

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

PAT NARDUZZI: Start off, obviously, we closed that chapter last night and moving on to the next one. Got 24 hours, but tough loss. Wasn't happy after the game, wasn't happy on Sunday. It's Monday at noon, and I'm certainly over it, that's for sure, and moving on to a really good Boston College game.

As you look back and reflect, I know you had questions after the game, some I answered, some I can't, but after you watch it, we all know this is a game of momentum. Again, that momentum was up-and-down. I talked to our guys about the ups and downs of the game. Every pregame, I'm talking about, hey, there's going to be ups and downs. There's going to be adversity today. How are you going to respond?

There was certainly ups early, it's 17-0 and we got the momentum. Momentum switched with a kick catch interference, and you guys know that whole story. It was an impactful play in the game. They get a three-yard touchdown.

But we gained it back. That's the beautiful thing about our football team. They gained the momentum back in the second half. We're up 10, and we just couldn't hold onto it for whatever reason. Obviously there are reasons. Coaches see the reasons. Players see the reasons. That's what we discuss as we come in here.

I can tell you this, we did make improvement from last week, and I think that's hard to say because you're like, hey, it's another seven-point loss. We didn't go overtime, but we did make improvements without a question. Again, how do you know that? Number one, it was against a better opponent. The skill level, the whole deal was a lot better. We faced a better football team. I have no questions about that, and we played and did some good things.

I'll start with defense, probably the highlight of the day, just the way we stopped the run. We didn't stop the run against them last year. I think it was maybe 176 yards. This year we stopped the run. Didn't stop the passes as much as I'd



like, but we did make them one-dimensional, and we got a chance to win the football game.

Defensively there's all kinds of stuff they want to clean up, and we'll clean up and make it better. Got a couple of communication errors on a 13-yard pass, wrong safety down, all those different things that happen in a game. We'll get better on that. Just the effort, the attitude, the physicalness of what we did is what I loved on defense.

Offensively we came out and started fast. A ten-play drive, take it down the field, get all the way down there on a third down, whatever it was, five or six, got a dropped pass and probably the best drive of the day is how we open up. So we started fast, I like that. I thought we looked pretty efficient in the first half, and I thought second half was not acceptable by any means. That's where we got it.

Good things there. Again, some positive things. Again, we talked about the turns. Then we go to special teams, special teams, two gigantic, game-changing plays, affected the game in a big way. We talked about the one already, and the second one versus the punt save. There was no pressure. We've got a new long snapper in there, the ball comes back a little bit different, a little bit high, and we catch it, and then as we try to bring it down, we drop it. Gigantic play in the game. Those are two plays that we haven't done, and we'll never do again, mark that down. That ain't happening again.

Our punters work on jugs all day. I guess we've got to work on more high jugs, hit them in the mouth with those balls. But those are two game changing plays. Wasn't obviously happy with that, but the rest of it, you've got the No. 2 punt returner in the country. We did a heck of a job on him. I think he had six total yards. Should have had zero because we missed a tackle and he gained six yards. We had two guys on tackle. TJ Kinsler should have made the play. Javon McIntyre has got to finish the play off.

I think, again, what we did, how we did it, besides those two plays, some good stuff on videotape.

Some of the good stuff, Pitt, we averaged 3.5 per rush. I know you guys had a rushing question. We averaged 3.5 per rush. They averaged 1.6. I mean, per play. I will say this, I went back and looked, they were 60 percent pass, we were 58 percent pass. I think someone asked a



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question about running the ball more. 60-40, I don't care run or pass, whatever it is, I think it's a pretty good number to be at. I think there was a question Saturday afternoon that I couldn't really answer because I didn't know what the number was there.

Again, if we were 70 percent, anything over 70, that's a high number for run or pass, but when you're in the 60-40s, I'm really pretty good about the mixture. Again, there's some runs we even had called when they line up in front, you just can't run it. You've got to check to a pass and all those sorts of things. That stuff happens.

Passing-wise, we averaged 8.1 yards per pass. They averaged 6.6 per pass. Again, giving you these things for a reason. Total plays, every play, we averaged 6.2 per play. They averaged 4.6. The problem is they had a lot more plays than us. We've got to move the sticks. That's where the issue is. We didn't move the sticks. Don't have enough plays.

