

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: Start off, want to start with congratulations to Coquese Washington and the women's basketball team. Just found out they won their opener, which is great, and first game for Coach Washington. Thrilled for them. Also want to wish Coach Pika and the men's team good luck tonight against Columbia and all season long. Excited. Big Rutgers Basketball fan, men's and women's. Excited for that season to start.

Let's talk about our season. Michigan State, going on the road. Tough Big Ten environment. Weather should be a factor. Starting to get into the pretend weather that we had today and we had all last week. It's going to get real here in a hurry. It will be part of the game: Wind, cold, Big Ten Football.

So from there, answer anything I can.

Q. With a player in Gavin's situation, this is probably the most adversity he's felt on a football team in a long time because of the level of talent he's going against consistently. How do you guide a player against him getting too discouraged, but also learning from mistakes and things like that and keeping him focused on improving?

GREG SCHIANO: It's a good question, I think it's all process-related, right. You stick to the process. Almost boringly so.

At this stage of: I can read out every single play, if I can run the huddle operation, if I can run the line of scrimmage operation and stay focused solely on those things, the results will be good because you are very talented.

The minute you start looking at the prize, that's when bad things happen. So just stay in the process. He's gifted. That will take care of itself.

Q. How has Noah been through the process with Gavin, taking that kind of secondary role?

GREG SCHIANO: Noah has been great. He's helped him

a lot. He's coached him a lot. Noah is going into coaching as a profession, at least that's what he says he wants to do. He's going to be an excellent coach if that's what he does. He'll be excellent at whatever he does. Very focused young man, very smart.

I think I probably should share with you guys the extent. He had a very extensive hand surgery, and it wasn't just, hey, let's go in there and tweak this or tweak that. They kind of did a lot, and what comes from that is very frustrating for him because he can release the ball and it feels just like it used to, and other times he can release the ball and has -- why did it do that. That's all part of coming back from the surgery.

But when you are a quarterback, that's a tough place, you know, to not have total control. Is it frustrating for him? Sure it is. But he's been an incredible teammate. Worked really hard to help Gavin and help me and help the team and help Coach Nunz. He's continuing to work to get better. If we need him, I think he's ready. But he's been just, you know, a captain in the true sense of the word.

Q. Before Gavin's injury, he was running the ball a lot more. Just curious about why his carries and that aspect of his game has kind of dropped off a little bit since his injury?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I think that's certainly part of it, right. We are trying to make sure that he is able to continue to play. But there is room for that. There's more room for him to run the ball for sure. It seems so simple. I'll just do a run -- every single thing you do with him adds up. We just have to pick-and-choose what it is we want to focus on right now with him.

Coming off, he's not 100 percent healthy either. Just because he's able to play doesn't mean that his ankle's healed. Still bothers him. There's times you can see him noticeably limping but he's gutting through it. We are probably trying to be a little cautious there.

But he's getting better and I think you'll see more of that as time goes on, because he is capable.

Q. I don't think Deion Jennings played a snap in the



second half. How is he? And Jamier Wright-Collins played a lot of snaps in his place. How do you think he performed in that spot?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I think first off, Jamier stepped up and did a good job.

Deion has been playing really well all season long. I mean, really someone who has stood out to me as a guy on defense that's playing very well consistently well. He's got an issue and we won't know until the end of the week if he's going to be able to go or not.

So that there be -- I don't know if it will be a game-time decision but it could be.

Q. The running game the last couple weeks, how much of that is a product of just going up against good rush defenses and how much is it certain things that maybe the running backs could do a little better or the offensive line?

GREG SCHIANO: Probably some of both. I think they are two of the top rush defenses in the country, not to mention in the Big Ten.

But we have to do a better job. We have to do a better job with our blocking up front. We have to do a better job seeing it and running the play that it's designed, and then let your abilities take over.

And a little bit to your point, we have to make sure that the quarterback is a viable runner, whether we run him or not. He only becomes viable when he runs. They have to believe that he'll run, and so we have to do some of that.

So we have to work to get better in the run game because it's not fair to put that kind of load on a rookie quarterback to carry the game through the air.

Q. What do you think the biggest challenges are facing this Michigan State team?

GREG SCHIANO: I think they are very big up front. They are very physical. They are a traditional Michigan State team. Their linebacker, 23, is just a really good player. He's been playing for a long time. I think he's the glue to that whole group.

