

# Adkins recognized for 500 career wins Vaught

from 1B

April Ellis  
Herald Staff

Veteran coach Keith Adkins reached a historic milestone on Feb. 6, 2026, earning his 500th career victory as head coach of the boys basketball program at Mercer County Senior High School with a win over Burgin Independent.

The achievement adds another chapter to a coaching career spanning more than two decades at both the collegiate and high school levels, marked by championships, national tournament appearances, and multiple coaching honors. Adkins was hired to lead the Titans in May 2023 following the resignation of former coach Josh Hamlin, bringing with him a reputation as one of the most accomplished coaches to transition from the NAIA ranks into Kentucky high school basketball.

Before arriving in Harrodsburg, Adkins completed a successful stint at Campbellsville High School, where he captured the 2022 All "A" Region title, won two 20th District championships, and was named the 2022 5th Region Coach of the Year. At that point in his career, he had already compiled a 448-305

record with 12 seasons of 20 or more wins.

Much of his résumé was built at the collegiate level, where he led programs including Campbellsville University, Life University and Lindsey Wilson College. His teams won or shared three conference regular-season titles, three conference tournament championships and appeared in 10 NAIA National Tournaments. He was named National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics National Coach of the Year in 2014-15 and earned three Mid-South Conference Coach of the Year honors from the Mid-South Conference.

During his tenure at Campbellsville University, where he spent 16 seasons as head coach, Adkins won 322 games and led the Tigers to a 29-6 record in 2014-15 — a single-season program best — along with conference regular-season and tournament titles and a national tournament appearance. The following season, his team advanced to the NAIA Final Four. Later, at Life University, he compiled a 47-23 record and guided the Running Eagles to conference regular-season and tournament championships and a berth in the NAIA national title game



The Harrodsburg Herald/April Ellis  
**Mercer County Senior High Principal Mike Flo, right, recognized boys basketball Head Coach Keith Adkins who reached 500 career wins.**

against Texas Wesleyan.

Adkins began his coaching career as an assistant at the University of Pikeville, then at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and Campbellsville, before becoming a head coach. As a player, he competed at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington after starting his collegiate career under Hall of Fame coach Digger Phelps at the University of Notre Dame.

A native of Paintsville, Adkins holds a bachelor's degree from UNC Wilmington. Off the court, he and his wife, Vanessa — a teacher in the Mercer County School District — have four children.

With 500 wins now to his name, Adkins' milestone stands as a testament not only to longevity but also to sustained success and influence across every level he has coached.

Nick Mingione. He was the Ohio Gatorade Player of the Year in both football and baseball his junior year to become only the third player in the award's history to win in two different sports in the same school year in any state.

Becky Ponatoski texted Stein after he got the Kentucky job and appreciates the belief he has in her son.

"He talked about in his (introductory) press conference how he really wanted him at Oregon and I truly believe that. Just the family culture around coach Stein and the relationship building he does impressed me. An important thing for Matt is to have good relationships. They are similar in that way.

"He's also such an offensive minded football guy. The things he's been able to do with quarterbacks ... it's great to know that Matt will be in good hands." Major League Baseball scouts are monitoring his progress this season and he could be a high draft pick in June with the option perhaps of choosing professional baseball over college football even though he has insisted he wants to play in the SEC.

So is he a football player who plays baseball or a baseball player who plays football? "That's a hard one to say. It's always been a baseball player who plays football, but I think he's shown that he's a football player too," his mother said. "He loves them both. There are certain things you can't turn down (with the draft) but at the same time what a great opportunity to play football and baseball both at Kentucky in the SEC. Time will tell and whatever path he takes will be the right path. He's fortunate to have those options."

He committed to play baseball at Missouri as an eighth-grader before deciding to open his recruitment to include football. The pitcher/infielder has been ranked as high as No. 16 in the 2026 recruiting class by Baseball America and his fastball has been timed at 97 miles per hour.