For example, offensively we had 35 plays in the first half. They had 20. Excuse me. We had 35 plays in the first half. We had 20 in the second half. We had 15 less plays in the second half. You can't -- I don't care if it's 3.5 or 8.1 yards per run, we don't have any opportunities, you can't get more yards. You can't score touchdowns if you don't have the ball. We didn't move the sticks. We've got to fix that.

Again, everything we see on tape is visible. Defensively, it appeared we were on the field for 95 plays in the second half, but we were on the field for 49 plays in the first half -- again, mainly because Biles takes a pick six back, and then you're back on defense, so it's Gatorade to go. Then we only had 41 in the second half. You've got to be on the field to score points.

I think we lost field position by 278 yards. We won it by 217 the week before. So turnovers impacted that game in a gigantic way against a really good football team. We're lucky it was a seven-point game. We're lucky.

I'll get into BC. I know that's a long opening statement. I'm trying to give you guys what you want to ask. Bill O'Brien, outstanding coach, even better person. I like spending time with Bill, who's a heck of a coach. What he's done in his career, again, just a great guy.

The one thing I'll say about them is they've been tested. Up until two weeks ago, we hadn't been tested. I think we've been tested pretty good now. They've had Michigan State, Cal, and Stanford. They've had to go on the road. They've played against good football teams. They have been tested. That's a bonus for them and us at this point.

Offensively, Will Lawing is their offensive coordinator, does a great job. Lonergan is their quarterback transfer from Alabama. Super player. Accurate. Doesn't take sacks. Gets rid of the ball. He's not going to let you get near him. Doesn't take a deep drop. They do a good job protecting him. They've got a tailback in the backfield, Turbo, and Turbo can go.

Then on the outside, number 11, Bond, and number 4, big dude that had a good game against us last year, a big almost tight end with blazing speed, Harris, Reed Harris is their wideout.

So, they know what they're doing on offense. They do a great job. It will be a great challenge. They've been tested. They're a good football team. I don't care what the record looks like. They've had three tough games, and they've been in every game. They've maybe had the same problems we've had as far as finishing the game off and taking the highs and lows.

Defensively, they've got a legend pitman, Tim Lewis, as the defensive coordinator. Got a ton of respect for what he does and what he did a year ago. You watch the tape, the kids play fast, they're well-coached. He's a great teacher. He's a great pitman. Up front, they've got a big number 88, big defensive tackle McConnell, and a guy we've got to worry about on the edge is number 15, the long kid or the Hutchins kid, big, long individual that's aggressive. He's intense. You can tell he's got a lot of toughness to him. So we got to be where they're --

And then their safeties really pop out on tape. A kid named Thornton and Price, KP Price, those guys show up on tape a bunch. Again, it will be a heck of a game at noon. We'll have our work cut out for us, and we've got to get better.

Q. How do you approach the quarterback position this weekend on Saturday?

PAT NARDUZZI: We're going to watch practice, get better, and see where it goes.

Q. Keith Gouveia off the depth chart. Ryan Carretta in that spot. Can you just talk about that?

PAT NARDUZZI: Keith unfortunately is out for the year. Meant to mention that in my opening statement, but I got too long anyway. Keith's out for the year with a lower leg as you guys saw on game day. It's disappointing. He's a super kid. He's a tough dude. Obviously, it's a tough loss. Just like any one of your starters, it's a tough loss.

We'll regather, work the depth chart, and see where we go



from there.

Q. What do you like about Carretta in that spot?

PAT NARDUZZI: Carretta, he's played both. He's played center. He's played guard. I just think he's the best guy. He's one of the five best guys to put in there. We've got five guys behind him. Isaiah Montgomery will be ready, Tai Ray will be ready, and Jackson Brown will be ready. We've got three other guys that have played football for us. I should say Tai Ray's played on the field goal team, but those other two have been in games. As a matter of fact, Jackson played tackle for us last year in this game.

We'll be ready to roll. It's a next man up mentality, as everybody is in the country.

Q. What do you need to see better from Eli?

PAT NARDUZZI: Consistency. I just think where his eyes are and put the ball where the open receivers are, let it go.

Q. Any consideration given to the start to Cole or Mason?

PAT NARDUZZI: We're not going to discuss that right now, but right now Eli is our starting quarterback.

