

University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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John Calipari

Press Conference



Kentucky - 69

Yale - 59

Q. You've talked about how Oscar has not been fully 100%. How was it getting him back, seeing what he could do?

JOHN CALIPARI: There's two things that happened in the first half. He didn't demand the ball. In other words, you're ducking in and you're open, you have to say something. We have a term we use. You can say 'one more, one more'. If that guy hears it, he will throw it to you. He wasn't.

The second thing in the first half, when he had shots, he was passing them. Score the ball, they can't guard you. I told the other guys, again, we have to throw him the ball. You're driving and he is in the middle wide open, throw him the ball.

Again, you know, that one is an NCAA tournament team. Again, Harvard and Yale are going to be battling. They're both really good teams. But that's a good team.

We guarded pretty good against them. It's another hard game to play. You got to grind it. When we figured out we could throw it inside, it gave us a gap and some space. I liked how we finished the game off. We did some different things. The execution, we only had how many turnovers, nine turnovers. I mean, the execution of what we were doing was pretty good. We got to get a couple guys playing better.

But I thought played Oscar way too many minutes. But Ugo got two or three balls ripped from him. Like, you're going to coach to win the game.

Q. What was the difference between the two parts of the first half? Seemed like offensively really came out well the first nine or 10 minutes, then went 2-15, missed 10 in a row. What changed?

JOHN CALIPARI: You miss shots, this is what it looks like. It is kind of like going 0-10. Doesn't look very good. If you look around the country, everybody seems to be playing the same way, a lot of dribble handoffs, a lot of pick-and-rolls, a lot of space.

We have an advantage, and the kid's name is Oscar Tshiebwe. You got to throw it to him. If you're driving and he's open, don't shoot it, throw it to him. The crazy thing is if he can't shoot it, he'll throw it back to you, which he does.

It was great seeing Sahvir make some layups. He's been missing layups. He's the best layup shooter in the country for two years. This year he's missing left and right, like, layups.

Again, we need Jacob to elevate his game, be more physical, go after more balls. If you jump 40 inches, how about every once in a while jump 40 inches, like go for a ball, jump 40 inches, go get it. How about go block a ball. How about one-dribble pull-ups, which he makes. But what he did today, he had four assists, and they were all critical to get us a gap so that we could finish the game off.

But, again, let's give them credit. They've done this to just about every team they played. I was really worried about London, the travel, and then the guys not understanding this is a good team. They see Yale, all of a sudden I'm like, Look... They were good. They had the big guys that played. I think their best player was out, yes.

Q. I think Cason is floating around 50% for the season. What were expectations you had for his three-point shots? How much of a benefit has it been for him to be so good early on?

JOHN CALIPARI: He does that. He defends, he rebounds. Locked into, like, execution of stuff. He knows. He'll tell other players on the court. He's unusual for a freshman. Most of the freshmen, you worry about your own stuff. Whatever else is happening happens. I'm just worried about me.

One of the things I've told these guys, confidence isn't just let you play 30 minutes a game. Confidence is you get in the gym and you get better. Demonstrated performance,



going in the game, performing, is how you build your confidence. Not me. Not me saying...

You go in, and all the stuff that we're working with you, you're working on, you go in and do it.

The biggest thing for this team is we want to be a defensive team that really locks you in. You asked about you missed a bunch. That's because they offensive rebounded or scored. But when we rebounded, we were able to go.

We told them at halftime. Again, let me say this, we out-rebounded them. We're the first team this year to out-rebound them by one. But we out-rebounded them.

That's one of their things that they do a great job.

Q. Your program paid Yale athletics \$90,000 to come down here and play this game. What's the benefit of paying a team like Yale to give your team some reps? How did you feel when you went down by two?

JOHN CALIPARI: I played a bye game, Billy Tubbs was coaching. I was at UMass. I had to go down there two years in a row. The first year they won at the buzzer. He says, You know what's great, you got to come back here again next year. That's what he shook my hand and said.

The next year, we won at the buzzer in Oklahoma. You know what I said? Where's the check? Who do I get it from (smiling)?

This is all part of what you do. You understand, again, this basketball program makes money for all the other sports. So if you go on the road, you might spend \$150,000. You play at home, we pay them \$90,000, we make over a million. What would you do? You pay the 90 or go on the road and play?

That's what it is. I'm not even talking anything outside of what this thing does. But it's important.

I told you guys, I don't take it lightly, that we play in the Champions, we play in the CBS. Well, they pay us a lot of money to play in those events. It's like we're playing at home versus going and playing three or four games and it costs this and you end up losing \$3.5 million by playing those games. That's part of it.

