

# Tip from father helped Maxey hit four threes and score career high 27



by Larry Vaught

The first time Tyrese Maxey hit a 3-pointer against Louisville last week one of the first fans to jump out of his seat was Tyrone Maxey, the UK freshman's father. Considering Tyrese Maxey was 2-for-20 from 3-point range in UK's previous five games, that was cause for celebration. However, his father, a former high school and college coach, gave him a shooting tip that led to him going 4-for-5 from 3-point range against the Cards.

"He was telling me to stay in there, stay locked in, hold my follow-through, to be confident. I'd been shooting it and releasing it and not holding my follow-through," the UK freshman said.

That was the same kind of coaching his father had given him exactly a year ago when Maxey was a high school senior and playing three games in two days at Marshall County High School in western Kentucky about six weeks after he signed with the Wildcats.

Saturday was the first time his father had seen him play in person this year. Maxey's mother has seen him numerous times and was also at the game along with his sisters and uncle.

"I am very excited. It was an amazing feeling to see them over there (in the stands). It felt amazing. I can't wait to spend time with them," Maxey smiled and said after the game.

He had been spending time with teammates since they returned to Lexington on Christmas after a needed break following two losses in Las Vegas.

"By Christmas night, we were practicing. It was worth it though, we got the W. Everyone played well," Maxey said.

Maxey never doubted his shot would return and pointed out that his last time talking to media members he noted he would not stop shooting. "I believe in myself. I put the work and time in. If I

keep doing that, the shot is going to fall. It fell tonight," he said.

Louisville coach Chris Mack was not surprised that Maxey scored a career-high 27 points — the most by a UK player against Louisville since Jodie Meeks had 28 in 2008—on 9-for-14 shooting. He also had seven rebounds, one assist and one steal in 40 minutes.

"He's good. We knew that coming in. He's an explosive scorer," Mack said. "A lot of scorers, sometimes they take difficult shots. But at the same time, we knew he was going to take them."

"Guys like that don't lose their confidence easily. He is just a challenge. A couple of the 3's he hit, we didn't do a good enough job in transition of getting back and getting matched up."

"He's good. And his pull-up game, his ability to make 3's today was better than it's been. But we knew what he was capable of."

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Frustrated was one of the nicer words Sacred Heart basketball player Erin Toller says describes her emotions when she tore her ACL not once, but twice in 10 months and missed the end of her sophomore season and entire junior season.

However, one person who never doubted her ability to recover was Kentucky coach Matthew Mitchell. He offered her a scholarship before her first knee injury and never backed off which led to her signing with UK in November before she actually got to play in a game again.

"We were so impressed with her explosive nature and ability to score at all three levels," Mitchell said. "She can shoot the 3, get to the basket. Just a lot of talent to be an outstanding guard for us."

"These injuries she had have become very common. We know how to handle them and we're real confident she will have an outstanding career for us."

In her first seven games this season the 5-6 guard, who picked UK over Tennessee and numerous others, averaged 15.6 points and 4.6 rebounds per game and shot 41 percent from 3-point range in the seven wins. Her team will face South Laurel, the 13th Region favorite, in the Centria Metals/Penn Station Shootout at Franklin County Jan. 4.

Toller spent a lot of time



Tyrese Maxey, right, says a shooting tip from his father helped him hit four 3-pointers and score a career-high 27 points in last week's win over Louisville. (Vicky Graff Photo)

just trying to stay in shape and focusing on eating right when she could not play. She also had to work on her attitude because she admits she was "really down" at times. Her best childhood friend dies from cancer just a few months before she tore her ACL for the first time.

"I was in beginning stage of depression. My sophomore year was probably the hardest year of my life. I did not want to be around anybody. I just wanted to be in bed, not go to school," Toller said. "After I went to see my team play the first time, it made me really excited and happy again."

She missed almost two weeks of school but says teachers were "helpful" and gave her extensions to finish her work.

"I have always been a studious person but I was able to keep up with what I needed to do thanks to some very understanding teachers," Toller said.

She didn't worry about her college options the first time she tore her ACL. She knew that injury happens to numerous female players and coaches would understand. When it happened a second time, she did worry she would lose scholarship offers.

"That's when it really showed which coaches would really be there for me and why I chose Kentucky. They showed a lot of love for me," Toller said, "and recruited me even heavier after I got hurt and said I would still be a huge asset for the program. They still came to our games to watch my team play just so they

could also watch me. That really impressed me."

"They weren't worried about my skills. They knew I could play. They wanted to see if I could still be a leader while I was not playing."

Toller says she never lost her speed but had to work on being able to change directions on the court as quick as she should before she was injured.

"My first day on the court I was just slow, could not really move at all. But my first step has always been quick and natural. I never lost that. I just had to work to get everything else back and it keeps getting better every day," she said.

She admits she was "biting her lip" in anticipation of playing her first game this season and was more excited about this year than any season ever.

"I just have a different type of love for basketball now," she said. "I am more driven than what I was before but my goals never changed. It's just that my determination to succeed is over the top now."

Before her injuries, she would have been a strong 2021 Miss Basketball candidate. She might still be but that honor is not something she worries about.

"Right now I just want to play and win state and every tournament we play," Toller said. I haven't even though Miss Basketball. I don't think about rankings. I logged out of my social media so it would not be a distraction this year. I plan to stay off social media all season. It's hard to do but with all I've gone through, I should be able to do that so I can concentrate on my basketball."

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Kentucky All-American punter Max Duffy grew up in Australia watching NFL games and playing Australian football. He also enjoyed basketball. "I did grow up watching basketball and had a bit of appreciation of what college basketball was like before I got to Kentucky," Duffy said. "I always wondered what college football was like but that was not a sport I grew up with."

He actually knew more about Kentucky basket-

ball than Kentucky football when he got a scholarship offer from coach Mark Stoops two years ago that he quickly accepted.

"I knew Kentucky basketball had some good players. I didn't know (Rajon) Rondo had played for Kentucky before I got here," Duffy said. "I knew (Anthony) Davis and (DeMarcus) Cousins had played for Kentucky but not really much else other than that."

"I just didn't have a true appreciation for Kentucky basketball and certainly had no idea about Kentucky football. I've learned a lot about both and I'm just glad I've been here to do that."

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Junior Gabby Curry, the SEC Libero of the Year, was one of 22 UK athletes who graduated in December — just a few weeks after Kentucky won a third straight SEC championship with Curry as a starter again.

"I came in early and had some (college) credits (from high school) and our academic team does a good job pushing us," Curry said when asked how she graduated midway of her junior year. "It was feasible for me to do that, so I chose to do that and get my grad degree."

She will start work on her Master of Business Administration degree this month and finish in 2021. She talked to teammate Leah Meyer, a graduate transfer from Duke this season, who was in the same MBA program.

"She said it was doable. I am super positive about what I am going to do, so I think it will be good," Curry said.

Her father, Buddy, a former NFL player, agrees.

"Gabby is about personal excellence. She is an intense competitor who is driven to excel in school and maximize her education. She plans her time well and is very organized," Buddy Curry said.

So organized that she graduated from Buford (Ga.) High School a semester early to join the UK volleyball team as a walk-on for one semester.

"Club volleyball where I am is really expensive, so it only cost about \$1,000 more to come up here and get really good training at Kentucky," Gabby Curry

said. "We decided to do that over just playing club volleyball."

"I think the amount of quality touches I got here pushed me to be the best I could be in the fall (of my freshman year). Obviously freshman year is hard for anybody so that made the transition much easier."

Curry, who played for Team USA last summer, certainly has made the coaching at UK pay off for her.

