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## KANSAS BASKETBALL PREVIEW

# Jayhawks attempt to live up to preseason hype

LAWRENCE (AP) — Kansas, as you may have heard, is loaded, the best team in the country.

Deep, talented, full of current and future stars, the Jayhawks have the kind of team that would make it tough for the best player at some schools to crack the bench.

Just don't hand over the national championship trophy. Not yet.

For all the preseason hype, including predictions of a second title in three years, top-ranked Kansas still has to actually go out and do it. The Jayhawks, like everyone else, have their share of questions on everything from maturity to chemistry — enough to keep those reservations to Indianapolis on hold.

"No team is perfect," Oklahoma guard Willie Warren said. "They're a good team, but every-

one is beatable."

OK, so call the Jayhawks the least beatable team headed into the season.

Senior Sherron Collins is one of the most dynamic players in college basketball, a bulldog of a guard with a knack for getting to the rim. Cole Aldrich is arguably the nation's best true center, a shot-blocking rebounder who can take over games scoring or without even taking a shot.

They'll be complemented by a talented returning cast, with the top nine scorers back from a team that reached the NCAA's round of 16. Twin power forwards Markief and Marcus Morris, point guard Tyshawn Taylor and powerful guard Mario Little — among others — all should be better with year of experience.

The recruiting class is probably the best Bill Self has had in

six years in Lawrence. It's headed by Xavier Henry, who could be the first one-and-done player in Kansas history, and also includes his brother, C.J., speedy point guard Elijah Johnson and 6-foot-10 forward Thomas Robinson.

Without playing a minute, these Jayhawks are already imposing.

"If we get to jelling, I think we'll be one of the toughest teams to beat in the country," Collins said.

Now, for the questions.

• Do the Jayhawks have the maturity to live up to expectations? A series of ugly, on-campus fights with members of the football team embarrassed the university and raised questions about the players' judgment. Taylor suffered a serious thumb injury throwing a punch during

one of the fights and exacerbated the situation by posting inflammatory comments on a social networking site.

Less than two weeks later, guard Brady Morningstar was arrested on suspicion of DUI. The team's best perimeter defender and a clutch shooter, he's been suspended for the fall semester.

Backup guard Chase Buford also received diversion for a July drunken-driving charge.

Were the incidents isolated or symptoms of a bigger issue? Self isn't one for putting up with much nonsense.

"I'm not real happy with our guys for those events that took place," Self said. "But if we were that undisciplined and irresponsible that selfish motives could get in the way of something so insignificant, then we weren't

obviously disciplined or responsible enough to win big. If anything, I think we'll be more disciplined."

• Is there too much reliance on newcomers? This year's team is similar to the 2008 national champions in talent and depth. One big difference: the '08 team was front-loaded with upperclassmen, most of whom had played together for three years.

These Jayhawks are young, with Collins and Aldrich the only players with more than a full year of experience. Teams like Michigan State, Texas and Kentucky are built around upperclassmen.

Collins and Aldrich are both leaders, preseason All-Americans who took a young team within two games of the Final Four last season. But they aren't perfect.

## KANSAS STATE BASKETBALL PREVIEW

# Veterans return for Kansas State

MANHATTAN (AP) — In his first two years as Kansas State coach, Frank Martin had just about everything except experience.

His first year, he had Michael Beasley, arguably the most talented player in school history. His second year, he had determination and flair and one of the quickest guards in the nation in Denis Clemente.

He no longer has Beasley. But the Wildcats still have Clemente. And they finally are blessed with experience, that vital ingredient they've always lacked.

With three seniors and three juniors to go along with a talented newcomer, the Wildcats could make serious noise in the Big 12 this year.

Back for his junior season is point guard Jacob Pullen. The super-quick Clemente, who tied the Big 12 record last year with 44 points at Texas, is a senior, as is 6-foot-10 Luis Colon. Also back are forward Jamar Samuels, a sophomore, and junior swingman Dominique Sutton.

Also in the mix is one of the Big 12's most intriguing transfers, 6-foot-8 Curtis Kelly, and 6-foot-9 freshman Wally Judge, rated by Rivals.com as the No. 18 recruit in the nation.

The Wildcats were 22-12 last year, 9-7 in the Big 12.

Picked for a fourth-place finish this season, they may have what it takes to go even higher.

"You work really hard to try and get the guys that you recruit to fit your style of play and personality, and have them grow within that," said Martin, 43-24 in two seasons.

"That is what we are starting to see with the guys — Jacob, Denis, Luis, Chris (Merriewether), Jamar and Dominique. Those guys have been with us for at least three years, and are starting to see who we are as a coaching staff."

Martin got the job when Bob Huggins suddenly bolted for West Virginia before the 2007-08 season. He had Beasley and little else other than Bill Walker, another touted freshman who also was one-and-done.

But finally, the program is feeling like it is his own.

"Well, here we are a couple years later," Martin said. "Now we've got a core of guys that have been together. We've got some things in place now."

They also have some intriguing newcomers who could make an immediate impact.

Kelly, a New York native, was a two-year letterman at Connecticut who sat out last year. Judge is the

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## SUNFLOWER SHOWDOWN

# BRAGGING RIGHTS



File photo/The Ottawa Herald

Kansas' Darius Parish (93) and Jake Laptad bring down Kansas State's Lamark Brown during the 2008 game between the two state rivals at Memorial Stadium in Lawrence. Kansas and Kansas State renew the rivalry today in Manhattan.

# Kansans have special take on rivalry

By ARNE GREEN  
Special to The Herald

MANHATTAN — Tysyn Hartman can laugh about it now, but at the time there was nothing funny about the Kansas State Wildcats' 52-21 loss to Kansas in Lawrence.

"I couldn't get away from it," said Hartman, a sophomore safety from Wichita, who had moved from quarterback to defensive back earlier in the 2008 season as a redshirt. "When I went home, KU had the bragging rights."

"Whenever I saw my high school buddies who went to KU, I was always hearing something from them, and whenever I see supporters of the program, it's always, 'Just beat KU this year, just beat KU this year.' That's the game I'm sure people in both programs circle on the schedule every year."

Well, it's that time again. KU (5-3, 1-3 in the Big 12) visits Snyder Family Stadium at 11:30 a.m. today for the 107th Sunflower Showdown, riding a three-game winning streak in the series.

That does not sit well with the Wildcats (5-4, 3-2) — especially the native Kansans — who are eager to return the Governor's Cup to the Vanier Football Complex.

Junior center Wade Weibert of Hillsboro, who redshirted last year after transferring from Butler Community College, couldn't even describe the trophy.

"I've just seen pictures," he said. "I've never seen it. It means a lot to try to bring it back."

"At the end of the game, I want to be able to see it, I want to be able to hold it and know that I've created some of my own legacy on it."

Senior offensive tackle Nick Stringer, a product of Topeka's Hayden High School, has fond memories of the games growing up.

"It was a huge game, and it was one of the funnest games in college football to watch on TV," he said. "As a young kid going through high school I always dreamed of playing in a game like this and this is the last one I get to play in, so it's special."

It's also the last shot at a victory for Stringer, who redshirted in 2005, the last time the Wildcats beat KU, but has come up empty in three tries as a participant.

Stringer has had some contact with the Jayhawks after striking up a friendship with senior wide receiver Kerry Meier at the 2005 Kansas Shrine Bowl. Meier's brother, Dylan, was a senior quarterback at K-State his redshirt freshman year in 2006.

"He's one of my buddies," Stringer said of Kerry Meier. "I haven't talked to him, but I know Dylan, and I'm excited and I know he's excited."

"I'm not going to speak for Dylan, but if I had to say, I know he bleeds purple, just like everybody else in this building."

Weibert's KU connection is with running back Jake Sharp. One of

Weibert's teammate at Butler was Kyle Woodall, a close friend of Sharp's from Salina Central.

"I haven't talked to him since last spring, but we give each other a hard time a little bit," Weibert said.

"He seems like a cool kid." But there's a clear delineation between K-State and KU that transcends football, according to Weibert.

"There's just some differences that makes it so that there's that kind of division between the two schools," he said. "That's what I think makes it such a heated rivalry."

"The traditional students don't understand the other ones."

Senior quarterback Grant Gregory, a transfer from South Florida, has had to rely on his teammates to get up to speed on the series.

"When I first got here, they let me know which games are true rivalries and Kansas State-Kansas is a big game," he said. "At South Florida it was a new conference, and everything was brand new."

"The rivalries were just developing, so it's nice to have a rivalry that's been around for a while."

Hartman never followed the rivalry closely as a kid, but he knew the public perception of the two schools.

"I always knew growing up that KU was known for basketball, K-State was known for football," he said. "That's basically the way it's been up until recently, and they've had a pretty good run (in football) here the past few years."

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