



Chuck Perry photo

They've Got Spirit – How 'Bout You?



By Wendy Abbott

Dressed in your team's colors, you and your buddies enter the football stadium and head for your seats, checking your tickets as you move through the crowd.

A few minutes later, the band begins to play and the cheerleaders explode onto the field, flipping, twisting and cheering as the crowd roars to life. The squads perform their choreographed routines, whipping the crowd into energetic chants and cheers.

When game time rolls around, the purpose of cheerleaders is, first and foremost, to lead the crowd and generate excitement and team spirit. However, when the lights have died down and the crowds have gone home, the work of a cheerleader continues. These dedicated individuals are leaders on and off the field or court. Hours of training, relentless practice and high standards of performance drive these young adults to achieve new heights of excellence.

The UK cheerleaders know what it takes to be champions. The UK squads have dominated the Universal Cheerleaders Association's (UCA) National College Cheerleading Championship a record twelve times since 1985 and are the only ones to win eight championships in a row.

There are two squads at the University of Kentucky: the Blue squad and the White squad, both in the upper echelon of cheerleading. The Blue squad cheers at home and away football and men's basketball games. The White squad cheers at home football games as well as at women's basketball and volleyball games. They practice at different times, separate from each other. There are no team captains for either squad, with seniors often stepping forward into positions of leadership. The co-ed squads work on tumbling, pyramids, baskets, partner stunts and more each practice.

In the classroom, the cheerleaders also represent UK proudly. Sixteen full-ride, in-

state scholarships are available for members of the Blue squad. There are also several endowments available to cheerleaders of either squad who achieve academic excellence.

So how do you get involved with such a dynamic group? There are three ways: through biannual clinics, a video tape submission, or a personal invitation from the coaches. The coaches conduct two cheerleading clinics a year, in October and April. These clinics are times when prospective cheerleaders have the opportunity to "show their stuff" to the UK squad coaches. Hopeful applicants must demonstrate above-average ability in stunts, cheers, creativity, appearance, and gymnastics. Personal invitations from the coaches usually result from attendance at the clinics and/or a submitted audition video.

Cheerleading is a rewarding experience that develops individuals to their full potential through leadership and commitment. Head Coach Jomo Thompson puts it best,

"It's a great activity. It requires great athletes but at the same time our main focus is to encourage and help the teams we support."

For more information, check on the Web at: <http://ukathletics.ocsn.com/ot/kty-cheerleading.html>. 📱



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