

# Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Sunday, October 29, 2023

Bloomington, Indiana, USA

## Coach Mike Woodson

### Postgame Media Conference



Indiana - 74, UIndy - 52

**Q. Mike, in the second half, your movement on and off the ball and in transition and in half court was a lot more decisive. What do you think unlocked that decisiveness in the second half?**

COACH WOODSON: Well, we had a nice halftime talk. But I thought, to start the game, I thought we were a little tight. Guys not really familiar the first time playing in front of a crowd.

And I'm not using that as an excuse. We missed so many layups, our bigs, around the rim, and we couldn't make free throws. And you've got to give them credit. That team plays hard.

They won 26 games last year. Pretty much got everybody back. And they came in here and they played their butts off the first half. And I thought we adjusted and finally started playing Indiana basketball. And it started with our defense.

I thought our second unit was fantastic. I thought Gabe came in and got that group around him, and they started to really defend and got the lead that we needed to have.

**Q. Your length defensively, I imagine it's something that helps in the half court, but I think it was 26 or 28 fast break points. Is that something when you can get getting arms in passing lanes and quickly get the ball moving, it can get you guys running faster in transition?**

COACH WOODSON: That's a big emphasis in getting the ball out. And the way we try to play is X is not always the guy that's got to lead the break.

That's why we work on ball handling every day. Our bigs can push it. But whoever is pushing it, we have to get ahead of the ball and then make the passes up the floor and create offense that way.

And I just don't want to live in a half-court game this season. And I think we've got enough talent out there that guys can make plays. We only had 10 turnovers tonight. So I was pleased in that category as well.

**Q. I know it's initial, but what did you see from Payton Sparks' injury and how is he now?**

COACH WOODSON: He's going to be fine. He's a tough dude. He'll be back on the floor, I'm sure, for the Marian game.

**Q. You mentioned in the second half kind of the defense and the second unit kind of creating that (indiscernible), and you mentioned Gabe, too. How do you think that unit really propelled --**

COACH WOODSON: Again, if you followed me closely in the NBA, I've always stressed that the second unit is just as important as the first unit. And I've tried to build teams that way, where if you're not getting it from the first unit, you can go get it from the second unit.

And I think we're deep enough, we can stay away from injuries, that we can sustain that over the course of a season. I know this is just one game, and we hadn't even talked about Kansas and Auburn and all the big-time schools that we've got to play -- Connecticut, UConn, rather.

I'm just trying to build a team of guys that, when called upon, they're ready to play. And I thought the second unit, they really responded tonight in that regard.

**Q. Your guys had a little bit more trouble finishing inside in the first half. Got it going more in the second half. Do you feel you were getting the looks you wanted and the shots just weren't following or --**

COACH WOODSON: You're that close to the rim, you've got a 7-footer and 6'9" kid and a 6'8" kid in Mackenzie, the ball just wasn't going in.

I told our guys we were too soft. We've got to be tougher. You've got to will the ball in. Put it in the bucket. Don't



hope that it goes in; you've got to put it in there. I thought the second half we were better in that regard.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

**Q. I know you've stressed the fact that the 3-point shot isn't everything. You guys took 10 today. I just want to know, is there a certain amount maybe you want to hit on a (indiscernible) or do you want to shoot more going forward?**

COACH WOODSON: Again, I don't put a lot of emphasis on it. If we've got them, you've got to take them. I'm not telling guys to pass up the 3-point shot. And we had a few good looks, but their defense was pretty good the first half that really stymied us from just offensive movement.

Again, a lot of that is on me. I've got to get us comfortable in terms of running offense. And I thought the second half we was much better. Our defense kind of generated some easy buckets for us.

**Q. Coming into today, what were you trying to accomplish and what were your expectations?**

COACH WOODSON: Just trying to see if the two units could play. We had been kind of playing pretty good in practice with two different units, and granted we don't have Banks, Kaleb Banks, with us, and he's a big piece to the puzzle. We want him in the mix as well.

But I thought Anthony Leal played a great game today, and he's been pretty good in practice as well. I want to be able to play nine to 10 guys. I mean, I think if I can do that, we can have something in the tank as we finish the season.

**Q. Anthony Walker looked like he was making a few good decisions out there got plays with the basketball. What did you see out of him from the transfer portal and what have you seen so far now that he's been with you in the program?**

COACH WOODSON: We brought him on board because we thought he does a little bit of everything. I had to get on him in the one timeout because they were in the zone and we threw it a couple times to him and he looked like he was hesitant.

And then he came right back after me getting on him and he responded with two buckets inside the zone. He's been scoring and doing a lot of different things for us in practice, and I don't want that to go the other way.

I mean, I brought him here to play. And what he did at Miami is behind him. He's just got to worry about what he's going to do here for us.