Nothing To Apologize



Larry Vaught

Kentucky freshman Isaac Humphries grew up playing rugby in Australia -- and he thinks that has helped him be a more physical basketball player.

One thing Humphries can do is play physical, something that UK's other big men have not done consistently this year. Humphries joked that what he did best in rugby was run down the field with the ball dragging six or seven players with him because he was bigger than them all.

Kentucky coach John Calipari said he might have another player that needs to try

"If that's what helped him, then we're going to do some rugby with Skal," Calipari said noting Skal Labissiere's lack of physical play this sea-

Calipari likes the way Humphries is playing.

"He's not afraid. He's in there. He's fighting," Calipari said.

The coach went on to explain that Humphries plays with an intense look, not a tournament play, don't look scared look.

"He makes mistakes. He'll

say, 'My fault.' But proud of 2014. him," Calipari said.

That didn't change when Humphries got the late technical foul in overtime at Texas A&M when UK had a onepoint lead with less than 10 seconds in a game it eventually lost.

Teammates and Calipari more point guard Tyler Ulis? insisted Humphries had nothhe did nothing wrong.

Kentucky in NCAA

Where will Kentucky end up starting NCAA Tournament play? That's a question more and more UK fans have been asking since the Cats starting showing they could be a factor in March Madness again this year.

From UK's point, the ideal seeding would have UK placed in the South Region where if it won two games, it would play at the Yum Center in Louisville in the Sweet Six-

The first-round sites are ible basketball IQ. Providence, R.I.; Des Moines, Iowa; Raleigh, N.C.; Denver; Brooklyn; St Louis; Oklahoma City; and Spokane, Wash. Other regional sites are Anaheim, Philadelphia and Chicago.

It's still hard to imagine the NCAA selection committee putting UK in the South Region if it is not at least a three seed, and probably a two seed. That is going to be a lot more difficult after the bitter loss at Texas A&M, too. But who knows? The NCAA does not always make logical deci-

As for where UK will start for it to be Raleigh. Duke and North Carolina both will

probably get to play there. Kentucky would be fine going to St. Louis — remember the win over Wichita State in

SEC Player of Year

Who should be Southeastern Conference Player of the Year? Should it be sensational LSU freshman Ben Simmons, the likely No. 1 pick in the June NBA draft, or UK sopho-

Most SEC coaches concede ing to apologize for because it is a two-player race and it seems that the winner will be determined by whether UK or LSU wins the league title.

"I mean, you'd be hardpressed to find anybody who's been any more impactful," said Vanderbilt coach Kevin Stallings, who will see Ulis again Saturday night in Nashville. Simmons, obviously, has been impactful for LSU. (Jamal) Murray has been impactful for Kentucky, obviously. But nobody's been any more impactful for their team, in my opinion, than Tyler Ulis has been. Because he's a terrific player. He has an incred-

"He makes very, very few mistakes and he controls the game in a way very few guys can control it. He can control it offensively, he can control it defensively, and he's just a guy that plays the game exactly how it should be played and rarely, if ever, deviates from that, and that's just a rare commodity to have in your point guard."

Alabama coach Avery Johnson, a former NBA guard, thinks Ulis and Simmons can be 1A and 1B.

"I love Tyler. I love point guards. The job that he did when Cal got thrown out of the game at South Carolina, that was a textbook example of his great leadership and why he could be in the talks for best player in the country. If for some reason Tyler Ulis is the best player in the country and Ben Simmons is second, I think that's still great for our conference," Johnson said.

Florida coach Mike White was a Ulis fan before his team played in Rupp Arena. After that game, he became an even couldn't pass up on." bigger Ulis fan.

facet of the game. I appreciated him watching him on TV and studying him on film, but I appreciated Tyler at an entirely different level when we competed live in Rupp Arena. I thought that he completely dominated the game offensively and defensively. I thought that he was their engine," White said.

"Leadership qualities jumped out. His motor jumped out. I knew he was fast and he was quick, but he played unbelievably hard every second he was on the floor. He didn't allow our guards to get into ball screens. He pressured our guards into turnovers. You see him on film, it's amazing the number of times he's been mismatched in the post with opposing teams bigs and he

fights them like he's a big."

SEC Legend Conley

Reader Joseph Fast — who sees my column in the Bourbon County Citizen — approved of Kentucky picking Larry Conley to be its SEC Legend this year. He enjoyed listening to his TV work with Tom Hammond and says many of today's TV announcers believe fans want to "watch their antics and not the game."

Conley was a starter on Rupp's Runts in 1965-66 when the Cats lost to Texas Western in the national title

"I worked at the Dairy Queen in Lexington on New Circle Road near Eastland Bowling Alley. Larry came by there on many Sunday afternoons to buy a large milkshake," Fast recalled. "He was always by himself, very polite and courteous. I always thanked him and wished him good luck.

"I truly believe his flu (at the Final Four) was a huge factor in the loss to Texas Western. He played while being very weak, courage personified.'

Agree on all counts.

A Hidden Gem

Looking for a name that could be a hidden gem in Kentucky's 2016 football recruiting class as the Cats get closer to the start of spring practice.

