

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Coach Mike Shanahan

Press Conference

Q. What were your first impressions of Omar? I know you're probably drinking through a firehose evaluating all those guys that first spring. What were your first thoughts about him?

MIKE SHANAHAN: Yeah, I remember my first meeting with him when I first got to IU, and he jumped out as a guy -- there was a lot more to him than just football. I know he has a really strong family connection, really deep in his faith as well. Just knew he was a really good kid that I wanted to help along his journey.

Then athletically, he really jumped out to me the first time I saw him work out, his explosiveness, his speed, his ability to track the football in the air. I knew he was somebody who could be really special, and he's just continued to work hard and really happy with how he's played this year for the most part, like we've talked about, and I thought last week against Alabama, it felt like he was back to himself after the injury in the Big Ten Championship game.

Q. Coach Cignetti is not a coach that really calls plays, and you've been the one doing that for him for quite some time now. I'm curious if you've had conversations with him about why that is and why he made the decision to delegate that.

MIKE SHANAHAN: I'm not sure why. I know maybe it had something to do with us just working together for so long. But yeah, we never really talked about that.

But it's a collaboration throughout the week. A lot of times throughout the game, we've already discussed that on Monday or Tuesday or something like today, to know what to go to in certain situations, and just us as a staff, we've always been on the same page and feel that's something we've been very conscious of as we go into the games ready to go.



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Q. From your perspective, does that free him up to do other things?

MIKE SHANAHAN: I'm sure it does. But I know he's got a lot on his plate, that's for sure. Hopefully it would allow him to think about the defense or special teams or recruiting, something like that.

Q. Rematches don't really happen in college football. How does your film strategy change when you're playing a team again?

MIKE SHANAHAN: Yeah, it hasn't changed a whole lot. Obviously we went back and watched our game pretty closely just to see what their plan was against us the first time around.

However, I feel like it could be a completely different change-up pitch from the first game. They've morphed a little bit. There's still some things that they've shown to continue to do since we played them, but that's just what makes it so much fun, the chess match within, and we're putting a scheme together that accounts for what we did in the first game, but also what they've showed throughout the rest of the year.

Q. Speak to the balance of that. Do you ever worry you're sort of second-guessing something a little too much, that you're thinking too much about they did this the first time? Do you almost focus more on yourself in a game like this?

MIKE SHANAHAN: Yeah, you're always focusing on yourself and what you need to do to have success and to put the players in the best position to be successful.

Coaches, I know especially for myself, I tend to overthink a lot throughout the week, and then usually pretty good gauge on how the game is going to go after that first series or two and try to make the proper adjustments.

You're always trying to play the what-if game without removing yourself from what you do well. That's what I feel like we went back to, even in the Alabama game and other



games throughout the year, focusing on what our guys do well.

Q. How does the strength of your run game influence the offense and allowed you guys to open up the playbook more?

MIKE SHANAHAN: The run game is where it all starts for us. Number one, it gets everybody in the flow of the game, especially the O-line, allow those guys to kind of eat up front.

Our running backs do a really good job of keeping the ball moving forward. They're really disciplined. They ran really hard in our last game, so we're going to need a big game out of them. When you're able to run the football, it creates favorable situations I guess you could say, for the receivers and the quarterback.

Whenever you're able to establish the run, it usually helps the quarterbacks in protection, as well, slows down the defensive line slightly.

Q. How does it affect the passing game?

MIKE SHANAHAN: It really just creates one-on-ones. Some of that comes in RPOs. With us, if a guy is playing 10 yards off, a lot of times we have something where we can take advantage of that.

But also, whenever teams need to stop the run, usually you've got to get an extra safety or add a corner in the box. Usually that creates match-ups on the outside that we're able to take advantage of.

Q. Charlie Becker has popped off the page in the last game. What have you seen from his growth?

MIKE SHANAHAN: Yeah, he's taken enormous steps. Just happy for him because he always put the work in. Even when he wasn't getting a ton of reps early on in the year, always stayed ready. He was a guy that could play multiple positions. You saw last week he played in the slot quite a bit along with playing on the outside. So his flexibility has been a real key for us, as well.

Then really, as you saw the last really half of the year, his ability to stretch the field, and not only stretch it, but also make plays down the field has been huge for us, and our explosiveness, and just adding another layer that defenses need to account for.

Q. How does that help everyone with Omar (indiscernible)?

MIKE SHANAHAN: It's one more weapon offense that teams need to account for. It's hard to tilt coverage to somebody else. It's hard to really stack the box in the run game I like to think.

We're fortunate we've got a ton of weapons out there on offense, and Fernando has done a really good staying disciplined in his reads, getting the right guy the ball and taking those shots down the field whenever we can, giving our guys a chance to make some plays.

Q. Coach talked about the off-season. The next challenge was the consistency, whether it's day-to-day practice or the way he performed in games. You talked about the physical approach that he has and the mental approach that he has, how did he get to a place where the consistency was where it needed to be, just in his habits --

MIKE SHANAHAN: I think some of that had to do with him just maturing, becoming older, becoming around us and our expectations and the standards that Coach Cignetti sets every single day on the practice field, and that's where it all starts for us.

He's bought into it. He very easily could have gone the other way, but he's bought into everything that we've asked him to do.

It's just a constant process with him, just like a lot of other players, just every day being consistent, putting the work in, practicing the way you're going to play on game day, and I feel like he really took a step this year in that regard.

Q. Last time you guys (indiscernible) what are you hoping to do to try to (indiscernible) if they bring it again?

MIKE SHANAHAN: Yeah, I think that's just who they are to a degree and what they like to do. It's going to be hard to balance it. We're going to have to be really good in our protections when we throw the ball. Obviously running the football is going to help that as well as long as we have answers. You know, a big pressure team, they take away easy access throws. We're going to have to find other ways to move the ball consistently in the run game.

But they're a good defense. They pose a lot of challenges. Even when they're not pressuring, they have the ability to get to a quarterback with just a four-man rush, and they do a nice job with the simulated pressures, as well.

Everybody is just going to need to be on point with their pre-snap indicators, post-snap, playing fast and reacting.

But they definitely keep you off balance, and I feel like

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that's why their defense is ranked so high.

Q. You have one of the older teams in college football. How important is age and experience?

MIKE SHANAHAN: In the recruiting part, I would say it's a factor. Coach Cignetti always says, I'm sure you guys have heard it, production over potential. With production usually comes a wealth of experience.

We're very fortunate that we have a lot of guys that have played a lot of football and the amount of snaps they've accumulated throughout the year, even some high school guys or a guy like Charlie Becker who is just a sophomore. By now he's a junior because of the amount of snaps he's accumulated, and there's other guys, Damola, some other guys on offense that are in that situation, as well.

Q. (Indiscernible).

MIKE SHANAHAN: Yeah, that's a good question. I believe we can. Plays off of plays, things that we've done throughout the year, building off of each other, and then yeah, there's a lot of times where we try to make the same play look a lot of different ways to the defense. I feel like that's what a lot of offenses try to accomplish.

But it's very easy in our system to change things up and keep it simple for our guys, but make it look differently to the defense and hopefully cause a miscommunication or a guy getting out of his gap, maybe a busted coverage, things like that that we try to take advantage of.

Q. How much do you watch the film of other games and say, oh, that's a play we need to try? Do you do that a lot?

MIKE SHANAHAN: That's definitely part of it. Every week you assess what other teams have done on the defense and try to see what may fit that you don't have or things that are very similar that you can kind of translate to the concepts or the run game or whatever it might be, with your offense. But that's part of the game planning process. Don't want to give too many details, of course.

But yeah, we want to see what has affected teams throughout the year and how we can apply it, if at all.

Q. (Indiscernible) what have you seen from him and how valuable has it been to have those game reps specifically?

MIKE SHANAHAN: I think it's been invaluable for him. I think one thing that really jumped out to us was his athleticism, his ability to use his legs to make plays. Saw it

last week, but you've seen it in other games, as well.

Whenever we have asked him to throw the ball, I feel like he's made good decisions. There was only one or two maybe throughout the whole season that I'm sure he would like to have back. But for the most part, he really executed well when he's been in there. It's been a good evaluation tool, but also, that's kind of what we expected out of him. He took a big step this year just moving from his freshman year to now. He really has grown and matured.

Q. When you have a guy that's been in your system (indiscernible), how are those conversations like you say, you'll have a chance to compete, because he sounds confident. What are those conversations like?

MIKE SHANAHAN: I mean, he's always been very confident. He's always put the work in. He's a winner. He won at the high school level. Those are all attributes that you love about him.

I feel like, just like every position, though, and I am not going to limit this just to the quarterback position, but we're always trying to upgrade, trying to create competition. Competition usually brings the best out of everybody.

So that's always been Coach Cignetti's approach in what we try to do at every position, bring the best guys we can into the program to help us win, and ultimately bring the best out of each individual guy, as well.

Q. (Indiscernible).

MIKE SHANAHAN: Yeah, I feel like that's been one of Fernando's best traits throughout the whole year is being able to take one play, whether it was good or bad, wipe it clean, come back to the next one and completely reset.

After that first drive, they did some different things that they hadn't really showed on film, so we had to talk about it on the sideline, have him see it for the first time along with everybody else on the offense, get everybody on the same page, and then just -- I was a little bit more conscious of it, too, the aggressiveness that they came out with early in that drive, in the first drive.

But Fernando's experience now, he's seen it all. Maybe there's a little tweak here or there, but he's able to adjust quickly. Nothing has shaken him. You guys know all the moments. I'm sure you know what I'm referring to throughout the year. The good and the bad, he's been able to wipe the slate clean and totally reset going into the next drive.

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