

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dan Morgan

Dave Canales

Draft Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Would you like to start off with an opening statement or kick it off with questions?

DAN MORGAN: Obviously we're really excited about this draft class. A lot of hard work was put in by the scouts, by the support staff, the coaches. It's just a group effort.

We felt like everything went really good. We're really pleased with how the draft turned out and just excited to keep building this team towards something special. Yeah, we're excited.

Do you have anything to say?

DAVE CANALES: Just culture fit guys. All the work that we did on the film, first and foremost, the football players, and then just thanking Eddie and Duce for the background and making sure that these guys fit into what we're trying to do here.

Just excited that, again, we got guys that fit our culture and the play style that we're looking for.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Dan and Dave, either or both, looked like a heavy emphasis on SEC defensive guys and an offensive guy. What is it about that conference, and have the NIL and the consolidation of some of these bigger conferences just made a bet on the SEC an even better bet these days?

DAN MORGAN: I don't think it was done on purpose in terms of the SEC stuff. It just kind of turned out that way. Obviously there's some really good players in that conference, and we just so happened to draft them.

I think we got some good ones that we're really excited about.

Q. I wanted to ask you, is there an emphasis on this

team -- you have two young receivers. You were trying to go young and develop this team for the long haul moving on from some of the older guys you had to get to kind of get where you are this past year?

DAVE CANALES: Honestly, the draft makes you younger every year. Really just looking for guys that fit in the profile that we're looking for. You know, just by default, the nature of it, that's the way it works out, but for us it was just about every year we have this opportunity to go in there and to challenge our roster and the players that we selected in different spots give us the ability to create competition in each of those rooms to hopefully just elevate the entire performance of the group.

Q. You said, Dan, before the draft that you feel like everything was set up in free agency, so you guys didn't have to reach and you didn't have to take somebody you really weren't looking at. Do you feel like the way this went with the number of offensive players, taking two wide receivers, that's kind of the case of taking best player available?

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, definitely. We wanted to go by the board and just kind of follow the board, and I feel like that's when you have your best draft is when you trust your gut, you stick with your board, and you take the best players.

That's what we did this draft, and we'll continue to do in the future. We feel like it worked out really well for us.

Q. Finally, what's the biggest surprise that you ran into this weekend?

DAN MORGAN: What's that?

Q. The biggest surprise, a player that you weren't expecting to get, biggest thing that happened that really surprised you or stood out?

DAN MORGAN: I don't know if there's anything specific that kind of stood out, but I think there was definitely some players that we drafted that I think maybe we had a little higher on the board than where we drafted them. So I think maybe we got a little lucky in a sense, but hey, we're



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really excited that it happened, and we got our guys.

DAVE CANALES: I can only imagine that happens across the league, as all of our boards are going to be different, and we value different things, attributes as players, attributes as the person that we're looking for. So there's just this crazy way of all 32 boards just kind of working themselves out and meshing to where you look up, and there's no players up there where they shouldn't be, and if one is sticking out, that means we valued them a little more than somebody else might have. That was a cool learning process for me too.

Q. Considering the contract status of Moton and Ickey and not choosing a natural tackle during the draft, are you secure in extending Moton, or did a tackle just not fall into place for you guys?

DAN MORGAN: First off, we are going to up Ickey's fifth year option, just to get that out of the way. I just actually notified him and figured I would get it out of the way before I talked to you guys. We're going to pick Ickey's option up.

Yeah, we love Taylor. Taylor is obviously a really good player. We're excited about him and this season. From there, we'll get together, and we'll figure out the future, but right now we're focused on the now.

Q. Was there a tackle that you liked and just didn't go your way, or you just liked players better?

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, there were some tackles that we had on the board that we liked. It just kind of worked out the way that we drafted a different position.

Again, we were following our board and kind of sticking with that, and it just so happened that a tackle wasn't the top player at the time.

Q. Dan and Dave, this is for both of you. I know it's weird to go straight to a sixth-round pick, but Jimmy is kind of a unique player. Can you tell me what he brings to not just the receiving room, but the return game?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he's a dynamic punt returner. It's really fun to watch, but he's more than that. If you look at his body of work and just as a true receiver, he's got an explosive element to him. He can stretch the field. He's got run-after-catch ability. So I think just that whole thing.

Then we brought him in and visited with him and talked to the guy, and I think we can all say collectively we fell in love with the guy and just the passion for the game. You can just feel his energy and excitement and gratitude for

the opportunities that he's gotten.

Whenever you get a guy like that that's got a lot of depth of character, it's really exciting to pair that up with the playing ability.

