

BIG 12 SPOTLIGHT

A weekly look inside the conference

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Conference stars ponder big question

As many as eight Big 12 basketball players could leave the college ranks early for the NBA. Some decisions were no-brainers. Others should use their brains and return to school to further develop their games:

Michael Beasley, Fr., K-State

Decision: Beasley, who held a news conference Monday, declared himself eligible for the NBA Draft.

Analysis: Good decision. Obvious decision. The freshman, who averaged 26.2 points and 12.4 rebounds per game, will be drafted either No. 1 or No. 2 overall.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 1, Miami

Bill Walker, Fr., K-State

Decision: Walker made himself eligible for the draft Monday, but didn't hire an agent. That means he can withdraw his name before the draft and return to K-State for his sophomore season.

Analysis: Nice idea by the freshman, who averaged 16.1 points and 6.3 rebounds, to leave the possibility open to return to Manhattan. It would be the right move.

If you combine Walker's 6-foot-6, 225-pound frame with his basketball talent, his second-round mock draft status is a joke. He's a first-round talent, but his nonchalant demeanor on the court seems to be costing him draft spots.

Playing alongside Beasley could have cost him draft spots, too. All the more reason to return to Manhattan next year. Prove you can be a viable No. 1 option. Prove that without O.J. Mayo (summer 2005 teammate) and Beasley, you can carry a team. After such a scenario, that draft status might change from No. 40 to a lottery pick.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 40 (second round), New Jersey

D.J. Augustin, Soph., Texas

Decision: After winning the Bob Cousy award, given to the nation's top point guard, Augustin said he'd make a decision on the NBA Draft in the next week or two. If we take that answer literally, we should hear an answer by Monday.

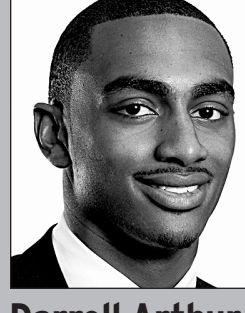
Analysis: No argument here if Augustin's NBA bound. There are reasons, though,



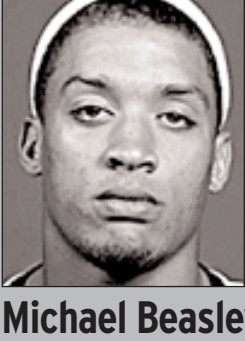
Brandon Rush



Mario Chalmers



Darrell Arthur



Michael Beasley



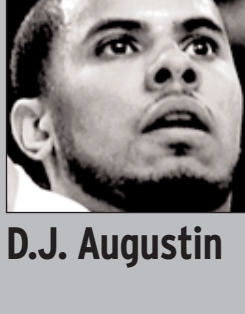
Bill Walker

Stay or go?

Commentary by Eric Sorrentino



DeAndre Jordan



D.J. Augustin



Blake Griffin

to stay at UT. Was Augustin truly the best point guard in the nation, as the Cousy award states, after facing Derrick Rose and Memphis in the Elite Eight? Another year of fine-tuning his game would benefit Augustin.

Consider UT's starting lineup next year if he stays: Augustin, A.J. Abrams, Justin Mason, Damion James and Connor Atchley (same team that reached the Elite Eight this year). In such a scenario, Texas would be the favorite in

the Big 12 and could have the best starting five in the nation.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 11, Indiana

Brandon Rush, Jr., Kansas

Decision: Rush, who declared for the NBA Draft twice before the 2007-08 season, is expected to declare a third time.

Analysis: No surprise here. Had it not been for Rush tearing his ACL last May, he would have been NBA-bound already.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 25, San Antonio

Darrell Arthur, Soph., Kansas

Decision: Arthur hasn't announced his plans, yet it's widely believed he will join Rush in the NBA.

Analysis: Of the Jayhawk trio contemplating the NBA jump, Arthur likely has the highest ceiling. Arthur may not have ever single-handedly dominated a game in his college career, but he never had to since KU had more offen-

sive weapons than Tom Brady and the Patriots during Arthur's two-year stint in Lawrence. As he matures, he could average 20 points and 10 rebounds in the NBA by his mid-20s.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 21, New Jersey

Mario Chalmers, Jr., Kansas

Decision: Chalmers hasn't announced any NBA intentions yet.

Analysis: If Chalmers returns to Lawrence, there's no reason KU couldn't make a run at UT for the Big 12 title. The Jayhawks wouldn't have the talent of the Longhorns, but Chalmers, Sherron Collins and Cole Aldrich sound like nice focal points.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 27 overall in 2009

Blake Griffin, Fr., Oklahoma

Decision: Griffin has already decided to return to Norman, Okla. for next year.

