

GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

Kansas Jayhawks

Bill Self

Jamari McDowell

Tre White

Postgame Press Conference



TRE WHITE: It opens up everything. Whenever he's playing aggressive, when BT is playing aggressive, they get doubled, it gives us easy catch and shoots. I feel like it starts with them honestly whenever they're attracting two people or even just dominating the matchup, it makes our job a lot easier.

Q. Bill, to follow up on what Jamari was saying, why did you want to go with Jamari in the starting lineup today as opposed to anyone else?

BILL SELF: Well, I felt that he played the best yesterday. Kohl, he's been laboring, and I just thought it would give Kohl a different look to maybe come off the bench and not feel the pressure of starting. Kohl actually played better today. Jamari was -- Tre made some hard lay-ups and played really, really well the whole game, and Jamari was rock solid. He was steady out there for us.

Q. Bill, you have a situation where Darryn Peterson has played two games; this team is going for it without him. How do you bring those worlds together with the way these guys are playing and having to add Peterson back at some point?

BILL SELF: Well, we'll be so much better offensively whenever Darryn is back. We don't know how to play without him, to be honest, yet, and we're just kind of piecing it together.

But we have played through our bigs more, and we've experimented in playing three bigs. So those things are all positive and will stay the same moving forward.

Hopefully we become a better screening team and do some things differently, and so many things that happen now is the way Syracuse played us, it was smart. But we couldn't make the play behind the pressure, behind the trap or Darryn will just throw it to the guy and go make a play. We'll be so much better when we get where we can do that. Melvin doesn't have any help out there as far as ball handling or being able to drive a gap and force help.

I'm excited about it. We need to learn how to win ugly. We learn how to make other people not play well. Even against Duke for the most part, I don't think Duke is going to say they played well that night. I thought we did a pretty

Kansas 71, Syracuse 600

Audio difficulties first four questions:

Q. Jamari, question for you. Just getting the starting nod today, how if at all did that change your approach going into this one and maybe boost your confidence a little bit?

JAMARI McDOWELL: I just stayed consistent in what I was doing. I just thank the Lord for what he's given me. Gave me opportunity and knocked on it and opened the door.

Q. Jamari, were you nervous at all? When did you find out you were going to start? And Tre, what did you think of his many minutes and great performance?

TRE WHITE: He stretches the floor. Any dribble handoffs, if they don't step up he's shooting it from the half court volleyball line, whatever. So he definitely takes some pressure off us. And driving the ball downhill he's good at making the right reads. So I feel like he came in seamless and he was ready for his minutes.

Q. (No microphone.)

JAMARI McDOWELL: Obviously I was very excited, but I don't think I was nervous. I've just been consistent in what I was doing. It's the same thing over and over every day, just be faithful in yours.

Q. Tre, another double-double here for Flory. How does that open up things for the rest of the team when he's playing that aggressively?

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good job of guarding them.

Hopefully we can do it one more game and then see what happens after that.

Q. Coach, point differential is the main tiebreaker in this tournament and Kohl's late dunk pushed you above Iowa State in the standings by two points. How much were you emphasizing scoring every point possible as your team was putting up those late shots?

BILL SELF: I didn't know anything about any point differential, but I did know that we should try to score if we have the ball late.

We turned down a dunk. Melvin had Flory wide open for a dunk and didn't throw it to him the possession before, and then we actually attacked and got the dunk and then we got off three threes in five seconds to end the game. So the guys were well aware of it.

But yeah, I'm excited about it. The point differential doesn't have anything to do with who's the better team, but it does have something to do with how the format is set up, so hopefully we'll get to play for some money tomorrow. That would be great.

Q. Yesterday Coach Sampson from Houston had high things to say about Coach Autry and Syracuse. Syracuse played you pretty smart today. How impressed were you with your opponent today and how did they help cause pressure against you guys, make some difficult plays on offense?

