

CFP National Championship: Miami vs Indiana

Saturday, January 17, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

Miami Hurricanes

Rueben Bain, Jr.

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Rueben, could you talk about first time you met Jason Taylor, what has he mainly worked with you if you could pin it down to a couple things, your relationship has been about teaching?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: First time I met him I was going into my senior year. He was in an off-the-field role, but when I got here he transitioned into the full time defensive line coach. The relationship we got is like a father/son relationship. That's for me my mentor and that's a big role model, motivation for me every day.

Whether I'm just needing any advice on life or football, I go to him and ask anything, just develop my game or develop my own personality as a person.

Just a great role model and motivation.

Q. What do you ask him?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: I ask him literally anything and everything. Whether it's about his NFL career, the game of football, anything to help my game, my technique, how he moved in the NFL, what it was like being in the NFL, Hall of Fame. Any and everything.

Q. You guys had far more success getting to the quarterback the first two playoff games than against Mississippi. What was the difference in that game and how important is that going to be?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Just understanding where we at now. It's win or go home now. Just having the mentality to get to the quarterback and nothing can stop us. It's playoffs. You can't lose in the playoffs. If you do, you go home.

It's just attention to detail that we have in practice and the mindset and motivation we got just from being in the place we are.



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Q. What was the difference last game as opposed to the first two as far as getting the pressure on the quarterback?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It was no different. We still got home and got the ball out at two seconds, so if you watch the tape everybody knows we're still winning or winning one on ones.

Q. When you think about your last game, I know it might be hard to really think about deeply, but your mom says she has jitters thinking about watching you in your last college football game; your dad is excited. What have you envisioned how you'll feel emotionally, mentally?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: I practiced with my dad two days ago. I told him I'm going cry. No matter the outcome of the game, I'm going cry. It's really my last game. Been a long but quick three years, spending all my time here at Miami. It's like a fairytale for me because I get to start it at the Hard Rock and end it at the Hard Rock. I'm going to cry. I know I'm going to cry.

Q. What would it mean to win a title at home here in Miami?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: A lot. One, you're at home and this is a stadium we all grinded in. We ran the stairs and we literally shed tears, sweat, blood, all that good stuff. It means a lot being able to have this opportunity to come home and do what we do.

But this is something the city been needing for a long time. Just walking throughout Miami now I can't go anywhere without somebody saying Go 'Canes, just talking about bringing it home and getting it done.

So you can tell the pride the city gets within this University and this program, so getting it done is all that matter.

Q. Miami produced a lot of legends over the years. What's it like when you see stars like Michael Irvin or Ray Lewis to be on this journey with this team?



RUEBEN BAIN JR: It's crazy because people only see them on the sidelines, but they come through our practices, too, so it means a lot.

Having that constant motivation and constant wisdom around your program, you can look up throughout the our facility and see all the names. So to have them on the sideline and touch their hands is a big difference than seeing a name on the wall. It's more of a driving factor.

Q. Coach talked about it being 1-0 all season long. How different is this one to all the rest?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It's no different. Same 1-0. At the end of the day you just got to win the game of football. No matter what's the outcome, just got to win 1-0 in everything.

Q. You committed when they were 5-7. Your first year. 7-6. You've heard the noise around here for a long time. Why did you stay? What made you say, I'm staying?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: This opportunity right here, man. I said all my senior year that championship is coming to Miami. I mean, we here. I ain't going to lie to nobody. I got the opportunity to do it. Same motto I had my freshman year and senior in high school is the same way I feel now. Championship is coming to Miami.

Q. We know about your notebook. We know what certain things mean to you. The last month you've heard your arms are too short, you're too this, too that. How has that fueled this, as if playing for a natty wasn't enough.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: My notebook is filled dup now. I ain't got no more space to write. I don't really pay attention to all the outside noise because right now just the love I get from being in Miami and the city of people I grew up with, how they got immense pride in this program and university and me, that's all I need.

I don't need no outside noise. Just the love from people from Miami.

