

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Sunday, December 24, 2023

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Head Coach Matt LaFleur

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Green Bay Packers 33, Carolina Panthers 30

MATT LaFLEUR: Well, it feels good to win. Certainly made it a little bit closer than we would like, but give Carolina a ton of credit. Give their players, their coaches a ton of credit. I mean, they fought for four quarters. We knew that would be the case. Bottom line is we found a way to make a couple of plays at the end of the game to propel us to take the win, and we're happy about that. Obviously, a lot of things we got to clean up and try to improve upon moving forward into next week.

Q. Keep your playoff hopes alive. Talk about two games to go, what's at stake?

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah, everything's at stake. We're going into a great environment next week in Minnesota against a really good football team, and, um, you know, it's going to be a great challenge, but this is what we prepare for all year, every day, every week, um, so we'll be excited about that opportunity.

Q. So when you were, like last in the off season planning everything and you had a healthy Jones, is this what you envisioned with the run pass mix and the down and distances and all that?

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah, I think so. Um, certainly it's been -- you always evolve, I would say, every year, and you're going to make adjustments along the way and it took us, you know, probably longer than we would have liked to learn to see what, you know, is really working for us, but I think any time you have the caliber of a back like Aaron Jones, it really opens up other things in your offense, and, shoot, we ran a couple of keepers today. That was great, and you can't do that unless you're running the football effectively and I thought just our guys were coming off the rock, especially early on in the game.

I think Carolina made some adjustments, brought a lot more pressure in the second half and did a pretty good job of, I mean, forcing we had three three-and-outs, whatever it was in the second half. So, you know, Ejiro, I've got as

much respect for him as anybody in this business. He did a really good job of adjusting and kind of made our offense stall in the second half.

Q. And along those lines, did Jones out of steam at all? I ask because on the second to last possession, you banged out about a six-yard run in the first play and he came out immediately. I wondered if he was running out of steam or why he would have come out there?

MATT LaFLEUR: Oh, yeah, he needed a -- each play these guys -- it's pretty physical and he just had to, I think, gather himself real quick.

Q. Matt, can you just talk about how Jordan did out there with, you know, he's working with different receivers again, he had guys --

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah, I thought Jordan did an outstanding job. You always got to go back and take a peek at it, but I thought we just never quite got into a great rhythm in the second half. I thought the first half everything was flowing well, but the second half, give them credit. We just couldn't get a first down in a couple of those possessions, so I think just one cool moment was when we were on the goal line there in the first half and he audibled to that quarterback sneak, I think that shows kind of the level of growth that he's had in his game, just to see that and take advantage of it. That was a pretty cool moment.

Q. Um, that first drive was all two tight ends, if I remember right, and you did a lot of that today. Was that strictly an injury thing or was there something about the match-up that you really liked there?

MATT LaFLEUR: Just, you know, every week's a little bit different in terms of some of the game plan and how you want to attack people.

Q. Um, fourth quarter, you guys -- your defense looked okay for a lot of the game, and the fourth quarter, they need two scores to tie and they get 'em. Can you come out of this feeling any better about that side of the ball than you did last week?



MATT LaFLEUR: Certainly. I mean, that was definitely frustrating. I think -- but it wasn't just on the defense. I mean, offensively, you got to give them a breather, especially if we're bleeding little bit defensively. We got to find a way to put together a scoring drive. We got to find a way to get some first downs, to allow those guys to recover, recoup. Momentum's a crazy phenomenon, and I think they got the momentum in the second half and they were rolling really in every phase.

Q. What did Romeo give you tonight?

MATT LaFLEUR: Oh, he made some humongous plays for us and I love the energy and passion that he displayed as evident by -- that was a heck of a throw after he scored that touchdown. Threw it up in the second level, I think.

But Rome, I love how he competes. He's always going to attack the football. He did on that last play. I know it was a tight play and, quite frankly, I think they got it right. I thought there was a time element when you catch that ball that you're on the ground that certainly satisfied and it was a tough call, but I do think they got it right.

Q. What do you think about putting up 30 without Reed, Watson, Musgrave? What's that tell you about how things have gone, developed on your offense?

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah, I think there's a lot of good there, but I still think there's more. So, you'll always take that. We've had a hard time getting to that. Was that the first time since week one, I want to say. And to me just my mindset, I would say our mindset is that it's whatever it takes to win. So if it's 30, if it's 33, if it's 40, if it's 21. It doesn't matter. You got to find a way to win football games and it's kind of that whatever-it-takes mentality and if one side's, you know, having some struggles, you better play complementary football, and the other side's got to, you know, pick up the slack so to speak.

Q. Kraft made a couple of good plays early --

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah.

Q. -- one late, too --

MATT LaFLEUR: Wow. I can't say enough great things about Tucker Kraft. How, first of all, how tough he was, or is, and just making critical plays, man. He's brought so much to our offense, and it's been so fun to see him progress and get better and work. And he's got so much confidence and for a lot of reasons. He's put the work in. I think JD's done a great job with him. I think that whole room kind of pushes each other, and, you know, all those

young guys are going to be a lot of fun to work with for hopefully a long time.

Q. What'd you think about how Jordan thread that had one in to him?

MATT LaFLEUR: That was a tight through, man. That was a tight throw, and some of them are. Just, I admire -- and I've said this before -- Jordan's resiliency because it can get tough when you feel the momentum flipping. They were down 14 points. They come back and, you know, tie the game and he made some big plays down the stretch.

Q. This is just kind of a protocol question, but on the coin toss you guys win.

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah. Thankfully -- yeah, I know. That's a big mistake. You know, that's something that you review with the guys before they go out there every time about, hey, we win the toss, we're going to defer. I did -- I went to the officials before the game to make sure they knew what he we were going to do. We had an incident earlier this year where we had a similar situation, so always trying to be proactive in that approach.

Q. So your talking to them trumps whatever's said?

MATT LaFLEUR: I think -- I mean, I don't think they ever want to get that. I've seen it in other games where they don't want to -- yeah, I would say yes.

Q. Was he a last-minute addition to go out there as a captain?

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah.

Q. By you or by himself?

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah. (Laughter)

MODERATOR: Two more.

Q. Kraft came out, I think it might have been after play. Was he okay, or?

MATT LaFLEUR: Yeah, he was all right. He was cleared to go back in the game so, yeah. But he took a hit and that was a hell of a play, though.

Q. Matt, what'd you think when Young spikes it? Were you looking at the clock? Were you looking at him?

MATT LaFLEUR: Well, I thought they snapped the ball with one second and it's going to take a second -- they definitely got the snap off, but the play takes a second, so,

I thought it was a correct decision.

MODERATOR: Thank you, guys.

MATT LaFLEUR: Thanks, guys.

