

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Men's Basketball Champion University of Louisville Cardinals July 23, 2013

The President. Hello, everybody! Please have a seat. Welcome to the White House. And let's give it up for Coach Pitino and the National Champion Louisville Cardinals.

Now, I have to start by recognizing a proud graduate of the University of Louisville, Senator Mitch McConnell, who is here. We've got a number other Members of Congress who are here. We've also got Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer in the house. We've got Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway in the house. And I gather we have a whole bunch of fans everywhere. So—[laughter].

Today we're here to celebrate a Louisville team that always played hard, that always worked together, that stayed focused on one singular goal, and that is, to bust my bracket. [Laughter] I've been having a tough time lately on my brackets. [Laughter] This year I was close; I had the Cardinals in the title game. But I guess I discounted the motivational power of making your 60-year-old coach promise to get a tattoo if you won. [Laughter]

Now, we're not going to ask Coach to show it here at the White House—[laughter]—but I have to hand it to you, Coach, you did not chicken out. You kept your word. And in return, you've got something that will stay with you forever: a shirtless picture of you on the Internet. [Laughter] That will never be erased. [Laughter]

But even if the rest of us don't have a tattoo on our shoulder to serve as a reminder, I think we all agree this is a team we will not forget. It had a swarming defense, and as a consequence, the Cardinals were able to capture their school's third national title, but their first since 1986. They ran off 16 straight wins to end the season. They captured the Big East tournament title. They sailed through the first four games of the NCAAs.

In the Final Four, they needed a pair of 3-pointers from walk-on Tim Henderson to mount a late comeback—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes. Go ahead and give Tim a big round of applause. [Laughter].

Mounting a late comeback against Wichita State to make the title game. And then against Michigan, they treated us to one of the best championship games that any of us has—have seen in a very, very long time. Luke Hancock led the way. At one point—

Audience member. Luke!

The President. Luke! Luke! At one point scoring 14 points in a row, including four-straight 3s, before helping to ice the game with a pair of free throws in the final minutes. And that made Luke one of the first—I believe the first player ever to come off the bench and win the Final Four's most outstanding player. So it's a great testament to him.

This win also made Coach Pitino the first coach in history to win a championship at two different schools. And we won't name the other one, right? [Laughter]

Coach Pitino's second title came in the same week that he not only found out that his son been hired as coach at Minnesota, but he had been named to the Basketball Hall of Fame. So he had a pretty good year. And the horse was all right, you know. [Laughter] I think I actually lost some money on that horse, so—[laughter].

But Coach understands he didn't do any of this alone. As he said, "Players put coaches in the Hall of Fame." And this team had some players. Gorgui Dieng, who is—by the way, I went to Senegal, and everybody was very excited about Mr. Dieng. Played outstanding. Peyton Siva—both Gorgui and Peyton were taken in last month's NBA draft. And so we wish them all the best of luck in their next endeavors.

Luke earned a spot on Team U.S.A. in the World University Games, serving as flag bearer in the opening ceremonies. Russ Smith was a third-team All-America last season. And even though he couldn't be here today, we are all

excited to see what Russdicolous has in store for his senior year. [Laughter]

And then, of course, there's Kevin Ware. I told him to say hi to his mom because moms don't like seeing their kids get hurt. And obviously, all of us remember the terrible injury that Kevin suffered. But what we also remember is the love that all of his teammates showed for him, the way that he was on crutches a day later. A week after that, he was up there cutting the nets in Atlanta. Today he's standing here with his teammates, working out, hoping to be ready for fall practice.

And that's the kind of resilience and strong spirit that this team has had. They didn't just show it on the court; they showed it in the classroom and in the community. As a team, Cardinals earned just under a 3.3 GPA, which is outstanding. Three players organized a beard-shaving event that raised more than \$7,500 for the American Cancer Society. Peyton spent his Christmas morning delivering toys to kids in a children's hospital. And just before this event, the team met with some of our Nation's wounded warriors, who are here in the audience with us now. And we could not be more proud of them and more grateful to them.

So I want to thank everybody with the Cardinals organization for their outstanding performances, their leadership, and their contributions not just to Louisville, not just to Kentucky, but to the entire country.

Coach, we want to congratulate you again for your amazing leadership. You're a great teacher. Congratulations again on the National Title. And from what I've seen in the pre-season polls, we might see you back here at some point. [Laughter] So congratulations. Coach Pitino.

Head Coach Richard A. Pitino. Thank you. Well, the first gift that we'd like to give our President is—it's a Louisville Slugger, which is located in Louisville. It says, "National Champions," your name on it. And the reason we picked the bat is, some press conferences are difficult, as it is for me. [Laughter] Feel free to use this at any time.

The President. All right. There you go. You hear that, people? [Laughter] He's talking to you. I like that. Absolutely.

Coach Pitino. And obviously, the standard jersey.

The President. There you go. Thank you so much, Coach.

Coach Pitino. I guess the greatest thing for us: First time you were running, I would always try to get my guys to participate in politics, and they really had very little interest. They were worried about social activities at school. And I said, you guys, when you get the right to vote, you should vote, even if it's local contests. They said, well, we don't really know a whole lot about politics. I said, you need to study it, whether you're a political science major or not.

When you ran, I said to my team, okay, how many guys are going to vote, trying to get them to—encourage them again. And every person, including managers and coaches, all gave me the time that they would have to miss practice to vote. So you—[applause].

The President. That's wonderful. That's a good story. Appreciate it.

Coach Pitino. This team, I think, is the perfect example of what a team is all about. They suffer together. They cry together. Everything that you've heard in Jimmy V.'s speech is represented with this basketball team. They do their best on the court. They do their best off the court. They love each other.

They were so excited to see you today, as—so were the coaching staff. [Laughter] And we just really, really are proud of what Louisville represents. We're a blue-collar school. Twenty percent of our students have to have a second job to pay for school. We have 26 Fulbright scholars, more than MIT and Dartmouth and a lot of elite universities—not Harvard—[laughter]—but most places like that. So we're real, real proud, because they're overachievers. They go beyond it and have to work real hard. It's everything that our President is trying to build with our country.

So this is a tremendous capping-off of an unbelievable season. We have Kevin Ware now walking. He'll soon be running. We have two of

our players moving on. We have great academic prowess in the classroom. And we've got a chance today to cap off a great season with a visit to the White House and meet a President on our team that's very much well loved. So we're very excited.

One thing is missing—if—for my players. If Michelle was here, they would be off the limits. [Laughter]

The President. Thank you, everybody.

Remarks at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois July 24, 2013

The President. Hello, Galesburg! Well, it's good to be home in Illinois! It is good to be back. [Applause] It's good to be back. Thank you, everybody. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. Well, it is good to be back.

I want to, first of all, thank Knox College. I want to thank Knox College and your president, Teresa Amott, for having me here today. Give Teresa a big round of applause. I want to thank your Congresswoman, Cheri Bustos, who's here. Where's Cheri? There she is. We've got Governor Quinn here. I'm told we've got your Lieutenant Governor, Sheila Simon, is here. There she is. Attorney General Lisa Madigan is here.

I see a bunch of my former colleagues, some folks who I haven't seen in years and I'm looking forward to saying hi to. One in particular I've got to mention, one of my favorites from the Illinois Senate, John Sullivan is in the house. John was one of my earliest supporters when I was running for the U.S. Senate, and it came in really handy because he's got, like, 10 brothers, and his wife's—and sisters, and his wife has got 10 brothers and sisters—[laughter]—so they've got this entire precinct just in their family. [Laughter] And they all look like John—the brothers do—so he doesn't have to go to every event. He can just send one of his brothers out. [Laughter] It is good to see them.

Dick Durbin couldn't make it today, but he sends his best. And we love Dick. He is doing a great job. And we've got one of my favorite neighbors, the Senator from Missouri, Claire McCaskill, in the house, because we're going

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:16 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tim Henderson, Peyton Siva, Russ Smith, and Kevin Ware, guards, Luke Hancock, guard-forward, Gorgui Dieng, center, and Stephan Van Treese, forward, University of Louisville men's basketball team; Lisa Junior, mother of Mr. Ware; and Richard Pitino, Jr., head coach, University of Minnesota men's basketball team.

to Missouri later this afternoon. So—[applause].

And all of you are here, and it's great to see you. And I hope everybody is having a wonderful summer. The weather is perfect. Whoever was in charge of that, good job. [Laughter]

So, 8 years ago, I came here to deliver the commencement address for the class of 2005. Now, things were a little different back then. For example, I had no gray hair—[laughter]—or a motorcade. Didn't even have a prompter. In fact, there was a problem in terms of printing out the speech, because the printer didn't work here, and we had to drive it in from somewhere. [Laughter] But it was my first big speech as your newest Senator.

And on the way here, I was telling Cheri and Claire about how important this area was—one of the areas that I spent the most time in outside of Chicago—and how much it represented what's best in America and folks who were willing to work hard and do right by their families. And I came here to talk about what a changing economy was doing to the middle class and what we, as a country, needed to do to give every American a chance to get ahead in the 21st century.

See, I had just spent a year traveling the State and listening to your stories: of proud Maytag workers losing their jobs when the plant moved down to Mexico—a lot of folks here remember that; of teachers whose salaries weren't keeping up with the rising cost of groceries; of young people who had the drive and