

EJ Austin now a “Townsmen of a Stiller Town”

October 8, 2017 Fletcher Long Player Profile 4



Elijah Scott Austin (EJ, No. 11); July 2, 2003-October 7, 2017

Hoptown's Tigers lay to rest its brightest young football star...a town left in mourning



I was not there when Elijah was Christened with the name of

one of the most famous of all of God's servants. I can only imagine he was so named in reference to the Elijah whose story is first told, then re-told, through out the Old and New Testaments of The Bible.

The story of Elijah is most prominently told in a book entitled Kings. In Kings we find the following:

Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them (Elijah and Elisha); and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. 2 Kings 11-13.

I thought of that rather poignant passage yesterday as probably the finest football player I have ever had the privilege of coaching was taken from me as if by a whirlwind into heaven. I wondered, like Elisha did for the Biblical Elijah, just who would take up my Elijah's mantle?

There was so much more to EJ Austin than his merely being a football player, yet let me assure you he was a terrific football player. He was a fine student, a wonderful citizen, a tremendous friend to my children, my wife, and me.

He stayed at my house, he met my closest friends, and even I can't imagine or describe the feelings which are being presently felt by Coaches Maurice Jesse or Carl Banks, who didn't just coach him in Middle School but all the way through the Junior Pro Football ranks. Then there is my friend Derrell Johnson who shared with me just last night that EJ was probably the youngest former member of the Attucks Wolfpack AAU basketball program.

To his Mother, Grand-parents, two sisters, a half-sister and a brother I don't have comfort for any of them or I would surely give it. I am a huge fan of poet A.E. Housman who wrote in a book entitled A Shropshire Lad (1896) a poem entitled To an Athlete Dying Young many believe on the occasion of the death of his close friend, Adalbert Jackson, who was also taken from the world too early during The Boar Wars.

It feels particularly relevant now:

The Time you won your town the race,/We chaired you through the marketplace; Man and boy stood cheering by,/As we brought you shoulder-high./To-day, the road all runners come,/Shoulder-high we bring you home,/And set you at your threshold down,/Townsmen of a stiller town./Smart lad, to slip betimes away/From fields where glory does not stay/And early though the laurel grows/It withers quicker than the rose./Eyes the shady night has shut/Cannot see the record cut./And silence sounds no worse than cheers/After earth has stopped the ears:/Now you will not swell the rout/Of lads that wore their honours out,/Runers whom renown outran/And the name died before the man./So set, before its echoes fade./The fleet foot on the sill of shade,/And hold to the low lintel up/The still-defended challenge-cup./And round that early-laureled head/Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,/And find unwithered on its curls/The garland briefer than a girl's.



EJ Austin

EJ Austin led the HMS Tigers Football Team to an unprecedented 12-1 record in 2016, a Region I Championship, and narrow defeat in the State Semi-finals to the eventual champion, TK Stone, 38-36. The game, which has been viewed thousands of times, YouTube, (State semi-final game), was viewed again by my sons, William, Jack Whaley, and me, last night.

This time, we didn't care the brilliant and courageous, last minute comeback, fell just short of victory. We all just needed to see him on his stage, in his element, as resplendent as we all remembered, just one more time. We needed to revel in the brilliance about which the TV announcers on PrepSpin.com couldn't stop remarking.

We needed to be amazed, once again, with his ingenuity, his grace, his poise. We wanted, once more, to be wowed by his athletic prowess and genius escapes from pressure, as he had accomplished such feats for all to see for years previous.

For any Hopkinsvillian who had the chance to see EJ Austin on a football field, and passed, I can only imagine your regret. Last night on YouTube, we watched, once more, The Time (EJ) won (his) town the race,...symbolically if not actually.

I am going to borrow from the Athenian, Menander (ca. 342–291 BC), and I am going to change the sentiment somewhat because Menander was a pagan. Billy Joel borrowed the same sentiment in a popular song about a girl named Virginia and I am told the sentiment has been part of Dominican theology from its inception.

He whom [God] loves dies young. George Gordon Byron (a.k.a. Lord Byron) – the greatest Romantic “hero” – gave clearest voice to the idea, linking it most firmly with the ancient tradition and also reaffirming it as a model and an inspiration for the future, right up to our own time.

In Don Juan, Canto IV, stanzas 11 & 12, Lord Byron elaborates on the ancient Greek idea, first arising from Menander that...

Happy they,
Thrice fortunate who of that fragile mould,
The precious porcelain of human clay,
Break with the first fall. They can ne'er behold
The long year linked with heavy day on day
And all which must be borne and never told,
While life's strange principle will often lie Deepest
in those who long the most to die.

‘Whom the gods love, die young’ was said of yore, And
many deaths do they escape by this:

The death of friends and that which slays even more,
The death of friendship, love, youth, all that is,
Except mere breath. And since the silent shore
Awaits at last even those whom longest miss
The old archer's shafts, perhaps the early grave,
Which men weep over, may be meant to save.

So, where does that leave us, the heavy-hearted, broken, family, or extended family, of a teammate, brother, friend, son, grandson? How does any of this comfort us?

