

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: What a great response by the players. Challenged the guys just in game, the sign of a team that's growing, a sign of maturity is how you deal with adversity, and to come out right away and have turnovers and have some big plays get out on us, but to watch the guys focus, stay together, go to the next series, go to the next play and just continue to execute, settle into our game plan and the way that we planned to attack the Dolphins.

Got to give the Dolphins credit for coming out being ready to play right off the bat and making plays in all the phases, really.

Then it kind of -- the dust settled and we started to play football and we started to battle our way back. But it's the resilience of this group, it's the toughness, it's the commitment to each other, the commitment to continuing to improve our processes, our schemes, and to execute the way that we're asking them to.

Q. You switched up Trevin Wallace and Christian Rozeboom's roles, at least pre-snap and their playing time. What did you notice on time about their two performances?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it was a really interesting dynamic where Trevin felt really comfortable making the calls, and that was something that we asked him to do, take on that challenge. Christian just looked like he was playing a little freer out there and running sideline to sideline, making hits, all the things that we saw bringing him in here.

So flipping the roles I thought really helped both guys settle into a comfort zone in a role.

Then going into our dime packages, we left Trevin out there a little bit more and got a really fast group out there of guys that were aggressive in the run game and in the pass game. I thought Ejiro did a great job of making that decision, and he and Coach Pete Hansen talked that through, and it worked out for us.

Q. Rico said that he went to Brad about the play that got the 53-yard burst. Can you talk about him, one, going to that and the lines of communication? I'm assuming he communicated that to you. And then empowering your players to have that type of input in the game?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I love the challenge as coaches, and I told him, I'm going at that call this early so you'd better do something with it. That's for Rico, that's for the quarterback, that's for the defensive guys asking for opportunities. Derrick asked for more pass rush opportunities, and he got a sack early on with that.

I think when the players put themselves out there and make themselves vulnerable, then we get to push them and we get to say, okay, well, show me something, do something with it. Just by the way that Rico hit that run with aggression, it was his play, means something. That's the approach that these guys have to take with all of it.

This is your offense. This is your defense. This is your special teams unit. Can we have the pride to bring that type of energy? Can it matter that much for you? But it was a really cool moment.

Q. Would you expound on Derrick's conversation with you?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Derrick just working back into this year, coming off of last year's injury, we wanted Derrick to make sure we ramped his play time up. He was playing 70 plus percent of the snaps over the last couple of years, and he's feeling good, and he asked us and so we gave him a few more opportunities to be out there in some rush downs and some different things, but he's been responding really well, and he's working tirelessly to make sure that he's physically ready to handle whatever we throw at him.

Q. Going back to the run game, it looked like throughout the day yesterday you had a lot of success going to the rain. What did maybe Rico see and you guys saw that you liked in that match-up?

DAVE CANALES: There were some front-side match-up



stuff for us. I think Brady gives us an opportunity to be really fast and display the front side, and then partly it was just what hash we ended on and what run we were going to that kind of put us in that spot. It wasn't really until a couple of series where we realized we were getting a lot of positive results over there on the front side.

It does put stress on your backside, but Damien is really stout there, and Ikey is a fantastic athlete, so he can cut things off from that standpoint, but a lot of that ended up just being the way it played out from the hashes.

Q. Jimmy Horn is a guy who was waiting for an opportunity. He got that opportunity yesterday making that big play on 4th down. How do you foresee him moving forward now?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just keep bringing him along, asking him to execute the plan, asking him to be detailed. He'll come up here and tell you there's a couple things that he needs to clean up. We knew that going in; how is he going to handle the load. He did a good job, and I think on top of everything, he played full speed, whether it was blocking in the run game, using him on our jet sweep time of things or in the pass game making that big 4th down was a huge confidence builder for him, and loved that Bryce had the confidence in Jimmy to go win in a critical situation.

Q. With Chuba and what Rico did yesterday, will that have any impact on how you use the two backs moving forward?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Chuba, we're going to evaluate him every day and see where he's at, and with he and Rico, what I take from it is we have two good backs, so we'll have to figure that part out. That's a good problem to have, but it's something that we have to work through.

Q. Seemed like you had some success in the screen game this week, which is something you struggled with earlier. What does that open up for the offense?

DAVE CANALES: It allows us to play off of the play action passes, the run game, those known run formations and try to cash in on some of those screens. There was a couple that the execution could have been a little cleaner and we would have had a few more big plays. But to get one screen going, the guys getting out in space, Rico having the ball in space and being able to get those yards, it does give you balance in what you're able to do.

Q. Is Jalen Coker's 21-day practice window opening on Wednesday?

DAVE CANALES: Yes, we're going to open up Coker's window. We're going to throw some loads at him and kind of increase it each day to see where he's at. We'll make the best decision for Jalen, make the best decision for the team as we go forward through this week.

Q. Does he have a chance to play on Sunday?

DAVE CANALES: We'll see. I'll be able to tell you that after I see him on the field actually playing football. Right now he's been in RTP. They're doing a great job with him, monitoring his progress, his top speeds, his endurance, just general, like, physical conditioning for football, but now you've got to go play football to be able to prove that we can bring him out there.

Q. Actually once he does get activated to the roster, that will mean a decision for the 53 and what you do with that? Do you have any thoughts on how that's going to impact the wide receiver room from a roster standpoint?

DAVE CANALES: Lots of thoughts but nothing that I want to get into right now.

Q. You talked about the players being vulnerable and asking for stuff. How have you seen those conversations evolve, and when did they really start to get comfortable bringing that to you?

DAVE CANALES: In bits and pieces. These are conversations that Bryce and I have been having for a long time in terms of here are the concepts, and when he has an idea for how to improve something that we've built, we want to take that feedback. I want to make sure that whatever play comes through the radio waves that hits his ears, that it creates good chemistry in his mind, he's excited about the play, he's excited to go execute that, and that's where we want to have that feedback.

But that goes for all the players. We ask the offensive line now for the year and change that I've been here, we asked the offensive line on Friday, give me a list of your top eight runs that you have to see called this week that we feel like we can execute, and we ask them for that. We take that into consideration as Brad and I are building the game plan.

But we want that kind of feedback from our guys so that we know -- when they're telling us those things, that's what they're comfortable with. That's what they're confident in, and that'll allow them to play fast, and that's an important piece.

Q. Through five weeks you're one of the least



penalized teams in the NFL. What do you attribute that to?

DAVE CANALES: I believe it's the pre-snap process on both -- really in all phases. We were sloppy in ways offensively. We had a 12-man, I had to take a time-out on defense. Special teams we had two different times where we didn't have the right people or enough people out there. Those are the things that we have to clean up if we're covering it up with time-outs and those things. It throws the momentum off, and it creates a refocus moment for us where we have to settle back in to go.

But I think it's a commitment for guys to just play with great effort, play with great technique. When you're in good position, usually you don't have fouls. When you're in great position in the secondary, it usually doesn't lead to a foul because you can play the ball well. When you're blocking on the perimeter, the offensive line, if you're running your feet, you typically avoid holding calls because you have good technique.

So it's about these guys' commitment, our players' commitment to playing with great technique and great leverage that allows us to play clean football.

Q. A lot of time the team that over comes those long odds and the things you just mentioned, it's looked back on in time as a defining moment for that team or that person. Did anything did yesterday feel like a defining moment for Bryce and for the team?

DAVE CANALES: Really for the team in general it's the style of football, the physical nature that we've been playing with has to match up with the execution, and while early on defensively and offensively early on, we were not executing at a high level and we turned the ball over, but to settle into really good football allows that physical nature to not get covered up by a bunch of mistakes.

To play that kind of football, it gives us -- it gives me the permission to double down on execution, to double down on the fundamentals and the basics of the play, the trust factor it takes to play good football.

So it allows me to say, look at the process as we put three good weeks of practice together. It's led to some good football, but it can get away from you if we don't refocus and we don't have the discipline to keep returning to that type of mentality.

Q. You mentioned Ejiro earlier. What adjustment did he make and the defensive stuff in general on Darren Waller because he went from a huge first half to no targets in the second half.

DAVE CANALES: First and foremost, it was the pass rush continuing to build through the second half. We got better opportunities to affect the quarterback, which forced the ball to come out earlier. It was just simple execution. When you look at a couple of his big plays, it was a communication thing on the back half, and then it was just a technique thing where we had two players in phase. JC was kind of low, we had a safety over the top, he ran a great route, and Tua had enough time to hit the second one that went for about 17 or 18.

The big one, we just needed to communicate and make sure we were understanding and locating where he was at in the formation to be able to execute that, but they talked through it, they fixed it, and then we rushed better, and that combination kind of led to the success in the second half.

Q. You talked about the pre-snap process a few questions ago. Yesterday you said there were a few plays that got in late. I'm curious, as a head coach and as a play caller, how is that balance for you, and how difficult is it to try to do everything?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it is difficult, but that's what we prepare for, and we try to put ourselves in those situations so that they come up in walk-throughs. We put ourselves in critical end-of-half, end-of-game type situations on Wednesday and Thursday, and then on top of that, for me it's also responding to the big play. One of them happened because Rico rips off a big run, we're all excited, I'm late to get the play in, Bryce is trying to get the guys organized.

That's on me. I have to be better in that situation. Get the personnel called, all this stuff is happening, people are celebrating, get the personnel, get Bryce the call early so as he's jogging down there, get the guys organized in the huddle.

I know we're all excited for this great run, but we have to get back to the huddle. The play clock starts sooner than you think on those big plays. So we can do a better job there.

Then from there, it's about just making sure that the information is communicated to the guys, let's get out of the huddle and get to the line so we can gather information so we're not up against it.

Q. There was a moment that Derrick Brown mentioned postgame where he essentially said that Bryce had come up to him I'm assuming after a turnover, but the context being go get the ball back for us and we'll go. Were you aware that that happened, and even just the fact that it happened, what does that signal to you?



DAVE CANALES: I was not aware of that conversation. I'm always trying to read our body language; how are we doing so I can check in with guys and just be a presence so we can refocus, whether it's from a big drive in a positive way or whether we go out there with some adversity to make sure we have the right focus, the right mentality.

To hear our leaders talking together across the ball, that's what it takes. It doesn't matter how you end up in the situation; can you go out and execute one more time. Can you keep your focus on your side while also being able to connect with, we believe we can get this done, so I love to hear that they're talking together, the belief is that, and we're building on that.

Q. As you guys look back at Lathan and Corey Thornton and the new roles they had yesterday, how did those two handle that increased workload?

DAVE CANALES: They did a solid job. They played hard. There's some communication things, some technique stuff that needs to be improved by what they did. But love asking them to take on bigger roles as we continue to go through this season, to see these guys contribute and help our team win. They handled that. They handled the responsibility of it well. We need the execution to continue to improve.

Q. What about Bryce? Was there anything about it that was a defining moment for him, the way he handled the adversity?

DAVE CANALES: He's been really consistent this year on when things haven't gone right, when there have been mistakes, when he's turned the ball over and he's got a great look on his face and in his eyes of accountability but also like, I'm good, let's keep going, and giving me the confidence to just continue to give him opportunities to take the ball down the field when he can, put the ball in his hands when we get into the red zone to get opportunities that way. So he's just led with consistency. He has a way of going down, sitting down, collecting his thoughts, and then coming back out with great energy, and that's where he's been locked into, and I want him to stay there.

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