

Rutgers University Football

Media Conference

Monday, August 26, 2024

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: All right, game week. Give a few opening comments. The guys worked really hard in camp. We transitioned to game preparation last week, and now we are kind of repeating that this week.

And so today is a Wednesday, actually, of game prep so now we are coming on the back half of the week and it's been hot.

So it's been a challenge these last two weeks have been hard for the guys. We are a little beat up. I told you I'm not going to get into all the specifics but you'll see some young faces out there that you haven't seen play before.

And you know, obviously Mo's is a season-ending injury. Right now there's no other season ending injuries but there are some that are single or multiple game injuries. We're just going to have to work our way through it.

Q. You've been around a lot of these season openers at this point. Curious, do some season openers feel different than others and is this one ever them for?

GREG SCHIANO: Not really for me. We haven't played the game yet as this team, the '24 team. I only know one way and that's full speed. You know, run scared, as my mentor taught. You run scared. You get ready to go. Not scared of your opponent. Not scared of the situation. Just check under every rock. Make sure everybody, you've gone through everybody over and over again, situations that, you know, you haven't played a game in a long time.

So just make sure you keep doing it over and over again so the guys are ready and confident. There's an old saying, you don't rise to the occasion, you sink to the level of your training.

And we have to make sure that we are trained in everything we are doing and we are ready to play. Whoever is healthy we have to go out and play.

Q. Kirk previously talked about year one and two making a step up in his previous stops. Can that trend



continue with the offense under his direction?

GREG SCHIANO: I'm hopeful. We're more cohesive and understand it better. But you have you have to go do it, right. Practice is everything to us, but you have those 12 games, you have to go do it otherwise it's just a thought.

Now they are coming. We've been preparing long enough since January, preparing for this. So looking forward to getting out and playing a game.

Q. What does he than have to do in your mind to make his debut a success?

GREG SCHIANO: Just do his job. No different than any other position although it's much different because he touches the ball every play but within his realm of the big job he has, he has to just, you know, we say chop your job. He has to cho phis job one play at a time. Doesn't need to do anything special. Just do what you're trained to do.

Q. Last couple years for Sam Brown, choppy because of the injuries. What you are your expectations for him this year?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, Sam, I think is in a good place. He did get bumped earlier in camp. So he missed some time. So he's not -- he's not all the way back by any means. But my expectation is he's really looked good both before he was bumped and since he's been back. Yeah, so we have some depth in the running back room and we need to make sure we utilize that.

Q. What are you expecting to see from Howard on Thursday?

GREG SCHIANO: They are a really well-coached team. I know their coach well. Go back a long time. He was at south Florida. I coached his little brother at University of Miami. I guess it's his little brother, older, younger, I coached one of his family members at Miami. I followed his career. He was at South Florida for all our great games over the years and then at Miami and then at Tennessee. He's coached and a lot of his coaches on his staff, I know them.



They are experienced coaches. So it's a very well-coached team. They really challenge us schematically and they have some really good players. She have some guys on the senior bowl watch list. Their safety, number 0 I think can play anywhere. Really, really fine player. Both their running backs are really good players, 2 and 5. One of them I know his dad, James from Miami.

This is going to be a challenge. We've got to get our guys ready to go. We are a little bit shorthanded, that's a fact, and we have to figure out a way to go score one more.

Q. 7-6 last year, bowl victory, you reached a significant mile-marker and you used the parkway, Turnpike reference. This year, what is the next step for this program and if you want to use your mile-marker again, what would that be?

GREG SCHIANO: It's so hard to say, right of the you'd like to say, 7-6 let's make it 9-4, whatever, everybody likes to do that. You never know what's going to unfold, you know what I mean, that's the way it is. I didn't expect not to have Mo, you wake up one morning and you don't have Mo anymore.

I don't ever get into that game. It's fun for media and fans, I understand why you do it. What else are you going to do while you're waiting? Well I've got a job to do all week that pertains to that score and win you're talking about. I don't get caught up in that. I get caught up in the process I try to get our team to get caught up in the process.

Certainly with people talking about it, I need to sometimes bring our guys, hey, listen now, the only thing that matter s is right here and now, and we believe practice is everything. It's just something that's been -- as long as we teach that in practice, practice is everything and you win the game on Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and then you go out and claim it on Saturday. That's what we are in the midst of right now.

