

# University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

## Head Coach Pat Narduzzi

### Press Conference

Pitt 24, Boston College 16

PAT NARDUZZI: First of all, just happy for our kids in there. They have worked. Every day they come to work, and things haven't gone our way in a lot of games, but I couldn't be prouder of our football team.

Love those guys in there. The seniors, all their families; that was a win for the seniors. And the parents were so good last night at Senior Night. It was a heck of a way to finish out our home season here in Pittsburgh.

It was a 60-minute focused game. We had talked all week about just putting 60 minutes together. We put 30 minutes last week, and then put the ball on the ground, whatever it is. Just to put it together. You're plus-2 in the turnover margin, and when you do that, you have a chance to win games.

We had four penalties for 22 yards. We were disciplined that way. I was happy about that. We made plays when we needed to.

Questions.

#### **Q. What led to the decision to start Nate?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Just protecting the ball. Again, we still has a lot of confidence in Christian. He will be ready to go, and he is going to learn from his mistakes. Sunday we said we were going with Nate, and Nate took all the snaps with the ones all week.

We just felt like he would go in and make really good decision, which he does today. He protected the ball and gives you a chance to win a football game.

#### **Q. Do you regret not starting Nate earlier in the season?**



PAT NARDUZZI: We can regret and look back and all that. There's no regrets. We all can look backwards, and it's part of the game. It is what it is.

Nate is a good football player, as we know, and he is 2-0 as a starter. I've told you all along since August that we had faith in really all three quarterbacks, but the guys have to protect the ball and give us a chance to win. It was Nate tonight.

#### **Q. How much input was there from Frank Cignetti in starting Nate tonight?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It was a group decision. It was pretty clear-cut. So Cignetti, myself, the staff.

#### **Q. After Rodney's touchdown run, was there any temptation to maybe go for two to make it a two-score game?**

PAT NARDUZZI: No, all the charts tell you to kick it, period.

#### **Q. Will Nate start next week against Duke?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I guess we'll see; right? I would say probably; right? It's pretty simple. Protect the ball, and you have a chance to win.

#### **Q. How about defensively and your ability to limit Castellanos?**

PAT NARDUZZI: He is an athlete. You can see him just outrun some guys to the edge, but I thought we limited him pretty good. He still scrambled. He is fast. He is a playmaker.

We did a good job in the run game. That was the most impressive part is stopping the run. That was the number one key. I told the defense prior to the game, I said, I didn't say stop the pass; I said stop the run. I thought they did a really good job.

In the first half they came out and they jumped into those gigantic people out there and went a bunch of 22-personnel, and we matched the personnel and did a solid job.



**Q. It seemed like Dayon really stepped up.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Dayon had a good game. When you get a chance, I think we had a few sacks. I don't know how many sacks we had. Six sacks.

Again, it's hard to get sacks when they have 66 rushes, but we were able to get to the quarterback and early in the game, and that was good. I think we had three early in the first or second quarter. Those were critical.

**Q. When did you like from Rodney tonight? Do you think that's something that could have been there all season?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, you have to block them. Our guys did a good job blocking. I think it's something you learn. Kenny Johnson came in, and on that big run, that go ahead touchdown, Kenny Johnson came in and had just an unbelievable block and sprung Rodney.

So Rodney didn't do it all by himself, but Rodney looked great tonight, and that's what we expect out of Rodney.

**Q. This is the second straight week that you guys have turned down the penalties from where you guys were at for much of the season. Was there a response that you saw from your players the last couple of weeks, or did something change?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I wish I could tell you we did a great job coaching on that part, but it's just discipline. Again, we talk about it all the time. We didn't change anything or do anything different, but penalties and turnovers will get you beat really fast.

**Q. How much do you think what Nate was able to do tonight with stretching field and his ability to run maybe opened up some stuff in the run game that hadn't been there before?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, there's no question. We had the quarterback runs early, but he did a good job reading what the defense was giving you. If their ends are chasing, he is keeping it, and he had a nice touchdown run.

