

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: All right, a great day. A great finish to the prep. We got another review tomorrow, but as far as the on-the-field work in practice time, just a really focused group and excited group obviously with this opportunity that we have in front of us to go down there and play the Saints.

So we're fired up to get after it.

Q. How much do you have to talk about what happened last night as far as what it kind of means for you guys and if it maybe heightens the importance of this week?

DAVE CANALES: It's the same process that we've had all year. Every game is a championship opportunity, and where we've been even before the game last night, you know, approaching this game and respecting the opponents, respecting the Saints and the challenges that we have right in front of us.

And so that's got to be the focus. And for us, our pursuit is to find our best football and continue to work on the things from all phases that we're trying to improve upon and that we can count on.

And so keeping the guys locked in and focused on that and understanding we have this opportunity right in front of us in the division and what's looking at us, it's easy for me to sell that.

Q. Told us on Monday than when you watched the Saints-Tampa game on Sunday that you got emotionally involved.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

Q. Watching last night were you able to stay more even keeled or did you let your emotions take over again?

DAVE CANALES: You know, I watched the first half. You

know, 8:00 kick is here, so it's around 10:00 got to sleep with the workday in front of me and woke up and found out what the score was.

I'll have a chance to dive fully into it as we go into it next week. Last week was different because we were playing the Saints this week, so I was able to watch that full game and be a part of it as a part of my early evaluation process.

But if I'm asking the guys to be focused on this week I have to as well. I'm sure I'll have a chance to dive into some of those things going forward.

Q. The fact that you went to bed early and didn't know the result until the morning, does that speak to the focus that you want these guys to have throughout this entire process?

DAVE CANALES: We have to. We have to be ready to attack every day. And if you want to continue to improve your processes, it's about these practices that we have and making sure that we're all on the same page with this day, attacking this day with all the energy and focus that we can.

Q. Brad's been brought up as a potential future head coach by some media lately. I know when you're the offensive coordinator in title but don't necessarily call plays it's kind of curious what -- how involved you are. How important is he to the week-to-week process and really your development as a head coach?

DAVE CANALES: Invaluable. The one thing that I've known about Brad for a long time now -- first of all, I met Brad when he was in high school. His dad John was working for us in Seattle, and so got to be familiar with him.

But then he came back to us as a quality control coach, and the work ethic, the trust factor, loyalty that I know Brad brings, he carries this thing. He's the engineer. He's the one that's talking to the staff and cranking out who has what, scripting things, making sure that our conversations -- my job is to come in and make sure it looks like us and make sure that we're doing the right things for the players that we have.



But I can't do this without Brad. I know he'll get an opportunity to call plays at some point and I think he's going to kill it. You know, I've been in his role a lot of different times over the years for Darrell Bevell, for Brian Schottenheimer, Shane Waldron, where I'm the one sitting there evaluating and looking for the spots to attack what the defense is doing.

You have the sheets in front of you, the coverage notes, and the play callers is giving the personnel the next play out there, and what Brad has done a great job for me is to just continue to be two or three plays ahead of where we are at and getting me prepared for potential fourth down go-for-it scenarios and having the things we talked about in between series circled and ready to go.

He's done a phenomenal job and it's been amazing for me to just watch him grow over the last two years in his leadership, being in front of the room, being able to talk to the guys on a consistent basis, and making sure that we care about the things that are important to us.

Q. Dave, you talk a lot about finish and about opportunity. Did you address the team today just about both of those things in the wake of last night's result?

DAVE CANALES: Nope. Today was our Friday. Today was a Focus Friday and we had to be locked in, finishing up some red zone concepts. Friday is the day you really pull the whole game plan together: first and second down, third down, short yardage, goal line, red zone, and so it's really this cool dry run at the things that we're doing.

That's our focus. Our focus is to make sure we win the day, because that leads to great process. That's been a part of what we're doing. Everybody watched the game. The guys, the coaches, we all watched it, but we also understand that's for next week.

We play the Bucs next week. We're playing the Saints this week. We got to have our focus here. It's going to take everything we have to win this games and we're going to get the Saints' best shot.

Q. Bryce has been putting up big fourth quarter numbers. How important with the chance to stay in control of the conference to get off to a quick start and kind of avoid that lull that seems to be trending end of the first quarter and into the second quarter?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just looking for consistency. I would love to see that from snap one until the end of the game, to your question.

The fact that we do finish well in the fourth quarters, we take a lot of pride in that. We take a lot of pride in the way that we prepare, do right longer, maintain that focus. It's the simplest execution that's required throughout.

It also comes from just a lot of adjustments that go throughout the game, the different ways we're trying to run the ball and how they're impacting that, how we're trying to throw the ball, how they're impacting that.

And so there are a lot of conversations that we kind of settle into a type of game plan as the game goes on. Would I love to see, you know, more success early on and especially in the middle part of the game? Absolutely. That goes back to the places where we were talking about finding our best football is finding that consistent football that shows up drive in and drive out.

Q. Dave, with Jaycee cleared and ready to come back, do you think -- is there any common thread on his interception numbers this year? He's always been a guy who has had those kind of production numbers.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it's attention to detail and it's really -- you know, this is attributed to his study habits, the way that he watches film, the way he prepares himself and looks at who is at what spot in formation, what's the split, taking in the D&D and all those things that come with just being out there and playing with your teammates and trusting your eyes and trusting your feet.

What I've seen of Jaycee, he's got incredible hands, and I've even flirted with the thought of like, shoot, an end-of-game scenario and you got a jump ball, why not put Jaycee out there and try to get up there and affect the game that way, too because of his ability to track the ball and to come up with those catches.

But it's all just paying off because of the work he's been putting in.

Q. What would Claude's role be Sunday?

DAVE CANALES: Claude has to be ready to roll. We got Christian Rozeboom back this week as well. Claude will be definitely playing a lot of special teams, but has to be ready to contribute on defense as well.

He showed us some stuff. He showed us he can help this team win, and if he gets called upon we'll be excited to see him have another opportunity out there.

Q. When you see guys step up, specifically on defense -- I know EJ is going to hit all the rotations and



stuff -- but when a guy steps up and you have two starters, I know inside linebackers you're normally not taking them off the field, but can you manufacture opportunities for them in certain packages?

DAVE CANALES: I've seen that done across the league in different ways where maybe a guy is a little bit more of a run-down player. Danny Stutsman for the Saints. He's mixing in there some for Pete Warner in some different spots? They have three really good linebackers they like to try to get out on the field.

Just great to bring that up because we're playing the Saints this week. There are opportunities that way and these are good things for us as a staff to evaluate. The bye week gave us a chance to kind of look at some of the other spots to see who can we get involved and get out there to see if they can impact the game.

Q. No injury designations this week. You guys seem to be trending in the right direction that way. Saw Rob Hunt out there again today. Looking at his week so far, does it feel like he's closer potentially to having that window opened maybe next week or the week after?

DAVE CANALES: Every week closer. We'll reevaluate that on Monday, Tuesday and see where he is from a strength standpoint. Then of course, the biggest thing for the offensive line or any interior linemen, defense or offense, is how much you use your arms, your upper body when the picture changes, when a defensive lineman runs a stunt.

We got to make sure that the arms extended away from a your body. That has to be the most strong possible place so that you're safe in that and you're powerful in that position. And really that's the next thing out there for him.

So we're going to continue to push that and make sure we'll get him out there when he's ready.

Q. Speaking of that, Brad kind of brought up Damien Lewis' punch and how he's been able to handle both pass protection and run stopping. In your eyes, since he was a rookie in 2020, how much has he grown but also why is he having such a successful season?

DAVE CANALES: He's always been an incredible athlete and he's got length. You know, for being a 6'3" guy and not the tallest -- sometimes you have your guards 6'5", 6'8" and that, but he's got great length and he's incredibly quick. He matches quickness well.

He's a big man, too, and so he can anchor when you got a

bigger guy who might be a little bit taller than him he can still anchor and find that.

What I've seen from D Lewis is he's seen lots of football and a lot of different combinations at this point. Even speaking to the some of the veteran quarterbacks I worked with try to remind these guys you've seen it all. You've seen ever stunt. You've every pressure that can happen. You've seen different body types in there.

Damien just really leaning on his experience. And he cares. He cares so much about this team. He cares about winning. He's a great teammate. He picks and chooses when he speaks, but when he does it comes from the heart with a lot of passion. That's what I love about D-Lew.

Q. Is David Moore farther ahead than Rob in terms of return to play?

DAVE CANALES: We're going to try to get David out there tomorrow -- sorry, next week, and open up his window to practice in a mode to see if he can handle being out there running -- he's been running because it's an elbow injury so he's at top speeds. He looks great.

But, again, kind of goes to the same part of it. He's going to be blocking. He's a special teams player as well, so we got to make sure that he's strong enough, stable enough to be ready for the impact.

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