

CFP National Championship: Miami vs Indiana

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Elijah Sarratt

Pregame Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Next up we have wide receiver Elijah Sarratt.

Q. I guess just early on we've asked you it feels like a lot this season about sort of week to week, is it man, is it zone, what are the tendencies in coverage you see in the opponent? What do you see out of Miami and the way they're going to approach receivers in your position?

ELIJAH SARRATT: Yeah, from what we've talked about, what I've seen, they're mostly zone on the year, cover four, cover two. But they do run man a lot. I'll say that's the second coverage, cover one, like a lot of one-high safeties most of the time. It's changed up between them. But so far, it's either cover four, two, or one. Coach Hetherman, my brother, actually, knew him, played with him at JMU, speaks highly of him. It's going to be a challenge. He's been having those boys fly around. I'm sure it will mix a couple coverages up. It will be a good one.

Q. I want to take you back after the 2023 season, JMU finishes the regular season. Are you aware that Curt's interviewing? Was there anything in the locker room? What was the mindset of the players, and when did you become aware that Indiana was a possibility?

ELIJAH SARRATT: Yeah, towards the end of the year, there were rumors on Twitter and stuff and everyone was talking about he was taking calls and everything, and people were tracking his flight. They tracked his flight all the way to Bloomington. And that next day or something we were about to have a team meeting, and it was announced on Twitter.

And he came in and basically told us: I got to take this job at Indiana. It's what's best for me.

It went from there. Before that, yeah, people were tracking his flights, rumors on Twitter and stuff. So it was crazy.



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Q. I'm curious, what do you do in terms of getting amped for a game, pumped for a game? Do you listen to music? Do you watch "Gladiator"? What do you do?

ELIJAH SARRATT: Big music guy. I try not to be locked in all day, so in the morning I'm just chilling. Rod Wave is the first one I turn on because he's a chill rapper, not too hype. And then I throw on some gospel just to keep me calm, thank the lord and everything.

But as it gets closer to the game -- I have this playlist that I've had. Right when we get to the stadium and I go out for my own pre-game warmup, that's when I turn it on. And from there it's just locking in and just embracing the moment. I take a couple deep breaths when I'm on the field, look at the stadium, embrace the moment. And from there, I'm just ready to go.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

ELIJAH SARRATT: Always the same playlist. I add and take stuff out of it if I'm listening to it or not listening to it. But, yeah, it's the same playlist.

Q. When did you become a good jump ball wideout? How do you try to build hand strength? It appears you have extremely strong hands.

ELIJAH SARRATT: Yeah, for real, for real, I have always been pretty good at jump ball since I have been in high school. I just naturally have been good at it and been able to adjust my body and stuff. Just blessed with that ability.

Hands-wise, really just the amount of catches I catch a day and the amount of work I put in, really. That's all it is. After practice, I'm getting catches in. I don't really do too much like strengthening hand stuff and all that, but just catch footballs. That's really it.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

ELIJAH SARRATT: I always get at least 100 after practice. And then in between practice, I don't really count. But if

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I'm just sitting around while we're in special teams or something, I go with the quarterbacks and catch some passes. Just try to accumulate as much as I can.

Q. So you went to Fernando at some point, there's a story out there, and looked at some of the back shoulder throws from some NFL guys and said let's put this in. Take us through that. Which NFL guys did you see? Why did you think, hey, we can add this? And take us through the conversations with Nando and how that played out.

ELIJAH SARRATT: It was Aaron Rodgers and Davante Adams, to be specific. Since I've been watching Davante Adams and since he's been with Aaron Rodgers, he's done a great job of getting the release off the ball, and then around 12, 14 yards, Aaron Rodgers just throwing a laser and just falls out and it drops in the bucket.

I tend to win off the line more times than not, so I felt like I had a good chance of it. Now, I know, like, Aaron Rodgers and Davante Adams, that's a whole 'nother level that I someday pray I can reach to.

But Fernando, he was with it on that, same day after practice, we got a couple reps in, just trying to work it, be similar with how they were looking with it, and just went from there. And then just communication after that. I try not to be picky, I just try to tell him let me get my hands on it, and he does a great job putting it on the money, and we just go from there.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

ELIJAH SARRATT: No, it wasn't from week one. I don't remember when it was. I think it was closer to the Illinois game is when I sent it to him. And from there, we just kind of remind each other about it and go from there.

Q. As you guys prepare, Coach Cignetti has said we're treating this like we have done every week. It's something you have done throughout playoffs, and it's worked. How have you been able to do that, and what do you think he's been able to impart in you so that you have been able to come in calm, cool, collected?

ELIJAH SARRATT: Really just like you said, keeping things the same, eliminating the clutter and keeping things in the locker room. There's going to be a lot of talk on social media about how big the game is, how big the moment is. We're treating it like any other game. That's what you have to do. You don't want to make the moment bigger than it is.

We understand it's the national championship and a lot of

people are going to be watching, but we're going to treat this practice week the same. Go in, work every single day leading up to that game.

Q. Going back to 2023, when you had a conversation with Coach Cig, do you remember it at all? Do you have any recollection of it? How happy are you that it worked out?

ELIJAH SARRATT: Same thing like he always is, walked in the office, feet kicked up, chilling, How do you like it here? We're chopping it up. He's asking me what other visits I went to. I told him, and he didn't really like that answer and he was just like, This is the place for you. You know I'm going to take care of you. You know I'm going to get you the ball. You're cool. You know the strength staff and everybody.

That's kind of all I needed to hear. He told me about Curt, how good Curt is, how good he thinks he is, which Curt lived up to that and more. After shaking his hand and stuff, I knew it was the best fit for me, the comfortability and familiarity and everything.

Q. Cignetti has talked about changing the way people think and eliminating the noise and clutter. You personally, how do you train your mind to get to that point?

ELIJAH SARRATT: It's really a daily process and really believing what he says when he says don't pay attention to all the outside noise. You have to actually try not to do it. I delete Twitter each week because I try to really embrace what he's saying and not really worry about what everyone else is saying.

Just a daily process of listening to what he's saying and then believing in it and asserting it to yourself.

Q. Coach Cig said yesterday this group out of every team he's had is best at taking the message that he gives and putting that on the field. Why are you so good at that?

ELIJAH SARRATT: We have a great group of vets around, a great group of vets that have been there, done that, and we believe what he's saying. We understand what he's saying has been working. The vets have done a great job keeping us in the moment, keeping the young guys on their toes and everything.

It really hasn't been too hard. We understand our goal, and we understand how we're going to get to our goal, and it's just by doing what we've been doing, staying in the moment.

Q. Obviously Miami's run defense is very prominent this season. I'm just curious, I know it's a broad question, but if it gets to a point where the running game can't get going, more for you guys to have opportunities outside if it gets to that point. How comfortable and confident are you feeling if it gets into that situation where Mendoza can drop back and find you guys more?

ELIJAH SARRATT: I'm always comfortable when you got somebody like Fernando back there throwing you the ball. And of course I believe in myself and the guys in the receiving room with me.

So I'm always confident no matter who we're going against, no matter if it's Miami, no matter if it's Indiana State. So, very confident in my beliefs. It's going to be a challenge, of course. They're in the national championship for a reason, but I will always go into every game being confident.

Q. Elijah, you answered this to some degree since I raised my hand with the question, but you talk a lot about blocking out the noise. You can't ignore what it is. And if you look over your shoulder, you will see the National Championship banner all over the place. In your quieter moments with yourself, do you talk to yourself and say this is kind of fun that we're here and doing this and we are playing for a national championship? Do you have that time to yourself without external noise?

ELIJAH SARRATT: Yeah, 100%, knowing this is my last couple of weeks here in this facility here in Bloomington playing with this team. When I'm home talking to my mom and dad and brothers, like dang, it's crazy how everything works out. Just to be here in this moment, yeah, it's definitely exciting.

I'm trying to be calm because I understand nothing really matters too much unless we win that game, but I definitely -- these last couple of weeks have been like, man, just playing in the big bowl games, Rose Bowl, Peach Bowl, all of that, it's been cool watching these games, watching legends play in these games, and for allowing me to make some plays and see my guys make some plays in these games has been exciting.

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