

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Coach Dave Canales

### Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: All right, great to be back on the grass working, getting prepared for the Falcons. I just always love getting back to Wednesday, the work that goes into it, the focus of the guys, being able to work together. That's what always brings us back, it's the work, the preparation, and having the discipline to continue to build this team and work together and communicate.

**Q. Dave, Sunday you guys had kind of one of your poorer run offense performances.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. Not just because of the score, but what do you think was the issue up front as far as the run game was concerned?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I thought the Cardinals did a really good job. When we were in our base plan and some of our base runs, they played it well. They got a couple yards out of it, and I think after that, with the turnovers and then going in 20 to 3 into the half, we were in a different mode.

To me, I believe in the run game. I believe the runs, they start to add more and more the further into the game you get to. So I would love to get our team to play in that style of football that we're used to, that balanced complementary football of defense and offense where we can run the ball, be balanced, throw play-actions, get into our dropbacks and quicks and empties like we have. I want to see that mix come alive.

Not where we want to be right now certainly, but it's something that if we can just start off with execution, we can start off with playing normal football, we'll see that part come alive.

**Q. Last year in this Atlanta game, week 18, saw both quarterbacks play pretty well, very well, after which you said Bryce is our guy. Where is your confidence level with him two games into this season?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, super high. There is stuff obviously Bryce would come up here and say he would like to clean up from the first two games, but I'm fired up about where we are headed. In a game where we had 9-0 plays, you get a lot of information about the other guys that come in.

Brycen Tremayne making a couple of plays, Hunter continuing to get comfortable in there, and certainly T-Mack, because this is two games in. So gathering a lot of information about our group as we continue to play.

Was exciting to be able to just learn that. You know, again, I say like the games are so valuable and teach us lots about our guys.

**Q. What's it going to take for Jimmy Horn to get more time on the field?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we're evaluating Jimmy every week. He has to continue to grow and wait for his opportunity. It's a full team thing, where does he fit, how does he fit. That's the part that Dan and I and the coaching staff are talking about weekly.

**Q. In relation to Bryce, we saw in the second half of the season he played some of his best ball. Cade was in there at center. What sort of role did Cade play in that success, and what did you see from Cade overall back then that has your confidence in him in this role?**

DAVE CANALES: Cade was invaluable for us. He was on the Giants practice squad and we claimed him back when Corbs got hurt last year, and he did a great job settling into the system and really learning how to communicate with the guys and helping us to function.

He was a big part of that growth. He was in a competition this camp. He did a great job and it was close. Corbs edged him out in the competition of it, but those reps and that time on task is going to pay dividends for us.

**Q. As it gets going, is the current split between Chuba and Rico, especially with Rico on third down, is that what you anticipate or is that fluid?**



DAVE CANALES: It's hard to say. I would love to get into the normal flow of our games to see how this rhythm plays out. I'm glad they're both here and certainly Chuba is our guy. We want to start that way.

Rico is very talented in the run game and the pass game.

We'll see how that plays out.

**Q. Follow up on Legette, how has he responded to the last two days? With the criticism he's facing, how do you coach up a player that's probably never faced that amount of criticism?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just be the same guy. It's about the work. I truly believe that hard work pays off. I've seen that happen for players who just continue to battle, just continue to improve. You attack every day with focus. You attack every day with hard work.

He's doing all the right things and just we're all just -- we got his back. We're all encouraging him to keep pushing forward, keep evaluating yourself on film, take the coaching points, and at the end of the day, have fun. Just go win. Go win like you know how to win.

I truly believe that's what he's going to do.

**Q. Do you expect him to play Sunday?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, so as a precaution he just had some hamstring soreness. He started off the practice and he got through the individual part of it and we just thought it was smart to shut him down for the day. We'll reevaluate him and see where we are tomorrow.

**Q. (Regarding Sunday.)**

DAVE CANALES: No, not that I know of. Today the soreness kind of just popped up. We're talking about 90 plays, which he was in for about 65 or 70. I don't remember the exact number. He got a high volume. There was a lot of guys who had a high volume today that we had to be smart with and manage some different guys.

But challenged them after practice today, I said, okay, tomorrow we put the pads on and we go. The guys responded well to that challenge for the group.

