

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

D'Angelo Ponds

Press Conference

Q. You've played a lot of star-laden lineups here in terms of Ohio State, Alabama, Oregon. How does Oregon compare to those other two, and maybe what's kind of the strength you see from that group?

D'ANGELO PONDS: When thinking of Oregon, they had a high-priority offense. They like to take shots. They like to go deep. Great quarterback. Just like all those other teams. I would say they're kind of similar with the receivers. Great receivers, like to get the ball to them in space. So they're very similar.

Q. What are the challenges of going up against a team a second time, especially for you as a quarterback lining up against a receiver? How tricky is it mentally to kind of not remember what people did the last time you played and just kind of treat this as a new game like everybody's been saying?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I would say in terms of my position, it is kind of tricky. The receiver knows what I like to do. I know what the receiver likes to do. So it's a chance to mix things up and keep them guessing, basically. And it's going to be a mind game out there. So basically that's what it's going to be.

Q. IU has had some significant injuries this year, and it has not affected performance. I know the "next man up" philosophy is working. Why is it working so well? Is it the quality of the players, the quality of the coaching? Why is that?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I would say it's the coaching. When you have a player of that caliber go down, like Stephen Daley or stuff like that, and the production stays the same, everybody does the same thing and the standard is the same at each level and it's the next man up.

Q. You've gone against some premier wide receivers



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who can get into space and get extra yards. You and Jamari have done a really good job of getting your guy down to the ground. What goes into that, both in practice and then in the game, when you're facing these guys who could take the ball 80 yards?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, going against receivers like that, it's definitely tough. It's tough. We worked on it in practice from Ojong. He teaches us to get the man down. Sometimes we're in cover three, and they throw little hitches out there. We gotta make the tackle. We gotta (indiscernible) the explosives. And it's something we take pride in, honestly. So that's something we work on every day as well.

Q. Last week you had said that like size-wise a lot of guys view that as a con with you. It's kind of a pro, though, the way it's kind of always added a chip. Why is that a positive? Like, why is the size that a lot of guys view as a bad thing actually really a positive for you?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I believe I said it before. I'm way faster than guys. I got good technique. I have better feet than most of the taller guys. I would say that's why it's a plus for me. It's easier for me to move. I can move fluidly. I feel like that's what makes me excel as a player.

Q. You have become one of the known features of this great defense, first of all. How much pride do you take in that of itself, knowing where you came from? And exactly who's having more fun with this season, you or your dad?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, I definitely take a lot of pride in defense. Defense will take you a long way. They've won championships, as people say. It's definitely something we take pride in as a whole.

And definitely my dad is having fun with it as well. I try to stop him sometimes, but it's out of my control.

Q. D'Angelo, you guys are one of the more fundamentally sound playoff teams left in the playoffs.

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And last week versus Bama, instead of a lot of ramp-up tackles, it felt like a lot of guys were dropping their shoulder, just trying to lay somebody out. Was there something that played into that, or was that how the game was going for you guys on defense?

D'ANGELO PONDS: It was a little bit of stuff that played into that, from my perspective. But it's how we play as a defense overall. We've been playing like that all season. We have a lot of doubters and stuff like that, and we never looked that way, and we just played our game.

Q. D'Angelo, when you look on either side of you and you've been going through this season with your brothers on the field, what has this whole experience been like? What are some words to kind of describe what this journey has been like as this Indiana team has grown to the point that you're at the semifinals of the College Football Playoffs?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Honestly, in my perspective, words can't really describe the feelings we're going through right now. We're just taking it one day at a time, try to go 1-and-0 each week. I haven't really thought on the season and how well it's gone. I would say after the season I will probably do that and look back on it. But right now we're just trying to go 1-and-0 each week.

Q. D'Angelo, a quote from Coach Haines about you, he said D'Angelo competes with every fiber in his being, and that seems like a great compliment. I'm curious where that comes from in your kind of evolution as a football player.

D'ANGELO PONDS: I would say having that chip on my shoulder, hearing I'm undersized, being under-recruited out of high school and stuff like that, always overlooked. I would say that's where it comes from. Just that dog in me, I feel like it's come from being overlooked. I always thought I never got the credit from what I was putting on the field, and I just prove that every day.

Q. D'Angelo, I know you guys say all the time you guys don't pay attention to the doubters, but I'm sure you guys at least see some of that stuff. So when that stuff pops up on social media or your feed, do you immediately scroll past it, or do you send to somebody and say, Ha-ha, look at this is? What's that reaction when you do see that doubt online?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I really don't react no type of way. A lot of people have a platform these days and ages. Anybody can say anything. It really doesn't affect me. If anything, I'll probably laugh at it or I'll just be like, okay, that's noted. But it really doesn't affect anything on the

field, honestly.

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