

March 14, 2008



KANSAS JAYHAWKS

CHARLIE FISS: We're joined now by the Kansas Jayhawks, Coach Bill Self and his two student athletes, Sherron Collins and Sasha Kaun.

Coach, congratulations on your victory and your thoughts on tonight's game?

COACH BILL SELF: Me first? I thought the second half we played a lot better than we did the first half. But I thought Nebraska was -- and I think these guys would agree, did a great job controlling pace the first half. We turned it over. I think the stat was they had 15 points off our turnovers and we had 0 off of theirs. So that's, in large part, why they controlled the first half. And defensively we weren't horrible. They only had 27 or so the first half.

But second half we played with much better energy. You can ask these guys this, I thought we played tight the first half. And second half, you know, the ball got in the hole a couple of times and kind of loosened us up and played a lot better.

Q. Sherron and Sasha, at what point at the end of the first half did you feel there was a turning point? Was it when they were reviewing the play? It just seemed like the energy picked up right there at the end before the half where you guys just looked at the game a little different or the energy level went up. Can you kind of describe when you felt things turned for you guys?

SHERRON COLLINS: During the first half, we knew we just had to change from the first half. We just came out -- like Coach said, we are a little tight and things did go our way and we turned the ball over.

During the game, I think we had a small little run and got the lead down to five. I think we went into the locker room, a little bit momentum on our shoulders, we knew we had to change it anyway.

SASHA KAUN: Like Sherron said, I think after the last media time out we came out from the huddle and we played a little bit more with energy. Coach said we have to cut the lead and that's what we did and it helped us go into the second half.

Q. It looked like you were never going to be 100% this year but you looked very close now. How is your health and how long have you been feeling this good physically?

SHERRON COLLINS: I'm feeling fine right now, feeling good. I have been feeling pretty good since about the K-State game a few weeks back. Just been doing a good job, getting treatment and trainer has been doing good with me and giving me a lot of treatment and getting me to this point.

And I think I am real close to 100% and I won't look back. I don't think I will be bothered with any of my injuries.

Q. Sherron, do you think when you've had as much success as you guys had against the team like Nebraska this year, do you think maybe that's why you get off to a slow start? Do you kind of look ahead when you have beaten them so bad the first two times?

SHERRON COLLINS: I think that's half of the reason. The other reason is knowing Kansas and we basically play with a target on our back. We're going to get everybody's shot. You know, this is the Big 12 tournament. For some people, it means a lot to them. They got -- they are going to give us their best shot. We didn't come out to match their intensity. We didn't match the energy. We were flat. And we just didn't come out ready to play.

Q. Sherron, it looked like it got a little interesting at the end, got a little chippy. What was going on out there?

SHERRON COLLINS: I feel the last foul that he made, I just feel he didn't go for the ball. I just felt that -- a little cheap shot. I shouldn't have lost my cool. I should have kept my composure a little bit more than I did. I just start chattering with

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him, and I shouldn't have did that.

Q. Sherron, it looked like early in the game you were really into being a leader and emotional. Do you feel like this is a time for you to really put your personality on this team?

SHERRON COLLINS: Yeah, I think it should have been done. But I know I was bothered with injuries and stuff wasn't going right. I kept good attitude during that, but I think sometimes when I'm out there, somebody needs to talk and speak up and I try to be the one to do it if nobody else is doing it.

I know we needed a boost, and I just tried to keep encouraging my teammates when things are going wrong or not our way.

Q. Sasha, how much do you get up for playing Maric? You are both seniors and this is the last time you are seeing him?

SASHA KAUN: It was definitely an exciting game for me, especially after this past summer, I got to know him a little bit better and kind of going -- become little bit of friends and just fun playing against each other. He is a great player. I love playing against him. It was kind of sad it was the last time for us to go against each other. But definitely it is a lot of fun.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you for coming. Congratulations on your victory.

Q. Bill, those two guys coming off the bench the way they're playing right now and Sherron being 100%, it seems like it gives you a hell of a boost going into the tournament?

COACH BILL SELF: I think so. You could make a case that tonight those were our two best performers. I don't think there's probably any doubt about that. You could make a case that Sherron has been as good a performer as we've had the last two to three weeks. Sasha has been rock solid off the bench. You know, one thing tonight, coaches role the dice. When Sherron got his second foul. I pulled him and we lost a little bit of energy when I pulled him.

You know, coaches have to have trust in their players playing without fouling. And he starts out the second half with picking up his third just like that (snapping fingers). Maybe it was a smart play, I don't know. Those two, Sasha is a stabilizer and Sherron is the guy that is the boost-- energy boost.

