

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: We had a chance to look at the film and to really evaluate the different things that happened in the game, and there were some growth, some positive things in certain areas, but there are certainly some things that we've got to clean up and to find the consistency of play that we're looking for.

There were areas that felt like we built on some continuity in the past game offensively, and then there were just a bunch of areas that we really felt like there was a little bit of rustiness coming off of the bye week and trying to find -- get back to finding our fundamentals of our football and our footwork and our hand placement and different things, some tackling on the defensive side, stuff that we have to shore up to make sure that we can play up to a standard that we want to hold our guys to.

Again, got to take all the things in. Finishing on a drive but then with the time left, trying to just stop the Chiefs from getting into field goal range right there to win the game so that we could extend it and try to give us another opportunity.

Q. Yesterday you indicated that the players are kind of seeing what you guys are aiming for in terms of the standard and what you want to be. When you watch the film with them, what are some specific things from yesterday you can point to to kind of enhance their vision of that?

DAVE CANALES: I say it's the high effort of play. I think it's also just the improvement offensively on third down and finding ways to have success. There were some great plays on the defensive side, knocking balls down, creating five sacks, different things like that. So there's growth.

Special teams-wise, except for the opening kick, I saw great coverage in our units and things that we can certainly build on. I think that just in general finding a way to fight ourselves back into the game with two excellent stops by the defense on the last two drives to give the offense an opportunity to go down there and tie it up and then have the two-point conversion to try to give us a chance to

extend the game.

Q. Last night from yourself and around the locker room, there's a lot of talk about Young's confidence and how it's growing. Against the Chiefs, he seemed to be reading and reacting better when he was blitzed. Is that part of his progression?

DAVE CANALES: Bryce just took advantage of another opportunity, a great week of preparation by the whole group. It was great to have Thielen back out there. It was great to have David Moore step in with Jalen down. So I saw some good trust factor and some growth in terms of just the chemistry in the pass game that came alive for us in some critical areas.

Q. What's the latest on Ja'Tavion, and how are his spirits kind of 24 hours after all this?

DAVE CANALES: Scary moment. Right now what it appears is that we avoided a really pretty bad injury based on the nature of the play, but it is a neck injury. He's here. He's in the building. He's getting worked on. We're still evaluating all of that. We're going to have to take that all the way till Wednesday to see what his availability might be for this week.

Again, that's something that we still have to be really, really diligent about in terms of collecting all the information and data that we have with the nature of the injury.

Q. And then if I could follow up, yesterday you brought up the fight in the team. There was also a lot of feistiness that we saw from Adam, we saw from Sam. How do you measure that -- I guess how do you pick and choose when to coach up that feistiness just because obviously penalties and distractions and stuff like that. How do you manage that?

DAVE CANALES: I think it's playing with passion, playing with everything you've got, and that's what we ask our guys to do. There's always that fine line, though. You've got to toe the line, and you've got to know when to back off. We've got to make sure to continue the type of respect to our opponent, to the officials, to the other coaches and all

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that stuff to make sure we're playing a style of football we believe in.

So we want to have that passion. We want to have that fire. And guys got to know -- and that's where our teammates can help out, hey, grab that guy and get him out of there in these different situations.

These guys are laying everything out there for their teammates, so I love that part of it. I can't sit up here and say I don't love that. To see the fight in the guys, it matters to them. All these moments are critical. Every play is important. Everything counts. So I love that mentality.

We've got to be able to toe that line and know when enough is enough to back off and then just go to the next play.

Q. It's good news about Ja'Tavion. Glad to hear that. You mentioned a lot in your post-game presser yesterday about missed opportunities. I think you specifically focused on the red zone, getting field goals instead of touchdowns. When you go back and watch the film, what was that a product of? Was there any execution lapses? Do you wish you had any like play calling things back? What was that a product of?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, offensively, I would say that a couple of missed opportunities, some near misses on a couple of throws. I think those are things that we'll continue to improve on just with time on task and just continue to grow the chemistry between Bryce and between the wide receivers.

