

March 10, 2011



Kansas – 63
Oklahoma – 62

An Interview With:

**KANSAS
COACH BILL SELF
MARIO LITTLE
MARCUS MORRIS**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the Kansas Jayhawks, Coach Bill Self and student-athletes Mario Little and Marcus Morris. Coach, an opening statement.

COACH SELF: It's obviously hard fought. We're fortunate. They played well. They controlled the game, the majority of it. But we did guard and rebound the second half.

And we really feel fortunate to have won considering how we shot the basketball.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Mario, talk about your play in the lane, what you were thinking, what you saw, how you made your move?

MARIO LITTLE: When teams go zone, I mean, Coach likes to throw me in the middle. I just like to turn and face and try to catch it and maybe hit a guy somewhere or drive.

I feel like the game is slower when teams go zone, so it's kind of easy for me to make moves in there.

Q. Marcus, they got into foul trouble, especially their bigs. What were you doing to get that to happen?

MARCUS MORRIS: Just trying to be aggressive and try to attack, because in our scouting report, on the big side, they wasn't that

deep on the bench. So it was first bigs in foul trouble was definitely a key to getting them in foul trouble first.

Q. Marcus, you had nine offensive boards today, was that just a product of their bigs being in foul trouble or what made the difference for you?

MARCUS MORRIS: Definitely. Just trying to stay aggressive on the rebounding, because definitely, like I said earlier, it's definitely just being aggressive and seeing who wanted it more. I felt like if I get a couple of offensive rebounds I could get a couple of fouls and maybe get to the foul line. I was just trying to be effective on both ends of the court.

Q. Marcus, your only basket in the second half was the 3. With those guys in foul trouble, were you surprised you didn't get the ball inside more in the second half?

MARCUS MORRIS: They did a great job of trapping. Our guys really didn't make too many shots. But, I mean, they've been making them all year. So we're going to live and die with those guys shooting, and Tyrel and Brady. But they did a great job of denying us the ball and driving on the inside.

Q. Marcus, talk about the play that Mario made, and how you guys view his role on this team.

MARCUS MORRIS: Rio is our off-the-bench spark, he scores off the bench. When he came in with about a minute and a half to go and he missed a couple of middle shots, I told him to just stay aggressive because they were small and they gave me a better chance of getting it off of the rebounds. And I knew he makes those shots all the time, so I told him to just stay aggressive and keep shooting.

Q. Marcus, what did Markel Brown say

to you after both those blocks he had on you?

MARCUS MORRIS: Whatever he said got him the tech. I can't really repeat what he said. But it's all in the game. He was happy that he got those blocks. But he said some things I can't say.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. In a tight game like this where there's no one team taking advantage, what's going through your mind in the last few seconds when the shot comes up short and the seconds tick off the clock?

COACH SELF: We've been in -- over the years you're in that situation quite often. And I've never been one you hope for things or you wish for things or anything like that, but I admit I was praying a little bit.

But the whole thing is our defense. We couldn't keep them off the free-throw line. And fortunately I think Dowell kind of fumbled the ball, which that killed the play.

I was more concerned with us fouling than making a shot because I thought they do a good job of putting their head down and driving.

Q. Can you talk about the importance of Oklahoma State's bigs getting in foul trouble?

COACH SELF: I think it was important, obviously. I don't think we took full advantage of it. They played -- if you watched our team play a lot, we'll shoot about 28, 30 percent of our shots are 3s, and when we're playing really well about 10 to 15 percent of our shots are 3s.

And that's as tight as anybody's played us all year. I mean, they go zone and the looks that we were going to get more than likely, if it wasn't right in the middle against the zone or against their man, was going to be guys open on the perimeter.

When their bigs went out they probably even condensed it more. And we didn't make them pay. We had several opportunities to make them pay and didn't do it. But it was smart defense, good strategy. And it worked. But certainly we wanted to attack them inside.

We talked at halftime. I think they had three, two, and two at halftime, and we talked at halftime and said we have to go inside and pick up a couple of early ones. In the second half, fortunately we were able to.

