

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Trayce Jackson-Davis

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with today's presser with Trayce. We'll take questions.

Q. You mentioned in your statement that you believe in Coach Woodson's plan. Can you elaborate on what exactly you heard from him in terms of the meetings, what that plan is?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: So basically me and my dad, we had a sitdown for two hours with Coach Woodson yesterday and talked about my future where he believes and sees me in the offense, how he can help develop me into the player that I aspire to be, also winning basketball games here. He told us he came in, doesn't want to rebuild, he wants to win right away. He said I'm a big piece to that.

After hearing that, after hearing an NBA coach tell you that, it just really was a simple decision to come back and play for him honestly.

Q. This time last year we talked a lot about how you wanted to develop more of a perimeter game, add pieces to your game. Obviously with Joey out this year you sort of didn't really have the luxury of not playing down low all the time. How much of that plays in a role, too, of just wanting to be able to expand your own skills before you head off to the next level?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Most definitely. Joey was a big part of it, just trying to play the role that Coach Miller needed me to play. Obviously I try to do that to the best of my abilities.

But he basically told me that we're going to get your right hand going, we're going to get that right and we're going to get your jump shot right. Basically he wants me to shoot those shots in game. If I don't shoot them, he's going to take me out of the game. It's kind of like that.

He needs me to be a better player, better play-maker, so that's what I'm going to do.

Q. Elaborate on that. He actually told you he wants you to take jump shots or he's going to take you out of the game? What role does he see for you, and how different has it been from what you've seen so far? How important was that in your decision?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: I think that part of my game is going to open up a lot of things for our team really. Teams won't be able to just pack it in.

I also believe with Parker coming back and deciding to stay, we already played a few open gyms together, he shoots the ball really well. The spacing on the floor will be a lot better. I also believe with Joey being healthy, it will also give our team a much better dynamic just because he's so big and he's also a really good post player. It enables me to go out and handle the ball, do stuff of that nature, so...

Q. The word 'legacy' isn't really thrown around until the end of someone's career. Right now what do you want your legacy to be at Indiana?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: My legacy? I want to get Indiana basketball back on track. That's my goal. That's why I came back. I believe in this tradition. I believe what we have here is something special. I want to be one of the reasons why. I don't want to be someone who ran away when it was tough.

But really all in all, I believe in Coach Woodson and I believe in the tradition of Indiana basketball. I know we can get it back, so...

Q. It feels like with Parker back, with Joey here, with you back, Woodson in the fold, it feels like something special is happening here. What is of the mood like there?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Most definitely. I think that the mood here is really, really, really, really positive. I feel like there's a light. I feel like we've been in the dark for a while. There wasn't any energy. Like, there was no energy here. Like all the life after the season was sucked out of us.

Ever since Coach Woodson got hired, I feel like it's been almost like a new positive vibe has come. We've been hooping, we've been playing some open gyms, us and the guys. Excited to be playing basketball again. Excited to be out there, just being part of the team, getting work in honestly.

With him not being able to really talk to us yet because of all the recruiting stuff, when he does talk to us, I think he really has the knowledge and knows what he's, like, talking about, what he's saying.

I think it's really good. I think there's a positive energy here right now honestly.

Q. When you went into that meeting with Coach Woodson, what was your mindset? Were you thinking about entering the NBA? Was it always wanting to go back to school, possibly transferring?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: When the coaches got fired, my mindset was honestly I didn't know who they were going to bring in. I was going to wait anyways. But I was almost dead set on entering the draft and hiring an agent. That was probably two weeks ago.

Then the hiring of Coach Woodson, I wanted to see what he had to say, what he had thoughts about the team, about me and my development, how he can help me.

So I sat down with him and we talked a little bit. I really liked him. But my parents were still dead set on me going to the NBA. I said, How about you come down, dad, and give him a chance, see what he has to say?

That's what we did. We had a two-hour conversation. My dad came out of the room, he said, Give us five minutes. We went out of Coach Woodson's office, went into a little meeting room, and he said, You're staying. That's how that went.

I hope the other guys, my other teammates, get to meet with him and they decide the same thing. I feel like he knows what he's talking about, I know he knows what he's doing, and I got 100% faith in him.

Q. Teammates, I'm guessing you're recruiting them. What are you doing to your teammates in the portal? What is your pitch and approach?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Obviously with my teammates, those are all my brothers. I want what's best for them first and foremost. I'm going to support their decisions no matter what they choose.

But I really feel like with the situation that we have going here, Assembly Hall being packed again, having fans back, being able to play under a new style of offense, I really feel like there's no point to leave. I feel like all the necessary tools are right here at our disposal. We have an NBA coach coming in. What else do you want, if I'm being honest? That's really my pitch.

Obviously they need to do what's best for them. I want 'em here, all of 'em.

Q. Specifically in terms of your development, you mentioned the jump shot. I guess you want to be able to be more right-handed, too, in what you do in your game. What specifically do you think you can get better at next season?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Most definitely. I feel like with my jump shot, I just have to have the confidence to take it. Taking one a game, going 0-1 is really hard when you can go 3-5. That's the way I think about it really. Like against Illinois, I was 3-5, 3-6. It is a lot different shooting 50% from jumpers when you're just taking one a game.

Having the confidence to shoot that ball. I think he's going to instill a lot of confidence in me. That's what he's already been telling me. Being able to handle the ball, being able to go to my right, using that as second nature to my left hand. I have this as my left hand, and my right hand is another thing that I can go to. My left hand is a sure thing, my right hand is, Oh, so you took that away. It's right there.

