

# Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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## Coach Mike Woodson

### Press Conference



**Q. After the game Sunday, X talked about how having Rob back made him more comfortable being aggressive on defense. How does having that safety net of a veteran point guard make you more comfortable in terms of putting out rotations just in case X might get in some foul trouble?**

COACH WOODSON: I mean, it's huge. Rob has missed ten games. And we went through a stretch where we were close in games with Rob and X on the floor -- and winning, which was kind of nice. But I haven't been able to get back to that here of late because Rob has been out.

But, yeah, it frees X up a lot more because he knows now he can stay aggressive. We got away with it in the Maryland game. X picked up two fouls early. And we really had nowhere else to go.

**Q. We didn't have a chance to ask you this yet. What actually is Trey Galloway's injury? And at this point do you have a timetable for when he might be able to be back?**

COACH WOODSON: He's got a high groin pull that's kind of way up in there. And he just hasn't been able to do anything, really. So I can't tell you when the timetable is for him coming back, really. I mean, he's missed 13 games.

We came into this season thinking that he was going to be a really big part of our rotation. When we got him back we were excited to see it but now he's out again.

**Q. Tomorrow night's the final home game already. I know sometimes the seasons take a long time or they seem they fly by. What is it for you? How do you look back on this from November to now and your overall impressions of your first year and how fast it's gone?**

COACH WOODSON: That's a great question. In the NBA you go through almost 100 games a year. I've done that for 34 years. So this is kind of a piece of cake. In terms of an 82-game season versus a 30-game season.

And I mean for me it's still just basketball. But the college game it gives you a lot more time to teach and prepare. And the pros, you don't sleep. You just constantly grind it.

**Q. You mentioned a couple times this season about how you don't want to dwell on the past; kind of what's happened in the past has happened in the past. And I was curious, where did you get that mindset from? Is there an experience in your life where you kind of develop that way of thinking, or is there someone that taught that to you? How did you kind of figure out that philosophy of thinking?**

COACH WOODSON: Again, guys, you think about your everyday life, your own individual lives. I mean, things that happened in the past, you can't go back, good or bad. You learn from the mistakes that you made in the past and you sometimes relive the good things. But you can't go back and get it. I just try to -- I think ahead, man. That's the makeup of how I've been from pretty much the time I left here and went into the NBA.

And you could probably say it started here because the crazy thing here was Knight never let you forget the past. I don't either when it comes to games. We always go back and we look at the game. I'm not going to ever let them forget that. Good or bad, we learn from watching film. And I've always thought that was a major tool.

But I can't live in the past. I've had a good run in terms of my life. And I take it a day at a time. And the fact I'm back here trying to push these guys to do the right things on and off the court, that's, to me, what it's about right now.

**Q. I wanted to ask you something specific about Xavier Johnson's game. Seemed like earlier in the year, when he was getting downhill, he was taking a lot of off-balance, contested shots, getting himself in trouble sometimes. He seems to have developed in that area where his judgment, once he gets past his man, he's either taking a good shot or he's finding the open man. Can you talk about just his progression and that specific aspect of his game?**

COACH WOODSON: You're right on when you say that



because, again, I watched him play at Pitt. And he played very loosely there. And I'm trying to get him to play more -- and that's no knock on the Pitt coach and how his system was set up -- I'm trying to get him to play non-reckless, where he's including his teammates and trying -- we're trying to make him a complete point guard.

A good point guard can get his own shots and can set up everybody else around him. That's what the good point guards do. That's something that we've been trying to teach him, when we brought him on board.

And he's had a roller-coaster ride. Early on, like you said, he got down there and he got stuck a lot of times, didn't have nowhere to go with the ball. Then he went through a phase where the game started to slow down and he started seeing things around him as well as when it was time to make the right play for himself.

And then he hit another stretch where it was the other way again. And now he's playing really good basketball for us, which is kind of nice to see.

**Q. Following up on you that point, you're going to be facing a Rutgers team one of the best defensive teams in the league, along with yourselves. Just the importance of Xavier's decision-making, Caleb McConnell is leading the Big Ten in steals. What's the importance of that ball-security aspect of him and the rest of the offense heading into a game like this?**

COACH WOODSON: Again, we pretty much have seen everything this season. I go back all the way to that St. John's game. And they made us have to play. We really prepared for them because the fact that they press and they do a lot of junk things that make you have to think about what you're doing on the floor. And it was a hell of a game.

And this team, it's no different. They press some. I watched them against Wisconsin and Purdue. They pressed a little bit. But they are, they're a good defensive team. They play hard. So we're going to have to match their effort for 40 minutes in order to come out of here with a win.

**Q. It's your first senior day as a coach. And it's obviously complicated by the fact that even guys who are technically seniors can come back if they want because of this COVID year. Who do you expect to go through kind of senior night stuff after the game Wednesday? And how do you kind of, what are the conversations like with guys who may be debating do I want to kind of call time on my IU career here or do I want to consider taking that COVID year?**

COACH WOODSON: I haven't really had any discussions with them about it, to be honest with you. I think there will be a few players that take the senior walk. And, hey, I'm all for whatever they want to do. But at the end of the day, we've got to make the decisions as a staff with our program once the season's over with. And I'm sure there are going to be players that, with this portal thing you have no control. I mean, these guys can tell you one thing and do another. I mean, it's just a part of it.

So I lost three players last, coming into this season, in the portal, which two gave me an opportunity to court them and try to get them to stay on and one left before I actually got the job. He already had his decision made.

So it's chaotic right now in terms of how this thing is going to play out. And all I can do is wait until the season's over with and just see where we are as a ball club.

If there's guys that are going to take that walk tonight and -- tomorrow as a senior, then all I can do is wish them well and tell them that, hey, if there's anything I can do, I'm obligated as their coach to help them. It may be pursuing their basketball career or going into the job market. I'm obligated to help them do that. And I will. Whatever anybody decides to do if they want to leave.

But I can't really give you a definitive answer because, again, man, basketball is so different in regards to this portal and people being able to come back or leave.

So, at this stage, I'm just searching just like you guys are probably wanting answers. So that's where I am.

**Q. The offense has played a lot better here of late, it seems, with getting more contributions from many different people whether it's Miller Kopp, Parker Stewart, Tamar, Jordan -- and played hard through the end of games. But even at the Minnesota game we still saw an end-of-game. I don't want to call that a collapse but seems like even though Minnesota was hitting crazy shots the offense still stagnates at times like that. What can they do differently to fight through that offensively and not let what they're doing affect you?**

COACH WOODSON: Well, again, I think a lot of it is mental. I mean, when things get tight, you know, guys stop executing and moving. I mean, you can build a 27-point lead moving the ball and cutting and playing freely, then you should close it that way. And when things get a little tight -- a lot of it is because this team has never won, man. And guys are still searching and trying to figure it out.

And I get it. And I'm going to keep saying it. I've got to help them get over the hump. I don't care how you guys think and feel about it. It's my job to help them in that regard to relax and play like you got the lead. That's kind of how I've been the whole season.

When we've lost, we've been competitive. We've led in games and we played freely. And then when things got a little tight, we succumbed sometimes. And the beauty about the other night, you know, even though they cut it, we still made the plays that we had to make to bring it home.

**Q. In light of senior day and the fact that some postseason awards are coming out in a few days, can you talk about the season Race Thompson has had for you and whether you think he might be a guy worthy of some of those awards next week?**

COACH WOODSON: Listen, he's been one of the most consistent players in the Big Ten. I mean, his numbers are very, very consistent in terms of how he's played. And we've all benefited from it. I don't think anybody saw that coming into this season.

Again, you've got to pat him on the butt and say, hey, job well done, still got a lot of work still left. But the work that he's put in in practice and on the floor has paid off for him and we've benefited from it.

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