

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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## Coach Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference



PAT NARDUZZI: All right. Last night closed that chapter, 24-hour rule, Florida State. Really felt pretty much when you watch the game tape afterwards, the same day or the same thing I felt the day of the game is great team victory for our kids. Just proud of the way they came out of that first quarter when things didn't look as good and they were persistent on what they came down and traveled to Tallahassee to do. I told them earlier in the week we're not going down there to play Tallahassee or play Florida State, we're going down there to win, and our kids did absolutely that.

A lot of plays to be made. I know you guys have asked a lot of questions about they dropped this pass or dropped that pass, but receivers made plays when they had the opportunities. I don't think there was a dropped pass the entire day (knocks wood). That's clean football. The sacks, quarterback didn't have a chance to really scramble that much, and we took care of the quarterback and everything in there.

I was just happy with the details. Still not as happy with some of the after-the-whistle penalties that we had, whether it was a late hit on a quarterback or a celebration or taunting. Some of those will drive me nuts and try to tie that up this week. I think they watch too much NFL football and see that the guy is running down to the end zone and taking pictures. It's just something you can't do in college football, and we've got to act like we've been there before.

Got a great challenge on the road again, headed down to Georgia Tech, and I think a tough football team. When I watch tape on them, really all three phases you see a physical team. You really do. They've got a young football in Jeff Simms that's athletic. He's a freshman from Jacksonville, Florida, that we recruited a year ago, so we know who he is. I know what he looks like; I know he's not six foot; I know he's probably more 6'4"-ish. I know he's athletic, he's got a great arm. And then defensively, again, Jeff Collins is a defensive guy and they play hard on defense. They're sound, and they make plays.

It'll be a tough game. It was a tough game a year ago

when we went down there, and I guess we have to go to Georgia two years in a row. I don't know how that plays out with the ACC scheduling in the future, but I hope they have to come to Pittsburgh two years in a row, as well.

With that, I'll leave it open for questions from you guys.

**Q. Were you surprised going back when the schedule was revised and you found out you go to Atlanta two years in a row? What were your thoughts when that came out?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, just what am I going to do? I shake my head, like okay, I'm just hoping -- you can't just say it's a COVID year, it didn't matter and they only had to come up here and repeat again.

We like going down there anyway, so just another long road trip and our kids have done an outstanding job with that, preparing for it and taking care of business before we leave, and obviously on that trip last week having all our meals in a tent was interesting to say the least, and our kids just kind of didn't matter. We came down there for a reason, to win, so we'll travel wherever we've got to go to go play the game.

**Q. You said you had meals in a tent; what was that?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I thought we talked about that last week.

**Q. I might have missed that.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Were you sleeping when I talked about that?

**Q. I didn't hear it.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, we had a little different hotel. Maybe it was on the radio we talked about it or maybe I'm losing my mind. But we had a hotel that everybody stays at down in --

**Q. You're right, we did talk about that on your show. The one thing we didn't bring up this week was Jerry.**

PAT NARDUZZI: I hope you're doing something besides listening to a radio show. You get a radio show here every Monday.



You know, we had a different hotel, obviously, last week, and every week it's different. We go to Boston, I think I said on the radio show, we went to Boston we had the whole hotel to ourselves. You go to Miami you've got some other people in the hotel. This week we had some other people in the hotel but it wasn't big enough to do meetings in there and to be social distanced. It was just different. We'll be great in Georgia this weekend with the place we normally stay at.

But it was a Holiday Inn down in Tallahassee and we had big tents outside and we were eating in the parking lot under a tent with fans blowing. It was interesting.

But our kids, like I said, didn't care. We had pregame out there, same thing, pregame meal in a tent. I've never done that in 30-some years of coaching. It was good. The meeting rooms were too small. The offense met in a tent outside Friday night, which is always interesting. I was with the offense that night and I didn't feel anything, but some of the guys were talking about they were getting bitten up out there. You're in the swamplands. I didn't get bit at all, but I never do.

