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Congratulating the University of Kentucky Wildcats Men's Basketball Team for Winning the 2012 NCAA Division I Men's Championship

HON. HAROLD "HAL" ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2012

MR. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker—It is my distinct honor to rise today to commend and congratulate the University of Kentucky Wildcats men's basketball team on winning the 2012 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Championship.

By now, any basketball fan is familiar with the legacy of the Wildcats. The "Greatest Tradition in College Basketball," Kentucky is the winningest program of all-time, both in total wins and total win percentage, and the first team to break the 2,000 win threshold. Kentucky has fifteen Final Four appearances, and now eight national championships, second only to UCLA.

Even measured against this pedigree and the impossibly high expectations of the Big Blue Nation, this batch of 'Cats was something special. "The Undeniables," as they are known, were ranked number one in the nation for most of the year, losing only two games on their way to setting the NCAA record of thirty-eight wins in a single season. During their remarkable NCAA tournament run they won each game by an astonishing average of ten points, never trailing in a second half. While the title was the ultimate goal, the Final Four victory over in-state rival the University of Louisville may have been even sweeter, as the highest stakes game ever played in the historic rivalry and the most important single sporting event in the history of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

This team achieved greatness against extraordinary competition because of the players' love and respect for one another. It is telling that a team led by three freshmen and two sophomores all forecast to be first round NBA draft picks, and all used to scoring 25 points a night in high school, were known first and foremost for their defense. Their willingness to support each other on the defensive end translated into selflessness in their offensive attack, with a different player leading all scorers on any given night.

The senior anchor to these young 'Cats was Darius Miller, one of Kentucky's favorite sons and a high school Mr. Basketball from Mason County. During his freshman season, Kentucky failed to make the NCAA Tournament for the first time in 18 years. After that disappointment, Miller has been a mainstay of teams under Coach John Calipari that have gone undefeated at home for three seasons, earning two Final Fours, an Elite Eight appearance, and a National Championship. Over his career, Darius played in more games than any Kentucky player in history and was one block and thirteen rebounds from having a career stats sheet with some 1,200 points, 500 rebounds, 250 assists, 100 blocks, and 100 steals.

That Miller was the sixth man on this Kentucky squad demonstrates the explosive athleticism of Big Blue's younger stars. Leading the

way was Anthony Davis who, with 186 blocks bested most entire teams in that statistic, cleaned up nearly every individual award for which he was eligible, including Freshman of the Year, SEC Player of the Year, Defensive Player of the Year, and the Naismith and Wooden National Player of the Year awards. Though ending the season with a 62% field goal percentage, he was scoreless in the first half of the National Championship Game and yet was Most Outstanding Player for his defensive abilities and capacity to ignite the UK offense. Davis along with fellow freshman point guard Marcus Teague started in a record forty games for UK and were the distributors for a extremely quick and highly efficient offense that was a perpetual threat in transition. Leading that attack were sophomore and freshman forwards Terrence Jones and Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, dangerous whether around the rim or breaking free for an open jump shot, combining for an average 24 points a game. Sophomore Doron Lamb was the team's often unsung hero and clutch shooter, averaging 37% from the three point line during his career and killing the momentum behind several opponents' would-be comebacks. I could go on-and-on celebrating these leaders and the other players who made this team championship caliber. "The Undeniables" will be regarded as one of the greatest all-around teams in college basketball history and that eighth NCAA Championship banner now hanging in Rupp Arena will forever stand as testament to their place in the hearts of the Big Blue Nation. I wish all of these players the best as they continue their careers, whether at Kentucky or at the professional level.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the boundless energy and enthusiasm of Head Coach John Calipari, who forged a timeless team out of young freshmen and sophomores. Before Coach Cal's arrival, UK basketball was lost in the woods. In a single season he made the Wildcats into a perennial championship contender once again. But more importantly, he has worked selflessly to promote the University nationally and internationally, even more closely involved the community in the basketball program, and pursued philanthropic goals both through the University as well as with his private charity. This winning environment in Lexington is a result of the seamless teamwork and support of the coaching and training staff, Athletic Director Mitch Barnhart, and University of Kentucky President Eli Capiluto who, in his first year as president, is now one-for-one in national basketball championships.

In closing I would like to once again join the Big Blue Nation in congratulating the team, everyone affiliated with the University and UK fans around the world on a terrific season and our eighth national championship. What a banner year it has been!