

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

Pittsburgh - 73, Youngstown State - 17

PAT NARDUZZI: That's the way we scripted that win today. Talked to our guys just about the attitude we take and making a statement in regards to who we played. We wanted to put the foot to the pedal and show who we are.

You look back at 2012 and Paul Chryst first year and you think about how far we've come as a program. They got beat by that team coming in here '12. Then '15, my first game, we beat them barely. '17, we go overtime with them.

Again, wins are wins, but this third one is the way it was supposed to be. They may have preached all week about, hey, last time we took them to overtime. That was 2017. That was before Coastal Division championship. I was proud of the way those guys went out there and played.

I asked them on Tuesday to go get one for my dad out there. Just try to make it personal. They took the challenge and went out there and tattooed them pretty good. My dad would be fired up as he was watching up there.

Excited so many guys got a chance to play, a lot of guys made plays. That's the way it's supposed to be. If you want to win a championship, that's how you take care of business.

Q. Eli opened up the passing offense by hitting a lot of underneath targets early when Youngstown State was trying to take away the deep ball. Once they reverted to taking away the underneath, he was able to go deep. What can you say about his progression as a decision-maker?

PAT NARDUZZI: Coach bell has done a great job of coaching. Eli is very coachable. Again, taking what they're giving you as we always try to do. Just the way he ran with the ball as well, running for 100 yards, throwing for 250. That was heck of a ballgame by him.



Then you watch Nate Yarnell come in and play pretty efficient as well. Happy for both those guys. Happy to get Nate and all of those other guys in as well.

Q. Eli said he wanted to go back in and get his official 100 rushing yards. He said you told him to sit back down on the bench.

PAT NARDUZZI: I didn't say anything to him. Kade might have told him to sit down. He never asked me. I might have put him back out there.

Q. Regarding time of possession, you had three or four drives today where you scored two plays or less. What's kind of the efficiency when you see something like that?

PAT NARDUZZI: When you score touchdowns, it makes it easy on the defense. Time of possession, really even last year, wasn't relevant. Neither was it in 2021. I'm not sure we won it. But put your defense in a spot out there.

I think the defense likes to play with the lead, and when you're explosive on offense, it makes your job a heck of a lot easier. We're playing more plays, but we doubled their yards today. They made a couple plays getting stuff that we did.

Not happy with some of the mistakes we had, especially that last touchdown. We make the coverage check, make the check, and we don't play the check. That's ridiculous. That can't happen.

All in all, we'll clean it up. We have two weeks to live with this one and moving on to North Carolina.

Q. You played Youngstown before, the other two times before. Why did you feel the particular need to put it on your father today?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know, it just hit me. Number one, my brother came last week and brought me a bunch of pictures, and I saw him in that shirt and the cutoffs. So that was one of the reasons, just out of the blue, opened up a box in the basement and found some pictures. That was one of them.

Then just trying to make it personal. One of the things we



did in the off-season, just to get our team closer, we did a lot of talking as a team, mentor meetings. I had four guys with me, every coach, every staff member had four. So we split the team up and kind of talked about who your hero was, what your hardship was in life, and highlight in your life.

Just as I talked with every group, you think about I met with four at a time, four players and a staff member the whole time and talked about who my hero was and the hardships I went through growing up and losing your dad at age 51, six kids and all that. I just thought like dad would want this thing done the right way.

I don't know if we had the fighter power back in 2017 to do it that way, but it just matched up that way, and it was a good deal.

Q. You've been around Daniel Carter for six years. What did he show you today?

PAT NARDUZZI: Daniel, he's had some talented backs, whether it was Izzy in front of him, and then obviously Desmond didn't play today and could be ready. He could have probably played if we wanted him to and if we needed him. We thought let Derrick go and let Daniel Carter go and see what we've got. It just deepens that backfield.

He got some snaps as well and had a long run, which I knew, as soon as he turned the corner, there's no way they're catching him because he's fast. Obviously moved from wide receiver to the running back spot probably at the end of camp.

I'm happy for Daniel. He deserves that. He's a selfless man. He's been on the punt team for three years. He does a heck of a job as our personal protector, makes all the calls on our punt team. For him to get the ball and go out and make plays, I was happy for him.

