

## Gooden playing on break

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) — While his fellow students soaked up the sun during Kansas' spring break, Drew Gooden sat behind a bank of microphones to face a different sort of glare — the scrutiny that comes with being an All-American, leading a No. 1-seeded team into the NCAA tournament's round of 16.

Gooden wouldn't trade his week for anyone else's, though — although he could do with fewer questions on certain subjects.

"Sometimes I can see myself on the beach at Cancun, with my shirt off and the girls all around, dancing with Jerry Springer," the Jayhawks' star junior forward said Tuesday. "But I'm winning games in the NCAA tournament right now."

Gooden, in his third year as a starter — and perhaps his last at Kansas — has never gotten past the round of 16.

The Jayhawks lost to Duke in the second round two years ago and were beaten in the regional semifinals last year by Illinois — the same team Kansas faces Friday at Madison, Wis.

"I'm excited to see what's next," Gooden said. "I want to see what an Elite Eight is like. I want to see what a Final Four is like. I wish we could play every day instead of having these layoffs, because I can't wait to see what's next."

What's next now is a rematch with a team that eliminated Kansas 80-64 last year — and physically dominated the Jayhawks in the process. Even a year later, Gooden and the other returning players still face questions about Kansas' ability to win a high-contact game.

Gooden, for one, is getting tired of it.

"I don't know how many physical games we have to win this year to prove that we can be physical, that we are a physical team," Gooden said. "Ask Stanford. Ask them if we were physical. Ask Oklahoma if we were physical. Ask Texas. They'll tell you."

The fact that he and forward Nick Collison can play well away from the basket has led to speculation that they're not comfortable banging around underneath it, Gooden said.

"Nick and I can step out on the floor and do some things. That doesn't make us soft," he said. "When we need to bang, we can bang."

So can 6-foot-9, 250-pound freshman forward Wayne Simien, who has four double-doubles and is averaging 8.3 points and 5.3 rebounds per game as a reserve.

The challenge for Simien and Kansas' other freshmen, though — including starting point guard Aaron Miles — is adjusting to the demands of a longer season.

Kansas high school teams play from 20 to 25 games, while the Jayhawks (31-3) will be playing in their 35th game on Friday night.

"That wears on all the first-year players," Simien said. "But you just have to look at it that there are, possibly, only four more games left in the season."

"This is the time when you get down to the end of all the blood and sweat," he said. "You just have to try not to think about that; you just suck it up, play those last four games and hopefully end the season on a good note."

## Broncos sign tackle

DENVER (AP) — The Denver Broncos have reached an agreement with former Baltimore Ravens defensive tackle Lionel Dalton on a seven-year, \$22 million contract, The Denver Post reported on its Web site Tuesday.

The deal includes a \$3 million signing bonus, The Post said.

Broncos spokesman Jim Saccomano did not immediately return a telephone message Tuesday night.

Dalton, 27, is an unrestricted free agent. He spent four years with the Ravens, mostly as a backup.

His playing time increased last season when starter Tony Siragusa battled injuries.

## Avalanche drop one

DENVER (AP) — Trading away Adam Oates could be viewed as a sign that the Washington Capitals have given up on reaching the playoffs this year.

Not just yet. Olaf Kolzig stopped 21 shots for his fourth shutout of the season as the

Capitals ended a three-game losing streak with a 3-0 victory over the Colorado Avalanche on Tuesday night.

The victory came hours after Washington dealt Oates, the NHL leader in assists, to Philadelphia for a minor-league goalie and three draft picks. "To the outsider, it might have

looked like we threw up the white flag," coach Ron Wilson said.

But with the victory, the Capitals are just three points out of the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Kolzig got his 26th career shutout after allowing nine goals in his last two starts. He made several saves during a

6-on-4 chance with two minutes left.

"We easily could have figured that everybody else is counting us out, we might as well book our vacation," Kolzig said.

"Instead of doing that, the guys did a 180, and said we're going to prove everybody wrong," he said.

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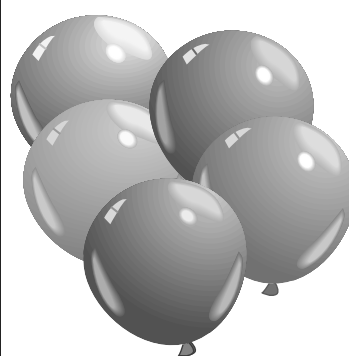
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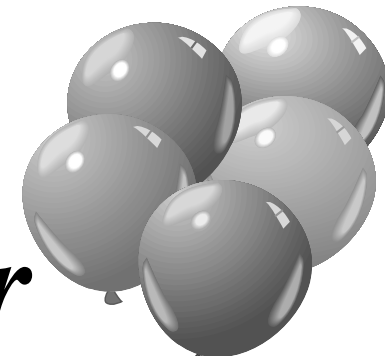
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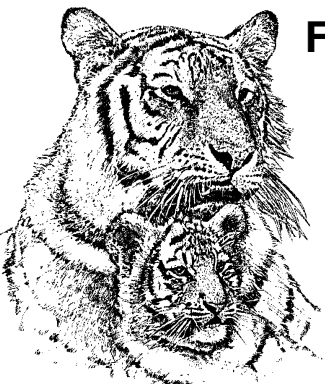


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