

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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Coach John Calipari

Press Conference



Robert Morris 60, Kentucky 100

Q. What we saw from Daimion down the stretch, how much is that potential to what he can do?

JOHN CALIPARI: He needs to play. You know, I question whether I should have played him more in the Duke game, but and I told the team, you do understand if he plays more what that means, John Hale?

Can I petition to see if I can add minutes to the game? I'm trying to get it to an extra eight a quarter. I don't think they're going to go for that. The other kid that's got to play more and get more comfortable, month and a half ago he may have been our best player, Bryce.

Then he shot some air balls in an exhibition game and just kind of -- I'm trying to tell the players about contentment. You got to be happy with where you are, who you are, what you're about. You still strive to get better, but I'm happy with where I am.

These guys, at times, and it's all the clutter around them, you got to be this, you got to do that, and most of it's based on shooting more balls and playing more minutes. I bet you not one person is in their ears saying, Rebound better, defend, block shots. What does Daimion give to us?

Q. Length.

JOHN CALIPARI: What does length do, John Hale? Excuse me? Yeah he blocked four shots. What else does length do?

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN CALIPARI: We need him in the game. Now, even if it's 20 minutes, we need him to play. Lance, I was so proud of him. Hurt and tried to go and he, and I laughed, and I told him, I appreciate you trying.

You got C.J. with the hamstring injury. Again, going to be out for a minute again. How long? I don't know. Imagine

that.

And now, Jacob, his shoulder, a different part of his shoulder, but it's bothering him and he's getting an MRI tomorrow; couldn't play today.

One good thing is one man's misery is another man's opportunity. Now, I woke up, do you remember Derek Willis? I love Derek. He's one of the greatest kids I've ever coached here. Where did he struggle?

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN CALIPARI: But we needed him to do what?

Q. Make shots.

JOHN CALIPARI: So when he got the ball the entire team yelled, Red when his man got it. We all, Wook, we're here for you kid. I think we're going to have to do that with Dontaie, because first half he scored a three, it was great; gave up two.

We lose. So I want to get him some time. But today Davion did exactly what I want him to do: Be that guy. You don't have to make every shot, but don't miss two and then start driving it and going crazy. Just shoot balls.

I thought Kellan was good today again. Just plays within himself. Our guard play, I like the fact that assist, turnovers and, you know, Oscar, he knew we needed one more rebound for 20.

I think what we're going to put up, you know, this place has always been about the three and the next three. We're going to put somewhere else Rs. R, R, R, R, R, R for him so he can look up and count. I've going to get five more. He'll go get them.

But it got kind of silly when you watched it. Like he just going and grabbing and jerking them in. My issue and what I said to the guys all year is going to be one thing: When somebody has it going and you play less minutes and the clutter comes to you, how are you going to deal with it? Are you able to say, he got it going? If I get it going, I'm going to stay.

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So that's going to be an issue, because we got to have a rotation. You can't play 11, 12 guys. It may be we settle in for a game. There is the eight. We got it.

Guys got tired today. They did not get tired up in New York. They got tired today. TyTy got tired. Kellan got tired. Keion got tired twice. Daimion got tired. Oscar got tired. He wasn't going to take himself out, but he got tired.

And, again, I apologized because I should've had the walk-ons in earlier. It just didn't enter my mind, folks. I told the team after the game, We get into a situation like this, your job is to remind me, Hey, Coach, get those guys in. They deserve to play, too.

So I apologized to the kid, their coach and said, Look, I should have got him in earlier. I apologize.

Q. Daimion who gives you the length, the rear protection, he's still thin and going to get bounced around. How does he compensate for that until he gets stronger?

JOHN CALIPARI: You just be really active. You play people before they catch the ball. You position with leverage. I asked a player or an NBA personnel guy who's a friend, How do you evaluate toughness?

He said something really interesting. He said, Well, first of all, there is a physical toughness, but some guys are a little bit thinner and they'll use leverage. That means they're tough. They'll play a guy before it hits the rim. They'll move. They're tough.

I said, What about the other stuff? He said, Real simple, body language. Said, What do you mean, body language? I don't want to evaluate everything. The kid misses two shots and his head goes down or he jogs back, he's not a tough kid. Just not.

Body language. I told the kids, I've just given you the answer to the test. You want them to say you're tough, your body language never changes. Even if you're not playing great you're always playing hard, clapping. He looks a little at a spirited player or at a guy that backs up, and then he says he's not tough.

Everybody wants tough players. You know, he and Bryce, I felt so bad for them up at New York because they were crushed. They wanted to play more. But I called them in. I said, We got to play you. What did we need in the game against Duke?

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN CALIPARI: Right? So Bryce was the guy, but he hadn't been playing as well. I didn't want to do the other side, throw him in and crush him. They were crushed that they didn't play. Daimion wanted to play Paulo. I said, But Jacob was playing Paulo good, which is why I didn't go one more and try him.

But today they're happy and, like I said after the game, Guys, someone is playing really well, someone else has to play less. Just going to have to accept it if you want this to be a good team. Or other option, you can't be here.

Q. Oscar's performance specifically, you mentioned the rebounding. What has he brought to this team in the early going of this season?

JOHN CALIPARI: You know, he's a great kid. Smiles every day. I'm trying not to give him too much stuff, but we still don't have a good post scheme yet for him. We just don't. I told the team after, We got to figure this out. I tried some new stuff today, but I'm a guy that my mind works so I experiment with stuff. But I think their mind works like mine; their mind doesn't work like mine.

The more you throw at them the more they get confused. So we got to come up with some specific things to where we're getting him the ball and letting him go to work. The other thing is he's got to learn to dunk balls when we throw lobs. When we throw a lob, dunk the ball.

Now, he's never played that way. It's always been bounce, pass, post, mush mouth. Now it's we're running you to the goal. How about he shoot an air ball. I looked at him and I said, You're a great shooter. How did you do that? But post game for us, if we're going to be legitimate, we got to be able to do it. We're not going to make -- how many threes did we make?

Q. 12 threes.

JOHN CALIPARI: We ain't making 12 threes every game. There are going to be some games will make three or four. Then you're going to have to play and do other things. Have to have a high two point field goal percentage, which means you got to get some lay-ups and some lobs and you got to get some post play.

Q. How comfortable is Oscar in posting up? Doesn't look like he establishes position in there.

JOHN CALIPARI: I'm going to have you guard him in practice and then see if you say the same thing. No, we're still working on footwork. He's not -- he's stopping his feet. You got to keep your feet moving. Then when you catch it,

you got to go right into the shot, or you catch it and ball fake and go into the shot.

And we just got a lot of work to do in a lot of areas, to be honest with you.

Q. Talking about Oscar's feet not moving, but aren't his feet always moving when he's thinking about going after a rebound? Seems like that's a natural thing. I wonder, how does he do that?

JOHN CALIPARI: Here's the one thing you all should be watching. He is so big that there are times he's going to jump for a rebound and the guy in front of him is going to act like he got hit. These officials got to know he's 255 pounds with 7% body fat. If he pushes in the back, what? Call it. But if he jumps for a rebound and that guy is fighting like crazy and ducks his head, it is not a foul.

He's 255 pounds and goes after every ball like that, and if you're ducking, you're not going to get the ball from him. My concern right now is you go on the road, and all of a sudden the guy is going overboard trying to box him out and he rebounds it and they say over the back. Then I'll lose my mind.

We are working and teaching holding your ground and going after the ball, not pushing. I mean, you know, there were other coaches, they used to do this. As the shot was in the air they push. They teach you. So the shot is in the air, push. Now all of a sudden you get jerked and the guy goes and gets the ball. They're like, Where was the push? Push was early. We don't teach it.

This is the shot goes up, get your body on him. You're 255pounds. He's not moving you. You get him under the basket, the only one he gets is which one, Eric?

Q. (No microphone.)

JOHN CALIPARI: I knew he didn't know. The one that goes through rim. He can grab that one. Other than that. We want him to go get these balls.

Q. Last week Jay told us that the really good thing about Daimion is he's kind of this blank slate where nobody has told him what to be before. How rare is that for a top level player? What does that say about his potential still?

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, he's in the making. We just got to play him. It's going to take minutes from some guys but in is what it is. I mean, you know, you know how I am about things. I've done things in different ways to try to get people minutes, but we got guards that should play more

minutes than the rest, so you can't do platoon.

You can platoon three guys, but not those two. Then you're taking away minutes. You know, we got to do what we got to do. Get our rotation, get those two in, figure out how we do this, and we still broke down on defense a bunch. Just a bunch. We'll watch the tape.

The communication, when Bryce is in you got to talk to him because he'll get confused. We twirled or switched a couple times and he went with his man. I mean, it's Daimion the same way. Just got to really -- the veterans got to talk to the young kids to tell them what they need to do.

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