

Kentucky has a big fan in Chip Michalove - the 'Great White Shark Whisperer'



by Larry Vaught

Chip Michalove is known as the "Great White Shark Whisperer" who has hooked a 3,500-pound great white shark a few miles off the South Carolina coast.

The Kentucky native moved to Hilton Head Island in 1989 and now owns and operates Outcast Sport Fishing. However, his love for Kentucky basketball has never stopped.

That's why last weekend when Kentucky played Louisville, his boat was not available for charter. It's the same in March if Kentucky is playing in the NCAA Tournament.

"I was born in Lexington and spent about the first 10 years of my life in Louisville before my parents divorced and I moved to Hilton Head with my mom," Michalove said. "I still get back to Lexington about twice a year to catch a game. I like to see games like Louisville, North Carolina and Kansas. But the boat never leaves the dock on the Kentucky-Louisville game or for NCAA Tournament games. Everyone knows that."

He almost named his boat "Bleed Blue" but knew that might not be a good business move with Indiana and Tennessee fans.

"But our logo is a great white (shark) with a jockey and the jockey silks are blue and white checkered," he said. "My dog is named Cali after (John) Calipari because I am a huge fan of his. I believe he's vastly underrated. I hate seeing all the heat that has been on him. Some of it has been ridiculous but he's great at developing players."

His first sports memories are his parents pulling for Kentucky and/or Louisville. He remembers arguing with elementary school friends about UK and the Cards. He remembers getting to watch stars like Rex Chapman of Kentucky or Pervis Ellison of

Louisville play when he got to go to games. He jokes one of his best days was when Chapman followed him on Twitter.

"My dad still lives in Louisville and we are best friends. We talk Kentucky basketball or football almost every day," Michalove said. "He does not keep up as I do with recruiting, coaching changes and stuff like that. The late 1980's or 90's it was hard to get Kentucky info. Now I can get it on KSR, The CatsPause and Twitter daily."

So how did he go from a young boy in Kentucky loving the Wildcats to the "Shark Whisperer" making national headlines working with scientists at the Atlantic Shark Institute and the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy placing tracking devices on sharks?

He caught a 6-foot shark on a vacation to Hilton Head Island when he was 6 years old.

"It was the scariest thing and I cried. But I also loved it and knew I wanted to pursue doing that," Michalove said. "Back in Kentucky I would fish the Ohio River, Lake Cumberland. I was always fishing but I was not obsessed with walleye or crappie. I wanted the biggest bass, biggest catfish. Then it went back to the biggest, baddest thing in the water — sharks."

He laughs thinking back to when he was 10 years old in Kentucky putting notes in ponds with his name and phone number saying he was a guide for hire.

Once he got to Hilton Head, he knew he wanted to be a chartered fisherman and catch sharks. He says he "failed" a lot and lost the first great white he hooked. In fact, he lost the first three.

"I could not figure out how to put the brakes on a great white shark. Nobody in the world was catching them that I could call to ask for advice," he said. "I learned through trial and error. I tried different methods until I got it figured out."

Michalove says the obsession Kentucky fans have with UK basketball is similar to what the public has with sharks.

"There is no sailfish week on the Discovery Channel. The public has so much interest in sharks," he said.

He now laughs at being told there were no great

whites off South Carolina.

"Nobody had ever seen one. Then after years of trying, it happened. It was so crazy that not even our local paper believed me when I hooked my first one," Michalove said. "They told me unless I was in the picture it was hard to believe."

"The next one I hooked was about 2,500 pounds. So I put my hand on its nose for a picture and then CNN, FoxNews and all the bigger news outlets were calling," Michalove said. "Next thing I was working with top scientists in the world and leading expeditions to catch sharks. I run a charter boat by trade but I take out a lot of scientists. It's worked out great."

He even met his girlfriend, Riley Miller — a Kentucky native from Bowling Green who is now news anchor for ABC TV affiliate WJCL in Savannah, Ga. — because she called to do a story about him.