You know we definitely need those guys. When those two aren't playing well, we almost have to go five for five. When those two aren't playing well, we can go five for seven and we are in still pretty good shape because you can have five guys that are productive out on the court all the time.

Q. Bill, how frustrating has it been for Sherron not to be at full speed all year and what kind of lift does it give you guys when he is at 100% like it seems he has been at the last couple weeks?

COACH BILL SELF: He is the as best the player we have, period. You could make a case that Mario or Brandon or Shady (Darrell Arthur) or Darnell at all points in time during the season have been our best player. Sherron has played as well as anybody in our program has played during their hot stretches. He is as important as anybody we have.

But one thing about him, he lives for ball and it's been a very, very frustrating, humbling year for him because he's done what he's supposed to do to get himself back but he just hasn't caught many breaks. But, you know, if he's healthy when it counts the most, then, you know, really what's happened up until this point, we're not going to remember that much. It is going to be from this point forward.

So it is nice to have him at full strength.

Q. At the end of the game when Sherron gets the technical, he just said he should have kept his composure. But time and score you were comfortably ahead. It was a cheap shot. As the coach, do you have a problem with the way he reacted there or does it bring a spark to your team that shows he will fight back and not take that?

COACH BILL SELF: I think you can show a spark and not fight back without getting a technical.

The one thing about being a player, a mature player, is always next play. There's a point in time where you can do that, and you say cheap shot. I don't -- he fouled him. The foul was called. I mean, that happens. Hard fouls happen sometimes. So maybe it was. Maybe it wasn't. Who knows, but there's a way to conduct your business and get your point across without getting T'd up. I didn't like it. But I know what you're

saying. But I love the fire, he just has to do a better job of controlling it.

Q. With the way Sherron is playing and the play of Russell and Mario, as you go forward here, do you do anything subtle with the minutes for those three guys, as you give more to Sherron?

COACH BILL SELF: There is no doubt we will. But he's got to also play without fouling. Against A&M he played 32 minutes. He's a guy that without foul issues, off the bench, he should be playing close to 30 a night. So if he's playing well.

The whole thing -- one of the great things about our team is all four of them don't have to play great but it would be nice if three of them do. So whoever the -- the three best playing guys that night, you can play the majority of the minutes, but the way he's playing right now, I don't see a scenario that's not -- he's not going to be out there more.

Q. Coach, what did you say to your team at halftime? You were trailing by five at the time. And it seemed like a complete difference in intensity from the first half to the second.

COACH BILL SELF: I will be real candid, I was very disappointed in our team in the first half. I was disappointed how we got frustrated. I was disappointed in our energy level. Not that we weren't trying, sometimes people say you play with lack of energy, that means you don't care. That's not it at all. We played tight. When you play tight, you don't play with as much energy.

And we had a collection of guys not play particularly well and we started the game off getting the ball two feet and we turn it over. It was just one of those deals where things just didn't go well.

But the thing I was most disappointed in, we are athletic enough that we should be a great loose-ball team and they beat us to the loose balls. So to me that's a sign of being sharp and being focused and energetic. We didn't talk about Xs and Os. We just talked about getting back to who we are, if it means as much to you as I think it does. And I thought they performed pretty well the second half, especially starting out.

Q. As you use this weekend to get ready for the NCAA tournament, is there a

better matchup for you tomorrow to start to get ready? Is it a team with Beasley and Walker where you have to defend two guys like that or a team approach that A&M would throw at you? Which is better for this team to get them ready?

COACH BILL SELF: You know, I don't know. Obviously K-State handled us the first time we played them and played better the second time.

A&M, we played our best road game of the season probably down there. But we know they're capable of playing with us and having a great chance to win, if they perform.

I don't know which is -- I don't know which prepares you more. But I will say this, both of them are great preparation games. I think they're both great games because you are going to see similar styles in the tournament. You may see a team that has one or two guys that score 60% of their points, you may play a team whose leading score average is 12. I think they are both preparation games.

Q. When you guys came here in December and played, we talked and you said, Sherron had this nagging injury and that it would fix itself at some point. Did you ever give up and was like, "Damn, it will never be right and he will never be 100%," and it seems like out of nowhere, wham?

COACH BILL SELF: I will tell you, we didn't give up. We thought when he bruised his knee the week before the Colorado game at home, we didn't see any improvement over time. You know, if you watched us play Oklahoma State, he was no factor. Iowa State, he wasn't much of a factor. Colorado at home, he wasn't a factor.

And then it was almost like one day he was able to run without it catching or where he felt very little pain. So we talked about this, even the training staff said he may not get back all the way this year. But I think he is. I don't think there's anything holding him back health-wise right now.

CHARLIE FISS: Coach, thank you very much.

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