

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

Kansas Jayhawks

Coach Bill Self

Nicolas Timberlake

KJ Adams Jr.

Media Conference

Kansas 93, Samford 89

THE MODERATOR: Joining us is Kansas.

We'll start with the press conference with an opening statement from Coach Self.

BILL SELF: Yes, we're relieved, excited and proud to get an opportunity to advance. I thought Samford was great. I've never played against anybody that there's never a break in the action. They're always pressuring in some way, shape or form. Of course, the way they shot the second half was pretty much incredible.

Proud of our guys, and of course these two guys really stepped up and played great.

THE MODERATOR: We'll now open it up to questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Nic, your KU career high, how do you feel about that? Were you fouled on that breakaway?

NICOLAS TIMBERLAKE: I was definitely fouled open the breakaway. I think it started this morning at shootaround. I was feeling pretty good. It just carried over into the game.

Q. In the second half they were able to shoot quite a few three-pointers, make them. What kind of, specifically, troubles did their pressure and their press cause for you?

KJ ADAMS JR.: They're just a really fast team. They like to push the ball a lot. Got us off balance on a lot of plays.



Shot the ball really quickly. I think they did a good job in transition, pulling up a lot of threes when they were open.

NICOLAS TIMBERLAKE: Kind of what KJ said. They definitely tried to do that in the second half. Just got to keep ahead on the ball.

Q. You were up 22 in the second half. They got it to one. Describe the feeling of trying to be resilient during that.

KJ ADAMS JR.: Yeah, we're in March Madness now. A lot of crazy stuff happens. But when you are not disciplined in some plays like we were down the stretch, it can hurt you. We made some big plays to stop that from happening.

NICOLAS TIMBERLAKE: It definitely helps, too, having all the veterans here. Hunt's been in the tournament before. KJ and Juan have gone the furthest you can. Having these veteran leaders. Myself, I haven't been here before, but I've played enough games in my college career that you just have to think next play.

Q. Coach, like you said, you respect Samford in this game. What you thought overall they were doing, the comeback that they had, what they gave to your team, your reflection on that.

BILL SELF: Well, I thought that's my first experience with Bucky ball. I'd as soon not play against it again for a while.

It's a hard game for us with very little depth. You have to play guys the entire game. We knew it's going to be like that. There's just never a break in the action where you can catch your breath.

First half we should have been up more than 10 the way I thought we played, better than to be up more than 10; the second half, when we got out ahead, then there's no question they were the dominant team after that. I think we played kind of not to lose and they played in attack mode. I thought they were great.

Our ball screen defense was obviously not any good. They had a guy go 4-4 from three that's 6 of 26 for the year.



They picked on us with Hunt guarding the five man.

Contrary to what the gentleman asked earlier, second half we took care of the ball. We only had six turnovers. We had 12 the first half.

We actually did some good things. What we couldn't do, we couldn't guard the arc. To get outscored 30 points beyond the arc and still win a game is pretty remarkable. We certainly can't let that happen moving forward, to have a chance.

Q. What did you think of the crowd? Seemed like at times it was almost a road game?

BILL SELF: Seemed like (laughter)? God almighty. It doesn't get this loud in our league.

Q. What did you think of the way they were cheering for the other team?

KJ ADAMS JR.: I thought it was awesome. I thought it was awesome they brought this environment to this game. To play down, to play with four minutes left with that crowd going like that, can't get any better than that. That's what you dream for when you come here.

NICOLAS TIMBERLAKE: I wasn't sure what to expect for them being on the East Coast. They definitely brought a crew with them. It definitely got loud a couple times, for sure.

Q. KJ, 39 minutes, obviously not easy minutes tonight. How is the fatigue level?

KJ ADAMS JR.: Obviously, a little tired. I bet after a couple ice baths and Theragun, I'll feel good tomorrow.

Q. What was the difference tonight having Coach Self back this year?

KJ ADAMS JR.: It was great having him here this time. Coach Robs did a good job, of course, last season. It's great having him here with all the coaching staff fully present.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse the student-athletes and continue with questions for Coach Self.

Q. Your sense of relief? A lot going against you. The broader feeling of winning this game?

BILL SELF: Yeah, I think matchups in the tournament matter a lot more than where you're seeded. That's played out to be true throughout today. I think there's been a lot of

things happen today in the tournament that has been a little funky. This game obviously could have gone the other way, so we feel really, really fortunate.

As a coach, you look at them and you say, Okay, they're going to play 12 guys, and they're going to put two guys on one and try to deny him the ball, how is he going to play 40 minutes when they do that?

We were fortunate. Played out a little bit of foul trouble. How would we know that Hunt would get 19 and 20 after separating his shoulder? There were some good things that happened, but there was also some really non-basketball IQ plays that occurred as well that you got to eliminate those.

We're fortunate, thankful. But certainly know that we played a team that under any circumstance they could give us all we wanted just because of the way they play.

Q. This game had just about everything. What did you learn about your team tonight? What can you bring to the round of 32 matchup against Gonzaga?

BILL SELF: I think I learned that you're up 22, you should win the game. But when they cut it to 1, we actually played some of our better ball down the stretch. That was good.

I'm proud of our guys. We had some guys come through that haven't been as big a contributor. Nic Timberlake hasn't been able to do much of anything this year. For him to be able to start and get 19, that was great.

To play Gonzaga, I got to study tape more, although I've watched them play just about every opportunity I can, if I can stay up past midnight our time. Of course, love Mark and the job he's done. So much respect.

The way that I saw their first half today is they had a lot of different guys make threes. If we can't defend the arc better than that, it will not be a fun day.

I think Nic actually thought Samford brought all those people today. I'll educate him, they were Gonzaga fans, later on (smiling).

Q. Five years ago Bucky was a high school coach. Can that work? 40 years old, a younger coach. Do you see that working at the next level?

BILL SELF: Why can't it work? The thing about it is with coaching, where guys get a little bit out of whack is when they start coaching what they don't really believe in. He believes in this. When you believe in something, it's much easier to get your players to buy into it, too.

I don't know why he can't sustain this. I don't know their roster, all their ages, things like that. When you get to a little bit higher level, sometimes it's harder to press because the guards are so good that you're going against.

Like in our league, when we're healthy, you go play Houston, they got Cryer and Shead down there, nobody presses those guys. Guards will just break it.

I think it may have to be adjusted a little bit maybe at a level where maybe there's more marquee perimeter players. But today was a perfect game for him to do that because we were just playing with one ball handler. It was good strategy to do that against us, for sure.

I shouldn't say one ball handler, but one primary handler.

Q. There's a pretty short turnaround from tonight to your start time on Saturday.

BILL SELF: Do we know what time we're playing yet?

Q. 10:46 a.m. I'm sorry, you have the 1:15 game. It's a short turnaround. How do you deal with that with so many of your guys playing such heavy minutes? What do you think of the turnaround?

BILL SELF: I mean, I can't get into CBS business or truTV or TBS or whatever. That seems like it's pretty quick turnaround. But it is what it is. Certainly there will not be any reason why we won't come refreshed and rested and ready to go.

But tomorrow will be a mental preparation day as opposed to a physical one.

Q. Did you get a good view of Timberlake's breakaway? How well you guys did two plays in a row...

BILL SELF: The second play, if I'm not mistaken, when KJ dunked it, I think the guy fell down, which is a huge break for us in that situation.

Yeah, I thought Nic attacked the basket well. He's a much better athlete than what a lot of people think. He attacked it strong, just like he should.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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