

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Monday, January 5, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Carter Smith

Press Conference



**PLAYOFF
SEMIFINAL**



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with Carter Smith.

Q. Obviously teams change as seasons go along. What are some things Oregon does better or different now than the first time you guys played them?

CARTER SMITH: We see a lot of similarities. I think that's a team that really sticks to their DNA because it works. It's shown against other competition this year.

There's a couple schematic changes we have seen so far. It's still pretty early into the week for us. We're starting our prep today a little more in-depth. It's all about just keeping the main thing the main thing. Everyone has to be in their playbook and understand the schemes.

Q. Can you talk about the physicality you guys played with and how much that has become part of your DNA.

CARTER SMITH: You're just talking throughout the season?

Q. Yes. Certainly with Alabama, too.

CARTER SMITH: Absolutely.

The biggest part of our run game is being able to break down a defense's will. I think we've done that many times on film so far this year.

We stick to our preparation. All the things that we do in practice are going to translate out onto the game field. Making sure we keep that speed and physicality throughout practice is kind of our edge setter. It is definitely one of our strengths.

Making sure that everybody's on top of that week after week after week is definitely one of the edges we have on the offense.

Q. Carter, you faced Ohio State, Alabama, Oregon this year, rosters with similar talent levels. What about Oregon specifically stood out compared to the other two teams you faced?

CARTER SMITH: Yeah, I think they have one of the better end corps throughout the Big Ten. I'd match them very similarly to Ohio State. They move the same. They're all very quick and very long guys. They're all very athletic, too, with a lot of good moves in their arsenal in pass pro and they know how to play the run.

There's always specifics with certain players. They were very great the first time around. It was definitely a challenge. It's going to be a challenge this time, too. I think they're going to give us their best shot, but they're going to get ours, too.

Q. You guys have committed very few penalties this season, especially the longer 10-, 15-yard varieties. What is the key to avoiding those mistakes?

CARTER SMITH: Yeah, it's all about how you practice again. Making sure that you are on top of all the little things. I had one this past week, my hand wasn't quite as inside as I wanted to when Fernando was escaping the pocket. That's something that is coachable and teachable for me to fix in order to reduce those mistakes.

I think we've done a good job of that this year.

Q. Bob Bostad, he was the only holdover. You've been there working with him. What does he mean to this program, to the group that you play for, and also for yourself and your development?

CARTER SMITH: Yeah, I mean, he hammers the DNA of the offensive line into everybody in that room. He prides himself on preparation and repetition. Whenever he sees something that's different and something about a certain look that a defense will present, we're going to run through it like 15 to 20 times before we get into the game. That way, whatever we see it in the game, we fall back on our

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preparation.

When Cignetti saw that, I'm sure he was impressed with it. He has a great résumé. Been throughout the NFL and all throughout college football. He was one of the main reasons I decided to stay here, too. I knew having a great offensive line coach was what I wanted. I knew I wanted to be his offensive lineman, too.

Having those years under him, the way that he's able to restack his room, too, bringing in great guys for the room to lead, it shows just how valuable of an asset he is.

Q. We'd heard from Cig I think on Saturday about how a lot of you guys are well equipped to be good in life after that. When you reflect where you were at prior to him arriving to where you are now, where have you seen you grow off the field habit-wise?

CARTER SMITH: That's a good question.

I would say that I've tried to better myself in terms of my religion, trying to be a better man of God, become closer with my Christianity, my faith. That's really important to me. It's something that a lot of my teammates preach, as well. I think it brings good camaraderie into the locker room.

I've never been the greatest at school. I'll definitely admit that. I earned my degree this past year. That's always going to set me up for life whenever I need a job. Yeah, I guess exciting things are to come for me once everything's over.

Q. A little bit off the wall, but I imagine you've seen more of him in practice than most. Daniel Ndukwe is a player we're seeing more of on the field. He's taken on a larger role. You've seen some good edges there. How have you seen Daniel grow as he's been handed more responsibility? How would you describe him at that position?

CARTER SMITH: Yeah, he's a great kid. Ever since he got in here, I'm pretty sure he was an early enrollee in the spring of 2024. That shows his commitment to the program already, wanting to come early, get into his playbook and develop as a player and as a person.

Out on the field, he breeds great competition. He's going to throw his hat down, play into your chest. He wants to get around you. A really feisty defensive lineman. He's starting to step up into a role of making plays. It shows last week. He had a lot of great plays in Alabama, a lot of great stuff.

His development is going well. I think he still has a lot more steps to take. He's definitely taken a lot of steps in the right direction, too.

Q. A lot has been made about the calendar these days. You're a guy who came in as an early enrollee. What did you gain from that versus what you gave up as a high school senior? Would you do it again?

CARTER SMITH: I gave up a volleyball state championship. My team went on to win that in the spring. That wasn't the greatest.

Coming here early was definitely for the best. Going through spring ball as a true freshman was really a blessing for me before going through a fall camp. It really opened my eyes to how much more of the game I needed to learn.

I think that's something that's big for any recruit that comes in. If you decide to come early, that's a big step in your career. It's going to help you realize, like, what you need to learn six months prior to when everyone else is getting there. It gives you a head start. You're already being developed by a college strength staff. There's really no downside to it.

I would preach that to anyone who has the opportunity, should definitely give it a shot.

Q. The personnel on the offensive line, how does that allow you guys to do different things? We saw you in the backfield kind of in the H back, running back, fullback position. How does the trust in some of these younger guys and Kahlil coming in give you guys some flexibility at that position?

CARTER SMITH: Yeah, it allows Shanahan to scheme a little bit. We saw that a little bit last week with me in the backfield. That was a lot of fun.

But at the end of the day, it's about getting the right guys ready for the job. Damola was given that opportunity last week. He did a great job, too. The first half he was in for most of the game. He balled out. I thought he did a great job.

I imagine that everyone upstairs is thinking the same thing, keeping him in that role. He's done great for our room. He still has a lot of growth left, but he's also a young guy so he understands that. I think he'll understand his role a little later in his career.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Carter.

