

# Rutgers University Football Media Conference

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**Greg Schiano**

**Travis Johansen**

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: It's been a minute. First off let me thank you for coming out. I appreciate, as always, you covering our program and we've got a great day, a day that I'm very excited about and going forward.

You know it seems like a couple years ago, we had one of these couple years ago we had one with Coach Ciarrocca and I had similar level of excitement knowing where we're headed, and that's the way I feel today.

I have some thank-yous to start with. I want to thank President Tait. I want to thank our board of governors, all the people that have to approve this. And I want to thank Kelly, who helped me through the process, and discerning what was right and what was best for what we needed to do. It really was a team effort, there was a lot of people that helped.

It's a lot of logistics, whether it's me going somewhere or bringing people in to interview. I talked to over 20 people in the process, from every different level, from the NFL to college football to the CFL, the UFL, whatever FLs there are left.

I talked to people from everywhere. It was my intention, as I met with some even in my office that day, it was my intention to not put a cap or a cage on this process, and just let it play out, and that's one thing I've learned over the years when you don't do that, usually make a mistake.

And unfortunately, I've made some mistakes in my time, and I've also made some great hires. I'm extremely confident that this is a great hire.

I will tell you that Travis Johansen, when you look at his track record as a football coach, it's incredibly impressive. And when you talk to the people that I did that have been around him in his career, it kept coming back, the same mental, the same mental, the same message.

Now, as I was doing this, I was also retaining our football

team, right, and I was also recruiting in the portal, and we were also, as a staff, recruiting high school kids.

So there was multiple things going on, and I know a lot of people got a little uptight about the timing of it. I'm not one of those people. I just felt like we had to find the right person and however honk that took, we were going to find the right person. And I'm extremely confident that we did. We found the right person in Coach Johansen.

So I'm certain you have questions. I'll try to answer them the best I can. And then I'll formally introduce Coach and let you -- let you have some time to get to know him. So with that, questions.

**Q. I guess how did Travis come on to your radar, and then when you were talking to people about him, and said they kept coming back with that same message, can you sum up what that message was that would make him a good fit for your program?**

GREG SCHIANO: Sure. He's been in the hopper the whole time, and have, as I said, over 20 people.

I was super, super deliberate on this because I know how important it is. We have a really, really gifted group of young players here that need to be developed. One of the things that I kept hearing about Coach was, he is a true developer of men, right. He's a leader, and whether it's developing staff members -- if you look at the staff people that he brought in to South Dakota, right, that worked underneath him when he was the coordinator and he was the head coach, and see where they have moved on from South Dakota -- incredible track record. It's not just developing the players; it's developing the staff.

And any great head coach, any great coordinator, that's a huge part of your job is to continually develop your staff because they are the ones that exponentially then can affect the players.

So that kept coming back, a true teacher of the game, a guy who earned everything that he's -- that he's received in this business. There's no shortcuts. He started and just worked his way up and was successful at every level. At some, some points, freakishly successful, like things that



you get very excited about.

It's hard. Playing defense, as you know, at the very beginning, it's a losing proposition, right. They make a yard, everybody -- but when you look at a track record over time, at all different stops, that certainly was something that impresses you.

But that's really one of the things that gets you started in the search. It's when you sit down and you really start talking about -- and people think incorrectly, by the way, but a lot of people think that it's schematics. Remember we talked in my office -- it's not. It's about leadership.

Leadership to me is everything. You have 11 guys, you can deploy them several different ways. I've never been a big worrier about that. It's about leadership, and can they lead the staff and can they lead the players, and that's what we have found.

So that's really what kept coming back to me is a consistent, firm, yet caring leader that develops men.

**Q. Defense obviously has been your baby over the years. How closely does Travis's philosophies align with yours, and along those lines, do you expect to be able to hand it off to him like you do with the offense to Kirk?**

GREG SCHIANO: I expect to hand it off to Coach but like with Kirk, we meet on everything. Our staff is totally aligned. One of my big principles, those of you that know me, is vertical line. We talk all the time about everything. We meet and go over everything.

