

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Rolijah Hardy

Press Conference

Q. I'm curious what it's like being one of the younger guys contributing on this team. It feels like there's so many fourth- and fifth-year players that are kind of the faces of Indiana this year. But for you to come in and be doing what you're doing at such a young age, what's that been like and what does it say kind of how the coaches have sort of evaluated you and brought you in?

ROLIJAH HARDY: Yeah, the coaching staff, they trust me. It started off with last year, it's funny that you say young guard, Coach Haines always said you're not a young guard. Like, coming in, he always said I'm one of the older guards, I can be a leader.

And it's just been a great time here this year being able to play as a true sophomore and play with those older guards.

Q. Line of scrimmage, every team in America talks about next man up. You guys as a team have done that extraordinarily well. You've had injuries at linebacker or defensive line or even kicker. What is it that enables you to do that? Is it the quality of the depth, the coaching? How are you able to do that?

ROLIJAH HARDY: It's definitely the coaching. It's the quality of the coaching. These coaches, they put a lot of time into all the players, all the installs. Everybody knows what to do. They know everyone's job. So when it's the next man up, it's his turn, then they know what to do.

Q. Rolijah, you guys have done a really good job of (indiscernible) the yards after catch with a lot of these explosive receivers. What goes into that in practice? And then in the game, how do you just bring these guys down without them getting these extra yards?

ROLIJAH HARDY: Yeah. We do a lot of stuff in practice. We got a lot of tackle circuits. Coach Haines always talks



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about vice tackling, trying to damage ball carriers and just get them on the ground so we can survive the next down.

Q. Rolijah, when the national perspective kind of begins to shift like it has on you guys and as a team, how do you continue to maintain the edge and the hunger that's kind of defined this team throughout the entire season?

ROLIJAH HARDY: Yeah, it's always about blocking out the outside noise of preparing like we've been doing since the beginning. Just keep playing, preparation. We just target one another every week, and that's our goal.

Q. This is kind of a big-picture question. Do you guys ever talk about the fact that right now you're ranked number one in the country, you're the only undefeated team in the country, and that you're on the verge of playing for a National Championship and a chance to do something special, and once in a lifetime in the history of Indiana? Does it ever come up between you guys as teammates saying we are a team of destiny or we can do this?

ROLIJAH HARDY: Well, it's not really about us being the number one team. We talk about how we got here, and that's preparation, the hard work that we put in. And we just try to focus on that and we go from there.

Q. Rolijah, looking at Bryant Haines and just what he's meant to you, what he's meant to this defense, knowing that he will be there post this season and locked in with the Hoosiers, what it's been like to have his leadership and how that's gotten through to you?

ROLIJAH HARDY: Yeah, Coach Haines is great. He's defensively the best defensive coordinator I've been a part of, one of the top coordinators in the country. And he's just a great linebacker coach. He's able to help develop us, his game plan, his system. It's just really great to play for him.

Q. Rolijah, Aiden talked about this a little bit, but just people always say it's hard to beat a team twice in one season. For you, I guess, what is the challenge

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associated with that and how do you kind of approach this game, both, you know, in terms of preparation and just mentality? Like why is it tough to beat a team twice in one year?

ROLIJAH HARDY: Yeah, you take that last game and you watch the film, you it make adjustments. They got the same film we got. So we all just try to use that film. They're a better team, we're a better team, and we just go from there. Let the coaches do the game plan how they need to, and we just execute.

Q. Rolijah, the defensive line has been kind of the heart of this defense, which has been amazing, and you guys have taken hit after hit. And each week now you're playing a different offense, a different style. You have to make changes. You talk about making adjustments, but you have to make adjustments to whom you're playing. How difficult has it been? But how fun has it been to play against this myriad of different teams, whether it's Ohio State, Alabama, and now Oregon coming up?

ROLIJAH HARDY: Yeah. It comes down to coaching, having the guys around me knowing what to do, the "next man up" idea, and we just play off of each other. Our front seven is a great front seven with the stunts and the games we run, and it's really good to play behind a group of guys like that.

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