

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, again, we closed the chapter on a really, really good North Carolina football team last night with our guys. Our guys were in a good mindset. They see the mistakes they made, again, coaches and players. There's always preparation errors that you can put on coaches, as well. We all take a responsibility in any win or loss as far as the team goes.

But again, I feel the same way I did after that game. North Carolina is a good football team. We'll start there. Mack Brown has done a nice job. The quarterback is really good. Josh Downs is really good. Had trouble stopping either one of those guys.

I thought Kancey's departure from that game was a turning point. I even heard their team after the targeting cheering saying, hey, we've got a chance now, we've got a chance now. That's something I heard from our guys on the field when that happened, which I thought was interesting, because they must have felt the same way.

He was pretty much -- regardless of tackles or sacks, he was disruptive and he's been disruptive all year. I think that kind of tells you that.

Like I told our team last night, we played three really good quarters, and we've got to find a way to finish it. I'm going to change some things up in practice this week. It's really two fourth quarters that we've let two of them get by the last few weeks.

Historically I think we've been a pretty good fourth quarter team, so is that something we're doing or is it something the other team is doing. If the other team is a good fourth quarter team, and both of them are on the road in good atmospheres, so as a coach you never know what to attribute it to. Again, look and see what Louisville did last weekend to Wake Forest; Louisville is a good football team.

I think the parity in college football and obviously around the ACC is strong, as well.



With that, we've got the No. 22 ranked team in the country. There's no rest for the weary. Dino Babers is coming into town. They've had two tough losses against two really good football teams, too, the last two weeks, but they're still ranked No. 22 in the country and they're coming in to Acrisure Stadium and we've got to be ready to go.

Dino is having a great year. Coach Babers is having a great year as far as what they've done this year. They started off with six straight wins and got up in the rankings pretty high. Again, two tough losses.

Probably the biggest addition, Tony White is their D-coordinator. He's done a great job. I think they're ranked 16th in the country on defense as far as total defense goes. And Robert Anae, their new offensive coordinator -- you guys remember probably the Virginia game here at home. Robert Anae, the offensive coordinator for Virginia a year ago, who did such a great job with Brennan Armstrong, is their offensive coordinator there now, and you see a lot of similarities.

Obviously we'll go back and watch the last couple years at Virginia, as well, just to see what they like against us because you watch tape and sometimes it's like they like certain things against other teams they're not necessarily going to run against you, but when you have previous games, you can always retreat back to that to find out what concepts did they do. They got a lot of empty stuff to him, and that's what they did with Armstrong.

But I give Coach Anae a lot of credit for what they've done with the Shrader kid, the quarterback, and even the backup with Del Rio. He does a nice job with quarterbacks. Also the quarterback coach from Virginia went to Syracuse, as well, so I don't want to say it's a package deal, but they've got two of those guys.

You look at how productive Virginia was a year ago offensively, and then you see it leave to go to Syracuse and then really you see a totally different offense as far as what they're doing, how they're doing it and the success they've had in the quarterback position, not only throwing the ball but running with Garrett.

We've got our hands cut out for us. It's another athletic quarterback that's had a lot of success this year.



Questions?

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, I'll start with the defense. Offensively, again, three good quarters. I guess I'll start with the offense because it's probably less.

Obviously we didn't play a great fourth quarter. The turnover changes things. When you look at the last three drives of the game, I don't have the numbers, but I think it was a 48-yard line, the 35-yard line and the 44-yard line I think were the three last possessions our defense had the ball.

The score didn't indicate really what kind of game that was. They got us in the fourth quarter late, and obviously we were up for three quarters, I believe, or at least up until a couple minutes into the third quarter. I'm not sure what that number was. But it's just how we finished.

On offense, the one turnover, which is better than four, so that stands out to me, we didn't throw any picks, which is huge, we protected the ball a little bit there. But it's another turnover that ends up getting you beat fast, okay, when you get the ball into plus territory.

But the thing on defense that disappointed me the most was obviously the ability of the quarterback to scramble, which I told you guys he was good, but once he started to scramble, our linebackers were all eyes in the backfield instead of eyes on the receivers and getting the reroutes and doing their deal. They started getting like, we've got to stop this quarterback; we can't let him scramble again. Then when you do that, the D-line is hanging out the linebackers because they're not containing the quarterback and making bad decisions trying to get sacks, and the linebackers are going, okay, we've got to cover for the D-line, so when you cover for the D-line, you leave your DBs hanging out.

That's why it takes 11 to play great defense, and when you do that, you're going to be in trouble. We lost our faith that we were going to put pressure on the quarterback and then it just goes from the front end to the back end.

Q. On offense in the fourth quarter, aside from the one possession they had the fumble, you guys went three-and-out and then turned the ball over. What led to that kind of collapse offensively where in the first half you guys were moving the ball so well and even in the third quarter. What changed in the two possessions that didn't end in a fumble?

PAT NARDUZZI: Hard for me to say exactly, but a little bit

of what they were doing, playing a little bit deeper, not giving us as much of the deep stuff, and then we just didn't execute underneath, whether it was a drop -- we had an RPO where we had a 1st down going and then Marcus Minor is downfield, which to his defense it was an RPO; maybe we didn't get the ball out fast enough. He was uncovered; that made it a lot easier for him to get down the field about seven yards, so it was a good call.

But we've got to coach that better based on being uncovered and just running like you would in an outside zone play, which was an RPO, and Jared caught the ball over the middle. That was a huge 1st down, I think on a 2nd and 2. But we just didn't execute as well in the second half. I don't know what it was. Did they over-execute? Did they play better? They batted down a couple balls. A little bit of everything. Again, more than one guy, I can tell you that.

Q. A lot of players on offense had success. Your receivers, all these guys you're counting, have played well in the past, and it seems like they're struggling this year. What do you feel like is holding them back, maybe playing as well as they have before and as well as you expect them to?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I mean, your expectations are your expectations. You can say Kenantae played at Akron and not in a Power Five. Same thing with Bub playing down at Louisiana Tech. You can go back and look at the stats; it doesn't matter what they did in the past. What are they doing here, what are they doing now. It comes down to execution.

It comes down to that, and it comes down to blocking. Kenantae has got a chance on a 3rd down, going back to another question, 3rd down late in the half, I want to say it's 3rd down and 10, and we throw a bubble to Kenantae. If you look at the coverage there, you're going, this is going to be a 1st down. But we don't block the guy and he comes through, corner comes through, we don't block him.

That's execution. That's not on -- Kenantae can go for 25, but we don't give him a chance to, so it's execution and whoever that guy was that missed the block - I'm not even going to call his name out - but that's what happens. It takes 11.

I hope that answers your question.

Q. What's missing (indiscernible) we've seen that connection?

PAT NARDUZZI: Just happens -- it's like -- comes down to the down and who's open and what they're taking away



and what they're giving you and what you're seeing. There's times back there, and again, I know we make comments -- when you watch videotape, you go, oh, that guy is open; why didn't he throw it to him. He can't see it. Again, there's somebody in his way. You know there's a lot of things back in the pocket, whether you're 6'3" or you're 6'0", we know things change that way, but nobody is 6'8" back there that can see over everything. When there's linemen get in your vision, you don't see some of those crossing routes, which we missed a couple crossing routes or check-downs that maybe we should make -- call them runaways through that linebacker territory that maybe we didn't hit that we'd like to hit.

Q. Talking about the defense earlier and the struggles that they've had, focusing too much on maybe Drake May running versus maybe other guys, how much of it was also the angles that your guys attacked on, on Josh Downs in space, May in space, and how much is that something you prepare for versus execution in the moment?

PAT NARDUZZI: A lot of it's prepared for. We had angle problems earlier in the year against a tailback -- a quarterback from -- Gibbs from Georgia Tech. Since then we haven't really seen it, but they lined up Downs in the backfield and swung him out there, and we adjusted after the first time. We didn't execute it after that. It comes down to practice.

Again, we've got to get wider. We're going to see the same thing with Sean Tucker. They're going to do the same thing with Sean Tucker. They're going to motion him out quick, throw him the T-bubbs and we'll get a chance to practice this week, and we'll practice it 100 times. We'll get our backer out there wider.

It's one of those things that Hallett didn't pull the trigger fast, but if you go back to the week before at Louisville, you remember what happened; it was the same thing. It was a bubble, bubble go, so he's playing back, and until Bangally or the star, that outside linebacker on the field triggers faster, he's got to hang on to it so he doesn't run by him, so it's kind of like there's plays off of plays that the normal eye, but it looks like you've got it.

Jerry, he still doesn't know what we're talking about right now. But those are things -- I'm just messing with you, Jerry, as you know. I know your football knowledge is up here to 10.

But those are things that you wonder why he pulls slow; he's making sure he doesn't give that back again. But then Downs runs, he's fast. You talk about angles, there were some angle problems there.

But hey, they've got a guy that runs a 4.4 out there and we've got 225-pound linebacker that ain't running a 4.4. We've got to put ourselves in better position. And again, we talked about it but we didn't get a chance to coach it as well as we'd like to, and didn't have a walk through or run a play on the sideline.

Again, it shocks me that we weren't able to figure that out quicker. Like after he'd run it once, man, as a linebacker I know what I'm doing. As soon as that thing goes or as soon as I see 11 lined up at the tailback spot to the field, I'm widening it up a little bit just getting ready for it. I don't have to react to it. But it didn't click in.

Q. Stopping those type of plays earlier on and then he kind of withered down throughout the game, how much of that is coaching for consistency and how much of that is hey guys during the game we've got to keep adjusting or keep talking?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, we adjust throughout the game with a bunch of different stuff, and again, I'll tell you this, we didn't see a lot of stuff that we practiced all week. We saw a heck of a lot more passes. Their favorite play is the counter; they didn't run counter all day. I don't think they ran it at all.

Obviously they felt like they couldn't throw to that point, or excuse me, couldn't run it. They were just going to let their best player throw it to one of their other best players and let those tailbacks do what they do, protect a little bit and sneak out every once in a while.

Again, good game plan by them. They used their tools, and again, something you have to adjust to all the time.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It's not easy. We tell our guys every week, whether it's offense or defense, if you put something on tape, whether it's a protection on offense and you get beat on a blitz -- they don't even run this blitz but we've got to practice this blitz because they can put it in. Same thing on defense; hey, they don't really run a bunch of bubbles, but last week we got hit on the bubble go, so we're protecting, making sure we don't give up the bubble go and then they're throwing bubbles. As soon as you stop that -- they loved bubble goes last week. We knew -- really North Carolina didn't run many bubbles; they ran more bubble goes than they even did bubbles. We knew the 3-by-1 formation was some bubble but really bubble goes, which was where they were killing people on, so we were very conscious of that. But they got the right guy out there to attract the bubble, that's for sure.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No, there was nothing going on. He's a great kid. To be honest with you, last Thursday I didn't think that Bub Means would play. He was available game time. That's the only reason. Again, I felt guilty kind of saying he's going to play and all of a sudden he doesn't. He was ready to play. From the week before, I don't know if you remember this, from the week before I was excited for him to get a chance, and then again, we got him at a different position that wasn't fair to him.

It seems like every week there's something going on, and then last week we got him switched around. We were going to put Kenantae in that position because he's played it before and just leave Jalen where he was. However, then it goes down to -- comes to game time and Bub is ready to go and he played the whole game and did a nice job.

That's why. But I thought -- Jalen had started all week. Bub didn't get many reps. But that's kind of what we did.

Q. I noticed the (indiscernible) is it fair to say that there's some of those positions that are a little bit more up for grabs due to that lack of production and the way things are going right now?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. Go back to the tackle position. We feel like we've got three guys and I think we gave up one sack at that left tackle position. We wish maybe Matt Goncalves was in there instead at the time. We got beat inside on a sack, but those three -- nothing is open. You feel like you've got guys that can be starters. Same thing at outside linebacker. Bangally didn't start pretty much because he didn't play. He didn't practice on Tuesday because he was banged up. As a matter of fact, we didn't think he was going to go, either. The trainer told us last Tuesday he wasn't going. Then -- he's a tough, tough kid.

But some of his maybe lack of practice maybe showed up on the field, too, but that's some things you have to deal with. That's why Tyler was out there. Nothing is up for grabs. I feel good with Tyler; I feel great with Bangally; I feel great with Solomon DeShields getting out there and playing, and obviously Shayne Simon.

It's not up for grabs. There's some people around the country that don't even go depth charts anymore because depth charts make guys feel bad. You guys like a depth chart, who's starting. But we've got guys -- we feel like M.J., A.J. and Marquis are three starting corners. Those are your three guys you see out there. You can't one is a

starter over the over because they're all playing significantly.

Even when you look back at Bangally didn't start. Bangally ended up having more plays than Tyler when you look at the play count. So it really doesn't matter. It comes down to who's playing and playing well and then we're going to go with the hot guy.

Q. You talked about so much being on the line, what your team hopes to accomplish in the big picture. Do you feel you guys can almost play with nothing to lose? With the ACC Championship pretty much out of reach, you guys can really just play looking to defy some odds or anything?

PAT NARDUZZI: I hope that's what we're already doing. We try to go 1-0 every week, so I don't know if the mindset really changes, because my mindset hasn't changed. We're still trying to be 1-0 every week and not looking too far ahead to what could be.

I wouldn't say it really matters. We're not going to play any looser than we play; we're going to play the same type of way. I don't see changing our philosophy, what our mindset is. Our goal is to go 1-0 each week, and we've got a really good Syracuse team coming in here that's hungry. They're hungry for a victory like we are, so it'll be two hungry teams looking to get back in the win column.

Q. What makes Sean Tucker unique?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, Sean Tucker, a year ago they were running the ball a lot. I think they might have rushed for 28 yards on us total, total offense last year.

You know, he's fast. They will get him the ball out of the backfield more. We just talked about the Josh Downs T-bubb. They're going to run the bubble to him without a question, and they've done it already so you've got it on videotape, so it'll be interesting to see how we defend it this week.

I'm sure they'll do some bubble goes, after which I haven't seen a bubble go yet, which means bubble and then those guys block and go.

But he's fast. He's elusive. He's got good wiggle. He's a really good tailback. Actually we got him in the run game last year, but now you're going to deal with him in space this year in the passing game. He'll be on the backside of a 3-by-1. He's running wheel routes. He's running bubbles over there into the boundary. Shrader looks for him a lot. He's going to look for Gadsden and look for Sean Tucker.

So those are two guys he wants to get the ball to.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes, I think we all go back to the Big East days. Is it one of those where we're going to go fight in the tunnel? I don't think so. But it's a rival game. But I don't know if it's to that extent.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: A bubble is when the guy swings and they throw the ball, like Josh Downs. You know which play I'm talking about. Then they fake the bubble, like if EJ is the tailback, fake the bubble, and those other guys are blocking for him is when they block and then they go vertical. Okay, so the quarterback can pump there and then they go vertical.

That's what got us against Louisville the one touchdown when he's wide open in the end zone. Erick Hallett pulls to get the bubble, and the guy runs by him. So that's what slows people down. We'll get a lot of work at that this week with what we've seen the last two weeks.

Q. Are you preparing for both quarterbacks, Shrader and Del Rio?

PAT NARDUZZI: We're preparing for both for them. We won't change our scout team quarterbacks for that matter, but they're both guys that are athletic. They both throw the ball well. I don't know if the offense changes a whole bunch based on who plays. I would think just watching the TV copy that he looks like he's in good condition on the sideline. I don't know what it is, a lower leg injury or concussion, got kneed. I think he played 24 and he looked wobbly at that time, so I don't know what it is, but he didn't have a towel over his head and light wasn't bothering him it didn't seem in the dome. So we'll see.

Q. Syracuse (indiscernible) what do you think has changed this year?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, it's a credit obviously to Dino holding it together, but I would say they were good on defense a year ago, so Coach White has done a good job there.

I started out by saying Robert Anae has been a difference maker for them on offense. But we've seen some different coordinators go through Syracuse in Dino Babers' career there, and if Dino is a fast-tempo, Baylor-ish type, very similar to Tennessee tempo, there was years we'd go up in that dome and they were tempo, tempo, tempo, tempo, snap the ball in 10 seconds like a Tennessee. They've

obviously slowed that down; they're about 22 to 25, 26 seconds on average, which is about the same thing Virginia was back when they were there.

We'll be ready for their fast tempo. They've got a dozen plays, 20 plays that will go in 10 seconds. But like everybody, it's the same tempo everybody is running nowadays. Nothing is real fast except Tennessee and some other teams throughout the country.

But everything else they're going to be lined up, make you be ready early, and they're going to speed it up to slow down.

But Robert Anae and the quarterback coach have made a big difference in my opinion, and they're making it simple on the quarterback as far as his reads and getting it out of his hand quickly. There's been times we've had 10 sacks up there, and they're not giving up a ton of sacks right now I don't believe. You see the quarterback scrambling. If he doesn't like it, he's taking off, just like we saw last week.

We'll have to be prepared for all those quarterback draws you saw. Same stuff.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, it's hard to say. I'm not going to criticize the officials. They do an outstanding job. It's tough. The whole rule is tough. But the guy is going down and you don't know it; he collides, he doesn't know he's going down, and then before you leave your feet if you knew he was going down then you wouldn't even do anything. But you've got to say it's a good call because they said it was a good call. But it wasn't a good call for me on the sideline; I'll tell you that. It was not one we wanted to lose.

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