

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky 82, Mississippi State 74

Q. I wondered what do you think made the difference? Were you guys going to Kellan in overtime or was it going to the hot hand?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, I had told him, he missed like four wide open shots, and I said, "You'd better keep shooting it," because he passed one up. And I said, "You shoot the ball," and the play we ran was for him to shoot the three. I've got a lot of confidence in him. He's shown that he can miss some shots and come back and make shots.

You know, it was nice that we were able to play the whole second half with Sahvir. You know, I mean, look, it was a game I thought would be like this. We struggled to get some baskets when we needed to, TyTy, being out probably affected that.

But they were good. They were good. Did they out-rebound us? No. Oscar 21 and 22, not bad. Have to get him to talk more. Had four turnovers. He's got to do better.

Q. What is it about Mississippi State that seems to bring out the best in Dontaie?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, first of all, when I put him in, he got beat twice defensively and they missed the shot, and I looked at him in the huddle I and he had, guys, you understand I want to leave him in -- but what?

They said, Dontaie, you have to stay in front of somebody and then he got out there and defended better and blocked the ball. How about the tip dunk he got, and then he finally made one. How about the two he missed that were so in and out? You can't miss a ball any closer than he missed.

But I was happy for him. You know, he had not played that much, and again, most of this stuff from me comes down to defensively playing harder than the other guy, playing with unbelievable energy.

Look, I thought the way Jacob went down, he blew his Achilles' and all of a sudden he's back jumping around, I don't know if he was embarrassed because he slipped and fell. They took him off in a stretcher, and he came back and he's the guy I put on the guy that we had to stop. Did it with one Achilles.

Q. What does it say about your team that on the nights that you didn't have TyTy, didn't go very well the second half, but you all still closed out a game the way you did?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, we needed this game. We said it after. I told the guys, we needed to be in a game like this where we he had a chance to end it. We did not dive on the floor for a loose ball. If we got that ball, the game would have been over. We had a guy not go for it. We needed to be: Now we've got to fight to get back in it. How about you'd better make free throws? How about you got a guard? We had a guy break down twice late in the game and moved it to over time and then Kellan made two ridiculous shots.

But look, we're going to Kansas, they have been in a bunch of close games. We had to be in this kind of game to understand, like, okay, how do we finish it off. You know, I'm glad I didn't call a time-out. There were two guys open on the play and we threw it to the wrong guy. We panicked a little bit but it's okay.

I needed the second time-out because I had to call it to get Jacob in. And so saving it, I'm happy did it I. At the time I probably should have called it. But we practiced it. Why do I have to call time-out and go over it again? We practiced it a hundred times.

Q. What happened with Oscar? He was fine and came back in and gave you some huge moments but he also hobbled back there to the locker room. At that point, are you hitting the panic button?

JOHN CALIPARI: No, I told one of the staff, go back and get Oscar, where is he, go back and get him. Again, I said this today, the game ended, I didn't ask Oscar what was up. I looked up at Jacob and teased him, "Do you have a blown-out Achilles'? You went down like a sniper hit you."



Because you slipped? Embarrassed? Why? What happened here?

Then I looked at TyTy and he had said, "Do you think you're going to play this month?" And this was about it. I didn't ask him what hurt, what happened. I'm not the trainer. I don't do it. I leave it and they will tell me later what the deal is. So I don't -- in other words, Kyle, I don't know.

Q. You've talked a lot about players being ready to take advantage when their time comes. How much of that is physical, being able to fall out of bed and play well, and how much of it is mental to fight through and be ready, even though you have no idea when your chance is coming?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, you have every excuse if you don't play well. If you're not, either a rotational guy or playing a lot of minutes. What do you say? What would you say?

Q. Somebody else's fault?

JOHN CALIPARI: Not playing me enough. It's your fault. You've got to take responsibility first for your performance. You've got to. Are you playing harder than the guy you're playing against or is he playing harder than you? Well, just let him play through it.

