

SPECIAL EDITION

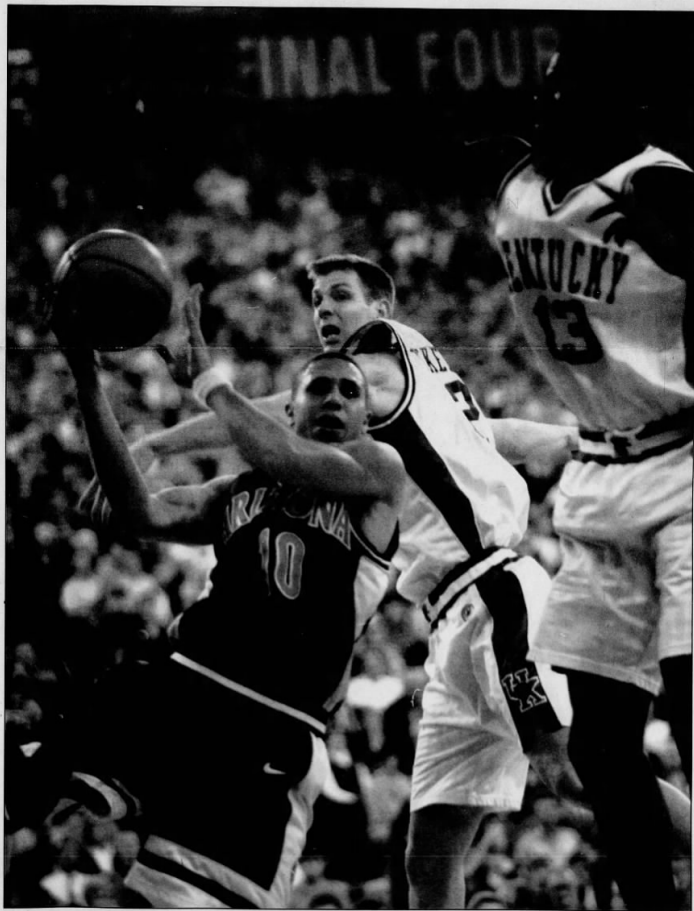
The Arizona Daily Star

Vol. 156 No. 91 **

Tucson, Tuesday, April 1, 1997

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Champions!



The Final

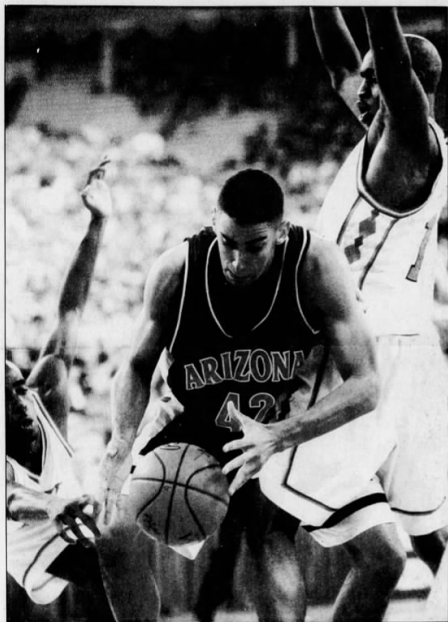
The Arizona Daily Star
Tucson, Tuesday, April 1, 1997



Eugene Edgersen gets a big Wildcat hug from Wilbur after Arizona defeated the top-seeded Kansas Jayhawks.



Arizona fans, from left, Mary Lou Odgen, Jill Maltos and Megan Maltos show off their Wildcat license plates.



Arizona's A.J. Bramlett grabs a rebound from North Carolina's Ed Cota, left, and Vince Carter



Michael Dickerson goes up for a shot



The Wildcats celebrate their victory over Kansas



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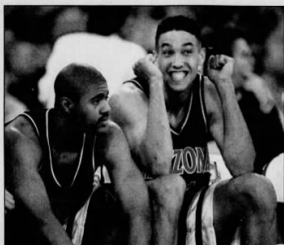
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Traditions



