

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Monday, November 13, 2023

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Really quick turnaround. I asked the guys in the team meeting, "what's today?" And today is Wednesday, if you guys didn't know.

Closed the chapter really quick. Didn't watch the videotape as a team like we normally do. Had to get working on the upcoming opponent.

I feel the same way I did Saturday night after that game about obviously turnovers will get you every time, and we played an outstanding first half I thought and had a chance. Came out that first drive and looked pretty darned good, and then we turn it over.

It's a recipe for disasters, and that's exactly what happened in the second half.

Time of possession, keeping our offense on the field and sustaining drives has been an issue and continues to be an issue there, so we've got to continue to work and muster up yards and move the sticks on offense, keep our defense off the field.

Tackling wasn't great on defense. Again, we're on the field for I think 14 minutes and 52 seconds more than we should, and again, not winning the time of possession.

That, and again, like I said, we flipped that chapter as fast as you can flip it, try to get our guys fresh. Practiced on Sunday night as well as today, this morning, and worried about Boston College and a tough football team that Jeff Hafley brings in here.

He's a great coach, good friend, and again, he's got a really good team that's playing well. Obviously coming off a loss to Virginia Tech last week, and again, one of the top rushing offenses in the country, as if we didn't need to face another good rushing team.

Castellanos, their quarterback, is an athlete that can run. I don't think we'll see three or four quarterbacks back there in the wildcat offense, but we'll certainly see him back there, and he'll do plenty of that.



Good football team, and ready for a Thursday night clash.

Q. You've been pretty critical of yourself and your coaching staff this year, and I know we asked you last week your thoughts on mid-season changes and everything. How do you go about evaluating how your staff is doing in a season when you're focusing on the players and winning?

PAT NARDUZZI: We evaluate every day what we're doing, how we're doing it, and try to get things corrected. Again, like I said, it's a team sport, and it's everybody. I even tell the trainers they're involved; equipment, you'd better not mess it up; and certainly coaches.

We look at on a daily basis what we're doing, how we're doing it, and again, focused on Boston College.

Q. There's never a point in that evaluation process where you feel maybe a change needs to be made mid-season?

PAT NARDUZZI: No.

Q. Is your quarterback injured?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't talk injuries. I don't know.

Q. Are they hurt?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. Are they?

Q. You tell me.

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. We'll see Thursday night.

Q. Is it hard to make a change at that position on a short week?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it's always hard anytime you make a position change at any position, period. But we've got plenty of trust in both those guys.

Q. After the last two games, I know you've played a ton of young guys, but do you look to expand those opportunities because you're trying to get a feel for what 2024 might look like?



PAT NARDUZZI: We're trying to get the next win, really. Just want to win. That's what it comes down to is winning football games every Thursday or Saturday night. That's the main focus. If they can help us and we're not going to take a redshirt year away from them, we'll do that.

We've done that with a couple guys already that we know have four games to go, and if we get an opportunity to put them in there and they'll help us, we'll continue to do that.

Q. Obviously Villari is a unique challenge given his size, but you mentioned the missed tackles, and that seems to be a recurring theme you've talked about throughout the season here finishing game 10, moving on to 11. Still having that issue. Is it fundamentals? Is it youth?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it's a little bit of everything. Again, give credit to the guys running the ball. Villari is a big guy, and for a big old quarterback, he's got good moves and puts his foot in the ground and gets vertical. We've got to be more physical -- again, it's a little bit of everything, but one thing you notice when you go back and watch tape is there are a lot of guys breaking down.

I'm not a big break down because all you do when you start to break down on a tackle, you just give that guy a chance to make a move on you. You break down, then he gives you a little over there and goes there.

But I like to go take shots, and that's what our guys are taught to do is go run through, and if you're going to miss, know where you're going to miss; miss on this side, miss on that side. Know where your help is, and they should always know where their help is based on the coverage of the defense.

We like to take shots, and I don't like stuttering down. Don't give that guy a chance to make you miss.

You see some of that as you go back and evaluate it. Again, anytime -- again, it's going to be this week again Thursday night. Anytime you're defending 11 guys, like Virginia Tech and the Drones guy. I'll go back to that. That's the last time we really face kind of that offense, and we didn't really know what to expect going in there. We didn't know that we were going to see different quarterbacks in there at all.

But anytime you're defending 11 guys, if you just miss it by that much, whether it's a D-tackle out of a gap, a linebacker doesn't hit it, there's times where there's a blocker, a tailback would run up through an A-gap, and again, the runner has got the ball right here and all you've got to do is

take out both of them, and you tackle both of them. But we take it on high and then he makes a cutoff.

So it's just some physical things that we've just got to go be reckless, I guess, to take care of some of those runs and eliminate them.

Then there's times where you come through a backfield unblocked on zone pressure, whatever it may be, and then you don't make the tackle, diving and not running through tackles.

So it's a fundamental thing, but it's also there's no room for error because if you -- 11 guys that you have to defend, they've got enough hats for hats.

Q. Were you guys physical enough on defense?

PAT NARDUZZI: I wouldn't say not physical enough. You always want it to be more physical. You talk about toughness up on that back -- our guys get great -- put it this way: Defensively when you talk about physical, they're about as physical as you can get. Just more leverage, I guess.

Then the effort was outstanding all the way to the last drive on 3rd and short and 4th and short.

Q. Do you go back and see some of the fundamental mistakes you're talking about, the breakdown, the discipline, maybe sort of an accumulation of a war of attrition where prior mistakes sometimes have guys not focusing on the current problem and trying to fix something that they messed up earlier?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think so. Speaking of discipline, no one mentioned I think we only had three penalties and no enforced errors on offense, which was a bonus.

But I think certainly there's some of that.

Q. In the first half you called two time-outs on 4th down. There seemed to be some confusion. Are you able to explain what happened there?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's a great question. You might have to replay that. We went through that real quick. Was offense on the field or defense on the field?

Q. It was offense on the field. You guys I think originally had your field goal unit out there, then there was a false start and then you brought the punt team out there, and there were two time-outs called in that sequence.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. Again, I'm arguing with the official on the stem, and I sat next to the guy -- again, not a bad argument, it was a good argument. I was asking how his day was going, what he had for dinner last night. But no, I was warning him before the ball even got snapped that you know they're going to stem and try to make us jump offsides. I said, watch it. What did they do? They stemmed and got Terrence to flinch.

You know, again, I called it right ahead of time because I knew on a long one they'd try to back us up more. As I'm talking to him, they never pumped the clock up, and again, that's what it was.

Q. One-way conversation with the official? Did he give you any --

PAT NARDUZZI: Head nod, like I've got you. Then we got a delay of game later on. Our only penalty I think on defense Brandon George made too big of a move call. A Mike linebacker making a loud move, I've never heard that one before. Delay of game. I guess he's got to quiet down.

Q. You called that time-out and then you had the false start and then it looked like you were calling another time-out. Did they not make that a time-out, that second one?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, that's because they pumped the clock up. We were trying to decide -- I was busy talking with them.

Q. Do you worry about confidence with your group at this point in the season when you guys haven't been in this position since any of them have been here?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. I think I've got a confident group. They're going to go out and play with swagger. It's just got to be 60 minutes. They went out and played with confidence in the first half, we've just got to play with it for 60 minutes. It's a four quarter game. No one wins after two quarters or three quarters. Sat in the locker room at halftime and said it's 0-0; let's go out.

Again, I think they had the intentions, and sometimes things don't work your way.

Q. When you're having trouble stopping the run, is it almost a good thing that you know exactly what you're going to get on Saturday or Thursday night?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, yeah. It's nice to know that Thomas, No. 1, is going to be the quarterback, I think. Gosh, I say that and Hafley will put somebody else at

quarterback that we don't know about. But they do a little wildcat, as well.

But that'll be the main guy, and he can sling it, too, and run.

Q. How have you seen your receivers grow this year with all the struggles? Seemed like they were still in the game making plays even as the passing offense was having a hard time connecting.

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm proud of the way those guys have hung together and can make plays when they have opportunities. You guys were here, Kenny Pickett's junior year where it wasn't like that.

That's one of our older groups; we look at Bub and Konata and Daejon Reynolds, and you've got the one young puppy in there, Kenny, those are probably the top four if I'm not missing anybody that are getting a lot of the reps out there.

Again, it's one of the older groups. They've stayed pretty good, although two of those four last week probably didn't play at their best. I don't know if they didn't play before the game just with that little bug going around.

We dealt with a little bit of that last week and still dealing with it today.

Q. Two fumbles that Christian had, were those a matter of him not securing the ball, or was that a miscommunication on the read or the give and the plays you were running?

PAT NARDUZZI: A little bit of both, just having a better grip on the ball and pulling it. Obviously you're reading it and you've got to be clean with the mesh, and it wasn't.

Q. What does Dino Tomlin bring to their team?

PAT NARDUZZI: Dino Tomlin, that's a great question. That's a great question. I've been really impressed with him. Obviously transferred from Maryland. Went to Maryland out of high school, and went up to Boston College, and he's been impressive. He's a playmaker.

I think he's become a trustworthy guy in that offense. He does a lot of different -- they'll hand jet sweeps off to him. I'm sure Coach Tomlin will be up in his box on Thursday night watching his son.

He's been impressive. He's got great hands, and he finds a way to make a lot of plays. They'll throw quick screens to him. He does a lot of different things. He's impressive, which we thought he was impressive out of high school, as well. We offered him out of high school, and he's a good

football player.

