

Indiana University Football

Media Conference

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Coach Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: A little bit like Groundhog Day, to be honest. Like FIU, dominate the game, not reflective in the scoreboard. Not happy with the way the offense played in the second half of FIU in the red area in this game, and the fans left at halftime. But it all felt like Groundhog Day to me.

I'm never going to apologize for a win. They're too hard to get. Same team that should have beat South Carolina last year in the opener. Really dominated the game. Not reflected in the score. I mean, we probably left 35 points out there on offense with six possessions inside the 10, primarily the goal line offense and the 5 in -- dropped a touchdown pass, overthrew a touchdown pass, fumbled going in.

And had the game in total control. It's just a matter of what the score would be, and really expected a 45-, 52-7 type game at that point. And we didn't do it on offense.

I mean, we won the time of possession, 41.5 to 18.5. First downs, 30 to 10. Had 310 yards rush. Won the turnover battle 3-1. End of the half, beginning of the third, won 14-0. Good on third down, punt return for touchdown.

Two bad plays on defense. First play of the game was a 30 read for our linebacker. It was an outside zone read. We're not going to block the weak side defensive tackle. The guard blocked him, which meant it looked like outside zone and then came off late and quarterback. So the linebacker went. Quarterback pulled the ball. There's nobody left.

But the last third down and 1, that's just an egregious missed assignment by the field end who has the quarterback and took the dive.

Gotta make the plays on offense. Gotta get better, period all the way around. Gotta get better. And we should get much better this week.

Now, the team we're going to play, Kennesaw State, lost by one point to a Power 4 opponent last week. Brand-new

coach. High-tempo offense. They can go at warp speed, and they can slow it down.

Defense, guys run around good. Held Wake Forest to nine points. They missed an extra point and field goal and lost 10-9. So we've got to be ready to go. They beat Liberty last year when Liberty was undefeated. They were the first team to beat Liberty, old staff.

Looking for improvement.

Q. You talk about, just sort of like, you compared a little bit to Florida International last year. Maybe this is almost a philosophical question not specific to ODU, but as a coach how do you approach sort of digesting with your team a game where maybe the underlying numbers say the score should have been different but you can point to some good things in the performances. You can also point to some learning experiences, some things that need to improve, especially in week one, when you know things are going to be a little rusty?

CURT CIGNETTI: I told the team in the locker room, the wins are hard; enjoy it, but not pleased with the way we played. With you guys, I put the game in perspective. With the team, the focus will be on what we put on tape and what we gotta do to improve.

So not pleased. I can't imagine anybody on the team is pleased, and we've got to get better.

Q. You mentioned some of the red-zone struggles, and Fernando talked about some of the throws he missed. When you watched the tape, what were your biggest takeaways, especially in the run game?

CURT CIGNETTI: First, when you get down there, you've got first and one at the 1. They jumped into a different front than they had shown the previous year, but still you've got to be able to gain a yard.

We had a running back take the wrong footwork and the wrong course one time. We had a missed assignment up front one time. And two poor blocks. And then on the

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fourth-down pass, didn't make the right read.

And then got down there again and had two more missed assignments in the run game. Had to settle for a field goal. And we scored two touchdowns.

Then we were really running the ball really well. We're up 27-7. And, look, they were running the clock in the second quarter. End of the second quarter they were milking the clock. They were tired gassed on defense. We threw a pass on second and six, in it was incomplete. Puts us in a third and 6. And didn't make a great call on third and 6.

And then the last series, I thought that was pass interference on Sarratt. They didn't call it. Sometimes the officials feel like the game's over; they just want to get home. You've still gotta call them.

So dropped a touchdown pass, overthrow a touchdown pass -- wide open -- and fumble going in. So really you could build a case that there's 55 points minimum.

I guess the difference between FIU and that game was we were much more consistent for 90 yards or 93 yards than we were last year.

Last year we led the country in red-area touchdown percentage. But we've got to get better. Doesn't matter what you did in the past, gotta get better now. So, that's that.

Q. (Indiscernible) after going back and you watched the film, what did you like the most about what Fernando did on Saturday? You talked about the processing, but anything else you noticed maybe he needs to work?

