

# State Farm Champions Classic: Kentucky vs Kansas

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Kentucky Wildcats

John Calipari

Adou Thiero

Reed Sheppard

Press Conference



Kansas - 89, Kentucky - 84

JOHN CALIPARI: Yes? Questions?

**Q. How impressed were you with the poise that you guys showed there were some things that obviously went wrong early on, getting behind and missing shots but seemed like they, nothing really rattled this group.**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, the end of the game, missing free throws, missing some shots, broke down a little bit. We got to get better at finishing. But a young team learns that. But what I was proud of is they fought. That's a huge team. They had to fight to survive. We got down early and it looked like what everybody said would happen, we're going to get smashed. Then all of a sudden we're up and then there's one play at the end of the half we're up 10, throws, you know, like why did you do that? Now they come down make a three and it changes. Got back up, but, again, in those, we were trying to post the ball. We didn't. Guys were dancing and you know just throw it in there. I was proud of 'em. Rob went on a run. Other guys that didn't play well offensively rebounded and defended pretty good. I thought Reed was good, Jordan Burks was really good. Whatever minutes he had, he was a plus 19 and it was all based on energy and effort and all those kind of things.

**Q. In a game like this especially early in the season how do you balance riding hot hands versus knowing even when they're not making shots, I'm going to need D.J., I'm going to need Justin?**

JOHN CALIPARI: In the game, I'm playing the game as it's unfolding. I'm not even thinking of somebody's ego at that point. They're going to have to grow up fast to be here.

**Q. Took 38 threes, I'm guessing that wasn't totally the game plan. Is that just the way things developed?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well, we had four at the end where we were trying to post the ball and I think three of the four were air balls. We're a young team. Adou is young. He's 19. So you might as well say he's a freshman. He didn't play much last year. So you're out there with a bunch of young guys. I got to do a really good job of showing them how to finish games. Then part of it is who should be in when you're finishing the game. Like I got to figure that out. Like if you're going to miss five straight shots at the end of the game you can't be in then. Somebody else has got to be in. If you're not defending, if you're, you know, again, we had another game against the No. 1 team in the country that's physical, deserves to be No. 1, we have eight turnovers. A couple of 'em were, he got his arm grabbed. Did you get your arm grabbed on that?

REED SHEPPARD: Yeah.

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, I thought you did. But there was a lot of good. I mean, we were, we didn't have the 20 minutes -- by fouling you knew what we were doing by running. We got to 'em. And then we start fouling. So what happens when you foul? And they were not good fouls. Like why did you grab? Why did you reach in? If you were in bad position, let 'em score because the game keeps going. Now you're trying to run people down until you can get some break outs and they got to call timeouts and that's to your advantage. But we're learning. This was, you know, none of us are happy that we lost the game. I'm not happy. I got work to do to help them finish games off, figure out who needs to be in at the end of those games. But to come in this environment with this, you know, everything that goes with this, the bells and whistles, and they perform like they did, I couldn't ask for much more other than make some free throws and a shot down the stretch and win.

**Q. You got three guys who are side lined right now. How did that complicate your effort to defend Hunter tonight without those other bodies?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, you know, one guy's misery is another guy's opportunity. So Jordan did well. Adou did well. They're taking advantage. So when these guys

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come back, we'll figure it out. The good news is they're basketball players too. They're not just big guys. They can pass it, they can shoot it, they can bounce it. They may be seven foot two, but they're basketball players. So the stuff that we're doing with Tre out on the floor, they can do too.

**Q. You had another former Wildcat come in the locker room, John Wall after the game. Did he have a message?**

JOHN CALIPARI: Yeah, he was good. When you're not making shots you got to do something else to help your team win basically is what he said. So it was great to see him. He's just loyal and, you know, appreciates the opportunity he had here and mother, his mother loved it. She was the best. She would come in, after he was gone she would come in. So...

