

UK fans now know plenty about Snell



by Larry Vaught

At this time last year, few UK football fans knew that much about the freshman running back Benny Snell from Ohio. Now most knowledgeable fans in the SEC — except maybe media members who left him off the three preseason all-SEC teams — know plenty about him.

“Going from being a nobody last year to where I am now is great, but I am the same. In some places now, people see me and come up and stare. Then sometimes I feel like I can go out and nobody knows me. But the fan support I get is really cool. It’s great in this city,” Snell, a preseason Doak Walker Award candidate, said. “I had something to prove to myself and everyone last year and now I want to do it all over again.”

Offensive coordinator Eddie Gran is on Snell — and others — to be great leaders and individuals constantly. Snell appreciates that.

“I just try to make myself a better person every day not to mention getting better on the field. Coach Gran has a lot of great things that he says you grow with daily,” Snell said.

Does Gran ever irritate Snell?

“Coach Gran probably does irritate me at times,” Snell laughed and said. “When we are going at it with the defense, I go too hard. Sometimes coach Gran jokes about me getting tackled. He tries to get under my skin to get me mad and better.”

Gran says Snell runs like he’s mad, something opposing defenders who have been steamrolled by Snell would not dispute.

“I take that as a compliment. When I run, I always run with a chip on my

shoulder. I am not really going to try and avoid contact,” he said. “I can spot guys when they have fear in their eyes when I am running. I try to attack. I definitely want to make guys miss but I will go through them, too. I’m not afraid of contact.”

Hall of Famer Cobb

Tina Cobb was caught off guard when her son, Randall, called to tell her he had some “news” for her.

Since he recently got married, she thought maybe he was going to tell her he was expecting a child. Instead, he told her he was being inducted in the Kentucky Athletics Hall of Fame in September.

“We had never talked about this. It was a big surprise when he told me,” said Tina Cobb. “It was a total surprise to me.”

With the numbers Randall Cobb had during his three years at Kentucky, his selection is no surprise. He played receiver and quarterback. He returned punts and kickoffs. He set a Southeastern Conference single-season record for all-purpose yardage (2,396 yards) during his junior year in 2010. He also set the school record for touchdowns (37).

He finished his UK career with 144 catches for 1,661 yards and 13 scores, ran 228 times for 1,313 yards and 22 touchdowns, and completed 62 of 122 passes for 689 yards and five more touchdowns. He returned 63 punts for 619 yards and two touchdowns and ran back 44 kickoffs for 1,081 yards.

He’s been just as good for Green Bay as a receiver. He was a Pro Bowl selection in 2014 and has 366 career catches for 4,488 yards and 35 scores in six seasons. Like he did at UK, he’s been versatile. He has rushed for 335 yards and has returned kicks for 2,701 yards and three touchdowns.

“This is really a big honor not just for him, but for our whole family,” Tina Cobb said. “He was the first one in our immediate family to go to college and graduate (in 2016). He promised me he would go back and get his degree no matter how long it took.



Benny Snell likes to run with a chip on his shoulder. (Vicky Graff Photo)

When his little sister started college, he got a move on because he wanted to be the first.

“But his accomplishments have been overwhelming. Every time I turn around, he’s doing something different. Just when you think nothing else can come along, then something like this (Hall of Fame) happens.”

The Hall of Fame induction will be Sept. 22-23. Green Bay hosts Cincinnati on Sept. 24.

“I don’t know if he will be able to be there or not. We have not talked about it yet,” Tina Cobb said. “I know he would love to be there. It’s just a matter of what the Green Bay coaches say. He’s all about commitment to the team he’s with.

“I will be there as long as I am able and I do not have to give a speech. I can accept it for him, but I am not that person to give that speech (at the induction ceremony).”

She recently got to spend time with her son on a family weekend vacation to see her son and his wife, who live in Virginia. He took them on a tour of Washington, D.C., and various landmarks.

“We get to see him a little more often now that he is living in Virginia,” Tina Cobb said. “The last

six months have really been busy for him. He got married on a Saturday in April and then had practice start either Monday or Tuesday. They didn’t go on a honeymoon until after camp was over and just got back from Africa recently. But making that trip to Lexington for the Hall of Fame is something we are all really excited about and I just hope the timing works out for him.”

