

March 12, 2006



An Interview With:

KANSAS JAYHAWKS

COACH BILL SELF JULIAN WRIGHT MARIO CHALMERS

MODERATOR: We'll go to you first, Coach. Your thoughts on today's conference Championship.

COACH BILL SELF: It was a great game. Of course I wouldn't be saying this if it went the other way, but two teams playing at a high level for vast majority of 40 minutes.

I don't know how many league changes there were or ties, but there were a lot. We played great. That's the best we probably played all year. I thought Texas was really good. But down the stretch I just thought we executed and got stops defensively and of course rebounded the ball a lot better than we did the first time we played them.

MODERATOR: Questions for **Coach Self**.

Q. What were you able to do to take LaMarcus out of game?

COACH BILL SELF: I think fouls helped. He got a couple relatively early the first half and he still played the majority of the first half. But he got, if I am not mistaken, I don't know exactly, a quick third and a quick fourth when he checked back in. He's a great player, and we were unsure even during the game do you trap him or not. But fortunately for us, we did not have to make those decisions for us because he played out of foul problems more. But our big guys are good post defenders. **Sasha** and **C.J.** can both guard very well and they did a good job on him.

Q. How much does this win lift your team with tournament coming up?

COACH BILL SELF: Well, I don't think there's any question that it should give us great

confidence. Last year we went into the tournament on kind of a down swing and this one we're certainly on an up swing.

But playing well this week doesn't guarantee anything next week. But I think it gives us great confidence and the atmosphere and everything will be comparable to an **NCAA** tournament type atmosphere. So I think we got a lot out of coming to Dallas this week.

Q. Hawkins played pretty well in the tournament?

COACH BILL SELF: Yeah, he was great.

Q. Is he a bigger part of the offense and do you have confidence in him taking those guarded threes in big games like that?

COACH BILL SELF: I have got a lot of confidence in him right now. I like for our guys to shoot the ball. If they guard hard they can pretty much shoot it every time they are open. They play smart enough to share it, and when another team plays zone, Hawkins becomes very, very valuable and Texas played a lot of zone which allowed him to get some shoulder squared jumpers. Fortunately for us he made them. He played very well the entire three day weekend though.

Q. Your younger players talked yesterday about wanting to prove kind of a tone for that last game. They played great all year, but do you think this is still a lift for them?

COACH BILL SELF: I think it is a lift, yeah, I think so. These guys, they have only played in -- last 22 wins they have only played -- well, every win we have had this year, 25 wins, only two of them have been single figures. So they have played pretty good. Then of course 5 to 7 losses were on the last possession.

So we have been in games -- but I really think the **Oklahoma State** game probably did as much for us as any game because we need to win a close game, a grind it out game. We were okay yesterday, but today we played at a level that we haven't played at consistently all year long, and it was so good to see because to get all 5 guys, regardless of who they are, on the floor, working together like that, was something that we needed

to see and that's even with **Brandon** having an off night.

Q. This season you haven't played a lot of teams that are going to be one or two seeds for the NCAA?

COACH BILL SELF: We played one today.

Q. Exactly. Will that win over Texas, does that give you a lot of confidence that you can compete with those kind of teams?

COACH BILL SELF: I think some. We have got truly good players, and they are playing to their talent level a lot better, and -- but I think so. But the thing about the **NCAA** tournament, you can't look to see who the one or the two is with you. We know firsthand we got to take care of business whoever we're playing the first day and obviously that won't be -- I don't think will be seeded such where you will look and say, well, that's definitely a win.

I think it will be a situation where like last year or four or five or whatever, that we're going to have a very tough opponent first game, so I am concerned about our guys believing they are good enough to play with anybody. But we need to not be looking too far ahead. We need to take it one day at a time.

MODERATOR: We're joined by Julian Wright from Kansas.

Q. Bill, when we look at McDonald's All-Americans we always look at offense. Great athletic ability. Did you see the defensive potential in Robinson and Chalmer and Wright or does that kind of surprise you how good they are?

COACH BILL SELF: Mario, I mean, Mario and Julian and Brandon done were obviously -- **Brandon** wasn't a McDonald's guy, so it was Mario and Julian were. And I will be honest with you, the way they played in high school, Julian only averaged about 13, 14 points a game, so he was a complete guy. It was easy sell for him. I think it's been an easy sell for Mario. Russell, that's who he is. Russell came here, that's who he is. I think Julian would agree that's his mindset. He's the heart and soul and pulse of our team more than anyone else.

And the other guys, C.J., **Sasha, Darnell**, those guys weren't McDonald's guys. Those guys weren't highly recruited. Those were guys that didn't score points in high school. So it was an easy sell for them if they want to help the team do this and that, and certainly they have done that.

These guys have bought into guarding probably better than I thought they would at this age.

Q. Talk about that pass you are making from the high post, seems like Sasha catching the ball much better now. Is that a matter of doing that through three, four months and then getting used to that pass?

JULIAN WRIGHT: Definitely. We work on that a lot in practice just high, low, also being aware of the ball and knowing that that's what I like to do. I like to distribute the ball, me and **Sasha** developed a good chemistry in terms of where we like the ball, where he likes the ball to score. He's a big body. I know he's going to get to the line, get big man in foul trouble, put pressure on them, and the guards were able to knock down shots too.

Q. Can you talk about 32 points off turnovers. Were you surprised at how many points you were able to get off that when Texas only had 7?

COACH BILL SELF: They only had 7 when? They had 16 turnovers.

Q. Points off turnovers?

COACH BILL SELF: I am sorry, okay.

MARIO CHALMERS: We were kind of surprised. First game they got us when we played them at their house, they kind of scored off our turnovers. Today we tried to bring a lot of defensive pressure to them and make easy baskets off their mistakes.

Q. Talk about what it means to win this tournament coming from where you guys have come from at the middle of the -- at the middle part of season with all the talk?

JULIAN WRIGHT: It means a lot to me and to everyone. Just the way that we became -- we have become a team, you know, team oriented, everything we do outside of the court and everyone is ready to work and make sacrifices.

That's the big thing this year. We were able to just bounce back from when we were 1-2 and look at us now, we just try to, you know, listen to Coach Self and coaching staff and try to get better day by day.

MODERATOR: One last question for Coach Self.

Q. No trophy presentation in Manhattan, but this one might have been a little bit sweeter today?

COACH BILL SELF: That kind of got

blown out of proportion in how that went down. And the league certainly told us that it was kind of a mishap, so there's no hard feelings on that deal at all. But I think in a weird way, it might have helped us because, you know, we did tie for it and our guys maybe probably didn't feel the same way the Texas kids felt when they tied for it. No fault to anyone, but certainly it was nice to hold that one today. I know the guys really enjoyed that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

March 12, 2006



An Interview With:

TEXAS LONGHORNS

COACH RICK BARNES P.J. TUCKER BRAD BUCKMAN

COACH RICK BARNES: Congratulations to Kansas. We made a lot of mistakes with the ball and they turned them into opportunities and scored, and that was the difference in the game.

MODERATOR: Let's go to questions for our two student athletes. We'll come back to Coach *Barnes*.

Q. Talk about the Kansas defense in the last five minutes of the game.

P.J. TUCKER: They played pretty good defense, but I think it was more of us just bogging down on offense and not doing all of what we were supposed to have done.

I think that we still, you know, are a good team but we just -- that last five minutes we didn't tough it out as we should have.

Q. Following up, particularly on Julian Wright, maybe the two biggest plays of the games he comes up with steals. Can you reference those two plays, how big they were?

P.J. TUCKER: When you gets caught up in the moment like that it's coming down to -- everybody is trying to make a play and trying to get their team going, so he came up with two big steals that was probably two of the biggest plays in the game, and just plays where some players, especially myself, just trying to make something happen when there's nothing there.

Q. Did you see anything missing mentally internally here for you guys at all?

P.J. TUCKER: I don't think that we displayed being the same team that we usually are

tonight today. They came out, played really hard, got to give credit to them. They didn't give up at any point in the game. We definitely just let down. We weren't the team that we usually are today

BRAD BUCKMAN: I agree. We weren't the team like we were at the end of the season. But it happens, and we're going to learn from this and our season starts the big -- I mean, March Madness starts next week, so we have got to worry about that right now.

