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2019 KENTUCKY ATHLETICS ANNUAL REPORT



# KENTUCKY CAN.

THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CAMPAIGN




# #EVERYTHINGSCHOOL

**A**t the University of Kentucky, we don't want to be known by any one sport. We want to be known nationwide as an athletics department that excels in every sport, both in the classroom and out. We still have work to do on that front, but it's also important for us to stop and celebrate the fact that this department – from basketball to football, volleyball to rifle and soccer to softball – has never been better.

That is exactly what we did at the CATSPY Awards in April, our annual celebration of all things UK Athletics. And this

year, as the student-athletes, coaches and staff who made an outstanding 2018-19 season possible entered Memorial Coliseum, they passed a set of tables that held the proof of exactly how outstanding that season was. On the tables stood dozens of trophies and medals won by Wildcat teams and individuals, ranging from conference championships for volleyball and men's soccer to the various pieces of hardware accumulated by Josh Allen during a stellar senior season.

These days, Kentucky is an #EverythingSchool. ■

**K**entucky Can is a historic campaign for the future of the University of Kentucky and our Commonwealth focused on student success, addressing critical areas of investment, and involving all units and programs. In this campaign, UK Athletics is focused on

providing student-athletes with the resources and best-in-class facilities necessary to succeed in competition, in the classroom and in life. This campaign challenges the UK family in ways we have never been challenged, but for good reason. We are trying to achieve in ways we have never before achieved. ■



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# KENTUCKY®

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*From start to finish, the 2018-19 season in UK Athletics was full of moments to celebrate. The common thread among all of them – from soccer’s kickoff in the fall to a bowl trip to Orlando to the grand opening of Kentucky Proud Park to another deep March Madness run to the final Senior Day of the season at John Cropp Stadium – was the Big Blue Nation. The best fans in America packed home events at the University of Kentucky to the tune of a total attendance of more than one million.*





# IN THIS

# TOGETHER

**Y**ou were there in August when the 2018-19 season began. You cheered as our men's soccer team announced itself on the national stage with a pair of victories over top-five opponents. You went wild whether you were down in Gainesville or back home in Kentucky when our football team finally toppled Florida. You rejoiced at the return of basketball at Big Blue Madness and celebrated when our volleyball team polished off an unbeaten run through Southeastern Conference play.

You traveled to Orlando for the VRBO Citrus Bowl and to Kansas City for the NCAA Tournament. You joined us for the opening of Kentucky Proud Park and marveled at the athletic prowess of our gymnastics team during a record-setting year. You smiled when our swimming and diving teams swept Louisville and when our track and field teams raced to another great year. You were as unsurprised as we were when our rifle team posted another top-five finish and soaked it in when our softball team clinched a super regional berth in our final home event of the year. All totaled, more than a million of you attended our home events in 2018-19.

You lifted us up when we were down. You empowered us to achieve. You inspired us to do more. In short, you were the Big Blue Nation – the best fans in America. We can't do any

of this without you, and we wouldn't want to. Your support makes it possible for us to pursue our goal of building one of the nation's truly elite athletics departments at the University of Kentucky. Your support allows us to create a one-of-a-kind experience for the more than 500 student-athletes who compete for our 22 teams while pursuing a world-class education.

Thanks to you, we added another chapter to the greatest era of comprehensive success in the history of this great athletics department. We won championships in volleyball and men's soccer and completed our best football season in 40 years. We finished 14th in the Learfield/IMG College Directors' Cup and extended our streak of consecutive semesters with a cumulative department grade-point average of 3.0 or better to 14. We proudly watched 99 Wildcats graduate and move on to the next phase of their lives, some in professional sports and many more in graduate school or careers outside athletics. We are excited to tell some of those stories in the pages to follow. We hope you will enjoy them, understanding along the way how essential you are to making them happen.

We have accomplished incredible things together, but we also realize our work is far from finished. The best fans in America deserve to cheer on the best athletics department in America. And make no mistake about it: That's our goal.

**Mitch Barnhart**  
*UK Athletics Director*

# A TEAM FOR THE AGES

In a year of unimaginable pain off the field and unprecedented success on it, the Kentucky Wildcats banded together, inspired the Big Blue Nation and finished the season as one of the best teams in UK football history.



## #SCHLARMANSTRONG

*Through treatments following his cancer diagnosis, John Schlarman never missed a practice. His dedication was rewarded when his offensive line bulldozed the way to 303 rushing yards in a win at Florida after which he received the game ball.*



## STREAK STOPPED IN THE SWAMP

*For all the progress Kentucky football had made under Mark Stoops, a 31-game losing streak to Florida remained one door UK had yet to kick in. In one memorable moment that served as the first sign of all they would accomplish during an incredible 2018 season, the Wildcats kicked that door in and announced themselves an SEC contender.*

# 27-16

SEPT. 8 | GAINESVILLE, FLA.

**S**treaks were snapped. Records were broken. Rivalry games were won, and in dominant fashion to boot. The 2018 season had already been a remarkable one for Kentucky football, but the Wildcats knew something was missing.

The void – now filled – was shaped exactly like the VRBO Citrus Bowl championship trophy.

“Just as I mentioned on the podium accepting the trophy, it was extremely important to this team, to all of us, to come home with some hardware, to come home with a trophy,” Mark Stoops said.

The Cats added the crowning achievement in a season full of them with a thrilling 27-24 victory over Penn State in their first New Year’s Day bowl appearance in two decades. On the heels of the program’s best regular season in four decades, Kentucky downed a college football blueblood and clinched the third 10-win season in program history.

“Believe me, we had a great belief in our locker room,” Stoops said. “We didn’t have to do anything special, just be us. I was so proud of this team. We had so much fun, it ought to be illegal how much fun we had this week. We had a blast just being with each other and just spending time and enjoying it and taking it in. But then when it was time to go to meetings, time to go to practice, these guys were locked in, they were competitive.”

*continued on page 6*

“”

**THEY WERE TEASING ME AND SAID, ‘COACH, YOU’RE GOING TO GET ALL SAPPY AND CRY ON US,’ OR WHATEVER. I HAD TO PLAY IT OFF BECAUSE IF I REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT I COULD. THOSE GUYS MEAN THAT MUCH TO ME.**

*– UK Head Football Coach Mark Stoops*



# 2018

## BY THE NUMBERS

0:00



Time left when C.J. Conrad caught a game-winning touchdown pass from Terry Wilson to win at Missouri

3

Consecutive bowl appearances



JAN. 2019



DEC. 2017



DEC. 2016

1

Current win streak over Florida after snapping a 31-game losing streak



2

10-win seasons in Kentucky football history prior to 2018

19

Graduates from this year's team

Kentucky secured its first 10-win season since

1977

Rod Stewart topped the Billboard pop chart that year with *Tonight's the Night* (Gonna Be Alright).



41



Number worn by Josh Allen, who...

- Set school records for sacks in a single season (17.0) and in a career (31.5)
- Led the SEC and ranked second nationally in 2018 with six forced fumbles
- Sealed UK victories over Florida and Vanderbilt with game-ending strip sacks
- Tallied 13 of his 17 sacks after halftime in 2018
- Was a two-star prospect weighing less than 200 pounds out of high school
- Won SEC and national defensive player of the year honors
- Was drafted No. 7 overall by the Jacksonville Jaguars.

4

Wins over teams appearing in final 2018 College Football Playoff rankings

#10



#18



#23



#12



5

SEC wins, marking the first winning season in conference play since 1977

11

Final Coaches Poll ranking, highest since 1950

13

SEC wins over the last three seasons, tying a school record for the most over a three-year period

3,873

New UK record for career rushing yards set by Benny Snell Jr., who broke or tied a total of 14 school records. He eclipsed the previous career rushing mark held by Sonny Collins (1972-75).



# MARCO SHEMWELL

I N M E M O R I A M



## VICTIM OF GAME-DAY TRAGEDY MAKES LASTING IMPACT

It was a moment that had never before happened at the Albert B. Chandler Hospital. Early the morning of Sept. 17 – two days after Marco Shemwell was struck by a vehicle outside a Kentucky football game – dozens lined the hallway to say goodbye. Marco’s parents, Ben and Liz Shemwell, had made the gut-wrenching decision to donate the 4-year-old boy’s organs and hospital staff, family and friends gathered to silently honor Marco. Less than a week later, hundreds gathered to pay similar tribute at Marco’s funeral, where Mark Stoops and members of the Kentucky football team served as honorary pallbearers.

