

# Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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## Coach Dave Canales

### Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: All right, just talking to the players, you know, what I appreciate about this group is the physical nature we played with. Played with great effort. All that was there. It was in the execution the fundamentals and techniques. That's not just the players, it's coaches as well making sure we're getting into the right schemes at the right times.

That's a weekly process, and was no different yesterday. We got to look at the film and be truthful about it and be studs so we can make the improvement going forward. The players in the locker room are obviously upset for the loss. We had an opportunity right in front of us and played tough, made enough plays, but we gave them some stuff.

I got to give the Saints credit. They executed their game plan well and did a good job there. We didn't execute ours to the finish of it, and especially in some of those situations, some of the penalties that we had giving them multiple third downs in different ways.

So on both sides really just it's important for us to look at this one, to grow from it, to make sure that we get back to really good football.

**Q. Dave, on the play before the fourth down attempt.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. It seemed like Bryce changed the protection or audibled that play. Chuba kind of had some confusion there. What happened on that play?**

DAVE CANALES: It was just a miscommunication on the call. I may have left out a word. Bryce had called it a certain way, we realized we were backwards on it, got Chuba into the right spot by the end of the play.

There was just a miscommunication.

**Q. Was that supposed to be a keeper?**

DAVE CANALES: No.

**Q. Dave, Tyler Shough said that he sold the injury on that Ransom hit. Wonder your thoughts on that. Did you think of that in the moment? And also selling injuries...**

DAVE CANALES: I won't even comment on that. I just know for us, I just try to look at our responsibility of it. Those are really difficult situations. Derrick's and Lathan, same thing.

These are bang-bang decisions. They happen so fast and you have to be able to make that judgment call. This guy is a runner. He's a threats to run. We've seen that over the last couple weeks. So you have to be ready to get him down.

We've also seen different situations where if you let up and all of a sudden the quarterback steals a bunch of extra yards at the sideline, and so we have to be ready to play the physical game the way it is.

And then there is that split second where you have to try to find an angle to avoid that massive collision in those spots. It's as difficult for us as it is the official trying to officiate that part. Did he hit him forcibly? Did he give himself up in that time?

So those are really challenging spots.

**Q. (Regarding sending video to the league.)**

DAVE CANALES: George and I got to talk about what we'll send.

**Q. You guys have been successful in fourth downs. I don't know what the numbers are in terms of fourth and short success rate.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. But you've also been reluctant to use Bryce in sneak situations.**



DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. Why is that and is there -- have you given any thought to doing like a Taysom Hill type thing with somebody else?**

DAVE CANALES: We have. We're working on stuff. With Bryce it's physics. He goes about 190 pounds, and when you have a 220, 230 pound quarterback leaning on a center, that's an advantage when you're not putting a bunch of force that way. I don't see that as an advantage.

Other part is I like to leverage off some of the formations we use to throw shots down the field. You get into a third and inches and you're in dive or belly type plays, it allows you to try to throw a keeper, throw a play-action.

We've had some success over the courses of the last two seasons finding explosive and short yardage at a higher rate than most teams that are going to sneak it.

It's great to have a sneak. It's great when you can just -- man, it's half a yard or something like that and you know you can execute it with your quarterback, it's great to have that in your back pocket. That's not our style and so we just try to maximize our approach.

**Q. I know Brad is next to you on the sideline. You guys are constantly communicating. From a situational football standpoint, taking in the information of the game, the flow of the game, and deciding on a play call, how difficult has that been to balance throughout the last few years as you've had those two responsibilities?**

DAVE CANALES: It's challenging and also really fun. These are high-stakes situations and goes with a lot of conversations on the front end. Who are we playing? What's the mode of the playing. This is George and I having a lot of those conversations.

So we haven't fully predetermined, but we're ready to be more aggressive in certain spots. We may say, okay, let's take like the no-brainers and we'll talk about the other ones, and other games it's like, shoot, we're in the next tier of it, and then let's start talking if it gets into 50/50 type situation.

So all that stuff happens on the front end, which prepares me to be ready for it. And then on top of it, George does a great job letting me know on first down, we get an earned first and run play, he's like, four or less is a go, two or less is a go.

So I have that two plays ahead in my mind to try to set that

part up.

