

Father provides UK with football recruiting tips



by Larry Vaught

Kevin Knox Sr. doesn't mind talking basketball when it comes to his son, Kevin Knox Jr. He's one of the top incoming players for Kentucky coach John Calipari.

But he does a different type of talking with his long-time friend, Kentucky football recruiting coordinator Vince Marrow. He's giving him Florida football recruiting tips.

"Vince is one of the best recruiters in the nation, but I can give him some insights and a few names to recruit around where we live (Tampa)," Knox said.

Marrow welcomes any help.

"He called me and was like, 'Big Dog, I got these recruits in Florida for you to check out.' One thing about him, he does know talent. He had some guys I did look at," Marrow said.

"I think he will be a big help now that he is part of Big Blue Nation. They play good football down there and I am going to be leaning on him a lot. Trust me on that."

Kevin Knox Jr. threw for 1,036 yards and eight scores his sophomore season at Tampa Catholic when he completed 89 of 165 passes before he decided to play basketball only his final two years of high school. Both UK coaches have seen video of him playing.

"Just to see his son come up is amazing. He used to send me tapes of him playing football. I have watched this kid grow up. It has been an amazing run. I can't wait to see him play here for Cal (John Calipari)," Kentucky receivers coach Lamar Thomas, who played football at Miami when Knox Sr. was at Florida State, said. "He was a hell of a quarterback. He could throw it. Could run. I am just amazed when I watch his basketball highlights at how great he is now in basketball."

Former UK running backs coach Chad Scott told Marrow about Kevin Knox Jr. playing football.

"He was a big quarterback. Kind of like the same scenario with LeB-

ron (James). I knew him (James), his mom, his uncle. He was a real good football player and had the same conversation, 'Dude, you are going to be a NBA basketball player. Stop playing football.' That's what he did just like Kevin," Marrow said. "Kevin had to love football because of his dad and I bet his dad was really pushing him to that. But when you are 6-8, 6-9 and talented like him, you go play basketball."

Since Marrow has known Knox's father for almost 25 years, he feels a bond with the UK freshman who is considered one of the top basketball players in the country.

"I am really excited. He is going to get all kind of people bothering him. I told his dad I just want to be a place where he can lean on and talk to me and come by the house," Marrow said. "There is going to be a lot of pressure on him. But if he has the demeanor like his dad had, I think he will be fine because pressure really didn't bother his dad. Of course, nothing else much bothered him either. He was a different dude."

Going To Egypt

Paul Washington and his wife, Sherry, decided that if their son P.J. Washington was going to Egypt to play for Team USA in the under 19 FIBA World Cup, they were going with him.

"Our son is here, so if he goes, we come out with him," Paul Washington said Sunday after Team USA's easy win over Angola. "It's just the two of us. We left our other two children at home. It's been a wild ride, but it has been fun."

That includes the chance the players and coaches had to ride camels last week. John Calipari, the team's head coach, tweeted that he won the camel race.

"I think all the guys were having a blast. None of them had been on camels before — and probably won't be again," Paul Washington said.

P.J. Washington and USA teammate Hamidou Diallo will both be around Calipari plenty this season at Kentucky. Paul Washington said it has been good for his son to get accustomed to how Calipari coaches.

"It has been good for P.J. to get in better shape playing and getting to play for Cal and see how he coaches," Paul Washington, the head coach at Findlay Prep (Las Vegas), said. "We talked today af-

ter the game about free throws. Cal told him he was just going to keep going to him and for him to take his time, get to the line and make those shots.

"Cal will keep going at him to make free throw shooting a strength. So hopefully by October and November both him and Hami will have built a really good comfort level with Cal."

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Freshman receiver Cl- evan Thomas believes he can make an impact for Kentucky this season. However, he did not originally start out as a receiver.

"I was really chunky out of middle school. My day played football and I just adapted. I just had the body but could not lift (off the ground)," Thomas said.

Just how chunky was he?

"I was real chunky. It was to the point where like I couldn't even run. In middle school I played offensive line. That's why I can block. I never played receiver until high school," Thomas said. "I am not tall and my dad told me I needed to slim down, get faster and play receiver. So that's what I did."

Green Is Like Ulis

Freshman point guard Quade Green opted not to try out for the USA under 19 team now playing in Egypt but don't forget about him going into next season and his importance to the team.

He reminds me a lot of Tyler Ulis, especially with his toughness. Ulis was one of the toughest competitors to play for Calipari — or for any coach at UK. He was from Chicago. Green is from Philadelphia and has the same mentality.

"I am a little guy. Everybody tries me, but ain't no back down with Quade, man," Green said.

Ulis challenged 6-11 DeMarcus Cousins, a NBA star, during a summer pickup game when he got to Kentucky.

"I heard about that. That's the bulldog in us. He don't care," Green said. "I would do the same thing. We might be little, but we don't play small. We can play as big and tough as anyone."

