

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Coach has joined us. We will hand things off to you, coach.

PAT NARDUZZI: Good morning, good afternoon I guess, right on time. Obviously another tough weekend. Game of football, my dad always said half the teams win and half the teams lose every weekend. Always have to keep that perspective.

Our kids are obviously looking forward to a great Notre Dame team this week. We didn't play as well as we would have liked to play on the road against a really good Miami football team. There's no doubt about their athleticism, size, obviously the way they're coached.

We made some mistakes in really all phases for that matter, things that hurt you as the game goes on. I really don't feel any different from what I felt like on game day. A couple calls, obviously questionable, as far as penalties, those discipline things that drive you nuts as a coach.

We got to do a better job coaching them. Disappointing things coaching-wise, just things we know how to do. It's more preparation for what you might see, not necessarily what you saw on tape. Sometimes you fall into that loophole, this is what they do. When they do something different...

We got to know some of the weaknesses we have, especially when you're playing with a young guy out there. Voss being a new starter, saw some things really I don't think we practiced enough or emphasized enough. That's on us as coaches when things like that happen.

Start off defensively Saturday, again solid performance. Three of Miami's four touchdowns were 45 yards or less. We gave up some of those pop passes to their tight ends up through the middle, which we work enough. Really ran four of them. You guys don't notice that we stopped one of them. Cam Bright did a nice job when he was in there. Cam wasn't in there enough because he's still a little bit banged up. Hopefully 100% this week. He does it the way you're supposed to, a veteran guy.



Voss is maybe one of the smartest linebackers we have. I know that will never happen to him again. We had one come through the line of scrimmage. Seven or eight yards down the field on the second touchdown that was disappointing to see. RPO style.

Offensively Joey, heck of a first start for him. Didn't know what you were going to get out of him. Happy with the way he performed overall. Obviously the fumble creates one of those short fields for our defense. Another one was on a fake punt that obviously I called. We thought we had a good thing going as far as that fake goes. Just don't clean up a block, which I think we can get 10 yards. You're taking a risk any time you do that. We took the risk, thought it was worth it. We came up short.

I don't look back and say anything. I don't question the call at all. I want to be aggressive. I want to give our kids chances to make plays. You find out if they're going to make them or not, then you move on.

Offensively we got to run the football. 22 yards, disappointing there. There's some details that we haven't cleaned up. I don't think our O-line did a great job of blocking them. Give those guys credit on the other side of the ball. They're an athletic crew that did some things up front.

Special teams, our kicking game for the most part has been as good as it's been in the last several years, in my opinion. Punt team, Kess is continually kicking them in the end zone. 4-4, we have to turn two of them into touchdowns instead of kicking them.

We face a great Notre Dame team, No. 3 in the country, coming into our house, coming to Pittsburgh. We know it's always been a good game, a game our kids will look forward to. Their talent across the board, offensively, defensively, haven't watched a lot of special teams at this point. They are big, strong, physical. A typical Notre Dame football team.

They base offensively out of two tight ends. They're going to put their two tight ends, Tremble kid, a physical, great blocker, their starter. They got three tight ends that do a lot of work in there. Obviously run by Ian Book. Tommy Rees, former quarterback I faced several times in the past,



is their offensive coordinator. Has really done a nice job putting things together on offense. They're 4-0, No. 3 ranking.

Defensively Clark Lea, ACC linebacker coach at Syracuse, based out of a 4-3. Up front, sound across the board. Safeties are active like our safeties are. They make a lot of tackles. We're going to have to play our best to get a W on Saturday.

Questions.

Q. Last week you had Davis and Joey vying for that job. Do you go in this week knowing Joey is the guy?

PAT NARDUZZI: Right now I do. We're going to go in like we normally do. A lot of confidence in Davis. Liked what I saw with Joey. Coach Whipple did as well. We missed a couple throws. I love his patience in the pocket.

Davis is only going to get better. He's going to have a better week of practice this week than last week just getting those reps.

