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SYRACUSE, N.Y. -- Without a doubt, Saturday's Elite Eight NCAA tournament game between Kentucky and West Virginia will have no shortage of star power on the court. But John Wall, DeMarcus Cousins, Da'Sean Butler, Devin Ebanks and the rest of the players on both teams will decidedly take a backseat to the two titan coaches manning each respective sideline.

It just doesn't get much bigger than UK coach John Calipari versus WVU's Bob Huggins with a spot in the Final Four on the line.

In his first season with the No. 1 seed Wildcats, Calipari, the National Coach of the Year, has guided his youthful, NBA-talent-littered team to a 35-2 record. Huggins, meanwhile, is in his third year coaching his alma mater, and led the No. 2 seed Mountaineers (30-6) to the winningest season in school history.

Calipari and Huggins have combined to win more than a thousand games in their careers, although the older Huggins has 189 more wins. Head-to-head, Huggins is 7-1 all-time against Calipari, dating back to Huggins' tenure at Cincinnati, when he beat his counterpart, who then coached at UMass and Memphis.

"Bob and I go way back to when he was at Walsh College," Calipari said inside the Carrier Dome, Friday. "He's a Hall of Famer, but he's also a guy that would give you the shirt off his back."

"John and I are going to be friends for the rest of our lives," said Huggins, who was paid a hospital visit by Calipari when he suffered a heart attack, in 2002. "He's a good guy. Hopefully when he goes in the Hall of Fame, I can sit there and watch him go in."

The coaches' personalities, philosophies and personnel are not exactly mirror images of one another. Calipari is the slick, smooth talker from Pittsburgh suburb Moon Township, whose commanding confidence and exuberant persona may be unmatched in all of college basketball.

Huggins, on the other hand, born and bred a Mountaineer in Morgantown, is a brash, no holds barred, in your face drill sergeant type of coach who demands excellence of all those within his program.

UK, a speedy, athletic team led by National Player of the Year Wall, a 6-foot-4, 195-pound freshman phenom, spreads the court and punishes defenses with their five-out dribble drive open post offense.

WVU, led by All-American performer Butler, relies heavily on defense and rebounding, as opposed to a flashy, innovative style of scoring.

Despite the immediate differences, the two coaching icons have one undesirable characteristic in common, but it's something that has molded them into who they are today.

"The good news for both of us, we both have been fired," Calipari joked. "There's nothing you can say to us that we haven't heard."

"There's nobody in here that's going to write anything about me that's any worse than some of the stuff that people wrote that never met me," said Huggins.

To be fair, Calipari was fired by the New Jersey Nets before he turned Memphis into a national power and is the only coach that's had two Final Fours vacated from the record books due to NCAA violations. Huggins lost his job at Cincinnati following a DUI arrest.

"I'm not one to look back," Huggins said.

Neither is Calipari.

And the majority of Wildcats and Mountaineers fans have nothing but the utmost admiration and support of their admittedly-flawed basketball gods.

Leaving the past in the past, Saturday's game features the only No. 1 against No. 2 seed Elite Eight match-up in the entire tournament.

"West Virginia is one of the best teams left," Calipari said, "maybe the best team left. It's not in the finals. It's not in the Final Four. Two No. 1 seeds is what it is."

"I think to take all those freshman and put them together and mesh them together the way he has," said Huggins, "there's very few people who can do that and come off the way it's come off."

Pleasantries and pats on the back aside, emotions, energy and effort to advance to the Final Four will be astronomic as soon as the ball is tipped off between UK and WVU.

The Mountaineers are looking for their first Final Four since 1959 and have never won a national championship. The Wildcats, college basketball's all-time NCAA leader in wins (2,023), have won seven national championships and are looking to return to the Final Four for the first time since 1998.

"Tomorrow, we're going to compete like crazy," Huggins said.