

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Appreciate you guys coming out here at 4:30. Usually we do this earlier but we had Bowl practice and a lot of stuff going on in the building right now and our guys are in final exams. It's an exciting time, and this rubbing class certainly makes it even more exciting.

So before we get into your questions, I just some thank-yous. I want to thank Eric Josephs, who is our director of player personnel; Cassie Petty, who is our director of on-campus recruiting and recruiting operations; and the rest of the whole recruiting team did an incredible job in this -- this really is a multi-year effort. Some of these kids we've been recruiting for four years, and that's really the way it works here. The people this run our recruiting operations and our staff led by Eric Josephs, they do such a good job.

And my hat is off to our coaching staff. They did an incredible job developing relationships, identifying the right people, and then following through with the recruitment and certainly in this day and age, there's a lot of attacks and a lot of stuff that goes on in the recruitment and to see it to the finish line the way they did, really pleased.

We have 28 members in this class, and I think it's well rounded. I think it brings a lot of different attributes that we are going to add to our football team that are going to make us better in the future. It's the highest academic class in my career, all the years that I've been the head coach, which I'm really proud of that, too.

As I've said to you guys so many times, it's a very challenging academic institution and they compete with some really tremendous students in the classroom. Forget who they compete with on the field. This group will be able to come in and do just that, compete in the classroom, as well as on the practice field and in the game field.

I'm excited about them. And again, just a great big thank you to our staff, our entire staff. Recruiting and recruiting weekends and during the week, coaches away from their families, it's a great sacrifice, but it's the critical part, the lifeline of any college football program, and I'm grateful for



the job that our staff from top to bottom they did in recruiting.

With that, I'll open up to questions and try to help you any way I can.

Q. Dymere Miller, obviously accomplished a lot at Monmouth, several records. What did you see with him on film that stood out and made him the right fit for your program?

GREG SCHIANO: There were some connections with Dymere, certainly being local but he's the all-time leading receiver in FCS this past season. He happened to be childhood friends with Aaron Young. They played, I don't know if it was little league or whatever together or if it was football, but my hat is off to Aaron. He helped us in the recruitment, and I think we have a receiver there that can help us. He's very fast.

I think this class overall brings a lot of speed to our team, and that's something that's very important to me and the philosophy with which I coach and what I expect our program to play. But he fits right in there, and he's a one-year guy. So we expect him to come in here and have an immediate contribution and impact on our team.

Q. AJ Surace, what do you like him as a prospect and what does he bring to the class?

GREG SCHIANO: AJ, he's a tremendous football player. It's in his blood. His dad is a long-time head coach at Princeton and in the National Football League before that and just a great family.

Family of educators. His grandpa was a legendary coach down in south Jersey. So you guys know the story, and AJ is every bit the culmination of all that. He's a football guy. He's a great student, and I think is going to be a great quarterback at Rutgers.

Q. You had your first commitment in your tenure as a head coach from Georgia in Antonio White. How big is it to bring him into the program and expand the footprint into the State of Georgia?



GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Antonio is an excellent football player. He's got all the skills to be another in a long line of great defensive backs that played at Rutgers.

And you're right. Our reach has kind of grown in recruiting, and I think that has a lot to do with the Big Ten is a national brand. And it's never become more national than it is now from coast to coast, right, starting next year.

And Rutgers is a national brand. And I think the ability now to do a little more in an expanded footprint than maybe we did our first go around. So we are taking advantage of that.

And I have grown so focused and can see so clearly what we want in a player both from a physical standpoint, from a currently standpoint and then from an academic standpoint and I'm really hard on our coaches and our recruiting staff in don't settle because he's got two of the three or one of the three. It needs to be three of the three. Sometimes you've got to stretch your boundaries a little bit.

Now sometimes in the past, we had to settle for two of the three or one of the three because that's what we could get. I would tell you, in this class, most of the these guys, if at not all of them, are three for threes, and that's what we need here.

Again, I don't get caught up in rankings. I don't care about any of that stuff. I care about finding the right guys for our program that are an athletic fit, that are that good of player; they are a cultural fit and they can live in our program and succeed in our program; and they are an academic fit that they can succeed at Rutgers here in the classroom.