Q. Talking about the rushing numbers, Eli's first interception and the rush on six-yard carry on first down. Why throw there?

PAT NARDUZZI: Great question. Because that's what the offensive coordinator wanted to do. We're averaging 6.6. We lined up -- what personnel group were we in? Not sure. Again, that's Coach's deal. We were in 12-person. How often do we get in 12 personnel? Not very often. Over the last two years, we've been 100% run in that formation, in that personnel grouping. Why? Because you build tendencies to break tendencies. It was open too. Just got to throw a better ball.

Q. Eli goes to a game where he throws two interceptions and gets benched. How do you have to approach it with him this week so that he doesn't end up pressing. You say he wanted to play his game, but now the most rushing, he's got four --

PAT NARDUZZI: That's the emotional part of the game. Just got to sit back and take a deep breath. That was last week. This is this week and refocus.

Q. What do you identify or what are some of the things you're working on on third down?

PAT NARDUZZI: The great thing is we weren't in too many third down and longs. We had third and manageable downs the other day, and we just got to get the ball to the right guy at the right time. That's what it comes down to. We've got good plays. If you go put on the tape and say I'm going to watch third down in five plus, you're going to kind of go huh. Go there, go there. We've just got to make good decisions.

Q. You feel like the plays are there, just execute?

PAT NARDUZZI: We've got to execute better. We've got to block them better and run better routes and get open.

Q. I know you were down in the secondary on Saturday. I counted. Louisville had 15 passes of 10 or more yards. A lot of just kind of death by a thousand cuts, if you will. Watching the film, what did you make overall on the secondary's performance and how you defended the pass?

PAT NARDUZZI: I thought the secondary played pretty solid. The quarterback had a heck of a day. He played well. He played about as good as he could play. Just little technique things.

We give up -- the worst play was the 25-yard touchdown after a dropped punt snap where we play outside leverage and give them the post. It's easy. It wasn't a contested throw or catch.

That's why I like to play -- we played off. We bailed to it. That's why I like the press for anybody who wants to talk fundamentals. That's why I love to press because you don't give them that space and take away right at the line of scrimmage. Hindsight, probably shouldn't have bailed out, should have pressed him up.

Just details. We've got some guys not in the right place in the back end. We have to be -- and again, this week, they will take advantage of it. These guys will take advantage of it. Again, sometimes we're blitzing and playing our coverage. It's been pretty good for us. He's getting the ball quick. He's finding the right guy. So give them credit too.

Q. I don't know if we asked you on Saturday, just the final seven minutes of the fourth when Cole was at quarterback, obviously had that interception with a couple of seconds left. What did you make of his time under center?

PAT NARDUZZI: It was good. He did a good job like we thought he would. Didn't obviously create a comeback, and that's what we were looking for a spark and we didn't

get that, but Cole did a nice job.

Q. Treyvon went out. A couple D-ends went out in that game, came in and played on corners. Are you a little concerned about your depth on defense right now?

PAT NARDUZZI: I'm always concerned about our depth. Every week it's -- throughout the last ten years, it's always -- you're every week plugging something up, and you've got a weakness here or there and you've got to cover up for it. We've got a true freshman corner that played 93 snaps on defense and 8 on special teams two weeks -- three weeks ago now. You're always concerned with that, but we'll be okay. I thought Kavir Bains came in and played a heck of a game.

Q. (No microphone)?

PAT NARDUZZI: He gave up one of those -- I think the biggest pass -- as a matter of fact, just talking defensively. Again, we'd like to stop every darn pass. You talk about 10 yards or more or whatever. But giving up the explosiveness has been two weeks in a row. Our goal on defense is to give up five or less explosives. The last two weeks we've given up three.

Brian was part of -- I think two explosive passes. They had one run. What was the run? Anybody know? They ran one big 15 yards exactly run. It was a speed option, which we've never seen before. Shoot, Biles got hooked around the head, and we were there. We've just got to finish the play. But that was a big run. So we gave up three explosives the last two games. Yeah, I've been happy with not giving up the gigantic plays because you're going to give up a few of them.

Again, just speaking of explosives, we had seven to their three. You're supposed to win the game when you win the explosives. But when you lose the turnover ratio, you're going to have a problem. Did I answer that?

