

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: Right off the bat, Kurtis Rourke will not play this week. We do expect him to return during regular season with a thumb injury. That's all I'll say about the injury.

We have 100% confidence and the team has 100% confidence, I have confidence, the staff has confidence in Tayven Jackson. I thought he played really well in the second half.

We got a tough challenge this week against a good football team, Washington. A lot of play-makers on offense, good defense. Like to pressure. Not giving up a lot of points. A lot of respect for Coach Fisch. A very well-coached team.

Really was very impressed with his team last season, Arizona, where he turned that program around, the way they finished. I think they won their last eight games, maybe nine. Playing about as well as anybody in the country last season. They're a good football team. Got to have a great week.

Questions.

Q. With Kurtis, he dealt with an in-season injury at Ohio, what is your message, telling him to be patient? Have you talked to him at all? What is your message to him?

CURT CIGNETTI: No, he's a veteran guy, married guy. He's older, smart. Got a great attitude about it.

Q. You talked about how it could be hard sometimes for a backup week to week. They don't get as many reps in practice. What is different for Tayven when he's able to go through a whole week knowing everything is geared around him as the starting quarterback?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, exactly. I thought he came in, did a nice job in the second half. Now he'll get more repetitions, which will help him prepare for the game on Saturday.

He's a guy that's extremely capable, extremely capable. I'm sure he'll rise to the occasion.

Q. Spoke with your old boss Dave Blank from Elon. Now that you've had success here similar to the way you had at Elon, how similar does it remain? How much do you fall back on that experience to make this one successful?

CURT CIGNETTI: I drew parallels to that early on when I was hired, having gone through that one time before.

One of the differences is we won a lot of close games there. We had eight wins in a row. They almost all went down to the last play of the game. Whereas here, we've been pretty dominant in our performances. Haven't trailed.

But they were similar situations, yes.

Q. With FOX being here, now ESPN being here, do you have a sense yet of the recruiting impact that's having on a national scale?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I think it's great exposure for the football program and the university. Now we got to do our part on Saturday. You guys all know the best way to do that is to have a great day today, great meeting, great walk-through, stack good days, which is what we have to do.

Q. Looked like you moved some pieces around in the secondary on Saturday, more play for Terry Jones. What do you like about him that got him on the field more?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, he's done a nice job on special teams. Got an opportunity on Saturday. An aggressive player. Played a lot of football. Had over a hundred tackles at ODU last season.

Put Ferrell at strong safety. We like the way that played out on Saturday. I thought we played really well on defense. Created five turnovers. Had 28 points off of turnovers Saturday, which you don't see that very often.



The offense I thought did a great job, red area, seven for seven touchdowns. We out-rushed them pretty significantly.

But Terry, I thought he did a nice job.

Q. With Kurtis out at least for a game, how important was it that Tayven got to play an entire half Saturday against that Nebraska defense?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, and played well, right? He's played this year, so...

We always talk about the next man up. Everybody's here for a reason, right? In this sport, you're going to have injuries at every single position. It's a lot different when you're the starter, right?

I'm sure he was excited about it. The team rallied around him at halftime. We outscored them 28-0 in the second half.

Q. College Gameday coming this weekend, does that validate what you're doing as far as the process is concerned to get this program turned around?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, they're here for a reason: we're winning games, creating a lot of excitement. That adds to the excitement. Once again, we got to do our part.

Q. Two very talented receivers on the outside for Washington. What are your expectations for your secondary and defense as a whole?

CURT CIGNETTI: They got a really big offensive line, big tight ends, big running back, experienced quarterback. Another quarterback that's got really good athleticism, can throw the ball also. I like their wideouts a lot.

They're going to be a big challenge. They got a really good scheme. We're going to have to fly around, swarm the ball, win up front, put pressure on the quarterback, stop the run, cover, create some turnovers, offensively win the line of scrimmage, be balanced. Lot of man-to-man coverage from Washington. Handle the blitzes, be good in critical situations.

The keys of the game really never change.

Q. From a mentorship standpoint, how important is it that for just Tayven and the rest of the quarterbacks to have a guy who has been successful at the college level, played a lot of football over the years in Kurtis that they can lean on and learn from not just this year

but setting the foundation for going forward?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I think it's good. I saw them supporting one another during the game. The way Kurtis prepares and practices, he's a good role model for the younger quarterbacks.

Everybody needs a role model, right? So he'll be on the sideline Saturday. He'll be a plus.

Q. You mentioned last winter with Jackson that you were excited to see how far you all as a staff could help him having that extra structure around him that he kind of lacked last year. When you reflect on the last however many months, where have you seen him improve the most?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I think you see it during the games when he gets his opportunity, how he's responded, how he responded on Saturday. He's a year older. It's a different offense. It's a different system. Tino does a great job of developing the quarterbacks.

He's got excellent potential. He's gotten better. Now he's got an opportunity. He's got to take it and run with it.

Q. Whether it's at Indiana or James Madison, what are a few of the traits with Tino that you think have led to your success with quarterbacks?

CURT CIGNETTI: He's a really good quarterback coach. Has great relationships with those guys. Student of the game. Communicates really well.

I think offensively we do a nice job in terms of our system, giving the quarterback answers. Every play's got an answer. We build the offense around the quarterback.

I mean, the last four have been Player of the Year in the league, the previous two were one-year transfers that only had moderate success at the places they'd been in the past. One was a dual, one was a pocket guy, two were in between.

I just think we do a nice job developing quarterbacks. It's a group effort, team effort. Since Tino has been here, I think he's taken those guys to another level. This will be his fourth year with me, yeah.

Q. As you've been able to process the film, what worked so well on the ground? What was opening up for you guys in the ground game?

CURT CIGNETTI: One, you're balanced. We throw RPOs, too. We're not running in stacked boxes. We throw

the ball efficiently, too, so you can't load up against us. But we blocked them up front really well. Our backs made people miss. Downfield blocking was good.

It was an explosive day, no doubt about it. We capitalized on our opportunities, many of which were created by our defense.

Q. With the pass protection, was that the best that the line has played this season? What has been the key to getting that group to show a lot of chemistry?

CURT CIGNETTI: I really haven't measured it against another performance. Those five guys have been in there almost every single play all season long. They're tough, hard-nosed, blue-collar type guys. Coach Bostad has done a great job of developing them. They're on the same page. They function really well together. They're a tough, physical group.

I'm not surprised by what they did on Saturday. Not at all.

Q. Have you and Lee Corso ever crossed paths at any points in your career?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, Gameday came to JMU last season. My wife and I made sure we spent about 10 minutes with Coach Corso beforehand. I called him on his birthday a month or two ago. He called back. We had a nice conversation.

Been aware of him obviously for a long time. I can think all the way back to when we were at West Virginia. There were only nine bowls back then, right? Final bowl spot, the Peach Bowl, I think it was '72, came down to West Virginia and a 9-1 Louisville team coached by Lee Corso. West Virginia waxed Syracuse pretty good and got the bid. That was probably the first time I was aware of who he was, yeah.

Thank you.

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