

## Athletics Report for Board of Trustees Meeting, February 19

### Fall Sports Highlights

- Our **men's soccer** team won the regular-season championship of the Sun Belt Conference, the seventh regular season or conference tournament championship under Coach Johan Cedergren. Johan has taken the team to 11 NCAA Tournaments in his 13 seasons.
  - Sebastian Conlon was named the Sun Belt Conference Goalkeeper of the Year and eight Wildcats were named all-conference.
  - For the fifth time in his career, Coach Cedergren was named the conference Coach of the Year.
- **Women's soccer** advanced to the NCAA Tournament for the second year in a row under Coach Troy Fabiano. They completed the season with 12 victories, most in a season in 11 years. Three Wildcats received All-SEC honors.
- The **volleyball** team swept the SEC regular season schedule, winning the league championship for the ninth season in a row. The Wildcats also swept the SEC Tournament.
  - Eva Hudson was named SEC Player of the Year
  - Kassie O'Brien was named SEC Freshman of the Year
  - Molly Tuozzo was Most Valuable Player of the SEC Tournament
  - Hudson, O'Brien, Tuozzo and Brooklyn DeLeye were named All-America
  - For the 7th time, Craig Skinner was named SEC Coach of the Year

The Wildcats were a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament and earned the right to host the First and Second Rounds and the Regional. With tremendous support from the Big Blue Nation inside Historic Memorial Coliseum, we won all four of those matches to advance to the Final Four, where we defeated Wisconsin and finished as national runner-up.

- In December, we introduced new **football** coach Will Stein. Coach Stein has built remarkable momentum during his first two months.
  - Although he was extremely busy helping guide Oregon to the national playoff semifinal, Coach and his staff were able to recruit a transfer portal class ranked in the top four in the SEC and in the top 11 nationally.

- The momentum and enthusiasm generated by Coach Stein has been embraced enthusiastically by the Big Blue Nation. The renewal period for season tickets began last week and the ticket office reports that we are already receiving a very strong response for renewals. In addition, we have received deposits for more than 2,000 new season tickets.
- Spring practice begins March 10 and the Spring Game is April 18.

### Winter Sports Update

- Playing against what is currently rated as the nation's seventh most difficult schedule, **men's basketball** is 17-9 overall and 8-5 in the SEC. The season has been highlighted by a sweep of Tennessee and wins in the non-conference schedule over Indiana and St. John's.
- For the first time in school history, the **women's basketball** team has two victories in the same season against Top-5 teams with wins against Oklahoma and at LSU. The Wildcats are 20-7 overall, 7-6 in the SEC, and ranked No. 16 in the country. Center Clara Strick is a candidate for National Player of the Year.
- The No. 1-ranked **rifle** team set the all-time NCAA scoring record with a match score of 4762. Individually, Braden Peiser has broken the NCAA smallbore record with a 599 – out of a possible 600 – and tied the NCAA aggregate record with an 1198, out of a possible 1200. The team will host an NCAA Qualifier on Saturday before moving on to the conference and national championships.
- **Gymnastics** is ranked No. 24 in the nation as Delaynee Rodriguez has emerged as one of the nation's top all-around gymnasts. Kentucky will play host to an NCAA Regional in April.
- Our **STUNT** team is 7-1 and ranked No. 2 among Division I teams. There is exciting news as STUNT has been certified as a full-fledged NCAA championship sport and the first NCAA championship will be held in 2027. We want to commend the work that Sandy Bell has done with STUNT, both in being the founding administrator for our team and also the incredible job she has done in promoting it nationally, which has enabled STUNT to become an official NCAA sport.
- The **swimming and diving** teams are competing this week at the Southeastern Conference championship meet in Knoxville.
- The **indoor track and field teams** head to Texas A&M next week for the SEC Championships.