Eugene Edgersen and Bennett Davison



Jason Terry



Miles Simon



Lute Olson

Arizona is *wild* about the Wildcats



A.J. Bramlett



Mike Bibby



Justin Wessel, John Ash, Mike Bibby



Michael Dickerson and Ortege Jenkins



Quynn Tebbis, John Ash, Josh Pastner, Jason Lee



Donnell Harris



Eugene Edgersen

Special Final Four section Friday

The Arizona Daily Star

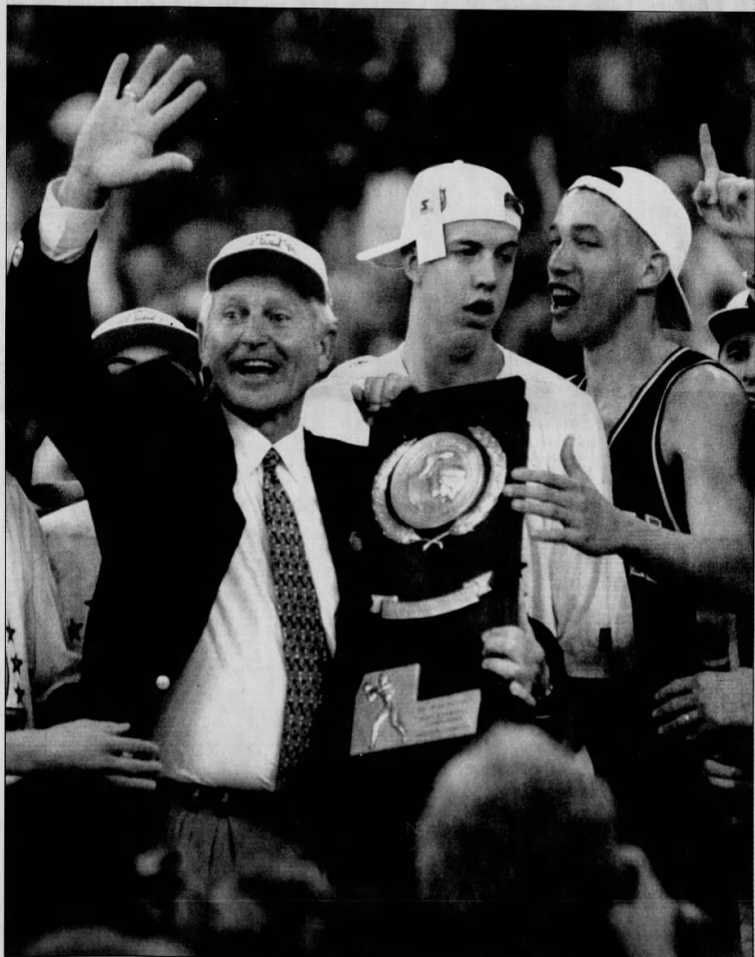
Serving Tucson and Southern Arizona
Final Edition, Tucson, Tuesday, April 1, 1997



Vol. 156 No. 81 *

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TOP CATS



Arizona coach Lute Olson celebrates at midcourt with players after winning his first national championship, 84-79, in overtime against Kentucky

David Sanders, The Arizona Daily Star

1 C

The Arizona Daily Star

Tucson, Tuesday, April 1, 1997

The Final

Young group of Cats

Young UA lifts Olson to 1st title

By Javier Morales
The Arizona Daily Star

INDIANAPOLIS — The Arizona Wildcats completed last night an NCAA Tournament run that no other team has accomplished.

The UA not only won a title with nine losses, they beat three No. 1 seeds — Kansas, North Carolina and Kentucky — along their magical and unexpected trip. Never before had a team beaten three top seeds.

Those traditional powerhouses combine for 11 championships. Arizona won its first in school history last night.

"Our kids showed their toughness to the very end," said UA coach Lute Olson, who at 62, does not have to worry now about retiring without a championship. "What's most impressive is three No. 1 seeds went down."

"This is one tough group of Cats."

The Wildcats streak embodies more than a six-game joy ride through the tournament, ending last night with an 84-70 win in overtime over Kentucky at the RCA Dome. Arizona became North Carolina State last night. The UA knows how Villanova felt 12 years ago.

Olsen did not run all over the court like N.C. State's Jimmy Valvano. His hair was out of place, for once, however, because Bennett Davidson fulfilled his promise to run his hands through his coach's mane if the UA won the championship.

Simon knelt down on the court, hugging the ball, looking like Michael Jordan when he won his first NBA title.

"It was such a war," he said, slightly shaking his head with a smile. "This is the most unbelievable thing I've ever done."

Jason Terry ran from baseline to baseline, wearing Arizona's championship cap in the air. Simon and Michael Dickerson, the cornerstones of the team, embraced. Mike Bibby was mobbed by the UA reserves.

"I thought we had a chance next year, but

See CHAMPS, Page 11C

INSIDE SPORTS

■ A welcome-home rally for the UA men's basketball team will start at noon today in the east side of Arizona Stadium.

Gates 1 and 8 will open at 11 a.m.

Sun Tran will operate shuttle buses from El Con Mall to the stadium, beginning at 10 a.m. The cost is \$1 each way. Buses will leave from the northeast side of the mall. Story, Page 3C.

■ NCAA men's championship bracket. Page 2C.

■ Local fans' reactions. Page 3C.

■ Championship game notes. Page 4C.

■ Complete box score. Page 11C.

■ Picture page. Page 12C.

1997 NCAA Final Four

INDIANAPOLIS

Bibby thought UA would win in 1998, not this year

By Jack Magruder
The Arizona Daily Star

INDIANAPOLIS — Freshman pro-bie Mike Bibby is leaving school, all right.

But only for a day or two.

"He said he's not going to make it to class this week. That will be his celebration," UA assistant coach Jesse Evans said.

But he'll probably be there by Wednesday.

Bibby, believed to be the first freshman point guard to lead his team to an NCAA championship in 30 years, might be down to earth by then.

"Still, we had nothing to lose — (to win the title) next year, but not this year," Bibby said.

"Still, we had nothing to lose."

Bibby, 18, was one rebound short of a double-double, scoring 19 points with nine rebounds, eight turnovers, five-

shots and three steals.

He made three of his five three-point field-goal attempts and all six of his free-throw attempts.

Bibby accounted for 11 of the UA's final 17 points in regulation, scoring nine — six free throws and a three in transition. He also missed the shot clock in the final minute before setting up Bennett Davidson for a layup with 18.6 seconds remaining that gave the UA a three-point lead.

He penetrated. They collapsed on him because they weren't expecting the big guys to score. I just finished it," Davidson said.

"He just played like the whole team. We knew it was a championship game, but it didn't feel like it was a championship game. All the pressure was on Kentucky. We're a young team, like (Olsen coach) Rick Majerus said," he said.

See BIBBY, Page 11C



Miles Simon looks to make a pass despite intense pressure from Scott Padgett, left, and Cameron Mills



Mike Bibby passes ball through Kentucky defense

This was one for the ages

INDIANAPOLIS — The game never really ends now. It is in your heart forever, unending, a moment in time never to be forgotten.

You will summon to mind the glow of a three-week crusade in which Arizona's unprecedented run against the royal family of college basketball — Kansas, North Carolina and Kentucky — became one of the most remarkable testaments to heart and poise in the history of the game.

If you live in Tucson you will never again have to say, "Damn, that should have been us." Now you know what it is to be No. 1, and now you know that the winning exceeds the wanting.

"It was such a war," said Miles Simon, who, in the mad march of March, became the best amateur basketball player in the world. "It is the hardest thing I have ever done."

If you ever wanted to know what it is like somewhere over the rainbow, it is something like this: Lute Olson stood on the championship platform on the middle of the court at the RCA Dome last night, his wife's red lipstick smeared around his mouth, a national title cap pulled taut over his mussed-up hair.

"Three No. 1 seeds went down," he said into the P.A. microphone, his eyes misting over. He said no more. The reaction from the 4,000 Arizona fans drowned out whatever else it was he wanted to say.

The holy trinity of Arizona basketball (or at least a possible version of it) crowded into the UA dressing room and let it be known that they, too, belonged to this championship party. Sean Elliott, Steve Kerr and Judd Buechler, denied the national title nine years ago in a suffocating bout of hurt in the 1988 Final Four, wanted to get a closer look at this fourth-seeded team that hardly did anything the easy way, which is precisely their charm.

"Losing (in '88) still hurts, it'll always hurt," said Kerr, "but this takes away a lot of the sting."

So in the end, Arizona's last game was its best game. It beat Kentucky 84-79 in overtime, never tapping the brakes, always advancing, refusing to submit to Kentucky's battalion of all-stars.

The chancellors of the game will now have to revise history. No longer is Villanova's 1985 title unchallenged as the most inspiring, most unexpected championship ever. Now, a No. 8 seed, beat two No. 1 seeds and the defending national champion, Georgetown, for the title.

Arizona's route to the championship is, at worst, a photo finish for the top spot.

"This was one of the all-time marathons," said UA assistant coach Phil Johnson. "Beating Kansas was like a national championship game to me. And then beating North Carolina was like a national championship game, too. It's almost like we had three national championship games. Every game was a mountain to climb and I think that's why we won it all. We prepared for every game like it was the game."

There will be no chance for a refund.

Each of Arizona's six victories were excruciatingly tense. Two overtime. Two more required comebacks from double-figure deficits in the final seven minutes. And two chess matches in which Olson moved his pieces to

See HANSEN, Page 11C

'U-of-A' chants shake Dome as Cats win the big one

By Doug Krutz
The Arizona Daily Star

INDIANAPOLIS — Plant a saguaro cactus smack in the middle of the basketball court.

Scatter some rattlesnakes underneath the hoops.

Crank the temperature up to a desert-like 100 degrees.

Arizona ORNS this place.

"It's unbelievable, baby! I'm telling you, it's unbelievable!" howled Ronald Lebrun, a Tucson lawyer and University of Arizona Wildcat fan, seconds after the Cats dismantled the University of Kentucky 84-79 last night to win their first national championship.

The fans from Tucson love it, baby! Lebrun went on as the enormous RCA Dome game site was swathed with waves after waves of thunderous cheers.

"Dreams can come true!" Chants of "UofA! UofA!" furiously rattled the Dome's rafters as Wildcat fans tasted, for the first time in 30 years, the sweet elixir of finishing second to no body.

"The third time really was a charm," said Arizona fan Shannon Travis, of Tucson, referring to the Cats' three previous trips to the Final Four phase of the NCAA tournament.

After they won Saturday night (over North Carolina), I found a lucky penny in my shoe. Really. A penny I didn't know was there. Do you think that had anything to do with it?" Maybe, who knows?

But most fans seemed to think the victors had a whole lot to do with, superlative play by an

See DOME, Page 11C

For Simon, miracle shooting has become routine

Beating Kentucky's press, he scores 30 points for Cats

By Bruce Pascoe
The Arizona Daily Star

INDIANAPOLIS — When Miles Simon hit a 60-footer to beat Cincinnati last year, the shot was pretty much considered a miracle.

Now the truth has surfaced. It was standard practice.

With another furious press in his face, with leading scorer Michael Dickinson sitting on the bench last night with another case of the ticks, Simon pulled off the unthinkable again.

This time, it was 30 points. One attained through a 16-foot free-throw shooting and his ready ability to split defenders.

Simon danced through the lane and scored the ball in the basket.

On Saturday, it was an upset and night game to break the UA record of a 15-4 deficit against North Carolina.

For the two final games, it was 54 points and the Final Four MVP award. For the six-game tournament, it was 132 points and 14 rebounds.

What's more, all of that doesn't even count that fruitful, sleepless night Simon survived before passing his family studies course in an effort just to make it on the floor this year.

"It's unbelievable," Simon

said. "To come out and ... I don't know — I just gave it my all. Kentucky, I think they were not down in a first half. I was very tired. I called for a sub like three times. But in the second half, I just had to suck it up, and I was getting the ball in the right spots, able to create easy shots and get to the foul line."

He wasn't just getting the ball in the right spots. He was getting the ball and creating the right spots.

Simon drove through the Kentucky press all night, often splitting defenders and hanging forward for baskets. When he didn't get the shot off, he drew fouls, and that was fine, too.

The gig became so easy, Simon started asking for more.

"He kept saying, 'They can't stop me. They can't stop me,'" Dickinson said. "He was in the zone. And when a player's in a

ARIZONA'S NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Year	Sport	On the final day
1976	Baseball	Arizona beats Eastern Michigan 7-1
1980	Baseball	Terry Francona-led UA beats Hawaii 5-3
1986	Baseball	Cats cruise past Florida State 10-2
1991	Softball	Debby Day shuts out defending champ UCLA 5-0
1992	Men's golf	UA erids seven shots ahead of second-place ASU
1993	Softball	Sue Parra's two-hitter drops UCLA 1-0
1994	Softball	Sue Parra one-hits Northridge 4-0 win
1995	Softball	Marissa Barnes sinks 1-40-yard shot in playoff
1996	Softball	Jenny Dalton's homer helps beat Washington 6-4
1997	Men's hoops	Miles Simon scores 30 in overtime thriller

zone like that, you've got to give him the ball."

Ironically, Arizona coach Late Olson indicated, that could be Simon's best asset. Not popping 60-footers.

"Miles can not only penetrate, but he can get you in the air," Olson said. "Probably as well as he shoots three, his best basketball is when he's slashing and cutting through the defense."

He has a feel when to shoot it, when to shoot it, and when to get the guy up in the air.

He has a feel when to get the ball, period.

All season long, he's been our vocal leader out there, and he just wants to play every night," guard Jason Terry said.

"He actually said, 'Give me the ball. I can't guard me. Just put it in my hands.' That's just the way he is. Miles is so determined that in a big game, (he knew) someone had to step up, and he felt he was."

Not that it is anything new. By now, Arizona has been watching Simon pull these kinds of things off over and over again.

"He's been doing it all year," forward Bennett Davidson said.

Press? No problem. Kentucky press? No problem. Just give him the ball.

Then the scissors.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

What writers around the country are saying about Arizona's victory over Kentucky.

Mitch Albom, Detroit Free Press:

"The game had the awkwardness of a ten-year-old learning to dance, the stickiness of wet paint, the color of an unripe banana. The players, in plain, dumb, plain, ill-advised shots, it simply was not polished basketball — it was the problem of a 16-foot free-throw shooting and his ready ability to split defenders."

And yet, when a championship is on the line, even mistakes and bloopers and debacles off the knee take on a future importance, and you find yourself peering at the game, watching your hands on your thighs, inhaling through your teeth, waiting, like everyone else, to see who has the last laugh in the Big Dance.

Bad basketball. Great drama. Did you need to be tough, or have an iron stomach? The star of the night, the game's most outstanding player, was a junior guard out of California named Miles Simon — named for Miles Davis, the jazz trumpeter player — which was appropriate, since you had to improvise in a game like this.

Simon improvised all right, almost every time he had the ball — ducking, twisting, spinning, dipping, running down the lane for the dunk, twisting, spinning, dipping, running down the lane for the dunk, twisting, spinning, dipping, running down the lane for the dunk.

Simon improvised all right, almost every time he had the ball — ducking, twisting, spinning, dipping, running down the lane for the dunk, twisting, spinning, dipping, running down the lane for the dunk.

Chuck Cuiper, Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader:

"This is a great story, the kind of story Americans love, the kind of story you get only once in a while in college basketball. A young team from a remote place on the map (Tucson) and a remote place in the NCAA Tournament draw (No. 4) rises up, wins it all. Nobody foresees it. Nobody even thinks about it."

It plays a marvelous overtime title game with the defending champion, and it forces the team that runs everybody out of gas to run out of gas itself. It boots everybody else at everybody else's game.

Arizona was watchable and likable. It was a small band of guys with trick-the-eye quickness, seemingly reaching in to everybody's passing lane. It wouldn't let even Wayne Turner, who has penetrated past everybody for Kentucky, penetrate in the age of quickness over night, guards older big men, Arizona is a firing change.

Arizona was just better than everybody else, and who knew?

Dale Hofmann, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel:

"This will always be the Final Four that fueled most people and greeted everybody."

Only the sixth overtime game ever to determine a national collegiate basketball championship, it was as good as it gets.

The country will forget about this tournament's early exit now, but it will never forget about this tournament.

Tom Sorenson, The Charlotte Observer:

"The players had no legacy, no reputation, no doubts. Arizona

doesn't stop to play any upperclassmen. You know when we should have known the Wildcats had a great chance to win? It was seconds before the championship game began."

Arizona junior forward Bennett Davidson sealed to center court for the jump ball. Now this is a major, major, major moment in the World Series or the Super Bowl. And these are 20- and 21-year-olds, at least the 21-year-olds who have yet to leave

for the NBA, who play it. More than 47,000 fans in the RCA Dome are screaming and everybody else is watching on TV. The cameras are almost straight at the players. What did Davidson do?

He yawned.

No, Bennett — are we boring you?

No. And Bennett and the other players don't know us, either.

Jason Whitlock, Kansas City Star:

"Great stories. Great emotion. Great action. Great drama. But no great teams."

That's what we should remember about this college basketball season. That's the message that resonated from this Final Four. That's what transpired last night at Indianapolis' RCA Dome when Arizona's Wildcats ended Kentucky's reign as college basketball's national champions, upsetting Kentucky's No. 1, the Wildcats 84-79 in overtime.

But let's not kid ourselves. The Arizona team that won last night wouldn't stand a chance against the Christian Laettner-led Duke teams of the early 1990s or the Larry Johnson-led UNLV squads of the same period, or even the Pal-Ford-Provided Michigan Wolverines.

Neither Arizona nor Kentucky has a claim to greatness.

