

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Cooper Rush

Visitors Postgame Press Conference



Cowboys 30, Panthers 14

Q. Can you start by talking about the fumble, what happened on that play, and just the way you and the offense seemed to respond after that early in the third quarter, if one led to the other in any way or just kind of break it all down?

COOPER RUSH: Yeah, it was a frustrating one. Thinking of the first half, we were moving the ball, doing whatever we wanted to do. So to end the first half that way, I was trying not to let them ruin my day.

That one is on me. I don't know what's happening. I have to figure that one out with the zone read stuff.

Like you said, happy that we battled back in the third quarter. We had a big third quarter for us. The past few weeks we've been able to come out in the third quarter and get some of your stuff done.

Q. Everyone always talks about your poise. Was it hard for you to stay poised in that minute? Were you a little harder on yourself than you normally are for that fumble and that situation? Like you said, the first half was -- you had things going.

COOPER RUSH: That one was frustrating. Definitely when you go to halftime, you have more time to think about it, but once you're out there, it's back to executing. You're in and out of the huddle. You have all the communication things. You're not really thinking about it.

Q. Your first three touchdown gain, is that something you noticed coming off the field?

COOPER RUSH: Yeah, I was happy about that one. Like I said, I had that fumble stuck in my mind still, so I was happy to at least have something that I could hold on to.

Q. You've seen Rico from start to finish and now him being able to really put it together the past few games. What do you attribute that to?

COOPER RUSH: Yeah, he's in a real rhythm. I think he's really in a rhythm with the guys up front, read and blocks, cutting here, cutting there. Our communication and coordination up front has been tremendous the last few weeks.

Brock Hoffman is really in there leading the charge, talking. Guys are on the same page. We're coordinated. When you are coordinated, you have a chance. You give yourself a chance. Rico can break tackles. There's not free runners, things like that.

The whole group along with the tight ends are talking a lot better, and I think that's contributing to the run game.

Q. Brock was talking about it. He said you've talked with him about there are seven or eight guys at once maybe undrafted players at once on the field on offense. Can you talk about the mindset there of just kind of playing with a chip on your shoulder and what that means to see these guys succeed?

COOPER RUSH: We talked about that one day. It's probably one of my favorite memories of playing football in the NFL. It's cool. I think we had seven guys out there undrafted at one point, or many times they're out there. We've been rolling with them again.

It just shows the NFL, they'll find you. If you can play, you'll play. A lot of the league is built on late round, undrafted guys. You come in undrafted, but people forget in the NFL you're allowed to get better.

I think a lot of guys get better. They spend time with their craft and start producing, and guys are playing together.

Q. Fourth straight year that CeeDee is going over 1,000 yards receiving. As you've connected with him these last few weeks, what has that been like for you?

COOPER RUSH: He's unbelievable. A couple of throws today he takes for 20 yards, a screen there, a screen there. The adjustment he makes on the touchdown throw, it's just elite-level instincts that a lot of guys don't have at that level.



Just pretty easy to throw to, and got to get him the ball.

Q. Just the significance of that touchdown pass to open the third quarter after they forced a fumble on the very first play and then capitalizing on it there and what that play was and what you saw?

COOPER RUSH: Yeah, the way our defense is getting the ball right now, we've got to capitalize when they get us the ball. It's another game where they're getting turnovers, getting the short fields. High emphasis on complementary football and turning those into touchdowns.

Came out of the fake. I didn't expect to throw a touchdown. Hopefully just have junkie look, and J.T. is running back there. Kind of saw a safety in no man's land, and threw it away kind of. I was like, Maybe he'll catch it, and he goes up and caught it right where he could get it. He tapped his feet. It was a great play by him.

Q. The one to Jalen later in the half, can you describe that play?

COOPER RUSH: Yeah, they kind of had it gloved. Took away even the check-downs. Scrambled right on that particular play. You'll see, did not want to scramble right. Everything is going this way, so it's kind of an "oh crap" moment.

Then Jalen Brooks, tremendous job. He was screaming across the back line of the end zone to get in my vision there where I'm thinking possible throw-away. He's ripping and just throw it out there for him. He made a great catch and made the play for his first touchdown.

Q. Can you talk about the team resiliency? At the end of the day you had a big change in momentum at the end of the half to come back to regroup at halftime and the second half play your best football. You did not quit and did not get down on yourselves.

COOPER RUSH: Yeah, I think both sides of the ball showed it. We fumble and messed that up. They go down and score on one play. Then we come out first or second play at the half. We get a fumble. Flushed it; onto the next play.

I think we all knew we were playing well. We just kind of were shooting ourselves in the foot. So when we got back out there in the third quarter, we were really excited to keep going and do our job and things would turn.

Q. A lot was made about the Panthers being a favorite for the first time in two years. Was that talked about in your locker room at all before the game?

COOPER RUSH: Not much. I mean, we don't pay attention too much to that. You saw it, and you knew it, but it wasn't anything crazy.

Q. Your defense obviously pretty banged up right now, but you've gone against them in training camp, scout team, all that stuff. Just what have you seen from them when they are clicking as they have been in recent weeks?

COOPER RUSH: Yeah, Zim does a lot there on defense to really kind of -- puts a lot on the QB, challenges the quarterback. Those guys are very coordinated right now it looks like, and they're flying around.

You disrupt the pass game by getting after the QB, and they're getting their hands on the ball, and they're being violent and taking it away. That's huge. We have to capitalize on it.

Q. Do you feel like this is your best stretch of football in your career right now, this last four games?

COOPER RUSH: I think I'm a better player than I was in '22 for sure. I think I have some fundamentals cleaned up. I've been around a long time, but getting starts matters. You do learn every game, so that's important.

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