

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Friday, August 8, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Coach Dave Canales

### Postgame Press Conference



Browns 30, Panthers 10

DAVE CANALES: Sometimes ball gets pretty simple. Two turnovers, they had eight explosives, we had four. Two of ours got called back for penalties, so I think we were even in terms of numbers of penalties, but it was when they happened that really just put us in a bad spot early on and then I thought they did a great job just getting on the edge. Shedeur extending plays, finding guys down the field, and then even Huntley comes in and makes a couple plays with his legs. They were able to continue some drives. I thought they did a great job.

I was proud of our group. Played physical. Some great running and hitting happened all across. So really proud of the play style. But part of our play style is playing smart. I didn't feel like we did that. I felt like there was sloppiness in some of the drives, and we're looking at 1st and 15s, we're looking at some situations like that.

So we've got to take that, look at it and make sure that we're continuing to coach the technique better in some of those situations.

#### Q. What did you see on the Xavier play early --

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I was like right in front of it. We ask our receivers to finish the play with hands on. He was. He had his hands on the guy the whole time, through the echo of the whistle. The guy swung and chopped his arms down and Xavier just kind of held on to his jersey. Then they started exchanging punches. You can't do that, neither side. Both guys got ejected, rightly so. We can't have that as a part of our game. It's a physical game. If you can't handle that -- tempers are going to get hot, but as soon as you throw a punch, all of a sudden we're at a disadvantage, so we want to see better from X for sure.

#### Q. Have you had a chance to talk to him?

DAVE CANALES: I have not, no. I just got in the locker room right now, so they escorted him off the field right after that play.

**Q. A lot of what you just described about kind of the sloppiness happened later in the game. Your thoughts on the touchdown drive, and did you see everything you needed to from that first-team offense?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I thought it was good to see some of the match-ups that we took advantage of, and some guys made plays down the field. TMac made a nice play down the field. Jalen Coker comes in when Xavier goes out and did a fantastic job, like we didn't skip a beat. Made some great plays that way, too. I saw some good rhythm.

I think the first drive wasn't what we wanted, but it was good to just get the group out there, just working together, getting into the flow of the game, getting some good runs. Loved how hard Chuba ran, Rico ran, and yeah, there was a good enough work there, and thinking about maybe getting them another series as we go into Houston just to try to feel the flow of the game and have to be out there kind of working through things on the sideline.

#### Q. What's your assessment of TMac's day?

DAVE CANALES: I thought it was really good. I thought he gave himself some good opportunities to win. I thought there was -- a ball got on him pretty quickly down there, could have been the first touchdown. He got hung up a little, and that's red zone football in the NFL. It happens quickly, the windows close and the quarterbacks are going to put their back foot in the ground. Bryce delivered a great throw right there, and I think that's one that he'll be able to grow from.

We had another opportunity on a slant and go where he and Andy just kind of didn't connect on it, but I thought he won. I thought he got on an edge, and I thought the throw was just a little bit high.

But I liked the speed of play. I loved that he was able to give us an option there.

**Q. The 30-yarder down the sideline at the start of that drive, is that kind of indicative of everything you**



thought you had in him?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. That's what we're counting on. That's why he's here. Stretch the field, play big, and that was a sign of good things.

**Q. Damien Lewis didn't play today; what's the latest on his injury?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he strained his shoulder in the joint practice and wasn't able to finish that day. So we shut him down. He'll be week to week just kind of as we evaluate his shoulder. But it's something that he's going to have to prove that he gets the strength back and all that stuff. So he's going to return to play for us.

**Q. Could that jeopardize his status for week 1?**

DAVE CANALES: I hope not, but again, they gave us kind of a week-to-week deal on it, and I think -- I've known D-Lew for a long time, and he finds his way back on the field, so I'm confident that he'll be able to do that.

**Q. Did you just say that you might play the offense like three series instead of two next week?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I'd like to, and I think it's going to depend on -- we got another great week of practice and we're going to have a joint practice, so if we feel like we got enough work out of the practice part of it, it might look like tonight, but I'd like to play them just a little bit more. Just the more that you can do that, the more they can kind of refocus and come out for another drive.

I'm very pleased with the conditioning of our group. I think Josh Hinks has done a great job of working with us and Jeff Brown helping me plan the practices. I feel great about the conditioning level of the group. But it's really more about just the -- all the mechanics of just coming out of a huddle, different situations that may come up.

