

Indiana University Football

Media Conference

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Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: Good solid performance in the opener, did a lot of positive things. I like the way our defense swarmed to the ball, put pressure on the quarterback, TFLs.

Offensively strung together four straight drives that averaged 75 yards, 11-plus plays, three straight touchdowns, and then a field goal. We hit that halfback pass, which we normally do in practice, then we're looking at four TDs.

Had a couple of clunker drives there at the end of the third quarter, fourth quarter. Offensively, penalties obviously, too many on offense. Got to cut those out. I think we had seven second and 11 pluses and six third and 11 pluses, some were 17, 21. Things we can teach off tape obviously, all correctible.

Last drive of the second quarter, crucial missed assignment on third and five. We should have had that play nailed. Guy didn't do what he was supposed to do.

We didn't finish the second half the way we want to finish the second half. That's always a point of emphasis. We did start the third quarter by stopping them and driving down the field. We ended up kicking a field goal, should have scored a touchdown.

Special teams was solid, and I thought the effort was good. We're excited to play again Friday.

Q. You talk about the defense, but just how encouraging is it to see so many different guys getting involved in the disrupting? Talking about tackles for loss, sacks. It felt like it wasn't just one or two guys making plays.

CURT CIGNETTI: That's what I'm used to seeing. We like to pride ourselves on playing defense. We pride ourselves on being fast and physical and disruptive up front and creating a lot of different looks for the defense and being really good against the run. I think we gave up 53 yards rushing, less than 200 total yards.

And we've always been really good against the run and had TFLs and sacks. So it was nice to see that carry over with this group. We've added faces to the defense, and a lot of guys did get involved, like you said.

Q. A lot of times in week 1, it seems like one of the things teams struggle with is tackling. Live it looked like you guys tackled pretty well. Is that what you saw when you went back and watched the film? How pleased were you with that?

CURT CIGNETTI: We did tackle well, we swarmed and had multiple hats. We didn't tackle in fall camp and only once in the spring. There you go. So a lot to build on.

Q. You mentioned bringing a lot of new guys in on defense. Two returners I want to ask you about. Josh Sanguinetti and Isaiah Jones. What did they do to earn your trust? Josh obviously had a starting role. But Isaiah only played in four career games kind of in rotation at linebacker. What did they do to stand out to you to earn those roles?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think everybody on this team sort of starts with a clean slate and evaluated daily, in season or out of season. Once we start practice, typically fall camp, day in, day out practice and who earns the right to be on the field.

Those guys have done well and earned that right. We need them to play well throughout the whole season.

Q. Curt, the game is coming down to the wire in the fourth quarter, up by three scores. Clock was winding down. Seemed like you were still airing the ball out a little bit and went for it on fourth down there. Do you view situations like that in nonconference like live practice reps almost, and how do you balance that against injury risk?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, we were still in attack mode. At that point we weren't really satisfied with how we had played since really our last touchdown drive. Even the one we went down and kicked the field goal, we weren't



pleased we had to settle for the field goal.

There were some missed opportunities out there, and sometimes we got behind the sticks because of penalties. So we wanted to keep attacking.

Q. Curt, it's the first time it's been relevant to ask you about this, but what are your thoughts about playing college football on Friday nights? Here in Indiana, high school football is a big deal. All three schools are playing at home here in Bloomington. It's a short week for you too. What are your thoughts about playing college football on Fridays?

CURT CIGNETTI: I've played Thursday. I've played Friday. I've played Saturday. We just get ready to play them when we're asked to play them.

Q. You mentioned the number of looks you all can throw it. I want to say you guys had a lot of role flexible players. Mikail working inside, outside. Josh and Shawn kind of felt they could play low, play high. When you guys are in that process of trying to scheme and plan, how important is it to have those role flexible players?

CURT CIGNETTI: It's real important, and Bryant does a great job, along with the defensive staff, of creating different packages and week to week based on team's tendencies, what they think puts us in the best position to be successful. Those guys have to be versatile, but part of being a safety is being able to play low, run for it, play deep, and stop the pass.