I think the Chiefs defense, they rushed us really well down there, and they played some nice coverages and complements to the things that we did. So they made it challenging as well. That's kind of life in the red zone when you face a good team that can rush you with four and play different coverages. So they made it challenging certainly from that standpoint.

On the flip side, defensively we kept them to field goals early on, but they got that two-minute touchdown right there at the end of half. They had a nice drive down there on a third and long and came up with a nice throw and catch for a touchdown, which was one that ended up being a difference in the game there. So I think it's just sustaining that part.

Then the Chiefs had a really good day on third down against us, Pat Mahomes kind of extending some plays and finding some guys available. A couple of critical areas that I think we can lock in on and improve on this week.

Q. When you're talking to the guys, how do you sort of balance from a philosophical standpoint the things that went well, the team they went well against, versus it was a loss?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I try not to make it about the opponent. It's got to be about us. It's got to be about our fundamentals and the execution, the things that we're counting on, the consistency of play, and we have to be able to go through it and tell the truth about the things that we did well and the things that we didn't and just go right back to the basics, which has been the message the whole season.

I know that that always works. That's always a place that we should go is let's go inwards with our focus in terms of what we can improve upon and the things that we can build on that we had success with.

Q. Is it tricky, though, to balance that against the human nature of, yeah, that's Patrick Mahomes on the other side, Andy Reid, a team that's had so much success?

DAVE CANALES: Hopefully it becomes kind of the normal message from me to the team that we're going to look at the things that we can control first and foremost, and we can't control what opponent shows up here or that we go to play. Those are the teams that we're focused on on playing from a schematic standpoint.

It really does just come back to our execution and making sure that we're making those plays and trusting each other in those critical moments.

Q. Wanted to ask you, we didn't realize when we talked to you yesterday that Bryce had had a speech to the team in the locker room. What can you tell us about that, and what did that message say to you?

DAVE CANALES: I'm just proud of Bryce, the way he's handled all this and the way that he's progressed on a weekly basis. Each week there's been improvement in the things that he's doing.

As the quarterback, to have a moment in the locker room where you can share your heart, you can share where you're at with all of it. I think it's important that the guys continue to connect that way, and the guys responded positively.

I think that in general the message is this the brand of football that we can play, and on top of that, it's like, okay, now let's get back to work and see what did we miss out there? I feel like there was a lot of meat left on the bone.

So when it shows when you play a version of football where you can be competitive, especially against one of the league's best teams right now, it's still got to be about the finish.

So it was a good moment for the guys to connect. All the guys to a man had that mixed feeling of being sick that this was an opportunity missed and also to know like we are continuing to improve on a weekly basis, which has been our goal.

Q. What's it mean that this team now is at the point where you're really not looking at moral victories. You're really looking at we should have won this game. What does that say about where you are right now?

DAVE CANALES: I just hope that's the expectation of our group. We all work so hard on a weekly basis. We start off and grade the film. We move on to the next opponent with intentionality and just how important all the walk-throughs, the meetings, the practices -- all those things that go into this product is to win. That's the ultimate goal is to find a way to finish and win these games.

So I can feel that that expectation is starting to grow here with our group that we're expecting for these things to lead to the final result that we want, which is the win, and to have that kind of energy and mentality going into the week's preparation, it makes everything matter.

Q. The Chiefs didn't punt until almost the last seven minutes of the game. I know there were a lot of completions, short yard completions into the secondary. Are there any plans to kind of integrate Caleb Farley more into that rotation?

DAVE CANALES: Caleb's been doing a great job. He's certainly earning an opportunity to show what he can do out there, and that will be great as well.

I think, again, it's just a matter of guys like knowing the call, making sure that you're matching in your area. If it's a zone play, making sure you're in your landmarks and rallies up and making those plays. I think a lot of the extra yards are some of the things we're talking about to address this week is making sure that first guy there gets that tackle down, and that's one of the areas we know we can improve from last week.

