

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Coach Greg Schiano

Press Conference



COACH SCHIANO: We're excited. We had a good training camp. As I always say to the players, you have a good summer program, that gives you a chance to have a good training camp. We have a good training camp, it gives you a chance to have a good season.

We've had a good summer and good training camp. Now it's on to the season. So with that I'll open up to questions.

Q. You had a chance to put more of your stamp on this program. What's different about this team heading into this year?

COACH SCHIANO: Anytime you continually go through cycles and the same people go through them you get better. We had some coaching changes on the defensive side of the ball. So you don't get that. But then maybe you gain a little bit of new ideas, things like that.

The players that have been through it for two or three years, I think that's the key. They now have the culture. They are the ones who share the culture with the players on the team, the younger guys, the new guys. That to me is the key.

When you talk about culture, and people want to use the word "tradition," tradition isn't singing a song and ringing a bell. Tradition is what the older players pass down to the younger players.

Q. You settled on a plan at quarterback at this point, or how are you planning to use that this week?

COACH SCHIANO: No, we haven't settled yet on who will start. I think they all had good training camps. We're going to do whatever it takes to win. I don't know how many you'll see. Whatever it takes.

Q. What would it take to play two quarterbacks in a game?

COACH SCHIANO: Whatever it takes to give us the best chance to win. And I say I -- Sean, myself and the

offensive staff, if we feel that's the best way to win a game, then we'll play multiple guys. If not we'll just play one.

We're such a young team and we're figuring out who we are -- we have three practices this week that are really important. You get 25 practices leading up to the first game. So this is about an eighth of our practices we still have left to prepare for this game. They're going to be very important.

Q. At the beginning of camp you said Aaron Young was doing some things, but not everything. What's his status going into this game?

COACH SCHIANO: It's not certain yet. We're going to see. Again, these three practices will be big on what he's able to do and what he's able to do at the level we need to do to win the game. So there's really two questions. What can he do? And can he do it at the level we need to win the game? We'll figure that out.

But we've got a good mix. We're trying to figure out who is healthy, who is not, who is ready to go. And we'll have somebody to carry it.

Q. A lot of familiar faces on the opposite side line this weekend with Boston College. What's your relationship with Jeff and John McNulty in the years you coached together?

COACH SCHIANO: There's a lot of good friends on that sideline, you're right. I'm really proud of Jeff. I knew Jeff would be a head coach. Jeff was great for us here at Rutgers. He was also great for us at Tampa Bay.

You talk about Tem Lukabu, who was with us in both places, and John McNulty, who was with us in both places. Those are really good football coaches and good people.

There's others too. There's some of our former players. Savon Huggins, he's up there, doing a great job. I'm proud of him. And Steve Shimko, who coached in the NFL and is back in college. So it's really good.

And there's a guy that worked with me at Ohio State, was my graduate assistant there, Matt Thurin, who handles the



special teams and works in the secondary. He's an excellent young coach.

So there's a lot of familiarity. It will be a little strange because I care about those guys, but when you're playing in a game, you're competing, and you're trying to win.

Q. What stands out about Phil Jurkovec when you watch him on film?

COACH SCHIANO: Very talented quarterback. He's an NFL quarterback, which, when you say that, that means a lot to me. He's got a big arm. He's very mobile, very athletic. So when things break down, he extends plays. He doesn't just run to run. He extends. He extends -- has a really good feel for the pocket. A very good presence in the pocket.

I know John, having worked with John, John is really a good quarterback coach and a guy who makes a quarterback very aware of rush patterns, escapability, how to extend plays. So I'm sure that there will be improvement there as well.

Q. I heard someone say the other day that year three is the new year five for a coach in the progress of the program. Do you agree with that, where the sport is now? And what do you think, what makes year three important for you personally to show where this program is at?

COACH SCHIANO: Well, I don't know what the new year five is. I'm not sure about that. I get the saying, I get what people are trying to say. This has been such a weird ride that I haven't really tried to, with COVID and the situation, where we came in with the program. So it wasn't a perfect situation when we got here. And then COVID struck.

So I'd like to say full bore ahead year three, let's make sure. I'm not getting into any of that.

At this stage of my career I enjoy coming to work every day. I enjoy the kids. I enjoy the coaches. We work really, really hard, and we're getting better. It's just a matter of, with this young group, how fast will we be good enough to win. I don't know. Will it be this week?

I know this, we're going to go up there and we're going to let it fly. These kids love to play together. The staff loves to coach together. We're not going to play scared. We're just going to let it fly. If it's good enough this week, it will be. If it isn't, we'll keep getting better. We'll be a much better team in November than we are today.

Q. What did you see from Gavin this summer in his

first camp that impressed you? And what else do you need to see from him? Like, are there areas of growth that you really want to see, whenever he gets on the field?

COACH SCHIANO: Yeah, there's tons of areas of growth. You're talking about a freshman at the quarterback position. There's so much to learn at the quarterback position.

So I just think his overall understanding of everything that's going on -- when you're really playing the position at a high level, much like Phil's playing it right now at Boston College; he knows everything about the offense; he knows where everybody's supposed to be. When you get to that level -- we've had quarterbacks at that stage here -- when you get to that level and you have the physical gifts like Gavin does, that's a lot of fun.

