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BOSTON BOUND

- ▼ *Players, fans react to coach's resignation, see page 5.*
- ▼ *Coaching search could center around Georgia's Tubby Smith, see page 4.*
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WeD

May 7, 1997

Big Blue Adieu

By Rob Herbst
and Jay G. Tate
Sports Editors

In the end, after years of flirtation with the fame and fortune of the NBA, Rick Pitino left UK for the same reasons that initially brought him to the beleaguered Wildcat program in 1989.

In his last appearance as the modern architect of the UK program yesterday, Pitino exited Memorial Coliseum under the same circumstances which welcomed him to the Bluegrass eight years ago.

"I came to the understanding that I couldn't and shouldn't turn down this opportunity because it's the same one I had eight years ago," Pitino said of his choice to accept a head coaching offer from the NBA's Boston Celtics. "I love challenges — that's what brought me here to begin with."

Though the Celtics are free of the NCAA scrutiny that awaited Pitino when he arrived in Lexington, the challenge in Boston will be of similar proportions. The once-proud Celtic franchise, which boasts a record 16 NBA titles, has run aground in recent years. Boston's 1996-97 record of 15-67 was the team's worst in its storied history and sent head coach M.L. Carr back to the front office.

"He has a great opportunity in Boston," UK center Nazr Mohammed said. "He really wanted to do that."

Pitino said he made his decision before he went to bed Monday night after several discussions with close friends who offered their own insights into the situation. With a flurry of contradictory advice, all of which, Pitino said, was thoroughly considered, the decision to leave was not a simple one.

"I waffled back and forth through the last 48 hours, contrary to Boston reports," Pitino said. "Before I could do anything, I had to meet the players, talk to them eyeball-to-eyeball and get their feelings behind it."

Also moving on with Pitino will be a significant portion of his UK staff. Among those making the trek to Beantown will be Winston Bennett, who served the program as both a player (1984-87) and as an assistant (1994-97). He looks at the NBA position as a stepping stone to his dreams.

"I had always said I wanted to be a head coach at the professional level," Bennett said. "This is going to look good on the resume."

As for resumes, perhaps senior guard Allen Edwards should make his objective to become a psychic. Edwards seemed to be ahead of the curve when it came to making predictions about Pitino's departure.

"I felt this was going to be the year he left," Edwards said. "And this was just the time for him to do it."

"He wanted that challenge again, just like when he came here (The players) saw how badly he wanted to do this and almost everyone wanted him to do it."

Details of the Celtics' contract will be disclosed tomorrow, though Pitino indicated the reported \$70 million figure was not necessarily the offer.

After yesterday's announcement, many across the Bluegrass wondered about the immediate future of the UK program. Though neither Pitino

See PITINO on 2

UK under siege in wake of Pitino move

King Arthur is gone, and mighty Camelot is under siege.

After five years of invincible bliss, Rick Pitino is no longer the figurehead of UK basketball. In the wake of his move to Boston, he has left this basketball power vulnerable.

Pitino admitted that he had become very much a part of the fabric of UK and the commonwealth.

Outside the stone gates of Administration Drive stand all the great programs Rick Pitino helped Kentucky surpass in eight sterling seasons.

And North Carolina stands ready with its sword drawn. Led by college basketball's winningest coach, Dean Smith, the Tar Heels are celebrating Pitino's departure by setting their sights on reclaiming the total victory crown Pitino took en route to a national championship. Smith and his 879 wins are giddy with

anticipation of a chance to pass UK before retirement.

Bobby Knight, with his three championship banners and a struggling beehive of a program at Indiana, waits outside Memorial Coliseum with a row of red and white chairs cocked into throwing position and a Starter sweater to welcome his new adversary.

The Hoosier state has been waiting for a coach who allows UK and IU become a true rivalry again.

Just 75 miles down Interstate 64, Denny Crum is quietly planning his cavalry assault on the castle of Rupp Arena this winter with a new-found optimism that was crushed by years of pressure

defense. The Louisville coach has been in Pitino's shadow so long, UK's misfortune may provide just enough sunlight to push his Cardinals from relative obscurity back

to national prominence.

