

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Monday, October 23, 2023

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, tough won I said after the game. Out of that area, I still don't know what that area was. I've still got nightmares after that game and nightmares from where we had to do that presser. That was not Division I. I don't know if you guys could even hear me.

But that was a tough game to swallow. You know, I think everybody would like to point and say, you know, it's this play or that play but there's plays all over the field. As a coach, you go back and watch tape, and you see even more and more and more of just like, wow, we really did give it away.

And again we can point to penalties. We can point to, you know, a slide. We can point to some, you know, just crappy coverage, and you know, in that last 40 seconds, I guess, in the second two-minute that our defense was involved in that you didn't want to be involved in on a short field. Again, which puts a defense in a rough spot.

But you know, with a 21-yard penalty in a 32-yard punt, you know, instead of starting at the 50, they could have started at their own minus 21 if you want to put the numbers together, which I have. It was just a rough night. You take the first, second, third quarter after that, and really just what happened in that fourth quarter, just not something I've been accustomed to. Usually at Pitt we finish.

Again, our guys gave great effort. There was no lack of effort out there. It was just, you know, I don't know if it was focus or what but we just didn't play like we should play, not like a Pitt football team. Continue to be disappointed in the way we rushed, or stop the rush, stop the rush, stop the run.

And I reminded our defense last week, in the last three years, I guess we've been spoiled. We've been number one in the ACC in rushing and Top-10 in rushing defense, and we're at six right now I believe. But that's like a far, far difference from what we've been at, and that's, I guess, some of the frustrations I have defensively.



And then offensively, you know, we were two dimensional. I wish we rushed for more than what we rushed for but throw for 300 yards. We just had drive killers. We could rush for 200 if we block better and get to the right guy and do the right thing, and there's times we are not doing that which is stopping runs. It's stopping runs on fourth-and-one.

But the drive killers are whether it's fourth-and-one, fourth and four, you don't get it or you don't block the right guy on a certain run play; it doesn't get the run game going. So those are some of the frustrations, really both having to do with the run game, not the pass game.

So that's kind of where it is. But just lack consistency across the board, lack consistency in our punting, and we can point to that. And there's plays all over the place and it's not just the slide or, you know, the penalties. It's like they are all over the place. It's not just in the game. That's why it's a team game. That's why it's played in four quarters. We just go play the last two minutes of the game and see who wins. It's all over the place the entire game that we've got to continue to get better and I think we are getting better. But you know, we certainly didn't show it. Maybe Saturday.

Questions?

Q. Do you think maybe the slide rule should be reviewed considering that Florida State game?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think so. First of all, the slide rule is to protect the quarterback and protect the quarterback, he's trying to protect himself. It's not for an official to determine when he started the slide and all that stuff. Would be nice if the officials would go and look in the little TV there and go, okay, let's be sensible here. The kid was being smart. He wanted to stay inbounds. So I gave him that and wish he'd take a couple more steps or whatever.

But it is what it is, and to me it's still first down, but like, you know, it's over.

Q. You said it felt like you made a rookie mistake in not diving for it. When you look back at it, do you think it was just kind of like, hey, that's what most quarterbacks would do?



PAT NARDUZZI: That's what most quarterbacks would do. And again, talking -- I'm no quarterback guru. And Coach Cignetti brought up a good point. I said Kenny just dived forwards instead of backwards. He said, "That's when fumbles happen."

I was like, "Well, you're probably right." I mean, the other thing that would have been worse is diving forward and ball was on the ground. So you see most quarterbacks are going to slide feet first.

Bostic -- true or false, Bostic? Never ran that far. Didn't get to the sticks. Didn't matter.

But like I said, there's different things, and again, being smart. He did it the way it was supposed to be. He thought he was clearly beyond the line and it looked like he was, so we'll just leave it as it is. There's a lot of other plays out there. You have.

Q. You have the most yards in the ACC, what do you have to do --

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, sometimes you feel hated on and I don't share these with you -- I don't share these with you weekly about what goes into the ACC -- and obviously I'm not going to get into it. I'm not going to talk about what comes back. But sometimes you feel like, you know, it just needed to be called both ways and sometimes you feel like it's not as a coach.

I'll just talk about our penalties. I brought a sheet in here -- because we talk about it all the time. Defensively, we had four aggressive penalties and two selfish. You guys know what -- the two we called selfish penalties. It's just not good. Selfish. The two by Donovan, who has apologized ten times to me since the end of the game. He's crying after the game. I mean, he didn't mean to do it. He was pulling the guy off the pile. It was a penalty what he did.

