

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Coach Greg Schiano Postgame Press Conference



Rutgers - 44, Howard - 7

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out, sticking around. Just a quick recap, I was really pleased with the way that our guys continued to chop. I knew what kind of game it was going to be.

Howard is a really good football team. When you look at what they did last year, when they played up, they were super competitive. Could have won both of their games that they played against FBS teams.

A lot of those guys were back. And really well-coached team. Schematically, all three phases.

I knew exactly what it was going to be. You worry sometimes as a coach, do your players understand that? Because when you play an FCS opponent, they're definitely different levels of FCS. And this team is a very good football team. They're going to have great success if they can stay healthy. So much respect for their program.

But much respect for our team. I was really pleased. We worked them very hard in training camp. I think we got them back and they came out and played really hard at first, a little bit slow.

But we tried during training camp to make sure that the guys that had experience didn't really get a ton in the live scrimmages. I think it took a little bit to get going. And defensively, we had five guys that were legitimately playing substantial football for the first time. So that's a big chunk. And they gained valuable experience.

So I'm excited. I think several times during the night I wrote notes down about our team, things that came to my mind that I really didn't realize before tonight. So it was really good, really good. And now we've got to enjoy this for a night and then get to work on Akron, and I look forward to doing that.

Q. Athan's first start. How do you think he performed and how did he handle the offense?

A. I think he handled the offense really well. Just listening, watching him, seemed very cool. Got himself out of trouble a couple of times. Threw it away a couple times when the look wasn't there. Those are the plays that no one knows. You think it's just an incomplete pass.

But especially when you're down on the 25-yard line and in, it's not there, you just throw it away. You live to play another play. Well, that's easy to say. It's not so easy to do. So I was pleased with that.

And then I thought his accuracy kind of showed. I think he'll get better and better as we get more in the flow. Overall, I think it was a positive first outing for him and one he and Coach Ciarrocca can tear apart and grow from.

Q. Along those lines, the offense in general, was this the plan, to keep it a little vanilla, to ease your way into it? What was the strategy in a game like this?

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know if it was so vanilla. We're not like Barnum & Bailey over here. We kind of do what we do. But we just kind of, at the beginning, we're shooting ourselves in the foot. We dropped a couple that were catchable balls that are converted third downs and the drive continues. Just kind of stumbling a little bit at the beginning.

But the thing I was really pleased with is our guys just kept chopping, kept doing it. I told them that was the difference. The differentiating factor will be, because you never know as a coach -- do they believe what you tell them, that this is a really good football team. That you'll have to go out and play well and chop every single moment to come away with a victory.

And obviously our guys did believe that. You don't know as a coach. You hope so. But I've been on both ends of that.

I was proud of on your guys the way they continue to chop. And then the offense picked up. And Kyle and Sam, they have the potential to be a real good 1-2 punch. So overall, positive.



Q. Sam got a lot of carries. Were you just giving Kyle a blow at the end or is that just --

GREG SCHIANO: I think Kyle -- Kyle got quite a few carries and racked up some yards quickly. So I think it's just the rotation that we had talked about doing and making sure we keep both backs fresh and keep Kyle fresh. I thought Kyle ran violently tonight.

Q. What did you think of Miller's debut? Why didn't we see him stretch the field more with that speed?

GREG SCHIANO: Miller's debut, probably not the best one to ask because I'm not watching him particularly. But I've seen a lot of him in practice. He's going to be a really good player for us this year. We've got to keep him healthy, and he's got ability.

We've got a bunch of guys. He's not the only one with speed. So we'll get there. We'll get there.

Q. Since I had a chance to run to both locker rooms, why was Larry so angry about the end of the game? Did you run it up?

GREG SCHIANO: You have to ask Larry that. I have a lot of respect for Coach Scott. I think he does a great job with his program. Obviously back-to-back champions.

He's a competitor. I'm a competitor. And everybody sees things a little differently. You see it through your lens.

You watched the game. You saw it. You can draw your conclusions. I'm very comfortable with the way we handle our team, that I handle our team. And if I wasn't, I'd tell you that too.

Q. Same lines, could you take us through the process of going for the final score on that play rather than kneeling it out?

GREG SCHIANO: No. Guys practiced all training camp. They deserve to play. There was no running it up. If it was running it up, you don't use timeouts when you have the ball. You let the game end. That wasn't retaliatory.

