

Crossroads Classic: Indiana vs Notre Dame

Saturday, December 18, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Indiana Hoosiers

Coach Mike Woodson

Postgame Media Conference

Indiana - 64, Notre Dame - 56

Q. Coach, the three-point shooting, you've always kind of instilled the confidence even early in the season when they weren't making them. For that to materialize the last few games, how gratifying is it to see some of the shots going in?

MIKE WOODSON: I was just happy to see some shots go in, period. You know, I thought we struggled really early in the game and just couldn't make shots, but our defense was just tight. Even when we were struggling, they were I think sitting at 19 when we were at 11, so they weren't going anywhere. They wasn't running off, but, boy, I was struggling to find offense tonight, but we made the plays down the stretch that we needed to make in terms of securing the game.

Q. They made that nice run and got back even with you, but then you guys closed it out from there. And coming off what happened at Wisconsin and such, I'm sure it had to be gratifying that it wasn't a factor at all today.

MIKE WOODSON: That's the first thing I said when I closed out our meeting with the team prior to coming in here today. You stepped up and did what you had to do coming down the stretch, and you are not going to blow every team out. There's going to be games that are going to be close.

Notre Dame is a good team. They are well-coached, so I didn't expect the blow-out -- the 8- to 10-point lead like we had, but we did, and our guys stepped up and made the plays that we needed to make to win the game.

Q. Coach, you look more consistent on both sides of the ball coming out of the half. What were the conversations like in the locker room with your guys?



MIKE WOODSON: Again, going in I thought the momentum shifted our way the last, what, four, five minutes of the first half when we went on that run to get back in it. And then coming up three at half, you know, I was feeling pretty good at that moment, but knowing that 20 minutes is still a lot of time. And I just told them, hey, we just need to put a solid 20-minute half together and come out of here with a win.

Q. Big picture being this close to the Big Ten season resuming, where do you think your team is? Where do you think you're doing well, and where do you think you need to work?

MIKE WOODSON: I'm going to be honest with you. Listen, I'm just happy where we are. We try to take it a game at a time. We've had two Big Ten games, and I thought we played extremely well in both. Came up short in the one. Our next opponent is Northern Kentucky, so we just got to get ready for those guys.

Hey, the Big Ten is what it is, man. We can't run from it, and when time comes to play a Big Ten game, I'm just going to prepare like I normally prepare for any game and just take it one game at a time.

Q. Circling back to three-point shooting, from Parker's perspective, if he is not at 50%, he is near 50% from behind the arc. I know it can't come down to just one guy, growing that area, your offense, but how valuable has he been as somebody who has the confidence to knock down at that volume?

MIKE WOODSON: He has been very important for us. Again, early on when we first started this journey, I didn't know where the three-point shooting was going to come, and Parker and Miller both have stepped up and made some threes for us.

But I need X to make them. Rob is capable of making them. Khristian, if and when I play him. I mean, I feel good that he can make them. We got guys that can make them.

But I don't want to be a team to just live on three-point shots. If you got it, you know, hey, take it. I mean, if it's there. But I think our strength is playing inside-out with our big guys, and that's been good for us. I don't want to stray away from that.

Q. Rob Phinisee's impact tonight gets you two threes, (indiscernible) assists. Seemed like his defense on Wesley, who went 5 for 16, was impactful. Just curious your thoughts. Did Rob kind of give you a lift, and what's your thoughts on Rob?

MIKE WOODSON: He gave us a huge lift. I need Rob in the worst way. I think he knows how I feel about him in terms of what I think he can do. I just got to get Rob to believe more that he can do things like he did tonight.

I mean, he is a hell of a defender, and he can make shots. He can make plays for other people. That's what point guards do. I just got to get him more comfortable and get him more love and confidence that he can do those things.

Q. About your point guard position, not just Rob, but also X, just how do you feel about where it is, where it's come? Has it come anywhere?

MIKE WOODSON: Still, well, we've improved, but we still got work in progress with our point guards, and it's okay. Hey, it's the toughest position on the floor, and I'm demanding. I'm going to keep pushing these guys to get better because I know if they do, we're going to be better as a ball club. We'll benefit from it.

They all still trying to learn what we're trying to do. They're searching, man, and I just got to -- I got to help them more somehow.

Q. Mike, you mentioned just defense before. I think they made I think maybe 11 of the first 22, something like that. What did you see get better in the last eight minutes of the first half in particular and then throughout the second half, especially defending the three and defending the perimeter?

MIKE WOODSON: They hit a three. There were two threes that were made by their team early on that we didn't execute our defense, and one of the time-outs I was very critical because, again, we've gone -- we've had two days to prepare, and you can't walk out on the floor and just forget your coverages.

And it cost us an out of bounds three, and it cost us a three where Xavier didn't switch correctly, so those are things that you can clean up. You take those two threes away early, you know, we're sitting at a very close ball game.

Neither team scoring the ball.

In that regard I was pretty happy where we were defensively, and then I thought the second half our defense was even more steady in terms of how we wanted to cover our coverages.

Q. Coach, sticking back to the point guard theme, it seemed like I could be wrong, but you had X and Rob on the floor a lot together in this game. What did you like about that combination?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, they were small -- besides the big, Wesley, they were small too. You can play two point guards in that regard. Both of them are pretty good defenders. They defend when they want to defend, and Rob is a hell of a defender. So, I mean, I was looking for defense and two guys to kind of run our team. That's what I was looking for, and I thought they did a pretty good job in both areas I thought.

Q. First half you talked about your defense kind of setting things up. You had seven assists and nine turnovers, but in the second half that kind of reversed itself. Nine assists, five turnovers. Was that better defensive play, or what led to that?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, again, I thought offensively we moved the ball in spurts, and when we did, good things happened for us. I got to get them to understand that. You know, it can't be one or two passes and then the shot goes up and lets us a layup.

In that regard I got to help them offensively, but defensively we didn't have a whole lot of miscues. You know, we gave up a couple layups at the end of the game that I don't like. I mean, you still got to play the clock, and the score as well. You know, where you give up quick twos, now they can set their defense and get ready to press.

You got to make them at least make two or three, four passes before giving up an easy bucket like we did. I mean, hell, they just drove around us and laid the ball up, so we got to clean that up, but for the most part I was pleased.

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