

'Graybeard' Turpin Gets Sixth Year At Florida State

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When it was suggested Thursday that Kiel Turpin suddenly is the “graybeard” of Florida State’s basketball team, there was laughter on the other end of the phone.

“That’s the second time someone has called me ‘graybeard,’ ” he said. “I think that will be my nickname.” Turpin is in a laughing mood. For him, the key is he can still be called a Seminole.

The 7-foot graduate of Normal West High School and Lincoln College has a new lease on his college basketball life, granted a sixth year of eligibility this week by the NCAA.

Turpin missed this past season because of a knee injury and was given a medical redshirt by the NCAA. At 24 — he turns 25 in October — Turpin truly will be a veteran presence for coach Leonard Hamilton.

“By far I’m the oldest on the team,” Turpin said. “Coach is looking toward me to be one of the leaders because I have been here the longest.

“I really think it (the injury) is a blessing in disguise. I get an extra year to further my education and be able to participate in a high-end basketball conference (Atlantic Coast Conference). There’s nothing negative about that.” Next year will be Turpin’s fourth in Tallahassee, yet he has played only the 2012-13 season.

He sat out his first year after transferring from Lincoln College for medical reasons as well. Florida State was diligent in checking out a slight heart murmur first detected at Lincoln College, delaying the start to his season. Then Turpin contracted mononucleosis and was redshirted.

He started 25 games in 2012-13 and averaged 5.4 points, 3.0 rebounds and 1.7 blocked shots. A late-season surge had him eager for 2013-14, but shortly before practice was to begin he suffered a slight patella tendon tear and a stress reaction in his left knee.

He was in a brace for a month and a half and said the knee “never really got better.”

“Around December I was out of the brace but there was still some pain,” Turpin said. “Coach (Hamilton) didn’t want to force anything and cause more injury toward me if I played on it. By the time I got comfortable playing on it and getting to game speed, there were only a couple games left in the season.”

The decision was made to not play and seek a medical redshirt. That put Turpin’s basketball future in the NCAA’s hands, making him squirm despite assurances from coaches/trainers he would get a sixth year.

“I didn’t have that good of stats the last year I played. I got better as the year had gone on,” Turpin said. “If I didn’t get it (another year), I didn’t know what the future would hold. Not finding out until now, I would have missed a lot of (professional) opportunities.

“I’m just really grateful the NCAA ruled on my behalf and I can finish out my college career the way I wanted to.” Turpin earned his bachelor’s degree in social science in December and the following semester got certified in emergency management. He is on track to complete a second degree in international affairs by next May. On the court, he seeks to prove he is a “high-impact player” after struggling early two seasons ago.

“I figured if I got this year back, I can show that I’ve developed enough that I can be that go-to guy,” Turpin said.

“I’m more athletic now and I have more energy and I know what I’m doing. Being able to come back, I get a chance to redeem myself.”