

UConn prevails over Kentucky

By Larry Pritchett

Past PCHS activities director

It is late Monday night and one NCAA Basketball Championship is decided and another one will be decided tomorrow night. The men's final was a good one with UConn defeating Kentucky by six. A number seven seed defeated a number eight seed and that was the first time ever that a number seven seed has won the championship in the men's tournament.

Kentucky, under John Calipari, has taken the "One and Done" players and in a short season turned them into contenders and national champions. Last year however, this year's finalists were in much different spots.

Kentucky didn't make the NCAA tournament and were upset in the NIT. UConn was banned from any post-season tournament play because they did not make the grade latterly.

There were reasons that the teams came into the tournament as seventh and eighth seeds.

Kentucky, on one hand, had the top recruiting class in the nation and that meant they had talent but no experience. Calipari said before the season started that the Cats had talent to go 40-0 in the season. They didn't. They struggled early on the road and at home.

UConn was coached by a second year head coach that had to fight to keep his team together after the ban by the NCAA last year. He did it.

The NCAA tournament is a lot about match-ups early in the tournament. Personally, I thought that the NCAA tournament selection committee made sure if Wichita State won the whole thing they would have to climb every tall mountain in the United States of Basketball.

Wichita State University almost got it done, but the mountains were tall the valleys were deep. I didn't think UConn would beat Kentucky. They delivered a punch to the nose of the Wildcats early in the game, but like most of the games the Wildcats made a 16-5 run late in the first half and were in a position to win.

UConn had great guards with experience and Kentucky had great guards with just one year of college experience. To me that was the difference. Shabazz Napier had 22 points to lead the Huskies and Ryan Boatright had 14.

At one time in the first half those two had outscored Kentucky by themselves. UConn won it at the free throw line and Kentucky lost it there.

It was a good game to watch especially for an old coach. Both coaches made adjustments that influenced the game.

The game was played at 'Jerry's World' or AT&T Stadium. This is where the Cowboys play football and I am not sure it is a great basketball facility.

My son Troy and some of his friends made the trip and it will be interesting to see what he thought. Travis and I made the trip to Minneapolis in 1992 and we sat in seats so high that the game was just a rumor.

It may have been that way for Troy and the group. He did send us a picture of him and his

close, personal, friend Dick Vitale at one of the local watering holes.
Sometimes the ballgame isn't all that is interesting in a trip.
Now we have the long lay-off until next November when the fun starts again.