

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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**Dan Morgan**

**Dave Canales**

Draft Day Press Conference



guy that has 18 touchdowns the past two years, so he puts the ball in the end zone. Obviously that's something that we want to do.

**Q. Do you view him as a Day 1 impact starter?**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely, he's going to have to work for it. He certainly comes in just like everybody else and comes into a talented group.

Probably the thing I'm most excited about is the further we dug in, the pro day, all the postseason work, just getting to know the guy, spending time with him. We had him here on a 30 visit to be able to spend a little bit more time and just making sure he was the right fit for our team. The type of players we're looking for, they love playing ball. They love to work on their craft, and it really shows up.

Dan and I just the last couple of days as we're getting ready for this pick, we're just nitpicking. So I put my receiver coach hat on and just watched his pro day and watched just his route craft, the way that he can reduce his surface in the top of routes as a 6'4" guy, the way he comes back to the ball, some of the things that you look for as a great starting point for a receiver.

So giving us that good size element, the red zone target, a lot of things to be excited about. Something that was really cool for us to just come together on and kind of knew, unless somebody blew us out of the water with something, we weren't going to let our guy pass. It was a great moment for us.

**Q. The additions that you guys were able to add on the defensive side of the ball with free agency, how much did that impact your draft board?**

DAVE CANALES: I mean, you certainly take it all into consideration, but like Dan said, we follow the board. You rank the players how you like them and where the talent is at, and so you just stay true to it, and it comes right to you.

Some of those picks right before us, really thought the fifth pick was a big moment for us. Kind of like what was going to happen here that was going to help us get our guy at

DAN MORGAN: First of all, we're super excited about our eighth pick. Getting Tet, he's somebody that we obviously really liked. Thought he could really add a different dimension to our offense and just add another playmaker to the offensive side of the ball.

Not only a great player, but you know, he's a great kid and somebody that Dave and I really value. So we're excited to have him in the building and excited to get going with him.

**Q. Will you tell us about some of the calls that you were fielding? We heard that you were fielding some calls for the No. 8 pick.**

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, we had a few calls. Obviously you entertain everything, and at the end of it, we wanted to get our guy, and we're excited about it.

**Q. Why a receiver at this point versus defense, which you said was a big need coming into the offseason?**

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, it's still a need, and we have eight more picks. We wanted to add the best player. We wanted to follow the board, follow our board, of who we thought was going to help us the most up there.

Again, we got our guy, and we're excited about it.

**Q. Dan, you said he adds a different dimension. Actually, for both of you guys. What is that dimension, and was there any concern about kind of his lack of elite speed?**

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, I think he has really good play speed. I think the thing that pops off the tape about Tet is just how smooth he is, his body control, his ability to adjust to all types of throws, his catch radius, and his hands are elite.

He catches everything outside his frame, and he can win the jump ball down the field and in the red zone. He's a

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that point? With Cleveland taking Mason Graham right there in that spot, the board kind of felt like Tet is going to make it. We're holding our breath right there for a couple of more picks, but really excited about that.

**Q. You guys have preached size and length. Obviously McMillan fits those molds. I'm just curious, how does he fit into the wide receiver room from a complementary standpoint outside of notices attribute use?**

A. Yeah, shoot, you got like a basketball team going on right now. There's different attributes. Xavier, the power and speed he brings. Thielen's craftsmanship. You saw Jalen Coker come on strong last year. Tet all of a sudden brings in this really long, 6'4" target to kind of round out the group. It's a really cool group to think about.

Obviously like right off the bat, Brad and Rob come down the hall, and I'm like, All right, boys, here we go. Pretty exciting.

**Q. You're a former wide receivers coach. Brad is a former wide receivers coach. Rob, all his accolades. You guys have invested so heavily in wide receiver. From a development standpoint, how much pressure does that put on you guys to kind of deliver and make that group kind of ascend?**

DAVE CANALES: I love that. I love for the pressure to be on us to utilize these guys with their talents, the unique abilities they have to fit them in the core of our scheme to continue to find out who we are and to find that identity in the pass game.

Then, of course, just from a team support, just getting football players, getting dogs, getting playmakers. We really felt like we got that in Tet.

**Q. How much did the way Bryce finished the season and seeing that uptick, how much did that go into saying, Look, we have defensive needs, but we have to get this quarterback another weapon?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I mean, I think for me and for Dan as well, we've got to do what's best for the team, and the best thing we can do is to evaluate our board to stay true to where we have guys at. When you really have conviction about a player and they come to you, the alternatives, like the trade alternatives and all those things, they have to blow you out of the water to pass up on all the work that that's been done. Not just myself and Dan, but his whole staff. My staff as well just looking at these guys and being able to evaluate them so that it's a collective decision so that we all go into this thing with a commitment

to make the Panthers better.

**Q. You guys both had said individually this offseason that you were good with the receiver group you have. Clearly you felt it needed another piece, though.**

DAN MORGAN: No, I wouldn't so much say that. I just think, again, like you follow your board, and you take the best players, and Tet was high on our board. We obviously felt really good about him, and he was there for the taking. So we didn't want to pass up on a good player.

