

Indiana University Football

Media Conference

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Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: All right. Good win Saturday. It was a hard-fought, physical game. Rip off the rearview mirror, so to speak. Total focus on Michigan State. I think the key now is our response coming off of this game. But that's always the key. Right? And this team has met every challenge up to this point, because they've been hungry and humble, prepared properly and put it on the field, which requires commitment, discipline, sacrifice, you know, eliminating the noise and clutter, controlling the controllables, and putting themselves in the best position for success, because when you prepare properly, it breeds confidence and brings out your best.

Playing a good football team this week in Michigan State. They had two hard-fought losses on the road against USC and Nebraska. They played really hard and had a chance to win both games and then returned home, and I'm sure they're not real pleased with their performance. But they got a lot of good players, great coaches, really respect Coach Smith. Did a great job at Oregon State. They got good design in all three phases of the game. They got guys that stand out, and I'm expecting their best shot.

So this game gives you nothing. You gotta earn everything, and it's all about our mindset and our preparation. Questions.

Q. Curt, I guess from a coach's perspective, what does a quarterback learn about him and what does a team learn about its quarterback when it sees Fernando respond the way he did? He throws the pick six, obviously the environment changes, the momentum changes, and to answer with his performance on that drive, what does he learn about himself in a moment like that in your experience and what has this team learned about him?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, the quarterback is the key figure. He gets too much credit and too much blame. You know, he overcame adversity. That play wasn't all on him, but at the end of the day, the ball came off his hand. We had pressure in the pocket. He wasn't able to set his feet. The receiver could have flattened the route, and it happened.

And we talked about it a lot going into the game. You don't go on the road and win a game like this without being able to overcome adversity and never let doubt or frustration creep in. And that was a prime example of that, and his teammates rallied around him and supported him, and we came back with a nine-play 75-yard drive.

And I think offensively the best things we did was we responded to their scores with two nine-play 75-yard drives, and then had a great two-minute before the half again like we did against Iowa, where in 24 seconds we were able to take the ball down field, kick a 58-yard field goal and give us momentum going into the locker room.

Defensively we were tremendous, most of the time. You know, TFLs, sacks. Second half, gave up three points, had two interceptions, gave up 41 total yards, not counting the last drive. We were in prevent defense. And special teams, you know, the 58-yard field goal, which he made twice, and then Radacic's two field goals. But the other teams were good.

So it was a great team win. It was a physical, physical, hard-fought game, and Fernando was under duress at times, made some sensational plays where he got the ball out of his hands, and he ran for yards.

But, you know, it was going to be hard, and we found a way to overcome it. So now it's really important that we understand who we really are and what's got us to this point, always, last year, this year, all the years in the past, you know, in this game what does it take to be successful. You gotta have commitment, you gotta make sacrifices. You get out what you put in. You gotta have discipline to do what you have to do when you have to do it and do it right. You gotta have work ethic, attention to detail. You gotta control the controllables, eliminate the noise and clutter, which you guys do a great job of providing a lot of that, and stay humble and hungry.

This is a big-time opponent coming in here. Every team you face in the BIG TEN, the margin for error is very slim, and we have to have a great day today, great meeting, great practice, and stack days and then put it on the field.



Q. You mentioned the tackles for losses and sacks, and Dan Lanning after the game said your pressure and front seven kind of disrupted whatever game plan they had. You've talked a lot about Bryant Haines's scheme and how it's designed to do that. Is there anything unique about this talent group, this front seven that's sort of powered your success? A lot of new faces this year. I don't know, anything unique you've seen from this groove that's kind of powered the success they've had?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think it's all about people and plan and then the things I just talked about, putting the work in. And we got good players up front. We got really good coaches that coach them, Pat Kuntz and Buddha Williams. Of course, Bryant oversees the defense, does a tremendous job. And we've definitely made progress up front, there's no doubt about it.

But we also understand we're in a production-oriented business, and what we did yesterday doesn't mean squat, because next week's news will be largely determined by what we do today, tomorrow, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then obviously Saturday from 3:30 to 6:00, from play one to 150.

Q. I wanted to ask about Isaiah Jones. What is he playing so well and his development, is that an example of the kind of development that you want in your program and are seeing in your program?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah. I think everyone is just so proud of Isaiah Jones. He's a great teammate. He's a great leader. He represents everything that we talk about, what it takes to be the best you can be. He was on the team the year before I was hired, but when he showed up, I guess he had a back injury and required surgery, wasn't able to do very much. So he got out there my first spring and then fall played quite a bit the first half of the season in our Joker package, and then Hardy started to play a little bit more. And I think it's just a case of a guy staying healthy. And you know, these are young guys. Their bodies change. Their work with Derek, you know, the winter and then the summer builds on the winter and then you put two years together, two years in the same scheme. You know, now you can play faster, react because you recognize. And he is really playing well. I am so happy for him, and he has been a huge play maker for us.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the production you're getting from Wyatt and Landino among the defensive linemen who are playing really well?

