

CFP First Round: Notre Dame vs Indiana

Friday, December 20, 2024

Notre Dame, Indiana, USA

Notre Dame Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

DC Bryant Haines

Postgame Press Conference

Notre Dame - 27, Indiana - 17

Q. Bryant, it seemed like there were a lot of moments when the pressure almost gets there and either Leonard slips away, gets the ball out, a tough catch somewhere. Did you feel like it was kind of one where a lot of the plays that you've been making that have set teams really far behind the chains this season were kind of just maybe an inch a little too far away at times tonight?

BRYANT HAINES: Yeah, that's exactly how I felt. I thought the guys competed, played hard.

All credit to Notre Dame. That's a good football team. I thought that quarterback played really well. I thought he would make a few errors here and there. But he didn't seem to. He seemed composed. And, like you said, we weren't able to rattle him. We didn't get home -- we came close to getting home.

Especially against a good athlete, getting close to getting home just wasn't enough. He wasn't affected and stood in the pocket, delivered the throws he needed to throw and took what we gave him. He was very composed and had a great game.

Q. Along that same theme, I mean, I think it was 5 of 7 in third down in the first half. How demoralizing is that? And how tough is it to come back from the demoralizing effect when Leonard is able to make plays with his legs and keep third down drives alive?

BRYANT HAINES: That's the most frustrating thing that you can do have to a defense is they keep the drive going. They did a good job staying on schedule. Some of the third downs were third-and-three and third-and-four. Those are a little tougher to win than your third-and-11 and third-and-12s. They stayed in rhythm and kept us on the field. We got a little bit tired and just didn't make the plays



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we had to make.

But yeah, credit goes to them. That's a really good football team. I was probably maybe a hair more conservative than, looking back, wish I would have been. Maybe I should have brought that one extra guy. Maybe that would have been the difference.

Q. When you're looking at a team like Notre Dame or even back to that loss against Ohio State, what's the biggest difference in your eyes between teams like that and a team like your Indiana team right now?

BRYANT HAINES: The thing I notice is the margin for error is just so small. They get the ball on the minus-2-yard line. I put in a simple kind of gapped-out call. I was thinking of being even more aggressive. I was talking to Aiden Fisher; you want to go attack them, maybe we can get two points here?

No, let's put in a nice conservative call. You misfit it a little bit and the thing rips you for 98 yards and six points. That's how small the margin for error is against elite teams. I felt that way against Ohio State. I felt that way again tonight.

Q. Did you get a chance to talk to James Carpenter after the game? He's called for the penalty, obviously not on purpose, mistake. It's his last game. You've been with him forever. What do you tell him? And how tough in that moment just to see it happen to a guy who's worked so hard for you?

BRYANT HAINES: I'm sure he's down on himself. I got a chance to give him a quick hug. But I'm sure there's a lot of emotional guys in the locker room and guys I've been with a long time and love.

Do I fault him for making that mistake? No. That guy is going to play as hard as he can possibly play every single snap on the field. How can you hate that? Do I wish he had pulled off? Sure, but I love him for who he is and how hard he plays.

Q. How do you manage the emotions of a year where you re-energize a town, completely change a mindset



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and then ultimately end like this?

BRYANT HAINES: I think you just try to build off of it. I think what we have here is a foundation. I think that -- I told some of the guys that are hurting in that locker room, like, we built something here. This is a building block. This is a foundation that's laid. And now the standards are up.

I'm just proud. I'm proud of the unit. And I'm bummed about tonight, they're bummed about tonight. We could have done a lot of things better. But it doesn't take away from what we've accomplished. It's the first step to many.

Q. The season on the whole you had a lot of really good performances, holding Nebraska to, I think, one score, shut out Purdue, number of other things. Why do you think you guys played at the level you did this year? And is this a level that you can tell future recruits, this is how you do it at Indiana?

BRYANT HAINES: To your last question, that's 100 percent what I'm going to tell recruits. I'm going to say this is Indiana football, Indiana defense. Do you want to be a part of this? We stop the run. We harass quarterbacks.

Tonight doesn't change that. Yeah, that's what I'm going to tell recruits. Just thankful for the season along the way -- the ups and the downs, and just a good season overall.

I'm bummed about the night, again. But credit to Notre Dame. They did the things they needed to do. We just couldn't make the plays we had to.

Q. What would you remember most about this team, this group of players? And what should, I guess, fans remember most about this team?

BRYANT HAINES: That's a good one. There's a lot of good memories there. I think I'll look back and just remember how much they've changed things. And, again, this is coming from a guy that was here before. I was in those locker rooms. I was at Indiana. I know what it meant to be an Indiana football player in 2012. It's a different era now, and these guys changed it forever.

Q. You said you were a little bit more conservative than you wanted to be. Did you go into the game wanting to be aggressive, and then it sort of changed based on how the game was going? Or how would you explain that?

BRYANT HAINES: I mean, that's exactly it. In my mind I saw a chance of being aggressive. But, again, a lot of it for me is the flow of the game. Whether it be like how was the offense doing? What's the field position?

I wanted to be aggressive against Ohio State. Maybe they get the ball on the 30-yard line. That changes things. There's some situational football in there.

But I guess, all said and done, looking back at it, especially on third down, I had intentions of being a little more aggressive. But that 35 seconds goes fast. You've got to come up with a call, put it all together. And hindsight is 20/20.

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