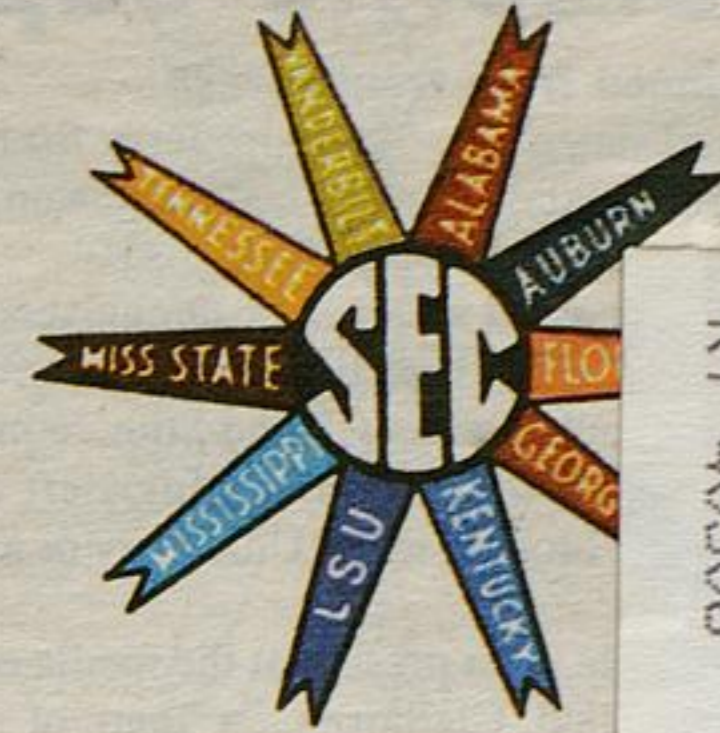


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# The Cats' Pause

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SPECIAL EXTRA ISSUE

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LEXINGO



## Claiborne announces retirement

**Newton: 'Be quick, but don't hurry,' in finding successor**

by TCP managing editor Russell Rice

The unexpected resignation of Jerry Claiborne, 61, as University of Kentucky football coach on Tuesday, Nov. 29, caught all interested parties by surprise and immediately set into motion speculation on the choice of his successor.

Claiborne, who compiled a 41-46-3 record and took his teams to back-to-back Hall of Fame Bowls during an eight-year tenure at UK, explained at a Tuesday-afternoon press conference that he made the decision during a bumpy plane ride somewhere over Ohio on Monday night.

After his Wildcats lost the season finale to Tennessee for a 6-5 record and no bowl invitation, Claiborne had prepared to hit the recruiting trail, wondering privately if he had the heart for one more rugged campaign.

He expressed his doubts to UK athletics director C.M. Newton on Monday morning, then later joined assistant Chip Garber on the flight to Youngstown, where Claiborne was to speak at a banquet.

"The weather was rough," Claiborne said, "and the plane was bouncing around. I didn't know if we were going to hit the ground, or what we were going to hit. I started thinking, this is kind of stupid."

The resignation, which Claiborne emphasized was his own, "under no pressure from anybody," caught practically everyone by surprise, although there had been some speculation that Claiborne might succumb to pressure from his wife of 40 years, Faye, and family and hang it up in the near future.

Despite his teams finishing on the short side of the won-loss ledger, they were competitive, and the players had endeared themselves to UK president David Roselle and the academic community for outstanding performances in the classroom.

The most recent accomplishments included the 1989 College Football Association's Academic Achievement Award for highest graduation rate (90 percent) among its members, and just recently a record 17 members on the Southeastern Conference's All-Academic football roll, bringing UK's total to 68 during his tenure.

Newton said the university would accept Claiborne's retirement, but would honor the four remaining years on the coach's contract.

"As a student-athlete and 40 years as a football coach, Jerry has always been a great role model for his peers, players and everyone involved," Newton said in a

(Continued on page 2A)