

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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## Coach John Calipari

### Press Conference



Kentucky 77, Ohio 59

JOHN CALIPARI: So let me say this: Bryce Hopkins, without him playing we don't win the game because we are down 15 at the half.

He fought. Still has things to learn; he fought. Daimion in the first half got exhausted. All we were telling him to do was run because we were going to throw you lobs. He got a couple and then he stopped running to the rim because he couldn't breathe.

But he's got a chances.

Keion shot twos. I kept telling him, Why are you shooting threes? Shoot twos. TyTy, why are you shooting threes? Shot twos.

These guys at the two point line are like 60%, 65%, which means you got to shoot 40% from the three, and if you're not doing that, you might as well take twos.

So Oscar getting the two quick fouls, first one was -- I'll watch it on tape, but I already know what I'll see. And then he gets 10 rebounds in the second half. Doesn't care about scoring. Just goes and chases down balls.

Sahvir played well.

Today Davion played better. Kellan didn't play bad; Davion played better, so he played more.

Again, I called the NCAA to see if we could put more minutes on the clock so I could get guys more minutes and they told me, no, you don't get 40 minutes in a game.

So if someone else plays well, you play less. Let me say that team, I almost thought, What in the world did I do playing these guys? You need tune up games. Some teams only play tune up games. We don't.

But, we do have some tune ups. We have to have them on the schedule. But this game really showed us something.

You know, I thought we got into their legs, at least that's what we were trying to do. We keep flying up and down the court.

So proud of guys. We out rebounded them by a bunch. 15 you turnovers. Three of out guys had 12.

**Q. I know Oscar getting early foul is not what you wanted. Did that early adversity kind of galvanize the team? Do you think they grew up some tonight?**

JOHN CALIPARI: They were really saying good things in the huddle. Really good stuff. You know, you guys know if any of you listen to me over the years, most of you haven't, but we try to empower our team.

We know if they were empowered we have a real team. This team a beginning to do it. They talk to each other. You know, Sahvir holds guys accountable. What I did with Keion, he was unbelievable in the first half.

Started the second half letting this kid catch the ball and kind of going through. You're out. You're not doing that. I'm not looking at that guy. The other guy I see is one of the best players in the country.

The other guy that started the half, I'm not seeing it. Now, by saying that and being honest, people may be sad or mad. It's just being honest. Why did you take him out? Because his level of intensity went down.

But that's who we need him to be. Make twos. Don't need you to make three. If you make one or two, fine. But that's not what you're playing for.

I told him, You like getting 22? I know you're kind of sad you didn't make a three. Hit 22 points; don't worry about it.

**Q. They wanted to make Sahvir go right, neutralize Oscar, not leave Kellan. Those were at the top of their board and they do that in the first half.**

JOHN CALIPARI: Oscar got neutralized, but it wasn't by that.

**Q. Right. How good was it for you to see the three**

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**guys that have taken you to this point when they're out of it, those other dudes can step up and deliver?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I'm telling, you without Bryce, without Daimion playing in the first half, we don't win the game. We don't get a chance to get separation.

And if we got separation it would've been to tie up the game like five minutes to go, four minutes to go. Wouldn't have been what it was.

The biggest thing for both of them is they fought. Daimion got exhausted. I told them they have tomorrow off and I said, If I'm you, I get in the treadmill and I go hard. Bryce, I would do the same.

Hopefully we have some guys coming back, Lance and Jacob. Hopefully start coming back.

**Q. You mentioned Bryce there. Because of the foul trouble he had to play a different role, using him on the wing mostly. How much is he maybe more suited for that right now in his development?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Probably is more suited for that right now. He probably is. We just got to get -- when you're a freshman you never play your man before he catches the ball. You're just kind of moving around. When he catches it, you try to play him. He gave up three threes in the first half. That's nine points.

But he fought. He rebounded. He came up with plays. But it's just getting the reps and getting out there and realizing the intensity that you got to play with.

The reason is everybody that we play, it's their Super Bowl. The biggest game of the year. Everybody. They can all say what they want, that's what happens.

Normally the team beats us, the next game they either lose or play like crap. So you don't fight and you don't play with unbelievable intensity every game you lose. You lose games.

But the other side is the toughness. I like our toughness. How about TyTy? 11 rebounds. I think he was one for seven from the three. Is that what it was?

**Q. One for six?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He was one for six from the three. He gets 20 points and 11 rebounds. And he only took 15 shots to get 20 points. Think of that.

He fought. He fought. So did Davion. He fought.

**Q. I think you overestimate how sad we get when you tell the truth. Dontaie got in there first half. He hit a big three, got a rebound. How is he doing in practice and how would you assess him?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He did better. Here is what happened. I got to get him talking. The same thing I did with Keion, that I'm holding you accountable. You know what we need you to do, and we talked about it for two days. The same with him. If he doesn't talk -- do you remember when guys came together and they were getting wide open?

