

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Saturday, September 26, 2020  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Coach Pat Narduzzi

Postgame Press Conference

Pitt - 23, Louisville - 20

PAT NARDUZZI: I'll tell you what: I've about had it with these masks.

All right, guys, obviously we played well enough to win today. Kids did a heck of a job, played their tails off, 60-minute game. Last week we finished with the offense on the field, this week I was hoping to finish with the offense on the field but the defense was ready to go had we had to go, and obviously we did, and Jason Pinnock had a nice play again, interception to end the game.

Just happy for really our entire football team. They just continue to fight and find different ways to win football games, and that's what good teams do. Doesn't matter if we don't get a 1st down. Doesn't matter.

I think we gave up three points in the second half, and I really blame myself. That field goal was all on me. We were in a punt safe to begin with, they took a delay of game for whatever reason, and I said to myself, I went and put a punt return out there and I shouldn't have done it. I was like -- I said, they're not going to delay a game and then fake it, are they, for more yards? And I played right into their hands. That's what they wanted to do; they wanted to get our rangers out there. So that three-point is on me, it's not on the defense. I'll take that. That's a dumb move, and shoot, if I wanted to waste another time-out I would have, but I didn't want to waste another time-out. I thought we'd stop them.

I think we had a misalignment on that, as well. But we'll clean that stuff up. We haven't given up a fake punt in a long time. It's just another thing to clean up. That's why they call us "coach."

Proud as heck of Kessman. We've got a lot of faith in him and he's three for three today, and again, I go back to that's why they call us "coach," to get them right, and those are the details that great football teams do.

Questions?



**Q. You're getting most of your pressure from your four-down linemen. Is that just physical domination or is it partially scheme, too?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I know the steel curtain is Pittsburgh Steelers, but today and really they've been dominant up front. We did get a lot four-man pressure. I don't know if we had a five- or six-man sack or not, but a lot of coverage sacks, a lot of quarterback tucking it and containing him near the end. Seemed like he got away a few times.

Our prayers go out to Malik, as well. Never like to see a game end like that with a minute and 15 or whatever is on the clock.

But it's a little bit of both. Obviously Pat Jones, Rashad Weaver and whoever got those sacks, I don't have a stat on who got them, but I know Patrick had three. He was upset a week ago. He practiced like an animal this week and did a great job.

**Q. How much does your defense embrace the one-score game and keep coming up with one stop after one stop in the fourth quarter?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I don't know how much they embrace it, but they give me chest pains. Again, the two touchdowns they got in the first half, the big long run, we just fit it wrong and then they came back and ran it and we had probably a gain of zero or one, if that, maybe a TFL, I don't know. We just didn't fit it right. It was something different, and it was really just kind of a read that we had on them based on what they were doing. We had a linebacker reading one thing and they got us on the one read and we changed the read and came back and stuffed them, but those are things that happen.

**Q. As a coach, clearly you know what that defense is capable of, but what have you been able to do through these three games here, how impressive has it really been?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It's been really impressive. Randy Bates, Charlie Partridge, Coach Harley, Coach Sanders, Coach Collins, the defensive staff has done an unbelievable job. It starts during the week, guys. You win on Saturdays but it starts with the preparation and putting



the kids in position to make plays. We're pretty simple but complex defense and we give our kids a chance to just turn it loose and play football.

I mean, the penetration they had, they could run the ball on anybody. You saw what they did to Miami, a great Miami defense a week ago, and then you look at what they did to a Pitt defense. It's a little different deal when you line up against a Pitt defense.

**Q. You had eight interceptions by a defensive back all last year. You already had five this year. Doing something differently on that front, or was that any kind of focus for you coming into this season?**

PAT NARDUZZI: First of all, the guys are making plays. Marquis Williams, we've got to teach him a little ball security. He's trying to point out blockers and stuff, and I'm like, just tuck that ball and run, would you please? You ran a 4.5, go. He might even run a 4.4.

But I can't tell you we're doing a whole lot different. We've got, again, just different checks. We look the same and we have different checks that we make coverage-wise. We'll call one coverage and then they got a chance to put themselves in position to make plays, and there's a lot -- there's a lot more mental out there as far as what we do, how we do it, and that's a key to what we do defensively.

Our kids know what to do. They're confident in what they're doing. They're putting themselves in good position, and again, the credit goes to Paris Ford and Damar Hamlin. They're those two safeties making those checks and covering up the receivers to the point where the quarterback has got nowhere to go with the ball.

**Q. You knew what you had coming into this season with Weaver, Jones, the older players on defense, but how encouraged are you by Kancey or SirVocea Dennis or Marquis Williams, some of these more inexperienced guys who seem to be stepping up pretty big for you?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, it's their turn. You've got Damarri Mathis with shorts on on the sideline and was originally starting cornerback, and guys got to step up. That's what it's all about, and our kids are making plays and they're putting opportunities and have opportunities to make plays. It's fun to see.

