

# Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament: Kansas vs BYU

Sunday, March 29, 2026

Wichita, Kansas, USA

Charles Koch Arena

## Kansas Jayhawks

## Coach Brandon Schneider

## S'Mya Nichols

## Jaliya Davis

### Semifinal Pregame Press Conference

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I think obviously we're excited to not only be in the tournament but to be able to be in our home state and represent the University of Kansas.

I couldn't be prouder of how our team has responded. Obviously there's disappointment on Selection Sunday for many teams. But I think for the way that our young women have responded and continue to really just improve and get better with each and every practice and game.

We have a very tough opponent in which we faced earlier in the year in BYU. They're playing terrific basketball.

**Q. KU is now the only Division I team left standing in the state of Kansas to be playing postseason basketball. What does it mean to you guys to hold that title right now?**

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Well, I hadn't really thought about that. I think it's just a testament, again, to our young women and their ability to stick together and to rally and want to continue to improve and grow and advance our program.

**Q. You mentioned just throughout these stages of the WBIT that you've seen this team continue to improve. Now you mentioned sort of the disappointment of not making the NCAA Tournament, but how pleased have you been with the ability of this team to sort of compartmentalize, forgetting about the past and focusing on the opportunity to continue to keep playing?**

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: We've had some really rough stretches with injuries that probably played major factors in us not putting together a solid enough resume to be



selected. But we got healthier as the year progressed, especially late in the year. And I think that's why we've continued to see growth, in particular, on the defensive end and on the glass.

**Q. And obviously another sweetener to the deal that you guys have been able to stay in the state of Kansas throughout this entire run. There's been some buzz with Jayhawk Nation making the trip. How much does that make this whole experience sweeter knowing you get to play in a familiar place, Wichita? KU has experience playing here. And you get to have, hopefully, some home court advantage.**

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Yeah, I think, I'll be honest with you, I think our team was even more re-energized when Texas A&M lost and we knew that we would have an opportunity to stay at home and compete in the tournament.

I'm excited for them. We've got young women who have played in the state championship here in this arena. So some of them should feel pretty comfortable.

**Q. S'Mya and Jaliya, I'll start with you, your experience playing here at the Roundhouse, what do you remember about the past and how excited are you to be back here?**

S'MYA NICHOLS: The number one thing I remember was losing. My school lost. Liya won.

JALIYA DAVIS: We won, actually.

S'MYA NICHOLS: I remember the atmosphere and being able to come here with my teammates. I know a lot of them weren't really dialed in on the basketball side of it, especially in high school, but it was such a cool experience to go to state here.

JALIYA DAVIS: My experience was pretty good here. Couple of years we didn't go as far as we wanted to. But I mean it's a really cool place. And just being able to come back play again is a really cool opportunity.



**Q. Jaliya, it's been a record-breaking freshman campaign for you, Big 12 Freshman of the Year, and just like I asked Coach, the opportunity to continue to play, seems like a lot of joy with this team at this stage in March. So late in the month, and you guys are still dancing, how does that feel?**

JALIYA DAVIS: Feels great to keep playing with our seniors, just kind of going out and finishing the season out for them.

**Q. Back to the mentality aspect of it, S'Mya and Jaliya, either one of you if you want to answer this. How Coach talked about a little bit of a disappointment when it came to Selection Sunday, but you changed your mentality, focused on what was in front of you, what you could do to still dance at this point. How did you guys get over that emotionally mentally and focus on what was in front of you?**

S'MYA NICHOLS: For sure, we were definitely disappointed and just down about it, just knowing how close we came to in a lot of games in the first place. I think one thing we owned onto was just being consistent every day. We know we have practice. We know we have to get better and just continue building our chemistry on the court so that we can produce.

**Q. The growth that you've seen throughout the season especially this late in the year, what have you guys seen within the team on and off the court that you've liked with your growth this year?**

JALIYA DAVIS: I mean he obviously mentioned there's a couple of injuries. I was part of that myself. Just to be able to come back out and impact and help the team win was really something I wanted to do.

S'MYA NICHOLS: There has been so many evident things that have already just increased and is just going well. I would give a good shout-out to Libby. She's playing really good right now. She's really confident and just not overthinking anything. And I think that it really shows like everything that she's worked on to get to this point.

**Q. S'Mya, you've talked a lot about the young girls on this program and what you've loved to see from them growing and from your position as a veteran, what is kind of been your perspective of that and what have you liked from their growth, in particular?**

S'MYA NICHOLS: Yeah, I mean, I love how they stay in the gym. They are constantly in the gym trying to get better. Whenever they have questionable or -- I mean even bad games, everyone has those, they're thinking

about themselves and how they can better for the team. And their heart is all in it, for sure.

**Q. Jaliya, it's your first experience this late in March in the collegiate level. What's it been like for you just this experience overall?**

JALIYA DAVIS: It's been a really cool experience. I mean just being able to go out there, just being able to play under somebody who is such a strong leader like S'Mya over here, she's taught me a lot and just the ability to work hard.

**Q. Coach, you talked about that one time you've already played BYU this season and how good they've grown as well throughout the year. What are you taking from that one game that you played against them this regular season into this one?**

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Well, in that particular game, you know, our transition defense in the first half was problematic. We gave the appropriate effort but didn't communicate as well as we could have. So we'll try to be better there.

And then in the second half, we were able to get them in a little bit of foul trouble. Obviously playing on our home floor as well.

But I think it's two programs that are really similar in that they're playing their best basketball late in the year and then in March, which is, I think, every coach would hope that for their program.

**Q. And you've talked about it a lot this year, just seeing your older girls and your younger girls mesh really well, both on and off the court. From your perspective, just what has it been like for you as a head coach to see that community really well?**

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I've been doing this for a really long time now, 27 years as a head coach, and we've been fortunate to have some really, really good teams, accomplished teams. But I'm not sure we've had one, a group of young women that have liked each other as much as these guys do on and off the floor.

And I think that makes it really easy for a coaching staff, when you don't have problems in the locker room, you don't have problems off the floor. We've set academic records. So it's a group that I'm extremely grateful and blessed to be a part of.

**Q. I just wanted to ask if you guys could talk about Jaliya and what she's meant coming in as a freshman having such a good year. Could you be more specific**

**about what she does in the game?**

S'MYA NICHOLS: Jaliya brings an insane amount of fire and intensity to the game, so much that sometimes you really have got to calm her down, like, hold on, one second. (Laughter).

But again she brings consistency and pace as well, just playing with pace, being able to run the floor. And she does all the little things right. And I know that everything that she does on the court is everything that she's worked on every single day. Like, she has a routine that she sticks to every single day.

It's just a blessing to play with her, especially just her personality as well, on and off the court. Just two different people. She's such a little sweet soul off the court, but, goodness, on the court just energetic, fiery, sassy, everything -- she's everything that you would want to play with.

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I tell Jaliya all the time she was a pain in the ass to recruit. But once she arrived on campus, it was very, very evident that we had a player who was committed to growing and improving every day.

And that's something that oftentimes a coach or an assistant coach or a staff member has to promote and try to motivate every day.

Like S'Mya said, she comes in with a plan, and we've seen incredible growth in her game in a lot of phases, when you go back to June when she arrived and now in March. And extremely bright, bright future for Jaliya Davis.

**Q. Jaliya, this one's for you starting off here. You've heard the words "freshman of the week" quit a bit this season. We talked about record setting pace for you in conference. Does that add any pressure going into any of these big games with you having such a spotlight on you hitting the floor? Or is this kind of all part of the plan and being great and being successful?**

JALIYA DAVIS: Obviously there's a lot of pressure when everyone is coming at you, but I live for the pressure, just being able to go out there and doing what I do every single day.

**Q. And they said pressure is a privilege. At this stage of the game, being a Kansan yourself and having played in this gym before, what it would mean to be hoisting it up and winning at the very end in Koch Arena?**

JALIYA DAVIS: It would mean a lot just to finish it out

here. I played here for four years, so to come back here and do it again, it will be great opportunity for us.

**Q. S'Mya, you said you lost in this gym a number of years ago -- we're not going to focus on that. But looking more on the positive spin, aside from the game you've got coming hearing KU is a WBIT champion on this same floor, how much of a difference would that make, and how special would that be for you?**

S'MYA NICHOLS: It would be super cool just knowing that we've been working the whole season and seeing it all come together towards the end.

At the end of the day, it's still a really big accomplishment that we should be excited about as a team. So fun fact, we did play here my freshman year. I did win, but just not in high school.

**Q. Coach, to your point that you made a number of days ago, you said this is a very tight-knit group of ladies and they're just special. So kind of take me through some of the moments that you've seen off the court with them that have made this such a tremendous group to coach and to lead at this point in the season.**

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I think it starts with S'Mya being our quarterback and ultimate leader. She had a lot to do with Jaliya being part of the program and the recruiting process. She is very organized in how she leads team gatherings and making sure that they're spending time together off the floor.

But I felt like, we take a team retreat every fall. We saw some accelerated growth there in the 48 hours that we were together, and very vulnerable moments on that retreat that I thought we saw a lot of connection happening, and it's probably the best money that we spend, to be quite honest.

**Q. As it pertains to the city of Wichita, what's it like coming down here? Have you explored the city a little bit? Have you had a chance to do that, get acclimated to the environment down here? What's it been like for you?**

S'MYA NICHOLS: We haven't really explored. We, honestly, just got here. I will say we have a lot of Kansas natives. So it's not our first time being up here, so we know what Wichita contains, you know. But it's still really cool just to be here.

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I was at Emporia State for 15 years. I spent a lot of time in Wichita recruiting. Actually



tried to get this job twice. I have a lot of respect for this area.

**Q. Jaliya, after the WBIT quarters, you and Lilly were at the podium and Lilly made the comment, what else is anyone else doing, come to Wichita. What message would you or S'Mya make to Jayhawk Nation in order to pack the Roundhouse, make it feel as much a home environment as you could?**

JALIYA DAVIS: I think it's really important for fans to come out today. Not today, tomorrow. Come out tomorrow and support us help everybody and make us play our best game.

S'MYA NICHOLS: Our fans, we appreciate them so much. We essentially just play for them.

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