

Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Oregon vs Indiana

Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Fernando Mendoza

Press Conference

FERNANDO MENDOZA: I want to make sure my focus is immersed in this moment right now for the Peach Bowl.

Q. A lot of people were shocked when Indiana beat Oregon, but to have that kind of moment already, how does that motivate you guys to kind of recapture that moment again?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Yeah. I would say Oregon is a fantastic team. They're a national powerhouse, and although we've beat Oregon, it shows that we are still the underdogs.

At that point we were for sure the underdogs. They were ranked above us. However, we were trying to keep that underdog mentality going into this game as we might be ranked higher than them now in the College Football Playoffs, but it's a neutral site right now. They have fantastic talent on their team, draft picks, star picks all across the board, offense, defense. We are really trying to have that underdog and hungry and humble mentality.

Q. How have you been able to handle all of this, all the media attention? You go from the BIG TEN title, obviously the Heisman Trophy. How have you been able to handle this personally?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: I would say the 26-day layoff, the bye week, although it hurt a lot of teams, it helped myself a lot because it gave me a break between the BIG TEN championship and the Heisman and all the way to Alabama.

There was a lot of media attention especially after the Heisman that was grateful. I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That was a great honor for all of us. However, really stepping back and keeping to my process and keeping to my routine and not changing too much and also not really having social media. I only have LinkedIn



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and YouTube on my phone right now. It's really helped things in perspective and keep all the opinions of the in the building opinions.

So I'm not online reading, oh, Fernando is great, Fernando sucks. I'm listening to what my quarterback coach says and what the quarterbacks in our room think, so that is what my focus is, and that's how I've been able to play my best football so far.

Q. Hoosier Nation they showed up. We know Atlanta is a lot closer to Indiana than California. Give me your thoughts, your expectation, your excitement for these IU fans showing up on Friday?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Yeah. The Hoosier Nation, they were a huge reason on why we beat Alabama and the way we beat them is because it was a home game for us. It was 80 percent Indiana fans, 20 percent Alabama fans. And having that home field advantage means so much to us as players.

It's essentially having the 12th player on the field. And to have them show up not only meant so much off the field by disrupting the opponent, but it meant on the field with us and elevating our play and to be able to have another opportunity to play in front of Hoosier Nation, or myself having another opportunity to play, it's an honor and I can't thank Hoosier Nation enough for their support.

Q. (Inaudible)?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Yeah. I would say it's the fourth quarter mentality. You see a lot of people trying to adopt it by putting the fours up. It's a different type of mentality of, hey, you really gotta focus in. It's college football. Small margins and playing such a great team as the Oregon Ducks. It's going to be a small margin game.

And we have to have extreme focus and intentionality, especially in the fourth quarter, because you want to make sure you're putting your best foot forward and all those plays count so much more than maybe the first quarter, second quarter. Every play counts. And we want to make

... when all is said, we're done.®

sure we have extreme intentionality to every single play.

Q. Fernando (inaudible).

FERNANDO MENDOZA: Yeah. So the Rose Bowl, California, longer trip for us. And we were there for an extra day. So there was a lot more -- we had a real Thursday red zone practice in Pasadena. That was extremely interesting. However, this is a quicker turnaround, similar to many of our away trips. So I think we've been able to learn and compartmentalize it all. Although playing the Rose Bowl and playing the Peach Bowl are fantastic experiences, and you want to have gratitude and appreciate the moment. It's not time to go sightseeing. This is a big trip. This isn't like a normal bowl game, you're there for a week, you're hanging out with your friends, going around the city. Obviously we're still hanging out with our friends, but this is a business trip. This is a business trip and we're here for one reason only and it is to compete against Oregon.

Q. (Inaudible).

FERNANDO MENDOZA: I can be here for hours talking about the process. However, I would say that having an intentional process, I wouldn't say so much of, you know, superstition that you're doing crazy stuff here and there. But I would say more things that actually are going to be able to translate to your productivity, performance towards the game and being really intentional with those.

My process is getting more than eight hours of sleep a night. Sleep is so important, and there's so many different unsung heroes in my process, whether it's sleep, whether it's nutrition, whether it's film studies. And I make sure to keep that a constant.

Whenever I have my process, it's really a system. It's really a system that I follow that I go and I really deliberately do and make my system. That means I've done everything possible to prepare for this game.

And so when I step on that field, I am confident, as I know that my preparation is unmatched, and I know that's the most that I can do possibly. And so when I go on the field, I'm confident that my process has taken me here and that I can compete at the highest level.

Q. (Indiscernible)

FERNANDO MENDOZA: I would say, we like to joke around. We like to joke around, and it might not always be in such a joking way. For example, if I see Carter Smith which he pushes so much weight, the guy is so strong. If I see him doing 350 on whatever on squat or 400 on squat,

like hey, man, you could add five pounds on that. That looks light. Little jabs and jokes. I would say it's a really good culture where we all jab and joke with each other. It's what good friends do. So we'll throw jabs at each other, and I think that's what he means by that.

Q. Your offensive line has been getting a lot of love. How much of an impact can they make for you guys coming up on Friday?

FERNANDO MENDOZA: I think the best thing that's happened to this team especially after the Rose Bowl game was Pat Coogan getting the Rose Bowl MVP. Thank you for giving Pat Coogan the MVP because it has jolted our offensive line and given -- they've really been the unsung heroes as a run game has setup everything in our pass game. And they're the reason our offense is good, plain as it is. I could seem all humble about it, but it truly is the truth.

And having an offensive line get that award and get that recognition and praise has helped us so much as it's really helped them not only play as a unit, but it's also felt them feel appreciated, not just from inside the building, but from outside the building.

So I think it's been great for them. And I'm really happy to see it.

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