

A STATEMENT MAKER



Nike's Jason Wright '12 designs uniforms of all levels, sports

BY TIM SCHRAG '12

If you're a sports fan, there's a high chance you're a fan of Jason Wright '12 and you didn't even know it.

Wright, a senior product graphic designer at Nike, has helped craft dozens of uniforms for the brand across a variety of sports.



STANDARD UNIFORMS



THROWBACK UNIFORMS



Some of his more notable designs include the uniform kits and logo for the Los Angeles Rams; uniforms for the Arizona Wildcats, the Baylor Bears, Oklahoma Sooners, LSU Tigers, Michigan State Spartans, Virginia Tech Hokies, Virginia Cavaliers, various Major League Baseball teams and the Kansas State University men's basketball team.

"I grew up wanting to work for Nike," Wright said. "I wanted to be a footwear designer. I thought I was going to be a footwear designer. And I had some mentors actually growing up that worked at Nike and were telling me, 'Yeah, this might be something that you should look into.' You could have a future here. So I came to K-State knowing that I wanted to be a designer."

So he did just that. Studying under Tom Bookwalter, who famously designed the Powercat logo, and Mervi Pakaste, Wright earned a degree in graphic design. In his spare time as a student, he designed many of the T-shirts for his fraternity, FarmHouse, and worked as a designer for K-State's Division of Communications and Marketing.

"Jason worked for DCM for two years. He was a great designer and a joy to work with," said Ben Cleveland, creative director for the Division of Communications and Marketing. "You could tell he was just at another level in his design and thought process, and I followed his career in KC and then with Nike with great interest. Our team was really excited when the word got around that he was working on K-State's uniforms and we knew the design was in good hands."

"I truly believe K-State has a great design program and has great professors," Wright said. "They were very great at being concept-driven, it was 'what's the reason you're doing this project? What are you trying to get out of it?'"

After graduating, Wright worked as a professional graphic designer before being tapped to join Nike's team in 2015. When he started with

Nike he was working mostly on football uniforms, eventually becoming the lead designer for NCAA uniforms.

"We recognize, especially in college sports, understanding the culture of the teams is extremely important," Wright said. "We do our best to understand that stuff, but there's only so much research you can do. Actually experiencing and knowing a team is different."

Wright now has a larger hand in the management portion of leading a design team. But because of his familiarity with K-State he was tapped by his former boss to lead the redesign of the Wildcats' men's basketball team uniforms unveiled last year. The kit Wright helped create includes away purples, home whites, alternate blacks, throwback Wildcats Script uniforms and the all-lavender uniforms.

"I go around working on a lot of different programs, and you kind of get used to the idea of going to games and seeing your work out there," Wright said. "But, working for K-State felt very different because this is the school that I grew up going to games for. That's pretty cool."

An example Wright points to are K-State and TCU. Both are purple and white teams, but each has its own unique feel. K-State, he said, has a traditional Midwestern toughness to it. While TCU uses a flashier brand language.

"Having an understanding of what a K-State team looks like through the years versus what a TCU team looks like through years gives you a better understanding of the difference between two purple teams."

The process, Wright said, involves more than just a single designer; a team at Nike spends more than a year researching to develop a product and design that works for each team.

K-State was no different in that respect.

"The whole uniform design, especially from the front view, has a very simple, stripped-back design

language to represent that no-frills, no-flashy, hardworking culture, but then, as you turn to the side, there's this reveal of the Wildcat within," he told *K-State Sports Extra* when the uniforms were unveiled. "Just bringing some of the visuals from that Powercat out. That's how everybody in the Big 12 and in the country looks at K-State. They know us as the Powercat. So, how do we have a uniform that has some of that bold read from the visual cues of the Powercat? You can kind of see on the short, the way the stripe comes out from that side seam. We've been calling that the 'Wildcat Within.' It's this DNA of the Powercat that's sort of revealing itself."

Elements from the Powercat were incorporated into the stripes of the design as an homage to the mark and previous jerseys worn by the 'Cats such as the ones from the Michael Beasley and Bill Walker era. Typography and elements like the phrase EMAY were added into the throwback jersey.

"The throwbacks, those are awesome uniforms," Mike McGuirl, K-State senior guard, said. "I'm grateful to be a part of this program with the rich history it has. To be able wear those throwback jerseys is an honor."

"The new jerseys, throwbacks, look incredible," head coach Bruce Weber said. "I know everyone got excited about the script 'Cats with football. To me, this is even cooler. Hopefully people are excited. It'll be a great opportunity."

Last year Wright was able to attend a basketball game where the uniforms debuted in Kansas City's Power and Light District. He described the experience as surreal and the best part of this design adventure.

"It was cool to see something that was so widely embraced," he said. "If you're going to work on something that's so personal to you, you want it to be something that people like and that people are proud of." 🐾

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