

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



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JOHN CALIPARI: Let me start by saying Dwayne did a great job, had husband team ready. I've said this before, when a team is struggling a little bit -- and I'm watching their tape. They play really hard. Played harder than we played. If you watch the game, you said, dog gone it, they played harder.

Second thing he did is he put a couple things in, wrinkles defensively that bothered us and really got us out of rhythm in the first half.

But the hardest thing for a coach and something that shows me that, one, he's a really good coach and he's connected to his team. They're going to have a breakthrough, and they'll go on a run of games. But they've just got to stay the course. And how hard is it when you're losing games? That's a real coach.

You're winning, everything's easy. It's the next. That's easy. You're struggling some. You're missing some shots. You're doing some things, but your team's fighting like crazy.

Yes, he was the ball boy. No, I didn't spend a whole lot of time with him when he was the ball boy. His dad was in our gym all the time when we practiced. He worked at the University of Mass.

But I'm proud of him. I watch him, and he's got a smile on his face. Did a great job.

Q. Cal, how much is Kellan still trying to figure out his role versus what he did at Davidson, and how close is the second half to what you kind of see for him?

JOHN CALIPARI: It was better, but here's what's happened. He's on the scouting report. Like don't leave him. You know what that means? They're working hard not to get you shots. What does that mean? You have to work really hard to get plays now. You've got to work harder than they're working to keep you from scoring to

score.

I gave him, I said, go look on YouTube and look at Rip Hamilton. Rip Hamilton, skinny dude that could score and catch it and shoot, and they all said, we're going to keep him from doing it. You know what he did? He sprinted. He didn't run around the court. He sprinted to get himself free to make shots. When he sprinted, everyone else ended up being open because they tried to stop him. He slips to the basket, lobs, guys trying to help on him.

That's where Kellan is. You're on the scouting report. You may be the top of the scouting report.

Q. What do you hope Oscar learns from the last two games about foul trouble?

JOHN CALIPARI: That he is going to get fouled and grabbed and pushed. Got to deal with it. His advantage is 255. In the eyes of others, that's a disadvantage. So they let him be grabbed and held.

I mean, it's what it will be and deal with it. You can't push back. He didn't.

Q. Did he get frustrated tonight?

JOHN CALIPARI: He did. He came over twice and said, the dude's grabbing my arm. I said, look, just play. It's what I've said and I'll continue to say, his advantage is 255. If a guy backs under him and he goes to rebound, that should not be a foul.

Well, he's got to go straight up and down. He was, except the guy displaced him and moved him back. So now he grabs the ball, and it's like that. Well, it's over the back. It isn't. He went straight up. Is displacing a foul? I don't know. But we'll watch the tape and try to learn.

Still I've got to spend more time with him in the post myself, and I will. The biggest worry I have is I'm watching games, the physicalness of the games that I'm watching, there's no emphasis on physicality right now for the officials because they're checking on -- if you cut, you're getting chucked. I'm seeing really physical play.



My question is can we play that way? Or does it take us out of everything we're doing? Or do we have two or three guys that will play physical and fight, or do you have those other two that keep breaking down and don't want to be that guy?

So I've got to watch the tape. We've got to screen better. What's that? Toughness. Go knock somebody's head off like you're getting your head knocked off. I've got to get back and practice and got to shift what we're doing.

The pick-and-roll stuff in the first half was me, like they did some things and I didn't -- at halftime I got us to do some different stuff that hurt them. I've done this 30 years. Obviously, the ball boy's coaching the other team. So I've been here a while. So I would say that I should have been better in the first half to give us a chance.

Q. Keion had 17 points, 8 rebounds. Didn't take a three-point shot. Is that the way that you want him to play?

JOHN CALIPARI: Just got to fight more. Just got to fight more, but he's coming. Look, he's got to be a 15, 16 point and an 8 rebound guy for us in a real physical game. Then you've got to be confident defensively.

If you're guarding a guy -- this is what I just told him. If you are guarding a guy and you're going like this or your hands are down because you're afraid he's going to beat you on the bounce, how are you going to be confident offensively? If you're getting driven by, shoved, pushed, dunked, laid on, you cannot be confident offensively. You're going to turn it over. You're going to miss some shots you shouldn't miss.

So we've got to get back to defensive confidence. One, that we're all together so I know I can trust my teammates, so I can get up and be aggressive. That adds confidence.

The second thing is I'm fighting before -- I'm going to beat him down the court. I'm going to beat him over the screen. I'm going to fight. A shot goes up. I'm hitting him before he hits me. And now all of a sudden, you're the toughest guy in the gym.

It doesn't matter. He weighs 25 pounds more. Hit him before he hits you because, if he hits you first, he's forcing you under the goal. So I'm not saying that about just Keion. I mean, I watched the game. We have three or four guys that aren't to where they need to be.

But I'll say it again. For us to be any good, Keion has to get 15 and 7 in a really good game, and he's got to have confidence defensively. Was that block a goaltend or a

block?