And it's been a tough week but you know, we have some injuries. The easy thing to do is we have to lighten up but we can't do that. It's a long season. We are preparing for the opening game but we are also preparing the team during training camp for the season.

Q. On special teams specific, big picture, small picture, return game last year, what was your impression of the return game and what's your than this season?

GREG SCHIANO: Our return game? Very collective. Very, very collective. We return kicks when we think is benefits us. We had the No. 1 he return game in America

last year, and we had five total kicks. What does that tell you about stats? They can be very misleading.

We are going to do a very good job in my opinion of managing risk and opportunity. That's the business we are in in the kicking game. But with there's an opportunity we try to take advantage of it and where there's risk we try to lay low. That's all been our philosophy but probably more so now than ever. But maybe it's -- I don't know Why.

Q. Do you understand why there's so much optimism around this team from the outside?

GREG SCHIANO: I do. We made progress. We have experienced players but I also know what happened. One of the best players on our team we lost for the season. We wake up one morning and he's not able to play anymore.

I understand how fragile it is and if I or anybody in this organization starts to think the way that you guys are talking, you know, it's been said many times, it's like poison. If it sits on the table doesn't do anything to anybody. The minute you drink it, it's a big problem you've got.

And we have to stay focused on the job at hand. Pieces are always changing. The narrative is always changing. You always have to be ready to pivot and that's a big job just getting the team ready mentally, physically and emotionally ready to go play is a big job every week. You can't -- or at least I don't have the capacity to do more than that. Maybe some guys do.

Q. When you mentioned Mo, you mentioned Wright. What role do you expect him?

GREG SCHIANO: Abe you saw him come on the scenes last year on teams and third quarter. He is a very well able linebacker now, no pun intended. He's seeing it better and he's really athletic can. Can run, hit, do all those things. He's got a bright future. We'll keep shoving him out there in different roles and I think with DJ and Moses Walker, I think those guys are feeling it, and see what we do with Tyreem. That will be a late decision and we'll make a decision here. We haven't made it yet.

Q. A little more broadly on the linebacker room how have they responded since Mo's injuries?

GREG SCHIANO: I think it's bigger than the linebacker room. It's the team. You not only lose a really fine player but you lose kind of the, I don't know what the word is, the Alpha on the team. That's what Mo is and Mo was.

. So now is there one guy who steps up and fills that? No.



It will be a combination of guys. When I was talking with Steve, that's why -- when things change, it takes so much to get it all patched up again and to get it -- no one wants to hear that you lost this guy, that guy. That's nobody's problem but ours. You have to figure out how to -- you're a problem so far and you have to figure how you're going to fix that so you can win football games and that takes an incredible amount of time and effort and Mo was a lot of things to this team including being on outstanding linebacker.

Q. Is there a position group that's --

GREG SCHIANO: I'm going to just wait until we put out the availability report. There's no reason to let them know who it is now.

Q. You mentioned earlier in camp having your offensive line set.

GREG SCHIANO: There are some injuries there that I'm not sure. I'm not being evasive. I'm just saying, I'm not going to let them know. There are some injuries. Will they play? They might. The one thing, again, I agree with what we are doing as a league but this is not a conference game. So they are going to get an availability report two hours before kickoff, we are not, which is a little bit of a disadvantage but it is what it is.

Q. Last year looking at the numbers with Kyle, 40 percent of his yards came in the fourth quarter. You talk about guys who get better as the game goes along. What are the traits that he has that leads to that?

GREG SCHIANO: I think that's a multi-faceted stat. He does get stronger as the game goes on people say that. I think he does a little bit. I think other people get more tired and he doesn't. Like he runs the same way in play one that he does in play 40, play 60, play 80.

The other thing is you have to be in games where either you're leading or it's a close game where you can run the ball. You know, the first few years back oftentimes we found ourselves down multiple scores where you had to throw it or you were not going to have a chance for victory.

I think it's helped us a lot that we've been either in games more or winning games where we get to keep feeding them the ball. But he is a guy that you know he's such a tough, tough guy, and he's low to the ground and he's very strong, so he can continually play with leverage.

And one of the things that happens to players as they get tired, they get higher and higher and higher. He's got

natural leverage and he really stings you. You look at a lot of runs at the end of the game, it's after contact yards that he makes and he's gift that had way. Like he does that all the time. His feet never stops. His legs are churning. I think that's one of the things that makes him an elite running back.

All right guys, thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...