

Rutgers University Football

Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: Hey, guys, appreciate you coming out. Got a quick turnaround here, out to State College. Huge challenge, one that I know our team is looking forward to. So I'll try to answer your questions.

Q. Third straight week you're going up against an elite defense. What do you see from Penn State's defense and what do they do so well?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, you're right. Third week in a row, really, against a top five defense, three weeks in a row. It's hard to do, right. I guess four and five would be the remaining.

They are really good. They are good at all three levels. They run as well as any defense I've seen in a long time. Their front runs. Their defensive ends run as well as most team's safeties. They really have an unusual group of talent there this year.

So, big challenge. Certainly have our hands full. Working hard to try to figure it out.

Q. I guess they are coming off a situation where they just fired their offensive coordinator. Does that change anything that you're doing or look at that situation differently?

GREG SCHIANO: You know, I don't really know what we can go off of, you know what I mean. I know all the parties involved and I've known, I've known Juwan since he was a kid in high school. His dad was -- I believe he was the athletic director at Glade Central High School down in Florida, so years and years.

They are all good coaches. They will have a great plan put together, I'm sure. You know, when you look at their personnel, that's what I know. They have got two elite running backs, really, really good running backs, a very good offensive line with an elite tackle. They have two or three depending on who is judging, I think, great tight ends. A young quarterback who is as acclaimed as they come and receivers that are definitely on the up.

So yeah, they are a very complete football team. I've said it, I think they have a lot of pieces in place there.

Q. What do you know about how Kyle Monangai is feeling right now injury-wise?

GREG SCHIANO: It's early in the week still with all those injuries, bumps and bruises, whatever you want to call them. I think by Saturday when the availability report comes out, I think we'll have a much better understanding where we are.

Q. You haven't been afraid to bench quarterbacks in the past, whether it's Brian Hart, Tom Savage, guys who went on to have great careers here. Is that anything you've considered doing with Gavin considering some of his struggles in the last two or three weeks, and is that something that can that sometimes help a player in their career?

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know about part two. But part one, no, that's not something I'm considering.

Q. It seems like the team's best games this year is when Gavin was able to be effective running the ball. On Saturday, he wasn't really able to get it going, and only kept it a few times. On those inside zones, does Gavin have the autonomy to pull and run if the aggressive end is crashing, or is that decision made pre-snap?

GREG SCHIANO: It's interesting that you read that question. That was somewhere from your Football 101 or -- yeah, I am not going to get into how we read plays, Richie. I'll never do that. That would be foolish on my part.

You're right, Gavin didn't carry it as much as he has, and in retrospect, maybe we should have, right. There's a lot of -- the tough thing where we are right now is you know, if all of us were together on July 31, and we were hanging out talking and somebody said, okay, you're going to the fourth quarter at Kinnick Stadium and it's 6-0 Iowa, and by the way, you're 6-3, would you take it, would you take it? Would you have taken it in July?



I would have taken it in July. We are a developmental program. We are developing, for sure. We are going like this (indicating upward trajectory).

But let's realize who we are. That's one of the biggest things I talk to our team about. At Rutgers, and I think that meant a lot that have been here longer than I have. So I kind of know about this place. I might not know about every place but I know about this place. And at this place, you've really got to stay focused on who you are.

See, the way we've played the game, has allowed us to be in every single game this year going into the fourth quarter with an opportunity to win. In the past, that wasn't the case. To me, that's an incremental improvement. I know we'd all love to go from 4-8 to 12-0, but it's just not going to work that way at Rutgers. Maybe somewhere else but not here. Maybe if you go into free agency -- I'm sorry, NIL, and get all these players in a swoop because you had a bankroll the size of Detroit, then maybe you would turn it (snapping fingers.)

So we know who we are. I know who we are. And the way we are playing the game right now might not necessarily be the way we play it two years from now when some of these younger players that we think are really promising now are developed, and playing at a different level, then we can play the game differently.

So everything we do right now, whether it's right or wrong that, can be argued, that's the beautiful thing about sports, right. That's why you guys have jobs. You write stuff. It stirs it up. People want to talk about it. That's why I have a job, because people want to come watch it.

But we really think the way we are doing it gives us the best chance to win. It doesn't guarantee us a win. We are not at that point. Hopefully down the road we'll be at that point. That's kind of how we do it.

With your question, it's particular how we're going to read something out. I would never get into that. But I will say that I do agree with you, when he runs the ball, he's been effective. Nothing was really effective Saturday after the first quarter. First quarter, you know, we're moving the ball. We just shoot ourselves in the foot with those procedure penalties. It's not going to be quiet this weekend, right.

So it was really loud at Iowa and guess what, at Beaver Stadium, it gets pretty loud. We are going to have to get over that and figure out how to operate in the noise. Poise in the noise.

Long answer.

Q. So that end, you kind of answered this question, but do you think in hindsight you guys were offensively a little conservative against Iowa?

GREG SCHIANO: I wouldn't say conservative. I'd say that's the plan that we had to win the game.

Now, you may on the outside, when it doesn't work and you look back at it retrospectively, it's always easy to look at it after the fact. But going into the game, we felt like that was the way.

Again, when I say things, sometimes I think you guys think I'm leading you with breadcrumbs some somewhere but I wasn't leading you on breadcrumbs. They were 15-1 in the month of November in the last four years. Now they are 16-1, right. They have a formula that quite honestly we are trying to duplicate in some ways as far as the way we play our football.

So yeah, I'm not going to get into too conservative or not. That was the way we went into the game planning, and it worked to a degree, but we weren't able to finish the job, so it didn't work. And our defense, and we didn't do that, leave the defense out there that long, right.

But had some of those procedure penalties not happened, I would have like to see that game. But you know what, you can't live in the ifs and buts world. That's what killed us, those penalties. We are not good enough to overcome them. Some day we may be, but we are not now.

Again, know who you are, and the argument could be, do you abandon the plan then after those penalties. I didn't think so. Again, retrospectively, you can argue anything.

Q. With those penalties, how difficult is it realistically trying to diagnose that during the week and trying to fix it going into another loud environment?

GREG SCHIANO: I think it's very fixable, I really do, and I don't think it was just the noise. And I'm not going to get into too many details. And it was nothing illegal by them. Last time I said something, a lot of people got very excited about it.

We did not do a good enough job handling it. I just said "poise in the noise." That's what we need to do, and we had not experienced it maybe to that degree, but the noise that was on our practice field last week was louder than the noise in Kinnick Stadium, I can tell you, because I was in the middle of it and I could hear the stuff I needed to hear on Saturday. And on Tuesday and Wednesday, I couldn't.

So we need to just keep practicing at it. Again, we are

developing. We'll develop how to play in that kind of environment, hopefully in time to get out there in Beaver Stadium and be able to do it.

Q. What did you learn about Ian Strong playing on the road and putting together a pretty nice performance?

GREG SCHIANO: I think Ian has performed from the very beginning. The opening game, I believe he made that tremendous catch, right, opening game, was it? Top-10 on -- or No. 1 on ESPN, right. So I think he's a really fine athlete.

You know, all of these freshmen guys, let's be real now, it's mid-November. They started training camp in August. Their bodies, minds, everything, are not prepared for that. Right. That's not what high school is like. They are all at some point or another hitting the wall, and Ian is working his tail off because he's hit the wall. He's got things that are bothering him physically that he's learning in college that you push through those things.

But I was very pleased that he answered the bell when JaQuae went down and showed some great toughness because he wasn't a hundred percent, either, out there. I knew he was going to play. But I knew he wasn't a hundred percent.

Q. Now it's been a couple games since you lost Tyreem Powell to an injury. How do you feel the linebacker group has stepped up since then?

GREG SCHIANO: It's a very good question, and I think number one, we really miss Tyreem Powell because he is as complete a football player as we have on our defense, and when you realize that is when you go through the other things that he did. He was the adjuster on punt. And then every specialty play that we have built in that you don't see until you see them, right, end-of-game plays, end-of-game offensive plays. Tyreem was on all of those. Why? Because he's 6-5 and he's got a tremendous width to him, catch radius.

So he was on so many things. You don't realize even as a coach until he's not on them that you have got to replace him on the depth chart in all these different areas.

So we certainly miss Tyreem. I think the linebackers have really stepped up. I thought that Deion played, maybe his best game Saturday. I think he really played well.

I think Mo is really getting -- and Mo getting all these reps is getting even more advanced. Again, we have to remember that this isn't a position that Mo played for us. This is his first year being a full-time linebacker, and I think

he's really developing nicely.

And then I think, you know, we have some young guys behind them that are close to being ready to go do it in games, and I hope that that can take a little bit of load here off those two guys in the last two weeks of the season.

Q. Something else you said earlier, I think we all agree, 6-3, down six points against Iowa, fourth quarter, everybody would have signed up and I think everybody agrees it's a successful season. Do you think, in your view, do you guys need to win one of these last three games to not dampen that early success? You guys start off 6-2; do you think getting one more win would help not solidify the season, but you know what I mean, do you think it's important to get a win in these last three games?

GREG SCHIANO: So the reason, because I generally don't use any perspective, and I just talk about being 1-0 at the end of this week, the reason that I use the perspective was not to go big picture on you. It was too explain why we are doing things the way we are to give ourselves a chance to win in the fourth quarter.

I really don't think anything other than about Penn State. We have to find a way to go into another hostile environment against a top five defense and win a game, be 1-0 at the end of it and how we do that, that's all encompassing for me. Maybe for some that's not. Some coaches can do a bunch of other things, I heard stories, some coaches go golf and stuff during the week.

Like every waking moment it takes me and that's not trying to play, you know, woe is me. It's just the way it is. Again, as I tell the players all the time, at Rutgers, you need to know who we are. As a coach here, I need to know who I am.

Q. Big picture --

GREG SCHIANO: I would be disappointed if you didn't, so I appreciate the effort.

But I closed it as soon as I opened it. I just opened it so you get a brief glimpse because this guy over here wanted me to tell him exactly how we read the play. I haven't seen him in weeks and now he wants to know exactly what our read is. I mean, what the Sam Hill. Go ahead.

Q. You threw me off now.

GREG SCHIANO: No reading off your book or your laptop, either.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about accuracy lately. Mike Leach was famous for a lot of things, but one thing in particular he said that accuracy cannot be taught. My question to you is: How hard is it to teach accuracy?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, what is accuracy, right. Like that, to me, to know how to teach it and how to get it, you have to know what exactly you're talking about.

So if you're throwing a football, just you and the receiver, that's one thing. If you're throwing the football and a bunch of guys are trying to kill you, that's another thing, right. When you line up a quarterback and go to throw a pass, there's a bunch of guys that are trying to knock your head off. I think there's a difference, right.

Technique, though, if drilled enough, you can improve accuracy. But you've got to work at it, right. Just like any other technique in doing an doing an athletic skill, and what you work toward is that you get muscle memory that trained behavior becomes your instinct, and you don't have to think about it.

But you throw in that other -- that's what we try to do with our quarterbacks. We try to grind into them the technique needed to be an accurate passer. But then you throw in a very active defense that is trying to get you, I think those are things that have an effect on all that.

Having said all of that, we need to be more accurate. I've said that. Gavin will say that. We all will say that. But in the first quarter, I thought he was really accurate. I thought it was boom, boom, boom, we hit every target. There was some long NFL-style field-out throws that he made. You know, it just kind of turned on us a little bit, and with those penalties, and then like I say to you guys all the time, games take on a life of their own. And maybe you do understand, maybe you don't, but it definitely happens. You might want to call it momentum. Call it whatever you want to call it. That's kind of what happened to us.

But still, with all that being said, the fight that's in this team, it's 6-0 going into the fourth quarter. Just couldn't finish the job. Not yet.

Q. What have you even from Eric Rogers this season?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Eric has been a real nice addition. Of I think it's a perfect situation for him. Transferring over from Northern Illinois, doesn't have to come in and be the guy, but comes in and is a guy. He's playing. He's in sub-packages. But Beam and Max were the first two guys, and then he kind of works in a rotation with them on normal downs. Kind of bop them around in

sub-packages and I think he's done a good job. Eventually, he's going to have to elevate to the next step and I think he's showing signs that he can. So yeah, we are pleased that Eric's decided to join us.

Again, guy, I'm only playing with you, too, Richie, you know that. I'm glad that you're here and I appreciate you guys covering us. I know that all your questions have to be asked. Hopefully I answer them enough.

But just remember those freshmen. You had talked about Ian Strong, all those freshmen that actually are having an opportunity to play, this is really hard stuff right now. They are in the middle of economics, which at this place is really tough. So my hat is off to those young guys.

Thanks, guys.

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