

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Arkansas vs Kansas

Thursday, March 20, 2025
Providence, Rhode Island, USA
Amica Mutual Pavilion

Kansas Jayhawks
Coach Bill Self
AJ Storr

Zeke Mayo

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us Coach.
Opening thoughts on tonight's game.

BILL SELF: Well, I thought it was a good basketball game if you're a fan. I thought we tried really hard and the zone kind of gave us a chance there in the second half, but we got off to terrible starts to start the game and to start the second half and I don't know what it was. We finished the game up three with 3:30, something like that, and three out of four possessions, we turned it over. So we did a lot of the damage ourself but their length bothered us all night long. We had open passes and couldn't pass over them and they got steals or deflections off of plays that could potentially be layups for us.

We fought hard and, of course, AJ had his best game of the season and Zeke was great throughout. Disappointing but certainly, I thought, we gave a great effort.

THE MODERATOR: Anything out there for the student-athletes?

Q. AJ, how does a performance like this and a couple of these performances you have had late in the year affect your confidence moving forward and your college career going into the pros?

AJ STORR: I don't know. I'm really just thinking about the loss. Shout out to all the seniors that played their last game out there. Thankful for those guys. I'm just looking to work hard this summer.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else? Going once, going twice. Fellas, thank you.



Take questions for Coach Self.

Q. I was curious, is there any update on KJ's status? How significant was that not having him down the stretch there?

BILL SELF: I would have to go back and look at it but he's got an achilles injury. We're hoping for the best tomorrow. I'm not sure it's going to be great news, though. He got the rebound, came out on it. I think we had the numbers and then he went down and I don't know exactly how much time was left, but he and Juan, more so than anybody because they have been here the longest with me, but that's ten years of spending most of every day with them. They're like sons to me and it's one thing to lose the game but to see him potentially lose a year on top of the game, you know, that's a pretty big blow.

Say what you want to about those two kids, they're winners and they compete every day. It's just disappointing to have anybody go out that way.

Q. Coach, you were up three points about 3:00 left in the game. They sped you guys up and it seemed after they sped you guys up, it was kind of hard to get back into your offensive flow. When they sped you guys up, do you think that kind of threw you guys off momentum?

BILL SELF: Yeah. I'm not sure it was because they sped us up. We're running a simple little backdoor play for Juan and Hunt just made a bad play. And we were trying to through a duck in to Hunt and I think Juan got sped up on that one. Then we tried to run a 1-4 high and it wasn't there. We made the pass anyway, so I guess technically you could say it looked like it was sped up. I don't think it was. I think it was just we made some poor decisions there when it counted the most.

Q. Bill, last season you had taken the most losses you ever had, Kansas when it was even more. As the senior class exits, I know you have Darryn Peterson coming in. From a roster-building standpoint, what adjustments do you anticipate making to get KU back to more of where you had been for a majority of your career there?

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BILL SELF: Yeah, that's a fair question. I think it's a fair question that in some ways is an unrealistic question, though. If I'm not mistaken, no matter what you do in life, there's going to be some ups and downs and we just haven't had very many downs, to be honest with you. The last two years, we were such a beat up team at the end, we probably didn't have much of a chance with our injuries to McCullar and Hunt wasn't healthy. This year we don't have that excuse. This year our roster was good enough to be competitive, but it probably wasn't the roster it needed to be to be talked about in a way that the best teams in America are talked about.

So we've got to reevaluate on how we do things and you can't afford misses, but I will say this: In today's time, there's going to be schools that do a great job, but still there's an element of luck involved, I think more now than there was even before. You can go after the kids that you get a great bargain on. You get a good deal on it and all that stuff but it doesn't matter unless they fit in and can help you win. We've got to do a better job of evaluating the portal but I'm happy with the roster we had. It just didn't turn out to be the team that we had hoped it was, but still yet going into last year, I would have taken that roster every day and then I don't think we really, with Elmarko tearing his patellar tendon and Shak not being available to us, I don't think we had our best team to make a push at it.

Q. What was the message in the locker room to the guys who aren't seniors about trying to bounce back next year, if there was one?

BILL SELF: To be honest with you, there wasn't a message tonight. We had a kid in there who was really hurting with his family. I think the message was guys, proud of your effort. You guys did what we asked you to do. We appreciate everything, but now is not the time to talk about that stuff. Let's worry about your teammate right now.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time, Coach, appreciate it.

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