Across the Mississippi River, Roy Williams can sit back for a few moments and ponder the possibility of being the basketball power of 1997.

With the core of a team that owned that brand last year and lost just three games all season, Kansas can cross off one contender for that pre-season recognition — not that having a number one tattooed on its chest has ever been a help at tournament time.

In the remote reaches of the Kingdom, too distant to participate in battle, young page Steve Lavin sits in Westwood admiring the 11 championship banners hanging at Pauley Pavilion.

Pitino had threatened to minimize Bruin tradition with consistent greatness, but UCLA can rest for now. Gone is the one demon who dared challenge the great John Wooden foundation. The Bruins can fortify their castle and await the next challenger to their greatness.

And while the Commonwealth of

Kentucky mourns the loss of its adored leader, C.M. Newton must pick the

Lancelot from a host of Monty Python Black Knights.

This loss is much more than just a flesh wound.

When Pitino chose Beantown over the Bluegrass, he ended a time when no mention of great college coaches could exclude UK's.

You cannot replace the charisma of a man who waltzes into an arena and commands respect with a stare, a man who forever changed the game of college basketball with his helter-skelter style of play and a man who could play the media like an Eastern Kentucky fiddle.

He took this University to three Final Fours in five years and was the most successful active coach in NCAA Tournament play until yesterday.

No one can blame the man for making the decision to leave. There are no professional sport franchises like the Boston Celtics.

The hallowed halls of the Boston Garden hosted some of the greatest National Basketball Association moments in history — from Michael Jordan's 63-point playoff performance to Larry Legend's mid-'80s title runs.

Pitino has a new arena — the Fleet Center — and a chance to put his stamp on a franchise with more history than the Discovery Channel.

This is a crossroads for the UK basketball program. If the job search takes too long, or the wrong candidate is named, UK could face a rebuilding project much like the one that lured Pitino from the New York Knicks in the first place.

"Kentucky will not lose a step," Pitino said. "If it does, then I haven't built a very strong house."

UK fans just better hope that when the Italian Stallion leaves horse country, the tailwind doesn't discover a house of cards. Aaron Sanderford is a political science junior; his views do not necessarily represent those of the Kentucky Kennel.



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KENTUCKY Kernel

New England state of mind will suit Celts

By Dan Shaughnessy
The Boston Globe

What's the Big Deal, you ask? Why is every local sports fan excited about the prospect of Rick Pitino coming to coach the Celts?

It's a big deal because Pitino is a dynamic, successful coach. He restores credibility to our most storied sports franchise.

Getting Pitino is also uplifting because he's one of us. Bill Parcells was a great coach, probably the best local sports leader since Red Auerbach.

But the Tuna never was a New England guy. Give Parcells a gas-guzzling car and a doughnut shop and he's happy anywhere. New England? New Jersey? Same difference.

Parcells hardly ever made it into the Hub. He didn't know the Hancock Tower from the Citgo sign. He thought the Swan Boats were yachts owned by a Cardinal defensive lineman.

Pitino is different. He went to college at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. He worked and lived in Boston and Providence. His son goes to school in Milton. Rick Pitino knows that the Globe is a broadsheet and the Herald a tabloid. He's a card-carrying member of Ted Nation. Even while coaching at Kentucky, he managed weekend getaways in Boston, trolling Newbury Street in search of fine dining and expensive suits.

Pitino played for Jack Leaman at UMass. He played in the backcourt with Billy Endicott and he knows that Endicott got beat up at the Boston Garden after playing in the old Tech Tourney. He knows that former Oriole Cy Young winner Mike Flanagan — another UMass contemporary — is from Manchester, N.H.

He knows that students used to line up outside Curry Hicks Cage to watch Dr. J. He knows that John Quincy Adams is a high-rise in Southwest, and he knows that Melville is a low-rise. He remembers when you could buy a pitcher of beer at the Blue Wall.

