

# CFP National Championship: Miami vs Indiana

Saturday, January 17, 2026

Miami, Florida, USA

Hard Rock Stadium

## Indiana Hoosiers

## Roman Hemby

### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. What makes you guys built and ready for this moment come Monday night?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I would really just say our process. We have great coaches that put us in great positions and just a great hunger to want to be better and go out to work every day to try to put our best product on the field.

**Q. In terms of -- I know physicality is something that you guys are used to. When you look at Miami on tape defense-wise, what stands out? What's it going to take to kind of overcome kind of their physicality as well?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah, when you look at their defense, you really see that they have a very stout front seven, I mean, they're linebackers play really well, great defensive line, and I feel like that's the biggest challenge for us. Especially as running backs, we want to kind of lean on the defense and kind of be successful in the run game, but we have our work cut out for us in that avenue, so that's something that we'll have to look into and game plan for the best opportunity.

**Q. When you look at the fact that you're a thousand-yard back this season, Kaelon could get to a thousand yards in this National Championship game, what's it like to have that give-and-take between the two of you and the relationship that you have on and off the field knowing that you have so much success on the field?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, when you look at our stats, I really just give a lot of credit to our offensive line. I really feel like we wouldn't be in that situation without them and our receivers blocking down field. You got great tight ends like Riley who does a great job for us to kind of make it easy for us.

But looking at our relationship, that's my brother. I love him to death, and he welcomed me with open arms when I



# NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

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came here about a year ago, and we kind of want to have success for each other. We want to see each other succeed. I like to say we don't have any egos in the running back room. I want him to be successful just as much as he wants me to be successful, and we go out there every day with the mindset that we're going to play for one another, bounce off of one another, and do whatever we can to help our offense be successful.

**Q. What's your favorite thing about his personality when you talk about Kaelon?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I really think the fact that he's very loving, and he has unconditional love type of thing. He's just so knowledgeable. He's been in the game for a long time as well, like myself, and he has a lot of experience.

So I would say outside of him just being a very cool person and a very cool dude, he helps me to be a better player and a better person just by his experience. He's been through a lot, so he knows a lot more than I do, and I know some things that he doesn't. So just having somebody that you can have in your corner to where they just want to see you succeed, they have the tools and the platforms to kind of help you get there, and you see the things that he's able to do on the field, it's very cool to try to emulate some of those things as well.

**Q. You and Kaelon have been running the ball so well in the playoffs. Did anything change schematically or do you feel like it's all just clicking for you at the moment?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Nothing really changed schematically. I would say we have a heightened sense. We know that these games are a little more meaningful when we're playing a one-game season. So we do the best that we can to make sure that we're at our best for game day.

So whether that's the offensive line doing a little bit more in the run game to kind of open things up for us or if that's Kaelon or myself really trying to lower our shoulder to get those extra hitting yards in a game. We're just trying to do everything we can to be successful. And I feel like we've been grinding all year to have the success that we're



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having now, and we definitely have some more work to do, but we're definitely happy with the spot that we're in currently.

**Q. The last three games, you guys have had confetti, you've held up a trophy on a stage. How has that experience kind of helped you for this moment? Maybe is there not as much nerves going into a game like this, despite the magnitude of it, if that makes sense?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah, I would definitely say that we've been in some high-magnitude games over the last month and a half, maybe. It's kind of hard to articulate the schedule. We've definitely been in situations where it was a one-game season, win or go home, and hardware to win at the end of the game.

So we're not new to any of it, but this definitely is a different magnitude than we've been used to. We're not going to treat it any different. Coach Cignetti does a great job making it feel like one game is no bigger than the next game. So this is just our next game. We're going out there to do whatever we can to be successful to win the game, but we're not going to make it anything that it isn't, and I feel like that's the recipe to kind of have success. We don't want to go out there more antsy than usual. We want to lay it all on the line and hopefully we'll reap the benefits of the labor that we put in.

**Q. Also just curious, what was a National Championship game you remember growing up and what kind of stood out about it?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I would say really over the last few years, I haven't really had a vivid memory of before I really tapped into football and really started trying to play it. I would say there's not really too many National Championship games that I can really count, but I would say the year that Alabama won when they put Tua Tagovailoa in and he kind of willed them back to a win.

I went to school with his younger brother, so I kind relived that moment and we talked about that a lot. That's something that shows the battle of adversity and overcoming adversity.

**Q. I asked Pat Coogan that same question earlier this week, and he brought up the LSU-Clemson game from 2019, which made me think, a lot of people would say that LSU could potentially be arguably one of the greatest college football teams of all time. You guys have put yourselves into that conversation. I don't know how much you hear about that. But what does that mean to kind of be in that spotlight of potentially**

**being the first team to go 16-0 in a year and being in that conversation of best college football team of all time?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, I always like to say that we're in elite company. We're definitely able to reach heights that some have never been able to make. So we're definitely blessed and grateful to be in that position.

We don't really want to compare ourselves to them just because we want to be our best self and kind of not stray away from our game plan, but it definitely is cool to see the comparisons and the things that they are putting out there. You look at the 2019 LSU team, they were pretty complete across the board, they had a lot of great players, so for us to even be in a conversation with them, that's something that I definitely would hold near and dear to my heart. But we really want to focus on trying to win this game, so we'll look back at that afterwards.

**Q. When you came in from Maryland, did you ever think getting to this game would become a reality?**

ROMAN HEMBY: When I transferred here, Coach Cignetti definitely gave me the platform and the blueprint that this could happen. Definitely it was one of those things where he said if we were able to do the things that we needed to do to be successful, we could get to this point. I really just kind of say all things align the way that they had to. We definitely made it to exactly where he said that we would be, but we're not finished, and we definitely have some more work that we have to do.

**Q. You're coming from leaving a program where the coach encouraged you to transfer to another school, and now you're entering a National Championship. What did you tell yourself during that transition?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Really just to rely on God and trust the process. I feel like I was hit with a lot of adversity throughout that moment, but I was able to kind of rely on my family, rely on my faith, and just know that everything happens for a reason. And when I got out here to Indiana -- I said out here, but when I got to Indiana, it was, like, hit the ground running and lay it all on the line, and that's kind of what I've been able to do. And I'm just so grateful to be in this position to kind of bounce back from that adversity and to have the success that we're able to have here.

**Q. Pat Coogan played in this game last year. What's been his biggest message about what it takes to ultimately come out on top and try and do something differently?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah, Coach kind of hit it on the head



with that, just kind of giving us the mindset of, You got guys, like, Pat Coogan who is a big leader for our offense and a big leader for our team. So he's been urging us to really be detail-oriented throughout the week, really not to get complacent. I feel like he's kind of living his experience, maybe things that he felt that they needed to change in his past experiences.

So he really wants to make sure that we're all at our best come game day, and we're not taking any plays off, not taking any reps off, and we're really just trying to work as hard as we can so that we can have the best product. So you take a leader like that, take a leader like Elija Sarratt, some of those other guys, Aiden Fisher, they make sure that we are at practice every day trying to get better and finding ways to overcome the adversities and to put plays together to ultimately win the game.

**Q. Between you and Kaelon, what is it that makes you guys such a dynamic duo?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I would really just say the fact that we have no egos between the running back room. We really just want to see each other be successful, we like to bounce things off one another. I say that we'll come out of the game and ask him, Hey, like, did you see anything different there? And he'll ask me like, you know, Was there something different that I could have done back there? We want to see each other be successful not for ourselves, but for the offense as well and for the team.

So I feel like we like to feed the hot hand. Whoever can help us be successful in that moment, should be in the game, and sometimes it's him, sometimes it's me. Sometimes it might be even Khobie Martin who has the hot hand. So we just really want to do whatever we can to help the offense stay ahead of the chains to score points and ultimately win games.

**Q. What's it like to play for Coach Cignetti?**

ROMAN HEMBY: It's amazing. It's definitely amazing. Just his personality and all of the things that he kind of said to me in the recruitment process, it's all come true. He's a man of his word. He's all about winning. He does everything that's possible to win. He makes sure he puts us in the best positions to flourish and show our abilities, and he's a guy that you definitely would love to play for, and I've loved my time here.

**Q. What does Fernando Mendoza mean to this team?**

ROMAN HEMBY: He means everything to this team. Like I would say, he's the heartbeat of this team. Especially the offense, just the player that he is, the guy that he is, he's

one of those guys that helps us to play at our best every day and without him, I'm sure we would have success, but we wouldn't be in this position. So big ups to that guy, shout out to that guy, and we love him to death, and we're just so appreciative that he chose to be a Hoosier.

**Q. A lot has been made about how Coach Cignetti doesn't smile a lot. What do you think is the best way to get Coach Cignetti to smile?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I feel like we can get him to smile by winning (laughing). Winning the game or being successful, I feel like is the best way to get him to smile and be happy. And even when he's not smiling, he's definitely proud of us. He's happy all the time. If we can execute the game plan and do the things that's necessary to play complementary football and clean football, we'll be in a good spot, and I think he'll be happy at the end of the game.

**Q. A thousand yards, seven touchdowns, you, Fernando, you-all get a lot of credit. How good is this offensive line?**

ROMAN HEMBY: First, I want to say, what's up to you, man? Big ups to you, man. I've watched your career, so it's cool to see you out here.

But the offensive line is really great, man. They really help us grow. I feel like we wouldn't be in this position without them, without them protecting Fernando, without them opening up holes to kind of make it easy for myself and Kaelon Black to run. Without them, I don't think I would have the success that I'm having. So I look at my stats, and having a thousand yards on the year and everything like that, that's a really good thing, but I definitely would not be here without them, so I definitely give them a lot of love and respect, and I appreciate them for everything that they do for me.

**Q. Last one, what would be one word to describe Fernando Mendoza?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I would say gritty. A lot of people don't see that side of him, just to see the way that he overcomes adversity. He shakes off his mistakes. I could have said poised as well. He's very poised. Anytime that we're in the pocket or anytime that we're in the game, he makes sure he commands the offense, commands the line of scrimmage. I can't say enough good words about that guy.

But I would say gritty just because a lot of people get to see him in interviews and they get to see the uppity person that he is, but they don't get to see they guy that lays his body on the line and does whatever he can for his teammates and for his team. And I think that's kind of one

of those guys that you get up for because he puts so much into this team and he loves us so much.

**Q. Hoosier Nation. What have they meant to you guys and has there been one moment during this post-season run where you're like, oh my God, these fans are nuts?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, Hoosier Nation has been everything to us. I feel like they're our 12th man. That's something that a lot of teams say. But they really show up and show out for us every week. They give us that environment to where we feel like every game is a home game, almost.

I would say, to your point, last week was really when I was able to see it. Playing down in Atlanta and having, I want to say, maybe 75 to 80 percent of just Indiana fans in that environment was just insane. The ability for them to come out and show out for us -- I think we have the biggest alumni base in the country, so it makes sense. And for us to be able to make them proud and do what we can to be successful and them being along the ride with us every step of the way, it's very, very -- I can't even put it into words. But I definitely appreciate them and I love them for everything that they have done.

**Q. What gives you the confidence as you guys get ready for this game knowing biggest game of your guys' careers, tough opponent, they're playing in their home stadium, with all this on the line?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah, just being as detail-oriented as possible and attacking it like it's a one-game season because it is. We don't want to really make the magnitude any different than what it is, but it is definitely the biggest game that I'll be playing in my career up to this point. So really just relying on my faith in God and relying on my faith in my teammates and the coaching staff and everything that they have done to get us to this point.

I know that if we can execute game plan and do what we have to do, we'll be in successful territory. So that's kind of where we're at with it. We definitely have more work to do. I feel like the preparation never stops until the kickoff. And even on the sideline, we're still prepping and doing things to make sure that we can correct our mistakes and go out there and do that. So we'll be hands on -- all hands on deck for the next 48 hours until game day, and through game day we'll be doing everything that we can to be successful.

**Q. You've been very successful running up the gaps. Can you talk about the support that you get from your offensive line and how much you rely on them to do**

**what you do?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, I give a lot of the glory and praise to the offensive line because without the work that they do for myself and for Kaelon Black, I think we wouldn't have the success that we're having now. I know that at this stage in your career -- or in playing on this stage in college football, just being a good running back isn't good enough all the time. You need people around you that can help you to be successful, and that's what I got with guys like Pat Coogan, Carter Smith. I could name the whole offensive line, but those guys really do a lot to make us successful.

And I even give a lot of praise to our tight ends as well. They come out there and they do a lot to make sure they open holes for us. So I take my success with a grain of salt because I know I wouldn't be there without the guys that are around me.

**Q. The guys from South Florida talk a lot about South Florida football, the neighborhood games. In the locker room, are they talking about it like even then? How much do they bring it up and how much pride do they have in all this stuff from South Florida?**

ROMAN HEMBY: They don't bring it up too much. I feel like they kind of let their work speak for itself. You see the guys that are from Florida on our team, they're all vital pieces to the team, they all help this machine to go, and they definitely don't try to praise themselves like that or say anything like that.

We know what it takes and we know that when you look at the production from this state of Florida, they produce a lot of great talent. So you see that the players that they have on our team from that state, you see the players that are from Florida that are on the Miami team, they're all really good. I feel like that's just in their culture, that's how they were bred, and we're looking forward to the challenge of playing against some of those great players.

**Q. Curt Cignetti has talked a lot about how this has been his best team about executing his message. What is it about the maturity level and of this unit that allows you guys to do that?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Really just executing his game plan and trusting it. I feel like we all bought into the culture on day one, once we got here. I arrived in January and kind of hit the ground running. But just to have the ability to see, like, his work in progress and see how things kind of come to fruition when he says things and how they happen. I think that we just really bought into his culture, and I think that that kind of plays a huge role into the success that we've

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been having this season.

**Q. Have you been able to kind of give any thought to that success and sort of relish and appreciate the history of this season, even with one game to go?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah, looking at the success from this season, it's everything. Being as though I came from a place where I had some success, some bumps along the way, just to be a part of such a great culture and a great team, where we have a lot of guys from different walks of life that kind of come together. And we have a common goal. We go out there every day with the ability to have a positive impact on someone else. And you kind of don't look at the end result when you're during the process. But being able to win the Big-10 championship, to win the Rose Bowl, to win the Peach Bowl, those are accomplishments that I'll be able to live and tell my kids and my family one day. So just to see the little nuggets of success that we've been able to have along the way and being able to really just execute and overcome any challenges that we faced up until this point is definitely very, very humbling and very awesome. It's just awesome (laughing).

**Q. Watching you at the Rose Bowl, I think people underestimate the physicality that you and Kaelon run with. How have you been able to be that level of physicality of backs?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I would really just say, I always say the coaches, just because they put us into positions to be successful. But I would also say a little bit of Coach Cignetti's philosophy as well. Being able to make sure that we're healthy on game day, that we feel like ourselves, we're able to go out there and play to the best of our abilities. I feel like that all kind of plays a hand in how we've been able to be successful. So, yeah.

**Q. Less toll on your body?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah, all of that kind of plays a part in it. I feel like, going in on game day, I always feel like myself, and I'm able to do a little bit more of the dirty work, the gritty work to kind of have success. When you're playing alongside some of the greatest players, like Fernando Mendoza and the offensive line like we have, it makes it a little bit easier for you to kind of put your body on the line, put some things at risk to see success. Kaelon Black is one of those guys that he sets the tone with the way he runs. I kind of just follow his lead. I let him kind of set the tone. When he does, I just kind of follow suit and try to do my best to emulate that and build off of it.

**Q. What is it about Coach Cignetti's system that makes that success sustainable this season and in the**

**future?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I would say just the way that he goes about his business. He's in the film room at 5:00 a.m., and he's the last one to leave at night. He has a winning formula. I tell my family that all the time. He has a winning formula. He has a great coaching staff around him that kind of knows his process, knows what he wants to see done, and they're all on the same accord. I like to say that it's kind of like a trickle down effect. Like, Coach Cignetti says something to the offensive coaches, the offensive coaches says that in our position rooms and we all carry the same mindset forward. I feel like when you have a philosophy like that to where you know that complementary football is important. And Coach Cignetti does that, he makes sure that we're all on the same page, and when we hit the ground running at practice we all have a common goal.

I feel like as long as he does that he'll always have success, because he has a great eye for talent, he has a great eye for culture guys that come in and know how to listen and do everything that they can for one another. I feel like as long as he does that, the success and everything that he's looking for is definitely right in front of him and they will continue to have success.

**Q. Can you talk about your relationship with your offensive line and what that group has kind of meant to you and your success this year?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah. The offensive line means so much to me. I feel like if you ask any of the running backs or even the quarterbacks, maybe even the receivers what they mean to this offense, they will kind of have nothing but good things to say. I always say, like I would not be in the position that I am without them. I would not have the success that I would have, that I've been having throughout the season without them. I have a great relationship with those guys. I'm able to sit down and talk to them, have fun with them. And even when it's time to lock in and focus on the things at hand, we're able to sit in the huddle together and share words together, maybe even just a fist bump to know that, hey, like this next process, we got to be all in. I love those guys to death. I know they love me as well. Hopefully we can get this last one done so that we can have the success and kind of look back on our historic season from a good standpoint.

**Q. I know you know all about having the odds stacked against you, being told you're not good enough. For the next generation out there of younger kids, tell us what you've been through and what got you through, your keys to overcoming adversity?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, I was definitely in a position where I felt as though things weren't looking too good for my career for the things that I kind of stood for. But I had unwavering faith throughout the process. When things didn't look too good I relied on the faith and the support system that I have. And if you surround yourself with good people, good things will always happen to you. And bad times don't last forever. So if somebody was out there going through anything, maybe having odds stacked against them like you said, or things don't look too great, rely on your faith, rely on God, and pray often. And just make sure that you trust your gut when you take your next step. If you trust your gut and you put everything that you have on the line, more times than not good things will happen and you'll have the success that you want. Just because I always say that God gives his toughest battles to his strongest soldiers. I'm not trying to say that I'm the strongest soldier out there, but I definitely have some things that I went through, and I'm a testament to keep moving forward. And if you keep pressing on, good things will always happen and you'll turn the corner eventually.

