

FULL QUOTESHEET: Pitt 28, Youngstown State 21

Pitt Coach Pat Narduzzi
Pitt vs. Youngstown State
September 2, 2017

Opening comments:

"It couldn't have been a better first half. At halftime, I talked about making a statement. We had three offensive touchdowns and the defense played pretty solid. You felt pretty good about where you were. Coach Pelini's a great coach. They've got a championship-caliber football team. I expect them to make the championship game again. We played a darn good football team."

On the team's second-half performance:

"I talked to the team at halftime about how it's a 60-minute game and coming out we had made some little adjustments and watched some tape. Youngstown State did a nice job. They did a nice job of doubling Jester Weah all day. That's a heck of a job by them. You couldn't have ended it any better. It's a win. We're going to find out who these players are. You don't know what you're going to have. We will find out what we've got."

On the Youngstown State defense tightening up in the second half:

"They made some plays. They did some good things. They did some twists and moves inside. We'll have to see the tape."

On getting receivers open in the passing game:

"We will look at the tape and find out. It's the same thing in the run game, if they're doubled out there then hopefully we can go to the rushing game, and I know we gained over 200 yards. We just didn't make plays when we needed to."

On the missed opportunities to score in the game:

"We missed two field goals. We had that blocked punt and took it to the five-yard line and didn't get any points. It's just the little things that we can't let happen."

On the how quarterback Max Browne managed the offense:

"I'll have to look at the tape. I don't think it was bad. I think he probably thinks he played pretty good. We'll look at all the details. I wished he would have run for a touchdown near the end. But, he hasn't played for a long time either, for over a year since he started. It's got to be some kind of rush to play at Heinz Field for the first time. He's got an opportunity to play better."

On the game-winning interception in overtime:

"Bricen Garner made a big play. That's what you have to do back there. Their quarterback had to scramble and we didn't get the pressure I wanted. He stepped up there and threw it and Bricen was in position to make the play."

Pitt Player Quotes

Running Back Darrin Hall

On the game being close in the second half:

"They are a really good team so we expected this to be a hard-fought game. That second half, we had to pick up where we left off in the first half and come out harder next game."

On his role in the offense:

"My job is to make plays. I'm going to continue to make plays and I'm going to make bigger plays. Whoever scores doesn't matter as long as we win."

On playing his hometown team:

"It's fun. I know a couple of guys on their team. It was a fun atmosphere and I was glad to be out there."

On pairing with Qadree Ollison:

"We're explosive. That was just the beginning. We can play better and we're going to play better. We're looking forward now."

On how the team deals with adversity:

"We continue to fight no matter what. Adversity is good. We might be in close games down the line, so knowing what to expect and how to react is good."

On his thoughts on heading to Penn State next week:

"I think it's going to be fun. It's going to be a fun atmosphere. I've been there before as a recruit. I'm looking forward to it. I'm really excited."

On his thoughts on the offense in the second half:

"As an offense, we need to come out hungrier. We might've taken a back seat and we should've come out harder. We should've made more plays."

Wide Receiver Jester Weah

On his thoughts after a game where the offense doesn't have a clean second half:

"We've just got to get better with practice and if we keep working hard, we can achieve that goal."

On if there were first game jitters:

"You could say that. We've all seen this. We were hot and then we were down, but we have to keep our foot on the pedal for all four quarters."

On being double-teamed:

"After a year like last year, I feel like I have a target on my back. It is what it is."

On his touchdown catch:

"It was a great ball by Max [Browne]. I was lucky enough to get open and strong-balled the catch."

On getting a win despite a slow second half:

"I'll take a win any day in any shape or form. A win is a win. We've just got to get better in practice."

On the offense having more to show:

"We can do really big things this year. I believe that with Coach Watson and Max [Browne] leading us at quarterback."

On his expectation for the offense this season:

"I feel like with Coach Watson we have a great playbook and a great offense as well. It's going to be an exciting year."

Wide Receiver Quadree Henderson**On the offense clicking in the first quarter:**

"In the first quarter, we came out swinging. It didn't carry over to the second half. This week in practice, with Penn State on the schedule, we're going to have to fix all the little errors."