Marco’s memory was never far from the Wildcats’ minds throughout the rest of a 2018 season, his tragic passing galvanizing them and forever bonding them to his family. His legacy won’t end there, as the Marco Shemwell Foundation ([marcoshemwellfoundation.org](http://marcoshemwellfoundation.org)) has been founded in his memory.

And at the Albert B. Chandler Hospital, Marco has inspired a brand-new tradition: the honor walk.

*continued from page 5*

With all-time greats in Josh Allen and Benny Snell Jr. at the height of their powers in their final appearance as Wildcats, the Cats made their case as one of the best teams ever to wear Blue and White.

“I feel like we’re going to go down as the best team to come out of Kentucky,” Allen said. “That’s how I feel.”

Though other teams can make the same claim, the successes speak for themselves. A road win over a Florida team that thumped Michigan in a New Year’s Six bowl. A pair of other wins over opponents that appeared in final College Football Playoff rankings in Mississippi State and Missouri. Allen’s awards. Snell’s newly minted spot atop UK’s all-time rushing chart.

“I feel like we’ve got a lot of great players on this team,” Allen said. “You know, we haven’t won 10 games in a very long time. We haven’t beaten Florida in a very long time. We haven’t broken this many records in a very long time. Just a lot of accomplishments around this team.”

The accomplishments are one thing, but the path the Cats took to get there is what truly defines this team.

“For me, I just want BBN and the fans to know that this group, especially with myself, we give our all,” Snell said. “We gave our all through practice. Even when, you know, teams are smack talking and we’re the underdogs coming into the game, such as Mississippi State or Florida. We set the record straight that this is Kentucky football, we’re not just about to lay down.”

There was never any quit in these Cats. Not when they fell behind at Missouri, lost back-to-back games in November or even when Penn State mounted a furious rally behind Trace McSorley, the program’s all-time winningest quarterback. Outside noise accompanied every roadblock, but it never got the better of this team.

*continued on page 8*



## BUILDING A WINNING HABIT

*UK punctuated its best regular season since 1977 with a dominant 56-10 win over Louisville to reclaim the Governor’s Cup. Impressive home performances against Mississippi State (top left) and South Carolina (top right) preceded it, while Lynn Bowden (middle right) helped will UK to an improbable road victory at Missouri.*

continued from page 7

“There’s a lot of pressure and the things like the Florida game and all those things, they have so much information at their fingertips,” Stoops said. “... They have a lot on their plate and they have a lot of pressure. They have to take a lot on their shoulders and you have to be man enough to accept that, look at it, go through the adversity and bounce back, and that’s why it takes seniors and that’s what it takes special guys to be able to handle that.”

The on-field adversity was notable, but it was nothing in the face of what the Wildcats faced off the field. The preseason brought cancer diagnoses for two members of the UK family, sophomore Josh Paschal and offensive line coach John Schlarman. Then early in the season, a tragic accident took the life of a

young fan, Marco Shemwell, outside Kroger Field.

On each occasion, the Wildcats first rallied around the members of their Big Blue family who were hurting. Then, they closed ranks. Only made stronger by what they had gone through, this team made the #GetUp slogan they had used since winter so much more than words on a poster. Their steadfast refusal to let anything tear them apart or deter them from pursuing their goals is what defined these Wildcats.

Combine all that – the joy and the pain, the struggle and the triumph – and you have a team for the ages.

“Just as a group, as a team, I feel like there’s no other team, no other legacy that is like this, what we left, so I’m very happy,” Snell said. “I’m very happy with my team.” ■

## JOSH PASCHAL

### SPOTLIGHT

On Nov. 17, 2018, Josh Paschal shed a block, pursued the ball carrier and took him down to secure a third-down stop for his team. In the midst of a promising freshman campaign in 2017, that kind of play was commonplace. But at that moment, after everything Paschal had been through, it was the most emotional one of the season.

Three months of ongoing treatment and three surgeries after a diagnosis of malignant melanoma, Paschal made a triumphant return to action at Kroger Field as Kentucky downed Middle Tennessee State, 34-23. That tackle he made was his first of the season, but it was hardly his first contribution.

Even when he couldn’t play through three months of ongoing treatment and three surgeries, Paschal was an inspiration to his team. The Cats closed every team huddle with “JP on three” in his honor, while also supporting offensive line coach John Schlarman in his own battle with serious illness.

When Paschal returned, he only became more inspirational.

*Josh Paschal underwent intensive treatment (top right) following his diagnosis, but never lost his positive outlook. He returned to action on Nov. 17 and was awarded with the Heart of a Wildcat Award at the CATSPY Awards (lower right) this spring.*





A celebration was in order following UK's VRBO Citrus Bowl victory. Mark Stoops got a Gatorade bath after his first bowl win as a head coach (top left), Benny Snell Jr. earned MVP honors and Josh Allen relished a three-sack outing in his final game as a Wildcat.



## LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY. CHECK.

The 2018 season had been a remarkable one, but the work wasn't done when the Wildcats earned a VRBO Citrus Bowl bid. The Cats didn't squander their opportunity to play in UK's first New Year's Day bowl in two decades against a college football blueblood in Penn State.

Ready to play from the opening kickoff, UK built a 20-point lead when Benny Snell Jr. raced into the end zone and set the new school rushing record. And the Cats didn't blink when the Nittany Lions rallied, sealing a 27-24 victory.



# 27-24

JAN. 1 | ORLANDO, FLA.  
VRBO CITRUS BOWL

# A MAGICAL

## BREAKTHROUGH SEASON



Kentucky was dominant throughout the course of a 2018 season that saw the Wildcats compile a record of 19-2-1. By the time it ended, there was no question it was the greatest in Kentucky men's soccer history.



*Clockwise from top left, JJ Williams, Enrique Facusse and Aimé Mabika led the way for UK and earned All-America honors. Jason Reyes (bottom left) was named C-USA Freshman of the Year and Kalil ElMedkhar (near right) formed a potent attacking partnership with Williams.*





## JJ WILLIAMS

### SPOTLIGHT

JJ Williams has always looked the part. The 6-foot-3, 190-pound native of Montgomery, Alabama, even played it from time to time as a sophomore, but his junior year was when it all clicked.

Williams was nothing short of remarkable in establishing himself as arguably the nation's premier attacker, scoring 18 goals and 44 total points – both totals third in the country. Nine of his goals were game winners, including a strike just after halftime to give UK a win over Charlotte in the Conference USA Tournament final.

The First-Team All-American was rewarded for his excellence by being named C-USA Player of the Year and a finalist for national player of the year before he was selected No. 18 overall in the MLS SuperDraft by the Columbus Crew.

**T**he journey began in the cold all the way back in January. Memories still fresh from a disappointing 2017 season in which they fell short of the NCAA Tournament, the Kentucky Wildcats weren't going to sit around and hope their fate would change in 2018. Head coach Johan Cedergren instituted a rigorous training regimen, one that didn't pause even for snow.

Ten months later, as the bitter cold of the previous winter began to return for the first time, the Wildcats were celebrating the greatest season in Kentucky men's soccer history. UK swept Conference USA regular-season and tournament championships for the first time in school history. Nonconference play brought a pair of huge, dominant wins over Louisville and Indiana, as UK dispatched the top-10 opponents in a pair of 3-0 victories.

Forward JJ Williams established himself as one of the best

players in the country, earning First-Team All-America honors. He was joined by second-teamer Enrique Facusse and third-teamer Aimé Mabika and UK swept C-USA Player of the Year, Offensive MVP, Freshman of the Year and Coach of the Year honors.

All that added up to a No. 3 seed in the NCAA Tournament, where UK won a pair of games at the Wendell & Vickie Bell Soccer Complex to advance to the program's first Elite Eight. Even with basketball season underway and the football team bound for a New Year's Day bowl game, 3,228 fans bundled up and braved the cold as Kentucky played for a Final Four berth against Maryland – a total surpassed only by the record crowd of 3,503 in attendance for the regular-season win over Indiana.