Dave Hyde, Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel:

Arizona, so used to being first only alphabetically, needed a lesson in embracing the moment when it came into view nationally.

"Let's not doubt now," coach Late Olson shouted to his team in overtime, in the RCA Dome, with one of the NCAA Tournament's most unadorned champions ready to be crowned.

Olson need not have worried by then. Doubt was downed for the Kentucky finally followed.

John H. Johnson, Newport News (Va.) Daily Press:

History has not been kind to royalty. The crown of Boston's Patriots tossed King George III's tea into the harbor. The French hoped to have a better royalist, but the crown Prince Charles dethroned Prince Louis.

But no one in college basketball has ever treated the game's royalty as Arizona, your new national champion.

The Wildcats defeated defending titlist Kentucky 84-79 in overtime last night in the RCA Dome to win the first title in program history. Add victories over Kansas and North Carolina en route to the championship game, and Arizona defeated college basketball's three reigning champions during this NCAA Tournament.

MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP																											
First round		Second round		Regionals		Semifinals		Regionals		Second round		First round															
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<div><div><div>1 Kentucky 75</div><div>16 Montana 54</div><div>3 Iowa 72</div><div>8 Virginia 65</div><div>3 Boston Col. 79</div><div>12 Valparaiso 68</div><div>4 St. Joseph's 76</div><div>13 Pacific 85</div><div>8 Stanford 90</div><div>11 Oklahoma 67</div><div>3 Wake Forest 68</div><div>14 St. Mary's 46</div><div>21 N.C. Charlotte 76</div><div>23 Georgia Tech 67</div><div>25 Utah 74</div><div>28 Navy 67</div></div><div><div>2 Kansas 76</div><div>15 Iowa 67</div><div>7 Iowa 67</div><div>9 Iowa 67</div><div>1 Boston Col. 79</div><div>11 Oklahoma 67</div><div>5 Wake Forest 68</div><div>13 Pacific 85</div><div>9 Stanford 90</div><div>17 Stanford 72</div><div>19 Wake Forest 68</div><div>21 N.C. Charlotte 76</div><div>23 Georgia Tech 67</div><div>25 Utah 74</div><div>27 New 67</div></div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div></div>														<div><div><div>North Carolina 63</div><div>North Carolina 73</div><div>Colorado 56</div><div>California 53</div><div>Villanova 82</div><div>Long Sand U. 91</div><div>Louisville 84</div><div>New Mexico 63</div><div>Texas 92</div><div>Coppin State 81</div><div>Kansas 78</div><div>Purdue 81</div><div>Rhode Island 79</div><div>Col. of Charleston 66</div><div>S. Alabama 67</div><div>Brown 63</div><div>Georgia 70</div><div>Tenn.-Chatt. 73</div><div>Providence 88</div><div>Providence 81</div><div>Duke 87</div><div>Murray State 66</div></div><div><div>North Carolina 92</div><div>Indiana 60</div><div>California 55</div><div>Penn State 52</div><div>Villanova 101</div><div>Long Sand U. 91</div><div>Louisville 66</div><div>New Mexico 63</div><div>Old Dominion 65</div><div>Wisconsin 58</div><div>Texas 71</div><div>South Carolina 65</div><div>Coppin State 78</div><div>Kansas 78</div><div>Purdue 81</div><div>Rhode Island 79</div><div>Maryland 66</div><div>Col. of Charleston 75</div><div>S. Alabama 67</div><div>Brown 63</div><div>Georgia 70</div><div>Tenn.-Chatt. 73</div><div>Providence 88</div><div>Providence 81</div><div>Duke 87</div><div>Murray State 66</div></div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div><div>OT</div></div>													
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Fans go nuts



UA students at O'Malley's on Fourth again during the final moments of the game.

Cars tipped, damaged as UA revelers celebrate victory

By Tim Steller and Monica Mendoza
The Arizona Daily Star

Jubilant fans overturned cars, shinned up light poles and scrambled onto rooftops to proclaim their triumph over the University of Kentucky last night.

At least one Tucson police patrol car was damaged as fans shattered windows and filched belongings inside. Police arrested at least one out-of-control fan.

Some people jumped the fences at the railroad tracks, and still other revelers rocked cars back and forth. In at least one case, a car was flipped. It was unknown whether there were any injuries. In the area of Sixth and Fourth avenues, car windshields and house windows were broken.

Bans boistered one another onto their shoulders, chanting, "I of A!" and screaming, "We're Number One!"

"Enjoy the time, enjoy the moment!" Andrew Nemeth, a University of Arizona student, said.

"It's the greatest feeling I've ever had," Matt Kevorkian said. "It's so good, I could kiss you," he shouted into a reporter's face.

Then he did.

Pats at O'Malley's bar pitched plastic beer cups into the air, leaped and hugged. Bartender Kristy Stacks sprayed the room with soft drink from a soda dispenser.

Tucson fire truck parked the crowd on Fourth Avenue, and crew members leaped out, slapping hands and yelling, "We're Number One!"

"It's the best feeling in the world," Jim Gorman, a UA student, said.

Rep. Jim Kolbe and college students cheer on the Cats at O'Malley's on Fourth.



At Eighth Street and Fourth Avenue, two men climbed a light pole and ceremoniously tossed their T-shirts into the sea of fans to shouts of approval.

About 400 tightly packed people slapped one another, leaning their bodies together into a writhing "mud hug."

At 10:45 p.m., as the crowd swelled to more than 1,000, police steered themselves against the crush.

One officer told her partner, "It's helmet time" — referring to riot gear stored in police vehicles.

Officers then donned helmets and braced themselves for a long night of crowd control, as fans raced up and down the streets.

"It's really going nuts out there," Richard Miranda, Tucson Police Department assistant chief, said. "The drums have emptied out thousands of people and everyone's pouring over to Fourth Avenue," he said, minutes after the game ended.

At one point, six men stood atop a fabric store roof and mooned those below. Onlookers took aim and then came upon.

Hours before, fans took no chances on getting a seat at their favorite sports bars.

"People have been here since noon saving tables," said Gene Pollock, managing partner of Maloney's, at 213 N. Fourth Ave.

"It's just like St. Patrick's Day," said Dave, a manager of O'Malley's, 247 N. Fourth Ave., who said he has time to give his last game. "I've just gotta go."

O'Malley's hit its capacity of 480



Joyous fans take to the street on Fourth Avenue, sparking police response

patrons at 3:30 p.m.; Maloney's reached its limit of 250 at 3 p.m.

Outside O'Malley's, Amy Meshulam, a UA senior, was still waiting outside as game time approached.

"Where are we going to watch the game?" she called to her friend. She grimaced as Congressman Jim Kolbe excused his way through the crowd to do a television interview inside.

"They, what's going on here?" Meshulam yelled to Kolbe, before backing off and letting him pass.

By 10:00, about 22 residents of the UA's Maricopa Hall had packed their lounge in the women's dorm.

They blew up long, narrow balloons and tied them into goody cones.

Someone called out: "The game's on," and the room fell silent.

Later, as A.J. Brandt whipped the ball to Jason Terry at the three-point line and Terry jumped to shoot, 22 women gasped.

The ball fell through the net, and they screamed their delight. The score then was Arizona, 31, Kentucky 30.

UA dorms were locked at 7 p.m. to keep outsiders from crashing student gatherings. Normally, they shut at midnight.

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Celebrities join crowd to cheer UA court stars

By Doug Kroutz
The Arizona Daily Star

INDIANAPOLIS — The big stars of last night's national championship basketball game played on the court.

But other stars — celebrities from various walks of life — turned out as spectators and sometimes ended up holding court.

Actor Kevin Costner — usually attired for hoops viewing in tan slacks, green shirt, filthy glasses, long blond hair and a beard — watched the game from the heart of the University of Arizona seating section.

Shortly before tip-off, Bobbi Olson, wife of UA coach Rube Olson, stopped by for spirited chitchat with Costner, the star of such hits as "Dances with Wolves" and such bombs as "Waterworld."

Among other actors spotted in the crowd was Ted Danson, a popular star of the eternally running "Cheers" television series and now a co-star in a sitcom called "Ink."

From the world of sports, former UA All American Sean Elliott delighted Arizona players and fans

"They're gonna win."

Steve Kerr
Former UA player

by joining team members on a bus that took them from their hotel to the RCA Dome game site.

Although his words weren't audible outside the bus, Elliott, who is now a star with the San Antonio Spurs of the National Basketball Association, presumably delivered a few words of wisdom on the business of winning.

At least two other former Wildcats who've moved on to the NBA — Steve Kerr and Judd Buechler of the Chicago Bulls — turned out to root for their home boys.

"They're gonna win," Kerr predicted matter-of-factly before the game.

Well-known basketball coaches and former coaches in the stands included John Wooden, a longtime legend at UCLA; Lon Kruger, of the University of Illinois; Jim Boeheim, of Syracuse University; and Denny Crum, of the University of Louisville.

Throughout the Final Four weekend and at last night's game, Dick Vitale, an enormously popular sports commentator on ESPN and ABC networks, was heralded — and sometimes booed — by fans who referred to him affectionately as "Dickie V."

Symington bets enchilada on UA

More was riding on the game than just the hopes of millions of fans.

Gov. Fife Symington yesterday issued a bet with Kentucky Gov. Paul E. Patton on the outcome of the championship.

As Arizona won, Patton paid Symington a small Kentucky country ham to Symington. A loss meant Symington must send a five-pound beef roast to the winning governor.

"I know we can win, and I'm betting the whole enchilada," Symington said before the game.

"I can smell our victory now — and it's the scent of ham speaking in Kentucky."

Cats' convoy to reach stadium around noon

By Monica Mendoza
The Arizona Daily Star

Keep that UA Wildcat shirt on, get your banner ready, and head over to Arizona Stadium to welcome back the Cats.

The Wildcat men's basketball team is expected to touch down in its chartered plane at 11:15 this morning at Tucson International Airport. The fan at the stadium begins at noon.

"Win or lose — people are more than welcome to bring in signs to let the team know they support them," said Mandy McCollins, vice president of the Associated Students of the University of Arizona.

Gates 1 and 8 will open at 11 a.m. to the east side

of the stadium — which can seat about 35,000 fans. Sun Tran shuttles from El Con shopping mall, near Broadway and Alvernon Way, will bring fans to the stadium, beginning at 10 a.m. Pick-up is on the northeast side of the mall.

A motorcycle parade will bring the Wildcats from the airport to the University of Arizona. From the airport, they will travel north on Tucson Boulevard to Valencia Road, then head east. The police-escorted caravan will turn left on Palo Verde Road then travel north along Alvernon Way. It will take a left on Broadway and head west to Campbell Avenue where it will travel north to Ende Drive, which leads to the stadium.

The plane will come in at the air freight apron on

Airport Drive, where FedEx is located — not the executive terminal. Fans who want to greet the team when it arrives will be directed to park in the empty lot across from the freight apron. Access to the lot is through County Club Road.

