

**Pitt vs. Oklahoma State  
Postgame Quotesheet  
September 16, 2017**

**Pitt Coach Pat Narduzzi**

**Opening remarks:**

“That’s about the worst day you can have at the office. As I said to Coach Gundy after the game, ‘you certainly have a top-10 team.’ That’s a good football team. That’s a top-five football team for sure. We’re obviously disappointed in the performance. Our kids are disappointed. We had trouble covering them on defense. We had trouble getting first downs on offense.”

**On playing two quarterbacks during the game:**

“Yes, I have a decision to make at the quarterback position. Max Browne wasn’t very productive when he was in there. Ben DiNucci came in and gave us some life. He gave us the spark we thought he could. Do we have a great quarterback? No, not right now. That’s what happens when you’re a young football team. It wasn’t Max’s fault. It was all 11 players. It’s all 11 players plus me. We’ll continue to evaluate and watch the tape and see where we are.”

**On getting playing time for younger players:**

“The second half was a scrimmage. We got to see some of the younger guys compete and play. There were some players who got reps they normally would not get. It’s good to see those guys compete. They had an opportunity in the second half. That’s a bonus.”

**On making alterations to the defense:**

“We are changing things. There’s a lot of change back there. We didn’t stop the run early so we had to get our linebackers up in there. There are only some many things you can do and matchup wise it wasn’t a good matchup.”

**On the defense’s performance against Oklahoma State’s high-powered offense:**

“I think we missed more tackles today than we normally miss. There were some good plays out there. We’ve got to be more consistent.”

**On moving on to the next game:**

“We’ll continue to look forward. ACC play starts next week against Georgia Tech in Atlanta and that’s where our focus will go.”

## **Pitt Player Quotes**

### **Quarterback Ben DiNucci**

#### **On his thoughts when asked to go in the game:**

"I approach it the same way every week. If my number is called, then I'm going to do whatever that I can to give the team a chance to win. We were down when I came in, so my goal was to start putting points on the board."

#### **On his own performance:**

"Some good stuff and some stuff I need to improve on. I have two things off the top of my head: the interception when we were backed up and the interception when we were going in. The second one just got away from me a little bit. Other than that, we moved the ball a little bit and were able to do some things at the end of the first half, going into the second half. I'll have to look at the tape but I think I did okay."

#### **On why he feels he brings a spark to the offense:**

"I think my legs really help. In terms of being a leader, I think guys just naturally follow me. Like I said earlier, I'm going to do whatever I can so if that's making plays or getting a spark provided whenever that's needed, then that's what I'm going to do."

#### **On how tough it will be to bounce back after two straight losses:**

"I don't think it will be very tough at all. These last two weeks don't affect what our goal is. Our goal is the ACC Championship and we haven't started ACC play yet. We'll watch the film tomorrow and move on. Our goal is still that and that starts next week down in Atlanta."

### **Cornerback Avonte Maddox**

#### **On Oklahoma State as a team:**

"That's an explosive team—explosive quarterback, explosive receivers, explosive back. Coming into the game, we knew what they were going to do but they executed and we didn't. We were on the bottom half of that so next week we're looking to get better."

#### **On Oklahoma State changing from last year:**

"No, they came with the tempo, which we expected. They came with the deep ball shots, which we expected. We just have to make plays. They executed and we didn't."

#### **On their struggles with getting stops on third down:**

"That was really frustrating. That's the money down, the down to get off the field. We were slacking there big time. It was 3rd-and-10, 3rd-and-15 and they were completing it for first downs. It hurts. We have to get the ball back to the offense any way that we can. That's one thing that all have to get better about as a defense."

#### **On OSU Wide Receiver James Washington**

"He's a good player and a good guy. He's fast, strong, and has good hands. I went out there ready to compete with the guy and he played a real game today as well. We just have to be stronger as a defense on the back end and that's what we're going to work on going into this week."

## **Wide Receiver Rafael Araujo-Lopes**

### **On having a pivotal role in the offense today:**

"It was great. I didn't get too caught up even though it was my first touchdown. The priority was to win. Whenever the coaches call my number, I am going to do whatever they tell me to do."

### **On Oklahoma State defensive scheme changes:**

"They were pretty similar. It was not as much about them. It was more about our execution."

### **On the quarterback battle:**

I really don't know much about it. I can't let myself get caught up in it. All I know is to do my job and worry about what I do."

### **On gaining momentum in second quarter:**

"I am not totally sure. Sometimes we executed and sometimes we did not. We just have to pay attention to the details. There may have been a couple of drives where we did well and paid attention to the details."

### **On the upcoming game against Georgia Tech:**

"Moving forward, we are going to prepare like we always do and intensify going into ACC play. We have to pay attention to the details and making sure that our intensity is right, and our effort is there, like Coach (Pat) Narduzzi always preaches."

