

Rutgers University Football

Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out. A little chance to recruit on Saturday, and then back at it. Getting ready for Nebraska, very good football team. Matt Rhule, excellent coach, known Matt for a long, long time, and he does a great job. He's certainly got that thing going into the right direction, and now it's being seen in the record.

They got really good players. They are well-coached. Offensively, Raiola, the quarterback, the freshman, is incredibly talented. You don't usually see a freshman that's kind of capable of doing the things that he's doing right now. They have got three really big wide-outs, Neyor, Banks and Bonner. Each one is bigger than the next. I mean, they are gigantic. Very physical group. They have drawn a lot of DPis, as you can imagine, because of their size and kind of the way they move DBs around.

The tight end, I mess up the way you say it, Fidone, he is a really good player. I think he is one of the better ones we'll see this year.

And then the offensive line is big and physical. Offensively, they are definitely going to be a huge challenge.

Defensively, I think their defensive line is stout. Robinson, 9, and then 0 and 1, I think it's Butler and I don't know if I'll say this right, Hutmacher, those three guys, as physical as you're going to see.

The linebackers, we kind of know one of them, he's an Irvington kid that we recruited, really good player in Gbayor, and then I think the secondary is really well-coached. I mean, they play together. They play -- you can see they know what they are doing with the scheme.

So I think their defense is one of the better ones in America, and they certainly understand what their defensive coordinator wants them to do. Tony is a heck of a coach, and I think that it's a well-coached team. It's a talented team and we are going to play them in a very, very tough place to play.



To say our plate is full would be an understatement but that's the Big Ten. That's why I love it.

So try to answer anything I can.

Q. You mentioned Dylan Raiola and what he's able to do as a freshman, can you expand on that? What happened stands out when you watch the film that is surprising given he's a true freshman?

GREG SCHIANO: The command that he has of their offense, I would say, is good for any level but for a freshman is unheard of.

And he's a very gifted athlete. He's big. He's mobile. He can throw on the move. He can throw from the pocket. There's not much this guy can't do but that's why he was such a highly recruited quarterback, right. He's got all the tools.

Q. Defensively, are you more encouraged about the way your team played in the red zone against Washington, or are you more concerned about some of the big plays you guys gave that up helped them set up in the red zone?

GREG SCHIANO: We have been playing pretty good red zone defense here last season and the beginning of this season.

There's other areas that we are not playing really good defense and we have to get it corrected. Tackling is one of them. We haven't tackled well, and I wouldn't say it's just last week. I would say overall I don't think we have tackled well. We need to make sure, No. 1, that gets fixed. We need to make sure we are all on the second page in everything we are doing.

Q. Specifically back to defense. No sacks or tackles for loss against Washington and Rutgers has dropped to 115 and 126th nationally in those two categories. What's your concern level about getting pressure and playing behind the line of scrimmage?

GREG SCHIANO: We had our opportunities. We didn't get them. We have to certainly concern, and you're not



going to win consistently playing defense that way. As a matter of fact, it's rare when you do.

Q. How does that change the dynamic of the offense?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I think it changes it a lot. You look at when you're 7-for-15 on third down, a lot of that is on the shoulders of your quarterback and your receivers and your offensive line, and the guy that's handling the football is the quarterback. Athan did very a good job an answering after the blocked kick throwing the fade for touchdown.

So those are all plays that we need him to make for us to win. And that's why he's here, and he's doing a good job.

Q. The tackling issue, what can cause that? In past years, it hasn't as much of an issue.

GREG SCHIANO: There's been some different guys in the lineup. We've got some guys coming back into the lineup. Attention to detail. A lot of things. Angles of entry on the tackle. There's a whole bunch of things. But it doesn't matter. We need to get them corrected.

And the end result is you have to drop -- now, the reality is, Friday night, they had a really hard guy to tackle. But that's the Big Ten. You know, we are going to see that this week. They do running back by committee. But it's a pretty darned good committee.

So we'd better get it fixed or we're going to have some issues, and the receivers, we'd better all tackle them. They are all 220 pounds. It's not like tackling your normal 190-, 200-pound receiver.

Q. You've won two one-score games this season, and Nebraska has a long streak of losing one-score game in Big Ten play. Do you feel confident about your team pulling through in these tight games that, I imagine, not only this weekend, but the rest of the Big Ten schedule will provide?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, every game is independent of the others. I do believe experience is good, don't get me wrong, and experience under pressure. You know, no doubt any kind of experience that you can call upon that was positive is a good one.

