

Pitt Coach Pat Narduzzi Quotes
Pitt vs. Duke
November 19, 2016

Opening Comments:

"It was a great Saturday afternoon for a little Panther football. I'm really proud of how our players played this afternoon, coming off a big win a week ago. We had no hangover from that game. We were a little bit sluggish in the first half. We left some points out there and dropped some passes. I challenged our players in the second half to come out 0-0 and give us the best 30 minutes of football they had, and they really did. It's nice to get one where you can relax and get our back-up quarterbacks in there. It's good to get back-ups in the game at all spots."

On the victory over Duke, an ACC opponent:

"It's a complete victory against a good football team. Coach Cutcliffe is a great coach. They've played a lot of teams tough this entire year, so give them credit."

On James Conner returning to the game after an apparent ankle injury:

"He just had a little tweak. He was just being smart which is what we ask our guys to do. You don't want something little to become something big. He provided a spark when he came back in. When he is in the game it seems to be a little different. He has an attitude when he leads in the huddle. He takes the rock and he's a special player."

On James Conner breaking two ACC all-time records:

"That's a team win. I'm really happy for him. It's great for him. But getting the win and the way James plays for the team, I don't think he really cares."

On the performance of the defense:

"Our kids played well. We matched up well with them. Our guys did a good job and kept things up front. They had one good pass on us, the bubble screen early in the game; but for the most part, when the defense gives up just seven points, you have to be happy. For the last three games, Duke has rushed for 200 to 250 yards. Some guys worry about the passing game. I worry about the running game. When you can stop it, it makes the game one-dimensional."

On the importance of special teams:

"We talk about that weekly. One of our keys to victory was to play great in special teams and I think we did that. We've had kickoff returns for touchdowns and we were just waiting for a punt return for a touchdown. We had great blocking and Quadree Henderson can make that happen. He has a great burst and used it on that play."

On the next opponent, Syracuse:

"I'm really excited about what we're doing and the players are starting to figure it out. We've got a big game against Syracuse and we have to get ready for next Saturday."

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Running back James Conner

On if he was monitoring the ACC touchdown record at all:

"I was aware of it. I just play football though. If you think too much about it, you can't focus on the things that really matter. I was definitely aware of it."

On how it feels to have scored more touchdowns than anyone in the history of the ACC:

"Like I always say, I'll be forever grateful to the University of Pittsburgh for giving me a scholarship, believing in me, and giving me the opportunity to do that. I really just owe it all to the University."

On not getting caught on last week's performance vs. Clemson:

"We wanted to use that momentum and really just turn the season around. We want to win out, win a bowl game and start fresh. Show that we can compete with anybody and put Pitt back on top where they belong."

On the offensive line:

"Yeah, I got some hogs up front. They did a great job, moving people, and it was easy for me, thanks to them."

On if the ACC touchdown record is the best record he's ever broken:

"I think so, I think so. I've had Pitt records, but to lead the whole conference, I think that's the best one."

On the most memorable touchdown of his career:

"Everything I've been through, working on getting into the rhythm, my endurance, and playing 60 minutes of football, the one versus Clemson. It showed that I can come back and play 60 minutes of football at a high level, late in the game. It was a big run. They're all worth six points, but I feel like that was one of my better ones."

On if the offense plays with an attitude:

"Every time we take the field, we just try to be the most physical team on the field. That's what we do every game."

Wide Receiver Quadree Henderson

On his punt return touchdown:

"The first couple of times he was kicking, I was looking at the jammers on that side of the field. My jammers were doing a heck of a job jamming up their gunners. When the ball was in the air, I saw that they weren't getting down the field and I heard Coach Sherman communicating with me 'You got room'. As soon as I caught the ball, I went to that side of the field and the blockers did a great job on that side of the field springing me free on that punt return touchdown."

On his jet sweep touchdown:

"I definitely felt better today. It wasn't just me on that jet sweep, it was George Aston blocking, Dontez Ford blocking down the field on that. I just want to thank George Aston and Dontez Ford for perfect blocking on the field and execution on the play."

On evading Duke tackles with his speed:

"As soon as I stick my foot on that field, that's when I turn the jets on. I just ran through a bunch of arm tackles. You can't get arm tackled in this league. I got arm tackled the first few jet sweeps early in the game and I wasn't trying to let that happen again."

On their quarterback kicking on fourth down to keep him off the field:

"That was so unexpected. I watched them do that the North Carolina game last year, but that was so unexpected. I was sitting on the sideline just waiting for it, and they kicked it back there. Definitely a sign of respect, I appreciate it."

On feeding off the offense playing with an attitude:

"Coach Canada preaches every play is a play. Go in and execute all our plays. James Conner goes in and gets a stiff arm, he gets us fired up. We get a big run we get fired up. Jester Weah makes a big catch, or anybody makes a big catch or run, we get fired up. Just feeding off that energy helps us with momentum a lot."

On that attitude and people doubting Pitt:

"A lot of people from other teams doubted us. Nobody has put 40 up on Duke this season. Coach Narduzzi read us an interview from one of their players after coming off of a good win against North Carolina last week. We just went in there, for us to put up 56 points, it definitely showcased that what people think we can't do, we can do."

Cornerback Avonte Maddox**On having a blowout win and not relying on a last-second field goal:**

"It feels really good to get a win without counting on a late field goal or a late touchdown. It's a great feeling when your team is getting new guys in there and being able to go out there and play ball fast."

On the team having an attitude:

"The last two weeks that has been our theme. Go out there and play with an attitude and no matter what happens just to go out there and leave it on the field."

On James Conner inspiring the team:

"He inspires everything: defense, special teams, offense. When he is not on the field, he is over with the defense and he is telling us to keep playing. He is a great guy, a great man, and I love him."

Quarterback Nathan Peterman

On whether or not today's offensive showing is the blueprint for the team:

"Yeah it is, but obviously there are a lot of things we can do better. Obviously, on my turnover, I blew it. We want to have zero turnovers and protect the football. I didn't do that well enough. I think our offense was playing a great game and I made it a little tighter than it needed to be. There's a lot of things we can get better at here and there. I let up a sack. I know I shouldn't have taken that. That's all on me. Lot of things to get better at and keep working this week.

On another dominant offensive line performance and James Conner having room to run:

"They always do well. I'm usually trying to carry through my fake most of the time, but when I get to look back I occasionally get to see that wall built for James [Conner] and then I see him go stiff-arm guys and break tackles. It's very nice as a quarterback when I'm relaxed back in the pocket and clean. It makes it really easy."

On bouncing back from throwing the pick-six and throwing the deep touchdown to Jester Weah:

"It was awesome. He made a great play. I know that I need to move on from bad plays, but I think it provided some anger for me throughout the game. I think it was good and I need to have a short memory so we can out there and win."

Defensive End Ejuan Price

On the defensive performance:

"I think it was dominating day for us and I think that overall our guys were locked in from the very beginning. I think we also carried our confidence from last week. I thought a couple of guys really had a boost from our last game and we realized that we could really play with anybody in the country. You could definitely see that confidence out of a couple guys today."

On how crucial the pass rush is on the pass defense as a whole:

"When you play aggressive defense like we do, you can't let the quarterback sit back there and take his time. It's key for our defense."

On the defense stepping up in the last five quarters of play:

"I just think we have a really resilient group like I have been saying all year. Even though bad things happen to us, our attitude never changes. We always feel very aggressive during the week and we always have great practices. I guess that's just character coming through."

Offensive Lineman Brian O'Neill

On senior day:

"They've been through a lot in their four or five years here. That's a thing that we've stressed on, the seniors were going to win this game for us today. They did, all of our seniors played really well. One of the things that we've [the younger players] focused on is that next year we're going to go win it for the seniors in their last game at Heinz [Field]. They [the seniors] really took it over today and did a great job.

One thing that we really focused on was no let downs, just because of last week. You can't take the pedal off the gas and that's something we're going to push into next week."

On if there is a difference when James Conner is in the game:

"If he makes contact at three yards, he's not going down until 10. You always like that as an offensive lineman, padding your stats a little bit as a group. He's a great team leader. I love it when he gets the ball. It seems like we're getting five or six yards at minimum every time he touches it. It's good to see how well he has come back. I think he's a couple yards off from 1,000 at this point. I don't know what the number is but we want to try to get him 1,000. We just want to keep playing well and putting up points. One of the things that we've focused on is that Duke hadn't let up 40 points to anybody this year. That's one of the things that we wanted to finish off. That was something that Coach Canada challenged us to do all week in practice."

On looking forward to next week:

"On to the next week, that's all we worry about. This one is over and done with, just like Sunday morning when we got home last week, Clemson was done. We'll take a look at this one tomorrow afternoon to see what we can do better and correct our mistakes. There's definitely going to be a lot of mistakes on there. You can always improve and I think that's the beauty of this game. Even if we put 56 points up, there's so many things we can still do better. That makes practice interesting each week. They're [the coaches] going to continue to push us and we're going to continue to push ourselves."

Linebacker Matt Galambos

On finally playing a game that doesn't come down to the last few drives:

"It was awesome. It was definitely a total team game. We only let up one touchdown. During the year we let up a lot of points on D so it was good, especially coming off of the last game which was a big game. We didn't want to have a hangover or not focus on Duke, we knew that we had to come out firing right away."

On how to avoid the hangover game:

"We just had to come with the same mentality that we went out with last week. I said to our guys, have the 'it's us versus the world' mentality. Really be focusing on the week in practice, not slopping around or feeling entitled because we beat one team. We still had, including this game, three games left so we just want to go out there and win them."

On the key to successful defense this week:

"I think it was a lot of confidence after last week, we can play with anyone. We knew that we had to come out this week and we knew that Duke was a good team. We wanted to focus on them."

On the retro jerseys:

"Awesome. It was my second time wearing it. We put them on again and it's just different. We had [Tony] Siragusa come and he gave a great speech after practice. Just things like that, it's good to be in touch with the throwbacks."

Duke Coach David Cutcliffe

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Opening comments:

"I am going to tell you essentially what I told the team. I don't think you can go back and dissect a lot about what happened because what happened was too vast. We had breakdowns in all three phases, in every aspect: ball security, uncovered touchdowns, giving up a punt return, fumbling your kickoff return. If you do enough things like that, you're going to lose without having to worry about dissecting every little detail. The thing we have to do is focus on how we are going to respond, because responding to being shell-shocked like that has never been easy but unfortunately it's something we've all had to do in this business. I've had to do it at Duke, at Tennessee and at Ole Miss. It's part of the business. I think it tells a lot about your team and I'm anxious to see what our tomorrow looks like, not that we are going to forget this but we have to move forward and get ready for an outstanding Miami team on the road. We best understand what the week is going to look like."

On Pitt dominating the running game and out-rushing Duke by close to 200 yards:

"If you don't move the ball between the tackles, it's hard to run the ball all day. They leverage you well outside with their alignments so they challenge you to run between the tackles and we didn't get that done. They are very good at running the power game and they did a good job of getting the ball outside on us as well. They did a better job running the football schematically, blocking us, and protecting the passer than we did, so the bottom line is they won the battles at both lines of scrimmage. They won the execution battle and that's why the score was so lopsided. We also loss the kicking game. It wasn't out intention coming in, but we just got whipped. "

On the missed FG at the end of the first half and Pitt scoring a TD on the first drive of the second half:

"I thought the first half was a solid game, we had a turnover early and they took advantage of the extra possession. We could have been sitting there 28-17 and maybe recovered, but we did anything but that. I've always believed that the first possession of the third quarter can affect the game but unfortunately so can the last possession of the first half. We had a good drive just to go down there and miss a chip shot field goal."

On the special teams and field position advantage Pitt had:

"We felt going in that we had to win that battle. We knew how good Henderson was. We knew the challenges and we felt that we could punch out some returns ourselves. We didn't have a good night punting. We didn't have as good of a day as I would have hoped on returning kickoffs. They just flat out won the kicking game in every aspect. When that happens, and they win the offensive and defensive lines of scrimmage, it's a tough day."

On Duke's offense finding themselves in tough downs and distances:

"Our first down production wasn't what it should have been. We had some good plays but give Pittsburgh credit for being well prepared. No matter what you call, the way you're going to get behind the chains is if they're winning consistently at the line of scrimmage. Our quarterback got hit a lot and we didn't run the ball. That's never a good combination."

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Quarterback Daniel Jones

On the field conditions and why the offense didn't click:

"I don't think you can really complain about the conditions. It's colder than we are used to but it wasn't particularly wet. It was just a matter of finishing plays and finishing drives. We didn't put ourselves in great positions early in drives getting behind the chains and didn't execute on first and second down which hurt us some. A lot of penalties at poor times. There are a lot of problems when you perform like we did on offense tonight. "

On Duke's difficulty running the football:

"You have to give credit to their defensive front. Their linemen and linebackers in particular are good run stoppers but we have to look at what we did and we certainly can run the ball. We are a physical team also, so we need to figure out what we need to iron out on that and it's on us as players to execute better."

On his inability to create plays running the ball:

"Again you can give credit to Pitt and what they're doing on defense. They're a good, physical defense but we didn't execute much of anything really well and that's on the guys on the field"

Defensive lineman A.J. Wolf

On Pitt overall:

"They have a lot of player makers, a good offensive line. At the end of the day they just kicked out butt. We didn't finish tackles. When you lose by this much, there's not much to say. They did everything better than we did."

On Pitt's use of the sweep:

"It's definitely unique, but we prepared for it. We knew they would run it. There's nothing we were scared about. We thought we could handle it, but at the end of the day, they just out performed us."