

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: Want to start by wishing our prayers and our thoughts to all those down at UVA, their victims, their families and the university. It's a tragedy and one that I think everybody in the football world and everyone really in the world, world, just a tragedy.

Let's move on to our stuff here and try to help you any way I can.

Q. I guess looking at Penn State, what stands out the most when you watch them play, especially what they are able to do on defense?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, they are a very good team. So it's not just defense. It's all three phases. Certainly defensively they played extremely well last week. Suffocating. They can cover. They play a lot of either man or multiple, which turns into man once the routes declared.

I think the thing they are doing the best, they are second in the Big Ten in sacks only to Michigan by one. So they are getting after the passer and you know, pass coverage and pass rush usually go hand in hand. So they are doing both very well.

Offensively, I think their freshman tailback is an elite player. Really good at the skill positions and I think the line has really developed quite a bit. If that was a weakness at one point early in the year it's not anymore.

And then the special teams, they are pretty complete in the kicking game. I think what you are looking at is, you know, what they are. They are one of the Top 15 teams in America. They are playing at that level now. That's what I would say the biggest thing is they have gotten better over the course of the season and they are playing at a high level run.

Q. Didn't get to ask you this at East Lansing, your thinking in the last time out, the blitz?

GREG SCHIANO: The blitzing?

Q. When they were doing the victory formation.

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, that's what it's always been. If you followed us, if it's a competitive game, and there's an opportunity to create a fumble, it's not -- you know, there's always been a huge area of contention with people. I think it's ridiculous, personally. It's not where we are diving at -- contrary to what the experts say, we are not diving at people's legs. It's a coached play. We are trying to coach a fumble. We have caused a fumble three times, our doing it. If there's a chance to win the game, that's what we do. And if it's not, then we don't. You let the game end with a snap and a kneel.

I thought it was interesting, though. Over the course of my career, I've watched teams do it enough. It's pretty interesting that you ask that question on the heels of the pro game yesterday where Buffalo, that could be a huge loss in their season, and I think everybody kept playing there.

I liken back to the Super Bowl where the Patriots beat the Seahawks, very similar situation and Seahawks were firing out and Brady was taking a knee and nobody had a word. It's a competitive play when the game is competitive. When it's not competitive, you'll never see us do that but I don't think it's any secret that we're going to do that. I don't see an issue with it whatsoever.

Q. Mel was a bit upset. Did he say anything to you during your handshake?

GREG SCHIANO: He didn't look upset to me. I wasn't really checking Mel's feelings at the time. We shook hands like we always do.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Asamoah getting the start. What went into him that decision with his development over the course of the season?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, we felt like we had an opportunity to run the ball against these guys, and that turned out to be true. Kwabe has really gotten better. When I talk to you guys about we'll be a better team in November than they were in September. Well, there's no doubt we are. The competition is better in November than it was in September



but no doubt we are better.

Part of that is I knew our talented young players would continue to get better and better and better. Kwabe could not have gone in a game and been an effective player he was against a Big Ten and what a way to break into Big Ten having No. 64 over your head. He may be one of the strongest players in the Big Ten. Feels like he's been playing forever, right.

So I was proud of the way Kwabe responded. As I mentioned Saturday, we played several people. We were rotating guys in and look, when you're building something, we're into this thing almost three seasons.

Until you're an established group, which means you've been doing it for a while together, the whole program is died in the wool of your culture and every guy in the program has been in it for a bit, you need to do whatever it takes and if it means unconventionally subbing, we'll do that. I don't sweat any of that stuff. Like what do I care? Trying to win a game and we'll do whatever it takes to win the game within the rules.

Q. Following off of Kwabe, how do you feel like your younger offensive linemen are developing? How do you think they are coming along?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I think we are getting better and it's not just the true freshmen, it's the guys that came in the year before, as well. I think we are getting better. I thought you saw Gus Zilinskas go in the game. Gus played his freshman year because he had to. He wasn't ready to play last year. He has improved and now when he got a chance to play, you could see that improvement. That's what I'm talking about.

And I give him another year in the weight room, he's a second-year player playing in the Big Ten Conference and he was a little under developed when he got here. For him to have to play last year wasn't fair but it's what we needed and he's an unselfish guy who did it.

To see what he did it Saturday is really exciting for us because we believe he's going to be a great center. We think he's got all those tools including a real head on his shoulders. So.

It's exciting and it gives you a reason to say, maybe he should play a little bit more, too, right. If he can do like he did Saturday, then he deserves to play. So if we play seven or eight offensive linemen, so be it.

