

# Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

## Head Coach Greg Schiano

### Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: Back at it. Really good Maryland team that we're getting ready for. Offensively very explosive. Coach Locksley does a great job. Certainly he's been a handful for us in our time back here. We haven't had a ton of success against them, especially playing on the road. So we have our hands full.

Offensively they're explosive. The Edwards kid, the quarterback, has done a really nice job, and he's up at the top of the league in passing.

Receiving room is as good as you'll play against. It's an NFL receiving room. Felton leads the Big Ten and Prather isn't very far behind. They really do. They have an NFL receiving room. Then Hemby, it feels like he's been playing forever. Very experienced.

Then the O-line is gigantic, and they made a change here a couple of weeks ago. We all here at Rutgers know Coach Wroblewski very well. A lot of respect for him and the job that he does. Going to be a huge challenge for our defense for sure.

When you flip it over, defensively they're gigantic up front. Especially their two interior guys. That's going to be a challenge to get some movement there. They're big. They're strong. They're physical.

Linebacker group, experienced. Hyppolite, another guy that I feel like we've been saying his name for a long, long time. Really good football player. Then the secondary is quality players. Really good, long athletes. So our hands are full.

Special teams they do a good job. Some guys we know that are coaching their special teams. The most respect Coach Zook is back there doing special teams and known Ron for a long time.

Well-coached, quality football team going on the road and going to be quite a challenge. I'll try to answer what I can.

**Q. Just defensively what's the key to continue that**

**improvement that the team showed the other day, especially when it comes to tackling and the quality of tackling?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, this is kind of a different operation. What Coach Locksley does offensively is a little different than what we faced last week. It's different every week, right, but this one is quite a bit different.

So we're going to have to have a good plan for sure. Put them in position to make those tackles, but as I mentioned some of those names, they're really athletic guys. So it's going to be really straining to the level that we strained and beyond.

I think our players should be able to say, All right, that is the standard that we have around here. That's what it's been around here. Nothing lower.

I really believe this. You are either getting better or getting worse. You don't stay the same. So it has to be a little bit better or we're getting worse. We have to have that kind of commitment to playing for each other and just splattering your body around the field.

**Q. We got used to seeing Taulia Tagovailoa the last couple of years. You mentioned the quarterback playing well, maintaining that system, and playing well there. Does the offense look different with the change of quarterback, or what's your assessment of the year-over-year for Maryland?**

GREG SCHIANO: A little bit different, but can you see the bones are still the bones, right? I think that they'll go into -- they've had a lot of success against us offensively, so certainly we're studying what they did and trying to fix some of those things, but it's not like we didn't try to do that last year.

We just have to go out and play at the quality level that we played last week. We have to do that and have to build upon that. We're capable of doing that.

Now, health comes into play again, so we'll see who can actually do it. We had that extra week to get guys feeling better, but now we're back into the weekly grind. So we're



going to find out.

**Q. I saw you run some four wide receiver sets, which hasn't been common recently. What went into this, and speak to the wide receivers, the quarterback, or just want to change things up?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think it speaks to a lot of things. It speaks to the wide receivers. We have quality wide receivers in our program. It speaks to Coach Ciarrocca's experience that he has the knowledge and he is comfortable enough to adapt on the fly.

Also, you have to remember, we lost our starting tight end and we lost our second team tight end, right, and that's the same thing we had at the running back position. We had lost our second team running back and then we lost our first team running back.

So I think you have to be more creative. When people say the word creative, it's not always double reverses and flea flickers. Creative is personnel. Creative is little things that unless you're a coach you don't have any idea are happening, but make a significant difference in the execution.

So we'll continue to pick and prod and figure out ways. That's our job, you know, but it's a challenge for sure.

**Q. Abrams and Tyler Needham looked like they got pretty banged up at the end of the game. Do you anticipate those guys playing again this season? Just the nature of the injuries look pretty bad.**

GREG SCHIANO: We'll do that availability report on Saturday, and that will be the technical or the final word on that.

**Q. Just on Wesley Bailey, you kind of touched on it in your post game presser, but was it a decision for him to redshirt? Was it an injury thing?**

GREG SCHIANO: No, he can't play. He's physically unable to play. We held out hope, but I think some of that caused some stress too. He needs to get better. He needs to heal. So it is what it is.