Q. What did you notice about them that was different than when they played in Austin?

P.J. TUCKER: I don't think they played any different. They still did mainly the same things they did in *Austin*. We played different. We never gave up. We kept attacking, kept on making big plays, and we played hard the whole game. I don't think it was more of them. I think they still did the same things, but I think we were a totally different team.

Q. Particularly after the first two games, what were you looking for out of yourself as far as effort and results in this one?

BRAD BUCKMAN: You know, I feel like I was a no-show in the first couple of games. This team deserves a lot more out of me than I gave them first couple of games. I can't have that now. I am a senior. I should know what I have to do every game, and I let my team down in the first couple of games.

I can't be having that coming into next week because it's All-Star next week, so, you know, I wanted to be a lot more effective this game. My shots is not falling and I got to do some other things besides shooting the ball.

Q. Can you guys talk about the atmosphere today, what it was like, how that can prepare you for what you will face in the week coming?

P.J. TUCKER: A lot of times we're used to playing on the road anyway because a lot of games, called neutral games, we end up -- seems like we're on the road anyway. So we're used to it.

Crowd today was pretty good, we had a lot of fans. They did as well, so it was a tough game. These are games you can expect in the first,

second round after tournament. Just getting us prepared for next week.

BRAD BUCKMAN: Obviously they had a lot of fans; we had a pretty good amount of fans. That's how the environment is going to be from here on out. We have got to get used to it. We have seen it before, we have to understand that that's how it's going to be the rest of the games.

Q. Same question I asked the guys, anything intangible about today's game that concerns you at all?

COACH RICK BARNES: No, none of that at all other than the fact that it's pretty simple, you look at the line, I mean, they scored 32 points off turnovers and they shoot -- end up for the game 44 percent. You take away those turnovers, I don't think they would have shot that high a percentage.

And the biggest difference, if you want to look at the line, LaMarcus didn't have the game he had in *Austin*, that was obviously the difference in him having to be on the bench there. But again, even with that, the two turnovers that Julian Wright made, you can say what you want to say, those were two big plays. But we come out and make two free throws and we missed three of them, it's a one-possession game and we'll see from there.

We don't make the plays we had to make, and that's the most disappointing thing. Give them credit for what they did because they did the things they had to do. We didn't. Taking care of the ball again, you turn the ball over 16 times and a number of those being unforced, that's the most frustrating part of it.

Q. You just touched on it, LaMarcus, 5 points and 5 rebounds in 28 minutes. What did they do to take him out of the game?

COACH RICK BARNES: I don't know. I can't tell you that. They obviously came in, tried to be physical because they have got -- I am sure they are sitting there thinking they got 20 fouls to give there and they were being very, very physical to start with and getting him off the lane a little bit.

He had two fouls, he had a foul where he -- the illegal screen, which I don't -- probably would tell you that's not necessary for him to do. And he reached in on a ball screen which he didn't need to do. Those are the kind of plays I told him all year that it takes him out of the game, he's not as aggressive. He picks up a couple of fouls, but they shot the ball. They made 12 threes, but a lot of that has to do with the fact that our turnovers gave them some breathing room.

I would have loved to see if we made those free throws with a one-possession game,

see what happened in the last couple of minutes. But we didn't do our part to get it to that point.

Q. Just two quick questions. How do you think this loss affects your team with the tournament selection committee? How does it affect your team period?

COACH RICK BARNES: I can't answer the first one at all. I can't answer that. But in terms our team, we talk about different seasons that we play, you got your none-league schedule, regular season, and a conference tournament. I'd say that we have done pretty well except getting the final result in this tournament.

Even if you win this tournament, it doesn't matter, starting next week it is a whole new basketball season for 65 teams and if we do what we have done in the past, we'll bounce back. We'll learn from it. And better now than later because we definitely can do things better than we did today. We're going to have to, or this is what happens this time of year. It's single elimination, it's not a series here. But you know, it is what it is. We lose today, and we have got to get ready to play. I think our guys will.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports