

# University of Kentucky Basketball Media Conference

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

## John Calipari

### Press Conference



Vanderbilt - 68, Kentucky - 66

JOHN CALIPARI: In the second half they never gave in. We were short handed, but no excuse, let's go. The last minute of the half you could tell I went crazy. Again, because I've done this 40 years and I know how momentum shifts because of lack of concentration, lack of execution, and all of a sudden we go from up to down four. What? What just happened?

And if you look at those plays, we'll show our team, that shifted everything. And that happens in a basketball game. Then you say, did that need to happen? Did this need to happen? Is that what you were supposed to do? But, I'm going to say it again, we never gave up, just kept fighting.

Now, when you shoot the way we shot today, you're going to lose a lot of games. We got open shots, a lot of misses. We missed some free throws down the stretch that could have done some things. But I told them, Guys, you're missing open shots, just keep playing, you're fine. Just, somebody's got to make a shot or two. And we made one or two.

But we needed the last timeout, and I'm happy I saved it because we got a chance to win the game on the last shot. We could have never gotten that off if we didn't have a timeout. Had to call the other timeout to get us organized because we're playing without a point guard. I was having Jacob bring it up. No excuse. And what did they do? They got up in us. That's what they did. Their thing was, you know, they don't have a guard, go play, just go nuts on 'em.

But I thought the only way we were making a basket was throwing it to Oscar. So that's what we did.

Questions?

**Q. The obvious question with fans is how is Cason? And the follow-up to that is how do you go forward without a point guard if you have to for awhile?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, first of all, Cason, they X-rayed. He's fine. It's not swelled. So we'll see. I'm hoping that he'll be okay for Saturday, but I don't know.

And if not, we got to figure out how we do it against pressure. We had to go with the guys we went with. We went with some other guys, and they just were getting the ball taken from 'em.

Again, it's the energy, the level of the game, how hard the other team -- you got to play that hard. You got to know they're coming after the ball. So I thought we did some -- we only had 11 turnovers. You ready? We only had 11 without a point guard. You ready? We only had six assists. So now I say to you, was that because we missed every shot or we were playing without a point guard.

I would tell you a lot of 'em were shots we could have made and now all of a sudden you get 13 assists and 11 turns, you're in a different position.

Yes.

**Q. I was going to ask, the three assists in the first half, only 11 made baskets, that was before Cason went down. Was that just misses or were you happy with the shots you were getting? Were you happy with the ball movement?**

JOHN CALIPARI: The ball wasn't moving like it had been. So now we had guys, everybody catching it and bouncing it and let me -- we got to get back. We'll be able to show them on the tape. They're capable of playing the way we're trying to play.

So, yeah, we got good looks then too. If you go back and look, there were some open shots, and we, 3-19 from the three and how many of 'em were open? I mean, they weren't contested. We were taking 'em, we took what they gave us.

So they're not machines, they're not robots, they're not going to make shots every night. You want to win anyway, and we almost did. You want to win it anyway when you're not making shots.



**Q. Are you confident that at some point you'll get Sahvir back and obviously Antonio kind of thrown in emergency tonight. He played some at Illinois State at point guard. With time to actually prepare for that mentally, do you think he does a little better?**

JOHN CALIPARI: My guess right now, and what the doctors told me, it's going to be a couple weeks, or at least that's what they think. So this is who we have right now.

**Q. Is there anything that you kind of want to leave the guys with? With it being senior night, kind of the last game here at Rupp this season, anything you kind of want to leave 'em?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I wanted to leave 'em with a win, so I'm disappointed for them. But I'm going to tell you again, we fought and did everything we could to give ourselves a chance to win. We just needed to make one more shot.

But give Vanderbilt credit. When they came back at the end of the half, it was a totally different game, that last minute of the half, and that's basketball. They made some tough threes. They, again, like always, there's a bank three that makes at the shot clock. You know, it's what happens. But again, I'm proud that these guys fought because the game got away and then all of a sudden we had to fight like heck to give ourselves a chance, and we did.

**Q. How do you rate the job that Vanderbilt's done with Stackhouse this year? From the first time you saw them until now, what's different about them and why?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He's got 'em playing physical, he's got 'em playing in a way they have to play, but he'll have to adjust again. They told me about the big guy, Robbins. I feel sick to my stomach when they said it because the kid's been through so much. But he'll have to adjust again and he will. I mean, they have won some good games and they have beaten some good teams, and we're one of 'em.

**Q. Of the 59 shots you guys took 30 were from mid-range. Is that what you guys were wanting to do --**

JOHN CALIPARI: We had 19 threes. We took 19 threes. And we wanted the mid-range shots, yes, because that's how they play and it's one of the things we do so well. We missed a bunch of 'em today, just missed a bunch. That's a shot we make. As a matter of fact, we play to get those too.

**Q. Last game C.J. only had seven minutes. Tonight he was kind of thrown into a larger role with Cason going out. How do you feel like he played and adjusted to**

**that larger role?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He fights. He fights. He's smart. We had some breakdowns where it was a guard-to-guard screen and we didn't switch, and the guy drove for a layup. Like, are you kidding me?

But again, the only thing I want to tell you is, all I kept talking about, and I said it at halftime, I think they made this game bigger than it needed to be because we're in good shape right now. I told 'em, This game is us learning about ourselves. Don't worry about the result.

But I think you start missing free throws, you start missing open shots, we got to do this. No, it ain't that time yet. And so we had played and chasing and playing and moving the ball and knowing how -- and we kind of got away from it in the first half. But I think we got back to it. But like I said, we had to play one way to finish the game to give ourselves a chance to win and that was throw it to Oscar.

**Q. Given sort of how you guys have played and you talked about people trying to talk you out of the tournament, and you played your way probably into the tournament, how important was it that you built up a little bit of cushion when you have an unforeseen thing that happens like this?**

JOHN CALIPARI: You know, it's amazing. I think there were 17 teams, somebody told me, in the top 25 that were unranked at some point. I mean, this thing is -- look, we've done what we needed to do. We got one more game left. We got our tournament left. Now, let's just finish it, and then let's go to the next. I mean, we're fine. I mean, this team has done things and played ways. And we're short handed and now we're really short handed and still, I mean, we're going to be fine. We're fine. I said it before, we still can write our own story. We're on that path. I said it before when everybody was losing their minds. We'll write our own story. We don't have to deal with that.

This one, you would like to have won it, but we didn't. But we fought like heck. We learned some things. You're playing without any point guard. Now we got to say, okay, what if we have to do this again. What do we do. What works, what doesn't work. How do we get into offense without the guy having to bounce it three times. I mean, you know, we'll have to look at it and see.

So, but it was a good win for Vandy. You got to give 'em credit now. Don't act like we played awful. We missed shots. They guarded us. They were physical. But again, I want to tell you, we didn't turn them over. They were playing it for the last shot. The one that banked in, come

on, plugged and went in, rolled in. It's only against us that stuff happens. So, but we'll move on now. We have a practice tomorrow. Really not doing much film. We'll do something on Friday and get on the plane and get down there and play a terrific Arkansas team in a building I would imagine that's sold out.

Let me say this: The fans literally carried us today. The fans in that building carried us and got us back into the game and gave us a chance to win. Our fans. And it was another unbelievable crowd and spirited. It's great to see the ovations all the kids got.

Ellen being out there for Sahvir was great. I talked to him earlier. He was still groggy when I talked to him so I knew at 3 o'clock there was no way he was going to be able to come down here. But we'll go from there. Thanks, folks.

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