

F1 Academy drivers aim to reach new audience with Netflix series

BY JAMES ELLINGWORTH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON — Abbi Pulling never thought so many people would want to watch her chase her Formula 1 dream.

Following on from “Drive To Survive,” which sparked a boom in F1’s audience through its mix of on-track action and behind-the-scenes insight, “F1: The Academy” debuts on Netflix on Wednesday. It’s set to bring unprecedented attention to a women-only racing series.

The documentary is “a huge opportunity,” said Pulling, a 22-year-old British driver whose run to the 2024 title forms the backbone of the series. The series follows F1 Academy, a competition which can make or break careers and runs as a support series to F1 Grand Prix races.

“It’s definitely changed my life and helped my career progress,” Pulling told The Associated Press. “Little 8-year-old me that started karting definitely would never have imagined how it’s all exploded and become so big.”

A culture shift in auto racing

Operating a women-only racing series has been controversial among

some F1 fans. Mocking, even abusive, social media comments are part of the scenery for the series and its drivers.

For the drivers, it offers funding and an opportunity to build a brand. Pulling, who’s shown sharing a house with her manager, says she couldn’t have afforded to keep racing if not for F1 Academy, or to continue for 2025 if not for winning the title.

There are also subtle ways the atmosphere in F1 Academy is different. “No friends on track” is the title of the opening episode of the docuseries, but the drivers are a close-knit group off the circuit. To an audience accustomed to the F1 feuds of “Drive To Survive,” seeing drivers consoling each other after mistakes and organizing birthday parties is a little different.

“As a woman, it’s like you go in there, you have your own safe space,” said Bianca Bustamante, a driver from the Philippines.

F1 Academy is part of a wider culture shift in auto racing. In 2018, F1 abolished the role of “grid girls” — models paid to stand in front of drivers’ cars — and while auto racing remains



Courtesy of Netflix

This photo, made available by Netflix on Tuesday, May 27, shows the actors of the tv series ‘F1: The Academy’ Abbi Pulling, left, and Maya Weug, right.

male-dominated, teams increasingly employ more women in engineering and strategy roles.

“Five, 10 years ago ... the motorsport world, community, was very, very different,” Bustamante told AP. “The only time girls were ever on the grid was if they were grid girls, or umbrella girls, or podium girls. All these things that we don’t see nowadays because of the representation.”

Aiming to make history

No female driver has started an F1 world championship race for 49 years, or even entered qualifying since 1992, and the last woman to take part in an official F1 session was Susie Wolff

in British Grand Prix practice in 2015. Wolff is now the managing director of F1 Academy.

“I’ve lived it. I know how tough it is,” Wolff told the AP. “It’s my job to set something up which gives young female drivers opportunity for the future, and from start to end I think we’ve made a huge amount of progress so far in a very short space of time.”

F1 Academy uses modified Formula 4 cars, meaning that even the series’ best drivers have multiple more steps to reach the F1 grid. While it may take years to develop a female driver through F1’s ultra-competitive feeder series, Wolff says that’s not the only goal.

Helping a driver launch a sustainable long-term racing career in any series is a win for F1 Academy, Wolff argues, and so is encouraging more girls to start out in go-kart events or join the increasing numbers of female engineers in F1.

“It’s much more welcoming now, compared to how it was when I started back in 2001,” says Alice Powell, who mentors girls in karting series, alongside being Pulling’s manager and a development driver in the Formula E all-electric series. She says she’s seeing more girls starting out at the grassroots in Britain, and they’re having more success too.

“Female drivers are much more accepted. There are a lot more female drivers in the karting paddock, which is really nice to see. A lot more female mechanics are getting involved and helping the younger drivers as well.”

The journey, not the destination

It’s not always easy to follow what F1 Academy winners do next.

The unprecedented attention on F1 Academy compared to other development series means that moving up means leaving the spotlight — at

least for now.

Pulling’s reward for winning the title was a fully-funded seat in the British-based GB3 series this year. That costs far more than Pulling could have paid and gives her a much faster car, but has a fraction of F1 Academy’s audience.



PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
In accordance with KRS 424 and KRS 100.221, notice is hereby given that the Hopkinsville Board of Zoning Adjustment will hold public hearings on June 12, 2025, at 3:00 P.M., in the Council Chambers of the Hopkinsville Municipal Center, 715 South Virginia Street, Hopkinsville, KY. The purpose of these public hearings is as follows:

BZA25-6-1
REQUEST: The applicant, KattPharm, LLC (Owner), Kathy Detraz (Agent), is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow for the placement of a kennel at 101 Johnston Trace, Hopkinsville, KY. The property is zoned I-1 (Light Industrial) District. A Conditional Use Permit is required prior to the establishment of a kennel within an I-1 (Light Industrial) District. A kennel is defined as any premises where three or more animals over four months of age are housed, groomed, bred, boarded, trained or sold, and which may offer provisions for minor medical treatment.

BZA25-6-2
REQUEST: The applicants, Salus Management Inc. (Owner) and Dad’s House, Inc. (Agent), is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow for the establishment of a Crisis Counseling Center use at the property located at 550 Moores Drive, Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The property is zoned R-4 (Multi-Family Residential) District. A Conditional Use Permit is required prior to the establishment of a Crisis Counseling Center use in an R-4 (Multi-Family Residential) District.

BZA25-6-3
REQUEST: The applicant, Cabot Corporation (Owner) and Johnathan Granger, (Agent), is requesting a Dimensional Variance of twenty-five (25) feet in height to allow for the construction of a discharge stack with a maximum height of eighty-five (85) feet. The property is located on 4045 Calvin Drive, Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The property is located in the I-2 (Heavy Industrial) District. The maximum allowable building height in the I-2 (Heavy Industrial) District is sixty (60) feet.

BZA25-6-4
REQUEST: The applicants, Anthony (Tony) and Karen Chiles; Owners, are requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow for a structure located within a B-3 (Central Business) District to be utilized as a Car Detailing Business. The property in question will be classified as a Mixed Use as the proposed car detailing/repair business use will be in conjunction with a professional use (real estate office). The property is located at 1506 South Virginia Street, Hopkinsville, KY (PVA Parcel No. 218-00-04-019.00). The affected property is a corner lot at the intersection of South Virginia Street and E. 16th Street. The structure for the proposed use (car detailing business) has frontage on East 16th Street. A Conditional Use is required for an automobile washing station and repair shop within a B-3 (Central Business) District.

BZA25-6-5
REQUEST: The applicants, Iron Development Group, LLC (Owner); Tammy Stratton (Agent), are requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow for the placement of a kennel (pet boarding/grooming services) on a 4.31 acres (+/-) lot on Johnston Trace in Hopkinsville, KY. The property, which is identified as PVA Parcel ID No. 208-00-02-001.00, lies 450 feet (+/-) southeast of the intersection of Johnston Trace and Dawson Springs Road with frontage on Johnston Trace. The property is zoned I-1 (Light Industrial District). A Conditional Use Permit is required prior to the establishment of a kennel within an I-1 (Light Industrial) District. A kennel is defined as any premises where three or more animals over four months of age are housed, groomed, bred, boarded, trained or sold, and which may offer provisions for minor medical treatment.

The application and Staff Report for these cases will be available for review at Community and Development Services on or after June 5, 2025 during the hours of 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

COMMUNITY AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
710 SOUTH MAIN STREET
HOPKINSVILLE, KY 42240

Former Wildcat scores first round upset at French Open

The former Kentucky star led UK to an NCAA runner-up finish in 2022

BY CHRIS FISHER

For the first time in his budding professional career, Wildcat legend Gabriel Diallo has won a match at Roland Garros—the second Grand Slam of the season. The Montreal native who played at Kentucky from 2020-2022 defeated 18-seed Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina in straight sets, 7-5, 6-3, 6-4.

The Canadian Wildcat—who led Kentucky to a NCAA Championship match appearance in 2022—has now won his first round contest at each of the last three Grand Slams, advancing to the third round at the 2024 US Open and second round at the 2025 Australian Open.

Monday’s victory marked the first time in his Grand Slam Career that Diallo has won a best-of-five match in straight sets. Diallo now owns three top 20 wins in his career and two on the 2025 season after the Canadian knocked off No. 16 Grigor Dimitrov as a lucky loser to advance to the quarterfinals at the ATP Masters 1000 event in Madrid.

Currently ranked No. 54 in the ATP Rankings, Diallo has surged over 100 ranking places from No. 166 in the 52 weeks since he qualified for his first Grand Slam Main Draw appearance at Roland Garros in 2024.

