

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Sunday, January 9, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Mike Woodson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana 73, Minnesota 60

MIKE WOODSON: I mean, shooting is a big part of it, but just leading. Rob has been through the grind of the Big Ten, and he knows the ins and outs of it. He's a senior, so I expect him to lead. I don't have too many players like Rob that's been on this team that knows the team, and he can't live in the past. I'm just trying to break that past and say, hey, man, here's the ball. It's okay to go lead. It's okay to be good, it really is.

Q. Both Rob and X could tell I'm sure early on that they weren't going to be defended if they were going to shoot. What did you like about how they approached that? It seemed like Rob took his time and was solid as far as his shots and Xavier as well. How did you think they handled the fact they were going to get that much time to shoot the ball?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think it's great. I'm not telling them not to shoot. Minnesota forced our hands in terms of shooting threes tonight, the way they sagged in, and they were just basically saying Trayce and Race are not going to beat us. When teams do that, our perimeter guys have got to be ready to step up and make shots.

I thought tonight they did a great job in that area.

Q. When teams go five out on you and try to look for dribble drives, is that when you turn to X and Rob and then also at the end of the game also Trey in there? Is that kind of your best defensive lineup?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I mean, there's not a lot of teams that -- when you start playing two small guards, I've got to utilize my two small guards who both can defend off the dribble.

Trey, he defends off the dribble. He got beat a few times tonight, but hell, a lot of us got beat tonight off the bounce. I thought that was a big part of their offense, and we didn't control it that well. Then when we did, we were really good defensively.

Q. For as well as you guys shot on the perimeter, that 10-0 run three inside baskets to Race, I think one to Trayce. Was that kind of your bread and butter there at the end of the game or did you see some mismatches to exploit there in terms of how you guys pulled away?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, the mismatch, they went small, so I mean, if they're going to play us small, we've got to spoon-feed the ball inside. That's what we did, and Race had a guard basically guarding him, and he also had Battle guarding him, too. So I was like, hey, let's just get it inside and make them stop us.

Q. I was going to ask about Race. You went to him when you were up nine and called the 30-second time-out. Is that something you can do because he's not seeing the double like Trayce is?

MIKE WOODSON: Yes. If you're not going to double him, I'd take my chances with Race. He can make plays. He's been working on his low-post game. I'm good with that if teams are going to play us that way.

Q. The stat sheet shows here Minnesota didn't make a shot in the last three minutes of the game. What did you think of that defensive lineup you had in, Rob, X, Trey, Trayce and Race at the end of game?

MIKE WOODSON: I call it winning basketball. When there's not cutting time, you've got to step up and make plays. They came back from being down as much as 10 and took the lead. Our defense really picked up after that.

We had the lapse and then we started to really pick it back up and play, and then coming down the home stretch those last three, four minutes, we were solid like we were at the end of the first half.

Q. Xavier has had his ups and downs. Have you instilled the confidence in him or is this something he's done or is this something you've done to him?

MIKE WOODSON: I'm trying to give all these guys

confidence, but I'm also still trying to coach them, too. That's a part of coaching. There's some tough love there. I'm tough on point guards. I've always been that way. But he's still learning. He's trying to figure me out. Rob is trying to figure me out.

Tonight I thought both of them played extremely well, considering all the hollering and screaming I was doing over there.

Q. You talked about defense all year long, but did you realize that it was as good as it is right now? It's one of the absolute best in the country, one of the best in the Big Ten, and I know that's where you want to be, but did you think that you were going to be there this soon?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, you never know. I mean, at the beginning when we started this journey, I told them, hey, guys -- and this is after I've done my homework from last year in the Big Ten and just in college basketball in general, if you hold teams 60 and under, you're going to give yourself a chance to win a lot of games. They believed that. It's shown in our play since we've started the journey, and we've just got to continue to grow and get better in that area.

Q. Perfect at home still, but now you're on the road for two. The fact that you guys have closed out the last couple games pretty well, are you hoping that that part of that learning experience can help you now going forward to do the same on the road?

MIKE WOODSON: Yes, we've got to break the ice on the road. I think once we break through, it'll open up a lot of these guys' hearts to know that we're here to play and compete in the Big Ten. But you've got to win on the road, too. You can't lose at home, but you've got to figure out how to win on the road.

Q. It was very clear that Minnesota didn't want Trayce beating them, so what do you have to say about him being so unselfish and not being willing to force it and kind of dish it out to his guards?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, it's called trust, and it's not going to be him every night when teams double-team him. Sometimes he's beating double teams, and tonight they set -- they just packed it in. Hey, he made the correct passes coming out of the double teams, and guys benefitted from it by making shots. That's how we've got to play.

It's not no surprise; if I'm playing us, hell, I'm going to double him, too, and get it out of his hands, so that's what teams are doing. Hey, he was patient. When he had it, he

made the play, and when he didn't have it, he sacrificed the ball, which we need.

Q. To go back to X and Rob, how well have you seen them get used to the dynamic between them, the roles that they have, the splits of the minutes and what not and who comes off the bench and who starts, and how important is that that those guys have bought into what they're being asked to do?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I look at Rob, he never once complained that X was starting and going to be the starter. I brought him here from Pitt to start. That was never an issue with him.

For me, being his coach, that means a lot, because again, it means you're buying into winning. You're all about team. Everybody can't start. I've always said, it ain't who starts, it's who finishes the game.

Hell, he was on the floor at the end of the game making a big contribution to us winning the game tonight, and hey, you can't ask for more. He's about team.

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