

Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Michigan Wolverines

Men's Head Coach

Saddi Washington



THE MODERATOR: Michigan Head Coach Juwan Howard could not be with us today, but we would like to send our well wishes to him for a speedy recovery. In his place we would like to welcome Assistant Coach Saddi Washington. Coach Washington is in his eighth season at Michigan.

Coach, we'll begin with your opening statement.

SADDI WASHINGTON: Well, thank you. Thank you to Commissioner Tony and your staff for putting together this awesome event. It's an amazing time of the year for us as basketball coaches.

I just looked at the schedule. I think we're four weeks away to the day of our first game. It's always an exciting time of the year.

We send greetings from Ann Arbor. Obviously Coach Juwan wasn't able to be here, but he sends his regards. He's doing fantastic. He's in good spirits and very motivated to get back to the young men, and we're going to be really excited the first time we see him walk down that hallway and into the gym.

We've had a tremendous summer. Our young men have been working diligently both on and off the floor. It's been really refreshing with this group. We have a great blend of older and returning guys, and we're really just excited to get this season started.

With that, we'll field any questions.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

Q. Is there a timetable for Juwan Howard's return? And what do you think that will mean to this team that's been dealing with the situation this offseason?

SADDI WASHINGTON: Well, you know my boss, right? He is a very motivated individual to get back.

But, no, there's no timetable. Quite honestly, we want him

back when he's ready. He's going to listen to his team of doctors, and he's going to go through the process of working through his rehab and getting healthy, but I know the competitive spirit that he is, and he's going to be running through the door when his time comes.

We're just going to hold down the fort and forge forward and try to prepare these young men for this season.

Q. Obviously an unfortunate situation, but you're here, and this is an incredible experience as someone who wants to be in that leadership position in the future. How much does this experience help you?

SADDI WASHINGTON: You know what, it's amazing. Coach Juwan has done a great job in preparing me personally. It's one of the reasons I love working for him, working with him, working at the University of Michigan.

He's always given us as assistants a voice in the program. For opportunities like this when he sent me a text and said, Hey, you know, I would love for you to represent me and the program on Media Day, there was no question. For sure, you know.

All the time we challenge our guys to have that next-man-up mentality, and that's what we have tried to do as a staff while he's been away getting himself healthy.

Q. Coach, what has Olivier Nkamhoua brought to this program?

SADDI WASHINGTON: Man, Olivier is such a great burst of energy. You know, you have a young man who has championship experience, NCAA Tournament experience. They did a tremendous job in developing him at the University of Tennessee.

We're so excited for what he's going to bring to the University of Michigan, and I think Olivier has done a great job of immersing himself into the Michigan culture.

He brings a great deal of leadership. He has been tremendous in terms of using his voice in the locker room, but also balancing the concept of learning our new system,



our new culture, and we're really excited he's on our team.

Q. Phil Martelli has a lot of experience as a head coach, even before coming to Michigan. How have you seen him step up in this situation and lead as a head coach?

SADDI WASHINGTON: The legend himself, Phil Martelli. Phil Martelli, you would never know with the humility that he brings since day one that he's coached at the highest level and on the biggest stages.

He's been a great source of leadership for us. He's a great sounding board. He's been a tremendous mentor for our staff. Every single day he's leading. He sends a text every day. He doesn't miss.

It's been awesome to work with him in the various capacities, and even now in this role as he is standing in the gap for Coach Juwan, it's been awesome to kind of -- it's like anything else. Coach is a vet. Phil is a vet, and he can coach in his sleep.

Just kind of watching him grow and develop the team in his way through Coach Juwan's system has been awesome. So we try to support one another in that hallway, and Coach Phil definitely has been awesome for us.

Q. How is Jaelin doing, and what has it just been like to kind of see him go through a tough injury and try to get back?

SADDI WASHINGTON: Well, having gone through that injury myself in my playing days many, many moons ago, I'm so proud of that kid. We all are.

At the point of the season last year -- I think it was eight or nine games in when he went down -- we really felt like he was really getting his feet up under him in terms of playing at this level, being our starting point guard. It normally takes that long for a transfer to really kind of settle in, but that kid, man, he has put the work in since his surgery.

It's been awesome to see him out on the floor. He's been working out and practicing with our guys in a limited basis, just waiting to get full clearance from our doctors. Every day that he shows up in the gym a good day for the Michigan Wolverines.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Washington, thank you so much for your time.

SADDI WASHINGTON: Thank you.

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