

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference



Q. I guess what are you expecting from this Northwestern team, given the way that things have gone the last few months for them?

GREG SCHIANO: I think the thing you've got to remember is they have a lot of experienced players. On defense, they are really strong up the middle. You know, the two safeties, the two linebackers, are really experienced. The McLaughlin kid who plays D-end is an experienced guy. We are talking about fourth year starters, third year starters, so when half your defense has played that much football, they are going to be ready to play.

They had -- if you look at their results, I know you look, say, it's 1-11, but when you really dig deep, turnovers are what killed them. When they didn't turn the ball over they are a very good football team, not much unlike us. If we can keep from turning the ball over, we've got a chance.

I think the inexperienced defense -- I think on offense, there's several transfers at wide receiver that are going to help. I think Henning and what is it, Johnson, those two guys, they are good players. We watched them on Michigan tape and at quarterback, they have not announced who the starter is. They are different. Brian and Sullivan are different, so it will be interesting to see who you prepare football; one is more mobile than the other guy and one is more of a pocket-type guy.

And I think Cam Porter, their running back, is a special player. I think that unfortunately he had an injury that set him back but from all accounts he's back to who he is. He's a 220-pound Big Ten running back that if we are not buckled up, it's going to be a tough day.

I think schematically, they do a very good job. Offensively, I know Mike Bajakian, he's a good football coach, really, really good football coach. He's been at every level.

Defensively, Coach Braun is running the defense and if you look at what they have done in his past, he has climbed the ranks and done it the right way at every stop and he's worked for friends of mine who speak really,

highly of him.

So he was brought in there initially to fix the defense and then he got some more put on his plate obviously and then special teams, the same fellow that was running it who does an excellent job, he's still running the special teams. From a schematic standpoint, I think it's going to be more of the same. Everybody tweaks and does things, and I know with Coach Braun coming from a different school, he's got to adapt his system to their personnel, but as a coach, there's certain things that are your go-to things and I'm sure we'll see those.

Q. Given you needed Gavin into start before training camp, is it fair to assume that he'll be allowed to play through miss training camps, and I guess for lack of a better term, how long of a leash is he working with?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I don't even like to get into that stuff to tell you the truth. He's our starting quarterback. I make decisions, which is always in the best interests of the team what gives us the best chance to win. I'm not going to address that. That's a hypothetical.

Q. What do you hope to see out of your defense in this first game of the season?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, they are grown. They developed. At times we played good football last year. Good defense. And other times we gave up plays, so we're deeper. We have more players that can play, which helps. It's going to be a very warm day from all accounts on the weather forecast. So the more able bodies that you have that can go out and play and play well, the more it's going to help.

Going to be a lot of emotion, first game. You're really going to have to work hard to make sure we can keep everybody out there playing.

Q. From a scheduling perspective, what's it like and how do you feel about opening against a conference opponent?

GREG SCHIANO: It's been good. I think it gets everybody lit up and attentive and not that you're not going to be attentive for anybody you open with, but I think when you



put a Big Ten in front of it, it gives you a little extra juice for sure.

Q. Can you talk a little bit more about your relationship between you and Bajakian? I know you both started as GAs at Rutgers, you both coached at the Bears, several other stops. Talk about your relationship.

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah but we were never together. I know him professionally. I don't know him personally. He's a Jersey guy, so I know people who do know him.

Q. You said in the past you thought players should be played. I don't know if you caught Jim Harbaugh's comments yesterday about revenue sharing and what you thought?

GREG SCHIANO: I didn't catch his comments but I heard. Some people told me about it.

I want to focus on Northwestern because that's why we're here today. But I think it's on record, I believe that players should be paid for 20 years now. So that's nothing new. I think we missed the boat a while ago, and I think we need to make it right.

But again, I'd like to stick to Northwestern.

Q. Last year, you said that this team would go as far as the offensive line would take them. Do you feel more confident this year with the continuity and some of the personnel and the coaching staff that they can stake that step forward collectively?

GREG SCHIANO: I think we have. I think we have gotten better. As I watched them practice, it's a better product on the practice field. Now we've got to take it to the game field.

Q. Obviously playing on a Sunday and having the short week, how many adjustments did you have to put in place this week to account for those schedule changes?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, that's really my job, to make sure that the young coaches have done the breakdowns and we're ready to go once the game is completed on Sunday. But I've dealt with short weeks in college. I've dealt with short weeks in the National Football League. You just have to adapt your schedule a little bit. A little less time to get stuff done the following week.

