

Atlanta Falcons Media Conference

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Raheem Morris

Postgame Press Conference



Panthers - 44, Falcons - 38 (OT)

RAHEEM MORRIS: Really disappointing day on defense. Really proud of our young stud quarterback giving us a chance, keeping us in that football game, going out there and being able to do the things he was able to do. We couldn't stop them.

Hat's off to the Carolina Panthers and their offensive scheme and what they were able to do today. You got to give those guys credit where credit is due.

Special teams-wise, we help up, did what we were supposed to do, but we did not come out to play today on defense, and they got us and it showed.

Q. Could you elaborate on what was not working for the defense and the play of Bryce Young today for the Panthers?

RAHEEM MORRIS: He was outstanding. He was able to manipulate the pocket, move around in the pocket, find people down the field. They were able to run the football, stay on track. They were able to get us out of the get back on track situations. They were able to keep on normal D and D.

Really able to manipulate everything he was able to do in the pocket. We couldn't tackle him. When we got back there and got to him, couldn't get him on the ground. Couldn't find a way to find him.

Then down the field he made some really good big time throws: The Cover 2 on first and 25. He made a throw on the sideline that was lights out. He made a couple throws down the field that were really good across the board to end the game there in the overtime. Made a really good throw (indiscernible).

He made throws all day. He made plays all day. He made a demand. He had some schemed up plays. Way too many wide open people. A couple of schemed up plays

with some gimmicks. Explosive in the first half. In the second half he continued to go out there and wheel and deal, and he was absolutely lights out, particularly on third down and when it came to moving the chains.

Q. Given the stakes coming into today, how surprised are you that you didn't come out ready to play on defense?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Really shocked. I was really disappointed in our defense today, especially based off how they've been playing and how we've been going, how we've been attacking the quarterback, how we've been able to manipulate terms and getting after people.

I was really fired up where we were going, the direction we were going, and we took a step back today, a huge step back. That's something we've got to go back and look at and review and find out why because those things can't happen.

Obviously big loss losing Mike Hughes. Clark was able to go out there and step in and do some different things for us, but there will be no excuses made for who you lost or what happened. Those guys outperformed us, outplayed us, and they beat us.

Q. Losing six of the last eight, obviously it's quick to turn around and sort of handicap all of that, but do you know standing there right now what happened down the stretch?

RAHEEM MORRIS: No. It has to be something that we'll go back and we'll review. Obviously we've talked about the reasons we made switches at different spaces before and different areas. We talked about different things that we've done throughout the course of the season, but right now you won't pinpoint the whole last eight on what happened.

We'll talk about those things as we move forward and as we go into the off-season and find out what's necessary to get ready to come out here and compete at the highest level.

Q. How much do you feel like it's helped Michael Penix



Jr. to hold the clipboard for at least some period of time, and what's kind of your opinion on rookies coming into the NFL and having to hold the clipboard as opposed to going straight into the fire, just the mental transition there?

RAHEEM MORRIS: Obviously as an organization, that was our big time plan, to have him come in and hold the clipboard like you talked about and have him learn from the veteran presence in Kirk.

Obviously that process got sped up a little bit for him, but him having the ability to do the things he's done obviously has shown, and realistically the light at the end of the tunnel for us, despite how bad and poor we played on defense or anywhere is the quarterback.

The organization has a quarterback that is certainly bright, that is certainly our future, that certainly can go out and make any single play and play in any single game that you can play in. Those are the things we'll talk about I'm sure tomorrow and moving forward.

We'll figure out ways to fix what we need to fix. We'll figure out ways to fix the things we got to get done. But Michael Penix is certainly outstanding. He's certainly one of the guys that's going to play in this league and absolutely dominate for as long as we allow him.

Q. Going back to Penix, that Penix to London connection, how excited is the fan base for having that from two young players?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I don't even know what the yards were and the stats, but I just know it was absolutely outstanding watching those guys wheel and deal today, Michael Penix to Drake London.

Watching Bijan have the ability to get the ball in his hands in certain situations, even some of the missed throws that we're making are just exciting. If you're a fan and you look out there at Michael Penix, you've got to be excited.

Obviously we did not intend to have a shootout today, and he did not intend to have a shootout today. We wanted to be able to run and control the football, do the things we did in the first half, be able to control that, not allow those guys to score.

He went out to game change and did what he had to do, and he gave us a chance to go out there and compete and have a chance to win.

When you've got a young quarterback like that, you're cooking with gas. That's what fires me up. Despite how

angry I am or pissed off right now, when you look at No. 9, he gives us the best chance to win football games moving forward.

