

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: I'll start off by just kind of talking about an incident this weekend. We'll start right there. I've already released a statement on my behalf and really don't want to answer any other further questions on it. But obviously as a head football coach, as a parent, very, very disappointed in what happened.

Again, it's something that we coach very hard against, not only football-wise, it's how we act as people. So very, very disappointed, and I'll let my issue or I'll let that issue take care of itself, and I won't have any further comment on that.

Getting back to the Syracuse game, great team win. I think we played some pretty good football. Obviously in all three phases we left some plays on the field. You guys can watch the tape. You can watch the TV copy and say, look, ooh. But defensively I think it was about as strong a performance as we've had this season. Really played well in all phases. Couldn't be happier with the way they played.

Offensively we ran the ball well. Obviously played with a backup tailback and was happy with what Rodney did. Again, he's still rusty. We could have had some more yards and maybe some better reads and all those things, but he hadn't had that many carries in a long time.

Really Kedon completed about 70 percent of his passes. I know everybody, you guys talk after games like, hey, think about this or think about that. 70 percent of your passes is pretty good. We'd all like him to complete 90 and 100, and there's probably one big post above that we wish we would have hit. We should have saw it. But when you look back, he didn't leave any plays. He had some great passes on the sideline to Jared Wayne, and again, shouldn't have got sacked once, but it's not on him. The pressure came through.

So I was really happy with where he was, and I think he just keeps getting a little bit better every game.

Jared drops one across the middle, ball is on the money, would have had more, but getting just a cleaner route by



the tight end that was supposed to clear out there would have just taken that guy out of the way, it would have been maybe a touchdown.

So there's some plays, little things like that, that obviously you're not looking at and probably as a defensive guy I'm not looking at as I watch the tape or watch the game life if I don't watch it with our offense.

Then on to Virginia. Good football team. We know what they looked like here at old Heinz Field last season. Brennan Armstrong is back, Tony Elliott is the head coach there, brings his Clemson swag into Virginia. Obviously in his first season there, but a good football team.

They've got capable receivers that when we walked off that field last season, we were like, that's the best receiving corps in the country. Keytaon Thompson is really good. They've got a kid, No. 3, Wicks, who's outstanding. Again, defensively they're four-down and play a lot of quarters and cover-three and man-free and zone pressure a little bit. Again, I think they're getting better every week they step out on the field. Again, it's a whole new offense for them, it's a new quarterback coach, it's a new defensive coordinator. There's those things.

Again, they took, as we know, a really, really good North Carolina football team to the wire last weekend. That's kind of what we're dealing with.

I'll leave it there and open it up for questions.

Q. What's the difference between Armstrong this year and Armstrong last year?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, it's a change. It's a change. I talked about Syracuse last week and what Coach Anae, how he was and what they did at Syracuse. Brennan is dealing with a new change, no different than what Kedon is -- he's got a new offensive coordinator, new quarterback coach from what he had a year ago, and there's change. I think anytime there's change, it's hard.

That's why having a consistent coach being around you and having that -- that is so critical. It doesn't matter what position.

There's change all over that roster as far as just the entire



staff is new, I think. I'm not sure if the one guy got retained. That's the biggest difference. He's still a good quarterback, but it takes time, and it's no different than a guy going from college to go to the NFL and adjusting to an NFL system. It takes time.

Nothing is instant. We'd all like it to be instant. We talked about Kedon and being a grad transfer a week ago or two weeks ago, and it's the same thing for him. It's like he transferred in there and he's got a whole new staff, so that's what I think it is.

He's talented. He can run. He's their leading rusher. You talk about all the quarterbacks we've faced this year, again, another runner and another guy that -- obviously a left-hander that can sling the football, and we saw he can make any throw.

Q. Assuming what you said, that Izzy will be back this week, how do you go about mixing Izzy and Rodney's carries with both of them kind of rolling at full strength now?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't really know. I was going to wait until Thursday and ask Jerry what he wanted to do, see if he'd give me some tips.

Q. I'll tell you right now.

PAT NARDUZZI: What you got?

Q. 60/40.

PAT NARDUZZI: 60/40, okay. Again, we know we've got capable guys back there, and you see it, I see it. We've got an offensive line. Change-up is not bad. We obviously want to keep Izzy healthy, as well. So 60/40 Jerry says, so we'll try to get it right.

Q. Speaking of the running game, Gavin hasn't been targeted all that much this season. Is that because he's staying in the block (indiscernible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: There is. I mean, there is. It depends on what you're dropping back. We'd like to get him the ball more, there's no question. We'd like to get it to Bub Means more. If you go back and watch the tape, there's a big post that if we lay that thing out there, it's going to be a 60-, 70-yard touchdown. We'd like to get it to everybody, but when you're running the ball a little bit more than you're throwing it, then that's going to happen.

So we'll see. There was one he was open and we've got to get it to him, as well. There was probably another one.

Q. Talking about C'Bo (indiscernible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: We'd like to. Obviously we've had faith in him in practice, and when you get him out there in the game and you turn him loose and you see what he can do, it's just juggling it all.

The plan is always to get those guys in there, and then you kind of see how the thing is rolling.

I hate to make any promises to anybody. If Izzy feels good, we want to give him his touches, Rodney, C'Bo, Vince. It's a good problem to have, I guess.

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: It's funny, talking about players of the game. He I think was an unsung hero that drive, and it was like the C'Bo drive. I told the kids last night -- the kids cheered for him. Last night here, to me there was a different mood on the sideline when he was out there because everybody is used to Izzy and Rodney, and all of a sudden it was a different guy out there, and our guys, they're happy for guys when they're seeing success, and they know the frustrations of being a backup and maybe not playing as much, and they see it, they feel it, they see it in the weight room, they see it in the dining facility, maybe study hall, frustrations.

Sometimes you've just got to wait through the process, and the time is coming. C'Bo has done a great job on special teams, and he's got another year of eligibility, and I hope he decides to take it because I think he's a really good football player, and I think he's only going to continue to get better with having a spring.

We talked about it last year. Everyone is genuinely excited when guys like that get their opportunity and make good off of it.

Q. Does this (indiscernible) do you notice anything different that you guys have been able to say, hey, we do this, he's going to have a hard game?

PAT NARDUZZI: Nothing that I'm going to sit here and discuss. Now you made Virginia go back and look, gosh, he's throwing to the left more than he's throwing to the right; what's he doing? Now they're all going to throw to the right. So there's really nothing. Is it by chance? Is it he's throwing good balls to his right, he's throwing to his left, he's throwing to the field, he's throwing it to the boundary, throwing it to a guy, who's he throwing it at, who's the corner over there, what's the match-up.

There's a lot of things you can look into and Tony can look

into, but we've got to defend him. We don't know where he's going to throw for sure. We're not going to drop eight guys to his left and our right to try to -- that wouldn't be really good.

Q. Do you see any shades of previous years of Clemson's offense in what West Virginia does?

PAT NARDUZZI: We do. We've got obviously a four-game breakdown on Clemson, which he was there the whole time, so just looking back like what do they do.

We know we're going to get a crack-and-go. It's something we've seen every year. We saw one last week and defended it well. But that doesn't mean you're not going to see it again.

There's always -- he's a head coach. He's the offensive coordinator/head coach, and he's going to have some say in what's going on in there. I can't imagine him hanging around in the defensive staff room, just like I'm not hanging around in the offensive staff room too much. I go in there and do my GA jobs and give them some self-scout stuff and get out of there and go back to the defense.

I can imagine him doing the same. He's going to be involved in the offense, but he's going to let his guys coach, as well.

Q. (Indiscernible) starting spot at punter this week. (Indiscernible) do you anticipate bringing more one punter on the road this week?

PAT NARDUZZI: Possibly. You said one punter on the road? Yeah, we usually always bring two. But really EJ didn't put on the depth chart what I told him to. He said, any updates? I wrote on there, I said, those three, and I put another order, I said "Pat Narduzzi" because I think I might be able to go out there and hit it pretty good if you go back and check those records at Ursuline back in the day as a backup punter, so maybe I messed him all up.

Again, like I said the other day, Sam came in, did a nice job on that last sky punt. Not where we want it to be as far as the direction, but did a nice job putting one at the 1. We'd like the other one to be inside the 10. That's his role right now. We'll see how those other guys do with that this week. We'll see.

Then when you look at Cam and you look at Junk, both of them have legs. We're going to find out what they do this week, so it's an "or" right now. Maybe Sam Vander Haar goes out there and kills it this week, but it's an "or," and there's a battle going on there, as I think we all see.

Again, it's not all the punter's fault. The high snap, and Cam has got to jump for it, then punts it two yards. That was ugly. That punt team has not been a pretty sight this year, and obviously when you lose your starter that's been starting for whatever it was, four years for Kirk, it's something that we've got to work through, and it's not good enough right now.

By the end of the year we'll have our guy for next year, I can guarantee you that, but it's taking a while, and it's not easy sitting back there. Not only is it a new punter, it's a new snapper, as well.

Q. (Indiscernible) what have you seen from the linebackers (indiscernible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, they were in the locker room down in North Carolina, the linebackers, the DBs in their little huddles. They sometimes get together with their coach afterward, and weren't happy. I think I told you that last week.

It was just a heck of a lot more detail. They let the thing get away from them, and that happens in a game. Things start to happen. Obviously we got after the D-line, too. They put pressure on the quarterback. They took care of it to the point where the linebackers didn't have to worry about it, and I think any time that stuff happens, when you're worried about a scrambling quarterback, you've got a problem.

Again, Armstrong can scramble, as well. Like I said, leading rusher. Those aren't all quarterback runs, but they do like to have designated quarterback runs for him, whether it's counter, just zone read keeps or insert keeps.

But just -- it was so much more detail. When you watch the reroutes on the receivers, the receivers couldn't get started. As soon as they got started, they got rerouted, pushed out of the way. Just makes everybody's job easier.

They paid attention tension to details, and sometimes you lose the details when other things are happening to you. You get distracted during a game by something else that you shouldn't be, but it's understandable, too.

