

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm sure you guys got lots of questions. But obviously disappointing game Saturday night down there on the road in a nice, hostile environment. Our guys didn't play like we needed to. We didn't coach like we needed to. Just something off. If I could put my finger on exactly what it was, I'd have it corrected immediately. Just wasn't us.

Again, I'll go back. That's a good football team. Won't be surprised if they're in a championship game this year. I think they're really good. I think they got talent all over the place. We got talent, too. That wasn't the reason.

We just didn't execute. We didn't tackle well on defense. We didn't play well on offense. Didn't tackle the quarterback, didn't run the ball good enough. Again, when you play a really good, talented football team, you better match up.

I look at it, there's been games where our offense has been on it, defense has been okay, offense wins the game. Then games where our defense plays lights out, like Syracuse then the offense is not so good. You carry each other and you feed off each other.

There wasn't really one phase that you go we even won that. Even special teams. Punt game wasn't really good. Got a chance to maybe pop a couple punt returns. Des was pretty good. Bright spots everywhere. But for the most part the majority of it we didn't dominate on offense or defense.

Take a punt to the house, if we get a couple more blocks... Things that we learned last night, maybe we spark off of that, but just didn't happen. We started off with missing tackles on defense first, never gained control of the game after that. Second quarter was not very good. Bad quarter of football for the Pitt Panthers.

Great Virginia team coming in. Parents Weekend in Pittsburgh. I think ACC Network coming into town. We have a chance to go back on that network and show who Pitt really is this weekend. I think our kids are anxious. I



think sometimes you get punched in the mouth, how we responded last season, this season.

You've heard me talk about handling adversity, handling success. Handling success is hard. I told our guys last night we handled it for seven weeks pretty darn good. Is that part of the reason, did we think we were good, shark attacks, all this stuff? Did it go to our head? Wasn't much out there.

We'll rally the troops and get a good practice in today. Game prep today. Tony Elliott, great football coach, won a ton of games as the offensive coordinator at Clemson. Pretty solid down there. He's building that thing from the ground up.

We have another good football team in here that has had three tough outings the last three, but they played three pretty good football teams the last three weeks.

Capable, rested team coming in here. They had a week off, two weeks to prepare for us.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: They were good. When I walk into a 7-10 team meeting last night, every team is different a little bit different after 10 years. This is a quieter team, which means it hurt a little bit, which is good. If we come in here, they're having fun, looking at videos on their phone, stuff like that, it's like, Really? To me, you can tell a lot by what your team does coming in after a loss.

I think it hurt them. I don't think they were happy. They were quiet on the plane, on the bus on the way back, which is a good thing. I want them to be hurt. You better be hurt. We all work too hard to have a negative outcome. There better be some pain involved. When it hurts a little bit, it means something to you.

We'll bounce back this week, I'm sure of it.

Q. You said something was off.

PAT NARDUZZI: We didn't play good football. Again, offensively whatever. I look at our defense. We go out there and play defense first, get that performance. It was not good.



Again, they're fast. No. 1, No. 13 are fast. Again, they showed us some different stuff. Won't forget that. There's different stuff they ran, okay? There's stuff in the run game we did not prepare for that I thought we adjusted well to it as the game went on. We didn't fit it good. We got enough movement going on in our front to take care some of that stuff, we didn't get it done.

Q. How much do you flush a loss like that?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's fast flush last night. Brought a toilet in here. No I didn't (smiling).

It's flushed, though. It's flushed. That game is done. When we walk out of here, it's done. We went right into meetings on Virginia, like we normally do. Like it's done. We're done talking about it. There were thoughts tonight about looking at it. We had to make the corrections. There's people, We ain't watching that watch that tape. I don't even want to look at it.

To me that's what coaching is, teaching is, learn from their mistakes in all three phases. If you don't, you've lost an opportunity to teach.

Q. You mentioned loss of execution. What can you do during practice, especially offensively, to improve that?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's practicing hard every day, which I think we do. You see it versus the scout team. We make plays in practice. We just got in the mode yesterday. If you put the tape on and watch it, he's going to make that play. Rashad is out there, he's going to make the play. Everybody slows down a little bit, then there's a change of speed. That can't happen.

You always see it when we don't make a play. When you're busting, the tackle is done, good. When you have to change speeds, then you got problems. Again, that's a sign of a loaf. Don't assume. We assumed this guy is going to make the tackle, Jerry is going to make the tackle. It didn't happen. Then we weren't there to help out. That's not Pitt defense. That's got to get corrected.

Q. The players after the game said they played their normal speed, but you couldn't keep up.

PAT NARDUZZI: That's player talk. Their normal speed...

Their tempo was not a problem. Getting lined up, we had no issues with getting lined up. We had trouble at times because maybe some of the runs and fits that were gone. Got popped out on two explosive runs. We couldn't catch

the tight end on a shot that we practiced all week. Didn't execute that. Didn't do it till the fourth quarter. We run right past it.

