

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: A great day. A great day to be on the grass. Fired up about this game for all the obvious reasons. Great matchup right here. Division opponent at home in Bank of America Stadium.

A lot of energy in the building, excitement from the guys and we understand what it's going to require: Focus, our best, playing against these types of opponents, the Bucs namely, this part of the season.

So I'm fired up to get going as well as the rest of the group.

Q. What did you learn about Baker and the experience he had here, how he felt about that while you were in Tampa?

DAVE CANALES: We didn't talk much about his experience here other than right off when we first met. It was more just the collective experiences he's had throughout the NFL.

My default with veteran players, whether it's at the wide receiver or quarterback position over the years, is just to lean on the information and knowledge that you've gathered from the different spots, the breadth of experience against defenses.

By the time I got to work with Baker he's seen every coverage and every blitz possible and I tried to remind him of to that play fast. Those are the nature of our conversations.

Q. Is this ankle and foot been bothering T-Mack for a while?

DAVE CANALES: This is stuff that just came up in the game. I think he got rolled up on on a run play looked like and just kind of built up on him. We just decided to keep him out of practice today and try to get him back for tomorrow.

Q. With Baker, how much does he resemble the player

you coached versus where you see him maybe different at this age?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he just continues to take his game up and really just time on task with the group of receivers that he's gotten comfortable with. They're back to full strength in terms of just the guys they were counting on coming into the season.

I can see the excitement of trying to get Mike the ball, and Chris as well. They got Bucky back as well. So a bunch of different weapons on that side. Baker's kind of been right in the middle of that being the point guard and trying and make sure the offense works smoothly.

Q. I asked Princely this, but what is it about this team that you guys have excelled with your back's against the wall?

DAVE CANALES: It's a character of the team, and the guys look at these different opportunities to respond to adversity. And whether it's in a game or whether it's after the game, coming into the next one and losing has a way of humbling you.

We're no different than any group where the greatest things is these opportunities. Even when you lose, can you learn from the things. Can you learn from the stuff that we didn't execute well or different situations that I could have called something differently, Ejiro as well and Tracy as well and all of us taking that information in and being accountable to each other.

I believe that's probably, as I talk and ramble, getting to the accountability piece of it where we all know we have a part in it, so we just attack it head on and try to right those things in meetings. We can't wait to get back on the field to shore up some of the things we want to show up for us.

Q. Do you think this team responds better to adversity or success?

DAVE CANALES: I mean, certainly the record would say to adversity and the way we responded. It does take a mentality and mindset to be able to handle success well so



that it shows up consistently. That's what we've been after. That's what we've been trying to capture, is how to just keep it going and can just build off the things, build off the successes and saying, let's find new lessons to learn. Let's not relearn lessons that we've already talked about and grown from.

So we have another opportunity for that this week.

Q. You talk about in your pass game you want to find a focal point. When did T-Mack kind of become a player that you believed was able to be that?

DAVE CANALES: It was pretty clear in training camp with the different formations we threw at him, the way he was able to handle moving around in formation, different concepts we try to throw at him.

Targeting him a bunch really early on kind of put him on team's radar and they started to make adjustments to try to take him away. And then we've seen in recent weeks Jalen Coker taking advantage of opportunities in matchups that way. We want to continue to build that that way.

Q. Your one year in Tampa, what did you learn about Mike Evans that you didn't know from before?

DAVE CANALES: Just the competitor that he is. It really didn't matter what it was. It could be ping pong, darts, could be cards, certainly on the field, shooting hoops. Whatever it is he just loves to compete. He loves to find that moment. He brings a lot of energy. He's challenging somebody and very comfortable in that place.

I just think that's probably -- besides the obvious things, he's huge and he's got a catch radius and understands coverage and how to beat things, it's really just the competitive mindset that he has.

Q. How do you think he looked coming back last week off that injury?

DAVE CANALES: Thought he looked strong, really physical, right back to the style of play. You know, talking about Mike, this is a guy that forces you to play a physical nature. Certainly can't go without saying he draws a lot of defensive pass interference calls, and going into this game I understand the crew that we have, that's something that they do call. This is information we're aware of.

But we have to be up to the challenge. Jaycee and Mike will have opportunities and you have to play them physical because he's going to bring that power forward type of mindset to the position.

And so we're not going to back off that. We have to continue to challenge him in different ways.

