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## Gardner-Webb in the Garden

University Named for Governor O. Max Gardner and Wife, Fay Webb Gardner

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The itinerary for Gardner-Webb's basketball team lists a flight to New York today and its initial appearance at Madison Square Garden tomorrow night. The Bulldogs will be matched against two-time national champion Connecticut in the semifinals of the 2K Sports College Hoops Classic that also features No. 3 Memphis and Oklahoma. Their quest will be telecast on ESPN2 and viewed by millions.

Yet Rick Scruggs hasn't said a word about any of this to his players. That's because the coach didn't want them looking past their home opener against North Greenville College last night. North Greenville, a Division II school from South Carolina, might not be considered a major obstacle to the outside world but the truth is, if a Gardner-Webb can whip mighty Kentucky on its home court, anything is possible.

"I haven't talked about Connecticut once in practice," Scruggs said yesterday. "The kids are still on Cloud Nine from Kentucky. I'm hoping our home crowd will get us through it."

They apparently did, as Gardner-Webb won, 99-74.

As ready as the Bulldogs were for Kentucky last Wednesday - they raced to a 14-0 lead en route to a remarkably convincing 84-68 victory over the 20th-ranked Wildcats at Rupp Arena - they hadn't planned for the aftermath of success. Not only had Gardner-Webb scheduled the game against North Greenville for last night but it had agreed to play Radford on the road in Virginia one day after the New York event benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer concludes with the consolation and championship games on Friday evening. Furthermore, the upstarts from Boiling Springs, N.C., are committed to a second game with Connecticut in Storrs on Tuesday.

"We obviously weren't expecting to be in this position," said Scruggs, in his 13th season at the school that made the jump from Division II to Division I at the turn of the century. "Suddenly, we're playing an NBA schedule."

Five games in eight days, two against UConn, would test the mettle of the top teams in the nation let alone one that finished 266th in the RPI last season. But this is a hardy

group, one that bused back to campus after the historic upset in Lexington, arriving at approximately 7:30 a.m. and reporting to classes. Needless to say, it has not been business as usual at the Baptist-affiliated institution named for former North Carolina governor O. Max Gardner and his wife, Fay Webb Gardner.

There was an impassioned rally in the gym last Thursday, and students camped out from Friday night until Monday for tickets to last night's game.

"My wife and I took them pizza each night," Scruggs said. "As hectic as this has been, it's the most fun I've ever had in coaching."

The fun will grow exponentially when he and his team enter the famous arena tomorrow. He has so much respect for Connecticut coach Jim Calhoun and the Huskies that he initiated the game at Storrs next week so his players could sample the atmosphere at Gampel Pavilion while his athletic program collected a \$75,000 guarantee.

Of course, UConn will be heavily favored in the first game of the doubleheader. "Obviously," Calhoun said, "[the Bulldogs] are going to get the sympathy vote. We know we're going to have our hands full."

In any case, as much as Scruggs would love to add another big-time victim to the ledger of the Bulldogs, he is determined that his players enjoy the moment. "I want them to be able to smell the roses, to take something with them for the rest of their lives," the coach said.

Gardner-Webb at the Garden? Priceless.