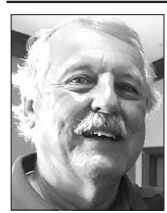


Paducah Tilghman QB can throw TD passes, win wrestling



Vaught's Views
Larry Vaught

Paducah Tilghman junior Jack James is not your ordinary high school quarterback. He threw for 4,019 yards and 56 touchdowns last season when he completed 255 of 375 passes (68 percent) and also ran for six touchdowns to help Paducah Tilghman reach the Class 4A semifinals. However, he also won the 215-pound state wrestling championship this season. If that's not enough, he also has a 3.95 grade-point average. Paducah Tilghman coach Sean Thompson knew James was talented as a freshman but says he has matured and improved because of his work ethic. "You don't hear of many quarterbacks with elite arm talent who also wrestle," Thompson said. "He didn't cut weight for wrestling either. I definitely have got the toughest quarterback in the state. He has wrestled his entire life but is a much better quarterback. He wrestles for that edge and his family believes that helps his football and it has worked because wrestling helped him learn to fight through adversity. "He's a very willing runner. It's not something we ask him to do much because his arm talent is so special that we don't want to risk what we have with him."

Thompson noted James (6-1, 210 pounds) had an 80-yard run against Mayfield that showcased what he can do when he runs. James, who also plays baseball, said his father liked the physical and mental toughness it takes to wrestle. He started wrestling about 11 years ago when he was at McCracken County and just kept wrestling when he got to Tilghman. "Football has always been my main sport and I just wrestle during wrestling season for about 3 1/2 months per year," James said. "I have had good coaches and been able to train with state champions." He admits he's never seen another quarterback wrestling because it takes more of a "linebacker" mentality on the wrestling mat. James was third in the 2023 state wrestling competition and the two who finished above him are now wrestling in college. He moved up from the 175-pound division to 215 rather than cut weight which might have hurt his football preparation. "I am going to play college football and need to keep my size," he said. "I've always wanted to play college football and knew that was a realistic goal after my second freshman year after COVID when I threw 35 touchdown passes. The interest started cranking up my sophomore year when I started getting offers." He has offers from Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky, Murray State, Tulane, Massachusetts, Miami (Ohio) Troy, Old Dominion and Char-



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lotte. He admits the UK offer surprised him. Thompson said he's a perfect fit at the mid-major level because of his ability to make quick decisions and get the ball out fast. "If he was three inches taller he would have any offer he wanted," the Paducah Tilghman coach said. "A lot of times coaches get caught in measurables as opposed to what a kid can do. But he's going to make someone a really good college quarterback."

New Kentucky women's basketball coach Kenny Brooks had a brief conversation with men's coach John Calipari upon his arrival in Lexington and pledged his support to the new coach. "Obviously, coach Cal, that's the first time I ever met coach Cal. I used to be an assistant

coach on the men's side for 10 years (at James Madison) and so I know Bruiser Flint, Orlando Antigua and those guys and it's good catching up with them," Brooks said. "The interaction with Cal, I'm going to lean on him. And we do have newspapers everywhere, I know there's been a lot going on with coach Cal and his situation but he's one of the best, one of the best in the country and I'm looking forward to picking his brain. "Anything and everything about Kentucky basketball because when we talk Kentucky basketball, it's an umbrella that you want to be under. It's a brand and I'm looking forward to capitalizing on it." However, it's not just Calipari that Brooks wants to lean on. He wants to garner knowledge from every successful coach at Kentucky. "Any sport that we

Quote of the Week:
"The ball never dies in his hands. He passes, attacks or shoots. I knew when he got with better people and did not have to do so much he would excel and told folks that. He's very, very unselfish."
Former Wayne County High School coach Rodney Woods, Kentucky's fourth all-time winningest coach, on Reed Sheppard

Quote of the Week:
"Every piece of blue has been eliminated from my wardrobe. The Revival has begun. The ReviVILLE has begun. The passion in the minds & hearts of Card Nation is like o other."
Pat Kelsey after being named the new head men's basketball coach at Louisville.

are successful in here at Kentucky, you want to piggyback off of that. Because just great exposure. I'm looking forward to that," Brooks said. * * * Kentucky athletics director Mitch Barnhart and coach John Calipari made a rare joint appearance on "BBN Tonight" on WLEX-TV one day after Barnhart confirmed last week that Calipari would return for a 16th season at UK despite his 2-8 record in Kentucky's last 10 postseason games. One noteworthy moment during the show was Barnhart's revelation that he and Calipari discussed at their annual year-end meeting how they wanted to end their careers at Kentucky. "Whatever we do in our careers, both of us want to exit well. Not a lot of people in our industry — in our enterprise of college athletics — get to exit the way you want to exit. And I want us to be able to exit well, and be able to say, 'We left it in a really good spot for the people that came behind us,'" Barnhart, who hired Calipari in 2009, said. "What ends up happening a lot of times is it gets left on the side of the track in a heap and a mess. And you say, 'Good luck,' to the next guy. "That's not what either one of us wants. We want to be good caretakers for the program. And we want to leave it in the right spot for the next person." While the program is not in the "right spot" after another early NCAA Tournament exit, Barnhart pointed out that Calipari went to four Final Fours in his first six seasons and has seven trips to the Elite Eight. "It's not that we don't know how to get there. We've hit a patch where we haven't," Barnhart said. "And that is not lost on us. "He and I are a little bit competitive. We certainly like to win. That has been in our DNA from the beginning of his career, and mine. We didn't come to this program to sit here and say, 'Hey, let's just see if we can casually walk through this thing and sashay all the way to the end of the deal.' I want to win."