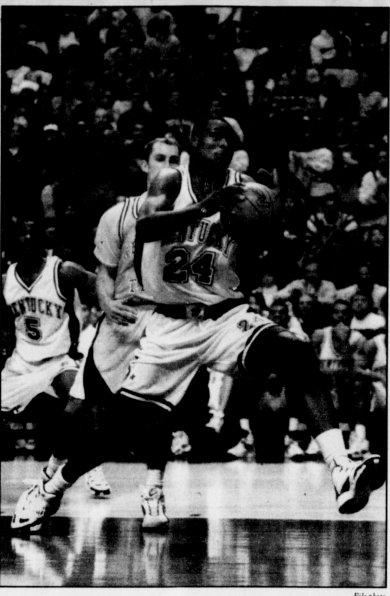
He knows that Case Gym is upstairs from Brown Arena at Boston University. He remembers coaching players named Tom Channel, Steve Wright, Wally West, Glenn Consor, Desmond Martin, Brett Brown, John Teague, Tony Simms, and Gary Plummer when he went 91-51 in five seasons at BU.

He knows that a piece of old Braves Field, where Babe Ruth finished his career, still stands as part of Nickerson Field. He knows that Martin Luther King, Howard Stern, and Faye Dunaway matriculated at Boston University.

Pitino went to work with Hubie Brown and the New York Knicks when he left BU. He knows that one day before the Celts met the Knicks and red-hot Bernard King in the 1984 conference semifinals, Cedric Maxwell pointed to King and said, "The bitch won't score 50 off me." He knows that Bernard went for 50 in Game 3. Pitino was there when Larry Bird torched the Knicks in Game 7 at the Garden on a Sunday afternoon.

Pitino knows what the Celts were like in those days. He saw first-hand what the Celts stood for. He saw Bird, Parish, and McHale at the top of their games. He was with the Knicks when Auerbach counterpunched New York's interest in McHale by signing three New York free agents in a one-day flurry.

After his first NBA experience, Pitino took over for Joe Mullaney at Providence, leading the Friars to the Final Four in 1987. He



TOGETHER AGAIN Ex-Cat Antoine Walker will get to play for his former coach again when Rick Pitino takes over the Boston Celtics next season.

knows that Dave Gavitt was a god in Providence. He knows that Ernie DeGregorio is the all-time gym rat, and that Marvin Barnes once went after teammate Larry Kettvirtis with a tire iron. He knows that everybody goes to Murphy's Deli after Friar games.

He's been in Lexington for eight years. His New England knowledge served him there only when he came to Boston to recruit Wayne Turner at Beaver Country Day (which Pitino knows is always the first school to postpone when it snows) and Mike Bradley at Worcester Burncoat — not far from Holy Cross, where Pitino played against Gene Doyle and coached against George Blaney.

At UK, Pitino rebuilt college basketball's signature school (the Boston Celtics of the NCAA) and won a national championship. Along the way, he adjusted to the food and the customs. He took a liking to bluegrass and thoroughbred racing. And when he couldn't find any good Italian food, he opened his own restaurant.

But now it's time to come back to his basketball roots. It's time to return to the land of Jack Leaman, Dr. J, Al Skinner, Dave Gavitt, Ronnie Perry, Joe Mullaney. It's time to come home to the New Garden where Red and K.C., and the Cooz and Tommy Heinsohn still prow. It's time to come back to New England to rescue the once-proud Boston Celtics.



FEEDING FRENZY Media packed Memorial Coliseum (above) for Rick Pitino's final news conference as coach at UK. Pitino (below), who has spent eight seasons in Lexington, announced yesterday that he'll accept the Boston Celtics' offer to become their new head coach.

Pitino Rebuilder moves on, faces next challenge

From PAGE 1

"He wanted that challenge again, just like when he came here. (The players) saw how badly he wanted to do this and almost everyone wanted him to do it."

Details of the Celtics' contract will be disclosed tomorrow, though Pitino indicated the reported \$70 million figure was not necessarily the offer.

While there is little doubt the new Celtics coach will receive a hefty sum, Pitino said the money was not the determining factor.

"The cynics will say 'he's going to get a lot of money,'" Pitino said. "But Kentucky would pay me anything I want and it's never been about money here because if I wanted a certain amount, Kentucky would come up with it. You don't, at this stage in my life, leave for money."

After yesterday's announcement, many across the Bluegrass wondered about the immediate future of the UK program.