That's what I need to get my development at. I know he's going to get that for me. I averaged 19 and 9 this year strictly using my right hand. Being able to open my game even more, the sky's the limit, really.

Q. Is there anything in particular that Coach Woodson said to you that just told you, This guy definitely gets it, whether in the first or second meeting? What were some of the things he said that told you he really understands what I need as a player and we need as a team?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: The thing that he really told me is the things that I did not want to hear. He told me what I needed to work on. He showed me clips of me playing. He showed me my missed shots, what I should have done in this situation, where I needed to take shots. That's all my dad talks about. He talks about the things that I need to improve on. He never talks about what I'm good at.

That right there was already showing me that he already wants what's best for me. After he did that, I was sold on him. I think that's when my parents were sold on him, as well. Just showing things that I can fix in my game already, showing like basically that you can do so much more, and it's almost like you were like you needed room to blossom almost, so... That was probably it.

Q. Going off some of your own comments, you want some of these guys back, there are positive vibes. The success that you did not achieve this year with these guys that you want back, that you want to play with, talk about the success that you're looking forward to having with them on the floor next year.

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Most definitely. I feel like our freshmen year, my freshman year in general, I feel like we were right there. 20-12. We were playing in the second round, about to play Penn State, who had just beat -- had a chance to make the tournament. I think we really had a good shot. Then COVID putting a damper on everything.

Coming back this next year with a lot of positive vibes, everybody was ready to go, then Joey gets hurt. That was a big thing that hurt our team. About eight or nine games in, Armaan gets hurt. He's out for seven games. He's our second leading scorer.

It really shows that when adversity comes, you have to stick together. That's what we did, we stuck together. We didn't win games, but at the same time we had all the pieces and we were right there in most of the games. It wasn't like we were getting blown out every game. We had a chance to win all of the games that were on our schedule. Just never happened. Sometimes that's the way that goes.

Coming in this year, I feel like with Joey healthy, some new guys coming in, with some of the guys staying, we have a chance to do something really big and something that hasn't been done here in a while. That's where my head's at right now.

Q. You mentioned Parker Stewart earlier. That's a guy we haven't been able to see much of so far. Expand on what you're seeing from him behind the scenes, what you think he can bring to the team?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Parker is a hooper. Parker shoots the ball at a very, very, very high level. I've already seen it. He can shoot it off the dribble, he can shoot spot-up threes. He puts the ball in the hole. That's something we're going to need on our team. I'm really, really glad that he decided to stay.

He's going to space the floor. He's going to shoot that thing at a high clip, so...

Q. You're close with Armaan. What is your sense on him right now? I don't know if he's quite decided yet. He went in the portal. Do you have a pretty good feeling on his situation or had any discussions?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: I talked to him a little bit. Trying to give him his space. He needs to make his decision that's best for him, obviously first and foremost. I want him here. I know he's iffy. He doesn't know. He's a guy that is more about trust. He's not a guy to take a leap the faith.

He just really wants to see, kind of hear what Coach Woodson has to say a little bit more before he makes his decision. That's fine with me, he can take all the time he needs.

I know I want him here and I want to play with him next year.

Q. How important would that be from a continuity standpoint? There was a little bit of chemistry developing before he got hurt.

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Oh, most definitely. Me and Armaan, I think we were both playing at a pretty high level. There was that stretch where he was averaging like 19 points per game. Putting him in a fast-paced offense, with him being able to get the ball and go in transition, I think that will really help him.

At the same time he still has to choose what's right for him. I'm going to be there and support him every step of the way. If he needs my advice to help him, I'll do that.

Q. You talked a little bit about the different schemes and situations that Mike Woodson will bring to the offense this year. With the addition of Parker and Joey, how good can this team be offensively? How different can it be from last year where you guys struggled at times?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: I think last year we struggled at times because we never really played up-tempo. I feel like when we played up-tempo, we were really good. I feel like we were set oriented too much. We didn't really just get the ball and go. I feel like we were more robotic than basketball players.

I feel like Coach Woodson is really going to let the leashes off, let us actually play our games. I feel like that's going to really help a lot of our teammates, really going to help

people like Rob, if Christian comes back. People like Christian, too, those guys can go out and flat out score. They're really didn't get a chance to because we were always running sets.

I think that will help them. But at the same time Christian needs to do what's best for him. Rob coming back, I think he's going to do well in the system.

Q. In terms of visualizing next season, the full Assembly Hall, all that, how much maybe for you, I don't want to ask you to speak for other guys, how much have you all been able to refresh in the last few weeks? It was a stressful season, unusual season, probably very difficult season from a mental standpoint as much as a physical standpoint. At some level does the locker room just feel refreshed, not just coaching, but can you visualize something more normal next season?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Most definitely. Especially for me. I really just feel like -- let me refresh.

So basically with a packed Assembly Hall, just coming back to a normalization with COVID, bringing in the freshmen, they've never experienced that. Working with them is really going to be special. I feel like college basketball wasn't nearly the same this year from my freshman year. There just really wasn't that spark to it. It was really weird.

But I feel like next year, with the fans, with Coach Woodson, with the players coming back, whoever decides to come back, with new players coming in, transfers, I feel like the season's going to be really special. I really can't wait to be a part of it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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