

University of Pittsburgh

Football Media Conference

Monday, September 1, 2025

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: All right, had a great team meeting last night. Closed the chapter on Duquesne, moving on to week two. Obviously goal is to go 1-0, take care of business this week.

First of all, preparation-wise I think our players did a great job preparing for that game besides just going in and playing it. To me it's all about the prep. We've talked about the routines you take every week, keep it at the same, maybe do a better job as a head coach making sure that the preparation stays the same regardless of who you play.

Obviously one of our goals to go in the game was to be explosive in all three phases. We were explosive on offense and special teams. Again, I think we were pretty explosive on defense. I would have liked to have gotten a couple turnovers, which we didn't get. Almost got one. Quarterback was down. We have to make plays when we have opportunities to make 'em. We don't get those opportunities all the time.

Overall a great performance by our football team in the opener. That audition I talked about, you don't know what you're going to get, you don't know what they're going to do. Obviously they made some changes on both sides of the ball, as we did. You adjust as you go.

I think one of the best things we do is adjust on the run. The iPads I said last year are critical. You see what they're doing. You make different adjustments based on what they're doing.

I think our coaches did a great job of adjusting, coaching up not only on the sideline but halftime in the locker room, which is huge, what we're allowed to do in the locker room nowadays.

We got Central Michigan coming in here. They're a tough football team. They are blue-collar. Played them in the past, Northern Illinois. Actually at Michigan State we played Central. We actually traveled up to their place one year. They had music blaring, more speakers and fake



music than I've ever seen in my life. Loudest place I've ever seen for not being that big a placement.

Matt Drinkall is the head coach. Came from Army. Brings that Army toughness. They're getting their best players on the field. Jim Chapin is the offensive coordinator. He came from Eastern Washington. We've watched a lot of Eastern Washington tape throughout the summer and now. You see a lot of similarities.

They're going to play with three quarterbacks. If you're out there watching, you're not going to say, What happened with the quarterback? Did he get hurt? They play with three. They played with three at Eastern Washington all the time.

They have packages for all three offensively. They do a bunch of different stuff. They like to line up and pound you, okay? That's what they want to do. About 70% run football team. They're going to line up in a lot of two tight ends, three tight ends, a little bit of the one tight end stuff that is college football nowadays.

It will be a different look for our defense this week. It's going to come down for toughness I think. We're kind of built for that here in Pittsburgh. Anybody that wants to line up with big people, we embrace that here. That will play into our hands, for sure.

They got a great win against San Jose on the road. Never an easy trip to go out to California, play a night game. They did a nice job being plus three in the turnover ratio, three turnovers defensively.

Sean Cronin is their defensive coordinator. I've known him for a long time, back to his Marshall days. Visited at Michigan State. Heck of a football coach. He came from Army. He was a D-line coach up front at Army. Does a great job.

They ran a lot of three down this past week at San Jose. We expect some three down and also four down as far as what they do. Bouncing their backers all over the place trying to confuse you. Run a bunch of different coverages. That is kind of what we expect.

Questions.



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Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: No. Again, if I would tell you if it's season ending. Terry, you listening to me (smiling)? I would tell you if it's season ending, like I already have.

He will be fine. Something we're going to work on. I'm not going to talk about injuries. You know that. I don't care for stuff to be tweeted out. If you see something in pre-practice, this stuff gets out, I'm not going to be real happy.

We don't talk about it. That's nobody's business. That's kind of how we are.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Sorry?

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He got a little bit of a stinger. Another injury you want to ask me right after I had an injury question.

Ryan is fine. I can tell you that. Did we need him after that? No. There was no sense in putting him out there, so...

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: One of the first snaps. I blame myself. That wasn't his fault. He had a heck of a game after that first play, which is what we thought.

He hadn't played a whole lot of right tackle. We wanted to put him in there to get him reps there because we think he's the best tackle going in there. Jiavani Cooley would have been fine. He was fine when he went in there.

I think we had 73 guys play in the football game, which is really good. 85 guys on scholarship. 73 guys played in the game, which is outstanding that we were able to get a lot of guys reps.

But in that first one didn't play right tackle. He was getting coached up on the sideline. Again, we think as coaches sometimes it's easy to put guys in there at different positions. He hadn't repped that position for two weeks probably. We got Jia a lot of reps over there, made him better. That's probably a coaching error. Only sack we gave up on the day. Probably coaching error.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, just depends on what they're giving you. Cancel gaps inside. They're good up front. I told you coming into the week that their offensive line and their defensive line were two of their strengths. They got guys on scholarship, too. Probably not as deep as we are. But they got guys that are transferring different places. So they're good up front. They had a good game plan.

