

the very necessary, dominant linebacker in Curry's defensive system. He is Emerson Wells, a 6-3, 225 lb. linebacker from Paducah Tilghman High School.

Some recruiting experts had Wells headed for Colorado or Missouri, but Coach Curry said, "We felt like we had a good shot if we just stayed persistent without being pushy. We kept staying in touch and presenting our case."

It also helped that Wells's mother had a favorable inclination toward the Kentucky program.

The tight end position vacated by five seniors has help on the way from Steve Langenkamp from Cincinnati Moeller High School, Corey Reeves from Corbin and Donte Key from Franklin-Simpson High School.

The need at wide receiver will be met by high school all-American Leon Smith from Louisville Trinity High School, James Tucker from Arlington, Texas, and Dan Hicks from Lexington Bates Creek High School.

Kentucky Mr. Football Damon Hood, a running back from Warren Central High School, did not sign February 6. Thus began the "Damon Watch." Hood decided on UK four days later, clearly adding to the assets of this bunch. Four signees had not met freshmen eligibility requirements, but Curry was confident they would.

"It's our policy to only recruit those who have the ability and the desire to graduate from our institution. You know my position on standardized testing that I've taken since 1980. Those tests are not a good predictor of success for rural or for inner-city youths. We expect all these young men to qualify. But if they don't, we will work with them to receive all the financial aid they can qualify for including a part-time job to make their way through the first year."

## Legends Abound

February was a month of legends at the University. Before the first home game of the month (Feb. 3 vs. Georgia), three more jerseys were retired in Rupp

Arena. The distinguished Wildcats honored were UK all-Americans Basil Hayden and Cotton Nash, and long-time radio play-by-play announcer Caywood Ledford. Hayden, who lettered in 1920, '21 and '22, was UK's first All-American. Nash, a UK letterman in 1962, '63 and '64, was an All-American three times. Ledford is in his 38th season as the popular "Voice of the Wildcats."

A number of other UK basketball lettermen returned for a "Legends Luncheon", a fund-raiser for the United States Olympic Committee. UK's past Olympic basketball players were afforded special recognition. That evening there was an Old-Timer's Game preceding the UK- Alabama contest in Rupp Arena (Feb. 26).

## War Note

Cliff Barker, a member of the Fabulous Five basketball team which was Olympic champion in 1948 and NCAA champion in 1948 and 1949, is a former World War II prisoner. That information comes from Cat's Pause columnist Russell Rice who reported in the February 9, 1991, issue that Barker left school after his freshman year and became an engineer and a gunner on a B-17 bomber. He was shot down and spent the first six months of his 16-month imprisonment playing basketball.

"We could play all we wanted," he said. "We'd go from one camp to another, playing other teams." Barker said his treatment as a German POW depended on who was winning the war. When the U.S. got the upper hand, the guards began "buttering up" to the prisoners, he said.

"Being in the Air Force was different," he said. "If you were in the infantry, they made you work. We were in a separate compound. It was kind of a code between the Air Force and the Luftwaffe."

When Barker returned to school, he was the old man on the squad (26), but made honorable mention All-American twice — in '48 and '49. He currently lives in north central Florida.



Among the legends who returned in February were Rupp's Runts, one of the most popular teams in UK's basketball history. Above, Pat Riley, former Los Angeles Lakers coach and now a NBC commentator,

talks with WKYT-TV sportscaster Rob Bromley. Look for more coverage in the April Open Door. Photo by Chuck Perry.