

Final Four Interviews:

Zack Whitaker, Berry, Kentucky

Kris Whitelock, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Jody Jessup, Rural Hall, North Carolina

Justin Wyatt, Wise, Virginia

**By David McKee
and Jason Cooper**

Interview with Zack Whitaker, Berry, Kentucky

Zack is 27 years old and has been hunting since he was six years old

David – “First, congratulations on the birth of your little girl Wednesday morning. Is she doing ok?”

Zack – “Thanks. Yes, she is doing great.”

David – “Glad to hear that, Zack. Congratulations on making it to the Final Four. Tell me how long you have been hunting, who you started with, what kind of hounds, etc.”

Zack – “I started hunting Redbones with Robert Jones. When I was eight or ten, we switched to Treeing Walkers. Robert just hunted for meat, he didn’t competition hunt any. I started competition hunting at the age of seventeen. Larry Toller took me to my first competition hunt. I’ve been hooked ever since.”

David – “Tell me about Cash?”

Zack – “Cash will be 7 years old the 22nd of this month. He is Buck Creek bred. I been hunting the same bloodline ever since I was a teenager. I hunted cash in the Nationals at Greensburg and made the top 16. I hunted him in the AKC World in SC twice. I made it to Thursday both times but couldn’t get any further.

David – “What about his mouth and how he hunts?”

Zack – Cash is not loose mouthed on track. He’s not an automatic strike dog. When Cash opens, he isn’t long from treeing.

David – “So he’s a little tight on track then?”

Zack – “Yes, sir, he is a little tight on the ground. But he has a good mouth you can hear him a long ways. He is chop on track and tree. Good hard tree dog. He will get deep and likes to be by himself.

David – “So with what you two have accomplished I think it’s safe to say he’s pretty accurate.”

Zack – “Yes, sir, Cash trees a lot of coons. He’s pretty accurate.”

David – “You mentioned the Nationals and World hunts. I know that you and Cash have won a few hunts.

Zack – “Yes, we won the ACHA World in 2011. We have made 11 semi-finals. But this is only the second time making the finals.”

David – “Well maybe this one will be the one you’ve been waiting on. How did Cash do so far this week?”

Zack – “Cash won Thursday and Friday night by getting by himself and getting treed with a coon. Thursday he scored 125+ and Friday 175+. He treed only coon seen on cast.”

David – “Well I know the coons haven’t been cooperating too well, so one was enough. What about your competition? Have you hunted against these guys?”

Zack – “I’ve never hunted against Jody or Justin. I have hunted against Kris. I have hunted against Pounder before with Terry handling him. Think I’ve got some tough competition.”

David – “Yeah I think it should be a great cast. Anything else you would like to add, Zack?”

Zack – “I would like to thank Mark Jones for teaching me about competition hunting. I want to wish the rest of the Final Four cast. Good luck.”

David – “Thanks, Zack, and good luck to you and Cash.”

Interview with Kris Whitelock, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

David – “Congratulations, Kris, on making the Final Four. Tell me a little about yourself.”

Kris – “Thanks, David. I am married to Rocio. We have two kids Jared who is seven, and Jakob is three. I have been hunting about 30 years.”

David – “Who got you started?”

Kris – “I started hunting with my step dad, Mark Lunsford.”

David – “So have you always hunted Walkers?”

Kris – “Yes, pretty much.”

David – “So Kris is there any particular bloodline you like?”

Kris – “No, just as long as they will tree a coon and can win in the hunts.”

David – “I know you’ve had a pretty good year so far because I remember handing you a check for \$5,000 in March at the Sportmix Championship. So tell me a little about your competition success.”

Kris – “Well I won the PKC Super Stakes in 1997, PKC Indiana State Race in 2009 and 2011, the 2011 AKC Indiana State Race and the Sportmix Championship this year.”

David – “Yeah, you have been in the winner’s circle a time or two that’s for sure. What about Pounder? What kind of hound is he?”

Kris – “Pounder is a good tree dog and likes to get by himself. He has a chop mouth mostly on the track and tree. He’s a good, hard tree dog, and he’s fairly accurate.

