

Indiana University Football Media Conference

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Curt Cignetti

Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: Okay, guys. Great win last night. Was really a heavyweight brawl. Proud of the way our team played. Thought we really played well on defense and made timely plays on offense. Special teams was a wash, but it was a great effort.

I think when you look at the game, third and fourth down, we were seven of 13, they were four of 12. We had five sacks. They had three.

Take away the Hail Mary at the end of the game, our defense limited their offense to 276 yards, out-rushed them 118 to 58.

Wasn't a perfect game. Hard-fought game. Great win for the program.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Obviously you'd like to go through the season with no injuries, but especially the O-line. Adedamola Ajani stepped in. Talk about what you have seen from him, your thoughts for his future in the program.

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I think he's a good, young prospect. We inserted him when Evans went down. I saw him improve every week. He played quite a bit last night at right guard. Benson and Zen kind of split the reps at right tackle. Drew Evans was back. That gives us seven guys right now, whereas last year we were at six. When Drew went down, we really were at five.

So I think he's got a good future. He's got a lot of athletic ability. Hadn't played a whole lot of football. You can see him improving.

Q. Last year all four teams that had byes lost. The 30-day break, obviously the team you play will have played in advance, how do you prepare for that to get your team ready, up to game speed?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, it's a three-and-a-half-week break. We put out two tentative calendars based on when

we might be playing. So now we know.

We'll treat the first half of this just like any off week. We'll practice enough to stay sharp, get the rest and recovery in, get the weights in.

Once we figure out who we're going to play, which will be Friday night the 19th, I think, then we'll be able to kind of hone in and go into game plan mode, game plan practice mode.

We'll essentially get two full weeks in of opponent prep. We'll get a Monday through Thursday in, then get a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday in here. We've already been through Thursday once. Thursday and Friday, we'll get that when we get out there.

Q. I know you're not a big behind-the-curtains guy. Can you talk about what last night in the locker room was like with your coaching staff, the ride home, enjoying that night together?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I mean, it was obviously a great win, a lot of emotion on the field. It was a little bit of a different setup postgame with the stage, some of those kind of things.

We never really had the opportunity to get the team together in the locker room afterwards because it was close to an hour before I got back in there with the different interviews and such. Some of the players, too.

But you could see the celebration both on the field and on the stage. It was well-earned.

Q. You just called the performance last night 'not perfect' for you guys. What does it say about your team that you can play not perfectly and still beat the No. 1 team in the country at the time?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, they didn't play perfectly either (smiling). They missed a field goal that was kind of a chip shot down there at the end that could have tied the game. We missed one, which was uncharacteristic. The interception, which led to their first score on a short field,



could have been prevented.

It was a great effort. When you play a great team, they're going to make plays, you're going to make plays. You just got to make one more than they do.

Q. I think you said last night that the challenge now is just trying to humble this team. How do you approach that? What do you use to try to humble them?

CURT CIGNETTI: I said that kind of tongue-in-cheek a little bit, sort of to be funny.

We've got a lot of time here. We're going to meet with the team tomorrow at 4. We won't practice tomorrow. We'll be in normal off-week mode here for almost two weeks, week and a half, before we find out who our opponent actually is, then go into game plan mode.

We have great character kids and leadership on this team. I have absolutely no question we'll be ready to play.

Q. Do you have any update on Omar's health? With Bryant Haines, what is about that connection with him and the defenders that makes him so dominant?

CURT CIGNETTI: Omar, we'll know a little bit more as we go. We don't expect it to be anything. We don't think there was anything that happened in the game that will affect our next game.

In terms of Coach Haines and the defense, we attack. We move a lot up front. TFLs, sacks, stop the run is the emphasis. There's a lot of line movement. We were very disruptive.

In fact, I just started the game before I came down. I've gotten through about 15 plays. We hit the quarterback three of the first 10 plays. Picked one off early. Great play by Lou Moore. Twice got down there in the low red and came away with maybe three points I think it was. It's just an attacking style play on defense and Coach Haines does a great job.

Q. You've seen the coaching chaos across the landscape. What did you see in the administration that you trusted they would follow through on the promises they made? The first thing you did at the podium was thank the administration before you got to the fans. What was your standard to be like, I can trust this, believe they're going to follow through?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, it was just a belief I had in my conversations, my initial conversation with Scott. It is vibe I was getting. Then talking to Pam. I talked to Scott three or

four times. It was a quick process. They understood it was integral that they get football going. There would be a commitment there.

What I will say is within the first week on the job we realized the commitment wasn't going to be enough. Right away we upped it, ended up doubling it that first year. Since rev share now, you guys read all the articles, we want to be highly competitive.

Q. I want to circle back to you've talked a lot about how pressure, that attacking style defensively, is something that you want out of your defenses philosophically. How much does it almost complement the way that you want to play offensively in the sense of just constantly putting an opposing offense under pressure, then using that controlling field position on the scoreboard, using that to fuel what you want to do offensively?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think you hit it right on the head. Really I guess you if you looked at your defense relative to our offense in terms of... Our defense is probably more aggressive than our offense 'cause we're very balanced on offense between the run and the pass. Don't put too much pressure on the quarterback. You don't see us spreading the field with five-wides, things of that nature, running things that people don't see all the time. We're a little bit more conventional, although we are going to exploit weaknesses in a run game, pass game as well.

I think that's one of the things, like you look at us last night, the timely plays on third down and the down-the-field shots we were able to convert on based on some things they'd been doing on tape and really hadn't been challenged.

But Coach Haines... We got a lot of heady guys on defense, too. That whole linebacking core, a lot of those guys up front are smart guys. Then you got some really good coverage guys with ball skills on the back end, which allows us to do a lot.

There have been some busts in the back end during the season. I know one in the first 15 or 20 plays. Things that we still have to clean up and get better at.

Q. The impact that your success has had on the fan base, the university... What are some things you've experienced, seen, felt, community, what have you?

CURT CIGNETTI: You'd probably have to talk to people on the outside to get a better feel for that.

I hear it. I just know that winning lifts all boats. In terms of fan support in the stadium, donations, all parts of the



university, downtown when you pack the stadium, bring a lot of people to Bloomington, it helps their sales. A lot of pride in Hoosier Nation. The largest alumni base in America, over 800,000 people.

I'd say right now the arrow is pointing up. We probably got a lot of momentum going in those kind of areas.

Q. Elijah, 10 tackles last night. How have you seen him grow as the season has gone on building off of last season?

CURT CIGNETTI: Good young player that played really well last night on a huge stage. It just tells you a lot about him. Two years remaining. Key guy to keep around.

Q. Every team is obviously different. Every year is different. The experience of going through the College Football Playoff process last year, how is that going to help this team benefit, even though they don't know who they're going to be playing yet?

CURT CIGNETTI: Second time through, you're always better. This one's a little different 'cause you got a little more time off.

But like every other experience from our first year, the returners all learn from those. Some of the newcomers have been in this situation before. Zen and Coogan.

Yeah, it's only going to help us. This is a different team that's overcome some hurdles last year's team didn't. We're Big Ten champs. Beat the No. 1 ranked team in the country. Beat the No. 2 ranked team in the country at the time on the road. Proud of what we've accomplished.

Q. What's made the pairing work so well between Fernando's playing style and Mike Shanahan's style as an offensive play-caller?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think the thing Fernando has is he has the ability to extend plays. He's really throwing the long ball really well right now.

When you have a guy that can get out of trouble and extend the play, he makes the offensive coordinator look real good.

So the offensive thing, Mike Shanahan, I thought he did a great job last night dialing 'em up. It's kind of a group effort. That's one of Mike's strengths, is he draws on everybody. Of course, I'm still in there doing my thing.

Bob pretty much does the run game for the most part. We kind of all get together on the pass game, the various other

elements of it, screens, RPOs, et cetera.

Mike's demeanor is such, he's such a likable guy. He doesn't really have an ego. He does a great job coaching receivers. Has done a great job as coordinator.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys.

CURT CIGNETTI: Thank you.

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