Q. You gave us the numbers on the rush, but what were your impressions on Juelz and Ja'Kyrian with Des out?

PAT NARDUZZI: They played a good game. I was happy with both those guys. Juelz knows what he's doing. The pass protection we talked about was so much better. They got more reps. All those things. Prepared as starters, both of them. I was happy. I wish Bootsy would have caught the one pass out of the backfield the one time. He's got to hang onto that. I thought both of them played well and hit the holes where they were supposed to.

Q. Bill O'Brien's had a lot of different stops in his

career. What stands out about what you're going to get from one of his teams?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think he's a pro guy. What stands out is the match-ups they're going to try to get. They're going to try to get Reed Harris matched up on our safeties. We've got to negate that somehow, some way. The good thing is we've got a year under our belt, and I'm sure he's going to change. The things that were at practice this year, he's not going to do. He'll have another bag of tricks he'll pull out, and that's what good coaches do. We'll adjust as we always do.

The good things is we have another year under our belt knowing who Bill is and how they do it on offense, and what Will Lawing likes to do. So that will be the important thing.

Q. When Keith goes out, how did you feel about the pass protection on the offensive line?

PAT NARDUZZI: It was good. I know you guys ask that question every week. I thought they did a heck of a job when you look at it. We gave up two sacks. I thought -- you know, you give up two sacks in a game, it's decent. Again, Eli got one and Cole got one.

But Ryan Carretta overset the one time he was in there. Pretty solid, especially for a guy coming in there in relief. In a position he doesn't -- he hits 80% of his snaps at center, and he gets about 20% during the week. This week obviously he'll get 100% at that left guard spot.

Q. How overall is the morale in the locker room right now? Just when you have games like this back-to-back weeks where you're up and you can't close out, is there a longer hangover that you have to deal with?

PAT NARDUZZI: Better not be. I think they're great. I think, like I said, we had a team meeting last night. I don't worry about that. Our guys love to play the game. I feel bad for them. They don't deserve it. We all work too hard. They work too hard. Coaches work too hard. Everybody in this building works too hard to get those kind of results.

Our guys get it. I think last year we started off 7-0. Everybody's feeling great sitting in this room, sitting in those chairs, and then we didn't finish well. Hey, maybe we're not starting so well right now. That's the attitude. Guess what? How about a finish? That's what we expect.

Our guys will always come out and play. We've got great kids. They listen. They're coachable. They've been that way since we got them in January. We'll be all right.



Q. What are your impressions of Cal Stevens during his first four games?

PAT NARDUZZI: What's your take? Pretty solid, right? I wish I had one back against Virginia, which would have caused us not to go into overtime. I think he's been outstanding. I think we had two illegal procedures -- we had six penalties the other day, which was, again, another major improvement from the week before as far as the penalties go.

I thought Trey did a great job, especially with some illegal procedures. They're moving up front, making calls, whatever. We should be fine, shouldn't do that. That's something we'll fix up this week because I'm sure we're going to see a ton of it now. They'll be moving all over the place making all kinds of calls.

We'll be better prepared for that this week. You know, when you kick one and it goes through the uprights, all of a sudden, back it up five yards and kick it again. That could get some guys. It doesn't get him. It's like, oh, just hit that one. I've got to hit another one? It's not him. He just lines up and -- he's like this (indicating).

Q. Concerning more opportunities, do you see he's starting to figure out college football?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, you see him burst through the line of scrimmage a couple times like oof. He's got a different gear to him. Those one-two punches, I hope we are three of them in there. We've got a lot of faith in Bootsy, especially since he's been here in the spring and saw him in like scrimmages. He's 100% healthy all spring. This summer he didn't get a whole lot of work.

Q. There was a video that went viral from the game after Rashid's pick six and a scuffle on the sideline with a ball -- I guess you didn't see it at the moment. What do you think now?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I didn't see it at the moment. Coach said to me after the game, which I was really happy to watch that, but probably a little bit overblown. What do our guys do after they get a turnover? What do they do? They go dunk. So he was just doing like he normally did. The he obviously got surprised by someone coming in and trying to take it away from him and didn't know who it was or whatever. Thought it was one of his boys. Probably a little overblown, emotions of the game.

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