

# #WEAREUK

## 2012 OUTLOOK

Coach Joker Phillips feels a sense of momentum as his Kentucky football team heads into a new season.

THE 2012 SEASON

The Wildcats finished 2011 well with a strong performance at Georgia and a season-ending win over Tennessee. Followed by a solid recruiting class, progress in spring practice and productive offseason workouts, Phillips is optimistic as he anticipates the coming campaign.

"I definitely have (optimism) with the enthusiasm and the excitement about how we finished the season," the third-year coach said. "We played really well against Georgia, we played good enough to win in the Tennessee game. Those two games alone gave us a lot of momentum. We had a lot of young players playing in those games. For those guys to go in and make plays gave them nothing but confidence.

"We got better in the spring on fundamentals and technique and also made progress in playing physically."

Phillips says the team must keep going in that direction during preseason practice.

"We have to continue to get fundamentally better all across the board – offense, defense and special teams. If we can get fundamentally and assignment sound, we have enough athletes to be a good football team," Phillips said.

### OFFENSE

Phillips' believes the first order of business on offense is to continue building a passing attack that was inconsistent a year ago.

"We have to be able to throw the ball more efficiently," Phillips said. "We gathered an idea of who some of our playmakers are (during the spring). We have to put them in position to make plays and get it in their hands."

In stark contrast to a year ago, when UK had to replace the starting quarterback, tailback and top two receivers from the 2010 team, the Wildcat playmakers return mostly intact from last fall.

Injuries struck the quarterback position last season as Morgan Newton and Maxwell Smith shared the position. Newton, now entering his senior campaign, completed 47 percent of his throws for 793 yards and eight touchdowns. He's also a dangerous runner with 272 yards and two TDs on the ground. However, he did not have contact in the spring while rehabilitating a shoulder injury but will rejoin the competition in August.

That left Smith as the starting QB for three games late last season and all of the spring. He completed 54.9 percent for 819 yards and four touchdowns en route to Freshman All-Southeastern Conference honors. Sophomore Jacob Russell, a transfer from Eastern Kentucky, has good size and showed passing and running ability in practice. Incoming freshmen Patrick Towles and Jalen Whitlow will get a look when practice begins in August.

The QBs will throw to a more experienced and potentially more explosive set of receivers. Senior La'Rod King led the team in every receiving category last season with 40 catches for 598 yards and seven touchdowns. He combines size, hands and speed with the ability to make contested catches.

Seniors Gene McCaskill, E.J. Fields and Aaron Boyd bring more experience. McCaskill has been the most accomplished with 41 catches in his career.

