

## **RUTGERS UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL MEDIA CONFERENCE**

**November 6, 2023**

**Head Coach Greg Schiano**

***Piscataway, New Jersey, USA***

**Press Conference**

GREG SCHIANO: Thanks for coming out today. Hope everybody's doing well. So here we go, week 10, going out to Iowa City, huge challenge.

You know, so much respect for what Coach Ferentz has done at Iowa over a long period of time and really, what they have done lately. You look at their last 15 games, they are 12-3, and you look at what they have done over the last four years in the month of November, they are 15-1, which is astounding.

So we certainly are going into one of the toughest places to play in America against a team that's leading the Big Ten West, 7-2. We've got a big challenge ahead of us.

So it's right back at it every week in the Big Ten and that's the way we like it. We've got a lot of work to do between now and Saturday, and then we'll go lay it on the line.

**Q. Iowa's defense, obviously one of the top-ranked in the nation. What do they do so well that they are able to sustain that and play at a high level?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, they have a philosophy of how to play defense and they stick to it. It's not that they don't tweak anything from time to time, but they know how they want to play. They train their people in the program. A very developmental program, as well, and they develop their players and they develop them in the system, and they are a lot better at doing it when they are there four years than they are at one year but they just keep getting better and better. Very much, you know, what we try to do here. So they are very good at it.

Coach Parker has been there for a long time, the defensive coordinator. You know, there's a reason they are good.

**Q. There's been a lot of history here at Rutgers. Do you still relish the opportunity to make history, accomplish firsts? Rutgers has never beaten Iowa and never won at Iowa City. Do you relish the opportunity to make history for this program?**

GREG SCHIANO: I don't really look at it as making history. Just trying to be 1-0 this week, and it happens to be that the team we are trying to be 1-0 against, we've never beaten.

At the end of the week, that's all we all want to do in this program is be 1-0 at the end of the week, and it's certainly a huge challenge like I said. I've been to Iowa City a few times to play and it's a really tough place.

**Q. This is the Rutgers offense that's most improved in the Big Ten in terms of scoring offense and yardage. Who role do you think the offensive line's improvement plays into that?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think it's huge. If you look at it in sheer numbers, offensive line makes up 5/11ths of your offensive football team. If they get better, then a large portion of your offense gets better.

But I think we are just kind of moving along, like I've said to you all along, it's a developmental program. We are developing guys.

Coach Ciarrocca is new; so some of the things that came here and presented when he got here were different for our guys and they are getting better at it. We just have to go out and have a great week of practice, and we're beat up like everybody else, right. It's Week 10 in the Big Ten and you're beat up. But it's a matter of who handles it bet. I know Iowa has got injuries; we've got injuries. That's the way it is right now. You've just got to go out there and play your best.

**Q. Do you see a lot of similarities between Rutgers and Iowa, the way you play defense and overall attitude and things like that?**

GREG SCHIANO: Do I see a lot? Boy, I hope so.

Like I said, I have nothing but great respect for Coach Ferentz and the way that he's built his program over the last 25 years. You know, had we stayed, had I done -- made the right decision and stayed here, it would be very similar I think. But we didn't. We took a nine-year break. So we are playing catch-up for sure.

But I do have so much respect for how they play and what they do, and we are just in a spot where we're getting better slowly, and we've just got to continue to do that. Will it be enough? We're going to find out here in whatever it is, five days, six days.

**Q. Kyle is obviously getting close to a thousand yards, what message do you think that sends to kids in high school who maybe are not highly recruited about what they can become in a high-level program in a major conference?**

GREG SCHIANO: I think it shows that, you know what, if you come and you love football, and you're willing to pay the price -- because it's not easy. It's really hard. But if you're willing to pay the price that you can be successful, and be successful at the highest level, and Kyle has demonstrated that.

It's well-chronicled that he was not the most highly recruited guy, but he's our kind of guy and he's doing a great job, and I think the whole running back room is doing a great job.

**Q. Saturday Isaiah Iton had five tackles, seeing more reps. What did you see from his performance and his development?**

GREG SCHIANO: He came from Ole Miss. They play a little different style. You know, they are more of a two-gap, 3-4 team most of the time, at least on early downs.

So it's been a transition for Isaiah for sure. He keeps getting better, slowly, but he's progressing. We play a lot of people in the front, as you know, and rotate. But playing single-gap control defense is a lot different than playing two-gap. He's learning and getting better at it every week.

