

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Kansas Jayhawks Coach Bill Self

Media Day Press Conference

BILL SELF: Well, first of all, excited to be here and excited for the season. It's going to be another great year for our league, obviously, and the expectations are high. I think the expectations may be actually undersold a bit because I think there's actually more great teams in our league than maybe what people are talking about.

I'm excited about my group. I think we're better. I think we've got a better roster. I think we're deeper. How that translates into winning games when you play the schedule you're playing, I don't exactly know. But if things could fall right and have some good fortune, obviously, like everybody else from a health standpoint, if the pieces fit like I think they could, then I think potentially this could be one of our better teams.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about Big 12, SEC, what's the best conference in America. How difficult will it be to win in this league this year, especially with all the teams that have come in?

BILL SELF: Well, you know, you have five of the preseason top 10, which I was told earlier that that's never happened before in a league. Then you have -- you're going to have three or four other top-25 type teams, that whether or not they're in there now they'll be in there at some point in time during the course of the year.

I've said this a lot of times, and we've had some success in the league, that that particular year I feel like it would probably be the hardest year to win it of any of the years that we had. I can tell you hands down this is going to be the hardest year to win our league, in large part because of unbalanced scheduling, too, depending on who you play at home and who you play on the road and who you play twice and all those things.

But it's going to be a great league.

I don't think you look at it the way that maybe we used to, that it's a win-the-league-at-all-costs deal. I think you look



at it more as if we can compete and be at the top of this league, we've got a chance.

Even though disappointment comes when you don't win, you'd better be equipped to be disappointed some because nobody is going to run the table.

Q. There have been some coaches, Tony Bennett just decided he didn't want to coach today's game anymore; we've seen some football coaches that have had enough of it. What's the state of college athletics right now for you, and is this something that you've been able to adapt and overcome with all the changes and work with it?

BILL SELF: Well, I don't disagree with what anybody has done and the reasons for doing it. I would say that I don't feel the exact same way they feel at this point in time.

I do think that it is a very uncertain world that we're living in right now from a college athletics standpoint, but I do think it will balance out. I do think -- I don't know exactly what the formula is, but I think we'll look at our sport and college athletics in a couple years from now, and it'll feel and look different than it does right now.

I don't know what business anybody has been in where there hasn't been significant changes over time if you've been in the business for three or four decades. We're going through one of those changes now, and people probably aren't as comfortable with the change, as I'm not, either, but I do think we'll get through it and it'll balance out and we'll be at a place that we're much more comfortable in a short amount of time.

Q. If someone were to tell you a couple of years ago that Texas and OU would be out of your conference and the conference would add eight new schools ranging from Phoenix to Orlando, what would you say to them? Would you have seen it coming a couple of years ago, or is this totally out of the blue?

BILL SELF: Well, I'll tell you, I'll say this: It's been 12 years ago when we were just worried if we were going to be in a league. So I actually feel better about where we're

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at now because I think the Big 12 is solid, more so than it has been in a long time.

So I feel great about that, and even though losing two brands like OU and Texas obviously on the surface is a hit, but what we've replaced with I think especially from a basketball standpoint, I don't think that we're going to take a step backwards in any way, shape or form.

Now, we may have taken a step sideways but not backwards at all. I feel really positive about where we're at.

Q. You bring in a very impressive transfer class this year with six players. Can you talk about what you've seen so far in early practices and what you expect this year from all six of them?

BILL SELF: Well, we've brought in five on scholarship. We've brought in a sixth that's a walk-on. I like them. I think they all have a chance to contribute, and you can make a case where they've all been one of our better players on any particular day thus far, whether it's David Coit or Zeke Mayo or A.J. or Rylan or Shakeel.

I think the question will be coming from a different place -- it's this way with all coaches and all programs. How do they fit in with your present players and how do they fit in playing differently than maybe the way they played at their different place.

I don't think we're quite comfortable yet. I think we have more talent. I think we're more athletic. I think we shoot it a little bit better. I think all those things. But do they fit exactly the way we've won over time? I think that still remains to be seen.

You're going to know a lot more when we get punched in the gut or hit in the face the first time and see how we react. But from 10,000 feet or whatever, I like them all, and I think it makes for a pretty deep roster.

Q. You mentioned five teams in the preseason top 10 of the AP poll, unprecedented. Other coaches have mentioned that that makes the league difficult, but similarly something that makes it difficult is there's no teams ranked outside of the top 90 --

BILL SELF: That's what makes the league hard. I don't mean to cut you off, but a lot of leagues are top heavy but they're also bottom heavy. This league has no bottom. No matter where you go, winning on the road or not winning on the road will not be considered an upset in coaches' minds.

Having a record -- what are we playing, 18 this year? We're playing 20 this year. So having a record 20 league games, man, somebody would go 15-5, I think, wow, they've had a heck of a year; whereas in the past you could have a team go 16-2, something like that. I don't see that happening.

I think there's going to be the appearance of off days far more often for teams in our league that aren't really off days; you just got beat.

Q. The thing I hear from other coaches is even when you go play the last place team in this conference, it's probably still a top-100 team and it's probably still a pretty close to capacity filled arena.

BILL SELF: That's true, and it's a great league around all sports. But basketball, we take a lot of pride in our league and the fan bases take a lot of pride.

All the road games are great wins.

There is maybe some scheduling favor to some teams just because it's an unbalanced schedule. It was that way in the Big Ten. It was that way in the Big 12 when we played 12 and you play the south once and you played the north twice. Just depending on what teams were good that year and that kind of stuff. But I don't think you think look at it that way in this league.

I had somebody ask me earlier what's the biggest league game on your schedule, and I actually thought about it, and I said, probably the next game. I know that's coach-speak, but that's true. If you're not ready, you're going to get beat.

People from the outside may look or our fan bases may look at those as upsets. Hey, any road win in our league will be considered, I would think, to be at worst a Quad 2 win. At worst. That's why you get so many opportunities to make the NCAA Tournament out of our league because you have an opportunity to play 15, 18 Quad 1 games and the rest of them are Quad 2 games, which is what makes the league hard.

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