

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Coach Dave Canales

### Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Had a chance to meet with our leadership council of our players. Talking about the game. Reflecting on that. That's not our football.

You know, just kind of had that conversation about the run game, playing it well, with discipline, tackling the things this showed up there, and of course taking care of the ball on the flip side of it offensively.

I thought the special teams unit performed well, covered, got a couple decent returns and really played hard, but didn't show up for us offensively and defensively. Now the challenge for us is to return to the football that led to success, which is stopping the run first and foremost, getting our run game going, and then taking care the ball so we can get back and return to that version of football we want to play.

#### **Q. Can you give us an update on Bryce as well as Cade Mays and Taylor Moton?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, for Bryce, getting better every day. Had a good session running today in return to play. The goal is to get him out there on Wednesday, move him around, and see if we can get him into practice, in a mode.

I'm optimistic he'll be out there, but we'll take it day-to-day with him.

Taylor and the rest of guys we'll give the injury report on Wednesday.

#### **Q. Wanted to ask you, there has been a stark difference in production between Rico and Chuba over the last two weeks. How has that changed your outlook on this rotation? What have you noticed about why that is?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, you know, it's a fair observation. Chuba has meant a lot to this organization, certainly to the identity we want to build our team on. Wanted to give Chuba an opportunity to go out there and continue to impact our team in a positive way.

We cannot ignore the fact that Rico has been exceptional in a couple games, and in the opportunities he's had in the last two weeks he's made some excellent plays. Love the tempo and violence that he's running with. These are all things we're talking about and working through this week as we look back on these last four games and really taking a snapshot of what has been successful for us.

These are conversations we definitely do have to have.

#### **Q. Just wanted to take a quick look at the offensive line and its constantly changing personnel with injuries piling up. Are you confident with the replacements that you can develop consistency and continuity from the unit?**

DAVE CANALES: You know, this is a challenge. Chandler Zavala's window will open up this week and we'll have a chance to get him on the field to evaluate him. Certainly could use his help right now, especially with Brady going down.

We'll evaluate Taylor Moton to see where he is this week. Yosh stepped in and finished the game for us. If it's not T-Mo, we are counting on Yosh to step in in that role. And then thought Corbett did an excellent job stepping in. We will count on him again.

Nick Samac, who we haven't seen get action at center could be another option in the interior of our offensive line. And then we have a couple guys on the practice squad that have been around us, have been hearing our words, that we will be able to look at if we need them to.

#### **Q. I wanted to ask about Brandon Walton. I believe he's been up three times already. Any chance of signing him this week? Or Saahdiq Charles, do you expect him to get a chance?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, those are the guys that we're talking to and looking at right now. We'll make that decision as the week goes on once we know where everyone is at.



**Q. Can you expand a little bit on what you were talking about Rico and Chuba. You were highly praising Rico. Does that mean you're considering going to more of a heavy load for Rico and changing up the way you're doing things?**

DAVE CANALES: That's something we're looking at. You know, again, have to respect the job that Chuba has done for us and to get us to the point where we established the mentality about how we run.

And we cannot ignore the fact that Rico has made an impact when he's been out there. These are things we are talking through as a staff and we'll make that decision as the week goes on.

**Q. When you looked at I guess what happened after the game a little bit with the skirmish out there, what was your -- I know you said yesterday emotions were high. I think you were talking specifically about one of the players. (Regarding helmet), but a lot more was going on out there. What did you think when you saw the video and any kind of action from your end?**

DAVE CANALES: Just disappointment. Really the guys feeling disappointment and frustrated in the moment. We'll handle all the other stuff in-house.

**Q. Kind of following up on the running backs, you mentioned that this is kind of a delicate situation given Chuba's standing in the locker room and your respect for him. Is there kind of a scenario, a way where you can keep everyone happy and satisfied and still maybe give Rico the lion's share?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I mean, that's not the goal, right? The goal is to make sure we put the right guys out there. That's my job. So I really do have to look at that and evaluate it and make the best decision for the Panthers collectively.

You know, for me I have to make sure that I keep it about the football. At the same time, I've had a good amount of experience with Chuba and I've seen Chuba at his best. Now we've seen Rico at his best.

So I have to make sure we have the right conversations all together and move forward.

**Q. How will your experience with Bryce and Andy, with doing that decision you made last year with Bryce, how will that help inform you with this situation?**

DAVE CANALES: Talking specifically about the

quarterback situation or with Chuba and Rico?

**Q. Yeah, you did not go into the quarterback benching lightly and you were I think very, you know, sensitive to Andy and the whole dynamic.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. I just wondered if that will benefit you in your handling of this.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I'll agree, Joe. Those types of decisions prepare me more and more for how to handle it and how to make the right decision.

At the end of the day we have to talk as a staff and we have to make sure we're making the best step going forward. All those conversations and decisions, they really do help kind of guide what's at the heart of it. What's at the heart of it is winning games and putting our best foot forward.

That's the decision ultimately that we'll do.

**Q. You mentioned meeting with your leadership group this morning. What does that look like throughout the week? Is that a message they take back to the locker room? Is it just -- like what is the results of a meeting like that?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, so four weeks ago we had the same meeting. We had one at the beginning of the year. Got four games in and then regrouped and it's a great leadership group.

The guys understand that it's the work and it's the process that have led to the success. So we sit in the room today with four games behind us, 3-1, some great football, great process. What we're asking them to get out of each day, Wednesday through Saturday, showing up on Sunday, and playing good technically sound football.

Those are the principles that will get us back to playing our type of ball. It was a much better conversation after four weeks looking at what we've done and saying, what led to this? Well, it's fundamentals, it's the attention to detail throughout the week, and then on Sunday showing up with everything you have and make be sure those things carryover.

