

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

Saturday, October 25, 2025

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference

Pitt 53 - North Carolina State 34

PAT NARDUZZI: All right. Ask for a complete win, complete game out of our players. I was happy with what we did out there today. I think it was a darn good win against a really talented football team in North Carolina State. Got a lot of respect for Dave Doeren and the program.

We obviously gave up some big plays on defense. But I couldn't be prouder of the effort of our coaching staff, of what we put on that field today. We had a starting middle linebacker today, Abe Ibrahim, who got it done inside, the snaps he was in.

We had Kavir Bains playing outside linebacker today. I mean we just found a way to get it done. We talk about blue vasing it. You guys have heard about blue vase. In the past we had to find a way to get it done, and our kids played their tails off.

Offensively, obviously, we were really explosive. Mason played at high level, and that's how you win football games. Questions.

Q. This offense was able to bounce back from a poor showing last week.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. That didn't shock me. I love to win when you play bad. And I knew that we played a heck of a game on offense. I didn't know what we'd get out of our defense today, but I didn't have any doubts our guys would bounce back. They obviously weren't happy. You think about all the penalties we had a week ago, the sacks, and again, probably versus a more talented football team, gave up zero sacks, protected the quarterback and gave Mason a chance to do what he did. The O block was alive today.

Q. How creative did you have to get on defense? I mean I think the second play of the game with Kavir coming in at outside linebacker?



PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. Creative. I mean, it was a touch and go all week. We'll be in better shape this week coming -- going into the Stanford game.

Just it's where we were. Our kids found a way, and it was no, oh, Coach, we can't do it. It was like, Coach, we'll get it done. And that's exactly what they did.

And like I said, the staff did a heck of a job. Abe almost went out with a finger, I think he was in the training room the whole second half. I'm like, oh, my gosh. Like we can't lose him.

So heck of a job by Lovelace. Again, we move Lovelace from middle linebacker to outside linebacker. So it was a complete mess at linebacker, but we found a way to get it done. That's the biggest thing.

Q. The big plays, there were a couple in the first half. What changed that allowed you to bottle them up in the second?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, we bottled 'em up for the most part. Then we gave up an inside zone. Again, I saw the iPad already. Fitzie gets reached. Cam Lindsey hesitates in the box. If he doesn't step -- I mean, and it's a young backer getting meaningful reps in a big game against a great tailback. And we let them split us. And you can't do that.

Again, tailback I thought it was inside zone. I watched the videotape, but it was outside. That guy went three steps and pushed it vertical, and we just didn't execute on that play. They had kind of an unbalanced shot where we were calling it out from the sideline knowing because No. 12 was really deep in that set, and we thought it was going to be a double pass, and we were in cover three, and our kids broke up on the bubbles because they were hitting us in bubbles earlier.

They tried to take advantage of Kyle Louis not being out there, with all those bubbles they were throwing earlier in the game. I mean, Kyle Louis is out there, he prevents a lot of that because he's so big, fast and physical. So they took advantage of some things, but our guys managed to get it done.

Q. Mason was here a few minutes. Not about all the



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stats that put up, but more so just things that felt like you guys left out on the field. How would you assess what you got out of Mason today?

PAT NARDUZZI: Mason played great. And, again, he's upset -- he's in the locker room upset that he missed some throws and missed that and could have done this better. But that's kind of how he is. He's not worried about what he did well. He's worried about what he can fix, and you gotta love that.

Q. NC State was combined for 16, I think, on fourth downs. What can you say about your defense?

PAT NARDUZZI: We put a whole new package in. We put in the Night Stalkers. On third down usually we go Delta. We put in the Night Stalkers, a whole different personnel group because we didn't have -- usually three D-linemen, and I don't know if you guys know, there's Delta Force, the Night Stalkers. They had some things to do with capturing Osama bin Laden. So our Night Stalkers went out there and got it done.

But went out there with four D-linemen, just two linebackers on third down, and five DB. So that was kind of a different package that we had to make up, and we were scared to death of just guys executing the package the right way, but they did a pretty good job on money down.

Q. Obviously last week you said Des was somewhat limited. Was he 100 percent today?

PAT NARDUZZI: He practiced good last week. He was 100 percent going in today. Obviously not 100 percent coming out, and that's the fear. He said he was good afterwards, so we'll see how he is on Monday.

Q. You mentioned Cameron Lindsey earlier. He got to start today. He had a forced fumble. Overall how do you feel that he played?

PAT NARDUZZI: He had a forced fumble. I forget, I think Rashad Battle got on that. It was a heck of a play. He played good. For as young as he is, I think Cam Lindsey played really good.

