

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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## Coach Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Closed a chapter last night in a nice way. It's been a while since we had a good, positive, healthy, fresh team meeting in here, talked about players of the week and all that stuff and all the positives. It's always fun to have one of those against a really good Louisville team. But we close the chapter on it and moving on to a really good Wake Forest team. There was a lot of stuff on tape offensively, defensively, special teams-wise that we could still do a lot better. It's not like we're a finished product yet. We're still learning, still getting better.

Defensively too many long drives, too many drives that continued to go that we should stop earlier execution-wise, and then too many three-and-outs. I think we had seven three-and-outs on offense, which is not good enough.

A lot of things to improve on, which is great. It's nice to get the win. Then we move on and continue to get better this week in practice.

Let's go to Wake Forest. I might as well hit Wake Forest. Obviously a good football team. 3-3 football team. Got to play on the road, which we've not won a road game yet, so that'll be the first challenge is going on the road and executing against a younger team, wherever that may be, against a talented football team. They played Clemson 17-14. Again, good team.

Virginia Tech gave it to them pretty good last week, but Virginia Tech, I think that Drones guy, he ran for a lot of yards. I think he threw for 330-some yards, which is a lot of yards. I think that guy just continues to get better every week. Again, that was a good physical football team. So we know who they've played.

I think they do a nice job. They've got a system, and they believe in their system, kind of like we do. Dave Clawson is a heck of a football coach. Warren Ruggiero is his offensive coordinator, who I think kind of calls the plays, but Dave being in there a lot, and Brad Lambert is their D-coordinator.

Offensively a lot of RPOs, so something we haven't faced a



ton of. It's just a run-pass and riding it up into the line of scrimmage and throwing it over your head or throwing slants and digs, five-yard outs, ten-yard outs, fades. Hit us on a fade in the championship game on an RPO where it looks like run, and everybody commits to the run, then they throw it over your head.

That'll be a challenge defensively. Offensively it's a very similar defense to what we are. They're four-down, an attack front up front. Play a lot of quarters and a lot of man free, and they're going to blitz you, whether it's safety backer from the field, safety backer from the boundary.

They'll do a little bit of everything, stuff that we've seen and stuff that we've just got to go out and execute and do a great job communicating.

Good football team, and looking forward to the challenge.

**Q. After having a chance to review the tape, what did you assess about the offense?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Overall pretty good. Overall that front was a nasty front really. I think coming in -- they did a good job neutralizing up front. Again, there's still fundamental things, a couple ID issues as far as where we're blocking to and the run game, but you give up one sack, you're getting a little bit better, I'd say, based on what they -- I don't know what their sack total is on the year, how many they're averaging a game, but I would imagine one is underneath their total. I don't know how many times they got Hartman the week before, but it was quite a few times.

I thought they did a solid job and we'll just keep getting better.

**Q. Was Blake not playing due to injury?**

PAT NARDUZZI: He didn't get beat out; put it that way. Blake is still our starter. If he's available, we'll find out.

**Q. You guys had four 4th down stops, but especially the run where they were 4th and 1 they ran right at you guys. Did you see more up front from your guys in this game than what you've seen so far?**

PAT NARDUZZI: But it was also the backers. It's everybody together. The D-line can do a great job



... when all is said, we're done.®

attacking. If the linebackers don't fit it right and fit it physical -- I've been emphasizing just being more physical at the linebacker position, just coming down and blowing people up and creating a wall at the line of scrimmage.

We did a nice job on that. It wasn't just one guy, it wasn't just Dayon who did a nice job to start it off with, but the backers fitting off of them, fitting where you need to be and not running behind each other, fitting -- I think it all comes together when you do it that way. But it's got to be like that all the time.

**Q. Do you feel like the chemistry is trending in the way that you want with your linebackers fitting your defensive line?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Sometimes. I think Bangally was a little rusty out there. He was rusty, didn't play one of his better games, but you kind of figured that was going to happen. He hadn't played in a game in a few weeks, so you kind of figured you were going to have a rusty Bangally. But I think the chemistry is good.

Little by little -- again, every week is a little bit different. That's the thing. Saturday you're facing a run and a pass team that's going to do a little bit of both and tricks and all this stuff, and then the week before you're facing -- you're trying to stop a quarterback run, a wildcat offense, trying to defend 11 guys as I've told you, so every week is a little bit different in what you're trying to defend.

Now you've got the RPO, so it's three different offenses in three different weeks. Things got to go that way, and we've got to execute like we had this past weekend.

**Q. The numbers aren't huge yet, but do you feel like you're starting to turn a corner with the run game?**

PAT NARDUZZI: That front is hard to run against. Again, we'll do a better job of checking how many guys they have in the box and doing that, just with some of the youth we have there. So we'll change some things up as far as -- we ran in some pretty heavy box, especially on that 4th down and 1. They got everybody down there, and we've got to find a way to better get out of a play if we can based on those guys that we have on the field, making sure -- it's better to run a play and everybody going in the right direction than running a play with some guys going that way and some guys going that way being an issue. We'll get better at that, I think, week by week.

**Q. What did Jay show you in practice last week for him to get the bulk of the snaps at safety over Donovan?**

PAT NARDUZZI: PJ, after that Cincinnati game I think he was a little bit down, but PJ, you've got to love his attitude. Again, all three of those safeties in my opinion are starters. I'll go back and say that Donovan, Jahvan and PJ, but PJ just had a good week of practice.

We're evaluating our players every week. Doesn't matter what you do. What you did the last game, what you're doing in practice, what you're doing in school, what you're doing in study hall, Jules is in there in the cafe, what are you doing in every respect. PJ has been doing a good job. He's loud. He's obnoxious, which is good sometimes. He's a beauty.

**Q. Was tackling better this week?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Tackling was better. Still had a couple of those runs where Devin Danielson falls down and we've got our head on the wrong side, just got to take one more step, but a lot better.

**Q. After you got a chance to evaluate Christian's play when you looked at it on film, what stood out to you?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Christian threw some nice balls. He got the ball out quick, as well. He made good decisions with the ball. You think about the weather and you think about what that other quarterback did and what our quarterback did, I liked the decision making he made. I liked where he placed the ball, especially at the Bub one and the Konata one, those are two. But he can do a better job on some of his out routes, which Coach Cigs will fix his feet and do all those things, but I thought he had a really nice day.

**Q. Accuracy is around 50 percent for him so far this year. The deep balls looked pretty good --**

PAT NARDUZZI: Just keep throwing it deep, I guess.

**Q. Is there adrenaline? Do you attribute some of that to adrenaline?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. He's pretty smooth and calm out there. He kind of is like this all the time, so you're not seeing the wave.

But I think it's really more of his feet and how he's pointed, and I think Coach Cigs can get that fixed. We'll find out this week because we'll throw a lot more out routes just to see what he does with his footwork, but I think that's just being a young guy and trying to figure it out still.

**Q. (Indiscernible.)**

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. We had to drop him. He

hit under 50 percent. I don't even know what his percentage was. He hit Bub one time on a pass right here. Those guys made plays for him.

But I'm trying to think of some of the other -- missed a couple in the out area there. Then when you're throwing it deep, you're not going to hit them all. You talk about 50/50 ball, and we threw a couple deep, too, that were missed throws. Some of them were routes. It's a little bit of everything.

One time Bub releases inside, he should be releasing outside. Christian thinks he's running a comeback and he runs a vertical route. Those will get all cleaned up, just missed IDs.

**Q. What goes into scheming up those deep shots where you guys get the one-on-one looks you want? Christian talked about how on the last touchdown to Konata you guys were prepared for a zero look to get that inside leverage and threw it outside to the pylon. How does the coaching staff engineer opportunities like that?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't do any of that. Coach Cigs does. But it's game planning, knowing what you're going to get, and they could have changed it up and you might have nothing. But you guess right, and you're hoping that's what you're going to get is 4th down, and you kind of have an idea of what they like to do, but nobody is 100 percent on 4th down. No one is 100 percent this coverage or that blitz on 3rd down and long.

Sometimes you're lucky with calls. Sometimes you're good with them. Same thing on defense. You've been making calls, you're trying to change it up, hey, last time I did this, I want to do this next time, and sometimes you guess right and sometimes you guess wrong.

But even if you guess wrong, if you execute you can still make plays. That's what we expect, whether it's running the ball or throwing the football.

**Q. After all these years I'm still trying to make sense of the depth chart --**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know I never touch that depth chart. EJ touches that thing. That's EJ's fault.

**Q. Who should we read will be at center this week?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know, maybe Blake will be ready to go or Kradel will be ready to go. Make Blake will be ready to go, I don't know. If I didn't tell you, then you wouldn't know.

**Q. So you're saying there's a chance?**

PAT NARDUZZI: There's a chance this week where I don't think there was a chance last week.

**Q. Does it take a certain type of player to want to come here and play DB because you're going to do what you do and they're going to be out there by themselves a lot, and it's sink or swim.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, if you watch college football, you see those guys are out there. I think it's more and more people are doing what we do, whether it's man free or quarters. I'll tell you what, you're going to watch Wake Forest, they play a lot of off quarters. I would much rather be pressing than playing off.

**Q. Why?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Go rewind that game maybe in the first quarter and see Marquez play off, and he's got that 6'4", 210-pound wide out, and he throws a hitch and he's got to come up there and make that tackle. If he misses that tackle, it's out the gates, and we're going to be talking about tackling or how bad the tackler was. I would rather him try to throw that fade and have to throw it way down the field than to have to make that tackle right there.

That's not easy. You're 50/50 making tackles in the open field. He had from that wall to that wall to make a guy miss, and Quez made that tackle. That is not easy to do. If you've ever played corner or lined up out there -- Boston can tell you there, guru quarterback over there, just what he would rather see is probably that off corner free access out there. If you throw a hitch and that guy takes off and goes, little spin move, little -- it's iffy.

I won't get in -- maybe in the off-season we'll have like a cover four clinic and I'll explain to you just leverage by the corners and the press as opposed -- you watch college football at night, you watch in the NFL, they're all playing press, and there's a lot of reasons why, I think.

**Q. Looking at the game film from Wake Forest, did you see them struggle in a couple of areas where you guys struggled against Virginia Tech? Were there any similarities in your loss compared to theirs?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, you can have them watch a ton of that football, and Monday is usually my -- Sunday night on defense, and then as the week goes on, Tuesday and Wednesday I get to watching more of their football and watching the other side of the ball. I let the offense get ahead of me on that.

But there's no question about it; Virginia Tech got after them, ran the ball and threw it and took what -- taking what you're giving them, as well.

**Q. Has this system benefitted this new quarterback in the way that maybe it benefitted Hartman when he was there?**

PAT NARDUZZI: You say the new system...

**Q. Not new system. Has this new system benefitted this new quarterback I should have said, like it benefitted Sam Hartman? He's seeing some similar things come in --**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Griffis, again, they played two quarterbacks last week against Virginia Tech, but that's what they do. So they're recruiting guys that fit -- Dave has been there, what, 10 years or something, so they're recruiting guys that fit their scheme, that they can get at Wake that they like. He's a 5'11" guy that does what they do. Yeah, I know talking to Coach Clawson, he's excited about them. He was excited about him when they lost Hartman to Notre Dame, and he's still excited about him.

**Q. M.J. said after the game the other day that maybe he wasn't where he needed to be at the beginning of the season. Maybe he read too much about him, stuff people were saying about him. What have you noticed about him over the last couple of weeks?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Last couple weeks? Let's just talk about one week. I don't want to go back two weeks ago. But he sits right where Jerry is, and I actually called him a little bit ago and said, hey, you seemed kind of grumpy sitting in Jerry's seat last night. I said, I don't know, are you grumpy, you mad at me because we got after you a little bit. He's like, no.

He just looked like he had his game face on. Hey, you never know; you read too much -- you'd have to ask M.J., but he told you that or said that, I guess.

Sometimes you've just got to look in the mirror and go what can I do better. It's like I told our guys, when you walk out on that field every day, whether you're playing corner or you're playing right tackle, left tackle, tailback, tight end, quarterback, right defensive end, it's an audition every week. You're putting on an audition. When you're walking on that practice field, and tomorrow there will be seven NFL scouts here, it's an audition every single day when you walk out on the field. What are you putting on videotape in practice, what are you putting on videotape in the game.

It's kind of put on a show, and M.J. put on a show the other night. What did he have, 12 targets, five PBUs and a pick six? I was wondering why they were going after him. They were kind of going after him because that's where Thrash was. I think they just didn't care who the match-up was, they were just trying to get it to their dude. M.J. had a pretty good day.

**Q. In recent years your pass rush tends to get better as the season goes on. Do you look at this match-up against Wake who's allowed 29 sacks already this year as an opportunity to keep building momentum and getting better?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I didn't notice they had 29 sacks. I don't know where that stands. I didn't know that. I'll go tell Coach Partridge. He'd better have seven or eight of them, I guess. He needs to look at what we're doing defensively.

