

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Final - Miami (FL) vs Kansas

Sunday, March 27, 2022

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

**Kansas Jayhawks**

**Coach Bill Self**

**David McCormack**

**Ochai Agbaji**

**Remy Martin**

Elite 8 Media Conference

Kansas - 76, Miami (Fla.) - 50

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Kansas.

COACH SELF: A tale of two halves, obviously. We weren't very good the first half and played tight a little bit and couldn't guard McGusty. And for whatever reason, the lid came off the second half and the intensity picked up defensively and then we had about two good plays turn into four, turn into eight, which turned into 16. That was about as well as we could play the second half.

And these guys earned it. So I'm so proud of them and proud for our program. And we need about four days off. Can't wait to get to New Orleans.

**Q. Down six at half. Ended up winning by 26. What was your message at the half, and did you see anything early in the second half where you thought things were turning the corner, anything specific?**

COACH SELF: There really wasn't. I'm not good at those type of things. I told them we need to play better. But I did tell them that KJ Adams gave us the best 29 seconds defensively than anybody did the entire first half. And just challenged our guys to guard them. And they did.

And the lid was going to come off eventually. I think when CB -- I think CB made the first 3. And then the lid came off. But that was an impressive start of the second half, to go from down six to tie it in, what, two minutes? And then get control of it right after that. So it was nothing anyone



said; it was just these guys went out and did it.

**Q. Dave and Ochai, a couple of dagger-type plays. Dave, your and-one that you kind of went madman style afterwards. I wonder what the emotion was you felt from the team after this and yourself. And Ochai you had the other one, the 3 in the corner where Jalen ran it down after the miss and threw it out to you. Did you think those were the dagger plays, like I said.**

DAVID MCCORMACK: For my and-one, I definitely think so. I think it was a big momentum changer just getting an and-one basket and trying to get them in foul trouble as well, that changes the momentum and how they would need to guard us. I don't know what it cut the lead to at that point, but I just know it pumped energy into the bench and everyone on the court which makes us guard better, move faster. It just helped the team all around.

OCHAI AGBAJI: Plays like that, those plays that we need. David's and-one and my 3, those are plays we needed in the second half to get us momentum moving forward. So once we made those plays, it was just, like, no looking back.

**Q. Coach, you guys took on a team that's one of the best transition offenses in the nation and you ended up outperforming them 17-10 in fast break points, among other things. From a coaching standpoint what did you see in the second half that your team did well that Miami could not deal with?**

COACH SELF: I think Miami is very good in transition. But that's been one thing we've been pretty good at ourselves all year long. I think the first half there weren't as many opportunities to run because we took the ball out of bounds too often off makes.

And the second half, I don't know what it was, but we controlled the defensive glass and their shooting percentage went down. So there were more opportunities to run off misses. And we did get out and run very well the second half.

**Q. Christian, you had the dunk to bring it to 40-40 and**

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**the 3 to make it 43-40, like Bill alluded to. From your own perspective could you tell how critical those plays were?**

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: Yes, I think we needed some energy more than anything. When I hit that 3 it was a big confidence booster for me and I'm sure for the rest of the team. We just needed some energy, I thought we were flat in the first half. That shot and the dunk, I know it helped me and I think it helped the team just get going.

**Q. What did you guys feel that first half, internally?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: We felt that we obviously could have played better. I think we had a lot of opportunities in that first half to score. We had open looks. So it wasn't a matter of we weren't getting those open looks; it was just a matter of us not making a shot.

Going into the second half it was the lid's going to come off at some point. Keep guarding and focusing on guarding better and the offense is going to come.

**Q. Bill said he's not very good at "those kinds of things," alluding to halftime speeches, I think. What was your guys' perspective of that? And CB, wondered for you, he's been telling you for your whole career to shoot the 3 and you turned some down the first half. And that was a quick trigger on that dribble hand-off. Just kind of was that message ringing in your ear after?**

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: Yes, I passed on one that was wide open in the first half. But everybody tells me that, it's not just Coach. When I'm open, shoot it. I know I shoot the ball well. I've got to step up and knock those down, especially the team wasn't shooting well. We needed one like that, so it was good to see one go in the hole.

