

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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## Head Coach Curt Cignetti

Signing Day Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: Signing day sure has changed. They've moved it up, which is good. The month of December has changed a lot as well across the country, whether you still have games remaining or not.

Got all of our papers in early this morning. Signed 21 guys. Fourteen will be early enrollees. Seven will enroll for the fall and report in the summer. Nine on offense; 12 on defense. Four from Indiana and Ohio. Two from Illinois and Tennessee. One from St. Louis. So 13 roughly from a four-hour radius.

I like these guys. Good players, good people, good character, good students. This game is all about recruiting and development and then retention. You know, keeping the guys that eventually produce. So excited about them.

Questions.

**Q. Coach, you talked about development. You have eight guys -- five on defense, three on offense -- that play in the trenches. You count the tight ends; that's half your class. Big-body guys. How important is it -- I know they're a few years away, but to get those guys, get them in and develop them and not have to be so portal-dependent on getting guys at those positions?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, it all starts up front, and the defensive linemen with always the hardest to find and get. So we got two inside guys and two ends, and pleased with that.

Offensively, three offensive linemen all report in midyear and then the two tight ends. The one in-state tight end will be an early enrollees, and Blake Thiry will be a fall enrollee. I feel good about that. Feel good about all these guys.

**Q. I recognize some of this stuff probably is still at least sort of theoretical, but what was the process -- I imagine when you are talking to this class it's a little different with revenue-sharing kind of on the horizon. Where did that enter into the conversation? Was that**

**something the high school guys seemed at least somewhat kind of I guess educated about on their own? Was it something you had to talk through with them? How did that change maybe any element of the conversation as you went through this class?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, NIL has been a thing for a while, and the rev-share component was in its infancy when a lot of these guys were being recruited.

It all comes down to a number, and where that comes from really is of no consequence. You know what I mean? But, you know, the rev-share thing will kick in July 1st as long as the court case is approved April, what, 4th, I believe. We're all counting on it across college football, athletics in general. That will change quite a bit how things are done once that kicks in on July 1st.

**Q. An extension of that, obviously with the transfer portal opening next week as well, are you operating under the framework of keeping 85 scholarships with the roster limit? Has there been sort of discussions with the Big Ten about how they're going to approach that because it will change --**

CURT CIGNETTI: There's a roster limit that will go into effect right now if everything stays the same. Will that go into effect in August camp or the week of the first game? There are some things to be worked out there.

In theory, if a team wanted to offer 100 -- let's say the number is 105. If a team wanted to offer 105 scholarships, they could, but as soon as you go over 85, it takes 2.5 million off the cap right off the bat.

I saw a poll around the conference -- who is planning on staying at 85; who is planning on going over? It appears right now the most people are going to stay at 85 scholarships because the other thing that's going to change is once you go to 85 scholarships with rev-share, you'll be able to give partial scholarships too. A quarter scholarship or a half or one-third, kind of like my D2 days.

But it all has to equal 85. Otherwise, you go over what 85 would equal, 2.5 million comes off your rev-share cap.



**Q. Are you planning on sticking with 85?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah.

**Q. When you are evaluating players, how much does the fact that they are a multi-sport athlete -- how much does that factor in? When you look at academic scholarships, do you also look at things like tardiness and how well they attend class, that type of thing?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, well, we don't give academic scholarships, but I do look at the transcript. I like to see the transcript on every guy and see what the grade point average is, a core grade point average.

I do look at the absences. I think that's a reflection of his habits and accountability, right, and doing what he's supposed to do.

Multi-sport athletes, that's all good, but at the end of the day this is football, and football is different than basketball and baseball and track in terms of the skill set required. It can be helpful in an evaluation, but it's more about what the guy does on tape or at our camp or another camp, things like that.

**Q. Coach, we know that you're a process-oriented guy, so what does your recruiting process look like for the high school guys?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, they're all signed up now. So now we've been spending a lot of time right now on portal guys, evaluating portal guys, which opens up Monday, the 9th.

We're going to be preparing for a football game also. So we want to kind of be as far along in that evaluation as possible because even though the portal doesn't open until Monday, if a guy is graduated or if a coach has been fired, right, then they're technically in the portal now.

Underclassmen can't officially be in the portal until Monday, and then it could take 24 to 48 hours to be processed, so it could be Wednesday, but all you have to do is go on Twitter and see who has announced that they're going to go into the portal, and that doesn't prohibit you from pulling up their PFF tape and evaluating them. So there's a lot of that going on right now.

