

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 14, 2019

Chris Holtmann

C.J. Jackson

Keyshawn Woods

Ohio State Buckeyes

Ohio State - 79, Indiana - 75

COACH HOLTSMANN: Certainly a tough win. A lot of credit to Indiana. I knew, based on how much respect we have for their team and for Archie, that they would come back and battle. That's just in their DNA. So we knew it could certainly get tight. But our guys weathered the storm. Players win games and these two to my right here, obviously along with having Caleb back and his defensive presence was the difference. Look forward to tomorrow.

Q. Can you talk about what it meant in general just to have Kaleb back and how it opened things up for the rest of the team?

C.J. JACKSON: Obviously it was good having him back. He's one of our key guys. And just having one of our brothers back that -- we have been working all season long, all season long. It's always good to have one of our players back.

KEYSHAWN WOODS: Like C.J. said, Kaleb draws a lot of attention. He opens up the floor for everybody else. And then also on the defensive end he's a great presence, too, protecting the rim. And he's a great talker and communicator. So it's great to have Kaleb back on the floor with us.

Q. Did you feel like when you were up 20 there in the second half that maybe you let up a little and let Indiana back in, or did they just come and force the issue?

KEYSHAWN WOODS: A little bit of both. We kind of got out our way a little bit. And also they were forcing the issue. But we regained our poise at the end when it really mattered and we got the win.

C.J. JACKSON: Like Keyshawn said, we knew they were going to come back, kind of how Coach talked about how they weren't going to quit fighting. And that's what they did. And we just had to continue to be who we are in those type of moments and continue to fight and stay together. And we did that.



Q. The nature of this tournament is you play again tomorrow and you've got to start looking ahead. You'll face a team that's gotten you a couple times this year. Is that any extra motivation going into this, that they've gotten the better of you a couple times, and another shot at Michigan State?

C.J. JACKSON: Yeah, we know what type of team they are. Like you said, we played with them a couple times this year and we'll definitely be ready tomorrow at 11:30.

KEYSHAWN WOODS: You always want to play a team that beat you twice. It's another game for us. It's an important game for us. We've got to keep winning if you want to advance in the tournament. We've got to prepare tonight for Michigan State.

Q. As much as you want to focus on the game, when the whole world's talking about the bubble and if you win it means this and if you lose it means that. How hard is it to keep that out of the narrative within the team, and were you able to do that?

COACH HOLTSMANN: You know, I think that that conversation's been going along for -- they start bubble talk, I think, in November. So that conversation has been going on for a while. And I think it requires some discipline. And I'm not sure that we've always been great at it. But as much as possible, we've just tried to focus in on trying to play more possessions and quality basketball than what we did the previous time. So, is it hard? Sure. I mean, it's everywhere this time of year, right? I think our guys did a pretty good job here this last week and a half.

Q. Woods' background, I'm not sure he ever played in the NCAA Tournament, to borrow off what --

COACH HOLTSMANN: Play-in game one time.

Q. Looked like a guy that wanted to be in the tournament and really laid it out there. Just talk about 9-of-13 today, he really hit the shots in the final minute that kind of got you a little bit closer to the finish line.

COACH HOLTSMANN: Tremendous. He was tremendous. I thought he was tremendous in every way. I thought he's looked, since the 10-minute mark

of the Wisconsin game, like a guy that wasn't ready to see his career over any time soon. And that's what you hope in seniors. Like, that is what we've been kind of hoping to see, honestly, in light of being down Kaleb, we've been hoping to see that. And he and C.J. were both terrific.

Q. You guys had a couple of pretty good games with Michigan State. How do you guys get to the next level, and how have you seen Michigan State maybe change in the past month or two?

COACH HOLTSMANN: I've watched them a little bit. But not as much, honestly. They had Nick Ward both times. He went out the second half of our game. I don't know what his status is now. But they're terrific. They're an elite team, can get to a Final Four, can win a national championship. They're deserving of everything that's come their way. We'll need to play exceptional basketball for 40 minutes. But we're excited about the opportunity.



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OHIO STATE POSTGAME PLAYER QUOTES

Ohio State sophomore F Kaleb Wesson

On how it feels to be back on the court...

"Yeah, this is great to get a win like this out there with my guys again felt really, well, felt comfortable."

On being eager to be back...

"Yeah, my teammates were making a big deal at the beginning of the games. Like 'yeah were happy to have you back. We're going to get you back in your rhythm.'"

On not being able to play in the last three games...

"It has been tough. You know you always want to be out there with your guys, the guys you've been struggling with, grinding with from the beginning of the year. So, just seeing them out there -- it just hurt not to be able to do anything."

On making up for lost time...

"I don't know about make up. I just let the game come to me. They were able to get me the ball and made an effort to get me the ball. I think it was just more of playing the game and letting it come to me."

Ohio State sophomore G Musa Jallow

On communication on the court...

"Usually they are just talking about who I'm going to get or what I need to do whenever I go in. Usually were going back and forth on whether it's a good idea to go in now and just trying to strategize the situation."

On preparation to come into the game...

"When I'm sitting there, I'm just acting like I'm already playing in the game. So, it's just a fluid transition. Pretty much watching how he's moving how IU was moving as a team and stuff like that so I can just come in."

On his team's ability to hold other teams off in tight games...

"I definitely give it to the older guys like Key, CJ and Joey. You know, they all can sense when everything is getting either out of hand or we're getting too hype. Just everybody comes together and just tries to keep the course."

Ohio State junior F Andre Wesson

On OSU's seniors' last Big Ten Tournament...

"It's fun just the guys that have been here. We've played with each other for a while now so we just know each other and it's just fun that we can do that."

On mindset as game was coming to an end...

"Kind of just having that next play mentality. Obviously things kind of weren't going our way there for a while, but you still have to keep that next play mentality and just flush it."

On what point of the game he was comfortable...

"I didn't feel comfortable until the buzzer rang."

On the second half of the game...

"Yeah, just get a stop and focusing on what you could do to help your team out was probably the biggest thing. Just like I said, the next play mentality flush it and move on."

On Kaleb Wesson being able to play...

"It was big for us. He was sort of down on himself a little bit for these past few weeks, but I was there to help him up and everything. It was great to have him back out there."

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Archie Miller

Juwan Morgan

Devonte Green

Indiana Hoosiers

Ohio State - 79, Indiana - 75

COACH MILLER: Congratulations to Ohio State. They played a really well-played game. And we just didn't play at a high enough level for long enough of stretches in the game on either end of the floor to keep ourselves in a little better striking distance. And you've got to give them credit for that. I thought offensively that was probably as poor as we've played here in a long time. Our turnovers in the first half really broke us down in terms of giving them 17 points off turnovers. We had 10 in the first half. And that was kind of a little bit of a deal-breaker for us at halftime. And then I thought in the second half, hopefully coming out of halftime we would be able to regroup. But we weren't able to make a couple plays there in the first four, eight minutes, especially long rebounds and some 50/50 plays that just kept the lead right at the same time. Then once they broke it open, I thought our team kind of responded how we normally have. And to their credit, especially the guys that finished the game, to be 55 seconds in a one-possession game, I thought showed a lot of heart, which is what this team's had a lot. It's been some really tough sledding at times and we've had some good moments. But to finish the game like that was encouraging for the guys that were on the floor. But just weren't good enough at this game at this level for what was at stake -- needed to play smarter and sharper and at the end of the day be better defensively in terms of rebounding, some things that we could control and we didn't.

Q. Juwan, obviously it's hard to play with foul trouble. How much does that disrupt your rhythm, just when you're having to worry about the whistle and you know you're going to be sitting down for a while, more than you want to, what goes through your mind?

JUWAN MORGAN: Just gotta stay in the game, stay engaged in the game mentally. That's just as important as the physical aspect of it. And you have to be ready to go once you go back in. You can't sit there saying, I should be playing, the refs or anything. You have to



just be ready to go once you're back out there.

Q. You talked about once they kind of broke it open you guys responded. During that crucial couple minutes, what was going on? Were they just making shots and you weren't, or what did you see happen there?

