

# Rutgers University Football

## Media Conference

Monday, October 9, 2023

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

## Greg Schiano

### Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out. Really a tough one to swallow Saturday but true to our form, our guys came out yesterday and we had a really good practice after we went through the autopsy of the game. We're 0-1 in the Wisconsin season but the great thing is we've got a chance this week to go 1-0 in the Michigan State season and that's what we started to do last night.

So I'll open it up for questions.

**Q. With the uncertainty with their quarterback situation, what's the challenge of preparing for that type of uncertainty, especially when one guy doesn't have a whole lot of film to evaluate?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, we have a scouting report on him. We have some things that were public access video. I knew of him when he was at St. John Bosco in Fullerton, California. So if they end up playing him, he's more of a bigger pocket passer type guy where Kim is probably a little more mobile. But I don't see huge changes in their offense.

Now, they had a bye week just as Wisconsin had a bye week which is interesting that you have two in a row that have bye weeks. That always makes me think a little bit.

So they have the opportunity and especially with the change. What went on, certainly, was a traumatic experience out in East Lansing and to have a chance to catch their breath, you know, and as a staff to really circle up and say, okay, what do we want to do for this back half of the season, who do we want to be, how do we want to run this thing, where as, I'm sure, initially it was just trying to keep everything going.

So is there a guarantee they will be in the same thing? I can't tell you that. But we'll be prepared for both.

**Q. At the midway point, what's your overall assessment where your program is?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I think you know by now, I don't



go there while we're in it because I literally live in we're 0-1 last week. So my assessment is we were 0-1 and disappointed in that. But encouraged by the team of guys we have, by the leadership on our team, the way they came back to work.

You know, I said something after the game that I really feel, we're just not there yet. We're getting there. We're a much improved team. We'll get there. We've just got to keep going. You know, got to be fortunate, stay healthy. We've lost some guys already and we don't have great depth at some positions, so we have to stay healthy. But we are getting better and we'll get better this week. Will it be good enough? I hope so. I hope so.

**Q. What's your assessment of how the offensive line performed in pass blocking and more on the run side?**

GREG SCHIANO: You know what, we did some good things and then we did some things that were really poor. So you know, when you mesh that out, it's usually not going to be good enough.

Inconsistent would probably be the No. 1 word that comes to mind. We need to build consistency. I know we're capable. I know that. We just need to do it under pressure in a game against really good personnel. We're going to get that chance this week. Michigan State's front four is as stout and as athletic and disruptive as we'll face all year, so it's a huge challenge.

**Q. We saw Reggie Sutton play some significant snaps on Saturday. Just your overall evaluation of him, and is there any chance that he could be elevated into a starting role?**

GREG SCHIANO: There's always a chance. Competition is competition. And he's getting more reps. We have to -- you know, to me, some of my NFL experience and some of our coach's NFL experience, will come into play with Reggie because Reggie is much like a 30-something-year-old lineman in the league that, you know, you get him ready, you get him what he needs during the week, and then you let him go as much as you can. And when he tells you he can't go any more, then you've got to pull him.



So we're working towards that. The thing that Reggie brings, he's really a good player. He understands the game. You know, he's mature. You don't do what he has done if you're not one of the toughest son of a guns on the planet. You get a lot when he's in there. Just got to, like I said, you've got to manage it.

**Q. Simon stepped into a difficult role on Saturday. Can you just speak to him and his performance, and also just kind of the role that he has on the team and what you've seen from him this year on and off the field?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I was pleased with the way Evan went in there, and I knew he would. Evan doesn't sweat anything. That's one thing he's got going. He's a cool customer. And I thought it was great that first play in there, Curt throws the ball, calls a pass. That shows you how much we believe in him, and he's done a great job of just preparing as if he's a starter.

He doesn't get as many reps as the starter, but preparing and making every rep count and sure enough, when the opportunity came, he made the most of it. I was pleased. And I think that the way he works, they have a really good quarterback room. All of those guys support each other. When Johnny went in the week before, everybody was so excited for him. So I think they have got something special in that room and it's led by Coach Ciarrocca.

**Q. Where is Sam Brown in terms of him getting built back up into full gameship?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Sam Brown, interesting, because October 22nd, 2022 is when he got hurt. He had pretty significant surgery. Had a little bit of a setback over the course of the summer and missed some valuable time. He's getting caught up right now and as he gets more and more caught up, Sam is a really good player.

And the good thing is, we have guys that stepped up, and I think Kyle is, what, third or fourth in the league in rushing and we have good backs. I think Sam is one of those. He'll get more time. He just needs to get a little more work in practice.

But we as you guys know, we still have half a season left. He didn't start practicing in earnest until the first game week, so he missed all of those practices, 15 in the spring, 25 in training camp. So it wasn't until game week that he started. We've just got to give him a chance to get his feet back under him and he's going to do just fine. You know he's already gone in and did some good things.

We've just got to -- look, I thought about it Saturday, I did. We were struggling a little bit and said maybe a fresh blast. But it was one of those games where there wasn't very many plays. So you know, it's we're going to do this. Well, let Kyle do it; he's practiced that. I think you guys know the importance that I put on practice and cumulative repetitions. So we'll get Sam back.

