Bob Watkins' UK Sports Report

The big man and the University of Kentucky.

When West German Gunther Behnke decided to leave UK last week it was the latest in a long line of sad endings that were preceded by celebrated beginnings where UK and "the big man" have been concerned.

A basketball press guide and a few remembrances produce an uncanny picture of how UK and the Big Man have not been the stuff of which marriages in basketball heaven are made.

Starting with 7-footers (and above), Kentucky basketball has been a story of "what might have been if..."

■ In the autumn of 1949 Bill Spivey arrived from Warner Robbins, Ga. as UK's first ever 7-footer. Under Coach Adolph Rupp Spivey's wonderful potential began to show through by his sophomore year when he averaged a team high 19.3 points per game and led the Wildcats to a 25-5 record and No. 3 national ranking. A year later Spivey averaged 19.2 points and led the team to a 22-2 record and a national championship.

But in 1951 Spivey was in disgrace, implicated in a point shaving scandal, he left UK. He pleaded innocence in the scandal and was never convicted, but Spivey was barred from the NBA for life. In two seasons (41 games) he scored 1,231 points, 30th on UK's all-time list.

■ In 1970 UK's ballyhooed 7-footer was sophomore Tom Payne. Teh moody kid from Louisville, UK's first black cager, averaged 16.9 points a game and the Wildcats finished 22-6, winning an SEC title. But Payne quit UK after the season opting for the NBA Atlanta Hawks. A year later he was in prison, convicted of rape.

■ In 1973, and it rates as barely a footnote now, one of the best high school senior prospects was a 7-4 youngster from Memphis, Tenn. Steve Turner said he wanted to attend UK, but signed with Vanderbilt. He never achieved the potential predicted for him and faded from the scene.

■ In 1980 UK landed Sam Bowie out of Lebanon, Pa. At 7-1 he was Coach Joe B. Hall's first 7-footer — a scrawny but promising big man prospect. Bowie exhibited some of that promise as a freshman when he averaged 12.9 points per game and led the team in rebounding. Before his sophomore season however, it was discovered that Bowie had a cracked shin bone. It would keep him out of action for two years and cost him a year's eligibility.

■ An important footnote to Bowie's arrival was this: the Kentucky basketball coaching staff got within a "mother's signature" of landing a twin tower for Bowie in 1980. Ralph Sampson, who would become the country's premier big man, wanted to attend Kentucky along with Bowie and Derrick Hord. At the last moment Sampson's mother refused to sign the NCAA contract and insisted that Sampson enroll at Virginia.

Below the 7-foot mark

Proving that good big men are hard to find, Kentucky's track record with 7-footers has not been good. But there are pock marks in the "just under 7-footers" as well.

In 1965 UK signed 6-10 Larry Lentz. he lettered in 1966, then left school. In 1966 6-11 Art Laib arrived at Kentucky in a Volkswagen. Said he wanted to play for the best, Adolph Rupp. He played little, lettering in 1968.

In 1969 6-10 Mark Soderberg arrived from California along with 6-11 Jim Andrews from Ohio. Soderberg lettered in 1970, but quit the team the following year because of lack of playing time.

In 1975 UK landed 6-11 Rick Robey and 6-10 Mike Phillips to go with 6-10 Danny Hall of Betsy Lane High. Hall quit the team at mid-term — not enough playing time.

In 1977 the newest phenom was 6-11, 256-pound Chuck Alexsijus, Mr. Basketball in Connecticut. He stayed a year and a half. Although he was UK's starting center in 1978, Alexsinas quit the team.

And so it has gone for UK and the Big Man.

Success

Ironically, and perhaps there is a lesson in it, the University of Kentucky's more successful basketball teams have been those without a big man — in 1948 UK's center on its 34-3 team was 6-4 Wah Jones; Jones was back in 1948 to lead the Wildcats to a 36-3 record and national championship, in 1954 6-4 Cliff Hagan led the team to its only perfect season, 25-0; in 1958 the NCAA championship team's starting center was 6-7 Ed Beck; and in 1966 Rupp's Runts had 6-5 Thad Jaracz in the middle.

Bennett/Hall

Winston Bennett of the University of Kentucky and Jeff Hall of the University of Louisville, who will be "getting together" on Dec. 15 at Freedom Hall, talked about their respective careers last week.

■ Bennett, when asked about his plans after college and the NBA, said, "I'm not counting on professional basketball necessarily. I'm planning to get into selling stocks, maybe stock in race horses."

Last summer Bennett worked with ex-UK cager Derrick Hord in the "thoroughbred bloodstock industry in Lexington.

Bennett's father, Winston Jr. had some interesting things to say about the recruiting process of his son and final selection of UK over Louisville and Georgetown. The Bennetts avoided much of the hassle from recruiters.

"We talked with Darrell Griffith and others and got some inputs there," he said. "We started out considering about 25 or 30 schools and what they had to offer in relation to what Winston wanted from college. Then we got it down to 10 and finally to three — UK, U of L and Georgetown. Winston was very, very close to signing with Louisville."