So that's the confidence I have in this group to continue to affect the rest of their teammates in a positive way. Here is how we go about it. Get right back to work. Make it about the basics and we crush it every day.

**Q. I was going to ask something along those same lines. Hoping you could expound on it. Is it fair to say that this Monday looks similar to the Monday after the Patriots game, preceding the three-game win streak?**

DAVE CANALES: Yes, it does. Unfortunately it's in that same mode of a game that really got out of hand on us.

There is a lot of humility in that room. Certainly a group that's been growing in confidence based on how we've been playing and preparing.

And now what's great about it, Alex, is that we get to go into that same room with a similar type of result from the day before and really feel the urgency of what it takes to stop the run collectively on defense, and offensively to get our run game going, and also to take care the ball to lead to the success we've had.

So very eerily similar in that regard. Hoping for the same result. So the guys come back together, regroup, and we get back to some really good football.

**Q. Is there a belief that perhaps wasn't there three weeks or four weeks ago? Or is that belief or was that belief always there?**

DAVE CANALES: No, it definitely -- there was a shift. Early in the season even from our veteran players in our group, a lot of them were new to this team and new to this group. It's a team that's grown together. It's a team that's found ways to win in different phases.

Going into this meeting today there is a sense of an identity. There is a sense of what we look like at our best. We understand what we're getting after and what's required of it. So there is a confidence that's growing and a knowing of who we are and what our identity can be at its best.

**Q. Can you share who is on the leadership group?**

DAVE CANALES: It's a good group. You know, it's our captains and then there are a bunch of other veterans. I don't want to go through the whole list of guys. Most of guys have a couple years in the league and have been -- a few have been around different places.

So it's an opportunity for us to also draw from the places they've been and things they've seen, successes they've had that really affects this group.

**Q. And a situation like what you're dealing with with the running backs and whether to switch things up again, is that something you discuss with them, just**

**get a feel for what they think on that? Was that part of the meeting?**

DAVE CANALES: It is not.

**Q. Okay. Personnel just strictly with the coaches then?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. All right. And one more thing on that. How is Chuba handling what you guys -- assuming you talked to him -- how is he handling possibly going to a lesser role?**

DAVE CANALES: That's not something we've discussed with them right now. This will be something we'll talk to them about whatever we decide. I'll make sure that I present it. I always try to make sure I talk to the players one-on-one and make sure they know what the plan is going forward and I'll do that again.

**Q. Dave, how are you, sir?**

DAVE CANALES: Hey, good, how are you?

**Q. Good, man. You've been around this league for a long time with only playoffs teams. Seattle, Tampa a couple years ago. How vital is it when you get to this part of the year that you talk about that leadership committee to have a guy like Derrick Brown, Jaycee Horn particularly on defense when you go through these moments of let's say temporary regression. I would assume those are the two guys among others on that defense you're leaning on right now to be the voice and strength.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it's important for the coaches as well as the players, people who have been around teams that have become something and made playoff appearances, and for a bunch of us on staff who have actually been in Super Bowls to look at the commonalities and the team identity and the culture that's set. It's a daily pursuit of excellence. We understand the marathon of the season and how long the season is. There are injuries but we have to adjust, and we count on new people to step in.

But it's the same principles that show up. It starts with taking care of the ball. It's great fundamental football. It's great situational decisions and mastery in different situations. It's about coming back to work. Every we had ready to improve, ready to dive deeper into our schemes and concepts.

It's not about adding more or making up new things. It's



about drilling in on the things that we're good at to make sure we troubleshoot things what are showing up or things that might need to be tightened up.

It's constant tweaks, micro-adjustments within the things that we believe in that will lead to success. We're going to rely on and count on the leadership group and some of the veterans to keep pounding the drum and being my sounding board for what it takes to build that consistency and to just keep improving.

The best teams continue to improve throughout the season. There may be lapses, but you got to get back on track and keep pushing your football forward. That's got to be the mentality.

**Q. One more question. Tre'von Moerig, safety that can do a lot of things. Can you explain in a few words what he means to your defense in terms of playing the back expend also coming down low and servicing the run game?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he's got an attacking mindset and he's also very versatile. Being able to play the edge on run game, pass game, whatever that might be. He gets matched up on receivers at times too.

Has to maintain his leverage, but it's his energy. It's a daily thing for Tre. He loves football. Loves to be on the field talking to his guys, working through the issues.

He's got a great personality, big smile on his face, just loves being on the grass. When he has an opportunity to make a play he usually shows up with a lot of anger and a lot of aggress, which is a big contrast to the personality that you meet on a daily basis.

He really loves it. He brings a joy for football out there for his teammates.

**Q. I have two more and they're unrelated. Did you feel like you got away from the run game too quickly yesterday?**

DAVE CANALES: I didn't. I felt like we were in a different mode. While I would love to have ran our way back into the game similar to the Dolphins game, it felt like a different mode, especially with the turnovers and the score started getting out of hand.

We did need to shift gears a little bit offensively. Would love to have had more success just in the normal flow of the game with our run game early on.

I thought the Bills did a good job playing it well. They

certainly improved and took advantage of their bye week and they're self-scout and some of the things they were struggling with. They performed really well yesterday.

**Q. Did Andy check into the tunnel screen that got picked off?**

DAVE CANALES: Yes, he did. The end just played it perfectly. He stayed up the field, he didn't chase, kept his eyes up, and knocked the ball back to himself.

**Q. There has been some speculation that Shaq picked up on that check, and the film shows him yelling to that end. Did you think that was the case, that Shaq had it?**

DAVE CANALES: Could be. Certainly could be. It's wise of all of us to use whatever information we have. Shaq was here and I'm sure we ran our screen against Shaq a bunch of different times while he was here in training camp last year.

So if that was something that they picked up on, then that's excellent execution by the Bills.

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