COACH MILLER: Combination of things. Obviously offensively we weren't scoring or turning it over. And I think just our overall toughness on the ball wasn't good enough. When the screens hit us, in my opinion we died on a few and we had to stay a little longer than we needed to in rotation. And I thought they delivered the ball out of the ball screen a few times off of the corner pass and they made some timely 3s. We struggled. We just did. We struggled for whatever reason. We struggled on the ball today. If you look at their guards play, you know, if you look at C.J. Jackson and you look at Keyshawn Woods, 35 points between those two guys and nine assists and three turnovers. Guards win at this time of year. They've got to make plays. They've got to make shots, because it's difficult. And those guys made some really, really big baskets for them inside out of the post. I thought Woods in particular, he may have scored the last seven points or at least seven in a row in a tough stretch when we couldn't do it. So those guys played well. And Kaleb, let's be honest with you, if Kaleb isn't an all-conference player then I don't know what one is. He hasn't played in the last three games. That drastically changes the structure of what you're doing. I thought he did a great job getting back. They did a great job getting him the ball. And they're a tournament team. And at the end of the day they advance and I wish them well.

Q. Talk a little bit about Devonte's play and stepping up when the team really needed some bucket late.

COACH MILLER: He was all we had there for a while. He stepped up and made shots. That's what it's going to have to be like in this type of a game. They're going to give some guys some shots. You're going to have to step up and make some easy, assist-type passes early in possessions where you don't over-dribble. They crowded the floor on the dribble all game long. I thought Devonte here in the last three weeks has really raised his level of play. He was great yesterday in our workout. He's the one guy, he's playing with really good confidence right now. And he hit some late ones

there that were long ones. But without him I don't think we would have even been close coming back that last eight minutes. He made some really good plays for us. He's had a good finish in the last month of the season for us, which is good to see for an older guy.

Q. What do you think this means for you guys going forward, especially regarding the NCAA Tournament?

COACH MILLER: We'll wait and see. It will be difficult. Our resumé at the end of the day if you put it up there with a blank sketch I'm sure it compares favorably to some other teams. We've played a ridiculous schedule. And obviously have beaten teams that obviously made the tournament. And I think the one thing in this stage when you're comparing everybody -- can you beat a team in the tournament? Can you win a game? And this team can win a game in the tournament because it's played good ball here lately and has also played good ball early. When you're able to beat a Marquette or Louisville, you're able to get a Michigan State twice. You're able to get Wisconsin here lately. Those teams are all highly seeded teams. So are we capable? Yes. Did we do enough? I'm not sure. I know if we are in the tournament, I believe our guys are capable of winning the game. But for me to speculate, it's hard. I know that our league is the toughest in the country this season. And to play the schedule that we've played and be able to sort of come up with our head above water here these last three weeks is a good sign. So we'll take whatever they give us. You obviously earn what you get. And for us right now we'll just kind of wait and see. But I think our league in general, though, will be represented well.

Q. Ohio State, I assume you think they are a tournament team at this point?

COACH MILLER: Yes, they're in the tournament. And I hope they get rewarded with that. Their last three games, like I said, are playing without a dominant player. So that has to go in consideration with their resumé as well. And they should definitely be in the tournament.



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INDIANA POSTGAME PLAYER QUOTES

Indiana sophomore G Justin Smith

On getting into the NCAA Tournament...

"We're taking it one game at a time. It wasn't for sure if we're going to get in, we don't know. It's really out of our hands, especially now."

On if they turn the NCAA Tournament noise off...

"We try to turn it off. We try to take it one game at a time and really focus on the next game that's coming up."

On the difference in turnovers today...

"I think we got sped up. We kind of got away from what we were doing well and then that kind of carried us through the game. We got some things going but definitely the turnovers."

On what changed when the team was down 20...

"When we got down 20, we kind of had to look at each other, get each other going and get some energy. Then we were able to bring it back to, whatever we got it back to, at the end of the game but it was a tough game."

Indiana freshman G Romeo Langford

On waiting until Sunday to find out if the team is in the tournament...

"It will be tough. I know all of us will be thinking about this one game but it's not really for us to worry about. It's for the committee to decide whether we're worthy to get in the tournament or not."

Indiana freshman G Rob Phinisee

On what the difference was between the first and second halves...

"I'm not sure. I feel like, like I said, we were missing shots so we couldn't really get any momentum. I feel like after we started making shots we started getting momentum and started playing harder on defense."

On the team fighting its way back into the game...

"I think leadership, coaches. Everybody on the team was staying together so we just fought till the end."