

# INDIANA HOOSIERS



Indiana vs. Alabama • Thursday, January 1, 2026 • 4 p.m. • ESPN • Rose Bowl • Pasadena, California

## LAST TRIP TO THE ROSE BOWL

Indiana has played in one other Rose Bowl, losing to USC on New Year's Day in 1968. O.J. Simpson led the Trojans to a 14-3 win over the Hoosiers, scoring on two rushing attempts for the game's only touchdowns.



## INDIANA'S BEST SEASONS

1945: 9-0-1 (Coach Bo McMillin, Big Ten champion)  
 1967: 9-2 (Coach John Pont, Big Ten champion)  
 1979: 8-4 (Coach Lee Corso)  
 1993: 8-4 (Coach Bill Mallory)  
 2024: 11-2 (Coach Curt Cignetti)  
 2025: 13-0 entering CFP (Coach Curt Cignetti, Big Ten champion)



## TOP HOOSIERS THIS YEAR

Quarterback Fernando Mendoza, 2,980 yards passing, 39 total touchdowns  
 Running back Roman Hemby, (below) 918 yards rushing, six touchdowns  
 Wide receiver Omar Cooper Jr., 804 receiving yards, 11 touchdowns  
 Defensive back Louis Moore, six interceptions



## GOOGLE ME

He's not known for lengthy media interviews, but IU coach Curt Cignetti has made the most of his words. During a 2023 interview with reporters who were questioning how he would recruit and build a successful program in Bloomington, Cignetti famously responded that he had won everywhere, instructing reporters to "Google me." But it's been the results, not the words, of Cignetti that have earned him rockstar status in Indiana. He's compiled a 24-2 record at IU over his first two seasons, leading the Hoosiers to back-to-back College Football Playoff appearances. In October, Cignetti signed an eight-year, \$93 million contract extension making him one of the highest paid coaches in college football.



## IU SEASON RESULTS

Aug. 30: W, 27-14 vs. Old Dominion  
 Sept. 6: W, 56-9 vs. Kennesaw State  
 Sept. 12: W, 73-0 vs. Indiana State  
 Sept. 20: W, 63-10 vs. Illinois  
 Sept. 27: W, 20-15 @ Iowa  
 Oct. 11: W, 30-20 @ Oregon  
 Oct. 18: W, 38-13 vs. Michigan State  
 Oct. 25: W, 56-6 vs. UCLA  
 Nov. 1: W, 55-10 @ Maryland  
 Nov. 8: W, 27-24 @ Penn State  
 Nov. 15: W, 31-7 vs. Wisconsin  
 Nov. 28: W, 56-3 @ Purdue  
 Dec. 6: W, 13-10 vs. Ohio State (Big Ten Championship Game)



Associated Press file photos

Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza (15) celebrates after throwing a touchdown pass to wide receiver Omar Cooper Jr. during the first half of a college football game against Maryland, Nov. 1, in College Park, Md.

## Indiana seeking Hollywood ending to historic season

DANIEL SUDDEATH  
CNHI SPORTS INDIANA

While "Hoosiers" is one of the most famous sports movies ever made, the Indiana University football team is giving the classic a run for its money with its own cinematic season.

From Omar Cooper Jr.'s toe-tapping, game-winning catch against Penn State to the Hoosiers' iron clad defense shutting down the defending national champion Ohio State Buckeyes in the Big Ten title game, Indiana has taken college football's center stage.

The undefeated Hoosiers, led by second-year coach Curt Cignetti, are seeking the program's first college football championship. With a Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback in Fernando Mendoza, as well as a top-10 defense, the Hoosiers are poised for a deep run in the College Football Playoff.

Indiana's improbable ascension to the top of the college football standings may be the makings of a movie script, but some of the sport's best teams stand between the Hoosiers and a Hollywood ending.

The historic season for the Hoosiers continues New Year's Day when Indiana will play Alabama in the Rose Bowl for the right to advance to the CFP final four. The game features a traditional football powerhouse in Alabama against a team that suffered three straight losing seasons before Cignetti took the helm in 2024, yet it's the Hoosiers who enter the matchup as the No. 1 seed



Indiana wide receiver Omar Cooper Jr. (3) catches a touchdown pass during the fourth quarter of a game against Penn State, Nov. 8, in State College, Pa.

in the playoff and the favorite to advance.

The No. 9 Crimson Tide and the Hoosiers have never faced each other on the gridiron. Cignetti and the Hoosiers haven't played a Southeastern Conference opponent during his first two seasons in Bloomington, but the coach is no stranger to Alabama. Cignetti was a wide receivers coach and recruiting coordinator at Alabama from 2007 to 2010 under former Crimson Tide head coach Nick Saban.

Alabama enters the quarterfinal matchup with an 11-3 record. The Crimson Tide rallied to defeat Oklahoma in the first round of the CFP. After the Sooners stormed out to a 17-0 lead, Alabama scored 27 straight points and went on to defeat their SEC rival 34-24 on Dec. 19.

Indiana hasn't been in action since Dec. 6 when the Hoosiers snapped a 30-game losing streak to Ohio State and won their first Big Ten title since 1967. The Hoosiers' defense stymied the Buckeyes, leading Indiana to a 13-10 win and a 13-0 record heading into the playoffs.

The Hoosiers also secured the No. 1 seed in the CFP with their triumph over Ohio State. It marks Indiana's second trip to the CFP. Last season Indiana made its first trip to the playoff, falling to Notre Dame in a first-round game 27-17.

Mendoza earned the Heisman by tossing for nearly 3,000 yards over the first 13 games of the season. The quarterback has completed 71.5% of his passes, throwing 33 touchdowns with just six interceptions.

Mendoza has proven he's ready

for the big stage. He tossed five touchdown passes in leading Indiana to a 63-10 win over Illinois on Sept. 20.

On Oct. 11, the junior completed 65% of his passes including a touchdown throw during a key road win against Oregon.

In what has widely been described as his Heisman moment, Mendoza trotted the trailing Hoosiers down the field late in a Nov. 8 meeting with Penn State. He connected with Cooper Jr. in the back of the end zone for a game-winning touchdown and one of the season's top highlights.

Though the Big Ten Championship Game was defined by defense, Mendoza's 17-yard touchdown pass to Elijah Sarratt in the third quarter against Ohio State put the Hoosiers ahead for good in the contest.

Indiana's total defense is ranked sixth nationally, surrendering just 257.2 yards per game. But the Hoosiers will likely be without defense end Stephen Daley who injured his leg in a postgame celebration at the Big Ten Championship Game.

After falling to Georgia in the SEC Championship Game, and spotting the Sooners 17 points in the first round of the CFP, the Crimson Tide appeared to find their stride against Oklahoma. Quarterback Ty Simpson tossed for 232 yards and two touchdowns against the Sooners.

While Simpson has thrown for 3,500 yards this season, Alabama has struggled to establish a consistent running game. Jamill Miller leads the Crimson Tide with 504 yards on the ground.



Content: Daniel Suddeath, CNHI • Photos: Associated Press • Page design: Mike Rogers, CNHI



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# Go Hoosiers!