**Q. Given all the young quarterbacks you've worked with, what were your observations of Shedeur in practice and during the game today?**

DAVE CANALES: Very impressed. Extending plays when he had to, getting the ball out of his hand quickly. I thought he did a great job of not sitting there in the pocket to see what was going to happen. He either took off and extended and made some plays with his legs, or he got the ball out quickly to a check-down.

I was just really impressed with the way that he operated out there and really kept himself pretty clean for the most part.

**Q. Every team in this league either has a quarterback or is looking for one. You guys were sort of going through that last year with Bryce. What did you think of his night and kind of the decision -- did it affirm your decision to play that first-team offense?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, for Bryce, he loves to play. Asking him, asking all the starters, all of them expect to play. They want to play. They want to get out there. They want the juice. They want the competition. They want to get tired and have to function because they know that's a part of what we're doing. Bryce first and foremost, he couldn't wait to get out there and just give the new targets an opportunity in real-life play.

I was really excited to just give those guys that opportunity.

**Q. Was there anything at the beginning from the first defense in the short amount of time they were out there?**

DAVE CANALES: I just saw some good physical play. I think they'd come up here and tell you they'd like to give up less on a couple of those runs. When we're sitting there at 2nd and 6 on a four-yard run, that's really not our standard and not what they want to do. But I loved seeing the communication happen. I loved seeing Corey Thornton show up like he's been.

These games, while every practice is so important and fan fest was a great opportunity to kind of play it this time under the lights and the joint practice, once you get into a game, there are guys that -- I think it's probably one of my favorite things about being in the NFL is there are guys who may not show up in practice but all of a sudden make plays in games, and there are guys that are making plays in practice and they kind of disappear. To kind of get that part to reveal itself -- we've got a bunch of plays. We got a lot of information now come out of this game, and it was good to see that first group get out there and play with each other really for the first time in a game.

**Q. What did you learn about your rookies tonight?**

DAVE CANALES: Oh, just the effort. Princely off the top of my head, I remember one run play where he set a beautiful edge. Sam Roberts comes barreling down from the backside, and when you can set a great edge on the perimeter, you allow those big men inside to come off their blocks, make plays and the backers to flow over the top. Probably my favorite Nic Scourton play of the night was had a great rush, Shedeur worked his magic, got out of it, kind of scrambled all the way back to the right, Nic pivoted, ran another 40 yards, chased him and knocked him out of

bounds on a play that could have been a huge run. That's what we saw on film, that effort, that relentless pursuit, and I was so excited to just see that show up today because that's just great football. So I'm really proud of him for just playing with the kind of effort that we were expecting from him.

**Q. Did you call the offense tonight?**

DAVE CANALES: Actually Brad Idzik called it tonight and I had the call sheet there. He kind of worked through a flow, worked through the openers, the first 15, so he kind of had his good amount of plays right there, the situational stuff, and I kind of was just in his ear with the style of plays that we were running and wanting to try to, hey, thinking run or keeper here, let's see a screen, some different things like that, just kind of feeding him stuff. But I wanted him to get that opportunity to be able to function with the guys and feel the flow of the game.

**Q. You mentioned Corey Thornton. Can you expound on his night? He had a massive WWE-style tackle, PBU. Can you expound on it?**

DAVE CANALES: He puts himself in good position, whether it's a tackle or whether it's making a play on the ball. Cooley is doing a great job just teaching him technique, footwork and all that. He's taking the coaching. He's a natural football player, and then he shows up physical in those moments. So that was really exciting to see.

**Q. You mentioned earlier in the week about Jalen really doing a lot this off-season to put himself in position like he did tonight. Was that something he took on? Was that a challenge from the coaches?**

DAVE CANALES: It was a collective effort. It was a collective effort to help Jalen take the next steps in his career. Coming off of a rookie season and having a plan for your off-season, it was Josh Hinks, it was Denny Kellington, it was myself, it was really a collective group to all sit down and put our heads together and say, okay, we have a plan for you from now until training camp, and I promise you if you stick to this plan, you'll see good results.

Now let's give Jalen the credit. You go away for five weeks and he trained and he worked himself into great shape, and he made some great plays on offense tonight. I can't wait to watch his special teams drill because he was on a couple of the teams and was available most of the night to help out that way too.

I'm really proud of him. I'm proud of his response. When I see a guy smiling and I know he's confident, I know he

knows what he's doing and feels great. I'm really happy that Jalen came and showed up tonight.

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