

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Mike Woodson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana 71, Illinois 68

Q. I imagine over the years people have asked you what's it like to be one of the most accomplished players in program history, asked you about other players in program history similar to you. Trayce passes you on the all-time scoring list today. What will you tell people about Trayce once all of this is said and done?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I mean, as a player myself, I was never about accolades, man. It's just something I was blessed to be able to do, and scoring the basketball. The beauty about Trayce and Mike Woodson, we both didn't shoot threes. He doesn't shoot them, and I never had the three-point line.

I couldn't be more proud of a young man than Trayce today. That record has -- I've been sitting in that spot for a long time, and for him to surpass it, man, it's special. It just means the body of work that he's put in over the years, but he can't stop there. It's just points. He's still staring at two things, a Big Ten title and a national title, and that's where I'm trying to get him.

Q. You guys are down 48-39 with a little more than 12 to play. You climb back, and in that last minute and a half or so, why were guys like Jalen Schifino and Miller Kopp able to make such key plays?

MIKE WOODSON: We're hungry, too. This was a separation game. If they win, they separate. Even though we've got a long way to go still, this game was important.

You've got to applaud Illinois and how they played. They were without their best player, and they were trying to move up, too, and they played that way.

But we made the plays coming down the home stretch I thought that we needed to make in terms of getting stops, and Jalen's two big free throws, the jump shot he made, and then getting it out of that double-team right at the end there.

Q. You won a whole lot of 50/50 balls, especially in the last four or five minutes of that game. Just the effort and intensity that kind of went into everything on the defensive end, had as much to do with scoring the points, didn't it?

MIKE WOODSON: It had a lot to do with it. I think the first half we were getting beat on the boards. They won all the 50/50 balls. We were just moving in slow motion, I thought. It was heated in the locker room at halftime a little bit.

But I thought we came out, and they jumped right on us right from the start, and we just kept scrapping and scraping, and we made a game out of that at the end and was able to do it what we needed to do to win.

Q. Can you talk about what your approach is with Jalen in terms of keeping the faith, because he didn't have a great statistical game, he made some mistakes, but then he's on the floor at the end of the game to make some big plays. What's your approach in terms of dealing with him on that?

MIKE WOODSON: He's a freshman. Freshmen make mistakes. I just look at the process of where he's come from and the fact when you lose your starting point guard in Xavier Johnson and you turn the ball over to a freshman to run your ballclub at a major program, that's huge. It's huge.

Make no mistake about it, he's put us in in position along with the supporting cast with Trayce Jackson-Davis leading the way. You're not going to shoot it well all the time, but I always judge players at the end of the game about who they are as a player, and he made the plays down the stretch that counted. That's what I look at.

If he had miscued those plays, then I'm in his ear after the game or tomorrow saying, hey, these are things that you've got to learn the next time you're in that position. But he made every right play except for throwing the ball away out of the time-out. As a coach, that kind of tears you up. But I thought he made winning plays coming down the stretch



to help us win it.

Q. How have you seen Race since his injury attack his recovery to get back on the court? How have you seen him deal with the mental and physical hurdles of that?

MIKE WOODSON: No, I think he's coming along smoothly, I think. I played him up at Northwestern 25 minutes. I think he got 22 minutes or so tonight. So I've just got to gauge that a little bit. Somehow I've got to get Tamar and Geronimo -- Malik is playing at a good level. I've got to get them back in the swing of things because we're going to need guys like that as we continue this journey.

We've still got a long way to go, and I just don't want to pile up. Trayce is playing damn near the whole game. I think he played 37 tonight. We've got to start scaling him back if we can with Malik and Geronimo giving us some minutes up front.

Q. Obviously Miller tough night shooting. The other night at Northwestern he bounces back. Was there any conversation with him afterwards? I know it was an emotional game for him. How happy were you as a coach to see him play like that tonight after a tough game at Northwestern?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, Miller has been around a long time, and that Northwestern scene is not a good scene for him, going back to last season. It is what it is, man, but the bottom line, he's played well here at home for us. So I expect him to make shots here.

He's got the fan base, and he's got everybody in his corner, so it makes it a lot easier for him.

Q. You alluded to Jalen having the ball in his hands so much, but as a team with 14 turnovers that led to 16 points off of those turnovers and then at the free-throw line Illinois was 14 of 18, 78 percent, Indiana just 61 percent, was 50 something percent for most of the game. How concerned are you about those things as this season starts to wind down?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, we've kind of been up and down in those areas in terms of the free throws, but for the most part we've been better this year shooting free throws, especially when it counts.

You're always concerned about that. You look at every statistical category on the stat sheet, you can go in and nit-pick and say this and that, and in some games it's just smooth sailing and things are great.

But again, stats are what they are. Sometimes -- I gauge things on what happens at the end of the game. If it's a close game. A lot of it's on me. Yeah, I live my fantasies through these guys to see who's going to make plays. That's what I get excited about.

Tonight, Jalen made plays, shooting a stupid number. It was crazy. But he still made plays down the stretch to help us win the game.

Q. Illinois made 6 of 12 three-pointers in the first half, missed all eight in the second half. What was the halftime adjustment for the three-point shooting and how did three-point shooting affect the game on both sides of the ball?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I thought that they were the most aggressive team the first half, and we were just playing on our heels. A ball was just floating around the perimeter easily. Guys were just freelancing, beating us off the drive. It wasn't pretty basketball the first half I didn't think. I thought the second half, especially as the game started to get tighter, our defense started to pick up and eliminated a lot of the threes and the good looks that they had the first half.

Q. You've been around a lot of young basketball players in your career. What is it about Jalen that allows him to throw a bad pass that they take for a dunk and then turn around, come right back, make a shot, make two free throws --

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it wasn't pretty, what I said. I mean, that's a coach's worst nightmare, man. You come out of the time-out and you throw the ball right to your opponent, and they didn't have to work for it. When he was coming back down, I was screaming at him like -- and he took it upon himself to run a pick-and-roll and make up for it and make the shot, and then he makes the two free throws, so go figure.

Q. Specifically Matthew Mayer had 16 from the field in the first half and only two from the field in the second. How much of the halftime adjustment was specifically keying in on him, and what did you see from your guys?

MIKE WOODSON: Miller got an earful, and guys that didn't switch up on him, at halftime -- hell, I thought he was going to go for a career high here the way he was playing. He was playing extremely well. But second half we kind of closed in on him and took away a lot of the gaps where he was able to work on.

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