**Q. With that said though, how do you not be reactionary when something is not working early on in a game and just taking that out of the elements of the plays? For instance, if the run game is not working of the jump, how do you stop yourself from kind of...**

DAVE CANALES: That all factors into it. You know, it's similar with the two-point play. Some of the different strategies for like going for two when you're down 14, it matters how you got down there. That's a conversation that we've also had. It's not just this number. It's not just this analytics thing.

It's, okay, my primary target on these two-point plays just scored a 40 yard touchdown. He's exhausted. Or we just had a 13-play drive and Rico or Chuba is gassed and my best two-point play is a run. There are all these factors that go into it.

You have to start off with the numbers, start off with what does the book say, and then you have to make a judgment call on the humans that you're trying to execute it with.

**Q. What happened with Turk Wharton?**

DAVE CANALES: Walk-through. Walk-through hamstring. Should I get into it, Bruce? Is that all right if I do?

Honestly, he tripped on a teammate and put his foot down try to gather himself and that was enough to do it.

It was really unfortunate. I think in my 16th years that's the first time that's ever happened. Really unfortunate for Turk. He was excited to be out there. He was very upset, very disappointed.

We'll try to get him turned around and get the full -- what it that looks like on Wednesday.

**Q. You guys have had success playing kind of as an underdog and winning games like that, but it's been since 2021, well before you were here, that this team has won as a favorite.**

DAVE CANALES: Wow.

**Q. Is there something to winning when you're -- I don't want to say supposed to win -- but favored to win? Is there a learning process that goes in that, growth of a team?**

DAVE CANALES: I think there certainly is. I hope that's not a factor for us. I see the inconsistency of play that we

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can have at times, and to me this is a group that is still growing in terms of just finding week in, week out success that way.

That's what I really attribute it to. That's what it looks like on film. I didn't know that number that you brought up, and of course these are different coaches and these are different players. This is a totally different team.

There are challenges. I know that you have to expect a team's best and I know that when you go into a game as a favorite or you start to build some momentum, the team also sees that and they're aware, like, hey, let's go, and it calls on them to give their best.

I hope we can find that on a weekly basis though.

**Q. Scored on another opening drive, but the second quarter struggles continue.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. 11-minute drive surely didn't help. Is there a way to get over that three-half lull the team has been in all year?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, this was avoid penalties. We had a penalty that set us back and we were not able to overcome that adversity.

Simply put there. I wouldn't broad stroke this. It continues to become a factor, but then we had a successful drive in the two-minute and got points out of it. Yes, I would love to have that consistent execution.

**Q. ...the point differential in the second quarter?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, that's wild.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we looked at the numbers of what they called. They did call a lot of flags and that was pretty consistent with it. I really didn't have a lot of problem with most of their calls.

**Q. Dave, last time you guys lost to the Saints you said you took it personally the way you guys lost. This game, following this game Nick Scott said something to the effect we looked like we came off a bye week. What does that mean to you? What does that say about the way you guys prepared coming into the game?**

DAVE CANALES: I like the way we prepared. Guys had a

great look in their eyes all week. Excited about the opportunity, understanding what we're playing for, all that. Felt the focus was there. It was not clean enough from an execution standpoint, and whether that's the bye week or whatever, doesn't matter. We have to be able to execute at the most basic fundamental part of our football.

**Q. Your team, like on this Tell-the-Truth Monday, what are the vibes that are coming out of this game after watching the tape?**

DAVE CANALES: Still a really excited group, and I was waiting to see what the full group was going feel like. The locker room feels one way, right, immediately after the loss. When you come back together and all the guys -- the guys, you go back on the plane they got their iPads and they're watching it to see what happened. There is some closure in that, and also preparing themselves for this day when we all get back together and speak specifically so it's not the first time you get eyes on it.

But there is great energy. There is great energy in the room. You know, just I love this team. I love the fearlessness, the courage of this team, the finish, the grit, the physicality, all those things that we play with.

And just trying to talk to the group and say, guys, we owe it to ourselves to do right so that that shows up consistently. Because when you -- when we play the style of ball that we play and watch how we just continue to finish and fight through the game, all the way through the fourth quarter, we owe it to ourselves to just show up with that consistency all the way through for all the hard work that's been put into it.