On if there was frustration in the second half:

"Not really frustration, it was more trusting your teammates. We didn't get down on ourselves. We had to tell our defense, 'finish the game strong for us.' And that's exactly what they did. Big shout out to Bricen Garner with the game-winning pick."

On the team mood about the win:

"It's more of a 'hey, we won.' No win is a bad win. We just came out swinging. Alex Kessman has to keep his head up even though he missed the field goals. We have faith in him, just like we had faith in Chris Blewitt last year. We are going to take this win, we are going to run with it and we are going to get back to work Tuesday."

On how Youngstown State was able to get back into the game:

"I think Coach Bo Pelini went in the locker room and gave them a hype speech. They came out swinging and definitely battled back. Big credit to them. They're not a Villanova, where you know you can win with ease. They came in here my freshman year and almost beat us and the same thing happened today. It's funny how history repeats itself. We just pulled it away."

Defensive Back Bricen Garner**On his game-winning interception:**

"It was just natural reaction. The defense played it perfectly. They latched on every man that they had to and they had all their checks correct. That allowed me to make a play."

On making that play after Youngstown State forced overtime:

"It's always nice to make an interception or a play like that, especially to win the game. I just credit the defense a lot because they were on top of every check and everything and that's just what allowed me to make a play."

On how the defense played as a unit:

"I think we played really well. We still have a lot of stuff to clean up. We're going to clean stuff up tomorrow when we watch tape, but it's never done."

On how all his training led to the interception:

"It could be one play, it could be multiple plays, it could come together as a whole unit or as a whole game. You train for stuff like this. It's nice to see it pay off."

Quarterback Max Browne

On how the first game felt:

"Felt good to get the first game out there. Playing different opponents is always nice. Felt great."

On why the second half was different:

"It's a matter of being on the gas pedal, and probably if we are being honest, easing off a little bit. Looking back on that first half we only had three drives so we were three for three there, I guess four technically but that was with a minute left towards the end. In the second half, we sputtered once and they got some momentum but that's football for you, a game of momentum but luckily we finished it out."

On if there was any panic on the sideline:

"Panic? I don't know if we would go that far but definitely a sense of urgency and a huge huge wake up call. But we responded. Give them credit, they went into the locker room down 21-0 and they didn't roll so give them credit but we're happy to get away with this one."

On why the offense did not have many long throws:

"They were sitting with two high safeties most of the game so just a simple numbers game, that's one less guy in the box so that is a factor on why we had so much success in the run game early. We got a couple there, I think a close call on two of Jester's and then Matt Flanagan got one but obviously it was good to have that last go route for sure."

On his play:

"I feel like I played well. Narduzzi just asked me the same thing, I wish I could have one play back, that third and five in the fourth quarter. That wasn't executed well by me, wish I could have that back but you learn from it and move on, but just happy to get away with that one for sure."

On a poor second half:

"It's probably a product of taking the foot off the gas pedal a little bit. I think this was a game where there weren't a ton of possessions so every possession was critical. When you didn't score or make something of it, it was widely apparent so it was just one of those things I think. But give them credit, they are a good football team. There's a reason they were in the FCS Championship game last year and they did good in the second half."

On if there was any rust in his play earlier on:

"Not a whole lot, to be honest. Obviously it's only my fourth start so you still get a little of the pre-game jitters but it was business as normal for the most part."

On what to take away from that win:

"I think you learn a lot. I think obviously everybody wants to have that first game be a blowout but we were forced to stand in there and have a fist fight which a lot of teams may have to wait until week three or four to get their first test but we got it week one, right away."

Linebacker Oluwaseun Idowu

On how the linebackers contributed:

"I think we are the heart of the defense, you know. That's the way we look at it. I know everything starts up front but we have to communicate. We have to do a better job communicating to the back end, to the front end, and really the whole defense, that's our job."

On if there were communication issues from the defense:

"Yeah, it's all about the little things. The little things make or break the game, so today I think those things were communication."

On if the team relaxed after taking the lead:

"I don't really think so. If you start fast and have to finish strong all the way to the fourth quarter. We pride ourselves on being a fourth quarter team and that's something we have to do. I don't think we relaxed, I think we were trying to take it to them the entire game. They are a good team, but we have to come out and execute all the way through the game."

On the challenge of playing with young players:

"It's a lot of young guys and the problem was the communication to them. You have to communicate to those guys because they haven't been in that situation and we need a lot of talk to help those guys out."

On whether he thinks there will be improvement in the next game:

"It's the start of the season. Like training camp where you see a big improvement from the first day to the second day of camp, there is a big improvement from the first game to the second game. There were some mistakes and communication errors in the first game."

Defensive End Dewayne Hendrix

On returning to the field after missed time with an injury:

"Being out there completing a whole game with my teammates just felt good. I've been practicing a lot, and being out on the field today felt really good."

On if Pitt's 21 point lead at the end of the first half changed the team's mentality in the second half:

"Not really. We take it quarter-by-quarter, and we can't look at the score board. In the second half, we knew we were going to bring it and they were going to bring it, so we just have to keep striving [for greatness]."

On how he felt physically going into the game:

"Right now, thanks to the training staff, this is the healthiest I've been since I've arrived at Pitt."

On how the defense feels after their performance:

"A win is a win, but at the end of the day, we can always do better. I'm just going to leave it at that."

Running Back Qadree Ollison

On if there is a level of concern surrounding the team after the second half performance:

"We've got to be better. Offensively, we just came out really flat. You can score 21 points in the first half and then score only seven in the second half. Hats off to Youngstown State, they're a great team. They

got to the FCS championship for a reason, and I think they'll be back. They're well coached by a coach that has been in the big leagues. We have to be better executing in the second half. They made some adjustments in the second half and you have to give some credit to them as well."

On if the team became too comfortable after their three touchdown lead:

"I don't think we were relaxed, I just think that they made some adjustments in the second half and they didn't give up. Every time we come into the locker room, no matter what the score is, we always say it's 0-0. You don't pay attention to the scoreboard and you don't get satisfied. We just did a poor job executing offensively. We had a big turnover from Jay [Stocker], getting us down to the five-yard line and we didn't score. We missed two field goals, which is really big. Going forward we have to be better."

On how it felt going into the game knowing he is the No. 1 back for the first time in two years:

"It felt good to go out there and do what I can for the team. But like I said, we were rotating guys in. A.J. [Davis] played, Darrin [Hall] played, we had multiple guys rotating in. Like I've said before in previous interviews, I don't want to get the ball 40 times a game, no running back does. We've got to be able to rotate guys in and keep executing when other guys are called up."

On his play in overtime:

"It was just a bang-flash, that's all. The idea was to try to get Jester [Weah] open since he's our big play guy, but I believe they double teamed him and I was open. It was just a flat route, so the objective was to get Jester the ball, but Max [Browne] made a great read. He didn't lock in on Jester and we were able to move the chains on a big third down."

On the biggest challenge in facing Penn State next week:

"I don't know, we haven't watched them much. We haven't watched them at all actually because we were getting ready for Youngstown State. I've never been to Penn State for a game, except for visiting them in high school. I hear it's crazy and I hear they'll be 107 [thousand fans] strong. I don't know how many people behave at the stadium. We don't really know the challenges yet, but just based on last year, they have a great team. They won the Big 10 championship and lost the Rose Bowl in a nail-biter, so they're a phenomenal team and we have to do a better job if we want to go in there and try to come out with a victory."

Youngstown State Head Coach Bo Pelini

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On the team's second half play:

"We executed better, we tackled better. We took advantage of some more opportunities. We obviously played better defensively, and we finished drives. We had some opportunities in the first half that didn't happen for us. Those last points at the end probably cost us the game. We left a lot of plays out there. I'm sure Pitt is saying the same thing. We had multiple opportunities. But you win as a team, you lose as a team. It hurts, but it won't change what has to happen tomorrow. Had we won the football game, what happens tomorrow doesn't change and the guys in the room understand that. They're hurting, they played their hearts out, but you have to man up, take it for what it is. We can't control what just happened but we can control what happens going forward. That process starts tomorrow."

On if he is pleased with the outcome of the game:

"No. I'm never pleased when we don't win. I fully expected to win this football game and it didn't happen. We will be ready to go tomorrow."