CURT CIGNETTI: Tucker and Landino from really I've seen those guys really come on the last three weeks.

Wheeler has been very steady, reckless in that mix. Outside, Wyatt, since the day he got here really has been impressive. He got great work ethic. He's really smart. He's very versatile. He's a good football player. And that was a key acquisition.

You know, the other guy that we added in the spring after spring was Daley. Now, he came from a program that wasn't as good as Wyatt's, and when he came in the summer, you know, he wasn't in like quite as good of shape, physical condition as the other guys. But he's a freak athlete.

Remember him from when I was at JMU. He came to our high school camp. Guy ran sub 10 800-meter senior year in high school, 230 pounds. And he is really like, you know, about the middle of camp on. And then of course, you got Kamara out there.

So but Landino and Wyatt -- Landino, you know, we've always been very high on him. He's had some nagging injuries that have kept him off the field in his early days, missed his first spring, last spring, my first spring here. And I see him developing into the player we knew he could be. And, you know, he's got an unlimited ceiling moving forward.

Q. Coach, I want to ask you about Roman Hemby. He's a guy obviously at Maryland always known as a speed guy, could run. It seems like he does that here, but also, it looks like he not only is going to run between tackles and run with power, but looks like he enjoys it and takes some satisfaction. What have you seen from him and how big has his addition been to running?

CURT CIGNETTI: You know, when you take anyone out of the portal that you don't have a history with, you can research the production, you can watch the tape, you can talk to people, but you really don't know 'em. Right? Until they're here a while and see how they respond to different situations and how consistent they are day in, day out.

Roman Hemby is a warrior. That guy gives 100 percent every day, every play, physical runner, fast, smart, great hands, great out of the back field. And you know, he's a guy that wants the ball, that you can give the ball to and that he's been durable.

Q. You said this team is humble and it's hungry. Where does that hunger and humility come from on your all's team?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I mean, you know, you got a certain blueprint and a plan, things you preach, things that



you feel are important and it's my job to communicate those and the assistants', right? Also. And to like kind of live that and walk that. And then, you know, the team, right? They get to get the message. But they aren't words. They're actions.

And we've got enough older guys here, and I think having all those JMU guys last year certainly helped with the process. They understood the program, knew what to expect. But this year we added quite a few new guys, veterans, great character, good players, good leaders. You know who they are. I don't need to mention names. But we got a lot of strong character on this football team, and they're a team. And, you know, the team goals supersede the individual goals. And let's face it, when you enter a season, especially nowadays, because you got a lot of new faces, there's really a lot you still don't know about your team, how they're going to respond.

And you learn about your team every week. You really do. And we're going to learn a lot more about our team this week. Right? So I'm proud of the way that they went out to Oregon, got the message. A couple of the coaches said you could hear them on the field through their chatter some of the stuff they, you know, one play at a time, play the next play, you know, whatever, whatever it is. But we got good players that prepare and like to play football, and they're smart and they made good choices and decisions on the field.

Q. Curt, last season you rotated your wide receivers pretty heavily with the five or six guys you had and this year it's become more of a clear group of starters and second teamers. I guess what led to that change in philosophy? Did you see that much year-to-year improvement from Eijah, Omar and E.J.?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, no. Last year we had a lot of experience and depth, you know, Sarratt, Cooper was still kind of young, but had made plays the year before and really was coming on. You had Miles Cross, who had caught about 150 balls in his career, Myles Price, who had got 100-plus playing in the NFL for the Vikings; Ke'Shawn Williams had caught probably about 100 from Wake Forest, and now he's on the Steelers practice squad. McCulley was with us for a while. E.J. until he red-shirted. Who am I forgetting?

We just had more experienced depth, guys that had done it successfully at this level. Our backups now are a little younger, still developing. But they've done well when they get in there, for sure.

Q. You talked about handling success and the message to the team ahead of Michigan State. Do you

reiterate that at the beginning of the week, at the beginning of each day of practice or do you leave that relatively unsaid?

CURT CIGNETTI: Oh, no. No. Yeah. We have a team meeting tonight at 5 and I'll talk to the team tonight and put the message out there. Normally I don't talk to the team after practice Tuesday or Wednesday. I'll talk to them Thursday and then Friday in team meeting and then obviously before the game.

But, you know, sometimes I'll jump in there and talk to them Tuesday or Wednesday after practice if I think I need to.

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