Finally, the Bennetts decided young Winston's business opportunities after basketball would be more enhanced if he enrolled at UK.

"I don't have any regrets," he said. "So far."

On breaking into the starting lineup next season, young Bennett was noncommittal.

What sort of UK team can fans expect next winter?

"We'll be smaller, but really quick," he said. "I expect we'll be a pressing team."

Bennett said his perimeter shooting will be much improved and he predicted that Kenny Walker will be a "better player" in the absence of Sam Bowie and Melvin Turpin.

A footnote: Bennett has shucked his long hair appearance from last season.

"I just wanted to change my image," said the 6-7 205-pounder with a half smile.

■ U of L's Jeff Hall, like Bennett at UK, was ninth man for coach Denny Crum's Cards last season and he also expects to move into the starting lineup next season. Maybe.

U of L returns Mill Wagner and marks the arrival of freshman phenom Kevin Walls to the backcourt.

"You like to start, but however things work out will be all right with me," Mill said.

After his college career, Hall wants to stay in Louisville. "I'd like to open my own business," he said. "Maybe in sporting goods."

One sense that Hall harbors some bitterness toward Kentucky for not recruiting him after UK assistant Joe Dean Jr. reportedly told Joe B. Hall that the Fairview product was "too slow to play at Kentucky."

"I've proved different," Hall said. He has indeed

Gunther Behnke

When the 7-4 University of Kentucky basketball signee from West Germany signed with UK last spring apparently it was not "a marriage made in basketball heaven."

UK assistant sports information director Randy Stacy said last Wednesday "Gunther told me in my mind I know it is best for me to stay, but in my heart I want to go home."

Much has been written about the 21-year-old German since he announced before the NCAA Mideast Regional that he would enroll at UK.

According to a source close to UK, who spent time with Behnke before his departure last week, "This whole thing is really weird. He's just not ready for UK. It's tough enough for an 18-year-old kid to come to a place like this and stand up to the pressures and so forth. But this kid just isn't ready for it, that's all. The UK coaches could not have done backbreaking work on this kid."

"Behnke is a nice, shy kid," he added. "But he hates basketball. He really does. He says he feels (at 7-4) like some kind of freak. His parents had hoped that he would come over here and take advantage of this opportunity and make something of himself. But he's simply not ready for it."

Behnke's departure leaves UK coach Joe B. Hall in quite a "riches to rags" quandry considering the graduation of Sam Bowie and Melvin Turpin. Junior Bret Bearup at 6-9 is the only experienced returnee, along with 6-10 freshman Robert Lock.

Still, according to the Lexington source, Behnke's defection could be a blessing in disguise.

"Even if Behnke had stayed Joe (B. Hall) is preparing to make an all out personal effort to go after Manny Ferry."

Ferry is a 6-11, 230-pounder at Washington DeMatha High who is being touted as the best of the 1985 senior crop.

Ferry was reported to be headed to North Carolina, but he insisted that speculation at a summer basketball camp, saying he was leaving his options open. Ferry is said to have put a premium on "early playing time" with whatever college he chooses.

"North Carolina is going to be overloaded with big men next year and UK, with Behnke gone, is going to need somebody right away," the Lexington source said. "That's something for him to consider."

If you have a question, comment or opinion you would like to share, write to Bob Watkins, Rt. 1, Glendale, Ky. 42740.■

Winless Jackets face Fairview

Mistakes hurt in Mason loss

The Mason County Royals defeated the Nicholas County Bluejackets 44-0 in a real slugfest last Friday night at the local field.

The Jackets, now 0-3, will take to the road tomorrow night for a district clash with Fairview.

"The 3-0 Royals had an excellent team that made few mistakes of their own and capitalized on the mistakes of the Bluejackets," Coach Ben Pumphrey said after the game.

Mason County was held without a first down until presented one on a roughing the kicker penalty brought on by a "Hollywood performance" faked by their kicker, as Pumphrey phrased it. "This pepped them up and they put together a drive which was capped by a three yard touchdown run by Tony Jackson."

The score was 6-0 at halftime.

In the third quarter, after back-to-back first downs, the Bluejackets fumbled the football and the Royals marched to a second touchdown on a four yard run by Chris Neal. Kelly Faris kicked the extra point.

The remainder of the game was a hitting and punting match until the Jackets mishandled a Royal punt at the 40 yard line with four minutes remaining. The Royals then made three first downs and scored their final points on a three yard pass from O'Hearn to Greg Purdon.

Offensive statistics — Pope, 15 carries 62 yards; Blakeman, 8 for 31; Ramey, 10 for 30; Young, 11 for 16, 4 of 7 passes for 22 yards and three punts for 71 yards.

