

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Head Coach Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. Mike, we've asked this periodically, but it seems like we've seen little bits and pieces of X being able to do more basketball-wise. Where is he in his recovery, and has he been able to ramp up any activity, whether it's something in practice, whether it's individual workouts, whatever it is?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, he is doing some individual stuff, but contact, you know, doing drills with the team, we haven't been able to get there yet. We are hoping next week.

I'm going to sit down with X today and just see what his thinking is because my thing is it's going to come down to him being able to bang a little bit and cut and use his speed to do what he does, but if that's bothering him, then I don't know if he is going to play.

I mean, only time will tell. That's all I can tell you guys right now. He is not doing enough for me to be on the floor to play. I know that. Not right now.

Q. Mike, in that first game with Purdue you threw a lot of different looks at Zach Edey as much as you could. Especially there in the first half and had some good success with him. How important is just that aspect of it of trying to do different things against him each trip down so he can't get comfortable, or less comfortable?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I mean, we had a game plan going in, and I thought it worked the first half. You know, they made the adjustments the second half, and Edey got loose, you know what I mean? We were still able to make some plays down the stretch to secure the win.

I mean, he is just a load. I haven't seen very many teams stop him this season. And watching him on film, you know, he is going to demand the ball, and they're going to go to him a lot. Our bigs are just going to have to battle as much as they can, and we've got to get them some help as much as we can and not let the rest of the supporting pieces get away from us.

I thought that was a really big difference in the game here.

Q. I'm curious, when you look at the bench and what their performances have been on the road compared to home, can you pinpoint one or two things that -- is it just experience? Is it guys maybe being a little bit out of their comfort zone in a tough environment? What maybe do you feel like is not going right for the bench on the road, and how concerning, I guess, is that to you moving forward?

MIKE WOODSON: It's always a concern when you go on the road. You want everybody clicking.

You know, I go back to last year. We played well on the road a lot of games, man, where we were in games. This year, I mean, even our last game, I thought the game plan was nicely done. We came out ready to play.

That team, I think it was six, seven minutes -- they only had, like, 13 points -- left in the half. Then all hell broke loose.

I wish I knew what the formula was to get us feeling good about the road. It's not just our team. There are a lot of teams in the Big Ten that struggle on the road and the environment that you play in.

I mean, I look at our numbers on the road versus at home. It's staggering. It's unbelievable. It's a major difference how we play at home, and when we get out on the road, it's totally the other way.

So we have one more game here to get out against Purdue before we come home and finish our last two at home. Then you have to go to Chicago. That's out on the road, so somehow we're going to have to figure it out.

Q. I wanted to follow up on X just from the standpoint of if you do get comfortable that he is able to play physically, how challenging will that be to bring someone back at this stage of the season? As important as he is overall, how hard is it going to be to try to bring him back into the rotation and into what you are trying to do?



MIKE WOODSON: Well, it ain't the first time I've done this, guys, in terms of, you know, even in the NBA and having key guys that get hurt, you have to fit them back into the rotation. I mean, you never run away from your talent.

X is a talented player, and he has been good for our ball club, so somehow you have to fit him back in. You know, I don't know if I'll start him or bring him off the bench. A lot of that has to deal with once he warms up, is it good to start him instead of him sitting over there coming off cold? There's just a lot of intangible things that come into when players get hurt.

I can relate back to when I was -- when I came back, the coach never sat me down. I played every minute of the game. I never came out of the game. That's just how much he trusted where I was at the time.

A lot of that's going to be on X, too. I've got to feel good. I don't want to mess up what chemistry we do have, but he is still a big piece to what we do. I mean, he changes -- he is a game-changer to me.

So if he is good to go, I've got to feel like I've got to put him back in there, and we've got to play off of him and see where we are.

Q. When you watch Zach Edey, just how has he improved? In what ways has he improved from last season to this season?

MIKE WOODSON: I think he is in better shape because he is playing longer minutes. Last year he played a little over half the game, and he played in spurts because he was sharing minutes with -- what's the big kid -- Williams. This year everything is geared to him.

He is in much better shape. You know, he is moving up and down the floor. Not that he didn't last year, but the fact that he knows he is going to demand the basketball and he has developed both hands extremely well. So it's not like you can give him angles. He is just a tough matchup, man, for -- he is a nightmare for a lot of teams. Not just us.

You can't give him angles because he is good with both hands at making plays. He is good. That's all I can tell you. I like him (laughing).

Q. I was going to ask you about that. Can you take yourself out of the competitive realm and kind of appreciate the matchup between Trayce and Zach from a good-for-basketball point of view? Not only that they're both excellent, but that they're both excellent in such contrasting ways. Do you give yourself a chance

to kind of appreciate it on that level when you are watching film?

MIKE WOODSON: It's competition. I love it. I mean, that's kind of as a coach what I live for and watching so much talent in college basketball. I left the league that was just full-blown with talent. You sit and just marvel at guys.

There are a lot of people that was tuned into that Purdue-Indiana game here at Indiana, you can rest assured of that, and just to see the matchup. They didn't fail anybody who was watching because both of them played extremely well, and I can't help but think it's going to be the same way come Saturday.

Q. More of an intangible perspective, how has Trayce kind of helped you establish the culture you want at Indiana?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think you kind of blurred out on me. Can you repeat that, please?

Q. From an intangible perspective, how has Trayce kind of helped you establish the culture that you want at Indiana?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, he has helped me tremendously. I think when your best player buys into what you are doing as a head coach, it sends a message to everybody that's around him.

Trayce, yeah, we've had our battles as a coach/player relationship, but that's a part of it. As a coach, you can never run away from challenging your best players, and I was challenged as a player in college. I was challenged as a player in high school. I was challenged as a player in the pros, and I wanted the challenge.

You know, me coming in blindly taking the job, I didn't know how it was going to be with Trayce. I really didn't. I knew after watching him on film, I wasn't happy with what I saw from a coaching standpoint. And I knew once he made the commitment to stay on board, he was going to be challenged. He is probably -- him and Xavier has probably caught more hell than anybody on this team, and rightfully so.

I mean, X is your leader in terms of running your team, and Big Fellow is the engine. We feed off of what he does. So, I mean, when he is not doing what's expected of him, he has to be told, and he has to be coached. I call it coaching. That's all I call it.

Q. Mike, I haven't had a chance to ask you this in a while, but have you had a chance to spend a bunch of

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time with Coach Knight at all in the last month or so?

MIKE WOODSON: He comes to practice once a week, and it's a beautiful thing, and it's been that way for the last month and a half. He pays me a visit and sits at courtside. It's just nice to see him sitting there where he belongs.

Q. Kind of following up on that. Today, February 23rd, is the anniversary of the big chair throw that Coach Knight had back in '85. Can you remember when you were the angriest you have ever been on a basketball coach, whether as a player or as a coach, and how did you react in that moment?

MIKE WOODSON: I don't know. You know, in New York I got kicked out of a game against Chicago. Melo got kicked out. Tyson Chandler got kicked out. Hell, I thought I needed to get kicked out. So I lost my cool and leaned into the officials, and I got kicked out of the game.

That chair throwing was something I saw from afar. As coaches we're crazy, man. We do a lot of crazy shit on the practice floor and during the game, and a lot of it is -- sometimes it's not warranted and sometimes it is based on the officiating and things that go on during the course of a ball game.

For the most part I've tried to keep my composure, but sometimes it's just hard (laughing). It really is. So I understand Coach Knight's frustrations that day (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll see you Saturday.

MIKE WOODSON: Take care, guys.

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