

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

Friday, March 20, 2026

San Diego, California, USA

Viejas Arena

Kansas Jayhawks

Coach Bill Self

Darryn Peterson

Tre White

Media Conference

Kansas - 68, Cal Baptist - 60

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Bill Self and student-athletes Tre White and Darryn Peterson.

BILL SELF: They say survive and advance. And that's what we did. I actually thought we were pretty darn good for about 25 minutes, and then went stale for about eight and then was really poor the last seven. We just played not to lose and weren't very aggressive.

But give them credit. They kept grinding, and obviously Dominique got on a roll there late.

But we made enough plays to advance, and certainly couldn't be more thrilled to have an opportunity to play again on Sunday.

Q. Darryn, you talked yesterday about how excited you were to play in this tournament. You had 28 points. At one point, you hit back-to-back 3s. What was this like for you, and how good was it to come out with the win?

DARRYN PETERSON: Oh, super fun. The goal was just to win, and we did that. I'm happy for myself and the team.

Q. Darryn, you took your last shot at the 4:18 mark and then didn't seem that involved in the offense as the lead was dwindling. What was going on there?

DARRYN PETERSON: Just playing. I happened to not touch it. It's fine, though. I'm glad we -- I'm happy we won.



Q. I think you missed your first six shots and but it seemed like a lot around, in and out and around the rim. Were you still feeling pretty good even though they weren't falling early and just kind of telling yourself to keep shooting?

DARRYN PETERSON: Yeah, I was still feeling good. My coaches are telling me to keep shooting, my teammates were so their confidence helped me out.

Q. Dominique Daniels got hot towards the end. How much of a challenge was he in the end after all?

TRE WHITE: He's a great player. Averaging that all year, all year, I feel like he's seen every defense possible, so we couldn't just do one man guarding him. Try to have the whole team try to load up against him. And he still went on a good run.

Kudos to us towards the end. We kind of pulled it together. But he's a great player.

Q. Tre, can you just talk about Darryn's performance he had the most points ever by a Kansas freshman in the tournament. Just starting off March Madness like this, how good was he?

TRE WHITE: He was huge for us. Seeing it every day I'm not shocked. This is what he does. It was kind of my job and our job as a team to get him going early. And you see what he can do whenever he gets hot. And whenever he's downhill like this, he creates open 3s for me and the rest of the team. So whenever he's in this mode a great piece for us.

Q. Darryn, did you hear from any Jayhawk legends before your first March Madness? And if so what was the advice that you heard from them?

DARRYN PETERSON: I talked to Morris twins and Mario Little. I wouldn't really say advice but they just telling me just to go out there and play, have fun. And Mario texted me today and just said, blessings. Blessed to be able to be here and blessed to be able to be part of this.

Q. Darryn, can you take us through the final sequence of the first half there?



DARRYN PETERSON: Made a couple of shots. Coach called some plays for me. Yeah, I just started to get rolling a little bit.

Q. Specifically what you saw in the last play there, with the buzzer-beater 3, what you were going for before that play and what you ended up with there?

DARRYN PETERSON: Just got a shot up. He played good defense. I just happened to make the shot.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue on with Coach Self.

Q. You talked about surviving and advancing. How big was Paul for you guys tonight off the bench?

BILL SELF: Flory and Bryson weren't very effective scoring the ball. And Paul's a big body, and I thought he was great. Darryn was probably our best player tonight. But Paul was probably our second-best player tonight. I thought he was great.

Q. What did you think of Darryn over those, maybe, final four minutes of the first half?

BILL SELF: Well, I can't remember everything. But we ran an isolation play for him where he got a shot. And then, I believe, he hit another 2 on a drive. And then we got fortunate where they turned it over with about 10 left or 8 left, and we just got the ball to him and got out of his way. Of course, he made a hard shot there.

At the time, going up 38-18, you'd think that wasn't that big a shot. But the way the game ended, obviously it was probably a pretty important play.

Q. You said on TV that on the first 25 minutes was like an A or B, the last 15 was a D-minus. What do you think changed? Was it complacency?

BILL SELF: I think it's a combination of some things. I thought our ball screen defense on Daniels was really good, early. And we corralled him and didn't let him get loose.

Then after that, when he just put his head down and said, I'm going to drive it every time, we couldn't keep him in front of us. So I thought we weren't as good defensively.

And then offensively we were so passive and complacent. And then to Pat's point, out of a timeout, we got a couple of plays to get the ball to Darryn, and we'd throw it to somebody else and they're face guarding him, and we didn't get it back.

