

# Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Head Coach Mike Woodson

### Press Conference



**Q. I'm curious last night on your radio show, I think you talked to Fish a little bit about Parker Stewart and Miller Kopp struggling a little bit and you needing to kind of help them kind of find their groove. I'm curious, just from your experience coaching in the NBA and how long you've been around players, what have you found works in terms of talking to guys to get them out of a funk. Have you found different things work with different guys? Or is there anything you try to do to get a player out of a funk?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I mean, it's not nothing new. They've got to put more time in the gym, which they've been doing, shooting the ball.

And, you know, our offensive flow has just got to be -- I mean, they've had good looks. They just haven't knocked the shots down, you know. And a lot of that is you got to show them some love and get them some confidence and run some plays for them, a few plays for them to get them going.

But, again, I mean, I'm not going to go overboard or react overboard about it. At the end of the day, they have shown that they can make shots in practice. I think Miller was pretty good in the Bahamas. Until he got hurt, he made shots. And Parker has made shots, you know. And I just got to get them comfortable, man, in what we're doing and feel good about when they let the ball go, they know it's going in the hole.

So that's kind of on me a little bit. But those two guys got to continue to put the time in the gym, which they have been doing, and shooting the basketball and hopefully it will come around for them.

**Q. Mike, St. John's plays such a unique style of basketball, something you don't see every night in college basketball. Is that something though that you try to prepare for a little bit in the off season or preseason, or is that looking too far ahead?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I mean, you got teams

that's going to press, you've got teams that's going to play half court zone. I mean, you see a little bit of everything in college basketball.

And our guys, we've worked on -- leading in to St. John -- I mean, we've been working all year on pressing. We've just got to hope when they throw it on us, our guys are comfortable in making the reads and getting the ball out of the double teams and getting the ball up the floor to try to create a scoring opportunity.

But it's a part of college basketball. You can't run from it. And, sure, we've been working against half court zone. I'm not a big zone guy myself, personally, but I have some of my assistant coaches work with the second unit in zone situations and guys with the first unit and we try to create the atmosphere where we are getting trapped and going against certain types of defenses.

So it's going to be an interesting game to see where we are. I'm kind of anxious just to get to the game to see how we're going to fare against their traps and getting the ball up the floor and doing what we do.

**Q. Hey, Coach, yeah, just kind of piggybacking off of St. John's and the pressure that they bring to the floor. Talk a little bit about the point guard play so far from your group and kind of where they are up to this point and kind of what they need to improve on, especially going up against a very defensive pressured St. John's squad?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I mean, I'm happy, you know, with the makeup of our point guards. I haven't played Khristian very much. But I thought when he came in the other night, he was ready to play. And that's all you can ask for from a coaching standpoint.

But I think Rob and Xavier are kind of holding it down a little bit in terms of how we want to play. Rob has been kind of a stabilizer for us when he comes in the game. And X is starting to find his groove a little bit. The last game he played really well for us and made -- you know, made all the right plays that we needed him to make as a point guard.



But again, you know, we haven't witnessed this kind of pressure. Like I said, I'm kind of anxious to see where we are to see how our guards and just our players in general react to pressure.

**Q. Hey, Coach. Seems like a good time to ask. Have you prioritized playing a game in New York City in the coming years either in Madison Square Garden or another location?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I spoke with, you know, my Knick family that I know well about, you know, possibly here in the future bringing the game to -- I would love to do that. I think I owe that to Jim Dolan and that Knick organization.

I mean, we -- our team has gone to New York a few times. I mean, we were out there for the NIT when I was here. And I know coach has taken the team out a number of times as well when he was coaching here.

But it would be nice, I think, for our ball club to go back east and play in New York. So only time will tell. We've just got to put something together and make it happen.

**Q. Yeah, Coach, I just wanted to ask real quick about Race Thompson, averaging almost a double double. I think it's 8.5 points, 10 rebounds only playing 20 minutes a game. Just like your thoughts on what you've seen from him and is this sort of what you want from him going forward or do you see other things you'd like to add a little -- you know, little more to what you're getting from him?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think if his minutes go up a little bit more, I think all his numbers will expand. But I'm really at a good place with him right now and how he's playing.

