

# KENTUCKY

Alumni

SPRING 2009



100 Years  
Of Wildcat  
Spirit

**UK**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
**KENTUCKY**  
Alumni Association

# Profiles in BLUE UK Wildcat



Photo: John Sommers II

This year the University of Kentucky reaches a milestone: "Wildcats" has been its proud moniker for 100 years! The official nickname for the University of Kentucky's athletics teams, Wildcats became synonymous with UK shortly after a football victory over Illinois in 1909. Commandant Carbusier, then head of the military department at old State University, told a group of students in a chapel service following the game that the Kentucky football team had "fought like Wildcats." The nickname stuck. Wildcats became more and more popular among UK fans, as well as with members of the media. Later, the nickname also was adopted by the university. The words "Kentucky Wildcats" are deeply meaningful today to alumni, evoking happy memories of everything UK, including academic programs, as well as athletic teams.

Beginning in the early 1900s, a series of live Wildcat mascots appeared on campus at football games to inspire the UK team and fans. Currently, UK is represented by a bobcat that lives at the Salato Center in the Frankfort area. Named Blue, this cat weighs about 30 pounds, which is normal, but large, for a bobcat. Although Blue is the official live UK mascot, Blue never appears on campus but is available for viewing in his habitat at the wildlife center.

Today, thousands of UK fans are entertained by the Wildcat mascot who originated during the 1976-77 academic year. Back then, UK student Gary Tanner donned the costume, dancing and entertaining the crowd at Commonwealth Stadium and Rupp Arena during athletics events.

Over the years there have been many students "on the inside" and it is a distinct honor to be selected to serve as a friendly ambassador for the university, attending academic functions and visiting childrens' groups, as well as athletic events. In fact, there have been so many students privileged to strut their stuff as the Wildcat that some of them get together from time to time to reminisce about their special experiences, including the time that one of them actually proposed to his future wife during a timeout at Rupp Arena.

## **Favorite Thing About Being A Wildcat**

“Never having to say I’m sorry.”

## **How To Stay Cool Under Pressure**

“Pressure... what pressure?”

## **Favorite Chow**

“Anything from Bonefish Grill or Kentucky Fried Chicken.”

## **Last E-mail Received**

“Albert E. Gator asked me to join him for a swim in Florida. Sounds like a bad idea.”

## **Flaw In The World Would Like To Change**

“Opposable thumbs would be swell.”

## **Favorite Web Site**

[www.icanhascheezburger.com](http://www.icanhascheezburger.com) (Lolcats)

## **Skill Would Like To Master**

Dunk a basketball

## **Favorite Cat Woman: Michelle Pfeiffer Or Halle Berry?**

“Meeeeooooow!”

## **Reading Now**

*“100 Cats Who Changed Civilization: History’s Most Influential Felines,”*  
by Sam Stall

## **Family Pets**

“Until an unfortunate incident, I had goldfish.”

## **No. 1 Rule To Live By**

“Never let them see you sweat.”

## **Two Words That Best Describe You**

“‘Wild’ and ‘Cat’ — Let’s not overthink this thing.”

## **Guilty Pleasure**

Watching the Westminster Dog Show on cable TV

## **First Choice For A New Career**

“Forever Blue, baby.”

For the 17th time in school history, UK Cheerleaders won the Universal Cheerleading Association National Championship trophy in January. The team is coached by Jomo Thompson; T. Lynn Williamson, advisor.