

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Sunday, November 5, 2023
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Head Coach Frank Reich

Postgame Press Conference



Colts 27, Panthers 13

FRANK REICH: A few injury notes. Wooten had an ankle. Burns had a concussion. Sullivan had a shoulder. Henderson had a concussion. Vilain had a knee, and Woods had a thigh.

Tough loss. Give the Colts credit. We did not play well enough as a team. I thought our defense played well today. I thought we did a good job containing their run game, containing their offense in general, but we win and lose as a team.

I thought special teams-wise we had a few nice plays, but entirely too many penalties. I mean, you can't win football games when you make special teams penalties like that.

Then offensively obviously it was a struggle. It was a struggle all day with penalties and executing. So it was a struggle there, but the good news is that we play Thursday.

No one is going to feel sorry for us, so we've got to get back to work. It's a quick turnaround. We've got to learn from our mistakes and get ready for Thursday night football.

Open it up.

Q. Two pick 6s in a 14-point game. The defense plays as well as it does, how do you keep this from snowballing offensively even though you are playing --

FRANK REICH: I think the character of our leadership will do a great job. They understand we're in this together. What I just talked to Bryce about in there, I said, Listen, over a lot of years I've seen games like this many times, and it's not all on just the pick 6s.

I know it seems that way, but we put him in a hard position a couple of times. Obviously Bryce, he owns his share of it, but we're all part of it. We're all part of it, so we have to do a better job.

Q. Was he tentative tonight, or what was the problem?

FRANK REICH: I just think we got off to a slow start. We were backed up a few times. I thought their rush early was good. They beat us. They pressured us early. We just never really seemed to get a rhythm.

Q. Specifically, what did you see out of Bryce? It was his worst game, pick 6s or whatever, but what did you make of it?

FRANK REICH: I have to obviously look at the film to see why. I was about to say to see what's his, what's that. The one thing you don't do as a coach, this isn't about finger-pointing, but you do try to find reasons. As you're saying, Joe, we're looking for reasons. We're looking at things that we have to correct, so that's what we do.

We're not going to finger-point. It all starts with me as the head coach, so we have to get ready to play, and we have to play at a higher level.

Q. Is there any part of you that has entertained the idea of maybe sitting him down, letting him watch, going with Andy, or is it just something as a rookie that you have to go through the mistakes?

FRANK REICH: I suppose that's a fair question, but I can honestly tell you that thought has never even come close to entering my mind.

Q. How is his confidence level?

FRANK REICH: I think his confidence level will be great. Listen, I've seen this happen to the best quarterbacks in the history of the game. They all have games like this.

Sure, it's easy to put it on the quarterback, but you bounce back. That's what makes the great ones. It's a long road. It's a long road. I've said this many times. The quarterback journey, developing into the franchise quarterback, it's a long road.

I/we believe very strongly in Bryce. Coming into this game I felt like he was hitting a rhythm and a stride. This is a

step backwards for us as an offense. We were starting. We thought we had several games in a row where we're making good strides, and then we went out and laid an egg today offensively.

Credit the Colts' defense. Credit Gus Bradley and their players, how they played us. We have to do a better job, but it was one game. In reality, it's not that we were lighting up the scoreboard, but Bryce has been playing good football. This is one game, so I'm not even thinking twice about it.

Q. Does it make it especially frustrating given the way the defense played?

FRANK REICH: Yeah, it does. That offense had a streak going of scoring 20 points or more, 350 yards every game. Their offense is very explosive. The whole year they've been very consistent.

Our defense came in, and we did what we wanted to do against them and did a great job. It's a credit to EJ and the defensive staff and the players. Played very good on defense.

Q. Besides the pick 6s, there was the flag on Xavier Woods on third down lining up off sides on the punt. Just the self-inflicted wounds, how frustrating is that?

FRANK REICH: Very frustrating. Early in that game we had three penalties that were devastating penalties. Two of them extend drives that they end up getting points on. You can't do that. You can't do that and be a good football team.

We talk about those things all the time. We watch tape on it. The things that came up, we've talked about. We've sat in here in meetings. We show tape.

As coaches and players, we have to figure that out. I mean, there's just too many of those mistakes. That's frustrating.

Q. When those coaching points don't land, when you are in those meetings talking about the very things that happened, just...

FRANK REICH: Everybody has to take accountability. If you're the position coach and it's in your position, you feel like it was you who committed the foul because you have to figure out how else can I communicate it?

If you are the player, you have to take ownership. If you're the head coach, you have to take ownership because you're in charge of everything. You're responsible for

everything.

If you are the coordinator, you have to figure out what can I do to do my part to get these things cleaned up?

I thought we had a couple game stretch before this where our penalties were down, where we were playing good, clean football for, I don't know, two or three games. It felt like that.

I'll have to go back and check it, but I think the last game we had three penalties. I don't know what we had the week before, but this was -- I mean, it was bad. It was really bad penalty-wise.

Q. When you guys were evaluating Bryce coming out of college, he didn't really have much for mistakes because he didn't make many mistakes. Now that you're seeing them coming sometimes in bunches like tonight, anything you can put your finger on why that keeps happening?

FRANK REICH: It happens, you know what I mean? I'm just not going to panic.

Listen, I hate that it happened because, like we said, the defense played well. This is a game we should have -- hey, I give them credit. They beat us, but I thought we had a great week of practice, and I expected us to win this game.

But offensively, it happens. As a quarterback, it happens. I told Bryce in there, like I said, I've seen the best quarterbacks in the game have way worse games than this. Way worse. Okay?

You don't flinch. In some ways it's good for him to go through this. In some ways it's good to kind of have to bounce back after something like this.

So that's what we do. We learn. You don't like to fail, but when you do fail, if we really learn from it and if we get better from it, it's ultimately put in the category of just another step to getting us where we want to be.

We take some lumps in the meantime, and it sets us back, but we believe in who we're doing it with and the way we're doing it. So we're accountable for the results. It's a long season. There's a lot of football left starting Thursday night.

Q. What was the explanation you got on the roughness penalty on Xavier?

FRANK REICH: They talked about launching, you know,



and thought that he hit him in the head and neck. If he did hit him in the head and neck, it's a penalty. I don't know. I would have to see the tape.

If it's launching, launching isn't a penalty. Launching and hitting in the neck area, head or neck area, is a penalty. Launch and hitting in the body is not a penalty.

So I don't know. I didn't see the replay, but what I was told was that he launched, and he hit him in the head and neck area.

If, in fact, that's what it was, then that's a penalty. If he launched and hit him in the body, then that's one that they got wrong, but it happens.

Q. To circle back to your answer before this, you said you want to get somewhere. You're working towards it. At this point what's the identity of this offense through eight games? What do you want it to be?

FRANK REICH: We want to be able to run the ball. We want to be able to run the ball with our three core runs, run our play action stuff off that, our movement stuff.

Listen, I'm not going to sit up here and give a seminar. That's a fair question, Mike, but I'm not going to sit up here and give a seminar on how we define what our identity is. Obviously we're struggling to find our identity. There's no question about that, but it does start with running the football. I thought we showed flashes of that tonight.

But then we have to be able to -- when you can run the ball, you need to be able to get some play action shots down the field and get some chunk plays. We're not getting that right now.

Then we have some things in our identity as far as who we are in the red zone that I don't want to talk about for competitive edge reasons and how we approach the red zone, and then on third down and situational football we need to be able to be a team that spreads the ball around and does some unique matchup things, again, that I don't want to go into details about, that when you start defining how your identity is, that's the way we talk about it internally.

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