"I think personally growth outside the court has led to growth on the court. I think learning how to be a good teammate, learning how to be a leader, how to please your coaches and do the things they ask you to do is really key," Curry said.

"Skill-wise, I couldn't have picked a better program to come to. Number one, they teach the things that work well for my body and work well as an athlete. Then two, the coaches are just really supportive. The way they give information is important. I couldn't ask for anything more."

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### Quote of the Week:

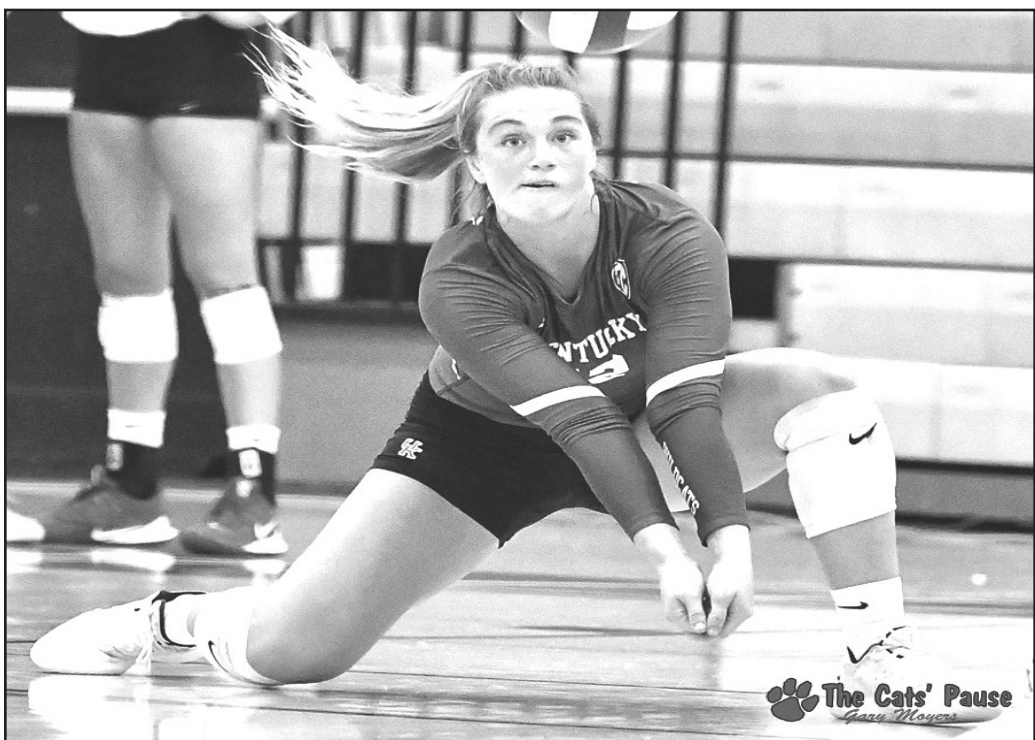
"It was amazing. Thank God we have hand signals because I didn't hear anything (John Calipari) was saying. And on the free throw line when they were shooting, I really couldn't hear anything. Immanuel (Quickley) was holding his ears, plugging his ears one time," MVP Tyrese Maxey on the Rupp Arena crowd after UK beat Louisville.

### Quote of the Week 2:

"You can't play, in my opinion — at least my team can't, maybe other teams can — an open court game with Kentucky and feel like you're going to be the victor," Louisville coach Chris Mack after his team lost 78-70 to UK in overtime.

### Quote of the Week 3:

"They are just so consistent vocally, emotionally and just made things easy and were constantly pushing the team to be its best. Playing with the two of them was just amazing. I know a lot of fond memories I have on the court are because of them and with them," UK All-American Leah Edmond on junior volleyball teammates Madison Lilley and Gabby Curry.



Gabby Curry not only is a two-time SEC Libero of the Year, but she finished her undergraduate work at UK midway of her junior season. (Gary Moyers Photo)