

# Rutgers University Football

## Media Conference

Friday, December 18, 2020

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

## Greg Schiano

### Postgame Press Conference



Nebraska 28, Rutgers 21

COACH GREG SCHIANO: You know, a lot of guys started going down and missing and different combinations and we just weren't able to coach well enough or play well enough to win tonight. But you know, I'm really, really proud of them. We're one two of teams in our league that played every game. You know, every single day we talked about our No. 1 opponent was COVID and if we were able to defeat our No. 1 opponent as a program, that we would have the opportunity to get better.

And you get better in practice, but you also get better in live competition in games, and we were able to improve. So we won some. We lost some. But we got better. And a lot of guys got valuable experience that moving forward is going to be very beneficial. It's really good. I wish we could have won tonight. You know, there's some guys that this was their last game, and I really, really wanted to win, but I also knew how hard it was going to be. I mean, we had a chance. We had a chance, and just couldn't quite finish the job.

And my hat's off to Nebraska. They did; they found a way to finish the job.

So year one's in the books and we'll evaluate everything. We'll make whatever adjustments we need to and we'll keep moving this after we take a rest, because that will be the first order of business is get these guys done with school, take a rest, coaches take a rest, and then reconvene in January and start this thing moving again. But as I said at the start, I'm very, very proud of our players and of our coaches, everybody involved in the program. Everybody worked very hard to be able to play a complete season. Sacrificed quite a bit to be able to play a complete season.

**Q. Would it be fair to say that in the last game you kind of just ran out of gas, you know, nine weeks in a row?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: I don't know. I hate to -- I hate

to categorize reasons why you lost. There was certainly a lot of people that weren't playing. You know, there's a reason that guys are first-team players and second-team players and third-team players. You do stack them by who is performing the best at the time, right.

So when you lose several of those guys, you've got to, you know, famous word is next man up. Well, we tried. Next man up tried to do it. Coaches tried to do it. We ran out of gas maybe. Maybe it's a collective run out of gas. But I don't even think it's just the football or the injuries. I think it's everything. I mean, I checked the guys. I do bed check every night before the game and literally, I had, I don't know, we have 74 guys at the hotel, probably a quarter of them were working on finals when I went to put them to bed at 11:00; papers that were due at midnight, or, you know, 11:59, finals that were due at 11:59.

And that's part of being a college football player, right. But I think collectively the entire season, we changed our practice week, obviously, for the shortened week, but we literally didn't put pads on them this week. We couldn't. They just weren't physically able to do that, not even one day. We just didn't think their body would hold up.

So I'm really proud, because they did; they gave it everything, their energy in pregame, I really said, man, these guys, they are going to spill it here. But I think as some things went, injuries, the guys really started to feel it, it was hard to focus on the things that were most important to win this game. That's what gets you is you get a little bit off and not against a team like that. They are big and they are talented.

**Q. Can you talk about special teams?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I was very, very pleased with our special teams. Certainly our punt team led by Adam was phenomenal. I thought the kickoff return was almost as good. I mean, you know, they are consistently getting the ball out around midfield and hit the home run on the one.

Again, there was enough chances for us to cash in to win this game. We just couldn't do it. You know, that also was part of growing up as a program. But you can't put a value



on these games we got to play. To play nine football games this year, when we didn't think we were going to play any, that's really going to pay off for us going forward.

**Q. How close did Noah get to playing tonight and what did you see from Art on offense?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: Well, Noah really tried, but he wasn't very close. That was -- he did. He had some machine, I don't know, one of these machines that the trainers and doctors give. The guy carried the machine around. First I saw him with a thing to heal his hands for a few weeks and then I saw another one for his foot. I said, you're going to get electrocuted, buddy. He wanted to play but body just wouldn't cooperate.

**Q. I realize it hard to assess a season this close to the end of it, three Big Ten wins, overall, how do you feel about your first season back?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: We'll do that probably in a day or two or three. But I really love these kids. They worked so hard to be able to do this. Like I said, there's only -- there's 14 teams in our league and you could say we're lucky. Well, maybe, but I always believe you make your own luck.

These kids sacrificed so much, so when two out of 14 teams are able to play all nine games, I think they worked really, really hard to play the game that they love to play and to play it together. That's why I felt so bad for them down in that locker room, because for some of them, this is it, and some of them, they are going to miss their teammates that aren't going to be around next year, next semester.

But we'll wrap it up the right way. We're not going to rush out of here. Our finals go through to Tuesday, not that everybody has them all the way to Tuesday, but we'll get together as a team like we always do and then do our exit interviews and make sure everybody has got everything taken care of.

We'll have some surgeries that have to get done this week, so that's a big thing that has to happen, and we actually have quite a few. You know, that's what a nine-week physical season bears on a team. A lot of guys played through pain that they knew eventually they were going to have to get surgery.

So that's where we start. That's where the off-season starts rather quickly. A lot of guys have already had the MRIs and everything to be prepared. I think Dave and his staff are ready to go so we can get it done as soon as possible and start the road to recovery.

**Q. You were talking earlier that you played all these games this season, all nine games. Can you talk about how special it is? You said you're two in the Big Ten, but all the conferences around the nation didn't get as lucky. Can you talk about the how special that you guys got out there, all your games that you had?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I do think it's special, Patrick and I guess there was two in our league, and someone told me, I don't know if this was facts or not, but there was ten in the country including us that were able to do it; play every game on our schedule. I don't know if it's true or not. But I am very proud of our guys for doing it.

Again, not the fact some of those people didn't play a game because the other team canceled because they couldn't play. The fact that I'm most proud of is that they sacrificed for each other to be able to play the game they love. That's what shows me, I've said oftentimes to you guys, as bad as the virus is for everybody, the one thing for a new coach in a program, you get a glimpse into how important football is to each guy.

And a program that can keep each other safe for that long and be able to play every game, I think, you know, I think it deserves some credit. I've given that to them. I am proud of them.

**Q. Christian gets four takeaways tonight, two straight games with an interception, how do you think he performed tonight and how much have you seen him grow over the course of the season?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: Well, I was really excited to see Christian when I got here. I'm very close with his high school coach and he told me, he said, "You're going to love this kid." And he's right. I mean, he's fun to coach. He's totally committed. He works his tail off, and he's a really good player.

So the best part is, he's going to be around. So can't wait to see how good he can get and we're going to work to keep making him better and better because I think he can be a really dominant player in this league.

**Q. Due to the circumstances this season, was it the most challenging season of your coaching career, and will it be a benefit long-term in the way this team responded and instilling your culture and foundation for moving forward?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: Nothing will ever match the year with Eric LeGrand, but yeah, as far as circumstances unrelated to us solely, yeah, this is the toughest thing

we've had to deal with.

**Q. And just to follow up, how will it benefit moving forward, the way these guys responded? Do you feel like it actually kind of sped up your ability to instill the culture that you want to have here?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: I do think that. I do think that in many different ways it did that, including the one that I said earlier; that I saw how much it meant to certain people, right, because the things we asked them to do were not easy things to do.

And if it's not that important to you and you don't care that much about your teammates, you might not do it. So doesn't make him a bad person. Again, it's all about how important is this game to you and how important are your teammates and this program to you. That to me is what sets programs apart. And when you get an unselfish group of people that are willing to do things for each other, sky's the limit.

So I think that there's definitely growth that is going to come as a result of this. But that's a football team you're talking about. Tragedy all over. So it hard to even put into context, right.

**Q. You kind of touched on it earlier, but obviously the seniors all have to make a decision soon. Do you almost have to recruit them again to come back next season?**

COACH GREG SCHIANO: You know, I don't try to talk people into that. I think it's really hard to play college football in our program if you don't want to do it. So if -- I will educate them for sure. If it's an NFL decision, just as if they were my son, I try to give them the good, the bad and the ugly of what could happen.

And having been in that league and coached in that league twice, two different times, I think I'm a pretty good source for them for information. But ultimately they have to make that decision. Some guys, it isn't an NFL decision. They may have had enough football in their life. Maybe their body is telling them enough is enough or it's time to go get a job and get on with life.

So I think everybody has their own individual situation and that's why we don't just rush out of here. We have exit meetings. I meet with guys this week; I meet with them next week.

Everything in our program is very much out on the table. It's very much like a family. We discuss it all, but then every single person has to make the decisions they feel

are best for themselves so that's where I leave it to them and when they decide they are coming back, they are all in. They are coming back. It's not a half-foot in, half-foot out. You have to be all-in to be successful in our program.

That will all get taken care of soon enough, but whether the guys played their last game here or whether, you know, they have four years left, I'm very excited about coaching this team and as I said, disappointed about tonight for sure.

We had an opportunity to do something that no Rutgers team has ever done and that's win four games in the Big Ten. And as I told them, you know, winning four games would not have been taking that trophy and putting it up here, right, but it's a step on the way. So we didn't get there. We won three. So we'll go back to work after like I said, we take a rest, get back to work and keep building this thing.

But I'm really pleased with our guys and looking forward to the future.

I want to thank you guys for your coverage all year. I guess we'll get maybe one more chance to hook up here, end-of-the-year-type wrap up, but you guys have been awesome and we appreciate that you cover our team the way do you. Thanks.

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