

'Next year is my year,' Moreno embracing return to UK

By **KEITH TAYLOR**
KENTUCKY TODAY

Malachi Moreno admitted his decision to come back for a second season at Kentucky wasn't an easy one. "It was a pretty difficult decision," Moreno said Thursday. After declaring for the NBA Draft, Moreno went through the vetting process and met with several teams, including the Oklahoma City Thunder, Los Angeles Lakers, and Boston Celtics, among others, to gauge his draft potential. "I met with everybody," Moreno said. "... the key things in those meetings were just to kind of get to know me and for me to kind of get

to know them and understand what they're about and what their program is about. The meetings were really cool. They broke down a lot of film, and that was a big learning process for me and I was able to learn it. I can bring it back here and put that in my game." While going through the draft process with numerous interviews and individual team workouts, Kentucky coach Mark Pope was "hands off" and gave Moreno and his family the space needed to make an informed decision. "He would call me a couple times, just wondering how everything's going," Moreno said. "He really did



Malachi Moreno met with the media at Historic Memorial Coliseum on Thursday. (Keith Taylor/Kentucky Today)

keep hands off, and he really just let me handle this on my own with me and my circle. Once it came time for the deadline, that's when he kind of started to call me to check

in and see where my head's at, stuff like that. "I'm very grateful that he kind of let me enjoy that process, but having him reach out as soon as that deadline came back

really helped as well." Knowing that he has one of his best players back next season, Pope envisions a breakout year for Moreno and predicts he will be the best center in college basketball next season. Moreno has already accepted the challenge, which he said has "really propelled me in a lot of different ways." "I think next year is my year," he said. "... I think going through that process was definitely beneficial for me, because at the end of the day, I decided to come back and now I can bring what I learned in that process back to Kentucky, and just add it all to my game." A year ago, Moreno wasn't expected to make

an immediate impact, but was thrust into the lineup and eventually a starting role. He was named to the Southeastern Conference All-Freshman Team and his stock continued to rise throughout the season. "I think last year I kind of came in being a kind of quiet freshman, making sure I learned everything and really just taking it in," he said. "Last year, I wasn't expecting to play as much as I did, but I knew if I just put my head down and worked, I knew I would get my opportunity. Once I got that opportunity, I just took it and ran with it. Now that I'm here for year two, it's time to take an even bigger leap forward."

Batt hits the ground running as UK's new athletics director

By **KEITH TAYLOR**
KENTUCKY TODAY

Jason "J" Batt has hit the ground running as Kentucky's new athletics director and CEO of Champions Blue. Although he doesn't begin until July 1, Batt has been getting familiar with his new home since he was tabbed to replace retiring athletics director Mitch Barnhart on Monday. "It's been unbelievable," Batt said during a roundtable with select journalists on Tuesday. "I've been on the phone a bunch the last 24 hours, and whether it's the different folks I've talked to, donors, the passion people have for this place is unreal. "I think it's one thing that that we're still try-

ing to learn, but UK athletics matters to the entire commonwealth. We're super excited to represent that, to work to prove to each and every day how important that standard is, and to meet it. We've felt that for sure." His first 24 hours at Kentucky will resemble the days ahead as he meets and greets with donors and Big Blue Nation to become familiar with his new home. "It's the only way I know how to do it and I love being out and in the community and (with) the fan base, and I'll absolutely do that here," he said. "As much as I can be out, I'll be out. I look forward to meeting every single person in Big Blue Nation that wants to visit. I'll be there,

with a hand to shake and everything else. I love it. It's part of what really excites me about this job. We've got tremendous people and so getting out and about is something I love to do." Batt considers Barnhart a trendsetter in college athletics and will be leaning on the longtime athletics director for support as he "dives into" the top athletic post at Kentucky. "Mitch is a legend and I was fortunate enough to work with him in the committee that we used to help launch the CSC (College Sports Commission)," Batt said. "I got to firsthand watch him work, learn about and just see how deep his knowledge is around college athletics. And certainly, he's part of

the group that's been a standard bearer for all of us that have wanted to be in these opportunities for a long time. "I look forward to picking his brain and calling on his institutional knowledge, and everything else that he brings to the table (for) as long as often as he'll let me." During his time work-

ing at Alabama, Batt admired the standard of excellence Barnhart set during his two-plus decades at the UK helm. "From my time in the SEC, (I) had a great amount of respect for this program, and I've mentioned several times, but that championship standard, the excellence that exudes

