

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Those two bull lead us, two, and they are freshman. They were the best two guards are on the court, whether they are freshmen, seniors, sophomores, whatever, they were the best two. But again, they were best two because they were physical and they bullied us. It wasn't like they were jacking threes and going nuts. They just went to wherever they wanted to on the court and either went into your body and shot or jumped over and you shot.

And then when they figured out that's all they had to do, Fulkerson killed us last year and we do a pretty good job. It's a one-bucket game with five minutes to go and all of the sudden, turnover, turnover, layup, layup, bad shot, because we pass up a shot and all of a sudden it's 6-8 again. I mean, I was at a loss for words. Like can you not -- we had two turnovers at the half. We had two turnovers in the first three minutes of the second half. I mean, just throwing crazy passes. Why would you throw that? Oh, I thought I could, we can't be that team.

So disappointing. I'm just -- you know, I don't know what to tell you at this point. We are playing good enough to win and then we hit a stretch where we don't score a basket. Our guards didn't shoot it well, I know, but they still passed up open looks that led to turnovers or bad shots. Again, five or six of them.

The bigs are telling them, please shoot, but when you're four or five, 26, 26 as a group, that's when you start ball faking and trying to drive and get fouled and just can't be that group.

Q. I thought that Keion looked like a go-to guy there for about 37 minutes or so. 36, whatever it was. Scoreless down the stretch. What did you think of his performance?

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: I thought he was great today. Not only did he score, he rebounded and he was above the rim. We have some other guys that have been big-time rebounders for us. I don't know if the game was rough but they wouldn't go after balls, not even attempt. He did. And

yes, we just went right at him and just said create. Now the only thing that happened late is they crowded him, and he threw it out and he was begging guys to shoot balls. And you know, he was in the huddle saying it, "Shoot the ball."

You know, and again, understand it's -- no one is being taken out for misses. I took Davion out one time because he didn't shoot a ball. You can't be in. And so you know, we just -- you know it, was one of those nights where we needed to have one guy make some shots on the perimeter because of how they played and we just didn't get any of it.

Q. I would assume that these guys, some of them haven't lost 12 games in their life, much less in one year. How much of a challenge is that emotional hurdle and do you have concerns of losing the team the way the losses are piling up?

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: I don't worry about that, but they also have a coach that's not used to losing 12 games in three years. I'm trying to stay positive. I'm trying to hold them accountable. I'm trying to continue to teach. I'm never going to stop, quit on this team. I'll give them everything I have. But at the end of the day, they have to get on the court and perform. And they have to be strong with the ball. You cannot turn it over in critical times. Did we do it again today? Yes, we did it again today. You have to understand, every practice we're working on this stuff.

The issue becomes where you get baskets from if guys don't want to shoot open shots is, how do you create some opportunities for baskets and every game it seems like it's something new. Very, very hard way to go about this. But it's what it is. You know, and we try different ways and if something works, we stick with it.

Q. It looked like you were trying to play at a faster pace and getting that done, first time you got to the foul line, second half, you barely get there, Tennessee gets there a lot.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: I don't know I have to watch the tape. We didn't get to the bonus till two minutes left. They

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were in the bonus 15 minutes left in the game. Big advantage because now it's a free throw shooting contest. We were there in the second half with ten minutes to go, not 15.

But I'll have to watch the tape. Just see what the tape says.

Q. At some point do you have to at least keep an eye on next season in terms of, maybe you want to see this guy in this situation is, I want to throw this guy into this fire and get a look at him or this group of guys who might be the foundation going forward.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: I'm worried about the next game. I'm not worried about postseason, conference tournament. Look, we're not that far off. We just played three ranked teams and we had a chance to beat them all. And we break down at critical times. Do I have the wrong guys in? I made some changes, and the guys that went in didn't make any shots, turned it over.

I mean, we're trying everything we can, but I'm not thinking about next year. It is -- I owe it to these kids and this program to do whatever I can to get this thing flipped around, and that's all I'm doing. I'll watch the tape. I'll go back. I'm trying to be light and positive even though it's -- I'm telling you, it's been 35 years since I've had to deal with something like this.

But this team can paint the picture that they want. But not if you continue to have the same things happen, and we work on it, we show it on tape -- see, part of it being, if guys aren't playing well, this is the immaturity. If you're not playing well, it's hard for you to help us versus an Anthony Davis, I can't make a shot, you guy the shoot, I'm going to block every ball and rebound every ball and I'm going to play great defense is, you score, I can't. That was a mature star who got it.

Where, again, we've got to get guys, when you're not playing well, what do you do to help us win? Do you do anything to help us win? Again, moving screens. I've got to watch the tape. Critical. That's, like, the game. The game changed. You need to watch, and see, did he move is, if he did, why would you? Why would you do that in that situation?

So again, got to watch the tape. I'll be able to see more then and like I said, we've got a quick turn with a team, are you ready, five out, four out, beat you on the bounce. Five out, four out, beat you on the bounce. Arkansas. Mus is doing a great job with his team, terrific players a lot of one-to-one stuff. We didn't do very well today. I would have liked to have had Jacob in a little more, Jacob in, but

our offense was so bad. I was trying to get some baskets and that didn't work well. So it was a mistake by me. I should have gone with Jacob and let some other guys sit a little bit and tried to say, okay, let's guard, because basically what they did is they just ran right down us and scored.

Q. I'm also going to try to be positive but it seems like your team has had more fast break points in these past two games than they have all season. Is that something you're trying to do intentionally? This team should be able to get out there and run.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: We are, but you've got to throw the ball ahead, or they won't run. So today, what happened is, their one guy was ahead twice and didn't get it, so he stopped running, and I told him, "You must sprint, and if he doesn't throw you the ball, he's coming out. You've got to throw the ball. Not down the middle, up the sideline."

Now, let me ask all you Basketball Bennies: If you throw it up the sideline and those guys are covered, what does that mean the court is?

Q. Open.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: And what do you do now?

Q. Go to the basket.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Go right at it and create a shot. It's not that hard. All we've been working on for the last week and a half is what you just said.

So it's showing up. But at critical times, decision-making. Execution. Why would you throw a slow bouncer when he had a shot? Again, because I'm not worried about his shot but I'm worried about what I'm doing.

Just we've got to get together and be about each other, especially if you personally aren't playing well.

Q. Just 12 minutes tonight for Jackson. Any specific reason for that?

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, wasn't getting balls and Keion was doing it. Keion got all the rebounds and scored. He seemed a little bit behind in the first half, so I went with Keion in the second because of how he played. We were at plus-eight with Keion and Olivier in together. We just have to keep Olivier on the court.

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