

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference

Pittsburgh - 55, Austin Peay - 0

PAT NARDUZZI: I was really happy, obviously, we're 1-0. And we talked all week just about coming out and making a statement. I told the guys probably about a week and a half ago, maybe two and a half weeks ago, I guess when camp broke we started working on Austin Peay, that we were going to come out and make a statement. And since I've been here I felt like we haven't come out and exploded against anybody. I don't want to say played down, but the big emphasis today was to come out and play up and we were going to show that we were a different football team and really make a statement to the country about who we are and what kind of weapons we have on really all three phases of the game.

Obviously we had some guys that didn't play today or were and absent. I'm not going to talk about those guys. I'm going to talk about the guys that are here. And again you guys know what's going on. You guys know what the climate is. There might be somebody missing in the box out of you guys as well.

So it's kind of the age we're in. I would also just comment that I have never ever in 31 years of coaching played 10 minute second quarters. That came about at halftime. I think Jerry, the head official, talked to Dennis back in, I guess, ACC headquarters and I had to agree to it. And Austin Peay really wanted to play -- first, it was like, Hey, we're only going to play a 10-minute fourth quarter and then about two minutes later before the half was over they came in and said, Austin Peay wants to just play two 10-minute quarters. And I said, Hey, I can understand. It was out of control at that time.

But we had 70 different players play today and obviously some guys absent. We could have played more. But it was a great experience. We got a chance to get Davis Beville out there and Joey Yellen and some backups in there that -- I told them at halftime, This is an opportunity. You guys want to play more, show me something.

So we'll look at the tape. It wasn't obviously as clean at



least offensively as I would like it to be. I thought defensively we did some good things and we saw Dayon Hayes, our little hometown hero, come in there and get two sacks. One was a strip sack. So there was a lot of good things. I mean, we've got to look at that tape and maybe we got to find a place for Dayon to come in there and get a pass rush because he had a heck of a speed rush early against their 2s, of course. But overall, hey, we're 1-0 and I'm excited about where we are.

Questions.

**Q. How important was it to just get through the first game, going through the new protocols and being in front of no crowd? Do you think it will put your players' mind at ease just having gone through it once?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think so. Certainly I think that going through this thing for the first time and going down and singing to the Panther Pit, because we hope they're there in the future as well was important. But, you know, every day is a step in this COVID-19 era, and we know what the atmosphere is out there and our kids have done a heck of a job, guys. Again, my hat goes off to our football team and what they have done. You've looked around the country and see what's going on at Memphis and Virginia Tech, and our kids are doing it right. And I thought maybe we would have everybody out here today but, we're excited to be able to definitely get that thing done.

**Q. With your seven absentees, was there any concern about maybe not playing in the game today?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm sorry?

**Q. With seven guys that didn't play, was there any concern about maybe not playing the game because of that?**

PAT NARDUZZI: No, not at all. Not at all. We weren't even close to that. Not even close.

**Q. Are you anticipating having those guys for next week?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I do anticipate having everybody, and like I said, I'm not going to really talk about it because you



could have somebody else that's missing. Shoot, next week Jerry might not be with us, so wear your mask and be safe out there. That was really my message to our football team is: You've earned the right to play one game, now earn the right to play two.

**Q. You said that you didn't -- the offense needs to clean up a little bit. What about the first half, though, specifically? Your first team offense, do you feel that was that was a pretty clean effort?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I thought it was very clean. Obviously we still had a couple dropped balls, but I thought it was as clean as we have looked. And like I said, I wanted to make a statement and I thought our run game looked solid. We played a lot of tail backs today. I thought our O-line did an outstanding job of blocking. And then Kenny was sharp. Kenny put the ball where it needed to be 99 percent of the time and that's, there's a lot of decisions to make back there at the quarterback spot. So I thought our 1 offense was very, very sharp.

**Q. Was there a different mentality than you've had in these games in the past four years?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It was and that's what I said, where are we? Who are we? And, again, that was a two weeks ago we talked about it, and we talked about it on Tuesday in our first practice about coming out and playing our game, not playing somebody else's game. And that's what -- I think Austin Peay's a good football team. But when we play up to our level, that's what an opener should look like. Probably one of our biggest margins of victory since I've been here, and like I said, going back to Youngstown State where we win in an overtime. Delaware was a tight one. I know Kenny didn't play in that game last year. I look at Eastern Michigan where we just kind of play hard enough just to win the football game and I wanted to prove that this 2020 team was a different team and they really are the. In the attitude all week in practice they shrug everything off and, Let's go, Coach. They're ready to go.

**Q. Eight of 20 -- eight of the 20 completions Kenny made went to Jordan Addison. Can you talk about the impact he has a freshman and going forward?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, and he could have probably had nine. So I know he's kicking himself in the butt. He's a good football player. I think I've given you guys a preview what he could be and I think he's only going to get better every down. The scary part is him back there catching the punts. And for a freshman to go back and there catch punts, as a head coach, that's the one thing that's a little scary about putting a guy back there, but he was outstanding.

