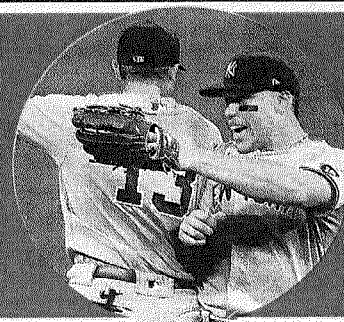


# Sports



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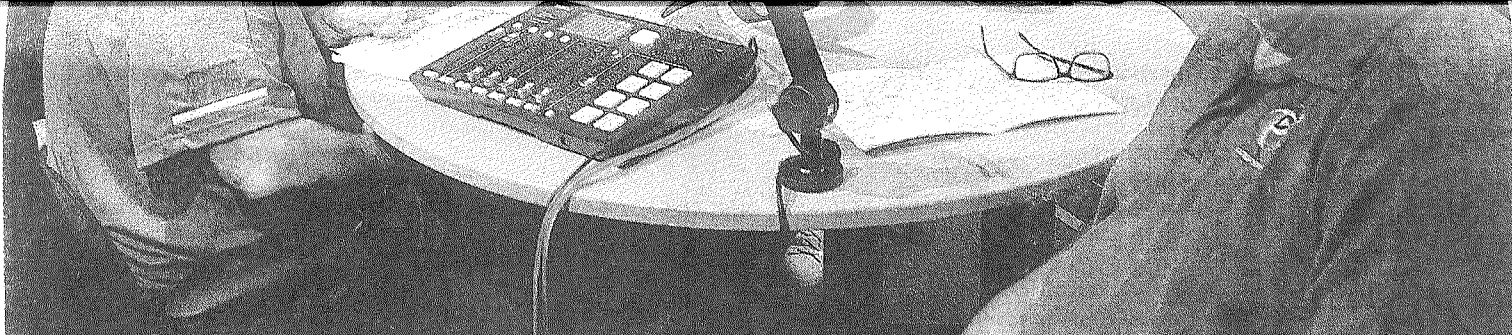


PREPSPIN.COM

Former football coach Mike Meighan, left, PrepSpin.com founder William Warfield and play-by-play man Gary Ball sit inside the company's mobile studio as they prepared for the 2021 high school football season.

## Play by play voice Gary

Before the first big game, he



PREPSPIN.COM

Former football coach Mike Meighan, left, PrepSpin.com founder William Warfield and play-by-play man Gary Ball sit inside the company's mobile studio as they prepared for the 2021 high school football season.

# Play-by-play voice Gary Ball on mend from stroke with fresh outlook

BY JARED PECK  
jpeck@herald-leader.com

Last Friday night marked the return of high school football, of course, but for play-by-play man Gary Ball, it meant something much more.

The producer of the long-running "Scholastic Ball Report" on CWKYT and regular voice of PrepSpin.com's streaming high school football and basketball games suffered a stroke last November.

What followed were months of hospital stays, rehabilitation and doubt.

"It was like, 'Am I ever going to get back to announcing?'" Ball said. "That's the thing that I really love. And I thought it would be taken away from me."

## WARNING SIGN

Ball felt unusually tired the evening before Thanksgiving. He went to sleep and when he stirred, he told his wife, Brigid DeVries, "My arm's asleep." They called his doctor.

The doctor advised Ball to go to the emergency room if it didn't get better in 30 minutes.

"The emergency room was full, and they took me right back," Ball said. "So, I knew something was really wrong with me at that point. ... They started doing tests on me and then, all of a sudden, boom, I was out of it."

Ball suffered a lacunar stroke, which happens when a small artery supplying blood to the brain is blocked.

"If I hadn't been in the emergency room on Thanksgiving eve, I would have died," Ball

said.

## THE ROAD BACK

Ball was in and out of Central Baptist Hospital and Cardinal Hill Rehabilitation Center for two months for rehabilitation and a couple of complications that arose during his recovery. It was also the height of COVID-19 at that time. "It was awful."

The stroke slurred his speech, numbed his right arm, took away his ability to walk for a time and even gave him recurring hiccups, which, eventually, went away.

Finally, on Jan. 21, Ball got to go home. He's been rehabilitating ever since with three therapists — physical, occupational and speech. He has a slight limp, but he ditched the cane a while ago.

Before the first big game, he practiced with PrepSpin.com owner William Warfield and broadcast partner Mike Meighan ahead of Friday night's live action at East Jessamine High School.