That's where it helps to have intelligent guys defensively because it is a heavy plate, where they've got to learn some things and there's checks built into formations, et cetera.

Q. Your longest passing play on Saturday was 30 yards, and that was a broken play. There was a lot of check-downs, screens, RPO type stuff. Was that a by-product of the opponent? Is that what you're looking to do, get the ball in rhythm offensively early?

CURT CIGNETTI: No, we should have had two post touchdowns. The one we hit Cooper on the deep cross, probably should have gone to the post. He's open. We didn't throw it. We did throw the post later in the game to Anderson Coby, who's open. We got to use the field and lay it out there. That should have been a touchdown too.

We had some other down the field opportunity chunks that we just didn't convert on.

Q. You had to get a lot of guys playing time on Saturday, especially late in the game. Is there anyone that stuck out to you that made the most of their opportunities?

CURT CIGNETTI: I thought they all played hard. Overall, Aiden Fisher, we thought really played well. A number of guys played well on defense. I like the way the running backs ran the ball on offense, and Carter Smith played well up front, Zach Horton did a good job.

I like the way we kicked off. McCormick, I thought was excellent on kickoffs.

We got some young guys in there at the end. Landino saw some action, and Hardy saw some action at linebacker. That was good to see. Continue to try to build some depth.

Q. Just your thoughts on the offensive line. You did get some young guys in there. I think four guys had their college debut on the offensive line. Just the way you thought they played?

CURT CIGNETTI: Did a nice job, rushed for 240 yards. I thought we ran the ball effectively, averaged about six yards a rush.

Pass pro, we had a couple issues, but nothing that's not correctible there. We're not real deep there on the offensive line. We can go probably six deep with veteran guys, seven. So got to keep progressing.

Q. A veteran in Donaven McCulley, who's played a lot of football, but only got to play a half in the opener. How frustrating is that that you weren't able to see him out more in game action? Does it hurt him to not be able to get those game reps in this new system?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I don't get frustrated when a guy gets hurt because it's next man up. I don't have time to think about that.

We got him in there, and he was playing fast, doing a nice job, and took a hit and was ruled out. He'll be anxious to get back, and I'll be anxious to get him back.

Q. What's your process of reviewing the game with the quarterbacks? How do you feel like Kurtis -- what do you feel he took away from that game, and what do you take away from that too?

CURT CIGNETTI: I always come in early and look at ODK, and then when we come in as a staff Sunday morning, the offensive staff will watch it together, defensive staff will watch teams together. I may cut out a few plays I

watch with the defense. This past week I didn't.

But in terms of the quarterback coach, and Tino will coach -- tonight Kurtis will review the tape with Tino, and that's how we did it. I thought he did a nice job. He made some plays when he was under pressure, getting out of the pocket, and made a throw or two and threw the ball fairly well.

He missed a couple reads, but I thought it was a good first time out for him.

Q. Curt, you talked about the 80 penalty yards you had. In this week of prep, what goes into correcting that?

CURT CIGNETTI: Now you can teach it off tape and the consequence of having a holding penalty and how it puts you behind the chains. We've got to get better with our hand placement, got to get our hands inside, they can't be outside. It's always a concern going into the first game.

We don't have officials at every practice like some people do. So you harp on it during fall camp. Sometimes it takes a consequence to get the result.

Q. Just liking to spread the ball around but also getting production from your running backs. What goes into that offensive game plan? Is there anything specific that you guys really wanted to kind of nail in this first week?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I mean, every week we're going to put our best run game plan together based on the opponent, what we're seeing schematically. Then we've always tried to play three backs, keep them fresh.

And I thought Elijah Green did a nice job because Kaelon Black, you know, ham was a little tight. So we held him precautionary after he ran down on kickoff and I think had one carry. I thought all those guys did a nice job.

Q. Follow-up on Donaven. Do you anticipate him being available for this week, or at least did he avoid something serious long term?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think we'll have him back soon. Right now I would say it's more day to day.

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