

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi Press Conference

Pitt 17, Cal 15

PAT NARDUZZI: What a ballgame. Heck of a ballgame you guys got to watch and enjoy.

Want to start off just thanking the crowd. I thought the crowd was loud, especially in that fourth quarter. The Panther Pit was outstanding. I think they caused an illegal procedure on the count maybe the second to last drive, but they did an outstanding job. Proud of our team. They just find ways to win football games.

Obviously the offense didn't play great today, but the defense played lights out, and that's what you want to have. I know you guys have been asking for some sacks, so we got some today for you. Jimmy Scott, heck of a day; Lovelace just finding ways.

Again, our defense is out there in a two-minute situation. I wish we would have ended the game in a four-minute situation. Had kind of a bad snap, as well.

So it didn't happen today for us offensively, it just -- sometimes when it rains, it pours. But we'll learn from our mistakes on offense today, and again, it's just great to maybe not play well on offense and find a way to get a win. Defense played lights out.

Questions?

Q. You talked earlier in the year about how you guys are one of the best at adjustments in this game. Braylan talked about how in the first half you guys were getting hit behind your blitz and he said you guys said, we've got to cover the middle part of the field. What was the adjustment you guys made to counter how Cal was attacking you guys, especially in 3rd and longs?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we did a poor job on 3rd down, period. The whole first half was awful. Regardless of what the coverage was, they made plays, we didn't execute properly, regardless of the coverage. But that iPad is a



powerful tool. I don't have to tell you guys I'm going to wait until I see the film; I get to see it during the game.

Unfortunately it seemed like every time the defense came off the field, we had no three-minute time-out and had to not look at it and wait for our time.

But we just didn't execute on 3rd down. We'd get them in 3rd-and-long situations and we've got to get off the field. So that was a disappointing thing on defense, but we got better as the game went on.

We put Javon McIntyre in at the star position. I don't know if you guys noticed that. I just felt like we needed a little bit of maturity there. We've got to get better.

The great thing is we got a win, and we've got a lot of things we can whine and get after our guys about as far as cleaning up some of the details. We left the tight end just flat in the third quarter right down the middle wide open because a guy blitzes instead of plays coverage. That's a problem. But to be able to come away with a win and make mistakes like that, it's a great thing.

Q. Your quarterback came in here accepted responsibility for his performance, didn't make excuses, said Cal threw a lot of different defensive formations at him. How important is that maturity for him to come in here and man up and said if I watch tape, I can get better every week?

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, it's good. Eli is a man. He gets it. He's going to get credit when things are going great, and he's going to get bashed when they don't. But we knew that coming in. We knew that coming in.

He had stuff wide open and he needs to throw it and not try to be the hero all the time. They did throw a lot of different stuff at him. Especially with the tempo they did a nice job.

Again, he will learn from it. That's the great thing.

Q. First play of the second quarter, how quickly did you come to the conclusion you were going to go for it on 4th down from the 28 and you had the whole span between the first and second quarter to change your mind?



PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, never second-guess yourself. We've got faith in our offense, and we were 2 for 2 on 4th down. Those were two critical plays. The 4th and 5 we converted it for a TD, Des goes, and then 4th and 1 -- no, 4th and 1 was Des's, but that was a T we drew up on the 4th and 5.

But those are calls you've got to make as a head coach. You guys yell at me if we don't get it, but we were 2 for 2. I think they were maybe 0 for 1.

But our defense continues to be good on 4th down, and again, we tell our guys we're going to go for it on 4th when the time is right, and we've got a lot of faith in our offense converting.

Q. What can you say about how Braylan Lovelace stepped up today?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, Biles was out. Biles probably could have gone. He was begging, as a matter of fact, whining, complaining almost too aggressively, and again, you've got to love that. He wants to play bad. The trainers held him out; just wanted to be safe and smart. So he'll be ready to go.

But I'm fired up for Lovelace. Braylan needed that. He's played good, but he hasn't played great. But he got two sacks today. He played the whole darned game pretty much. I think we put Jeremiah Marcelin in there, a true freshman, for a few plays, but Lovelace took the brunt, and I'm happy for Braylan. He's a great kid and a great football player. He needed that for his confidence.

