

COLLEGE BASKETBALL ROUNDUP

Hello, Newman: Career game lifts Jayhawks

Malik Newman scored a career-high 30 points as ninth-ranked Kansas beat Oklahoma State

The Associated Press

Kansas had just been battered by Oklahoma State for the second time this season, a humiliating loss in Stillwater that sent the Jayhawks into the Big 12 Tournament rubbing their bruised egos.

Then the Cowboys raced out to a 10-point lead in their quarterfinal matchup.

Rather than fold, though, the ninth-ranked Jayhawks showed the kind of toughness they've been missing much of this season. Malik Newman scored a career-high 30 points, their backup big men made up for the absence of injured center Udoka Azubuike, and coach Bill Self's squad pulled away in the second half for an 82-68 victory over the Cowboys on Thursday.

"This team is easy to nitpick with because when we're good, it's magnified in ways because we can shoot and move the ball, and when we're bad it's magnified because we don't do the things in grind-it-out games that a lot of teams do," Self said. "Sometimes I think we get a little spoiled on what our expectations are, but I'm real proud of them. I think they competed hard for the most part."

Svi Mykhailiuk added 13 points and Devonte Graham had 10 points, four rebounds and nine assists for the No. 1 seed Jayhawks (25-7), who were swept by the Cowboys (19-14) in the regular season. But they rose to the occasion when it mattered, setting up a date with Kansas State on Friday.

The Wildcats beat TCU in an overtime thriller earlier Thursday.

**No. 5 Duke 88, Notre Dame 70:** In New York, Marvin Bagley III had 33 points and 17 rebounds, Grayson Allen made his first five 3-pointers and No. 5 Duke rolled to an

88-70 victory over Notre Dame in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament quarterfinals Thursday night.

Allen finished with 23 points and the second-seeded Blue Devils (26-6) advanced to play No. 3 seed Miami or 12th-ranked and sixth-seeded North Carolina in the second semifinal Friday night.

Duke, the defending champion after beating Notre Dame in the title game last year, earned its 100th ACC Tournament victory.

Bonzie Colson had 18 points and nine rebounds for the 10th-seeded Fighting Irish (20-14), who were unable to score the marquee victory over a top team that might have been a huge boost to their NCAA Tournament resume.

**No. 12 North Carolina 82, No. 24 Miami 65:** In New York, Theo Pinson scored a career-high 25 points and had 11 rebounds, lifting No. 12 North Carolina while its other stars were struggling, and the Tar Heels beat Miami 82-65 on Thursday night to set up a second straight Atlantic Coast Conference semifinal meeting with Duke in Brooklyn.

The fifth-seeded Tar Heels (24-9) face the fifth-ranked and second-seeded Blue Devils for the third time this season on Friday night for a spot in the championship game — just as the rivals did last year in the tournament's debut at Barclays Center. It will be the 22nd time Duke and North Carolina play in the ACC Tournament. Duke leads 13-8.

Ja'Quan Newton, who beat North Carolina nine days ago in Chapel Hill with a 40-foot buzzer beater, scored 17 points for third-seeded Miami (22-9).

**No. 14 Texas Tech 73, Texas 69:** In Kansas City, Keenan Evans scored 25 points, including a pretty fadeaway jumper in the closing minutes, and No. 14 Texas Tech held off hot-shooting Jacob Young and Texas for



Kansas' Silvio De Sousa, left, gets past Oklahoma State's Mitchell Solomon, right, to dunk the ball during the first half of an NCAA basketball game in the Big 12 conference tournament Thursday in Kansas City.

a 73-69 victory in the Big 12 Tournament quarterfinals Thursday night.

Jarrett Culver added 13 points for the deep and talented Red Raiders (24-8), who had lost four of their last five in the regular season but

appeared to recapture their mojo in Kansas City.

They advanced to play No. 18 West Virginia or Baylor in Friday night's semifinals.

Young had a career-high 29 points for the Longhorns (19-14), going 11 of 17 from the

field and 6 of 7 from beyond the arc. But he missed a wide open layup with 36 seconds left that would have gotten the Longhorns within 70-67, and Evans made a free throw at the other end to help seal it.

Pitt fires coach Kevin Stallings

The worst season in Panther's basketball history cost the coach his job after two years

BY WILL GRAVES

The Associated Press

The worst season in Pittsburgh basketball history cost head coach Kevin Stallings his job.

Stallings was let go by the university on Thursday, just two days after the Panthers completed an



KEVIN STALLINGS

want to express my appreciation to Coach Stallings for his commitment to our program," athletic director Heather Lyke said in a statement. "In moving forward, we have tremendous expectations for our men's basketball program at Pitt and I believe we can achieve great things within the Atlantic Coast Conference and nationally.

Stallings went just 24-41 in two years at Pitt after replacing Jamie Dixon in March 2016. The Panthers were a perennial NCAA Tournament team under Dixon but Stallings struggled from the outset.

