

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL MEDIA CONFERENCE

September 19, 2022

Greg Schiano

Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

Press Conference

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out. Big home game this week. Open up Big Ten play. So try to answer anything I can.

Q. Any update on Gavin?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, Gavin will be a game-time decision. We'll know as the week goes on.

Q. Iowa defense, what stands out?

GREG SCHIANO: Very fundamentally sound. They know exactly what they want to do. Very physical. Typical Iowa defense.

Q. You guys are at 19 consecutive home losses in Big Ten play. Up there as one of the longest streaks. You said at the end of last year that you would take a look at the discrepancy between home and away in Big Ten play. In the off-season were you able to find one thing that's been a struggle for you guys at home in Big Ten play?

GREG SCHIANO: No. I mean, we did look at it. I can't tell you that I know there's any one thing. You know, we'll keep looking at it.

Q. How big would a win be to get that streak off your back, or is that something that you guys don't even think about?

GREG SCHIANO: We just take every game one game at a time. We are trying to be 1-0 at the end of this week. So what's happened in the past, I think when people do that, you put yourself in a bad position, start looking back or looking forward. We are just here to chop the moment.

Q. Looking at the offense overall, you've ran it on first down 80 percent of the time. Any concern it's becoming predictable at all?

GREG SCHIANO: Not a concern, no. I mean, I'm good. We just have to execute a little bit better.

Q. What were some of the things you saw offensively that you would like to fix?

GREG SCHIANO: There are several. You know, I think some things happened that were part of it was technical. Part of it was schematic. And when I say "technical," I mean technique. And part of it was cultural. So throw all three things together, and you had kind of a perfect storm.

But we are moving. We are learning from it and we are moving forward and we need to because we have an opponent with as stout a defense as there in the country.

Q. You passed Frank Burns for the record, but the first couple years when you were building, how tough was it to win with everything going on and what you walked into? Is there anything you can say about that time?

GREG SCHIANO: That was a tough stretch. The good thing, when you're young, you don't know what you don't know. Because if I knew what I knew, I don't know if I would have stuck it out. You don't know what you don't know, and you just go hard as you can. That's what we did as a staff and as a program, and fortunately we were able to get over the hump.

But yeah, that was some tough sledding back then, real tough.

Q. The penalties the last few games, is it early season mistakes guys are making, or is there a larger concern that this will hurt you once Big Ten play starts?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, there's always a concern. As I told you guys, you know, those of you who have been around for as long as I have, two old men in the room, Steve. I don't have want to be No. 1 in least penalized because I don't think you're trying hard enough if you're doing that. But I don't want to be down in the bottom, either.

Somewhere, obviously in the top half but maybe more towards the top quartile. We have too many penalties. Now when you look at it, some of them are young players that haven't played and some of them are true freshmen that haven't played. You learn.

The whole thing, as I said to you last week, all of us, you're told, don't touch the stove because it's hot, you're going to get burned but sometimes you've got to touch it. Hopefully we run out of those stove moments and we start cleaning things up.

Q. What's your confidence level right now in Sean?

GREG SCHIANO: As high as it could be. Yeah, we got the right guy to be our offensive coordinator.

Q. And secondly, is there a moment when you get more involved in the offense if it continues to struggle? Has that happened yet?

GREG SCHIANO: As a head coach, when I first started as a head coach, like I said, I didn't know what I didn't know, and then later on I became the defensive coordinator as the head coach and was very involved.

At this stage in my coaching career, I'm the head coach, so I oversee the offense, the defense and the kicking game but I'm not running any of the three. I know I'm very, very confident in Sean and our offensive staff.

As I told you, at the beginning of the year, this is a young team in many ways, and some of it is chronologically young, some of it is Rutgers young, right. But you can't have it both ways. If you truly believe the strength of your program is your culture and then you bring people into your program that may not be chronologically young but are young to Rutgers, then we've got to give it a little time.

And you know, when you take over the program in the way we did, there's some things that are not quick fixes, and offensive line play is not a quick fix. We are getting better but take that and have a young quarterback, two young quarterbacks, that neither one have played. Unfortunately our veteran quarterback was injured. Those are all things that factor in.

I know this: That we are getting better. Saturday was a tough, tough outing, but we are getting better. I see it every day, and I'm confident that the path we are going on is going to get us where we need to be.

What I'm proud of is that our team found a way to win three weeks in a row, and that's very important. I said it after the game, but you know, when you don't play your best game and you still find a way to win, that's something to be said for your guys, for your team, for your teammate, for your coaches, for everybody.

I know exactly the challenge that's ahead of us this week and if we play anywhere close to the way we played offensively this week, it will be a lot worse. So we all know we have to improve. But I think that improvement will come.

Q. Before the season, Aaron Lewis, you said you expected him to make a big jump; 11 tackles on Saturday. Are you seeing that now?

GREG SCHIANO: I've seen it. I think he's made kind of a steady climb. Aaron is a very, very good football player. He's explosive. He can make plays. So we need him to do that and he's doing what we need him to do.

Q. You mentioned the offensive line. What do you feel like is kind of the biggest improvement they need to make right now to get the offense overall closer to where it needs to be?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, you know, I wish it was one thing. You know, that would be an easier fix.

But I do think there is some common all I think on some of the things, right. We need to just continue to get better at what we do technique wise and that may sound like why don't you just do it. Because there's a lot going on and then there's this other thing, the guy on the other side trying to kick your rear end in.

There's a lot to get down for a group of guys that have not played together. But we're going to be okay. Yeah, I'm confident on that.

Q. Can you talk about the progress that Noah is making in his injury return and where he's at the at the moment?

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, he's going to be a game-time decision as well. It's kind of unsettling, you have two quarterbacks that are game-time decisions. Thank goodness Evan is healthy.

We'll just prepare, as I said after the game on Saturday, we'll prepare for whoever we have that the doctors tell us are going to be able to play.

Q. Just in case neither of those can go, is there someone else on the depth chart?

GREG SCHIANO: That is going to be on the depth chart I hand out? No. But we have one for sure.

Q. Who would that be?

GREG SCHIANO: I'm not going to get into that.

Q. You haven't really benefitted from the expanded stadium in a meaningful way since you've been back with COVID and the different situations. Was this the kind of night that you had in mind where you pushed for that; the idea that this could be a 50,000-plus real college football atmosphere?

GREG SCHIANO: Without a doubt. I think, also, as we push, and I say "we," Bob Mulcahy and I; and as you know, we are in the in Big Ten without Bob Mulcahy pushing to get this stadium built. Together, our partnership I think allowed that to happen.

And getting into the Big Ten, that's the vision I had is that we expand the stadium, we get into the Big Ten and we have games like this that -- sellout crowd, fans that are rabid and a great opponent coming to town. Most of all, Rutgers stepping up and playing the way that we all want Rutgers to play.

That's why you do this. That's why I came back to put us in position and to win these games. Are we ready? Who knows. We are going to find out.

Again, I go back, beginning of the year, I told you where I knew we were and I told you it was going to be a work-in-progress. Iowa is a different program. They are an established Big Ten program. Coach Ferentz is certainly the dean of the league, but he's one of the best coaches in America, period, and his program continually, there's consistency year-in, year-out, and you know exactly what you're going to get. They play very hard. They are physical. They are technically sound.

So it's a great challenge for our guys, great challenge for our coaching staff. You put all that together and throw it in this Saturday night, wearing red to the game and packing the place, that's what college football is all about.

FastScripts Transcript by ASAP Sports