

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

Wednesday, October 20, 2021

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Coach John Calipari

Press Conference



Q. Just talk a little bit about how practice has been going, if you feel any different now than you did two weeks ago, and talk about the next two or three weeks coming out.

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, the first question is I am having a ball every day I walk in because I've got a bunch of guys that want to be coached, that want to challenge each other, that are engaged. We've got veterans. When you have veterans, they're on time. It starts to lead -- without even saying anything, they lead. That's been fun.

I haven't had many teams with veteran kind of players on it, so I kind of forget that it takes one thing off your plate. But it's good. They're shooting the ball. They're playing. They're competing.

You know, a little bit like Reed and PJ, that kind of team.

You have a Nick and Daimion, but it's a little bit like Reed and PJ being together.

Q. With all the changes in college basketball, name, image and likeness, transfer portal, G-League coming and taking more and more, Coach K is hanging it up, Roy is hanging it up, why don't you use this point in time to say, I've done enough, I'm walking away?

JOHN CALIPARI: They're way older than me, both of them.

Let me talk about name, image and likeness first. Kids come here because of the culture, because of the basketball. They want to be coached up. They want to compete. They're not promised the world. They don't come here because of name image and likeness, but let me say this: To this point, our players have the most transactions on our campus, and there's only really 10 of them taking advantage, and they have the most transactions on this campus.

They are benefiting by this.

Now, that's not why you come here, but it'll be better here for everybody because there's been -- there's three more requests to talk to our team by companies, so they request their direct messages, so they want to talk to everybody. It's a little different.

But here's the thing. You talk about life skills we're able to teach. I talked to them about a tax account. They're like, a tax account? Yeah, you've got to set half your money aside and put it in a tax account. Why? I said, because there's this guy, Mr. FICA, and this guy Mr. FICA is relentless. He's coming after his money, and you'd better set half the money aside so you have money to pay him.

The other side of it becomes, they've got to look and read contracts. Talk about football, football are three-year deals. So a kid can make X amount of money, but it's over three years. You can't sign three-year deals. So you've got to read the contract. You've got to know what it says. You've got to be involved. We've got to help protect them and those kind of things.

And the other thing is financial literacy. They're coming across money for the first time. I ask some of you, how many of you knew anything about taxes when you graduated from college? How many of you knew anything about looking at a contract? How many of you even had a credit card? How many of you had a credit card? Did you know anything about stocks and bonds, mutual funds?

Well, this is life skills through this. But I say it again, they don't come here because of that, but ours would be the best, based on what this program is about in men's basketball and the culture we've built in men's basketball, the aura of men's basketball, and it's been built long before I got here, we're standing on the shoulders of some great coaches and players, but it is here.

Lastly, I would say this again. You've got to have flexibility and be nimble, not to restrict, because we know if it goes to the Supreme Court again, you're losing. It was 9-0. So you can't be nimble and flexible to restrict. You're flexible and nimble so you can see if another state does things that puts us at a disadvantage.

Okay, let's be flexible enough that we can adjust how we

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

do this. We needed the executive order.

Now, there's some things that we need to go back now in the state law and make sure we're all protected, also. A player isn't playing a whole lot, and it affects his name image and likeness. Is he going to sue me? I'm not the one -- you're deciding. So there's got to be some protection.

Former athletes, they're mad; why didn't you do this for us?

Do you know how much I would have made? So there's some things that need to be in it, but flexible and nimble are so that we can move -- not be more restrictive, well, we're going to decide now -- it can't be that way, because you're not going to win that. Well, it's a state law. Well, I just know it's a 9-0 vote.

Our kids, no effect on the locker room. As a matter of fact, I asked them one time, went through and individually, not as a group, and they all were like, is this having any effect on -- they went, what? No, we're all happy. We know some are going to do better than others, but Coach, we're all involved in this. Our walk-ons are involved in it. That's how you get to the number of transactions that we have, and still, three or four companies have already called about doing more.

We haven't done autographs. We've kind of said, let's get into the season, and when the season starts, I want this to be really trimmed -- they're not worried about anything except playing. Thank you for giving me that bully pulpit for a minute.

Q. I remember earlier in the preseason you talked about how what a luxury it is to know going into each day's practice what you're going to get from players. How much of that did you have last year, and how does that show itself do you think going forward? How does that benefit?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, this is like a normal season for us. I told them yesterday, we have not had a bad practice yet. I said, we go through seasons without a bad practice here. Seasons. Those are the teams that are winning 38, 35, 32, those are those teams. There's a bunch of them.

Last year is a blip. That's so far behind me, what we went through, and I learned from it, and you move on. But what I like about this group, they're competing against each other.

But let me say this: Yes, we do have depth. So now you have guys that are similar skills offensively. Who would you play now? It's you. They're very similar offensively. Who are you going to play? It's done in practice but how

about defends better, rebounds better, takes care of the ball better. Those guys get a leg up, and I keep telling them, you're competing with each other, yet I'll play as many deserve to play.

But I'm saying this again, folks, it's not communism. It is not communism. If I have to play 10, 11, 12, I would. It's not what I'd like to do, but it's not about me, it's about them. I've played 10 before, I'd rather not. I've played five before and six. Probably not enough, but I would do it if people separate as we go forward.

Right now, if you walked into practice and watched, you'd say, they are really competing.

Q. This is sort of a follow-up to what you just said, but based on the makeup of your roster with new faces --

JOHN CALIPARI: You're saying right here, I don't know where -- there you go, I'm waving at you. Thank you. Go ahead.

Q. You've got new faces via the transfer portal. That said, what sort of things are you going to be looking for in the blue and white exhibition games that maybe you don't get to see in practice?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, when there's popcorn popping and there's people in the seats, guys seem to play different. I've tried in my mind, I want it to be this guy. You know there's times I've started guys -- let me put it this way. I haven't started players, they've forced their way in, and they're lottery picks -- they weren't even starting because I thought it would be the other guy. Most of the time it takes me a minute for them to figure out who it's supposed to be. Immanuel Quickley is a great story but so is Shai Alexander. I could go on and on. We've had a bunch of them. Yes, we'll have an idea. It's us playing against each other. They know each other. We'll play a couple exhibition and then we start regular season. We'll have it figured out by then.

Q. In terms of the blend of what you have right now with some older guys, you really haven't had via the transfer route, a lot of high major guys, some coaches haven't gone the transfer route, Jay Wright, Danny Hurley, some of those guys have just decided to go more high school. Why did you decide to do this? Was it out of necessity or was it just --

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, what I'm always doing, we recruit really good players and then they leave right away. We'll deal with it. What's the best thing? For this team, we needed a couple more players. So when you looked around, do you really want to bring somebody here that's

not quite good enough that's going to really struggle here? Well, then you go see what the other guys are, and in our case, the players that we brought in are Kellan -- ooh, now he struggled early because he's never played this fast, but he's not struggling now.

Sahvir, I told him, you're not getting four turnovers a game. That ain't happening here. All of a sudden you see him, what he's doing.

You look at Oscar, he's 255 pounds with 7 percent body fat. He's flying. The pro day they said we didn't know he could move his feet that way.

So you're talking about guys that are adding to us.

Now, what I've done in the past are grad students. Reed was really good for us, and it was great to have an older player with some younger guys. We did it with Nate Sestina, who was terrific for that team, and that team could have won the national title. We won our league by three games and then the pandemic hit.

So I've done it, but we've never done it with a sophomore, a junior. CJ has been hurt, but he can really shoot the ball, and I can't wait until we get him on the court. He's been on the court 15 minutes, so we haven't seen it.

Now, here's what I would tell you. In a normal year, like if this class finishes like I think it's going to finish, the only way we take a transfer is if we have a roster of nine players.

Now, you won't believe this. You need a warmup line. You've got to have like enough where you can have a couple balls. So okay, then maybe we take a transfer. If we miss on a kid, then maybe we take a transfer.

