

# Year's Team Will Center Around Poythress



Larry Vaught

Alex Poythress missed most of last season with a knee injury, yet Kentucky coach John Calipari insists that the success of this year's team will "center around Alex" and his performance at power forward.

"We do not have a beast, and that can be Alex," said Calipari. "There is no one else like him (on our team). No one that physical and tough. Just the ability he has to get balls and make plays. Nobody else on the team is like that. If he does what he can do, the rest of the guys will fall into what they are."

"He's doing good, he's doing good. He's about 75 percent. We need him to be something, like he's got to be a beast. Now he's got to get healthy, he's got to get more confident in his body. It's not just confidence in I can make a shot, it's that he's confident that I can come down hard and I'm

going to be fine. But he's big for us."

Calipari tried to convert Poythress to a small forward last season to enhance his chances in the NBA. However, the NBA going to smaller lineups, Poythress can not possibly play power forward at the next level and move back to what Calipari feels is his natural position this season.

"He can be a skilled 4 (power forward) and a beast 4," Calipari said. "He has grown so much as a person and graduates in three years. He's grown as a player and then he got hurt and that set him back. I just want this to work for him."

So does Poythress.

He came to UK from Clarksville, Tenn., as a five-star player many projected as another one-and-done player for Calipari. The start of his freshman season was spectacular before his numbers tailed off. The slide continued his sophomore year and then he was injured last year.

"I am past the frustrated part. I can run, jump, all that stuff. Everything is on schedule and I am making sure I do all I can to be 100 percent," Poythress said in a preseason interview.

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For the second time this season, coach Mark Stoops' Cats failed to deliver a season-changing win when they had a chance at Com-

monwealth Stadium. However, the loss to Auburn last week did not take away from the big-time atmosphere in Lexington for the first Thursday night game ever at Commonwealth.

"I thought it was great. It was great. Really special night, fans were up, I saw them standing," Stoops. "And again, we just were so close (like they were against Florida earlier). We just could never get that momentum and get on top and that's probably what's going to bother you. We have had opportunities to get the game tied or get ahead and just couldn't do it."

"Couldn't get the fans really juiced up and really into it. But they were. We could have really done our part, but really appreciate the atmosphere and the effort. It was a fantastic environment."

The atmosphere started with a Montgomery Gentry concert, another effort UK officials have made this year to help the pregame atmosphere.

"I was just blown away by the crowd," Montgomery Gentry guitarist Bo Garrett said. "You come out and just see all that blue out there. I didn't know exactly what to do. But it was a beautiful thing to see."

The show had one surprise for fans — Marlana VanHoose of Denver, Ky. She has been blind since birth and has cerebral palsy, but can certainly sing. She joined Montgomery Gentry on stage to sing one of their

biggest hits, "My Town." She was scheduled to sing the national anthem before the game and since she is a Montgomery Gentry fan, they had her come on stage to sing and later posed for pictures with her. She also led the crowd in the "CATS" cheer as Montgomery and Gentry urged her on.

"She's a great singer and a remarkable person," Eddie Montgomery said.

Again, another smart move by UK officials to have her at the game.

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Even though it has been a week, I am still not sure I'll ever understand why UK running back Stanley Williams didn't touch the ball the second quarter of the Auburn loss. You might remember that Williams turned a busted play into a 60-yard run in the first quarter. He's also the same back who took the opening play of the season for a 75-yard scoring run.

"All of us know he's very explosive. I know he can make plays," receiver Garrett Johnson said.

Offensive coordinator Shannon Dawson said he didn't know why Williams, who finished the game with 16 carries, didn't get the ball the second quarter. If he didn't know, wonder who did.

"He was tired. We took him out for a little while because he was tired. He had a big first quarter. He's not a Nintendo little guy. He gets tired," Dawson said.

Maybe, but I doubt he was so tired that he could not have carried the ball a time or two, especially with



Alex Poythress was back on the court for Big Blue Madness and Kentucky coach John Calipari says the team needs him to be a "beast" this season. (Vicky Graff Photo)

the way UK's offense struggled in the second quarter.

