

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. I'm curious, Purdue's obviously a really good rebounding team, particularly on the offensive end. That's something you guys have struggled with. When you go back and watch film and just kind of look at where you can be better on the defensive boards, what maybe stands out to you in that regard?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, you've got to block out. That's just basic basketball. When the shot goes up, we've got to put bodies on people.

I don't think our guards have done a great job this year in getting back in. We challenge three-point shots, we're trying to head up the floor, and a lot of times when those long shots are taken, they're long rebounds, and we're just not picking some of those up.

I think Malik has got to get better and Mack has got to get better in terms of helping us rebound. I think Ware's done a hell of a job rebounding the basketball, and he can't do it by himself. We've got to do it as a team and as a unit. We're going to have to do it tomorrow night because they've got a big team and they're scrappy and they rebound the ball.

Q. Payton Sparks has fallen out of the rotation a little bit. Tomorrow against Purdue, is this a time for him with Zach, are you looking for him to get some minutes defensively, a guy with that size?

MIKE WOODSON: I'm not going to -- when I substitute, put people in the game, I get questioned about how I sub. I'm not even going to discuss the rotations in terms of how -- if there's foul trouble, sure, you have to play him. He's a big body that bangs.

Until we get into the game and see how it's flowing, I'm hoping I can keep Malik and big fella Ware out of foul trouble. He's a load. If they are, then it's next man up, Payton's got to play some, if that happens.

Q. I guess I'm curious, given they still have Edey, they still have the backcourt, what looks different to you

about Purdue last year to this year? I think in particular they're just a much more dangerous three-point shooting team. Some guys have maybe taken a step forward. Some guys have maybe joined that rotation. What is different about the challenge of this Purdue team compared to a year ago?

MIKE WOODSON: I think they shot low 30s from the three. They're shooting 39 this year. That's the biggest challenge. You're going to have to guard the three-point line and still deal with Edey.

He's getting more touches, probably more than he got last season. He's a load. I mean, I don't even know how to explain it. He's a big guy that's very skilled and tough to deal with.

So we've got to go in there and battle, guys, for 40 minutes and see what happens.

Q. Since you got here, you're the only coach in America to beat Purdue three times. I know you played against them a bunch and all this stuff. I know you deal with practice every day as being the most important and next game up and all that stuff, but does the Indiana-Purdue rivalry still mean just a little bit more to you?

MIKE WOODSON: It does. They want to beat us as badly as we want to beat them. It's been that way. I think it's great for college basketball. They have their fan base, and we have our fan base. When you go there, it's the same way. When they come here, our fans are unbelievable.

It doesn't matter who we put in, our fans have been great all these years, and that's not going to change.

Q. I kind of wanted to follow up on that sentiment. Now as a coach, this being your third year in this rivalry, you played in it obviously a time, what's different about preparing for a matchup like this knowing the history behind it as a coach versus as a player?

MIKE WOODSON: We take each game one game at a



time, and we prepare pretty much the same way in terms of who we're playing. That won't change.

We know we've got a hell of an opponent coming in here tomorrow, and we've got to do all the necessary things to win. We've got to rebound the ball, not turn it over, and you've got to share it and get shots, and it helps if you can put the ball in the hole.

All those things tie in together in terms of you winning basketball games.

Q. When it came to Trey Galloway the other night, what did you like about his game? What did you think when it came to the responsibility of running the team and how he handles that?

MIKE WOODSON: Nobody really has -- the way we play, everybody handles the basketball. With Gabe and him and X, they probably handle that with our perimeter play more than anybody because we pretty much put them in pick-and-roll. So they shine a little bit more when they're doing all the necessary things, when you're running pick-and-rolls or when you're feeding the post or getting in the passing lane and getting steals and things of that nature.

No, I was happy and pleased with how he played. He had a great floor game and got the ball where it needed to go, and he made some shots.

Q. You mentioned Kel'el's rebounding. I know he's been good all year in that, but the last two games he's had 31 rebounds. Is there anything he's changed or you've talked to him about to kind of get that next level if him kind of rebounding out of position and things like that?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, it's the second effort. When we first got him, that didn't even exist in terms of him making second and third efforts to try to go get the basketball. A lot of it was he just hadn't been taught and pushed to do it.

I mean, it's like night and day from the time we got him to where he is today in terms of going hard and understanding that you just can't take possessions off.

From where he was, man, he's come a long way, and it's kind of nice to see because a lot of people just didn't expect that because he hadn't played.

I just think there's a lot of room for growth. He's a young, talented 7-footer that does a lot of good things for you.

Q. You've got a lot of players now that this might be

their first time playing in this game, kind of a newer roster. What is the message to those players just how important this game is and how to stay calm in a game like this?

MIKE WOODSON: Every game is important, that's how I approach it. It's not just this game. We take it one game at a time, we prepare. Yes, we are a young team, hadn't been together, and a lot of these guys hadn't been in big games like this. It's my job to get them ready and calm them down if they come out not ready, and see where it leads us, man.

You can't ask for bigger games than this. Like I said, this is what fans like to see. It's good for college basketball. We'll just see what happens tomorrow night.

Q. Some of Trey's shooting percentages are down this year, particularly from the three-point line and free-throw line. Have you been able to maybe figure out why that's been the case from last year to this year, and how have you tried to maybe help him through that?

MIKE WOODSON: I wish I could really answer that and tell you why he's not shooting it like he did last year. It's hard to explain. I think as a coach all you can do is to keep encouraging and pat him on the butt and say, hey, the next one is going to go in. That's all you can do and continue to work and practice.

Q. Just one other question, just kind of about Purdue last year to this year. It seems like they figured out how to make some of those two-big lineups with Edey work just a little bit more. It seems like last year sometimes they struggled to play another big next to him, but obviously Trey Kaufman-Renn starts with them a lot and Furst is still in their rotation. Are there things you see from the other bigs that sort of make, again, when Purdue wants to go with two true forward centers in the lineup, work a little bit better than last year?

MIKE WOODSON: I just think the shooters have allowed them to do a lot of that in terms of playing two bigs. Both bigs are very demanding on the block. Kaufman is tough on his block when he catches the ball. He's very aggressive in terms of scoring the basketball, and he's a hell of an offensive rebounder.

So it hasn't hurt them at all because they've got some guys on the perimeter that make some shots for them. That's the key to any team. You make shots in life, you look good. Life is great if you can make them.

We've had our ups and downs this year in terms of making them, but when we do make them, we're a pretty good basketball team.

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