

Topeka Jayhawk Club

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TJC Day at the Fieldhouse

Saturday, February 27th, will be Topeka Jayhawk Club Day at Allen Fieldhouse when the Lady Jayhawks take on the Texas Tech Red Raiders at 7 PM. Topeka Jayhawk Club members and their guests will be offered special priced tickets and seating. Reserved seat tickets will start at \$6.00. Parking is free for the Women's game, except for the parking garage, which is \$5.00. Please call Megan Norkunas at (785) 864-6220 or by email atmnorkunas@kuathletics.com prior to February 25th! Click here for more information.

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Membership	Nancy Kelley
Secretary	Kerri Holthaus
Photographer	Dave Heinemann
Newsletter/Website	Pat Maxon

Many thanks go out to past Club President Gerry McGuire and Vice President Dave Wenrich! We so appreciate all the time and hard work they both give to the club.

Welcome to Big 12 play! Fasten your seatbelt!

By Jim Williamson

Kansas Basketball went into the last Saturday in December – their Big 12 opener – with an 11-1 non-conference schedule and a #2 national ranking. Good stuff for the team and fans alike. But it's not a secret that head coach Bill Self enjoys conference play like a fat kid likes cake or like Urban Meyer likes sweater vests. Conference play is where you make your bones along the way to the NCAA Tournament. It's where you see a Saturday road game at Lubbock and a Big Monday at Morgan town and smile, because that's where you'll find out if your team is half as tough as you hope they are.

And at Kansas, conference play is when you get fitted for a bright yellow vest with a big red target on it. Of course, the same guy who fits you for the vest also takes preliminary measurements for rings, so...

Of all the weeks in this conference season, Week One will, I'm confident, be one of the more memorable ones just because of the broad range of opportunities it brought and the million-and-one positive ways the Jay hawks responded to start off Big 12 play a perfect 3-0.

Kansas 102, Baylor 74

The always-long, always-athletic Baylor Bears came into Allen Field House a bit down but ready to remind fans and pollsters alike, "We're still here!"

And there they were, all the way up until the under-eight minute media timeout in the first half when the game was all over but the shouting and KU was up, 24-4. Baylor coach Scott Drew is so good at recruiting long, athletes to come play for him. If Drew can ever learn to recruit basketball players, he may be onto something.

Wayne Selden continued his terrific season by scoring 24 against Baylor. He had lots of help on the offensive end: 11 of 13 Jayhawks who played scored.

This was a made-to-order game in that it was a good opponent that could be a tough match-up, yet you're playing at home. A rout of Baylor at Allen Field House was a great way to get things going.

Kansas 109, Oklahoma 106 (17 OT)

Okay, so maybe I'm exaggerating about the overtimes, but not by much. This game matched up the #1 and #2 teams in the country, and which team was which depended on who you watched or read.

It didn't take long for ESPN to put their seal of approval on this game. The Worldwide Leader announced long before the game was over that this 2016 premier of Big Monday would be rebroadcast as an instant classic early Tuesday morning. It was that good.

Fashion trends come and go, but in a game like this, one must choose wisely. Oklahoma should have won it in regulation, frankly. Kansas had a wide open look for the game winner in the second OT and blew it. For a heavyweight fight like this, Perry Ellis is always in fashion. And boy, was he ever. The silky senior from Doodah combined 27 points and 17 rebounds to lead Kansas. Wayne Dense contributed 21, Devote Graham had 22 and his back court mate Frank Mason helped with 15.

It's also key to note that Mason – so far, Bill Self's most indispensable player – and Graham each had seven rebounds to help keep the Sooners in check. Mason and Graham's rebounding has been unreal this season and will, I think, make a world of difference come tournament time.

Oklahoma's Buddy Hield made a strong case for Big 12 Player of the Year by scoring 46 against the Jayhawks that night on just 23 shots, along with eight rebounds. That's a new record for points scored by an opposing player coming into Allen Field House.

He was everywhere, and not a single shot looked forced. Major kudos to OU coach Lon Kruger and Hield's teammates for doing what needs to be done to get the ball in his hands in situations and positions in which he can either score or help someone else score. Buddy Hield is smooth as glass, folks, and the only thing there is to not like about him is that he's wearing crimson and cream instead of crimson and blue.

Kansas knocks off Tech, 69-59, on the road

KU played the 3OT classic against #1/#2 OU on Monday and travels to #15 Virginia Tech for a game Tuesday, January 12. In the meantime, KU had to fly to Lubbock to take on Tubby Smith's Texas Tech Red Raiders.

It had "trap game" written all over it, and besides, nothing ever seems to go the way it's supposed to. Remember the year Jacques Vaughn's black eye (and maybe a broken nose) threw themselves at a Tech player's elbow and got called for a foul? Lubbock just has bad Jayhawk juju.

Saturday's game seemed primed with just such weirdness. Despite a chilly start in then first half -- KU shot just 29 percent -- on the way to a sloppy, painful 29-27 halftime lead.

In the second half, the Jayhawks opened up a couple of 10-point leads, only to have the Red Raiders knock down a couple of threes to make it a game again.

It wasn't until three minutes were left that Wayne Selden – who had spent much of the game on the side of a milk carton – made his first three-pointer to put Kansas up, 61-54. On Tech's trip down the floor, Perry Ellis blocked a shot by Devon Thomas and flushed a dunk on the offensive end to give the Jayhawks a nine-point lead, 63-54, with just 1:40 remaining. Mason and Graham showed a great deal of maturity and poise by making four free throws in the final minute to ice the game.

This is a very good Kansas team, gang. They're the #1 team in the nation, 14-1 overall and 3-0 Big 12. They won all three conference games this past week without playing their best ball, which means there's still some upside to this group. You never want to be as good as you're going to be in December.

Self lacks the big, inside presence he loves to have. Don't get me wrong: he loves Hunter Mickleson. But Hunter Mikelson will never be confused with either Morris brother or even Cole Aldrich. I think everyone was hoping for a little more from Chieck Diallo, especially on defense and in rebounding. But he'll get there. He's soooo young, and his body language says he's into what's going on.

The lack of a true big seems to have revived Self's excitement to coach some small ball. He can coach it incredibly well, and he's got smart, reliable guards who can execute.

I think this wild first week of Big 12 basketball will be a momentum-builder and may have done a lot to help this team decide who they're going to be in 2016.

Jim Williamson is a lifelong Topekan and Jayhawk. He has written articles and columns for several websites and publications, including Phog.net and Jayhawk Illustrated. He was able to touch the rim in high school.