I mean, his leadership, you know, on the defensive side of the ball has been, I mean, really, really good for our ball club because he's kind of directing traffic and helping guys who probably have struggled a little bit in the defensive system. He's kind of been like the mouthpiece and the centerpiece in terms of getting guys where they need to be.

But I like how he's been playing though. He's done a lot of nice things. Unfortunately, in the first game, he got, you know, into foul trouble, and I had to pull him. But this last game, he was solid again.

I mean, we're going to need it from he and Trayce, you know, as we navigate through this season, man, because they're two big pieces to the puzzle.

**Q. Yeah. Hey, Coach. This particular group you're**

**talking to right now isn't real accustomed to seeing a fully healthy roster. Looked like you had all 13 available the other night. Just wonder what kind of value you're getting in practice from having so many guys available and in starting to prepare for some high major opponents like St. John's?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it's been very competitive, chippy. I mean, you know, guys -- everybody wants to play. And I get that. And, you know, we can't play everybody. Although the other night, we were able to -- because of the blowout, we were able to get everybody in the game. And I thought everybody stepped up and played well when they got in the game.

And that's kind of how practice has been. You know, guys have been very competitive and going at each other. And it's kind of nice to see. It keeps -- keeps everybody on their toes in terms of who's going to play and who's not going to play.

So tomorrow's game will be interesting to just see where we are as a ball club and see how we handle their pressure.

**Q. Yeah. Kind of getting back to that, Coach, and tempo. Do you see yourself wanting to run with them when you break -- you view dictating tempo in this kind of a game?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, my thing is when teams press, I convert back to when I was in college. You know, we used to -- when teams pressed us, man, that was -- that was open door season for us, man, to get up and down the floor and play.

I mean, we used to lick our chops back in the day when we got pressed or, you know, teams played half court zone against us because we kind of liked it.

And, so, you know, I'm telling our guys, hell, you get pressed, you know, you've got to make them pay on the other end for pressing. So, I mean, it might cause us to speed up and play a little more up tempo, but that's okay. I mean, it's a part of it, you know. I mean, I don't want to break the press and just play half court. If we've got an opportunity to go score the ball, that's what I want us to do.

**Q. Hey, Mike, I wanted to go back to what you said about Xavier Johnson and him finding his groove. He's obviously been a guy throughout his career that's been pretty high risk, pretty high reward. How did you sort of want to shape his game to maybe accentuate the positives and cut down on some of the turnovers and the other stuff? And how do you feel like he's**

## coming along with that?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think he's making some nice strides. I mean, again, point guard position is a tough position for me. And -- because I'm just so demanding on them doing the right things to help, you know, all the other pieces that go along with your team.

And he's learning, man. I mean, he's -- I don't think he's ever been asked to do a lot of the things that I'm asking him to do. And that's a part of being a good point guard. You know, you need good point guard play in college basketball to be effective I think.

And if I can keep Rob and Khristian on board and doing the things that they need to do when they play and Xavier, you know, kind of leading the charge with that first unit, then I think we'll be in positions to win ball games.

**Q. Mike, I wanted to ask, you talked a lot about Jordan Geronimo, a player you think has made a lot of progress and still has kind of a lot of potential he can realize. As you get ready for a game like this where maybe there's some defensive match-ups you might ask him to embrace and obviously as a younger guy who wants to see the floor, you also want him to be careful with the ball, just -- I guess, do you feel like he's put himself in a position where you can give him more of that responsibility in games like this?**

MIKE WOODSON: We're going to see, you know. I mean, again, I'm not scared to play any team in college basketball, and I'm not scared to play my guys.

So, you know, you can always put them in, and you can always pull them when they're not doing what they are asked to do. But Geronimo is going to be in that second unit when I sub him in the game. And it's going to be interesting just to see how he responds.

I mean, it's -- listen, he's getting an opportunity to play. And he's very excited and upbeat about that. And I got faith in him, you know. We just -- only time will tell. Just got to wait and see how he responds.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Coach, thank you.

MIKE WOODSON: All right, guys. Take care. See you tomorrow.

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