

Big Ten Basketball Media Days

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Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Indiana Hoosiers

Men's Head Coach

Mike Woodson



KEVIN WARREN: The next coach to the podium is the head basketball coach at Indiana University, Mike Woodson, who is not only a great college and pro player, but brought so much panache to the Big Ten Conference. Does a lot with the Boys & Girls Clubs through his charity golf tournament.

A great leader, man, and I know he's excited for the upcoming season for IU basketball. They had a nice run last year. Has most of his team back, some really great players. I'm so happy that Mike Woodson is part of the Big Ten family.

Welcome to the stage Mike Woodson.

MIKE WOODSON: Good morning. First of all, let me just say it's an honor to be back this season. I think about my coaching staff who called me all season a rookie, so I can get that off my plate this season, being my second year (smiling).

Thank you, Commissioner Warren, and your staff for a beautiful job that you've done so far today.

With that being said, I'll open the floor up for some questions.

Q. Obviously a really loaded non-conference schedule this season. Is that what the country should expect to see from Indiana year in and year out as long as you're at the helm?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I think competition is great, man. I mean, it's good for your program. I thought last season we made a major step. My whole team, that was the first time they experienced the Big Dance. I remember back in the day we used to always experience the Big Dance. So I was very excited for our ballclub.

We thought coming into this season, not even knowing if we were going to get Trayce back, Race had committed to come back, we had already put our schedule in play with North Carolina and Kansas and Arizona. Which I think is

good. It gives us the opportunity to play some of the best teams in the country, just see where you are as a ballclub.

Q. Where does Jalen Hood-Schifino fit into your lineup, and the other freshmen, what impact do you expect them to make?

MIKE WOODSON: It's been pretty competitive. All the freshmen that have come in this season, I like 'em because they are competitive. Jalen sits right at the top. I've kind of had him in the starting lineup, I've had him on the second team. I'm just trying to look at combinations just to see who's going to start, who's going to get the minutes.

But he's been a great addition to our ballclub because he does a little bit of everything for our team, which is kind of nice.

Q. How is your team handling a lot of this pre-season hype and buzz about their prospects?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it is what it is. It's a part of the game. When I was in school as a player, I never bought into the rankings, what the media would say about our ballclub. You still got to go out and play the game.

Hell, my senior year we were ranked No. 1 and we didn't get it done. So at the end of the day I guess it's kind of nice for our players who haven't experienced that.

Again, you got to go out and play. I mean, you got to prove it on the basketball floor. That's when it counts.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Trayce's return. Obviously he wants to have a great season with you guys, but how he can make it work both for him individually and his future pursuits as well as become an even more dynamic player for you guys?

MIKE WOODSON: He was the missing piece, the major piece to our ballclub. I kind of rode along this summer trying to figure out if I was going to get Trayce or would I have to go out into the portal and find another big.

But he made it easy for me when he decided to make the



decision to come back. It just puts us in a better place. I mean, he had a tremendous season last season. I just got to get him to the next level, to the point where if we handle our business in terms of winning, I think everything else will take care of itself.

He's really put a lot of work in this summer, shooting the midrange, the three-point shot. I never been one to tell him not to shoot it. I think in the game he's just got to figure out when is the right time to take the shot.

He was a workhorse for us down low last season. He does a lot of things for our team. He blocks shots, he rebounds, he pushes the ball in the break. He's a great passer out of the double-team.

I just think the sky's the limit for him this season. I'm going to try to push him in the right direction and hopefully everything else will take care of itself.

Q. You talked about back in the day used to be used to it every year of reaching the heights that you're now aspiring to reach this season. What is the thrill factor for you? When you get up in the morning, you're coaching this group, now all those things that you strived to do back in your playing days are on the table for this group.

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, it's me and my staff, we got a big task ahead of us. That's what I signed up for, which is okay. I feel good about what I do as a coach.

But at the end of the day we got to get 17 players playing at a high level in order to win the Big Ten or a national title. The Big Ten is good, man. You got a lot of great coaches, a lot of great teams.

Then our schedule early is very competitive. We got a lot of work to do this season, man. But you can't run from it or be scared of competition. This is what college basketball is about.

I came here, I signed up for this, so I'm looking to push these guys to the max and see what happens.

Q. The Big Ten has always been known for its centers on the court. How important is it still to have a dominant big man in the Big Ten and how have you seen the league move more towards positionless basketball?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I think college basketball was always built around having someone, a big, a low-post presence. When you go around the college game, not just in the Big Ten, there are a lot of nice, dominant players that

play in the low post. We happen to have one.

It's kind of nice for us in terms of when I'm preparing and trying to put a game plan together, I know I got an ace in the hole that can do a lot of things around the bucket.

It's going to take more than just Trayce. If I go 9, 10, 11 deep, those guys got to be ready to play and compete around him to help us win as a high level. Man, it's a lot of talent in college basketball. You just can't fake it. You got to go out and compete every night for 40 minutes and just see what happens.

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