



Just Hunting

by Steve Brewer

Nema Brewer-Candy, my daughter, and myself made it once again to Ray's Hog Holler pay lake. I got to meet the owners, and just like my first thoughts, which I wrote about in this column, are fine people. They had seen the story, and were well pleased. He even told me, he would have the dog barking under control; and for the biggest part of our 7-hour stay, they were not to be heard.

We ran into our friend and fishing buddy, Tim Abney. We like Tim, and fish with him every time we can. But, this story is about my buddy and neighbor, Brian Riddell. I have been told by several local fisherman, Brian Riddell could put an empty hook in the water and catch fish. Watching him fish, there is no doubt in my mind, that is a fact.

On this day, Brian caught 49, and the proof is

in the picture accompanying this story. Brian is from what I have always called a "Special Breed". Something about their makeup allows them to be the "Best of the Best" when it comes to doing some things, like hunting and fishing.

I have had some personal friends that were like Brian is now. Gene Adams, a long-time friend of mine, was a professional fisherman, and the sponsors lined up to sponsor him; he was never with them. Roland Supply in Hazard was his main sponsor for many years. Gene left us much too soon, in the 70's. He would "catch fish in a sink bowl."

Then there was my friend that never failed to put me to shame, hunting. His name was Clyde Dale Morris; he was for years a professional hunter, and big name companies were always at his door. He was only 60 years old when God wanted him to come guide some other hunters; he also left us much too soon.

I have never talked to Brian about fishing the circuit, but he is good enough to do just that. Tip of my hat to you, Brian Riddell, for a job well done. Keep up the good fishing and do your best to hang with us for a long while.

I will give you a date on Ray's closing, when I get one. Till then, good luck, hunting and fishing. Archery season opened on September 5th.

You can email Steve Brewer at <Steve@EstillTribune.com> and message is forwarded.



Brian Riddell with his catch of 49 fish

Could Drake Jackson Be Best Center To Have Played at Kentucky In Last 40 Years?



by Larry Vaught

He's been piling up preseason honors the same way he has piled up successful blocks but Kentucky senior center Drake Jackson won't let the accolades go to his head.

SEC Network analyst Cole Cubelic ranks him as the Southeastern Conference's best returning center. Pro Football Focus ups the ante by ranking him as the most valuable center returning to college football. He's been named to every preseason all-SEC team, is on the watch list for the Outland Award given to the nation's best offensive lineman and been on All-American preseason teams.

"As much as I appreciate preseason recognition and I know it is earned on the past, I would rather be there for postseason recognition," said Jackson.

Some players talk about living their dream. Jackson truly is.

"It's one of those things that no matter how much I try to sit down and reflect and think about, this is where I wanted to be and really was my childhood dream," Jackson, a Woodford County High School graduate, said. "I am from small-town Kentucky. Never imagined this happening. I am getting publicity like few linemen ever do."

"It still blows my mind every time I see that. Part of me says there is still so much more I can prove. So as glad as I am to see it (preseason recognition), that's not my end goal. That is not all want."

Depending on how the 2020 season goes if there is one, Jackson could leave

UK being regarded as the best center ever to play for the Wildcats, a possibility he downplays even though in 974 pass-block snaps he's allowed just one sack. He also had 44 knockdown blocks in 2019 to earn first-team all-SEC honors.

"Look at the whole of what coach Stoops has done and all these honors are a testament to how he recruited and developed players," Jackson said. "I have been teammates with the best running back (Benny Snell) at UK. Played with the best defensive player (Josh Allen) out of UK."

"Before it is all said and done, there are a couple of other dudes who might be the best to come through at their positions. Probably the best kicker in Austin McGinnis. Maybe the best punter (in All-American teammate Max Duffy)."

Jackson said the common denominator with all those players is Stoops, who came to UK with a vision he sold that players bought.

"You can judge a coach's career off what his individual players have done and how he has elevated the program," Jackson said. "For him to have already had the best kicker, punter, running back, defensive player and some of the best offensive linemen says a lot about him."

Jackson was part of huge in-state recruiting trifecta for Stoops when he signed along with Lafayette offensive lineman Landon Young and Paintsville linebacker Kash Daniel. Signing that trio solidified Stoops' stature with many UK fans.

Jackson had to redshirt the 2016 season when both Daniel and Young were playing. However, he certainly has no regrets about that because it allowed him more time to change as person which led to changes in how he played.

"I have changed more as a person (than player) and that has helped me



Preseason recognition is fine but senior center Drake Jackson is more interested in earning post-season accolades for his play this season.