UK fell just short of the College Cup in a 1-0 loss in which a goal just never came, but by then history had already been made. ■



**IF YOU GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO JANUARY WHEN WE STARTED WORKING ON THIS TO GET TO THIS POINT TODAY, IT'S JUST BEEN AN INCREDIBLE JOURNEY AND THESE GUYS HAVE GIVEN 100 PERCENT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. THEY'VE NEVER BEEN PERFECT, BUT THEY'VE ALWAYS WORKED AS HARD AS THEY CAN AND WE'VE LEARNED AND WE'VE GOTTEN BETTER.**

*– UK Head Men's Soccer Coach Johan Cedergren*



# REIGNING SUPREME

## AGAIN



For the first time since 1988, UK finished the 2018 regular season with a perfect 18-0 SEC record en route to a 23-match winning streak, a second consecutive conference title and another deep run in the NCAA Tournament.



### SEC VOLLEYBALL ROYALTY

The confetti fell in Memorial Coliseum after Kentucky completed an 18-0 run through Southeastern Conference play during which the Wildcats won 54 sets and lost only five. SEC Freshman of the Year Alli Stumler (top right) had an outstanding debut season in the process, while Gabby Curry (bottom left) and Craig Skinner (bottom right) were the SEC's Libero of the Year and Coach of the Year, respectively.

*Through only three seasons, Leah Edmond has already established herself as one of the best players in the history of Kentucky volleyball. She will enter her senior year 251 kills away from becoming the program's all-time leader after being named a Second-Team All-American and SEC Player of the Year as a junior.*



**T**hree straight losses out of the gate and a 4-3 start overall might have given some outsiders pause, but the Wildcats didn't flinch. They knew they had everything they needed to defend their Southeastern Conference championship from a season ago.

They were right. And then some.

UK completed a run through conference play the likes of which has rarely been seen in the SEC, finishing a perfect 18-0 in league play. Along the way, the Cats were taken to five sets only once. They won 13 matches with 3-0 sweeps, including an eight-match stretch over the course of almost a month during which UK did not drop a single set.

Powered by a pair of Second-Team All-Americans in Leah Edmond and Madison Lilley and Honorable Mention All-Americans Brooke Morgan and Gabby Curry, UK won its seventh SEC championship. Craig Skinner, of course, was named SEC Coach of the Year, while Edmond was SEC Player of the Year, Curry Libero of the Year and Alli Stumler Freshman of the Year.

By the time the NCAA Tournament rolled around, UK had not lost a match in nearly three months and deservedly received a national seed. The Cats extended their winning streak in the first two round by sweeping Murray State and Purdue, carrying a 23-match winning streak into a Sweet 16 showdown with Nebraska. UK would fall short there, but history had already been made. And coming off back-to-back SEC championships, the Cats will enter 2019 eager to do it again. ■

## CRAIG SKINNER ERA

### BY THE NUMBERS

- Two-time SEC champion
- Two SEC Players of the Year
- Three-time SEC Coach of the Year
- Four SEC Freshman of the Year winners
- Eight SEC Liberos of the Year, including four straight
- Nine-time NCAA Tournament host
- 14 straight NCAA Tournament Appearances
- 15 All-Americans
- 47 consecutive weeks in the top 25
- 51 All-SEC performers
- 328 career wins (most in school history)





# ELITE INDEED

John Calipari and the Wildcats took a memorable journey to yet another Elite Eight berth and the fifth 30-win season in the last 10 years.

**A**t first blush, what Reid Travis was saying didn't make a whole lot of sense. Kentucky's season had just ended in the abrupt fashion unique to the NCAA Tournament with an Elite Eight loss to Auburn, and in overtime no less.

Travis – the graduate transfer who had grown into an indispensable leader and favorite of the Big Blue Nation in his lone season – was distraught, but dutifully answering questions nonetheless. He was feeling the temptation to dissect every one of his mistakes in the loss and how not making it could have changed everything, but he knew he had to stop himself.

“Right now I'm trying to kind of enjoy these moments with my teammates,” Travis said.

An outsider might not have been able to understand how someone could enjoy moments as painful as those, but that's just how close this group became.

These Wildcats bonded in the Bahamas, stoking the flames of championship expectations with four dominant victories. They became even tighter when early season adversity came in the form of a disheartening season-opening loss to Duke. They embraced the enormity of the task ahead of them, then reminded everyone they were a force to be reckoned with. They rejoiced in the successes of their teammates, from Ashton Hagans' breakout to Tyler Herro's emergence to PJ Washington's star turn. They were unfazed when injuries threw up unexpected late-season roadblocks.

Along the way, there were memorable moments aplenty. Wins away from home against North Carolina and Louisville to reestablish Kentucky as a contender. Extraordinary performances in Rupp Arena against Kansas and Tennessee in front of raucous sellout crowds. NCAA Tournament thrillers against Wofford and Houston.

The victories and achievements were nice, but the relationships built along the way are what really mattered. ■



# DANCING ALL THE WAY TO THE ELITE 8



John Calipari fully understands the randomness of the NCAA Tournament. That's why his goal on that front is simple: to have his team in the best position possible to make a deep run. Through 10 years at Kentucky, he's succeeded wildly on that count. After yet another trip to the Elite Eight in 2018-19, UK has made it at least that far seven times.

This season's run saw UK overcome an injury that kept PJ Washington out of the first two rounds and score a pair of hard-fought victories against Wofford and Houston on the strength of incredible defense before an overtime loss to Auburn left the Cats just shy of the Final Four.



UK has won more games than any other team in college basketball in the last 10 seasons under Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Head Coach John Calipari and has advanced to the Elite Eight seven times and the Sweet 16 eight times. He also led UK to a national championship and four Final Fours (2011, '12, '14 and '15) in a five-season span, just the third coach (John Wooden and Mike Krzyzewski) in the history of college basketball to accomplish such a feat. The chart below tracks those and some other high-water marks of the Calipari decade.

WINS	30-WIN SEASONS	NCAA TITLE	FINAL FOURS	ELITE 8	SWEET 16	SEC TITLES	SECT TITLES
<b>305</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

## PJ WASHINGTON

SPOTLIGHT

There's no timetable for growth, not even at the school that produces more NBA players than any other. PJ Washington knew that, which is why he came back.

Even when a few quiet games in November and December had people talking sophomore slump, Washington didn't waver. He knew how hard he had worked, all the way back into the summer. He knew he had the right coaching staff. He knew he had the right teammates.

When the games started to matter most, Washington played his best. In the process, he became one of the best players not only in the SEC, but in the entire country. Over a 10-game stretch in January and February, he averaged 21.0 points and 7.9 rebounds, consistently showing off his now-reliable 3-point shot along the way.

Then, with March Madness just beginning, Washington was tested. A foot injury suffered in the SEC Tournament against Tennessee left his status in doubt for the NCAA Tournament. When the Big Dance began, Washington was spotted in a walking boot and fans wondered whether his UK career was over.

It wasn't.

Washington returned for the Sweet 16 to rescue Kentucky from hard-charging Houston, then nearly carried the Cats to the Final Four with a heroic 28-point, 13-rebound outing against Auburn.



# BIG BLUE



## RESURGENCE



*UK was fueled in large part by a veteran backcourt of Jaida Roper (left), Maci Morris (middle) and Taylor Murray (right).*



Kentucky women's basketball reasserted itself on the national stage with a return to form behind a group of players who relished every moment together.

**T**he Kentucky women's basketball team began the season with a simple goal: to have a great year together, learning all the while. The Wildcats didn't bother to mention winning games or even making a return to the NCAA Tournament following a one-year absence. They figured that if they took care of that one big-picture goal, the specifics would come into place.

They were right.

The fun and the learning began with an unforgettable sum-

## SOUL SISTERS

SPOTLIGHT

Matthew Mitchell doesn't like dwelling on the past. But when he thinks about Kentucky's four seniors – Maci Morris, Taylor Murray, LaShae Halsel and Paige Poffenberger – he can't help but think about the experiences they went through during their careers and the bonds that were formed in the process.

"When you think about how this group came together, they did not all come together in the usual way where you are a signing class and show up the first day and then progress through your career," Mitchell said. "It has been an ordinary fashion and has been well documented the difficulties that we had at the end of 2016."

Those difficulties – a rash of transfers and coaching staff turnover – led to the most trying moments of Mitchell's career. They also could have led to the departures of Morris and Murray, but the thought never so much as crossed their minds.

Morris and Murray were just a pair of 19-year-olds at the time. Coming off standout freshman seasons, it would have been easy for either or both to look to greener pastures. They chose the Bluegrass instead. In turn, they became players who, by any measure, now stack up among the best in Kentucky history. They are both 1,000-point scorers for their career, with Morris cracking the top-10 all-time scoring list and Murray among the top 10 players in program history in both steals and assists.

