

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Just really proud of the group taking advantage of some opportunities and really just playing the full game with great effort and finding the execution late.

We talk about finish, do right longer, and that's what our guys continued to find in that game. Love the way we played a really complementary game with each other, creating turnovers on defense, special teams settling in after a big return, and then offensively just executing and finding some critical wins on third and fourth down.

Q. You mentioned third down there. Chuba was pretty big on third down yesterday. What did you learn about him through the last month as far as the way he handled the situation of being released as a starter, and what did you learn yesterday that makes you feel that he can be a big part of this offense moving forward?

DAVE CANALES: I just love the way Chuba went right back to work. That's his mentality. He's going to handle what's right in front of him, control the controllables, get take care of his body, get himself back to where he feels great. He looked amazing yesterday. He looked explosive and he looked strong and really brought an attitude to our group.

It really impacted us as a team on the sideline. I could feel that just by the way -- the intentionality of how he was running the ball and making yards, and just really proud of the way that he's worked himself back. All he wants to do is win and help his teammates. I love that about him.

Q. To see somebody handle it that way how unusual is the selflessness that he showed from your experience in the NFL?

DAVE CANALES: He's just a first class pro. Works hard and gets himself ready. Prepares every day the same regardless of the circumstances. Just really attacks his studying and his bodywork and practices every day with intentionality.

Q. Vikings have granted Adam Thielen his release. You got a young receiving corps. He was a big part of that last year. Is there any interest in the Panthers in Adam?

DAVE CANALES: He's still on their roster currently, so I'm going kick that one down to a couple days.

Q. To go back to Chuba for a minute, can you tell me a little bit more about the swing pass he caught that turned into your first really big play of the game? Was that the first read? Tell me how that one developed.

DAVE CANALES: Excellent blocking on the perimeter. We just try to mix it up in those different zones on third down. Sometimes it's a run; sometimes it can be a perimeter screen; sometimes we drop back and pass protect to get the ball down the field.

It's good to just have variety. In that particular situation right there they were pretty aggressive with their pressure, and our guys did a great job getting the play started on the perimeter, and from there Chuba just exploded and had really good angles to the pylon and just ran through it.

Q. How did you come out of that game injury-wise?

DAVE CANALES: Pretty solid. Let's see, Taylor Moton missed a little bit of time with an oblique; came back in.

Lathan Ransom injured his thumb, so we're going through how to take care of that right now. See what his timetable is as we go forward.

Q. Last thing from me. You talked about having everything in front of you with this team. Now you're going into December here with a real shot at everything. Just wonder how you address the team before you let them go today about that circumstance.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, the importance of the bye week, getting our recovery from a physical standpoint and mentally, emotionally. This is a long season, so making sure we take that break, but we make sure we keep



moving and be ready to get back to work. Every game is a championship opportunity. It's what we've been stressing. Our mentality is that 1-0 mentality. We have to look at the Saints. This is our next opponent when we come back after the bye.

We get right back to work and keep that focus. How long can we maintain the week-to-week focus and how long can we really accentuate each day? How can we attack that day and win it, whatever we're doing on that day from a game plan standpoint, practice standpoint? They're all so important.

It's this time of year. The teams that continue to improve fundamentally are the ones that will find success, so we have to be committed to the basics.

Q. Congratulations on the win.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. I've been covering this team a long, long time. This is probably one of the -- I think the toughest team, I think a lot of people would agree, to figure out because you have a big win in Atlanta; then don't play well at New England; beat the Cowboys, but lose big to the Bills; the Green Bay win and the loss to New Orleans; and then the 49ers loss and then huge win against the Rams. Seems like it's all the over the place; hard team to figure out. Is there any way you can explain that? I guess as coaches, you want to be consistent every game, but like how do you explain what's kind of happened this season with the ups and downs and big ups and some downs?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, this is a maturing team and it's about handling the fundamentals and basics. It always comes down to a handful of plays, whether's defense, offense, or special teams. Certainly taking care of the ball is the big thing that we talk about, but it really comes down to the fundamental execution and consistency that we're looking for, and it's our job as a coaching staff to keep pushing our guys to find that improvement that we're looking for to solidify things, take lessons learned, and then move forward to find new lessons and say, okay, we've got this one. Let's remind ourselves how important it is to take care of this, this, or that.

And that's what we're continuing to push the group on. We have this next game coming up after the bye to continue to work on our football. Our goal is to play our best, to find our best football. That's got to be the full focus of the group. The inconsistencies that we've seen, it always comes down to the most basic things. It's blocking and tackling. It's throwing and catching. Making those plays

when we're supposed to. Owning your leverage. Being where you're supposed to be.

That's just a sign of a group that's continuing to figure out who we are, find that identity, so we can have it show up on a weekly basis.

Q. Have you updated us on Robert Hunt? Where does he stand coming off the bye? Any chance getting him back?

DAVE CANALES: He's working his way back. Doing a great job in return to play. He's getting stronger. We have to just continue to take week by week to see -- we want that strength in his arm to come back so that he has balance and be able to stop a big man trying to redirect.

We're going to have to be really smart about that. I can't tell you exactly what the timeline is, but it'll be a weekly thing to see where he's at.

Q. To follow up on that question, Dave, will Robert's availability be based on where you are at in the standings? Do you have to consider the long-term versus the short-term? What was your take on Jake's performance yesterday?

DAVE CANALES: The focus has to just be on Robert's health. When he's healthy and ready to go, he'll play for the Panthers. That could be this year. I hope it is. Really it's like if we had a chance to get Rob back, we want him back.

Jake, Jake played a pretty solid game. There were some ups and downs. For the most part from an assignment standpoint did an excellent job. Just like any game, there are a couple plays that got away from him.

This is a really good group. They won some pass downs on him; he won some. But in general, just really glad to have Jake being able to step in there when we needed him and showing the different versatility he can give us. Right now we need him at guard. He could go in there at tackle. He's done that for us in the past in Seattle.

Q. And then Mike Jackson, I know he -- you were there in Seattle, right, with him a little bit -- wait, I guess -- yeah, for a little bit.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, uh-huh.

Q. How much has he grown as a player and maybe a guy in the locker room since your limited time with him?

DAVE CANALES: Mike has been the same guy. He's been consistent as the day is long. He's a guy that loves the work. He's a grinder. He's out there early. He's on the field late working on his craft, taking in all the information he can, pattern reading different things from a formational standpoint.

Mike doesn't say a lot. He really doesn't try to take that vocal role. But he's a leader by example because of his professionalism. He's had a great impact on young guys like Corey Thornton who said, this is what Mike does, I'm going to take this format and just like really just adopt that and take care of my body. What do you do? How do you -- is it contrast therapy? How do you get yourself prepared mentally?

Just the way that he takes his work so seriously, it's a really big impact in the type of leadership that has impactful for our team.

Q. Dave, is your expectation you'll get Jaycee back after the bye?

DAVE CANALES: That's my expectation, yes. Both he and Claude are in the concussion protocol, but daily improvement. We'll circle back around once we get closer to next week.

Q. Wondered if you've had kind of message or meeting with Bryce before turning him loose and what that might have been?

DAVE CANALES: You talking about just today?

Q. Yeah. Just anything about talking with Bryce about kind of what the next four weeks are going to look like when ya'll get back?

DAVE CANALES: Nope. Just the focus of enjoying our bye week. When we get back to work it's the Saints; here we go.

Q. Lastly, and I missed your opening statement or most of it, did you tell guys that you want them to get gone and get home and get away, or are you leaving the building open? What's your approach to that?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we have all the resources available here. Our staff, they also need to have a break and so there is a rotating group of staff that will be here, whether it's in the athletic training room or in the weight room.

So guys have the ability to be here to move their bodies, to keep some of that conditioning, the callousing we worked

up to at this point. So they're here for those resources. Guys are free to do and go wherever they want to go.

My message to them is just like look what we are playing for and working for. Let's be smart and take care of our bodies and make sure we move within reason. So just giving them some last remarks and making sure they all understand we have something great to protect here. We have another opportunity coming back after the bye, so let's be smart about this week is and hit the ground running.

Q. Dave, I was going to ask about some of the logistical things with this week. With your coaches in particular, what's the message for those guys as you carry into a week off and what you want them doing both this week and then to prep themselves for the last four?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, so just early in this week, today and tomorrow is going to be making sure we hit some of our self-scout stuff, see what's working and what needs to be adjusted, the different things we need to emphasize, and then we are moving right to the Saints.

We get to take these couple days right here, we just played them not too long ago so going to be able to see some carryover from our game plan. Things we weren't able to get called so we can have a starting point there. But really just to press in so that when we get back next Monday, we have a good, solid foundation of what we're looking at and how we're trying to attack.

The time from when we leave the building here to when we come back though, I think it's really important for everybody to just make sure they're connecting with their family, making sure they're just unplugging for a little bit to just gather something back, just fill the tank up physically with sleep, mentally by just being able to do stuff you love with the people that you love, and really just being able to get ready for the finish that's in front of us.

Q. Coach Canales, you mentioned this a couple times. You mentioned it today and then also in the postgame address to the team about them really not seeing your best football yet. Curious what is that missing element?

DAVE CANALES: What I'm looking for is the complete game where all groups are firing on all cylinders. That doesn't mean the game is ever going to be perfect or we're hit every single play, pass, every single run will be a big run or defensively that there aren't any plays made on us.

It's that consistency in the whole group for a full game,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

whatever the game looks like, however long it takes. Just that consistency that we're looking for.

And I know that's out there for us. We see one side of the ball playing really well; the other side may not be. So there is like kind of this fleeting thing where if we can find good, solid football collectively, eliminating penalties, taking care of the ball, executing at a high level, those are the things I'm talking about.

Making sure we play good assignment football. Understanding that in a league where you're facing great talent every week, teams are going to find their plays. Teams will get a great rush on you. Offenses are going to make a pass down the field or make a run. Those things happen in a game. But let's make sure that it's not -- it may be a technical breakdown. Let's make sure we are mentally where we need to be, and that's what out there for us.

Q. Thank you.

DAVE CANALES: Uh-huh.

Q. Hi, Dave, I had a question about the run game. You seemed to find good balance in the run game earlier this year when you were balancing Chuba and Rico series for series. This time it seemed more integrated. What went behind that? Tell me about this week and how you decided on that rotation between those two guys.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, some of it was third down opportunities. We've been using Chuba primarily as our third down back and then he gets series as go. The way we play on third down we mix our runs, some of the perimeter screens he had a touchdown on. Just different ways to allow him to affect the game.

And especially because of how he's looked in the last couple weeks. He's looked really strong, really powerful, and just making sure that he's a weapon for us in different ways.

And for Rico, giving him the lion's share of some of those first and second down, early series and all that is a great way to just get him the ball.

So I like where we are. Like the balance. Got to give Bernie Parmalee a lot the credit for the way he got those guys in there and to be able to mix it and make sure they're both impacting the game.

As we continue to grow as a team offensively speaking, these are two guys that are veteran players who can really

help us, and sometimes it's just about that. It's like they're dynamic players, but their leadership and how they attack the game gives a lot of confidence to the group.

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