

Big Ten Football Media Days

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Rutgers Scarlet Knights Coach Greg Schiano

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: My job here is to introduce the next coach. Up next is going to be Rutgers head coach, Greg Schiano. Greg's been 15 years at Rutgers. I think it's his fourth season since returning to Piscataway in 2020. Will be at CBS our first weekend on Labor Day weekend. I'll get to do Ohio State at Indiana, and in CBS's first-ever Labor Day Sunday broadcast, Northwestern will be traveling against Rutgers, and Greg will be on CBS TV. Let's welcome Greg Schiano.

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks, Gary. Thank you all for coming and being a part of our media day here in the Big Ten Conference.

I'd like to start by welcoming our new commissioner, Commissioner Petitti. It's been a great start, really fun to work with. I think he really is a great listener in trying to figure out exactly what's best for the Big Ten Conference, and that, after all, is what we're here for.

I consider it an honor and a privilege to represent Rutgers here at the Big Ten media day. I want to thank our President, Jonathan Holloway, and our athletic director, Pat Hobbs, for all the support they give our players and our program and our coaches.

Really, really proud of the three players that came along with us. Deion Jennings, linebacker, is a sixth-year senior, really special player. Aaron Lewis, another guy that's just the Energizer Bunny, brings it to our team every day. And Johnny Langan, who's a tight end with us and just a super young man.

As a head coach, when your best players are your hardest workers, that really is a nice spot to be in, and I'm very pleased with these guys.

This is my 15th year at Rutgers, 11 my first time, going on my 4th this second time. I can honestly tell you I've never been more excited to be the head coach at Rutgers University. I love what we're doing, I love the culture we're building in our program. I love our players, our coaching staff. I'm excited about the way we're handling business

both on the field and off.

I heard Bret say they had the highest GPA. I can brag the same. We had the highest GPA in program history, and I'm very proud of that, over 3.0 as a collective team, and that's something that's very important to me.

When we're entrusted with these young people's lives, certainly football is a big, big part of it, but we know that football ends and that their life continues on after football.

I think what they learn, not only in the classroom, but in all areas, being with us is an important time in our development. I always tell families when they come on visits, other than that time when you're an infant, I think is the biggest time of development in your life, 18 to 22 years old, when you're figuring out what kind of adult you want to be, what's going to be the basis of who you are.

Excited about the program. Recruiting's gone well. We're a developmental program, and I think I say that often. People don't really understand always what that means. We're not getting a ton of guys that are walking in the door ready to perform in the Big Ten Conference on their rookie year, on their freshman year. There's a few, but we're a developmental program. We need to get them in the pipeline. We need to develop them in the strength and conditioning area, nutrition, learn the culture.

Then what happens is, as we build and build and build, the pipeline begins to become full, and we're approaching that now, where we have 22-, 21-, 23-year-olds that are grown men, and when those guys are your best players and they play their best football at 22 years old, that's when you start to have success at a place like Rutgers. That's what we did the first time, and it certainly is the plan here going forward this time.

I think one of the most important things being at Rutgers University is know who we are and know that we have to be different, and that's okay. I love that. I love being in that position. Like I said, never been more excited than I am today to be the head coach at Rutgers.

With that, I'll open it up for questions.



Q. I know this is about 2023, but just looking ahead to next year with the elimination of divisions, the addition of USC, UCLA, how do you feel that's going to impact your program?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, you're right, '23 is the thing I'm focused on. Getting a look at it, it really didn't change much for us in '24, so it's not going to be any different really. Moving forward, I'm sure it will be, but we'll worry about that when it's time.

This '23 season and really training camp is what's my focus right now.

Q. When you came back to Rutgers, I think there was a 15-game losing streak that the program had against Big Ten competition. What was something that you thought you needed to change within the program, whether it was mindset or development, to try to put you in the right direction and be competitive within the Big Ten?

GREG SCHIANO: That's a great question. It's a little different in our situation because I had been there 11 years before I had left, and then I'd been away for 8 years. I was a little bit shocked how much things had changed. And I'm not just talking about the athletes or the football, I'm talking about the infrastructure.

So we had to really rebuild a lot of the things, whether it's medical coverage, the way the players ate, nutrition, training, all that. You know what, I didn't complain at all because you know when you're taking a job what has to get done.

I think we're in a great place right now. I think our support for our student-athletes is unparalleled in college football, what we do for the players, and I'm proud to say that, and I think our guys know that.

It's one of the reasons that, in this age of transfer portal and those things, our guys are staying put. The minute you say that, you might lose a guy, but I really feel like those things had to be rebuilt while simultaneously the recruiting and developing of the players in our program.

So it's a lot to do, but certainly I feel like we're right where we need to be moving forward.

Q. What is one thing that you would change about either the current NIL or transfer portal landscape, if you could do it tomorrow?

GREG SCHIANO: That's a great question. There's a lot of

things, so choosing one is the tough part, right? Somehow if the universities could control more of the NIL just so there's uniformity and we don't have all the third parties that are involved. That's not to -- look, no one's doing it other than the third parties now, so I'm grateful because without them we'd be in big trouble.

I just don't see that being -- if you look at most other businesses, that's not the way it works. There's someone else that has a totally different -- oftentimes, not always -- different vested interest. I just believe that somehow we need to bring that back in-house. How you do that, there's going to be people who have to decide that other than I. I've got to coach a team. I do believe we have to get our arms back around it.

Right now I have a saying on my desk. It says, if you don't like it, dot, dot, dot, change it or change the way you think about it. I'm not going to change it single-handedly, so I had to change the way I think about it. That's the way I've approached it.

Q. You talked about being different. I'm curious what's the biggest challenge you still face at Rutgers.

GREG SCHIANO: I think, number one, the biggest challenge, you look around at the logos on that wall. We play in the best conference in America. So we have to build a program that can compete at that level and someday be a championship-level program.

How do you do that? You do that one step at a time. You recruit the right players, and you develop them. To me that's it. Part of the development is all the things that surround them, like I mentioned, nutrition, strength and conditioning, mental health, physical health, equipment, all the areas. Because then the football part, that's what they love. That's why they're there, and they want to play. They're dying to do that.

It's the other things that you have to -- because, again, if we know who we are, we have to develop our guys and get them to the end of their career, where they're playing their best football. That's how we'll win there.

Q. How will your preparation change for Northwestern after the firing of Pat Fitzgerald and then the promotion of David Braun to interim head coach?

GREG SCHIANO: That's a good question. I don't think as much maybe as if it was a total overhaul. Mike Bajakian is the coordinator there, he's been there. I think that's going to remain similar. Defensively, they didn't bring him in to be the defensive coordinator and run someone else's defense, so now he's the head coach as well. So I think

we're going to get what we're studying and getting prepared for.

The biggest thing in my career is make sure your own team is ready. That's our challenge. I need to make sure that Rutgers is ready on the 3rd because I know that Northwestern is going to show up, and we need to make sure that we do.

Q. Your first tenure at Rutgers, you had a lot of local kids stay to help lead the program. How important is it to keep those kids from Don Bosco and Bergen catholic in state to help grow this program?

GREG SCHIANO: It's always important to recruit your backyard, there's no doubt about that. The most important thing is that you get the right players that fit your culture and that are gifted enough to play and compete and win in the Big Ten Conference.

If you look at our program the first time, at first it wasn't cool to go to Rutgers back in 2001, 2022, so we recruited all over the place to get the right people to fit our program. Then when we won, all of a sudden the local guys, then it was cool to go to Rutgers.

Again, has that happened a little bit? Yeah, but I feel confident that in our local area, the New Jersey/New York area, which is our backyard, we're going to consistently recruit the best players.

Will we get them all? No, but I'm not worried about that. I learned a long time ago, Coach Paterno used to always say: Don't worry about the ones you don't get. Make sure you love the ones you do get. And that's what I live by.

Q. Greg, you made a coaching change, offensive coordinator Kirk Ciarrocca. What does he bring to your program? What kind of differences do you hope to see on the field from the offensive unit this year?

GREG SCHIANO: That's a good question. Kirk Ciarrocca is a veteran coach, one that I know very well. He was on our staff at Rutgers the first go-round. He brings experience, he brings clarity, knows exactly what he wants to do and I think does a great job leading and managing our staff.

So I'm excited. I enjoy going to work every day. I enjoy being with him. He's just a true professional. Thank God we have him, right? Because my job has changed so much just in the last year. Between Kirk Ciarrocca and Joe Harasymiak, our two coordinators, I couldn't be more pleased. It's the best staff I've been on my whole career.

Again, thank goodness, because a lot of my time now is spent on NIL and those type of things that have very little to do with offense or defense. If they weren't there, I don't know what would give. So I'm very appreciative and fortunate and blessed to have them in our program.

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