The good news for us, if you talk to Sahvir, you talk to Kellan, you talk to Oscar, you talk to CJ, those are the guys that would say to somebody, if you get a chance to get in this culture, what men's basketball is and how we do it here, you take advantage of it.

But I'm not that smart to say, I'm going to invent -- I'm just playing it, all right, where are we now.

Q. A lot has been made about your new energy and outlook this year. I had a colleague from out of state ask me, what is a Swaggy Cow. What should I tell him? And is that a name that you embrace?

JOHN CALIPARI: What is the name he said?

Q. Swaggy Cow.

JOHN CALIPARI: Who says that?

Q. Everybody does. Fans do.

JOHN CALIPARI: They call me Swaggy Cow? Why don't you tell my wife that's what you guys call me. She would enjoy that.

You know, I would hope every year that I walk in the gym that the players know that, wow, he expects us to be good, and not only expects, he's demanding that we improve every day so that we are good when we finish. He doesn't put it on the score, wins and losses. It's about are we getting better, and man, he's confident.

Well, part of it is I've done this for 30-some years, and the process and the culture we've built at different places is similar. It's about being about the kids first.

I've said this many times. I went from the business of basketball to the business of kids and families, and it shifts. Like I'm telling these players now, a lot of stuff we're doing is for you individually so you will improve so you can help us be our best.

I don't know if that's Swaggy Cow, but I'm confident in what we do and how we teach and how we're playing. Now, we're going to play different this year. When we did the dribble drive, it was totally different than everybody else. When we did the positionless basketball, it became different than everybody else. When we played with three point guards, how do you do that? You can't -- well, they all were drafted and it all worked out for everybody. One of them scored 60, Jamal Murray, in a game.

What we're doing now, the spacing and what we're trying to -- is different. As a matter of fact, I kind of like changing what I do, to be honest, I don't -- you've got people that say, he's listening to me, and we laugh because he says, I don't listen to anybody. I don't listen to my wife. You guys see her -- what's she on? Instagram? Following me putting the garbage -- what? I don't care what she does. Take my picture, go do what you want. Have fun, good.

But the best part of this is trying new things. Now, I am making calls to friends of mine saying that I'm trying this, do you think this will work, because I don't want to waste time with this group, so there's some things that I've scrapped already that I didn't like that didn't fit this group. And every year I have is different. But I don't know, I'm comfortable and confident, but I've been comfortable when we've gone into games and you get smacked and we weren't ready.

I want them to know if they spend the time and you sacrifice and you're about each other you'll win your share of games, and you'll have a chance to be the last team standing. You know, I've seen I just looked at something. I've never seen a selfish person who's happy, and I've never seen an unselfish player not be happy, or be unhappy. I'm just trying to get these -- it's hard now when you've got 10, 11 guys all trying to -- how do you get them to be about each other. It's the hardest challenge we have as coaches.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about Tubby having his jersey retired and when he'll be here and what you think that day will be like?

JOHN CALIPARI: He and I talked today. He and I have talked about this for a while as a matter of fact. I called him about, you need to get back in here, and I'm really happy the university saw fit to do this for him. But I had one thing. I told him, I'm going to tell you right now, I'm going to be really ticked if your ovation is bigger than mine. That's what I told him, jokingly. And he laughed.

But you know what I said to him? What happens, you leave a program -- I don't think Coach Hall understood how much he was loved here. When he went on his birthday and he did the wine, everybody went absolutely bonkers, and they did the statue for him over here, and now he can come and bring friends to -- he understood how much he was loved here. I want Tubby to understand. I said, Tubby, when I mention your name I'm going to be in Louisville tomorrow and I'm going to mention your name, it's like a standing ovation. I said, Tubby, you are loved here.

The more that the time goes by, I think the more people respect the job he did and how he did it. So I'm really happy for him. He deserves it, and we'll be so honored.

I'm hoping some of his former players the night before come back, and I think we're going to have a bunch of them where they come back and honor him together, because he was loved. I put it on last night, his players loved him, loved playing for him.

Q. You guys are No. 10 in the AP poll, picked to win the SEC. What do you think of that?

JOHN CALIPARI: You know, that's all good. We've got to play the games and see what happens. It's a long season, and let's just hope we're one of the last teams standing at the end.

We may struggle early like we always do. We struggle early, too bad, let's go, we're going to get better. We've got

good players, we've got good guards, we've got some physical players who are men. There's not a whole lot of, I got fouled, and no one is saying that. You're trying to survive.

That's nice. Let me say this about our league. Our league is probably the best it's ever been, and our league may be the best league in the country. Those games should be games where every fan is trying to get to, the league games, because they're going to be -- and you know the league always gives us the hardest games.

If it's only one game, where are we playing them? We're playing them on the road and there's game day. It's going to be a dogfight like it is every year, but the league has gotten better. The coaches by and large are recruiting and doing good stuff.

I think the investments that all the universities have made into their basketball program, which we talked about 10 years ago, got to invest in basketball, can't just invest in one sport. You've got to invest there.

Here, we have to reinvest. Now it's our turn to go back and reinvest in all our stuff. We've got to be the gold standard. I want to have a campus that has everything on it, men and women, teams and sports science and housing and how they eat and dieticians and even classrooms where other students can be a part of it.

My vision is always as it is, ridiculous, but the gold standard -- men's basketball at Kentucky. Men's basketball here. All that's been done over the years has been because administrations want to win championships - listen to me - in men's basketball.

Over the years, they always made that commitment, and we're continuing that now.

So what we're doing and where we're going, it's some pretty big stuff.

Q. At the open practice the other day, there were a couple of times you told your players, we are going to be a speed team. What's your definition of that?

JOHN CALIPARI: You run faster than you think you can run, and when a guy is going at his speed, I stop it. Why is that fair, that Oscar is running so fast he's not getting his feet in front of him, and you're going at your pace? What's fair about that? If you run in a game like this, you're telling me you're tired, you're coming out. So get used to it. Let's create that habit. First three steps, we're flying. Doesn't mean you just play fast, it means you're running fast, and then you have poise, and then you have pace to your

game.

The biggest thing when you run fast to most of these players, their feet are moving real fast and their minds are moving just as fast. Well, you can't play that way. You've got to run fast and have a slow look at what's going on around you. So we've been working on it. They've been great. I'm telling you, they're trying, they're running. We've got a great feel. They're for each other, but it got a little bit physical the other day, and guys broke off and went one-on-one to beat the guy that's beating him up.

Can't play that way. All right, you've got to work harder to get free, then he's working hard to grab you and hold you from getting the ball. You've got to be stronger on drives, you may have to come to stops. He grabbed my arm. So what? Play. Now you come down, it's one-on-one, I'm going to show him and then you turn it over and get it blocked. That's why we don't do it.

This has been -- the only way you get that is if they're competing like that in practice. The only way you can really compete in practice like that is you have 10 that can go against each other, and they can do that, and we do.

Q. With so many guards on this roster, how have you sorted through the similarities between them? I don't know if redundancies is a word, but how have you sorted through that process and figured out exactly where they fit in at this point?

JOHN CALIPARI: I think what you have in basketball players, you have play starters and you have finishers. When your play starter is taking the most shots on your team, not a good thing. If your finisher is trying to drive and pass and play and do -- and he's got more turnovers than assists, not a good thing.

So what you first try to find out, who are the play starters and who are the finishers. We do drills where you're trying to make baskets in the last five, six seconds of a clock. Who can make those? Then who can do it in a game? But I'm going to tell you this will come down to if there are a couple guys that are better defenders, those will be that last couple guys. That will be the differentiator. He's a tough, rebounding, defensive player who can finish. He's a tough, rebounding, great defender and great play starter for us. He can really shoot it, but he's -- well, this guy can shoot it, too.

So we've got to wade through that. Part of it will be in games. I've got to figure some things out and make sure everybody has their opportunity, but you guys know, I say this every year, before it's all said and done, every one of these guys will start, and you'll prove whether you should

keep starting, or you're the victim. Well, I didn't play for a while, now you started me, now I can't -- well, you're the victim. I don't deal with victims well. Well, I haven't played -- now you're starting. You already have excuses? No, everyone on this team will have their chance. Some will start ahead. Immanuel didn't, and he was Player of the Year in the league. Shai didn't, and he ended up a lottery pick.