"I didn't think I'd get through it," Ball said. "I thought I'd do a quarter, maybe half and then have somebody sit down, but I got through the whole game."

Ball estimates he's at about "75 to 80 percent," and thinks getting back to at least 95 percent of his pre-stroke self is within sight.

"It worked out pretty well," Ball said of the broadcast. "If you watched the game, you know, it's pretty good."

DeVries, a former commissioner of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association, took over hosting duties of Ball's weekly "Scholastic Ball Report" on CWKYT as he recovered. The "Report" highlights the on-field and off-field achievements of high school athletes and also deploys them as interns to help run the show. Ball will return to the program for its fall debut on Labor Day weekend.

SEE FOOTBALL, 3B

# FOOTBALL

"If I learned anything from the stroke, I'm going to enjoy each day," Ball said.

## MOBILE STUDIO

One thing making Ball's comeback a lot easier is PrepSpin.com's new trailer, or as it's officially called "The Whitaker Bank Mobile Broadcast Studio."

Warfield, who last year signed a major deal with Mingua Beef Jerky's Curtis Mackley in addition to the Whitaker sponsorship, had been thinking about having a studio on wheels for some time, especially after the loss of almost all of his high-end equipment from his truck in a restaur-

ant parking lot burglary in 2017. "I knew it would serve a dual purpose of home office and rolling studio (for his onsite video podcast)," Warfield said. "I never thought we would actually have play-by-play inside it. Then COVID hit."

In addition to many schools not wanting Warfield's three-man-plus team occupying press box space under COVID restrictions, Meighan developed a chronic foot problem, and Warfield suffered an unusually long illness, as well.

"We kept getting beat up, health-wise," Warfield said. "So, the idea to add

this huge TV inside the trailer came to mind. This allows the guys to call the games inside."

Warfield found a vendor that could put the trailer together, and he's been outfitting it with screens and all his equipment since its delivery in July. It has a custom PrepSpin.com broadcast table, lined walls and lighting and three air conditioners. All that's left is the paint job, which will be a custom wrap promoting his company and his sponsors.

"No one has anything like it. It's definitely a first of its kind," Warfield said.

Now, Warfield can produce streams and his team can call games from the air-conditioned studio with one or more camera operators around the field. Ball doesn't miss the

press box. "We love it," he said of the studio. "It's ideal."

This Friday, PrepSpin.com will stream Lexington Catholic's Traditional Bank Bluegrass Bowl game at home against Pulaski County for free on its YouTube channel, website and apps. Kickoff is scheduled for 8:45 p.m.

## NEW BROADCAST IN TOWN

There's another new way to watch Lexington high school football in town thanks to WTVQ-36 and WLXG-AM 1300.

Sports anchor Bryan Kennedy has spearheaded an effort to combine HypedUp.TV and WLXG's "Varsity Game Night" to WTVQ's 36.2 digital channel, which is available over the air and Lexington

cable systems. HypedUp.TV, founded by Corey Rainey, provides the video, WLXG's Angelo Carriero and color man Josh Toftness provide the commentary and WTVQ provides the signal. The broadcast cannot be streamed due to Fayette County Schools' exclusive streaming deal with the NFHS Network, but over-the-air broadcasts get around this problem.

"A big reason we did is, honestly, for exposure for local athletes," said Kennedy, who made a trial run of the idea during last season's 43rd District basketball tournament. "I'm a big high school football guy. I played high school football, and I always feel like, sometimes, high school athletes get left behind, especially in a city as big as Lexin-