That's what's important to me. We have got to find people that fit our program.

Q. These kids have been committed a while. In today's era of guys going all over the place and looking at other schools and decommitting, what is it about this class that kept them together? And the young wide receivers, can you talk about them, and having the No. 1 player in the State of New York?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, those are two good questions. First one is keeping the class together.

You're right, we had one decommitment in the entire class. It happened early on. We have been able to recruit this class. Like I said, it's a culmination of many years of recruitment. And hats off to our staff, our coaching staff that was actually on the road recruiting and on the phones with them, and our recruiting staff that did all the background work and the legwork on all the things that we

do.

I'm really proud of the way that our guys go out and build relationships, not only with the prospect and his family, with his coach. I believe, and I know, old school, I believe the high school coach still very, very important in recruiting.

There's a lot of young coaches out there right now that don't even talk to the high school coach. They go right to the player and their family; that's one way to do it. It's just not the way I do it. That's not the way we do it at Rutgers.

There's people involved in this process. Certainly the prospect but then his family and his head coach. Those are very, very important people to me and our guys do a great job of touching all of those touch points and making sure that the communication is consistent. We are very clear what we are looking for, so there's no secret. We are very honest. People sometimes get frustrated, well, why haven't you offered my kid, and I always just say, look, we are going to have to agree to disagree.

But I always think, if you go the to coach and you say, if someone came in here and told you who you have to start at quarterback, what would you say? You'd throw him out of the office, right. You work at this. Well, that's kind of where we are at in our program. We know exactly what we're looking for and we have to agree to disagree sometimes if we are not going to give -- I don't make scholarship offers to kids if they are not acceptable, if they are not committable offers.

That's one thing I don't like about college football right now. Teams are offering 400 or 500 kids. How can they be committable. It's literally more of just an invitation to come to summer camp. We make committable offers. And this group we made them to, and some of them took them, and then we really stuck with our guys. That's why I know that they know who we are.

I don't want guys that think they are coming to one thing and all of a sudden they show up and it's something totally different. We are transparent with it. We had some visitors that come with Bowl practice, I really like it, we have some visitors come and I can tell you for -- I think there was some guys that came and saw the way we practiced. It's a little harder than they want to practice. So they went somewhere else and so that's fine. Better now than later, right.

This is the way we practice. And we don't put out a recruiting practice so people can see, you know, high fives and chest bumps. This is how we practice and if you want to do it this way, you'll get better and you'll end up in the NFL if you're talented enough and you'll get your degree.

Those are good things. This is the way we do it here. That's how we have to do it.

The second part of your question, good receivers. Really good receivers class. And you hit on the head. K.J. Duff, No. 1 player in the State of New York. What is No. 1, No. 2? I don't know what that means.

But I know K.J. Duff understands what it is to be a Rutgers player. His teammates, Ian Strong, the year before came here, and he had an inside view of who we are through his teammate, and he came. So No. 1 that, tells me Ian Strong is doing well, and No. 2 it tells me K.J. Duff knows exactly what he's getting into. And those two will be fun to watch in the years ahead together.

You look at Ben Black, another guy who can fly; Isaiah Crumpler. I don't want to leave anybody out. But we really do have a good group coming in that can run, that can catch, that can do all those things. So we need more numbers at the position, and I think we are getting it, so that's good.

Does that answer your question? Two-parters are hard, you know. I forget sometimes.

Q. Unfortunately I have a two-parter for you. Farell Gnago. Have I pronounced that one correctly?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, you did.

Q. See, there we go. He's one of the most recent offers, just recently flipped today. Can you talk about when you guys first evaluated him and found him, and how easy of a sell was it to him being that half the defensive line room is basically Canadian at this point?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, good question. We evaluated Farell in summer camp. He came down here and came to summer camp, and at the time I liked him and our coaches really liked him but we were not sure he was exactly a fit.

So what we did is we were very honest with him. We told him we want to see your senior tape. When your season is over, we'll evaluate it. We did. We really liked his senior tape. Coach Corey Hetherman went up to Montréal and met and saw him and came back to me and said, "Coach this is a sure thing. We've got to go."