**Q. Are these like big party tents? Is that what you're talking about?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, the ones with the big -- it was big. We were socially distanced, but we had to do that just to keep our kids safe. We were obviously outside, but there's no way we could have eaten inside. They had a room about as big as this little room I'm in here right now, about like five-by-five was going to be the offensive meeting room, so we switched it all up.

The training room was in the bar. They shut the bar down for us. We went and changed the whole building around. Chris LaSala and John Ford did a great job organizing that.

**Q. Back to Saturday for a second, I saw you ran a lot of three-down linemen with Patrick Jones standing up. What did you see on tape that you employed down at Florida State?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You're a football guru. We've run it a couple times during the year but not enough that anybody would notice, but we did stand Patrick up quite a bit in the game. You know, when you look at it, I guess last week when we game planned, we haven't done a lot of it and it takes more work, more pass, more football, just takes a little longer, and I guess in the open week it gave us a little chance to do maybe just a little bit more, but it's hard to do.

On 3rd down we usually go three-down, okay. And on

normal downs we don't, we go four-down. But to be able to go three-down I guess was based on our secondary. We pretty much played Saturday's game without three starters back there, and we probably didn't have enough for nickel, and that's kind of why we had to just have a little small package of that just to get through the game.

But whether we have a couple plays this weekend, I don't know. We'll see. We haven't even got to that far. But we should be a little bit deeper, and I think we have a little bit more confidence in the back end based on the way Erick Hallett played, and A.J. Woods played outstanding. Judson came in and played some meaningful snaps in the game.

So just getting a game under your belt with some of those new guys out there. As I told you, Jason will be back this week, so we'll have a little bit more -- Quis didn't play in the game, Marquis Williams, that is. So we were shorthanded in the back end against an athletic Florida State team.

**Q. Is it hard to overstate Kenny's importance to this offense?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, Kenny is really good. I keep telling you guys. When you don't have your starter out there, it's different. I saw Big Ben went out a little bit yesterday again, and you hope he never goes out again. It changes what you do. It's mainly like -- you think of all the reps, if you added up every snap that Kenny Pickett has had in his last four years in practice and games, it's big, and when you add up the snaps that Joey Yellen or Davis Beville have had in the last -- as long as they've been here, I mean, it's a drop in the bucket as far as just the knowledge they have. They're going to have it when they get a big spring ball in front of them and then a fall camp that's real fall camp. We got three days of spring ball in there; we just didn't get much. And then you get to fall camp, who's getting the majority of the reps? Your starter. And then you're splitting reps trying to find out who the other guys are, and you never can find out. This spring is going to be huge for the other guys.

But when Kenny Pickett is in the game, it's a different ballgame whether he can scramble or not. Again, he wasn't full go, and I think he came out of that game feeling really good, which is a positive, so he'll be a week healthier this week as we go, and then maybe there's some opportunities to (indiscernible) him a little bit more if we have to.

**Q. Is it as important emotionally as it is anything else, just the way sort of having him out there helps the other guys?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, I think naturally everybody has a little bit more confidence in the guy that's done it for all those reps we just talked about, the million reps. So there's obviously the confidence part. But there's also the execution part that's huge, and it's different when you've been -- that quarterback spot back there, you can ask Florida State's quarterback how different it is sitting back in the pocket and seeing stuff come at you, and it ain't easy, and he's a younger guy, as well. But it's a little bit different back there compared to Ian Book a couple years ago, compared to where Ian Book was this year. You look at the difference where we got him a couple years ago in South Bend and all of a sudden this year Ian Book is like a different dude. They played pretty good this weekend, as well.

**Q. Is that confidence not just with the offensive guys but defensive guys and special teams, like hey, we've got our quarterback back, maybe it gives them a lift, as well?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think all those things are factors mentally. I think our defense feeds off our offense, our offense feeds off the defense. When our offense is moving the ball, and I'm not getting on headphones saying "punt alert," so the defensive guys can get up near the offense in case we don't get a 1st down on 3rd down, it's kind of like I feel like I just said that a minute ago, "punt alert," and there's another punt alert, but when they're moving the ball down the field and scoring and defense gives them a nice short field and they score, they feed off each other, and it gets frustrating and that's when things happen in the second half, which we saw against Miami, we certainly saw against Notre Dame where guys are trying to do too much instead of just do their job, and then it gives up even bigger plays.

