

Rutgers University Football

Media Conference

Monday, March 24, 2025

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Greg Schiano

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Ready to get started here with spring football. It's been a really good off-season, good winter. A lot of stuff cooking here on our team and our staff.

Offensive staff-wise, pretty much stayed intact. John, we lost -- I'm sorry, we gained John McNulty as our assistant receivers coach, which is really a big, big get. It's good to have John back.

Defensively, obviously with the co-coordinators Rod Smith and Zach, as well as Vic Hall who will come in and work with the nickels and safeties.

We also have David Rowe, he was on staff but David is going to coach the corners now, and Charlie Noonan, who was on staff is now going to coach the interior D-line. Excited about that.

Now there's three of our former players that are position coaches, which is exciting for me. You know, when they are guys that you met when they are 16 years old as high school students and now they are coaching for you, that's a lot of fun, and they are really good coaches, too. Excited about all that. Excited about our team.

We do have some injury -- some off-season surgeries that I'll go through now just to do housekeeping.

Missing in the spring offensively is Kenny Fletcher, still recovering from his surgery. Dillon Brathwaite, Sam Brown, Bryan Felter and Shedrick Rhodes. So those five guys will miss spring.

Defensively, Mo Toure still recovering. Abram Wright; Isaiah Deloatch, who is a new incoming freshman who is recovering from surgery, and then we had one winter program injury, DK Gilley has had surgery. He'll miss the season. So that's kind of from the injury standpoint.

And other than that, I'm here to answer any questions that I can. So again, appreciate you coming out.

Q. I guess starting off with the DCs, why did you



decide to go the co-defensive coordinator route and how do they share the responsibilities?

GREG SCHIANO: That's a good question. Really took my time in this process and there was a lot of twists and turns. I think we ended up exactly where we needed to. I think both of those guys, they have worked together before at Duke. They were really complementary of each other, and I said let's get them both and that's what we did.

I think it's going to work out well. As I noted Rob will call but Zach is a huge part of the implementation of the defense, running it, putting the game plan together, and I'm sure there will be a lot of discussion even with the two of them on game day.

But Rob has more experience calling it, and that's the way we'll do it.

Q. Why did you guys ultimately land on Rob?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, this is the fourth time that Rob's accepted a job. It's the fourth time I've offered him a job. Certainly have a lot of respect for him. I think he's an excellent football coach. Sharp, sharp defensive mind.

And I just think that as things evolve, there's always changes, right. Nobody stays the same and I'm excited about that. It's been a great off-season working with him and Zach, and I am so excited about what we're doing on defense. Glad it ended up the way it did.

Q. We are reaching the point in college sports history where obviously we start paying players. Curious if you've changed the operations at all behind the scenes, or what you've done to prepare for that moment?

GREG SCHIANO: It's been going on for a while actually but I know what you're saying. The 7th is coming, April 7, if the House case gets settled it will be a different pay stream.

The interesting thing is going to be what happens to NIL, right. If everybody says well there's going to be a clearing house and all these things -- I hope it works. That would

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

be unbelievable.

But I've been doing this a long time, and there's teams in our league that have paid \$25 or \$30 million for their roster last year. I don't think they are going to take a pay cut. So how that all gets sorted out, that's going to be the interesting part but I don't really care.

I worry about what our situation is here is the Rutgers and that's what you're asking about. Yeah we spent a lot of time as far as we're still in the process of building up our personnel department. Really what's happened in college sports is you need a college personnel department, and then you need a high school personnel department. If you wait until people come on in the market in the transfer portal, it's too late or you'll make bad decisions, one or the other.

So you have to really evaluate players, especially in areas of need in the portal or potential portal market, and that takes people. There's guys that are coaching, guys that are evaluating. Kind of mix in all of it.

As far as the setup goes, I'm pretty comfortable with where we are. We still need to add more staff to get the work done. So a lot of people are humping it right now and doing double time. I'm comfortable with the way we're handling it.

Again, I think it's important in these situations that you know who you are and what works in your program, and I do know that.

