

Indiana University Football Media Conference

Thursday, April 18, 2024
Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Curt Cignetti Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: The great thing about that was we got nobody hurt today, got some good valuable work in. I thought we made a lot of progress from the beginning of spring to the end of spring. I give the players a lot of credit. I thought they really tried hard.

When you look back December 1st, the first day I took the job, when we had ten offensive starters in the portal and many defensive guys and really couldn't even fill the team at that point, and where we are today, we made good progress.

But we have a long way to go and a short time to get there. I think the players understand that in terms of mindset, how we think, playing more physical, cleaner, tackling better first time out, throwing and catching, stuff like that.

We'll look different with four or five key injured guys back in the fall and with a great summer, second time through the offense, defense, special teams, and hopefully a few roster additions in some areas we could use some help.

Q. Those first two roles of the offensive line, if you want to call them the first team, the second team, it felt like they were having maybe some trouble with the pass rush but also some stretches where they were keeping clean pockets. What did you see from the offensive line tonight?

CURT CIGNETTI: That would be hard for me to evaluate that until I watch the tape. I know, when we ran the ball, we ran it really well. It seemed like the ball was moving forward. I told Mike to throw it 65, 75 percent of the time tonight.

There were a couple of dropped passes that probably stalled some drives. And then with me being out on the field, there was one situation where the ball was in plus territory about the 42 or 7, where it would have taken two downs and we threw it on third and got a penalty. So if we'd have played that different.

But there was some pressure on the quarterback for sure,

but it's hard for me to say how much.

Q. In terms of the quarterback, the last two times you talked to us, you said Kurtis was making significant steps. Did that continue on the back half of spring? And what were your impressions of Tayven as well in that second half?

CURT CIGNETTI: I was trying to figure out if our two offense was that good or our two defense was that bad. I think I know the question to that -- or the answer. I think the freshman corner got exposed a little bit in the boundary. But Tayven made some nice throws, and Anderson made a play or two, Coby.

But we then turn around and drop a ball, could have been a big play, throw an interception. Kurtis was the victim of some dropped passes that could have kept some drives alive.

So I think there's a healthy competition there heading into summer and fall camp. Competition is a great thing. We need more competition at all positions. That was one of our issues this spring is we have some guys that played some football in the past that didn't have the kind of competition we'd like to see to motivate them to go out every day, every play, focused in, best effort, improving.

That's how I saw it.

Q. Aiden Fisher is obviously a guy you're familiar with, new here. He was all over the field tonight, and he was a first time starter last year for you. How much progress has he made? How impressed have you been with his progression from when he first started for you last year to this spring?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think Bryant Haines sleeps a lot better at night with him. He's like a quarterback of the defense. Knows it inside out, really studies, really respected by his teammates too, helps get others lined up. So making progress, good football player.

Q. Curt, you mentioned the summer and fall being super important and having a long way to go with a



short time to get there. Kind of what does the next few months for your football team look like?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think it's a busy time for your coaches, number one. The portal is open. We spent a lot of time on that the last few days as well as recruits here and then getting ready for the scrimmage. Then they're going to hit the road, May recruiting.

Players will stay in the strength and conditioning program for a week and then prepare for finals. Then there's a few weeks where they're off. Then summer sessions start. We'll be back training again May 20th, begin our summer program.

I thought we made excellent progress in the winter with Derek. Usually what we see in the summer is just a huge leap. I expect to see that. Then another significant leap in fall camp.

I think the number one thing right now is just some key positions on this football team we've got to strengthen a little bit.

Q. With the setting tonight being different, a spring game compared to practice the last few weeks, were there any players that kind of stood out there or maybe unexpected that flashed tonight?

CURT CIGNETTI: I'd have to watch the tape. To me it was just a glorified practice. They called it a game.

I know Tayven started out good, him and O hooked up a couple of times. I think some of that was going against a freshman DB who may have fallen down one time.

I've got to watch the tape. It seemed like, when he ran the ball, the ball was moving forward pretty good.

Q. You mentioned that you were running the ball. I was going to ask about the running backs, Lawton and Ellison and Black all had some moments throughout the game. What do you like about the way they ran the ball tonight and the progress they made through spring?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think that group definitely caught my eye. I just think our running back room is faster, more dynamic, good at pass pro, good at catching the ball out of the backfield, can break tackles. We have more speed and athleticism back there. All three of those guys just love football. They're football nuts. Tough guys. They're tough guys.

Q. With McCulley, I know you kind of mentioned you

want a little bit more out of him, I think last week. How did he kind of finish this spring, and where do you need more out of him?

CURT CIGNETTI: I thought he made a really nice catch that first touchdown on the post. I saw him really respond. I don't do that a lot. I did it once last fall with our quarterback, and he really responded about the middle of the season.

He still has some improving. Everybody's got to improve. I know what his goals are, to be a great player, and it starts with the way you practice, your attention to detail, how you study off the field, how you prepare. Those are some of the areas he's got to improve in. But I'm glad we got him.

Q. Coach, on the back end of the defense, with Asbury and Jones, they both had interceptions today. What have they shown you in spring and capped off in the spring game growth-wise?

CURT CIGNETTI: They're both doing great in the classroom, I can tell you that. They work really hard. They've got great work ethics. Asbury has a very consistent spring. Jones has been running a little bit more with the twos lately, but had a nice play, like you mentioned.

Both of those guys have played a lot of football and had about 100 tackles last year each. That kind of experience only helps.

Q. Curt, you mentioned some of the good things the offense did in terms of the running backs and some of the things that the receivers did. I guess the other side of the coin of that is the tackling aspect on the defensive side. There was a few games where there was some yards made after contact. How do you evaluate the defense? And how much of that is good offense, and how much of that is improvement that needs to be made defensively?

CURT CIGNETTI: This was the first practice we tackled, which is kind of a trend across the country. I watched some other people, even their spring games, they're thudding.

We did this last year, and because we opened with Bucknell last fall, they didn't even tackle in fall camp any of our scrimmages. I'm not saying we're going to do that.

So I'm sure there were some missed tackles tonight. When there's missed tackles, that can be a lot of different things -- athleticism, balance, body control, want to, toughness, things like that.



It's hard for me to give a comment on that without watching the tape, other than I'm sure there's a lot of improvements to be made.

Q. Coach, you mentioned you're still looking to add to this roster. Are you looking for starters, depth guys? What positions are you looking to add some guys to this offense?

CURT CIGNETTI: I'm looking for the best I can get. I'm not looking for any third teamers.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

