

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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Lexington, Kentucky, USA

## Coach John Calipari

### Press Conference



Kentucky 83, Missouri 56

**Q. When you're looking early in these games to see whether Keion or Jacob is the hot hand that night, what exactly are you looking...**

JOHN CALIPARI: It isn't even hot hand, John. It's what energy are they playing with? Will they go get rebounds? Will they play physical?

I'm not worried about what they do offensively. All ego stuff. If they do the other stuff, guess what? They'll score the ball. Keion was terrific. Start the second half our energy was down, he jogged a couple times, I took him out.

He rebounded one and bounced it before he threw it ahead. Nope, not doing that. And so -- but he played great. How about Lance today? I mean, here is a guy, and I want you understand I stuck in Daimion before I did Lance.

Lance didn't say, That's disrespectful to me. What? I coach, you play. I put you in, go do your thing. He played. He did the same thing with North Carolina. He went in and made a big difference in the game.

I asked Sahvir, What did you do over Christmas, eat? Did you get in the gym at all? He laughed and said, I'll be honest with you, I really didn't and I did eat. But he got nine assists and one turn, so you I said, Keep eating, kid.

**Q. Considering you're coming off the Christmas break, you're playing there and you start out really well, and Missouri hit with your a 14 to 2 punch right there. How pleased were you with the way your team responded to that instead of kind of hanging their heads or feeling sorry maybe?**

JOHN CALIPARI: No, I loved it. Here is what I loved: How we started the game. The energy we started with, who we are, how we run.

If you play the way we're playing, picking them up and you're running, at some point if a team is not used to playing that way, there is going to be a gap. You're going to get a layup, a layup, a three. They turn it over, and now all of a sudden it's 12-14 instead of 4.

And that's why we want to keep playing fast. You know, I don't know what we shot from the three point line; 5 for 17.

I mean, doesn't matter if you play the way we're playing. You got to play a certain way. What? How about you score like we are 83 points. And I told you, we got to 80, 75, 72 to 80 points or more, we're good, because defensively and rebounding the ball we're pretty good.

**Q. I remember maybe you and other coaches saying that Sahvir would have to be careful about trying to drive all the way to the basket. He seems to have a real knack for that. How does he do it?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, you got to bring the big guy out if you're going to give him opportunities to drive. So if you're watching what we're doing, either in transition, the big guy is not in the lane yet, or in half court offense we've done things to bring the big away from the basket, and he takes advantage.

**Q. Couple questions about Oscar. One, on a night where he cannot buy a bucket, rebounds, a lot of guys say, I don't care about scoring, which Oscar has said before. How much does that validate that he really doesn't. He just wants to go do the thing he knows he can help you do? And then the other part of that, we've seen some mid-air battles. I think he almost took Keion's head off after Keion stole a couple of his rebounds. Is that good that other guys are trying to challenge him?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, they're doing it because I'm saying, If you don't go and attempt to rebound, I'm taking you out and playing somebody else. Get in there, mix it up.

Now, I asked him after the game, I said, We could have shot 50% if you -- you were two for ten, my man, and they were one footers. I know, it wasn't my game. That's what



he said. Wasn't my game.

Well, the next one better be your game. But we ran a couple plays for him that other guys shot the ball. I said after the game, if I were him, I would say, you know what, boys, you go get 20 rebounds and I'm going go out and be cute and dribble the ball around. You go in there and mix it up like I am. When he's this there and it's his play, throw him the ball. Again, we did some and he missed a bunch today.

I thought they were trap more. They only trapped once. I would think every team is going to trap him and then they don't. I don't understand.

But you're right. He had 20 rebounds. What in the world?

**Q. You didn't have quite as many assists tonight. What did you think of your passing overall?**

JOHN CALIPARI: We held the ball again. We had guys that walked, which means you're supposed to catch it, pass it, drive it if you have it, but you're not messing with the ball. You're not ripping it to your hip and looked like I'm going to make the play.

If you heard me, if you were anywhere near the floor I kept saying, Swing the ball. Everybody that caught it was trying to make a play. You're not going to get assists when you play that way. Not going to get in the lane where they collapse and you throw it out and a guy makes a shot.

Again, when you shoot 43% and 29 from the three, those are about five or six assists that you would get, and then we would be at 18, 19 which is pretty good for us.

Just didn't make shots.

**Q. Cal, do you think that at some point... (audio cut out.)**

JOHN CALIPARI: I didn't hear one thing you said. You're breaking up. Next, go. We done?

Guys, let me talk a little bit about Tubby Smith coming in, Coach Smith. You know, we wanted this moment for him. The job that he did, part of it is you want guys like him and Coach Hall to really understand how appreciated they are by our fan base.

What they did while they were here, winning national titles, doing it with class, Tubby deserves to be in the rafters. He's going to have a get-together with his players. I may stop in for a little bit, but I want him to be with his guys.

And then next day we play a basketball game. Tonight I think they were up one at halftime against Michigan State and ended up losing by 13. So don't think, oh, this is just another pushover game. No, it isn't. And you all know how good a coach he is. You know what kind of defensive coach he is. Elbows and blocks and physicalness.

He's got two really good guards. One scores 21 a game and the other shoots threes at 45% and he let's them go.

So, you know, the biggest thing is I want he and his wife and the kids to understand that this place, these fans, this school, this state, absolutely appreciates what he did while he coached here.

**Q. Cal, just a little more on Keion. I wonder when a guy is a junior, like you've seen the ups and downs, do you have a sense what buttons to push with him and how to push them? He's an older, mature guy you've had a relationship with. Can you guys have some frank conversations?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Oh, we've had 'em. We've had 'em. You guys know I keep it real. What I've done is I'm holding him to a high standard that I think he's capable of reaching.

But you got to fight, you got to play with spirit. When the ball doesn't go in, it can't affect the rest of your game. If it does, you're out and Jacob is in.

But if he plays, we're pretty good. And it's not -- you guys, he had nine rebounds. That team out rebounded everybody they played, and they played a tough schedule.

By five, six rebounds a game, and he went in and they weren't rebounds away from the goal. They were traffic rebounds and he got them. Second thing he did is he ran the floor like the guys that are playing really well ran.

Those guys run and they're ahead of the action. They're ready to play. He's now running.

So my hope is it's really hard to play the way he played and it's physical and it's bruising. Do you say, Let me try it that other way one more time because there has to be an easier way. There is none. Guys got to touch the fire couple times before they say I'm not touching the fire.

The good news for him is Jacob is there. I was just so happy for Lance. Such a great kid. The kid is working extra. How about making free throws, he's in the gym extra.

That's how this works. You want to build your confidence. You want to be confident? Let me hear if you guys hear

anything I've ever said. Is it about coaching? You want to be confident? You ready? I'll do it one more time for you. Be competent. Be competent. Fight like heck, be competent, you're going to be confident.

If you're not competent, it don't matter what the coach says. Oh, you'll be all right. Next one will be good. Doesn't matter. You got to get in the gym and get better and get more consistent.

And if something goes wrong you know what you say to yourself? I've worked too hard. I expect to play well. I've spent too much time with the coaches.

So I'm happy for him because, again, I want him to do well. I can't do it for him. I can't fight for him. I can't sprint for him, but I can hold him accountable to those things.

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