

Season preview: HoopsHD Interviews Florida State SR F Malik Osborne

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HoopsHD

September 10, 2021

We are keeping our fingers crossed in the hope that we can return to a “normal” version of college basketball this fall: fans in the stands, announcers without masks, etc. Nobody knows exactly what is going to happen but we will try to restore some order with season previews featuring the best players/coaches in the country. We continue our coverage with Florida State SR F Malik Osborne. HoopsHD’s Jon Teitel got to chat with Malik about making the Sweet 16 last March and his expectations for this season.

You began your college career at Rice: why did you decide to transfer, and what made you choose Florida State?

Rice was a great program but I wanted to challenge myself by going to a Power 5 conference to see how I matched up with the top talent in the country. Assistant coach Dennis Gates (who is now head coach at Cleveland State) offered me a scholarship to FSU and I had a lot of family in Florida and the weather was warm so it seemed like it was almost meant to be.

You play for Coach Leonard Hamilton: what makes him such a great coach, and what is the most important thing that you have learned from him so far?

He is relatable and understands his players and puts us first: he is the most selfless coach that I have ever had and if we ever have an issue then he will talk directly to us to see where we are coming from. It feels more like a family: we handle our business on the court but remain tight-knit off the court. I learned that you get out what you put in: I have taken that attitude by putting in a lot of time and being an open book to the younger guys on the team.

Last winter you joined FSU’s Anti-Racism, Diversity & Inclusion Task Force: what have you been able to accomplish so far?

We have accomplished a lot. We have held some very intense discussions about racial issues on campus, such as changing the names of a building or removing a statue. We looked into the details of some things with racial backgrounds and then banded together to make some changes.

In the 2021 Sweet 16 you scored 12 PTS/4-7 3PM in a loss to Michigan: what did you learn from that loss that will help you this year?

I learned that chemistry is so important, especially during times of adversity. We were up in the Midwest (Indianapolis) and there were a lot of Michigan fans and we got rattled a bit and tried to do our own thing. Looking back on it now I think that is what helped teams like Baylor/Gonzaga make it to the title game. It is tough to come together during COVID because after a game we would just go back to our own rooms.

Your FT shooting increased from 59% as a sophomore to 84% as a junior: how were you able to improve so much in only 1 year?

After shooting 59% I knew that I was better than that so I put in a lot of work on my mechanics/rhythm and found something that was very comfortable. I just calmed myself down and shot thousands of FTs, which helped settle me down during games and become a better FT shooter. Even after shooting 84% I know there is still more room to improve.

You earned your bachelor’s degree in Social Science last April and are currently working on a 2nd bachelor’s degree in Humanities with a concentration in Communications: how do you balance your work on the court with your work in the classroom?

The academic people at FSU have helped me a lot. I received some tutoring and made sure to do my homework in advance because time management is essential. You need to have discipline because it will pay off in the long run. If you take care of things in advance then it will give you more time to get into the gym or rest your body.

You have a brutal non-conference schedule this year (including Florida/Purdue/South Carolina and possibly Missouri): which of these games do you feel will present your biggest test?

We played Purdue a couple of years ago and they gave us a run for our money (the Seminoles won by 3 PTS in OT) but they are all challenging opponents. Even the mid-major teams will challenge us mentally. We know that we will get everyone's best shot but we will be up for the challenge all year long.

You lost each of your top-4 scorers from last year (Scottie Barnes/MJ Walker/RaiQuan Gray/Balsa Koprivica): how will you try to replace all of that offense?

We will just play our normal game and push the ball in transition. Even after losing all those scorers we still have a few veterans left on the team including myself. Everyone has a certain role and nobody will try to do too much because the entire coaching staff has put us in positions to be successful. The main focus is to stick to the game plan and trust our staff.

Your father James played football at Iowa State and your mother Tina ran track in college: who is the best athlete in the family?

You are trying to get me in trouble! I would love to say me...but my mom is a stallion who killed it on the track so between the two of them I will say my mom.

What are your goals for this season and what are your expectations for this season?

I definitely plan on winning our conference and getting back to March Madness. We want to win as many games as possible: we have a young team but are willing to learn and give our maximum effort each time. I think that we can win the ACC tourney and hopefully make the Final 4, but we need to keep it all in perspective and just take it one game at a time.