

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky 95, Kentucky Wesleyan 72

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. A lot of chatter during the pre-season about the transfers, the freshmen. Did it surprise you at all that Keion Brooks was the guy that stepped up and jump-started the game for you?

JOHN CALIPARI: He played good. Way better, way more skilled. I think Davion fought. I love what I saw from Davion today. He didn't make any threes. What was he? One of five. In a normal game he's going to make more than one of five.

What I would tell you, 20 assists, nine turnovers, the way we're playing, the speed we're playing with, is pretty good. We held it at times. Instead of a drive, pass, pass, drive again, we went drive, pass, and that guy tried to make a play. We got to keep working on that.

The biggest thing came out of our interior defense where in the second half, Jamal just went crazy. 12 out of 17. Again, we got to figure it out. I'll be honest, I have not zeroed in on it, but I told them after the game, If you can play interior defense, you're going to play for us. So you want to play? Play interior defense.

I know Oscar was out. Hip has been bothering him, so I left him out the rest of the game. But it doesn't matter. We had other guys. We tried two or three different guys to say, Let's go, let's see how you do. Didn't do very well.

Short of that, there was some good stuff.

Q. Do you expect C.J. and Jacob to be ready for the Duke game? Where do they fit into this?

JOHN CALIPARI: We don't know yet. I mean, Jacob practiced like one day. But we're coming down to the wire right now. It will be hard. C.J. has not started yet. It will be hard.

But if you ask me, we get to eight, there's a couple guys. It's just how it is. You want to play more guys. Just got to play better. I mean, again, Sahvir, six and one. The great thing is TyTy had 18 points on nine shots. What? And he didn't get the ball early in the game. He wasn't, like, involved. He never wavers, just plays, which is great about him.

Q. Hopkins said the other day what he was looking for in this game was cohesion, how well they played together. Especially on an opening night, how well do you feel they shared the ball and played as a unit?

JOHN CALIPARI: There were times that they needed to make one extra pass, and the guy that got it... You have to understand, they're trying to establish who they are, too. It's natural. It's not selfishness, I'm trying to get this.

We're trying to get to where the ball moves a little bit more, we keep driving. We did it later. But, yeah, I come back to we didn't turn them over as much as you would like to, which you got to give them credit, their guard play. They played well. Their big guys literally did not turn it over and got shots up every time.

We got a ways to go. There was good stuff, but it's glaring to me what I got to do now. Forget about Friday, Tuesday, next Friday. The path that this team has got to go on is what are we going to be perimeter defense.

I thought Sahvir did a great job of fighting screens. We got some other guys that were running gaps. We're not playing that way. We got beat on the bounce. You guys and ladies know how much we work on staying in front of a driver. We just didn't seem to do it.

Q. You've talked about wanting to be a speed team this year. Looked like you were trying to push the pace. Did you live up to your expectations today?

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, the only reason we started pressing the way we were doing it is I just wanted to speed them up and get the game going the way we wanted to.

How much we're going to press, I don't know. I like that we can press with our guards like they can pick up and play.



You're not going to get beat on a dribble, they're going to stay in front. But we ran.

What happens when you play with that kind of speed, it's usually about 12, 13 minutes into the game you'll get a little bust-out. Then in the second half, about the 10-minute mark, 11-minute mark, 12, in there, you get another bust-out. It just wears on the other team. You just keep running.

Like I said, I thought we had a couple guys that didn't play with the kind of motor they needed to all the time. It's not just making shots. It's flying up and down the court. Again, if a guy is playing you, you're struggling to guard him, play him before he catches the ball. May not deny him, but you're going to control him a little bit instead of him controlling you. That takes a high motor. You can wait till he catches it and try to guard him.

I'm just saying it's not the kids' fault. I told them afterwards, how much have we worked on interior defense. We've been more scrimmaging, and the main reason is we gotten guys and they like to compete. We're getting stuff done.

But the breakdown of the defense we have to get back to what I've done normally. Again, if we're what we could be defensively, we could be good. If we're not defensively able to turn people over or if we're not able to have interior defense, it's hard to win unless you can score 95 and hope they score 93.

Q. 29 three-point attempts tonight. Is there a number you would like to see the team average from deep?

JOHN CALIPARI: My son said to me, We took 29 threes. I said, What was the percentage? He said, 37. I said, Okay, I'm going with that. You shoot 37, 40%, you probably should shoot 29 threes.

