

# Sacha Killeya-Jones



Larry Vaught

Kentucky signee Sacha Killeya-Jones, ranked as the nation's No. 14 senior by 247Sports, will be playing at Pulaski County High School in Somerset Saturday at 6 p.m. against Josh Jackson, one of the nation's top ranked unsigned seniors.

Killeya-Jones originally committed to Virginia before changing his mind and switching to Kentucky. His coach at Virginia Episcopal is Curtis Staples, a former standout at Virginia.

"He'll remind a lot of fans of Anthony Davis. He plays comparably. He can play the two through the five, can face the basket, really shoot it, is a really good athlete to be 6-10. He's a gym rat, so the kid is improving at a really high pace," Staples said. "He can take you off the dribble, pull up, post up with his back to the basket. He's a great rim protector. He's doing a little bit of everything."

He's also sometimes been misunderstood. He's a native of Chapel Hill, N.C., who was envisioned himself as a high-level quarterback. He transferred to Woodberry Forest School in Virginia as a freshman and now plays at Virginia Episcopal School in Virginia.

His mother, Ley Killeya-Jones, says some speculated, and continue to do so, that he left Woodberry because he grew and decided to make basketball his main sport.

"Sacha has always been tall - he was 6-4 as a frosh, 6-7 as a sophomore, 6-9 as a junior and is now almost 6-11. He didn't have a sudden growth spurt. In fact, we joke that he has been spurting since day 1," she said. "While it is true that at the time, WFS was a strong football school, the basketball program has been growing by leaps and bounds under the guidance of coach Craig Dawson. Sacha played varsity for Craig as a sophomore and loved him."

"One of the most difficult things about his decision to find another school was leaving Craig and his program. Sacha had made the choice of foregoing football the summer between his freshman and sophomore year and returned to WFS for his sophomore year. He didn't play football

and focused on basketball and later, participated in track and field in the spring.

"Leaving WFS was not a sports-related decision. As a family, we made this decision based on what would be best for Sacha as he completed high school and prepared for college. We did want to make sure whatever school he ended up at had a basketball program that he could play in but that was secondary to other academic and social/cultural characteristics of the schools we considered.

"Lastly, Sacha left WFS in good academic standing. I've read in a couple of places that some people are saying he failed out. That is simply not true. He was never asked or forced to leave. In fact, from the Headmaster down, many folks reached out to try to make a return to WFS possible."

Obviously, transferring to Virginia Episcopal turned out to be the perfect move and if you want a chance to see the future Wildcat play and see why his stock rose so dramatically in the last year, then make a trip to Somerset Saturday.

## Top Seniors Coming

Some of the top signed seniors who will be playing in the Thoroughbred Classic in either Lexington Friday or Somerset Saturday and Sunday are No. 6 (ESPN) Miles Bridges, Huntington Prep, WV (Michigan State); No. 12 (Rivals) Terrance Ferguson, Advanced Prep, TX (Alabama); No. 43 (Rivals) Kameron McGusty, Sunrise Christian, KS (Oklahoma); No. 49 (ESPN) Curtis Jones, Huntington Prep, WV (Indiana); No. 67 (ESPN) Mark Vital, Advanced Prep International, TX (Baylor) and No. 72 (Rivals) Vance Jackson, Prolific Prep, CA (Connecticut).

Top unsigned juniors playing in the event are No. 1 DeAndre Ayton, Hillcrest Prep, AZ; No. 2 (Rivals) Trevon Duval, Advanced Prep International, TX; No. 5 (Rivals) Billy Preston, Advanced Prep International, TX; No. 7 (Rivals) Jarred Vanderbilt, Victory Prep, TX; No. 34 (Rivals) Ira Lee, Prolific Prep, CA; and No. 82 (Rivals) Isaiah Jasey, Sunrise Christian, KS.

## Derek Willis

When it comes to UK junior Derek Willis, maybe his father really does know best. He's played his best basketball in three years at Kentucky in recent weeks and says part of the reason he's become more aggressive daily is his father.

"A lot of it was my dad and there was a lot of where you want to be. Started looking at life different ways. I would say, honestly, I wasn't really being competitive with basketball,

and then it was like I talked with some friends and a lot of older people and they let me know the competitiveness doesn't transition just with basketball, it's everyday life," Willis said. "There's going to be guys competing with you for jobs, for a girl, anything. If you don't step up and kind of be a man, then honestly, it's just going to be a really difficult life for you. That's kind of what made me change."

"Honestly, I'm just playing to win right now. I don't think about that stuff. If it happens, it happens. It's just how I take it. For right now, I'm just doing what I can for the University of Kentucky. That's all that's important to me."

