

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Arkansas Razorbacks 81, Kentucky Wildcats 80

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Let me just say this, guys. This team, that's the best we've finished a game. So I'm like, I can't be that upset. There were things that happened. I've got to go back and look at the last call, I mean, was it a jump ball? Was there body contact? Because this game was physical. To give up two free throws to win the game, I don't know. We'll see it when I watch the tape.

But this team fought. You know, B.J. played better. We took open shots. We didn't make them all but we took open shots. We flew it up the court. We posted it. We added a little wrinkle or two today -- for today. We did some things defensively different. We're just trying to see if we can bring some aggressiveness out now.

I was going crazy in this game. I was not going to let them hang their head. I had to tell them, we're down four baskets. There's five minutes to go. Like they look like the world ended. What? And so this was a breakthrough that way. Am I happy we lost? No. I want to watch the end of the game and make sure I know exactly what happened. But the plays and the execution that we had, flawless.

Q. I know you don't like to run plays specifically to set up threes, but Olivier has shown such an attitude for that recently, is that an option to get some more offense going to have him do what you were doing in the second half more often?

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Well, you don't want him to take -- well, how many you want him to take?

Q. He's 8-for-15 on the season.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: I'm asking. Do you want him to take ten a game?

Q. No.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: How many did he take today?

Q. Four.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: All right. So maybe he takes one or two more. I mean, yes, but he's also pretty good when he squares up shot. He can do both. He can do both. He's -- I've been saying all along, you saw Davion make some shots, Devin made some shots, B.J. made some shots, Olivier made shots and I keep saying, most of this is mental for these kids. It's hard. It's hard. How we started this season and what the gauntlet was I threw at them, it was hard mentally. This has been hard. So they -- let's just hope this was a little bit of a breakthrough.

Q. You've spoken to a little bit, but not just in this game, at 5-13 now, you have a bunch of guys who have had a lot of opportunity to kind of just punt, you know, to just lay down a season and for all the agonizing losses, doesn't seem like you have any guys, or many guys, who have done that. How significant is it to you --

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Well, we don't -- we don't have anybody -- we don't have anybody.

And Kyle, I want to say this, and I need everybody to listen and our fans to listen: TeC; the medical people, I'm not going to be specific of what's wrong, but he has an injury that he cannot play. So everybody on this team, he cried. I cried. Because he's out another four weeks.

So it's not like anybody doesn't want to play. He was supposed to be our best player. We haven't had him, and now, you look at this team, I'm proud that they are fighting. We still make mistakes and we do some stuff.

But here's the biggest thing I said to them prior to the game the last two days. If you're not in and looking like this (indiating) and you look like that, the game is really hard and you're out there about by yourself. If you're like, this the game is a little easier because you have a bunch of guys looking after you.

There was one point in the first half where we didn't pass the ball and you probably heard me, I as was yelling, loud, "Just pass it to somebody! Pass it! Pass!" We stopped. Well, second half we went back to moving the ball. Pass



the ball. Get it to the next guy. Throw it to a guy who is open. How about this? Create a good shot for your teammate. We did a bunch of that today.

Guys, this has been one of those -- I told them today, they worked hard enough and had enough bad things happen to them. They deserve something good to happen. But no one is giving it to you. You've got to take it. We got closer today to taking it.

Q. It seems like on most of the losses this year, in the second half, the team has lost focus, had a lot of turnovers. What was the difference tonight? It seemed like they were a lot more focused and had a lot of fight in them.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Because they were playing together. So instead of each guy worrying about how I play, I played so bad, I cannot be engaged with this team. And that's what we do, and then it leads to turnovers. I've got to get a basket because I'm 1-for-7, so I've got to get a basket. So you take a bad shot, you throw a crazy pass or you try to hit a home run because you're playing poorly.

Today they were a team trying to create shots and execution for each other so that we can win. You know, again, we had some breakdowns defensively. We were -- there were some guys that, you know, the game plan was we broke it off a couple times and they made us pay with layups. And so you know, but the reality of it is guys who are in there fighting, battling, you know, did some good stuff.

But look, this game of basketball, the key is, when I'm not playing well, how do I help the team win. If you want to be a really good player. Or when I'm not playing well, I don't care if we win or lose or what happens. You can't be that guy.

And what I'm continuing to say, we're looking for singles and bunts. I don't need home runs. We're not capable of hitting home runs. So let's not. Let's just do all the bunts and great screens and execution and everybody do their thing together. Like I said after the game, hard for me to be mad. I wanted to win the game. I'll look at the stuff down the stretch to see how I feel.

But the reality of it is the team fought and they executed and they threw daggers today. Finally, guys threw daggers.

Q. It was just a couple weeks ago that you said the team was listening but they weren't hearing. And now the things that you've been emphasizing, the turnovers, getting out on the break, it seems like they

are really hearing for the first time. What do you attribute that to, and does that give you encouragement for the rest of the year?

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: I think, again, you know, this is us -- we're still trying to figure out different things with this team. You probably didn't know but I changed some stuff up today on how we had spacing on the court, what I did defensively on the halfcourt, you probably didn't notice, but we are trying different things to see what works for this group.

And I'm not going to stop. I'm coaching. I'm fighting. I'm battling. I'm playing every game. We've got one game Saturday. I'm not worried about anything else. We've got a game Saturday.

So my day will be spent watching this, learning from the tape. It's done. Let's get on with the next game. I'm going to be honest with you, I don't even know who we're playing. I know we've got a game Saturday.

Q. I know you mentioned you wanted to go back and look at that last foul that was called, but earlier in the game, you had a long talk with officials. Isaiah gets a tech and has to leave -- what can you say about the guys being frustrated --

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: I just told Isaiah, "Isaiah, if you miss a call, you've just got to let it go." You can't get technical in a game like this. And they keep the ball and all of a sudden the stuff changed on us.

Now from that point, we had our chances and got the one-point lead but we don't want it. It's the same, again, you know, you look at -- in a game for us in our team, there are game-ending calls that we've seen. At Auburn, it's a game-ending ball. Not a jump ball. It's a foul. Now those game -- they are done. The game ends. That was a game-ending call. I've got to watch the tape. I don't know. You guys could tell me. You probably saw it. If it was a foul, it was the right call. If it wasn't a foul, it was the wrong call.

Q. I guess looking back, it's kind of a minor thing in some ways, but toward the end when I saw your team huddle up on the court, Devin got in and looked like he took charge and almost barking at the guys. Is that a step forward for him? First time I can remember somebody doing that.

COACH JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, and we've been talking about that. We've been talking about it. You guys don't even huddle. You're so disappointed in how you are playing, you can't even huddle and talk it each other.

Again, we've got inexperienced guys who have only played for themselves. I've had it before but I've had the summer and the fall. And they figure out at some point in the year, we need each other, so I've got to stop this, or you're not going to play. I'm not going to put you in the game.

And so now they are starting to huddle. They are starting to talk. I mean, how about how we had to finish the half. How about the stuff we're doing, had to go zone, Davion playing, and then I said, "Let B.J. play for you." Are you kidding me? He didn't play point at one time in any practice at any point.

So we ended the night, I looked, I said, we're right there, we shot 31 percent in the first half and we're down one -- I loved it, but I'm still saying the same thing. You know, there were points in the game, one or two or three plays, bang, that changed the complexion of the game and we've still got to get it under control.

Thanks, guys.

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