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Indiana's Defense Prevails After Some Struggles in the First Half

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RICH JANZARUK/HERALD-TIMES

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The Hoosiers beat the Charlotte 49ers in a dominant fashion, winning the game 52-14 Saturday afternoon. This is the fourth week in a row where Indiana has dominated its opponent and it most likely won't be the last. While the Hoosiers' defense held the 49ers to a mere 14 points, they

seemed to struggle at times in their run defense in the first half and early in the 3rd quarter. However, following a 4th and 1 stop in the 3rd quarter, their struggles seemed to subside.

Indiana started the game in Hoosiers’ fashion by forcing a three-and-out from the 49ers. Immediately, you could tell the presence of Indiana’s defense and their ability to disrupt opposing offenses. Indiana was able to stop the run fairly well in the first quarter only allowing 28 rush yards, until the final 30 seconds when they allowed a 33-yard run (allowed 61 rush yards in 1st quarter) to set up the 49ers in the red zone. This allowed Charlotte to gain some momentum and score a touchdown on back-to-back drives in the 2nd quarter which is the most touchdowns and points allowed in a game by the Hoosiers defense all season. Coach Cignetti talked about the struggles on defense during the first half in his postgame press conference.

“They had us on our heels, our defense, with some shifting motioning, running the ball right at us. I know defensive coaches aren’t particularly pleased.”

Shawn Asbury II also noticed these challenges and pointed it out as a reason they struggled in the first half.

“Their offense ran a lot of motions and shifts, so we had to communicate quickly. That offense we haven’t seen a lot of before, so we had to make some adjustments... We knew the mistakes that we were making, so we just had to make sure to go out there in the second half and fix them.” Asbury said after the game in an interview.

While the defense struggled to stop the run, in the first half, they regrouped and made sure that Charlotte wouldn’t score again in the second half. Charlotte’s first drive of the 2nd half proved troublesome for the Hoosiers at first, but they were able to rally and forced a turnover on downs. After that, the defense was forceful and wasn’t allowing any big plays from the 49ers. While there were some low points when watching the defense, they were commanding the field and totaled 8 tackles for a loss, 6 passes defended, and a fumble recovery. The star on defense in Saturday’s game was redshirt sophomore Jamari Sharpe who was replacing D’Angelo Ponds in the first half of play due to his targeting penalty last week which barred Ponds from playing in the first half. Sharpe had 4 of the 6 passes defended and was praised by teammates and coaches after the game.

“We knew that was going to come from Sharpe already, as he does that a lot in practice. We all trusted him and knew he was going to go out there and make plays, and that’s what he went out there and did.” Asbury commented in a postgame interview.

The Hoosiers definitely have some things to work on before their week five matchup against the Maryland Terrapins next week. If Indiana’s defense can address some of their mistakes, they will likely have another outstanding game in their first game of conference play at home. The Hoosiers are an exciting team to watch and are only getting better as their chemistry develops.

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