Memorable moments in NCAA Tournament history

College basketball fans have it made each March. Come March, scores of college hoops fans anxiously anticipate the tipoff to March Madness, which is a widely used nickname for the wildly popular NCAA Tournament, a single-elimination battle featuring 68 teams competing over seven rounds. Each team aspires to win the championship, but only one can walk away with the elusive trophy. That reality ups the ante with each game, and many a nail-biter and memorable moment has taken center stage during the tournament over the years. As this year's round of madness prepares to tip off, fans can look back at these memorable moments from tournaments past and ponder the many others that have made March such a fun, if frenzied, month.

ble headline "David 43, Goliath 41" the morning after the game. • "The Shot," March 13, 1998: March Madness fans who eagerly fill out their brackets each March know the matchups featuring a 13 seed are always unpredictable (see above), and that certainly held true in 1998. Down two points with just 2.5 seconds left, Valparaiso shocked the world and sent the University of Mississippi home when guard Bryce Drew, the son of head coach Homer Drew, sank a 23-foot three-pointer as time expired. • A 16 finally beats a 1, March 16, 2018: Few likely imagined the sixteenth-seeded University of Maryland, Baltimore County defeating the tournament's top overall seed, the University of Virginia, in the opening round, much less doing so in convincing fashion. But that's precisely what the Retrievers did, outscoring the Cavaliers by 20 points in the second half as they cruised to a 74-54 victory and made history as the first 16 seed to defeat a number one seed. • A halfcourt heave stuns the defending champs, March 14, 1981: There's something about March Madness that compels hoopsters to save their most memorable moments for a game's final seconds, and that's precisely what happened when Arkansas's U.S. Reed stunned the defending champion Louisville Cardinals



in the second round. Down a point with six seconds remaining after leading for most of the game, Arkansas was facing dim prospects for advancement. A swarming Louisville press made it unlikely Arkansas was going to get a good shot, and that played out. Reed was forced to heave a 49-footer from a stride or two behind the half court line. The shot improbably went in and the Razorbacks advanced. • The Heels' hopes are lifted, and then sank, April 4, 2016: Much like UCLA fans would not fondly recall their upset loss to Princeton in 1996, fans of the storied program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill might find it hard to characterize their 77-74 title game defeat at the hands of the Villanova Wildcats as a night to remember. But few title games have featured closing moments as dramatic as this one. After the Tar Heels' Marcus Paige

double-clutched and sank a game-tying three pointer with 4.7 seconds left, the Wildcats' Kris Jenkins answered with a buzzer-beating three-pointer of his own, securing Villanova's first national championship since 1985. **Women's NCAA** • A scoreboard is lit up in the inaugural tournament, 1982: More than 40 years ago, few college hoops fans might have realized just how much history they were seeing as they watched the first Division I women's championship tournament unfold. Though the inaugural status made the tournament memorable in its own right, Drake's Lorri Bauman added to the history by scoring 50 points in the West Regional final. Though Bauman's efforts were not enough to overcome Maryland, her prodigious offensive output remains a tournament record. • Cheryl Miller cements her legacy, 1984:

Few might object if a basketball fan declared the Miller Family American basketball royalty. Though Reggie Miller, a 2012 Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame inductee, may be more of a household name, his older sister, Cheryl, a fellow Naismith Hall of Fame member, earned glory on the hardwoods long before her younger brother. Miller led the way as USC won its second consecutive national championship in 1984, winning the NCAA Tournament Most Valuable Player award for the second year in a row. • A summit is reached for the first time, 1987: The late Pat Summitt is a legendary figure in the game of basketball. Summit won eight NCAA Tournament championships as head coach at the University of Tennessee before retiring in 2012, and her first came in 1987. Though Summitt's Lady Vols would establish the program as one of the most dominant men's or women's college basketball programs throughout her run in Knoxville, the legend had not yet been written in 1987, when Tennessee finally got the better of a Louisiana Tech team that, prior to the 1987 national title game, had won 11 of the previous 12 meetings between the schools. Summitt's squad left no doubt among fans, as the team cruised to a 67-44 victory and, in a scenario that would unfold many more

times over the ensuing decades, celebrated as national champions. • A thrilling title game and a legendary performance crowns a new champion, 1993: A generation of basketball fans may never forget the name Sheryl Swoopes, and the Texas Tech star's performance in the memorable 1993 national championship game undoubtedly has much to do with her enduring reputation. On the back of Swoopes' title game record 47 points, the Red Raiders earned the school's first national championship, defeating Ohio State 84-82 in a game many consider among the most memorable in the history of the sport. • Brittney Griner denies entry, 2010: Blocked shots rarely garner much glory, but when they come as often as they did in one second-round affair in 2010, they make for one of the more memorable individual performances in tournament history. Legendary Baylor star Brittney Griner found herself in foul trouble in the first half of her team's second round game against Georgetown. A noted shot blocker, the 6-foot-9 Griner blocked just one shot in that foul-plagued first half. But she more than made up for that in the second half, blocking 13 shots after halftime to shatter the previous record for blocks in a single game as the Bears held the Hoyas to just 17 percent shooting on the night.