

State Farm Champions Classic: Kansas vs Duke

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Kansas Jayhawks

Coach Bill Self

Flory Bidunga

Tre White

Press Conference



Duke 78, Kansas 66

Q. Bill, you guys got close on a number of occasions within the second half and within one possession. Why do you think you weren't able to get over the hump there?

BILL SELF: Well, when you're playing from behind, it puts so much pressure on you not to have any screw-ups, and I think that I'd have to go back, but if I'm not mistaken, we missed four free throw opportunities in a row, a front end and then a two-shot foul.

When you're playing from behind, you've got to convert every opportunity that you get.

I actually thought we did some good things. We're a makeshift team right now, but I thought we did some good things. I thought we competed hard. I thought we uglyed the game up pretty well, and I don't think that -- I haven't spoken to Jon, but I doubt he thought they ran the most fluid offense that they've ever run and stuff.

So there were some good things there.

But the bottom line is when you've got to get stops and you've got to execute, we didn't really do that, I don't think, as well as we could have the last four or five minutes at all.

Q. Bill, Melvin had a pretty good second half. What did you see from him out there compared to the first half?

BILL SELF: Well, I don't know what I thought -- I thought Melvin played great. I think Melvin's shot selection sometimes can be a little questionable, but I thought he played great. One thing about him, he plays downhill. He's got to get where he can drive to pass and not just drive to shoot.

But good gosh, he did some good things. His speed is undeniable, and he finished at the rim several good finishes. He's close to being a real good guard. He's just got to tie some things together and be able to think about time and score momentum sometimes a little bit, but I think Melvin is doing well.

Q. Tre, you came out pretty aggressively in this one. There was a point where you were out-rebounding Duke by yourself. What's your plan of attack coming into the game like this?

TRE WHITE: Just try to muck the game up, do the little things. Just trying to carry that energy. Flo does a good job starting off like that. I'm just trying to pick up the slack with him. They're a big team, so just trying to be physical with them, do the little things.

Q. Coach, first time you got to see Cam Boozer play in a setting like this. What stood out? You held him relatively quiet in the first half, but what stood out about his game from your standpoint?

BILL SELF: I'll tell you, from my standpoint I actually thought we guarded him pretty well. I thought we did some good things. I think these guys would probably agree with me. When we screwed up, it seemed like he made us pay when we screwed up. If you miss a block out he'll make you pay on the block out. If we screwed up, which we did a few times, screwed up a trap the post or whatever, he'll make you pay out of that.

But he's a good player. The thing that I think he does really well is -- he does a lot of things well, but he's a really good passer.

But I think what -- I actually thought, I felt pretty good about how our guys defended him even on one-on-one type situations. I thought we did okay. But when we screwed up, he took advantage of it.

Q. Tre, how is it different for you and your teammates when Darryn is not on the floor?



TRE WHITE: Yeah, there is a difference. Darryn is a one-on-one scorer, so we definitely got to make up for that. But the message has been the same: Next man up; do the little things; play more aggressive. That's what we tried to do tonight.

Q. Flory, you got to stay in after picking up your fourth with 7:20 or so to go. How did you approach that challenge and stay on the floor the rest of the game?

FLORY BIDUNGA: You know, just need to play with my head and my feet, put shot up. If all this,...to take me out, but I mean, I pick up four foul. Could have been doing a good job at it, but it is what it is, so...

Q. Bill, I think you called the Peterson injury a hamstring strain. Is it now officially called a hamstring strain, and are the cramps conjoined with that?

BILL SELF: Jeff Goodman reported it was a hamstring strain, so we'll we just go with whatever Goody reported.

He's had hamstring tightness, which is caused by a slight hamstring strain. So until that subsides he's going to not be confident to play on it, to push off and those sorts of things, which has been going on a fairly significant amount of time.

We actually feel good about what we're doing. They feel good about what we're doing, and we don't think it'll be long at all.

Q. Does it have to do with the cramps at all?

BILL SELF: I think they're all tied together. Me going to med school at Oklahoma State back in the day, I think in my expert opinion, they're all tied together. The cramping could create some straining or slight whatever problems there are, but the cramping has subsided as of now, so he's just dealing with the tightness.

Q. On a night where you didn't have Darryn, what can you say about Flory's night and his continued development this season?

BILL SELF: You know, I think he's gotten a lot better. The thing about Flo to me is he can play really well and not score because he's so active. He can change the game with activity.

But I think his offensive game has gotten better, and I thought he played big tonight, and he played athletic. I still think that there's some things -- and I think he would agree with me, that there are some things he can do to simplify some stuff to make him a more effective player.

But our guards have to do a better job of looking for him, and we didn't throw the ball to him. We missed him several times tonight.

Q. Is it easier or harder or does it make a difference playing in all these neutral site tournaments? Because you're playing here and in Vegas and back to back, so that's three straight games at neutral sites. Does it make a difference?

BILL SELF: Actually it'll be four straight games. I don't know if it makes a difference. You know, scheduling has changed every year seems like. No matter what, it's good competition.

We're off to obviously not the best start because we played two blue bloods and come up empty both times. They would have been hard games regardless, and the games in Vegas will be hard, too.

But we need to grow together as a team. Sometimes those tournaments I actually think can be the best thing for a team throughout a year because we get away, it's only us, three days in a row.

I always thought Maui was great for team building, and hopefully this will be the same going out to Vegas, as well.

Q. When you play such a highly touted team like Duke without your best player, obviously you in your locker room have the competitive spirit where you hate losing, but is there ever a good feeling coming out of a competitive game like this one?

BILL SELF: Great question. No. But I told the guys in there, I'm not leaving out of here discouraged. We fought. We just need to tighten some things up. I think they would agree. There's some things that we got to do to tighten up to become a good team, and if we can do that, we'll be a much better team whenever we have all hands on deck.

Q. You guys went down seven points at halftime. What were the words to your team at halftime?

BILL SELF: We were just trying to get to halftime and actually did a decent job. What did we have it, to four, and then Evans makes a three at the buzzer?

But playing without Flo the last six minutes or seven minutes, whatever it was, of the first half hurt us, without question, but I felt like we were still in the game at halftime. There's no doubt about that.

I thought the way the second half started, we kind of traded



baskets for a while, and it kind of hung around that eight to seven to ten range, and then I thought we actually played better over about an eight- or ten-minute period, then we couldn't close it out.

Q. You guys have now played Duke in November the last two years. How would you compare where they are in their development last year versus where they are in their development this year?

BILL SELF: Last year's game was a better-played game. Both teams played really well last year. That was a high-level game. This year I didn't think it was a high-level game, and you could probably blame us on that because we probably needed to muddy it up, and we did that to an extent.

I thought Duke's potential last year when we played them was exactly what they ended up playing to. I actually thought this year's Duke team was playing better than last year's Duke team in early November. I'm not sure they did tonight, but I actually thought their execution and ball movement and all that stuff was better this time this year than it was last year at this time.

But the talent was undeniable that they had last year.

Q. You said you weren't concerned about the injury to Darryn being long-term. What's your concern level of him not being ready for the Notre Dame game or the two games in Vegas?

BILL SELF: He's going to be reevaluated later in the week. Yeah, he could not be available to us, but we'll just have to wait and see after he's evaluated here.

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