**Q. I know Michigan State season is important to focus one game at a time. Does it feel extra important this week knowing where you guys are in the season, 4-2, coming off a tough loss, does it feel like a must-win?**

GREG SCHIANO: I never, ever -- what's "must"? I just never have felt that in my career. I put -- every game is a must-win to me. I wake up in the morning, and that's all I think about, and I go to bed, so what more can you do?

To me, every game is you give it every single thing you've got. If you start looking at this game is more important than that game; if I coach difference against Wagner than I did against Wisconsin, then shame on me, they should get rid of me.

The preparation is the same. The attitude's the same. The focus is the same. That's what professionals do, and that's what I fully expect from our staff every week. This is a big game. It's a Big Ten game. They are all big.

But you know, you work all year, as I've said to the players and as I've said to you guys, it's a long year to get to the season and only get 12 guaranteed games. I never understood how anybody -- that's a long -- a lot of work year-round to just get to those 12.

So every one of them is a must-win to me.

**Q. Aaron Lewis and Wes Bailey both tied for the team lead in terms of sacks. How do you think of the job that they have both done in terms of pressuring the quarterback?**

GREG SCHIANO: Again, I think our front has a chance to be really good. I think the cumulative repetitions, again, are going to pay off in the back half of the season if we can stay healthy. They are good players and as they hone it more and more, hone their skills and abilities trust their thing, they are just going to keep making more and more plays.

So we just need to ride that front. We have eight to ten guys that we play on the defensive front, and we try to keep them all fresh and keep rotating them. But certainly when you have guys like Aaron and Wes, they are going to get a little more, because they are, I think top, top part of

the league players.

**Q. "Yet," twice, we are waiting for it "yet." How did Greg Schiano 1.0, your first time here, impact how you are looking at "yet" and seeing when "yet" is going to happen?**

GREG SCHIANO: That's a good question. I really -- I think -- I don't look back at the last time very much and say, well, this happened last time, so this is going to happen this time.

I think all of us are accumulation of our experiences. So that whole 11 years, plus everything that happened between when I left and came back, that all comes into play in determining where we are and hopefully after all these years of doing this, can see where a team is, and is it on the rise or is it on the level or is it on the decline. I see this team like this right now (indicating upward line on the rise). I see guys that are going to be really good players some day. We're getting them in there. We're sprinkling them in there. And then I see guys that are really good players right now and those are the guys we've got to win with.

I just think that it just takes a little bit more still. There's no magic pill. It's cumulative reps. It's development. I've said it many times, we're a developmental program. You just have to keep developing them and the worm will turn.

**Q. With Gavin where he is in his development and the experience that he now has what changes have you seen from the way he bounces back from adversity and the way he learns from mistakes and things like that?**

GREG SCHIANO: Much better. I think that isn't just, though -- I think everybody likes to make that an emotional thing. I think it's that he knows he's trained, and he knows he's put the time in, and when those plays happen, all right, they made one.

As I always say to them, they are on scholarship, too, guys. You know, those coaches get paid as well. They are not a volunteer team with a bunch of volunteer coaches. That's a Big Ten program, and they are going to make some plays.

As long as you're trained and you believe and you trust your training, I think that gives him confidence to say, well, they got one; I'm getting the next one. And he did. He came back, and as I told him when he came off, I always ask him, "What did you see," because I want to know what he thought. And then I said, "Well, let's keep gunning, Man. Second half, let's go."

**Q. Just wanted to check in on a couple of injuries. Chris Long, how close is he to coming back? Rene Konga missed last week and Tyler Needham, I'm assuming is going to be a little bit more long-term?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, as I always say, I'm going to always refer to the availability report on Saturdays. They are all working their tails off to get back, I promise you that. As soon as they are able, they will be back in.

I think our training staff and our medical staff has done a great job. We have gotten some guys back that, man, quite honestly, I didn't know if we would get them back. So I trust those guys and I think they are doing a good job and I know those players that you mentioned are dying to play, so they will do everything they can in their power to get back.

It's always interesting in a season. You have guys that are healing; you have guys that are freshly injured. You have the whole mix and you've got to try to balance that and make sure distributing the reps in practice is critical for how you play the game. So that's a challenge.

And then, you know, again, I always say it, we are in the heart of it now, right, in the middle of the semester, and these kids are under a lot of pressure academically. This is a tough, tough school academically. They are competing with some of the brightest people in the country. So I know our guys, I can see when they have papers do. They are looking back at you, just like you guys are, and you see that fatigue. And I feel for them.

But you know what, that's what they got to do. You chose to get -- you're going to get a great degree when you leave here but there's a price to pay for that. We've got to watch the injury recovery and we've got to watch guys not getting enough sleep because they are doing their studies. We're trying to help them with all that. I'm proud of the way they are working right now. We have a great opportunity, home coming Saturday, Michigan State coming to our place and I'm looking forward to it.

All right, thank you guys, appreciate you covering us.

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