

CFP National Championship: Miami vs Indiana

Saturday, January 17, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

Indiana Hoosiers

Pat Coogan

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Obviously you're a proud Marist Chicago alum. Talk us a little bit about your time at Marist Chicago why it was so special and why this has meant as a part of your process getting becoming who you are today?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, absolutely, Marist is a huge part of my life. It's kind of in my blood. My dad graduated from there, my uncle, my brother, my two sisters. We're really a Marist family.

And it's just been a huge part of my growth. And I definitely credit a lot of my successes to Marist and everything that I learned there, the coaching staff and the friends that I made, lifelong friends. I met my longtime girlfriend there, who I'm still together with.

It's just so many memories, so many great times. I credit a lot to that to Marist. And it's always exciting going back home and being around the Marist family and getting back into the halls and stuff like that.

Q. Have you felt a lot of the love from the Marist community these last couple of weeks?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, absolutely. They're so good at supporting their alumni and highlighting their alumni and definitely have felt the support all throughout my career, really. It's a credit to them for supporting and just being there for me and being another key supporter in my life.

Q. Coach Bostad has been getting more recognition of late. What role did he play in your development this year?

PAT COOGAN: He's been huge in my development, really. Just becoming an all-around center, really learning the game at a high level, learning what it takes at that center position to excel and take that next step, whether that's diagnosing defenses, seeing different blitz patterns, moving beyond the first-level of defense into the second



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level, into the third level, really just molding me into more of a complete center.

Q. Tell me about playing with this IU program and the way this whole team has come together. You've got a lot of transfers who have come in, but this team seems so cohesive heading into the National Championship. What's it like to be a part of this program that Coach Cignetti has built?

PAT COOGAN: Certainly, yeah, it's a credit to Coach Cignetti for recruiting the same, the like-minded individuals. It's a credit to him for bringing us all in here with a direct goal in mind. And it's really a credit to him for molding this team into a cohesive team and a team that believes in each other and a team that always has its back.

Like I said, it's a bunch of like-minded individuals that have come together to Bloomington for a common goal. We all get along super well. It's a very close locker room. I believe that's why we see some success. That's a part of our success is because we're very close on and off the field.

We all believe in each other. We support each other, and ultimately we play for each other. So I believe that's a big part of our success.

Q. You were here, like, a year ago in one of these interviews, and I remember seeing you. What for you has changed in the last year?

PAT COOGAN: It's been a wild year, no doubt. It's kind of felt like the longest year of my life, but at the same time I feel like I blinked and I was here last year.

Just grateful for it all, really. Every experience that I have learned, every new lesson that I've learned throughout this new transition of life, in these past 365 days, really.

Just really grateful for it. I'm blessed to be here again. Blessed to be here with my great coaches and teammates. It's a wild ride, but it's been fun. It's really been fun.

Q. Like you said, you're a pretty tight-knit group.

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Regardless of how Monday ends up, that's the season finale. What does that mean to you?

PAT COOGAN: It means everything. I mean that's my favorite part of football, right? Like, the brotherhood and the bond that we share. Yeah, these are my teammates for life. Made some lifelong friends here that no matter how the game goes, no matter what happens after, like we're boys.

So I take a lot of pride in that, and I know we all take a lot of pride in that, because that really is the difference between a group of individuals and a team, really. So it starts in the locker room. That's why, like I've said, we've seen successes is because of the locker room that we have.

Q. Miami's defense has had a lot of success getting to opposing quarterbacks this year. What's it going to take to stop that group?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, absolutely. It's a great defense. It presents a huge challenge for us, especially up front, starting with the front four.

Just incredibly explosive, violent, great with their hands, twitchy. They have every tool in the toolbox, per se.

It's a huge challenge, there's no doubt about it, and one that we've prepared endlessly for, and we have another 48 hours here to prepare. So it's an exciting match-up and one that we've got to step up to, because it's going to be a huge challenge for us.

Q. Going off that, can you talk about the identity of this offensive line, kind of the mentality of that group?

PAT COOGAN: Absolutely. I mean, the identity is we do anything to give our offense a chance to succeed. And I think we've shown that on multiple occasions, whether it's a drop-back game, an RPO game, a duo game, inside zone, outside zone, pin-and-pull, we can win at various different levels and various different schemes. I think we're extremely detailed, and I think we take great pride in that.

I think we are a focused group. I know this, that we all support and believe in each other, no matter who's in the game.

And that's really just a credit to Coach Bostad and the group that he's implemented, the mindset that he's implemented. He's done a wonderful job with us, and he's really the key to this team's and this offense's success.

Q. You won the offensive line MVP. You were the first

lineman to get that since 1944. How crazy is that for you? How much does that mean to you, seeing as how much work you put in all season?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, it was a great moment. There's no doubt about it. But I was really just happy that my family got to be there to experience that. And to be around my teammates, like the video of all my teammates crashing me and hugging me. Those are moments that I'm never going to forget.

I'm from the Chicagoland area, but I had near 50 people out there in California, which is one of the most I've had for any game in my career.

For them all to be out there and most of them were inside, I think almost all 50 were in the game, for them to experience that moment and that shock and to see, like, the emotions on their face, just videos that I got, you know, a couple days following, that was really special. So I'm glad that they got to experience that moment. Special for sure.

Q. You've been able to play against some elite defensive teams this year. What stands out about this Miami team most differently from, whether it's Ohio State, Oregon, those top-level teams?

PAT COOGAN: Absolutely. It's an elite front. Across the board, their front four is just extremely explosive, extremely explosive, twitchy and violent. Their get-offs are some of the best you've seen.

Certainly, you know, just the caliber of players on the outside and the inside -- just across the board, just extremely violent, twitchy, explosive, long, great with their hands, great at working an edge. They have the ability to run through and around you.

So just overall, their whole game, everything that they encompass presents a huge challenge for us and one that we've prepared for endlessly and one that we've got to continue to prepare for.

Q. Getting back to your time at Notre Dame, you have some pretty awesome sound bites. What encourages you to be such a vocal leader?

PAT COOGAN: I think it's just a part of who I am. I've been through a lot. I've experienced a lot. This is my fifth year. I don't know how many starts I have. I believe it's 40-plus.

So I've been through a lot. I've failed. I've succeeded. I've learned at an early age from a lot of great leaders and a lot

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of great coaches. So all that has just molded me into the type of leader I am.

Especially as a veteran presence and a guy who has kind of been around the block, per se, I have a responsibility to this team to use that to our advantage and help others. Especially as a center, you know, it's kind of molded into the position. So that's definitely part of it as well.

Q. I'm assuming in the portal, you had plenty of options. What made you choose Indiana in that process?

PAT COOGAN: Absolutely. I think I was looking for a place that fit a lot of the criteria that I had for myself, and I remember just sitting down with my dad and kind of writing on a yellow legal pad of what mattered most to me. Culture was A, number one. And also just the opportunity to slide right in at that center spot was paramount for me.

I put together an impressive resumé in my opinion, just coming off the National Championship. So I believe that had the resumé to slide right into a starting role. And ultimately when I got to talk to the coaching staff and talk to other players, talk to Fernando, like, on the phone, in the portal, I believed in what they had here. I really did. I believed that this team was going to be special yet again.

I saw who was coming back -- the Sarratts of the world and Coop and Fish and Mikail and all those guys. I knew this team was going to be special. I wasn't going to go anywhere -- I came off a successful run at Notre Dame and I didn't want to go anywhere where I was necessarily taking a step back in terms of like potential success of a season.

I wanted to go somewhere where I knew I was going to win. I knew I could do that here with this group.

It really came down to belief, right? Coaches can tell you as much as you want, but at the same time you've got to feel it in your gut, and you've got to get around the staff and the coaches and be in the locker room and ultimately choose to believe in what they had going on here, and that's what I did. And thank God I did.

Q. You have a very experienced group all across the offensive line. How has that really helped over the course of this playoff run?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, absolutely. I think it's key. And it's a great advantage that we have. We have a lot of guys that have been around the block, right? You can't quantify that, right? Like, experience is such a great thing that just molds you into the kind of player you are, especially in the big moments.

It's kind of amazing, like experience is something that you've got to go through. But then when you're on the end of it, you don't appreciate it when you're in the moment. But it really molds you kind of into the type of player you are and the person you are. It's key for all of us, really.

Q. How confident are you that Coach Bostad and Coach Cig have a blueprint that's set itself in Bloomington, that will be successful for years to come once you leave?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, absolutely. Extremely confident. Because we're built on substance and we're built on the right things. We're built on the locker room and values and morals and the right things that good programs are built on. So that just doesn't leave after a few players leave or one year.

That's how you build and sustain success. And sustaining success is key and paramount, and I believe they're set with a really, really great foundation to sustain success.

Q. What could you say about this offensive line group and how connected they are with each other?

PAT COOGAN: I think certainly and it helps that we're great friends. We have a great room and everyone is very -- we're all very tight on and off the field. So I really think that helps us on the field.

And just the ability to kind of, whenever we have time in the summer, the spring, just to get out of the locker room and hang out with each other, just boys being boys, I think that's really paid off. And that's helped us ultimately in this long journey of a season just stay close. And it's definitely helped us on the field.

Q. Everybody has a fatal flaw. They do something wrong, something annoying. People would think that Fernando does not have one. What is, like, his thing? I don't know, is he messy? I'm searching here, what is his fatal flaw?

PAT COOGAN: I'm trying to think. I don't know. I don't, like, pay attention -- I don't live with him. Maybe if you ask one of his roommates. Or his younger brother might have a better answer than that as well, but you probably already asked him that, too.

Q. Is it annoying that you can't come up with something?

PAT COOGAN: Right now it is because I'm trying to give you a good answer and I don't know what to tell you. No, I

mean, his locker's pretty clean. I wish I could give you something better.

Q. You touched on this about gelling with the offensive line. Drew just told me that he's the best cornhole player on the offensive line. I don't know if you disagree or not. But how important are those trips to the house, trips out to eat with everyone?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, super important. I'm going to take him up on that probably later. No, super important. Like I kind of just said, like off the field is just as important as on the field. I think we've been really great at making that a point of emphasis, and whether it's going out to dinner or just in the summer, on a Saturday, just stuff like that, where you can kind of just take a break from the stresses and anxieties of like the football world. And just whether it just be college students or just be boys, just hang out, play video games together, what ever it may be. I think that's key, for sure.

Q. How tough is it to be a college student especially in (indiscernible).

PAT COOGAN: It's definitely tough. We're just so focused on the task at hand. So that all college-student kind of stuff stopped probably in the summer.

But at the end of the day, this is our life, and we love this. This is who we are as people and athletes. Being able to go on this journey with each other, like, that's what it's all about.

Obviously the final destination is here, but the journey is what we're all going to kind of remember, like, the long journey. And I think a lot of us still do have to deal with the stresses of our class load and stuff like that. But at the same time, none of us would trade that in for the ride that we've been on.

I think as a collective, I can speak for everyone, just say we're very grateful for where we are and just the ride we've been on.

Sure, there's many days where there's long days. You've got to go to calculus class or something like that. But like I said, none of us would trade it in for the world.

Q. You mentioned the journey. Have you been able to give any thought to the success that this team has already had -- of course one more game, but a historic season nonetheless?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, certainly. I feel like I've said this, but it's kind of hard to have perspective on things when

you're still in the moment. So I'm sure maybe next week or in a few months, kind of when the dust is settled, I'll look back and really just reminisce, almost.

But right now, we're just so uber-focused on the task at hand. And like I kind of said, it's hard to have perspective when you're still boots on the ground, in the moment.

We're all grateful to be where we are, there's no doubt about it, but at the same time, looking at that macro longevity of what we've done, not yet, per se.

Q. What about Cignetti's system builds sustainable success these two years, but down the road, for Indiana?

PAT COOGAN: Sustaining success is the key to the game, right? It's the key to building a program and sustaining a program and making sure you sustain success.

And I think that is paramount, and I think we've built a really, really good foundation on what great programs are built upon, and that's being built on great values and culture.

Culture is A, number one. And I think that's what we have here, and that's why we're going to be able to sustain success, is because we have a bunch of like-minded individuals who are committed to a common goal and a common purpose.

We have a great coaching staff that has a long-time longevity with each other that are committed to a common goal and a common purpose bigger than themselves.

