

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Kansas Jayhawks

Coach Norm Roberts

Jalen Wilson

Joseph Yesufu

Postgame Press Conference

Texas 76, Kansas 56

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined on stage by the Kansas Jayhawks Coach Norm Roberts; his student-athletes tonight are Joseph Yesufu and Jalen Wilson.

Coach, your thoughts on today's game?

COACH ROBERTS: Give Texas a lot of credit. They played really well. They're very athletic, we knew that. Fast. They've got some really, really good offensive players.

I thought we did a pretty good job early on in the game and then we missed a bunch of bunnies, easy shots, put-backs, and things that could have kept us in the game.

And then I think fatigue kind of took over. We got tired in the second half and we had a couple of guys get nicked up. We didn't defend the way we needed to. We know we needed to defend better. Got beat on back-cuts way too much and they hurt us on the glass.

Q. Today you all were not on your best and the last two days y'all were on a roll. What was the differentiating factor between tonight versus the last two games?

JALEN WILSON: Just being down and understanding they're a really good team. We've played them a few times and they gave us trouble.

What separated us was the easy points they got. That's one of the things we try to hang our hat on is no easy points, and they got a lot of them today. And when you



give a team like that easy points it's hard to come back, especially early on in the game.

Q. You guys didn't have Kevin tonight. How did that change the approach against Texas?

JOSEPH YESUFU: Kevin, you know, you guys know Kevin is a great defender. He's the Naismith Defensive Player of the Year. He was missed today not only on the defensive end, but on the rebounding end. We just really missed him today.

Q. Guys, Coach was talking about the defense. Were you surprised it wasn't very good today?

JOSEPH YESUFU: Yeah. We came in here, we felt like we had a lot of energy, but, you know, we gotta defend better. We gotta be ready for the tournament, that's all it is.

JALEN WILSON: Like I said, the easy points they got early kind of got them off to a good start, and when you give a good team confidence, good players that can all get the shots, it will kind of project them in a good way.

It's on us to start the game better off on the defensive end making them take contested shot rather than just walking into different shots.

Q. How did this affect you guys? Are you ready to get back to work, forget this one quickly, or think about it or what?

JALEN WILSON: It's kinda the same as what we've been playing. It's all win or go home now. You can't really stand on one game too long. Even if you do win, you got another game coming up soon.

Gotta learn from it, get better, and understand this is the most important basketball that we need to play, the best basketball we need to play. Today wasn't the best, but the overall goal is still here.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen. Good luck next week.



Questions for Coach Roberts?

Q. Coach, it had to be tough to play without Kevin today. How is he doing? Was it a big challenge and a shock to the guys to not have his leadership?

COACH ROBERTS: Well, you know, Kevin is a big -- makes a big impact with our team. He can do so many different things and he does so many little things defensively, when you got him and Juan out there you can do a lot of things as far as trapping or getting loose balls.

And Kevin is an excellent rebounder for us, too. We knew that going in. But it next-man-up mentality. Some of our younger guys did some good things, but we got beat too easy on back-cuts, and really the end of the shot clock, giving up easy shots or easy plays, and we need to do a better job.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH ROBERTS: No. He needed to rest, and we're thinking about it for the long haul, given that the tournament is next week.

Q. Norm, obviously Texas is a good team. You guys have beaten more good teams than anybody in the country this year. What is it about them, especially the last two match-ups, do you feel has given you a fit?

COACH ROBERTS: I think they have the ability to score center all five positions. Disu has changed his game and he's really gotten a lot better, and he's a big factor. He's big. He can score on the perimeter. He makes those floaters, and then he can post up smaller guys.

So that's really helped him with an inside presence. Marcus Carr is a terrific scorer, we knew that. Arterio Morris, the young kid, he's going to be really good. He made some great shots for them today.

And Rice is terrific, too. They have been all year probably the most talented team in our league. They played really well tonight. We didn't do enough to disrupt them.

Q. Coach, it definitely seemed in the second half that the defense trailed off. It looked to be because of fatigue. Is that an artifact of playing three games in three days, or is there something that the coaching staff and you guys can do to help prevent those issues going into the tournament?

COACH ROBERTS: We're at Kansas. We don't make an excuse. You just keep on playing. We just didn't guard the way we needed to. We're not going to make any excuses.

They played the same amount of games we played. No excuses.

We just didn't focus in and guard the way we needed to and take them out.

Give them credit. They made a couple of tough shots, too, but we just didn't guard like we needed to.

Q. Coach, we've been so spoiled. You guys share the basketball so well; only 8 assists today. Was that what you guys didn't do or Texas did?

COACH ROBERTS: I think it's both, but we didn't do a good job of moving the ball. We talked about ball and body movement. I think we stood and watched JWil, and he scored the ball well. We're a better team when the ball is moving, and it didn't move very much today. We know that, so we gotta get back to doing what we do best.

Q. (Off microphone) ...but he's turned himself into a more respectable shooter, a guy you have to stick to on the perimeter. How much of a lift does it give Texas off the bench?

COACH ROBERTS: It did today. He made that big turnaround that kinda got some space away from us, and I thought we defended them well there, but we know he's a good catch-and-shoot guy.

We didn't do enough to try to disrupt his rhythm and Disu was hurting us inside, so we had to dive down and left him open. They've got a lot of guys that can score the ball.

Q. Any update on Coach Self's condition? Will he coach next week?

COACH ROBERTS: He's doing well. We plan on him coaching next week.

Q. Norm, bench points 20-3, for Texas. Going forward with your bench players, the production you have to get, how did you do you get that going in such a short amount of time?

COACH ROBERTS: Guys have to play with confidence and we didn't do that today. I thought Ernest had a couple of opportunities to score in tight, couple of lobs we didn't make, and I thought Bobby need to get downhill more.

Joe had quite a few open looks. Even though I know he started today, he had quite a few open looks. I thought MJ did some good things probably in a different role than what he's been in. Those guys know they have to play with more energy and look to score the ball more.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we'll let you go. Thank you.

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