But make no mistake about it: Travis is the leader of the defense. And schematically, there are a lot of similarities, but that wasn't what drove the process because there's a lot of things that are different, as well.

You know, as late at 15 minutes ago, we were sitting down talking about tackling, how are we going to teach, how are we going to merge things together, and I am -- I've always been -- one of the things that I take pride in is being a lifelong learner. Just continue to learn and learn, and in the interview process, with a lot of great candidates, I learned a lot of football.

So, for me, it was an ongoing clinic, as well, how other people are doing things, different procedures they are using. Everything from defensive football to how they travel as a team and how they do all the things that they do.

It's a great opportunity to grow. It takes a lot of time. This

has been a really tough -- from the end of the season until we agreed to -- to coming together, it's been hard. But going to be well worth it. The investment in that time I was willing to put into it, with everything else going on, because I know it's that critical. We could have had a guy hired in two days (snapping fingers). That wouldn't have been the best guy.

Doing the way we did it definitely produced the best candidate and the best coordinator for Rutgers.

**Q. You mentioned "alignment." Just how does Travis's ability to develop and bring along players, how did that fit with what you want from a developmental program?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, you know that's us, right. That's who we are. I still believe, although we made great usage of the portal, I still believe wholeheartedly in developing your program through high school age kids. You bring them in. They came to Rutgers for a reason, and now you develop them.

And you develop them not only as football players -- I know they are getting paid now, I get all that. But they are still 18- to 22-year-old kids, and it's what my calling is to help them not only reach their goals athletically, but also get an education. Like I think sometimes it's become such a big story about all the money and all that stuff. They are still here to get an education. Yeah, they are getting paid, but they are here to get an education, and to grow as young men.

That's one thing in our conversations I took away from Coach Johansen is that's important to him, just like it is Kirk, just like it is everybody in our staff.

**Q. In the past, you hired some younger, not as experienced coaches. This go-around, you hired two FCS sitting coaches and an FCS sitting coordinator. Was getting FCS coaches a point this off-season?**

GREG SCHIANO: I don't think that's what I went into it with. First it was finding the leader. Like again, you've heard me say it over and over: I believe leadership is everything because there's several different ways to do any task. But if you have the right leader, then he can galvanize the people. He can get them to believe in it and make it their idea and then go do it and execute it, right. It started with him, and then from that point, we started talking about staff.

And we had -- you know, I want to make sure I recognize one thing: We had good coaches. It just didn't work, right. So a lot of the guys, I told them, I said, I don't know what's



going to happen, Guys, so if you have an opportunity, let me know, and it was good. Everybody landed on their feet.

And that's -- that's a positive. Because they are all good people, and I cared about them. I care about them now, and I'll help them any way I can.

But we needed to have a change. We did it. And I'm super excited about where we're headed now.

**Q. You guys invest a lot in your coaching staff, and I'm assuming Travis and his defensive staff will be no exception to that. Why is it important for you, when you're allocating resources of this program, to invest so much in your coaching staff?**

GREG SCHIANO: Well, I think there's a lot of levels to that, right. The cost of doing business, you know, being a Big Ten football program, the coaches salary's have really -- they have climbed quite a bit.

But I do think, if you really believe leadership is everything, then you've got to go, you know, you get what you pay for. That's important to me.

I have so much to do as a head coach, and I told you guys at the beginning, I said, look, if I could duplicate what we have on offense, on defense, I'll be a happy man. I feel like we've done that.

And great people. Both leaders of the O and the D are great men and they really are very, very focused on how to do their job, and I love that.

All right. I've kind of done it, but I'll do it a little more formally here. Very, very excited Travis and his family coming to Rutgers, and the coaches that he is very, very closely aligned with coming, as well. Some of them have been announced. Some of them will be announced in the upcoming days.