Sustaining success is key, and I believe we've built a great foundation to be able to do that.

Q. What do you make of the fan support, of course taking over Atlanta last week, but the prospect of kind of taking over National Championship in a road stadium?

PAT COOGAN: It is unbelievable what Hoosier nation has been able to accomplish. Just the support of them, it's awesome. There's nothing like it. Just like I talked about earlier, we're on this long journey, like these fans are on it with us. They're a part of it.

It's one goal, it's one whole. It's the sum of all of our parts, like, one whole of the University of Indiana, or Indiana University. It's been awesome to see, awesome to be a part of. And I'm just very appreciative of.



Q. You've been in this moment before. What's the message you're sharing to the other guys about this incredible opportunity ahead here against Miami?

PAT COOGAN: I think we've done a great job of just making sure we put in the right prep, making sure we commit to the process and that same process that has led us here.

The stage is big, but the stage has been big. So I think we've done a great job of just keeping our eyes focused, staying focused on the task at hand, not making it bigger than it is, not changing our process just because it's a different game or just because it's the National Championship.

Our process has led us here, like, we're a product of what we've done consistently over the past six months. And I think we've done a great job of staying true to that process.

Q. You've had the chance to play in a lot of big games so far in your career. One of those was in Dublin for the Aer Lingus College Football Classic. Can you talk us through just your experience of playing in that game?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, that was very fun. That was my first career start. I had a lot of family be able to go. I'm Irish Catholic. That was a very fun experience and certainly a special moment with it being my first start in Dublin.

That's just an awesome college experience and awesome to be able to be there and for my family to be there and experience the country, and a very fun, very fun moment.

Q. Do you look back on that fondly, especially with this being possibly your last college game as well, that was your first college start and then your final college start is probably going to be in a few days' time?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, certainly. It's been a wild ride, even just starting in a different country and now to here. It's been a crazy journey.

All the stops along the way, starting in Ireland, the many different cities I've played in or arenas or, you know, states, just all across the board, just really grateful for it all. It's been a great experience and a great ride.

Q. You came from a place where success is expected at Notre Dame. Then you come here and you have all this success. I feel like everybody is sort of looking at Indiana that there's a magic trick that got done by Coach Cignetti and now you guys are good. Having

been at another program and comparing it to this, when you got here, did they let you in on the secret trick they're doing? Is it just the same sort of process that you saw at Notre Dame playing out here as well?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, there's no secret, there's no, like, magic pill. The secret is in the work, really. The secret's in the process. The secret is in, you know, the practice and how we prepare -- the spring ball, the workouts that Coach Owings develops for us and how we develop in the weight room.

There is no magic trick. There is no secret pill. There's no, you know, anything. It's really just in the work and committed to the work and the process and the prep. That's where we've seen success, and that's part of now who we are.

Q. All year long, you guys have held true to the value that outside noise doesn't matter. Right now, with the noise at an all-time high, what have you done at a personal level to hold to that value?

PAT COOGAN: I feel like I've done a good job of just tuning it out and focusing on what matters. Really that's what it is. It's outside noise. It's white noise. It doesn't matter.

You know, people gotta do their jobs and people have to you know, get the clicks and everything. There's no problem with that, it's just us as athletes, we need to focus on what we need to focus on. That stuff doesn't matter to us, and we've got to remain consistent in what we focus on and how we focus. And I think I've done a good job, personally, of just tuning that out and focusing on my preparation and my process.

Q. You played for two great coaches. I get amazed of how it seems like every game, you guys are always in -- obviously you've won the games, but rarely blown out, right? What is it about Cignetti that makes him special as a head coach and have you guys so locked in every week?

PAT COOGAN: Yeah, I think he's great on focusing on what matters most. Like, the fundamentals of the game. I think sometimes that gets lost in the hoopla of the moment or the grand scheme of things.

But the fundamentals are what wins and loses ball games, the line of scrimmage, the little things, right? Like, the stuff that sometimes you don't talk about, like catching and tucking a football, you know, ball security.

Everything that goes into the details of the game, I think

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he's so great at emphasizing, no matter when the time is, like how big the moment is. That's what he's saying to us before we walk out of there. He's a great leader for us, and he really just sets the tone on how we go about our business.

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