

## Transy's all Bluegrass-bred basketball roster

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BY MIKE FIELDS

When Transylvania men's basketball coach Brian Lane gathered his team for their first preseason get-together last summer, there was really no need to introduce the new players to the holdovers.

They were already pretty familiar with each because they are all graduates of Kentucky high school hoops.

Two dozen colleges in Kentucky have men's and women's basketball programs – from big schools like UK and Louisville, to little ones like Asbury and Brescia — but of those 48 rosters, only one is made up entirely of home-grown players.

That is the Transylvania men's team. All 16 players were basketball-bred in the Bluegrass State.

"It's not by design, but we do try to do a good job (recruiting) in Kentucky," Lane said.

The Transy roster is comprised of players from nine regions, stretching from the 2<sup>nd</sup> in Western Kentucky to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> in Eastern Kentucky. They come from state-championship certified programs such as Covington Catholic, Christian County, Lafayette, Lexington Catholic, Scott County and Trinity, and from small programs such as Collegiate and Danville.

Does the common thread of Kentucky high school basketball help tie Transy together tighter as a team?

"It definitely helps everybody fit in," said Cooper Theobald, a sophomore guard from Covington Catholic. "We like to joke about playing each other's high school team. It's fun and it creates a bond. It really does."

Bo Schuh, a sophomore forward who along with Theobald helped CovCath win the 2014 Sweet Sixteen title, agreed: "Everybody being from Kentucky helps with how close we are. We have similar basketball backgrounds, so we become good teammates and get along with each other quickly because of that familiarity."

Kyle Gullett, a sophomore from Johnson Central, said, "A lot of the guys here played against each other in high school, or we've seen each other play, so there's a little bit of familiarity there. That's bound to help."

Even bitter rivals become blood-brother teammates.

Alex Jones, a senior from St. Xavier who leads Transy in scoring, is often paired in the Pioneers' backcourt with freshman Gabe Schmitt, who's from Trinity.

When asked about the détente between the former Tiger and former Shamrock, Jones laughed and said there's still a little give-and-take between them.



Transy Coach Brian Lane watches Alex Jones, a senior guard on the Pioneers' all-Kentucky roster. The St. Xavier grad leads Transy in scoring and assists. (Transy photo)



Cooper Theobald is a sophomore guard from CovCath. (Transy photo by Justin Sweeney)

Jones also sees the benefit of having an all-Kentucky roster.

“Everyone knows each other’s high school, and just about everyone comes from a competitive school in a tough region and played in a lot of big games, so when they come in here they’re tested and ready to go.”

Some of those big games came in Rupp Arena, just down the street from Transy’s Beck Center.

Schuh and Theobald played in the state tournament two years in a row, winning it in 2014 and making it to the final four in 2015.

Transy sophomore Kyle Gullett played for Johnson Central in four consecutive Sweet Sixteens.

Schmitt made it to Rupp with Trinity twice. Hines Jones was on Scott County’s runner-up team to CovCath. Grant Clarkson played for Collins in the state tournament.

Recruiting is a challenge for Lane because Transy plays at the NCAA’s Division III level where there are no athletic scholarships, only academic scholarships.

But as the son of legendary Transy coach Don Lane and a former Pioneer himself, Brian Lane knows better than anybody what his school has to offer.

“When you think of college basketball, Lexington is one of those places in the country that’s really, really special,” he said. “Not many Division III or small colleges have a weekly TV show that goes to over half the state like we do, or get the media coverage we do.

“I’ve always felt it’s like the big time of small college basketball.”

Two freshmen who didn’t need to be sold on the Pioneers are Harrison Lane, the coach’s son, and Spencer McKinney, whose dad Ed was Brian Lane’s basketball and golf teammate at Transy in the late 1980s.

Transy also benefits from being only a few blocks down Broadway from Rupp Arena.

During the Sweet Sixteen, Lane said most of the participating teams practice at Transy at some point, so the kids get to see the Pioneers’ facility. Transy has also played host to the East-West high school all-star game.

The school’s academic reputation needs no burnishing.

“When I’m out recruiting,” Lane said, “I always ask the kids, when you tell somebody you’re coming to visit Transy, what do they say? And they always say it’s a great academic school with a basketball reputation that’s really, really good. I ask that question because I know the answer.”

Transy got off to a slow start this season, but it seems to have found its stride. The Pioneers blasted Earlham 86-62 Wednesday night for their fifth win in a row. Eight Transy players hit three-pointers, led by Zachary Pulliam’s 6-for-11 long-range shooting, as Lane notched his 250th victory at Transy.

Pulliam, from Harrison County, finished with 20 points. Jones also had 20 points to go with 10 rebounds and four assists. Thirteen players scored for Transy, which shot 54%.

It was a good night for the Pioneers, and a good night for Kentucky high school basketball.

## Transy’s roster

- Derek Jeffries, 6-5 sr. (Henry County)



Kyle Gullett



Bo Schuh was part of CovCath’s 2014 title team, along with Cooper Theobald. (Transy photo by Justin Sweeney)

- Alex Jones, 6-3 sr. (St. Xavier)
- David Keyer, 6-4 sr. (Lou. Collegiate)
- Tristan Burgess, 6-4 jr. (Boyd County)
- Robert Dence, 6-6 jr. (Lexington Catholic)
- Isaiah Pollard, 6-1 jr. (Christian County)
- Kyle Gullett, 6-6 so. (Johnson Central)
- Jackson Jeffries, 6-5 so. (Henry County)
- Hines Jones, 6-2 so. (Scott County)
- Bo Schuh, 6-6 so. (Covington Catholic)
- Cooper Theobald, 6-1 so. (Covington Catholic)
- Grant Clarkson, 6-0 fr. (Collins)
- Harrison Lane, 6-1 fr. (Lafayette)
- Spencer McKinney, 6-4 fr. (Danville)
- Zachary Pulliam, 6-6 fr. (Harrison County)
- Gabe Schmitt, 6-2 fr. (Trinity)

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