

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Coach Dave Canales

### Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: A great work Wednesday, phenomenal energy at practice today. Wednesday is about recapturing that work ethic and setting the precedent for getting the speed that we need. This is where we make our team is out there on the practice field, and this is where we make Sundays easy is when we work hard during the week. The energy was great, a very physical practice. We were padded up today. It was just great to turn back around off of a bonus Monday, just get the rhythm and the flows of the installs and the early walk-through, all the different things. It's amazing how much we can squeeze into a short amount of time.

But was really thrilled about the energy out there, and some things to clean up as always, which we'll get back to here in a second.

#### **Q. Can you elaborate on your self-scouting efforts this week as you head into week 1?**

DAVE CANALES: I think just taking in a lot of tendencies that we might have had. We're talking about going back to last year; what are teams looking at. They have a full season of our team, our systems and different things to look at like that. Just being cognizant of it. Something I learned a long time ago is tendencies are okay as long as you're aware of them. That's where you can use them to your advantage if you have a 70 percent or more in an area, just make sure you have something that complements that, the defense or offense may know what you're doing in that regard, but it's always good to have a little bit of a change up.

#### **Q. What's the plan for left tackle if Ikey cannot go?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Yosh has been taking a lot of reps there, Nijman, and then also Brady has been taking reps at left and right as always. We're just kind of going to take it one day at a time, and it's cool just like -- you hope that the competition is over and you just kind of settle into your group, but here we are, guys have another chance to compete for that spot.

#### **Q. What does Ikey need to do and prove to make you confident that he's ready to go on Sunday?**

DAVE CANALES: He's got to have a great day on Friday. That's the goal right now. We had him out there running, moving around a little bit today. Tomorrow he'll do a little bit more. Then the hope is Friday to get him into individual period, see him get in a stance, move around, hit some bags and do some things to be able to make that decision.

#### **Q. What's your level of concern with Robert Hunt's foot, and also Tommy being left off the injury list, seems like he's going to be good to go this week?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Tommy is ready to rock. Had a really great practice today. He feels great. He's said that as much. As far as Rob goes, he went back in, he had a little something in his foot, he went back in, had a couple plays. We decided to shut him down for the rest of practice. We'll evaluate him this evening, this afternoon, and we'll have more information for you.

#### **Q. To clarify, it was today that --**

DAVE CANALES: Yes, it was today in practice.

#### **Q. He couldn't return and finish practice?**

DAVE CANALES: He did not finish. He returned, though, came back in for a couple plays, and we just thought, let's just shut him down, let's evaluate it, let's make sure we're doing the right thing and then kind of move forward from there.

#### **Q. It's going to be a big season for Bryce. Can you describe how he's handling the pressure to prove that he is a bona fide No. 1 quarterback?**

DAVE CANALES: Bryce is doing a great job leading the group. Just challenging the guys to have the right energy, the right focus, the right mentality every day. Just continuing to just build on each day and having great conversations yesterday, just kind of popping in and out, just kind of talking about different things that we plan on doing.



Love his involvement there. Love his intentionality.

**Q. Has there been any discussion in the front office about contract extension for Bryce?**

DAVE CANALES: Not that I'm aware of right now.

**Q. How would you describe your relationship with him going into the season?**

DAVE CANALES: Oh, just excitement. I think the cool part about last year was there was this cool thing for both of us really, as his first-time coach and play caller, and then for Bryce coming back in and playing the type of ball -- I don't know if he shares this point of view, but I'm just sharing my point of view. I wanted to prove to him that I can put a really good offense together that you'll be excited about and that you'll be able to help us grow and evolve over the course of time.

That's kind of from my standpoint, and then I just look at the way he approached it and the way he continues to approach it is to show us, to show his teammates first and foremost and our Panthers fans and all of that that he's the guy for this team.

There's just a real cool mutual respect that I think both of us have kind of grown just over the course of time, and just working together daily.

**Q. What sort of emphasis or discussion has there been on the need to start fast and how important that could be Sunday?**

DAVE CANALES: I think that's always the mentality. I think in my dream of all dreams, you'd just go out there, and whether you're on offense or defense, you put your best foot forward. I hold that, and with the other handy also say, look, regardless of what happens early, you just go to the next play. You go to the next series. You just keep grinding, you keep battling, you keep pounding, as we say.