But I really like -- I've had a chance to sit down with them now for a couple days, and I really am impressed with not only the football acumen but the type of men they are, and just being around a short time, they are going to fit in well. They have already met our staff that's already in the building, and there's been a great connection there.

So they are meeting with the kids, and the thing that I love that Travis said to me; the first thing we need to do is we've got to meet these players and connect with these players. And that, to me, is everything. You know, some coaches, the first thing they want to do is get on the whiteboard; well, this is our scheme. Well, you know what? Those are circles and X's up on the board, but they are really human beings, and if you don't connect with the human being,

you're not going to get the circle and X to do what you want it to do.

That, I was super impressed with. And I've watched kids going in and out of all the coaches offices today, just getting to know each other on a one-on-one personal basis, and that's the kind of stuff that I love because it's about connection, right. And once you connect and they know how much you care, then you can get them to do just about anything for you as a coach.

In our process, when we went through it, Travis and I, we talked about that over and over again, and I enjoyed, when he came on his interview, he got to walk through the weight room and watch our kids train. He sees the same things I do. Look at that, look at that, and the energy -- we're not -- how do I say this without giving Steve a classic headline here, right?

We're not broken. We just need a little adjustment, right, and this guy is going to come in and get the defense adjusted the way we need to.

But our kids, they are aligned. They are working their tails off, and now we're going to get it straight on defense. You can tell, I haven't been this excited in a while.

So I'm fired up, and I'm really fired up to introduce our defensive coordinator, Travis Johansen.

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Thanks, guys. I think No. 1, just really fired up to be here. I haven't been this far east in probably ten years since my sister was in Boston. But the snow reminds me of back home in Minnesota. I didn't expect to see quite a bit. But yeah, special place.

Really excited to be here. Certainly thanks to Coach Schiano and Kelly, giving me the opportunity to come here and do this job. You know, we've got a tall task in front of us but one with clear vision and huge upside.

Just being here the last couple days, and certainly last week, going through this process has really given me a clear understanding what have we've got to do to get Rutgers back where it certainly belongs, and excited for that challenge in particular.

So yeah, happy to answer any questions.

**Q. What's the why for you at this point in your career? Why make this jump here now?**

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Yeah, so I really just -- I gravitate towards two things. You know -- winning and impact. Where I was at South Dakota that before, we had a lot of

success, and I transitioned from the defensive coordinator to head coach because I just felt that was the way I could impact the rowing program to take it to the next level.

And you know, when Coach Schiano and I started talking about what Rutgers needed, not necessarily timing or a level or a place. It was an opportunity that I felt my skill set fit the need. And I could have an impact with a program that has so much ceiling that it -- that the fit made so much sense. And that challenge excited me.

You know, I think my -- my impact was waning, maybe, to a certain degree. We were so close to winning a national title there and it was the only step needed to be taken.

You know, there's -- there's a little more meat on the bone left right here at Rutgers that I felt like it was a situation that I knew I could step into and have a lot of impact and success alongside of that.

So it was really more about the fit than anything else, not necessarily timing.

**Q. You talked about the ability to work in an interview a couple days ago, the ability to work with Coach Schiano and his track record with the defense. This is a defense that's going to need a lot of work. What have you seen from the group, and what's it going to take to get that defense back up to**

standard, you wanted the standards used to seeing around here.

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Yeah, you know what? I necessarily don't think it's a lot of work outside of just going through the process that we've been through. You know, I see those guys, and the talent, and the growth potential that's in there, great human beings. I think as I sit down with each and every one of them, I get more excited by the day, by the meeting. The opportunity to be with Coach Schiano is second to none.

You know, his experience, what he's done in this game, how he's done it, maybe most importantly, I think we're so in alignment with this is the greatest people game in the world, right.

