

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Obviously wasn't a fun evening down in Louisville. I enjoy and love watching our kids play, but we obviously didn't get it done. Again, it starts with me. Like I told the kids, it starts with all the coaches. Again, it comes down to execution.

We've got to be better. We've got to do a better job coaching them on all the details.

I threw up a drive chart. We watch it on tape. You guys all get this drive chart now. This is probably your thing. You probably look at it and go, what the heck is it, but it's one of my favorite sheets. You watch the tape and then you've got to visually got to look at it and go, okay, what the heck happened. To me it's a 10-minute, hey, what happened here.

I'll start with defense, who played a pretty darned good game. Gave up 17 points. The first touchdown, they go eight plays, 75 yards with 3:21 in the first quarter. They hit us on like a bubble go out of a two-by-two formation, and they don't run bubbles. I was kind of disappointed that we gave that up, but it was wide open in the end zone, and you go, what's going on.

But that was one they got us on. I don't know if it was called a trick play but it's kind of a trick play, and sucked us in on that one.

Then they kicked a field goal and they get the next touchdown, which we know they'll throw back to the quarterback. We could have played it better.

Again, I always go back to how do we coach it, and like you see something, you learn from your mistakes, but guy goes in motion, which we see a lot of. We call it orbit motion, goes in motion and they threw it to him, but it was the backside end, who happened to be Deslin. It's not his fault at all. Sees that. The deeper that guy is, stay back.

You just add to your -- kind of add it to your checklist of things that we've got to coach, and you didn't see the play, but you're going to see copycat, so we're always working



on how are we going to tell -- how does that end tell what's going on there.

So they get that one, and then hit us on a seam pass, which that's the second time we've got hit with that, so we didn't learn from that one, so that's disappointing.

They get a field goal after we turn it over on downs. They go 33 yards.

But overall, you look at the defense, there's still things that we can get better at, and still, when it's 10-7, I'm like, hey, guys, it's the third quarter, it's 10-7; they don't score, we win the game, period. I don't care what our offense does; that's our attitude.

Then you look at the offense, and we all want to talk about the turnovers, and rightly so. The first one -- here's the rundown. Obviously we've got to do a better job as coaches of making sure we don't throw it to the other guys. We've got to make sure we don't fumble the ball, and again, got a helmet on the ball, which are sometimes the hardest ones to take care of.

But the first interception, it's 2nd and 10 and we're at the plus 29-yard line. We're in field goal range already and we're thinking points. We've got to protect the ball; we've got to make better decisions. Carter is opening up the flat and just a bad decision. Wanted to throw it down, thought he had a shot. Just got to throw a better ball if you're going to low deep.

Next one is 1st and 10 at the plus 18-yard line. We're moving the ball down. We're down in the red zone. That's what hurts the most is you're down where you need to. 1st and 10, plus 18-yard line. Five-play drive, we fumble the ball doing some of that wildcat stuff.

1st and 10 at the plus 28, we throw another interception moving down the field. Again, it's not like it's 4th down and you're turning it over. It's like, okay. We're down there. It's not like you're turning it over in your own territory. We moved the football, which is what offense is supposed to do. We're supposed to hold on to it and put points on the board.

Then the last one, it's a 1st and 10 at the plus 35, and it is -- there's 4:21 left to go in the game. It's a 17-10 ballgame.



This is what it comes down to. Again, as crappy as you can say we played, turnovers and all those things, we've still got a chance to win the game with 4:21 to go in the game. We don't make decisions, so we get the ball down -- 1st and 10 at the plus 35, we're striking.

I'm already in my head thinking about we're on the road; we going for two or not? Are we going to get home at 4:00 in the morning or are we getting home at 3:30 in the morning? What are we going to do? Chris was tired. Wanted to get him back.

So we get an illegal procedure, so now it's 1st and 15 at the 40, and then that's when we throw our pick.

