

Lady Engineers get season started despite delays

by **MIKE WISEMAN**
Estill Tribune Sportswriter

Regardless of old man winter trying to keep spring away, the 2018 Lady Engineers Softball season opened this past week. This 2018 edition looks to grab yet another 56th District Title and reclaim their grasp on the 14th Region Title.

The Ladies would open their season with a road game at Paul Laurence Dunbar. Estill would

come home disappointed after a 11-1 loss. The Lady Engineer bats would be mostly quite in this one as they would only manage three single for the game. Dunbar's damage would come on two swings as their star, Brooke Hill, would connect on a grand slam and three run bomb.

The Lady Engineers would come back to life as they travelled to Owsley County for the

first District matchup of the year. Estill would wreck havoc on the Owsley pitcher, collecting 16 runs on 17 hits for the game and a 16-0 win after just four innings. K. Covey would be almost perfect on the mound by striking out twelve and surrendering just one hit. There would be plenty of offensive stars in this one as seven Lady Engineers would collect a multi-hit game and secure the first Dis-

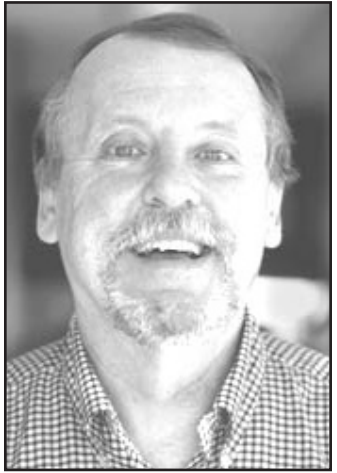
trict win of the year.

The Lady Engineers will return to action on Wednesday as they host GRC at JL Thomas Field and then travel to Lincoln County on Thursday. Estill will travel to Lee County on Monday for a District matchup starting at 6 pm. Come out and support Lady Engineers Softball!!! GO BIG BLUE!!!

STATS:
Estill 1, P. L. Dunbar 11

L. Wood- 1-3, SB
K. Covey- 1-3
S. Wiseman- 1-3, 1 RBI
Estill 16, Owsley Co. 0
L. Wood- 2-3, RBI, 3 SB,
K. Covey- 3-4, HR, 4 RBI
S. Wiseman- 3-4, RBI
K. Riddell- 2-4, HR, 4 RBI
T. Duechle- 3-4, 2B, 2 RBI
E. Hardy- 2-3, RBI
L. Isfort- 2-2, RBI
K. Covey- 4 IP, 1H, 0BB, 12 K.

Kentucky signee Johnson to play in the McDonald's All-American Game



by **Larry Vaught**

His season has not gone exactly the way he hoped so far, but junior pitcher Justin Lewis does like the way one thing is going — the perception of Kentucky baseball.

"I can tell a big difference. It used to be if somebody asked me I played ball at UK, I knew they meant basketball," said Lewis, a Georgia native. "Now they let me know that they know I play baseball. That's really good."

"When all the sports at UK are doing well, it just makes it better for the university. We broke attendance records last year and the buzz coming into this season was really a lot better than ever before. Big Blue Nation is great and we love their support in final season at The Cliff (UK will open a new baseball season next year)."

Lewis knew the big turnout at Fan Day a few weeks before the season started proved how fan interest had increased for both baseball and softball.

"It's cool we can come together and have the clinic and have Fan Day together. When I was younger, fans were excited about Georgia Tech and it was great to take pictures and play catch with the players. It's a lot of fun to get to be around the fans like that," Lewis said.

The right-handed Lewis finished his sophomore season with a 3.56 ERA and 71 strikeouts in 92 innings. He had a 6-4 record

and became a dependable weekend starter.

He was an 11th-round draft pick of the Tampa Bay Rays in 2017 and many thought he would start his professional career. Instead, he chose to come back to UK where he has a 4-2 record with a surprisingly high 6.11 earned run average in 34 innings. He did throw five innings and gave up just one hit in a 13-3 win over Auburn Sunday.

The 6-7, 195-pound has had no second thoughts about not turning professional.

"Sometimes when you are waking up for that 8 a. m. class you might have a (second) thought but I couldn't be happier with my decision. I am ready to win a SEC championship and then also a national championship. We have the players to do that," Lewis said.

Lewis has two high-profile family members — former UK star and NBA veteran Chuck Hayes and NFL cornerback Richard Sherman are his cousins.

"A very good gene line. Athletics has always been in my blood. My mom was a good athlete and so was my dad," Lewis said. "I saw Chuck the last time when he was inducted into the (UK Athletics) Hall of Fame. I don't see him often, but when I do I love talking to him. I saw a stat where he was the shortest center ever to start a NBA game. That shows the heart he has."

Lewis was on back-to-back high school state basketball championship teams in high school. His team went 32-0 his senior season and was ranked No. 11 in the final poll by USA Today.

He admits he briefly thought about a college basketball career but "enjoyed" baseball too much to do that.

"Sometimes I wish

watching those games at Rupp that I could be out there playing," Lewis said. "We were good in high school. I joke with all the guys on the team that my high school team would beat any high school team."

"I was good. I was the starting power forward. I have lost a step or two but I was pretty good. I was the best defender on the team. I could lock down and guard all positions."

Could he hold his own in a pickup game with John Calipari's team?

"I think I could hold my own but coach (Nick) Mingione won't let us play basketball at all any more. Those guys are first round picks but I could hold my own. I know I could."

Kentucky's basketball season certainly did not end the way players, coaches or fans expected — not after the Cats won nine of 10 games going into their NCAA Sweet Sixteen matchup with Kansas

State.

