

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Coach Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: Hey guys. Appreciate you coming out. Exciting time around the building. One thing about college football is when you start your second semester as a head coach, you get to meet with your squad and then you get all fired up to be with them and then you've got to go on the road recruiting for two weeks, so this is the first week back with our own team and it's been awesome getting to work with them.

Today we had a team workout which was good. It's fun to get back to work, and it's always cool to see now you're with the 2022 version of the team minus some of the freshmen that will be here come the summer. Excited. I think the momentum is certainly going in the right direction, and we just need to keep building one day at a time, one chop at a time, and our guys are definitely doing a good job with that.

With that, why don't I throw it out to questions.

Q. I guess with the four offensive line transfers and you guys you brought in in December, do you feel like you're in that spot where you have the depth and talent to move forward at that position?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, that was certainly the aim. I'll let you know. I really think they're impressive players, but until you coach them and until they get into your system, you can't really ever know. But certainly we didn't sign them not to play. They're coming, and we're counting on them to play.

Q. Can you just talk about some of the coaching changes you made since the season?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, yeah. We've had some things today that we named Damiere Shaw receivers coach, and I'm really excited about that. Tiquan decided that it was time, and it's strange, people wonder what's going on. I've known Ti for half of his adult life, recruited him out of high school, his career here. I signed him down at Tampa. He played for me for two years, and then brought him back here and he coached. There's nothing but love there for

him. He's been a great representative of Rutgers and a great friend to me.

But sometimes guys feel like they need to spread their wings and fly from the nest. Again, nothing but love unless we're playing them. Then it's different.

Q. With Taj Harris and Sean Ryan, what did you like about those two guys and what makes them the right fit?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, they're both older, experienced receivers, and I felt like we needed to -- I think we have some really good young receiver prospects in the room. They just have to grow and develop.

When you play in the Big Ten conference and you play an out-of-conference schedule like we have, there's not time to grow and develop right out of the gate. Now, some of them will progress during spring and summer and be ready to go, but you don't know that, whereas what the portal gives you the opportunity to do is go address needs in your current lineup, and I feel like that's really what we use the transfer portal for.

Every once in a while do you get a young player that maybe just wants to be home and you think he's worth developing. Sure, but that's a one-off, at least for our program. To me a lot of the use of the portal is for addressing need.

Q. On that line, do you grade a portal class on what they do that season? Do you have to be able to know, is it an instant impact thing? Some of these guys have more than one year of eligibility.

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I guess it all depends on what their portal, what each team's portal philosophy is. If you're bringing a lot of portal guys home that are younger players, then I don't think you can grade them on a one-year. But if they only have one year of eligibility to play, then I guess you can because that's all you've got them for.

I think every situation is different and really every player is different. But again, in our program, if we bring a portal guy in, it's because there's a need 90 percent of the time.



Q. Speaking of portal guys, you brought some interior guys in; can you talk about them, DiRenzo and Dunlap, Ciaffoni?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I think it all goes with the theme of the offensive line. I've spoken to you guys from the beginning that that was certainly an area that was needed to develop, and I think that we have not developed quickly enough there, and that hurt us in our seasons, both seasons.

Do I hope that this -- we brought in seven freshmen linemen. Some of them are here now, some will come in June. Those are the future. But there's a small gap between the future and the 2022 season, and that was the purpose of all of those portal linemen.

Q. Off of that, how important is it to kind of develop competition within that unit and that they're pushing each other for those roles?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, that's exactly it. That's it in our whole program right now. I just addressed the team. It hasn't been as competitive a room as a team probably since we left, whatever that is, 10 years ago, but it's getting that way now. There's three recruiting classes in. There's, I guess, two portal groups that have come through. The competitive nature in the program is climbing. It'll continue to climb.

That to me is the key. When Tuesday and Wednesday are the hardest days of the week, then you truly have a program. We're not there yet, but hopefully in the future we will be.

Q. I want to ask you more about your assistant coaching hires. I know you mentioned Shaw but you also hired Joe Harasymiak and Marquise Watson. How much did their ties to New Jersey play into the interview process?

GREG SCHIANO: I think sometimes that's how I know them. I'm familiar with them. But in this instance both those guys are guys that I've had my eye on for some time. They both happen to be New Jersey guys, like you said, but they're excellent coaches. They're excellent recruiters. When I talk about coaches, what am I looking for? I'm looking for guys that really, really understand how to equip players and how to inspire players, and then you need that element of being a great recruiter, because that all fits together in what we have to do.

We have to do all those things as coaches. There's not like a staff that goes out and recruits like in the NFL where

you have your scouting department. We are it. Our assistant coaches do all the recruiting, and I think people sometimes lose sight of that. You have to be a great recruiter, and then within your program you have to equip and inspire your players.

I think that Marquise and Joe are going to be really, really huge additions to our program. I'm very, very excited about them.

Q. You still have an open coaching slot; any update on that right now?

GREG SCHIANO: We do have an open slot, and I am moving pretty rapidly to a position where it won't -- I'm going to announce that soon as well as some other things at every level.

I think when you get two years into it, you kind of take a look at the whole operation and you say, okay, how do we make moves to get better. In this day and age of college football, you have to be ready to pivot all the time, whether it's players, whether it's staff, and the staffs are large. You have recruiting staffs, personnel staffs that are working behind the scenes. You have quality control coaches that are working behind the scenes.

I think matching them with the right position coach and matching them with recruiting staff, all of that's critical. I've been working really, really hard on that since the bowl game really. Really before the bowl game, to get the right people in the right seats. You know the old saying you've got to get them on the bus, but you've got to get them on the right seats on the bus, as well. That's really been my challenge.

I think within not too long, I'll be able to make some announcements on that, but just not ready quite today.

Q. Obviously Joe and Marquise are from New Jersey, Damiere is from the Philly area. In the past there was a conventional wisdom you need a guy who has Texas roots or California. Are those days over now and you can double and triple down on the region and guys can go all over the country?

GREG SCHIANO: This is what I would tell you: If you're a good recruiter, you can recruit in Texas, California, New Jersey, Florida. It doesn't matter. That's what I look for is guys that can recruit anywhere. Now, do they have natural connections to areas? Sure. It's just as simple as I was in Philly with Damiere and he's driving around Philly and there's no GPS on. He knows the back way to here and the back way to there. But does that make you a good recruiter? No. That's your familiarity.

Now, your relationships might help, but really it boils down to are you a good recruiter. What is recruiting? It's like anything else in life. It's hard work and it's relationships. So the guys that are willing to put in the time and develop relationships with the players, the coaches and the extended community usually are pretty good recruiters.

Q. How different is this time around for you for signing day because this time 10, 12 years ago you were waiting for letters to come in and stuff like that.

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, this is very different. They call this the signing day; they call the one in December the early signing day. Really if you're going to properly name them, December is the signing day and this is the late signing day.

But certainly I think we've made some great additions in today's signing, and I'm very excited about the guys that we're bringing in. There's some guys on this list that I think some can contribute sooner than others, but I think all of these guys are going to have an opportunity to contribute in some way, which to me is important. As you build your roster, you just have to have quality young men, quality football players, quality student-athletes, and the more of those you put together, your culture, multiplies exponentially. It grows exponentially, and that's what we're trying to do.

Q. You added 22 guys today, but one guy specifically I want to talk about is Timmy Ward. He's a Hodgkins lymphoma survivor. Can you tell me about the back story and how you identified him?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Timmy came to us from Pennsylvania. He was an equipment manager and a really good equipment manager, worked his tail off. Equipment managers are a very key part of our operation because to practice, you have 10 position coaches, and each one of those guys has an equipment manager that works with him that makes practice go quickly, that has the drills set up, that does different things to make it efficient.

Timmy was one of those guys, and when we had walk-on tryouts, he went to the walk-on tryouts. My coaches came back, the people that were at the tryouts, and said there's three or four guys here that we think have a chance to help, and one of them is one of our managers, Timmy Ward. We weren't ready to do anything last semester, but this semester we allowed a few guys to come out and be a part of the team, and he's doing a good job. He's got a long way to go. This is college football, Big Ten football. But I think he's going to be a great addition. He was a great addition as a manager, and I think he's going to be a

fine addition as a player.

Q. Obviously I guess last week one of the ADs said that the Big Ten is thinking about eliminating divisions. I'm assuming you would be a pro vote for that? Do you think that would help Rutgers?

GREG SCHIANO: Whether it helps or not, I am a proponent of that. I think it's better for the league. But I haven't studied it for me to be able to tell you yes or no really. I'm so much at the stage of my career, I have a belief that unless I'm going to be really involved in all the inner workings of legislation and committees and all that stuff, I don't really deserve to have a strong opinion because I don't know. I'm at the point in my career I just want to coach our team, recruit our team and build something here at Rutgers, and it doesn't mean I don't care about the greater good of football or anything like that, but it's just the stage that I'm in.

If I was asked to do something for the good of the game, certainly I would do it, but I don't have enough of a knowledge to say if it's good or bad. I know what everybody said, oh, the Big Ten East -- it is, the Big Ten East is one of the toughest divisions in college football in my estimation, so if they mix it up, but I don't know if that means if they mix it up, but I don't know what that means, if they mix it up. Does that mean you're not going to play all those teams? I don't worry myself with that. We get a schedule every year and we've got to be ready to go win games on that schedule.

I appreciate you coming out. I know there's a lot going on, but it's great to see you, and all kidding aside, Sarge did a great job on our beat for a number of years when I was here the first time, and it's been fun to be with him a couple years now. I know he's not far off. Every once in a while I guess he'll call us from the closet and say hello.

Spring game, didn't want to leave without that. Spring game will be on April 21st, 6:30 p.m. kickoff. It'll be on BTN Network. Looking forward to it. Thanks, guys.

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