



## Gavin Schilling: Patience Is A Virtue



February 14, 2017 – by Jazzy Teen, MSU Athletic Communications

The basketball career of senior Gavin Schilling has always been one of unique experience. From picking up the game for the first time in 8th grade, playing internationally, to landing a scholarship to one of the best programs in the country – the journey has been far from ordinary.

The 6'9" power forward finds himself in a unique situation yet again, quite possibly one of the most unanticipated, eye-opening circumstances basketball has brought him thus far.

“This is certainly an unfortunate setback for Gavin, as he had been practicing very well,” said Michigan State Coach Tom Izzo last October. “He had an incredible summer and was in excellent shape as he was ready to make his senior season his best one yet.”

What should have been Schilling’s best season was put on hold due to an injury that occurred the practice before Midnight Madness, the kickoff celebration that takes place at the start of every season.

“You could say my year so far has been pretty unexpected with this injury. I injured my knee back in October and I’ve been out ever since. It didn’t go as planned, but it is what it is. I’m being patient for now and waiting for it to heal,” explained Schilling.

The incident seemed minor at first. Schilling was driving to the basket, when he felt something was a bit off. The resilient player that he is, he shook the injury off, danced his way to center court during Midnight Madness, and didn’t realize the severity until two days later.

Since then, Schilling underwent surgery and has been aggressively rehabbing ever since.

“I just try to think of the positive in every situation. I know that I’ll have another year left of eligibility after this season, so I focus all my energy on what’s next,” said Schilling.

One positive that has been taken from this experience is the bond formed with teammate and fellow forward, Ben Carter.

Carter too, had a season-ending knee-injury at the start of October as well. The two have leaned on one another through the heartache of watching from the sidelines, to the strenuous rehab workouts done together during recovery.

“We’ve gotten real close, we’re together everyday,” said Schilling of Carter. “He’s from Vegas, and I graduated out there too, so we have that in common. He’s a cool dude and we really get along.”

As Schilling focuses on full recovery, he has not left his role as a senior leader, often providing advice and knowledge to this year’s young and inexperienced team.

“Basically, I’m just trying to be a leader on the side, even though it can be tough when you’re not playing on the court beside them. Sometimes you think that because you’re not going through it with them, they don’t have to listen to you,” explained Schilling. “But, they know what I’ve experienced and have been through. They do listen to me and they are getting better, I see the whole team getting better. I’m trying to still show them what I know.”

Schilling, whose defensive abilities have been commended throughout his career, has been able to see scenarios in a different light while watching from the sidelines.

“At the college level defensively, you really need to know the other team’s game. You really have to study that. Stepping up on the ball screen, being in help defense at the right time,” said Schilling.

As the year progresses, the senior sees his team making strides.

“Looking at where we started, we have definitely improved. Especially for the freshmen, where all four have been getting significant playing time. I’m trying to teach them, teach Nick [Ward],” said Schilling. “At first they played a little casual, but now they understand the college game.”

During the tougher days of rehab and missing out on rivalry games such as Michigan, Schilling turns to his family for support - both families.

Schilling has a close relationship with his parents, as well as his younger brother. While his father lives in Germany and his mother and brother live in Chicago, his Spartan family has filled the void while in East Lansing.

“My parents always, I turn to them a lot. Ben too, of course. He’s been through this before so this is his second time around. I turn to him for advice a lot. The other guys, the coaches – the whole program has done a great job to make me feel comfortable,” said Schilling.

That comforting atmosphere MSU provides, Schilling says, is what made him choose to be a Spartan four years ago.

“It came down to four schools for me. What really separated Michigan State from the others is the family atmosphere I felt right away on my visit,” said Schilling.

After playing on various high school teams from both the United States and Germany, Schilling committed to Michigan State and never looked back. Reflecting on his career, Schilling recognizes the growth this program has brought him.

“I would tell myself as a younger guy that coming in here, you have to work hard. I could have been in the gym more my first couple years, definitely,” said Schilling. “At times I let distractions get the best of me, so I would tell myself to stay focused and rise above.”

Schilling has never been more focused on what’s next.

“I’m working as hard as I can to get back to the shape I was in before – even better,” explained Schilling.

Before that, much is left to be done. Aside from rooting his team on to the Big Ten tournament and hopeful tournament run, Schilling, a tri-lingual student, will graduate with an advertising degree in May. Next year, during his last year of eligibility, he plans to pursue a Master’s degree in sports administration.

“Patience. Patience is a virtue, it’s true. You can learn so much more watching than just playing. There’s little things you notice. The importance of winning, the importance of one possession can really affect what happens next. I pay attention to the little details now.”

It’s those little details that will make all the difference once he finally gets that shot at his best season yet.