Leaning to UK

Dick “Hoops” Weiss was one of few media members to spend time with Team USA at the FIBA Under 19 World Cup in Egypt earlier this month and he got a good look at the four high school seniors who are all on John Calipari’s recruiting radar.

Point guard Immanuel Quickley is the one that seems to be leaning to UK the most right now.

“Most have him as a top 12 player in the country. I see him more as a combo guard than just a point guard,” Weiss, who has worked for newspapers in Philadelphia and New York and now writes for Blue Star Media, said. “He started coming on more with the team in the later games.”

Cam Reddish probably made the biggest impression of the high school players. He’s seen as a Duke lean.

“Reddish can play multiple positions and play them all well,” Weiss said. “How many kids 6-8 can play four or five positions? Not many. John started him at point guard. He was by far the best high school player there.”

Romeo Langford was limited by back spasms and did not get a ton of minutes with Team USA.

“When he did get in a game, I don’t know if he ever got in his comfort zone,” Weiss said. “He scored 8 in the bronze medal game, but they won by 24. He missed two games completely. You could still tell he had great athletic skills. He has great springs (leaping ability). He can block shots. Give him the baseline and he flushes the ball.

Louis King does not yet have a Kentucky offer, but the 6-8 wing could soon get one.

“King was very active. He needs upper body

strength but he had games in double figures,” Weiss said. “John was brutally honest with all of those guys. He tells them what they have to do to make the league (NBA) and do better in college.”

Favorite Player

It’s not unusual for a young basketball player in Kentucky to have a favorite UK player. However, Kentucky women’s commit Emma King of Lincoln County might be the first one I’ve heard name DeAndre Liggins as her favorite.

“When I was little my dad always talked about DeAndre and how hard he played. He was No. 34 and I remember watching him. I didn’t care about watching basketball that much then, but dad always talked about his defense,” the Lincoln junior said. “When I was in fourth grade and started playing AAU basketball I wanted to be No. 34 just like DeAndre Liggins. I have kept that number ever since.”

Her dad wanted her to pay attention to how hard Liggins played on defense. King is known more for her offense, especially her 3-point shooting.

“I’ve worked hard on my defense. I know with coach (Matthew) Mitchell if you don’t play defense, you don’t play offense,” King said. “Defense is more of a want-to thing. I have to get more inside of me and have the heart to do it.”

Lady Wildcats

Amanda Paschal helped Gulf Coast State College win the 2016 national junior college championship

but missed last season when she hurt her knee before the season started. Still, coach Matthew Mitchell has no doubts about what she can add for his team this year.

“She is a really explosive score, great ballhandler and tenacious defender. Not real tall (5-6) but really, really tough and strong. Can get you off the bounce, get to the goal and shoot. She has got a total package offensively and fits us real well and can play on the ball or off the ball,” Mitchell said.

