

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: All right, guys. It is Monday again. Obviously coming off a nice win against, I think, a very talented Louisville team. Obviously we joked last week about the speed that they had, and obviously we've got some speed, as well.

Our kids played hard. We obviously weren't perfect, and there's a lot of stuff we watch on Sunday night in really all phases that obviously we could fix, but defensively we were pretty strong. Had a busted coverage for a touchdown, really two busted coverages for touchdowns, one in the passing game in the red zone after a turnover in a sudden change situation.

And really in the run versus an unbalanced formation it was a little bit different. Popped us. And again, we didn't line up perfectly, which I didn't know from the game field. I thought it was just a fit problem. Obviously always things we can clean up on defense.

Offensively really did some good things. Encouraged with our run game and how we're moving the ball and what we're doing in that part of the game, which is better than where we've been a year ago, and I think just every week if we can continue to get better there. But hurt ourselves in the red zone when we get down there.

As much as I'm happy for Kessman, if he sits on the sideline and kicks into a net all day I'll be excited for him. He can just kick in the net. He's never missed one in the net yet.

I'm happy with him over there, but we've just got to score more when we get in the red zone. As f you watch the tape it's like one guy here, whether it's a throw, a catch, a block, just one guy, and that's how offense goes.

Quite honestly that's how defense goes. One guy doesn't do his job, we've got an issue.

Special teams obviously saw some things. There was some emphasis we made with our kickoff team -- excuse me, our punt team. We had two penalties the week before.



Our gunners weren't very good and we kind of went old school and kind of turned back the time a little bit on that.

Kirk is kicking really well right now and our coverage was much better. We lined up better. We didn't have those issues like which did against Syracuse.

And then obviously the field goal team. Just changed up some things we were doing and tried to make it more realistic. I think I might have told you Thursday we had all the team yelling and screaming at them just to get them locked in. Whether I had anything to do with it or not I have no idea, but obviously he had a lot of success there.

I think that's all I've got.

We've got a great North Carolina State team. We know they're athletic. I know 2017 when they came here they beat us, and I haven't forgotten that game. Went and watched that game late last night, and have worked the Wake Forest and Virginia Tech games this morning. Watching a lot of Texas tape.

Obviously that's where their coordinator came from. He's a Youngstown, Ohio, guy, so we'll watch a lot of Texas stuff.

Q. Last night when you went back to rewatch, I guess, the '17 game, what stood out to you? Anything, even just like little things just like pop up where you're like, Oh, I remember that or whatever?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I remember they're really athletic. I mean, they had a lot of guys drafted off that football team. I think if you count them up and put them in the NFL right now, they were a really talented football team. We ran into a buzz saw. They're talented now, but they were really -- you know, they had Chubb at D-end and Samuels, who's next door this week at tailback, and really Mr. Do it all in the backfield for them.

They were just really good. Tailback is one of the -- I forget his name, but I'm sure he's somewhere. He's not there now I don't think, but he's probably somewhere in the NFL. Their D-line and O-line were a bunch of first and second round draft choices from what I recall.

But they were really good. We had a battle. We didn't get blown out. We were young that year, too.



Q. It's hard not to notice, you mentioned on Saturday, we heard a lot about our speed. I was never worried about that, which says that you believe that your defense is pretty fast --

PAT NARDUZZI: And our offense.

Q. Your defense looks really fast, but do you think people sleep on that? When I hear you say that, I hear you say in addition to I think we're fast that I hear you say other people don't think we're fast defensively.

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, you know, it's what you read. Jerry is sleeping on us. He's always the one that asks the slow questions; right, Jerry? Give me just a head shake.

Q. No. I don't agree with that, Pat. Sorry.

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know what it is. Must be just slow in Pittsburgh. But we recruit, too. Those guys, we have scholarships. We just don't get all walk-ons. But we recruit, we have scholarships that we give out, and we try to get fast guys, too.

Obviously our guys were faster than their guys last week, which is what I thought going into the game. I did not think -- I truly didn't think they could move the ball on us. You take that 75 yards out, they have 75 yards -- you know, 150 yards total offense, and that should not have been.

Even the touchdown should not have been. Again, could have been another goose egg, guys. That's three in a row, and defensively we've got to just -- you want to win big time games and win them all. You can't give them anything. You just can't give them anything.

But I think our speed is pretty good.

