

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: All right. How we doing today? Good. Obviously our focus all turns to Clemson after a nice team win Saturday against Virginia Tech. Again, as I said Saturday we probably talked enough about Virginia Tech already, I felt like that was a marathon presser after that game. So we talked probably enough about that. But great team win by our guys again and the resilience that our kids showed going through that week will only help us going into this second week going into Clemson. You're going to face the No. 4 team in the country in Clemson they got weapons everywhere, on offense and defense, they have got depth, they're long, they're fast and obviously they're well coached. Dabo does a great job, got a lot of respect for him and always have and how he operates his business down there. We're looking forward to a great week. So questions?

**Q. You've been around college football a long time, how do a Clemson and Notre Dame stack up among the best teams you've seen?**

PAT NARDUZZI: They're both really good, obviously. I'll let you know after the game who is better, but it's hard to -- you evaluate Notre Dame on a, on the field and what they do and then you look at Clemson on videotape and until we get -- we haven't faced them for two years since 2018 down in the ACC Championship Game, so it will be interesting. But we know Trevor Lawrence and Etienne on offense are explosive. Both offensively and defensively Clemson, they have got a top-20 offense and a top-20 defense. Those are two really, really good ratings when you're both. You got -- a lot of times you see a team that's got a top-rated offense and maybe not as good a defense and vice versa, but they're good at everything they do. We know they're a talent-rich football team.

**Q. What can you point to since the Notre Dame game, since the bye week why the offense has been performing better?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You really asked that question?

**Q. Sure.**



PAT NARDUZZI: Well, first of all, when you got Kenny Pickett back that makes a big difference. When you got your starting quarterback, guys have a lot of confidence in him and we got to be ready when you don't have him. But when you got a quarterback that's got as many reps, whether it's spring ball two years ago because I really don't count spring ball this year, that makes all the difference in the world that. Guy pulls the trigger, he can make plays with his feet, he's a leader, he leads our offense again, that doesn't say Joey or Davis or whoever else was in there, it's just that's the case and until have you an off season to work those next guys up at the quarterback position, that's a, the number one key. And you look at, Trevor Lawrence is spectacular, they go a couple games without him, and maybe they're not as explosive. Maybe they beat Notre Dame with Trevor Lawrence in there, so who knows. But I would say that's the biggest difference that I see.

**Q. Sort of at the same time how much of that is just the guys around Kenny progressing and getting better and getting more comfortable with what their roles are and what they're asked to do?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think that's important, but you look at the make shift offense that we had Saturday, does it really matter? I mean we can be explosive either way, but I still believe Kenny's the guy that is running the show and we got three linemen out, you have Jordan Addison, your leading receiver out, I don't know. You asked me one question I gave you my answer you guys can have all the answers you want, that's my opinion.

**Q. You mentioned Addison, do you guys expect to have him this weekend at Clemson?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, you hope you do, but we'll see in time here, we'll see how this week goes. With all those guys. I mean with COVID protocols, with injuries and all that you just don't know. I'm not going to push guys out there before they're ready that's not my job my job is to coach the guys that are ready to go and we'll continue to do that.

**Q. Do you have players that right now you know won't play or is everybody still at least possible that if the testing continues to go well this week could suit up?**



PAT NARDUZZI: You know, you never know. You never know. Because there's one thing going on at 10- or 14-day quarantine, it's another thing to how do those guys feel. They got to come back, they got to do all their EKGs and heart scans and all the things they do. They got to go through conditions and then they got to feel good. And I think there's a difference between guys that are asymptomatic and I think that's maybe what the public doesn't realize, there's asymptomatic guys who usually come back and feel pretty good and can start up right away. And then there's guys that, if they're symptomatic, if they have any symptoms at all, it takes them a little longer to get their breath, there's just things that linger that, it lingers with people more than others, and that's what we don't know. I don't know how long things are going to linger and that's -- 14 days, 10 days, that's bad enough as it is, but then guys don't necessarily feel great coming back.

**Q. What can you take away from what Boston college was able to do in that first half, because they're really one of the few teams that have challenged Clemson at all. How were they successful in running up the score?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, obviously they got a really good offensive line. I think they got a deep passing game, they did a nice job running the ball, throwing it deep, and making shots and Phil's a good football player. And then defensively they're really good, they're sound, they're going to make you earn it and I think that's kind of what you saw in that game.

**Q. The emotions were revved up for Senior Day on Saturday, but for these seniors especially will the emotions be even more revved up they get a chance to play a game on national TV against a really strong opponent that might even rev them up even more?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We'll find out when we get there, sometimes you say can you get jacked up two weeks in a row? That's the emotion and energy you talk about, you want it, sometimes it's hard to replicate that. You hope so, but you see how the week goes and you kind of see how -- you just don't know, you don't know how that goes and you hope it's high every week, but we're talking about 18 and 22 year olds.

**Q. Kind of off of Jerry's question, what do you tell your team in preparation being such a big underdog on the road? How do you tell them about how to you overcome this obstacle?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, you really worry about what we do, not worrying about Clemson and who they

are, it's about us executing and I don't think we have to you can at that about, I don't know what the underdog is, what are we 40-point underdog, I don't know what we are, I don't look at all that stuff. But really not going to focus on us being an underdog or it's a 40-point spread, whatever it is, just going to focus on what we do and what we, how we execute.

