

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Coach Archie Miller

Postgame Media Conference



Michigan 73, Indiana 57

Q. Coach, just give us a brief opening statement and maybe something about AI, a lot of questions about him and his last game here at Assembly Hall potentially.

ARCHIE MILLER: Well, Senior Day has taken on sort of a new dynamic here, and I've told those guys last night in our team meeting, I talked about Cooper and I also talked about AI. Number one, Cooper joined us a couple summers ago, has been fantastic for our program. Extremely, extremely unselfish, great energy, whether it's a weight room, a morning workout, a summer workout, practice. You name the job that you ask him to do, he does it. He's been a great addition to what we're doing, and for him to be able to play here I know is big. But he's going to be successful in whatever he wants to do, when you're that hard a worker.

AI has been here from day one. You go through a lot of ups and downs as players, and AI is a special player to me. He's as loyal as it gets; he's as coachable as it gets; and he's as hard of a working guy as you'll ever be around. You know, to me, right now he's finishing the way that you like seniors to finish, by rallying our troops and staying positive, but at the end of the day, he's playing so hard. He's working very, very hard right now for us, and it's up to us to figure out how we can deliver a better performance on his Senior Day, but it's also up to us to figure out how we can keep playing with him.

AI is a guy that 10, 15 years from now right now, I mean, I wouldn't be surprised whatever field he's in, how successful he's going to be just because of the personality, the teamwork, likable, smart. I mean, he's just got so many different types of things going for him.

I'm just sad that his family, Cooper's family, as well, our manager's family, it's tough to not have those guys on the floor, and especially without our fans. It's very difficult to imagine a Senior Day especially like here when you're accustomed to the Senior Day festivities that they've seen

over their time, so that was disappointing.

Today's game was disappointing in the outcome. Michigan is a terrific team, and they have a lot of answers on both ends of the floor. Tremendous size, inside on offense and also inside on defense. Very difficult to stay in rhythm on offense because of their ability to switch likes and they're so big at the 3, 4 and 5. They really protect the rim.

We got off to a good start. The first half, I'll have to watch the film, but they shot 18 free throws in the first half. When you give a team 18 foul shots in the first half, that's a lack of physicality and a lack of discipline, and I think their overall size and ability to drive was the more aggressive team.

I also thought we had some really tough reach-in calls that are undisciplined, but they made every free throw. 16 out of 18 in the first half was a big deal. We are the No. 1 free-throw shooting team in the league in terms of getting to the line, and I don't think we've been out-shot from the foul line 18 to 9 in a half all year. That was a very big part of the first half and it changing toward the end was our guys having to sit.

Second half we were lucky to score the first couple baskets, tried to get a time-out, but Livers banged two threes right away, and they just keep coming. I think as you watch Michigan you may hang around for a while, but they have the ability to sustain it throughout the course of the game, and they play extremely hard.

For us we only had 57, and a big part of that was their ability to protect the rim. We had a hard time at the rim. Trayce was 3 for 12 and Race was 3 for 5. But to me we had one stretch in the game that really stood out, which was our lack of ability to rebound and chase down balls in the second half. Other than that, our guys competed pretty good. I thought our attitude was good, and today we ran into a good team. When you're down a guy like Armaan, you're going to have some odd combinations, and I think Jerome being able to play the 3 spot for the first time really all year did a nice job for us in being able to man that up, give us a bigger guy out there, so I think we'll probably stay with that as we have that throughout the rest of the season.



But we're on to the next one. At this time of year there's not a whole lot to talk about. We have a quick turnaround to play a Michigan State team that we just played a week ago, so there's not a whole lot to talk about on that one. We've got a lot to get better at, and we're going to have to be a lot better against them because they've done what we're trying to do. As you struggle, as you go through it, they found a way to get one, and to me Michigan State looks like the team at the beginning of the season a lot of people thought could make a really deep run, and one thing can change to the next quick, and we're going to have to try to find our opportunity to make that happen.

Q. What do you think right now defending the three-point line in terms of rotations and stuff, and are there ways maybe you can make shooters a little more uncomfortable?

