

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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Coach John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky 80, Miles College 71

Q. John, you sat up here last week and said I need dogs. Show me who you are. See any dogs tonight?

JOHN CALIPARI: Couple. Got a couple others that have got to become those guys.

Again, approach, defense, and digging was way better, wasn't it? Now what fell? Three point defense. And then you say, Well, how much have you worked on it? Like some, but this was a great game.

I said it before. Great game for us to play, because I watched the tape. The things that they did perimeter-wise I didn't expect them to make this many threes, especially in a row.

But, you know, second half they get 61 with a couple minutes to go, and then all of a sudden you do the same thing. Give up threes, don't bring in a ball, they make a layup, all of a sudden it's like the last game; they get eight points in the last minute.

So you're sitting there like...

But the one thing that this team is, we'll ride who's playing well. If you're the next man up you got to go ready. I thought Dontaie did great in the second half. You'll say, well, he made shots. No. Did you see how he stayed in front and defended and he blocks a shot? He fought. Then it's in the just shooting.

He threw one away. That's fine, because he was doing enough to fight you could leave him this there. Our guards, they're probably going to play 30 minutes a game if they can stay out of foul trouble. Those two guards. They are. They're better.

C.J. comes back, we'll have to see. I thought Jacob played with more energy, more spirit than some of the other guys, which means I may not start him, but he's going go in, and if he plays that way this means you're playing less. Just

how it is.

Oscar hadn't practiced. He was off about four days. He was injured and I think it kind of showed. Second half he played a little bit better. First half he was just out of sync, wasn't with us.

Q. Looks like your guards are pretty good. Wheeler and Washington both had six assists apiece. They were good passers. How much more flexibility does that give you had terms of game plan and designing offenses?

JOHN CALIPARI: It's like, okay, what do we do with this team? If those two are going to play 30 minutes a game, all right, what happens behind them? I think what you're seeing is they're taking the leadership without me saying it.

I thought Sahvir defensively was ridiculous. It's hard to play that way for 30 minutes or more, but he did it. And I thought TyTy did some good stuff. Missed a couple floaters that I would expect him to make, but, look, you got to give Miles credit again. I mean, to be up and you watch -- here was my point, and I kept saying it: Are you watching the game? I'm in the huddle. They haven't made a two. Are you watching?

So don't drive them off the line. So we're closing with our hands down, and then when he goes to shoot the three we go like this, and as it goes over our hands we go like that and they make another three.

So that was -- it was disappointing. Like you had to be sitting there watching. They are not going to be -- how many teams are going to come in here knowing they got to make 15 threes to beat us? There's going to be teams that are going to know, if we don't make enough threes we can't beat them.

The good news is we're shooting the ball better. So now, you know -- but around a basket, I mean, we had the ball one foot and missed ten. Got them blocked, missed shots.

They must be in there watching ESPN talking about this game. They're in there. I told the coach, I said, this was good game for us. I mean, you went right at us.

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Q. In terms of Sahvir, his pressure, what did he kind of tell those guys that you all could push him out to the perimeter and keep him there for several minutes?

JOHN CALIPARI: He was coaching in every huddle. He was coaching in every huddle. He was talking to guys, getting on guys, he was encouraging guys. TyTy was doing the same.

Like they never -- I walked in at halftime and everybody said, well, what did you say? We're going to play games where someone is going to make this many threes. Now, we got to come out and push out a little bit, and then you got to play well and continue and we got to get stops back to back to back to back.

Again, we've hit two games where teams are shooting 49, 46. Hopefully we're better defensively than we're showing right now.

Q. You're talking about TyTy's taking over the huddle. It sounds like the empowerment, you always talk about that. Have you seen that this early in a season?

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, Tyler Ulis was that way. But, again, can't be just two guys talking. We have to -- let me tell you what's hard for players. Next man up. That's hard. And next man up is hard, because if someone got it going in front of you, you're not going to get as many minutes.

You're just not. Well, then you go in and now you can't play because you're not -- you don't understand the concept. We don't even have C.J. back yet. He's supposed to practice tomorrow for the first time in months.

It's the same when he gets his opportunity. It'll be does he deserve more or less. He may not be ready. That's been a struggle for this team. Because you talk about depth, yeah, but what that means is when you go in, you're going to either earn more minutes or less. That's just what it is.

And so I think we got a little bit of a struggle there, but got to grow up, mature about it, and know, so...

Q. With this being one of your most experienced returning teams, are your expectations maybe a little bit too high? How important is it for you to do well on Tuesday?

JOHN CALIPARI: My expectations? No, it's everybody else's expectation. I know where we are right now, and how hard going forward, not just Tuesday, after Tuesday. Coming back here and having teams, you know, that are veteran teams that are good, too.

So we're going to have to play better. We have to have some post presence. You guys know what I say when you have no post presence. You've got to be able to throw it there and get a couple easy baskets. So it's both defensively and offensively.

You got to have gang rebounding to have a chance. I like the fact that we're flying, that we're getting out, and eventually you can wear people down.

But my expectations are let's get better tomorrow than we were tonight. Let's get better Sunday and Monday so we go in with a good feeling. Now will that be enough? I don't know.

Q. Will Tuesday night be a good barometer for how you think an experienced team...

JOHN CALIPARI: No, because I can remember we got beat bad in that game and came back and were an Elite 8 team of. We made free throws, would have been in the Final Four and could have won a national title.

Whether it's early playing in that thing, but what it'll be is two teams that will be who is going to fight? Who is going to come up with the balls? Who is going to pass it quicker? Because you're going to have to do this together.

But they got terrific -- you know, obviously they got one the great coaches ever. It's his last season, and they got terrific players. The guys that came back are really good. The guys they've added are really good. Be a hard game.

You know what? It's an exciting time. I'm just happy we're back and fans are in the stands and it's back to normal. Players are at my house. We're able to be around each other. It's just like back to normal.

This team has made unbelievable strides. I'll say this: You are not going to be great at everything, and you don't know what you're weak at until you really start playing games.

So last week it was if you guarded a guy you were an island. You were by yourself. In the last five minutes they showed it.

In this game it shows, boy, you a better have a concept on how we're guarding threes. How about a simple fade screen, which we work on? Simple fade screen and you hit into it and the other guy doesn't go out and they get three or four shots; made three of the four.

So there is stuff that we showed, but like I said, I'm not discouraged, probably not encouraged, but we are

probably where we need to be right now. My issue is next man up. Can you play that way. Understand, because...

But was what it was.

Q. Couple of the guys mentioned this week they feel like they're not going to overlook Miles, but it's an opportunity for a big tune up to get ready for Duke. What did you see out of your --

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JOHN CALIPARI: They tuned us up. Miles tuned us up.

Q. Right. What do you feel like you're seeing out of your team?

JOHN CALIPARI: Look, we'll practice tomorrow, Sunday, and Monday and get ready. There ain't a whole lot of -- what do we have to zero in on. I'll go back to the office tonight. I haven't started watching Duke tape. I need to get something together, so we'll do film tomorrow morning about this game, walk through some stuff about this game, come back later in the day and have our practice, have a practice on Sunday, travel, practice on Monday, and we'll play when the lights go on.

It's like the biggest game in a decade. The tickets are ridiculous. It's crazy. We go to the Knicks game on Sunday night, so I get to see Leon, Wes, and Kenny and the guys, and our players, our team is going to go and eat there and watch the game. You know, then we play this game.

Q. What is the one thing that you want your guys to take away from this pair of exhibition games?

JOHN CALIPARI: That you got to be watching the game and knowing what's happening. Let's just say it's a screen to screen play. If you walked in and you're watching and it's hurting us, you know, you are all knowing this is hurting us, let's talk as we're out there. Or a fade screen. You had to see that it happened four, five, six times.

We are telling them in every huddle, if it's thrown over your head, just go run and guard him even if it's not your man.

But like I said, they -- it was a good game. Should have rebounded better. We have some guys that -- you know, I thought Jacob and even Bryce went after one. He got an offensive rebound. You got to get some easy baskets. That means you better be tough, a dog, better fight. Hard to go in there.

I would rather just run back. You know, I go in and get hit, get bumped. We just got to know, you know, how we got to play. But I thought it was pretty good. 20 threes, I thought we could have shot a few more, especially the percentage we're shooting.

