

Barker says "no doubt" team is more united



by Larry Vaught

No one wanted to talk about any internal problems on the Kentucky football team last year. Never mind that the issues seemed obvious to almost everyone.

During preseason camp this month, a few players have hinted that this year's team is far more united.

Quarterback Drew Barker, who started the final two games last season, said there was "no doubt" the team was more united and had more purpose. He credits

new offensive coordinator Eddie Gran for much of that on the offensive side.

"Coach Gran, the first thing he said in our first summer meeting is we are doing everything as a team. We are not using I, me. We are only using us. Everyone has to be involved. Everyone has to be there. We have to learn how to work as a team. Even in the spring we took big steps forward," Barker said. "He's not going to accept anything but united."

That seems obvious with the receivers, who had a major disconnect it seemed with offensive coordinator Shannon Dawson last year. New receivers coach Lamar Thomas has a playful side, but is also a no-nonsense coach on the field.

"I think the biggest thing with them is their attitude. They are attacking and staying after practice and catching balls. I think they will have a big year," Barker said. "They have all the tal-

ent in the world. They just have to put their mind to it. Coach Thomas and coach Gran have really changed their attitude and picked them up."

But the pressure is still on Barker. Two older quarterbacks -- Patrick Towles and Reese Phillips -- transferred after last season ended. Coach Mark Stoops has never wavered in making it clear this is Barker's team to lead.

"Yeah, it has been like that for a while with the pressure. I am looking forward to it and embracing it," Barker said. "I can't wait to get out there and hopefully all the work we are putting in pays off.

You can't play quarterback without pressure. If you can not handle the pressure, you might as well stay home."

True. But it also takes more than a quarterback making plays in the fourth quarter for a team to win close games and be successful. In recent years, Kentucky has not been able to make those plays when it had chances to win close games.

"It definitely is hard in college to make those plays. The players are so much

better but you have to put in the time, the film study. Just making plays is not going to happen out of the blue," Barker said. "You really have to dedicate yourself to doing stuff longer and with the receivers. If you doing that, it will pay off and if everybody is doing that, stuff will pay off in the season."

"Juice" Johnson

Did you ever wonder how Kentucky junior receiver Garrett "Juice" Johnson got his nickname? I did, so I finally asked Johnson - UK's top receiver last year with 55 catches.

"In between high school and UK, I got the name. After my senior season, coming up here, that is how it started," Johnson said. "I can't really remember how it started, but once it did it just took off. I love Juice Johnson, too."

He says sometimes even his mother calls him Juice.

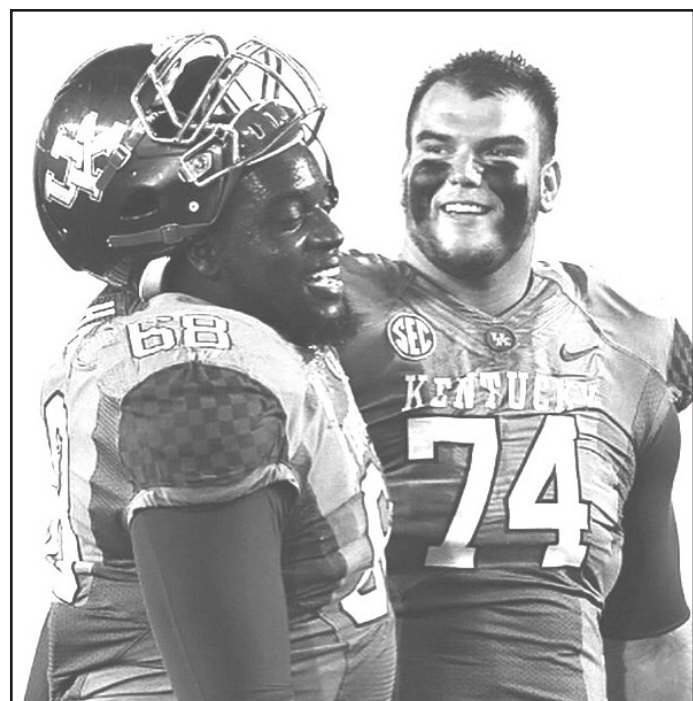
"She slips up and calls me Juice, too, and that makes me laugh," he said.

It's a long way from Florida to Kentucky, but Johnson has no regrets about his college choice and says he gets happier every year he's

at UK. "Everything happens for a reason. I feel like that choice was the right choice and just me coming up here, I have really grown up. It made me be more my own man. Made me become smarter," he said. "Home is a 14-hour drive away. So it's just me and maybe a phone

call home. "That takes a little toll on you as a kid but when I call back home the only person I talk to is my mom or dad and they are rooting for me. That makes it easier to have that support back home and they are up here a lot to make sure I have everything I need."

Mosier was a punter when in high school



Cole Mosier, right, says he can punt better than teammate Nick Haynes. The two are offensive linemen and roommates who are both expected to be in the starting lineup Sept. 3.

Cole Mosier is now a 335-pound junior offensive tackle at Kentucky and likely will be in the starting lineup when UK plays Southern Mississippi Sept. 3 to open the season. Not bad for a former walk-on lineman from Walton-Vernona.

But while his story from walk-on to scholarship player to potential starter has been well documented, did you know he was a punter in high school.

"I was actually pretty good. Coach didn't want me to punt our senior year but we didn't really have anybody, so I said I would try and he let me. I punted pretty far and I had it. We actually worked on a fake punt, but I never got to run it," he said.

He says sometimes he still tries to kick the ball a bit at UK. Junior offensive guard Nick Haynes does, too.

"He thinks he can beat me out in punting, but he can't. He gets close, but not really. He can't beat me," Mosier said.

What does Haynes, who lives in the same house as Mosier, say?