**Q. I know one of the most important things in this game you wanted to get through this game pretty healthy. Haba went down. Do you have an update on him?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know I don't talk about injuries, but Haba went down and we'll evaluate that.

**Q. Is there an update on Lucas Krull?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You guys know I don't talk about injuries, but we expect to have Lucas back next week. And we were playing it safe with him today. He could have gone if he wanted to -- I shouldn't say if he wanted to, if we wanted him to. We chose to hold him and get him 100 percent. I didn't want 99 percent Lucas Krull. I wanted a hundred percent Lucas Krull and he'll be ready to go for the ACC opener.

**Q. Mac?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Mac will be ready too, I hope. You guys ask a lot of injury questions.

**Q. Did one running back kind of stick out more than the others today?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm looking just at the sheet sitting in front of me. I thought that they all did some good things. You'll find out obviously when the 2s got out there and 2s and a halves, whatever it may be. Like I said, we played a lot of guys. Vince Davis made some people miss. The running backs held onto the ball. It looks like Vince Davis had two touchdowns, but -- it looks like he had the most carries. But Izzy was impressive. I thought AJ Davis was really good early. Again, we just didn't, you know, we were able to play a lot of guys and I think that's the best part of this football game today.

**Q. How about Kenny running the ball? Talk about that.**

PAT NARDUZZI: He told me, I'm going to -- if that guy, that shoulder -- if that guy turns, I'm taking it, and he did. So he's a guy that can run with the football. We got a lot of confidence in him. There might be more where that came from.

**Q. You talked some about wanting to show that this team is different as far as how it beats a lower-level opponent by a lot in their first game. What to you are the biggest differences with this team compared to some of the previous ones you have had?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We've got four captains that are making sure the message gets across to everybody. I think it comes down to your senior leadership. This is a senior-laden team, and just the leadership of our football team. I would say the best teams are teams that are led by their seniors and captains. And, again, our captains have done a great job at leading them, making sure what the standard was going to be today, what the standard is going to be for 2020.

**Q. You talked about playing 70 players and getting a bunch of guys in. Is there somebody that maybe stood out to you from that the 2s and 2s and a half groups that showed you something maybe in a game setting that you haven't necessarily seen in practice?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Until I get to watch the tape and really evaluate it, it's hard to say. The guy that sticks out to me was Dayon Hayes, as I mentioned already. Bangally, at linebacker kind of did some things out there. He's got a little attitude to him.

Offensively it was good to get Goncalves out there, which I think we had some high hopes for. Owen Drexel. Some guys that haven't played a lot of football here that got a chance to go in there. We're going to evaluate it and make sure they get better next week because you may need everybody. You look at - Brandon George made a little fullback today as well. It's a little package we have been working on. So Brandon George played both sides of the ball, played just about every special team, so he's an asset for us.

**Q. Earlier you expressed your frustration with the testing process. Now that you've gone through a full game day experience with that process, obviously with what happened today happening, what are your thoughts on the process as a whole?**

PAT NARDUZZI: The process has worked and we got to trust the process, listen to our doctors, and listen to what goes on. So, again, I can't say there's frustration with the process because there is really no frustration with the process. It's the just waiting for test results and all that to come back that's the hardest thing. But the process is the process. It's pretty simple as far as what we do. It's just the three testing, it's like it becomes a, it becomes a major process. And UPMC and the CDC has put some protocols in that are outstanding and allowing our football team to play safely, and that's the most important thing. If we have got to go out there with 22 players, as long as we have 22 players playing safely, that's the most important thing, because we know the climate out there, we know what's going on. When games start getting cancelled and you hear pregame that Virginia Tech has a problem down

there, you just kind of look at each other like, Hey, Pitt could be next. And we don't want to be next. That was our message to our football team to go out there, tonight, go to your room, put your mask on and do things the right way because everybody's susceptible. Anything can happen, and we want to make sure that doesn't happen to the Pitt Panthers.

**Q. You had Kenny, he obviously had a big game today, but how did you feel about his approach to the entire week just as a leader? I've heard a lot about how he's been helping young players like Jordan Addison. He connected twice big time for D.J., he just got there. Talk about how did he do in the game and how he managed everything as a leader.**

PAT NARDUZZI: He did a great job. You don't go out there and be that explosive. When we wanted to be explosive, he was explosive. Some of the things we did in the passing game to open up our run game, he was on fire. And again he led our offense. He's the key to our offense. He's a captain, but he's been a leader for the last three years, and he's going to be a great leader now as a captain and a quarterback. He did an outstanding job. I don't know if you could have played any better than Kenny Pickett played today.

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