

GCMS Lady Dragon Volleyball



Seventh-grade libero Abby Herald serves an ace during Lady Dragons two-match win over the Lady Rebels. The matches ended 21-16 and 21-9.



Eighth-grader Kaylee Sharpe prepares for serve receive during the Lady Dragons' two-match win over the Lady Rebels. The matches ended 21-7 and 21-16.



Seventh-grader Ana Kae Ferguson serves the ball during seventh grade victory against Casey County Rebels.

Photos by Abbey Griffiths



Eighth-grader Joss Brown makes a kill during the GCMS domination of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade games over the Rebels on Thursday night.



Eighth grader Raylen Davis sets to the outside hitter during Thursday night's Dragons' victory over the Eagles.



Eight-grader Charlie Staten builds momentum with a block for the Lady Dragons.

Moreno could be one of the best freshmen in country



Vaught's Views
Larry Vaught

Texas coach Sean Miller was not surprised at how well Kentucky 7-foot freshman Malachi Moreno played against his team last week. "Malachi is a terrific young player. I think he's one of the best freshmen in the country and certainly has a big role in Kentucky's team," Miller said after Moreno had eight points, six assists and four rebounds in 26 minutes in UK's win against his team. "I think he's improving. Everyone likes to judge these guys on one snapshot, but you forget he's 19 years old and from Northern Kentucky. He's playing in games that he's never played before. I think he's only going to continue to get better."

Moreno has been forced into a much bigger role because Jayden Quaintance was not cleared to play until mid-December after last season's knee injury at Arizona State. He played only four games before the knee flared up and kept him from playing.

Kentucky coach Mark Pope calls Moreno "really smart" and liked the way he avoided committing fouls in the win over Texas defending Matas Vokietaitis, who leads the nation in fouls drawn.

"Malachi had a complicated guard all over the court. Complicated in ball screens, complicated curl protects," the UK coach said. He also liked that Moreno led the team with assists and had the ball in his hands often to start UK's offense.

"Halftime I'm putting a play call in, and Malachi's like, 'No Coach, we already got it. We already talked about it as a team. We already figured out what we want to do,'" Pope said. "He is a coach on the floor as a freshman, as a 7-foot freshman. I'm proud of him, and he continues to get better and better and better."

Cincinnati Moeller quarterback Matt Ponatoski verbally committed to Kentucky when Mark Stoops was the head coach but didn't hesitate to sign with the Wildcats after Stoops was fired and Will Stein became



Texas coach Sean Miller believes Malachi Moreno is one of the best freshmen in the country. (Vicky Graff Photo)

the new coach. Stein had recruited Ponatoski, a four-star recruit ranked as the 21st best quarterback in his class, when he was offensive coordinator at Oregon.

Stein called him a "really accurate passer and winner" who put up big numbers against good high school competition. "Cincinnati Moeller is a fantastic school. He is a two-sport athlete. He was Mr. Football and Mr. Baseball. I mean, that's pretty incredible," Stein said. "A Gatorade Player (of the Year) in both. I think he is one of like three guys ever to do that."

"I recruited Matt at Oregon. He was somebody that we were

super high on, really wanted, ended up taking another kid just because of the timing of it out at Oregon. But had the relationship with him and his dad and mom, great people. He is extremely accurate, throws the ball on time."

The 6-foot-2, 190-pound Ponatoski joined Pro Football Hall of Famer Randy Moss and National Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Mauer as the only players to be named Gatorade Player of the Year in their state in two sports in the same year.

He had a bevy of football scholarship offers but also drew almost as much interest for his baseball prowess where he could be a high pick

in the upcoming Major League Baseball draft. Ponatoski plans to also play baseball at Kentucky for coach Nick Mingione.

Stein is not worried about Ponatoski maybe opting out of football if he is a high draft pick. "Everything that he said to me is that he wants to be a big-time college football player. So is it (the draft) concerning? No. I mean, I'm just really grateful to be able to have the chance to coach Matt," Stein said.

"I think his best years are to come in football. He is obviously an outstanding baseball player and I would love to get him on the diamond here at Kentucky too and let's do this thing together."

Notre Dame transfer Kenny Minchey is expected to be UK's starting quarterback

next season but Stein likes other quarterbacks on the roster.

"I like (redshirt freshman) Brennen Ward a lot. I'm excited about Brennen. I've gotten to know him more and more just watching his tape from practice here last year and watching his high school tape. Son of a coach. I mean, he can really throw the rock. He has got great intangibles too. I think he is a natural leader, a great communicator. So excited about him," Stein said.

"We added JacQai (Long) from Marshall, who has played and started games. Carson Cruver from FAU. I think the room is competitive, which is fun. Guys that might not have a ton of experience, but I think the upside of the ceiling on these kids is really high."



Kentucky coach Will Stein made a trip to Cincinnati last week to see quarterback signee Matt Ponatoski.