

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Monday, January 5, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Roman Hemby

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for Roman.

Q. Coach Cignetti talks about breaking opponents' will. How do you approach that, and what does it take to break an opponent's will?

ROMAN HEMBY: Four quarters of us playing our game, honestly. You see the guys we have up front, they work really hard. They make myself and Kaelon's job really easy. We just try to out-physical some of our opponents. We want to make it a four-quarter fight where we impose our will. At some point in the game, we feel we can potentially break the defense or make that play that helps us win.

Q. You guys have played a series of teams, Ohio State, Alabama, Oregon, with similar talent. What stood out about Oregon based on something they did well?

ROMAN HEMBY: I feel like Oregon is a great defense. All the defenses that we played have been great. I feel like it was just the environment and the atmosphere we played in that kind of played a factor into it.

You look at their front seven, they have really good players up there. Their linebackers are really good, as well. You look in their secondary, you see that they have a lot of players that are very athletic. I feel like that presented a challenge to us the last time we played, too.

Really going back to the drawing board and making sure we have the proper game plan, we go out there at practice and work as hard as we can. We'll have what we want on Friday night if we can do those things.

Q. You only have one fumble this year. What is the level of emphasis that's put on ball security every day?



ROMAN HEMBY: We put a huge emphasis on ball security. We do ball security drills in practice. The running back coaches and players, we do a really good job of doing individual drills where we take care of the football. We make sure that we carry good ball security throughout practices. Hopefully we can keep that going because we know that taking care of the football is really important for our offense, really important for our team. We want to sustain drives and really not give our defense short fields to have to cover.

As much as we can take care of the football and control the clock, we'll do that.

Q. You mentioned the coaches. Justice is on staff coaching you guys. How much do you talk with him during this run? How much does he say he wishes he was on the team instead of coaching?

ROMAN HEMBY: He says a lot about his journey and how it kind of shaped him to make him the person he is. He's definitely somebody that's very influential for the running back room, and in general, just somebody that's been there. He's been on the team. He kind of sees the successes. He sees the things that maybe went wrong in the past. He kind of helps us to shape our mindset in how we kind of go about things.

He doesn't say too much about wishing he was in our shoes. He's one of those guys that you could see by how he approaches his role that he really loves this team and he does everything he can to help us be successful.

When we do individual drills and things like that, he's working us extra hard because he knows what it's like to be in our shoes. I feel like that really helps our running back room to flourish.

Q. You guys on offense have a bunch of old dudes on this team. Could you talk just how the communication goes, in game even, in regards to what you might be seeing, in regards to your abilities to adjust on the fly?

ROMAN HEMBY: I feel like having veterans on the field



makes our job easy because we have that sense to where we've been through it before. A lot of our players have been in the situations that we're going to be in or have been in the past.

I feel like that helps us to stay grounded. You look at us in the huddle. You have guys like Pat Coogan who has been around, knows what he's talking about. You got other leaders like Fernando and players like that.

We kind of have that mentality where we won't flinch. We go in the huddle, regardless of the situation, regardless of where we are in the game, we know that all it takes is for 11 guys to do their job. We're here for a reason, because we have 11 guys that can do their job. We trust each other. We have that love for one another. When we get out there on the field, we know that we're going to put it on display.

Being older, I think it does help us to know that we've been through it. We're battle-tested. We play for one another. I feel like that really helps us to experience that grit feeling. That helps us to win those games.

Q. At the beginning of the season, it felt like maybe teams and opponents thought of you guys as more of a passing team. As the season went on, the run got more and more established. Do you feel you got better as a group? Do you think you changed some minds along the way?

ROMAN HEMBY: I definitely feel like we got better as a group. That makes sense. That's kind of how it works. We have to gel together. It takes us a little while to click on all cylinders in the facets of the run game.

It definitely was one of those things where we had to keep working towards it to get to where we want to be. Obviously we're not where we want to be. We can improve, a lot of things we can work on.

As the season went and started, we kind of had to find out what our team was about. We were testing a lot of different things. But we know that once you get into those big, meaningful games, a lot of those games are won at the line of scrimmage.

So the defensive line and offensive line have to go out there and work extra hard. They make our job easy, I say that all the time, because you look at the offensive line that we run behind, they open up those holes, they start to lean on those guys in the third and fourth quarter and make it easy.

But ultimately, as an offense, we just want to play

complementary football. We want to win those games. So if we got to throw the ball a lot, we'll do that. If we have to run the ball a lot, we'll do that. We just want to win.

