

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Isaiah Jones

Press Conference

Q. Isaiah, next man up. Injuries, defensive line, linebacker, wide receiver, running back, even kicker, and it hasn't affected the performance of the team. Why is that? Is it coaching? Players? How is that possible?

ISAIAH JONES: Yeah. I think that's just the mentality of the team. It starts with Coach Cig. There's a standard in every room and as a team. And if one guy goes down, there should be no let-off and no difference in the guy that steps in.

That's what makes the team special, is I know in the linebacker room or the defensive line room and on the defense entirely, if one guy goes down, it's the next man up. And the standard we have on defense and on the team is there should be no let-up and you should be able to step in and fill that guy's shoes and be able to do the same things, make the same plays he is.

Q. Isaiah, people often say that -- talk about how hard it is to beat a team twice in one year. For you, just why is it so difficult to beat a team twice in one year? And when you look at Oregon specifically, what do you see different in them than what you saw both on tape and in reality the last time you guys played each other?

ISAIAH JONES: Yeah. I mean, the thing is, what makes teams great is you get better each week, and that's obviously what Oregon has done. That's what we've done.

So for them, they're an entirely new team. They're playing fast. For them, they're using some of their athletes, their tight ends, their running backs. They have a receiver that's really coming on this year right now.

Dante Moore, he's a great quarterback, great player. He's playing excellent right now offensively, and so they're starting to get their athletes and get their play-makers the



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ball in space. And their O-line is one of the best we've played.

So they're obviously doing well, picking up pressures and running the ball, and same thing we pride ourselves on. When you can run the ball and stop the run, you're setting yourself up for success.

Q. Isaiah, when it comes to playing in a 15th game of the season, what are the challenges of the mental preparation, the physical preparation? Because, I mean, have you had this much wear and tear in one season of football before?

ISAIAH JONES: No. I don't think anyone at this point really has probably had this much, with the new College Football Playoffs and all the playoff games. 15 games in a season is long, but for us it's a one-week mentality.

And we know that complacency kills, and so that's something we fight every week. I know every team probably fights that across America. But this deep in the season, when you're so close to something, for us it's almost like you have a new hunger inside your stomach. And it's a one-week season, and you don't want to go home. Everyone wants to fight tooth and nail for one more game.

So with the veterans on this team, I know it's a reality that if you don't go out there prepared, this could be your last game forever. And so that lights a fire in our stomach, and that's what keeps us hungry and ready each week.

Q. Isaiah, you faced obviously Ohio State, Alabama, Oregon in the regular season, and very star-laden lineups. You mentioned athletes. But what does Oregon maybe do better than those other two teams, or what's their strength kind of compared to them?

ISAIAH JONES: I think Oregon's O-line is pretty talented. Just with ID'ing blitzes, pass protection, and then running the ball. If you can run the ball, that opens up your play actions, opens up your deep shots. That's when you can get in your pass sets. And you're working with second and

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third and short downs -- when you're behind the sticks, it's really hard as an offense, kind of makes you want to (indiscernible) lets the defense know kind of eat.

And so they're a really good O-line. They really communicate well and are able to pick up stunts. And so that's where I feel we'll have a big challenge. And obviously on the perimeter, just being able to -- these guys all have athletes, but it's our 11 versus their 11 each week. So we're confident, and we're excited for it.

Q. Isaiah, just curious as someone who's at Indiana before Coach Cig got there, what have you learned about how he evaluates players and who he brings into the program? Because he's obviously involved in all of those decisions, GM and coach. What's it been like from your perspective to see?

ISAIAH JONES: Yeah, Coach Cig's player evaluation is special. Obviously he doesn't always go after the big shiny guys. He just wants guys that he knows can play. And if you can play, he wants you.

And the second part of that is just the human being behind the pads. He's going to bring in guys that mold well in the locker room, guys that are team players. And that's what makes this team so special, is just the camaraderie we have in the locker room.

That makes you want to play that much harder for those guys, offense or defense, and lets you kind of just fuel off each other. And when offense is kicking butt and running the ball, the defense wants to go out there and get a three-and-out so they can get the ball back and go score. And it's the same way for the offense. Just having those types of players in the locker room makes a special team.

Q. Isaiah, when the national perspective shifts like it has done over the last couple of weeks on this team, does that kind of change the chip on your guys' shoulder at all?

ISAIAH JONES: No. I don't think the chip's ever changed all season from last season, the guys that came. Whether you're ranked one or unranked, you're always chasing perfection. You're chasing that perfect game as a defense.

And for us, that chip will always be there. I know a lot of these guys have chips before they were at Indiana, and so do I. So having that chip is what's got us here, and I don't think it's ever going to go away.

Q. Isaiah, habit-wise, has Cig changed, like, the way you operate, like off field? Has he instilled things that have kind of affected how you live life?

ISAIAH JONES: With Coach Cig, he's never -- he respects our time a lot, coaches and players, and he's never going to have us here just to have us here. And that's made me think, if he's going to give us this time off, then be a pro with your time. Take care of your body, eat the right things, stretch. Take care of your body because your body is what's got you here and what's going to keep you playing and keep you active.

Seeing how he respects our time and how he wants our bodies to be the best, that's kind of rubbed off on me and a lot of the teammates, is take care of your body and just be a pro outside the facility.

Q. Isaiah, I know you guys don't want to be complacent about the fact that you've already beat Oregon, but from the outside, that was the game that kind of really shifted the perception of you guys. I'm just curious, did it in any way shift the psyche of the team to think, you know what, if we're prepared and we execute, we can win every single game we play the rest of the year?

ISAIAH JONES: Yeah. That's every week, you want to go and prepare no matter who you're playing. I think that's what made this team special, is no matter who we're playing, whether it's the No. 1 ranked team or unranked team, like I say, we're chasing that perfect game. We're chasing perfection.

And no matter who we play, if we're chasing perfection and we go out there and do our 111th, we can play with anybody in the country. And I think the last game with Oregon showed that. And the games from then on, it's just us out there chasing perfection, doing your 111th, flying to the ball, fast, physical. For us, that's the makeup of our team. That's the makeup of our defense.

Q. Isaiah, you guys went like 25 days, whatever it actually was, without playing a game. And now you're going to potentially play three top-level games in a span of 19 days. Which do you guys prefer? Which do you prefer, and has your teammates, have you talked about that, do you think, would be better?

ISAIAH JONES: Yeah. I had heard about the teams with the bye, the curse and all that. No one really pays attention to that. For us, I think we're all getting pretty antsy with that 25-day break. We were all itching to get back out there.

And what makes this team special is we have a lot of guys that love football. And I think if you gave us a game every single day, these guys would go out there ready to play,

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fired up, and you want to get tired of it.

So this team is excited. This team loves playing together and loves playing for each other. And the 25-day break was long. It's a lot of time we felt like we were just sitting around waiting to play, seeing who we were going to play.

So for us, we're excited. It's one game. One game at a time. It's a one-week season right now. So right now all we have on our minds is Oregon, and we're excited to go out there and play.

Q. Isaiah, when you look at Coach Cig and just what he brings to the table, how he leads and what he chooses to do, just the way he goes about and how he is as a coach, is there anybody that you had as a coach growing up that can parallel that, or has he been totally unique in the way he approaches the game and approaches the team?

ISAIAH JONES: Yeah, I think Coach Cig is one of a kind. And obviously it stems from maybe where he's been before with Coach Saban, but I wouldn't know about that. I just know Coach Cig is one of a kind. I've been around the way he handles the team and takes that leadership role and owns that.

He just instills confidence in his team, and that's something I feed off of. I know a lot of guys feed off that. And when you have a coach that's that confident and believes in you with no doubt, I mean, that makes your guys play their hearts out for the guy.

And when he goes out there and maybe sticks his neck out in the media and maybe says things some people don't agree with, when we see that, he's not just a coach that's in the team room saying these things. He'll go out there and say it to the media and to the world. When you see that, it's like why would you not want to put your heart on the field for the guy.

Q. Isaiah, during your recent answers and questions, you mentioned the word "special" more than one time, I mean, in terms of the camaraderie, the feeling with the team. But has there been any introspection in terms of relation with the community and the fans of what you've done already, being special in terms of coming to this point in the season as the top-ranked team in the country, being undefeated and having the chance to play for the national title?

ISAIAH JONES: Yeah. You know, I love the Hoosier fan base. And I know in the past few years and maybe decades it's been rough. But I think the two things I can go back to are our two postseason games. Both have felt like

home games.

And that shows the love Hoosier Nation has for this team, and they've been waiting for the opportunity like this. I'm glad to be able to be a part of it and to go out there and wear the Indiana Hoosier across my chest -- it's probably more important than the name of my back, to be honest -- to go out there and give these fans this and give them what they deserved. You see them show up, and these last two games felt like home games.

And I know they'll travel well to Atlanta. So I'm excited for that game too, just to be able to give this fan base this opportunity, because I know it's a ride for them, just like it is for us. And we're not done yet, and I'm excited to see them in Atlanta.

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