

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: It's game week. Great to have you guys here today. The university obviously had some news this morning that I would like to at least start off commenting on first.

But the first thing I'll say, really the only comments I really care to have at this point is I'm grateful and appreciative of the last seven years working with Heather Lyke. She's done a great job. She's got great energy, and appreciate everything she's done there.

Again, I wish her and her family all the luck personally and professionally as far as her next move. She's a strong, strong person and will land on her feet.

I know Chancellor Gabel is committed to excellence in athletics, committed to the excellence in championships in Pitt football. So I have a ton of trust in her and what she's going to do in the future here at Pitt.

With Jen Toscano, who has been here a lot longer than I have, but she's been here for my ten seasons. So we've got a great relationship as well, and I trust that Jen will do an outstanding job leading the entire athletic department as well as football. I'll probably sit down and talk with her later this afternoon.

But we're here for some football. I really want to focus on football, focus on this football team, and focus on this gigantic rivalry game that we're going to see here at 3:30 on Saturday in Pittsburgh.

With that, I'll just kind of close on Cincinnati quickly. Obviously it was a great come-from-behind victory. Couldn't be prouder. Had a great team meeting last night with our guys. Couldn't be prouder of just the way they took care of business, and the business on the field is what we do. That's why we play this game. That's why we coach this game.



But the resilience our kids showed fighting through adversity.... we say adversity, our guys are used to dealing with adversity. I can't tell you our sideline was as good the week before on the sideline in the second half as it was this week.

The excitement on the sideline, the belief. Looking those guys in the eyes knowing that we were going to win that game in the fourth quarter, it was just belief. I can't tell you I've seen that always. I told them last night the last 20-point deficit that I remember being involved in was Baylor in the Cotton Bowl, and we came back and won that one too.

They don't happen every week. They don't happen every day. It is hard to come back from that deficit, and that tells you what kind of football team we have.

So obviously, you know, I thought the end of the third quarter, maybe that last series offensively, last series defensively in that fourth quarter as a whole was dominant by our football team. Again, you talk about how you start, and it's really how you finish. We stuck to our guns. You always talk about belief in what we're doing and how we're doing it. We left a lot of plays out there in the first half that you would like back offensively, defensively, and special teams, and all phases.

There's a lot to clean up. I feel good. When you walk off the field with a win and you know you have a lot to clean up and you have a good team meeting to start the clean-up, there's nothing better than that to be honest with you. You make those kind of mistakes in the first half, come in here with a loss, it's never fun.

Credit goes to our players. The men in the arena, they got it done. It's a tribute to these guys that sit in the front rows, our seniors, our captains, and our leadership group that, again, pass on the message and gets it done.

Obviously gigantic, as I said earlier, really, really big rivalry game here. There's maybe not many more important rivalry games in the country. You guys can talk about the River City Rivalry. We all know that's not really a rivalry this weekend.

If you don't know anything about rivalries, this is the one. This is the one that people in Pittsburgh live for, people



down South live for. Again, they have a great football team.

Brown is a heck of a heck of a football coach. He's calling the plays. I think schematically he's very similar to Satterfield last week. I have a ton of respect for him as a football coach, as a scheme guy. He does really good stuff.

They will challenge you really in all three phases of the game. They'll be very multiple on defense, running a bunch of different fronts and coverages. None that we haven't seen thus far. We may even see some free safety stuff. Who knows?

They do a great job there. Again, I think one thing to note, just when you think about who they are and they've got two games in already obviously like we do, they have 11 transfers and two deep on defense. They have a lot of new guys over there that I think when you look at that, they're going to get better every week and fit into their scheme.

Then offensively it all starts with their quarterback, Garrett Greene. I think him and Donaldson in the backfield with Jaheim White in the backfield as well, they like to run the ball. They're going to throw RPOs. We're going to see all that.

They got really I think talented receivers out there. They got deep ball guys. They got intermediate guys. They have guys that can make plays. We'll see a bunch of RPOs. We'll see deep balls. We're going to see it all. We're going to see everything they got.

I think you can throw every record out. We could be 0-2. They could be 0-2. It doesn't matter. This will be a knock-down-drag-out battle at Acrisure Stadium on Saturday.

