

# Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

## Greg Schiano

### Postgame Press Conference

Rutgers 24, Northwestern 7

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out here on Labor Day Sunday. A couple things I want to touch base with you on.

First off, Marquise Watson had to miss the game today due to a health situation but our prayers go out to him. Optimistic he's going to be back with us and be okay, but that was really hard for him and really hard for the D-Linemen. They have a unique relationship, that group, I was really proud of the D-Linemen the way they handled it. Coach Jared Keyte stepped in and did an incredible job, so I'm proud of the D-Line for the way they come together and didn't let that have an effect.

Really grateful for our fans, and to come out on a day like this, it was a scorcher, especially our students. I tell you what, that's unbelievable, 12 o'clock game on a Sunday on Labor Day in that student section is awesome. They don't start classes until Tuesday. I just think that's really cool.

So with that, I'll open up for questions.

#### Q. 22 yards on the ground -- total team effort?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, it's body blows. We just kind of kept hitting them in the gut. They are good up front. They do some things that are unique stunting their front, and we knew it was going to be a challenge to run the ball but we were committed to doing it.

Again I think we missed a few big, big runs by a fingernail. So we have to get that cleaned up and we'll go to work on that tomorrow.

#### Q. What did you like best about Gavin's performance today?

GREG SCHIANO: He played a really clean game. I think he played relaxed, confident, because of his preparation. Thought he was very decisive.



The other thing he did that stood out to me is he let the bad plays die. Saw him throw a few away. Saw him tucking and run. That to me is a sign of maturation.

#### Q. Kyle and Jason out of the backfield, can you talk about them and the status?

GREG SCHIANO: Say that again, buddy.

#### Q. Can you talk about the running backs, Kyle and Jason out of the backfield, without Sam and Aaron, can you talk about their performance and where things stand with Sam and Aaron?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah. So Ja'shon Benjamin, a true freshman out of Pahokee, Florida; I thought this scene was not too big. He was close to popping a few, and I think that Kyle just played like the veteran leader that he is. He played tough. He ran well. He protected well. He was on the punt block team. I mean, he did a lot today, and he did a lot well.

Sam and Aaron are both going to be okay but they just weren't ready. Sam probably in a pinch could have gone, but he hasn't practiced very much. He seemed to be good at the beginning, and then, you know, we had a little setback, but I think we are back on track now with him.

Aaron had something just late in the week. He was all set to go, and then we got Shorty back, Salaam, we got him back just a couple days ago. He had been down with a little leg situation.

So yeah, it's been a little bit of musical chairs. I think Coach Ciarrocca and the offensive staff did a great job. There were some other guys out on offense, as well; and juggling the people and making sure we had guys in the game that knew what we were doing. I'm anxious to get everybody going and get going at full strength soon.

#### Q. We talked a lot in training camp about how good the defense could be. Today, the number of guys that made an impact, how encouraging is that to start the season?

GREG SCHIANO: That was our plan we talked about, we



are going to roll a lot of guys on defense. I think you're going to see even more roll as some young guys get a little more experienced. I'd rather play a guy a month late than a day early because it can have an effect on them. But I think we'll even roll more.

But that was key today, as hot as it was, we had a couple issues; I'm sure they did with hydration and cramping and that stuff. We work so hard at not allowing that to be an issue. But a day like today is brutal, especially on that turf. I don't know what the final temperature was but when you go on that surface, it's another 12 to 15 degrees warmer.

So that was a great job by our training staff and our strength staff and our nutrition staff by keeping those guys out there on the field.

**Q. In the small picture, you guys go for the three fourth downs in the first quarter, obviously they have to be makeable distances, but in the big picture was that setting an aggressive tone for the game, for the season, to go for those three fourth downs and extend drives like that?**

GREG SCHIANO: I wish I could tell you because it would write a nice story. But no, it was just what the plan was to win the game today. That's what we do.

**Q. Naseim, do you have an update on him? And Wesley Bailey, looked like he got dinged; looked like he played in the first half but not the second. Do you have an update on the status?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Naseim has an issue, an NCAA issue, and I'm going to hold comment right now on about because I'm about fuming; you could fry an egg on my head with that whole situation. I'll shut up before I get in trouble. Naseim, got me so mad, I lost track. What was the other guy you wanted to talk about?

Wesley, yeah, I think it's not something that's serious but I think it be something that will hurt a lot more tomorrow than it does today. We'll see. Obviously we have this short week. So, great to have the national audience and the only game in town, but not so great to have a six-day week coming up. But we'll do everything we can to get our guys ready.

**Q. With all the preparation for this game and the detail that you have on the first game with the team that's gone through what they have gone through, is there a concern now that the game is over?**

GREG SCHIANO: I was really confident in our guys. I really didn't have a lot -- the temperature and the hydration

really, really concerned me, because you can do everything right sometimes and still just not be able to stay ahead of it. That was my biggest concern, and it wasn't any disrespect to our opponent. I just saw how our team worked and how our leadership led during training camp. We had a really tough training camp; those of you that covered it know that.

But the leadership of our team ran the team, and that's why they were able to go out and play. Like I said, I thought Gavin played a clean game; I thought our team played a clean game, and that's attributable to those leaders.

