

Justin Lindner's Last Dance

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Seminoles.com

January 7, 2021

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (Seminoles.com) -- Sixth-year Seminole senior Justin Lindner is a crowd favorite amongst Florida State basketball fans. The Seminole fans erupt when Lindner gets substituted into any game at the Donald L. Tucker Center even when the result of the game is no longer in doubt.

Lindner became a member of Coach Leonard Hamilton's team in the fall of 2016. He is a member of a school-record tying four NCAA Tournament teams, as well as the Seminoles' 2020 ACC Championship team.

With only nine home games remaining for Lindner, fans will be cheering extra loud for one of their favorite basketball veterans.

Lindner continues his last season with Coach Hamilton and the Seminoles on Saturday against Louisville. The Seminoles play host to the Cardinals at the Tucker Center with the tip set for 8:00 p.m. The game will be televised nationally on ESPNU.

After five years helping to develop a new reputation for the Florida State basketball team, many would have assumed that was it for Lindner. However, due to the coronavirus, playing for a sixth year was not beyond the realm of possibility.

In October of 2020, the NCAA had granted fall and winter sport athletes an extra year of eligibility, whether they had competed during their 2020-21 seasons or not. This meant that Lindner could return for a sixth year at Florida State.

Lindner finished the requirements for his master's degree in Sport Management and had an assistant coaching position lined up at Mississippi College. However, his teammates and coaches had successfully convinced him to stay at Florida State. After his five seasons as a Seminole, Lindner decided that he wanted to have just one last dance.

"I felt like (last year) was kind of an incomplete year," said Lindner. "I really want to help Coach Hamilton get to the Final Four. "

After building relationships with several newcomers, including Kentucky transfer Cam'Ron Fletcher, Lindner saw the potential that the 2021-22 team could have, and he wanted to be a part of it.

Fletcher and Malik Osborne decided that they wanted to do something special for their hard-working teammate and friend. Coach Hamilton had expressed to the team that there was one scholarship remaining for the 2021-22 season, one which Fletcher and Osborne suggested should go to Lindner.

"Fletcher told me he wanted me to stay with him and help him out," said Lindner. "Malik told me he wanted me to stay as well.

Both of his Lindner's teammates took it upon themselves to speak with Coach Hamilton about this opportunity.

"I called him [Coach Hamilton] about it, and we talked for a while," said Lindner.

"Then he said, as long as you're all in on it, we can give you a scholarship and, you can come back and help us out with a few different things this year."

After receiving the news, Lindner was ecstatic to have the opportunity to play with a new team that he fit in with so well. He was able to bond with many of the newcomers over the summer and wanted to share his knowledge with the younger guys.

Lindner sees himself as a big brother figure to many of the guys on the team.

“It’s been a learning process this year because we have a lot of new people,” said Lindner. “I have had to take on a bigger role by helping the team out and steering them in the right direction.”

This scholarship also meant more responsibility for the 24-year-old. His added responsibilities include cutting video and helping out with scouting -- invaluable tools for an aspiring young basketball coach. He is currently working on a certificate in coaching through the Florida State School of Education. And is working towards completing his masters with a coaching internship this semester.

Lindner has always wanted to become a basketball coach. When he was in 10th grade at Christian Brothers High School in Memphis, Tennessee, he formed important relationships with his teammates and coaches.

“I liked their coaching style and they showed me what it was like to be a coach,” said Lindner. “Since then I knew that was what I wanted to do.”

“At first, I wanted to be a high school coach,” said Lindner. “But once I went to college and learned from some of our assistant coaches and saw how basketball works on a more complex level, I wanted to become a college basketball coach.”

His love for the game and its complexities have inspired Lindner to set big goals for his future.

“I eventually want to get to where I can be a head coach of a Power Five school,” said Lindner. “I think my networking with our coaches, and my ability to connect with a lot of players that have come through here are skills that are going to help me out in the long run in advancing my career.”

After serving as a mentor to first round 2021 NBA draft pick Scottie Barnes and second round 2021 NBA draft pick RaiQuan Gray, Lindner is seen as vital component of the Florida State men’s basketball team. His leadership has played a huge role in the success of the team in recent years.

His leadership has helped establish a lasting impact on the Seminole program for now, and in years to come.

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