**Q. You mentioned the need to clean things up a little bit. Are you a little concerned that your wide receiving corps has 15.4 percent drop percentage on catchable passes this season?**

PAT NARDUZZI: In my opinion there was maybe one dropped pass. DJ turned on a critical 4th down, down in the red zone in the third quarter. But nobody is perfect. I don't know about your percentages, but receivers are making plays when they need to. You look at some of the catches they did make, like Jordan Addison, that catch on that sideline on 3rd down was a critical 3rd down.

No, I'm not concerned. It's called win. Just win. No concern there, just like I'm not concerned if Kessman is going to miss a couple field goals. We're not going to be perfect. You guys ain't going to be perfect, and obviously I messed up on the punt safe there. I should have stayed punt safe. So we all make mistakes.

**Q. Was that a missed assignment on the touchdown pass?**

PAT NARDUZZI: The touchdown pass? You know, I think it was maybe a missed check if anything. We'll see it on tape. I'm not sure what happened on it, but we kind of knew -- we call it a chair 7 where No. 1 and 2 run an under route and they run a 7 route with two-two. We kind of knew it was coming, and I'm not sure what happened on it to be honest with you, but they made a play and we didn't. Maybe it was one of those wrong checks.

**Q. Your players at the beginning of the season said we don't want to be known -- Pat Jones said specifically we don't want to be known as just a defensive team. Three weeks in with the numbers you guys are putting up, it's kind of hard. Are you okay with being -- is this what you envisioned in terms of the personality of this defense, not just what it's playing but the way that it's playing?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, the defense's motto has been "unfinished business." I think you win championships with great defense and you can win a lot of games with defense, and our offense is going to continue to manage and get better. Louisville has got a lot of talent on both sides of the ball.

I know Jerry was really, really, really concerned about the speed factor. Obviously that was not a factor, which I knew it wouldn't be. I guess that was a little sarcastic last week, but no, I'm not concerned at all. We've got a great football team, and I don't care how we win. If there's going to be a time like North Carolina last year where you think you're playing good defense, all of a sudden your offense bails you out, it doesn't matter. We scored enough points to win and that's our goal, score enough to win.

**Q. We didn't see Lucas Krull or Wendell Davis, a couple other guys out there. Are those some serious**



## **injuries, season-ending?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, they're not season-ending yet, so we'll just -- they're not season-ending yet, so we'll play it day by day.

## **Q. You're 3-0 for the first time since 2014; your thoughts on that and just moving forward?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, we're 1-0 today. What we did last week and the week before doesn't really matter. All focus goes to North Carolina State and trying to be 1-0 this week. We just try to keep it one at a time, never start to look ahead where we're going. I'm just proud of this football team making plays. Punt team was much better; major focus on our punt team. We had some great punts by Kirk, and guys just making plays and just cleaning up things.

## **Q. It was Taysir Mack's first game back and he made a huge play sticking with it after they tried to bring him down. What can you say about his first day back and your excitement seeing your senior back out there?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he had a couple great catches, some crucial 3rd down catches and that was a big 4th down catch, obviously, and we talk all the time about finishing, and he finished. It's great to have him back. He's a big-time playmaker. Coming out of last season, you guys know that Eastern Michigan game. He's a go-to guy, and I'm happy for Taysir.

## **Q. Did your running game make strides today, Pat?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think so. It seemed like the first time we'd run it, whether it was a 1st and 10 or 2nd down, ran it -- Vince had 68 yards, and I don't know how many yards we rushed for. 156 yards, yeah. When you rush for 150, it's a good day. Isy got involved and he had 42 yards, ran hard. Yeah, obviously impressed with that. We've been able to run the ball and mix it up, not just be a passing team, so that's been critical.

## **Q. How do you assess Kenny's performance? Seemed like in the first half he made some pretty good throws on 3rd down there and didn't do as much in the second half, but how do you assess it overall?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we'll watch the tape. He threw enough completions and made enough plays to win a football game, so I'm sure it's never as clean as you want it to be. I know he kicks himself in the butt for the pick in the second half, end of that third quarter when we're approaching the red zone. We still got to be better in the red zone. We'll continue to work on the red zone. We're

working on the red zone on Tuesday, working the red zone on Tuesday and Wednesday. We have periods in the red zone against each other, and we've just got to continue to make strides down there in the red zone.

## **Q. What can you say about Jordan Addison and what you saw from him today? He had the big catch on 3rd down to keep that drive alive.**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, again, seven catches. It's like he's averaging seven catches a game it seems like. He's a guy that you can trust. He catches just about everything. I can't say enough about the play he's made as a young guy that just steps in and makes big plays.

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