## **Safety Dennis Briggs**

### **How it felt playing a high-octane team:**

"Obviously it's tough. You're searching for answers. You really can't figure it out and just trying to get better. It's a process trying to move on to get to the next play. Always trying to get better. Honestly, it feels terrible. We have to rely on each other and remember that is your brother and continue to try to figure out the answers."

### **On what happened today:**

"Blown assignments and missed execution. All I can think about is what I did and not what everybody else did. You have to look in the mirror and try to correct what you can."

### **On what has changed in the system on defense:**

"We did not really change anything. We made adjustments throughout the game to try to area it off. The biggest thing in the game is that we have to look our self in the mirror and execute better."

### **On if the team has taken a step back:**

"Definitely feels like a step back. The numbers will tell you the story. We need to draw from that and start faster the next game."

### **On bouncing back from two tough losses:**

"We don't have a choice. We are going into ACC play. We talked about it in the locker room as a family. We have no choice but, to move forward as a group."

## **Oklahoma State Head Coach Mike Gundy**

### **Opening Statement:**

“Obviously we had a good game today. Our players were really focused and they did a really nice job in preparation. As a coach that’s so gratifying. To see guys get ready to play a game, prepare and execute. Obviously we were very explosive on offense. Defensively we stopped the run. Pitt wants to run the ball and control the clock – we stopped the run. In the first half, we were poor at time tackling. We missed three or four guys on tackles which cost us a couple of touchdowns. The rallied and tackled better in the second half. We lost our focus there a little bit in the second quarter. And certainly at the end on the poor snap on the punt. But other than that, it was a good win for us and we have a long way to go. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but I was proud of our team.”

### **On Mason Rudolph’s ability to avoid pressure and make plays:**

“He’s worked hard in the offseason on a couple of things – his footwork on different styles of throws, also his ability to protect the ball and move around in the pocket. He made some big plays today at crucial times, and you see the importance of having a quarterback who makes plays. He made a lot of plays. He got out of his “box” one time, and when he did he threw an interception. He did not progress appropriately and it cost him. He made his mind up prior to the snap based on coverage, they rolled coverage and he threw an interception. So it is an example of what happens when you don’t follow the system we have in place. But other than that he was obviously really good.”

### **On how his team completed one of the most efficient road games he has ever coached:**

“I told the team that they were really good in all three phases to start. And then the guys played good. They were focused. We started fast. We made key third downs and they played well.”

### **On being the first team to have four receivers gain over 100 yards in a game:**

“We had a few players this week who lost focus. We got out of our world and our culture. So when that happens they can’t be with us. But when we come back on Sunday, they’ll be with us and play games. They are healthy and they didn’t violate any rules outside of the team. But as I said earlier, Mason [Rudolph] has done a nice job of spreading the ball out. When we have good skill guys, he’s responsible for delegating the ball to the people based on what they give us. And he did a job for us, except for one time and it cost him an interception. And that’s why we spread them out and got multiple guys catches. We saw some heavy roll in the play towards James Washington, and when that happens we have [Jalen] McCleskey in the middle of the field most of the time.”

## **Oaklahoma State Player Quotes**

### **Quarterback Mason Rudolph**

#### **On new elements of his game:**

"I think making that throw was something that worked out. I've always been one to get out of it. It's about making it count. So that's something I try to highlight in my offseason work, and then see it in those guys. But anytime you can work when the lights are off and you're set up with your guys, and you think, 'What are rules?' If you're going deep, and you come back short, those type of things."

#### **On the touchdowns:**

"Honestly, I didn't even pay attention to those statistics. I knew they scored a lot. But no, usually it flows like that. Sometimes there will be some sputtering dries, but the coaches on the offensive line are making the right calls and making us run up front. We were protecting our butts and making that block for Justice [Hill] today. That one-two punch with J.D. [King] was something serious and it's cool to watch."

#### **On if anything carried over from last game against Pitt:**

"They had a bit of change with personnel, a couple graduated. They had a really good speed rusher last year, number five, I remember him. There's some personnel differences from last year to this year but they are who they are, and their D.C. [defensive coordinator] isn't going to change. He's an old school guy, he's a great coach."

### **Running Back Justice Hill**

#### **On the offense:**

"Coach always stresses it to us that if we want to pass it we have to run it, so we stress that every day in practice. We work hard every day, and that translates to the game."

#### **On playing the game:**

"It's crazy. It's really fun. Just being out there with your teammates, you don't have to do much besides your job. And then you look up, and you see James [Washington, Jr.] and Marcell [Ataman] and somebody else are out there running a touchdown. If I'm not doing something or running the ball, then J.D. is out there running the ball, it's just fun."