

Pat Narduzzi Postgame Press Conference
Sept. 15, 2018
Georgia Tech

PAT NARDUZZI: A lot better Saturday afternoon than last Saturday. My hats go off to our football team, our kids being resilient, being tough, fighting back from a rough one. [Sportswriter] Jerry [DiPaola] has got all kinds of darned stats. What happens, Jerry, we just did that for your stats, we don't really care. (Laughs) Our kids came to play. It was a little different. I'm not so sure, last week we were so high and so excited, and this week we weren't as excited before the game, but we came out and executed against a really good football team.

That offense is no joke. They're a good football team that scored a ton of points a week ago against a fast and athletic South Florida football team. I'm just proud of our kids. They took coaching. We got a lot of details cleaned up from a week ago. I thought our special teams played great. Started off our first -- we call it our rangers, our punt return group, they want to fake a punt and they do a great job of stuffing it. Jimmy Medure had a great play on that one. He's been a great special teams player for us so far this year.

And then even the blocking that we did on the last hands team was excellent where they couldn't even get to the ball, took an unbelievable bounce but went out of bounds.

So again, I'm happy with all three phases. Still in the second half, some details that we still have to clean up, just critical penalties at crazy times. That 3rd down stop in the first drive defensively, I don't think it's a facemask when -- last time I looked the facemask is not up here, it's a fumble, we got the ball, all of a sudden they got a 1st down and take the drive down for a touchdown.

So little things like that that we can't continue to do. But we're 1-0 in the ACC. It's where we wanted to be, and we'll work on the next.

Questions?

Q. How important was it to rebound today with a big win?

PAT NARDUZZI: Well, I guess I already started talking about that. It's important. It's important how we respond. And even at halftime, I talked about maturity and what are we all about as a football team. Who are we? Are we going to be able to handle the success? You talk about handling adversity, all of a sudden you have 30 minutes of success and can you handle success. And then all of a sudden there's some adversity and we handled the adversity, as well. We get a 1st down at the end in a critical -- they've got three time-outs left with, whatever, 39 seconds, and our offense did a good job of eating up a clock and getting a 1st down, running the ball down their throat, and that's how you win football games.

It's important to bounce back, and again, it shows you what kind of football team we've got.

Q. At halftime did you know Kenny Pickett would come out in the second half?

PAT NARDUZZI: I knew immediately. We didn't have any -- Kenny, I'm going to get mad at him. I think Rodgers got hurt last week in the NFL game with his plant leg, and that was a plant leg problem there, and he wears a knee brace as you guys know that have been to practice every day. He wears a knee brace every day in practice, and he'll wear a knee brace. As a matter of fact, if any of you guys find out

he's not out there with a knee brace on, let me know, but that plant foot is vulnerable, and we did that at Michigan State when I was there. I was the one saying, listen, Coach, I get scared of our defensive guys getting too close to our quarterback. We've got to protect that guy's plant leg, and they've done it for years there, and Kenny is going to wear that knee brace.

We dodged a bullet really. He's healthy, but he likes to go run, and he wants to feel clean, but that ain't going to happen. I'll tape that thing to his leg.

Q. Do you see a lot of progress from last week to this week?

PAT NARDUZZI: I do. That was a good football team, and we talked about possibly making your biggest improvement from week 1 to week 2, well, I don't know if we got challenged in week 1, but we certainly got challenged in week 2, and I think we made some major improvements against a good football team. Georgia Tech is a good football team.

The three-and-outs that our defense pulled up in the first half were incredible. That was maybe one of the best defensive performances in the first half as you're going to see. When you go three-and-out four times or whatever it was, four of the six drives, that's incredible.

Q. Was that an accumulation of you talked about practicing against that over the summer. Did you see that sort of all kind of come together?

PAT NARDUZZI: No doubt about it. I think our kids felt comfortable. Randy Bates and the defensive staff, Rob Harley and Charlie Partridge and Coach Collins all did a great job. They knew what they were doing. We were detailed. We looked at three years of tape. But again, as much as you stop in the first half, they come out in the second half and they do some different things, motioning out there and getting your numbers and blocking the safety out of a trips formation, and they do some things.

Our kids, we had a couple busts out there in the second half because we adjusted our coverage a little bit, which I was a little scared to death. Charlie Partridge comes up and says, hey, I've just got to give you a heads up, we're changing something that's drastic, and I was like, oh, golly, really? And a couple guys made some busts on it in a series, but it did help us in the long run. As a matter of fact, I think Phillipie [Motley] got a pick on the coverage that we kind of tweaked. So heck of a job by him.

Q. You had two players with injuries, light injuries. What are their statuses right now?

PAT NARDUZZI: I don't talk about injuries. You must be new. (Smiles)

Q. I am new. I thought they walked off the field --

PAT NARDUZZI: They walked off the field, and they both finished the game. 23 and 8, they finished the game and they're fine.

Q. Your offense went 5 of 12 on 3rd down; it didn't seem like you were in 3rd and long a lot. You were in 3rd and manageable. Did you feel like that was one area of the offense that maybe didn't rise to your level of expectation?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, we'll look at it, and we'll see. I think we threw some balls a little short, even the first 3rd down Kenny throws it behind him and whatever, but I'm not going to nitpick on those things. We've got to get better. Sometimes you have some routes that are run wrong or wrong depth and all that, but we'll take the win.

Q. When you have a kid like Kirk [Christodoulou] go through what he did last week, what was it like to

go through that with him and try to get him ready for this game and to see how he performed his bounce-back?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I don't know what his average was. Looks like 39 yards, six punts. But again, it wasn't just him. I mean, I was excited for all those guys. That snap is important. We got our holder back. I mean, all those things are important. The guys get used to being with that same guy, and it was great to see all of them bounce back. I thought the snaps by Cal [Adomitis] were great. Obviously Jake's [Scarton] holds were great, the kicks were great, and Kirk caught all his punts, which we expect him to do, so he played well. I think he's just going to continue to get better. You live and learn, and I'm just glad our guys have learned from the situation. We got over it, and we move on to the next week.

Q. I know they scored on you, you but you punted down to the 1-yard line. It took a long time for them to score, which was a big factor.

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, it was long drive. They got us probably on the time of possession on that 99-yard drive, but I think it was a two-score game at that time, maybe even three. But make them earn it.

Q. But just the 1 rather than 20 --

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, the 25, yeah, huge. It was a great stop. Really should have had Aaron Mathews, the other gunner, get down -- he should have been the one to down it. We only had one gunner down there, so just little details like that that maybe you don't see. Oh, that's a great job; Aaron, go all the way to the goal line and make sure you stop the ball, it's a sky punt, pooch kick.

Q. In your first three games this season you have scored 60 points in the first half and three in the second half. What to you explains sort of that drastic difference, and what are you seeing in the second half offensively that isn't quite up to par?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know, I think it's just details of a call, details of an execution. It just takes one guy to mess a play up, and you know, we should -- we get a sudden change situation, we got the ball, Phillipie gets the ball on the interception, we get the ball at the 30, we throw a pick. It's those things, drive stoppers that we've got to continue to clean up. But there's always something. But again, give the defense credit for making some adjustments, as well, and maybe doing some things better.

Q. Is Kenny going to wear the knee brace in games, too, the rest of the season?

PAT NARDUZZI: Yeah, I thought he was.

Q. Practice and games?

PAT NARDUZZI: I mean, me and Coach Watson talked about it yesterday. Yeah, practice and games. Me and Coach Watson talked about it probably last night or something like, hey, Kenny wants to wear -- Kenny doesn't want to wear the knee brace. I'm like, I don't care what Kenny wants to do, Kenny is going to wear that knee brace, and then when he went down, I'm like, Coach Watson, where's his knee brace at? I don't look for knee braces. I don't check to see if guys are wearing gloves. I've got to be, I guess, the equipment police.

Q. Your defense seemed to do a good job forcing Marshall to really go through his progressions and get the ball out of his hands on the pitch. Is that just everybody sticking to their keys on those plays?

PAT NARDUZZI: It was. There was some great discipline going on. They changed some blocking again. We caught a arc block where they arc release the offensive tackle to get Wirginis, who was so active in the lane in the quarterback lane, so they started arc releasing him, so just again, another great job again by Paul Johnson just adjusting. We were getting in the pitch lane with the Mike, but our kids did a great job executing option football. We've got to be disciplined.

Q. Qadree Ollison has been extremely consistent for three games. How do you feel like he's better than he was a year ago or what's leading to him being so consistently good?

PAT NARDUZZI: You know what, I can't tell what it is by just the naked eye. Number one, it starts with his attitude. He's got a great attitude. He's become a leader. Our guys obviously chose him as the game captain, our captains did. He's just taken over. He's come a long way. Now, I'll tell you what, Darrin Hall had some great runs, as well. Darrin Hall, I was like, keep running that guy, too. You wish you could play both of them at the same time. Darrin Hall is a great back, and both of those guys, we want to get both of those guys going, and really Darrin Hall had a great game, too. I don't know what he rushed for; looks like 29 yards on just seven carries. Darrin Hall is a great back, too.

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