

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. Hey, Coach. Not a lot of experience facing the 2-3 zone so far this year. Syracuse is going to implement that. What do you guys need to do to attack them and have success?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, we're just going to get to the game and see what happens. I mean, we've been shown some -- a few teams that we played have shown us the 2-3 zone, and we've had a chance to go against it a few times, but nothing like a 40-minute game.

I've experienced 2-3 zones in the pros, but that's totally different because, again, you can't sit in the lane on the back side. You've got 2.9 and then you've got to get out, and in college 2-3 is you can just camp there. We've seen it a few times since we've been together as a ball club, and we've gone against each other in practice. Again, until you get in the ball game that a team does it for 40 minutes, I know we've got to make shots. I know we've got to make some plays inside with the basketball. Only time will tell. We just have to wait until we get to the game and see where we are with it.

Q. Coach, two-part question. How is Rob doing, and do you expect him back any time soon. And, also, in terms of Xavier, the other night he had those two early turnovers and then it seemed like he really kind of got better at decision-making. How important is he going to be just in terms of navigating the game on Tuesday with the decision-making against the zone?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, Rob went a little bit yesterday. I don't know where he is right now in terms of playing tomorrow. We'll practice at 1:00 today, so I'll get a feel how he felt after yesterday and even if he can go today, so I won't know that until I get to practice.

For Xavier, I thought he played well. Again, we all are learning, man. Khristian struggled a little bit last game, so I road Xavier for probably the most minutes he has played since he has been here, but at the end of the day, I feel good about Xavier's play. Khristian has given us some positive minutes, so if Rob can't play, Khristian has to be

ready to go.

And, again, the zone is what it is, guys. We can't run from it. I've always looked at zones when I played. I licked my chops when I saw zones because, again, we've always felt when we played here and we went through zones, teams zoned us because they can't play man-to-man. I don't know if that is the case, but this is Boeheim's way of coaching, and he has done it for years, and it's what it is. We've just got to go down, and I think we'll be ready to play and see what happens.

Q. Mike, I guess kind of as you examine the way Trayce responded Saturday and then maybe the way his teammates responded as Marshall had to shift more to him, are you happy with, I guess, almost sort of the learning on the fly a little bit in terms of maybe being surprised by a game plan that isn't conventional in terms of not doubling Trayce, but then also adjusting as Marshall had to adjust to be able to take advantage of the holes that opened up as they did start to feel like they had to trap him more?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I go into every game with Trayce knowing that he is going to get trapped. He is our best player. He is our best low post player, so we try to design things knowing he is going to get trapped from different spots on the floor. It's just a part of it.

When they didn't trap early, hey, I just utilized him. If they're not going to trap him, I didn't think nobody on the floor could guard him on the block, so we just kept spoon-feeding him, giving him the ball. Then when they decided to start -- they started trapping a little bit right before the half, and he beat a couple of the traps with quick moves before it actually got him trapped tight in there, and then the second half they started trapping some.

There were holes all over the place because he made some passes out of the trap across court, up top, back out to the guy that passed the ball into him, so, I mean, he is learning to read because, again, we go through practice sometimes where I have the second unit have to -- you've got to trap him just to see how he fairs in traps and can he find open people that are open, or can he make plays

before the trap actually gets there, and he did a lot of that in the Marshall game. I thought he did it all.

Hey, it's what it is. He is going to get trapped. We can't run from that. He has to be able to make plays when he is trapped and try to beat the trap out, obviously, before it gets there. I was pleased the way he played. We benefited from his 43 points that he scored the other night.

Q. I know you have mentioned several times about not seeing much of that Syracuse 2-3 on the pro level, but how does that dynamic work with your assistants and yourself in regards to preparation for this, in regards to what they've seen and done and what sort of feedback they provide for you?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, they've gone against it. We've had an opportunity to watch the Auburn game, the Colgate game. There was one other team. VCU, who beat them and executed well against the zone. I mean, the zone is what it is, guys. Again, I'm not going to sit here and harp about a team that plays zone. We're going to see zone. You're going to see full court press, like we saw in St. John. It's a part of the college game, and I'm just trying to prep our guys to get them ready when we know things like that are coming, and I thought for the most part we've handled what's been thrown at us so far, so now we've got to take our act on the road and play a team that plays 40 minutes a 2-3 zone, and we've got to go execute against it and see how we fair against it.

Q. Coach, I'm curious what kind of interactions, if any, you've had with Boeheim over the years. Obviously, you coached a similar player in Carmelo Anthony, and just your thoughts about matching up with a Hall of Fame coach?

MIKE WOODSON: He is a hell of a coach. I've watched him. Sure, I've had some communications with him when he was with the Olympic team when I would go and I had a few players with Carmelo and Tyson Chandler and) way back when I had Joe Johnson who played on the Olympic team. They always brought Boeheim in to kind of set up, talk about zones with the coaches, and he and I have interacted over the years.

The fact that I did coach Carmelo, one of his best players probably that's ever played at Syracuse, one of them, I have nothing but respect for Coach Boeheim. He has won a lot of games. He has been successful. He has won national titles. I think he won one national title with Melo, I believe, didn't he? I think, didn't he?

Q. Yes.

MIKE WOODSON: He is a great coach, man. That's all I can say, and he is a good person. I've seen him on the recruiting trail this summer. When I was out there recruiting, he was out there trying to do what he does as a recruiter. So it's going to be interesting to see how we fair against a great team, great coach.

Q. Even by Syracuse's standards, by Boeheim's standards, they're giving up or teams are taking more threes, even than usual, and obviously, that's something that you usually see against a zone anyway, but it's 51% of the shots are threes. Just how much does this game just come down to just making shots, and I guess you watched VCU. Is there a way to beat them without having to take 30 threes in a game?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, guys, when you play, you throw it up, you've got to make shots against whoever you play against, may it be man-to-man, zone. Look, hey, we're going against a 2-3 zone. That's what it is. Yes, we got to make shots. You've got to make shots out on the perimeter, and you've got to make shots inside.

I mean, that's just the nature of playing basketball, man. We can't change the way we are playing because these guys are playing a zone. Hell, if you got an outside shot that's makeable, shoot it, and let's see if you can put it in the hole for us. That's what it's about. If you have plays inside with Trayce and Race, our guys who are playing inside, hey, you got to make plays inside at the rim. It's just a part of the game.

Q. Coach, what concerns you about their offense? Obviously, they've got some guys who can shoot the ball pretty well.

MIKE WOODSON: Well, their starting five all is averaging in double figures. That's a concern. That's the first team that we faced that all five guys are averaging double figures, and the reason that is is that they're only about eight deep. They only play eight deep, and the other three off the bench don't get the high volume shots as the starting five, so you are going to have to deal and know going into the game that that starting five is going to play 30-plus minutes, each guy.

All of them can score the basketball, so we're going to have matchups all over the floor where you can't take Tuesday off. I mean, everybody has to come ready to play defensively from a man-to-man standpoint and be ready to help from a team standpoint defensively.

Take care, guys. See you soon.

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