

Great Big Expectations

Lexington does October well. In addition to crisp autumn weather, fall weddings, and fun local festivals, it is an unparalleled month for sports fans in the Bluegrass. Keeneland's Fall Meet kicks off against the lush backdrop of brilliant fall foliage. UK football fans greet the chill in the air with proclamations that bourbon season is upon us, as is the wonderful inter-league rivalry among



SEC teams. And then, there is the most magical event of all: The Trifecta Weekend. Three legendary days, requiring elaborate plans, costume changes, and bounded only by physical exhaustion and financial limitations, in which we are treated to an SEC football game, horseracing, and our very first glimpse at the upcoming UK basketball team. At least during those three incredible days, blue goes very well with yellow and orange.

"part Bono at a U2 concert and part President Barack Obama at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver." We even received the media's projection as the 2009 Preseason SEC Champs. And yet, even with the media frenzy, and the attention, and the accolades, we want more. A friend of mine, upon attending her first Big Blue Madness, noted: "I thought it was going to be different — or maybe even a little better."

As Kentucky fans, we have big expectations. The easiest way to put the shame of the Gillispie era behind us is to win big. We adore the adulation, but we want results. We're elated that both a returning player (Preseason All-SEC First Team member Patrick Patterson) and a new one (All-SEC Second Team member and CBSsports.com's Top Point Guard and Preseason National Player of the Year John Wall) are racking up speculative awards. Those votes of confidence are lovely, but we want something tangible. Something we can hang from the rafters. To paraphrase Coach Rupp, unless we win, basketball means entirely nothing. We want another championship win, and we want to continue Coach Calipari's amazing recruiting streak.

As fans, we're excited at the prospect of a return to our former greatness. Friday night, Rupp Arena was filled with signs and t-shirts bearing an audacious and overconfident number eight, indicating that this could be the year of our eighth National Championship. While the Coach's Daughter

tion to the program; we need to resist the urge to take every little setback as an imminent sign of failure. If our much-lauded team stumbles in a few games, we need to remember that team-building is a process.

Sports

by Heather C. Watson

Another obligation of UK fandom is that we must reacquaint ourselves with the rules. We all know the rules of the game; we should become equally well-versed in the NCAA regulations governing our institution. There has already been some controversy as to whether we violated regulations pertaining to prospective student-athletes in chanting the names of these blue-chip recruits during Big Blue Madness against the express warning from the NCAA. While we most likely have the duty to self-report this as a minor infraction, it is certainly an honest mistake, one of enthusiasm and hope. It is a mistake, nonetheless. We should learn how to avoid similar mistakes in the future, avoid internet contact (via Facebook, MySpace and Twitter) with recruits, and ensure that Kentucky's Athletic Department is considered a clean one.

As a rebuilding program with a new coach, we will certainly be under the microscope in the upcoming year. Just as we are receiving extensive coverage for our amazing roster, any poten-

"Yesterday's morning practice saw us miss 72 layups and shoot 30% from 3-pt. Other than that we're ok. Boy, do we have a long way to go!"
— Coach Calipari post on Twitter, Sunday Oct 18

With the Year's Greatest Weekend still fresh in our memories, many of us are still reveling in its hat trick of sporty goodness. Despite a cold and rainy start, Sunday provided a sunny day for racing. Saturday brought a huge road victory in the always-dangerous SEC West territory, our first win over Auburn in over 40 years. But the real highlight — the event that put Lexington in the national sports spotlight — was Big Blue Madness. Even if it wasn't held in Commonwealth Stadium, it received a ton of attention. An up and coming rapper, Lil Wayne protégé Drake, provided the musical entertainment and ensured our spot on MTV. ESPN's Andy Katz characterized the show as

in me naturally shies away from the bad juju that often accompanies such displays, the amazing hubris of pinning such hopes on unproven players seems even dangerous. We have some amazing players, but by all accounts, our outside shooting game still isn't there. On Sunday, Coach Calipari noted via Twitter that "Yesterday's morning practice saw us miss 72 layups and shoot 30% from 3-pt. Other than that we're ok. Boy, do we have a long way to go!" Well said, Coach. We simply aren't there yet. We should be a great team by the time conference play rolls around, but we should expect some stumbling blocks along the way. Rebuilding a program takes time. As fans, we have an obliga-

tial violation will undergo similar scrutiny. As fans, we should enjoy the madness of a talented, highly-publicized roster, but we must remember that the ultimate goal is a basketball program that is both successful and well-run. ■

The University of Kentucky Athletic Office posts compliance guidelines for fans at ukathletics.com/athletic-dept/compliance.html.

Ace Writer Heather C. Watson lives in Lexington with her fiancé, Bob, and their Black Lab, Max. Her father and grandfather were both basketball coaches. Follow her on Twitter at @heathercw and read her posts at aceweekly.com

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