

Basketball's Prieto Win's Third Golden Torch Award

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (seminoles.com) – Harrison Prieto was presented with the Golden Torch for men's basketball in a recognition ceremony during Florida State's football game against Louisville on Sept. 25 at Doak Campbell Stadium. It marked the third consecutive year the meteorology graduate student was recognized with the highest Grade Point Average among his teammates. Prieto was honored as one of 29 Seminole Student Athletes for their achievements in the classroom during the 2020-21 academic year.

Prieto reflected on his academic and athletic career at Florida State as he prepares for his sixth season as a Seminole.

1. What will it mean to you to get your Master's Degree in Meteorology?

Getting my Master's Degree in Meteorology will be huge for me. For one, I will achieve a lifelong goal to further understand meteorology and climate, but it will also open a lot of doors for my future which is very exciting.

2. What does being a Master's Degree candidate entail? Harder classes? Teaching classes?

Getting my Master's Degree means that my classes go from general meteorology classes (large scale atmospheric processes) to much more focused topics, which can certainly make the classes harder, but I've found that it also makes them more interesting. Additionally, I am working on my Master's Thesis with Dr. Rhys Parfitt where we are looking into frontal interactions with surface air pollutants, which I find quite exciting because there are real-world socioeconomic applications for this sort of research. I am also privileged to be able to TA classes for undergraduate students. I think the relationships I've been able to build with my students have been an unexpected but incredibly rewarding aspect of TAing.

3. What is the most interesting thing about the study of meteorology?

The most interesting thing about meteorology is that you get to learn the how and the why of everything that happens around you daily. Why does it seem to rain every afternoon in Tallahassee during the summer? How do hurricanes form? Being able to predict some aspect of the future is cool, and I think it's lost on so many people that we can do that. For anyone reading this that gets angry with their local meteorologist about a forecast they don't think is right, consider what your march madness bracket looked like last year (I bet you didn't get a good portion of the games right). Predicting the future is nearly impossible, and the weather is far more complex than any basketball game. The meteorological community has gotten very good at forecasting over the last few decades, so take it easy on them, they're doing a better job than you know.

4. What do you hope to do with your Master's Degree in Meteorology?

After I graduate with my Master's Degree in Meteorology, I want to go into a career that combines meteorology, data analytics, and economics. I'm just now beginning the process of a job search, so we'll see where that takes me. I'm sure I'll find something in the field that combines the three and sets everything up for a good life situation down the road. You never know what the future holds, you can only hope to point yourself in the right direction and shoot your shot into the dark.

5. When you look back, what has been more challenging – playing six years of Division I basketball or earning two degrees from Florida State?

There have certainly been challenges within basketball and academics. Playing basketball at the Division 1 level is extremely difficult, physically taxing, and a huge time commitment, but earning meteorology degrees isn't exactly easy. There are few majors outside of meteorology and engineering that combine calculus, differential equations, fluid dynamics, thermodynamics, etc. all into one degree, so just being able to survive and excel with the course work has been a huge accomplishment for me. I'm not sure which has been more challenging, to be honest, but I'm extremely proud to say that I've been able to do both.

6. How has being a leader on the basketball team helped you be a leader (teacher) in the classroom?

I think basketball has helped me in so many ways, but being one of the leaders on the team has taught me how to interact with so many different people from so many backgrounds. Not everyone reacts to criticism or coaching on the basketball court in the same way, which parallels teaching in that not everyone will learn to understand meteorological principles the same way. Honestly, this has all given me so much more respect for people like my sister (who teaches at an elementary school in Dallas) because teaching is so important, but it's also a very difficult job where you must cater to the individual student.

7. How have you found time to balance high-level academics and high-level athletics – and be successful at both?

I think time management of basketball, academics, and social life has boiled down to the support group that I have around me. I have no words for the support that I've received from people here at FSU that have helped turn my dreams into a reality. All I can really do is thank everyone who has helped me along the way from my parents, coaches, academic support personnel, advisors (thank you so much Charlie and Shel), professors, classmates, and friends who have been there for me the whole way. There's nothing quite like feeling supported by such a vast group of people and I'm just so thankful for everyone who has helped me in any and all moments of need. None of this would be possible without them.

8. Did being in the “bubble” last March in Indianapolis make it easier or harder to excel academically?

The bubble was extremely difficult in a lot of ways, but it certainly made it more difficult to excel academically. We were all very isolated from help receiving in our classes, and we certainly had to miss a few classes from time to time due to the demands of the NCAA tournament. It did help that our lectures were on zoom because I was able to go back and watch lectures I may have missed.

9. What are the biggest sacrifices you have made to help the Seminoles get to the level they are at in basketball?

When you decide to play college basketball, you're signing up for a very different college experience than anybody else will ever have, but I think it's so much more rewarding and fulfilling than being a typical student, so in a sense, you sacrifice a "normal" life, but it's for something much better. The biggest thing that you sacrifice is your time; we spend hours on end practicing, watching film, team building, traveling, playing, etc., and that makes it difficult. You also sacrifice your body to some extent. I don't think a day will go by for the rest of my life where some part of my body doesn't feel the wear and tear from so many years of college athletics, but I think that's just part of the deal. What's the point of living life if you're not willing to use what you were given?

10. What are the sacrifices you have made to be successful in your academic career?

Sacrifices I've made in my life for academic success really just include putting forth the effort to make school a priority. At the end of the day, I'm not sure if that's a huge sacrifice, but I see it as the best way to set myself up for life moving forward.

11. What is your greatest memory as a member of the Florida State Basketball team – what is your greatest success as a member of the Seminoles?

Honestly, I have so many fond memories of my time here at Florida State, there are Sweet 16 games, HUGE team wins, and personal moments like making a three in the closing seconds of senior night where I accomplished things I didn't think would be possible in a million lifetimes. I'm not supposed to be here. I wasn't a high school superstar with scouts clamoring to watch my games, but I was given the opportunity to play here, and with the help of teammates and coaches I have been able to turn a single opportunity into wonderful experiences, which will forever be special to me. With that being said, I think my greatest memories will be the friendships I've made along the way. Going to dinner with teammates, going river tubing with the entire team this summer, playing volleyball with the guys by the pool, or having a team barbecue with Grill Master Wyatt Wilkes cooking up burgers.... those are the special memories I'll hold closest, and I think that's how we've made such a big jump as a program over the last 6 years. We love each other, and we like being around each other. It's easy to make the unselfish play in a game when you're doing it for your best friends. This is a special program and I hope that helps demonstrate why.