

FSU's Kiel Turpin thrilled to get sixth year from NCAA

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Florida State center Kiel Turpin always felt good about his chances of being granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA. But still, here he was in early June, months after the season had ended, and he had not yet heard official word on whether he would be allowed back for the 2014-2015 season.

Then he got a call from head coach Leonard Hamilton on Tuesday afternoon, telling him he would be able to put on the Seminole uniform for one more year.

"I kind of freaked out," said Turpin, who missed all of last season with a knee injury. "There was a lot of excitement. A lot of weight was lifted off my shoulders. I was really, really excited."

The Normal, Ill., native transferred to Florida State after two years at Lincoln Junior College.

It was that first year in Tallahassee that was at the heart of FSU's argument for a sixth year. Turpin said the training staff detected a "slight heart murmur" and ran weeks and weeks of tests to make sure he was fit to play. Then, when he was finally cleared to start practicing with the team, he contracted mononucleosis and was forced to miss more than a month. By the time he was cleared to play, he wasn't in playing shape.

So he redshirted.

Turpin then started 25 games as a junior for the Seminoles, averaging 5.4 points, 3 rebounds and a team-leading 1.7 blocked shots per game. The 7-footer was again expected to be a vital member of the FSU team this past season but suffered a preseason leg injury that kept him sidelined for the first half of the season — and eventually wound up with him receiving another medical hardship.

"It was probably the most frustrating thing I had to deal with in my college career," Turpin said. "And I was thinking in December, what's going to happen now? Am I able to get a sixth year? Or am I just going to have to play the last four games of the season and hope for the best?"

"Luckily, Coach Ham kind of knew what he wanted to do and he told me we were going to try to get a sixth year."

Which is exactly what he got this week.

Though he admits the wait was interminable.

"I was pretty sure, but I started getting a little worried about it because it was taking so long," Turpin said.

"The coaches kept reassuring me we had enough evidence that I was hurt and had no way of playing. But yeah, you start to get a little worried."

Then Hamilton called. And he found out for sure he would get a final year in the garnet and gold.

Talking about it a day later he still couldn't hide his excitement.

"I wanted to end my career on a positive note and play in front of all those great Seminole fans," Turpin said. "My main concern was that I would never get to put on that jersey again. Now that I have that chance, I'm going to take advantage of it.

"I'm completely healthy now. We've got summer workouts. And I'm going to go 200 percent to make sure I can help my team."