They feed off each other offensively and defensively when things happen during the game. I think everybody fed off A.J. and I thought the play of the game was A.J. Woods' pick. That changed the tide right there, and then our offense responds.

**Q. How is Patrick Jones' cover skills? And two, what is it specifically about him that you trust him to do that job of standing up?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, if you watched it closely -- you've got any stats for me? How many times did he go in coverage?

**Q. Yes, he did.**

PAT NARDUZZI: No, he did not. He never. He rushed all the time, it was just rushing from a different spot over one

of those guards. Our confidence in him covering anybody, probably not real high, and maybe not very smart on our part if we're taking one of our best rushers and having him drop back in coverage. Probably you guys would look at me afterwards and go, what are you guys talking about, what are you doing. As a matter of fact, a really good defense would drop Weaver and Patrick Jones off in coverage.

**Q. It's a zone blitz town; I think people would be okay with it.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Okay. Well, maybe we'll put it in for you this week and we'll see how it works, and if it's bad I'm going to blame you.

**Q. Chris Tolman (phonetic) used to do it.**

PAT NARDUZZI: That was back in 19 what? They were in three-back set. They were lining up in a bubble with a quarterback under center. The quarterback was 6'5", 245 pounds and ran a 5.3 back in the day.

**Q. You're coaching a team, especially on defense, that looks a lot different than the one you took to training camp in late July and early August. What does that say -- and you have a lot of young guys playing. What does it say about the trajectory of the program that you can insert a lot of young guys to replace these seniors and you're able to win a game by 28 points?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Archie Collins and Cory Sanders did an outstanding job getting those guys ready, and like I tell our kids, nobody cares what you did last week; what do we got to do this week. I may say something different next Monday. But did a great job. Like I said, you get more and more confidence -- we talked about it after the BC game that we wore Jason Pinnock out; that's a coaching error. We got A.J. Woods some reps, all of a sudden now you're going -- Erick Hallett, all along he's been kind of Damar's backup, he plays the star position on 3rd down, he plays corner. He's like the utility guy in everything. And I feel bad sometimes, but he starts at corner, and he made some plays out there, covered Terry, their best wideout a few times. I'm like, he's not having any problems -- he's not running away.

You just find out different things every week if you recruit the right guys that have talent. And again, it's not all about the talent, it's about the character of our guys. And that's win, loss. I was happy with the way that secondary played Saturday. Not only in the passing game but obviously the run game. I mean, Brandon Hill could have been a little bit better on that big long 88-yard run, but it wasn't just him.

**Q. Are there any kind of special problems or situations that crop up when you're coaching a team with a lot of young guys?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. You see all this gray hair like you've got? They give you a lot of gray hair, that's for sure. I mean, there's -- nothing more than normal. I mean, coaching young guys is young guys. It depends how much knowledge they have, but it's our job as coaches to get it out of them. It's called coaching. That's the fun part. You'd like to do that. Now, you don't necessarily like the results on Saturday if you don't get what you want, but that's what happens when you're playing with young guys.

**Q. SirVocea is second in the country in tackles for loss this week; what's kind impressed you most about the season he's put together so far?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, his motor. I talk about effort all the time, attitude and effort, toughness. He's tough. He's got everything you want in a linebacker. But if you saw two of his sacks, I don't know if you guys watch it as closely as we do. It's bang-bang out there, but he had two where he either misses, falls on the ground. He falls flat on his face like this and then he gets off the ground and goes and gets a sack. It's like, you watch other guys, they lay on the ground, get up slowly or pound the ground and go, ohh. I'm not talking about our guys. Our guys play with a motor. The kid has just got a motor. He doesn't stop, and again, he's got a great instinct for the football.

