

Rose Bowl Game presented by Prudential: Alabama vs Indiana

Tuesday, December 30, 2025
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Indiana Hoosiers D'Angelo Ponds Press Conference

Q. D'Angelo, I guess last year you guys came out here, there was a pretty big IU contingent. You came will last night. What's it like being back here again but on a bigger stage?

D'ANGELO PONDS: It feels great just to have another opportunity, another shot at the national championship. I feel like this time we got a different mindset, and it's going to be a great one, this one.

Q. You guys got here last year I think on Friday night, correct?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah.

Q. You did kind of the same thing against Oregon. Here you are on Tuesday, game Thursday. You guys have to adjust to West Coast, or are you going to try to stay East Coast time zone?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I'll have to get with our coaches on that one, but I would assume we will adjust to West Coast time, because we'll be practicing as well. So I feel like it will be best to adjust.

Q. When you look at Alabama's receivers, how do they measure up with some of the teams that you have played already? Obviously Oregon, Ohio State. What are your thoughts on the receiving corps?

D'ANGELO PONDS: In my opinion they have great receivers, great quarterback. They're the same as, like, Ohio State and Oregon. Those teams have good receivers and good quarterbacks as well.

I feel like this team is a little different from those just because of the plays they run, but I feel like they're elite receivers just like those guys as well.



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Q. Is there a particular player that you can kind of watch and maybe keep your eye on throughout the season as you watch games or even in prep?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Not a specific player, but I know they have great players on their team. We'll just scheme them up, yeah.

Q. Was the Rose Bowl something that you thought would be something that would happen for you in your collegiate career? What does it mean to be playing in this game.

D'ANGELO PONDS: Honestly, not really. Being at JMU, I never thought I would be playing in the Rose Bowl. It's just a blessing just to be here. I'm just blessed to be here. I'm happy to be here, but at the same time, we're here to win a football game.

Q. Growth-wise throughout your career in college, what are you most proud of?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I'm just most proud of jumping over just the doubters. They doubt my ability and saying stuff about my size. Proving those people wrong, I feel like that's what I'm most proud of and showing the smaller guys that they can do it too.

Guys growing up, looking up to me, I feel like just showing them they can do it too, that's a big thing for me, so yeah.

Q. When you're going against a receiver like Jeremiah Smith, how much do you see that as an opportunity to prove that you can come out against the highest level of competition?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I do see it as an opportunity. Just like I said, prove to people that I can compete with those guys as well. Those guys are elite receivers, but I'm an elite DB. So I feel like those are opportunities just to prove myself, so yeah.

Q. Do you guys feel like you have a chip on your shoulder with these guys being four- or five-stars. I think there's four zero stars out of high school on your



defense. You do you guys feel like you have something to prove again?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, definitely. A lot of guys on this team weren't recruited by teams like this. Yeah, it's definitely a chip on our shoulder just to prove to the coaches as well that they missed out on an opportunity with us. It's always a chip on our shoulder, honestly.

Q. Can you talk about Cignetti and on him turning this program into a winning program?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, Cignetti is everything. He turned this program around. Just his process, trusting in him, believing in him. And he's a successful coach just because we bought into him, so yeah.

Q. Talk about that one-on-one he has with each player or just the team overall and motivating you guys to win this game?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, he has a big impact on us. When he speaks, it speaks volumes. He focuses on the basics, basically. If you play defense, he's not going to really speak to you that much, but he keeps us disciplined on the fundamentals, and he keeps us ready, honestly.

Q. D'Angelo, you believed in this staff to bring success from James Madison to Indiana. You're now playing in the Rose Bowl. How rewarding is it to see that belief pay off here?

D'ANGELO PONDS: It's very rewarding. It's a blessing just to be here. Honestly, going back to JMU, I wouldn't have thought I would ever be here, but it's just a blessing to be here. I'm happy to be here, and we're just really here to win a football game, honestly, so yeah.

Q. The Rose Bowl is one of the biggest football games ever. You're now here. What does that mean?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I feel like it hasn't hit me yet. It will hit me when I walk in the stadium, I feel like. Like I said, I'm just happy to be here. Honestly, I'm focused on the game really. Just preparing for the game and ready to win, so yeah.

Q. When you step out on that field, just business as usual?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, just business as usual. Another game. Elite opponent, but just play it like another game, so yeah.

Q. As a team how do you approach when Alabama has

all these five stars and talk about strength of schedule? As a team how do you guys look at that?

D'ANGELO PONDS: As a team we tune that type of stuff out. Those are for, like, scoreboard watching and stuff like that. We look at the film, and they have elite players, but we have elite players as well. I just feel like we are just ready to compete with teams like that, so yeah.

Q. We got D'Angelo Ponds, defensive back, Indiana. It is Rose Bowl week, big challenge. You've had a chance to watch Alabama. They've been a little up, a little down. What do you think about that quarterback?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I feel like they have a great quarterback. He knows how to read defenses well. He will break your disguise as well, but I feel like he got a strong arm. They like to pass the ball a lot, so I feel like they got a great quarterback.

Q. You've been dominant, this defense has been dominant all year long. This team, they're a passing team. They have to be a passing team. You know it's going to be about you. Your eyes lighting up?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Oh, yeah, definitely. It's going to be a lot of opportunities out there. They like to pass. I feel like these are the type of games I like. Teams that are going to put the ball in the air, it will test me, and I'm going to test them as well.

Q. Give me an idea what it's like playing in a game like that where you know the ball is coming at you. How much communication is going on in the back end? How much is it just instinct and flying around?

D'ANGELO PONDS: A lot of it is communication. We have to play together as one, and then also, it has to be about you as well, because they're going to try you, they're going to test you. You have to be just ready for adversity and ready to make plays, so yeah.

Q. Does the Ohio State game feel like it was a long time ago?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Not really. Honestly we've been going at it in practice. Like when we're (inaudible) every day. It honestly don't feel like we've had time off. We've had maybe in total four days off. We've practiced the whole time, so yeah.

Q. What did iron sharpening iron actually look like? Was it back to basics at all?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yes, a lot of good on good, one



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versus ones, going against Elijah Sarratt, Omar Cooper. That's what iron sharpens iron looks like. Elite versus elite, best on best. That's what it looked like.

Q. Your wide receivers have been fantastic this year. You've gone up against some good ones. You've watched some film. How do you think your guys stack up against the rest?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I feel like we stack up very well. As a defense overall, them liking to pass, I feel like we're a pass-oriented defense. I feel like we're ready for the challenge.

Q. Morning workout or night workout?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Morning workout.

Q. Favorite road trip snack?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Skittles.

Q. Signature shoe or an award names after you?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Award named after me.

Q. Why?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Because I feel like it would last longer.

Q. Song that gets your mind right?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Wildways Freestyle.

Q. Emojis you use the most?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I feel like it's the smiling emotion.

Q. With the teeth out?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, teeth out.

Q. If you could steal a teammate's skill, which teammate and what would it be?

D'ANGELO PONDS: That's a good one. I'm going to say Carter Smith's strength.

Q. Describe the Rose Bowl in one word.

D'ANGELO PONDS: Legendary.

Q. Do you have a New Year's resolution?

D'ANGELO PONDS: No.

Q. Not one? Elijah said no shopping in January. Do you think you can do that?

D'ANGELO PONDS: No, no.

Q. (Off microphone).

D'ANGELO PONDS: Mendoza is a great leader, honestly. If you could see, he took us on a private jet, but I'm like, he's a guy that everybody likes. He talks to everybody.

I feel like, Mendoza, he's a guy that leads by example mostly that I see, and he's a great leader. Honestly, just talks to us a lot. I feel like a guy that's a leader, you should want to talk to him. He does that, so yeah.

Q. Does he make himself available?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Yeah, a lot of people -- like, he's a Heisman winner. A lot of people want to talk to him, and he's a likable guy. He talks to everybody. He's not like a non-humble guy, so he's a great guy.

Q. Is there extra motivation to give him a championship on top of his Heisman Trophy?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I would say it's always that extra motivation, but it's about us as a team as well. Yeah, definitely want to do that for him just to add that to his legacy, so yeah.

Q. What is your favorite Cignetti saying?

D'ANGELO PONDS: "I win."

Q. When you think of the Rose Bowl, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Legendary. That's the first word I think of.

Q. Do you watch fan edits of yourself?

D'ANGELO PONDS: Honestly, I just scroll sometime, but I don't really go looking for it.

Q. If you could make a parade float for the Rose Bowl parade, what would you make?

D'ANGELO PONDS: I would make a float of myself, like just a picture of my face. (Off microphone).

Q. How are and Bloomington different?



D'ANGELO PONDS: Oh, way different. The food is totally different. Roscoe's Chicken & Waffles, they don't have that. I feel like that's the biggest difference.

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