

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Monday, November 17, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Just really excited to go through this game and really sometimes it takes five quarters to get it done, but the mentality of the group, the finish, and the way that we did it connected and together, took all phases to get it done again. That's been the common theme in the games we've had success in is all the groups had to show up at different times to make sure we got the win.

I'm most proud of that, the resilience of the group and the physicality we played with all the way to the end. Watching our defense the last couple drives and certainly in overtime just showing up with big hits and with a different group of guys.

Claude Cherelus making some plays out there with the guys trusting in him.

Corey Thornton having an opportunity to impact the game, and our usual guys that make plays for us that we count on showing up and doing their job when we needed them to.

So really exciting win for us.

Q. Dave, real quick, you came in last night and said you almost ran out of plays on your play sheet. How many do you usually go into a game with?

DAVE CANALES: It varies, but we're pretty lean. I want to say it's probably somewhere between 110 to 120. That includes plays that we have up every week for two-minute situations, different things like that, some one-word plays where we can go fast at times.

So that probably makes up somewhere between 20 and 25 plays and then the rest are situational things, first, second down, third down, red zone, short yardage, all those things.

I think probably leaguewide that would be pretty lean, but we ask a lot of the guys in terms of being on the details and all that. And we went through a lot of our core calls last night, circled back around to a few we like certainly to try to attack what they were presenting us.

Q. You also mentioned Corey right there at the top. With him playing a lot more last week, what went into that and what was specific to Atlanta?

DAVE CANALES: Was that Corey Thornton?

Q. Yeah.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, you know, he's been showing a lot of ability in practice that we can count on; watching him continue to improve his fundamentals. A guy that's really into the game, really focused on the details, wants to know. A guy that competes with Chuba Hubbard to try to be on the field first every day, so a competitive guy by nature.

And then he's got length and size. We thought would be a good matchup knowing they were going to move Drake London around a little bit. He got some opportunities yesterday and made the most of it.

Q. Bryce was really sore, ankle looked really sore when he came into the press conference after the game. Where does he stand now? I know he finished the game. Will that impact you guys as far as using him for preparation for the Monday night game? What do you foresee for him?

DAVE CANALES: We'll do the full evaluation and have the updates out on Thursday.

Q. So anything -- did you talk to him today? How is I feeling?

DAVE CANALES: We'll let you know on Thursday.

Q. What about the inner strength he showed to come back when you think about it 24 hours impressed you the most?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just the resilience, an opportunity to show his teammates that he wants to be out there with those guys, win that game with them.

I think if Bryce was up here he would tell you first and



foremost whatever it takes to win and just try to find way to contribute, try to find a way to affect the game.

He certainly was able to do that getting himself back out there and battling through some stuff to be available for us and coming up with some big plays when we needed it.

Q. And just to clarify, when you let us know Thursday, is it a full test, MRI, everything the next couple days or what?

DAVE CANALES: We will do whatever we feel is necessary and let you know on Thursday. (Smiling.)

Q. Hey, Dave, good afternoon. Being in your third year as a playcaller, obviously second year as head coach, I would imagine you learn something new about yourself as a playcaller after you watch the tape of every game. Just curious what was your biggest takeaway from your performance as a playcaller after this game?

DAVE CANALES: Just trying to find the rhythm of how to attack a team based on what they're trying to take away and what they're giving you, being opportunistic that way. That's something Brad and I talk about a lot, is how are we going to win this game. When they do this, how do we attack it, try to make things coming alive so that we have a balanced attack and we're able to not let the defense completely dictate to what we're doing, but see it as an advantage to say, okay, where is our one-on-one opportunity. Where are the voids in the defense.

So that has to be the continued commitment to find what works that day, knowing there will be some core stuff that shows up and comes out weekly. But we have to look at each opponent specifically and say, okay, how are we going to attack them and what are they giving us.

Q. A lot of teams have a de facto No. 1 tight end who they target pretty regularly. You've kind of run like a trio committee. They're pretty involved in the run game and everything like that. What's your biggest takeaway on the way that group has operated as a unit and how much more can they evolve as passing threats?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, a really tightly-knitted group, tough, definitely detailed. Pat McPherson does a great job with these guys being prepared. Tight end is a very difficult position to play as you know. Running routes, blocking in the run game, being a part of the pass protection unit as well.