CURT CIGNETTI: Did some good things. Left some things out there. The emphasis with him has been on his processing and decision making. And you grade the quarterback based on his decision making and accuracy -- has he gone through the right reads, throwing the ball to the right guy and accurately. He's made progress since he's been here, but he's still got to get better.

Q. You talked about the fact that you guys aren't happy with how you played. Why don't you think that you guys played to your standard? Where did those missed reads --

CURT CIGNETTI: Missed assignments, missed assignments and guys not doing their job. And every once in a while they'd line up in a different defense than you thought they would. So gotta make the plays.

Q. With Drew Evans, with him coming back, how would you assess the way he played?

CURT CIGNETTI: Solid. He's going to give you a great effort. He's going to finish, give you everything he's got. He's a really smart player. And having him back is a real plus.

I thought our offensive line and tight ends did a nice job. Our running backs, our receivers, most of the day blocked well. It was a game where they were called on to block safeties.

And really overall I thought we did a great job penalty-wise. I think we had three. The one call on the interception was not a good call on number 12, Boykin. And so we had a false start. Then we got a running into the punter, which Isaiah Jones says he got his hand on the ball.

So turnover ratio and penalties, two things you talk a lot about in an opener, we did a great job. And all of our special teams goals, we accomplished. I mean, this game really came down to what happened inside the 6-yard line and two plays on defense. I mean, other than two plays on defense, you hold them to 160 yards.

But look, it's a win. It's a two-score win. But we left a lot out there. And it's good that we've gotten to the point where people's expectations are such that they're not happy with just wins. But at the end of the day, they all count as one win.

Q. With special teams, you had the big punt return, a punt was blocked it looked like on TV. But Brendan Franke is the long field go guy, and Quinn Warren stepped up in a big spot and hit one inside the 3. Could you just talk about where you're going to use Franke with a punting situation?

CURT CIGNETTI: We feel like Quinn is a really good prospect. And Quinn stepped in, the punter had a little issue and wasn't available at that time. And Franke is a long field goal guy. He hadn't missed one in practice. Now, he's only kicked about four or five because we'll practice a long field goal, 56, 58 yards. This one was 52, but into the wind, and he hit the crossbar. So that's where that's at.

Q. You mentioned how you can't imagine anybody was really pleased from this win. When you had that talk with your team in the locker room, what was kind of the immediate after-effect, kind of the reaction they had?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think they understood. Look, we had



them where we wanted them. We just had to put the fork in them, and we didn't. So I don't wait around for their reaction. I'm the critiquer.

Q. You've been high on Amari for a while. Where have you seen him evolve the last year and a half? And then you had him at rover for the first half last year. Why did you move him back?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, first of all, that's a guy that's not redshirted. So he played as a freshman and started the whole season as a true sophomore. And we moved him back to strong safety because he's a really smart, instinctive player and there's a lot of communication involved there. And it gave us the ability to put our best five on the field.

So he's a really good football player that I think the sky's the limit, and he'll get out what he puts in. He could be an outstanding football player. I've seen him really mature and grow up.

Q. Injury updates, mentioned McCarthy, got banged up. And Bryson Bonds and Byron Baldwin, where are those guys at? And did anybody come out of the game with anything?

CURT CIGNETTI: Bonds, unfortunately, has a knee injury and will miss the rest of the season. Baldwin is more day to day.

Q. You talked a little bit about it in your opening statement about the crowd. Disregarding the second half what was your initial reaction seeing the crowd and the parachuting Bison --

A. I thought the students were awesome. They bought extra tickets. They were loud. The place was rocking. We didn't see the Bison come in. I heard it was spectacular, big time. The crowd was rocking. And we needed to give them more to cheer about.

Q. Turning the page to Kennesaw State, what are your early impressions of them? And what kind of challenges can they give you on the offensive side of the ball?

CURT CIGNETTI: Like I said at the beginning, the offense can go really, really fast at warp speed. They'll change the tempos, athletic quarterback that spent some time here, senior.

They've got a lot of older guys in general on their football team and starting roles. Receiver No. 1 is a really good player, running back is a really good player, too.

So they're going to use the field and the biggest adjustment will be when they do go warp speed, getting the calls in, getting lined up, that kind of thing, and keeping the quarterback contained.

And defensively I'm impressed. I mean, they're fundamental. They're well coached. They're in the right place. They run around good. They tackle. They're tough. So, guy's done a nice job there.

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