

# Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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## Mike Woodson

### Press Conference



MIKE WOODSON: Let me just say that I've never been in this part of the country. This is kinds of nice, beautiful drive coming up. And the cause is for great cause when you talk about giving scholarships to kids. I'm on board big time. Looking forward to this evening and I hope everybody has a wonderful time.

**Q. Obviously you've had a couple months to process your first full year as a coach. How have you self-evaluated and what went well and what do you want to do differently?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I took this job for one reason and it's to win the Big Ten college and national titles. We fell short of that. I thought our season was very productive this past season considering where we started when I came in as the coach. You know, we had a lot of barriers to knock down. We were trying to put a ballclub together where you had players that didn't raise their hand to stay on board, and you know, we had to do a lot of damage control to make sure that we kept the right pieces in place and it started with Trayce Jackson Davis. He gave me the opportunity to coach him and everybody else seemed to fall in line and then we were off and running.

You know, we had our ups and downs. But for the most part, you know, we made the late run that we needed to make to break that streak of not being in tournament play and we were able to get in tournament play. I was happy because it gave our kids who had never had an opportunity to experience that the chance to see what NCAA Basketball is all about. So I just hope it's something that we can build ongoing into this season because that's what it's going to take.

**Q. Knowing Trayce is back, having your roster settled at this point, how do you evaluate it and what do you feel are the priorities?**

MIKE WOODSON: The process has to be speeded up. When you bring in freshmen, freshmen are freshmen. They come from high school and are trying to learn the college game. So I've got to help them speed the process

up. I think that they are -- they will play next year. They will be a big part of our rotation. And then the guys that were here last season, you know, I need them to make a major step in terms of where I'd like to see this team go.

Again, the only thing I'm pushing is first thing's first is trying to win a Big Ten title next season and once we get into tournament play, if we are fortunate enough to make that happen, then we'll go from there.

We are going to take it a game at a time and a practice at a time and just see where it leads us but we've got a lot of work to put in, I know that.

**Q. You mentioned important pieces in play. The players making a decision this week, how important is that in allowing you --**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, that was the major piece to our puzzle, getting him back. I thought it was great that Rayce made the commitment to come back but I was chasing Trayce all summer, basically, trying to get him to commit to come back, and things kind of fell in place for us. A week ago I went out to L.A. to see him and I went to Chicago but he didn't show up in Chicago for reasons that he wanted to come back.

So I came back home to Indianapolis and he made a decision to come back. Now, you know, he's got -- he's got a lot that he's got to bring to the table next season. I'm Notre Dame going to put added pressure on him. This past season, it wasn't like we didn't tell him to shoot the basketball but he's got to shoot the ball and feel good about shooting and he's going to make some and he's going to miss some. I mean, I missed a lot of shots in my career and I made a lot. It's a part of the game and I've just got to somehow get him over the hump and make him understand it's okay and guys are playing off of you to shoot the 15-, 17-, 18-foot shot and knock it down. Free throws has got to get better. I think he improved in a lot of areas last season, I thought, looking at his play in past seasons. But he's got to make a major jump and we've got to ride him pretty much like we did next year but I think the supporting cast around him will be a lot better, and based on how I try to speed it up, to get to where I think they need



to be to help us win basketball games.

**Q. How do you address shooting during the off-season? What's your philosophy on tinkering with form?**

MIKE WOODSON: There was an article that my wife sent me based on the past three or four years of Final Four teams and how they shot the three-ball and you know, we ended up 33 percent in shooting. We went through a phase when I started the season, I didn't know who was going to be able to make threes. And we struggled and then we went -- we went on a rage where we were making 3s. And then coming down the home stretch, we got a way from knocking them down.

I think when you shoot them, confidence has a lot to do with it. I think we have added a few pieces that I think guys will be able to make the three ball and guys that were here last season, they are in the gym now working on the three-point shot. It's a big part of our game, I get it. But I still think you need low post play and I still think your defense has to be solid enough to generate offense for you. And we were pretty good in that area as well last season. So we've got to continue to work but I'm happy where we are as a ballclub. Getting Trayce back is huge for us. And now we've just got to get to build on it and see where it takes us.

**Q. During the season you remarked -- the development of the power forward --**

MIKE WOODSON: It's going to be important moving forward. I'm not going to put any added pressure because last year, guys, was the first time that I had ever coached a low-post player and featured in my whole career. Trayce and Race both benefitted from it. If we are talking about winning a Big Ten title and going to the Big Dance and perhaps winning the national title, you know, you've got to have a balance. You can't just be inside. I'm just hoping the summer work that these guys are putting in, it pays off for us because we are going to need everybody to shoot on the perimeter to be able to make that shot. We've got a lot of good looks last season. Statistically, it shows that we're in the top five of getting open threes.

**Q. The non-conference schedule, obviously you have Kansas, going to play Arizona. How is that coming along and what else can you tell us in terms of non-conference schedule next season?**

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I'm still new at this. I know we have that ACC and the Big Ten deal and I have no idea who we are playing there. But it's going to be somebody good, imagine that. You know, again, like I mentioned

coming in last season, I'm not taking any team lightly. I've never done that as a coach so I don't think we have any gym mops. You guys might think that but everybody that's on our schedule can beat you if you're not ready to play. And you know, Kansas, Arizona, are two great teams that will be competing at the end when it's all said and done, and you know, we'll see what we're made of when we face those teams. They will be pretty good.

**Q. Trayce Jackson-Davis said he thought one of the changes that would benefit you guys is more of a focus on offense in the season. Last season obviously started on defense. How would that play out?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I don't know if the focus would be -- I think you've got to balance it out. You know, defense is what won us a lot of games last season, and I'll never get away from that. You know, I put the defense in early because I knew we had the two games in the Bahamas. So the offense pretty much had to wait because the system had to be put in play for us to even be competitive in the Bahamas.

I would never get away from our defensive system and how hard I push guys to defend. You know, I just think offensively, you know, we've just got to get a better flow and get guys confident in making shots. I mean, that to me is the big part of it. It's not like we didn't work on shooting and things of that nature. Shooting free throws, all of those areas, we got improvement. It starts with them as well.

**Q. The second part of that, if you make a jump in three-point shooting, who are two or three guys that are capable --**

MIKE WOODSON: All of them. If you play minutes and you take those shots, I'm counting on you to make them. The Galloways, the Xaviers, Caleb, Banks if he comes in and plays, C.J., Jalen, Geronimo, you know, Tamar Bates. We have got enough guys that are putting in time this summer that I feel good about when they lace it up next year that they can make it. That's the way I feel, they have got to make shots. I'm not putting pressure on them but that's just the nature of the game when you talk about competing at a high level.

**Q. Talking about Trayce and building an offense -- what do you feel like you learned and I guess how do you maybe take some of that to challenge this year coming back, pushing him, whether it's stuff he's producing or his leadership, whatever it is?**

MIKE WOODSON: Let me say this, I had Amare and Melo in New York and both were inside and outside players. But with Trayce, it was basically for us inside. Although he

handled the ball a lot more than he did in the past out on the floor, making plays with the ball, he even led breaks at times when he got the rebound. You know, I just got to get Trayce in a better place because his shot is not that bad, guys, when he shoots it. You know, I've just got to get him here mentally where he's okay, because it's okay with me. If the coach says it's okay, it should be okay with you.

So I've got to get him more confident and I don't think it's going to take away from what he does on the low -- I really don't because he's going to have opportunities to handle the ball. He's just got to be able to make plays when he has it in his hands.

**Q. I know you're friends with Kenny, your reaction to him getting the job in Louisville and any progress on the possibility of Indiana Louisville or Indiana Kentucky?**

MIKE WOODSON: I couldn't be more happy for a guy. I've known Kenny for many, many years and he finally got his big break to come back home to Louisville where he played. I think he's going to do great things there because he's a competitive guy and he knows the recruiting game. He's been a part of the college game. Just a short stint in the neighbor. But I think I've had the opportunity to talk to Kenny and their AD and he promised me something in two years. Once Kenny got up and going, that we could possibly get -- you know, I'll take that all day long because I know it to be a competitive game and Indiana fans like playing Kentucky fans, anyway.

So the Kentucky game is something that I've got to go back to the table with Kyle. He and I addressed it early on when I got the job but I'm not going to let it die. I'm going to stay on his heels about getting the Kentucky/Indiana series back on the table because I just think over the years, man, that was a hell of a game, going to Lexington and them coming down to Bloomington. It might not be Bloomington, Lexington, I don't know. But however way we can get it done, I'll take it. So we've just got to figure that part of it out.

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