ARCHIE MILLER: I think our three-point field goal percentage defense has really suffered because of our lack of smarts, effort and communication in transition over the course of the season. Transition defense has been our biggest problem, and when you're playing against a team like a Michigan or you're playing against some of the teams that really have four shooters out there, we've really struggled with that element. That's a big part of why.

I think the second part of it is if you're not able to guard the ball, if you're not able to rebound it effectively and your help is late, you're not where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there, you're going to break down, and that's the second part of it. I don't know if some of the shots are any more challengeable at times. Sometimes you're playing against terrific players and they make shots. But no question about it, three-point field goal percentage defense in our conference play and our defense in general in conference play has been a big letdown.

Q. Just to get some clarification on Armaan's injury, I know it's on the right foot. What can you tell us about it and how long might he be out?

ARCHIE MILLER: Armaan has a right foot injury, which isn't his original injury. His ankle was on the other side. He awkwardly landed in the Rutgers game, and it seems to be more of a bone bruise issue than anything, heel through the achilles. Uncomfortable, sore to touch, nothing structurally wrong. Really at this point it's a pain tolerance thing. There wasn't even a question that he wouldn't go today. I don't believe he'll go the rest of the regular season in my mind with how he's operating right now in the boot, and we have to find a way to collectively be a little bit better now that we know he's not going to play.

Today was a quick turnaround and we had some unique combinations out there for the first time all year, but to me Jerome played really hard, did a pretty good job for us on both ends of the floor and he'll be a little bit more comfortable as we go into the next one.

Q. Two questions: When Trayce starts as slowly as he does and doesn't rebound much, do you see it kind of happening in real time, and do you say anything to him to wake him up or just kind of wait for it to happen?

ARCHIE MILLER: Yeah, I think Trayce has started slow, and I think part of that is maybe a little bit on him just in terms of his aggressiveness and his approach, but he's been better at it recently. We've tried to do a better job of finding ways to get him started a little quicker with a basket and whatnot. But I think in this one, he had some looks there early in the game that were tough shots against huge size, and sometimes him not being able to make a couple early slows us down.

But usually he picks it up a little bit and keeps it going throughout the course of the game. Today was a hard one, though, and I think -- I watched the Iowa game at length the other day and I saw the leading scorer in the country have a very difficult time scoring in that game, as well.

There's a reason I think Michigan is championship good and I think a lot of people will talk about their skill level and a lot of people are going to talk about their versatility and their ball movement and how hard they are to guard. I think they're one of the most difficult teams to play against on the other end of the floor. I mean, between Wagner, Livers and Big Hunter, you're looking at 6'10" to 6'9" to 7'2" across the board, and with Livers' and Wagner's ability to switch, things are very difficult across the board.

I thought today they mixed up their defenses, tried to take us out of rhythm in sets and made us play the game. I think when we got Trayce on the run and he's able to get some pick-and-roll game, he's able to get some more face-up opportunities, he was better at attacking the basket. But tough to score with low post back-to-the-basket moves consistently against that type of size inside. And Davis does a good job when they bring him in, too. He's very underrated.

Q. The Big Ten has been so hard all year and you've seen them all now. It seems like this Michigan team just doesn't really have any weaknesses. Do you see that there with them?

ARCHIE MILLER: No question, they deserve all of the --

whatever the word you want to use, accolades, praise. They deserve it all. First and foremost, I think regardless of how they play on offense and defense, they have a great spirit about them. I think that's one thing you'd probably have to look at Michigan and just look at the way that they vibe and they play on both ends of the floor. They get after you, they play hard for one another, they have a great bounce to them, so you can tell they're very together. That's a big part of what they're doing. And they have amazing size, like versatile size on both ends of the floor. They have -- to me Livers is the most difficult matchup for teams to figure out unless you're really, really small. But between Wagner and him, that's a pick your poison sometimes between how you can guard those two guys. They're both guards, they both shoot, but they both really drive.

And then the big fella, he's a problem too, now. He's as good as they're going to get inside the box. When he catches it he's got great hands and he can really score. But to me, yeah, they're complete, and as they approach here toward the finish, they have a great opportunity to do and go as far as anybody in the country. I haven't seen some of the other teams. I know within our league if you do what they're doing, you're the real deal.

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