

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Postgame Press Conference



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DAVE CANALES: Well, that was fun. Got interesting. We had a chance to drive for the last one to try to take the lead and didn't get much done on that drive, but the guys kept battling. The defense gave us another opportunity, and I was so proud of the way we finished. It's something we talked about is finding the way to finish. Sometimes it takes the whole time. Just proud of the guys. Really fired up and excited for them.

Q. A lot of people will make stuff out of the offensive performance, with the defense getting those two stops back to back. After what they've been through the last eight games, what did that mean to you and your staff and the locker room to have that sequence?

DAVE CANALES: It was just a great job by the guys just having the finish mentality. I think the discipline is you don't pass judgment on the outcome of a game based on what happens early on. It was back and forth a little bit there. But for the guys to be able to play our calls, to execute the way we want them to execute and make plays when it came to them, the guys got to be proud of that. I can't be more fired up for a group that has had to fight and scratch and find a way to play defense.

Q. How would you assess Bryce Young's play today?

DAVE CANALES: Solid. I've got to look at the whole thing, watch the film. He came up big in critical moments and gave us an opportunity a couple times. So, again, just proud of the step that he took again, just taking the things we're asking him to do, getting us to the right place at the right time. So a great step.

Q. Are you going to name him starter for next week?

DAVE CANALES: Not yet. We'll take in all the information, watch the film. We've got to process, make sure we look at this stuff and let you guys know.

Q. That was his first game-winning drive,

game-winning touchdown drive of his career. What would hold you back from naming him the starter?

DAVE CANALES: Again, just looking at all the information we have, taking a look at the film, all that stuff, making sure we make the best decision for the team.

Q. Dave, first home win. How does that change perspective? It's been a tough season so far. The mindset of the team, winning a game like this.

DAVE CANALES: It's just exciting to see the hard work pay off, to keep coming back every single week, coming back after losses and having to just go back to the film, the basics and the fundamentals. It gives us a chance to point to those things and show where those things showed up and show the things we've got to continue to improve.

Q. A couple times, J.T. came up with a big play when you needed it.

DAVE CANALES: Just a play-maker. It was a check-down, and he hurdled a guy, stayed on his feet, and flipped the field. I'm proud of the young guys in general, but J.T. for sure today taking advantage of some of those opportunities one on one down the field. So a great step forward to him.

Q. Was it the hurdle or the end of the play?

DAVE CANALES: The whole thing. It was just a great effort play. Took care of the ball too. In those situations, a lot of times the ball can be in peril, but he kept it high and tight, and that's what we ask him to do.

Q. (No microphone) made some big plays, went out with an injury, came back in. How's he doing growing into the role?

DAVE CANALES: Doing great. A couple of opportunities down the field I wish we'd have back. He continues to play fast. He's a big, strong dude. For him to be able to come back out after the assessment and all that, to come back and finish the game was awesome.



Q. Did his hand injury affect that interception?

DAVE CANALES: I don't know. I've got to take a look at that. I wasn't sure which hand he had locked in on that particular play, but it could be. It was a fantastic play by the corner on that one.

Q. Coker had a couple plays in the second quarter. Kind of went away from him in the fourth. What does he need to do to continue to grow into the offense?

DAVE CANALES: Just like the rest of the guys, just to press into the core of our concepts, details and fundamentals that they're improving on, taking strides on. That's really it. Staying the course and the improvement, the week-to-week mentality we have. Coming to work on Wednesday, making sure we take those steps.

Q. You had a makeshift offensive line. You had your fill-in starting center playing left tackle and had your third starting center of the season. You gave up one sack, looked like a coverage sack. How do you think the group performed overall?

DAVE CANALES: I'm proud of those guys. It goes back to the confidence we have in those guys to step in, take advantage of these opportunities, respect these moments for these guys that get the opportunities to show what they can do.

And the bottom line is trying to find a way to help the team win, and they did that. They were all together, working all the stuff all week. Just really proud of Cade, really proud of Brady getting out there and being able to help us win today.

Q. Bryce seemed frustrated after three and a half where there were a lot of plays, throws right around the line of scrimmage. Looked like he had a conversation with you. Did that kind of help influence you or the two of you to kind of let some rip then in the fourth quarter?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. The way that series played out, the plays just went to those spots. One of them was a screen with an aggressive part of it as well. But they had a great call. I thought they had really, really better calls on two of those screens than we had. And then we just missed the throw on the second down to Xavier that I thought we had a chance on. But, yeah, those are ones I'll look at and sure I'll be kicking myself for.

Q. How did the conversation kind of impact you going forward?

DAVE CANALES: I'll keep all those conversations private. But, again, I think, Joe, you're asking the right question. Just knowing when I can be aggressive and take advantage of opportunities and Bryce continuing to show that when I give him the play calls, he'll find opportunities down the field, which he did a good job of today.

Q. That last pass breakup that Mike had, looked like it was right in front of the bench. What did you see on that play?

DAVE CANALES: Just the energy, the sideline exploding on that. A one-on-one opportunity, those are things we've talked about, playing our leverage. Playing our assignments and making those plays when they come to you. Huge play for Mike. I'm proud of him. The moment was special. The moment to see the guys finish all the way through to the last play. So really proud of him.

Q. Where was the breakdown on the two-point conversion, the delay of game?

DAVE CANALES: We've got to talk to the guys. I've got to gather more information on that.

Q. The defense the last few weeks seems to be trending in the right direction. The game today, how big was that?

DAVE CANALES: Huge. I think it was the number of opportunities and our calls, our execution, all those things are getting better. We're getting tighter with our coverage, allowing the rushers to get closer to the quarterback, forcing some errant throws, those things.

It's just the number of trips down there that we want to try to minimize, but the guys forced some critical field goals which ended winning us the game. Just keep playing. As long as there's downs, as long as grass, just keep playing. That's what they did.

Q. How would you say Bryce's confidence was today?

DAVE CANALES: It just helps being out there. Having the game in Denver, to go through some things that we talked about and trying to build, trying to take steps. He did that. He re-engaged last week. He was focused and continued to work on his game and work on his teammates.

Thank you.

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