

The Annual Memorial Game: A Proposal

Creating a Fan-First Experience in the newly renovated Memorial Coliseum

Mitch, Listen Up!

This idea of a Men's Basketball game in Memorial Coliseum has been tossed around for years. It is one of those few universally loved ideas within Big Blue Nation. With these tumultuous times for the fanbase, we need a unifying movement to get behind. So, with that in mind, I have put together a formal proposal for one Mitch Barnhart. Here, I will walk through how I would start when putting this event together.

Enjoy!



TICKETING

In my opinion, the most important aspect of this game is who will be there. If we want to make this a money-maker, we absolutely could. An 8,500 capacity gym against a quality opponent would skyrocket the fair market value of the tickets, especially if we were selling them months in advance to third-party vendors. You could see the get-in price skyrocketing to the thousands of dollars for just a single ticket. **THIS IS NOT FAN-FIRST THINKING, MITCH!**

So, here's what we are going to do:

Student Seating

If you look at the seating chart to the right here, the ENTIRE right side of the gym will be student general admission. Students will be able to get into the game **FREE OF CHARGE**. I don't have an exact number, but that should be around 4,000 students, which is right around the current Rupp Arena student seating allotment when you consider the eRUPption Zone and the

overflow student seating. We **MUST** do it this way because SEC rules dictate that designated student seating cannot be directly behind the visiting team's bench. So, the students will get to attend their first on-campus Men's Basketball game in over a decade behind press row.

Public Seating

The remainder of the available seating (once you account for the opponent's allotment of family tickets placed near their bench) will be sold as general admission tickets. We are going to make these **REASONABLY AFFORDABLE, MITCH**. This is a game for the common fan, not the horse farm owners. My initial suggestion is something around the ballpark of \$50 a ticket, but I'm sure I can be talked up to \$100 maximum. This game will be exclusive in terms of numbers, but it should not be exclusive in terms of financial access. If you want to win the fanbase over with this event, make it available to the majority of the fanbase. What you lose in ticket sales you will gain back in fan support, media coverage, merchandise sales, concessions sales, and more. And if you end up still not making as much money as you could have, **WHO CARES?????**



Buying Tickets

This is the kicker. If you sell these tickets traditionally online, we lose all of the work we just put in to make it affordable to the common fan. Third-party vendors will snatch these tickets up in hordes and sell them back to fans at astronomical prices. So, let's get creative and create a new Kentucky Basketball tradition while we're at it.

Tickets for this game will be sold...

- ☐ ...in person
- ☐ ...a few hours before the game
- ☐ ...one ticket per person in line

What this does is it causes people who want the ticket to WANT the ticket. People will have to wait in line in person to get into this event, but they won't have to break the bank for it. That is how you get the true biggest fans of the program into the building for this game.



This likely means we will have a campout situation. If only there was ample green space across the street from Memorial Coliseum. OH WAIT THERE IS! For a designated amount of time (a few days or so before the game), fans and students will be able to line up for their chance to go to this special event. This creates a number of opportunities to do some positive morale-building with these fans. The team can

come out to greet those in line; we can set up some entertainment stations to keep fans occupied and energetic; local businesses can host events or sell products or services to grow the local economy. This event benefits EVERYONE involved.

With this approach, we can create LEGITIMATELY the best environment in college basketball HISTORY. No one would EVER be able to match this level of energy.

THE OPPONENT

This is where decision-making gets difficult. Basketball is a winter sport, and we are going to be setting up a situation where fans will be camping outside for multiple days potentially. We need to choose an opponent that can play us during the warmest parts of the season.

Non-Conference Rival: Pros

Ideally, I'm talking about a Blue Blood, but really any ranked non-conference team would do in this spot. This is an opponent that fans will get excited about and would draw the attention of the national media. We want to show off our fanbase, our newly renovated coliseum, and our basketball team, so a marquee non-conference opponent would do that. It also practically boosts our team resume as we build toward March Madness. This matchup could also occur during mid-November, one of the warmer parts of the season before we get into deep winter.



Non-Conference Rival: Cons

Scheduling this matchup will be TOUGH. Which Power 5 team would sign up for this event? They are nearly guaranteed a whooping because the environment would be so unique. It would likely require a commitment for Kentucky to play one (if not multiple) true road games against this team in the future AND a relatively hefty sum of money. But to be fully honest, I like true road games too, so that isn't really as much of an issue. As for the money, we have already established that this is a fan-first event, Mitch, so we are just going to have to bite the bullet on that one.

Non-Conference Cupcake: Pros

This game would be simpler to schedule, and smaller schools would LOVE the media exposure surrounding this event. We know fans will turn up either way, so it won't impact attendance as much. We won't lose as much money on ticket sales because we aren't scheduling a marquee home game for a 8,500 seat gymnasium.

Non-Conference Cupcake: Cons

Making this decision is how we turn this potentially long-running tradition into a one-year gimmick. Fans, national media, and the team themselves need to see the importance of a game like this. Bringing in Directional State Technical Institute would diminish the product we are working so hard to produce. The nation will care less about this event as well, meaning we lose the media exposure that was going to help justify our loss in revenue.

SEC Foe: Pros

JUST IMAGINE! Kentucky vs. Florida or Tennessee or even Missouri in a crucial SEC showdown in MEMORIAL COLISEUM! Kentucky is playing for NCAA Tournament seeding, a SEC Championship, and bragging rights against a conference foe. This would be an amazing late-February game for fans.



SEC Foe: Cons

There is really only one downside to this plan – weather. The SEC season is from early January to early March, otherwise known as the time period where Kentucky is either Siberia or Florida. It is impossible to predict weather patterns in this time frame, so we would be gambling choosing a conference opponent. There would likely be years where fans are camping out and throwing snowballs at each other.

THE TAKEAWAY

Mitch, please make this happen. We common fans don't agree on much these days. But, we ALL agree on this right here. Give us just one game a year in Memorial Coliseum, set it up for the benefit of the common fan, and you will have our undying support (that is, until you make another Mitchy decision).

With The Annual Memorial Game, we can make Lexington, Kentucky the focal point of all of the eyes of College Basketball for a week every single year. I can guarantee you that if we start this now, there will be people pitching tents on the other side of the Avenue of Champions 50 years from now thinking back to the very first Memorial Game way back in the 2020s.

Make the right decision, Mitch.