I thought our offense the last four or five minutes was brutal. The first half, I didn't think it was great. But it wasn't great because we missed shots. We got the ball where we wanted to get it, we just missed shots. But there at the end, we didn't get the ball where we wanted at all.

Q. Speaking of Daniels, what do you make of him as a high-major (indiscernible), also the fact that he wants to stay put as a mid-major, despite the talent that he has?

BILL SELF: Well, I said this yesterday. It's very admirable that loyalty comes to play in a way that, I don't know what their NIL budget is, but he can make more money, I would assume, if he went somewhere else.

He probably loves playing for Coach Croy and loves his teammates. So that says a lot.

But I will say this, if you guys remember a kid we had several years ago, he's a little taller than Dominique and didn't play quite as downhill, but he reminds me of Frank a lot.

I think Frank was more efficient, but I think Dominique was stronger and could get his own shot better than Frank. Frank was national player of the year.

But I thought there was a stretch tonight where he made some plays that I didn't think our defense was bad, I just thought he made some great plays.

Q. I think you guys started out like two for your first 15?

BILL SELF: We were awful, and layups, layups, too.

Q. What do you think clicked right after that? You made five of your next six shots or something.

BILL SELF: I don't think anything clicked. I think we played really, really tight offensively. We had one guy make a 3. I mean, that's not very good. And how many balls that we tipped, Flory or Bryson or whatever, that should be baskets that didn't just go in. I thought we played tight offensively.

But I did think this: Sometimes when you miss shots, it puts pressure on you to be a little bit better defensively, and I thought we were pretty good defensively to start the game.

Q. St. John's is coming in as one of the hottest teams in the country after winning the Big East Tournament.

What are some key factors in getting a win against Coach Pitino's team?

BILL SELF: There will be a lot. They're very, very physical. They're deep, athletic. Their 4 and 5 can pressure at 90 feet. We saw that even some tonight with Zuby getting out there. They're as well-coached as anybody.

I thought that they deserved to be higher than the seed that they were. But that may also be a chip for them that they can use to their advantage.

But what have they won, like, 19 out of 20? So, yeah, there's not too many teams that play in a good league that win 19 out of 20 and are a 5 seed. But I think they're great.

The thing about it -- I think they're great defensively -- the thing about them is, I watched the first part of the game tonight, and it wasn't Northern Iowa making a shot. It was Northern Iowa getting in the scoring area where they could take a shot.

It was the same way in the Big East Tournament, from what I saw. So we'll have to be a lot better to try to get our shoulders past them to at least get some paint touches, because they're really good defensively.

Q. Coach, you pulled out Darryn, Flory, Melvin, like, seven or so minutes in. What were you sort of looking for with that lineup with those guys on the floor? Do you think you get anything?

BILL SELF: I pulled them out because that's about the time that they can play and plus we had a timeout coming up. So you knew they wouldn't have to be out there long, be out long.

And a lot of times when a guy gets a foul early, like, with 16 left, you probably want to -- if you can stretch it and get him close to the 12-minute timeout, take him out then to try to protect him from getting a second in that period of time.

So there was no strategy, saying let's go with Paul. But I'm glad we did, because I thought Paul was really good tonight.

Q. If could you just expand on Paul. Season high in minutes, season high in points -- career high in both of those, I guess, he's a freshman. But what did you really get from him tonight?

BILL SELF: Well, he played big. I mean, I thought that defensively he was fine. But I thought, offensively, he showed that he could play above the rim. And he caught a

couple of lobs and made a really good move when he backed a guy down from about 12 feet. So those were all good things.

He's improved a lot. He's had a really good last month. But that excites me because we're going to be playing some teams that are bigger than us, and it would be nice to have another big body out there.

Q. Wondered if you felt a sense of relief, or were you very happy with the win since you led by 26 and looked good then. And what did you tell the team afterwards?

BILL SELF: I told them that be excited that we won. Don't apologize for winning a game in the NCAA Tournament. But we've got to be a heck of a lot better than this on Sunday.

Q. Can this be good in a way for any reason, going into --

BILL SELF: I've actually experienced games where you don't win and you're cleaning out your lockers the next day. So yes, it's good. Anytime you win a game in the tournament, it's good.

Q. What's the balance with Darryn as far as letting him play within your offense and letting him kind of go and iso and create his own shot?

BILL SELF: It's a really good question. Our best offense is to let him go when he's out there. But our best offense when he's not out there is to allow the defense a chance to break down.

So I think that we play a little differently when he's out there. And I'm not saying that's positive, but I think the way that he needs to be coached is go make plays. Let it go.

To Pat's point, if I understood what Pat was asking, when he doesn't have it, teams aren't going to let him catch it easy. So when he does have it, take advantage of the times that he does have it.

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