Though neither Pitino nor Athletics Director C.M. Newton commented on specific coaching

Rick Pitino

DATE OF BIRTH: Sept. 18, 1952.
HOMETOWN: New York.
FAMILY: Married to Joanne Minardi Pitino. They have five children.

HEAD COACHING POSITIONS: Boston University (1978-83); Providence College (1985-87); New York Knicks (1987-89); and University of Kentucky (1989-present).

COACHING ACHIEVEMENTS: Lead Providence to NCAA Final Four in 1987 and Kentucky in 1993, 1996 and 1997, winning national title in 1996. Coached Knicks to NBA Atlantic Division title in 1989.

candidates, Newton dispelled claims that it will be difficult to find a quality successor this far into the recruiting season.

"This will be a piece of cake," Newton said. "There are a lot of basketball coaches who want to come to this program. I think this is probably an easier time to hire a coach. Right now, everything is in order."

Newton added that the UK vacancy is one to be coveted by coaches nationwide. He believes it offers a can't-miss opportunity.

"This is a job, I think, will appeal to coaches who want a chance to compete for a national championship," Newton said.



Making Memories...

AT UK 1989-90

▼ Named head coach UK, a team coming off its first losing season since 1927 and facing a two-year probation from the NCAA.

▼ Feb. 15, 1990, UK defeats LSU 100-95. In the biggest win of Pitino's first season, the Cats jump on top of Shaquille O'Neal and the Tigers early and hold on for the win.

▼ In the spring of 1990, Pitino signs Jamal Mashburn, who in three seasons would lead UK to one elite eight and one Final Four. Pitino said of the 6-foot-6 forward, "He was the program turner. He cut the building process in half. Period."



1990-91

▼ Feb. 26, 1991, Pitino guides the Cats past Alabama 79-73 for the school's 200th win in Rupp Arena. UK becomes only the second school to win 1,500 games.

▼ With a 114-93 win over Auburn, UK clinches the best record in the Southeastern Conference. Because the Cats still are on NCAA probation, the SEC does not recognize the championship.

1991-92

▼ With the Cats off probation and back in postseason play, Pitino begins his tradition of getting his UK teams hot at the right time. UK makes

Alabama 80-54 for Pitino's first SEC Tournament title.

▼ In the NCAA tournament for the first time in 1988, UK marches past Old Dominion, Iowa State and UMass into the elite eight.

▼ In what many will call the greatest NCAA Tournament game ever played, UK takes eventual national champion Duke into overtime before bowing out 104-103.

▼ In the spring of 1992, Pitino finalizes his best recruiting class at UK, landing Top 50 recruits Rodrick Rhodes, Tony Delk, Walter McCarty and Jared Prickett.

▼ Sports Illustrated names UK its preseason No. 1 team.

▼ The Cats roll over the competition in the SEC Tournament, beating LSU 82-65 in the finals to give Pitino his second straight tourney title.

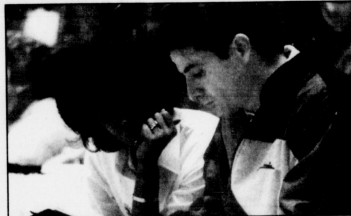
▼ In an NCAA Tournament run for the ages, Pitino's Cats beat their opponents by an average of 31 points per game in advancing to the Final Four.

▼ Pitino's first Final Four at UK ends in the semifinals in an 81-78 overtime loss to Michigan.

1993-94

▼ The "Cardiac Cats" beat Arizona 93-92 on a last-second tip-in and rally from 31 minutes down with 15 minutes left in the game to beat LSU 99-95.

▼ With a sophomore-dominated team, the Cats bow out early in the NCAA tournament, losing to Mar-



quette in the second round, 75-63.

▼ Pitino is involved in intense discussions to coach the Los Angeles Lakers.

1994-95

▼ In perhaps the greatest SEC Tournament game ever, UK rallies from nine points down with a minute remaining in overtime to defeat Arkansas 95-93.

▼ Pitino's Cats win 28 games and advance to the elite eight before losing to North Carolina.