When everybody does their job, it sometimes looks like the secondary wasn't very good against North Carolina or the linebackers are not very good, but then we weren't very good up front, either, so it just trickles downhill.

Q. (Indiscernible) are there players you saw at least more controlling in those conversations to help everyone else?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think the DBs. I think when you

think passing yards and what just happened today, it falls on them because they don't care what the linebackers do. They're just looking at like what happened, and I didn't cover my guy, or they don't sometimes -- especially after games, standing in the shower having a little huddle, realizing really what happened to them until they watch the tape. Just like sometimes standing on the sideline you don't realize what happened.

They take it personal, but we all do. Whether it's the front all the way back to the secondary, we're all -- as coaches, too, take it personal. You love it when your players take it personal.

Q. After the game (indiscernible) what have you seen from him this season and kind of how he's put together --

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Haba had half a sack, he had an arm around the neck. He got a nice holding call. Haba has been outstanding, and again, sometimes for all these All-Americans, let's just look at numbers, but like I've talked to a lot of scouts that walked through here and said, they see almost the strips, they see almost. That's what they want to see.

Again, it's all great for the magazines and all that to have these big numbers, but they're looking for football players that pay attention to details. Haba is about the details. If there's one guy -- and again, Deslin had a heck of a day, but if there's one guy that's really been as detailed as anyone at that defensive end spot, it's been Haba. We've been happy with where he is, and he wants to go make plays, and he'd like to get those stats like everybody would.

Jerry would like to be voted the best media guy here in the city of Pittsburgh, really western Pennsylvania. We'd all like those accolades, but you've just got to keep working, Jerry, and it will happen for you.

Q. (Indiscernible) chip on their shoulder to get to the quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, they were good. Again, it's like I told Coach Partridge, great job getting them angry. There was some angry guys maybe in that room. You can tell them and tell them and tell them. They've got to do it.

Again, let's say maybe their offensive line is not as talented as North Carolina's was, but it's hard to say what, why, how, but nobody cares what happened at Syracuse. We only worry about what we do at Virginia this weekend because you guys won't be talking about the pass rush if we don't get any this weekend.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

PAT NARDUZZI: We're going to have that conversation. I think let's let the season play out. Really have not had it, and you've got senior day in two weeks. We'll have to figure it out soon who's going to walk out there, who's not. Again, as you guys know, some guys will walk out for senior day and some guys won't, and it doesn't mean they aren't going, either. There's decisions to be made for a lot of people come the end of the season.

Q. (Indiscernible) today's day and age with the transfer portal and all this and the way college football goes, is it more challenging to convince players to stay or keep them happy, or is there a little bit of that in there with everything -- the way things are going nowadays?

PAT NARDUZZI: There's no question. We've done a great job of keeping our guys for the most part. Some get recruited off campus and all that, and we all know that. But I think when you've got a happy place to work, you guys got a happy place to work, it's easy to stay.

But I think the longer this name, image and likeness thing goes on and you more you read about it and the more you kind of look around, the kids are different nowadays than they were three years ago, five years ago, eight years ago, 12 years ago. Everybody has got somebody in their ear.

You certainly worry about it, but you can't control it. Our job is to win football games and put the best guys on the field and win football games, period. That's what we have to do.

Q. Do you sense watching from the last few games that (indiscernible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: No, I don't see that at all. It's the same every week. Nothing has really changed. It's one at a time, and I know that sounds cliché and you guys are looking at me like I'm crazy, but it's all about Virginia this weekend. If we saw our guys, like, oh, let's get a push for this, it would be like, what's wrong with you; why didn't you push before. You don't see it like that.

If I saw it like that, I'd be upset. I'd be really upset if that was the case. Like you didn't want to push it a few weeks ago? You didn't want to push it against Georgia Tech?

Q. (Indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: I think so. I think so. In their minds, yes. If you dig deep, is there something back there or has someone said something to them, like, hey, this could be --

you guys patting them on the back saying they looked real good, guys up on campus saying, hey, you look great. How do you handle success, how do you handle adversity, those are all things that we talk about all the time, but everybody handles it a different way.

You've got to make sure they're all on the same page. It's my job to make sure that they're together and they get it. Sometimes it goes in one ear and out the other. I try my best.

Q. (Indiscernible) might not be here much longer. What have you seen from some of the younger guys who are stepping up to kind of understand their roles and be playmakers?

PAT NARDUZZI: If you look where they are right now compared to where they were against West Virginia, it's night and day, as you can see. The 25 yards rushing last weekend was I think someone mentioned after the game was that the best performance ever. It's in the top five. But I think R.J., EJ's great assistant gave me a stat like there's been 16 times where we've held a team under 100 yards, I think, so we've held someone to minus one yard rushing. I won't get into their name, but like we've done that before.

Like that's not -- that's what we want to do. That's what we should do. But when you look at what we did in the rushing game the last few weeks compared to what we looked like against West Virginia, they've all grown up, and Voc didn't necessarily grow up this season, so it's some of the young guys and new guys that we have on our football team.

Solomon DeShields keeps getting better. Bangally keeps getting better. All of those reps are so valuable that you just get them in practice. They just don't happen.

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