

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: First of all, just want to say congratulations to Kristi Coleman being named CEO of Tepper Sports & Entertainment. Just in my short time that I've been working with Kristi, just the way she comes every day, she's fired up about game day. First text I get in the morning is happy game day. Super excited about it. Just her leadership means a lot to all of us in this organization.

Then big congrats to SMU and Clemson. Weird kind of saying SMU in the ACC Championship. But SMU and Clemson playing right here in Bank of America Stadium. So really exciting day for those teams as well.

Q. Starting with the loss of Derrick Brown, the run defense has struggled most of the year. With Barkley coming in, how important will it be for the line to stay stout?

DAVE CANALES: Every week, right. It starts with the run game. This is a group -- the Eagles are committed to the run game. Saquon right off the bat a really good offensive line, and a quarterback who can do some things with the zone reads and the RPO game.

It's a big task, and we have to make sure we're looking at it, we're attacking that in practice, and making sure we have a good plan for that.

Q. With the way that they're rolling, are they kind of -- I know you played the Chiefs and a diverse offense, but is this offense even more multi-faceted?

DAVE CANALES: Honestly, the thing I respect and admire about Coach Sirianni is the fundamental principles they play with. The schemes are just sound in any phase, special teams, offense, and defense. They play sound football, they play hard, and it's really cool to see and watch because that's what we want to do. We want to get our systems in place to play that kind of sound, aggressive football.

They do have some different schemes, but they're not trying to fool you. You know what they're going to do, they

just execute at a high level with a lot of talent. It's a great challenge for us this week.

Q. With Hurts, you kind of addressed him a little bit, but he's obviously a difference-maker in the way they operate.

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. A guy that knows how to win games. He's a smart football player, first and foremost, and he knows how to get the ball to his talent, the skill players on the outside. Then when he does tuck it down, he can run, and he can do those things. So a really good football player.

Q. Jalen Coker was focused during practice today. What did you see since Monday that made you confident he can go full go today?

DAVE CANALES: Just pushing the workload, pushing it early in the week, and getting him back out there. We had a great individual period. He ran his routes full speed. He looked great. He's got a different look on his face, like I can tell he feels confident.

He came off of the bye week with some pretty fresh legs and should the injury happen there in practice a couple weeks ago, but he's got himself back to a good place. I can just tell by his demeanor that he's feeling really good. So we're excited to get him back out there.

Q. Is JT trending toward playing this week?

DAVE CANALES: I would hope so, yes. So we still are taking him through a process to make sure we're doing the right thing, the smart thing, but he moved around great today. It was a non-contact football day today, but he moved around great.

Tomorrow we'll be able to play a little more football and see where he's at.

Q. How much can Brooks' kind of weekly progress and workload help you guys lean into that run identity that you've wanted to really establish here?



DAVE CANALES: It would be great, right? The vision of being able to -- for Chuba to get out there and run hard as he wants to, and when Jonathon pops in there, you don't skip a beat. Just to let the progression for Jonathon happen naturally.

You saw his play last week. In the couple of times he was able to touch the ball, you see his confidence. You see some of the skill set come alive, breaking tackles, running hard, those kinds of things that we're counting on. So I just hope he continues to stack one week at a time.

Q. Back on the Eagles run game, Barkley looks like he's a guy that gets stronger as the game goes on. Is that more a testament to him? He's not a real big back. Or more his line kind of wearing teams down?

DAVE CANALES: It's both, and you know I'll always start with what happens up front. This is a really good offensive line that he's playing behind, and it's also the commitment of the run game, where they're going to run it early, they're going to run it late, the whole time.

It's the attrition that takes place that they continue to stick with it and have success that way, and of course it comes back to also making first downs. They've done a good job on third down as well to give them more opportunities to get back to the run game. So it's a commitment.

Q. Had you ever seen a back hurdle a player until a few weeks ago?

DAVE CANALES: Never, not once. That was an incredible play.

Q. Your numbers across the board defensively are better defensively the last three games, except for the run defense. Is that just another sign that you really miss Derrick Brown and don't have the personnel to be what you want to be right now?

DAVE CANALES: You know, these are the guys we're counting on, and it's about playing team defense. It's about tackling together. It's about owning leverage. Give a little shout out today to Coach Tim Lukabu, who presented today on fundamentals. That's our Wednesday presentation. He talked about leverage and the power that comes with owning your leverage, whether it's in the pass game or whether it's in the run game, and showed great examples offensively.

And especially defensively, it's a trust factor to know that each person all along the line is going to play their spot, going to fit their gap, and own their leverage so that the ball bounces back to somebody eventually who's available to

make a tackle.

And then it's finishing on these tackles. It's making sure we get these guys down. We're tackling with our near shoulder and running our feet at contact. It's all of those basic things we've got to continue to press into every week.

Q. Bryce has gone three weeks without any interceptions. What are you seeing out of his play that he's cutting down on mistakes? Is it something schematically that you guys are -- or is it just him making better throws, better plays? What are you seeing?

DAVE CANALES: It's confidence, and it's decisiveness. It's knowing what the concept is, getting a preview of what's happening from a coverage standpoint, and then making quick decisions. If you can play on time, throw to the first open guy, and then progress quickly, get to your scrambles once you're above that 2.7, you activate the second play, as our QB Coach Will Harriger always likes to say, activate the second play, here we go, baller mode.

He's getting to those things, and he's finding the down and finding ways to win. That's my message to quarterback that's I've been talking to forever is there's a win in every play. Sometimes it's that on time completion. Sometimes it's the off schedule play. Sometimes it's the throwaway. Sometimes it's the sack and the play with the ball that got us.