Like this still is about human beings, and as much of that's going on out there in college football, a lot of programs, you know, it's gotten pretty, transactional, and he's found a way to live in that world while still being really transformational. And I think the reason why the players are here are for Rutgers, or for Coach Schiano, and to watch how he's done that in such a dynamic era right now is pretty impressive, and I'm really looking forward to, you

know, being under the hood within that way. After sitting in a head coach chair for years, and watching how he's done it with so many years and so many changes, I would be dumb not to sit into that, you know, sitting there and experience that.

Heck, he was talking about that 15 minutes ago. You know, there's some things I've had on a slide for the last five years in regards to teaching and tackling, and one term in there, how we may be able to teach it better. I took -- and we're going to run with his staff.

There's so many things I look forward to that way, but I think more, most importantly, that just the human being makes me excited about kind of going down that road with them.

**Q. Just give us a glimpse of what a defense looks under your tutelage, and what you expect from your players.**

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Incredibly sound. Incredibly disciplined. A defense that's going to show a lot of mastery in what they're doing. A very connected group, a group that plays the game with physicality and effort, passion that you want to see on a field.

You know, I want people to be able to turn the tape on and see the intangibles of the defense without knowing the human beings. I think it's the biggest indicator for a great defense as you look at them, and you say, I know those are tough, competitive people that love each other and love Rutgers, and they're out there battling that way.

You don't have to get them into an interview to kind of find out who they are. You know, I believe that in recruiting. You know, you see the intangibles on the tape. We need to be able to inspire those guys to play with that level of passion.

But it all starts with discipline, accountability, and all the things that are necessary to operate in a manner, where you can teach them, you know, to do great things on that field, where they are confident and inspired to go out there and show that to you guys, you know, where it's just obvious.

And so, yeah, and that's the, you know, like coach mentioned, that's the relationship piece. That's the understanding the human being piece. That's what makes them tick. What are they inspired to go out and do. And I think without that connection, it'll be hard for you to see that.

So that's job number one, you know, for us, and, um, but,

you know, what that brand will look like, um, is exactly that, you know, we, we want to be the toughest, most physical group in the Big Ten, and plan to do that.

**Q. How do you feel like your year as a head coach will now kind of influence how you are as a coordinator at this level, and then is there anything that you took from that experience that is going to change you, how you do this job a little bit?**

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Yeah, I think more than anything, it really galvanized the way I thought about team football as a defensive coach.

How you look at how you balance with an offense, how you need to provide schemes that prepare you all year long versus just what might be successful on Saturdays in the fall.

Your responsibility as a defense to be, an opponent that maybe mirrors a little bit more, some of the things you see week to week, and how that sets you up for long-term success, A lot of things, that way. You know, I think once you sit in that chair and have that perspective, you really understand what it takes to win on a holistic level.

And then when you step back into this chair, you know, there is a little bit of readjustment to making sure you're doing your part -- on your side of the ball to make the team -- I think when you just do the defensive thing for so long, you get out there in those competitive moments, and you're like, I'm just trying to win the day.

You know, it helps you go win the year. And so, I think it gives you the patience and security to be able to do that, because not only are you providing success in the teaching and the results of the defense, but you're also preparing your football team in a lot of ways to be great at every level.

So, yeah, I think that sure helps you a lot do that, At least galvanizes what you thought.

**Q. Trevor, I wanted to ask you about your pass rush in the past. In the most couple recent years, Rutgers has kind of struggled to get to the quarterback. What are some effective ways that you've been able to get to that quarterback?**

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Yeah, I think for us, it's always going to start with fundamentals. I don't know that I'm really taking what we've done in the past and saying, Here's how to maybe fix that in a schematic level.

I know it's worked for us, and then I look at the athletes that

are in there and go, I can work pretty dang good if we get it right with these guys. So, yeah, I don't know that I'm necessarily looking at, Hey, here's what we did, and here's how to do that better. What we've done in the past have been pretty effective. I think our staff's ability holistically to, you know, get into the schemes and give our kids the tools they need to identify what's going to make them successful.