He completed 718 of 1,104 passes for 9,295 yards and 115 touchdowns with only 14 interceptions — nine came in 2023 — in three years at Moeller. His senior season he was 199 of 301 for 2,402 yards and 28 scores but as a junior he was 282 of 406 for 3,456 yards and 57 scores.

"Matt was very clear with everybody he spoke to in recruiting that he was going to do both sports in college and if that wasn't something the school would allow, then he wasn't going to be interested in that school," Becky Ponatoski said.

Becoming a successful Southeastern Conference gymnast starts at an early age and normally requires athletes to focus on only one sport. Kentucky gymnasts Cecily Rizo and Gaby Van Frayen both tried other sports but not for long.

"I started gymnastics when I was about six years old, and I've stuck with it ever since. I did like many sports outside of gymnastics, and I did any sport that you could think of. I did soccer, basketball, softball. But at one point my parents were like, 'Okay, you need to pick a sport now' when I was maybe 10 at the most,"

Rizo, a junior, said. "But I was flipping around too much and my parents were finally like, 'You are doing gymnastics,'" Rizzo said.

Van Frayen started gymnastics at age five because she wanted to learn how to do a cartwheel.

"My parents said they were not teaching me a cartwheel in the house," Van Frayen said. "They signed me up for gymnastics and I fell in love with it instantly. I also did soccer for a little bit but it got to be where the hours were too much and my dad said I had to pick one and I said gymnastics. He said not to make a decision too fast and I think he probably wanted a soccer player. I think I was about seven at the time."

That means the UK teammates have spent the last 12 years solely concentrating on gymnastics.

"Gymnastics is life," Van Frayen said.

Cameron Mills still remembers Kentucky's 1997-98 national championship season when his team was down by 17 points to Duke in the second half of the NCAA regional final.

"I am sulking thinking we have had a great run winning the SEC regular season and the conference tournament. We got to the Elite Eight. I was in the national championship game the last two years. I was having that moment thinking I had a great career, especially for a walk-on, at UK but it was over," Mills said.

That was before point guard led a dramatic comeback and both Scott Padgett and Mills hit clutch 3-pointers late in the game to lift UK to a win that sent the Cats to a third straight Final Four.

"Fortunately for me the other guys were not having the same thoughts as me. They were fighting to win so I could come in, get a ball batted to me, make one shot and go right back out," Mills said.

The comebacks continued in the Final Four in San Antonio. Kentucky trailed Stanford 13-3 in the national semifinals and won 86-85 in overtime. In the national title game, UK was down by 10 points in the first half against Utah but won 78-69.

"We were down to Utah and the halftime horn goes off and you will see (Utah) guys in red walking off the court. The locker rooms were about a mile away (in the Alamodome). They were so far the coaches got golf cart rides to the locker room," Mills said. "We literally ran to the locker room and were passing guys in red who were walking."

"(Final Four Most Outstanding Player) Jeff Sheppard noticed that and after coach (Tubby) Smith talked to us we huddled in the hallway and Jeff said, 'Those guys are done. They are gassed. We ran off and they walked. They are done.' He was right and we came back and won."

"We didn't come back as many times as the team this year has done. I can't think of too many games where we were down double digits at half until the last three games. But remember we had a bunch of older guys who had been to two national championship games already and had learned our lessons. These guys this year are still learning."

## What should you do with your tax refund?



### Financial Focus

**Perry Dressler**  
Edward Jones  
Financial Advisor

- Contribute to your IRA. If you receive \$3,167, it could go a long way toward funding your IRA for the year, but any amount would help. You have until April 15 to contribute for the 2025 tax year, but if you've already "maxed out" contributions, you could use your refund for 2026, when the annual contribution limit for an IRA is \$7,500, or \$8,600 if you're 50 or older. Beginning early toward fully funding your IRA can help reduce the pressure of coming up with large amounts later.