Q. I know you want to focus on a week-to-week basis, but how important is it to stress urgency of being able to control your own destiny in the next three weeks?

DAVE CANALES: Every game is a championship opportunity. We don't see this one as anything different. It is obvious now for the division right in front of us, this opportunity and how huge it is. I can feel a sense that the players feel that and see that and know that.

We can't let that be a distraction and make it more than it is. It's about us executing and about us playing clean football, getting rid of some of the things that showed up last week, and making sure we play our best brand.

I can stand in front of the group and say, when we play good football we can beat anybody. That's a true statement for this group, and I'm proud that we've worked ourselves to that point.

But we got to make it happen and bring it to Sunday.

Q. Ickey was a DNP. Can you give us more information?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he made it through the game. He was battling out there. You can kind of sense there was some stuff going on, but in the postgame evaluation and as we started doing tests on him, there is something in there, there is something going on with his knee.

So we had to make sure we took care of him today. He's going to be day to day. We are going to look at him tomorrow and see if we can get him out there to practice, but we're not really sure right now.

So we'll go through it. We will make sure we do all the testing that we need to do and do the right thing by Ickey. He wants to play, and that's -- I wouldn't expect anything different from him.

We have to make sure we do the right thing and put him through the wringer and make sure we test it and he's strong and able to perform.

Q. Fair to say McMillan is also day to day?

DAVE CANALES: Yes.

Q. ...filling in at that spot, or...

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Yosh Nijman would step in there.



He practiced today for us without Ickey, and Jake Curhan who played guard for us. Mostly he's played tackle in his past, too, so we got a couple guys that can help out if we need them do.

Q. McCollum injured reserve this week. From that you've seen how does that change their defense and how do you prepare when it's going to be somebody new out there?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Zion is a part of a couple different packages that they used. Thinking about my time there. They can move him in different spots. He can play safety. He certainly is their starting corner, but he can play in the slot and play safety and gives them some versatility.

So they're going to have to lean on somebody else to fill those roles. He's been a really consistent player out there for them. He's big and athletic. He's a really fine player.

So the next guy has to step up, and we have to try to make sure we take advantage of some of those opportunities.

Q. Rob Hunt is -- I know that you brought -- activated David Moore. Do you know what you'll do with him for the remainder of the season yet?

DAVE CANALES: It's week to week. We did not feel confident enough after the first couple days to open his window. This week we will revisit it through the weekend and look at next week to see if we can open that up.

Q. When you say you can feel the guys, perhaps that sense of urgency, what are noticing?

DAVE CANALES: It's a focus, a seriousness. We have fun. We really enjoy being around each other here and the energy is right. But then there is also just like the subtle social cues where I can see this guy is locked in and this guy is like -- I can feel that.

Every game should feel that way, but I don't want to certainly ignore the game we have in front of us. I don't have to over-sell the impact that this is a championship moment for the guys.

Q. When you got the job, obviously through the interview process you had a plan how you were going to bring the franchise along. Where are you in your plan and has the progress and the wins and success, have you maybe altered that plan?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, the plan is to build a team that we can all be proud of. The Panthers fans, and especially in this building, the organization, the administration, the

players, the coaches, something that we can be proud of. Excellence. Great processes in every way, shape, and form, whether it's in the training room or the weight room or the cafeteria. Especially with our coaching staff and players.

My dream is to continue to build that to have great fundamentals, great core part of what we're doing, and I'm really pleased with the fact that we're building that and we have an identity of who we are and now we're trying to find the consistency of that.

But that's been my dream. That's been a part of what we're trying to build here and we're certainly on the way to that.

Q. There was a report that the NFL admitted to you guys they blew the replay on T-Mack's catch. How do you take that news and did they own up to any other errors?

DAVE CANALES: I just -- they have to make live calls and they have to go with the information they're given. There is nothing we can do about that. What we can focus on is executing, doing our part, and we certainly gave up some opportunities in that game. That's got to be our focus. That's my focus. I'm focused on getting ready for the Bucs.

Whatever comes up after the game, those things can either -- you can either be justified for it or you can just say, okay, everybody is accountable to each other. We've had this conversation. We've had that information. You just got to move on and get ready for the next week.

Q. Any feedback on those hits on Shough?

DAVE CANALES: None that I really want to talk about. We're focused on this week and I kind of want to leave those conversations between us and the officials.

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