

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

Thursday, December 30, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Pitt Panthers

John Petrishen

Press Conference



Michigan State 31, Pittsburgh 21

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by linebacker John Petrishen.

Q. Johnny, the last couple drives defensively, did you feel like it was just kind of building for them? Both of them were long drives.

JOHN PETRISHEN: They definitely had momentum. We had confidence in our defense that we could man up and make a stop to hopefully win the game.

We knew we had to step up for our offense. They were struggling for a little bit, but we got some momentum towards the end of the game.

It's a shame that the game ended like that defensively. I felt like we played a really good game up until the second half of the fourth quarter. It's disappointing to finish the season that way.

But I think we left it all out there.

Q. You as a defense have closed out so many games this year. What was Michigan State doing that they got past you guys? Some passes were right through tight coverage that allowed them to get some scores.

JOHN PETRISHEN: Yeah, you know what, that's ironic you asked that. There were several times throughout the game, at least three times, when I would tell Voc or somebody else that they ran the perfect play call versus the play call we had on defense.

Especially I think there was twice in the first half, then once in the fourth quarter where I came off the field saying, Dang, that's exactly what we didn't want them to run in that situation, and they ran that.

Credit to them and their preparation and that. Sometimes that's just the luck of the draw, the way things work out.

Yeah, to answer your question, they played a complete game. We weren't sure exactly what to expect with their running back not being able to play. They came out and they threw it. Their quarterback had some really good passes. Sometimes we had really tight coverage and they were able to complete passes off of a great pass and a great catch.

I talked to M.J. after the game, told him to keep his head up. It was a great throw and a great catch. Sometimes there's nothing you can do about that.

You live and you learn. We'll move on.

Q. Especially in the late stages of a game when Michigan State keeps converting on third, fourth down, when those things happen over and over, what effect or cumulative effect does that have on a defense, its psyche, mindset, its fatigue level?

JOHN PETRISHEN: That's a great challenge, not trying to let it affect you as a defense. There were a couple times on the last few drives where we had them in third-and-long. We'd say to each other on the field, Okay, this is our stop, we got to get off the field here. They complete a third and 11 or 12. They weren't huge plays, but chunk plays they would get way past the sticks.

Sometimes it's a sigh after that, like, Ah, geez, that was our opportunity. It'll be a challenge to snap and clear and move on to the next play, especially when we know our team needs a stop. That can be pretty daunting and challenging as a defense.

As an older player and as a leader, I feel like that's my job, some of my teammates' jobs, to kind of rally the troops, look forward to the next snap.

Q. You just wrapped up your Pitt career. Take me through the emotions you're feeling, even after the loss.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

JOHN PETRISHEN: Someday I'll write a book on all this. People keep telling me to do that. Within the next few weeks here, I'd love to sit down with one of you guys and do an in-depth interview about everything, the whole journey, the whole process.

I know we've talked about it here and there, but I haven't gotten into anything, any details about the extent of just my journey, process, the roller coaster ride I've been through personally.

When I came to Pitt, it was really a blind leap of faith. I felt like that was my calling at the time. To come home and to help put this team back on the map, it's really been everything I've ever dreamed for.

But to me, I felt like it was meant to happen. Sometimes with everything I was going through, I wasn't sure exactly how it was going to happen, but I had faith and I knew in my heart it was going to happen.

When I had the season like I did, I fully expected that. The people who believe in me and support me, my small support circle, they expected it. I'm so thankful and grateful for all those people that supported me along the way.

Everybody here at Pitt welcomed me with open arms. I know it's said in the past, but I'll forever be hailing to Pitt. I'll forever be grateful and loyal to Pitt. I can't thank Coach Narduzzi enough, because he didn't have to take me. He's a man of his word. I'll forever be loyal to him and a fan of him.

I could go on for a long time about this, everything I've been through. But it's amazing. Obviously I'll wish more than anything we could have won that game tonight, to finish off my Pitt career with a win. I wanted to win that game so bad for the city, the university, the program.

This program is on the right track. I'm so excited for what's in store in the future. But like I said, I can't be more grateful or appreciative of the opportunity and the season we had this year. I'm really proud to say that I helped put this team back on the map.

Q. You pretty much said it all, but I was wondering how difficult it's going to be for you in the coming weeks to put this game behind you.

JOHN PETRISHEN: It's really difficult. Like I said, I wish more than anything we could have finished off with a W.

If there's anything I learned throughout this process is that

adversity is always going to come. Being positive, positive energy, just defeats everything.

We can go back and forth about certain games and things that happened in the past, but for me, when football was taken away from me for three years due to uncontrollable events, I looked at myself in the mirror and learned more about myself.

Adversity is always going to come. My saying, my favorite book, is "Chop Wood Carry Water." I learned to just keep going. The punches are going to come. You've got to roll with the punches.

Being positive, the sun's going to rise again tomorrow. The sun doesn't stop for anybody. It's heartbreaking that we lost tonight. I feel bad for my teammates and coaches who put so much into this.

Like I said, I wish more than anything we could have pulled this out for everyone because I feel like we deserved it. We played a heck of a game tonight. Everybody played so hard, I'm so proud of everybody.

This is a great program. It's definitely on the rise. It's going to stay there. I'm excited for the future for me and for Pitt, everything is going to work out for everybody. I'm excited.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