Then we're going to practice today, and we're going to practice tomorrow. We're going to practice Friday. Right? Players lifted yesterday. Had Monday off. Today will be like a Monday routine, and tomorrow will be like a Tuesday, and Friday will be like a Wednesday to stay sharp with our fundamentals and our timing and that kind of thing. Then

we'll find out who with he play Sunday at 12:15.

**Q. Curt, how do you kind of balance your time right now between the portal evaluation and all the high school recruiting stuff and maybe some advanced scouting of teams you might be playing coming up?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, it's a juggling act, the things that I just mentioned. You know, the portal evaluation is taking up a good bit of time right now, and today's practice in terms of the preparation for today's practice, an hour, hour and a half. If you count the scripting, maybe two hours.

Then we're having conversations also. I've had a couple of conversations with returners about next year, but not too many because I want our team to focus right now on -- we're in season, and the main thing has to be the main thing, right? You guys all know that today has to be a great day and a great meeting and all that stuff that we preach, so...

**Q. How big of a role does just your success with player development play in kind of your recruiting pitch to guys? You have a lot of players on your team that have talked about being overlooked when they committed to JMU from other Power 5s and then a lot of them are starters and all-Big Ten players now. Do you use those examples in your recruiting?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, yeah, you can look at them positionally in terms of what guys have done through the years, but I think it's a reflection of team success really, recruiting and development. Guys want to be a part of a winning program. Obviously winning here opens doors in the recruiting process and will continue to open doors as long as we continue to be successful, which we plan on being obviously.

So the high school part of it really is the guys have been committed a while, right, so the last few days we've been in the office it's been more portal evaluation.

**Q. Kind of expanding more on the off-field, I kind of feel like you mentioned a lot this year just how mature of a roster you have. How when you are trying to vest the people over the player, how do you kind of approach that process?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I think it's all about people... the coaches you hire, the players you recruit. There's a lot of good players out there. I mean, you're looking for people that are passionate about what they do, goal-oriented, know how to set goals and go about achieving them.

Now, they're still young guys, and they're going to need



developed and guided, correct? Then it's process, but as you get closer to the season, the key to the drill then becomes getting everybody to think alike and keep their eye on the prize, focused on the bull's-eye, you know, the intangibles as you get into the season.

But the winter conditioning program leads up to that. Spring football, summer conditioning, and fall camp. So I like the class. I think these guys all have a chance, and we're excited about them.

**Q. Coach, the one position, you didn't get a guy at quarterback. Two questions: First, do you plan on trying to get one out of the portal? And then, secondly, you mentioned how you got a lot of older guys that because of the roster situation. What positions will you be focused on in the portal on Monday?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, we have two young quarterbacks in the program that we like: Tyler Cherry and Mendoza. So we didn't feel a real need to sign a young quarterback this year.

We will definitely recruit a quarterback out of the portal. In terms of our other needs, I'll let you guys put pen to paper and figure out who is coming back and who we're losing and figure that out on your own.

**Q. An extension of that, but you said you've had some conversations with players. Was that mostly just kind of the guys that have NFL possibilities because you need to know to try to determine what you need out of the portal? Is there an urgency to figure out that part of it just because the urgency to recruit the portal guys come next week?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, no. Let's say we have 55 returning scholarship players, and I had the staff rate them 1 to 55, right? Well, I didn't start my conversations at 55. So I've had a couple; not many.

**Q. I know the portal and the December signing window have kind of changed just the calendar this time of year, but a lot of times coaches kind of power programs down before a bowl game. Do you draw on some of your FCS experience in terms of kind of keeping your team online straight into a playoff sort of environment rather than if you were playing, for example, a bowl game around New Year's, and you had a whole month to figure out what to do with your team and how to power everything --**

CURT CIGNETTI: You are looking at about a three-week turnaround. This week the players are going to get two

days of weights, and we'll get three practices in. One will be more of a walk-through.

Then next week we'll look more like a normal game week in terms of what we do on the field. It will be closer to a game week.

**Q. Kind of to address that a little bit, but in terms of preparations next week for whoever you're going to be playing, how will that work in terms of the period of time in terms of preparation?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Next week will be very similar to a game week. It might not be exact, but we'll start preparation in earnest. We still have to balance the portal, the evaluation, and we'll probably have official visits coming in during December as well.

You know, preparation on the opponent, depending on who that is. Some of these teams we know already. Some of them we don't. So next week won't be quite like a game week, but it will be similar.

**Q. Coach, with the portal I know it's a moving number because you've got to wait, but do you have an ideas how big this portal class will be when it's all said and done?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I do.

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