I don't know if the second one was real. It looked like, you know, someone threw a shoulder into him but I'm not the official. Players play, coaches coach and officials officiate.

We have three defensive holdings, which again, to me it's a go both ways. I don't know how to officiate it. I don't know how to coach anymore, I guess. And we had a face mask.

Offensively we had five false starts, one, two, three, four, five false starts. Again, one is, you know, one we were not going to run a play on fourth down and five, okay, but a receiver covered up the tight end. The tight end, his hand down; I'm not worried about that one. You can throw that one out, penalty yards, penalty yards. We're going to punt it and we were taking a delay game, anyway. We were

trying to get them jump offsides. We had three offensive tackles go offsides. Two young guys, got to be better there.

And then we had a quarterback's got to wait for a receiver to get set up, lined up on a quick, we call it -- I won't tell you what it's called. But we come out of the huddle quick, get called, run the play. It's on really the quarterback not letting the receiver get lined up fast enough. So we took a delay game on defense to punt the ball, or on punt just to back it up. We're going to snap it in. We ate up 25, 30 seconds off the clock that play. We had a center, a guy at a new position lineup off the line of scrimmage on our field goal team.

They are unforced, they are unfortunate and then there's some aggressive ones, which we're going to be aggressive. Just, you know, I've just never seen so many of them. I don't know what else to tell you.

Q. How do you stay focused when you feel like you're not getting both ways, how do you stay focused despite those?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think that's what we have done. Again you can't get emotional like Donovan did, and it's an emotional game, he's trying to protect M.J. It's, like, just stay away.

But besides the emotional one there on one play which cost us 21 yards, you know, you've just got to keep your cool and play ball. I don't think our guys get emotional when it happens to them.

I mean, you go back and watch A.J. Woods, he's on there, it's a tiny little tug, and the guy is jamming, and supposedly when you lock your arm out, it's supposed to be called as offensive pass interference. But didn't get called. When something is pushing me off, I'm holding on for dear life, too.

Q. Does it bother you that all this is happening in the seventh game in the season?

PAT NARDUZZI: It bothers me when it happens in the first game and seventh game and bothered me even more because last time I was at Notre Dame, it happened in the whatever game on a post in the middle field. So bothers me every game.

Q. You'd think it would be figured by now?

PAT NARDUZZI: You hope so. But every game is a different game on the road and different stuff is happening to you. People are stemming. They have got a guy

clapping on the -- we try to punt the ball. We clap cadence. It's supposed to be a violation. Go back and watch, their linebacker 45, is clapping, no call. I don't know why. But just, you know, luck of the draw, I guess.

Q. Overall how would you evaluate Christian's performance, slide aside?

PAT NARDUZZI: Christian I thought played a pretty solid game. He took what the defense was giving him. He made some nice throws. He had a cup where we would say mentally, don't go there, go there. A couple of those, which I don't know if a quarterback has ever gone through a game and had ones where he didn't have a couple of those.

I think he got better from the first game to the second game. He started off, I don't know what it was, seven or seven or eight or eight for whatever it was. He was on fire. They changed some stuff up. He made plays when he needed to.

Again, we've got to convert more first downs. I think we had three, three-and-outs this past weekend. The week before, anybody remember how many we had? Seven. I remember.

So when you look at stuff like that, we are moving -- we won the time of possession. The week before we didn't. We got crushed with it because you're going three-and-out seven times, you're going to struggle that way. So they are getting better little by little.

You would like to eliminate -- it's penalties. It's a messed up coverage, not executing it properly. Not blocking the run game. There's stuff everywhere. I'm you know sitting there trying to plug holes everywhere, and that's kind of where we are right now at this point.

Q. Obviously you'll be challenged by Notre Dame. What can you do defensively? Is it personnel changes to improve that rush game quickly?

PAT NARDUZZI: Maybe. Maybe. We're looking at everything. But you know, every offense gives you a little bit different. And again, give Wake credit. They did some different things that we really didn't prepare for. They lined up in the pistol more than we've seen them.

Quarterback did some things different that we didn't practice as much more for. We practiced more on other things that they didn't do when we didn't know who the quarterback was going to be and didn't know there was any issue with their starting quarterback. So prepared for him, and then had really a totally different guy in there. And

again they switched the run game up a little bit.

But you know, we've got to execute. And again, we haven't forgot how to coach defense and how to stop the run, okay. It's what we do. And you know, it's like I said, we've got to coach better. We've got to get it out of them and they have got to learn better and execute better, and that's what it comes down to.

Q. Jake came in the second half, he was playing -- what do you like about that?

PAT NARDUZZI: We'll look about it. I mean, Jake was back and Blake was back, so we had really four guards that played for us, and just trying to find the best combination now. I think they are all back healthy, or at least close to being healthy right now. So I can't tell you a like anything yet but we'll keep looking.

Q. What you've seen of Sam so far --

PAT NARDUZZI: Protecting the quarterback, too. How many sacks does we give up? Zero. That's big time.

Q. What you've seen from Sam Hartman this year, how has he evolved as a passer from last time you saw him, which I believe was in 2021?

PAT NARDUZZI: Obviously a totally different offense. He's in a pro-style offense. He's huddling up and taking snaps under center. If he's going to play in the NFL, it's going to be in that type of offense, not what they are doing at Wake Forest.

I think he's probably enjoying it. I think it's every childhood kids dream to ply in the National Football League, and he's going to have an opportunity just by being able to make run checks, sit underneath the center and do all the things that they ask him to do there. I'll he'll obviously have a better opportunity in that atmosphere and circumstances.

So you know, he throws the ball well. He's a calm guy. He can run. He can scramble. He's still a great athlete. You don't see anything abnormal there. Again, we haven't really talked Notre Dame; so we'll get into Notre Dame.

Obviously Marcus Freeman has done an outstanding job here in his second season. They have got a talented team. When you put the tape on and watch those shiny gold helmets, they fly around, they look good. They are probably as good a looking team as you are going to walk out on game day and see, and they play fast.

All the receivers look like tight ends. They wear 80s numbers, too, which you disguise them. You're not sure

how many tight ends there are. They play with four tight end at times in formations and they will go all the way to play with four wide-outs, tailbacks are athletic and you have got Hartman.

And defensively Al Golden is running the defense, and you guys know Al from back in Miami. Was in the league for a while. But great coach. He's done a great job with their defense. And again, four downs, they are all physical, they are all fast. I can't sit there and focus on one guy because there's 11 of them. They are as talented a football team as you're bog to face out there. So we'll have our hands full.

Have a lot of guys on that staff I know. Start with Mike Mickens, coaching the corner. You guys saw him. So it will be a nice little reunion there. Max Bullough, one of our linebackers, is there on that staff as well. And Gino Guidugli, old Cincinnati quarterback is the quarterback coach.

So there's some familiarity with their staff as well. It will be a great challenge for our guys to go into South Bend. I think they were fired up last night to close the chapter and move on.

Q. Inaudible.

PAT NARDUZZI: You see, C'Bo has been playing well the last couple weeks, and again he's also helping to lead our football team as far as just being a leader. I think he's stepped up with the absence of Matt Goncalves. He's kind of got some natural leadership skills to him. Our guys have really bought into what he's all about. He plays his tail off. I mean, he'll be on any special teams. So he's played hard. You know, Rodney didn't start but Rodney, he's good, too. We like them both. You go with your hot hand. And I think even late in the game Coach Powell tried to put Rodney in the game and he's like, "Coach, he's hot, let him go." It's like, whoa, kind of shocked by that. Kind of an unselfish move by him but I would have liked to have got him more snaps the other day because I think he's special as well. We are going to play the hot guy, and maybe Rodney rushes for 150 this week.

Q. Seems like C'Bo for a few weeks, but just the hot hand the last three or four games?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's like anybody in the country. Notre Dame plays four tailbacks. They play four of them and they all got 20-some-plus snaps at tailback. They have got two really that are getting the majority of them. I don't think we're different anyway. You want to get your tailbacks reps, and you want to make them all feel comfortable. They are all ballplayers. You.

Never know, if you have one tailback that's getting 200 snaps and the other guy gets three and all of a sudden the first guy gets three, and all of a sudden the first guy gets hurt and you've got a guy that's never rushed the ball before, we won't have that problem. I think it's a natural thing. You have to play who is hot and blocking well, and who you feel comfortable with based on the flow of the game.

Q. Has C'Bo shown you and your staff, the stuff that you expected out of him when you were looking at him out of the portal last year or has he grown more?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's gotten better. I think he's obviously growing up a lot on and off the field. But yeah, he's doing what we thought he could do. He had a motor last year. He understands the offense more now. I think he's more comfortable, just like anybody would be in their second year of a new offense that's totally different from what they were doing at the other place.

So you know, he's done a nice job. Like I said, you're never going to question that guy's effort. He has got a motor. As good a motor as anybody on our football team.

Q. Maybe I'm wrong --

PAT NARDUZZI: Banged up. Not out for the year. Who else did you say, Kyle --

Q. Louis was not there?

PAT NARDUZZI: Louis was not there and you know we lost DeShields in the first half. And Jordan Bass, for a freshman, in base defense. And I didn't really realize when you think about how -- your third down package, we weren't very good on third down, and poor Jordan Bass is starting on that team, too. I didn't take into account the effect there.

But you know, we had a lot of walk throughs in fall camp, and there wasn't one walk through that Jordan Bass spent in third down, at all, because it's like, that's way too much. Let's just get you to be doing your base defense.

But Jordan Bass played well. I was impressed with him for his first game. He's only going to get better. We have got to get Biles going this week as well I think. But Jordan Bass, for playing four plays last week on defense, and then having 51 plays on defense; it's way too many but that's kind of what we were -- what we were under, and it cost us at the end of the game, too. It wasn't necessarily his fault. But I would have hoped we would have adjusted a little bit better than what we did.

But you know, you play with young guys, sometimes they are not going to be perfect, and I mean close to perfect. Our guys who have played four and five years aren't perfect. But I was impressed with the way Jordan Bass played, pulled the trigger and made the plays.

Q. Expert more playing time for Jordan?

PAT NARDUZZI: No question about it, Jordan is going to keep more playing time period, and he's only going to keep getting better and based on injuries, we have to get Biles ready to go as well.

Q. On Christian, he's below -- his ability to stretch the field with his arm seemed to give you guys an extra boost. Has his success forced you to reevaluate different concepts and different things you might call with more frequency to open that up?

PAT NARDUZZI: No question about it. You say that; Rashear (ph) is catching the ball well, too. I mean, they are catching the football. And you know, there's no question about it.

Again, but again, we are going to take what Notre Dame is going to give you or the next opponent after that is going to give you but we've got confidence that he can throw the ball and he's getting it out quick. Like I said, he's going to keep getting better every week, I think.

Q. The third down conversion -- for the slot rusher?

PAT NARDUZZI: That's what a quarterback is supposed to do. They all have to do that. He's done a good job of going through his progressions and knowing where to go based on the coverage. That's the name of the game, look, okay, they have got that and boom, he's able to come back to his second or third read and he's done a nice job.

Q. Did you notice that team do anything different?

PAT NARDUZZI: Grumpy.

Q. Grumpy?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, grumpy. Kind of like I was grumpy yesterday. It's a 24-hour grump. You can't be grumpy for 24 hours, you know you've got problems.

But nobody's happy. That's what we talked about last night. There's nobody happy. I feel bad for you guys. Nobody wants to go through it. Nobody wants to go through it. Like, we had to take it.

I think I it easier to get beat by 25 points than to take that

one on the end when you think you had a chance. And again -- and you still didn't play good. I still look at and the end of the game didn't even matter. I'm still pissed about the first quarter and second quarter and thick with the things we didn't do. And again, it comes down to execution. It's a game of execution, and it comes down to consistency. You can't show me you can do it really good here and then you can't do it here. That drives me nuts.

Q. That said, do you have any conversations with the ACC?

PAT NARDUZZI: Your question don't count. Not yet and I won't share with you, anyway.

Q. The pass rush up front wasn't able to get home late in the game. What happened, especially from your down guys?

PAT NARDUZZI: Great question. Great question. I mean, I think A.J. Woods had three sacks, okay. So you know, we're not who we were last year or the year before, and we know we lost some dudes up there. I think Sammy is coming on but our detail is up there as well.

I know Coach Partridge is working on it. Our stunts, I started talking about it a little bit earlier. Bass was in there running stunts and he's getting smooshed out of there. He looked like those wagons on wheels there, playing an A gap or B gap. And again, really wasn't fair to him. He's not done many of those. I'm just shocked he got near where he was supposed to be it.

Again we should have done a better job of adjusting that to be honest with you. We will the next time, I guarantee you that. But you have regrets as coaches. That's a coaching thing that we should have fixed. But when you look at it, we've got to be better. Our stunts just don't look as clean. We've just got to clean things up and detail them with a bunch of guys that maybe haven't done a bunch. We are young up front.

You look at the guys, Sammy, Jimmy Scott is in there on that last series playing left end. We had Dayon at nose just trying to get more speed on the field. And trying to think of who else, Sammy, Jimmy and Dayon were the three guys in on that last series.

We've got to be better with our pass rush and contain the quarterback, too, because in that last series, you look at first and second down were good in the last series, third down, it's bad coverage. Won't get into it. And then the fourth-and-one, bad coverage, won't get into it. And then they got a first out and goal. Again, we don't get a reroute on the tight end. We hang out McIntyre and they slow

throw a touchdown pass. Name of the game.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

