

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi Press Conference

Pitt 41, Syracuse 13

PAT NARDUZZI: Heck of a defensive performance. I mean, I don't care how we win, offense, defense. We got great coordinators, got great coaches, got great players. It's a tribute to just the overall coaching and play-makers.

We talked about start smart was our deal this week. We wanted to start smart. We knew kind of Syracuse was kind of like us as a football team. They won games and squeaked by some games and won 'em. We kind of thought they were very similar to what we were. Just talked about how we needed to start fast and be smart, just do all the details. Precision execution is kind of what our deal was. We certainly did that.

Defensively we're out there for 93 plays. Offense for 44. Anytime you get pick-sixes... It would be nice to put the offense back out there. They won't let us do that again. Should be a new rule.

Three pick-sixes. You talk about the big plays in the game. The Biles pick-six, big-time. That interception by Brandon George laying on his stomach and coming up with that. Louis' pick-six, as you know. C.J. Lee had a nice touchdown pass. Poppi had a nice touchdown pas. Lovelace, TD on the screen.

Those tailbacks can run. When you look at Kyle Louis was a tailback and play-maker in high school, so was Lovelace. Rushed for a lot of yards in high school. Those guys looked like it when they got the ball in their hands.

Again, team win overall. Moving on to the next, SMU. Big game down in Dallas. Looking forward to it.

Questions.

Q. (Question about Eli.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Eli is going to be fine. He's in there smiling, happy, jumping around. So we'll be fine. Just added precaution. Kept him out. At first we just thought he



had dirt in his eye. It was a little bit more than dirt, but he's fine and happy.

Q. This was a statement win for the defense. They wanted to get the bad taste of last year's game out of their mouth. How much do you think that performance motivated them?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it motivated them a lot. Even though this just scored 21 points on our defense last year, we weren't happy with how we played. Our D-tackles didn't play very well in that game.

Obviously it was an offense we never saw. Obviously it was at Yankee Stadium and the press box was in first base. You might as well have been in a blimp way out of the stadium. Could have been in Staten Island or Long Island. We just couldn't see anything. We made crappy adjustments. We weren't happy with it.

They came out, had to go to prove. Our motto all year is to prove it. I think we proved a lot on a primetime game time, national audience.

Q. (Question about defensive performance.)

PAT NARDUZZI: We can keep having success like that. When you think about the tempo of what our offense is playing with, it's part of the process. Nobody wants to slow the offense down. Want to keep rolling, trying to score points. Again, we were only on the field for 44 plays on offense.

I don't think our offense ever got in a rhythm because they were on the sideline for so darn long. Never got in a rhythm. Got to have plays, string plays together to get stuff going.

Our defense was our offense today. Score 21 points on defense, that's national defense of the week material right there, I think.

Q. What allows a defense, especially a linebacker group, to be able to make plays like that?

PAT NARDUZZI: We're talented at linebacker. You look at Lovelace and Biles. Biles, that was a heck of an interception. He's a great player. He had nice shoes



tonight, too. I don't know where he got those shoes.
Noticed at halftime.

It's kind of what we do. It's not like we played some different defense out there. Kyle McCord, I got a ton of respect for him as a football player. You guys heard me say that on Monday. I mean, that's a good quarterback that has had a ton of success. He just played the wrong team tonight.

Q. (Question about Branson Taylor replacement.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I didn't look a lot of the iPad on offense. Got to be honest with you. Again, 44 plays. We'll look at it. I can't tell you. We'll continue to look at that.

He's a tough kid. I think he played okay, so...

Q. As a defensive guy, is that one of the better performances or best performances you've ever seen out of a defense?

PAT NARDUZZI: I've never been around three interceptions for touchdowns. Five total interceptions first time since 2008 you had five interceptions in a game. That's dominating. We've had some pick-sixes wherever I've been. But to have three of them in one game. Hope we didn't use 'em all up. We need to save a couple.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, it's called development. It's called coaching. Coach Manalac does a great job with those Sharks, as we well know. Sharks were on attack today. Jaws would be proud of what happened out there today.

Again, we knew it in spring ball. I mean, Kyle Louis was our best linebacker in spring ball. You could ask anybody on the offense, defense. Kyle Louis has been dominant. He remains dominant.

Biles is right there with him. Lovelace, the last two weeks, that guy's played lights out as well. Brandon George continues to play solid inside.

It's called development. It's a style of defense we play. We're attacking. It's what we do. I don't think Syracuse saw a defense like us coming into that that game, to be honest with you. I think they saw a lot of soft coverage and free access for the quarterback to throw it to.

We felt pretty good about what we were going to give him that maybe they wouldn't be able to handle it like they have in previous games.

Q. Your players said you changed up a few things because you knew what Kyle McCord wanted to do. They said they took this game personally. What went into making the adjustments from what you normally do?

PAT NARDUZZI: We did what we normally do. I mean, those guys, nice coach talk over there. Geniuses.

We tweak our coverage ever week. We're going to tweak it to what they do. It's not like we installed some new defense or new coverage. It's what we do.

But it's different tweaks. Again, depending on what someone comes out with, we play a lot of cover four. Depends with what they come out with. Two receivers, three receivers, close together, far apart. Donovan McMillon and Javon McIntyre, P.J., they do a good job. Cory Sanders does an unbelievable job of getting us in different stuff.

We wanted to mix it up. We mixed it up with a few different checks. We knew Kyle would have an iPad on the sideline looking to see what we would do. Okay, they come off the sideline, they're doing this today. The next series we're going to do something else.

Just tweaking and knowing he's good enough to pick you apart if you don't just change it up by series.

Q. To that plan is also the work of the outside corners. He took deep shots. Your guys were batting them down, didn't allow them, forcing him to come back inside.

PAT NARDUZZI: Anytime your corners... We put those guys out on an island, as you know. Anytime your corners play like our guys are, Ryland, Tamon came in and had some nice hits as well. Noah Biglow, Rashad Battle.

Here is the thing about our defense right now. They keep getting better every week. They keep getting a little bit better. We know we're young at corner coming into the season, young on the D-line. Again, I don't know how many sacks we had today. We had four, but two looked like they were intentional groundings, in my opinion, where he just got rid of it. Could have been six real easy.

Q. Rasheem Biles said if he were an NFL GM, he would spend a draft pick on Ben.

PAT NARDUZZI: He's the best one I've ever been around. I would imagine he'd be up for the Lou Groza. They should just give it to him mid-season. He's automatic from

57, 58. Doesn't matter where you put him. He's been outstanding this entire season.

Q. As a defensive-minded coach, are you gratified knowing your defense outscored not only Syracuse but your own offense?

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm always satisfied. Defensive coach? I'm a head coach with a defensive background.

I want everybody to play well. I don't care if it's offense, defense. Those first four games of the season, our offense was on fire. They'll get back on fire once we let 'em get on the field a little bit more.

Q. Do you expect Taylor back this year?

PAT NARDUZZI: I would say probably not. I think Branson is out for the season. I was going to tell you on Monday. Shoot. Branson is out for the season with a knee. He's in good shape right now, on the mend. So we're going to miss him. He was on FaceTime in the locker room. He's up in the box today. He had season-ending surgery.

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