

# Jarred Vanderbilt



Larry Vaught

**Vanderbilt:** "I make time for it. It is mandatory for me. I am a student-athlete, so academics always come first. That is just another goal that I want to be an engineer or getting a doctorate. I always take education seriously, even before basketball."

**Question:** Is that because your mother is a teacher?

**Vanderbilt:** "That has something to do with it. She kind of instilled that in me at an early age and I just stuck with it. Before I would go outside to hoop when I was young, I had to make sure I got my homework done. If I had trips or games, she was on me to finish my work before I could go."

**Question:** What about your track background?

**Vanderbilt:** "I ran the 100 (-meter dash) and 200. I stopped doing it because basketball is year round and I don't really have time to do multiple sports. I could run pretty fast."

**Question:** Do you play a few musical instruments?

**Vanderbilt:** "I used to play percussion. I played drums, bells, xylophone and all that. My middle school was a magnet school, so they taught us how to play instruments and do all that arts and stuff. I was in the marching band. Playing percussion in the band helped your coordination and all that stuff. All my activities I did when I was younger helped me and I utilize those skills now. I am glad I did do that at young age."

**Question:** Do you realize that wanting to be an engineer, having over a 4.0 grade-point average and a musical background is not that normal profile for a top basketball recruit?

**Vanderbilt:** "I do have people seem surprised because not the average basketball player has those attributes. It is unique."

## Frustrating Season

Want to know how frustrating this season has been at times for Calipari? Well, he's having to teach during game-day shootarounds.

"It wears you out. It tires you out. Like you just can't stand there and watch. You have to — and you can't let them just play like the way they want to play. You have to stop them because if you let them do what they want to do, you cannot win. You're not winning," Calipari said.

He says a shootaround can last 30 minutes if all goes well. Like just bang, bang, bang, they know it, we got it, you ready. 'Alright, let's go do this.' And we all know we're going to play great. Then I've had them before which are like 50-minute, 55-minute shootaround, that I'm exhausted when I leave the court," Calipari said.

## Recruit Mac Jones

Florida junior quarterback Mac Jones was UK's first commitment in the 2017 recruiting class and has impressed new quarterbacks coach Darrin Hinshaw since the coach got to UK from Cincinnati. However, three 2016 UK in-state commits — Drake Jackson, Kash Daniel and Landon Young — have all obviously had a big impact on Jones.

"I bought my first pair of boots today. I guess you can call me @The\_Drake\_52, @Landon\_Young or @Kash-Daniel," Jones posted on Twitter.

To borrow a phrase from Calipari, that's called the Kentucky Effect.

## Clueless Analyst

Every media member is entitled to his or her opinion. Even when I disagree, I respect another media member's opinion when I feel it is based on some type of logic and intelligence. Then there is ESPN so-called analyst Dan Dakich. He's anti-UK.

Always has been and always will be going back to his playing days at Indiana. He also tries to be a bully as I found out at the 2014 NCAA Tournament when he disagreed with something I said and try to be a macho man on press row.

But no way he can really believe what he said about Tyler Ulis is not even a top five point guard in the country and says no Kentucky fan even believes that. Are you kidding me? He even got into a Twitter battle with Kyle Tucker, beat writer for the Louisville Courier-Journal, about Ulis after the sophomore point guard had 21 points and five assists in Saturday's win over

Vanderbilt.

Either Dakich is clueless or just loves provoking UK fans. Myself, I think he's both and often wonder why ESPN puts up with him.

## Thursday-Saturday

Kentucky is the only SEC team with two Thursday-Saturday turnarounds on its schedule this year but started out well by winning at Arkansas and then smacking Vanderbilt. Next UK will host Tennessee Feb. 18 before playing at Texas A&M on Feb. 20. Texas A&M leads the SEC and is considered the league favorite.

"It's easier, in my opinion,

when you go home-to-away than when you go away-to-home," ESPN analyst Seth Greenberg said. "The players can get a good night's sleep and practice at home the next day before traveling to the second game sit. Sort of stay in your routine. But either way it is not easy."

Greenberg gave an honest assessment

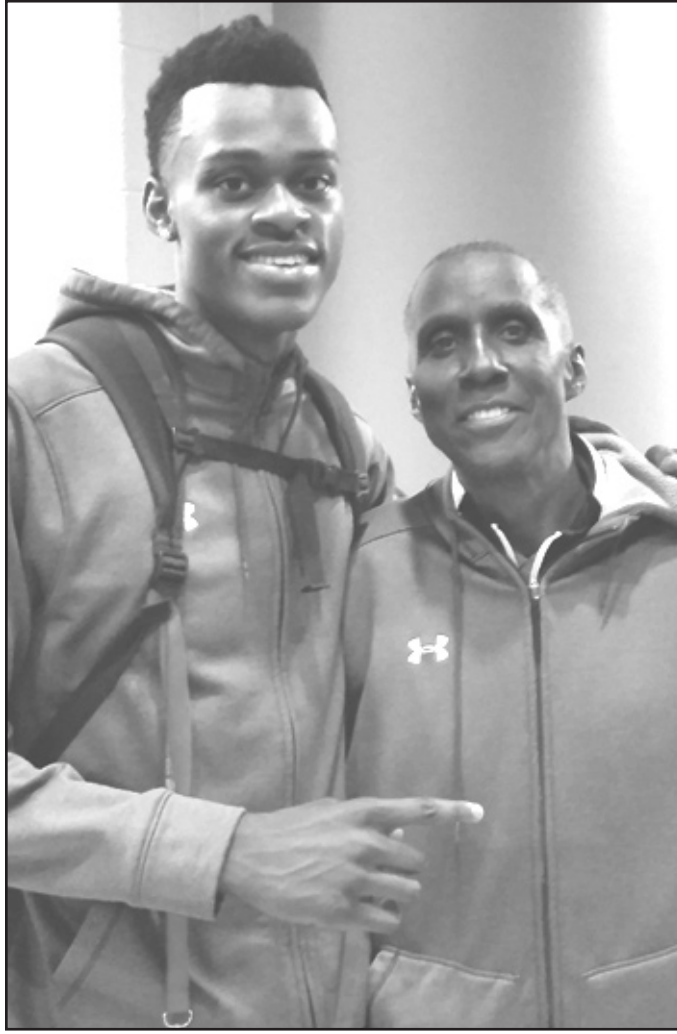
"I don't like their chemistry, right now, and that makes it tough. Their shooters don't defend. Their defenders don't really make shots," Greenberg said.

He was right. But to his credit, he reminded everyone how two years ago UK lost

four of its final seven regular-season games and still made the national title game. "It's only January," Greenberg said. "We've seen (Calipari) flip the switch in February."

And to Greenberg's credit, after UK beat Arkansas and Vanderbilt in a 48-hour period he said we may have seen the start of that switch getting flipped.

Now comes a real chance for UK to show nationally that the switch has been flipped when it plays at Kansas this Saturday. ESPN GameDay will be there and why it is not a must-win for UK, it could sure be a statement game for Calipari's Cats.



Jarred Vanderbilt and his father, Robert, a former college coach, will be back in Kentucky Feb. 6-7 for games at Pulaski County. Vanderbilt is a top 10 2017 recruit being pursued by Kentucky.

(Larry Vaught/Verizon Photo)



Tyler Ulis has seven games where's he scored 20 or more points and over 100 assists this season, but ESPN analyst Dan Dakich continues to taunt UK fans by saying Ulis is not one of the nation's top five point guards.

(Vicky Graff Photo)

# Bob Watkins' Sports In Kentucky

## Kentucky Wildcats starting to Get It; Next SI-worthy story? Could be Pitino's team



Bob Watkins

Eureka moments are part of most every basketball season. It's why we pay attention to witness when a jumble shows signs of we get it! becoming a team.

For fans, makes-my-day magical. A feel-good worth the time and ticket. A pay-back for devotion. Last week the Kentucky Wildcats showed signs of we get it!

## Evidence

1. An across-the-board embarrassment at Auburn was like an old fashioned table-spoon of caster oil — "Tastes awful, but open up! Good for ya!"

2. Then, a pair of platinum performances — Arkansas and Vanderbilt. Caster Oil reaction? Fiercely effective defense. Playing at home the Hogs rushed, squealed, panicked, shot 40 per cent and surrendered.

Rhetorical question: When's last time Kentucky got out of Fayetteville having committed seven turnovers? Answer: When Tyler Ulis was five years old. Or, when Nolan Richardson boasted about 40-minutes-of-hell, 2001.

