

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: What's up, guys? Appreciate you coming out. Try to help you with anything I got.

Q. Do you have an update on Gavin? And how has he been handling this whole setback?

GREG SCHIANO: Gavin is doing better. He practiced last week, made some strides. So he's handled it well. I mean, he's disappointed that he was injured and couldn't compete. But it's good to have him back.

Q. This last week, how has the offense adjusted to the change with Nunzio and how do you feel like they are in that process of making those changes?

GREG SCHIANO: I think there's been real good energy. Guys have worked hard to adjust to some of the tweaks that we've made. Again, the energy has been great. And that's really what I can judge right now. We'll see how that all adds up on game day. But they've worked very hard. Some guys that otherwise probably would have got a little more rest worked because there were some things that they had to get accustomed to. But overall, I think it's gone pretty well.

Q. I want to go through a couple guys. But with Gavin, you mentioned that he's back at practice. I can't remember exactly what wording you used, but how would you classify him for Saturday? Is he a game-time decision?

GREG SCHIANO: No. I think we're going to have all three quarterbacks at our disposal. I think Gavin improved quite a bit. He practiced last week. Noah's hand is getting stronger by the day. It's not all the way back, but it's getting there. And Evan, although a little bruised up from playing a couple games, I think last week served him well to heal up. So I think we'll have our full quarterback pool.

Q. Just a few more guys. Longerbeam missed a couple games. Where is he?

GREG SCHIANO: Not sure yet. Going to be close.

Hopeful though?

Q. Aaron, he's warmed up and dressed, but he hasn't played yet? Aaron Young?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah. He's getting better. Again, going to be close. I'm not sure.

Q. Victor, when you mentioned him a couple weeks ago, you said it would be a long-term thing. Do you have any update on where he is or where he stands?

GREG SCHIANO: Victor will not be available on Saturday. As far as long term, I can't tell you exactly how long he's going to be out.

Q. You said on the call that night after you parted ways with Sean that you've never done that before. You talked about your mood and stuff. What has it been like this week? It's something totally different for you from a head coaching and leadership standpoint. What's it been like adjusting?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I think first and foremost, we have a great group of guys in that room. And so now Nunz has moved into the leadership position.

But the support of the staff is great. And I've been able to spend a lot of time with Nunz in the last, you know, whatever it is, seven days working through this. And I just think everybody's kind of circled the wagons and is willing to do whatever it takes, including our players. So that's been good.

And our defense is playing really well right now, top 20 in a lot of categories and doing a great job. I think the staff has done an incredible job of connecting with the guys. There's a great chemistry there. So hopefully we can kind of keep that rolling on defense and as I said on Sunday night and start to make offense a weapon that's similar to that. I think special teams, if we detail it just a little bit better, we can really be a force. We've done some good things, but then we've also made some mistakes that have hurt us.

Q. How do you balance -- you know, why the change, make some tweaks to the offense, but also it's

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midseason, so I'm assuming there's only so much you can do so that the players can execute it on the field. What is that balance like of trying to make changes but also do it on the fly?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, it's been, you know, a huge area of conversation over the last seven days. Exactly what you say. You start going down that rabbit hole, and there's a lot of things you might want to do. But it's one thing saying it. It's another thing doing it. And without repetition -- football is a game of repetition, so you have to be really careful. You try to do as much same as, you know, or very similar to. And then they can kind of connect the two things. But, again, we need to get the offensive unit playing as a unit and more precise. And I think we can make some hay by doing those two things.

Q. With the change in offensive coordinator, is the quarterback rotation still a possibility? Are you scrapping that? Where does that stand?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, whatever -- it's the same every week. Whatever it takes to win the game. And, certainly, I don't claim to have all the answers. So sometimes what we think is the best thing to win the game may not be. But we spend 18 hours a day trying to figure that out. And we're going to do whatever it takes. So we'll see.

Q. To that end, you guys -- you've often used that phrase whatever it takes to win, gives us the best chance to win. That seems to be the priority. But how much do you balance development into that? For example, playing younger guys, getting them experience to grow? Or can you balance those two things? Are they opposite ideas? Just how do you view that?

GREG SCHIANO: I look at it like this. You know, we develop talent and we play production. So when a guy produces, it's my obligation to our players, to our coaches, to our fans to play the guys that give us the best chance to win.

There's not one guy here who's, hey, let's make sure we're good in 25. Nobody cares about -- care about right now. And I'm right there with them. So that whole development stuff, we practice a lot and we have spring practice and training camp. And we can develop talent. We've proven that over the years. But you got to play production in my opinion. So who do we think is going to produce or who has produced? That's what factors into giving us the best chance to win.

Q. You elevated Joe Susan to tight ends coach. Talk about that move and what he brings to the table.

GREG SCHIANO: Joe has coached tight ends here for us. Joe has coached a lot of positions. He's been a coordinator. He's coached the O-lines, tight ends. There's probably nothing on offense Joe hasn't coached. So he's a very seasoned coach and I think kind of comes into the room and brings a great deal of background, you know, to add to conversations. And he's done that in the past week, I think has added some things.

Now, it takes away some things that he was doing for me as the special assistant to the head coach. So we've had to -- you know, there's never any move that doesn't have trickle down effects. So that's something that we've also been adjusting to that isn't maybe in the limelight but is certainly important to the overall operation of our program.

Q. Christian Izen, he's been productive in the past, but do you see anything different from him this year in terms of being able to play at a high level this consistently game in and game out?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I think a couple things. Number one, he came into this season healthy. It wasn't talked about a lot, but last year, he came into the season not healthy, all summer, all training camp and he battled through. It seemed like he battled the whole season with different injuries, different things that didn't keep him from playing but kept him from playing his best. Number one, I think he feels much better physically. And, number two, again, I talk about that chemistry that we have going on that defensive side of the ball. I think he's just a part of that, a big part of that and playing at a high level

Q. Greg, three and three at the bye week, halfway through the season. Bowl game was a goal entering the year. Do you feel like you're still on pace, on track to achieve that goal?

GREG SCHIANO: I'm not really concerned with that right now. What I'm concerned about is being 1 and 0 after Saturday's game. We have an opportunity. But I've often said to our team and have said here right there's no such thing as missed opportunities because someone always takes it. And that's one of the things that we're learning to do is to be able to reach up and grab an opportunity and take it.

So here is an opportunity. And guys have worked awful hard. But that -- there's an old saying that I say, don't confuse activity with achievement. Right? We can work as hard as we want, but you get evaluated on those 12 Saturdays or those 12 games each year. And if you do it well enough, you get a 13th. And that's what you're referencing. I think right now we've got to go 1 and 0.

Q. What do you see out of the Indiana team and talk about what they bring? Just talk about your opponent.

GREG SCHIANO: It's a good question since we have a game this week against Indiana, right? And we haven't talked about them at all.

Couple of things. Number one, offensively, they're the fastest tempo team in the country. They run more plays than any other team in the country. So we are going to have to get back, get aligned, get the call, and get our cleats in the ground because otherwise they catch you off balance. And they've done that to several people. You know, oftentimes, the film isn't ready to go they go so fast. Literally, they want to snap it with 32 seconds on the clock. So to be able to run more plays than any team in America, that says something.

I think they can throw the ball around pretty good. Then they get you on some run things that you're not -- you know, maybe your feet aren't quite set and they catch you and they've clipped off some good ones.

Defensively, you know, Coach Allen is a tremendous defensive coach. I followed him when he was an assistant defensive coordinator. They play really, really hard. I've read where they're concerned about their tackling, but I look at them, and they're a very physical team. And I know when you're -- when it's your team, you look at the issues differently.

I think they're going to get -- sounds like they're going to get -- they have two guys that were all Big 10 level performers. Sounds like they're getting one of them back in the secondary. Sounds like the linebacker will not be able to play, just by my reading into it. They're a good defensive team. They play a lot of people. They rotate up front.

They do some things that are unique, unique in the coverage structure that they run. And it's all sound, it's just not stuff you see every week. So really, not the best when you changed offensive coordinators, you know, to add another variable in a different coverage structure. But you don't get to pick your circumstances. You just have to be able to adapt to them. So that's what we'll do.

On special teams, I think they're good. They get after it. They play really hard on special teams. And they know what they want to do on special teams. Sometimes you throw the tape on and you can't really figure out what a team is doing. So that usually means they don't know -- they don't really know what they want to be. When you throw their special teams on, it is clear what they want to

do, how they want to do it. They're very committed to their principles in special teams. And they play good players on special teams. So that will be a challenge.

It will be two teams, I think, that are going to play really, really hard. And, you know, for our guys, we've had some great environments. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to give our fans a win. But now it's homecoming, so it will be another great environment with a lot of alums coming back. So it's a great opportunity. Again, someone's going to grab it, and we're hoping it's us.

Q. Just going back to the defense. Is there anything that stood out about the way Joe communicates his game plan, teaches it, anything from that end that impressed you the most?

GREG SCHIANO: I think Joe is an excellent, excellent football coach, excellent communicator, connector. I think the whole defensive staff is. I think that's what makes that chemistry special. If it's one guy, it's hard. But I think Joe sets the tone for that room. And I think all of those coaches are of similar mind, and they all bring that to the players. And you can see it, just the energy on the defensive side of the football has been special. And we've just got to keep building on that. And what we're trying to do is get the offense to catch up.

And hopefully, I said it earlier in the year, I really believe we're going to be a better football team in November than we were in September. We've played a lot of people. Six weeks, we've played a lot of people. Young kids have gotten valuable game reps because they deserve to, not because, you know -- back to Brian's question, not just for developmental purposes, because they earned the right to do it. And you play production. When they produce, you keep playing them.

So I think there's guys on both sides of the ball and on special teams that are newcomers or young guys that have deserved it.

So I think the bye week gave us a chance to get some other guys experience as well, which was huge. And any time you have a bye week, it's a great opportunity to help our guys get caught up academically, you know, get to see some family and relax. So I think all that stuff was beneficial. Everybody's got nice clean haircuts. It's one of the things you take an opportunity -- except the head coach, he didn't because he had a tough week, but I'll try to get my hair cut soon.

All right. Thanks guys.

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