

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: All right, ladies and gentlemen. Again, tough Saturday night again. We played two good football teams the last two weekends. Didn't come out with a victory. Didn't play as good as we need to. Didn't play as clean as we need to.

Again, I guess we'll look at the positive side of the ball first. Let's just talk the positives. I thought special teams played at a high level, and just watching it with the team last night, again, we let -- the whole room was full, and it's everybody. Even if you didn't play one snap, we're watching special teams.

There's always going to be one play -- you're not going to be perfect at anything. There's always going to be one play, a week ago missing a field goal, this week putting a ball in the end zone on a punt.

But when you look at just the whole picture of playing quality football on special teams, we've done that.

Defensively I thought we cleaned up a lot of things from the opener the week before. You've got a team that rushed I believe 50-some times and did a solid job.

Again, as I sit in that defensive staff room watching the tape, there's things we can still do better that disappoints you as a coach. Again, we're never going to be happy as coaches, period.

But there were some good things in that game. There were some good performances, some really, really winning performances on the defensive side of the ball.

I think anytime you hold an offense that's averaging probably 475, 500 a game and you cut it down to 211, that's a good day. Again, talented football team.

Again offensively, which I'm sure you've got a lot of questions about, it wasn't good enough. As I watch, watch it with the offensive staff, and I told you I'll probably have more answers when you come back here on a Monday, as you watch it, it's everybody. I know you guys don't want to



hear that, but as I watch it, if I could sit there and say, it's this guy, and if we get rid of this guy, it's a problem, and it's not that.

You go back and watch the tape like a coach and watch missed blocks, missed -- not only miss a block but go the wrong way on an offensive line again or a tight end or a tackle or whatever it may be. But those opportunities -- again, there's spots we're getting five yards a carry, and we started off running the ball down the field. Why did we keep running the ball down the field? Because it was there, and we felt good, and it was like, okay, let's go. Nobody goes into a game saying let's run the ball 12 times or 13 times and we're not going to throw it one time. That's not the plan. The plan is you're having success, let's go. You just keep going with the flow. You don't have a plan to do that.

But it's receiver blocking, it's O-line blocking, it's tight end blocking, it's catching the ball. Like you have to catch the ball. We have opportunities where we can catch the ball, and we don't catch the ball.

There's opportunities to complete the pass and throw a better pass, and we don't complete passes. It's everything.

We've obviously got to do a better job of making sure our quarterbacks are throwing under duress more in practice, which we've discussed, whether it's just turning people loose -- we try to stay away from the quarterback, but we've got to give our quarterbacks opportunities to throw under pressure.

Then we're better off punting on 2nd down if we're going to turn the ball over. Again, when you go back and look at the turnovers, which I couldn't see on the field what happened, why did he throw it there, and you don't see it until you really see the tape. First one is a hitch and a seven route behind it on a sprint-out pass, and they roll up the corner so the hitch is taken care of, and they've got a guy in the deep third on the seven route. It's like, couldn't have been a worse coverage to have versus that pass concept. Sometimes they guess right.

We've got to make better decisions. It's trying to force it in, trying to feel like you've got to make a play, and sometimes quarterbacks get to that point. It's the same thing I said last week with receivers rushing the route. You try to make



something happen and you making nothing happen. You make bad things happen.

We threw two interceptions which cost you the game, and again, not just those two. There's all those other things I just got done talking about that'll hurt you.

Without blabbering on and on, we've got an incredible team coming in here this weekend, and it ain't getting any easier, I can tell you that, with North Carolina.

Well-coached Mack Brown football team, talented. Anybody who knows their quarterback May is, we all know him, he'll be a first- or second-round pick next year, period, or first pick I should say, second pick, and they've got talent all around him.

Chip Lindsey is the new offensive coordinator, so it's a different guy than last year. I think the O-line coach and the quarterback coach went to Wisconsin, so Chip Lindsey is a new guy. Came from UCF, worked with Gus Malzahn for a long time, very creative, does some great stuff, and again, has got one of the best if not the best quarterback, NFL-pro-style quarterback in the country.

Then Gene Chizik is the defensive coordinator. Again, we're going back to a four-down, which -- our guys are obviously a little bit used to that, but we're getting used to the three-down here the last couple weeks, so we've got to switch now, go back to four-down protection schemes and all the rest of the things that go with the four-down, and talented.

They've got No. 8 up front, D-tackle, Murphy, that is all over the place. He's physical. He's twitchy. He's fast. He can be a game wrecker inside.

There's another kid, the Rucker kid, No. 25, their left end, as we look at it from the offensive standpoint, that's really good.