**Q. I want to say, I went to Maryland. Me, SVP, and the whole entire Vu (phonetic) Facebook group misses you.**

ROMAN HEMBY: I miss everybody.

**Q. But we're all very happy for you. What are your aspirations after college?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, I definitely will miss you guys as well. Definitely being a Terp alum is something that's definitely in my heart and something that I'll live with forever. After my career here I want to pursue the NFL. If, God willing, I'll definitely have a career in the NFL, and live a long career, and ultimately maybe get on ESPN one day or something like that to be a commentator.

**Q. And you can make us happy by maybe playing for the Washington Commanders.**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, that would be awesome. (Laughing). Hey look, I'll be blessed to be anywhere in the NFL. If any team takes a shot on me, I'll do everything that I can to repay the organization by hard work, dedication, and coming to work every day. But being from Maryland, being from that area, it definitely would be awesome.

**Q. You're a great guy, I really respect you.**

ROMAN HEMBY: Thank you so much.

**Q. Good luck tomorrow.**

ROMAN HEMBY: Thank you.

**Q. Who is your pick to win Texans or Patriots?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, I'm going Patriots, just because Stefon Diggs is a Maryland alum is on the team (laughing).

**Q. If you were to give a title to the movie that Indiana has had this season, what would you call it?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, good title? I would say Keep Fighting or something like that. Just because you see the adversity and the things that we went through throughout the season, but we never wavered, and we definitely continued to press on when things didn't look too great. And although we're not looking up at the finish line yet, we're almost there and I feel like it's a testament to hard work and dedication.

**Q. When you were at Maryland your first couple years, before last season when Indiana popped, what was your perspective of this program? What did you think about Indiana when like someone asked you thoughts on IU, what came to mind?**

ROMAN HEMBY: It's hard to say, just because they were in a different spot, different coaching staff and a lot of different players as well. I would say though like being completely honest, during my early times at Maryland I wouldn't look at them as a being a tough team like they are now, like we are now. Once Coach Cignetti came through and the coaching staff changed and everything like that, it was like night and day. I feel like the program did a complete 180. Just being a part of it now, I was able to see like, hey, like this is definitely not the team that I was used to playing back in 2021 and 2022. That's just a testament to the great coaches and great players that Coach Cignetti brings through and just so blessed to be here.

**Q. Are you an Orioles fan?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Oh, yeah, I make it to at least one Orioles game every year with my father. We go to at least one a year. I forgot who they played, but this past year we went on Father's Day, which was really cool.

**Q. You're from PG County?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I'm from Baltimore County.

**Q. That's where I'm from.**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah.

**Q. Reisterstown Road.**

ROMAN HEMBY: I'm familiar. I currently live in Hartford County in the Joppatowne area. But I played football for Middle River Renegades growing up so close to that Essex area.

**Q. Do you like crab cakes?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I love crab cakes.

**Q. Crabs?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I love crabs. It's funny, I actually grew up eating crabs once a week until I was maybe 19 years old.

**Q. What about pizza?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I love pizza as well.

**Q. They got good pizza there?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Awesome pizza.

**Q. Do you like Ledo's?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I do like Ledo's. My time at Maryland, I ate Ledo's a lot, just because that was kind of where it was at. But I love Ledo's.

**Q. What is your favorite pizza?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I would say Seasons, if you ever heard of Seasons Pizza. It might be just in Hartford County. It's a pizza place that I grew up eating, and I definitely love their pizza that they have there.

**Q. Is there like anyone that you grew up watching that you try to like emulate your game off of? Is there anyone that inspired you or you watch, you break down their film, you try to see if you could translate that, or any inspiration?**

ROMAN HEMBY: Yeah, I would say, looking at my college career, when I was going into college I watched a little bit of Alvin Kamara, just because of the way that he was able to run the ball, catch the ball, do a lot of things other than just running between the tackles. I feel like that was really something that I tried to emulate with my game, just because I have dreams and aspirations to play at the next level, and I know that that's kind of the way that the game is shaping in the NFL as well, running backs that can catch the ball, that can run routes out of the back field, and can ultimately just make plays in the open space. And he was

one of those guys that really hit home for those aspects when I was looking at the game of football growing up.

**Q. How long did it take for your dreads to get that long?**

ROMAN HEMBY: I started growing my hair in 2019. So what's that? Going on seven years maybe.

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