

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

Monday, September 25, 2023

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out on this rainy day. Couple things. Really excited, we had 55 players coming back from the 1976 undefeated team which is being inducted into the Hall of Fame, the Rutgers Hall of Fame, so it will be great to have them back and have them down on the field and all that kind of stuff and be able to see them.

The other thing, this week is the Coach To Cure M.D. Week when across America, coaches will be wearing the patch. It's certainly personal here. Matt DeRiggi, who is an intern for us, is battling the disease, but I think it's great that the Coaches Association does that. Proud to take part in that.

So now we are on to Wagner and our goal is the same as it's been every week, to be 1-0 at the end of the Wagner season. Will put a lot of work into it and let it fly on Saturday and see where the chips fall.

Q. When you look at you're four games into the season and you look at Gavin's week-to-week performances, what does it say to you about the way he's continuing to improve, particularly when it comes to his decisiveness?

GREG SCHIANO: I think what Gavin is doing is he's getting a better and better understanding of exactly what we want to do on offense, what his job is, and he's trusting his training. He's trained very hard.

All off-season, I've told you guys that with Coach Ciarrocca, he's trusting that training under the fire, and he just needs to continue to do that. He's got the ability for sure. He's done a nice job not only running the ball -- not only throwing the ball but running the ball and being a complete quarterback.

So we just need to keep building on that.

Q. You start the season with three crucial home games, and you just played a very physical game against Michigan. Your next two Big 10 opponents are



coming off a bye, and you don't get a bye until the eighth or ninth week against the season. Does this game against Wagner come at the right time for you guys, I don't want to say a stopgap, but does it come at the right time for you guys?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I like continuing to play. When I talk about Wagner's team, I have the upmost respect for Coach Masella. I've known him a long time. He's a guy when I was breaking into the business, was one of the guys I looked up to, and he's done a really good job of mixing the portal and high school. So he's got transfers.

You know, the last time they played here they were coming off a 21-game losing streak, and now they are coming off a two-game winning streak and they are sitting on top of their league in first place. So he's done an incredible job building that program.

And they have players on that team that when I watch the tape, I said you know what, this is going to be a battle. I don't know why we can think of anything else. You're looking at a guy early in his career, you know, was beat by, what do they call it, FCS team and it was hard. Trust me, this week our preparation will be as hard as it's been. Just a little bit harder because that's what you do each week is you try to out-prepare yourself. We know exactly what we're walking into and we've got to get ready.

Q. Ireland Brown, Gus Zilinskas, splitting time at center, what do you make of their process and where the battle stands in the room?

GREG SCHIANO: It's just competition. Gus has played considerably more than IB so far. It doesn't mean that it's going to stay that way. It just means that that's how it's played out in practice each week and how it's played out in the game.

I think competition is going to bring the best to the top, but we are going to continue to have competition in several spots on the offensive line.

Q. Christian Dremel, obviously having a bigger role in the offense this year. What have you seen in the time you've gotten to know him till now and how he's



continued to improve?

GREG SCHIANO: Christian has always been from the day I arrived an incredibly hard worker, a guy who loves football and intensely focused. He's had some tough luck with injuries. He's gotten to the point where he's ready to go, and then he had some freaky things.

I'm really happy for him. Happy for us because he's performing at a high level, but I'm happy for him because he deserves it. There's not many people, if any, that work harder than he does.

Q. Piggyback on the question about Gavin. Where do you think he is in his overall development as a quarterback, and what do you think the next step is, the next tier of that development?

GREG SCHIANO: That's a hard one, where is he in the overall. Like no one knows how good someone can get, right. I just look at Gavin's trajectory, as long as he keeps the nose up he's going to get to a level where we all want him to. He's learning every single game. I'm not going to get into specifics but there's some things on the tape that you say, oh, great, that's something we've been talking to him about, and he got it.

And you know, that's what we need to continue to do. You can't have any backslides. You can't have any progress-halters right now because he's on the climb and he's got to continue to stay that way. I'm confident that between he and Coach Ciarrocca that that will continue.

Q. The transfer portal era, this is the fifth game of the season, so redshirt tracking time. Having another year under your belt, understanding the transfer portal, does that change your calculus whether you will redshirt guys or not, or is it a matter of thinking transfer at any time, it's less of a priority than it used to be?

GREG SCHIANO: You just sent a word that send shivers down my spine, "calculus." That's one I didn't enjoy. A big, fat red book. I had to take it in the business program, and I had a tutor every night and got through by the skin of my teeth. So let's not use that word.

Bu yeah, I constantly track who is playing. The day of the redshirt, who knows. I don't know if you recruit the right players, are they going to stay for five years? Maybe, maybe not. There's so many things to balance. I don't think there's ever a sure thing, though. I think you just have to go with what you believe, but we track it all. I have a list every week, how many games each guy has played in, that whole deal.

You know, the rule change, they can play in four, but then they can also play in any postseason games and they don't count, so that's a big change. So you don't have to leave one.

That aggravated me last year, though, because you know, we didn't know if we were going to be in the postseason or not, and you can't watching it and then retroactively, they said, well, you know what the Bowl game doesn't count.

So hopefully this is what it is, it's four and then you can play in the postseason.

Q. What have you seen out of JaQuae Jackson's performance so far this season and how he plays in the whole of the offense?

GREG SCHIANO: JaQuae and getting better every week. Unfortunately he had a little injury during training camp that slowed him down. I wish that he had had all those practice repetitions to get in the groove with the offense. He didn't start here until the summer, midsummer, because of the portal and his recruitment. It's not like he was here all spring where he got cumulative repetitions.

So then we get to training camp and he's doing well, and then he has -- he's forced to take a little break because of injury. And then that -- you know, I don't think we're seeing yet the guy we are going to see in the next four weeks. I think he's going to continue to get better and better which is good, I guess. But I would have liked to have had it earlier.

Q. Talking about getting Samuel Brown up to game speed and in game shape, how close is he to being the Sam Brown that we saw last season?

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know if it's last season or what, but I look at it as, is he ready; has he had enough repetitions that you can go in and know that he'll do things, muscle memory, and not have to think about it.

Because when you're thinking about stuff that you need to be able to do just naturally, you open yourself up to two things: You open yourself up to injury, No. 1 because you are not playing as fast as usually do. And you also open yourself to not performing the way you're capable of.

I think this week of practice now, it will be the third consecutive. That's getting into that sweet spot now where hopefully he can play more.

Q. Getting Aaron Young back, how big is that for the offense, having more depth in the running back room,

but also his versatility? I assume he has to get built back up?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, he is. He's getting built back up as we speak. He does bring great versatility. I think he can do a lot of different things, and as he gets more and more in that zone, so to speak, I think there be more roles for him to play.

Q. I got a D in calculus when I went here just for the record. That's part of why I'm here.

GREG SCHIANO: I gotcha maybe me, too.

Q. We touched on the offensive line rotation. You guys changes guys in every spot except left tackle against Michigan, understanding that every decision is what you guys thing is what gives you the best chance to win, and you've said if you had five guys that would be the ideal scenario. What are some of the reasons why you guys have to rotate? Is it fatigue? Is it performance-related? What are some of the things you see coming up that you have to bring guys up?

GREG SCHIANO: Probably the two things you said, fatigue and performance. Those are things that would cause someone to be subbed. Yeah, that's really a good summary.

Q. When Chris Long got injured, I don't think it seemed like a very long-term injury. Can you maybe talk about if it's going to be long-term or you're expecting him back soon-ish?

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know what soon-ish is. I think it's been, what, two weeks now? Three? Two. Two weeks now. We're hopeful he'll start to work on his recovery back here. He needed to rest for a little bit. But we are getting some guys back third page are going to help, especially in the receiver room.

So yeah, I think Jessie Ofurie will be back this week. Famah Toure is going to be back. So some young kids we were very encouraged with in training camp; they got injured, and hopefully they can get some reps in practice.

Again, they are not where they are going to need to be but maybe they don't need to go in and play maybe three, four or five plays. We'll see. We're going to mix it up but Chris I think is on the mend. Just got to wait till the trainers and doctors tell me he can start back up.

Appreciate it. Really proud of our kids and now you're into the season, and we're four weeks in right now, and I think they are doing a good job working in the classroom and

everybody for gets that they are college football players. This is where tests start. This is where papers are due. You know, our academic advisors and all the people, Jeff Jones, and all the people who work with them, our PDs, our player development guys, are doing a great job.

But this is where it starts to become tough on them, and it wears them down; they are up late doing papers. I've said it many times: This is a very challenging school. The guys they are competing with in the classroom and the gals they are competing in the classroom are really serious, serious students.

So my hat's off to them because so far, they are doing a great job, and I encourage them to keep doing that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...