1995-96

▼ Pitino coaches UK to its first national championship in 18 years. The Wildcats also become first team in 40 years to go undefeated in the Southeastern Conference.

▼ After the season, Pitino has serious discussions with the New Jersey Nets, who reportedly offer him \$30 million. Pitino eventually turns down the Nets.

1996-97

▼ UK advances to the national championship game, losing to Arizona in overtime.

▼ Pitino reportedly entertains a lucrative offer from the Philadelphia 76ers before rejecting the NBA franchise.

▼ May 6, 1997, Pitino leaves UK after eight seasons and agrees to become head coach of the Boston Celtics.



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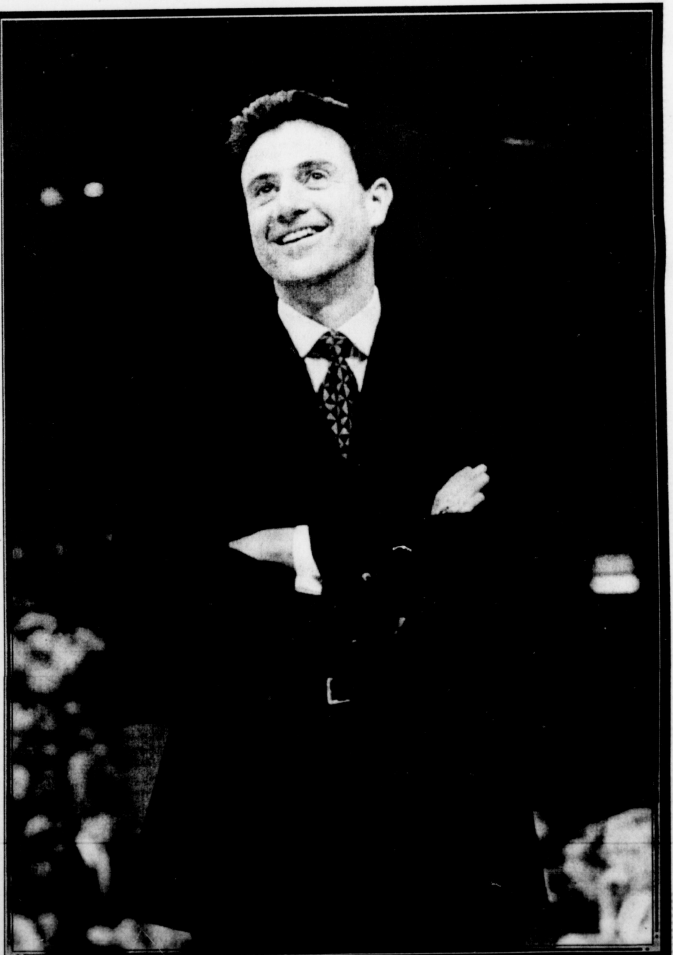
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Cats should seize shot at Tubby

UGA coach a logical fit for Wildcats

By Brett Dawson
Associate Editor

For some UK fans, Rick Pitino's move to the Boston Celtics might seem like the end of the world.

For C.M. Newton, it's the beginning of a load of work.

Newton, who scored one of the great hiring coups in NCAA history when he brought Pitino to UK from the New York Knicks eight years ago, now faces the daunting task of replacing one of college basketball's elite coaches.

The UK athletics director — an ex-coach himself — probably won't be able to land a name as big as Pitino this time around. But with eight players departed in the past two seasons, the Wildcats are in a state of transition, and this hire figures to be an important one for Newton.

Some of the names likely to come up:

Layups

A number of candidates' names always seem to get tossed around when coaching vacancies open up. And some coaches with UK ties would seem to be natural fits.

Wilbly Smith — The former Pitino assistant has the intensity to match his mentor and likes to run 'n' gun, which makes him a prime candidate.

WP.J. Carlesimo — The current coach of the NBA's Portland Trail Blazers was among the top candidates last time UK searched. He lacks the flair Pitino brought to the court, though, and UK fans have grown accustomed to that.

Willard Willard — Another ex-Pitino assistant, Willard might've been a lock had Pitino jumped to the Lakers in '94, but his stock may have dropped after his struggles at Pitt.

