Dreams on a mirror
Cale Garrett writes his goals on his bathroom mirror. Then, he achieves them.
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Becoming a go-to contributor as a freshman in the SEC isn’t easy, but Jalen Knox, Tyler Badie and Nick Bolton have all made their mark for the Tigers

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10 impossible questions about Kentucky

1. Kentucky is one of four states constituted as a commonwealth. Which of the following is NOT one of the other three?

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OBJECTIVE:

Rout: Missourian vs. Kentucky defense

KENTUCKY OFFENSE VS. MISSOURI DEFENSE

STARTERS

MISSOURI

Kicker: Tucker McCann 19
Punter: Corey Fatony 26
Long snapper: Drew Wise 51

MISSOURI OFFENSE VS. KENTUCKY DEFENSE

KENTUCKY

Kicker: Miles Butler 95
Punter: Max Duffy 93
Long snapper: Tristan Yeomans 42

KENTUCKY catalogs a strong offensive line led by quarterback Terry Wilson 3, fullback Christian Holmes 21, and running back Benny Snell Jr. 26. The Wildcats have a deep and productive running back group, highlighted by Snell and C.J. Conrad 87. Snell, a dynamic runner, has shown the ability to break tackles and find gaps in the defense. Conrad, a physical back, provides a complementary style to Snell's speed and is a threat to run between the tackles.

The Kentucky defense is anchored by linebacker Jamar "Boogie" Watson 31, who has become a key player in the Wildcats' scheme. Watson's aggressive play style and ability to cover both the run and pass make him a dangerous threat on the field. Joining Watson is defensive end Tyree Gillespie 9, who has established himself as a formidable pass rusher and has the ability to disrupt the quarterback's timing.

The secondary of the Kentucky defense is led by cornerbacks Dorian Baker 21 and Brandon Lee 4. Baker, a physical player, is a reliable cover man and has the speed to keep up with the fastest receivers. Lee, a long-limbed defender, is a strong Coverage II player and provides solid depth to the Kentucky secondary.

The Kentucky defense has shown a strong ability to stop the run and create turnovers. With players like Snell, Conrad, and Wilson, the Wildcats' offense will need to be sharp and efficient to overcome the tough challenge posed by the Kentucky defense.

Tiger Kickoff // Columbia Missourian // October 26-27, 2018
Fast Five with
DEMARKUS ACY

BY ELI LEDERMAN

What’s your favorite meal in the Mizzou Athletic Training Complex cafeteria?

The baked potatoes are really good. I do the baked potatoes with the cod. That’s a really strong combination.

What’s the movie you go back and rewatch over and over?

Oh, that’s ‘Titanic,’ most definitely. That’s probably the first real, true movie I sat down and watched. I watched it with my grandmother. It’s probably one of my favorite movies. I heard they’re making a sequel to it. I’ll go see that.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be, and why?

I’d want to be able to go back in time. I think some of the stuff you could do would be really funny.

Outside of friends and family, what’s the thing you miss most about being home in Dallas?

Whataburger, most definitely. I get the honey butter chicken strip sandwich. I miss the heat, too. I don’t like the winter weather up here. I love the heat back home.

Where’s your favorite place to go unwind around Columbia?

I like taking my dog to the Devil’s Icebox (in Rock Bridge Memorial State Park). It helps give me a peace of mind away from football, takes me away from any problems I’m having and stuff. I like going there.

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Missouri notched its first win in five weeks with a 65-33 Homecoming victory over Memphis this past Saturday. Now, the Tigers turn to the remainder of their Southeastern Conference schedule, starting with Kentucky this weekend. As always, the Impossible Quiz is here to see how much you know about Missouri’s opponent.

From sprinting humans to sprinting horses, and from Kentucky women’s basketball to former United States Secretary of State Henry Clay, the quiz will test your knowledge of the Kentucky Wildcats and their hometown, Lexington, Kentucky.

So, how well do you know the Kentucky Wildcats?

