

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 23, 2021
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi Press Conference

Pittsburgh 27, Clemson 17

PAT NARDUZZI: All right, ladies and gentlemen, couldn't be prouder of our football team just going out there and playing like they did. That's a good football team they beat today. Probably should have beat them by another 14, to be honest with them. Critical errors.

First off I want to thank the crowd out there today. They were outstanding. The Panther Pit, I'm not sure if I've seen them like that. Stayed all four quarters. Said we needed them to get it done. They take part in this win. It's everybody involved. It takes everybody. I was really proud of that crowd.

Our kids played hard, played tough. Had too many penalties again, for whatever reason... Just proud of our football team. Love those guys in there. They fight. Just fired up. Signature win for Pitt. We talked about that. They got it done. A lot of big plays.

Questions.

Q. How do you bring them down from this high?

PAT NARDUZZI: We'll get them down. We'll be okay, Jerry. They know how important the next one is. They get bigger. Every game gets a little bit bigger. I think Kenny said after the game in the locker room just about, Hey, we're moving on to the next one. 24 hours this thing will be flushed down the toilet, we'll move on to the next one.

Q. The two third downs in the fourth quarter, any doubt who was carrying the ball?

PAT NARDUZZI: Kenny was going to carry it one time. We had Izzy go down. Rodney came in and did a heck of a job on that last drive. Vince Davis ran hard. Obviously Kenny ran hard on that quarterback zone which really we hadn't done that with him. It was a big play.

He wanted the ball. Just some guys making plays. I don't know how long that drive was at the end. That's two weeks



in a row that you questioned the run game, asked about the run game. When we want to run the ball, we can run the ball.

O-line is doing a heck of a job, tight ends, running backs. Shoot, the receivers are getting blocks, too.

Q. Second quarter, just sticking with it? What changed for you offensively?

PAT NARDUZZI: No, there's not many adjustments. Play selection, not shooting ourselves in the foot. We start off a little slow. Lucas has a first down, then fumbles the ball. Just little things like that.

We talked about it being all about Pitt, what we do. It's not about them, it's what we do. Go out and play Pitt football, play clean, be composed, do your job. It's never going to be perfect. We'll take the W.

Q. It looked like in the first quarter Clemson's defense was getting prosecutor. Kenny seemed to stick with it. What can you say about his perseverance?

PAT NARDUZZI: Kenny, one of the reasons Kenny came back. They were getting pressured. I don't think they ran the same blitz twice. It was a different blitz after different blitz after different blitz, from three down and four down. Kenny hung in there.

Again, first of all, he made good decisions with the ball. Didn't throw it to them, which is critical. That's what he had done down there last year. But that's a good defense. He played really well.

Q. How nice it for you to be able to lean on a guy like that, a fifth-year senior?

PAT NARDUZZI: I thought he was a sixth-year. I keep hearing six year. Four and a half. Four years, four games, not six years (smiling).

Q. In a game like this, a stage like this, against a team like Clemson...

PAT NARDUZZI: Say it again.

Q. To be able to lean on a guy like that.



PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, that's what you work for. It's a tribute to Kenny coming back. He's an unbelievable football player. Again, we lean on Kenny. We're going to put the ball in his hands. We ride with Kenny.

Q. You've had big wins that were big because of who you were playing. This might be the biggest game where you had where it was a big game because of your season, what it can mean for you guys going forward. How do you feel like your team rose to the emotional challenge of that kind of pressure?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's a big game for our kids. I didn't make one tackle, I didn't make a catch, I didn't make a block. It's about our kids. They make the plays. I didn't do anything out there. Just bring all the dogs out in the fight.

Again, it's all about the players. Players make plays. Coaches coach, players play. Our kids are out there playing their tails off and having fun.

Q. What do you think of the hit on Izzy?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. Izzy runs strong, man. I love that kid. He's a great running back. He'll be back soon, so... We expect to have him next week, be ready to roll.

Q. What can you say about the offensive line? Clemson has a lot of five-star-type guys, big guys up front. In the second half you were able to grind a lot of plays out.

PAT NARDUZZI: The O-line, it starts up front with those guys, and the D-line for that matter. Can't say enough about them. Coach Borbley has done a heck of a job coaching those guys up, protecting the quarterback. Kenny didn't get hit very often. If he did, it is because he wanted to. He likes to get hit, too. But the O-line has done a nice job.

Q. Talk about the secondary, how well they played.

PAT NARDUZZI: Secondary played good. We gave up one big pass early, which led to a touchdown, seven points in the first half. Coach Bates and the defense, Coach Collins, Coach Sanders did a heck of a job back there.

Times where we were trying to take some guys out of the fit. We gave up some run game, take cares of the RPOs. Secondary good a great job. Proud of those guys. Damarri Mathis had a nice pick. Probably should have another couple. But we're saving 'em, I guess.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He's always around the ball. He's a beast. Boundary, safety, he's around the ball a lot. Made some big hits. Made a big hit on Deslin, too. Brandon Hill is a good football player.

It takes 11, everybody doing their job, 11 as one.

Q. Before the half, is that where Whip says, I got a play?

PAT NARDUZZI: We go back and forth on the headphones. Sometimes listens, sometimes doesn't. I love Coach Whip.

We had no doubt we were going to go for it. He felt good with his playing call. You have to ride with the OC. If he feels good, we go. If he's like, Punt it, we punt it.

At the end of the game in the fourth quarter, we're going for it on fourth down. What, it's two possessions. Want to drain that clock down. Luckily we didn't have to go for it on fourth down.

Q. When did you feel the momentum shifted in your direction?

PAT NARDUZZI: I would say when SirVocea intercepted that shovel pass for a touchdown, there was a little momentum there, a big-time play. Put their quarterback on the bench. That was a turning point, I think.

Q. After Western Michigan, Kenny call a team meeting, players rallied around each other. What's different about this team, they're not going win like this, what have you seen of your guys of what they've carried into this game?

PAT NARDUZZI: You learn from your mistakes. That's what life is. You have to learn from your mistakes. We stumbled. But we got back up. It's not what happens early, it's what happens late. Our guys responded after that game. Like you said, that team meeting that Kenny called, getting everybody together.

It comes down to the senior leadership, Kenny Pickett leadership. You're only as good as your team. If you're a player-led team, you have a chance with Kenny. I hope all our young guys learn from Kenny Pickett.

Q. SirVocea, how far has he come?

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, he was on a blitz at that point. He blitzed up through the A gap. Wasn't even a read, it

was a blitz. Great call by Coach Bates. He popped right in there. I don't think the quarterback saw him. That will go down in history as just one of those plays against Clemson. That was fun to see.

I'll never forget last year, just at Clemson, where we fumbled the ball, goes down to the two yard line, they're trying to score. Happy for our kids. We needed that win.

Q. What does it mean to be playing meaningful games with this team in front of 60,000 people here?

PAT NARDUZZI: It means a ton. Like I said, the fans, the Panther Pit, the cheerleaders, dance squad, rocking the royal today. We did it all.

I couldn't be prouder of our football team, couldn't be happier with the city of Pittsburgh, what they did for us today. We need them to come out for us next week against Miami.

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