

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 10, 2017

John Calipari Isaiah Briscoe De'Aaron Fox Edrice Adebayo Kentucky

Kentucky - 71, Georgia - 60

THE MODERATOR: We'll ask Coach Calipari for some general thoughts on the game. And then we'll take your questions just for the three student-athletes and excuse them back to the locker room and then finish up with Coach. Coach, would you begin?

COACH CALIPARI: The first game is always a hard one, especially when you're talking a good team, and, you know, Mark did just an unbelievable job all year. With Maten out, they still won. He comes back and they play here, and they deserve to be in the NCAA Tournament, I believe that.

Everybody thought well, they got to beat us. Why in our league is that the way it is? I mean, I think they deserve to be in, but obviously I'm not in the room.

I was happy with our guys defensively. Derek Willis is playing better and better. Had 11 rebounds. Bam had 10. Isaiah had 20. He could have had 30.

But I'll tell you, you know, it was the defense, the fight and, you know, which is what won the game for us.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take your questions for any of the student-athletes.

Q. Isaiah, as your Coach just said, you could have had 30. I thought you winced when he said that. With so much foul trouble in the first half particularly, do you feel a responsibility to carry the other guys?

ISAISH BRISCOE: Yeah, also, you know, we had Dom come off the bench and play big, Mike played big minutes, also. But yeah, just Coach put me in position to score, facilitate, and that's exactly what I was doing.



Q. Isaiah, the quick starts in both halves were key for really getting y'all started. After several games where you kind got off slow, how much of a focus was there on that to really kind of get things going?

ISAISH BRISCOE: Major focus. We wanted to come out with a lot of energy and press early and get the game to speed up. That was the emphasis all week in practice. I think we executed coming out today.

Q. This goes for all three players. Talk about how you guys stopped as a collective group, but J.J. Frazier hit 24, I believe, first game, 36 the second game. Tonight he had 12. That's major.

THE MODERATOR: Isaiah, take that first.

ISAISH BRISCOE: It was more just transition defense. You know, he's a good player and he likes to score in transition. So what we were trying to do is crowd him where he would distribute the ball up the court. And I think we did a good job at that and just playing collectively on defense as a team.

THE MODERATOR: Same for De'Aaron.

DE'AARON FOX: We tried to corral him in transition. We knew a big part of it was pick and roll. He killed us. He killed us last time on the pick and roll. We were able to execute. He still going to score. You can't completely shut him out. We did a much better job this game.

THE MODERATOR: Bam.

EDRICE ADEBAYO: They basically summed it up. We just try to corral him and keep him from getting in the paint. He's a good player, but we try to corral him and keep him from scoring.

Q. For De'Aaron and Isaiah, when Malik is struggling a knockdown shot, what is your mindset to kind of help the team get some offense in the backcourt?

DE'AARON FOX: Just to keep touching the paint, keeping swinging to him. If it's open, we're not going to tell him to not shoot the ball if he's wide open. Get to the lane. Sometimes somebody else has to make an outside shot. Malik won't have 30 points every game.

We both came up big, but next game it could definitely be Malik.

ISAISH BRISCOE: Malik is our scorer. Today he didn't have a good game. Our job -- our job is to get the ball in the paint, get touches and create open shots. Today Malik had a off day. Like De'Aaron said, tomorrow he can score in bunches or play how he usually play.

THE MODERATOR: Time for one more question.

Q. Isaiah, how could you describe your role now? What do you feel like you're doing differently in terms of rebounding, in terms of dishing out and your focus now?

ISAISH BRISCOE: Before every game K.P. tell me, you know, just make the game easy for others, and I go out and try to do just that. And my role on the team, I just want to be consistent. I'm not into the stats or anything like that. If I need to go rebound, I do whatever it takes for my team to win. I just try to go out there and make the game easier for my teammates.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll excuse you back to the locker room, fellas.

THE MODERATOR: Hands up. Questions for Coach Calipari.

Q. You've talked about the intensity that you wanted. How pleased were you with that beginning stretch where you -- I guess it took maybe about 10, 12 minutes to get a double-digit lead, but they just kept pushing and pushing.

