

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Monday, September 2, 2024

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, had a good day yesterday just reviewing the tape with the guys and just going over the good, the bad and the ugly, as you do every Sunday. There's always good and bad and ugly. You have to go back and watch the videotape.

A lot of self-inflicted wounds. I told our guys that the good thing is you saw adversity out there. After one series in the third quarter it's 28-21 and there's adversity, which is always good to fight through that, but self-inflicted adversity. I talked about a couple of them last night. The momentum changes of games, the Desmond Reid punt return for a touchdown was a big momentum change for us. It's like, okay, we're going to knock them out, but then we let them come back in the game because of what we do. Example is the muffed punt return that goes for a touchdown. Give them momentum. An interception, big return, but again, our defense gets the momentum back by stopping them and getting their own interception. 3rd and 1, we go three-and-out defensively, we jump over a shield of some sort, which the guy kind of chopped us so it's a little bit of an odd play, and you can't block below the waist either on special teams. But either way it's a momentum changer. All of a sudden defense is back out there. Sudden change again.

Things like that that we did to ourselves. Opening kickoff, I think when you look at just winning the field position, they started off having the ball at -- their worst field position was the minus 25, our worst was the minus 5 and the minus 10, so we had 95 and 90 yards to go. So just explaining all that stuff to our guys last night.

But great meeting. A win is a win is a win. We'll make corrections. They're very coachable guys, and I like where they are attitude-wise right now, and we'll move on to a good Cincinnati football team.

Scott Satterfield has been there for his second year. We've faced him when he was at Louisville, and he's a heck of a coach. He's probably the play caller on offense. I think he does an outstanding job, as good as anybody is going to do, of mixing up personnels in different formations



and motions. Heavy, heavy motion team, as well, so we'll work again a lot on motions and what we're going to see there.

They've got a transfer quarterback from Indiana, Sorsby, Brendan. He's a good football player. They've got Kiner in the backfield; Xavier Henderson, receiver; Royer, transfer tight end from Ohio State who's a dude, I think, No. 11. You'll see him if you watch any tape.

They've got skill guys everywhere. They're talented. They're like an ACC football team playing in the Big 12. So it's ACC versus Big 12. That's the challenge this week, so I like that.

Defensively they're a 3-4. They've got a new coordinator defensively, but they're kind of an odd team, which will be the first time we've seen the odd look, so it'll be interesting game plan-wise what we do as we prepare and block something different.

Obviously the Corleone kid on defense, he's a heck of an outstanding football player. He was out, as you guys know, during the summer, but I expect Dontay to be back. I think he'll be back for us.

I think he spent plenty of time talking to people, expect him to be back. He's the dude up front. They've got some other great players up front. Eric Phillips a big defensive end, No. 97, is a great player. Bartlett at linebacker stands out to me, their middle linebacker, gets things rolling. Then the back end, they've got skill guys to cover you up.

Questions?

Q. Is the starting quarterback race now solidified and Eli is the guy moving forward?

PAT NARDUZZI: Right now he is. That's what we looked at. You look at the tape and he just made really good decisions. He's calm. It's his first start; you never knew what was going to happen. But Eli was impressive on game tape.

Q. What did you see about Nate and how he handled that situation? That's got to be tough for him to take.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Nate is a pro in my opinion. He's



as great a kid as you're going to be around. He knows it's a long season. We all know it's a long season. If we get our quarterback hit like we did last week, Nate will be the guy in there, and we've got a heck of a lot of confidence in him.

Nate has handled it well. I'm sure it's not easy. It's not easy making the decisions, easy taking it, but he's a supporter. Just like he was last week, I expect the same support this week of him encouraging and coaching like he does.

Q. Is there something beyond stats jumped out to you about Eli and his performance on Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think just composure I would say. You just look at how he just kind of was out there smooth. You don't ever know how a guy is going to react. I don't care if it's a quarterback or a D-lineman. How are they got to as far as just his composure on game day, how he carried himself, how he led the offense, how there wasn't a bunch of false starts and mechanical issues as far as just the operation. It was a clean start. That's tough to do for a redshirt freshman.

Q. Can Des be a 20-, 25-touch-a-game guy or is he a change of pace because he's not the biggest dude in the world?

PAT NARDUZZI: Good question. That dude is as tough a guy as I've seen around. He's explosive. He's tough. Like anybody, you want to limit -- you don't want to do too much with him.

We'll talk this afternoon at our staff meeting just about reps on special teams, how many plays did we have this guy get on offense, plus special teams equals what, just to see what he's doing and what we've got to get to.

As you guys know, our running back position can be by committee, but he's a special guy back there. He can handle it.

Q. He does not seem afraid of anything.

PAT NARDUZZI: I know you were in Paris for a while, but during fall camp, that dude is as tough a guy as I've seen at tailback here, okay. Isy Abanikanda was here the other day, and Isy was an okay pass protector, as big as 210 pounds when he was here, he looks 220 now.

Desmond is like -- he will stone you in the hole. It's like, whoa. I don't know where he gets it. He's good in that -- he's tough.

Q. Is he as strong as Isy was when he first came here given his stature?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, when you look at him, I'm like, how many carries can we get him? We've got to protect him, get out of bounds, do all those things. Like he doesn't turn -- he's not turning that down.

Q. What's issues did you notice?

PAT NARDUZZI: A little bit of everything, some miscommunication. I think one of them was a bad call. We missed a couple things. But just little stuff that we can clean up. Nothing that I'm like, oh, my gosh, what are we doing. Branson's kick slide was not good. We don't know where it came from, haven't seen it before, but he came out with a new style of pass protection, but it's easy to get cleaned up.

Q. How do you feel about the depth there?

PAT NARDUZZI: Daniel Carter is a good football player, too. We hope to get Juelz back here soon, and I think Che can run and hit the holes and do all the things that Des can do. We've got to work on his pass protection.

Q. How did you guys handle the pace in terms of wanting to get the ball set at a certain time, snapped at a certain time. How did you think you guys handled that?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, again, it comes down to operation, and again, it starts with the quarterback and getting the call out there. But they got lined up pretty quick. You see them hustling around to get lined up. I didn't get the average snap. As a matter of fact, I'll work on that today - I'm glad you asked - just to get the average snaps in the game. Coach LaSala, you got Mark on that, please. But I get it for every practice. I'm not sure why I didn't get it for the game.

But they did a good job. It was one of those first time doing it, how good can we be at it, how detailed can we be, and the tough part is you're trying to run it fast as an offense and everybody is getting lined up quick, and again, to Eli's credit and Nate's credit, those guys were getting lined up and a lot of times you've got to make sure they're all lined up before you snap the ball. Someone is making sure they're on or off the line of scrimmage, and we didn't have any of those, and we moved pretty quick, so I think it's only going to get better.

Q. Obviously there were no procedure penalties. Did it surprise you there were none?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. During camp, there was a little -- two- or three-day window during camp that I'm like what are we doing; we jumped offside again, again, again, and then we turned the music up real loud and made crowd noise, and then there was none. It disappeared.

So it's a matter of being locked in and focused, and you'd better pay attention. The noise is going. So I don't know if that had anything to do with it, but it was a little shift in camp when it got noisy out, and probably just a -- you think it's easy and the cadence is easy, and all of a sudden you lose your focus.

Q. Did it almost feel because of the tempo it might almost force guys to focus more because they're moving at the higher rate because there is a greater sense of urgency?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I think that has something to do with it, but you've still got to lock in. There's a lot going on with a cadence. It's not just like set hut, and we go on the first hut all the time.

Q. If you look at the pace you had, it was no-huddle pretty much all the time, but it seemed kind of back and forth about how quick they were snapping it. Sometimes they slowed it down a little bit. Did you like Kade's feel for the pace?

PAT NARDUZZI: Loved it. I think the toughest thing on a defense is when you do -- if you're all fast and you stay fast, that's easy. It's when you're in and out of stuff and you're going fast and then slowing down. That to me as a defensive guy is the hardest thing to deal with because your guys are up ready to go, and all of a sudden now you're sitting on the ball and you're not doing anything, and you're like, come on, let's go. They want to play because you went fast two plays in a row, now all of a sudden you slow it down. I think that's exactly the way we want it to be.

Q. After seeing the fast pace in the game, are you more convinced than ever this is the way of college football now?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think you can do it any way you want. It's having the personnel.

I like what we're doing. But I think it comes down to just having the right people and doing what you do. I feel good with where we are for sure.

Q. What did you think of Sincere Edwards' performance on Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, you guys heard me all camp

talk about how physical that dude is. If you watch the tape or you just had your eyes on No. 90 out there, he's physical, he's aggressive. I thought he played really well for, again, another true freshman. You're talking about a guy, went to the prom in March, April, and he's playing fast like he is. It's pretty impressive.

Q. There were a couple pass plays on Saturday -- did you notice anything with those?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, bad technique, fundamentals. Again, the one I'm not sure -- you guys tell me if the second touchdown on PJ was complete or not. I haven't paid much attention to it since the game.

But can't really tell on the TV copy, the all 22, from the end zone or the wide. But that was a tough one. I think it was good coverage.

The other one was a little bit of a -- I don't want to say busted coverage, but you saw PJ kind of undercut it. He got a couple picks in camp doing it, and he felt like I can do that. Well, it only gets you until it gets you. If he'd doesn't undercut it, we've got a chance.

Then we had some bad technique on another one that got called back. So those are the three. I think there was three total big passes. Then we got a missed tackle by Donovan on one of them and then McMillan misses it, and a 15-yard gain turns into 41, which was the longest big pass of the day was missed tackles. It should have been an easy catch and tackle.

Q. When you're going from a team that's where Kent State is at, trying rebuild their program, to Cincy, which is a little bit bigger, when you're reviewing film on Sunday, do you let them feel good about 55 points, 500 yards, or do you maybe more emphasize, look, we've got to clean this stuff up because next week this is not going to fly?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, self-inflicted wounds. Cincinnati is a really, really good football team. If you guys recall, they were in the playoffs a couple years ago, so they've got talent. They did a great job recruiting. They're in a hotbed of football in southwest Ohio. They've got talent. They've got talent all over that roster, and they've obviously dipped into the portal. A lot of their defensive guys are from the portal, as well.

They're talented, and going from there to Cincinnati is a difference, but going back to the end of that question, it's like, we're going to be on our guys' tails this week as far as just the details. If you go do what you did on Saturday and you go down to Cincinnati for a noon start there, you might

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

not be so happy walking in the door after that game.

Q. What did you think of the receiving corps?

PAT NARDUZZI: Receiving corps did a good job. I think we had a couple drops, but Kenny Johnson had two spectacular catches. Poppi Williams, as I've told you during camp, did a nice job, looking at the top 3 there. Then Konata Mumpfield was really good, as well. He got his five or six catches. I thought he did a nice job.

Overall when you get opportunities you've got to make plays. I think anybody that had an opportunity to catch a ball did a pretty good job at it.

Q. Do you see keeping that ball spread around, keeping the defense as a whole a bit off balance?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, that's what you want. Again, if they're double covering somebody or doing something where we can't get the ball to that guy, the coverage always dictates. I know everybody likes to get Gavin the ball, and we've got two this weekend. It will be a battle between two great tight ends, as well, in this game, with the Royer kid and obviously with Gavin.

But you want to spread it around, but again, it's not like Eli or Nate dropped back to pass and throw it to a guy that you want to throw it to because he's good. It's all based on coverage. I think we're going to see a lot of drop-eight coverage this weekend, too.

Q. After you evaluated with the film, how did you evaluate your defensive line and the push they got up front?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I felt bad for that quarterback after the game. He took a beating. Our guys played hard up front. There was attack up front. There was penetration.

Defensively I liked the relentless play that we had. Could have been cleaner tacklers. That third quarter first series was the most annoying thing that I've seen, and I'll take that responsibility and I'll make sure it doesn't happen this week in practice because we're going to have a third quarter ACC period this week.

Whether it didn't come out, whatever, it wasn't acceptable. That's another momentum change thing that we didn't get done.

I was happy with the push we got up front. We did a nice job.

Q. How did the technology work out?

PAT NARDUZZI: The iPads are spectacular on the sideline. It's great to be able to see what the heck is going on, and the green dots were good. No problems there, no issues.

Q. What did you think about how Ryland and Sean played at cornerback?

PAT NARDUZZI: They played solid. There's some things they've got to clean up for sure. I know Coach Collins is focused and locked in to try to get them better. I would say Ryland for his first maybe real start -- I don't think he started at all last year so it's his first start. I think he did a good job.

Rashad Battle never had a start before, either. Him, Tamon, and those three guys I think are going to get better and better every game with just the reps and the experience of going out there and seeing it live. It's different.

Q. Do you have a policy, you guys have a policy on a punt return if a ball bounces whether a guy should pick it up if it doesn't come right to him?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Des let one bounce and got it. I mean, to me it's is it hot or not; is it going. But I don't think Konata really wanted to pick that thing up, but it was like, it's coming right to me, I'm going to take it. I think he wanted to go make a play. Players want to go make plays. I think that was one of those.

He apologized right after. That's what you love about Konata and a lot of players on our team. He's like, my bad, I'm a knucklehead.

But it was one of those favorable bounces where he could have done something with it as long as you tuck it away and cleaned it up. But we've got to be smarter around those balls and be careful.

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