He's obviously a talented young man, and he's really smart, he's really athletic and he plays with a great motor. What else do you want in a football player?

**Q. Are you starting to see this Georgia Tech team look, I guess, less like a triple option team and more like a Jeff Collins team at this point?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, you see the -- you see a transition for sure, and they're a lot better football team than they were a year ago. Obviously they gave us issues last year. I think they're tough. I think he's got his culture built there. He's still recruiting, but when I look at their offensive line -- because defense is defense. It doesn't matter, nothing changed for the defense except their defense gets to play against normal offenses during summer camp. But the biggest change was what they've done with their offense, and I think they've done a great job offensively as far as what they do, how they do it, what they're trying to do.

Like I said, the Jeff Simms kid is a young guy. They're playing a -- I think he's going to be sharp, and he's got a nice arm. He's smooth. He knows he can read coverages.

You see him look off stuff, he'll go over here and go from one, two, three, so you see him reading the field. He's not just throwing RPOs. But they will throw some RPOs for sure this weekend.

**Q. Is Nick Patti creating a new position as the official quarterback sneaker or are you putting any Nick Patti packages in for this week?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I don't know. I wouldn't tell you if I did know. But yeah, I would say no. Just the situation we're in next week, I would think Georgia Tech would kind of have that one figured out already. I would probably say you probably wouldn't see that package again. Don't count on it.

We probably saw it too many times. That third time we ran the quarterback zone was probably -- that was it. I didn't think we'd run it three times. I don't think Coach Whipple thought he'd run it twice, but we were just in that situation.

**Q. I wanted to give you a chance to talk about maybe some of the younger players that stepped up over the past week because you guys coming into this you had a losing streak, you snapped it, and this had to be a learning experience about resilience for a lot of your younger players. What are some of the things you saw, maybe some stories about different players you saw this week and what they were putting into the team?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, again, it takes a team -- it was a team win. But just some of the young guys, obviously Jordan Addison, obviously he's a young guy but he's not, he's an old man in our offense and on our team. But like John Morgan has done some great things, just as young guys. Jules is getting snaps at D-end. Haba Baldonado, you saw him come out -- I think he missed a sack one time, and he's probably not 100 percent. As a matter of fact, I was a little shocked that he got out there. Tyler Bentley continues to improve, but Tyler Bentley didn't play Saturday, as well. David Greene hobbled out there; he hasn't been healthy. We put probably a banged-up team out there and brought a banged-up team in. Tyler Bentley was with us but did not play.

I'm trying to think of other young guys. The whole secondary, we've already talked about them. Linebackers, Voc is probably the young guy in there, but you look at some of the special teams, I guess. Maybe we'll go special teams. Not a young guy, but Kirk Christodoulou, I mean, the way he punted, 51-yard net, that's almost unheard of. But like Bangally coming down on a kickoff and clotheslining the one guy. I'm glad it wasn't a penalty.

Just some of our young guys that are covering kicks and on our punt return team, and Bangally is a guy, A.J. Roberts is running down. Aydin Henningham, getting another true freshman. I think at one time we had five true freshmen on one side of our kickoff team. So those are some of the things you see, and I'm going to miss some names here, but we've got a lot of young defensive guys that play on special teams.

**Q. Do you have any more clarity or have you talked to the seniors about what their decision will be after this year, and how do you handle that with the young guys?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, we haven't talked much about the seniors. We're kind of worried about Georgia Tech right now. Might come up next week when we talk about senior day, which I don't even want to get to that point, but that topic may come up a little bit more next week where I've got to pull the guys aside. Maybe I've got to have meetings on the airplane on the way back from Georgia just to kind of find out. I've got a feel for some guys, what they're thinking, but I think people want to really wait until the end of the season to find out where they are, what they did, and how they finished up the season as far as seniors go. Does that answer it? Just worried about trying to be 1-0 this week.

**Q. What did you think of your offensive line play on Saturday, not only getting the running game going but protecting Kenny where he didn't really have to scramble a ton on that ankle?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, great point. I think they did a great job, and again, you look at Miami's defense, you look at Notre Dame and Miami, those two fronts we saw -- does anybody know how many yards Clemson rushed for against Notre Dame's defense? Does anybody know?

**Q. Travis Etienne only had 28 yards, I think. I'm not sure of the exact number, but he didn't have a big game.**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think they may have had less than 50 yards rushing. EJ will do a stat right now. I can see he's on his computer right now doing some type of -- but I think Clemson rushed for 40, 50 yards on Notre Dame's defense. So when you look at it, are we there yet? No. Did we play Notre Dame's defense again this weekend? If we had, maybe we would have made a few strides there.

We'll find out at the end of the year and measure where they are and what they did, but like I said, sometimes it's the team you're playing against. But let me tell you, Florida State has got a bunch of NFL guys on that defensive line.

They're really athletic at the end spot. But our guys did some good things Saturday in all phases of the run game and obviously the pass game, keeping Kenny clean as they did. Shouldn't even have gave up the one sack that we did, but Carter got his hand chopped down and just didn't have as good a punch with that left arm.

**Q. For the record, Clemson had 34 yards rushing.**

PAT NARDUZZI: They had 34, Clemson? Well, we had 22, so they got us by 10. That's what I'm talking about. It's not easy. It's a good defense, as we talked about. Now, they threw for 500 yards maybe, but that was the other part of it.

**Q. You mentioned Notre Dame; I have a colleague working on a story on Notre Dame's impact on the conference this year, just being involved. I'm sort of curious, would you in your heart of hearts like to see them become a permanent member of the conference just from a competitive standpoint? And it looks like it's probably just going to be a one-year deal; does that almost make the other coaches pull for whoever they might face if they get to the ACC Championship game? Are you almost hoping they don't win it since they're just sort of interloping this year?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, I hope they do. I hope they -- to me you either play with us or don't play with us. You'd almost like to boycott them. But if you want to play in the ACC, come play in the ACC. Then again, I'm not at commissioner. That's Coach Swofford's job to help out there.

But to me it's either play or don't play. And if you don't want to play, let's not give them five games; let them go play BYU and whoever else they want to play. But we shouldn't give them a game. But they're talented and we'd love to have them in the ACC for sure.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Rashad Battle, a Georgia kid and a freshman that's probably played a little bit more than you expected. What do you see out of him as long-term prospect? He's a big guy compared to some of the other corners.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, the young guy, another guy that I didn't talk about. I talked about Jud but probably should have talked about him, as well. I'm probably missing somebody else. Jahvante Royal is another guy. But Rashad Battle, playing on special teams, he's been really good, and he got a lot of reps at corner last week, and I don't know how many snaps he got in the game but maybe 10 or 12. I don't have those stats in front of me.

Rashad Battle is going to be a great player here. He's tall. You look about -- look for that mismatch as far as height sometimes, and when he's on the field you're not going to worry about, well, he's too short to play against that guy and not worrying about flopping your corners and is he playing the boundary, he can play the field, all those things. But he's a guy that can play anywhere. He is going to be an outstanding corner in this conference. He's an unbelievable kid. He'll be going back home this week. I know he'll be fired up.

**Q. I just wanted to get some specifics. Chris asked you about the running game. Were the things you emphasized among your blockers and among your backs that maybe we weren't doing before that they did?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I was in a meeting about two hours ago with Coach Salem and Coach Borbs and Coach Powell just talking more of the run game, and again, I don't like to get involved in it, but there's still a lot of little things. But it comes down to details.

Sometimes people look at the formation in the backfield set and all this, but just some of the details, they just cleaned up some of the details, I think, trying to make it a little bit simpler. To me when your kids are playing fast and know what to do, it's more important than having all these schemes to get all these run game things going.

It's a constant work in progress, and they cleaned up some of the details. We got some movement. But that was last week. We're working on next week.

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