**Q. What do you see from the young offensive linemen this past Saturday and how does that shake out this week if everyone's healthy?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Well they got a game under their belt, that's for sure and really all three of those replacements, Matt Goncalves did an outstanding job. So is it does Blake Zubovic and Carson Van Lynn, he's played more snaps than he's ever played maybe at offensive tackle all year, so got his feet wet as well. So those three guys and Jimmy Morrissey and Bryce Hargrove really just did an outstanding job of making those guys feel good. I think it started off slow, probably why you see three field goals early and then our kids started to get confidence that hey I can do this and our O-line got better as the game went on, they executed better and then you started turning drives into touchdowns instead of field goals.

**Q. You guys saw Trevor Lawrence was it two years ago in the ACC title game, how has he progressed as a quarterback from your standpoint, from your perspective so far?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know how you progress, he was pretty good in 2016, he's really, really good, he's got a quick release, as I think I talked two years ago, you watch it and it's like, "zoom", he rifles the ball out there, he knows where to go with the ball, he makes quick decisions, they don't take many sacks, and they don't make bad decisions. And he's really getting the ball out to Etienne out of the back field more than ever. So not only do you have to worry about number 9 running the ball, you got to worry about him catching it now. So he loves to throw it to him, I think Etienne's the No. 2 receiver out there, Amari is No. 2, the slot receiver, No. 3, who really lines up all over the place. But they're explosive in the passing game, they have got weapons.

**Q. He's a guy, he's like a consensus No. 1 pick, I mean teams are NFL teams are tanking for him, is he, is he that good, in your eyes, is he kind of the best quarterback maybe you've seen at the college level, I mean how does he stack up in that regard?**

PAT NARDUZZI: No question, I mean, you know, I've seen a lot of great quarterbacks, through the years here and he's up there with the top-3 or four, I mean Ben

Roethlisberger was pretty good when we face the him at Miami of Ohio back in 2002. I look at what he did that year that we played against him, he's like Ben, he's explosive. I don't know, and I don't know if any envelope teams are really tanking, I think it's hard to say, Let's lose today, guys, so we can get him. But I don't know if I would go that far. But there's a lot of great players out there, Trevor is certainly one of the top two quarterbacks in the country if not the No. 1 guy -- I would say he's No. 1. I would say he's your Heisman Trophy guy. Went through COVID, all of a sudden he slips, I don't understand how that works. We're in a pandemic and he shouldn't lose any votes for Heisman because he didn't play in a couple games because of COVID. It wasn't like he made a bad decision and got whacked in the back field and went down and threw a pick at the same time. His play on the field speaks for itself.

**Q. I know you didn't have a lot of guys around that are difference makers or that played in that game down there in 2016 but are you able to replicate any of that travel stuff? Are you a superstitious guy, do you try to say, well we did this four years ago, and I'm just curious, does the COVID situation just make that out the window and just say, hey, we just got to do what we can?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think every year's different, every week end is different. It's who is playing for you, No. 1 but the big thing we got to do is worry about us and our kids will go down with confidence and one way or another that's my job and then they got to go down and play with emotion. Because it's an emotional game, you better have enthusiasm, you better have energy. But I really don't know if you can take much of what you did there, that's what we do every week. So what we did against Clemson as far as just getting them mentally and physically prepared is the same thing we do every week, whether you're playing Notre Dame or you're playing Clemson or you're playing Virginia Tech.

**Q. In 2016 I think Deshaun Watson threw for almost 600 yards against you. You still win the game, but Wayne Gallman only had like 36 yards. And then in 2018 Etienne went off and had 150 and Lawrence didn't even need to throw. Is that step one to winning this type of game is you have to compete up front and not get run over in the trenches?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It always is. If you don't stop the run you look at those deals we had a chance to beat them down there, with whatever they had rushing, 50 yards rushing that day. And then they had 300 yards rushing in the championship game. So that's certainly the deal. You got to make it one dimensional. And really they didn't throw it

much in that ACC Championship Game, but it didn't really matter, they didn't have to. So we got to stop the run and Etienne is the guy to start off with and then as soon as you get enough guys in the box then they're going to throw fades and he's, Trevor's really accurate and you got to change up your coverages a lot or you're going to be in trouble.

**Q. I'm curious with the schedule seems to change by the minute, and I know you anticipated being light on your feet this year, but I mean how do you sort of, you know, I mean you're preparing to play Clemson was in Tallahassee and the game didn't get played. I mean, just sort of where are you at in terms of does nothing surprise you at this point in terms of how the schedule gets affected?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, nothing surprises me. We have been blessed to be able to play nine so far. We have had one trip-up, I guess, if you want to call it. But good thing is we got it rescheduled and so we'll get our guaranteed 11 games in. Hopefully. (Knocks on wood.) But nothing's surprising me. Again, I think that was the first game that was really squashed on a Saturday morning and we don't want that to happen. We don't want to travel down there and get squashed and we sure hope it gets to be played.

**Q. I assume you're feeling much better about your offensive line depth now even if those guys who didn't play Saturday can't play this Saturday, you got guys not just for these next two games but for next year?**

PAT NARDUZZI: No doubt about it. It's kind of a spring game if you want to call it Saturday. We got a chance to see who the future is at some spots and know that, hey we got a game under their belt and they're going to feel much better whether it's this weekend if they get that opportunity again or next year it just builds your depth for the future and you know who might be there and who might be playing that spot, no doubt about it.

**Q. Is it just the position or has it been something else when you haven't had Jordan Addison available, that has led the those two kind of big explosions from D.J. Turner and can you find a way to get those guys going at the same time when you do get Addison back?**

PAT NARDUZZI: No doubt about it. You can only throw it to one guy though and we definitely got to find more ways to get D.J. in the game or get D.J. the ball in the game, if Jordan does come back. So we just got to if Kenny could throw like that it would be really good, but we got to get to the guy that gets open. I think that's the major thing, it's not really throwing it to a guy, sure if there's some bubbles and stuff you want to get guys the ball in space but D.J.'s

definitely a guy that we got to find ways to get him the ball more.

**Q. You guys got hit with two of those celebration penalties on Saturday. One after Patrick's fumble recovery, one after D.J.'s touchdown. I'm curious, neither of them really seemed like much. I'm curious, what do you tell your guys after they have made a big play, a massive play in the game and you know they're obviously happy and excited about it, what do you tell them to kind of balance showing their excitement but also maybe just trying not to get hit with a penalty like that?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. That's great question that I need to get answered. I don't make those calls. Going to the season I didn't know this was a big emphasis, every year the referees will say hey this is an emphasis this year, a couple years ago they didn't like the knee showing, now you can have -- now you can look like Juan Price and no one cares. But no one alerted me that you couldn't have fun playing the game of football any more, okay? There's nothing choreographed, it's, it's called excitement, it's called energy, and I want our football team to have energy and play with excitement. Now I don't want it to be excessive, but when it's on the sideline you kind of go, What are we doing here? I mean, I don't get it. I would like to know how many were called -- maybe some of you guys can do your homework -- how many were called in other games? I know they got a pick against us last week and there was a lot of talk on our sideline, because it was on our sideline and really almost taunting our sideline, but there's no flag there. So I don't know what to tell you, I wish I had answers. I'm going to try to get answers. We have had four in the last two weeks. I mean, we got someone does this and gets a penalty we got someone that goes like this and gets a penalty. We have a receiver catch the touchdown pass, gets excited on the sideline and we go have our dunkfest on the other side, we don't get a penalty for that, but like, I don't understand, I guess we have to have a class, I guess, on how you can celebrate the right way. But I want our kids getting excited. This game of football is a fun game, you're supposed to have fun when you do it, we talk all the time about guys celebrating together and it's discouraging when these kids have been through a lot I don't know if anybody appreciates how much effort these guys put into the game of football, playing it and practicing it every day, going through the COVID protocols that we have and then you want to flow a flag for someone getting excited and try and squash the party. That's not what college football's all about, these are all amateurs that should be excited when they make a play. So it's probably a question for the ACC office, I guess.

**Q. The last time you guys traveled you came back and you had a COVID situation we don't know if that was specific to that or not, but have you made changes to your way that you guys are traveling or anything this time around?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, yeah, we just -- you don't know. That's the hard thing about this whole thing is you don't know if you got, you know -- I know we're not going to eat in a tent, you know, we stayed at the Westin hotel this past week end they did a great job, they had, if I'm serving food right here on this podium here they had a glass wall to the ceiling, it just seemed so safe and I think our kids feel comfortable when it's like that and it wasn't like that down in Tallahassee, so again no, nothing against them down there, it's just what it is. It's what they had available. I guess maybe next time we got to go out to eat somewhere where we feel better. But that just takes more time and then you got to get there earlier and you got to have a bus trip to go to a restaurant that can serve you the right way. But I don't know and you don't even know if it's that, I don't even know. So we're pretty safe every week in the protocols that we use, sometimes your hands are tied as a coach and sometimes the meeting rooms are as big as this room I'm in right now and sometimes you got to go out in a tent. We have been lucky in the city of bits burglary we got big time four and five star hotels that we're able to stay in and stay safe. We just got to hope we can have that down in South Carolina.

**Q. The basketball teams around the country have had generally some tough luck in going here.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Basketball teams?

**Q. There's been a lot of teams shut down in games cancelled already the season hasn't even started yet. Since you went first, have you been in contact with the other programs at Pitt to try to talk about some of the things that you guys did that have seemed to have worked?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I haven't had time, but I know Chris LaSala has been in touch with anybody that asks questions. I think we do things the right way, we got the same doctors, Jennifer Brown does an outstanding job, she's kind of in charge of the whole athletic department, so she knows the protocols we're doing down here. And I'm sure she's doing it, because she works with basketball every day. They're doing, we're all working together, I would say. But I haven't had any contact with anybody up there in the athletic department, we just don't have time. I'm lucky I talk to my wife, so -- she knows the protocols.

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