

## Coach Calipari Speaks At Big Blue Madness, October 14, 2011

WOW! WHAT AN INCREDIBLE NIGHT TO CELEBRATE THE THINGS THAT MAKE OUR PROGRAM GREAT, THAT MAKE THE COMMONWEALTH'S TEAM THE BEST PROGRAM IN THE COUNTRY.

TO THE THOUSANDS HERE IN RUPP ARENA, TO THE MILLIONS WATCHING AT HOME, ACROSS THE STATE, COUNTRY AND GLOBE – TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE BIG BLUE NATION – MY FAMILY AND I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR AN INCREDIBLE TWO YEARS. YOU HAVE MADE US A PART OF YOUR FAMILY AND ELLEN AND I APPRECIATE IT.

ON THIS NIGHT, TWO YEARS AGO, MILLIONS ACROSS THE COLLEGE BASKETBALL WORLD WATCHED THE REBIRTH OF KENTUCKY BASKETBALL. WE RECALLED THE STORIED EXCELLENCE OF OUR PROGRAM, AS WE TURNED THE PAGE FROM ANTICIPATION TO PREPARATION.

WE PAID TRIBUTE TO COACHES LIKE RUPP, HALL AND SMITH. WE HONORED LEGENDS LIKE KEIGHTLEY AND CAWOOD.

WE REFLECTED ON OUR REVERED TEAMS WE TELL OUR CHILDREN AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN ABOUT. RUPP'S RUNTS, THE FAB FIVE, THE UNFORGETTABLES AND THE COMEBACK CATS.

A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO YOU CAMPED OUT, TO CAMP OUT, FOR BIG BLUE MADNESS. WHEN WE SAID YOU COULDN'T LINE UP BY MEMORIAL UNTIL A CERTAIN DAY, YOU LINED UP ACROSS THE STREET! HAVE I TOLD YOU THAT YOU PEOPLE ARE CRAZY? AND HOW MUCH I LOVE IT!

TWO YEARS AGO, I SHARED A VISION WITH YOU. THAT NIGHT, WE STOOD TOGETHER UNDER THE RAFTERS OF THIS HALLOWED ARENA AND IN ONE LOUD AND UNITED VOICE PROCLAIMED THAT WE WOULD ONCE AGAIN ACHIEVE THE UNIMAGINABLE FOR THIS PROGRAM.

THAT NIGHT, I SAID WE WOULD ...

... BE A PROGRAM BUILT ON A FOUNDATION OF INTEGRITY AND FUELED BY CLASS, THE GOLD STANDARD OF COLLEGE BASKETBALL ...

... I TOLD YOU WE WOULD BE A PLAYERS-FIRST PROGRAM, ONE WHERE KIDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY WOULD WANT TO PLAY BASKETBALL, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF BANNERS, RINGS AND TROPHIES, BUT BECAUSE THIS IS A PLACE WHERE THEIR DREAMS BECOME REALITIES ...

... I TOLD YOU MY STAFF AND I WOULD RECRUIT THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST PLAYERS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY AND BRING THEM TO A PROGRAM COMMITTED TO A HIGH STANDARD OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND GRADUATE OUR PLAYERS ...

... I STOOD ON THIS STAGE AND TOLD NEARLY 25,000 PEOPLE IN THIS ARENA AND COUNTLESS MILLIONS ACROSS THE WORLD THAT WE WOULD MAKE THIS THE COMMONWEALTH'S TEAM AND THAT YOU WOULD BE PROUD TO WEAR BLUE AND CHEER FOR YOUR TEAM ...

... HAVE WE DONE THAT? ...

PAUSE ...

BUT IT HASN'T BEEN EASY. WE HAVE FACED OUR SHARE OF CHALLENGES. WE HAVE HAD SOME CLOSE CALLS, SOME HEARTBREAKING MOMENTS. EACH WAS AN INCREDIBLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY THAT STRENGTHENED OUR PROGRAM AND HELPED US GROW AS A TEAM.

