

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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## Coach Curt Cignetti

### Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: The game is finally here. A lot of work to be done. Have to have a great week of preparation at the day. Put ourselves in the best position to be successful to play FIU. Coach McIntyre does a great job, has throughout his entire career.

Extremely dangerous at quarterback, dual threat kind of guy. Throws the ball well, extends plays, can run and we'll have to do a great job on them. They've got a deep stable of receivers, returning two or three receivers and adding more guys from the transfer portal. Impressive with their running backs. The guys all returned that they played last season.

Experienced in the secondary at the safety, corner. Their leading tackler returns. Their linebackers, specialists are good -- kicker, long snapper, punter, return people.

So it will be a challenge and we'll have to play well. And I want to see us play fast and physical and work out some of the mistakes we made in the first two scrimmages -- penalties, missed signs, things of that nature -- but also play smart, disciplined and poised. So there's a fine line there.

But we do want to attack, be that kind of team and play well.

**Q. (Inaudible) you guys have there? And how has he developed as a leader? Ty Son Lawton was telling us he brought the group together after the first scrimmage and really kind of lit a fire under them. What have you seen from him in the locker room kind of getting the guys together?**

CURT CIGNETTI: He probably reminds me of Cole Johnson who we had for two seasons. His last year with us, he had a tremendous year, about 41 touchdown passes, four interceptions, threw for over 4,000 yards.

Both more pocket guys but still can gain positive yards with their legs. And really smart, heady. Played a lot of football. Respected by his teammates. He's not a real "rah

"rah" guy on the field, which is fine. You kind of lead by example and how you do on the field. But he's got the respect of all his teammates.

**Q. Just your philosophy as much as anything else on how you handle freshmen that you might want to see get some snaps, where you maybe set the bar for guys that you don't worry about the redshirt, where you maybe set the bar for guys you think let's give them a couple of games see where he gets to. How do you basically handle the question whether he's going to redshirt, retain it or throw it all?**

CURT CIGNETTI: The best guys play, really. And we're a veteran team. We've got a lot of new guys. We've got a lot of seniors on this football team. So I wouldn't anticipate seeing many freshmen out there. That doesn't mean you might not see one or two. But it's all based on who can help us be successful, who's ready to play winning football.

And things change every week. So right now, going into the first game, I don't see many freshmen having very significant role in this game.

**Q. Obviously after Nick Kidwell went down, you had a lot of competition, not just because of him but overall. Not naming guys but where are you with that competition? How do you feel about the five guys right now that look like they may be the starters?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I feel good. Like I said previous, now you're looking at Drew Evans, Bray Lynch and Tyler Stephens, three guys for two spots. They all can snap also. And we'll see who we trot out there in the first series.

**Q. You mentioned FIU's quarterback, Keyone Jenkins. What do you feel like is the biggest thing that causes trouble and what is the biggest thing you can cause trouble for him on Saturday?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, he's an extremely capable passer, but when he gets out of the pocket he does a really nice job of extending plays. And even though he's a really good athlete that can tuck it and run and gain a lot of yards, he's going to look to throw first and does a nice job of finding



people when he extends plays.

And we've got to win up front, our defensive line. And we've got to put pressure on him and keep him in the pocket and not give him much time to throw. We've got to get to him. And we need a game from our D line.

**Q. With this first game of the season, how much do you kind of see this as an opportunity to set the tone for what this era of Indiana football will look like?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I don't look at it that way. This is the opponent. I'm spending every second of my day with a sense of urgency trying to help put us in the best position to be as good as we can be. And that's how we look at things as coaches, I think, across the country.

**Q. We know that you're a process-oriented guy. I'm curious what the process looks like now that it's a game week, you're away from fall camp? How do meetings go, how does next week's preparation start for next week's opponent, all those things?**

CURT CIGNETTI: All the eyes are on this opponent and today. And typical in season I was up at 4:00 a.m. and in the office before 5:00. And we'll have a light practice tonight and then tomorrow is first and second down and punt return. And then Wednesday is third down and Thursday is red area and goal line, two-minute. And the mornings and afternoons are spent preparing for those situations. And then we put it all together.

**Q. Omar Cooper has been mentioned as a guy, a potential breakout guy to use the generic phrase. Those who saw him in high school saw the potential that was there. What are things he needs to do this season to go from "potential" to make a few plays here and there, to be maybe the breakout guy who can really be consistently an impact guy for you guys?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I think he just has to take what he's done on the practice field and take it onto the game field, which I'm confident he will and can.

**Q. I want to say we had Shanahan in here a few weeks ago, we had Walker and Lawton who each mentioned this winning mindset you have. What kind of shapes your specific mindset? And, again, for a team that's, I want to say, won nine games the last three years, how do you approach trying to add that here in the culture here?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I think that's well-documented at this point. But we came in and changed the roster and then you have to change the way people think -- the mindset,

the culture, the identity of your football team. And I think we've made progress. But you really can't measure it until you play.

And then every week, chapter one of a 13-page book. So I'm excited to see us play. We do have a lot of work to do before we kick it off, and I'm confident in this team.

**Q. You guys have a few cornerbacks down. Do you feel like you have a good grasp of the rotation going into that season-opener?**

CURT CIGNETTI: We really don't have a few down. We had one miss some practice time in fall camp, and he's mending very quickly. So we anticipate being close to full strength.

**Q. You've been a part of multiple rebuilds and reboots. Going into this week, I know you'll know a lot more after you play, but how do you feel about your offense now as compared to other places where you've gone into that first game?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I feel good about our offense. We have a lot of veteran players. We have a veteran quarterback. And I think we have a chance to be a good offense and defense and special teams.

But as a coach you've always got concerns, too. I've never had a team I didn't have concerns about something. But my focus right now is on preparing these guys and help them be as successful as possible Saturday. And I feel good about the pieces we have in place.

**Q. You've talked before about how small the margin of error is once the season starts. What aspects through fall camp have you seen lessen that margin, and what parts this week do you think really need some work?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I think we were more consistent in practice as camp went on. We weren't an up-and-down team. We still have to more consistently get everybody doing what they're supposed to do assignment-wise, technique-wise.

But part of that is the challenge of camp, too, because you install everything. So the plate is very heavy.

Now, you get into the first game and that plate lighten up a little bit. And we want to free them up from thinking too much so they can play fast and let their ability take over.

**Q. What have you learned from previous stops along the way or previous new jobs that has helped you make this transition as smoothly as possible? What**

**lessons have you previously learned to help you this year?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I think in every area that matters, leadership, recruiting, development, retention, managing staff, messaging, how to practice, game-day philosophy, I think every year you do this you get a little better. You learn lessons.

So this is my 42nd year, I think, in this business. And so there hasn't been much I haven't seen, but I'm sure something will come up one day that I haven't yet.

**Q. You mentioned getting up at 4:00 in the morning going into the office by 5:00. How late are you staying?**

CURT CIGNETTI: We'll get off the field tonight about 8:15.

**Q. Has the pace been that way pretty much same since December, going a thousand miles an hour.**

CURT CIGNETTI: Oh, yeah, and December was very much that way. We have some rest banked right now, coaches and players. So we should have a full tank heading into this week.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about the running backs in general and Lawton, in particular, what you expect from them what you hope to see from them?**

CURT CIGNETTI: When you look at Lawton, Black and Ellison, they're all very similar. They can take it between the tackles. They can get the ball outside. They can catch the ball out of the backfield, and they're good pass pro guys. And Elijah Green is a good back, as well as Vanhorse. Lawton is capable of making the big play, catches the ball extremely well, is good inside the 10, and he's got an extra gear, and he's had a lot of success. He's a confident guy and doesn't talk very much. He doesn't say much. But on game day, he shows up and you know who he is.

**Q. Do you have both coordinators in the booth and does the quarterback communication this year change your game day operations at all on how you kind of organize everything on the field and in the booth?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, in the past we've had Mike up in the booth and Bryant's been on the field, still talking through what we'll do this year. I haven't figured out what we'll do. But the game day communication can change things somewhat, whether you huddle a little bit more. To start a new series, do you huddle, gather them up on the sidelines. There's some things I think you'll see across the

country that are a little different than last season.

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