

# Kam Williams wanted to find a way to help his team



Vaught's Views

Larry Vaught

After Kam Williams broke his foot against Texas on Jan. 21 and needed surgery, it seemed almost certain he would miss the remainder of Kentucky's season.

Williams' father, Greg, knew that was a possibility but also noted there was a "chance" he might return for postseason play if all went well. Last week Kam Williams was back playing for Kentucky in the SEC Tournament.

He played 17 minutes and hit a 3-pointer in the first round win over LSU. He got 13 minutes in the second round win over Missouri and hit another 3-pointer. Pope did limit Williams to seven minutes in the loss to Florida.

"I love seeing him play and it was super exciting to see him back. He is tough. Kam is also about the team," Greg Williams said. "It was hurting him not to play. However, you could tell he was also worried about what might happen in that first game. You could see the relief on his face when he could tell he was fine."

It was a freak, non-contact injury that made Williams miss almost two months. He was running back on defense, tried to avoid a Texas player and came up limping. Two days later he needed surgery. He was in a walking boot, had to ride a scooter and was on crutches to keep his leg stable. His father said he had massages and ice treatments daily. He had to wear an insert in his shoe so his foot would not bend and that caused him to limp.

"They also would do more X-rays to see if the bone was healing and he had injections of something in his stomach to help the bone heal faster," Greg Williams said.

Even when he played against LSU he had to do certain things for his foot early that morning and then do more after the game before putting the foot back in the boot for precautionary reasons overnight.

"That's just the dedication and toughness he brings. He wanted to find a way to help his team," Greg Williams said.

After his surgery, he could not leave his apartment for a week. He was allowed to attend practice after that first week but all he could do was touch a ball while wearing his boot. Still, the more Greg Williams watched him rehab, the more optimistic he was about a possible return.



Kam Williams not only returned from a broken foot to play in the SEC Tournament but hit 3-point shots in two games. (Vicky Graff Photo)



Kentucky assistant coach Josh Peterson believes McDonald's All-American Emily McDonald is the perfect guard for coach Kenny Brooks' system. (Vicky Graff Photo)

"He did everything he was supposed to do and nothing he was not supposed to do," Greg Williams said. "I told him if he wanted to have any chance to play and not re-injure himself he had to listen to the doctors. I knew how bad he wanted to play and it helped him when he knew they locked up a NCAA (Tournament) bid and he knew the SEC tournament would not be his last chance to play."

"That's why it was overwhelming to see him get in that first game and BBN cheering. They (fans) really

care about and that was a reward for the hard work he did. It kind of shocked me he was able to run around with no problems immediately and then made that 3. It was unbelievable."

Not only was Kam Williams out, but point guard Jaland Lowe was out for the year with a shoulder injury and center Jayden Quaintance played only four games at midseason before his knee issues shut him down again.

"Kam would hear what was said about JQ and all that money he got and he should pay it back or play," Greg Wil-

iams said. "We talked about it briefly and I just said you got to clear that out of your mind and worry about getting better because positivity helps with healing and negativity has a bad impact."

"There is a negative aspect to the fanbase and a positive, optimistic part and he fed off that part. Just cheering before him when he went into that first game helped in a positive way. He just wants to fit in any way he can. He doesn't have to start. He just wants to contribute and not throw the team off from any

positive steps it had taken without him. He just wants to provide any spark he can."

Lowe was a different type of leader for Williams during his rehab because he was constantly in "everybody's ear" about what he would see to help them. Williams followed his lead and took on a "cheerleader role" while also watching the game to see what he could learn.

"Both JQ and Lowe told him not to waste his opportunity to come back and play. Take advantage of it because they both wished they could play," Greg Williams said. "The hardest part was the mental part knowing that any little setback could extend the time to come back. But you have to play as if you were not injured. Once he overcame that fear, it was Coach's job to protect him and limit what he does."