Q. Mike hasn't said anything to you about this week yet?

PAT NARDUZZI: No, haven't had a chance. Obviously we've been on a different schedule and they're on a different schedule. We usually text once a week, good luck, good luck, and we move on. I don't know if he'll get a good luck this week. I don't know.

Q. What was the main problem with the Boston College defense on Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I'll go back. I think I told you after we played -- that's a good football team. I don't even know what their record is. I don't look at standings or records. I just know I think they do a heck of a job in the run game. Again, they've got 11 guys, and it's not easy.

He can throw it. He can run it. Kind of like we're facing this weekend. Virginia Tech is one of the more improved football teams in the ACC with some of the off-season acquisitions they've acquired.

He's done a nice job down there, and it's defending 11 guys.

Q. You mentioned Thomas Castellanos, the Boston College quarterback. What makes him such a threat?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's a running back there and he can throw it. He's impressive, let me just tell you. I thought last week we saw some athletic quarterbacks. Like he's quick, he's fast. He's probably a 4.4 guy. He can put his foot in the ground and go. He's really good. They found a diamond there, I think.

I think he's really talented. They run a lot of quarterback counters and they do everything with him.

Again, he's athletic, he's fast, and he can also throw it. Again, if they had another quarterback, he could be a great tailback, too. He can go.

Q. What was practice like today?

PAT NARDUZZI: It was good. Went out there and had a full scrimmage -- we didn't do that. You've got to be careful. I preached to our guys about just recovery and making sure that we're as fresh as we can be. It's a fast turnaround because you play a game and you get home at whatever, 11:00, 11:30 at night, probably they're walking in the Bridge on Forbes at midnight and you're turning around and practicing the next afternoon.

You've just got to be careful what you do, which always scares you as a coach. It's like you can go practice and work on those fundamentals and all those things and be exhausted on Thursday night, and I want a fresh team, as fresh as we can make them. So you try to balance that with what you do work-wise and how fresh you can keep them.

Q. As a group do the coaches go to the ACC and say how about we play Thursday night when we have a bye week before that?

PAT NARDUZZI: We've talked about it. We've talked a lot about that. That happens sometimes -- I think one time in my years here at Pitt, we had a team that had a bye week and we didn't have a bye week. That should never happen.

But as long as we both had to play on Saturday -- it's not good for a banged-up team. It's not good for -- again, it's the same thing in the NFL. They're doing it, trying to put it on TV as much as they can, I get it. But it's important to get our guys back healthy.

Q. Is it worth it playing on Thursdays? You don't make the schedule, but ostensibly you have a showcase. You'll be the only college game on Thursday night. Should they schedule it after an off week?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it would be beneficial to everybody, but there's a lot of games to be played, and I think ESPN kind of gets what they need.

Q. In the NFL it's a part of the CBA, hey, we care about player safety but we also schedule games with guys on three days' rest. Those are professionals. You guys are still student-athletes. --

PAT NARDUZZI: You're going to get our CBA going.

Q. Is it in the best interest of the kids to put themselves out there two games in 96 hours or whatever it is?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I don't think so. You'd like to see more -- that's why we're going to take care of our guys this week. That's what I've got to take care of. If they're not going to take care of them, I'll take care of them as much as I can.

Q. On the quarterback question from earlier, will it be a game-time decision on Thursday night or something you'll probably decide the next day or two?

PAT NARDUZZI: Probably next day or two. Maybe Thursday night. Maybe in the locker room pregame. Who knows. I'll let you know first.

Q. Given Phil's ties to that school, is there any plans to have him on the field in any sort of --

PAT NARDUZZI: We're trying to win a game. If he can help us win the game, we'll get him on the field. If he can't, then he won't be on the field. How about that?

Q. It's obviously senior night Thursday. What does it mean to see some of those guys go out on their last night?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, our focus in our team meeting today was gratitude. Just talked about how grateful we are, not only to the seniors and the guys playing their last game at Acrisure Stadium but also to really everybody in this room.

But the seniors mean a lot, and there's a lot of guys that won an ACC Championship in here. Regardless of what happens in '22 or '23, the one thing about most of these guys up front is they've helped us win an ACC Championship, and no one can ever take that away from them. That's something impressive.

You have your up years and your down years, and just doesn't matter. Like I love these guys in this room. These seniors, most of them have been here for a long time, and this is our family in here.

It's always sad to see those guys play their last game. Again, we want them to go out winners on their last game in Acrisure Stadium. That's what we're working on. Good question. I'm glad we got that one in.

Q. Are some of them going to come back maybe?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, yeah, you know, I don't know. I wish I knew. I would give you that answer if I knew.

But as you guys know, Senior Day, some guys walk and come back. I think Kenny Pickett walked on Senior Day and he came back. So just use that as one good example. Everybody has got decisions to make in the future, what's best for them, and we understand that, and we'll help guide them in the best way we possibly can.

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