

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

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Lexington, Kentucky, USA

## John Calipari

### Press Conference



Kentucky - 72, Florida - 67

#### **Q. (Question about Daimion.)**

JOHN CALIPARI: He gained the weight back, and then he's there. Need to play him more. Need to play Oscar less. I mean, Oscar, I got to chalk it up to he's playing too many minutes. How do you -- you know when I'm saying? The baskets, things that I know he can do. So probably playing him a little bit.

That means Daimion can play more. The guy that without him we don't win the game. Who is that? Who? Chris was good too. I like that you think there is more than one guy. That makes me feel good. Sahvir. Without him we don't win this game.

Do you know what he did? Aside from those layups that we really needed to create a gap, he let Cason go do his thing. He told me, Let Cason handle it. I'll just be on the wing. That's a teammate. That is a teammate. Cason making those jumpers and that three, the free throws. I told them, My Texas 2 got 7-7 from the line.

But I had no problem with Daimion being at the line. None. But Florida doesn't go away. They made threes at the end that gave them a chance. We missed a free throw that gave them a chance. But we did what we had to. I thought Chris Livingston was outstanding. I thought C.J. was outstanding. The shots that he made that created gaps. And the way we defended in the first half.

Here's a great thing. Mike Pratt. Number raised. How many points did they have at halftime? 22. Mike's number. Who made the last points of the game? Number 22. You don't think Mike was up there tipping balls away? Think about that. One of the nicest people, kind heart. We had his kids and his grandkids and his brother and his wife in the locker room after. I'm just, I'm happy for him. He's been an unbelievable supporter of mine.

It's easy when things are going good for people to step up and want to be there and be around, and then when you

struggle a little bit they kind of run. Mike wasn't that guy. Mike was the one that would talk through all the stuff.

Now, I said this about him. He did call me because he wanted info so he could be in the know. Like, Hey, I, you know, and we laughed, Marcia and I laughed about it. But I loved the guy, and I miss him. I'm happy that this was done. I told Mitch it's a great move and well deserved, top 30, only played three years in scoring, rebounding, assisting. He only played three years because freshmen didn't play when he played. So it was good.

Yes?

#### **Q. You mentioned all those guys who contributed and made a big difference. What does it mean that Oscar can have a four-point night?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Did he only have four? Oh, he missed a bunch. But that's all right. You know what? He was one of the happiest guys in that locker room. So when I tell you that my job is to make sure he's out there being fresh so that he can do what he does, he's like, Whatever you say. When I said, Take yourself out, you know what he said to me? I don't know how to do that, Coach. You just take me out. That's what he said to me.

Yes?

#### **Q. C.J. is a shooter and you just tell people like that just keep shooting --**

JOHN CALIPARI: I said it again.

#### **Q. How do you keep those guys from getting inside their head when things aren't going well?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I sent 'em a text, all of 'em: You don't hurt your team when you miss a shot. You don't hurt us when you turn it over. You don't hurt us when you get bullied or miss a layup or you don't dive on the floor.

You hurt us if that turns into four more possessions like that. So you got to go on to the next play.

I told C.J. in the huddle, I said, Shoot. If you are open, you



let that ball go. This team has confidence in him. I'm going to tell you what else. The other teams, we know he went like 1-15 or whatever he did over a couple games. The other teams still play him as a shooter because they know he can shoot.

It wasn't Antonio's day. It wasn't because he got beat on five backdoors. It wasn't offensively. I couldn't keep him in because he kept getting beat on backdoors. But he made baskets when we needed 'em. When we were dying, he came up with stuff.

**Q. You talked about Oscar and Antonio tonight kind of struggling offensively. They combined for eight points. Every game since the South Carolina game one of them have been the leading scorers. What does it say about your team to pull out a tough win like that when those two guys are struggling?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, like I said, this team is coming together, and I told 'em they would break through, just stay the course. And they're breaking through.

Now, we got other tough games. I mean, I thought we played Wednesday. I had to ask, Who are we playing? And they said, Arkansas. I said, Wednesday? They said, No, Tuesday.

So like they don't stop coming. They're one after another. So we got another tough game Tuesday. We got to play better in certain areas. But we guarded pretty good today. Then at the end of the game, they made some baskets and all that, threes, and fought to get back in it.

But I told Todd prior to the game, I said, Coach, I'm watching the tape. You're doing a heck of a job with your team. That's one of the top defensive teams in the country. They're in the top 10 in like every category defensively.

I just wanted us to play faster. That's why you put Sahvir in the game. You'll play faster. We got to play that way, even though we can play in the half court. We only had nine turnovers, but Cason had three and Oscar had three, so that's six. The rest of the team didn't turn it over. Nine turnovers in a game like that? Pretty good.

**Q. Jacob Toppin played just amazing tonight. What do you think the biggest improvement is since November to tonight?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, he went through something that a couple of our guys have that I would tell you you don't want to go through. Instead of being the best version of himself, he was trying to live up to expectations. Then all of a sudden it started piling up.

So after Missouri, when I started him that next game, trying to basically say, And I believe in you and I'm starting you for that reason.

But he has built his own confidence, where before, if he made a mistake, you might as well, you know, you had to take him out in past years. Now he's got it. He's doing it. He's really an intelligent player. Quick twitch. He's rebounding balls. How many rebounds did he have today? He had 10 rebounds.

He did some good stuff. He did some good stuff. Let me just say, folks, this was a heck of a win for us. To do it and, you're seeing teams all over the country get beat. I only read about us when we get beat, but there are teams across the country that are getting beat, and it's because that happens.

You play a good schedule, you're going to lose some games. You play a team that's trying to figure themselves out, it takes some time. Now, it's not done. With this schedule, you know, we just, what we're doing is staying the course. We're trying to win now Sunday. That's all we're worried about. We want to have a win on Sunday. Then we want to have a win on Monday. And then let's play the game and see how it turns out.

We're just trying to win days. That's what we've been doing since Tennessee, just win days. And these guys have been terrific. Last one, so I can get out of here.

**Q. You talked about how much that Chris played just tough, went for loose balls. But you've also been playing him the last few games a lot at that 4 position.**

JOHN CALIPARI: And he's been good.

**Q. What has he showed you there that's made you want to give him more time at that position?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, what I know is that he's someone that physically and athletically can do stuff not many players in the country can do. His skills are catching up to that. But you see him on a breakaway do a Ginóbili and step through and make it. Not charge the guy. Not put his shoulder down.

A month and a half ago he would have run the guy over and maybe blew out the official's knee, you know. But he did it. He's slowing down. We're playing a little different, which helps him. I mentioned that to all of you. When the game slows down it's better for him.

But I'm proud of him. I mean, he's doing everything he

needs to do to get better. Daimion, Sahvir -- you think about it. You got a lot of guys that are playing well and I would expect Oscar and Antonio to step back up and be where they were. Thanks, folks.

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