

WEEK ONE
ALBANY AT PITTSBURGH

PITTSBURGH -- For all of sophomore quarterback Kenny Pickett's precocious talent, Pittsburgh head Pat Narduzzi is quick to issue a reminder that in terms of Pickett's career, he's just "a baby."

Maybe, but Pickett is growing up quickly. Narduzzi believes the rest of his team is too.

Pickett threw for two touchdowns and ran for another in a flawless first half and the Panthers used an early outburst to coast past Albany 33-7 on Saturday. A year ago, Pitt jumped to a 21-point lead over Youngstown State in Week 1 before needing overtime to survive.

There was no drama this time. Though Pickett cooled off after halftime, the defense did not, allowing Pitt to avoid a misstep before a showdown with in-state rival and 10th-ranked Penn State next weekend.

"We talked about (a letdown) not happening and we came out in a different fashion," Narduzzi said. "That shows our kids and hopefully shows everybody that this is a different football team. We didn't just go out there and settle for less again. I think we're just going to keep getting better."

Nine months removed from a stunning upset of second-ranked Miami in his first collegiate start, Pickett picked right up where he left off. The sophomore completed his first 13 passes and finished 16 of 22 for 154 yards. He hit Rafael Araujo-Lopes twice for scores in the second quarter, the first on a 3-yard lob and another on a 42-yard catch-and-run in which Araujo-Lopes did most of the work.

Pickett came back to earth a bit in the second half, in more ways than one. He threw an interception in the red zone to thwart one scoring drive and fumbled after a misguided attempt to hurdle a pair of Albany defenders while trying to scramble for a first down.

"I think the first thing I said to Kenny at the beginning of the second (half) on the sidelines when he was warming up, I said, Listen, you do not take a hit, so you go down," Narduzzi said. "So what's he do? He goes up. He must have misunderstood down and up."

Pickett, who finished 16 of 22 for 154 yards passing with two touchdowns and the interception and added 42 yards rushing, isn't worried about making the same mistake again.

"I think I might have to retire that move," Pickett said.

HOUSE CALL

Pitt wide receiver Maurice Ffrench returned the opening kickoff 91 yards for a touchdown, an auspicious debut for a return unit trying to replace All-American Quadree Henderson. Ffrench, who later added a 9-yard touchdown run, praised his blockers for allowing him to sprint downfield practically untouched.

"Just how we practiced it," Ffrench said. "Perfect execution, which we've been preaching as well to execute and try to do the little things right. It felt like I was in track, the 100-meter dash, just run."

UNHAPPY HOMECOMING

Albany head coach Greg Gattuso, a Western Pennsylvania native and former Pitt assistant coach, called the experience "great" even if the result left a lot to be desired.

There were some bright spots for the Great Danes, who are looking to bounce back from a 4-7 season in 2017.

Vincent Testaverde, son of former NFL quarterback Vinny Testaverde, passed for 263 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions in his first start for Albany. Dev Holmes caught nine passes for 148 yards but the Great Danes were never really in it after the early barrage.

"I'm disappointed we didn't start better and put more pressure on them," Gattuso said. "In a game like this, you have to put more pressure on the opponent."

BIG PICTURE

Albany: Testaverde gives the Great Danes a legitimate threat at quarterback. The fifth-year senior didn't wilt in the face of near constant pressure and showcased his arm on several occasions. If he can stay healthy -- he left briefly in the fourth quarter after taking a sack -- Albany should be considerably more dangerous than the team that averaged just 17 points a game in 2017.

Pitt: The running game could be back. The Panthers rolled up 238 yards on the ground, including a game-high yards by senior Quadree Ollison. Ollison switched from No. 37 to No. 30 this season to honor his late brother Rome Harris, who died a year ago.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
ALBY	7	0	0	0	7
PITT	19	14	0	0	33

Scoring Summary -----

	ALBY	PITT
FIRST QUARTER		
PITT TD 14:48		
Maurice Ffrench 91 Yd Kickoff Return (Alex Kessman Kick)	0	7
0 plays, 0 yards, 0:00		
PITT TD 11:03		
Kenny Pickett 5 Yd Run (Alex Kessman PAT failed)	0	13
3 plays, 19 yards, 1:15		
PITT TD 4:42		
Maurice Ffrench 9 Yd Run (Two-Point Pass Conversion Failed)	0	19
9 plays, 75 yards, 4:39		
ALBY TD 1:45		
Dev Holmes 9 Yd pass from Vincent Testaverde (Ethan Stark Kick)	7	19
6 plays, 75 yards, 2:57		
SECOND QUARTER		
PITT TD 10:17		
Rafael Araujo-Lopes 3 Yd pass from Kenny Pickett (Alex Kessman Kick)	7	26
12 plays, 81 yards, 6:28		
PITT TD 1:08		
Rafael Araujo-Lopes 42 Yd pass from Kenny Pickett (Alex Kessman Kick)	7	33
9 plays, 95 yards, 4:34		

Team Stats	ALBY	PITT
First Downs	16	21
Total Yards	323	407
Total Plays	57	60
Avg Gain Per Play	5.7	6.8
Net Yards Rushing	60	238
Rushes	28	37
Yards Per Rush	2.1	6.4
Net Yards Passing	263	169
Comp-Att	18-29	17-23
Yards Per Pass	9.1	7.3
Times Sacked	0	5
Yds Lost To Sacks	0	33
Interceptions	1	2
Punts	5	2
Punt Average	36.2	46.5
Penalties	7	6
Penalty Yards	40	55
Fumbles	0	1
Fumbles Lost	0	1
Possession	30:26	29:34

Individual Stats

RUSHING

ALBY	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Elijah Ibitokun-Hanks	14	57	4.1	0	23
Karl Mofor	7	22	3.1	0	11
Dev Holmes	1	8	8.0	0	8
Jerah Reeves	1	6	6.0	0	6
Will Brunson	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
Vincent Testaverde	4	-31	-7.8	0	0
PITT	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Quadree Ollison	7	73	10.4	0	20
A.J. Davis	13	46	3.5	0	14
Kenny Pickett	6	42	7.0	1	12
Darrin Hall	4	22	5.5	0	12
Shocky Jacques-Louis	3	21	7.0	0	9
Maurice Ffrench	2	17	8.5	1	9
Rafael Araujo-Lopes	2	17	8.5	0	12

PASSING

ALBY	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Vincent Testaverde	18	29	263	9.1	1	2	--
PITT	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
Kenny Pickett	16	22	154	7.0	2	1	92.9
Ricky Town	1	1	15	15.0	0	0	99.6

RECEIVING

ALBY	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Dev Holmes	9	148	16.4	1	40
Jerah Reeves	3	58	19.3	0	37
Elijah Ibitokun-Hanks	1	28	28.0	0	28
Donovan McDonald	4	26	6.5	0	12
Karl Mofor	1	3	3.0	0	3
PITT	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
Rafael Araujo-Lopes	3	50	16.7	2	42
Taysir Mack	3	44	14.7	0	26
A.J. Davis	2	19	9.5	0	16
Jim Medure	1	15	15.0	0	15
Tre Tipton	2	14	7.0	0	8
Aaron Mathews	1	9	9.0	0	9
George Aston	2	8	4.0	0	6
Maurice Ffrench	1	4	4.0	0	4
Tyler Sear	1	3	3.0	0	3
Shocky Jacques-Louis	1	3	3.0	0	3