

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

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Coach Mike Woodson Postgame Media Conference



Indiana 74, Wisconsin 70

Q. I guess, Mike, just to address the obvious first, how do you try to manage what was obviously a really unexpected situation with the break there, and maybe what did you see in your team's ability to maybe refocus? Wisconsin was riding some momentum but you stopped it not long after the restart.

MIKE WOODSON: First of all, I want to thank our fan base, the crowd for going through what we all went through and still came back into the game and gave us the support we needed to get over the hump and win the game.

I truly thank the fans.

It's the first time I've ever been a part of something like that as a player and coach. When you go in the locker room, you're trying to clean up things going on during the course of the game, especially the second half when we got going, and then try to get offensive plays in quickly so they know what we're doing when we come out to start play again.

It's a tie game. I thought we played well early. Wisconsin, they're well-coached. They're not going to ever quit. They pushed us to the end. I just thought we held in there after even going down. I think we went down three and Mack hit a big three to tie it.

From that point on we never looked back.

Q. Wanted to get your thoughts on Ware's performance tonight, points, rebounds, blocks, everything?

MIKE WOODSON: It was unbelievable. He had a man's game. He really did. You get 27, 11 fly blocks, one turnover, you know, maybe we didn't go to him enough, but he was fantastic tonight. We needed every bit of it in order to win this game.

Q. What do you think was the key in the sort of final five minutes there when you mentioned Mackenzie

hitting the three and closing the game on a run and getting some defensive stops? What was the difference there from the rest of the second half?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, this team, we been down a little bit. You know, losing four games like we've lost, you're searching as a coach. Players are searching trying to figure each other out.

And Mack stepped up after going down three, hitting the big three. Malik hit the big two leaning inside that put us back up two, which was a huge bucket. Then we came down and got a big stop defensively.

I mean, it's not like I haven't seen that out of our team. We just haven't done it consistently.

Tonight was Indiana basketball at its best I think.

Q. Mike, a lot of the narrative the season has been about what you haven't had. All season long Kel'el has been a rock, consistent. How much do you appreciate that, and how much have you seen out of him in terms of how he's been able to embrace being that important to what you need to do?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, I think when we brought him on board we didn't know what we were going to get. Really didn't. We knew he was very skilled and the word was that he didn't work hard. I thought after the first month of us getting after him a little bit that kind of picked up and it was nice carryover into the season.

He and Malik and Mack have had really wonderful seasons for us. For guys who really haven't played a lot in college basketball, it says a lot for my staff and the work these guys have put in, along with myself, to get these guys playing at high level.

It's great to have X back. I mean, every day I go to bed thinking about what this team could have been like if we had X earlier. To have him back tonight, you can see the game changes a little bit when he's on the floor. He didn't play particularly, well but I thought he did some good things when he was in there.



Good to have him back, man. Just got to keep patting him and keep him safe and see if we can get where we need to go.

Q. Trey had 12 assists tonight and did a good job finding the right people, especially down the stretch. When you're going through hard times, how good did that feel the way those final three, four minutes played out with those guys at least having the confidence to get done what they needed to get done?

MIKE WOODSON: We got a lot of trust in Galloway. No doubt about that. He's played probably some of the most minutes of anybody on our team this year.

So we trust when the ball is in his hands he can make basketball plays. I thought tonight he delivered for us; made a lot of great plays. But he defended. I mean, his matchup was a tough matchup. He had a solid game. That's what I expect from him. I told him I was very pleased with his play tonight.

Q. Yeah, coach, with X, how did his absence limit your offense or overall your team, and then what did his return tonight mean?

MIKE WOODSON: Again, he gives us defensive pressure out front. He gives us speed in terms of he's the only guy that can really change directions and make plays off the bounce.

And then when we're pushing the basketball, that's when we're at our best. When he's got the ball and pushing and we can get ahead of the ball, we can play a little faster with X on the floor. We just got to get him in a little better shape and get him playing the right way.

I thought he was trying to do a little too much tonight. But what the hell, he hadn't played in so long. Just happy to see him back out on the floor.

Q. Coach, you guys were riding a four-game losing streak. Gave up a 15-point lead tonight. Fire alarms going off. What does it feel like to see your team be resilient through all that?

MIKE WOODSON: That locker room is very happy right now. When you go through a stretch like that, I don't wish that on anyone. Nobody likes to lose. Me being who I am, I hate losing.

But there is a lot that comes with that, man. You got to stay patient. You can't just bury the guys. You can't do that. You got to pat them. We all forget these are 18- and

19-year-old young men, man. Sometimes their feelings are crushed too.

But that locker room is happy. It's like we got that monkey off our back, so I'm happy for them.

Q. Mike, you guys have all season stressed the importance of defense. Tonight you win the rebounding battle. You hold Wisconsin to 43%. They don't score in the last couple minutes. What does that mean for your performance tonight and possible the rest of the season?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, we have to validate it, man. You know, it's -- I'm happy as hell we're off this slide, but now we got to go to Maryland who has played well at home, is playing well, and see if we can validate what we did this evening and see if we can have a carryover into the Maryland game.

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