

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

## Coach Dave Canales

### Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: A beautiful day. Just get to get back on the grass. Almost felt like a bye week having a bonus day. At this point we've been going week to week for a while here, and I can just feel there's a little bit more in the tank with the guys, and we're happy to be back out on the grass and focusing on this opponent.

**Q. I understand we're going to get the injury report later but we didn't see Christian Rozeboom or Trevin Wallace participate. You brought in Jacoby Windmon. What is the linebacker position looking like as you start prepping for San Francisco?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, first and foremost, we have to evaluate Trevin, see where he's at for this week, so again, told you he was week to week on that, and we'll have more information on that.

Brought Coby in here, a guy that's familiar with what we do from a special teams standpoint and linebacker standpoint. Love what Claude did in the game. Chris Barnes, another guy that's been around that's ready to go, and Maema Njongmeta, he got into the game a little bit at the end, as well.

We have a couple guys, couple options there. The picture will get a little bit clearer once we know what's going on with Trevin.

**Q. (Indiscernible) came out with the ankle that he'll be injured on Sunday?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he was a full participant in practice today. He was able to move around and execute what we needed him to do today.

**Q. Are you preparing to go without Rozeboom?**

DAVE CANALES: We are. We are right now. But again, we're putting him through the tests, making sure to see where he's at and his availability for the game. We'd hate to put him out there for a limited amount, knowing how he

plays, the style, the aggression, physical nature that he plays with, we want to make sure that he's healthy first and foremost.

**Q. Just for clarity, you're not ruling Trevin out this early?**

DAVE CANALES: Not yet, yeah.

**Q. Facing someone like Christian McCaffrey would pose problems for any linebacking corps. How do the injuries you have in that position affect your defensive scheme, your defensive game plan?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we have to be aware of the way that they used him in the pass game and the run game, all those different things, a versatile player, a guy that I really respect for a long time now, and the stories I've heard from being here, around the guys, around the players, the staff that have been around him in terms of his preparation, the way that he takes care of his body, how intentional he is with the game plans and executing his fundamentals, stuff that I really respect about him.

And of course the product is great, and he's able to make plays in different ways. We have to be aware of that part and make sure it's not just about the linebackers, it's the whole thing tied in in the run game and the pass game.

**Q. This is a pass defense that's had trouble getting a pass rush going with the injuries to Bosa and Mykel Williams and others. How do you think you might be able to take advantage of that? I know they didn't get to Jacoby at all last Sunday?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, this looks like a Robert Saleh defense, and it's hinged upon great fundamentals, counting on each other, and rallying to the ball. That shows up in every area, even in the 3rd and long situations where you feel like you can get a completion and get some run after catch. They rally to the ball. They play a physical style of football.

They have good scheme. They have great things that they're doing. I got finished last night looking at some of



their 3rd downs and some of the pressure packages they have. They have a way to create pressure. We can't forget Bryce Huff is over there, and on any given play, he's electric and he's got great pass rush tools.

But this is a group that's playing well together and they haven't produced the numbers maybe to get pressure on the quarterback, but the whole thing is tied together, and whether it's the linebackers and the secondary playing concepts, well, that's what I see right now on film.

**Q. How are you balancing with the young guys, hey, go out, enjoy Monday Night Football, enjoy this opportunity, the position that we're in, with maintaining focus and one game at a time?**

DAVE CANALES: Championship mindset, and what a great opportunity for us to play an excellent opponent, a team that I really respect from a players and coaching standpoint on Monday Night Football. There will be a bunch of cameras out there, a lot more action that way. You get to be the show of the week.

That's something that prepares us to handle these types of situations with class and with the right intentionality and focus, and that's why we try to preach every game is a championship opportunity so that you don't all of a sudden have to get up for Monday Night Football.

But it'll be special. It'll be great. I encourage our guys to take in the moments, take in the opportunities, look around, hear the sounds, feel it, feel all of it, and still get back to our execution and be able to have a great focus week.

So there's a lot of excitement, but at the same time, we have to treat this as another game, playoff implications, all those things, right, right in front of us, with the Niners continuing to battle to find ways to win. This is a great opportunity for us.

**Q. Do you get bored on Monday waiting to kick off until 8:00 whatever it is?**

DAVE CANALES: No. There's lots to do. There's obviously always checking in with your players to see where we're at. The game does take a long time to get there, and it's not like normal on Sundays where you can sit there and watch games until it comes, but it allows you to get a good night's rest. We'll have some version of a walk-through and some brief meetings in the morning to just make sure that our brains are locked back in. But everything is about that game and just getting yourself prepared from a physical standpoint and a mental standpoint so we can go and perform well.

**Q. Kind of piggybacking off of that, when you guys are so regimented and you're used to having the same routine this whole time, how do you try to balance that or keep the routine similar for these guys even though you're playing at night?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we took our bonus Monday and then basically started off our week a day later so we could just be in the rhythms and the flows of what we're doing, and that's what it felt like today. I know it's Thursday for the rest of the world, but in our minds, it's Wednesday. It's our work Wednesday. Went through our meetings and our preparation the same way.

That helps to just kind of get back in that rhythm, and then of course following the Monday night game, then you have a different set of opportunities to look at a shorter week and how do we condense our game plan and try to make it feel as normal as possible for the preparation.

**Q. With you guys being in the playoff conversation and Bryce having another aggravation of his ankle, do you guys have to consider putting Mike White up on the 53 just so you have that emergency option as you go down the final stretch of the season?**

DAVE CANALES: It's an option. Right now, that's not the plan for this week, but it is an option. I'm glad he's here. Continue to hear our words, prepare with the guys, have the conversations, be a part of the protection meetings, all those things, so that if we need him, we can call on him.

**Q. McCaffrey you talked about; do you have to defend him differently than you might other running backs because of his versatility?**

DAVE CANALES: You do have to respect the variety of routes that he can run from the backfield and split out. He's got a pretty developed route tree out there. From a run game standpoint it's going to require just good team fits, good team football and rallying to tackle. We know he can make moves and make miss at times, so we respect all those things, but again, it's going to come down to our fundamental execution and just being aware of the different route tree that they can present when he's out wide or when they scat him out.

**Q. I asked Jaycee Horn about this, but what advantage did it give you seeing Bijan Robinson just last week, Alvin Kamara the week before that, just to prepare you for those pass catching running backs out of the backfield?**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely, and that goes back to the conversation where every game truly is an opportunity for



us to play at our best and it prepares us. It continues to get our minds right for different styles of attack. We haven't even talked about George Kittle. This is a fantastic player. We've played a lot of really special tight ends throughout -- I think about Arizona early on. I think about Atlanta with Pitts and the different things that he can do.

It allows us to just be aware of how teams try to utilize these tight ends in different ways, in play pass, in regular drop-back situations. We certainly have to make sure we give those guys the right attention they deserve.

**Q. You brought up studying tendencies last week and it's something you do every week. How do you balance that with maybe they can alternate what they do because, hey, we know this is a weakness, or hey, we've seen this is a trend? Like if you're attacking a certain area and they flip the switch and you have to kind of improvise, how much do you have to weigh that?**

DAVE CANALES: We do think about that, and some of that happens in between series as we look at our pictures, our still shots of how they're trying to deploy their defense. What I've seen from a Robert Saleh defense is they're going to call their calls and they're going to play with discipline, and they keep a simple mentality. A lot of it is disguised. But they end up in the right spots.

When you can really narrow your focus and you look at all the concepts, you're able to play them well because you have fewer calls and guys are in position to play them, and that's what I expect. I expect them to fit the run game the way they're coached to be and be in their spot and their spot drops. They'll mix some man in there, as well. They've got some nice coverage players out there.

We try not to tweak too much. That's why we develop concepts that allow you to progress, allow you to get to other things if the defense tries to attack you in a different way.

**Q. Alex Kemp's crew will officiate the game on Monday. How much stock do you place into looking at the officiating crews and some of their tendencies, some of their calls and things like that?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we're aware of that. Coach George Lee does a great job on Saturdays talking about each officiating crew and what they call, what they don't call. It gives our players an expectation for what to be looking for and what to be aware of, keeping your hands clean. Some groups, they say, hey, they're going to let the defensive backs play as far as being aggressive and all that, so guys will be looking around fishing for calls if this is

a crew that allows that.

They all have a little bit of a different bent crew by crew, and on top of that there's always the weekly emphasis of things that are happening around the league that the league wants the officiating crews to address. We make our teams aware of that, as well. Hey, they're really looking at the offensive tackles making sure their helmet doesn't create any space from the belt line of the center. There's different things that come up that we make our players aware of so we can execute and try to stay away from hurting ourselves with some of those penalties.

**Q. With the win against Atlanta and then being in the playoff hunt, this team is getting more national attention than I've seen in recent years. Do you pay attention to that kind of stuff or do you remain relatively isolated from the outside noise?**

DAVE CANALES: Well, it doesn't help us. It's unavoidable, and that's something that we talk to our group about and try to maintain focus as it happens. We have so many amazing opportunities just the way that our schedule played out. Being on the road early, seeing a lot of AFC teams early, there were some opportunities there missed, there were some opportunities made, preparing us for this stretch. But now we're sitting here looking at a bunch of NFC opponents, four out of the five that are in front of us in the playoff picture.

So there's a real focus and opportunity for the group to say let's go one game at a time, we're playing the Niners this week, we'll worry about the next one when we get to the next one, but big picture wise understanding our work is right in front of us; can we execute, can we maintain our focus and not be distracted by the rest of it.

What is it going to come down to? Fundamental execution. It's going to come down to blocking, tackling, throwing and catching and making our plays when they come to us, and that's never going to change. There's going to be more cameras. It's going to be -- the field is going to be the same size. It's another opponent, and we have to make sure that we stay on that track so that we're disciplined about our approach and we don't let up on any of that besides everything else that might be coming from us.

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