

CFP National Championship: Miami vs Indiana

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Aiden Fisher

Pregame Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Hi, everyone. We have linebacker Aiden Fisher.

Q. Did you expect Curt to stay at JMU? What were you hearing as players at the time, and then what was your thoughts when that was all kind of going down that week right after the season?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, after the last game, I don't think anybody really expected him to leave. And then we had some fans that were tracking flights in and out. So then once we saw it was Bloomington, we all looked up: What is Bloomington? I was with all my buddies at JMU, they all looked at me and were like, You're going to Indiana.

And it was just kind of a funny scenario. But I don't think anybody expected him to leave or come here, but sure glad he did.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, he addressed the team in a team meeting before we started the bowl prep for the Armed Forces Bowl. He initially planned on coaching us in that bowl game. Obviously that's not how business went down, and that was kind of it after that.

Q. Were you tracking flights?

AIDEN FISHER: I was not tracking flights, no.

Q. We talked to you about the three-linebacker setup and how it's evolved for you guys and how much you guys trust it. How much does it allow you, maybe -- a year ago, I think, it felt like we were asking everyone on the defense about that defensive line. How much does that three-linebacker setup allow you guys to be creative with what you do on the defensive line? Because you can always trust that you can put four down and you don't have to worry about coverage



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versus playing heavy against the run. Just the versatility and the dynamism that having all three of you on the field, when you go to those sets, really gives the defense?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, we have a lot of sets, a lot of three-linebacker sets. We can show up internal. We can show up on the edge. We can have somebody play the rover spot, the hokie/stud spot. That helps us in certain situations, down in distance, things like that. But it makes our defense a lot more multiple, being able to blitz different guys, drop different guys. And Coach Haines, he doesn't care who drops, it's a 305-pound D-tackle or linebacker.

Being able to have those guys on the field, it helps our defense be a little more multiple, but it's also a big thing for the offense because you have no clue who's coming, who's not. It's huge to have those guys that built their confidence, they're playing the way they are right now. We're at a good spot with the three-linebacker setup.

Q. I've asked a lot about the way Cig has changed habits of guys he coaches. Are there times off-field you walk around and say, like, this is new for me? I have learned how to live this way, how to operate that way because of Cig?

AIDEN FISHER: All the time. I was on the phone with my mom about two days ago. I don't even remember what we were talking about. I was just like, Yeah, I hope somebody doesn't get complacent. And I was like, Wow, I have been with Cig way too long. And she said, Yeah, I said the same thing the other day. She used the word "complacent."

It's funny when you've been with somebody for so long you start talking like them a little bit. Everything he talks about is true in football and in life, complacency kills. Everything about just the way he makes this football program makes you a better person too.

And I think my mom gets that when I'm texting her: No more talking about the last game, on to the next.

It's funny how long I have been with him and the things that

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rub off on me.

Q. The metrics suggest you guys are one of the best teams in the country in the last 15 or 20 years. Are you guys aware of it? If you are or aren't, why do you think you guys have played to a standard that's not excellence this year but has some historical context to it?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, I'll save that question for after this next game. It won't mean really anything unless we walk away with a win in this game. I'm proud of where the team's at right now. I think we're playing well all together, and we got to put it on the field Monday night.

Q. I think Cig said something along the lines that this team, out of any team he's had, has done better at adhering to the message and going along with that. Why is that so? Why have you guys been able to adhere to that message so well?

AIDEN FISHER: We all know Cig's been in these positions before. He's played in big games. At the end of the day, players just want to win. Whatever he deems is the most important thing, we're going to follow that.

We have an older team of veteran leadership that has been in these big games. We have been in the situations that we're facing right now. So it's all about taking the past experiences and kind of moving forward with them.

And obviously Coach does a great job with that, but having the older guys we have, taking the message and relaying it to the younger guys, relaying it to the room, and our assistant coaches do a great job with it too.

It's just making sure we're all adapted to one message and that we're on the same page at all times.

Q. Fernando talked about delayed gratification being a mindset that this team really embodies, where you're able to reset after these high highs. How do you train your own mind? What goes into it to have those moments reset and move on, treat every game, like he said, as the national championship?

AIDEN FISHER: The good thing is I think we built a couple of experiences off doing that. Last probably two months has been a lot of highs for us. And then there's been some lows in there too. But it's all about take it, enjoy it for the moment, and then move on.

I think, when you get in the postseason especially, that's how you have to live. We took the 24 hours after the Peach Bowl or the Rose Bowl to enjoy it, and you're on to

the next thing.

I think that's why we keep moving forward. We're not satisfied with anything. We just want to earn more opportunities to play with each other, earn more opportunities to prove ourself as a team, as an individual. And that's how you be successful.

Q. It was brought up that this -- how historic this team has sort of become over this year. The last month, you guys are favorites heading into each and every game so far, and heading into next week. How vital is it to keep that "chip on your shoulder" mentality when you're cream of the crop right now?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, we know it won't mean anything unless we walk away with a win in this game. I don't think anybody is really paying attention to all this stuff that people are putting out there. We have a lot to clean up from that Oregon film, a lot of sloppy plays, especially in the second half as a defense and the one long drive they had before the half.

We know there's so much more room for improvement. All the things that you guys have pointed out, historical things, doesn't really mean anything to us right now. We're all focused on Miami. They're a great team that has a lot of weapons that are really good on the line, at least the offensive side.

We have a lot to deal with, a lot of handle. Everything else will take care of itself, and we just got to win this game.

Q. Cig told us yesterday he was going to address in the team meeting the worst thing you guys could do is make this game bigger than it could be. Even though it is the biggest game, how do you, as one of the older guys, a veteran, a leader, keep that into perspective and disseminate that message to the younger guys?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, I think it's kind of two sides for me. It's a four-quarter football game. It's the same amount of time, you're playing it on grass. You're still in helmet, cleats, and pads. It's just football.

The other thing I told the linebackers yesterday is it's an opportunity that's rare. So I just kind of encouraged everybody to block everything out for one week. Just give me one week of everything they have and just prepare like it's your last game of the season. I just need everybody to kind of understand the opportunity we're having right now.

At the end of the day, we're going to prepare the same way we prepared for Old Dominion in week one, just because that's the way we're wired, the way we do things. And if

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not, it's a disservice to yourself, to your team.

So I think just making sure we're on top of everything, but knowing that this opportunity is rare, put your everything into it so you can walk off the field with no regrets and it's something that you'll hold with you for a very long time.

Q. Aiden, when you face a team that I think the quarterback has thrown for 3500 yards, a thousand-yard rusher, close to a thousand-yard receiver, what kind of problem does that present?

AIDEN FISHER: Yeah, they're really balanced on offense, great O-line, great running backs. Receivers are great. They have somebody who can break a game in No. 10 and a good quarterback who is an experienced veteran who has been doing this for a while now, and then a really good OC with a good scheme.

When you put all that together, you get an elite offense that's exactly who they've been throughout the playoffs, throughout the whole regular season. It's definitely a big challenge for us and something we're excited for.

It's about all limiting their explosive plays and stopping the run, first of all. They've had a lot of success running the ball, they have great running backs, a really good O-line. It's going to be on us as a D-line and linebackers and front seven to stop that first. Once the pass game gets going, they get dangerous too.

It's a lot to minimize for them, but great offense, and we're excited for the opportunity to match up against them.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about the ways you guys have started games. Several games I can think of off the top of my head, you have had sacks, interceptions. Is there anything that goes into that that makes that first drive unique for you guys, or is that just the way it's played out?

AIDEN FISHER: It's just the way it's played out. I have seen all the stuff about different things for our team. It's funny and kind of ridiculous to me, but we watch film, we study, we prepare.

A lot of people have put things out, but we just do a great job preparing. We have things that we can see within our preparation, and then we have the best D coordinator in college football. So when you match up those things, you get off to fast starts as a defense. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Aiden.

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