



Cincinnati Football Week 2 Press Conference
Sept. 5, 2023
Head Coach Scott Satterfield

Opening Statement

"First of all, I want to thank the fans for last Saturday. That was awesome, great atmosphere, just like we anticipated and we appreciate everybody coming out and selling that out again. We will certainly need that as we go through this season. We certainly fed off the energy there, our players did and right from the start of the game and it didn't stop. We have to continue to have that as we go through the year. We have some great teams coming into Nippert this year. Our guys came out really focused all week and really started the game the same way. We took the ball right off the bat and go down the field. The first fourth down, we had a fourth and five at midfield and ran a tempo and ended up connecting with Xzavier [Henderson] with a great play and that kind of just us got started and we really didn't slow down. The first six possessions were touchdowns and pretty much took the game and control at that point and I was really pleased with the way Emory [Jones] played. I want to say congratulations to him on getting Big 12 Player of the Week, which is hard to get I think when you got this many teams in the Big 12. There were so many good games this weekend and it was awesome for him to get recognition for that. [Brady] Lichtenberg comes in and he runs one and throws one as well. I thought all the quarterbacks played really well. I think defensively we did some good things there. DG [Daniel Grzesiak] had a great game. He was our player of the game on defense with the impact that he had seven tackles, two tackles for loss, sack and a forced fumble. We got to put it together again this week. We are playing Pittsburgh. We know they are a really good football team. We played them last year when we were at Louisville and I think they do a really good job. They are coached well, offensively, defensively and in the kicking game are solid and what they do in their approach. You flip on the film and it's certainly an NFL style offense, zone and play action. They have been playing this this defense for a long time with coach [Pat] Narduzzi and they know what they are doing and are really solid at it. They are very aggressive and they play very hard, hard-nosed football team and that's what you are going to get when you are playing Pittsburgh. We are looking forward to this opportunity to go there and play those guys."

On the difference in preparation from ECU to Pittsburgh

"You talk about it; the speed of the game is going to be faster. You got to anticipate it being more physical. We practice physical, in August we tackled a lot. We tried to be intentional in the way our approach was knowing we want to be a physical team, like we want to play that way as well. It's something that we pride ourselves in, so we better be able to bring it every play we are out there. We are playing a team that is obviously a lot better than ECU. Pittsburgh is used

to winning each year and I mean, they won the ACC two years ago and play a very aggressive style. Last year, I think they were number two in sacks last year behind Louisville. They have been the top three or four in sacks every year I feel like. That is just what they are going to do. Offensively, they are going to try to play bully ball, be big and push you off the line of scrimmage. We got to be strong. We got to be aware of that and ready for that."

On preparing to face Pittsburgh QB Phil Jurkovec

"We will have [Brady Drogosh] down there quite a bit this week. We had him down there last week as well. He kind of split time he was on our end of the field and that end and anticipate this week trying to get the defense a little bit more of that look to have that look at a bigger quarterback. Yeah, you're right. I mean he's listed as 6'5", 235lbs. We played him as well last year when he was a Boston College and he's a deceptively good runner. You think somebody that big can't run, but he had a big run against us last year to basically seal the game for them. I think he is a little bit more athletic than which think. He wants to be in play action and throw the ball in the pocket, but we have to start fast and get him off the spot there to make him a little uncomfortable."

On the team's performance

"We'll go back and watch, but it was kind of what we thought. We had big explosive plays on offense, the receivers played really well. I thought the quarterbacks played really well. We have to do a much better job at the tight end position. We did not do very good there blocking so we have to do a better job with that. We gave up a couple of pressures. It is certainly going to be challenged this week with a team that's really going to pressure you. So, we have to be way better up front and at the tight end position as far as blocking goes. I think defensively we had one drive where we had a couple of guys get out of their gaps and they hit two A gap runs on us and then they hit a touchdown pass. I think there was a linebacker that was not where he needed to be in that. So we've got to be better with that. In the first half we didn't have any sacks last week. In the second half we did a much better job of getting out to the quarterback. When you go back and look at it, that's kind of what we saw. I thought the teams played well, I thought toward the end of the of the game last week, we didn't play quite as hard on special teams. We've got to do a much better job of finishing and playing fast and hard in the teams."