Tight Ends Improved

Vince Marrow really likes the way tight ends C.J. Conrad and Greg Hart

have improved since last season. But he loves what redshirt freshman Justin Rigg can bring to the offense this season.

"He has the potential to be a monster. That is what you want in a tight end," said Marrow. "The average size is 6-3, 6-4 and 240 (pounds). He is 6-6 and 255 and is probably going to be 260. The kid can run, he can block. I just need him to play at SEC speed every day. When he does that, he is real good. But I need him to do that every day."

Rigg got extra work during spring practice when Conrad was hurt that he hopes pays dividends for him and the team when preseason camp starts.

He's not worried by the "monster" description Marrow uses about him with media members.

"He tells me all the time that he is pushing me to be the best player I can and tells me that all the time. It really motivates me to want to go out there and become the best player," he said.

So what is a "monster" tight end?

"A big guy just taking over. Getting your blocks, dominating every play," Rigg said. "I feel like I can get down the field and produce."

A Fan Favorite

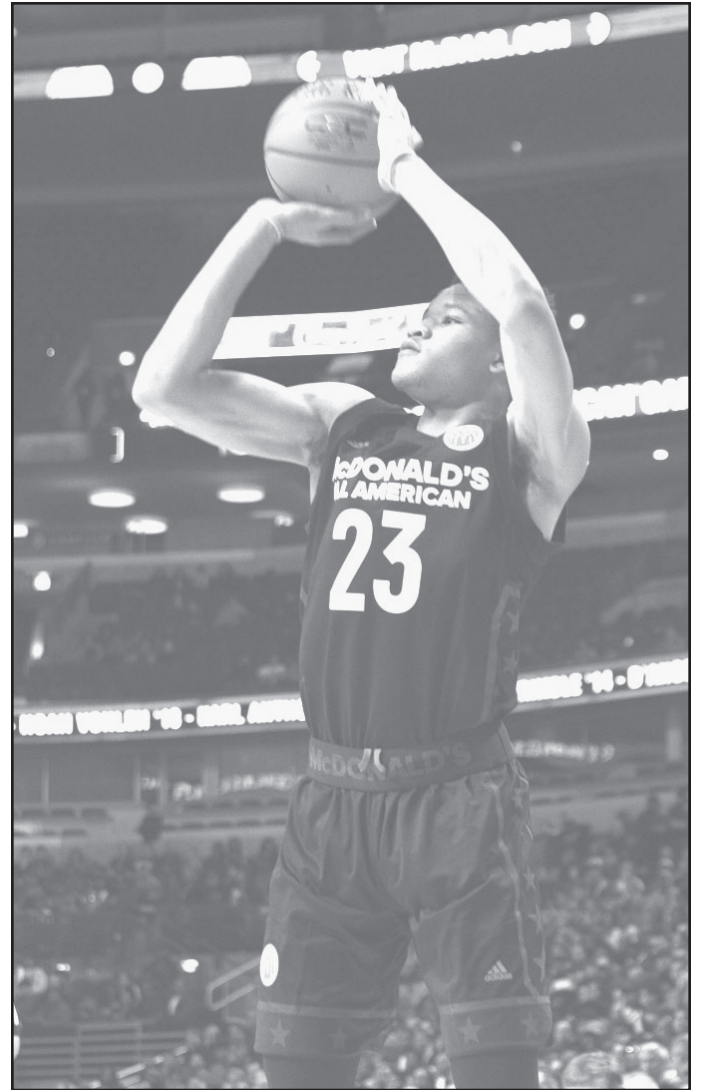
Randy Mulder, father of former UK basketball player Mychal Mulder, will be one of several featured speakers at the annual Ohio UK Convention July 15 in Franklin, Ohio.

His son played only sparingly as UK. He shot 36.5 percent from 3-point range and 92.3 percent at the foul line his senior season. He played at least 10 minutes in 10 of his final 19 games and hit at least one 3-pointer in 21 of 32 games he played last season.

