

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Coach Mike Woodson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana - 74, Iowa - 68

Q. Obviously you've got a number of good performances and got a couple of guys injured that we'll ask about later, but I wanted to start with Anthony Leal coming in off the bench. The 3s he gave you, the effort he gave you, your thoughts on his play today and how impactful it was?

COACH WOODSON: I gave him the game ball after the game. I thought he was huge -- 13 points, seven rebounds. I mean, defended his ass off. It was a nice carry-over because I thought he played well in the Illinois game. That's why we elected him to come in early and play him and he responded for us which was kind of nice.

Q. Kel'el returned. Talk about his impact, not only in terms of what he did on the floor but emotionally for the team? Looked like he was playing hurt a little bit himself and what that meant in terms of getting over the hump in this game?

COACH WOODSON: We needed him back in the worst way. Games like this, man, it's huge for our ball club. He gets 23 and 10 and three blocks. We were missing his length and ability to block shots. We just didn't have it.

It was nice having him back. He was huge tonight for our ball club. And we hadn't beaten this team since I've been here. Fran has kind of had his way with this ball club. They're always well-coached and they get after you. But I thought we withstood it coming down the home stretch and made the plays to win the game.

Q. Is there any update at all on Malik or X? And number two, just what did it say about your group that they watched you go down with apparently serious injuries, a couple starters, a couple guys that would be maybe in crunch time in a tight game the players they'd look to and they still found a way to grit through?

COACH WOODSON: I applaud our team. I've always said

since I've been here, it's the next man up. I don't know the severity of X and Malik at this point. But both went out kind of in pain. I'll know here when I get back there to see what the outcome of that is.

But if we have to wait on them, we have to wait on them. But it's the next guy up. We've just got to get the next man ready to play.

So guys that have been sitting over there, hadn't played a whole lot, they've got to step in and help us win basketball games because that's what it's all about at the end of the day.

Q. Refocusing the team, Xavier is screaming on the court, goes out. Malik was emotional. Did you sense them kind of at any point your players get distracted because of that? Do you have to refocus them? What do you say in that moment?

COACH WOODSON: You've got to move on. I don't like seeing any player hurt, especially my own players. But the game is still going on. And you've got to get these guys refocused and deal with what they're facing, what's in front of them.

This was a game that could have gone either way, but we made defensive stops. I thought the shot that we gave up with 2 seconds or so on the clock was huge for them. But we responded back when Gabe hit the 3, and we never looked back from that point on, which was kind of nice.

Q. Anthony has been getting more minutes but tonight looked like he was really looking for his shots when he got it. Didn't hesitate one bit. Did you have conversations with him about shooting more when he's out there? Or what's that been like?

COACH WOODSON: Not really. I mean, we take those shots a lot in practice. We practice them. We just gotta step up and make them. Mack had a lot of good open looks. Galloway had open looks. We're going to continue to get open looks.

We've just got to have the confidence to make it. I've got



to help them figure out how to make them -- by instilling confidence, same with our free throws, because we made them down the stretch some. But still eight free throws is a lot of free throws in a close ball game.

Q. Anthony has spent four years looking for a role. What impresses you most about the way he seems to have stayed prepared and has come along these last couple of games?

COACH WOODSON: Where I come from in the NBA, you call that a true pro. And Anthony is the ultimate teammate, man, in terms of just hanging in there with me. And I've coached him and he's come to practice every day and has done what's asked of him and never complained, not once.

He's been a true, true teammate. And guys like that, it's easy to coach. It's easy to throw them in the game and feel good about it because you know what you're going to get based on how he performs in practice. And he's earned the right to play, and that's why I'm playing him.

Q. You've said multiple times when Kel'el arrived he had a reputation of not playing hard or being soft. When you see him out here tonight, limping, knowing he can't come out because Malik's out, kind of gutting this game out, what's your reaction to seeing that?

COACH WOODSON: A lot of Coach Woodson screaming from the very beginning when I got him. I don't mean that in a bad way. I just tried to push him, along with our coaching staff. Because the first two or three weeks with him was a nightmare in terms of his energy and his get-up-and-go.

And we've kind of coached him into playing better, playing with a little more energy. And I thought tonight was -- he actually showed some emotion. I mean, one time -- hadn't seen that all pretty much all year with him, but it was kind of nice to see.

Q. You guys hold Iowa to 35% from the field tonight. This is a high-powered offense coming in. You mentioned after the previous game that the defense was something you were pretty proud of besides the shot making. Did you see the kind of continuity with the effort on the defense tonight that you were hoping for?

COACH WOODSON: Yeah, I mean, we still gotta get Mack better from a defensive standpoint because I think he got lost a few times, and that's not to knock on him. That kid's come a long way since we started with him. And I just gotta help him more.

I've got to help everybody more, because it's going to be our defense that carries us the rest of the way and rebounding the ball. And I thought tonight it was a beautiful carry-over from the Illinois game, because we were pretty good defensively.

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