

# Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Bloomington, Indiana, USA

## Coach Mike Woodson

### Press Conference



**Q. Just the obvious question first, do you have any sense for X and Malik both in terms of maybe their availability for this weekend and just maybe if they're not going to be available this weekend, what kind of timeline they might be looking at in their respective injuries?**

MIKE WOODSON: Right now we're still evaluating them. I'll know more today when I get to practice. I spoke to Tim this morning, and at this point I don't know. I really don't. Both went down, X's elbow and Malik's ankle. They didn't do anything yesterday, so we'll see if they're on the floor to do something today. So we'll see.

**Q. Looking at some of the defensive numbers in Big Ten play, you guys are fourth now in the league in points per possession allowed, first in three-point field goal percentage defense. What's been better recently defensively and what do you attribute the improvement there to?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, there's a seven-footer on our team that blocks shots and rebounds the ball. That makes a big difference for us. When we're getting beat off the bounce and we're trying to scramble, when he's at the hull, it helps.

When I look at our ballclub and base our numbers and where we are as a basketball team, I look at the full parts. I haven't had a full deck with this team since the latter part of November, which would have been the Harvard game.

From a coaching standpoint, I'm still reaching and grabbing and scratching because we haven't had a full deck. We had it for a few minutes the other night, and then all hell broke loose. Malik goes down, X goes down.

All we're doing is just trying to work, continue to work on our rotations, things of that nature, things that some of these young guys are not used to doing to stay as solid as we can from a defensive standpoint.

I thought the six, four, five days that we had leading into

the Illinois game gave us an opportunity to get back to some of the basic stuff. It was like starting all over again. It was a nice carryover into the Illinois game.

Then the other night against Iowa, having the big guy back, that helped. That's why we brought him here. We thought we could get him to a place where he could rebound and block shots and score a little bit for us, and he's been able to do that.

**Q. You've talked about the next-man-up mentality with the injuries, but did you sense the team being down -- you get the win, but you're kind of dealing with this uncertainty moving forward with X and Malik. Did you kind of talk to them, and did you feel that message resonating, that next-man-up?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I don't think any of our guys were down. It's been this way since November. We haven't had a full team since November, and nobody has even printed that. It's like, go in anyway.

I get it. Nobody wants to win in a worse way than Mike Woodson with this ballclub. But I think when you put a team together, you're hoping that that team can get through a season or be there just to see exactly what kind of team you do have. That's been the frustrating part for me from a coaching standpoint because I do think if we're pretty healthy and guys do what they're asked to do, we could be a pretty decent basketball team.

But it's been a struggle because we just haven't had a full deck, and I don't know if we're ever going to have one, to be honest with you. I don't know what's going to happen with X, and I don't know how long Malik might be out, if he's going to be out.

We've just got to keep -- that next-man mentality has got to stay in play. Guys that haven't logged a lot of minutes, your number might be called, and you've got to be ready to play and step up and help us win basketball games.

**Q. It seems like in a lot of sets you guys have run, even with X or Gabe in the game you've had Trey at the point. Can you talk a little bit about what you've seen**



**developmentally from him as a primary ball handler and how he fits what you want to do offensively?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, we put him in that position last year when X went down, alongside Jalen. Even though Jalen was the primary ball handler, we stuck Trey in a lot of pick-and-rolls and gave him an opportunity to get downhill and make basketball plays. It's been a carryover from last season. That's when it started. More than ever now, depending on X's situation, Gabe and Trey and Anthony Leal now because he's in the mix, whoever is in there are going to have to feel good about handling the basketball and making basketball plays. That's the only way we're going to get through the rest of this season.

**Q. In the last two games, Illinois and Iowa, we've seen you go smaller a few times with some three guards or even four for a couple brief stretches. What do you like about kind of what those lineups give your team both offensively and defensively?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, Illinois forces you to play small. I mentioned in one of my statements, it would have been really interesting to see how we would have really matched up if we had Ware and what they would have done with our two bigs in the game.

You had no choice but to go small because Ware didn't play.

But Iowa, they kind of forced us to play small because they didn't play their two bigs together that much in that ballgame. It wasn't that I tried to match up with them, but I thought it was the right thing to do because they were -- at one time they had two small point guards in the game, so you could play X and Gabe together.

I'm just trying to mix and match based on what's going on on the floor, but if I got my two bigs ready to play, that's who I'm going to play. I'm going to make you have to match up against us. That's why I've got a seven-footer and a guy in Malik who's improved at his position to play those two spots.

**Q. I know you've mentioned some of the injury issues that you all have had and kind of limiting some of the things that you've tried to implement, but as of right now, I think you guys are 344th out of 351 teams in three-point attempts per game. When you were assembling this roster, is this the type of offense you envisioned having?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, if you haven't had your point guard who is probably your best pick-and-roll guy, it's kind of hard to run pick-and-rolls and get threes. The only way

we get threes now is we post our guys, our guys get doubled, we kick it out or we get early transition and advance the ball up the floor.

I don't look at that. You guys look at the three-point shots. We've had a lot of attempts. Probably not as many as most of the college teams. Why not make the shots that we've had? That would help to me, in terms of our shooting percentage. I don't know what we're shooting right now in the Big Ten. It's not great.

When I look at the guys that are shooting them for us, everybody is down. Gallo is down from last year. Gallo shot it I thought extremely well for us last year. He's not shooting it that well this year. Mac has had his struggles, and you can go on and on. Our bigs are shooting better threes than our perimeter guys, and it shouldn't be that way.

We've just got to keep working the threes that we get. We've got to knock them down. You can't play Illinois and go 0 for 9. That's nine opportunities you came up dry.

Listen, in the NBA, I led the league in taking threes with the Knicks and made threes. If you've got guys that are making them, then you shoot them. We are shooting them some, but hell, you've still got to put the ball in the hole, guys. You can shoot them and shoot them and shoot them, and every coach in college basketball after a game that they lose, you hear them say, well, we didn't make shots, we didn't make threes. Well, what are you going to do? You've got to keep working at it, and hopefully they'll start knocking them down, the ones that they do shoot. That's kind of how I look at it.

**Q. Going back to the small lineups you've had to play due to injuries and the last couple teams you've played, when you were playing those lineups defensively, what do you feel like the key is to the switching and the scrambling and rotating behind the ball?**

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, Illinois is unique. Iowa, they normally play their bigs. I thought Ware did such a good job inside against their bigs and blocking shots and altering shots. He elected to go small and just play the one big at a time, based on what we had after Malik went out.

I was pleased in that regard. But to answer your question, we have to scramble because when you're talking about playing smaller guards, and Gabe and X, before X got hurt, that's two small guys that got to switch, and sometimes they're switching on like McCaffery who's 6'8", 6'7", 6'8". My whole thing is you have to fight and battle.

But my theme has always been to try to keep a body on a body, and you've got a better chance of defending it, and when the ball goes up, block out.

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