Well, it doesn't, I am afraid. I can't give EJ back to all of us, though I certainly would if I were able.

I believe in a God who loves us. Some intellectuals would note this as an indication of my being simple or dull-witted, but I do.

I believe EJ is in a better place with people, who have themselves gone on before him. I believe they will both love and gladly welcome EJ into their warm and loving society.

I believe he is in the presence of the Almighty now and is being loved and cared for more than we could ever either replicate or conceive. I hope Lord Byron is right and...since the silent shore/Awaits at least even those whom longest miss/The old archer's shafts, perhaps the early grave,/Which men weep over, may be meant to save.

There are some very definite things I can say. I will never get over the hurt I feel for this senseless tragedy and a part of me has now died too, but that can be said about the many tragedies I have before experienced over 49 years of life, and there have been too many.

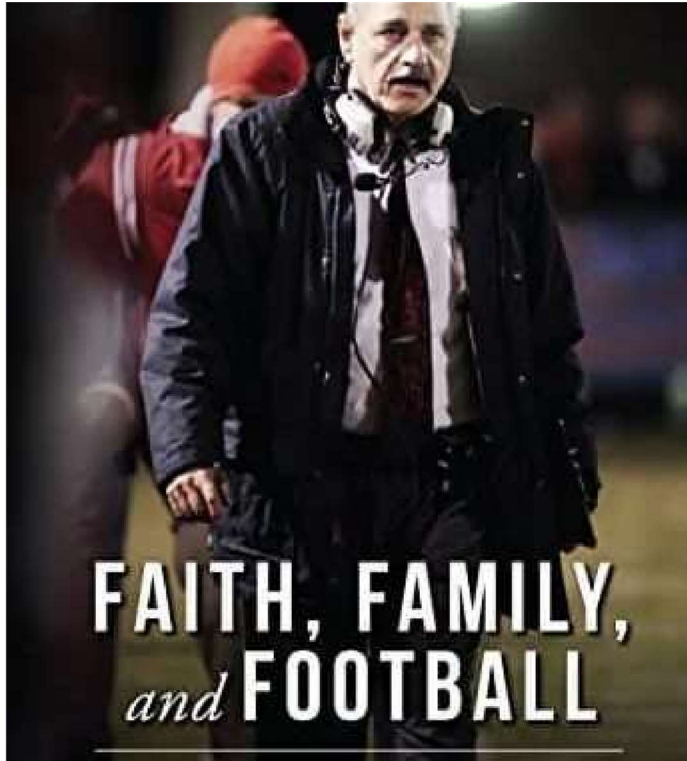
All of you reading this can say the same, though it may be about an altogether different tragedy. I can also say EJ Austin was the best freshman football player, playing Varsity football, I have ever witnessed.

I can also say with some surety that, if they play the game of football where EJ is, and if score is kept and the team choosing wants to win; it would be exceedingly wise and this author's recommendation that team select EJ Austin for its team. After all, this newest arrival will be one of the more dynamic athletes joining heaven's pantheon of Angels on either this or any other day.

This is Fletcher Long reporting for Kentucky Prep Gridiron reminding his greatest player for the last time to
PLAY THROUGH THE WHISTLE!

**Special Report: Phillip Haywood has
passed...The Lord Calls home a Favorite Son
and all-time Great!**

January 22, 2025 Fletcher Long #WeGotUCovered, Coach Profiles, Public Service
Announcement 1



Haywood won 491-games in 50-years and played for 14titles,
winning eight (8)

Pond Creek: Kentucky's all-time, greatest high school football coach has passed. This fact, virtually
incomprehensible to me at present, has left me searching for words; adequate words.



I have lost a man I deeply admired and had grown to know fairly well. I have lost a benefactor who both supported and believed in the work of this magazine and this reporter.

I admired him as a writer. I admired him as a football coach. I admired him as a Christian. I admired him as a human being.

There are so many things I could discuss here. I suppose I could discuss his winning 491 football games in 50-years. I suppose I could talk of his being Kentucky's all-time, winningest football coach; the nation's fifth, all-time winningest football coach; or even the fact the Dawhares KHSAA Hall of Fame should be renamed in his honor.

All of those things are true. All of those things are impressive. Yet, he was so much more than just the all-time, winningest football coach.

Ask any one who played for him. Ask anyone who was ever sufficiently privileged to get to coach with him.

I would prefer to tell you my Phillip Haywood story, if you would permit me. I am hurting, I need to tell it. It captures so much of the man Coach Haywood really was.

I was sent to Pike County to cover a pair of games. The date was November 16, 2018 and both Pikeville and Belfry were hosting regional title games.

Pikeville was playing Williamsburg. Belfry was hosting Boyle County and its almost equally famous head football coach, Chuck Smith.

Haywood won 491-games in 50-years with eight (8) titles

KHSAA Statistical Website

It was pretty obvious Pikeville was going to murder Williamsburg. True to form, and to the surprise of no-one, the Panthers amassed a huge, first-quarter lead.

My sons and I decided to trek the 20 or so miles, up highway 119, to Pond Creek to watch the Belfry game. William was a sophomore in high school. Jack was 10; and a “small 10” at that.

I had earlier emailed Coach Haywood for passes. Coach Haywood was the AD, in addition to being the program’s head football coach.



[Link to purchase](#)

When we got to the gate, the police officer motioned us to a spot virtually right off the playing surface.

“Are you Mr. Long,” the officer had asked at the gate?

“Yessir,” I responded.

“Coach Haywood has asked you to park in the VIP lot, sir.”

I looked over at William and winked. It is pretty rare, but sometimes covering sports has benefits.

The stadium was rocking that night. What I mean by rocking is there were over 7,000 screaming Pond Creekers who had virtually swallowed the entire environment. It was a madhouse.

I am not sure either of my two sons had ever before seen such rabid, off the chain exhibitions of fanaticism in either of their relatively short lives. When I say it was wild, I am talking w-i-l-d!

The game didn’t go Belfry’s way. Boyle County was a tough customer and Chuck Smith also knew a thing or two about coaching. The final score was Boyle County 41- Belfry 24; not that it matters.

We were coming to the end of the game and I had no idea where Jack had gone. I look at William and ask, “Son, where’s your brother?”

“I don’t know, Dad. I haven’t seen him for a half hour or so.” That wasn’t the answer I was wanting.

“Son, where’s your brother?”

“I don’t know, Dad.”

Fletcher and William Long, 11/16/2018

I was thinking of all the places Jack could be. I was wondering how I was ever going to find him in the absolute melee which was this home crowd. I was wondering what I was going to say to Jack’s mother and my wife.

As all of these thoughts were milling about in my head. Then, as if in answer to prayer, William says, “There he is Dad, at mid-field.”



I looked out to the team’s logo and there was my 10-year old son, holding Phillip Haywood’s hand, pulling him through the middle of the field. Jack was talking Coach’s ear off.

Haywood was walking, in lock step with little Jack, hanging on his every word. It looked as if Coach had been drawn into some fanciful yarn told him by his own grandson. I don’t know what the heck Jack was telling him, but Jack was earnest in its telling and Coach couldn’t have appeared any more interested.

The two had never met, had they? I mean, Coach and I had never met, in person, before that night. We had talked over the phone, and had some written correspondence; but tonight was our first in-person meeting.

I ran out to the middle of the field. “Coach, I am Fletcher Long with Kentucky Prep Gridiron, and I am so sorry if my son, Jack, has been bothering you.”

“I know who you are Mr. Long,” Haywood responded. “Your son, Jack is no bother at all. Matter of fact, I have been enjoying our conversation, immensely.”

“...Jack is no bother at all. Matter of fact, I have been enjoying our conversation, immensely.” Phillip

Haywood

NewsRadio 840 WHAS and KPGFootball's Small School (Class 1A, 2A, & 3A) All-State Football Team from 2023! @1776Bank @minguabeefjerky @HopkinsCentral

July 1, 2024 Fletcher Long #WeGotUCovered, KPGFootball All-Stater, Player Profiles,
Recruiting 3



Small School All-State Football Team (Classes 1A, 2A, & 3A)

Editor's Note: Last year, for the first time in Kentucky history, NewsRadio 840 WHAS and KPGFootball configured and published a small and large school All-State Football Team. This year, we believe we will be adding a new, Kentucky-wide, corporate sponsor. To refresh everyone's recollection, here was last year's 1A, 2A, & 3A All-State Football team!

NewsRadio 840WHAS and KPGFootball selects the Class 1A, 2A, & 3A, Small School All-State Football team

No all-state team is complete. Every all-state team has glaring omissions. One just can't possibly get them all. We have divided up our All-State team into Small School and Big School divisions. The Small School is the 1A, 2A, & 3A team and the Big School is the 4A, 5A, & 6A team. Without any more fanfare this is our Small School All-State Football Team. Congratulations to those players selected. To the worthy players we missed, we're truly sorry; we did our best.

HB Lyon, Scouting Director, [KPGFootball](#)

Reveal Show on News Radio 840 WHAS...[Link](#)

Friday Night Fletch's Small School Coach of the Year: Dudley Hilton, Bell County High Offensive Player of the Year:
Brady Atwell, QB, Owensboro Catholic Defensive Player
of the Year: Kenyatta Hardge, DL, LCA

Offense

The throwers...

QB, Owensboro Catholic, Brady Atwell, '25, threw for over 4,700-yards and 68-TDs while rushing for another 700-yards and 16-TDs. Atwell was nominated for the "Gatorade Kentucky HS Player of the Year." We're voters on that particular award. We voted for him!



Luke Pennington, Sayre

QB, Christian Academy-Louisville, Cole Hodge, '24, threw for over 4,000-yards and 55-TDs against only 7-picks and gained over 600-yards rushing with 10-TDs rushing.

