

**October 23, 2008**



An Interview With:

## **KANSAS COACH BILL SELF**

PETER IRWIN: We're joined by Coach Bill Self from Kansas. Welcome, and your opening thoughts.

COACH SELF: Well, opening thoughts, I think this is an exciting time for all coaches and everybody's excited about their team and everybody's undefeated and has high expectations, and certainly we fall in that category. And it's been a good off-season and we've added some nice players into the mix, and we needed to because we lost so many guys.

But it's going to be, I believe, a fun year for us. I'm excited about working with these young guys.

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

**Q. Can you describe what your life has been like these past few months on the tilt-a-whirl and are you glad to be getting back to the business of doing some coaching?**

COACH SELF: Yeah, I am. My life has been hectic, but there's a lot of guys and ladies out there whose lives are hectic and have a lot going on. And we've had a lot of things going on, but there's been a lot of worthwhile things we've tried to squeeze in to do since there's been more opportunities this past six months than there maybe has been in other times following the season.

But it's been wild, but it still beats work. And I hope I'm busy every off-season like this. That means we probably had a pretty successful run.

But it is nice to get back to coaching your team and you know where you're going to spend the night every night and that kind of stuff, because I'm probably less busy now coaching our team than I have been the last six months as far as trying to cram so many different things into the day.

**Q. Can you talk about what benefits come to your program with the national championship, some tangible things, and then more broadly what sort of benefits that could have for the Big 12?**

COACH SELF: Well, I think for the University of Kansas, I think there's been many benefits. I think our interest level is at an all-time high at a place where the interest level has always been very high.

I think because of us winning it, it helps spearhead improvements, major, major improvements in facilities that would have gotten done, but it probably accelerated that. And also from a recruiting standpoint. I don't think winning it guarantees you anything, because you still have to be people -- more times than not on their turf recruiting.

So we've still got to go to LA and USC and Southern Cal, you've got Chicago and Illinois and Michigan State and Notre Dame there. You've got to go different spots and you're in somebody else's turf, but I think we're in the game and I think that's certainly assisted us in being in the game.

And from a league standpoint, from my vantage point it's ridiculous that the Big 12 had to validate the play of our league in men's basketball when you've had so many teams in the Final Four and Elite Eights over the time that the league's been in existence.

But I don't think coaches felt that ever. But from the outside of the media perspective, it's something that probably needed to be done just to validate that, hey, this is as good a basketball league as there is anywhere.

**Q. I'm sure you had some idea before you won a national championship of what you thought it might feel like after the fact. Now that you've had a chance to reflect on it, what did it feel like to win a national championship, and also was there a time last year when you thought Byron Eaton was playing as well as anyone in the league?**

COACH SELF: I thought that for one 40-minute period when he played Kansas, that's for sure, because he kicked us pretty good when we played at Oklahoma State last year. I thought Byron was fabulous.

But certainly the feelings of winning the championship, I think, is the only time that I've ever felt the win felt better than the losses felt bad. The only time.

I've never had a game where I felt that winning that game felt as good as bad the losses hurt. And that was like you could add all the losses up and it definitely still feels better.

The thing that I probably underestimated in winning it, because I hadn't thought about it, was the internal satisfaction that you get that's non-public-related for your players and for everybody that's just joined in and played a role in helping a group get there.

And that could be, you know -- you just realize there's so many people that take just such great pride and played a role in helping you coach your team, helping put you in a position to even be in that game and those sorts of things.

To me it's pretty humbling because there's a lot of people that have given their heart and soul to this profession and we had an opportunity to experience as good as it possibly can feel. So we feel pretty blessed and lucky with that.

**Q. With you and Kansas State losing so many underclassmen early, how much do you think the balance of power swings back down to the South this year?**

COACH SELF: I think if you talked to the coaches in the South, they'll say that the balance of the power has been in the South for a while. If you talk to the coaches in the North, they think the South coaches don't know what they're talking about.

