

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Kansas Jayhawks

Coach Bill Self

Hunter Dickinson

Dajuan Harris, Jr.

Postgame Press Conference



BILL SELF: The big scoring deal is a little misleading, because -- but, Rob, what was interesting, they had six different guys make threes, so they had balance and we obviously didn't have as much balance.

Our bench delivered. What did we deliver? Six points tonight? Oh no, Diggy. I'm sorry, Diggy got 9 I guess and Flory had 4, so we got 13. We didn't play the bench much. I didn't think the bench was very effective to be honest.

I thought their bench was obviously pretty effective, and there was no drop-off when they went to it.

Q. To the players, I think Arizona turned a 1-point game outscored you 18-8 down the stretch. Some might figure it was fatigue. What do you think of that stretch to close the game?

HUNTER DICKINSON: I don't think you can blame fatigue. In this NIL era we are paid to play, so you've got to be professionals and approach it like professionals. You can't give that excuse.

I think it starts with me. I've got to be better for my team and give them more energy. I feel like I let them down defensively.

DAJUAN HARRIS JR: Basically what he said. You can't make excuses, especially against teams like that. You've got to play hard to the finish line. Arizona clearly wanted it more.

Q. Coach, how do you think your guys' game plan strategy was affected by having to go 45 minutes the night before?

BILL SELF: I don't think the strategy was affected. Maybe the execution of it wasn't quite, but those are all excuses.

The bottom line is we didn't make them play bad, and in order for us to be a good team and when we played our best we made our opponents not play very well.

So that to me is the biggest thing. Scoring 77 points should be enough.

Arizona 88, Kansas 77

THE MODERATOR: Joining us on the dais is Kansas Head Coach Bill Self, along with Dajuan Harris and Hunter Dickinson. Coach?

BILL SELF: Obviously we didn't do a good job defensively and they shot the ball so well so early that gave them some separation. And then we actually played pretty well probably for the next 20, 25 minutes and then we didn't close.

But we tried hard. I think we had, not an excuse because we put ourselves in that position, but that was a pretty quick turnaround after four guys played almost 40 last night.

So I just didn't feel like we had the energy defensively to keep 'em out of the paint. Obviously they shot the ball well, but where they really hurt us the most was at the rim and they dominated the paint.

Q. Coach, what was the mindset going into tonight's game and how was it different than going into Saturday's game?

BILL SELF: I thought -- that's a good question. I thought maybe Saturday we played more desperate. Last home game, Senior Day. I thought tonight we -- I thought we tried hard but I didn't feel like we played quite as desperate or with as much reckless abandon as we did Saturday.

Q. Coach, talk about the disparity in the paint and the bench scoring for those guys. What do you think led to that?

Q. Bill, where do you feel like you are? What are the next few days like before you gather up for the tournament? What do you need to get accomplished?

BILL SELF: Guys, our league is really good. It would be hard to win the tournament playing four games in four days with basically playing five or six guys.

So that's not a -- I'm okay with that. But I do think this: we need a couple of days to rest, because we've got a tired team. We've been riding the starters or at least four of 'em hard for a long time. So we could use a little rest.

I would rather play tomorrow and not have rest, but it can also turn out to be an advantage for us going into next week.

Q. Players, where is the team's game at and where are your heads at heading into the tournament?

DAJUAN HARRIS JR: You' got to have high hopes going into the tournament because you never know what will happen in March Madness. I believe in my teammates. I believe in my coaching staff, and I feel like we can do it. We just gotta take care of a couple of things. Get better on the defensive end like Coach said, that's the main thing, the defense.

HUNTER DICKINSON: I would say we're probably one of more volatile teams in the country. When you look at it, we've played with the best in the country and been neck and neck with them and beat some of them and been neck and neck with a lot of average teams.

I think it just, you know, depends on which Kansas team shows up. The blessing and the curse about these next couple games is you only got to be great for forty minutes and then you get another forty minutes, and I think it starts with me.

I can't go out there and play like I did today or we're going to go home early, so I gotta bring it every game.

Q. Players, you addressed it a little bit, but in the two games, how would you assess your defense, and where it stands today?

HUNTER DICKINSON: I would say it starts with me. I gotta be better in the ball screen coverage and one-on-one. I think I let my teammates down with that.

When you look at it, their best player holding them to 11 points and their second best player to 7 points going into that game, I feel like you would be confident in that, but I

gave up too many baskets today especially one-on-one where I let my team down.

Q. Coach, what do you think about a possible seed on Sunday?

BILL SELF: I don't know enough about -- what did they have us at, 6 today? We certainly didn't help ourselves tonight, but we also lost to a team that's going to be probably a top 4 or 5 seed at the worst.

Arizona is good and they're talented and they're athletic and they have depth and they throw bodies.

The thing about their team from my perspective, their success in large part will be determined how well they shoot the basketball. You start out 5 of 6 from three, you know, that was -- we couldn't keep up with that. But seed, I don't know, G.B. There are still games to be played. I would say 6, 7 line probably.

Q. For the players, what do you think of Zeke Mayo's performance especially in the second half?

DAJUAN HARRIS JR: That's why we recruited him. He keeps that up we're going to be in great shape, scoring the ball.

HUNTER DICKINSON: I feel like I wish I could have done more to help him out. He was scoring out there and I wish I could have helped him out more, because he did have a really good game for us.

Q. Bill, to Hunter's point about volatility and which team shows up, is that how you feel?

BILL SELF: I actually thing Hunter hit right on the point. The thing that's -- what he said is true. What he says, take more responsibility, that stuff, it's the same with every one of our starters.

Dajuan has got to feel the same way. Zeke's got to feel the same way. KJ has to feel the same way. We don't have the depth not to feel the same way, which I think makes our team look more volatile, because when one of those guys aren't there we don't have guys off the bench and replace that.

So I think Hunt is right on the point, but I think that everybody need to take that ownership, what Hunt is talking about, because that's just the way it is this year. There is just no other way that we're going to be this year.

Q. Is it at a point where you're not quite sure what you're going to get game to game?

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

BILL SELF: I don't think it's at a point where I'm concerned about what we're going to get. I would say there would be many times that I would be concerned about can we score enough points and is our defense good enough to keep a team under 70? Can we get to 70?

Right now we've scored points. We just haven't stopped guys. Even when we played Arizona -- that was a good basketball game last Saturday.

And you gotta understand something. Arizona came rested and they had all week to prepare for us, they were ready to play. You could tell -- didn't you guys think it was a different energy they had?

DAJUAN HARRIS JR: Yeah.

BILL SELF: They came ready. I think what I'm most concerned about, what are we going to get on the defensive end? Because I think we gotta make people play poorly. In many ways when you are playing an elite team, which we are more than capable of doing, but we haven't done that consistently.

Q. Coach, on that front, I'm sure you tried every trick you know in the book to try to get the defensive to be more consistent this year. Are you at wits end with it? What can you do at this point of the year?

BILL SELF: I think we can do some things. I think a lot of it is -- you know, if you're playing -- if the chiefs are playing and they need a great defensive effort and they've been on the field two-thirds of the game and we need them to be great in the fourth quarter it's a little hard to do.

When the offense has the ball two thirds of the game and you need them to be great in the fourth quarter it's easier to do because the energy is up and the guys are flying around. I don't think we don't have great energy because I think we're fatigued. I think we play tired sometimes. Can that be corrected? I don't know if it can be corrected. Hunt said it best: We've got to play well for forty minutes and then we can take 48 hours off and then we gotta play forty minutes again. It's a two-game tournament and we've got enough gas in the tank to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

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