

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. Over the course of the fall practice, who would you say are three or four guys who you feel have been the most consistent, the most consistently impressive to you?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it's really hard to say because we've been all over the board a little bit. But I would probably say Gallo started out being the most consistent. Mackenzie has been pretty solid. Everybody else is just trying to grow together and trying to figure it out.

I haven't had any what I'd like to see really major bright spots, but I've had a lot of good spots where guys have played in spurts that lets me know that we've just got a ways to go in terms of putting things together.

Q. How are you going to handle Mackenzie and will he be playing in the exhibitions coming up?

MIKE WOODSON: He will be playing. He's been practicing, and all that's behind us. We've got to move forward.

Q. Last year heading into the exhibitions your team had more known quantities and more returning players. This year with all the new guys, how important are these two chances to get out there and have some competition before the regular season tips off in terms of just evaluating where certain guys are and what you maybe have in terms of lineups and different rotations?

MIKE WOODSON: It's very important. We got together this summer, the process began, and it's been a lot of work up until this point where these guys have pretty much beat up on each other. I'm kind of anxious to see where we are when we tip it up on Sunday to kind of give me some indication of things that we need to do to get better and continue to grow.

I can't wait until Sunday to see where we are.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Kaleb Banks, obviously a

guy we saw in some productive cameos last year, particularly off the bench in Big Ten play, a lot of energy. How have you seen him expand his game as maybe a guy that has the potential to do a lot of different things, play different positions, defend different positions? What have you seen from him from the end of the Miami game last year to this point?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, he's grown a little bit. He and CJ both have grown. Even Malik. But I need more. Right now Kaleb has been kind of hampered with a groin pull, so he's kind of been on the sideline the last week and a half. We're kind of gradually bringing him back slowly because that's something that can be nagging all year, and I don't need that. I need him healthy and ready to go. I don't know if we'll play him on Sunday.

But him and CJ and Malik are huge to this season. I'm going to need them to play at a much higher level than they've played in the past.

Q. Big Ten media days you said you had been banged up a little bit and were struggling to get a full look at everything. Have the last few weeks been more productive in terms of having everybody available? You mentioned Kaleb having the groin pull, but overall have you had better luck at getting everybody on the floor?

MIKE WOODSON: Yeah, this week we've had a couple scrimmages amongst ourselves, and the last scrimmage was really promising, probably the best we've played against one another. Both the red and the white really competed.

But again, only time is going to tell. Sunday will give us a better indication of where we are, and from that point we've just got to continue to grow.

Q. I wanted to ask about Gabe Cupps specifically leading that second unit. With Jakai out and him being your only freshman guard in the backcourt, how do you anticipate him being able to lead the offense and kind of with this exhibition, what does this opportunity provide for him?



MIKE WOODSON: He's been solid. I didn't mention him earlier, but he's been really one of the bright spots, too. He seems to do everything that we've asked him to do. I can't help but think in time he's going to continue to get better and grow once he figures out the college game.

But he's done a lot of good things on the floor for us in terms of winning, winning basketball plays. That's what I like to call it because he does a lot of good things to help you win games.

Q. I know you don't care about preseason rankings or anything like that, but you're not an AP top-25 team, barely in the top 50 in Ken Pom. From a national narrative - you get to see these guys every day - do you think you're better than a top-50 team and that we'll see that improve over the course of the next several months?

MIKE WOODSON: Only time will tell. Again, what you just said, I don't care about rankings. You've got to play the games. We'll start here soon and kind of get a feel for where we are and what we need to continue to grow in. You're talking about 10 new faces, six guys that came from different programs and that are trying to figure out me as a coach and all the things that I'm asking them to do.

Only time will tell. We've just got to play the games and see where you are.

Q. Along those lines, just with so much overturn of the roster, do you feel like kind of what you see in these couple of exhibition games becomes more important than it has been in recent years?

MIKE WOODSON: No, every game is important. When I first walked in the door two years ago, these guys didn't know me, and you're putting a system in place. Every game is important.

