

Coach Mitchell expects next season to be a big adjustment for freshman Treasure Hunt



by Larry Vaught

With the success that All-American Rhyme Howard has had in two seasons at UK, expectations are already astronomical for incoming freshman Treasure Hunt — who has a higher recruiting ranking than even Howard has and is the highest ranked player coach Matthew Mitchell has signed at UK.

“With expectations you can look at a player’s size, speed, agility, explosiveness and athleticism and know where they are on scale of physical talents and gifts,” Mitchell said. “I just like to go from sort of a blank canvas approach for any player, including Treasure.”

Mitchell sits down with every freshman player multiple times to inquire about what they want to become as a player, person and student. That won’t change with Hunt once he gets her on campus in late July.

“She is a supremely talented prospect that we believe has gifts and talents to make a big impact as a freshman,” Mitchell said. “But you couldn’t tell with Victoria Dunlap, Adia Mathis, Maci Morris and now with Treasure just how good they would be. You just don’t know until it happens.”

“Adia was ranked as the 125th best player in country in one recruiting ser-

vice and 67th in another. She had unbelievable talent and as a freshman was able to handle practice and the role she settled into. She became an All-American, two-time SEC Player of the Year.”

That led him to remember Jennifer O’Neill, the first McDonald’s All-American he signed. She had a “difficult” freshman season before becoming a “top level” player who made the WNBA.

“Both Adia and Jennifer had different rankings, different struggles but both went on to be great players and pro players,” Mitchell said. “It’s just hard to say how any player, no matter how highly ranked, will do until you see how they handle their freshman year.”

The 6-1 Hunt has the right pedigree. She also was a McDonald’s All-American and is a top 10 recruit. She averaged 24.7 points, 5.3 rebounds and 3.2 assists per game for Hamilton Heights Christian Academy in Chattanooga. She’s a five-star signee with experience in some of the nation’s most prestigious events.

“We are going to work really hard to make sure she thrives as a freshman,” Mitchell said. “If she plays up to her abilities, she can make an incredible impact and we hope she does. But you have to give any freshman, even one as talented as Treasure, a chance to get here and see how she adjusts before you proclaim that she can do this or that.”

“Treasure was a significant recruiting event for us. We are planning on her being a major player and know she has all the tools to do that. But you just have to be patient and give her time to adjust and everybody adjusts at

a different pace.” Mitchell is having to do some adjusting of his own now, too. He had surgery recently to remove a subdural hematoma after blood was found on his brain. Mitchell’s wife Jenna Mitchell said he fell and suffered a concussion nearly four months ago and later blood was found on his brain.

“Grateful to God he is with us and still the best dad and husband we could have on our team,” his wife, Jenna, posted on Facebook Saturday.

(Mitchell made his comments about Hunt in an interview before he knew he would need surgery.)

A recent ranking put Kentucky’s Mitch Barnhart among the Southeastern Conference’s worst athletic directors, something that Allison Tamme — the wife of former UK all-SEC tight end Jacob Tamme — certainly did not agree with.

“Mr. Barnhart is an incredible man of integrity, compassion, heart and intelligence. He invites one of our Swings for Soldiers families into his (football stadium) suite every year with his own family and treats them like they are also,” Tamme said. “I could write a novel about all of the wonderful things he has done in the 17 years we have known him, but I will stop there.”

Allison and Jacob Tamme have raised over \$1 million dollars to build home for wounded military personnel with Swings for Soldiers, a golf scramble/charity auction that is annually held in July. Barnhart has been a regular participant in the event as well as a supporter of those the event has helped as Tamme not-



Despite her lofty national ranking, Kentucky coach Matthew Mitchell warns that next year will still be an adjustment for freshman Treasure Hunt.

ed. Allison said COVID-19 has forced plans to be altered for this year’s event. “Right now we have a tentative date, nothing is set in stone yet pending COVID,” Allison Tamme said. “Hoping to make an announcement soon.”

Younger University of Kentucky basketball fans likely don’t even know who Louie Dampier was even though he’s in the Naismith Hall of Fame and could be the best shooter ever to have played for the Wildcats. He was part of Rupp’s Runts with Pat Riley, Larry Conley and Tommy Kron that reached the 1966 national title game. When he graduated from UK, he had 1,575 points — the third most in UK history at the time behind only Cotton Nash (1,770) and Alex Groza (1,744). And remember there was no 3-point shot or fresh-

man eligibility then. His shooting prowess continued in the professional ranks. During the 1968-69 ABA season, Dampier made 199 3-pointers for the Colonels. It took 26 years for another pro player to make more. An even crazier number is that Dampier made 13 percent of the 3-pointers made in the ABA in that one season. He made 198 3’s the next season and 103 in 1970-71. That meant he had 500 3’s in three seasons and he had a record 794 3’s in 10 ABA seasons when he scored 13,726 points but also had 4,044 assists. He also hit a then professional record 57 straight free throws during the 1970-71 season.

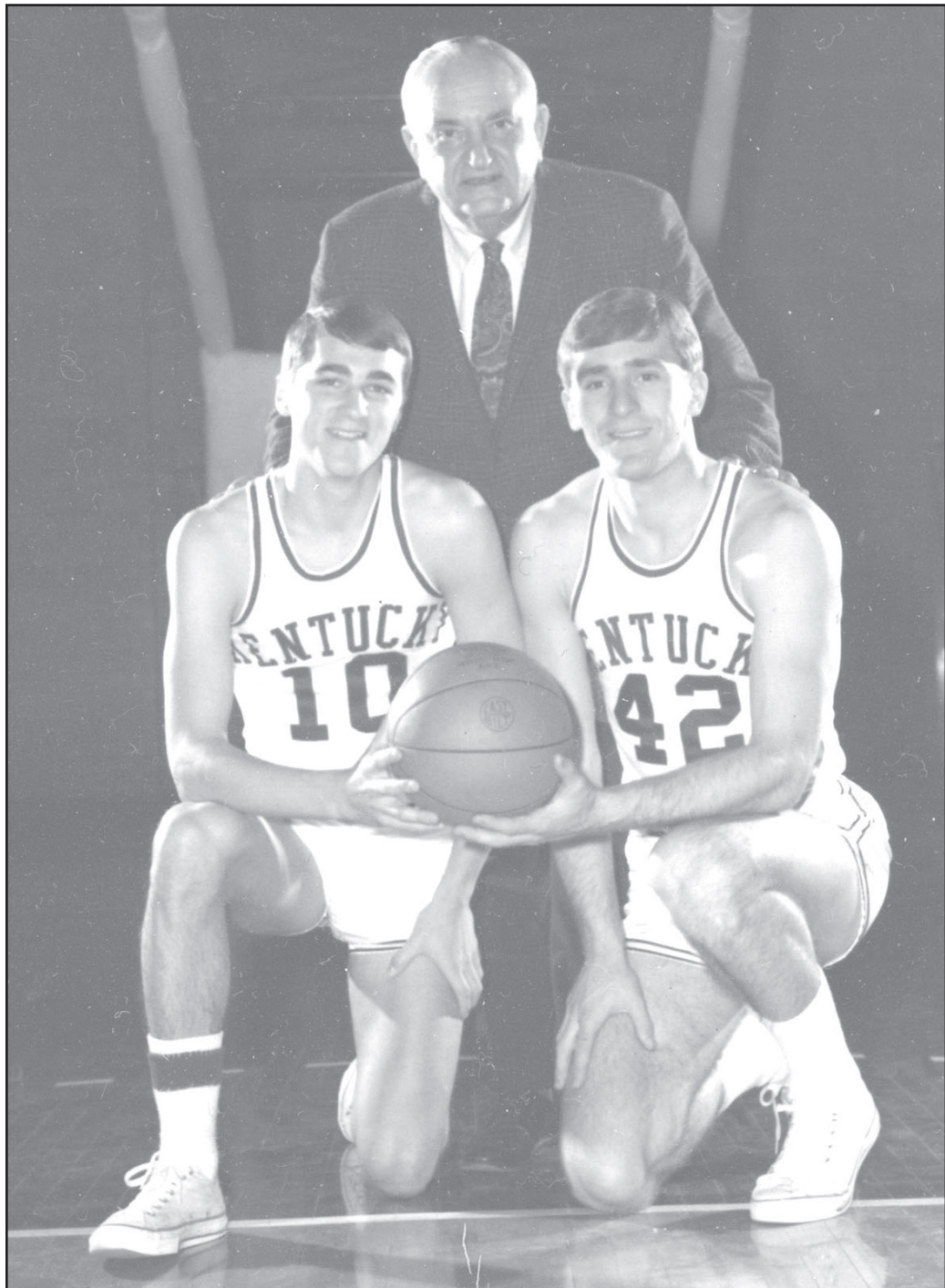
Former coach Kevin Keathley certainly can attest to Dampier’s 3-point accuracy.

“One time after practice at the Louisville Gardens,

I’m talking to the guys at center court and Louie begins shooting in the deep corner about 19-20 feet,” Keathley said. “As I’m talking, Louie keeps hitting shot after shot. Every one out of three or so you can hear the swoosh of the net. The backspin is creating big time string music. So much so that my team begins to notice Louie not missing and we all just turn and watch.”

“I didn’t see him miss for what had to be 3-5 minutes of continuous shooting in the same deep corner spot. By the way, he did this while wearing a huge Denver Nuggets jacket (he was an assistant coach for one year with the Nuggets). He never took it off.”

“Once he realized we were watching he said, ‘Sorry Coach, I didn’t mean to interrupt what you were doing.’ Walked out never missing a shot.”



Louie Dampier, left, with former UK teammate Pat Riley and coach Adolph Rupp, is one of the best shooters ever to play at UK or in professional basketball. (UK Athletics Photo)

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