

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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Lexington, Kentucky, USA

## John Calipari

### Press Conference



Kentucky 76, Southern 64

**Q. Talking a lot about the underground railroad experience and how it was very enlightening. What was your experience you took away from that?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I was really uncomfortable. It makes you think, and you know, how would you be in the mid-1800s if you lived in the south?

If you lived in the south, if I had the same heart, would I be the same person. Just made me uncomfortable. I was with the guys but I was more reading. I needed about another three hours because it was educational, and the people that were there were unbelievable. I'm going to call them educators. When I would tell you for everybody, if you, you know, the history and you know, Cincinnati's part, it's a big deal.

But it was good that both teams got to do it with the radio show with both teams and both coaches. The name, image and likeness educational component we did. This McClendon Initiative is going to, you know, is going to benefit by this game, too. So there were a lot of things that we did. Now, thank goodness we won because they played harder than us. Shane did a better job of coaching his team than I did. Whether did they get in the first half, like were you amazed? Anybody watching the game here?

What did they get a lot of? That was me, I had us too spread out all over the court. And what did they give us? The same. They were tight and in and what we did in the second half, we just said we're playing tight. Now the problem with that, and I told the guys, because we were getting beat on the dribble so bad, the problem is, you're not going to have as many possessions. So that means there's going to be eight to ten shots less a game that are carved up amongst your team. You're playing to win, don't worry. We had some guys not play well. Let's give it to Southern, they played harder than some guys. When a guy is playing harder than you, you don't have confidence.

Now, my kids are not machines and they are not computers. They don't play great every night. I'm not

feeling good, so imagine a couple of those guys aren't feeling good. But you've got to give southern credit for how they played, and what I said yesterday on the radio show, all the tapes I watched, they never stopped playing. Didn't matter what the score was. Just like today.

**Q. Does he know what the number on his back represents, that number, and how Kenny played, everything, does he know that?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Probably not. Obviously I'm in this profession and the kids know the last three years. If you asked about Kareem, they would say, who? Oscar Robinson, you know, triple-double, you know, I mean, it's -- but I'll say this, he's playing for the team, the fans. He doesn't get the ball. He never hangs his head. We're still trying to figure out how to play him and post it. You notice we did some stuff different today. I'm not playing him like I played Anthony Davis because he's not Anthony Davis or Karl Towns, he's different than those guys. We're doing some different things. But teams are going to collapse. What does that mean you're going to have to do? Ball fake an open shot? Drive it in there? Or are you going to have shoot a jumpshot you can make, if it's only a two, I don't care, but you've got to make shots. Because they are going to collapse, that's what they are going to do. That's what I do. He still caught the ball but thank goodness, you know, again, my argument again is, if they are boxing you out, and displacing you, and you jump the rebound, it's not an over the back.

Now, they said he pushed. I'll watch the tape. If he pushed, it's a foul. If he jumped straight up and the guy pushed him like that, that ain't a foul. Here's the problem. He's 255 pounds. My suggestion is, go recruit somebody 255 pounds to play against him. That is his advantage in most games we're going to play.

**Q. This was your first games since the opener he had everybody available. Were the minutes what you wanted or was Bryce --**

JOHN CALIPARI: Bryce went 50 percent yesterday in practice. I asked him at half, is your back good enough to go? I wanted to get him in but what I'm going to do is over the next ten days, we've got to start making the decision on

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some guys getting more minutes and some guys getting less. It doesn't matter what year you are, none of that, and so if we have a roster of 11, I'm not going to play 11 guys. I mean, now, who are the -- the guys that aren't playing, you have to be ready to go. Today, you know, I went with Davion because I wanted him out there to get his wheels underneath him to go. Dante played some. But he's behind Davion. It's just what it is. Davion ended up with five rebounds again. This kid ends up rebounding the ball. Defensively, he struggled and so did some of the other guys. Wasn't one of Sahvir's better games, but what we did find out, he can really do a good job of pulling up on elbows and making that shot, would you say. So we learned a little bit, okay, let's incorporate that for him.

It just takes time, and you can't skip steps. I want to skip steps. But you don't. I thought Jacob gave us great energy. There may be two guys that you're going to play if he plays bet, you're playing less, if you both play well you're going to both play the same amount. I mean, I may go with that a little bit. But I thought Jacob's energy, the last play where the kid tried to outrun him, that would have been a dunk if it wasn't Jacob. Well, I tried to run. He ran faster than me. Can't, you know.

But you win a game, that team is picked to win their league, the games that I've watched, have a chance to win them all, and you are hoping they played today. They competed -- I told as I walked off, play that way in your league and you'll be fine. You play like you just did tonight in your league, you'll be fine.

