

And the Winner is...

Coach Cal, in a few Best of Lex landslides

By Kevin Faris

My wife and I were about to board a cruise ship for a week of relaxation this past Spring, and despite the promise of warm beaches and cold drinks, I was in a complete panic. I had spent the past two days, on the drive to Jacksonville and in our Savannah hotel, furiously updating my iPhone for news on UK and Coach John Calipari. Unfortunately, the news would not come. It was beginning to feel like someone had frozen time on Christmas Eve, forever making it 11:59PM, and no matter what I did, it would never be Christmas.

As we waited in line at customs, I noticed other people in UK hats and shirts, and they noticed me. "Heard anything?" "Is he coming?" "Is it official?" You would have thought we were in the hospital waiting on the birth of a child. It was a mixture of excitement and fear. What if he didn't come? What if he said no? I tried to block these thoughts out of my head, and my wife tried to pretend that our vacation would not be preoccupied by a man I had never met.

Hours turned to days on the ship, and despite signing up for 40 hours of Internet access (only

done, the contract was signed, and the announcement was made, I was pumped. I was high fiving strangers and hugging my wife like she had just said yes to my proposal. After Billy G., the NIT, Jeannine Edwards, and 4th place in the SEC East, a UK fandom desperate for good news got the best news. And then the best news got better.

Coach Cal came and so did John Wall, Eric Bledsoe, DeMarcus Cousins, and Darnell Dodson. Jon Hood and Daniel Orton stuck to their commitments. Patrick Patterson left and then returned. The only piece of bad news for UK fans was the departure of Jodie Meeks. Sure, there have been haters, both locally in the form of Mark Story, and nationally, in the form of Pitino's personal friend and co-author Pat Forde, but for the most part, UK fans don't care. After a few years of angry call in shows, split fan bases, and trying to convince ourselves that starting Mark Coury was a good idea, UK finally had the coach and the spotlight they wanted.

I don't think you can overstate the openness with which Coach Cal has embraced the role of a UK coach, which is not just on the court, but also in

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\$24.95!) immediately upon boarding, nothing had changed. I still had conversations with UK fans on the ship, including one musician who played us the UK fight song in the lounge. The look on people's faces, and the sound of their voices, as we discussed what could happen (*Would he bring his recruits? Do you know about the Dribble Drive Motion Offense?*) made it clear that John Calipari was not going to be just another UK coach.

In the few days before the announcement, UK fans were more excited than they had been in years. Tubby Smith, while a great coach, did not have a captivating personality and it appeared as if the demands of the job began to wear on him. Tubby was not a celebrity coach; he would not be appearing in RockBand commercials with Coach K, Roy Williams, and Rick Pitino. Billy Gillispie? Like a Saturday night mistake in college, he was best forgotten. But Coach Cal had the potential to not just be a great coach like Smith, but an even better recruiter and a much bigger celebrity. He just had to say yes.

And then he did, and since then, life has not been the same. When the slow computer at the Carnival Internet Station finally revealed that it was

the community. His house is right on Richmond Road for all to see, and when my sister-in-law visited you can bet we drove by it. He lets the fans into his life, and his family's, through Twitter and Facebook. He has criss-crossed the Commonwealth with basketball camps and book signings. And even when there have been PR bumps in the road, such as with the Obama jersey, he has stepped forward and made his feelings clear. When I was on a cruise ship headed toward the Bahamas, the UK fans I talked to were like me, just hoping for something better than we had. We ended up with a lot more than that, and we can only hope that as good as it has been, the best is yet to come.

No pressure Coach. ■

Coach Calipari was voted "best Lexington Twitter" and "best Lexington Facebook page" and "best thing to happen to UK this year" by Ace Readers in the 2009 Best of Lex Ballot. (A lot of readers also wrote in Coach Cal for "best burger," "best florist," "best taqueria" and numerous other categories.)

Welcome!

Welcome to the annual Best of Lexington Readers' Poll — all year long, the Readers suggest categories; the Ballot is included in every August edition; and every year we print the Results, usually during the Keeneland Sales. (Next year's Best of Lex will be on stands just in time to kick off the 2010 World Equestrian Games.) Then there is a party. And at this party, there is always Cake.

Every year, the Ballot shifts and changes to accommodate the ever-evolving and growing interests of the *Ace* Reader. When Best of Lex began in the 90s, for example, there was no "Best Local Blog" category, and there definitely was no Best Twitter. (UK didn't even have a Coach Cal back then. If you can imagine.)

something is built at Lexington Mall. Steve Austin is reportedly working with students as part of a larger "Dead Malls" project, and hopefully we'll have better news to report there in the next year. But Turfland will still likely be added as a category in 2010.

Also returning this year is the Best Use for the CentrePointe Block. We hope that category doesn't last as long as the Lexington Mall category.

One reader asked why there is a category like "best honest mechanic" which just "perpetuates a stereotype?" The answer is: for the same reason there's a "best fear-free dentist." The readers recommended those categories, in precisely those terms. Presumably, they wanted to honor their favorite stereotype-busters. For several

Some categories retire, rotate, and might be revived later (e.g., Best Burger is back this year, but best pancake is still taking a rest after Alfalfa won it about 430 times).

New this year is **Best GTV3** episode. *Ace* covers LFUCG (usually via GTV3) live every Tuesday and Thursday at twitter.com/aceweekly, and then posts summaries at www.aceweekly.com. So if you aren't familiar with the "Scott's Turf Builder episode" or the "Sidewalk Debate" or the "Shoeshine episode," then you can search those items at www.aceweekly.com. Or if you don't know the name of your neighborhood Kroger, you can read more about Disco Kroger and its cousins on page 17 (and at *Ace* online).

Some categories just never go away... even when we want them to. "Best use for Lexington Mall" has been a category since the Mall died. Readers asked this year when we would retire it, and the answer is: when

years there was a "best honest divorce attorney" category and "best honest roofer" (admittedly, categories that didn't draw a lot of voting).

Best Scandal? That's not a new category, but there are new contenders.

Read on... Read on...

As the new *Ace* website (thanks Elevation Creative!) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/AceWeeklyFans) and twitter (twitter.com/aceweekly) allow us to talk with the Readers 24/7, this 20th anniversary year represents a new and exciting era for *Ace*. We're combining that online interaction with real life meet 'n greets like Front Porch Fridays (the first Friday of every month) and the *Ace* Book Club (the first Wednesday of every month), so who knows what the 2010 Best of Lex Ballot will look like. We expect you will tell us.

See you at the Party! ■

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Best of Lex '09

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Best Arts NonProfit

Art in Motion

Lexington Art League
Lexington Philharmonic

Best place to hear poetry

Al's Bar (Holler Poets Series)



Common Grounds

Best live music venue

Buster's



Lower 48
The Green Lantern

Best Lexington author

Ed McClanahan



Gurney Norman
Neil Chethik

Best new bar/club (opened in last year)

Bakers 360
Drake's
Soundbar



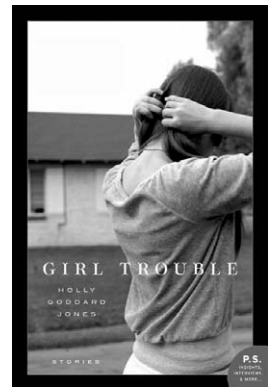
Best visual art exhibit in last year



Side by Side
Pet Milk
SWAP

Best book by a Kentuckian in last year

Girl Trouble by Holly Goddard Jones
St. Myrtle by Donna Ison
Weird Kentucky by Jeffrey Scott Holland



Best local theater production (indoor)

Long Time Traveling (Silas House play)
Always Patsy Cline

Best local theater production (outdoor)

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Summerfest)
Once on this Island (Summerfest)
Henry IV (Summerfest)

Best local visual artist

Arturo Sandoval
James Shambhu
John Lackey



EAT & DRINK

Best funnelcake you ate this year

Lexington Legends/Applebee's Park
Woodland Arts Fair
July 4 downtown



Best restaurant for locavores

AP Roots
Good Foods
Alfalfa



Best \$10 buck lunch (non-chain)

Sidebar
Wine + Market
Tin Roof



Best dinner \$100 bucks

Azur Restaurant
Jonathan at Gratz Park
Rossi's



Chef Jeremy Ashby at Azur



Best new restaurant (opened in last year)

The Dish
Drake's
Bakers 360

Best taqueria

La Favorita
Hacienda

Best VETERAN local restaurant (decade or older)

Merrick Inn
Dudley's
Ramsey's

Best burger (non-chain)

Sawyer's
Tolly Ho
Stella's

Best romantic restaurant

Melting Pot
Le Deauville
Murray's

Best Sunday brunch

Winchell's
Stella's
Doodles

Best beer selection on tap

The Chase Tap Room
Pazzo's
Marikka's



THE GOODS

Best \$10 buck gifts

Third Street Stuff
Two Chicks
Lucia's



Best \$100 buck gifts

L.V. Harkness
For Friends
Keeneland Gift Shop

Best New Store

Scout
Corner Wines
Babycakes

Best boutique

Bella Rose
Mod Boutique
Helen's



Best bookstore

Joseph-Beth Booksellers
Morris Book Shop
Half Price Books

Joseph-Beth
Booksellers

Best place to buy local art

Cross Gate
Artique
South Hill

Best Kroger

Romany Road (known as Krolex, and Krandalls)
Richmond Road (known as Growger)
Beaumont (known as Death Star)
(see page 17 for related story)

