

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Mike Woodson

Press Conference



Q. Mike, in terms of when a team is struggling for a long period, do you try to vary your approach at all? Anything you can try to do that you see differently to try to help them through it as the kind of struggle goes on?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, all you can do when you play basketball you got work. Got to go to practice. Got to watch film. Got to continue to do the same things that you've done when you won.

You know, only way you work your way out of a slump is got to put the time in on the floor and hopefully carryover when you go to the real game. That's just how basketball is.

I mean, there is nothing else you can really do. You got to practice, work through it.

Q. Given that now the Big10 tournament is the best chance to make the NCAA at this point, do you view these last four games the regular season as a chance to try out different things to potentially get on a run and build some momentum going into that tournament?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, you're right about that. I mean, we got to win all four games to even have a shot. Once we get into tournament play, we got to win some games in the tournament play, if not win the Big10, to probably make the tournament.

I'm not looking that far down the road. Only thing I'm looking at is Wisconsin. We got to take little steps right now based on where we are, and Wisconsin is staring us in the face. They've had their struggles, so that's all I'm truly thinking about right now, one game at a time.

Q. You mentioned after the Penn State game that you were not only upset with the way you played, but how you've coached. Is there anything you looked at specifically that you could have done differently when you look at the season as a whole?

MIKE WOODSON: Would've been nice to have Xavier Johnson to help lead. I coach -- every year I've coached, when things don't go well, I point the finger at me. A lot of coaches won't do that, but at the end of the day, when things go well, I point the fingers at the players.

That's just kind of been my nature of how I've coached over the years. You know, I know how was it when I played, and I played for coaches that had success with me and I played for coaches that haven't had success.

You know, sometimes coaches don't want to take the blame and want to put all on the players. I'm not that type of coach. Even though I don't miss jump shots, wide open shots, and don't miss free throws, I'm still a big part of it and I take a lot of responsibility.

All I can do is continue to work with my team right now and try to put them in the best position to be successful. And hopefully they'll come through for us.

Q. I guess talking about in particular just how you approach kind of every day, you've been with some young teams in your time in the NBA that maybe had the will but not the habit to figure out how to navigate a losing streak or a slump. Do you reach back to any of your experiences, particularly in Atlanta, to guide these young guys through these experiences?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, guys, only thing you can do is -- you can't take off from practice. You can't stop watching film and studying your opponent. You just can't do that, or you really don't put yourself in a position to win.

That's all I know. As a player, when you struggle you got to go to the gym and you got to work and you got to continue to watch film and you got to think positive and have strong beliefs that you can come out of a slump when you are in it.

That's the battle that I'm having right now with our team, is that I'm trying to get them in a good place mentally so when they step on the floor they feel good about themselves. Hopefully that will click and you get a game



under your belt, now you start to feel good about yourself.

We went through this a little bit a couple years ago where I think we lost four or five in a row. It's tough. Somebody has to pick us up. When you're out on the floor, players just got step up and make plays and feel good about themselves, and I got to help them do that.

Q. Looking at some of the analytics, you guys are more efficient offensively playing four-out than with two bigs on the floor. Obviously also your two bigs are very productive for you. Have you do you manage that?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, when we won, we won with both of our bigs on the floor. You know, that's what I look at. You look analytics based on we haven't played a lot where we played four around one this year, so you're looking at short stats basically.

We basically have played with two bigs on the floor most of the season. The games that we have won and played well, they've been in and out of the game. So I don't look at -- I look what the we've done as whole.

From a basketball standpoint it's hard to gauge our season based only the fact we haven't had Xavier. I'm not putting it all on that, but Xavier was a big piece to the puzzle in terms of leadership and being able to run our team as a senior point guard.

We put so much pressure on Gabe Cupps that that's not fair to him even though he's played well in spurts for us. It's just for me, it's been tough in that regard because we haven't had Xavier. We just got to continue to work.

Q. Coach, looking at Wisconsin, obviously lost by 12 in Madison last month. When you look at them, they've had some rough stretches in the last month or so. What's changed with them? When you reflect back, what do you feel like you need to improve on?

MIKE WOODSON: We got to defend. When you look back they scored 91 points, we scored 79 points. I mean, you're not going to win like that.

I mean, we shot great from the twos, great from the threes, made our free throws, but they were better in those categories. You're not going to beat anybody in the Big10 like that.

Defensively we got come with it on Tuesday in order to beat them, because they're a good offensive team. They play inside out. I know after the game he wasn't real happy with his defense he said to me, and I surely wasn't happy

the way we played defense.

We got to find some kind of defensive presence, and that's what we been working on a little bit, and see if that can keep us in the game until we can start making our threes and free throws.

Q. Mike, last Monday you mentioned hoping that Xavier could return in a week or two. I guess in the last week has he been able to practice? Do you have an idea when he might be able to come back?

MIKE WOODSON: He did some things yesterday on the floor. Not a lot of contact. All I'm doing is I'll go down today and talk to Tim just see where he is. I know he wants to play in the worst way. Time is kind of running out on him. I feel for him in that regard.

But I'm just going to follow his lead. I don't like playing players when they don't practice and not have some kind of contact. So I don't know. I'll know more today and see where he is in terms of him wanting to play. I know they told him before the six, seven weeks at the time of the injury, but and we're at I think about four weeks now.

So we'll see today and see how he felt after running around a little bit yesterday without the contact and go from there. That's all we can do.

Q. You mentioned earlier just how when you're going through a stretch like this you still have to prepare and practice the same way. Have you sensed any slippage in that and how do you reverse that?

MIKE WOODSON: There is never any slippage. We work, my man. We come to work. We put in the good two, two and a half hours every day. That's the only way I know.

My staff and I watch a lot of film together and we watch film with the team. That's how I was taught. Win or lose, that's how I was taught as a basketball player and that's not every going to change. Most coaches do the same identical thing. You got to work on the basketball floor and watch film to get better.

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