Greg Williams' oldest son, Greg Jr, played basketball at St. John's and Louisiana. He played in a NCAA Tournament and hopefully Kam will this week.

"My oldest son was in Israel playing professionally but now he's home and will be able to watch his little brother have the same opportunity he had in the NCAA," Greg Williams said. "My oldest hurt his wrist and was trying to get an MRI but there are only seven places in Israel where he could get that done and then he had a problem with the team's insurance. They had a break coming up so he came home to get the MRI done."

"That was about two weeks before the conflict (with Iran) started. It was like God answered my prayers and he did not have to go back. He is trying to rehab his wrist in case someone needs him this season or he may play in Canada or he may play in the summer league and try to get on an NBA

team. I am just thankful he is here and safe."

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The first time Kentucky assistant coach Josh Petersen saw Emily McDonald play was when he was recruiting Savvy Swords. Both are now McDonald's All-Americans and the two New York prep teammates are both Kentucky signees.

"It was September of 2024 when I went to see Savvy in an open gym. I had heard of Emily and it was like, 'My God, this kid is perfect for us. She is a Kenny Brooks type of guard.' She was 6-foot, long, plays with a great pace and her basketball IQ is very good," Petersen said.

Her high school team, Long Island Lutheran (LuHi), is one of the nation's best annually and has three McDonald's All-Americans on this year's roster.

"They have six, maybe seven high level players on this team. Four are already committed — one to Duke, one to Vanderbilt and two to Kentucky — and two more are 2027 (recruits)," the UK assistant coach said. "I got to watch her with her club team in the summer and her role on that team is very different. She runs point and handles the ball a lot. She is a true combo guard."

"She always brings a lot of competitive juice to the gym. You can develop skill and that is such a bonus to have but the true intangible I love is if the kid is a real competitor. Our whole (recruiting) class is like that. They are so competitive. Savvy is the savage and (point guard) Maddyn (Greenway) is a pit bull."

McDonald picked Kentucky over national powerhouse South Carolina after slowly climbing the recruiting rankings to earn a spot in the top 25 nationally.

"She is very personable and very well rounded. She's got an awesome family, is a great student and is unbelievably humble," Petersen said. "She does not boast or post crazy stuff on social media."

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One of the first priorities that Jay Bateman had when he was hired as Kentucky's defensive coordinator was to make sure safety Ty Bryant stayed at UK for his final season. He was one of the first players Bateman reached out to as soon as he arrived in Lexington.

He has started 25 games the previous three years and played in 37 games. He had a team-high 76 tackles in 2025 along with leading the SEC with four interceptions.

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Senior safety Ty Bryant is even faster than new UK defensive coordinator Jay Bateman was expecting. (Vicky Graff Photo)



Kentucky signee Maddyn Greenway ended her prep career as the third all-time leading scorer in girls high school basketball history. (UK Athletics Photo)

### Quote of the Week:

"They showed me what a family is and they take being a Wildcat very seriously. I remember when we played the state championship at Kroger (Field), and it just felt so special, and it really hit my heart,"

—Owensboro linebacker Ty Ashley after his commitment to UK football.

### Quote of the Week 2:

"I'm so proud of Otega Oweh in terms of his willingness to be present in the moment through all the frustration. It bodes well. If we can carry that with us, we have a chance. We'll play way better than this. I have no doubt. If we can hang on to that ability to focus for 40 minutes on just trying to find answers, we're going to make a great (NCAA Tournament) run,"

—Kentucky coach Mark Pope after loss to Florida in SEC tourney quarterfinals.

### Quote of the Week 3:

"The idea for him at Ole Miss was to play a bigger role. He is not a soft player. He's a physical guy. He's a competitor. But in the game of basketball, there's going to be plays and possessions where you have to play with that kind of strength. We've been encouraging him from one day to initiate the contact, don't run from it," — Ole Miss coach Chris Beard on former Kentucky Mr. Basketball Travis Perry at the SEC Tournament.