He had a great pass to Bub. That was a big-time throw. I'm just happy for Nate and the offense and the defense and special teams and for especially all those seniors.

**Q. What explanation was there on that touchdown catch there by Boston College? Obviously it was reviewed. Wondering what they told you.**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, it's irrelevant at this point,

but guess it was a touchdown. They said it was a touchdown, it's a touchdown.

Our guys fought through adversity, and it didn't matter, and they just kept going.

**Q. When was the decision finalized to go to Nate, and how did he handle himself in preparing on a short week?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Nate is a pro. We kept our guys fresh this week. We didn't go in pads at all. We were wearing shorts and spider pads on Sunday. We practiced Monday and Tuesday.

Nate did a good job of running the game and managing the game so happy for him.

**Q. Did he have that workload Sunday, like, starter workload on Sunday? Was that decision made then?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes, sir. Yeah.

**Q. Zero turnovers. Zero penalties in the first half. No punts in the entire game. Can you talk about the clean way the team played?**

PAT NARDUZZI: We had a couple of punts in the second half. None in the first half. I like that.

That 15-play drive was execution, and again, he didn't see the false starts and making it second and 15, all those things. It was a clean game versus a good football team. That team can run the football. That's a good football team.

**Q. What can you say about your team's focus after starting 2-8?**

PAT NARDUZZI: It was amazing. You have to focus. I pleaded. I said before the game, I said, Please give me 60 minutes of focus. And I said the same thing, I said, Please give me 30 more at halftime and just focus and take care of the details, and good things happen.

**Q. Is there any particular senior that maybe at halftime or throughout this particular game that kept up momentum?**

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it was a team win. I can't say there's one, but David Green was very vocal at halftime and after the game, Captain David. It was a team win, and a lot of guys led.

**Q. P.J. looked like he was in a good position a lot of**



**times tonight. Have you seen him grow a lot this year as a safety?**

PAT NARDUZZI: P.J. has really grown a lot. I think it might be his third pick of the year. Especially in the second half of the season.

That was a great play down at the -- we had some horrible field position that third quarter. I think it was -- what was it?

Third quarter we were at the minus 10 to minus 2 to minus 3. We were coming out. That was some brutal field position that they had, but when we gave them the ball at 25, they did a good job moving the ball.

**Q. The other times you've played Nate, Western Michigan was a run-heavy game plan. The other games he was coming in at the end. Now you've seen him in a full game, I guess we'll call it a real game, did your view of him change seeing what he did tonight?**

PAT NARDUZZI: My view hasn't changed. I loved him on scout field when he was there prior to that Western game. He just takes care of the details. He's calm and cool, and that's what you need, someone to manage it and take care of the football.

**Q. How much of the playbook was open for him today? Going back to Western Michigan, it was, again, a run-heavy team. You guys relied Abanikanda. How much of the playbook was open for him?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Nate, he's one of the smartest guys on our football team. The playbook was wide open. It's funny.

Earlier in the week I said, you think about it, when we played in that Western Michigan game -- in high school he never took a snap under center. I don't think he ever went under center at Western Michigan, but he can operate in the gun. He can operate under center. So the playbook is wide open when he's in the game.

**Q. Your thoughts on Bub Means and his performance in the game, even in the past few weeks as a trusted, reliable playmaker?**

PAT NARDUZZI: Bub is fast, big, and strong, and he makes plays. So happy for him to get that big ball. He's capable of making big plays at any point if we can get him the ball and protect and do all the little things right.

Last thing I'll say is that Panther Pitt, I love the Panther Pitt. They were unbelievable. They were out there early.

Prior to the game I looked up there and thought, Oh, doesn't look so good. When we came out for the game time, the Panther Pitt was rocking, and thank those guys

and love them as well. Thank you, and hail to Pitt.

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