About 2,500 red-and-blue balloons will fill the sky as the Cats arrive in the stadium while KAMP student radio disc jockeys spin tunes and the pep squad leads well-wishers in cheers.

"It is a lot more exciting than the last Final Four," said Mike Chaston, who co-owns Balloons Etc. with his wife Linda. The couple donated the balloons the last time the UA team went to the Final Four.

"There's excitement that they made it this far and looking forward to next year."



Harris handles pressure with turnover-free night

By Greg Hansen, Bruce Pascoe and Javier Morales
The Arizona Daily Star

INDIANAPOLIS — Donnell Harris had gotten used to the pressure of the NCAA Tournament a work ago in an overtime game against Providence. Last night, he revolved in it.

"I missed a few free throws," he said, "but I thought I was there for us on the boards. I thought I did my job well in helping break the press. I was loving it out there."

A 6-foot-11-inch sophomore, Harris played 19 minutes, mostly because starting center A.J. Brunell fouled out. He rose to the occasion, getting a critical offensive rebound with 2:30 remaining in overtime and the game tied at 76. Harris was fouled, made a free throw and the Wildcats didn't trail again.

His offensive rebound with 1:08 remaining, and subsequent free throw, not only gave the Wildcats an 80-76 lead but made it a two-point game.

Donnell came in and played the (middle) of our scheme against Kentucky's press," said UA assistant coach Phil Johnson. "He got the ball, took care of it all right, and rotated it to the right outlet man. The middle of that exchange was very important. Donnell was one of the keys."

Harris finished with seven rebounds and eight points and, probably more importantly, did not have a turnover.

"We're No. 1, and how many teams can say that?" Harris said. "We beat the champs to be the champs. There isn't a better way than that."

Pressure, what pressure? UA junior forward Bennett Davidson said he heard so much about Kentucky's relentless pressure defense that he wondered what kind of physical condition Kentucky's players would be in.

"As it turned out," he said, "they looked more tired than we did. People said no one had more pressure than they did, and it didn't bother us at all."

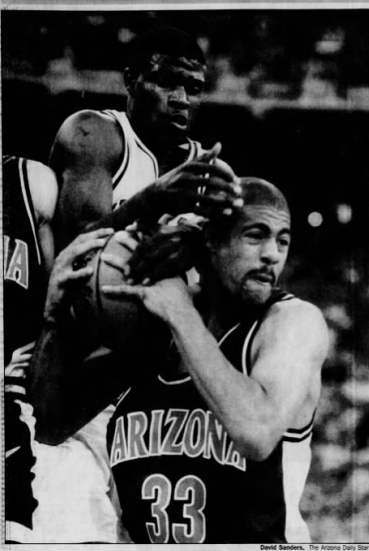
Arizona spends about 20 to 30 minutes a day in practice against pressure offense and pressure defense situations.

"Many teams don't do that," Johnson said. "But we do it every day, and that's why I think Arizona historically has success against the press, teams like Iowa and Arkansas, and now Kentucky."

"We knew that someday there would come a time for a game like this, that you would face a pressure team. Our philosophy is that you can't prepare for it in just two or three days, you've got to do it all year long."

Simon stands out With 60 points in Arizona's Final Four victory, Miles Simon became just the 11th player in NCAA history to reach 60 points in two games.

David Sanders, The Arizona Daily Star



Arizona's Eugene Edgerson grabs a rebound in a battle with Kentucky's Nazir Mohammed

Cats use 3 players to curb Mercer

By Jack Magruder

INDIANAPOLIS — Miles Simon was riding the luck of a golf cart when he put the UA's defensive effort in exact perspective.

"Mercer only got nine shots," Simon said.

Kentucky forward Ron Mercer may torment the NBA after being one of the top three picks in the 1997 June draft, but he had very little effect on the UA in its 84-79 national championship victory to deny Kentucky a repeat title.

Mercer, a 6-foot-7-inch sophomore forward playing his final college game, made five field goals, three three-pointers while being covered man-to-man by Michael Dickerson, Miles Simon and

Jason Terry.

In addition, UA forward Bennett Davidson jumped out around screens to double-team Mercer in the first half, although the UA got away from that later when Kentucky began working the inside.

Most of the final 25 minutes, the UA just played inside-outside.

"I wasn't making anything. I figured if I wasn't going to get anything, he wasn't going to get anything, either," said Dickerson, who had one field goal and two free throws.

"I figured, hell, I'll play defense. My main thing was to stay in front of him when he made a cut," a move around a screen that is supposed to pick

off the defensive player.

By the second half, Kentucky had shook most of its cut plays in favor of trying to get Mercer the ball in the low post. But the UA prevented catches there too.

"We have played Isaac Fontaine, Ed Gray, similar players in our league that didn't get a lot of points on us," Dickerson said.

"We knew if we could shut those types of players down, we could shut Ron Mercer down."

Terry, 6-1, used his quickness to overtake a size disadvantage while on Mercer.

"I was just trying to beat him to the ball and not let him get to his comfort spots," Terry said.

"We knew if he and (guard Cameron) Mills got lost, it would be a long night."

The UA players said they noticed Mercer seemed to be frustrated as the game wore on. Several times in the second half, Mercer seemed to be yelling at his teammates to run plays to get him the ball.

Mercer was 1 of 4 in the first half, scoring on a three-pointer with 1:47 remaining. The last of his four baskets in the second half was a desperation three that Kentucky within striking distance, 72-71, with 5:11 sec-

onds remaining.