They have got a really good secondary. Now, a couple guys are out right now, but who knows, that's not my purview what -- you know, who will be out and when will be out. We are just getting ready for everybody.

But I think defensively, they are a unit that is strong and

can run. Offensively, they have played a few different running backs. So I think it's kind of by committee.

But quarterback is a returning guy that did very well, and is doing very well, and I think the receiving core, they have some guys that can go up and make the play on the 50/50 ball as well as run by you.

So I think it's a huge challenge. They are always good on special teams. Coach Tucker does a tremendous job in all three phases. I think they really play together complementary football, so it's going to be a challenge.

And especially to go out to their stadium in the weather, it's going to be an old-fashioned Big Ten game, and we have to be ready for it. We have to be ready to take our game on the road and go win a game in someone else's stadium.

Q. To that end, your first game here was obviously that road win at Michigan State. You guys have won a couple of Big Ten road games in your first two years. What is the key to stealing a road win in the Big Ten?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I don't think it's stealing. You've got to go win it, right. If you're stealing, then it's not yours. I mean, last time I checked, it's not their game, right. We are both playing.

But yeah, we've got to go do the things I said. It's got to be process-oriented, right. That's what 'CHOP' is. We have to go out there and chop the moment, moment by moment. We have to stay at the job at hand and forget about the result that sits out here.

I've told you guys before, and I tell the players, the two biggest thieves, right, the past and the future. We have to stay right here in the present and CHOP the moment.

And it's going to be hard. Because there's going to be a lot of things going on that will try to distract you. The opponent, very good. The crowd, it will be a big crowd. The weather, it will be cold, windy. There's plenty of things that will distract you. What's on the line, right, we are playing meaningful games in November.

So that's a couple years in a row now we are playing meaningful games in November. Well, with that meaningfulness comes a little bit more of, oh, this means something. So we have to take all of that, put it aside and focus on our job.

Q. What have you seen from Wesley Bailey over the course of the season?

GREG SCHIANO: He's had a really good year. He started



out as guy that we were hopeful he would do what he thought he would do, and I think he is consistently performing. He plays with great energy. He plays with physicality, and he's only going to get better.

He's only going to get bigger. He's only going to get stronger. He's gotten quite a bit bigger as you've seen, but I think he's a young football player that's got a lot of great ball ahead of him.

Q. I think you said two questions ago, you are preparing like every Michigan State player is going to play.

GREG SCHIANO: How do you know?

Q. Like you said, it's not your purview.

GREG SCHIANO: Right.

Q. Is that difficult to prepare for?

GREG SCHIANO: No, I think sometimes that gets overblown, right. Yes, if he was the starter, he is the best player, otherwise he wouldn't be starting, right. That's usually the way it works.

But it's not like the next guy is like a dud. Those are Big Ten scholarship football players and we are going to prepare, because I am pretty sure they are going to have 11 out there and we have to go do what we do against 11 guys and they are all good players.

So I don't get overly -- now, when you have a guy that is a quote, unquote, disrupt-the-game-type player, yeah, then if he's playing, you'd better know he's in the game whether it's in the offense, defense or kicking game. There are certain guys in the Big Ten Conference that can single-handedly disrupt plays, and if they are out there, you'd better know about it.

We are going to be aware of their personnel; we always are. And again, how do I know? I can't predict that stuff. I don't even try to worry about that.

Q. With Aaron Young, how has he been coming through, coming back from the injury? Now that he's getting more and more snaps, how is he health-wise?

GREG SCHIANO: So far, so good. He's been able to answer the bell each week, and he's played more and more. And I think he'll play more this week. I hope he does. I think we've got to remember, we've got to think back to last year. He was the most efficient runner we had as far as when you just look at his plays.

So I expect to see more of him. I think we'll see all three running backs. And like I said earlier, we have to run the football better.

Q. Just to be clear, Gavin is the starting quarterback for Saturday?

GREG SCHIANO: Mm-hmm.

Q. And you're when you're making that decision to start Gavin, how much does Noah's injury, I don't want to say make the decision either for you but obviously he's a bit limited. Does that have any factor?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, no, I'm not going to get into all my criteria. Imagine if I started doing that at every decision, right. That would get -- not only we'd be here for a long time but that would expose how I think. Some might say, well, that would be a scary thing but that's okay. Everybody can have their opinion.

But yeah, I'll just leave it at that it's Monday and I'm telling you who the starter; isn't that good enough (Laughter) yeah, all right. Thanks, guys.

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