But I think we did what we wanted to do. We missed some shots. We had opportunities. That's going to happen in every game. You can put on the game last night. Look this guy is open, that guy is open. That goes with game experience.

I was excited about what I saw on offense. We'll be fine.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: I was excited for both of them. Both of them played really well. Cam Lindsey is physical. He just keeps getting better. They're just going to continue to get better all year.

Nick Lapi, he played 26 snaps I think on special teams. That guy is a beast. I forget how many snaps on defense. Those two guys are two reliable guys that we have no problem putting in. They're just going to keep getting better.

Q. Central Michigan has multiple quarterbacks. What have your initial impressions have been on those guys?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's a totally different offense. They run option. Quarterback is going to carry it a lot on powers. We think we got pretty good medicine to take care of some of that stuff.

Game plan will be critical. That's kind of what we do. This is old school. I'm in that room more than normally, because all that stuff is old school, Big Ten football. I think we'll match up well as far as what we do, how we do it, versus what they do.

But we got to go out and make plays, get lined up properly. It's just different stuff that we'll get Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday to adjust to it. It is not quite like playing Georgia Tech back in the day. It's different than what we're normally seeing. I think that's probably the biggest deal.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Not really. Pretty much what I saw on video. What you saw out there. I thought Cole played well as well when he came in, to get him reps.

Again, we weren't going to bring him in there and hand the ball off every time. It's an audition for him, too. There's going to be a time where he has to come in. We have a lot of faith in him. Probably could have got Mason in, as well. We get four games to redshirt. There will be a time that he'll definitely get in the game. We trust Mason to go in the game, as well. I'm kind of excited when he does get his opportunity.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, the only thing we didn't get to see was him catch a short pass or screen, something like that, just based on the game plan, use his feet to make plays.

That throw and catch, I mean, Eli's throw on that play right there, that was a thing of beauty. It was a heck of a catch by Blue. He's shown that throughout camp, throughout spring ball. That's what we thought we'd get out of him. He's a play-maker.

Then we had a couple dropped passes as well. Those are a couple passes we got to catch. Players make those plays.

Again, first game action. That's experience for everybody. I don't care if you played two years. Getting in that opener, getting used to making those plays, so...

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he played a lot of meaningful snaps. That's a tough dude. He doesn't stay blocked. If you watch him, he disengages, gets people off of him.

He had the one personal foul. You guys look at it, we'll talk about calls, but that was one that was aggressive. I wish he would have batted the ball down before he hit him. He got a penalty for pushing the quarterback, I guess. But it was one step. If you take two steps, it should be a foul. But it was one step, maybe half a step.

He is a good player.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He's been doing that all fall camp. You talk about a guy that has just continued to game plan. I think that guy's going to be a really good football player, make a lot of plays for us this year and in the future. It's consistency, his knowledge of the game, knowing what to do, being in the right place all the time.

Joey had a nice game, as well. He had a couple missed assignments in there, which new guy. This is his first time being in a game. He has some stuff he'll clean up. I thought it was a good game for those guys.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: There were very few missed assignments in the game. Our receivers, secondary, communication was good. Look, it's their first time coming out there. We're looking for execution. The execution was good. Is it going to be perfect? Never. There's still a lot of things we can still clean up in all three phases. The execution and effort...

There's different position groups that I won't mention in there that I want more effort, more celebration on touchdowns, more celebration together, all that kind of stuff.

But a lot of good things on the video.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: There are times like that all the time. I mean, it doesn't matter who you play, whether it's a lower level or higher level. Just got to tell it like I see it, period. The videotape doesn't lie. I always say the eye in the sky doesn't lie. That camera pretty much picks up everything.

We're going to be on 'em and continue to coach 'em hard. We haven't done anything yet, guys. We're 1-0. We're 0-0 this week. We beat Duquesne. We have a tough, physical MAC team. If you go back and look at the MAC schedule last week, who they played, all the tough, tight games. Ohio U almost beats Rutgers. Wisconsin, 17-3. They played good football. I think the parity in college football is closing. I think it's a good thing for college football.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It was Spiderman. But I don't care. Anything that looks like it, you can't do it. We talk about it all the time. He'll never do it again. He's so sorry. Coach, I'm sorry. I'm not worried about Malachi. You'd rather it happen in that game than an ACC game.

I'm glad he scored a touchdown rather than later on. Sam had a heck of a day kicking the ball off. Now he's trying to do more, trying to put it in the end zone from the 20 yard line, which probably isn't realistic. Maybe to the five. He tries to hit it too hard, hitting it out of bounds. Next thing you know the ball is spotted at the 50 yard line and we give them a short field. We won the field position by 158 yards. We give them a short field and they get three points out of

it. That's what happened to that.

Just can't do it. I've talked to our guys. There's celebrations. Officials have allowed celebrations since last year. I hate it. Any hate any celebration. Larry Fitzgerald, hand the ball to the official, that's the best celebration I've ever seen. I'll continue to say happy birthday to Larry. Birthday was yesterday.

Act like you've been there before. Malachi hasn't been there before in the end zone, maybe his first touchdown pass. He's talented. He had a drop earlier. Shoot, I told him right after he was going to go catch a touchdown pass, and he did.

He got too excited. You got to control your emotions out there. Felt bad about it on the sideline.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Really good. I mean, he can run. One time they had a big hand on him. He did a nice job running the football. He did it at the right time.

We'd like to see him step up in the pocket. Probably the biggest difference from the first series, second series. He seen it on the iPad. Okay, you're right. When he starts stepping up in the pocket, find the receivers or take off running is when things change a little bit for him. I think he realizes that when he watches the tape on the sideline and afterwards.

Eli, he had a nice game.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He played well. Again, like we thought. He's a football player. I don't know how else to say it. The big stage.

Again, he had some technical little things, fundamentally, that you'd like to see a little cleaner. But for a true freshman to come in and play in the first game, play meaningful reps. He came in and played like we expected him to, like we saw in camp. He'll just keep getting better, as well, with his first game reps.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, we talked about Stanley already. I thought the first group did a great job protecting the quarterbacks. Didn't give up any sacks. I thought the run blocking, based on what they were doing, was good.

Again, like I said, they committed some people to the run to

stop the run. We had a chance one time. I mean, even on the interception, Des is wide open on the left. Like it's a touchdown if you throw it to Des.

Those are decisions that happen in games. You don't see everything. You can't feel everything. Those are all things that we'll continue to get better and we'll continue to coach the details out of that.

I thought the O-line did a nice job. I'll give them a B. I'll give you a grade. Maybe a B plus.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, maybe not show too much. I can't tell you that. There's always going to be adjustments. Always do that. You don't know what they're going to do. They got new players. I think their linebacking core that they brought in, they didn't have a linebacker on their football team that played last year for them. The one returning starter was out for the game, I guess. The guys they played in there, they were good football players. Those were some good-looking linebackers that could probably play here as well. I liked what they looked like up front. They did a nice job.

Again, you're always going to make adjustments. That's why the offensive staff is sitting in that room over there. Defensive staff is sitting in the other room. That's what we're doing right now.

What do you think they're going to do? You try to do something different. You see what they're doing. That's kind of what we do. That's called coaching and game planning. That's part of the game.

If they came in and did exactly like they did on tape, that would be pretty easy. That's our job as coaches. Even in the second half we put in some stuff that we didn't have in. You want to do that, we got this for you.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes, yes. I mean, obviously starter. I believe his name is Labas. He's the guy. He'll take the majority of 'em. The other two guys, the third guy that comes in, he's 235 pounds. He's going to run the ball. I'm sure he can throw it, too. He's a quarterback. They got different things. They're going to use their skill sets.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: If we played worrying about risks all the time, we would just pull 'em out after the first quarter and hope we can hold the 14-7 lead, whatever it is. That's the



game of football. It's a collision sport. Things are going to happen.

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But those are some great reps for Kenny to go back there and feel confident doing it. If you recall a year ago, put Mumpfield back there, he muffed a punt. It's a touchdown going the other way. I forget who it was. Kent State maybe.

But for him to go back there and take those meaningful reps, do what we ask him to do. Kenny wants to be back there. He has the biggest smile on his face. They want to play football. They come to Pitt to play football. They don't want to sit on the bench. They want to play, have an opportunity to make plays.

Kenny is not saying, Coach, I'd like to save myself for next week, or God, I hope I don't get hurt. We don't play that way. If you play that way, that's when you get hurt.

Our guys are tough, they're physical. They're conditioned to play. They want to play. That's what they work for. You work since January to get to the first game. You want to play football. They want to play. There's guys on the sideline that want to play, too.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, I don't want to put my backup quarterback in in the Louisville game or the West Virginia game because we have to and he's throwing his first pass.

It's good for Cole's confidence to go in there and throw the football and operate the offense. It wouldn't be fair to Cole to go in and hit it off every down. That just doesn't make any sense. I'm never going to do that. If Eli was in the first quarter, we'd probably hit it off every snap. There's no need to do that.

Score that quickly. The guy was wide open. They had a bust in coverage. I think they were supposed to midpoint to the field. Free safety didn't midpoint. Gave up a big one. That's the game of football. I can't help that we scored fast.

We were in two-minute mode at the end because we wanted to work two minutes. What we practiced for.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: He understands. He's an offensive guy that understands you got to get your guys reps. It's a long season. You can't play with the same 11 guys every snap.

That's football, you know.

