

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Postgame Press Conference



Falcons - 38, Panthers - 20

DAVE CANALES: Game came down to finish. Down a score right there, we're running the ball really well and throw an interception on that drive. They turn it around into points right away, and the game got away from us there.

The message to the team was just consistency. Can we just play consistent football, still working through all the issues that we need to work through, but can we keep taking steps where you come out of a game and you feel like there was balance to what we were doing, had a better day on third down, which allowed us to get into our run game and hit some passes down the field.

But it's about the finish, and we have to be able to do that.

Q. You referenced the interception. How deflating was that for the defense? And is this defense in its current state, does it almost need the offense to be perfect?

DAVE CANALES: For all of us, it's definitely hard when we get into those situations in a one-score game, and we've just got to finish. There's nothing else to say about it than that. Just finish on our terms and be able to punch that in and get a two-point opportunity there and turn it into a game.

That's something we've got to continue to learn how to put a full game together.

Q. You talk about complementary football all the time, and when the defense is giving up 35 to 38 points per game and there's that lack of margin of error for the offense, how can you go to the offense and then expect them to be perfect in that type of scenario?

DAVE CANALES: You just play football. You just keep playing ball. We have a mix of our plays. We're looking at the pictures in between drives and seeing what's available for us, and we've just got to keep playing ball that way. That's just what it is.

For my mentality for our team, we try not to make big assumptions and judge the game based on what happens in the course of it. We've just got to go to the next drive. We've got to be ready to just continue to play football, and that's the discipline and mentality we have to have.

Q. You mentioned that on that drive Chuba was running the ball well. It was second and eight. Was that a designed play for Andy to pass that? What happened there?

DAVE CANALES: It was just as -- we're running the ball really well, and as we're doing that, that's when you get to mix some of the passes and things in there. That's where we have to make sure we execute right there and finish.

Q. As someone who commits himself to the run game, how difficult is it in particular when your defense can't seem to stop the run, struggles to stop the run?

DAVE CANALES: We've just got to continue to improve those things, look at the film and see where the voids are at and the techniques and the things that are happening there.

That's what we'll do tomorrow, we'll get to the film and just try to keep taking the next step for our football team.

Q. How encouraging is it to see Xavier and Coker respond the way they have to their early reps?

DAVE CANALES: It's great. It's great to see those guys, to see the investment, to see the work they've been putting in come to life. Guys that we're counting on to make plays, they made the plays that came to them today.

Q. In what you would call an adventurous first half, but you came back 92 yards and four straight runs at the end of the fourth quarter. How much confidence do you have in them?

DAVE CANALES: It's our system. That's the way that we play our football. Can we continue to play our style of football late into games? It was playing out just the way we wanted it to, and we've got to finish.



Q. Are there any other buttons that Ejiro can push? You guys have had so many injuries over there? What more can you do or your staff do to help this defense?

DAVE CANALES: I truly believe in we go to our concepts. We play our system and our concepts well. Guys got to fit together. We've got to play team defense and stop the plays that are there to stop. I truly believe that, Ejiro believes it. We're going to go right back to the film, and we're going to watch it. We're just going to attack the fundamentals and the basics because that's what we've got.

If we can make the story as simple as that, can we get better at our fundamentals, just the basics of what we're doing and how we fit in different type of run styles. That's the challenge for us is to keep taking the next step and improving our football.

Q. It seemed like it was one of the louder crowds that you've had as head coach, at least at home. Did you kind of feel that the energy kind of came out after that interception, that final one?

DAVE CANALES: Honestly, I was just focused on, okay, what mode are we in now? How do we attack this? How do we play in these situations? And just accumulating and gathering information and doing that.

That was really the focus for the whole group. Can we go to the next drive? Can we keep working until there was no time? That's what we try to do.

Q. What did Andy say he saw on that interception?

DAVE CANALES: We haven't talked specifically about that. And those conversations I won't air out for sure.

Q. What did you see on the play? It looked like Terrell had pretty good coverage?

DAVE CANALES: He made a great play on it.

Q. How did Yosh do today?

DAVE CANALES: Yosh had a solid day, settled in some early things. He settled in and played fine football and gave us a chance with the run game and the pass game as we went into the second half.

I was really encouraged by how that group settled in and played together as the game went on.

Q. You haven't challenged a lot of plays, but to come

out with the Trevin Wallace fumble, how was the communication on that? Who is the person that reviews that in the booth, and how was the communication there with the ref?

DAVE CANALES: It was great. They let me know really early this is close. Any time it's close, it's worth the challenge. It costs you a timeout in the first half, those are the opportunities you've got to see if they can take a second look at it.

Falcons did a great job of trying to go fast in that situation, so I knew I was going to have to make a decision there. George Lee was upstairs and had a good look on it and gave me the information I needed on it. So we challenged it, and I was happy to get that.

Q. The two-minute drive in the end of the first half, it seemed like everything was in a rhythm. How different are those drives for Andy as opposed to the more scripted drives?

DAVE CANALES: It's just great execution. These are the plays we run, and we just ask these guys to hone in on the details, especially in those types of situations where you get a little bit more coverage. The defense certainly is clued in, and Andy found some plays with his legs, threw to some guys. We were fortunate enough to get down there tight and finished it in the end zone, which is great.

These are things we work on all the time. So there's just -- I was fired up about that obviously and knew that we were doing a good enough job moving the ball.

Q. A week ago you brought Bryce in on the game, it was kind of decided. You let Andy stay in this time. Is that a confirmation of him staying at starting quarterback?

DAVE CANALES: We're always having those conversations. Again, we'll keep those conversations private, but in that situation, I just wanted Andy to finish the game.

Q. Will Andy be your quarterback this upcoming week?

DAVE CANALES: Yes, Andy will be playing against the Commanders this week.

Q. You talked about finding your identity the past couple weeks. Is that pretty much what we saw tonight, is that what the identity is going to be this season?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. It starts with the run game, the mix of the passes. Were we perfect on every drive? No, but it felt right. It felt like we could get into our calls. We could be aggressive at times. And we could counter the run game when we needed it.

To be able to drive the ball all the way down the field with the mentality of running the ball is fantastic. That just felt so right, and the defense was getting worn out, and we just kept hitting those runs. Those are things we've got to be able to finish.

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