"I threw everything in my portfolio at her to impress her and catch her eye. Fortunately something worked," he said.

Miller, who is a UK graduate and UK fan, is not nearly as fond of fishing as him. She's gone out with him to hunt lemon or sandbar sharks.

"I don't know if she is built for catching a great white. That is usually at least a 12-hour day. She's not good for more than a couple of hours," he said. "She's not real thrilled when we go out. She's more concerned about getting nauseous."

However, he did persuade her once to take a picture with a small shark in her lap.

"I told her all her friends would go nuts and social media would go nuts and she would get more publicity than she could ever imagine holding a shark," he said.

He wishes it could be that easy to help fix UK's woes this basketball season.

"We just need a better point guard. If we had DeAaron Fox or Tyler Ulis, we would be better," he said. "Ulis was so smart and quick. He thought pass first. We need that this year. Devin Askew just does not have it yet. They are missing a good quarterback. I would love to have Brandon Knight on this team. He was fantastic and would make them so much better. But no matter what, I stay a fan."



Chip Michalove and his girlfriend, Riley Miller, are both Kentucky natives now living in Hilton Head, S.C., who remain die-hard UK fans. He now helps place trackers on great white sharks and even has taken Miller shark fishing.

QB's have "good" practices for Taxslayer

Mark Perry coached UK freshman quarterback Beau Allen at Lexington Catholic before leaving to join coach Neal Brown at Troy and then West Virginia as director of football operations. He came back to Kentucky where he was a walk-on quarterback under Hal Mumme from 1997-2000 in 2019 as a quality control coach.

He's been working as UK's quarterback coach during preparation for Saturday's Taxslayer Gator Bowl after the dismissal of offensive coordinator Eddie Gran and quarterback

Darin Hinshaw after the regular season ended.

Perry says both Allen and sophomore Joey Gatewood have been "good" during practices as the backup to starter Terry Wilson.

"Both of those guys have big upsides. They both enjoyed this year and both learned a lot," Perry said. "They both traveled to every game."

"I think at this level that is a valuable time for those guys to grow and develop. They are both continuing to do that during bowl preparations."

He noted that Alabama quarterback Mac Jones, a one-time UK commit, and former LSU quarterback Joe Burrow, last year's Heisman Trophy winner and No. 1 overall NFL draft pick, did not play immediately in college.

"They both learned and grew and developed and when their number was called they played at a high level," Perry said. "It is a growth process for most quarterbacks and both Beau and Joey have grown a lot this year and will keep growing."

Mintz blames himself for losses

Senior point guard Davion Mintz is averaging 10.3 points, 3.6 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 1.2 steals per game for coach John Calipari. He's also hitting a team-best 35.3 percent from 3-point range and has 12 3-pointers (the rest of the team has combined for only 18).

Mintz had 19 points, seven rebounds and two assists in last week's loss to Louisville. He didn't get shots late in the game, including three trips UK had in the final minutes when Devin Askew missed a 3, Olivier Sarr missed from 15 feet and Brandon Boston misfired on a 3 just before the buzzer.

"I think most of that is my fault. I wasn't more assertive

to go get the ball and to call one more when guys were penetrating. So I kind of take credit as to why I didn't get the ball down the stretch," Mintz said.

That's the kind of player accountability coach John Calipari always wants and what this team desperately needs with a 1-6 record now.

Mintz credited Calipari for drawing up the right plays and continued to blame himself for not doing a better job executing those plays even though his play kept Kentucky in the game.

"I feel like just going in and continuing throughout the season, I've got to be more vocal and make sure I

can get the ball in my hands, if I'm the guy that's feeling it that night, to have it," Mintz said.

Calipari understands what Mintz is doing for the team and appreciates how he has handled the season.

"Davion has been one of the guys I've been really proud of. He never said one word earlier this year. Like Immanuel Quickley -- he never said a word," Calipari said. "He just took his role, tell me what you want."

