

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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## Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: All right. Again, coming off a good win up in Kalamazoo. Was happy with the way our guys responded going up there, playing on the road. We talked I think last week about just learning how to play on the road, how we do things on the road, how we act on the road, how we travel, all those things. It's a good week that way.

I think after three weeks of the season you kind of find out who your team is a little bit. Couldn't be prouder of the way our guy responded after having a couple guys hurt. The main one being obviously quarterback Nate Yarnell, how he responded. Not only next man up, which we've done all year, but the rest of the guys stepping up. I think I may have mentioned it afterwards in the press conference.

Our coach had a great game plan against a good football team. Don't underestimate the opponent. We know what happened a year ago. They're talented, they really are. But just the way our kids played, the way they should play versus that opponent.

Again, the game plan, like I said, didn't want to put Nate out there, throw it 50, 25 times a game. That was not our plan. We executed the plan. A tribute to our offensive line.

They had nine guys in the box, not six in the box. They weren't playing the pass, as we all know. They were playing the run. Blitzing, bringing guys from everywhere. Great opportunity there for our guys to show what they could do.

Moving on to Rhode Island. Good team. I know last year they were 14th in the IAA poles. Get beat by Delaware, so they'll drop a little bit.

Known Jim for a long time from his days in Akron, Canton area. He was at Kent State. He was in Akron as a defensive coordinator there. Recruited his son Will out of Akron Hoban High School. Known the family for a long time. Good people. They do a great job. Well-coached as the watch the tape. We will look forward to preparing this week.



Questions.

#### Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No question about it. I almost want to see what we're made of. To me, I didn't know what the heck we get. I mean, number one, we didn't turn the ball over on offense. One delay of game, had to use my timeouts. That was probably the biggest struggle. Felt like I was staring at the damn play clock for a long time.

When you hold on to the ball, 14, 13, whatever you want to call them, quarterback in there, that was impressive. He played with composure. Not turning the ball over was critical.

Again, just don't think it's throwing it, it's handoffs, handing it off to scout teams. Our staff did a great job of setting that up, getting to the point where he was comfortable.

#### Q. Western Michigan tried to throw interior blitzing, trying to exploit that, what goes into preparation to see things like that?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, it was not easy to prepare for. Kradel has done it. He's listened to it. Owen is usually giving the direction. We knew Jake could do it just as well. All got into Pitt, so they're all smart guys, you know that. Again, they just did a nice job up front.

Tell you what, I'll go back to Nate Yarnell, he's controlling things. Not only was he playing quarterback, taking snaps, he's making checks up there as well. He's making checks, changing runs, he's changing pass protections. He was doing it all. We weren't just calling a play and saying, Just run it, don't worry about anything else. He was operating. He had 100% decision making. He made great decisions with what we asked him to do. That was impressive.

#### Q. Would Nate be the backup behind Kedon?

PAT NARDUZZI: Every day we'll find out. I know we know a lot more, have a lot more faith with what Nate did on game day. You can see him in practice, on the scout field. When you see how a guy operates in a game, it definitely gives you, We have another piece to the puzzle you may have to use at some other point in the season. Who knows



when, where. Gives you just another guy.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: We'll see. Coach Borbely's decision. I'm not going to tell him who to play. It's putting the best guys out there. We know we didn't have just five starters. We have six, seven, eight starters out there. We'll see how they play, how they practice.

Comes down to how they play. Nick Patti, Yarnell. Comes down to how they practice.

**Q. Do the opponents go into deciding whether you give him another week to get ready, or if Kedon is ready to go, he's going to play?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it comes down to comfort. But, yeah, I mean, we're going to do what's best for the health and safety of our kids first. Again, Kedon is out of the woods. If he is, you go play. He wanted to play last week, so... We'll have to tie him down, probably keep him off the field this week.

**Q. You guys are playing your alma mater this week. What are some memories you have from playing there? How would you describe yourself when you were in college playing football for Rhode Island?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't remember (smiling). Haven't really thought much about it. It's been a long time.

But it's a great place to live, great place to play football. Bob Griffin was the old head coach up there. I know his son is coming to the game because he messaged me the other day, who was a kicker at the time when I was there.

Just great people. I don't know what else to say. Played football there. Got my degree there. Met my wife there, started a family. I coached there as well.

You think about the places you've worked. Worked there in those offices, did construction in those offices, even though it was against union rules. We still painted. Had to do it ourselves or it wasn't going to get done. I was the foreman on the job in the office.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: The attraction to go to Rhode Island, you know why, so I was leaving no matter what. The attraction was we played Akron in 1985. I had a good game against Akron. In the playoffs, Rhode Island played Akron in the playoffs that year. The coaches up at Rhode Island saw me on tape in that game, found out I was in the portal back

in the day. Didn't have a portal. Found out I was leaving. That's how I went there.

It was really to get closer to home. I didn't want to play at Columbia in the Ivy League. It was really a three-hour drive from home. I wanted to be as close to where my dad and family were going to be, a place where I thought could win.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah.

**Q. Where?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Doesn't matter. Rhode Island was the only one (smiling).

**Q. What did you learn from Bob Griffin?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Oh, gosh. Coach Griffin, he was a great football coach. Obviously he's living up there, taking a walk probably right now down on Ocean Road right now.

Learn everything, everything from your coaches. Discipline. I think we talked about it a month ago, leader, about being a captain and all that.

I think who you are as people is what you pick up on a daily basis. Very disciplined. Just a great coach and a great person. That's what I learned. How to treat people. Because Bob Griffin is a great man.

**Q. Did you know you wanted to be a coach that early? Were you kind of trying to learn how to be a coach? Obviously you had examples prior to that. Were you looking at your coaches at Rhode Island, taking things you wanted to learn, put into yourself as a coach?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, I knew way before that. I knew in high school I wanted to be a coach. Didn't know you were going to be one. You were coaching even at that time. As you played, you were kind of coaching. My linebacker coach, the late Larry Caswell, great coach, former quarterback there.

I knew I wanted to coach. I was into it. Put it that way. I think I was the only player that had an eight millimeter projector in my dorm room. Probably enough there.

Next.

**Q. Given how much work Issy got the last two games, would you consider resting him, giving him a week off, be ready for the SEC games?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. I mean, maybe don't give him 31 carries. I'm sure he wants to play. Put it this way, we put too much work in not to play. Unless he's banged up, he's going to want to play. They all want to play. We all want to coach.

You get 12 great guaranteed opportunities to go out there and play. It's just another one of those opportunities to go make a name for yourself, brand yourself out there on the field.

I think our players are going to take it. If I grabbed Issy, said I'm thinking about resting you this week. He'd look at me, Coach, you don't like me?

They want to play the game of football. They love football. They're going to go play.

We'll rest him up Tuesday, Wednesday, give him less carries. He'll be ready to go Saturday.

**Q. Your team had a 21-point win on the road with a backup quarterback, yet you went down one spot in the AP pole. Frustrate you at all?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Absolutely not. Nothing.

**Q. Does Nate's performance give you confidence in the quarterback position once Kedon has moved on?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Certainly. You don't know what you have. You don't know in August what you have because he's getting reps with the freshmen and the threes. Nate Yarnell has never taken a snap in a scrimmage with the ones or twos, never. After practice every Tuesday, we have what we call showtime. Those guys get to go out, get a period of that, to continue to develop all our young guys, which I think is a critical period for us, as long as health-wise you can do that.

That's when we were coaching him there. I guess he did get six minutes a day of getting coached. Again, it was threes on threes. You're not going, Wow, he did a great job against them today. How do you take it?

**Q. He didn't play his senior year. What would be the attraction be?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We don't recruit him off of senior tape. They better be good players as juniors.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, yeah.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: One kid that went to Texas, I believe. He played a lot of football there before hurting his thumb. Got in a fight, tough quarterback, got in a fight with a linebacker, broke his thumb. Really what happened.

He's tough. Got leadership qualities, let's put it that way. He didn't crumble. He wasn't nervous. He fights linebackers. He looks nice, mild-mannered. I guess he's angry inside. I don't know.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: First thing, it's we, we, not me. I was happy the way they acted. We threw the ball 12 times. If you're a running back last year, that's kind of how you felt. I guess they felt like maybe sometimes the running backs did a year ago: Hey, how about us? We can carry the ball, too.

But they responded well to that. The thing, you got disappointed the week before. Not making plays, Kanota not making plays. Hopefully that's a steppingstone to them making plays, period.

I think we win the week before if we catch one or two more balls. We didn't make some of those catches we needed to. It was good to see Kanota make that nice catch in the end zone, Bub come over on an over-route, make some plays.

Obviously I was a heck of a lot more impressed with what we did based on the opportunities we had. We took advantage of every opportunity.

**Q. On the D-line, what have you learned about your depth? What has allowed them to step in in certain situations seamlessly?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Wish we weren't getting look at our depth. But we have an opportunity to see what they have. They develop themselves after every opportunity they get in these games, regardless of who it is, against Tennessee, against Western Michigan.

I've been impressed what with what they've done. Like I said, our guys are stepping up. Again, Nate is a great example.

**Q. Who stood out to you after seeing the tape from Saturday?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Bam Brima had a nice day just coming



in, playing. There's a guy that hadn't played a ton of football, but really did a nice job. Certainly worth noting how well he played.

Chris Maloney came in and played a little bit. Those are some of the new guys. Aba played three quarters, getting him out of there. Those guys on the D-line.

**Q. The depth, is that maybe just proof of what you've been doing the last three, four years on the recruiting trail, contrasting when you got here? The guys you're getting that are second and third on the depth chart are guys that might not have been here before?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We'll find out when we get to the ACC as well. Can they maintain it? We certainly have to stay healthy here.

It is. Again, it's not just a one-week thing. We have to keep going, keep progressing, find out where we are here in a few weeks.

**Q. Do you like the maturity you've seen from your group? Businesslike, it seems.**

PAT NARDUZZI: No question. It was businesslike. Our guys went up there with a business mindset, for sure.

Again, it all comes down to character. I think we got a great room of character guys. That's what I told the guys after the game. These are character wins. Our guys didn't care who. I prepped them early in the week. Doesn't matter. They went out there with a chip on their shoulder and played with great character across the board. I think that's the important thing.

**Q. Does that character give you comfort that when you're playing a team when you guys on paper are more talented, there's not going to be a letdown?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I certainly hope not. We'll have different goals what we want to do, how we want to do it. We didn't have that problem a year ago. Maybe we were an angry football team a year ago.

I think our guys are mature enough they understand. They've learned from the past. We'll find out Saturday about 4:00.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: Wasn't healthy. Not going to get any injuries. As you guys know, if somebody is out for the year, I'm going to tell you. Good information, bad information. I would say bad information. He's not out for

the year or I would tell you, correct? Tell everybody...

**Q. Correct.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Thanks (smiling).

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: No. Injury guys, the referee guy. Next play, whatever.

**Q. Did you understand watching?**

PAT NARDUZZI: A little bit. A little bit. Whatever.

Next question, let's go.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. Yeah (smiling).

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, he's a football player. Again, like I said, I've told you guys, win or lose, that guy has been good regardless. I've never worried about 31. We didn't help him a whole bunch last year as coaches and the rest of the team in that game as far as what we did, how we did it. Talking little things we didn't adjust to. Again, put it right on my shoulders there a year ago.

Eric saw it. He's playing off-coverage man-to-man, whatever, 65% of the time. He's got a job, and we trust him whether it's downs at North Carolina, we trust him against anybody. He plays good coverage. He's got a tough job.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: Right. Like I said, half coaches. Again, the thing I noticed, guys are going to complete balls. You see them complete balls on Sundays. You see them on Saturday completing a lot of passes.

The thing that's impressive, put that tape on. He was right there to make the tackle. One time he's there, someone knocked him off the tackle. That's about the ugliest play of the year. I mean, he was right there.

Can't make every play. You can't make every interception. You can't get a PBU every player. He would have been gone already. Deion Sanders didn't make a play every play. He did actually have balls caught on him. So did Darrelle Revis, even though he was the greatest of all time.

Next question.

**Q. You said 100% decision making once he got the play or saw what the defense was showing him. How much did he have to work to earn that trust? Talk about him going out there and being able to do that effectively on Saturday.**

PAT NARDUZZI: It's important. I mean, again, we had trust in him or we wouldn't have done it. We have ways of saying, Hey, it's a straight call, let's go with it, let it run. We have a way of saying, Hey...

He's not looking to the sideline, coach, go with it, check what? He's not looking to the sideline, he's doing it all by himself. For a young guy to go out there and do that, it's impressive.

He did an awful lot of it, too. If we didn't, we would have run into a lot of walls inside. So that's the most impressive thing. People can change defense. When we look to the sideline, you can change the defense. You can't change it when the quarterback is making the decision out there by himself, and the cadence.

**Q. Is there any chance you would look for opportunities, even when Kedon is back, to give Nate a series during a game?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Maybe. Coach Cignetti make that decision.

**Q. Ryan Jacoby, was that a one-time thing?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Ryan has been in there all year doing the same thing. We just changed his number. We got 61 sitting on the sideline. We'll just see what the game plan is this week as far as personnel goes, what we want to do.

There's a chance he's wearing 61, maybe 84. Maybe we'll change his number, I don't know, he asked for jersey number 1, I said he couldn't have it. He did actually (smiling). He laughed.

Anything else?

**Q. What's the most important thing you're looking for on Saturday from your team?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Execution. As I said last night, it doesn't matter who you're playing. It's not who you play, it's how you play. That's what I'm looking at.

I don't care what color the jerseys are. It matters how you're going to play. It comes down to execution. This

game, we're leading right into the ACC play. What do we look like going into ACC play, which is the most important game of the year.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: I hope so. I really do. They need these games. When the opportunity came up, they need these games to survive, as well. I don't know what their average attendance is there. It's not as much as it was back in the old days.

They need these games to survive. Some of their paydays come on the road. Play these games, give their kids the opportunity to see what it's like playing at Pittsburgh, Syracuse, BC, wherever it may be.

I think it's good, but I don't know where it's going with the Playoffs and everything else. I don't know where. If it gets shut down, it will slowly kill that level of football.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, again, they got good players as well. We put a lot on those guys. We want to play a better technique, whether it's locking your hips, looking the wrong way, trying to get a pick instead of just doing your job.

I thought the PI was just an average call. I thought there was a lot of hand fighting. But I didn't see any restriction at all. That's the call they made, I respect that.

The big passing game up, I don't know if he got any points out of that or not. I forget how that series ended. That's going to happen. How you respond to it is the key. Tapped out, went right back into the next play and competed. Just playing with good technique. Those guys are on an island. It's going to happen. The best DBs in the world get beat. It's how you respond from it.

We gave up three explosives. I don't care what game you're in. Last week I think Tennessee had three explosives, I think. Maybe I'm not miss-talking. Our goal is five, I believe, five or less. We gave up three last week. That's huge. You're going to give up one of those. It's going to happen.

The other one, the Bub go, that's the one that gets you, too. One run, two passes, we'll take it.

Thanks, guys.

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