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Although the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville are known throughout the sports world as "basketball schools", their football programs have produced a remarkable number of star quarterbacks. Historical examples include former all-pro quarterbacks Babe Parilli (UK), George Blanda (UK), and Johnny Unitas (UL). In modern times, UL stars Chris Redman, Dave Ragone, and Stephan Lefors were named Conference USA Players of the Year. UK All American Tim Couch was the first player selected in the 1999 NFL draft. Former UK quarterbacks Jared Lorenzen and Shane Boyd are currently on NFL rosters.

Even so, current quarterbacks Brian Brohm and Andre Woodson may turn out to be the most prolific passers ever produced by the two programs. Both star signal callers were recruited by the nation's finest college football programs, but chose to play close to home in the Commonwealth. Both participated in the Elite Eleven Camp, the nation's most exclusive and prestigious proving ground for high school quarterbacks.

Notwithstanding those noteworthy similarities, these two stars came to prominence by very different paths. This is a story of town and country. It is a story of a polished high school All American with an elite pedigree from the Commonwealth's top high school program, versus a raw multi-sport athlete whose unknown high school football team used a run-oriented offense.

Both Brian Brohm and Andre Woodson have come a long way. They are now generally considered the nation's two best college quarterbacks. Woodson was recently named a first-team All American by ESPN, while Brohm has previously been projected as the first quarterback to be taken in next spring's NFL draft by that same authoritative source. In many other ways, their stories have become intertwined by their celebrated places in the modern history of NCAA Division One football in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This fall, all Kentuckians will proudly watch the final collegiate performances of these two great quarterbacks.



Brian Brohm

This is a Louisville story, but it could have been written in Hollywood. Frankly, it is impossible to imagine a more perfect All American cinderella story.

In UL football circles, the Brohm family is known as the "First Family of Football". Oscar Brohm, the patriarch of the family, was a consensus all-state quarterback who went on to become a star for UL a generation ago. Big brothers Greg and Jeff also starred for UL, and later became assistant football coaches for their alma mater. By the time little brother Brian Brohm became an all-state quarterback at powerhouse Trinity High School in an eastern suburb of Louisville, his father Oscar had assumed an assistant coaching role at the school. This unusual arrangement allowed Brian's father to manage his son's high school career personally. In two all-state seasons as Trinity's starting quarterback, Brian became known as the finest quarterback prospect ever to emerge from the greater Louisville area. Many of the nation's elite college programs came calling. After turning down scholarship offers from Notre Dame, Tennessee, and Nebraska, the youngest Brohm followed in his father's and brothers' footsteps by signing with UL. This script could hardly have been more perfect.

Still, several other factors have conspired to feature

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Brohm's talents as a rising star on the national sports scene. Brohm arrived at UL during the head coaching tenure of former NFL Jacksonville Jaguar quarterbacks coach Bobby Petrino. Thus, Brohm received pro-style instruction and development from Petrino. Brohm has also been fortunate to play at UL during the school's entry into the glitzy Big East Conference media market.

Petrino was an ideal coach for Brohm. Petrino fully recognized Brohm's unique talents. Petrino's high-powered aerial offensive schemes exploited Brohm's athletic ability to UL's maximum advantage. Petrino recruited quick, athletic skill-position players to complement Brohm. In 2006, both UL starting wide receivers (Mario Urrutia and Harry Douglas) received postseason all Big East recognition. Urrutia and Douglas will return in 2007 to provide Brohm with one of the nation's best receiving corps.

Moreover, UL's transition to the Big East has been eased considerably by the simultaneous departures of Miami, Virginia Tech, and Boston College to the ACC. Since the nation's top defensive coordinators and athletes are not currently found in the newly-aligned Big East, UL's conference opponents have basically been fodder for Petrino's superior tactical acumen and Brohm's vast talents.

Even so, Brohm's rise to stardom has not always been a cakewalk. As a freshman, Brohm played second fiddle to Lefors. As a sophomore on the verge of national stardom, Brohm tore an ACL against Syracuse, then missed UL's season finale and bowl game following surgical reconstruction of his knee. When Brohm returned to contact at the beginning of UL's 2006 season, some observers privately wondered whether his rehabilitation of the knee was complete.

However, those troubles are behind him now. Under Petrino's demanding tutelage in 2006, Brohm threw for 3,049 yards and 16 touchdowns, with only 5 interceptions. Brohm was named Most Valuable Player of UL's Orange Bowl victory over Wake Forest after he threw for 311 yards and engineered an impressive victory over the #15-ranked ACC Champions. Playing in Petrino's NFL style passing offense, the 6'4" 225# Brohm has earned a reputation for his advanced pocket skills and strong right arm. Based on all of these assets, NFL scouts and analysts have concluded that he has a chance to become a very good professional quarterback. If Brohm had elected to enter the NFL draft last April, he would have been a certain first-round draft choice, and possibly even the first quarterback chosen in the draft.

Instead, Brohm opted to return to UL for his senior season. This fall, he will be one of the leading contenders for the coveted Heisman Trophy.

Petrino recently cashed his collegiate chips and became Head Coach of the NFL Atlanta Falcons. This season, Brohm will be playing for new UL Coach Steve Kragthorpe. Like Petrino, Kragthorpe is a former NFL quarterbacks coach (Buffalo Bills). It is doubtful that the defensive coordinators of the Big East

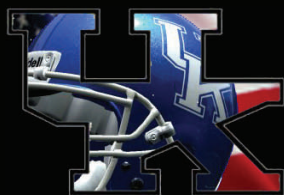
will catch up to Kragthorpe and Brohm anytime soon. Expect a prolific 2007 season and a lot more headliner postseason recognition for the talented senior.