Q. You guys seem like when you're down at the goal line, you've had a lot of success running behind Rob Hunt. I know, as you self scout, you don't want to have tendencies that the core defensive guys are picking up on. How easy is it, when you need a tough yard, to just run behind 50?

DAVE CANALES: We feel good about the different run schemes we have, to your point. Tendencies aren't always bad when you have something that counters it, and when you're aware of the direction of different types of runs, that can work to your advantage as well.

Rob's just done such a great job of creating movement and avoiding Chuba, just learning the type of patience and where he needs to go with the ball in these different run styles. But having Robert in there, having D-Lew in there on the inside, these guys working together gives us confidence to run the ball and a couple of other little wrinkles in there when we get inside the 5 yard line.

Q. Also, don't know how much tape you've dived into yet, but is it weird looking at the Tampa Bay offense and these guys that you coached running Liam's scheme now?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, a lot of the crossover film, right? Because we're in the same division. So just seeing what a good job Liam's been doing with the group, Baker and those guys finding ways to have success.

It was a little bit more strange early on in the season, but as the season goes on, we're so inundated in the things we're doing and how to grow here, you've got to snap into just like what are our guys doing and how can we improve our processes?

As I start to get rolling on the Bucs defense and the different challenges they present to us from an offensive standpoint, it's just kind of seeing the things that I kind of remembered that they were doing, the wrinkles that they've gotten to since. It's Todd Bowles' defense, and he's not going to sit in the same deal and kind of let you attack him that way. So it's been good to start to like turn the page and get back into the game plan process this week and getting ready for the Bucs.

Q. Just real quick, what's the schedule this week? I guess guys had today off?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we wanted to get a jump start on the game planning, knowing that we were going to have Thursday Thanksgiving afternoon as an afternoon/evening, a good opportunity for the players and coaches to reconnect with families. So we just decided to give the players today off.

They're still coming in and doing all their normal body checks and all that, but to allow us to get a little bit of a jump on it knowing we're going to lose a little bit of an afternoon/evening later on in the week.

Q. I wanted to ask about David Moore, someone you've been with on a few teams now. Based on the film from Sunday but also what you know of him, what's allowed him to have success?

DAVE CANALES: It's his work ethic, it's his availability that's been -- I think the greatest thing I've learned about David over the years is he finds a way to be out there on the field and just he works at it, and he knows what he needs to prepare himself for Sunday, and he makes sure he gets that done.

He'll grab an extra coach. He'll spend a little extra time doing this and that getting his body ready for practice. He takes his practice very seriously. He's been doing special teams stuff. He's been playing different positions from an offensive standpoint for us, and having the familiarity in our system allows him to do that.

And then a guy you can just count on. In those critical third downs, in those pass situations, it really gives confidence to the quarterback, in this case, Bryce, to know that David's going to be where he's supposed to be at the right time and to show up big on a couple of those plays.

So just a guy that I love that I've always been really fond of. That was 2017 I was the receivers coach when we drafted him in Seattle, and to see him grow into this pro, I'm just really proud of what he represents and that he's a part of our team.

Q. Going back real quick to just Bryce against the blitz yesterday, I think it's the most he's been blitzed in his career and ended up having one of his better games against it as well. You talked so much this off-season about wanting him to have that internal clock, how much of that is a product of kind of listening to that clock a little bit more and having that more embedded?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it's just the ownership of the concepts, first and foremost, having answers for different pressures. Where am I going with this ball if they do this? Going through all of those what-if scenarios. And then on top of that, knowing he's got guys out there he can trust.

Xavier's growth, having Thielen back, David Moore out there, Ja'Tavion adding his things, Tommy had a nice catch on a third down. Knowing that the guys are continuing to be on the same page gives him that confidence to play fast. He was able to get to a couple of scrambles and pick up some yards that way in some different situations.

I think all those decisions happen faster the more confident

and comfortable you are with the system and the guys as they work together. So it's really a tribute to the whole group.

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