But I'm excited. We have a chance to play on opening weekend. The only game on Sunday at noon. So be a lot

of eyes on the Scarlet Knights.

Q. How are you guys doing health-wise coming out of training camp and are there any key players or guys with injury that could prevent them from playing on Sunday?

GREG SCHIANO: I guess now you guys are familiar with the report that's going to come out season Saturdays, two hours before kickoff. I think we are just going to go to that from now on, two hours before, it will be announced. That's going to kind of be the standard now in the Big Ten, which I think is a good start.

I think we need to do more. We need to make sure we protect the student athletes. With gambling really growing the way it has, you know, when that information becomes so valuable, you know, hopefully we're starting something here that will grow.

My experience in the National Football League, I think they are doing a good job with that with the way that they get the information out. I don't know if we have to do it like they do, but I think Commissioner Petitti is right on board. We are going to get this thing rolling and we'll continue to grow, and I think we'll be a leader in that fashion.

Q. To open up the season in a home environment at SHI Stadium, and several home games to start the year, how much of a boost is that for you guys at home?

GREG SCHIANO: I love playing at home obviously. Love playing at SHI Stadium. Love our fans. I'm sure they will bring a huge home-field advantage this week. Can't wait. Can't wait to get back there with them. I've been here a long time, a lot of years. I've seen the good, the bad and the ugly. But we have some very loyal fans.

And we're going to provide what they are looking for. I believe that over time, it's a steady growth and we are going to continue to grow, and like I've said before, we are going to get it back to where it needs to be and beyond but it's a journey, and we're all on that journey together, our fans, our team, the university, the state.

Q. You have a lot of depth at running back. How do you foresee carries being split up on Sunday or do you see a workhorse-type game, a committee?

GREG SCHIANO: Whatever gives us the best chance to win, that's how we're going to do it. How I predict that, you always go into the game with a plan but do you know how things are going to change during the game? No, you don't know. You have to be prepared to adapt and we will be

prepared to do that.

Again, playing time, all those things come down to what gives us the best chance to win.

Q. What did you see from Jackson in camp, the way he got acclimated to the team and to the offense?

GREG SCHIANO: JaQuae did a good job. Again he just started in the summer. It's not like he's been here for a while. He had to learn the playbook and how we condition and how we train and how we do everything. I think he's really done a good job at that. I think his progress will continue throughout the year but he's very talented, so we are grateful to have him.

Q. Three hot topics by you, you already addressed them with Harbaugh's comments and the injure report. The first down rule, some talk after the first weekend of college football. How do you think that will impact the game? Have you guys prepared for it in training camp and what's your overall thoughts on it?

GREG SCHIANO: I think you're going to have less plays. What I've read and what I've seen, there's going to be overall less possessions, which obviously is less plays. How that affects our game, we're both playing by the same rules, so I think it will be negligible -- I won't even try to say it, but it won't be a big impact on the game. It will just be what it is.

Q. This will be your 15th season opener at Rutgers. Still get that excitement level? Still get that energy and buzz? How is it different than 2001?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, never been more focused than I am today. Never been more excited than I am today about this team. We have had some great teams here, some good teams, and some not so good teams. Some good teams.

I love coaching this team and our staff and being back here at Rutgers, in New Jersey, my home state. I always tell players, don't wish away time. Use every second that you have to prepare, prepare, and then prepare through the event. So I'm trying to abide by my own advice. But I'm really excited to get it started and to do it at home, as the only Big Ten game in the country, that's fun.

Q. What do you expect to see out of more veteran players on the defensive side of the ball, guys who have been with the program for a long time?

GREG SCHIANO: There's several of them and it's nice. I've talked to you guy about this, that I look at it as a

pipeline. They are not all the way to the end of the pipeline but they are getting close. We have some guys that came in here, a guy like Aaron Lewis, came in here at 6-5, 212 pounds and now he's 6-5, 262 pounds. That's a pretty big jump, right.

You play that out over a bunch of guys: Powell, Jennings, you just go down, Robert Longerbeam, Max Melton. Now they are all starting to become grown ups. Are they at that full development stage in not yet but it's getting closer and closer. It's been my experience when you get the guys on the back end of that pipeline if they are really working the way these guys are, that they are going to play well, so I expect them to play well and we need them to play well to win.

Thanks, guys. Appreciate it.

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