An All-American and NCAA Singles Quarterfinalist during his time in Lexington, Diallo seized control late in the opening frame, turning a 5-5 deadlock into a 7-5 set

victory. The Canadian recovered from a 0-30 deficit in the 11th game before breaking Cerundolo in the subsequent game.

Despite falling behind a break in the early stages of set two, Diallo immediately responded by breaking back and forcing Cerundolo into an extended service game two games later. The power-serving Diallo kept the pressure going by only dropping three points on serve for the remainder of the set, while also finding a second break of serve to take a two sets to love lead.

In the third set, Diallo continued to control the match by only dropping five service points in what would become the final frame. The two players traded serve until the seventh game, when Diallo was able to win four out of five points to claim an advantage he would not relinquish. In the tenth game of the third set, Diallo won the first three points of the game and, on his second match point, delivered his 27th winner of the match to advance to the second round at Roland Garros for the first time in his career. In the end, Diallo only faced one break point all match and was able to nearly 80% of his first servvvve points.

Diallo will return to the Parisian red clay on Thursday, where the Canadian will await either Marcos Giron of the United States or Tallon Griekspoor of The Netherlands.

Pope says Oweh’s draft decision is a matter of the heart

BY DARRELL BIRD
CATSPAUSE

Kentucky coach Mark Pope shares the latest news on Otega Oweh during an exclusive one-on-one with The Cats’ Pause one day ahead of the NBA Draft deadline.

MIRAMAR BEACH, FLA — If you are a member of Big Blue Nation and on constant “Otega Watch,” then you’re in good company.

Coach Mark Pope, like all Kentucky fans, is waiting to learn a decision from Otega Oweh on whether to return to Kentucky or enter the NBA draft. He has until 11:59 p.m. Wednesday to make the call.

“We’re having conversations via text right now because I’m trying to give him as much space as I can,” Pope told The Cats’ Pause Tuesday during an exclusive one-on-one interview from the SEC Spring Meeting in Florida.

Pope, in fact, told his leading scorer he has just one request.

“The most important thing is where his heart is,” Pope said. “That’s really the most important thing. He’s had really good progress of his workouts, he’s getting incredible feedback that’s been really positive from teams. There is a space for him in that league at some point. So it’s going to be all about where his heart is.”

Option 1: Otega stays in the draft.

“He’s been dreaming about playing in the NBA for a long time,” Pope said. “So if he thinks, ‘This is my moment and I gotta go,’ then he has to go. That’s what we want for him.”

Option 2: Otega returns to Kentucky.

“If he feels like, ‘My heart is telling me I got unfinished business at Kentucky and I want to run this back, and that’s where my passion is, and I’ll go grow my game and

improve my draft stock,’ then he needs to come back.

“But this is a decision that’s gonna depend on his ticker,” Pope said, “because that’s what’s gonna carry him through the next year.”

Oweh was Kentucky’s leading scorer last season and the presumptive leader of the 2026 Wildcats should he opt to return. It puts Pope in an awkward position since what may be best for Oweh might hurt the coach’s new Kentucky team.

Pope counters that argument.

“Here’s the truth, and this is always the case with players,” Pope said. “What is best for Otega is going to be best for Kentucky. It’s 100% true.

“If he follows his heart and his heart tells him to come back, it’s going to be great for us,” Pope said. “If he follows his heart and

his heart says he should go to the league, it’s going to be great for us because he’s going to go be great there. And he probably wouldn’t have been great for us because your whole heart has to be in this. So it’ll work out the way it’s supposed to work out.”

Kentucky fans were hoping to learn Oweh’s decision before the 11:59 Wednesday deadline. No such luck, according to Pope, who said Oweh has one final workout with an NBA team on Wednesday.

“Otega has earned this right to make the decision,” Pope said. “He’s an incredibly special person with an incredibly bright future and I’m just excited to help in any way that I can with him to look deep inside himself and find out what he wants to wear.”

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ATHLETE

of the

WEEK

Athlete of the Week

University Heights Academy's Eli Finch

This week's Athlete of The Week is Eli Finch. Eli had an RBI and no errors in University Height's Academy's, UHA, Semi Final win against Trigg County High School Tuesday, May 27. UHA played Lyon County Tuesday night in the Region 2 Championship finals.

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