You know how it is as a backup now. First five games of the season, Kenny is taking all those reps. Last week Kenny didn't take a rep. Those backup quarterbacks, what happened last year with the backup quarterback with the Pittsburgh Steelers, when Big Ben is out there all by himself running the show, backups don't get many reps. Probably a few more reps than in the NFL.

Those guys are going to get better every week as we move on. We'll see where Kenny is. We didn't travel Kenny because it was the best thing for him to just rehab. Sitting on a plane for two hours, swelling, all that stuff, was not going to be the best thing for him. We wanted to bring Captain Pickett with us, but it was the best thing to leave him here, which he made a lot of headway over the weekend instead of standing four hours during the game.

We'll see how they practice this week as far as quarterbacks.

Q. Is that an advantage, where Joey has to win the job, stay sharp, have some competition?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think any time you have competition at any position. At some positions we don't have as much competition as we like. D-line, a lot of competition, could be a different starter out there every week. You saw Deslin Alexandre play a three technique. He looked as goods as he looked at end. Certain positions you have that competition. Some you don't.

Really through the first five games, Davis and Joey were splitting reps with the twos. Trying to get three quarterbacks ready because you're not sure who that guy is. Last week we were able to see full practice with more reps for both of them looked like. I think the competition is good.

Q. You've been wanting to run the ball all year. How much more difficult is it when you have a new kid back there under center, the defense is thinking they're going to run the ball? How much harder is it?

PAT NARDUZZI: You're kind of breaking up a little bit so I hope I'm answering the question.

The run game has to get better. I don't think we blocked very well. For the first game, we didn't win a lot of scrimmage (indiscernible) at all. We had decent games run-wise. Two previous games we out-rushed the opponent. This game we obviously didn't, which was disappointing.

We didn't block them very good up front. Didn't give our tailbacks a whole lot of time. Sibley early had some lanes to run through, lanes that my old butt could probably run through. Did a nice job carrying up through there. But the holes closed fast as the game went on. We didn't do a great job blocking. I think it will be a wake-up call in that room that we got to block them.

Again, not going to be an easy task against one of the top defenses in the country. They're big, physical. We're more of an attack team. They're more of a read, react up front with their D-line. They're going to make it hard to rush the ball as well. We're going to have to be really good up front.

Q. I understand that Notre Dame was recruiting Jordan Addison as a D back. Understand why you want him at wide receiver. Do you think he'd become a go-to wide receiver halfway through his freshman year?

PAT NARDUZZI: Isn't he already a go-to receiver? Sometimes you can target them without four DBs covering him. Seems like a lot of time in that game they weren't pressing him. They pressed everybody else except Jordan as the game went on for whatever reason.

Jordan is a go-to guy right now. We'll continue to try to get him the ball without wearing him out either. Some other guys have to step up. We have a lot of confidence in Taysir and Jared, DJ Turner. We have to spread the ball out. If you got one guy you're throwing it to all day, you got problems.

Joey has the ability to do that, so does Davis, as far as spreading it out, looking at what they're supposed to coverage-wise.

Q. You mentioned the problem with the offensive line, you need to do better. What are some things you identified specifically as a group they have to do better or specific guys that this spot has to be better?

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm not going to talk about certain guys. Every play might be one breakdown. We have to get more movement up front, stay on blocks. We have to sustain blocks, is a big thing, sustaining blocks. You can be on a guy, but you have to finish the block. We didn't do a good job finishing.

Again, give those other guys credit. They're being coached on the other side to disengage, get off of blocks. Good job by them. We want to be better than that.

Q. Defensively you talked last week about trying to get a little more rotation at cornerback. How do you feel your staff did this week with that? A.J. Woods got more time on the field.

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm not sure who is asking the question, but...

I was happy with A.J. Woods. He really came in. I think he took 41 snaps. Again, every week you're plugging a hole here or there. Like I said, he had a great week of practice. I think he was kind of the weeks before thinking he wasn't going to get in the game, maybe just wasn't motivated. When we said you have to, we need you, we have to have three corners, he really stepped up. Great tackle on an outside run in space that I thought was outstanding. Did a good job in coverage.