Q. Third straight game you guys have been a little bit sloppy offensively but still

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pulled out a win. What's been kind of the impetus for that?

COACH SELF: I think against Missouri we were sloppy. I'm not sure we were against A&M. To me you can tell sloppiness by turnovers and shot selection and all that.

The way they guard us, we had eight turnovers for a game which, for this team, is remarkable, to take care of the ball that well.

So we had a couple of bad plays late, I know, which led to easy baskets for them. But for the most part it wasn't sloppiness. It was bad shooting. And I think there's a difference in that.

Q. Can you talk about the decision to go with Mario when Markieff fouled out instead of Thomas? Was that because they were in zone, like you said?

COACH SELF: Yes, partly because they were in zone, and there were a couple of other reasons. They were small, which allowed us to switch ball screens and hand-offs.

And the last thing is I believe Thomas can make free throws but Mario is a better free-throw shooter, and we were in the double bonus, if I'm not mistaken. That was it. I asked our guys, Who do we go with? And Mario obviously is probably a little bit more skilled against the zone. And fortunately for us it paid off because he made a couple of really nice plays in there, really nice.

Q. Bill, they came out as evidenced by their two technicals in the first half.

COACH SELF: Fired up.

Q. Pretty fired up. I didn't think you guys were. Am I right on that? Or you just didn't match that anyway.

COACH SELF: I would agree with that. I told our guys before the game, you know, obviously the last five minutes of a game is far more important than the first five, because the mistakes are magnified and you don't have time to recover. First five you have time to recover, the second five you have time to recover, all that stuff.

In our season, we know we're going to get to go on. And their goal is to go to the NCAA Tournament. And so they're in the last five and we played like we were in the first five. And that was the analogy that I used.

To be honest with you, when I thought of it I thought it was pretty good. But they played like

there was no tomorrow. And they had energy. I thought they pumped us up early in the game. But I did think we responded pretty well. We played through some stuff today that missed shots and different things that I think will be positive for us moving forward.

Q. Talk about Page. I assume he's a player you like, and how did you defend him where he didn't get a touch on that last sequence?

COACH SELF: We didn't do a bad job on him and he gets 23 on 12 shots and he's good. The one thing you have to do on him is you have to keep him off the free-throw line. You have to take away 3s and keep him off the free-throw line.

And we actually did a decent job. He scored six points to start the game off of poor defensive plays and kind of got their team going up a little bit. I think we were up 7 to 3, and then he gets fouled on a 3, and on a bad shot 3 gets fouled, and 7 to 6, not that it was a huge deal, but it got their confidence going and their team.

But we didn't defend him poorly. I thought Elijah and Tyshawn did a decent job. We switched everything late, and fortunately for us the ball did not come back to him. The ball stayed on the other side of the floor. They played the hole with Kemi, and it ended up in Dowell's hands. And we were fortunate there was a fumble right there.

Q. What Blair asked about, the guys coming out fired up, do you get the sense at this point in the season that some teams are kind of trying to bait Marcus and Markieff into playing that type of game, get in their heads, get them in trouble on the court?

COACH SELF: I didn't sense that at all tonight. I didn't sense that at all. And if they do, they do. But my guys have also been guilty on the other hand of doing the same thing to opponents. Saying that's basketball. But certainly I think those two have done a better job, knock on wood, of seeing the big picture as opposed to seeing small picture.

So I'm hopeful that's the case.

Q. Depending on what happens in this next game, you guys could see Kansas State, in-state rival. They've knocked you off once, they knocked you off once. Talk about the potential matchup against Kansas State in the semifinals.

COACH SELF: I think our guys will look forward to that game just like their guys will. I think it could be a fun deal. They have a tough game to play first. It's amazing look at the games in the tournament so far. If I'm not mistaken, what do we have, four games out of the five come down to the last possession or last two possessions. It's been great.

But we'll have to play a lot better to be successful tomorrow. There's no question about that. Regardless of who we play. But against K-State, if we play like we did today, we'll go home sad tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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