BILL SELF: Well, I actually thought we guarded them well. I thought our ball screen defense was good the first half and then we switched up the second half and switched everything.

But I thought it was actually pretty good. They didn't shoot it well, which we were fortunate, because the good looks they got, they didn't make a real good percentage.

But we didn't turn them over, obviously. But the thing about it is we really rebounded the ball, really rebounded the ball, especially early. That gave us the extra possessions that we didn't make up for in turnover margin.

I was excited. I was excited how we guarded them, the way that they played us, I think, with blitzing the ball screen with the 4 man I thought was really smart. We didn't take advantage of it.

But they're going to have a good team, and of course

they're missing an important player, too. I would anticipate Syracuse having a fun season.

Q. They cut it to two; how do you think you responded so well after that? And Flory's play in the first half versus second?

BILL SELF: That's not all the same question. Flory was more we got the ball to him more in the first half than in the second, and in the second half they didn't double, they played it straight, and we didn't take advantage of him sealing.

Our guards aren't great at getting the ball to the bigs on time. Yet. We'll get better at that. But I thought Flory played fine both halves.

When they cut it to two, we had kind of screwed it up, and we haven't finished games very strong, or halves, like I think we should. But we did have that good stretch after that, and that was good to see because when you win, you like to be stressed, and that stress was probably good for us moving forward.

Q. Bill, how do you handle the rest of this evening not necessarily knowing who you're going to play tomorrow?

BILL SELF: Tell the guys to eat and go to bed. To be honest, tomorrow the way I look at this -- we're going to try to win, but it's a bonus game. We're not going to have a great look on whoever. They're not going to have a great look on us.

I guarantee whoever we play has scouted us, and I guarantee whoever we play, we have scouted them. But it's not going to be -- if you don't know who you're going to play until 10:00 at night, you're not going to bring the guys down stairs at 10:00 at night and say, all right, guys, let's go over scout. You're going to let them sleep.

I'm going to approach it like a game that we're thrilled to be a part of, but it's a bonus game and go have fun and let it go, let it fly.

Q. What do you still want to learn about this team this week?

BILL SELF: I would like to learn if we can actually carry out an assignment and execute. We're piecing it together. We're not running stuff. We don't execute at all.

I would like to see us play where we actually execute in pressure situations that we're going to be in a ton. I mean, how do you not know which side to line up on in press



offense when we do it the same way every time, and they say, well, I thought since the ball was over here -- no, don't think, just do it the way we always do it.

There's things like that that we'll get better at, but that's a lot of guys out there that haven't played together and are young and don't know.

It's exciting to me to know that we've got a lot of room for improvement, too.

Q. Coach, J.J. Starling struggled a little bit tonight. What were you impressed with your team's defensive effort against him?

BILL SELF: He made two big threes, didn't he? And we were going to play him as a driver. He made two big threes, and then he got downhill with his right hand. But he's a good scorer. What did he average, 17 last year? So he can attack the paint and everything.

But I think that we didn't do as good a job on him. I actually thought we did a much better job on the two guards, Kingz and George, and we did a good job on Anthony, too. I thought we guarded those guys pretty well.

Q. How did Dawson's X-rays come out and what's his status moving forward?

BILL SELF: Day-to-day. Day-to-day. It's not broken or anything. But go as tolerated. He said he couldn't go today, so I certainly wouldn't anticipate him playing tomorrow.

Q. When you're playing a team like Syracuse that's struggled as much as it has from the free-throw line, does that change anything with how you coach your team to be aggressive?

BILL SELF: In some ways, yes. I don't think it changed us to say we want to put them in the bonus and then foul. I think once they got to the bonus, it changed that it was okay to foul.

We didn't want to have it be a free throw contest, but they actually shot them better tonight if I'm not mistaken, and you take away the one, that's quite a bit better.

But I actually -- instead of giving up a dunk, you can foul, one of those type deals, which people do with us all the time. We could have done a better job of that.

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