

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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## Dave Canales

### Postgame Press Conference



Carolina Panthers 30 - Atlanta Falcons 0

DAVE CANALES: When you have a chance to score in every phase, you give yourself a great chance to win. I thought the defense played an unbelievable game. The run game plan, the execution, the communication, all that stuff that we've been really just harping on is where we have to continue to grow.

There was still a couple of things that we need to clean up from a defensive standpoint. But to take advantage of some of those opportunities with Chau Smith-Wade with the touchdown, Mike Jack with the interception, and then that punch-out at the end, it's just a form of habits. It's what we're trying to get done in practice is the more attempts we get on the ball, eventually you can get one out there. So I was really proud of the group.

How about Ryan Fitzgerald? Not just the field goals PATs, but I really thought he impacted the game with how he kicked the ball on kickoff, gave us some amazing field position, some different kicks that gave them some issues getting the ball on the ground in the landing zone.

And then offensively I felt like we had some good rhythm going, and if you look at the stats, our penalties really put us in some unfavorable third downs, and we weren't able to convert some of the longer ones. So I thought we made it harder on us. But coming out of it two for three in the red zone was really good execution and finish by the guys.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

DAVE CANALES: Honestly, I think it's just time on task. It's playing four quarters with each other and knowing how to fit off of guys, how is Derrick going to hit this double team and where is he going to end up at for Boom and for Trev.

Setting edges and counting on those edges being set so that the rest of the guys know where to fit and know where to fill in on some of the runs. I just think that's something that we'll have to continue to push this group. It's the

speed of communication that really what we're looking for, and that's what I felt we took a good step, positive step in that direction defensively.

#### Q. (Inaudible)?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. If we can play normal football. And we can play complementary football, and a punt is not the worst thing. We flipped the field, and that's a big play when you think of it in terms of how we set our defense up and the offense has to execute and go the long way. So I was excited about that.

And then, of course, we muffed the punt. Trevor lost that punt right there, and the defense held up, forced them to a field goal there, and they missed it, and it was kind of a one-for-one on that one, but that's something that we do have to clean up. We want to make sure we play clean football throughout so that we can have our normal game and just execute.

#### Q. You speak to the symbolic importance of winning your very first home game. Seemed like a rowdy crowd.

DAVE CANALES: It felt great. It felt great to be in Bank of America Stadium with our fans. I felt the support. You look around and it was all Panthers fans. And there was a sprinkling of the Falcons group that came to watch the game, as close as we are. But I know the guys feed off of that, and it's something that I saw happen last week on the road and tried to remind the guys, you know, we bring the juice. We're the ones that have to get this started, and then it's infectious and then it spreads.

So I just love that the end of the game and some critical times in the third quarter, it was loud on third down. That's an advantage for our rush. That's an advantage for putting pressure on the offense. So they were felt today.

#### Q. And to piggyback on that, the importance of winning this, the numbers when you start in this league are pretty daunting. How big was that, as you said, specifically now here at home. But also when it's as emphatic as it was today.

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DAVE CANALES: It was great. I think talking to the guys, this is what it looks like when you play team football. And I gotta give a lot of -- I have a lot of respect for the Falcons, for the group that they have over there. I think that they have a lot of talent. And we took advantage of some of the mistakes today, and that's the way it played out. But going into this game throughout the week in our prep, this is a team that we really respect. I respect Raheem to the utmost and the schemes that they run on defense and on offense.

And so I just gotta give credit to those guys, but also our guys just executing the plan and having that discipline to come out in the second half and then continue with the plan.

**Q. The way the defense played in the second half last week, did you feel like maybe you had turned the corner and it felt like an effort like this was coming?**

DAVE CANALES: It did. It felt like the glimpses of what I saw in the first two games we didn't do that for a full complete game. And today it showed up. Outside of the four-minute there, we'd love to not be able to let them run the ball like that at the end of the game, even as they're battling. These are our calls and these are our fits. So just gotta make sure we continue to challenge the guys to finish with execution.

**Q. You've emphasized special teams all off season. Tracy is your guy, the guy you brought in. To see the way you guys have been able to handle kickoffs and kind of take advantage of the stakes, how important is that for the program and the guys that are maybe not contributing on offense?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. Everyone's got a role on game day with how many people you get. The obvious guys that have been making impacts, with Brycen Tremayne and Thomas Incoom, but then you see Claud Cherelus making plays out there.

Dalevon Campbell was up for his first NFL game and did a heck of a job as a gunner and really showed us what he can do, and that's what I look for at any phase, how can you help us, how can you help the team. And that's what we were able to see today.

**Q. You're a pretty high-energy guy. But you seem pretty chill right now. Why is that?**

DAVE CANALES: I'm a little punchy. I think calling plays will do that to you. Even last week, 90 plays on offense, Brad and I, Goodie, were talking in between series, and I

expect execution. It'll give us a chance to win. And so when the guys do that, I just -- I feel a sense of peace and support from them.

And I gotta give our players all the credit. This is a group where I stop talking to them before we come out of the tunnel. It's like, this is your team. What do you want to say to each other? And they're doing such a great job of challenging each other the right way. And there was a focus about the group this week. And this has been a really focused group, but for them to take the challenges, I'm just really proud of this team.

**Q. Can you comment on the job that Zavala did?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, really solid. I gotta watch the film to see how he graded out. But certainly felt like a normal game in there. We had enough time in our pass protection. They got us a couple times, but in the run game he looked solid and moved, from what I could tell right now. Again, we'll watch the film, but he's a guy that we're counting on, and Cade did an excellent job as well.

**Q. Are you aware the Falcons never reached?**

DAVE CANALES: I was not aware of that.

**Q. Speaking on that defense, you had Nic Scourton moving inside a lot, filling in for Pat Jones. What did you see from him?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. Great effort. Again, I can't tell you exactly what he did. But expecting Nic to be that high-motor, high-energy guy that he is, you know, he was out there trying to impact the passer.

**Q. Early impressions or first impressions of Brycen Tremayne?**

DAVE CANALES: Just solid execution. Managing the game the right way, taking the aggressive shots when he felt like he had them there. I think we missed on most of those deep shots that we had down the field, but we had opportunities. I think those are things we'll continue to grow and execute those. But just in general from the run game, pass game to the protection, I just thought he really managed the game well.

**Q. Can you talk to us a little bit about how you got Rico and Chuba in the rotation?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. Our goal is to really try to get Chuba going and making sure that however the series play out, we want to make sure that Rico has an impact, and you guys can see, he can make yards. He can make the



first guy miss and ran with a lot of physicality. So I just love that we have both guys, and I can just continue to call the call sheet the way that it comes off. It just gives me a lot of peace of mind where I don't have to shift run types based on who's in there. So that gives us a lot of confidence to just call my game.

**Q. The nickel position is pretty volatile in the NFL. What have you seen from him in his maturation in the last two years?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just professionalism, a guy that's into the details, owning his leverage and really just getting the communication quickly and executing. I think it speaks to the hard work that he does since the day we got him. And the lessons that he didn't know last year he had to learn live, but coming into his second year, settling into our schemes, he's done a good job for us.

**Q. Did you envision any of this today or what aspects did you envision when you were rebuilding this defense during the off season?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. I think just building it up front. And we didn't have Turk out there. We didn't have Pat Jones out there. But we have good depth inside, and I thought those guys did a great job of executing the plan together.

Nic filled in on the edge and played really physical. And Tre Moehrig had some beautiful plays on the perimeter in the box. The tackling has improved each week. That's something that we have to continue to challenge our guys. But it all starts up front, and the guys did a good job of executing today.

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