Q. What's it like to be 4-0 at this point?

PAT NARDUZZI: It doesn't really matter. You think about it, it's 4-0, one at a time. North Carolina is the only thing on my mind right now is where we are there. I guess first time in history of Pitt football that we're undefeated in the preseason, and preseason is over now.

We're moving to ACC play, and North Carolina, they're on the clock for us, and we've got two weeks to prepare and get fresh and get ready to roll.

Q. The thing about the maturity of this team, though, to be able to lock in the way they have with two comeback wins and then coming off an emotional

comeback win to turn in a solid performance with the complete practice they had this week?

PAT NARDUZZI: You worry about that relief syndrome, which is why I hit them on Tuesday with what are we doing here? There's 12 games in a season. 11 are for you. Give me this one here, and just kind of challenge them to that.

It's easy to get into the relief syndrome, where you saw a big sigh of relief, oh, we got that one against West Virginia. You can't -- those trap games, whatever you want to call them, you can't have any relief.

You're college football players. You get one opportunity every week. You're not like the normal folk out there that maybe takes that English test and passes it and maybe have relief and you don't take another test for four or five weeks -- or midterms, whatever it may be. Our guys understood that and showed up today.

Q. Are you fine with the bye early in September, or would you like to keep this rolling?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it's fine. It will give us a chance to get healthy. The next one is the one after two games, we've got another one. It doesn't matter. Whatever they set our schedule up to be, we don't have any say. I like where it is right now. We'll just take it as they give it to us.

Q. Putting up 73 points on the scoreboard, does that give you a little momentum going into conference play, something you can build off of?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes, it was nice to have kind of a breather here and just explode out. It gives our kids confidence. They know what they've got. They still know there's a lot of things we can clean up and make better.

Q. Eli told us this week he was aware of the history with going undefeated in nonconference schedule, and he said he was telling his teammates we can't afford to look at this as a tune-up. What can you say about him showing that leadership this early in his college career?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's a baby, and he's mature. I didn't say a word to him about that, talk about we've never done it before. It doesn't matter. It's one game. We just want to be 1-0.

Our guys took the challenge, and they went out and played the way we should today. We did what we should do.

Q. You said a lot of great things about Kyle Louis.



What about these past two games flying around the ball and generating turnovers?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's a beast. That guy is a football player. We knew it in spring ball. I told a lot of the linebackers, like he was the dude. Rasheem Biles is the same kind of guy. They've been explosive on the edge, and we're getting a lot of really, really good plays out of those guys.

Q. Says he feels like the linebackers are 75 percent there as far as balancing being aggressive but also sticking to their roles as linebackers. Where do you feel that group is as far as doing exactly what you guys are coaching them to do?

PAT NARDUZZI: They're about where Heem says they are. If Heem says that, we're not going to tell him he's wrong. We'll look at the tape and tell him where he is.

There was a lot of good things. That was a good rushing football team. They had the ball for 37 minutes. I don't think they had an explosive play really at least in the run game. They might have had a couple of 20-yarders -- they had the big long pass with the busted coverage.

Our guys did a nice job. I know there wasn't more explosives, which is our goal.

Q. Coach, against Kent State, you said that in the third quarter there was defensive lapses that you weren't too happy with. In a team in this game also had a huge lead coming out of the half there was also defensive lapses in the third quarter, for example, that big play. Is there something mentally going on there coming out of the half?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think you're up whatever 32 points at halftime, and we were yelling at them. Again, just coming out with an attitude, and I think that's part of it.

We come out at the half, we've got to be ready to roll. I thought we missed some tackles early. We've got to get them greased up earlier and get them revved up to go.

Q. Eli talked to us last two weeks he's been very critical of himself. He apologized after Cincinnati and said he didn't come out strong early enough against West Virginia. We talked to him just a little bit ago and said he didn't like how he started the second half and left two or three touchdowns out there. Did you see him being critical of himself out of this game? How do you like that approach for your quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: You've got to love it. He knows what

he's done right or wrong. He gets to watch the videotape. He's probably watched the game once already. He'll watch it a couple more times with the iPad. He knows what he missed and didn't miss.

He came out and took that sack. He's got to throw the ball away at the beginning of the third quarter. I think we went three and out and punted to start of the third quarter.

Again, you've got to love a quarterback that's critical of himself. You've got to love that. He's not thinking he's all special and done everything the right way. That's what you want.

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