

The Unconquered Spirit of Trent Forrest

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Imagine racing around on a hardwood basketball court, dribbling the ball at top speed and trying to beat players to the basket while experiencing excruciating pain in your big toe. Now think about doing that in 31 more games, over 900 minutes of playing time against elite talent in America's top basketball conference---the Atlantic Coast Conference---with that big toe throbbing all the time.

Got the picture? Then you are looking at FSU's Trent Forrest who coach Leonard Hamilton says: "represents what the Unconquered Spirit means." Playing with a bum toe last year Forrest averaged 9.3 points, had 138 assists and 69 steals in 37 games.

It is no wonder that a healthy Forrest's return as a senior leader precipitates high expectations that 2019-20 will be a stellar season for Florida State basketball.

Asked about his leadership role Coach Hamilton explains that it is a no-brainer: "Trent has always had the same role he had as a freshman. He came here as a leader and he displayed stronger, better and wiser leadership every year that he has been here. So, we are expecting more of the same."

In the 6th game of his junior season, playing Villanova, an on-court collision caused his big toe to bend way up, far beyond normal. It hurt a lot and at first seemed to be bad case of "turf toe" that was eventually determined to be torn cartilage. Every step hurt. Disdaining mid-season surgery that would have ended his season Forrest elected to play through the pain.

How could he manage that?

He says: "Kinda just wanting to play so bad for my teammates. I guess it's just a high pain tolerance is all I can say." Amazing! And the good news is, after off-season surgery, Trent is back, pain free and as he says; "ready to rock."

You gotta love the game to go through all that. It's obvious Trent loves basketball. As a baby, when his parents put different small balls in his crib he reached for the basketball.

Later, as a youngster he slept with his basketball every night.

Even though Forest grew up in the small town of Chipley, population 3,526, his talents did not go unnoticed despite playing in the state's smallest high school classification. When you score over 3,000 points the scouts will find you. He received offers from Georgia, Ga. Tech, Alabama, Wake Forest, Miami, Tennessee, Providence and Wichita State.

He elected to go to Florida State, just 86 miles from home via I-10, because he says: "I felt like I could relate a lot with the things Coach Ham was doing. It was just the relationship I had with the coaches. I was able to trust them, and they were able to trust me about things in their program and even things outside of the program."

Forrest says his biggest adjustment to college basketball was "the speed of the game and understanding the college game. It's more in-depth and teams are going to have scouting reports on you."

Four years later the Seminoles are looking to Forrest to lead a team that has made it to the NCAA Playoffs three years in a row. In 2018-19 Seminole Basketball had a sparkling, best-ever 29-8 record. This coming off two other stellar 26-win seasons that been topped only once (27 wins in 1971-72).

"Just that past experience, especially last year will definitely help me be a better leader this year," Forrest said.

Forward RaiQuan Gray, who played in 36 games as a freshman agrees: "Last year Trent was one of our leaders and we looked up to him. I feel like this year he will have an even bigger role. I think he will be a vocal leader who brings everybody together."

The late President Ronald Reagan once said: "There is no limit to the amount of good you can do, if you don't care who gets the credit." Except for the fact it was before his time the President accurately described Trent Forrest.

Coach Hamilton says: "Even though he scored close to 3,000 points in high school, he is such an unselfish player that he plays to win not to get statistics."

Even though he might not light up the scoreboard in his points column he does even better. Corey Clark explained on Warchant.com: "Forrest is one of those rare players who can dominate an opponent without taking shots. That's the beauty of his game. He puts his imprint on games in every way imaginable."

The basketball court is not the only place where Forrest makes an impact. Ashton Henderson, FSU's Assistant Athletic Director for Student-Athlete Development, says: "Trent hit the ground running when he matriculated to Florida State University. He has been doing everything with my office for community service. He constantly shows up for everything we have going on. He is there. I send him the text and he brings all the guys with him."

Henderson has been impressed with the way Trent relates with everyone and becomes just one of the group; "He's a guy who has all that attached to his name and seeing how humble he remains, his meekness and then he still remains so competitive on the court. He will speak to the janitor. He will speak to anybody who needs their day to be brightened. I have always respected that about him. Trent Forrest is somebody you want to model your program after."

Gene Deckerhoff, the Radio Voice of the Seminoles, for over 40 years calls Forrest "a tremendous basketball player" but is equally impressed with his off-court presence. "He's always got a smile when you see him. Not a moody kind of guy. His teammates love him. He's the real deal."

Forrest's upbringing accounts for many of his admirable personality traits. He grew up in a Christian home. His mother, Barbara Lee, is the pastor of *All Things New Worship Center* and Forrest played drums in the church. Both his mom and dad, Lester Forrest, played basketball for Chipola Junior College.

In the mornings when his mom got up at 5:30 a.m., Trent got up and started working on basketball drills. Then after school he worked out as well. That committed work ethic continues. This summer after having the foot operation, before he could walk around again, he would lift weights and practicing dribbling while sitting down. He was determined to be in shape when fall basketball practice rolled around.

The things he learned in the backyard, the playgrounds and high school gyms came with Forrest to college. Raquan Gray says: "Trent is a great driver. He is able to move around and find an opening and when he drives he sees everybody. You have to be ready."

In early 2018 the Seminoles were in possession on a 27-game home-winning streak against non-conference foes. That was in jeopardy in an ACC-Big 10 matchup with 19th ranked Purdue leading 72-71 when Forest caught a pass in the lane from Terance Mann, drove in and floated a shot into the basket with 5.2 seconds left to put FSU up 73-72. Not content to admire the shot, Forrest raced back down the court and stole a pass to seal the win and make it 28 in a row for FSU.

Those are the kinds of plays Seminole fans have come to expect from Trent Forrest. When the game gets tough Forrest rises to the occasion.

He said that he draws some strength from his coach when panic is about to set in: "In pressure situations you look over and Coach Ham has the same face he had at the beginning of the game. He is not showing any panic or

anything,” Forrest said. “You get a timeout, in the crucial time and he is always calm and collected. You see that, and you know there is no need to panic.”

Forrest is happy to be able to play basketball close to his home town where family and friends can come to the games. One favor he can do for his friends is to help keep the streak alive against their arch-rivals, the Gators. The Seminoles have won five in a row against them.

In 2018, a year that Forrest scored in double-figures 15 times, Forrest scored 13 points and had five assists in FSU’s 81-60 win over Florida. “I definitely want to be able to say I never lost to the Gators. Winning that game gives me lots of ammunition to take back home.”

Looking back on his college career Forrest feels like he has maximized the benefits and was able to give back. He is thankful that his scholarship made that possible. Forrest says: “The scholarship means a lot. You can’t thank the Boosters enough because they are investing in the student athletes here. It’s beneficial to people like me to be able to come here and chase their dreams.”

Trent Forrest’s scholarship was a sound investment by the Boosters for as Ashton Henderson said: “I am sure that Trent is going to be very successful and will make FSU proud.”

After all he embodies the true Seminole Unconquered spirit.