

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Ready to roll?

Obviously a tough loss to a talented football team. Our kids knew they were talented. I'd say the most underrated 4-4 team, whatever they are right now, in the country.

As I stated before the game, quarterback was a good player, and he showed that. They lost to Alabama, Michigan State, both who are in the top five or six in the country, I'm assuming. They lost by five points to two ACC teams. We thought we would be in a battle.

There's a lot of good things. Our offense had 17 explosives, which is the most on the year. We got our explosives. Defensively held them to seven points in the second half, which was two great things offensively and defensively.

Special teams-wise, I thought we played one of our better games. Great coverage, great punts. Kirk was good in what we expected to get out of him.

Obviously a lot of things to clean up. Starting slow on defense, obviously disappointed the way they started the game. First 10 plays were touchdowns, 21 points, out of the gate. One was I call it a sudden change because we turn it over on downs on a fourth-and-three. Week before we go for it on a fourth-and-five. We convert. It's a coach getting greedy. Put it in Kenny's hand and let Kenny go make it. We didn't succeed.

They moved down the field. They got us on three explosive plays. Defensively we only gave up five explosives, and our goal was to keep it under five. Give up five, it was too much in that game, period. It was five to 17 explosives. Again, it's stuff that you feel pretty good about it. Just lack of execution really.

We gave up a big run early. In the second series after the sudden change when we turn it over on downs, gave up a deep pass, two 57-yarders. One 57-yarder, we're in coverage three. We're not man. Corner sits down, doesn't get deep enough.



Even when you were in high school, cover three, stay deeper than the deepest. We didn't, got hit there. Got hit on a fake reverse where Mallory kind of wheeled away from the reverse. Safety was on it. Then he kind of peeked back and lost him coming out the backdoor.

Again, just execution. You start off good, good, good, aah. Inside zone where we had a guy to make the play, we didn't make the play against Knighton, who is a good football player. Those are obviously some of the highlights and low-lights of that game.

Defensively first 10 plays are the worst plays of the game, at least those three plays I'm talking about of the 10. Shoot, there's one more coverage bust on the touchdown pass to No. 80, the tight end. A routine deal. Sometimes you got guys trying to do too much. I was trying to help over here. Just do your job. We didn't do our job, gave up that one touchdown pass I think after the 57-yarder in cover three. We had two lack of focus, lack of execution and doing your job to cause us those problems.

Combine the turnover on downs with two turnovers on offense, it's a recipe for an issue there. Obviously the last one there, I think you guys asked after the game, I don't want to say miscommunication, but misread. Sometimes that happens. That's part of the game of football.

We got to get off the field in the four minute at the end of the game, get ball back to our offense. It's another one of those where you know you're going to score.

I expect Miami to win the next four, put my money down they'll win the next four games in their conference play.

Questions.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Not here at Pitt. Again, we gave up 108 yards. I'm glad you talked about the tackling. I missed that one. We gave up 108 yards of (indiscernible) and bubbles out there. It's an inside drill out there where we lost the physical matchup on Mallory. Give Mallory credit. He was more physical than we were at the linebacker position at the point of attack.



We played that generally pretty good. We didn't have a great plan as coaches to have a change-up to what we were doing because we weren't denting it with our outside linebacker, motioning to trips and throwing bubbles, what we call now routes. They beat us up out there. We didn't make plays. We didn't get off the blocks. 108 yards, that's a lot of yards in just a simple bubble.

Obviously we understated the strength of Mallory and didn't do a good job of defending that. Tackling, we've been good tackling all year. We didn't do a good job there. We missed some tackles. Give their athletes, they got good speed, too.

Miscalculated because the backer was not as firm as he needs to be, decisive on where he was going to be, putting a dent in it. 31 is weaving to find out where he's going to fit on that bubble. They don't have a guy. We still got one extra guy to make the tackle. We didn't do a good job of tackling in space. We didn't do a good job of making it clear for him of where to go. He is taking the backdoor, he is coming out the front door. To me, it was at that linebacker spot. Again, a tribute to the Mallory boy.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No, it's not back to square one. Again, they got a good football team. You could say second half was back to square one. I think we finished it the way we needed to. Came back and played a really good second half, regardless of what happened in the fourth quarter on a third down dink route to the tight end, there's a fumble. All the discussions there were safeties and all that. Our defense came out and played a darn good second half. That's how you want to finish it.

If it would have been a first half and the second half the same, maybe we're back to square one. But we got a good football team and I got a lot of trust and faith in our guys. Give them credit. We didn't play as good as we needed to play.

Q. Does that tell you this is fixable?

PAT NARDUZZI: There's no question about it. We definitely fixed it again. Hit you in a couple plays. Our guys regathered. Again, give credit to the coaches for getting them together, getting those first three series. One was a sudden change. Maybe I should have sky punted it, made them go 90 yards. Dumb decision on my part. That's what we do as head coaches, make dumb decisions.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't remember. There was a few of them.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Sometimes a matchup issue. Again, he's sitting there right there as one of the our top three or four corners. A.J. Woods is playing good now. A.J. actually played more snaps than Quez. Quez was one in cover three. Didn't play it great. A.J. is playing good. Just got to keep getting better at that spot.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Evaluation right now. We'll find out. He wanted to go back in the second half. Doctors did a great job and said, Don't go in, not going to do it. Just trying to protect him.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Right now we're still under evaluation so we'll see. We'll see.

Q. The last two games have been tougher. 3-1 at home. Good wins at home. What do you see in Duke?

PAT NARDUZZI: Duke is a good football team. Offensively I think they're No. 26 offense in the country. They're very efficient. Like to run it. They're going to throw their RPOs that they do.

They've hit some explosives. Pound, pound, pound, all of a sudden someone is going 60 yards for a touchdown. They have been explosive on offense. So again, No. 26 offense. On the road, Durham, it's never easy. We've always come down there and won in the last second of the game on something. Defensively they're going to be primarily a four down, play a lot of man coverage, which will probably be pretty good for our offense if they're going to play man all day.

Q. Have you had time to grade out on Miami? Anyone in particular?

PAT NARDUZZI: Okay, winning grades? When you lose, you try to make everybody not winning. I want to say Haba Baldonado played pretty good. The other disappointing thing, just the composure. We talked about composure and points all week. We let them get in our heads. There was a lot of trash talking, I don't know about what. You can

just imagine.

I don't know what happens on video games, but I heard a lot of video game talk. I don't know what that means. I didn't get some straight answers about what ticked some of our kids off. When Deslin gets a personal foul, you go something is wrong. About the calmest, smartest guy on our football team.

We didn't composure ourselves. We prepared our guys for it. Disappointing thing is they didn't really listen. We knew it was going to happen.

One thing looking back, you always point at myself, what could I have done to prevent that? Talked about it, but should have had our scout teams talk more crap during the week and cause some fights in practice I guess, but I didn't do that. That's something that will happen next year for sure.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It's an option. I can't tell you we practiced that option. You have to be a football player at that point and go what's my best option. He scores a touchdown if he just takes off running. But old pitcher, I think he was thinking I'm going to throw a touchdown pass. Guys have confidence. A critical play in the game.

I can't tell you in practice he said that's covered, that's covered, I'm running. You can contact the coaching area. Practice it one time, it isn't there. He goes, he scores a touchdown, as athletic as he is.

Just another one of those what can we do better as coaches. Should have practiced that scenario. Can't practice everything. Got limited hours on the field.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Maybe. I mean, we weren't putting it in his hands. It was supposed to go to him. Again, Lucas, if he throws it early, might be a completion for a touchdown. I think he was worried about that guy undercutting Kenny and picking it off and going the other way for six. Not easy being a quarterback, it was putting it in Kenny's hand. A play we have confidence in based as how they play.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Because we got great kids. Got coachable guys. They learn from their mistakes. We got a lot of football to play. We got four good ACC teams. Anybody can win any given Saturday. Our guys will be ready to play.