Wan Isel — The good news: Isel, one of the greatest players in UK history, has NBA coaching experience. The bad news: While coaching the Denver Nuggets, Isel got fed up with players' attitudes and burned out on coaching.

Three-pointers

These longer shots would be solid choices, but they have down sides that might work heavily against them.

Willy Donovan — None of the many Pitino clones can match the Florida coach for sheer donezness, but a couple of solid years at Marshall and a mediocre rookie year at Florida don't exactly make



MATT BARTON/Kentucky Kernel staff

MAN WITH A PLAN UK Athletics Director C.M. Newton said he would meet with UK President Charles Wethington and Wildcat basketball players before embarking on a coaching search to find a replacement for Rick Pitino.

him a hot commodity.

Wilber Sendek — Yet another ex-Pitino assistant, Willard is doing great work at N.C. State.

After a year there, he might not be ready to move. And his slowdown style might not play in revved-up Rupp Arena.

Half-court heaves

The most unlikely candidates are usually the most fun ones to speculate about. Among them:

WJohn Calipari — The New Jersey Nets coach seems comically bound to Pitino — he got the UMass job after Pitino recommended him; he took the Nets job after Pitino turned it down. Now could he come to UK and fill Pitino's shoes? Not likely.

WPat Riley — The ex-Cat is one of the few coaches who can pull off a rah-rah style in the NBA, and his system seems tailor-made for college ball. But check out his list of coaching stops: Los Angeles, New York and Miami. He isn't

likely to leave the big green and bright lights of a high-profile NBA job for the blue pastures in Lexington.

The final buzzer

Riley, of course, is the dream candidate. But even if Newton approached Riley about filling Pitino's position, he'd face a near-impossible task in landing him.

Of the realistic candidates, Smith is a natural fit. His intensity and familiarity with the Pitino system make him a logical successor. Skeptics will argue that UK isn't ready to hire an African-American to guide its basketball program.

But Newton — among the wisest basketball men in America — has the opportunity to prove those skeptics wrong and to put the UK program on track to not miss a beat.

Newton should learn a lesson from his former coach and seize his opportunities.

Newton's law: quick selection

By Price Alkinson
Staff Writer

Here we go again. Déjà vu, back to November.

UK Athletics Director C.M. Newton now finds himself in the same position he was in when the football season ended, in search of a new head coach.

Except this time it's a basketball coach.

This year marks the second time since Newton has been at UK that he has had to hire a new football coach and a new basketball coach in the same year. In his first year at UK, Newton hired Bill Curry and Rick Pitino as head coaches.

On Dec. 2, Newton hired Hal Mumme to lead the UK football team this coming fall. Now he needs to find a coach who will

lead the UK basketball team in Rupp Arena later this year.

Mumme came from a small school in the deep south of Georgia, from Division II Valdosta State.

Football and men's basketball are the two major revenue sports in college athletic programs which need attention because of the dollars they bring in to the athletic department.

But an athletic director is not usually faced with replacing a football coach and a basketball coach in the same year.

Right after a head coach resigns or is fired, the athletic director usually sets a time table for hiring a successor which is what Newton is in the process of.

"I'd like to have it done either tonight or by noon tomorrow and that would suit all of us," Newton

said, joking at yesterday's news conference.

"Realistically, I don't have a time table right now."

An AD often forms a search committee, which is made up of University board members such as the University's president and faculty representatives.

"The president will make the determination as to how we go about it," Newton said. "To me it's important we move quickly; be quick but don't hurry it."

But Newton said Pitino's decision comes at a good time, while the "getting it good" for hiring college coaches.

"I think this is probably an easier time to hire a coach," he said. "Right now everything is in order, recruiting is in bed so I think this is an ideal time to hire someone."