Q. Your two years in the NFL, can you bring any experience that applies to the salary cap management?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I'd say a ton. And when I went to the NFL I didn't know any of it, which was a real disadvantage. I learned a lot, and I learned a ton after the fact, as well. Salary cap, agents, all those things, I feel very comfortable with that, and I think needs to be an advantage for us.

Q. Spring game still on? It's been canceled in a lot of programs across the country?

GREG SCHIANO: There's a lot of questions there, No. 1, I love the spring game weekend. It's great. It's kind of like where the past, present and future all come together. You have the football alums, and I love seeing all our former players that played here long before I coached here that come out en masse, and our current team and families and recruits. I think it's a great weekend. We try to do it, if it's at all possible we try to do it on Rutgers day so it's a great

day for Rutgers University and our football program and we've been able to do it again this year.

This is still college football in my mind, and pro football is a great game, and college football is getting more and more like pro football. But.

There are still some things that are unique to college football, and spring game is one of them. So I'm looking forward to it. We are definitely going to have our spring game and can't wait.

Yeah, there's a lot of good developmental time that comes between now and then, and that's what excites me the most is we have a really good football team coming back and I'm excited about coaching them. There's a lot to be done between now, and when we kickoff against Ohio, and this is one part of it for sure.

I always enjoyed joint practices when we had them in the NFL. But you have to go with the right team. Some of the nonsense that goes on NFL is just that, nonsense, guys fighting. Everybody that we did practice with, we had a rule, any fights, you're gone. That worked fine. They didn't have any of the nonsense, and you got really good work.

We'll see. I would not be opposed to it in training camp, either. You don't get preseason games in college football. That would be really good.

Again, we'll see what comes about.

Q. You talked about having the former players as position coaches. How important to have those guys that know what to expect to instill it in current players?

GREG SCHIANO: I love having, more than anything, our former players that not only know the culture, but they lived the culture and they lived it in this room and that campus outside here. And that, to me, is what makes them uniquely qualified to deal with our student athletes and our players.

They know me. They get away with murder because it's like your own -- they know me for how many years now and I know their families, but they are really good coaches.

Several have wanted to get into coaching but they have to be selected. They have to have that "it" factor.

Q. What's the status of Jett Elad?

GREG SCHIANO: I can't comment on it now it's an ongoing case. I hope it works out because Jett is a good player and cultural fit.



One thing I'm proud our staff did a great job of identifying great players in the transfer portal but guys that are a cultural fit, and I think that's of the utmost important. Here is the thing, if you're going into the portal for a guy, you'd better get a guy that you're bringing here to play. You shouldn't be going there to get guys that are not going to play. Well, if they are going to play, then they are going to lead people on your team whether you like it or not. Because they are going to make plays and guys follow people who make plays.

So they have to be a cultural fit. Otherwise you run the risk of guys being led in the wrong direction. So we spend a heck of a lot of time on players we recruit, and even more on the portal guys because you know they are coming in for a particular purpose, and that's to win now.

I love the guys we got in the portal this year, I really do; in years past, and this year again, really special young men.

Q. What stood out about Zach and his football mind, and just the importance of having a Jersey guy on staff?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, Zach, I had talked to Zach probably five years ago when we first came here, and he was at Virginia Tech at the time. And I remember being very impressed. This guy is a sharp young kid, and he's had tremendous experience since then working with some defensive football coaches.

I've kept an eye on him. Rob brought him up to me and I said, "Yeah, I know who he is." Talking to him, I had a couple conversations where I was impressed and could feel his energy. Talk about a guy that loves Jersey; he is that guy. He is excited to be home. His family is excited to have him home and he's going to do a great job for us, recruiting, coaching, the whole deal.

Q. I know you get asked about the position groups but the one with the most turnover seems to be the DB room. How do you use the spring game to prepare?

GREG SCHIANO: We call them takeaways when the defense does it, just a small thing but we don't think anybody just gives things to you, right. You have to go take it and we didn't do a good job this past year of doing that. We were not, by our standards, we were awful. So we need to improve on that.