- Build an emergency fund. Your tax refund could help you start or expand an emergency fund. It's a good idea to keep three to six months' worth of living expenses in such a fund, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account, separate from the funds you use for your daily expenses. You might need to draw on this fund for unexpected expenses, such as a major home or car repair or a large medical bill.

Without an emergency fund in place, you might be tempted to dip into your IRA or other retirement accounts to pay for these types of costs, and that could be expensive, resulting in taxes, penalties and lost opportunities for growth.

- Contribute to a 529 plan. If you have children or grandchildren and want to support their education, you might consider investing in a 529 education savings plan. Earnings and withdrawals are federally tax free, provided the money is used for qualified education expenses. Your 529 plan may provide state tax benefits, too. (It's possible, though, that 529 withdrawals could affect financial aid packages, depending on who owns the account.) A 529 plan can be used to help pay for college, accredited trade school programs, some K-12 expenses and even some student loans.

- Pay down debts. You may wish you could reduce your

debt load. Your tax refund could offer you that chance. But which debts should you tackle first? You could follow the "snowball" method by paying off the smallest of your loans or debts as quickly as possible. Or you could choose the "avalanche" route by making minimum payments on all debts and using extra funds — such as your tax refund — to pay off those with the highest interest rates. Either method could help you save money in the long term.

- Prepare for other tax obligations. Your refund can also be set aside in a separate savings account to pay estimated quarterly taxes or personal property or real estate taxes.

It's not often that you receive a financial windfall such as a tax refund — so think carefully about how you can maximize its benefits.

*(Editors Note: This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.)*

## Get involved with Mercer Newcomers-KY

Mercer Newcomers is a group I am so proud of. The Mercer Chamber would host new residents in our community for a meeting from time to time as we deemed necessary. We invited our non-profits to come and so new residents could access services and learn about volunteer opportunities. We wanted to connect these folks more deeply with our community and, if they were willing, get them involved as volunteers



### Chamber Chat

**Jill Cutler**  
Executive Director  
Mercer Chamber of  
Commerce

or board members. They were added to our newsletter and included in many activities. I believe in 2023, the help-ers for these meetings, plus some newcomers themselves,

said, we want to keep meeting! We want to connect even more. That birthed the Mercer Newcomers-KY. They are a wonderful and welcoming group. As chamber members,

they have cards at the office and help identify others who need a goody bag or contact us. It has been the best!

Three of our Mercer Chamber Board members have come from this fantastic group. They are well sown into our county and about helping it be a better place for all. You just never know what some small things can do in the long run with the right people on the team.

## BURGIN JR CHEER TAKES CENTER COURT

The Harrodsburg Herald/Wesley Bird

### Ready to Rumble

As part of the Burgin girls basketball game regular season finale and senior night against Trinity Christian the Burgin Junior Cheer took the court for a special halftime show.

**Pictured left:** Landry Howard, left, and Aver Thompson made sure the Burgin home crowd was ready to rumble Thursday, Feb. 19.

**Pictured below right:** The Burgin Jr. cheer took the floor for a special halftime performance in the Lady Bulldogs basketball team's regular season finale Thursday, Feb. 19.

**Pictured below left:** Emori Thompson pumped up the crowd with her Burgin Junior cheer squad Thursday, Feb. 19.



### ---- Public Notice ----

Notice is hereby given that LG&E and KU, 815 Dix Dam Rd Harrodsburg, KY 40330, has filed an application with the Energy and Environment Cabinet to construct an aggregate access road as part of a larger development. The property is located 2,600 feet south of Jackson Pike Rd., 5,200 feet west of Highway 127, and 5,600 feet east of Salt River. Any comments or objections can be submitted via email to: DOW-Floodplain@ky.gov Kentucky Division of Water, Floodplain Management Section, 300 Sower Blvd. Frankfort, KY 40601. Call 502-564-3410 with questions.