

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Indiana

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Indiana Hoosiers Coach Curt Cignetti Press Conference

Q. It's been a long three and a half weeks. All the players talked about how you kept them focused, be where your feet are. What's the challenge as a coach to say, okay, here's what we've done, long journey ahead?

CURT CIGNETTI: Well, everything we've done up to this point doesn't matter. All that did was get us here. The only thing that matters now, once we leave this, is our preparation between now and kickoff.

So when we came out of our last game, because we had so much time and didn't know who we were going to play, and then nowadays in college football you've got to think ahead to your '26 roster.

So we were sort of in bye-week mode, a lot of good weight-room stuff, rest and recovery, some short practices, working on the '26 roster, retention, evaluating portal guys, coaches retention. Once we knew who the opponent was, the next day for the coaches was a Sunday. Then the next day, for the players, was a Monday, and so forth.

Up until the 24th, which normally would have been a Thursday practice, we wanted the players to be able to get home for Christmas, so we were off the field by 1:00 and it was sort of a repeat, short, third-down day.

We head back on the 27th for a 7:00 check in meeting, and next day, normally would be a Monday again, was a Monday in terms of reps and tempo, but it was red-area work.

Then we caught up on our Tuesday with more red area. Yesterday was third down. Today will be a normal Thursday. Tomorrow will be a walk-through, then go play the game.

Q. You know about the Bama mystique. How do you



convince the players that you're playing this team, not that tradition?

CURT CIGNETTI: You probably know more about the mystique than they do. Our guys just know what they see on tape.

Q. I know you're (indiscernible) on your way to the championship. How do you appreciate what you guys have done already to get to this moment, and to do so much good for the IU nation?

CURT CIGNETTI: The only goal right now is to have as good a day as we can today. We've got progress to make in our preparation. When we get done today, this morning, with media, it's important we have a great day and that we have a realistic perspective what it takes to meet the challenge, gives us the best possibility.

What you're talking about are things in the past, which I've probably fielded that question a hundred times, right? But it's a good question. It's great. There's a lot of excitement. But we're here to play in the playoff game and our 100 percent focus is on the here and now.

Q. How long for that game you're trying to get ready for the next opponent? For a while you're thinking you're playing Oklahoma. What was it like watching that game realizing who you're going to get?

CURT CIGNETTI: I did get to watch the game. You're right, early on Oklahoma built a lead. And then a true test of Alabama's character and resiliency to come back on the road in a playoff-game, hostile environment and win that football game. I think it says a lot about their football team.

Alabama is a great football team. Kalen DeBoer is a great coach. I've been following him for a long time because our backgrounds are similar. He's come a long way from the Canyon Coyotes. I figured I'd throw that one in there.

And I shouldn't have to build up Alabama. Everybody knows what a great team they are. So it was an interesting game. It was just good to get our opponent defined.



Q. You said in Indianapolis, three and a half weeks to get the team back (indiscernible) humble. How did you go about it?

CURT CIGNETTI: Like I said, until we knew the opponent, we weren't in high gear, so to speak. Once we knew the opponent, and the coaches had their Sunday and the players came in for their Monday, there's always a team meeting. Now, it was all on me to get everybody focused, thinking the way we wanted to because had a lot of smoke blown up their you know what for two, two and a half weeks, right?

And then you're dealing with player retention and negotiation and a lot of stuff, a lot of different stuff. Guys are winning awards. I thought I'd rock their world and get their attention, and I did my best job to do that.

Q. How did you do that?

CURT CIGNETTI: We don't have it on tape.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think Alabama has a really good defense. They've got a lot of great players and a lot of depth. And Kane Wommack and the defensive staff do a great job putting them in positions to be successful. And I think they're tough.

Q. Fernando has done so many good things for you guys all this year. Is there one thing as a coach you appreciate what you're seeing for him as you get ready for Alabama?

CURT CIGNETTI: I think the things he's done in the past has been documented pretty well, the way he's played with the game on the line, particularly on the road, in the last five minutes of the game. And that's a mark of a clutch player, a great player. And then he won a nice award in New York.

I think it's really critical now that he really developed a sharp edge in his preparation and don't play like, oh, I'm the Heisman Trophy winner and I've got to do this or do that, because we've all been following this game long enough to know we've seen some of those performances, right?

And Alabama's defense I think is a challenge, not only because they've got great players and they play really hard and fast. But schematically, they do some things to try to throw you off rhythm. So we've got to go in with a good, sound plan. But at the end of the day, it's all about execution, left tackle doing his job, running back, receiver,

and Fernando being on point.

Q. You mentioned retention and portal stuff. How do you go about monitoring who you expect to be available and evaluating guys who might be potential fits for the '26 roster?

CURT CIGNETTI: They all say something on Twitter nowadays, right? So you know who is planning on going out, and it's easy for the recruiting department to make a PFF tape on them because you know you can't talk to them until the portal opens on the 2nd.

Q. When it does open, how do you farm out the responsibilities of making contact with certain players, start that recruiting process, however you define it?

CURT CIGNETTI: I'm not going to tell you all our secrets.

Q. Generally in college football, is it pretty standard how people do it or does everyone have a unique way of doing it?

CURT CIGNETTI: I can't say what everybody else does. I hear stories. I'm just worried about us.

Q. During the season, do you guys evaluate players -- like guys on the staff, is there, like, evaluations going on of players elsewhere in the country or was it strictly focused on the schedule?

CURT CIGNETTI: The focus there is on high schools.

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