

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Dave Canales

### Postgame Press Conference



Carolina Panthers 30, Dallas Cowboys 27

DAVE CANALES: So proud of this group that just continues to fight and scratch and claw and just get it done.

The end of the day, it's what do you do with the last possession and the defense gave up some yards and Dak Prescott and George Pickens had a great day. Got to give the Cowboys a lot of credit for the offense that they produced today, but the defense came through for us when we needed it to get us the ball back, give us another chance to get down there, get into field goal range right there and for Ryan to hit his first year game-winner was amazing. It just ties the whole group in.

Everybody had to do their part right there at the end to win this game so I'm so proud the way the team keeps coming together to find good football when we need it.

**Q. It's slowly but surely becoming the Rico Dowdle show out here in Charlotte. Did you feel any extra motivation going in facing his former team?**

DAVE CANALES: Just looked like the same guy last week, ran with violence, had a plan. A man on a mission that wants to make yards and really just take our schemes and make them come alive. He'd be up here, first thing he would say is give credit to the offensive line, the tight ends for blocking, the wide receivers involved and all that to create another successful day on the ground. But I'm sure -- he's human. I'm sure there's emotions for him coming from his former team and all that so I will acknowledge that part of it but I didn't see a difference from what he did last week. I just saw great execution and great attitude when he ran the ball.

**Q. Ryan has the make from 55, what are the considerations on fourth and four on the 40 there?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, big-time considerations. Having the confidence to let Ryan take a shot at that one. We had the wind in that situation right there. Fourth and four I certainly was trying to find opportunities to get another drive to get another series knowing we were playing a

really good offense and they were going to find some opportunities but wanted to give them that shot right there. I'm so glad he came through for us.

**Q. No, I mean at the end, he already has the make, you decide to go for it on fourth and four.**

DAVE CANALES: Oh, right. Flip that. Flip that. Wind in our face right there. Got to make a decision on whether we want to try a really long one that might not be in our favor, wanted to put the ball in Bryce's hands, get us a first down right there. He did a great job of finding Hunter right there on the inside for the completion and allowed us to finish the game off right there.

**Q. How did you feel about Bryce's game management today? He got off to a pretty quick start, faced some adversity. I'd have to watch the film, but in terms of how you think he handled the game out there, what did you think?**

DAVE CANALES: I thought he was great. Better and better just in terms of the communication with the guys. It's a lot of hard work. These guys have been working together, working on things in practice as we continue to challenge the group and they took to that.

We had to take a couple of time-outs there at the end. There were some substitution things. I had to make a really critical indication to use these time-outs to make sure we were settled so we could have our best group out there for the concepts that we practiced. I don't want to use those time-outs in that situation, but for me, it felt like I needed to settle the group in, let's get our best call, and we ended up executing there.

**Q. You guys went empty on that fourth down play call. Can you talk about the decision that went into that?**

DAVE CANALES: On which one?

**Q. On the fourth down...**

DAVE CANALES: At the end? Yeah, it was going to be a long kick and we were looking at -- we had a little bit of

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head wind so I wanted to put the ball in Bryce's hands, be able to see and evaluate what they were doing from a defensive standpoint. He had two great options on the left with Hunter and T-Mac over there and found a completion for us. It was a critical down, and those are the types of plays that I love when Bryce comes through for us right there and give them a chance to affect the game.

**Q. Dave, T-Mac had the early drop that lead to the interception to come back down to him. We talked about all week the lack of touchdowns and he scores two big touchdowns in this game. What have you seen about his resilience just when he makes a mistake, how he's able to bounce back.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he's a really focused player and he just goes to the next play. A high-confidence player who knows he's going to make that play. The catch was a little bit away from him. I've seen him make that. He'll be the first one to tell you, I can make that play. The Cowboys turned that around and got a big gain off the interception, but get the guy down and give us one more chance and see if we can affect them and keep them out of the end zone.

But the way that he just responded, the way he bounced back, this is time on task. This is conversations between him and Bryce all throughout this season of just fine-tuning the different routes and the landmark we're expected to be at, how we adjust on things. And that really showed up on two plays, plays we've been working on that those guys have been talking about if they play this, I want you to respond this way. If they play this one, find space here. That's the type of chemistry we have to continue to grow.

**Q. The play action has really come into play the last two games. How much is that Rico? How much is that just because the running game is working in general?**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. It's a great point. When the run game gets going, it creates space in the back half. We didn't hit all of them, but we had some good production down the field. We got some good production on our check-downs as well. Even the screen the Legette that we had. It presents itself like a deep shot in that situation when you get past the 50 and he was able to bite out a big chunk of yards for us right there.

**Q. The Panthers haven't been .500 this late in the season or at all since week ten four years ago I know you have bigger goals than that, but getting to that point in going forward, what does that say about where you guys are in your build?**

DAVE CANALES: It's a group commitment to the process

and the way that we practice, the way that we study, the way that we talk to each other and the type of effort that we ask for in our practices, it leads to good results and there's got to be a trust in this process that it will lead to good things if you just show up and give us what you have when you're in this building, when you walk in these doors. It leads to improvement. That's what we're looking for... progress. We're looking for improvement in all areas and we're seeing that. We're seeing groups work together to be able to come away with a full team win right there was really amazing and it allows me to just double down on the fact that this process works if we stay together, continue to just bravely and courageously look at the mistakes we have made and correct them. This is a group that's just continuing to get better each week.

**Q. As you said, this was Ryan's (inaudible). Is he one of those guys that you go check on right before he goes out there? Do you leave him alone? What was he like before he went out there?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, honestly, just the normal course of action for me is I don't really typically go and check with the kickers and as they're going out on to the field, I'm just collecting my thoughts about what happened, what's the scenario. There's a lot of conversations happening. I just want to give him his space to be locked in and he came through for us in a big way today.

**Q. (Inaudible) offensive line, specifically the makeshift right side, how they did.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Brady was consistent. He was great again for us. Yosh Nijman did a fantastic job today. I got to watch the film to see how that all graded out but as far as I saw with the run game and the pass protection, there was an element, there was enough time for us to get our passes gone and the run game certainly showed up again. I'm so proud of Yosh, the way he stepped in when we asked him to and really responded.

**Q. How important was that final possession of the first half... 17-10, you end up with a field goal, but you know Dallas scores more points I think than anybody in that situation. It felt like you were, knowing you had the ball to start the second half felt like a critical possession and how you managed it.**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. Going into the locker room and we tried to mess that up, talk to Xavier about the lateral right there in that situation. It's just something that's outside of what we need to do. I think actually Rico was calling for the ball so Rico kind of came up to me and was like Coach, that was on me and I was like guys, don't make stuff up. (Laughter) Let's just play our football. Let's just

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advance the ball, get us into a better field goal situation so we can take advantage of the plays that led into it.

But it was a good way for me to just remind the group just do your job. It'll be enough. If they beat us, they made great plays. George Pickens made some amazing plays today. We got to give them credit where credit is due. The defense made it hard on us at the end. We had a three-and-out right there right before the touchdown drive and Dallas' defense made some adjustments and made it hard for us right there. But we just have to continue to just execute the little things over and over.

**Q. The little things... Etienne, Trevor at the end, looked like he obviously went down to Dallas, trying to make him score. Who told him to do that or what's the little thing there that you --**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Dallas was all over it. We had a time-out somewhere in there. Dallas called a time-out. He came over. He was like, okay, you know, I'm telling these guys first down, get down, this is something we practiced. Coach George Li presents us with different scenarios in our walkthroughs where we get to hit our two-minute situations and a half in a game and also four-minute situations just like that. We practiced that two weeks ago getting into a four-minute situation where this is a first down get down type of deal and Trevor came off the field and said the next time that happens, you guys are going to have to run off the field and tackle me because I really would like to score my first touchdown. (Laughter) But it was well-executed, well-blocked. He got down, gave us a chance to run the clock out and win the game walking off.

**Q. You guys are on a roll with Rico running the ball. How do you anticipate everything still working together when Chuba comes back and mixing everyone in?**

DAVE CANALES: That's a great question. We're going to figure that part out, but I know Rico is doing a great job and he will be a part of what we're doing. Thank you.

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