With the duo leading the way, the Wildcats entered the polls after an impressive week at the Paradise Jam and didn't look back. They guided UK back to the NCAA Tournament. In the process, Morris was named First-Team All-SEC and SEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year and Murray named SEC All-Defensive Team.

Equally important, the two close friends – one from Bell County, Kentucky, and the other from 20 miles south of Baltimore – enjoyed one final successful season at each other's side.



*Rhyné Howard was a star in her debut season, averaging 16.4 points and 6.6 rebounds en route to receiving unanimous National Freshman of the Year honors.*

mer trip to Italy for a three-game exhibition tour and plenty of sightseeing and cultural learning along the way. There, the Cats got a head start on becoming a team. Once the season began, it didn't take long for their work to become readily apparent. UK raced out to a 9-0 start, highlighted by a three-game sweep of tough competition – South Florida, UCLA and North Carolina – at the Paradise Jam.

The only nonconference blemish came on the road against eventual Final Four team Louisville, but even then the Cats mounted a furious fourth-quarter rally and served notice there wouldn't be a single challenge they would back down from. The trend continued in SEC play, when UK overcame injuries to close the regular season with six wins in seven games to earn a bye in the SEC Tournament.

Honors came flooding in, with both Maci Morris and Rhyné Howard earning First-Team All-SEC recognition. Howard – the National and SEC Freshman of the Year – was joined on the SEC All-Freshman Team by Blair Green and Matthew Mitchell shared SEC Coach of the Year honors.

The season would end with a record of 25-8, a return to national rankings and eventually a second-round NCAA Tournament appearance. The Cats stayed together all the while and never stopped learning. ■

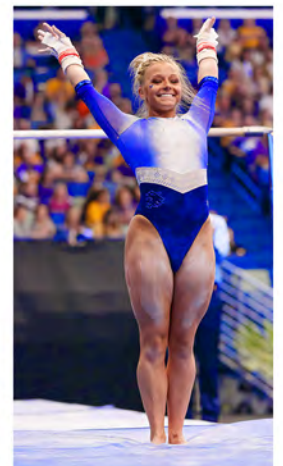
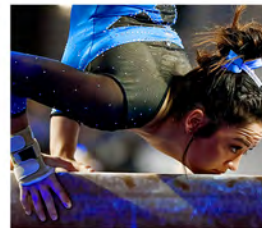


# NOTHING BUT THEIR BEST

Six young women arrived in Lexington in 2015 intent on leaving their mark on Kentucky gymnastics. Four years and one record-setting senior season later, Sidney Dukes, Alex Hyland, Katie Stuart, Danaea Davis, Katrina Coco and Aubree Rosa did that and much more.



*Sidney Dukes (left) started her career by earning First-Team All-America honors and never looked back, while Alex Hyland (bottom right) became the second Wildcat to qualify for NCAA Championships in four straight years. Katie Stuart (above) was a steady presence for Kentucky as an all-around competitor and Danaea Davis (top middle) served as a vault specialist. All-American Mollie Korth (top right) and Cally Nixon (middle), who qualified for nationals on bars as a freshman, headline a group of returners that will work to build on the legacy of those seniors.*



**T**he recruiting process happens early in college gymnastics. So when Tim Garrison took over as Kentucky head coach in 2011, he knew it would be a few years before he would be able to build a class from the ground up. He had his first such chance with the 2015 signing class, and he would not squander it. Sidney Dukes, Alex Hyland, Katie Stuart, Danaea Davis, Katrina Coca and Aubree Rosa arrived on campus as a result of those efforts, and they weren't about to squander any chances either.

Four years later – degrees in hand – the group of six had left Lexington the most decorated senior class in school history after a run of unprecedented success that culminated in a record-breaking 2019 season.

That season saw the Wildcats crack the top 10 of national rankings and stay there. The regular season ended with five

performances of 197-plus points in six meets and the first National Qualifying Score of higher than 197 in school history. One of those performances came, fittingly, on Senior Night, when Dukes, Hyland, Stuart, Davis, Coca and Rosa bid farewell to Memorial Coliseum with the best score in program history.

That record would stand for all of a month.

At the biggest meet of the season – the NCAA Regional Final – the Cats went toe to toe with three top-15 teams with a second straight NCAA Championships berth on the line and posted an incredible score of 197.600. Unfortunately, No. 1 Oklahoma, No. 8 Georgia and No. 15 California were just a little bit better on that day. But with the foundation laid by one outstanding senior class, Kentucky gymnastics is positioned to return to that same stage for years to come. ■



**THEY DO THE RIGHT THINGS TO KEEP THEMSELVES HEALTHY DURING THE WEEK, INSIDE THE GYM, OUTSIDE THE GYM. THEY DO EVERYTHING THEY POSSIBLY CAN TO PUT THEMSELVES IN POSITION TO DO WHAT THEY'RE DOING ON MEET NIGHTS. THEY LOVE THIS TEAM. THEY LOVE COMPETING IN FRONT OF THEIR FANS. THEY'RE WILDCATS FOREVER.**

*– UK Head Gymnastics Coach Tim Garrison, commenting on 2019 senior class*



## **CATS UPSET #5 LSU**

It wasn't that Kentucky had been bad through the first six meets of the season, but the Wildcats had more in the tank. A few short-term injuries, some early season lineup tweaks and a lackluster rotation here or there made Tim Garrison certain the Cats were building toward something.

That something was on full display Feb. 8 in Memorial Coliseum. Hosting perennial power LSU, the Cats posted what was then the second-best score in program history (197.150) and took down the fifth-ranked Tigers in memorable fashion. Even then, the Cats were still building. Over the next two months, they would top their winning score from the LSU meet five times.

**197.150-196.025**

The Kentucky swimming and diving program continued to make its presence felt on the national stage with another season full of memorable performances.

# LOCKED IN

**L**ars Jorgensen has taken a steady approach to building the Kentucky swimming and diving program, forgoing quick fixes to build a solid foundation. That foundation is now yielding sustained success.

The 2018-19 season brought top-25 NCAA team finishes for both UK's men's and women's teams for the first time in more than a decade – the women finishing 15th and the men 25th. After a regular season highlighted by a sweep of rival Louisville, a UK record 12 swimmers and divers received All-Southeastern Conference honors. The women's team followed that up at nationals by earning 19 All-America honors.

With another record-setting season in the books, Jorgensen and the Wildcats now have their eyes on the future. More success, if they have anything to say about it, is sure to follow. ■



*The women's team celebrated its third straight top-15 national finish in 2018-19 (left), while Seb Master-ton (top right) capped his UK career by earning First-Team All-America honors to lead the men's team to a top-25 finish.*

## ASIA SEIDT

### S P O T L I G H T

Asia Seidt has packed a career's worth of achievements into just three seasons at the University of Kentucky.

As a junior, the Louisville native earned All-America honors in all six of her NCAA events and became an eight-time NCAA First-Team All-American, a record for any UK swimmer. The three-time defending SEC champion in the 200 backstroke is as decorated out of the pool as in it, winning the Elite 90 Award, SEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year and Arthur Ashe Female Sports Scholar of the Year in 2019 alone.

And she still has one more year at UK to fill that trophy case.



# THE LONNIE GREENE ERA BEGINS



With a sunny disposition and a big Bahamian smile, Lonnie Greene brought his own unique style to Kentucky track and field while building on the success the program has enjoyed of late.

In recent seasons, the University of Kentucky has established itself as a player on the national stage in college track and field. After Lonnie Greene's first season at the helm, it seems clear that the Wildcats are not going anywhere. UK had a combined five medal-winning performances from Daniel Roberts, Marie-Josée Ebwea-Bile Excel and Chloe Abbott and 34 All-America honors across NCAA Indoor and Outdoor Championships, with the women's team finishing 14th at outdoors—a mere half-point outside the top 10. Along the way, Roberts and Ellen Ekholm claimed South-eastern Conference individual titles.

With talented returners from the 2018-19 roster joining the promising group Greene put together in his first full recruiting class, next year could be even better. ■

Marie-Josée Ebwea-Bile Excel (left) capped her decorated UK career by winning a pair of bronze medals in the triple jump, while Ellen Ekholm (right) won high jump gold at SEC Outdoor Championships.



## DANIEL ROBERTS

S P O T L I G H T

*Daniel Roberts' banner junior season brought a pair of silver-medal NCAA performances and the 110m hurdles title at SEC Outdoor Championships.*

In any other year, either Kentucky's Daniel Roberts or Florida's Grant Holloway would have thoroughly dominated short hurdles this season. Instead, the two SEC stars waged a season-long battle the likes of which has never been seen. Every meet featuring the pair rewrote record books, culminating in Roberts tying a 40-year-old NCAA record by running 13.00 in the 110m hurdles, just behind Holloway's 12.98.





# WIRED TO WIN



*Grace Baalman (top left) stepped up in the circle as a sophomore, while seniors Katie Reed (top right and bottom), Jenny Schaper (bottom) and Abbey Cheek (bottom left) were standouts at the plate and in the field.*

Kentucky softball's senior class added the latest chapter of the program's success under head coach Rachel Lawson.

It was a scene familiar to anyone who follows college sports: seniors, faced with the end of their careers, showing the emotions that the end so often brings. This seemed different though. Special. That's because special is exactly what these seniors are.

That senior class – Abbey Cheek, Katie Reed, Jenny Schaper, Kelsee Henson and Sarah Rainwater – led Kentucky to a third straight trip to super regionals.

The five seniors arrived at Kentucky after the program had

already been established as a contender on the national stage. The Wildcats had reached Supers four times in five seasons, culminating in a 2015 trip to the Women's College World Series. UK's seniors fell short of their goal of a return trip in losing to Washington, but their legacy will live on.

Those seniors joined a program that had achieved success on the strength of pitching and defense engineered by Rachel Lawson. They never turned their back on the grit that had defined Kentucky softball, but they set out to leave their own

CHEEK

11

Abbey Cheek was on track for one of the best careers in Kentucky softball history through her first three seasons. Since she was a starter and a middle-of-the-lineup threat from the moment she set foot on campus, the logical thing would have been for Cheek to keep doing what she always had.

Instead, she reinvented herself and had the best offensive season the program has ever seen. Cheek was nothing short of extraordinary in earning Schutt Sports/NFCA National Player of the Year honors. She batted .428, bashed 20 home runs to become UK's all-time career home runs leader and walked 64 times on the strength of refined plate discipline that made her the toughest out in college softball.

REED

23

So put together was Katie Reed that her teammates took to jokingly campaigning on her behalf. "Katie Reed for President," they liked to say.

A gifted player both in the field at shortstop and at the plate, a 4.0 student for the entirety of her Kentucky career and a team captain if there ever was one, Reed did it all. She was an All-SEC selection in her final three seasons and just the third All-American in program history in 2017. Reed followed that up by earning Academic All-America recognition in 2018 and 2019.

The Senior CLASS Award winner is headed to dental school after graduating in May. After that, there's no telling what the future holds – and she'll be eligible to run for President in 2032.

SCHAPER

6

Jenny Schaper wasn't a prototypical leadoff hitter. Far from it, in fact. She lacked the speed coaches generally look for at the top of the lineup, was not a slap hitter and wasn't a lefty, but Rachel Lawson still couldn't help but pencil her in at leadoff for the final two months of the season. She had a steadiness about her, a knack for calming things down that made her a perfect, if unconventional, fit for the role.

That trait defined her through her decorated career. She started at catcher – notoriously the toughest position to play for Lawson – for four years and was a First-Team All-SEC performer and Academic All-American as a senior.



**THE THING THAT IS SO COOL ABOUT THIS CLASS IS THEY RESPECT THE TRADITION OF KENTUCKY SOFTBALL. THEY HONORED THAT TRADITION, BUT THEN THEY BUILT ON IT AND THEY BUILT THEIR OWN. I THINK THAT'S THE SIGN OF A GREAT PROGRAM AND THE SIGN OF A PROGRAM THAT'S GOING TO BE LASTING FOR A LONG TIME.**

*– UK Head Softball Coach Rachel Lawson*



mark. They did so by building the best offense in school history these last two seasons. That culminated in a 2019 season that saw UK bat .308 as a team and average 6.35 runs per game – 11th in the country – and sweep through back-to-back Lexington Regionals by a staggering total score of 54-5.

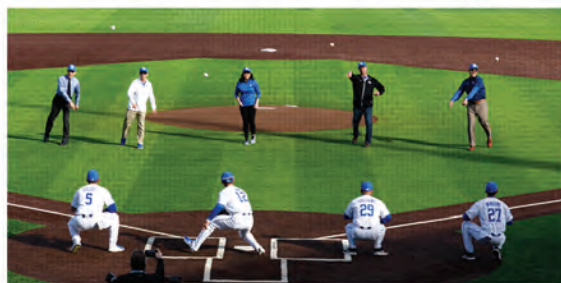
UK's five seniors will now move on to the next phase of their lives. That means postgraduate work for all five, including dental school for Reed. Reed and Cheek will also be teammates once again, as both were drafted by the Chicago Bandits of

National Pro Fastpitch, but not wearing Blue and White.

That's sad, no question, and leaves UK with plenty of production to replace next season. The Cats will be counting on the legacy left by those seniors to do it.

Though Cheek, Reed, Schaper, Henson and Rainwater might not have reached the Women's College World Series as they so desperately wanted, their fingerprints will be all over UK's eventual return trip to Oklahoma City – whenever that happens. ■

# FROM VISION TO REALITY



*The sun was out on an unseasonably warm day as the Wildcats played the first game at Kentucky Proud Park on Feb. 26. More than 4,000 fans were in attendance to watch UK post a 7-3 victory over Eastern Kentucky.*

A new era in Kentucky baseball began in style with the grand opening of Kentucky Proud Park.

**M**any a coach and administrator had dreamed of a new home for Kentucky baseball. Those dreams yielded various sets of plans over the years, but none had yet come to fruition – not until the last and best version came into focus and Kentucky Proud Park sprung up along Alumni Drive.

The \$49 million stadium gives Kentucky one of the best facilities in college baseball, a fact made clear by the first season spent

playing in it. Complete with permanent seating for 2,500 as well as stone terraces, grass berms and a 360-degree concourse that bring its regular-season capacity to approximately 5,000, Kentucky Proud Park's team areas give players and coaches everything they need to succeed while creating an ideal place for fans to support them.

It might have taken a while for Kentucky baseball's new home to take shape, but the wait – considering the reward that came at the end of it – was well worth it. ■



**IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME THAT OUR PROGRAM HAS WAITED. WE CELEBRATED A LOT OF COOL WINS AT THE CLIFF SO YOU NEVER WANT TO LOSE SIGHT OF THAT, BUT TO BE AT THIS PARK TODAY, IT'S PRETTY COOL. FOR OUR FANS THAT HAVE WAITED, IT'S REALLY NEAT. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL PLACE. I'M BIASED BUT I'M NOT SURE THERE ARE A LOT OF COLLEGE PARKS THAT WILL SURPASS IT.**

*- UK Athletics Director Mitch Barnhart*



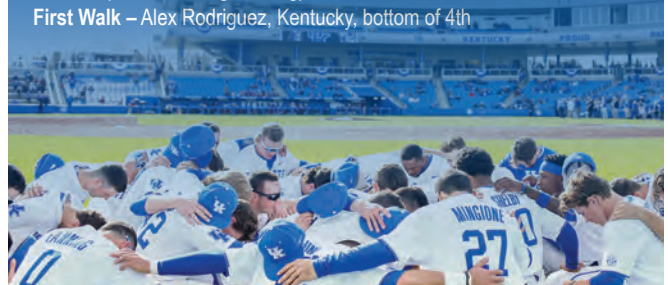
*Kentucky Proud Park – the successor to Cliff Hagan Stadium – is more than just a game-day home for Kentucky baseball. The new stadium features a team lounge, locker room, training area, indoor hitting and pitching areas, and coaching offices, as well as a recruiting room.*



## STADIUM FIRSTS

FEB. 26, 2019

- Final Score – Kentucky 7, Eastern Kentucky 3
- First Official Crowd – 4,074 (10th largest in program history)
- Time of First Pitch – 4:03 p.m. ET
- Who Threw First Pitch – Grant Macciocchi, Kentucky
- First Hitter – Ryland Kerr, Eastern Kentucky
- First Hit – Ryland Kerr, Eastern Kentucky
- First Out – Chris Botsoe, Eastern Kentucky popped out (foul) to UK catcher Coltyn Kessler
- First Hit by Kentucky Player – Dalton Reed, double, bottom of 2nd inning
- First Home Run – T.J. Collett, Kentucky, bottom of 5th inning, left-center field off EKU's Jacob Ferris
- First RBI – T.J. Collett, Kentucky, bottom of 5th inning
- Run Scored – Dalton Reed, Kentucky, bottom of 2nd
- First Stolen Base – Jaren Shelby, Kentucky, bottom of 5th
- First Strikeout – EKU's Will Johnson by UK's Grant Macciocchi (leading off top of 2nd inning, looking)
- First Walk – Alex Rodriguez, Kentucky, bottom of 4th



# TEAMING UP



As part of the UK Athletic Department's unwavering commitment to community outreach, the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee selected Special Olympics Kentucky as its Charity of Choice through April 2020.