But I think when you get in that next one, it's totally about that opponent, that game. And we know, it's going to be a challenge for sure. They are a really good team.

Q. Just to follow up, the locker room at Virginia Tech, you said you saw something in your team's eyes when

they went to take that drive. Do you see something in this team that is different than those teams you had in the past?

GREG SCHIANO: I've had a lot of teams that have had that look but since we've come back, that was a pretty different look that I received, as I mentioned, at the Virginia Tech game. So that's a positive.

Look, the Big Ten is the most challenging league in the country, and it requires you to get better every week. If you don't you'll get left in the dust. My main focus is getting our team as improved as we can by Saturday. Will it be enough? I don't know. But I can't control that.

What I can control is my staff and I challenging and presenting opportunities for them to improve, and hopefully they take advantage of those opportunities because that's what being in it together is all about. We have a job. They have a job. Together we both do our jobs. It's going to be an improved product on Saturday.

Q. When you're preparing for a quarterback that doesn't have a lot of experience as a freshman, does it change your approach or your attack at all versus a quarterback like last week in Will Rogers, who has been around the block a few times?

GREG SCHIANO: It might, if you didn't see what he's done so far. He does not look fazed by disguised coverages. He does not look fazed by -- he gets hit and pops up and is fine.

So I think this guy is mature beyond his years. He's grown up in a football family. I think he's kind of made to do this.

Q. Mentioned the size of Nebraska's receivers. What's your message to your secondary cornerbacks playing guys bigger, more physical, more physical? And Eric Rogers got shaken up at the end. Is he going to be good to go in this circumstances?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, you know, it's a good try, but I'm not going to talk about the availability report before the game. You'll get all that stuff.

What I talk to the DBs about all the time, but it's really emphasized more, is you need to be really precise with your angles of entry, your coverage mechanics. Because if you're at all out of position, these guys have such large catch radiuses, and they can use their body to box you out. So you're really going to have to slip the hip and really be playing good football to be able to make a play on the ball.

Q. Going back to Eric, he's been productive this



season after stepping into the bigger role following Max leaving. What have you seen from him and what he's been able to do?

GREG SCHIANO: Who are we talking about?

Q. Eric Rogers.

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I think Eric, he played a lot last year. So I don't think this was new to him. He was in a three-man rotation. I think we have to get more guys playing at corner. I think that's an issue is the corners are probably taking too many snaps right now. I like to have a three-man rotation going, and I think Bo Mascoe and Al-Shadee Salaam need to play more. I think they are good players.

So we'll probably try to get them involved more and again, when you're playing against big wide-outs like that, it tires you out when they lean on you. So we are going to have to be aware of that.

It's going to be really hot Saturday, too. Temperatures are predicted in the 80s. The way the stadium is set up, they flip sidelines when Matt got back there. So sun will be beating on us. We've got a lot of things that we're up against.

Q. Bo Mascoe, I know last year it took him a while to get on the field and be able to play from you but what have you seen from him, coach's son, and the maturity that he has?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Bo is a football player, right. He's not our prototype size corner but he plays bigger than he is. He's long and he plays bigger than he is, which is the only reason we took him because he is a football player. He's tough. He competes. Fearless.

So I think he's got a chance to be a good one. Just got to keep developing. Again, and I'll say it again, like this league, you need to improve every week and I don't mean like Smiths. You need to make big improvement every week, otherwise you get into the middle and the back of the season. You're just not good enough to win because everybody else in this league, it's a really well-coached league. I was talking to a guy today. He said, man, there's no rest in that league. Every team is well-coached. Every team is talented.

I said, yeah, that's why I love it. That's why I wanted to be in the Big Ten. That's where we belong. I've said it before, it's that perfect intersection of elite football and elite academics.

And I'll close with that. You know, our kids now are a few weeks into the semester, a month into the semester. That's really it's college football -- I know they are getting paid and all this stuff with NIL and all that. But they are still college students. And they have a lot to do, and now it's starting to pile up on them. Papers, tests are beginning.

All those things as a coach you need to be aware of and make sure your guys are handling that well. As you get into this Big Ten season, it's a challenge. But like I said, one that we love being a part of.

Thanks, guys.

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