

# CBS Sports Classic

Saturday, December 19, 2015

## John Calipari

## Marcus Lee

### Kentucky Wildcats

Ohio State - 74, Kentucky - 67

**Q. Marcus, there was a lot of pressure on Skal coming into this year, people talking about him being a potential Number 1 pick. It hasn't turned out as far as he would hope. Do you feel like he's pressing at all right now?**

MARCUS LEE: You forget he's a freshman. He's going to do freshman things, like all basketball players. Here at Kentucky, he has to speed things up and figure things out quicker. Once he starts figuring out the flow of Kentucky basketball and what he has to do for us to win, he'll be fine.

**Q. Marcus, the game had a lot of wild swings where one team had a lot of momentum than the other. What do you attribute that to?**

MARCUS LEE: The game of basketball. Do you want to be one sided? That would be kind of boring. That's just how basketball is played. The person down doesn't stay down the whole game. It's just big basketball players battling.

**Q. Marcus, if you take something positive out of this, what Jamal was able to do to sort of ignite you guys in the second half, is that what you guys need him to be? And maybe is this a coming out party for him, do you think?**

MARCUS LEE: That's exactly what we need him to do. We need that fire at all points of the game. We can't light it under him and then he goes, just so we can start going. We need him to start picking it up earlier and getting into it earlier.

**Q. Marcus, 30 percent shooting in the second half, is that what ultimately led to your loss tonight?**

MARCUS LEE: They came into the game fired up and made a whole lot of threes and made a whole lot of buckets, and we just couldn't get into the flow.

**Q. Marcus, it seemed like you guys were fighting and scrapping and diving for loose balls and rebounds. Yet there wasn't much of a reward. At the other end offensively shots weren't falling. Did it feel that way to you? How frustrating does that get to be?**



MARCUS LEE: The game as a whole was just frustrating. Seeing our team dive to the ball and trying to win the game and not worrying about anything else is a good thing coming out of the game, a good thing that we've learned to battle and that's something we've always worked on. So that's always a plus.

**Q. Marcus, with Murray in the second half, I think he made seven threes. How much of this was called plays, exact called plays, and how much of it was someone just feeling it?**

MARCUS LEE: Once somebody feels it, we understand it immediately. If we don't see it, Ty will see it or Coach Cal will see it. We go back to it over and over again. It's like if Skal's having a great game, we go straight to him.

**Q. With Louisville coming to Rupp next weekend, how do you regroup for that big game coming up?**

MARCUS LEE: Louisville is always a big game for us. It's in-state rivalry. We have a really long way to go from our goal, and Louisville is just another game, another step for us to get to.

**Q. Marcus, if you could take stock of the team right now, what are some of the things you like about what you're seeing and what are some of the things you guys need to do to grow in the next two, three, four weeks to be where you want to be by March?**

MARCUS LEE: Right now we're learning fast. We need to learn a whole lot faster. This is Kentucky. Yeah, he's a freshman. Yeah, we're pretty new at this. Alex is coming off an injury. I haven't played very much. We need to learn a whole lot faster and pick it up to get to where we need to be in March.

**Q. Marcus, how do you think the freshmen are going to handle kind of setbacks? In the past, freshmen have gotten off to such great starts. Do you think these early losses can help them?**

MARCUS LEE: I mean, freshmen go through it differently. Not all freshmen are the same. Once they get pushed through diversity, they have to start figuring it out. Right now we're still trying to figure that out.

**Q. Marcus, just defensively, specifically, both your performance and the team's. Besides execution generally, what's one thing you want to be better at**

**next weekend?**

MARCUS LEE: We really picked up defensively-wise in the second half, and we picked up the aggression, and we were able to be the aggressor. That's something we'll really try to do here, especially with our guards and us being able to switch a lot of the pick-and-roll. We just need to play to our strengths.

**Q. John, do you have any concerns with this team or challenges with this team that you haven't had with previous teams while specifically at Kentucky?**

COACH CALIPARI: Well, we still have to learn how to win. We had the plays. First of all, we didn't start the game. They were the aggressor, and they came after us.

So you're down -- the way we ended the half wasn't winning basketball. We took a bad shot. They make a three. Fifteen seconds to go, you take one shot, and the kid came down and went nuts. Threw it, five seconds and another three. Now you're down 12 instead of 6. That's not winning basketball.

