

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Sunday, October 29, 2023
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Frank Reich Postgame Press Conference



Panthers 15, Texans 13

FRANK REICH: On injuries, Justin Houston had a hamstring and did not finish.

Other than that, great win. Obviously long time coming. We fought hard. Feel like our level of preparation has continued to rise throughout the year. Standards going higher and higher. Just a matter time before we see the results.

Really proud of how we played as a team, as one, just sticking together. Good complementary football. Wasn't always pretty at times, but we hung in there. You know, there were times in the back and forth where defense bailed us out and offense came through with a long drive. We were aggressive.

I thought Thomas Brown did a great job calling his first game.

I thought Bryce really played smart with the football.

Thought we did a good job. No turnovers. Three penalties to their ten. Zero turnovers to their one. Those are big stats in a close game like this.

And then just really proud of how we fought at the end. Did what it took to win the game.

Open it up from there.

Q. That last drive kind of got a little choppy. What did you see on the fourth and two play?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, you know, just a great play by those two. You know, have to look at it on film. Didn't come out as clean as we anticipated. Didn't matter. We made the play. That's two guys making a play, getting the completion, getting what we needed on a clutch play. Just go to your two guys.

Q. What does a drive like this do for Bryce and this

team considering everything that went on?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, I mean, I think it's a big confidence builder for the whole team, especially for the offense and Bryce obviously as our leader.

You know, making the plays, making the plays in that drive that we needed was clutch. I thought Bryce made a bunch of those during the day, but when we needed him the most he made the biggest plays.

Q. How was the play calling?

FRANK REICH: I thought it was great. Thomas called a great game. You know, I was off. It was his game. It was his game and I resisted any temptation to get involved. We talked on the sideline a couple times about a few things, but I thought he did a fantastic job and I thought he did a fantastic job getting the guys ready during the week as well.

Q. This is new territory for you I think. Do you feel like you were able to kind of -- there was a relief for you being able to manage more pieces of the game?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, I definitely felt that as far as the game management side, being able to talk to the guys upstairs a little bit more. Wasn't a whole lot of crazy stuff that came up in the game but what did come up we handled well. Communication was good. Was able to keep in tune with what the defense and special teams was doing a little bit more, so I definitely felt the difference.

Q. Have you ever seen anything like that sequence on the field goals?

FRANK REICH: I have. It's been a little bit. It's a strategy that some teams seem to take. I don't want to impute motives, but they try to just intentionally jump it a few times to see if they can rattle the kicker. They're willing to, when you're already in tight, just keep doing it and doing it and doing it sometimes.

Now, I'm not saying that's what they were doing but I've seen some teams do that. I'm not accusing Houston of



doing that, but that's what's done. As soon as it started to play out like that, I mean, you just keep your cool. Eddy did a good job keeping his cool. You know, just was clutch like we knew he would be.

Q. During the off-season, Josh said that off schedule throws and creating his own plays, Bryce is super (indiscernible). We saw a lot more in this game than we had this previous games. Wonder what you attribute that to and why do you think he was so successful doing it in this one?

FRANK REICH: I just think he was in good rhythm. I thought in the first half we did a good job in some of our play-actions, getting the ball down the field. You could just tell he was comfortable making the plays. Good to see Mingo get going a little bit on a few catches.

I thought once he hit in rhythm like the one to Mingo, and other times, I said, Mike, he's getting out of the pocket and making a play, those are all things that we know we're going to see on a week-to-week basis.

Q. If I can follow up on that, we saw a drops by DJ and Jonathan and Caden. He went back to them. In your experience, how important is that?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, it's a big deal. You could see it in his body language. You could see no negative -- when a guy dropped it you could see him, he's talking to them on the sideline, I'm coming back to you, that kind of thing. Great leadership by him. Great confidence and trust by him and his guys.

Q. ...on that last drive to set up the field goal?

FRANK REICH: They were huge. We struggled running the ball the whole day a little bit. I mean, we had a few runs here and there, but, man, did we need those runs. Did we need those runs. He ran it hard. He protected the ball. He got what we needed. Thomas did a good job calling it and sticking with it.

It was a really clutch. Chuba came up big.

Q. How does it feel?

FRANK REICH: Very satisfying. I mean, for the guys, for our team, for all of us, right? We've been working hard to get this thing going. I think we're all walking off there feeling like, okay, now we're going to get going. This is one. We know we've got a long way to go. We've enjoy this and celebrate it, but this is just the beginning.

We've tried to set very high standards for ourselves with

the way we prepare. I think we have been learning how to do that as the year has progressed, and there is no turning back. We know every week in this league it's a battle. It's a battle every week. All we have to do is prove we're the best team on the field that particular day.

So you reduce it down, shrink the problem to that one-on-one match up, that one team you're playing, and then you go play your game and play it with confidence.

Q. You have been preaching you're close and getting better and improving. Now to be able to take this back to the locker room and show them it's working, how important is that?

FRANK REICH: It's very important. At some point -- you know, these guys have been great. You want to see the results. We know that we're building the results, but you need to see them at some point.

I don't think the guys have wavered. That's to their credit. This is going to be a great win to build confidence off of. That's a good football team. They don't make many mistakes. They have been playing good team football.

That team makes you beat them, and I thought we did that today. We went out and proved we were the better team, and we didn't beat ourselves. You know, we put our best football on the field for 60 minutes and came away with the win.

Q. (Regarding first win.)

FRANK REICH: I think so. I mean, yes. Didn't expect it to be this date. Did not expect it to be this date, but it is what it is. We're not looking back. No regrets. It's just part of the season, and you look forward to the next week. For me personally, I'm going to stay day-to-day and try it continue to get better.

We'll come in here tomorrow and watch the film, look at it and be critical as coaches and as players, figure out how we can get better. We need to be a team that in the second half of the year we just get a little bit better every week. If we do that, good things will happen.

Q. Frankie was all over the field today. 12 tackles. A sack. What can you say about him today?

FRANK REICH: He was incredible. I mean, he was a beast, like you said. I didn't know it was that many tackles, but a couple pass defended plays that are probably going to be first downs. That one third down right there, he makes a great tip.

I think he had two passes defended in that as well. Just an all around great game by Frankie.

Q. Second play that Bryce made, something that showed what he was all about today?

FRANK REICH: I got to go back and look at it. You know, crazy as it sounds, the one scramble when it was third and two and somehow got that ball out there to get the first down, I don't remember how to drive ended up.

I think we got points on this drive. I think we got a field goal out of that drive. But he's just got all the instincts. All the play making ability. All the throws. Great composure. Seeing the field great. So good things ahead.

Q. DJ Johnson got carted off. Looked like he got hurt in the celebration. What do you know about him?

FRANK REICH: He was cramping up. He played hard and you know DJ, that guy plays hard. He left it all out on the field and was cramping up at the end.

Q. Was there a game ball that went out?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, so sometimes right after the game you give out a couple immediately and then we'll give out some tomorrow. But obviously gave one to Eddy Pineiro. Got a walk-off field goal. Always going to get a game ball there.

Thomas Brown, him calling his first game, you know, in the NFL, being clutch in the fourth quarter in that last drive. Had great poise, great control. Did a good job of sequencing that drive.

Then the guys, I know this meant a lot to Bryce, but Frankie and the guys wanted to give Bryce a game ball. His first win. So that was a pretty big deal.

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