So there is a lot of things we ask them. They're very smart

guys, conscientious, tough, versatile guys that we trust. So we try to get them all out there to have a chance to affect the game. And I believe there is more out there for them in the pass game, and it's not just about that group, but it's about how I'm using them and the different positions that I put them in on routes that they can find success with.

So that's a continued process to see if we can continue to find another spark with that pass unit.

Q. Hey, Dave, you mentioned this in the presser, but the ball getting out to so many different receivers yesterday, was that a conscientious effort going into the game? Was that something that kind of happened organically?

DAVE CANALES: It happened organically, Joe, and I'm glad you asked, because that's something we try to bring to life weekly. Again, as I have said before, we try to create a focal point of the pass game knowing T-Mack will get targeted in some way, shape, or form.

When you create that, then you can kind of tilt the field a little bit and find other opportunities. I was just fired up that we had the protection. First and foremost it starts up front. They gave Bryce the time to get through his progressions to find different guys.

There was a concerted effort to make sure that Xavier had someone one-on-one opportunities. Knowing we had a good matchup on that side if AJ Terrell was going to follow T-Mack, we were going to have some opportunities over there. Xavier made some plays for us.

And also the other part was making sure Jalen Coker doesn't come out of the game with a couple targets. He made some fantastic catches yesterday. Played really physical to the ball, contested passes, and was able to find some separation.

So I was really pleased with the group in general building on the hard work that they been putting into the pass game.

Q. Back on T-Mack, there was a crazy stat by NextGen that he had exactly the same number of catches, yards, and touchdowns inside the numbers and outside. Was that by design?

DAVE CANALES: Yes. Just trying to move him around, trying to make sure that he doesn't get the hard down every play. When I say the hard down, any time you're in a three-by-one formation and he's the single side X there is a lot of things that a defense can do. First and foremost, you can put your best corner over there to cover him.



Secondly, you can cloud it with the safety over top. You can buzz the safety into the hook and have kind of a presence on the weak side. You can use the weak sideline backer to stave off any type of in-breaker.

So there is a lot of things that defenses can do when he's singled up, so the goal was to continue to move him around in different spots. The No. 3 spot, the No. 2 spot, No. 1 in a two-by-two, No. 1 in a three-by-one, and just get him in different places. He's seeing different coverages and maybe try to get him a little access knowing that we can also rely on him to win some one-on-ones out there, but that becomes a really difficult position for the receiver as you're trying to protect all the angles of the cut for the receiver.

Q. Two quick ones. First ones, it worked out fine, but I wondering why you waited until fourth down to kick the field goal in overtime as opposed to the second or third?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, honestly I haven't been a part of where you kick the field goal on third down with time. If you're in a timeout situation, it happens to be first, second, or third down, whatever down it is, obviously you just take the -- take it down to four seconds and kick the field goal in those situations.

In terms of like last year in Germany against the Giants we force that fumble, got the ball, ran it a couple times, kicked it on fourth down. It's a part our process. I like the kicker to just kind of know in his head the ball is getting kicked on fourth down. The whole blocking unit is ready. Everyone is prepared. We trust the guys to snap it, hold it, and make those kicks in that situation.

Of course also like the Arizona game last year, we had a walk-off on a hand-off to Chuba. Broke a couple tackles and scored a touchdown to win the game. So wanted to see potentially could have that type of opportunity, but Rico did a great job securing the ball in those downs and getting us a couple yards.

We didn't make much out of it, but we were in a good spot to kick the field goal.

Q. The other one is you mentioned this a little bit yesterday with your dream and vision of being in the hunt and you are now. What do you think it would mean to this team if it made the playoffs?

DAVE CANALES: Honestly we just take it one game at a time. My job is to really just sell the championship moments that we have, the championship opportunity. Talking about this week, playing on Monday night against

the Niners, a team that I really respect, that's a great opportunity for us. There will be a couple more cameras out there. It's going to be under the lights. This will be a great environment for our guys and easy for me to sell just what these games feel like.

It'll feel like a playoff environment, certainly against a playoff caliber type of team. These are the opportunities that we need.

Q. Congratulations on the win.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. Following up on the wide receivers, can you speak to the credit they deserve for creating better separation from the...

