

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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## Pat Narduzzi Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Welcome to Media Day 2022. Excited to get this camp rolling. I think our kids are really excited. Appreciate you guys all being here. Got a good crowd today.

We're excited. I know the Steelers are getting it cranked up there, so I appreciate you guys being here.

We have 110 guys in camp, which is what the NCAA allows us. But I think good information is we used to be able to have more last two years. In the COVID year, we were allowed more, and the year post-COVID we were allowed to have more just because of possibly guys getting sick.

So it's a little bit of a shock to go back to the old norm of 110 which I think is a crazy rule that the NCAA doesn't let us -- they do a lot of different, crazy things but they won't let us bring guys that have worked their tail off in camp all summer and bring everybody in. So there's some disappointed guys that don't get to come to camp that have worked hard. You always feel bad for these guys, and eventually we'll get them in here at some point; but NCAA rules.

We have 17 seniors in camp, three graduate transfers that we are excited about, and I think we have pretty good leadership when you look at it overall. Again, you gauge the leadership by what happened during the summer, and our kids did a nice job. The coaches are not always here, we had a coach here every day, but there's still a lot of things that our kids put on their own plate and take care of things. So, happy with the leadership at this point, and we'll find out how it goes through the month of August and look there.

Coach Stacc and his staff have done a terrific job, four assistant coaches down there. The summer is smoothest it's been. We are significantly stronger than we were a year ago, and I can go through some of the numbers, but I won't bore you with the numbers but our numbers went up in the squat, the bench. We're fast. Our GPSes are fast. Run the 40, I think Brandon Hill give you a quick 4-3-40,



fastest guys in a bunch of 4-4 the out there, legit times, and not guys' time with their thumbs. Real, real good scores there.

So we're in shape, ready to go. Got through practice No. 1 today, which you guys saw the first I think five periods, and happy with where we are right now. I think day one is kind of where you expect to be. Got a lot of bad habits that we've got to correct from what they did by themselves out there all summer. Just getting them to practice with tempo and the attitude that we want them to go. So we got plenty of practice to get that done.

So with that, I'll just open up for questions.

**Q. I guess after coming off a championship, I think you guys always had that mindset broke down with the ACC champs before last season. What's the difference that you guys actually accomplished it?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Really no difference. Today, they changed it up. I don't tell them what to do. They kind of do it. Today they broke down on champs. That's a good one, because you could be anything, right.

So you know, again, I don't tried to micromanage what they say. Sometimes they break down on family, ACC champs. But I'm always listening to what they are saying, talking about, what they are feeling. Coming off a championship, you know, that's in the past and nobody cares what happened last year. They really don't. Nobody in this room is going to care, coaches, staff, or you know, media.

Again we just have to work on the next and this is the 2022 team. It's a different team than the 2021 team, and you know, I think our kids got a good mindset about what that means and what they have to do to be something different than what 2021 was.

**Q. You said a few weeks ago that the coaching staff is better this year than last year. What makes you say that?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Just I feel good with where we are. And again, I think in every facet, okay, I think whatever we do, we keep getting better. You know, last year was good. Great staff. But like there's always something, and you know, and time will tell.



Just it's hard to hire people, first of all. It's hard. Dave Andrews left and we got Coach Stacc and Coach Stacc and that staff has done an unbelievable job, we got better, how can we do that.

Like I said, it's hard to hire people but you take your time and you do it right, and you can get just as good or better. That's why I feel really good with this staff and the communication, and I feel good with what they are doing and what they did in the past which I think will help us win football games.

**Q. What does Kedon and Nick have to do the next few weeks to be the guy?**

PAT NARDUZZI: They have going out and execute. They have to show what they did over the summer is something that has pushed them ahead of the other guy. It will be interesting. Most interesting thing, I think the Steelers got one of those going on. We got one of them going on. Pittsburgh is a quarterback hotspot as far as competition going on.

But what I love, it's going to come down to what they are doing and really, I want the whole team to know who that guy is.

I always say this: I don't care what position it is; if I have to make the decision, then we got issues, okay. Everybody should know and when we make that decision, it's not like everybody is going, oh, man, I thought it was the other guy.

I don't want controversy. I want everybody to know, that's the guy. So I'm hoping something comes fast. But we'll see how it goes. It's a day-by-day process.

**Q. To that end, Mike T. said the other day at camp, it's a marathon not a sprint. So far one guy is with the ones, one guy is with the twos and your former guy is with the threes. How do you manage reps with those guys? Will they swap or is there a delineated setup to start?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Kind of like we did in the spring. There will be rotation. They are both going to get reps with the ones and twos and see how it goes and try to find out who our third team quarterback is, is a big thing that we want to get figured out this spring as well, which we didn't really have an opportunity in the spring to figure that one out.

So you know they are going to mix up reps and we are going to see how they work with each group and what they do.

So makes it a little harder when you're not just going with the ones and with the twos. But we'll figure that out, and then, you know, as soon as we want to adjust it and say, hey, you're running with the ones in the further notice and we'll see how that goes, too.

**Q. A month from today is your first game. You know, when would you like to have that spot sort of figured out?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I would love to give you a date, will, but I'm not going to give you a doubt because then you'll be like, today is the day. I would like to have it done before the opener, put it that way. That's the only date I can give you. Might be two weeks. Might be three weeks. Might find out on game day. I don't know. Wish I could put a date on it but can't put a date on it. Wish I knew today.

**Q. Are Kedon and Nick, are they different players? Or are you looking for one to play --**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think they are definitely different players. I think at every position, they all have something that they have maybe that's a little bit different.

So they have got a different style. They both lead a little bit different. You know, one has been here; one hasn't been. So there's a lot of differences, and we're waiting to find out who plays better and what we need at that position, as well.

**Q. Where are you with the install of the offense mand Frank coming in, versus last year. You have the same quarterback, same offensive coordinator for a while and now you have a lot of things going on. How do you feel you guys are taking on all the new things that are being added?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We had install in the spring, we had install this summer, and really we're going through the third time.

I look at what we are doing day one compared to what we did day one in spring ball, and it's night and day as far as the concepts we have, the personnel we have in. Our kids have come a long way in the summer to get where we are today.

Yeah, I feel good. Do you like the continuity? Yes. But there's change, and change needed to be done. I like where we are. Just like three years ago, we needed to have change.

Right now, we needed change based on who we are as a football team right now compared to who we were a year

ago.

**Q. Who are you?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Find out. You'll find out. But I think we'll be a little bit more balanced football team. We are going to still sling it around like we do, and we are still going to -- but we have got to establish a little bit more of a running game at times. And we're also going to play, I've told you guys in the past, we are going to do what the box dictates.

**Q. I read an ESPN survey today that said that 80 percent of college football players, administrative and coaches -- inaudible -- going to turn into a black market kind of thing. Do you think your program was violated in any way by name, image and likeness this off-season?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You tell me. I would say probably. We all, you know, talk about the elephant in the room. But I don't think there's any question, at least, you know, tempted with it one way or the other.

But there's no question about it. It's not a good thing, and hopefully they get it under control. But we're moving on and working on the next.

Thanks, Jerry.

**Q. How much does that loom over recruiting over the summer? In June when you have recruits coming to campus and their families, did that come up in conversation with recruits and families?**

PAT NARDUZZI: A few. But there's no looming. Everybody has got their opinion and a lot of the opinions are the same as what we kind of thought, like, why.

But hey, we don't make those decisions. It's over with and on to 2022. I feel great with where we are.

**Q. If you had to recommend legislation or something, some sort of protection for universities, what would you do? How can you guys sort of try to negate something like that?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, they have opened up the portal. They have opened up name, image and likeness. They are going to have to shut the name, image and likeness down. The portal is not going to change I don't think. They are going to try to put some borders and stuff on it.

Although, I think a week ago, John, you told me they were talking about unlimited transfers or not. I don't know if that's going to happen or not, that would be crazier,

because it's already wild and crazy. I think putting some borders on name, image and likeness on what you can do and can't do.

And I think you have to remove the boosters from the game. You have to remove them. I mean, for years and years and years, the boosters were eliminated, and now all of the sudden, we have brought boosters back into the pick tire. I want our kids to make as much money as they can but I want them to work for it and do it the right way and not just black market it.

**Q. A guy like Sirvocea in the middle with your linebacker core being very young, how much confidence does it give you in guys like Bangally and Solomon that they have not only someone in the middle but someone that can play all three positions?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Sirvocea can play all three and that's what I have comfortable with, nice to have him in the middle to make sure he has everything under control and can tell everybody else what to do.

Bangally, we'll find out as these game plans change, that will be the big thing. He's own the ability to be a player for us, an athletic guy that makes plays. Got to play within the system.

Solomon DeShields is another guy. Shayne Simon, don't forget about him. So we have some guy, Tylar Wiltz, looking forward to. Saw one day today, and looking forward to seeing the development that we have there.

There's a few guys out there, Buddy Mack is back at that start position. We're going to find out. I think we have a lot of pieces to work with, and it will be interesting to see what happens come mid-August, late August with that group.

**Q. If Sirvocea moves outside, who would be the first couple guys behind him in the huddle?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Brandon George is one of them. Shayne Simon is able to play the money (ph) and the mike. Brandon George can do the same thing. We'll just figure that out as we go. Coach Manalac is rotating them in and just saying, hey, you know, play them all.

That's what you need to do with a young group is get them to play a lot of different positions, find out what they can and can't do and don't limit them to play one position, because ultimately, we are going to play the three best. When it comes down to who whoever are the three best, okay, these are our three best guy, regardless of what position they play and then put them where they need to be and that will be what we'll do come in mid-August or when

we start to get that group together.

**Q. I feel that you have tremendous depth at running back, so how do you plan to utilize all the weapons that you do have with so many guys that would want the ball?**

PAT NARDUZZI: C'Bo is in camp as well. We do have some guys back there that will bring it to watch how had he progress but we are looking for the consistent guy. I think when you say you've got three guys, and then C'Bo comes in, you've got four, you want to look and see who is the guy that's going to be most consistent. I think at times those guys have been like a yo-yo where that guy had a great day, and the next guy the other guy has a great day.

I'll go back to last year, okay, 2021 spring, I came out and said Vince Davis was our starter, okay. Going into spring ball. Coming out of spring ball Mike Izzy (ph) is our starter. It's like, what the heck happened. Like Vince what did you do, Izzy stepped it up.

So it's back and forth, and I want to see a consistent guy. I mean, I didn't say that when James Conner was back there. Didn't say that when Qadree Ollison was back there. We are looking for that guy that's going to take that position over and it could be any four of those guys. Just looking for consistency, the guy that you can count on for all times, and then we'll see how that whole thing goes.

**Q. The speed of the run game, entire offensive line back, do you feel this could be one of the best lines you ever had?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I believe so. We'll find out. We'll find out in December if it is. Nobody is going to say that they are the best in August or September. But I think they have got talent. We have got to go out there and execute. We've got to -- we pass set it, we protected the quarterback at times and now we are going to have to go run the ball a little bit more than we have in the past, and that's something we are developing at and that's something I'm looking forward to seeing more complete.

I think they are excited about it. I think it's one of the reasons they came back is they wanted to run the ball more and show that they can run block more than just in the end of the fourth quarter.

**Q. Talked about playing fast, especially the defense, executing and moving. You have Brandon and Eric back for another year. Where do you see them as your safeties helping especially your secondary play fast and get on their assignments and play aggressive style of football you like?**

PAT NARDUZZI: A year ago, those two were two babes back there, getting their first start and you don't know if Eric was going to be the guy or not, and now he's proven he's the guy; Brandon Hill; we have two mature leaders back there.

You see what they Tweet this morning. I re-Tweet their Tweet, my right hand man or whatever, goes with the hand up. You know, they are confident. They are leaders. You know, I just think it comes really down to the confidence they have back there right now. They are going to be well-coached and they are going to know what to do, and they are going to be able to communicate and lead the rest of the guys back there at the corner position and the guys behind them.

**Q. As far as defending the ACC title and going back a little bit to the last year stuff, do you prefer guys to acknowledge there's a target on their back? Or do you say, maybe, ignore that; day-to-day, the focus is on what you're doing?**

PAT NARDUZZI: There's no target on our back and we are not really defending any because it's not going anywhere. It's there. That trophy is not going to leave that area out there in front of the building. If the trophy is here, we are champions, 2021 and it's over.

So we are just starting a new one. And going after that trophy and going after the championship. Again, we are not going to -- we are going to be on the offensive. We are not going to be the hunted. We are going hitting ourselves, okay. We are not going to sit back and go, oh, gosh, people are coming after them. No, we are going after them and we are going after them harder than we did a year ago, and we are going to go after them in a different way. It will be a different attack offensively, defensively, and there will be a different attack on special teams.

I think it will be fun to watch but we are not going to sit back and do the same thing we did last year and think it's just going to happen again.

**Q. You mentioned earlier you want your team to know who is going to be that offensive quarterback to lead the team. What do they need to do to let those guys know, hey, I'm the guy?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Eric, the quarterback position is no different than the kicking position or linebacker position, so let's not focus on it. It's every position. I could grab a couple guys, say, hey, who is the best Mike or best left tackle. They know who it is. Left tackle, Carter Warren. We all know. There's no competition there. The question

will be, who is the backup.

So I want our kids to feel confident who that guy is. They should be able to answer those questions. So it's going out and executing, it's leading and it's making plays. And you know, the kids should see it on tape. Players should watch it on videotape.

**Q. Is there anything they can do off the field they can do or is more on the field for you?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It's a little bit of both. It's who do the guys want to follow. That quarterback position, that middle linebacker position is such a critical one that people are looking to those guys to find out, are they going to help make everybody else better, the offense is a little bit different than the defense because now all no-huddle.

But back in the day that quarterback and defense and that linebacker was in the huddle. With ten guys staring him in the face, you couldn't look like a little weasel back there. You'd better have a little look to you and you'd better have some leadership skills to make those guys believe in what you're doing.

Same thing at the quarterback spot. That quarterback has to make 11 guys on that team play. Those other ten guys, he's got to get them going, and they have to play better for one or the other.

**Q. Do you feel like there's somebody that can step up and take a leadership role or how do you feel about the depth?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, leadership role, I feel good about the depth. We have weapons out there. Jared Wayne has been that leader this summer. He's been that guy and he's one of our eagles in our leadership council. He's taken over that leadership role with those guys, and I feel good with the leader there. I feel good, obviously the main leader is Coach Underwood.

I feel good with the leadership. We'll find out how that depth goes. Got some new guys out there. Konata is one of them, went through spring ball, not as seasoned as the rest of them. But Bub Means is in camp and did some nice things today. Big, athletic guy and he's had a great summer and doing things the way he's supposed to do. We're excited about him. And watching to see if Jaden Bradley can come through and make a ton of plays and grow up and be mature and do things the way we want it to be done. All those things are stuff that we are looking toward to.

**Q. You've had some really good offensive lines,**

**especially the last few years, and not just in terms of production but the pros you've produced. Do you feel that you guys have earned a reputation maybe nationally about maybe that specific thing being a strength whereas other things, like you don't know who the quarterback is going to be this year, at least not yet. Do you feel like you guys have established an identity that regardless of all the other moving parts, that this part of this team is always going to be a strength?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I don't think it's always going to be; you slack off and don't do a good job of recruiting them or coaching them or get banged up.

I feel good about the quarterback spot. Two quarterbacks have taken majority of the snaps in the last seven years, still in the NFL, feel like we've kind of repeated there. We are going to continue to have wide-outs. You but I feel great with our D-Line group. They play aggressive, they are well-coached, the scheme plays a part to it, and Coach Bates does an unbelievable job.

I say this and I'll say it again, and I don't know if you guys believe me because you guys keep asking me, the D-Line, D-Line, D-Line, I got the same thing on Media Day, it takes 11. We could have four Aaron Donalds there but if the corners don't cover everybody and the ball comes out quick, they are running up the field wasting their time. They might as well stand on the line of scrimmage and try to bat a ball down. It takes everybody doing their job or the ball is coming out, it doesn't matter, you're not getting any pressure and you're going to have a hard time stopping the run as well.

**Q. Park and those guys are gone, so what are you looking for there in camp?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We've got a kicking competition. Really you could say we have a punting competition with our new punter. All those guys are competing. Long snapper, Byron is in there backing him up. There are some spots. Sam is back. So we have our kicker from a year ago. But Ben is also a guy who has shown he's got a chance.

We are going to continue to evaluate those guys and it's a little bit different, like I said, we have a different attack this year, and some of those, the specialists are going to be critical. We know how important special teams are but the thing I feel really good is the people around our kickers are seasoned. We have a lot of specialists that are special on special teams, whether it's running down on punt team, blocking on kickoff return, being a head hunter on a kickoff team. We have a lot of those guys that have played football and some young athletic guys that are going to

help us as well.

**Q. You talk about Tylar coming into the linebacker room, FCS guy, what did you think that he could make that jump?**

PAT NARDUZZI: He looked smart on videotape, you never know, but then he was smart when he came on his visit. He's athletic. He's a playmaker, and he kind of fits in just like Shayne Symone did. When you watch him on tape, you're like man, we get him, he fits into our scheme. I just like the way -- he has great instincts, and his ability to get to the ball and he has athletic ability.

So I think that's going to be something, we're going to find out what it looks like. I shall there will be some growing pains with it because he's going into a different system but he's so smart and so willing. He's got a great personality and he can take coaching, and you can see that right away. He wants a tip every minute. He wants -- "Coach, what did it look like? What do I need to do?" He's looking for coaching. I love that.

**Q. Was Kedon the guy you hoped would come in --**

PAT NARDUZZI: No question. He is what we thought he was and when we recruited him. He's everything and some. I think he's athletic. He's smart. He's got a great arm and again he does stuff different than Nick and it's going to be fun to watch those two compete.

We're excited to watch those two guys.

**Q. Snaps at corner, who is in the mix to fill in?**

PAT NARDUZZI: AJ woods had a great spring. You have Williams. Look at my depth chart here -- Devonshire has been outstanding. The three guys the at the starting position right now would be MJ, Marquis and AJ woods.

But then Rashad Battle is coming back. You have Jahvante Royal, this Ryland Gandy, he's been sharp. Looked good in the spring, and find out if he hits the August wall, but he's really sharp and trustworthy. Got Noah Biglow. We have got DBs that have athletic ability. The light turns off, and we have some corners out there that can cover people and they are big and athletic.

**Q. Any other freshmen you have your eye on right now?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I'm looking forward to see what Steph Hall does. I think he has some potential. Again he's not a true freshman. He's a freshman, though. Javon McIntyre is another guy, I think is interesting.

On the offensive side of the ball, nobody that can offhand, say, just as a freshman. I guess maybe the other guys, Ryan Baer. That guy is big and athletic, and so we'll see what happens there.

**Q. Anybody going to be limited?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Is that an injury question? (Laughter) Nobody is limited except maybe me, right. My calf is a little tight.

(Knocking on table) we're really, really healthy right now going into fall camp. We want to see it that way.

**Q. A good chance with the rankings come out in a couple weeks you find yourself in the Top-10 or 15 in the polls. Do you think there's a good chance with the high expectations?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, not worried about it. Don't care. I want to know where we are ranked at the end of the day and how many wins we have in the win column. That's going to be the key. Those preseason rankings mean absolutely nothing.

Pull out your ranks from the beginning of the year and see what it looked like -- does anybody ever did that and how wrong they were? We could be in the Top-10 and not be in the Top-10. I'd like to see our ranking -- matter of fact, turn your rankings in last year to E.J. and we'll do some work on them.

**Q. Under five weeks to go, how important --**

PAT NARDUZZI: First day you're already telling me the countdown under five weeks.

**Q. How important is it to the fan base in college football overall that you play historical rivals?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think there's a lot of excitement. It's a little bit different than opening up with somebody like New Hampshire or whatever it may be. There's excitement in Pittsburgh, the fans. Every time a see a Pitt fan, that's all they talk about is that opener.

So it's going to be electric. Game day will be there. I think it's going to be a lot of fun and they feel it. They feel you, they feel the fans. I shall if I'm hearing it, they are hearing it wherever they go when they are going out to dinner. So they are feeling it.

I think it's exciting. It's college football and again, the backyard brawl, whether it's in September or if it's in

November, doesn't matter when that game is, it's a big game and we are looking forward to embracing that rivalry and putting in a good game plan and getting our boys ready to go.

**Q. Clarify something, when we were asking about NIL and stuff, you said, "I'd like to get boosters out of the equation."**

PAT NARDUZZI: You asked me if I could put one rule in.

**Q. At the same time you also mean your position, head coach position -- a lot of this stuff is provided by fund-raising. As a coach how do you walk that line?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm not saying getting rid of boosters from our athletic department. What you'll see throughout the country now is a booster, okay, saying do I give my money to the athletic department or do I give it to the collective. I'm saying we should be giving our money to the athletic department and kind of eliminating that.

I think name, image and likeness goes out to those companies that want to take care of your kids, and you know, you're working for them, Tweeting for them and you're doing community service for them. You're making money that way.

I just think there needs to be some limits. And again, if we are going to get boosters involved in name, image and likeness, which is great we just have to have control on what they can do, and it has to be pretty equal throughout the country. Can't be wide gaps or we are going to ruin college football.

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