

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Great day to be out there. Got a really focused group; locked in. They certainly understand what an opportunity that is right in front of us.

Talk about every game is a championship opportunity, and couldn't be more true playing against a divisional opponent on the road, an opponent we're really familiar with, a team that has found some really good football and a coach and a group that I really respect.

I know the guys are excited for the challenge for this week.

Q. Dave, was there a noticeable uptick in focus and effort and all that with practice this week compared to last?

DAVE CANALES: I didn't see a big change in it. The focus has been there. The hard work has been there. A lot of those things obviously that we talk about, you know, that we expect, our standard, the expectation, the guys are locked in and ready to go.

Q. Dave, last week you had a similar return-to-play plan for Rico, keeping him out Wednesday and having him Thursday. You ultimately had him questionable last week and no designation this week. Is that to say that he's getting -- that quad is getting better week to week?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, today he looked great. He moved around yesterday, did some things, and then got him out there today again and he's ready to go.

Q. Coach, a lot has been reported on Bryce's downfield passes this week. Question is: How can the receivers help with more precise route running? And as a former wide receiver coach, has is the young group developing in the minute details of the position?

DAVE CANALES: It's a collective group effort. It starts with myself and Brad making sure we put a good plan together, getting the guys in position to be successful,

running routes to complement their skillsets, and then from there it's just about chemistry and timing and something the guys been working tirelessly on for weeks now, and they continue to grow together. They continue to take strides, and I'm excited to see them out there this week.

As the hard work -- what I know is that hard work works, and if you continue to work on it, talk to each other, that's what's been happening and that's what I expect to happen with this group.

Q. Does no Latham Ransom mean more opportunities for Demani Richardson at the safety spot?

DAVE CANALES: We're working through all that. Could be.

Q. How do you feel like Claud looked this week?

DAVE CANALES: He did an excellent job. Great to have Claud around here for a while now in this scheme and to understand what we're requiring of the inside linebackers to play.

Really love the way he finished last game, and then he had a great week just playing physical and being in tune with the calls and the different situations.

Q. Can you say who will have the green dot?

DAVE CANALES: I won't say that, yeah.

Q. Dave, you talk about the refocusing this week. Panthers, ya'll did beat the Falcons 30-0 week three. Was there a particular prioritization of, hey, guys, like yes, that was a great win, but you got to refocus; it's a week to week league? Were there similar kind of mantras this week?

DAVE CANALES: We just focus on the week at hand. We don't really look back and make a lot of exclamations about what's happened in the past. You know, really just try to build off the game we just played, fix and correct the things, fundamental parts that we can, and then go to the next opponent.



Of course as you can understand, as the season goes along and as you start to find an identity for what your team looks like, that happens across the board. So we got to look at most recently what the Falcons have looked like in the last couple games and what we've looked like and what we can take advantage of on our side of it.

Then of course just being aware of what they're trying to do and accomplish on both -- really in all three phases. So that's got to be the focus. That works. It allows the guys to just be really in tune on what's happening now and what the opportunity is right in front of us.

Q. Speaking of route running, Kyle Pitts, for a big guy, awful good. Contained him pretty well in the first game. Can you do it again?

DAVE CANALES: Fantastic player. We expect them to try to make him a part of what they're doing in their attack. We'll be aware of where is at and we will have a plan to execute that.

Q. Dave, did you look at the film this week from last year's game down there?

DAVE CANALES: No, I didn't look at that one specifically. It's in some of our cutup situationally. I think that's where it can help, when you have carryover. This is a new defensive coordinator. I know Raheem is very involved, but we have to look at what they're doing most recently.

What I do is I kind of look at all these things, and as we had our moments throughout this season and do self-scout, you take a peek at where did we look most rhythmically in our pass game, what did our run game look like, how are we complementing different things.

And so I think that's an important part of the process. Again, who is this team? Who are we now and what can we execute? That's what's most important.

Q. I know the different scheme and all that. I was talking more like did you just want some guys to see those good vibes? That week 18 game offensively was pretty special.

DAVE CANALES: That's really not our focus. The focus is right now and trying to take advantage of these practice opportunities to shore up some of the things we need improvement on and then to keep leaning into the things that are working for us.

That's really where our focus has to be.

Q. Do you expect the receivers to get more press coverage?

DAVE CANALES: The Falcons press, so, yeah.

Q. One of Bryce's strengths is how he can mentally kind of bounce back from game to game. He was pretty upset Sunday. How have you seen him take on this week from that mental standpoint?

DAVE CANALES: Just perfectly, like he always does. Get right back to work, attack the things we can improve and then attack the game plan and the plays that are coming in, how we're trying to deploy different things and the timing of the shifts and motions, all those details that require your full focus.

So just returning to work with that same type of focus and mentality has been his approach and was that this week as well.

Q. Is the plan still the same with Rob Hunt?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, right now. Again, it's weekly improvements, weekly conditioning, weekly strength, range of motion, all those things. We just got to keep taking that information in as long as possible.

Q. Do you have a decision at right guard?

DAVE CANALES: Yes, we do. Chandler will play. Chandler will start this game. And when I look at these opportunities I see these things as competitions that happen, you know, where your focus can't be you're competing against your teammate, but it is about opportunity and who can make the most out of it.

So I'm excited for Chandler to get in there and see what he can bring us in the run game and the pass game.

Q. And you'll have Austin available as needed?

DAVE CANALES: Yes, absolutely. He's invaluable to what we're doing. Gives us flexibility inside. If somebody has to come out he has got a lot of flexibility along the sides of the line.

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