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<p>Name: James Hubert Embrey Program: History Dissertation Title: Reorienting Perspectives: The Accelerated Pacification Campaign of 1968 Major Professor: Dr. George Herring Date: May 12, 1997 Time: 5:00 p.m. Place: 1745 Patterson Office Tower</p>	<p>Name: Randy Back Program: Physics and Astronomy Dissertation Title: E2M1 Ratio of the N=0 Transition in a Modified Skyrme Model Major Professor: Dr. Jing W. Bao Date: May 13, 1997 Time: 10:00 a.m. Place: CP 180</p>
<p>Name: Lon Jon Blanchard Program: Chemistry Dissertation Title: Development and Application of Surface Methods for the Analysis of Military and Other Elements in Coal Major Professor: Dr. J. David Robinson Date: May 15, 1997 Time: 10:00 a.m. Place: 157 Chemistry Physics Building</p>	<p>Name: Guangping He Program: Crop Science Dissertation Title: Effects of Light, CO2 and Temperature on Carbohydrate Metabolism in Mango (Mangifera indica) Cultivars Major Professor: Dr. Jack W. Budden Date: May 19, 1997 Time: 10:00 a.m. Place: 5301 Agricultural Science Center North</p>
<p>Name: Gabriel Balazs Program: Microbiology Dissertation Title: The Role of CD 5 B Cell-Mediated B Cell Activation and in B1 B Cell Major Professor: Dr. Stefano Rossetti Date: May 20, 1997 Time: 1:00 p.m. (Seminar) 2:00 p.m. (Defense) Place: MV 465 (Seminar) MV 342 (Defense)</p>	<p>Name: Jianyong Luo Program: Animal Sciences Dissertation Title: Intracellular Metabolism of Cellulose and Starch Degradation Products by Bacteriocin-Antibiotic and Penicillin-Biosynthesizing Major Professor: Dr. Herbert J. Strobel Date: May 22, 1997 Time: 1:30 p.m. Place: 195 WG Genetics Building (Seminar) 201 WG Genetics Building (Defense)</p>

KABLAMMM!!!
Read the Kernel.

Players support coach's decision

By Chris Easterling
Senior Staff Writer

It wasn't reminiscent of a funeral, but the reaction of the UK players upon learning that Rick Pitino was leaving for the Boston Celtics wouldn't ever be compared to a birthday party either.

While most of the players didn't show much emotion when talking to the media after the announcement yesterday, it was a different story when Pitino told the team behind closed doors earlier in the day.

The coach went around the room and asked for each player's thoughts on the matter.

Allen Edwards indicated that Jamaal Magloire seemed more intent on Pitino remaining in Lexington.

"I think every player on this team, deep down inside, there's a side of them that's hurt and a side of them that's really happy for (coach)," sophomore point guard Wayne Turner said.

Turner, who happens to be from the Boston area, is one of several players returning next year who has benefited from the tutelage of Pitino.

He, along with center Nazr Mohammed and guard Cameron Mills, showed some of the biggest improvements from the 1995-96 season to last season. All three went from simply being seldom-used players to three of the key cogs in the Wildcats' run to the national title game.

"(Pitino) has meant a lot to me," Mohammed said. "I know I have a long way to go, but he taught me how to work hard and how hard work would pay off."

UK Athletics Director C.M. Newton said he would get the players' input on what they wanted in the next coach in a meeting he held yesterday evening at Memorial Coliseum.

When asked who they wanted to see lead them next season, many of the players said that they wanted someone who ran much the same style of basketball as Pitino.

While none would specifically name a certain coach they would like to take over arguably college basketball's most storied program, they did name off some of the same coaches being tossed around by speculating members of the media and general public.

Georgia coach Tubby Smith and Florida coach Billy Donovan — both former UK assistants under Pitino — were two of the names brought up the most.

"It's not like I have a say in (the coaching decision)," Mills said. "We just know that (C.M.) Newton is going to bring the best man in."

Despite the coaching change, players said they could not see anyone leaving UK over the change.

"Everybody's going to be here next year," Turner said. "I'm going to be here. We're just so used to everybody, it just so happens that we lost our leader."

While there apparently will be no player departures, don't expect to see much of Pitino's coaching staff remaining at UK.

Pitino said yesterday that associate head coach Jim O'Brien and assistant Winston Bennett both will join his coaching staff in Boston.

"Certainly, when you're in my position (with a family), it's not easy to uproot the family and say 'Hey, we're going to Boston,'" Bennett said. "But at the same token, I have such a wonderful, Christian woman that is behind me 100 percent when it comes to achieving my goals."

