

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Dave Canales

### Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: All right. Great win for the boys. Great win for the Panthers. Just I know how hard they've been working to improve some of our just fundamental details, really in all phases. And to see the hard work pay off with the execution that we saw, I was just really proud of that. I just love when we stick with our processes and we stick to our plan and then you see results and you see guys continuing to improve, individually, but then also collectively as a group, executing together, communicating together. And it was great to be able to point to those things that we've been emphasizing and for it to all come together.

#### Q. What did the MRI show on JT?

DAVE CANALES: We'll give all that update on Wednesday.

#### Q. We didn't ask you last week how the results of the surgery went for Rob, and you said you were going to update us on their timelines.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. So Rob's surgery was successful, and it was to repair the biceps tendon. And it's going to be a long time. We're looking at maybe end of the season type of a return. But, again, that's all going to just depend on how his recovery process is.

And Austin did not have surgery. Right now he's rehabbing that. And it's closer to -- I guess the number I got was six to eight weeks, in that range, but different guys heal at different rates, and he's had similar injuries before. So I think he has a process and kind of knows how to approach that and attack it, and we'll take it week to week.

#### Q. Surgery at some point? Is he kind of considering that?

DAVE CANALES: I'm not sure.

#### Q. Also on the injury front, Xavier didn't play. What's an update on Xavier?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. We'll give you guys the updates on Wednesday.

#### Q. In the past or at least last season the game ball was something that you said wasn't necessarily your approach. But I noticed last night you received one. Can you take us through that moment and even how you may approach that throughout the season?

DAVE CANALES: I was just really grateful. I think that just, collectively, as a group we've been pushing on and really striving for playing good football. And for me, in that moment, they give me the game ball, I'm super proud that at the same time, while I'm always thinking of pouring into our guys, they're also there to encourage me and challenge me, and they'll bring things up to me, too. So I was really thankful that they chose that.

But as far as giving out game balls, that's just not something that I've done. That's not really something that I've been around very much. So for me when we have success after game wins, if I had 12 game balls, I'd give them all out. We just like to rattle off the guys that made significant impacts on the games one by one and make sure they're recognized in front of their teammates.

#### Q. You've had three pretty high-variance sort of games. When you have those variables and not like maybe a traditional back-and-forth close game, how difficult is it to kind of find what you guys have or figure out what talent is there, what play calling needs to be adjusted, et cetera?

DAVE CANALES: That is a challenge. I think it's a great question, because when you get those back-and-forth field position type of games, which this game -- early on it was kind of that way, and then as we made a couple of big defensive plays and the score got out of line, then they kind of went into a different mode. So we need more information about who we are, about what's working for us and learning our players. And we need all these games to be able to accumulate all the first downs, the second and shorts, the second and longs, the two-minute drives, different third down situations and all that on both sides and in the kicking game as well. So it's a good point.



**Q. From a procedural and kind of a planning standpoint, a lot was talked about Atlanta's pass rush and what they did the week before. You guys seemed to find ways of kind of mitigating that with movement. From the process standpoint, how do you guys think you did at least from a preplanning perspective?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. I thought we could just use the information that was available to us in the first two games. There was some carry-over, a little bit of carry-over from last year. But I felt like with Jeff Ulbrich being there, Raheem brought him in for a reason. So there was a different flavor. There was a little bit different signature.

And our guys did a really good job of picking up some of the issues. They got us on one. Bryce kind of threw a low ball to T-Mac, and Bates was free. They schemed that pressure up really well. And I thought besides that, I thought Bryce just made great decisions. He mitigated some of those challenges by getting the ball out quickly or by just getting us to a run or different types of solutions. So he used his toolbox well. And then it was just really well executed. Joel Gilbert does our protections, the O Line. Cade did a fantastic job getting us targeted, and I thought Chuba and Rico did an excellent job playing physical in the interior.