IN OUR FIRST YEAR, WE WON 35 GAMES, GRABBED THE NUMBER 1 RANKING AND MADE THE ELITE EIGHT. A LITTLE SHORT OF OUR GOAL. WE BECAME THE FIRST PROGRAM TO PASS THE 2,000-WIN MARK AND CONTINUED OUR REIGN AS THE WINNINGEST PROGRAM IN COLLEGE BASKETBALL.

IN OUR SECOND YEAR, WE RETURNED TO THE FINAL FOUR FOR THE 14TH TIME IN OUR PROGRAM'S ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORY. A LITTLE SHORT OF OUR GOAL.

DURING THOSE TWO YEARS WE WON OUR 44TH SEC CHAMPIONSHIP AND CLINCHED OUR 26TH AND 27TH SEC TOURNAMENT TITLES.

NONE OF IT WAS POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE PLAYERS WHO MAKE THIS PROGRAM. AS A PLAYERS-FIRST PROGRAM, WE ARE HERE TO HELP THEM REACH THEIR DREAMS.

TWO YEARS AGO OUR PLAYERS BROKE A BARRIER WHEN FIVE WERE DRAFTED IN THE FIRST ROUND OF THE 2010 NBA DRAFT. IT HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE AND MAY NEVER BE DONE AGAIN, UNLESS OF COURSE WE DO IT!

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ANOTHER FOUR OF THEM WERE SELECTED IN THIS JUNE'S DRAFT.

THIS IS ALSO ABOUT SEEING ALL OF OUR SENIORS OVER OUR LAST TWO YEARS WALK ACROSS THAT STAGE WITH A DIPLOMA IN THEIR HANDS. THIS IS ABOUT WAYNE TURNER RETURNING TO SCHOOL TO GET HIS DEGREE. THIS IS ABOUT MARK KREBS GOING ON TO WRITE A BOOK AND STARTING A TV CAREER. THIS IS ABOUT SCOTT PADGETT AND TONY DELK EARNING ASSISTANT COACHING JOBS.

THESE PLAYERS ARE HERE TO PREPARE FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES. THAT'S WHY WE POSTED A TEAM GPA OF OVER 3.0 LAST SEASON. THAT'S WHY OUR TEAM WAS FIRST IN THE SEC WITH AN APR OF 974.

THIS IS ABOUT RECONNECTING WITH PAST PLAYERS WHO HAVE LEFT OUR CAMPUS AND ACHIEVED EXCELLENCE. THIS IS ABOUT KEITH BOGANS, JODIE MEEKS, NAZR MOHAMMED, RAJON RONDO, CHUCK HAYES AND TAYSHAUN PRINCE, AND EVERYONE ELSE THAT'S PUT ON THAT KENTUCKY UNIFORM.

IT'S ABOUT OUR PLAYERS, PAST AND CURRENT, MAKING THE NEXT STEP IN THEIR LIVES. WE'RE STILL HERE TO SERVE THESE PLAYERS AND CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR THEM TO SUCCEED.

BUT, AS I SAID TWO YEARS AGO, THIS PROGRAM ISN'T FOR EVERYONE.

BEING A KENTUCKY PLAYER ISN'T EASY. YOU'RE HELD TO A HIGHER STANDARD BOTH ON AND OFF THE COURT. YOU'VE GOT TO WANT THIS. WE CHOOSE STUDENT-ATHLETES WHO BREATHE THEIR DREAM, WHO WAKE UP EVERY DAY WITH THE FIRE TO WORK HARDER AND LONGER THAN THEY DID THE DAY BEFORE, TO REALIZE THEIR WILDEST ASPIRATIONS.

THEY HAVE TO BE THEIR BROTHER'S KEEPER. THEY'VE GOT TO BE BUILT FOR THIS. THEY'VE GOT TO HAVE A MENTAL TOUGHNESS, A BURNING DESIRE, A DRIVE THAT'S BEYOND THE NORM. YOU HAVE TO BE UNSELFISH. WE CALL IT BEING HUNGRY AND HUMBLE. CAN YOU BE THE TEAMMATE YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH? YOU HAVE TO BE TO PLAY HERE.

WE DO MORE THAN RECRUIT TALENT. WE RECRUIT CHARACTER. WE WANT GOOD PEOPLE.

WHY HAVE WE HAD THE NUMBER 1 RECRUITING CLASS THREE STRAIGHT YEARS? BECAUSE OF RESULTS.

YEAH, THEY LOVE OUR FACILITIES, THE SEC, THE BEST LEAGUE IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS, THE AURA OF KENTUCKY BASKETBALL AND RUPP ARENA, AND YOU, THE GREATEST FANS IN THE COUNTRY. BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT. THEY ARE SEEING THESE YOUNG MEN IN OUR PROGRAM DEVELOPING ON AND OFF THE COURT, TO GO ON TO LEAD BETTER LIVES.

WE TALK ABOUT THE KENTUCKY EFFECT, THAT IS THE KENTUCKY EFFECT, HAVING HIGH ASPIRATIONS AND STANDARDS IN EVERYTHING YOU DO. THE KENTUCKY EFFECT IS ABOUT BEING THE BEST IN ALL AREAS. IT IS PUSHING AND PROMOTING OUR PLAYERS AND PUTTING THEM IN THE BEST POSITION TO REACH THEIR DREAMS. THEY WILL IN TURN HELP US CREATE THE LIFELONG MEMORIES AND LIFT THE BANNERS THAT WE ALL YEARN FOR.

TONIGHT, I CHALLENGE THIS TEAM AND THE BIG BLUE NATION WITH THIS: WHAT'S NEXT?

TONIGHT, WE BEGIN TO WRITE THE NEXT CHAPTER. TONIGHT, WE FEEL THE KENTUCKY EFFECT IN FULL FORCE AS WE, ONCE AGAIN, REDEFINE COLLEGE BASKETBALL.

MY CHALLENGE TO THIS PROGRAM, ITS FANS, THESE PLAYERS AND THIS COACHING STAFF IS TO EMBRACE THE BELIEF AND HAVE AN ATTITUDE THAT OUR POTENTIAL IS LIMITLESS, WE SEE NO PLATEAUS AND WE SEE NO STOPPING POINTS. LET'S PERSIST BEYOND WHAT IS AND CREATE WHAT WAS NEVER BEFORE IMAGINED.

WE DO MORE THAN MOVE THE NEEDLE, WE ARE THE NEEDLE. ... WE ARE U K.

GOING FORWARD, THE COMPETITION WILL BE AS FIERCE AS EVER. WE WILL BE THE SUPER BOWL FOR EVERY TEAM. AND FOR SOME, WE WILL BE THEIR SEASON.

NOW OUR CHALLENGE. WE NEED TO COME TOGETHER AS A TEAM IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, AND BECOME THE BEST DEFENSIVE TEAM IN THE COUNTRY. A GREAT REBOUNDING AND SHOT-BLOCKING TEAM, AND THROUGH THE DRIBBLE DRIVE MOTION OFFENSE WE WANT TO ATTACK, ATTACK, ATTACK.

WE ARE STILL AIMING FOR THE MOUNTAINTOP. BUT JUST LIKE EVERY TEAM WE'VE HAD HERE, WE'RE STARTING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE MOUNTAIN WITH A NEW TEAM AND A LOT OF YOUNG PLAYERS. ONCE AGAIN, IT IS ABOUT BECOMING ONE UNIT WITH A SINGLE HEARTBEAT, A SINGLE CAUSE AND A UNIFIED LOVE SHARED AMONG TEAMMATES, COACHES, STAFF AND THE GREATEST FANS IN THE WORLD, THE BIG BLUE NATION. ...

... BEFORE I FINISH, BEFORE WE GET A GLIMPSE OF OUR PLAYERS AND WHAT IS IN STORE FOR OUR FANS THIS SEASON,

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THERE IS ONE MORE THING. WE TALKED ABOUT HANGING BANNERS, SO LET'S HANG THIS ONE TONIGHT. LET'S HANG IT AS A SYMBOL OF WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED AND THE STANDARD WE HOLD OURSELVES TO. WE ARE U K. THANK YOU!