You also need some of these tough games to see where your team is. This was a good game.

Q. Kids have finals and so forth, but you do have some practice time. What do you want to focus on?

JOHN CALIPARI: They got three days off 'cause we've been traveling all over the world. I can say that literally. They've got the rest of today off. They got Sunday off and they got Monday off. They're preparing for finals. We'll practice in a two-hour slot every day probably at 1 or 1:30 every day so you get your work in, then go do finals.

We leave on Thursday, after finals, to go to New York. We'll be there Thursday, Friday, Saturday. We'll come back here. I think we have another game, then they go home for Christmas for four days.

We've been working right now. I hope you could see we're executing better. We don't make every shot. There's sometimes you look discombobulated. Part of it is you're playing a team and they're maybe doing something defensively that you're not used to, then you got to talk 'em through it.

Got a really smart team. Got a skilled team.

Q. Does the halfcourt offense concern you at any point to this point? What's the key to getting the Plan B and Plan C to work behind Oscar obviously being Plan A?

JOHN CALIPARI: I think we're in the top 15 in efficiency. I'd like to be number one. I think we lead or league in three-point shooting.

We motion and movement, but we are so fast, we are trying to get to where we're flying if it's not there. We're playing. We're working on it. We're getting better.

No, I mean, if I thought we were really struggling, yeah, I'll look at new things. I'll be honest with you. These guys will tell you if you ask them, how much does he come in and adjust stuff, how much does he change? They'll say, Jeesh. If I don't like something, I throw it out, we try something new. The whole season is that way.

Again, making shots is part of it because it really makes your offense look really good when you make shots. When you miss 10 in a row, What is wrong with this offense? You got a good shot, you just happened to miss it.

Q. As of late you've been talking about getting Chris Livingston more involved. He did some good stuff today.

JOHN CALIPARI: Yes, he did.

Q. What do you want to see from him going forward?



JOHN CALIPARI: Just continue on this path he's on. He mixes it up. The only reason I took him out, he left the best shooter in the court, he left him, and they made a three. I said, I don't care about you missing shots, but this game is too close to have you not realize you're not leaving that guy. I said, You're fine, but we're trying to win the game. I told him after.

At the end of the day you got to coach to win the game, not I wonder how he feels, how he feels. Then they'll go.

Look, I did an interview about Shai Alexander. He didn't start the first 10 games. Shai Alexander took 12 shots a game here. He's in the top three in the NBA or top four in scoring. Took 12 shots a game here.

Anthony Davis and Devin Booker are also in the top 10. None of them were shooting 25 balls a game here. There's an efficiency to how they play, what they know, what they're doing.

I mean, like I said to these guys, you're going to get minutes and you're going to get offensive opportunities. What are you going to do with them? How do you keep building your confidence?

We're just going to keep on this path. Chris, he's the best. He's the best. (Indiscernible) was sick yesterday, didn't practice yesterday, but came and couldn't keep anything down, but he's better today.

Ugonna kind of got pushed around in that game. I was surprised, to be honest with you, but he did.

Q. In three of the first four games this season, CJ had 14 or more. Four of the last five he's at three or fewer. Didn't have any today. What is it going to take to get him going again?

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, you look at it, and one of the things I said at halftime is I want to put him and Antonio together because I kind of like those two playing together. Then Antonio broke down three straight times on defense, put CJ in for him. Game played out different than I wanted it to.

I haven't lost any confidence in him. But, again, if someone's playing better, then they're going to play more. When I put him in the second time, I said, Look, kid, just shoot the ball. If you're free, let it go.

Again, this was one of those games with just the movement, dribble handoff, that kind of stuff, which again they're a really good offensive team and they scored 59.

One of the things we were trying to do is, all right, how we going to do this defensively. If guys are breaking down, we just said, All right, go with the guys that are guarding.

Q. The Yale bigs started out pretty strong. What adjustments did you make to try to throw them down?

JOHN CALIPARI: We left our feet too many times. They'll step through. They do good stuff. They'll spin away from you. All we kept talking about is stay on the floor. All those ball fakes, all that stuff, just body up and stay down.

But, again, they still hurt us. I mean, there were plays that we had to switch. I'm trying to tell the guys, most important thing is that we're playing five-on-five. Doesn't matter who's on who, it's that it's five-on-five. We don't have two men, then we're in a rotation, then we're trying to scramble, then we're trying to talk late, now they're getting easy baskets. Whatever we're doing defensively, we're trying to make sure it's five-on-five.

Thank you.

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