

2019-20
KANSAS MEN'S BASKETBALL
**BILL SELF PRESS CONFERENCE
QUOTES**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2019

KANSAS HEAD COACH BILL SELF

On if he coaches freshman or veteran players differently:

"I don't coach them differently, regardless of classification. I never have. I've always thought the freshmen have to do the same things that the seniors have to do. Now you should take into consideration when they (freshmen) have no chance to know and it's not anybody's fault. If they haven't experienced some things, certainly you should be patient with that. For the most part, when I look out there I don't see young kids or veterans, I just see guys. Isaiah Moss is a young guy compared to Devon Dotson in my eyes, because he actually is a newcomer. But to your point, we do need to have our younger guys play older. That's not a problem with Devon and Ochai (Agbaji) for the most part, but it is with Christian (Braun) and Tristen (Enaruna) and Silvio (De Sousa). We need to get those young guys certainly playing older to give us more depth and more production off the bench."

On how he gets through to the young players:

"I think with Silvio opportunity is a big part of it. But even last game, he was in there, he did fine, but he didn't really have anything really good happen. You play well, you go 3-of-6 from the free throw line, you miss a bunny – he just really didn't much of a chance to play and get numbers. The thing that's frustrating to those guys, and it's not as frustrating to me as it was earlier, is it's pretty evident that – we got off to a great start the other night (vs. Milwaukee) with two big guys out there – but for the most part, offense seems to flow better when we have a smaller team out there. It's not those guys' fault, but their guy guards Dok (Azubuike), and when they're not in there then their guy doesn't guard Dok as much. It's just a natural deal, it's what's best for our team. I've got to be creative and do some things that create better spacing and not allow that to happen as easily when those two bigs are in the game. I've never been a coach to run plays after a miss. At least that's what I think, you flow into what you do. Well, maybe when we play big we need to run some plays off a miss because maybe those plays will be designed to keep them apart. Maybe doing things like that to keep them apart. That's not how I've wanted to play and certainly goes against how we play, but maybe for this particular team that would be good for us."

On what he meant when he said he wanted his team to "play bigger" following the game vs. Milwaukee:

"Basically protecting the rim and rebounding the ball a little better. I think that we rebounded pretty good the other night in the first half and then we didn't rebound as good as far as the numbers go in the second half. I think that if you want to play inside-out and get their bigs in foul trouble and give them something to guard and certainly creating more rim protection and lane protection and then dominating the glass more, that's how I would see it. I don't see it as necessarily our big guys scoring a lot more points. But I can see David (McCormack) or Silvio posted so strong that they have to call a foul on David or Silvio or the guy guarding David or Silvio. Not too many people can throw that many quality bigs out there like we can so I think that will be an advantage to us."

On how the players off the bench can not have as much drop-off when they come in the game:

"I think you will have a drop-off. And the drop-off is not anyone's fault, it's just a lack of confidence, being reactionary as opposed to thinking. To me, Tristen Enaruna is one of the best athletes on our team. He's one of the best athletes. But I think thinking-wise he gets tied up or he doesn't play to his athletic ability. Christian Braun was the best loose-ball getter, extra possession guy we had during the entire months of September and October -- nobody close. But we haven't seen that in a game yet because he's just worried about not to screw up. I think experience will help with that."

On the team's defensive ceiling:

"I think when we play small, you take away, in theory, one of the things that we will not do well playing big and that's switching up ball screens and things like that. My teams, defensively, and I think most coaches would probably say that, are better if they know this is how we play. As opposed to "well, when we play this lineup we're gonna play this way and when we play this lineup we'll play this way." You play the same way. If we play the same way that's best for our defense, that means David and Silvio have to guard guards. And that hasn't been as good for us as what I thought it could be but we are actually better at it than what we were a month ago. But to me, when we play small, it allows those positions to be interchangeable to the point where we can get from the big guy if the other teams try to post those guards which could also play to our favor and then, of course, much easier to get those shooters when you play that way so that's how I see it."

On if this team could potentially be his best defensively:

"No. Not yet. Devon is great on the ball but he's not very good off the ball yet. I think we could develop into one of the better ones. I could be wrong on this but when we had those freshmen Mario (Chalmers) and Julian (Wright) and Brandon (Rush) to go along with Russell (Robinson) and Sash (Kaun) and Darnell (Jackson) and that group, I think we led the country in field goal percentage defense playing three freshmen and two sophomores. And we didn't switch anything so you had to be tough enough to fight through everything and show and cover and help and we won a national championship and never switched anything. So to me, I feel like the way we do things now is easier to guard other teams' actions because switching obviously is harder to screen. But I don't think we have that mindset that those other teams had. "

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On what comparisons he draws from this year's team and the 2008 National Championship team:

"We have depth. Marcus (Garrett) is our Russell Robinson so to speak. Marcus is getting better at defending more people. You have some similarities but I don't think that this team still takes the same pride that those guys took. There were some teams in the Big 12 that didn't hang 40 on us. There were times we were up 43-8 to start a game against Big 12 opponents. We had some guys that, when things were going well for us offensively, it didn't affect how we guarded on the other end and I don't think we're quite that close yet."

On Ochai playing freely:

"You can't be confident without a free mind. He's playing with a much freer mind. He still can improve some things, passing the ball because I think he is a much better passer than he has shown. He is playing with a free mind and not remembering makes or misses near as much he is just thinking about playing. To me, he has been rebounding the ball. When you worry about things you can control, you can actually shoot it better and he's definitely doing that."

On Sprint Center being dubbed "Allen Fieldhouse East" and his teams' performances there over the years:

"Sucks, for the most part. We haven't played well in this game, historically, in my time here. We won; like last year we crushed New Mexico State and beat them by one (point). There have been a lot of games, even going back to Kemper, that were just kind of boring games and there's not as much energy. I think that's one of the challenges we face Saturday, is to bring that energy. It's not that the attendance is poor, it's not that the fans are bad, it's not anything like that. I think that when you get outside of your own building, in a neutral-site type – even though it's not totally neutral, but it could be this week – I think sometimes people want to be entertained and then when we don't play well, or we play boring and they're not entertained, it can become a dull atmosphere. I think that's kind of what we've had over there. We haven't had any problems (playing there) during the Big 12 Tournament, when there's more energy. In this particular game, it hasn't been a great game for us, as far as us playing well. There are some advantages of playing in Kansas City that we like, but as far as us bringing the same energy, I don't think we've done that consistently."

On what areas he has seen Devon Dotson improve on since last year:

"I think he's actually trying to be a better leader. I think he's talking more. I think he's outside his comfort zone now. I think he's confident where he is so he's not worried about if he screws up or if I get on him. That stuff doesn't even register anymore, like it may have last year. I think from an intangible standpoint, he's trying. The other thing is, he's leading the league in scoring, which is a shocker to me that he would be doing that. And, to be honest with you, I can see him continue to do that, to score the same clip – now, it may go down a little bit – but he's almost averaging 20 (points) a game, nine or 10 games in. I think that will probably drop – all stats drop when you get to conference play – that's the thing I think I'd say he's improved at the most, are some intangibles and then his confidence to try and score the ball."

On Dotson getting to the free throw line more and if a conversation happened between the two:

"I don't think we've had the conversation about 'You need to get fouled more,' I think he knows that if he's fouled more, he'll score more. I think a lot of times 'How do I score?' we say that a lot. If you score and get to the basket, you get to the free throw line. He's kind of figured that out. I think he can do a much better job of rebounding defensively, because, to me, one of the easiest ways to get to the free throw line is if we're in the bonus, rotation rebound, block out, those sorts of things, and get a big guy to climb your back. He hasn't done that like I think that he can, but certainly, his ability to get defenders to put their hands on him is pretty good. A lot of that is created by speed."

On if having the loss to Duke early in the season can now be looked upon as a good thing:

"I think it was probably a good thing to have the experience. I wish that you can learn as much winning as you do not winning. But I've said this all along: basketball is different than football. I don't know that there are ever good losses, but they're not bad losses because we learn from those losses and then we don't let those same things happen again. So I won't say it was good, but maybe it was what this team needed at that particular time to knock us down a little bit, to let us know we're a long ways from being a good basketball team, or elite, because we weren't close at the time."

On if Dotson has gotten better this year at setting up other guys:

"I think he has. I think that's another step in the progression, but he has gotten better. He has kind of a bad stat line from assists to turnovers, primarily because of two games when he had like 14 or 15 turnovers, with the Duke game and maybe the Dayton game, if I'm not mistaken. So that's a little misleading; he should be a 3:1 guy opposed to 1.5:1 guy. One thing I don't think he does well at all, or our team does well at all yet, is throw lobs. There's been numerous times that Marcus (Garrett) had Dok (Udoka Azubuike) wide open and just the other day, although he got fouled, Marcus underthrew Ochai (Agbaji) on an easy lob play in the second half. I don't think we do that quite like our other teams have. That's something we've got to improve on. But I do think Dot has done a pretty good job of getting the ball where it needs to go, for the most part. But he's a better finisher than he is passer right now, which is not a bad thing for us at all, as he's leading us in scoring."

