

## The Final Four field is set

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For the second year in a row, Kentucky has made it to the last weekend.

I think this is the best chance the Cats have had for Coach John Calipari to win it all in the one-and-done era.

Kentucky starts three freshmen and two juniors. They have a bell cow in freshman Anthony Davis, who is the national player of the year after two semesters in college.

Although Calipari has seen two previous Final Four schools (Massachusetts, Memphis) he coached have to vacate NCAA Tournament achievements, Calipari has never been charged with any major NCAA rules violations.

Calipari stays in the unidentifiable gray haze of college basketball, but give the devil his due.

He has used the system to his advantage. He not only recruits at the highest level every year, Calipari can make high profile recruits play hard, stay out of trouble and not be problems while at Kentucky.

At most programs, they would not have enough basketballs to go around for this many prima donna recruits.

All five starters on Kentucky's current team averaged 20 points or more in high school. So how does he get them to fit into roles in order to be successful at the next level?

No one on the current UK team averages more than 14 points. All five starters and their sixth man all average 10 or more points.

Davis leads the team averaging 14.3 points, but the 6-10, 220-pound center is a rebounding and shot-blocking machine.

Calipari, more than any other college coach, gets the most high profile recruits because he tells them he can get them to the NBA, more than likely as a first-round pick and a few of them as the number one pick in the NBA Draft.

It works. Clarksville Northeast star Alex Poythress said at the time that one of the main reasons he chose Kentucky was Calipari's track record of sending players to the NBA after only one year of college.

Poythress is a prototypical Calipari recruit. He is Tennessee's Class AAA Mr. Basketball. He was second in the state in scoring with a 30.4-point average.

Calipari's track record proves his point. Kentucky point guard John Wall was the No. 1 pick in the 2010 NBA Draft. That was the season Calipari saw five of his players go in the first round, all of them earning guaranteed money.

He called it the greatest day in Kentucky's storied basketball history.

In last year's draft, Kentucky had two of the first eight players drafted. In 2008, Memphis guard Derrick Rose was the No. 1 pick. The 2009 draft saw Memphis guard Tyreke Evans go No. 3.

Let's face it. Every 10-year-old kid shooting hoops on playgrounds or in recreation centers across the country has the dream of playing in the NBA. For many of them living in inner-cities, they have been told that basketball is their only way out.

They view Calipari as a modern day Moses. And to play at Kentucky is to be universally idolized by the fan base commonly known as the Blue Mist.

Now, Calipari is back on the Final Four stage again. He has the best team and the best players in New Orleans.

Louisville's Rick Pitino coached eight years at Kentucky. He knows what it is like to cut down the nets after the final game.

I think John Calipari will join that fraternity Monday night.

**Contact Sports Columnist Joe Biddle at [This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it](#) .**

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