

University of Pittsburgh Football Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Pat Narduzzi

Press Conference



Notre Dame - 37, Pittsburgh - 15

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't think we played our best game today against a really good Notre Dame football team, but it starts with me. We've got to do a better job as coaches preparing. We didn't convert enough third downs. We didn't get enough stops on defense. They ran the ball on us, which they've done all year. They may run for 306 yards, so we held them to probably their average or less, but we didn't get enough stops. It starts with me and every coach on down. We've got to make more plays.

But I'm proud of our football team. We don't quit at the end. There's no quit in these guys. We get a fourth down stop, and then we take the ball down and score a touchdown. There's no quit out of our football team.

We've got a lot of season ahead. We'll get locked in and get ready for Georgia Tech on the road. Excited for that one.

Q. I'm sure he wanted to make a statement on that opening drive, and just a couple drops there, a couple drops in the first half. How deflating was that?

PAT NARDUZZI: They're deflating. It's a game of momentum. You've got to make those big time plays in the game. Our skill guys, they've done a great job all year. I'm not going to complain. Big time players make big time plays in big time games, and that's what we have to do. If you don't make those big plays -- but it's a momentum change.

Mason puts the ball on a dime. Again, the game of football is not easy. We'll learn from it. We'll bounce back, and we'll go on the road and get a W.

Q. How do you feel like your offensive line played today?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's hard to say without watching the videotape. Obviously they put a lot of pressure on our quarterback, so we didn't play good enough. They're

talented up front, and when you put yourself in third down and long, we knew we were going to get a lot of different fronts and stunts and picks and all kinds of different stuff. We didn't do a great job.

I don't think we did a great job in scramble too. When he's scrambling, our receivers have got to get open. It was very touchy out there today as you guys probably know, but we've got to make plays.

Q. Mason was sacked three times in the first eight minutes or so. Do you think that early pressure had him shaken up at all?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's not a guy who gets shaken up, but I think it would shake anybody up a little bit. You start to go, okay, I've got to get the heck out of here.

Give them credit, they've got a good front seven, as talented as any you're going to face in the country. They've got good players.

Q. A long touchdown run by Love followed by a pick six in the first 17 seconds. How difficult was it to come back from that, and how did your guys try to respond?

PAT NARDUZZI: Our guys responded well. There's adversity in the game. I don't think our guys ever put their head down. They popped a run on us. We've seen it before. He's talented. He's a Heisman Trophy candidate. That's a big guy with some speed that can go. We missed a couple tackles and didn't fit it great. We've got to be more physical at the point of attack and make plays.

Q. This wasn't a must win in your eyes but for the Pitt fans --

PAT NARDUZZI: They're all must wins.

Q. For the Pitt fans it had a little bit more meaning. You sold out the crowd, GameDay, Aaron Donald retirement. What do you say to the fans after this?

PAT NARDUZZI: I apologize to the fans. It was a great showing. Walked out to GameDay. It was a heck of a day, at least to start, for our Pitt fans, for the University of Pittsburgh, for this city of Pittsburgh. I appreciate everything they did. I wish I could have given them more.

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Q. It's still only Mason's sixth game. Do you think there's some things he probably could take from this game and learn now that you've got to go on the road and play another big time opponent?

PAT NARDUZZI: No question about it, Paul. Every player on the football team will learn from just the little details. I'm watching stuff on defense, at least from the iPad. There's so many details that we can fix and clean up, and I look at it and go what are you doing? That we haven't done in the past. That's all part of it.

I want to make sure our guys weren't too hyped up. Maybe they were. I thought that was one of the keys to victory was making sure our guys didn't get too cranked up. When you start to drop passes, that gives me a signal that maybe you were too excited. I didn't want them to get too darn excited because that's how they beat you is by getting you too hyped up for them.

Q. About the kicker situation, obviously you didn't have Trey. You also attempted a 53-yarder with Sam. Is that normally in his range?

PAT NARDUZZI: He's hit them before. I think, if you go back to the spring game, he hit a 52-yarder. That's a long kick, but we had to take a shot at it. We weren't in a fourth down and go area of the field, and I wanted to see what he had.

We do that every time, whether it's Trey -- 52 yards is not easy for any kicker. But we took a penalty on that series as well. If we don't get a penalty -- Poppi caught a big ball, I think on a dig inside, and we could have had better field position. Those details and the operation was not good enough on offense today.

Q. You mentioned third downs earlier. I was just curious, what do you think is the biggest reason you guys weren't able to convert?

PAT NARDUZZI: Pressure on the quarterback. Again, we have to go back and watch the tape if our guys are getting open or tugged or whatever else was happening in there. But we've got to get open. We've got to make plays, and we've got to protect our quarterback.

We didn't do a good enough job across the board. When you don't convert a third down, you convert a couple of fourth downs, we get down to the 1 yard line to the half-inch yard line, and we don't get a touchdown. It was one of those days, I guess. That game could have been a lot closer than it was.

Our kids played their tails off. I love that team in that locker room. They played hard. They didn't quit. That's what you love about this group. There was no hanging heads down there. Our guys were playing.

Q. How impactful were the multiple short field opportunities for Notre Dame? A couple of touchdown drops started around midfield.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, midfield, across midfield for sure. That first series, 48 yard line, 43 yard line. It was not good field position the first half. I don't know what -- but we definitely got dominated by field position. We can't do that to ourselves.

Q. How much did the Love rushing touchdown and the pick six in two plays in the first quarter really change the game?

PAT NARDUZZI: Like I said earlier, it's a game of momentum. I haven't seen that pick six yet, and I just saw the guy walk in the end zone. I'm not sure what he saw, what coverage they were in. Obviously we'll check that out tonight.

It's a game of momentum. Instead of us going down and scoring and making some plays, they turn around and get a big run.

Q. How do you keep this loss from kind of like snowballing?

PAT NARDUZZI: Very easily. That's my job as a head coach to make sure we don't let it snowball into anything. We've got a great Georgia Tech team now. We've got another top 25 team coming up this week, and that's where our focus goes.

We've got to get ready to play down in Atlanta, and I'm excited. Our kids will be excited. This will not snowball into anything.

Q. What did you make of red zone situation? I think you guys had eight plays and couldn't get it in the end zone.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, you've got to convert. They have one of the best red zone defenses in the country, and we didn't make plays. We'll look at the videotape and see what we were doing. I thought we had an excellent game plan going in, but good defenses can change that.

Q. Coach Freeman just mentioned in his press conference, he mentioned Mason and his ability to escape. That's something that impressed him when he



talked about the plays. Any silver lining in what you saw in his escapability?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, he's avoiding some really good players. I wish he wouldn't have to do as much of that as he is. We've seen him do that all year. He's made plays with his feet. I'm glad he came out healthy.

He's a fighter. He's a fighter. Mason's a good player, and I was happy for Eli to come down and get a touchdown pass at the end as well just to give him some time as well.

Thank you. Panther Pitt, Pitt Nation, thank you very much.

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