

# Spring Sports

## Priest proud to be on bench for Wildcats

By John R. Karman III  
Catholic News Service

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — At one end of the University of Kentucky men's basketball bench is coach Rick Pitino, impeccably dressed in an Armani suit, but constantly in motion, screaming at officials, yelling at players, gesturing and teaching.

At the other end of the bench is Father Ed Bradley, wearing his Roman collar and taking in all the action in a more calm and reserved fashion.

Father Bradley, a priest of the Diocese of Owensboro, has served as chaplain of the Wildcats basketball team for the past five years. He was there as they defeated Syracuse University 76-67 in the 1996 title game April 1.

In those five years, the team has experienced the highs and lows associated with big-time college basketball. But no matter what the final score is, they know they can always go to Father Bradley for spiritual or personal counseling or just to pray.

"I try to ... be there as just sort of a quiet presence," Father Bradley, 52. He spoke to *The Record*, Louisville's archdiocesan newspaper, in a telephone interview from Dallas, where the 'Cats won their first two games in the NCAA tournament.

His association with the team began when he was attending a wedding reception in Lexington and was introduced to Pitino by a friend. The coach invited the



James Crisp/CNS  
Father Ed Bradley, chaplain of the University of Kentucky Wildcats, and Ryan Pitino, son of head coach Rick Pitino, enjoy a laugh on the Kentucky sideline.

priest to say the team prayer before the next home game and to watch the action from the bench.

For a year, Father Bradley attended games as his schedule al-

lowed. But since 1992 he has been a fixture on the bench both at home and on the road.

"It's like an unreal world," he said, describing his view of the games from the bench. "It's very easy to get caught up in the excitement, and I do."

Father Bradley said this year's team was special, and he is close

to several of the players. In addition to praying with the team and providing individual counseling, the priest also said Mass on the road and distributed Communion to Catholic players Walter McCarty, Antoine Walker and Wayne Turrier.

"I think I have a great relationship with the team," Father Bradley said. "One of the great things about this team is that each of them is just a fine young man, and they genuinely care about each other and want each other to look well."

Traveling with the team in the South has given Father Bradley a chance to be a symbol of the Catholic faith to college basketball fans.

"It's been a real good experience, especially for me as a Catholic priest, because most of the places we go (have) very few Catholic people," he said. "I think it's a real good opportunity to be a witness in those places. And I always wear the (Roman) collar. I think just that in itself is a real witness."

Over the five years, Father Bradley has forged a close relationship with the Pitino family. He baptized the couple's daughter and was the confirmation sponsor for one of their sons.

Three years ago, the coach and the priest opened the Daniel Pitino Shelter in Owensboro, named after the Pitino son who died several years ago.

"They've really made me sort of ... part of the family," Father Bradley said. "When I'm in Lexington, I stay over at their house. It's a beautiful family, and I just value their love and friendship very much."

## Diocesan athletes achieve successes

Diocesan athletes and teams have enjoyed success recently. Based on information submitted to the *Catholic Courier*, noteworthy achievements were recorded by:

• Sandy Mitchell, from St. Mary's Church, Waterloo. She enjoyed a strong sophomore season with the Seton Hall University women's basketball team, finishing as the NCAA Division I Pirates fourth-leading scorer with 7.8 points per game. Sandy moved into the starting lineup for the season's final 10 games and averaged 11.5 PPG over that stretch as Seton Hall posted a final 1995-96 record of 16-13.

• The Catholic Youth Organization boys' high school basketball team from St. John of Rochester Church, Perinton. St. John's won the Monroe County CYO championship and went on to capture the annual Bishop Clark Diocesan Tournament in Elmira. A 67-53 win over St. Mary Our Mother of Horcheca in the tournament championship game, enabled SJR to post a final record of 20-2.

• The grade 7-8 girls' CYO team from St. John the Evangelist Church, Spencerport. This team hosted and won the Knights of Columbus Tournament March 4-10, completing its 1995-96 season with a 27-1 record. St. John's also won the Monroe County Tournament with a 29-24 victory over Siena Catholic in the title contest.

• The high school boys' CYO squad from St. Jude's Church, Gates. In its very first year, the team shook off an 0-4 start with a stirring late-season rally, winning 12 straight games and defeating St. Thomas the Apostle, 55-40, in the Monroe County Division D championship game.

• The grade 5-6 boys' CYO team from St. Rita's Church, Webster. This squad completed its league schedule with a perfect 10-0 record.

• Several parishioners and teams from St. Helen's Church, Gates. Highlights came from Andrew Doyle, who took first place in racquetball singles at the New York State Senior Games, and won in singles and doubles at the Monroe County Senior Games; Aimee Muscato, who broke the Gates-Chili High School single-season varsity girls' basketball scoring record, averaging 17.0 points per game in 1995-96; and four CYO boys' basketball teams that had a combined regular-season record of 31-9.

• Frank Lisco, a parishioner at St. Michael's Church, Lyons. Frank recently completed his senior season with the Lyons High School boys' basketball squad, which won the Section 5 Class C championship. A four-year starter at guard, Frank was named to the Wayne County All-Star first team and Section 5 All-Tournament squad this season. He is also a starting baseball shortstop for the Lyons.

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