That's the part that hopefully we understand. We know what's in front of us with the Bucs. We know the opportunity we have to come play in Bank of America Stadium, to be at home here for this game and get back on track with our football. There is some great stuff is that happened. You look at this is how we win. I show them the critical variables of that, and we did a great job taking care the ball until the very, very last play.

Tried the rugby play and couldn't get it started. Defensively the big hit by Mike Jack on the jet sweep and the ball pops up and they end up with it. A great hit on Jevon Johnson down there in the red zone and ball falls right back into his lap.

There was some amazing opportunities. Five sacks we didn't get a ball out. That's a credit to Tyler Shough taking care the ball in those situations, but getting our pass rush going. Like so many good things. Bryce making plays. Picking up three third downs with his legs. However you



can get them you get them. Chuba in a great effort on a screen play.

All these things mount up to there is stuff here, but consistency, right? The penalty thing that just popped up out of nowhere is something we got to clean up.

**Q. You said you wanted to look at the film to see what went wrong when Olave took the game over. What did go wrong?**

DAVE CANALES: On the touchdown?

**Q. No, that whole drive. You guys blanketed...**

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. We were totally disjointed on the back end. That part is something we're talking about right now. You know, it was the linebacker hook droppers, the carry players, all those things. It was completely disjointed.

They did a great job staying on the ball and really just kind of executing a couple of plays and finding the completions there.

But I don't want to get into the specifics of the breakdowns of all that. These are like base calls that we have to be more connected on.

**Q. Was it the call that was disjointed or the communication?**

DAVE CANALES: It was the communication that was disjointed and just guys not owning their landmarks in it.

**Q. What do you attribute the inconsistencies to? I think since the October you haven't had two wins in a row. What do you attribute that to? Just being a young team or what?**

DAVE CANALES: Identity yeah, this team trying to find an identity of professionalism, maturity to have that consistent outcome weekly. That's what we're looking for. Shooting for. That is our best football.

That's what we have to go find. That's the challenge that we all have as a staff and certainly the players as well. We're all in this thing together, and we have to find consistency because that's what really good teams look like, is they show up week in and week out and do the basic parts of their job to where the other opponent should have to make spectacular plays to win the game if we all do our jobs well.

Whether that's offense, defense, or special teams, if we

execute our technique, if we do right and we grade out at a really high standpoint and our technique is right, then it should take an excellent effort by the opponent. Those things happen. You got to live with those. You got to live with those individual wins and losses across the league on the field play to play.

But the more that we can minimize the things that are given because we have poor technique or the things given because we missed an assignment, we have to get that out of our game. And the penalty thing as well.

**Q. Baker has had tremendous success since he left here and has played against the Panthers. Out up some incredible numbers. What do you guys got to do to slow him down? And of course they got some guys that are coming back, like Mike Evans is back.**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

**Q. What's the challenge ahead for that?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, this is a great group. They got their full starting skill group they thought they would have coming into the season with. Baker has done an amazing job with just orchestrating the whole thing, distributing.

Also just got to factor in the part that he's going to try to win the down whether it's with his legs, his brain, or with his arm, and it's going to call upon us to just know where they're at, where they're trying to put their people at, play off of each other, have that leverage, and there is discipline in the rush plan that has to come to life because he is another guy that will find wins on third down with legs to extend drives.

So we have to be aware of that and we have to make sure we're up for that challenge.

**Q. Dave, Corbett said something last night everybody has to lock in for the next three weeks, even though it's holidays, family, all the external distractions. How do you manage human beings this time of year when there are so many things out and around them?**

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just remind them you know what makes Thanksgiving great is when you win that game that week. What makes Christmas great is when you win that game that week. This is our job and this is what we're called to. It's a gift. This is a blessing to be able to do what we do. It goes through the holiday season. We have to be able to focus on this opponent this week, right now.

Our families, we love them and we'll see you when we see you. We have to be all hands on deck when we're doing

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this. But that's what we all sign up for. My wife, Lizzy, will be the first one to tell you that. She knows. This is the lifestyle. We wouldn't have it any other way.

It's a beautiful time of year to be able to do this, but it's going to require our full focus.

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