

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Monday, September 6, 2021
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference



PAT NARDUZZI: Ready to roll?

Into week two. Just reflecting back on the UMass week, kind of thought -- you guys asked if I was worried about anything going into the game. Our kids were locked in, focused on getting their job done. They'll be locked in this week as well, obviously.

You talk about a four-quarter, 60-minute game, I really was happy with the way the guys came out. As we watched tape offensively, defensively, special teams, little things we can work on. Their attitude was great, focus was great, really their effort for the most part was pretty good. I could pull a guy here and there, motion in all three phases that we got to clean up. We're excited where we were.

Offensively just looking at one thing I take note of, they did a good job adjusting our offense. Coach Borbley, Coach Salem, we didn't see much if any three down going into it. They played a lot of man coverage, as far as man three. A lot more zone coverage, which was good. So we were able to adjust on the run. Receivers had to adjust on the run based on what we were seeing. It was a good starter for the season. That's kind of where we are there.

Moving into Tennessee, obviously the Johnny Majors Classic. I love it. I like it the best because I've had a relationship with Coach Majors from his time spent here at Pitt, the days he's been here to visit the university he loved here. Spent a couple flights with him. Spent a lot of time with him at some of the Nike clinics he was heavily involved in through his retirement years, I guess. I think it's a great thing in honor of the Major family. We're excited about that.

Again, we got a Tennessee team that we haven't played the personnel there, but Josh Heupel coming from UCF, having two games with them, gives us a little bit of an advantage, gives them an advantage as well because they know who we are both sides of the ball. They saw Pitt special. They'll be ready for the Pitt special. We'll be ready for the tempo. I think it's going to be a heck of a game.

Open it up for questions.

Q. (Question about Tennessee offense.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It looks very similar. I'm sure they'll have some tweaks for us maybe that they didn't show in the first game. But very similar.

I think they're snapping the ball faster. Probably an average of 11 seconds they're snapping the ball on offense. Defensively they're a little bit different than they were in the past. Tim Banks came from Penn State, their defensive coordinator. A lot of look like them as far as playing a lot of man free, a lot of four down. A lot of different variations in coverage which I'm sure we'll see a few just to confuse Kenny a little bit.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: His size and athleticism and that canon arm he's got makes it difficult. Obviously a transfer from Michigan. He's 6'5", 240, he can run. He's a big athlete that we're going to have to get down. One guy might not get him down. We're going to have to get two, three, four guys there. We are going to have to run to the ball, then we are going to have to get home quickly because they will snap it between seven and 10 seconds.

Q. (Questions about linebackers with experience.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It helps. When you look at our linebacker crew, they played in the tempo, especially Phil and Cam. They're used to that. How many of our guys went and played against them fast tempo-wise in our secondary. Damarri has played in it. A lot of other guys hadn't played in the tempo.

We'll give them a good taste of how fast it's going to be this week. Our scout team, look team, has to do a great job this week of giving us a fast look, not only getting the plays off fast, but execute them as well so we can get the look we need.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he's heavily involved in the game plan. There's rumors he may have been calling some of it



as well. I think he had a lot of input. Been a coordinator before. There will be a lot of similarities.

Q. The numbers were good on the running game Saturday. What is your eyeball test?

PAT NARDUZZI: We got some guys that made some nice runs. We got a lot of guys involved in the run game. I was happy with the backs for the most part. They made the right reads. Sometimes that's as big a problem as anything, make sure you're reading the right things, especially during a different front that we had not seen. There was carryover from fall camp as far as the run game goes.

Again, our O-line did a good job. They did a good job adjusting to some of the things they were doing. They were lining up in three down, but moving things a certain way that they maybe had to combo a little bit different up to the backers, get a hat on the Mike linebacker. That's something you don't prepare for going into the game, you don't know what you're going to see, but you're prepared to make those adjustments as they go. Coach Borbely did a good job, even after that third and one, fourth and one, adjusting so we make sure we take care of that front, stunt, blitz they're giving us based on the formation.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Maybe. I'd like to have three or four. We'll eventually find one or two. But you're going to play two or three backs. You're going to keep them fresh. We go tempo, they're going to need blows. You'd like to have two or three of them you feel really good about going into the game. We feel that right now.

Q. I remember a game here against UCF, you talked about how important it was given the state of defense. This offense plays with safeties. How important is it what they're going to do this week?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, all 11 of them are important. Two corners are important as well because they like to throw some fade balls as well. Safeties are as critical as the outside linebackers getting reroutes and stopping the run. Their fits are going to be important across the board.

Got a lot of confidence in Brandon Hill, Eric Hallett. Rashad Battle played okay, not as well as he wants to. That's his first game. I talked about the improvement from week one to week two. Some of those guys haven't played, been in that situation. They'll make the biggest improvement. Is it going to be 5%, 10% better having that game experience under the belt, on the hash, see what they did wrong in a real scrimmage, game situation as

opposed to a scrimmage. I think that really helps.

Q. (Question about the offensive line.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, again, was happy with the O-line. We're blocking some different dudes up front. Going to see four down most of the time. We just got to play with better leverage and communicate all the way together. That's some of the things, just communication-wise with the different fronts, getting everybody on the same page.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Played good. I mean, when I look back, Matt had some quality reps in there. So did Blake. Blake didn't get as many because of the different front, we were busy adjusting during the series. I know Coach Borbely wanted to give him a little bit more. I think he had like 27 snaps or something like that. Marcus Minor had 55 or something if I recall.

We wanted to get Blake a few more. We'll get Blake a few more this weekend. We were happy. There was nobody that had a losing grade, put it that way. And that's a good thing.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I think there was a lot of thinking. The guys are not playing as fast. Again, how about getting his first start, I think, maybe he had one start in the past. John Morgan played a lot of football for us.

Just consistency and playing fast. Maybe they didn't play as fast as we needed them to play. Again, you're trying to prepare for everything. They have all these things on their menu, things to worry about. We'll get them playing a little bit faster this week, not thinking so much, react to what you are going to see. Don't think they're going to come with this next because of this set. There's a lot of things like that with all the things we try to cover the week before an opener that you don't know about.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: A lot easier than last week when you have game tape. You got a whole game on who they are. Think their offensive line is big and physical. Look like an SEC offensive line. Those top five guys played a bunch, they're big, strong, know what they're doing. It will be a bigger challenge than Josh Heupel's team at UCF as far as the O-line goes. Their backs are good.

We've got enough tape on them to know who they are right

now. I don't think they held anybody out in that game so we'll know where their speed is, where the concerns are, where they like to throw the ball, what they want to do in the run game.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I think he's getting closer, yeah. We'll see. Might be a week out. I don't know.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No, he's both. He's both. We only had 54 plays on defense. We had seven three and outs. We didn't get into multiple reps. When we do want to sub, we can play them both.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I would say 75%.

Q. You mentioned the defensive players that were thinking out there. How about reacting, playing fast?

PAT NARDUZZI: John played fast, did some good things. John had his moments, too, from the coach's film compared to what you might see on tape. You look at production sometimes, production doesn't say everything.

John played good. I look at where he was this year in the opener compared to how he wasn't ready a year ago from a switch from safety to linebacker. He is playing at a high level right now and it's great because you're able to get him and Cam out there at different times, keep them fresh. Keeping them fresh this week with the tempo.

We ran 54 plays on defense. I believe Tennessee ran 94 plays on offense. We're going to play two games this week, that's going to be the difference. We'll need substitutes.

Q. 84,000 for their opener. Hostile environment. Crowd noise or anything like that at practice?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we'll have crowd noise. That will be the big thing offensively. But we worked that during camp as well. Not the first time we're going to work the loud crowd noise. We had it during camp, prepared for it already. That was just something situationally, whether it's third down, working the red zone, working noise, we've done it before.

We'll be prepared and we'll be ready to go. Any time we've had noise issues, noisy games for our offense, our guys have stepped up and done a nice job. They'll be prepared

for it. Should not be an issue.

Q. How did you evaluate the kicking game?

PAT NARDUZZI: No, we got two kickers out there. Start off with the kicking game, the kickoffs, I think Ben Sauls did a good job. First one he knocks out, I don't know how much touchbacks he had. Wasn't as consistent. Would like to have a little more hang time when he doesn't kick it in the end zone.

Sam was good. Was he great? I wish he wouldn't have missed an extra point. That will be something we have to look at. I think they both have the ability to kick field goals. Again, Sam will go into it being our starter again this week at the kicking spot. Look for those guys have that first game under the belt, get some kicks in.

Really didn't want Sam's first kick to be a field goal, extra point right down the middle. We were able to get him comfortable, he was able to hit his first field goal.

Q. Physicality of the O-line, better than last year?

PAT NARDUZZI: I didn't go back and look at it. They did a lot of movement up front. I mean, physicality. It's hard in this game when everybody is moving. You'd like it if they just would sit there like statues and not move. You can be a lot more physical.

When people are moving around, you're going to have to make sure you're in position not to just whip on the block. You go freaking crazy trying to knock them off, he goes that way, you're going that way, and you are going that way.

Back in the day you used to have white knuckles. Nobody has that anymore because things are moving. You're not getting the physicality that you really like because people move all the time. Our offense is used to that with as much pressure and movement we give them in practice every day.

They've got movement and the back has seams sometimes.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He's there. He is there. He played really well up front. He was our player of the week on defense. You watch him play with good feet, lock out, shed blocks. He looked like an all-ACC performer on Saturday night. Have to do it again against an SEC opponent this week.

Q. How does he grade out?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't have all the grades in front of me. But he played well. He was probably high average. I don't think any of our tailbacks we could say were winning. He played well.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It's really nice, especially that quarterback spot and on offense. They're going to have to deal with the crowd noise, everything that goes with it. I know Kenny is looking forward to that kind of atmosphere and playing big against a big team.

He missed the Miami game last year. Played in the Clemson game last year with just two offensive linemen that were starters. I know this is why he came back, for one of those games.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, he's a former safety. He's a hybrid-type guy, as Cam is. He's done more of the secondary stuff. We feel good with some of the skill things he does back there.

Again, we have other guys that go in that role as well. You may see a different package with maybe him not in the game, putting another DB out there with all the skill we're going to see on the field. Maybe a nickel package just to make sure we can handle the speed.

We're not going to go in there and play three linebackers or four linebackers the whole game. I don't think that would be smart.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I think he'll have a great year. I'm not worried about the whole season, worried about just this weekend. Think he has a lot of confidence. He was in early watching tape today with the quarterbacks. I think he's got confidence.

That's the main thing. You come out there, he's feeling good, he's healthy. He did a good job blocking, a great job catching the ball. Didn't have any drops. That was something he did a year ago. I think he's feeling great. I think he's got a big upset. He could be an all-ACC tight end.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he's on our leadership council, our

eagles. He's in charge of those guys. He's an older guy that does a great job communicating. He will voice his opinion in meetings with those tight ends. He's helping develop that whole room, just like we have someone in each room that is really in charge of that room to take care of any loose ends that we might see in that room.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No, our team periods. We usually do three or four team periods. It will be loud, whether it's inside. (Indiscernible) will have noise as well. It will be anytime we're together as a team. We don't need an individual when you guys are there, but we'll need it during the team periods, for sure.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: My knee's a little sore. No. We feel pretty good. You're always going to have your bumps and bruises. It's a physical sport. We came out good.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Tight ends did a pretty good job of blocking. Gavin, for a freshman, he came in and had some licks on some people. Again, the receivers are going downfield making their blocks as well.

I think their secondary felt the receivers a little bit and they're going to have to feel them this week, too.

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