OCHAI AGBAJI: At halftime it was basically a matter of kind of a challenge against us. We didn't come this far to lay down or give up at this point. So just going out there and playing our style of basketball.

**Q. Ochai, what's this moment mean for you, senior year here the regular season you had, and obviously the tournament hasn't gone the way you wanted it to until today, to play like you wanted to especially in that second half?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: It means a lot. It all hasn't really set in yet. I think it will once we get back to Lawrence. But I'm just proud of my team and proud of Coach Self. It's great for the program and the university. But we're not done yet. And I'm not satisfied yet with this. I know my teammates

aren't either.

**Q. Christian and David, along those lines, you all were on a team couple years ago that had a real chance to get this far. It was taken away from you and everybody else by the pandemic. What do you remember about your emotions back in 2020, being on a part of a team that was No. 1 in the nation for a while, and being able to -- how does that compare to where you are now and how much has that driven you to get back here?**

DAVID MCCORMACK: It's definitely a heartbreak feeling knowing that we definitely clawed our way to the top that year. We had a lot of great pieces and felt like we could go really far in the tournament. Now this year feels like we're avenging that year. Now that we have the opportunity, we're going to make the most of it and just continue to grow as a team with each game. And just do what we weren't able to do or didn't have an opportunity to do within that 2020 year.

CHRISTIAN BRAUN: I'd say the same thing. We all knew we were a pretty good team that year. We were No. 1 for a long time. For it to get canceled like that kind of sucked for a while.

But I would say this team, losing that game last year in the tournament didn't feel good for us either. Honestly we're doing the same thing for that team last year. We've got a lot of the same guys. We've got Remy, but we just wanted to get back for our performance in the tournament last year. So it feels good to go to this round.

**Q. Ochai and CB, after the Big 12 Tournament you guys said that the celebration was short. You guys were already talking about the next step. Six more, CB mentioned. How quickly has that switch flipped now? Are you guys already saying we're not done yet or how long do you enjoy this one still?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: On the podium in Kansas City, like we were saying, we weren't done yet. Obviously we had more to accomplish with six more. But on this podium, here, it was like we've gotten to this point and now it's just roll the ball out there and go play in the Final Four. We're just happy to be here.

**Q. Bill, you got a lot of great play from obviously a lot of the players in the second half. Did you feel like David McCormack's intensity at the beginning of the second half may have kind of sparked the rest of the team at the beginning? And, David, was that something you set out to do coming out in the second half was to kind of use your emotions and intensity to kind of help your team get back into the game?**

DAVID MCCORMACK: Definitely. My teammates and Coach Self for sure puts a lot of faith in me and trusts me to perform and excel anytime the ball is in my hands. I just do what I can to make the team better and use every opportunity to score or pass out of the post. That's what I took advantage of that matchup.

COACH SELF: I thought David was fabulous. And especially the start of the second half. We had a size advantage inside and also they were playing through some foul issues. And so we just kept trying to throw it to him as much as possible. And I'll give Dave credit for the start of the second half. But I also think Juan keyed -- David and Juan, most than anybody keyed the good start in the second half because Juan did such a great job defensively on McGusty.

**Q. Remy, early in the year back at Allen Fieldhouse they're chanting your name, "Remy, Remy, Remy!" Everyone was excited about you. Since then you deflected. It was teammates team, Kansas, all that. Out there today, you're the MOP, they're chanting your name again. You've got the hat, the net. Can you put that in perspective, that journey, that feeling of hearing that out there today?**

REMY MARTIN: I mean, obviously it feels great. But my teammates, man, it's really my teammates and coaches just sticking with me through ups and downs. And just instilling more confidence in me. And it's all credit to them. I didn't really know that I won. When they said my name, I didn't know that's what it was for. But I have the greatest teammates around me, greatest coaches. And, I mean, what more can I ask for?

**Q. Talk about this team believing they're good, believing that they don't know they're anything different than that. What's the significance of these guys getting there with that mindset? And this is the fourth team you've taken there, but can you put that into perspective?**

COACH SELF: I think whether it's Juan or J-Wil who is not here, and Mitch, I think that those three, plus these four, believed all along that this was possible if we did what we were supposed to do. I think one thing that has given us a little confidence, is we had a pretty good team this year. And we shared the league and then won the tournament.

And we kind of shared the league without having the opportunity to play Remy. And so I think Remy, in his core, always knew what he was capable to do to help us, but we hadn't really seen it yet because his health hadn't allowed it.

I think our guys have more of a swagger now knowing what Remy can do to make us better. And I don't know how you guys feel, but it's nice to -- he missed his first two shots today. And we're used to making his first three. But it's nice to run some bad stuff or whatever and still have an opportunity to come away with points because he can provide that for us that we didn't have before. So I do think that gives us a little bit of extra confidence moving forward.

**Q. Dave, wondering what you saw from the challenge of Waardenburg and Walker on tape and how that played out in this game and how you felt you handled that, just playing a little more away from the basket. And, Bill, when Mitch came in to replace him, how you thought Mitch played?**

DAVID MCCORMACK: I think we just played to the scouting report, knowing what they're capable, what they can do with their offense, a lot of isolation stuff. Knowing that Jalen would be guarding Waardenburg, I helped off a lot, plugging the paint, doing whatever I can.

And when Miller came into the game, just things like that, I knew I had to be out in perimeter, as long as we communicated as a team, ball switches, everything like that, everything went smoothly.

COACH SELF: I thought Dave kind of got the short end of the stick today in the second half on minutes. I didn't quite realize it like that, that it was because David got us off to a great start. And then we were still going with Mitch in there. I thought Mitch played great. I'm sure David gave some acknowledgment that he got the short end of the stick on minutes.

But the reality is you combine those two, that's how I look at it -- there's 40 minutes there -- you combine those two, and I don't know what you get, but get 24 points and whatever and very, very efficient. That was huge in today's game, especially when we have a size advantage.

**Q. I'm sure you've seen on Twitter so far they've shut down Mass Street, how excited are you to get back and celebrate with what's waiting on you there in Lawrence?**

OCHAI AGBAJI: That's crazy. We see pictures all the time of Mass Street being full. One of our compliance ladies showed us a picture of Mass Street being full now. It's actually crazy seeing that and us being the reason.

DAVID MCCORMACK: Stay there; we'll be back.

COACH SELF: We're not going to mass. (Laughter) KU



students look for a great opportunity to have a beer every now and then.

**Q. Coach and Ochai, you said the other day the lid is going to come off eventually, and by God, it did. What does it mean for you to see Ochai hit his stride this game and knowing that the lid finally came off? And Ochai, what does it mean for you knowing the game just kind of came to you, you hit your stride and you put points up on the board?**

COACH SELF: I see the game maybe a little differently than a lot of folks. I think Ochai can play well without making shots. But I think to the public, that's what we depend on him to do.

So I mean, I think if you have to prove your worth, whether you play good or not, if the ball goes in the hole or not, that doesn't really mean you're the player you can be. Ochai has carried us all year long.

And for him to not get 20 or 22 in a game does not mean he's in a slump or anything like that. He has labored offensively, I think in large part because of how people have defended him. And maybe we haven't done a good job getting him the ball. But I know now after the way we played the second half, he'll be full of confidence moving forward.

**Q. Coach, wondering at any point in this season, maybe prior, if you thought this was a real possibility for this team to achieve this?**

COACH SELF: Oh, yeah, I've thought all along that this was a possibility. But I've also thought all along that the margin for error wasn't such where we could get loose and have it be a probability.

So I don't know -- I think these guys have stayed focus. They've eliminated distractions for the most part all year long. And they do play for each other. And so when we play the way that I think that we're capable of playing, I have total faith that we can play very well.

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