Again, sometimes you got to get punched. It's called adversity. Sometimes you got to get punched in the mouth. We got punched. Our guys will swing back. Not worried about that at all.

It's easier than having a four- or five-game winning streak, trying to stay on them. Let's go. You can't think you're going to just line up and beat anybody.

Q. What is your understanding of the safety rules?

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, it's football. There's a white line on there, about that big. I don't know if it's six inches, four and a half inches, five inches, whatever it is. You got to get past that white line.

Again, the only thing I know it's side judged, head linesman on my side, said he couldn't see it and he called him out, out of the end zone I'm saying, where he gained I guess two inches past that white line. I think the ball was in the other hand.

Coaches coach, players play, and officials officiate. Can't control everything. If it's inconclusive, he calls it a safety. If it's inconclusive, it's a safety. He said he couldn't see. How do you make that decision? I don't know. I'll just try to keep coaching better.

Q. What do you see from their offense?

PAT NARDUZZI: Duke, they're going to be the second fastest team we played this year as far as tempo. They're going to snap it on average of 19 seconds per play. They're going to go fast, which is like Tennessee, not quite as fast as Tennessee. They're snapping it seven, eight, nine seconds. We're going to see the tempo.

They're a good football team. The Durant kid, tailback, No. 21, I think he's got 156 carries. He's their workhorse. Don't have two guys rotating in there. He is the guy. They're going to ride him until he needs a blow and he taps out, someone else will come in.

He does a nice job running the football, reading the zone play, being patient, finding holes. He's a good tailback. We'll have to wire them up in there and be good versus the run as well as trying to stop the RPOs they're going to throw behind you. Their run game is good.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: A year ago, two years ago, 2019, they were snapping it somewhere between 20 and 22 seconds. They speeded it up three seconds on average. I wouldn't

say it's new. I'd say there's more faster snaps than there has been.

They've got a new coordinator, two new coordinators that are taking it over. I'm sure Coach Cutcliffe has his hands in it as well. He is doing a good job tempo-ing it and running the football.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It is. We see a lot of tempo. Miami ran tempo. Who doesn't run tempo? This seems to be the second fastest tempo. We'll be well-prepared. Some people run tempo to keep you base. We're not going to play base. We're going to do what we do.

Our guys are smart, they can pick it up. We give them quick signals. We're not going to be playing one front and coverage. They're going to have to run fast. They're going to run into some accidents, too. Those are things we count on defensively.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No, no. The Western Michigan was a game you expected to win. Our guys were upset about it. I think our guys looked at it offensively and defensively and said we missed some plays, we didn't execute, against a good football team.

There was nothing where they felt like we have to reorganize or we're going back to square one at Western Michigan. We had to reevaluate what we're doing, how we're doing it, what happened that day.

But we're not there.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Not worried about it. I don't know how much they pay attention to all that stuff. I don't know. You can't take the phones away. They got to be mature enough to not listen to the noise, the good noise and the bad noise. We're not worried about that. We just got to keep playing.

There's a lot of things that can happen in the last four weeks with the teams that are up there that knock each other off, fall down.

We're not worried about playoffs. We're worried about the next game. We control our own destiny. We got to play Pitt football.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He was okay. He was okay. Could have been better, like everybody on our football team, with no exception there. Gave a couple of comebacks which I wish he could have played better. One out of the end zone on the safety series, whatever you want to call it. Wish we were better coverage there. It ain't easy. They got good talent.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I wouldn't call it timeout because I thought it was a safety. They were viewing it. I called a timeout right afterwards just to save the clock. I knew they were going to start it on the ready. That's game management. We wanted to use our timeouts to give our offense some time left on the clock to go down and score. But I wasn't going to call it. We may have lost a couple seconds there I think, maybe not. I wasn't prepared to call it after we thought we had a safety.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Too soon. Kept changing it. They're not going to let us play that fourth quarter over again. Doesn't really matter. It's gone. It's gone.

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