1. Kentucky is one of four states constituted as a commonwealth. Which of the following is NOT one of the other three?
   a. New Hampshire
   b. Virginia
   c. Massachusetts
   d. Pennsylvania

2. The city of Lexington was established how many years before Kentucky became a state?
   a. 1
   b. 7
   c. 10
   d. 16

3. Tyson Gay, a sprinter from Lexington, holds claim to the world’s second-fastest man behind Usain Bolt for his 100 meter dash time. What is Gay’s fastest time in the event?
   a. 9.60 seconds
   b. 9.63 seconds
   c. 9.66 seconds
   d. 9.69 seconds

4. Keeneland, a thoroughbred horse racing and sales facility in Lexington, has sold how many Kentucky Derby winners?
   a. 22
   b. 34
   c. 47
   d. 51

5. Henry Clay, who practiced law in Lexington, served as secretary of state under which president?
   a. John Quincy Adams
   b. James Madison
   c. James Monroe
   d. Andrew Jackson

6. The University of Kentucky’s women’s basketball team was organized in 1902, one year before the men’s team, but was abolished in 1924. In what year was it re-established?
   a. 1959
   b. 1962
   c. 1970
   d. 1974

7. Which of the following MLB pitchers played for the Lexington Legends, a minor league affiliate located in Lexington?
   a. Andy Pettitte
   b. Roger Clemens
   c. Roy Oswalt
   d. Wade Davis

8. Although he attended Kentucky on a football scholarship, Gay Brewer is more well-known for his success in golf. In what year did he appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated after winning the Masters?
   a. 1964
   b. 1967
   c. 1968
   d. 1972

9. Tim Couch is the only Kentucky player to have gone No. 1 overall in the NFL draft. In 1998, the quarterback set Kentucky’s single-season passing yards record with how many yards?
   a. 4,275
   b. 4,517
   c. 4,636
   d. 4,892

10. How many undefeated seasons has Kentucky football completed in its history?
   a. 0
   b. 1
   c. 2
   d. 3

ANSWERS: 1 (A) 2 (C) 3 (D) 4 (A) 5 (A) 6 (D) 7 (B)  8 (B)  9 (A) 10 (B)

BY MISSOURIAN STAFF

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUIZ

10 things you don’t know about Kentucky

SCHEDULE

| Sept. 1  | vs. UT Martin, W, 54-14 |
| Sept. 8  | vs. Wyoming, W, 40-13 |
| Sept. 15 | at Purdue, W, 40-37 |
| Sept. 22 | vs. Georgia, L, 43-29 |
| Oct. 6   | at South Carolina, L, 37-35 |
| Oct. 13  | at Alabama, L, 39-10 |
| Oct. 20  | |
| Oct. 27  | vs. Memphis, W, 65-33 |
| Nov. 3   | vs. Kentucky |
| Nov. 10  | at Florida |
| Nov. 17  | vs. Vanderbilt |
| Nov. 23  | at Tennessee |
|          | vs. Arkansas |
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BY ELI LEDERMAN
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The pane of reflective glass hangs on the wall above the sink. Like most of us, Missouri’s 6-foot-3 middle linebacker brushes his teeth in front of his bathroom mirror and checks his reflection as he gets dressed each morning. But the mirror’s purpose goes beyond self-care or self-admiration — the ink stains left on its silver surface point to something deeper.

On this particular bathroom mirror, with the help of his Dry Erase markers, Cale Garrett scribbles his goals and aspirations.

Like any good planner, he’s organized. Cale arranges the mirror into segments; one is devoted to life ambitions both present and future, another to personal objectives. There’s a space dedicated to traveling, too, and a corner reserved for his hobbies. Playing the piano is one.

In the very middle, though, Cale lays out his most important goals. These are written in big, bold lettering and relate to football. As of Week 8, the primary aim for the man leading Missouri with 55 tackles this fall, spelled out in the center of the bathroom mirror, reads as such: “Be a better tackler.”

The practice is rooted in equal parts visualization and self-actualization. Put your hopes and dreams up on the mirror, stare at them each day, then go out and make them happen. Lindi Burns first began using the process in her work selling cleaning supplies to remain on top of her sales goals and commission numbers. She passed the method down to each of her children, Cale the last of them.

He committed to it with the most vigor. Reach a goal, wipe it off, add a new one. Lindi recalls a time when the ambitions her son wrote on his mirror were more concrete and farther out of reach than the ones he has today — a time long before he became the 230-pound burgeoning bundle of intensity and the heart of Missouri’s defense, when scholarship offers weren’t pouring in, because really they never did, and the idea that he might play football someday at a Power Five school was a pipe dream.

