

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

Pitt 45, Central Michigan 17

PAT NARDUZZI: Game two. Obviously a great win by our guys today. Probably the best thing is we had a little adversity in the second half. We go from whatever we were up to it's a seven-point game in the third quarter. That's something you don't want to have. You really don't want to see it.

Our guys didn't flinch. Talk to them all the time about not looking at the scoreboard. Doesn't even matter. To be up only seven in the third quarter I thought was a bonus that our guys have to go, Okay, what are we going to do?

That's the adversity that's going to happen during the season whether you're up or down. It's good to have that in one of your first two games.

Audition number two. Again, thought the defense played outstanding. I think they had seven yards rushing at the half. 40 yards total for the game. That is a team that rushed for 273 yards against San Jose, Group of 5 football team a week ago. Outstanding job by our defense. Great job by our staff just game planning, again, stopping the run. That was what they like to do.

Obviously we had five fourth down conversions. Would have liked to be better than what we were on the fourth downs. When you play that kind of team that's going to be risky, go analytics, as we talked on Friday, I thought it was a good job by our defense. A lot of things we can get better at.

Offensively, Eli played really good. Completed 75% of his passes. One critical error at the end of the half. We use our timeouts. Should have let the clock run out if I knew we were going to turn it over. Obviously not happy with that one. Neither is he. Just can't have it.

Another turnover in game two. So we're minus two in the turnover ratio in the country. Not where we want to be. We got to get turnovers on defense, which we haven't had a chance to be better there.



Special teams I thought again we had another good day. Not as explosive as we wanted to be based on a couple penalties that were thrown out there, a couple yellow flags that were thrown on the ground. Not happy with that.

We'll look at the videotape and see what they looked like. But we still showed that we are explosive. Kenny takes one out to the 50 on a kickoff return, I believe. All in all, good showing versus a good football team.

Obviously competition was better than it was last week. They will win six, seven games in the Mid American Conference, I can tell you that. Good football team. Well-coached. Matt does a great job.

I'm just happy for our kids. We get to move on to Morgantown. Looking forward to that game on the road. Our first road opportunity. Be exciting down there next weekend.

Questions.

Q. What was the difference between a really clean game last week and...

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, again, we'll look at the videotape. I'm not sure what happened with the first penalty. I'm looking at Abe had one on Des's big return. Didn't like that one. We have a third down conversion, maybe it was fourth down, I think it was third down with Eli on a scramble. Actually it was a run. I thought it was a pancake block by Cooper. Had his hands inside. Pounded the guy on the ground.

I don't know. We'll look at the video tape. Blue had a penalty out on the edge on a big pass, bubble screen, out there. We'll see where his hands were. But little details like that, we got to clean up. We can't have ourselves moving backwards.

Did I name every penalty? Those are the big ones that I can remember offhand.

Q. You lost time of possession like 36 minutes to 23.

PAT NARDUZZI: Today?



Q. Yeah.

PAT NARDUZZI: We won it at the halftime. Halftime I think it was 16 to 13 or something like that, give or take a few seconds there.

Time of possession, we lost it last week. It's about who puts the points up on the board. I told our guys in the second half, get ready, go. Two plays, touchdown. Nobody is going to complain about that.

Not worried about time of possession. They worry about time of possession. I'm not worried about time of possession. I worry about points and what that scoreboard looks like at the end.

Q. All the scoring drives were under three minutes.

PAT NARDUZZI: As long as we score. I don't care. I'm not going to tell Cade to slow it down, score slowly. Being explosive on offense is critical for us.

I'm not worried about the time of possession we. We lost it a week ago. Can you imagine we lost it a week ago, scored 61 points, whatever the heck it was.

We talk about critical things to winning. Turnovers are obviously number one. You can't turn the ball over. Haven't won that in two weeks. Have to play clean ball to go on the road and win.

Time of possession is the last thing we talk about as far as critical to winning goes. It doesn't really matter.

Q. A lot of different receivers over the first couple of games. What stood out to you about Poppi?

PAT NARDUZZI: Poppi, I've been impressed with him. One of the things going into the off-season was, Poppi, just don't catch and fall down. It has to be yards after the catch. He's done a great job the last two weeks. He's explosive. He runs good routes. He gets open. Gives Cade an opportunity to throw it to him. Poppi has been good all camp.