QB, Sayre, Luke Pennington, '25, Pennington, headed to Marshall (we believe), completed 171 of his 252-passing attempts for 2,555-yards and 50-TDs versus not a single thrown INT all year long. That just blows our mind. He lead his team to a 12-1 mark, rushed for a TD, and even intercepted a pass during a brief stint playing some defense.

The runners...

RB, Bell County, Daniel Thomas, '24, Thomas carried the football 400-times for 3,817-yards (KHSAA single season all-time record) and 54-TDs (KHSAA tied a single season, all-time record), led the team in scoring (373-points, 24.9-pts. a game) and made 75% of his PATs he attempted in the kicking game. Thomas, a three-phase contributor, had 94-tackles, 3-TFLs, 1-QB sack, and 2-FRs.

RB, Lexington Christian Academy, Brady Hensley, '24, Hensley had 235-rushing attempts, 2,408yards and 43-rushing TDs; caught 4-TDs receiving, led the team in scoring with 288-points and 22.2-pts. per game.



RB, Mayfield, Jutoriaus Starks, '24, carried the football in the neighborhood of 200-times, gaining around 1,700-yards on the year and scoring over 30-rushing TDs. Starks led Mayfield in scoring, registering over 185-points on the scoreboard for the year and averaging close to 14points a game. This kid runs track and is an 11.2-second FAT, 100-meter guy. Speed kills.

RB, Central High (Lou.), Cortez Stone, '25, Many people believe this to be Kentucky's top-rated RB and his offer list would suggest this to be true. Stone gained 1,871-yards on 278-carries with 23-rushing TDs. He scored 23-rushing TDs; 1-TD receiving; and seven, two-point conversions in route to scoring 158-points for Marvin Dantzler's Yellow-Jackets and leading the team in that category. What makes this even more impressive is Central played duPont Manual, CAL twice, Mercer County, St. Xavier, and LaSalle out of Cincinnati.

FB, Hopkins Central, Calil McNary, '24, McNary is a 6'2, 235-pound, bruising FB who plays a position not many teams can find a DAWG to fill. McNary gained 949-yards in 145-carries with 12-rushing TDs. He caught the ball well out of the backfield and was a punishing lead blocker and pass protector for an offense which rushed for over 2,000 in 10-games and threw for close to 1,200. McNary is the Bluegrass's preeminent player at the FB post. The receivers...



WR, Christian Academy-Louisville, Connor Hodge, '25, Hodge had over 110-receptions for close to 1,600-yards receiving and 25-TDs, led the team in scoring while leading the team in INTs (11), IRNYs (177) and pick-sixes (2)

WR, Owensboro Catholic, William “Tutt” Carrico, '24, “King Tutt” as he is called caught around 95-passes on the year for 1,900-yards and 30-TDs receiving; was fourth on the team in rushing, led the team in scoring, had over a 100-tackles, 12-TFLs, half a sack, 4-FFs, 2-FRs, and 6-picks with 75-IRNLs

WR, Shelby Valley, Brady Bentley, '24, Bentley caught 76-passes for 1,455-yards, scoring 16-TDs and led his team in scoring with 128-points.

WR, Middlesboro, Kameron Wilson, '24, Wilson caught 71-passes for 1,269-yards and 19-TDs while leading his team in scoring with 128-points.

Calling the Hogs...

OL, Lexington Christian Academy, Hayes Preston, '25, 6'3,” 255-pounds, Preston was instrumental in an OL which helped pave the way for 697-points scored, 2,574-rushing yards, and 2,393 passing yards for perhaps the commonwealth’s most balanced and lethal offensive attacks.



OL, Breathitt County, Jacob Parker, '24, 6'4,” 275 pounds. Parker has enviable length and is very athletic. His upside is through the roof as is his growth potential. He helped pave the way for an offense which rushed for

more than 2,000 yards and passed for more than 1600-yards while scoring 384-points in its 12-games. Breathitt got better as the year went along and ended the year among 2A's better football teams.

OL, Bell County, Brayden Dunn, '24, Dunn is a 6'4," 305-pound OL and we may well have shorted him a few inches and pounds. He is just massive. Dunn bench presses 345, squats 465, peels off a 40-yard dash in 5.7-seconds while short shuttling in 4.8-seconds. Helped the Bobcats make the title game in 3A while rushing for close to 5,000-yards and scoring around 600points.

OC– Lexington Christian, Garrison McKinney, McKinney is a '24, 6'3," 275-pound center committed to LeHigh University (Division I, FCS) as an offensive center, McKinney is also capable of long-snapping. Three year starter at LCA. Helped pave the way for 697-points scored, 2,574-rushing yards, and 2,393 passing yards for perhaps the commonwealth's most balanced and lethal offensive attacks.

McKinney, a three year starter at LCA has committed to play for LeHigh

OL, Lexington Catholic, Cannon Mackley, '24, Mackley is 5'11," 215-pounder who runs a 40-yard dash in 5.07-seconds, squats 455-pounds, power cleans 265, and verticals 25-inches. Mackley can play offensive center. He is a 2X captain who helped his team find its way into this year's semis. Mackley had 43-tackles, 8-TFLs, and a pair of QB-sacks. Mackley also picked off a pair of passes and registered one of the team's five pick-sixes. This kid is a leader and an athlete.

OL, Beechwood, Xavier Campbell, 6'0," 245-pounds, though a tad undersized, Campbell is an elite interior offensive lineman in the commonwealth. He anchored a front which led the way for Beechwood to finish 12-2, score 666-points while passing for 4,020-yards and accumulating close to 5,700-yards of total offense. This was a different type of Beechwood offense as it relied heavily on the down-field passing game this year.

Defense

Level one, the down linemen...

DL— Lexington Christian Academy, Kenyatta Hardge, '24, Hardge had 21.5-TFLs on the year and 3-QB sacks while forcing a pair of fumbles and blocking a pair of punts. He was the best interior, down lineman in the commonwealth this past year in spite of being doubled all season, run away from, and being the primary focus of every scouting report published about LCA from every opponent the Eagles played. He's a grown man.

Hardge = Grown Man!

DL, Paris High, Preston Cowan, '25, Cowan had 112-tackles, 28-TFLs, 7-QB sacks, 4-FFs, 1-FR.



DL, Paris High, Zian Webb, '24, Webb registered 92-tackles, 20-TFLs, 14-QB sacks, 2-FFs.

DL, Trigg County, TayShaun Linton, Linton had 50-tackles, 12-TFLs, 6.5 QB-sacks, 2-FFs, and a FR. Linton leaves Trigg County with the all-time QB-sack mark. There have been a few players at Trigg County through the years, boys!

DL, Union County, Kamden Davis, '25, Davis registered 100-tackles, 7.5-TFLs, 11-QB sacks, 2FFs.

The second level guys...

LB, Breathitt County, Kory Combs, '25, Combs, the son of a fine linebacker in his own right (Kenneth "Shorty" Combs, ECU) registered 111-tackles in 12-games, 7-TFLs, 1-QB sack, 1-FF, 2FR. Kory Combs scored 8-rushing TDs on offense and caught a pair of TD passes which gives you some idea about his movement and speed.

LB, Owensboro Catholic, Vince Carrico, '24, Carrico recorded 190-tackles, 13.5-TFLs, 4-QB sacks, 2-FFs, 1-FR, and an INT. We call this stuffing the stat sheet.



LB, Caldwell County, Cooper Mobley, '26, Mobley's team really struggled this year but the versatile sophomore, two-way star didn't. Mobley had 86-tackles, an INT, a TFL, and a FF to go along with being his team's second leading rusher and among its leading receivers if that gives you an idea about his athleticism.

Mobley had 86-tackles and was his team's second leading rusher to boot...

LB, Union County, Amare Black, '25, Black registered 107-tackles, 7-TFLs, 8.5 QB-sacks, 3-FFs.

LB, Lexington Christian Academy, Major Brown, '24, Brown is a 6,' 195-pound LB with the speed and athleticism to play SS in college or stay on the second level. Brown has led the Eagle defense in tackles the last two years and has over 300-career tackles, second most in school history.

The last line of defense, third-level guys...

DB, Mayfield, Xavier Biggers, Biggers had 40-tackles but that doesn't tell the tale with DBs. He was among the leaders in PBUs and INTs (3) where he registered 108-IRNYs and a pick-six. Xavier led the team in receiving yards (542), TD receptions (9), and was third in scoring. We included this to let you know the type of athlete we're dealing with here.



DB, Hart County, Kohnner Trent, '25, Trent registered 76-tackles, 2.5-TFLs, half a sack, 1-FF, and 2-FRs. Oh yeah, he picked five (5) passes for 150 IRNYs and a pick-six. His efforts were instrumental to the best season in Hart County history (13-1, Regional Champions). Trent also starred on offense, catching 22-passes for 330-yards and 5-TD receptions.

DB, Lexington Catholic, Sam Clements, Clements registered 68-tackles, 3-TFLs, 1-sack, 3-INTs, 123-IRNYs, and a pair of pick-sixes.

DB, Pikeville High, Blake Caudill, '25, Caudill registered 62-tackles, 10-TFLs, 6-QB-sacks, and was among the club leaders in PBUs, while "showing out" on offense too. Caudill was among his club's leading rushers and scorers to go along with what he did on defense. This kid, at 5'11", 185-pounds, may move up into the run-box and play linebacker next season.

DB, Christian Academy-Louisville, Justin Ruffin, '24, Ruffin is largely considered an elite corner in Kentucky among the small schools. Ruffin led his team in PBUs, had 39-tackles, 2-TFLs, 1-FF, and 2-INTs. Kid made opposing receivers, against whom he matched, just disappear. Hard to judge corners by numbers sometimes. This kid stood out; ask anyone the Centurions played.

DB, Sayre, Brock Coffman, '24, In 13-games, Coffman picked nine (9) passes and housed one to go along with 193-IRNYs.