Analysis: Brilliant decision. Griffin played much of the season with a sprained medial collateral ligament in his left knee, then partially tore the medial meniscus cartilage in his other knee. He still averaged 14.7 points and 9.1 rebounds in 33 games.

Next year, decently high expectations will surround OU, which advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament this year.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 2 overall in 2009

DeAndre Jordan, Fr., A&M

Decision: Jordan declared himself eligible for the NBA Draft. Like Walker at K-State, Jordan didn't hire an agent and could return to College Station next season.

Analysis: If there's any Big 12 NBA prospect who needs to return to school, it's Jordan. Granted, he's a freak athlete (7-0, 260 pounds) with rare speed for a center his size. Jordan's ceiling is compared to the talents of Dwight Howard.

It's time to temporarily stop the Howard comparisons, though. At the same age, Howard was considerably better prepared for the NBA. He averaged 12 points and 10 rebounds in his first season. Jordan's chances of averaging similar numbers next year are minimal, at best.

Draftexpress.com mock position: No. 10, New Jersey

Jayhawks hold off Baker

By Jason Elmquist

Journal-World Sports Writer

Midweek baseball games against NAIA teams are intended to be a way to pad the record and get some playing time for bench players — and much-needed rest for starters.

For the Kansas University baseball squad, Tuesday's game against Baker University was supposed to be just that.

However, Baker made it a bit interesting in an 11-6 KU victory at Hoglelund Ballpark. "I shared with our players that we did a lot of things really good, we just had that one bad inning and let them back into the ball game," Kansas coach Ritch Price said. "But then we turned right back around and scored again like good clubs do."

KU coasted through the first six innings with a 9-0 lead. But in the top of the seventh, the Wildcats scored six runs off of reliever Matt Lane — only four were earned due to two errors — before Max Ellenbecker came in to clean up the inning.

Out of the 21 Kansas position players used in the game, only Matt Berner and Ryne Price contributed more than one hit — each batting a perfect 3-for-3.

Ryne Price, who normally



Nick Krug/Journal-World Photo

KU THIRD BASEMAN MATT BERNER THROWS to first around pitcher Hiarali Garcia. Kansas defeated Baker, 11-6, Tuesday at Hoglelund Ballpark.

patrols right field, spent his sixth game playing behind the plate — which seems to translate to success while at the plate.

With his 3-for-3 performance, Ryne Price is 11-for-22 this season when he plays catcher.

"I think it helps being able to see the ball from behind the plate and that may carry over a little bit to my at bats," Ryne Price said. "It helps too being able to know if he (the umpire) has the big strike zone that day or if you can layoff pitches that

are off the plate because every guy's different."

Ryne Price increased his Big 12 Conference lead in RBIs to 52.

Marciel out for season: Before Tuesday's game, KU baseball coach Ritch Price made it official that left-handed pitcher Wally Marciel will miss the remainder of the 2008 season because of a torn ligament in his pitching elbow. The Kailua, Hawaii native will have Tommy John surgery next week.

BOX SCORE

BAKER	ab	r	h	bi
Jeremy Wright lf	4	0	0	0
Dusty Griffin 2b	5	1	3	2
Travis McLeary ss	2	0	0	0
Nick Peterson ss	3	0	0	0
Aaron Westerhouse 1b	5	1	2	0
Christopher Moody dh	2	0	1	0
Ryan Highfill ph	2	0	0	0
Zandy Woodruff-Hall 3b	1	0	1	0
Josh Reed ph	2	1	1	0
Kyle King rf	3	1	0	0
Marc Burchard c	2	0	0	0
Kris McDonald c	2	1	1	1
Andrew Hannon cf	2	0	0	0
Matt Cramer lf	0	1	0	1
Totals	35	6	9	4

KANSAS	ab	r	h	bi
Brian Heere rf	3	1	0	0
Casey Lytle rf	1	0	1	0
Robby Price 2b	5	1	1	1
John Allman cf	2	2	1	0
Phil Parrish cf	1	1	0	0
Casey Larson lf	1	0	0	0
Ryne Price c	3	2	3	3
Tai Mitchell ph	1	0	0	0
Buck Afenir c	1	0	0	0
Erik Morrison ss	0	1	0	1
Zach Thoma ph	1	1	1	0
Greg Herbst ph	2	0	0	0
Tony Thompson 3b	0	0	0	0
Preston Land 1b	1	0	0	0
Justin Ellrich 1b	1	0	1	0
Jimmy Waters lf	3	0	0	0
Blake Slagle lf	2	0	1	1
Nick Faunce cf	0	0	0	0
Joe Southern dh	2	0	1	2
Eric Snowden dh	1	1	0	0
Matt Berner	3	1	3	2
Totals	34	11	13	10

E—Parrish, Slagle. LOB—BU 7, KU 14. 2B—Robby Price, Allman, Ryne Price. 2. SB—Ryne Price, Morrison. SH—Woodruff-Hall, Lytle. SF—Morrison.