One of my goals has always been to be a head coach, whether it was at the college level or the professional level. Hopefully, (this job) will be a stepping stone to that goal."

But Delray Brooks, who has been a UK assistant for five years, will not be going to New England. Pitino said he hoped Brooks would be taking a collegiate head coaching job.



MATT BARTON/Kentucky staff

FACING THE FUTURE Nazr Mohammed talks with reporters after Rick Pitino announced his plans to leave UK for the Boston Celtics.

Pitino move makes fans truly blue

By Aaron Yelton
Staff Writer

NBA action, it is indeed fantastic. But UK fans might be growing a bit tired of the league, which has claimed early entries from among UK underclassmen and now has taken the Wildcats' coach, Rick Pitino.

Although leaving UK for bigger and "greener" pastures in Boston, Pitino said Kentucky will always be a special place for him. He still holds the philosophy that here at UK, you never say goodbye, you only say hello.

That philosophy is easy to accept, but difficult to live with for UK fans and players.

UK's players weren't the only students deeply affected by Pitino's decision. Even though the faithful followers on campus took the news hard, there was no feeling of betrayal or anger, only wishes of success.

James Willet, an English junior, said the news wasn't a surprise to him. In fact, it was somewhat expected.

"I thought it was inevitable that some team would give him an offer he couldn't refuse," Willet said. "If that's what he wants to do, best of luck to him."

Kentucky Gov. Paul Patton said he was "heartbroken" by Pitino's decision but believes the coach leaves the program with a solid foundation.

"I think the program is strong enough that there are other people who can carry on a great Kentucky tradition," he said. "But it's going to take a superior individual to maintain that tradition. Rick Pitino rebuilt it."

UK President Charles T. Wethington Jr. said he regretted seeing Pitino leave the program that produced a national title in 1996. "We have the highest regard for the job he's done here," he said. "The university will always feel a debt of gratitude for the tremendous work he's done in bringing the University of Kentucky back to national prominence in college basketball."

University of Delaware President David Roselle, who hired Pitino in 1989 when he was UK president, said that Pitino left a positive mark on the institution. Pitino accepted the job after then program was placed on a two-year probation from the NCAA for recruiting and academic violations.

"He has not only reinstated Kentucky basketball but he has taken it to a higher level than it has ever experienced," he said in a telephone interview from his home. "So I'm a complete, total fan of Rick Pitino and I greatly respect what he did."

Florida coach Billy Donovan, who played for Pitino at Providence and coached under him from 1989-94, said Pitino's departure is "a big loss for college basketball."

"He has made an enormous impact on the lives of many players, coaches and people involved in the game," he said.


Georgia coach Tubby Smith thinks Pitino is the kind of coach needed to rebuild the Wildcats, who just completed their worst record (15-67) in franchise history.

"His current situation with Boston bears a great resemblance to Kentucky when he went there in 1989," said Smith, who was an assistant on Pitino's first UK team. "Both have storied traditions and the Celtics need the same kind of rebuilding job that Rick accomplished at Kentucky."

Pete Nannery, a Boston native and a national resource conservation junior at UK, said it was the best move for Pitino, and UK fans should be happy that he is going to a place where they will appreciate him as much as fans here do.


"They love him — it's the first time a professional team in Boston has paid this much for a coach," Nannery said. "They needed someone to go in there and get the team going, so they got the best coach in the country."

SOUNDbytes



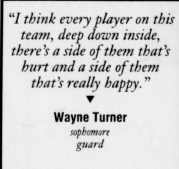
"When I first came here, there was a chance that he would leave. I was hoping I'd get to play for him a year or two."

Heshimu Evans
junior forward



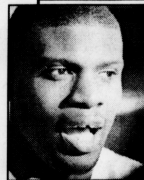
"Everybody knows he had to leave because he likes to take on challenges."

Scott Padgett
sophomore forward



"I think every player on this team, deep down inside, there's a side of them that's hurt and a side of them that's really happy."

Wayne Turner
sophomore guard



"We still have some great players here. I know we're going to get a great coach to come here."

Nazr Mohammed
sophomore center

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