

# Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl: Pitt vs Michigan State

Monday, December 27, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Pitt Panthers

## Nick Patti

### Press Conference

**Q. How often, in the past week or so, how much have you been talking to Kenny?**

NICK PATTI: I mean, I have a good relationship with Kenny. He's one of my best friends. We talk all the time. We talk almost every day, whether it's about football, about the game, just about what he's doing, life after being a Pitt Panther. So I have a great relationship with him. I talk to him a lot.

**Q. I was wondering of course not only your relationship with Kenny, but what is it like to get this opportunity? And Coach said your teammates have just been very, I guess you would say, encouraging you. How has that been to get this opportunity and get that encouragement from your teammates?**

NICK PATTI: I think it's just a tribute to the way our team is. I think that's why we had so much success, was just because we have the family environment. When someone has to step up, everyone's excited for them because they see the work that they do behind the scenes and in practice every day.

And I think the guys have just rallied around me mostly because they've seen how hard I've worked this year. They're excited to play one last game.

**Q. We had Michigan State defensive players on earlier today. We kept hearing over and over how they haven't seen a lot of recent game film of you. Is that an advantage, do you think, for you for this game?**

NICK PATTI: It could be. I think just the reps I've got in practice and being able to watch Kenny is a good advantage as well. So I guess there's somewhat of the element of surprise. But I'm just ready to go with whatever they throw at us.

**Q. Obviously last December Kenny made his decision**



**to come back. I'm sure before he made that you might have thought 2021 would be your year, your opportunity. Do you feel this is a long time coming, in a way? And I guess how eager are you to start this game?**

NICK PATTI: Watching him all year, seeing the success he's had, and being able to talk to him, like, when he comes to the sideline he talks to Coach Whip, but I'm the second guy he talks to, kind of asking questions and see what he's saying.

So being able to see that every game, you get excited when you see him throwing to Jordan, throwing to Lucas and Jared, throwing to the running backs. And you're just excited to get that opportunity to be that guy throwing to them.

**Q. What's the procedure going to be between plays? Because Kenny always went over and talked to Coach Whipple. What will it look for you guys on Thursday night?**

NICK PATTI: So we'll have our quarterback coach Matt Schell, on the sideline. And he'll be talking to Coach Salem up top. And the quarterbacks will have the headsets too. So it will be mainly business as usual. But we'll have Coach Salem up top being able to relay everything down and have the bird's-eye view we've had all year.

**Q. Are you looking at this game as an audition of sorts for your future?**

NICK PATTI: I guess so. I made a start my redshirt freshman year. Seems like forever ago. But still it's experience playing. And I played a little bit this year and got a chance to get in some pretty big moments. So I don't have many reps but a still a little bit battle tested. And I'm excited to get out there and play again.

**Q. I know Eric Kasperowicz was back with the program in some capacity this year. How much has that helped you as a developmental quarterback to have a guy around the program who has been there in**

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## **those shoes that you're in right now?**

NICK PATTI: Yeah, having him in the room has been a nice comfort. He's obviously a legendary coach in this area. And he's had some input and some good things to tell me. And he's definitely been a good help.

## **Q. You mentioned getting in for some high leverage situations this year, having to fill in. Is there a play or moment you look back on this season and say I proved myself there and something you hold onto?**

NICK PATTI: Not necessarily. I mean, there was a situation against Virginia that it was a fourth down and -- it was a fourth and one and we were thinking about going for it, thinking about kicking a field goal. And Kenny was down. And Coach Whip put me in and we threw a pass which definitely gave me confidence.

But that's the confidence he's had in me all year, that on fourth down, I haven't made a throw all day and he could put me in and we throw a pass and we end up getting a pass interference call.

But I think that that's a moment where he kind of showed that we have trust in all of our guys, whether they're starter or backup, have one play or a thousand plays. He trusts us and that's just trust through practice and trust through seeing every player every day.

## **Q. If I could follow up on that, being put in that moment specifically, does that confidence that Whip had in you in turn give you confidence and give you a necessary boost in that moment?**

NICK PATTI: Absolutely. It's a two-way street. I trust our players. They trust me. And we all trust our coaches and they trust us.

And I think that's one of the main reasons why we've had so much success this year is just the trust that we have in everybody from Coach Whip, Coach Salem to make the right call and for them to be able to call whatever they want because they know we're going to execute it.

## **Q. Have you seen from Michigan State's defense on tape and are there any similarities between MSU's defense and any of the defenses that Pitt's already faced this year?**

NICK PATTI: There's definitely a lot of similarities with kind of every defense that you see. You try and watch them and the first thing is okay who are they like that we've played. But they like to throw a lot of stuff at you. They like to keep you on your toes and throw a lot of different

blitzes at you, a lot of different coverages.

We've had a lot of time to prepare for this. And I've been in the film room a lot to be able to see what they do. And even though they've had time, you kind of stay true to what you are and I'll just be ready and I know everyone else will be ready for whatever they throw at us.

## **Q. If we were to watch video of your game against Delaware from a couple of years ago, how much different would you look today compared to what we saw in the Delaware game?**

NICK PATTI: Definitely the longer hair. But that game was a while ago. I definitely had the chance to learn behind Kenny a lot. Learned myself a lot in practice. And I would say definitely a completely different player.

## **Q. Wanted to ask you about, you talked about players having trust in you. How has been building relationships -- not relationships, but on-field chemistry, with guys in the situation -- Salem talked about how you show up every day all season long working, but now you're in Kenny's shoes. And that has to be a challenge to say we're running with the 1s not just a couple times at the end of practice, but all practice long. What's it been like establishing that connection with all the different receivers that Pitt's been using?**

NICK PATTI: Definitely different. And I think that that's the benefit of the bowl game is we had a week or week and a half off for finals week. And the guys, like Jordan, Jared, Shocky, that I haven't really thrown to that much, we had a chance to throw to every day. And that was a big benefit because going from the 2s to the 1s, it's definitely a speed change and you've got to -- they're real easy to throw to, but if you don't throw to them at all, they're not so easy to throw to.

That was, this past week and a half getting chemistry with them. I think we went two or three days without throwing an incomplection, throwing almost 150 balls. I'm excited about it. I know everyone's excited about it. We just can't wait until Thursday.

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