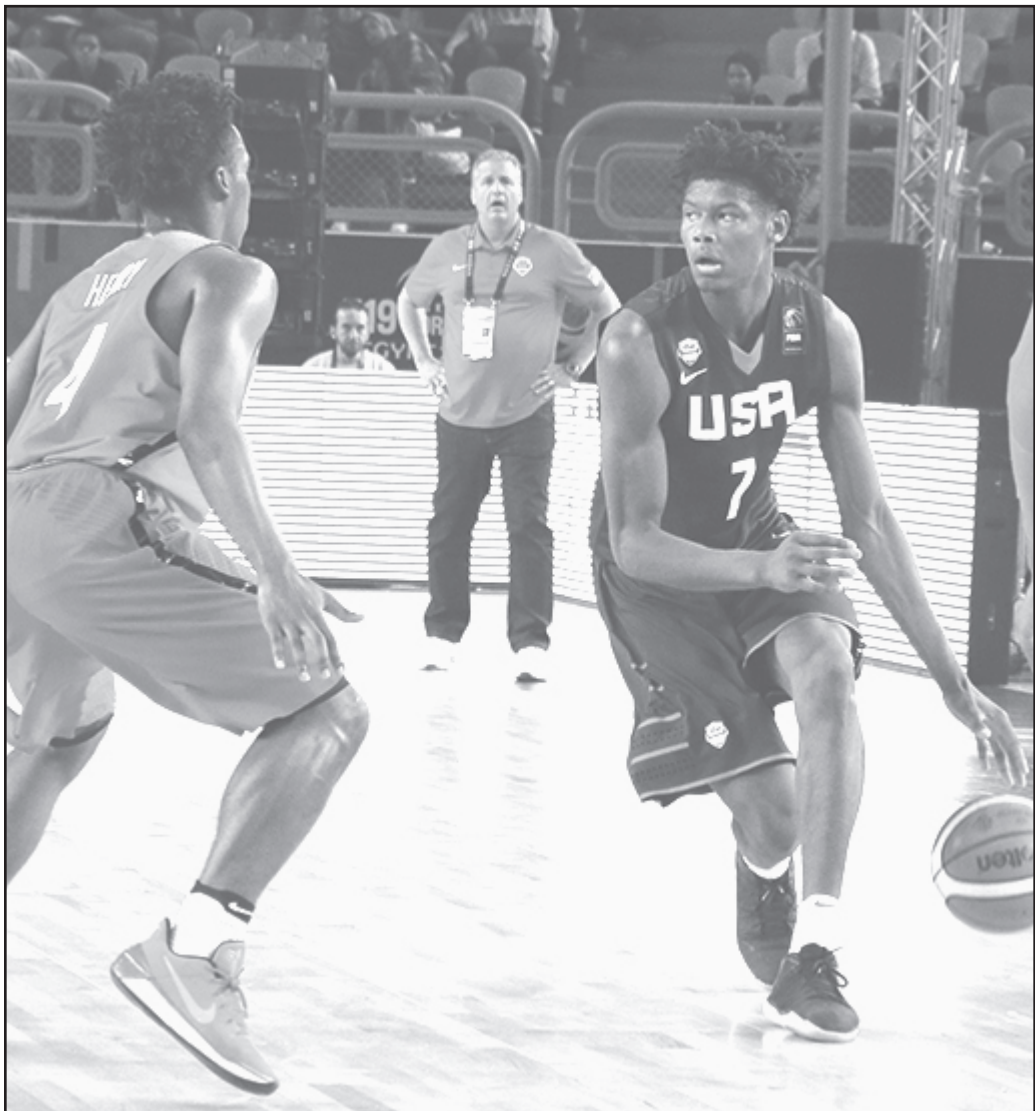
She averaged 11.2 points, 3.9 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game as a freshman and shot 46.9 percent from the field and 26.7 percent from 3-point range.

“She was their go-to player in the tournament and was really dynamic,” Mitchell said. “Last year (point guard) Taylor (Murray) did not really have a lot of help from someone who could get up and start the defense. We would have to mix and go zone to give Taylor a break. Amanda will help us with that tremendously and really get up and pressure the ball.”

Mitchell doesn’t think missing last season will impact Paschal.

“A lot of times that can be a great experience for a kid about maturity and understanding just how precious the game is. Although she didn’t get to play, I think it was a positive year for her,” Mitchell said.

The positive for UK is that she will have three years to play at Kentucky instead of two.



Veteran sports writer Dick Weiss said UK target Cam Reddish impressed him with his versatility with Team USA. (USA Basketball Photo)

Quotes of the Week

Quote of the Week: “He is the second best pro prospect behind Marvin Bagley. He has a chance if Bagley goes to 2017 (recruiting class) to be top player in 2018 class. Will be a big guard who is a playmaker,” ESPN recruiting director Paul Biancardi on 2018 UK recruiting target Cam Reddish.

Quote of the Week 2: “He played at Jarren’s high school. This dude is physical and nasty. The best offensive tackle that I have seen in high school,” Anthony Williams, father of UK quarterback commit Jarren Williams, after USC transfer E.J. Price committed to Kentucky.

Quote of the Week 3: “I would go out with football players and ask people what position they thought I played and after five times of being told I was a kicker, I quit asking,” former UK All-American receiver/returner Derek Abney on how often fans recognized him.