



» “The game was about the right to go to the Sweet 16. Anything other than that was just a side light.”
— Gregg Marshall

Photo by Kevin Brown

Shaq Morris dives after the ball against the University of Kansas on Sunday at the CenturyLink Center in Omaha. The Shockers will advance to the Sweet 16 and play Notre Dame Thursday in Cleveland.

SWEET

from page 1

The Shockers were behind by three points — senior Tekele Cotton’s opportune time came without filing a flight plan. He soared through the air, was briefly halted by contact from Jayhawk center Landen Lucas and floated the ball in the air, which bounced around the rim before dropping. One free throw later, the game was all tied up with 1:27 left to play in the first half. “I think I probably surprised them a little bit [with my athleticism],” Cotton said, grinning. “I looked at their faces and they looked a little surprised. I didn’t really get it like I wanted to, but I think they were a little surprised.” When Cotton hit that soaring layup, everything in the game — and the state of Kansas — changed. The Jayhawks have dominated this series winning 12 of the previous 14 matchups. The last time they met, KU knocked down WSU with a 103-54 victory in 1993. A lot has changed in 22 years, and it showed. The Shockers weren’t so little compared to the blue bloods of college basketball anymore. Little brother grew up, and he’s bigger than big brother now. And big brother got scared. “They were far superior to us in

the second half,” Kansas coach Bill Self said. “Whatever we tried, they had a counter.” When Shaq Morris fouled Frank Mason, Mason was stunned, laying on the ground for what seemed like minutes. Mason went full speed into 260-pound Shaq Morris, who stood over Mason like a giant. Earlier, Kansas forward and Wichita native Perry Ellis left the game after taking an elbow from the smaller Fred VanVleet. With 50 seconds remaining in the first half, VanVleet sank a three. Then he poked the ball away on defense, flipped an underhand at the basket and missed as time expired. VanVleet ran off the court smiling with the Shockers controlling a three point lead. The Shockers extended the margin in the second half and after an Evan Wessel three-point-er to go up 37-30, WSU opened a whole new can of worms the Jayhawks couldn’t handle. Self sat on the sidelines helpless, watching his team fall apart in what’s been coined the “Battle of Omaha.” “Wessel is a stud,” Self said. “To me, he was the most most valuable guy of the game, and he dominated the game from a loose-ball energy. When he made that three, it kinda took the lid off the basket after that. Then they dominated us.” An “Evan Wessel” chant stirred

through the arena after the game. Wichita State wasn’t David with a slingshot against Goliath. They used all their artillery and they had a full arsenal. Wessel rained threes and hit the boards, Baker hit big shot after big shot, Cotton scored at will, Zach Brown looked like the best freshman on the court and VanVleet kept the team’s composure. Darius Carter and Cotton hit back-to-back shots under the five minute mark, followed by a timeout. Before heading to the Shocker bench, VanVleet pulled his team together at halfcourt. “He didn’t say too much,” Cotton said. “He just kept us poised, like a leader.” VanVleet directed traffic and not worried about running clock. He kept attacking — making plays — poised to head to the Sweet 16. “Obviously, at that time, you can pull the ball out and run clock,” Baker said. “But we’re a really aggressive team and we make smart decisions with the ball, and that’s what we did.” The Shocker team had mixed emotions after this one. Marshall said it’s awesome and Cotton ... “I’m speechless,” Cotton said. “In the locker room I heard Fred say he didn’t know how to feel. This feeling was unreal, and he was right about that.” Not getting the opportunity to play KU and going to the Sweet 16 is a tremendous achievement,

» WSU vs. KU – Shocker Stats

	FG	3FG	REB	PTS
Darius Carter	3-5	0-0	4	10
Evan Wessel	4-6	4-6	9	12
Fred VanVleet	4-12	2-4	6	17
Ron Baker	5-10	2-5	3	12
Tekele Cotton	7-12	1-3	2	19
Rashard Kelly	0-0	0-0	1	0
Zach Brown	2-4	1-2	1	7
Bush Wamukota	0-0	0-0	2	1
Shaquille Morris	0-2	0-0	1	0

