

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Sunday, December 15, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Head Coach Mike McCarthy

### Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Cowboys 30, Panthers 14

**Q. Coming off what you said was one of the heaviest locker rooms you had in that Cincinnati game, short week, lost another couple of starters before you got here, just how have you felt this team responded across the board? MIKE McCARTHY: I really felt they stayed the course. It was a quick week obviously coming off the Monday night game. Had a good week of prep.**

Obviously Trevon's news was a bit of a surprise. Yeah, we had some guys go down today too, but they're doing a great job as a football team. They just keep playing.

**Q. Just picking back up on the resiliency of this team and certainly going back to Monday night and even today you have a great first half. You fumble the ball, give them momentum going into the second half, and then you come back right out there and get the ball right back and just score.**

MIKE McCARTHY: We've always been a resilient bunch. That's a great example of it because, frankly, the way the first half went, we felt like we were really in charge. I think we were plus-six big-play category at that time.

That was really the only two plays they made in the first half. The fumble recovery was self-inflicted, and they hit the big play on the broken coverage.

But, yeah, they were good at halftime, and we have to play better moving forward. Obviously we have Tampa Bay coming in next. Too many penalties. We have to take care of the football, but the take-away is outstanding.

I thought the defense really set the tone for us in the first half. Turp is magnificent and special teams. The field position battle -- I didn't see the field position battle, but I assume we were ahead there.

Plus-three turnover ratio. Those are the basics that we want to play to. I think we had 20 more total plays than

they did. I don't know what the time of possession came out, but that's the way we want to play. We want to play balanced on offense, get our trips to the plate in the run game, and be smart in the passing game.

**Q. What did you make of the way Cooper rebounded after the fumble?**

MIKE McCARTHY: Yeah, I thought his two touchdown throws were huge, big-time throws. The loop pass was something that they ruled a coverage to the close side. We call it the nub side.

Obviously had a good coverage for that particular play, and he just extended the play, had great patience, and hit J.T. in the corner of the end zone. I thought that was a huge, huge play. No different than the second one to Jalen Brooks.

Love his poise. He commands the huddle. Keeps us in really good plays. You can see that throughout the day, particularly how we ran the ball just because this defense is very challenging. They do a phenomenal job testing you us, especially on a short week. So a lot of credit to our players for managing that.

**Q. I think Osa the first two drives I guess that they had in the third quarter, what has he meant to your defense? What did he mean to you guys today?**

MIKE McCARTHY: I think Osa is up on that wall where you are looking for examples for what a pro is, for what a Dallas cowboy is. Tremendous work ethic. Same guy every day. Just has one gear. He always plays wide open. Osa gives it up for us every single day.

**Q. CeeDee Lamb, it's another 1,000 yard season for him. More so, the way he's played these few weeks dealing with the shoulder, taking big hits and still producing, what have you seen from him?**

MIKE McCARTHY: He is just a tough, talented, dynamic football player. You can't find enough ways to get him the ball, and the beauty of CeeDee is you can line him up in the backfield ten times and hand it to him. He's a natural

runner with the football too. I go back to his rookie year. He was our punt returner.

So he plays every position in the receiver room, and we just have to continue to find ways to get him the ball.

**Q. How important has it been to have him when you haven't had Dak and Cooper has to come in there and start to have somebody that's established like CeeDee?**

MIKE McCARTHY: Definitely. He's a feature premiere player for us. He's a quarterback's best friend. He's easy to throw the ball to. He has great body control.

When he gets even, he's leading with the DB. That's what you look for in your No. 1 receiver. He's everything you ever wanted and more.

**Q. Rico, three straight games, three straight career highs in rushing yards. Compared to how it was the start of the season, what do you think has changed or flipped that switch the last three weeks to really get him going?**

MIKE McCARTHY: Just the combination of his running style and the run blocking unit. I think we're definitely in sync, and I just think, like any good run game, you need the attempts.

Our guys have gotten into rhythm. We've had a number of line-up changes throughout the season. Just again today with the number of guys that went down. You know, he's doing a really good job, breaks tackles. He has a violent run style. His courses and his decision-making has been excellent.