They'll be ready; we'll be ready. We're excited for it. I know our team is excited for it.

Questions?

Q. Regarding Heather, what can you say about how he supported you as she came in and took over the athletic department and obviously negotiating an extension?

PAT NARDUZZI: Like I said, talked about her appreciation already. I really don't want to get into a whole lot of -- I want to talk about our football team. It's football week, right?

I've been locked up in the room there, and I had really no idea. Everybody is leaving me alone thinking, you know -- but I'll answer your question.

She's been outstanding and supportive. Like I said, I can't thank her enough and her family... Dave, Eli... Eli is a supporter. He loves football. He loves Pitt. They love Pitt. It's what it is, so really supportive.

Q. What have you learned about bringing a transfer quarterback up to speed? You've done it the last couple of years. Maybe this time you have a freshman coming in, and obviously Eli looks like he's picked things up relatively quickly.

PAT NARDUZZI: What was the --

Q. What did you learn about the process of being a transfer quarterback and putting him out there Week 1?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think everyone is different. You can go all the way back to Nathan Peterman. Everyone is a little bit different. There's transfer quarterbacks all over the country. It's the No. 1 transfer position in the country.

I think you can't sit there and say, This is what I learned because of him or him or him. They're all different. When you look at people, they're all individually different. They have different characteristics.

I guess maybe the one thing I know is just be detailed. I'm going to make sure I dot the Is and cross the Ts as far as what we're doing in that range. I want to make the right move and be careful about everything we do, period.

Q. What did you learn about Eli in the game on Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: Any time you start off and move the ball down the field and go down and you throw a pick, okay, how are you going to respond? That's the first adversity. I think it's tough on a quarterback. He has the toughest job on the field.

He's got the job. How did he respond to that? Had a couple of up-and-down series, but in the end I think just go to the second half and look at the videotape. I learned that he's tough inside, and he can wipe it off, and he is moving on. He did one hell of a job in the second half.

Q. I think I know the answer to this question. I don't want to speak for you. At any point in that game did you think of making a change at quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: No, no, no. Again, I think when you do that, when you do that -- again, I always say stick with your decisions and go with it. Obviously we made the right decision. Coach Bell made the right decision. It's not easy, right? You have to kind of stick with what you feel you know and what you saw in practice every day in practice.

Q. How was Cade in the bad times and the good times? In the end --

PAT NARDUZZI: He has a great demeanor. He's all Mr. Positive. He's more positive than me, I can tell you that. Cade is, Oh, we'll be okay, Coach. Holy cow, I wish I was as young as you and as positive. That goes with the stress as a head coach.

Again, here's the great thing. These iPads make things a little bit different, okay? They really do. These iPads are game-changers. The National Football League doesn't get to use them. They have still pictures. What do you get out of a still picture?

The video and showing him as the game goes on, like, hey, do you see? Oh, I got it, Coach; I got it. Those are the things that we didn't have a year ago that I think really helps out our offense.

Cade is outstanding. He's positive. You talk about adversity. They struggled early in the game, but it didn't slow him down either. Just like a quarterback, it didn't slow him down.

Q. You just mentioned the iPads. I know you mentioned it after the game on Saturday about making adjustments in-game, particularly on the defense. Do you think that you guys come back without the use of the iPads and having that technology?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, there's no question. I think we still get good eyes. We have great eyes in the box. We have great eyes on the sideline. We have someone looking at the left side of the line. Someone is looking at the left guard. We have enough people that are -- they have a job to say, This is what happened on a play.

But to your question, I think the difference is when the kids can see it, okay? Even when we gave up the one touchdown pass on a pressure and Javon McIntyre, his footwork wasn't good. I'll just leave it at that. His footwork looks good 99% of the time.

I grabbed him right after. Without seeing the video -- because I heard what Coach Sanders said up in the box, and said, His footwork. He did something wrong. We call

it torched. Doesn't matter, but he didn't do it right with what we asked him to do.

Javon is, like, Coach, I did it right. The eye in the sky doesn't lie. To be able to go -- and he will go, Oh, because sometimes kids think they're doing it right, but for him to see that it wasn't exactly the way we needed it to be done and it could be eliminated, those are the things.

