

Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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Greg Schiano

Postgame Press Conference



Rutgers - 34, Ohio - 31

GREG SCHIANO: Appreciate you guys coming out and covering us. Really happy for our team, for the coaches, the players, everybody. Hats off to Ohio U. Played a heck of a ballgame. Parker Navarro is certainly a special athlete. We knew that coming in, and he didn't disappoint. Big, big hats off to our student section. I thought that was awesome. It was packed. They came early. They stayed late. They impacted the game. They truly impacted the game. They had a big part in that blocked punt because they caused the illegal procedure, which backed them up five more yards and made me feel more comfortable calling a punt block. And then sure enough, they blocked a punt for a touchdown.

When your student section can do that, that's important and we are going to need those guys in eight days. So I'm going to ask them to come on back and do exactly what they did this week because that was excellent.

Rather than me go on, why don't I try to answer questions you have. And certainly I'm excited to be 1-0. It's hard to win. Plenty of things we have to get better at but I like doing it from the win column. So I'll open up for questions.

Q. On the final drive, what factored into the decision to go for it on fourth and seventh that ended up sealing the game?

GREG SCHIANO: You look at the situation. You know if you compete it, the game's over. I have a lot of faith in our quarterback. He's a winner, and I thought Kirk Ciarrocca made a magnificent call and they did something they really don't do. They loaded it up and they brought everybody. I kind of thought they would do that and so did Kirk, and Athan stood in there knowing that he was going to get hit and he drilled it. I mean, he dived it. All night, I thought he was very sharp.

I think somebody told me we were five-for-five on fourth-down conversions which probably means we have to get better on third down conversions. But to be able to do

calmly and execute the way he did, I think his growth and development keeps showing through. So I sure am glad we have him. He's done a good job.

Q. Are you more encouraged about what you saw from your offense or more concerned about what you saw from your defense?

GREG SCHIANO: First of all I'm very encouraged by our offense. The running backs, the where I understand, the tight ends, the multiple, there's some depth there and then the offensive line, they did a good job tonight.

Defensively, I feel like as I'm watching the game, I'm like, okay, we've got to do more of this. We've got to get better at this. We had six guys that had never started start the game, and then we brought in guys that had played, and played not very much either.

I've told you guys all along, I haven't tried to hide it. It's a work-in-progress, and it will be all year long. We'll get better and better. A lot of guys that haven't played together either, right. We had a lot of guys out there that, you know, we've been here for seven, eight months. So I'm encouraged that we have plenty of room for development and we're going to have to do that, right. Fundamentally, right, that's how do you it. You don't go create new defenses. You create better fundamentals that when they execute those fundamentals and we get better and better and better, then the calls will work better and better.

I really think this kid is special as far as getting out of trouble. He's not just quick. He's fast. There's a difference, right. When a guy is quick, he can get out of the way but he can't run away from you. This guy had the speed to run away from a fast -- Sanders is a fast player. There's one time he closed the angle and ran through it.

But we're going to see plenty of good football players in the Big Ten. We have a lot of work to do. I think our coaches, our players, everybody knows that. But I do know this; that they are hungry to do it and we'll get better.

Q. You used three different running backs tonight. How was that balancing and distributing the carries and has that been the plan all along?



GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I mean, I think Coach Shaw does a great job with those running backs. And I said it in the preseason that running back inherently is a selfish position, right, because there's only one ball and only one guy can carry it yet Coach Shaw continues to do a great job of creating a real brotherhood in that room and they pull for each other. And then there's still Sam Brown there, too.

So I'm excited about the development of our running back room. We had C.J. who is new, Antwan and Bengie. You're talking about guys that have put in their time, worked really hard and I'm anxious to see them continue to grow as we move forward.

Q. What do you think surviving opening nights like this does for your typically moving forward?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, I think, you know what, I've been doing this for a while now, I've been a part of some teams that had great years that won games by one point that they shouldn't even have been close and they go on, and I've also been part of teams where you blow people out and you're not very good. One game is one game.

As I told the team, he we worked really hard all training camp. Celebrate and then we kind of get back to work. We're going to get back to work tomorrow, and I'm excited to get in here with the players and watch the tape. Watch the tape tonight. I can't wait to see -- I'm going to pull probably 20 plays of defense that if we do just this step of better or that eye better, those are dead plays. Some of them aren't.

Parker Navarro, he's fast and he's good and he broke contained. But we had opportunities for sacks. I was really hoping we'd get sacks, but I also knew it was going to be a challenge to get them down. Not a lot of people get them down. So we have to get better at that because we'll see some mobile quarterbacks on our schedule.

