

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky 80, Mount St. Mary's 55.

JOHN CALIPARI: I told you all that he can shoot the ball. He is one of our best 15, 17-foot shooters. The other day we did the five-minute shooting drill that we did, and in five minutes he made 87 shots. 87. I think the most was by Kyle Wiltjer, I think. He might have made 89 one time. The kid made 87.

Then I'm telling the team, how can he shoot an airball? Like, it's in his mind. Shoot the ball. We put in some stuff for him to shoot jumpers, which is what we did. It's an easier way to get him a shot. Like we know that this is for him, but, you know, he made baskets. Didn't get quite as many rebounds. Keion got them in the first half. I loved it. That's how he has to play or people will move by him, and I told him, just go play. He had energy.

Now, I did send him to go trap to make him and Bryce more motor, play with motor, and then they ran hard enough where they're ahead of the game, so they're a team that takes away the three-point shot. Well, by taking away the three, Oscar had baskets. We had a bunch of layups, but they did what they did. They don't give you threes. We passed up on two or three, the guys who were open. The guys that we want to shoot it, shoot the ball. Then they drive in and, you know, nothing. It's not something good that happens. I would rather you shoot it or drive it to pass it to somebody else. They played well, though. I thought St. Mary's played well.

Q. How much closer was what TyTy did tonight to how you want him to play?

JOHN CALIPARI: He had four turnovers, though. Again, here's what I'm saying to the team. Again, I say stuff. I tell the truth. Sometimes that aggravates people. Yeah, it's negative. I'm telling the truth. We run, and when we throw it ahead, if they ran back, we did our job because we made them run, and then we reverse the ball out, and we play basketball.

After they've run that way about seven straight times, you

throw it ahead, and the guy gets a layup. Today we threw it ahead, and they ran for their lives back, and we drove in on them. There's nothing there. They're there. We've done our job. We've made them sprint. Swing that ball out and play, so that happened. He had four turnovers. Probably two of them were on that.

I got on him because the lob he threw, he could have thrown it, hit the top of the back board, and Daimion would go get it. He threw it low. Why would you throw it low? He's getting better. He'll be fine.

Q. John, on Friday you asked for an R counter for Oscar's rebounds, and they got the counter in the corner. I don't know if you saw it or not.

JOHN CALIPARI: I didn't know, but I said, where are the rebound things, and they put down the threes, and they put up that. I love it. He knew how many more he had to get, but if he was one or two away, I would have left him in for another minute and let him get two rebounds because that's not being selfish. He needs two more points. Sit down. It's not about points. That's ego stuff. Rebounds are hard to get, and that's not being selfish. The other one is. You want to get 10 assists a game, you're my newest hero. Why don't you get 12? Again, we had 12 assists -- or 15 assists, but I'm telling you, they make you shoot layups and make you bounce the ball to score. It's how they play.

Q. How hard is it to be consistent, Oscar, in rebounding? How difficult is that?

JOHN CALIPARI: You know they were throwing bodies at him. Like, I got mad on the screen because if you hit him and you are running fast, what do you think is going to happen? He doesn't have to move. He just goes like this, and you hit 255, 7% body fat. You are going to spin and look like you got smashed. That is not a foul. It's his advantage being 255 pounds. Other guys' advantage is they're 7-foot tall. That ain't him. Don't take away his advantage.

The same thing when he rebounds like this, and the guy is backing under him to try to block him out, and he jumps straight up and does this. Believe me, I will go nuts if that's



called an over in the back because they're underneath him pushing. He sets a screen. Now, if he obviously moves like it's a sliding move, but if he leans like everyone in the country and he leans on a screen, you're going to knock the guy down because of how big he is. That's his advantage. Don't take away his advantage. Let him be who he is.

Q. Coach, Sahvir, eight assists, just one turnover tonight. What's been different and better about his decision-making the last couple of games?

JOHN CALIPARI: He is not losing his mind. Believe me, after the game he looked at me and said, I had one turnover, so he knows it's important to me. Who is it going to be important to? Him. We still have some guys that I'm telling them exactly what I want them to do and how to play, and they fight it a little bit, and it just hurts them, hurts us. He has totally bought into what I'm saying. Totally bought in.

Like that three he took with the guy on him. I said, why would you do that? If the ball went in and out to you, shoot the three every single time. The guy is on you. Go by him. Get us something. You don't shoot that ball. It's a bank miss.

I like the fact that I'm able to get on our best players. That means I can coach everybody on this team.

Q. You've used the expression in the past "you told on yourself" when a player does something exceptional. Oscar is going out and doing it like every night. Is he the kind of guy that can keep this pace up?

