

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky 92, High Point 48

Q. Kellan seems to have found his groove, is a little more assertive, hunting the shot, I know you talked about shooters -- is there anything more to it than that?

JOHN CALIPARI: I had a friend of mine, and you know, Basketball Benny that is a friend of mine that said, hey, how about you get anything to create some shots for him. So I talked to him just, you know, prior to the game. I said, here are some things we are going to do for to you get shots off. Because the last game he didn't get as many off, but he was open. They just threw to another guy.

So then, you know, now you start saying, okay, we may have to run some things to him. But he's shooting the ball well. He's confident and he knows if he does not shoot it, he's coming out. Now, we have some other guys that just can't make it right now and that's fine. But their job is to shoot balls, and hopefully, you know, as we keep going, those guys will make shots.

Q. What did you think of the ceremony?

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, and you know, what you want, and because I coach, I know how this stuff goes, you want guys that had had a huge impact on programs to let them know they are beloved. I think kind of -- and I keep coming back to Coach Hall.

Sometimes you're not in a situation, and the loudest people sometimes you listen to but I just thought -- I got a little emotional to be honest with you. I did. And to see him out there and I knew him when he was an assistant at South Carolina, I've known him that long and when he was at Georgia and I was here, I would call him and talk. He was one of those gracious guys. I was on the phone with Mark Few and he said, let me tell you with Tubby, it's so good you guys are doing this but we were on a Nike trip and I was a nobody. He took me golfing. He would see me at dinner because I didn't know anyone, and that's who Tubby is. And he doesn't do stuff to get anything back. He just

does it.

It's kind of like when a guy has been doing something the same way for 30, 40 years, you could say well that's not who he is, or you say, well, he's been doing the same thing 30 years and that's Tubby. He is who he is. A great basketball coach and again, I said after, when we make shots like we made today we're going to beat everyone. But his team is going to be fine. I've watched tons of tape of them. I've probably watched five games and they are playing -- he's got them playing and playing together and creating good shots. We were a little bit much. We played really good today.

Q. Any updates on Sharpe?

JOHN CALIPARI: He's not here yet but the stuff we are doing is breakfast in the lodge. I'm not taking them out to where I would do sometimes for breakfast because I just don't -- I just want to mitigate.

So we're having breakfast in the lodge. We're telling other teams, if you want to eat in the lodge, eat at a different time than we're eating. We're trying to sterilize just to mitigate and then we'll go over and we'll practice and then that evening, like we may come through like we did yesterday evening, we shot free throws and kind of walked through some of their stuff. I told them today, I'll be back to the office tonight early. I want to try to get there earlier, and I've got to start on LSU. I haven't watched them one minute at all. And we play them Tuesday.

So I've got to get there and get the staff and get a game together of what it's going to look like tomorrow and Monday. Saturday will be more cerebral but Sunday and Monday we've got to go and then we've got to travel. So we're trying to use every minute we can because, you know, on the tenth or whenever it is, they start back to classes.

Q. Four straight big wins, but what more do you want to see from your team going up against LSU?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, they are going to press, from what my staff said, they are going to press and put pressure on us, and how we play, you can't gel are like one-on-one.



They are not going to force their will on you. You have to force their will on them. They are very good. They are a Top-10 team.

Let me give you of what happened today that may be the beginning of us changing.

How do you know Lance played? Just thumbs up, thumbs down. How do you think Lance played today? Did anybody watch the game or you just talk questions to me? Okay.

So he played really well. In three minutes, he had five rebounds and two blocks. That was at half. I walked in and when I was talking, I said, Lance, I'm going to play Daimion, even though you played well because I've got to get him on the floor and I want him to play. He gave me a thumbs up; I'm good.

Can you imagine the maturity? How about the guy, you know, that's disrespectful. You know -- you're selfish. This guy said thumbs up. Then I was able to tell Daimion, and if you saw I made them hug each other on the bench, start of the second half, I said, he's giving up minutes and he's playing unbelievably but he's willing to give the minutes. You'd better go in there and play hard.

Well, look how Daimion played. Now they start playing for each other and I hate to tell you, I like him and Daimion together on the court. I like them both on there. And we play a different way, a certain way, but I like that, which means we can go to that. So that's the kind of stuff that's happening. Bryce played so well in the first half. I went to sub him and Kellan said leave him in. Kellan said, "Leave him in, Coach. Let him play."

We are starting to be empowered as a team. Tyty, he's like the silent assassin, quietly, he tiptoes in and gets 15 points and nine assists, and if you ask me how he played, you -- some of you may not have watched the game but if you did, you would probably say, he played okay. 15-9 defended his butt off. He does it quietly.

Sahvir, obviously is the straw that stirs it. And we just got to keep, you know -- how about this. Who -- when I sub with 11 or 12 minutes to go in the game, and that was it for those five that started, who did that hurt more than anybody else? Oscar. He was getting 20 rebounds a game. Oscar, you know what, kid had a smile on his face, was happy as heck for how we played. Think about that.

He's been on the ticker getting 20 rebounds -- oh, if I knew he had eight I'd have left him in for two more and he had eight -- they will say he had eight today, he had eight in 25 minutes.

So you know, it's fun. I'm telling you, I'm enjoying this team, because they want to be coached. They are pushing away the clutter that comes at them. You've got to answer the phone, why don't you shoot more, you need 30 minutes a game. I've said this before, 2015 team doesn't need 30 minutes a game to show what they were individually: Six drafted, four lottery picks, the No. 1 pick and then next year the other three got drafted.

So they didn't need that. 20 minutes, you can do what you do. But you've got to have to fight. You have to take what you want. You've got to compete at a high level. You've got to be physical, all that stuff and these guys are now getting it. How about Keion? He had five rebounds at half. What did he end up with? Where is he on here?

So he ends up, he has nine rebounds and he had seven rebounds back-to-back games, but what I liked about him, they were all in traffic where he had to go take them from somebody. And by being that guy, spreading the floor, being aggressive, going after balls, you build your confidence; no, you do it by playing 30 minutes and shooting 25 balls. No, you don't. You don't. You build it by sprinting and all of a sudden you get a couple easy baskets because you sprinted or you dunked one.

You get an offensive tip-in dunk, all of a sudden, you're like this, it's all about that energy and these kids are getting better and better at pushing out the clutter, leaving that rat poison alone, and focusing on each other and I keep telling them, look, there are not many teams that I've coached that get along like this team. You'd better enjoy it because when it's over it's over. You may never play in another team that gets along like this team.

Q. I'm sure you and I both know, if you guys were not playing well right now, going into this moment where Shaedon Sharpe is about to come to campus, clamor would be to play him. Does playing well in this stretch as he gets here take pressure off and quiet that down and let the kid just get here and settle in, or do you hope that's the case?

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, we haven't talked or the family hasn't talked about it. You know, not -- my guess would be he's fine, let's get him in shape and go from there but you know, there was never a plan to play him. I left that out there so everybody would panic. But there has never been a plan to play him. But let's get him here and work him out and see where things are and see where our team is.

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