

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Tough Saturday in Louisville. It's never easy in the ACC. Louisville is a good football team, as you saw out there. They're talented. I feel like almost a perfect storm. We've been unhealthy -- we've been unable to stay healthy, really, since the Cal game, as you guys know. It's a perfect storm down there.

I felt coming out attitude was great. I think our guys played with great effort for four quarters. Our guys never quit, never gave up. We came out there, in the opening drive, we received the ball, went right down the field.

We looked as good as we looked maybe prior to Branson going down against Cal. Just a beautiful drive. The protection, you watched everything, wow, this is what it's supposed to look like.

We got a guy wide open in the end zone. We just don't put a little more on that and it's a touchdown and it's starting out 7-0. It's a game of emotion and momentum. I think we got a little deflated there.

I flipped over to the defense. I said, hey, don't worry, it's going to be a hell of a day. I don't know if I told you this after the game, first thing I said was don't worry about it. We're moving the ball today. We've got it.

Just the positivity. And then we get the ball again offensively. We move it and then we get a hip drop tackle, which is illegal in the NFL. That's two in two weeks. And a week ago it was a little bit more drastic than what happened here as far as just the overall ending of it.

But just a perfect storm. So just summing up different things. Turnover ratio, you're never going to win the game when you're minus three. That's a rough one. We didn't stop the run on defense. We allowed them to be two-dimensional. In the second half, we give up just one big pass and it's a 63-yarder where we've just got to make the tackle and play another down, and we don't make that.

Then the fourth downs, I put those on me. The days go by and 48 hours later I'm going I'm a knucklehead; I should



have just punted the ball. Played field position. You're playing a top 20 offense. We knew Louisville was touted on offense. Don't put our defense in that position.

I told our team that last night. That's on me. I've got to know maybe we're shorthanded on offense, I don't want to say wave the white flag and be smart, punt it away, make them go 90. I put those on me, those decision-making things on me.

But that's in a nutshell: Stop the run, turnovers and maybe some bad decisions by me.

But we've turned our attention to Boston College, Billy O'Brien, head football coach, NFL guy, guru. Love Billy. He's a super guy. He's done a heck of a job up there his first season since coming from the National Football League.

Offensive coordinator, Will Lawing, I think has been with them for maybe 13 years, all the way from being a GA at Penn State. He's his offensive coordinator. He does an outstanding job, offensively. I think their offensive line has 145 career starts up front, as good an offensive line as you'll face. They're big and physical.

Our front seven, front nine, whatever you want to call them, has got to play good against this football team. They want to run the ball, sort of like we saw in the fourth quarter Saturday. Down at Louisville, lining up at 12, 13 and so we're working a lot of that this week because they're really good at it.

They're physical. They know what they're doing. I think will does a great job coordinating. I'm sure Billy has his hands in the offense, like he always does.

Tim Lewis, defensive coordinator, Pitt history, being a former player, corner here, also coaching here at Pitt and with the Steelers, all over the National Football League. He does a great job.

Again, kind of a four-down, going to pressure you, blitz you. He's going try to get to the quarterback, playing a lot of man. They're good at what they do. They have some edge rushers. No. 6, he can wreck the game. You've got to make sure 6 doesn't wreck the game. Donovan, I believe his name is, I couldn't pronounce his last name,



only attempt it.

But No. 6 is a football player.

Q. Mentioned the D line (indiscernible). Any chance you will lobby to get that eliminated next season during the offseason?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know. You would think if the National Football League says it's too dangerous that we would also say it's too dangerous.

I'm just going to keep coaching, try to get off the field on third down and score touchdowns.

I don't know if people are coaching it. I know we don't coach it. I haven't seen one done yet by our football team, but if it's being coached, it's bad for the game of college football.

I'll tell you what, if they don't eliminate it, talk about a roster of 105 next year instead of 116, it's even worse. Roster numbers are going down across the country, everybody. Maybe we should start teaching the hip drop tackle.

Q. (Inaudible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, Rodney would like to redshirt. I'm going to grant his wishes. Would I like him to play? Yeah. But he's got to do what he's got to do and everybody has got to make a business decision, and I'll make a business decision as well at times. Business decisions have to be made.

Q. Has he given you an indication what he plans to do next year?

PAT NARDUZZI: No, no. That's the last thing I'm worried about. I'm worried about our football team that's playing right now.

Q. (Inaudible) and will he continue to be behind Nate going forward?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, he kind of came off the scout field. We've been repping obviously Nate with Eli and Ty Dieffenbach, who is an excellent football player, great kid.

When it just came down to the focus every single day in practice and the details, when you get your snaps, you've got to make your snaps worthwhile.