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On Marcus Garrett also being good at setting guys up:

"I think a lot of times, assists are not really a true evaluation of guys' passing the ball because some teams have one guy dribble and make the pass to finish on every possession while other teams have an equal opportunity. If it's one guy, he's obviously going to have more assists. I think the thing to look at is team assists and then of that number, Devon should be above five and he's not quite there yet."

On how Dotson has become a better leader, which areas he's looking at:

"I think being positive, being coachable – not that he was ever not coachable – but you'd get on Devon and he pouts up and everybody can see it. I think him taking certain things better. The biggest thing is that he's talking. He's talking more in situations that aren't basketball related, that I think is really good. Things just at practice and talking. I think he can become a very vocal point guard before it's all said and done."

On why he's surprised that Dotson is leading the league in scoring:

"I just didn't think our point guard (would be the leading scorer). Devonte' (Graham) didn't lead us in scoring because we had another guy averaging 30 points in the league at the same time. I guess Frank (Mason III) led the league in scoring. But, historically, guys who have played for me, the point guards aren't really the scorers. If you think about it like this: if Frank, Devonte' and Devon are scoring at the clip they are scoring, I'm sure Sherron (Collins) is thinking, 'I should have turned loose' because he's a better scorer than all of them. Historically, my guys have been pass-first point guards moreso than what they are now. That's not their fault; it's me and my staff opening up to give these guys more freedom to go out and play."

On Jalen Wilson's physical condition/progress:

"Jalen is doing fine. He's still in his boot, but he's on the bike and doing different things. I think the boot should be coming off here relatively soon, it's been 4.5 weeks, something like that. I really think we'll have him on the court, in some capacity, the first week or two of January. So he's doing well."

On the Big 12 Conference as a whole in nonconference play:

"I think, overall, it's done really well. But I also think we've had some tough losses, like we lost ours and Tech's lost a couple that they probably didn't think they'd lose. But if you stop and think about it, Baylor winning twice against top-20 (teams); Iowa State beating Seton Hall, which I think was (No.) 13 or 14 at the time; and then, of course, Tech defeating No. 1. I think that's pretty strong. I don't think there will be any league that will have a better nonconference than what we will have, but that remains unknown because we don't have the completed Big East and SEC Challenge. But I think our league's done quite well."

On Isaiah Moss' role moving forward:

"I think he needs to shoot. I think he's turned down shots. He's trying really hard to do what we want him to do, but I think he needs to be more aggressive offensively."

On if Kansas wins its game Saturday and he had a vote, if he'd vote the Jayhawks No. 1:

"Well, that's two hypotheticals there. I don't know; I haven't seen Ohio State play but they probably have the best nonconference (schedule results). It's a strange year; I don't think it's very often that you have had a situation, in the past, if you looked at the top-10 (at) 10 games in and there's not an undefeated team. I know San Diego State's in the top-25 and they're undefeated, but there's just not many. Everybody's had their good moments and everybody's had their struggles."

On where he sees Marcus Garrett's legacy at Kansas ending up:

"To me, he's as fun of a player as I've had to coach. Here may be a little different, because you think of Tyrel Reed's legacy or Brady's (Morningstar) legacy or Travis' (Releford) legacy – you don't think of guys who scored a ton of points – you think of winners. That will be part of his legacy, that he's a true winner. I also think this: I think his ceiling is higher than those other guys'. I think if he tightens some things up from a shooting standpoint, which he's got to do. I think if he could tighten some things up, he could play this game for a long time, if he just gets in the right situation, that this will springboard him into a nice career, but all that remains to be seen. But I just love coaching him. I don't think I've had a better understanding with a player that I can think it and I know he's thinking the same thing. I really think he sees it the same way I see it and that's fun to coach."

On if anyone has to been close to being like him, like Garrett is:

"Yeah, I think Devonte', Josh (Jackson), we've had other guys. Brady was right there. I thought Tyshawn was ridiculously bright; he didn't always do what I was thinking. (Laughter) I think Marcus actually tries to do what I'm thinking, at least for the most part. Sherron was that way too. Sherron knew what the team needed; but Marcus knows who to switch with, who not to switch with. He knows who should get the ball on the next possession and where they should get it. He just has a better feel for that than some of those other players did."

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On the challenges of graduate transfers coming into the Kansas basketball program for one year only:

"Maybe. You should ask Isaiah that. I think that that's possibly true, but I also think this, more than anything else: he didn't start practicing with us until late November, if we're talking about him being full speed, or close to full speed. When you're not healthy and you know your body can't do what your body wants it to do, I think sometimes you take more of a reserved role. But I do think, moving forward, he's (Moss) healthy and needs to be more aggressive, shoot the ball more."

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