My thing is, if you watch this, I imagine a lot of teams watched this, they're going to say we're taking away threes. It ain't all bad for us because we are a driving team. We will try to get to the rim or hard closeouts. I love it how we play.

They will be saying, They didn't throw it to the post. We need to work getting Oscar the ball more. We haven't done that enough. Let me just put it this way: we got a lot of work to do.

Q. About the three-point shooting, Keion I think is 23% in his career before this, how much has he improved that over the course of the summer? Is that a weapon?

JOHN CALIPARI: He's improved all of that stuff. My thing, and I keep coming back to him, your skill set is really elevated. You're going to think I'm crazy. I liked when he was screening the ball because then he would step back and be wide open. Normally you're trying to corral the ball. If that guy can shoot, he steps back, you got a problem. I kind of liked what I saw today.

Again, got to fight, rebound more. Like a couple he rebounded, he was tired. He looked to pass it. When you rebound it, you go with it, you're the point guard. He did it later. He made a pass. I think he got Davion a layup.

We're even faster if those guys can bust it up the court and then make easy plays. But he's gotten better.

Q. Another one on Keion. After the blue-white game, you suggested there's two spots that you're really looking at for a bunch of guys to compete. Is that how a veteran should step up? He probably heard some of those comments.

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, I'm not just saying it to the media, I'm saying it to them. Davion helped himself today because of how he guarded. It's not a secret if the you're watching the same game I'm watching, you say, He really guarded. Cal has said 50 times, The guys that fight and really guard and will dive on the floor and go rebound, they're going to get more minutes.

Well, he's gotten more minutes. He was one for five from the three. Doesn't matter. You can stay on the court if you defend that way. If you're breaking down defensively and you're one for five, Let me stay in. What? This ain't Communism, man, you got to come out.

This team needs an interior defender other than just Oscar. Who is it? I don't know. Jacob raised his hand. I said, Okay, it can be you.

Q. A big game for Wesleyan. What is it like to host an in-state game like this?

JOHN CALIPARI: This was a great game for us. I told coach, I said, You guys bullied us a little bit. I said, I love it because we have to play the exhibition game based on finances for the tennis program and all the other programs. Most teams are doing what? Playing scrimmages. When we play an exhibition, we got to get something out of it. Most of it is I got to learn about my team. I learned today. There's some glaring issues that we got to deal with. But I saw it.

If we didn't play a team that would battle us, we would never know. You get into your season and you're like,

Geez, we're not like we thought. Today we learned.

is. So we'll learn.

I'm hoping it helps them, their pride, their confidence in what they could do this year. Their guards were quick. We had to fight to stay in front. I thought we did a fairly good job. I would imagine a couple of their guards said, I was surprised they could stay in front of me because they're quick.

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They only turned it over 12 times. We were pressing them, trying to wear them down. Didn't wear them down. Wore us down, I think.

Q. Tonight we saw a pretty evenly distributed set of minutes. No one went over 25. Going forward, do you continue to plan to use such depth?

JOHN CALIPARI: Why do you think I played all these guys? Why do you think I played that many, instead of seven or eight? Who would play for defense. I need to know who's defending, who is going to fight. It's your choice.

How about this? I'm a college professor and I'm giving them the answers to the test. Here it is. I'm telling you what it is. Well, I can't play that way. It's not a problem, I still love you, you can stay with me at my house, I'm just not playing you that much. You got to fight. You cannot give up on plays, that's not acceptable here. I did pretty good offensively. So did he, and he fights more.

You play them all. Everybody got a chance. Now we'll watch the tape. If I would have played more, you would have get less rebound, so don't tell me that. You got your minutes, what did you do? Who took advantage of their minutes? Who do you think? Name one. Davion took advantage. He didn't start. He could have pouted. He didn't start. Who else took advantage? You could go down and say there were three or four guys. You're just looking offense.

I told them, I need dogs. Who are the dogs? C'mon. Show me who you are. I don't play that way. Okay, I got it, you just move back a little bit.

I tell them every day, the first fight you have is with yourself. Can't fight somebody else unless you fight yourself. Fighting yourself means you don't stop when you feel like stopping. If the energy is raised, you raise yours even higher. It's physical. My physicalness is going to be even more. That's how you begin to fight other people.

The fight doesn't mean fistfight, it means I'm going to battle. Either he gets it or I get it. Who got it today for them? He fought more than we fought. That's just how it