Well, he was involved in that. I kept saying, You have to speak. He's a quiet kid, and let me say this, one of the greatest kids I've coached. He is. And we're trying to do everything.

I left him in when he made a shot and when he came over I said, Listen, you have to talk. They're getting you in these screening situations and they're slipping them. You have to talk.

But he's a great kid. I love coaching him. I just got to get him to defend. We got a couple guys in a normal game we're playing like we did with Derek Willis. We're calling red. They get it. Everybody knows. Here is what it does for the player that you're doing red for.

His confidence now defensively, instead of, Oh, my gosh, he knows his teammates are all there to help him now because we're yelling it, red, red, red. Now he has more confidence.

There is such a thing as defensive confidence. If you're standing there and you back away and a guy just shoots it, you have no confidence. You're afraid he's going to dribble by and you're going to be embarrassed and you can't recover and blah, blah, blah, blah.

If you have confidence defensively, you're taking away a jumper, say, and if this dude drives I'm going to be in front of him. But playing him before he catches and all those kind of things, but he's doing good.

Now, again, some of the guards in front of him are playing better.

**Q. You mentioned TyTy's rebounding. I think you had six guys other than Oscar with more than six rebounds. Is his approach to that becoming a little contagious with some of his teammates?**

JOHN CALIPARI: No, because you don't want to go near him. You get hit by something, you'll be getting knocked

out.

But, no, what I keep saying is teams are going to spend two guys to keep him off the glass, which means someone else has got to rebound.

**Q. Speaking of Oscar, last night Bob Huggins took a shot at him. Called him an alleged All-American who didn't like that they tried to make him to do things hard and that's why he transferred. What's your relationship with Bob right now? I know you're friends.**

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, we're still friends. I don't know exactly what he said or how he said it. You're telling me but I don't know the context.

But it's hard to say he doesn't work hard. He's averaging 20 rebounds a game. He works hard. And the biggest thing he can do, and you figured it out, what? Kid can also shoot.

We got to get him a little better balanced in the post. We got to give him a couple things he can do in the post. He's still struggling a little bit.

But in pick and rolls and rolls and throwback and throw it to him, he's just got to get it to the rim quicker. I even told him, Just dunk the ball. Forget about a move. Just go and try to dunk it. If he blocks it, he blocks it.

**Q. Been a long time since Rupp has been that loud. How nice is it to have that boost back?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I said the 19,000 tickets that are out, if you're not coming to the games, give them to somebody. Call the local grade school and see if the principal wants to give them away.

Again, I don't blame anybody for not coming to the games because of COVID, because of the construction, and traffic, because now you can watch it on TV. And you're older. We got an old crowd. Not old, old; old, old, old. (Laughter.)

If they got to walk 200 yards to get in a door to get in the arena to walk another 100 yards, you would do it? I wouldn't do it. I just know me. What if it rained? I'm not walking 200 yards to get in the building.

So I get it. Here is my point: Give them away. This was great environment for people to be in and for all of us, these kids and our -- we got the best fans in the country.

Just don't sit on the tickets. Give them back to the

university. Maybe we'll do something with different schools or give them out for awards. They're bought already, so give them away.

I guess they're selling some packages. You know, no one wants to do a tune up game and you look at some schools, I and, say it again, that's all they have is tune up games.

Yeah, but that's not Kentucky. Kentucky should play the Lakers and the Suns. Okay. But they got packages now. So if you want to go -- here was the other thing. I think we need to play some Sunday games instead of Friday. You know what I'm saying?

Why all these Friday games? Well, was it football? It is TV? Play Sunday then. I mean, I think, again, weekday -- is there still football for high schools?

You know, I mean, there is -- style of play maybe. They don't like us to play this fast and press and shoot and do it. Come on.

I mean, and I'll say this: Again, I don't know, but if you get a chance to buy tickets and you can commit to saying I'll buy them and I just want to make sure I can buy them every year, because it will be like normal, we get through this COVID.

A little worried about the winter. I keep hearing stuff. But what you saw tonight, you know. I'm proud of our fans. I always am. Always am. We got the best.

**Q. You mentioned that Oscar didn't score, yet he was going for rebounds like crazy. What does that say to you about him?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He's great. He was so happy in there. He's smiling ear to ear. He's so happy to be with this group. Kind of like CJ said, I'm sorry I got hurt. What? I want to play with this group. I love this group of guys.

I think Oscar feels the same way. We got great kids. We got great kids. Thanksgiving we'll go and they'll serve food and do stuff and do it with pride. You know, obviously what we do at Christmas for families.

But these are -- they're competitors. They get it. They understand. And they play -- I mean Oscar, I'm playing for all these people here. I'm working this hard for the fans. That's a heck of a statement, and his teammates.

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