To the second part of that question, I don't know if we changed people's minds. We're not really in the business of trying to do that. We want to prove ourselves right. That's kind of our mantra and what we go to practice for every day.

Hopefully we did. At the end of the day, if we're winning games, we'll take it however we can.

Q. Besides yourself and Kaelon, you guys are maybe the best 1-2 tandem in the country. You're so much fun to watch because of how you guys run. Doing what you did against a team like Alabama from the SEC, the way you guys did it, did that give you even more of a boost? Is there a friendly rivalry between yourself and Kaelon trying to keep going?

ROMAN HEMBY: We appreciate that.

Honestly, we have that brotherhood to where we kind of don't care who has the success. I say to myself kind of like we want to feed the hot hand. That's kind of how we operate. I feel like both of us have been through a lot in our careers. We're both veteran guys. Anytime we take the field, we have the trust in one another that they'll get the job done.

You can kind of see how our last game went. Kaelon set the tone for our offense in the second half. I was able to kind of ride that wave, kind of follow up on what he was able to do.

Anytime you have a good running back tandem to where both guys can stay fresh and both guys can go out there healthy and we can play for one another, that kind of gives us the ability to run hard, to not hold anything back. We're in the stretch to where we want to go win a national championship. We're not really leaving anything on the table.

Him and myself, we go out there every day with the mindset we're going to prove ourselves right and play winning football.

To your point of us having a little challenge with one another, we don't have one now. I might make one. I might start a little bet with him or something, and maybe it will make us even better in the post-season. We're not really too much worried about that right now. We just want to play our role to help our team win.

Q. I know you've said your departure at Maryland was emotional. If you could go back and talk to yourself at that time, the life lessons you've learned from now to then, to get yourself where you are right now?

ROMAN HEMBY: I would say just to trust the process, honestly. When one door closes, another door opens. It was hard for me in that moment to understand what was going on. But unwavering faith, just believing in God, it helped me to see the signs on the wall, see the things that was there for me to have success, to be open to it.

If I could go back, I would just tell myself not to cry about it, not to be upset about it, but to understand all things work for the greater good because God has His hand on everything.

When I was going through that process, a lot of things seemed shaky, a lot of things seemed not straight and narrow, but I was able to kind of make the best of my situation. I was able to make it better.

Honestly, this was definitely the best decision that I made in my life. Sometimes when you hit that door, it doesn't open, another one is opening for you. I feel like that's something I would tell myself.

Q. You guys run the ball in situations where it doesn't seem like you should run the ball. What makes you guys comfortable doing that? What makes you successful doing it?

ROMAN HEMBY: I really think that that kind of shines light on Coach Shanahan. He's one of the greatest in the business. He does a great job putting us into situations to be successful.

I feel like that's just a testament if we go out there and 11 guys do their job, every play will be successful. I feel like that's kind of really showing that. First and 20, to be able to run the ball and have success like that, that kind of shows if we were able to go out there and execute every play that Coach calls, we'll have success and we'll be where we want to be.

Just having a lot of guys go out there and take pride in doing their one-on-one job and winning their one-on-one battle, I feel like that helps us as an offense and it helps us to keep moving forward and moving the chains, because that helps us to get points.

Q. Teams have elected to blitz you guys a lot. When you as a running back have to stay in to protect Fernando, what does that process look like? How in practice do you work on protecting the quarterback in

pass blocking?

ROMAN HEMBY: Pass protection is something that's very important to the running back position as a whole. We had a lot of times during fall camp, spring ball, where we were working it, fine-tuning it against our defense. You guys get to see Aiden Fisher, Isaiah Jones, guys like that, that get the blitz and get home in games for our defense. We were able to go up against them, fine-tune our craft, work on things we needed to.

Our priority is taking care of the football and keeping Fernando in the pocket. We go into games doing that, we'll have success, be where we want to be.

That's something we work every day in practice. We have blitz, pickups, periods to where we have to fine-tune our craft. Coach Justice does a good job making our scout team give us realistic looks that we'll see on game day.

As a running back, that's something that helps your career. I have aspirations to play at the next level. That's one of those things that keeps you on those active rosters, keeps you on the field at the next level. I do everything I can to make sure Fernando is able to get the ball off, and I try to do everything that I can to make sure our offense is clicking in the passing game when they do blitz.

We go to work every day to make sure we can kind of take care of those things when it happens on game day. We're not perfect, but we're going to keep working it because we know that 15, if he's on his feet, he's going to make a play.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

