

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Trayce Jackson-Davis

Race Thompson

Press Conference



Q. Trayce, how from your eyes have you seen Malik develop since he got here as a freshman?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Malik came in really strong, playing against some of the mid-major schools. He kind of hit a slump in the middle of the season, but I think since late January, he's really just turned it back up. He's playing really, really well, playing really, really confident and I just think that's his work ethic. I think that's the way he takes things in practice going against me every day.

I'm proud of him and I know he's ready to get back out there. He's a really big spark for us off the bench. He just needs to keep doing what he's doing.

Q. I guess for Race, having got a taste of tournament play last year and knowing what that feels like, how does that impact your mentality going into this year?

RACE THOMPSON: We worked all summer, all year, for this, last year being a play-in game, we kind of got a taste of it, and then going to play St. Mary's. It's like, we got a taste.

I think this whole year, feeling that, and just going into practice every day preparing to really play for the NCAA Tournament, just the want to be able to play deeper into the tournament is something that's pushed us every single day.

Q. Curious, asked Coach Woodson the same thing. When you're getting ready for an opponent that you really obviously haven't played this season or probably, I don't know if either of you guys watch much MAC basketball, but I'm guessing the answer is no. What are maybe the keys to kind of locking in the next couple days in terms of learning about this opponent? And what, I guess, does the staff do from a preparation perspective to kind of get you guys ready to play a team that you're not as familiar with?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Nothing really changes, honestly. From the beginning of the year, we scouted every team the same, whether it be a mid major in the beginning of the year, out of conference opponent like North Carolina, or Purdue coming in on our home floor. We take our scouting very seriously. The assistant scouts do a great job.

We have three days to prepare, and we are going to do -- we are going to see what they are doing, and then we've just got to go out and execute, and what the coaches are doing, we have to perform.

We are not going to take them lightly. They are a great team. Obviously they are here for a reason, so we've got to play basketball.

Q. For both of you guys, Coach just mentioned that you guys have to be the veteran leaders that can lead this team on a tournament run. What have you seen from the younger guys coming towards you guys for guidance, and I guess how can you kind of act on your coach's comments there?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: So basically, the way that I think about it, I don't think of our younger guys as young anymore. Fino has played a whole season. Same with Malik, KB and CJ. They might maybe need a little more guidance, but stuff of that nature, people that are in the eight-man rotation, we are all on the same page. We hold each other accountable, and it's going to take all of us. Me and Race will be there for guidance.

But at the same time everyone needs to hold each other accountable and everyone needs to be on the same page if we are going to make a run. You can't have two guys doing it. It's got to be a whole team thing. We win and lose as a team but we are going to be at the head of the snake, but at the same time, it's going to take everyone, Xavier on the bench, coaches, everyone, all the way down the line. So I think that's the biggest thing for us.

Q. I wanted to get your thoughts on with this opportunity, how pumped are you? How excited are you for this opportunity: It's a one-and-done situation,



to go out with a bang?

RACE THOMPSON: That's what it's all about. In the past, my time here, we haven't really had this opportunity beside last year, so I mean, it's just like -- almost like a new thing for all of us, and for me and Trayce going out like this -- one-and-done, there's no doubt in my mind that every single game I'm leaving it out on the court, and I have no doubt -- I bet everybody else will do the same. Yeah, just really excited overall.

Q. You talked about recently the team playing lackadaisical at times, and Race, there were times you said the coach got on you because you came out playing like a madman. What can you guys do to maintain that longer in games where you don't hit those stretches, especially now when it's a one-day tournament every day? What can you do for yourself and the rest of your team as senior leaders?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: I think it's just on the offensive end. We need to play more confident. I feel like when we play confident on offense, everything else is easy flowing. I mean, we're pretty good on the defensive end of the floor but we can't play tentative. We can't pass up shots.

We have to be confident. We have worked on this. We have worked to get to this moment. All throughout the summer we were shooting shots and we got a lot of good shooters on our team, and they have just got to let it go. I think that's the biggest thing for us.

And then I'll let Race answer the second part.

RACE THOMPSON: What was the second part?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Said something about you.

RACE THOMPSON: What was the second part?

Q. There was a time recently where Coach got on you and you came out really determined to play. What can you do, and Trayce, to help each other to maintain that level higher for longer parts of the game? Because now it matters so much; a loss and you're done for the year.

RACE THOMPSON: I think just holding each other accountable. That's something we have gotten better at throughout the year, and I think that if somebody gets on somebody, we know it's not personal.

It's just because we want best for each other, so really just holding each other accountable, and again, just knowing

that this could be your last game in an Indiana uniform, I don't see that happening.

So yeah, that's basically it.

Q. What do you guys remember about the NCAA Tournament last season? Obviously you guys were rushed going to Dayton quickly and then you had the travel issues and going all the way out to Portland. What do you remember from that experience, and what have you taken from it now that you feel that you can bring into this run?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: I think the biggest thing that I take from it is just the preparation. Just how quickly the games are, even though we didn't get -- we didn't win our first actual game in the tournament, we would have played like within two days. But we did it with Dayton on Tuesday, and then going on Thursday and playing, or Friday, whenever that was.

So it's the turnaround for me. I think the turnaround is the biggest thing. We have to be ready and locked in for the game, and then afterwards, we have to be extremely prepared for the next team. So I think that's huge for us; it's the preparation aspect for me.

RACE THOMPSON: Yeah, I would say the same. The preparation, the mental focus that you have to have going into each game. It's not like you have three or four days to prepare. You have almost a day and a half, and then you've got to go play. And then again after the games, it's such a quick turnaround, you have to really take care of your body. I think those are the two main things for me.

Q. You mentioned the word "confidence" in the context of shooters a couple questions ago. Curious to get your take on Tamar. It seems like he's found something here over the last three games. Are you seeing that, and what did you see in the month prior that maybe drug him down and how important is he going to be for you guys to reach your ceiling over the next couple weeks?

TRAYCE JACKSON-DAVIS: Tamar is huge for us, especially against Maryland, he really came on and I think that was his coming-out party honestly. He's had a few games, but just trying to string games together is the biggest thing for him. He doesn't lack any confidence. He hasn't ever seen a shot that he doesn't like.

So he is going to help us a lot. He's going to help us with spacing, and his energy is really contagious. He's always talking, and he's really blossoming and I'm very proud of him.