### Spring Sports Update

- **Softball** has a 7-4 record, including a win at No. 13 Stanford. The Wildcats play their first 16 games on the road before hosting the John Cropp Classic next weekend.
- The top-20 ranked **baseball** team is off to a 3-1 start and plays this weekend at Evansville.
- **Men's tennis** is 7-3 with ranked wins over No. 15 Duke and No. 20 Michigan State. The Wildcats open SEC action this weekend.
- **Women's tennis** has an 8-1 mark heading into SEC play, with the only loss being a close result at the No. 7 team in the nation.
- **Women's golf** has had three top-three tournament finishes this year, including a second-place showing in the spring opener last weekend.
- **Men's golf** has begun its spring season. The highlight of the fall campaign was a second-place finish, out of 15 teams, at our own Cullan Brown Collegiate.

### **Academics and Community Engagement**

- In November, it was announced that UK student-athletes broke the school record for the NCAA Graduation Success Rate. UK has broken or tied the GSR school record for 20 consecutive years, every year since the NCAA began measuring graduation rates in 2005. This year's score of 93 percent is three points above the national average.
- Twenty-five current and former Wildcat student-athletes participated in the December Commencement, including two who completed masters degrees.
  - Six of the graduates are part of our Cawood Ledford Post-Eligibility Program, in which athletes who did not graduate during their time here return and complete their degree requirements. That brings us to 192 graduates from the Ledford Program.
  - Combined with the 116 student-athletes who graduated in May, UK Athletics had 141 graduates during the 2025 calendar year.
- Our student-athletes had a composite grade-point average of 3.429 for the fall semester, our 27<sup>th</sup> consecutive semester above a 3.0 GPA. 419 athletes achieved a GPA of 3.0 or higher, including 134 Wildcats who posted a perfect 4.0 for the semester.
- 80 student-athletes were named to the SEC Academic Honor Roll for Fall Sports.

- Speaking of academics, during the Florida football weekend, we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our academics program, now known as the Center for Academic and Tutorial Services. Dozens of former athletes and staff members returned to campus for a ceremony and luncheon. UK was the first school in the country to build a facility dedicated solely to academics for its athletes.
- Our student-athletes continue to be active in the community. Dana Dahm of women's soccer, Brooklyn DeLeye of volleyball and Hayden Dawahare of football were named to the SEC Community Service Teams for their sports.
- Josh Kattus of football was named to the 2025 National Good Works Team. It's worth noting that he is the 19<sup>th</sup> player named to the National Good Works Team since that award was founded. UK ranks second in the nation all-time – among all NCAA Divisions – for the number of football players chosen for this team.
- Two weeks ago, 16 student-athletes were inducted into the Frank G. Ham Society of Character. The Society of Character annually honors Wildcats who have shown a commitment to academic excellence, athletic participation, personal development, career development and community engagement.
- Recently, we hosted our annual "Career Combine," as 219 student-athletes met with 54 employers and campus academic graduate programs to explore post-undergraduate opportunities.

### **Off-the-Field News**

We continue in a time of revolutionary transformation -- not just in our conference, not just in our department, but across the entire landscape of college sports.

As we noted in our last meeting, under the guidance of the *House* lawsuit settlement, we are in our first year of revenue sharing with our student-athletes. We are allotting \$5 million in additional scholarships for our various sports this year and are participating at the maximum level of revenue share, which is \$20.5 million for the 2025-26 year. Student-athletes also are taking advantage of name-image-likeness compensation, which must be a market-based "true" NIL as evaluated by the College Sports Commission. That process has begun and our student-athletes are making NIL deals as approved by the CSC.

- While the *House* settlement marks a positive step toward resolving some of the issues facing college sports, as we have said all along, there is still a need for nationwide congressional action, as the patchwork of varying state laws has resulted in additional lawsuits and a confusing regulatory landscape.

As we mentioned in our last meeting, the United States Congress is considering legislation titled the SCORE Act, which would create a national standard in the collegiate environment – enshrining the groundbreaking economic benefits of the *House* settlement while also providing expanded support benefits for student-athletes.

Failure to pass federal legislation will make it more likely that future litigation will prevent consistent regulation of college sports, which would threaten all sports programs, especially non-revenue and Olympic sports.

This is not a politically partisan issue. NCAA schools and conferences are uniting to urge Congress to pass this legislation.

- We also want to touch on our own organizational and financial evolution. During the 2025-26 school year, we are continuing the transition of UK Athletics into the Champions Blue LLC structure. There is extensive legal and organizational work involved in doing so and we are in the midst of that process.