Q. So from every level, from Gwen Cherry Park to Miami Central to University of Miami, name something that you learned on every level that helped you for in moment right now.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Hard work. Nothing going to be handed to you easy. My dad always got a story of me going to Gwen Cherry. I could have left to go to Miramar Wolverines, but he want me to stay and earn my spot at

Gwen Cherry, and I feel like that's where I really learned hard work and dedication from.

I really had to grind out for that starting spot, and every since then each level has just been me working and working and working. Fast forward to nowadays, whether that's before practice, after practice, still getting that same amount of work in, and it's paying off.

Q. What would maybe be an outsider or somebody who isn't from Miami not understand about how much pride you guys have in playing for the Hurricanes for a national title being a Miami guy?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It's just something you got to feel, man. When you're down here you automatically know you got to have spirit growing up and wearing orange and green, man, growing up that's all you talk about and ever hear about. When you got the opportunity to play for it, it's something you just got to experience to understand.

Ain't nothing like Miami, man. This the (indiscernible.)

Q. It means a lot to everybody, but for guys that got here a few years ago when you were a 5-7 football team, does it mean even that much more to where it's a personal thing where you guys believed in a vision that no one saw yet and how much that means to you that you believe in that vision and here you are playing for a national championship?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Yeah, definitely mean a lot. I was talking to Sisi the other day. Man, we came up from 5-7, 7-6 to this, so it's just crazy. Even like the last game looking around in the facility, the field, seeing that we going to a national championship from 7-6 my freshman year. We didn't know how the program was going to turn out.

Coach Cristobal and everything worked out how was it supposed to and now we here playing for the big game.

Q. You were No. 58 as a freshman in high school. Nothing was ever handed to you.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Yeah.

Q. What does that say about your game and how you worked for everything you want?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It says a lot. It's kudos to my parents, the people that had lead me coming into college, coming throughout my whole life. My mom said to got work. Nothing going to be given to you. The road never going to be easy. If it's easy, you don't want it.

Q. When I watch you play you have a relentlessness to your nature. You don't stop, first quarter, fourth quarter. Where does that part of your personality and desire come from?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Growing up in Miami, man. Football down here is life or death. One thing my coach, my high school coach always said, people get to play football. We got to play football and that's my mindset. I got to wake up and do this every day and I love it. I'll do it no matter the stakes or what the outcome. From the first quarter to the last I'm going to always be the same player, same person.

Q. You had a hamstring last year. What has this year been like for you?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Nothing but blessings. Just being able to walk out in games feeling good and walk out feeling even better, just wake up to the man up above, thank God every time I get to step on the field and be healthy.

Just been smooth sailing for me. Just having a good time playing football.

Q. For all the elementary middle school youngsters out there, what's one of the toughest things you've been through and what's the message to them about chasing your dreams despite any adversity you might face?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Well, nowadays kids grow up with social media, so you could say like social media, trying to realize that all that stuff ain't real. No matter what people saying, you just got to be you. People going to say and do whatever they want to do. At the end of the day just be your own person. Worry about you. You'll be okay.

Q. I don't know if you answered this question already, but just being hometown kid, to be in this position. When you're by yourself do you think about that, just how fortunate you are and how destiny led you to this point?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Definitely fortunate. This is something I've been thinking about since we got on the plane from the last game. I mean, amazing opportunity. I go back to the cornerstone and the pillars of my community, you could obviously see the pride and the urgency people got in this game and how they want the outcome to be.

I see people really cry over this. It's been a blessing first and amazing opportunity second just to do what we do.

Q. When you were playing at Miami Central did you dare to dream of an opportunity like this, a moment

like this?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Yeah, I said it multiple times on videos, on documentation all the time. I said a national championship is coming to Miami.

Q. Can you talk about what that playoff journey has been like from being one of the last teams in to making it to the championship and kind of silencing all the haters along the way?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It's been, one, a blessing, and two, amazing. Each obstacle we came, each challenge we had we overcame and just played football; silenced all the doubters. Nobody expected us to be here. I feel like nobody really wanted us to be here. They still don't.

That don't matter. We came to play football as a team, as a brotherhood, and as a family. People say what they going to say. At the end of the day you got to put your hand in the dirt and play some football.

Q. Why is Mario Cristobal the right coach for this team, the right leader to bring Miami back to that national stage in this moment?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Constant competition, true father figure for us. He's a believer. He believe in us so we going to believe in him. He trust in us so we trust him.

Somebody that holds up his word. He's not going to say something and don't actually mean it. Everything he told me and told us to come to light and it's true. I can't name one thing he said to me that haven't been true since we got here and even before I got here.

He's a man to believe in and man to get it done. If you see how he act in practice and throughout the week you'll understand why we here right now.

Q. As a Miami guy you saw some the lows of this program as well. When it was time for you to make a decision, were you always a Miami guy or were you looking elsewhere, too?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: I mean, honestly. Man, how things was going, if you told me I was coming to Miami I would've bet my life on that first. God just has mysterious ways of showing things, and that last two and a half months of my recruiting process was like a why not Miami? I had a conversation with one of the janitors at my high school and I told him my top schools. His name is Chris.

I was just -- he always ask, why not Miami? I actually had no answer for him. He had painted this picture that I never

saw, and couple years down the road we here right now today. Big thanks to Chris for opening my eyes.

Q. What's your Mt. Rushmore of Miami Hurricanes?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Got to go Ray Lewis, I'll put -- Greg Russo. Nobody really like to talk about that, but he had really good year. Sean Taylor of course. On the offensive side, just for flashy stuff, Devin Hester, yeah.

Q. What would it mean to win the national championship in your home stadium?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: A lot. This is a stadium I grew up in throughout my collegiate career. Having the opportunity to end it off is a cherry, on top, so a wonderful opportunity for us.

Q. Going back to the guy that did the painting and asking you why not Miami, what were the schools you listed before he asked that question?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It was just a couple ACC and SEC schools. None of that really matters now. I'm all about Miami. It's all about the U.

Q. I had an assistant coach call you the most dangerous guy on defense in college football. Curious your response to that? Do you think that's a good description? Bad? If you like it, why? And if you do think it's correct, what is it about you that makes you dangerous?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: I feel like, yeah, like it's kudos to the work I put in. All that really don't matter. At the end of the day I got to play football, and what makes me the most dangerous I feel like is my motor. From the first snap to the last I be the same person, if not better at the end of the game because I'm learning as the game go on.

Just really having the drive and the want-to to get it to whoever got the ball. Whoever got the ball I just want to hit them.

Q. What skill or ability do you think has taken steps over the last five, six months?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Just been taking the small details, whether that's striking hand placement or first steps. Just paying more attention to what I do not just going out and trying to play willy nilly.

Being more smart about my process.

Q. When you look at IU on tape, what stands out,

especially about Mendoza?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Just a well-rounded program, well-coached, disciplined. Least amount of flags and penalties throughout the whole college football. They are just a program that's going to come to play from the first snap to the last.

They understand the stakes just like us and they know what's on the line. They going to play for it all just like we are.

Q. It's a unique story. Like you said, you talked about your faith and getting to this moment. You said people from the outside didn't expect Miami to be here. Now Miami is playing for a national championship in Miami. So just how poetic that is and what the journey has been like to come all the way back home.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Very poetic. Nobody got the final say so. Everything is in God's hands. Nobody can really count us out even if they want to. It's between God and the work we put in.

We got our faith. The team is in chapel every time we host it, so put our all into the process and God rewards us for all the good work we have done.

Q. To pressure a quarterback is a good way to make him uncomfortable. For you guys as you prep, what is the thought process of trying to get to Mendoza early and make him uncomfortable?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: All or nothing. Just got to play our brand of football. Everybody seen that hit he took from Iowa State. He came back in the game as was the same person. He going to come to play. He's a hometown return for him and he'll have all the juice and energy and the drive to win the game no matter what happens.

So we just got to keep playing our brand of football and keep trying to get after them.

Q. On CBS Sports you were No. 3 on the impact players list. The first round in Ohio State you had a very impactful game and then a quieter game this past game. How are you planning on making an impact in your last game of the season.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Just being the player I am. I feel like I'm always having an impactful game no matter what. If you know ball, people know that.

