

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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Lexington, Kentucky, USA

## Head Coach John Calipari

### Press Conference



Kentucky 85, Central Michigan 57

JOHN CALIPARI: ...how good can we play? And there were stretches today we were really good. There were other stretches that we held the ball, which is -- you get up and guys are trying to get a point or two themselves and doesn't look the same. But we got tough games coming up, you know. We do.

It's been a grind. You know, we played obviously now the number one team in the country first game out of the gate, and it's a four-point game with four or five minutes to go. It was. Isn't that right?

So all right, now how do we continue to build? Miami of Ohio, I don't know, they're ranked 30th because they lost to us, but they will end up being one of those teams, an NCAA tournament team, and we beat them pretty good.

Now we've got another game next week and we -- we're getting a little break. And it comes at a great time because we're sick. Today Daimion didn't do the shoot-around because he had a high fever. Keion we didn't know would play until right before the game. And you saw he was tired. He looked tired. Lance, I think that ankle is still bothering him. We don't -- Davion hopefully will be ready for the game next week. Bryce, his back has been bothering him. Jacob -- I mean, we have been beat up. So we need now a couple days. And, you know, they're going to have off tomorrow and they'll have off Wednesday. It will be an individual workday unless you need treatments or something else for you. It's an individual day.

And then we'll figure out what we're doing on Thursday. And that may be individual work. I may do conditioning and not do practice, let them just get their wind back and then go Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday.

**Q. John, you're 18 and 1 against former coaches. What's it like playing against them?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Still mad about that one. No, I'm just -- it's -- look, I don't -- Tony and I spoke prior to the game.

He and I spent some time. And I know it's a process when you're rebuilding like he is. And we talked about it. But we -- I start coaching -- I'm worried about my team playing the right way. I'm worried about my team fighting, my team being consistent for 40 minutes on how we're going to play. But then we've got to figure each other out.

I'm still trying to figure out Oscar. He was better today. And that team was long now. Like it wasn't like he was going against 6'7 guys. Those guys were 6'11, 6'10.

And then offensively, there's just -- again, we had two guys go 2 for 12. Two guys go 2 for 12. Can't be 2 for 12. You can't. Or I got to figure out who else plays.

Does that put pressure on them? Well, you won't believe this, when they go in the game, there's pressure on them. And so we got to -- you know, we went against a zone today for the first time we really played it. We got the ball and did some good things and then missed like shots that were wide open. One right next to the basket. We fumbled. The others -- we just -- we've got to get work in.

**Q. TyTy seems like he's really letting the game come to him. He's pretty efficient out there. Would you agree?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah. He does. That's his mentality. That's his personality. Really comfortable in his own skin. He's comfortable with who he is as a player. He's not there to say I'm going to prove that I can do this. He's not playing like I need to get some baskets now. I got to get to double figures. He doesn't play that way.

You know, I keep talking to the guys about that confidence. Like you struggle and all of a sudden you shoot an air ball or you miss one, it leads to missing four. A lot of times I keep coming back to all the clutter. You got to block it out. You got to be a man.

And the thing -- I'm not taking guys out for missed shots. Well, he did this and you left him in. Stop. It is not true. They know I'm not doing that. Now, you can't miss every shot and expect to play. I'm taking you out if you don't fight, if you're not defending, if you don't dive on the floor for a ball, if you're not sprinting, if you're soft, you're coming

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out.

Now, to encourage them, that's what I'd be saying to them. Like, hey, man, you know, we had some guys miss a lot of shots today. They stayed in the game. It's not what it is for us because, again, I want them to know you can go in and miss shots -- you can't miss them all, but you can go in and miss shots if you're defending and you're rebounding, you're diving on the floor, you're making a difference in the game.

And if you play that way, you'll be confident. Oh, yeah. You'll be confident. Now, they think I just got to make shots to be confident. Okay. What if you're 1 for 9? How confident are you now?

It's all based on all the other stuff. What Tony had his guys doing, they set screens. And they were plastering guys. And my point is, if that's how we're to play, then I've got to teach that. Like we're able to go down and chuck a guy, we're -- we will get some of the helmets from the football team. They're not going to play for a couple weeks. And we'll have practice. And I'm telling Tony, he did a great job of saying we're not backing down.

