

While at Kentucky, Pursiful earned All-SEC first team honors and was the team's second-leading scorer with 19.1 points behind All-American teammate Cotton Nash's SEC-leading 23.4 points during the 1961-62 season. In addition, the captain of third-ranked Kentucky team was one of only three SEC standouts who were selected in the 1962 NBA Draft. The Chicago Packers (now the Washington Wizards) picked the Four Mile, Ky., product in the eighth round and offered him a contract for \$7,000.

Mainly because of job security reasons, Pursiful didn't play in the NBA. Instead, he opted to play with the Phillips 66 Oilers, a well-known amateur team operated by one of the corporate giants in the National Industrial Basketball League.

"They let you play and gave you a job with the Phillips Petroleum Co., the corporation," said Pursiful in another interview with this columnist over 20 years ago. "Once I finished playing, I had a job for the rest of my life if I wanted it."

Interestingly, Pursiful — a two-time All-State selection who first played high school basketball at Lone Jack before going to Bell County for his senior year — said only one college offered him a basketball scholarship. And that was UK.

"It was kind of unusual that they (the Wildcats) were the only people who recruited me," recalled Pursiful. "That was fine with me because UK was the only place that I wanted to go. Like most Kentucky mountain boys, I grew up listening to all the great teams at Kentucky, the Fabulous Five, (Frank) Ramsey and (Cliff) Hagan."

Here's one Rupp story about Pursiful, who was known as a great shooting guard.

The Baron often fussed at him for not shooting enough baskets.

"Coach was always on me because I wouldn't shoot," said the minister. "I felt like I could hit most shots when I was open. He wanted me to shoot sometimes when I felt that I wasn't open. He stayed on me about that."

One night during a road trip, Rupp saw Pursiful in a hotel lobby and told him not to bother coming to a pre-game workout.

"Four Mile, you might as well stay at the hotel tonight," moaned Rupp, who often called his players by their hometown.

"What have I done now?" asked a confused Pursiful.

"You weren't going to shoot anyway so you might as well stay at the hotel," said the unhappy coach.

During his senior year at UK, Pursiful helped his team beat rival Tennessee three times, including the University of Kentucky Invitational Tournament (UKIT). He loved it since he often had to put up with a lot of "ribbing" from many Vol fans living in the tri-state area of Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia.

"I'll be honest with you. I grew up in Bell County and I didn't like UT," he said. "We got the Tennessee newspapers and I had to read all that garbage about UK."

He had great performances in three victories against the Vols, gunning 34, 30 and 19 points. "I had some of my very best games against Tennessee," remembered Pursiful.

Not surprisingly, Pursiful today remains a huge fan of the Wildcats, who are currently ranked No. 23 in this week's AP Top 25 poll.

"My wife and I still attend every home game in Rupp Arena and watch every (road) game they play on TV," said Pursiful. "I'm still and will always be a Kentucky Wildcat.

"This current bunch of Cats are very typical of most of Cal's teams starting slow and finishing strong. At least, I hope that is the case. They are still having growing pains, adjusting to the college game, learning how hard you have to play now, learning what it means to play at Kentucky, and learning how to withstand every team's best shot.

"But the talent is there and pretty soon that elite athlete's pride kicks in and they go forward. There are several very good basketball teams out there this year and I guess we will see what happens, but I think they have the ability to play with anyone."

Back in the early days, while at LaRue County High School where he was the head coach for six years (1968-'74), Pursiful was active at a local Baptist church. But that wasn't enough and he eventually was called to the ministry.

"God called me to the ministry when I was 47 years old," said the former Cal. "I didn't really want to go into the ministry. I had a business and was helping my wife run the business — a shoe store in Elizabethtown. I was attending church, singing in the choir and teaching Sunday School. I thought I was doing everything He wanted me to do, but He had other ideas."

As I mentioned in my 1995 book on UK basketball, "Still Crazy About The Cats" (the second one of a four-book series), we still should call him a Wildcat minister.

And it sounds awfully good to me.

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Name
Larry Pursiful

Position
Guard

Class
SR

Hometown (Last School)
Four Mile, KY (Bell County)

Ht
6'1"

Wt
165

Seasons
1959-60, 1960-61, 1961-62

Birthday
June 14, 1940

From the 1962 University of [Kentucky](#) Media Guide:

The lone returning starter and one of only four lettermen back in the fold, Larry Pursiful bears a great responsibility in the success plans of Coach Rupp's Wildcat band for 1961-62. [Kentucky](#) coaches believe this boy has the potential to become one of the finest guards in school history, although he is the steady and dependable type rather than the high-scoring sensation. Larry is classed as one of the best shots in the nation—he finished last season as the country's 10th best free thrower with an 83.8 percent accuracy mark and was the team's best shot from the field at 41.1 percent. He's the best outsider shooter Kentucky has had in several years, a good jumper and quite possibly could be a phenomenal scorer if he would throw it up more. Ranked third in scoring last year with 375 points. Evidence of the fact that he is a consistent 20-point scorer is his high point production of 21 on four different occasions—against Illinois in the UK Invitational, Vanderbilt, Missouri and Marquette. Pursiful's top-flight performance in the UKIT earned him a spot on the All-Tournament five. Along with graduated All-Conference star Bill Lickert, Larry gained the unique honor of starting every game last season and piled up 956:38 in action time that was second only to Lickert. He was the fourth most proficient player on the club that staged a sensational comeback to win 11 of its last 12 starts and finish in contention for the national title. Averaged scoring a point every 2 1/2 minutes of play. True to the best tradition of Kentucky guards, Pursiful is comparatively small at 5-11 3/4 and 180 pounds and a good shot from long ranges. As the club's most experienced man, he'll handle most of the "quarterback" chores of playmaking in Kentucky's pattern offense. An unheralded schoolboy while playing at Lone Jack and Bell County Highs in Eastern Kentucky, Larry was offered a scholarship only by UK even though he was a first unit All-State pick and scored 750 points in his final high school year. In the off-season, he plays centerfield in base-ball and hit .242 last year.

Pursiful scored over 27 points per game during his senior season at Bell County in 1957-58 and was a first team all-state pick. He was a third-team all-state selection after his junior year at Lone Jack playing for a 27-2 Mustang club.

From [Ex-UK Star & Bell County Product Larry Pursiful Goes From Basketball To Ministr](#) by [Jamie Vaught](#)

A basketball star for Adolph Rupp's [Kentucky](#) Wildcats during the early 1960s, Larry Pursiful (pictured) has been doing a lot of ministry work spanning the past four decades.

And the humble Bell County native loves his work, helping people and sharing the Word of God.

"I thought I might as well do it, but then God has a way of pulling you where you belong," said Pursiful, who is now an associate pastor

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Larry Pursiful



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Hometown: Four Mile, KY (*Bell County*)

Position: G **Playing Height:** 6-1 **Playing Weight:** 165

Date of Birth: June 14, 1940

Additional Photos: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

Action Photos: (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11)

Game by Game Statistics

Kentucky Career Notes:

Multi-Sport Player [Baseball]

Season Notes:

1961-62: All- NCAA Regional Team; All-SEC [First Team (AP & Coaches)]

Post-UK Career Notes:

Drafted #61 Overall in the 8th Round of the 1962 NBA Draft by Chicago

Season	Games Played	FG	FGA	%	FT	FTA	%	Total Rebs	Asst.	F	Total Points
1959-60	17	24	50	48	26	36	72.22	23	-	20	74
1960-61	28	138	335	41.19	99	118	83.9	108	-	94	375
1961-62	26	204	400	51	89	109	81.65	90	70	78	497
Total	71	366	785	46.62	214	263	81.37	221	70	192	946



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