

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Aiden Fisher

Press Conference



**PLAYOFF
SEMIFINAL**



Q. Aiden, I was curious, Coach Haines is known for his innovative blitzes and schemes. Do you contribute to that? Do you come up with some innovative blitzes and schemes on your own, and how much fun is it to mess with offenses like you do?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, Coach Haines does a great job. Extremely innovative, extremely smart. Most of it he does on his own, and we'll pitch a couple of ideas here and there, but most of it he's the mastermind behind it. It's fun to play in a defense we, especially playing linebacker, you can really do anything. You can be a man covering, zone coverage, you blitz, you're in run fits. You really do it all.

It helps our defense with the diversity where we can show a blitz when we're not coming, we can show a blitz when we are coming, and I think for an offense or offensive line, and a quarterback especially, that really messes with your head and kind of throws a lot of protections off. Quarterback doesn't really know what coverage we're in. So it's a lot of things we do to get a step ahead scheme-wise, and I think it's obviously been paying off for us.

Q. Aiden, thank you for your time. And I know the word "fits" is different than the concept we're using it in here, but you guys do nothing but give offenses fits each week, it seems like, and you're changing everything. How difficult is it to adjust your defense to these variable different offenses? You're going to go from planning for Alabama to now Oregon, which is a very, very different and more prolific offense.

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, for sure. For us, the earlier in the week, it's a lot of mental gymnastics, kind of getting things figured out and sorted out with adjustments and how are you going to handle different things from different offenses.

But, yeah, like you said, these offenses aren't very similar.

We've seen Oregon once, but they've improved drastically. Their O-line is playing at a high level, quarterback, receivers, tight ends, running backs. Everybody is playing really well right now.

So we definitely have a challenge on our hands. But like you said, when you have Coach Haines, who's manipulating things so much, we're changing a defense week in and week out, it's a lot of mental stuff early in the week, but by the end of the week we all feel calm and confident with it.

And he does a great job teaching. I think all of our coaches do a great job teaching it instead of coaching it, this is how you're going to do it, one way. It's why are we doing it, how are we going to do it, and what are the multiple ways you can get to your ultimate job description.

I think that's what kind of makes it a little bit easier when we're doing so much mental stuff.

Q. Aiden, you guys have played obviously some rosters with a lot of high-level talent -- Ohio State, Alabama. Oregon is one of them. What separates Oregon from those other two? What are their strengths versus Ohio State and Alabama?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah. Oregon is an explosive offense, one that'll hurt you quick if you're not on your Ps and Qs.

Obviously, starts with a quarterback, who is one of the best in the country. Great player, smart, makes his reads quick, gets the ball out quick. He does a great job in every facet of being a quarterback in the system.

O-line, big, strong. They're physical. They move well, especially in space. Their O-line is great. Obviously the tight ends and receivers, the running backs, too, they have guys that are going to play on Sundays in every spot.

So it's a big challenge for us. They're really good when they get vertical. They're really good in the run game, quick game. The quarterback does a great job with his eyes reading coverages. And the running backs run hard.



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They're not easy to bring down, one guy.

So we definitely have our work cut out for us, but it's something I think it's more about us making sure we're doing the things and make us the special team and the defense than it is about being worried about the other team. They're a great team.

But I think if we're on high alert for all of these things, we'll be better prepared and better going into it on Friday.

Q. Aiden, I was asking about Daniel and Duvay. At some point in Coach Haines' defense where Coach Haines turns to you and says we need you. This is your opportunity. We need you to step up. How have you seen him sort of embrace that experience? I know he's been in the program a number of years. It's not like he's brand new to all of this. But how have you seen him these last couple of games you've been preparing for really sort of embrace the idea of, hey, I know it's my time now, my team needs me and maybe I'm going to add a little extra?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, when your opportunity arises, you gotta take advantage of it, and I think he's doing a great job. You can tell his maturity from last year to this year has really changed. He's not just a guy that's going to be there in case we need him. He's a guy that's going to get valuable snaps this year.

Obviously now it's going to be more than ever. He's done a great job. Physically he's cut out for the spot. There's no question about it. That spot has a lot of things that you have to think about and the mental game of it.

But he's done a great job. For us as linebackers, we have to do a great job communicating with him, knowing he's a little bit of a younger guy. But he's got this defense down to a T, and he's been doing a great job. He does everything we ask of him, and he does it at a high level.

