

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

Saturday, September 6, 2025

Bloomington, Indiana, USA

## Curt Cignetti

### Press Conference



Indiana - 56, Kennesaw State - 9

CURT CIGNETTI: Good day. I think we made the improvement we needed to make, but it's far from perfect. We'll see areas of improvement tomorrow when we watch the tape. But we took a step forward with the step we needed to take.

Probably most pleased with the way we dominated the second half. We got off to a fast start in the game and sort of stumbled, bumbled around in the second quarter a little bit. So it was a 15-point game at halftime, but we outscored them in the second half 31-3, and I think we scored 31 straight at the end.

It was good to empty the bench and see our twos make some plays, particularly in the pass game, like Charlie Becker and some other guys, Alberto.

So good day in terms of making the progress -- also, when we built the big lead, I like the way our guys kept playing one play at a time like it was nothing-nothing. I didn't see guys laughing on the sideline, kind of a relief syndrome. That's what we ask them to do. Time to be satisfied is in the locker room.

I was a little bit of a tyrant on the sideline in the fourth quarter, but my job is to make the team the best it can be, so that's the way it is.

**Q. You allude to it there, Curt, but was that third quarter in particular -- I think you scored 21 or 28 straight points in the third quarter. Was that third quarter kind of what, in your mind, this team can look like in terms of offensive efficiency, some of the explosiveness, and then the way that you were, I think in particular, kind of playing in Kennesaw State's backfield when they had the ball?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, it looked like that today, and that was great to see because last time we really waxed somebody was Purdue. That was a long time ago. So it was good to get back kind of to that.

Cooper's reverse was a real big play in the game, really good run and a lot of good downfield blocking.

You're right, our defense started to penetrate, make plays in their backfield a little bit. So we took it over.

I needed to see that from this team because there's a lot of new guys on this team. There were a lot of new guys last year, but a lot of them came with me, and I knew them. They understood the culture, the standard, the expectation. A lot of the guys that we have that are new aren't like Pat Coogan, who came from Notre Dame, a team that went far into the playoffs, championship culture. Some of these guys have come from .500 programs.

Like I said to our coaches this morning, you've got to really coach this team every day right now and reinforce the standards and the expectations in everything you do. Like the walk-through yesterday, I wasn't real pleased with. But it was all new guys, and you just can't assume they know because they don't. They don't know, they don't know.

Pleased we took a step forward, and get ready for the next one.

**Q. When you say you weren't pleased with the walk-through, just what did you see? The focus in the walk-through yesterday? What kind of bothered you then? Is that part of the reason why maybe to see that focus, you left the guys in longer in the fourth quarter?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I kept them in longer because we need to play football. We got some games coming up where we've got to be able to play that many plays. We haven't executed over a long period of time as well as we need to, so we need reps, we need game reps.

The walk-through was more of a -- it's not a physically taxing day. It's only a 25-minute walk-through, get about 40 plays on offense and defense, but they've got to be sharp mentally. It's not a time to kind of be relaxed mentally either. So you're getting more reps on the game plan, the right splits, alignments, checks, balance, et cetera.



But it's not the first walk-through that we haven't been pleased with, you know what I'm saying?

**Q. Elijah Sarratt's big day, your thoughts on what leads him to have performances like that?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I was glad to see him get going a little bit. Last year in camp, he really didn't have a lot of catches, but he got them during the season. Not quite as many as he did at JMU. Same thing in camp, he didn't have a ton of catches, not in the first game either. So I was glad to see him bust out and those two kind of hook up a little bit.

All these new quarterbacks, they build on their successes early in the season. You win, they play well, they build on it. Same thing happened last year with Kurtis. He didn't have the greatest opener. He sure played good the second game even though the opponent -- and obviously lights out the third.

Mendoza to Sarratt, Mendoza to Cooper and other guys are going to be an important hook-up.

**Q. On the field goal with the delay of game, what was the choice to not kick it after?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, it was a bad football decision, first of all. We had a couple drops, I believe, that series, and we were up. We got a delay on the field goal and missed it anyhow. Then we're moved back five yards. Really didn't want to go for it but didn't want to have to put Franke in for the field goal either.

We did what we did, and it didn't work out.

**Q. Your running game has been very consistent from statistically. And last week Roman Hemby was the workhorse; this week it was Beebe. How confident or comfortable are you having that triple threat running game?**

CURT CIGNETTI: All those guys are capable, and it starts up front with the tight ends and then the receivers too. Those guys run hard and break tackles, and it just helps when you can be balanced on offense and run it and throw it.

The thing about early in the year, I think you learn as a staff every game a little bit, like, oh, we need to have a little bit more of this kind of stuff down in this field zone or things like that. I mean, you've got to have enough diversionary stuff, so to speak. But today it was Beebe, Hemby still ran well, Kaelon, Cooper had 79 yards on the reverse.

Got to keep them healthy. We've got a little more depth at some positions on this team than others.

**Q. When you have a sideline that's not laughing, playing like it's all tied up late, even when you are up big, how relieving is that for you to see that it's a team that's bought into what you're trying to preach to them?**

CURT CIGNETTI: How relieving, you said?

**Q. Yes.**

CURT CIGNETTI: I'm never relieved. I'm going to be relieved when I go up in my office and crack a beer. But on the field, I'm never relieved because you've got to keep the pedal to the metal. You're trying to really teach habits, right? And how you do something is how you do everything, and you're either improving or you're getting worse. So if you're playing to the circumstances of the game, you're getting worse, right?

You've got to be able to handle success and failure and then play the next play at your very best. Those are habits, and you're trying to create those habits. At the end of the game, I was pleased, I was pleased, yes.

But our kids, I think, we have enough guys here that have been here that understand what we want and that were not happy with the way they played last week, and they responded really well in the fourth quarter.

**Q. On that, with the way the offense got the job done in the red zone and the way the defense contained the quarterback in the ground game, how pleased were you with the way the team saw what it needed to improve from last week?**

CURT CIGNETTI: That had to happen, and we answered the bell. Like I said, we were No. 1 in the country in scoring touchdowns in the red area last year, and last week it was what it was. It was good to see that ball get in the end zone in the red area, yeah.

**Q. Kennesaw State had eight plays of 15 or more yards offensively. What do you chalk some of those chunk plays up to the defense has allowed early in the season?**

CURT CIGNETTI: When people go real fast like they do or then they check to put themselves in the best spot and they take those big wide splits and use the field, there's going to be some throwing lanes, you know what I'm saying? We'll take a look at the tape.



I know they came out in the second half and challenged us down the field a little bit. But I thought we played really well against ODU aside from two plays, and I thought we played -- gave up 9 points today.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports