

**Defense overview:** Last year, Pitt's defense faced several challenges. A significant number of fifth-year seniors graduated the previous year, forcing the team to rely on younger, less experienced players who were stepping into new roles for the first time. Additionally, the defense was often on the field for extended periods due to the offense's struggles, frequently going three-and-out. Despite these challenges, the defense managed to perform decently, ending up in the middle of the pack statistically. However, their biggest struggle was in rush defense, a surprising development for Pitt, which had previously led the ACC in this category for many years.

This year, Pitt's defense will benefit from having returning talent in the same positions, which should allow them to focus on improving their run defense. Additionally, they need to work on penetrating the backfield, as they struggled with this last season and were often overpowered at the line of scrimmage.

**Overall:** My biggest concern is the quarterback situation. In the spring, Coach Narduzzi mentioned that Nate Yarnell was in pole position to be QB1 this year. But on Monday, the first depth chart released to the media listed Yarnell or Holstein as the starting quarterback. This marks the third year in a row that Pitt hasn't had a clear leader in this position. Uncertainty isn't good for the program. Without a definitive QB1, it's challenging for the offense to rally around a leader because they don't know who will be running the plays. This can lead to confusion and division in the locker room, which isn't healthy for team morale or performance.

Most media outlets are predicting that Pitt will have at best, an average season. However, I believe they can achieve at least six or more wins. The team is hungry and motivated after coming off a tough year, and they're aware of the doubts surrounding them. The offense is expected to look vastly different from last season, thanks to a revamped playbook that aims to get their playmakers, like Gavin Bartholomew, open and in space to create big plays. The defense will also benefit from having another year of experience, knowing better what is expected of them.