**F**or the last several years, the University of Kentucky's 500-plus student-athletes have combined to serve more than 4,000 hours annually in the Lexington community and beyond. In other words, they have always taken seriously their responsibility to use the platform afforded them to make a positive impact on the world around them.

They recognized they had the opportunity to increase that impact though, so Kentucky's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee set out to select a single organization with which they could partner to do exactly





Since the partnership was announced in December 2018, Special Olympics Kentucky athletes have attended the CATSPY Awards (top), participated in a bowling event with UK student-athletes (middle) and enjoyed activities with various UK teams, including men's basketball (bottom).



that. After the SAAC representative from the women's soccer team, Payton Atkins, nominated Special Olympics Kentucky, they soon had their pick.

Through April 2020, Special Olympics Kentucky is SAAC's Charity of Choice. That hasn't limited student-athletes from giving of their time to support various other worthy causes, but it has allowed them to make maximum impact with an organization that creates year-round sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. The fit is natural, as UK student-athletes and their Special Olympics counterparts share a passion for sports.

Months in, the partnership has already been a meaningful one. It began in earnest with a bowling event at which 50 Wildcats and 50 Special Olympics athletes shared fun, fellowship and a little friendly competition. It continued with events with various UK teams, including a postgame visit with the men's basketball team at Rupp Arena, and culminated with Special Olympics athletes attending the CATSPY Awards as honored guests.

And that's only the beginning. ■



UK's commitment to the success of its student-athletes in all facets of life has never been in question. After all, UK has long been a trendsetter in the academic support of student-athletes, becoming the first university in America with an academic center dedicated to student-athletes in 1981. That support has helped lay the foundation for an ongoing streak of 14 consecutive semesters with a grade-point average of 3.0.

UK student-athletes have capitalized on the opportunities afforded them to pursue a world-class education while learning lifelong lessons of teamwork, leadership, sacrifice and perseverance in competing at the highest level of college athletics. The results are plain to see, with Wildcat after Wildcat going on to build lives of his or her own.

With the formation of the Student-Athlete Experience Division, UK is redoubling its commitment to prepare student-athletes to enter life after UK by equipping them with the requisite professional skills and helping them identify and pursue internship and work opportunities. In June, Athletics Director Mitch Barnhart named Jason Cummins – previously UK's Director of Impact Leadership – to lead the division as Executive Associate Athletics Director for Student-Athlete Experience.

The Student-Athlete Experience division will cultivate and enhance the one-of-a-kind experience student-athletes are exposed to at UK, empowering young people to prepare themselves for whatever path they choose after college and challenging them to grow into the next generation of leaders for the world.

The work has already begun to bear fruit. Over the last year, the Student-Athlete Experience Division sponsored a career workshop and later a career fair attended by dozens of student-athletes and various companies eager to discuss professional opportunities with them. The division also took a group of student-athletes to Harlan County for a service trip.



Jason Cummins helped lead a career workshop for student-athletes this winter.

# WINNING ON *MANY* FRONTS

## OFF AND RUNNING AGAIN

**GO BIG BLUE**  
*4 MILER* Kroger

The Go Big Blue 4 Miler – an outgrowth of UK’s comprehensive partnership with Kroger – took runners and walkers through various athletic facilities to a finish on the goal line at Kroger Field for the first two times in 2018. The race will return in August 2019, encouraging health and wellness in the Lexington community.



## MASSIVE VIDEO BOARD AND RIBBON BOARDS UNVEILED AT MEMORIAL COLISEUM

Installation of a massive new LED video board spanning approximately 1,800 square feet and a new LED ribbon board nearly 100 feet in width was completed in October, providing a major boost to the fan experience in the historic venue. The project is the first step in UK Athletics’ plans for Memorial. The building opened in 1950 as a tribute to Kentuckians who gave their lives in service of America and served as the home of Kentucky men’s basketball for two decades. Today, the venue is home to Kentucky’s women’s basketball, volleyball and gymnastics teams.

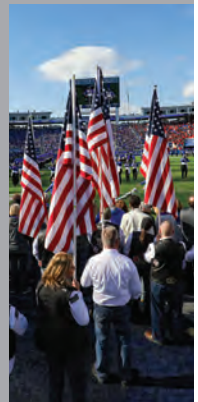


## UK ATHLETICS HONORS VETERANS, FALLEN MILITARY HEROES AT KROGER FIELD

In fall of 2018, four Chairs of Honor were dedicated inside Kroger Field. The dedication took place at an emotional private event attended by Athletics Director Mitch Barnhart, Rolling Thunder – a nonprofit organization dedicated to publicizing the POW/MIA issue – and family members of one Kentucky service member still missing in action.

Chairs of Honor are empty black stadium chairs with a plaque honoring all soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice, have been

*The four Chairs of Honor at Kroger Field were dedicated just before Kentucky football’s Salute to Veterans game against Georgia in November. They will continue to stand in honor of all soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice, have been held prisoner of war, are listed as missing in action and those currently serving.*



held prisoner of war, are listed as missing in action and those currently serving. The Chairs of Honor were dedicated just before UK football’s Salute to Veterans game, which takes place in conjunction with Veterans Day each year.

The chairs are located in each corner of the upper concourse at Kroger Field. Fans are invited to visit them on game day and reflect on the sacrifices made by the military members who protect our freedom and the families affected by those sacrifices.



From left to right, Anthony Davis, Jacob Tamme, Victoria Dunlap, Eric Quigley and Dennis Emery attended the induction ceremony for the UK Athletics Hall of Fame.

## UK INDUCTS 2018 HALL OF FAME CLASS

The University of Kentucky Athletics Department welcomed a new class of six Wildcat greats to its Hall of Fame in 2018. Russ Cochran (men's golf), Anthony Davis (men's basketball), Victoria Dunlap (women's basketball), Dennis Emery (men's tennis coach), Eric Quigley (men's tennis) and Jacob Tamme (football) were inducted as part of Hall of Fame Weekend in September and honored on the field during Kentucky football's big home win over Mississippi State.

The UK Athletics Hall of Fame was started in 2005 to recognize and honor persons whose participation and achievements enriched and strengthened the University's athletics program. The charter class included 88 individuals who previously had their jersey retired by UK. A committee consisting of Hall of Famers, media members, campus representatives and current coaches and administrators elects new inductees each year.

Today, the UK Athletics Hall of Fame has 173 members spanning nearly all of Kentucky's 22 varsity teams. Plans to create a permanent physical home for the Hall of Fame as part of a renovation of Memorial Coliseum are in their initial stages.



## BIG BLUE MADNESS LIGHTS UP RUPP ARENA

*Big Blue Madness continues to raise the bar for spectacle as the official celebration of the arrival of a new season of Kentucky basketball. A capacity crowd in Rupp Arena was treated to an on-court video presentation, pyrotechnics, intros for UK's men's and women's teams and a reunion of members of Kentucky's first three national championship teams.*



## LARGER THAN LIFE IN TIMES SQUARE

*Just as the Kentucky Wildcats began to play their way into the national limelight by invading the top 10 of the College Football Playoff rankings, digital ads featuring UK's awards candidates ran on the screens in Times Square. That wouldn't be the last time the Cats would be heard from during the program's most successful season in four decades.*



## UK ATHLETICS BREAKS GRADUATION RECORDS

Wildcat student-athletes continue to set new standards for achievement in the classroom. UK broke school records for graduation rates in an annual report released in November by the NCAA.

The Graduation Success Rate (GSR), a four-year composite statistic for the freshman classes of 2008-09 through 2011-12, was 88%. That tops the previous school record of 85% set last season, continuing UK Athletics' streak of breaking or tying the mark every year since the NCAA began tracking the statistic in 2005.

