

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Coach Mike Woodson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana - 100, Kennesaw State - 87

Q. You guys were down by four in the second half. You put in Anthony Leal, and that lineup seemed to spark the lineup. What did you see from Anthony specifically and the group as a whole?

COACH WOODSON: He's had a really great week of practice. After the break, he came back, and I thought his two days of practice, he deserved to play more. And I just decided to play him.

And he gave us a hell of a spark when he came in. I mean, just from a defensive standpoint. He did a lot of things that we didn't do early in that spot.

So, again, this is a team game, and when guys are called upon, I expect them to come in and play. And I thought he delivered tonight.

Q. Without Kel'el tonight, two stars, obviously Xavier down. What did you make of the way the game unfolded? Gave up 17 3s. What's your takeaway -- you came back again, kind of a second half surge there, but what do you take away when you look at the game as a whole?

COACH WOODSON: We won. That's what matters. They made a lot of shots, some tough shots. It's part of the game. But we didn't fold. When we went down four, our defense kicked in, got stops. We executed on the other end, and got the lead and was able to bring it home.

So those are the things that I look at. Things that are fixable are free throws. We missed a lot of free throws. We turned the ball over 18 times. Those things are all fixable. And we just gotta keep working.

Q. Malik's performance tonight, 34 points, plays 37 minutes, gets 11 rebounds. What impresses you the most about his play tonight?

COACH WOODSON: He's getting better. Everybody talk

about development and who is being developed and this and that. And Malik, based on where he started with us last season and where he is today, he's a lot better.

And I think there's a lot of room still to grow as a player. He's just got to keep pushing and we've got to keep pushing him to get better.

Q. When did you know that Kel'el wasn't going to play? Did you get any practice time ahead of time to prepare for that?

COACH WOODSON: Not at all. He practiced the two days coming back from the break, and then he just wasn't feeling well. So we sat him out. Payton was the next guy up, and he was tremendous tonight. I mean, his numbers, look at 10 and 8, four blocks, two assists in 14 minutes. He was pretty special, I think.

Q. I know some of this is personnel especially with some of these teams that are going to play smaller just by their roster construction, but a couple times now you've had some success with lineups that were a little bit smaller and, in particular, closing games. Is that something you think, maybe not every match-up, but something that you can kind of keep in your back pocket going forward that you may have if you need it, I guess?

COACH WOODSON: Again, I mean, sometimes you have to match -- when I pulled Payton, I was basically -- not that he played -- I thought he played well to start the half, the second half. And I pulled him based on their match-ups because they went so small.

And in doing that, I know we could switch 1 through 5 with Malik at the 5. So that was the reason I did what I did. And I thought it helped us a little bit. And then coming down the stretch it really helped us because we were able to switch and not give up -- I mean, they were making 3s anyway. But switching allows you to at least keep a body in front of you and hope like hell that they don't make shots over the top.

Q. Going back to Anthony Leal, he's had a pretty



variable role, especially with you as the head coach. And this year he's seeing more minutes now in kind of irregular spurts. What have you seen from him in those times even when he's not playing that gives you confidence to put him on the floor?

COACH WOODSON: He's a senior. He's ready. I've seen it in practice. He hasn't done anything in terms of me not wanting him to play. He's been really good in practice. And he deserves to probably play a little bit more because he is playing well.

And I thought tonight he came in and gave us the boost that we needed. So we'll continue to keep our eyes on Anthony and see where we go with him.

Q. You touched on Payton earlier, but just a guy who grew up dreaming of playing for Indiana, getting an opportunity to start here in Assembly Hall. What does that mean for him and what all did he provide for you on the court tonight?

COACH WOODSON: I'm sure it's special for him. This is his first big-time start. And as a coach, I'm anxious to see if he's ready to play because he hadn't played big minutes. And he only played 14 minutes tonight, but I thought they were a positive 14 minutes to help us win a basketball game.

That tells me a lot about him in terms of being ready to play because you just never know. We didn't know that Ware wasn't going to play until this morning. And he was ready and he stepped in and gave us a major lift. That's what team play is all about, and everybody's just gotta stay ready to play.

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