Kenny Johnson was outstanding. Blue got a chance to make some plays with his feet on the one time in the second quarter. We got weapons out there. Zion had a catch, which is good. Deuce had another nice catch. We've got weapons out there.

Again, it's not just throwing to it one guy, it's throwing it to who's open and where you're supposed to throw it.

Q. After they pulled within seven in the third, your

offense comes out and gets a quick touchdown. How pleased were you with how the offense kept their foot on the gas and defensively not allowing any more scoring after that?

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, that 15-yard drive or 14-yard drive before the half hurt. Again, two-play drive, I believe. No doubt, again, being down, adversity we talk about. Sometimes you don't see those until you get into a Power Four, ACC game, whatever it may be. I've been impressed with how they put their head down to go to work next series and not worry about what happened the last play.

Q. Shadarian Harrison got to start today. What did you see from him that stood out?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I have to watch the tape to really see. He was grumpy after the game, too. He's probably mad at something, whether it was a catching, third down, whatever it is.

He just keeps working. I've been impressed with him. We actually played mostly with our backup corners the whole game. That won't happen next week.

You know I won't talk injuries. Drip and Shawn Lee, they were out there versus a different offense than they haven't seen summer camp, all August. Getting depth at corner, guys you can trust, that was impressive.

Q. 11 tackles for loss. Sometimes there might be one guy with four or five. You had 10 different players. Seemed like the whole defense was able to get in the backfield.

PAT NARDUZZI: We're aggressive up front, whether it's blitzing or playing base. Crothers was outstanding today. Again, it's not built around one guy. I think we had four sacks with those TFLs, as well. It's just being aggressive.

I was impressed with the way our defense played today. Bates, Manalac, Cory Sanders, Archie. Tim Daoust did a great job game planning. Game planning both sides of the ball. Offensively did a great job game planning, as well. I don't know how many series we didn't get points, but if we did, it was because of us.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: Zach has come a long way, a long, long way. I told him after the game, A little bit different when your back was sore in camp. A year ago, his back hurt. He got that right, worked out. Coach Stack has done an unbelievable job of stretching him out.

A year ago there were times when he was crying because his back hurt so bad. To see where he's come... That's development in the weight room, the training room, recovery, just knowing who you are, what your body is like. I couldn't be happier. Zach Crothers is a football player and he's going to keep getting better.

Q. You had an opportunity on the second drive, fourth and one, short distance. Why throw there instead of run?

PAT NARDUZZI: Hey, I don't want to be 100% run on fourth down. We took a shot, we had a guy open, we missed him. You go back and watch that fourth-and-one. We had a shot.

I knew Cade was going for it. They're expecting to run the ball. We want to mix it up. I don't want to look at our self scout, we call it self scout, I don't want to see that we are 100% run on third-and-one, 100% run on fourth and one. People have to know we are going to take a shot so they don't load the box.

I like the call. I'd like it to be completed. We had what we wanted. We had man coverage. I think Poppi was open on that play. We just got to find him. Risk/reward.

Q. (No microphone.)

PAT NARDUZZI: It was fun to watch those guys. Max had a nice catch. We had three tight ends. Obviously Jake didn't go today. But Justin Holmes is a starter. I'm not sure if Malachi got much action. Did he? I didn't pay attention. Malachi will be ready to roll next week and be 100% healthy.

Holmes came in and took it over. Then Altsman comes in and gets a touchdown pass. That was impressive. When I was a tight end, I'd want to play in this offense. I'll say it like that. Good to see Altsman and Holmes get involved. Eli obviously get to his tight ends, get it to who he's supposed to get it to on those plays.

Q. (Indiscernible) how much does the one field goal increase your trust?

PAT NARDUZZI: Every field goal, every extra point are all critical for a young guy. Really, the guy, he doesn't flinch either. It's impressive for a true freshman coming in and doing what he's done so far.

Knock on wood, now we got to take him on the road and see what he's got in Morgantown.

He's just like this. No ups and downs with him at all. He's

steady. That's what I love about him. There's no getting too high or getting too low. He does things the right way. I love how he prepares.

All right, have a great weekend. Let's go, Steelers, beat the Jets. Looking forward to watching them go. I won't be watching, sorry (smiling).

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