Again, it's a protection issue. It's a snap cadence issue. It was a no-huddle, going from -- I won't give you the terms, but we were in a no-huddle two-minute to get to that point, to that 35-yard line, then we went into a huddle mode, and our cadence was still in a no-huddle tempo, and it was a mistake. Again, something we've got to work harder on, make sure -- we got across there. We wanted to take our time, and now we can run some runs, and again, we screwed it up.

That's the rest of the story.

We put it to rest. We've got to learn from it as coaches and players and get better, coach from it.

But always impressed with the way our guys play. They hang in there. They fight. We've just got to protect the football, or you can't win games. It doesn't matter; you can rush for 300 yards. If you turn the ball over, it doesn't matter. You can throw for 300; it doesn't matter.

But we've got a really good North Carolina team that we've got to go face down there. Mack does a great job, as you guys know. He's a legend, and Gene Chizik as the defensive coordinator, and Phil Longo does a great job at scheming you up.

He's going to go back and look at the throw back to the quarterback. Their quarterback is a guy that can do that. But he's a guy that I would term as a "copycat" guy. He's going to take every play that's hurt us this year and they're going to run it.

Louisville wasn't that type, but they actually took some plays and threw those in there, as well. It's something that we're defending in North Carolina, and you've got to go back and look at everything, pull everything out that fits into their DNA and work it this week.

I think they've got one of the top offenses in the country,

top 10 about every category. The May kid is outstanding, the receiver Josh Downs. They're dominant right now.

Defense will have a great challenge. Offense has got to rebound and take the football and score points.

Questions?

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: He's not done for the season. I would tell you if he was, Jerry, right? I think he's done a great job. It's like we talked as an offense yesterday, last night, Kedon played above average, above average. I thought he played good.

As a matter of fact, at one point he was 9 of 11, which I didn't realize. I don't count those things, but 9 of 11 at one point, but he played really good in the first half. I'm not just talking throwing the ball. If you just go back and watch the first half, watch how -- he's making great decisions in the run game, as well, and getting the right checks.

Second half didn't play very good. Why is that? I don't know.

At the end of the half he took a couple shots. Not to the point where he had a concussion, but they're still shots, and we've got to protect our quarterback.

I think it affects every quarterback in the country. We know defensively we're trying to get as many hits as we can and try to affect him because it affects their mindset and getting the ball -- just get it out of there. They just want to throw it.

So yeah, we've got to protect our quarterback. We know that. That's a key every weekend. But he played really good in the first half and didn't play so good in the second half.

Even in the run decisions that you guys won't see, watch it, you're just going to say the O-line didn't block anybody; well, we're running into a problem. That's something we've got to work on and fix and find out why. That's our job.

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes, nobody wants to play receiver, they want to put some weight on and go play defensive end.

Q. (Indiscernible) sometimes doesn't take the shot that's there in times like the interception (indiscernible) forcing it.

PAT NARDUZZI: You've got to keep coaching them.



Again, it's not easy. You sit back there, and Jerry has got his -- there's a lot of things flying at you, and when you get hit in the back of the head one time, your decisions change a little bit.

We've got to keep coaching them. We've got to protect them. That's the first thing you should do, is give them protection. He got sacked, only twice, but got hit a few times.

Again, it's a new offense, too, guys. Don't forget Kenny Pickett wasn't where he was a year ago compared to the year before, compared to the year before, compared to the year before, so it takes time. Whether it's a transfer quarterback or -- we all want instant success.

I get it, and it's the same thing for Kenny right now compared to where he's going to be in two or three years. It's a different ballgame, a different speed, and a different offense.

I think those are all things you've got to take into account, but we're happy with what he's doing. We've got to be more consistent. Again, that's across the board, across the board offensively and defensively and special teams.

Q. (Indiscernible) in-game quarterback changes once or twice in 2017. Is that something you're sort of philosophically against? Is there something you consider in the middle of games where the quarterback is struggling?

PAT NARDUZZI: We can do whatever we want to do. You mess with a football team when you do that. There's psychological effects when you do stuff like that, I think. What are you moving for?

Again, I watch practice every day, and we're playing our best football player right now at quarterback. I've got no doubt about it. Kedon is our best quarterback to help us win a football game right now. If you guys want to be able to have a scrimmage and you bring somebody in, you guys watch and tell me afterwards, but right now that's kind of where we are, and we can start all over if you guys want to, but that's not something I'm very fond of as a football coach.

I think we believe in our guys at every position, and it's our job to coach them and get them better. That's why I said, it starts with us.

Chris asked what do we do. We keep coaching them. Again, it'll get through. Again, we've got to coach our other guys, too, so they protect the quarterback and the rest of the things.

It's everybody. It's not just one guy. We talked about that after the game.

Q. You talked about how you got knocked around a little bit. Maybe that affected his decision making -- is he talking to Frank between series and is Frank gauging where he's at and maybe changing what you guys do to try to help?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, they talk over there. They're on the phone. I'm not on the phone with them. I went over there after he threw the first pick and said, hey, don't worry about it, smacked him on the butt and let him go. But they'll talk, and they're trying to figure it out.

But he doesn't seem shaken, and that's the big thing. He's a quarterback. They've got a lot of stuff on their mind.

Q. Looking at North Carolina's schedule, it looks like they're in a lot of high-scoring games. They have a top-rated offense and a bottom-of-the-barrel defense statistically. Do you think your team is able to compete in a shootout-type game like that --

PAT NARDUZZI: No way. You tell me. I mean, I hope so.

Hey, we're going to compete every -- we get to go play a ranked team on the road at night again, primetime, and probably going to do it the next week after that.

I think we can compete. I think our kids believe, and we've just got to go play better. Just don't turn the ball over, and you've got a chance.

Q. Is the game plan to (indiscernible) and not make it a shootout, or do you think it comes to a 50-50 type game that you guys are able to (indiscernible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know what it's going to be. If we knew that we'd maybe change our game plan right now, but we want our defense to play really good. We don't want to give up a lot of points, and we want to score one more point than they do. Right now the game plan changed. If it's 21-0 in the first quarter and we're down, the game plan changes a little bit.

But we'll have enough in to take care of whatever happens, but we're going to think on a positive realm there and hope that doesn't happen.

Q. Not just Kedon but the offense, what more do you need to see from the receivers?

PAT NARDUZZI: We need to see a lot more. You

practiced all week, and again, I feel bad for those guys sometimes, it just seems like there's some bad luck in that room.

But you know, pregame we find out that Bub kind of got hurt in pregame. Bub Means got hurt in pregame, a little IT band. We thought -- he went in even during warmups. We thought they were going to rub it down and put a little spit on it and he'd be ready to go, but we come in after pregame and he's not ready to go.

So then we go over the quick game plan. Gavin is his backup, but we wanted to get Jaylon Barden on the field, and it's just one of those issues.

Depth-wise, we took a hit a year ago, whenever, and so we're trying to get Barden ready to go there and just give him the Cliff notes on that position thinking he could be able to do it. It wasn't fair to him to even try to do that. He struggled to get lined up so we had to do it with Gavin who did a nice job when he was in there because at least he could get lined up.

We need to see more play making out of him, and again, it's just rough when you're low on numbers.

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: You can ask him. I'm over that one. Ask him.

Q. How does a performance like this from the defense build confidence, given the match-up against North Carolina and how they can score, how much of a confidence build is that?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think our defense has confidence. As a matter of fact, they're upset that they gave up 17 points. That's kind of -- I was fooling with one of them before I walked in here today, and he goes, Coach, we're going to be better. They've got an attitude about them. They don't want them to score any touchdowns, and again, like I said, 10-7, I'm like, hey guys, they don't score, we win, so they've got that kind of in their mind.

Again, played good football for most of the day.

It's a great challenge for them, and I think tough teams like the challenge. To me, I'd much rather put our defense against one of the best as opposed to going out there and look at the tape and they're like, Coach -- you put the tape on, the worst thing they did, last night I didn't sleep very good, is watched all the big runs and big passes.

They're pretty good. Drake May is pretty good. He can

make all the throws. He can run. He's 6'5". He is going to be --

I'll tell you what, the ACC quarterbacks now, I think I've said this before, ACC quarterbacks, it's a real deal. You're dealing with -- this conference is no joke as far as quarterbacks. I don't think there's a better conference in the country than the ACC as far as quarterback play. You can discuss everything else you want, but the quarterbacks in the ACC? Ooh.

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: We'd like him to be, we've just got to get him at the right position. Like I said, he was backing up Konanta and it was just a bad draw. We'd like to get him the ball. He's fast. We've got to get him to know what to do all the time. It wasn't fair to him to put him in that position because he just was -- it's hard. It ain't easy. Knowing one position is hard enough as it is. To know two and three...

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, I'm the head coach. I'll let our offense deal with that. I don't want them taking a bunch of shots and I got to sit in here and have you guys talking about why he threw a pick. I want completed balls. I'd like 9 of 11. If we go 9 of 11 the first half and 9 of 11 the second half and throw it where we're supposed to, it's a good thing.

People are playing with a guy deep in the middle of the field that takes away some of your shots, it's going to open up your run game a little bit. We'll see what they do.

Q. (Indiscernible) looking at the numbers today I think 9 of the top 50 defenses in the FBS are SEC teams; 7 of the top 50 in points. That's by far the most of any of the Power Fives -- is there something about this conference, or is it the style of play is just a little more...

PAT NARDUZZI: It's tempo. I don't think it has anything to do with the play numbers. I can tell you that. Because there's a lot of plays being run.

I don't know what it is. I'm kind of in my little bubble here just worried about Pitt and worried about North Carolina.

Q. (Indiscernible) good defensive play.

PAT NARDUZZI: I have no idea. I just know someone has recruited some good quarterbacks. I don't know about the defensive play, but worrying about what we do on defense

and on offense and special teams and what we're going to face this week with North Carolina. Maybe after the season we'll study.

Q. The margin for error for you guys to get to the championship game is basically almost gone. Is that something that comes up, and do you have to sort of shift your sights a little bit?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, I don't think you ever shift your sights because you never know what's going on. There's some parity in college football. After the Georgia Tech game, I knew -- I said, guys, we ain't got to worry about it. I didn't say anything after this game. We need to just worry about winning one game and not even worry about where we are going.

Focus has got to be North Carolina, not where we're going to be in -- I'm not going to worry about it. We've just got to keep going. We've got five games to play, and we've got to be 1-0 each week and then we'll see what happens. We don't control it, but there's a lot of things that can happen.

Q. (Indiscernible) or is it a matter of sticking to plan and people have to fall in line with what you guys --

PAT NARDUZZI: I think when you talk struggles, it seems like -- we talked about this maybe last week, just we're running the ball pretty good, okay. Really hired Coach Cignetti because I knew he could run it and throw it.

But you've got to go based on your personnel. We're a good run football team right now identity-wise. You guys want to change that and open up the tempo and start throwing it 50 times a game, good luck to you. That's not who we are right now. That's not how we're built outside. So we've got to do what our personnel does best and try to win football game that way, period.

If you try to be somebody you aren't, we're going to have bigger problems.

So we have to just be who we are and players' hands that need it, period.

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I don't have a bunch of Mack Brown -- I just think he's a legend. I love him. I just think he's great for college football, period. I'm glad he's out of the media industry and back into college football because he's good for college football. He gets it. He's old school. Just listening to him in coaches' meetings -- hanging out with him in coaches' meetings, he gets it and he's old school, and that's what I love about him. He does it the

right way.

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