

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Monday, January 5, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Oregon Ducks

Matayo Uiagalelei

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Non-football question. I know how into thrifting you are. Since mom opened up her shop, have you had a chance to go down there?

MATAYO UIAGALELEI: Essentially like officially opened, I haven't been down there yet. Like during the summer, I was helping her just get stuff, just helping her get set up and stuff.

Yeah, I mean, it's definitely cool.

Q. What has the conversation been like when the defense plays its best game of the season?

MATAYO UIAGALELEI: I mean, I think just looking back, we already played the same (indiscernible) when we lost. It wasn't the standard.

But just talking about, like, what it takes to win this game. You can't take the (indiscernible) success. But, I mean, yeah, just talking about what we have to do to win, just how much does it mean to us.

Q. Your team obviously is different from the last time you played Indiana. Where do you feel up front defensively as a unit that growth has happened?

MATAYO UIAGALELEI: Talking about only up front?

Q. Yes.

MATAYO UIAGALELEI: I mean, I think we definitely become more mature up front. Trusting the defense, trusting the scheme, not trying to do our own thing. I think attacking the ball is one of the main things we've improved at in the front and the backers and in the back end.



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Definitely attacking the ball. Just playing more relentless, more physical.

Q. When you guys pitch a shutout like you did against Texas Tech last week, how much of that is a confidence booster? Do you feel like you right now defensively are hitting your stride, where you want to be, heading into this game?

MATAYO UIAGALELEI: I mean, yeah. Looking back, it's definitely cool to watch the film and be, like, there's a few plays where we could have done better. But overall we dominated them. It's cool to watch.

At the same time we are playing the best team in the country. This last week kind of stays back there. Now I just focus on Indiana.

Q. Last season it was a rematch with Ohio State in the Playoffs. This season another rematch but with Indiana. This time you guys are on the other side, you lost the first matchup. Do you think it gives you extra firepower going into this one with a chip on your shoulder as opposed to maintaining a standard you played at earlier in the season?

MATAYO UIAGALELEI: I mean, I'd say yeah. I know the other guys, they're eager to play this game, hungry for this game. It's a chance to get a get-back.

At the same time Indiana's grown, too, as a team. You got to realize that, so...

Q. Can you give me your impressions of Sadiq as both a teammate and a player?

MATAYO UIAGALELEI: Yeah, I mean, we came in the same class. I think we did a lot of stuff together. We were in the same lifting groups and stuff coming in.

I'd say from the start, he's definitely not a talkative guy. I think just his presence alone, just how he carries himself. I would say he's definitely a good leader, one of the main leaders on our team. Just leads by example all the time.

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Just shows up when he needs to show up, you know, yeah.

Q. How much is Fernando a focal point?

MATAYO UIAGALEI: You always want to get pressure on the quarterback. I would definitely say Mendoza, I wouldn't say he's the most athletic, not like the Washington quarterback where this guy is freaking running all over the place. I will say I think he's one of the best scramblers in the country as far as decision-making.

I think having a good cage, caging him in that pocket, pushing that pocket, is definitely important.

Q. When you look at your story, getting to Oregon and everything that it took to get to where you are right now, standing in this moment, what can you say about that personal journey, what you've learned, going through adversity to be in a place where you're one step out of a national championship?

MATAYO UIAGALEI: Yeah, I mean, growing up, like, this is kind of what you wanted as a kid, it's what you want to play for. Having a chance to play in the semifinal game, potentially playing in the next game, that's like this is what kids dream of, so...

I'm pretty sure everybody on the team is excited. I know everybody on the team is excited. It means a lot. It definitely means a lot, yeah.

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