

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Bloomington, Indiana, USA

## Curt Cignetti

### Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: All right, total focus on Purdue, rivalry game. Obviously big game, Saturday night, 7:00, Thanksgiving week, weekend. Really need to get the students back. Need to pack the stadium. It's got to be loud. It's got to be a winning edge for us. We've got to have a great week of preparation and take care of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, put ourselves in the best position for Saturday.

They're a capable team, and they're not having the kind of season they wanted to have, obviously, but they're also a team that's scored 40 points in the second half against Illinois to come back from a 27-3 deficit and send the game to overtime. At this level, everybody is capable.

We've got to play well and play very well.

Last week obviously not the outcome that we wanted. I thought we did some good things. I thought defensively overall other than the last drive, take away the last drive, we hold them under 300 yards, 17 points. Offense, good first drive, good last drive, but in between, not a whole lot there.

We've got to shore our pass protection up. We had some missed assignments, a couple physical errors. One time got beat one-on-one. But we've got to take the hits off the quarterback because I don't know a quarterback in the country if he gets hit over and over again, they all lose their effectiveness.

I thought we ran the ball fairly well. We've averaged over four and a half yards a carry, take a knee play at the end of the half, and ran the ball fairly well. Obviously the punt team cost us 14 points. It's a 7-7 game with about 1:40 to go in the second quarter, and we dropped the snap, and they get the ball on the 7-yard line. Then we punt the ball first series of the second half and get a 79-yard punt return for a touchdown. Punt is supposed to be kicked to the right and ends up over on the left number and all of our coverage is going right, ball goes left, and we were in a bad spot.

Looking forward to this game. I said what I had to say about the College Football Playoff after the game. The only thing I'm going to say today is we're sitting in a good spot. But we've got to take care of business. That's that.

Questions?

**Q. You mentioned the pass protection. When you look at the last six quarters, the second half against Michigan, any commonalities in the struggle? I know take the noise out of it, but anything else you saw on tape, recurring problems that you've got to fix?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Missed assignments and poor technique would be the themes. Five sacks against Ohio State, we had three missed assignments, routine stuff, communication stuff. We got beat physically one time and poor technique on a weak-side twist, which is similar to what Michigan had given us the week before, a little different but similar. They had a little weak side linebacker in twist that we just didn't do a good job with.

We've got to get back in sync offensively and get our rhythm back where we're playing with a lot of confidence, scoring points, scoring points in bunches, and running the ball and throwing the ball with equal success.

**Q. As part of that, you mentioned on Saturday kind of the increased athleticism and sort of Michigan and Ohio State. Is that part of why those things crop up where a guy forgets technique because you're facing somebody quicker --**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, most of our problems Saturday were assignment errors, like day one protection, certain lineman is supposed to go to the left and he doesn't. I mean, there were three five-man pressures and two four-man pressures. One was a simulated pressure. All routine stuff. We didn't do a good job of handling it.

We protected really well the first series. We protected well the last series. But in between -- we had that 3rd and 1 play where we got called for the false start, put us in 3rd and 6. They brought a blitz, we didn't block it right. Quarterback got hit. He got hit four of the next five passes,



sacked. So when he did have the opportunity to throw the football, he wasn't quite as effective with his reads or his accuracy, and when you get rocked like that, not many guys are.

**Q. You talked about the hits on Curtis. Just the wear and tear of the season at this point they're going to take some hits by this point in the season. Also, with his thumb, it's going to be cold on Saturday. How does he manage that part of it in terms of his --**

CURT CIGNETTI: No, the thumb has really progressed well. It's not an issue. We've got to do a better job of protecting the quarterback. I'm confident that we will.

**Q. You mentioned the special teams errors. How did you see James handle the aftermath of that, just reviewing the film from that, and how do you reassure him to make sure something like that doesn't shake him?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, it was a good snap. We kind of had our hands on the back half of the ball, and then the next punt was the one that was supposed to go right and went way to the left for the touchdown. It wasn't a great day for that unit. It's got to be better.

**Q. Kind of a two-part question. You hear coaches talk all the time about how beneficial it is to play beyond the end of the regular season, bowl game, postseason, whatever, those extra practices. Where do you fall on that as far as the benefit to younger players and how do you and your staff approach those practices to get them some of the attention and reps they don't get because you're prepping for the regular season?**

CURT CIGNETTI: It depends on how much time and how many practices, but in terms of keeping the guys that are actually going to play fresh, I've always done a good job of managing that. Any more getting the young guys some work, but they're going to get plenty of work in spring ball.

**Q. The team is coming off of a loss for the first time this season. How do you expect them to react, and especially going into a rivalry game where a lot of the guys are not used to this being the rivalry game?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, but they all understand what a rivalry game is, and they know what's at stake. I expect us to have a great week.

**Q. I saw that the Purdue quarterback I think is coming off a career high in passing yards. Talk a little bit about the problems they present offensively and defensively.**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, quarterback is a very talented guy. He's got arm talent and really good escapability. Tight end is a weapon with 46 catches. The one receiver, 7, is a very explosive player, and they've got a speed guy, too, and then they've got some guys that make good contested catches. I've always thought the running back was good. The center is an excellent player. Right tackle is very athletic. Scheme is good.

Defensively they've given up some points, but they've tweaked a few things and they're playing better defense. They're a very capable football team.

The quarterback is experienced.

**Q. Back to Ohio State real quick, what did you notice were the differences? You talked about the struggles of the pass protection. What were the differences in the run blocking department that allowed you guys to be decently successful on the ground?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I just thought we did a nice job of coming off the ball and targeting the right people. I thought the backs ran really well. Really well. We had pretty good downfield blocking.

**Q. Tyler Stevens has kind of been moved around the line throughout his entire career. How have you seen him relish that opportunity and how beneficial has he been this season?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I think he's done a really nice job both games at left guard. I hate that we lost Drew Evans because I'm very high on him and he has a couple of years of eligibility left and he's real tough guy. But Tyler Stevens has stepped in and he's done well.

**Q. I know College Football Playoff isn't guaranteed, but for teams that do make it, you've got that, you've got the transfer portal opening early signing day structure to handle everything that's going to be happening all at once with your assistants and how much of a time crunch is that to have to reshape a roster because you've said you're going to have to hit the portal hard over the next couple weeks?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, and I think I can talk more about that next week. Obviously we all knew December was coming and all the different things that would be going on, so I've had a lot of time to think about that. Right now my total focus is on Purdue.

**Q. I know you're focused on the season, but any position groups in particular that you feel really need**

**to be addressed from that avenue?**

CURT CIGNETTI: We'll address that at the end of the season. Right now our focus is on Purdue.

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