

## **Coach Schiano Leads Rutgers Football with Honesty, Toughness, and Passion**

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Coach Schiano is no stranger to the football world in New Jersey. Greg Schiano was born and raised in Wyckoff, New Jersey. When initially researching Rutgers Football, I thought I would focus my story on the successes Coach Schiano had while he was the head coach previously in the years 2001-2011 and how those years influenced the decision for the University to want him to return to the program. I found it interesting that a coach would return close to a decade later to lead a program he once took from struggling all the way to multiple bowl appearances. It is common knowledge that the key phrase “Keep Chompin” is exactly what Coach Schiano did. When things are stacked against him, he keeps at it and works until he accomplishes his goals. I wanted to get insight from within the program to what makes Coach Schiano so special. I sat down to talk with two team captains, Mayan Ahanotu and Noah Vedral. In these separate conversations, I asked the players to give me three words to describe their coach. In the words they chose, I was inspired as a young athlete. I will go into more detail in the following paragraphs, but what stood out to me the most was that their answers rarely involved the sport of football. The respect and admiration these two captains have for their coach and teammates went far beyond the football field. While they described these attributes in different ways, both players described Coach almost identically. Coach Schiano leads his program with honesty, toughness, and passion.

Noah Vedral shared that one of his favorite qualities of Coach is the fact that he is honest. Noah stated, “He is straightforward. He tells you how it is, even if it isn’t easy to hear.” Coach Schiano’s number one goal in his program is to make the guys on the team better than when they come into his program. To become better sometimes means you have to hear things that aren’t what you want to hear. But Coach will walk alongside his players to help overcome obstacles and lead them to the next level. Mayan Ahanotu said that Coach always makes sure the guys are doing the right thing. “Coach is disciplined on and off the field and he expects the same from us.”

“Coach Schiano preaches toughness.” Mayan stated during his interview. Noah also quickly described Coach as tough. “He was tough as a player and he is tough as a coach. He has to go through tough things. We know his job is tough but you just have to grit your teeth and tough it out. He never lets you think it’s hard. He sets a really good example for us.” He has lots of energy and is focused and locked in when he is on the field.

The third word that was used to describe Coach was passion. Noah Vedral said, "His pregame speeches can make you want to run through a brick wall." Coach Schiano is filled with enthusiasm around teaching the game of football. He loves the game and it shows in everything he does. Since Rutgers came to the Big Ten in 2014 they struggled but when Coach Schiano returned he was passionate he could turn it around, and is still working to do so.

Honesty, toughness, and passion describe a great coach, but it was a quote that Noah Vedral shared during our talk that really got my attention. I asked him for a phrase other than "Keep Chompin" that Coach likes to use that means something to him. That was when he shared this quote with me. "Don't let the past or the future steal from the present." Noah said he loves that quote because as a player you can lose focus on the present because you are too worked up on where you came from or what's next but that you must stay focused on the present. This got me thinking about my story. I was so focused on wondering what Coach did in the past that the University was hoping for him to do again in his reign at Rutgers. But it is a new group of players and he is a decade older with more experience. From what I can already tell through my discussions with the players, the Coach is "coaching" so much more in these men than just making them better football players. When asked, "What is something Coach has taught you or made you better at?", both team captains referenced Coach making them the best person they can be. Neither said the best football player they could be. Both Captains talked about Coach pouring into them as leaders so they can in turn lead the players on the team. This is the part of the interviews where both captains spoke with such excitement and passion about their Coach. I know he has taught them so much on the field. It wasn't a coincidence that these two players transferred to Rutgers the same year Coach Schiano returned. But I think what he has and is still teaching them about life goes further than the football field. I would be lucky to have a Coach like Coach Schiano touch my life one day.