Okay. So he plays four minutes, gives up two baskets and gives up a rebound and doesn't make a shot. Wait a minute, this isn't 8th grade. Again, own your performance. It's hard when like Lance now, who played great again today, it's hard when you don't know: Is Oscar going to play so well that I'm not getting any minutes or many minutes, or is he going to struggle and be in foul trouble and I'm ready?

Every day Lance Ware is in the gym getting better, every single day. I look out my window and that kid's in there. I have all the confidence in the world. I play Daimion today first, but I told him I was going to do it, told Lance, I've just got to get that kid on the floor and get him to break through a little bit.

We went with Bryce. He did okay. But he didn't come up with rebounds and balls. But he dunked that one. There you go. Rebounding and defense and diving on the floor, it doesn't take skill. You don't have to think. You just got to scramble and hustle and that's what I'm trying to get guys.

Here is the other thing, a lot of these guys have the weight of the world on them, everyone is you've got to do this and you've got to do that and you've got to play like this, you've got to say this. I mean, they have got the weight of the

world. They don't even tell you that. And so my job, yes, to hold them accountable but also figure out ways, like if -- so let's talk about how we get this done.

Again I talk to you, you know for years, 30 years, I've had Bob Rotella, sports psychologist, and work with my team, and recommend players: Go call them, talk to them, get yourself -- because most of it is being mind ready, mind fresh. Knowing if things don't go well, I've worked hard. How about positive self-talk.

Now, it's hard if all you're hearing was, I told you so, and that's the worst, and that's what you hear, it's hard for to you have that positive self-talk. But you've got to have it. Because if you don't love yourself, and you're not good to you, no one is going to be good to you. You've got to be good to yourself.

And that means block out the negative. Be really positive. And that's what I'm trying to get all these kids to do and what I try to do every year, but this place, it's big. Like every game is like Auburn, and they are all like this, and every game we play, someone is going to play their best. I mean, last five games, Mississippi State shot 24 percent from the three. What did they shoot today? 31. But they made three at the at the end of the game to put it to over time.

So that's what's going to happen. Liked, I told the guys, I don't want to see anybody, don't call me, we've got an off-day. Leave me alone. Let me get my mind set for what we've got to do. We've got to travel to Kansas? Do we play on the road after we come back from Kansas?

We've got a home game, oh, my gosh, we've got a home game? Wow. I thought they would put us on the road after that.

Q. I'm pretty old but I don't have a chance to talk to many coaches that have won 800 games. What's it mean to you to get your 800th win?

JOHN CALIPARI: It means I've been doing this a long time, had a lot of good players, and publically, I'd like to thank all those players from UMASS, all those players from Memphis, all those players here that have won all these games.

You know, when you're coaching good kids, when families entrust you with their sons, you're blessed. And to be in this job with this fan base, I am blessed. And again you know, I've been doing this a long time, like 30-some years. I'm 56 now, but I started young. I was 18 when I first got my first job.

Q. Early in the game, Sahvir gets two fouls, and Daimion is three in the first half. Wondering, you're already short on TyTy. What's going through your mind?

JOHN CALIPARI: Thank goodness Dontaie has good thoughts about this game. He plays well against these guys, I don't know why, but he does. I want to keep giving Bryce minutes because I want to keep giving him opportunities to break through but at the end of the day, Dontaie did better. He did more, so I left him in.

Q. We obviously saw Kellan hit the big shots but I'm wondering if there's something else that you saw at the end, when you had to make plays, was there something besides the shots, something small that we might not have seen that you really liked about your team?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, they wanted to throw the ball to Oscar. The problem was, after we did it a couple the Finals, they had two guys on him and the kids adjusted. I liked the fact that we did some stuff in a huddle that we had not really worked on, and they came out and executed and Sahvir got that layup.

And again, I'll just give it to you, these guys in these huddles, I'll say, what do you think about this; they said not enough time. We don't have the time for that. Let's go -- let's do it quicker, and I said, okay.

That's meaning they are empowered, and every huddle, Sahvir is talking to his team and when TyTy is there, he's talking to the team. They are all talking to Oscar. You know, it's a good group.

Keion played better today. But I said, look, he's even better than that, but he played good. But be better. Making those two free throws, that was a big deal.

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