

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Coach Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: Saturday definitely took a step forward, but it was far from clean. Still a lot of areas of improvement. Must improve. You always have to improve.

But I don't think the players want to look at the score and feel like, yeah, okay, we're there, because we're definitely not. I mean, defensively we gave up nine plays of 15 yards or more. They had drives of 63, 64, 44 and 50 consecutively, and we had a number of missed assignments, poor alignments, the fast balls, particularly in the middle of the field where they're going fast, were not aligned correctly.

Really the play of the game is Jamari Sharpe's strip where it's 28-9 in the second half and they get a big play, and if they go and score, it's going to be 28-16, and he makes a great play. On the very next play, we run the reverse for a touchdown, so it's 35-9. But on that particular play, ball is in the middle of the field, they come out in empty three by two and we set the strength wrong, and then they motioned a four by one and we've got guys all over the place.

So we've got to do a better job of that. I do think the last two teams we've played in terms of getting aligned are some of the bigger challenges we'll face this year because of their tempo, particularly this last team who had a lot of -- they could go extremely fast and then they had some oddball formations you had to adjust to.

Offensively we still had six or seven missed opportunities that we need to convert on. On the plus side, it was good to go seven for seven touchdowns in the red area on offense.

Defense, the first four series three-and-out, and the last four series, they had one 1st down. We won the turnover ratio 2-0. We had 14 TFLs on defense. Teams were good. All the kickoffs were out of the end zone. We blocked a punt. We had a 35-yard return.

So things to build on, got to get better, and it's an early game Friday night.

Q. When you talk about things that need to be cleaned

up from the first few games, how many lingering issues have you seen between both games? Are more of these common issues between both Old Dominion and Kennesaw State or just individual things that have popped up --

CURT CIGNETTI: I think every game is different without a doubt. You come out of this game, and you can say, okay, offense improved in certain areas, teams was still very consistently good, and defense gave up too many chunk plays. They had an opportunity for more chunk plays that they didn't execute. We also had a lot of nice defensive explosives and TFLs.

But we missed tackles at linebacker more. We had some misfits. Safeties were out of position quite a few times.

Got to get lined up quicker. Communication has got to be cleaner. There needs to be a little bit more attention to detail in our preparation in the back end.

Q. You talk about some of the tackles for loss, and there was certainly a lot of pressure, a lot of penetration. Do you see some of the -- what's the difference in your mind, when you see those chunk plays, between it being structural issues within the defense or it being just individual missed assignments or bad footwork or just --

CURT CIGNETTI: It's always somebody not doing what they're supposed to do. Always. Whether it's a missed tackle, poor read, a poor fit, an alignment issue.

Q. With the receivers, they had some drops in the first half it looked like and there was a couple the previous week. How is the chemistry with Fernando developing with them and what have you seen from the group as a whole after the first two weeks?

CURT CIGNETTI: I thought the pass game took a step forward. I'm not a stat guy, but I think it was 21 of 28 for about 280, five touchdowns. That's pretty good.

There was one drop, true drop, EJ on the RPO. A routine play. If you're talking about Sarratt's, that's one where

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Fernando had a guy in his face and the ball was a little behind. It's hard to see on tape. Tough catch it looked like.

We took a step forward. There's no denying that.

Q. The performance you're getting from Warren in punting, you didn't necessarily expect that, but he seems to be stepping up.

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah. The punter has got a little bit of an issue, the first-team guy. He's sorta day-to-day. But we've always had a lot of confidence in Quinn. The first one that we downed inside the 5 was a little bit of low kick and we got a good bounce. But he's really capable of booming the ball, and he did a nice job.

Q. I'm sure it's not perfect, but it seems like the perimeter blocking has been pretty solid. You guys have sprung some good runs. One guy that looks like he's doing a nice job, Riley Nowakowski, kind of filling that Zach Horton role. Just your thoughts on how he's doing? It's kind of the dirty work; nobody talks about it, but it seems like he's playing well there.

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, he was the player of the game on offense, sort of an unsung hero, high effort, high character, gives you everything he's got play in and play out, really dependable. Really played well Saturday. Scored a touchdown too. Caught a pass early.

The effort on the reverse by him and others downfield was really nice to see, and good player.

Q. You'll have more clarity on Lou this week, but at that spot, I want to say it was thin. Do you like who you have after Lou, and what have you seen the last few weeks as well, that whole spot there? You played Chung last week.

CURT CIGNETTI: Right. That one is sort of day-to-day depending on health status of a guy or two. We've got to get better at safety. We play three of them. We play a rover, a free safety and a strong safety. They're capable of -- they're not playing bad, but they're capable of playing better.

Q. You mentioned the offense and the passing game stepping up, five touchdown passes, but yet the running game was still right there. I think you guys were within 15 yards of being balanced on both sides. What are you still wanting to see from your offense as you move forward?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, you don't want to leave plays out

on the field. When you have opportunities, you want to cash in on those opportunities because as we move forward, the windows will get tighter, et cetera, et cetera, so you don't want to leave plays out on the field.

Q. You mentioned with the chunk plays, you guys got to get set quicker and whatnot. Is that on Coach Haines? Is that on Aiden getting the message to the defense quicker? Who does that responsibility fall on?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, the calls are getting in quick enough, and the communication from Aiden is getting done quick enough. Now, one time maybe he set the strength to the right and maybe he could have set it to the left, but the guys in the back end got to get lined up faster, and that's the safety position primarily.

Q. Coach, Indiana State has played both their quarterbacks, one in one half and then the other in the second half. What challenges do they present to you, and how difficult is it to plan for two guys playing?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, they're doing a nice job on offense scoring 40 points a game. They're fairly balanced, playing a couple running backs. They're doing a nice job throwing the ball. The starter is completing about 77 percent of his passes. Defensively they're doing a nice job as well.

I'm sure they're going to come in excited to play. I want to see us play a clean game.

Q. Coach, with a Friday night game, how does the preparation with the short week change things?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, we'll keep Monday Monday, Tuesday Tuesday, Wednesday Wednesday. Thursday will be a little shorter, and then we'll have a meeting with the players Friday late morning and then get them back to the hotel and play the game.

We don't alter our routine a ton. I may cut some reps during the week in practice.

Q. Back to Saturday, late in the first half, you get the ball back after a score; there was 28 seconds, you got a couple of time-outs. What is the discussion about what you're going to do in that situation?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, that's two-minute before the half.

Q. Is that kind of a common thing or is it just case by case?

CURT CIGNETTI: Okay, that's two-minute before the half.



If you do go into a two-minute drill, you're trying to steal a score. You don't have to score. We like to be fairly aggressive there. But everything depends on the circumstances of the game.

I felt like they had a little momentum going after we didn't kick the field goal. They put a couple drives together. And we had sort of flopped around our last series or two on offense.

So if we would have spit a run, we would have used a time-out, but we didn't. I was ready to get to the locker room and regroup a little bit.

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