

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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## John Calipari

### Press Conference



Kentucky - 60, Bellarmine - 41

JOHN CALIPARI: Let me start by saying that's a hard game to play. We got guys cramping up in there. We had, I think, 31 out of 48 stops. We had shot clock violations. But you had to play the whole clock.

We worked three days on how we finish over a game. First half, 10 turnovers. Not enough movement. So we went to our grind-it stuff. Which we have worked on now. So you saw that we were grinding it out. Which there are some games you got to do it.

So that was what was good about the last three days. We were able to do some stuff. Didn't do it in the first half.

In the second half I just said, Look guys, we're going to have to grind it with 'em. If we have something easy, take it. If not we'll grind it out. Which there are some games you got to do it. So that was what was good about the last three days.

In the second half I just said, Look guys, we're going to have to grind it with 'em. If we have something easy, take it, if not, we'll grind it.

Let me just say this, Scottie's done a great job with that program, we all know. What's disappointing that, if they win their league tournament again, they can't get in. Here's what I would say, and I've said this many, many times. If you do things for the kids, you're never wrong. If you're doing stuff based on, well, that's the rule, well, we had a rule that they changed because a player went on TV and said, I'm starving and I don't have money to buy a hamburger, and all of a sudden all the rules changed. Within a week they all changed.

I understand, well, there's a rule that Bellarmine's got to wait eight years, whatever it is. Change it. It's not right for the kids. It's not right for the kids. They should be able to be in that tournament if they do what they did. They're well coached. They're great kids. I hope people will reconsider -- change the rule. You changed that rule. You know what

happens if it comes back to them, it's on me. I'll change the rule. We're going to do something. Well, wait a minute. This is on those kids.

So hopefully this will be reconsidered and they're tied with us at halftime and we're supposed to be one of those teams. Well, shoot.

Yes, questions.

**Q. You mentioned on the radio last night and when we talked to Bruiser yesterday the importance of defensive discipline tonight, given such a distinct offensive style that Bellarmine plays. So from your advantage point, how did you like it?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Really good. Really good. Oscar broke down, but he never has to play out on the floor like this. So he broke down. We had about three other breakdowns, but when you think about it, like we were all over it, and it's hard because we're running and playing too, and then you're on defense for 30 seconds. They all were laughing in there, like that was the hardest thing to guard. Well, we needed to show some discipline. We also needed to grind it out. We had three days.

Now we're traveling tomorrow and getting over there, and we're going to have a couple more days of practice before we play. But I'm happy with what we got in with my whole team. Like, we got a whole team now. So that stuff was good. I love Chris. Again, I got to figure out how to get him in. Chris Livingston. Did you see him go get balls? Until then we weren't getting any balls. The way we started the game, I loved it when I went to those other five, and all of a sudden it changed. Now we became the aggressor. I looked at the guys on the bench and I'm like, Why should you go back in? And I think that led the rest of us to do it.

But I like what we did the second half, three turnovers, playing fast, grinding it out. The other thing is, I thought we passed up shots in the first half. Can't play that way. You're going to play, every team that plays us, you ready? They have nothing to lose. Everybody. They have nothing to lose. Well, you got to play that way. You got to play like you have nothing to lose, or you're at a disadvantage every game you play.



**Q. What is keeping you from playing Chris more minutes?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Having to get some other guys, whether it be Cason, Antonio, C.J., someone's going to have to take less minutes, or could I play him at 4, which I was going to do today.

But he's going to get more. I was just, I'm so proud of him. He made one, he got tired. He went to sub himself. First time in his life maybe that he said, Sub me. Right? And I left him in through the timeout because I thought the timeout, very next play he tried to steal it, and then he let the guy run for a layup, and I knew it. That's on me. I should have had him out. But he's going to get more and more time. He will.

**Q. All the good stuff that you saw defensively, some of the grind it out stuff, what offensively in terms of what you want to see night after night that hasn't happened yet, what is it that you're not seeing that you're trying to get them to do that's not happening?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, this team plays different, and then you got to play a little different because of how they play. I think our offensive efficiency, even with a couple games where we didn't play well, was in the top 10.

Now flying is the best way for to us play. But we've got to realize, if you don't have something, it's hard to post Oscar from the wing. I keep telling 'em, You got to post him from the middle third of the floor. If you post him from the wing, everybody's off and they're, you know. He missed some shots today, I was really surprised, some lefties.

And then it's important because of how we're playing and because of Oscar that you got to shoot open threes, especially if you're one of those three. We need probably more aggressive play from Jacob going to the rim in the first half. He missed three 2-footers. Threw 'em. Second half he drove and he made baskets. But you got to do that when they're being physical. We got to get some easy baskets that way.

**Q. To follow up on that, there was a stretch there towards, in the second half where Jacob, it seemed like the light bulb went off a little bit and he was attacking the basket, finishing inside. Is there a secret there to unlocking him? You saw the even the end of the Gonzaga game where he was hesitant early and then kind of letting it fly late.**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, you know, my whole thing is I think his mid-level game and his ability and his athleticism

to go to the basket, but it takes a grit to want to go in there and know you're going to get bumped and pushed, and that's where the only way you can get comfortable doing it is doing it.

He's got to just go in there, and there's going to be some car crashes. But he is so much a better player. But the grit is between him being special. You want to be special? Be that guy, where they got to play you on pull ups. They're not going to try to muscle you because it doesn't matter. It becomes a foul, and you're a good free throw shooter.

