

Recovering Forrest 'Ready To Rock'

By Tim Linafelt

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Trent Forrest gave himself one week.

One week to reflect, one week to rest and, yes, one week to wonder about what might have been.

But a week removed from Florida State's loss to Gonzaga in the Sweet 16, Forrest was ready to move forward.

"I'm ready to rock and roll, really," Forrest said Wednesday, in his first public comments since the end of FSU's season. "I've thought about it a lot. I'm just ready to take that step next year."

Both literally and figuratively.

Despite entering the 2018-19 campaign with sky-high expectations, Forrest's season came to be mostly defined by the painful injury in his left big toe.

Forrest's ailment – often described as "turf toe" – came about when Florida State played Villanova, way back in November.

He remembers someone stepping in front of him, and, in the collision, feeling his toe bend up. And then keep bending, far beyond the way it should.

"When it first happened," Forrest said, "I just thought it was a toe jam or something. Something that normally happens."

And even then, the adrenaline that Forrest felt during the intensity of the game hid the true nature of his injury. It wasn't until a few days later, as the pain worsened, that Forrest and FSU's athletics training staff could determine what he was really dealing with: Torn cartilage in his toe.

Every step hurt, so badly that Forrest briefly considered a mid-season surgery that would have ended his campaign.

But with the Seminoles in the midst of what turned out to be a special year – and assurances that he wouldn't make his toe any worse by playing on it – Forrest instead made the decision to persevere, managing his pain as needed.

And although Forrest gave the Seminoles everything he had – "He's everything," then-teammate Mfiondu Kabengele said of Forrest during FSU's NCAA tournament run – he often found himself capable of giving less than he would have liked.

"It took away a lot," he said. "I feel like my assist numbers were down, and I feel like a part of that was because of my toe. I wasn't able to be as explosive as I wanted to, maybe getting in the paint. ... I would say it definitely took a toll on me and what I could and couldn't do."

For one brilliant evening in Southern California, Forrest looked himself. He scored 20 points, relentlessly attacked the basket and was easily FSU's best player during its Sweet-16 loss to Gonzaga.

The Seminoles' season ended that night in Anaheim, and Forrest had surgery two weeks later.

"It is definitely a big relief," Forrest said, "to have it over and finished with."

'Although he's fitted with a walking boot, Forrest said his foot feels better every day, and that each week is an improvement on the one that came before.

Which is good news for a Florida State basketball team that, save for Forrest, is going to look a lot different next year.

The Seminoles said goodbye to five important seniors – Terance Mann, Phil Cofer, Christ Koumadje, David Nichols and P.J. Savoy – and then were dealt another blow when Kabengele, their leading scorer in 2018-19, declared for the NBA draft.

Which means that when FSU hits the floor later this year, it will have just two players who started in a game last year.

And Forrest is by far the most experienced.

"I came in with a class of six, and now I'm the only one that's left," Forrest said. "So, I mean, I think about that all the time. We have pick-up games, and it looks so different without those guys being here."

The good news is that Forrest has taken the necessary steps to make a full recovery from his injury and expects to be fully healthy for preseason practice in the fall.

He's also embracing what lies ahead – a new team, in which he'll be a cornerstone both on the floor and in the locker room.

"I may not be the oldest in age, but I'll be the 'oldest' on the court," Forrest said. "So I definitely think those guys are going to look to me for a lot."