

Tourney Talk: HoopsHD Interviews Florida State Senior Forward Phil Cofer

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Florida State lost to Louisville in the ACC tourney last Wednesday but still had a resume that was strong enough to earn an at-large bid to this week's NCAA tournament. The Seminoles beat FGCU in the 1st round of last year's NCAA tourney before losing to Xavier in the 2nd round, and they made it back this year to claim the school's 6th NCAA tourney bid in the past 9 years (where they could potentially face the Musketeers again in a 1-vs.-9 2nd round match-up next weekend!). Earlier today HoopsHD's Jon Teitel got to speak with Phil Cofer about being undefeated in OT this year and facing #8 seed Missouri in Nashville this Friday night.

You originally signed with Tennessee but were released from your letter of intent after a coaching change in Knoxville: what made you choose the Seminoles?

After the Vols' head coach left I just opened up my recruitment. Coach Hamilton was the 1st person to call me, I took a visit to Tallahassee, and liked it. Coach is like a father-figure to me.

What makes Coach Hamilton such a good coach, and what is the most important thing that you have ever learned from him?

Coach Ham talks about basketball but also a lot about life after you put down the basketball. He has helped me as a person to build my character.

In the 2017 NCAA tourney you had 2 REB in a loss to Xavier: what did you learn from that game that you think will help you this March?

We came out with good energy but have to be locked in on defense. Xavier was also very physical.

After starting only 2 games as a junior you started all 31 games as a senior: what is the biggest difference between coming off the bench vs. being a starter?

I am playing more minutes now so I try to bring the energy no matter how many minutes I play. Fatigue definitely comes into it but you just have to push through.

In your ACC opener in December you scored a career-high 28 PTS/11-16 FG in a 7-PT loss at Duke: was it just 1 of those scenarios where every shot you put up seemed to go in because you were "in the zone", and how close did you come to beating the Blue Devils?

My teammates had confidence in me after I got hot and just kept getting me the ball. We came pretty close to winning: it was a hard-fought game and we need to be playing like that in March.

You played 3 OT games in ACC play this year and won all 3 of them (over fellow NCAA tourney teams Syracuse/Miami/Clemson): what is the secret to beating good teams in OT?

You have to play to the last minute no matter what. You have to keep fighting on every possession: that is what makes teams great.

The ACC led the nation with 9 teams who made the NCAA tourney: how hard was it to go 9-9 in a league full of so many talented teams?

It is very difficult because they all come to fight and always bring their "A" game.

Your father Michael made the 1998 Pro Bowl with the Detroit Lions, your mother Reba played basketball at Tennessee, your brother Michael Jr. played college basketball, and your uncle Joe played football at Tennessee: who is the best athlete in the family?

I would say my dad because he played the most physical game (football)...but I might have him beat now!

What do you think about getting a #9 seed, and will you have a lot of family/friends at the game in Nashville?

I plan to have a lot of people there since my dad is from Tennessee, but I will be locked into the game more than I am focused on the fans.

What do you know about Missouri, and how do you prepare to face a team with a player of Michael Porter Jr.'s caliber who has only played 25 minutes all year long due to injury?

Missouri coach Cuonzo Martin was actually the head coach at Tennessee who originally recruited me so I know him a little bit. We will take the entire team seriously and treat all of the players as if they were LeBron James.