**Q. Is there a particular moment where you guys looked at each other and said, Okay, this is our guy?**

DAN MORGAN: I felt it was about every time we watched him. It was another great catch and just the way that he -- it's effortless the way he catches the ball, and he catches everything outside his frame, and he's just a great receiver that is super fluid. His body control is some of the best I've seen in a while. Yeah, he's exciting.

DAVE CANALES: And the one thing that I really learned from Dan just through the process is the biggest challenge, which is all still new to me as a head coach, is to get into the horizontal comparisons of offensive players versus defensive players. When you start looking player for player and the dynamic way that they move, the dynamic way they play and having to try to compare them across different positions apples to oranges, was really kind of where we came back in the process and kept putting him on. Then you're, like, really excited, and you almost can't turn the tape off. It stood out in such a special way that he made the decision easy for us.

**Q. Two years in a row wide receiver, first round. You are turning into an offensive guy there?**

DAN MORGAN: I don't think so. I'm turning into a guy that just wants to bring good football players in here, and it's just another opportunity for bring a great player in here.

**Q. Is there a chance you're not done today?**

DAN MORGAN: No. Yeah. No, I think we're done, yeah. I meant like, no, we're not.

**Q. When you look at last year's draft --**

DAN MORGAN: Your eyes got really big.

**Q. I was, like, oh, okay, we're going to be busy. When you look at the way you guys handled last year's draft, now that this first pick is in, what lessons can you possibly take from last year that you might apply now**



## to Day 2 and Day 3?

DAN MORGAN: I think it's just going back, re-assessing your board and trying to figure out what guy is going to fall to us at 57 and then just kind of weighing the options of, Hey, should we trade up, should we stay where we're at, should we trade back?

I just think all options are on the table again with this second pick, and we're just going to attack it and we're going to follow the board.

### **Q. Would you have traded back? Did you have a --**

DAN MORGAN: We had a lot of people sniffing around. I think it would have had to be something above and beyond for us to kind of pull off this pick, but yeah, that's where we were.

### **Q. You had some good conversations leading up to the draft with him. Can you talk about the cultural fit that he might be with this team?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, and then speaking to the lessons learned from one year to the next. We look at the guys that we brought in last year, and they fit the profile of what we want for Panthers football players. So that's really that commitment and kind of looking at the guys that just -- the more that we watched him, the more that you see the different parts of his craft show up, you can tell it's a guy that works on it a lot.

For a 6'4" guy to be able to reduce at the top of his routes the way he does, that takes work. His speed cuts and all those things, you just kind of see somebody that's working on his game.

So I think just taking note out of that and just knowing that we're getting another person that fits into what we're trying to do. The guy is a baller, and there's a simple way to look at it when you watch film, and the ballers show up. They make plays in big moments, and they're always looking to do something special.

### **Q. The defense had historical struggles last year. With the offensive wide receiver group you have two guys already above 6 foot, 6'3". What would you say to the fans about what you believe about this defense not taking a pick in the defensive side of the ball this early in the draft? What is your message to them about what you believe about this defense?**

DAVE CANALES: Same thing. We're trying to do the best thing for the Panthers, and that's our commitment. If we can stay true to our evaluation process and follow the

board and be disciplined about that over time, we'll select the players that we have conviction on, that we're all on the same page with, all on the same board -- I mean, all on board with to make those choices. I think the consistency of the players that we're looking for is what we're after.

I think that it's been said in different ways. If you start to chase needs and you are not just being true to your process and true to the players that come to you and the ones you have belief in, I think that sometimes that you can get yourself a little bit out of whack and not in alignment for what we're trying to do.

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, and we did attack our defensive needs through free agency. Again, we have eight picks left, and our board has a lot of defensive guys on there as well. It's definitely not something that we're going to neglect.

### **Q. I think you answered this already, Dave, I apologize if you did, but have you communicated with Bryce yet?**

DAVE CANALES: Right away. Right away. We got him on speaker phone and talked to Bryce. He's fired up. Another Southern California guy. They were in different times, but Servite High School and Mater Dei are rivals, and they're kind of in the same area. So there's no love lost there.

I think for the culture of what we're trying to do, that part is just a bonus.

### **Q. A little bit similar question, but on something like this do you communicate to Xavier Legette who might feel a little threatened by this pick?**

DAVE CANALES: Not right now. Right now we're celebrating this moment with our guys. When Tet gets here, again, tomorrow will be an opportunity. He'll be in here at some point. So I'm sure the fans will be able to meet him at some point tomorrow, but right now it's just about celebrating this moment. When he comes in here, he's a panther. He's one of us.

### **Q. Why is this pick so evident, Legette and his early development?**

DAN MORGAN: Xavier, he wants to win. That's ALL Xavier cares about. Just going back to that question. Xavier wants to win, and he's hungry to go out there and compete and show up big this year, and I know he's been working his butt off, and we're excited about him, and we're excited about the team and the direction that we're headed.

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