

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Great to be back on the grass. It was a really excited group to be back out there with the great opponent coming up this week, knowing especially how tough the Saints played us last time. The guys are really excited about the opportunity we have to get back to football.

I hope that the group understands at this point in the season every week is a championship opportunity, it truly is. We have everything in front of us right now. We're excited to get back to work.

Q. What did you see from watching the tape in the first meeting between you guys, what were some of the things that stood out to you that you feel the team has improved upon?

DAVE CANALES: We missed some opportunities in the pass game. The Saints did a great job challenging us in our run game.

The focus in that week was to try to have that balanced attack, and they didn't give us a lot. They played us really well. They had a great game plan. We looked at that part. We're going to be looking at that early in the game if they have the same type of plan to counteract that, be part of it.

Then on the flipside of it the Saints made some huge plays in this game. I think it was two touchdowns on third downs. We're in position to make plays. They came up with the plays we didn't in that game. That was the difference. Played good enough football to have a chance for it.

This time around we have to make sure as we play this team, you watch the style of football that they're playing, finding a way to play their football.

We found an identity in who we want to be. We know when we're at our best, we're balanced, making sure we're running the ball. Same thing on the defensive side, stopping the run.

Going into this matchup, a great opportunity and challenge to shows up with our best.

Q. Jaycee and Claudin cleared concussion protocol?

DAVE CANALES: We'll do all the injuries on Wednesday. They're both trending in the right direction. They're in the protocol. They have to make sure they keep clearing the different things they have to making sure we're doing the right thing for the guys.

Q. Is Lathan's hand injury related to the previous one?

DAVE CANALES: Not related, no. This was a different injury. I'm not sure if it's the same hand, but this is a different one.

Q. We saw Rob working on the side. Is he going to be elevated?

DAVE CANALES: He's getting closer. We're not going to open up his window this week. He's getting closer, stronger. Would love to see him back at some point over this next stretch.

Q. (Question regarding D.J. Wonnum.)

DAVE CANALES: He's doing a great job playing consistent football for us. While I know he would be the one here telling you he would love to come away with some sacks, he's doing an excellent job in terms of being the part of leadership of the group, doing right, setting edges, affecting the quarterback with our different combos and rushes.

He's a guy that I love. I love that he's here. I love that he shows up every day with professionalism. He's been a great example for Nic Scourton and Princely to see what it looks like to play this position at a high level.

Q. 'Championship' is your message to this team every day. Now that it really is one on paper, do you tailor that message at all?

DAVE CANALES: It is why we talk that way. We try to



heighten every responsibility. You're going to have to win games on the road, you're going to have to win at home, in the elements, with crowd noise. There's all these elements in every game that really does present championship moments.

We're going to go down to New Orleans. That place can be really loud. A team that played really good football against a really good team in the Buccs just yesterday.

It's easy for me to sell it in these type of situations, especially knowing what's in front of us. But the way we did it is we take one opponent at a time. The goal is 1-0 with a chance to win the division. It's right here in front of us.

Q. Saints game, guys talked about the attention to detail wasn't there throughout the week. Did you see the kind of focus you want to see coming out of the bye today?

DAVE CANALES: It was an excellent practice, a group of guys that were excited to be back together, knowing what we're playing for. Have the opportunity to be outside in the cold, be on the grass. A lot of good energy out there. The guys are fired up.

Q. When you look at the results of the season, it feels like to the casual observer that some of the maybe worse losses come after some of the biggest wins. Is there anything to handling success, these guys learn how to continue to maintain that high level of play?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely there is. That's the greatest challenge for all of us across the league, the ability to refocus, the ability to take it one week at a time, one day at a time. Because that process leads to good results.

Making sure you capture those days... No day is less important than the other. We have to make sure we go through a great process, everyone is focused, locked in, finishing up with the weight room session after practice. Hey, the day is not over. There is great work in there, too.

How you do anything is how you do everything. That has to be the mentality. That's the sign of maturity I'm looking from this group, to build off of wins. Now we have to go back to work, let's correct the things we need to correct, let's look at the things that worked for us well, let's try to continue to lean into those things, but making sure we have the right focus for the task at hand.

Q. The bye week gives you a chance to get healthy physically. Do you think it would be to your advantage coming off of a big win against the Rams, kind of

recenter, refocus, maybe not have that dopamine high so much?

DAVE CANALES: It's always nice to have a win going into the bye week. It leaves you with a great feeling. At the same time the discipline part of it is not to relax. Discipline part of it is to make sure we look at that game and we take the lessons learned from that game, as well.

We had some great moments. There was some balance. There were also things that needed to be corrected. We have to make sure we take those so we can keep moving our football forward. The goal is to find our best football. Right now we have this game, another opportunity to improve in some of the areas that we've wanted to improve.

Q. How close did you monitor the game yesterday? Were you glued to the Saints upset?

DAVE CANALES: I was watching the game, yeah. Wanted to make sure I was connected to the story of it. Got to be honest, I got a little emotionally involved in the game at times. Something I try to remind our players, watch these games, let's try not to get too much emotionally connected. But how can you not? It impacts all of us in this division. Certainly it impacts us going into this week with another division opponent.

Q. Emotionally involved, were you cheering for the Saints then?

DAVE CANALES: I mean, anything that helps, right? We're all competing out here. Honestly, like knowing that they're playing good football, knowing that it's going to require the best of us, allows us to make sure that the focus is right. It heightens that awareness so that we understand, like every single week this league is full of teams, especially the ones that are finding their best ball late in the season. It's a really important opportunity for us.

Q. With the way that you say you were watching it, emotionally invested, is it tougher to watch as a fan, as a coach? Are you trying to watch game planning and do work as opposed to just watching the game for the outcome?

DAVE CANALES: First of all, it's hardest to watch as a parent. Then as a coach, when you don't necessarily have the ability to affect what's happening...

It's hard not to shut it off, especially when I'm watching their defense playing and how they're attacking the Buccs in different schemes that they're using. You can't turn that part off.



When I'm watching college football, try to remind myself to just watch the ball bounce, you can kind of turn the wheels, shut them down for a little bit. It was a great opportunity to watch a bunch of football.

My favorite part of it is, whether it's college ball, whether it's high school ball, or watching NFL games during a bye week, there's so much to learn from every game.

You look at these critical situations. We will find ourselves in those critical situations at different times. Just watching the coaches who I respect, see how they handle different situations, fourth down calls, special go-for-it scenarios, clock management end of half, end of game. There's a ton to learn from. That's why I love this time of year.

Q. You mentioned a couple things in the pass game, the first Saints game. Bryce has had some ups and downs, just as the team has had. What do you want to see out of Bryce these last four games?

DAVE CANALES: Keep continuing to lead, keep pushing our concepts forward. Finding ways to protect some of our core concepts in the run game and the pass game. Just lead the charge that way in terms of just getting us to the right play.

For the whole group, just the execution, to watch a group on the offensive side really start to find some chemistry and some rhythm, to just be able to continue to build off that this week.

Q. Where does 'consistency' fall in all that?

DAVE CANALES: It's the whole thing, all the leadership. Making sure we are growing our systems, that we are protecting our runs and our passes and just distributing the ball. Knowing what we expect out of the position.

He does to continue to go on the road... The part that doesn't get mention, which Bryce has done a phenomenal job of, is just being on the road, being in different environments, and getting us to the line, getting us to the right protections and runs. He's been doing a great job of that part, as well.

Q. It looked like he came back from the bye pretty healthy. Tre'von, too. How important is it to have these pieces back together as you make this stretch run?

DAVE CANALES: It's huge right now. We would have loved to have Jaycee and Claudin and Tre out there on Sunday. Got to give a lot of love to the guys who had

opportunities to come and help us. We're excited to get all those guys back on the field, really to have about as strong of a group as we've had. Christian Rozeboom. With a couple of guys, Rob, we'll see where we're at as we go toward. David getting closer to his window there. There's guys that can help us here.

Right now the focus is this week, who can we get on the field this week. We'll have more information for you on that Wednesday.

Q. You said you found your identity on offense. When do you think that happened?

DAVE CANALES: I would just say it's generally throughout the season. If you look at the games we've had success, we've been a balanced attack, had our run game to count on, we've been efficient with our pass game, found some explosives.

That's my dream for this group, is to have a really balanced attack, where everything starts off the same, ends up different. We're making sure that the guys who can help our team touch the ball in one way, shape or form. That certainly starts with me and Brad making sure the plan reflects that.

Thank you.

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