SERVICES & PROFESSIONALS

Best architectural firm

EOP

Tate Hill Jacobs
Pohl Rosa Pohl

Best florist

Best of Flowers

Oram's
Stephen Hein



Best honest mechanic

Lowell's

Autotech
Powers

Best computer service/repair

Woodland Computers

Geek Squad
Gorrell's



Best Fear-Free Dentist

Dr. Fred Schroeder
Beaumont Family Dentistry
Dr. Gina Higgins

Best Realtor

Whitney Pannell

Rick Queen
Mina Mattone

Best doggie day care

Uptown Hounds

Dogtown
PetSuites

Best remodeler

Padgett Construction

BACK Construction
Crawford Builders

SEX & THE CITY

Sexiest elected official

Kelly Flood

Kathy Stein
Jim Gray



Best Twitter Power Couple

AllanThinks/AliThinks



Josh Fenner/Liz Fenner
Bill Powell/Jackie Powell

Best Place to Meet SMART Singles

Morris Book Shop

Farmers Market
Joseph-Beth Booksellers

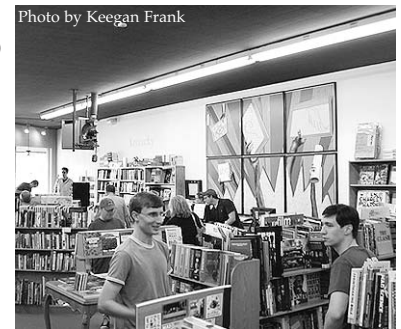


Photo by Keegan Frank

Sexiest Radio Guy

Kruser

Mick Jeffries
Twitch

Sexiest Radio Gal

Deidre Ransdell

Cass Dwyer
Sue Wiley

Sexiest News Guy

Marvin Bartlett

T.G. Shuck
Kevin Christopher



Sexiest News Gal

Kristen Pflum

Megan Skaggs
Dia Davidson



LOCAL COLOR: PEOPLE & PLACES

Best use for Lexington Mall's current carapace

Indoor Farmers Market
New City Hall
Waterpark

Photo by Keegan Frank



Best thing to happen to the suburbs this year

Legacy Trail

New Amphitheater at Horse Park

Best charity event/fundraiser in last year

Makenna Derby Party

FreedomFest
Beaux Arts Ball

Best Lex politician

Diane Lawless



Jim Gray
Kelly Flood

Best grassroots organization

SeedLeaf Lex

SustainLex
Local First/March Madness Marching Band



Best thing to happen to downtown this year

Burying the Power Lines on Newtown

Distillery District
CentrePointe Failure

Photo by Rob Morris



Best political grudge to settle in a cage match *(loser leaves town)*

Dudley Webb vs. Jim Gray

Best local activist/hellraiser

Graham Pohl

Jim Embry
Rob Morris



Best old building rehab

Buster's

Pulse Nightlife

Best thing to happen to UK in last year

Coach Cal

Gillispie's Exit
S. Limestone Streetscape



Best Lex Scandal

Billy Gillispie

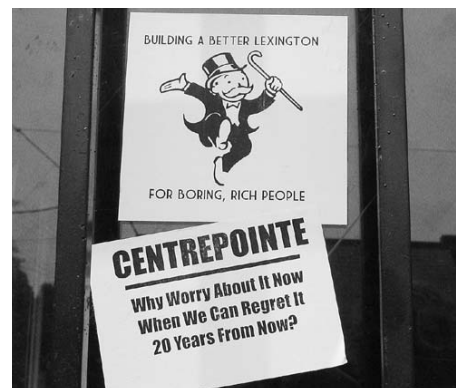


Airport Spending
Library Spending

Best use for Centrepointe block

Downtown Grocery

New City Hall
Amphitheater



MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA/NEW MEDIA

Next group Most Likely to be Investigated by HL

UK
The Jail
DDA

Best Lex Facebook Page

UK Coach Calipari



Ace Weekly
“Draft Jim Gray for Mayor

Best local radio show

Trivial Thursdays (WRFL)



Curtains at 8 (WUKY)
Accents (WRFL)

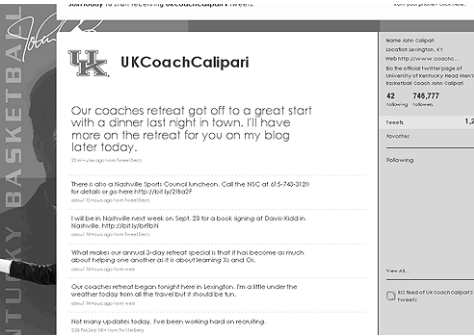
Best radio station

WUKY
WRFL
WKQQ



Best Lex Twitter

UK Coach Calipari



KySportsRadio
Whitney Pannell

Best GTV3 “episode” 09

“Scott Turf Builder”
Sidewalks Debate
“Shoeshine”



Best local blog (non corporate)

MingleFreely.com

Kimmyville
Blueline



Best DJ

Kruser
Mick Jeffries
Twitch



Best TV anchor guy

Tom Kenny
Marvin Bartlett
Kevin Christopher



Best TV anchor gal

Megan Skaggs
Amber Philpot
Barbara Bailey

Best TV weather guy

TG Shuck
Bill Meck
Jon James

Best TV weather gal

Mary Wasson
Kristie Kubovic



Best evening newscast

WTVQ
WLEX
WKYT

Best Lex netroots movement in last year

Kickball at CentrePointe
LexMobs
S. Limestone action

