

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

Pitt - 55, Kent State - 24

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm sure you've got a lot of questions. Happy with what we did today. I thought really all three phases did some good things. All three phases did some stuff we've got to clean up.

Opening day issues, whether it be a muffed punt by Konata trying to make a play, just some stuff like that that's got to get cleaned up. Jumping over a punch shield, which we can't do, which we coach every single day, but guys trying to be aggressive.

Too many penalties early in the game. All on us. But overall, game one, there will be a lot to teach from the video, and happy with where we are at this point.

Q. Evaluate Eli's performance today.

PAT NARDUZZI: I'll let you guys. It won't matter what I say. I'm going to watch the videotape. I thought early, shoot, I think his first series there wasn't an incomplete pass.

Sorry you can't see me, Jerry. Got the chairs pulled up really close.

Eli played really good, I think. I was really happy with where he was. He had the one interception, kind of threw it off his heels, I think. We'll go back and look at what he did there. But overall, he got the ball out of his hands when he needed to. I think one series, we gave up two sacks in a row, which is disappointing. See if he needed to get rid of it or we had a protection problem. I think the corner came one time.

Overall, 30 of 40 for, what, 300-plus yards, I would say he looked pretty darn good.

Q. Looks like Eli completed to four different receivers, two tight ends and two running backs, and from both sidelines deep, intermediate. What do you say about his grasp of the playbook for being a red shirt



freshman who transferred to you guys?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's a good football player. I told you. And so is Nate. But I think schematically, I think Coach Bell and the offensive staff does a great job of scheming it up and putting our kids in position to make those plays.

The ball is being spread out. I don't know how many different receivers caught balls here today. But when you look at the targets, Kenny, just some good stuff. The ball's spread out. You can't just focus on that guy over there. We've got different ways of getting guys balls and have got to try to get everybody involved.

Q. You said you hoped after the first game it was pretty obvious who your starting quarterback would be. Do you go in next week, rest of the season, feeling pretty good that Eli is your starter?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, we'll talk about that Monday. I want to sit down with the offense and sit down with Kade. I think things looked pretty good today, what we kind of thought coming out of camp.

Eli was sharp. If things didn't look sharp early, we'd probably have pulled him earlier to see what Nate had. I told you earlier, I think I told you Thursday I didn't have a plan for when and what to do. But the way he played with composure, obviously it's going to be -- we're going to see a little bit more next Saturday at 3:30 in Cincinnati. So just getting locked into that one.

Q. You talked about Desmond being explosive on Thursday. Is that what you're talking about, his performance today?

PAT NARDUZZI: That's what I was talking about. I mean, the kid's been like that. He's tough. He gets a calf right there, comes back, doesn't say boo. He just keeps going. He's an EveReady battery. He just goes.

Even the punt return. We had our base defense on the field. We were in punt safe. We were keeping our base defense on the field. They made some blocks, and he made some plays. He popped through. I told you he could break one. Happened to be Izzy was here today. He's that kind of back who can break one.



I thought Derrick Davis did some good things. Daniel Carter some did nice things as well. So we got a lot of people involved. We've got a lot of guys playing football today.

We've got our second offensive line in there. Shoot, I think we've got our third D-line. Jahsear got in there. Whittington got in and got some good things in. I think the last three plays defense were TFLs.

I did not like the way our defense came out in the third quarter. We'll address that. I didn't like that at all. I don't know what they were doing, what they were thinking. I can't wait to watch the videotape. That was not how I wanted to come out in the third quarter.

Q. (Inaudible) big plays, especially in the third quarter. Did you notice anything?

PAT NARDUZZI: No, just execution and details. I don't know. I don't know if they felt like -- I don't know what they came out in the second half as, but I'll get on the defensive coaches. Starts with us as coaches. Make sure their minds are right, and they don't think the game's easy and it's in the bag.

Q. You guys got a lot out of Kenny Johnson as a sophomore, whether it was red zone, deep ball, over the middle, catching it off the ground. What have you seen that's allowed him to make the kind of improvements he's had?

PAT NARDUZZI: He didn't practice a lot this fall so I can't tell you it was because practice makes perfect. He was banged up a lot. We were able to get him in, C.J. Lee back on game day, which was good. C.J. was banged up more than he was. I think he had a few catches today as well.