**Q. Kyle Monangai, 500-plus yard games, in each of the last three games he's eclipsed that mark. Do you think he's getting more better and effective as a rusher as the season goes on?**

GREG SCHIANO: I do think he's getting better. I think the line is getting better; the tight ends are getting better; the receivers are getting better; quarterback is getting better.

So I think it's the old saying, right, all ships rise with the tide. I think that Kyle is a big part of making happen, but he's also a part of being around other guys that are doing well. But we're not anywhere close to what we need to be but we are getting better and that's the key.

**Q. Gavin has the lowest completion percentage amongst FBS State quarterbacks, 200 drop-backs. Is his inaccuracy holding the offense back?**

GREG SCHIANO: Is it holding it back? No, because I think Gavin does so much to help our offense. Does it have to get better? Absolutely it has to get better.

You know, completions come as a result of protection, correct routes and then throwing and catching the football. So everybody contributes.

But at the end of the day, it goes on whose record? The quarterback's. He gets the completion percentage. The receivers don't; the line doesn't.

At the end of the day, we need to be more accurate with the ball for sure. So we're working on it. But like everything else, we are developing, and I'm sure he's going to get better at it.

**Q. What about Reggie Sutton, a few games back, now is he continuing to manage the workload and do you balance the week, making sure it's not going to set him back?**

GREG SCHIANO: It's hard. Gratefully the bye week came at a point where he played and had a week off, but there's no weeks off now. It's week-after-week.

So we have to really do a good job, as you said, managing his workload, and he's got to communicate honestly with us, which he does. He's great with that. We've got to find

that happy medium between too much is no good, right, but you've got to have enough so you're sharp and can go play at the level. Otherwise, it doesn't matter.

But Reggie is a mature guy and he's helping us with that.

**Q. We didn't get to ask you about Mayan Ahanotu's injury coming off the last game. Wanted to check in on that.**

GREG SCHIANO: He was not available Saturday. I think he will be available this Saturday, which is good because he's a leader and a big part of our defense.

**Q. You were busy the first quarter but they made an announcement about NIL on Saturday. How important has that become as part of your job and just kind of part of the progress of the development of the program, the NIL side of things?**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, it's a game week right now, so I'm going to stick to Iowa. But it's a good question because I didn't see it, but I heard that there was one.

It's paramount in what we are doing right now. That is where college football is, and you have to be able to be competitive in that landscape, and we have to be able to be competitive in that landscape. And it's not going to get less. It's going to only get more.

We have guys that have performed at a high level. Well, you know what, they are going to be people that's trying to get them off our team. That's the facts. And there's going to be guys, we are not only going to want to keep our own guys here, but we are going to want to go out and pursue; and we have to do the things that Big Ten teams do to be competitive and eventually be champions. Every bit helps but we need every bit.

**Q. Iowa has been in a lot of close, low-scoring games; a design of how they play on both sides of the ball. Projected same thing to happen this Saturday. When you play in a game like that, does the margin of error increase even more because the crucial plays are so few and far between? Low-scoring games, how do you --**

GREG SCHIANO: Yeah, the margin of error in the Big Ten, period is very small, right. The margin of error a couple days ago was about as small as it gets.

So yeah, but we are used to playing with that. That's the only way we play. The margin of error is like that, and when you're a team like we are where you're developing and building and growing because we are still right in that phase where we're developing and growing, you know, you make some mistakes, you don't get it back.

I've said it, there's no such thing as missed opportunities, because someone always takes it. In this case, if we don't take it, Iowa is going to take it. Yeah, that's life in the Big Ten.

**Q. We talked a lot about Kyle Monangai; you've coached a lot of great running backs in your career. Where does what he's doing this season rank in the performances you've seen of great running backs?**

GREG SCHIANO: I'm going to hold on comparing him to others because he still has quite a bit of work left in this season. But I'm very pleased with the way Kyle has performed and the way he's worked. I'm equally pleased with how he leads off the field and the way he handles himself academically. I say every week, this is an incredibly competitive academic institution, and Kyle serves as not only a great role model of how to play football here but how to handle your academics. He's a great student, and he's a guy that's going to be hugely successful in life.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that these guys are in the thick of it right now, in the back end of midterms. Now all of a sudden the workload is so hard academically that I do get concerned because some days. I stand in front of them early in the morning, and you can see they are tired. It's something that we have to manage.

So it's not only the Reggie Suttons of the world, but it's managing the whole workload of the team going into Week 10 academically, as well as the burden they put on their body.

I'm proud of the way they work. It's part of what you do when you come to Rutgers but it's all well worth it.

Thanks, guys.

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