

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson Press Conference



MIKE WOODSON: We've just been working the last month and a half to prepare for this Bahama trip. There's been a lot of input both ways with the players and coaching staff and from where we started to where we are today, we've gotten a lot better. Especially from a conditioning standpoint and I know it's early but I just wanted to get a feel of who I am as a coach in terms of my conditioning side of the basketball. I mean, we've got to be in better shape I think than we were last season.

So that's why I'm really pushing the conditioning because of the way we want to play on both ends of the floor. We've really got to be conditioned to move around and run up and down the floor.

So in that regard, I think we're starting to improve there, and they are starting to pick up some of the things that I've added from an offensive standpoint and a defensive standpoint, and it's kind of nice to see but we've still got a long way to go right now.

Q. Curious defensively with the change kind of going from what the team ran last year to what you're trying to do defensively, has there been any challenges that you've noticed so far and any habits maybe that they previously had that you've had to work with them to change?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I don't knock -- what they did last year is what they did. I've got to concentrate on my style from a defensive standpoint. My thing is if the ball has been guarded tight and everybody's in a support position to help if there's a breakdown, you know, I want a body on a body. I don't want guys taking possessions off begging for help defensively. You know, if you're on the ball, that's your guy, you've got to guard the ball. There are certain directions where we want the ball directed. Somebody's beat, you know, there's got to be help.

And then that guy helps; you've got to help him from helping the guy who got beat.

So I mean, everybody's got to be on a string. So we are

working on rotations and mainly just keeping heat on the basketball in terms of who is guarding. Pick-and-rolls, we're trying to be up and be aggressive in that area. But again, you know, what they did last year was last year. This is a totally new year for us.

Q. I wanted to ask you about recruiting. Was it hard for you after so long in the NBA to recalibrate your expectations of what you're looking for, and what else did you learn out there?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, you know, there's no question the level of play is not the same. But at the end of the day, you've still got to evaluate talent, and you know, for me, it was -- I had a great time out there. I saw a lot of people I knew.

But just to be able to evaluate young talent and just see where, you know, the level of play in certain areas where you go is totally different.

You know, some areas, guys can shoot the ball and some areas, they can't shoot the ball. There are areas where guys can't handle it as well as certain other areas that you go to and watch basketball.

So basketball is being played differently all over the United States, but at the end of the day, we've got to evaluate players that we think fit what we're trying to accomplish here at Indiana, and you know, there's a lot of talent out there. You know, getting players to commit is the next thing. You know, we've got the one kid, Kaleb Banks out of Fayetteville, Georgia, who I liked at 6-8, athletic and can score the ball. He averaged I think 28 last year on his high school team.

So he's got the knack to put the ball in the hole and I kind of like that. He can handle it and make plays off the dribble, as well. We've got to get him stronger once he gets here but I think skies are the limit for Kaleb if he stays on target in terms of his growth and where we think he needs to be.

But you know, there are a number of guys that we're still trying to get for next season. But for the most part,



recruiting was fun. It was grueling and tiresome at times, because you sit in the gym sometimes from eight in the morning until 12, 1 o'clock and then I've got to get out of the gym and go jump on a plane and go to another site. It's up and down, and watching a lot of talented players.

Q. We just had the NBA Draft. What did you see as far as what Big Ten players got drafted and how did you think the Big Ten did in the Draft this year?

MIKE WOODSON: I didn't watch the Draft that closely. I read it in the paper. We had I think seven players from the Big Ten that got drafted. I think one in the first round, I think the other six were later in the second round.

At the end of the day we are still in the hunt in the Big Ten or players getting drafted. I think the most was the SEC. They had ten NBA Draft picks. But again, the Draft is what it is. My focus now is trying to find players that can make the next jump. That's going to be important for your program, as well, as we move forward, and you know, anybody you recruit, they want to know, can you get them to the next level, anyway.

So I think is if you're good enough and you're willing to work, you can get to the next level. It kind of goes both ways.

Q. How are you going to go about installing? You talked about four-out, one-in as a general concept for your offense. Are you going to install a lot of things before the season starts and get good at them during the season, or are will you add stair steps as the season goes along?

MIKE WOODSON: We've been doing a little bit of everything. The main focus the last month and a half has basically been on defense, so it's going to be kind of interesting to see how we react when we play someone else.

This team we're going to play, team BC Mega in the Bahamas, they are a pretty good basketball team. And so we'll be tested and I'm anxious to see where we are from a defensive standpoint.

Offensively, you know, things will come along. I've added some things to get ready for this game. Again, when we are scrimmaging and we break down the tape after our scrimmages, you know, there's just a lot of -- there's a lot of room for improvement in terms of execution because my standard of execution is high. I want -- I don't want guys throwing the ball all over the gym. I want them getting shots, good shots. And I want them executing.

And then defensively, you have to be held accountable to defend the basketball and rebound. All that goes hand-in-hand when you try to put a team together. But we just kind of got baby steps right now in terms of, you know, getting where we need to go knowing that there's a long way to go.

Q. You talk about breaking down film, how valuable will that be as you start moving into the preseason and the fall?

MIKE WOODSON: It's very valuable because I've seen from the time we started to where we are today, some improvement. I've always felt that film is a major teaching tool for young players when you are trying to build a program.

And we still got a long way to go, man. I mean, the positive behind the month and a half for me is that they are starting to pick up some of the things that I'm throwing at them, and that means a lot when you're trying to build a team. You know, I don't have to keep repeating myself. I mean, yeah, they are making mistakes and that's just a part of the game.

