

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Coach Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: I'll try to help you whatever way I can. Obviously a big game going on the road to Minnesota. We've got a lot of work to do before we're ready to go play that game. I think everybody knows that and everybody is locked in on doing it.

It'll be how we prepare this week that'll be the difference.

Questions?

Q. What did you just think of the offensive changes you guys made and your overall assessment of the quarterback play last week?

GREG SCHIANO: Look, I thought that we prepared very hard over the two weeks. Certainly you can't flip things upside down in two weeks' time. I think what we'll do is continue to grow.

The quarterback position, it's not like we discovered something. We finally had our quarterbacks all able to play on the same day. The way it played out, we didn't know exactly how it was going to go. For that game, Noah was the starter, Gavin was the backup, and Evan was the next guy in.

Each game is going to be different, depending on our preparation, on our opponent, our match-up, and until we figure out exactly how we want to go -- now, you say, well, you're on your eighth game. Yeah, as I told you at the beginning of the year, if it works itself out, that's great; and if it doesn't, we have to keep tweaking it until we figure it out.

So we're working on it. Again, last week was the first time we had all three guys. It's really the first week that it was normal, so to speak.

Q. PJ worked on your staff here and in Tampa. Just talk about your relationship and what it's going to be like going to be like coaching against him?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, not just PJ, most of the staff.



Kirk Ciarrocca is over there; Joe Rossi is over there. There's so many guys that have Rutgers connections that are on PJ's staff, and I love that. I'm proud, really, really proud of the job PJ has done.

You mentioned he was here at Rutgers with us and then he was at Tampa, as well, and always did a great job. I knew, heck, probably a day into his time here that he was going to be a head coach. I could tell you countless stories of what a big difference he made in our program, both here and at Tampa.

He's an excellent coach, and all the success he has had he deserves, because he works incredibly hard. He's incredibly driven, yet I think is a man that has a big heart and understands people.

Yeah, I can't be more proud of him, but now we have to compete, right, so it's kind of like the first week of the season when we went and played Jeff at Boston College, and so many of those coaches had Rutgers ties.

But I'm proud of all those guys, but when it's time to compete, it's time to compete. I know he'll be the same, and then after the game we'll hug it out and keep moving forward and help each other, because he does, he helps me, and I try to help him whenever we can.

But obviously not the week we're playing them.

Q. What do you see in that team, especially with their running back Ibrahim and the challenge he can present?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Kirk Ciarrocca does a great job with that offense. He was there when they built it up and then he left but he's back now.

I think Kirk knows exactly how to use a back like that and how to tie it into the RPO game. Everything is very, very well-coordinated, so it'll be a big challenge.

The back, he's really special. He can stick a foot in the ground and change direction as good as anybody in the country, and he's strong. Tackling this guy is going to be a challenge for sure.



Q. Any update on Sam, how his lower extremities, as you put it, is? And Kessawn, what's his status?

GREG SCHIANO: Okay, start with Sam. Sam has a couple more things to do with the doctors, but I think we're going to be okay there.

Kess had an issue; he did some stuff last night, so we'll see. I think it'll be kind of a play it by ear as we go through the week with Kess.

But yeah, leave all that stuff up to the doctors, but I'm encouraged.

Q. We talked before the season about how with the offensive line it was going to have to be a steady climb throughout the season. Are you seeing the improvements at this point that you hoped to see, a little bit past the midway point?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, we're getting better, as I've said all along, I think there's been a steady progress, but not where we need to be. We were so far away that progress is good, but we've just got to keep getting better.

And that really is the whole team. When I sat here two weeks ago after the Nebraska game I said, we just need to get better, guys. Got to put all the noise out of your mind and just focus on getting better. And we got a little bit better and it was good enough to win Saturday.

Now we have to get better, and we have some practice days to do it and some meetings, and how we meet, how we practice, how we watch film, that's going to determine how much better we can get. That's all we can control. Will that be good enough to go out and win the game at Minnesota? That's why you play the game. We'll figure it out.

But it goes for our whole program.

Q. Are there any players you're looking at stepping up to stop the run, a guy like Christian Izien or anybody specifically going to be doing anything different this week to compensate for how good Minnesota is running the ball?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, if there was, I couldn't tell you right now because I'd be looking at the camera telling Minnesota. But look, we have to do some things. Obviously they're very good at running the football and he's very good, but I think it's going to take 11 guys.

I think it's going to take great swarm, great eye discipline,

and really, really fine tackling to be able to do it.

Q. Christian Braswell has been through a lot since he joined the program. What's it been like to see him be this productive and have this much of an impact on the defense this year?

GREG SCHIANO: It's really great, to tell you the truth, because you hit it on the head: He has had such bad luck, whatever you want to call it. My heart was going out to him because he worked so hard to recover from the knee surgery, and then some other things got him.

I was just like, this guy, he's really got the short end of the stick.

But as of late he's really been productive. He's playing at a high level. Certainly that interception for the touchdown was a deciding play in the game.

Couldn't be more happy, and he's a great kid, too. He's not a kid, a great young man, great person, like a lot of our guys.

But I've been very, very pleased to have him in our program.

Q. Sean Ryan had a few big catches. Is that what you saw out of him when you got him from the portal and kind of what you expected from him?

GREG SCHIANO: It is. I think he's a bigger guy. We don't really have very many of those guys. When you're talking about competing for a 50/50 ball, well, why does it got to be 50/50? If you give him a chance, the receiver clearly has the advantage. He's got really strong hands, he's got a good frame, and he can go up and get the football.

He also has good hands when he's running routes inward, breaking routes, which you're going to get hit on.

So I think he has a chance to really -- I think he's got a feel for what we're doing. I think we've learned what he's best at, so I think he's got a chance to do this here in the back half of the season.

Q. Defensively you guys rank top 10 in a lot of categories, but a majority of that side of the ball has multiple years of eligibility remaining, a lot of underclassmen. How much of growth do you see in that unit and how much better can they get?

GREG SCHIANO: I think we can continue to get a lot better, yeah, and I think depth, we can strengthen our depth as we get better.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

You know, every Sunday night we're out there with the younger players just working on technique and then going and playing the game of football because that's the way you get better at playing.

Really it's guys who don't play on Saturday, so Gavin was out there, did a tremendous job, and I've talked to you guys about Gavin after the game. He was really a lot better from one Thursday to the next, and now the challenge is can we do that again.

Last night he did an excellent job. I'm excited about his growth.

That's the whole football team. When we talk about the defense, there's some older guys up there, the AZs and the Christian Iziens and the Fettys, but then there's a whole bunch of young players that are making plays.

I'm right there with you. We just need to keep getting better. I know it sounds so cliché, but you're either getting better or you're getting worse. That's the fact. Nobody stays the same.

We have to keep pushing each other to get better.

Q. Obviously defensive coordinator Joe Harasymiak is going back to his former school, as well. What's your assessment about the job he's done to this point for you?

GREG SCHIANO: Joe has done an excellent job. Joe is an excellent football coach. He's a really fine communicator and connector with the players.

I can say that for the whole defensive staff, though. I really have been impressed the way that they have come together, the way that they've connected with our guys, the level of detail that they've coached with. I'm very pleased, very, very pleased with the way those guys work together and the way they've bonded with the players.

I just look forward to seeing that continue to grow because a lot of those players are young guys.

Q. I know you emphasize special teams a lot. What's it been like coaching without an actual coordinator as one of the 10 assistants?

GREG SCHIANO: You know, we all kind of pitch in. I kind of try to head it off because I don't want to distract from anybody else's job in the offense or the defense. We have some support staff that help us with different technical things, breakdowns and stuff.

Certainly after a day like Saturday where you give up a touchdown return and then you have one called back, it's not very fun. Special teams has always been a big part of what we do here, and we've been fortunate to do it well. Saturday was not our finest effort.

Certainly we have a chip on our shoulder as a special teams unit that we need to play better for sure because that isn't even close to being good enough.

Thanks, guys.

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