The Federal Graduation Rate (FGR) is also a four-year composite statistic for freshman classes from 2008-09 through 2011-12. UK's latest FGR mark is 61%, besting the previous record of 59%.



## CHEERLEADERS WIN 24<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL TITLE

The greatest cheerleading program America has ever seen added another chapter to its unmatched history this year. The University of Kentucky cheerleading team won its unprecedented 24th national championship at the Universal Cheerleaders Association finals competition in Orlando, Florida, in January.

Competing among the Division IA Coed squads, the title was the fourth in a row for Kentucky cheer under head coach Jomo Thompson. Although Kentucky has won 24 championships in the last 35 years, it is only the second time that UK has strung together four in a row. The Wildcats won a school-record eight straight from 1995-2002. Kentucky won its first national crown in 1985, also winning in 1987-88, 1992, 1995-2002, 2004-06, 2008-10, 2012, 2014 and 2016-19.

The dance team was entered in three categories at nationals, placing fifth (Game Day competition), sixth (Hip-Hop) and 12th (Pom).



## ESPN GAMEDAY VISITS RUPP ARENA AND MEMORIAL COLISEUM

College GameDay loves coming to the University of Kentucky so much that ESPN's popular pregame show made two trips to Lexington this season. It's only the second time GameDay has made two appearances at one school in a single season.

GameDay first aired at Rupp Arena before the Wildcats hosted Kansas in a matchup of college basketball bluebloods in January. Just three weeks later, GameDay came back to UK and aired from Memorial Coliseum before the Cats' Southeastern Conference showdown with Tennessee.



*ESPN College GameDay was in town for two of UK's biggest wins of the season: Kansas on Jan. 26 and Tennessee on Feb. 16.*



*This year's Frank G. Ham Society of Character inductees were honored following the induction ceremony at Kentucky's men's basketball game vs. LSU at Rupp Arena.*

## 14 WILDCATS INDUCTED INTO FRANK G. HAM SOCIETY OF CHARACTER

Fourteen student-athletes were inducted into the Frank G. Ham Society of Character at a ceremony in February. The Society of Character annually honors Wildcats who have shown an extraordinary commitment to academic excellence, athletic participation, personal development, career preparation and serving as a role model.

The 2019 inductees are: Abbey Cheek (softball), C.J. Conrad (football), Jonny David (men's basketball), Morgan Duerr (rifle), Marshall Gei (baseball), Sarah Loheide (swimming and diving), Taylor Murray (women's basketball), Cathryn Papasodora (rifle), Akvilė Paražinskaitė (women's tennis), Sarah Rainwater (softball), Jenny Schaper (softball), Evangeline Soucie (women's soccer), Jason Spaude (rifle), and McKenzie Watson (volleyball).

## NCAA RIFLE CHAMPIONSHIPS



*A year after claiming its second national championship, the Kentucky rifle team placed fifth at the 2019 NCAA Championships in March. The Wildcats were led by a trio of All-Americans: Will Shaner, Hailee Sigmon and Cathryn Papasodora. Shaner was also named National Freshman of the Year, becoming the second Wildcat to win the award in as many seasons.*



ALLEN



ROUND 1  
PICK 7



JOHNSON JR.



ROUND 2  
PICK 54



EDWARDS



ROUND 3  
PICK 99



SNELL JR.



ROUND 4  
PICK 122



ASAFO-ADJEI



ROUND 7  
PICK 232

Josh Allen, Lonnie Johnson Jr., Mike Edwards, Benny Snell Jr. and George Asafo-Adjei will be wearing new colors next season, but they will still be representing the Blue and White of UK on Sundays.

## JOSH ALLEN HEADLINES HISTORIC NFL DRAFT FOR UK FOOTBALL

Kentucky football's season officially ended with a VRBO Citrus Bowl victory on New Year's Day, but the NFL Draft served as a coda to the program's best year in four decades. Five Wildcats were drafted, the most chosen since 1979, and UK was one of only four schools to have a player chosen in each of the draft's first four rounds along with Alabama, Oklahoma and Ohio State.

## THE CATSPY AWARDS

The 17th annual CATSPY Awards were held in April at Memorial Coliseum to recognize athletic and academic performances during the 2018-19 year in the UK Athletics Department. With co-winners in some categories, 44 individuals were recognized as well as multiple teams.

The Mr. and Miss Wildcat awards – dedicated in honor of the late Bruno Agostinelli, a UK men's tennis All-American and past Mr. Wildcat winner – went to C.J. Conrad (football), Katie Reed (softball) and Asia Seidt (women's swimming and diving). The Mr. and Miss Wildcat honors are presented to Wildcats who have represented all-around excellence in athletics, academics, character and service during their Kentucky careers.

A new honor was bestowed upon a group of Wildcats this year: the Legacy Award. The award honors student-athletes who have made significant contributions to their team and the athletics department over the course of their careers. Twenty-two Wildcats, from 10 different teams, took home the new hardware.



Marcus Spears, a college football analyst for the SEC Network, and Laura Rutledge, an ESPN college football and basketball sideline reporter, hosted this year's CATSPYs.

## LEGACY AWARD WINNERS

Katie Reed, Softball  
Abbey Cheek, Softball  
Maci Morris, WBasketball  
Taylor Murray, WBasketball  
Josh Allen, Football  
Benny Snell, Jr., Football  
Sidney Dukes, Gymnastics  
Alex Hyland, Gymnastics  
Katrina Coca, Gymnastics  
Danaea Davis, Gymnastics  
Aubree Rosa, Gymnastics  
Katie Stuart, Gymnastics  
Asia Seidt, WSwimming and Diving  
Sydney McLaughlin, WTrack &Field  
Jasmine Camacho-Quinn, WTrack & Field  
Marie-Josée Ebwea-Bile Excel, WTrack and Field  
Tim Duckworth, MTrack and Field  
Daniel Roberts, M Track and Field  
JJ Williams, MSoccer  
Leah Edmond, Volleyball  
Madison Lilley, Volleyball  
Leonie Bettel, Women's Golf

From left, JJ Williams (men's soccer), Asia Seidt (women's swimming and diving) and Leah Edmond (volleyball) were among the 22 UK student-athletes who received the inaugural Legacy Award at the 2019 CATSPY Awards.



Seventy-eight student-athletes – the most of any league school – were named to the SEC Winter Sports Academic Honor Roll this year. Combined with 60 on the Fall Sports Academic Honor Roll, 65 on the Spring Academic Honor Roll and 99 on the First-Year Academic Honor Roll, Wildcat student-athletes combined to earn more than 300 SEC academic honors.

## 99 WILDCATS GRADUATE IN 2018-19

Pursuing a world-class education is an essential aspect of the experience to which Wildcat student-athletes are exposed at the University of Kentucky. That pursuit, in most cases, yields a degree.

During the 2018-19 academic year alone, 99 Wildcats – 28 in December and another 71 in May – walked across the stage at Commencement and graduated. The group comprised members of all 22 Kentucky teams, including a combined six members of UK's conference championship volleyball and men's soccer teams and 19 football players who led the way to the program's best season in four decades.

Another five Wildcats – including baseball star John Shelby and current NFL player Avery Williamson – returned to earn their degrees through the Post-Eligibility Program. Since its inception in 1989, more than 150 Wildcats have returned to graduate through the program.



## BETTEL ENDS PROLIFIC UK WOMEN'S GOLF CAREER IN REGIONALS

Leonie Bettel rewrote the Kentucky women's golf record books during a banner senior season. She set new records for single-season stroke average and under-par rounds in winning three tournaments, the second most in a single season in school history.

*Katrina Coca from the gymnastics team (left) and Paige Kelly from swimming and diving were among 99 Wildcats to graduate during the 2018-19 academic year.*



*Ryo Matsumura closed a prolific college career by advancing to the NCAA Men's Tennis Singles Championship for the fourth straight season. He also led Kentucky to a second-round NCAA Tournament appearance.*



## MIKULSKYTE AND PARAŽINSKAITE LEAD THE WAY FOR UK WOMEN'S TENNIS

It was another solid season for the Kentucky women's tennis team, which reached the second round of the NCAA Tournament and posted its best record in more than a decade. Justina Mikulskyte led the way for the Wildcats in her final college season, earning All-Southeastern Conference First Team honors and earning bids to both the NCAA Women's Singles and Doubles Championships. Mikulskyte played doubles alongside Akvile Paražinskaitė, who will return next season as a redshirt senior.

