

# Rutgers University Football Media Conference

Monday, September 18, 2023

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

## Greg Schiano

### Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out. Excited about the opportunity. I want to first congratulate Kyle Monangai for being named Big Ten offensive Player of the Week. He certainly deserves it. He's had so far a great start to the season, and really represents I think what our football team is about. Works extremely hard. Lives in the moment, chops the moment and it's paying off for him. Excited for him and for our team.

Great challenge, No. 2 team in the country. Probably could be easily ranked No. 1; they are that good. There's absolutely no weaknesses in this team.

When you look at what they have, their offensive line, two-time reigning Joe Moore Offensive Line of the Year, an experienced quarterback who can both run and throw accurately, deep, do all the things -- he's a future first rounder at quarterback. They have two running backs that are as good as anybody's in the country. A slew of receivers, tight ends.

Flip it over to defense: Their defensive line is maybe the best in the country. Big, physical, deep. Linebackers run and hit. Secondary covers well. Kicking game, they have specialists that are arguably the best in the nation.

So definitely a tall order, but we need to make sure we take care of us. That's what we need to do and that's what we'll do in preparation, and then great opportunity to go out to Ann Arbor and go play. So looking forward to it.

**Q. Going back to Kyle, what have you seen from him in the way he's developed in the time that you've had him and what he's done to become a formidable Big Ten back?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, he's worked incredibly hard. Both his physical development and his strength and conditioning area. Become a student of the game.

Oftentimes, running backs can get away just by being naturally talented guys, and he is naturally talented. But he's worked very hard to understand run schemes,

understand pass protections, and most importantly, understand defenses.

So I think he's now what I would call a guy who is in that final quarter of his development here, and those are the guys that we need.

**Q. You mentioned Kyle being Player of the Week. Seems like there's some more eyeballs on your program after starting 3-0. Can you feel any extra excitement from your players, from the fans going into this huge game?**

GREG SCHIANO: You know, I know our players are excited about playing it. It's definitely a great test for us. I think we are still kind of isolated in this building in what we do. I don't look at stuff, so I wouldn't know that. I don't see very many people other than our staff, our players and my wife.

So I can't tell you that. I'm probably the worst one in the world to ask about that. But I'm excited. So we have a great opportunity.

**Q. Five of the last six halves, two games in a row, 21 and 20 -- and first half of last year. Why do you think that is? What has allowed you guys to have success and what do you think is missing?**

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know. If I knew what was missing, you know, I would have employed it and done it and hopefully won the game.

But yeah, I think, you know, one thing about our guys, they work so hard, and they are so focused that given the opportunity, they are going to be ready to go. Will it be good enough? Heck, I don't know. But we are to go give it everything we've got.

**Q. First road trip of the year, going to the Big House, over 100,000 fans, very intimidating environment to play. How do you as a coach sort of prepare your players the best you can to face that kind of environment??**

GREG SCHIANO: I love going on the road, especially the



first time when you take your 74 guys you're allowed to bring and your staff, and it's just you and you go on the road. Nothing like it. When you come out of that tunnel and everybody is against you and it's just your guys, that's a special feeling, one that I think every athlete that's done it appreciates it and enjoys it.

Again, great opportunity. Coached many times. Excited about the chance.

**Q. Is there anything different the team does during practice and before the game?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, we flip the speakers. So when we are home, the speakers are pointed towards the defensive field because as you know, it's deafening out there on defense on third down. You can't hear yourself think. Everything has to be hand signals and nonverbal communications.

Now you flip the speakers and put them on the offensive field because when you're on the road, the noise is going to hit you on the offense. So there's some certain things you need to do, nonverbal communications, silent counts, those kind of things that, we'll put into play. But we have worked on those in training camp and ready to do that.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about two offensive lineman in particular, Taj White, red-shirt freshman stepped up and played significant snaps at right tackle in place of Needham who was missing. And then Bryan Felter played a lot of snaps this year, didn't play much last year but playing a lot more this season.**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I think those are all good guys, and the guy I would add would be Kamar Missouri. Between Kamar Missouri and Taj White, they did a really good job of ham-and-egging it and filling in for Ty Needham.

I don't think you can say that we really noticed that that was a huge dropoff. Sometimes as I've told you guys before, it's not always a one-for-one fill-in. I thought they did a great job together. They kind of split their reps almost down the middle, so I thought it was very good.

Bryan Felter has improved, and I think he does a nice job of mixing in there with Curtis Dunlap, and you know, again, I'm not opposed to that. Coach Flaherty is right along the lines with me, and so is Coach Ciarrocca, if that's what gives us the best chance to win; if five guys gave us the best chance to win we would only play five.

