

Indiana University Basketball Media Conference

Sunday, March 10, 2024
Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Kel'el Ware

Xavier Johnson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana 65, Michigan 64

Q. (No microphone.)

XAVIER JOHNSON: Honestly, before he got here I overheard some questions about his motor. I think that was something that was well-known about him. Coach Woodson and the team has stayed on him about it, and I think that's the reason he's averaging what he is averaging right now, and he's doing a hell of a job, and I think he is going to continue to be that type of guy and continue to play like that.

Q. Kel'el, before the season you had said you wanted to prove people wrong that had doubted you in the past. Do you feel like you've done that?

KEL'EL WARE: It's always still more to prove, so I don't feel like I've proven myself just yet.

Q. Kel'el, tie game at 64; 17 seconds left. You were 0-5 after that first miss from the free throw line. What was going through your mind as you approached the second shot?

KEL'EL WARE: Just don't think, shoot. That was all I was thinking. Just don't think, shoot.

Q. X, you and Trey have kind of played so well together these last few games; then he goes out. After the starts you guys had things grind down a little bit offensively. What did you have to work on going into a shorter rotation, and what did you find as maybe the primary ball handler was what he needed to give the team most especially maybe the last eight, ten minutes?

XAVIER JOHNSON: I was just focused on -- the first half I think was trying to do too much. In the second half I tried to control the game a little bit more better. I think we went to the bigs a lot at the end because they're a big piece to

the team. They made plays and the right plays, and as a result, winning.

Q. X, you guys were up 15 early and they get up 7 in the second half. What allowed you to get control back? Not necessarily control, but your composure back when they take that 7 point lead and obviously could have gone the other way.

XAVIER JOHNSON: I mean, I think this is a different team going down the stretch. The old team of a couple games ago would've probably quit. I don't think we take punches well. But now I think we really do take the punches well. We want to hit back and win games.

It's coming down to the point where it's March.

Q. Xavier, up one when Kel'el made the second free throw; they had one chance. Obviously they are probably going to go to Walker and they are battling for that ball and you come Race down that floor. What was going through your mind when you had that ball and were racing to the other end of the floor?

XAVIER JOHNSON: I was thinking, you know, because it's crazy because I had a play like that my senior year in high school. Last game, too as well. I would've probably dunked it, and I looked up and I said, I got time. Nah, I'm not trying to get hurt. That was going through my mind. I just didn't want to get hurt because I don't want to miss any more games.

Q. Kel'el, with your recent performances and the three 20-point games you have had recently, what has led to you becoming more aggressive offensively?

KEL'EL WARE: Just wanting to win. You know, of course I've been wanting to win the whole season, but I feel like looking past it I just need to be more aggressive, and that's what I've been doing on the offensive end, and just trying to help my team as much as I can on the defensive end just to come up with the end.

Q. Xavier, at the end there it looked like you were kind of in that corner and then you got mobbed and then



you walked off -- I think you had the rock in your left-hand, right-hand was kind of wiping away a little bit of whatever you want to call that. Emotionally what's in your lady?

XAVIER JOHNSON: It's tears of joy. I battled throughout the whole year mentally and physically. You know, those are just -- those final seconds is like it's really my last game. It's just crazy, because from where I started to where I finished, I know it's been is difficult year, it's like I still push through everything I've been through and I got to the finish line.

Not quite there yet because still more basketball left and want to finish the right way, like I keep saying. Really, really proud of myself and really proud of my teammates as well.

Q. Kel'el, after Trey went down with the injury, seemed like the offense stagnated a little bit. Was there a point in which the coaches told you you need to take the game over, or you just knew that instinctively?

KEL'EL WARE: Trey is definitely a big part of our offense, with him just being able to get downhill, throw the lob, or get to his flow offensively. With him going down, I just felt like not even just me, but everybody on the team had to step up. If we wanted to get the win. I feel like that's what we did, so...

FastScripts by ASAP Sports