But I do think on paper the South appears to be very, very strong. I'm not saying the North does not appear to be strong. I'm just saying the South appears to be very strong, when you have Oklahoma and Texas and Baylor, who is picked 1, 2 and 3 in the league. So obviously I'm not the only one who feels that way.

But I will tell you this: Expect the unexpected. I mean, that's always the way it works in our league. You're going to have guys step up and that are -- from my vantage point, from your vantage point, how could you not think that K-State and Kansas would take a step backwards based on what they lost? How many have been to

practice so far and know what we gained when we lost guys?

So, I mean, K-State may not have Beasley, and we may not have our guys and that kind of stuff, but there are nice pieces to replace them. And sometimes the pieces can lend itself to becoming very, very good teams. And that's the goal is not to have the best teams, the goal is to have the best team, which the best players give you the best chance.

I do think that the league will be as competitive as it is every year and history certainly played out to be true in that regard.

**Q. From what you've seen in practice, is there a reason to think that you're better than some people might believe?**

COACH SELF: I don't think we're very good right now at all. I do think we have a chance to get good, because I think we have some nice pieces. There's much less margin for error. Last year Darnell gets hurt, you put Sasha in there or -- so there's much less margin for error.

But I don't think that we should just look at what we lost, because we did get some nice players coming in, and I do think we'll be very competitive, and I think we've got a chance to be good. I just don't know when that time frame will occur.

But hopefully it will occur before conference play begins, but there's no reason why we shouldn't be very competitive this year.

**Q. Among those new faces, has anybody caught your eye in particular in only a week?**

COACH SELF: I would say. I think Tyshawn Taylor is really a nice player and he's a guy that nobody would know of him because he was the third or fourth leading scorer in his high school team. Of course, his high school team that won the mythical national championship, but he only averaged 10 a game in high school. But he's good. And he's going to be good.

And Marcus Morris is going to be very good. Markieff Morris has a chance to be very good. Mario Little, Travis Releford are guys that I think can play most places.

So to me it's not going to be as much from do we have good enough guys, it's going to be a situation can we just get them to understand and buy in in what we're doing and can we get them to

become a team, because we're not even close to becoming a team. I don't know if I've even had a team become a team until December or January.

But certainly this group has a chance and it's kind of new and it's fresh and there's that youthful exuberance or whatever that's kind of refreshing, because it takes us an hour to do something last year's team took five minutes to do, but still, yet, they work hard that entire hour at it and they're trying. So I think that's exciting.

**Q. Based on what you've seen in practices so far, how are guys reacting to the extended three-point line?**

COACH SELF: I would say we have probably a little bit of an advantage over some schools, because we went to Canada. And I thought Canada, without us emphasizing it at all, we didn't emphasize it at all, but we took a lot of bad shots. We took a lot of two-and-a half pointers because they just not knowing the geography of the court as well.

I do think it's going to have an impact. It won't have an impact with some guys, like Abrams. He doesn't ever shoot on the line anyway.

But there will be a majority of guys, that that 19-9 shot that was a decent shot for them now becomes a poor shot. And something else nobody talks about, side out of bounds is going to become a big factor, too, because guys try to posture themselves for a three in the corner even though it's not like the NBA line, that extra foot you're going to see a lot of guys stepping out of bounds, too.

So there will be things like that trying to position themselves to shoot a three. So there will be things like that that occur that I think it will take a year or so before players really get totally comfortable.

But makes you go down. I just can't believe that you can move it back. It becomes a harder shot. And that does not occur. So I do think it will impact our game.

**Q. You say it makes you go down, but do you think maybe it would deter people who aren't that good at it and then just the good shooters take the three and it doesn't impact the percentage?**

COACH SELF: Well, in other words, coaches are going to start telling them who can shoot and who can't shoot. Yeah, that could become true. We would never do that at Kansas

(smiling), but we would never take a guy's confidence.

But I do think that there will probably be more of that. But when you say makes go down, then you have less attempts. So percentages are not going to go up, I don't care who is shooting them.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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