So we went as hard as we could, and we were fortunate to be able to -- we weren't the only ones who got to his senior tape and decided that he -- you know, he did flip his commitment. But there was other people that we were battling as much or more than the school he was

committed to. I was very excited for that to happen. I think he's another fine young man.

And you're right, when you look at it, we have seven guys from Canada now, we will when they enroll, seven guys from Canada on our team and all seven happen to be on defense. It's a place we always recruited. I personally recruited it as a young assistant coach at another school, and I got to know that you have to make sure that you have the right connections. Like anything in recruiting, you've got to get real information. And as long as you can get real information, then you can make good decisions.

I think when you have a group of people that you're connected to up there that can get you accurate information, it gives you a chance in an area that's maybe not as heavily recruited or there's not as much of a spotlight on every guy to get the good information.

So right now, really, the guys that have come here from Canada have been very successful and they are all arrow up guys. This is exciting for me. I think we have, what, three players coming from Canada in this recruiting class alone.

Q. Kaj Sanders, seemed like a great kid, great family, all the things you're talking about. What stood about him in your evaluation of him, and do you think it was a little bit of a recruiting win to pull a top-end player out of the Catholic school up there in north Jersey?

GREG SCHIANO: It's a win in Sanders, I'll tell you that. I mean, he is a great player. He is a guy that we have been recruiting for a long time. I think he is going to be a special player here.

The fact that he comes from a quality program up in north Jersey at Bergen Catholic, Vito Campanile does a great job with the entire program. And certainly, we get a guy that our plans are to play him in the secondary. You watch him play as a running back this year, he was electric as a running back. So it tells you kind of the athlete that he is.

He played in the secondary for them, but this is the kind of athlete you're talking about. And I think raised the right way. Really a tough football player. Loves football. And again, I keep coming back to the guys that fit us. This is not a good place if you don't love football. If you're a like-it guy, you should probably go somewhere else and that's just being honest. I tell players that right off the bat. This is a love-it guy.

I look at our secondary and I'm excited, really excited about the guys that we have coming to play in the defensive secondary, Kevin Levy from Florida is going to be I think a

fantastic player. I go down the list. I always leave somebody out if I start singling people out, but it's one player off another that I just think are really talented guys, and our type of people.

So I'm very excited to get him here and get started coaching them. That's the fun part of it, right. This is all going on while we're getting ready for a Bowl game. So there's so many good things going on right now. It's taken a while to get the cooker going but I think it's going, and I've talked to you guys about that pipeline theory. This group will fill the pipeline, and we'll fill it as well or better than I thought it would. So that's exciting to me.

Q. Gabe Winowich, what stood out about him when you were recruiting him, and the fact that he transferred to play here in New Jersey to be an early enrollee and play with AJ, what does it say about him and how much it means to be here?

GREG SCHIANO: Gabe is a throwback football player. He's a tough guy. He can play. He played any number of positions this year on defense, on offense. I think Gabe is going to help us in a lot of ways.

The fact that he did just what you said, he transferred to New Jersey with one purpose so he can enroll early. Unfortunately his school, he couldn't do it. So I understand schools that have that policy, there's no hard feelings. I hope they don't have any. It was his doing. It wasn't ours. We did not perpetuate that. But when he told us what he wanted to do and he went through with it, I said, wow, this guy is really serious about getting his college career going.

It's going to be great to have him here. You see him here on game days. He's here for most games, he and AJ. That's what I love. I see him before every game, see him after every game, the home games, they feel like family already. This whole class feels like they are part of us because we've been recruiting them for a long time. There's very few, a couple, like you talk the about Farell, we had had him at camp but he didn't commit until yesterday. That's a new addition.

But a lot of these guys have been committed for over a year, so it's exciting.

Q. How much of a role is Watson able to play in this recruiting class, putting it together and can you share any update on him? Can he coach in the Bowl game? What's his status right now?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Quise has played a big part in a lot of these kids. He's a tremendous recruiter. I'm going to stay away from really getting into his personal condition

and all those things. He won't be able to coach in the Bowl game, no. But again, making progress and just let's all keep him in our prayers. He's definitely one of us and he definitely had a big impact on this recruiting class.

