

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out, Recruiting Day signing class press conference, a 26-member class that I think really, really made us exponentially better. I'm thrilled with the class. I'll get into that more.

Before I do, I want to wish Joe Harasymiak and his family the best. Joe accepted the head coaching position at the University of Massachusetts earlier today, and will do a great job there. He's been a huge help in building this thing, and just wish he and his family, like I said, the very, very best.

I'd also like to thank Eric Josephs, who is our director of player personnel. He and his entire operation did such an incredible job in this whole process. You know, it was a big change how official visits and things fell in the summertime, and the last couple years, and they have done an incredible job of pivoting and just really changing the way we've traditionally done things. So huge.

And then last but not least, I'd like to thank the coaching staff and their families. Coaches spend a lot of time away from home recruiting the future of this program. There's no easy way to do it. This class was put together the old-fashioned way through years of relationships. Some of these kids, we started recruiting the day we got hired, and they are finally coming to fruition now.

So again, to the coaches on the staff now, to the coaches on the staff that have been here before, it's just a giant thank-you because they have done an incredible job. And you are only as good as the young men that you bring into the program.

Again, I'm thrilled. I think that this class is filled with great length, size, speed, toughness, intelligence, and most of all, a bunch of guys who are cultural fit and love the game of football.

So with that, I'll try to help you, answer any questions I can, but I really want to keep this to this recruiting class. Because this is a special day for all these young men and a special day for our program, making them part of our



family.

Q. I guess, just the recruiting, offensive line, how has that process evolved for you, and I guess when it comes to the quality of recruits that you're able to bring in, seems like a lot of these guys are closer and closer to Big Ten size when they join the program. How has that evolved over the last few recruiting class?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, we have been able to recruit better and better classes full of linemen. I think players are more and more prepared than they have ever been, right, with all the trainers and O-line trainers and all the things they do now during the off-season.

But the reality is, again, the old-fashioned way, relationships. Some of these kids we've been recruiting for three and four years. You know, there's highs and lows, as you can imagine, and being able to weather the storm when you're in the lows and being able to ride it when it's high, to be able to get it to the finish line today, what a tremendous class. I'm looking forward -- I've talked to some of them and looking forward to talking to them later and telling them how excited I am to be their coach, and we're ready to move forward.

Q. Is there anything different about the recruiting process, knowing that these players would be the first group, really, to play or set foot on campus in the revenue sharing era? Did that change how you had to go after players or address this any differently?

GREG SCHIANO: Not really. Maybe a little bit but not as much as one would think. That's in our class. Like I said, these have been relationship guys. Because again, we still don't know exactly what that's going to be, right. I wish I could sit here and tell you, this is how it's going to work. We don't know that yet. Still has to be ratified by the judge and all those kind of things.

This, again, was done the old-fashioned way. You know, NIL is involved. The new old-fashioned way. I think this class is really special group and they are going to do really good things here.



Q. You added a running back in Terrell Mitchell. Can you point out what stands out about him and what made you go after him late? I think you offered a month ago or so. You've obviously known about him but what stands out about him late as a prospect?

GREG SCHIANO: You're right, Terrell Mitchell I think is a great addition to our class. He is a running back that we think fits what we do perfectly. And he's right down the road, right. 20 minutes down the road.

I thought he made a big improvement from his junior year to his senior year. We're one of the few staffs that still evaluates seniors all the way to the end. And I think having my history, 37 years of doing this, you know, back in the day, you didn't even offer kids. You went to see them, and you didn't even know who they were. And then you offered them in the season, and you signed them in between December and February of their senior year. Now most classes are done before their senior season even starts.

Eric Josephs, our director of player personnel, he and his group and our coaches do a great job of continuing to watch senior prospects that maybe we thought were just a little bit off. Because that's a huge year of development. Some of those kids are going from 16 to 17. A lot of things happen from 16 to 17 or 17 to 18. A lot of kids change in big ways. I think we've got a great back here. I think he's going to fit right in that room of quality, quality backs and thrilled to have him.

Q. When you talk about the shifting landscape of where you recruit from, North Carolina is becoming increasingly important. Why has that been a state that you've targeted?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I don't know so much as if we targeted it. I think the guy that went in there did a heck of a job in Scott Vallone. Scott is a relentless recruiter who that became his area, and he went in there and just, you know -- Ben Black a year ago, right.

I stood at this podium a year ago and told you, I'm so excited to see last year's class because I knew -- I really knew we had some special kids there. And I think everybody got to see that, even in games some this year, right.

I feel the same way about this class, and you know, we added guys like you said from North Carolina and now that's two years in a row. Hopefully that can be -- because again if you look at our class, it's mostly up and down the Eastern seaboard from Florida all the way up until sometimes New England, and that's a natural fit for us.

Will we go anywhere? Yeah. We'll go any in the country. We'll go to the Midwest. We'll go to the Southwest. We'll go wherever we have to. But there's a lot, a lot of good football players in that circle or that long oval called the Eastern Seaboard, and North Carolina certainly falls in that.

Q. Obviously quarterback being the leader of the offense and the team in general, Sean Ashenfelder, the first commit of that class way early. Does getting a quarterback, the leader of the team, does that early set the tone for the rest of the class?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, Sean has been incredibly loyal. He's been with us, like you said, for a long time. I think his play just went like this (indicating upward trajectory). You watch his game tape this year, and at times he single-handedly put the team on his back and carried them.

I think he's a really fine football player. Good quarterback. He's a great athlete. Here is a guy who is a really fine baseball player, and was really a part-time football player. He played baseball. He played football.

I can't wait to see him now that he becomes a full-time quarterback, and he's already started that process. He is a go-getter and I think really, really going to be a great addition at the position.

