Bill Self’s Kansas Jayhawks limped into last night’s Sunflower Showdown losers of four of their previous five games and on the verge of falling out of the top 25 for the first time in 12 years. It was the most beatable and pedestrian Kansas team that Kansas State has faced in years. Yet, the result was as predictable as ever.

Kansas 74 K-State 51.

The Wildcats never led and trailed by as many as 26. They have now lost four straight Big 12 games by at least 20 points – a feat unmatched in school history. The average margin of defeat through ten conference games has been 22 points.

There are few answers to be had right now.

“I don’t know the biggest thing holding us back. We’ve got some soul searching to do, myself included,” K-State guard Mike McGuirl said.

They can start on the offensive end. Nobody scored more than ten points on a night when the team shot a meager 34% from the field.

“Some of the guys…this was their first time in Allen Fieldhouse. I think they were looking around in awe a little bit,” K-State head coach Bruce Weber said. “We’ve had really good teams that were rated high that have struggled and done that.”

Self has used a variety of defenses over the years to vex K-State’s best offensive players. His latest victim was Nijel Pack. Pack poured in a career-high 26 points – including eight three-pointers – on Saturday against Texas A&M but didn’t even get a shot off until over eight minutes into the game Tuesday night. He finished with as many turnovers (4) as field goals made.

“They did a great job on Nijel. We knew they would come after him. They’re just good, and (Kansas guard Marcus) Garrett is good,” Weber said. “I’ve said all along that I don’t want to put too much pressure on (Pack), but, obviously, we need him to play well if we’re going to have a chance.”

Pack is humble by nature, but the Wildcats may need him to become more selfish.

“I wasn’t going to force anything. That’s not the type of player that I am,” Pack said. “They were definitely keyed into me, so I was trying to get my teammates going.”

The Wildcats hung around for a half and trailed by only eight at the break. But the Jayhawks came out of the locker room and quickly grew their lead to an untouchable 24 points by the ten-minute mark of the second half.

Kansas forward David McCormack keyed the efforts with eight points and seven rebounds inside. That led to 14 second-chance points in the second half alone for the Jayhawks.

“It’s pretty simple. They just out-toughed us for offensive rebounds,” Weber said. “Once they got those rebounds and made that little run, then they hit a couple of threes. Now you had yourself in a bind.”

K-State’s losing streak has hit nine as they head into Saturday’s game against #13 Texas Tech. Any peek ahead at the upcoming schedule is enough to elicit a grimace, but the Wildcats did push the Red Raiders in Lubbock before falling 82-71 on Jan. 5.

“We’re not the type to just put our heads down and quit. We’ve just got to move forward,” McGuirl said.