Again, it starts up front. I think they've got eight starters on offense returning, nine on defense, so we've got a veteran group coming in here that's played a lot of snaps.

Questions?

Q. I wanted to give you a chance to clarify something. When I asked you about Baer and whether you guys had confidence in him, you mentioned you don't start dumping people; you want to be positive, whether it's cornerback attack or quarterback, you don't dump players that quick into a season. But we have seen guys like Jason Collier and Phillip O'Brien not start after being starters this season. Can you clarify the

difference between a situation like that and --

PAT NARDUZZI: Let me clarify the difference between a free safety and a quarterback?

Q. No, I'm saying you were saying when I asked you about giving someone else a chance at quarterback, and you said you don't do that across these other positions, what's the difference in giving other guys chances versus giving another guy a chance at quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: Hey, you never know. You never know.

But I think the quarterback position is a totally different animal than any other position, okay. Period. That's why I said you try to compare a quarterback to a safety, and to me there's no comparison. We're going to rotate safeties in there. If you talk about a two-quarterback system, you talk about a four-safety system, you're rotating guys in there. All of a sudden you find rotation you like.

I just think the quarterback position is a totally different deal. Again, I'm not a quarterback whisperer, I'm not a quarterback guru, but I do believe from anywhere I've ever been that it takes time to gel with your guys.

We've been juggling things up front. You guys can see there's a different starting offensive line every week. There's some missing pieces there, and we haven't done our job to do the protection part of it, and we've got to get Phil more opportunities to throw under duress in a practice situation, period.

Your scout teams aren't always going to do that, and maybe you go back and preseason camp in August, and maybe we should go live on the quarterbacks so he can really feel it. How dumb would that be, when I come in here on a press coverage or a scrimmage, to say we just lost our quarterback for the season. That would be dumb.

But it goes back to you get what you practice. I'll never go back to when Ben Roethlisberger was a freshman, a rookie here I should say, when I was at Miami, just hearing about all the drills they did with him. Everybody talks straight drop-back, sit in the pocket, and everything is perfect, right? Like pass skelly. And we look really good when we do that in pass skelly and complete 90 percent of your balls in practice, whatever it may be, but it ain't like that. It's not realistic in the game.

We've got to do a better job offensively of cleaning that stuff up. With Ben Roethlisberger, man, it was like throwing balls like this. Who throws ball like that in practice? Nobody.

But we probably got to go to that because that's kind of the game we're in right now. You watch NFL games, you watch college games late at night, whatever time, but it is -- and quarterbacks are throwing under duress. We can do a better job coaching.

And again, it starts with my butt of making sure things are as realistic as we can do with keeping the safety there.

Q. What is keeping you from making a change at quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, he's a leader in that huddle. He's a guy you trust. You've seen it every day.

When you look back and you look at all the stats and all the numbers of what you put in a practice and what you put through camp and you put on paper and what you've showed to do as far as not throwing interceptions in practice. Now, obviously games are games. You just don't dump things like that. You just don't do it. That's just a philosophy and where I'm coming from.

Again, we're going to evaluate every day. Obviously it'll be a big week of practice for everybody, including the quarterbacks. We've got to get better.

Q. How do you feel about helping a quarterback or just the offense in general build more confidence after a couple of tough games in the middle of the season?

PAT NARDUZZI: Early in the season. You know, you just keep pressing. Hey, life is not perfect. We've all got issues on the outside and on the inside. You've got family issues -- it ain't perfect. Nothing is going to be perfect. Everybody would like to have a perfect world. It's not perfect. That's why they call us coaches and we've got to go fix it and try to make it as perfect as we can, and it's never going to be perfect.

You know, it's never going to be, but we've just got to make things as -- we've got to make things better, period, and that's our job as coaches, and it starts with me and the offensive coordinator and every assistant coach on that staff, making things easier -- you've got to throw completions, make plays.

Q. Is there still support for Phil in the locker room?

PAT NARDUZZI: No question about it. Again, I don't hang in the locker room, but I think -- is there still support in the O-line room? Is there support in the tight end room?

I think, again, as the offense sits right here every day,

guys, and we sit in here and have a unit meeting offensively, and Coach Cigs puts up, hey, these are things, just look at it. Look at the quarterback, look at the receivers, look at the tight end here, look at the O-line, and you look at it, there's not one guy on this side of the ball that's saying, hey, it's all his fault or it's all my fault. It's everybody's fault. I don't know if there's anybody -- so when you talk about that, it's a team game, and our guys sit in this room, and again, we're together on that.

Again, nobody can point the finger and say they played 100 percent or they didn't screw it up because there was a lot of guys that didn't make plays on both sides of the ball.

