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Boone town

Nobody makes plays like Kentucky's go-to receiver

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It's hard to say who will miss Aaron Boone the most when he leaves the University of Kentucky.

It could be the media, to whom Boone has endeared himself with his ability to fill a reporter's notebook.

Or it could be the mothers across the Bluegrass, who look at the blonde-haired, blue-eyed, clean-living 24-year-old as an ideal suitor for their daughters.

"Aaron's the kind of guy that you wouldn't have to worry about leaving your daughter with," said Jackie Morriss, wife of UK Coach Guy Morriss and mother to two teen-age girls.

But no group figures to miss Boone more than the UK offense. The 6-foot-3, 205-pounder has emerged as the Wildcats' top receiving weapon.

Even though he often plays less than 50 percent of UK's snaps, Boone is tied with Derek Abney for the team lead in receptions with 34.

But Boone's most impressive statistic is touchdowns. Of his 34 receptions, he took 10 to the end zone. Combine that with six touchdowns on his 18 catches last season, and Boone's reception-to-touchdown ratio is an astounding 3.25-to-1.

He had a career day Saturday, when he caught three touchdown passes against Louisiana State in front of his mom, Sherry, and four of his brothers and sisters.

"Around here we just call Aaron 'Cris Carter,' " said UK quarterback Jared Lorenzen. "All he does is catch touchdowns."

But just as Boone is settling into his role as UK's go-to receiver, his career is coming to a close. His final home game is Saturday against Vanderbilt.

"I wish I had one or two more years," Boone said. "I was talking to Coach (Brent) Pease the other day, and that's the problem. As soon as the guy comes in here and gets comfortable and starts making plays, it's time for him to leave."

Finding his role

Boone's journey to UK didn't come without bumps in the road. He committed to play for former coach Hal Mumme, and when Mumme resigned, Boone had to prove himself to new coach Guy Morriss.

He was one of Kentucky's most consistent receivers in his first spring practice, but he spent most of the early part of his junior year on the bench.

Once he started playing regularly, Boone excelled. He caught six touchdowns in UK's last seven games. But when spring practice rolled around, he was No. 2 on the receiver depth chart. No passes were thrown his way in Kentucky's 22-17 season-opening win over Louisville.

Since that game, Boone has caught a touchdown in eight of the Wildcats' nine games. But with the UK offense rotating as many as six receivers, Boone's snaps often get cut.

"I've always had to prove myself from Day One, and the amazing thing is, I still have to prove myself," he said. "There hasn't been a game when I've played half the plays, ever. So when I go out there, I know I have to make the most of my opportunities."

Lorenzen calls Boone the best receiver with whom the quarterback has ever played.

"And I've played with some good ones," Lorenzen said. "But nobody makes plays like he does."

So how does Boone get open? Although not a burner (he said his 40-yard-dash time is in the 4.5 range), Boone thinks his speed often is underestimated.

"I think a lot of guys will look at me and just assume I can't run past them," Boone said. "That will get you beat a lot of times."

"Another thing is just wanting the ball. When the ball is in the air, I just attack it like it's mine and nobody else's."

Boone has one other characteristic that endears him to Guy Morriss.

"Courage," Morriss said. "That's what I love about him. Same thing with (Derek)Abney. They've got courage. ... I love those kind of guys."

Setting the standard

Boone's ability to go up and get the ball isn't surprising considering he comes from a family of go-getters.

Older sister Tamara Bourne is a successful businesswoman who manages Internet sites for a Virginia-based company. Sister Becky is a police officer. Another older sister, Martha, is married with children and living in Utah. Younger sister Sarah lives in Virginia.

Two younger Boone brothers, Jeff and Jason, play football at the University of Utah.

"That's just how our family is," Bourne said. "We see something and we want it, we just go out and get it."

Aaron Boone was born in Fillmore, Utah, and raised in a Mormon household, but the family always strived to be different.

"We're not like most people from Utah; sometimes I can't even believe we're from there," Bourne said. "We focused a lot on individuality in our household. We always wanted to stand out and take chances."

Boone has garnered a reputation for his unique fashion sense, which Bourne said he picked up from older brother Jonathan.

"Jonathan had this collection of wild shirts and ties and stuff from the '80s that was pretty bizarre," Bourne said. "I think that caught Aaron's eye."

Jonathan has released two CDs and got his start by singing parodies for his wife's Mary Kay cosmetics line.

"You remember the song, *Y-M-C-A*?" Bourne said. "Jonathan had a song that had the same beat but went 'Try Mary Kay.' "

Aaron Boone doesn't have a future in singing, but UK receivers coach Harold Jackson believes that Boone might have a future in the NFL. Jackson, who played receiver in the league for 15 years, compares Boone to the Denver Broncos' Ed McCaffrey.

"They've got to give this kid a chance to get in camp and show what he can do," Jackson said. "He's a diamond in the rough. I think the pros will be surprised at some of the things he can do.

"I think he's probably faster (than McCaffrey), and he's a big guy. Once you get in the red zone, he can really get down there and use his body."

Boone's dad, Coley, will be in Lexington on Senior Day to watch his son play for the first time.

"He's pretty excited," Boone said. "I don't know if I can top what I did last week, though."