

Nothing To Apologize



Larry Vaught

Kentucky freshman Isaac Humphries grew up playing rugby in Australia -- and he thinks that has helped him be a more physical basketball player.

One thing Humphries can do is play physical, something that UK's other big men have not done consistently this year. Humphries joked that what he did best in rugby was run down the field with the ball dragging six or seven players with him because he was bigger than them all.

Kentucky coach John Calipari said he might have another player that needs to try rugby.

"If that's what helped him, then we're going to do some rugby with Skal," Calipari said noting Skal Labissiere's lack of physical play this season.

Calipari likes the way Humphries is playing.

"He's not afraid. He's in there. He's fighting," Calipari said.

The coach went on to explain that Humphries plays with an intense look, not a scared look.

"He makes mistakes. He'll

probably get to play there. Kentucky would be fine going to St. Louis -- remember the win over Wichita State in 2014.

SEC Legend Conley

Reader Joseph Fast -- who sees my column in the Bourbon County Citizen -- approved of Kentucky picking Larry Conley to be its SEC Legend this year. He enjoyed listening to his TV work with Tom Hammond and says many of today's TV announcers believe fans want to "watch their antics and not the game."

Conley was a starter on Rupp's Runts in 1965-66 when the Cats lost to Texas Western in the national title game.

"I worked at the Dairy Queen in Lexington on New Circle Road near Eastland Bowling Alley. Larry came by there on many Sunday afternoons to buy a large milkshake," Fast recalled. "He was always by himself, very polite and courteous. I always thanked him and wished him good luck."

"I truly believe his flu (at the Final Four) was a huge factor in the loss to Texas Western. He played while being very weak, courage personified."

Agree on all counts.

A Hidden Gem

Looking for a name that could be a hidden gem in Kentucky's 2016 football recruiting class as the Cats get closer to the start of spring practice.

Defensive end T.J. Carter of Georgia was basically not rated when he got his Kentucky offer and signed with the Cats. The 6-4, 245-pound Carter had 68 tackles, including 10 for loss, as a senior. He also led his team in quarterback sacks as a junior and sophomore.

His other offers were Samford and Wyoming, but Stoops is convinced he has what it will take to help UK's defensive front.

"T.J. is a guy that's just a solid football player. Very good," Stoops said. "I felt like he was too good of a player, too solid of a person, too much of one of those glue development guys, he's going to be a heck of a football player we couldn't pass up on."

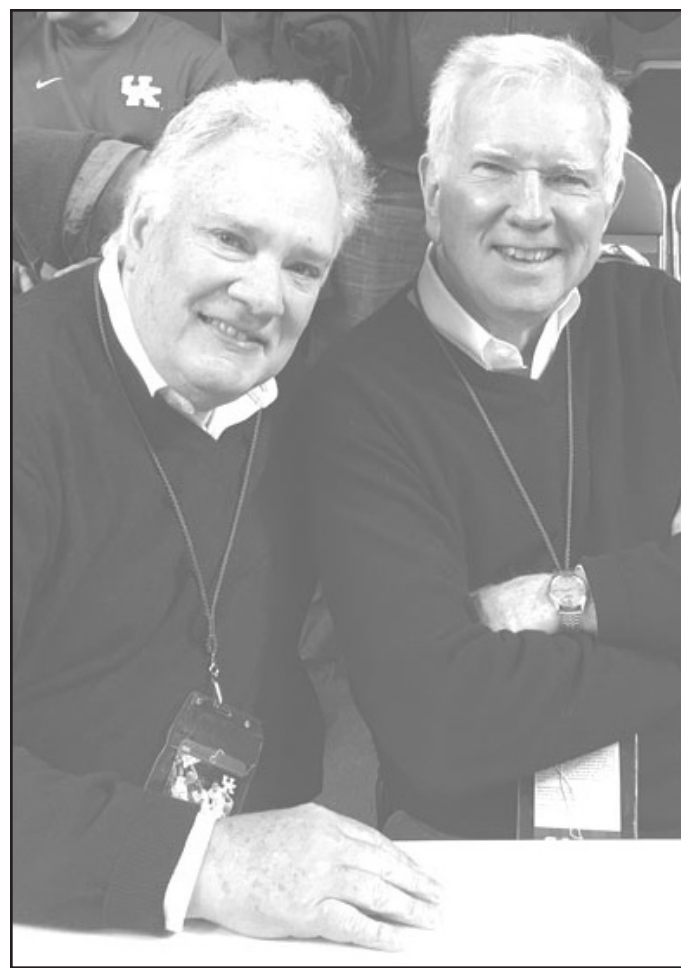
And what did recruiting coordinator Vince Marrow think of him? "When he came in on the visit, I said, 'Wow, this kid is definitely underrated,'" Marrow said.

In-State Recruiting

One reason head coach Mark Stoops and then offensive coordinator Neal Brown wanted John Schlarman on the UK coaching staff was for his in-state recruiting connections.

"Coach Stoops has emphasized from day 1 that we have to do a good job with in-state recruiting," Schlarman, a former UK offensive lineman, said about UK's 2016 recruiting class. "Sometimes you work really hard at that and we've been working on this class since 2013. This has been a work in progress for the last two to three years."

Kentucky signed two in-state offensive linemen, Drake Jackson of Woodford County and Landon Young of Lafay-



Larry Conley, right, will be Kentucky's SEC Legend this year. He worked many years as a TV color analyst with Tom Hammond, left, and the two got together at a recent UK home game.

ette. Other in-state signees were linebacker Kash Daniel of Paintsville, cornerback Davonte Robinson of Henry Clay and athlete Zy'Aire Hughes of McCracken County.