We'll continue to get better there.

Q. Penalties one thing you're most concerned about today?

PAT NARDUZZI: I am. We talk about eight things critical to winning, and penalties isn't one of them. Penalties doesn't lose games. How many illegal procedures did we have? Zero unforced. There's going to be some aggressive penalties we had.

There were some early. I don't have my book on me, but there were some early that shouldn't happen. They were aggressive ones and, you know, I don't anticipate those -- I think the first one was a block in the back or a holding on a punt return. Just shouldn't happen and, you know, we'll get that cleaned up, I think, for sure.

Q. What's your biggest concern going forward?

PAT NARDUZZI: I have a million concerns, Jerry. My first concern is that next week, E.J. gets these seats backed up so I can really see your whole body and not just the top of your forehead. That concerns me that we've got the seats moved up closer than they've ever been in ten years.

But I'm going to pick and pick and pick. There's all kinds of stuff that we can clean up. I'm not going to sit here and say I'm worried about penalties because that's not critical to winning, but it can cost you a game. We've got to clean that up. It's bad ball.

Q. One of concerns pass protection? Four sacks allowed, a couple coming early with pressure.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. I mean, you know, we'll look at that. Again, sometimes it's plays. One thing I can tell you about our offense, we're going to get five receivers out. We like the explosive plays and guys out of backfield. So the quarterback has to get the ball out at times.

If we're putting five -- you watch. If you're putting five in a route, the quarterback is caught off of somebody, and we've got to do a good job of picking up corners and knowing they're coming. The ones you can't see, we've got to do a better job.

That sometimes goes with fast tempo as well. When you fast tempo, sometimes you can't see it coming. We've got to do a better job with that. That comes with experience at the quarterback position and Coach Bell knowing what he's got there too.

Q. What did you think about how the linebackers played today, especially Kyle Louis?

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, refer to the videotape. Kyle Louis, the one time he came in there and smacked the guy. The quarterback got beat up today. I hope he's healthy. He took a beating today by our guys. We got five sacks, but it was five sacks and another ten hits so it's 15 hits on the quarterback. He took licks, and he's a tough kid from Camden, New Jersey, so give him credit.

Kyle Louis and I think Rasheem Biles had the first sack of the year. We'll just continue to get better. We've got a young front. We talked about it. You probably saw a lot of penetration, all the way down to the threes at the end there, you know. But I thought the linebackers did a nice job. We'll evaluate it as we go.

Q. (Inaudible).

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Thanks, guys. Appreciate it.

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PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Jerry, tell him.

Q. Sorry, Pat, can't help these guys.

PAT NARDUZZI: Can't help them. Yeah, we hope we get him back. That's why I sit here. I can put all those oars on there. Something happens during the week you don't anticipate. He's been healthy all summer camp. It was unfortunate that he wasn't ready to go today, but hope to have him back next week.

Q. There was a third and long that you converted off a draw, spread out the defense really wide with your wide-outs, and Desmond Reid gets it and goes 28 yards. Is that something you uniquely designed for him because of his ability, or is that just a normal play call?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's draw on third and long, you know. Draw on third and long when you're throwing a lot. You catch them by surprise. They have a four-man twist on. Offensive line did a good job. Sometimes the twists, you know, the gate, the draw sometimes.

Again, it's a great job by Jeremy Darveau, our offensive line coach, getting it up, coaching it and knowing what to expect. Again, it comes down to coaching and players making plays. It's a little bit of both. So it's great play call by Coach Bell.

Q. Can you offer any clarity on Rodney's situation?

PAT NARDUZZI: We made an announcement about that already. And, you know, got nothing further to talk about.

Q. How important is it to have such an offensive explosion?

PAT NARDUZZI: Really important. Our kids, there's a different bounce. There's a different bounce about our kids. I watched them last night coming out of offensive meetings last night at 8:30 p.m., and it's just like the smiles on their faces. They're excited. They had a lot of confidence going in.

Again, a tribute to our offensive staff and Coach Bell and what he brought to the offense. There's confidence about what they're doing, how they're doing it. It was important to come out and put some points up like they did.

The great thing about him, he's in the locker room all mad because he felt like he left three touchdowns out there. So that's what I like about that.