

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky - 77, Duquesne - 52

Q. One, how is Daimion doing? And, two, how do you think --

JOHN CALIPARI: How did what?

Q. How is Daimion doing? I know he went home. And your thoughts on Sahvir's night tonight?

JOHN CALIPARI: You get one question. Which one you want? First one? Okay.

We're leaving tomorrow to go to the funeral. I wanted to take the whole team, but we got to go to Indianapolis, come back, go to Spokane, come back, go to London. They don't need another trip.

But Cason is family, so he's going to go with us. And then we'll come back with Daimion. So he went down. There was a family viewing today that he needed to be there for. It was amazing. He left after practice or as practice was ending and all the guys hugged him and, I mean, it's, what's happened, he's got family here, and it's these players. They all greeted him when he came back. He didn't get in until 11:50, and they were all the waiting for him at the lodge to just let him know and hang out with him. So it will be good to get him back.

And Sahvir did good. He played more minutes than I wanted to play him. But I think our guards are going to play 25, 20 to 25, 27, depending on who is playing well. Antonio keeps amazing me. C.J.'s doing his thing. Cason. Sahvir. We got four really good guards. I thought Chris Livingston banged the boards and rebounded and toughness. Could have played him more, but I was trying to let Jacob play through, like come on kid, rough it up. And that's why I left him on the floor.

But Chris did well. Adou, I told him after, the game wasn't one that I wanted to shove him in the game. But he's going to be fine. I just told him, Just be ready.

And Ugonna, wow. Like, he impacts the game the minute he walks on the court. Not afraid. How about he shot a right-handed jump hook from 12 feet. Air ball. But he had the courage to shoot it.

By the way, Mike and Molly McGuire are going to come in after and you got, if you have questions for 'em or anything. Wasn't it neat though? They're all here. They came, parents, siblings, children, some other people from the town. I mean there were a lot of -- they all came. Which is great. I mean, you know, I'm not one that likes to go to these kind of things unless I'm watching one of my players. This is my life. But they come in here and see it, and they want to stay and be in Lexington tomorrow some and enjoy the city. And I'm going to say this again because I grabbed the family in the hallway and told them again how it happened. I was sent the picture, don't know who sent it, immediately saw it. Obviously my grandfather was a coal miner. I said, I want this guy at one of our games. Find out who it is. We'll give him the VIP. And then I didn't think about it again.

By the time I got to the office, it had circled the world. And it was because here's a hardworking guy that is into his family and his children enough to forget about showering, cleaning. I'm just going to go be with my son and I don't want to waste time. And it was one of those feel-good stories. So to have him here and be a part of it.

And let me say this about Duquesne too. I'm a fan of their program. I grew up in Pittsburgh. Keith's -- he just stuck a team together of like 11 new guys. And let me explain, by the middle of this season we will say, We beat a good team. Look at them. We beat a good team. They missed some shots. They were a little bit, you know, things that they won't do later. They're trying to figure each other out. But they got good guys. They posted us up. They did what they wanted at times.

Q. Curious about Ugonna and the potential down the road with Sahvir and Cason the way they pressure out front and having a guy like that in the back that can change shots like he does.

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, we have a lot of options. The thing I told the guards today is, Look, you're going to play

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between 20 and 25, 26, 27 minutes. They all played 27 today.

And I said, And if one of you really is playing well, you'll play more. And if someone's struggling, this is brain surgery, you're going to play less. And the same holds true with other guys. When you have a deep team, it holds you accountable.

Now, it doesn't mean this is for the rest of the season. Get yourself right and let's go. Next game. Move on.

Q. For the second straight game C.J. and Antonio were the two leading scorers. It looks like that you guys went 57 percent from three. How much does that open up the floor for your offense when you have two guys that can fill it up like that?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, we're not throwing it inside to Oscar right now. So when you throw it inside, we threw it some to Ugonna. How about the one he kicked out for a three? The guys went crazy in the huddle telling him what a great job he did.

But, no, it helps us. Cason can shoot it. Sahvir's shooting it way better. We just got to, like I said, this next game, the reason this was a good game, I knew it would be a roughhouse game. I know how Keith coaches. Not giving you an inch.

The next game we play is going to be a roughhouse game. Now, either you can play in a roughhouse game or you can't. If you can't, don't worry about it, go on to the next game. You just won't play much because this game will be, it's going to be a roughhouse.

Offensive rebounds, you're going to have to work like crazy because they're going to hold blockouts. You're going to have to fight. They're going to fight through screens. They're going to be up in you. They're going to collapse defensively. They're as well-coached a team as we'll play all year. And they had Gonzaga beat, I guess, tonight. They lost by one?

Gonzaga, are they No. 1 in the country? What's Michigan State, then? Was the boat moving or something? I don't know.

Q. What is Oscar's status right now? How far along is he compared to last time you talked about him? And what about Tuesday for him?

JOHN CALIPARI: I don't know yet. So he's got to go through some workouts and if it swells or does stuff, we're just going to have to wait. That surgery, he's ahead of

schedule, but, you know, you got to be able to stop and turn and, you know, it's not ligament or anything like that. But there was an operation where they went inside that area where it's, it will still be sore for a minute.

So we'll have to see. I hope, but I have no idea. I did not think Sahvir would play as many minutes as he played. But he got tired. He said, You know I never take myself out, and I took myself out.

Q. Obviously you came into this game with exactly 40 minutes of film on this particular Duquesne team. But coming out of the game, what would you describe as their identity going forward?

JOHN CALIPARI: They're going to be a tough out and I'm going to tell you why. They got really good guards and they got guys that aren't afraid to be physical.

We had two rebounds offensively at halftime. Two. They checked us. They bodied us. They didn't let -- they got almost every 50/50 ball in the first half. And we talked about it. But that's how they're going to play. But here's the big thing. They have good guards. Their guards are good. The guys inside, listen, when we played behind 'em, the guy turned and scored. One kid's 6'-10".

So what I will tell you is, as this season goes on, you're going to see, one, Keith's a hell of a coach; but two, you're going to see that team, because like the fans here, it's like what I have to do every year. You got a brand new team and early on they're going to struggle a little bit and make some mistakes, and then as it goes on, they get better and better and by the end, they will be really -- when you have good guards in college basketball, you got a chance. And they got good guards.

Q. How do you think Jacob has played so far?

JOHN CALIPARI: He's done okay. He's done okay. He's got to be better than he is, but he's done okay. He's way better than he was. But, you know, I mean, playing through bumps, wanting contact, 50/50 balls, rebounding in traffic, those things that you're going to win at the highest level.

And Daimion comes back, it forces you to, you know, because they may be trying to do the same thing to Daimion.

Q. How pleased were you tonight with the team's ball movement. You got 22 assists on the 28 made field goals.

JOHN CALIPARI: Can I say this? We have good guards.

And when you have good guards, you get that kind of play. And like the good news is if they play 25 minutes and they get 18 points, they're evaluated by 40 minutes. That's how this, the analytics go.

And so the best time -- I've said this before, the max minutes is about 28 and then you start going the other way, your efficiency. So they're playing about that max that they want to play if they're worried about efficiency, which I am too.

Q. You talked about going from 11 guys to eight guys by the end of the season. Is part of that spreading minutes around maybe limiting Oscar's minutes from -- no?

JOHN CALIPARI: No. I just, he can't play 36 minutes. And part of the reason he can't is there's this kid, Ugonna, that's going to deserve some minutes. And then the question is, can they play together? I don't know. I haven't coached them together.

Ugonna, you tell him one time and he's got what you say. One time. You don't have to tell him twice. I already told you -- no. Whatever I tell him, he does. But there may be games where he's doing what he needs to and we leave him in the game, but the issue is right now, you're going to play more people and then when you get down to it, you're going to play seven or eight guys.

The hard thing becomes, you know, you're talking four really good guards. Like, here's the other one. Chris Livingston was really good today. Probably should have played more minutes, but I wanted Jacob to play through bumps and figure stuff out, so I played him more. But if that were the continual thing, Chris would have played 27 minutes instead of 19. He would have played the extra minutes. But he did good.

Q. If Oscar had been healthy from the get-go, do you think Ugonna gets this opportunity? And how much has he exceeded what you thought he might do coming in?

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, he's exceeded, but you probably are right. But, you know, I mean, Lance fought like heck today. He did better. I think both of 'em, you know, there may be a game that it's Lance's game and there may be a game that it's Ugonna's game. But the question is, who becomes that four? Is it Daimion? Is it Jacob? I've been playing Chris at four. Not a bad team. A little bit smaller, but as long as Chris rebounds, who cares? Damian, then you almost have four guards in, because he can shoot and play too.

But this, again, this was a good win. I was worried this morning. I was really worried about Howard. And then worried about this game because I watched 40 minutes of them just pound Montana by a hundred, and I'm like, what in the world?

But good game and I wish 'em well. Keith knows I'm rooting for Duquesne. And I go back to the Red Manning days and the John Cinicola days. Some of you Pittsburgh people know what I'm talking about. So it's a terrific program and they're in a good league.

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