What we did a very good job of is taking care of the football. We had two fumbles and seven interceptions the entire season. If we can take the ball away and continue to take care of the ball the way we are, we'll have a great year. But we have to take the ball away.

To your question, how do we do it? You work on it. You emphasize it. Everybody knows that's a key ingredient to our defense, and you've got to put pressure on the quarterback, right. When you put pressure on the quarterback, right, he throws balls to his teams other than his own sometimes, and what's we need to happen this year.

Q. Other programs are hiring GMs. Are you considering doing that? Or am I talking to the GM?

GREG SCHIANO: I mean, if the right person became available, we would certainly do it. But until that right person is available, I'll handle parts of that. But we have a great staff. Eric Josephs is our director of player personnel and does a great job. Jordan Huxtable is involved in every facet of our program and does an incredible job.

We just need to beef up the staff to be evaluating tape. Again they have to be the right guys. Culturally they have to be a fit. You have a vertically aligned organization only if guys want to be vertically aligned.

I spent a lot of time on the hiring of staff and the recruiting of players because I think if you do that right, it gives you a chance to really have success. If you do it wrong you're chasing your tail the whole time.

Q. You were asked about the new hires. Vic Hall, had you did you find him? He didn't have a bunch of New Jersey connections or Rutgers specifically?

GREG SCHIANO: I thought I did mention Vic Hall's name specifically. Vick is going to coach the nickels and the safeties. Rob Smith -- I did not know Vic Hall. I knew him as a player. I remember him at Virginia as a player.

I did not know him, but man, am I glad we met. I've been with him for about a month, and he's really a sharp guy, really good football coach.

I can tell he relates to young people very well which is going to help him be a very good recruiter. So I'm excited. Excited that we kind of got a mix of parts of our defensive staff from last year and some new guys this year, and I'm excited to just sit back and kind of observe you how they all mesh together. They have been doing a good job, though. There's a chemistry there that I like and when you have an off-season like we have had with all these portal guys, you know, eleven portal guys is the most we've ever had.

My job is to make sure we get everything put together. That's going to be the key; that everybody is on the same page, and I think our coaches have done a really good job



so far with that.

Q. Going back to the Jett Elad lawsuit, it mentions approximately a \$500,000 NIL deal. Is that number accurate and where does that rank in the spectrum of the NIL deals on your roster?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I'm never going to get into, unless I'm publicly required to reveal it, I'll never get into who is getting what. Just don't believe everything you read, is something that I learned a long time ago. Jett is a really good player. Glad he's here.

Q. Earlier, I meant roster turnover, not takeaways, interceptions.

GREG SCHIANO: Oh, yeah.

Q. Preparing the new starters in the DB room --

GREG SCHIANO: You can see where my mind is, get the ball, get the ball.

Q. Having the alumni employers coach the young guys and instilling that culture when the key veterans are gone, how important is the off-season for that?

GREG SCHIANO: It's really important. But overall your coaching staff has to do that, whether they played here or coached here or you got them from Alaska. It doesn't matter. Like the job of a coach is to live life with his players.

Part of that is coaching him in football and part of it is helping him grow up as a man and part of it is helping him be successful as a student, right. I think our coaches do a better job of anybody in the country at living life with our players and that's what I ask them to do.

I tell them, if you're looking for a job, there's probably better places to go work. If you're looking for a lifestyle, you want to live life with our players, then this is a great place to work. I say it up front because I don't want guys getting here and being like, what is this. I really expect them to live life with their position group. Like I said, our guys do a great job of that.

Q. Eric O'Neill and Bradley Weaver, what stood out about them and how do they fit into this defense?

GREG SCHIANO: Really, really productive guys that the their previous schools. Hardest workers on their team and are now some of the hardest workers on our team. Really impressed with them up to this point. And it's been fun to coach them.

So far, it's all good.

Q. Last year with the injuries, I know that was something that we talked about an awful lot and has the strength and conditioning program adjusted?

