

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana 79, Northern Kentucky 61

Q. When you're three days before Christmas and you've got a bunch of college kids, how tough is it to prepare them to play basketball this close to Christmas and everything?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I don't think it's any differently. If you've got your team in position, you're playing for something, and in the pros, we were always trying to play to make the playoffs.

So every game is important regardless of the time of season it is, and that's what I'm expressing to these guys. You know, I mean, wish Darrin (ph) at the Big Ten, you know, after our next game coming back after this break, and every game that we play is important.

I mean, you can't take any nights off you know what I mean, and I truly believe any team in college basketball can beat you if you're not prepared and ready to play.

So this was a good win for our ballclub going into the break, but they get the two days off. I hope they have a great time with their family. But Sunday, it's going to be back to work.

Q. First, the decision not to play Parker in the first half, was it injury-related or discipline related?

MIKE WOODSON: I'm not addressing that. That's an in-house matter. I would never address things that go on in my locker room to the fans or the media. That will never happen.

Q. And the defense in the second half, why do you think it kind of slipped a little in the second half?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I've got to go back and look at the tape but it wasn't pretty, I'll tell you that. I thought defensively we did everything right the first half in terms of our coverages, our switches. We were up touching guys. Nobody we're getting -- pulling up with dare shots, and it

was totally the opposite the second half.

You know, I made that known before we broke huddle tonight that that can't happen. You won't win a lot of games in the Big Ten doing that.

Q. I know you don't want to talk about Parker but can you talk about Anthony and what it means, getting his first start?

MIKE WOODSON: Listen, five guys can start. It's all you can start in a game. Parker didn't start tonight. Anthony started. I thought he played well.

You know, but again, everybody that plays on this team, I feel good about playing. So I mean, somebody's got to start and somebody's got to come off the bench and somebody's got to finish the game. It's just a part of basketball. I thought he played well as a starter. He did a good job for us tonight.

Q. Trayce talked about -- and Race talked about it a lot in the preseason, you challenging him, and that being a real point of emphasis of you just saying we need you to score and confident shooting the ball and looking for your own offense. How tough has that been for him at times when he's playing against a volume guy like Trayce and how have you seen him carve out that offensive role for himself?

MIKE WOODSON: This is Race or Trayce?

Q. Race.

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, he's a senior, man. He's been around. So you know, I went through the system as a college player. I think as you grow in college as a ballplayer, you expect things -- you expect the older guys to do things at a higher level. He's been around awhile.

So you know, when I took this job, he was one of the first guys I sat down and told him what I expected. The fact that he had played, you know, a number of years in college, hey, expectations are high. You know, he's got to be held a lot higher from accountability standpoint.



I mean, I expect a lot from Race and Trayce, and Race, he's come through, man. I mean, he's doing a lot of wonderful things for this ballclub. Things that some people thought he couldn't do, you know, when I got here and he's gotten better because he's put in the work and that's a testament to him.

Q. You're 12 games in right now. Is the learning curve of this team where you want it to be?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I think as we go game-by-game, practice by practice, there's always going to be a learning curve. You know, I mean, these guys haven't been together that long, and surely they hadn't been together long with me, and vice versa. So you know, it's a learning process for me every day, you know, dealing with this unit, and I don't mean that in a negative way. I mean, they have done everything I've asked them to do. You know, I've been pushing and yelling and patting them here and there, and hey, it's just a part of what we do as coaches.

But I'm excited about where we are as a team, knowing that there's still a long way to go when we're talking about the big picture.

Q. Turnovers always something we seem to talk about and this team, Darrin Horn's teams, that's one of the things they focused on, but at the end of the first half you guys only had five but the second half I think it jumps to eight, part of the reason things go awry in the second half. What was the reason for so many more turnovers in that second half?

MIKE WOODSON: I think their zone is kind of unique because it's a 2-3 matchup. You know, they will switch a point guard onto our big guys, and then try to pass them off.

You know, sometimes it's confusing -- and I'm not making excuses. I mean, I thought when we got the ball in the interior of the defense, we tried to make plays that just weren't there, and that's how they catch teams.

You know, we just, again, we're starting to see more zones. You think back to the St. John when they pretty much pressed us the whole game, and threw all kinds of zones at us in the halfcourt, we are starting to see more of them, and we just got to continue to work and get comfortable with them because I think teams will continue to play some zone and trap. It's just part of college basketball.

Q. Trayce talked about the importance of being

unselfish down low. What do you think of the chemistry that him and Race have developed in the post?

MIKE WOODSON: It's been great. I saw a little bit of that last year. And they know each other's movement inside, and they read each other really well, which is great. I always talk about "buddy ball" with our bigs, and you know, they are really good buddies when it comes to playing buddy ball, especially inside the zone.

So that's something that's got to continue. You know, I've got to get Geronimo and Big Mike more in play in that area, and just see what happens as we move forward.

Q. You've talked about the defense being ahead of the offense since the summer. 20 assists on 32 made baskets; are you pleased with the pace of the offense trying to catch up to that defense?

MIKE WOODSON: I mean, when I look at the point differential, we've got a big plus based on how we're scoring the ball and how we're defending our opponents.

So you know in, that regard, I'm happy. But again, I'm not overly happy where we are from an offensive standpoint because I just think there's so much more to give, you know, and we just got to keep working, man. I mean, I knew the defense would be ahead of the offense, and you know, we are doing some good things offensively but we are just not there yet as far as I'm concerned. But it's still a work-in-progress; put it that way.

Q. Another Race question. He's made 17 of 19 shots in these last three games. When you watch him play, what makes him so efficient? Is it his strength around the basket, shot selection or what do you see?

MIKE WOODSON: I think the fact that we are delivering the ball to him in areas where he can be effective, and you know, he's been working on his little floaters, you know, little jumpshots and things of that nature.

Again, he stepped out and shot a three tonight. I don't -- I don't mind him shooting threes. I mean, he's just got to get comfortable shooting them and making them.

But he's been so effective for us around the bucket, and the fact that we work on it every day in terms of delivering the ball down low to all our bigs, because that's where our strength as a team is.

So I'm just happy for him, man, because he's worked and like I said, there were a lot of things when I got here that, you know, people said he couldn't do, and he's defeating

all the odds. He's doing a lot of great things for our ballclub, he really is.

Q. I had a question on Race, as well. How much of his success is how he's moving without the ball? You mentioned him playing off of Trayce but seems like he's in motion a lot and not necessarily just standing with his back to the basket. How much do you think that has helped him?

MIKE WOODSON: Race or Trayce?

Q. Race.

MIKE WOODSON: I think the unique thing, I'm letting Race bring the ball up the court and make plays in that regard. I didn't box him in a box when I got here. You know, I tried to make everybody comfortable. He's got to be that way because you're going to get caught throughout the course of a ballgame where you've got to make a play with the basketball.

And he's comfortable in that area.

And he's comfortable in making plays, you know, around the rim. I mean, you saw that again tonight. So again, I can't praise him enough. He's just got to continue to work and hopefully he'll grow and get even better. I mean, that's how you get better as an individual player in terms of helping us win ballgames. I'm pleased with what he's done.

Happy holidays.

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