

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Happy Monday. We closed the chapter on the game Saturday. Obviously disappointing loss. We didn't get what we wanted out of our team. I think as I told you, I forget what I said Saturday after the game, but we kind of played like as the opener; we're going to really find out what we need to improve on. I think as a football coach, that's what you do.

If you think about it, this is kind of why they call us "coach." I told the staff that yesterday afternoon, is to fix the problems. If there's no problems, you can't fix it. If you don't know what the issues are, you can't fix things.

Now I think we have an idea of what we need to do. This communication, that communication, whatever it is, really in all phases of the game.

I thought special teams played really well on a positive note, and then defensively we played a really good second half. Offensively we had some spurts in the second half we played really well. But we did a lot of things.

As a matter of fact, defensively, same thing as offensively. Whether it's one or two guys, the most critical guys not doing their part in a football game.

We got a couple runs defensively where we got one guy going the wrong way. So we always talk 1 of 11. Do your 1 of 11 on defense, but if you've got 10 of 11 guys doing the right thing, you've got a problem, and that appeared on the tape. It appeared on the offensive tape, as well, as you look at it.

There was a lot of issues as far as a lot of uncharacteristic issues that you get exposed with when you're playing a good football team. But got a lot of faith in what we do, and again, it starts with me. When you talk about the blame and -- you guys can all point the finger right here at me because I didn't get them ready to go. I'll take full responsibility, and we'll move on and have a great week this week. Backyard Brawl.

Questions.



Q. Did the guys look ready to go?

PAT NARDUZZI: They were ready to go. They were not not ready to go.

Maybe it started fast, maybe they thought -- I don't know what they thought. I actually asked them what they thought last night; hey, were you locked in? Yeah, Coach, we were locked in. Well, why did we start slow? They didn't have any answers.

But I just want to make sure you look in the mirror and find out why, and whatever that locked in was wasn't locked in enough. I think we got them there, and quite honestly you had a chance to win the football game, and I thought we did not play great at all.

We played below average football for most of the game and still had a chance to win the game at the end. That's the crazy part about it.

It happens. It happens in life. Sometimes that happens in every part of your life.

We'll regather, close the chapter and move on.

Q. A lot of questions between the defense in the first half and the second half in the run game. What was the biggest difference? When you talk to Shane, he talked about inside zones, outside zones, reading keys. In the second half you guys did dominate. Now that you've had time to look at it --

PAT NARDUZZI: Just little tiny things. Looking at Shane watching the tape, he's pointing one time, like they had an unbalanced set and he's pointing at the tight end who's over there and he forgets to do anything else.

There's a lot of things going on. That doesn't even -- he's just trying to overcommunicate, trying to do his job as a Mike, and D-ends are pointing, Sammy O is pointing. It's like, who cares about that guy; get lined up and read your key, whatever that may be. That's just one minor thing.

But those are all over the field.

It's just details, and we talk all the time about -- as a matter



of fact, it's one of the things I talked about before we left the hotel was if you take care of the little things, the big things will take care of themselves.

If you don't take care of the little things -- it's the same thing on offense. If you rush -- these guys are trying to run as fast as they can, but you've got to remember just as fast as you can is not always the best. It's detailed the best you can.

Those all affect everybody. We didn't do a good job pass protecting up front at all, and I think out of 44 plays, Coach Cigs had written down we had 25 pass protection issues. But again, you're trying to play hard, you're trying to be aggressive, you want to punch that guy, and you move too hard this way and all of a sudden someone loops and you can't react. So you've got to be under control. You can be cranked up and ready to go, but if you don't play under control and do your job, you have issues.

But we'll learn from it. That's the great thing is you learn from it.

Q. Saturday night Corleone said in the second half you guys started blocking him one-on-one. Was that an adjustment you made at halftime, or is that just checks at the line by Jake? How did he get into those situations?

PAT NARDUZZI: It all depends on what the protection was, number one. Defensive linemen, they've always got little things -- we ran the ball more in the first half, then you got into a passing game, so there's going to be more -- when you're playing a three-down, that guy is going to be on it. The guard has got to kind of sift for the defensive end what's going on. If there's two guys coming off the edge, a guard can't help. So it all depends on what the pressure is, to answer your question.

Q. At the start of the game you came out and threw three passes. Was that scripted or something that was being seen on defense?

PAT NARDUZZI: It was something being seen on defense, and me and Coach Cignetti talked about that, and he's like, I wish I could do it over again, but that's part of it.

You got your plan about what you want to go in there, and we've got to have a better plan. Again, that's why I say it's coaches. It starts with me and it trickles down. We could do a better job of putting our kids in better positions to make plays.

