

March 12, 2011



Kansas – 85
Texas – 73

An Interview With:

**KANSAS
COACH BILL SELF
MARCUS MORRIS
MARKIEFF MORRIS
TYSHAWN TAYLOR**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the Big 12 champions, Kansas Jayhawks, coach Bill Self and student-athletes Marcus Morris, Markieff Morris and Tyshawn Taylor. Coach, opening comments.

COACH SELF: You guys need to hear from these guys. But we played really well against a great team. The game had great pace to it for us, and we have been laboring a little bit offensively the last two weeks or so.

And we played with really good energy and was very aggressive from the outset, and I think that was the biggest difference.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Tyshawn, you returned to the starting lineup today and there's also the opportunity to avenge a loss from earlier this season. What motivated you to play the way you did the first half and throughout tonight?

TYSHAWN TAYLOR: I just wanted to win. Texas played good against us the last time we played against them, and they got us. We knew we had to be aggressive. Coach gave me a green light to come out and be aggressive and told me to attack. That's exactly what I did. I just was looking to score and looking to create for my teammates.

They did heck of a job just playing and fighting down there, so I just wanted to reward them. And they helped me out. These two guys get so much attention that it opens the lane up for me, Tyrel, Brady and Elijah. So I was being aggressive and I was getting in there and things were falling for me.

Q. Tyshawn and Markieff, would you say that the team's energy level and defense was better, as good as it was the first two ball games this tournament and why?

TYSHAWN TAYLOR: I think it was just as good at stretches. I think we just came out from the beginning with the intensity we had like midway through the other two games.

I think from the jump ball, we just knew we had to get after them. Texas is a good team. We knew we couldn't relax. We knew we had to play. And that's exactly what we did from the jump.

MARKIEFF MORRIS: Like Ty said, we had to come out and play. We had to back our talk up. We were saying we wanted Texas, they beat us, and we definitely came out ready to play and we kept the energy the whole game.

Q. Marcus, when you guys play like that, can you play with anybody in the country, do you think?

MARCUS MORRIS: Yeah, I mean, if we play like that every game, it's definitely going to be hard to stop us.

We had great ball movement and we had great help defense with everybody and we outrebounded them by five. I mean, it's a tough team to definitely get a lot of offensive rebounds. If we play like that, we can compete against anybody in the country.

Q. Tyshawn, what role did having to earn your starting spot back play in, you playing so well since coming back from the suspension, especially in the tournament?

TYSHAWN TAYLOR: Like I said yesterday, my role is the same. I just wanted to come off the bench or start and make sure my team get a shot every time and make sure I played defense.

And I think our defense create offense for me. Being able to get fast breaks and easy layups, that's how I play. That's how I like to get my points. So I think playing defense and making sure my team gets a shot every time is my role.

And I think the offense is going to come if I do that. And so I don't even worry about them. My role is just to make sure my team gets a shot and play deep.

Q. Did having to earn the starting spot maybe capture your attention?

TYSHAWN TAYLOR: Oh, for sure. I've been starting for a while since I was a freshman here. And I love starting. I like starting. Who wouldn't?

But things happened and I had to come off the bench and I kept a good attitude and played through it. And Coach had faith in me to start me today, and I hope I proved that I could start for the rest of the time.

COACH SELF: You had two turnovers (laughter).

Q. Marcus, after the loss to Texas in the regular season, how much more motivation was there for today and how did you guys, I guess, rally around that?

MARCUS MORRIS: I mean, since the loss we've been talking about that we really wanted another shot at them, because a lot of people have been saying that they were the best team in the Big 12.

And I just think that it just happened in a perfect way for us to get them in the Big 12 Championship and for all the marbles. And I think since last night and leading up to this we've been so excited to get out there and play against them and show everybody. I'm not saying that the first game was a fluke, but we wasn't at full strength.

And I think that today we were playing our best and we were at full strength and we showed everybody.

Q. Tyshawn, with all the circumstances surrounding the last game with Thomas Robinson and what he was going through and you guys may have run out of gas in that game, how much different was it as a feel going

throughout this game, just being at full strength?

TYSHAWN TAYLOR: I think the last game our attention span was kind of like it was somewhere else.

I mean, we knew we had a game the next day, but there was so much more important stuff going on. So our focus for that game kind of dropped a little bit. We were fully focused for this game. We were ready. We prepared -- we prepared for -- like Marcus said, we've been talking about playing against Texas since after we lost to them, you know what I'm saying? So this is what we wanted. And, I mean, we got them in the best situation, like Big 12 Championship game.

And, I mean, we came out fully focused and with high intensity from the beginning. And, I mean, we showed what we could do if we play how we play.

Q. Markieff, you mentioned about having to need to back the talk up. Did you guys need to talk to energize yourselves? Do you need that sort of thing?

