

Transfers love talent, depth UK volleyball has

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Contributing Writer

Kentucky volleyball will open what it hopes can be a special season in just over two months and two transfers off NCAA Tournament teams - Molly Berezowitz of Marquette and Lizzie Carr of Purdue — love the overall talent that coach Craig Skinner has on his team.

Carr, the younger sister of former UK basketball player Andrew Carr, averaged 1.52 kills last season for 27-7 Purdue. The 6-foot-6 Carr had 87 kills in her two years at Purdue.

"It's cool to see how hard we can compete and how good you can make the people around you," said Carr, a middle blocker. "Everyone is constantly pushing you to be the best version of yourself as a leader, a person, a teammate and player."

Carr has always believed a team can only be as good as its backup players are because "they are the ones competing against you every day." She says Skinner mixes up players on Blue and White teams in practice and they consistently beat each other.

"Every single person is good enough to have a starting spot. It's cool to see how each person is pushing others to be better and kind of make you uncomfortable in a good way because you have to figure out how to compete at the high test level every day in practice and that makes for a great team," Carr said. "We're just so deep and have so much stuff that we are really going to have a good team."

Berezowitz, a libero, had a season-high 21 digs in Marquette's NCAA Tournament win over Utah and hit double digit digs in 10 matches last season. Her older sister, Maddie, was on UK's 2020 national championship team.

"I played for a high level team at Marquette, and when I got here, I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is better than I ever imagined.' I thought I was playing at the best level that I could be at and then getting here, these people just make you so much better," Berezowitz, a junior, said. I think that it starts off the court. This is just such a good group of girls."

Kentucky had all 14 players, including three true freshmen, on this year's team on campus the second semester to give the Cats a huge head start on this season.

"We all got to train and compete all spring and we didn't want to take that opportunity for granted that we had with everyone here," the Marquette transfer said. "Usually teams get six months to be together but we will have almost a whole year and teams don't get that very often."

"I really see something different in this team. It really starts with how we act together off the court, and that just really transitions on the court. Obviously it helps just having so many talented players. It's fun getting in the gym every single day and you're battling every single day. I think that if we have that mindset in every single game, we're going to be hard to beat this season with the talent we have."

The team's leader will be junior All-American Brooklyn DeLeye, one of the nation's top four players last season when UK reached the Elite Eight. Berezowitz played against her in club volleyball in high school but didn't pay a lot of attention to her the last two years even though her Marquette teammates did.

"My teammates at Marquette would talk about BK (DeLeye) is. I don't know how to really explain it, but you can just rely on her to get it done. She is super relatable," Berezowitz said. "She just has that presence where we all trust her. It's also cool because we also have (Purdue transfer) Eva Hudson on the pin, so it's like having that combo out there that we can rely on to finish points. But I love playing with her (DeLeye) and she certainly has lived up to that All-American standard."

Quaintance will be a difference-maker for UK

Jayden Quaintance is working his way back from knee surgery in the spring but Kentucky coach Mark Pope is confident the Arizona State transfer will make a full recovery in part because "we have the best performance team in the country" working with him now at UK.

The 6-9 Quaintance is already being projected as a lottery pick in the 2026 NBA draft even though he does not turn 18 years old until July 11. He could be starting his high school senior season in Kentucky and be eligible.

"He is really physically talented. He's on the most elite of elite levels with his physical talent," Pope said.

Quaintance originally committed to Kentucky and coach John Calipari in November of 2023 and considered staying with the program when Pope took over but instead headed to Arizona State for his freshman season. He averaged 9.3 points, 7.8 rebounds, 2.6 blocks and 29 minutes per game despite being the youngest player in college basketball last season.

He's a defensive stopper who Pope knows will be a "difference maker" for Kentucky.

Pope has said Quaintance reminds him of former Clemson star Dale Davis, Pope's teammate with the Indiana Pacer during Pope's rookie season. Davis played 16 years in the NBA.

"Dale Davis was an elite-level shot blocker, an incredible athlete. He could really run the floor and punish you at the rim. He was an intimidating presence and Jayden is like that," Pope said.

However, Pope also likes Quaintance's ability to do things offensively and believes he's "destined to be a star" at Kentucky.

"Jayden has unbelievable timing and is incredibly mobile. He can also surprise you with the way he can put the ball on the floor. That's some of why I think he's going to be a star," Pope said.

Kentucky sophomore Trent Noah admits it is even hard for him to believe that Quaintance can be so good and still not be 18 years old yet.

"He has an incredible build. I mean, that's why he's a NBA style player. I'm ready for him to get healthy and play alongside him," Noah said.

Noah played against Quaintance and UK freshman Jasper Johnson when they were on the same AAU team two years ago.

"The two of them were really good together, so I kind of know him (Quaintance) from that and it was easy to tell even then just how good he was going to be," Noah said.

Past relationship paid off for UK transfer

New Kentucky receivers coach L'Damian Washington recruited Ashton Cozart when he was coaching at the University of Oklahoma but the No. 214 ranked recruit by 247Sports Composite ended up signing with Oregon over Alabama, Auburn, Florida and Oklahoma.

The Texas native left Oregon after one season and played the 2024 season at Southern Methodist and had one catch for 24 yards in four games before entering the transfer portal again. This time Washington was successful and Cozart committed to the Wildcats in May.

"He early enrolled at Oregon at age 17. He then transitioned home (to SMU). He battled anxiety really hard being away from home," Washington said.

Once he got back to Texas at SMU, Washington said Cozart felt the pressure of being a top 30 receiver in his recruiting class and dealt with depression at times.

See **VIEW**S, on 10



Purdue transfer Lizzie Carr, right, signed autographs for fans after UK's spring exhibition match. (Photo by Larry Vaught)



Coach Mark Pope believes sophomore Jayden Quaintance, right, is on an elite level with his physical talent. (UK Athletics photo)



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