Talked about the one run. He knows it. There's another one he went in front of the receiver -- you don't go in front of the receiver with two hands. You hook and swat. Could have had a PBU, but instead, it was a completed pass and a conversion on third down. So those are things that he'll learn from in his young career, but he's going to be a really good young player for us.

Q. Today what went into that decision?

PAT NARDUZZI: Caleb. Just same, leg has been exhausted I think. And I think he kicked it all right. He kicked two out of bounds, putting the ball at the 35-yard line. He was much better in practice, but I think he got a good height on it, but he's gotta drive that thing out of the end zone.

Q. Lyndon brought the whole offensive line in here with him when he talked to us. What have you seen from him from a leadership standpoint as your offensive captain?

PAT NARDUZZI: Captain Cooper. He's an outstanding football player. It was personal for him. I don't know if he mentioned he had pictures of him up in their locker room. They kind of put a target on him. And our kids made it personal that we were going to go out and get a victory for Lyndon Cooper.

Q. Why has the offense responded to Mason the way it has?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, because he makes plays, I guess. I mean, he's getting the ball out of his hand. I mean, he gave up zero sacks and throws, whatever, 40 some times. I mean, he just knows where to go with the ball. I can't say they responded any different. Just Mason is making plays, and guys are going to rally around those guys that make everybody look good.

Q. (Inaudible). Did you see what you expected from them today?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah. I think so. Bailey is a heck of a player. CJ Bailey, you know, Hollywood is a great tailback. You saw him take one to the house. They're a good football team, but guess what, we got a better football team, and I think that's the thing that everybody's gotta realize.

Q. Did you have any conversations with Deuce Spann about some of those kick return decisions?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yes. We felt pretty comfortable with him taking it four yards out. That was by design, and sometimes you take chances. We were trying to turn Deuce loose. And we were trying to -- kids were talking about free 'em, Free Deuce. So they call him Doody.

We had one good one, right? I think he took one out to the 40, 35, 38-yard line, whatever. Sometimes you gotta take a chance, and to me we're going to be risky on special teams. You gotta go make a play, and we trust Deuce to

take one to the house. He'll take one to the house soon. Our special teams has been impressive.

Again, go back to those two onside kicks. Those are never fun or easy, but our guys responded recovering those as well. Those are big-time plays.

Q. Ja'Kyrian Turner has really stepped up these past couple of games, two touchdowns today. What have you seen from him that has allowed him to kind of become --

PAT NARDUZZI: It was a mature freshman. I mean, he's a true freshman going out there getting a lot of meaningful reps. He's athletic. I mean, you guys see him. He's tough. He's physical. He had that one drop, Caden wanted to choke him out there. It was first down, P and 10, easy completion, probably another first down.

But he's just going to continue to get better. He's going to be special for Pitt.

Q. There's wins and losses, Xs and Os and that part of coaching, but you talk about the guys rallying around Lyndon or the way the defense kind of rallied together. Is that an extra sort of something that makes what you do rewarding when it comes together like that?

PAT NARDUZZI: No question. Like I said, it's a blue vase, finding a way to get it done. Doesn't matter how we get it done, just find a way to get it done. And special teams find a way to win at different way. And, again, our guys -- we got guys -- got a lot of guys reps today that you wouldn't expect maybe on the field, and that just makes us better.

Our guys believe. Our guys believe, and I think that's the most important thing. If you have belief, that's all you need, regardless of -- our guys trusted whoever is on the field, and our guys got it done.

Q. Could Ken Johnson have finished the game if you would have needed him or is that more a precaution?

PAT NARDUZZI: A little bit of both. A little bit of precaution, but, you know, at half time he said, Coach, if I feel better, can I go in? I'm like, hey, that's up to the trainers. But he wanted to go back in there, but I'm glad we didn't have to put him in there. But I don't know if he could have or not.

Q. What would you say about Kavir's play at safety.

PAT NARDUZZI: Kavir is a really good football player. That kid, I got a lot of respect for him. He's not the biggest guy in the world, but he is tough. He's a play maker. Even

on some of those bubbles, this guy has taken a shot. He stemmed a big tight end stuck them inside and made a play. He's just a football player. He makes plays, and that's why we thought he could play that outside linebacker spot, and he certainly did, in one week. In one week's time he was able to convert and get the job done in our nickel package.

Q. Were you surprised only got eight carries?

PAT NARDUZZI: They got behind the sticks. They got behind the sticks. I would have handed off to him more, but not surprised after that 65-yarder, I'm glad they didn't. But they got trust in Bailey and the receivers. And you had to come from behind, and I think once we got up 17 in the second half, they threw it more than they'd like to.

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