I think that that's got to be the mentality, and it all starts off with practice. It's about the energy that the guys come on the grass with because that's where you train that in your mind; when I hit this grass, it's all go, it's all gas. Really trying to establish that type of culture and philosophy for how we work should carry over to the games.

**Q. How many guys do you need this week to play the role of Travis Hunter for your scout team?**

DAVE CANALES: We really haven't looked at it that way.

I don't know what they're going to do with him. I don't know how they're going to use him in different ways, as a traditional wide receiver. Is there going to be gadgets that come out of that? Defensively, as well, is he just going to play the corner spot? Is he going to return punts for them? There's all these question marks about a really talented player like Travis Hunter.

But for us, it's really about assignment football, regardless of who's out there. He's a phenomenal player. We've played against unbelievable players just throughout the course of time. You really just have to approach it the same way. It starts with us knowing how to line up, knowing how to communicate and execute the way we know how.

**Q. XL has worked a lot this off-season on just little things. As somebody who has a lot of history with that position, what are some of the things he's worked on that the average fan might not notice right away on Sunday but can make a big difference?**

DAVE CANALES: I think it's just work habits. He's a grinder. Sometimes he's a little bit of an overworker. That's just kind of the way he's wired. But I think it's just the play in and play out energy that it requires to be a great receiver. If you want to be a great receiver, you've got to be available. You've got to be out there, play after play, going full speed. We may throw, we may launch you down the field 40 yards, and if that ball isn't complete, you've got to come back and be ready for the next play, and I think he's pushed himself to keep his energy and speed up consistently, and that's what I'm really proud of is his willingness to be coached, his willingness to grind.

**Q. To follow up on something that you said earlier about wanting to show early on, to put together an offense you can be excited about, what do you look for to signal that you've found that with him?**

DAVE CANALES: I think it's just the mutual respect. I think it's just the connection in between drives and kind of just taking in the information that we see, looking for opportunities as we check out the pictures on the sideline in between, celebrating the plays that we envision happening and then they do, it's celebrating those moments, and then it's working through the things that need to be fine tuned so that we just feel like we're all on the same page and that we're all striving to just put our best out there.

**Q. A big part of the offense is Chuba. What do you expect from him this year?**

DAVE CANALES: I mean, just the consistent nature that



he is. I just expect him to run the ball hard like he always does. He's really meticulous in his studying, whether it's in the run game, pass game, protections, all those things, to just continue to lead, be the leader that we expect him to be, vocally but also just physically being somebody that we can count on.

**Q. Why is it important to know that kids like me can connect with the head coach and the Panthers?**

DAVE CANALES: It's about having a dream. If your dream is not big enough that it doesn't scare you, your dream is not big enough. I think you sitting here right now, being able to ask me questions right here in this room, this is amazing. I think about when I was -- how old are you?

**Q. 10.**

DAVE CANALES: You're ahead of me. I just remember falling in love with football when I was about 12 years old, and I just couldn't get enough of it. As you have this opportunity and you keep envisioning yourself doing this for a living, I think that dreams are what pull us through hard times, and we'll do whatever work is necessary to get there.

**Q. Is there anything you can do proactively to kind of acclimate the guys to the heat that's expected on Sunday?**

DAVE CANALES: I just think it's conditioning. There's really no way to replicate that unless we just get blessed with a hot day tomorrow. It's been amazing. It's been gorgeous here. We've been in the low mid 70s. But I think it's just the tempo that you practice with, making sure we're getting the work and the conditioning, the strength work in the weight room, all those things.

Once your conditioning level is at a point, then you've just got to deal with the heat. It's no different than the cold. You can't really prepare for being in different situations. I remember 2015 we'd go out to play against the Vikings in the playoffs, and it was negative 19 with wind chill. We could not make that happen in Seattle. It was in the upper 40s or something like that. So you just kind of rely on your execution. You rely on your conditioning, and then you deal with the elements. You deal with it just like any external factor.

But it is a challenge. It's a challenge. It challenges the guys to focus, and that's something that we've been talking about this week; can you get back to that next play and execute your fundamentals.

Coach Caldwell gave a great presentation today. We try to

have coaches rotate through and talk about fundamentals, and he just really crushed it today. I just thought it was unbelievable for him to talk about -- in all these years that he's been coaching, I think he said it was 47 years or something like that, that the consistent best players, down in and down out, regardless of how they feel, they execute with great technique and great fundamentals.

**Q. I know you haven't wanted to talk much about the last year, but you must have had some confidence in him that he would be able to handle that situation. Did it ever surprise you with how well he handled that and battled back?**

DAVE CANALES: I wasn't surprised. He revealed a lot of his character in that process and showed great leadership. He stayed in front of the team. He did not take a seat in the back and just kind of let this thing play out. He continued to lead, and he was sending a message very clearly to me, this is my team, and I respect it. That's exactly right. This is a place where we want to create an organization and a football philosophy where this team belongs to the players. We're all doing this together, but it becomes most powerful when those guys own it in the locker room.

**Q. We've been asking the guys about kind of this edgy undercurrent that we're getting from them. Do you feel that, and if so, what do you think that is stemming from?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I think it's just a decision and a commitment to each other and a commitment to a style of football. It's a physical game, and if you want to be a great team, you have to play with physicality. You have to play with toughness and great effort. It has to start there.

Before anything else, before the schemes, before creativity and all those things, forget about the special plays, can we just play physical on the every down, 1st and 10, or 2nd and 5 in the middle of the field, and can we do that for four quarters or however long it takes. That's what I feel from the guys. That's what I felt from this camp.

It was a physical camp. There was a lot of great, just, collisions, great tough play up front, as we've built the front play, getting it the way we want it to and then bringing a guy in like Tre Moehrig is just is an absolute hammer, like play in and play out. He's trying to hit somebody on every play. It's almost like he feels like he didn't earn the play if he hadn't hit somebody on that play.

I just love that the guys are really grasping that and taking a hold of that mentality.



**Q. You mentioned a big hit for Moehrig. You had some guys racking up some personal fouls for those types of hits. Have you seen anything out of him or talked to him about not kind of crossing that line?**

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DAVE CANALES: I really just know it's about positioning. I think that when an offensive player is on your right side, it should be a right shoulder hit. That takes the helmet out of the hit. If you cross and you try to hit with your left shoulder, now the head gets involved.

I've just seen Tre really be conscientious about his body position, and it really goes back to the start of the play, knowing what leverage you're supposed to play with and using your teammate so those compression tackles happen with two people at times, and then the third guy comes in there with the secure tackle, you attack the ball.

I've seen him kind of work through those things. I haven't seen him fly recklessly with his head down. He's got his face up, and he's just making physical plays. It's not just at the tackle, but it's also when people are trying to block him, he just shows up physically.

**Q. Back to being sort of a player-led team, you talked about the power of that earlier. Was there a moment in one of your previous stops where you noticed that that had clicked in, and if it's not here yet, what sort of signs are you looking for to make that transition?**

DAVE CANALES: I think it goes back to my playing days, playing on the teams that were the best. We had a connection, and there was a level of care. It mattered. It really mattered to us that we got everything right. It mattered to us that we were on our assignments. Whether it was a walk-through, whether it was in the classroom or in practice or in the games, it just mattered. Spending all that time in Seattle and watching that team really be built over the course of years, I just can recall offensively just kind of the accountability that was present, and defensively, as well, whether it was a walk-through or practice. If there was a pass concept where a guy was open, it was like immediate chatter, immediate communication about, okay, who's got this here, who's supposed to be up on top of this, who's supposed to be in the flat.

It's that level of care that I'm seeing being built here, and it's about the guys connecting. Like they've kind of taken it on their own. They get together before they go out. Before every drill, the defense gets together, they talk to each other. It's like they're reminding themselves, here's the standard, let's go do it again. That really mimics in between drives when you get together and they have their chance to get back out on the field, that they go out there as one connected to be able to work through things.

