

Pitt Football Postgame Transcript
Pitt 52, Virginia Tech 22
November 10, 2018

Head Coach Pat Narduzzi

HEAD COACH PAT NARDUZZI: I hope you enjoyed that one. It wasn't a nail biter like we're used to giving you here, but first of all, it's obviously a great day for our seniors. 19 of them -- we had a great moment last night with some senior videos, and then it just parlayed into what we did today with our kids. It's a great way to send your seniors out.

I told our kids afterward, you watch Qadree Ollison up on that ladder singing that fight song, and it's hard to believe it'll be the last time he'll get to stand up on that ladder, and that's emotional. But for all those guys, you know, just -- these kids, that's a great locker room in there. We've got some great kids. I love the way they come to work every day and practice.

We've still got two guaranteed wins to go here, or two games to go. We've just got to take it one at a time. We've got Wake Forest next, and that's kind of where our attention goes right now, and I'm just happy for our kids.

We did a lot of great things. I think offensively I think we ran the ball like we needed to. I think they knew it was coming, too, from watching videotape.

And then defensively I thought we did a great job in the first half, really good job in the half first. Second half they had three 4th downs on the one series, which I guess because you're up as much as you were, they can gamble and go for it. Normally you don't get those 4th down tries. But obviously they converted on a few of them, really four of them in the third and fourth quarter and got us in time of possession there, but we didn't give up big plays, which was the key, and we're telling our guys keep it in front, they're going to have to earn it. Don't give it to them.

Had a critical personal foul near the end, which was disappointing when we got a -- keep a drive going, then we have a sack that we thought. I think the announcer called out a sack, and all of a sudden he runs for another 40, 50 yards, whatever it was, but that -- it's like I told the officials out there, I said, our guys are afraid to hit the quarterback and then his forward progress is stopped and then you guys don't blow a whistle, so I don't really understand that. You're doomed if you do, doomed if you don't.

Happy for our seniors. It's a great win. We're bowl eligible, and we'll move on to the next.

Q. You talked all year about the run blocking down the field.

PAT NARDUZZI: Our receivers have done a great job across the board, you know, all year. I mean, it takes 11. When the passing game is going, it takes 11, and when the run game goes, if those guys out there are lollygagging around and not blocking anybody, you're not going to get those big explosive runs. Credit to everybody on offense when those things go, and then we said it was going to be critical for us to get our pass game going today, and we did that, too, at least in the first half when we needed to.

Q. Darrin and Qadree have had long careers here --

PAT NARDUZZI: Not long enough.

Q. What can you say about those two guys, the way they're finishing not just the season but their careers, the way they're finishing here?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, it's incredible. It shows you the work pays off. The persistence pays off. Our kids work hard, guys. It's not easy. And you look at both those guys, where they were four years ago, five years ago and where they are now, it's been a long haul. Those guys are two great backs that are going to play in the NFL, and those are two special guys.

Q. Talk about the bond they've forged, too.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, selfless. I've said that over and over again, and they continue to be. It's not like they are ever jealous of one another, which -- again, it's something that we've preached all the time about selflessness, and we've got to -- really a locker room full of those guys.

Q. You talked about them and the game plan going into the week, but with as many close games as you've had with Virginia Tech, could you have imagined a dominating performance like this, like it turned out to be?

PAT NARDUZZI: We just talked about our guys being consistent, putting a win on top of a win and being consistent offensively and defensively, and I knew once we played together and we could get it all clicking. This is a good time to start to get hot, I can tell you that. But anything can happen. I mean, so we looked at the tape, and we thought we could have a good day either side of the ball, and we did.

Q. Having some early success in the passing game, did it help the running game going forward?

PAT NARDUZZI: I think it always does. They were pressing us up early. And then all of a sudden, you start to see them play off of Ffrench, and they're playing eight yards off. That dude is fast and he can make some plays. You've got to make those of those plays, and we did today, and that makes a huge difference for sure.

Q. How would you describe kind of the narrative, the dramatic arc of the season where not too long ago things looked pretty grim, and now Pitt is looking to be as good as any team in the conference, as any team in the country.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, it's just persistence. It's our kids believing in there. Everybody talks about, oh, you guys got a tough schedule. In June and July I talked about it, but the reality was that schedule prepared us for where we are today, and win or loss, doesn't matter. Our kids were prepared. Iron sharpens iron, and I think that's where our really our kids are. They're tough, they're resilient, and they're coachable, and our coaches have done a great job and we've done a great job of just keeping it together, and we talk all the time about playing together, and that's what togetherness and persistence will do for you.

Q. Every Virginia Tech touchdown you guys were able to answer quickly. How important was it to never really let them get any momentum?

PAT NARDUZZI: It's huge. I was on the phone with Coach Watson after something would happen, like hey, we gotta answer, and sure enough, we did. They just couldn't stop our run game. It was impressive, and that's a good football team out there, as we know. It's a good football team, and Justin Fuente does a heck of a job, so it's a good win.

Q. You have a lot of unfinished business left as you mentioned with the two games, but how good does it feel to have a game like this with so much riding on it and to come out with a home victory?

PAT NARDUZZI: It feels good. We're going to feel good about -- I'll feel good until about 11:00 and then tomorrow morning I'll have a stomachache worrying about the next one. That's the way it is. It's how we go.

Q. Talk about the offensive line today, the way they opened up holes for your running backs.

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, they're unbelievable. I attribute it obviously to our game planning, the way they block, the way they learn. I mean, they're -- Coach Borbely has done an incredible job. That guy has been here not even a year yet, but he's made a major impact in that room, and I think he gets a lot of that credit.

Q. This is a great group of seniors that personally clearly means very much to you. For this team and where they are now and for this program and your time here, what have they meant to that success?

PAT NARDUZZI: The seniors mean -- it's everything. It's the backbone of your football team. They sit in the front row of our team meeting, and we talk to them all the time about how it's their football team, and it's going to be their leadership. I've kind of mentioned it to you guys after practice or Thursdays about just the leadership that we've got. It's gotten better every week. The captains and the seniors -- just more guys have stepped up. I think I talked the other day Dewayne Hendrix stepping up and leading. It's almost become contagious where they're all confident enough in what they're doing, and they're all leading now. It's a great thing. Again, that's a credit to our seniors.

Q. How do you feel like you guys were able to take on the big game, the emotions of senior day, all of that, and use those feelings in a productive way, especially from the very beginning of the game?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I mean, again, it's -- we talk about laser focus all the time. The guys were focused. They were locked in. They didn't get the emotions get to them, and senior day out there with your parents is not easy. I've seen some flops when that happens. But our guys were locked into what they wanted. It just comes down to the focus that we've had. We talked about just the focus and not worrying about that next game or worrying about where we could be and just worried about that one job. I think our kids have learned that as the season has gone on, and they just keep talking about being 1-0 this week, and that's what we did.

FastScripts Transcript by ASAP Sports