**Q. You mentioned earlier trying to do some different things with Oscar in the points. Several times in the second half he was able to get the ball in the low post and score. How encouraging is that to see him have some success down low and are the different things that you're trying, working?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, we needed him to win the game to go get some balls, you know, when they were switching and he held off. The biggest thing on a guy like that when we throw you the ball, you must catch it because if you don't, they will never throw it to you. We had a couple thrown to the wing that could have been posted and the guy threw it out. Like why didn't you just throw it to him. Think thought on the other wing away from our bench, he caught it. From that, he kicked out and we got plays.

Look, teams are going to trap. They are going to trap from the top. They are going to trap from the bottom. We have to get them ready. You know, just we've got to get him ready. We've got to try to get him, again, we'll look at the fouls and I'm going to show him, you can't do these things but most of them are, you're playing too late. In other

words, play before the ball is shot. Not after it's shot and then you push. You can't. But we'll look. We'll watch. You know, we'll get a chance to see it and teach.

**Q. Was Texas beating Florida last night a teaching tool for you guys?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I called Johnny Jones this morning, I said, why did you do that? Now you just gave Southern, they think they are going to beat us now. We have got a Tiger on our hands, and Johnny laughed, and we talked about the game a little bit. But I've known Johnny for years and years, and you know, it was a heck of win. And then we were 0-7. Did you look at their schedule? Ridiculous. But if you look at Sean's schedule, it's the same way. I mean, these teams go, and what happens, though, is if you have some success, you really start believing even though you didn't win the game, we can win these games.

Now it becomes a different kind of game. They out-hustled us. They out-played us. We couldn't stay in front of them. They crowded the court and stayed in front of us. We had to then go back and crowd the court and it shortens the game when you do that. We missed nine free throws. Don't get fouled then. If you don't make free throws, don't get fouled. Let's somebody else shoot. Missed nine. We're look the best free throw shooting team in the country.

**Q. I remember you telling us at the beginning that you had pretty good guards. I think they are still pretty good. What's keeping from you maybe putting four of them out on the floor at one time?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, the size of the guards. So if you put Sahvir, Davion, Kellan, Kellan got zero rebounds today, okay. He's the biggest one of the group. And then Ty Ty, you're really, really small. So would I do it? I did it late just because they did it.

I like -- I like to say who is the four. I thought Damion did some good stuff today. He's getting better. He's confident. You get in the boxing match, you get in the ring and the other guy is coming right at you and he's playing and he's fighting harder than you, you're going to be confident? No, you -- you're like -- you're looking around, you know, you have to understand, you build your own confidence. You go after people. You respect everybody. You fear no one. Don't fear anybody. I'm good, too. But if you let the guy out-play you, you look like you have no confidence. So again, we try to tell the guys, I sent them, all of them, Texas Southern big Florida big at Florida. They are picked fourth in their league. This team is picked first. You'd better come ready. So they really -- I don't think we were -- I just think that we had a couple guys not play well. And

they are not machines. I'm not mad. You know what I told them after? You know what's good about this team? A couple of you don't play well, I'll put in somebody else and they will play well and you just sit there and watch and then get yourself ready. That's what's good about having depth.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Dante, he shot an air ball, he fouled a three-point shooter. He's not shooting well over a stretch. What's going on there? How steep of a climb does he have, do you think?**

JOHN CALIPARI: You know, again, I love the kid. I mean, he's -- he has gotten better. But everybody's judging him based on just made shots, so now it's the hardest thing in the game to do. But I told him, if Europe, you have to shoot -- -- if you don't shoot, you're coming out.

Why did he take you out, because I didn't shoot? No, he took you out because of a mistake -- the other guy's mistake -- no, no, he took me out because I did not shoot. What? Well, why didn't you shoot. Oh, just I didn't make a couple, so I didn't want to shoot. What's he saying? He doesn't care if I make them. I have to shoot.

Again, I ask you this, what are you doing if you're not making shots to help us win? And not just Dante, that's this whole team. You're not making shots, what do you do to help us win? Are you a defensive stopper? But what do you do? You're not playing well. Do you have no rebounds or one rebound? Well, wait a minute, you can do that. That's all effort. So you know, like I said, we've got a gauntlet coming in. I just heard Notre Dame's recruiting football weekend, the big one, it's going to be a party and a celebration and here comes Kentucky to town. That will just amp it up about 20 times, and I'll tell you, let's go because it's going to be a physical energetic engaged game, hopefully by both teams. I know Notre Dame will play like that. I have a lot of respect. Here is a game I just watched, 44-44 regulation, could we play in a game like that? I don't know. You know, that's that kind of game, a game in the nine tees, we've got to try to play everything. I did some things at the end of the game just to see how we can finish off a game and it's a work-in-progress, folks. All I can tell you the first half, how we played defensively, that's on me. I spread them out too much, I thought we could do it and still guard but we brought it in and slowed down the game, but again, coaches don't win games, not just try to score a lot of points.

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