

Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Thursday, October 3, 2024

Rosemont, Illinois, USA

Men's Basketball Panel

Fred Hoiberg

Nebraska

Eric Musselman

USC

Mike Woodson

Indiana

THE MODERATOR: Welcome in the head coaches of those two E team. Fred Hoiberg, Eric Musselman, Mike Woodson kind enough to join us. Fred, you made it public last week that you are going through what you termed a minor procedure. Obviously I know you well enough to know you take everything humbly, especially when it's about you. Folks do want to know how you are doing? You look great.

FRED HOIBERG: Thanks, Rick. Great socks, by the way. I feel really good. It was a procedure on Friday to replace my pacemaker. I went in there, and it was about a 30-minute procedure.

Biggest thing right now is just being careful. I'm coaching a lot on the sidelines trying not to get hit. I just can't get hit in the area where they did the procedure, but feeling great.

THE MODERATOR: A few years ago we played golf together at Olympia Fields. He was coaching the Bulls, running late. Trunk slammer; straight from his trunk to the first tee. Goes birdie, par, birdie, and tried to convince everybody that he was just lucky.

FRED HOIBERG: I was. I was very lucky. Hasn't happened since.

THE MODERATOR: We got a chance to meet for the first time, Eric, out at Terranea in May. Don't try to work out next to this guy in the gym because you won't look good. You shared a story then that you ended up in almost the same location, a stone's throw from where you were when you got your very first job out of college.

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, first job out of college was selling tickets for the L.A. clippers, and I lived on 44th and Highland in Manhattan Beach, and now we're on Sixth



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Street in Manhattan Beach. Kind of full circle. Super cool for myself and our family.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, you have been obviously very busy, you and your staff in the offseason with the transfer portal. It's always important to get time to recharge the batteries. You know about keeping the pace being in this business for as long as you have. I understand you were able to recharge those batteries not far away in California as well a little bit this summer.

MIKE WOODSON: Out in Desert Island dealing with the heat. It was all fine. I'm talking about averaging around 110 a day. But my wife likes it out there a lot, so we spent about three weeks out there this summer.

THE MODERATOR: You obviously did spend some time in the portal. Talk about some of the amazing transfers you have coming in Oumar Ballo, Carlyle is on that list. Myles Rice, so many on other guys. How were you able to do that? What's that process like now when it is so important to get into the portal and get players that can fit immediately into your program?

MIKE WOODSON: Well, we had no choice. I mean, I lost three players to the portal. I lost two seniors in Kel'e'l Ware, who was drafted to the Heat as a 15th pick in the draft.

I had to go out along with my staff and start, you know, really working to try to build our team back. We were able to come West and get Big Ballo, as you mentioned, and Myles Rice and Kanaan Carlyle.

Then we were fortunate enough to get Goode to come back home, which he is a Bloomington kid. Then we got a freshman in Bryson Tucker, who kind of fell in our laps late. I had looked at him a couple of years ago when he was at IMG. We were able to get him on board.

I mean, we've built basically through the portal with one freshman, but it's been a work in progress. Our summer program I thought went extremely well, and then we gave them a month off. Now we're back at official practicing.



It's been a good run so far. We just got to put it all together and see where it leads us.

THE MODERATOR: Eric, no one was busier than you and your staff in the portal, out of necessity, obviously. Give us a sense of the guys that came in and also how difficult it can be and what the challenge is when you are trying to build chemistry with so many guys who haven't played together before.

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I think from a chemistry standpoint it's about what you can do in the eight-week offseason program. Every Friday we tried to do a non-basketball-related activity, whether it was wiffle ball on the beach or boxing together as a group, or spin class. We tried to do something outside of basketball and then follow that up with a meal of some sort.

Then in the transfer portal out of necessity certainly with the way the roster was with one returning player. We had to go to the portal. We're excited about a lot of guys. But a lot of guys that need to play with a chip on their shoulder. Obviously nobody on any of the Big Ten teams right now that were recognized with the top players, and we discussed that. We discussed where we were ranked preseason. So we -- I hope that our team kind of has that chip on their shoulder from day one.

THE MODERATOR: Fred, for you the transfer portal story is interesting because you have a handful of guys who come from other Big Ten schools who really know this league. How much of an advantage could that be?

FRED HOIBERG: Well, I think it's important when you are putting your roster together to -- last year we were the oldest team in the league, and we needed to replace a lot of really important pieces that we lost from a year ago, including Reink Mast who unfortunately had a knee procedure, and he will be out for the season.

So for us to go out there and try to get that experience to replace a Keisei Tominaga, Reink who I just talked about, Josiah Allick who were great leaders and great players on the floor.

We accomplished -- we did a pretty good job of that. I think we have eight guys that are in their fourth year or more in college basketball.

When you have that experience, it gives you a chance. We have two freshmen that I really, really like, and I think they're going to be very good players, but we also have experience. As you said, Rick, guys that have played in the league with Connor Essegian, with Gavin Griffiths, with a couple of guys that played in the Pac-12 last year with

Braxton Meah and with Berke. These guys are coming together.

I think Muss hit it on the head as far as those eight weeks how important they are to build the chemistry in the summer. You know, back in our day when we were playing, it was October 15. You basically had two or three weeks, and then all of a sudden you're playing games.

So those eight weeks in the summer, the five weeks in the fall, and then you are already -- the guys are already sick of you on the first official day of practice, but that's all very important as far as building that very important chemistry.

THE MODERATOR: You do have some terrific returnees back. Bryce, Juwan, and others, guys that got to taste the tournament last year. It's always hard to get to the tournament. Many coaches say it's tougher to get back for a second year. How do you kind of keep that momentum going that you built a year ago?

FRED HOIBERG: Well, it's such a different experience, and being on the big stage and all the coverage that you have, and we only really had of our active roster one guy that had played in the tournament, and that was Juwan Gary when he played at Alabama.

Now we have a bunch of guys that have been there. We've talked about this a lot as a group. The challenge now is not only getting back there, but it's winning in March. It's taking this program to where it's never been before. Our guys have been really good. I love the work ethic. I love the competitiveness.

When you have a you group of guys that play hard, you're going to have a chance.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, you've been there. I know you would like to get a little deeper into March this coming season. When you return to your alma mater, I'm sure you had an idea of where you wanted the program to be at this point. How does that compare to where you feel like the program actually is?

MIKE WOODSON: I think we took a step backwards last year by not making the tournament. That was kind of disappointing. But again, we got to move forward. The first two years a lot of those guys hadn't been in the tournament for five years. Then they tasted it a little bit.

At the end of the day along with these guys, this is about winning Big Ten titles and winning national titles. That's why I came back.

I remember the good days back when I played and some



of the great years that Bob Knight had at Indiana that it's been missing. To be back and I'm able to put my stamp on it, you know, it's going to be great for me.

I'm happy to be back, but we still got a long way to go as a ball club.

THE MODERATOR: Eric, your career has been defined a little bit by change because you've coached at so many different places, at so many different levels. How much can that help you in another year of change? Not just for you and your program, but for the Big Ten as for the first time ever we see 18 conference games, just one two-play because of that. Everything is new for everybody including those teams that have been in the Big Ten for a long time.

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I think if you coach in the G League, you are used to change. So right now it's change of roster. It's change with players receiving name, image, and likeness. It's change in the way that we're going to travel.

I think that along with both coaches, Coach Woodson and Coach Hoiberg, I think there's a little bit of the NBA travel can come into play here with how you do shoot-arounds, when you travel West Coast to East Coast. We've had a lot of discussions with our staff what we did when Golden State played in, say, Orlando on the first round of a travel day and when do you actually do shoot-around? Do you not do shoot-around?

I think that some of the NBA lessons with travel can help. At least it's the hope.

We've also talked and met with the L.A. Rams a couple of weeks ago about how they travel when they go west to east. What do they do on that first night that they land and how do they handle the morning before, like, a 1:00 kickoff? It will be a learning process for all of us, though, for sure with the travel part.

THE MODERATOR: When coaches say we're only looking at the next game, and this scenario you are looking at this as a whole to figure out the best way to deal with all the different things that approach you this season?

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I think you have to. I think that the way you manage your team in November and December can have an affect on how you play in March, and obviously the goal for all of us is to have our teams playing their best basketball in March. A lot of that has to do with mental fatigue, physical fatigue, and then where you are with your bodies and minds come the end of the season.

So certainly the way that you plan in November can have

an affect.

THE MODERATOR: I know we actually have to get there, but since Eric said end of the season, what do you think it's going to feel like at the end of the regular season to have gone through this league this season?

FRED HOIBERG: It's going to be a grind. You add four unbelievable programs with great coaches, and it's going to be -- the travel, to Muss's point, is going to be something that none of us have ever experienced at this level. The three of us I think have been fortunate to either have played or coached in the NBA and what some of that travel is like.

I think we're set up in a pretty good spot in Nebraska. The West Coast grind I don't think will be quite as much as it is for the East Coast schools, but at the same time you really do have to prepare for it.

One thing that I think we do a good job of is we have a sports scientist that monitors every practice, and we have a load progression that we really want to follow to try to be fresh when it matters most.

In the last couple of years we've had very successful February and March record. So just to really try to keep your guys going where you're playing your best basketball at the right time of the year.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, it certainly helps when you have guys that have been through that grind before, like Trey, like Malik, Mackenzie experienced it, and now expects some growth this year. What do you need from those guys specifically and those veterans that have been on this team to try too meld in all the newcomers?

MIKE WOODSON: We need them to lead and make another jump. I thought Malik made a hell of a jump from his freshman year, and Mackenzie, tremendous jump. Trey Galloway is who he is. He's been a leader since I've had him. Unfortunately, he had the knee surgery this past season, and he's worked his butt off this summer to get back.

He's not fully recovered, but he is getting there, so I'm going to need all three of those guys to lead. We got some seniors, but we also have a bunch of young guys as well too that hadn't really experienced the Big Ten like Myles Rice and Kanaan Carlyle and Tucker.

So we're going to need those veteran guys to step up and lead our ball club.

THE MODERATOR: Let's finish here, guys. On your



campuses obviously there's a lot of momentum with your football programs as well. Indiana is surprising everybody. Have you felt that vibe of your players and maybe have had a chance to watch the Hoosier football team this year?

MIKE WOODSON: I'm loving it. I think Coach Cignetti has done a hell of a job. He's put a great group of guys together. He's got running backs. He's got receivers. He has a hell of a quarterback.

I couldn't be more happier for him because it's been a while to see our programs even in the top 25. So you have to give him a lot of credit for that. I'm waiting for Northwestern this week. We have them here at Northwestern. It should be a good ball game.

THE MODERATOR: Eric, have you had a chance to spend much time with Lincoln? I know you and Lindsey have shared thoughts.

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Went to a couple of practices. Actually got some good drills that we've kind of taken, some quarterback wide receiver drills that he used and have used with a five-shot drill that, they had a five passing drill with their quarterbacks. There's nothing like USC sideline pregame.

The only thing that's been troublesome a little bit is we keep having recruits come in on weekends when our football team is playing on the road, and I keep wanting to go on a road football game. I'm, like, stop with the recruiting stuff so we can go to a road football game and experience Big Ten football.

THE MODERATOR: Fred, I know you and Matt obviously talk a lot about what your respective programs are doing at any given moment.

FRED HOIBERG: Coach Rhule is doing a phenomenal job. It's been so much fun. We had our 400th consecutive sellout, and the last game has been sold out since 1962. The passion and the energy right now around Nebraska football, it's been awesome to see.

THE MODERATOR: We really appreciate the time.

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