

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Dave Canales

Postgame Press Conference



Steelers - 19, Panthers - 10

DAVE CANALES: It was a great group to coach. We know we have a lot of hard decisions to make coming in the morning, and I just wanted to say that, first and foremost, I think just the energy, the excitement, the culture that we're building here, the brand of football that we're learning to piece together and play with, just really proud of the way the guys battled. We had 55 guys up. Guys were out there on every special teams unit you can think of, playing offense/defense, and I'm proud of the way the guys stepped up today and got it done.

Q. Anything you can glean on offense coming out of this game, on starters? Looked a little sluggish.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, let's score some points. Let's finish. We're in the red zone, the turnovers is a big thing; we've got to continue to work on that and clean that up. That part is not up to our standard.

We moved the ball. We got down there, but we've got to finish. That's part of who we want to become. So collectively we've got to find a way to do that.

Q. Have you made a decision on the kicking competition?

DAVE CANALES: Not yet. No, we'll talk about that tomorrow.

Q. Is there a reason why you didn't let Matt attempt a kick, just because he -- seemed like you were doing halves, like first half and second half?

DAVE CANALES: I think just opportunity.

Q. What was the thought process behind not playing Brycen Tremayne today?

DAVE CANALES: Just general body soreness. Felt good about the work we saw him have in the first two weeks. And then bounced back this week for really a grinder

practice two days ago. We shut him down in the middle of that practice. We just didn't feel good about being able to turn him around that quickly to get him out there in the game.

Q. What did that speak to his roster chances?

DAVE CANALES: He's got a good chance. For Brycen to show what he can do offensively and on special teams as well, he really made a statement for himself on this team. So something that we weigh heavily. So just excited to have the conversation to see how that all plays out.

Q. What are the next couple days look like for you personally and the coaching staff?

DAVE CANALES: I think we have a little bit of a weird week because it's a Thursday game. Typically this last game lands on a Friday or Saturday. So we have a few extra days.

A great opportunity to come in tomorrow, watch the film. There's a lot of stuff that we can still learn from schematically and different things, different challenges that presented themselves to the team. So we'll take advantage of that.

We'll do our a.m. rechecks with guys. And from there we'll start as a coaching staff and with Dan and personnel staff putting our heads together tomorrow afternoon and be able to have the weekend to make some decisions.

Q. (Indiscernible) you had that big run tonight, he bounced out. What has he shown you tonight and the season?

DAVE CANALES: Who was that?

Q. Trevor Etienne.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Trevor, I think just taking what's there. I think being a reliable catcher in the return game, he's shown a lot of value that way. And so I'm just excited for what he can do for us on this team.



Q. (Indiscernible) left with a shoulder. Do you have any information on that?

DAVE CANALES: We're going to just -- we're going to basically monitor that tonight, monitor it tomorrow just to see how it presents right now. Still sore enough. Couldn't get the strength back tonight to get him back out here. This is a guy that's going to be with us. We just wanted to be smart about that.

Q. Lathan Ransom's interception and just some general comments about his training camp?

DAVE CANALES: Just physical style of play. It's exactly what we're looking for, to show up in the run game angry and he's still got a lot to learn. He's certainly growing in terms of just trusting his leverage, communicating with the other guys.

But he's done a great job. And I think just seeing the weekly improvement, being in position, playing his leverage the right way. But he's built right and he plays the game with the physical nature that we're looking for.

Q. You had Jalen Coker play on special teams throughout -- into the third quarter. Was that just a matter of getting him the live reps he might have missed in Houston?

DAVE CANALES: Partly and partly he was one of the guys we had dressed, especially, like, in the return unit on kickoff return, he was able to fill that role. We had a bunch of guys playing a lot of snaps. I'm glad Jalen has become a dependable guy for us to be able to use in some different phases.

Q. What's your thought process on how many receivers you might keep just looking at what --

DAVE CANALES: It all depends, again, we talked about it before, but the special teams are going to matter. When the guys, they realize -- I think by now we've preached it enough -- that when you're trying to make the last few spots, how many you keep in each room really depends on what you can do for us from a special teams standpoint. That's something we have to consider for the wide receivers.