"He is so appreciative of this opportunity to be here, of playing here, of playing for us and our staff. He's in a different mindset, which is why you start playing the way you're playing."

Larry's Quotes of the Week

Quote of the Week: "People are seeing blood in the water and you're at Kentucky. This is their chance. I'm talking about every team in our league. 'This is our chance to smash these dudes.' And so, they've got to understand these teams are coming. We're not going to face a team that doesn't play hard or plays poorly," John Calipari on opponents having no sympathy for UK's 1-6 start.

Quote of the Week 2: "I am excited to learn that system. You can feel a little more pep in the step and bit of urgency from everybody that something is about to change a little bit. They (players) are gearing up and using these reps to prepare for the bowl but also for the future," UK offensive analyst Mark Perry on excitement created by the hiring of offensive coordinator Liam Coen.

Quote of the Week 3: "A lot of preparation went into this moment, a lot of prayers, and a lot of blessing. I thank God every morning when I wake up. I really appreciate him helping me get to this point," former UK guard Tyrese Maxey after his first NBA game with the Philadelphia 76ers where he had six points, two rebounds and two assists in a win over Washington.

Stoops had inside contact with the Los Angeles Rams when hiring Coen

Mark Stoops had an inside contact with the Los Angeles Rams when he was contemplating hiring Liam Coen as UK's new offensive coordinator.

Veteran NFL assistant coach Aaron Kromer is an Ohio native and has been LA's run game coordinator.

"Coach Kromer's son played and coached with my brother at Oklahoma and we know him from vacations and time in Florida," Stoops said. "I know several other guys, so I know quite a few guys with the Rams and did a lot of research."

Coen, 35, is a Rhode Island native and former UMass quarterback. He was the Rams' assistant receivers coach for two years before coaching quarterbacks this season.

"You can tell by the people that make comments on Liam that he's just a

very sharp individual. Really has a good command, top to bottom," Stoops said. "I think that is the area of expertise I was looking for with the quarterbacks and receivers."

"I think that's the big key for me with the OC was being very detailed and having total control of the quarterback and receiver room because that's the area where I feel like we need to make the biggest jump."

Recruiting coordinator Vince Marrow believes in what Coen can bring to UK's offense. He said he could tell recruits were excited when he dropped hints before signing day about the possible hiring of Coen and how they felt after watching the Rams offense.

Marrow joked that he told Coen his hiring made it easier for him to recruit skilled players.

"Let's be honest, everybody wants to be in that system. If you are a running back, a receiver, a tight end, you want to be in a system that's like basketball and gets the ball to receivers but also running backs," Marrow said.

The UK recruiting coordinator says skilled players will not only be able to show they can run block but also to play in a pro passing system "that's going to make guys a lot more money" after their UK careers end.

"He's a good communicator with the quarterbacks and if you communicate with the quarterback and he knows where to go with the ball, you will probably win one or two more games because there are throws that need to be made and sometimes they're not made. That can be the difference in winning the game."

Trying to bond as a team has been difficult

Trying to bond as a team during the current pandemic has been difficult for collegiate teams and the Kentucky men's basketball team especially has had a hard time with so many new players on the team.

However, the players are not using that as an excuse for their struggles the first five weeks of the season.

"The benefit we have is that we live together in the lodge. Being at Kentucky, they've taken the safety measures to make sure we're all healthy and that we test regularly. We're able to kind of hang out in each other's rooms," senior point guard Davion Mintz said.

"Whereas my old place (Creighton), and

most college places that I know of, the main guys aren't living together. So that's been good for us and we're just trying to do as much as we can."

Freshman Lance Ware said the Cats didn't get to hang out a lot with each other initially but that changed when the season started and testing became more regular.

"We've been staying in this mini-bubble we have at the lodge. We've been able to hang out a little bit more and a little bit more often," Ware said. "Honestly, we're still creating team chemistry. That's just something that's going to keep on coming and only get better. We're trying to spend as much time as possible together."