Had nothing to do with their tempo at all because they were actually slower than I thought they were going to be. Wasn't fast at all. We had no problems with the tempo.

Like I said, they got fast guys, and we didn't adjust well. There were times where they out-ran us and we didn't make a play.

Q. If I were to assume that you're not changing quarterbacks this week, would it be right?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, you're right. I have to forget that you asked that question.

Q. Second part is, when you played Eli as the starter back in August (indiscernible), mitigate his inexperience?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's a redshirt freshman. I think everybody forgets. I can't even believe you asked the first question. I'm a little disappointed in you.

When you win, Eli is going to be the rookie of the week. When you lose, which obviously it's our first, it's not on Eli. We didn't protect him well enough, run the ball well enough. We played a really good defense.

I'll say this. The last three weeks what we practice, we don't see on game day. I'll go right into this week and assume we are not going to see what we see on tape. We're not seeing the same thing, guys. It's totally different.

We're going to have to prepare two game plans. We're going to get drop eight. They got a new linebacker coach, dropped eight, played three down. We're just assuming we're going out practicing this week...

That doesn't help Eli. That's half coaching. That's coaching. Practice stuff all week, have a great Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, then Saturday you see something totally different.

The last three weeks we have not seen. Even SMU, the team that has 24th ranked defense in the country, came out and did something totally different than they do. They are a man free team, they didn't play man free. They didn't like the matchups, they played cover three all day. Three weak, they played cover two. That's what we saw.

We have to plan on seeing cover three, three deep safeties. That's what I told the offense yesterday. That's

how we're game planning. We'll adjust to whatever they do. I mean, Virginia is four down, I tell you right now, four down quarters team. We'll find out if they do that.

I would say we're going to see a lot of cover three with the boundary safety coming down. They're going to make Eli make those shots. We have to be able to run the ball when they do that, too.

Q. When you have a young quarterback, coaching is the key, how do you coach Eli that he has to prepare for this as well?

PAT NARDUZZI: You got to do it. He's bright enough, smart enough to get that. We have to get him practice reps. Not just say if they do this coverage, go do this. That's hard to do for a young quarterback. You go back to Kenny Pickett, his freshman year, shoot, we didn't start him till the last game of the season, okay, because I was afraid of throwing him in early.

I remember the end of a Virginia Tech game, playing the whole second half of that game. Years ago. You gradually get to that. To see people just come out and not run their defense, it's shocking, especially as good as SMU are.

For us, it's respect to who we are, what we do. We have to respond on offense and go, Okay, that's the way it's going to be, let's go.

Q. What did you see with that went wrong in of the offense, the pass defense?

PAT NARDUZZI: It starts with the protection. It starts with the trust up front. We're missing blocks inside, as well, not just at left tackle or left guard. We just got to be better up front.

Again, they're talented. Let me tell you, they're talented up front. They had some dudes that could rush the quarterback. Again, we sit here and can move on to Virginia. I don't want to make excuses because all they are is excuses. We got to get it done as coaches, got to get it done as players. That's the expectation. They have a good football team and we didn't play as good.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: We do some of that. We do some chip protections and all that. Keep an extra guy in there. But it doesn't do anything. Passing game, send out three, send out the tight end later, back out late. It's okay. They just got more guys back there.

If you're max protecting, they're dropping eight, you're

protecting six guys on three. Guess right. You obviously want to protect when you need to protect. You got to guess.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. I mean, it was probably status quo. I told each guy last night, You got to look in the mirror. I wasn't particularly happy with Brandon in the first half, what he was doing in there. If there was an offensive lineman, he ran right down the middle. There's a gap there, a gap there, don't right down the middle.

We always harp on it with Mike and Brandon especially of being physical. You're a big Mike linebacker, not this finesse guy. You try to jam a 315-pound center or guard, you're going to lose those battles. You are not an offensive lineman. You are not a 300-pound middle linebacker. He has to get in the gap so everybody knows where to fit.

We to make too many plays, thinking I got to go be the hero this week, catch my ball, do all those things. Probably look in the mirror a little bit and say, I didn't play good enough.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, we expected. Keye is getting back healthier. That's one of the reasons, yeah.

Q. To lose a game especially to somebody in your division that might hinder your chances to get to where you want to go, now it's one big pile of teams, there are more avenues if you lose a game. Is that something you bring up with the team at all?

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. I'm just worried about going 1-0. We can't worry about where we're going to be in four weeks, the first week in December. We just got to take care of our business.

We got games in front of us. We don't control our own destiny. They know that. I told them in the locker room we're going one at a time. That's as much as I'm really talking about. It doesn't matter. We got to win. That's all that matters.

The sad part about the one division, I love the two-division format as you probably know from past conversations, I don't want tiebreakers to be involved. Again, I learned from Roddy Jones on the radio, I didn't realize if we just won out, there is no tiebreaker for us. Everybody else needs something else to happen. We didn't need it. Now we do. Probably need some help. I don't even care to look.

Big long divisions, all these darn teams, people aren't playing people. If you don't get to play the best, you're going to get there because of a tiebreaker? Those are things you don't want to happen.

I think we'll see that across the country regardless of the conference, Big Ten, the SEC. You're going to see that same thing where it's going to be a tiebreaker system coming in. Who wants that? Who wants to sit in front of the team and talk about a tiebreaker? E-3, this is what it says. We're going off of some FBI ratings, whatever that is (smiling).

Q. Teams are switching things up a lot when they play you. What are the things you have to focus on to get your offense back on track specifically?

PAT NARDUZZI: We got to execute. Again, we just got to get more looks. I think that's the main thing, practicing what you think you're going to get. We have to guess on offense. It like that opener you're playing.

Again, we'll know after the first year of a new offense that this is how we're going to play. In the off season you practice all these different things to get ready what you're going to see during the season.

We don't drop a lot of eight. As a matter of fact, I think we've dropped eight maybe twice this entire season. They didn't see it in camp. We don't play a ton of cover three. You could say we have played more man than anything. So that's what they get used to seeing as a football team. We haven't helped them defensively with what we're seeing.

We just got to give them more looks of it in practice. You're double-time. Like that season opener where the guy just took the job. You don't know is it this offense, that defense. You have no idea what you're going to see. That's when it's hard. You're trying to play chess and it's hard because you don't know what you're going to get. That's coaching.

Q. Have you done any coaching on Virginia? What do you see from Virginia?

PAT NARDUZZI: Good question. We've done plenty of scouting, yes. Shoot, got about two hours of sleep, went to mass yesterday and got on to Virginia.

Good football team. The kid at quarterback, I think that dude's as tough as they can be. They run a lot of quarterback runs for a guy that's not gigantic. Six foot, 184-pound quarterback that is tough as nails. Tough as

any quarterback. The guy has taken some hits and he just pops back up like crazy.

They have a great run game. No. 8, Malachi, their wideout is a good football player. Defensively they have the Kam brothers, not actually brothers. No. 92, the defensive end, is active, has a great motor, never comes off the field. Their Mike linebacker, Kam as well, with a K, is a special linebacker. No. 20, their safety, is a really good player. They got guys on all three levels that are special. We'll just find out where they're lined up. But they got a good football team.

Q. What have you seen from the demeanor of the team?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think I mentioned it already. They were great. Like I said, they were quiet, willing to learn, figure it out. I mean, hurt. That's what you're supposed to be after a loss, right? But they're back today eating bunch, ready to roll.

I think young players are resilient nowadays. More resilient than coaches are, I think. So you got to make sure your staff is as good as your players are as far as wiping off and moving on. They're good. They're like normal kids.

The good thing is they came in here with a serious attitude and don't want it to happen again.

Q. What was your demeanor?

PAT NARDUZZI: My kids said I was miserable in the morning before I life, after church. But then when I get back into work, you get into work mode, you're ready to go. I'm usually miserable, you know. Maybe win or loss, I'm miserable (smiling).

Q. When you look at the offensive protection, conference play numbers are more modest than non-conference. Talk about the way you protected, what you had seen on film. When you watch guys play, is the same stuff that was available in September available now? Is it more of an execution problem or teams are attacking you differently than they were because they know what to expect and you have to adjust?

PAT NARDUZZI: Obviously you're talking about non-conference games and Big 12. Let's just look at it that way. Okay, the SEC is a lot better than those conferences, right? We'll cut that aside. We're 2-0 against the Big 12. Throw it out there. That's number one.

Plus I think people have learned from what they've seen,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

right? To your point, they've learned and said, Let's not do this. It's how you respond to it.

People want to drop eight, you have to be able to run the football. Have we run it good enough? I don't know. We talked about that last week. We talked about it's not where we want it to be.

But it comes down to execution, comes down to staying healthy and making plays.

Q. Those offensive line struggles, do you think that's what is hurting the lack of the running game, too?

PAT NARDUZZI: Let me ask you, if you wanted to run the ball, you need the hogs up front. It's not just the passing game that affects it? Yeah, it affects it.

The O-line, it starts up front. D-line, starts up front. If we don't make plus up there, if we don't spill stuff like on Saturday when we didn't. The guard pulls and you're getting trapped, you got to spill it. We moved you this way. Here comes the guard, you ran up the field, you didn't spill it after we moved you into it. You didn't get. Starts up front, makes everybody else's job easier.

In the run game, yeah, we need those five guys up there to be beasts up front. They have to get the run game going. Two-dimensional. One of our goals going into that game was to be two-dimensional. We knew against a good defense, you can't be just throwing it back. End up have to throw it more than you want to because you got behind. You're not doing what you really need to do to win a football game.

We needed to be two-dimensional. We weren't like we wanted to. I think 103 yards, whatever it was, wasn't enough. We want 150. Thank you.

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