Q. Ten guys from New Jersey. How encouraging is it that more and more guys are choosing to stay home, especially when a lot of these guys have offers from a lot of different places and could have gone anywhere?

GREG SCHIANO: Home is always going to be the base of our program, right. We'll never take a guy just because he's from New Jersey. That's not a reason. They have to be a cultural fit. They have to be an athletic fit. We have to have guys that love to play football.

As hard as we work here and the focus that we put here, "like it" doesn't work here. "Love it" does. But to have ten from Jersey, and ten really good players and good people from New Jersey, it's a huge, huge part of our program.

You know, I look at it as, you know, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, southern Connecticut, out into Eastern PA, that's a two-hour circle, maybe a two-and-a-half-hour circle that we have to consistently be productive in that circle.

Q. DJ McClary was a late flip for you guys. Really talented player on both sides of the ball. What did his commitment mean and?

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GREG SCHIANO: I love DJ McClary. I think he is an incredible athlete.

I got to watch him live this fall on our bye week, a really awful weather day, and just stood there amazed. He plays quarterback. He plays running back. He plays wide out, linebacker, D-end. He's just one of those really, really talented athletes. Can run, can hit. Can make plays on the football.

I can't wait to get the chance to work with him. I think he's going to -- he's going to be another one of those special defensive players that we've had here, and to have a guy right up the road here many Jersey City like that, to me, is really cool.

Q. You always talk about getting bigger up front, especially in the trenches. The defensive line you added two big guys in defensive tackle, Jyon Simon and Braxton Kyle. How much of an impact do you think these guys are going to have?

GREG SCHIANO: They are really good football players. I sounds last week a broken record but I love the way they play. They are kind of different physical makeups but they play with great motor. Real aggressive guys, and well-coached players. You know, really know how to use their hands.

I think that -- just, again, I can't wait to work with them and a lot of these kids are mid-year. So come mid-January, they are going to be on campus and we are going to get to start working with them.

College football has become a year-round operation. There's really very little time where you're not working with your players.

So I love that about it. You know, I do. And I think every bit of it is needed to get the players ready to play at this level and beyond. So hats off on that; that the rules have changed where we can work with them because it's important.

Q. The impact of recruiting in the Big Ten, as opposed to your first go-around in the Big East, how does that play into things? Is it easier to get into a living room of a recruit because you're in the Big Ten?

GREG SCHIANO: I think with the Big Ten, why I always wanted Rutgers in the Big Ten and why it was just a constant quest of mine, is I think Rutgers Football, and Rutgers Football under our culture is the perfect fit for the Big Ten, right.

The Big Ten to me is that sweet spot, and I've said it before, of elite academics and elite football that meets way up here (indicating top of a pyramid).

I don't think there's any -- I know there isn't any place else in the country that has such a group of people that are commonly connected in that manner, elite football, elite academics because it is still college football. No matter how much revenue share, NIL or all that stuff, they have to get their degree. There's going to be a heck of a lot more of them that don't play professionally than do, and the degree that they get, the education that they receive here, both real life and in the classroom. Those are the things that are going to help them as they go on to be great husbands, great fathers, great members of society.

I can't say enough about what the Big Ten means to Rutgers; what it means to me. I've said it many times. I think it's a perfect fit for Rutgers, and what we need to do is now we need to go get on that top half there and above, where we can -- we actually are in the top half this year. But we've got to get to the top of the top half. We've got to go win the thing and that's going to be hard, really hard but that's what players like this can do.

Q. Just the wide receivers that you brought in this class, what stands out about that group? And when you have guys like Ian Strong and this year Black and Duff, how does that change how you're able to recruit these guys and tell them, hey, if you earn a spot you're able to contribute right away?

GREG SCHIANO: I think one thing that pretty well nationally known that recruits know is we don't have any buy as, seniors, juniors, framework men, sophomore. None of that matters. Where you're from doesn't matter.

All things equal off the field, meaning you're taking care of your business. Whoever gives us the best chance to play, they are going to play.

Now the wide receiver class I think is outstanding. I thought last year's was really good. I think this year. And that's hats off to Dave Brock and to John Perry. Those guys did an incredible job of working with Eric Josephs and his staff, zeroing in on who they really wanted and then saying, Coach, we need your helping to get these guys.

I love the way that this was handled. I love the way that it ended, the ones we got. I couldn't be more pleased, and I can't wait to get them here and start working with them. They are going to get opportunities. We lose a lot at the position. So they are going to get opportunities to step in and compete.



Q. Sorry if this was asked already but Joe --

GREG SCHIANO: You get a detention but that's okay.

Q. We'll save that for next season. It will be a suspension to be determined. Four quick ones on --

GREG SCHIANO: Well, you can't have the last question and say "four quick ones."

Q. All right.

GREG SCHIANO: Go ahead. You're late. I'll give you what you need. Go ahead.

Q. Did you have to address -- with high school recruits --

GREG SCHIANO: We already talked with about Joe and I said this is about the recruiting class so I'm going to hold off on that. I know it's in relation to Joe with recruits. Players come to come to Rutgers. They don't come for one particular person. It's about our program.

Q. Just quick on Joe. Is he going to coach in the Bowl game?

GREG SCHIANO: Joe has started. This is about the recruits.

So one more time, and then I've got to cut you off. Yeah, he's up there now and he's going to be the coach there immediately.

Guys, I appreciate it, as always. You do a great job covering us.

This group of guys, I think you're going to really enjoy getting the chance to cover them. They are excellent football players. They are really, really good people, as well. So what excites me is I feel like we're stacking classes, right. I think last year's class was excellent. This year's is excellent, as well. And people always want to say compare this to that. I don't get into that.

I just say, if we can stack class after class after class, you look up, and we are going to have a program that we can all be proud of.

Appreciate it again, and we'll see you on Sunday.

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