

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Head Coach Arthur Smith

### Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Panthers - 9, Falcons - 7

**Q. Yeah, Coach, what did you say to the team after a game like this?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, obviously, you know, we didn't do what we needed to do coming in here. And it wasn't for a lack of effort. We didn't make enough plays. You know, didn't do a good enough of a job getting them ready. We hung around and we turned the ball over late, and when you do that, you'll lose. And so, we -- this one stings. But we got to get back and find a way and we got to get back in the win column. But not the result we expected.

**Q. The conditions -- you know, the one fumble and the interception, were y'all hoping -- how do you assess those and try to hope your defense could bail you out there?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I mean, we did. We put them in the turnover, the sudden change. They did bail us out. You know, we held them to three, made some plays, and then came back after that. I mean, the helmet, from what it looked like from my perspective, would be Bijan getting out there and the ball popped out. We try to play to win. And, obviously, the conservative approach didn't play out for us. And so, when we took the drive after we made it 7-6, had the long drive down there and we had the interception.

**Q. Do you feel that you were too conservative today?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I mean, certainly that's a fair -- I mean, when you only score seven points, trying to play to win and a lot going on down there; the wind, the rain, the ball popped, got on the ground twice. We had some issues we were trying to negate and the protection. So that's certainly a fair criticism.

**Q. You talked about critical errors all season. Defense, is it seems like this has been a theme in losses.**

ARTHUR SMITH: But it's on all of us. You know, whether

it's -- you know, you can blame me, you can blame the turnovers. You know, as a team, we've got to make those plays. And we didn't do that and that's the momentum shift right there. You're in scoring position, at worst, you're hoping to get a field goal, change what you've got to defend, you know, the dynamics are completely different. But that's not what happened.

**Q. When you talked to Desmond about that interception, what did he say? What was he trying to do that there?**

ARTHUR SMITH: He was trying to make a play. And, obviously, he'll be the first to tell you he wishes he could have it back. But that's not what happened.

**Q. Will you change the message to your team at this point considering where you are right now?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, I mean, the message is always different every week, Josh. But when you're coming off two close losses like that in the division, that certainly changed things in eight days. But we still got three more and we got to find a way. And a lot going on. I mean, we did it to ourselves. We got to get back in there and we got to find a way to beat Indy.

**Q. In terms of improvement this year, in this season, do you feel like this team has improved from where you guys were in the beginning of the season?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, obviously, Mike, we still got some football to play. Certainly, in a lot of areas you feel like you do. But that's where we're at right now. After these two losses, it doesn't feel that way in terms of -- in the short term. We've had opportunities and there's been a lot of improvement in other areas. But coming off two losses, it's hard to say you feel good about anything.

**Q. The injuries along both lines, how do you kind of square that with -- you know, you got three of five backups on the offensive side, both your tackles missing on the defensive side, how do you square, you know, this loss with not having all your people at the front?**



ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, that's -- part of it was the weather, part of it was the personnel. And we're trying to negate some of the stuff. So it wasn't really traditional out of the passing downs. And so, that's where, you know, trying to play the weather, the wind, all the different scenarios. And then, obviously, it didn't work out for us.

We did a lot of things to try to protect that Brown and Burns didn't wreck the game. Like I said, you turn the ball over twice, don't get any takeaways. And among a number of things, we got to score more than seven.

**Q. I know you said it's a collaborative approach before. But do you consider making changes again in the last three games?**

ARTHUR SMITH: We've done a lot of different things, Mike. And it's a team effort. You know, it's -- we've had games where Dave's punched it into the quarterback and games where I have.

So just a lot of things. Nothing that we do that we don't collaborate with. I mean, it's not anybody going rogue and getting rid of the plan. But ultimately no matter what's called on special teams, defense, offense, that's on me as the head coach.

**Q. Do you know why the consistency hasn't really been there at all? It seems like every time you guys made some -- it looks like you guys made some progress and then some steps back again?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, I mean, every scenario is different. You look at the last two weeks, last week was a completely different story than this week. Yeah, I mean, obviously, that's what we're trying to eliminate. And we've been trying all season. And I think what's hurt us the most is clearly the turnovers.

It's just not going to change in the NFL. The turnover margins, that's been -- you know, a lot of things you can pick apart, certainly, that's the one that's hurt us.

**Q. Given Desmond's issues with turnovers this season, did you have any kind of hesitation about putting the ball in his hands at the end?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Well, I certainly respect the question. I mean, you're trying to get outside the pocket, and we've been so run heavy, and you're trying to call a movement keeper and thinking, Hey, worst case, we take off. And, obviously, there's a lot of things that you're going to second-guess yourself with.

And that's not a shot at him, because it's on all of us and it certainly starts with me. But, in theory, we were not trying to drop back there and that wasn't the -- that wasn't what we were trying to accomplish.

**Q. Do you feel like you've seen enough improvement from Ridder? This would be, really, a full season worth of work.**

ARTHUR SMITH: Mike, it's a lot of things. We're coming off that loss. Obviously, we didn't end the way we wanted, we weren't as productive as we wanted. We had some good movements. But, obviously, we're not satisfied.

Certainly not happy with what's gone on the last two games. Still got -- we've got life and we, you know, got to find a way to fix some of these issues. Because we got Indy coming in next week and a lot of crazy things can still happen.

But this is one -- these last two do sting. We've had our opportunities, regardless of the score, we still had leads in both. Didn't get it done, though.

**Q. You have three games left. But I'm curious: On what basis do you believe you're the right coach for this team?**

ARTHUR SMITH: I think in any job you take, you've got to have a lot of self-belief. That's the cycle of it. There's consequences when you lose, so these are natural questions, right? It's NFL 101. The job is to win games.

There's a lot of things that -- every situation is different. There's a lot of things we've dealt with early on, but ultimately, you know, the job is to win games and get into the playoffs.

So we'll still have an opportunity. It'll look like a long shot. But each one of these years are different. We've had three different teams. Movement in critical spots. But at the end of the day, your job is to win. But I've got to a ton of self-belief. And nobody should take a job they don't believe in themselves. I can promise you that.

**Q. Have you been told anything about the future?**

ARTHUR SMITH: Nothing like the State of Union. Every day, you go in there and you try the best you can at your job. And then that's all we work on, is improving, trying to win games.

**Q. (Question concerning the starting quarterback position and if Desmond Ridder will be the starter for next week.)**

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, that's, you know, been the plan. Nothing's ever set in stone, Josh. You've got to evaluate and adapt. Just like the questions you're asking about personnel and what you got to do, we got to find a way and we need to win.

**Q. Do you feel like you have a quarterback on the roster right now that you can consistently win with?**

ARTHUR SMITH: We've had some good moments. I mean, there's -- like I said, we'll get back and evaluate everything. We'll make sure we have the right plan and make the right decision for the best of the team, that's in the best interesting of this team to win a game. We need to get back in the win column.