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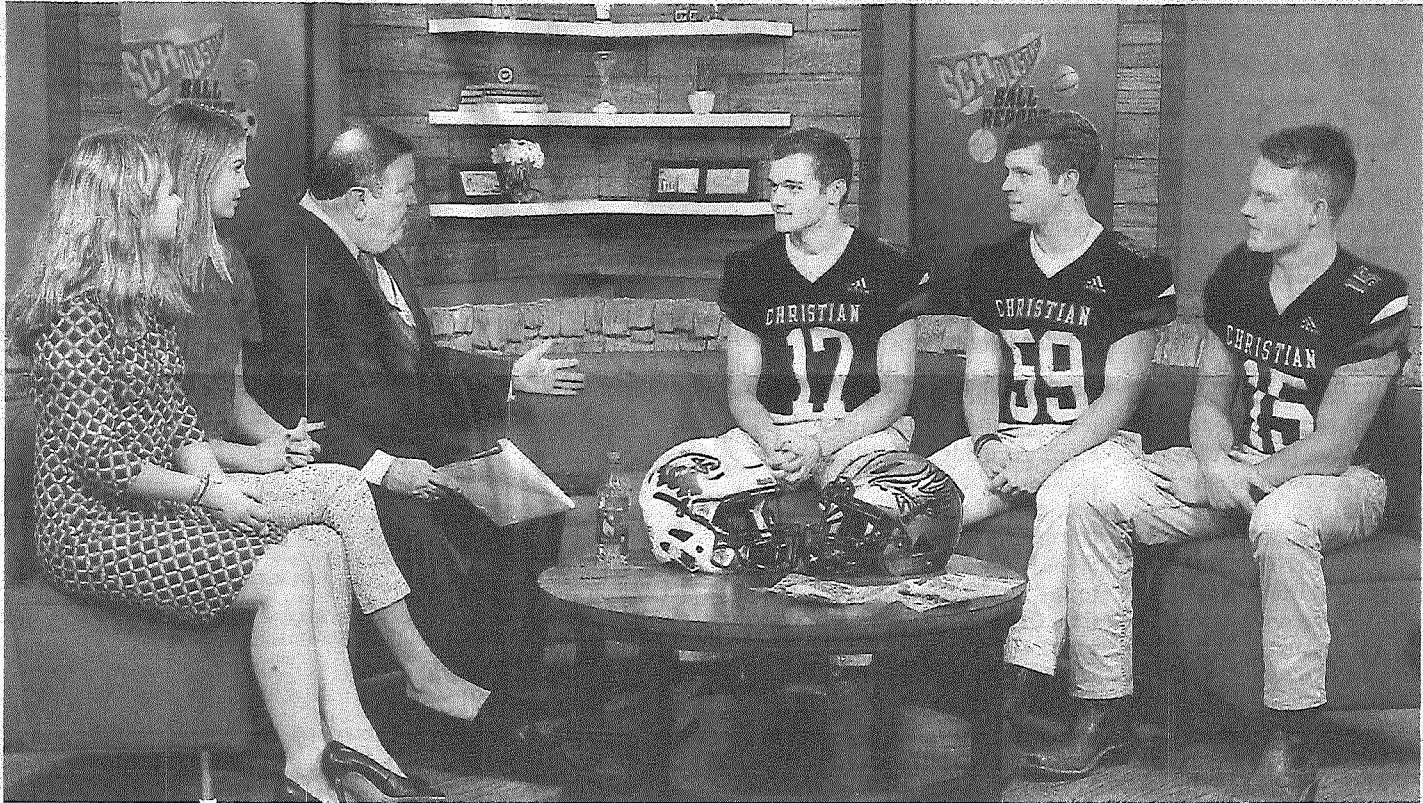
with Kentucky and EKU close. Something like this can give them even more exposure. I mean, there's nothing cooler than being a high school athlete and seeing yourself playing on TV. I think that's pretty cool."

The team made their debut doing the Mingua Beef Jerky Bowl double-header at Henry Clay last week and is set to broadcast this Friday's Madison Central at Paul Laurence Dunbar game at 7:30 p.m.

In Lexington in addition to the 36.2 digital signal, the game can be found on Spectrum Channel 138, Metronet Channel 132 and Windstream Channel 11.

Jared Peck: 859-488-2883, @HLLpreps

# Kentucky high school athletes intern on 'Ball Report' show



MARCUS DORSEY mdorsey@herald-leader.com

Producer Gary Ball speaks to three area high school football players as interns Karson Purdy and Grace Hager listen intently during a production of "Scholastic Ball Report" at WKYT's studios.

BY JARED PECK  
jpeck@herald-leader.com

Now in its 17th season, the "Scholastic Ball Report" has highlighted the athletic and academic achievements of hundreds of athletes during the high school sports season each week on CWKYT.

But the achievements of those guests are just part of the legacy of the Gary Ball-produced show. Ball has also mentored dozens of student-athlete interns who take a full part in the broadcasts each year and have used the experience as a springboard to their future college and professional careers.

"I hope to pursue a career in news broadcasting, so it's



MARCUS DORSEY mdorsey@herald-leader.com

Davis Brown, left, a Frederick Douglass basketball and baseball player, conducts an interview with fellow intern Allison DeMoss, a Frederick Douglass soccer player, for the show.

been great to see how it actually works and how it all plays out and to see if I'd really be interested in doing

this for a living and I've loved it, so far," said Grace Hager, a Lexington Christian Academy tennis player who found out

about the internship from her journalism teacher. "I was very surprised by the amount of work that goes on behind the camera — the amount of editing — it really makes you appreciate the show a lot more."