Defensive stats — Young, 8 tackles; Ramey 16; Robinson, 13 and 1 blocked extra point try; Curtsinger, 11; Wells and Lesford, 5; Culdiron and Dotson, 4; Anderson, 3; Baker, Duncan and Kirby, 2; Allison and Pope, 1

	NCHS	MASON
First downs	11	12
Yards rushing	129	179
Passes completions	4-9	4-7
Passing yards	23	26
Punts	3	5
Penalty yards	20	10

It was a pleasure

A popular event in the 1983 Lions Club Horse Show was the pleasure horse class. Here, Christi Turner of Mt. Sterling, aboard Midnight Joe, accepts ribbon presented by Tacey Earlywine, Mayor Frankie Hughes, at left, was ringmaster. — Photo submitted

Shumate, Blair in pro-am event

Local golfers Wayne Shumate and Proc Blair competed in the pro-am division of the Citizens Union Senior Classic last Friday and Saturday at Griffith Gate.

Shumate's foursome finished with a team total 113 for the two-day event while Blair's team carded a 118. Low total for the amateurs was 106.

Shumate played rounds with professionals Gordon Leishman and Arnold Palmer, while Blair toured with pro Jack Fleck and Art Silvestrone.

Rope-jumping recess

Students in Mrs. Herrington's sixth grade class take a break from classwork and enjoy recess. Shown jumping rope on the playground are Dawn Woodard, left, and Tiffany George. — Photo submitted

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90 pints of blood donated in drive

Some 90 pints of blood were collected from 150 volunteer donors on August 27 at the First United Methodist Church in Carlisle. The drive was sponsored by Central Kentucky Blood Center and the Nicholas County blood committee, under the coordination of Phillip Hastings.

The next blood drive is scheduled November 19.

Donor volunteers included the following:

Lyle Anderson, Deborah Ecton, William Wilson, Nevada McGlothlin, Diane Peters, Mildred Jolly, Billy Guthrie, Ronald Baker, Richard McDonald, Jimmie Johnson, Thomas Ockerman, Allen Bowles, Charles Durham, Tracy Ishmael, Donna Kelly, Charles Pope, Joseph Saulino, Mary Tapp, Tommie Bowles, Kenneth Ishmael;

Beulah Coldiron, Dennis McDonald, Stanley Rose, Frances Linville, Carolyn Terrell, Hattie Jones, Ann Cobb, Allen Campbell, William Brothers, Lola Gates, Thrastley Markland, Donald Smith, Gerald Watkins, Ronnie Letcher, Helen Barton, Raymond Rosser, Ray Gaunce, Joan Morris, Howard Allison Jr., Derrell Faulconer;

Judy Hastings, Wilmer Hakoosh, Jackie Howard, Sharlee Gipson, William Seeby, Leon Riggs, Louis Sauls, David Zachary, Danny Jones, Gregory Smart, Carol Power, Kenneth Mitchell, Everett Dale, David Stancil, Fred Burnaw, Ralph McGlothin, Fred Wheley, Reese Broost, Jeff Sorrell, Ethyl Edwards;

Brenda Smart, Ira Conyers, Myron Williams, Nettie Barnes, John Burke, Nancy Judge, James Cox, Mary Knapke, Ricky Herrington, James Galbraith, Andy Judge, Charles Smith, Lee Bentz, James Biddle, G.C. Myers, Cecil Howard;

Betty Howard, Michael Mann, Taylor Mathers, Deborah Hughes, Lacy Allison, Vicki Sparks, Edward Booth, Roger Livingood, Barbara Biddle, Eugene Kelley, Harold Letlin, Betsey Tabor, George McGlothin, Robert Hester, Norman Turpin;

Kenneth Baker, Calvin Wills, Allen Hamon, Jean Booth, Sallie Curtsinger, William Murrell, Jennifer Taulbee, William Tedder, Sherman Evans, Lois McCorliff, Emerson Baker, Philip Hastings, Douglas Garrett, Charles Canupp and Edwin Sanders.

Two pints are Sept. 8 at 6 p.m. and Sept. 9 at 2 p.m. at Nicholas County Elementary gym.

KENTUCKY WATERFOWL SEASONS OPEN NOV. 20

Kentucky's statewide duck season will open Nov. 20, according to regulations approved by the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The first phase of the duck season will continue through Nov. 25, with the second part of the split season set for Dec. 8 through Jan. 20, 1985.

In all but extreme Western Kentucky, the goose season will also open Nov. 20 and will run through Jan. 20.

LL CHEERLEADERS

Little League basketball cheerleaders must be in grades 3-6 to sign up. Information furnished the Mercury last week was incorrect about age requirements.

Tryouts are Sept. 8 at 6 p.m. and Sept. 9 at 2 p.m. at Nicholas County Elementary gym.

'Come and get it'

Breakfast is served each school day at Nicholas County Elementary School and must meet federal standards for nutritional value. According to food service director Bill Guthrie, an average of 350 students are fed daily. Cost is 30 cents. Students who qualify for reduced price lunch may purchase breakfast for 15 cents. Students who qualify for free lunch may also receive free breakfast. — Photo submitted

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84	Turismo 2.2 P.S., P.B., Air, Stereo, Silver in Color	9,234
84	Charger 2.2 P.S., P.B., Air, Stereo, Maroon	9,142
84	Charger 2.2 P.S., P.B., Air, Stereo, Black	9,243
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84	Dodge 150 Prospector III Conversion Van, All Options	
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