

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



Indiana 20, Michigan 15

CURT CIGNETTI: Got a win. Got a win. Defense, bend don't break in the second half. Wouldn't let them in the end zone. Punt return was a huge play there, and then we stop them and we get the 1st down that we need.

So it's a good win. Not many style points there. Not going to be many people banging the drum saying Indiana ought to be rated higher in the BCS and all that good stuff, but the Indiana Hoosiers are 10-0 and have a week off, so Coach Cignetti has got a day off tomorrow.

I thought we had a chance to distance ourselves in the first half and we really just didn't take full advantage of our opportunities in the red area. We had an offensive PI call and a couple other things happen, some close calls. I thought one time they fumbled, great stand on the defense on the 2, and it looked like we were getting ready to fall on it and I thought their quarterback grabbed our guy.

But we just still had a multiple-score lead at halftime but we come out the first play of the second half, threw the interception, but the defense held them.

For a while there, we had a hard time gaining three yards on offense. A lot of sacks. We weren't getting anything done. But defense would bend and not break, and we found a way to get it done.

It tells you a lot about the resiliency of this team, its competitive character. At the end of the day, they all count as one, whether it's 72-6 or 3-2. They count as one. You know what? We're going to take the win over the Michigan Wolverines, and the Indiana Hoosiers will enjoy being undefeated for 24 hours.

Q. You talked about that punt return. Obviously Ke'Shawn is not your starting punt returner. You had some injuries today, had to change some things in and out. Maybe it's not the way you've been winning games in the past. Is that the kind of moment that captures a team that finds a way to make winning

plays when it's getting pushed a little bit differently?

CURT CIGNETTI: Absolutely. No doubt about it. There's a veteran guy, he'd catch 35, 40 a year at Wake Forest. He's made plays for us. Him and Price alternate. Made a nice catch early in the game on our sideline and Price got knocked out of the game, and that was a hard punt really to judge and catch because the nose was spiraling down and to the left. It was dying.

He was full throttle, man. To catch that punt, and he made it happen, was a tremendous effort, and really was very uplifting for everybody in the stadium. About the first great thing that had happened offensively counting the punt return as an offensive play. Gave us a real shot.

Q. What was different in the second half that allowed them to generate some more pressure and put you guys on your heels --

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, the interception was a bad way to start, and then we had some protection issues, and then we had some opportunities, plays that we normally make, maybe a one-on-one go ball or back-shoulder throw, we fake the bubble and Sarratt down the sideline just can't quite connect. We had a number of those. And then the sacks. We couldn't get anything going in the run game. It just wasn't happening.

Q. Did you sense any nervousness there from the offense?

CURT CIGNETTI: No, I thought we did a really good job. The offense is used to clicking and scoring a lot of points. I thought everybody had good resolve. We stepped up as a team and found a different way to win.

Q. I don't know if you guys got any sacks, but the defensive line, seemed like they had him off his mark the entire game. Just your thoughts on how they played?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I thought our defense played a great game, held them to 69 yards rushing, 137 yards passing. So 206 total yards. Kept them out of the end



zone quite a few times when they were deep in the red area inside the 10 down tight, and yeah, that guy was on the run quite a bit, and so great effort. Flew around. Swarmed the ball.

Q. We saw you in your on-field interview after the game show a little emotion. You mentioned the lack of style points from this game, but for Indiana football to beat Michigan and get double-digit wins like this, how big is this moment for your program?

CURT CIGNETTI: Okay, here's how I'm going to honestly answer that question. I'm glad we won. I don't like the way we played. I'm not happy with the way we played, particularly on offense in the second half. So we've got to take a good look at the film Monday and see what happens.

I thought special teams overall was fairly solid. There were a couple kickoff returns that game out on their bench, but it looked like maybe we were getting grabbed on them. But I thought our defense did a number of good things, but they were on the field too long. But it's a win. None of us are going to give it back.

While I'm glad we won and that we're keeping this going, I am not happy with the way we played.

Q. Your defense does seem to have a certain refusal to accept adversity. Other than the first series they didn't allow a drive more than 44 yards in the entire game. Can you speak to how they embodied the undefeated spirit of this team with the way that they just --

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, great competitive character, a lot of guys that have played really good football in their career. My teams have always played really good defense, and Brian Haines does a great job. You've got guys like Kamara and Carpenter and CJ West and Lanell Carr and Fisher and Walker and Ponds and now Ferrell and on and on, Jamier Johnson, and you've got guys coming in in the rotation. They've got a lot of pride about the way we play. Our defensive coaches do a great job of coaching them up and getting them ready.

But we're going to put that tape on and there's going to be a lot of things that Coach Haines and his staff are not going to like on that tape, also, but they definitely had built the wall between the 1 and the goal line a number of times tonight when Michigan was down tight.

Q. You guys had simulated adversity in practice but you hadn't really faced it in the fourth quarter like that. What were you able to learn about your team being in

that situation?

CURT CIGNETTI: Guty, find a way to win. I'm sure glad we played this game at home because our fans played a big role tonight. I thought it was a great crowd. That punt return, too, was such a key play.

But championship teams find a way to win football games, and not all the time do you get style points. This is probably the first one we haven't gotten style points. Let's face it, we didn't even trail until last week, and then we were down 10-0 and scored 47 straight. Pretty good win.

Our numbers are through the roof. You look at PFF, we're top in the country in all three, ODK, but we obviously had our struggles but we found a way to get it done. This is a team. This is a team, and everybody's goal is the same.

I can't say enough about these guys. I don't throw many bouquets out there. We all know that. But these guys have accomplished quite a bit, so I can reflect on that for tonight and then we'll get back to work on Monday and have a good off week.

Q. Nico Radicic last week set the single-season program record for extra points, but he hadn't really kicked in the clutch. That last field goal, 42 yards, his career long, what have you seen from him to have confidence that he's going to hit that kick when you need it the most?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, he's done a great job on the extra points. Like you said, we haven't had many field goals because we've scored so many touchdowns down there, but did he have two or three tonight? Two? And they were both huge.

He's been kicking well in practice. We didn't kick the 51- or 52-yarder with him. Thought about it, but the offense thought they had a play that could work and it had a chance, we just didn't make it happen.

He's calm and cool and accurate and has good disposition, which is great for a kicker. We've been fortunate to have a lot of good kickers the last five, six years that have been pretty good. We have a certain way we manage that, that I manage them, but at the end of the day they've got to put it between the uprights.

Q. You mentioned guys like Aiden Fisher, CJ West, guys like that. How important are those types of guys in a game like this from an on-field leadership perspective?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, you've got to have good



leadership on your football team to have a successful season, and if you are a good leader, that means you can persevere through tough times and overcome obstacles and adversity and you know how to handle success, too, and you lead by example. Others follow.

Those guys had big games tonight, and there are probably a number of guys that had big games tonight. But that's why we are where we are, because we've got a lot of guys like that.

CJ West was a guy who was a key addition to this football team after spring ball. We were very thin on the defensive line. That was a big get for us. It's great to see him playing at such a high level right now.

Q. I know it's better for the ticker to win 47-13 or whatever the case may be, but with the two weeks off coming up and yet another gigantic challenge, having a game with this kind of adversity in these two weeks, is this something you think will help the team focus even more so going forward?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, yeah, I think this team understands that no matter -- we can find a way to get it done. But I think if you polled them, they would all prefer to execute at a much higher level and score more points.

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