Again, we were trying to figure out in that first half, they were packed in so bad, and then we missed some shots, and then guys wouldn't take shots, and that kind of adds up, which is why we came out and said, All right, we're grinding a little bit. So you don't score as many. I don't know what we scored. It's one of our lowest-scoring games in a while.

**Q. How much a game like this against a team like Bellarmine is a growing up part for a team because you can't get frustrated, you can't get impatient, you have to be mentally tough to play it out like you had to play tonight.**

JOHN CALIPARI: Look, the thing I would say is, it took unbelievable discipline to play that the way we played it, and they're a team, anytime you breakdown, which happened in our other couple games, the good teams, when you breakdown, they make you pay. So it takes unbelievable discipline throughout the possession for 40 minutes. When you're tired, come out because we're trying to win. This is not you just trying to play. And so that's what was good about this.

And like I said, you get a couple guys that cramped up. So it was, it's what we needed. I hate, I told the guys today, I told the staff, this is like going to the dentist. That's what it's like.

**Q. If you're going to play Chris at the 4, obviously that maybe pushes somebody else out. Is there a scenario where Jacob can be a small ball 5 and he can be your 4?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He wanted to guard 42 today and did a great job. Basically when he got on him, he didn't make another three. When those other two were on 'em, he was making one after another. Could we do it with Chris and maybe Cason? I mean, you're going to be really small. Could we play that way? Yeah. I almost went zone today, and the staff was, Are you nuts? We're defending. Leave it alone. And you could go a big zone because they were

just going, running crazy.

My guess is if you played 'em zone, they would do exactly the same thing and run around like crazy, but you don't have to follow 'em as much. But I just, I thought about maybe going with a bigger lineup and just saying, let's get big and play some zone just to do it.

But the good news is we have it in. Only worked on it a couple days, but it's not a hard zone to play.

Tomorrow I'm going to go to Governor Brown's service. I'm going to go a little bit early because I want to see the family. I couldn't get up there today. I would imagine there were tons of people up there. Special man, a great friend and supporter and a mentor, promoter. Called me when things were, you struggle, he would call. When things are going good, he would call. He came over to practice when he was healthy. Just became a great friend. So I want to make sure that I pay respects and that I get up there tomorrow. And I really want to spend time with his family, so I'm trying to get out of here.

**Q. The Reeves/Fredrick lineup with them on the floor together, it seemed like that gave that you jump start in the second half, and then when Sahvir came in for Reeves, that's when Fredrick hit those two threes. So that Reeves/Fredrick lineup, what does that give you?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, if they're shooting balls and they're able to defend and rebound, you just can't exchange baskets. But like I said, you saw Cason come up with balls and do stuff and I was running a play -- this is how great a kid he is. Late in the game we were doing something, and I had Antonio somewhere and I had him getting a back screen. He said, Let Antonio. He's just made three shots. Let him run that and we'll run it for him.

Now think about that. You think about that. He's the only guy on this team that would say that. Oh, you're getting me a shot? Like, so he's important to this team too. That's why I was saying, with Chris, how do we, you know, I just, we just got to figure it out because, again, he went in and got two great rebounds. He's able to do it. He's not afraid of the contact. So maybe we play him at 4. Let him get in there and you play small ball with him at 4.

Now you still have a roughness to -- I thought he stayed in front. He did some good stuff.

**Q. I know it's been a few years in the making, now it got postponed, but the Michigan, the London trip, why did you want to do this?**

JOHN CALIPARI: You know, you're trying to get matchups

that we could have at home. Next year Gonzaga and Michigan are coming here. Juwan, I've known him for a long time, really like him. I said, you know, if you want to do something. And then the Hall of Fame called us about playing in London for the Hall of Fame. I said, well, maybe that will be a third game.

So, you know, we're going over. It will be a great experience for these kids, really hard game. We better not play how we started this game. They're really, they're well coached and they're a good team, so it will be a hard game.

But it will be a great experience. When you're doing what I'm doing, you're trying to put these kids in different situations where they learn and grow. I took a team in '94 to France when I was at UMass. We flew to France and played in the season. Went up the Eiffel Tower. Imagine none of 'em will ever do it again. Maybe. But maybe not. Made them eat escargot because they didn't know what it was. So they took 'em out of the shells and I had 'em all taste 'em. No, well, it's not bad, and then I showed 'em the shell that it came out of, and they were spitting it out.

So you want to put 'em in -- you know doing this stuff at Salvation Army. The Lundergan family gave away 700 meals that day. We helped with some, but many were delivered. To put 'em in all kind of situations before they leave here, the events we play in. So this is just one of 'em. It's the first college game in that venue. Which they say is the No. 1 venue in the world.

We're staying right in London. So, you know, not going to do a whole lot of sightseeing, but we will the first day we're there and maybe the second day and try to get out. Because of where we're staying there's things they can walk to.

But, you know, we're asked to play in a lot of events. We are. I just want to make sure whatever we play in benefits us the most. Not, this -- it benefits us the most. So as we go forward with some of this -- they talked about this ACC Challenge being now. Okay, then the Gonzaga game probably happens in January or February in the middle of our season.

I've done it before. Played Louisville. When I was at UMass. In February we played Louisville. So I've done this before that way.

It should be -- you know what will make it a great trip. And then -- you know what will make it a great trip. You know. But we're getting better. Happy we had the days that, the two-a-days that we had to get the structure that we need. The sequence that we need to play with. The grind it out

that we got to have in our arsenal. Can't just try to run and shoot when the other team's holding the ball. So thanks, folks.

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