

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Head Coach Dave Canales

Postgame Press Conference



Panthers-27, Dolphins-24

DAVE CANALES: What a great finish. I'm proud of this group for continuing to play football after a pretty sloppy up-and-down first half. A lot to work on. A lot to clean up. You know, some procedural stuff.

Two of them were on me getting the play in late after a big play. I got to be better there. I got to get the personnel in quicker and make sure we're operating right there after Rico's big run down inside the 20 yard line right there. So I got to help us out and not put us in those long situations.

Lots of stuff to work on, but again, just the fight in this team, the belief in each other to continue to play, to continue to troubleshoot and find solutions together. I thought that was the biggest thing that I came out with today was guys were talking in between series and when things happened, they collectively got together. They went out there, fixed some things, and continued to play well.

It's about the run game. You know, we got our run game going great today. Defensively did a great job against the run making it hard for them, making them get into known pass situations, and I saw the effort in our rushes really start to affect them later the longer we started playing.

Q. How do you describe what Rico did? Did you have any idea this was coming, and can you describe the long rush you saw?

DAVE CANALES: We had a great game plan. Rico would be up here and, first off, tell you the offensive line did an excellent job of getting movement to get the run started, but it's the attitude that he ran with, the violence that he ran with, finishing through arm tackles. Something that we've been challenging our guys on.

When we get you to the second level, have a plan for how you finish, and I saw great finish today out of Rico. Trevor got in there and had a couple of nice touches, as well. I was really pleased with that group.

Q. The fourth down calls, down 17-0, scrambled and came back with a really nice play. How much did that spark the rally and Horn's first catch in the fourth quarter?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we needed those. Those were big plays for us on fourth down. The guys are comfortable in different situations going for it, so it all starts with that. Just knowing, Okay, we're going to have another chance right here if we can make yards on the first couple of shots there.

Bryce did a great job of extending that play to find T-Mac, and Jimmy Horn coming through for us in a big, big way right there on one of our bread-and-butter concepts. There was a defender there. He tried to make a play, and Jimmy got up there and snatched it away from him.

So really proud of the way the young guys played today.

Q. You allowed 19 rushing yards. How do you explain the difference between what went well today and what happened previously?

DAVE CANALES: When you look at the last five games now when you talk about first and second down, normal runs, our defense has been doing a great job. Where we got hurt a little bit was some of the perimeter stuff, and I thought we did a great job there of minimizing by just rallying.

It was really just guys hustling to the ball, coming out of the stack on the defensive line. Trevin and Boom running like crazy, and the guys playing their leverage to slow those perimeter runs down. They did get a couple of nice ones on us, but for the most part it was just a really well-executed plan from a run game standpoint.

Q. Not letting the bad stuff spiral. With the two turnovers and then down 17, what was it about that message that you felt resonated today?

DAVE CANALES: I just felt the maturity of this group. You're going to face adversity. You're going to face hard times. We can make it harder on ourselves by the



decisions or Bryce's pass was too high for Xavier. It was open in the middle of the field. He would be up here, he'd tell you that right now. He would love to have that one back, but it's the response.

This game is about how you respond to adversity, and I saw us take a step in terms of just collectively staying together, not looking around, and saying, Okay, well, however we ended up here, Defense, we have to go back out and play again.

Q. Fourth down late in the game allowed you guys to continue to drive and get that go ahead touchdown. Can you talk about the decision to go to Jimmy in his very first NFL game?

DAVE CANALES: Just counting on him to execute. We talked to our guys. Especially the young guys, we talk to them out of a sign of respect, and we say, we're counting on you to just do your job. We don't need you to do anything special. Just be where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there.

I was so proud of Jimmy be to able to make that play for us.

Q. T-Mac got the first fourth down. Jimmy had that one. Trevor, the big run after Rico went down, and Mitch, of course, in the end zone. How big of a step forward is it collectively for the rookies to execute and win a close game like this?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we're counting on them. We're counting on our rookies to be a part of what we're doing. I see them take strides every week. It happens in practice, and it's the ownership of what we're doing, which allows you to play fast.

I saw those guys just be confident out there, and Bryce trusts them, and Bryce is going to give them opportunities when it presents itself.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about the significance of that victory, because that tied for the largest comeback ever in Panthers' history. It seems like the kind of win that can do something for the team, I mean, in a global sense. What would you say about just the comeback and how significant this is?

DAVE CANALES: I really just want to double down on execution. That's how we did it was blocking runs well, stopping the run, getting our rushes going, playing good coverage.

Of course, we gave up the big one, you know, late and

there were a couple of plays that way, but it's all about execution. It's all about do right longer. That's our mentality, and that's a place where we took a stride today.

Especially I don't know how many series it was. Was it three series we went three and out or something like that there late in the game where we didn't get that execution, but nobody panicked. We just stayed together and kept playing. Defense got us the ball back, so it was a full-team effort.

Q. After 17-0 and two turnovers, were you contemplating making a change at that point at all?

DAVE CANALES: Just keep playing football. Ask him to execute and keep taking chances. Fortunately for us, we were able to stay balanced with our attack, and the run game got going, which allowed us to have a different type of attack and settle back in. Then he made his throws when we needed it.

Q. An aggressive call at the end of the game. You could have run the ball, made them take the last time-out. What went in the decision to call a pass play?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just going for it. Just trying to give ourselves a chance best play call in that situation. You know, we felt like if we did have to punt with the amount of time that was there, we could change the field. Then they would have to operate without time-outs if I would have chose to run the ball.

It was a decision. There was a quick conversation about it, and I was, like, Okay, let's just get our best play out there, what attacks our coverage, and see if we can make a big play. We got the penalty there to finish the game.

Q. Dave, I know this is hard to think about in the moment. This game pretty started the way that Week 1 and Week 2 started with the two turnovers and getting the points on them. How much do you think having those experiences helped you kind of recover?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, adversity definitely builds resilience. While I hate being in those situations, we're comfortable continuing to play, continuing to execute. So it does build a mental toughness and emotional toughness to be able to keep moving forward and say, okay, but this next drive could be the one and to just continue to have that optimism, that positivity about this next drive could be the one and to execute together as a team.

Q. What do you think about Xavier back on the field and then scoring that touchdown?



DAVE CANALES: Unbelievable. I think just I truly believe that Xavier as he settles in and just does his part, when the ball came to him, he made the plays. That's all we need from him.

He showed up today. He had a great look in his eyes. He was excited to get out there. I saw him through the week just every day just building confidence, building confidence. I'm so glad Bryce gave him a shot right there, you know, where they had double-double coverage on T-Mac and somebody else on the inside. Xavier had the single. We need you to win big, and he did on his touchdown.

Q. Speaking of that touchdown, we saw you go over to X on the sidelines after. Was this a conversation, or what did y'all say? I know you've been trying to help him get back to this point, too.

DAVE CANALES: I was about to cry, honestly. Just very proud of the work that he's put in to get himself back out there, because I see him grinding, I see him attacking the things that he needs to work on in practice. He's not shying away from it. He hit it head-on, and he looked in the mirror, and he said, These are the things that I need to improve my game on to get him back out there healthy and playing confident was huge.

Q. You guys are undefeated at home now. I don't know if you heard from the sideline there were "Go Dolphins" chants, and those quickly dissipated after you had that drive. To finish the way you guys had here, what does that mean?

DAVE CANALES: It's about us, and we have to be able to take that with us on the road as well. It's always going to be about us. Can we stay together? Can we stay tightly together so that we can execute when we need to? It can't be just at home.

Having the advantage of our fan base here, which for the ones who stayed, got to see an amazing show and a team that just won't quit, just has resilience.

This is something that we have to continue to build on. We know how to finish. Can we start and play consistent football all the way through? That's the question. We can't lose that just because we won the game. We have to still tell the truth. We have to look at the things that we need to improve on and move forward.

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