Sunday is too late. For someone that can look at it and go, I gotcha, Coach, you're right, as opposed -- we can see it, but do they believe it? It's hard not to believe it when you see it on tape on a Sunday. It's even nice to see it at 2:38 p.m. in the middle of third quarter.

Q. How many iPads do you have on the sideline?

PAT NARDUZZI: Oh, boy. That's a tough question. On the sideline I think we have a total of 18. I'm not going to give you our split, how many up, how many down, but we have a total of 18. Coach? A total of 18 that we're allowed to distribute.

We kind of spread them where we need them. Like the O line is going to get two, right? Coach can't show everybody. We wish we had some big screens out there, but I saw the Steelers at practice the other day having a big screen TV out there in the middle of the field. I kind of liked that idea. I'm going to steal that one here shortly.

Q. Can you talk about Eli's apology after the game? What does that say about his character?

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, you guys can make that determination. He cares about the team. Just tells you he's -- obviously you stated the obvious. Again, when you get to watch the iPad, and going back to that, you get to see it. Just tells you what kind of kid he is. He is a super kid, like all of our guys now.

He has the hardest job on the football team. It's not easy playing on the road for your first time, your second start after a lot of success the week before. I would say he had a lot of success throwing for three TDs again. He made the plays when he needed to, and that's what you want a quarterback to do is take you on the comeback, right? He made the throws he needed to make and did some nice things.

Q. (Indiscernible). Is that something you had talked with officials about, like, Hey, look for this, or do you think it was just finally called?

PAT NARDUZZI: In our first scrimmage in Acrisure Stadium Kyle Louis came up and kind of did one of these.

They threw a flag. We have discussed it. There are a lot of things you can't do. We had the officials come in and talk to our entire team about what you can and can't do.

They made it hard on defense. We're not even trying to move. Keyshon Camp used to do this, go from one stance to another stance from the A gap to the B gap, and you can't do that anymore. You have to be very careful. You have to move like you can't move.

Keyshon was the only one who did it. It's just the way he was moving his arms. That's a penalty nowadays. It can get called.

In our opener we had the same thing. We got warned, I believe, in the opener. I forget who it was. It might have been Lovelace maybe early in the first down that they warned us about it. I think they were warned about what they were doing, whether it was barking out some cadence as well as moving their head real quick. They can't make those quick type motions and movements anymore on the D-line.

Again, they've paralyzed us on defense. It's something we talk about all the time. We have to move slow, but sometimes you got to get lined up. That won't be the first time it's called all year. That's the rule. Obviously the officials did a nice job of administering that.

Q. Moving around too much?

PAT NARDUZZI: I didn't zero in on it. I saw first down. I got kind of excited, but you know, yeah.

Q. How did the offensive line play with Brian at the line?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think I mentioned it after the game. I think they did a pretty darn good job without Jacoby being in the line-up. Jason Collier had a really nice game in there.

Again, I told you he came in that second half. I didn't know if he was going to go. I am, like, Oh, boy. On to the next. Maybe your third guard, right?

But he came out and says -- I'm, like, Hey, Jason, we need you. There was no begging. He said, Coach, I'm ready to go. He got a little therapy. He got a little tape job. My hat goes off for our medical people and Chris Hanks, our trainer, of getting him back on the field.

It's hard when you are 320 pounds and you get a hammy. I didn't think you could do that. When you are slow like me, you don't get hammies. I'll tell you what, he was out there

pulling and running. That's impressive.

But the O-line played solid. Branson Taylor had an outstanding game as well at the left tackle spot. We were happy with the offensive line. That's a good defensive line. The Godfather is a good football player.

Q. In terms of Saturday's game and with all the new coaches and players that you guys have, did you do anything to kind of prepare them for the atmosphere or the history of the rivalry or anything like that?

PAT NARDUZZI: For this Saturday you're saying?

Q. Yeah.

PAT NARDUZZI: We're going to talk about our opponent. We talked about them last night. We always end Sunday with, okay, we're moving on to the next, right?

So, you know, we're always going to prepare them. We prepare them for the noise that we're going to get this weekend just like we prepare them for the noise we had last weekend. Preparation is everything.

It's the details of what we do, and you prepare for the music you're going to see, the style of music. I want our kids to get every possible thing out of that game they possibly can where they can say that was exactly right.

