

Jayhawk Women fall in Sweet 16

It was only the third time the Lady Jayhawks made the NCAA tournament Sweet 16 in school history (made Sweet 16 in AIAW in 1980). Jayhawks made the tournament as one of the last four teams in earning an 11 seed after facing plenty of adversity, especially in the latter part of the season. They saw a player transfer away, their leading scorer, junior, forward Carolyn Davis go down with a season ending ACL injury with six games to go in regular season play, as the Jayhawks finished the season off 2-6 (includes loss to Texas A&M in Big 12 tournament). But the Lady Jayhawks would celebrate on selection Monday, as they found out they would play sixth seeded Nebraska in the first round, making it to the NCAA tournament for the first time under head coach, Bonnie Henrickson.

As one of the last four teams in the tournament and playing without their leading scorer on the season, the Lady Jayhawks would show why they belonged in the tournament. In their first round matchup it was a defensive battle for both the Kansas Jayhawks and the Nebraska Cornhuskers, as each team shot over 60 shots but would shoot 37.9% and 32.8%, respectively in the contest. Jayhawks would lead the game at the half by an eight-point margin 28-20 at the half and that's all the Jayhawks needed to notch the first round victory, 57-49. KU's success came at the hand of junior, point guard, Angel Goodrich who put herself on the women's basketball map with great tournament performances; Goodrich 20 points, five rebounds and five assists in the win over Nebraska. Freshman, post, Chelsea Gardner came up big, too with a double-double 15 points and 16 rebounds, as she took over for Davis in the starting lineup.

After the Jayhawks they advanced to the second round but things wouldn't definitely not get any easier, as they drew the draw of the nation's leading scorer, Elena Della Donne and the Delaware Blue Hens. The Jayhawks looked to try and stifle the game of Della Donne who dropped 39 points in the Blue Hens first round win over Arkansas Little Rock. Della Donne would finish with 34 points and 10 rebounds, but have to work hard for those 34 points, while no one else on the Blue Hens squad finished with over eight points. The Jayhawks continued to play great defense, throwing multiple looks at Delaware, while the offense opened up for the Jayhawks as they shot 50% from the floor, leading them to the 70-64 victory and a berth into the Sweet 16. Goodrich tallied 27 points, six assists and four rebounds for the second straight game were she took over for KU. The freshman Gardner once again netted double-figures with 10 points, while senior, forward Aishah Sutherland notched a double-double with 17 points and 11 rebounds.

With the win, the Jayhawks punched their ticket to the Sweet 16 for the first time since 1998 and for the first time in the tenure of head coach, Bonnie Henrickson. The Jayhawks who have never made it past the Sweet 16 would get the daunting task of taking on the number two seeded Tennessee Volunteers in their region, who are coached by the legendary, Pat Summit. Jayhawks looked like they still had the fire lit under them at the start of the game as they stormed out to a 14-point lead at one time in the first half, but would only lead 35-30 at the half after a run by Tennessee to get back into the game. Once the second half started the lethal scorer, sophomore, Meighan Simmons for the Vols, would spark the Vols ultimate comeback scoring 16 of her 22 points in the second half, utilizing her scoring off the bench. Tennessee would snatch the victory from the Jayhawks grasp as they took the lead by double figures in the second half and ultimately won, 84-73.

Goodrich continued her stellar tournament with 23 points, five rebounds and six assists; showcasing that she belongs in the conversation as one of the best point guards in women's basketball. Senior, Sutherland finished with 19 points, while freshman Gardner finished with her second double-double of the tournament, 14 points and 10 rebounds.

Jayhawks with the loss to Tennessee end their season, 21-13, making the Sweet 16 in the NCAA tournament for the third time in school history. After facing all the adversity the Jayhawks did this season the Jayhawks can easily say they enjoyed one of the best seasons in school history for the longest time. Kansas looks primed to be a very good team next year, as they only loss one player in starting senior forward, Sutherland, but return point guard, Goodrich, freshman post, Gardner and will get leading scorer, Davis back to go along with all their key role players returning.