Athletes

ATH, Middlesboro, QB, Caden Grigsby, '24, One of the best overall athletes in the commonwealth at any level of play. Grigsby threw for over 2,000 yards and 26-TDs, rushed for close to 900-yards and scored 9-TDs rushing, was second on the team in scoring, and led the team in INTs (6), IRNYs (67), and logged a "pick-six." Find me a player who contributed to any team any more profoundly!



Cayden Grigsby, Middlesboro

ATH, Breathitt, WR/DB/KR/PR, Isaac “Wheels” Turner, This guy did it all. He led the team in receiving (36-receptions, 6-TDs receiving), was third in rushing adding another 6-scores, was the club’s leading scorer (78-points), and led the team in INTs (3), IRNYs, and pick-sixes (1). Add in his contributions to the return game and he was a three-phase contributor.

ATH, Belfry, Caden Woolum, ’24, Woolum rushed for over 1,100-yards on only 91-carries with 12-rushing TDs. Woolum was the ball club’s leading receiver with 25-receptions for 511-yards and 7-TDs. Woolum was the club’s leading scorer with 128-points. Woolum had close to 100tackles, led the team in INTs, forced a pair of fumbles, picked three passes, led the team in IRNYs with 48, and took one of his three INTs to the house. Now that’s an “athlete.”

ATH, Raceland, Noah Wallace, ’24, rushed for 1,198-yards and 15-TDs; caught 10-passes for 114yards and a TD; was second on the team in tackles (82), 51 of which were solos; also registered 4 TFLs, 2-INTs, and a QB-sack.

ATH, Murray High, Jeremiah Jones, ’25, Jones, at 6’4,” 200-pounds, is listed by most services as a safety and we see him playing there in college. Jeremiah was a multi-phase contributor for the Tigers, this Fall, and that is why we listed him as an ATH. Jones caught 22-passes for 326-yards and a pair of scores, was third on the team in rushing, scoring 3-times by land, and was fourth on the squad in scoring. On defense, Jones had 66-tackles, 4-TFLs, 5-QB-sacks, recovered two fumbles including a “scoop and score,” and picked two passes he returned 89-yards to lead the club in IRNYs.

Johnson, from Union County, was the top ground gainer in the Western Kentucky Conference from his QB slot...

ATH, Union County, Jarren Johnson, ’25, Johnson played QB for the Braves and threw for close to 700-yards with six (6) TD passes. He was more of a RB, in the Braves’ system, and man did he deliver there. Johnson gained 2,091-yards, in 233-carries, and scored 33-times on the ground. He led the team in scoring, with 218-points, and led the team to an 11-2 finish, losing to Hart County, by three, in the regional championship game. The Specialists...



PK, Mayfield, Lincoln Suitor, '24, Suitor also punts and has one of the stronger legs in the commonwealth. He is also being recruited as a soccer player. Suitor converted right at 95% of his PATs and knocked five of his nine placekicks through the uprights including a key 40-yarder in the championship game against Owensboro Catholic on college uprights, which are more narrow than the high school counterparts.

PK, Garrard County, Zak Dailey, '25, Dailey converted on 87.5% of his FGs in '23 (seven of his eight attempts) and he was a perfect 25 for 25 in PATs. We call this type production from one's kicker "elite."

P, LaRue County, Carter Peace, '24, averaged 44-yards per punt and was ranked one of Kentucky's finest punters by Pro-Kicker.

There it is, the players selected and statistically why they were selected. Like we said, we didn't get them all. We erred on the side of put them in there even if the team gets weighted a little heavier at one position than at others.

The "Athletes" were meant to signify guys whose value to the team was significantly more vast than their primary, listed positions. Many of the "Athletes" make this team at their primary positions too, but their value and versatility permitted our including another player who, otherwise, might have gone unrecognized.

This is Friday Night Fletch, reporting for KPGFootball, reminding you to **PLAY THROUGH THE WHISTLE!**

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hereby recognizes and honors*

Fletcher W. Long

for the tremendous dedication and hard work that he put forth to research, write, and publish "Football 101 Boo-Boo's a Quarterback: A Football Primer for Prospects, Coaches, and Parents." Affectionately known as "Friday Night Fletch" and called by some as "the most influential person, Kentucky-wide, in the world of high school and middle school football," Mr. Long has earned a stellar reputation across the state for his achievements as a writer and broadcaster and for his outstanding coverage of KYMSFA and KHSAA football. Inasmuch as Fletcher W. Long has worked tirelessly and with tremendous skill and commitment to promote Kentucky athletes and to serve the state's vast football community, the members of this distinguished body are delighted to join Representative Bill Wesley and Representative Myron B. Dossett in congratulating him upon the recent publication of his book, commending him for his continued service to football fans across the length and breadth of the Bluegrass State, and extending to him best wishes for continued success and good fortune in all his future endeavors.



*Done in Frankfort, Kentucky, this
eleventh day of December, in the year
two thousand twenty-four.*

Paul W. Boone
Speaker, House of Representatives

Bill Wesley
Member, House of Representatives

Myron Dossett
Member, House of Representatives

WEST KY SPORTS



KPI Newspaper Group welcomes new sports columnist

By Greg LeNeave
Publisher
KPI Newspaper Group

Are you ready for some football?
I know it may seem a bit early for some sports fans, but not for the true die-hard football fan.
The NFL is already in the middle of OTA's and college coaches are getting their teams in order for a new fall season for 2025.

