

## **Florida State's Hamilton Not Ready To Hang Up Whistle Anytime Soon**

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He has been coaching at Florida State for two decades and is 71 years young.

But, as you might suspect, Leonard Hamilton has no plans to slow down anytime soon.

The Florida State men's basketball coach, who coached the Seminoles to their first-ever ACC regular-season championship this past season, was a guest on the "Black and Mild" podcast this week and was asked about a variety of topics.

Much of the conversation on the podcast -- which features former FSU basketball player Adrian Crawford, former FSU All-America football player Corey Simon and Warchant.com's own Ira Schoffel as hosts -- centered on race relations in the United States.

Hamilton, who grew up in segregated North Carolina in the 1950s and 1960s, obviously has a unique perspective on that particular topic. But the veteran head coach was also asked about his future, and how long he sees himself coaching major college basketball.

Hamilton obviously is in the midst of his best-ever run as the Seminoles' head coach. His team was 26-5 in 2020, won the ACC and was ranked No. 4 in the country heading into the postseason. And that was coming off three straight NCAA Tournament appearances and back-to-back Sweet 16s.

But Hamilton also is in his sixth decade in the coaching profession. Which is why Crawford asked Hamilton how long he foresees himself doing this.

"I'm going to be doing this as long as I can remember the names on the jerseys," Hamilton said with a laugh.

"As long as I can see the scoreboard, as long as I don't call Billy 'Bob' and Bob 'Billy,' as long as I can walk out there and see what's going on, and don't go to the wrong bathroom, I'm going to hang in here. You know what I mean? "If I start walking down and sitting on the other team's bench, (it might be time to go)."

That time doesn't seem to be coming anytime soon.

Hamilton went into the 2019-'20 season on the last year of his contract. And there has been nothing released by the university saying he has agreed to a new deal.

But at some point, it will get done ... if it hasn't already. Hamilton isn't going anywhere. He doesn't want to. And Florida State most definitely doesn't want him to. Not after what his program has become.

So whether a new deal gets announced or not -- the timing isn't exactly ideal to publicize multi-million dollar contracts right now -- Hamilton is certainly going to be the coach at FSU for the foreseeable future. And when the ink is dry, he almost certainly won't be the 52nd highest-paid coach in the country and eighth highest-paid coach in the ACC -- behind the likes of Clemson's Brad Brownell and Notre Dame's Mike Brey -- like he was this past season. Hamilton's team had a legitimate shot at the Final Four this season before COVID-19 hit.

Two years ago, the Seminoles were a basket or two away from making it that far. And the year in between, they were hit hard by injuries as they rolled into the Sweet 16.

Florida State also has become a major force on the national recruiting scene, signing at least one five-star prospect in five of the last six recruiting classes.

It has been an incredible resurgence.

A half-decade ago, after missing the NCAA Tournament for four straight years, it looked like Hamilton's tenure at FSU might be limping to the finish line. Now, he's sprinted through the tape, and his program is running faster than it ever has before.

"I enjoy what I do," Hamilton said. "It's a pleasure. It's fun to do what I do. I enjoy working with these kids, but our philosophy is we're going to treat our players just like we'd want you to treat our kids if our kids were with you. ... And I'm kind of old school, but I think the strength of my success has been that my father told me, 'Never let anyone outwork you.' It was simple. it's a simple formula. Now I can control that. Don't let anybody outwork me.

You might be better and you might have more success, but I'm going to give more effort. I can control that.

"And then to not ever make any excuses. He said, 'Don't ever come to me complaining that you didn't get the job done because you were white, you were black, the coach was playing favoritism. If you let it be close, then that's on you.' So, I've never had anybody to make excuses to. ... So I have a mindset that I'm going to work hard. I'm not going to blame my assistants. I'm not going to blame anybody. I'm going to have all the responsibility on me. And I take that and go to the house with it."