

## **Overcoming Adversity Nothing New To Florida State's Phil Cofer**

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Tallahassee Democrat

January 11, 2019

After a breakout season in 2017-18, the stars were finally aligning for Phil Cofer.

He was granted a medical redshirt and fifth year of eligibility for this season in May.

This allowed him the chance to return for one last season as the leading scorer (12.8 points per game last season) and leader of a Florida State basketball team that was coming off its first Elite Eight appearance in 25 years.

Then, Oct. 23 happened.

One day before he was set to represent FSU at ACC Media Day in Charlotte, North Carolina, he suffered a right foot injury in practice that would cause him to miss the beginning of the season.

Missing time with an injury is nothing new to Cofer. He played just 11 games as a sophomore in 2015-16 before he suffered an ankle injury that required season-ending surgery.

This injury was what allowed him to be granted his fifth year of eligibility this season. It also lent him some perspective on his situation.

"Because you're getting injured again, you're like why would it happen to me," Cofer said of his mindset after the injury.

"But I didn't dwell back on it. It was adversity and I just fought through it."

The foot injury sidelined Cofer for FSU's first nine games this season. While he was unable to get back on the court, Cofer used the time wisely, serving as a leader and additional coach from the bench.

"I think talking to the younger guys and even the older guys about what they did wrong just from my visual of what I see on the court was pretty good," Cofer said.

"It was pretty cool just to be on the bench, looking at the game."

While he was out, it was Cofer, not an FSU coach, who walked over to his teammates and offered advice when they came off the court.

"He's been around. He's been through the good times and the bad times. He's learned and grown from the experience and so his voice means an awful lot to his teammates because he's speaking from experience," FSU head coach Leonard Hamilton said.

"He's had some ups and downs that he's had to overcome. He's had injuries that he's had to deal with and so he can be a motivating voice for those who have some challenges physically. I'm sure that's very valuable when you're going through what we're going through."

Cofer finally was able to make his return to the court Dec. 17 against Southeast Missouri.

He failed to score in five minutes of action in that game, but his experience and leadership provided a boost in other areas.

"He's a key component to our team," sophomore M.J. Walker said.

"His leadership, the way he talks on the floor, the energy he brings."

After dealing with some pain his first few days back at practice, Cofer is pain-free now and isn't concerning himself with the possibility of another injury.

"I'm never a dude that worries. If I get injured, I get injured and I never think about if I do this move I'm going to get injured again. I've never been that guy," Cofer said.

"Just going out and playing, giving it all I've got every day."

In the four games since his scoreless debut, Cofer has averaged 9.3 points and 3.3 rebounds. The highlight of his young season was scoring FSU's first 12 points against Winthrop on his way to a season-high 14 points.

After hitting 37.5 percent of his threes last season, he's picked up right where he left off upon his return. His 41.2 percent mark from three-point range is the second-best on the team behind only Terance Mann.

"The things that Phil does on the court are definitely well documented," redshirt sophomore Mfiondu Kabengele said.

"Off the floor, we need that as well, talking on the bench, communicating in practice, being a great leader. Him being back coming into full form is really helping us."

Added Walker, "We definitely need him this part of the season."