You know, we teach a lot of offensive football more than defensive football, a lot of ways. How to identify where that slide's coming from, or how they're protecting X, Y, and Z, which players that we match up with best, you know, and I don't know if that was done in the past or not.

I just know that's how we've been successful. So you know, we're going to take this thing from the ground up with the guys. You know, it's going to take us now until the end of the summer to -- to really, really end a fall camp, to be where we want to be, to go attack the Big Ten.

But, yeah, I think, you know, the proven things that we've done well, how they'll fit versus what we see is really the game plan there. But I think there's a talented group of guys in there that are hungry to do it.

**Q. When you're building out your staff, how much autonomy do you have? How much autonomy is Greg giving you to, you know, pick guys, hire guys? What are you looking for in guys that you're hiring to work under you?**

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Yeah, I think we value the same thing, so I think one of those things, particularly in today's day and age, is continuity When you have -- when you're trying to do this, and we feel like we've got a lot of, you know, a coach and team meeting, a lot of potential is a dangerous word, but it's there.

How do you streamline the teaching? You know, I've had guys, you know, we've been systematic for the last six or seven years in South Dakota, right. And so when you've got all those guys in the building that have been through systems, created mastery, you don't have to get things start to finish. It's already kind of halfway there for the guys when they're counted on to do the jobs.

We've got to get this start to finish. So it is important to me, and it's important to him that we get guys that have system background, that we connect already well as coaches, we speak the same language, we do those things.

So we've not grown as a staff as much as we need to grow the players. When it's coming to building this staff, it does

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

have a lot to do with that. And then knowing what my experience has been over the last seven years, what's going to need, what we're going to need in addition to that, as the year goes on, as the versatility we need to create. Can we stay ahead of the curve that way by maybe interjecting some people that -- that come from, maybe an outside background, but we have a relationship.

**Q. How do you think your journey to Rutgers helped prepare you for your role here?**

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: Well, I think, I think, number one, you know, Rutgers is a -- Rutgers is, you know, like Coach said, it's about, you know, the purity of football. I'm a purist when it comes to this game. And, you know, Rutgers is a blue collar, tough, you know, organization that's about that end of football. So I connect really well with it. Because I wasn't born on third base, you know. My dad's a truck driver. My mom worked in retail. I lived in Minnesota a lot of my life, and I was a DII football player. I've coached in the NAI, DII, FCS, and so, you know, I think when you come, you connect with a place like this.

Always overachieved, and I think that's what we want guys to do. Those are the type of people that I think, you know, acclimate well here, that thrive here, you know, it's, we're just kind of, I feel really connected to just the spirit of the place. And outside of all of the fit and the football and all that, you know, Jersey's a place that reminds me a lot of where I'm from, you know, particularly with this dang snow right now.

But, yeah, I just -- I feel like I landed, you know, back home, and you know, and just the spirit of Rutgers Football. I mean, it's a birthplace of college football. I mean, that's the coolest thing ever.

I saw that statue up front. I was like, I want to go take a picture by it, honestly. I will at some point. Probably my son, but it's just about the purity of the game, and I think if we stick to that, and I do my job the way it's supposed to be, the players that chose to be here for that reason, too.

And that connection, I think, can take us to some places maybe we haven't been.

**Q. Coach Schiano brought in a bunch of transfers, especially on the defensive side, while still going through this process to hire a defensive coordinator. Have you gotten to know any of those guys, or did that affect your decision at all coming here?**

TRAVIS JOHANSEN: The answer is no, no. I mean, I'm trying to find the coffee pot, little on get acclimated with all the players. I mean, from now until, it's done. That's my

job right now. And so, really, the phase we're in is, understanding every player.

Like, I certainly got to see them and watch the tape, and I think when you when you mean that. Yeah, I understand the players we brought in. I understand the skill sets, and those sort of things.