**Q. I know Andrew has played a role in who plays and how much, but you asked in the first half of the first game to get the young guys in there more, and we saw a big uptick in that last week and this Sunday. What are you noticing about the play of these young guys, how? Is that helping you, benefitting you?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I'm really proud of the way that they're just developing and they're working. I think about just picking one guy, Nic Scourton, who really just works his butt off in practice, and he gives everything he has. He's taking the coaching and the principles, and is it perfect, no, but he learns lessons. He continues to stack lessons, and I can say that generally for our young group, that they're taking the challenges the right way; they're taking coaching. And it's a trust factor thing, and the trust level will continue to grow with these guys, as they show us we can count on them to get in there and execute.

**Q. Speaking of one of those young guys, I wanted to ask you about one particular play with T-Mac and then also get your general comments about how he's played so far. But the play was Bryce said yesterday he told T-Mac to do one thing on that deep ball in the third quarter and T-Mac adjusts and almost makes the catch. But Bryce said that's 100 percent on him. What happened there?**

DAVE CANALES: I'll keep that behind closed doors, but there was a little bit of miscommunication on that play, yes. And I think T-Mac, just in general, I've been very pleased with how he's taking to the concepts, to the alignments and the details of what we're asking him. He'd come up here and tell you he'd love to have a few of those plays back, you know, that were bang-bang plays.

And gotta give the Falcons players credit. They were in phase making plays with their hands on the ball, and T-Mac feels like he can make those plays. And so I love that he takes accountability for those things as an area for him to improve and to strive towards.

**Q. How encouraged were you by the tackling performance after reviewing the film? What were some that stood out?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it was excellent. I think in the run game, first and foremost, it was just a well-executed plan where guys were playing together, and they were trusting each other, playing their leverage and not trying to play out of scheme. So I thought they did that well.

It was team tackling. We kind of talked about that early in the week. With an amazing player like Bijan Robinson and some of the other skill players that they have as well who run with physicality or have some shiftiness to them, the guys rallied up. The guys maintained their leverage and then team tackled, and I thought the thing that stood out to me was just like the check-downs, the flat routes. Obviously we had the interception for a touchdown, but then there were just some amazing deep-to-short guys coming out of their shoes when the ball was gone, and that's all about effort. That's want-to. And I love the way we showed up. Tre' Moehrig kind of stands out in my mind coming downhill and just finishing physically, playing with leverage and making sure he got the tackle.

Chau had a couple of nice ones, too.

**Q. Do you feel you have a DB room that is like completely willing to do what you're talking about there?**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. They're committed to each other. They're committed to a style of play, and I think when they hold each other -- I believe the standards that they set for each other is what compels them to show up aggressively.

**Q. You referenced this after the game, but the kickoff coverage and landing in that landing zone, all of that has really shown up. What do you attribute that to?**



**Like yesterday is an example. It looked like the Falcons weren't sure what was coming.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. I gotta give Tracy a lot of credit for just kind of finding out the alignments of their return units and where they were putting their returners at. And then it's really but the confidence that he has in Ryan showing us that he could try to hit different spots with different types of balls, different flight patterns, some different things that we've been trying. And it's an aggressive approach, because obviously you're trying to hit that landing zone from different angles.

And I love the fact that we just went for it.

And then to have the coverage unit be such that you can put the ball anywhere and these guys are going to run with their hair on fire, and if someone is just out of a lane, someone is going to cover for them, and that's all effort as well. It's the assignments. It's talking through what happens, if this guy gets out of his lane, we need to make up for it, but then it also just comes down to flat-out effort and guys flying in to show up where somebody might have gotten doubled.

We watched all the kickoff coverages as a team just to show the spirit of our play style. I truly believe that kickoff coverage kind of exemplifies who we want to be, and I believe in that. That's why I love special teams, but especially on kickoff, especially when you can start the game with a kick to be able to show the effort, the enthusiasm after great plays of them celebrating, the toughness, playing smart off each other and then finishing each play.

