

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

Monday, October 21, 2024

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: In the interest of times, I'll get right to your questions.

Really, really talented opponent in Southern Cal. We have a huge challenge in front of us, one that we are excited about taking on.

Q. I believe injuries have been a big part of the season but are they just football, or is there one thing you could point to, whether that's strength and conditioning, medical staff, any processes in the preseason that you think are leading to this?

GREG SCHIANO: No. It's a very physical game, football. People wear these hard helmets and they wear these hard plastic pads and they are really strong.

The strength and conditioning gets them really big and strong and fast, and then they run full speed into each other. Sometimes that hurts them. Sometimes they are so strong that when they go to stop their ligaments and stuff are not as strong as their muscles, right, and they tear a leg amount.

But there's no blame. There's no conspiracy theory that somebody put something in their Wheaties. That's the way it is.

Some years you're fortunate with injuries and some years you're not. But the reality is, and that the reality that our team has to understand and the coaching staff has to understand and I certainly understand is, nobody cares. Nobody cares if you have 20 injuries or five, it doesn't matter.

Talking about them -- I love that we have the availability report because now I don't have to talk about them. I just say it's in the availability report. I like that.

Other than that, I have to deal with it. And I meet with my trainers and my medical and strength and High Performance every single day. That's all we talk about is the players. We'll see. You know, we'll see who the 74

when they get on the plane.

That the challenge, too. You don't know, we leave Wednesday, you don't know if he's going to be ready to play on Friday or not. You have to make a decision, do you take him or somebody else. You say, 74, well, you look at all the guys on special teams that can play 15 plays, it adds up quickly.

My issue, not yours.

Q. Going across country, playing a really late kickoff game, have you changed anything else from a preparation standpoint?

GREG SCHIANO: We have. Without getting into all our schedule and all that stuff, we generally go out a day early. Just we stay on Rutgers time. But when you have an 8:00 start Pacific, I don't think it's prudent to stay on Rutgers time. We've done it in NFL and college and everywhere and it's really served us well.

The times we went early on other teams that I coached on, I don't think it served us well. But we don't have a choice in this matter -- I guess I have a choice. But at 2:30 in the morning, hopefully the game is on the line, and I don't like my decision-making at 2:30, and I don't really like our players decision-making at 2:30 either.

So we'll go out early, and we'll have some stuff out there on Thursday. You know, get out there Wednesday night. Do some stuff there Thursday and then do play the game Friday and come home right after the game.

Q. Following the game, you talked about your optimism of the direction of the program and where things are going, and fans don't always want to hear that in the moment. What leads to your level of optimism, and is it optimism for this season or moving forward?

GREG SCHIANO: It's optimism for that night, right. It didn't go the way we wanted on the field but I know how the coaches are approaching and I know how our players are approaching it. It didn't happen. And I totally understand.



Again, it's a long-suffering fan base, I get that. So every time they get a little, you know, Oohhh, and it doesn't exactly happen, it will happen.

That was my point, is just hang in there. It's going to happen. It didn't happen overnight the first time. It's not happening overnight this time. It will happen.

I go out to practice every day. I see them train year-round. I see our coaches the way they look. It will happen. Will it be a linear ascent? No, it won't. But that's the confidence. It's not arrogance or a defiance. It literally is as I see it.

It's a great question because hopefully that will get to some people that are a little concerned. I said the sky is falling -- I don't mean to be sarcastic. My statement is to literally explain why there are some things going on right now that are not under our control and you have to live with what you live with.

I made it very clear that it's my decision. I made the decision to play some people that may be weren't a hundred percent, thinking that they were better than someone else was, at 80 percent. I have to reconsider that. I may play the exact same people if they are able. I don't know that. That's what this week's practice is about.

But as you mentioned, right, I mean, it's a shorter week. You're not doing to have the exposures. So we'll figure it out by Wednesday when we get on the plane. There are only 74 guys that can get on. So I have to make sure we have the right 74 so I can make the right choice of who the right 11 are; and throw on top of that a really, really talented team that's got their back against the wall as well, right.

So we both probably have very similar feelings about what we have to do Friday night. Should make for a great game. Really respect everything they do out there. They are really a complete program. Coach does a great job.

Q. What that do you see from the USC offense on film?

GREG SCHIANO: Talented as all get out. They have speed and athleticism at the receiver. They have a young, or inexperienced, but very, very talented quarterback. You know, he's rolling up the cash register as far as numbers go.

The running back situation really strong. They had their lead guy like we do, and they have a guy that spells them. Then the offensive line is gigantic. It's typical USC, what you would expect from an USC football team.

And then you throw on top of it, they are so well-coached. You know, you can see all the years of Coach Riley's mindset come into his play. I remembering going against him when I was at Ohio State back in 2016 and we were playing Oklahoma and he was the OC, and you see a lot of the same stuff. You see how he's evolved over the years to this time.

I just think they are really well-coached. Schematically they present as many issues as anybody we play all year.

Q. Obviously a win is the main goal. But short week, late game, like you said, L.A. Coliseum, national TV, at USC. What makes you get on the plane on the way home and feel satisfied or proud no matter what the final score is?