Those kids, I remember telling Shai, you know, probably could start you, and he said to me, Coach, I trust you. Just do what you're doing. I'm good.

It'll all play out. Let me just say it, we've got good guards. We do.

Q. I know you've mentioned you like this team's competitiveness. Obviously it changes once the season starts and you see them out there, but what else do you like about this group? What are some things that you're feeling out right now?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, you're trying to figure out guys -- I called Daimion in the office the other day and said, you've got to show me more. I don't know enough about you. Make some mistakes. Shoot some balls you shouldn't shoot. Do some stuff so you can see what you are and what you're not, and then we can talk through it. I'll give you an example. I said that to him, and he shot two-point shots. Every 5-on-5 that we do there's stats. For the season so far, and we do it by week, sometimes every two weeks.

Daimion shot the ball from two, pull-ups, some floaters, some stick-backs, 65 percent. From the three, he was zero percent. So in front of the team, I said, with the numbers, you probably should shoot more threes. No. How about you dive to the rim more? How about you find scoring opportunities within 16 feet? How about the shot goes up, don't be standing on the perimeter. Even though you're playing one of those spots, you've got to be a diver, and all of a sudden yesterday he was ridiculous.

But that's what we have to do. That's what coaches do. You try to -- some of the kids will listen. Some of them will be delusional, I'm going to show you that I can turn this thing over. Okay. Or I can play a certain way. Okay. That's your choice. That's a great thing. But I have choices, too, as a head coach.

What we're doing with guys, Bryce -- he didn't practice for 10 days, seven days, and he moved back. Well, he's back practicing and he's kind of nudging his way up. Very physical, starting to try to rebound more. You can play him as a 4, you can play him as a 3. He's probably not big

enough to play as a 5. Daimion could be a 4 or 5. Keion could be a 4 or a 3. There's all kind of moving parts right now.

Q. As far as going through last year, maybe what you learned from it, what are some things that you're doing this year even on and off the court that you've been able to do similar or maybe different?

JOHN CALIPARI: Last year was a pandemic, so I'm by that. I mean, it was once in a hundred years. I feel bad for the kids. I feel bad for the students. Somebody said, what if you were a freshman. What an awful thing. What if you were a senior, your last year? What an awful thing. What about a team sport? What an awful thing. It's done. This team reminds me of past teams that I've had that come every day -- you ready for this? You can scrimmage more.

Most people will say, you don't scrimmage enough. They'll come in and watch and you need to scrimmage more, and I'll say, yeah, and you got fired, so don't even talk to me. But they're right. We've got to scrimmage more. But until I get them to develop the habits that are winning habits, playing doesn't help that. It confirms what they think, which is not right.

This team, though, has advanced partly because I've got some older players, partly because we've got 10 and they're competing, so we're doing -- yesterday was two and a half hours and my guess is nearly two hours we scrimmaged. Now, I went and did it different ways, I take that back, 10 minutes, 15 minutes with shooting, so probably an hour and 45.

Hopefully we get more of that because they've got to get to feel each other and how they're playing.

Q. I've heard you say before that if you find a bobby pin on the ground before a game --

JOHN CALIPARI: A bobby pin?

Q. Yeah, that you're going to win. Last season did you find any bobby pins on the ground before a win?

JOHN CALIPARI: I had a mask on, I didn't look down at anything, so they may have been down there, but I did not see them.

Q. When is the last time you found one before a game?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, I find them when it's not a game, and I know I'm going to have a good day. But I get -- look, it used to be a coin with the head up. A great story: So

we're playing, I'm coaching at UMass at the time, and the story got out that I'd walk around and if I found a coin head up, we'd win. We're playing Temple, might have been my second year, in the championship game of the tournament, which had never happened before, and I went to sit down, and there must have been 500 coins under my chair, all head up. Our fans. We didn't win the game either, by the way.