BAKER IP H R ER BB SO
Joe Kaup L, 0-3 2 1 2 2 2 0
Michael Strnad 1 1 2 2 4 1
Nick Burd 2 6 5 5 4 4
Carter Bledsoe 1 2 0 0 0 1
Brett Read 1 2 2 2 1 2
Ben Cunningham 1 1 0 0 0 0
KANSAS
H. Garcia W, 2-0 3 2 0 0 0 3
Brett Bochy 2 1 0 0 0 0
Daniel Manos 1 1 0 0 0 1
Matt Lane 1/2 4 6 4 2 2
M. Ellenbecker 1/2 0 0 0 0 0
Thomas Marcin 1/2 0 0 0 2 1
Brett Bollman 1/2 1 0 0 0 1
PB—McDonald. BK—Kaup, Cunningham.
HBP—Allman by Kaup, Berner by Kaup. T—3:01.
A—823.

Relays memory savored

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

because high jumpers back then landed in a pit of sand or saw dust. A Fosbury Flopper could get seriously hurt.

"Back in my day, you had a variety of styles and techniques. It was fun to watch," Smith said. "Then you have a Fosbury jumper. If you've seen one, you've seen them all."

Smith stopped high jumping in 2005 (at age 70) after having both of his hips replaced. He still competes in the Senior Olympics as a shot putter, though he knows that his best days as an athlete are well behind him.

He now shares his stories, and for years the picture had to be painted with Smith's words. Then the proof surfaced, and his memories rushed back to a spring day 51 years ago in Lawrence.

It was like yesterday. "I had never seen myself in a video," Smith said. "I thought it was so neat."

— Sports reporter Ryan Wood can be reached at 832-7152.

KANSAS HOOPS

Russia invites Kaun for tryout

By Gary Bedore

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Kansas University center Sasha Kaun has been invited to try out for Russia's national basketball team.

Kaun, a 6-foot-11, 250-pound senior from Tomsk, will travel to Moscow for tryouts in early July in hopes of representing his country at the 2008 Summer Games in China.

"This is a great opportunity for me to continue to play basketball and move toward a professional career, whether that be the U.S. or overseas," Kaun said Tuesday.

NBA player Andrei Kirilenko (Utah) and Viktor Khryapa, who was cut by the Chicago Bulls this season, led the Russian nationals last summer.

Kaun — he averaged 7.1 points and 3.9 boards a game — said he was flooded with phone calls and text messages from friends in Russia the past several days, congratulating him on KU's national title.

Appleton to ink today: Tyrone Appleton, a 6-foot-3 sophomore guard from Midland (Texas) College, today will sign a national letter of intent with KU on the first day of the spring signing period, which lasts until May 21.

Gary, Ind., native Appleton averaged 13.2 points (46 percent shooting), 5.2 assists and 1.7 steals per game last season for 28-4 Midland.

He joins a class that includes Mario Little, 6-5, from Chipola (Fla.) CC, originally from Chicago; Quintrell Thomas, 6-8, from St. Patrick High in Elizabeth, N.J.; Marcus and Markieff Morris, 6-8 and 6-10, from APEX Academies in Pennsauken, N.J., originally from Philadelphia; and Travis Releford, 6-5, from Roeland Park Midge.

Appleton's signing puts KU one over the roster limit of 12 for next season.

His scholarship will be made available by junior Brandon Rush, who before the April 27 deadline will make official his decision to enter the NBA Draft.

KU, which also is expected to lose sophomore Darrell Arthur and possibly junior Mario Chalmers to the NBA, is still in the market for a big man. One possibility is Ater Majok, 6-10, from Sudan, who is considering UConn, KU, Kentucky and Baylor. Another possibility is J'Mison Morgan, 6-10, from Dallas, who signed with LSU, but is considering asking out of his letter of intent.

Another guard possibility is Tyshawn Taylor, 6-3 from Jersey City, N.J., who has asked to be released from his Marquette letter of intent. He considered KU, Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech the first time around.

Collins staying put: One player with NBA aspirations who won't be leaving KU is sophomore Sherron Collins, who has told KU coach Bill Self of his desire to run the point his junior year. "He said he's excited about coming back, excited about next year," Self said.

Travel package offered: A travel package for KU's Labor Day trip to Ottawa, Ontario, is available through Travellers Inc., of Lawrence. Details are available at the Web site travellersinc.com.

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