

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: All right, a little bit of a combo day today. Took Monday as a staff to really evaluate what we're doing, who we're using out there. Just kind of put our thoughts together and shared that with the players. Here is where we are with our schemes, here is what is working for us, here is what is not working for us and things we have to improve on.

So little bit of a combo day. Started off that way, and then launched into the Dolphins and getting ready from a game plan standpoint to play these guys as they come in here.

So it was really good just I thought really productive meetings all across the board. Just kind of showing the honest clear picture of this is what we can look like doing things well. This is what we can look like when we don't execute or give up big plays or different plays like that.

So I thought it was really good. I thought the coordinators did an excellent job of painting a picture. The bottom line is we have to give them something tangible to work towards, to work on, so we can continue to improve our processes.

Q. If you can share, you talked about what you gathered and when. What did you guys land on in terms of those meetings and where you go?

DAVE CANALES: I won't get into specifics of that. I think that's a little bit of a proprietary advantage for us to continue to work on the things. But there is good stuff. There are pockets of big plays on the defense, on special teams in a couple phases; offensively, the lack of big plays, right, and trying to find a way to find explosives through the run game or the pass game.

So those are some of the general things. Then there is just a lot of details, a lot communicating together, and execution, you know, that we're counting on to carry over. And it's got to be consistent, because there are these -- in each game there are drives where we are executing, we are talking, we are making the things happen; and then there are mistakes being made.

Certainly myself included in that in different phases of the game, different decisions and all that on plays to call. All of us just making sure we're taking accountability for the things we can improve.

Q. You indicated Monday that Chuba was not limited during the game due to the calf.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

Q. Has he had a setback there? What's the deal?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, the calf needs more treatment, the calf needs more time, and so we're just taking it day-to-day with Chuba now. We needed to get him a rest day today, not put him out there, and try to get him back on the other side of it.

He was able to play and still played at a high level, the way we expect him to play, and ran the ball hard all the way through it. Coming out of it we just didn't feel like he was in it a really good -- wasn't in a better spot coming out of the game than he was the week before, so we're going to treat at that day to day.

Q. You guys released DJ Johnson. Can you tell us about the process behind making that decision?

DAVE CANALES: Hard decision. DJ gave me everything he had. I wish him the best. I believe that he's going to be able to help somebody. And for us, just looking at our depth and looking for guys to produce, this is a production game, and that was one of the decisions that we had to make.

Q. In regard to what Mike was saying earlier, do you feel that some of the issues have a risen because of trying to overcompensate at times? If so, what have you worked on specifically this week to address that?

DAVE CANALES: Just execution. Just guys being on the same page, working together, the fundamentals of football that we're talking about.



I think the most encouraging thing for me is as you watch the film, as we present it to our players, there are things within our control, and we have to make sure that we demand that and the players have to make sure that we're following that execution through.

As I alluded to before, two really good weeks of practice where there was a lot of good communication, growth, but we got to see it consistently happen.

Q. DJ had been with you guys for a while. To make the decision now, why was now the right time?

DAVE CANALES: I just look at all the things. We had a lot of time to evaluate what we were doing and who we could use in different roles. We just felt like this was the appropriate time.

Q. During that evaluation you had on Monday, Tuesday, what, if anything, changed in your opinion about Bryce and how he played in the first four games?

DAVE CANALES: I've seen a lot of confidence, a lot of confident play. I believe that this is a group that's continuing to try to find chemistry, of course beyond T-Mack, who we've seen be a viable target for him and some other guys kind of flashed for us in this different ways.

But finding that rhythm and chemistry is really critical. It starts in practice and just making sure we're continuing to throw the right concepts, put the guys in position to be successful in routes they can really execute.

This week is a little bit different now because we're getting Xavier back and Jimmy Horn is getting ready to play we got to see Brycen Tremayne in a certain role. So just continuing to find ways to see how we can use Brycen as well.

Q. Talk about Jimmy Horn. Would it be more special teams specific with Dave Moore going on IR?

DAVE CANALES: No, this is an offensive emphasis for Jimmy. This is the reason he's here, this developmental part of knowing these opportunities come up. This isn't the way that we would all have loved to see this happen with D-Mo getting injured, but opportunities come in a bunch of different ways and here we're.

I'm excited for Jimmy to get out there and excited for what he can bring to us.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

DAVE CANALES: Maybe.

Q. When you look at Jimmy when he first arrived to now, what parts of his game do you feel he's improved most?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just ownership of our concepts. When I know Jimmy is confident about what's happening you see the speed and ability really show up. That's what happened in the last two weeks, is he's continuing to get himself ready because you just never know, and here we are.

He's done the work and he's working really hard. It's all hands on deck. He's into it and excited about it.

Q. Dave, as you assess those four games and looked at your playcalling, do you see any opportunities to be more aggressive, especially where Bryce is concerned in the pass game?

DAVE CANALES: Could be. I definitely think there were some spots. I believe we've come out and thrown the ball more than we have in the past and given our guys opportunity down the field. We haven't come up with big plays, whether it was a missed throw, a dropped pass, miscommunication, just little things like that that we have to continue to drill in on.

So I think those opportunities will still come up, but that was a big thing, Joe. That was a big one that we looked at in the first four games. How can we get the ball down the field with the guys we're playing with right now?

Q. This might being more of an EJ question, but from an inside linebacker standpoint it seems like there are weekly struggles. What's the perspective on that unit and is there a fix there?

DAVE CANALES: Urgency. The time is now. We have four games under our belt with different packages, playing against different styles of offenses, and that's the production and that's the urgency that's being communicated, is guys, we need better play here in different spots.

And there is good stuff, too. I saw Trevin Wallace two weeks ago play his best game as a pro and then he was inconsistent last week. Just getting him to settle in there and be big and fast like we know he is. Christian Rozeboom who we're counting on to call the defense and be in there, let's talk, let's execute.

So, yeah, there is a lot urgency communicated to those



guys, and they're up for the challenge.

Q. In the two games that you had Xavier on the field and the two games he wasn't on the field, even though he wasn't necessarily producing, how did you see him affecting the defense?

DAVE CANALES: I think guys are aware of Xavier and how fast and big he is. They're trying to attack that and get their hands on him early so he can't build up his speed. That's a part that he has to continue to work through.

I saw improvement going into the Arizona game. I saw him play faster than. The nature of that game, the targets that went to him I thought just kind of a misfortunate deal. Will Johnson makes great play on a one-on-one go-ball in the end zone and he had good position on him.

I'm just waiting for that one play where I can see him smile and just make a play, just get the weight off you. You're just out here to play football. Just do your part. So I'm excited for the work he's put in and excited to see him this week.

Q. The defensive attention maybe for the two games he was not in, how did you see that shifting and sort of the impact that he had?

DAVE CANALES: I wouldn't say noticeable. There were some things that teams tried to do a little bit for T-Mack but not out of the ordinary. This wasn't a full-sell let's stop this guy thing, which is why he's still able to produce for us.

But we are looking for the other guys. I've talked about this before in the pass game. You love to have a starting point. You love to say, we're trying to get the ball to this person because it does set up all the other stuff and does open up other guys and their opportunities in one on one, whether it's in zone or man.

So these are the opportunities for guys to show us what they can do and really make plays when they're getting lighter coverages.

Q. Christensen, what is it about him that makes you so comfortable putting him in different places?

DAVE CANALES: He's really tough. He's very intelligent. He'd willing. He wants to win. He wants to help the team this any way possible. We use him as a big tight end. Played him at center, guard, tackle spots, all those things.

We can count on him because he studies. He does the work and he's ready to go, and I love his willingness to help the team in any way possible.

Q. I understand that you can't share specifics about what you and your coaches discuss, but when you come -- it comes to communicating to the team, outside of execution was there one central message that you imparted to them based on the meetings you had with the staff?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just minimizing the catastrophic plays. We know teams are going to make plays. We know that turnovers happen. But the nature of how they happen, that's the part we really have to hone in on. We can sit up here, and if we execute properly and a guy makes a play one-on-one, that's the NFL. There is a lot of great players in the NFL.

But it's when we give up free things, when we have turnovers or we give up explosive play because of lack of communication or different things like that, or if I call a play at the wrong time and it doesn't fit the coverage or whatever and they have us or the pressure or different things like that.

In the special teams as well, right, the big returns. We're in position. We have to be able to minimize those big, big plays because that shift happens. And when they do, we have to be resilient enough to just refocus and go out there and execute the next series, understanding that this is the NFL and teams are going to find ways to make plays.

Can we stay consistent and steady and just return to focus?

Q. Mike McDaniel was saying the other day he lost a key weapon in Tyreek Hill. He was coaches don't really like to address the injury situation because it's like next-man-up mentality. It does have an impact on every aspect of the game. What has been your experience, including this year, when you have that many injuries it has on I guess just your play in general?

DAVE CANALES: We know that has an affect. I can't think that way and the players cannot think that way. We trust these guys to execute that go out there. I get excited for the opportunity to find out new information about a player we may not have seen a lot when they get in there. We get to know them more, how they can help the team.

So I always look at it from a positive standpoint of this is an opportunity to come in and help the team. We are aware and we do acknowledge the fact those are challenges that all of the teams go through across the league really, so that also doesn't allow you to have an excuse because we all experience it.

So we have to just -- we have to just go back to football.

Q. Depth in this general, when you have really good depth you can put another guy in there and can keep that effort up.

DAVE CANALES: That's a very valuable thing. We were really fortunate of have Chandler Zavala step in. He's had a setback with an injury, but we were fortunate in that way to be able to have him step in there.

Q. How much of the elevation of DeeJay Dallas and Trevian Thomas come out of your guys' evaluation of how special teams did last week given their experience in special teams?

DAVE CANALES: It was really injury related. So with Chuba, just not knowing if we're going to have him or not, going day-to-day with him, I thought it was important that we start to see DeeJay Dallas. He's a guy that I really trust as well. This was an opportunity for me to reward a guy who has been working his butt off in practice, been running all the scout team, running back deal. He's been excellent in protection, in that role as well. He's doing all the special teams. He can cover. He can play different spots. He can return.

Just a really valuable guy who really stands for what we're about here in terms of being a team player and being a high effort guy.

Trevian Thomas, another guy that's done a lot the of good things for us just throughout this season on practice squad. Showing he can be available for special teams as well, and seeing if we can get an opportunity to see him on the defense at some point.

Q. Tyreek being out, how does that change defensively? I imagine he would probably normally a big focal point. How does that change what you're allowed to do?

DAVE CANALES: Well, we all certainly know what a great player he is, but I respect this system and I respect Mike McDaniels and the way he tackles defenses. They still have a lot of fast players that they're going to try to challenge us with horizontally and vertically, so we have to take the same approach.

They're not going to just change their offense all of a sudden in one week. This is going to be an attack that has a lot of variety with movements, shifts, motions, different run styles, different ways to attack the perimeter.

So we have to just go -- look at the film and just basically be prepared for the schemes that they're going to present to us.

Q. You addressed the third down draw on Monday.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

Q. You also had some second and shorts which in this league, as you know, a lot of times are shot plays.

DAVE CANALES: Uh-huh.

Q. You handed the ball off or had short throws. Were those the kind of opportunities you're talking about maybe to do a little bit more of taking a shot downfield?

DAVE CANALES: Could be. My philosophy is when you're in second and short we run the ball. We want to find opportunities to be a tough, physical football team. When we're in second and short, that's an opportunities to run the ball, get us a new set of downs. Does that present some explosive opportunities? Absolutely.

But, again, that's my philosophy. It's in my DNA going back to being with Coach Carroll for all these years. When we get into that mode we want to be tough, able to run downhill, do those things so that we can get a new set of downs and then open up the attack again.

Q. What was is the severity of two injuries for David and Chandler as far as how long they're going to be out? For Chandler, he had a knee in the preseason. Was that the same injury or something different?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it was the same injury, a little bit different nature. David had a significant elbow dislocation, so that's going to take a longer time. So they both went to IR just knowing that we needed to have more time to be able to get those guys back out there.

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