But I'm less and less superstitious, like I used to be, but I do have bobby pins everywhere if you're around my house, my office, my clothes, my coats. They're in there somewhere.

Q. You've been in this business a long time. I wanted to ask you whether it's five years, ten years, 20 years, I know you're a players-first coach, but what is the legacy and what has college basketball meant to you? What do you want your legacy to be when it's all said and done?

JOHN CALIPARI: There's two things that basketball has done for me. It got me to understand as a player the commitment that if you're willing to sacrifice and commit to something, you can be good at it. Now, there may be better than you, but you can be your best. You can take pride in every morning. It can wake you up in the morning. It can make you go.

The second thing is basketball is a team sport. On the court, when I played, obviously, we -- well, we had cell phones back then, did we?

Q. No.

JOHN CALIPARI: No? But they can't be on the court with cell phones. So they can't text each other. They can't send pictures. They must talk. You're also in the locker room. Now, sometimes they grab the phones too quick. But the reality of it is through this game I've created relationships as a player, high school, college, are still my friends today. You create relationships -- you ready for this one? They're authentic. They're not just fly by and how are you, like they're authentic.

You understood how to let the other guy be right; you could be wrong so he could be right. My dad taught me early, you don't have to argue with anything. Don't argue, just let him be wrong. I learned that -- we're arguing, okay, you're right. I let him be wrong.

There's so many things. Then I get into coaching -- again, my dad worked at the airport. Later in life he was a baggage handler. My mom was at the junior high school selling ice cream in the white jacket for a dime. It was a

dime back then.

But I'm in a position to help families, and it's all been through this game, and I went from the business of basketball to say, if I help families, and that's what I do, and I'm about them, not we're all about banners, they'll be about banners. We've won one. I'd like to win five more. But I'm not changing the culture here, which is how do we help young people get better.

Sometimes it's holding them accountable, sometimes it's holding them accountable and other times you've got to pick them up. But they have to understand, their confidence is built through their competence. If they're not competent, they can't be confident. If they don't get in that gym and work on it and build their own confidence, there's nothing I can do, but we talk that way all the time.

My ability, and you say legacy, it'll be -- how many people, staff people -- I try wherever I work to work with other coaches and help them as they helped me, whether it be the athletic directors that I've worked for who still call me once a week, to presidents of the universities that know what we did. It's more than just winning a game for me and trying to win every game we play, trying to put banners up every year I coach. But not at the expense of kids. It's just not -- my hope would be, that's one dude that was about their kids.

That was a long answer, huh? How much more time? Can I filibuster any more?

Q. I feel like I need to ask about Kentucky football at 6-1. How excited are you for Mark Stoops, and is it refreshing to see the two sports coexisting so well?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, first of all, we've always coexisted. Whoever was the coach -- Rich was, but Mark and I are close. We're from the same western PA and Youngstown. He talks -- he's one of my guys.

But what he's done here, which took time, this didn't happen in two years. He did this over a period of time.

I called him after Georgia and he was upset. I thought we could have played better. I said, Mark, it was a rock fight. It was a rock fight. You're not going to have execution. You're trying to survive, and your kids never budged.

That crazy call, the fumble, I thought this was going to be -- and then they score one play later, and it kind of changed things, and that's sport. Especially Kentucky in football who are now vowing to have an undefeated season or a one-loss season, and it's a little different when things happen, but it was like volleyball here when Coach Skinner

said to me we can't quite get over the hump, and I said, when you do, you will see you will be running downhill, and that was about five years ago, and his thing has done the same as Mark's.

I have to tell you that the commitment in all the sports here, new soccer stadium, new softball stadium, new baseball stadium, \$190 million in football, you're talking about what they've done for volleyball. They're trying to build more track. They've already built one, they're trying to go with another one, you're talking tennis. How about a rifle team? We've got a bunch of snipers over there.

The investment that's been made here is in all the sports, so no one can say, well, they put all the money in basketball. That's not what happened here. That's not what happened here.