Q. Can you talk about your special teams? You alluded to earlier with the punt block but also your punt defense was good. You had your gunners get down there quickly and make tackles that set them back. Talk about your special teams overall tonight.

GREG SCHIANO: It starts with the two guys who run it, Eddie Allen and Jake Bahr did a great job, they are excellent coaches, and then they have some assistants that do a great job. I mean, it's really an operation.

Special teams is important at Rutgers and every player in the room knows it, and you see a lot of starters out there. Because for our formula to win football games, I've told

them all along, we need to win in the special teams area. Every coach I've ever been around that I worked for says we've got to win this special teams battle, and I always said, why should we win it more than the other team? It's like offense and defense.

One of the things that I tell our team is the amount of time we spend on it. We have to and when we don't it's discouraging, right. I was really excited for Jai Patel, too. As specialists, as coaches, we look at specialists and special teams sometimes separately. But Jai Patel broke a Rutgers record for consecutive field goals tonight which I didn't know. They told me that.

So like when you have guys that are doing their job the right way and you start plugging pieces in, we had a lot of guys on special teams that hadn't played. So I'm excited about that. That's going to have to be a big part of our repertoire if we are going to be able to win games.

Q. It's sometimes easy to forget that Antwan Raymond is supposed to be a freshman. What did you see from him tonight, the running and nuances pass block?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, you're right. And that's one of those situations, right, where he started, he reclassified when his school closed up. And, boy, are we grateful we have him here. He's not only a great play but a good young man.

I think the thing that you see is the things that they are learning, how to be a little bit more patient. All three of them, really. How to be more patient. How to wait on some runs and then the protection part, I think all of them put their face in there, and that's hard to do right because some of those guys are come with running starts. That's not an easy thing, and I know Athan was grateful for the protection.

Q. This off-season, I had the opportunity to speak with Duron Harmon and he spoke about last season and how you guys left some games on the table, kind of beating yourselves. Tonight it seemed like you guys limited the turnovers and penalties a bit. Was this a step in the right direction? Was this kind of what represents Rutgers Football?

GREG SCHIANO: Yes and no. We've played really good defense around here and we need to get better at that. So I wouldn't say that's indicative of Rutgers Football. But complementary football, kind of bailing each other out.

And Duron's right. Duron's a football guy and he understands. But we are 18-2 since we have been back in this second run when we don't turn the ball over. So I



always talk to the offense, it's not that complicated, right. Don't turn the ball over, you have a very good chance of winning the game. So the ball is the program around here, and we are very, very clear about that.

I didn't like the fact that we didn't get any takeaways. I thought there were opportunities to get takeaways tonight and we didn't take advantage of them. So that's one of those fundamentals. And I wish I could tell you we didn't work on it that much so it will get better. But we spent a lot of time on it, so that's why it's frustrating.

You know what, sometimes right before that tree falls, you have to swing the axe one more time, and we are going to keep swinging it. We'll get there. We'll take the ball away.

Q. Can you remember a time when you went for it five times on fourth down in a game? First part. And second part, is that indicative of the way you think you'll play this year with the confidence you have in this offense?

GREG SCHIANO: Every game, I always tell you guys, every game takes on a life of its own, and yes, I do have confidence in our offense and in our quarterback. But games, you do it long enough, you get a feel, games take on a feel, and I just felt like we needed to be more aggressive than normal tonight and play to our strengths.

And you know fourth and seven, that's really counting on your strengths.

Q. Can you remember going for it five times in a game?

GREG SCHIANO: I don't. If they were, it was fourth-and-ones and just happened to come up. Some of those tonight weren't that.

But you know what, you didn't see anything in our guys that was any different than any other down, other than the crowd noise and things. I think they stayed very much on the spot.

Q. Seemed like Moses Walker and Darriel Djabome were out there for nearly every snap. What did you see from them as two of the main returning starters on the defense?

GREG SCHIANO: They did. They played almost every play, if not every play. I don't remember looking up and seeing anybody else out there. So that's yeoman's work. That's a hard team to be -- you know, some games, you play in a phone booth. This game was played from sideline-to-sideline, and those linebackers were running all

night.

So to be able -- it's a testament to their conditioning and you know, their mental toughness that they were able to play well and play well, I thought. I thought Moses had a good game, and I thought Jab did a good job, as well. We'll see. When you watch the tape, there will be things that drive me crazy.

But again we were so close a couple of times getting Parker down and that changes the whole complexion of the game but that's football, right. Those inches, so many times, the difference between success and failure is that much.

But it's a good place to start and we'll be teaching from the winning column tomorrow which is much better than the other side.

Appreciate you covering us and staying here tonight, and again, to those students, can't thank them enough. Can't wait to see them out there next week. Appreciate you guys.

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