Defensive end T.J. Carter of Georgia was basically not rated when he got his Kentucky offer and signed with the Cats. The 6-4, 245-pound Carter had 68 tackles, including 10 for loss, as a senior. He also led his team in quarterback sacks as a junior and sophomore.

His other offers were Samford and Wyoming, but Stoops is convinced he has what it will take to help UK's defensive front.

a solid football player. Very good," Stoops said. "I felt like he was too good of a player, too solid of a person, too much of one of those glue development guys, he's going to be a

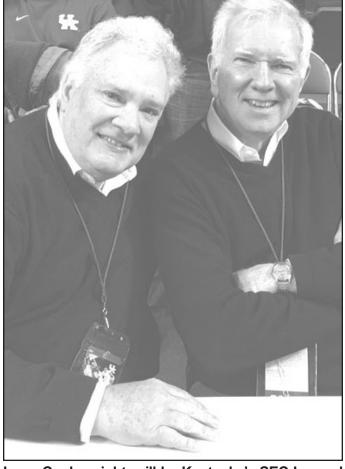
way that he affects every of him? "When he came in on the visit, I said, 'Wow, this kid is definitely underrated," Marrow said.

In-State Recruiting

One reason head coach Mark Stoops and then offensive coordinator Neal Brown wanted John Schlarman on the UK coaching staff was for his in-state recruiting connections.

"Coach Stoops has emphasized from day 1 that we have to do a good job with instate recruiting," Schlarman, a former UK offensive lineman, said about UK's 2016 recruiting class. "Sometimes you work really hard at that and we've been working on this class since 2013. This has been a work in progress for the last two to three years."

Kentucky signed two instate offensive linemen, Drake Jackson of Woodford County and Landon Young of Lafay-



Larry Conley, right, will be Kentucky's SEC Legend this year. He worked many years as a TV color analyst with Tom Hammond, left, and the two got together at a recent UK home game.

ette. Other in-state signees were linebacker Kash Daniel of Paintsville, cornerback Davonte Robinson of Henry Clay and athlete Zy'Aire Hughes of McCracken Coun-

Schlarman said there's nothing better for a Kentucky high school player than to play at UK, a message he hopes highly touted Lafayette junior lineman Jedrick Wills hears and understands.

"That was part of it when I started recruiting Drake and Landon. I understood how important it is being from Kentucky and playing at the University of Kentucky and we talked about that quite a bit. Then to see them earn all the accolades they did (nationally) and still stay University "T.J. is a guy that's just of Kentucky guys was really exciting," Schlarman said. "Now we can get them here and go to work. Let's go out and win more games and get after it.

When you have your famheck of a football player we ily and friends coming to every single game, you want to And what did recruiting co-make sure you are out there 'He's unbelievable in the ordinator Vince Marrow think representing the state and representing your name also to the best of your ability. It is important to you. You want to show the rest of the country we are doing special things here at Kentucky. I know it means a lot to these guys and I am looking forward to see what they turn into."

Young and Jackson.

Question: Could Young and offensive linemen, something UK or in the SEC?

Schlarman: "It definitely could happen. We have some guys coming in that will be able to compete for jobs. Will they start games? We will see. We want them to compete and everything will sort itself out. If a guy wins the job, then he will be out there whether he is a freshman, junior, senior. If he is the best player for that position, he will be out there."

Question: Are the offseason weight workouts a lot more difficult for offensive linemen now as players are saying they have been?

Schlarman: "It definitely makes a difference in the offensive line. You have to get in that weight room and grind and go to work. This year we are looking to turn up the heat another notch and make sure getting bigger and stronger."

Question: What are the plusses and minus for a player like Young who plays three sports (football, wrestling, track) in high school compared to Jackson who did football only and is already enrolled at Kentucky?

Schlarman: "A plus is I am anxious to see what he does when he just concentrates on football. He has been a three-sport guy which keeps him from getting burnt out on football but I am looking forward to see him concentrate on the weight room 365 days a year and just concentrates on football. He has a tremendous upside.

"Now with a guy like Drake, concentrating on football has helped him. He is a technician. He is as polished with his technique as I have seen out of a high school senior. That part helped him. Sure negatives to both but also plusses.'

Question: Does wrestling help Young's football tough-Here's more of what ness (he won the state heavy-Schlarman had to say about weight championship last Saturday)?

Schlarman: "Definitely. Jackson play as true freshmen It is a tough sport. There is nowhere to hide on that mat. that does not happen often at Landon being a top wrestler in heavyweight division has definitely helped him with leverage. He is competitive. He wants to win every time and that carries over to football."

Contact Larry

Remember you can contact me at larryvau@gmail.com or on Twitter at @vaughtsviews. You can also see more of my work at www.lex18.com and www.vaughtsviews.com.





Isaac Humphries has given UK a lift with his defense

and rebounding in recent games, including last Sat-

urday at Texas A&M where teammates told him not

to worry about a late controversial technical foul

against him. (Vicky Graff Photo)

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Landon Young, center, and Drake Jackson, right, will get a chance to compete for starting spots in UK's offensive line as freshmen. Kash Daniel, left, also figures to be in the mix at linebacker as a freshman. (U.S. Army All-American Bowl Photo)