Freshman guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander became UK's best player — and perhaps the best player in the NCAA Tournament the first two rounds. He had 15 points, five rebounds and five assists in the 61-58 loss to Kansas State but it was not nearly the type of game he had been playing. He was just 2-for-10 from the field and had five turnovers that led to easy Kansas State points. He did get to the foul line 12 times and made 11.

It was a tribute to him that Kansas State set its defense to stop him.

"We kind of just crowded him a little bit, kind of watched him a lot, just to know what he did," Kansas State guard Barry Brown Jr. said. In the first half, he was killing us just drawing fouls and getting to the line, 11 of 12 from the free-throw line. For him to finish with 15 (points) just shows that we got it together. Can't say we stopped fouling, but we

stopped fouling him, and we were able to keep him off the line."

He finished the season averaging 14.4 points, 4.1 rebounds and 5.1 assists per game. He led the team in steals (61), assists (189), minutes played (1,248) and free throw percentage (81.7). He was not known as a 3-point shooter but hit 40.4 percent from long range and 48.5 percent overall.

He became the second player in school history to have at least 530 points, 189 assists, and 153 rebounds in his freshman season — John Wall was the other one. He also became the first player in school history with three NCAA Tournament games with at least 15 points, five rebounds and five assists.

Remember he was not a McDonald's All-American — or even a consensus five-star recruit. He was expected to be the backup for Quade Green and/or Hamidou Diallo. Instead, he became UK's best player and

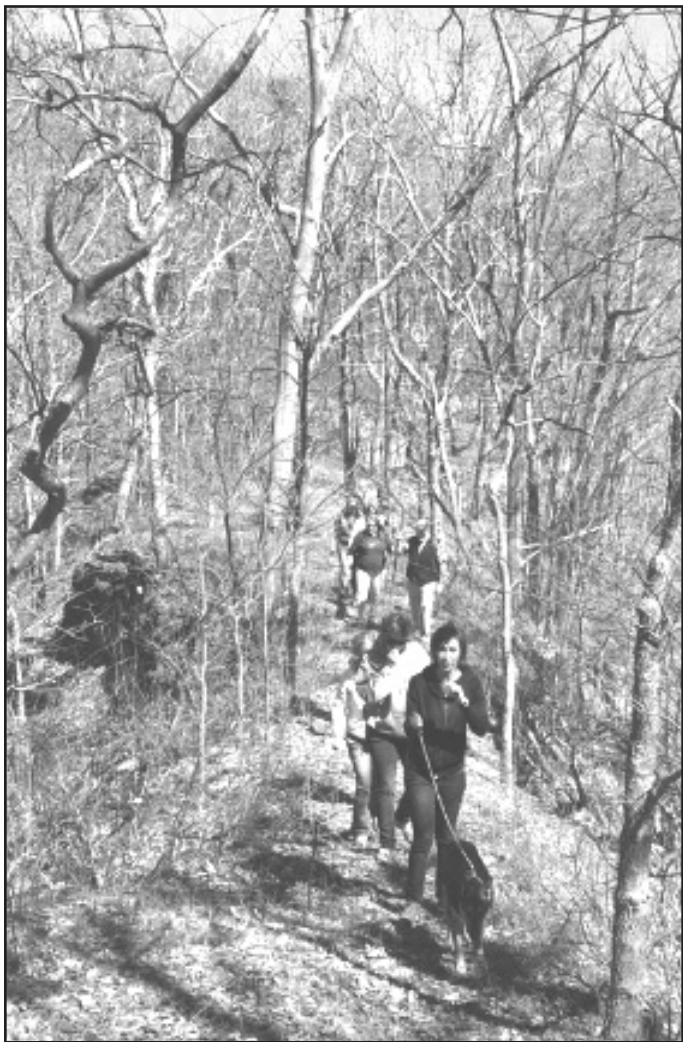
more importantly, the team leader. His early-morning individual workouts at midseason led others to do the same thing and that's when UK's season took a turn for the better.

"His was an amazing story," ESPN analyst Dick Vitale said. "Kentucky gets the best of the best recruiting-wise, but he was not supposed to be the star. He played his role and then became their best player. He was not afraid of the big stage. He didn't hide from the ball at key times. And he was really fun to watch play because of the way he competed."

Gilgeous-Alexander is projected a first-round pick in the upcoming NBA draft and even as high as a lottery pick in some projections. That means there's almost no chance he'll be back at UK but despite the finished he said "sucked" after the game, it was a memorable year for a player who did all he could to stuff the stats.



The Estill County Lady Engineer 10 and 11 year old basketball team won the 11 and 12 year old division of the Madison Central Basketball Classic on March 24 and 25, 2018, at Madison Central High School in Richmond. It is the second championship this season to go with three second place finishes. The ladies are really playing well this season. Pictured, left to right, front, Jadelyn Neal, Jayci Long, Miley Wilburn, Ava Hale. Back, D. P. McIntosh, Mila Walling, Lexi Tiller, Kadara Skinner, Callee Snowden, Maddie Cole, and Larry Tiller. (Photo courtesy of Larry Tiller)



LEFT AND ABOVE: Estill Action Group hosted a guided hike through Daniel Boone National Forest in the Marble Yard Road area on March 18. Kris Davis of Estill County guided more than 20 hikers and 3 dogs along a system of trails he cleared in the area so he could mountain bike. Davis said, "I knew the Action Group would want to explore the trails. We have a real opportunity to have a system of trails in Marble Yard area. But we need more people using what is already there." Estill Action Group said they plan to host more guided hikes in the future to help residents and visitors discover great hiking in their own backyards. There are no signs marking trails. Estill Action Group has been working toward getting Irvine/Ravenna certified as an official Kentucky Trail Town to bring more visitors to the area. (Photos courtesy of Victoria Stevens)