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Kentucky's Meeks: A 54-point legend in Lexington

By Marlen Garcia, USA TODAY

Kentucky guard Jodie Meeks played only 11 men's basketball games last season. He did it mostly in pain from injuries.

That's partly why he found his school-record 54 points Tuesday in a 90-72 victory at Southeastern Conference rival Tennessee so shocking.

"The biggest thing is I got healthy," Meeks said Wednesday. "Last year I was really banged up. I've got my strength back."

One of the first congratulatory messages Meeks received late Tuesday was a voicemail from Kentucky legend Dan Issel, who owned the previous record of 53 points for 39 years. Meeks called Issel back Wednesday.

"I told him, years from now what he would remember is that his family was there to watch it," said Issel, whose father, Robert, watched him set his record against Mississippi in 1970.

Meeks' father, Orestes, and uncle attended the game in Knoxville after a three-hour drive from Meeks' hometown of Norcross, Ga. "My dad was almost in tears," Meeks said.

Last season, a sports hernia, initially misdiagnosed as a stress fracture in his pelvis, and a strained hip derailed Meeks. The hernia required surgery.

This season, Meeks is averaging 25.9 points. He scored 46 vs. Appalachian State in December. Going into this season, his best college game had been 21 points.

Meeks said coach Billy Gillispie has given him a green light to shoot all the time, "as long as it's within the flow of the offense."

Issel said he found Meeks' shot selection — he was 15-for-22, including a school-record 10 three-pointers — most impressive. "When it takes you only 22 shots, that really is a great comment on what kind of night he had."

Wildcat strikers

Kentucky's Jodie Meeks set the school record for points in a game Tuesday in a 90-72 win at Tennessee. His 54 points surpassed the 53 scored by Dan Issel in a 120-85 win at Mississippi on Feb. 7, 1970. Issel, who did not have the benefit of a three-point line, went on to be the

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school's career scoring leader and was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. Comparing their careers and record-setting games:

Issel	Category	Meeks
6-8	Height	6-4
Career		
83 (3 seasons)	Games	62 (in 3rd season)
25.8	Scoring average	13.4
2,138	Points	833
In record game		
34	FG attempts	22
7	FT attempts	14
44	% of team's points	60
36	% of team's FG atts	42

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