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it's just time on task. It's just the work.

Q. Particularly Xavier's long --

DAVE CANALES: You cut out a little bit. Sorry.

Q. Yeah, no problem. Specifically Xavier's long touchdown pass, how big it was for him and the confidence going forward.

DAVE CANALES: That was an amazing play. Great execution by Bryce to buy a little time, get the ball up and down, and Xavier just running under, securing the catch, and taking advantage of that opportunity.

Had a similar opportunity the week before against the Saints. We just missed it. We were just a touch off on that one. But those are things that Bryce, Xavier, they talk through those things. The whole group really just having conversations throughout the week and watching the hard work pay off, it was so rewarding.

Those are the types of moments that I love.

We have these conversations. Brad and I, Will with Bryce, Rob with the receivers, Pat with the tight ends, certainly the protection unit and all that. But it's time on task. It's the little tweaks. It's the trust factor. It's guys being where they're supposed to be when they're supposed to be there, and then ultimately coming down to Bryce delivering an accurate throw in those situations and creating more separation.

It's all technique. It's making sure you're exploding off the ball, making sure you are coming out of your route efficiently with the footwork and body position. All these



things are things we work on on a consistent basis, and I've been seeing the improvement.

But I was so glad to see to come alive on Sunday.

Q. I know you touched on Coker, but how good was it to see him get more involved with the offense?

DAVE CANALES: I was fired up about it. We all were. We were really excited because Jalen has showed in the last couple weeks he's creating separation and he is attacking the ball when he gets his opportunities.

It was really just a matter of opportunities, and we hadn't had a lot of opportunities like we did in this game: 81 plays. That just speaks to the whole group getting more first downs, having more opportunities to affect them, and then Jalen making the plays when it came to him.

Q. Hey, Dave, you opened the press conference by acknowledging Corey Thornton and also Claudin Cherelus. Can you speak to after watching the film just how effective he was?

DAVE CANALES: Claude?

Q. Yes.

DAVE CANALES: Had a great conversation with Pete Henson this morning just talking to him about the preparation it takes to get a guy ready to play, particularly when he hasn't had a lot of in-game opportunities this year.

But the process continues. The developmentally-minded approach is so important. It's all hands-on deck. All the guys have to be ready and looking for their opportunity. We saw Claude at the end of the Saints game. He came back in and picked up right where he left off. Collectively as group we let some runs get out on us in the first half.

Once they settled in, Claude started to see the runs really well and looked for opportunities to make a play. When he did, he showed up with physicality, whether it was in the run game or the pass game. He had a late nice collision on a slant route to Drake London at the end of the game where he just trusted his eyes and bolted toward it and made a really physical play there to get the ball down.

Really proud of the way that Claude stepped up for his teammates.

Q. One quick follow up. Did he wear the green dot?

DAVE CANALES: He did not. Christian did. But once Christian was out, then he was the one calling the plays at

that point.

Q. You've joked a couple times like ya'll know your schedule. You play Sunday at 1:00 and you told the guys yesterday, like you would see them today; no day off. What does your schedule look like this week and how do you have to adjust and how do you keep the guys focused during a different schedule?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, bonus day, so another day for recovery, get our bodies right our minds right. A chance to really look at some of the things in the last couple weeks that went well, some of the things we need to continue to improve upon while evaluating our players.

Just trying to take advantage of that extra day so that our mind is right and then just attacking the game plan like we would. So essentially we just bumped back the whole week one day and then get into the regular flow of our preparation.

Q. One more quick thing from me: A play that kind of got lost in the shuffle yesterday because there were no points scored off it, but the fumble that Bam forced, Princely recovered; how big that was to not let the Falcons score coming out of the half?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, that was Bam's second play of the day. He made a nice tackle early on on a kickoff, and on that one he had an opportunity to strike the ball, to punch at it with his open hand. He was unblocked on the play. Made a dynamic play and got the ball down.

I'm sick that we didn't get points on that one. We're fourth and one sitting right there. We were a little bit behind the clock on that play. I needed to take a timeout let's regroup. This is too much of a critical situation and scoring position. So I got to take this one right there.

But Bryce still got the play snapped in time and tried to make something happen on it. I could have done a better job in that situation.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports