

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Kansas Jayhawks Coach Bill Self Jamari McDowell Elmarko Jackson

Postgame Press Conference

Cincinnati - 72, Kansas - 52

THE MODERATOR: Kansas Head Coach Bill Self has joined us along with Jamari McDowell and Elmarko Jackson. Coach?

BILL SELF: I actually thought we tried really hard. I thought the kids tried. Obviously we were bad offensively, and didn't make shots, didn't make any shots, and tonight would have been a night where things would have had to go a lot better for us shooting the basketball to have a chance. I thought defensively we were pretty good, didn't rebound, but we took away stuff they like to do but we couldn't score the ball at all on the offensive end.

Q. Coach, you said you guys didn't really make shots tonight. Was that more so something you did on defense or it just wasn't falling tonight?

BILL SELF: It was a lot. Their strong on the perimeter and athletic and I think their size and athleticism bothered us. And they're good. Statistically, they're one of the better teams in America defensively, efficiency. I think they're 18th. So we didn't have enough weapons to score the ball. And when we did get looks we needed to take advantage of it and we didn't do that.

Q. Bill, just wondering if this was a tournament game, could have seen yourself playing Kevin or Hunter in this game? Just kind of asking about their status.

BILL SELF: Hunter for sure couldn't. Kevin probably could have, but Hunter, when it popped out of place and the MRI and what the doctor said, he's got to pass some tests before we put him out there. But, you know, you could make a case that if this game was played on Saturday,



could he have played? The answer may be yes. But he should be good to go by next week.

Q. What was the difficulty then of sitting Kevin and what went into that decision?

BILL SELF: Kevin, you know, he's probably practiced three times in the last four or five weeks. And he didn't practice after the K-State game and then felt good enough to play against Houston, at least that's what he said, and once he got out there realized it was a bad idea.

So whenever Hunter went out, to me it was an easy decision to sit Kevin. You know, you try your butt off to win a game, and with the risk of injuring him. It was an easy decision.

Q. Bill, you guys -- when you do get them back, you've struggled to shoot it a little bit lately. How hard has it been to run offense when the perimeter shots aren't falling?

BILL SELF: When you can't stretch it, it puts a lot of people around Hunter, but we had -- the bottom line is, you know, we haven't shot the ball well beyond the arc since the second game of the season. But what we have done is run really good offense and score a lot of two's, a lot! Probably as efficient as anybody in America inside the arc. But, you know, the bottom line is we need to be able to make six or seven threes. When you get outscored 15 to 30 points every game from beyond the arc, that's a lot of two's and you don't have enough opportunities to make those up.

So we do have to shoot it better. Johnny has been in a slump obviously shooting the ball. And, you know, Nick shot it well on senior night and did tonight and Juan has to be able to make one out of two or one out of three from beyond the arc. We just didn't do that tonight. When we do have our full complement of guys and you put Kevin out there, we've got enough threats that we can stretch the defensive and run good offense.

Q. For you both, what did the team say to each other when you heard that Hunter and Kevin weren't going to

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go and when you got that run and cut it to two? How did you come together and try to keep the momentum going?

JAMARI McDOWELL: We really just thought that we could -- I felt like we could really do it. We had did it before, so I was positive in that moment. I was really, really into it.

ELMARKO JACKSON: I would say the same. In practice, we practice scenarios like that a lot, being able to come back in scenarios like that. I believe we started on a 13-2 run to start the half, momentum was good and kind of just fizzled out a little bit, so being able to get over that hump.

Q. Bill, I wanted to give you a chance to reflect as bad as you are struggling right now, a year ago today things were a lot worse at least for you physically?

BILL SELF: Yeah, but we made it to the finals. Yeah, yeah, yeah, a year ago today, I was messed up, so yeah, from that standpoint. I feel a heck of a lot better today than I did a year ago. And today I don't exactly -- I'm not exactly happy or feeling great.

The thing about it is, you know -- and Dennis, you hit it on the head. We have struggled of late. But we haven't been whole yet either. I mean, gosh dang it, if we can get whole we can play with anybody. We've proven that. And it's not excuses.

Guys that are in there need to obviously deliver when they're in there, but the guys that are in there haven't been in positions like they were tonight to deliver. So it's new for them. We get those guys back -- but, you said something, a struggle lately, which leads to confidence. Which we gotta get our swag back, you know? Geez!

Guys are aiming the ball instead of shooting it, and I haven't asked these guys this, but we had four starters combine 8 for 39 tonight. It's like they're shooting at the fair, you know, where the balls can't actually fit through the goals. So we gotta start shooting at a bigger basket and, you know, we got about seven to eight days that we can get some of that back.

Q. For everyone, starting with you, Bill, how much can you take away from this game, but like you said you are on hold --

BILL SELF: I actually think you can take away some good competitive things. I mean, the guys guarded. Cincinnati last night, you know, they were pretty good offensively, and they had some guys make some shots tonight but until the end they were probably shooting under 35%, you know.

So I think our guys guarded, but guys, what are we going to take away? We will take away that we came over on a Wednesday and the quarter finals is tomorrow. Sucks. That's what we're going to take away from this.

ELMARKO JACKSON: I would say the same thing, really, just carrying this feeling with us through practice for the next week, just remembering this feeling because I know nobody on the rest of the team wants to feel this again, and the stakes are higher.

JAMARI McDOWELL: I agree with defense for sure. I thought we guarded pretty well until they made their run at the end. We just didn't get shots tonight, but that will happen. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

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