

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Coach Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. A little bit off topic, I know you're friends with Quinn and Bobby Wilkerson and Scott May and those guys, but last night with USC and Baylor losing, there's no more undefeated teams, and 46 years later what are your thoughts on the legacy of that team?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I know records are meant to be broken, but that's one record I would never want to see broken. Scott May and I talk about it all the time. Every year that we get ready for college basketball and teams start their season and they are 10-0, 13-0, I always call and say (indiscernible) we're going to be just fine. The record is going to be intact.

Just for selfish reasons alone, I hope that record never gets broken.

Q. You said early on that when you were working with this team defensively that you did things like have drills where guys couldn't switch to help them stay in front of their man. I'm curious what are the things defensively you worked on emphasizing early on that you think maybe helped as building blocks to get this team where it is right now defensively?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think when you put a system in place defensively, first of all, you've just got to get guys to commit and buy in. I'm not saying that our defense and our system is the best defense out there. It's just what I believe in. No matter who you coach or what team it is, you've got to get players to buy into what you're doing.

They bought in early on. Yes, my deal was, hey, take pride in guarding the ball. Don't be begging for help all the time. They've kind of bought into that.

The team aspect of it, when somebody gets beat, you've got to always have help, and that guy that helps you has got to have help. It's like a chain reaction defensively.

We've been pretty good in that area, as well, and then once that ball goes up, everybody has got to rebound the ball. We haven't gotten out-rebounded in very many

games, so that's a major plus because it goes hand in hand with defending the basketball. You've got to come up with the rebound once it goes up.

Q. We've obviously talked a lot about where this defense is throughout this point of the season, but offensively you guys have really started to click over the past few games. Are there kind of one or two areas of improvement you've seen this offense take here in the past few weeks?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think our ball movement has been a lot better. I thought the Minnesota game forced us to have to take more threes based on how they defended us inside with Trayce and Race.

But the ball movement and not turning it over, that's been a big key. We're not getting the greatest shots, but we're getting shots. That's important when you're talking about executing offense.

I think the next step for us is just knowing where the shots are coming from and trying to get a better -- a good shot, maybe turn it into a great shot. That's the next key, I think.

Q. Obviously dealing with Iowa means dealing with Keegan Murray. What's impressed you about him on tape so far and what do you feel like is the best way to try to go about guarding that guy?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, we're sitting here with two days to go to try to put a solid game plan together because he's really a good player, man. He leads the Big Ten in scoring, and there's nothing he can't do on the basketball floor, and that's on both ends. He's long and rangy. I like everything about it. But he's got a nice supporting cast, too.

It's going to take a total team effort for 40 minutes to commit ourselves to playing defense. I mean, this is the No. 1 offensive pace team in the country in terms of getting up and down the floor, making plays offensively. You score against them, they throw it right back in and they're right back at you. We've got to make sure our transition defense is on par, that we're getting back, getting matched



to three-point shooters and not giving nothing up over the top. That's going to be the key.

Q. Throughout the course of your career, what are some of the keys or tricks you've picked up to slow a team that likes to run so much?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, everybody likes to run. The bottom line is if we can get them to take the ball out of bounds, that means we're making shots, and then hopefully we can get back and get our defense set before they get to us.

We've got to control the ball. If that ball is inbounded, we've got to try to get to it early, and we can't let it come up the sideline very quickly. That's how fast breaks are started. You throw it in and you advance the ball up the sideline or you throw it up and make gut passes, and we've got to eliminate those.

Q. In the spirit of the Indy high school hoops city tournament which tips next week, what did Bill Smith do for you in your life, and any memories you have of lacing them up in that tournament back in the day?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I played in the city tournaments, man. That was some of the best talent when I was coming through. I don't know what it's like now because, again, basketball has changed so much, but when I was coming through, Arlington, Shortridge, Tech, Ripple, I mean, Crispus Attucks. There was just so much talent in the city, Shortridge, so much talent. Everybody had to beat up on each other to get through that city tournament.

I remember one year when I was a sophomore, I lost the city tournament for the varsity. Shouldn't even have been in the game, but Smitty put me in at the end, and I threw the ball away, cross-court pass that led to a lay-up that ended up losing the city tournament.

That was tough. I had to live with that for the next year, that summer, going through that summer, and then my junior year we were beat early, the second game of the city tournament, and then my senior year we went to the championship game of the city and lost to Northwestern, who was stacked, as well. Their team was really good, and they beat us in a close game for the championship.

You know, city tournament is -- as I can remember was always great, man. A lot of talent, a lot of good play.

Q. On Coach Smith, just his impact on you if you don't mind?

MIKE WOODSON: Listen, he kind of set the table very

early on before I actually got to Indiana in terms of what basketball should be like on the basketball floor and what you should do off the floor. Smitty was hard, man. He wasn't -- there was no messing around with him. He left no doubt who was the coach. He was very disciplinarian.

Most of the time he got guys to buy into what he was doing. I just thought it set the table so when I got here to Indiana I was already ready from a discipline standpoint.

Wright just kind of revved it up 10 notches because he was a lot more tougher. I was mentally and physically ready to deal with it, and I thought I handled it pretty well.

Q. Iowa might play a little bit of zone against you guys. How well do you think you've done against zone so far this year, and what were the keys on Thursday?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I'm sure they will play some zone. They do a lot of different things in their zone. They full court, they three-quarter court, they half court press, they play half-court zone, matchup zones, they do it all.

I think we've seen a little bit of it all year. So we've just got to be sharp and ready when we see it. That's going to be the key, I think, one of the keys to the game in terms of handling their pressure and getting the ball.

But I've always been one when teams press, I want to stay on the attack, too. If they want to press, then let's attack them offensively. Let's not sit on our heels.

We've been pretty good in that area, so I just hope our good carries over into Iowa, because that's going to be important.

Q. I know you mentioned already how much Iowa likes to play with pace, but certainly from your NBA days, as well, you've seen a lot where teams who like to play that kind of pace don't like other teams playing against them that way. Are you kind of hoping that you can move pretty quickly, as well, too, get the ball up the floor and certainly when you've been dealing with Rob and Xavier on the floor at the same time you've been able to get that done a lot more. Are you hoping to do more of that on Thursday?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it all depends on what the game presents. I've just always been one when you go in the game, you've just got to let it happen. I never predict anything like that.

The game is played how it's played. If they force our hands and we've got opportunities to push it and score the ball, you've got to take advantage of it.



Only time will tell. I don't know how it's going to turn out, but we've just got to go and make ourselves committed to playing for 40 minutes and see what happens.

Q. Obviously turnovers were a big problem early on in the season but the past three games the team has gone under 10 turnovers each. Have you seen anything from the group in practice maybe that has kind of helped to improve that mark or translate into the game, and going against Iowa who's second in the Big Ten in forced turnovers, is that any more of an extra focus at all?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, every game, it doesn't matter who we play, turnovers is a problem for me. I just always feel if you're patient enough and you work hard to get open and you sacrifice the ball, you shouldn't turn it over. I know sometimes teams press and all of that, but if you're being double teamed, that means there's two on the ball, and if you get the ball out of there, somebody is open, and then that leads to another guy that possibly is open, you've just got to find the pockets to make the right play.

We've been pretty good. Practices have been pretty good and competitive still. Every day we stress from a coaching standpoint, hey, take care of the basketball, and as of late we've been pretty good in that area, and I just hope it continues the rest of the way.

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