GREG SCHIANO: We're always adjusting whether it's sports science, strength and conditioning, medical, we're constantly pressing. But the reality is the injuries we had were kind of freakish things. When you tear ligaments, you break bones. If you had a ton of soft tissue injuries or you had injuries that you're not doing things right.

But when you have -- the year before we were kind of fortunate and unfortunately that's how it goes sometimes. You'd like it not to be so severe. If we could be kind of in the middle, but maybe this year that means we're going to be good. We'll see.

Q. Everyone is optimistic in the spring, but you seem optimistic. What gives you hope?

GREG SCHIANO: I like our staff. I like our team. I like our players. We are playing in the best conference in college football.

So it's quite a challenge, right, the Big Ten Conference. We've got a great schedule this year. But the reality of it is we have to get this group that we have right here now, we have to get them better and better and better. They have to believe in themselves more and more and more and get to training camp and get ourselves in a mindset to be ready to play what could be a great, great season.

But you're playing a great schedule so you have to go every single week. There's no letdowns on that schedule, and it's going to take every bit of what we can do now, between now and then to be prepared for it. You're right, this time of year, if you're not optimistic this time of year, you've got some issues. But I really do, I like our team. I like our staff. I love this place. I'm excited.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about the defense obviously but the offense is a group that has a lot of continuity minus a few major pieces. How continue to get that group to grow together throughout the spring?

GREG SCHIANO: It starts with Coach Ciarrocca. He does a great job with the entire staff. You know, there's no, oh, we got better and now we figured it out. He is one of those guys that's constantly pushing it.

The next, and maybe 1 and 1A is our quarterback, right. I mean, Ethan is a special kid. I've really enjoy watching him



grow this off-season. Growing, you know, after putting results up on the field, I think it's allowed him to be more of a leader this off-season.

Again, you've got to remember, last off-season, he's coming in from a different university. He's got to compete for the job. And really just had his head down trying to do his job and win the job. And this year it's totally different. You know, we have our quarterback, no ifs, ands or buts about it. He's our leader.

We have the opportunity to really have a great receiving core. They are youngish, they are a good mix, really. But there are some guys that I look at that are saying, all right, that's what it's supposed to look like. Got to keep getting better. Stay healthy. The offensive line, you know, we have a big man to replace in Hollin. He really had a great career, kind of silently, quietly, 50 starts. Not a lot of guys who have started 50 Big Ten football games. This is a kid who we are going to miss a bunch. Someone is going to enjoy having him but we are not allowed to anymore.

But I do, I like the guys that have been developing behind them, and Coach Flahts has done a great job developing them.

Our running back group I really love. Again, Coach Shaw, exceptional job in developing. You look at a guy like Kyle Monangai, what a tremendous runner, all those things, for sure. But what is it, like 633 carries, zero fumbles, that's unheard of, right. That, to me is coaching. That, to me is a coach who connects with his players and they believe in him.

When I look at our staff, Dave Brock, tremendous job, Scott Malone with the tight ends. I really think that Coach Ciarrocca has done a great job of bringing our staff together and making them truly united and vertically aligned in what our offense is.

I'm excited. Again, we've got to get better and special teams is going to be a huge part. Eddie Allen really heads that up, and Eddie does a great job, and I try to help him where I can.

Yeah, we've got work ahead of us but good group to go to work and try to get these things accomplished.

Again, probably forgot something that I'll get you on Friday. But I wanted to get this stuff out of the way so we can just talk about practice and the team and where we're headed come Friday. We'll do a little mini-camp Friday and Saturday, back-to-back and then we'll get into our routine, Tuesday through Saturday, and again we'll have that spring game on Rutgers day, which like I said, will be a

great time for a lot of different groups, and then it's into that summertime, getting ready.

You know, I break things up into those kind of segments, and we just finished the winter program. Now we are entering the spring. This is a new segment, one we have to really excel, and we'll take the next one when it gets here. Appreciate you coming out, and looking forward to seeing you this spring.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

