

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: First question, please.

Q. I was hoping for an overall health update on the team, Xavier, Jordan and Logan. Specifically on Xavier, is he far enough along in his rehab that you're comfortable he's going to be back at some point in this season?

MIKE WOODSON: Not really. He's been out there trying to shoot a little bit. He just got out of the boot. I mean, I just don't know. It's hard to say when he's going to actually be back.

If you ask Xavier, he thinks he can play tomorrow. Listen, I've been around basketball a long time. That's impossible. The guy broke his foot. I'm not using that in a negative way. I wish he could play tomorrow. But I don't know.

At this point I'm just trying to deal with the guys that are in uniform.

With Geronimo, I think he shot a little bit yesterday. He's had a calf strain. That's what's keeping him out. Logan has got a major sinus infection again. I mean, I've known players that have had calf problems, and that's something you can't mess around with or you can be out for a longer period of time if you come back too soon.

I don't know what the outcome is. I haven't gotten a report today since I've been in the office. I'll get it here in a few on those guys to see where they are.

Q. Obviously looking at Purdue, that offense revolves around a guy like Zach Edey, what impresses you about their backcourt?

MIKE WOODSON: They've done a tremendous job. I mean, what can you say? Playing with two freshmen and a big guy in the middle, that says a lot. Matt has done a great job with his ballclub.

They say you can't win with freshmen a lot of times in college basketball, but they're proving that they belong.

They have a system that fits them and they're playing well.

Q. When it comes to a player as influential as Edey is with Purdue, how risky is it to get too caught up in changing your own principles to try to account for him? How do you strike that balance?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it's tough. I mean, coming out of the NBA, I've been around dominant centers. Hakeem Olajuwon, he's not Hakeem, but you get so in tune to just stopping him.

They got other supporting pieces around Edey that have played well this year. It's a double hit. I mean, you got to lock in to Edey. I thought last year we played him well.

He's playing more minutes this year. He is the guy. They have the other big guy that they had, Wills I think, last year along with him.

I'm watching film and watching other teams play him. I mean, he's a tough matchup for anybody. We just got to make sure that he doesn't go off, and try to play him as tough as we can.

As you know, last year Trayce didn't even get a chance to play him. He played 11 minutes, 11 or 12 minutes. We got to focus in on the whole team. I look at what Gillis last night had 29 points, I believe, Gillis had 29 last night. I mean, we just got to make a total team effort to just play.

I don't want to get caught up in the Trayce-Edey thing. They're both great players. They're playing well for both teams. We just got to see where it leads us.

Q. With someone like him though and all the shooters around him, how important is it to do a lot of different things defensively against him through the course of the game? Secondly, how important is it to defend better without fouling?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I don't mind the fouls if it's fair both ways. I mean, I'm telling our guys to play hard and try to play more physical, get into the ball and things of that nature. I don't think our team should be punished for that.



There are teams that do it, too.

When you look at Edey, he's seen double-teams, he's seen zones. The guy is just a big presence in the middle that demands the ball. And they go to him a lot, a lot more than they did last season. He didn't play the minutes that he's playing now last season.

My thing is, we got to just play him as hard as we can play him and make sure that the surrounding pieces don't go off, and see what happens.

We going to have to play, too. Offensively we're going to have to make shots to keep them honest, as well. But our defense has got to be a signature coming into that game. We're going to have to defend and rebound with this team.

Q. I recognize there may not be a hard-and-fast answer to this question. You mentioned Gillis. He had more points last night than the previous six games. What is the balance you strike when you're looking at a game plan between not wanting to alter what you plan, but when a player has a game that's that much of an outlier, not wanting to ignore it?

MIKE WOODSON: You can't ignore it. A guy gets 29 points in a college game, he can play. Hell, if he didn't get 29 points, I still think he's a good player.

You just got to respect everybody that plays on the floor, play 'em as hard as you can. It ain't scientific, some big deal where we got to figure out how to stop just Gillis. They got a good team. 20 something and 1. They doing something right.

You are going to have to play their team. They got two nice pieces with Gillis and Edey, but they got surrounding pieces that have played well for them, as well.

Q. Two freshmen obviously that have played pretty well for the most part of the season, but they are freshmen. What can you do or are you planning to do? Can you try to put more pressure on those freshmen to try to make it uncomfortable for them?

MIKE WOODSON: Listen, guys, when we're good, we defend, we rebound, and we share the ball, we're shooting the ball. I mean, coming into the Maryland game, we had been playing great offense. No doubt about it. The ball was moving, guys were making shots and they were feeling good about themselves.

The same thing has to apply on Saturday. We got to make shots. Our defense has to hold, we got to defend and rebound. It will be a battle. They defend, too, try to get

after it as well.

When you got two teams that are banging around, best man's going to win. That's how I look at it.

I'm anxious to get to the game and see where we are against the No. 1 team in the nation.

Q. Tamar, do you need to see more consistency out of him offensively? What can you do to maybe get that out of him?

MIKE WOODSON: It's not like he's not playing the minutes. We just got to get him in a good place mentally 'cause he can make shots. When he makes shots, we're pretty good.

I look at our perimeter play the other night, we were 5 for 32. You're lucky to even be in the game. Obviously our defense was okay. You hold them to 30, 20 something from the three, that's why you were in the game.

It's hard to beat teams when you go 5 for 32 with your perimeter play. Our perimeter play has been pretty good as of late. Five-game winning streak. Everybody was pitching in and doing their part. That's how it's got to be the rest of the way if we going to continue to win games.

Q. Obviously growing up in Indiana, do you just have any favorite memories of the IU-Purdue rivalry or things that stick out?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I mean, it's the biggest game in the state of Indiana. I was recruited by Purdue and had a visit set to go to Purdue. I canceled it at the last minute based on my conversation with Coach Knight. I had already committed. Hadn't been anywhere, so I was just going to take the trip. Didn't make the trip. Glad I didn't 'cause Indiana is home for me, where I always wanted to go.

The rivalry is just what it is, man. I mean, they have their fan base, and we have our fan base. The games have been pretty competitive. I know last year both games were very, very competitive games. I can't help but think Saturday's going to be a competitive game, as well, when we go up to Purdue.

Q. You spent 40 years in the NBA. I always shake my head when I listen to people talk about how there's no place in the league for a guy like Zach Edey's skills or with Trayce's skills. When you look at those two guys, you see what they do, those are professional players in your mind, aren't they?

MIKE WOODSON: Without a doubt. I look at our guy, at Trayce Jackson, I mean, he rebounds, he blocks shots, he defends, he finishes at the rim, he runs the floor, he passes the ball. I mean, as a coach, you can use all those things on a basketball floor. That's what's amazing to me.

Here is big Edey. Edey gets up and down the floor. He might not be as mobile as some bigs, but he's mobile enough to do what he's doing. And he's a low down low.

Big men can't play in the NBA or don't have... It's crazy. I mean, somebody's going to take a shot at both of these players, and they going to be happy as hell when they get them.

I don't know what Edey does, but I've got to think he's a good young man and he works hard. Our guy does the same thing.

You're getting quality people. You just got to teach them the NBA game once they get at that level because it is another jump. It's faster. You got to figure out things once you get at that level.

But I think both of them are capable of playing in the league, and they deserve to be in the NBA because they're good enough.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

MIKE WOODSON: All right. Thank you.

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