

CFP First Round: Notre Dame vs Indiana

Friday, December 20, 2024

Notre Dame, Indiana, USA

Notre Dame Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Coach Curt Cignetti

Postgame Press Conference

Notre Dame - 27, Indiana - 17

CURT CIGNETTI: All good things come to an end. And when you're my age, you've seen it all. And I have a lot of guys hurting in there but a part of life is learning how to deal with disappointment the proper way and come back a stronger person because of the experience. You never get everything you want in life. That's how life is.

But it doesn't diminish what these guys accomplished, for sure this season which everyone in this room can detail out what this team's accomplished. A lot of firsts.

So proud of them. It's easy to say we didn't play our best game, but a lot of that was probably because of who we played. I thought Riley Leonard was excellent handling the pressure, getting rid of the ball.

Defensively they pretty much suffocated our offense until the last minute and a half of the game. And their skill guys made good plays. They played well. And they beat us (indiscernible).

And I am happy that our guys didn't give up and pounded those two scores in on two-minute drives at the end. You just never know. You make that two-point play and you recover one more kick, it's just a crazy game, right? I mean, the way it was going, you're looking at the game saying to yourself, well, this is probably going to end up about 40-3 or something like that. I'm not saying that, but you're probably thinking that.

Here you are scoring, 27-17, with an opportunity to make a two-point conversion, kick another onside kick to tie the game.

So, Notre Dame is a good football team. Wish them the best of luck moving forward. And I'm proud of our guys.

Q. Curt, just in terms of, I don't know if you would pin



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it on any one thing, whether it's the offense, the pick, maybe some of the third downs, did you feel like your team never got off its heels?

CURT CIGNETTI: Absolutely, we completed that long pass to Sarratt early in the game. Got down there and threw that interception on a tempo play. They came out, a 98-yard, guy in the wrong gap. You know what I mean? We can't catch them -- bigger, stronger, faster. It was tough sledding.

Q. You hinted what your answer might be, but in terms of -- you mentioned missed tackles during every interview during the game. What do you attribute some of those things to? They didn't crop during the season, but tonight was it just their skill players being faster --

CURT CIGNETTI: When you play good people who move faster, quicker change of direction, they're harder to tackle. I think that was the case tonight a lot of times.

Q. Notre Dame was 5-of-7 on third down in the first half. What were they doing to make it difficult to keep them from getting off the field?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I can't remember every single play off the top of my head, to be honest with you. I do remember Riley Leonard, us having Riley Leonard in our grasp and him still being able to complete the throw with the receiver making a nice catch to extend drives. I think they made a number of nice catches that I can recall -- low, here, there.

There was a point in the game it appeared we were starting to put some pressure on Riley Leonard, near the end of the first half, we were getting closer and closer. But, again, I give him a lot of credit. He's a really good athlete with a quick release that played a lot of football. He's got body quickness and twitch. And he's able to get rid of that ball and throw the check-down to the running back and get a positive play. Not everybody who plays that position can make that play.

I'm not sure that really answers your question, but they made plays and we didn't.



Q. When you think about everything that this team accomplished this year, how do you think this team should be remembered?

CURT CIGNETTI: You are what your record says you are. So, 11-2. Tied for second in the Big Ten. Made the College Football Playoff. And packed the stadium. Made a lot of people proud. And had a historic season. So set the foundation for hopefully what's to come.

Q. Right now what do you think the biggest difference between a team like Notre Dame and a team like Indiana is right now?

CURT CIGNETTI: They've probably got more depth than we do. They probably have some front-line guys that are just a little bit bigger, stronger, faster than our guys.

Q. You guys were down 23, I think 11, 12 minutes to go, three scores behind you. You decided to punt there. What went through your mind not going for it?

CURT CIGNETTI: I didn't want to punt, but I didn't want to go fourth-and-10. It's like you're wishing and hoping. You have nothing to base it on that you can convert fourth-and-10 at that point. And there's still time to punt if you win the game.

So that was the reason why. I didn't want to do it. But I felt like it was the best move.

Q. Your offense just getting three points until the last minute and a half, whatever it was, what were the biggest issues? Was it Notre Dame playing well or were there things you look back maybe we could have done A, B or C?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think they played well. There were probably some pretty ordinary things that we normally would execute that we didn't get done very well.

I can remember Miles Cross coming wide open on a corner route. We overthrow them. There were things like that. But they put the pressure on us. They have good players. And they won the line of scrimmage. They won the one-on-one match-ups on the perimeter. They affected the quarterback and they swarmed to the ball.

Q. I want to say you mentioned that you want the whole year to kind of just set the stage. Why is this stage and a height like this achievable?

CURT CIGNETTI: This team earned it -- the right to be here. I'm not sure we proved tonight to a lot of people.

Repeat your question again.

Q. Long term, as you look ahead, why are heights like this (indiscernible)?

CURT CIGNETTI: Everything is about recruitment and development and now retention. Every year you've got to start over now in college football. It's not quite the NFL but it's getting close.

So you can change a lot of things in a year. Now, the one thing about the way the calendar is set right now if you do make the College Football Playoff, you're kind of penalized in the portal recruiting area because, like, we didn't have official visits this week because I wanted 100 percent focus in preparation for Notre Dame.

So that's time that last year we were spending on the portal. But we've got a good nucleus coming back, and we'll be okay.

Q. What is the plan for the next week or so in terms of getting the portal, everything dialed in?

CURT CIGNETTI: We'll get back at 3:50 in the morning. We have seven recruits on campus tomorrow morning on official visits. And Saturday and Sunday we can have them on. Monday is dead; it's a dead period, all the way until January the 5th.

And then we have one week we can bring portal guys in for official visits from the 6th to the 12th of January. But understand that probably 80 percent of the portal guys that are good players have made their decisions already. That's just where we're at.

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