

Crossroads Classic: Indiana vs Notre Dame

Saturday, December 18, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Coach Mike Brey

Dane Goodwin Jr.

Paul Atkinson

Postgame Media Conference



Indiana - 64, Notre Dame - 56

MIKE BREY: You know, I don't know, what did we have, three possessions with a chance to take the lead, at a key time, and couldn't do it. You got -- there's nothing like taking the lead, just the psychology of taking the lead in a game like this, and we really never could.

Love the fact that we put ourselves in position after taking a big punch the first ten minutes of the second half. They really defended us. I mean, they're athletic, and they turned us over, but, yet, we had our chances in a road atmosphere here early in the season, and, you know, there's some things we can build off of, and there's some things we need to do better.

Q. Dane, what allowed you to get back in the game when you are down ten there in the second half? You got some good offense going?

DANE GOODWIN: Yeah, I think we just got some stops in that time period, middle second half, whatever it was, started sharing the ball better too. Got some good looks, and really boxed out, played together.

We just need to do that for a full 40. Can't go in spurts and expect to win games like that, but we put ourselves in position, and just couldn't get it done today.

Q. What was the big takeaway of the game for you?

PAUL ATKINSON JR.: Like Coach said, we had some good things that happened tonight, and a lot of things we got to learn from and grow from. I think coming in on -- we have a game on Monday. One more day to practice and

kind of take it in, and then we have to move on to the next one and just be better and play together.

Q. How do you feel about how you guys handled Trayce Jackson-Davis? It seemed like you had him bottled up to start, and what kind of happened there in the second half and what he was able to do?

PAUL ATKINSON JR.: We obviously took him to account. He is one of the best players that we're going to go against tonight, and I think he is a really good player, and he is able to get a lot of good shots up, and he made a lot of tough ones. It's just something we to continue to work on, but overall we did a decent job.

Q. When you had a few of those open threes that you make a ton of times in practice and whatnot, how tough was that just to have none of them go in and what that would have done for you if they did?

DANE GOODWIN: Like I said, I thought we put ourselves in position, and especially in that stretch, we had some open looks. We were sharing it. Just couldn't get them to go.

You know, I think with time and us playing together more, we're going to keep getting those good looks. And you can't hang your head after a miss, and you got to move on to the next play, and that's what we're doing. Like Paul said, we have a game coming up on Monday, and we have to get ready for that tomorrow and then again on Monday.

Q. How difficult or why has it been so difficult to not get everything for 40 minutes where it's always a spurt here or spurt there? You just can't put a full 40 together.

MIKE BREY: That's been frustrating for us. You know, it's continued to kind of help them and work with them because we played a heck of a schedule, and I love that we were in position because that was a big punch we took early, and I think it shows it's a group that's going to keep swinging, but it's one of the questions about those open looks like we're going to have to make some more from out there at key times, and, you know, we didn't capitalize on



any of them.

Q. Hey, Mike, I just wanted to get your thoughts on Trayce Jackson-Davis, whose play -- especially his ability to kind of stay a rim protector without getting in big foul trouble, how much does he impact the game?

MIKE BREY: He is really gifted. He had his numbers. We were afraid of coming down there and really all-out doubling because, again, if they make too many threes, they're too far away from you, and overall, I thought we did a pretty good job, Paul and Nate, wrestling him, with a little help.

But he is a physical specimen, and he really plays with a nice demeanor. He has a great demeanor, and then the defensive presence as far as blocking shots. He is a great talent. I remember him as a young player here in the state and to see who he has become. I love his demeanor. He just kind of plays, and he gets banged on a lot. And, you know, we had the hard foul incident, and him and Cormac Ryan are like, I know what -- he is -- he has a great frame of mind.

Q. Mike, the shooting, I mean, I know you have seen these guys make a lot of threes for three years, but how do you kind of explain the, I guess, going nine games in here, and it's still kind of waiting for it?

MIKE BREY: It's one of those things where I don't want to talk to them too much about it because they're thinking enough. Right now they're thinking enough, and -- but, God, some of those looks we got after some movement, those are the ones you got to get to steal this one, and we haven't been able to get them enough, not only in this game, but all year-to-date. I do think the guys that are not shooting well are better shooters, and I bank on the law of averages here, you know, kicking in at some point.

Q. I guess going back to talking about Trayce's rim protection, and Indiana more in general, when they can make it tough defensively, what do they do well that just kind of cranks up that pressure?

MIKE BREY: Well, he is just so good. I mean, I think we had two possessions where we got it to Atkinson, right, with a chance to maybe take the lead, and it was one-on-one in the post, and Paul -- I think Paul is still in a little bit of an adjustment period coming from the Ivy League playing against Trayce Jackson-Davis kind of bodies that keep coming at him.

And I thought he made an unbelievable play on the reverse layup to block it. It's just a big-time NBA prospect defensive play. Atkinson looked around like where did he

come from?

Again, he has a good demeanor. He has a great tempo. He is long. He is up above the rim. When you have a guy that can take away some stuff at the rim defensively, it does help your defense. It really makes your other guys confident, and they have that with him back there.

Q. Mike, nearly ten games, a third of the way through the season almost. How do you get Prentiss and Nate going for you like they've done so much in the past?

MIKE BREY: We really need them. They've struggled. There's no question about it. I thought Prentiss was in a better rhythm tonight kind of in the second half making plays for us and leading and running our team.

We're going to need them both. I mean, they're key guys for us. I think I got to keep trying to figure out how to help them. A lot of times when you're struggling, you need one good game to kind of jump-start you, and I'm going to try and convince them that's Monday night.

Q. Coach, with Indiana shooting threes a little better than what you have seen from them in the past, how tough of a cover are they when you have to decide between doubling the post versus covering those threes?

MIKE BREY: That was the dilemma really the whole night, and he is getting some layups and some twos, and we were able to -- the other night against Kentucky, they couldn't make any of them, and we started to help more.

I just felt -- I felt like they were all better shooters tonight no matter what their numbers say because the atmosphere sometimes make you feel like you're a better shooter than your percentages, and so I'm thinking if too many of them go in, we're not -- if we were -- we would have been down 15 or 17. We were down ten, and we had it within striking distance, and so that's a dilemma for us. How do we help our big guys in the post, and how do you not give up so many threes?

Q. Coach, Blake Wesley hit some shots in the first half to keep you guys close. I'm justice curious -- I know you have probably been asked about the last week, but just his maturity and his ability, what did you see from him to start as a freshman?

MIKE BREY: I'm really pleased for him. He is playing against old guys. Indiana is old. They've done a great job of plugging in transfers with veteran guys, and he is playing against old guards.

I thought he had a great demeanor for us. In this atmosphere, the kid from South Bend, playing in Indiana on this stage, I think he had 25 people come down from South Bend, and I thought he handled it great.

I'm really pleased with his maturity and demeanor. And he does make some plays for us that nobody else can make, and where I'm still learning on how to use him more offensively to make those plays, but I am really pleased with his presence for a guy who we're asking a lot of.

Now, I think what helps him is he has older guys on this team that have really helped him because they know we need him. They're not jealous of him. They're like, man, we need him. Prentiss Hubb grabs him and Cormac grabs him.

But his presence -- I was worried about it. I mean, obviously, he is the hero, and it's magical last Saturday. You couldn't have drawn it up any better. Now he is coming down. I was, like, God, he was really pretty solid again, and he had some kick-outs to our shooters. He should have five assists. I think he will eventually. He found some people. I'm just really pleased with where he is at, and we just got to keep growing him. He is obviously a really gifted player. Thank you.

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