And then they went zone and they kept playing. His team never stopped. They played physical. They'll win their share. They get in the league -- I think they got Xavier now. I mean, they -- it's kind of like North Florida and these teams that we're playing have played like one Power Five after another. And so he'll have them right.

**Q. How close do you think you are to finding the rotation you want to play with and how much is the injuries --**

JOHN CALIPARI: I think it's going to be game to game, and guys are going to have to accept that. Someone is playing well, I'm going to play them a lot of minutes. You're not quite ready and you're not into it that game, that's fine. I still love you. I'll have you at the house. I'll make you breakfast. But you're just not playing a whole lot tonight. I mean, it's just what it may be.

Now, guys keep separating -- here is the good thing about all the injuries and sickness. Who got a good chance to play a bunch? Dantaie got his chance to play a whole lot. Bryce got a chance to play a whole lot. Daimion got a chance to play a whole lot. Okay. Now you start looking and it's -- you know, you have your chance, now get in there and do it.

So -- and it's -- even the one he made, I said, hey, it's about time you made one. And, hey, you rattled it in. It hit the rim seven times. And he started laughing. Because,

again, Dantaie can be a game changer for us to go in the game and have great confidence because he did something defensively. He blocked it. And all of a sudden he gets a shot and, bang, he gets another shot, bang. And all of a sudden, the game changes. So, you know, there is a spot for him.

And, again, it's a hard deal having to make shots. It's a whole lot easier trying to get an assist because who's got to make the shot? The other guy.

Now, I will say it's a little bit harder getting a rebound but --

**Q. Cal, Tony was your zone guy that you lean on at times when you took a look at it. You probably knew you'd see some of that tonight.**

JOHN CALIPARI: We did.

**Q. Did it help you to see some of that?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Oh, yeah. Look, every team we played -- like I think back to Miles College. That helped us. Like them -- how many threes did they make? 15. I mean, that helped us. It helped me say what are you doing?

And then there was some post up stuff. Who was that? Wesley? I can't remember. But someone did everything in the post. And we looked so bad that it's like, okay, how do we shore it up?

What we need to shore up right now, how we play offensively, how we finish off a game. Oscar was better today but still not there. We just got to keep working. Do we have another guy that can give us post presence on this team? Is it Bryce? Is he the guy? He's pretty physical now. Throw it to him and let him back a guy under it.

So we got -- we got to find -- and today it was I thought a pick and roll game for this team. And they did pretty good.

**Q. You feel like Daimion is gaining confidence just banging around in the paint? Seemed like he was going in there with a little more fuel tonight.**

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah. He's getting better. He just needs to get on the court. And when he gets on there, he's got to fight like heck.

I say it again, it's not -- you're not physically this beast and you're slender. Okay. You can still be tough. Leverage. You got to be lower than the man you're guarding. If you're not, he's blowing you into the cheerleaders, and then you get the sprinkles on your face. Okay? If the ball goes up, if he hits you first, we're -- where you are next to? The

cheerleaders. And you got the sprinkles on now your uniform. You've got to hit him first or you've got to be lower than him. You've got to outrun him and beat him to spots playing before he catches it. And now all of a sudden you're tough.

He's just got to learn it because I don't think the kid's ever going to be 260 pounds. So learn it here.

**Q. John, in the past, we've heard you say that a team can have too few turnovers. You had six tonight. Was that a matter of taking care of the ball or not being aggressive enough? What would you like to see the team average this year?**

JOHN CALIPARI: About 12, 11. But I don't see want to see three from my point guard if we only have six. One of them was a long pass to Oscar. There was no way he was catching that ball. Why did you throw that?

I mean, you know, I want him to create shots. He took a couple shots he really didn't have to. But he had the pullup, perfect. The three, perfect. Get a lay-up or two. Well, they're converging. Throw it there. He had a floater. I want him to shoot floaters.

And, again, I think he's playing as well as anybody in the country. And the reason is he's disruptive defensively. He's playing with speed. He's making us play fast. He makes good decisions. But he still has a ways to go.

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