

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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## Curt Cignetti

### Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: Coach Odom has got them playing hard. They've been very competitive at home. You look at Purdue. They go to Michigan; they lose by five. They got Rutgers; they're ahead with four minutes to go in the game at home. Minnesota, they led the whole game and lost at the end. Ohio State was a competitive game for most of the first half. Then they went to Washington, and the game got away from them. That's a hard place to play.

So we're certainly expecting their best shot, and we've got 100% focus all eyes on Purdue and are in the process of preparation to put ourselves in the best position to be successful.

Questions?

**Q. With the injuries, can you give us an update on some guys? Elijah Sarratt, will he be available? You had Kamara go down in that game. Will he be available? Drew Evans, is there a timeline for his return?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, we expect Kamara will start. Sarratt will start. Drew Evans, we'll know more today, and him and the rest of them are working hard to get back on the field.

**Q. I guess normally a bye week time delay like this one would probably seem a little bit awkward with only one game left in the season, but what did it do for your team, recognizing just how much more season you might have ahead of you? If you win this game, obviously Indianapolis, but then even thinking beyond that to a postseason that has gotten a lot longer in terms of games in the last couple of years?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I look at it from a different perspective. It was a much-needed off week, playing six games in a row late in the year. I think everybody that's playing is banged up, and I think the entire organization was a little tired. I could feel it, sense it, Penn State week and Wisconsin week, so I think it came at a really good time.

Everybody seems to be refreshed. There was a lot of spirit at practice yesterday, and I can tell in the office everybody is rested up, so it's a good thing.

**Q. I'm curious your thoughts on just kind of the whole theory of teams needing, quote, style points, unquote, to impress the committee?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Say again.

**Q. I'm curious your thoughts on the theory of style points, teams needing to win in impressive manners for the committee. You hear it get talked about. You hear margin of victory get talked about a lot this time of year. I'm curious your thoughts on that. Do you think it matters? Do you think it doesn't matter? How do you approach it?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, it's not something I'm really thinking about, quite honestly. We've had some wins where we've won by a lot of points, and we've had some wins that are close. I think the most important thing is that you win.

**Q. Can you assess the play of your special teams? In particular, what makes Nico such an accurate kicker?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, Nico has been money in the bank for two years. We've been pretty fortunate. About the last five of our field goal kickers have been that way. We have a certain thing we do with them that has worked up to this point. It's really all credit to the kickers and their ability to put the ball between the uprights.

I think our special teams have done a good job, you know, with blocked punts. We've had no catastrophic mistakes, so to speak. We've kicked some really key field goals. There's no doubt about that. Had some good punt returns. Not many opportunities in the kickoff return game.

So we count those blocked punts as basically turnovers. I mean, we're No. 1 in the country in turnover ratio, plus 15. You add a few of those blocked punts, you're around plus 18. Those are winning edges.



**Q. A unique situation this year with the rivalry game against Purdue coming up and then most likely a Big Ten Championship game. With the guys that have been hurt, that have been out and are coming back, of course, they probably need to knock some rust off, but are you going to be cautious how you play them with that game coming behind?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Look, we are 100% focused on Purdue and nothing else. We have respect for Purdue. If you don't respect your opponent, then you're starting in a bad spot.

I respect what I see on tape. They're playing hard. They're making plays. They're in games. They're doing a good job up there coaching, and we have to go up there prepared, and we got to play well.

I mean, we're going on the road to play a Big Ten football team, in-state rival. That's all we're thinking about.

**Q. You mentioned Elijah you think will start on Friday. How do you balance getting him back into the fold but also knowing the production you've gotten from Charlie Becker the last couple of weeks and balancing those two?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I guess you'll see Friday night.

**Q. You answered some of it before, but I was going to ask you about Purdue. Barry faced some similar challenges in building up a program similar as you faced when you first came in here. What do you see from Purdue now compared to where they were a year ago?**

CURT CIGNETTI: First of all, they're competing really hard. That's what I see. There's no give-up in that team, and I'm sure they're disappointed in the way it went out at Washington.

They're wide open on offense. Spread the output conflict, balance run and pass. Defensively really mix it up. Every play something different.

They attack. They've got an aggressive style on offense and defense and special teams, and I'm sure that's the personality of the head coach, who played linebacker in college, been a defensive guy. They attack. They're a physical football team.

**Q. I think this is time No. 100 between IU and Purdue. You got the taste of victory last year in the rivalry game. How have you seen, just yourself, the program**

**start to embody this rivalry and with so much history?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I probably haven't been here long enough. We've played them one time. They probably weren't in a real good spot last year when we played them. The goal is to be successful. Maybe in five, six years I can answer that question better.

**Q. On Fernando, I think you said that he preps just more than any other QB you've had. Why is that? When could you tell that his prep was just special?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I think it's because he wants to be great, and you know, he's willing to make the sacrifices and put the work in and has the discipline to do it day in and day out, and I think Chandler Whitmer has done a great job too of developing him and showing him the way, so to speak.

**Q. I'm guessing this is probably going to be the coldest weather game Fernando has ever played in in his career. I'm guessing nothing is going to change this week? Is that the right way to look at this?**

CURT CIGNETTI: We still have to throw the ball (smiling). It probably is. I haven't asked him. It's going to be cold for everybody.

