

# Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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## Greg Schiano

### Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Apologize. Running a little behind today with everything going on here, but exciting day. Really, really fired up about this class. It's a culmination of a lot of hard work by a lot of people.

I want to thank some of those people. First and foremost, our staff. They did an incredible job recruiting this class over the long haul. Eric Josephs, who is our director of player personnel, he's done an incredible job since the day I walked in here on the job, and he continues to do that. His assistants, Cassie Petty and Sam Rotondi did an incredible job as well, just making sure everything was the way it needed to be for all our recruits and their families.

It does take so many people to recruit a class, and to recruit this type of class, it takes great effort and persistence, and I'm really proud of our people for what they've done. I really believe that this class is a big step forward for our program. First two classes I was very, very proud of. One we recruited in 11 days, and the next we recruited solely over Zoom and WebEx. I'll never forget some of those kids walking in in January had never been on campus before.

So this was really our first class where we could recruit it more traditionally. What a great class it is. I think this say big step for our program, as I said. I think it shows people see Rutgers football differently -- recruits, high school coaches, people in our footprint where we recruit. They see culture. They see a program that is on the rise. They see one that is significant. To be able to recruit the way we did this class and to finish it up, because our season didn't finish exactly the way we would want it to, the resolve that our staff hit the road the following day and never looked up until this morning, I think what a big step.

Now we find ourselves at a place where that's great, it's three classes under the roof now, but we need to do better. I need to do better as a head coach, our staff needs to do better, our team does, and our fans do, we all do. If we're going to grow this thing to what everybody said they wanted two years ago, then we're all going to have to get better. But this is a really big step to be working to get



better off.

I'll answer any questions about the class. I think it's probably the most diverse class that I've ever been a part of at Rutgers, 20 players from nine states. Uniquely, you can see some of the Big Ten footprint in there outside of our traditional areas, but still big in New Jersey and the surrounding area, Pennsylvania, New York.

I thought it was really special, whether the rankings are accurate or not, who's to say, but to have three top rated players in three different states, that was part of what I mean when I said it's a big step.

So I'll open it up for questions because I know that's really the best part for you to get what you need, so I'll try to help you in any way I can.

**Q. Greg, I think it's seven offensive linemen in the class. They're all basically at 300 pounds or close to it. How much of a big step is it for that unit to bring those guys in and it can kind of accelerate the improvement of that group?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think it's huge. I've said it all along since we arrived back. We walked into a situation that was a little bit out of whack proportionality-wise. We didn't have enough scholarship alignment in the program. We made some moves to get some defenders over there that maybe could help.

But at the end of it all, we needed to go out and recruit and continue to recruit offensive linemen. The linemen that we brought in, you mentioned it, are all very big, are athletic. Yet it's a position that's very hard to come in and play right away. I don't care how readymade you think you are. For every Anthony Davis that starts as a freshman, there's a lot more who don't.

But I do feel really good about this group. I think there are some guys that are going to help us. Whether they start opening day or they help us throughout the year at some point, I think there's an opportunity there to do it. I think right now our offensive line is literally up for grabs. There's going to be great competition, and we need to come away -- as I've been saying all along, we need to come away



with a starting five and some rotational players. That will be our goal.

But I'm really excited about these guys. As you mentioned, tremendous size.

**Q. Greg, you signed a lot of players who have elite speed, athleticism. How much do you feel like that was an area that really needed to improve in order for you to become the type of Big Ten team, consistent Big Ten team that you want to be?**

**Q. That's how we built it the first time, right? We really were a fast football team. People used to say, well, Greg would rather have smaller faster guys. And I've told you guys before, no, I would rather have bigger faster guys, but we were unable to recruit bigger faster guys. Now we have some bigger faster guys, and we have some smaller faster guys, and that's what we're looking for. We're looking for explosive athletes.**

And the biggest thing, though, the thing that I love about this class is they know exactly what our culture is, and they want to be part of it. Because it doesn't matter how good of a player you are, how explosive, how big, how fast, if you don't want to be part of this culture, it's not going to work. We work really hard. We're not afraid to say that. We love them really hard as well, right? When you do that, I think you grow a chemistry and a cohesion. That's where I feel we are now.

I feel like we're getting to that -- this is the third class now coming into the building. A bunch of these kids will start mid-year, which is going to be a great opportunity to get them going right away. They'll report sometime around the 15th of January. We're excited. We can't wait to get to work. I know the prospects or the signees now are excited now as well.

**Q. Greg, I wanted to ask you about Moses Walker. Comes from a familiar program, four star linebacker. Can you just talk about his commitment, what it means, and what do you see in the future for him?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I think he's a tremendous football player and an even better person. Great family, great program. Coach Landberg does an unbelievable job over there at Erasmus Hall. Moses is a tremendous athlete. He runs, he's big, he can hit, he's very athletic. He's literally everything you look for in a linebacker recruit.