But dreams, and outsized ones at that, were plentiful for Cale. And so he did then what he does now: He scrawled his goals all over the bathroom mirror and tirelessly chased them down.

“For as long as I could remember,” she says. “Cale always had on his bathroom mirror ‘SEC’ and ‘MU’.”

The ink on the mirror helped Cale go from unheralded recruit to immediate contributor for Missouri, and then to a centerpiece of its defense.

Now they’re pushing him even farther, past a goal and a place he almost never reached.

Lindi had all the decorations she needed. National Signing Day — Feb. 3 — was just four days away, which meant that on Wednesday, Cale would officially commit to play at the Naval Academy in front of a few hundred people expected to attend the signing event. So by Saturday morning, Lindi had purchased all the navy-and-gold festoons she could find at Party City.

Saturday, Jan. 30, 2016

Lindi had all the decorations she needed. National Signing Day — Feb. 3 — was just four days away, which meant that on Wednesday, Cale would officially commit to play at the Naval Academy in front of a few hundred people expected to attend the signing event. So by Saturday morning, Lindi had purchased all the navy-and-gold festoons she could find at Party City.

CALE GARRETT CHASES HIS ASPIRATIONS ONE GOAL AT A TIME
Then came the phone call that sent Lindi and her son into a five-day spiral that changed their lives forever.

Suddenly, Missouri had fewer signees that it’d expected; a spot opened up for Cale. Early that Saturday morning, Tigers assistant coach Andy Hill called Greg Jones, Cale’s head coach at Kearney High School.

At 9 a.m., Jones sat across from Cale and Lindi in their living room and passed along the offer they had always dreamed would come. Jones expected the news to be met with excitement.

But the immediate reaction—from mother and son alike—was anger. Yes, this was the one they’d hoped for longer than either could remember. In the previous two years, they had done everything in their power to will it into existence. But with January fading into February, they’d come to accept that an offer from Missouri, or any Power Five program for that matter, just wasn’t going to happen. Cale was going to Navy. They felt comfortable with it.

“It was like a bit of a slap in the face,” Cale says. “It came right at the end of my recruitment. What had changed?”

During Cale’s junior and senior years, mother and son spent countless hours in the car together, traveling from one Midwest recruiting camp to the next. One campus visit after another. Trips to Illinois, Iowa, Iowa State, Oklahoma State, Arkansas, Western Illinois and others. Each offered a brief sense of false confidence. Only one yielded anything at all. Western Illinois, of the Missouri Valley Conference, offered.

At the preparatory camps, Cale put on impressive performances. He wasn’t going to let his talent and drive go unnoticed, and it almost never did. But when he came off the field, the feedback was always the same:

“Thanks for coming out, you’re close,” they’d tell him. “Just keep on working”

Scouts told Cale he’d never play in the SEC; he didn’t have the speed to compete at the highest level.

“That was the hang-up everywhere we went,” Lindi says.

The recruiting process left them deflated. There were letters from Bowling Green and Northern Iowa offering scholarships, but neither provided the big-time college football Cale always pictured himself playing. When Navy sent an offer his way, he saw it as a lifeline, and he and Lindi made an official visit to the campus on the coast of Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay.

They fell in love with the place immediately. The school was gorgeous. The crab—a Maryland staple—was delicious. Upon meeting Navy head coach Ken Niumatalolo, things clicked. He saw the potential in Cale that no one else seemed to recognize. Niumatalolo viewed him not just as a football player, but as a leader who could distinguish himself at the Naval Academy.

His kind words brought Lindi to what she calls “happy tears.”

“It was a wonderful feeling,” Lindi says.

The scenic campus in Annapolis felt like home. That’s why the 11th-hour offer from Missouri stirred such strong emotions. Why had it taken so long for the Tigers to come through?

Soon, though, tempers cooled, and the realization of the opportunity that had just been placed in front of them quickly came into sight. Missouri was offering a chance to play SEC football just 143 miles from their doorstep. It was the offer he had always chased. It was the goal he inscribed on his mirror.

