

Standout QB Before Concentrating on Basketball



by Larry Vaught

Kevin Knox Sr. was a football player at Florida State and thought for many years that his son, Kevin Jr., might be an even better college football player than he was.

Kevin Knox Jr. was a quarterback who could throw the ball 85 yards in the air, according to his father.

"He could move and throw on the run," Knox Sr. said. "But when he got to be 6-7 and wearing a size 16 1/2 shoe, we kind of started saying at 15 years old we might need to take a look at this."

Others had told him his son was destined to be a special college basketball player.

"If somebody is maybe going to offer a college scholarship, we wanted to have our options open," Kevin Knox Sr. said. "He played both sports and we just waited to see whether he would be blessed to be good enough for a college scholarship or not. He was a starting quarterback his sophomore year in high school and an ESPN top 150 player."

"But his upside was even more for basketball at 15 than it was for football. We talked about it, prayed about it and came

up with the decision best for him (to just play basketball). We feel now even at 17, he's only been playing basketball full time about 1 1/2 years. When you say the sky is the limit for him, it can get scary."

Not for Kentucky. The versatile Knox Jr., one of the top 10 players in the 2017 recruiting class, is headed to Kentucky and enhancing his chance to play in the NBA was a significant reason that Knox thought Kentucky was the right place to play his college basketball.

Kevin Knox Sr. said the ESPN 30 for 30 documentary, "One and Not Done," on John Calipari took a look at how the UK coaching staff prepares players for the next level.

"I told my son we are going to go to college and the reason we all go is to get an education so we can make more money," Knox Sr. said.

He noted how college graduates make more money normally than non-graduates just like those with a Master's degree make even more and a doctorate usually brings even more money.

"You are going to college to make money," Knox Sr. said. "If the opportunity presents itself to make more money after year one (in the NBA), why not go to it. How long would it take to make \$2 million (for a normal college graduate)? We can go back and finish the education."

"Just because you might have the opportunity to go early to the NBA and God gave you a certain set of skills does not mean that you do not go back to college. Shaq (Shaquille O'Neal) made millions, more than he could ever

spend. He went back to get his degree. We are going to get our degree."

Knox Sr. said every school recruiting his son told him he had a lifetime scholarship, something Calipari stresses. If Knox Jr. plays 10 years in the NBA and manages his money, his father said he could go finish his degree then.

"Every offseason we plan to take two or three classes online if he does go to the NBA," Knox Sr. said.

Knox's father said the family saw all the speculation about which school was best for Knox Jr. and why. Their only interest was which school they felt would develop the player the best.

"Coach Cal had a vision for Kevin to play the guard position," Knox Sr. said. "Everybody told us Kentucky had too many All-Americans, too many five-star players. We never looked at that because even with all the players Kentucky was bringing in, all the coaches told us the same thing — there is not a 6-9 kid who can dribble like a guard, rebound like a power forward and shoot like a shooting guard like Kevin can."

It also didn't hurt that Knox Jr. had played in all-star games with and against many of UK's incoming players for years and had a solid relationship with many of them.

"You play on the circuit with those guys and get invited to things other normal kids might not get to do," Knox Sr. said. "We got a chance to know elite kids. But overall we just felt the University of Kentucky brought something to the table that others could not match."



Kevin Knox was a standout high school quarterback before deciding to concentrate only on basketball. (McDonald's All-American Photo)

Uncertainty plagues Cal's USA team

by Larry Vaught

Uncertainty continues to plague the USA under 19 team scheduled to be coached by John Calipari and play in Egypt the first week of July.

USA Basketball twice delayed announcing players invited to the tryouts because of terrorist incident overseas, including one in Egypt.

Kevin Knox Sr. said his son, Kevin, still plans to play — in part because Kevin Knox Sr. says his father served in the Air Force for 26 years.

Paul Washington Sr. said his son, PJ, likely will go to the tryouts in Colorado Springs but it is still "day to day" what he will do if he makes the team.

Earlier Robert Vanderbilt

said his son, Jarred, would not be on the team because of safety concerns.

Remember that illegal pitch called against Kentucky's Meagan Prince in the Super Regional at Oregon that let the Ducks score a run and started the comeback from a 5-0 deficit that ended UK's season.

Not much has been said about the call — which UK fans, players and coaches clearly did not like — since the game. So I asked senior outfielder Buzz Ray what she thought of the call. Here is her tactful answer:

"Normally you get a warning call from the umpire. I was a little surprised there was not a warning before it happened,"

Ray said. "I was in right field, so I could not really see what happened so I cannot say a lot. But Meagan did not think it was the right call. I know that. It was a big deal when it happened. But at that point, I still felt we were in good shape. Still, it was frustrating not to even get a warning call."