On how his past playing against Pitt helps prepare for this week

"I think it helps a lot. We faced him in 2020 at Pitt and we lost 23-20 during COVID and everything was obviously different at that point in time but what they did defensively mandate, they shut us down. I think we gave up seven or eight sacks that day. We couldn't really run the ball. We hit one run for 75 yards but other than that we looked awful offensively. We were still in the game, but we did not play well at all. We learned a lot from that game compared to what we tried to do last year when we played them. I thought we played them a lot better last year. But it's still hard to move the ball. It's just hard to find points. We certainly have learned a lot though and I think that will help us as we prepare this week, to know what we need to tell our players and that really hasn't changed over the last four or five years. So, it's very similar. I think having that familiarity with them and with what they've done in the past will certainly help us this week."

On road game preparation

"We certainly will have times in practice where we try to make it loud, chaotic. I think the biggest difference is travel. We've got to go get on the airplane and go up to Pittsburgh. That's probably the biggest thing. But once you get to the hotel, it's the same routine. When we go to the game, that really won't change. We're playing on a different surface, so that's going to be a little bit different, but you try to get familiar with the surroundings once you get in there. Other than that, I think the cadence will be the only thing that really could be hindered by that. We'll try to do the best we can to prepare with chaotic noise with turning the music up or using crowd noise."

On preparing for Pitt's pass rush game

"You have to just have a really good plan. You can't sit back, drop back and think you're going have all day to throw the football. That's not going happen. They have gotten to the quarterback. You turn on any game that they've played the last three or four years, and they're going get to the quarterback. You got to get rid of the ball, you can't hold it. If you hold it, you're going to get sacked. So, you better have a plan of where you need to go with the football. I'm talking even when you're bringing forward. Other times in the game when they're bringing in five or six guys, and they're creating that area where you can't move, you have to get rid of the ball. We have to do a great job in practice with our quarterbacks. When the guy's not open, throw it away, hit your check, don't hold the ball. So those are things we'll work on in practice. I can't remember how many times they sacked us last year, but I know they hit us a lot. They hit our quarterbacks, but we got rid of the football right before they were getting hit, which I think was a positive obviously. So, you just can't hold the ball. We'll practice that, we'll put a clock on the quarterback."

On Emory Jones' progression over the summer

"I just think he had a really good. He missed some time at higher ground because he had to get a tooth taken out. So he came back and was a little rusty for a few days but then by the last game prep, he was back dialed and looked really good. Right from the start, I thought he was making some good throws. He was accurate. We felt good about calling some plays for him and he made it happen and the receivers like Xzavier [Henderson] made a couple of good, contested catches that I thought were really nice. He also did one thing that we hadn't seen which was his running because you're not tackling Emory at camp. It was like 'alright, what's he going to do when he actually gets tackled?' I thought he ran the ball hard, ran it well. We had to draw on that first drive for about 10-12 yards and then on that fourth down right after the cue draw and he got very accurate throw and then the scramble the touchdown run. It was a great run, he broke a couple tackles. He certainly has a good running ability. He's a different style of runner. When we had [Malik] Cunningham (former quarterback for Louisville), he was a smaller, more shifty runner. Emory is bigger, but he certainly has some good speed. He's going to keep defenses honest with the way he can run. He's going to be able to get out of some trouble at times. I thought his accuracy was really good. When you throw more touchdowns than you have in completions, it's a pretty good day. So, we have to find ways where he can get some completions in this game early and try to keep that thing rolling."