You know, when they make mistake, I try reinforce that they shouldn't do the things that they are doing. Then when we show them on film, try to show them the areas where they are making mistakes, you try to see the next practice if they have improved once they get back out on the floor and not doing the same thing over and over again.

So those are the things I look at from a coaching standpoint but again, we have a long way to go still.

Q. Is there anyone that has specifically really impressed you this summer or you feel like has made really good strides?

MIKE WOODSON: I think Trayce has. You know, he's one player that was always intriguing. That was -- when I took the job, I was desperately trying to get him to stay and we were able to get that done.

But from the time we started to where we are now, he's made some improvement in terms of how he's running and playing. He's playing, to me, much aggressive than he did in some of the tapes that I watched last season. And we're going to need him to be that guy, the guy that plays aggressive and if he can average 20 and double rebounds, that's a major bonus, again, for our ballclub.

I think Rob Phinisee has kind of changed his game a little bit, too. I kind of like what he's done from the time we started to where he is today. But I like the makeup of our

ballclub in general. I just think we have a good group of guys that are working hard and doing everything that we are asking them to do, and that's all you can ask for from a coach, coaching standpoint is players that are -- that come to the gym with energy and happy about being there, and putting in the work because that's what it's going to take to get back to the top I think.

Q. You mentioned Rob, how has he changed his game? What's different about what he's doing? And you mentioned BC Mega. What do you think about that team and what do you know about them and what kind of challenge do you think they present? What do you think they can do for you guys playing them at this stage?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think Rob has improved, his confidence is a little bit better I think than it was last year. And I'm just trying to get Rob and Xavier, Khristian, young Khristian, to learn how to be point guards and run your team when they got the ball in their hand.

I think Rob has stood out a little bit in terms of where he was a year ago, in terms of being more relaxed and comfortable and playing. You know, I'm going to need him to stay there because -- and continue to grow, because that position is important because a lot of times the ball will be in his hands and Xavier's hands, as well. You need them to be able to make the right decisions when the ball is in their hands.

With the Mega team, we are watching film on them. They are a big team. You know, they are a team that plays well together. They have got a pretty good little point guard that kind of directs traffic, so we really going to have to control him and put heat on him when he's got the ball in his hand but they got a lot of shooters, a lot of big guys. So it will be a test for our ballclub to see how we compete and how we can play at a high level. That's kind of why I'm anxious to get to the Bahamas to see where we are as a team.

Q. The four new guys, the four transfers that none of us have obviously had a chance to see much if any of them yet but can you fill us in behind closed doors what you think of them so far and what you like or maybe want to see them get better at quickly?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, they are trying to feel me out as well as the other players on the team I think Miller is trying to find his niche. He can make shots. I've just got to put him in the right positions where he's successful to make them.

Xavier is trying to learn, he's a point guard but there's a lot that comes with being a point guard so I've probably been

on him more than anybody on the team because I just think that position is so valuable in terms of where you go as a ballclub.

Young Tamar Bates, he's a typical freshman. The good thing about him is he's put on about 12 pounds from the time he's come in here and that's a bonus because he was real light in the butt and we needed him to pick up some weight.

But you know, he's a cocky kid that is not scared and I kind of like that in him. So Big Mike is who he is. He bangs and I think that's what his -- main trait is a little more competitive because he's a bigger guy now that can bang and do things down low when he gets the ball.

So competition in practice has been pretty competitive and in order to be a great team, you have to have competition and guys competing against one another. No starting position is set in stone except for the big fella, Trayce, so everybody is just working right now trying to figure it out.

Q. What do you think about Parker so far?

MIKE WOODSON: Parker's been solid. Early on went through a stretch where he was probably the best player in the gym, and then he just took a back seat, and now I'm trying to retool him and get him back to how he was playing earlier when he first started but he's doing fine.

Q. You had talked the last time we talked about being able to be hands-on and get to work with these guys. How do you think they are picking up some of your concepts particularly on the defensive end of the floor?

MIKE WOODSON: They are picking them up. My thing is when you put a defensive concept in place, you know, you give them the general stuff but there's always what we call the "what ifs." You're going to have the "what ifs" a lot when you're playing basketball, maybe on offense or defense, and mainly defense.

You know, I can say we're going to play this pick-and-roll a certain way, but what if it doesn't -- what if it doesn't happen that way, are you going to just quit and say it didn't work and we give up and get -- succumb to a bucket? No. You've got to play the what ifs, too. So those are the things that I'm trying to teach as we go along in our pick-and-roll coverage, our post-up game, you know, when there's a breakdown, somebody beating somebody on the baseline drive. Do you just watch and let him come in and lay it up? No. You've got to go and stop the problem. And then after you stopped the problem, you've got to scramble out of the problem and get to where the ball might take

you.

So I mean, there's a lot of things that has to be taught that we've -- we as a staff, we've got a lot of stuff in, in this short period of time, and that's why I'm very encouraged and that they are picking things up and they are getting better from the time we started to where we are today.

Q. Who have been your best four or five offensive players so far to start?

MIKE WOODSON: Oh, it has varied, without a doubt Trayce has been but Parker at one time has been pretty good; Xavier, Tamar, Galloway has been pretty good, and then Rob. Rob has played pretty well on both ends of the ball which is kind of nice to see.

I haven't given them a lot offensively because I just feel like that will come. We've just got to get solid defensively because I truly believe that if we can rest our hat on the defensive end in terms of defending and rebounding the ball, we'll give ourselves a chance to be in every game that we play.

So that's where my focus has been, but you know, we have put in some offensive things, and you know, they are executing and trying to learn it, and put it to work once we scrimmage and play.

So we've still got a long way to go, gentlemen, we still do. It's early right now.

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