I asked our offensive guys, Was the noise louder in practice or at the stadium on game day? They said, Coach, no question in practice. That's what we want it to be is to be louder in practice so you go out there and it's nothing.

Q. Just in terms of the history of the rivalry and things like that --

PAT NARDUZZI: Do we teach them about the history? I think they kind of know. I think we counted 73 players we players in this room that were on that trip last year. We took everybody that we could take, and obviously seniors graduated, so they weren't in the room last night.

But we have 73 players that were on that trip last year that were in that game. We probably have another 46 or 50 guys that were here in '22 when we played them at home.

Yeah, we're going to educate can them on the rivalry and what it is. There was no education last week. Education for a rivalry game this week, absolutely.

Q. Something in the offseason was said about learning a rivalry when you have a tough loss. Has

there been a lot of talk about West Virginia leading up to this season even before this week because of that game?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not at all. I mean, we didn't talk about that at all. We're focused on Game 1, Game 2. The focus last night at the end of that team meeting at 8:30 turned to West Virginia. Just last night.

I told them just the story about rivalries and protecting your family, protecting your people in this room, but we play for each other in this room. I told them a story just when I was at Michigan State. I didn't really know what a rivalry game was.

I told them last night, shoot, when I was in college, our rivalry was Rhode Island versus Brown in front of 7,000 people. It wasn't like -- you know, it was like, okay. They were good football team at the time, but it wasn't really a rivalry. There wasn't much to it.

I learned what was a rivalry was in 2007 at Michigan State. That's when I found, okay, I get it now. It was real. Shoot, I think after that 2007 game, I think probably won six of the next seven, and the only loss being one that they beat us, I guess, 12-10, kicked four field goals.

Q. Rhode Island versus Brown (indiscernible) --

PAT NARDUZZI: I knew were going to ask that question. You have a brown shirt on. That color reminds me of the Brown Bears, who our defensive quality control coach is there now, Phil DeCapito.

I don't remember. It wasn't very good. Let's put it that way. Not like we see now.

Q. Do you have a better appreciation for what this game means than you did when you first played them a couple of years ago?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think any time you're in that rivalry, yes, I think every year it adds to it. Every year there's a different flavor. Like I said, I know from 2007 what a rivalry game was, just with that game and knowing what's on the line and the people you affect and the Pitt fans and the Pitt faithful, the Panther Pitt. Everyone that's involved in that game, everybody is into it.

You know, I think every year adds another flavor, you know. I really do. I think it's just another -- there's another scar that has to be repaired regardless of what it is. Hey, this game this weekend is why you play the game of football. It's why you coach football. This is it.

Q. What can you take about Kade's offense, (indiscernible).

PAT NARDUZZI: He is sitting in his little office right now, which no one has sat in his office for the last five years. He has sat in his office, and he is staring at his -- he has two monitors. I only have one monitor in my office. I can't operate two.

The young guys have two. He is looking at two different game tapes. He has all kinds of stuff. He has his script up. He might have three, as a matter of fact. I go in there, and he is covered with screens thanks to our video and technology department, Seth Graham.

Again, that's what you do as an offensive coordinator. Every week is a little bit different, depending who you are facing and what you have to do. We had a lot of new stuff in last week that we didn't have in. So that's all part of it is getting that first half in.

It's not like anything we did the week before really mattered for the quarterback or for the offensive line or for the receivers. They're all different stuff based on what they did coverage-wise.

Like I said, we'll continue to brush up on that stuff this week as well. You just add it to your repertoire. If they come out and do this, this is what we got. You guys got it now? Got it; we're good.

I think that's the important thing to take away from it is it's not easy, and I think Coach Bell did a great job of adjusting, and we'll have to do the same thing this week.

Q. You guys sit down on Sunday morning and be, like, Hey, these are the notes that we have as far as the things that we want to see that we can make work against this next -- when does that happen where you sit down with him, and you guys go over what's the big things --

PAT NARDUZZI: Sunday morning it's all on closing the chapter on the -- the first one is grading the tape on Sunday morning, grading the tape, getting all our goals, all the things. What did we do? What did with we do well? What do we need to fix? What were preparation errors? We do that offensively, defensively, and special teams-wise so we have a book on every opponent for the next time you may play him, whether it's at Louisville or Cincinnati.

