

University Athletics Committee Report, February 18, 2021

- As we mentioned in our last meeting in December, from an operational standpoint, we are in the midst of our most challenging situation ever. Including spring football practice, all 22 of our sports teams will be in action during the remainder of the school year, which will put an unprecedented demand on our facilities and staff.
- However, this is also a very exciting time – we all got into this because we enjoy college athletics and supporting our athletes. We have an opportunity to do that at a higher level than ever before.
- Dealing with Covid-19 continues to have a vital role in what we are doing. We are implementing our health protocols, and updating as needed, with guidelines set forth by the NCAA, Southeastern Conference, University of Kentucky, and federal and local authorities.
 - The efforts of our medical team, athletics trainers and cleaning staff are greatly appreciated.
 - UK Athletics has played a role in assisting the campus and community through the use of the Kroger Field parking lots for COVID testing and vaccinations, as well as the use of the Nutter Field House as a temporary hospital last spring.

Fall Sports Roundup

- Since we were last together in December, the **football** team posted our third straight bowl win with a victory at the Gator Bowl. Coach Stoops became the first coach in school history to take the Wildcats to five straight bowl games.
 - Several players received All-America or All-SEC recognition and offensive lineman Kenneth Horsey was named the Mayo Clinic “Comeback Player of the Year” from his recovery from heart surgery a couple of years ago.
 - There has been a lot of good news regarding our roster. We had players who could have declared for the NFL Draft who have decided to come back for another year. Several seniors have decided to take advantage of the NCAA rule allowing an extra year of eligibility and will be with us for another season. We had

another productive recruiting period and also have accepted some transfer players who will help us when they become eligible to play.

- The **volleyball** team has resumed competition, has improved its record to 12-0 and ranked No. 3 in the nation.
- **Men's soccer** is 6-1 and will begin its conference schedule in March.
- **Women's soccer** played its SEC schedule in the fall and will play a few matches this spring.
- **Men's and women's cross-country** teams are awaiting the team and individual selections for the NCAA Championships in March.

Winter Sports Roundup

- Our winter sports teams are in the thick of their schedules.
 - Our **men's basketball** team has not had the season that many of us have hoped for. They have had to deal with a number of challenges – most notably the absence of key players for extended periods of time, circumstances that hindered the development of a very inexperienced team, and one of the most difficult schedules in the country – and they have continued to give great effort.
 - Since we were last together, we removed the interim tag from Kyra Elzy and officially named her head coach of **women's basketball**. As this report was written, her team has a 14-5 record and ranked No. 17 in the country.
 - The **women's swimming and diving** team is ranked No. 3, the highest ranking in school history. The team has been led by Riley Gaines, who has broken three school records, and the team has 21 individual events and relays ranked in the nation's top 25. The SEC women's championships are taking place this week.
 - The **men's swimming and diving** team have 16 individual times in the nation's top 50 so far. The SEC men's championships are next week.
 - The No. 2-ranked **rifle** team is 13-1 and won a share of the Great American Rifle Conference with Saturday's win over West

Virginia. They are preparing for the upcoming conference and NCAA championships. Mary Tucker leads the nation in shooting average and Will Shaner is fourth.

- After graduating a number of veterans from last season, the young **gymnastics** team still has been able to maintain a No. 15 national ranking and are doing well in the ultra-competitive SEC with a 3-1 league record.
- The **women's indoor track** team is ranked No. 13 nationally and has been led by sprinter Abby Steiner, who has the nation's leading time in the 200 meters and already has earned a qualifying time for the U.S. Olympic trials. The **men's indoor track** team is No. 16 in the country. Those teams have completed the regular season and are preparing for the SEC and NCAA championships.

Spring Sports Roundup

- Our **men's and women's golf, men's and women's tennis, softball** and **baseball teams** have returned to action or will do so soon.
 - Both of the tennis teams are off to great starts. The men's team is 10-1, with its only loss of the season a 4-3 decision against No. 1 USC. In that match, UK's Liam Draxl defeated the No. 1-ranked player in the nation. As this was written, the team was ranked No. 19 and is likely to move up this week.
 - The women's team is 8-0 heading into SEC play.
- It's worth noting that a number of our athletes currently competing are on the watch lists for national awards or have been chosen preseason All-America or all-conference in their sports.

Off the Field

- In January, Asia Seidt was one of the recipients of the NCAA Top 10 award, which is given across all athletes in all divisions, for her outstanding combination of academic, athletic and leadership achievements. Previously, she was named the NCAA Woman of the Year in November.

- Despite the challenges of a hybrid system of in-person and online classes, UK Athletics continues to thrive academically. We had a number of noteworthy achievements from the fall semester which we reviewed during the December meeting.

Remembering Ben Jordan

- Ben Jordan, a baseball player who also had played a season with the basketball team, died on January 11.
 - “Unfortunately, our new year began with grief because of the loss of one of our baseball players, Ben Jordan,” UK Athletics Director Mitch Barnhart said. “Ben loved and cherished being a Wildcat. He had a servant’s heart and answered the call whenever asked, including putting his promising baseball career on hold to help with the basketball team when it needed him last season. I remember meeting Ben on his official visit to campus and being so impressed with his passion for this state and the University of Kentucky. Certainly, we will honor Ben’s memory as we move forward with the upcoming season.”

Looking Ahead

- February is the time that we begin planning for the next school year. We have all been through an unprecedented time and as we begin planning for 2021-22, Mr. Barnhart has challenged our staff and our coaches to look at their roles in light of the past year and ask these questions:
 - What do we know?
 - What don’t we know?
 - What do we think we know?
 - What have we learned?
 - How are we going to adapt?