

Indiana University Football

Media Conference

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Kurtis Rourke

Press Conference



Q. This is kind of a weird way to ask this, I guess, but you've never really prepped for a postseason game, have you, between the injury and the portal and everything. Just what's different when you have a little more time and you maybe don't know who you're playing, but you have a little bit of downtime? We asked Coach Cignetti about keeping the focus going, but just from a quarterback's perspective, when you have a little bit more runway, a little bit more time to watch film, a little more time to digest things, what's different about prep? Is there kind of a balance about maybe doing a little bit more but not sort of overloading yourself, I guess?

KURTIS ROURKE: Yes, absolutely. Last week was a good kind of decompressed week and kind of look over the season and the highs and lows and where I can get better individually and then as a team.

Then also kind of just wanted to stay in the rhythm as well. We practiced three times last week, and I wanted to take every single rep, and I wanted to make sure that I stay in the rhythm of playing a game against speed and not take any time off kind of that way because I knew that practice went very long and I'd still be able to get my rest time and everything like that.

Then preparing for game in postseason, I haven't prepared to play, but I've definitely prepared for bowl games before, just haven't had the opportunity to play in one. So extra excitement going into this one.

Q. Can you maybe describe what this weekend was like? Ohio is playing in the MAC Championship game yesterday. Is it surreal to hear that? While you're waiting to hear Indiana is playing in the playoff. What's that like considering basically a year ago you made the decision to enter the portal and now this happens, what was this weekend like for you?

KURTIS ROURKE: It was an awesome weekend. Just so happy for everyone that was able to win. I know a lot of guys there, the quarterback who won the MVP is a really,

really good friend of mine. I'm just so happy for him and the success that he's had this season.

Then Ohio has been in -- it was the fifth MAC Championship they've played in, and they haven't won since 1960-something. Being a guy that was in that program for five years, it's awesome to see that and see a lot of my teammates, my past teammates excel and beat a rival like Miami of Ohio.

It was awesome. I was back to being kind of a fan and watching my friends and past teammates win. Congratulations to the coaches and all that.

Then just kind of when the game ended, was just kind of thinking about when our time's up and how exciting it is to play this late in the year, especially a part of the first ever 12-team playoff. So a lot of fun emotions yesterday.

Q. How did you watch the preview this morning?

KURTIS ROURKE: I just watched it with my wife and my wife's parents.

Q. Coaches talked about Ohio State, the noise was an issue for you guys. So you guys tried to fix some things. For you as a quarterback, what did you learn as an offense, what did you learn that you guys can do better, improve on? Obviously at Notre Dame you're going to be facing the same kind of crowd noise, so it won't impact you as much.

KURTIS ROURKE: It was definitely a disappointing loss. I felt like we didn't play to our standards in that game. It was also a really important game for us to -- a learning opportunity just how to deal and how to win those big games, something that watching and digesting the game afterwards, knowing how well we have to play and we have to minimize our mistakes and be able to handle the environment.

That's what it will take to win these big games. Even though it was a tough loss, I think it was really important for us to have a game like that, to be tested in knowing what it takes to win games. This is obviously a win or go home



kind of playoff setup. So we're going to have to make sure that we come with our best effort and knowing that it's going to be a hostile environment, and now we know how to handle it.

Q. Kurtis, it seems like the majority of the season, it's been chip on the shoulder, whether it was 17th pick in the preseason poll to all the national outside noise. How do you walk that fine line as maybe using it for extra motivation but not giving into the rat poison?

KURTIS ROURKE: Yeah, like you said, it's just extra motivation. I think what's so great about our team, it starts with Coach Cignetti, a lot of us have had to prove that we belong in wherever we are. It just fuels us in knowing that we're counted out and we're the underdog and we always will be, at least for this year.

So we just go in and we can play freely knowing that we're capable of competing with anybody. It just fuels the fire for sure.

Q. Everybody, it seems, has an opinion, something related to Notre Dame, knows someone who went there. What went through your mind when you saw Notre Dame pop up in the bracket?

KURTIS ROURKE: Just a place I haven't played before. So just kind of looking forward to the opportunity. Really excited to play whoever we're going to. Just know that it's going to be that Notre Dame's a historic place, so that's kind of all I knew.

I actually don't know anyone that went to Notre Dame, so maybe that will be a first. They're a historic team. They've had great teams in the past, and they're a good team this year. So just knowing that but also knowing that we're also a pretty good team as well.

Q. This team has talked on and on all year long about changing the culture of Indiana football, changing how it feels, changing the winning attitude. Do you feel like punching the ticket to the playoff does that, or does this journey start now?

KURTIS ROURKE: It's kind of a little bit of both. We've had that chip all year, and that regular season is something we're very prideful of in knowing that we were able to go out and achieve pretty much every goal that we set.

But then kind of resetting after the regular season, after Purdue, and knowing that the new season starts. We've got to be on our A game. We've got to take everything we learned through the regular season and apply it to this game because it's a one-and-done kind of thing.

Q. Coach Sunseri, of course, is moving on whenever you guys are done. What's he meant to you in your development as a quarterback, and how has he kind of handled the day-to-day with you over the course of the season?

KURTIS ROURKE: Coach Tino has been awesome. I've developed so much as a quarterback since working with him in January. It's been awesome to see my personal growth as well as the rest of the quarterbacks in the room. I know all of us can say that we've learned and become a better quarterback this year, and a lot of that attributes to Coach Tino.

Just very happy that he has an opportunity to go and continue his journey, his path, and his dream. Just very grateful for him because he's really accelerated and helped this offense, helped the players become and create opportunities for their personal life, and I'm just happy to see that he's taking advantage of an opportunity for him as well.

Q. You talked about the hostile road environment. I know against Ohio State you guys had to go to the silent count. How confident are you guys in going to that silent count, if you guys have to, in South Bend?

KURTIS ROURKE: Yeah, if it comes down to that, we're going to be prepared, more prepared than we were. We've been repping it ever since that game even though we might not know if we have to use it or not.

It's going to be an afterthought for us if we have to go to it just because we repped it so many times, and it's going to be -- yeah, I don't see it being an issue.

Q. Coach Cignetti said that there's going to be some tweaks to the week's schedule with the Friday game. Any tweaks for you as a quarterback with the shorter week?

KURTIS ROURKE: I mean, honestly, it was just replace class time with more film watching. We don't have class this week and next week, so just be worrying about watching more film, seeing what Notre Dame does, and be able to see some points where we can attack them and just learn as much as I can about them.

I think it's going to be a good game and can't wait till they get here.

Q. This is sort of a follow-up to that. How many games back do you anticipate looking at in terms of Notre Dame game film? The whole season? And what

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is it that you look for in particular?

KURTIS ROURKE: It will be good to watch every game that they have. You could watch games for tendencies. You can pick that up in any game. You can watch for personnel. Personnel, you usually watch the last couple games to see who's going to be playing.

In terms of overall scheme, with all the extra time, it would be good to watch as many games as possible, and that's going to be my goal.

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