Q. Was that a point of -- when you took the job, was that sort of a need that you felt needed to be addressed defensively and you realized it was going to take some time? Even Coach Satterfield said the other day, he said, Look, they do a great job of getting their guys, redshirting, developing them, and bringing them along. Was that an area you were specifically looking at when you took over?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. We're just looking to get good players. We're looking for speed and football players. It's not like you're going, Gosh, we're slow. I don't remember us being slow. I just know every year we're going to continue to recruit the best players we can.

We're looking at size, speed, and football players. We're

looking for guys that can play the game, two star, four star, doesn't really matter. Some guys get more four-star fast guys, and we'll take the two-star fast guy because they're out there -- you know, we're just looking for guys that play hard, play with great effort, and that's what we have right now.

Our kids, no one is going to question their effort, wherever it is. I'll go for example like Rashad Battle. He's one of our gunners right now, and two weeks in a row he's just wiring up their punt team. They're trying to cover down on a punt team, and Rashad Battle is with one hand -- he's got one hand right now; I hope he has two this weekend -- but he's wiring people up at the line of scrimmage. Just playing hard and playing with technique and taking coaching.

Q. You were down a few tight ends this week. What did you see from the guys that were on the field on Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I saw some busts. I saw some mistakes. I think you play five offensive linemen, and actually we played six offensive linemen, really seven offensive linemen, and we talk about mental errors.

We had more mental errors in the tight end room than we had in the entire offensive line who played, you know, how many plays. There's one tight end out there probably per snap maybe every once in a while you put two. We just had mental errors there. I think Danny Moraga is really good. Grant Kerrigan didn't have any. He had a winning performance.

But you're putting out maybe a smaller athletic guy out there than Grant. Grant is tough and has gotten a lot better. We're excited about what he's -- he's become a better blocker because that offensive line work that he's had.

So I'm excited about where Grant is, especially with that winning performance that he had.

But we had MA's out of those guys, and we have to clean that up.

Q. We asked you after the game about Vincent Davis, but where have you seen the strides from him over the last year, obviously getting the bulk of the carries now through three weeks?

PAT NARDUZZI: I wish he would catch that one snap when he was at quarterback, I can tell you that. That would be nice. But we'll practice that this week.

But Vince Davis has done a nice job. He's just more



mature than he was a year ago. He's obviously not playing with a broken forearm in a cast out there, but he can make you miss. He's playing with a lot of confidence and he's a spin runner and not easy to take down. He's making people miss.

Q. Speaking of your tight ends, I was wondering if the lack of production from the tight ends so far this season affects your game, your play calling on Saturdays, and your game planning during the week?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think game planning during the week, of course. You've got to kind of switch around what you're going to do depending on who's ready to go. Play calling, I mean, you're going to put the ball in people's hands that you're going to make plays.

Danny almost had a great catch over the middle there. I thought he was going to pull it down, to be honest with you, and he's got the ability to make that catch.

But it obviously affects your game planning. You don't know Tuesday or Wednesday who you're going to have, who are you not going to have, who are you going to have. You never know with this pandemic who you're going to have, as well. There's a lot of things that change what you're going to do offensively, defensively, game planning wise.

Q. Jordan Addison's 21 catches leads the ACC; you talked about him all fall camp, but is he doing what you expected him to do?

PAT NARDUZZI: I would say Jordan is. I didn't realize he was leading the ACC, but seems like he's got about seven catches a game, so 7-7-7. But he's done a nice job, and there's a couple that you'd like to take back. He's had a couple deep balls that he could pull in, but he's done what I thought. He's done probably more than I thought.

I think we talked about it last week, but Qadree Henderson in his first game compared to Jordan Addison's first ballgame. Jordan is just going to continue to get better as this season goes on. We've got to keep getting him the ball.

Q. You talked about playing seven offensive linemen. What did you think of the guys that came in after you lost Gabe, his performance, and what made Carson get more of the reps there as the game went on?

PAT NARDUZZI: Just watching a few plays -- you know, obviously when Keldrick was in there, you know, saw a guy run by him. I saw him getting out of his stance a little bit late. I kind of focused on that, because when Gabe was

out I was like, Oh, gosh. What are we going to do? Who's going to be that guy?

And again, he's just getting better. I like where Keldrick is. He's probably not where we want him to be right now. He probably thinks he's maybe further along than he is. But when you watch the tape or I watch from the sideline, I just didn't feel comfortable with what happened there.

And then we moved Carson over and Carson played a really good game. He had one bust in protection; you guys could probably watch it. He saw a corner coming and there's a guy that's like 260 in front of you, or 280, whatever he is, and then there's a 185-pound guy there. He jumped out and tried to block the corner and left a big ol' five technique for Vince Davis to block.

Vince started to go off to the corner, and then Vince has got to come back and block the 280lb D-end. So little things like that. Again, I think that's more plays -- I think Carson had 47 plays, which is more plays than he's ever played in one single game.

So it's awesome for the depth chart and those guys to get those serious ACC reps.

Q. What's it do for a defense when you have so many guys who can get after the quarterback so often? I think you had five guys who have multiple sacks through three games. As far as the morale, the makeup, the sideline, what's that do for the overall well-being of the defense?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it gives everybody a lot of confidence. I'm sure it that secondary a lot of confidence. It gives everybody confidence. I think it gives the offense confidence that they've got to block those guys up front.

Deslin goes right into that -- I mean, Deslin had some TFLs and made some plays in the backfield, besides Patrick having an unbelievable game, and Rashad.

But I think having those guys on the edge certainly changes things offensively.

Q. Going back to that 2017 NC State game, if you don't count the one pass he threw against Syracuse, that was really Kenny's first action in college. What do you kind of remember about that, about what you saw out of him three years ago in that game?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, what I remember is him scrambling for his life in that game because they thought they had a freshman quarterback there, and he did a pretty good job under pressure but he was scrambling for his life.

They were blitzing. They were blitzing about every down just trying to see if they could rattle a freshman quarterback. That's what I remember there.

Q. One of the things that Scott Satterfield said after the game that gave them a hard time was when you guys got into your delta package knowing which linebacker was coming. You don't blitz a ton, but as a guy who's a noted defensive mind, how much do you take those opportunities in that three-three front to really dial up some creativity and try to confuse some offenses by hiding some guys or maybe trying to do some different things with who's coming on the rush?

PAT NARDUZZI: That's all we do. That's why we like that front. We get into that and there's a threat of multiple guys going, whether it's Brandon Hill or Damar Hamlin the week before from the field.

Phil Campbell has had an incredible year for us so far. Maybe the unsung hero of that defense. He plays fast, hard, tough. But Phil Campbell out of the boundary, and then you've got SirVocea and Cam Braden inside. Which one of those guys are you going to block? When there's seven of them sitting up there and you're trying to change protections and you've got different blitzes called, it's kind of hard and that's part of the scheme part of it. When I talk about guys getting sacks, I mean, there's a lot of indecision.

Now, again, North Carolina State is going to come out and gap protect probably. They're going to sprint out, so we're going to have to work a lot of sprint out pass just trying to get away from the pressure.

So we'll have to be prepared for the gap protection this week where they max protect and really try to leave no seams, and then obviously spread out away from our pressure. Depending on whether Leary or Hockman is in there, they're both right-handed, left-handed, we don't know which quarterback they're going to face. I expect to be seeing both of those guys looking at that offense.

Q. I know he played much more later in that season, but how much do you think Kenny learned from that stint against NC State in '17, that experience late in the game? Even just as a guy getting in for the first time really.

PAT NARDUZZI: Oh, I'm sure he's a heck of a lot better right now, if you go back and watch that tape compared to where he is now, he's learned a ton. Not just from one game, but the only way you get experience as a quarterback to get those game reps and be put under the fire. He was under fire.

Q. I know both you guys are defensive guys. What do you know about Tony Gibson, and have you ever been in a game against him, and what about his defense makes it good?

PAT NARDUZZI: They're in a three-three stack and they can bring pressure from anywhere, so you've got to be aware where he is. Really I know Tony recruiting-wise. Hung out in the airport at some gates a few times and just talked ball and personnel and recruiting. I know he's a great recruiter and a great coordinator. He's had a lot of success as a coordinator, whether it was at Michigan or West Virginia.

So they've always had success, and I'm sure he'll have those guys ripping and roaring when they come up to Pittsburgh.

Q. On Saturday you all had nobody missing due to COVID-related protocols, down from three the week before that, seven the week before that. What sort of measures or steps did the program take or has the program taken to sort of control that and to get those figures down?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, our figures have been low from the beginning. Without getting into numbers, they've been really low. Really haven't done anything different than just continued to have a constant reminder that it can happen to you, whether it's sticking up all the postponed games from last week or this week. You know, you're one game away.

I talked to them after the game about how I guess the bars are open in Oakland. Just a constant reminder of, Hey, you're not allowed to go to a bar. Bars are off limits. I don't care who's opened them up. I don't care if you know the bartender. I don't care what you know. The bars are closed, and I told them they shouldn't hang out with a girl that's been to a bar. I'd check and see if they've got a stamp on their hand. If they got a stamp on their hand, I wouldn't let them in. I'd say, See you after this season is over.

But, you know, just constantly staying on them and reminding them that we're not out of the woods yet. We could go from zero to having 17 of them in quarantine this week. That's what it is. I think that's kind of what everybody needs to realize, is just because we're good right now doesn't mean you're going to be good in the future.

Q. As much as you tell them that, is that something that has to come from leaders within, has to come

from a really strong message from their peer leaders?

PAT NARDUZZI: No doubt about it. It's kind of interesting you ask that, because Friday night I'm eating dinner with the captains. We have a captains' table for dinner. That's how I found out. I didn't know the bars were open in Oakland. I had no idea. I don't even know when they opened. They said, Bars are open. I was like, Really? That's going to be -- I'll make sure I mention that after the game. Thank you, guys.

Because nobody tells me that. But hasn't been on my checklist of checking the bars. It's a dangerous spot for our kids to be in right now. If you want to play football, that's not a spot you need to be in. Everybody would like to go have a celebration after a game and just go out and have fun, but you can't do it.

Q. Speaking of kind of building off that, the fact that you guys have stayed so healthy has allowed you to condition and prepare maybe as normally as possible given the circumstances. Other coaches, I know David Cutcliffe and Fuente have talked about their schools have missed practice time, and they talked about in their games their kids were gassed in the second half. It doesn't look like your kids are gassed at all in the second half, particularly on defense. How much of that is just the fact that you guys have been able to kind of keep things normal because you've been able to kind of keep the tests under control?

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, I think that helps. I don't know what everybody else has done or not done. I go back to Navy, just listening to -- again, I don't listen to many interviews, but I don't know if anybody was playing or just listening to the one after they got beat by BYU in the opener and were gassed and didn't tackle, and our guys are in condition.

If we've got 50 guys out there -- I can't tell you we've had a full roster out there every day, but it's our job, it's Coach Stacchiotti's job that anybody that did sit out for 14 days or 10 days, that we get them in shape.

Regardless of whether they practiced last week or didn't, it's our job to get them in shape and get them ready for a game, whether it's in a day or two, whatever the prep time is.

But we've been (knocks on wood) fortunate that we've stayed away from that, and I just hope it continues. Again, it's the kids. They've got to do it. They've got to want it. And I talk every week about how they have to earn the right to play another game, and we've got to earn the right this week to play No. 4, and we had to earn the right this

weekend. Because that's what scares you, is what happened this weekend after the game. What did they do? Where did they go? I can't babysit them.

Q. Over the weekend, kind of on that same note, Syracuse and I think it was Georgia Tech, their game was delayed because they didn't know if kids were negative or positive. Have you guys had any close calls in terms of getting results back with MAKO? I know the last two games have been noon kicks, so I don't know if that plays into it either.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we haven't had any problem getting -- I wake up in the morning -- it's been awesome to be honest with you. When I wake up in the morning I know. Shoot, I think the first weekend I knew at midnight. I think I found out at 5:51 Saturday morning that the coast was clear and we were good to go.

But so I don't know what happened at Syracuse. I'd like EJ to find out and people just to find out just so you kind of get prepared for the next thing, what happens if you do get a positive on a Friday, what was the situation. I don't know. Were they invalid? I don't know what the tests were.

I don't think you can retest on a Friday. They really give you two things there from what I understand. You get two tests, so if the first one is positive they go to the second sample. So you're getting a swab. They stick it in a vial and do it again and then stick it in a different one.

So if that comes out positive, they go to the second one. If that one is positive, then you're positive. There not -- there should be no delaying of a football game from what I gather.

So I don't know what happened there, so I guess I can't answer, unless one of the things was invalid. Maybe the second one was invalid. I don't know. We have not had any issues at all, though.

