

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

Pitt - 48 Boston College - 7

PAT NARDUZZI: All right. Well, we've got an excited locker room in there. I talked to our guys last night about visualizing that we would win this game and talked about the celebration we were going to have after the game.

Just proud of our kids bouncing back. It's a good football team in that other locker room over there, and our guys went out and executed like we needed to. It comes down to a game of execution. I thought coaches did a great job. Players did a great job in all three phases. It was not my intention to mislead you guys as far as the quarterback goes, but I did what I felt like was the best thing for our football team.

My job is to protect our team. My job is to protect our kids and give us the best chance to win, and that's what I did. So it was not to mislead you, but I wanted to eliminate distractions during the week. Didn't need that. We needed to focus on what we needed to do. I think we accomplished that.

Questions?

Q. (No microphone) how he performed today, obviously?

PAT NARDUZZI: No. Earlier in the week. I think did a heck of a job. He got the ball out. We moved the sticks. We got 40 minutes time of possession. I don't know how many three-and-outs we had. We moved the ball. We had the ball in our possession. I thought he delivered the ball. He made good decisions.

The biggest thing is we didn't turn the ball over. When you don't turn the ball over, you've got a chance to win football games. A week ago, we're minus five with two special teams mistakes and interceptions. So, you know, when you have the ball in your possession, you can get first downs. You move the sticks. You keep the defense off the field.



Our offense should be exhausted because they were on the field for 40 minutes, and our defense got a little break because the last two weeks, they've been in the 90s. I don't know how many plays we ran today. Didn't look at it. I'm happy for our kids. I'm happy for our program. Hail to Pitt and hail to our heroes.

Q. So you recruited Mason for a reason. What we saw out there today, have you and your staff been seeing this throughout the summer, throughout the first couple weeks of the season?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. You know, don't get me wrong. Like I said, we've got confidence. I told you guys late in August, in late August and so forth that we've got confidence in all three of our quarterbacks. Got great confidence in Eli. Love him to death. He's like a son, like they all are. Again, I've got confidence in Cole as well. We've got confidence.

Mason, again, week by week, you saw improvement with limited reps. You saw him getting the ball out of his hand and knowing where to go with it. He prepared his tail off. I think he was in the office at 8:00 Monday and was there until 6:30. I don't know if he went to any classes but he knew what when he was doing out there, and he was prepared. I appreciate that.

Q. What was the decision to go with Mason over Cole, the third stringer on the depth chart?

PAT NARDUZZI: Just coach's decision, looking at what gives us the best chance to win.

Q. What did you think the offensive line did today, especially Kendall Stanley at left guard?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think they did well. First start for Carretta playing the whole game. They did a nice job. We were able to run the ball effectively. I'm sure we were about 50/50 run/pass, which is what we were a week ago. At least we were in the 50s.

We moved the sticks and put ourselves in good down and distance. We didn't get behind the sticks except for first down and 35 after a celebration that wasn't a celebration, and that drives me nuts. Let kids celebrate all the time. And then what is overtly celebrating? Hand the ball to the



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officials is my old-school method.

Besides that, we were ahead of the sticks, and it makes it easy to call plays and to execute even better.

Q. You said on Thursday that if you held Lonergan to under 250 yards passing, you'd be happy. I think he only had 89 today. What did you like from the pass defense?

PAT NARDUZZI: They did a nice job. They changed things up too so our kids did a great job. Bates and the defensive staff did an incredible job. They had about 200 yards, most in mop-up duties against our third group there in the back end.

But overall, I think they did an incredible. Cory Sanders, Archie Collins, Ryan Manalac did a great job game planning and putting our kids in a position to be successful and eliminate Lonergan taking advantage of us.

Q. (No microphone) each got interceptions today. How big were those, and how big was it that you were able to capitalize on those?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's, again, playing complementary football. There's times when we got turnovers and we didn't execute and we didn't take advantage of it. We can go back and back, and I can drudge through it all.

But that was the most impressive thing is getting a short field, which we've had short fields early in the season and didn't take advantage of it, whether you kick a field goal or get no points. That was huge today. Two fumbles, two interceptions. You're plus four, and you're going to win a lot of football games when you're in the pluses as far as turnover margin goes.

Q. Boston College came into this game averaging 37 and a half points per game. Your defense helped them to set it. How were you so effective with minimizing it?

PAT NARDUZZI: Again, it comes down to execution. We can talk about the good calls. Coaches, our job is to make the calls and put you in a position to make plays. Then players go make it.

I didn't make a tackle, didn't get an interception. I didn't block anybody or catch or throw the ball. But our players make plays. We focused all week, talked about pounding the rock and just continue to pound it, and it's going to eventually break. Our kids got the message and, again, I'm just proud of our kids. Lessons from the last couple weeks paid off today.

Q. For Mason, you put the ball in his hands a lot. Did you go into the game knowing you could do that with him, or did he show you something?

PAT NARDUZZI: Absolutely. Can't ever go into a game thinking you're going to just run it. No, we wouldn't have put him in there at that spot as a starting quarterback if we didn't think he could throw it 41 times and complete whatever he completed. We knew what we were doing. Great job by Coach Bell and the offensive staff.

Q. (Indiscernible) your fourth down play and the first four, I believe, got the confidence in the offense.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we're playing the odds. I think we were 3 for 3 on fourth down. It comes down to execution and our guys making plays. That's what we do. I'm happy with the third down conversion. We were 1 of 10 a week ago on third down. We're over 50 percent today and 100 percent on third down, regardless of what the distance was.

Again, it's execution. I can sit there and say I did a great job. Our kids made all the plays. I didn't do anything.

Q. Mason's efficiency, you scored on almost every drive that he was in and perfect on fourth down conversions and better on third down conversions. So just his efficiency?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's what we saw. He's efficient. Even during camp, he didn't have reps with the 1s. He wasn't playing with those number one wideouts. He's got a lot of trust in the receivers. He put the ball where it needed to be. He was very accurate in his passes. He gave our guys opportunities to make plays after they catch it.

Q. Compare Mason him to past quarterbacks you've had.

PAT NARDUZZI: Great question. I reflected during the week of going into making this decision. Last time we went with a starting freshman quarterback was last game of the season where we beat No. 2 Miami, and it was Kenny Pickett.

We think he's got that kind of ability. Again, one game doesn't define you. He's got a lot of work to do. We've got a big game this week against Florida State in Tallahassee. But it's stacking those wins and stacking the execution. So that kind of is what it was.

Again, we weaned Kenny into it. Shoot, I remember going down to Virginia Tech and putting Kenny in in the fourth quarter, and he mounted a comeback, and we just little by



little did it.

Mason, he works at it. He's a worker, and he was prepared. And he is prepared, you know, for that start today.

Q. After West Virginia, after Louisville, you told us that just like the losses, you felt like the goals of this team were still in front of you guys. After winning like this, it's one game, it's one week, but how reinvigorating does it feel to get a win like this in this fashion?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's great for our locker room. Again, the last two games prior to today, they didn't beat us. We beat ourselves. Today, we beat them. It was clearly a win.

Again, it came down to execution. Our guys executed. We've talked about focus, effort, and execution. Our guys executed today. We gave those games away, and that's what's disappointing. Can't look back. We're looking forward. Looking forward to Florida State.

Q. I asked you on Thursday about Kenny Johnson. What can you say about just it kind of seemed like there was a pretty good rapport there with Mason and Kenny. Was there a concerted effort to get him the ball, or do they just kind of have something there?

PAT NARDUZZI: No. Same as last week, same as the week before. We were able to get him the ball. Looks like 11 targets for 9 catches and 115 yards and a TD. I told him he'd have over 100 yards.

Kenny's a playmaker. He's one of our best wide-outs, if not best. Again, it has nothing to do with I like that guy, I'm going throw it to him. It's getting them the ball when they're supposed to get the ball. We don't play favorites. Kenny made some great plays. Wish he'd have one more across the middle, one of those low throws that we have to continue to work on. But he had a heck of a game.

Thank you.

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