It was too good to pass up.

And so they showered, dressed and hopped in the car for the two-hour drive to Columbia. Cale verbally committed to Missouri that day.

When they returned home to Kearney, Lindi went to Party City. The navy-and-gold adornments she had purchased would no longer work; she exchanged them all for others, these ones were black and gold.

Everyday changed that Saturday in late January. Five days later, Cale was on campus for good.

The slow guy in the middle

Toss a Super Ball around an empty room, and you’ll get a feel for how Cale Garrett moves on the football field.

Like one of those synthetic polymer bouncy balls, he caroms from one boundary to the next with reckless abandon, eventually reaching every inch of the space he inhabits. When he makes contact, it’s with a brute force that sends most flying in the opposite direction.

And just like the round, vulgarized toy balls, he never stops going.

At Kearney High School, he was the starting middle linebacker all four years. Even as a freshman, already standing at a towering 6-foot-3, Cale appeared to be a man among boys all the way until he removed his helmet and revealed the youthful face he still has today.

From the first day until the final play of his senior season, the 2015 Missouri Class 4 Defensive Player of the Year was a ball of energy and a bastion of intensity. In his senior season, the coaching staff at Kearney got creative, and decided to see what that lethal combination might look like on the offensive side of the ball. Cale barreled through helpless defenders as a running back that fall to the tune of eight touchdowns on 238 yards, and he added another score through the air.

His level of ferocity didn’t change in practice, especially on defense. At one point, the Bulldogs ran out of willing scout team running backs. Players on Cale’s own team were too afraid of what the big presence in middle might do to them. Even when he tried to let up, Cale still often laid out anyone, friend or foe, who entered his territory.

“Cale Garrett and slowing down?” Josh Gray, a coach at Kearney, says. “Those two things just don’t go together.”

Yet speed is very nearly what kept Cale from his shot at playing SEC football; and when he arrived at Missouri in 2016, he sought out ways to make up for his slow pace so it could never get in his way again.

In high school, Cale’s love for the game showed in his tenacity on the field and his eagerness to learn about its intricacies. He wanted to know not just the how, but the why. In Columbia, he took it to the next level. For as full-throttle as he goes on the field, Cale now works as tirelessly off of it.

Most days inside the Mizzou Athletics Training Complex, when practice is over and the weight training sessions are completed, Cale can be found in one of its many meeting rooms pouring over film. As plays unfold on the screen, he watches with a particular attention to detail. He reads them as if he’s out there himself, always trying to stay one step ahead.

Vernon Hargreaves, Missouri’s inside linebackers coach, has seen plenty of players who could run fast but didn’t play like it, ones who had all the physical attributes but lacked the awareness and play recognition to react when they needed to. Their speed wasn’t enough to make up for it.

In his middle linebacker, Hargreaves sees the opposite. Cale has a knack for retaining information, and the time he’s spent studying the game allows him to diagnose opposing offenses in ways others can’t. It’s how he plays faster than he truly is.

“He probably knows the defense better than I do,” Hargreaves says.

Cale can’t change his 40-yard dash time, but he doesn’t have to. He bridges the gap by knowing where to be and always ending up in that spot.

What was once a hurdle, Cale turned into weapon. His lack of speed made him Missouri’s most productive defender.

Please see GOALS, page 10C

CALE GARRETT
Missouri linebacker

“It was like a bit of a slap in the face. It came right at the end of my recruitment. What had changed?”

JAY BURY/Missourian
Missouri linebacker
Cale Garrett dives to tackle Memphis quarterback Brady White in the first quarter on Saturday on Faurot Field.

OPPOSING PHOTO BY DI PAN
When pen hit paper on Wednesday afternoon, and Cale was officially a Missouri Tiger, Lindi felt a sense of relief.

The days that followed the late offer were busy and stressful. Plans were changed, and adjustments were made. There was the call to Navy, too. That one was tough.

“I knew I could have had it really good over there,” Cale says.

It was a whirlwind week, but when all the forms were signed and everything was set in stone, mother and son took a step back and exhaled. Yet the bliss lasted only a matter of minutes. Not long after Cale gave his signature, Hill was on the phone with Lindi.