Q. Linebacker -- did you find a few in this class?

GREG SCHIANO: Yes we did, and I appreciate the complement. I don't know, some would argue maybe not the toughest but I appreciate the compliment.

You go down and look at our linebacker class, one guy -- well, there are several, actually. But Sam Pilof from Wisconsin is a guy that I just fell in love with watching him play. I thought that he epitomizes how we like to play. He's a run and hit guy. He's reckless. We say swarm; he swarms all over the field.

Really, I'm just looking down here to make sure I don't forget anybody. MJ Johnson unfortunately had a torn ACL early in the year, so he missed his senior season, but boy, was he a good player on tape. He has been rehabbing and working, so he's going to be starting here. Excited there.

Talking about linebackers now, so I'll keep looking here. Sam Robinson, oh my goodness, from Tallahassee, just a run and hit guy as well. I can't wait until JB gets his hand on him. He's going to be just tremendous as he gets bigger and stronger.

It really is a great group of guys. At every position group, I think we made ourselves better some, we made ourselves much better. Excited to coach those guys for sure.

Q. In your first tenure here, it seemed like you were pretty good at finding those unknown kids and getting them signed and developing them into pretty good players. Do you think that's possible in today's day and age of recruiting with social media being the way it is and everything?

GREG SCHIANO: It's a good question. I mean, even with social media and all those things, why are there players that are selected from FCS and Division II and even Division III once in a while into the National Football League Draft, right.

So certainly, recruiting is as much an art as it is a science. I think what we do and do a good job, led by, again, Eric Josephs is, we use the science part of recruiting, all the measurables and we plug that all in. We do a lot of evaluation and analytics on that.

But then the relationship part is equally as important, right.



So sometimes you find a guy that maybe isn't a five-star or even a four-star or three-star, but you know he's got something special about him. And as long as he loves football and has the growth potential, and then you know what, it's just as good to take one that's got all the stars and all the notoriety, as long as he is one of us.

And I don't get caught up in stars. I don't get caught up in. What I get caught up in is, is he one of us. And the players know what I mean what I say that. They will come on visits, and I will tell our guys, "All right, what did you think?"

And they will, blah, blah, blah.

And I will say, "Is he one of us?"

And if there's any hesitation, then I really worry. I go in and start digging deep.

"But is he one of us?"

"Yeah, Coach, he's one of us." Okay. Because they know what we are.

Finally, now, I think our culture is embedded in our program, and there's no one better to evaluate if they are part of that culture, and if they warrant being part of that culture, than our players. That's why it's so important to get around our current players so they can let me know and let our staff know if they are a good fit.

We'll do the evaluation. I don't ask our players to evaluate tape or go to games and look at players. We look at that. But the part we need help on sometimes is, okay, when they are not around their parents, when they are not around the coaches, when they are not around us, who are they.

And it's great when they visit, they hang around our guys and we get a real insight into who they are. That's another reason with this group, when they are the highest academic class we've ever recruited here in 15 years, or this will be 16 years, okay. They are a group that I really think could be special.

I have no idea where we rank nor do I care. I know what they are and I'm very excited. There's a lot of hard work that went into this.

Class and I would be remiss if I didn't one more time thank our staff. I think recruiting in college football has become such a challenge for assistant coaches and their families sacrifice so much because they are on the road constantly. You get a bye week in the season and everybody thinks, Oh, you get to go spend time with your family. These

coaches are on the road recruiting.

And we end the season, right on Thanksgiving weekend, and they are out on the road. In five days, they are on the road all the way to Bowl preparation. Then they go to a Bowl game and I think they have a week off and they are back at it. We have a visit weekend in the first week of January for portal guys.

And I'm not complaining. But I do mention it because these guys pay a huge price for us to have the kind of players that are on this sheet here and that people are reading about and seeing.

So I thank our staff and everybody that's made it possible. I also thank you guys for covering it. I think you are going to enjoy this group in the next four or five years, enjoy covering them and enjoy working with them because they are very special people. Thanks, guys.

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