

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Coach Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. I know Reggie Theus is a few years younger than you, but you guys have had your paths cross many, many times --

MIKE WOODSON: Hold on, man. What do you mean a few years younger than me? He's older than me.

Q. No, 63.

MIKE WOODSON: Reggie Theus is 63? I thought Reggie was always older than me.

Q. Maybe I looked at the dates wrong. So your paths with Reggie have crossed many, many times. If you would, you got one or two really good Reggie Theus stories to share with us?

MIKE WOODSON: Really, Reggie and I became teammates back in I believe it was '81, '82, somewhere around in there with the Kansas City Kings, and then we were part of the move from Kansas City to Sacramento when the franchise relocated there, and we've been friends ever since.

He was a good teammate, man. The only thing I get on Reggie about, me and Eddie Johnson always ride him a lot. When he first got to the team, he would always throw us bad passes when we were in a scoring position, so we couldn't shoot the ball, we'd have to pass it back. That was his big issue when we first -- we had to get him straight right off the bat; put the ball in the pocket where we can catch it and be ready to deliver a score, a bucket.

But Reggie was a good teammate. He and I, like I said, we've been friends since 1981, '82. He's attended my golf tournament that I used to host for years in Las Vegas, and we kind of made our rounds over the years playing golf in different other people's tournaments, so we've kept in touch. I'm happy to do this game with these guys.

Q. He is slightly older than you, I apologize.

MIKE WOODSON: Thank you.

Q. I know you had mentioned before that you'd been working on Coach Cal about getting IU-UK series back, and I'm sure you saw his comments a couple weeks back that you guys had agreed in principle to the series. What can you share on that, and what was your reaction to him coming out publicly and saying he wanted to play?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, Cal and I are very good friends. We've been very good friends for very many years, back when we were both in the NBA, and he's had a long run at the college level.

We always have shared ideals about basketball, from an X's and O's standpoint over the years. My thing is I can't say a whole lot until there's a contract inked, but yes, I would love to see the game back in play. I know he's for it and I'm for it, too, so until a contract is executed it's kind of a moot point right now.

But we're hoping something here in the near future will be executed and then we can really talk about the series once it's done. But right now it's still in talking stages.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the tempo that you want to play with this year. Do you feel like this team is better equipped to play faster than you did last year, and is that a point of emphasis for you right now?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, every team I've ever been a part of has always talked about, we want to play fast, we want to get out and run. Well, there's a lot of things that come along with that. You've got to be conditioned to do that, and then you've got to have the right pieces to do it.

Last year we just didn't have a lot of guys that could handle the ball and make basketball plays and do things off the bounce individually. That's no knock to anybody that we had last season, it's just we didn't have that makeup of the team.

I think with the guys that have come back to us that they have gotten better like the Tamar Bates, the Gallos, even Geronimo has been able to put the ball down on the floor



and make a basketball play, and then the new guys. All those guys can do that.

To answer your questions, yes, I would like to play faster and get out and do more things in the open court, and I think we can, but we're still conditioning ourselves and making sure that -- that's something that's always been a big thing with me. We've got to always be in great shape, and I think we're in pretty good shape based on all the running and things we've done from a weight standpoint to get to this point.

Yes, to answer your question, yeah, I would like to play faster.

Q. I wanted to ask about Malik; I recognize he's only a freshman and he's obviously also kind of in a crowded front court. There's a lot of guys around him. As he grows his game, do you think he'd be able to step away from the basket more, handle the ball more? You've talked about him handling it in the open floor. Do you think he can expand his game beyond just a traditional forward?

MIKE WOODSON: Have you watched him in these three games?

Q. That's why I asked. I think he's had enough of those moments where it feels like that's part of his game.

MIKE WOODSON: And nobody is kind of handicapping him. I've let him rebound the ball and push the ball up, take it all the way to the bucket and make plays. He's made plays out of the double-team. He's shot out on the floor some. Hey, I would never handicap a kid that I think can do all those things.

Yes, his strength is playing inside-out, and I'm going to hold him to that, too. I think he's a player that can do a little bit of everything, and we're going to hopefully put him in position to do those things. I think we've done that.

Q. You mentioned that your goal for Miller Kopp and shooting was to get him more comfortable. Through the first action on the season, have you seen him respond how you've wanted him to so far?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, he's making shots. He hasn't taken a lot of them, but the shots that he's taken, he's made. That's just all the work that he's put in this summer leading up to this point. I mean, Miller works; that's what he does in the gym. He comes early, stays late.

I'm expecting him when he's got shots he's going to knock

them down. That's kind of how I feel.

Q. You obviously had the two exhibition games, but now this non-conference season is getting started, games are counting in the standings, anything you can learn about the younger guys on your team?

MIKE WOODSON: Only time will tell, man. As the competition gets stiffer, you learn more about your ballclub and see where you are. That's no knock against anybody that we're playing. By the time we get to teams like Xavier, these teams that are top teams, Kansas, Carolina, and then once we get to the Big Ten, it's going to be a test for -- every game is a test. That's kind of how I look at it. I don't take anybody lightly. We've got to respect our opponents. But we've got to come and commit ourselves for 40 minutes.

My thing is we're taking it a practice at a time and a game at a time and see where it leads us.

Q. Tamar Bates gave you something good straight away off the bench on Monday; tell me about his development and what you want to see out of him as the non-conference games flow?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, Tamar has been one of the brightest spots since we've gotten back together, dating back four and a half, five months ago. Unfortunately he had a little hiccup about two and a half, three weeks ago where he got hurt, but other than that, he's been playing fantastic.

I'm expecting a great season out of him. He's going to play. He's proven and putting himself in that position and done everything that's asked of him to deserve some minutes on the floor this year.

Q. Is there anyone on this second unit or on the bench that you feel like through the two exhibitions and Monday or even in practice has really developed themselves as a leader on the court and off the court vocally, and how has this person been able to do that?

MIKE WOODSON: I think Tamar Bates, Gallo is starting to step up, and Geronimo. Geronimo has done a lot of good things in the minutes that he's been out on the floor, kind of leaving off where he left at the end of last season.

But I think he's more -- the word I want to use is more stable now. He's doing basketball things, and he's not overthinking, he's just playing.

That unit, again, they're very valuable to building a team. Your bench has got to be able to give you something. I

thought the other night when the first unit was just kind of going through the motions, our second unit came in and gave us a major lift. When you're building a team, that's what you're going to need because sometimes the first unit ain't going to be there, so you've got to have a backup plan. I thought our second unit was pretty damned good the other night.

Q. I wanted to ask about Trey playing with the wrapped hand. Obviously it's not stopping him from playing well, but is it impacting him in ways that it might be harder for us to see, and how long do you think he'll keep playing with his hand wrapped like that?

MIKE WOODSON: Oh, I don't know. That's something I can't answer. I broke my thumb I remember -- his is not broken, but I broke the tip of my thumb, and it's a tough injury. I never sat down. I put a splint over it, and out of all the injuries I've had that was the worst because the pain was just -- it was just unbelievable. You throw the ball, you try to catch the ball with a broken thumb, it's tough.

But we've seen him manage what injury he has. I think he had a severe sprain in the thumb area, and we just padded it. Tim Garl padded it just to give him some relief, and it seems to be working for him. He had taken a couple days away, too, just to get it calmed down, and we've just got to hope that it's not something that's going to nag him the rest of the season.

We're looking at it cautiously because we've got a long season ahead of us, and he's a big part of what we do.

Q. This is kind of a bigger picture question about you kind of personally. Growing up, was there a time that you realized you really loved the game of basketball, that it was a lot of fun for you?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I started late. I always played with my older brothers and their friends as a little kid, but I didn't start actually playing until the eighth grade.

That was a major learning curve for me because I was going through some personal things after losing my father, and I knew I liked basketball, and I took it serious even at an early age of the eighth grade. I got kicked off the eighth grade -- I would run and come in first place and always had to go in the locker room last. He'd always send me in the locker room last, and I couldn't understand that. I would win every sprint but would go in last. One day I just went in first, and he said, when you walk through the door, hey, don't come back, and I did.

I was voted back on the team the next week, and I vowed

never to quit again, man, because basketball really became a big part of me. By the time I became a sophomore in high school I was playing against the Pacers, who were my big idols, George McGinnis and Roger Brown, who was my idol, and Mel Daniels and guys like that as a sophomore in high school. I truly believe that's why I developed a lot quicker than probably most kids that young.

Q. Do you have any favorite memories playing with your brothers?

MIKE WOODSON: Yeah, I do. I was a crybaby at the time because they knocked me around. They were so much bigger -- they weren't that much bigger. My two brothers were 6'2", but they just always seemed to -- they let me hang around the old guys, and I truly believe that's why I developed. I always played up against guys that were much, much older than I was. I'm talking about my two brothers, there was an 18-year difference and a 12-year difference between me and those guys.

They just let me see -- they always threw me in there. It just became natural for me because I did get an opportunity to play. But they played a major part in my career and my development early on, I'll tell you that. They really did.

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