

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Coach Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



Indiana - 63, Illinois - 10

CURT CIGNETTI: Great night for Indiana Hoosier fans. Stadium was hopping. Really proud of the team. Dominant performance. The punt block got us going. Then we busted a coverage on their touchdown. And then we made a lot of explosive plays, pressured the quarterback. I think we sacked him seven times, really tried to get out of the game and shorten the game at the end and broke their will, I think.

So, it's a great win, and proud of the coaches and the players. I think we've gotten a lot better the last two weeks.

Q. You mentioned this dominant performance against a top 10 opponent will silence some of the critics you guys have heard about the last nine months that have attributed your past success to the schedule?

CURT CIGNETTI: I don't control that. I only control the development of our football team. I felt very confident about this game going in based on what I saw on film and there's a lot of football left to be played.

Q. Last year, Kurtis had a similar game in his Big Ten debut. What did you think of Fernando tonight, as efficient as he was? Obviously five touchdown passes kind of speaks for itself.

CURT CIGNETTI: I thought he took a major step forward last week and again this week. And really had a lot of confidence in him going into the game. I think his progress has really accelerated the last couple weeks. And I thought he was right on target.

And what I really liked about the team is the way they play every play one play at a time first play to last play of the game, regardless of the circumstances. To me that's key to the drill.

Q. You mentioned the seven sacks. Obviously I know you guys brought some pressure, but your defensive

line really physically whipped them tonight. Talk about the job those guys did, and the whole defensive front, getting pressure and shutting down an offense that can score a lot of points.

CURT CIGNETTI: That's what I saw on tape, too. I thought our defensive line could whip their offensive line, and we did. They came out and played with tempo early. And give him time to throw he's going to get the ball where it's gotta go.

But I think the sacks were huge, the blocked punt got us going. And then they couldn't stop us. They couldn't match up on the perimeter. And then we broke their will and just pounded them.

He's a good quarterback. But he took a lot of sacks last year, too.

Q. On Mendoza, his ability to make quick decisions and then accurate throws, where does that come from and how much of a luxury is that to have?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, physical attributes. He's got a quick whip, strong arm, accurate, mobile. The biggest thing when he came to us was working with him in the pocket and the drop-back game, being a little bit more patient, poised going through his progressions.

A lot of the stuff is RPO stuff with us and in this game, too, because we thought there were some things there we could take advantage of.

I think he's got a tremendous upside and he prepares. He's a tremendous person. He will do everything he can to be the best he can be. It means a lot to him. He wants to be great. And he's made great progress the last couple of the weeks.

Q. I know every year is different, but what type of message have you guys said about where this program is and what you guys can be this season?

CURT CIGNETTI: I don't know. I mean, you guys control all that stuff. I just gotta get them ready. And then we all

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play our games and see where it shakes out the end of the year.

Q. I wanted to ask you about your running game. I mean, 312 yards against a team that traditionally does a good job against the run. How were you able to continuously pound at Illinois?

CURT CIGNETTI: It's a mentality. I mean, our guys -- we're tied in together. We don't talk a lot. We're pretty much -- we hit the field, it's all business. I know I stirred things up last year media-wise because I felt I had to. This place, the fan base was dead and needed to set some expectations.

We kind of go about our business. Kind of a blue-collar outfit. And I think there was a point in that game where we broke their will.

Q. On the drive following the touchdown, you ran the punt team out. They called timeout. What was the chess match there? Were you going to punt?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think they had 12 on the field. I threw the punt team out there. I was a little torn what to do. And kind of had a déjà vu of about 14 years ago once that happened.

We elected to go for it at that point and converted. And that was a pretty big play.

There were couple special teams plays there. The blocked punt that play and a third one; I can't recall what it was exactly. They had another penalty on the punt I think that negated -- I don't know. I can't remember.

But that one, you know after I thought a little bit more about it, we felt we had a good play and it worked.

Q. With the way you guys ran the ball tonight and the amount of time Fernando had to work with, how would you assess the offensive line play tonight and how much potential that group has going forward?

CURT CIGNETTI: Potential, this and that, it's what you put on tape. And I felt really good about our line coming into this season. We got some really good players there. They reflect kind of the personality of their coach, Bob. They're tough guys, gritty guys. And they've been playing well. I expect them to continue to get better and play well.

Q. You guys had, I think, it was six tackles for loss on their first five possessions, finished with 10 tackles for loss, seven sacks. Why was the pressure so good?

CURT CIGNETTI: I mean, put the Duke game on. The same thing happened. The difference in that game was Duke turned it over five times. They got to them right off the bat beginning of the game four or five times. And I thought we could too.

Q. You mentioned the strides you all made last week and out there. Where have you seen the largest leap so far?

CURT CIGNETTI: Based on what we're putting on the field, from the beginning to end, the way we're playing in all three phases. And there's no let-up in these guys.

Q. I know you talked about Fernando and his growth. But there was a particular play and he went through all the progressions, still never gave up on Elijah Sarratt, hanging on the sidelines. That was key to the play there. How much does that show the growth since he got here?

CURT CIGNETTI: Positive performance, confidence, belief, and it becomes a cycle. And I've seen it with all these quarterbacks. He probably has more physical ability, he does, than all the other ones. And I think Chandler is doing a great job with him too.

And I like the way it's going in the game plan sessions and kind of the plan the last two games. And Fernando is the kind of guy, he won't get big-headed. He's going to keep his nose to the grindstone, doing a great job preparing and improve.

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