Willis said both his father and girlfriend have constantly told him he could play and compete with anyone at UK and now he's proving it.

"But you can't get content. My dad has always made sure to tell me that,"

## Stephen Johnson

A few months ago California junior college quarterback Stephen Johnson admitted he knew a little bit about the University of Kentucky football program but little about the players or coaches.

Once quarterbacks coach Darin Hinshaw came to UK from Cincinnati, Johnson started finding out plenty about UK because of the way Hinshaw recruited him and now he's at Kentucky planning to compete for a starting spot next season.

"Coach Hinshaw is a great guy, great coach. He knows a lot so I am excited to be working with him," Johnson said.

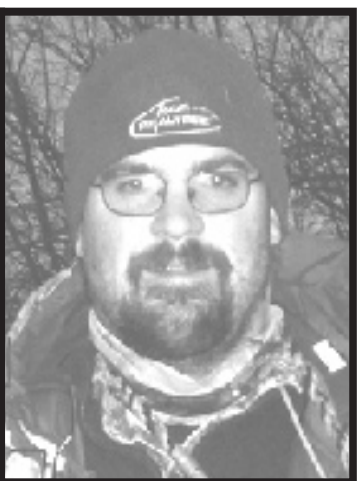
"They said they saw my film one day and they guessed I was a diamond in the rough which was kind of exciting to

hear from these coaches."

What about the staff overall? "They were just real. A lot of coaches tell you what you

want to hear but they told me exactly what would happen and that I would get a chance to compete.

**Wanderings from the Woods & Water**  
by Jay Bicknell  
CorridorHR@gmail.com



## Utmost Respect

Before I get started I have to say hey to my new buddy, World War II veteran Glenn Watson. It was such an honor to talk with Glen a few weeks ago. He shared some stories when he was overseas. I will cherish the stories he told me about WWII for my lifetime!

If you read my column on a regular basis, then you know how much I respect the veterans. I didn't think my respect for those that serve could get any higher. Well, as of recently, my respect level can't even be measured because it's so high.

In my business wading through mud, lots and lots of mud, is just another day at the office. Where we are working our access road is no longer open. So we have to carry in what we need. The end of the trail the other day was about a mile. We had to carry in 12,000 stakes mostly on a

frame back pack, all the while wading through ankle deep mud.

My first load I carried weighed in at 100 or so pounds. I was about halfway in and my legs were gelatin; knees hurting, and my back was screaming! I was wondering if I could even make another load without dying.

My third load was the heaviest load yet. As I walked away from the loading zone, one of our employees asked to take my load. I told him I had to carry it to the end of the line even if every muscle I owned hurt.

You see, carrying all this weight in a pack got me to thinking. I was thinking about all the soldiers who carry hundreds of pounds on their back daily for miles. I was thinking about the soldiers who carry hundreds of pounds in a ruck sack and don't get to go home

to their family at the end of the day. As I carried a load on my back I thought about how soldiers carry the load for freedom. I pressed on the rest of the day, carrying in several loads. With every step I thought how blessed I am that soldiers are around the world defending Freedom.

When you see someone with a veteran hat on, tell them thanks for their service. When you see a soldier in uniform let them know you appreciate them. If you ever get the chance to talk to a veteran about their service be sure to take the time to do it. Home of the Free because of the Brave! Thanks to all who have served! My respect for you is unmeasurable!

Until next week, get out and enjoy God's creation!

**Birding BITS** BY Cindy Brook

*All-Purpose Blend*  
Buy a no-waste seed blend that has sunflower hearts, white proso millet and peanuts. To this add safflower seed. Use on a tray or tube feeder, or toss on the ground. Soon you will have cardinals, tufted titmice, chickadees, buntings, finches, woodpeckers, sparrows, nuthatches and many more.  
E-mail: birdingbits@jllrr.com  
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# Bob Watkins' Sports In Kentucky

## Georgetown, UPike and Morehead are lone survivors Black Sat-dee



Bob Watkins

What a nerve! A couple of sequoia Jayhawks must have grumbled after the pint-sized kid drove into the lane, got airborne, and changed shot angle that found a gap among flailing giants and settled into the basket.

"Of all the nerve! What audacity, that little squirt bringin' that stuff in here that way."

Tyler Ulis is special. Enjoy him. March 5 is coming.

Kentucky home games left this season? Five. Sophomore Ulis is a finalist for the Bob Cousy Point Guard of the Year Award. A recognition of college hoops' very best at managing his team.

Raise your hand, please, if ...

✓ You're feeling that "please stay another year, kid," angst.

✓ You're awaiting a fan sign: "Please don't go, Tyler Ulis."

✓ You're hoping the kid's parents don't walk onto Caewood Court on March 5. Senior Day.

## BLACK SAT-DEE IN KENTUCKY

Was Black Saturday for college basketball Bigs in Kentucky.

Louisville was embarrassed by Virginia ... Kentucky lost in overtime at Kansas.

Western Kentucky lost at home to Middle Tennessee. Ninth time in last 10 the Hilltoppers have fallen to

arch rival Middle.

Murray State had its three-game win streak stopped at Tennessee-Martin. When's last time the Racers (11-11) were .500 in February?

Eastern Kentucky lost at home to Morehead State.

Morehead's Eagles (12-9) improved to 6-3 in OVC standings which brings Sean Woods into league coach of the year conversation.

Black Saturday's silver linings? Georgetown and Pikeville.

Georgetown Tigers, ranked fifth in NAIA, takes a 19-2 record into February.

And, UPike pushed to 19-2 and Bears coach Kelly Wells onto the NAIA all-time 25 winningest coaches list.

## KENTUCKY WINS AT KANSAS

George C. Scott (Patton) said, "losing is hateful to Americans" Is for Kentucky fans too. A scoreboard 90-84 loss at Kansas in overtime had a noteworthy upside.

✓ UK at KU was the most entertaining game of the season so far.

✓ Looking through a December prism, how many fans saw this coming? "Certainly (Derek) Willis getting in foul trouble helped us a lot because that allowed us to kind of switch up what we were doing defensively," - Kansas coach Bill Self.

✓ From the This-won't-happen-on-a-neutral-floor-Dept, KU had 47 free throw attempts, lopsided 25 more than UK's 22. Kentucky made seven more field goals than the Jayhawks, 33-26.

✓ Coach Gaffe Dept.  
✓ Perry Ellis was limited to four shots, but John Calipari was unable to find anybody to stop Wayne Selden getting off 20 (made 12)?

• Meanwhile, UK could spring leading scorer Jamal Murray for only 11 shots.

✓ Finally, Kansas needed overtime to protect its home floor, avoid losing for only the tenth time in Bill Self's tenure (2003-now). Kentucky heads into February with an NCAA tournament primer game film.

## MAYBE YOU MISSED THIS DEPT.

If University of Kentucky football expects to jump-start a campaign to make believers that a renaissance season is coming (sell tickets to seven home games), then director of athletics Mitch Barnhart had better dispatch his PR troops to make freshman Drake Jackson available to media day or night.

The Woodford County All-American was spot-on with attitude and approach in an interview with the Louisville Courier-Journal. Excerpts.

1. "It's not just about me being an All-American and coming in and playing right away. You gotta earn it."

2. "Once I'm here the four stars are thrown out the window. The (Army) All-American game is thrown out the window. We're all starting all over."

3. Importance of enrolling early: "I think it's huge. I know the campus ... the schedule and how (college) works and how to manage my time."

## READERS (RIGHT) WRITE

A series. Over the next few weeks, e-mails from readers, for your interest and entertainment.

Edited for clarity, language and interest, readers wrote ...

• Athletics and Anger?

"The big difference between my take on things and yours is I don't stew on UK athletics to the point of anger. ... Nothing is going to change until fans stop buying tickets and even then first thing to change will be a reduction in number of individual seats in arenas

(will) offset an increase in number of premium seats and boxes that can be sold. The 'new' Commonwealth Stadium is a prime example!

"So Bob, you need to let it go. Either enjoy the success of UK (basketball) and accept state of UK (football), or allow your anger to further control and make you and your readers (more) miserable, week-in and week-out. Merry Christmas!

• Perceptive View.

"Did not always agree with you but that's good. You gave me food for thought. I thought you were always good at seeing the human impact of sports, how it effects people. I appreciate your historic perspective of Kentucky Sports, your appreciation of those who came before us and the value that their contributions brought to today's sports. I appreciate that you reported what you really believe, and not what Kentucky readers wanted to read."

"I know from reading your article for years, that you're an honest and honorable man who is grateful for what you've been given, grateful for what you have earned and grateful for the opportunity that being in Kentucky has brought to you."

## WORTH REPEATING DEPT.

Days to start of Major League Baseball spring training? 14.

And so, America's first spring without Lawrence 'Yogi' Berra who said "the future ain't what it used to be," also reminded us ...

✓ "Love is the most important thing in the world, but baseball is pretty good, too."

And, maybe for sports section readers ...

✓ There are some people who, if they don't already know, you can't tell 'em."

And so it goes. You can reach me at



Sacha Killeya-Jones, center, is all in with Kentucky and so are his brother, Stefan, and his girlfriend, who is the point guard on the women's team at Virginia Episcopal. (Larry Vaught/Verizon Photo)