Again, these guys have just played basketball in the past. Now we've got to teach them how to win and what it means defensively, what it means rebounding the ball. I mean, late there were three, four rebounds. You bring that in, we're right there. We have our chance. You don't bring it in, they lay it in, and it's an and-one or whatever, and you don't have a chance to win.

We fought in the second half and did some good things. We're a ways away. I've been saying it. I thought Skal was better today, but when the game got a little rough in the end, I just didn't want him to -- I just went with Alex and Marcus Lee.

But you know it's going good. You foul a kid on purpose because he's shooting 28 percent and makes two, swishes both. That's when you look down and say, this is about done, boys.

But give them credit. They played. They made a bunch of threes to start the game. Five of them were tough. NBA, guy's hanging on him, and a guy makes it. That happens against us. Guys have bigger muscles and they start making plays they don't make all year. You've got to give it to them. They outrebounded us, out toughed us, beat us 50-50.

We probably should have done some things in the first half playing that pick-and-roll. We did a better job in the second half. That's not on the team. That's on me. It's just disappointing. I want them to be farther along than they are, but we're where we are right now.

**Q. Sort of a two-parter on Jamal. One, your impressions of watching him, what he did scoring 27 points in the second half?**

COACH CALIPARI: Again, let me start. The way he started the game, I had to take him out twice because you're not being aggressive. You're just coming down and dribbling and throwing it. We're throwing it ahead for you to score, and you're throwing it to a point guard underneath the basket with a 7-footer on him. Excuse me.

Now in the second half, he got going, where we're down. We need to play winning basketball where we're up, taking good shots, taking care of the ball, you pick up fumbles. You pick up fumbles. You don't try to advance it. You don't try to go on the floor like I'm going to throw a lefty hook pass. Bring him in. He's got a lot to learn, but he's really talented. He can do some stuff with that ball. We've just got to get him playing right.

I thought Isaiah took three or four shots he had no chance of making. They got blocked. I mean, he had no chance. Why did you do that? Why did you -- again, not playing winning basketball.

Now, without Isaiah, it's not close. He made every tough rebound. He came up with tough plays. But there's the guts of the game. We just don't do it for 40 minutes. This is like probably the statement of statements. We play like freshmen.

**Q. You just sort of answered the second part of my question. First to the other part, you talked about wanting to know who you have that can make those plays at the end of the game. Is it good to know that can come out of Jamal Murray when you're in a situation like that?**

COACH CALIPARI: Yes, absolutely. Another team, they're playing well because of them, not us. Like we start right, we're doing it right, we're playing, and they're executing a little bit better. They're making more free throws. You get down, you've got to make those kinds of plays. I like the fact that we didn't give up. Again, when we had it, we missed front end of a 1 and 1, almost shot an air ball. Then we don't come up with two rebounds. You've got to bring those in. That's winning plays.

Then there was a loose ball that we were trying to advance instead of just grab the ball, we're good. It's our ball. We're fine. A tie up was ours. But then again, I'm coaching young kids, and I'm being tough on them and challenging them and happy Skal did better. Still a ways away. I'll tell you, he does the jump hook, everybody's happy. The next time, he shoots a fadeaway. Shoot the jump hook again. Shoot the jump

hook. Learning, that's all part of the process.

**Q. John, you said you felt Skal was better. Do you feel like this helps his confidence today?**

COACH CALIPARI: Yeah, just, like again, there were two plays, two rebounds, and a missed lefty late, and we're trying to win the game. We don't have time. We'll work on that later. But I thought he made strides today. He's been pretty good in practice, and he's making strides now.

**Q. John, when you talked about your team not being where they are, I guess the question is what's missing? Is it effort? Basketball intelligence? Something different?**

COACH CALIPARI: Freshmen.

**Q. What do they need to do?**

COACH CALIPARI: They're freshmen. They're going through this for the first time. They're learning what it takes to win. They're learning what it means to be tough. Tough doesn't mean you fight, you push, you swing. Tough means you play people before the play happens. Tough means, when you go in there and I have nothing, I'm not trying to make a fabulous play. I'm tough enough to know it's done. I'm throwing it back out. We're going to go again, which we did late. We did not early.

