

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Gonzaga vs Kansas

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Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

Kansas Jayhawks
Coach Bill Self
Elmarko Jackson
Johnny Furphy

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Representing Kansas are a pair of freshman guards in Johnny Furphy and Elmarko Jackson. We'll open it up for questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Johnny, you told me early in the season that you dreamed about the moment, the NCAA Tournament, that you grew up watching it. Now that you experienced it, did it live up to your expectations, to your dreams?

JOHNNY FURPHY: Yeah, definitely. I think it was a different atmosphere for sure. It was really, really exciting game to be part of. It was a different energy.

Q. You've heard social media talking about Elmarko, if Johnny can step up, than we then we can go a long way. Does that put pressure on you? Do you like the fact that fans are talking about you, that a lot is depending on you? Or too much pressure? For both of you.

ELMARKO JACKSON: I say not really. As a team, we've dealt with pressure all year. So it's kind of just normal for us. We're very tight-knit where we don't really listen to a lot of outside noise. We just let our locker room talk and stay as tight-knit as possible. I feel that's a reason for our success.

Q. Question for both guys. Man, that was an incredible game yesterday. An instant March classic. You guys played a team that loves to press and really made you earn the win. How are you feeling fatigue-wise, health-wise, headed into tomorrow's match-up?



JOHNNY FURPHY: Yeah, that was a pretty tiring game. As I said last night, I've never played a team that has pressed that consistently throughout the game. That was definitely an experience. But I think we're looking forward to tomorrow. It's going to be a very different game, different play style for sure.

But we're looking forward to it.

ELMARKO JACKSON: I'd probably say the same thing. In a big-stakes game like this, your adrenaline is flowing pretty crazy. Just happy we came out with the win and excited for this one tomorrow.

Q. What are your initial thoughts on Gonzaga? Have you learned anything as you start to look at the scout for this game tomorrow?

JOHNNY FURPHY: I think they're a pretty well-rounded team. They're power forwards and centers are really strong. So we've got to do a really good job trying to not let them feel too comfortable in the post and try to stay out of foul trouble.

Yeah, I think it's going to be a different game than last night. We're looking forward to it.

Q. Elmarko, not a lot of people are giving you credit for the hustle play that you made yesterday to end the Samford game. That put the nail in the coffin. What was going through your head in that play?

ELMARKO JACKSON: I knew my momentum was going to carry me out of bounds. I felt him on the back, and I knew that if I had a chance to move or contort my body that I could get a shot off as I go out of bounds. So just happy it worked out.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, gentlemen, and good luck tomorrow.

We'll open up questions for Coach Self.

Q. Coach, congrats on the win yesterday. You said in



the post-game presser you were happy not to face Bucky ball anytime soon. The round of 32 brings a different team of Bulldogs to the table, and that's Gonzaga. You and Coach Few go back for a long time. How are you preparing for this game?

BILL SELF: Mark and I go back a long time. We were actually born on the very same day. That's the one pleasantry we exchange every year, is "Happy birthday."

But it's a different challenge because Gonzaga has scored, actually, more points even per game than Samford has this year, but they do it conventionally. They do it by more conventional transition or half court offense or defense.

And so that tells you how good they are offensively to be able to do that. I think they're -- with all the metrics, they'll rate out in everyone's top ten in everything, offensively. And they play inside-out, and they're a terrific rebounding team.

We're obviously got our hands full and know it will be a stiff challenge.

Q. The 1:15 start, what challenges does that present and what do you think of it, and has this ever happened to you before?

BILL SELF: I've done this a long time, and I can't remember what I had for dinner last night. So I can't remember if it's happened before. The one-day breaks in between are always tough. But this is a little extreme, I think, to get out of here at midnight and play that soon the next day.

It's hard. It's going to be difficult for everybody. Arizona is playing two and a half hours before us. Their wake-up call will be at 7:00 or whatever time. The difficult thing is after a late night and, of course, we had to extend all the energy we had to win the game, after a late night, now we're going to prepare for a team that's terrific and we'll have a 20-minute walk-through because we've got to keep our guys off their feet.

So that's the challenge in the second game of a two-game tournament and also the challenge of a Saturday/Monday in the Big 12. So hopefully that will help prepare us for what we've got to do.

Q. Coach, last night's ending was a little whacky. Even if you put that aside, do you have any strong feelings either way about whether you'd like to see a coach get a replay review at the end of a game on a call?

BILL SELF: No, I don't, because the thing about it is I thought -- if you're referring to the block on Nic, I thought it was clean. But there's also some calls -- you know, KJ got the crap fouled out of him on his dunk there at the end too. So that goes both ways.

The thing about basketball, it's comprised of human beings that actually, at times, could miss something. Players miss something. Officials can miss something. I actually think the replay reviews should handle most of this. But in our game last night, and I think in other games, you're going to the replay, it seems like, you know, every call in the last two minutes, which also extends the game.

But we were fortunate with that one call, there's no question. But there's 100 calls throughout a game.

Q. Hunter was talking about Graham Ike is one of the best big men he's had to go against all year. What will it require for him in that match-up?

BILL SELF: I think he's as good of a low post guy as we've played against, for sure. Not letting him be as comfortable doing what he likes to do and how he naturally scores. He's great at getting low post position. He's good at sealing. He's good at -- he can score over both shoulders, but obviously prefers right shoulder, just like Hunt.

So there will be things we'll try to do to maybe take away some things that are just so natural for him to go to. But, you know, that's also easier said than done. But he's a good talent. Really good talent.

Q. With Nic last night, I don't know if you learned anything new about him, but it probably hasn't been the season he's envisioned. What enabled him to come through last night, and how much do you need similar sort of production from him tomorrow?

BILL SELF: Oh, yeah, we need guys to step up and make shots. Nic is a good shooter, no question.

The thing that's most impressive about Nic to me is it hasn't gone great for him. To his own admission, he knows. It's not saying anybody's done anything wrong or anything like that. His attitude is great.

You hear that old coach speak, keep your head right because your number will be called. If your head's not right, you're not going to be able to perform. His head is right, and I think that's the biggest thing you need to know about him. He's a winner. Certainly, you can tell more about who is and who maybe is not going through tough times as it is going through good times.

He's got the right attitude every day that when and if his number's called, he'll be prepared to play his best, regardless of what the outcome is, and that's certainly the case last night.

Q. What makes Hunter such a good passer?

BILL SELF: I think there's a lot of things. He's got great hands. I mean, great hands. He's got vision, like a guard. The other thing, he's tall. He can see over things. He made a couple plays in transition that were long passes, and the pass I was referring to KJ at the end, in large part because he's 7 foot tall and he can see over people. He's being trapped or guarded by a guard in the backcourt, he can see over that.

But he's got great feel. Hunt's got as good a feel as any big guy that I've been around, and certainly I can't remember us ever having a guy that passed it like him from the pivot position.

Q. Coach, before this presser, we had Johnny and Elmarko up here. They're both freshmen. You've coached a lot of freshmen in March over the years. From a coach's eyes, how important is it for freshmen to get that first tournament win under their belt?

BILL SELF: I think it is important. It's a different pressure. I'll go back to this. My second or third year here, we had Rush, Chalmers, Julian Wright. We had some good players, and they were all freshmen.

That freshman team won 12 of the last 13 to win the league, and then we won the conference tournament. And we're on -- I mean, we're cooking. We're on a high tick. I remember going to the NCAA Tournament, and we're playing Bradley. The game before ours went overtime. In that 15 extra minutes that you're in there because of overtime, the mood totally changed. It goes from playing music to being loose to now, oh, my God, we're getting ready to go out there. It delayed it and everything. And we played as tight as could be.

So I do think getting the first one under your belt for a young player is very important.

Q. Coach, you guys were down there in Maui at the same time as Gonzaga. I don't know how much you got to see of them. How much growth have you seen from them over the course of the season? And you guys as well, how much has changed since Maui?

BILL SELF: We're not the same team as we were then, strictly from a personnel standpoint because, obviously, Kevin's not out there with us.

But we have had some guys get better. But it's not the same looking team, nor is Gonzaga the same looking team.

I don't know when it was with Mark's group, but they were never playing poorly, in my eyes. They played a really good schedule. And when you play a really good schedule and you don't play well certain nights, you may lose that game.

But it seems like to me, since about the Kentucky game, and I don't know if that's the exact game, but it just looks like to me that's the Gonzaga team of the past playing.

So people will look at them. I mean, we've talked about that today. Can you believe there was actually talk that they may not get in a month ago? It's ridiculous. And now they're playing fantastic.

But that's how good they've been in the last month. And I think they've tweaked some personnel changes and stuff like that, but the bottom line is they're just playing like Gonzaga is known to play this time of year.

Q. Coach, when you came into this thing struggling and then you play a team that's really not conventional, as you said, so when you boil it all down, are you able to tell how you're playing, using last night's 40 minutes?

BILL SELF: I'm going to choose to believe that we're on a roll. We've won one in a row. We're on a hot streak. We've won the exact same amount of games in a row that Gonzaga's won. So I'll just spin it like that.

But you know what? We saw the ball go in the basket. And if you looked at when we haven't played well, we didn't see the ball go in the basket. So I'm going to say yeah, I think last night was really good for us.

Q. Bill, how's Parker's health?

BILL SELF: I think he's fine. You know, he hasn't been healthy since he turned his ankle. That's been about two or three weeks ago. But I think he's moved better in practice the last couple of days. So, yeah, there's no limitations on him.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach, appreciate you. Good luck tomorrow.

BILL SELF: Thanks.

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