

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



Indiana 31, Washington 17

CURT CIGNETTI: Good win. There are no bad wins. I thought it was really gutty finding a way to win. Defense with the big turnover in the first half for a touchdown and then Ponds comes back with another one shortly thereafter. We made a couple nice plays in the first half and had a two-score lead at times.

But we weren't playing very well. We just weren't executing. Quarterback has got a few plays that he'll learn from. It wasn't that there weren't things there. They did change their tendencies on us quite a bit. They went from a man coverage team to a zone team, so at some point in the game you almost throw out 50 percent of the game plan and just start shooting them from the hip.

The second half opened with the interception, so it was tight. We respond with a nice drive and a score. That was a point. I think one of those drives we had three runs for third-down conversions, and then it became more about -- sometimes you've just got to throw that game plan out, like okay, what works against this.

It still comes down to the guys up front and the running back, Justice Ellison, 29 carries. The line did a great job up front, and the punt return was good. Defensive stops kept coming back, coming up with plays, and we gutted it out. We gutted it out.

We're 8-0, and it was a great team effort. I told the team after the game, I said, really good teams, championship teams, they find ways to win games, and that's what we did today. We found ways to win a game.

Q. In terms of complementary football, the defense scoring a touchdown, special teams setting up a touchdown, the way you talk about adjusting in the second half, is this maybe in terms of all phases as much contribution as you've gotten in all three phases in a game this year?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I don't know if that's

complementary football. Complementary football to me is you're playing well and you're balanced on offense and doing all the things you've got to do in all three phases. What I would say is the defense really saved us early in the game. Saved us, and then came up with some big turnovers.

Then at the end of the game the offense got the run game going, started eating some clock and kept them off the field, and special teams with the big return did their part, and we had some good plays on special teams.

I think this is a close team with a lot of competitive character, guys that really want to be good, have the right stuff, and they found a way to win.

Q. You mentioned Justice. In the second half, what made you go to him almost exclusively there? That's the most carries I think you've had a running back have going back three seasons. What were you seeing from him that you knew you could lean on him in that second half?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, there was a time we used to give a guy the ball 42 times a game, but we won't go there.

You know, Lawton had a little tweak and didn't feel like he was 100 percent, and Justice had the hot hand. We had Kaelon take a few carries, too, but I thought he was terrific. Terrific. Ellison.

Q. Obviously Tayven got the start today, some good throws, some good plays, but obviously some inconsistency. Your first thoughts on how he played?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, like you said, he made some good plays. He left as many plays out there. It's just doing what you're coached to do. Reading your key, don't forget to send the motion, those kind of things.

Q. The offensive line, they've been getting good attention, but this seems like a day that they kind of won it for the offense a little bit if you want to look at it that way. What did you think of how they were able to create the opportunities for Justice to run and also



Tayven on a few runs, as well?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I don't think we gave up a sack. I think the quarterback got hit one time, and we did it -- we've been very consistent on the offensive line. We matched up well against Washington, honestly. But those five guys have stayed on the field. They got a lot of snaps together, which really helps at that position.

I thought they were great.

Q. That 14-play, 75-yard drive in the third quarter gave you a two-score lead and a little bit of breathing room. What changed during that drive that enabled you guys to consistently be able to move the ball?

CURT CIGNETTI: We really just changed some things there. I think we had three running conversions on 3rd down there if I'm not mistaken. We played football differently and ate a lot of clock and probably caught them off guard on a few of those 3rd downs when we ran the ball.

Q. D'Angelo Ponds, obviously a freshman All-American last year, but what makes him so good, the instinctual play on the screen for the pick six and then just his athleticism on that second interception?

CURT CIGNETTI: You know, he's got good talent, but he's got competitive character. He's a competitor, and he wants to be great. He's got day in, day out consistency. He does the things that help him improve on a daily basis, and that's his goal. He wants to be the best football player he can be, and he loves the process and everything that goes into that, and he's intelligent.

He comes from an area down there in Miami where those guys growing up, high school, a lot of pride down there in South Florida about being a baller, and he's a baller.

Q. I know you got a little upset with Myles Price for letting that one punt drop in and he broke off the big return right after that. How much of a spark plug is he and how big of a moment is that to help put the game away?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I told him that between the negative 20-yard return and the big return, they came out to zero net yards. (Laughter.)

No, that punt return was a huge play in the second half. We had some good blocks and he hit the hole. We made some timely plays in the second half. Special teams played a big role.

Q. You talked about D'Angelo Ponds and his season last year. That comes with expectations. What have you seen from him that have been able to handle those expectations, and how have you seen himself handle himself off the young player?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, he's a good player, and he wanted to step up and play against competition at the highest level, like all the other ones did. He's showed that he's more than capable.

Q. What makes this O-line so special? You've addressed it a little bit, but what really makes them special?

CURT CIGNETTI: You know, Bob does a great job coaching them. They're all real tough, hard-nosed kind of guys, and they function well together. Bob keeps it simple, and we don't have missed assignments, things of that nature. They're tough guys. They're tough guys.

Q. Big picture, you guys are 8-0. You haven't trailed all year. How well are you guys playing? How good of a season is this turning into?

CURT CIGNETTI: I mean, you are what your record says you are. Believe me, we're going to put that tape on, and it ain't going to be real pretty at love of times on offense and it won't be on defense, either. There will be a lot of mistakes out there.

But not off to a bad start, I guess.

Q. You kind of mentioned the whole week that you all had to win for this week to really matter, but just having the outside eyes, having the whole attention part of it, have you kind of had a chance to reflect at all about the magnitude of it all?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, Gameday came, and we talked to the team briefly about it on Monday, and we really didn't dwell on it after that. I dealt with it a little bit after the walk-through yesterday evening with the team for about 15 seconds because that's a great thing to have at your university, the exposure and all that stuff, but it's real easy for your team to kind of lose their focus on what they're there for. I've just seen it happen over and over and over.

We overcame it, and we won, so it was a good day.

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