JOHN CALIPARI: He will try. He will try. My guess is that there's going to be teams that are going to put two guys on him. Would you say that? So what does the other guy have to do? If he is not rebounding -- Keion rebounded today. Daimion didn't. I played Keion more. You don't understand all the other parts of the game. I know the one part this team is going to need. That position is going to have to rebound because they're about to put two guys on him, which means you're going to be free to go get balls. Both defensively and maybe even offensively, but you got to go.

We've been working on it. I was so proud of Keion today. Second half he didn't rebound as much, but Oscar got every one, but what he did was he played with an energy. He didn't start the game, one-handed catch and -- no. He played. This is a sense of urgency every time you play, and I just told him, we need to play like we started the second half. Every time we step on the court. Whatever you're doing, you get yourself in that frame of mind. Like I

said, when I put those other guys in and they miss a shot, they take a bad shot, they give up a basket, I took them all out. I said, you all are together in this, and if one guy is breaking you down, say something to them. Tell them, you are giving up baskets. He is going to take us all out.

Like I said, we've got a lot to work on. We've got a lot to do. Playing the guys about -- Oscar I played more. Part of that was I didn't think Daimion was playing the way he had played the last game.

Let me just say one other thing. The greatest thing is they're coaching each other. They're holding each other accountable. At halftime one of the players looked right at the other guy and said, we need you. Where is your energy? Where is your spirit? You know what I said? When someone tells the truth, don't be mad. Well, I think that's negative. When someone tells the truth and the rest of you should be saying, facts. He didn't yell and cuss. He just told you. Now it's facts. Come on. We need you. That's when this team begins to be empowered.

I had Sahvir coaching the guards in pick-and-roll defense. He coached them. You don't need to be in this drill. They all need the drill. Show them what you are doing. He showed them. Then he coached them. Then he started coaching the bigs. I said, coach the whole team. That's fine for me. I don't care. We're just trying to grow, but this is a team that needs everybody to play well.

Q. You said the other day that Jacob was getting an MRI. Did anything come back that that's a long-term issue, or what do you expect from that?

JOHN CALIPARI: I hope not, but there was no damage-damage. He has a bruised shoulder, and we'll see. Lance has the ankle, so whether he will play in two days I don't know. We're playing Ohio. I haven't watched any tape on them. They're 4-0. They shoot 30 threes a game and make 12. If they make 12 against us, we'll lose. Now we got to spend a day absolutely saying, okay, how are we going to guard this stuff?

They've got five guys that all can play. Today did you see Oscar go out and guard guards? The only problem is when they try to drive, what's he do? He is trying to reach. Don't. Just stay in front of the guy. He has feet that he can do that. The Ohio game is going to be a hard one for us. Hard game.

Q. Any update on C.J. and his surgery, and what steps do you take on purpose to keep him involved because, I mean, rehab can be pretty lonely.

JOHN CALIPARI: I talked to him before the surgery today,



and he was in a good frame of mind. We need him. He can't travel for a while, but I want him to be around the team because he needs the guys.

I'm telling you, folks, he came up to me when he found out what it was, and I hugged him, and he said, I'm sorry. You're sorry? Are you crazy? He said, Coach, I love these guys. I really wanted to play with this group. That's the kind of kid he is.

I'm just telling you, you saw how he shoots. You put one more guy out there that can make shots. He also had a 6-1 assist-to-turnover ratio. He doesn't turn it over. He guards. He will guard and keep people in front and come up with balls. It's a bad blow for us and for him, too.

Q. Coach, I don't know if you were aware that the Kentucky -- played Indiana on Sunday with the first-year head coach, Mike Woodson. Has there been any discussion --

JOHN CALIPARI: Say what?

Q. Has there been any discussion with Mike Woodson, the new head coach up there, about trying to bring that series back in some way, shape, or form in the future?

JOHN CALIPARI: Mike and I are good friends. We've talked about stuff, but there's nothing imminent that I could talk to you about. I think we've got to go to Notre Dame. I think we've got to do a Michigan thing. You still got the Big 12. You still got Louisville every year. You got the two tournaments that everyone wants in that we're in. That's everybody wants those tournaments. The greatest thing about those two neutral games is the four teams that are in it are lucky because the minute anybody would drop out, there would be 50 teams calling and begging to be in those tournaments. Got through the Georgia Tech thing, but, yeah, it's -- Mike is a good guy.

From what I understand, they're doing well, too, playing good basketball. Let me tell you, he is a hell of a coach, and he is a great guy. I could tell you stories about what makes him a great guy, but he's doing great.

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