Right now, certainly, his physical gifts are ahead of his understanding just by pure time, the time he's had to learn it. But he's very, very gifted. And he does love football, and he works at it. So, when you have that combination, it's just a matter of time.

Q. Opening up against a Power Five opponent on the road, could you talk about the pros and cons of that for your team?

COACH SCHIANO: I guess -- whatever the schedule is you play it. I guess the pros would be, people would say, there's an urgency you're playing.

But I always thought opening game there's always an urgency. I don't care who you're playing because you haven't played together as a team. It's college football. This team is quite different than the team last year.

And you only get, unlike every other sport, you only get 12 opportunities to do it. So every opening game I've ever been a part of, no matter who we played, I've been incredibly excited. (Horn sounds).

You can hear we're having meetings here. That was the end of that one. So they're moving on at 1:10 today.

Q. Ireland Brown has made a lot of transitions, was voted the most improved player in the spring. What did you identify that suggested that he should make the switch from offense to defense?

COACH SCHIANO: It wasn't so much what I identified. It was really what we needed. It's been no secret that that has been our toughest spot, the offensive line, since we arrived. And Ireland had the ability to do it, we thought,



and certainly that's proven out to be true. He's become a good offensive lineman. And I'm grateful that he's here.

And I know it's special for him because he's going back to where he initially went to school. He transferred here from Boston College. Hopefully we can keep him contained there because he's touching the ball every play. Can't get too excited.

Q. A nostalgia question, Syracuse last year, Boston College this year. Some old Big East flavor. Does that add anything special for you having played those teams so many times going back there?

COACH SCHIANO: No, I guess the answer is supposed to be yes, and the old -- not really. We play in a very, very demanding league, a new league. One that as you guys know I believe that's where we've belonged.

So when you get out of conference, it really is it's different. You're preparing for the Big Ten schedule. So whoever we have -- I didn't have a choice in what happened in the past. I do going forward. And I certainly have a scheduling philosophy that I believe in. But this is all done well in advance.

Q. Going back to the beginning of camp, you mentioned the linebacker room is super green. I wanted to ask if there's any update on the Singleton thing. And on top of that what's the development in locker room?

COACH SCHIANO: There's no development on Singleton, we're working on it we're not just going to give up. Because I truly believe -- what's happening to him isn't right. But that's just my opinion. I'm not the governing body.

But as far as the room, they're getting better. They just don't have game reps. There's not a lot of game reps going on there. So they'll figure it out. They're good players. They're going to figure it out.

It's just sometimes until you do it in a game you don't know exactly what it feels like. And I think practice is really important, but I think games are just a little bit different.

Q. Wanted to follow up with a question what Brian had asked. Your scheduling philosophy, would you prefer not to have regional opponents this early in the season?

COACH SCHIANO: I don't know if it's this early or not. Like, we align with our league. That's who we play. So the other teams in our area, other than Maryland, which is in

our league, and Penn State, the other teams are in a different league.

So is that the best thing for Rutgers football? That can be debated. But I'm not going to get into my scheduling philosophy. You'll see it when the games get announced because there's negotiations and there's things like that. I'd hate to negotiate against myself up here at the podium.

Q. Overall, starting opening of season, do you still get butterflies, are you that way --

COACH SCHIANO: If you don't, it's probably time to -- again, it's excitement. I always tell our players all the time, there's no reason to be nervous unless you're unprepared. Now, excited is kind of a similar feeling to nervous. But excited is a positive. Nervous to me is a negative.

And I don't want any of our players to be nervous. I want them to be excited. So those butterflies to me are the excitement. I believe that.

But if you're not prepared, you can't fool yourself. I talk to our players all the time about that. There's only one way to be truly prepared. That's put in the hard work and get prepared and do the things that you know you're supposed to do. And that's when I say go let it fly. That's what I mean.

You should play the game with no apprehension, no fear. I should coach it with no apprehension, no fear. Unless you're not prepared. Then you've earned it. You've earned the fear.

Q. You said a couple weeks ago, going back to the linebackers, they have to gain experience and minimize experience. What's the biggest key that they need to take to the fields on Saturday and all season, really, to keep those mistakes at a minimum? I know there's a lot of keys, but what's the biggest one they need to focus on?

COACH SCHIANO: Linebacker, I've played the position, whatever position you play as a player, you usually have a tad bit better understanding. Linebacker to me is a position, thank goodness they didn't do the stuff they're doing now on offense back when I was playing -- right? -- I don't think I would have played.

But there's so much for them to process. They're intimately involved in the run game. They're really involved in the pass game. The conflicts that they have, run/pass conflicts have never been more than in this day and age. I remember when I came back from the National Football League, came back to college coaching, I'm watching the

tape. And finally one of those plays, power reads came up, I was like, whoa, what was that? Run that back.

Literally you have to defend three plays on one play. And that's college football nowadays. So it's gotten really, really hard to play the position. I think Corey Hetherman, our new linebacker coach, has done an unbelievable job getting these guys ready. He's simplified.

I think he's conceptualized things for them. But as I said, they haven't done it yet. Until they do it, I shouldn't say they haven't done it at all. They've played a little bit. But to be the guy is different than to have some spot time.

But look, guys, it's going to be a good year. And I appreciate you covering us. I know that for a lot of you we've known each other a long time. For some of you, it's new. But look forward to it. And I will see you guys or see most of you, at least, up in Boston. Be safe.

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