

# Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Thursday, December 7, 2023

Bloomington, Indiana, USA

## Mike Woodson

### Press Conference



**Q. Coach, thanks for the time. I'm curious, when you're preparing for a team like Auburn that you know is going to bring relentless pressure defensively and crash the offensive glass so hard, how do you prepare your team in the days leading up to that in practice? Do you do anything different? How do you emphasize the need in those two areas to be strong with the ball and also on the defensive glass?**

MIKE WOODSON: We just work, my man. That's all we do. We do what we do, and that's just work. They're no different than some teams that we play that apply pressure. We've just got to handle the basketball, not turn it over, and get shots.

What they do to you, you've got to reverse it and do the same thing to them. That's kind of how I look at it.

**Q. I guess just forgive the question that I imagine somebody was going to ask, but just how is X doing? Has he been able to get on the floor at all in terms of anything in practice or anything like that? Do you think he might be circling toward a return here in the next couple of weeks?**

MIKE WOODSON: I don't know yet. Right now he's rehabbing, and hopefully he'll be back here in the near future. That's all I can give you right now.

**Q. Obviously Auburn comes in as one of the most efficient offensive teams in the country, plays with a lot of versatility on the perimeter as well. What are the one or two areas of concern or priorities that you guys have when going into this matchup on the defensive end?**

MIKE WOODSON: I'm concerned about every team we play, not just Auburn. They're a good basketball team. They do a lot of good things. But any team in college basketball is beatable.

We've just got to stick to our game plan, put a good game plan together, and see where we go.

**Q. You talked about Gabe the other night, but in terms of having him in the starting lineup, what kind of growth have you seen just so quickly, and how impressed are you that he's been able to handle the moment?**

MIKE WOODSON: He's just been steady. He's been steady ever since we brought him on campus. Yes, he has a long way to go still, still trying to figure out the college game, but the fact that he competes, he loves to compete, he puts the work in. So he doesn't look lost, just put it that way.

I'm pleased where he is, but knowing that there's a lot of room for improvement.

**Q. I know you spend a lot of time in Atlanta throughout your career. What does that city mean to you, and why was it important to schedule a game there this year?**

MIKE WOODSON: It means a lot. That's where my head coaching career began, and I still have a home there, a lot of friends, people that supported me when I first started my journey as a head coach in Atlanta.

It was important that I take a game back there because I think for a lot of the people that supported me that were in my corner, they are still there, and that means a lot to me.

I figure bringing a game back would be something special for the people that have supported me all these years.

**Q. Kind of in that same vein, I wanted to ask about Kaleb Banks. He's another guy that's from Georgia and one of those sophomores you tagged that you would need more out of this year. Kind of going into this game, what have you seen from him this year as he's kind of evolved into that bench role in that second unit?**

MIKE WOODSON: Again, he's played well. He's had his ups and downs, as a number of guys on our team, but we've been able to hold things together based on how we

compete as a team. I thought the other night he was brilliant coming off the bench. He did a lot of good things for us.

Louisville is probably his best game where he logged a lot of minutes and played tremendous for us to help us win that game. I thought the bench the other night, they were wonderful in terms of how they competed. They scored the basketball, and they got after the perimeter guys.

Payton being big, he banged around a little in there. Walker doing what he needed to do. As we continue this journey, they're going to have to continue to do that and grow together to help us win basketball games.

**Q. Before the season, you had mentioned that some people in the past said that Kel'el Ware doesn't work hard, that he's lazy. That hasn't seemed to be the case this season. Just how have you been able to get the most out of him so far this year?**

MIKE WOODSON: You heard the same stories that I heard. That was the knock on him. But again, that's behind him. I don't even know why we're even rehashing it, revisiting it because it's behind him.

That's what was said about him when he played back there at Oregon, but we didn't recruit him for those reasons. We recruited him because we thought he could help us win basketball games and that we could, as a staff, put him in the best position possible to be successful to help us.

He's a young kid too that's trying to figure it out. He's come in here, and we pushed him, and he's played some pretty damn good basketball for us. But we've got a long way to go. He's got to continue to grow as a player and get better, and doing that, I think he can help us continue to win basketball games.

**Q. This is the second marquee type event you've played with this team early on in a marquee venue after going to Madison Square Garden, now going on the road to Atlanta, a fertile recruiting area as well. What is taking your team on the road this early against this level of competition do for them for the rest of the season?**

MIKE WOODSON: Competition is good, gentlemen. It's always been that way in basketball. I've never been a coach to shy away from competition. It kind of puts our team and lets you know where you are and where you stand as a basketball team, win or lose.

We've got a tough schedule. We knew that coming in this season, based on the players that we brought in. Auburn

is next up. We've got today and tomorrow to continue to prepare for them, and we'll see where it leads us on Saturday.

**Q. Just going back to the topic of you, of going back to Atlanta, do you just have a favorite memory of a game that you coached in back there?**

MIKE WOODSON: No, not really. Because when I started that journey, I started out with 18, 19, 20-year-old young men that didn't have a clue in what the NBA was about, and I didn't have a clue as a coach because it was a struggle because we were so young.

But the beauty about that young team, from my peers, everybody kept saying, boy, you guys play hard. Boy, you're competitive. But we just weren't experienced enough to win games. We grew together as a group, and we eventually broke the ice and got in the playoffs, and that's when it all took off.

We took Boston that year in the first round to seven games, and they ended up winning the NBA title, which that was the biggest thing for those young kids to experience because they hadn't been in the playoffs. Once they got there, the media and everybody had us being swept and wouldn't win a game. Hell, we forced a Game 7, which could have went either way. They ended up winning and then going on to win an NBA title.

Those were fond memories, to be able to take a team of young men and build it and have some success behind it.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about C.J. I know he did a lot of good things for you on Saturday. I know for shooters how important it can be to see one go down. How important was it for him -- that was his first three-pointer he made in nearly a full calendar year. How important was it for him to see it go down, and how much can that get him going in the next several games?**

MIKE WOODSON: It's very important. He had his struggles. He's made a lot in practice and just didn't carry over in the game for him. The fact that he made a couple, that was fantastic for us.

But I looked at the other parts of his game, where he defended, he looked more under control. He did a lot of things that we expect him to do, and I just hope it is a carryover as we continue to move on in the schedule.

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