It won't be long before area high school players will be reporting for 2-a-day practice in the hot summer sun.

As for our readers that love great sports feature writing, you will now be getting a real treat with KPI Newspaper Group.

Welcome Fletcher Long. Yes, he is the fellow referred to as FRIDAY NIGHT FLETCH.

He has been on WHAS 840 in Louisville for a terrific radio show that talks about football in Kentucky.

First, a little about Fletcher Long. He was the former editor of the Jackson Sun Times and a former attorney. While he was working as the editor, he won some awards from the Kentucky Press Association for outstanding writing and investigative reporting. He wrote a very fine article about his home that burned down in a horrible fire. Those are the types of stories you must report on when you are an editor of a small weekly newspaper. While he was there, he basically had to write everything for the entire paper.

Fast forward to



Fletcher Long

now. Long has made a great name for his outstanding Sports Features on coaches throughout Kentucky.

History and the accolades of coaches around the Bluegrass are one of his specialties when it comes to writing.

I told him when he was being interviewed for this article that he writes like he talks. As a publisher, I find that to be a great quality in a writer.

What to expect? Readers will find a writer that is a great storyteller. As a former trial lawyer, you must be able to tell a story about the case you're on the to the jury. Sports enthusiast will find that Long has a big network of coaching connections all over Kentucky and the South.

Starting next week, his stories and column will begin. KPG FOOTBALL's Slow Motion Replay. Folks that get any of the KPI Newspapers in Kentucky, from Fulton to Henderson, will be in for a real treat from Fletch Long, a.k.a. Friday Night Fletch. Stories about the greatest coaches in KHSAA History.



The McCracken County boys' team placed fourth in the KHSAA Class 3A Track & Field State Championship at the University of Kentucky on Saturday, May 31.

Photo courtesy of McCracken County High School

Myers, Harper named 2024-25 Midway/KHSAA Student-Athletes of the Year

Staff Report

LEXINGTON — The 2024-25 Midway University/KHSAA Student-Athlete of the Year awards program culminated on Tuesday, June 3 at Midway University, as Madelyn Myers of Murray (Tennis) and Grant Harper of Barren County (Swimming & Diving) were recognized as the overall Student-Athletes of the Year.

Beginning in May 2016, Midway has presented a Female Student-Athlete of the Year award at each KHSAA girls' state championship event. The awards program was expanded in 2019-20 to include male student-athletes, with Midway honoring a deserving student-athlete in each KHSAA sport and sport-activity.

The awards are based on athletic and academic achievement, as well as community service and leadership, with Midway choosing one overall Male and Female Student-Athlete of the Year each academic year.

School administrators, coaches and athletic directors nominate student-athletes, and the nominees are voted upon by a closed panel consisting of representatives from Midway.

2024-25 Midway University/KHSAA Student-Athletes of the Year

Archery: Peyton Henderson, Estill County; Dylan Black, Barren County
Baseball: Slaton Carter, Trigg County
Basketball: Tessa Miles, Bethlehem; Nick Poore, Clinton County
Bass Fishing: Will Dombroskas, Montgomery County
Bowling: Jadyn Estep, Johnson Central; Alexander Elam, Great Crossing

Competitive Cheer: Ellie Collins, Knox Central

Cross Country: Karly Williams, Betsy Layne; Will Sheets, Covington Catholic

Dance: Lindsey Wyland, Conner
Esports: Toby Ricke, Shelby County

Field Hockey: Lauren

Sloan, Christian Academy-Louisville
Football: Tate Kruer, Covington Catholic
Golf: Anika Okuda, Ryle; Carson Powell, Heritage Christian
Indoor Track & Field: Allison Kopser, Ryle; Lincoln Herald, Grant County

Lacrosse: Lilia Compton, South Warren

Soccer: Tessa Miles, Bethlehem; Case Davis, Bourbon County

Softball: Kyra McAlarnis, Knott County Central

Swimming & Diving: Madeline Haller, DuPont Manual; Grant Harper, Barren County

Tennis: Madelyn Myers, Murray; Jaxson Napier, Shelby Valley

Track & Field: Piper Stevens, West Jessamine; Charlie Ford, Newport Central Catholic
Volleyball: Bridget Egan, Sacred Heart; Ryan Britz, Holy Cross (Louisville)

Wrestling: Hailey Jo Butts, Madison Central; Mac Darland, Lexington Christian

Overall Midway

University/KHSAA Student-Athletes of the Year

2016-17: Brooke Forde, Sacred Heart (Swimming & Diving)

2017-18: Sara Hieneman, Russell (Softball)

2018-19: Maci Ferguson, Russell (Russell)

2019-20: Lee Ann Gordon, Assumption (Field Hockey); Michael Chou, Trinity (Louisville) (Tennis)

2020-21: Claire Lehmkuhler, Woodford County (Softball); Jackson Smallwood, Grant County (Track & Field)

2021-22: Renae Kopser, Ryle (Track & Field); Ben Gloyd, Mayfield (Baseball)

2022-23: Rafaella Johnson, Elizabethtown (Cross Country); George Ferree, Trinity (Louisville) (Wrestling)

2023-24: Carlie Thurmond, Bethlehem (Soccer); Max Germann, Boyle County (Track & Field)

2024-25: Madelyn Myers, Murray (Tennis); Grant Harper, Barren County (Swimming & Diving)

Racers win first ever NCAA regional baseball championship

Staff Report

OXFORD, Miss. — Murray State made the most of their first NCAA baseball tournament appearance since 1979.

