

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

Sunday, December 3, 2023

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Appreciate you coming out here on a Sunday night. Just got off the practice field, our first Bowl practice was this afternoon.

So it was good to get back out there with the guys after a week off, and certainly, we needed it because last time I saw you guys in this room, we were beat up pretty good and out of gas.

It was good to get with the guys and get back to work, and then as soon as we had got off the field, we found out about our invitation to the Pinstripe Bowl and that we were playing the University of Miami.

So very, very excited. Just an iconic venue, a real quality opponent, and another chance for our 2023 team to play together which is special.

I mentioned this at one point during the year. There's a lot of blueblood programs that are at home and don't get to do that. Don't get to have the practices we have and don't get to play in such a great game.

So I am thrilled about that opportunity, and just got a lot of work to do between recruiting and practice and transfer portal and all that stuff. It's a busy time. But I'd want it no other way.

So if I can help you out here, I'll try to do that.

Q. You mentioned balancing all that stuff. How different is it from your first time around here, because you have the transfer portal, roster retention and all this stuff. Do you have a plan together to balance it?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I don't know if there's such a thing to balance all that, right. A lot of times you have to be fluid enough to adjust on the fly. The problem is, you're dealing with other people's schedules, you know, recruits, portal recruits, our committed players, and so something has got to give oftentimes.

I really appreciate the flexibility of our staff right now. They



are working incredibly hard. Putting in a lot of hours. There's no way to slice it. It is a grind until after the Bowl game, and then as I tell the staff, you get a little time to decompress. But it's exciting. I'd have it no other way. It's definitely a challenge.

Q. How important and how valuable are these extra practices, but especially guys who might be continuing to try to prove themselves, maybe stepped into some bigger roles later in the year to get these extra practices and continue to prove themselves, I guess?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, it's a great question. The reality is, these practices are huge, right. We are going to have a bunch, I don't know how many, seven or eight, developmental practices with our younger players.

We need to still heal. I mean, eight days didn't heal us up from our season.

I got a stat today, I mean, I had no idea. We played the second-toughest schedule in America. When it was given to me, I was like, Oh, okay. I shared with our team. I said, Look, guys, sometimes when you are in the middle of the forest, you don't see that. You just get ready to play and you go give it your all. But we played the second-toughest schedule, and that's one of the reasons that it takes its toll on you physically.

But our guys, they banged away and now they get a chance to heal. And we are going to be smart about how we -- there's a lot of different schedules or plans for different groups of people. Some guys will do a little bit and then come in and get treated and do some lifting.

Other guys are going to be out there, full practice, getting better, right. Here is an opportunity for the second- and third-team players to get all the coaching, to get all the reps, to get all the film. So what a great opportunity. And then there's -- that's one phase.

Then you move into the installation of the game plan and then obviously you have game week. So we kind of break it into three separate areas, and today was the beginning of the first. So it was fun to get out there with them.



Q. For the opponent to be a team that you coached at, a team you played against in the BIG EAST, a guy who was on your first staff, Mario Cristobal, does that add anything for you in this Bowl game?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, it was a great time in my career as a young coach. I got the opportunity to be a defensive coordinator, I think I was maybe 31 years old.

So Butch Davis gave me a great opportunity, and I learned so much from him. He gave me the opportunity not only to coordinate the defense, but he really helped me learn what being a head coach was about and the different things you had to do. Some by observation, and some he forced me into it and included me in it.

I'll always remember that as a special place, and it wasn't long. It was two years. But it was really helpful for me in my development, and I have a lot of close friends still there.

But you mentioned Mario, I met Mario at Miami. He with as a graduate assistant on that staff, and he had played there. Was part of those National Championship teams. When we came to Rutgers, he came with us and came with us as our tight end coach initially and then took over the offensive line, and has just done unbelievable things. But I knew that. I knew that when I saw him as a GA that he was going to being a head coach and really good head coach.

Very proud of him and we have stayed in touch throughout all the year, so you know, when we play, it will be competition, right. But other than that, utmost respect and love for the guy.

Q. I guess you're on the practice field, so you weren't hitting refresh on the page as much as we were waiting for this announcement, but talking to the people at the Pinstripe Bowl, was there any reason they explained to you why it took so long in the process to get the news out there?

GREG SCHIANO: I really don't get into that stuff. I let other people handle that. Like I said, I'm perfectly content being out there on the practice field. I knew we got a 13th game and I didn't care. As long as we get a 13th game, I'm excited; the fact that it's in the Pinstripe Bowl and it's against Miami, that just makes it even better.

Q. When you talk about the strength of schedule, can you talk about playing those teams, and not only playing those teams but being competitive late in the games against some of those teams? That hasn't

happened much since Rutgers joined the Big Ten.

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, it's a really good question. I think we hadn't done it, right. We had played well in some game plans, and maybe for a half, but we had not been competitive toe-to-toe with those top teams until this year. I thought that was a big step for our program.

As I said to you, there's always mile markers as you go. And one of those mile markers is when you play the better teams or the best teams in your league, that you're able to compete. We weren't able to win but we were able to compete.

Before you can win, usually you compete. Sometimes you have a one-off where you have a great upset. But that to me is critical, right. And being in the Big Ten East the last year of the Big Ten East, toughest football conference in the country, at least that side of it was. To be smack dab in the middle of that, and see our guys respond, hopefully that has battle tested us for what's to come.

Definitely took its toll, and that's why we're healing up right now. But we've got a tough group of guys, and they will respond.

Q. Obviously there's a group of players with a decision to make about whether they are going to play the Bowl game or play in the NFL. When do you pursue those conversations, and when do you hope to know who you are going to have available?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, we're right smack dab in the middle of them. There's all kinds of conversations you have. Some guys aren't sure, is this the right place for me; am I going to be able to have a chance to play here. Those are some conversation.

Other conversations: Should I go to the National Football League, or at least give it a try, or do I return.

Other guys are, you know, I'm going to go to the League but I want to play in the league. I'm going to go to the League and I'm not sure I should play in the game. And there's going to be all kinds of answers to that.

You know, back maybe when I was younger, I worried about that stuff. You can't worry about it. You have to make sure that you do what's best for your individual players.

These guys have given their life to Rutgers and now they are at a very important part of their career individually, and I try to give them the exact advice I would give them if it was my son if they asked for it. If they don't ask for it, I

probably don't even give it. But I think there's big decisions to be made.

And the good thing, again, I always tell you, this is a developmental program and we're filling the pipeline. Well, the fact that we are even having those conversations, do they come out or don't they come out; that, to me, is another mile marker that we are developing the way we are supposed to.

When the pipeline is full, that's going to be a yearly conversation for several players. If we are fortunate enough to get most of them back, then it like I said a great foundation for the '24 season.

But right now, you know, we are going to handle those conversations. We are going to handle recruiting; preparation for the Pinstripe Bowl, and as I said earlier, a lot going on, but it's fun. That's what being a head coach is about.

Q. A bit unrelated, but Kyle Flood was on your staff 2005 to 2011, now the offensive coordinator at Texas, and they just got selected to the Football Playoff today. Did you get a chance to speak to him at all?

GREG SCHIANO: I didn't, but I do have to hit him with a congratulations text for sure.

I actually didn't get to watch -- I watched very little of the whole lead up but I jumped into somebody's office and it was just being announced and I saw the Texas kids, how excited they were when they got a announced. That stuff I love. I'm a little bit of a softy when it comes to that, to see the players so excited.

Look, I'm anxious to see our guys. You know, we finished practice. I came right in here to see you guys. I'm going to go hang out with them up at dinner and go see them because I know they are excited, and I want to spend time with them.

Q. Have any guys expressed to you that they plan to opt out of the Bowl game in your conversations you've had last week?

GREG SCHIANO: Right, now we are in the stages of conversation. I think some things will crystalize this week. As you know, tomorrow the portal opens officially; that may be the biggest unofficial, official ever, right. But yeah, it's coming to a head on a lot of these fronts I think and that's okay. I mean, that is college football now.

Under my desk, I have a saying written down that says, "If you don't like it...change it or change the way you think

about it."

I've decided to change the way I think about it. Because I'm not going to change it, I know that. I think that we have really good people in our program, and we owe it to them to help them make the best decision for them and for their family.

Q. With the portal, I guess generally, what's your plan going into tomorrow, and specifically, do you plan on targeting a quarterback in the portal?

GREG SCHIANO: In college football now, you literally have added a whole 'nother department in what's the equivalency of a pro personnel department in the NFL. Because you have to now scout other colleges and be ready if a guy goes in the portal, you have to know what your opinion is.

So now we scout every single position, just like we do high school prospects. Oftentimes you'll get a little precursor. Someone will give you a tip they might be going in. That certainly helps a lot, so you are not chasing too much ghosts. But we check every single position.

And the reality is that the transfer portal, there's a lot that goes into that. One of the biggest things that goes into it is NIL. You know, there's some guys that you look at on tape and say, Yeah, I'd love to get involved there but this guy is going to be X number of dollars and we don't have it. Or you know what, this is the guy that we are going to try to rally our troops together and try to get this done.

So that's another element in addition to just the talent evaluation and the talent acquisition. There is now kind of a payroll component that goes with that.

So it's tricky, yeah. It's definitely a handful but one that, as I said, I enjoy it. Sometimes it wears you out a little bit but just go to bed, get up and get cramping again. That's kind of what I've been doing the last week is trying to fight through it. As we say around here, keep chopping through it. You can't do more than you can do, and that's what I try to do.

I try to do the very best I can and try to keep the team together, but yet make sure that if it's in the best interests of the young man to go to the National Football League, then I'm going to encourage him to do that.

And fortunately, since having been a head coach in that league and having a lot of close friends in leadership positions in that league, we kind of get a good information to pass on to our players.

Q. Over the weekend, Tyreem Powell and Hollin Pierce announced they would be returning. Can you talk about the significance of bringing them back and what that means for each of those guys?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, it means a lot for them. It means even more for our program. I mean, these are two of our marquis players, right, a left tackle who is an NFL player and a middle linebacker who is an NFL player. Both decided to come back. I'm just so thrilled. They are great leaders, great players, and they are Rutgers through and through, and they are even better people.

When you have that, when your best players are your hardest workers and your best people, it's easy to point them to the rest of your team and say, hey, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Just copy what they have done. And they are; they are two guys, one lost a lot of weight and rebuilt his body, and another one put on a lot of weight and built his body. But they both worked incredibly hard to get to the same spot, and that's be a really, really good football player.

And to have them both coming back for next season is huge. There's a whole bunch more that -- we are right in the middle of it now, in the thick of it, and I'm just hopeful that things go the way they are supposed to. You know, whatever is best, that that's what happens and there's no mistakes; that all the right factors are what drive the decision and that's my hope, and that's what I'm working very hard to do. But I'm excited.

These guys, everything gets lost, the portal and this and that. Oh, guys, guess what, they have final exams right before they go to the Bowl game, right. Our final exams end on December 22.

So right when we are in the thick of our game prep, our guys are going to be in final exams, which is quite a challenge as well. As I've said to you so many times, at Rutgers, this is really competitive academically, the people that you're competing with, and these guys do a great job. I'm really proud of them for that.

So everybody, coaches, players, support staff, we've all got our hands full, but would want it no other way. And excited, really excited, to be representing Rutgers in the Pinstripe Bowl.

So, thanks, guys.

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