## MEN'S GOLF ADVANCES TO ATHENS REGIONAL

Kentucky men's golf enjoyed another successful season in 2018-19 in which the Cats placed third during stroke play of the SEC Championship and advanced to match play for the first time in the tournament's format. The Wildcats earned a spot in the NCAA Regional in Athens, Georgia, marking the fourth straight season Brian Craig's squad has moved on to postseason play. Lukas Euler was an All-SEC Second-Team selection and Cullan Brown was chosen to the All-SEC Freshman Team.



*Fred Allen Meyer, Max Mehles, Cullan Brown, Matt Liston and Lukas Euler helped lead the UK men's golf team to a fourth consecutive NCAA regional appearance.*





Kentucky was once again well represented at the NBA Draft. Tyler Herro (13th to the Miami Heat), Keldon Johnson (29th to the San Antonio Spurs) and PJ Washington (12th to the Charlotte Hornets) were all selected in the first round, bringing UK's total in the John Calipari era to 29.



The University of Kentucky Athletics Department put the finishing touches on another chapter in the greatest run of comprehensive success in school history by finishing 14th in final 2018-19 Learfield/IMG Directors' Cup standings.

"We have seen outstanding individual and team success this season," Athletics Director Mitch Barnhart said. "This success is worth celebrating, but it's also motivation for us because we know we can achieve so much more. We are already looking forward to the 2019-20 season, when we will continue to pursue our goal of establishing UK among the elite athletics departments in America."

### MITCH BARNHART NAMED NATION'S TOP ATHLETICS DIRECTOR

Mitch Barnhart was selected as Athletic Director of the Year from among five finalists at the 12th annual Sports Business Awards Wednesday evening at the New York Marriott Marquis at Times Square, based on the judging period of March 1, 2018 to Feb. 28, 2019. His fellow finalists were Ray Anderson (Arizona State University), Jennifer Cohen (University of Washington), Blake James (University of Miami) and Jamie Pollard (Iowa State University).

A finalist for the award for the second time – the first in 2015 – Barnhart is in his 17th year as University of Kentucky athletics director.



### BIG BLUE CARAVAN



After going from west to east last year, the Big Blue Caravan changed things up this summer. UK Athletics' annual tour of the Bluegrass began in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky and concluded in Meade County.

### CAPILOUTO NAMED PRESIDENT OF THE SEC



UK President Eli Capilouto will step into a leadership role with the Southeastern Conference this year. Capilouto was elected President of the SEC by his league peers at the SEC's annual spring meeting in Destin, Florida.

### CALIPARI, KENTUCKY AGREE TO NEW LONG-TERM CONTRACT

Kentucky men's basketball head coach John Calipari, who owns more wins, more NCAA Tournament wins, more Final Four appearances, more Elite Eight berths and more Sweet 16 showings than any other coach since his arrival at UK, has signed a new long-term contract with the school that will offer him the opportunity to end his career in Lexington.



## JARED LORENZEN

Few players in Kentucky football history have captured the imagination of the Big Blue Nation as Jared Lorenzen did. When the record-setting quarterback died in July, there was an outpouring of love for Lorenzen and support for his family to match his contributions to Kentucky and his one-of-a-kind personality.

A four-year starter for the Wildcats from 2000-03, Lorenzen was one of the most prolific quarterbacks in college football history. He played two seasons in the National Football League and, following his NFL days, returned to live in Kentucky.

A native of Covington, Kentucky, Lorenzen was an All-American and won four state player of the year awards – including “Mr. Football” – as a senior at Highlands High School in Fort Thomas, Kentucky. He led Highlands to the 1998 Class AAA state championship. Also an outstanding basketball player, he helped lead Highlands to three appearances in the “Sweet 16” state tournament.

Lorenzen enrolled at UK in the fall of 1999. He redshirted the ‘99 season, then was a four-year starter.

Lorenzen’s career statistics featured 862 completions in 1,514 pass attempts (56.9 percent) for 10,354 yards and 78 touchdowns. An adept scrambler when necessary, he also ran for 12 touchdowns and accounted for 90 total TDs as a Wildcat. At the completion of his collegiate career, he had broken six NCAA records, four SEC records and 11 UK records.

Lorenzen was a member of the New York Giants from 2004-07. He was a member of the Giants team that defeated the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XLII on Feb. 3, 2008.

Following his NFL career, Lorenzen returned to Kentucky. He was elected to the UK Athletics Hall of Fame in 2015. He had two children, daughter Taylar and son Tayden.



## SHELBY HILTON

The UK gymnastics family mourned a special member this spring, as Shelby Hilton died after fighting a courageous four-year battle with cancer at the age of 25.

Hilton was a four-year letterwinner for the Wildcats from 2012-15. She earned competition slots as a freshman on UK’s nationally ranked team, participating in the vault and floor exercise. As her career progressed, the versatile athlete added the balance beam and uneven bars to her repertoire. She posted career highs of 9.85 on the vault, 9.925 on floor, 9.75 on the beam and 9.825 on bars.

Hilton discovered her illness when she took a frightful fall on a tumbling run during a meet at Florida on Feb. 27, 2015. She was rushed to the hospital for testing on her head and neck, but had avoided the injuries that were feared. However, an MRI revealed something else – medulloblastoma, a form of pediatric brain cancer that occurs rarely in adults.

Hilton immediately began a medical regimen, and alongside four years of treatments, continued to compete in life as she had in gymnastics. She returned to UK, twice earning a place on the Southeastern Conference Academic Honor Roll. While completing her degree in communication, she received the Mike Lyden Courage Award at the 2016 UK Athletics CATSPY Awards. Following graduation, she landed a position as a sales representative in her native Florida.



## DALE BARNSTABLE

Dale Barnstable, a two-time Kentucky men’s basketball national champion, died in January.

He was 93 years old. Barnstable, a World War II veteran, was a key member of the 1948 and 1949 NCAA title teams, UK’s first championships. He played four seasons (1947-50) under legendary head coach Adolph Rupp.

A native of Antioch, Illinois, Barnstable scored 635 points in his career and appeared in 129 games. He was the sixth man on Kentucky’s “Fabulous Five” team in 1948 and moved into the starting lineup for the 1949 championship. UK won the Southeastern Conference regular-season and tournament titles in all four seasons with Barnstable on the squad.

Barnstable was an alternate on the 1948 Olympic gold-medal team coached by Rupp. He was an All-SEC Third Team selection by the AP in 1949 and also played on the UK golf and track and field teams. Barnstable is survived by his wife, Jerri; daughters Priscilla “Cyb” and Patricia Barnstable and Barbara Edelman; son, Dale Barnstable Jr.; and stepdaughter, Sherre Henne.



# RISING TO THE FISCAL CHALLENGE

To Mitch Barnhart and UK Athletics, stewardship means more than simply spending responsibly. It also means meaningfully contributing to the mission of the university the athletics department proudly represents.

UK Athletics will again operate with a balanced budget in the 2019-20 fiscal year, projecting matching revenues and expenses of \$156.5 million. Even with responsible spending, the realities of competing at the highest level of college athletics dictate an increase of approximately \$8.8 million from last year with rising expenses due to increasing salary, scholarship and facility-related costs offset by K Fund donations, ticket sales and contractual rights.

And that's where true stewardship comes in. UK Athletics believes wholeheartedly in the transformational power of the college athletics experience for student-athletes, which is why the department invests upwards of \$80,000 per student-athlete annually to support the hundreds of Wildcats who wear Blue and White. UK Athletics also believes wholeheartedly in the academic mission of the University of Kentucky, as well as the

immeasurable good UK does for the Commonwealth.

For that reason, UK Athletics remains firm in its commitment to partnership with the university it represents. The athletics department lives out that spirit of partnership by operating self-sufficiently and with the help of no state or university funds, even eliminating the athletics fee charged to students as part of tuition. UK Athletics also pays the full in-state and out-of-state tuition rates for all 330 off its scholarships for student-athletes, managers and interns.

UK Athletics also will directly transfer more than \$8 million directly to the university in 2019-20, a total that includes support for the UK Marching Band, funding for university scholarships and other fees. The largest and most notable portion of that total is the \$3.7 million UK Athletics contributes annually to the debt service for the Don & Cathy Jacobs Science Building on campus. Nearly two-thirds of the more than \$100 million state-of-the-art facility will be funded by UK Athletics in an unprecedented instance of an athletics department and a university working hand-in-hand to enrich the lives of students.