**Q. What did you start to see kind of I guess maybe the light go on a little bit with Cooper? He's had eight touchdown passes the last four games. When did you start to see that progression?**

MIKE McCARTHY: Cooper is a quarterback that you would want every new quarterback to work with. I mean, Cooper is so humble and same guy every single day, but super smart. He has a very high understanding of the game of football. He's been in a number of different systems. So I always think that's very beneficial.

So he just brings a lot of experience to the quarterback room. On top of it, he plays that way. The game is never -- it's never too big for him. He's very situationally disciplined. I think it's a huge part of how we're playing now because we don't back off anything from a volume standpoint, from a game-planning process. He gives us

that flexibility.

**Q. You've talked about Rico at times, We wish we could have got him more carries. Have you looked back at games and seen where maybe there were some opportunities to do that, or was that usually just game script getting away from you and you couldn't do it?**

MIKE McCARTHY: I think the games we did not have the opportunity to run the football, those are conversations you have in-game. Those were three-score deficits early in games that we went to two minute.

We could just stepped up the run game and maybe lost by ten, but based on time -- and, yeah, I don't think that correlates. It's great to be playing balanced. The best thing we're doing as a football team is we're taking the ball away, and we're taking care of it. We still gave one away today that shouldn't have been given away.

So that was our biggest Achilles heel in those early games. The numbers reflect that. So we're plus-3 today, and I think it gives us minus-5 for the season. To play winning football, especially in December, you have to win that turnover ratio.

**Q. How much pride do you take in their not quitting and still giving this type of effort, and what do you attribute that to?**

MIKE McCARTHY: I'm a realist, so I take a lot of pride in just the fact that -- I have a lot of pride in the commitment that we have to one another. It shows up. Monday through Saturday is the hardest part. Sundays, I mean, this is what we live for to get out here and compete against our NFL teams.

I just love the way they stay after it every single day, and that's a credit to the coaches and the players. We got a big one now. Obviously they're all big, but we fully expected to win this game. It was a tough one Monday night, but you can't look back. You just continue to grow, stack success.

So we won three out of four, and we obviously know the path that's been cut for us.

**Q. Defensively, only had one yard in the third quarter. Do you remember being part of stuff like that?**

MIKE McCARTHY: No, I do not. Yeah, it's a four-quarter game, but yeah. I wish they would do it every quarter.

**Q. You mentioned Diggs at the beginning. Can you walk us through the timeline and how that all went**

**down and when you guys knew it was going to be...**

MIKE McCARTHY: Yeah, it's something that he's been dealing with the knee injury. This is something that occurred in the game, so he went in for the MRI. We received the bad news.

That's a huge loss obviously, and partially you just feel terrible for Trevon. It's two years in a row with a season-ending knee surgery. That's a tough one.

**Q. So this is something that came up during the game. Not something that he's been dealing with all season, that knee?**

MIKE McCARTHY: I mean, he's been on the injury report at various times.

**Q. Yeah, but it's not -- it's not a continuation of what he's been dealing with? This is something that happened in the game Monday?**

MIKE McCARTHY: Correct.

**Q. Mike, with losing DeMar on Monday, it was demoralizing because of how good a player he has been, but for locker room in general. For Marist to Eric to come away with two take-aways and the two on the ground, what does that show you about their resilience, especially in a short week?**

MIKE McCARTHY: They're good football players. I know they're young, but just can't say it enough about young players when they get opportunities.

You can see it in the limited roles and the times whether it's special teams or just different subgroups. I think, also, with Eric Kendricks and what he has gone through and for him to be here today just speaks volumes about him as a man.

Then Marist, to be able to train at both positions throughout the week, there's just so much that goes into the preparation part of this. I'm just proud of all those guys.

**Q. You talk about Rush's poise a lot, but that unforced fumble and that sequence with them scoring. Did you talk to him in the locker room? Do you feel he can just handle it himself? Was there any sort of...**

MIKE McCARTHY: Me specifically, no, but we're talking all the time. I think our coaches are connected with our players. We have a network and communication regardless of what happens on a series.

We're talking about everything. You know, every play is

looked at. Every play is discussed. We set the plate for the next series.

We're emphasizing ball security all the time. We did great ball drills every single day this week. Trust me, everybody knows, especially the individual when a turnover happens. It's obviously not what they want to do or what anyone else wants, so you just have to get back at it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