Q. Moving forward off the heels of your best offensive game, I wanted to know what you were evaluating in

terms of growth for that offense and how you would evaluate that situation moving forward?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, we'll evaluate the whole thing at end of the season. I said that when we made the change. Right now we are so busy trying to get ready for Penn State, one of the elite defenses I think that we've played. And early on, their defense may have not been that. So when you look at some national rankings in certain areas, they are not.

But I know what I look at on film and I know when I look at them in Big Ten rankings. I think you've got to really be careful when you look at national rankings because that takes into play all those early season games. When you get into Big Ten play, especially Big Ten East play, you're talking about the elite of the elite. I watch what they have done in thinking Big Ten games. They have really played at a high level.

Q. Gavin said after the game that he does feel like things are starting to show down for him the more he plays. What are you seeing from that perspective and what do you look for from week-to-week to know that even though there will be some ups and downs that he is starting to see things better and recognize defenses better and things like that?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, pretty much what I said after the game. He didn't read everything correctly but he read everything out. There was a couple times in the Michigan game we just guessed. As a quarterback, can't guess.

But he's learning. And he works credibly hard at it. Like this isn't a guy who just shows up and relies on his athletic ability. This is a guy who grinds the tape. He grinds in his preparation and he's only going to get better. I think Nun is doing a really good job leading him along the path and learning how to get better as a quarterback.

Q. Did you see that when you recruited him? I know he had the measurables and the physical attributes. What did you see off the field that caused you to go after him?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, initially we just felt really, really good chemistry between our staff, he and his family.

But then after he committed, we started teaching him our offense, and teaching him football and talking football. He was very quick at picking things up, and understands he has a unique spatial awareness. That's why I say, if he can read it out, he'll right it right most of the time.

Defenses, you're talking about the Big Ten East now.

There are some really good defensive coordinators that are tricky and show you one look and then take it away. For a young quarterback it can be a little bit confusing but as long as he reads the right thing, and that's the difference, on each play, there may be a little subtle difference on what you're reading.

So he has to know what that is and then he has to know what it's going to look like. That's why the film study is so important, yet there's a danger to too much film study because you think you know it and that leads you to more than anticipate. There's that land, look at it as a football player, when you anticipate, you'll click faster. When you guess, you're all right or you're all wrong. It's great when you're all right but when you're all wrong, it's ugly.

We rely on anticipation and that's what all the preparation is for, so you can be a click faster to the read, to the fit, to whatever it is you're doing.

Q. Mentioned the risk reward and obviously hindsight is 20/20 but you have the ball, 1:33 left before the half, three time-outs. Is that a situation you look back as a missed opportunity to give Gavin a two-minute drill or is it a point where you're not comfortable putting him in that situation at this point of his development?

GREG SCHIANO: I don't look at it as an opportunity. We do two-minute drills out here all the time. I don't look at it as an opportunity to get anybody experience. We are trying to win the game. So we start the drive on our 11-yard line. Have a couple-yard game and then a minus-yard play.

So we are sitting there at third down, we run one and get a pop out, and that's good because we don't have to punt. The No. 1 goal right there was to get a first down, and when you go second and 12 -- I shouldn't say that. The No. 1 goal is to not give up a score, right. No interceptions, no fumbles. Let's get to the locker room, making it a one-score game and getting the football to start the half.

But if you get a first down, that's going to really help not giving them the ball back. So Mel used the timeouts, like a coach should, right. And then we get the first down. We are still, you know, where you would get the ball to start a drive and at that point we didn't want to.

So if we could run it and pop one out of there like we did a little bit, we get it near midfield, we'll take a shot. No risk -- or I should say very -- there's always risk, but very little risk, high reward. Not unlike what happened at the end of the game and throwing it up to Shameen and he caught the ball. That, I was willing to do. To throw the ball into the wind -- wait, that wasn't into the wind, was it? Yeah, it was

into the wind. No, it was with the wind.

But that didn't really -- that wasn't it. It was before the half, make sure that we don't mess this thing up. We're playing well. It's a tight ballgame. I really felt like much in the Boston College game that if we continue to run the ball, we were going to wear them down and be able to run it effectively. All of those things go into the decision-making.

But there's no defiance on this or what I'm standing by. I believe that's what you do when you have a young quarterback, you're backed up in your own territory. When we got to an area where I felt the risk/reward was appropriate, we were going to take a shot, and unfortunately we jumped off-sides and that was the end of that.

It was into the wind, yeah. That's why we didn't do it. That's why after we jumped it we didn't throw it into the end zone. All of those factors lead into it. But again, you've got to understand the whole situation, all the people involved, and all the factors involved, and I'm good with the way we did it, and we'd do it again the same way.

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