

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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Coach John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky - 77, Vanderbilt - 70

COACH CALIPARI: I believe so. I told Keion at halftime, you've got no rebounds. What happened to that guy I saw? Told him, you get five in the second half we'll win. Good news? He got four. He went out and got rebounds. We got outrebounded today.

Again, thinking about the wrong stuff. But it was a really physical game. The screens were -- you were getting levelled.

Again, we did some good stuff offensively in the first half. And then, like, we missed a bunch of, some wide-open stuff, which is fine. You're not going to make every shot. But I thought we fought on defense. And you look at the numbers you would say, wow. But we win the game, we move on, next game.

By the way, Davion played unbelievable today. Really, really good. And you know who was happy for him? TyTy. Like hugged him. That's what this team has been.

Q. Wanted to ask about the technical foul you got on Oscar. If I saw it right, you didn't think Oscar fouled trying to offensive rebound. How chaotic was this game to try to manage?

COACH CALIPARI: At one point -- they're not allowed to dislodge. In other words, if I have a position they cannot push me -- like push back. And when I say "push back," I'm not saying an inch, I'm saying two feet. You can't screen sideways. You can't. You turn sideways and knock a guy, whack him, you can't.

And there were things that went on, and I'm trying to protect my players. I didn't want anybody to get hurt. You're coaching the game and saying, hey -- but again, enough stuff that was done in the game that -- like I told them after, guys, if I watch that tape and I'm an opposing coach, I say, let's just try to beat the crap out of a couple of these guys, they'll go away.

Can't accept that. You've got to beat them two spots. You've got to be the first to hit. You've got to be quick coming off screens. You can't be late so the guy can move, physically move a foot and knock you down. You can't. You've got to be body to body. So that becomes so obvious a foul they've got to call it.

Q. You said Mintz played unbelievable. (Indiscernible) that defense, I thought you put him in early, (indiscernible)?

COACH CALIPARI: I put him in early because Sahvir had two fouls. But, again, he is a guy that -- how about that rebound on that free throw? That was a big play. I'm trying to get other guys to do that, what he just did, and it's just too rough. I try to move, but if the guy hits me, I stop and I run back.

He doesn't. He just is relentless. And he also runs the floor. He and Kellan spread the court out. I went, later in the game, I just went to Oscar and our point guard and spread the court and just played that way. The reason I did it I didn't want anybody to get hurt. It was so physical.

So, now it's so obvious that you're whacking somebody, they've got to call it.

Q. You mentioned the physicality of this one. You and Jerry both seemed to be frustrated. [Inaudible]?

COACH CALIPARI: No, no, what happened, I'm looking around the country, and many coaches are just doing what they do in the NBA, which I did. I acknowledged him.

But I got worried after the last game. Did you see what happened to one of the Kansas players after the last game? What? What happened? The guy has COVID. He has COVID. Basically he played with COVID.

And now I'm saying, I'm not sure we should shake hands -- give us another two weeks. The stuff we're doing with you, Zooming, it's perfect. I don't need to be in everybody's company.

And the same thing with -- I saw, I think it was South Carolina and Mississippi State. I saw those two coaches,



great guys, both of them, they gave the peace sign and left. They told the team -- we don't need that right now. But no that was nothing.

Q. Curious if you think a rock fight like tonight might have been better for you in the long run. You'll see those in March this year (indiscernible) learning how to play physical?

COACH CALIPARI: I mean, I'm fine. They did good stuff. They run good stuff. They create good shots. I'm glad we're done playing them. They got the big kid now. They've got another guy with size who can play.

So we're done. We're done. If we see them again, it will be in the tournament. And I hope we don't see them in the tournament.

Q. Talking about Keion's lack of rebounding the first half, was it still not [inaudible] seeing him making shots the second straight game for you?

COACH CALIPARI: Wow, and they were all big. He made three jumpers that were huge. The one as the clock expired. The dunk, I told him, look, you wanted to make it something hard instead of making an easy play because you might miss it. It's all that mentality that we've just got to keep on holding him accountable.

But I'm saying this. He has been so much better. Again, all I want him to do is when I look at that rebounding chart, his attempts are in the mid-80s. If he does, he's going to get eight or nine rebounds. That his sprints are 17, 18 sprints that are As and three or four that are Bs, because now he's going to be ahead of the action. He's going to get a couple of dunks, a couple of 3s or 15-foot corner shots. And he makes those.

And then that's where he builds his confidence. If you're getting knocked around, it's hard to be confident. It really is. And, like I said, I'm really proud of him. Like I said prior to the game, don't try to live up -- I don't want you to have the weight of the world on you again. You just play.

You don't have to make every shot. You're going to miss some. Just play. Get the weight of the world, get it off you. You just be a great player and enjoy this team. And he is. He has a smile on his face.

Q. You saw a little bit of that defensive rebounding. Anything else that you saw that suggested that?

COACH CALIPARI: I've got to watch the tape. I'll watch the tape. TyTy kind of coming up limping early in the game got me, like, you gotta be kidding me. He came back and

played. I've got to check on that. I've not seen him to ask him that. We had a short three-minute postgame meeting.

But I will watch the tape. We're going to watch the tape probably around noon tomorrow because of this ice storm. We're not going to be -- we were thinking about leaving tomorrow if we could get out. But we're not going to be able to. We're hoping that the ice will subside and we can get out on Friday. But we may not be able to get out on Friday.

We're just going to follow the weather. But we're not going to put ourselves in any kind of tough position traveling-wise.

Q. Scotty Pippen, both times, has up a lot of points. What makes him so effective?

COACH CALIPARI: He's good with the ball. He's crafty. He's good at pick-and-rolls. And he plays great against us. Always has. Every game I've coached against him the kid has -- he probably averages 30 against us. He wished he played us five times a year.

Q. (Indiscernible). How much is going against Oscar every day in practice (indiscernible) helped Lance with what he's doing?

COACH CALIPARI: Let me tell you what's helping Lance. He's now become one of the guys in the gym living in the gym. He's one of those guys now. And so he's building his own confidence.

It's not how much I play him. When he gets minutes, he's confident he's going to play well. And so he's out there playing well -- rebounding, he fights, he talks, he's smart. He's one of the smartest basketball players we have.

And when you have a big guy that's that way and you can run some things through him -- in other words, now he can be a dribble hand-off guy. He could be a re-screener because he's smart. And he can see it.

And he's complementary -- he complements Oscar, how Oscar plays when he needs to go in. But I put him in -- he only had three fouls. My staff said we had four. It was, I think he only has three. But he had three when I sat him down. He did not have four. He had three. Got his fourth later. So we had a little screw-up that we've got to square away because can't have that in these games.

Q. Kind of looked like Oscar got frustrated a time or two during the game?

COACH CALIPARI: I think they egged him on, Larry. And

now what do you think the other coaches that are watching this game are going to say? Don't let him move. In other words, if he tries to cut, chest him, bump him -- do stuff to aggravate him.

He's going to have to be smart because now that's what they'll do, because you can't stop his progress from running unless you do. And they let you do it. And you push, what do they say? Well, you fouled. Like I said, physical game, but it is what it is.

Q. I want to follow up on the roughing up Oscar. Do you now start doing that in practice, rough him up so he gets used to it?

COACH CALIPARI: No. Like tomorrow's practice will be film and script. And Friday's practice, if we're going to be able to get out, it will be a normal day before a game practice. You can't go crazy; someone will get hurt.

We get ready for a really good Alabama team. You're on the road, and I imagine it will be packed, like every game we play. Good news is we've walked into arenas like that. So we'll see. It's going to be a hard game for us.

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