

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: TBD vs Indiana

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Pasadena, California, USA

Indiana Hoosiers

Curt Cignetti

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: The Tournament of Roses is thrilled to host the Indiana Hoosiers in this year's Rose Bowl Game. We'll be joined today by Indiana Head Coach Curt Cignetti.

Coach Cignetti, I would like you to start by asking you to give a brief opening remark about playing in this year's CFP Quarterfinal at the Rose Bowl Game.

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, excited to be a part of the playoff, particularly going back to the Rose Bowl. We've got a long time to prepare. Two heavy-weight teams are going to slug it out, and we'll find out on the 19th who our opponent will be.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. We'll open up the floor for questions.

Q. Congratulations on making the Rose Bowl. You guys have been out to Pasadena before to play UCLA. What are the advantages of playing in that stadium, and how do you embrace playing in the granddaddy of them all?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, we have been out there before, like you said. I've been out there prior with Alabama when we beat Texas in the National Championship. So for a lot of our guys it will be a familiar venue.

Obviously it's the granddaddy of them all with a lot of great tradition involving the Big Ten, so we're excited about that. At the end of the day, you know, it's a football game. We'll approach it like every other game, including last night's game. We'll be looking forward to getting out there.

Q. I asked Roman Hemby last night if you would still give them the 24-hour rule to put this win last night behind them. He said he wasn't sure, but if you wanted them to come practice today, they'd all be



ready to do it. Curious your reaction to that, and how long are you going to give them to let this one settle?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, we have a team meeting tomorrow night at 4:00, so we'll give them 48 hours and then decide when to hit the practice field next. We've got a couple of itineraries sketched out now that we know where we're going.

We've got about three and a half weeks to kind of get game-ready in terms of mindset and preparation. We don't want to start too fast, obviously. We want to stay sharp with our timing, fundamentals, get our guys rested and recovered, get healthy so that we're ready to play when the bell rings.

Q. If I were to run a column saying Fernando Mendoza deserves the Heisman, what are key things that you think should be pointed out that are beyond his stats, maybe things that you as a coach know, see, understand about Fernando Mendoza that maybe aren't obvious just watching him play football?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, first off, I would have to say it's a no-brainer decision. I believe that. You got to look at his on-the-field production, particularly in the most critical moments of the football game and how he's performed at the end of the game with the game on the line and against Iowa, Oregon, Penn State, Ohio State and then his overall production numbers.

He's a tremendous human being that does everything really the right way in terms of preparation, community outreach, leadership. He's got a great relationship with the team. They all look up to him.

He cares about people. He's extremely intelligent, has high character and values. He's been the leader, and he can beat you with his arm and his legs.

Q. You mentioned the process for getting ready for the playoffs, especially with the little longer layoff. You kept everything very similar for the Big Ten for the regular season. How do you go about kind of trying to balance, like you said, getting them sharp, but not



overdoing it? Did you talk to anybody that's gone through this kind of with the layoff, or how do you approach that? What does your process look like with scouting Oklahoma and Alabama?

CURT CIGNETTI: We'll treat it like a normal off week up until we find out who our opponent is going to be. Then we'll rev it up a couple of notches, and we'll have 11 days really to prepare and be ready to play.

I think 90% of it we've got on paper, and it's common sense stuff. We've got a few little details in terms of the final three days we've got to work through yet.

Q. I guess in that vein, coaches in the past at times have talked about bowl games almost as like a second spring practice in some ways, that there's opportunities to get young guys more reps that you can rest some older players, and during sort of maybe the early prep time there is more opportunity for young players. Does that work the same way in your mind when you are getting ready for the playoff? Are there younger guys that get more front-line time in early preparation while you rest some of the guys that maybe you put more snap on their legs this year, or is that different from a playoff perspective now?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I think that all changes with the playoffs, to be quite honest with you. You know, your focus is your team rest and recovery, staying sharp with the fundamentals. Yeah, it's a different day and age and a different philosophy. I really believe that you start working on next year's team when the season is over.

Q. Just the second part of that question, how much scouting will you do of Alabama and Oklahoma personally? Kind of film, will you estimate how much you'll watch over the next -- how many days -- 12 days?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, well, I'm going to bring the coaches in a little later tomorrow. We'll watch yesterday's game, get that done. Got a team meeting, present the next two weeks to our team, what the calendar looks like. I'm sure we'll spend a little bit of time on each team after that, but we have some other things going on, too. Retention, recruiting, things of that nature.

I'm sure we're going to get eyes on both opponents, but once we really find out who that opponent is going to be, that's when we're really going home in.

Q. You said last night that you got three and a half weeks to humble this team again. I know that's always top of mind with you, but you've been around this team

all year. Do you feel like that's a legit concern with these guys, or do you feel like they're the kind of guys that you know will be ready when January 1st gets here?

CURT CIGNETTI: No, we'll be ready when January 1st gets here. This is going to be a normal off week for -- week and a half, two weeks. Then once we know who our opponent is, pedal to the metal.

Q. I just wanted to get your take. Your offensive line played well all year. Some different guys had to come in. Not only did they play well, it seemed like just from the watching chair that the play improved. A coach's view, your thoughts on that?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I've not seen last night's game film. Actually I'm going to watch it when we're finished with this Zoom here. I'll start with the offense.

We've run the ball pretty consistently this year. We haven't given up too many sacks. The quarterback's mobility has prevented some sacks as well. We've got a veteran line. Obviously Carter Smith was the lineman of the year in the Big Ten, our left tackle. We played really about seven guys up front.

Last night we got Ajani involved and Baldwin -- or Benson back involved. Both those guys finished the game, so we've got some flexibility and some options. I'll be anxious to watch the game tape.

Q. I wanted to circle back. You talked about your experience in the Rose Bowl with Alabama. I know you guys were in the playoffs last year, and maybe the timeline moves a little differently and everything. You've got a team now that's got some time off. You talked, as Mike mentioned, last night about having three and a half weeks to humble them. There are going to be guys with individual awards and different obligations and things like that. Do you reach back to any of your experiences with Alabama, a team that would have had maybe a lot of that attention, a lot of that potential distraction and say, this is how we streamline some of that out as we get ready for a game like this?

CURT CIGNETTI: Yeah, I think some of that stuff lives with me. I don't have old fouls that I'll reference. I kind of approach things on the practice field a little differently than we did down there.

Anyhow, I've got my own philosophy. We don't quite have the depth that we had at Alabama to be able to stay on the field that long and bang that much.



You know, when I made that statement last night, that was a little tongue-in-cheek, too. We're going to use these next two weeks to our advantage. I 100% trust in our assistant coaches and our leadership and our players that we'll approach this the right way, and we'll be ready to play.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach, for your time today. We really do appreciate it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports