

Leonard Hamilton's Twitter Account Gives FSU Fans A Peek Into His Personality

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If you only see Leonard Hamilton on game day, you probably think you have an idea of who the Florida State men's basketball head coach is.

For the better part of the last 20 years, the FSU men's basketball coach has patrolled the sidelines during games with a rarely-changing facial expression.

Emotions at either end of the spectrum -- happiness or anger -- rarely escape from behind Hamilton's stoic facade. As such, one might think just from watching him in this setting that he can be unpleasant to be around and hates fun.

Ask those who know him best and this couldn't be further from the truth.

"I have a lot of friends that always ask me, 'How's coach Ham? He always looks so serious, like he's mad.' I'm like, 'He's the complete opposite,'" FSU sophomore Devin Vassell said of Hamilton.

When you're around him, he's always making jokes and laughing. He always tells us that, in the games, he needs to have a serious face because how is he going to be able to yell at us and be laughing and everything. I respect it." While Hamilton's gameday demeanor hasn't changed this season, he's begun to show supporters that other side of him a bit more through the use of his Twitter account @FSUCoachHam.

Hamilton has had the account since 2009, but until recently, he used it just to talk about his team and former players and celebrate their accolades.

That changed this school year as Hamilton has embraced the modern-day internet, beginning to share funny images and show fans the personality that many may not have seen much throughout his time in Tallahassee.

"I do feel that it's important for people to know that I do have a little personality," Hamilton told the *Democrat*. "I'm not the focused, intolerant guy that they see, intense guy on the sidelines all the time. I have lots of fun with my players."

The first-such image dropped the day of FSU's 2019 football opener, Aug. 31. When FSU fans noticed the turnover backpack was no longer on the sidelines, Hamilton quote tweeted a photoshopped image of him holding up the turnover backpack with the caption, "I promised Willie (Taggart) I would take good care of it."

The timing of Hamilton's Twitter emergence has been in tune with the Seminoles' re-emergence as a program. FSU has been to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament each of the last two seasons -- just the second time that has happened in program history -- and won 59 of its last 62 home games.

The Seminoles saw their 10-game win streak snapped Tuesday at Virginia, but remain all but assured of making their fourth consecutive NCAA Tournament this season. That would also be tied for the longest streak of tournament appearances in FSU history.

Because of this successful run, Hamilton knew the interest would be there for him to start having a little more fun on his account.

"Basically all my coaching career, I've been kind of matter of fact, business approach, low-key approach to developing programs. And I've always been the underdog in certain situations and programs I've had to build so we've had to strategically operate under the radar," Hamilton said.

"But in this new age of social media, this is a movement that youngsters and young adults or just sports fans have gotten into that people are always looking for information about who you are and what you're doing..."

"Even though my whole career, I've been somewhat reserved and laid back, I feel a need for people to know about who we are, how we do it and allow our fans and supporters more of an inside look at who we are and what we do in our program. It's been fun trying to decide what's important for fans to know and to try to have a little fun with it as well. We've kind of gotten a kick out of some of the things that we've done. It seems to have drawn a lot of attention."

The funny pictures on Hamilton's Twitter have ranged from a Space Jam parody to old pictures of himself.

A common theme among many of the images and jokes is his age. Hamilton turned 71 last August, but is praised by everyone in the business for how he looks far younger than he actually is.

In November, Hamilton participated in the decade challenge, sharing pictures of him from 2009 and 2019 that show minimal aging with the caption, "I promise these photos are accurate. Told y'all about the Ham Sauce."

Hamilton's personal favorite tweet, however, is a picture posted in December of him at three years old. He's decked out in a full suit with an accompanying caption that reads, "I don't know why I'm not considered one of the best-dressed coaches in college hoops. This is me at 3 years old. I'm just saying. #Smooth"

"That picture says a lot about what my life has been about. That was a picture on a Sunday where my grandmother dressed me up because we went to church every Sunday," Hamilton said.

"If you look at that picture, you'll see from head to toe, I'm probably three years old dressed like a grown adult going to church. That was my grown-up look, my Sunday best clothes going to church... Because I'm dressed so elegantly, I want people to know that I've been dressing well for a long time."

Even as long as he's had his Twitter account, Hamilton's players still aren't entirely how he gets it to work given his technical expertise.

But they're ok with the fact that the rest of the world is finally starting to see the full version of the coach they've known since they were recruits.

"Half the time he doesn't even know what's going on on Twitter, but he somehow tweets out stuff," FSU point guard Trent Forrest said.

"People have him all messed up because he's a hilarious guy. Everybody, they see him on game day and on TV and they see just the stern face, but coach Ham is hilarious."