He's going to get better every week. It's hard as a defense, you want to keep your best guys out there as long as you can. We have to keep them fresh. The rotation at cornerback went well. Going to make us better as we move on throughout the rest of the ACC.

Q. 10 different penalties, 10 different kinds. How do you coach that situation up?

PAT NARDUZZI: We got to do a good job detail-wise. I can go through each one of them. Some of them aren't penalties, I can tell you that. We had hands in the face. We got called for it. You guys go back and watch the tape. I watched the video pretty good. It's tough to make all those calls out there. I'm not whining. Some things that set us back, shouldn't have been 10 penalties.

When we chop a three technique, when he comes through, we have a high-low on him, you don't expect to do that. Those are things you expect freshmen to do stuff like that. We just got to be cleaner.

We get too close. Shockey is busting his tail down the field. He just gets too close to the returner one time. Things like that that we'll continue to coach. It's something different every week. You have a roughing the passer one time last week. All of a sudden this week John has a chance to take his head off, he held up. Those we've got to learn from. We've got to do a better job coaching it, making sure that doesn't happen.

Sometimes you don't see it in practice. Three technique on the scout team, not screaming through the line of scrimmage, not fully blocked. You hope your tailback is not in that position, but he was. There's some things that happen like that, whether it's running down on a punt team. I thought Damar Hamlin, a trip-up. There's not a better cover guy back there than Damar Hamlin, had a couple PBUs. They tripped up feet there. I don't know what happened. That's how the ball rolls sometimes.

Q. With Keyshon not traveling two weeks in a row, how frustrating is that for him, for you guys, given he had that injury last week?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's obviously frustrating for him. Luckily we have some guys this there. DeAndre Jules played a lot more football. He's a baby. He's just learning what to do in there. Hopefully he gets better every week.

Keyshon right now is day by day. I will give you a little bit. I will tell you when somebody is out. I will tell you he is out. Carrigan will be out for the year with a shoulder. Nate Temple, as well, was really coming on as a defensive end. Got hurt a week ago with the kickoff team. Not sure what was going to happen with it. Late in the week they got fixing of their shoulders. We'll lose those two guys for the year.

Tight end spot, it's hard to run the ball when you don't have tight ends. Danny Moraga has done an outstanding job, physical guy. He's getting better every week because he's getting all the reps from practice. A little short on the tight end thing. Wish we could go get a free agent.

Q. Wendell Davis and Lucas Krull, not seasoning-ending territory yet?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not season-ending right now. It is taking a while. I've been told it's not season-ending. We'll continue to say our prayers at night before we go to bed and hope those guys get healthy quick.

Q. 16 days ago you're undefeated, up late, NC State goes down the field, now you're 3-3. You sound visibly frustrated. It's not like you're getting blown out. How do you keep a team mentally up when things sort of shift like that?

PAT NARDUZZI: You got that 24-hour rule where you got to let it go. Our guys love to play the game. I think we got great kids. Again, they've come back every time so far. I don't expect it to be any different.

Just keeping them locked into what the task at hand is. You got a No. 3 team in the country coming into your house. You're actually going to have some parents that will get to see you in Heinz Field. I know it's not a big crowd, but it's something. Better than nothing that we've had for three home games. I don't know what we've had at home.

That will be a motivation for our kids I think just to be able to have their families there, be with their families after a game. Again, play for your people. I think that's always a big-time motivation when your family can come watch you play. You want to put on a show when that happens.

Q. About Jordan, when you are recruiting him, what did you see in his personality and mental makeup that made you think he could be a quick learner and a contributor as a freshman?

PAT NARDUZZI: You never know. We knew he was a talented player. You don't know about all the external things about the way he learns. You only have so many visits with a prospect. You don't have a whole lot of time to talk football, get him on the board. It's different guys. Even SirVocea on defense, young guys have done it before.

He's just a special kid. He's humble. You never see that guy get too high or get too low. He stays the same, even keel. Very similar to what Joey Yellen is. That guy is like this. He can turn the ball over, he's going to come right back and go. Jordan is the same way.

He's just got to continue to do what he's doing, just focus on what his job is. That's what he's done so far.

Q. You lamented the lack of competition in some position groups. Is the offensive line one of those where you don't have as much competition as you would like?

PAT NARDUZZI: Sometimes. Maybe we just got to do a better job playing those guys. Matthew Gonsalves is a guy. You saw it with Drexel a week ago. Wish he would

have got more snaps just to get him going. Jake really had a couple days off, he wasn't as clean as we wanted him to be. That's tough when you play a front four like you're going to play in Miami or like you're going to face this weekend. Cannot be 100% or practice enough to get really good and be sound and solid inside.

But, no, offensive line, we have some guys we feel comfortable with. There's some young guys, it's one of those things, it's cohesive group. If there's one position you can rotate receivers and tailbacks, but if I pick two positions you really don't want to rotate too much is that quarterback position and your offensive line. Those guys get used to playing together. You like to ride your horse all the way to the end with your five hogs.

We got some guys that can go in and do some things. You sometimes see it in some of our extra packages, whether it is Blake Zubovic last week looked really good during practice with what he was doing. There's some young guys that are just going to learn. You give them roles where they can partake in certain situations, gain confidence, give the coaches some confidence in what they are doing as well.

Q. Sibley will get more reps on Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think so. We'll see how he practices this week. We know that position, the runningback position, has been by committee. He obviously started the game off. We'll see how he practices this week.

I'm happy with Todd, his cuts, the way he's reading stuff. We'll see. Next week you'll be like why is he in there too much. We'll see how they practice this week. We're still looking for guys to step up and make something happen, not only at the line of scrimmage but as we break into the secondary.

Q. You've had some pretty notable successes against some top five type opponents in your time here. Outside of X's and O's, maybe from a mindset or motivational standpoint, what is it that's allowed you to have some of that success?

PAT NARDUZZI: I wish I could tell you I had my magic wand underneath here. It's not here today.

I mean, there's no magic to it. It's getting your guys prepared mentally, physically. That's my job every week. As I told my guys yesterday, I guess I didn't have you prepared mentally, physically to get that win on the road. We know an ACC road game is a tough deal, they're never easy. We have to play better on the road.

The motivation, I hope they are all self-motivated, intrinsic motivation if you want to call it, where they're playing for somebody, playing for a cause. They want to be able to put good stuff on tape. I think that's the biggest motivation, go out and win, you be the guy that got things done structurally, fundamentally and production-wise.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the two local kids that are starting for Notre Dame, Hainsey and Lugg. How are they playing from what you've seen on video?

PAT NARDUZZI: Really good. Hainsey obviously played the right tackle spot. He's physical. I think his backup is Josh Lugg, who has five starts. I might add this, their O-line is about as good of an O-line as you're going to face. 129 career starts up front. I don't know if I've ever seen 129 combined career starts.

They have a veteran O-line, and that's why they are running it a little bit more. I am sure we will see some RPO and pop passes as talented as their tight ends are on some of the run game, run play-action pass. We'll work our tail off this week, make sure that stuff doesn't happen.

Hainsey is a good football player. Lugg is a good football player. Josh Lugg, as good as he is, he's backing up over there, which is amazing. Then Hinish is doing a nice job at the D tackle spot. They rotate a lot of guys up front, but he's a starter. He's tough and physical, smart, reads blocks well. He's a really good football player. They got a bunch of four- and five-star football players on that team.

I added up the 129 starts, you should add up all the stars they got. But they're deep and physical. Like I said, they're big. I look at some of the depth chart, I think they have all their freshmen, freshmen year in high school heights and weights. That guy ain't 6'2", he's 6'4". See if Kelly will give us some exact heights and weights on these guys because sometimes they look bigger than the numbers will tell you.

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