Otis Kirk: Anderson, Razorbacks Land Forward Coty Clarke; Arkansas Evaluating JUCO Tackle

by Otis Kirk, Hawgs247.com

5/10/2012 at 7:40am

Arkansas basketball coach Mike Anderson and the Razorbacks added a sixth recruit to the Class of 2012 on Wednesday when Birmingham (Ala.) Lawson State Community College combo forward Coty Clarke committed.

Clarke (6-foot-7, 225 pounds) arrived in Fayetteville on Tuesday for an official visit and knew shortly after arriving that Arkansas was the place he wanted to spend the next two years. Lawson College's Deddrick Tarver, who is an assistant coach at the school, thinks Arkansas is getting a player who will help them next season.

"He can make an immediate impact in the SEC," Tarver said. "A lot of schools didn't want him because of his size, but he is a great rebounder."

Tarver said that Clarke is the only player in the school's history who has averaged a double-double both years at the school. As a sophomore, Clarke averaged 14.5 points and 13 rebounds following a freshman season where he averaged 11.3 points and 11.2 rebounds. Also as a sophomore, Clarke averaged 4.7 assists, 1.9 steals and 1.6 blocked shots per game.

"He was the leader of our team," Tarver said. "The thing about Coty is he is very good off the court as well as on it. He is good in the community and is a good student."

Anderson and his staff was searching for a big man to finish out this class. While Clarke isn't extremely tall, Tarver said he plays like he was much taller.

"He is a great rebounder," Tarver said. "It doesn't matter how tall the player he's going against is. If there is a rebound, Coty will get it. He's a great rebounder, 3-point shooter and can handle the ball. He can play at least three positions for Arkansas."

Arkansas has also added Birmingham (Ala.) Central Christian Park forward JaCorey Williams (6-8, 195), Memphis (Tenn.) Bartlett shooting guard Anthlon Bell (6-3, 180) Shreveport (La.) Huntington swingman Michael Qualls (6-5, 200) Alexandria (La.) Peabody Magnet point guard Dee Wagner (5-11, 170) and former Little Rock Central and University of Houston power forward Alandise Harris (6-6, 230).
Arkansas also has two commitments for the Class of 2013. Little Rock Hall power forward Bobby Portis (6-9, 220) and Clarksville guard Dederick Lee (6-4, 170) have both said yes to Arkansas offers and both helped lead their teams to state championships as juniors. Clarksville also won the Class 4A state title during Lee's sophomore season.

**Honest Abens**

Abens Cajuste is considered among the top defensive tackles in the junior college ranks this season and Arkansas has taken notice.

Cajuste (6-3, 298, 4.93 seconds in the 40-yard dash) just completed his freshman season at Victorville (Calif.) Victor Valley College and has has six scholarship offers to show for his hard work.

"The recruiting is going good," Cajuste said. "I'm keeping my options open right now, but of the schools that have offered I would say due to my relationship with the coaches there that Rutgers and Indiana are my favorites right now."

Cajuste also has offers from Arizona, Florida International, New Mexico and Purdue. In addition, schools such as Arkansas are showing strong interest in him, as is Maryland.

"If Arkansas offers then they will be my favorite," Cajuste said. "I'm looking for a family based program. I also want to go somewhere that I can come in and play since I only have two years left to play and also where I will feel at home for the next two years."

Cajuste is scheduled to graduate from Victor Valley in December and then will have two years to play at the next level.

"I feel good about my freshman season," Cajuste said. "There's a couple of things I can work on to get better, but overall it was a good season."

Cajuste had 14 tackles and a sack last season. The chance to play at Arkansas or some other big-time program almost didn't happen. Cajuste wasn't highly recruited out of North Miami Beach and signed with Central Connecticut State.

"I graduated high school in 2010," Cajuste said. "I only weighed 240 pounds then. I redshirted at Central Connecticut State and decided to leave after that. I felt I could play at a higher level and just wanted to go somewhere to prove myself and try to earn a chance to play for a larger school. That's how I ended up at Victor Valley and it has been a great thing for me."

Cajuste isn't bashful about his talent. While he's a nice person off the field, he's just the opposite once he steps foot on the field.

"I feel my biggest strength is I try to destroy the guy in front of me and own the field," Cajuste said. "I command a double- or triple-team much of the time. I'm a very good run stopper. I feel I have done my job when I'm a disruption for the offense."