Hager is one of five interns who've been a part of the show since it resumed for the fall sports season in August. With her are Allie Viney, a Scott County swimmer and "Ball Report" veteran now in her third year; Davis Brown, who plays basketball and baseball at Frederick Douglass; Karson Purdy, a Douglass lacrosse player; and Allison DeMoss, a Douglass soccer player.

SEE INTERNS, 4B

# INTERNS

"It's been good," Brown said of the experience. "It's surprising. I like how it's a challenge to learn the questions and you get to see new people and you get to learn about these teams, because I'm a sports guy, it's cool to learn about these high school sports."

## CONFIDENCE REQUIRED

Ball likes employing student-athletes because they seem to already come equipped with the confidence necessary to be in front of the camera.

"When you're doing a TV show, you're bringing in a 17-, 16-, 18-year-old person in here as an intern, they have to have confidence that they can project on the air," Ball said.

Some of the interns admitted that confidence has been something they've had to grow into.

"When I first started, I was super nervous," Brown said. "I've never been on TV before, so naturally, I was nervous. ... I was just worried that

everything was judgy, but I've learned to be more cool with it and calmed down."

Learning to speak in public, whether it be in front of a group or on camera, is an essential part of almost any job, Ball said. And the show is essentially trial by fire.

"It's a lot of memorizing and coming up with things on the spot, so it's really helped me become a better public speaker," Purdy said.

## THEY REALLY ENJOY DOING IT

To see how impactful the "Ball Report" has been, one need look no further than one of Ball's very first interns, Mario Anderson, a Bryan Station High School grad who is now an anchor and television host on cable's Spectrum News channel.

"The 'Scholastic Ball Report' was my first experience ever stepping inside a television studio, complete with bright studio lights, production cameras and teleprompters," Anderson said. "I

was grateful for the opportunity to be one of the very first students to serve as an intern under Gary Ball, learning the ropes of this then-startup television program that focused on all things high school sports. All these years later, the program has continued to evolve, and I can honestly say that this experience further ignited my interest to pursue the broadcasting field. It's an industry that I've loved being a part of for nearly a decade."

Ball, who some might also know from his radio and PrepSpin.com play-by-play calls of high school games over the years and his signature "soup-and-a-sandwich" line whenever a basketball player makes a basket and gets fouled, said the show's guests and its interns help keep keep him young, "because they have such excitement. And they really enjoy doing it."

## KEEP THOSE GRADES UP

Earlier this school year, the players and the head coach from Male's football team drove over from Louisville on a weeknight to be part of the show.

"We highlight student-athletes. The criteria is they can play any sport, boy or girl. They have to have a 3.4 GPA," Ball said. "It doesn't matter what school you call, it can be Central Kentucky, Louisville, whatever, there's hundreds of kids that have a 3.4."

While weekly high school football and basketball highlights are part of the programming, the show has also featured Lafayette's championship marching band, among other things people might not associate as sport.

"We've had bowling on this show, we've had tennis, you name it. It's not just a basketball and football show. It really isn't," Ball said.

"Scholastic Ball Report" normally airs at noon Sundays on CWKYT and is later available for viewing on WKYT's YouTube channel.

"It's something different to do for sure," said Douglass's DeMoss. "It's a lot of fun, and you meet a lot of new people. ... It's a great community of people."

Jared Peck: 859-231-1333, @HLpreps

# High school 'Scholastic Ball Report' kicks off 20th season

BY JARED PECK  
jpeck@herald-leader.com

The "Scholastic Ball Report" begins its 20th season this Sunday highlighting the academic and athletic achievements of Kentucky high school students.

"When you think about it, over 20 years, that's a lot of kids and we've had more than 100 of them intern for us and a couple of more coming in this

year," said Gary Ball, host of the weekly show that airs during the fall, winter and spring at noon on CWKYT and is shared with WMYT in Hazard and WBKO in Bowling Green. Segments are also available via WKYT on its YouTube channel and Facebook. "For a TV show, that's almost unheard of. I guess "Law and Order: SVU" is about the only other one I can think of that's more than 20 years."

With more than 600 episodes and counting, Ball estimates the "Ball Report" has interviewed more than 1,500 coaches and 3,000-some Scholar Athletes of the Week.