Many great athletes emerge from collegiate football as NFL prospects, but few possess Brian Brohm's lineage, intelligence, and remarkable football instincts. Brohm may be the youngest member of UL's "First Family", but he has a great chance to become the best (and the wealthiest).



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Andre Woodson

Andre Woodson does not come from a football family. Because Woodson was born into a military family, he has lived in many places. Although a native of Ft. Lewis, Washington, Woodson also lived in Germany, Pennsylvania, and Hawaii before his family settled close to Fort Knox, KY, in 1994.

Blessed with a naturally strong, athletic body, Woodson became a multi-sports star at North Hardin High School. Although Woodson was unknown as a high school junior, his stock as a college prospect soared after a prolific performance at the 2002 Nike Camp, prior to his senior season. That earned him an invitation to the prestigious Elite Eleven Camp in California, where most observers felt he displayed the strongest arm of all the participants in the camp. Additionally, the 6'5" 230# Woodson possessed an impressive package of raw athletic tools.

Woodson achieved honorable mention all-state recognition in football and basketball. However, he was one of the few returning starters on his football team during his senior season. Woodson's high school football coach ran a run-oriented offense, so Woodson's passing skills were seldom featured. The North Hardin High School football team played in relative obscurity and struggled to a 4-7 record in 2002.

When the all-state team was announced at the conclusion of the 2002 season, Trinity High School junior Brian Brohm (not the senior Woodson) was recognized as the state's top prep quarterback.

Despite Woodson's modest passing numbers as a high school senior, college coaches were mindful of his Elite Eleven Camp performance the previous summer. Many viewed him as a high-upside collegiate prospect. Although Tennessee and Penn State offered scholarships, Woodson signed with UK.

However, at the beginning of his UK career, Woodson showed little polish, and a tendency to lose his poise in the heat of competition. This coincided with upheavals on UK's coaching staff. Rich Brooks was hired as UK's Head Coach shortly after Woodson verbalized to UK in late 2002. Brooks' first Offensive Coordinator, Ron Hudson, tried to feature the running game that had made him successful at Kansas State before his arrival in Lexington. Following Hudson's resignation in 2004, Brooks hired new Quarterbacks Coach Kurt Roper, who had previously developed Eli Manning at Ole Miss. Roper stayed in Lexington for one year before making a lateral move to the University of Tennessee. These changes in UK's coaching staff and offensive scheme complicated Woodson's opportunity to mature as a collegiate player, and hurt his confidence.



In 2004, the redshirt freshman Woodson was unable to beat out incumbent senior UK quarterback Shane Boyd. In 2005, Woodson started all eleven games and threw for 1,644 yards, but only 6 touchdown passes to go with 6 interceptions. Woodson often failed to spot open receivers. Frequent fumbles brought Woodson a reputation for poor pocket generalship. In practice, Woodson acquired a reputation as an accurate passer but a slow learner, with poor footwork

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and a penchant for dropping the football when hit from his blind side in the pocket. Making matters worse, Woodson had not earned Coach Roper's confidence, and the chemistry between coach and young quarterback was not very good. Roper doubted Woodson's competitive heart. At staff meetings, Roper openly expressed frustration with Woodson's inconsistent work habits and learning ability. The friction showed in Woodson's unsteady performances.

In 2006, everything changed for Woodson. During the winter, Roper abruptly left for Knoxville. Then, in an unusual musical chairs-like sequence of events, recently-fired UT Offensive Coordinator Randy Sanders accepted the vacant UK Quarterbacks Coaching position. In spring drills, Woodson continued to perform inconsistently, and temporarily lost the starting quarterback role to Curtis Pulley. But Sanders did not give up on Woodson. Sanders saw Woodson's enormous physical talent, and correctly perceived the need for patience. At Tennessee, Sanders had worked with many physically-gifted quarterbacks who needed careful individual instruction in order to re-

alize their full athletic potential as collegiate players. During the summer, Sanders' persistent tutelage of Woodson began to pay off. In 2006 preseason camp, under Sanders' watchful eye, Woodson beat out Pulley. During the season's early games, Woodson proved he had finally mastered the fundamentals of ball security. His footwork and throwing mechanics were vastly improved, and he was no longer missing open receivers. In the season's third game, Woodson threw for 293 yards and 3 touchdowns in a critical home victory over Ole Miss to open UK's SEC season. Woodson began to show leadership in the fourth quarter of close games. In November, he won the Georgia game (UK's first victory over the Bulldogs in ten years) by engineering two game-defining fourth quarter UK touchdown drives. Then, Woodson threw for an electrifying 450 yards in UK's home victory over Vandy, following which the Wildcats became

bowl-eligible for the first time since 1999. For the season, Woodson led the SEC in total offense (3,378) and passing yardage (3,515), while throwing 31 touchdown passes and only 7 interceptions. To punctuate a remarkable junior season, Woodson was named Most Valuable Player in UK's Music City Bowl victory over Clemson after throwing for 299 yards and 3 touchdowns to crush the Tigers on national television.

This fall, all of UK's key offensive skill-position players return to compliment Woodson. In selecting Woodson as a first-team preseason All American, ESPN's analysts are projecting the likely implications. After throwing for two miles of passing yardage in 2006 (a truly amazing statistic), it is almost impossible to fathom what Woodson might accomplish in his second season under Sanders' tutelage.

.....To be continued.