**Q. We saw Xavier thrive as a red zone weapon early on in his rookie year.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. Do you see teams maybe playing him differently or do you think this is more so...(no microphone.)**

DAVE CANALES: I think it's just the ops. I think it's opportunities in the red zone, and we're designing stuff for X, designing stuff for T-Mack, for JT and some of -- those are our primary guys that we're trying to feature down there.

Just the way that it played out, you know. It's our job as coaches to continue to put Xavier in the best position possible in the things he does really well, and we'll keep evaluating that. That will help this, too. I can't wait to just be able to get him catching the ball and running big and fast. You know, to be able to just get that first play in and just feel comfortable and just let it rip.

**Q. What do you see on film from this Atlanta defense and how much different is it?**

DAVE CANALES: They did a great job this offseason helping themselves with some young players and some veteran players up along the front, in particular with Jalon Walker, James Pearce, having Leonard Floyd and Ebiketie who was a solid player last year as well.

They did an awesome job retooling there.

Xavier Watts is another guy that we really like, and Billy Bowman who was really productive in college. Shows he still has great hands and he can make plays when he gets opportunities. I'm just talking about the newcomers. Obviously Bates is still there and we'll see on Terrell.

But this is a really good group. I think the thing that I admired about them last year, which is the same this year, is how hard they play and how they play together. I admire teams when they fly around and team tackle and they're communicating and doing all these things. That gives them a chance to be really successful on defense.

**Q. Mentioned a lot of reps. Hunter Renfrow probably played more football last week than in a long time. How is he holding up to the physical strain of that part of his job?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, great, and battling through some bumps and bruises last week, too, to get out there and perform the way he did and be someone we can count on coming out of it with two touchdowns. We are just continuing to grow together and learn from the things that he's able to do.

But I'm excited about the progression that Hunter has been on.



**Q. Atlanta defense, the two rookie rushers, both local to the area. What may have stood out from your pre-draft interaction and what impact you've seen from Jalon and James?**

DAVE CANALES: Jalon first and foremost, leadership, tireless worker. That's what you see on film. Just constantly chasing things and trying to find ways to have an impact.

James Pearce, the physical traits. The athletic ability, his linear speed, and his ability to translate that into power. These are two really talented young players.

**Q. It's hard to find someone who doesn't say something superlative about Bijan Robinson. His head coach called him the best player in football earlier today.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. What exactly does he pose to this Panthers defense?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he's just a really balanced player. He's explosive in the run game and the pass game. He's got great vision, power, quickness, speed, all the things that you want.

Also just his gamesmanship. He's a competitor and you can see him fighting and trying to find a way to affect the game and help his team.

**Q. (No microphone.) What things do you got to do differently?**

DAVE CANALES: Play together, team tackle, rally to the ball. When you have a fantastic player like that it takes multiple people to make sure they're doing their assignment, everybody rallying to the ball, everybody being there and trying to limit the amount of space that he gets.

The more space he has the more dangerous he can be. It's got to be team football.

**Q. What stuck out to you as you look back at that week eight game now particularly where Bryce and Michael seemed to be punch for punch back and forth?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I think it's the speed of play. It was groups that were playing really comfortably together on both sides. There was chemistry there. There was just a simple me-to-you factor. Been playing with these guys

for a while. I know where they're going to be and when they're going to be there.

That's what emerged.

And then two quarterbacks making really smart decisions with the ball and finding their opportunities to try to hit the explosive plays. Also just trying to extend drives, whether that's with the short completion, scramble play, all those things.

There is more than one way to win the game and that's what it felt like to me from both guys.

**Q. One more. (Regarding Xavier.) Is there anything specifically that you're seeing in what he's doing in his route running or his body, anything you're seeing that's holding him back right now?**

DAVE CANALES: Nothing specific. I think it's just a matter of just keep pounding, keep working through it, keep taking the coaching and the opportunities will find you.

It's not all on X. This is me, too. I have to make sure I do a great job of putting him in positions to do the things he's shown us he can do well in the past. I take it personal as well. I'm committed to making sure that happens and Rob Moore is right next to him in his ear and continues to coach and talk to him.

That's the thing, too. For all the guys, remember who you are. Remember what you've been at your best. You'll do that again. That's the type of self-talk that you have to have and believe that if I continue to work, I'll do that again.

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