Then Sunday I'll meet with the offense, spend three hours with them watching the game tape and reviewing it and talking about it. While I'm doing that, the defense is

working on the next opponent, and then we'll flip it. Then I'll watch with the defense and the offense. I would say around 3:00 yesterday the offense is starting to work on them, but as soon as the kids come in here to meet, then we go into corrections and fix the tape up. That's why we finish the evening with special teams in here, closing the chapter on special teams, and moving right on to the next opponent.

Q. With the monitors he has in his office, do you turn the lights out and say, Go home to your family?

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm not doing that. His daughter is going to come here with his wife and bring cookies in or something like that.

No, I'm never kicking anybody out of the office. Those guys know what they have to get done. It's get your job done. So they work at it, and they're efficient too. I will say that. They're efficient too.

You have got to have rest, too. You have to be fresh as coaches and players. I think freshness is key too. So you can't work all night and expect to be productive the next day.

Q. Coach, Desmond Reid had a historic day on Saturday for the university. At some and point do you get concerned about the wear and tear on his body at some point during the game, during the season, and pull back a little bit?

PAT NARDUZZI: It all depends. What makes you great? I've talked about how tough he is, how physical he is. If you try to pull back on most players, they're going to be like, Coach, did you see what I did last week? I'm going to do that again.

It's all in your preparation. It's how you practice. We're not going to slow him down. He's going to do what he does. He's in the weight room. He got recovery yesterday. He got a lift in. There's nothing better after a game than a lift. Let me just tell you that. A lift after a game -- it's not easy to go in there, but once you walk out of there and tighten up your muscles, you feel much better after a nice recovery and a lift. I'll tell you that.

Q. Was he in my pain in the fourth quarter?

PAT NARDUZZI: I never asked him. I think at the end of that fourth quarter he was flying high. I think he was excited. What's that?

Q. (Off microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He didn't limp in here yesterday. I'll guarantee you that.

Q. (Off microphone question about Konata.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm happy to see that. I didn't know that. I'm glad you told me because E.J. failed to tell me that. He was talking about Desmond Reid. I'm just busting you, E.J.

I didn't know that, but I kind of mentioned it last night like he had a career -- I called it a career day when I was talking about Konata in front of the team last night, but I didn't know it was his best day.

You talk about playmaker. He catches the two big passes set up both field goals in the second quarter and fourth quarter. Two touchdown passes as well. I mean, that was a career day regardless of yardage-wise, catch-wise. I don't care about all that stat stuff.

It was a career day for what I saw him do on the field, running crisp routes. I've said this all camp, guys. That guy has been as durable, as reliable as anybody in that room. He's done it the right way. He works at it. He works at his trade. He has a routine that he goes through on Mondays.

Not every player has a routine, like a coach has a routine. I do the same thing. I knew I'm going to be in here with you, but prior to this I'm, like, dah, dah, dah, dah knocking things out.

He has a routine unlike most players. If everybody had a routine like him, as far as watching third down, watching for -- he has his film review. He does his homework. He's a pro.

Two years ago he came in the office and called a meeting. He was like, Hey, Coach, I need to talk to you. I'm like, Oh, what's going on? The conversation was, Coach: I've got to do a better job taking care of my body. I'm going to take the next step, and it's going to be about recovery. I don't do a good job taking care of my body.

Then from that day on he's taken care of his body like a pro. Tribute that. That's how he is in everything he does.

Q. Just talking about that, what can you say about how he approached this week considering the last week he had a punt fumble that was returned for a touchdown, dropped a touchdown. For him to lock in like that and to have the career weekend...

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, again, adversity, right? He has a lot of confidence, and we have a lot of confidence in him.

Really everybody in this room that we put on that field, we better have confidence and trust that they're going to get it done.

To put him back there to be in a punt situation again, got faith. He did some great jobs at faking like he was going to catch that ball. He's a great decisionmaker.

Again, sometimes players try to do a little too much, and that's what he did in the opener. He was just wanting to go make a play. He wanted to take one to the house.

He has Des do it. I'm going to get one too. You get a little greedy. You have to just do your job. Don't try to do too much.

But Konata, we love his attitude and the way he prepares.

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