Schlarman said there's nothing better for a Kentucky high school player than to play at UK, a message he hopes highly touted Lafayette junior lineman Jedrick Wills hears and understands.

"That was part of it when I started recruiting Drake and Landon. I understood how important it is being from Kentucky and playing at the University of Kentucky and we talked about that quite a bit. Then to see them earn all the accolades they did (nationally) and still stay University of Kentucky guys was really exciting," Schlarman said. "Now we can get them here and go to work. Let's go out and win more games and get after it."

"When you have your family and friends coming to every single game, you want to make sure you are out there representing the state and representing your name also to the best of your ability. It is important to you. You want to show the rest of the country we are doing special things here at Kentucky. I know it means a lot to these guys and I am looking forward to see what they turn into."

Here's more of what Schlarman had to say about Young and Jackson.

Question: Could Young and Jackson play as true freshmen offensive linemen, something that does not happen often at UK or in the SEC?

Schlarman: "It definitely could happen. We have some guys coming in that will be able to compete for jobs. Will they start games? We will see. We want them to compete and everything will sort itself out. If a guy wins the job, then he will be out there whether he is a freshman, junior, senior. If he is the best player for that position, he will be out there."

Question: Are the offseason weight workouts a lot more difficult for offensive linemen now as players are saying they have been?

Schlarman: "It definitely makes a difference in the offensive line. You have to get in that weight room and grind and go to work. This year we are looking to turn up the heat another notch and make sure getting bigger and stronger."

Question: What are the pluses and minus for a player like Young who plays three sports (football, wrestling, track) in high school compared to Jackson who did football only and is already enrolled at Kentucky?

Schlarman: "A plus is I am anxious to see what he does when he just concentrates on football. He has been a three-sport guy which keeps him from getting burnt out on football but I am looking forward to see him concentrate on the weight room 365 days a year and just concentrates on football. He has a tremendous upside."

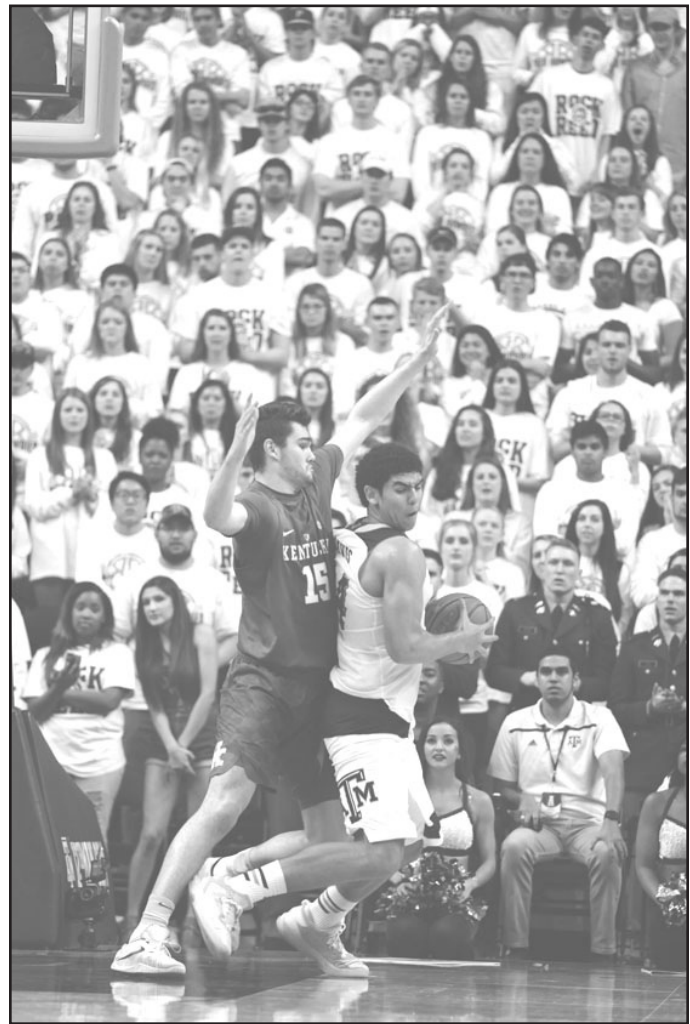
"Now with a guy like Drake, concentrating on football has helped him. He is a technician. He is as polished with his technique as I have seen out of a high school senior. That part helped him. Sure negatives to both but also pluses."

Question: Does wrestling help Young's football toughness (he won the state heavyweight championship last Saturday)?

Schlarman: "Definitely. It is a tough sport. There is nowhere to hide on that mat. Landon being a top wrestler in heavyweight division has definitely helped him with leverage. He is competitive. He wants to win every time and that carries over to football."

Contact Larry

Remember you can contact me at larryvau@gmail.com or on Twitter at [@vaughtsviews](https://twitter.com/vaughtsviews). You can also see more of my work at www.lex18.com and www.vaughtsviews.com.



Isaac Humphries has given UK a lift with his defense and rebounding in recent games, including last Saturday at Texas A&M where teammates told him not to worry about a late controversial technical foul against him. (Vicky Graff Photo)

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Landon Young, center, and Drake Jackson, right, will get a chance to compete for starting spots in UK's offensive line as freshmen. Kash Daniel, left, also figures to be in the mix at linebacker as a freshman. (U.S. Army All-American Bowl Photo)