But as you watch it, you're kind of going, hmm. But if I would have just made that block -- I'm a receiver; if I would have just made that block, what happens. Watch out.

If I'm a tight end, if I would have just blocked down instead of blocking out, like what happens. There's not a run through and you're not hitting hit on 3rd and 3, and it's going to be a 1st down, then the clock is moving.

What if I don't jump offsides on 4th and 1 on a quarterback sneak. What happens.

Like it's all over the tape, guys. Again, that's our job as coaches, to get that stuff fixed as best we can.

Q. When it comes to that decision, either to stick with a guy or change a guy, are you deferring totally to Frank on that? What's your level of input?

PAT NARDUZZI: I told you already, I'm leaning on Frank and the offensive staff to make the right decision and make decisions at every position.

I mean, those guys know better. I don't sit in there. I spend 85 percent of my time in the defensive side of the room. Practice I spend probably 85 percent of my time watching them because I know I'm going to watch it with the defense and watch it with the offense and making sure we're getting what we need out there and seeing what the tempo of the practice is.

Q. Do you feel like you protected Phil better this week than you did the week before?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, no doubt about it. You compare five sacks to one sack, okay, the numbers, if stats are worth a darn -- did we protect him like we want to? No. I just go back to the last play of the game where we just get beat inside and the quarterback gets whacked. Like that's -- you sit back there. I'd like to see anybody sit back there and take that. It's not easy.



It can't happen. It wasn't like -- there was no time to throw the ball, under duress or not. But you gave up one sack. A week ago we gave up five, plus I forget how many -- what did I say last week, 21 hits? That game is long gone just like this one is long gone.

The focus last night turned. The chapter is turned to North Carolina. We're not going to be looking backwards, we're looking forward to what we can do better as a coaching staff and as players.

Q. Turning the page, in recent years, your team has done a really good job of bouncing back after some of the losses. How have they been able to do that in the past, and how do you make that happen again this year?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, nothing is easy. I think we do a good job of, first of all, not throwing guys under the bus and saying it's all your fault. I think that's the first thing, because I think once you start pointing fingers, fingers get pointed, then you've got major issues, and that's when you lose your locker room, you lose your faith and belief and trust in what's going on.

You trust -- we talk about steps to a championship, how do we win a championship, and there's certain steps we talk about. One of the key ones in there is to never lose faith in what you're doing. Believe in the system and stick to your fundamentals and what we do as a program.

You don't change and go, well, we've got to stop doing that. You don't bail and change a defense when the defense is not going good. You stick with what you do, and it will get better. That's what you do.

Q. The defense played well Saturday night --

PAT NARDUZZI: Not all night.

Q. They played well. There were 18 tackles at safety. When the safety has many tackles, is something going haywire in front of them? How does a safety get 18 tackles?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's playing really well. He's played at a high level. Again, in our core system, okay, in our system, we're going to get enough guys in the box. The free safety usually has a detached receiver out there, and he's out playing in space, where Donovan is what they call a strong safety so he's in the box.

So we walk the back -- again, I don't want to get into football specifics. It's way too much here and I don't have

a grease board, but if one of our backers is walked out, depending on the formation, our boundary safety is kind of a box fitter, and he's done a nice job.

I'll tell you what, he's flying all over the field, too. He's making not only plays on this side of the field, but he's running over there, too. There's some great efforts by Donovan. Obviously he had a winning performance.

I'm not giving out grades here, but he played exceptional, and we expect our safeties to make those tackles when they have the opportunities.

They're cracking -- the receivers will come in and crack on the safeties, and he did a phenomenal job of being where he's supposed to be.

Again, next week he might have two. Again, they ran the ball a lot, as we know, which is what we expected coming in. They've had almost 50 carries in every game so far this year with Brown calling those plays.

This week will be a little different. This week we're going to go from playing the wishbone and run to first or second pick in the draft throwing it wherever he wants to because he can make every throw. Pressure doesn't bother the guy because he can really run. He's elusive, and not a quarterback run guy, but it's scramble to throw the football down the field and get 1st downs if he has to.

Q. I believe you guys have nine sacks in three games, which the defense have been able to get after the quarterback, but not at the pace you have the past five years. What needs to happen to maybe increase that pace more on the defense getting after the quarterback or maybe the offense giving them chances to defend leads so that they can be more aggressive?

PAT NARDUZZI: You can say it's a little bit of both. Obviously if it's a tight game, and forget this game, but just being in tight games, if they're running the ball and having success -- we always talk about one-dimensional. The last two weeks we've not made a team one-dimensional. I guess you could say they were one-dimensional. But you wish we would have smothered them and they had 90 yards rushing in a perfect world, and they would have had to throw it.

But we didn't -- we let them just kind of get to those 4th-and-1 situations and the quarterback sneaks and stuff.

That's all part of it, but again, sacks are sacks. They've got to be thrown -- if you look, I think we got two sacks last weekend. How many times did they pass the ball? Okay, so again, I have no idea. EJ, do you know how many

times?

EJ BORGHETTI: 10.

PAT NARDUZZI: 10, so that's 20 percent sacks. So 20 percent of the time they're sacking the quarterback. That's not terrible. But if they're two-dimensional, then you've got problems. If you make a team one-dimensional -- how many times did you see us go out in a nickel on a 3rd down and long? You couldn't.

Then the other thing is people -- you see more and more people going for it on 4th down, correct, which means a 3rd and medium, 3rd and long becomes a run down because they know they've got an extra down wherever they are on the field. We call that sequence -- they're sequencing downs, and then it becomes another -- now where 3rd and 7 used to be 100 percent pass or 90 percent pass, now it's 50/50, and nobody wants to stick another DB out there to stop the run. So you kind of are stuck a little bit and you're not into some great pass rush defenses.

Those are all things that we'll have to worry about this weekend, as well, because North Carolina does the same thing.

Q. When you're facing run-first offenses in the past couple weeks, how do you prepare your secondary to face not only a pass-heavy offense but a really talented quarterback at that?

PAT NARDUZZI: That's why we're going from the triple option to this spread with the best quarterback in the country probably, arguably. I would be shocked if he's not the first pick next year regardless of who wins the Heisman Trophy and all that baloney, when they do all their evaluations on character -- the kid is an unbelievable young man. Drake is a phenomenal quarterback, and I don't know how we do it, but that's what we practice for, and we won't be perfect, I can promise you that. He's going to make his throws like he did last year.

The first thing I'd say is when you look at last year compared to this year, the change happened when we didn't get pass rush, Kancey went down, you don't forget some of those things, and because May can scramble, we lost our faith in doing what we needed to do, and that'll never -- to me, why did we get smoked? It was because we stopped doing the little things right in coverage. Just because he's scrambling and maybe we're not putting pressure on him, we've got to hold true to who we are and do what you're supposed to do, don't start to -- again, it's no different than what everybody else does. It's throw it into coverage; hey, got to go make a play so I'm going to not cover EJ, and I'm going to come over here and do this,

and then all of a sudden it just trickles down all the way to the DBs.

So our I know our secondary is excited about the opportunity based on last year. I know Coach Sanders and Coach Collins are up for the challenge, and obviously Coach Manalac, the linebacker coach, because those linebackers become really, really critical at covering up the safeties and everything they can do with the passing game.

Q. Is it pocket elusiveness that really separates him from other throwing quarterbacks, his ability to move around in the pocket?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he's just so smooth and he's fast, too. He's deceptively a fast guy for a big guy, so he's got the whole package.

Q. Would you say their defense is better this year?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, you want me to be honest with you? I haven't watched a whole lot. I know who those guys are. I know the front four is going to be the key. I'll have more for you on Thursday because I usually take a couple games, but I'll just keep my nose where it's supposed to be, right? Help where you can help, help where you're best helping. I try to help out the defense as much as I can, but then I'll watch a couple games and go, hey, how about this, how about that, and then they'll say, Coach, we can't do that, and I'll say, okay, good, and then we'll move on.

Q. How was Phil's demeanor Sunday?

PAT NARDUZZI: Good. Good.

Q. In terms of the running backs, it seems like you've been rotating between C'Bo, Daniel and Rodney. Do you expect that to continue to UNC this weekend?

PAT NARDUZZI: Great question. I'm probably not going to tell you today, but we'll see how they practice. Obviously Rodney got the load of the carries last week. But Daniel has been the 3rd down back, but that 3rd down back better make plays with his hands, too. You've got opportunities to make some plays, you've got to make them.

We'll look at that just like anything else and we'll see where we are at the end of the week.

Q. Are you at all concerned about Phil's psyche going into this game after having two rough games and he was booed -- well, there were boos from the home crowd --

PAT NARDUZZI: Who were they booing? I think they were booing me, just so we're on the same page. Did they say boo, Phil, or boo, Coach? Like there was boos, so I don't know who they were at. At least from what I hear, because I don't hear those things with my headphones on, and I'm not sure our kids really do, either.

I'm sure someone said something to him or to me or whatever and said there was boos. I think there was boos in the first game someone said, correct? We're in Boo City. Boo City, PA.

But again, I think we talked about that a week ago or two weeks ago. I don't know when it was. But hey, it is what it is. If that's what they want to do, that's great. Should not affect us or our psyche.

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