On the performance of quarterback Hunter Wells:

"Hunter played a good football game. He made a tough play on the last play, and a couple other decisions, but he made a lot of plays. He played a heck of a football game. I told him, as a quarterback, the ball gets picked at the end of the game, and he thinks it's his fault. It's not his fault. There were a lot of plays before that where it didn't need to come down to that. You can't put it all on one guy. You win as a team, you lose as a team. Every guy in that room, coaches and players, take responsibility for not winning that football game."

On how the players revved themselves up for the second half:

"We have a pretty consistent approach. I thought fundamentally, we needed to do some things better. It's nothing magical, it's about playing the fundamentals better than we did in the first half. We didn't do some things fundamentally that would have allowed us to have success. When we got back to that, and fixed some of those things, I think we played better football."

On if there are any positives to take away from the game:

"Yeah, there were some positives. Pitt is a good football team. Make no mistake about it, they have some talent there, and they are a well-coached football team. There isn't a guy in that room who doesn't have respect for that team."

On Christian Turner's performance:

"I mean, he had 124 yards receiving, and also Kevin Rader had a big day for us. We know what our guys on the outside can do. We have the potential to be a good football team."

On what he learned from his football team today:

"Just what I said. There is potential. We are not a good football team, but we have a chance."

On the defense in the second half:

"We manned up in the second half, I was proud to see it in our guys and how we responded after halftime."

Youngstown State Player Quotes**Linebacker Armand Dellovade****On the 21-point comeback:**

"It just shows how capable we are and what type of team we can be. But, you play to win, so everybody's a little upset we didn't get the win. We'll build off this."

On the defensive plays:

"When we first came out, we were missing tackles. But in the second half, Coach Carl [Pelini] and Coach Bo [Pelini] said we have to be more physical, and we responded to what they said. We came out, we were physical, and we tackled well. It shows what kind of defense we can be."

On playing Pitt since freshman year:

"My freshman year, I was a little nervous. I didn't think I was even going to get in on defense, and I ended up getting in. Now today, I felt good, I felt comfortable, and I was running around having fun. Freshman year I was more nervous than anything."

On playing a local team:

"It's just another game for me. Pitt is Pitt, and we'll handle Pitt the same way we'll handle North Dakota State and South Dakota. But it's definitely cool playing in front of my hometown. A lot of people here know me."

Tailback Christian Turner**On his first collegiate game:**

"It was awesome. It was everything I've ever dreamed about. Ever since I was a little kid, I wanted to play college football. It's a dream come true."

On what he learned:

"I learned this team has a lot of arc. We have a lot of fight in us. We faced a lot of adversity today, coming down 21 to nothing, and we responded well the second half. We just have to go back to work tomorrow and learn from it."

On the game's pressure:

"My high school team faced a lot of adversity. We won three state championships. The stage wasn't too big. I'm kind of used to the big setting, big games. I was nervous at the beginning of the game just because it was my first college game, but as the game went on, I got more comfortable."

On tying up the game:

"It was crazy. There was a lot of emotion. That's another thing I learned at this game. We have a lot of passion for this game, we all love this game, and we all just want to win."

Quarterback Hunter Wells**On the second half:**

"We were down 21 nothing, and we came out and it just shows what kind of heart and what kind of passion is on this team. We're really resilient and don't back down. We're not going to stop playing until the final whistle. It's a tough loss, but it shows a lot about this team, how hard we put our minds to it. It shows the character too."

On how he thinks he played:

"We didn't win, so I'm not going to sit here and tell you I played a great game. We had three drives the first half. If you're looking for someone to blame, blame me. I missed the reed the first drive, the second drive I overthrew Tevin on a wheel route, the third drive I came out and had an intentional grounding. Obviously at the end I just have to take care of the ball and be a senior, not look like a freshman out there."

On staying calm under pressure:

"When you're in that situation, it's really easy to fold. We've been in situations similar, not as far as the first game or the stage. But it just shows the character of this team, and how we can overcome

something. If we can comeback when we're down 21 against Pitt, the sky is the limit for us. I give Pitt a lot of credit. Coach Narduzzi, he's a great coach. Pitt's defense played really well. I'm just really proud of the way we came out and fought the second half."