

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

Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Pitt Panthers

## SirVocea Dennis

### Press Conference

**Q. Obviously as a defense you guys probably want to challenge yourself. Were you guys almost a little disappointed when you found out Kenneth Walker wasn't going to play in this one?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: Definitely. He has had an amazing year this year. And he's a great running back and a top draft prospect.

When you think about going against a guy like that, it's just amazing. And it kind of makes the game exciting. And I know our Kenny is out as well. So it's not a complete game, but with those two guys, if they played, it would be an amazing game and an amazing experience.

**Q. You mentioned your Kenny, Kenny Pickett not playing. Without Kenny, do you feel like the defense, really everyone else on the team, has to step up in a little extra way obviously with him being such a big part of your guys' success this season?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: Truly I just think everyone just needs to do their role. If everyone does their role, I really think we'll be fine. And that's been the story the whole season -- everybody do their job, everybody wins their one-on-one. If we can do that we'll have success in this game.

**Q. With the linebackers, obviously you guys have a lot of seniors. So what have these past couple weeks been like, maybe with some of the younger guys working? And who are some of those younger guys you think can step up next spring and next season?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: During this week it has definitely been more developmental, and just me getting used to or everyone getting used to each other.

And I think Bangally is going to be coming in next year and he's going to be ready to step up to the play. I think he is



now. And me and him have been in the film a lot. He's been basically my little brother, really. He's been by my side, taking notes, doing everything he can.

And to be honest, I think he's ready, and I think he'll be ready to go whenever.

**Q. You mentioned this week taking on more of a developmental role or developmental kind of practice, what does that look like? How is that different to maybe a regular practice during the regular week or season?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: It's not really different at all. It's just those guys getting more reps that are valuable. I'm not saying reps aren't valuable. Reps are very valuable. But more reps that can help him work or help them work their craft. And like I said, get used to each other and get used to who they're around and playing with.

**Q. Do you feel like that's something -- obviously it's a long time between now and September, next season, do you feel it's something that carries over into spring ball into the summer onto the season next year, or can?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: Definitely. I think the reason we were as good a team this year is because how close we were and how much time we had to spend together, not just on the field but also off the field.

So if we can get that done as early as a bowl week or as early as December, transitioning into spring will be that much easier, and then coming into the fall camp would be better as well.

**Q. I was wondering, you guys haven't played since December 4th. And here it is December 28th. Still two more days away for the game. How difficult was it or is it to get recharged, get ready after having almost three consecutive byes?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: I don't think it's difficult at all. It's always the mentality of "stay ready so you don't have to get ready." We've been practicing. We've been working out.



We've been doing everything we need to do to stay ready. And the mentality of this team, we're just hungry for another game. We want that 12th win.

So I think we're not worried about having three byes in a row or three weeks of not playing a game. I think we're just ready to go, more than anything now.

**Q. You talked about the value of a 12th win. I wanted to ask you from a player's perspective the value of preseason rankings. It looks to me like neither Pitt nor Michigan State were ranked in these preseason polls. As a player, what do you guys make of those preseason rankings each year?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: It's just preseason. You still have to come through and follow up with the season. You have to play your best through every game and things like that. Me as a player, I don't really worry about all the media hype and everything like that because at the end of the day we have to come out there and execute the plays, put on pads, hit people.

It's a lot into that. And the preseason rankings, to me, honestly, doesn't really mean anything, because, honestly, it's like a lot of people look down on Pitt and it hurts to see, so it makes you play with a little more fire as well.

**Q. Sort of on that same light about disrespect, the four defensive players we talked to you today, you, Haba, Calijah, Brandon, none of you guys were four- or five-star recruits, none of you were big-time. What's the belief system once you get to Pitt that you guys believe you'll be a good defense without all the four or five stars?**

SIRVOCEA DENNIS: It's a lot to it. And I think my biggest thing was, and a lot of guys you just mentioned, was once you get the opportunity, to make the best of it. That opportunity does not come twice. It does not knock twice.

So once you really get a hold of the opportunity, please, please go forth, put your best foot forward. And once you do that together as a whole defense, 11 as one, amazing things can happen. And I know you witnessed it this year. So that's the mentality of this team, and the mentality of this program is, like, once you get the opportunity, just make the best of it.

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