Vandy? A word will do. Smothered! The Commodores had no chance against UK's inspired defense. They fired up 50 shots, made 16, for 32 per cent. Those numbers at Rupp Arena? Get

back on the bus.

3. Derek Willis as a starter. A new Tyler Ulis option (when Alex Poythress disappears). 'Calm Factor' Willis stretches defenses, moves, screens, uses his feet on defense. And, he is a balance to Jamal Murray's man-in-a-hurry search for another jump shot.

So, heading to February, Kentucky is starting to Get It!

The Wildcats are not front row yet alongside Oklahoma, North Carolina, Iowa and Louisville, but this weekend a giant-leap-forward opportunity presents itself when the 15-4 Wildcats host Missouri (8-11) as a prep for trip to Kansas (16-3) on Saturday.

UK fans will see just how well their team gets it!

## LOUISVILLE: SI-WORTHY?

Surging. Few teams in America are playing better than Louisville and those playing better defense is zero.

Heading to February, we could see unfold a Sports Illustrated-worthy story on focus-and-surge while under NCAA Probe guns and squirrely rumors about coaching change to affect recruiting for next year.

When smoke starts to clear next month and Bracketology returns to conversation, the right media bursts from right mouths could launch Pitino to first College Coach of the Year (while program is under NCAA investigation).

For the Cardinals this week, opportunity knocks — Virginia and North Carolina at home, next road trips to Duke and Notre Dame.

## THE LABISSIERE Qs

With media adulation and expert No. 1 draft pick projections for context,

more intrigue than solutions spun around Skal last week.

First, an assessment from an NBA official to Kentucky Sports Radio: "He's starting to concern people. ... he has absolutely no feel for basketball whatsoever."

Second, that John Calipari is recruiting over LaBissiere. Marques Bolden is supposed to be headed to Kansas, but there's speculation the 6-10 five-star center from DeSoto, Texas is being woo-ed with visions of Julius Randle one-season at Kentucky on the way to big money.

Increasingly obvious, LaBissiere might be, could be, may be ready for a sophomore year. The intrigue becomes, with another parade of one-and-done prospects already headed to Lexington, will John Calipari insist that Skal, a kid lost in weeds of college hoops be jettisoned into the NBA jungle?

## WILLIS & SCOTT PADGETT

Latest visit to Parallel World: Is Derek Willis the new Scott Padgett? Another native son who's scholarship to Kentucky was more token than news bulletin.

When Rick Pitino offered, Padgett at Louisville St. Xavier High School, would have been, in today's recruit currency, a borderline 3-star prospect. Need a year's sabbatical to grow up, returned to UK, earned opportunity and bloomed for Tubby Smith.

Padgett owns an NCAA title ring (1998). Had a cup of coffee NBA career. Assistant coach at Kentucky one season.

Today, two months ahead of 40th birthday, he is head coach at Samford U. in Birmingham.

Can native son Derek Willis be Kentucky's next Renaissance Man?

## MALIK MONK

Hops fans in Arkansas are still angry.

A look-in last week at Malik Monk in Bentonville, Arkansas tells us why. The 6-3, 185-pounder headed to Kentucky, has Tony Delk shooting range, attack-the-basket skill of Isaiah Briscoe, and he dazzles best under brightest lights, thus Rupp Arena.

All showy stuff. Questions Kentucky fans will want answered: Can/will Monk play defense? Can/will he share the ball with four other McDonald's All-Americans when the big lights come on?

## WORTH REPEATING DEPT.

Fan writes: "With Kentucky east of the Rocky Mountains, hopefully that means ESPN will never assign Bill Walton to a UK game. Dick Vitale is bad enough. Hopefully, ESPN will also never assign Bobby Knight Jr., a.k.a. Dan Dakich, to a UK game either."

**COMMENT:** Vitale is still spelled MUTE in my den.

Walton? Seeing Washington-Utah game, alarming how argumentative and off the wall he was. Maybe he had a couple drinks (or a joint) before air time.

Dakich? Like others who get face-time jobs in sports, started out well, but soon forgot the golden rule: Know when to shut up. And, like Jay Bilas, Dakich takes himself much too seriously.

And so it goes. You can reach me at [Bob.Watkins24@aol.com](mailto:Bob.Watkins24@aol.com).