

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. It feels like we always lead off with this, but we did see X dressed out; we saw him warm up Tuesday. Just do you have any sense of where he is and whether at this point in the season you'll be able to bring him up to speed enough to play meaningful minutes?

MIKE WOODSON: Don't know much yet. Can't give you any info on that yet. Today, got to go through practice and see where he is.

But hey, listen, I'm counting on the guys that's been playing, and we just got to see what -- where he is right now. Because he has not really practiced a lot. We've just got to see where it takes us today.

Q. Just with this Sunday being Senior Night for a handful of guys, what have some of those leaders meant for you in your first two years with the program?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it's meant a lot. I mean, when you look at X, you look at Race and Trayce and Miller, you know, they have all made big contributions to our ballclub. You know, I mean, it's a lot of games they played over their four years of college a lot of studying off the floor. It's a lot that's entailed, and when you go to school and play sports, man, they put in a lot of work.

So I couldn't be more proud of a group of guys. They are going to be well-missed when they leave here.

Q. You mentioned after the game that you would not just flush the tape obviously from Iowa, but curious when you sat down with the team and went over things, is there -- I guess what was the response, and have you how seen them bounce back yesterday in practice after that performance?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, we had a great practice.

Watching the film was embarrassing. It was just -- it was probably the worst display of basketball since I've been

here as a coach. It was awful. We didn't do anything that we set out to do going into that ballgame.

You know, I didn't see that coming, and it happened and you know, it's nothing you can do about it now. You just got to build on and try not to let it happen again. I thought practice was pretty sharp yesterday. It was a tough practice. But everybody put forth effort and they got through it, so today won't be any different. We've got to work our way back to where I think we need to be.

Q. I know you had talked about wanting Miller Kopp to kind of step up in his leadership throughout this season. How have you seen him response to that, and do you feel like he has grown as a leader in the way you want him to?

MIKE WOODSON: I think Miller has had an excellent season, and he has grown in that area. He's been a little more boisterous, and his play has put him in that category in terms of how he's led.

So I have no complaints with Miller. He's tried to do everything that he's asked on and off the floor and on both sides of the ball, he's been pretty good.

Q. I know after that three-game losing streak, you said you kind of got the team's attention and got them playing harder by practicing harder and just pushing up the pace in practice. How do you balance that with, you know, it being March and having concerns about guys wearing down?

MIKE WOODSON: It's tough. It's real tough. Because again, you know, I think back in the day, you didn't have that tournament, so you just basically got set to go right into the NCAA Tournament play.

The Big Ten Tournament is grueling, you know what I mean. Especially I think back to last year when you play Thursday, Friday, Saturday, that's tough, man. You're a shot away from playing Sunday. My thing is only the strong survive, man.

The tournament is what it is, and it's hard to balance



because again, you know, we need the practice based on how we played the other day. You play a great game at Purdue, and then you come back and you play a game like that where you don't even look last week you've been together as a ballclub.

So you know, practice, for me, is the only way I think we can get ourselves back together, and it's tough to balance it because we are getting ready to come into the Big Ten Tournament, and you don't want anybody getting hurt. You want fresh legs. I get all of that.

But got to work still, I think.

Q. When you look at the season, you've had some games where you played defense very well, and obviously some maybe less than stellar performances, can you identify maybe one or two things defensively that when you watch film that you guys are doing well when you have a performance like you did against Purdue?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, our defense has been solid this year. Even when we've lost games, we've had spurts in the game where we've been pretty good defensively. So I'll never diminish that.

Iowa, we had nothing going. You know, statistically in the Big Ten, you know, we've been a pretty good defensive team. So I'm not -- I'm not going to sit here and complain.

But I can't explain the Iowa game and why we played so badly and so poorly. But you give up damn near 90 points, you're not going to beat anybody in the Big Ten, I don't care who it is.

Q. You guys have been through a lot this season just in terms of injuries, ups, downs. Is there anything, any strategies you have as a coach that basically can just man age guys, the emotional levels of the guy, especially now you have a big one against Purdue and come out against Iowa; is there anything that you can do strategically as a coach to basically keep guys as level and just say locked in emotionally, just given everything they have been through this season?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, for the most part, since I've been here, even when we've won big games, we've come back and competed when we've been in games. Iowa is probably the first game that since I've been here as a coach that we just -- just weren't -- it wasn't there. That was kind of disappointing to me because I hasn't seen that before, and hopefully we won't see that again.

You know, these young guys, it's hard -- that was a big

game at Purdue and I know emotionally, they were sky-high but I don't look at it in that light as a coach, you know what I mean, it's just a game. We were fortunate enough to go in there and play well and win the game. But you've got to get mentally and physically ready for the next game, and we weren't there.

Q. You've got several guys going through Senior Night stuff on Sunday. What does that add to them in terms of the game prep or distractions, you know they have got family coming in and they have to think about speeches and all that stuff. What are the challenges and what do you remember about doing it yourself?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, only thing I can remember myself, I wasn't worrying about a speech. I was worrying about winning the Big Ten title that night, my last game. So had nothing to do with a speech. I was a desperate player coming back from back surgery just happy to be back on the floor, and I knew that one game would tell it all in terms of who would walk out of this gym here at Assembly Hall with the Big Ten title, and that's the only thing I was worried about.

And the same thing is at stake for these guys. Yeah, it's Senior Night but this is a huge game for our ballclub. If we win, it puts us in a great position going into the Tournament. That's the only thing that they should be worrying about. I get it.

You know, they put four years in. They got a lot of family members here. But their thought process should be just the game, I think. Everything else will take care of itself.

Q. Asking a little bit about Senior Night, too, you've talked a lot about the relationship you and Trayce have had and this probably kind of one of those moments that's sort of a signpost in that relationship. Just curious, is there kind of a moment or a memory from your time together that sticks out to you most about Trayce about a conversation you've had or kind of a moment you've shared or something you've seen him do on the floor that really stuck with you?

MIKE WOODSON: The only thing that sticks out to me, man, is him telling me that day after we watched film that he was coming back. And you know, that -- that kind of set the stage for where we are today because he could have left if he wanted to and gone anywhere in the country.

The fact that he made the commitment to me and I've made a commitment to coach him; and it hasn't always been pretty, you know what I mean. But it's coaching.

I think as captain of a ballclub, because I've been in that

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position before, there's a lot that comes with being a captain and you know, I probably have pushed him harder than any player on this team and I know there's been days that he's walked out of here thinking that, hey, is this guy really in my corner, based on how he's pushing me.

But at the end of the day, he's gotten better as a player. We have benefitted from it, you know, with our ballclub, in terms of how we played as a team, and he's been the driving force behind it.

So the fact that he made the commitment to come back and allow me to coach him, that means more to me than anything.

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