Q. Was it more execution Saturday night than anything else?

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, I think it starts with the coaches. We talked about the three passes to start off. I was kind of going, three passes? I want to run the ball.

If you didn't know that you were going to be passing in the ball in the second half, you'd have run those balls. You'd have three straight runs.

What was your question again?

Q. Execution --

PAT NARDUZZI: Execution is everything. It's never one thing. You guys all want to put your finger on this one thing that it is, and it's everything. Again, it ain't the quarterback. It ain't just the O-line. It's the receivers, it's the tight ends. Why didn't the receiver peek back? They've got to peek back when we're throwing hot, and he didn't look back. The quarterback wants to throw it to you and then he gets hit because you didn't look back.

All those things play into it, but it's never just one thing. It's execution.

There's not a coach in the country doesn't come after a game like that and go, man, I wish I would have done that. You don't watch tape on defense going, man, that was a great call - every one of my calls were great by the way - these guys didn't execute; it just doesn't work that way. That's not how a team works. That's not how we think. That's just not in our DNA.

We can always be better, and we put down on tape if it's structure, if it's physical, mental. You talked about all those things.

Every play we break down, and I think I've told you this in the past; it's mental, physical, structural. Structural means, man, what a crappy call that is. Man, they had a good defense for our play. And that happens in games.

We don't know exactly what they're in, so you try and eliminate those, and we could always be better, and you could have a better gauge on what our guys can do, as well.

Q. You also want to coach up the guys who made mistakes, but is there also some temptation to get some other guys some opportunities because of some of the things you're seeing?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, you'd like to, but do you want to see the same mistakes happen the next week when that guy gets in there? So little by little, yeah.



Q. You brought up overcommunication when it came to Shane and some of the checks he was doing pre-snap. Is it easier to correct overcommunication or a lack of communication from your experience?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's easier for Shane to -- it's easier to have overcommunication. I'd rather have the overcommunicator, and he's like, I got it, Coach; that doesn't mean anything. They were worried about a trick play. I won't mention what it is. They were worried about a trick play, and that's why he's pointing, so the safety -- anytime a tight end is there by himself and it looks like he's in an offensive tackle's position, you're worried about him -- it's unbalanced, but he's eligible. Sometimes unbalanced, he's ineligible, and they cover him up, but they were worried about it because he was eligible, because they looked out and saw the receiver. They were just worried about a trick play where someone would turn a guy loose and give up a big play.

Overcommunication is a lot better, but they've got to understand that once you point, we're good; move on and get your job done, too, because we can't have all the focus over here and then they go run the ball over there and you don't even know.

Q. How do you feel your safeties played Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, solid at times. I thought Donovan McMillon played a good game. Javon McIntyre played pretty solid. PJ played a little soft at times. We'd like him to be a little bit tighter coverage, but that goes with -- Erick Hallett and Damar Hamlin were the same way at his age, so it's all just feeling in the game, and it takes experience, too. It's not something that just comes automatic.

We'll tighten up that this week and make it better.

Q. Donovan hadn't played a lot in the second half. I think after the first two series I think he was in for the rest of the half. Is he maybe a case for more playing time? Maybe even 50/50 or more rotation?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, no doubt about it. Again, that's what we're waiting to see. That's why you try to figure out who those guys are and what they're doing and how they're playing, but he played good, and there's no question about it.

Q. What did you see from Phil this week?

PAT NARDUZZI: Getting the ball out quicker. Again, when you get hit 21 times -- any NFL quarterback can tell

you, when you get hit 21 times in a game and you get hit early when you shouldn't, you're going to struggle.

So like everybody wants to point the finger at Phil, and again, that's why you try to not say too much prior to watching the videotape, and then when you watch the videotape, it's a lot more than him knowing where to go with the ball. He knows where to go with the ball. It's just getting everything to be the right way.

As we talked a week ago, we've got to clean up our protections. We've got to keep it cleaner and it wasn't good enough versus better competition. If it wasn't good enough the week before, and then all of a sudden you step up the competition, we're going to see the same front out of West Virginia this week, and I'm sure we'll see a lot of the same blitzes, so we'll be preparing for West Virginia's defense and we'll be cleaning up all the blitzes we saw against Cincinnati.

Q. Phil had some strong words about the crowd's reception to the offense's play in the second half. I was wondering what your thoughts were on his reaction to the booing and your personal reaction?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, they were probably booing me. Number one, I don't hear it, and fans are going to be passionate. I really don't care about the guy that's in his basement on Twitter. I hope our kids don't listen to that.

It doesn't really matter. If that's what you want to do, you want to do it, but I'm not dealing with it. The guy in the basement and -- we're disappointed enough. We're going to stay positive in this room, and that's kind of all I've got to say about that.

Q. Do you have any words for Phil about his comments?

PAT NARDUZZI: No. No.

Q. Looking at West Virginia --

PAT NARDUZZI: Didn't really hear about it and it doesn't really matter.

Q. Looking at West Virginia, they don't have a guy like Ford-Wheaton who was really a big factor in last year's game but they still have Donaldson at tailback, though he might be less of a surprise this year. What do you expect to see from West Virginia on offense this week?

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, CJ Donaldson is a good football player, great at quarterback. He's athletic. He's a weapon. They like to run the football.

They've got a bunch of RPOs against CJ's 240 pounds. He's a load. He's hard to get down.

Again, our opener last year seemed like our opener this year against Cincinnati, so hopefully we'll be tied in more just -- we've seen live bullets in the game. Won't be a surprise as much as it was last year.

I think we're better prepared, but they're better prepared. They've got experienced -- I think they've got nine guys returning on offense. Their entire line and tight end are back. Brown does a great job scheming you up. He's obviously calling the plays, as well, so I think he does a good job play calling, as well.

I don't think he called them last year, so we'll have a totally different play caller. They do a lot of different stuff.

It's like preparing for a whole different offense, although they saw some of our weaknesses a year ago, so they do a good job scheming you up, with formation of boundary and some different things that got us that we'll hopefully be more prepared for, but he's not going to go back -- I'm assuming, and we'll still practice it, but he's not going to go back to the same stuff. He'll find some other stuff that he'll try to pick on.

Louisville did a great job, as well. I mean, Cincinnati, Louisville, whatever. Satterfield did a great job of seeing different stuff we had never seen before, either.

Q. When you look at your guard positions, how does Ryan Baer factor in either as an option back in there because you had him in there a little bit in the spring or have him at tackle?

PAT NARDUZZI: Big discussion. Ryan Baer is a great player. He's kind of like that third tackle. You've got to be careful of repping a guy at different positions, and again, he's a master of all -- jack of all, master of none, and that's our concern with a young guy like that. We want him to be that next tackle going in and get him prepared to right left and right, whatever we want to do there, but playing him at three different spots, are we doing him a disservice.

He could certainly could go in there and play guard. We'll look at it this week and find out what our best options are.

You look at B.J. Williams took his first game reps, and he's going to get better. He's going to learn a lot from really game 2 to game 3, for him game 1 to game 2 of just being in there. He was nervous the week before coming in in mop-up duty against Wofford. He goes, Coach, I was nervous, but after the first play I was good, so I can't

imagine what he was out there starting.

But sometimes you've got to learn that way.

Q. Just looking at what West Virginia does well, running the ball, defensive line play, do you feel like you guys are going to see a lot of the same challenges, maybe different schemes than what you faced this past week?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, a combination of what we saw last year. They rushed for 190 yards a year ago against us in the opener, and had a couple big plays. We can't let what happened Saturday happen again defensively. We've got to come out and -- it doesn't matter what they throw at you. We've got to react the right way. We've seen a lot of different stuff through camp, and again, we'll show them a bunch of different stuff this week and try to prepare as well as we can without knowing exactly how they want to attack us with Coach Brown making the calls.

You've got to react and read your keys and just do your 1/11.

Q. Do you want to play West Virginia every year?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah.

Q. You never had the chance to coach in Morgantown for an away game.

PAT NARDUZZI: As a head coach I haven't.

Q. Do you enjoy coaching in these hostile environments, these big rivalry games?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think every player and coach does. I like coaching, period. I like playing wherever we get to play. I like going to different places. I think that's all part of the pageantry of college football.

Yeah, I think everybody embraces that.

Q. You mentioned it was your first one as head coach. What did you learn about the rivalry from that match-up last year?

PAT NARDUZZI: We'll learn more going down there. I think the kids will really learn what the rivalry is on the road and how hostile it is.

I mean, rivalries are rivalries; it's nothing more than any other game for me. We know we're just down the road.

But it's a football game that means a lot to a lot of people. I

think our Pitt fans are passionate. West Virginia fans are passionate. It comes down to passion.

People want to see you play well in those games.

Q. Does it remind you of Ann Arbor versus East Lansing?

PAT NARDUZZI: No question, Cincinnati versus Miami of Ohio, that big rivalry we had there, there's always those rivalry games, Notre Dame versus Michigan State. There's a bunch of them out there.

Yeah, I would say that's a big rivalry game.

Q. Is there any chance that you think any of your players could have overlooked Cincinnati and been looking ahead towards West Virginia because of the rivalry?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, if I knew that, I'd have put a stop to that. I don't think so. I don't know how you overlook Cincinnati. Try to play them up and -- I think it's how we executed. We've got to get better.

I don't think that, but I mean, when you hear of a team playing in the playoffs, the team playing in the playoffs or the team not playing in the playoffs, which one are you thinking about, and think about that one that's right in front of us. But hey, I'm not on Twitter. I'm not on Facebook and knowing what everybody is looking at and hearing about. I don't know; maybe you guys know better than I do.

Q. (Indiscernible) working together at starters for the first time. Now that you've had a chance to see them against an FCS team and against an FBS team, what are your thoughts?

PAT NARDUZZI: I'd say B- probably right now, but give the whole defense a B- right now after -- I don't even care about game 1. What do you get from that? But B- right now, and going like this. I just think we're going to continue to get better and better offensively and defensively. That's what we do.

We knew we had a sky punt issue. We should have had two dropped inside the 1, and we just didn't get a great punt the second one but almost had a shot at the one.

Those are the things you want to get better and you want to keep working at and you want to see where your weakness is, so you can go out -- we've got all kinds of good drills set up for tomorrow's practice, just little things that you've got to work on throughout the practice and

different stuff in team periods that it's like, this is going to be good.

Q. What do you see from their quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I see a guy that is athletic. 5'11" guy that's really athletic. He's a real athlete. He's physical; he's tough; he's a competitor. He's a run threat. He can throw it. He can throw all the RPOs he needs to throw. I think he's throwing for 200 yards a game, which is good, when they're running the ball 70 percent of the team or 65 percent of the time. We've got obviously games last year that he played, and I think he started against Oklahoma and Oklahoma State and played really well. He's played in big games.

I just think he's a competitor. He's a tough dude.

Q. RPOs are pretty popular these days. Do they use them more maybe than --

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes, they use them a lot. 60 percent.

Q. That's high.

PAT NARDUZZI: That's really high. It's really high. We've been working a lot on that, and that's something we haven't seen a ton of this year, so it's a whole new thing. We've seen them in the past.

No, every run they have will have a run-pass option off it, whether it's a screen out there, whether it's vertical routes. They run some quarterback zone read; he'll keep it. They've got vertical routes running off the edge by two receivers. So there's all kinds of different ones they have.

We've got to do a good job of playing those guys because it puts you in a one-on-one situation depending on what defense you're in, and you've got to make plays.

Q. It seemed like when Gavin got more targets, the offense started flowing and it sparked a lot quicker. What do you guys have to do to make sure that's --

PAT NARDUZZI: Throw it to him. Got to throw to him more, I guess, right? That's a good question. Just got to target him more, I guess.

But when you've got a pass game and you're in your pass game, it's more based on what they're giving you. When he's getting some shots down the top, it's cover two, and that's where Phil is supposed to go with the ball, and one time he overthrew it. When he threw it behind him the one time, it was cover two. So different concepts, different plays, different coverages. There's times they're right on

him, and if they're right on him, he can't throw it to him anyway, so it depends on the coverage. He's got to get open, too.

Q. How does the quarterback balance that where, hey, I have a playmaker and I want to get him the ball versus I have to go where the defense taking me. That seems like sometimes that can be the make-or-break of what makes a great play.

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, it's hard; you can't force a ball somewhere where it can't go. You've got to -- it's all dictated on your reads and your progression. Easy as that.

Q. Do you have time or do you have the ability to overrule an defensive play call?

PAT NARDUZZI: If you want a bunch of delay of games. I'm not messing with a defensive call unless I call a time-out. But you're going to get a delay of game. You can't do that. Again, if you were sitting up in the box here, I wouldn't disrespect you by saying, God, that was a terrible call. I'd say, let's see how it works.

Again, these calls, these plays, coaching decisions, all those things are flip-a-coin sometimes. It depends on what they're doing. Was it a good call, bad call? Sometimes I'm like, no don't do that, in my mind, and all of a sudden it's a sack, and it's like, oh, it's a great call, good job. Even the first play of the game with the defense we ran, I'm like, ooh, I don't know if I like this call, and it ended up being a really good call, but you don't know.

But you hope everything on your game plan has a chance to be successful or you wouldn't put it on the game plan. You hope everything on the game plan has a chance to be successful or you wouldn't have it on there, but it's got to be executed.

Then there's maybe calls that just -- I hope they don't do that when I do this, but that's going to happen.

Q. It doesn't surprise you --

PAT NARDUZZI: No. A game plan is a game plan.

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