

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky 106, South Carolina State 63

Q. How much has Lance's interview rubbed off on the other guys and where specifically do you think he's improved last year to right now?

JOHN CALIPARI: He's way more confident but I told UH, what did he do that you didn't do? He sprinted. So he was in a position to go make baskets.

Q. Where specifically do you think he's improved last year to right now?

JOHN CALIPARI: He's way more confident but I told Ugonna, what did he do that you didn't do? He sprinted. So he was in a position to go make baskets. I took Ugonna out because the big kid got two balls from him. You're out, other guy is in -- had a knee, arm -- just give me numbers. Give me 7 and 2. Doesn't matter what you say. He got the ball from you.

Lance went in and did it. Now I think we are going to have a lot that have this year and they are going to have to accept it game-to-game. I told them, I think the best way we can do this -- seven minutes and then we'll figure out, you may play 18 because the guy playing 26 or 27 is playing really good. Then we'll let him go and you're next game.

I also have to figure out who is going to finish the game, who are the five that are on the court the last five minutes. Part of that is making free throws. Part of that is execution. Part of that is grit-and-grind and toughness. But who is it?

I don't know yet. But you know, a lot of good stuff today, and you know, we shot the ball, we ran. You say, well, why didn't we run against Michigan State? Well, they made a great effort to get back to not give that to you.

But the second thing is, there were no clean rebounds. We were rebound and celebrating. What? We were rebound and celebrating. What? Rebound and get rid of it. Let's go. That's how we play. But sometimes when a guy is

tired, he will rebound it and tell the guy, come back. You know, we're a team that we've got to get something in transition, not two points. We've got to be 15, 18 points in transition. And we should be. We should be.

Q. You had the chance to play a lot of different combinations tonight. What do you really like about having two point guards on the floor at the same time?

JOHN CALIPARI: Antonio's played some point for us too, so you really could have three at one time but that's what happens when you have guards that are unselfish. And the other thing is, it's not just about shooting, it's about making, okay, and that's how you get 25.

And you know what's funny, I watched South Carolina State. I watched a bunch of tape. And the stuff they are running, and how hard they are playing, I knew the press, they wouldn't be able to press us like they had these other teams because we're, you know, we get -- we'll get shots and we play in a very aggressive -- if you press us, we are trying to score a hundred.

So I knew that would be out. But what they did offensively, the hard cuts. You know, the end of the half, making two threes. You know, they never stopped and they won't. So I was -- you know, but I was happy.

Oscar, we weren't going to play him today but the reason we played him is it's a different game for the rest of our players when he's in. One of the things we did a really poor job of Michigan State is post-feeding. Now, you tell me why that would have happened.

We aren't posting a ball when he's not in there. Now all of the sudden he's in there and you're trying to post it and you're not a good post passer. We worked on that yesterday and today at the shootaround, how to throw it and make sure you're ready to get it to the post, and you're ready, where are you spaced to.

We had not thrown it to the post. I needed them out there today just so we get -- we've got to be a team and play together. We're going to give them off, and I said, why don't you play five, eight minutes a half. Now, what about that makes him really unselfish? Stats. Yeah, okay, you're

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going to play 12 minutes and you want to be the leading rebounder in the country and all -- and you accept doing that? That means you're unselfish. You're about your team.

Because I left it up to him. I said, you're not going to play more than 18, 15 minutes. But -- and then I said do you want to start the second half, play five or six and then I'll take you out. So I don't know exactly what he played, 13 minutes.

Think about that. Player of the Year in the country. Has 20 and 10 -- or 20 and 18 first game and he says, yeah, let me play less.

Q. You play Tuesday, short turnaround, play tonight, leave tomorrow. How do you feel about your team heading to Gonzaga and the areas you need to improve?

JOHN CALIPARI: What I told them, you know, I want your mentality to be, and I've done this before, the mentality is we beat Michigan State, where would you be feeling right now, an out-of-bounds play, a free throw, a missed shot here, late game, not executing and -- but all that stuff, we didn't play great. Still should have won, could have won. I give credit to Michigan State, Tom Izzo is a great friend but I want them to have the mentality, you played well enough to win that game.

Let's say you won it. How would you feel going to Spokane right now. Because half of this is the mentality. We needed to make shots today. You know we made only how many threes up there. Today we made shots. We only took 24. But we made shots. And you need that going in to that game. But there's -- there's going to be a lot of, you know, they are going to be a lion right now because they just lost at Texas. So they will be -- this will be a hard game for us to win. This is the great thing about November, trying to learn about your team and I still a.m. learning about my team. But I like the group. I liked them after Michigan State. Missed some shots. Did some stuff. Had some -- we had not practiced together. How about Oscar, he didn't play for four weeks. Played one practice and did that? Supposed to be out two more weeks if you're a normal human being, it's six weeks. He came back in four.

Q. We're pretty high up, I can't really tell but is this team talking to each other enough? How are they vocal-wise and who are the talkers?

JOHN CALIPARI: They are but you have guys like Adou

who doesn't, so a lot of breakdowns that we do, someone is assigned the basket the other team scores. And it could be two guys or three, you all get two points or three. So at the end without knowing, in Adou's time, he gave up a lot of points today.

Now, I told him, when we play a ranked team and I put you in and you're in and there's two baskets, you're probably not going to play the rest of the game. Now these kind of games, you've got to talk. But he's a young freshman. Chris Livingston, exactly the same. They are young.

Now they are trying, but it takes time. It takes experience. I was happy with Chris today. Driving the ball, making his shot. He started a little shaky like he was up in Michigan State. He was shaky. But we need his toughness. I put the challenge to both Jacob and Daimion, we need offensive rebounds. If you're not getting them, you're going with one hand, I'm taking you out and I'm playing Daimion, I don't care the other stuff. Rebound the ball. Jacob had nine rebounds today. I'm looking at Daimion, you'd better get blocks. If you don't get blocks, I'm not playing you. I'm playing Chris at fur. I'm holding them accountable -- wait a minute -- to things they can do. I'm not asking them to do things outside of the realm of what they are. So telling Antonio, score baskets. It's what you do. I don't care how you score them. Score baskets.

And I told those two. So one game, CJ has it going, he's going to play more than you. The next game, you go crazy, you're playing more than him. If you're a good teammate, you're fine with that. I gave him three things today: You want to be a great teammate, you're humble, you have humility. Here is what that means. I can be part of the problem. We had one guy after that game say: Show me the tape of my errors and my breakdowns; I want to see one.

Why didn't I have a whole team? Were you looking like it was somebody else? Humility. Take responsibility and be a part of what went wrong. Accept responsibility and say it's on me. I try to teach them that and what I'm saying, I think what they do is they look at it and say, you're right it, was you.

Second thing is, you ready, you've got to be hungry. If you want to be coached, if you have an answer every time we're coaching you, how can you be a good teammate? What's your work ethic? That's being hungry.

And the last thing is just being smart, not book smart, could be both. But knowing what's important for this team and what can't important. Well, I've got to do this. Is that important for the team? No. But I've got to do this. No. What do you need to do for this team, what's important.

That's being smart.

And so I told them, this is -- we've got to be great teammates, and then we can be a great team. We've got pieces. But if you're not great teammates, you're not going to be a great team. Not happening. Done this a long time. We're teaching kind hearts. You know the stuff we do. We are teaching servant leadership. Yes, that's part of being a great teammate, being that mentality. You know, Sahvir today, ten assists. I mean, we're passing the ball to each other. So it was a good win and we've got this one, we've got the next one and we got another one Wednesday. And then I think we leave for London, when? The following week? Michigan only won by 40 last night.

Q. Looking at the game on Sunday, Oscar, Player of the Year last year; Drew Timme First Team All American as well. What can we expect to see, it's more than a one-on-one matchup but Oscar and Timme, two of the best players in the sport going at it on Sunday?

JOHN CALIPARI: I've had this before. It was Marcus Camby and Tim Duncan. We played Wake Forest, those two played. You would have thought no one else was in the game and there were no coaches. It was one-on-one. I'm telling you.

Now, they ended up the score being 52-46, I believe, and I've been wrong before, I think it was 1978, 1977, but that -- it ended up not being -- neither one, they played okay. But the hype of that was ridiculous. So I've been through it.

I don't think, like Oscar, they like each other. I've been at events with them. They will both like each other and Mark Few and I, we talk once a week, every two weeks.

So you know, it's going to be a great challenge. It will be a hard game, in Spokane, 14,000. I'm getting calls all over the place, I live in Montana, can you get me tickets? I'll drive over -- I mean, it's -- I can't even imagine. And I love it's on an NFL Sunday. Perfect. Let's go. What do you want to watch? Steelers or are you going to watch us? Steelers won last week, too.

Last question.

Q. 60-46.

JOHN CALIPARI: 60-46? What did I say? You heard me wrong. (Laughter).

Q. Talk about guys holding themselves accountable, is that something that's come naturally with previous

teams or is that something you have to pull out of guys usually?

JOHN CALIPARI: It's kind of -- it kind of rocks you when I'm saying, we've had only one guy call about the tape and show me my breakdowns, why wouldn't the rest of you have done that? So are you saying, well, I had individual meetings with each. How do you think you played?

My second question: How can I help you?

My third question: Okay, what do you do to help our team?

And some of them, how you played, the answers weren't right. You know, because I watched the tape and there were guys that I thought I should have played more, I watched the tape. They shouldn't have played more. And it's not about missed shots and you know, the way a fan will watch. Are they impacting the game the way they need to.

And you know what I've been so impressed. How about Cason. Cason has a clear mind. Told the guys, clear mind. Before the game, I told them. The reason he has a clear mind, he's not playing to live up to -- like you didn't here about him. I saw him play. I'm like, Holy Cow. He has a clear mind. He just plays. If he has a shot, he shoots it. If I have a drive -- it's not like, I've got to score now. I haven't scored in the last -- he ain't playing that way. But we've got to have a team full of guys. I've already told you with Jacob and Daimion, you're better offensive rebound or I'm putting the other guy in and if neither one of you do, I'll put Chris in at four. Now offensive rebound. Now they are going to check you and do it. That ain't an excuse. You're out, he's in. Figure it out.

The same thing with our guards. If you're breaking down defensively left and right, the other guy's going to play. And we're working. I told them, part of the reason we are behind in some areas, not only didn't we have our team together to really do late-game situations, we just didn't have team together.

But the second reason is, we're spending a lot of time helping them develop the skills they need to be successful defensively, offensively, and you can't go five hours a day.

So appreciate it, guys.

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