

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

Friday, December 31, 2021

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

## Coach Tubby Smith

### Press Conference



High Point 48, Kentucky 92

TUBBY SMITH: First, it was a great reception and we're really honored and pleased by the reception and having the banner raised in Rupp Arena. Couldn't be more happy. Certainly I was happy to have my family here with me to witness this moment in time, and to have our High Point team, fans, staff, it was a great experience for them I hope.

I know we didn't give them much of a game in the second half, but that's what can happen to you if you don't stick with the game plan.

Questions.

**Q. Being here today, what was it like for you to be back?**

TUBBY SMITH: I'm sorry?

**Q. Can you talk about the emotions you had here today?**

TUBBY SMITH: Well, you know, it could be draining. We had a couple emotional -- as you get older, you want to enjoy the moments, savor the opportunity that you have.

But seeing how people responded, the ovation, that's one thing you can't duplicate. The only time is at Rupp Arena. The fans here are obviously very intelligent. They understand and they appreciate people when they've given back to the program, and I hope I've done it that.

It was just emotional, really it was draining, but I was glad we came out and played well and I made the adjustment, I think my team did. Obviously made a bunch of threes that kind of knocked us off of our game, but they're just a big athletic team.

Yeah, the emotions were there but the elation will always be a part, and just want to savor this time, anyway.

**Q. What did Donna think about doing the Y?**

TUBBY SMITH: I haven't talked to them, but Saul was here. My entire family was here, I am talking about my immediate family. Not many of my brothers and sisters could make it in dealing with COVID and the travel restrictions for some of them from Maryland and other places.

But Donna, she's done that before. She's done the Y before, and I'm sure -- she loves Kentucky like I do, and for her to have that opportunity it's just -- to witness her, I'm looking at it now, that's a special moment for her because she's been part of this journey now for 40, what, 46 years, 47 years.

So we appreciate Kentucky folks allowing her to be a part of that celebration, a part of the celebration.

**Q. Tubby, if I can, what did you think of Kellan Grady and how he shot? What kind of impact did he make?**

TUBBY SMITH: You know, we played against him last year at Davison and the same. We've had a -- our team is still maturing and he were playing pretty well there. In fact, I think we were leading with about four something to go in the game at Davison. It was like our first game after COVID. We had to cancel some pre-season games last year or nonleague games.

You know, he did a good job. We did a good job on him then; today we lost quite a bit. He's got an unorthodox looking shot but it goes in. Doesn't have the perfect rotation, but gets it off quick. He's got good size. He is a very intelligent player, as well. He knows how to play, he knows how to get open. We lost him and he knocked down a bunch threes on us.

What did he make here? What, seven out of ten? That's pretty good shooting. I don't care if you're just out there in the gym by yourself. And making threes like that, they are going to be hard to beat. Going to be very hard to beat, by anyone.

**Q. Congratulations and welcome back. You were a Hall of Fame coach.**



TUBBY SMITH: Thank you.

**Q. Got a boat load of other honors and awards. But especially for Kentucky fans, it seems like having your jersey retired is special. It's different. Almost reverential.**

TUBBY SMITH: Yeah.

**Q. How is that different for you, the specific act of having your jersey, looking up and seeing it up there?**

TUBBY SMITH: You know, I tell our players, you know, it's what you do from the day you're born to the day you die. My parents taught me, my dad, you never really want to see that gold watch or that retirement award unless you last. Your longevity has its part.

And do things and being a servant of every program I've ever coached. So we feel -- you know, and when do you your job and to the best of your ability people respect that. I think Kentucky obviously, the folks here and the fans here, we are not just on the basketball court, but serving this community, the state, giving back as much as we could through our foundation, and I think that's a testament to the values that we try to instill in our players and in our family.

And when you're successful, and when you're serving people, when we're telling the players, if you play for each other... Jeff Sheppard made that comment today. He spoke to the team briefly, he and Cameron Mills, and we had a great time with the guys last night at the reception with the former players, and each one talked about that season on just playing for me and how we treated them and that we respected them, and I think these what it's about.

Respecting each other and respecting the tradition that Kentucky has for their basketball program. It's the No. 1 basketball program in the history of college basketball, so that's why it's such a thrill, an honor to be a part of the legacy of Kentucky by having your banner raised in Rupp Arena.

**Q. Tubby, how long are you going to keep doing this?**

TUBBY SMITH: Well, you know, my wife won't let me quit, man. I been trying to. She likes this lifestyle.

No, it's getting -- you know, at certain times -- I go back to my pops, raised 17 kids with mom and dad, he said, boy, there is going to come a time you're not going to be able to fight look you used to. Stamina. It's not so much drive. Every coach loves coaching.

I mean, Roy Williams, Mike Krzyzewski, all the guys, the guys, the legendary coaches planning on retiring, they would still be coaching, but you can only go so long.

It's like a boxer or a basketball player. There is a window of longevity. I'm having a lot of fun here at High Point. We just built a new arena, facility, so I'm excited about that.

I'd hoped we had won some of those close games and have a better record right now, but it's a process. We want to finish this journey and then we'll make a decision about retiring.

Thank you.

**Q. I just wanted to ask you how you look back 15 years later on your tenure at Kentucky. Is it remembering mainly the good times or is there a mix?**

TUBBY SMITH: You know, you treasure the moments that you have had. When you're in the midst of it, when you're here you're working so hard. That's what I tell folks. It's a 24/7, 365 days of the year and the season never really ends if you're a coach and a player.

But this is a special place. This city, Lexington, the state, Rupp Arena. I spent 12 years, spent -- this is the longest I've served anywhere was Kentucky. And that's not because -- I'd liked to have stayed here. Would've loved to have stayed here longer.

But in this line the work it can be taxing, it can change you. But I was proud that we raised -- you know Saul played for me here, Bryant, my younger son won a state championship here, Lexington Catholic, so we have some fond memories.

I don't have anything that I can look back on and say this left a bad taste in my mouth. Always been just a joy to come back to Lexington, to the state. Donna a loves it here as I said before. This is where my family probably calls home more than anywhere else.

So when it's home, you will do everything you can and you're going to help to make it as great a place as you can by service people and being a part of it.

But, no, I appreciate it. We have family here, but the broader family of Kentucky fans, Kentucky administrators, on and on and on. It's just good to be back and be honored this way.

Thank you.

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