

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

COACH NARDUZZI: All right. Happy Monday. Good weekend for our kids. I think they played hard. They played fast. I think we played really, really good for a half.

A little disappointed when you watch the second half. Just some of the missed opportunities that we had in the second half. We had our chances offensively. Just shot ourselves in the foot. Whether it was giving up a sack in a series, which we gave up four on the day, or a penalty that put us back and caused us to either kick a field goal or kick one and miss one. Just didn't execute really like we need to in the second half.

I told them such last night that you can't play like that. You can't go out and do what you did in the first half and then do what you did in the second half. We had some dropped balls and whatever it may be.

Again, played good enough to win. Found a different way to win. We're moving on to the next. Closed that chapter last night. We have Virginia coming in here at 3:30 on Saturday. Bronco is a good football coach, will have his guys ready. I'm sure the first question, Brennan Armstrong, expect him to play. I think they saved him up. He will be primed and ready for an ACC clash, so we do expect to get their best player, which they didn't have Saturday. Who cares about the Notre Dame game? I think that was kind of the attitude they had going into it.

They'll be ready for us, for sure. They're explosive. It starts with him at quarterback, and he has a bunch of big targets. They run 60 different personnel groupings for our kids to figure out what number is who? They got tight ends that play quarterback. They have all kinds of personnel groupings that you have to worry about on that side of the ball. Defensively, they've run a little four down, three down, and it's kind of hard to see what they are.

It seemed like against Notre Dame they're more four down. Have they switched in the open week to the four down? We'll see. We have to prepare for both different fronts and who they've been. I think they ran eight snaps in three down against Notre Dame, but they went back to more of a



four down kind of deal. Bronco is really a defensive guy, so I'm sure he has a lot to do with what they do.

Great challenge ahead. Big football game. Playing for big stuff in November, and that's why you coach. That's why you play the game.

Questions.

Q. I don't know if you have had time to process the game. You just took on Sam Howell. (Indiscernible) How does that relate to the challenges that Brennan Armstrong will bring?

COACH NARDUZZI: Sam Howell is totally different than Armstrong is. I would say, first of all, we did a great job against Sam Howell. I mean, we bottled him up in the run game for the most part. Especially the ones when he was supposed to run. We lost some contained late in the game, which drives me crazy, which we shouldn't have. To me that comes down to a lack of focus. It wasn't a lack of defense or structure as far as what we're doing. Just do your job, and did we get a little worn out, I don't know, on a short week? It appeared to be sometimes. I don't think so. More of a lack of just details there, but we did a great job.

Sam Howell and North Carolina is more of an RPO. As good of an RPO team as you're going to face with downs in the slot, so we did a great job of defending those. Linebackers, Eric Hallett played outstanding. And, again, we got in the drop-back game. We're okay as well, which to me is the easier part. Again, I think Virginia is more of a drop-back team.

They've got an element of the RPO in there. They like to throw it 70% of the time, so it's going to be a drop-back, line up at empty with all these different personnel groupings and chuck it deep, chuck it wherever they want to. That's what they've done, and they like to throw the football.

Q. (Indiscernible) Is there a question of Armstrong scrambling then?

COACH NARDUZZI: There's some quarterback draws in there. There's a little bit. I would say it's more from scrambling than it is from a true quarterback run. I would say we'll have to worry about other guys, whether it's



Woolfolk coming in to run it or the other guys that all play quarterback. We have to worry more about those guys coming in like a Wildcat type quarterback situation this weekend is what we'll prepare for.

Q. This is the third straight game that you guys had to win or else it depends on somebody else to lose for the division championship.

COACH NARDUZZI: That was the tenth straight one. There was ten of them. Go ahead.

Q. If you don't win, you have (indiscernible) -- how are you holding up with the pressure?

COACH NARDUZZI: How are we holding up? I'm doing terrible. I'm struggling. I mean, we're okay. Hey, it's a Monday. We're game-planning, preparing, Jerry, just like any other week. There's no pressure.

Again, I've said this before. Pressure comes and stress comes when you are unprepared. We'll be prepared. Our kids will be prepared. I think they're excited. It's another football game, and that's the only way I know how to look at it.

Q. (Indiscernible)

COACH NARDUZZI: Last Saturday? It always does. Yeah.

Q. Going into last week talking about how to ramp up (indiscernible) -- this week you have a couple of extra days because of that. How did you spend the rest of the weekend? Did you go over film, or did --

COACH NARDUZZI: They got fresh, and, I'll go back last week was not an easy week to prepare for. Probably easier on the players than it was on the coaches. I thank our coaches and everybody in this building. Our quality control guys, our GAs.

It was a miserable Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, really last week for our coaches. That's not easy to keep your focus and get your guys ready to play, and that's critical. Our coaches did that, and that's where it starts. If we don't have them mentally prepared for a short week like that.

Friday we all as coaches went on the road and recruited, and our kids had off on Friday and Saturday, just injury checked. Then Sunday was a normal Sunday. Our coaches had off on Saturday. We had our iPad, watching TV. We worked from home, but you could lay on the couch and kick up. It was a get fresh for the coaches for the rest of November.

Q. How much do you lean on guys like -- to make sure that the entire team is not getting -- not letting the pressure, stress, whatever get to them?

COACH NARDUZZI: Relied heavily. Ultimately, it's my job. I don't think they're stressed out at all. They get to go play football.

I think you guys get stressed out sitting with your computers and phones. I think you guys are a little tight right now. I think you're a little worried. Hey, you know, it's, like, this is a football game. That's all it is. We get to go out and have fun and get to coach and play the game you love, but I do rely heavily not only in a game like this or a game like last week or the game before that or in an opener on our Eagles and our leadership council, on you are on captains to help lead.

For example, last week I told the guys, I said, hey, you guys didn't listen to me in the Miami game about having composure and poise. I said, it's on you guys. Okay? I want you to stress it when you guys meet with them. On Friday night I let our captains talk to our team. On Saturday before we leave the hotel I let our captains talk to the football team. It's on you. Maybe they'll listen to you.

I rely on them a lot. Sometimes you know growing up you might not listen to your mom or dad, but then when someone else or your uncle told you, it's, like, oh. Who are you listening to? The leaders are the guys in the room that sit in those chairs, and those captains are critical. Sometimes hearing it from a different voice. They're hearing from me, and I mentioned it too, but I thought our guys were exceptional as far as that goes because we thought there would be another game where they were going to talk a lot of stuff that we were going to have to have composure, and our guys did an outstanding job there.

Q. How is Jake doing?

COACH NARDUZZI: Jerry, tell them. He is a young guy. We don't talk injuries. Jake is a great kid. That's how he is doing. He is awesome.

Q. (Indiscernible) -- did you see improvement against Notre Dame?

COACH NARDUZZI: You're saying Virginia's defense? Yeah, you did see. They would go from three down to four down, and they kind of made a switch as far as what they do defensively. You saw them. I thought they did a good job defending compared to maybe the week before against BYU where they got worn out a little bit out there, which is

a long trip and an exhausting trip for them as well. It's always tough going on the road. You add a little bit of that stuff in there too.

Q. The run in the second half, how did you -- (Indiscernible)

COACH NARDUZZI: You know, working on the fundamentals. We didn't do a good job blocking them. Again, they're good up front. We just didn't execute like we would like to. We weren't able to sustain drives, so it's getting them locked in and getting them blocking better.

Q. (Indiscernible)

COACH NARDUZZI: He did a nice job in there at tackle. Gave up a sack. He came up to me after the game and was all upset. "Coach, I gave up a sack." He cares so much. Then, know, Blake had two holding calls, which were critical. Those are drive killers. We got to keep our hands in and can't have those problems. It just sets you back, and those will stop those drives whether it's a penalty or a sack or whatever it may be. We can't have them. So he has to get better, and he will.

Q. How about your receiving core, your guys didn't have Jaylon and didn't have -- (indiscernible) -- you have guys like Tre that have got to keep the ball open.

COACH NARDUZZI: We're banged up like a lot of people are in November. Just got to pick the pieces up and move, and, you know, get more out of our tight ends and our running backs.

Q. What have you seen on -- defense -- (indiscernible)

COACH NARDUZZI: You know, a lot of stuff. Every time they line up, they were going to have 11 guys out there that are on scholarship, and they're good. The guy that really stands on the tape is Noah Taylor, their defensive end, number 7. He is like the guy from a couple of years ago that was really good. Big, athletic, leading their team in sacks, but they're going to do and mix it up and have a lot of different coverage changes. They're going to try to disguise a lot of stuff on defense. That's what I see right now is a lot of disguise back there.

Q. The biggest guy to play that position, what allows him to make the impact that he does, and how can you use him and putting pressure --

COACH NARDUZZI: Calijah is going to be key. Coach Partridge continues to coach him up and put him in good position, but he is a twitchy guy that's explosive and he is hard to block. I mean, they try to chop him. He is jumping

over things. He is just an elusive guy that struggles to not make plays. He is a super athlete, and we're glad to have him.

Q. A different team, different set of circumstances and everything, but to have some of the older guys on this team that were part of the -- tradition, that kind of game. Does that help, having that experience?

COACH NARDUZZI: I think it help. Are they listening? Does it matter? We just have to go out and play. I think it will help if you get to that game, if you are lucky to get through that game. Going into it, I don't know if it really helps, but I think it will help with the experience going into that game more than anything.

Jordan Addison is a finalist -- semi-finalist for the Biletnikoff Award. That's why I was a little late coming in here. I talked to his mother about five to 12:00, and so he is one of ten, and talked to his mother. She was screaming on the phone, excited. I said, "Do you want me to call him, or do you want to call him?" I said, "Why don't you call him." She goes, "He probably won't answer my phone." As I'm walking down the hallway, he happened to be meeting with Coach Marion in the receivers room, and I said, "Call your mother." I said, "Did she call you?" He said, "Yeah, she texted me." I said, "Give her a call."

She was able to break the news. It's a heck of an award for him. Great player. He has a great quarterback throwing it to him, and any time you got a guy top ten, that's pretty prestigious, and we know the last guy that won that award played a long time in the NFL. Great deal there.

Q. (Indiscernible)

COACH NARDUZZI: He is detailed. He is smart. You talk about your punt return team. Look how our punt return team has changed. We knew he was the punt returner back there, but we were, like, okay, give it to somebody else. Look what he has done on punt return. When you got a guy like Quadree Henderson or Jordan back there, guys that have a knack to make somebody miss and have the break-away speed, he has made that unit a little more dangerous. Specialist coordinators out there are going, oh, gosh. We don't want him to take hits like he did last weekend. That's kind of why we've kept him off there. Just let him play receiver, but he loves it. He is a competitor.

Q. Something what's his reaction to that?

COACH NARDUZZI: Like that. I'm, like, sitting on the phone. I was waiting. I can't tell if she told him or not. He

is just, like, doesn't care. That's a fact. You were there, right? I gave him a fist bump because I had to come in here. I don't know if he knows yet, but see you later.

Q. For seniors it's a special day for them Saturday. What can you say about this particular group of seniors?

COACH NARDUZZI: I don't want to lose any of them, Larry. The senior group, Larry, great question. It is senior day. Nobody asked that question.

It's been a tremendous group from the super seniors to the seniors. They provided a ton of leadership for this football team, made a lot of plays. We're going to miss each and every one of them when they walk out in Heinz Field for the last time on Saturday, 3:30. It will be an emotional weekend for them. We'll have some festivities on Friday and a little bit on Saturday before the game, and you always worry about that, the emotions of senior day. Our kids will be ready to play, and I thank all the seniors for everything they've done here for the last four, five, six, seven, eight, Tre Tipton, nine years that they've been here. There's a little bit older senior class this year. All right?

Q. (Indiscernible) -- to have a receiver that calm?

COACH NARDUZZI: It's unique. I don't know how everybody else's receivers room is, but it's unique. He is just -- you just love him. If everybody had the attitude he has and just football, school, life, you know, doesn't call his mother enough. We have to kick him in the butt about that. He is just a super, super kid.

You always talk about lists. They have lists of guys that miss study hall, did this, did that that you are constantly on just like when we were all kids. You had little things that we all had to take care of. This guy, I told his mother the other day, I don't know what you did growing up, but you got the master plan as far as how to raise a son, that's for sure. She did an unbelievable job.

Q. (Indiscernible)

COACH NARDUZZI: I think that helps. I think any time you have a senior-laden team that it's going to help you as you go. They all help.

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