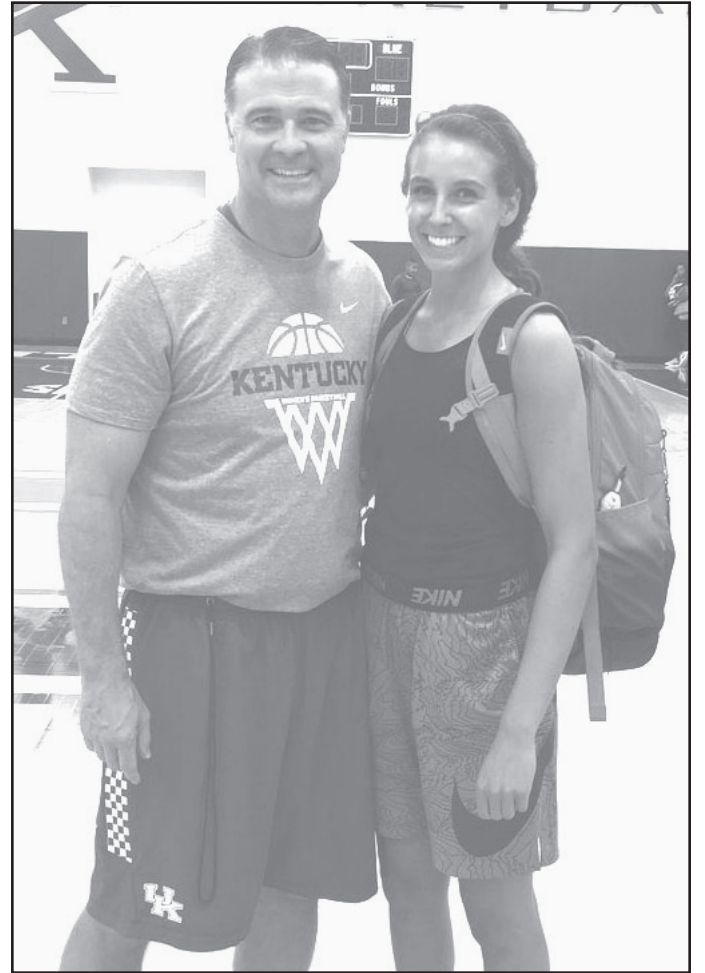
Naturally, his father would have liked to see him play more.

"He talked to me as a sounding board. He knows he should have been out there more than he was," Randy Mulder said. "But he has no regrets. He would say he was learning from the best and loved his teammates."

"At times I was not happy with the coach. I asked Jim if I could say anything bad about the coach," Randy Mulder laughed and said. "Seriously, sometimes I got frustrated with



Kevin Knox Jr. will have UK assistant football coaches Vince Marrow and Lamar Thomas looking out for him at Kentucky.



Blair Green will have to check with Matthew Mitchell at Kentucky about eating pretzels during games like she does now. (Debbie Green Photo)

Mychal, too. I told him Canadians are too nice and too giving. I told him to be more American and more selfish on the court. That's not a knock. He just need to think more about himself at time.

"I told him guys were taking bread off his table. But he doesn't worry about that because Dad has always given him everything he needs. He's not had to struggle for things or had a real sense of urgency to get ahead."

At Rupp Arena, Randy Mulder was popular with everyone. He often got to games way early despite coming from Canada. It wasn't unusual for him to talk with fans or pose for photographs.

"I am a bit of a chatty cat. I am like the old man in the grocery. Once you make eye contact with me, I am going to talk. I am Canadian. I am friendly," Randy Mulder said. "I am very outgoing, friendly and approachable. That's why people talk to me and I talk right back"

Others scheduled to speak at the Ohio UK Convention include former UK players Terry and Cameron Mills; Corporal Matthew Bradford; and Jennifer and Freddie Maggard. Convention registration is only \$25 and you can go to the convention website

(www.ukconvention.com) for more information or to register. If you have questions, contact Jim Porter at 937-746-8758 or David Starkey (937-974-4411) or Mike Johnson (mjohnson2017@cinci.rr.com).

Pretzels & Peanut Butter

Kentucky coach Matthew Mitchell may have to add a little something different to game day when Harlan County senior Blair Green joins his team for the 2018-19 season.

Green has a bit of an unusual pregame routine — and has had for years.

"She has a jar of peanut butter in my office and has a spoonful right before every game she plays," said Debbie Green, Blair's mother and Harlan County head coach. "She also has pretzels on the bench ... and we have to pack both peanut butter and pretzels for away games."

Blair Green said her ritual started when she was looking for something to eat before a game.

"My dad had a jar of peanut butter. I ate it, we won and I played great," the player said. "So every game after we warm up, I eat peanut butter. Then at halftime I eat pretzels, and sometimes I will on the bench, too. I'm not sure coach Mitchell will go along with any of that."

Quotes of the Week

Quote of the Week: "He treats everybody the same. He is very passionate with the way he relates to players. He talks to them individually, and still does that. You can talk to him. Some coaches are hands off and you have to talk to the assistants. Once they get you son, they will not talk to you. He is not like that," Ty-wanna Patterson on Kentucky coach John Calipari.

Quote of the Week 2: "I grew up a Kentucky fan. It was special to work there and to take a team back there one day to play would be very nice and special. It certainly would be a convenient game and a great opportunity to get exposure for our program," More-head State coach Preston Spradlin on possibly playing a game at Rupp Arena.

Quote of the Week 3: "We just put our three dogs in the car and headed out. We looked like the Clampetts (from the TV show Beverly Hillbillies). After the combine, Darian was looking and smelling like a swamp donkey. But when we got there, coach Marrow was there to greet us. So was the offensive line coach (John Schlarman). We got the whole red carpet deal," Mandy Rae Hedrick on the last-minute decision to bring her son, Darian Kinnard, to UK for a visit after finishing a combine in Cincinnati.



Randy Mulder was a fan favorite at Rupp Arena and will speak at the Ohio UK Convention July 15. (Larry Vaught Photo)