**Q. I know you mentioned a couple times how good Adou was tonight. Could you expand a little more. His first career double double. Almost had a double double in the first half?**

JOHN CALIPARI: He fought. He played hard. He subbed himself. I had one guy that refused to sub himself and missed three shots and turned the ball over. You're exhausted, come out. It's not high school. He subbed himself. He subbed himself three or four times. To play the way we're trying to play, to play fast and random, you have to be in great shape and the second thing is you got to sub yourself when you feel winded. But he played. Played above the rim, went and got balls, was physical. He was good.

**Q. As a follow-up to that, I know with any number you can kind of spin it in I way you want, but isn't it kind of shocking to see that he had the worst plus minus on the team?**

JOHN CALIPARI: I saw that.

**Q. Doesn't make any sense to me.**

JOHN CALIPARI: Well let me say why. Because the start of the game he was in and it was a bad start. Then there was a stretch in the second half where we were even and then they came and made a run at us and he was in during that time. So that's why he was a minus 20 something. Then Jordan was a plus 19. So you look at Jordan and say, why was that? He just played with unbelievable effort and changed the game. He and this guy here, Reed, they walked in and the game changed. So we got a good group. I enjoy going in the gym every day trying to figure out how I can help each of 'em. They want to win. We got dawgs. You can't be young like we are, my guess is we're

the youngest team in the country. That would be my guess, because -- well, you got Antonio Reeves, but everybody else is 19, 18, they're all young. You can't win with a group like that unless they are dawgs. Like, you know, they will battle, they will bite, they will go in and they're not going to just give up and let you do what you want. So, all right. Do you want to ask these guys questions? Go right ahead.

**Q. For both of you, Cal talked yesterday about just excited to see how I guys handled the moment and kind of not think about the moment just kind of play free. Do you guys feel like did you that and how do you guys feel like you handled this first big moment of the season.**

ADOU THIERO: Our main mindset coming into this game was to go out there and just have fun. Just enjoy the game, go out, play together as a team, fight and just have fun playing against them. I think we did a pretty good job of that in the first half and then I think that's when the age came into everything. We started looking at each other, looking around, trying to figure everything out and we should have just kept having fun the whole game. Yeah, it could have been a different turnout.

REED SHEPPARD: Like he said, coming in it was just have fun and enjoy playing. I think we were doing that in the first half. We were flying. Then Kansas went on a little run and Kansas is a good team, has really good players, some of the best players in the nation. So this was a good game for us, I think, just we'll build from it and just continue to get better and work and practice and keep competing and keep fighting and just keep getting better for the next games like this.

**Q. Somebody that knows what it's like to step out there as a freshman at Kentucky what were your impressions of the way that Reed and Rob were able to perform against Kansas in game three?**

ADOU THIERO: They definitely came out and did their thing. We were down a little bit at the beginning, they came in the game and changed all the energy and everything. Him, Rob, Jordan. They all went out, fought, got stops. I think we got three kills that's what we call it, we got three kills in a row. That's how the whole game flipped and we were able to get ahead from there.

**Q. How difficult was it to deal with Hunter Dickinson and how much talking was he doing out there?**

ADOU THIERO: He's a good player. He was able to get to his spots, get in the post, go up and finish it. He was talking a decent bit of smack but it's part of the game so it's

all love.

**Q. First off for you, how much confidence does this give you to have that kind of performance against the No. 1 team in the country?**

ADOU THIERO: It feels good to have this type of performance, but when you don't walk away with a W it doesn't really feel the same.

**Q. Reed, obviously I know the desperation kind of heave there at the end was not what was drawn up for you guys to do. Can you take me through what the play was supposed to be before that all unfolded the way it did?**

REED SHEPPARD: Coach drew up a good play, we were trying to either get a corner three or Antonio to get a good shot at it. Coach drew up a good play and Kansas guarded it well. We just had to give it to try and then Tre made a good play happen and I missed the shot. That's part of it. Coach drew up a good play and just Kansas just guarded it well.

**Q. Coach explained there why that number was what it was but was it frustrating for you when you were out there and Kansas just kept going on runs when you were out there?**

ADOU THIERO: Going on runs is part of the game. A team will go on their run and you'll go on yours. Whole time we were just trying to run the floor, get the ball up, try and score in transition. But Kansas was able to defend that better in the second half, but we'll learn from it, we're a young group, we'll get over it.

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