

# Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Bloomington, Indiana, USA

## Coach Curt Cignetti

### Press Conference



CURT CIGNETTI: Day one is in the books and day two is coming up Saturday, and I thought we moved around pretty well and the drill organization was good, which is what I had my eye on. When you've got that many new guys it's sort of your practice standards and the things that you preach that are important to you about playing winning football.

So there was some good, some bad, some ugly, as always, and every day we want to get better.

**Q. You always talk about how important your strength and conditioning program is, especially this time of year. Obviously had a change in that spot with Tyson Brown. Did you align with him philosophically, and how did you land on him bringing him in and what's he bring to the program?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I've gotten great feedback from the players and staff, too, on him. Actually after my first year at Elon I lost my strength guy. He was engaged and had to go back to Massachusetts with his wife, or wife to be, and hired Tyson, who was the No. 2 guy at Washington State for Leach. He was on the job three weeks, and his wife and kids put everything in a U-Haul and drove cross country to Elon, Burlington, North Carolina. They were 20 miles out when Mike Leach lost his strength guy to the Chicago Bears and called Tyson and offered him the job, making about four times more money, and our kids at Elon loved him. He was interested in the job coming back, and I knew him, and he got good reviews, so he's done a nice job.

**Q. Structurally what, if anything, changes? Obviously the calendar gets delayed because of how deep you played into last season and maybe there's certain things that the spring season maybe starts earlier in a different year, different calendar. Does anything structurally change for you in terms of how you're going to pace practices, what you want to accomplish in practices, or is it all just, hey, this is the calendar we're given, we're going to do it the way we've always done it, more or less?**

CURT CIGNETTI: No, we made some adjustments because we played our last game on January 19th, so we didn't start training the veterans, returning veterans, for a couple weeks. We gave them some extra time off. Last year we started spring football practice before spring break, so we're starting later. We've tried to get a blow in there, so to speak, and still get right on the new guys and get the young guys involved as quickly as possible, too.

I think it's been a nice balance. I mean, the biggest challenge right now, to be quite honest with you, is we have 49 defensive players out there right now. We've got some pretty good depth at some positions. We have 33 on offense right now. We've got seven guys out for spring ball. At least five of them we're counting on to contribute, many of them start. Good players.

So we're short right now on the offensive line. We've got one guy that's limited, so I'll count him as a half. We've got 11 and a half offensive linemen, and we've got three guys at tight end that are out for the spring.

One of the young tight ends was flexed out his whole high school career, so I'll count him as a half. We've got one and a half tight ends and 11 and a half offensive linemen and we're rolling through groups.

Defensively we have 18 defensive linemen, between D-ends, D-tackles, good young players, good old players, and we're playing three groups. So do the math.

But the most important thing is we get our work in, and if we've got to move a guy or two over to offense to help us get the work in so we can keep developing as a football team, we will.

**Q. Curt, can you address or assess the linebacker position and who needs to step up at this point?**

CURT CIGNETTI: It's too early to -- I can tell you this for sure, Hardy and Bones are back, Isaiah Jones, and they played winning football, and they're going to be two leaders on our team. We're excited about them. We've got some veterans returning and we've got some young guys that



we're excited about.

It'll be interesting to see how the competition between the returning older guys that are looking to play more minutes and the young guys that have promise, how that plays out.

**Q. Coach, I know it's early, but how do you feel like the new guys from the freshmen and the transfer portal have come in and met your standard?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I think we've had a good off-season, and now this is the important part in terms of putting it between the white lines. Understanding the standard, the expectation level, the accountability, doing the things that we preach that led to winning football games and not doing the things that lose football games.

So this is important. I feel like we probably have more work to do with this group than the first two teams, simply because there's so many that we don't have a one- to three-year relationship with, whereas even the first year there were quite a few we knew very well.

But they've trained well. The reports have all been good. Now we've got to develop them, which is a big part of this game.

Now, I put the portal guys and the high school guys kind of in different categories because a lot of the portal guys are 21, 22 years old, and they've been around the block once or twice, and the young guys are 17, 18 and have gone to college for the first time in January, and they don't know they don't know. They don't know they don't know.

But we've got some returners that forgot what they knew. I mean, we're building a house from the ground up again, right? We've got to have that edge and be humble and hungry.

We've got a number of portal guys that appear to be in position to really help us, but after one practice and without watching tape, it's really hard to say who and how many.

**Q. Curt, obviously you have plenty of experience with Tino. He was here and then he left and came right back. For one, are there things that Chandler did with Fernando that you saw and say, those guys aren't here anymore, but I kind of like that, I want that to stay within the coaching of our quarterbacks here, and is there any reacclimation period for Tino after not being here for a year?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, I think you evolve every year, not only schematically but maybe in your processes, and we've evolved, certainly.

Tino's first order of business was to learn the new stuff we did because there's things that we did last year that we didn't do before, and there's things that we're not doing that we did two years ago.

Then we'll recreate some things again this year. There's certainly some things that Chandler did with Mendoza, I thought, that really helped his development, the virtual reality technology, for one. That's something that we're still doing, and I think it really helps a quarterback's processing.

**Q. You talk about not sustaining success but improving on success. What does improving on a 16-0 National Championship run look like this year?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, that's over, okay. You can't really improve on 16-0. 16-0. Because there were 16 games and you won every one of them.

What you can improve on is your day-to-day consistency and the tools in your toolkit and the things you do to help guys become the best they can be, because even when you win games, there's a lot of plays you'd love to have back, there's a lot of calls you'd love to have back, there's missed assignments that hurt you. Those are the things you tend to focus on that you need to improve on.

But right now, all we're going to try to do is get as much juice, squeeze as much juice out of this group as we can this spring and take them as far as we can.

**Q. You guys lost a lot of your locker room from last year. Where do you feel like you're at right now trying to get new guys in those positions and have other guys step up, too?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, it's awful early. We've got a good core nucleus of guys returning that are going to be good leaders on this football team that are seniors. We've got some guys that are juniors that could be good leaders. There's always some new portal guys that are good leaders.

It's important, and it grows during the spring, but then it really starts to flourish in fall camp and in season. We're early here, but we're going to be in good shape.

**Q. What about Nick Marsh really stood out to you when you were recruiting him from Michigan State?**

CURT CIGNETTI: Two years of production at Michigan State. I remember we played Maryland early in the year and they did, too, and saw that tape and he made some big plays in that game.



I didn't love those gold shoes he came out in today. He learned what getting your ass ripped is all about. I don't know if that happened to him very often at Michigan State. That was before practice started. That was a wake-up call. But he's really worked hard, done a great job for us.

**Q. Did you ever get any chance to relax yourself? Did you get to go to the tropical place you said you were going to --**

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, we did. We absolutely did.

**Q. What's the fastest you've ever driven a car before next month?**

CURT CIGNETTI: I can't tell you the truth. (Laughter.)

But I bought a new Audi SQ8 the first summer I was employed here from down the road there, and that thing has got a lot of horsepower in it. One night within the first couple weeks that we owned it, my wife and I were returning from Ohio to see our son and there was nobody on the highway --

**Q. How long ago?**

CURT CIGNETTI: This would have been summer of '24.

**Q. Statute of Limitations has probably run.**

CURT CIGNETTI: I would not be setting a good example for the young people that need to -- but I laid it down pretty quick, but it's got a little juice in it. But I'm going to put the pedal to the metal when they tell me to in Indy.

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