The show once brought players and coaches into WKYT's studio in Lexington each week, but since the onset of the pandemic, interviews have been done virtually with Ball and his wife, Brigid DeVries, the show's executive producer and former commissioner

of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association.

This week, the "Ball Report" will feature Paris football coach Tyquan Rice and captains Zian Webb and Jakari Ransom as well as Clark County volleyball coach Kainan Hudson and players Abby Kubican and Kelsey McKeehan.

The show also features highlights of each week's high school sports action produced by WKYT's sports staff.

"It looks pretty good when it's all put together," Ball said. "We've reached a lot of people with it."

Jared Peck: 859-488-2883,  
@HLpreps

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 4, 2022

# Ball bounces from radio to TV

By Skip Tate  
Kentucky Post contributor

It's Friday night in the Video Features production center in downtown Cincinnati and the only thing separating Gary Ball from midnight is 15 minutes and a cup of coffee. The day is already 16 hours old and a long way from over. Ball has just finished broadcasting the play-by-play of the Covington Catholic-Highlands football game and now has at least six more hours of work in front of him.

The gears have shifted, though. After a full day of radio, the focus is now on television. Ball, WTSJ cohort Randy Wilson and a host of production personnel are working frantically to put the final touches on "The Ball Report," Gary's weekly TV show about local high school sports.

The work weeks since the show went on the air have been long and hectic, lasting about 80 hours. But for the Florence native, the time is well spent.

After eight years of working his way up the broadcasting ladder, Ball, 30, is now at an elevation where opportunities and recognition are finally starting to come. The Ball is finally in Gary's court.

He just started the television show. He was a finalist for the play-by-play spot for Xavier University TV basketball games. He's even turned down "four or five solid offers" from larger radio stations, preferring to stay at the 1,000-watt WTSJ.

"You don't do everything for money," explained Ball. "And I enjoy high school ball. In my opinion anyone can read sports. I'm a person who likes being at a game, part of the action."

"And as long as I keep enjoying it, I'll continue. What I'm doing right now is a blast and that opinion hasn't changed in five years and I don't see it changing soon."

The Arbitron ratings, which monitor the number of listeners for radio and television stations,



Gary Ball

indicate there are a lot of people listening, too, despite the fact the signal is decreased to 278 watts after 7:30 p.m. and is limited to inside the I-275 belt.

That has made life easier for Gary Ball the salesman, who spends his off-the-air hours as a sales manager, corralling advertisers for the sports programs.

Ball's broadcasting career started in 1977 after he captained Jim Connor's 1976 Boone County High School basketball team. He went off to the University of Kentucky where he called Wildcats football and basketball games for two years.

He took a job as a divisional manager at Scandinavian Health Spas, helping sell memberships. It wasn't until three years later he got back on the air, doing the high school roundup on WHKK.

In 1984 WHKK was purchased by WSAI and expanded its high school coverage into Cincinnati. Ball then started doing play-by-play of Cincinnati games. In October of 1986 WSAI went out of business and he and

WTSJ general manager Mark Roberts got together.

"He knew who I was because he heard me do some games at WSAI," said Ball. "They were a daytime station until September of '86 when they went to a 24-hour status. We put a package together."

The move the WTSJ has left Ball in the ideal situation, doing exactly what he always wanted to do.

"I knew what I wanted to do and it was just a matter of getting the opportunity to do it," said Ball. "I did the scoreboard show just waiting for a break. A lot of it is timing and experience. That's why I started the intern program, so they can get a break right out of the gate."

The high school internship program for high school students gives them a chance to do color commentary of games to gain experience.

Ball has also brought Cincinnati Bengal Anthony Munoz into the booth, letting the All-Pro tackle learn a few tips before he retires to do NFL games on television.

"When they were on strike he (Munoz) was working with CCCV (Citizens Contributing to Community Values)," said Ball, "and he came in to cut a commercial we were going to run. He jokingly said, 'I know you do high school games. I'd be interested in doing some color.' I thought he was just kidding. I called later and asked if he was serious and he said he'd love to do it. This is his second year."

"The Ball Report" has a contract to run for another 10 weeks, but Gary hopes it will run at least through the basketball season and perhaps in the future run in conjunction with the school year. No changes are foreseen for WTSJ's high school coverage, at least not for another year.

If anything does change, though, don't be surprised if it works out for the best for Gary. Right now, that's just the way the Ball is bouncing.