On motivating players who haven't competed against Power 5 opponents as often

"Certainly, that gives some of those guys confidence. You mentioned some older guys that maybe hadn't played as much in the past, their roles have changed now. So now they are getting action. They're having to go make plays. I thought it was a good first game for them to get out there, get their feet wet, and make plays. Once we see the film and the tape, there were certainly several guys that can do a lot better. The fortunate thing is that we played well in one big, so now you can make your corrections off that. It was a good point because there are several guys that it was their first time starting, first time playing. We had one starter back on offense so there's a lot of new guys out there. Not even just the transfers, but some other guys that was their first time playing a lot. Upfront, I think about DT [Dartanyan Tinsley], John Williams and some of these guys that haven't played a lot. They had to go out there and play and it was good to get some good game reps and teach off of that."

On Pitt's talented defense

"The thing that stands out the most is their corners. They've played a lot of ball. We've charted these guys and I think three guys have over 2,000 snaps. That's a lot of ball. They ask their corners to play man all day. You can turn on the film from three years ago and #14 (Redshirt Senior Defensive End, Marquis Williams) is out there playing man. Matter of fact, he picked us off in 2020. He's been playing this whole time, so they have some guys out there in that secondary that are very confident players. They're going get up in your face and they're going to harass you all day long. That's what they do. That's how they teach it. I don't think that they have any regard for pass interference. They don't care. They just play their ball, and they make it very difficult for receivers to try to get open. That's how they play. Now there are a couple of their safeties that are maybe not as experienced as the corners, but they're really good at what they do. The way that they're coached, they're as solid as you can get defensively. They plan their quarters and their cover three. They don't do a ton in the secondary, mainly cores and cover three and they do a lot with their front. I do think the experience in their corners, that's a lot of snaps they have out there."

On what he learned about this team from the first game

"We've talked about this a bunch, but I really appreciated the preparation that they put in last week. They were focused, they were intentional about their approach to the game. I've been apart of some teams when sometimes guys get a little lazy in their approach with their preparation, but these men were dialed in. They were focused, and then came out and proved that it worked. They came out right from the start and played really good football. As a coach, you don't know how they're going to be. So that's how we learned that these guys are really good at their approach. Now I think obviously, this week, we're going learn a little bit more about our team because now we're playing a team like Pitt on the road. That's a team that's used to winning and that are going to be a blue-collar, hard-nosed team. We're going to learn how we go out and fight because we'll face adversity this week. It'll be a tough, hard-fought game. We'll figure out how we're going to be able to continue to fight throughout the whole game."

On Xzavier Henderson's explosive WR debut and how to approach Pitt's secondary

"We expected that out of Xzavier. We expect him to make plays for us and will all year. He maybe hadn't done a whole lot in our scrimmages with a catch here and there, but we weren't trying to game-plan him with the ball and that kind of thing. He went out and made plays with contested catches and ran off with it. We feel we have several guys in that room who can go out and make those plays as experienced players. The new challenge this week is that their corners will be in our face on the outside all night long, and you'll have safeties that are down and making guys get open and work for it. There are no freebies out there this week. We're gonna have to get off the press and contested coverage to get free, because we have to get rid of the football early. There won't be time for the long routes. You have to get open and get the ball in the air."

On his reflections of winning his Cincinnati debut

"It was awesome. It was a great atmosphere. I said this last week, but I was looking forward to this one maybe more than any season opener, to get out here and play in Nippert after hearing so much about it. I wanted our guys to look like they knew what they were doing, and they did. They went out, made plays and it was very satisfying to see that and how they fed off the crowd. You want to win. The bottomline in this business is that if you don't win, you feel as bad as you can possibly feel. When you win, everything is so satisfying. The cheeseburger and fries I had after the game tasted way better, and I could sit back and watch all these other teams struggle to win. But when Sunday hit, we were right back onto the next week. That's the way this business is: you forget it and move on. Now, we have to do it again with great preparation. Our approach has to be amplified a little bit more than last week because we're playing a better team, and we have to bring it. We're looking forward to a great week."