

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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## Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm going to start off, really meant to say something Saturday at the press conference after the game, got rolling on the game. But just to acknowledge Dr. Freddie Fu and not only his impact on the University of Pittsburgh, Pitt Athletics and Pitt Football in specific. We wouldn't be sitting in this building if it wasn't for Dr. Fu.

All our prayers go out to his family. We know it's not easy for them. I had some contact with Dr. Fu, I guess a week ago, and you know, just a strong, strong guy that's been impressive and again, we can't thank the whole Fu family for everything they have done for Pitt Athletics and Pitt Football. Start there.

Obviously it was a good win, the kind of win you want, the kind of win you needed. It was a great job by our guys responding and understanding how you play in those football games. We talked about trying to make it a dominant performance, I think it was.

You know, one of the keys offensively was to run it, pass it and protect it and we did all three of those things. If you go into every game and you protect the football, you know you're a 4-0 football team, and you have a chance to win every game.

And when you look at even just Georgia Tech right now, I think they are 12th in the country in turnover margin. They are winning that war every week and it's giving them a chance to win every football game. Impressed with their offense, what they did.

Defensively, nine three-and-outs and played well, gave up one big 70-yard run which drives you nuts. We can't do that when we get into ACC play. I wouldn't say a fit problem, but more of a physical problem. Just being physical and attacking things and not just sitting back on your heels, which we can't do that and that's not who we are. But other than that, played the pass pretty good and put pressure on the quarterback and caused a lot of problems there.

Obviously as I said Saturday, preseason is over. We head



into conference play against a really good Georgia Tech team. They have played well in every game this year. Got beaten in the opener to a MAC team. We know that feeling, Northern Illinois is a good football team, and they learned their lesson from that and beat a Kennesaw State option team early and then played their hearts out against Clemson.

We know Clemson is still a good football team. I don't think anything's changed there but I see a much improved Georgia Tech football team and obviously they did a heck of a job. They played a lot of motion in the dome down there in Atlanta and knocked off a ranked North Carolina football team. So we'll have our hands full for the third time when we go down there again to Atlanta, and our guys have got to be prepared not only mentally and physically and look forward to having a great week of practice.

#### Q. (What stands out about Georgia Tech)?

PAT NARDUZZI: Obviously Georgia Tech was impressive. You know, I think defensively, we'll start there. Defensively Georgia Tech has changed their scheme a little bit. They came out in four-down against Northern Illinois, which they had not played a lot of four-down but I think they played a lot of four-down because they are waiting for the next week option where they would probably be a four-down that week as well. I think they surprised Clemson with some of the three-down stacked defense they had and came out and did the same thing against North Carolina. I'm not sure if North Carolina knew what they are doing, but very multiple in what they are doing. A lot of blitzes.

Their linebackers are really good. Their D-Line does a great job of penetrating. They are not huge up front, but they are athletic and physical and tough and they play with a lost effort like we try to do here at Pitt. Defensively they got after that North Carolina offense and they made enough plays on offense. They run the ball well on offense and they ran the ball well against North Carolina.

#### Q. What's your impression of Yates?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, Jordan Yates is a good football player. He obviously took over for an injured Sims and obviously Sims came back and had a heck of a ballgame in the second half and he's athletic. He can beat



with you his feet and his arm. Yates can beat with you his feet as well.

Very similar type of things they are doing offensively with both those quarterbacks. So it's not like they are changing but one has a little bit more run to them and he has to keep it a little bit more. They will have some design quarterback draws which got us at Tennessee a couple times and so we expect to see some draws and that kind of stuff and expect to see Sims get going.

**Q. You have to go down there -- what you have to do better?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, what you put on tape -- I think this is always interesting. You say this every year, like who are we, 2021. We are not 2020 defense or offense anymore. So it's a whole new ballgame of what we do and who we are and we can feel good, and know, hey, we feel pretty about going into the season but you're playing against each other every day.

So you know, I think what you find out going through four games is who you are, what you do well, what you don't do well, and when you look back at four games and say what are your weaknesses, people are going to go back; and we worked a lot on RPOs last week and changing things up and doing some little things here and there and we'll continue to see a bunch of RPOs on normal downs, first and ten, p and ten, Jerry, as well as second down, medium, heavy, heavy RPO team that we have to be prepared for.

But people will try to replicate anything. Any big plays you've given up, you're going to see it. We saw an outside zone kind of stretch us and puncture us last week, so we have to be more prepared for that. Any time you show a weakness on tape, people are going to go after your weakness and say, hey, let's try that, let's do this. You see a lot of copycat stuff. Last week, New Hampshire did a lot of copycat for what Western Michigan did prior to.

So we always kind of try to identify, is that offensive coordinator a copycat guy, or is he a guy that, hey, this is what we do and we're not straying from it. Certainly with them doing RPOs, they are going to take a lot from the Western Michigan game, so we'll obviously give them a different look.

**Q. Which quarterback do you prepare for?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You have to prepare for two different -- as I said a few minutes ago, obviously Sims, you've got to be careful because that guy can go and he likes to pull it and he likes to run and he's going to use his feet, so they

are different. I think Yates is more of a passer and Sims is more of a runner but the type of offense doesn't change.

It's the decision-making and maybe some of the play-calling they will have a little bit more of one thing than the other. You're going to see more quarterback counter with Jeff Sims and tailback flaring out, or whatever he is going to do, what they want to do to us it try to give us the eye candy. But you're just going to say maybe more quarterback runs with him. They will run a quarterback run but it will be one with Yates and four to Sims.

**Q. What did you see defensively, impressions or improvements?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Our defense? Just, you know, I think just more motion. Just like they played angry I think, and I think that's the biggest thing. You can go out there and it's not a matter of where you have your guys placed and what you look like structure-wise. It's about how you play. Started off in an attack mode, and I just like the aggressiveness of our guys and just taking it over, as opposed to waiting, playing on your heels. I think we played on our toes instead of our heels.

**Q. North Carolina obviously losing to Georgia Tech and Clemson going down as well, a lot of parity in the conference already. What do you feel about your position in the conference?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We're in position to play Georgia Tech and that's all that matters. People talk about coastal chaos. It's ACC chaos. It's Atlanta; coastal; it's college football. Look around the country, look at New Hampshire, FCS program, ten FCS teams beat Power Five teams first three weeks of the season.

You look at what we did, and again New Hampshire is still ranked in the top 20 or at least it was last week, and we're a top 20 team, and I expect to see them in the playoffs; they are a playoff team. But there's a FCS teams getting those wins.

So the parity we talked about last week, and again you see it all across the country. You're not just seeing it in the ACC. You're seeing it in the Big Ten. You're seeing Ohio State get upset and beat and you're seeing a MAC team beat Minnesota and you're seeing it all over the place. Again, I think the portal and a lot of those things has a lot to do with it.

**Q. Do you attribute some of that to the older players?**

PAT NARDUZZI: A little bit of it, the super seniors, the transfer portal, you look at their roster, they have got

transfers, their starting left tackle is a Vanderbilt transfer. They have got a wide-out from Miami. So I mean, the portal is helping out, and where someone is weak, they are able to strengthen it immediately, instead of going to the junior college which you used to have to do, now you can go get someone that's been college-ready.

**Q. The players meeting after the loss after Western Michigan, you've been here for quite some time and this is a different set of seniors, how different do you think it is this year with that kind of leadership?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It's good. Again, Kenny's that guy. I mean, Kenny is the one that called that thing Saturday night, he coached me and said, "Coach, can we have it."

I said, "You can have whatever you want. You can have them every day." I said this a week ago: Good teams are led by their coaches and great teams are led by their team. You can't wait until there's an issue to have that team meeting. It's got to be constant. It's got to be consistent as far as what you're trying to get and deliver the message that the coaches are delivering.

**Q. How do you treat the players' only meeting? Are you trying to figure out what they are up to or let them do their thing?**

PAT NARDUZZI: No. We had a leadership meeting first. So I knew what they were up to and they wanted to run it by me and get my thoughts and they had something on their mind and like I said, Kenny led their charge and the rest of the guys backed them and it was great.

**Q. Now that the preseason is over, would it be easier to --**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it is. I think it always is. I think some of the hardest games you go into are those ones where you have to get ready for the game. Like we didn't have to get our guys ready for Tennessee. They were cranked up and ready to go and played with a lot of emotion. They emptied their tank as far as the energy part of it goes, and the message this week is empty it again because you have an open week next week.

We'll put everything we've got into it. You know, it's ACC and I think they know that's been the goal is to get in the ACC and have a chance to win the ACC.

**Q. What impressed you about Rodney's performance on Saturday and the way he played, has that earned him more opportunities in higher-level situations in football?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It does. You feel like you have three tailbacks that you can go and rotate and we rotated Izzy and Vince like we said we were going to and we were able to get Rodney going. He's a strong, physical, runs low to the ground, spins and twists and just fights for those yards. He's a tough runner, and it does give him an opportunity to go play more. You've got to make sure he's good in the protections and all that stuff, but he did a nice job.

You know, A.J., obviously A.J. Davis has been out, so it's giving those other guys a chance to develop and get even better because you were leaving out A.J. because of how much his knowledge base was and now these other guys are getting more knowledge because we haven't had it for the last couple weeks.

**Q. Seeing the video after the game, what do you think of your new offensive line?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I liked it. I liked it. But again, it was against New Hampshire, and you know, we'll see what it looks like against an ACC football team.

But you know, Matt Goncalves did a great job at right tackle. Gabe Houy embraced that guard position, enjoyed going in there and doing it, and he was fired up going into it because he played guard in the past and he liked that change up. Just see what we've got this week.

**Q. Do you have to treat it any different going into Georgia Tech now that they are under a new regime and that you're not going to be getting that triple option every year?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We haven't had to worry about that for the last couple years, so they are not that new. To me, they are old. They are old. You can see their offensive line development. Doesn't look like they are in three-point chances trying to get a back side chop and cut people. They look like an ACC offensive line.

And again Coach Collins has done a heck of a job of developing that program and building up to where his first year it was a transition for sure, as big a transition as anybody in the country going from a triple to a conventional 2021 offense, and personnel-wise, they look the part and that's why they have given Clemson and North Carolina fits the last two weeks.

**Q. Any consideration to getting out of going to Atlanta two years in a row?**

PAT NARDUZZI: That's above my pay grade. Other people make those decisions and we messed it up in the COVID year, there's no changing back. No consideration.

**Q. You're facing a team that has forced a lot of turnovers, what's the line when you're preparing for that, making sure your conscious, but also making sure you're staying aggressive and not afraid to make a play?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we've got to go. I mean, you practice that way, you've got to be aggressive offensively and defensively. You know, you won't change -- we can't change the way we play, like oh, I'm going to hold on to the ball with two hands and run an inside zone play but it's just you're going to practice it.

Our show team, our rocks, our scout team, whatever you want to call it, they have got to do a good job of just making our guys of feel it every day, punching the ball out, twisting, ripping, trying to get the football out.

And we've done that the last couple years where we have gone down there and they have been the team that's always trying to go after the ball, they tackle the ball, and we have to do a good job of making sure our guys hold on to the ball when they are anywhere on the field. And that's what we do every we're, but we'll make it more of an emphasis this week that they are ball hawks and they are going after the ball.

**Q. Who stands out for you through the first month of the season?**

PAT NARDUZZI: There's been a lot of guys. Nate was outstanding, a little banged up right now but he was outstanding on offense. Ryan Jacoby has done a nice job on the rocks, he's a guy just waiting, waiting on the clock there to see what's going to happen with him.

But you know, trying to think, Daniel Carter has done a great job as a tailback for us as well, giving us a great look down there helping us. Jaden Bradley earned his reps going up, Solomon DeShields didn't have a great, great, great camp but has really turned it on with the rocks and heated it up to the point where first week was kind of slow, probably disappointed he was on the rocks and we moved him up to special teams because of his play on the rocks.

Trying to think of who else. Elliot Donald has done a nice job. Nick Kai (ph) has been up and down. Last week he had a great week and we lit a fire under his tail a little bit so we are happy with where those guys are. Again, there's more names than that. Luke Delgaudio has done a great job of just giving us pressure on our punt team. He's one of those guys that has a knack to block punts. Actually got two snaps, walk-on and so he's done a nice job and we are going to try to reward those guys that play hard.

**Q. Was a redshirt --**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think he may have played against UMass, I think. I think. I can't guarantee that but I thought he did against UMass, but we'll look at it. We'll just continue to see how he develops. We're not saying he's a redshirt yet. We'll just continue to see. Here is another guy on the rocks, you see how he's grown up on those rocks, first time is timid and what am I doing over here to now the point where he's having some fun. He's got the emotion for those rocks. He's an energetic guy and I like what I see emotionally out of him.

**Q. The last time you played Georgia Tech, Geoff Collins -- after the game, have you talked since then?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think we might have talked about this a long time ago. We're good. You get upset after games. There's no -- nothing personal, okay. But we talked at Media Day face-to-face and he apologized, and it's over.

It's over as far as I'm concerned. We'll have a nice pregame talk. There will be nothing to that. He's a classy guy and I appreciate him apologizing. I know how tempers go. I didn't take it personal. It's just not how we're going to do things any more I hope.

**Q. You said that Georgia Tech likes to try to tackle the football. Do you have to talk to your skill position players and say, hey, they are going to be tackling aggressively, don't try to get too fancy getting away from them, make a big play?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, and that's how we'll practice this week. They just need to know they have to tuck it, as soon as they catch, it, as soon as they get the hand off and again, we can tell them all we want but we have to show them on the field and that's how important our rocks are going to be this week of just getting the ball out.

Usually I go down the inside and encourage those guys, hey, go down and get a milkshake for everybody on the defense, have the GAs go out and get them their favorite flavor of milkshake if they can get a turnover just forcing it, and I haven't had to buy any. Guys offensively are doing a good job holding on to it and got to continue to do that.

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