**Q. What did you think of your offensive line play today? Seemed like you rotated a little bit and had a new center. Can you just talk about how you got to the lineup that you did on the offensive line and your thoughts overall on the performance?**

GREG SCHIANO: We are always going to put a lineup out there that we think gives us the best chance to win, that's it. There's no other criteria that go into it. What gives us the best chance to win today. That's why the line was what it was.

We did rotate some guys in there, you're right, and then we had some forced rotations. We had a little cramping going on. But we just got to keep going. I think the style of football we want to play, we have to play better than we did today up front. That, I know. But we will, Coach Flaherty and Coach Ciarrocca, we are going to keep working on that and get better.

Like I said, they do some things that are a little bit different but that's no excuse. We knew they were going to do it, and they did it. We have to be able to block it.

**Q. Obviously four seasons in a row now with the season-opening win with the first time ever hosting a Big Ten Conference game to start the season. Do you feel any added significance to already having a 1-0 conference record Week 1 of the season?**

GREG SCHIANO: Big Ten wins are tough to come by. No doubt it's absolutely different, conference win. Wins are all good, but conference wins, they are better.

**Q. 17 first quarter points and then 24 overall, tying the high mark of last season. What did you feel, is it something about the system that let Gavin have such a successful game or just the system getting instilled that Kirk wants to bring here?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think the system without a doubt, what Kirk brought here and how we are doing it, but it's the

people. You know, anybody can have a system. It's the people and it's the commitment.

Gavin has worked tremendously hard to learn what Kirk wants him to do. He still has a ton of work to do. But I just felt like there was a different level of focus that I have not seen out of him today and a different level of composure that I have not seen.

So that was a step we needed to take. But I was confident. He did it all camp, so I was confident he would do it today, but again, you never know until the lights come on.

**Q. Along those lines offense, is this what you wanted, expected to see from Kirk's offense? This the style of offense the fans will see the next 11 games?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think every game is different. Whatever gives us of the best chance to win is the kind of offense we're going to run. But we definitely want to have that physical nature.

And I think there's some things that we did not run today that I think are going to be good for us down the road, so that's good that we didn't have to use it. So I'm encouraged. But we've got a long way to go and we don't have a long time to get there.

**Q. Ian, the touchdown in the first quarter, what did he show you throughout camp to kind of get the opportunity that he did today and what do you feel like his trajectory could be?**

GREG SCHIANO: Ian is strong, true freshman, St. Anthony's High School out in Long Island. I think he is really a future bright, bright prospect.

In training camp, he didn't miss a practice. He just worked his tail off every day, and Coach Brock has done a very good job bringing him along. Coach Brock is a seasoned veteran. He didn't put too much on his plate at first and then just kept loading him up.

I'm encouraged there. I think we have a good group of young receivers, and then we have a good group of older receivers and we have to kind of mesh them together when they all get healthy and when we get off the NCAA deal. But yeah I think that's an encouraging factor.

**Q. There were a couple times last year where your teams went up in the first half and then kind of the performance tapered off. What did you see today? Seemed like the defense seemingly built and built as the game went on?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think the focus, not letting the circumstance dictate their behavior. Just the focus of what we were going to do and how we were going to do it, we call it chop, but the ability to chop the moment throughout 60 minutes of football, that's what our goal is. And if you can do that, whether you win or you lose, then you know did you your best.

And that's what our goal is, is we can't control who is on the other side now, but we can control, do we stay in the moment and chop the moment. And that's, for the most part, I thought we did that today. I thought there was a little bit of maturity about our team today.

**Q. Secondary had two interceptions in this game and a lot of other impact plays. What did you make of how that position group today?**

GREG SCHIANO: I thought they played well. I thought we had a chance for a third that was a makeable one, and that's our goal. We always want to try to get three takeaways.

Between the takeaways and the offense not turning the ball over, I thought going into the game, I told the team, if we don't turn it over, we're going to win this game. I don't guarantee many things but I guaranteed that.

**Q. Rutgers controlled the possession time 46 minutes to 22 minutes. What was the importance of controlling the clock in this one?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, on a hot day like this, right, it tires the defense out for sure. I think the kicking game had a big part to do with that as well. We broke in three brand new starters in the kicking game, and one guy came back and kicked good kickoffs, talking about Jude. Every one of those was bombs, right. That's what we're looking for. That's good stuff.

Flynn Appleby, his first game as a starter, and I thought he did really a very, very solid job.

Jai Patel, again, solid, solid job, a lot to improve on.

And then Jake, snapping the ball.

So infuse three new starters as your specialists and to be able to play a clean game on special teams, that was real important. So I think that has part of the time possession. You know, being able to use those kicking plays to kind of mold the game the way you want to mold it. Some good stuff there.

Overall, I think it was really important, all three phases,



played focused football, and that's what we need it do.  
That's what we can control.

Again, I want to thank our fans. Incredible, incredible turnout for a hot, hot Labor Day weekend Sunday, and our students. I went and talked to those students on Thursday -- I get my days screwed up with this Sunday game, but they were great, they were great. Bunch of freshmen, first-year students in their red block R shirts and you fill the RAC with all those kids, it was awesome. And then to see them all show up out here; I asked them to, and they did. I can't thank them enough.

So let's start that tradition, that would be great. Pack that student section every week.

Thanks, guys.

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