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Guards Tyler Ulis and Jamal Murray often go against each other in practice even though both likely will be in the starting lineup when Calipari's team opens the season.

Can Ulis guard the bigger Murray? "Anybody can guard anybody," Murray said.

Can he stop you? "Can he stop me? There are not many people that can stop me now," Murray smiled and said.

Ulis laughed when he heard what Murray said.

"I don't know how to explain that. Once Jamal gets hot, he gets hot," Ulis said. "So if he is on a hot day, there is no stopping him even if I am right in front of him. He is just going to throw it up and it is going to go in. But I can stop him. I don't know what he is talking about. But some days if he is hot, it's hard to contain him."

## Pals Students Attend ARC Conference



Abby Winkle and Kayla McKinney

On Thursday, two of our PALS (Promise Appalachia Leadership in Service) students, Kayla McKinney and Abby Winkle attended the Appalachian Regional Commission Conference that focused on transforming the region's economy. The PALS students participate in various GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) activities, then act as liaisons to the school by sharing what they have learned with the student body. The conference began with an opening session focusing on Appalachia's future with Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, U.S. Congressman Hal Rogers, and Earl F. Gohl (Federal Co-Chair, Appalachian regional Commission) as panelists who reflected on the current state of Appalachia and the goals for the future. They discussed various economic, social, and cultural trends that were impacting

Appalachia and what we could do to strengthen our region with both short and long term goals. After that, Kayla and Abby attended the Bringing Our Best Practices Forward: Cultivating the Next Generation session. This session focused on young leaders across Appalachia who are helping create vibrant, economically diverse, and healthy communities. The panelists discussed how these young leaders as business owners, educators, health professionals, and local farmers, are bringing a new energy and entrepreneurial spirit to the Region's economic future. Overall, the ARC Conference was an amazing opportunity for Kayla and Abby to meet new people, learn about what is being done to transform the Appalachian region, and develop their leadership skills so that they can make a positive impact on the future of Appalachia.

## Bob Watkins' Sports In Kentucky

### Remembering Laettner Moment; Can Stoops team get beyond kiss-your-sister?



Bob Watkins

Things I noticed and you did too.

1. Bowl game projections are beginning to surface. Among them Auburn to the Liberty Bowl, Kentucky to the Music City. But for a play or two, could be other way round.

2. Kentucky is how close to 6-0 and first place in SEC East? One dropped pass in endzone against the Gators and War Eagles.

A win at Mississippi State this week would be ...

✓ A break on through to the other side (SEC).

✓ Set a grand table for Tennessee's Halloween visit to Commonwealth Stadium. SEC Television crew also.

✓ Would all but eliminate chance for kiss-your-sister 6-6 season (Vandy (2-4) and Charlotte (2-4) ahead).

✓ And, create hard pick for Big Blue fans. Follow the bowl-bound Wildcats or stay home to watch every-game-televised basketball team.

3. Commonwealth's Unbeaten? Lindsey-Wilson U. Wins over Cumberlands and Georgetown in their pockets, the Blue Raiders are 6-0. On the road this week Lindsey plays No. 8 Reinhart College (8-0) at Waleska, Georgia.

4. This just in. Mike Krzyzewski will not coach Team USA after the 2016 Olympics. We wonder if planets, moons and asteroids in the Milky Way (and

politics) will be aligned to shine on USA's next coach who's name and first thought-of-the-day is I?

5. An instant after losing to Michigan State, did faces of Michigan fans remind anyone of the Christian Laettner moment in 1992?

6. From I-Never-liked-Michigan Dept. The angry American thing we see often with politicians, religionists, flag-wavers and fire-arm folks, reared its ugly face in sports. After Michigan lost, Wolverine fans tweeted death threats and more to college kid Blake O'Neill.

O'Neill botched a snap-from-center, State recovered, scored and won. Reactions via twitter were merciless, sad and moved to whisper, "Gosh! I would never behave like that."

**Tweets.**

- "dip---t loser, you might as well cut your hands off."
- "... jump off of a cliff into a pool of spikes and cyanide."
- "I hate you, you horrible person. Way-to-go you Australian rugby player."
- "... go back to the equipment room and start chugging bleach, my friend."

7. Michigan punter Blake O'Neill ... the new Steve Bartman.

8. Kentucky nose guard Melvin Douglas may not play college football again, but the '77 senior nose guard is the new gold standard for a student-athlete rising to make the college experience pay off.

9. Will Western Kentucky (6-1) be prime for prime time next week? The Hilltoppers have a week to prepare before an October 24 date in Death Valley against No. 5 LSU.

10. Real Sheriff-in-These-Here-Kentucky-Parts, quarterback Brandon Doughty will get an up-close-and-personal look at a Heisman Trophy favorite, LSU's Leonard Fournette.

11. A Bobby Petrino change-the-subject defense of Cardinal linebacker Keith Brown for being ejected for targeting a Florida State player was poor. Instead of letting Brown own his mistake (and half-game suspension this week), Louisville's coach justified the flagrant foul by arguing the FSU receiver was "not defenseless."

12. Skal Labissiere. If the Port-au-Prince, Haiti native has a legitimate high school transcript, an NCAA solution is clear, Free Skal. Let the kid go to college and play and ban guardian Gerald Hamilton from all contact. Period.

13. Hunch. When television lights go full power at Kentucky games this winter, the step-up-his-game spotlight player will be Jamal Murray.

14. Big Blue Madness. Price tag — more than half a million dollars to impress a handful of 17-18 year-olds is Sign of the Apocalypse for me, but full-court player image introductions was clever.

15. While John Calipari was preaching to the choir (and visiting recruits) at Big Blue Madness about his program being Gold Standard for men's college basketball, old nemesis Duke was sliding the 2015 championship trophy into a new glass case at Durham. Fifth title for Duke and college winningest coach, Mike Krzyzewski.

16. Asked to rank basketball coaches at Kentucky all-time and why ...

✓ **Adolph Rupp.** Father of precision basketball. Devoted 42 of his 76 years to UK game and dragged SEC programs to where they are today.

✓ **Rick Pitino.** Reversed an environment that had degenerated to "... play to not lose," and become NCAA bad boy. Replaced it with joy seeing players grow while fans in our state wit-

nessed a relentless will to win.

✓ **Tubby Smith.** A decade of SEC titles and average 26 wins a season beginning with (35-4) national championship run in 1998.

17. Prize. D'Aaron Fox is a top of the market 6-3, 185-pound point guard at Katy, Texas. Kansas, Arizona, Louisville and LSU want him. Scuttlebutt this week: Fox will announce for Kentucky.

18. Report: Kentucky women's coach Matthew Mitchell tried to retire from dancing/singing at Big Blue Madness.

Comment. Try harder.

19. Lemme get this straight, 35-year-old millionaire Lamar Odom took himself to a brothel in Nevada, spent \$75,000 on a good time, was found unconscious and we're supposed to feel sorry for him?

20. Kash Daniel, Paintsville star and UK commit tweeted after Auburn beat Kentucky. "Damn, that stings. No matter what though, I'll stand by Coach Stoops and his staff. Wouldn't want to play for anyone else. Just wait."

21. SEC basketball player of the year? Too early to tell by six weeks.

22. Alvin Gentry, New Orleans Pelicans coach: "I was at Kansas. Great program. This place (Kentucky) is Kansas on steroids."

23. Behind the curve. Alvin Gentry is learning what Kentucky fans knew three years ago, "Anthony Davis's knowledge of the game, that's where people really don't understand."

**PARTING SHOT**

24. If a lie is repeated often enough all the dumb jacks in the world not only get to believe it, they even swear by it. — Billy Boy Franklin (better known as Billy Graham).

And so it goes.

You can reach me at <bob.Watkins24@aol.com