

Fans, Officials Praise New Rupp Arena

By Mark Bradley

For most of the 23,266 individuals who witnessed the University of Kentucky's season-opening win over Wisconsin last Saturday night, the game ranked second in importance to,

in the words of NBC, "The Big Event."

That event, of course, was the unveiling of Rupp Arena as the permanent home of the Kentucky

Wildcats. And, even though dedication ceremonies will be held later this month, the Wisconsin game represented opening night for what UK fans hope will be a long-running and

successful show.

As befits such an auspicious occasion, several of the bigger names in Kentucky society were on hand for the Cats' 72-64 victory. THE CATS' PAUSE talked with some of those well-known persons (and also some who are not-so-well-known) at the game, and here are some of their reactions to Rupp Arena:

Adolph Rupp, the legendary UK coach for whom the arena was named -- "I think this is the best place for basketball in the United States. It's superior to Madison Square Garden (in New York), and there's no place like this in Los Angeles, Chicago or Philadelphia either.

Asked if he was honored to have such an arena named after him, the Baron of Basketball said, "I sure am. It's great, and I think UK will win tonight with no trouble."

Governor Julian Carroll-- "Obviously, the arena is breath taking. It's right noisy, but I don't think the noise is objectionable. It may raise the adrenalin level of the players. I brought my 12-year old son with me, and he hopes to someday play out there with the Wildcats."

Former Governor A.B. "Happy" Chandler-- "This is the best facility of its kind in the country, especially for a guy who remembers when the Wildcats used to play in Buell Armory, which seated 2200. We had our first championship team back then, in 1921, when we beat Georgia 20-19, on a free throw after time ran out by Bill King. There was a boy named Adkins on that team, and a Ridgway, a Hayden, and a Ladin.

"After we moved out of Buell Armory, we switched to Alumni Gym, and then to Memorial Coliseum, and now down to Rupp Arena, so this is the fourth place I've seen in some 60 years of following UK basketball.

"I think it's a great tribute to Rupp. You know, when he first came to Kentucky, no one really cared if we played basketball or not. He won the conference championship his first year here and they gave him a one-year contract. I asked him then, 'Adolph, if they only gave you a one-year contract when you win, just think what they would have done if you'd lost.'

"He was more responsible for the rise of southern basketball than anybody else. When he first came to Kentucky, Indiana was the capital of basketball. Well, Indiana isn't the capital anymore."

Dr. Otis Singletary, UK President -- "I'm very impressed with the place. I'm looking forward to it being the new home of the Wildcats, even though it's not quite as cozy as Memorial Coliseum. I'm just delighted with Rupp Arena."

Athletic Director Cliff Hagan -- "I was on the first Kentucky team to play in the Coliseum and I don't think the shift to Rupp Arena is as great a contrast as the change was from Alumni Gym. There were four times as many seats in the Coliseum as there were in Alumni.

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