And it just seemed like we weren't getting what we wanted out of Ty right now. And again business decisions. I don't

care if you're a walk-on or scholarship player, I'd obviously love to, I don't care, go back to Sam Scarton starting at kicker instead of Ben Sauls, which we know Ben was a phenomenal kicker back when he was a freshman, but you've got to put it through the yellow uprights.

We're playing the best players. We're trying to win football games. We felt David gave us the best chance of winning right now.

Doesn't mean that Ty doesn't have more talent. But you gotta have talent on the field. You have to have it between the ears and work and effort into it to be that guy.

When you get three snaps in practice as a backup or third team guy, you've got to make them mean something and it's going to be like, wow, he's doing the right thing.

Comes down to just 100 percent focus and sometimes guys can do it and some guys can't as far as right in that moment when you get those opportunities.

It's how you prepare being a backup or third-team quarterback. But we just felt David gave us a chance to go in there and win if it happens. We just made that decision couple weeks ago, but end up being in that position, too.

I feel bad for Ty. Love him. He's a great kid. But you've got to be ready when -- again, it's every day in practice, not just in the game. Maybe he would have been a gamer, done a better job, I don't know. Those were all things we've got to go based on what we practice like.

Q. Tough situation, about David, what do you think about David's scenario?

PAT NARDUZZI: One bad decision. Got out there. He operated the way you expect him, with limited, limited, limited reps.

He actually got all the backup reps last week, so he was the backup quarterback. But we know the backup doesn't get very much. And Nate came off the bench with no reps last week, which I might have told you after the game. But I thought he did an admirable job.

Q. You mentioned effort, and you're often complimentary of the players' efforts. Seemed on Saturday you had a lot of missed tackles. Guys don't get pushed out of bounds and a lot of yards after contact. Did they get deflated after Eli got hurt or was there something you sensed in the effort that wasn't...

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know if they did. It's hard to be in those kids' heads. It looked like an SMU performance on

the road. Again, we had missed tackles. Shouldn't be pushing people out of bounds, should be taking them down. But, again, it goes to good players.

Again, give the other guys -- usually when the other guys are pretty good, they make you miss. And sometimes being out of place. But, again, good schemes and all that do that to you at times and you've got to make plays.

So the effort -- I didn't question the effort when I'm watching. Again all the way to the end as well. Is there missed tackles? No question about it. Missed assignments? No question about it.

When a guy isn't in his gap things are going to happen. All of a sudden it gets up on you too fast in the back end and there's a chance. When you get in open space, there's a chance of missing tackles. That's why we don't want to get open space, we want to stop it at the line of scrimmage.

Q. (Inaudible) the backup quarterback?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't know yet. We'll see at the end of the week, Jerry. All the national media, when I talk to my guys on Friday, the ESPN people, the CW this week, we're on, they always talk about you. They must listen to you. They all know about Jerry. Like, we hear about Jerry.

Q. How much did you like the performance of Sean FitzSimmons against Louisville, and how important will he be for this program going forward?

PAT NARDUZZI: Sean FitzSimmons, this is what we thought Sean was going to be. Again, he's been banged up and he's stayed real healthy. That was the first thing I asked him after the game: How does your body feel? Coach, I feel great.

Even yesterday in the weight room, saw him down there. I'm just happy for him. He's playing well and it's good when those young guys are playing well. And he's a young guy still. Think about how young we are still on defense based on how we started the season off and faced some pretty good teams.

But I'm happy with where Sean is and the way he's playing. We need to keep it up this weekend because we'll need his best performance.

Q. (Inaudible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: Nate's first time. He's been dying to get on the field. And he's coming off, he's way, way ahead of schedule on the ACL. Credit to Chris Hanks and the whole training staff, Rick, our PT, of getting him back. I think he

had 16 snaps, which probably more than we wanted to get on it. Don't want to have any fatigue in that leg.

But he was out there. He wasn't doing everything right. He's still rusty and raw. But that will come with time. He's kind of practiced in and out maybe for a week, I think he had maybe a week of practice as far as full game scrimmage. I think we started him off on the rocks, gave him one or two plays, got him out.

It was good to have Nate back. He's got a motor. He cares. And I love his attitude.

Q. Another year?

PAT NARDUZZI: Could be. I think he could get another year of eligibility, yes.

Q. (Inaudible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: He had an opportunity to make a play. He had a great opportunity. What a hell of a throw by Nate Yarnell. You talk about putting it right in the bread basket. The basket was empty and we put it right in it. And maybe should have ran out there with a basket, I guess.