I came back with the same -- pretty much the same group last year, and you go out and you play, and you try to see if your guys have gotten better individually as well as a team. Every game is important. I don't care if these two scrimmages -- those are important games for our ballclub to grow and get better and see where you are as a team.

Q. I'm wondering how X has held up through preseason. Obviously he spent a lot of time rehabbing that injury and getting back to 100 percent over the summer. Have you seen him grow his game from the player he was last year?

MIKE WOODSON: You know, X, everything is in place for

X. I just need X to just lead more. That's all he needs to think about doing. His game will take care of itself based on the fact that he's got experience at the college level now and he knows what I'm about. He's got the speed as a point guard. He can defend. He can score the ball. There's nothing X can't do.

I just need him to lead more and make sure guys are getting better around him and he's holding people accountable. That's what captains are supposed to do.

Q. It's the proverbial first game. You get to see a lot of players against real opposition. Is it any more important for any of these first-year guys, whether they're transfers or freshmen, on Sunday than it is for anybody else to see what they can do against somebody else?

MIKE WOODSON: No, I think as a team it's for everybody. CJ and Kaleb and Malik didn't play a whole lot of minutes last year, so it's just as important for those guys as well as the new guys that have come in. We've done a lot since this summer getting together, so now just from a coaching standpoint, my staff and I, we want to see if they've retained a lot of the things that we've taught them, and does it carry over into a real game.

Only time will tell. Then we can see where we are as a ballclub.

Q. Early on, age was something that was used against you in regards to recruiting and being able to relate to today's player. Do you think that maybe because of your NBA experience and today's player seems more mentally inclined to think like a professional has been a big help in getting and reaching these guys as successfully as you have? There's also a family aspect to recruiting; how does it feel to be about to be a grandfather probably within days?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, only you guys was worrying about the age. That was never a factor when I came in the door. I've been coaching a long time, and I'm healthy enough to coach. Mentally I'm sharp enough to coach.

I didn't have a problem coming back to Indiana. That was you guys saying that I was too old and couldn't recruit. You have to recruit some in the pros, gentlemen, when you're going after free agency, and some of the same things I'm doing now, I had to do at the pro level. You just do it on a bigger scale in terms of -- as far as the money, the money makes it bigger. So you've got to make sure that you're doing your due diligence when you're recruiting a free agent or getting ready to make a trade, that you know what the hell you're doing because you can get -- it

can bite you in the butt.

It's no different than coming to college and having to deal with them. You're dealing with parents in the pros. You're dealing with their handlers in the pros and their agents. It's the same shit that I'm going through now that I did in the NBA, but you guys wouldn't know that because you weren't there.

I feel good about my position coming in. My thing was just being able to sit at the table with the best players that are out there. That's how I was -- that's the only thing I was thinking about when I came here; how can I get to the best players.

My coaching staff, they gave me their opinions about it early on saying, hey, you've got to wait your turn. Well, I didn't feel as though I had to wait my turn. Just get us to the table and let's see what happens.

We've had some pretty good success being able to recruit and talk to some of the top players. We haven't gotten them all, and you're not. You're going to win some, you're going to lose some. But hell, if you never get an opportunity to talk to the best players, it's not going to work as far as I'm concerned.

As far as being a granddaddy, I'm happy as hell. That's two weeks away, and I'm looking forward to that.

Q. A couple weeks ago in Minneapolis you mentioned that Kel'el Ware and Anthony Walker had been dealing with some minor injuries. How are they doing, and do you expect to have them Sunday for the exhibition?

MIKE WOODSON: No, everybody is healthy except right now Kaleb Banks and Jakai. Those two guys won't play on Sunday. I mean, Banks could play if I wanted to play him, but I'm just -- this groin thing, I've dealt with players that had groin pulls, and those and calf pulls, things like that is nagging, and if you don't watch it closely and rehab right, it could be a problem all season.

I'm going to need Kaleb Banks, so we might not play him on Sunday for sure.

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