

Big Ten Football Media Days

Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Rutgers Scarlet Knights Coach Greg Schiano

Press Conference



GREG SCHIANO: I first want to thank Commissioner Petitti for everything he does for our league. This has been the most transformational time in college athletics maybe in the history of college athletics. I feel very confident in our leader in how he handles our business as a conference.

I would also like to welcome our president. We have a new president, William Tate, who has come to join us from LSU. Very excited about that. I had a chance to meet with him. He had a chance to address our football team, and it was great, and can't wait to work together with him.

I want to thank our board chair, Amy Towers, for her tireless work in making sure that we have a president who is going to do a great job for our university.

Today we bring three great representatives of our football program. Athan Kaliakmanis, our quarterback, who has transferred in and has become literally the leader of our program. This is definitely his football team.

Wide receiver Ian Strong, who I think has just grown consistently since he arrived. This will be his third season with us, and he is I think an excellent football player and a great young man.

Then linebacker DJ Djabome, who is from Canada, came down. Great story. DJ came down to go to one of our football camps and drove down from upstate New York and didn't have a hotel room. He, his coach, and two teammates slept in a car in late July. He went through our camp and did a great job.

We offered him. We brought his family down on a visit immediately, and he started with us in training camp a couple of weeks later. Now to be standing here at Big Ten Media Days and DJ will be representing us, it's a great story. Excellent football player and even better young man.

Those guys, thrilled to bring them out here to represent our team and our program.

I would also like to thank our coaching staff. Really I'm indebted to them. They do an unbelievable job. Kirk Ciarrocca, our offensive coordinator, who is going into his third season, has done an unbelievable job leading our offensive staff. I would like to welcome Rob Smith back to Rutgers. He and Zach Sparber will be co-coordinators on defense and have done a great job getting everybody up to speed this spring and summer. Then Eddie Allen, who handles our special teams, does a great job. Leading our staffs and them leading our players.

Also, in this new day of college football, I would like to recognize, we have two assistant GMs. Assistant GM for finance is Jordan Wolkstein, who has done an incredible job putting all the financial end of things together. Then our assistant GM for personnel, Eric Josephs, who has been in that role with personnel since we arrived but now has additional responsibilities. Can't thank them enough.

Again, after all the changes that are going on in college football, it still comes down to a few things: Getting prepared, being tough, and then go putting it on tape. That's what this team I think has done a great job of doing so far in this offseason in summer, and I can't wait to coach them.

This will be my 37th year coaching. I've never been more excited about doing it. I feel like I did when I was 25, and can't wait to get this thing underway.

With that, I'll open it up for any questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Rutgers returned to bowl contention in 2024 with disciplined defense and ball security principles with just two fumbles and seven interceptions all season. With some returning starters and a sharper focus on creating takeaways, what specific areas are you targeting this offseason to push the program from good to constantly elite?

GREG SCHIANO: Well, that's a great question. For sure the ball is the program at our place. There's a huge amount of emphasis on that.



We came back to Rutgers. This will be our sixth season back. We were dead last and we could hardly see it from there. It was a tough start, but we've kind of step by step climbed our way to the middle of the league. I didn't come back to do that. I came back to win the championship. That may sound funny to some that have followed college football, but that's what we're going to do.

I can't tell you when that's going to happen, but that's why we're back. I have the staff to do it. We're constantly getting better and better players, and we're constantly growing as a program.

Our fan base is growing. All the things that you need to climb the ladder, and that's what we do. We just come in every day and try to get a little bit better. Can't have any backslides. Have to keep getting better and better, and eventually you'll get there. That's really what we focus on.

Q. Obviously rebuilding the program. You talked last year about winning the state back and recruiting. Obviously the transfer portal is a huge factor. Losing guys, you lose your all-time -- one of the best rushers in school history to the NFL. How did you kind of navigate NIL and the portal and all those different things to field the roster that you have right now?

GREG SCHIANO: That's another great question because it's certainly been the focus of college football, right? NIL, revenue share, all those things, it still comes down to finding the right fit for your program. What is fit? Fit is culture. Fit is athletic ability. Fit is student-athlete. What kind of student, can he fit in, do the work in the classroom? That's always going our primary focus. Do I wish we had some more money when the NIL stuff was going on? Absolutely. Who doesn't?

At the end of the day, players and families are going to entrust us with their sons. If they know they're going to be treated well, they're going to develop not only on the field, but off the field. That's what we can promise.

I can't tell them if they're going to start. I always tell players. You know, where do you see me? Well, a year from now I see you being the guy that's on our team. If I'm promising someone else at that time that they can come in and start, how does that make you feel? You come in and earn it at Rutgers. Everything is earned. Nothing is given. I think we have a bunch of guys, a team full of those guys, that understand that and that do that every day.

We have to be very, very careful when we go into the portal at a place like Rutgers. You need to make sure your culture is the driving force. If we're going to bring a guy in

from the transfer portal, not only does he have to be able to help us right now, but he has to be a cultural fit because if you are recruiting the good players in the transfer portal, they're going to help you; but if they help you and they're not a cultural fit, they're going to lead people in the wrong direction, and we can't have that.

I think our staff and the people I mentioned, Eric Josephs, Jordan Wolkstein, our whole coaching staff have done a great job identifying the players that are a great fit for our football program, and I feel very confident in the guys we got in the portal. I feel really good about the guys we've recruited, and I feel really, really good about the guys that are in our program.

That's the mission, to keep upgrading little by little, net upgrades, until you have a championship football team.

Q. You being, like, a veteran coach, being around for years, like you said, what's your thoughts on college football, with the salary cap, with the revenue sharing and everything? What's your thoughts on that?

GREG SCHIANO: Look, I think college football is in a great place, and I know a lot of people like to moan and groan about things that are different. We need to just let things settle down and figure out if what we've done, what the court system has done, is it going to allow us to kind of find a level where we can go out and perform, where we can go out and have the kind of teams and programs and leagues that we want to have?

I think tweaking things too early -- let's see how it works out right now. We did a lot. Let's settle down and see how this works. I know with the CSC there's a lot of things that are talked about. All those things are great, and they need to be taken care of. I forever have believed that players should be paid. I always felt it was an injustice that players didn't receive some form of compensation, whether it was a stipend or whatever it would be.

I'm thrilled where we are right now. I think that there needs to be some fine-tuning, but not major changes right now. Let's see if this will work, and if it doesn't, then a couple of years from now let's change it, then. I do. I think college football is still incredibly popular. The fans love it. The players love it. The coaches love it. I can't wait to get started.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