GREG SCHIANO: A win. Yeah, you hit it. The win -- we are not here to play well or compete. Like we are here to win, and when we don't win, there needs to be an examination, and we need to make at least an assessment of why that didn't happen.

The goal is to have one more point than they do. And I say this to the team. I say this to people when I speak. In our business, they have this humongous thing in the end zones with lights and they have our name and the other team's name. If their number is bigger than ours, we didn't get it done. That's as simple as you can get.

Now there's a lot of things that go into that, but at the end of the day that is the goal. There's a lot of purposes I have other than that. You asked about the goal. You asked what the goal is. The goal is to win the game.

Q. What's your assessment of the young linebackers especially Moses and D.J.?

GREG SCHIANO: Really, really well at times, and then not so well at other times. So we've been inconsistent.

But what do you expect from guys that don't have a lot of snaps under their belt? Now, we are at week -- we are going into Week 8. So I think that -- got to stop being a reason.

Definitely talented guys that we just need to -- we need to become more consistent. It's not an easy position to play, though. I think it's the hardest position on defense because you have to fit the runs against people that are much bigger than you, and you also have to play the pass against people that are faster than you.

It's a disadvantaged life. I've played it, I know. That

30-inch inseam doesn't cover a lot of ground.

Q. I know every game is important, but is this game a little bit more important that in the sense you win you don't have a four-game losing streak entering the bye week?

GREG SCHIANO: You're getting worse than I am, dude, with the lead-in to the question. Like, "I know" everything -- well, I get that. I get the preface. I do. I get it.

I don't even think about that. You know, the bye week, in my mind, you say bye week, I think development and recruiting. That's all I think about.

So I don't think about, oh, it would be nice to -- no. That quite honestly doesn't enter my mind. Might enter somebody's but not mine.

Q. What have you made of USC's inability to finish games down the stretch in those critical situations?

GREG SCHIANO: Again, you can look at it in two ways. I know you always look at it from the way you're looking at it. I get that.

I try to step back and look at it as, there's two teams playing and my grandmother told me a long time ago, I used to get very upset when my favorite teams in sports lost, the Yankees or Mets or Giants. I'd cry as a little kid. I was like a maniac. I was what the word fan is short for, fanatic, right.

And she used to tell me, "Gregory, half the teams are going to lose. That's a fact." And I'll never forget that.

So I think that they are really good. We have to go out there and play our very best football team, and there are extenuating circumstances. Too bad, right. You do the best with what you have at the time. I have a saying, when the foot hits the ball, right. It will be eight-something when the foot hits the ball and that's when you have to be ready.

Do what you're supposed to do when and do what you're supposed to do it. Well, that's when we are supposed to do it at 8:06 or 8:04, whatever that time is, we have to play and in three and a half hour four hours, that board will tell us about what we did.

That's what I love about this profession and what I love about this game. Sometimes it be cruel. Last couple Saturdays, it's been cruel. But it will get good again.

Q. Taking grandma's advice, how do you do that when you go through these difficult moments and these

difficult patches?

GREG SCHIANO: The way I've always done it. You go back to work. You certainly get frustrated, right. Everybody's human. But my job isn't to get frustrated. My job is to come up with answers for my staff, right. Listen to them, and then help them come up with answers. My players, listen to them, help them come up with answers.

Because the one thing that I've always told teams, coaches, businesses, unless you have a really bad person in your organization, there's not one person that says in the morning, you know what, I'm going to go in there and try to screw it up as much as I can and see if we can't get a big fat L on the record.

Now, there are things that they do they have to recognize and say, you know what, this guy is not handling his business well enough, we can't entrust him with repetitions or this guy is really a trust guy, we've got to get him more reps.

If there was one job during the season that I have as a head coach, it's to assess where we are now and would deserves the reps. Because who gets the reps in practice is who is going to play in the game, that's why the saying, practice is everything. Again, this is the only game where you practice a heck of a lot more than you play games.

So practice is everything. So the repetitions you get in practice are critical to the success on game day, and that's what I have to evaluate. The problem -- not the problem, the secret is oftentimes on Tuesday and Monday because today -- because today is a Tuesday to us, Tuesday and Wednesday, you don't have a real clear picture of how they are going to be on Saturday.

And experienced medical people, you know, to your point, experienced high-performance people, they do a great job of predicting, Coach, I think we can have them at 80 percent. Well, then I can make a decision. I look at it and weigh it out.

I don't have sleepless nights. A lot of coaches I hear, they can't sleep. I am so exhausted. When my head hits the pillow, I am out. But the thing I think about in my waking moments and sometimes dream about is, all right, who do we play, who gets the reps in practice. That's a huge part of my job ask, try to do it the best you can. That's how I get through it. I do everything I can as well as I can, and then I sleep well at night because I know that's the true definition of success, right. Coach wooden used to say it, the peace of mind you have when you know you've done everything you can be to the best you can be. Whales can you do? That's the way I look at it. I know that frustrates

some. Thank God it frustrates people. That means I'm doing something good.

Thanks, guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

