

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Sunday, December 1, 2024
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Head Coach Todd Bowles

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Tampa Bay Buccaneers 26, Carolina Panthers 23

TODD BOWLES: Hello, good evening.

Q. What can you say about your team's performance to be able to get one out like that?

TODD BOWLES: It was a tough game. The football gods were kind to us. The first half of the season, we didn't finish those games -- I got something in my throat. I'm good. Thank you. First half of the season we wouldn't have finished that game out. Did a heck of a job fighting back all game. It was a tough game. They played tough, we played tough. We made mistakes the first half of the season and this game, we pulled it out. They learned some mental toughness.

Q. Put yourself in a position to win the conference, the division title. How does that make you feel?

TODD BOWLES: Every week we said it's a playoff game, we got to take care of us. It's not going to be easy. As it was today, it's going to be a dog fight every week. We just gotta come ready to play and make less mistakes and our heart's into it and we got to clean up some things, we know that, but it's hard to win in this league. We'll take a win any way we can get it.

Q. Irving has been your hot back for two weeks. How worried about his hip injury and how many production he's giving you?

TODD BOWLES: He had a heck of a game. I think he had over a hundred yards. I know he had over a hundred. Rachaad played well as well. He's got a hip pointer right now. Rachaad finished the game, got the big run at the end so we'll see how he heals this week.

Q. What particular moments showed you that toughness that you thought they didn't really have earlier this season?

TODD BOWLES: The last run, Rachaad got to finish it.

The two minute to tie the ball game in overtime to make it go into overtime, putting the ball down the field where it needed to be. The receiver getting down on the slant with six seconds left, making it three seconds on the clock. Just the awareness that we didn't have in the first half of the year. The young guys were growing. They seemed like they grew up today.

Q. That fumble recovery was pretty big, too.

TODD BOWLES: It was huge. Nelly had a big week. He had a big week.

Q. The offensive line really opened up some holes that Bucky, 40-something yards, he wasn't touched at first until he was 12, 13 yards down the field. Can you talk a little bit about the holes they were able to open up, protection they were able to provide and just their overall play?

TODD BOWLES: They played tough. We talked about it at halftime. We were shooting ourselves in the foot. We were getting false starts. We were getting penalties. We were backing ourself up. Second half, they came out with a mental toughness and they played together and we played as a team and we pulled it out.

Q. How much did your tight ends help in that second half there where it seemed like those rushing yards, those rushing lanes really seemed to open up a lot more for Bucky.

TODD BOWLES: It was huge for the tight ends and the receivers. I mean, they're an extension of the offensive line, those guys practice it just as much and they're just as much a part of it.

Q. How concerned were you with Mayfield's injury? He was only out two plays. The replay, you know, he stumped his foot pretty good.

TODD BOWLES: He's tough. We'll see how he feels this week. I'm pretty sure he's going to be sore, but he's a tough guy. If he can come back and play, he's going to come back and play, but it was good for Kyle to get in there

a step or two and his time is coming, but Bake played a heck of a game. He played a gritty game when he came back in.

Q. Any idea the significance of Mike Edwards, his hamstring injury?

TODD BOWLES: Not at this time.

Q. The defense had some pretty big stops down in their own zone, especially the goal line stand. Can you just talk a little bit about how they were able to stiffen up and turn what could have been touchdowns into field goal opportunities?

TODD BOWLES: It was huge to hold them to three after that pick that got them inside the red zone, and it was huge when we shanked the punt to hold them to three as well. So they came up with some big stops and had some big plays the whole game.

Q. Mike Evans, eight catches, I think 118 yards, a touchdown, which was an absolutely incredibly play. Can you just talk a little bit about his return and what it means to the offense?

TODD BOWLES: He's tough. I mean, he's tough. He's working his way back in. He's feeling good. We got him the ball. He's our bell cow. He's going to help us win.

Q. Third down on offense and also red zone today on offense. Those were challenges. What were some of the things this Carolina defense was doing that made those two categories a little bit more of a challenge?

TODD BOWLES: It was tough. They were filling the lanes on the inside. They were putting a lot of pressure on us up front and switching fronts and switching coverages on us. They made it tough.

Q. What can you say, too, about your team's resilience, to give up that Adam Thielen touchdown and then be able to immediately respond the way they did to keep themselves in the ball game?

TODD BOWLES: We always talk about situational football. We practice it. We preach it. We go through the it several times a week as far as two minutes is concerned. The clock changes all the time, so the patience they had and the effort they had getting down there and the toughness they had with the mental awareness of understanding where the clock was was huge.

Q. And I know that you've always been really complementary of Bryce Young. I know you were last

year when things weren't really going his way and obviously you're coaching the Buccaneers today, but how difficult did he make your job today?

TODD BOWLES: In the first half, he did it with his feet and the second half he did it with his arm, so he's a tough quarterback. They played tough. They played Kansas City tough last week. We knew it was going to be a tough game going in. Just glad we hulled it out.

Q. You have one of the youngest teams in the NFL. Graham Barton has been great all year, Bucky. Jalen McMillan made a big catch late in this game. Can you just talk about some of your rookies, specifically what McMillan's catch means for his future?

TODD BOWLES: He's coming around. Mentally, he's getting comfortable in the offense. He's playing at a high speed. The catches aren't there all the way yet, but we know we can count on him when the big catches come. It's not too big for him, and he's going to help us down the stretch.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you.

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