

## **Caleb Mills Looking Forward To Making His FSU Debut Alongside His New Teammates**

By Chris Nee

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TALLAHASSEE – Caleb Mills played in four games at Houston during the 2020-21 season before deciding to enter the transfer portal on January 5th of this year. A week later he was committed to Leonard Hamilton and Florida State, choosing the Seminoles over Kentucky, Texas, NC State, and North Carolina. He enrolled soon after that commitment and completed coursework during the spring semester while getting acquainted with his new school, program, and team.

On Thursday night, FSU will host Mississippi College at 7 p.m. in an exhibition. If the redshirt sophomore takes to the court, it will mark his first game action with the Seminoles and his first time in a game since around Christmas of 2020.

"It has been going pretty smooth," Mills said of his transition to FSU.

"They all just welcomed me in," Mills added. "They have a nice thing going on here. It is different."

For Mills, the biggest adjustment has been to the Sunshine State weather. On the court has been a fairly natural transition for the Houston transfer who averaged 13.2 points during his full season of action in 2019-20.

"It wasn't too hard for me, having been in college already, being able to pick up on stuff fast," Mills said. "I feel like I've grown as much as I ever have in the short time I've already been here as far as being a complete player, making plays for other people and for myself, just being more efficient."

Expectations for FSU remain high, despite the fact that they are replacing around two-thirds of their scoring production from a season ago. Mills, along with a talented class of newcomers, is part of the reason that FSU is again expected to compete with the best in the Atlantic Coast Conference, where they were picked to finish second in the preseason poll.

The regular season is just over two weeks away. ACC play is nearly another month away from that date. Mills, alongside returning veterans such as guards Anthony Polite and Wyatt Wilkes, as well as forward Malik Osborne, and others, are working to get fresh faces such as guards Jalen Warley and Matthew Cleveland up to speed. That has resulted in competitive practices over the past three weeks.

"Practice for a good team is just a fight to be consistent every day," Mills said. "We've been fighting at it each day and getting better each day."

Mills, who was the 2020-21 AAC Preseason Player of the Year, is pushing himself to be the best he can be within the dynamics of the team.

"Just be as efficient as I can be," Mills said. "There's not that much pressure. Well, I don't put too much pressure on myself because I just enjoy playing basketball."

"Being around so many good players is refreshing, relieving," Mills added.

One part of the game where Mills wants to make his mark is on the defensive end. Even as FSU basketball has evolved under Hamilton, the backbone of their success is getting after it on defense.

"Funny thing is coming out of high school, I didn't even care for defense. After going to college at Houston, it was a defensive-minded school, and I fell in love with playing it," Mills said. "I got a lot better at it over this past summer. This is the best I've ever played defense."

Mills has taken to trying to bill himself as FSU's best defender and he isn't afraid to let his new teammates in on it.

"The reason I say that, it's just competitive. I like to talk trash with my teammates," Mills said with a smile. After an 11-month hiatus, Mills isn't sure what he will feel when he takes to the court on Thursday in a different arena with a garnet and gold uniform bearing a new number, the No. 4, signifying the start of a new chapter for the college veteran.

"I'm not sure exactly," Mills said. "I'm just looking forward to going out and playing hard. I'm not necessarily trying to make a statement or play out of my mind.

"I just want to play fun, play hard, and play alongside my teammates," Mills added.

Mills totaled 448 points in 35 games played at Houston (12.8 points per game) and shot .780 from the free throw line for his career at Houston. He showed the ability to knock down shots from the perimeter burying 50 3-point attempts in his lone full season with the Cougars.