There's different ways to win the down so that we can continue to have opportunities, and he's just doing a really great job of being decisive.

Q. Robert Hunt said after the game with the close losses the team has to learn how to win those games. What does that mean to you? What does that look like learning how to win?

DAVE CANALES: It's about the focus that has to be -- it's got to be on point all the way through the finish. Do right longer than the opponent. Can we continue to execute all the way through the finish of the game? That's where I've seen us have great focus for most of the game, but in those critical situations, the bigger the moment, the smaller the focus. It's about your fundamentals. It's about your footwork, your hand placement. It's about owning your landmarks, all those things, and just executing and having that mentality that, if I just do my job consistently, that we'll win.

So I think that it comes from just experience and confidence playing together knowing you're going to be in these types of situations, to be comfortable with those



situations, be comfortable with having to go down and try to win the game in a two-minute situation, be comfortable with having a lead and finishing in the four-minute. Defensively getting the people off the field and executing.

I think that's what Rob was alluding to, and I think that's the message I had to our group is we'll be here in these situations again, guys. The bigger the moment, the smaller the focus. We don't need great plays. We just need normal plays. Do your job, and that leads to winning.

Q. The Eagles have two rookies, Mitchell and DeJean, that really kind of pop off tape. When you watch, what have you seen from them, and why have they been able to make an impact so quickly?

DAVE CANALES: Starting with Cooper DeJean, a really smart player, physical. He challenges things, he reroutes things with his hands. He owns his leverage. He plays really well in the system, shows up aggressively to tackle and really competes. You see him competing. Even when a guy seems like he's got the catch, he's competing trying to rake the ball out all the way to the ground. So I think it starts out with that and his effort.

With Quinyon Mitchell, he's a talent. He's big, he's fast, he's got quickness, all those things, ideal length there on the outside and really fits the scheme well, a scheme that we're familiar with.

They're doing a great job, and I've got to tip the cap to the coaches because I know there's a lot of hard work that goes into getting rookies to play at a high level at this point in their career.

Q. What are you seeing out of Evero? I know I've asked you about him before. What have you seen during the first seven or eight games and these last three games to say, hey, that was the right guy to bring in here? Have you guys seen the players improve?

DAVE CANALES: I think it's just the consistency of his messaging. It's echoing all through the building. It's talking about the fundamentals, fundamental execution and not backing off of those things. This is how we do things. This is how we play these calls. This is how we tackle. There's a plan and a play for all of this.

I've just watched Ejiro through this season just stay consistent to the messaging, and that's where the progress has continued to stack up. If we can keep the principles the same and our messaging simple, then the guys have something that they can really grasp onto.

Q. Did you use the Al-Shaair hit as a teaching moment

here?

DAVE CANALES: I have not.

Q. Even with your quarterbacks too and sliding?

DAVE CANALES: No, I have not showed that to the team that yet.

Q. Bryce last year sort of famously or infamously conceded that he's not good at sliding. Is there anything you all have tried to do with that since he's gotten here?

DAVE CANALES: He's got his ways of getting it done. I think you've seen him move around and find ways to avoid those contacts and those big hits, and that's just been his style.

He doesn't have a lot of baseball in his background, but that is definitely something we talk about and just making sure you have a plan to protect the quarterback. I try to remind him, you're the quarterback. It's kind of a -- I try to keep it light, but at the same time, it's serious.

When you're heading into the end zone, when you're heading out of bounds, when you're in the middle of the field, having a plan for where those defenders are coming at you.

Q. Did you send the Thielen non-catch to the league, and did you get an answer that was maybe different than what we got earlier in the week?

DAVE CANALES: We just sent in the ruling. We wanted just clarification. I haven't seen the response yet, but just a clarification of was it a catch/no catch, or was it inbounds/out of bounds that was in question on the original incomplete call? Because that then can kind of direct a little bit of the feedback.

Where I was trying to sell like we saw control and just kind of reiterating the fact that the ball can move, but as long as you don't lose control.

But the camera angles were inconclusive, so again, like we talked about before, I think, if they called it a touchdown, they would have stayed with it. They called it incomplete, they're going to stay with it based on the information they had.

Q. Is there any information about the lack of camera angles? Because I know they said there were less cameras used in that game.

DAVE CANALES: No, other than just knowing that in primetime games you're going to have a lot more angles available. Whatever your normal coverage is, that's what we have to go off of.

Here's the thing too. With that, sometimes it works to your advantage. Sometimes it works for the other team as well. It's fair for both teams in those situations.

Q. Did your guys in the box have a clear view of -- a couple years ago one of your predecessors said that the coaches box was actually, because of the construction and the layout of the stadium, couldn't see the video board. What kind of feedback have you gotten from your guys on that?

DAVE CANALES: I have not been -- that has not been an issue for us.

Q. Raheem Blackshear is among those who are under Pro Bowl consideration for his return specialty. What have you seen from him this year? Just generally speaking, how has he stood out as a returner to you?

DAVE CANALES: As a returner, but also in the coverage unit. I think the biggest thing I can say about Raheem is just his willingness to do whatever it takes to try to help the Panthers win, and that's his commitment. Whatever we ask him to do and whatever role it is -- he made a tackle last week, really nice tackle the week before, just kind of helping out on one of the kickoff coverage units.

Then he's been the returner as well, and he's done a great job by and large of taking care of the ball and making sure that we're secure in the yards that we have. I can't say enough about Raheem, just battling and just trying to find a way to help us.

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