**Q. He does have the option to redshirt because he only played four games.**

GREG SCHIANO: He does.

**Q. Did you talk to him at all about coming back this year?**

GREG SCHIANO: No, I haven't talked to him at all. It's really been about his health.

**Q. Going back to the D-line. Like you mentioned, Wesley Bailey out for the year. Kyonte Hamilton has been a guy throughout the season that's played inside and outside this year. Defensive line had probably its best performance this season. Given those injuries, what can you say about the versatility of some of the guys, and how can you repeat that performance this weekend?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I don't know if you can repeat that performance. I hope you can and better, but I agree with you on Kyonte Hamilton. He has been a stalwart the entire year. It's been the one guy that I've counted on, and he has come through every single week.

He's played well. He has graded out well every week. I don't make any of that stuff public, but I'll just share that he has been the most consistent performer each and every week, showing up, doing his job, doing it at multiple positions. Yeah, he's a guy that we really depend on.

**Q. Jordan Walker, a guy that had a big play. Can you talk about how you found him and his development because he was a walk-on complete receiver?**

GREG SCHIANO: Sure can. It's a great story, right? You mentioned it. Bob Frazier found him up in Rochester, New York, and was really, really sold on him and kind of drove the process and really talked me into it.

He was a tall, skinny kid. I don't know. Maybe he was 199 pounds, maybe 198. I can't remember exact. He is now 260-something, and he is playing on the edge. He went from wide receiver to tight end to rush end.

Really nice play there getting a safety, but we saw it on scout team. We saw him getting better. Then we saw it in the spring doing it against our own people. But, again, he had never done it, right?

He just keeps showing up and working really, really hard. He's one of the hardest trainers in the summer, and when he came to training camp, he is one of the hardest working guys. Every day comes to work with a great attitude, and he's a great example for people in our program. I think the best is yet to come for him.

When you look at him, he looks like he walked out Giant training camp. The guy is a tremendous physical specimen. He's made himself into that. You talk about a self-made player. J. Walk is a self-made player.

**Q. Your two young wide receivers, Ian Strong and KJ Duff have a unique backstory. Playing at the same high school; they're both emerging. What has their development meant for your offense?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, Ian has been a big part of our offense last year and this year, right? The best part about Ian is we recruited him to be a safety. Ian played wideout in high school, but only on game day. So he trained as a DB all week, and then they would put him in and tell him what route to run.

So you talk about a guy who has relatively not a lot of experience, and I think can be as good as we've had here. I think Ian, sky is the limit. It's all going to be a matter of him staying healthy and him being able to continue to grow.

With Coach Brock and with Coach Perry, there's not two better receiver coaches in America. To have them both here I think that's part of the reason the receiver room keeps getting better and better.

Those two guys are awfully talented, and to think that they were on the same high school team is -- they won some games. There's a reason teams win games.

**Q. Just with Antwan Raymond, what stood out about him when you were recruiting him and just kind of what have you seen from his progress over the last few months as he has joined this program and gotten seemingly better and better?**

GREG SCHIANO: Antwan is a neat kid. The whole story on that is amazing, right, that we were recruiting him, like a lot of people were. Then the program discontinues at his school.

We saw that he could graduate and reclass. We kind of moved on it quickly, and we had a great relationship with he and his mom. One thing led to another, and all of a sudden he's on our campus training. You could just tell he was a little bit more mature physically and emotionally. Really tough and willing to do whatever was asked.

Again, I think Coach Shaw does a great job with those guys. Like I said, guys, it's the third and fourth running back. You can say what you want, but we've not been in that position in years past where our third and fourth running back would be able to step in and win a Big Ten game and rush for over 100 combined.

I'm really proud of those guys. I'm proud of Coach Shaw the way he has prepared his room, and we just have to keep going. If we can get Kyle back, now we have some

guys. We knew what Benji could do. To your redshirt question, we were trying to redshirt Benji, and we effectively are going to be able to now, which is important.

So just see where the chips fall here this week, and we'll get them well ready and whoever can play, they'll be the guys that play.

**Q. Taj got the start at safety over Desmond Igbinosun. It looked like you guys use primarily Tyreem Powell and Dariel Djaboe at linebacker. Were the changes coming out of the bye week game-specific for Minnesota? Do you anticipate them being the rest of the season? Specifically at linebacker, how much did it help to have the same two guys mostly in the same spots? Did the continuity help you defensively?**

GREG SCHIANO: I don't know if it was the continuity or the same two guys. The fact of the matter is Tyreem Powell was healthy. He wasn't 100 percent. Don't misunderstand that, but he was a lot closer than he was out at SC. He couldn't have gone that many plays at Southern Cal.

Tyreem was a pro football player, so when he is in there, it steadies a lot of things. Right here technically and mentally he is special and then his physical attributes. There are there were a couple of times. He's a 250-pound guy that when he hits the linemen, he knocks them back. He has great snap. He made some real big-time plays.

I still feel bad for him because he's probably 85 percent. He's still not 100 percent, but him at 85 is better than most at 100. Moses Walker is a real good football player, but they were playing really well. Sometimes when you get two guys that are hot together, you don't want to break it up.

We talked a number of times. Is this the time to get Moses in because we want to get him in. We have to find a way to get him on the field. He's too good of a player to stand next to us. We'll figure something out package-wise.

I can't tell you that we definitely thought that's the way the game would go with those two, but we kept asking 'Reem, How are you feeling? He kept saying, "I'm good." He's a grown man. He'll share with me when he is not feeling right. He'll say, I need a blow, coach.

**Q. Taj, starting him at safety and playing the majority of the snaps there.**

GREG SCHIANO: Taj I think started opening game, right? The guy has been through it as a freshman, but he keeps getting better and better. We think there's high promise.

We think we have some really good young safeties that you haven't seen very much of yet, but I thought you saw what Flip looks like when he feels a little better. Sometimes it's easy to forget.

He is a special player. He just hasn't been able to run very well and stop and all those things. So to see him out there semi again -- not 100. He is probably 80. When he hits you, man, you feel it. Shaquan Loyal felt better Saturday, and you could see him making plays.

So Des is a good football player. Des will play for us. It's just one of those deals that there wasn't a ton of plays, and we were getting off the field. When you got something cooking, you don't always have to mess it up.

Now, up front we rotate constantly, so that's just the norm, but in the back seven we kind of -- it was going well, and we kept it going well.

**Q. Just on Athan's performance on Saturday, he played incredibly well, had some big throws, had a big touchdown tight near the goal line there near the end of the game, fourth quarter. Just talk about his progress over the last several weeks? He gets better and better every week. Of course, working you mention a lot of injuries, personnel changes, his ability to really just manage the offense and go out there and execute for you guys.**

GREG SCHIANO: I think Athan has done a good job, is getting better every week, and we're going to need to. This Maryland group, they're going to get after us in the front. The back end they're long. You can't miss my much.

They are really good at taking the football way. Very opportunistic group, but he is getting better. I was really pleased and am really pleased. There's a couple of balls he would have back Saturday if he could, and we have to try to eliminate those. That's going to be the key.

Coming down the stretch now every game is going to -- if we do what we're supposed to do every game is going to be tight. You can't make those errors. Like you see plays, as I always say, games take on a life of their own, and it's one or two plays that guide the game in a whole different direction.

I always tell the players, I wish I could tell you those plays and then we could kind of just go golfing, but that ain't the way it works. You have to play every single play as hard as you can, and when those plays come up, then you are in position to make them.

That will be the task Saturday night for sure. It's a tough environment. Weather is going to start to become an issue. Now it's starting to turn into the fall here in the Northeast. A whole different set of circumstances, and we have to be ready for that. That's what this week is about. Preparing for this event for for this game and getting ready to go. I'm confident our guys will.

A couple of things I want to mention. I talked to you coming into the bye week, the long trip back from California and all that. I was really proud of the way our guys attacked the academics too. It's in that period now where we're in a very, very busy time. Things are coming due.

That was a huge amount of pressure on our guys as well as getting ready for the Minnesota game. I was pleased with that. Then I would be remiss if I didn't wish everybody a happy Veterans Day. I think today is a day that sometimes flies under the radar, and it can't. It just can't because the people that served and have given their lives for us to live the way we do, I think it's something that we all need to appreciate, and I know I do. I know you guys do too, but just thought I need to make sure I mention that.

We'll see you on Saturday.

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