Missouri wanted him to enroll early and participate in spring camp; they could have Cale in classes by next week. They needed him on campus the next day.

So Cale and Lindi pulled off in an afternoon what many families take a whole summer to do: They packed for college. After several hasty trips to Wal-Mart and another drive down to Columbia, Cale was moved in. It was a bit too fast for Lindi.

“I remember getting home, looking around and thinking, ‘Woah, that just happened,’” she said.

For Cale, it was even more overwhelming.

Days earlier, his mind was on Navy, but the Midshipmen weren’t expecting him until July. Now he was playing alongside the likes of Charles Harris and Michael Scherer and trying to tackle runners like Ish Witter. Cale felt lost.

He was no longer the big dog at Kearney, comfortable with his role on the team. The first few weeks at Missouri, he was nobody. People more often assumed he was swimmer than a linebacker. This was a complete restart.

In a sense, the unusual beginning fit right in for Cale. Why would it be easy or straightforward? It never had been for him.

But Cale recovered.

He impressed the coaching staff during spring camp and appeared in all 12 games as a freshman that fall, finishing seventh in total tackles. A year later, he became a starter and led the team with 105. Now a junior, he’s a team captain, and although those early days at Missouri seem ages ago, Cale still draws from them.

“I still have flashbacks to being that guy with something to prove. That drives me.”

Chasing the dreams on the mirror

When Cale was young, he’d scour YouTube for videos of inspirational figures. He was a hard worker, and the clips he found featured similar people. He’d spend hours watching, always trying to draw things from them.

There was always something about Muhammad Ali. Cale loved how the famed boxer exuded confidence without being arrogant. Ali’s poetic speeches motivated him. His quotes gave him life; Cale now has one tattooed on his arm.

“Being that good and believing in yourself when nobody else does,” Cale says, “I think is really awesome.”

On his mirror now, in the section reserved for football-related goals, Cale has a new aspiration: “Be a vocal leader.” In the past, he’s led by example.

But now the veteran wants to be more outspoken, and he’s turning to the man and the words that inspired him for guidance.

Like every other goal jotted on his mirror in Dry Erase, Cale is staring at this one each morning, trying to incorporate it into his daily life. When he feels like he’s fulfilled it — and boy you know he will — he’ll wipe this one off like all the others before it.

For a moment, the ink stains will be all that remain. Then Cale will find another ambition to add.

And just like the others — the dream of playing football at Missouri, the goal of starring for an SEC defense — he’ll chase it down until he can break out the washcloth and wipe the mirror down again.

“I still have flashbacks to being that guy with something to prove. That drives me.”

CALE GARRETT
Missouri linebacker

Supervising editors are Eric Lee and Michael Knisley.
October 26-27, 2018  //  Columbia Missourian  //  Tiger Kickoff  //  11

**OPPONENT PREVIEW**

**SEC SURPRISE KENTUCKY FINDS SUCCESS IN TRENCHES**

Running back Benny Snell Jr. leads the way offensively for the Wildcats, who also have a stout defense

BY BRENDAN LAVELL

Missouri has to do something it hasn’t done since Drew Lock was a high schooler if the Tigers are going to avoid starting this season’s Southeastern Conference slate 0-4: beat Kentucky.

That wouldn’t have been such a daunting task last year, or most years before, but this Wildcats team, coached for the sixth year in a row by Mark Stoops, is reaching the program’s greatest heights in a decade.

The Tigers got back in the win column with a 65-33 win over Memphis on Saturday, improving their record to 4-3. But they’ll have to win at least one of their next two games against ranked opponents — No. 12 Kentucky and a road trip to No. 9 Florida — if they want to avoid slipping under .500 for the first time this season.

Any conversation about Kentucky must begin with running back Benny Snell Jr. The junior leads the SEC and ranks sixth nationally with 124 rushing yards per game. He needs 713 yards to break the program record and is on pace to achieve it by the end of 2018.

Kentucky is a run-first team in every way, rushing the ball twice for every time it passes. Snell’s backup, Asim Rose, has 254 yards and four touchdowns on a 6.2 yards per carry average. Quarterback Terry Wilson has struggled at times through the air, but the sophomore has excelled on the ground, piling up 395 yards and three touchdowns.