The underdog Racers defeated Ole Miss twice and Georgia Tech once en route to the program's top moment in 86 seasons.

The Racers brought

home the program's first ever NCAA regional championship when they defeated the Ole Miss Rebels 12-11 on their home field in Oxford Monday, June 2.

The Racers pounded out 19 hits against Southeastern Conference pitching and jumped to a 12-3 advantage before the Rebels put on a late charge.

Luke Mistone and Will

Vierling both went 4 for 5 and Carson Garner and Dom Decker both had three hits as the Racers shocked the team that pounded them 19-8 on Sunday night.

Fortunately, the Racers had nearly every one of their top arms available, albeit on short rest, including Isaac Silva and Nic Schutte. The righty duo combined for 6 innings to start the

game by throttling the Rebels with only two hits, giving only one walk and striking out nine.

With the game on the line, Graham Kelham came on to record his third save in the regional by getting the final eight outs on six hits, three runs, six strikeouts and only one walk.

Murray State also did all their scoring Monday without the benefit of

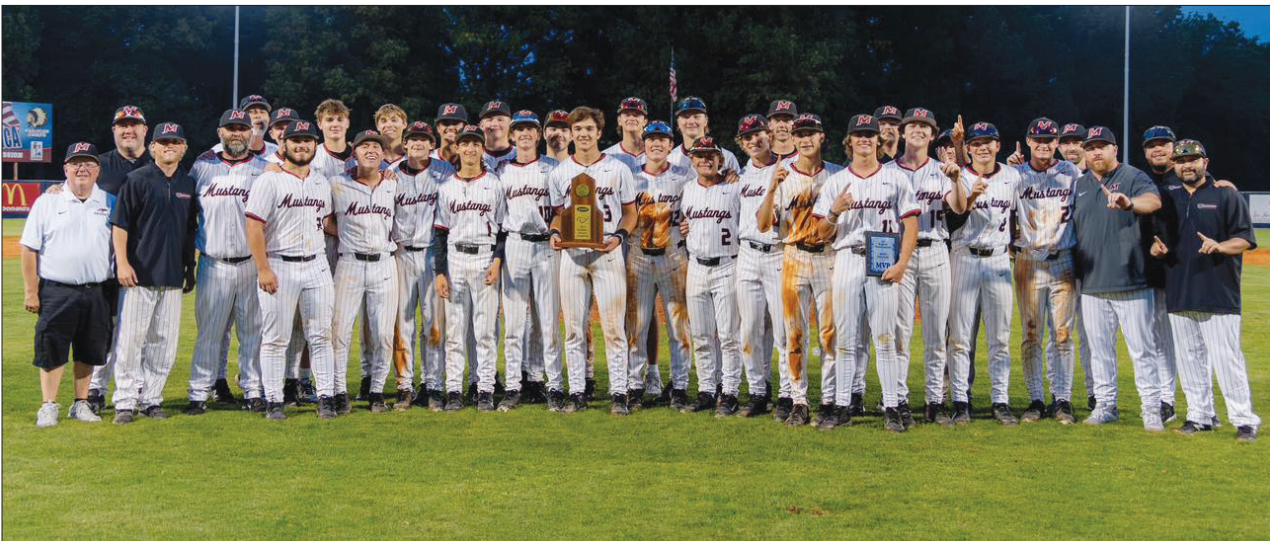
any home runs. The offense was highlighted by a triple from Dustin Mercer, who hit .556 in the four games.

The Racers (42-14) advance to the NCAA Super Regional where they meet the Duke Blue Devils in a best-of-three series this weekend in Durham.

Monday's win culminates and amazing postseason

run for head coach Dan Skirka and his team that won four games to take the Missouri Valley Conference Championship and three wins this week at the Oxford Regional.

Murray State is the third straight Missouri Valley Conference team to make the second weekend after Indiana State (2023) and Evansville (2024).



McCracken County captured the Region 1 baseball title at Brooks Stadium in Paducah on Thursday, May 29.
Photo courtesy of McCracken County High School



Allicen Harris homered for Marshall County during the 1st Region Softball Tournament title game on Wednesday, May 28. Marshall County defeated McCracken County 5-2 in the 1st Region Softball Tournament title game. Harris was named the 1st Region Softball Tournament MVP.
Photo courtesy of Marshall County High School Athletics