Q. You were down two starting linemen almost right away in this game. Do you think that affected the offense?

PAT NARDUZZI: It had a little bit of a factor, there's no question about it. I think Coach Bell kind of maybe got a little bit conservative, was just worried how we'd hold up over on that left side.

But you live and learn, and we'll watch the videotape and see what happened. But we couldn't run the ball -- we were running the ball pretty good early, then we lost those two guys. Jacoby and Branson are two really good football players on the left side, so that hurt us a little bit, but I'm not going to make excuses. Those next guys up, they've got to go make plays and we'll move on from there.

Q. We saw Sean FitzSimmons made a lot of plays; seemed like he made a big difference for you guys up front. How does he energize your defensive front? I think after that first drive you guys really took away the

run.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Fitzy has been good two weeks in a row. We thought he was a starter coming in, and he missed a lot of games, but he is back. Nick James is back, too. We'll see the video and see what it was like inside. But our guys played well. Ghost made some plays when he was out there.

It's good to have Fitzy back, I guarantee you that.

Q. You mentioned the sacks. What got you from the pressures you had been having to finishing with three sacks?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, it's a lot of different things, but sometimes it comes down to coverage, number one, and again, if they're going to drop back and throw it -- I think you get zero sacks against Youngstown State, you think you've got to get 14 of them. But if they're throwing the ball real quick and they're scared to death to get a sack and they're throwing it out -- I think going into this game, again, I think it was 27 percent screens on 3rd down, but when they're running screens, you're not going to get sacks, and it gets frustrating.

But when you get into the ACC play, as you guys know from the past, is when we start to get our sacks because they've got confidence in their protection and they've got confidence in their receivers and quarterbacks. I think that's what it comes down to is the opportunities in a drop-back compared to screens and three-step just trying to get the ball out making sure they don't take negative plays.

Q. It's one thing to trust your kicker. It seems like another thing entirely to send him out there for a 58-yarder. What can you say about Ben Sauls hitting that one today and what gives you so much faith in him?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I guess he tied Kessman for the longest. He came up to me before and said, can we get a delay of game so I can get the record. He didn't say that. I thought he was going to. I was like, he's going to want a delay of game. We're not going there.

But he's got a great leg. He's been automatic, and again, there's no hesitation on that call either.

Q. The struggles that you saw for Eli today as far as seeing the field, it seemed like Cal was on a lot of things you tried to do, especially the play action setup for slants over the middle. Seemed like they had either a defensive lineman or linebacker right in those spots



at the right time to bat some of those down.

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, Justin Wilcox is a defensive guru. That's why he's got the head job at Cal and been there eight seasons. He does a nice job.

That's the problem when you play these teams just once; you don't know how they're going to play, what they're going to do. That's why I always liked that Coastal Division, because you get used to playing people and find out, but obviously the next time we get to play them, we'll know a little bit more about how they're going to try to defend you, and that's part of the chess match out there.

Q. Earlier this week you talked about how it's important for teams to win in multiple ways. You guys have earned come-from-behind victories but you pulled off a nice win. What does a win like this do for the team moving forward?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's great. The offense is in there going, hey, great job, defense, and then on the other hand there's those games where it's like, great job, offense. We're going to find a way. Our guys stick together in there, and they know there's guys on the field that are going to make plays.

That blocked field goal -- we talked about a field goal formation at the end; we don't want it to look like a field goal formation.

I think our guys gave great effort inside and frazzled that kicker a little bit, I think. I don't know if we got a hand on it or not. I saw Chief Borders coming out and talking about tip or something like that. I'm not sure or not, but they felt like they had an effect.

Q. You're 6-0; do you feel like you've played a complete game yet?

PAT NARDUZZI: Probably not. I don't know if there ever has been a complete game. I wish -- we strive for perfection and we'll take excellence. It's never going to be perfect. There's too many guys on scholarship out there, and it's never going to be perfect. That's why you've just got to play one play at a time, not look at the scoreboard and just try to win every play. Every play matters.

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