I give them credit. I mean, let me go one further. Dr. Capilouto making this a students-first campus, 6,000 new beds, \$3 billion in new housing, new student facilities, new places to eat, common areas to learn and teach each other and take this -- I mean, there's a lot -- what year is this for me?

Q. 13th season.

JOHN CALIPARI: It's my 13th year. You know that's dog years here, so that's -- what is it, 91? I've been here 91 seasons. It's seven for every one year here. I've had fun watching it. I told the president, I said, Doc, I said, the only way you see growth on a campus is see cranes. You've got to see cranes. But I didn't want to see them outside my window. I'm somewhere else, not over here.

But what's been doing here and how it's been done and what Mitch has done with all the sports, and I've got a responsibility to men's basketball. I've got to make sure I'm on top of all the stuff that concerns us, which I do, because it's important for all the sports here. It's important for our state. It's what it is.

What else?

And let me say this: I am so happy for football. Packed stadiums, running on to the field, like storming the field, all this stuff. It's just great. It's great for the morale of this campus. It's great for our alums to take pride in this place.

Q. More and more players are entering the portal mid-season. How does your coaching staff evaluate prospects in the transfer portal?

JOHN CALIPARI: Are you talking football or men's basketball?



Q. Football, but it'll probably bleed over to basketball eventually.

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, here's my problem with the transfer portal. I said it all along. First of all, it's going to help Kentucky. I thought that would nix it, and they would never do it. That's what I thought. It is going to help Kentucky. Why? Kids are going to want to come here. They're going to want to hone their skills. They're going to want to be in this culture.

The question is how much do we take advantage of it. The problem I had was I've coached at UMass, I've coached at Memphis, where now do you take freshmen who are going to leave in a year, or do you take transfers because they can't leave? All right, so now you take transfers.

Who gets bumped out? High school players. I have a friend of mine whose son, he said Cal, I swear he's division I, he had offers and now everyone is holding back scholarships in case they can get transfers, and I knew it would go down to there.

So the opportunities for young people are drying up because everybody says, you know what, I will wait. We've never had -- normally in a year I'll have 11 scholarships. I never use 13. And usually the last couple I'm giving to walk-ons that deserve it.

I don't see mid-season -- if it happens, we'll have scholarships. We had one, Hamidou Diallo came mid-season and then played the following year. We've done that once. It's not something I look for, but if it happens and the kid can really benefit by practicing and being a part of our team and getting a head start, that's fine. But I think football mid-season will happen. I'm not sure basketball will have the same.

Q. You said younger teams don't communicate as much (indiscernible).

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, the older guys, we still have guys that don't think it's a responsibility to speak, and the problem is they're not going to play that much because your team is way better when everybody is chattering. You're just way better, your team. Yeah, but I'm this and this. Yeah, but our team isn't the same. You have to talk.

We had a group out there yesterday that talked like crazy, and the coaches were looking at each other like, what? We were in our press, we're pressing, we're trapping, the ball goes over and they all match down and they're talking and pointing, I'm like, what just happened? But the other team then would talk to themselves, like did you see that?

Yeah, you've got to speak.

That's all part of that, what's the differentiator, why is he playing instead of this guy? The toughness, the rebounding and defense, the ability to talk. Our team is better with him on the court, all that stuff.

I said to Dontaie the other day, he had an unbelievable day rebounding, and I said, listen, if you rebound the ball like this, you're going to get on the floor because it's not just shooting, you may go 0 for 6, you may go 6 for 6, but if you're rebounding, none of that matters.

He's been doing better, but he's in -- it's competition. I mean, we've got some good guys. And C.J. has not started yet. Now, he won the three-point contest. He started practicing yesterday. It didn't -- I said, hey, we're going to take another day.

So that's where we are with that. But talking, you're right. If you sit on the sidelines and the team doesn't talk, they stink. That's a team that stinks. If you sit on the side line and there's chatter and they're talking, talk to me, talk to me, I'm coming, my man is on the left, go, go, I got you on the backside. When you hear that, probably a pretty good team.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports