

Jayhawks Punch Tickets to Final Four

Kansas Jayhawks survived and advanced in the NCAA tournament to get the chance to punch their ticket to the Final Four in New Orleans, with close late wins over Purdue and North Carolina State. They would be matchup up against a familiar face to the KU basketball program in North Carolina Tarheels head coach, Roy Williams (former Jayhawk head coach) for the right to move on to New Orleans and the Final Four, where they would meet up with the Ohio State Buckeyes.

The Jayhawks who had their offensive struggles in the NCAA tournament came out shooting well in the game and throughout, but it would be their defense down the stretch that would allow them to take full control of the game and ultimate take home the 80-67 win over North Carolina, earning the Jayhawks their 14th Final Four in school history and improve them to 31-6 on the year.

Game started off as a back and forth affair between the Jayhawks and Tarheels throughout the first half with both teams shooting remarkable rates from the floor, as each team seemed to trade baskets throughout the first half of action. It would be a tie ball game at half, 47-47, leaving both teams to have to make adjustments in the second half to come away with the win. The Jayhawks would be the team to make the most out of those adjustments especially in the last four minutes of the game when Jayhawks stretched their one-point lead out to double figures, not allowing North Carolina to score in those final four minutes, giving the Jayhawks the 80-67 win. Nine total players from both squads combined scored double figures in the contest.

For the Tarheels, it was their frontcourt that led them in the game as Senior, Tyler Zeller scored 12 points, junior, John Henson tallied 10 points and sophomore, Harrison Barnes netted 13 points. North Carolina was lead in scoring by freshman, James Michael McAdoo who scored 15 points in the game. But it may have been the absence of one player that hindered the Tarheels the most, as sophomore point guard, Kendall Marshall missed the second straight game with his wrist injury.

For the Jayhawks, all five starters finished in double figures keying their victory. Senior point guard, Tyshawn Taylor lead all scorers with 22 points, while also tallying six rebounds, five assists and five steals. Junior guards, Travis Releford and Elijah Johnson added 11 and 10 points, respectively from Kansas' backcourt. The Jayhawks frontcourt say big plays from junior, Kevin Young off the bench with his hustle plays throughout the game, while the seven-footer, Jeff Whitey finished perfect from the floor (5-5 field goals) good for 15 points and tallied some crucial blocks in the last few minutes. Then there was Player of the Year candidate, junior forward, Thomas Robinson who finished with 18 points and nine rebounds.

The Jayhawks move onto their fourteen Final Four in school history, as they round out the four teams headed to New Orleans next weekend. Joining the Jayhawks will be their opponents, the Ohio State Buckeyes who won the East Regional with a 77-70 win over the Syracuse Orange. This sets up a rematch of a regular season matchup between the two teams in which the Kansas Jayhawks won 78-67 in Lawrence; as the Buckeyes played without star forward, Jared Sullinger. The other Final Four matchup is one that is a heated rivalry and a rematch for this regular season, also, as the Kentucky Wildcats, the number one seed overall in the tournament (winners of South Regional) will take on the winners of the West Region, in the four seed, Louisville Cardinals. Kentucky won the matchup earlier this year 69-62 in Lexington.

2012 NCAA Tournament Final is set Kentucky, Louisville, Ohio State and Kansas with matchups to take place on Saturday, March 31st. Louisville (30-9) will take on Kentucky (36-2) at 5:05 pm CT; while Ohio State (31-7) will take on Kansas (31-6) at 7:49 pm CT, both on CBS.

