

Athletics Report for Board of Trustees Meeting, February 22, 2024

Fall Sports Roundup

- The **volleyball** team kept rolling on, posting its seventh straight SEC championship with a 17-1 league record.
 - The Wildcats advanced to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament and had an overall record of 21-8.
 - Reagan Rutherford and Emma Grome were named All-America. Craig Skinner was voted SEC Co-Coach of the Year.

- The **football** team accomplished multiple milestones.
 - The Wildcats finished the regular season with a win at No. 9-ranked Louisville to retain possession of the Governor's Cup. UK was named National Team of the Week for that victory.
 - This was the fourth straight season that we have defeated at least two ranked opponents, the longest streak in school history.
 - Coach Mark Stoops now has 13 wins against ranked opponents, more than any coach in school history.
 - Coach Stoops also improved his UK record for total victories to 73. He has completed 11 seasons here and is sixth in the nation in longevity among current coaches in the NCAA Bowl Subdivision.
 - Kentucky extended its bowl streak to eight consecutive seasons by playing in the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl. It's worth noting that eight straight bowls is the eighth-longest active streak in the nation among the 133 Bowl Subdivision teams.
 - Four Wildcats earned All-America and seven were named All-SEC. All but one of those players return for next season.
 - Speaking of next season, spring practice begins in March. We will have the spring game in April.
 - The end of the 2023 season also closed the football career of our own Wilbur Hackett, one of the pioneers of integration of SEC football and the first African-American team captain in any sport in SEC history. Wilbur had a long and successful run as an SEC game official, on the field and in the replay booth. Our department congratulates him as he transitions from official to full-time fan.

- **Men's soccer** went undefeated in the last seven regular-season games to earn a spot in the NCAA Tournament.
 - UK defeated James Madison in the opening round of the tourney.
 - Max Miller was named All-Southeast Region and all-conference.
- **Women's soccer** made significant progress in its second season under head coach Troy Fabiano. The Wildcats had a 9-4 record with six ties.
 - Jordyn Rhodes set the school record for goals scored and was named first-team All-SEC while Grace Phillpotts was second-team All-SEC.

Winter Sports Roundup

- Our winter sports are in the thick of their schedules.
 - **Rifle** has the conference and NCAA championships in the coming weeks. UK will be the No. 4 seed in the NCAA event.
 - **Gymnastics** is in the midst of an outstanding season. Coach Tim Garrison's Wildcats rank sixth in the nation, are 7-2 overall and tied for first in the SEC with a 4-1 league mark.
 - **Men's and women's swimming** are at the SEC championships this week.
 - Our **men's and women's track teams** begin the SEC Indoor Championships on Friday, with the NCAA championships scheduled in two weeks. The UK men are ranked No. 11 in the nation.
 - Going into last night's game at LSU, **men's basketball** was 18-7 overall and 8-4 in the SEC. The Wildcats, ranked No. 17 in the nation, have battled injuries all season and are trying to get the full roster back together heading into the stretch run.
 - **Women's basketball** is coming off a win over Florida as the team enters tonight's game at Mississippi State.

Spring Sports Roundup

- Our spring sports have begun their regular-season action. Some of the highlights ...
 - **Women's golf** is coming off a second-place finish at its most recent tournament. Two Wildcats, Jensen Castle and Laney

Frye, have qualified for the prestigious Augusta National Women's Amateur, which will be played in April.

- **Men's golf** is showing progress under new coach Gator Todd and looking to continue that trend going into the SEC Tournament in April.
 - **Men's tennis** is ranked No. 11 in the nation. They're off to another good start with a 7-2 record going into yesterday's matches, including wins over a couple of top-10 teams, Virginia and Harvard.
 - Under the guidance of new coach Shelly Jaudon, the **women's tennis** team is 6-3 on the season.
 - Sparked by two wins over No. 3-ranked Stanford, **Softball** won its season-opening tournament. Having played a national schedule the first two weeks, the Wildcats have a 6-2 record and are ranked No. 15.
 - **Baseball** is 4-0 and swept its opening weekend with three wins over South Carolina Upstate, a team that is the preseason favorite to win the Big South Conference. The Wildcats have jumped into the top-25 rankings.
 - Our newest team, **STUNT**, is now in its third season and has a 4-2 record. STUNT has been classified as an emerging sport by the NCAA, the next step to becoming a fully sanctioned sport. In April, UK will host a national championship event for the Division I schools that play STUNT.
- All totaled, seven of our winter and spring sports are currently ranked in the top 25 in the nation.

Academics

- In November, it was announced that UK student-athletes tied the school record in the NCAA Graduation Success Rate. UK has broken or tied the GSR school record every year since the NCAA began measuring that statistic in 2005. This year's score of 92 percent is above the national average.
- Including the 2023 December commencement and last spring's graduation, a school-record 167 Wildcat student-athletes earned degrees and certifications during the 2023 calendar year. The total of 167 included 21 master's degrees.

- UK Athletics combined for a composite GPA of 3.335 in the fall semester.
That continued our streak of 23 consecutive semesters with a department-wide GPA of 3.0 or higher. 449 Wildcats achieved a GPA of 3.0 or higher for the fall semester, including 140 Cats who reached 4.0 for the semester.
- The SEC Fall Sports Academic Honor Roll has been announced. We had 84 student-athletes represented.

More Off-the-Field News

- In addition to our performance in academics, a large part of our Student-Athlete Experience Division – which we call “The Kentucky Road” – involves career preparation.
 - During the last month, we have had educational events for financial literacy, resume preparation, and interview preparation and practice.
 - Earlier this month, we had the annual “Career Combine,” as 169 student-athletes met with 40 employers and 14 campus academic graduate programs to explore post-undergraduate opportunities.
 - We also have initiated the “Pro Career Institute,” a sponsored program matching student-athletes with internship opportunities both externally in the public and internally with UK Athletics. 22 student-athletes have participated over the last three semesters.
- Last week, we inducted 15 student-athletes into the Frank G. Ham Society of Character. To be inducted, a student-athlete must be a junior or higher in academic standing and show an extraordinary commitment to academic excellence, athletic participation, personal development, career preparation and serving as a role model.
- Our student-athletes continue to be active in the community. J.J. Weaver of football, Reagan Rutherford of volleyball and Tallulah Miller of women’s soccer were named to the SEC Community Service Teams for their sports.
 - It’s also worth noting that Miller has been elected vice-chair of the SEC Student-Athlete Advisory Committee for 2024 and that

Eli Cox from football is chair of the SEC Leadership Council for a second year.

- During the fall, we celebrated Hall of Fame Weekend, recognizing the 2023 class of the UK Athletics Hall of Fame, featuring Robin Ewing-Bodem of gymnastics, Chris Chenault of football, Danielle Galyer Day from swimming, Dick Parsons of baseball and basketball, Rajon Rondo of basketball and Ryan Strieby of baseball.
- In January, we had a reunion for the 40th anniversary of the 1984 men's basketball Final Four team. The team had not been together in quite awhile, so it was a joy to bring them back to relive their successes. We'll have more on that later in this report.
- Also in January, it was announced that Tim Couch has been elected to the College Football Hall of Fame. That is a huge honor. We've had a news conference with Tim, we will honor him at a game during the season, and we will be there in December when he is officially inducted into Hall of Fame.

Facility Updates

- We have opened the new Jim Green Track and Field Center, a facility that keeps us on the cutting edge for the training of our nationally competitive track and field teams. The dedication ceremony in December was a lot of fun. A large contingent of Jim's teammates, classmates, friends and family turned out for the event, which was capped by a special surprise – the Green family presented a donation to UK Athletics.
 - Joe and Ambassador Kelly Craft, who gave the founding gift for the facility, were in attendance. The Ambassador and Jim Green took the official first lap on the track.
 - In addition to showing off the building, we also unveiled a statue of Jim that graces the entrance of the facility.
 - We have a video commemorating the event, which will be shown to the Athletics Committee.
- The Memorial Coliseum renovation continues. Our goal is to have the competition spaces ready in August when volleyball season begins,

followed by women's basketball, gymnastics and STUNT as the school year continues. There will be ongoing construction of additional spaces, with the goal of full completion in 2025.

- While we're discussing the renovation of Memorial, we want to thank the folks at Rupp Arena, Transylvania University, Georgetown College and Frederick Douglass High School for hosting our home events this year.

Philanthropy

- Later in the meetings, this committee and the Board of Trustees will be asked to approve some major philanthropic gifts that we want to recognize.
 - A gift commitment of \$10 million from L.T. Gibson.
 - A gift commitment of \$8 million from Joe and Kelly Craft.
 - In addition, a highlight of the 1984 basketball reunion was the announcement of a \$1 million gift commitment from Jim Master, a player on the '84 team. The gift will be split evenly between Athletics and the Gatton College of Business and Economics.

Remembering Chuck Stivers and Bettie Lou Evans

- Since we last met in September, we need to acknowledge the passing of two long-time staff members – Chuck Stivers and Bettie Lou Evans.
 - Chuck was a member of the grounds crew for 22 years before his retirement. He was beloved by our outdoor sports teams and his co-workers on the grounds crew for his sense of humor and for his dedication for doing whatever it took to get the job done.
 - Bettie Lou was our women's golf coach and director of golf operations for nearly 40 years. She played a tremendous role in the development of golf, not only at UK but throughout the state. Her care for her student-athletes was in great evidence when she was inducted into the UK Athletics Hall of Fame and so many of her former players came out to support and congratulate her.

Looking Ahead

- The Big Ten Conference and Southeastern Conference has announced the formation of a joint advisory group of university presidents, chancellors, and athletics directors to address the

significant challenges facing college athletics and the opportunities for betterment of the student-athlete experience.

- These challenges, including but not limited to recent court decisions, pending litigation, a patchwork of state laws, and complex governance proposals, compel the two conferences to take a leadership role in developing solutions for a sustainable future of college sports.
- The advisory group will engage with other constituencies as necessary, including consultation with student-athletes and other key leadership groups from within both conferences.
- As noted above, we are in the midst of numerous uncertainties in college athletics, but we will keep sight of our primary goals – education and competition, putting diplomas in hands and championship rings on fingers.