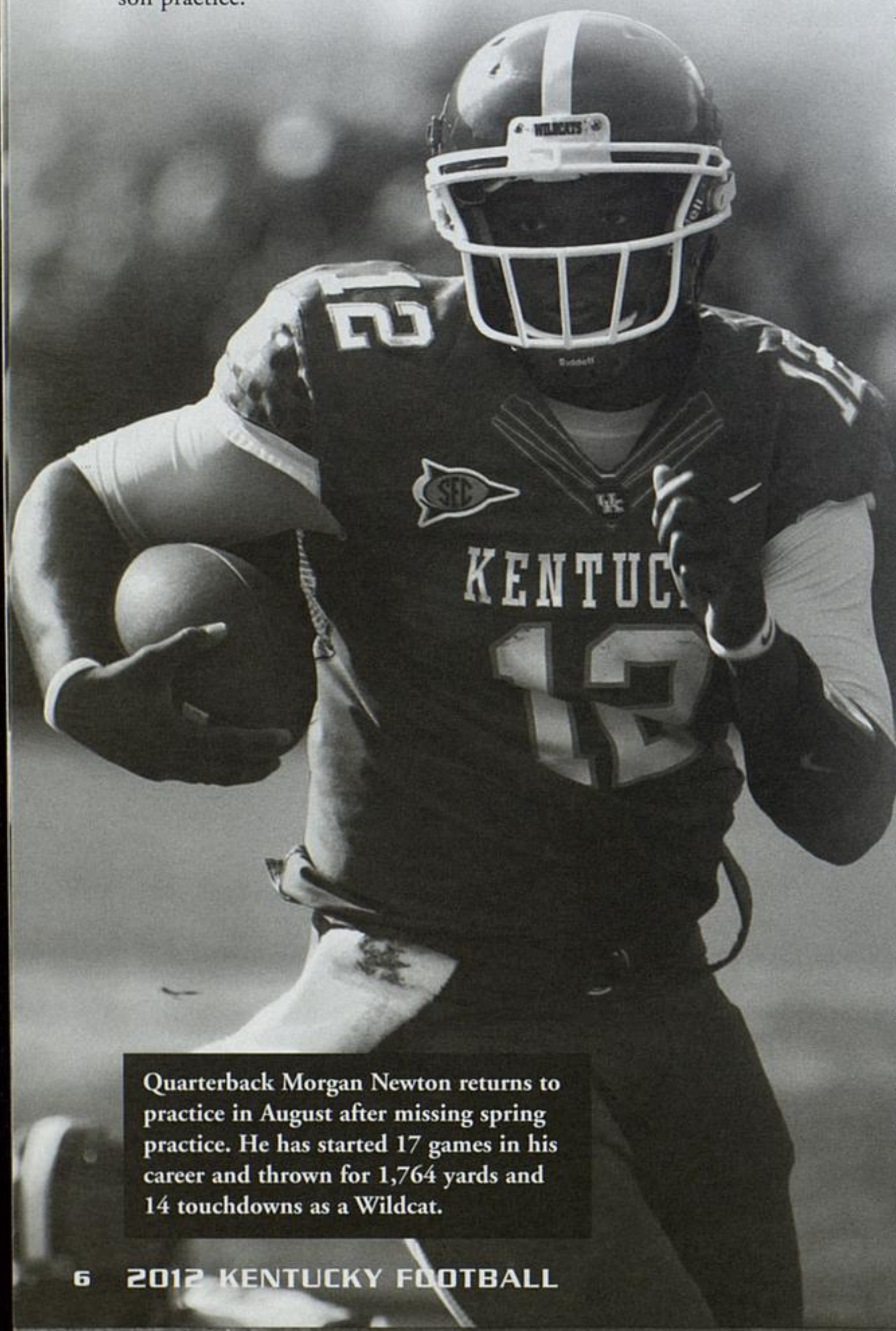
Some exciting youngsters challenge the veterans, sophomore Demarco Robinson and a trio of redshirt freshmen, Daryl Collins, Rashad Cunningham and converted quarterback Bookie Cobbins. Robinson starred in the spring game with nine catches for 146 yards and two touchdowns.

The tight end position has plenty of experience returning with juniors Tyler Robinson, Jordan Aumiller and Anthony Kendrick and sophomore Ronnie Shields. Robinson, with 19 career catches and 2 TDs, and Aumiller (18 career catches, 1 TD) have been the most productive. Shields made a strong move in the spring.

Like the quarterbacks, the tailback position was beset by injuries last season. Four returning players handled the role, including senior CoShik Williams (486 yards, 3 TD), juniors Jonathan George (208 yards, 2 TD) and Raymond Sanders (155 yards), and soph Josh Clemons (279 yards, 2 TD). They will continue their competition in August.

D.J. Warren won the starting fullback role as a true freshman. A year of experience and a year in the weight room will help his blocking and he is also a good runner and pass catcher when called upon.

The forward wall will be led by senior right guard Larry Warford, who has earned second-team All-SEC honors each of the past two seasons, and Matt Smith, a two-year starter at center.



Quarterback Morgan Newton returns to practice in August after missing spring practice. He has started 17 games in his career and thrown for 1,764 yards and 14 touchdowns as a Wildcat.