COACH CALIPARI: This is a team that we need to rely on energy, and that is their job to get themselves ready to do that, and our job is to come up with a game plan and a plan B and plan C just in case you need it.

Their job is to just -- we are locked in. You tell us what we want, and we're going the fly around the court. I want them to play faster, get out and go, and we did it at times. When we did it, we put pressure on Georgia.

You know, teams have worked so hard on letting back that sometimes then we almost accept that they're going to be back every time, and you can't. If they're back there, okay, we'll play.

This team has learned how to play down 15. They've learned how to play and grind it out, up 15. We just -- there are times we're inconsistent, and that's based on 18, 19-year-olds. You may look at me and say, "Why doesn't Bam just catch it and shoot it in there?" Why didn't anybody ask him that question? Like we work everyday just catch that thing, jump over the guy. If he's laying on you, he cannot jump. Just jump over

him. He had a couple offensive fouls. Again, he's 18, 19. This is all new.

I'm really pleased with Isaiah Briscoe. This -- he missed like four layups and just trying to get him to accelerate. When he does, he makes them. When he doesn't, they don't get blocked. If you're wondering why he gets them blocked, when he slows down before he shoots a layup, he gets blocked. When he explodes and accelerates through the layup, makes it.

So, he did it today and he was good with the ball. He ran the team. I got two point guards. Malik will tell you I have three, I disagree. But I think we do have two. And Dom if he needs to.

Q. I wonder if you can expand a little bit about Isaiah and his evolution as the season has gone along, how he's dealt with the high profile freshmen he shares the backcourt with.

COACH CALIPARI: Here's -- when you're in this program, you got to worry about being the best version of you and not try to compare to anybody else in the program because every player is different.

What Malik has is a will to win. There are areas that he's got to get better, shooting the ball, making free throws. That you can get better at. If a guy doesn't have a will to win or a fight, he's never going to be that guy.

I will tell anybody that if he's on your team, you got a team that's trying to win like Tyler Ulis. Everybody said about Tyler last year, they said, "Y'all are crazy." I don't care what his size is. He wants to win every time he plays, and he plays to win.

Isaiah Briscoe is exactly the same way. He can defend, rebound, he can create shots. We all forget he's only a sophomore, like we act like he's a senior, like he's the veteran. Great. He just turned 20. I mean, you know -- but he does a good job, and these guys know in the foxhole, dude is coming out fighting, he ain't running. He's not running. We're in this foxhole together. I know one guy is fighting, and it's him.

Q. John, if you can talk about building the resolve, the process of building the resolve, and in particular in the second half when they get, I think, within like 10, 11 points and they go on another spurt and Isaiah, I think, had like a steal and made a layup to get another free throw.

COACH CALIPARI: Post-season is about being able to make it hard for the other team. The second day in post-season is you got to be able to score. If you think you can score 60 points in post-season game and win,

you better hope that other team can't make shots. But the problem is if they're in the tournament, they probably can. So you're going to be a team that can make 70, 80 points because they may make 70, 80, you want a chance to win.

But at the end of the day, it's how hard can we make it on the other team to score. You know, we were pretty locked in, but again we left our feet three or four times that led to baskets or fouls. That's why we got in foul trouble. We had guys leave their feet on guys that we were saying, let him shoot it. If you're late, let them shoot it. Don't leave your feet. We still did.

Those are the things you want to kind of clean up this week. You got to get that stuff cleaned up so you're not -- you know, you're doing what you're supposed to and don't give hope to that other team.

Q. Coach, you obviously can't coach Malik to shoot it better, but what kind of advice do you tell him after he's 3 of 17 his last two games?

COACH CALIPARI: First of all, I was trying to get him to the foul line. And he did, he missed those, too. Then late you noticed we threw him the ball because I was trying to get him fouled again, because there's only person that can work through that, him.

The second thing I told him that I said in one of the late huddles, Malik can't make a shot, a free throw, a layup or a dunk. Now, my question is, what are you doing to help us win anyway? What are you doing rebounding? What are you doing on defense? That's what a player needs to do.

Sometimes you're not on your A game. You're struggling. When you struggle, you got to do other things to help your team win.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.