Q. A block.

JOHN CALIPARI: It was a block? (Shrugs).

Q. What did you think?

JOHN CALIPARI: I couldn't see it. At least that's what they'd say.

Q. I guess as physical as they were playing, were you kind of satisfied with the small runs in the second half that kind of gave you all a little breathing room?

JOHN CALIPARI: The biggest thing is we made a couple shots. You know, it was funny, and it was really true. One of the guys said to Dontaie during the game like, dude, if you make two shots, we're going to break this open. Just make a shot. I want him in there shooting balls.

You have to understand, I kept saying, just keep shooting. Then I told him after the game I probably, when I go to my office tonight, I will probably see you in the gym shooting, right? Because you're getting your opportunity. Now you've got to take advantage. We need him. You know, we need him.

It's another thing. Defensive confidence. You cannot be getting clubbed on defense and think you're going to be confident on offense. Again, it just doesn't happen that way.

Q. The ball boy said that it was kind of --

JOHN CALIPARI: I shouldn't have said that. Dwayne, he was our ball boy. I think he was a 26-year-old ball boy, by the way. He was a little older for being a ball boy.

Q. Coach Killing said that it was kind of a victory for them that you were not always happy with your team. I wondered if 17 turnovers are one of the reasons and what --

JOHN CALIPARI: That, and I didn't -- like, look, the one thing that I've looked at their tape and their stats, they turn it over. They didn't today. So what does that tell you? They were playing harder than us and were ahead of the action versus us coming at them. That aggravated me more than anything.

Again, it wasn't just one guy. It was like a team full of guys. But three or four, again, the same thing, this is good enough. No, it isn't. You won't be in. I'm taking you out.

Look, I like this team, and this team has a chance. And I've got to do my job and hold them accountable. I don't care about the clutter. People can say what they want. I've got a job to do, and I've got to get this team right because we have some pieces that can do this.

We've got to get healthy. We've got to get guys back. We still don't know what we are. What happens when Lance comes back? What happens when Jacob comes back? Do we become different? How do we play? What are we trying to do?

Q. Coach, with Oscar being limited to just 23 minutes with that foul trouble, what did you kind of see from the rest of your team of how they played with him having to be on the bench a little bit more than normal?

JOHN CALIPARI: Here's what I'd tell you. I'd rather not see what we can do without him. I'd rather him be on the floor. Again, when you're getting two and three guys thrown and hold and grabbed and kicked, anything you do looks like a foul. That's why I'm saying I've just got to send in the tape and say tell me.

And I may watch the tape and say, you know what, they didn't do it as much as I thought. But when I watch the tape, I'll know. When he's on the court, we're better because he just grabs everything. We've got to get him better around the goal.

Now, you know what I did late in the game. What kind of shots did we get him? Did you watch? Anybody watch? Jump shots. I know he can do that. He may be our best 17-foot shooter. But we've got to be able to get something around the goal, especially when you catch it three feet, get something.

And I'll say this. Daimion -- the stretch in the game that helped us spread the game out, when you're talking, was with Daimion, blocking shots, rebounding, dunk, throwing it to the rim. So he did some good stuff today.

Q. Cal, you all have gotten to the line a little bit more the last two games, closer than your teams normally do. How much of that is something you did differently, or is it just the way they're playing you these last two games?

JOHN CALIPARI: You're saying free throws? Some of it was guys going to the rim. We still shot our floaters. We're not shooting as many threes. I think this is a 22-shot three-point shooting team. But let me say, when you shoot 22 threes, are you going to get fouled? No. You're shooting floaters, are you going to get fouled? No.

(Indiscernible) your misses, and they end up being 70 percent shots. But you still in the open court have stuff to get to the rim, which we have to do.

Q. John, you had told us that Oscar was a great midrange shooter, and yet he still seems a little bit hesitant to put it up. He almost seemed like he was a little bit surprised when he made it. Why is that the case?

JOHN CALIPARI: I don't think he was. I think you're wrong in there.

Q. I've been wrong before.

JOHN CALIPARI: Yes, you have. Many times. (Laughter). But that's something we try to get him that shot. I'm just being honest, he barely misses it.

Then the one, he's not played this way before. Most of his stuff, which is why I'm kind of surprised. Everything was at the rim and mush mouth. Now we're trying to spread them out a little bit. Then when he gets close, the stuff that he used to be really good at, he's not as good. So it's probably me. But he can shoot. He can shoot free throws. Get to the line, get the ball up.

Again, his size can be an advantage. But in the eyes of others, well, they have to do that to play him. No. No. No. That is not -- for him -- but I'll watch the tape. And if I see some push-off, hey, it's fine. If he has two hands in the back and he's pushing people, if the guy's going like this and he's trying to get him away, is it a foul? Or is the other thing a foul? I don't know. We'll have to look. I'll watch the tape.

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