

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Postgame Press Conference



Carolina Panthers 23, Tampa Bay Buccaneers 20

DAVE CANALES: Came down to taking care of the ball. We got one. It was the right one. We talked, as a group, we talked about moments, moments that come up. We had a last drive that we had to put it together to get ourselves to get points and take the lead. The offense came together and made some plays right there on that drive.

Defensively, they were moving the ball pretty good right there on that drive and Christian Rozeboom had an opportunity on one deflected pass, didn't get it but just keep playing ball. Keep playing ball, being in the right spots and good things come to you when that happens.

I'm really proud of the group, the way that they stayed together, talked the whole time. A lot of great communication happening on the sideline, just drive in and drive out, trying to figure out the different things on both sides that was happening.

Got to give a lot of credit to the Bucs. The way they played us made it really hard for us to run the ball today with mixed success, but they settled into some things and Bryce and the boys made some plays to keep us alive.

Q. Last week, I don't know if it's poetic or whatever, for Lathan Ransom to end last week's game the way that he did and then finish off the game this week.

DAVE CANALES: That's a great story. That's fantastic and it's just about belief and having confidence in our guys to be able to be studs about the things we need to work on and be studs about the different decisions that come up. I love that for Lathan. For him to be able to make the winning play, the biggest play of the game for us.

Q. Dave, the Bryce touchdown where he raised (inaudible), like, how many times did your heart stop and stop during that play? Just kind of take me through your perspective of it.

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. They had a great call. They covered us really well and got to give credit to JT Sanders for staying alive and that's what we talk about. Activate the second play and that's what happens and Bryce just miraculously got out of some pretty tough situations right there, kept his eyes down field and got us the touchdown.

Q. Dave, I know we harp on it a lot but you have a lot of rookies on this team. To see Lathan and T-Mac and Nic play the way they did to contribute, how much is this team maturing down this stretch in the season?

DAVE CANALES: Couldn't be at a better time, and it's why we play these guys. It's why we believe in them and we live through the bumps along the road with having young players out there, but at this time of year, they're young, they're strong. We had a bye week to get our legs back and they looked that way, they looked fast. We had an aggressive style of play today so I'm really proud of those young guys coming through.

Q. Did you address Bryce's play, specifically the 34-yard pass to Jalen to set up a field goal?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, some critical throws really, and even early on, just a couple of misses. I know one got away from Xavier that would have been an explosive play in that drive. I thought Bryce just was taking what was there and the Bucs did a great job of mixing things up they showed blitz looks and popped out to two. They showed normal looks, brought blitzes and Bryce just did the right thing with the ball. Threw it away when he had to and extended the play when he could.

Just really for two weeks now, even going back to last week, just the way that he's been operating, the confidence, the connection and all the hard work that he's put in with this young group, this young skill group is paying off. For guys just being on the same page and took advantage of a one-on-one opportunity and Coker did a great job of stacking, coming up with the catch on that huge third down that led to the field goal.



Q. Are you growing more comfortable with him running the ball?

DAVE CANALES: We give him opportunities. We love putting the ball in his hand in different ways, whether that's with the RPO or whether that's in the keeper game and he's just showing me. He's showing me I can do it, I'm good, and we can continue to grow our package that way.

Q. What was the locker room like, Dave, just now?

DAVE CANALES: Hope. Belief. Everything is right in front of us still and to give ourselves a chance to continue to play meaningful football this time of year, they've earned that. They've earned that because of the work. They've earned that because of being accountable to each other and really having a great week of preparation and I think I mentioned to all of you just the focus this group had this week and understanding what's in front of us.

My message to them was, like, we've been playing playoff football for a really long time and because of our record early on, every single one of those games for the last month have been so critical for us to be in this spot. We get another week. We got another opportunity and we have to be able to make sure we take the lessons from this one and move forward and try to find our best football.

Q. Bryce, he got his ankle stepped on again early in the game. How much was that bothering him? Were you concerned about what was going on there? Seemed like he was limping there initially?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, he was able to work through it, but he got stepped on pretty cleanly. I think Corbs just kind of stepped back on the action. That's a couple times that that's happened now, so we'll have a conversation about it. It counsel the splits. It could be Bryce coming away from center, so we'll look at that and make sure we tie it up. But he was able to run around and make plays so he was fine.

Q. In the locker room, we heard you guys made it hard on yourself. The players are saying you just make it hard on yourselves. To have this resiliency to come back after some of the tough losses, how important is that for this team?

DAVE CANALES: It's huge. That's what's needed. You got to just find a way to win, somehow somehow. When your playing amazing teams, you know they're going to make plays. You know those things are going to happen, whether they make a sack or they make a big play or offense or a couple of returns that got out on us. We got to respond. We can't dwell on what happens. We have to move on to the next play. I know coaches say it all around

every league of football, but it really is. It's so important for the guys don't pass judgment on the outcome of the game based on what's happening, just keep playing football.

Q. In the past whenever the stadium was packed, it usually was with the visiting fans. They were prevalent. Today it was packed and it was mostly rooting on the Panthers. How special was it to you?

DAVE CANALES: It was electric. Bank of America Stadium was a special place today. Towels, black towels waving, all black uniforms, the whole thing. It felt right. It felt exactly right. It was an advantage. There were some false starts. There were some issues with communication. You can see where they were having trouble getting the calls in and getting lined up. That's our fanbase that's showing up for all of us. It does. It really does take all of us and those are the little advantages and edges that you need.

I'm so fortunate to be able to be here to feel that type of energy in the building. And then we make big plays, they let you hear it. The guys feed off of that. So it was an amazing electric feel in the stadium.

Q. Speaking of the resiliency, the contact with the long snapper that gave the Bucs an extra set of downs but you were still able to only hold them to a field goal on that. Does that kind of epitomize some of the resiliency your team has shown?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. And we settle in and we have a our calls and the guys understand, okay, well, this could be another opportunity to get a turnover. This could be another opportunity for us but they settled in and held them to a field goal which was huge.

Q. Mike Jackson gave up the initial touchdown to Mike Evans and then after that really bounced back and had a similar play where he broke up the ball. His resilience throughout the year, I know you've spoken about his character before, but how much of an impact did it have on this game?

DAVE CANALES: It's huge and it's just the message for all the guys to take on the challenge at hand. Mike Evans, the Bucs, a bunch of fantastic players. We got to play our ball. Even on the touchdown, Mike's in great position. It's a great throw and a great catch, but just continue. You can see him jogging off the field with that belief. He's ready for the next series.

I would have loved to see him come up with that pick right there. He had a beautiful break on the ball. Baker threw it just high enough where he couldn't get his hands on it.



Mike's leadership is -- and he doesn't say a lot. There's a mix of different types of leaders that we have on this team. He studied so much. He watches film and it pays off for him and the guys that he's around on a daily basis can see where that does help us.

Q. Each team only had one possession in the third quarter. When you have a game flow like that where there's these long drives, how much does that impact your play calling and your approach to the drive especially in the fourth quarter?

DAVE CANALES: I have to take those things into consideration knowing, okay, if they're going to extend drives we might have to be a little more aggressive. We took a big sack on a play action shot we were trying to throw down the field. That's an opportunity and shot we have to take. We shore up our protection. We have to take advantage of those moments right there but it put us behind the sticks and made it a little bit harder on us. But all those things play into it.

Q. Your destiny is now in your own hands.

DAVE CANALES: We feel like it's been like that for weeks on weeks and I like the group feeling comfortable with this type of pressure, feeling comfortable with knowing it's still just going to be about the work. Can we get back to work? Can we trust our process and it will lead to good results?

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