"I can beat him any time. When it comes to punting, I feel like last year I moved my game to another level. Cole punted in high school and had some experience on me, but raw talent and athleticism I beat him out there. I am a far better punter than

he is and when it comes to coverage, I make tackles," Haynes said.

"If me and Cole are on the 10-yard line punting, I would get 7-8 yards on him every time. My hang time, there is no punt returns. That's my thing."

Could he punt for UK?

"There are some good punters here, but if they need me I will go out there and do my thing. I'm never afraid of that. Whatever coaches need me to do, throw passes, catch balls, run the routes, whatever they need me to do, I can do it. And block.

It's even more bizarre to think that he was also a high school tennis player.

"When I was a senior I was like, 'I don't have anything left, so I might as well try to play tennis.' The tennis coach said I was pretty athletic, so why not," Mosier said. "I played and this younger guy on our team was really good and it would drive me nuts. I would go play the net and try to spike it on him and he would position around me and not hit it hard and beat me every time."

He said his dad was a tennis star in Ohio where Mosier was born.

"He just laughs at the talk of me trying to play tennis. He knows I can't. I might be able to get him now, though, that he is older but I doubt it. I was not that good," Mosier said.

Wanderings from the Woods & Water

by Jay Bicknell

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The "Unicorn"

Trail Cam Mania

At our house, trail cam mania has struck. The boys and I have our weekend routine checking our cameras. We are getting some good bucks on camera. Hopefully they hang around for an arrow or a bullet!

We name all of our bucks we get on camera. We got California from last year, showed back up. Then Unicorn who is the one my heart is set on shooting. Unicorn has a crazy antler configuration that I hope to see on the wall. Then we got 8U who will be nice in a year or two. Straight 8 is for sure a shooter this year. We are hoping Mr. Bigs will make an appearance. Not had any pics of him since late November.

The boys and I know our deer. It's always like Christmas when we check cameras. We go through our pictures looking at every detail. When a new deer shows up the whooping and hollering follows. It's our quality time. Plus, the boys get in a little BB gun time and creek playing time.

This year we have had a lot of luck with Black Magic Liquid and Sugar Beet Crush. These products have kept the deer close and kept them regularly on camera. I also like to keep a quality mineral supplement beside our cameras. I have found that it's best to try different products until you find the one deer like. What works great in one place might not attract a deer at another spot.

The newest product I got has made checking cameras easy. The card reader from stealth cam is the trick. It plugs into your smart phone

and immediately you can see all your pics. You can save pictures to your phone. You can delete unwanted pictures. I highly recommend this product. Rural King has them for under 20 bucks. They work great!

I really enjoy seeing the big bucks on camera. I look forward to hopefully connecting on a buck we got on cam. What makes checking trail cameras special is just being out with my boys. It's our time to slow down, hang out and enjoy God's creation!

It doesn't have to be trail cameras. It can be just about anything. Just find something that you can do with your kids. Something that's not part of this fast pace world. They grow up way to fast! My oldest daughter turns 14 in September. I am pretty sure it was just yesterday she was 6 and we were going on our Saturday mornings father/daughter breakfast. That was when it was still cool to be seen with dad!

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

Birding BITS

BY Cindy Brook

Window Strikes
Prevent birds from flying into windows by placing strips of tape, vertically, at least 1-inch wide and 10 inches apart on the outside of your window. I like the blue tape from the local hardware store. This breaks up the reflection, and birds are less likely to hit the glass.

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Quarterback Drew Barker says players have "learned to work as a team" and are more united this season. (Vicky Graff Photo)

Willis is outstanding card player

Kentucky senior Derek Willis is an outstanding 3-point shooter, but he's also a superb card player. He was a nationally ranked Yu-Gi-Oh player. That's a Japanese collectible card game based on the fictional game of Duel Monsters.

"I feel like he can read things. The first two years at UK, if you go back and watch you will see him on the sidelines and he knows everything that is going on and what is really going to happen. He really knows his basketball just like he does his cards," said Keely Potts, Willis' girlfriend.

His competitive nature does not stop there.

"Even with rock, paper, scissors and stuff like that, he likes it all and wants to win," she said.

Potts recalled a beach vacation trip where her great aunt and uncle went to a Pilates class and they went along with them.

"Derek went on the opposite side of me and got so into this class. It was

a lot of older women and it was like this white-haired woman was bending like crazy and Derek was getting so frustrated because she was so flexible compared to him," Potts said. "He kept asking how this woman could do all this and he couldn't. He kept trying and stayed after a little bit and worked on it. He puts his heart into everything he does."

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Kentucky quarterbacks coach Darin Hinshaw had two interesting points last week as UK prepares for its season opener Sept. 3.

First, he thinks going against cornerbacks Chris Westry and Derrick Baity daily in practice has to help UK's receivers. Westry and Baity are the main reasons many consider UK's secondary the best in the SEC.

"To have the secondary that we have, to go against every single day and how good they are -- and I know they have their moments where they need to get better, but they're really,

really good, and they force our receivers to get better. And that's huge," Hinshaw said. "What we're going against, we're going to see in the SEC all year because it's a really good secondary, so it really helps us a lot."

Second, he's indicating that Kentucky will throw the ball more to running backs this year. That's something Hal Mumme's offense did frequently and so former UK coach Rich Brooks. Hinshaw says in his 17-year coaching career, he's never had quarterbacks understand better how to "check down" to running backs on passing plays.

"We've thrown it to the running backs more here (in practice) than I ever have, and I'm really proud of 'em. That's what we have to do on Saturdays, we've got to check it down when the defense covers routes," Hinshaw said. "They're not going to be all open all the time, and throwing the ball away and checking down, we've done a really good job and we've got to continue to do that."