But I thought he did a good job. But you've got to make plays. Everybody wants to play. Then when you get in and the lights go on, you've got to keep your eyes on the ball and try not to think you're going to score a touchdown and start to pull away from it. Look the ball in, catch the football and then finish after that. And I think he got excited.

He's a young guy. He's got a lot of talent. And we hope he continues to get better as we move forward.

Q. DC looked different with James (inaudible)?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, they're still going to run the ball. He's still going to pull the ball in the run game, Grayson is. But it's the same offense. They didn't just switch the offense halfway through the Syracuse game.

I guess in the third series or whatever it may be, when he came in -- those are two athletic guys. Again, James pulled it. He can run. He can scramble. I think they want to keep him healthy, too. So I don't think they're going to do a ton of it.

But last game of the season we could see more of it. He's big, 230 pounds, 6'3". He's capable. And he throws a good ball. He obviously is putting their football team in the position to win. He's done a nice job since he's gotten in there. And he's been impressive.

Q. How do you try to get the team to still focus for your last game and eventual bowl game after four straight losses?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's a game of life, right, this is places we've been before. As a matter of fact I think last year we had a crappy season if I recall. We came back. And how do we do that? How do we come back on senior day and beat BC last year, last game of the season? I don't have a clue how we did it, but we did. That's kind of what happens.

It's a game. Sometimes you play good teams. You think about SMU and Louisville were lopsided, and early lopsided and we couldn't rebound. Too good a football team to rebound, you let somebody that big get up on you.

But you look at Virginia, maybe we're a fifth down away from winning that game. Think about Clemson, maybe we're a spot at the goal line away from winning that football game.

We're a damn good football team. We've got talent in that room. We've just got to put it all together. Like I said when you're snake bitten, or the perfect storm, but we just seem to not be able to stay healthy, especially on the offensive side of the ball, whatever it may be.

Terrance getting his first start at center. It's one thing after another and you continue to try to plug up holes. Gotta somehow get more depth in the future and stay healthy. We've got to stay healthy.

Q. Asked you this question four years ago, but do you believe your guys are up for a bowl game?

PAT NARDUZZI: Hell ya. Better be. I don't talk about a bowl game. I'm not worried about a bowl game. Four weeks ago we were worried about something more important than that.

You're talking about like a nine-win season, a 10-win season, whatever it may be. So, hey, you're looking at eight-win seasons, what your goal is, then move on from that.

Play the cards. Our guys would be excited about a bowl game. But where is it going to be? But I'm not worried about that. Like, that's the last thing on my mind. We want to finish this season, the regular season, at least off with a win.

Q. How important is it to get a win at Boston College, especially thinking about the portal and player

retention?

PAT NARDUZZI: That's going to happen either way. You're going to have to deal with the portal. Not really worried about it. I think our guys in here are pretty happy. The ones that aren't, hey, but we feel pretty good about that.

Q. Has anyone come to you already and said --

PAT NARDUZZI: Absolutely not.

Q. Anthony Johnson got hurt in that first game. He's been on the sideline.

PAT NARDUZZI: Glad you brought it up. Anthony, you've seen Anthony on the sideline. Anthony Johnson, I don't know if he's out for the year. Probably is. Should have mentioned it a long time ago.

He really didn't get hurt in the first game. He got hurt in practice on a Wednesday. Weirdest thing. Didn't know what it was. But I asked him, he really didn't want me to talk about it. He wanted to go out for senior day.

But something with his back, and he's getting better now, thank God. Little scary at first. But he's back moving around pretty good. I don't think he has the walker anymore. But my heart goes out to Anthony. Just another one of those injuries. I don't think he's got another year left. We'll still have to look at that.

Q. You're almost past the point of the COVID years.

PAT NARDUZZI: I think so. But I still see guys getting nine years and stuff. So I have no idea. I think the COVID year has passed, but it just keeps happening, waivers and I want this, I need this. I don't know.

Q. Last Thursday you talked about Signing Day coming up quick. So this game ends on this Saturday, Boston College --

PAT NARDUZZI: See you next Wednesday.

Q. Just ask about recruits that day. But when the Boston College ends, what will the next few days look like, just on the phone Facetime with recruits trying to shore things up?

PAT NARDUZZI: Got asked this question last Thursday, I think, Facetime, Zooms, whatever it is. Feel pretty good with everybody, to be honest with you. So it's not like all of a sudden we're going to start to call recruits the last week. There's constant contact and communication throughout

the process. We talk every week to them. Not just coaching football, it's a lot of things, coaching life and recruiting.

Q. Any update on Eli?

PAT NARDUZZI: No. You had your try.

Q. Season-ending?

PAT NARDUZZI: It was not season-ending. Not as bad as the one a week ago, the hip.

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