MARKIEFF MORRIS: No, not at all. They beat us. And that was enough for us to back the talk up, for us to come out and play the way we played today.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Do you think you've got some things figured out at point guard this weekend?

COACH SELF: Yeah, I think so. I have confidence in Elijah, and Elijah didn't play poorly. He fouled twice early in the first half. And then when we subbed for him in the second half, that's when we went really stale.

So we got Ty back in there. When one guy is playing that well he needs to be in there. And Tyshawn just put so much pressure on their defense by being able to drive it and get to the paint.

And he helped himself score by getting there, but he also created for others and put pressure on them the entire 40 minutes for the most part.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about how important it was for you guys to get out in transition and stop Texas from hitting the offensive boards as they're so accustomed to

doing?

COACH SELF: Texas is a great offensive rebounding team. And, you know, we got breaks whenever Tristan played out of foul problems, too. We know that. But I thought the big thing was that we had better rim protectors today. We actually challenged around the rim.

I mean, we made a combined for 1 or 0 blocks the first two games, and I thought we were much more aggressive in protecting the rim.

And we look fast. We're a pretty athletic and fast team, but we haven't played that way of late. So I think a big part of that we talked about before the game is I want you to play a lot faster and I want you to play with a free mind, and I thought we did that for the most part.

Q. How would you describe Tyshawn's night just on the whole?

COACH SELF: Well, tonight he was fabulous. I mean, he played like a point guard should play. He initiated. He finished when he needed to.

And, you know, he had a couple of mental defensive lapses. But those are good players. And guys score when they're good. So I thought his play was exceptional tonight.

Q. Rick mentioned that his offense, they got out of position, but your defense, particularly in the first half, did that kind of -- did you all play pretty well defensively do you think and that could sort of fuel your offense particularly getting some run-outs, that sort of thing?

COACH SELF: That was the best defense that we played in a while. We played the scouting report very well.

And so many times I think people look at defense and say, well, if the team doesn't score a lot of points you're playing great defense, but if there's few possessions you shouldn't score a lot of points.

I thought we guarded in a high-possession game. Especially the first half. And I think that set the tone for a lot of things.

Q. Bill, this is kind of an end of an era for this league tonight. How much better does this league get? And how much better does the rivalry get for next year?

COACH SELF: I think the rivalry will get better. I think the rivalries or the game's played has potential to get better because you're playing

home and home same year and there's going to be something that happens the first game to fuel interest for the second game.

I think that's great for everybody. Playing 18 over 16 is going to make it harder. Records will not be as good in my opinion. And our league didn't get stronger because two teams left, our league got stronger because of the playing the round-robin. And I think that's a pretty big deal. And no coach in our league is excited about playing an 18-game schedule, but it certainly makes for an interesting season, though, for the fans.

Q. Did you have an idea you'd be going back to Tyshawn all along or was it a product of his play recently?

COACH SELF: You know, I knew what was best for our team, and what's best for our team is to have him in the game. But there's a place for Elijah, too. There's a place for both of our guys. And there's some times where if Tyshawn wasn't playing well, statistically he can still impact the game in a lot of ways. And I think that's something that he kind of got away from a little bit when things weren't going well.

But what's best for our team is to have everybody's head right and thinking positive, moving forward, and I think this did wonders for that.

Q. Going back to what you were saying about defense, I mean, obviously you've expressed that the team's defensive play has been a concern during the regular season. Are the guys playing at about the level you think they need to play going into the tournament to give this team a chance to win the national championship?

COACH SELF: I don't know if we're playing that good yet. We gotta certainly do some things. But you look at us statistically, we got a good defensive team. It just hasn't been up to par compared to some of the best teams we've had defensively at KU.

But I think that we're getting better. And I didn't think our defense against Colorado was any good last night. I thought against Okey State and Missouri and A&M it was much better and tonight was probably the best we played defensively in rebounding the ball, considering that was a big-boy game and there's men out there playing. And I

thought we did a really good job on the glass finishing the possessions.

Q. That first half, no doubt at Baylor you had an awesome first half as far as scoring on possessions. I had you guys for 35 possessions and scoring on 21 of them. Does that sound about --

COACH SELF: Is that today?

Q. Yeah. Does that sound like what you guys did as far as --

COACH SELF: Probably. That's pretty good. That's pretty good. Basketball is a game of easy baskets. If you get them you're going to shoot a good percentage and score more. When we don't score a lot of points because teams do a great job of keeping us from getting those or we don't create them for ourselves, and even though we shot the ball very well, we probably got five or seven easy baskets in the first half off transition or something like that.

And so that's the difference in winning and losing, just those layups. And we didn't give them up, and we got them. Whereas the second half at our place we didn't get them and they got them.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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