Baker said. Fans decked in their crimson and blue couldn’t do anything, but sit, silently, watching the black and gold bully them. It wasn’t about getting a crack at the Jayhawks to Marshall, though. “The game was about the right to go to the Sweet 16,” Marshall said. “Anything other than that is just a side light. We wanted to go to Cleveland and play Notre Dame. If it was Duke or North Carolina, it would’ve been the

same.” The Shockers will head back to Wichita and prepare to go into their next challenge with Notre Dame on Thursday in Cleveland. “Just a great day to be a part of Shocker nation,” Marshall said, “and to lead these young men into battle. When you are able to go home and get a few day’s rest and deal with all the media and whatnot, it kinda sinks in, you’re one of the top 16 teams in the country.” — James Kellerman, Sports Editor

‘We gave our whole heart out there’

Women’s basketball knocked out in first round

By Joshua Duncan
SPORTS REPORTER
@joshduncan316

Coach Jody Adams has figured out the formula for winning games and running through the Missouri Valley Conference tournament, but couldn’t continue her winless record in the Women’s NCAA Tournament. Losing to California in the first round Saturday marks three straight trips to the big dance coming out of each with a loss. “Of course it’s a disappointment,” senior Alex Harden said. “You have to understand we gave our whole heart out there. We just came up a little short today.” Wichita State (29-4) came into the tournament set to face Cal (23-9) in the opening round. Harden threw the first punch by making a layup the first possession of the game, but this would be the only time the Shockers would have the lead. The game went back and forth for much of the first half with the Shockers cutting the lead to only a field goal. It was looking like this game would be close until the end. Late in the first half with the score 24-26, Cal coach Lindsay Gottlieb called for a timeout to regroup the Bears. Whatever Gottlieb said in that huddle pushed Cal’s offense. On an 11-3 run, Cal ended the

half with a 10-point lead to put the the score at 27-37. The start of the second half was not much better for the Shockers. They just didn’t have an answer for Cal’s offense. With a layup early in the second half by Cal’s Reshanda Gray, it put the Bears in a comfortable lead at 34-47. The fight wasn’t over for the Shockers. With two successful trips to the free throw line by Harden and Michaela Dapprich, and a three-pointer from Dapprich, WSU put themselves back in the game with a 9-0 run. With 12 minutes left in the second half, Gottlieb felt the Shockers nipping at their heels. Calling a timeout to regroup her players once again, Cal came back out and answered with five quick points. The Shockers committed eight fouls and five turnovers in the final minutes of the game. With no answer for Cal’s leading scorer Reshanda Gray (22 points) and their two freshmen, McDonald’s All-Americans Gabby Green (11 points) and Mikayla Cowling (11 points), the Shockers were defeated 66-78. Cal dominated the board with 37 rebounds and shot a lights out 52 percent from the field. WSU would finish with 27 rebounds and 40 percent from the field. Wichita State



Photo courtesy of the Wichita Eagle

Wichita State forward Kelsey Jacobs goes for a loose ball during the Northern Iowa game March 14 in the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament. The Shockers won the MVC Championship but lost in the first round of the NCAA Tourney.

is known for their defense, but it was no match for Cal’s efficient offense. “You have to give them credit for those freshmen stepping up and knocking down big shots,” Adams said. “This is the time of the year when if you’re a big-time player, you make big-time shots.” For Harden, this season put her in

the record books at the all-time leading scorer in WSU women’s basketball history. Her efforts in the game didn’t go unnoticed, and Gottlieb made sure she knew it. “I grabbed her at the end of the handshake line,” Gottlieb said, “and told [Harden] you could play anywhere.”

Adams said she would not let this loss define their season. Adams knew she was losing much more than a game. “I’m probably not thinking about the loss, I’m thinking about the loss of the three seniors,” she said. “This loss doesn’t define Wichita State’s program.”