

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Saturday, September 10, 2022

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Head Coach Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference

Tennessee 34, Pitt 27

PAT NARDUZZI: It was a heck of a football game versus a good football team. I think when it comes down to it, I told our guys, it's a game of inches, and there were inches all over the place that we needed to get.

Also, to start off with Frank Cignetti Sr., his passing this morning around 11:00. Right before we were going into a team meeting and pregame meal, Coach found out. When you think about sacrifice, this is a game of football, and there's so many other games in life and the sacrifice that he made sitting here. There was no doubt that he was going to coach the game. It's a major sacrifice.

It's a game of football and a game of life, but our prayers go to their family. Just a sad, sad deal.

Just to give you a little background and coach Cignetti will probably address you later on in the week, he went in the hospital after the game last week after the West Virginia game, ironically. Coach Cignetti was halfway home, got the call, and had to go back down to the hospital.

Tough for him. Again, my heart and prayers go out to, again, the family. Tough deal. Tough deal. Again, the sacrifices that the coaches make and these players make.

I really thought other players played their tail off. That's what I told them. You talk about a football game. There was back-and-forths. We made improvements from Week 1 to Week 2, without a question. Win, lose, doesn't matter. I knew that would be the factor. Our kids played hard. Made some plays and didn't make some plays.

We missed two field goals. Probably don't go into overtime if we can make one of them, as you guys know. Tough. One was a 46-yarder. It's a long one. He came back and made one critical one in the fourth quarter.



We got a blocked punt. We block a punt, heck of a job by P.J. O'Brien. Shoot, I thought we were going to score on it. Just a game of inches.

Sully kind of bumps into him and knocks him out of bounds. We should have scored there. That's one of the field goals that we don't make. We should have not let it happen.

Critical play in the game was down in the fourth quarter. Nick Patti takes a run all the way down to the 2 or 3, and we get a holding call, which we'll look at the tape, but everybody in the box said it -- there was a lot of holding going on out there in different phases. That one hurt bad.

No excuses. We've got to find a way to win. It's a good football team. I love our football team. I love where they are. And, again, all our goals are ahead of us.

It's a nonconference game. As I told them before the game, we're going to go out and have fun, play loose, and go. We're going to get better. And, you know, again, nonconference game. Move on.

Questions.

**Q. (Indiscernible) -- second half. Were you limited what you could call because of it?**

PAT NARDUZZI: A little bit. A little bit, but he will be fine. His mobility was not what we wanted it to be, that's for sure because Nick can run. It handcuffed Frank a little bit, but like I said, Coach Cignetti called one heck of a football game.

**Q. It looked like Tennessee was getting a free rusher at your quarterback consistently throughout the night. Was that more from their overloads, or were there miscommunications on your part?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think sometimes you're in a protection where we're hot off that guy, and we have to get the ball out a little quicker, and sometimes you're going to take those shots. It's a different protection.

If it's empty, you're going to be one short, and you have to get the ball off. You have five receivers out there.



**Q. What do you have to say about your defense's efforts in the second half?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Unbelievable. I don't know what they had in regulation, but I think last year when you look at what we did to them defensively, I think Coach Bates, the defensive staff, and those defensive players played their hearts out.

That is a tough offense with a tempo, and they started off with probably three three-and-outs. We've got to be more consistent. We would like to get 15 three-and-outs. I know that's not really, but they did a heck of a job really for four quarters.

We gave up a big pass in cover three. It kind of was a block-and-go. It shouldn't matter. We were in cover three. There's no way someone should get behind you on that, but they did. That's a critical error.

I thought they played their hearts out. Again, like I said last year, there's only three teams that played them really good. It was us, Alabama, and Georgia defensively. If you look at the yards we gave up to that explosive offense, I don't know if anybody will match what we did this year.

**Q. Last week you told us that you guys needed to take a step forward after last week's game with the rushing defense. You held them under 100 yards today. Do you think that's a step forward?**

PAT NARDUZZI: They did a heck of a job. Like I said, just little details. We did a good job there. And, again, I thought we played well on really all three phases.

You look at we got a fumble recovery on our punt team late in the game, which was critical. That was a big, big play. We got a blocked field goal. Special teams played well except for a couple of missed field goals, which those are big. We have to make those, and got to be 100% there.

**Q. Were you thinking about going for two?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Thought about it, but, you know, just -- no. Just thoughts. Let's go. Let's get down to the Red Zone and go. Let's go overtime. I don't think it was a hard decision at all.

You want to take it to overtime. You don't want to lose the game right there.

**Q. You mentioned that Izzy told you that he wanted to be better coming into this week. What did you think of his efforts today knowing that Hammond wasn't there to back him up?**

PAT NARDUZZI: What did you think of him? There you go, you answered that question.

He was outstanding. He ran hard. I just kept saying when the team went down, just keep feeding the horse. Just keep giving it to him. He had some nice runs out there today.

**Q. The stop on third down with a minute left, did you think of taking a timeout to give yourself a minute in the fourth quarter there?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really, but we'll look at it, and I'll tell you Monday if I thought. No, I don't think there was any. We talked the whole time on the headsets whether they needed one, wanted one, wanted a look. No second thoughts there at all.

**Q. How do you grade out your corners? It seemed like they had some big plays they made, but they also gave up big plays. It comes with the nature of how you guys play defense, but what did you grade them out as?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I'll watch the tape before I say that, but I think they played good. They get big plays against anybody. What was it, 27 points in regulation? They played pretty good.

Like I said, it was a zone pressure. We're in cover three. They got behind it, which it shouldn't. That's why you call it. I think it got behind M.J. I think on that one. I think we gave up two explosive passes, but when you look at overall, solid performance.

**Q. Is there any way you re-evaluate if Scarton could start taking kicks for you again?**

PAT NARDUZZI: They compete every week. I think we got the right guy and the right night. Got trust in Sam. Got trust in Ben.

Every kicker in the country misses field goals. So you want to bail on them, I'm not. I watch every day. I know what it is. It's not an easy job.

**Q. On Gavin's touchdown, when you watched the play develop, did you think he might have a chance to jump over that guy?**

PAT NARDUZZI: That was a big-time play. Again, you guys wanted to get the tight end some catches, and we did. That was a big-time play. We knew Gavin could do that.

**Q. Nick lobbying to stay in, did it ever get close to where you may have had to replace him because of his injury?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It didn't get close. Nick is a fighter. He is a tough son of a gun. He made some great shots out there. Nick played well.

**Q. 3 for 5 in the Red Zone, but it feels like a couple of those could have went for touchdowns. Was that more of missed opportunities for you or more about Tennessee stopping you in that situation?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It's always missed opportunities when you get down there. Even right before the half when we threw that pick, I thought we could have scored a touchdown there.

Who knows with some of the calls and what happened there and the whole deal? Waving flags off, I don't get it sometimes. Missed opportunities to get in the Red Zone. We have to get points, period, whether it's a field goal or touchdown.

**Q. Do you see a problem with the rhythm of your passing game. I know Kedon went down, and there were problems there. Your two scores early in the game came from big, explosive plays, and it wasn't like a flow of passing that worked its way down the field. Do you see that as a problem?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. They got guys on scholarship too. We got guys on scholarship. They coach over/under side of the ball as well. It's a good defense. They have a good plan too.

Had a couple too many batted down balls. They were kind of spying Kedon early and just kind of getting in the lane. 33 was kind of spying him and getting his hands up.

**Q. Kedon hurt on that fumble on the very last play he placed in the first half, was that --**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think so.

**Q. What was his injury, Pat?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm not going to disclose injuries and what happened, what we got, but I saw Kedon in there, and he feels good.

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