

# SPORTS BRIEFS

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## Wildcats Celebrate National Title

Camped out in front of Rupp Arena five hours before the national champion Kentucky Wildcats were to arrive for a pep rally, 10-year-old Justin Puffer got a lesson in supply and demand.

Tickets for the event commemorating Kentucky's 78-69 NCAA tournament title game victory over Utah were gone within minutes after the sales window opened Tuesday morning. But Justin and his mother were determined to find a generous scalper willing to make a sale.

The only problem was that Mom had established a price cap.

"Fifteen dollars, Justin, no more," Lois Puffer told her son.

And that offer just wasn't getting many bites considering other Wildcats fans, like Dan Mahoney, were openly offering \$50.

"I figure that if I stand out here and try to look cute, somebody will just give them to me," Mahoney joked.

But after two hours of waiting, neither Mahoney's monetary offer nor his charm paid off.

The 20,000 fans fortunate enough to get tickets somehow found a way to scream louder as the pep rally progressed, even with strained vocal chords. At 7:06 p.m. EST, the team bus drove to the edge of the Rupp Arena floor, and out jumped the national champi-

ons - the 'Comeback Cats' as several posters proclaimed.

The crowd erupted with the announcement of each team member, with the loudest cheers of all for first-year coach Tubby Smith.

"The love affair you all have for Kentucky basketball and this program is unbelievable, and it's second to none," Smith told the fans, his next sentence being drowned out by crowd noise.

Senior Cameron Mills gave credit to former coach Rick Pitino, who left the team at the end of last season to accept a coaching job with the Boston Celtics, but reserved his highest praise for Smith.

"I don't think you'll ever know how much our relationship means to me," Mills said, giving the coach a hug.

Tournament MVP Jeff Sheppard seemed to choke up as he spoke about the influence of his team-

mates. And Kentucky's other senior, Allen Edwards, thanked the fans for supporting him following the death of his mother during the tournament.

At the end, the players raised the championship banner to the rafters, where it joined those for six previous national titles.

After national title games, Lexington police were ready to handle the mob of close to 15,000 fans who celebrated in the streets. Three hundred officers lined downtown Lexington in full riot gear, watching the chaos with the aid of spotlights from a National Guard helicopter.

Police made 10 arrests and the UK hospital reported treating 25 people for minor injuries.

Still, police said the chaos never reached the level of Kentucky's championship night two years ago when, among other things, officers were pelted with beer bottles and a television news crew's van was overturned.

"I'm glad March Madness is over," assistant chief Sandra Devers said early Tuesday as road-cleaning machines wiped away beer cans, broken glass and abandoned shoes that saturated the area. "It's time for April."

union food court. She showed up about an hour later.

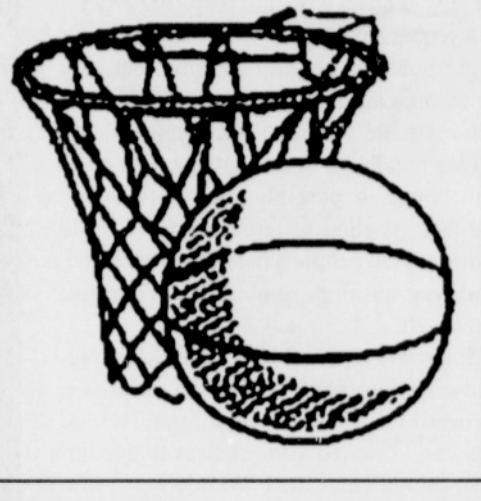
"After the pep rally tonight, we're going back into the streets to party again! We're not going to stop until the 'Cats drop,'" said Cowan, admitting that such a regimen could make for an exhausting offseason.

With two seasons of practice in controlling wild crowds after national title games, Lexington police were ready to handle the mob of close to 15,000 fans who celebrated in the streets. Three hundred officers lined downtown Lexington in full riot gear, watching the chaos with the aid of spotlights from a National Guard helicopter.

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