

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Guys are ready. Great challenge this week. Number one offense in the NFL. Defense that is coming together with some names that we know. A great coaching staff.

We're preparing. There was great focus out there, engagement today at practice, trying to build off and improve on the things we looked at in the film session. Just making sure that we're continuing to progress, continuing to show improvement in those areas. Pushing each other. They're taking to it the right way. So it's an exciting day.

Q. Can you talk about the confidence you have in the run defense last week, carrying it over into this week.

DAVE CANALES: We've consistently been winning on first and second down with the run game. We have given up a couple of explosives. But this is a team that continues to improve, to work together to fit the runs the right way and rally to the ball and tackle. We expect them to do that again this week, take on the challenge, talk to each other, communicate, keep building together.

It really happens in practice. It's the communication that I see out there. I see them talking about different sets, talking about different tips and tells that they're working on and making sure they're playing their leverages right and doing their assignments so we can play team football.

Q. Do you think Chuba will miss another week?

DAVE CANALES: We're going to put him out there every day little by little in RTP, see where he's at. We'll make that decision as we go. He's chomping at the bit, as you can imagine, especially after last week. He is fired up to get back out there. We have to do the right thing for Chuba and the right thing for the Panthers. We'll take it day by day and see where it's at.

Q. How good was it to see Ricoh get awarded?

DAVE CANALES: NFC offensive player of the week,

phenomenal. I'm really proud of the group. I'm proud of the offensive line. He'd be up here telling you the offensive line and the tight ends and the receivers blocking down the field.

It takes all 11. Bryce getting us to the right looks depending on the looks. It's a whole team effort. Rico went out there and did his part, played violently like we expected him to.

I'm excited for Rico, all the hard work that goes into it, the full group, to put that kind of performance. It's earned. You work on those things. To make it come alive, it takes a group effort.

Q. The offensive player of the week, Chuba comes back, is there a balance you have to go by?

DAVE CANALES: It's a great feeling for me. I look down at the call sheet, I don't have to worry about who's in there. Trevor has done a great job as well when he's gotten his opportunities to run the ball.

To know we have two solid backs that we love, it allows us to continue to play our brand of football, know that we can get a fresh set of legs in there that can execute. It's a great feeling for me. We'll figure out how to use both guys when that time comes.

Q. (Question about players playing against their old team.)

DAVE CANALES: That's not part of our language here. We take every opponent seriously. We look at all of them as championship opportunities, to improve our football, attack it. He's human. I know there's going to be emotions and all that. We have to set those things aside.

I don't know if there's any special emotions for him. Last week he played hard and I expect him to play the same way.

Q. Jalen Coker was wearing a scout team uniform. How did he help you in practice?

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DAVE CANALES: He looked good. He ran crisp routes. He looks fast. He looks like Jalen.

We want to make sure he can put the volume of this full week in before we make a decision whether to bring him up this week or not. We're trying to get extra reps here and there, some scout team reps, some full-speed routes, ramp up his volume tomorrow to see where he's at, to see if he can handle it, so we can trust he's ready to go for a full game.

When you open a player's window, it's easy to make decisions to try to get them back out there, especially when there's a guy like Jalen who we rely on to make plays for us last year.

At the same time we have to open the window and be realistic about what he can handle, let him show us what he's ready to handle. We'll take it day and to day here and make a decision.

Q. Was there a particular player from Sunday with Rico that you held up as an example for the rest of the guys?

DAVE CANALES: There were several. A defensive lineman is coming off of his block, he's got a free arm and Rico runs through the arm. It is a second level. Safeties and corners showing up on a second level in the run game. He's got his pad level down, covering the ball up, which is first and foremost for us. Those are great examples of what it takes.

Oftentimes when you run violently like that early on in the game, the DBs have to bring it, close in on you. That's where the extra yards come in. You can set up runs, make moves to left or right. It all starts running downhill, pressing the feet of the linemen, running violently. That sets up the rest of it.

Q. You talked about Cowboys being number one in the league offensively. What do you see...

DAVE CANALES: Great balance. A group of skill players that are talented. Experienced guys that have been with Dak for a while. Adding George Pickens into the mix with speed and size.

I know Brian Schottenheimer personally. I know he's going to try to find a way to run ball some way, somehow. You see the balance of their personnels, their formations. They can run or pass out of all things. That's what makes them a good offense.

I think Dak is playing at a really high level, finding his

completions, finding his play-makers out there. They are doing a good job of mixing personnel and utilizing their roster.

Q. Are there particular areas where maybe you're not surprise but most impressed with how much progress they've made?

DAVE CANALES: It's a collective group working together. That's what I see. I've seen that now for three weeks in practice happen where they're talk before the snap, they're getting set, their eyes are right, they're making adjustments together. That's what I've seen collectively.

I'm proud of the young guys. Nic Scourton, who made some awesome plays. Princely had a couple of plays in there, as well. Guys I didn't mention after the game. We were talking about some of the younger players.

These are guys that are growing up, figuring it out and they feel the weight of accountability from their teammates to do their job well. They're taking to the challenge and continuing to improve.

Q. Dallas' defense improving a little bit. Right now they have the worst defense yard-wise in the league.

DAVE CANALES: To me it looks like communication. I look at their roster and I look at the team they've assembled. They have depth. They have play-makers out there. Two corners that will certainly catch it if you throw it to them. They are dynamic players.

They have some experienced rushers on the edge and some younger rushers that they're developing. Kenny Clark on the inside.

I look at this group. I see those guys figuring out how to play together in a scheme. That's what it amounts to me. I know Matt Eberflus as well. Excellent coach. Andre Curtis, another friend of mine on the defensive staff. They'll get these guys to play really good defense in short order.

But I don't see them lacking anything. What I see is a group that as they come together and play together, I know they're going to continue to ascend.

Q. Had a guy that came back from before? LaBryan Ray. Made some stops in the first half. When you see a guy come off IR, he responds the way he does, does that give you confidence in the way you handle the guys from the medical and coaching standpoint?

DAVE CANALES: I can't say enough good things about



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Denny Kellington and the job the training staff is doing. Josh Hingst, as well, with the strength staff, preparing our guys to be ready for football when they come back from these things. Our return-to-play process has been excellent. I'm really excited.

Again, we have to treat each guy as an individual case with different types of injuries and exposure to it or recurring things. We have to take all those things into consideration.

We have all the analytics. We have all the expertise, the hands-on expertise. Now they pass them off to the coaches to put them to the test from a football standpoint so we can make educated decisions. I feel very confident about our group getting our guys back and playing at a high level when they do.

Q. There were a few times on Sunday that Nic, Princely, D.J. and Pat were all out there together. What do you like about that personnel grouping?

DAVE CANALES: It's a dynamic group. They're guys that are versatile. Pat can play inside. Nic Scourton can play inside some. To be able to move those pieces around to get those fast guys out on the field.

They've been working hard on their stunts, rush game. Their technique and their rushes as well. It's all paying off. I see them working with AC Carter. I see them working with Todd Wash using their hands, their leverage, learning from the veteran players so they are feeding off each other. That's the type of energy we need. That's a group that needs to continue to grow to make an impact in the pass-rush game.

Q. What are you seeing that has to change defensively to shut down the opposing tight ends?

DAVE CANALES: There's a couple communication issues that we have to work through. Then let's give it credit where credit is due. Trey McBride is a phenomenal player. Darren Waller is a phenomenal player. Those guys are going to make their plays. Can we minimize it by playing our leverages well, being aware of where they are in formation, making sure we eliminate those big explosive plays.

Are they still going to produce? Absolutely. They are going to find their plays, but let's minimize the big plays. I think that's the biggest thing, making sure they're all tied in together in their coverages.

Q. (Question regarding backs.)

DAVE CANALES: Could be. Some teams have two backs

they use with effectiveness. Some teams have a lead back that they ask to carry the load.

We'll look at all it and make those decisions when we get Chuba back.

Q. Home games, what benefit does it have being in Charlotte?

DAVE CANALES: I mean, speaking personally, it's just spending time with my family, spending time with my wife and my kids throughout the weekend, where you're normally getting on a plane sometime on Saturday afternoon. I get to go see soccer, those type of things. It puts you in a good state of mind.

I will say the flipside. I think on the road, in my experience, when I'm on the road, I have a window on the plane to watch a little bit more film, to look at my call sheet one more time, go up and down the aisles talking to players, talking to coaches.

There's a connectedness that happens to a team playing on the road. We got to be able to make sure that shows up on game day. We have to make sure we're able to do that.

We certainly love being at home, playing in Bank of America Stadium. We do everything here. We have our meetings, practices. We love it here. We look forward to that, having the back-to-back weeks where we can spend time with our families and really recover that way going into this long season.

Thank you.

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