Photo by Eric Krosnes

The WCVG-AM 1320 radio team for the 1993 football season, back row from left: Gary Ball, Bruce Kozerski, Doug Pelfrey, Joe Walter, Dave Guidugli. Front: Bill Harmon.

## Pelfrey hosts benefit game at Scott

Cincinnati Bengals placekicker Doug Pelfrey is giving a little back to his roots. Pelfrey, a former three-sport star at Scott High School, is holding a benefit basketball game at his old high school April 13.

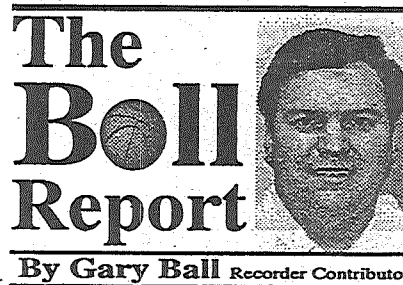
The game will bring some big names to the Taylor Mill school. Former University of Kentucky standouts Kyle Macy and Richie Farmer will be there, as will be NKU/UK grad Todd Svoboda. Also performing will be UK football standout and Highlands product Marty Moore, Dean Wells and other UK grads.

Northern Kentucky will also be well represented. Former Mr. Basketball Doug Schloemer and the 9th Region's all-time leading scorer Scott Draud will play. Former Bengal and now Fox-TV broadcasters Anthony Munoz will be in action, as will Doug Flynn, Jim Breech, Mark Pike of the Buffalo Bills and other local celebrities.

The honorary coaches for the first annual Doug Pelfrey Benefit will be triple crown winner Steve Cauthen and Andy Furman of WLW radio. Yours truly will be a player/coach.

Pelfrey has worked hard to put this game together. You can help him out by coming to the game and supporting Scott High School. Door prizes will be given away and autographs signed. For ticket information, call the school at 356-3106.

The game will be broadcast on the Northern Kentucky Sports Network WNKR-FM 106.5. Come out and support the Scott Athletic Boosters.



semifinals against Bullitt East (26-4).

GRANT COUNTY	6	13	14	5	38
EMINENCE	8	8	9	12	37

GRANT COUNTY (38): Collett 10, Bowen 4, Rose 3, Peace 16, Sauder 5.

EMINENCE (37): Roberts 14, Tingle 2, Stivers 3, Allen 16, Miller 2.

points in a losing effort for Carroll County (13-13).

CARROLL COUNTY	6	15	13	14	48
BULLITT EAST	15	22	21	9	67

CARROLL COUNTY (48): Brock 6, Lindsay 1, Booth 4, Izor 9, Weed 18, Tyska 6, Poole 2, Wrenn 2.

BULLITT EAST (67): Hardman 11, Simms 8, Mason 17, Reed 13, Bass 12, Johnson 6.

Three-point goals: CC—Brock, Izor, Weed 2. BE—Hardman 2, Simms 2, Reed.

the semifinals at 6:00 tonight.

FLEMING COUNTY	15	7	16	24	62
PENDLETON COUNTY	16	15	14	26	71

FLEMING COUNTY (62): Argo 5 0 10, Grannis 5 2 13, Lewis 2 0 4, Jackson 4 0 8, Perkins 7 6 20, Newsom 1 0 2, Saunders 2 1 5. Totals 26 9 62.

PENDLETON COUNTY (71): Dennie 2 0 4, Mains 5 0 10, Viers 3 2 8, Yelton 3 2 12, Schafer 3 2 9, Roberts 10 5 26, Peoples 1 0 2. Totals 29 11 71.

Three-point goals: PC—Schafer, Roberts. FC—Grannis. Records: Pendleton County 13-14, Fleming County 16-14.

## KENTUCKY WILDCAT BASKETBALL



**WNKR**  
COUNTRY 106.5 fm

**UK vs.  
Tennessee**  
9:45 TONIGHT

Tune to WNKR 90 minutes  
before each game for:  
A look at basketball  
Rick Pitino Pre-Game Show  
Wildcat Warmup

After the game stay tuned for:  
Wildcat Wrapup  
Rick Pitino Post-Game Show  
Wildcat Scoreboard

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## SPORTS COUNTRY 1320 CVG



with Doug Schloemer and Gary Ball

## 9th REGION BASKETBALL

Second Round action at 4:15 today

Holmes vs. Holy Cross

followed at 7:45 by

Newport vs. Conner

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