

## Kansas completes historic Final Four field

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*DETROIT (AP) - Stephen Curry darted this way, faked that way. Nothing open, and the bright red numbers on the clock getting close to zero.*

He was the right guy - the only guy - to take the biggest shot of the NCAA tournament.

But there wasn't one. All he could do was the pass the ball and watch as Jason Richards' desperation try thudded off the backboard.

Davidson was done. Kansas was in.

"It hurts a lot to get this far, be so close to get to the Final Four," Curry said after top-seeded Kansas held off little Davidson 59-57 Sunday.

The Jayhawks' win in the Midwest Regional final sent all four No. 1 seeds to the Final Four for the first time.

"I'm definitely proud of what we've accomplished and what we're about and what we've just proven all year," Curry said. "... But it's going to hurt. This game's going to hurt a lot for the next however long."

Curry, the son of former NBA sharpshooter Dell Curry, had made the tournament his own little party, scoring at will with his silky-smooth shot and carrying Davidson to one improbable victory after another. He looked as if he might do it again, drilling a 3-pointer from NBA range to cut Kansas' lead to 59-57 with 54 seconds left.

After Kansas' Sherron Collins missed with 21 seconds left, the 10th-seeded Wildcats got one last chance.

And of course they gave the ball to Curry.

"Kansas had four guards out there and they just switched. It kind of defeated the purpose of the play," he said. "I gave them a pump fake to try to get a look, but I was off-balance when he fell down. So I saw Jay open at the top of the key, so I swung it to him."

But Richards was off-balance a bit - just enough to send make it clang rather than swish.

"I kind of had a feeling in my heart that it wasn't going in because the way he shot it. It looked like he was leaning to the left a little bit," Kansas guard Mario Chalmers said. "When I turned back, I saw it hit the backboard. I was just relieved."

Richards dropped to his back at midcourt while the Jayhawks celebrated with a measure of relief.

"Trust me, I was on both knees," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "You picture the way you win a big game like that, it would be you make a shot, you celebrate or something happens and you're able to go congratulate all your coaches and players. This was not one of those deals. I just wanted to make sure that I hurried up and shook hands and the officials left the court so they couldn't put any time back on the clock."

Kansas (35-3) moved on to play overall No. 1 seed North Carolina - and former coach Roy Williams - on Saturday, and UCLA and Memphis will round out the party at the Alamodome in San Antonio.

Three No. 1s have advanced three times, most recently in 1999.

"That means a lot to us," Chalmers said. "It makes us part of history. We wanted to come in here and be part of history and be part of our first Final Four, and we was able to do that tonight."

The win also rids Self of that dreaded "best coach never to make a Final Four" label. Self had fallen short with three different schools, including last year's edition of the Jayhawks. But this year's bunch had too much talent, depth and experience to be denied.

"It feels good just for him," said Brandon Rush , who scored eight of his 12 points in the second half. "He's been stuck in the Elite 8 for the last few years. This feels good just to make that push into the Final Four for him."

Curry, who became only the fourth player to hit the 30-point mark in his first four NCAA tournament games, finished with 25 on 9-of-25 shooting and was picked Most Outstanding Player of the Midwest Regional. His roommate, Bryant Barr , was the only other Davidson player in double figures, scoring all 11 of his points in the second half.

The loss snapped Davidson's 25-game winning streak, longest in the nation.

"The agony of this is that we came so far," Davidson coach Bob McKillop said. "We've seen and touched our dream, and we missed. We came two points away from the Final Four with a 1,700-student school in the Southern Conference."

Sasha Kaun came up with big baskets down the stretch whenever the Jayhawks needed them, and he and Chalmers scored 13 for Kansas, which ended the feel-good story of the tournament. Tiny Davidson, trying to become only the third double-digit to make the Final Four, simply ran out of gas in the stretch.

"Fatigue was definitely a factor," Curry said. "That four-guard rotation they had really took a toll."

Not that the Wildcats didn't put up a valiant fight. Curry looked exhausted much of the second half - with good reason, after leading the Wildcats to upsets of Gonzaga, Georgetown and Wisconsin. But he showed the same moxie he's had all tournament, drilling an NBA-range 3-pointer with 54 seconds left that cut Kansas' lead to 59-57.

But after making improbable shots all tournament, Davidson could not get the one it needed most.

"They had a lot of bodies and a lot of athletic guys who could chase me," Curry said. "They did make me work hard, and I had good looks at the end, but they weren't falling like they did all tournament. We can't hang our heads. We had opportunities. We just didn't execute."

Indeed, the Wildcats (29-3) have nothing to be ashamed of.

They hung with the toughest teams in the nation - Georgetown and Wisconsin had two of the stingiest defenses in the country - and gave little Davidson something to be known for besides providing free laundry to its students. The Wildcats left the floor to applause from a fan club that's gotten a lot bigger over the last two weeks, and Max Paulhus Gosselin acknowledged them by holding up his index finger.

"This is about as tough a loss as it can get," Gosselin said. "We all played as hard as we could for the whole duration of the game. Now it's over."

For the Kansas' Jayhawks, it's just starting.

This is their 13th trip to the Final Four, but first since 2003 - Williams' final season. He took the Jayhawks to the championship game - they lost to Syracuse - then bolted for his alma mater.

"Everyone knows he used to coach for KU," Collins said. "There will be a lot of emotion and a lot of heat for that game."

Emotions for Self, too. He had taken teams from three different schools to the regional finals only to fall short four times, including last year's loss to UCLA, and he acknowledged Saturday that the hole in his resume weighed on him daily.

No longer. He smiled and gave a thumbs-up to the Kansas fans who shouted his name, and the players beamed as they lined up to cut down the nets at Ford Field.

And when he came to the post-game news conference, he'd traded his snazzy suit for boring old warmups because his players had doused him with water.

"I don't know how I'll feel, but I think we should have a great week," Self said. "The hard part is just beginning, but in our guys and minds, there's been a weight that has been lifted, which should free us up a little bit."

For the Davidson Wildcats , they are left to wonder about "what if."

"We expected to win," McKillop said. "We didn't come here content or satisfied. We expected to win. This has been a 12-month mission. It came down to one final play. That's the beauty of this game that we play."