DAN MORGAN: He's not the biggest guy, but he has a love for the game, and he plays with a chip on his shoulder. We're looking for those type of guys. Just another guy that we're excited to have.

Q. Then the other question is, I mean, obviously you guys want to host a kicker competition. Undrafted free agency will eventually start. You can't contact those guys technically right now. How aggressive do you think you're going to be in undrafted free agency with that position?

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, I think not just that position, but yeah, we'll be aggressive at that position and others as well. We need to fill our roster out to the 90-man limit, and we're going to sign the best players, and we'll be aggressive in post-free agency just like we were during the draft. We'll stick to that philosophy.

Q. You guys drafted Lathan Ransom, the safety out of Ohio State. Is it fair to say that y'all have a type when it comes to investing in that safety position, considering he's a physical guy, kind of like Tre'von Moehrig that you got in free agency?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I think it's the play style. First and foremost, you look for the guys that exhibit that kind of effort and juice, you know, the enthusiasm we talk about, toughness, intelligent play that shows up, playing smart, and a finisher.

When you get a chance to talk to this guy, they won a championship for a reason. They had a core of really talented but also really driven players, and we just love being able to bring somebody that has that winning mentality into the building.

DAN MORGAN: And I'll add to that. Just watching Lathan's tape, just the way that he plays the game, again be, it goes back to the passion, the energy, and the love of the game that he plays with. You could tell he just enjoys the physical aspects of the game and just being out there with his teammates celebrating each other and just having fun. He's exciting to watch on tape.

Q. Then y'all drafted four offensive guys and four defensive guys. Was striking that balance just happenstance, or was that a priority coming into the weekend?



DAN MORGAN: I think it just happened that way. Obviously we said we want to draft the best players, and I think it really just turned out that way.

Q. Dave, you mentioned the character and culture fits right at the top. Anything with play style or traits that was kind of a common theme running through these eight guys?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, all the play style things we talked about. These are guys that, first and foremost, play hard, and they have energy about them, about the way they go about their business, and that was why it was so important to meet these guys in person and make sure that you can feel the passion for the game and in different aspects, excited about different parts of it.

You just go through, and you want to make sure -- we wanted to make sure that we checked those boxes, first and foremost, so that we know what we're getting. I think I kind of talked about this the other day, but being around our players here in the building for a year now, being able to see the expectations that our players set, the standards that our guys set in their specific position rooms and then for the units, you know, just kind of making sure that the guys we're bringing in are as serious about winning or as serious about attacking the day as the guys that we have.

Q. One last one for Dan. After taking T-Mac Thursday night, was there a pretty concerted effort to sort of make the next couple of picks or the high picks devoted to defense, and do you think you would get enough for defense? I know you didn't get a corner or an off-ball linebacker.

DAN MORGAN: I think there was a plan and process in place. We knew the strengths and the weaknesses of the draft, and we felt like in that second round that we weren't going to get a real quality receiver that we were looking for.

In terms of philosophy, drafting T-Mac we knew that there was going to be a lot of edge rushers in this draft and that we would be able to capitalize there in the second and third rounds. I think we knew the board. I think we had a feel for the league, and at the end of the day it really worked out well for us to draft a receiver first and then two edge rushers that we think are really damn good players.

It worked out really, really well for us.

Q. This is for both of you guys. I wanted to ask about Cam Jackson. Adding somebody of that size after going out signing Turk, signing Bobby in free agency, how do you see all those new pieces kind of fitting

together, and are there a couple of combinations of guys you're looking forward to seeing next to each other as you put that group together?

DAVE CANALES: I think what was important for us is versatility inside and having a guy like Bobby Brown, who has played the nose, who has played all across the front, is huge.

Turk, the disruptive way he plays and more of a compact build, but he's really sudden. Just kind of having a little bit of a different style of play.

Then it was kind of the same thing as we were looking at Cam Jackson's film and kind of evaluating him. He played the nose. He's played all across the front, very similar to Bobby. For me it's the openness for Ejiro and for Coach Wash and the defensive staff to be able to let these guys show us what they can do so that we can put them in the best situations possible and find those combinations, but it gives us a lot of flexibility.

Q. Dan, specific to Cam, is there a quality about him that kind of stood out other than just the simple size and length?

DAN MORGAN: Yeah, obviously the size and length, first and foremost. When you see him in person and in his pads, I mean, that's a big man, big, long man that takes up a lot of room, occupies a lot of blocks. He's going to keep our linebackers free, but I don't think many people realize just how mobile he is for a big guy. He can get up and down the line of scrimmage and make plays out on the perimeter.

So, yeah, he's not just a big man and space eater. He can move a little bit now too.

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