



Saturday, March 23, 2024

GONZAGA BULLDOGS - KANSAS JAYHAWKS

Game Time: 03:15 pm ET

Watch: cbs

Selection: gonzaga -4

There are very few teams in the NCAA Tournament that are as hot as Gonzaga. They made mincemeat out of McNeese State in the first round, a game I selected the underdogs and who were totally outclassed.

Since the start of February, Gonzaga has the third-best offense in terms of efficiency and ranks 10th in the country. It was the addition of Ben Gregg into the starting lineup in mid-January that sparked this turnaround, just at the time you worried the Zags would not get into the tournament for the first time in over 20 years.

Led by Ryan Nembhard, Gonzaga doesn't turn the ball over and ranks top-10 in effective field goal percentage and 2-point percentage. Add in Graham Ike's presence in the post and Anton Watson's as the floor general and this Gonzaga offense is rarely slowed down. The key is for Ike not to get into foul trouble, which occurred in the WCC final losing to St. Mary's.

Gonzaga is not a deep team which is also the case with Kansas. If foul trouble arises, Mark Few's options are limited, but they do have a couple role players off the bench that can give them some valuable minutes.

The Bulldogs have an elite 2-point defense, thanks to their length inside. Three players stand at 6-foot-9 or taller, with Ike the "head of the snake". Watson and Gregg can hold their own around the rim, too.

Kevin McCullar Jr.'s absence in this game is big. Despite Kansas having no issues breaking down the Samford zone and scoring 93 points, when the Jayhawks needed points late, they struggled. They turned the ball over too much in the final minutes and their lack of depth showed, especially when pressed.

Kansas has long carved up zones in the past, which it won't see against Gonzaga. The Jayhawks stuck to a six-man rotation, with Jamari McDowell and Parker Braun combining for just five total minutes as

the seventh and eighth men.

Hunter Dickinson can be a beast, but he's not as effective without McCullar in the lineup, who was the primary shooter who could spread the floor. Now it's really just Johnny Furphy as the primary shooter. Nicolas Timberlake made three 3s against Samford, but that's not his game. He's been inconsistent throughout the season, but when he's on, Timberlake provides Kansas with another strong scoring option. Who know's what version will show up today.

Will tired legs end up costing Kansas? That's the question for the Second-Round matchup. Dickinson, K.J. Adams Jr., Dajuan Harris Jr. and Furphy all played nearly a full game while being pressed nonstop.

What Kansas lacks is defending the 3's. Gonzaga should get their fair share from deep. Kansas allows 42% of all attempts from 3.

This line opened with Gonzaga as 3.5 favorites, and it's risen in favor of the Bulldogs. This seems a perfect spot to send the Jayhawks packing as you have a red-hot team facing one that simply doesn't have all their pieces at a time when you really need it. I'll lay the 4 points with Gonzaga.

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Any questions or comments can be sent to: wiz@wizardraceandsports.com

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