So just having a good time and enjoying the game and having fun. I feel like when you have fun and everything



can work out in your favor. Enjoying the time while I'm there. Enjoy being where I am and playing free.

Q. How do you think you guys -- at what point this week did you say, hey, I think we're handling all this stuff well, concentrating on football as a team?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: From the moment we got back to Miami, just the mindset, understanding what the stakes are what with got in front of us, having the opportunity to actually play for the big game, and we know what we got to do.

We came in with the mindset to be serious about every detail and everything with do. Now we're just going to capitalize on the moment.

Q. Carson got 159.6. You got to beat that.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: I just hold it?

Q. Yeah. Just squeeze it.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: How long I squeeze it for? 155.

Q. Perfect. Thank you.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: You're welcome.

Q. What changed for you guys after your couple losses you had earlier in the season?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Just the brotherhood and the trust we have, it got tighter, stronger. Not being satisfied with whatever we had in the past and previous games before that, understanding that everybody going to come with their best against us.

Just having to play our brand of football that we have, trusting in each other, the brotherhood that we got, understanding that whatever we doing, somebody going to try to knock us off. Nobody going to take us lightly.

Q. Being the ACC defensive player of the year, do you feel a lot of responsibility for you and your team?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Yeah, you could say that. Also just being the leader in a program, in the team, being a captain on the team. Understanding there is a lot of people looking up to me and expecting me to do certain things. No matter what accolade I got, my team first, they want me to step up and be that person they need.

Q. You're going against one of the best offensive lines in the country. How do you prepare for something like

this?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Same thing I did for 15 weeks. Understanding that no matter who is coming on the field, I have to give my best effort. I know this is a great offensive line but I done faced many others. It was the same mindset. Kudos to them because that is a great offensive line. I just have to worry about myself and let everything handle itself it's own way.

Q. This team had an incredible turn around since 2022, much in part to what you've done. Would you say it's been necessary to experience that and overcome that adversity to be where you guys are now?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Yeah, because you got to learn from your mistakes. You got to heal from your wounds and things like that.

I mean, like everything happens for a reason, so us going through that process help us understand like what it feels like to lose and what it feels like not to get to this point so we actually appreciate and value where we at right now.

Q. How much are you guys motivated by the fact that you guys are an underdog in your own stadium? Can you tell me what it's like going to be in a visitors locker room for the first time?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Motivated by being an underdog is a lot. I feel like that's been our whole journey, the whole story of the whole playoffs. We like it. We don't want nobody to believe in us. The people that believe in us is just the program, and that's all we need.

Everybody in that room putting on pads is helping us try to get to our better goal and that's all we need. It's going to be a little different not having the same sideline and things like that, but no matter where we at we going to get the job done.

Q. I kind of love the confidence in that sound. You know, when you think back of your journey, knowing this is you're last collegiate game, have you thought about what that means for you, the city representing that?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It's crazy. Luckily it's for all the marbles, so it's a good feeling. Like I said I told them no matter the outcome I'm going to cry because this is a wonderful time here and it's been a hell of a journey.

I don't know. I don't know what I'm going to do.



Q. When you think back of your teammates like Wesley and you guys representing Central and what that means for the community, you've given the time to go back and visit these schools, visit the kids. Why has that been so important to you in your journey as you now get ready for your last collegiate game?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: It's a constant reminder of where we coming from and all the love and support we got back at home. Knowing we still home, but in the actual community everybody pushing for us. It's extra motivation, extra push. When you tired and feel like you don't want to do something you got people in the stands or in a parking lot or at home cheering on for you and trying to give you their best, so why not give your best.

Q. About Fernando Mendoza, what stands out about him? Why he this good when you watch him on film?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: He tough. He from Miami. I feel like everybody from Miami, they just bred a different way. Tough player. He actually played at Columbus with my older cousin, so when I went to his games I used to watch him all the time. He's been that same person since we were little. Went on visits together and everything like that.

So he's just a tough, resilient kid that's going to play football and appreciate the game of football the way he's supposed to.

Q. When it comes to Indiana's run game, what is it about Roman Hemby and Kaelon Black that makes them kind of difficult running backs to wrap up?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: One, just their offensive line, they move people out the way. They play fast. They play physical. They play together. Everybody know that's an experienced team. They all got the trust and the brotherhood they need to get the job done and play at one. For us to do that we got to play as one, too.

We are the same experiences and trusted and connected team that they are, so it's just all about who going to do their job and who going to listen. Just playing the game of football the right way.

Q. I talked to a bunch of your teammates from South Florida about the pride and being from here and growing up and dreaming as a little kid. Take yourself back to when you were 7, 8, 9, 10, playing football to where you are now.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Means a lot. My little self could see me now he would be proud and happy. To say I'd be here end of my career like this, it wouldn't even seem real. Kind

of crazy because I got to do it in high school. End my high school career at home and be able to do it again in college. It's a wonderful opportunity having a chance to play football here and put on for the city throughout the season.

And then to do it at the big stage and that's what everybody wants and needs, it's just a blessing.

Q. First of all, how are you? How has it been going for you so far?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: (Nods.)

Q. Good. I wanted to ask you a question about when people comment about you're arm length, what's your response to them? What do you say to people that have doubts about that?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: People rarely bring that to me. I don't really look into all the social media stuff. I just want to play football. So everybody going to have their own say-sos about that. At the end of the day you just got to put your hand in the dirt and play football and just be the player you are.

Q. Just keep your head down about it?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Yeah, pretty much.

Q. Following up on that, Mark was telling me he used to remember all the teams he played here. Youth teams in Miami, their names. Can you remember?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Little League I played for quite a bunch, but I started out at North Side Panthers and then went to Gwen Cherry Bulls. After that Miami Garden Ravens and finished off at Scott Lake Vikings. Then went to high school and played for Miami Central.

Q. First year, how old were you your first year playing youth football?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Four or five. Pants to my ankles, huge helmet. I was real small.

Q. Who was that?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: North Side Panthers.

Q. How did you get to know Coach Hetherman when he first came in, and were you curious about how his scheme might affect how you were able to do and how did you get to learn about that?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Yeah, I was very curious because I



really never watched Minnesota to understand what they ran. Yeah, I was just curious to see what was going to happen, what the scheme was going to be. It was fit just like a glove. It was a amazing. Perfect for us. We just trusted in him and he trusted in us and we got the job done.

I feel like that's been shown week in and week out from the first week he got here to the last, which is now. You can see the transition and how he evolved and played each week and week out.

Q. How would you describe his personality?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Crazy. I mean, serious and crazy. I stay in the facility until like 9:00, 10:00 at night. When I'm leaving he's still in his office and back at 5:00, 6:00 in the morning.

In my mind I think he a little sleep deprived. He don't get no sleep. You can never tell because he the same person at all times.

Q. We know about the notebook. What are you listening to on Monday?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: I listen to soul music. I be so pumped up and ready to go I got to calm myself down. Frankie Beverly. Real, real slow music. Teddy Pendergrass, all the old stuff. I got to. I got to.

Q. You've been around the program for a little bit of time now. What is it about this group in particular that makes them so tight knit and special? Did you see that early on or something as the season progressed?

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Just seeing -- I seen it as the season went on, but I feel like it's the main -- the bond we had throughout the years to come. I feel like all the guys, you see us on the field doing all this good stuff was here during in that 5-7 season and we had to grow up and a tight brotherhood with each other as the years went on.

We understood what it takes to get to this part of the season so we can appreciate when we here, and just understanding that anybody could be here right now. God blessed ed us to be here. We have the opportunity so why not seize on it.

Q. You've probably gotten this question in some sort of form or fashion. As you study Fernando Mendoza, his ability to slide away from pressure and move within the pocket, just how advanced is he from a pass rushers' perspective as a quarterback in extending plays? He can scramble, but also just within the

pocket sliding away from pressure.

RUEBEN BAIN JR: Very advanced, man. He from Miami so he understand what it is to play football down here. Yeah, like he understands. He got the same pride and heart for football that I got. He understand what the stakes is and he going to come out with his all just like we expect him to. We wouldn't want it any other way because we know he's a great player and it's a great opportunity for both of us.

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