Pitt finished 16-17 in his first season despite having senior stars Michael Young and Jamel Artis. Stallings restocked the roster heading into this season, bringing in 11 new players. Stallings expected a difficult transition and whatever thin margin for error the Panthers had vanished when senior forward Ryan Luther was lost for the year with a foot injury in December.

Without its most experienced player, Pitt simply couldn't keep up in arguably the nation's toughest conference. Only four of the Panthers' 19 ACC games were decided by less than 10 points, including a 67-64 setback to Notre Dame in the opening round of the ACC tournament that marked their narrowest loss of the season. It also assured Pitt of the second 0-19 mark in conference history. The Panthers were the only team out of the 351 Division I schools to not win a conference game this season.

Former Pitt athletic director Scott Barnes raised eyebrows two years ago when — after stressing the program needed a "fresh" approach after Dixon left for TCU — he opted to go with Stallings. During the press conference in which he introduced Stallings, Barnes said the common denominator was a shared belief that the Panthers could reach the Final Four.

It's a destination that's never seemed so far away for Pitt. Stallings is owed the final three years on his contract, which could make it difficult for Pitt to afford an experienced and established replacement.

Stallings offered a refreshingly blunt approach compared to the buttoned down and often contrarian Dixon but support eroded quickly. Attendance at the typically rowdy Petersen Events Center plummeted this season as the losses piled up. Pitt averaged just 4,117 fans at The Pete this winter, a 50 percent drop off from 2016-17.

Stallings never wavered in his belief that the future is bright. It might be. Stallings, however, will have to watch it from afar.

SEC TOURNAMENT ROUNDUP

Sexton's Tide slips past Texas A&M in final seconds

The Associated Press

Collin Sexton drove the length of the court in the final seconds and hit a floater at the buzzer to give Alabama a 71-70 win over Texas A&M in the of the Southeastern Conference Tournament on Thursday in St. Louis.

The win snaps a five-game losing streak for the ninth-seeded Crimson Tide (18-14), and it provides a much-needed boost for school's case for a bid to the NCAA Tournament — which it is trying to reach for the first time since 2012.

Sexton finished with 27 points, none bigger than his final shot. Alabama led by as many as 12 points in the second half, but the Aggies (20-12) rallied and went up 70-69 after a 3-pointer by T.J. Starks with 4.4 seconds remaining.

That's when Sexton took the inbounds pass and raced up the court for his winning shot. Dazon Ingram scored 13 points for the Crimson Tide, and Donta Hall added 11.

Starks matched his career high with 23 points in the loss for Texas A&M

Texas A&M had won three in a row entering the game, including a 68-66 victory over the Crimson Tide six days ago. The No. 8 seed Aggies led by as many as seven points early in the first half, but Alabama surged ahead in to take a 35-28 halftime lead — only to need Sexton's last-second shot to hold on for the win.

**Mississippi State 80, LSU 77:** Lamar Peters scored 24 points and Mississippi State hit 10 3-pointers in defeating LSU 80-77 in the second round of the SEC Tournament on Thursday.

Leading by seven with 34



Alabama's Collin Sexton celebrates a basket during Alabama's win over Texas A&M in the second round of the SEC Tournament on Thursday in St. Louis. Sexton hit the game-winning shot at the buzzer as the Crimson Tide moved on to the quarter finals.

seconds left, the Bulldogs allowed the Tigers to hit two consecutive 3s to close to 78-77. But with nine seconds to play, Mississippi State inbounded the ball, avoided foul attempts and escaped with victory after Nick Weatherspoon's dunk.

Peters led an unlikely charge from 3 for the seventh-seeded Bulldogs, who came into the contest the 15th-worst team at 30.7 percent shooting from beyond the arc. Mississippi State (22-10), which faces Tennessee in Friday's third quarterfinal,

shot 9-of-12 from 3 in the first half and finished the game 10 for 17.

Tenth-seeded LSU (17-14) trimmed a once 19-point Bulldogs' lead to just two with 5:52 remaining. The game stayed close until the end, but the Tigers never retook the lead.

Tremont Waters led LSU with 28 points and six assists. He sustained an injury in the final minutes but battled through till the end of the game.

Waters and Peters went back and forth all game, but

Peters' teammates scored more down the stretch. Quindary Weatherspoon and his brother, Nick, each finished with 15 points for the Bulldogs. Aric Holman posted a double-double, scoring 11 points and grabbing 12 boards.

**Arkansas 69, South Carolina 64:** Jaylen Barford scored 13 of his 17 points in the second half to help Arkansas hold off South Carolina for a 69-64 win in the second round of the SEC Tournament on Thursday night.

The win is the seventh in

the last nine games for the sixth-seeded Razorbacks (22-10), who advance to face No. 3 seed Florida on Friday night.

Barford, a first-team All-SEC selection, was 6-of-11 from the field and had a key 3-pointer and fast-break layup in the closing minutes. Daryl Macon added 12 points for Arkansas, hitting 8-of-8 free throws, including two in the final minute that helped seal the win.

Chris Silva had 15 points and 11 rebounds to lead the No. 11 seed Gamecocks (17-16).