Now we've got to get him in here and we've got to teach him the scheme, and we've got to get him acclimated to going to college and doing college work -- all those things

that every freshman struggles with at first. But I'm excited because he is going to be here mid-year, and he's going to be ready to go.

We lost several guys at the linebacker position, so it's great to have some really young talented backers now competing for those spots.

**Q. Greg, can you pinpoint a moment when you remember turning the corner recruiting-wise the first time around? Do you see any similarities in this class being the sign for you that you've done it this time around?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, that class -- unfortunately, that class that we had assembled when we were leaving, when we left, that class was going to be the best class in the history of Rutgers football. After we left, I think three or four guys either decommitted or were going to commit and didn't, went elsewhere.

But that was a special class. I felt that that class was going to be the beginning of something really special. So that shows you how discouraged I was at the time to leave with that kind of class coming into the program.

But I vowed when I accepted the job, not knowing that there would be a worldwide pandemic and all that, but just said, we have to recruit that level of player every single year. That's what I mean when I say we have to get better because it will be harder next year to recruit the exact same level, and we have to do better.

How are we going to do that? It's relationships. It's spending an inordinate amount of time on recruiting. Best recruiters that I've ever been around, there's one common denominator, hard work. Everybody thinks, oh, this personality, that personality. I've seen guys that were boisterous and fun loving be great recruiters because they worked really hard, and I've seen really reserved quiet people be great recruiters because they worked really hard. And I've seen very personable guys who don't work at it and it doesn't work.

So the challenge is we've already started -- the reality is you're recruiting four classes at a time always, plus a portal group. So recruiting has changed immensely from when I started in this game. I think the people who really embrace it and understand it are going to do better.

**Q. Just to follow up, does this class compare to that class, that last one?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think it's in the same level, but I think that class was going to be a top five class in America.

We're not quite there yet, but again who's to say who's top 5, who's top 20, who's top 30? I don't know who makes those.

I've told you guys this many times, but Coach Paterno taught me this, he said, don't worry about the ones don't get. Just make sure the ones you get, you really want to coach those guys, you love those guys. As long as you do that, you're never going to have a problem. I've stuck with that my whole career. Make sure the ones you get you can't wait to coach, and you've got the right ones.

**Q. So I'm looking at this class, and I think six, maybe seven kids have Fran Brown as their primary recruiter. How much of an impact has he had, not on just this class, but in past classes and now in future classes too?**

GREG SCHIANO: Fran is certainly one of those guys who works incredibly hard at recruiting. Everyone says, well, Fran's a young guy. Fran relates. Absolutely, he does all that. But what gets lost is that Fran works and works and works and works at recruiting.

As I said, the best recruiters I've been around are those guys who work at it. He's an important part, whether he's the primary -- you know, we do something, Richie, called team recruiting. So there's a captain for each player, but we have a whole team of people that are recruiting each individual prospect. So Fran is a captain of many teams, and he's also a member of many teams. I think that in itself says a lot about who Fran is because he's willing to take the lead on some and be a supporting cast on others, but he's certainly a big part of our recruiting picture.

**Q. Greg, I think you've said in the past that recruiting is year round now, right? Is it even more so now with the transfer portal, you have another signing period in February. You're probably recruiting your own players to stay out of the transfer portal now. How has recruiting evolved?**

**Q. Well, you kind of touched on each step, I think. You hit it on the head. There's two signing dates, which really as I've said to you before, this isn't the early signing date. This is the signing date. 95 percent of the kids or 90, whatever it is, signed in this first Signing Day.**

So I think if they're going to keep this -- and I don't know if the NCAA plans on keeping this or not. But if they plan on keeping it, this should be called the signing date, and that be the late signing date because that's, in essence, what it's become.

The portal is something that's changed everything, right? It's college free agency. You literally have to be watching college free agency and waivers. It's like the waiver wire in the NFL. Every day at 4:00, the waiver wire comes over. As a head coach and a general manager, you're always waiting to see who's on that wire. Is one of those guys better than the guys on my roster. Is one of those guys a player who can help our team?

I look at the portal very similarly. Every single player that goes in the portal, we're aware of, and there's a funnel that leads up to me, and if it gets to me, that means our staff, starting with our personnel staff, with Eric Josephs' people, who do a great job monitoring the portal, it goes through to coaches, and then it gets to me. It gets to me in a very, very short order. You don't have time. When guys go into the portal, if you're not on it very quickly, it's very hard to get in it. So it's really a fine tuned operation.

Again, you have to be selective. You can get a little bit silly with the portal if you're not careful, right? You'd better make sure that that guy is going to fit your culture because it's not some 17 or 18-year-old coming in. Usually it's an older guy coming in who's an established player.

So I really stress that with portal players. Are you sure this is what you want? Because this isn't going to change and this won't serve you well. If you come here and you have one or two years left and this isn't really what you're up for, now it's really going to be a mess. So we're very, very transparent in all our recruiting, but I'd say even double down with portal guys because we have to make sure that it's a fit.

Then I don't really see recruiting our own guys. I think it's a popular way that people say it. I think it's the way you treat your players -- the level of connection you have with them, the level of honesty you share with them. It might not always be what they want to hear, but if they know they can trust everything you tell them -- they don't have to agree with it, but they know you're telling them the truth and you really take care of your players and you care about them, that to me is the way you keep your players from going in the portal, the ones that you really want to make sure don't.

Sometimes guys go in the portal and it's okay. They need a place to go play. They're not going to crack the starting lineup here. They've got one year left, and they want to go see if they can make a big splash. I understand that. I get it. So I think instead of just resisting the portal, embracing it and say, okay, we'll use it the way it best fits our program and not get worried about keeping up with the Joneses on every single portal guy. What do we need, and what kind of young man is he, and does he fit our culture?

**Q. Nine early enrollees in this class. Now that you're a few years into the early signing period, is being able to do that the biggest benefit of the timing, and how does that help now that the transfer portal is such a big part of recruiting? Having that done and then being able to attack the portal?**

GREG SCHIANO: First off, I don't know how you know it's nine because I don't know it's nine. I hope you're right. It's somewhere between 9 and 12 or 9 and 14. There's still some things being played out.

But I do think it's really -- at first I was uncomfortable. I told you guys this before. I wasn't totally comfortable with people missing their senior year or their senior second semester. I think back to when I was a senior, that spring was a lot of fun. Then I kind of put it in context. I'm not a future first round pick, so maybe that senior spring is more important to me than a kid who really has an opportunity to be a first round draft pick and change the trajectory of the entire family, and that head start that he gets six months ahead can really be a big difference.

When you look at if a premier player comes and he's going to be there for three seasons, then that semester, that one semester is a big percentage of his time spent in your program. So if he has to sacrifice that, then it's actually a pretty big sacrifice.

So I'm excited about those guys starting early. I don't know so much if the early signing date really allows that? What it does is it makes it a little bit safer for coaches. If you remember, before they had the signing date in December, guys had started beginning their schooling in January like they are now, but they didn't have any letter of intent signed. So you didn't know that they were going to be part of your team until the day they showed up on campus. They told you they were, but until they showed up on campus, you really didn't have black and white that they were going to be there, right?

So I think the signing date now kind of lets you know exactly these guys are coming mid-year. We have a few situations where we're trying to find out if, in fact, they're eligible, their school and their district will allow them to do it. So we're working on some things there. I do totally understand now the purpose and the reason that people would like to start early.

**Q. I know when we were talking about the portal, you referenced the NFL waiver wire, free agency. But in the league, waiver wire is determined term by the standings, free agency you have a cap space and you can overpay guys. Do you think that people are maybe**

**having unrealistic expectations about how fast the transfer portal can accelerate a rebuild or even build a team on the fly?**

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know, but I think the reasons you mentioned would actually be more of a hindrance than a help unless you're one of the teams that claims early or you're a team that has that extra cap space whereas in college it really is just are you willing to use a scholarship on one of these guys? And how much work are you willing to put into it? Again, the reality is some kids come out of the portal already knowing where they're going. They're not supposed to, but some do.

So some of those, you have to sift through it and not waste your time. You've seen how many people, since the portal started, I think there's close to 14,000 student-athletes that have gone into the portal. Now, that's a stat that I heard on an official call, but I don't know if that's exact. That's something you can look up. But there's been a lot of prospects, a lot of college athletes that have gone into the portal. Some of them worked out well, and a bunch of others just haven't.

So I think you really need to do your homework, but you have to do it in short order or you're not going to have the opportunity to recruit them.

**Q. Just wanted to ask about Sam Brown. What did you like about him, and what do you think about the impact that he can make for you?**

GREG SCHIANO: Number one, Sam has tremendous character. I really love just being around him and being around his family. He is a tremendous big athlete. He's whatever, 6'2" and 220 pounds, but he runs very fast. He's a great athlete. I think he put in 25 last night in the basketball game, and you're talking Philly catholic school basketball. So that's pretty good basketball, right? So you're talking about an elite athlete who's a big man.

I think he's really going to help -- he's really a good fit in our running back room. Now, he won't start until the summer, so we really have to make sure that, once basketball is over, we're working with him. And the good thing is he's only an hour away. So he can come up and use the weight room and train and do different things that he's allowed to do by NCAA rules.

**Q. Greg, I know you had some late additions. I wanted to ask you about Tommy Amankwaa individually. I know you were at his game, he had a big year. Just talk about what you're getting in him.**

GREG SCHIANO: Thomas Amankwaa, he's not a late

addition. We've been recruiting him a long time, but we didn't pull the trigger on the offer until sometime during the season. I was very -- as I always am, I was very, very up front with him. Sometimes when you do that, that doesn't always work. Mind you, you tell him, look, I don't know if I have a scholarship. If I do, you're getting it, but I don't know. We're going to have to wait and see.

All he did was go out and have a tremendous senior year, like blew the doors off it. Something opened up, fortunately, and I think we're getting a really spectacular -- I think the biggest decision is do you play him on offense or play him on defense? Fran and Tiquan are fighting over this guy. So we'll see.

I think he's not only a great player, but a great athlete. The Carney family has long been associated with Rutgers football. They all stand on the table for him and are big believers, as I am.

I can't wait to see what he does here on our team. I think he's a great get.

**Q. Greg, I wanted to ask you about your latest pickup in Dantae Chin. What stood out to you about him that didn't stand out to other coaches across the country?**

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know if it's something that stood out to us and not others, I think what happens is recruiting is so accelerated that a lot of programs don't recruit senior class. They don't go back and check the senior class because they're already on to the 23s and the 24s. This young man didn't start playing football until this season, so there was no junior/sophomore tape to watch of him.

He's 6'5". He's 295 pounds. And he's a very good athlete. The hard thing when you find one of those is you sit there, and the old saying, this is too good to be true, right? So we dug and dug. Fortunately -- I know I'm getting old when this occurs -- the head coach at Cypress Bay High School, I coached against his dad back in the day. So I know him, and I know his dad. Many members on our staff knew the coach and went down there and did their investigation, and sure enough, it came up great.

Rocco Casullo is his name, and he's really a fine coach. He gave us information we felt comfortable with, and we met him. Then his whole family came up on a visit. Each time he cleared a threshold, we felt better and better to the point where we feel fortunate we have him. Again, he fits in that area of need, and we just want to see how fast he can develop.

**Q. Greg, I just want to ask you about Rashad Rochelle, what type of impact you think he can have. Sort of**

**connected to him, would the fact that it's becoming harder and harder to keep multiple scholarship quarterbacks in any program, do you think a guy like him who has quarterback experience at a relatively high level in high school is going to sort of become a marketed efficiency of sort to give yourself more depth at quarterback versus having a guy that plays another position.**

**Q. I think it's a great comment or question that you make because it is increasingly hard. We're very fortunate right now in our quarterback room. It's very hard to keep a bunch of quality quarterbacks in the room, and that's why Cole Snyder moved on.**

I love Cole, and I know he loves this program, but he wants to be the guy. And he didn't know if he'd have that opportunity here. So I'm not sure exactly where he's going to end up, but he'll end up going and competing for a job somewhere.

I think number one with Rashad, he's a tremendous explosive athlete. He's not the biggest guy, but he's not tiny either. But some of the things he did in his testing is off the chart record stuff. Explosiveness. And like you said, he plays quarterback. I love guys who plays quarterback at some point because they run the whole show. They touch the ball every play. They love being in that spot where they're running everything. When you put them in another position, I think they thrive.

We had him here for one of those individual workouts this summer and everything we thought would be consistent with his skill set was when we worked him out. Explosive off the line of scrimmage, good hands, great body control. I think he has an opportunity to come in here and be a player that helps us, relatively sure.

You never really know until they get here, but he's coming mid-year. I think we get him training and get him eating and doing all those things and learning the scheme, there's an opportunity for him here to go do his thing.

And yes, he has quarterback, legitimate quarterback background. He wasn't a guy that just ran like a single wing or a double slot option offense. He ran a real spread offense and ran it well. Yes, I think there is going to be a market for those guys specifically to play their primary position, which is a skill position, but having an emergency quarterback.

Guys, I think that was the last question. I just thank you again. I know that all season long you guys were very gracious with your time in covering our time, and I thought you were really fair and asked great questions.

Look forward to -- we're going to take a little break here and look forward to getting back at it in January with our guys. Once the guys get here in mid-January, then it's full blast. As I stated earlier, I think that this class was another huge step for us. It does show that people see us differently, but now we have to really do better. We have to expand on what we've done and take that step.

It's everybody who touches Rutgers football has to do that. We all have to up our game. That's going to be the challenge in '22 is everybody incrementally upping their game. Collectively, that will be a big step for us.

Thanks again. Have a great holiday and a happy new year. Thank you.

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