But every week is a little bit different. They're RPO, so I haven't watched a sack tape yet, but we'll eventually get to that to see how they're getting what they're doing, and is it being behind and you're dropping back and throwing it. If they stay -- if it's a 14-14 game at half, they're going to keep doing what they do and they're not going to get sacked very much, but if you get up on them and it's 28-7, that's when sacks come. That's what happened in the championship game.

If you get up on them and all of a sudden they've got to throw it every down and they're not throwing it the way they like to throw it, it's build a wall with those offensive linemen and fake that run up the middle and try to dink it all the way down the field.

**Q. What about Samuel Okunlola, played the most snaps in his career the other night. Do you expect him to just keep having a bigger role in the defense as you move forward?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he's been getting better every day in practice. Coach Partridge called it out just last week, like this guy is getting better like every week. And not just strip sacks and all that. It's more -- and again, that was on a screen, too.

You look at that play and go, that was a strip sack on a screen. How many people get sacks on screens. But things like that happen when everybody else does their job. The other part of the D-line went to go get the screen. The linebackers added themselves. The quarterback had nowhere to go on a screen, couldn't throw it away, and Sammy got him. But again, that's a coverage sack on a

screen that Sammy got. But Sammy keeps getting better every day, and yeah, we expect his role to continue to increase.

**Q. Jordan Bass played a bit the last game. Should we expect see more of him this season?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, that's a great question. Jordan was so excited. He came up to me, Coach, I got my reps in. I didn't even know he was in there. As a matter of fact, when you watch the tape, I usually don't look to say, let me watch how Jordan is doing. I'm usually looking for all the problems and who screwed up. When he was out there, I didn't say, what is Jordan doing. So he's just going to keep getting better.

I think I told you Thursday, we sit down and see how we're going to play the plays, and we're going through it, and just kind of talked to Coach Man and said, give that guy two plays; let him go out there. We're going to need him as we go. We've just got to put him out there, see what happens. Don't put him out there for seven or eight, 10 plays in a row. Two plays and then get him out and let's just make sure he's good, coach him up on the sideline, then get him back out there. I think he had four plays. He's got an expanded role in special teams as we go, and we're just going to continue to play him and get him ready.

**Q. Talking about scheduling down the road, is there any concern as a coach that some of the historical stuff between schools like Georgia Tech and Clemson, schools that are close to each other or have long histories might get disrupted?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think so. I think everybody worries about disruption. I think the ACC is going to try to keep some of those, and I think at some point, I think they're trying to schedule -- again, I'm not sure how they're doing it. I have no idea really what goes on behind the closed doors. Kinda. But they're trying to keep some of the things -- we'll have maybe some regional teams that we play every year, but then some teams have nobody they regionally play every year, which is odd. You'd think you'd have two teams that you're always going to play for the next seven years and then see where it goes from there.

But I think they really need to take into account travel. Just to maybe follow up on your scheduling question, think about travel. We know we're all going to have to go out west, they're going to have to come east, so take that out of it, but I think we've just got to make sure that there's some people that aren't traveling too much and some people are not traveling at all. That would be my biggest concern is not the rivals but who's traveling, who's taking buses every week. It can't be like the Virginia, North

Carolina teams playing the round-robin down there every week, they get to jump on their bus for 15 minutes and go play each other while someone else is flying 700 miles to get to their game and then gets back at 3:00 in the morning.

I think those are some of the things that I get more concerned about more than I think they're going to -- they're going to try to get the best match-ups they can for TV. That's what everybody wants. I don't think they're going to take away some of the TV things that everybody cares about.

**Q. Some of your biggest rivals --**

PAT NARDUZZI: Who are they?

**Q. Historically speaking, they're not in your conference. They're regional rivalries, but you're not guaranteed to play them every year. Are you worried that you guys might be more susceptible to, let's just have Pitt go over here or have Pitt go over there because you don't have sort of that -- Florida State and Miami have to play every year or whatever.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, you worry about that. You want to play variety. I think travel is one thing and then playing -- one of the reasons they went to one division is so you could have a variety of teams you get to play, so just keep the variety going.

**Q. The team you're playing this week, you don't play them very often. Does it feel like you're in the same conference with these guys when you see them once every three, four years?**

PAT NARDUZZI: There's no question about it. It's not like you're going back watching 2021 and 2018 tape on Wake Forest to see what they did and how they did it. They've changed a little bit since '18, but '21 they're pretty similar except who's playing the quarterback spot, and they do what they do and they do it well.

That's always a concern, but that's kind of where we are with these mega conferences that are 16, 17, 18 teams in a conference. You're going to see more and more of that.

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