

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Mike Woodson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana 104, St. Francis 59

Q. That second unit, I imagine it's not rigidly defined, guys can play in and out of it a little bit, but when that group is on the floor, Trey, Malik, Jordan, Tamar, we saw CJ tonight, what does that group do well when it's on the floor together?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I'm still learning. I haven't had an opportunity to really play these cats a lot of minutes together, so we've had some practice time, but some of these guys have been in and out. It's hard to gauge it right now.

I've just got to stay with it and take it a practice at a time and see where it leads us.

Q. Jalen and Malik, what have they done that's impressed you the most in the two exhibition games?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, they've been solid. They're doing all the things that we've been working on for the last four and a half, five months now, and it's nice to see practice is totally different than the game, but I always felt if you develop good habits in practice, it can be a nice carryover for you into ballgames, and I think that's what's happening to these two guys.

Q. Given the small sample size of the two exhibition games, how do you feel your team stacks up right now heading into the season?

MIKE WOODSON: Only time will tell, man. I don't know. Again, these were two exhibition games. Yes, our size was a big difference in both ballgames, but we know as we continue this journey, we're going to face teams that are just as big as we are. Then we've got to see what we're made of.

Again, only time will tell. I just was anxious to get these two games under our belt just to see where we were from a player-coach standpoint, and now it starts for real on Monday against Moorehead State. We've got a lot of work

on our hands still. I mean, the real thing starts Monday.

Q. At various points, Trayce, Malik and Race all led the (indiscernible) tonight. Is that something you're also still trying to figure out what they're capable of?

MIKE WOODSON: No, they can do that. Trayce and Race did that last year for us. I've gotten away -- and I started this in Atlanta coaching the Hawks, and when I coached the Knicks, I got away from the whole conventional way of, well, the big gets it off the board, he gives it to the guard, he brings it up. We've got a number of guys, we work on ball handling drills, that I feel good about guys making plays in the open court and being able to push to initiate our break.

Now, until you prove me wrong, then I'll scale you back and take the ball out of your hands and tell you that hey, you've got to play the conventional way. But Race, Malik and Trayce have proven that they can make basketball plays in the open court.

Q. Trayce and Tamar, what did you like from each of those guys?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again Tamar has really been one of our most consistent guys on this journey since we've been together. Unfortunately he got hurt the past week and a half and it's kind of slowed him down, so it was good getting him back, Tamar.

Trayce is who he is, man. He's going to be there when it counts. It was nice having him back in the lineup.

Q. Trayce and Malik, you look at those two, 6'9" and left-handers. You had them on the floor together at times tonight. How did they mesh well together on the floor?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, both can pass the ball and both can make basketball plays. It helps us in terms of how we run our offense now. I mean, they can both run pick-and-roll, they can both post the ball, and they're smart enough when they're double teamed to get rid of it to the right guy.



We've just got to continue to grow, get Malik in a really comfortable place where we're not trying to put him in a bad position defensively because where Trayce is used to switching and guarding smaller guys, he's not, and we've got to get him comfortable in that role.

Q. There's talk about the rotations; you've been asked about substitutions and that, but with the elevated level of talent that you have this year, is there a number that you are thinking that you'd like to get to at some point in the season rotation-wise, or is that something --

MIKE WOODSON: It's hard to say, man. I wish I could play everybody 30 minutes on this team, but it's impossible. You know, but when you're building a team, and I've said this, when you get minutes, you've got to make the most minutes -- the most out of those minutes. You've got to, to help us win.

If you don't play, you've still got to be a good teammate because you never know when your time will come. Somebody gets hurt and you're grumbling and mumbling about not playing, and then now you're not ready to play.

I don't think we have that amongst our team. I think we've got 17 guys -- it's kind of nice to see what the walk-ons did today and coming in there not ever really playing much in a game. They were solid based on the fact that they've been with us, too, going through the grueling practices every day.

I just think we've got a good team that everybody is going to have to sacrifice and be willing to buy in to do what we need to do to get where we need to go.

Q. Woody, free-throw shooting has kind of been a bugaboo of yours; it cropped up again today, 11 of 18. I know you can sit in practice all day and it still seems like game time and it doesn't work out.

MIKE WOODSON: Well, don't jinx us. It's early right now, really.

No, I agree with what you're saying, man. We've got to figure that part of it out. We score 100 points and we miss, what, eight free throws? Free throws are important. They're free. I've just got to get these guys to understand and relax and make them.

If I had a magic pill to give them, I would, on free throws, but I just don't. It's something that can bite you in the butt if we're not careful, man.

That's one of the first things I said before I broke huddle was our free throws. I mean, it's unacceptable. Somehow we've got to figure it out.

Q. You were talking to Don Fisher earlier this week just about Bob Knight instilling defense in his teams. Did you like playing defense in college? And was there a moment where I guess the importance of defense really came to you in college?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I tried to play defense, but Coach always thought I was probably the worst defender. I didn't think I was, but he probably thought so.

But I did what I was told to do, and that was put the ball in the hole.

But no, I talk about defense so much because of my experience not only playing for Coach Knight here the four years that I played, but that run that we made with that Detroit Piston team in the NBA when we beat the Lakers, that team defensively was -- they will probably go down as the greatest defensive team ever, and I saw it up close firsthand, and I know it wins games. It won a championship for us.

I've got to push these guys in that direction. That gives us a chance, man, to be in every ballgame if we defend and rebound.

Q. Obviously in both these exhibition games there have been a couple moments where you've pulled Xavier aside and just one-on-one after a play he made. What are you seeing from him in practice and in these games and where is his head?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I told Xavier after the game, you don't have to do it all this year. You really don't. I think we've got enough pieces on this team that you can just do your part and not have to stress out about thinking you have to do everything. That was my words to him because there's going to be nights X is going to really, really explode offensively and have big games, and there's going to be nights that might not happen. But he's still got to be Xavier Johnson for us. He's still got to defend. He's still got to get the ball where it's got to go and set us up, break press defenses and things of that nature.

I mean, it's just not his scoring ability. He's shown he can do that towards the end of last year, and I just think right now he's playing too fast. I've just got to slow him down and get him in a good frame of mind.

Q. Just want to get your thoughts on CJ going 15 minutes, nine points tonight, and what are you seeing

from him, and what are the important things from him to get some minutes this year?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, it's the minutes that you get. He played well tonight, but he made a lot of mistakes from a defensive standpoint. You expect that from freshmen. I get it.

I've just got to get him where he understands that every possession counts. It's important. You can take possessions off in high school and get away with it, but the talent level is too steep now in the college game, and you can't take possessions off. That's with all our freshmen.

He's just got to keep working. That's all I can tell him. Keep working.

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