UK's Calipari 'King of One and Done'

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So Kentucky's national championship team scattered to the winds after hoisting the trophy.

So what?

All five starters – three freshmen, two sophomores – declared for the upcoming NBA Draft. That included National Player of the Year Anthony Davis.

Cats Coach John Calipari never shed a tear. Instead, he was a proud papa at their press conference, in which he participated.

Conversely, Coach Cal realizes it is today's system and embraces it. While he says he doesn't like the NBA rule that prohibits a player to declare for the draft until they turn 19, Calipari is miles ahead of the curve on college coaches who have not adjusted to the rule.

Calipari is King of One and Done. He sells recruits a ticket to the NBA after one year. It is not a recruiting ploy. He backs it up. Calipari pushes the baby birds out of the nest and watches them fly.

Kansas Coach Bill Self gives credit where credit is due.

“Calipari is the best salesman our sport knows,’’ Self said prior to his team losing to Kentucky in the Final Four championship game.

“He recruits good players, but he coaches good players. He gets them to buy in. … Nobody recruits like him and nobody has coached better, considering how many young kids he has and how he gets them to play for one purpose.’’

You may find it hard to believe, but Calipari’s Cats are considered by Rivals.com to have the top recruiting class in the country this year. If it holds up, it will mark four straight years he has ruled the recruiting wars.

He has commitments from three of the Rivals.com top 15 players, including 6-10 center Nerlens Noel. Noel is considered by recruiting services to be the No. 1 or 2 prospect in the country.

Joining Noel is Clarksville Northeast star Alex Poythress, a 6-8, 215-pound small forward ranked No. 7 by Scout.com and No. 8 by Rivals. They also landed Archie Goodwin, a 6-4, 180-pound shooting guard out of Arkansas. Rivals ranked Goodwin No. 14. They will add 7-footer Willie Cauley, a 4-star recruit ranked No. 40 by Rivals.

It went down to the wire for the consensus No. 1 recruit, Shabazz Muhammad, a high-energy 6-6, 220-pounder who can play all over the floor. Muhammad decided to stay home, and will play at UCLA. If anyone was ideal for Calipari’s dribble-drive system, it was Muhammad.

The Cats are still in the hunt for other blue chippers and will add point guard Ryan Harrow, who transferred from North Carolina State and is eligible this season. He started 10 of the last 15 games as a freshman at State. Harrow was highly recruited out of Marietta, Ga.

Not only does Calipari’s message resonate with recruits, he has the resume to substantiate his sermon.

He saw five Kentucky players drafted in the first round of the 2010 NBA draft. The five players who are coming out early this year are all projected as first-round selections, with Davis and Michael Kidd-Gilchrist projected to go in the first five picks.

Over the last four years, Calipari has coached eight of the 33 one-and-done players taken in the NBA draft. The closest coach to him is Texas coach Rick Barnes, with three.

Of Calipari’s top-10 recruits since 2007, five have been top-five picks in the NBA draft.

The beat goes on in the Bluegrass.

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