Q. Raheem, three of the Carolina scores, in particular the throw to Sanders, the touchdown throw to Tremble, and then Young's run into the end zone at the end, there was almost like no resistance there in the red zone area. How do you explain that happening?

RAHEEM MORRIS: The play to Sanders was a pretty good play out of the backfield, pretty sneaky, snuck out through the big gap, got him wide open down in the red zone, fringe play, nice shot there, wide open play. Got to be able to cover that better, got to be able to see that. Great job scheming up by those guys.

The other one was a blitz where they caught us on a wide open they got a chance to catch us on a wide open play coming across the middle of the field. We've got to be able to attach to your guy. We couldn't attach to that guy fast enough.

Then watching Bryce run into the end zone after making a couple miss, that was magic by him and a nice job by him.

We just were not good enough across the board on defense. You can go through any play you want to on defense today and really criticize and critique the things we need criticized and critiqued, and we've got to be straight up honest with ourselves that was not good enough.

Q. Your default setting is generally positive and an encourager. Today is a little bit different. Is that just about today, or is this a culmination of stuff you've seen in the last eight games?

RAHEEM MORRIS: That's more of a setback of today. Like I don't particularly like or expect setbacks when you're talking about how you've gotten better, right?

We've talked about having a growth mindset just throughout the season, and I felt that throughout the season no matter what was happening, no matter what the courses were, that you had this growth mindset that we had to go out there and get better and better at everything you wanted to get better at.

Today I felt we couldn't turn that corner on defense. That's really what the negative intent coming off of talking to you guys is really coming from. That growth mindset we can have, we can bounce back and be able to make things happen when we need to, we've got to be able to do those things, and today I just didn't feel it.

Q. Do you worry at all about that growth mindset considering how much -- how positive you all were coming into this season and how it ended?

RAHEEM MORRIS: I don't worry about the growth mindset because we've got plenty of time to go back and get it right. We've got plenty of time to go back and correct the correctables and things we have to do.

I feel really good about the people that are in charge of those things. I feel really good about the people that's going to allow us to go out there and have success. I feel good about the addition that we'll be able to make within the off-season to be able to help us. So I feel good about the things we can do moving forward.

It's just today is a really disappointing day for us to have to end it with that taste in your mouth.

Q. One, you mentioned what offensively gives you optimism. Defensively, what excites you about moving forward? Two, how long will it take for you to get the emotion out of today before you may or may not make changes coaching-wise?

RAHEEM MORRIS: You always have a 24-hour period that you go through just when you talk about any emotional loss. That's always the case. You get a chance to go in and go on your Mondays and do what you need to do to correct things and be able to talk about it with the people that you need to talk about it with.

When all of this settles, you get a chance to really reflect on what happened today. Then obviously what you talked about, the defensive side that you're really excited about was the Kaden Elliss factor that we had going, how well A.J. Terrell played, and having Jessie Bates. Having those pieces on your defense being the key cogs that didn't have the days you wanted them to have today, you're really fired about that.

Michael Penix obviously on offense and Drake London and Bijan Robinson, your big three over there. Obviously with Mooney coming back and some of those type of different things, you're really fired up about O-line.

Then on defense, having those three cogs in those places, you're really fired up about where you can go and what you can do. I don't know if you can have a better season than A.J. Terrell had. I don't know if you can play as well as Jessie Bates has been able to play for us this year. And then some of the things that Kaden Elliss was able to do down the stretch and looking forward to him doing that for a long time for us really fires you up.

Right now I am down on the day. I'm down on what happened today. How did the results happen today? We wanted those guys to play better, and we did not live up to that.

Then obviously you go through the whole process of what you're going to do, how you're going to move forward with everybody across the organization and how you do those things. So that stuff will come up over the next couple of weeks in how we move forward.

Q. Michael Penix might have one of the strongest arms in this league. How do you utilize that to your advantage? Also, how do you harness that? Some throws you do drive, some throws you do with touch, and then kind of utilizing it to the best of his potential without overdoing it?

RAHEEM MORRIS: We talked about that. The minute he become a starter in the National Football League, he become a top five passer in this league just when it comes to the look of the throw and how pretty it is.

Then obviously we talked about what he's going to develop through the off-season going through his layer process and being able to layer some of those throws and get those in there when it comes to completion and doing the things he can.

Obviously he's a cannon down the field. When he makes those throws, the wild throws, they're really exciting throws, but we can harness some of those things and find a way to get those things where we can get more completions for him.

He's just a young man that's got the growth mindset that really excites you about where you're going, some of the stuff we talked about. As disappointed as we are on defense, we're extremely excited about what he brings to the table and where he's going to grow and how this off-season is going to be for him.

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