Several close calls also went against UK in that game. Coach Rachel Lawson might not have been happy, but she never lost her composure.

"I think she did a great job keeping her poise," Ray said. "She had to stay calm for us. If she had lost it or got too excited, we would not have produced like we should. But I am guessing there were times she was not really happy."

All-American's parents met in an unusual way

by Larry Vaught

Former Kentucky All-American Derek Abney had plenty of Kentucky connections when he chose to play for coach Hal Mumme.

His father, Larry, grew up in Winchester. His mother, Sylvia, was from Frankfort. His grandmother lived in Frankfort and other relatives also lived in Kentucky. His parents actually met at Georgetown College — but not in a traditional way.

"The first time they met, she hit him with a car," Abney said.

What?

"He was in the crosswalk and she was backing up in the car. She never saw him. He got pinned between her car and another car," Abney said. "He ended up in the hospital and she came to visit him."

"My dad, in typical fashion, told her, 'Lady, if you wanted my (phone) number, you just had to ask.' So that was how they met."

Abney also met his wife in a bit of an unusual way. He was a seventh-round draft pick of the Baltimore

Ravens and after never missing a high school or college game due to an injury, he got hurt on the first play of his NFL career.

"That night I was out and my arm was in a sling," he said. "I happened to meet my future wife at a bar. We were like two peas in a pod. Obviously, it was a strange night for me. It went from my future being bleak for football to spending somebody I would be spending the rest of my life with."

Vanderbilt will return to UK as reported

by Larry Vaught

Jarred Vanderbilt will be reporting to Kentucky June 6 as scheduled and apparently is fine after injuring his lower right leg/ankle late in the Jordan Brand Classic in April.

"Everything is going well," said Robert Vanderbilt, Jarred's father. "He's feeling good, looking good. He just can't wait until he gets his opportunity at Kentucky."

Robert Vanderbilt said his son was told to stay off the leg after the injury and has been doing exactly that.

"He was told to rest and that's what he has been doing the last few weeks. The doctor said it all looks well and he will be fine when he gets to Kentucky," Robert Vanderbilt said. "Most certainly the rest will be good for him. He had been going pretty strong."

The 6-9 Vanderbilt had been impressive in postsea-

son all-star play starting with the McDonald's All-American Game and then the Nike Hoop Summit. He had 17 points and seven rebounds in the Jordan Brand Classic.

"He has not done anything since then except rest and get ready for UK," Robert Vanderbilt said.

What the UK signee will not be doing is trying out for the USA under 19 team that will be coached by John Calipari and go to Egypt this summer. Robert Vanderbilt said they were not even sure Team USA would go after the recent bombing in Manchester, England.

"I told coach Cal when he was here that I would wish him well but too much is going on in the world. I do not want to go outside the country right now. The timing is just not right," Robert Vanderbilt said.

The timing could be right, though, next season for Jarred Vanderbilt, Kevin Knox Jr. and PJ Washington to all be on the court together. Many have speculated that they are similar and cannot be on the court together but Robert Vanderbilt disagrees.

"Those three can certainly play together," Robert Vanderbilt said. "They played well together at the McDonalds Game and the Jordan Classic. They have played together and known each other for years. They get along real well."

"I think it is a great thing for coach Cal to have that much talent on one team and the opportunity to coach guys like that who all have the same goal to try and win a championship as a team. I think that attitude is a plus when you look at all the talent this team will have."



Former UK All-American Derek Abney's parents met in a rather unusual way.

Estill Middle School Awards Night

Several Estill County Middle School students were awarded during the 2016-2017 Eighth Grade Award Night on May 16, 2017.

Attendance Award Recipients: Tiffany Atwell, Jason Brandenburg, Katy June Estes, Dalton Goolman (10 years perfect attendance),

Harley McKinney, Shaelyn Parsons (6 years perfect attendance), Katyleen Sparks (3 years perfect attendance), and Kenton Stepp.

Bill Durham Academic/Athletic Award: Andrew Elam and Peyton Meybrier. Rogers Explorer Participants: Peyton Mize, Leah Horn, and Rayleigh Jones.

Daughters of the American Revolution Award: Dylan Sizemore and Emma Knoll.

Gladys Wise Memorial Award: Emily Dennis.

Karen Hall Memorial Award: Summer Evans.

Outstanding Student Award: Peyton Mize and Emily Dennis.