

# Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

**Kansas Jayhawks**

**Coach Bill Self**

**Ochai Agbaji**

**Christian Braun**

Postgame Press Conference



Kansas 74, Texas Tech 65

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with the champions of the Big XII Tournament. Head Coach Bill Self from the Kansas Jayhawks and the student-athletes, Ochai Agbaji, Most Outstanding Player, and Christian Braun.

Coach?

COACH SELF: I thought it was a great game. I thought they played very well. Back first half we couldn't stop them and they really didn't stop us.

Two pretty good defensive teams going at it. Second half I don't think it was artistic on either end, but we made some really good toughness plays and got a couple of loose balls that led to some baskets.

Everybody -- it was a nice game for us in large part because it was a team game. Everybody contributed and played important roles especially at various points of the game.

**Q. For the two players, obviously you want to be making your best ball this time of year. Talk about this weekend and what it means moving forward for you guys.**

OCHAI AGBAJI: Obviously is important moving into next week. Going into Kansas City we had one goal to complete while we were here, and we did just that.

So just like I said, momentum moving forward in the next week.

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: It was great to see everybody

contribute. We had a lot of guys that played well when they got in, so that was good to see, and I think that's going to carry over into the tournament.

**Q. Christian, looked like you slapped Remy Martin's hand. Do you mind sharing what you said briefly to him?**

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: At that point we pretty much knew we were going to win, and that's what we came to do. That's what Remy came to do is win, so that's what I told him, that's what he came here for.

He played well this weekend, so that was really good to see, him scoring the basketball and him having fun. That's what he cares about is winning, so it was good to see that.

**Q. Obviously you're plenty confident coming into the tournament, and Coach Self kind of joked that he's pretty sure you guys are as confident as any team he's had, if I have that right, Bill?**

COACH SELF: Sounds good.

**Q. Nonetheless, what's the difference between winning a game or two here and winning this as you get ready for next week?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: Really the confident comes from our guys just in general. I get my confidence from my teammates and they do the same, too. We just feed off that energy and know that energy is just going to continue in the next week.

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: I would say the same thing. We all feed off each other, and winning championships together, you know, it's good for us. It's good for our confidence.

And then, you know, winning the Big XII is probably the best conference in basketball. That's big, and going forward we know we can beat anybody. We have a good leader. He scores the ball pretty well, so everybody feeds off him.

**Q. For Christian, Ochai, do you feel like you've locked**



**up a 1 seed with this win today, and just how excited are you going into the Tournament?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: I believe so. I think we should. But that doesn't mean anything in the grand scheme of things, in the Tournament, so we've just got to be ready to play one game at a time.

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: I'd say the same thing. We have to be ready to play no matter what seed we are. Those numbers don't matter going into the Tournament. You see it every year, so we are just going to focus, lock in and get ready to play whoever we play.

**Q. You guys know that yourselves, Jay-Will, Dave, produced throughout the year, but now that you have Remy doing what he did this weekend, Mitch playing the way he's playing, how does that elevate you guys?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: I think, you know, offensively it just brings a different dynamic to defenses that we're going against.

When guys like that are going, Remy is out there doing his thing and Mitch is giving us the post presence, everyone is flowing. Everyone has that confidence like we were talking about and everyone is feeding off that energy.

**Q. Bill, Remy had a play with about five minutes left where he stuck his nose in there, and when Dave got fouled on the dunk. Him making plays like that, how does that show where he's come or what you want out of him?**

COACH SELF: I think that he made more than that play, but you're talking about the dive play that basically they had possession and he dove.

He also made a good play when they stepped across the end line, which got us a possession back. He did several things that were really positive. These guys will tell you, I think that's the quickest we've seen him look in two months.

He looked like a different guy health-wise. I do think it gives us an additional element. I don't want to forget about Juan because Juan is rock solid, but this would be a hard game to play two little guards a lot just because they were so big on the wings and we switch so much.

But that's something looking forward is going to give us a lot more depth and hopefully a little bit more fire power.

**Q. Ochai, you're the fifth player in Big XII history to be Player of the Year and back it up in this tournament. What does that mean to you to do that in your**

**hometown?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: Means a lot. I'm honored to receive that. I'm just blessed to be in this position. I always gotta give it back to my teammates, because I literally couldn't have done it without them.

So I'm giving it back to my teammates.

**Q. Coach, following up on Remy a little bit, you said before this thing started you hoped that it would co-exist where he could get major minutes and you could win. Did you anticipate this many minutes, not only all weekend, but especially today?**

COACH SELF: Well, I didn't going in, but when Juan got two quick ones I knew Remy was going to play an important role, and he did. What did he have? 10 the first half? And they were -- you know, if we hadn't had those we wouldn't have gone up 1 for sure.

He also led the break. He did several things that were positive and he played with energy and personality. I don't know that I anticipated him, you know, playing that many minutes, but now that he has, it will certainly give me more confidence to know that we can go that direction and ride with it.

**Q. Also for you two. Coach on the court said this was a toughness win, a toughness weekend. You know what that means to him. What does it mean to you to hear him say that about this team?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: It's nice right now, but next week it's going to change. He's hard on us. He's going to push us, and that's what we expect. That's why we're here.

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: First time we've heard that all year. Feels good to hear, and that will give us more confidence going forward. Not yet.

But like Och said, we have to focus on our next goal. We set three goals every year and we got our next one right in front of us.

**Q. Coach, you guys played Texas Tech a couple times this season. What makes them a tough match-up?**

COACH SELF: Yeah, they're going to be a tough match-up for anybody in America. It's not just for us. They have good players. They're well-drilled and well-coached and they've got a superstar.

Even though his numbers are only about 14 a game for the season, 16 in league, Bryson Williams is a superstar. He's



a terrific player and he can carry a team.

But I think they have a lot of interchangeable parts and they're big -- they're so big on the wings. That's a big team! They're tough.

So that's one thing that I was proud of our guys about. Even though we were ahead by 1 they were the tougher team the first half, and even though we didn't play great the second half, I thought we were the tougher team the second half, especially on the glass.

**Q. Talk about being able to play this game in Kansas City right down the road from Lawrence?**

COACH SELF: I didn't notice it was a home court advantage at all. Neutral court! The tournament is good. Kansas City has always supported us.

I'll be honest, I think this was the least attended tournament in some ways that I've seen. I think a large part is because of weather, and then, you know, Iowa State takes so many tickets and K-State gets so many tickets, so when those teams aren't playing I do think it takes away from attendance some.

But it's a great tournament, and, you know, I'm biased, I'm selfish, but I think even players on the other teams would agree that Kansas City is probably the best host for this tournament.

Because we've done it some other places and it didn't quite work as good as it works here.

**Q. Bill, how is Mitch doing at this point?**

COACH SELF: I have no idea. His knee is sore. They came and told me he wasn't available for the rest of the game. He's got a sprained knee, but I don't know anything more than that.

**Q. Ochai, I know you came in with Dave as a freshman. What did it mean to you to see him step up in such a big way tonight?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: He was great tonight. He gave us that inside post presence. He was being active defensively, so, you know, he played a big part in today's win, obviously.

But coming in here freshman year, we made it to the championship my freshman year and lost to Iowa State, so being in that position again we both felt that and it was special to win today.

**Q. Bill, not just that you guy won the tournament but I**

**wonder do you feel like you're seeing this team emerge with a versatility and facets of the game that you feel like are indicators of promise ahead?**

COACH SELF: Yeah, I think we're better. You know, if you watched us play most of the year we've scored it better than we have defended. Today we defended better than we scored it.

If you watched us play, you know, in my opinion, we have shown flashes of being a decent rebounding team. We didn't in the first half, but in the second half we did.

The way you win in the tournament, if you can make shots, it always give you a big boost, but you've got to make the other team play worse than you. It's not so much you playing better than them. They've got to play worse than you.

I think this team hopefully is growing into having some pride in making other teams not play well. I've always thought that was the formula for success, because there is no guarantee that you're going to shoot it well.

So today that was -- we go 5 of 22 from three and still win by 9. I would have never thought that could happen probably a month or two months ago against a team like that.

**Q. Bill, McCormack, 29 minutes today looks like after 13-10. How do you assess his readiness going in after what he's been through with the foot and everything?**

COACH SELF: I think he's -- we caught a break, even though he probably won't agree with me. But the fact that he didn't have to play much the first two games was probably a bonus and him playing better today. His foot is tender. It's not anything that's going to keep him from playing, but it's tender and sore.

And so that was nice that we didn't have to tax him the first two days, but he was terrific today. He put us on his back when we beat Texas last Saturday in a brawl, and today he kinda did the same thing. In a pretty physical game as well.

**Q. Christian, Gary asked Ochai to comment on winning Player of the Year and Most Outstanding Player. Could we hear your perspective on what he has accomplished after having seen what he does to get there?**

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: Yeah, it's awesome to see somebody that I have known for so long accomplish these things, and it showed -- it started last summer. His work

ethic has gone up so much and it's at a level where he's competing with himself every day. Every rep he goes 100%.

It's great to see him do all these things. He's accomplishing pretty much every goal he set out to accomplish and it's awesome to watch him every day, you know, work hard and, you know, practice hard and do all these things, and then accomplish everything he set out to accomplish.

It's great for us to see. It's awesome to watch, so we know he carries us a little bit. A lot, actually. He carries us, and it's also fun to watch him, fun to play with, he's super unselfish. He's super humble so he'll never tell you, but it's great to see from all our perspectives.

**Q. Question for all of you. Remy Martin had 12-4-4 off the bench tonight. What impressed you guys the most from his performance tonight?**

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: Just the speed he brings when he's healthy is something that not -- no team in the country has. He's one of the fastest players in the country, so some of his shot-making he had today was super impressive.

Like Ochai said he kind of brings a different element to our team offensively, and then he makes great defensive plays. So if he's doing that you know he brings us a different elements we haven't had in the past.

OCHAI AGBAJI: Yeah, just like he said. His energy, his talking on the court, keeping guys composed throughout the game. I thought he did really good at that. Everything else besides scoring.

I know everyone sees the scoring, but behind the scenes he was making sure guys were aligned and stuff. It was great to see that, and moving forward we're going to need that from him.

COACH SELF: From my perspective, you know, the thing that you have to do when you play a team like Tech, you have to have a guy make a shot when you run bad offense, and he's a guy -- because that's a fact.

You're not going to get what you want offensively a lot of times. So these guys can do it, but he was a guy that gives us an extra element that can kinda go get his own a little bit, that can allow you to have good possessions, even though you really don't run good stuff.

**Q. Coach, I'm curious, just about Jalen's second half. Seemed as though that loose ball that he dove for sparked him. When did you see him turn it on and how**

**big are plays like that?**

COACH SELF: I thought everybody played pretty well but I thought Jalen Wilson was the best performer for us the second half. He didn't get a lot done the first half; I don't think he scored. In the second half he got a lot done, and the majority of the stuff he got done was off of kind of power ball. He scored around the basket, and he played strong and did a good job on the defensive end, took a huge charge. I thought he played great today.

**Q. Christian and Ochai, you talked about winning three goals. You cross it off, how quick is the turn-around, how quickly are you saying, okay, we've done this, let's get to the next thing at hand?**

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: I've already heard it. We are already set on the next goal, and that was our biggest goal all year, and that's what Coach and Ochai and I want to win. So we have six games left to accomplish our goal, and that's what we're going to do.

OCHAI AGBAJI: I think before that on the podium we were talking, we like this feeling, let's do it again type stuff so at that moment we were enjoying the moment but knowing that we want more.

THE MODERATOR: We will get the guys celebrate. Congratulations. Good luck next week.

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