

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: All right. It's hard to believe we're into week 12 already. Before I forget, just wish you guys all a Happy Thanksgiving. This is our last opportunity here. So Happy Thanksgiving to everybody. Hope you are grateful for a lot different things in your life and hope you have a great Thanksgiving. We'll be working Thanksgiving morning like normal and then give our kids the afternoon off.

But closed a chapter last night on Duke and had a good team meeting. Lots to still learn. You constantly find out about your team. The great thing is you go through the tape, there was a lot of things we did that was, that weren't good, but the nice thing is you played well enough to win a football game and when you cannot play your best game and win a football game, that's a sign of what kind of team you have, when at the end, when there's adversity and your backs are against the wall, it's a two-point play, it's fourth and 18, and we don't do the right thing, whatever it is, we found a way to win the football game and that to me tells me a lot about the kids that are in that locker room.

So my hat goes off to 'em. My foot wants to hit 'em in the rear end for some of the crazy things we did, but that goes with the game of football. It's not easy.

So on to Miami and Mario Cristobal and Kevin Steele, defensive coordinator. They've got a great staff down there. Josh Gattis, who was at Penn State in 2016 and 2017 when we faced Penn State as the offensive coordinator down there. So they got a Who's Who coaching staff there, and they got a lot of great football players that are running around.

Big question mark would be who the quarterback is. Obviously we know Tyler Van Dyke is a tremendous football quarterback. Jacurri Brown is a guy started I think the last couple weeks. It's hard to tell. There's quarterbacks in and out. So they have had some quarterback issues.

The Brown kid really is a great athlete that can run and I think he just keeps getting better every game he gets in



there. The one interesting thing this week is he's not leading the team in rushing because he hasn't played enough games, otherwise he probably would. But he hasn't been in enough games to be that guy yet, but he shows streaks of being able to really get up and go.

Questions.

Q. (Question about giving up big plays.)

PAT NARDUZZI: We gave up a lot of big plays? We gave up three. That's okay. We gave up three. But those three should have gave up zero. So go ahead.

Q. Just saying those are big touchdowns last year that there was a similar problem with Miami. What were you guys able to look back and say, hey, did you isolate things and say, if we do these things better, those type of explosives won't happen anymore?

PAT NARDUZZI: Miami's, Tyler Van Dyke -- the guy that we got to know where he is at all times is the Mallory kid. He's a good football player, great blocker. He'll get his arms out there and hug you up on the edge and he's strong. So we got to keep an eye on him.

But the three plays we gave up last week it was just communication and, I mean, just communication. We should not have given those up. That's what really disturbs you. You could have had a hundred yards total offense really if we played like we should. Those are ones that we just said, Here you go.

But Miami's explosive. Their tail backs are explosive. You got the Henry Parrish kid that committed to us awhile ago at tail back and the Knighton kid who is a football player as well.

So they got good players and good skill and if we can hold them to three explosives, it will be a great day.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. It's like anything, I don't think it has to be with who, who and where. I think it comes down to how we play, how we execute. We got to go down there focused, locked in. I don't care if we play in Pittsburgh in 1 degree weather or down there in 70 degree



weather, we got to go and execute. We got to not make mistakes and go play.

So what happened in the past really doesn't matter. I know you guys will always go back to what happened in the past, but the past really does not matter. It's not going to impact this game at all, unless it's in your head. But it's not going to be in our head or our kids' head.

Q. Is there any season-ending updates on any players that didn't finish the game from last week?

PAT NARDUZZI: No. No. If there was, I would give 'em to you. We're still kind of playing it by ear.

Q. (Question about Izzy being out.)

PAT NARDUZZI: We really didn't discuss that. We feel good with C'Bo. We feel good with Rodney. Not really.

Q. Are there plans to practice inside to get used to the heat again?

PAT NARDUZZI: We will be inside. There's no question. We will turn the heat up to 70 degrees in there, try to get it heated up and get ready for the acclimation down to Miami.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: They have done a great job. Have you ever seen 'em quit? Have you ever seen 'em go kind of go, oh, no? No, our guys just keep fighting, regardless of what's going on. The defense was putting four or five sudden change situations the other day and I think were successful two out of the four or two out of the five. The two interceptions we threw, they got zero points from. We turned 'em down on downs on one of those, I think the second one.

We have a punt blocked, which again, is disappointing. We've talked to our punt team and all that.

But, again, seven points off that. They get seven points off another punt issue. So I told the offense, we're going to go for it on fourth down a lot, so that's what we should be ready for.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Might as well, right? Let's go for it on fourth down. We have it right there, just, right there at least have a chance to get a first down.

I think we had a fourth and 18 or third and 18 the other day. We completed it and did a nice job. So just throw it

or run it.

Q. In your experience, maybe not this year's team, but is the last game of the season when you don't really have anything to say about the holiday bowls, is that a problem? Focus a problem?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't think it's a focus problem at all. It ain't a focus problem for me. We're doing the same Monday that we normally do. Our kids don't have to go to class this week, so they're excited about that. I think there will be some excitement that they get to play football. They feel like they're in the NFL or something. There's no classes and they get to play football.

But you only get 12 opportunities guaranteed. We've earned an opportunity to have another one, but that doesn't matter. It's like, it's a pride factor. It's about wins. It's about who you are, and I don't see any of that. It shouldn't be a letdown. We get to go play. You either go out there and play well or you go embarrass yourself, and I'm not one for embarrassing myself.

Q. What does it say about your guys's character to stay focused and make that happen?

PAT NARDUZZI: Just like, oh, is there going to be a letdown because what are we playing for? We're playing for a bowl game. You're playing for your pride. And I don't think anybody wants to go out there and slop around.

So it tells you a lot about our character. I think we talked about it last Thursday, just about like who we are as a football team. Any team I'm in charge of we're going to continue to go and it starts with the coaches working like they normally do and being ready to roll on game day.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I can't say that. We had some mistakes in there as well this week, especially on pass protection a couple times. Even on that, I mean, we got a third down and four. We have two runs for three yards, which three yards isn't a bad run for C'Bo. You wish you had a little bit more, but on that four-minute drive there, we have to throw a pass on third and four and we got some penetration and Kedon can't get the ball off. Konata Mumpfield is wide open, it's going to go for 20, and the game's over.

We aren't having the excitement that we gave you guys, and you guys can thank me later about the excitement we provided for you at the end of that game. But so, I mean, I can't tell you it's any better. It's about the same. Our guys are going to plug in and play where they have to play and try to go out there and execute the best they can.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, yeah, I mean it is. They're playing -- you watch 'em last week against a good Clemson football team as we know. They're playing hard. They're playing hard and they're athletic. I mean, they will be at home, it will be Senior Day for them, they will play excited, I guarantee you that.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Corey Flagg is their middle linebacker who is their leading tackler. He's a dude that just can't be blocked. Up front they're the typical four-down, going to penetrate and cause havoc in the back field. That's what they do. They're very athletic, probably the most athletic front four we have seen this season. So we're going to have to not only run block, but we're going to have to protect our quarterback.

Q. (Question about punters.)

PAT NARDUZZI: More than once.

Q. Is there anybody separating themselves in this entire deal or is it a week-to-week basis still?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's a week-to-week basis. Again, Sam is our sky punt guy and did a nice job there. Wish he would have got it inside the 10 and not at the 15 or 14 or 13. But maybe we were a little too far out for him.

But we got to clean that part of it up. It will be a wait and see. There will be some "ors" on the depth chart if there's not already some on there, there will be some "ors."

Q. (Question about recruiting.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Great question. No, it's not. Okay. The NCAA came up with a new rule. We're not allowed to go on the road next week. So, yeah. It's new this year. Took a week away from us.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. Sure. We're going to Hawaii. (Laughing.)

Q. Dayon played on Saturday. There's still the ongoing case that he has an important day coming up. Was there clearances you guys had to go through? Was that your decision? What was the process of getting him back on the field?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, getting obviously he missed one game. Like I said, there's, you're always innocent until you're proven guilty. But we kind of made him guilty until he's innocent. So he's paid a price with the team, he's paid a price on the field. He was out for a week. Again, spent some time down in what we call the Pit down there doing some stuff with Coach Stacc. So we'll wait to see where that whole thing goes. And then, you know, move on from there.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I was doing good. I was doing good. Is that an injury question? (Laughing.)

Q. Elijah said some really good things about Sean FitzSimmons when we talked to him last week. Of course he had to step in more this week. What have you seen from FitzSimmons this year?

PAT NARDUZZI: He hadn't played for a couple games, maybe three games. But I don't know if we'll get his four games in to redshirt, but we obviously expect to redshirt him. He's a guy that's just consistent. He does a great job on scout team during the week. We have no fear of putting him in there. He's big and strong as Tyler Bentley and Calijah and Devin and David Green know.

I thought our inside guys played really well last week. So he's going to be another really good football player for us.

Q. Will you spend next week talking to a lot of your guys that are undecided about their future? Obviously from a recruiting standpoint you need to know who is back.

PAT NARDUZZI: We need to know. Yeah, we'll spend a little bit of time. That's kind of what that week is for, just to find out where they are, going into a bowl game and going on the road recruiting.

So I think the portal opens up the next week we're on the road. So it gives us a chance as coaches to sit down, see where our guys are, what they're doing. But I don't think you'll know exactly where guys are. I think this off-season will be as crazy as it's ever been wherever I think everywhere. Just because it's another year.

But we'll have a chance to sit down in deeper thoughts than maybe some of the quicker conversations we had, just to see where guys are and what they're thinking. But I don't think we'll have any determination, whether it's a guy that walked on Senior Day or a guy that didn't walk that could move on.

Because I think, you know, there's just different things that need to go on. It's not like a quick decision. I want our kids to take their time. And like I told them, Take your time, make a good decision.

For me I want a quick decision, so I know what I got to do. But it's not about me, it's about them and making a sound, good decision on what's best for them. It's not about me or Pitt football right now it's about them. We'll try to wing it like we do. That's what COVID has done to us. We're just kind of winging it in December.

Q. Does that make the exit interview process, like does it help to kind of gauge where guys are at? It's bowl season, a lot of people will sit out bowl season if their thinking about going to the NFL. How does that change the tone of how you guys have to handle the process?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's hard. It's like a -- it's different because you don't know. COVID is still affecting us. This extra year -- usually you know who is your senior and then you might have to worry about an underclassman that might leave early that's it. Maybe two or three of those, max. And now you don't know. Guys have options. So we'll just wait and see how they feel.

Q. You have had more time also to look back. What do you feel about Kedon this weekend now that you've had more time to look at things to see how he did. There were some passes where he even talked about Means running through a route when he expected him to look for it. How have you seen him adapt to things?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think -- it's like Coach Cignetti says, It's the ultimate team game. It takes more than one guy. He always uses that phrase.

So whether it's the wrong route or him making a bad decision when he's throwing back across his body and throwing some balls he shouldn't. Or a corner falling off into a route that we didn't expect to. Some of those things happen at the quarterback position. He's got a hard job back there.

But I think he's adjusted well and I think he's done a nice job for us. He's given us a chance to win. He's on a three-game win streak. And you don't do that with crappy quarterback play, I can guarantee you that. There's a lot that goes into it. He's made some nice throws. When you look at his throws that he's made. Everybody wants to look at the negative, you got to look at the positive too. He's thrown some darts.

Q. John Morgan had a really strong start to the

season. A bit of a lull in the middle. He's really picked up the last couple of weeks. What have you noticed maybe just in his preparation and the way he practices, anything that maybe he's done differently team-wise that he can get back and get himself back on track?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think Coach Partridge has got a size 10 shoe. I think that's part of it. Coach Partridge has been after him just to take care of the details and not worry about getting sacks and this and that and making splash plays. Just do your job and good things will happen. Maybe that's part of it.

Q. You're going to have the ACC's leading rusher. Is that a feeling of pride? How do you feel about how the offense kind of accomplished that goal?

PAT NARDUZZI: We kind of felt like we would be able to run the ball going into the season. We obviously did. A year ago we thought we would be able to throw the football and we did. It's all comes down to wins. The stats are great and that, but like who really -- the only stat anybody really cares about is how many wins or net win column. So whatever we got to do to get to that win is what's important. It's not about sacks or yards rushing or throwing or completion percentage, it's about winning. Win clean, win ugly, doesn't matter, just win. Find a way to win. That's what really matters. Doesn't matter about the run game.

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