We were going to run plays. We bring a team in here to play us. We bring them here. We bring them in, we've got to win and we've got to get reps. And they were there, we took them.

Q. Chippiness there between the players after that. Were you worried about anything breaking out from that?

GREG SCHIANO: There was chippiness the whole game. That wasn't the first time. There needed to be some control grabbed of that game a few times.

Q. Obviously with Toure and Tyreem out what did you think the way Djabome stepped up and the game he had?

GREG SCHIANO: I think D.J. and Moses both stepped up. Without watching I couldn't tell you mistakes. I know D.J. was super productive. But I saw Moses make some plays too -- TFLs.

When you watch it's not always easy to see, but you know when a guy flashes and he made a decisive read and really went and got it. I saw them both do that numerous times. That's a positive.

Eventually we'll get Tyreem back and hopefully continue to build. It's a huge loss losing Mo, but you've got to move forward.

Q. Can you address the availability report and some guys that missed today, specifically the guys that were listed as out -- Wesley Bailey, Flip Dixon -- and start with those two?

GREG SCHIANO: You mean address it in what way?

Q. Long-term injuries? Do you expect them to be back sooner?

GREG SCHIANO: No. They're not long-term injuries. But I can't tell you if it's going to be next week or the week after. It's not like down the road or season-ending for that matter.

Q. With Flip out you started Kaj at safety. What led you to bring him in as a true freshman?

GREG SCHIANO: His performance. Since he got here in January, he's gotten better and better. And the way it always is around here. You earn it. He had earned the spot. He was the second safety behind Flip. And then when Flip went down, he continued. He showed that he belonged there.

I thought, again, without watching the tape it's hard, but I thought he played pretty well.

Just anytime it doesn't get thrown over your head you're a safety the ball doesn't run and break past you, YOU probably played a pretty decent game. I'll watch it. But he's a real good football player. He has a bright future.

Q. In his debut at tight end, Kenny Fletcher caught all four targets for 31 yards. What can you say about that addition to the offense?

GREG SCHIANO: Kenny is a talented guy, as you know, from watching him play on defense. I think Kenny's found a home at tight end. He'll be a work in progress all season. It's so new to him.

But some of the things you see are catches, but Kenny is a really violent blocker, and we just have to make it consistently violent blocking, then you'll have a complete tight end. It will take time. He's very new to the position.

Q. Tonight, Athan completed the ball to eight different targets. What does that say about Rutgers' (indiscernible) and overall the chemistry built over the spring and into this game?

GREG SCHIANO: I also think it speaks to the depth of the receiving corps and tight end corps for sure and I think it speaks to Athan's ability to go through his progression and not predetermine. Because that's easy to do. It's easy to predetermine, I'll throw it to that guy, because the look before the snap, look that way, or you may just have confidence in him. But you can't do that. You've got to let the defense tell you where to go with the ball. And I thought, again, without watching the tape, I can't tell you for sure, but I thought he did a good job and he looked very decisive. Very decisive.

Q. Given that Howard has a lot of options offensively, especially in the run game, including at quarterback, how would you say your team responded to all the different diverse looks and weapons that they threw at you?

GREG SCHIANO: You hit it on the head now. They have two really good backs, really good backs. And the quarterback certainly is a dynamic player, very fast. We have some fast guys, and he ran away from a couple of them.

That's what I was telling you. I knew what we were up against. This is a really talented club. As I said, they're well-coached.

When you put those two things together, it's a dangerous foe. That's why I was excited about the way our guys continued to chop and that's what it was going to take.

Q. The last guy was Tyreem Powell and just how close was he to making his return today?

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know. He was definitely

questionable. He warmed up and he did things, but you just have to make sure that when you're coming back from a long-term thing that he's ready to go. I won't rush that.

I've said it, but this guy is, what, six weeks from being a day-two pick in my opinion. He gets hurt at Indiana last year and then he gets hurt again. So two injuries.

We've just got to get him healthy, get him healthy. When he's ready, he's going to let us know and he'll go play great this year. I have confidence in Tyreem. We've just got to get him confident and ready to go.

What a deal by our first-year students, huh? I haven't seen our end zone packed like that. It was before we went up, the kids were all there. That was awesome. I guess they had a cookout tonight. I'd like to see them all back next week. Now a 12:00 start might change that for college students.

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