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Marcus Carr still working hard despite sitting out season

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4-5 minutes

The sophomore is focused on improving himself and his teammates.



Published January 29, 2019

He wanted to be available to play immediately — so did the rest of his Gopher teammates. Unfortunately for Marcus Carr, he has to

wait until next season to make an impact on the court for Minnesota.

While newcomers like freshmen Gabe Kalscheur and Daniel Oturu have made key contributions for Minnesota this year, Carr, one of the Gophers' most exciting young players, won't make his debut for the team until 2019-2020

On Nov. 7, Carr, a transfer from Pittsburgh, received word that the NCAA denied his waiver request to become immediately eligible. Minnesota immediately appealed the decision, which the NCAA denied as well, meaning Carr will have to wait.

“Initially, I was really disappointed,” Carr said. “I had a positive mindset going into it, thinking that I would get cleared and be able to play this season, but it didn't end up working out that way.”

Last season, Pitt went 8-24, including a 0-18 record in conference play. Carr decided to transfer away after Pitt fired head coach Kevin Stallings, who coached the Panthers for just two seasons.

Normally, NCAA rules state that athletes who transfer must sit out the following season. However, other players in similar situations had received the waiver Carr was seeking. The NCAA deemed Mizzou sophomore Mark Smith eligible two weeks prior to making their ruling on Carr. As a result, Minnesota felt blindsided by the NCAA's ruling on Carr.

“I think this whole process is really flawed,” head coach Richard Pitino said following the NCAA's decision. “Every waiver, you just don't know what's going into what. We felt like [the waiver] was a really strong case and I feel like [the decision] was unfair to Marcus.”

As soon as the NCAA made its final ruling, Carr's role for the season changed. Instead of potentially starting at point guard, he would have to focus on helping the team in other ways.

"Whenever I can, I'll scout [the opposing] team," Carr said. "Just try to get my teammates the best looks possible of the opponent that's coming up. I watch a lot of film with the coaches as well, so I give my teammates information in practice trying to make sure they're as ready as possible going into each game."

Though Minnesota would prefer to have Carr's abilities on the court, they are still thankful for his dedication to improving the team in practice. While young players such as Kalscheur are excited to have Carr in the rotation next season, they appreciate what he's doing to help the team win now.

"Against Rutgers, Marcus knew [freshman] Geo [Baker]," Kalscheur said. "He knew his moves, so Marcus helped me with what he liked to do. Having Marcus with the experience helped a lot. He brings a lot of intensity."

The Gophers figure to have a strong group of guards next year with Kalscheur, junior Amir Coffey and sophomore Isaiah Washington returning. In addition to Carr, two others will join that group: junior Payton Willis, who is also sitting out the season due to NCAA transfer rules, and Minnesota commit Tre' Williams, a four-star recruit.

"[Carr] as well as Payton, both I think are going to be terrific" Pitino said. "And then you look at Tre' Williams, another four-star, top-100 kid. I think those three guys, plus with who we add in the spring, I think we could get significant contributions from all those guys."

Before that, Carr is staying focused on improving himself. Coming off his freshman year at Pitt, where he averaged 10.0 points per game, Carr knows he can work to be even better next fall.

“[I’m] just watching a lot of film of myself last year,” Carr said. “[I’m] trying to focus on the weaknesses that I have and [am] focusing on strengthening those every day in practice.”