If Missouri’s 34th-ranked run defense can contain Kentucky’s array of rushing weapons, it can capitalize against one of the weaker air attacks in all of football. Wilson is a game-managing passer in every sense of the word. He’s been fairly accurate this season, but rarely connects on the deep ball, averaging just 5.9 yards per attempt. In addition, he’s tossed only four touchdowns against five interceptions.

Lynn Bowden Jr. is the only Wildcats receiver with more than 114 yards. The sophomore has hauled in 30 catches for 291 yards and three touchdowns. Kentucky will likely lean even heavier on its run game once it reaches the red zone.

Missouri’s offense, meanwhile, will face its toughest red zone challenge of the season in a Kentucky defense that has allowed a score on just 64.7 percent of opponents’ trips inside the 20-yard line, good for third in the nation. The Tigers struggled to cash in as they approached the end zone during their recent three-game stretch against some of the SEC’s better defenses, so this will be a matchup to…

Please see KENTUCKY, page 15C

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**BRYAN WOOLSTON/The Associated Press**

Kentucky running back Benny Snell Jr. (26) carries the ball during the second half of Saturday’s game against Vanderbilt in Lexington, Ky.
Missouri’s most recent recruiting class arrived in Columbia to high praise. The Tigers’ coaching staff raved about true freshmen such as tight end Messiah Swinson, defensive back Jarvis Ware and defensive ends Trajan Jeffcoat and Jatorian Hansford. And, of course, there was the crop of five wide receivers who turned heads from the get-go.

They weren’t simply adjusting to the team well, they were standing out from the early days of fall camp.

Most of these freshmen have since faced hurdles that have prevented them from breaking out on the field or seeing playing time altogether. It could’ve been injury or a developmental setback. After all, these young men are still adjusting to the rigors of life within a Power Five football program. Or they simply could’ve been buried on the depth chart, stuck behind established upperclassmen who have not lost their grip on extended playing time.

However, a handful have continued to make a difference in the most crucial games of the 2018 season. The Missourian spoke with the high school coaches of three of the Tigers’ most impressive newcomers — Jalen Knox, Tyler Badie and Nick Bolton — to learn about the preparation and intelligence it takes to succeed immediately as a true freshman in the Southeastern Conference.

Tyler Badie

Briarcrest Christian School head coach Brian Stewart has seen only one player with Badie’s work ethic. That young man went on to compete in the decathlon at Stanford. Badie’s resiliency and intensity set him apart from his peers.

“Let’s say we’re out there running drills and the drill goes 5 yards. Well, he’d run 40 yards or 50 yards,” Stewart said. “Not that many people love practice. And he just simply loved it. Every week, every rep was an important rep.”

Badie sought out any method of improving himself. He weighed 160 pounds when he arrived at Briarcrest, which is near Memphis, Tennessee, for his junior season. Over the next two years, he carried a jar of peanut butter around school for a steady supply of protein. He left for Missouri at 195 pounds.

The running back also showed an unusual dedication to film study. He poured over it on the weekends to break down details such as locating the exact spot on the ground to place his foot for a cutback. While the Saints met during the week to look at the tape, very few of them came in prepared by taking a Saturday or Sunday to produce their own analysis.

“He’s mature and seasoned beyond his years,” Stewart said. “That’s why he can practice the way he practices and prepares. Most high school kids don’t have that kind of vision, as far as for their future. He knew exactly what he wanted to do. He’ll play in the league some day because of the way he works, because of the way he gets after it.”

Nick Bolton

Jeff Rayburn, Bolton’s head coach at Lone Star High School near Dallas, has never met a smarter football player than the Missouri backup linebacker who racked up eight total tackles in less than three quarters of play against No. 1 Alabama.

Like Badie, Bolton also devoted a chunk of his weekend to film study. The young player didn’t simply look to correct his own mistakes but produced questions about the defense’s scheme — and potential solutions to those questions. Rayburn compared Bolton’s preparation to the likes of...
Badie, Bolton, Knox have surpassed expectations

FRESHMEN from PAGE 12C

Peyton Manning and Tom Brady. “Those guys made their coaches better because they were going to be so well-prepared, you wanted to be prepared to answer the questions they are going to have,” Rayburn said. “That’s kind of how Nick Bolton is.”

The coaching staff often implemented Bolton’s suggestions into its scheme or game plan. The running joke was “Nick Bolton is always right.” Similar to a quarterback, his coaches gave him the freedom to assess the opposition at the line of scrimmage and call a play based on the look.

The play that best displays the sum of Bolton’s intelligence, attention to detail and work ethic came in 2016 against the Wakeland Wolverines, a conference rival. Lone Star was losing by one score with less than five minutes to play when a Wolverines’ receiver broke the free on the opposite side of the field from Bolton. The linebacker tracked down the would-be scorer and tackled him at the 2-yard line. On the next play, the Rangers intercepted a pass that led to the game-winning touchdown.

“Our kids think about the interception in the end zone and the big pass play that happened afterward,” Rayburn said. “We always remind the kids of continuing to play as hard as you can. Every play is the most important play of your life. Nick kind of embodied that. The superstar of the team that everybody knows is also the kid that hustles the most and plays the hardest and prepares the best.”

Jalen Knox

Know has been named Freshman of the Week twice at wide receiver, which wasn’t his primary position in high school. He didn’t really have one.

There were many skills Knox needed at Mansfield Timberview High School — located in Arlington, Texas — as he rotated between quarterback, running back and receiver that don’t translate to his position with the Tigers. But he was able to handle the wide array of responsibilities placed on him in high school because of the same trait that has helped him emerge as one of Missouri’s most dangerous offensive weapons: his maturity.

Mansfield Timberview head coach James Brown and his staff could monitor how much film work their players were putting in outside of practice, so Knox didn’t necessarily prepare more than his teammates did.

His football IQ and attention to detail, however, allowed him to handle the broad range of knowledge he had to learn to play several positions within the offense. That experience in multiple positions has allowed him to understand offensive concepts and schemes easier than most players his age.

“He just raised the level play of everyone around him,” Brown said. “Because he was so good at what he did, he was so competitive at what he did on the field, he just never liked to lose. He was a guy that made sure when he stepped on the field he was going to be prepared and the guys around him were going to be prepared to win.”

None of these players were more than three-star recruits coming out of high school. Knox was rated as one of the best prospects in Missouri’s 2018 class, but Badie and Bolton were ranked much lower.

Talent alone rarely leads to immediate success in college football, especially in the SEC. The Missouri freshmen that have shone the brightest in their first year with the team are the ones who are mature enough to understand the rep-in, rep-out focus it takes to truly prepare and improve on a daily basis.

Supervising editor is Eric Lee.
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**Wildcats gobble up opposing offenses**

KENTUCKY from PAGE 11C

watch.

Defensively, Kentucky’s strength comes in the trenches, where opposing running backs have faced a house of horrors. In their six wins this year, the Wildcats have allowed no more than 128 yards on the ground. They allowed 164 rushing yards in a 20-14 loss at Texas A&M.

Nickelback Mike Edwards and linebackers Jordan Jones and Kash Daniel have particularly strong noses for the ball. So does defensive end Josh Allen, who has 45 total tackles and leads the team with 12.5 tackles for loss. Eight of those have been sacks, which ties him for seventh in the country.

Kentucky’s pass rush is enough to make opposing quarterbacks sweat, but its secondary has performed just as well. The Wildcats allow less than 200 passing yards per game and are tied for fourth in the SEC with seven interceptions through seven games. Safety Darius West has proved especially adept in coverage with three interceptions and five passes defended.

Throughout his Missouri career, Lock has struggled with ball security against elite defenses. Taking care of the ball will be one of his greatest challenges, especially if the offensive line fails to contain Kentucky’s pass rush. It’s also likely to be one of the keys to the game. After all, the Tigers are 4-0 when they at least break even in the turnover margin. They’re 0-3 when they lose the turnover battle.

The health of senior receivers Emanuel Hall and Nate Brown is an X-factor. Hall in particular would be a massive boost for Missouri. His return would allow Missouri to stretch the Wildcats even more, combining him with the likes of Johnathon Johnson and Jalen Knox.

Kickoff is set for 3 p.m. Saturday at Memorial Stadium. The game will be broadcast on SEC Network.

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