

Castell brings experience, aspirations to UK

By Larry Vaught
Contributing Writer

Like most Southeastern Conference football players, Jordan Castell wants to play in the National Football League. However, the Kentucky safety has an interesting Plan B if needed — he wants to be a high school coach.

The 6-foot-2, 211-pounder from Orlando transferred to Kentucky after three seasons at Florida, where he started 34 games, including 30 in a row, and had 168 tackles, 13 pass breakups and 2.5 tackles for loss. So why does he want to eventually become a high school coach?

“Really just to give back to my community. My area was mostly football, and a lot of guys go the wrong direction. The NFL is definitely the goal, and that’s what I am doing all this hard work for,” the safety said.

“But at the end of the day, I do think I am gonna fall back on coaching at my high school where I played when I do get finished playing football. That’s my goal.”

He admits that football and sports kept him out of trouble when he was younger. He was a consensus four-star recruit by 247Sports, ESPN, On3 and Rivals coming out of West Orange High School and was ranked as the No. 10 safety and No. 139 player overall in the Class



Florida transfer Jordan Castell has plenty of SEC experience but position coach Josh Christian-Young loves his daily work ethic.

of 2023 by ESPN.

“If I could do it all over again, I would do exactly the same thing,” Castell, a two-time SEC Fall Academic Honor Roll member in 2023 and 2024 at Florida, said.

He played one season for Kentucky defensive coordinator Jay Bateman at Florida, and when he was ready to transfer, he liked what Bateman had to say after UK coach Will Stein hired him.

“Coach Bateman really

just broke down the scheme to me about how they were gonna use me and stuff like that. He said this program wants to win games, and I’m like, I’m all about that. Having played for coach Bateman my freshman year, I knew that would be possible here.

“He got up here a couple of days before I came for my visit. He told me how his visit went, and I told him about mine. He was like, ‘Let’s

do it. Let’s go to Kentucky.’ So it just all fell together at the right time for both of us.”

That means he will see a different side of the Kentucky-Florida rivalry that was dominated for a long time by the Gators before Kentucky started winning more frequently. Florida also has a new head coach this year in former UK linebacker Jon Sumrall.

“It’s something I have

thought a lot about. I am very excited to have the chance to play my old school, and I want to win that game a lot. So, yeah, I have already been thinking about playing the Gators,” Castell, who had 54 tackles, two interceptions and one quarterback hurry in 2025, said.

This week, his focus is on Youngstown State, Kentucky’s first opponent Saturday, and he’s confident Bateman has a

successful plan for the UK defense.

“Coach Bateman is one of the smartest guys I’ve ever been around. Coach Bateman loves football,” Castell said.

“I can just go up there to coach Bateman’s office anytime I want, and we could have a talk about anything that’s going on. If that’s football-wise or just life-wise, he is there. I just have so much respect for the guy, and I knew I wanted to be a part of his team at Kentucky.”

Castell and returning starter Ty Bryant, who has played in 37 games with 25 starts, give Kentucky one of the SEC’s most experienced safety duos and will be relied upon to anchor the defense.

“I think Jordan’s over 2,000 snaps. I think Ty’s 1,500 snaps,” UK safeties coach Josh Christian-Young said. “When you have guys that have a lot of game-day experience, you can’t replace that. That’s one of the No. 1 things that’s hard as a coach to simulate, is game-day experience. With those guys kind of having that, it makes your life a little bit easier.

“Every time I see them together, they’re always watching film. We game plan, we do stuff, then I’ll go use the restroom or something, and pop in, and they’re in there still watching film together. I think that goes a long way.”

SEC adopts strict policy regarding pro athletes

By Keith Taylor
Kentucky Today

LEXINGTON, Ky. (KT) — The Southeastern Conference is taking a firm stance regarding the league’s professional sports eligibility rule adopted on Tuesday.

A program found in violation of the policy will face penalties, which include the head coach being suspended for 50 percent of the season, a fine equal to the sport’s yearly operating budget, and league voting privileges on business matters being revoked.

Earlier this week, the league adopted new rules regarding professional athletes returning to college competition.

The rule applies to athletes who declared for the NFL, NBA or WNBA Draft and didn’t appropriately withdraw from the draft; signed a contract with an NFL or another league associated with the NBA or G League or listed on a professional roster, which includes the NFL, NBA, G League or WNBA squad.

Southeastern Conference Commissioner Greg Sankey is authorized to impose penalties on any

school that violates the policy.

It’s unclear how the new policy will affect former Missouri star Mark Mitchell, who committed to the Wildcats last weekend.

Mitchell played in a summer league with the Denver Nuggets, but didn’t sign an Exhibit 10 contract.

The court system has cleared Mitchell to compete next season.

Kentucky’s Asja Sivka was drafted by the Chicago Sky in the 2025 WNBA Draft, but didn’t sign a contract and neither declared for or withdrew from the draft.

During the SEC football media days in Tampa last month, Sankey said one of the league’s greatest responsibilities is “to establish a stable national framework for college athletics.”

“For more than six years, those of us in the conference office, the leaders on our university campuses, Southeastern Conference student-athletes and policy makers have worked in good faith seeking the return of national standards through federal legislation,” he said.

“These efforts have

demonstrated not only how complex these issues have become, but also have reinforced my belief that Congressional action remains a needed path to provide that long-term stability.”

Sankey also urged legislators to pass the “Save College Sports Act.”

“The legislation moves us in the right direction, but it should more fully replace the growing patchwork of state laws that are conflicting and create competitive differences based upon state borders,” he said.

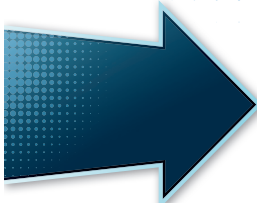
“Remember that quote from our student-athletes: we just want to know that others are held to the same standards.”

There have been discussions regarding the SEC breaking away from the current college structure and Sankey admitted last month the conversations are real.

“People have talked about that,” he said. “They’ve opined about the frustrations that bring them to the point of saying we should look at something significantly different. I do not believe that is a leverage point. I think that’s just honest communication.”



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