

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: I apologize for being late here. I had something I had to tend to that couldn't wait, but I'll do an extra good job of giving you all you need, how's that?

Q. How is Gavin doing, and is there any update on his status?

GREG SCHIANO: He's doing well. I think he's going to be fine.

Q. You would expect him to be available for Saturday?

GREG SCHIANO: I do.

Q. And reevaluating the tape, watching his game, did it look any better than he looked on Saturday? What are your takeaways evaluating the tape of his play?

GREG SCHIANO: I think what I said Saturday, I watched him pretty closely because have a really young quarterback in there. I felt he looked comfortable. I don't think he looked out of place. I felt that he ran an operation, and then he made some really good throws. And then he made a mistake and then he made another mistake that were two turnovers.

But he shows why we're excited about his future. That's what I thought I could come away with Saturday was, it's a matter of time, I do believe that, and I think it's a when, not an if. You've just got to keep going. You know, we are building something here, and he's a big part of it but so are a bunch of other guys that are working their tails off, so just keep moving.

Q. The majority of the scholarship roster is eligibility-wise either a freshman or sophomore. What are you looking to see out of these guys over the next four games?

GREG SCHIANO: I'm not really looking at the four games, I'm looking at this one game. It's real dangerous to start looking past anything. What I look for, you know, a lot of people say, well, that's coach speak like, and people like

more exciting stuff but if it's true, it's not coach speak, it's how I do it.

Right now, I'm totally focused on game planning Michigan because that's what we do on Mondays and totally focused with meeting with my leadership counsel. Those are the things that I really focus on because that's what's here right now.

And you know, we have a saying around here: The journey is the destination. The world isn't made like that, right. The world is, you've got to get to that spot. I really believe what we are doing today is really that spot and doing the best you can and that may sound corny, that may sound coach speak but I give everybody a little advice. It's kind of a good way to roll. That's the way we do it. That's what we are on right now is how do we get better today and those are the only things we can control. Tomorrow we'll have a Tuesday practice, and that will be the only thing we control.

Q. There's some concern around the Big Ten about teams sharing tunnels especially after the two incidents at Michigan. What's the promote your here and do you have any concerns in general about that?

GREG SCHIANO: You know, I witnessed the same thing, so I understand the question. We've never had an incident that I know of, at least when I've been here, we have not had an incident. We have great -- I think our guys do a great job with who goes when and it's all very controlled and maybe some people feel like it's too controlled but case in point, it needs to be controlled. That's just the way we are built right now.

There will be a day when we have two tunnels. I'm not worried about that. But right now this is the way we're built so this is the way we'll do it. But we have a plan, that's for sure.

Q. Michigan has obviously one of the best running games in the country. What does it take to limit a team like that as much as you can?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, it's hard. Why do they have a good running game? They have a very good offensive



line. They have two really good backs, probably more, but two that play a lot, and a quarterback that can run and pass. So you have to defend the pass, you have to defend his run.

The offensive line is doing a good job blocking. They have got two upper echelon running backs. So it's one of the better outfits in America on offense. That's why you look at where they are ranked in all those statistical categories that are up in the top.

Have we played against people like that? Yeah, we have. We have to do a great job. We have to be at our very best to have a chance to slow them down. Are you going to stop them? No. No one's stopped them. But we're going to do everything we can to the best of our ability and see where that stacks up.

Q. Your run attack without Sam, you struggled a bit against Minnesota. Is that the offensive line or running backs? And on Sam, do you have an update on when he'll have the surgery this week?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, first off, Sam is out at the site where he's getting surgery as we speak. The surgery is tomorrow. Why we didn't have an effective running game, first and foremost, Minnesota had something to do with that. They are really good on defense and not just against us, but they have been good in rush defense against everyone.

That's why they are ranked where they are. We didn't do our best. We missed some block combinations. We missed some reads in the run game. When you drop some of those RPOs, they are not quite as scary to the defense anymore. So it all goes together. Everything, it's never -- if it was one reason, you make a change in that person and it's fixed. It's never one thing or one person. But it certainly wasn't effective; I agree with you on that.

We're working very hard to figure out what we can do to help that and Michigan is equally adept at stopping the run. They are really, really good, maybe even better. They have a really strong defense, the biggest front we'll play against up front defensively. Their linebackers run very well and their secondary knows where to fit. It's going to be a challenge.

Q. In the past, Cruickshank has made crazy special teams plays, some returning balls for touchdowns multiple times. This years, he seems a little more conservative back there. Is it a matter of him still being in recovery or is that a scheme thing?

GREG SCHIANO: Some of it has been his recovery, yeah,

initially he wasn't overly confident in doing that. That's where he did get work. I think Aron is feeling good about it now and we have been a little more aggressive as you can see. In the punt game, punt return game, I think he's equally effective. Unfortunately we had one callback that was for a touchdown.

So what makes that feel better, you have one or two home runs and you feel great it all season long, and you don't, you don't. We have to do a better job.

Q. You said you started Gavin because you saw an opportunity against Minnesota. Is there any inkling of who would be the starter this week based on what you've seen with Michigan?

GREG SCHIANO: No, Gavin is going to be our starter.

Q. Can you elaborate on why?

GREG SCHIANO: Same reasons that I said before. I think he showed what he's capable of, and now we have to get consistent of doing that but that's not just Gavin. As I've talked to you guys before in building a program, there's a lot of steps. The last step is consistency because it's the hardest step, right, to do something right once, once you get taught the skill and you know the scheme, you can do it right once, but did you do it right over and over again against an opponent that's trying to make you do it wrong. That's consistency and that's where we are working to get there.

Q. How does the way that you navigate this rebuild, the roller coaster nature of it, the ups and downs, how does that compare to the first time you went through it, your expectations, the mentals within the program and things like that?

GREG SCHIANO: That's a good question. That's a real good question. Yeah, I haven't thought of that. I know I haven't felt it but I haven't really thought about it. When we lose, it's really, really tough and I'm not special in that way.

I think when you spend so much time, six days totally committed to that other than sleeping and eating, sleep -- what else do you do as a coach, and then it doesn't work, and the way we lost Saturday, it just rips you apart.

But the beautiful thing about our sport is you have to get up and get ready; in six days another one is coming. That, I love about my job. Is it similar? I guess it is fudge about it. In a lot of ways, it is.

Q. You guys are strong defensively in a lot of categories, red zone defense, 18 trips, 18 scores. Is

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

there any common factor there and is there a concern at all in that category?

GREG SCHIANO: There's certainly concern because we are not doing well there. Joe and I have talked about it. We have spent some extra time on it in practice. We have looked at it. When you're doing well in just about every other category and then not on that, you sit there and say, man, is it scheme?

It always comes down to, is it scheme or technique, right, is it the person playing. Those are the things that you've got to look at and scheme is what the coaches come up with and technique is how they teach the technique and then the players, you have choices who to play. So are we doing the right things? You know, certainly we haven't figured it out or it would be looking a lot better right now. Something that we are aware of. It's not something that we haven't talked a lot about. But right now, we haven't figured it out.

Q. In hindsight, obviously injuries had a lot to do with what you were able to do at quarterback but would it have been more beneficial to play one quarterback at a time as opposed to the rotation we saw at times?

GREG SCHIANO: I think you answered your own question with your preamble. We didn't have choices. It wasn't like we had choices. We had at the beginning of the season, Noah was out. Now did we headache that clear in no. Because we thought that was a competitive advantage for people not to know. Some have told me it was the worst-kept secret in Eastern football. So, okay, if they knew, they knew, that's good. People always like to say they knew. I have inklings about stuff, too. There was a lot of stuff being said last week about their quarterback situation, none of it -- none of which came true.

Believe me, people say they know, you think you know but you don't know until the guy trots out on the field and plays. At that point, we had two quarterbacks, which neither one of them was ready to take the reigns, so we were going to let them both get experience and see how it went. Then Noah started to re-enter the picture. He had experience but he physically wasn't ready. Again, you don't want to put anybody out there exclusively until they are ready to do it otherwise you can really harm a guy's development.

So when you kind of mix it up a little bit, no one is really the guy that didn't do it well enough. Or, when you win, oh, look at that, they put it together enough to win. There's a science to me in developing guys and when to bring them along and you know, obviously we have made that move and by what I said to you, Gavin starting, that kind of tells you what time we feel it is now.

Q. Just with Aaron Lewis, seems like he's becoming a bigger and bigger focal point of game plans. How do you see him adjusting and improving?

GREG SCHIANO: There's no doubt, you saw what Minnesota did. They double teamed him most of the time. Two things there. No. 1, get used to it, Aron, because you earned it and No. 2 how about some other guys, you've got to show up bigger now. Not that guys don't, I think we have some guys that are really razed up but we are young up there, too, with the exception of Feddy, really that's a young group.

So understanding when he gets the double team what does that mean for the rest of us, how are they going to block the rest of us. And it's always different when it's first and second down, normal downs what we call enormous downs and when it's third down or situational football, because then you're attacking just the pass.

When it's normal downs, you've got to play the run and the pass so it's not quite as easy to kind of rig it up to help somebody come free. So it's a challenge but as guys get more experienced, it's a feel thing as well. I feel the protection sliding to me, there's certain things I can do. I feel the protection sliding away from me, there's things I can do. That takes repetition, and we are getting better at it. But it's just not -- again, to Pat's thing, consistency, right. Consistency, being able to feel it every time. Nobody does it every time you know what I mean but nine out of ten times, you feel the slide, you shoot the twist game, it happens naturally. It's called a natural game.

But it's anything but natural. It happens over time because guys feel it. But yeah, we need to get better at all those things, and it's not from a lack of trying. This team is just busting their rear end every day. Not that I know of complaints about how hard we're working, studying, meeting, taking care of our bodies. That's what makes it even harder as a head coach. You see your guys hurt, they put so much into it and how much it hurts them. But way, welcome to big time college football. There's going to be a winner or loser every week. Right now we've won it four and lost it four. Got a great opportunity Saturday.

Again, apologize for being a couple minutes late and hopefully you got what you needed.

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