Q. To follow up on a question Mike asked, you could have called time out and let Matthew kick at the end. What was the decision?

DAVE CANALES: I think we played enough football. And I'm looking across the way and the Steelers kind of had -- towards the end of it we were both trying to run the ball a

little bit knowing that we were both working with a smaller group tonight.

And so it just felt like it was time to let's run it a few more times, get these guys a couple more reps to evaluate them and take it in.

Q. Do you have enough on tape from August on Matthew and Ryan?

DAVE CANALES: I think so. And we have the benefit, of course, of Matt being around for a while. And both guys did a heck of a job, in my opinion.

And, really, I think you look across the league, these are two guys that bring something special, not just from making field goals and PATs, but certainly in the kickoff. Both guys have done a good job of getting the ball in the landing zone and creating some issues.

Q. Jimmy Horn Jr., it looked like he didn't get any reps in the first half (indiscernible). Was that more about trying to get other guys like Hunter and David reps in the (indiscernible) and T.J. Luther?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we just kind of had to spread the work out and try to get evaluations of all the guys. I was happy to see Jimmy get in there and make a couple of plays.

Q. I know you're going to want to look at the film tonight, but given what you saw with these three preseason games, what are the takeaways where this team is at? And what are going to be the points of emphasis as you trim the roster down and try to get ready for Jacksonville?

DAVE CANALES: The style of play is there. It's a physical brand of football. The places where we've got to get better is the turnovers. It showed up every week in different ways. And so that's something that I have to get that done. I have to take that personally responsible to be able to take care of the ball the way we need to if we want to win the games that we're aiming to win.

So that's something that we have to look at. I thought we did a great job in the last two weeks of cleaning up some of the penalties, the line of scrimmage stuff, all that. There was great improvement there.

Love where our systems are at. You know, we're playing with a bunch of combinations of guys. But also just finishing drives. And it seems like we've got a bunch of drives going throughout this preseason that kind of just ended with turnovers or ended in different ways.



Penalties kind of put us in some situations, too. Just looking for that consistent execution across the board.

Q. How did it feel to you calling plays tonight?

DAVE CANALES: Great. I think the great part about Jack Plummer is he's a guy I trust, and he allowed us to be just be balanced and try to attack the Steelers in different ways.

And so I think outside of that turnover, we have a long drive down into the red zone. He's got to do a better job, but for him to be able to finish that drive the first half coming down to the touchdown to James Mitchell I thought was awesome.

Q. You activated Tommy. Any update on Damien?

DAVE CANALES: Tommy got out there. Wanted to get him just around the team, just get him running, kind of feeling the energy, getting him excited for the season.

And Damien, again, Damien's just kind of like day to day. He's making huge strides. We're getting the strength back where we want it to be. I feel confident Damien will be with us the first game, but we have to get him back out there, expose him to more physical play and get him back to football to be able to make that decision.

Q. Perkins made a couple of mistakes. How did he handle himself after a few weeks?

DAVE CANALES: Just to be able to come out here and make plays, we had a call sheet for him, things that he was comfortable with. So we were able to get some of those done. He got out of trouble a couple of times, but they had some good rushes on us on some of the pass downs, so it kind of made it a little harder.

But it was great seeing him out there throwing a couple of accurate balls in the last drive to end the game with the ball. So I was happy that he was able to come and that he was willing to do this and really gave us an option.

And I really wanted to honor the hard work and a guy just betting on himself, playing in the UFL, to give him opportunity to see what he can do.

Q. Second preseason is done as a head coach for you. What have you learned about the process of going through the preseason and just generally about being a head coach in the NFL?

DAVE CANALES: I just think it's the importance of all of us pulling in the same direction, looking for the same type of

energy on a daily basis. Camp can get long. Coaches gotta go -- we've got to go for it. The players will follow our energy.

There was a good back and forth. And I'll be honest, just learning about this team and the leadership and the guys that are here that really spearheaded the type of physical play that we're looking for, and I just learned the value of having strong leadership in the locker room but then also having the buy-in of the entire building to kind of understand, like, here's what it's supposed to look like, here's what we're pursuing every day to create the winning culture that we want to here.

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