His opportunity arose. He took advantage of it last week. We just need him to keep doing that. He's doing a great job. We have all the confidence in the world in him. We're happy with having him in that spot. I think he's doing a great job, and we're confident.

Q. Aiden, other teams in the playoffs have obviously lost games, and they're drawing on those experiences as they prepared, including Oregon. You've already had a team that's had an advantage, a team obviously that hasn't lost any games. What do you guys draw upon to sort of motivate you or, hey, if we do this, we might lose a game, we gotta be better this time around, even though you actually haven't lost a game as a

team?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, we have the same motivation as they do. We didn't play a clean game. We didn't play our best game. So all the mindset they have, we have the same thing. We didn't play a clean game. We left a lot of plays out there, and we felt like we just didn't play at a high level for that game.

So as much as the mental games that it can play on either team, we have just as much motivation, if not more, to really prove ourselves again. Like, we have so much more to prove to play a cleaner football game and to really prove ourselves.

We do that week in and week out. We have the opportunity to go out there and improve ourselves. We gotta take advantage of it, and I think we have a great opportunity this week. We just have to clean up a lot of things from Week 1 to Week 14, take those, learn from them, and move forward.

But we're excited for it. And we have a lot to prove this weekend.

Q. Aiden, when you prep and scout for a team a second go-around in the same season, what does that prep look like? How does it differentiate and how much stock do you put into the first meeting between you two?

AIDEN FISHER: To me, this is a whole new team. I think both sides are a whole new team. They've improved drastically. Their O-line, especially, and their quarterback are playing at an extremely high level. They've had new guys merge at receiver spots, and everybody is playing at a high level.

So for me, I'm scouting a whole new team. Schematically there are some things that will carry over a little bit, but for me I have to treat it like a whole new game, a whole new team, because we're in a different spot than we were when we were playing them, I think it was Week 6 or 5.

So to me, it's two teams seeing each other for the first time, in my mind. You treat it like that. You prepare for it like that. And none of it's going to be I can use my old preparation for this one.

For me it's a whole new team. My preparation is all new. I can speak for a lot of guys with that. Our coaches too. We're treating it like it's the biggest game of the year because it's the next one and you gotta prepare for it like that.



Q. Aiden, the win in Austin, after that win, was there kind of like a sense you felt that maybe the viewpoint around you guys had changed, like, okay, this is a legit team?

AIDEN FISHER: I think maybe for people outside of this facility. Nobody in here was taken off guard or shocked by it. Each week it's just another opportunity to go out there and prove that we belong. And I think that was obviously -- at that point in our season, it was the biggest opportunity to have, and I think we took advantage of it.

But I'm not -- I don't really want to pay any mind to that game. It's all focused on this one, and we have to go out there and prove it again. So as much as our fans and that the atmosphere around Indiana has loved that experience to go out there and do that, it doesn't mean anything to us now. This is way more important, and a game we have to be focused on 100 percent.

Q. Aiden, I had another question about that last game. I know you just said you didn't want to talk about it, but it was more like at some point during the season, Coach Cignetti said those games last year, Ohio State, Notre Dame, maybe the moments were too big. I was just curious like when you guys did go out there and win, was there any effect on the psyche of the team, like, hey, man, if we're prepared, if we execute, we now know the moment will never be too big; if we can do our job, we can beat anybody?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah. I think two things for that. I remember going into that game Coach Cig said we needed more dogs on our team compared to last year going into those big games. I think we got them now, so that's not going to be a problem.

And then for us, I don't want to say it was ever thinking it was a moment too big for us. I think Coach Cig said it great. People say that because our logo is I and U and it's Indiana. But that's just not how we think. I know for me personally, when we go into a game, with the preparation we have, the players we have, the confidence we have in ourselves, no matter when and what's happening in the game, we're going to find a way to overcome it. We're going to find a way to win the game. And it's just about you keep chipping away, and at some point it'll break. You kind of break free as a team.

But I think us this year, there's been no underdog mentality. I know people have referenced the misfits. I think when you look at where people come from, yes, but as a team, we don't feel like that. We're right where we belong, and I don't think anybody is going into any game with underdog or even a slight chance of doubt with any

game. It's full preparation, full confidence going into each game and kind of hitting the ground running.

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