Mercer did not get a shot in overtime before finding out with 41.7 seconds remaining and the UA leading 80-76.

"You can't take any credit away from them," Mercer said.

"They went out and played outstanding defense. Every time I cutted around, they had somebody waiting for me. They made it tough for me to score."

Mercer had nine rebounds and six assists, but also had five turnovers.

"Well, I thought they did a wonderful job on him. They were very physical coming off the screens," Kentucky coach Rick Pitino said.

"Miles Simon's toughness was unbelievable," UA coach Lonnie Olson said.

The UA coaches made Mercer priority No. 1.

"We challenged our guys with Mercer just like we did with Fontaine and Breon Knight," assistant coach Jim Roshorsburg said.

"Mike D. took him out of the game early. He got through screens."

Terry took Mercer later, before Simon did most of the crunch-time work.

Arizona's quick guards de-press UK's Pitino

By Javier Morales

The Arizona Daily Star

INDIANAPOLIS — Kentucky coach Rick Pitino was not jing when he said his team would not press the entire game because of Arizona's quickness and ball-handling ability.

Pitino's team did not press until more than five minutes had elapsed, and for the rest of the game Kentucky used the press sporadically. More often than not, the wanted press failed at Arizona, committed only 18 turnovers.

"If I had any doubts to begin with, Pitino said after the 84-79 loss in overtime, 'I wouldn't have pressed them at all. I didn't want to press much tonight.'

"Not only because of their confidence going against it, but I felt pressing tonight wasn't the way to go."

Mike Bibby and Miles Simon reinforced his belief. Bibby was credited with containing the UA's quickness, but it seemed he played with much more control than the number would indicate. Simon did what he does best, attacking the basket after

breaking down the press.

Continually, it seemed, Bibby was able to dribble past pickouts, find Michael Dickerson on one wing. He would lob the pass to Dickerson, who in turn would lob it to Simon on the other wing. It looked easy.

"Before the game, we asked the guys, 'What do you want to start practicing against the press?'" UA assistant coach Jim Roshorsburg said.

"They knew we started working on the press on the first couple of practice hours. There was no reason to get rattled."

"The key thing we wanted Bibby to do was to not get too close to the end line, where he could get trapped. We wanted him to be able to turn around from the pressure. He and Miles finished the job with their dribble penetration."

The Wildcats, realistically, had only three turnovers resulting from the press. In the end, Kentucky looked more tired and depleted. Five players were on benches while the UA's kept up with Arizona's speed.

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The Final

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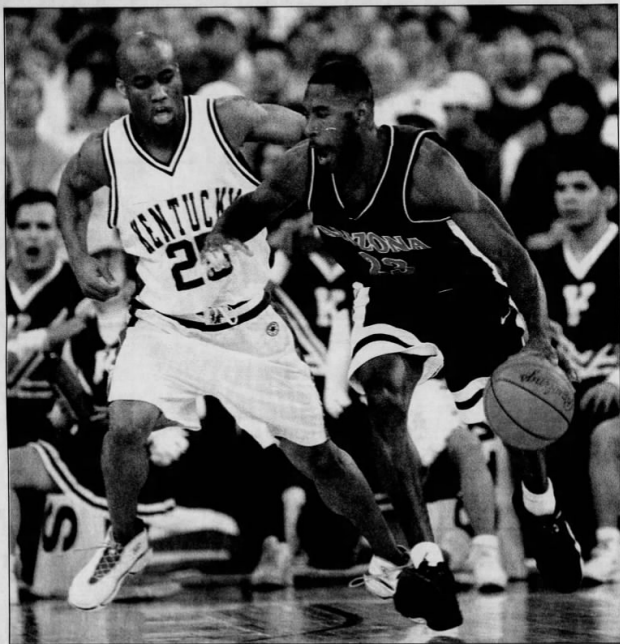
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Matt Melker gives his pre-game prediction

Cat race at Indy



Michael Dickerson outraces Kentucky's Anthony Epps in first-half action at the RCA Dome

Photos by David Sanders, The Arizona Daily Star

Lute Olson gives instruction to Mike Bibby.



Kentucky coach Rick Pitino helps Michael Dickerson after the two became entangled on the sidelines.

The Final

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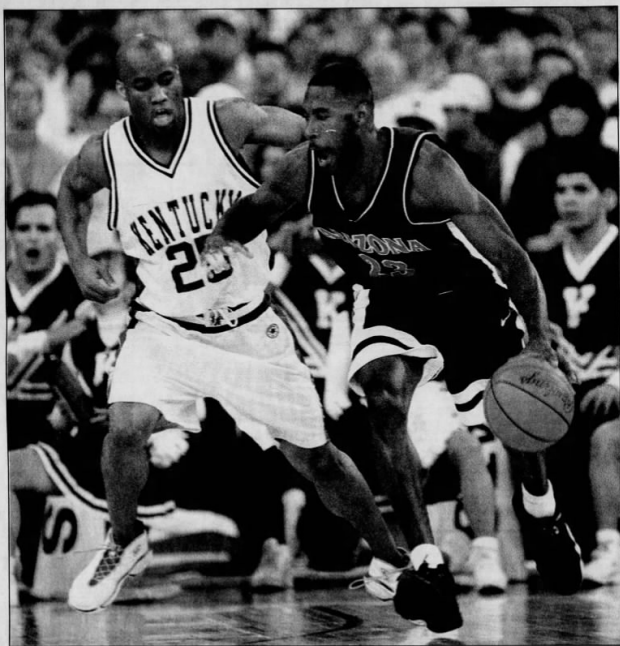
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