

Devin Vassell: The Perfect Fit

By Dakota Lewis

FSView

March 2, 2019

Working efficiently within the strategies designed by coaches on the court is a fundamental trait in becoming a better basketball player.

For Florida State guard Devin Vassell, proving this on a consistent basis has shown both fans and critics the value that the freshman brings to the program. While his talents on the court are noticeable now, Vassell's skills were honed through hours of preparation and a strong work ethic during his time in high school.

As a student at Peachtree Ridge High School in Georgia, Vassell hadn't received much exposure until he entered his junior year. Using his long frame, athleticism, and high basketball-IQ, the Suwanee-native began to make a name for himself as he finished the year averaging a team-leading 13 points per game. Vassell would go on to surpass this feat in his senior season, where he would average 20 points per game and was named to the Atlanta All-Metro team by the Naismith Trophy organization.

Having a strong work-ethic and constantly looking to put his talents on full display were things that Vassell looked to capitalize on during his high school career, and it showed.

"I feel like I can lead my scoring, assists, rebounds," Vassell told NoleGameday prior to his senior year. "I'm going to try to do it all and just show the talent that I have."

As a three-star recruit, according to 247Sports, Vassell earned offers from both the 'Noles as well as programs like UCLA, Miami, and Texas Tech due to his impressive work on both ends of the floor, particularly as an important defender in Peachtree's full-court trap defensive scheme. After ultimately deciding on attending FSU, some questioned whether the 6-foot-6 guard would be redshirted during his first year.

However, Vassell would quickly put those worries to rest, as his work-ethic and talent stood out to Seminoles head coach Leonard Hamilton and his staff early on in practices. It didn't take long afterwards for the two-way guard to earn his spot as a player for Florida State as a true freshman.

While Hamilton and company began the year by slowly involving Vassell into the lineup, the guard has made the most of his chances on the court as his minutes have increased over the season. Playing a season-high 22 minutes in the 'Noles' 68-61 victory over Notre Dame, Vassell was grateful for Hamilton and his staff's trust in him following the win.

"It's great that the coaches have trust in me and I'm glad I'm good at that type of trust," Vassell said. "Just being able to help my team out in any way is great for me right now."

As ACC play progresses, so have the contributions that Vassell's made as part of FSU's productive bench unit. Averaging 48-percent shooting from the floor and 44-percent from beyond the arc, Vassell's production off the bench on both offense and defense supports the growth that players and coaches alike have seen from the freshman.

With the departure of guard PJ Savoy and forward Phil Cofer following this season, these qualities will certainly be needed from Vassell and others in the future. Known for their shooting abilities from both inside and beyond the arc, the loss of these dynamic shooters will create the opportunity for second-unit players like Vassell to further work their way into the rotation.

However, the Seminoles may not have to wait for Savoy and Cofer to leave in order to benefit from Vassell's production. In Monday night's matchup, the guard finished with 13 points and seven rebounds, including sinking all three of his attempts from three-point range. Following the win, Hamilton spoke on the maturity Vassell played with during his impressive performance.

"Vassell came in, and [was] playing like a veteran," Hamilton said. "Very confident and tough guy."

Hamilton and his coaching staff aren't the only ones who have recognized his noteworthy play this season, though. Vassell's teammates have made sure he knows that when given the opportunity, he can give the Garnet & Gold the chance to succeed.

"Well the teammates like David, Trent, T-Mann, always telling me just be ready to shoot," Vassell said. "That's just great for me and encouraging for me and I'm just glad I have the opportunity to go out there and help my team."

Looking ahead, Florida State will certainly hope to see this continued production from Vassell as it wraps up its conference schedule. The 'Noles will get their first chance at home on Saturday, Mar. 1 when they face NC State at 12 p.m.