**Q. You watched them today?**

DAVE CANALES: Yes.

**Q. To follow up on Nick's question about tackling, Trevin Wallace seems to kind of had a 180 over the last couple of weeks. What are you seeing from him? What have the conversations been like and also why do you think he's been able to kind of turn things around so quickly?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah. Time on task, and I know that Trevin is a very smart player, and the more comfortable he gets playing in our schemes, the more aggressive, the -- like he's naturally, 250-ish pounds. He can flat-out fly. And he's got a real heaviness and aggressiveness to the way he plays, and the more he's comfortable, the more we see that guy.

We talk about guys showing their personality as they play.

I know they know what they're doing, they're focused and ready to go. I just thought he used his hands a lot better, just striking, punching, getting off of blocks. And that all just comes with his level of comfort being out there, hearing the calls and executing.

**Q. You've been asked a lot over the last year and even the beginning of the season about Ejiro and his scheme, and you continuously said how much you like the scheme. And you look over the last really six quarters since that opening drop to Arizona eight days ago, that's been a unit that's really played well. What has really changed with that unit overall that's led to that success in your mind?**

DAVE CANALES: Communication, execution. This is a defense that I've coached against for years, and it's a very -- the defense by principles is to try to eliminate explosives, and then you gotta rally up, though. If you're going to be playing to eliminate explosives, you gotta rally up and show up in the run game and you have to be disciplined about how you fit. So that means everybody's gotta be locked in. And so I know that Ejiro and his staff have the answers and I know that as we communicate together, those players who are out there talking to each other, trusting each other in the fits and that's how you execute.

**Q. Understanding that this is a week-to-week league. The way you guys finished the game last week, do you feel like that kind of led into the performance that you guys had this week?**

DAVE CANALES: I think everything matters. I think all these moments they count, and confidence grows as we learn who we are and what we can count on. And I try to ask the players, and I'll do this every once in a while in our meetings on a Saturday night or during the week, what can we count on from your group? And somebody will say, hey, you can count on this from us. And then as it happens and as it comes to life, that's when that trust factor and confidence really starts to build is that we know who we are, we know what we're becoming. And that second half in the Arizona game was a big moment for us, for the defense playing well, getting us the ball back, the offense going down scoring points and then the coverage units and the return units playing well together and obviously the on-side kick being able to get that back to give us a chance, the execution and all that it, builds confidence and breeds confidence. And the guys just took a real focus to this week, came out ready to play, and I'm really proud of them. And it all came from them. It all came from the guys talking to each other, challenging each other.

**Q. Monday's film session in terms of the players'**

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**energy coming in compared to the last couple weeks. Did they seem to just kind of turn the page already and look towards another game this coming weekend?**

DAVE CANALES: No. They're celebrating the heck out of it right now. They're in there watching their plays. There's a lot to learn from. It wasn't a perfect game. We left some stuff out there offensively. Defensively, we let some things get out of there, but come out of the game offensively without a turnover. Obviously we had the punt that we put on the ground. We'd love to have zero turnovers for the game.

There's a lot to learn from in this, and so we have to be really tough, really disciplined about making sure we continue to push our football forward and improve, but you also have to enjoy these wins. Wins are hard to come by in the NFL, and they're all earned. But we'll take this moment to enjoy it, and then right when these meeting end, we're flipping the switch and we're ready to go up to New England and focus on our new opponent.

**Q. Patriots for you?**

DAVE CANALES: I just have a lot of respect for Coach Vrabel. I know that he's going to have his guys ready to play good fundamental football. Other than a couple of turnovers last week from the film that I watched, they're playing really sound football. And I know that's what he's going to bring to that team. I can't wait to dig in more this afternoon, evening, to kind of see specifically what that looks like, you know, but I thought they played the Steelers really tough. And a couple of turnovers, especially one inside the five knocking on the door right there is a big game-changing play.

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