(Vicky Graff Photo)

change as a player. I am a firm believer it clicks at different ages for everybody. Your ability to understand responsibility, accountability, discipline are big fancy terms. It just clicks," Jackson said. "It clicked with Josh Paschal as freshman, clicks with some guys five years out of college. I was very fortunate that my freshman year I was forced to have to figure it out because of my situation."

Not only did he not play as a freshman, he was on the bench the first four games of his redshirt freshman season in 2017.

"I had to change how I handled my business and that made me a more mature person and made me a better football player. It's not like I learned technique and started hitting heavier weight in the weight room. It was about mindset," Jackson said.

"That is what made me better. I got to work on my technique and did get stronger but huge improvements come when you learn how to think and prepare. You become a smarter, more well rounded person and that will make you a better player because it makes you think different."

Alabama native Dave Hopewell, now an insurance agent in Harrodsburg, Ky, was the starting center on UK's 1976 Peach Bowl team and 1977 team that went 10-1. He's been

a fan since his graduation and seldom misses seeing a game.

Is Jackson the best center he's seen in his 40 plus years as a UK fan?

"Jon Toth was good and was bigger but overall Drake seems to have all the unique tools a great center needs. He has the size to play center and certainly has the football savvy to do it," Hopewell said. "Overall the best? I would say so."

Hopewell says giving up just one sack while making 33 straight starts tells him not only does Jackson have great technique but also studies opponents.

"You can tell he is very coachable and knows his technique. His footwork and hands are really good. He can get in front of people, get his hands up and keep them off. He doesn't make mistakes. He knows where he is supposed to be and what to do when he gets there," Hopewell said.

Hopewell said when he played UK basically "just lined up and tried to blow you off the football" but now Jackson has to talk more to let other linemen know what the defense might be doing.

"Defenses back then would stunt and try a twist or two, but nothing like now and that's why Drake has to do such a great job calling out those formations," Hopewell said. "It's just part of what makes him such a great center."

LaGrange, Ga. Pipeline

Remember the recruiting pipeline to LaGrange, Ga., that Kentucky coaches Rich Brooks and Joker Phillips got going that brought Wesley Woodyard (2004-07), Braxton Kelley (2005-08), DeMoreo Ford (2005-08), Tristian Johnson (2009-13) and Joe Mansour (2010-13) to Kentucky.

But the first star player Kentucky got from LaGrange was actually receiver Quentin McCord, perhaps the most under appreciated receiver ever to have played at UK from 1996-2000. McCord caught 112 passes for 1,743 yards and 15 touchdowns in his career, including 45 receptions for 799 yards and six scores as a fifth-year senior in 2000. He got to play with both Tim Couch and Jared Lorenzen, two of the all-time best quarterbacks at UK. McCord is top 10 all-time at UK in career receiving yards and receiving touchdowns.

McCord died last week at age 42. One of his former teammates, running back Anthony White, knew he had been experiencing health issues for some time.

"I played with him two years in 1998 and 1999 and he was very under appreciated. That's why I always bring his name up in conversations," White said. "He dropped a few balls but when he did catch it, he was great."

How fast was McCord? He had an 80-yard touchdown run against South Carolina in 1998, an 80-yard touchdown catch against Vanderbilt in 1999 and a 75-yard touchdown reception against Georgia in 2000. He's the only player in UK history with 80-yard catch and 80-yard run according to Corey Price of UK Athletics.

However, the play I'll remember most was at LSU in 1998 with UK facing a third down and 12 from its own 24-yard line. He went 38 yards on a reverse to set up the winning field goal in a 39-36 win — UK's first road victory over a ranked opponent in 21 years. That helped propel UK to a berth in the Outback Bowl.

White said he actually suggested the reverse to coach Hal Mumme to get UK in field goal range. White has rushed 15 times for 43 yards and two scores and caught seven passes for 59 yards. Derek Homer had also rushed for 60 yards while Couch threw for 391 yards.

"I knew the fake to me would draw people in and once he got the ball, he was going to fly and it would be hard for the defense to react and stop him," White said. "I actually thought he was going the distance but that set up the winning field goal (of 33 yards by Seth Hanson)."

McCord was a seventh round pick in the 2001 NFL Draft by Atlanta and had 23 catches for 427 yards and one touchdown in three seasons. He played three more years in the Canadian Football League before finishing his pro career in the arena league with the Kentucky Horsemen in 2009.

"It never seemed like he got the respect he deserved for the catches and big plays he made," White said. "He deserves more respect for what he did and anybody who played with him knows that."

Quote of the Week: "I don't think Landon has been getting the recognition that he deserves. Certainly, Darian deserves the accolades and the attention he's been getting because he is very, very steady and such a talented and good football player. And Landon is as well," Kentucky coach Mark Stoops on his weekly radio show when asked about the preseason recognition for offensive tackles Landon Young and Darian Kinnard.