

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Brian Walsh

Press Conference



Q. Curious, just on your background from a basketball perspective in coaching, who are some of the biggest influences that you've had in your life in basketball and in coaching?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, I think of a lot of people that come to mind. Obviously I went to college at Xavier and played for Sean Miller, being in western Pennsylvania, he was a guy I always looked up to and wanted to play for. His dad was somebody that I've known for a long time and did camps around my area. So definitely Sean.

Coach Dan Groce at the University of Akron kind of revolved my basketball career, transferring from Xavier to Akron, so I owe him a ton of credit, and then, you know, just getting on board with Archie at Dayton and the assistants that I was able to work with there, coming to Indiana.

And then this past year, I mean, my goodness, the staff that the university was able to put together with Coach Woodson and Thad Matta and Kenya Hunter who I've known for 16 years and Yasir Rosemond and all the guys that I've been able to be with and around in my young coaching career has been phenomenal for my development and I owe those guys a ton of credit for this position I'm in now.

Q. If I read your bio right, you guys just had a baby if I'm not mistaken. So what's this whole thing been like, having a move within the program, being promoted to being a full-time assistant coach, after having gone through a year with a new coaching staff, a guy you didn't really know before, what's the whole experience been like for you emotionally combining all those things together?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, it's been emotional for sure. Had our first baby daughter on March 9, it was Wednesday, and that was the day before we played Michigan up in Indianapolis in the Big Ten Tournament which I missed, and coach was very gracious about that and I was able to go back and forth the following games in the Big Ten

Tournament, and then the NCAA Tournament hit and we figured out we were going to be in Dayton and we had to leave Monday.

Unfortunately I missed like her first -- I missed about five of her first seven days of her life. Thank God for my great wife and in-laws who came in and covered for me. But it's been amazing. This is an absolute home run and Grand Slam for myself in my young career and I'm extremely grateful to Coach Woodson and the rest of the staff who believes in me and excited for the opportunity ahead.

Q. How did he offer you the job and what was that conversations like?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, you know, I don't want to get into too, too much of the details, but I can tell you, it was March 24th. It was Thursday. And there was some other opportunities that were presenting themselves to me in the college basketball world and I wanted to be transparent with Coach and let him know the developments of what was going on.

I let him know via, you know, text on the phone, and he called shortly after and I just remember, I was holding my daughter in my arms and my wife was sitting to my right. For whatever reason, I put the phone on speaker and listened to him, and he offered me the job to bump me up.

Like I told you guys before, it was really emotional just, you know, full circle, one year ago, the situation with the previous staff, and then having the opportunity to stay on with Coach Woodson, and it's just been unbelievable. I believe in Coach Woodson at the highest level.

He's an unbelievable coach, a really, really good man, and we had a blast this year. I think we accomplished a lot in his first year and just extremely grateful and humbled to be a part of the staff here.

Q. I guess going back a year ago, I'm guessing there were times when you weren't real sure what the future held for you during the coaching change. I mean, is that right and how surreal is it to over a year to be in the spot you're in now, and also have you actually

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

heard from Archie since you got the job?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, I mean, just rewind a little bit but it's been an incredible 12 months. One year ago to the date that he offered to bump me up, you know, I was trying to figure it out. Arch got let go and I was kind of in limbo of what was going to happen, looking for other opportunities, trying to figure it out. Very uncertain time for myself and my wife at the time.

I had some people go to bat for me here at IU, and I was fortunate to get the opportunity to work for Coach Woodson and I feel like I was able to bring value to him in some areas that he needed, and they just let me run with my job and felt like I was able to bring really good value to this staff this year.

As far as Arch is concerned with Rhode Island, we exchanged just some texts and congratulatory texts on his behalf but not too much other than that.

Q. You get now the chance to really full-time recruit. Where do you think you already have built some good relationships? Obviously maybe in your home state, but have you been able to build those relationships in Indiana and other places?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, I think my speciality is the Midwest. I grew up in western Pennsylvania. I still have a ton of close friends and contacts, guys that are my age that are now running AU programs on all the different circuits that I've kept in touch with and have great relationships with; and then I go over to Dayton, ran team camp for several years and plucked teams from within the state out of the state, the surrounding states, so I feel like Ohio is another state that I have really strong ties in.

Then moving a little bit further west at Indiana where your reach is bigger, you know, so I feel like the relationships that I've built in Indiana are very, very strong, and the surrounding states, Illinois, Kentucky, the surrounding states is kind of my, I guess you would call it, the bread basket.

Q. One of the things that I think a lot of people look at closely with assistant coaches is the value you bring in regard to individual teaching and such with players. Tell me what you think your strengths are in regards to being a teacher with regards to individual skills and what you're looking forward to especially with this group of guys in regards to diving into the summer to helping them get better.

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, I think the first and foremost is just the relationships that I've been able to build here with these

guys for as long as these guys have been here at Indiana, I've been here.

So obviously I haven't been able to be on the floor and teaching them like I was hoping to given the NCAA rules. But I was a guard not too far removed, about ten years, so I can relate with a lot that they are going through, and a lot that's going to be expected of them and asked of them; shooting the basketball, a lot of fundamentals, ball handling, things of that nature, just going back to when I was playing and knowing what skillsets are needed, especially with Coach Woodson and how he wants to play, I think I'll be just fine in that area of teaching and being with those guys on the floor. I'm so excited to get on the floor with those guys here in the short term.

Q. You've obviously been around the game for a long time now, whether it's playing, coming up through high school, AAU, different coaching staffs throughout your professional career. When you were getting started, what's a piece of advice you would give to your younger self in taking this next step in your career?

BRIAN WALSH: Great question. You know, I think the main thing is just getting out of your comfort zone and just working. I learned early on in my playing career at Xavier, we come out of high school and we're the best player, and coming to a school, you think it's just going to be easy.

Then you get to college and you get smacked in the mouth, and you realize how hard it is, and you have to work extremely, extremely hard to play. And that's something that has always stuck with me. Didn't really go my way at Xavier, which is fine, but it took me a valuable lesson that you can't coast, you can never get comfortable; that you always have to work and continue to get better every day, and that's no different in the workplace.

I mean, this is a highly competitive industry with a lot of great coaches that all are wanting the same thing, and that's to win, and I really don't think there's any substitute other than just coming to work every day, being consistent and working really, really hard.

Q. Looking back at your numbers when you played at Akron, you were a really good three-point shooter, something that's been an issue over the last couple years has been three-point shooting within Indiana Basketball. In your opinion is that something that is more on the development side within the program or is that something that needs to be better addressed through recruiting moving forward in terms of prioritizing shooting?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, I think it's maybe a combination of



both, right. Obviously you look at that and recruiting, you look at the numbers and you want to see if it can translate at the next level. But at the same time, these guys on our team, they are really good shooters. And I think a lot of it has to do between the ears. You know, it's a lot of mental, especially at this place where it's packed and the shots mean a lot. These guys want to perform for these fans. They want to win. No one wants to win more than our players, and they put in a ton of time.

I would say it's a combination of them being in a good space in their head mentally and also it's our job as coaches to recruit the best talent and recruit skills that will translate from high school to college.

Q. Going back to what you said, you felt like you provided value to Coach Woodson. How much do you think you were able to continue, obviously like you said, not coast, as far as your success with the staff, how much of it do you think was stuff that you were doing already and to what degree did you feel like you had to adapt or to what degree did you feel like you had to maybe change or find a more specific way to provide value for Coach Woodson's staff just because he's a different guy?

BRIAN WALSH: It was good, because I had to prove myself all over again. And that was a good driving force for me to help with getting kids on campus unofficially, officially bringing them to basketball games, connecting Coach, and Coach Yasir and Kenya, these are guys in the Midwest in different programs; hey, let's build relationships with these guys, these guys can help us, let's bring this kid in.

All of those things, and not only that, just being organized, when these kids come here, what are we doing officially and unofficially on these visits. And by no means did I do this by myself. We have an unbelievable team of managers and unbelievable group of graduate assistants, Ben Sander who has been kind of by my side the past seven years and been really helpful as well. It wasn't just me.

I do feel like some of the things that I had done over the previous four seasons allowed me to be valuable with what I was able to give the new staff as they kind of got their boots on the ground.

Q. Why is coaching important to you and what do you want to bring in terms of mentorship on and off the court?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, I mean, for me, and you guys will probably hear it a lot but relationships are everything to

me. You know, you are going to win games, you're going to lose games but it's about being here for these kids, not only on the floor but off the floor in life and having them navigate academics, social life what it looks like when they are done. Just being someone that they can count on, forever, not just when they leave here but as they go through life and need different things. So that's big to me.

And then the other thing is I'm super passionate about this, and I love it. I've been doing it for a long time, like ever since I was a little kid. I think my first word was ball. This is what I feel like I was born to do, and I just love it. It's really not work for me.

To bring that enthusiasm and excitement every day to the guys, I do feel like it's good, positive energy, and again I'm just really excited.

Q. You mentioned at the beginning, working with the current staff, what is it that you've learned most from them, either directly or just in watching this first year and how much can they help you going forward in your first go-around sort of at a high level here?

BRIAN WALSH: Listen, I'm not sitting in this seat if it wasn't for those guys' support. I've learned so much from those guys and I've had a previous relationship with Kenya, having him recruit me at Xavier when he was on staff with Sean Miller, so I've known him for a really long time. He's a pro's pro. He's polished and he's really, really good at what he does.

There's countless things that I could say about things that I've learned that I'm going to take with me when it comes to recruiting, when it comes to preparation of scouts, when it comes to delivery of scout to the players. I couldn't really pinpoint one thing there at Indiana because they are some of the best coaches in America, so just being able to learn from those guys on a daily basis has been amazing for a young guy like myself. So I'm blessed in that area.

Q. When Coach Woodson took the job, there was so much made about, you know, didn't have college experience, he wasn't a recruiter. I'm guessing nobody spent more time with him on the recruiting front than you. How would you say he kind of grew into that role over the last year?

BRIAN WALSH: He has been great, man. There's really not much that he hasn't senior done or experienced. Now the recruiting thing was new to him but he explained to us, like, hey, this isn't my first time recruiting. I've recruited megastars in the NBA and you're dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of contracts.

So it wasn't entirely new to him. Talking to high school kids might be different than what he's used to, and talking to parents and whatnot, but man, I'm hard-pressed, when we get kids here and he talks with them on a one-on-one setting, he's really, really good.

So just being able to set the table for him a little bit and getting the kid here, he's the finisher.

Q. You mentioned your work ethic. Was that instilled in you or had someone that instilled that work ethic in you?

BRIAN WALSH: Yeah, that's going to go to my dad and my brother. My dad, he was a really good basketball player at Ohio University, and my brother played basketball in college as well, but they are very blue collar. We are not the most talented guys in the world, my family is not. We are not the smartest. But we will work and we're not scared of it and we don't run from it, and we know that if you work really hard and treat people well, it's usually going to work out for you.

That's kind of what I've experienced in my young career. I see my brother in medical sales doing the same thing doing very, very well for himself and then I watched my dad grind for 40 years in his business and do really well. So those are the two guys that I would give immediate credit to of where I got it from.

Q. Setting the table for Coach Woodson, what was the challenge like, you said he recruited people before and he knew how to talk to people, but he seems to be pretty honest about the fact that NCAA rules were new, like the specifics of how this machine can work and can't work was new to him. What was that like for you and how important was that, making everything in the recruiting operation functioned and worked the way it was supposed to for a guy that had not done that before?

BRIAN WALSH: It was a little bit work. You just had to lay it out, X, Y and Z, hey, when this guy is coming in, this is the situation behind it and this is kind of who is with him, and just giving him a very clear and concise, okay, this is who they are, where they are coming from and what they have done, the relationship that we have built before you get in here.

And you know, there was really nothing else other than that, just my preexisting relationships that I've had over the past four years that kind of just built, you know, being consistent with your approach and finding out who is who in the Midwest; then being close enough to get here and get in front of them, Coach finishes the job. Again, that's

something that Coach Matta always told me to do is, hey, you get them here, and you've done your job and you let Coach finish.

Q. Sounds like you had your hand in a lot of things. Is it easier to make a transition from support to full-time assistant than it used to be, and what are things you haven't been able to do that you will be able to do now?

BRIAN WALSH: You know, it's all about the guy who is leading the program and does he believe in you. And I think Coach Woodson believes in me, and I think that's the major thing.

You look around the country and I've got a lot of good friends in the profession and they go from ops to assistant at different places. Do I think certain coaches in certain places, you can do it. I've seen at higher places, hey, somebody leaves, you bring in another guy who has got something in the works on the side. So I've seen a little bit of both.

I do think depending on the head coach, that's the only one that really matters. If he feels you can do the job, I've seen it a lot across the country where they bump you up from support staff to a full time.

Remind me, sorry, I'm blanking on the second part of the question?

Q. The new things.

BRIAN WALSH: The new things. In my previous role, I couldn't do anything on the floor. I was pretty much just, you know, an encourager on the sidelines and couldn't do a whole lot. Now I'll be able to be on the floor and instruct and present scouting information and present the scout from a team that we play the following day. All those things will be new, in addition to getting out from behind the desk.

All of my stuff that I was doing, I was doing from upstairs and that's what I'm most looking forward to is getting out and seeing you guys at these AAU events and getting to be with families and recruits in their homes and just building that relationship even more.

So those are the two major things that will change with this new role.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports