

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

Pitt 38, West Virginia 31

PAT NARDUZZI: What a ballgame. That was a backyard brawl for sure. You.

Know, first of all, you know, let's just start with the fans in that stadium today. That place was electric. Pity fans showed up, like, big-time. Was kind of real upset the night before when we heard there was going to be 75 percent West Virginia fans, which I knew ESPN had some bad facts. But they disrespected our fans and our fans showed up. They were unbelievable all day today so I thank them first of all because they were critical in the victory.

Overall we got the win. We knew it was going to be four quarters and we knew it was going to be a brawl. I told our guys three days ago, be prepared for 60 minutes. It wasn't going to be at halftime, you know, going to be under our belt and our kids believed, they trusted each other.

It wasn't easy. There was adversity back and forth, taking the lead and whatever it may be. And probably the play of the game was AJ Devonshire, that pick that he had and took it to the house. That guy was running. He was fast. That was one of the nicer ones I've seen, and that was a big-time play. He wasn't going to be denied.

But we got a lot of things to clean up. Openers are like that regardless of who you play. When you play a game like that, a rivalry game, Power Five team; and again I give West Virginia credit, good football team. JT Daniels is a really good football player and really accurate passer.

But in the end our guys did enough to win. They did some stuff out there that doesn't make me happy. But great thing is you get a win and you make your biggest improvements between Week 1 and Week 2.

So we've got a couple extra days here to prepare for a really good Tennessee football team coming into Acrisure Stadium.

Q. How would you evaluate how Kedon played?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, I thought he was a little late with the ball at times. 16-of-24, pretty good. I think one TD, five sacks, don't like the sacks but we'll look at that; why, what. Don't like the sacks at all.

You know, was a little disappointed with our run game. But it's openers, and again, sometimes you don't know what fronts you're going to get. You don't know what you're going to get but we have to do a better job. Our whole offense was like, "Coach, we'll be better." They are apologizing after a win. We have some great kids.

And again, that was a good football team you beat and you know, give them some credit. But it was a heck of a ballgame but we made the plays when we need to. Not very often do you win a game with a blocked punt. Let's just start there. You go back through all the different situations -- we'll talk more on Monday with the local media, but you don't win a game like that. Punter thought he had more time than he did, and we called artificial hang time but he's got to get that ball off.

We'll look at the tape but we were going the right way. But again, there's a rookie punter. That's his first football game he's ever been in. He's over playing Australian whatever. So it's good to get that under his belt.

Ben Sauls was outstanding, 100 percent. I was happy to see him play well.

Questions?

Q. Did you know, Rodney Hammond had a great right running and did you know he ran that aggressively in the past?

PAT NARDUZZI: Oh, no question about it. The local guys here can tell you, Rodney is a football player. Izzy came on; he's another guy that said, "Coach, I started slow." But he came on, which he did.

It's great when the kids are telling you: 'Hey, I didn't do it good enough; I wasn't good.' But Rodney came in there and he runs hard. He's a bull and that's no surprise to the locals.

Q. What was it about their zone runs that seemed to

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slow you guys down? Typically you guys have an aggressive run defense and it seemed like you guys were more hesitant?

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm hot, okay. I'm hot. That doesn't usually happen. I'm not happy. I'm not happy about our run defense. We'll get it cleaned up and see again. We have two young outside linebackers playing their first game, for the most probably SirVocea was good inside but we'll clean that up. That's a fact. I'm in charge of that.

Q. Can you speak to the job your pass catchers did in the run-after-the-catch department?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, they did a great job and we missed some shots. Bug has made those plays so many times in practice. We had one, you know, probably on Monday or Tuesday, like beautiful, like this, and we just didn't make as many plays as we needed to. We have to make a couple shots and loosen them up and when you don't make those, they are not scared of it.

I was happy. You look at, again, Konata had five catches, 71 yards. I don't see a lot of -- I guess Jared Wayne had a heck of a play. Wanted to see him get in the end zone and it was a heck of a play and scored off that. Again, trustworthy guy.

Rodney, Izzy, had one I think on that last touch as well. Some of these short passes were good and we got yack (ph).

Q. What does it say about your team where in the second half, it felt like the defense had nothing going right for it, for them to come up and make that big stop there at the end on fourth down to get those sacks.

PAT NARDUZZI: It tells you they believed and again like I said, we made some darn bad mistakes. But they found a way to win it at the end, and that tells you a lot about them. We'll get better, that's for sure. There's a lot to clean up and I didn't like our run defense at all, and you know, we had some different stuff happen out there. That third-and-four where we had a delay game on defense because we stem -- I've never seen that call before. But we got a way with a W at home, and had some Big 12 officials and you know, came out the right way.

Q. What's the word on Deslin's injury and what can you say about John Morgan stepping in, two sacks and four tackles for loss?

PAT NARDUZZI: John Morgan was outstanding. And Des is tough, he'll be fine and we'll further evaluate that on Monday.

Q. Talked about how players need to learn how to play in a rivalry game to really understand it. Do you think they got that understanding now?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think they got it figured out a little bit. I think it was a little -- even I'm trying to get on the TV with ESPN turning around going what is going on back there. I see Haba, a lot of chattering going afterwards. It's good for them to go 1-0 against West Virginia and we have to carry that on.

Q. You guys are backed up on your eight-yard line with about six minutes left. That's a situation where you go 92 yards -- is that the kind of thing you look for in a quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: No question about it. I think he was late with some of the passes but he had a heck of a game and made the plays when he needed to. You can see he's accurate with the football. He had some mistakes, whether he didn't bring a guy into motion one time but we had two guys across on a dig and had too many people in the hole there. Should have been some motion there. Just little details, openers and nerves, big crowd, rivalry game. We'll clean a lot of those things up.

Q. Are you surprised that they didn't go for it on the fourth-and-one?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, you never know what's going to happen. I think maybe they had some pretty much some confidence that they were going to be able to stop our offense. I'd have gone for it but I'm not going to answer for them. That would be something you have to ask Coach Neal about, what they were thinking or whatever.

You know, it's fourth-and-one. We were ready for a stop.

Q. Did you ever anticipate a true freshman, tight end, running for a hundred yards today?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he's a good football player, and again, I think we really helped him out a lot. I think he's a good football player. No, I didn't anticipate that but you know, our guys are very kind.

Q. Went somewhere else, came back here, came back home. What does it mean to have that guy do that in this environment in his hometown after having that start?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, you know, we wanted MJ out of high school, and he went to Kentucky and then we were

able to get him back. You know, I really think we take care of our Pittsburgh guys. Our Pittsburgh guys are successful. Dayon Hayes had a nice day today as well. Our Pittsburgh guys stay home and stay here, they are going to make a lot of plays and it's good for all those Pittsburgh kids saying, look, where are they being successful, because a lot of places are being as successful as they are here, Pittsburgh.

Q. Anywhere on the field, could you share --

PAT NARDUZZI: Kenny is like, hey, whatever it takes, get it done. Kenny is awesome. He's like, gosh, I wish I could play. I said, you're playing on Sundays, it's all right.

Q. Do you like starting the season with a rivalry game?

PAT NARDUZZI: If we win it, yeah. If we win it. Like I said, it's hard in the opener, it's hard for West Virginia, it's hard for Pitt. It's not easy. I hate watching tape for USC and West Virginia spring game. You just don't know what you're going to get. It's so much easier to defend people. It's so much easier to execute on offense when you really can see some real game footage from 2022.

So we'll have that from at least here on out, we'll watch Tennessee and see what happens with them and get prepared. Hey, do you like it? No. You would like to clean it up. But you get the win against a good football team, you'll take it.

Q. Catch and run at the end of the game in the fourth quarter --

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we'll watch the tape to see. It's hard to say, did he do something or was it the O-Line blocking. What did we do up front; we'll look. We had a tight end out today that really changed some of our personnel. Karter Johnson was, you know, he was there for Friday walk through and didn't make the team. He's in the hospital last night with an infection. I think he's going to be fine.

But Karter, he texted me saying, "Coach, let's get this win." So he's good right now. Probably be out of the hospital tomorrow sometime but that kind of hurt us a little bit not having him because he's a good football player.

Q. You talked on Monday about your guys being juiced up but also need to go maintain their composure. Do you think the penalties were lack of composure?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, there were some -- I know when

we go back and watch the tape, there was kicking and punching going on and our guys actually did a pretty good job. Interest was a lot more going on and our guys did a pretty about job. I don't know what happened with Williams on the one. They said he cut somebody. Corners don't want to be laying on the ground. Never done it in practice. So you know, supposedly he slipped.

So we'll look at the tape and clean up whatever we need to. But we talked about composure. I think we had one, Haba, in the end zone, had an unsportsmanlike conduct which he's got to clean up and again, we'll see the tape. But there was a lot of trash talk going on out there I guess for sure. I guess that's what it is.

Q. Your thoughts on Devonshire, not just getting the interception, but what it took to score the touchdown?

PAT NARDUZZI: All I say is, wow. When he caught that thing he was going. He's had some great punt returns and today, he's one of our punt returners as well. That makes you want to put him on punt return because he took that one; he was running 4:3 for sure. It was impressive.

Q. Karter's absence, did that force you to play more six, seven line?

PAT NARDUZZI: We did. We had that in our package as well but that was one ever the probably reasons we didn't do as much as what -- just putting the tight end in the game. We didn't want to wear Gavin out, so that was obviously one of the reasons.

Q. This game felt a lot like the 2016 against Penn State, two archrivals facing each other for the first time in a long time. How would you compare this rivalry game with this one?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, they are both big-time rivalries. We'll play Penn State any time they want to. We'll play West Virginia. We have West Virginia for another seven games. We are excited about that.

Heather Lyke has done a great job of getting that scheduled, and probably I think next year, we are playing the third game of the season, so it won't be an opener. You know, they are all the same. Football game is a football game.

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