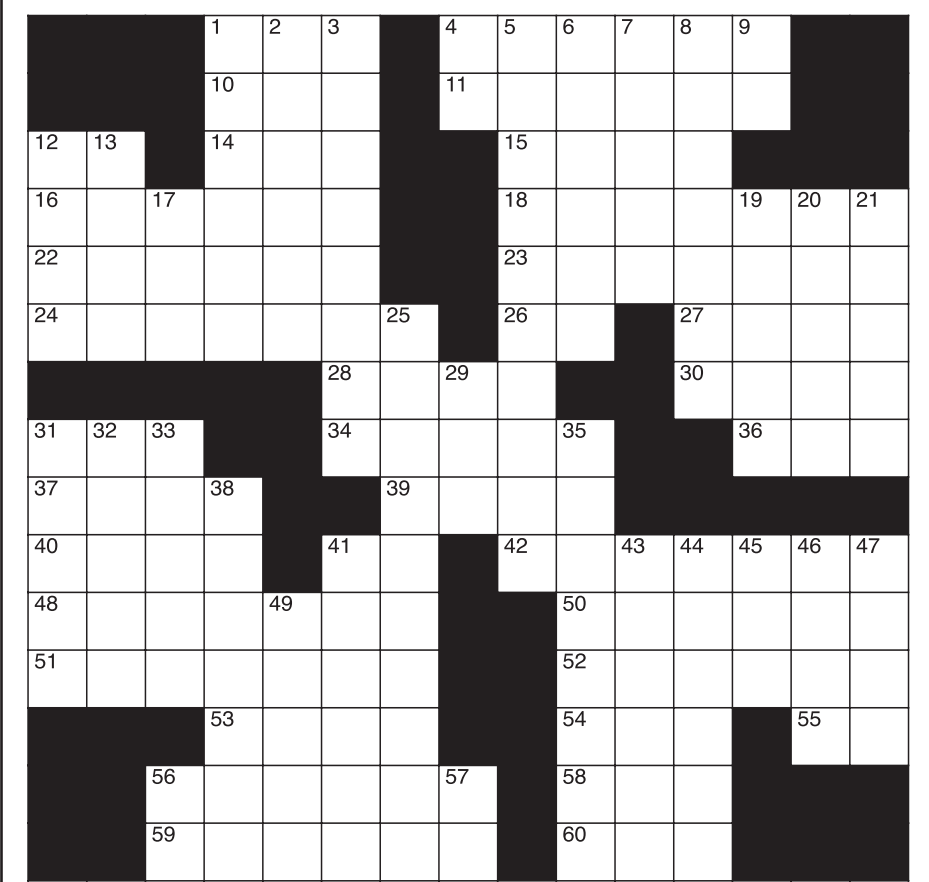
from this place, that's been clear," he said. "Understanding that from afar, having been to Lexington, knowing what a great community this is. I think the other thing that shines through and has really been cemented for me is just how important this athletics program is to the entire commonwealth."

Did you know?

The Running of the Bulls occurs annually in July in Pamplona, Spain. Each year more than one million people gather to witness brave individuals run through the streets of the capital of Navarre as they're chased by six large and powerful bulls. Spanish bull-running has a lengthy history. According to The Running of

the Bulls, which promotes the festival overseas and helps to educate runners and tourists, the event that has become the most recognizable component of the San Fermin Festival can be traced to the thirteenth century. The festival of San Fermin honors the co-patron saint of Pamplona, and while bull-running is a

secular endeavor, the two traditions merged over time. The San Fermin Festival was moved from September to July in 1591, and the running of the bulls has taken place nearly every year ever since. Certain developments (COVID-19 pandemic and World War II) led to the cancellation of the running of the bulls.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Similar
4. Have an ambitious plan or a lofty goal
10. No (Scottish)
11. __ Aires, city
12. Morning
14. Senior's son (abbr.)
15. A notable achievement
16. European nation
18. Endings
22. Puts into place
23. Former
24. Grenadier
26. Sea patrol
27. Algerian port
28. Norwegian river
30. Precipitation
31. Sunscreen rating
34. New York is one
36. Patti Hearst's captors
37. Soft mineral with greasy feel
39. Retired Brazilian footballer
40. An Indian nursemaid
41. Atomic #24
42. Immobile
48. Insignia of royalty
50. Seeds from which chocolate is made
51. Begin again
52. Round root
53. Beginning to end (alt. sp.)
54. What newlyweds just said
55. Empire State
56. Give back
58. College hoops tournament
59. Unstable situations
60. Young women's association

CLUES DOWN

1. Administer a drug
2. Holy places
3. Contrary opinions
4. Blood type
5. Gags
6. Micturating
7. Silly
8. A type of "cuff"
9. Spanish be
12. Austrian river
13. Messenger ribonucleic acid
17. Consume food
19. California supermarket
20. Electronic communication
21. Cassia tree
25. Written works
29. Cool!
31. Noteworthy 90s lawyer Kenneth
32. One who was compensated
33. National symbols
35. Raising
38. A type of talk
41. Cloud
43. Middle Eastern peoples
44. Pouches
45. 007's creator
46. A cut of meat
47. Sports entertainment award
49. Christine __, actress
56. Relief organization (abbr.)
57. Canadian province (abbr.)

Answers on page 3B

SUDOKU

	1							
		5	6				9	
					8	1	7	2
		7	1					
			8	6				3
3				5		2		
1	3							
6	9			2	7		8	

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

1	8	5	7	2	3	6	4	9
6	9	4	3	2	7	5	8	1
3	4	6	7	5	9	2	1	8
8	1	9	2	7	4	6	3	5
5	7	8	4	1	6	3	2	9
2	8	7	1	4	3	9	5	6
4	6	3	5	9	8	1	7	2
7	2	5	6	3	1	8	9	4
9	3	2	1	8	5	4	6	7

ANSWER:

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!