David – “Your score on Thursday was 175+.”

Kris – “He got lucky and treed him a coon and the others came in and covered him. He treed again with 4 minutes to go and I didn’t have to tree him.

David – “What about Friday?”

Kris – “Friday night he scored 350+. He had the last coon by himself.”

David – “What about the other three? Have you hunted against them before?”

Kris – “I have hunted against Zack and Jody before but not against Justin.”

David – “Do you like the new format we have? Went to using the zones and allowing the Supreme Grand Nites to advance?”

Kris – “I do. I was supposed to be hunting Bobby (Sportmix Champion SGN Tar Nailor’s Bobby), but Dan forgot to send in the entry. When he told me he forgot, I was sick.”

David – “Funny how it worked out though.”

Kris – “Yes, sir.”

David – “Well, Kris, I know you aren’t a man of many words, but anything you want to add?”

Kris – “Hope to have a good cast and may the best dog to win. Thankful that once you get to this level you don’t have to worry about guys arguing, just let their dogs strike and tree.”

David – “Yes, that pretty much says it all. Thanks and good luck.”

Interview with Jody Jessup by Jason Cooper

Jody Jessup, 39 years old from Rural Hall, NC. He has been married to his beautiful wife, Penny, for two years. Jody has a son, Christopher (9) and a daughter, Lydia (11). Jody is self-employed in the concrete business.

Jason - "Congratulations, Jody, on making the Final Four. This isn't your first time competing so tell me little about your accomplishments."

Jody - "Thanks, Jason. I have enjoyed coon hunting for 24 years. I have a few notable wins including the 2003 UKC World Hunt in LaGrange, IN; the UKC Purina Race for the past four years and in particular the 2011 Purina Race."

Jason - "Yes, quite a few notable wins. Tell me about River. What are his chances tonight?"

Jody - "I believe River's chances are good. River is a top end strike dog and likes to be by himself. I have owned River for about a year now. River is daddy to the dog that just won the AKC 2012 World Show, which is also owned by me and Penny."

Jason - "Have you hunted against any of the other handlers or hounds?"

Jody - "I have only hunted with Vance's Pounder in the past."

Jason - "Ok, well looks like a good cast."

Jody - "Yes, I think it will be."

Jason - "How did you get here, Jody?"

Jody - "I advanced to the World in the Friday zone round in Owensville. I tried to Supreme him out. I got 11 cast wins but ran out of time."

Jason - "Yes making a Supreme Grand is work. How do you like our new format?"

Jody - "I really like the new format y'all are currently using. It really helps with expenses."

Jason - "Thanks, Jody. Good luck to you and River tonight."

Final Four Interview with Justin Wyatt

Justin Wyatt is 28 years old and lives in Wise, VA with his wife and three children. He has twin boys, who are eight months old, and a three year old. He works at Radio Shack as a manager.

Jason - "Justin, you are handling for someone correct?"

Justin - "Yes, sir, I have hunted "Doc" for Stuart/Chambers on and off for two years. Doc is off Lovell's Huckleberry and Hanna's Hardwood Daisy."

Jason - "Congratulations, Justin, for making the Final Four. Tell me a little about Doc and how you feel about making it here."

Justin - "Doc's chances are as good as any. Doc is cold nosed, accurate and takes tracks as they come. He likes to be by himself and will get deep. I don't know much about any of the other dogs."

Jason - "Tell me a little about Doc's success."

Justin - "Doc's wins include 2011 AKC Tennessee State Leader, 2010 AKC Reserve Youth World Champion, 2011 AKC World Hunt 6th, and 2012 VA State Hunt."

Jason - "How did Doc get here?"

Justin - "Doc earned his way to KY by being a Supreme Grand Night Champion."

Jason - "Great to hear. It takes a lot of work to make one a Supreme Grand. So how do you like our new format for making it to the World Championship?"

Justin - "I really like the new World Hunt format and feel that it helps lift the burden off all week travels and expenses."

Jason - "Any last words?"

Justin - "I wish everyone good luck and feel like it will be a great cast. Everyone I have had so far has been."

Jason - "Thanks, Justin, and good luck to you and Doc tonight."