All that stuff is -- it's going to be through experience. I wish we were farther along than we are, but I've been saying it. I mean, when you don't come up with those 50-50 balls, especially when you're a veteran and you don't, now you're counting on freshmen to do it. That becomes even more of a challenge.

**Q. (Question on veterans needing to help teach those traits)?**

COACH CALIPARI: The older guys, Tyler is trying to do what he can do. Alex is coming off the injury.

I thought Marcus Lee, I thought, had a fabulous -- we would have been down 20 at the half if it wasn't for Marcus Lee. This is a combination of everything and us still trying to figure out how we need to play. We're still trying to look at us offensively and say how did we play? Second half, we shoot 60 percent, you say what did you do different? First half we shoot 30 percent, can't make a three, not close.

Did we do stuff that much different? Not really. I think a lot of it was we made stops. Then again, the end of the half, we stopped him for four straight minutes, couldn't make a basket.

**Q. Coach, Duke also lost today. Does this year look more wide open to you than some previous**

**years in college basketball where there's no dominant team and a bunch of teams could win it?**  
COACH CALIPARI: To be honest, I'm not following anything else or anybody else's score. I'm just trying to get my team right.

I would say that I know this: We're not as good as we were a year ago. It's pretty obvious. I still think we have a good enough team to do some good things. Just you must play to win. You must play to win. That means defensively you don't take chances. You come up with balls. You win 50-50 balls. You're ahead of the action.

On offense, you're making easy plays. You're creating different shots. You're offensive rebounding. If it's not there -- if it's a big time play, I'm either getting fouled, or I'm making this play. I'm not throwing a ball up that I have a 20 percent chance of making. That means you're going to lose.

When you come down and you throw a lefty leaner and just throw it, that's losing basketball. You get to that rim and get fouled or pass it to somebody else. That's all stuff we're still learning.

**Q. John, it seemed like your kids were throwing themselves on the floor, loose balls, going after rebounds, and yet there wasn't much of a reward at the other end offensively. How frustrating did that become?**

COACH CALIPARI: In the second half, I thought we -- we shot 60 percent in the second half, or 50. Is that us? Yeah, 52 percent in the second half. We did some good stuff.

When it became winning time -- say it again. You miss front end of the 1 and 1 and almost nick it for an air ball. You come down and have two rebounds you can get. You don't get it. You have a loose ball at half-court, all you have to do is pick it up, we're fine. We don't pick it up. We're trying to scramble to throw it to somebody. You didn't need to. Just pick the ball up. Just lay on your back and hold the ball. They tie us up, we can call a timeout, there's a lot of stuff. That kind of stuff adds up. Now all of a sudden -- especially when it's a one-bucket game.

A couple other plays that are slipping my mind that I talked to them about after. I just went down to seven, eight plays that were made -- you know, just can't make. We're good enough. We'll learn.

It's just now the schedule doesn't get any easier from this point, next game, next game, next game, you're in the league, you're in the league, you're on the road, and people smell blood, they'll come after us. That's

just how it is.

**Q. How much of this process has been psychological versus the mechanics of what they're doing? And the maturity process for them, how are you trying to get through to them teaching-wise, almost like a parent? I hear some of the things you're saying, and it's almost like you're trying to get through the things that are as much psychological as they are mechanical.**

COACH CALIPARI: They have to experience it. What's happened is we've talked about all this stuff, but they'll fight you a little bit because -- and I say this to kids all the time. What got you here is not going to get you to there. So things you were able to get away with that you think were impressive, but those things have to change if you're going to get to here as a player and just keep going.

Yes, some of it is mental. They must believe in themselves individually and believe in the team, and I think they do, but I think they get rattled at times, and that's just natural. I've coached a lot of freshmen, and it's a process.

It would have been nice for them to come out of the gate and play better to start the game and not look passive, not look -- you know, we were on our heels. We really were. And then they make some shots. Like I told them at halftime, I'm not worried about them making shots. I'm worried about how we ended the half.

So in the second half, they didn't make all those threes. That's just kind of how it goes. And we got back in it. But that ending of that half and those three or four plays, missed rebounds and loose ball, you don't get it, and it becomes intentional foul. Those are huge plays.

We're talking like six plays in the game. We're not a team that's going to beat people by 25. This isn't a year ago.

Merry Christmas, everybody.