

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Hopefully our work this week will pay off and we'll see where we are.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Obviously we saw kind of the statement you released yesterday. I wanted to ask you for your first or your fondest memories of George McInnis. You grew up in Indianapolis. He was a successful high school player, also at Indiana. Whether it was watching him in high school, in college, whatever it might have been...

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I've known him almost 50 years. He impacted my life from a young man growing up in Indianapolis as a basketball player, gave me an opportunity to play at an early age against him when he was a Pacer in the ABA days. It was just special for me.

I mean, we stayed in contact all these years. I played against him once I was fortunate enough to play in the NBA. His friendship has held true all these years.

It's a tremendous loss. I mean, anytime you lose somebody like that, I mean, he was bigger than life, man. Just a beautiful person. Forget all the accolades. Hell, he was a better person than all the accolades that he received over the years. I mean, he was just special. So he's going to be missed.

Q. I know you were disappointed with the result last Saturday. Now that you've had some time this week to work with your team, what has been the response from them from the loss on Saturday? What have you tried to focus on leading into another tough game on Saturday against Kansas?

MIKE WOODSON: When you experience a game like that, only thing you can do is go back and go to work. You practice to try to get better. Only time will tell.

I don't know where we are until we tip it up tomorrow at 12:30. We'll see where we are. I mean, we come back to practice and we work, we work. That's the only way you going to get better.

Q. Any update on Xavier Johnson's status for Saturday's game? He had a tough last year with the injury. How has he navigated this stretch missing these games?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it's been tough for him. I mean, you go back-to-back years where you're not playing basketball. We went into this season expecting him to be on the floor. He's not there, so...

I know it's tough on him. It's tough on us. But we got to keep marching along based on who we got in uniform until he gets back. When that is, I don't know yet. I just don't.

Q. I was talking to a couple of NBA scouts recently. They liked what you've done with Ware, how you've gotten him going. What are some key things that you feel you've done to get him playing the way he is? What do you think about the way he actually is playing?

MIKE WOODSON: Playing fantastic. The difference is he's playing hard. He's learning how to play harder. That cures a lot of problems. He's a talented, young, big man. A lot of room for growth. He's just got to keep working, to play harder, and to get better.

Q. You mentioned on your radio show this week you wanted to see defensive improvement, especially coming off of the game against Auburn. What goes into the work of that when you have a week to work on it? What have you tried to instill in the players this week to improve defensively against a good offensive team in Kansas?

MIKE WOODSON: Play harder, fight. That's the name of the game. I thought we came out, established ourselves in the last game. But to give up 104 points is unacceptable. That's something that hadn't happened since I've been here. The Syracuse game, a couple of overtime games, the point production kind of out of our character. We normally fight and try to hold teams in the 60s. To give up

a hundred points, you're not going to beat anybody in college basketball doing that.

We had to come back and go to work, emphasize defense along with the offense. Now we got to see where it leads us.

Q. In dealing with the response from a result like that game, in talking with Gabe Cupps afterwards, he mentioned there was a good balance between not letting that taste go out of his mouth and remembering that result, but using it as motivation. Have you seen more intent and emphasis on those things you wanted to get across in practices? Have you seen a response to that?

MIKE WOODSON: We've had a decent week of work. Always room for improvement, gentlemen. Only time will tell.

Q. What stands out to you about Hunter Dickinson's game? Anything different you've seen? What do you remember about preparing for him the last few years?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, he's a big man that's very solid, can score down low, can shoot the three, causes a threat for a lot of the big guys that go against him.

We played him at Michigan I think four times. He had the one big explosion here the first time we played him. But I thought we played him pretty well from that point on.

But he's having another great season. He's one of their top leading scorers. I think he's their leading rebounder. I mean, he's a handful. Somebody we're going to have to deal with tomorrow.

Q. You've had some success in these high-profile home games, Purdue, North Carolina. Do you do anything different with your team to keep them loose, not let the buildup get to them?

MIKE WOODSON: We just work. That's all we do. You practice to get better. You emphasize you can't lose at home. That's what's important. If you talking about winning the Big Ten title, you have to win your games at home, figure it out on the road. When teams come in here, this is our home court. We got to try to hold court tomorrow against a great coached team, talented team.

Q. On Hunter Dickinson, how much can you use as far as the way you prepped for him at Michigan compared to Kansas? Do you prepare for him the same way or does it have to switch?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, he's not changed as a player. You got to prepare for him the same way. He can make threes and he's great on the low block. I mean, nothing's changed. He's taken his act to Kansas and he's having a stellar season so far.

Q. You mentioned the threes that Hunter is able to knock down. As a team, Kansas is averaging I think eight made three-pointers a game. Scouting or preparing for them, are you doing anything different to try to prevent the three shot from being a difference in this game? Are you doing anything to try to either encourage or work more three-point shots into your own offense?

MIKE WOODSON: Guys, I'm going to say this to you for the last time. We take enough threes. We just got to make what we take. We work defensively to defend the three. We've had some struggles in that area. Hopefully tomorrow we will fix that - hopefully. It's all you can do.

I don't predict games or anything like that. You got to go into the game and you got to put up a 40-minute ballgame to beat a great team.

Q. You talked about Xavier's status before. Obviously you talked earlier in the week about Jakai and his status. With the guard depth a little thinner, how do you feel the rest of the guys, especially Gabe, have adapted to needing to be in more of an elevated role?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, you're dealing with young... Gabe is still a freshman trying to figure it out. He gives us all he can give us. I'm very pleased with the way he's played for us. But we got to get other guys stepping up and playing. It's just that simple. When you do that, you put yourself in position to win basketball games.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, coach.

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