

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: All right. You guys ready to roll?

Great road victory by our guys Saturday afternoon. I say this all the time, it's not easy on the road. Our guys took a business attitude walking into a place that they've always played us good. As I said afterwards, a 3-1 football team. A lot of really good plays on video.

Really no time to celebrate. We've had about 48 hours, being able to try to celebrate some things, enjoy some things. There was no time to enjoy it. I didn't even talk about who the players of the game was or nothing.

I'll share with you, just so everybody is on the same page, just some of the big plays. Again, a lot of things we need to clean up. Big TD pass to Jared Wayne. Pick at the 47 yards. Big TD run Pickett scrambling versus man coverage. Another big TD pass from Pickett to Gavin Bartholomew down the sideline.

Defensively sometimes you forget all the things that happened in this game. Interception again. Fourth and goal stop by Sirvocea. Devin was outstanding on that one. Another fourth down stop, Judson. Fumble recovery Morgan and Hill. If we get a block, we get to the end zone.

Big sacks. Cam Bright had two big-time sacks. Bangally came in and got a sack. When you look at Sam with four field goals, outstanding. Two tackles inside the 20. I'll throw those out there. One we didn't tackle anybody on. Talk about consistency.

Chris putting the ball down inside the five yard line, opportunity where we hope we got points, but we decided to punt it. When you do that, you hope to make some yards like that.

A lot of good things. A lot of things to clean up. We're not a perfect football team by any means, not a perfect coach. We still always have stuff to work on. We got a big challenge this weekend.

But I want to clarify some words. I know E.J. told me after



the game while I was in the airplane my comments after the game took a little traction about Carson VanLynn, a super kid, couldn't be a nicer kid in the world. Always smiling.

I want to apologize to him for what I said. Again, didn't mean to make anybody feel bad or any harm to him. I will say this, in the coaching profession, it's intent versus impact. My intent was not to make him feel bad. He didn't do anything I wouldn't do. I just called it out. I shouldn't have said a word. That's my fault.

The impact, sometimes you hurt people's feelings. You get people all up in arms. I wanted to address that before I move into Duke.

Duke, Coach Brown, great football coach. Really scored a ton of points as of late. Phil Longo is their offensive coordinator, Jay Bateman, defensive coordinator. You look Thursday night, you got two explosive offenses at Heinz Field. You got two top-10 offenses with two unbelievable quarterbacks. Everybody has a slew of receivers.

Their Downs kid, Madison kid, two matchups. I can't imagine people come from everywhere. Going heard there is to be 36 scouts going to be at the game, obviously watching both ball clubs. It's going to be a battle at Heinz.

I always say it's going to come down to Bateman and Bates. Bateman, Jay Bateman, is their defensive coordinator. Obviously Randy Bates is ours. Going to come down to who plays better defense on that day. We got to step up to that challenge. There's going to be two explosive offenses going at it.

Questions.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He always plays guard. He was our lineman of the week, I might add.

Again, we just kind of -- Marcus Minor will be ready to go this week, I can promise you that. He could have gone last week, we had him there, emergency only. If I didn't answer your question, you may think that Marcus missed bed check or something, which he didn't. Marcus, I take a bus full of Marcus Minors.



Just a little bit sore. We're okay. Again, you give Blake the start, he went the distance. Gabe Houy went down a little bit. Hey, Marcus, get ready to go. You might not have the day off yet.

We were able to get him fresh and he'll be ready to roll. That's a good thing, good strategy by Coach Borbely.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Not as much as you'd like.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, we were trying to purposely keep our guys fresh. I told you we were going to get P.J. O'Brien in there early. You find out, hey, how is he going to react. That's what we need to find out. Our kids did a good job rebounding. Things happened like that that. You want to find out what happened, how guys react. He blew that off, has a short memory. We did that at every position, just trying to get some guys to play. Wasn't taking them lightly by any means.

Feel like we got some pretty good guys. Again, I felt bad the week before, we're playing Erick Hallett, Brandon Hill every snap. There wasn't another safety that had played in a game. We can't keep doing that. We're going to hurt ourselves like we did against BC two years ago, a season ago. That's kind of where we are.

We try to get guys playing reps, but they got to earn them in practice, as well.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Matt is an intense kid. He's got a lot of enthusiasm. He's fired up. I mean, he'd love to go out there. He played a lot of football. He missed one little thing inside, he laughs about it now. Kind of a down block, different front. They actually messed the front up, so it was an unusual front. He missed his block. Wasn't on the goal line coming out there.

He's a competitor. That's what he is. He loves to play the game of football. He's athletic and tough, he's smart. Again, like I say, he loves the game. You just love to coach a kid, a bunch of those guys, for sure.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Obviously we didn't play him a year ago. He's been great for two years. The thing you notice out of him, he looks like he's 235. He runs like a tailback. I

mean, he is scrambling. What you didn't see the last two years is his ability not only to scramble, but now they've got designated quarterback runs, okay?

We prepared real hard for all their draws. They're going to run a lot of quarterback draws against us. Not as much counter and power with him. But who knows. We've seen enough of that this year with other athletic quarterbacks.

I notice about him, just the way he's dropping back, then running quarterback draws, scrambling, making plays with his feet. That's something I did not see in the past that he has added to his game.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It's a big deal. You try to cover downs. You put too many guys, too many people in coverage, you got a problem. It's hard to rush three against this guy because he'll take off going, like Kenny did last weekend. It can be deadly. You got to cover.

They're going to keep you honest with all the RPOs. They're going to keep you honest with pass and draw. I mean, that's kind of their run-draw-action-pass stuff.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I'll tell you after the game. Go back and say that. Van Dkye is going to be really, really good. Going back, Hooker has had a heck of a year. Done a great job coaching him.

Again, I love the kid from Western Michigan. I know he hasn't done well against everybody else. That guy was on fire against us. Like I said, people are going to come in and always play their better game against us at that level. We certainly got his best game.

Sam Howell, great quarterback. Ty Chandler, their tailback, is a stud. Transfer from Tennessee as well. He is athletic. He makes a lot of plays. He's jumping, hurdling people. He's the real deal.

We got Downs, Sam to worry about, then obviously a tailback that's really athletic. Maybe the best tailback we've seen of the year.

Q. You have stumbled out of the gates the first two weeks, being down the first quarter. What have you attributed to the issues that started, how you've had to adjust to them? How important is it to not do that this week?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's important, but we got to go out and

play ball. The other guys are on scholarships, the other guys have game plans. You can watch tape all week, like we did all day Sunday. You can watch tape, but they have different stuff they do. You have to adjust to it. Hey they are doing this. There are set plays, formations, all that. The stuff you of practice, you take that away, they got that. There's all those things.

You end up running out of them. How many can you put in? How many new things can you put in a short week? There's not a whole lot we're putting in. We're going to try to keep it simple. We don't have a lot of time to add a ton of offense and defense. We're going to do what we do, try to do it better than they do. We have to react, make adjustments on the sideline. That's what you do as a coach. If we don't make any adjustments offensively or defensively, we come in offensively at halftime. These are the plays we got to get called in the third quarter. Same thing on defense. What are they doing, what do they need to do. We do it every series defensively. Coach Partridge, Coach Collins, Coach Manalac, down on the sideline getting information from the press box. I would love to put a microphone in that huddle one day just so you see what happens there. It's impressive.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Downs is like Jordan Addison. It is like we're defending a guy we see in practice every day. This guy is a special football player. Probably one of the reasons there's 36 scouts going to be here this week, GMs, all the rest of them.

He's a young kid that's just electric. He can slow, all of a sudden, like he shot out of a cannon. He'll put you to sleep and then go.

Dazz was awesome, too. They've had two slot receivers. Two years ago Damar Hamlin goes down in cover two, a PI. We're up by 13, 14 points, whatever it was. He gets ejected, which was crazy, okay? Won't get into that one. Then (indiscernible) goes in and all of a sudden Dazz went to work. They attacked the weaknesses.

Erick and their secondary will have their hands full with all their receivers. They make plays.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Attack, kill mode. Kill or capture.

Q. How do you rate a risk/reward there?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think you got to go get them. You got to go get them. If you miss, then the next wave of players

got to go get 'em. You have to. If you don't go get him, he'll sit in the pocket all day and pick you apart. He can make every throw on the field. You got to go get him. There's no other choice.

I'm not talking about go get him with 10 guys. When you're in four-man pressure, we are not going to sit there and say contain him, keep him in the pocket, let's squeeze him, see if we can get him in there.

You got to go. Then we have secondary contain players in every defense. Going to happen. We've had guys do that. The thing we got to do is designated runs, the draws and stuff, are the biggest concern because he can go. People bounce off of him. He's a load.

Q. 16 carries. Izzy had 10. Vince had I think four. I saw in the depth chart this week it's still the same. Is Rodney close to getting one of those? Was this past week an indication of maybe a switch in how you use your running backs?

PAT NARDUZZI: We haven't had that conversation. We're just trying to get a game plan together. I told E.J. to put it an or. I blame him. All those guys are or. E.J. c'mon, man.

But Rodney is a good player. Vince is a great player. Izzy is a great player. We got three good ones back there. It's all based on how they're going. Everybody has a different motor on game day. If that guy takes off, that guy is playing out of his mind, let's keep feeding. Izzy was playing good. Rodney was going in there. We liked they way he was running. We'll just play it by ear, keep playing the hot guy.

Q. Seems like Rodney has taken on that closer role. What allows him to be so good in that role?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's just a good tailback. I don't care if it's closing or not. We could have put Izzy in there, okay, because he does the same thing. We feel great with him doing, it too. We got a game here in five days. Let's cool it here. This guy is good, too.

It's not like he's the closing tailback. Really we feel like all three of them can. Of the bigger backs are a little harder runners. Vince is so good in protection, catching the ball in the backfield, all that stuff. They all have different things they do well.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Possibly. I don't mention it to the kids. I say that to you guys. They know people are watching,



okay? The thing thick is there's this thing called the eye in the sky. They got the camera.

I think it's interesting for some of those guys to come to games and watch, just see it live. We go to games, we want to see a guy play live. I can watch that high school videotape. But when you get to see them up close, watch them compete. When the camera turns away, you don't see all the in between stuff. You don't see how he's acting on the sidelines. Scouts are looking. After a series is over, is your quarterback talking to the receivers? Is he looking up in the stands, signing autographs? They want to see all that. Who is he not only as a football player but a person.

Everything is on display when people are at the game, whether it's ESPN people, GMs, it doesn't matter. Microscope is on all of our kids.

Q. (Question about kicking competition.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Birthday boy. What's he done to keep it? Is he putting it through the upright? Is it pretty all the time? No. Goes through those two uprights, I don't care how it gets there.

I'm proud of the way he's playing. He's been money on game day. He's just calm and cool. That's what you need at that position. He's been really good. He's only going to keep getting better. He's a young kid. I've been impressed.

You don't know what it's going to go like. We're always going to play the best players. He was a guy that was a walk-on here. He beat out a guy on scholarship. It doesn't matter. I think it's a good message for all our kids. I don't care who our starter is. We're going to play the best player, the guy we trust on game day, to go out and do it. It is not about, Hey, you are on scholarship so I got to play this guy. It doesn't matter. I think one thing, it does show a lot of kids that.

Q. Short week, right after a big game traveling. Did you get any chance Sunday to watch Morris get his first start?

PAT NARDUZZI: Are you kidding me? No, I did not at all. Zero. I might catch a little bit of that Steelers game tonight, I can tell you that. Monday Night Football in Pittsburgh.

It was the worst Sunday ever, just so you know, a miserable Sunday, thinks not fun. After today we have caught up, but we practiced twice already, just so we're on the same page. Tomorrow is perfect Thursday, it's only Tuesday so we're on the same page.

Our kids have done a great job. They've been mature. We have a strategy we're using. We hope it works out for Thursday. I think we got a better plan than we had back in 2015 when we played one of these Saturday, Thursday night games. We'll see how that goes.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I can't tell you. Secrets (smiling).

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: When you say 'intense', you think I come in here yelling and screaming? What do you mean?

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It was different because it was a Sunday and a Tuesday combined, okay? The thing people don't realize, they think we just go out and play football, put the ball out there, spot it, let's go.

But Sunday first of all I like to get to 7:30 mass. I didn't get to mass. That's the first bad part of the day because we were in the office before that.

It's just you're trying to close the chapter on Duke and at the same time you have to be game-planned and ready. Usually for a Tuesday practice, Tuesday practice we have half the day on Sunday and all day Monday to prepare. You wake up Tuesday morning, you got your cards ready to go, offense, defense, special teams, here we go, let's put it together.

Sunday we had to close the book on Duke, make the corrections on special teams, defense, offense. Then we had to flip it around and as coaches, you weren't spending time on North Carolina before you could. You had to focus on Duke, good Duke football team.

It's cramming. You're cramming it in. Last night was a late night because we have practice yesterday, last night at 7:30, okay, game time. Then you had to whip around last night, now get ready for all your Wednesday stuff that you're going to do.

We had to have everything planned so this morning we could go out and do what we needed to do. That's no fun.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: That's not good. As a defensive guy, that's no fun. They need to slow the tempo down. They need to cut the quarters in half. I don't know, maybe go 12-minute quarters this weekend, take it easy on them.

58, 55, it's chaos. Two explosive offenses. Again, we got two more explosive offenses this week. I don't know where Wake is. I haven't studied them. I have watched them on tape, know how deadly Hartman is. I don't know where they're ranked in the country. I know we got two top-10 teams this week.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: What was that?

Q. (No microphone.).

PAT NARDUZZI: That one don't count. That was 119 plays.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, it's nice. I don't want to see that many points put up. Whatever happened to 14-3? Are those days gone? They're gone. They're gone everywhere. You see it all over the country.

Again, we're just focused on being as good as we can be on defense. That's going to be key.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Not talking about injuries. Next question.

Q. Is it a 12-hour rule, a 24-hour rule?

PAT NARDUZZI: It wasn't 12 hours either. Sunday, you better wake up and be ready to go. I don't know what it was. It was short. Short.

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