Q. How did Chase Pine do in the replacement for Wendell Davis at middle linebacker? And in that vein, any new information on Wendell and Lucas?

PAT NARDUZZI: No new information; day-to-day. We'll see how that goes. Chase Pine, like we know, did a great job. I don't want to call Chase a gamer because I don't like gamers and I like Chase. But Chase is -- you go back to maybe the last game he started was Stanford, and he played an unbelievable game down in the Sun Bowl. So I knew he would play lights out. I just know how he is. He played hard, he played physical, he got everybody lined up, he did all the things that you expect our middle linebacker to do.

He had an outstanding game, and we expect him, as long as he's that starter, and, shoot, he may just earn the job by getting it done every week.

We hope Wendell is back quickly, but we move on to the next. The next guy is up, and we certainly have a lot of faith in Chase Pine.

Q. Speaking on that gamer note, you talked about how you were trying to get that message across to Calijah Kancey last week. How do you think him and the other young players approached the game, and what's your read on them having to stay focused after a big win over a ranked opponent like this past Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, just one day -- the focus part is easy. That's my job, is to make sure we get back to business tomorrow and we practice. They're in here watching tape and eating a brunch this morning and getting some study hall hours in because it's their academic day.

But the young guys did a good job. Inside, whether it was Kancey or Devin Danielson, David Green ended up starting the game. David had the best week inside. It's kind of like the tailback position, who's having a great week of practice, and we'll start that guy.

Obviously David was the guy last week. Who's going to be the guy this week based on what they do offensively, who can stop what they do, and I think that's going to be the big thing.

Q. I know you talked about this last week a little bit on Thursday, but since then, Mr. Hamlin has put out a petition for the parents and then Jimmy Morrissey on Sunday tweeted, "please let my parents come to the game on Saturday." Is that frustration starting to boil up, that these kids want their parents to at least watch them play?

PAT NARDUZZI: I hope so.

Q. As a parent is it frustrating for you?

PAT NARDUZZI: It is. You sit in these homes -- I hope it's starting to boil up. Again, here's the thing. I'll go back. These parents are coming here. Kenny's parents are meeting him at the stadium every day. They're here. They just can't go sit in the seats.

So they're all here, so where are they watching the game? They're probably going to some bar for four hours. I would rather them not be in a bar, I'd rather them be sitting in Section 138 with nobody around them. We've got a

75,000-seat stadium. I'd rather them be there than some bar next to who-knows-who because after the game those parents are going to be with our kids.

That to me is the scariest part. I still don't understand it. The safest thing for everybody to do is to put those parents in those stands because they're going to be with our kids afterwards, and if we don't want any problems and we want to play football, to me that's the best thing to do.

Q. Any idea if that'll be a possibility this weekend, to get parents or a limited number of fans in the stands? We know there was an announcement that there were no fans for September, but this week --

PAT NARDUZZI: I think there's a chance. We don't know right now, but I'm going to say my prayers tonight, and there's a chance. I don't know when we'll know, but I think there's a chance for sure.

Q. For parents or just a small amount of fans?

PAT NARDUZZI: Parents will be the number one thing, I think. I'd be fighting for number one is the parents, but there's a chance for anything; who knows. The governor is going to make that decision. That's not for me or Heather Lyke or the chancellor. That's for the governor to make that decision to make sure we're all safe, and we trust that he'll make the right decision.

We all want the parents to come. We all want our families to go. We want the fans to go. I want the band to go. I want the Panther Pit to go. I want everybody to go. But the governor has got to do what he feels is best for everybody involved, and I'm sure he will, but the smaller it is I think it's even safer. We hope and pray.

Q. I was just wondering about NC State's running backs, Person and Knight, and what do they do that concerns you?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Person is really listed as the starter right now, and I think they're both really good. Knight, he looks big and physical and fast. I think Knight has got more carries than Person does, but they're a two-headed monster there and they're both really good. They run a lot of inside zone, outside zone, some similar runs that we saw last week, even out of some similar formations. The offensive line is really good up front.

They've got speed up there -- as a matter of fact they've got big wide outs. You look at the Devin Carter kid is 6'4"; I'm not even going to try his name, Emeka is his first name 6'3", 220 pounds, I believe; they've got some big wide outs out there. And I know their receiver coach George

McDonald who I've worked with Northern Illinois in the past is a great receiving coach, so I think he'll have those guys prepared.

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