

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Thanks for coming today. Obviously I was hoping we would never have a press conference after a loss, but better to have one early in the non-conference game, as I told our kids, as we close the chapter last night and move on to the next one.

But it's never easy. As you play this game of football, you learn that there's a lot of good teams out there, Western Michigan being one of them. There's a lot of parity in college football, as you look around the country and see how things go, whether it's in the ACC or outside the ACC.

And we didn't play our best ball game. That's the most disappointing thing. And I think physically we were prepared. I'm not sure mentally we were. I can't look inside. As I told the kids, I can't crack your head open and look inside and see what's in there, where's your mind been all week, what are you tweeting, what are you snapping. I don't know.

But I certainly don't think there was the energy, the emotion, which I might have mentioned after the press conference or I've been thinking about it for two days since the game. But we didn't execute. I mean, our passing game was good. I don't think our protection was good. I don't think we rushed the football like we need to. I don't think we blocked like we need to. I don't think we stopped the run.

So when you talk about stopping the run, did it open up your RPO? Shoot, we didn't do either one. We allowed them to be two dimensional and, to me, it goes on focus and making plays and details. Structurally, obviously we could do some things better but we didn't. You live and learn. That's why we coach the game of football and that's our job to fix it and make it better.

So we got to, 3-0, New Hampshire football team coming in here, which I think is a good football team. And if you don't come ready to play and you don't get your minds locked into what you need to do, and you don't think you're just going to throw your helmet on the field and it's going to take care of it and make plays for you, you'll have another



problem because they're a good football team. They've got a quarterback that will scramble around and make plays. They break the pocket a lot, and he's athletic. He throws a nice catchable ball. He's smooth. And I think he's accurate. So you're facing another guy. We're all over the place, obviously in 2021.

So I'm impressed with their football team. I think they're tough and I think they schematically do a lot of good things. So questions.

Q. How do you correct and make sure that you have the proper mental attitude for the game next Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: I thought it was good last week. I think after a loss, I don't think anybody came -- I think it's an eye opener. As much as we talked and put that Tennessee game to rest, they may be shaking their heads, yeah, yeah, got you coach, got you, yeah, yeah. I purposely didn't put, after the UMass game, on this little TV out here. Last week, you saw that field pass, maybe if you walked in there, going last week. You didn't see a field pass. I said, Do not put that up there. I don't want our guys thinking anything about it.

Just all those things you try to suppress it mentally, but I can't take care of it, but I would hope getting punched in the face Saturday afternoon, I hope that wakes you up.

Q. You have a bunch of veteran guys on this team. Did you assume that you were past the point where a mental letdown after a big win --

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. You think you're there. It's something you prepare for. You talk about it. And, again, you say mental. I see that guy executed. I would say Eleby was on fire. We went back and watched a bunch of RPOs from last year and just looked at what we seen this year in RPOs and how we did it, what we did wrong. And you don't see much of a difference what we're doing structurally and things at all, but I think they're a big-time RPO team, which I told you.

And I was impressed with the quarterback. And he made shots too, so I don't want to say it's all mental either. Physically you got to make some plays. We didn't stop the run. When you made it two dimensional, if they want to throw the pass, at least stop the run, but we didn't do that



either and that's even more disappointing.

Q. Obviously you guys are designed to stop the run, but when you do that, maybe do you need --

PAT NARDUZZI: You leave yourself open to some RPOs, yes, you always do, if you're committed to stopping the run. But the worst part about it is when you're committed to stop the run and you don't stop the run, especially in a four-minute situation when you know they're going to run are the ball.

But what happens if they start dinking, dinking, what's everybody think? Let me go help somebody else. Let me go do somebody else's job, and you don't do your own job and that's when things leak out only you.

So to play great defense everybody's got to do their job. You can't think, well, they keep throwing it over my head, so I'm just going to try to do this or maybe I'm going to run around the tackle and get a pass rush in and let them run it down your throat. And, you know, those are some things you see out there and we'll get it fixed, but everybody wants to go make a play, but you got to do it within the framework of the defense or the offense.

Q. Did you make any adjustments for the RPO's?

PAT NARDUZZI: We got a couple adjustments in there. We stopped them earlier and then they made some adjustments. We made some adjustments. And they look to the sideline so there's some things that get you there too.

Q. What's the team mood like?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, it was a good mood, like a normal, to be honest with you, and that's kids in 2021. They already got the lift in. They already saw the film. So we go and lift, meet, flip, and they got to see their videotape already. I think they got corrections. We come in here and watch special teams and then we put it to bed.

But the mood was good. Obviously we're locked in during special teams because we make all the corrections. Whether you're on the punt team or not we do that all together in here as a team and then close the chapter. But the mood was good. There was no head-hanging and that's what you expect.

Q. Did you want the mood to be good?

PAT NARDUZZI: I've gone back and forth. I've given up the, I've given up the job of trying to read and analyze, okay? Because you can't. I think they went in, they got a

workout, and they came back to work. And we talk about 24 hours, and last year I think there was one game, I forget, it was early where the kids were like really, really down. It might have been after our first loss. And I don't know if that's a good thing or bad thing. I'm not a psychologist. Sometimes we can claim to be, but you know, it's hard nowadays.

Q. You mentioned having the losses early in the season, you can move past it and put it out of the way. Do you worry that could linger and not --

PAT NARDUZZI: You worry about wins and deal with success lingers and then the adversity as well. So anything can linger. We got to just do our best job as coaches to try to get them together and pull it together and go out and beat New Hampshire. So I don't worry about lingering.

Q. There was some pretty frustrated fans. What's your message to them?

PAT NARDUZZI: I worry about the guys in this room. Everybody in here knows what happened and I can't help the fans. I apologize to them, and try to prevent it from happening again.

Q. It was fourth and six in the fourth quarter. Do you think about punting there?

PAT NARDUZZI: I thought about it. And I've always said this, I thought about it and next time maybe -- I felt like punting. Whip felt like he had a good call. And again, I always kind of go with where he was. If he was like, oh, I don't know, we're punting. If he's like, hey, I got this, then we -- so you have regrets as a coach. I mean, you look at the score of the game. We gave up 24 points off of turnovers, three real turnovers and two turnovers on downs and that fourth and six is one of them where we don't convert on a fourth down and we want to be a little bit more risky, if you want to say it at times like that. And you trust Kenny Pickett and you trust your wideouts to make plays and get the right depth and do all those things and sometimes you win, sometimes you lose.

I haven't gone back to look and see what the analyzers say that we do. I know I got it sitting on my desk. But go back and see what they thought, punt or go. But I would imagine any analytics would have probably said, you need to go. And again you can listen to analytics but to me it comes down to a coach's decision. So I don't blame analytics. We got to either execute or I got to say, hey, we can't execute, so we're going to punt.

But I also know that our defense wasn't stopping anybody.

We were on the field for 40 minutes and when you're on the field for 40 minutes you like to keep our offense on the field for more than just 20 minutes, which is what we were on.

Do I regret not kicking an onside kick with 3:48 or whatever was in the game? Yeah. It's a little too early, but if you're never going to get the ball back, you want to kick it onside. But then you give them the ball right there and then you guys will be asking me on Monday, like, why did you do that?

But and, again, I saw a little different attitude out of the defensive guys when they went out there. The first two plays of that four-minute drive at the end they were flying around a little bit different like juice. I know if we would have got off the field our offense was going to score and we were going to win the game but we didn't get that opportunity unfortunately.

Q. Do you think they were talking too much at times? You talked about them playing too fast. Do you think that was part of the problem?

PAT NARDUZZI: We were thinking, a little bit worried about, like, what's going on back there? What can I do to help? I think it's a little, yeah, you know, I talked to one guy that said, I was thinking too much. I should have just played. That was a guy that shouldn't be thinking at all.

Q. I was talking to Coach Lester. He said he watched a lot of film from the (inaudible.) As a coach, how much is it, everybody has assistants, you've been a very successful defensive coach in your career, you have a way that you play. And at the same time, how do you weigh that against, well, man, I don't want to be so predictable that guys can look at my tape from six years ago and figure it out?

PAT NARDUZZI: They're the same way. They did the same stuff too. So we went back, I think I mentioned it to you, on Thursday that we went back and watched them as well. So I told you his fingerprints were all over the offense and Tim's a great coach, so it's predictability and it comes down to making plays and who is making the plays and who is not.

But we have been running the same defense for, I don't know how many years, and after one game, I guess you guys think it's broken, so it's broken for a Saturday. We'll find out this Saturday.

Q. How would you assess those two guys when they came in?

PAT NARDUZZI: On the last question, I'm not sure. But Jerry usually asks me that question, so I'm shocked that you asked me that.

And then Kradel played okay in there. Obviously he doesn't get a thousand reps in there so it's like having your backup quarterback that gets limited reps in a ball game. So he had a couple MAs and some things that we needed to do better.

So anytime you lose one of your five up there that's starting and played a lot of reps you lose your continuity.

And then Keldrick came in and did a solid job, gave up some pressures for the plays he was in there, so we got to get better there as well, but he's getting some of his first reps.

Q. (Question about who can play guard.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes.

Q. You've known Sean McDonough for a long time. Can you talk a little bit about your relationship with him?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, Sean's a great guy. Again, I don't have this, we work together one summer and he was a coach at Columbia where my dad coached prior to passing away. Just a super guy. I've known him through the years when he was at New Hampshire when I was coaching at Rhode Island.

So just a super guy and a tough guy. Tough guy, old-school coach that does it the right way.

Q. (Question about a house painting job.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Geez, Jay, you're crazy. I thought we talked about this already. But I don't know, I don't know, back then, I was in college. I don't remember the price of the house, but you do. I don't know if you got the address or something and Googled it.

But for everybody that doesn't know, we painted a house together and a bucket of paint got spilled in the bedroom and we were scrambling to clean up a bucket of paint off the carpet. So we have been through stress together and adversity. So...

Q. (Question about the house painting job from the home owner.)

PAT NARDUZZI: She didn't say it to us. We were good. Good cleanup. Had more tarps.

Q. (Question about the house painting job.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No, because it was such a big house I was out there and he was over there, so...

Q. (Question about YAC yards.)

PAT NARDUZZI: They have done an unbelievable job and they really all have. Ironically, that one drill I throw bags at them, I got seven guys last week between running backs, tight ends and receivers. They weren't happy with me knocking them out. But we made some strides there and I don't know if that had anything to do with it, but our guys are running through tackles and making plays and getting those extra yards. And Coach Berry's done an outstanding job of that as well. So it's a player and coach.

Q. Is that surprising stat for him to be?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. Doesn't surprise me at all. He's a football player and he's big, he's strong. And again it all depends on what catches your getting. He's catching balls over the middle, he's able to get vertical. Sometimes if you run an out route or something like that you're too close to the sideline to get more YAC, but Jared's, we have been happy with Jared, Taysir and obviously Jordan Addison.

Q. (Question about the running backs.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It comes down to just we got to get him more carries and he will get more carries. He'll get more carries this week. We'll set it up, I'll make sure it happens. But I got a lot of fate in Izzy and he's going to get more carries this weekend for sure. But it just kind of, as the game went and how it was going, just kind of what you felt.

Q. Is this the best passing game you've had here?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. You guys could go back and look at the stats, I don't know.

Q. What does your eye test tell you?

PAT NARDUZZI: My eye test tells you the receivers are pretty good and Kenny Pickett's pretty good. I want to run the ball better.

Q. You guys have been searching for that solution for the game for awhile now.

PAT NARDUZZI: Still searching.

Q. How much does just the five guys up front beating

the guys in front of them matter?

PAT NARDUZZI: This past week I would say it's the guys up front last week. I mean, we didn't get a hat on a hat, which is what I talked with the offense, just like we got to get our hats on somebody and let the tail backs have a chance. But we're turning guys loose, for whatever reason, and somehow, some way we got to get a hat on a hat and get our bodies on their bodies. You don't have to knock them up into the goal posts, but we got to get some hats on hats and put people on people and I was not happy with that.

Q. You guys gave up big yardage numbers, but it also seemed like you didn't have enough on possession downs, didn't get any turnovers, touchdown near the red zone. Which of those do you focus on more, the total or those specific plays?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's specific plays. I mean, we only gave up five explosive plays on the day, which is crazy. You go down -- everybody looks at the yardage and all that stuff and again it's stats and I always say stats are for losers, but pull the stat together yards per minute you're on the field, okay? Pull up our offense per player on the field. Defense was on the field for over 40 minutes. I mean, two thirds of the game they're on the field. And again, to their issue, they couldn't get off the field, whether it was a P and 10 problem. So it wasn't all these explosives. I mean, the biggest explosive is really two big explosives are M.J. Devonshire falls down and Brandon Hill knocks the heck out of 31. I mean, those are two big ones. And then really that 32-yard run in a four minute situation where we got a safety kind of runs out of the box, which we worked a million times, and doesn't do his job, they hit it off the jet sweep guy and we don't fit it right. We got a defensive end who runs up the field. Like, what did you think, they were going to throw the ball in a four-minute situation? Those are what tells me like what are we thinking about out there.

Q. You said after the game you felt like you guys maybe should have blitzed more. Do you still feel that way?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, yeah. A different kind of blitz, but yeah.

Q. When you're looking at in-game adjustments, how does that work between you and Coach Bates?

PAT NARDUZZI: I got to do a better job. I trust our defensive staff, I really just trust our defensive staff, but there's times where I just got to -- I'm trying to make decisions on offense and the things were going fast. We're scoring in one play, it's three plays and out, and punt alert,



get ready for the next series. And to just hang on the headphones on the defense the whole time, it's tough. But I'm going to have to get over there a little bit more just to see what's going on. And we didn't make in-game adjustments like I would like to and I'm used to. Because as I watched the video -- I told our defensive staff -- as I watch the video, from the video session, as I watched it on Saturday night and Sunday morning, I'm looking at it going, If I would have saw that from the box, I know what I'm doing and we didn't do that. And I got to put it on me, because ultimately I got to get it done some how, some way.

Over the weekend I thought about maybe a head coach sitting up in the damn box this week, just coaching from the box, Larry.

Q. What stood out to you? When you had a chance to analyze everything, what stood out?

PAT NARDUZZI: Just little tweakings that we have to make and we didn't make those. Again it goes back to right here, me. Somehow I got to get it done.

Q. (Question about coaching from the box.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. I mean, I thought about that too. No question about it. No doubt about it. I can see a lot up there. It's hard to see on the field.

Q. You got a large disturbance, because of the eligibility with the extra year, I mean Trey's like as old as some of us, and you still got freshmen in there. How do you make sure that you avoid like the old guys sticking with the old guys and the young guys, like there's cliches that -- how do you make sure, when you got such a discrepancy, that the team stays together and then I guess have you seen mentorship opportunities maybe pop up that you wouldn't have otherwise because you have 24-year-old, 23-year-old guys?

PAT NARDUZZI: Each room takes care of itself and then the offense and the defense jell together. I think we got to -- I'm not worried about that at all. Our kids are, they're tight and have fun together. And obviously there's guys in the back of the room, the freshmen, the puppies, that want to play more and, hey, how about me, and I can put it on tape, I can show you why, just come ask me why. But we have got an eagle in each room we got a leadership council guy in each room that kind of is in charge of making sure everything sticks together. We try to mentor those young guys. It's a big brother, whether it's Jordan Addison with Jaden Bradley, I mean we got guys that are on those guys just to make sure they're doing things the way we do

it and they are with the culture, not against it.

Q. Can you tell us what P and 10 means?

PAT NARDUZZI: Okay, P and 10 is the first play of the possession. So P and 10 is just like first and 10, but it's the first play of the possession and there's different things o offenses do on P and 10's as opposed to they gain a first down and then that is a first and 10. Good question. I like that. Now you know what a P and 10 is. Did I say P and 10? Sorry, P and 10, possession and 10.

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