Arkansas assistant Kevin Peoples is recruiting Cajuste, who said Arkansas' coaching situation, with John L. Smith signed on an interim basis for next season, won't impact his decision.

**Quick hits:**

- The Fellowship of Christian Athletes Combine will be held Saturday, May 19, at North Little Rock. This is one of the top combines in the area. Many of the state's top prospects who have gone on to play at the next level have participated in this combine through the years.

- In recent days, Arkansas has made offers to a pair of Class of 2014 defensive tackles from inside the state's borders. Springdale Har-Ber's Josh Frazier (6-3, 300) and El Dorado's Bijnor Jackson (6-2, 310) are considered outstanding college prospects.
Arkansas' offer list for the Class of 2013 in the state remains at four at least for now. Fayetteville quarterback Austin Allen (6–2, 217) and linebacker Brooks Ellis (6–2, 215) as well as North Little Rock running back Altee Tenpenny (5–11, 200) and Pulaski Academy tight end Hunter Henry (6–5, 240) hold offers to the UA as well as several other schools. With spring practice starting around the state and the Arkansas coaches on the road recruiting, more offers could be coming. If not during spring drills, then at the two camps the Razorbacks will conduct this summer.

Tagged: Abens Cajuste, Hunter Henry, Altee Tenpenny, Brooks Ellis, Austin Allen, Bijohn Jackson, Bobby Portis, Dederick Lee, Alandise Harris, Dee Wagner, Michael Qualls, Athlon Bell, Coty Clarke, JaCorey Williams, Mike Anderson, Arkansas Razorbacks

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PeytonHillis_FTW · 4 days ago (#IDComment357842229) sigh. another short "big guy," it just never ends. He will look great next to our 6'6" "power" forward. SMH.

WE NEED TO GO GET SOME MEN.

Nicholas Malone Vaughan · 4 days ago (#IDComment358049765) that guy is a man. 6'7" is pretty big and he is a legitimate athletic big. He looks the part and as long as you can jump, you can play the part. NBA is built on this exact size.

not only that-- he has good character and just as chatty as Bj... those two are going to be FUN and FUNNY to watch

Dennis Rodman was 6–7, 222. What's the difference?

Congrats to Coach and Staff! I hope they keep targeting and getting the recruits they feel will help achieve their vision for the program. Keep their head up and grind it out for the next couple of seasons. Success will come.

For the most part, I agree with you PH–FTW... Elite BB players all range above 6–8/210 plus... Do a snapshot of UK's team, or most any North Carolina or Mich State team with an overlay of ours in front... It would be really scary how far off the pace we really are... But, oh well... Speed is scary too, right....?? lol... Go Hogs, please...???
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still looks as scrawny as ever. As an upperclassman, he should be bulking up and setting the example for the younger kids.

I hope Jeff Long has a plan for a coach, cause kids are not gonna come play for JLS. Just a fact.

we don't have a permanent coach, which is gonna KILL our recruiting off.....again.

This has got to stop, we don't get these players cause we don't pay enough. But Bama does. LSU does. Auburn does. Then,

most part, if Indiana and Rutgers are that kids' favorite, and are the only schools that have offered him, then we need to be

ones and we will not get them. Austin Allen? Are you kidding me? His brother that is here now is not that good. For the

These football recruits are not that good at all. We AGAIN waste time on leftovers. Henry, and Tenpenny are the only good

ones and we will not get them. Austin Allen? Are you kidding me? His brother that is here now is not that good. For the

most part, if Indiana and Rutgers are that kids' favorite, and are the only schools that have offered him, then we need to be

looking elsewhere. The only good JUCO player we've gotten lately is Highsmith, and we almost killed him having to play him all the time.

This has got to stop, we don't get these players cause we don't pay enough. But Bama does. LSU does. Auburn does. Then,

we don't have a permanent coach, which is gonna KILL our recruiting off......again.

I hope Jeff Long has a plan for a coach, cause kids are not gonna come play for JLS. Just a fact.
I have a feeling you are wrong about Brandon Allen. I think the kid can play. He hasn't even had a chance to prove himself. This is exactly the same situation when I predicted that Tyler Wilson could play if given a chance. I don't have any connection to Fayetteville High School (I had a relative play for a rival school) but I've seen the kid play since junior high and I've always been impressed. Trying to assess the situation from Kentucky doesn't make a lot of sense.

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