

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. Any thoughts after rewatching the tape from Nebraska about just the game and what went wrong?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, you watched the same game I did. The turnovers was the biggest problem. They had 27 points off of turnovers, and it's going to be hard to beat anybody doing that. We haven't done that a lot since I've been here, but that was quite a few, and we was kind of out of sync, I think, X coming back, trying to fit him back in there. He was kind of out of rhythm in terms of throwing the ball all over the gym. He had about four himself.

So these are things that has got to be connected. We can't play anybody in the Big Ten and give up 27 points on turnovers. That's tough to overcome.

Q. Just curious, on the three-point defense, I know some of it obviously is guys making tough shots, but is there anything you can do differently to make teams more uncomfortable maybe from getting shots on the perimeter and defensively, or is that just kind of something you live with, giving up some threes?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, we ain't trying to give up anything. I mean, the threes that they made, I thought half of them were some tough ones. The low guard, he made about three of them that were really deep, deep threes. I recall the one where Malik switched out and then Malik left him, and he just pulled up and made it.

I mean, we're playing teams that are making threes. We've just got to do a better job.

When we're up and touching and making players feel us a little bit, we're pretty good in guarding the three-point line. But when we're late on switches and not really communicating, because that's been a big problem with this team this season, we're getting burned on threes.

We've just got to keep working through it and being a lot tougher than our opponent in terms of trying to take threes away because it has been a problem for us this season.

Q. Just to follow up further, in rewatching the last four games, 48 threes given up in the last four games. It seems like the weak side guys kind of drift into the lane when the ball gets reversed are having a hard time getting back to the corner or back to the wings. Is that just an execution thing, or is it more philosophical where they're maybe drifting too far away from their shooters or do they need to stay more engaged with the shooters on the weak side?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, there's a number of guys that are doing it, and it's mainly our younger guys in terms of being in to get out. The last two years here we had some veteran guys that were pretty good at doing that.

We've just got to keep working with them. We know it works, and it's been a struggle this year because guys are not catching on quickly as I thought they would. But hey, the only way you get through it is you've got to keep working and hopefully something clicks, and then we're back to defending the three.

We defend the two pretty well, but the three has kind of been out of whack. It's not been the same as it's been the last two years. So we've just got to keep working on it.

Q. Getting X back the other night, just how difficult was the last month plus of rehab for him? Obviously he went through that whole injury last year, and I'm sure there was kind of some extra frustration. Could that have helped him knowing what rehab is going to look like and this is what I need to do? What's the last month been like for him getting back to the court?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it's been tough. Xavier hadn't really played much basketball, when you go back to last season and missing the seven games I think he missed this season so far. Mentally it's been tough on him.

We sit and watch him play, a few days he got a chance to practice, and the speed is still there, but the conditioning and just the game, game play that you would play every day when you're in practice, it's just not there.

I went into the game the other night knowing that he wasn't

going to play a lot of minutes because we couldn't play him a lot of minutes. He hadn't played much in practice. He wasn't real happy about that. He only played, I think, 14 minutes, but it was an awful 14 minutes. I kind of shared that with him yesterday because, hey, he was trying to do too much in the short period of time that he played. He's just got to let it come to him and relax and play.

Q. I'm curious, I know a lot of different coaches have different philosophies about this kind of stuff, but when you have a game and kind of a quick turnaround like this, how much of your time during practice is spent on self-scout and correcting mistakes from the previous game versus trying to prepare for another opponent?

MIKE WOODSON: That game won't ever go unnoticed. Every game we play, win or lose, you learn from it. We spent a lot of time watching the Nebraska game because that's how it should be. You just can't overlook it. It was a good ass-whooping.

You try to correct the things that you can correct, and then you go out on the floor and you go to work and get ready for the next opponent and try to clean up the things that happened in the game that you didn't play too particularly well.

Q. Malik Reneau, no matter what measure you use to measure it, has been vastly improved as a passer this year. He's probably always had that in him. What did you do to develop that part of his game to be effective at this level? Also, how does he calibrate pass-first, score-first? I know the defense dictates a lot of that, but how does that work for Malik?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, I think you watched him last season being a freshman, you could see signs of it. He just couldn't stay on the floor because defensively he wasn't moving his feet or he grabbed someone on a cut or would pick up senseless fouls and wouldn't allow him to play.

I thought this summer he spent a lot of time in Bloomington working on his body and his game, because all the fundamental tools are there for Malik. I mean, we knew that when we was lucky to get him on the back end of his recruiting trail.

He's grown, man. You're starting to see some of that now, and a lot of it is because he's mentally a little more mature than he was a year ago, and he's trying to -- he's figured out how to stay on the floor somewhat this year versus sitting next to us over there on the bench, and in doing that, he's doing a lot of good things for us on the basketball

floor, which is kind of nice to see.

Q. With the turnovers from the Nebraska game and even some of the previous games, what's kind of been your message to the team and maybe the focus in practice to try to eliminate some of those?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, we've never really been a big turnover team since I've been here. When you have games like that, your antennas have got to go up because you're not going to beat anybody in the Big Ten turning it over like that. Guys don't go out to just turn it over. I just thought the game early on was back and forth, but we had no defensive presence because they were scoring pretty easily, I thought, and we were, too.

Then our aggressiveness to try to score put us in a lot of bad positions. I mean, it ain't like we hadn't played teams that put two on the ball. Normally we've been pretty good in that area in terms of getting the ball out of there and that next guy making the play. But hell, we were throwing the ball all over the gym and didn't give ourselves a chance.

Q. On the topic of rotations, it seemed like Leal was kind of ahead of CJ, at least in Lincoln. Is that something that was more the way that Nebraska plays, or is that something that you feel like may continue moving forward?

MIKE WOODSON: Hell no, that can change. Anything can change with our ballclub. I just thought the last week and a half, Anthony had really been playing well, and it showed on the floor, in our last few ballgames.

I base a lot of things on practice. If I feel like you're not giving it to me -- everybody has had an opportunity to play, but I just think now coming down the stretch, I might shorten the rotation. It's all about feel and based on who's doing what.

But it starts in practice. If I feel like you're not practicing and working hard to deserve playing time, then you won't play.

Q. When you first took this job, you talked a lot about kind of on-the-ball defense being kind of the foundation and really being important to your program. How do you assess what you're getting on the ball this year, and how is that impacting maybe the three-point shooting that you're seeing against you?

MIKE WOODSON: We've struggled in that area. Gabe has really been the only one whose on-ball defense has been really good for us, I think. Not having X out there, because we considered him the last two years kind of the

head of the snake in terms of initiating our defense up front, but I'm not getting it in the wing area right now, and that's pivotal in college basketball, that the twos and the threes are guys that make basketball plays, and we haven't been really good in that area. That's something that we really try to work on.

But we've got to get better. I mean, it was obvious in the game the other night, their guard play was much better than our guard play, and that can't be. We haven't had very many games like that, but the big games, we've got outplayed out front in the guard spot, and that's something that's got to change. We've got to keep working to try to not let that happen.

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