But right now if we feel this the best mix and gives us a chance to win, and so, yeah, encouraged by all those guys

and hopefully they continue to get better and better.

**Q. Right after the Northwestern game you said there some plays you didn't run on offense that could be useful down the road. Curious, if you use think of those plays against Temple and Virginia Tech? And if not, is this game against Michigan, top five team, is that a game where you can open up the playbook so to speak?**

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know if it's open it up or not. I mean, there are certain plays that you continue to invest and if you don't run them, then you continue to invest in them again and you build cumulative reps. There are certain plays that you're going to run every week, and everybody knows it and those are the plays that you hang your hat on.

But then there's other plays that you practice that are more situational, and if you don't use them, that's great because then you build more reps, you put more equity into them. So yeah, there's some things that are out there.

But we are what we are. Like I said, we are going out there. We are going to do what we do. You always make game plan tweaks to fit who you are playing but that's the way we roll.

**Q. When you were recruiting Flip Dixon, what stood out to make you know he was going to be a guy who could really help elevate the defense?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, Joe knew him obviously from the time at Minnesota. So when we found out that he was in the portal, that was an immediate guy that we wanted to go recruit and recruit hard. And Joe recruited him out of high school, actually. He knew him better than anybody. And I say Joe; Coach Harasymiak. He was 100 percent sure, and then we put every bit of effort we could into him. He's such a great -- not only a real fine player, but a great person, a great guy to have on the team.

**Q. Way back in your first stint, there was a lot of excitement and great times. Huge games against Louisville comes to mind. How did you know your team was ready for a moment like that, and does it feel like that at all right now?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, you don't really ever know. Coaches say, well, I knew we were -- Coach Bryant, who was one of the best to ever coach the game said well into his career, "I can't tell you if my teams are ready. We'll see." And if he couldn't, and Coach Paterno and those guys couldn't, there's no reason I can.

It's human element. You never know. You just go out and play it. But what you do know is how much you invested in the preparation and how much you invest all the way right through the game, not to it, but through it. Every meeting on the sideline, in between series, everything at halftime, all that stuff is critical to winning and losing.

Exciting, you put yourself in position to play these games, and then you've got to go play them, right. You do invest a whole lot before, but then there's that three and a half, four hours where you've got to go get it done, and that's -- you know, are we ready to do that? I can't tell you that. I hope we are. But if we're not, then we will be. We've just got to keep working at it.

But I like this team. I like their mindset. I like the leadership. Let's go play it.

**Q. I know you talked in the opening part of the press conference about Kyle Monangai and the start he's had. How do you feel about the rest of the running back room is coming along as you move further along into the season?**

GREG SCHIANO: Very encouraged. Great question. Very encouraged by the running back room. You go right through it: Sam Brown is coming back from his surgery, and I think he's getting closer and closer to being in game shape.

Ja'shon Benjamin has already showed us he's a Big Ten running back. He's done things at a level freshmen rarely do, most important, take care of the football. He's really, really stout with that.

Aaron Young is working his way back from an injury, so when he's ready to go, I think he'll give us some flexibility here in some situations.

And then Al-Shadee Salaam has also worked his way back from injury, and I think he's ready to go and gives us real position flexibility.

So I think those five guys are really a good group of running backs.

**Q. Two-parter on Gavin. How do you think he's done as a passer through the first three games? Are you satisfied with the progress he's made in that respect? And going on the road, biggest atmosphere he's played in, I don't think he played at Ohio State last year. How do you think he'll do in an environment like that, and can he continue that progress on the road?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think Gavin is improving by the day. I

thought did he a great job Saturday. You know, three games into the season, he's protected the football the way we've asked him. He had some bad luck Saturday. He had three drops and two route errors, two route busts.

So you know, if you take those five, and maybe you call four of them completions, that really changes the complexion. We didn't throw much. We didn't need to throw much. We were running effectively, and that was kind of game it was. Every game is different. We can throw the ball 60 times this week. You never know what it's going to take, but you do whatever it takes to win the game, or gives you the best chance to win the game.

But I'm pleased with his development. He continues to really prepare his tail off, and I think his arrow, his nose is pointed up.

**Q. Looking back, you've coached against Harbaugh in the NFL and you've coached against him at the college level. What kind of relationship, if any, do you have with him?**

GREG SCHIANO: I have a lot of respect for Jim. He's an excellent football coach. Knows how to get the most out of his organization. I don't have a close relationship. It's more professional. But ultimate respect.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...