

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Monday, December 22, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Just really proud of the group, the way which battled throughout the game and overcame some adversity throughout. Couple unfavorable field positions. Our defense settled in really nicely and offensively just made plays when we needed to.

You know, trying to find that balanced attack, and I thought the Bucs does a great job limiting our effect in the run game, but it was enough to kind of create some other opportunities for us.

And then a good day, 50% on third down. A good day for the group making some plays there.

And just really proud of the way that we just keep going back to work and that's what we're looking forward to this week as well.

Q. Hey, Coach, good to see you today. Few questions about Seattle and specifically Pete Carroll. Just big game against him this week. How did Pete and the culture you had there, what influence did that have on your career?

DAVE CANALES: It was incredible. I'm very grateful to have spent as much time as I did with Coach Carroll in a bunch of different roles. One year at USC, 13 years in the NFL to watch Coach build a program around belief, around the principles that still carry with me today here for the Panthers.

The things that he cared about is what he wanted us to focus on as a staff; where we all have different styles and personalities, it's what's at the core: Taking care of the ball, the run game, toughness, all of our play style, the things we talk about.

It was such a consistent message from Coach over the years, and as our team changed, as our young players started to own our play style and philosophy, that's when it became really powerful. When it was a locker room and expectation from the players.

He served as the reminder of who we are, reminder of the philosophy, so I try to emulate that as much as possible with my own way.

Q. I know you talked a lot to him last year; this year he's been a little busier with the Raiders. What did he do last year or say to you last year that helped you with a tough time you were going through maybe with Bryce and the quarterback situation?

DAVE CANALES: Just the constant reminders to believe, to prove to the guys what we can do when we play really good football. That message has stayed consistent, especially in had those times last year right in the of the season trying to find wins.

Also like knowing how to celebrate the victories when they came and also point the group to where we are headed and what we're going for. So keeping the vision alive of what we're becoming. Those were some of the most critical things I think from last year.

And the other thing, John Schneider, the general manager of the Seattle Seahawks, was part of building that whole thing together as well and had a huge influence on me in terms of how he sees the game and the type of players to look for and all those things.

It was really amazing one-, two-punch that created that culture there and the success we had.

Q. Who's energy is higher, yours or his? You're both pretty high-energy guys.

DAVE CANALES: Definitely Pete. He is like that every day at practice. He's the first one out there throwing the ball around, running routes, chasing things down in special teams. That kind of energy is infectious.

The part where he really shines too is just creating culture and environment in the building and the sense of competition and having games, having competitions happen in team meetings in different settings. Always trying to push the staff to find an edge. He's like, guys, if



we're going to do this and work so hard, let's at least make it fun.

Just really adding a lot of color to what we do so that no day felt mundane. There was always something exciting to look forward though in those meetings, he would throw little curve balls and there and invite special guest sometimes to come in and share moments with us.

We always appreciated that. It just never got stale. It was always fun, always exciting.

Q. Congratulations on your win.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. This is a new question to ask you because we haven't asked you this question in this position before. On Sunday you need a very particular result for it to matter really. You win, Tampa Bay loses. Wonder, first of all, will you keep an eye on the Tampa Bay score throughout the game?

DAVE CANALES: I will not. We can't approach it that way. We have to make sure, especially for us -- I appreciate the question, but as we're trying to create consistency in our product of what we do on the field game in and game out, that's what we're after, and it's out there for us.

To find our best football we have to approach it that way. We have to make sure that we approach this game plan that way. As the game continues to go however it goes, it's like I'm trying to win this down. I'm trying to win this series right here.

We all have to be locked in there. We can't afford to do that in the place that we're in collectively as a team. We have to continue to find consistent football.

Q. I appreciate that. One other thing related to that, and that is: You have to prepare for all outcomes, good and bad. So if you're down by three scores, say, in the fourth quarter, ultimately the Seattle game is pretty meaningless for you no matter what's happening in Tampa Bay. Would you at that point consider sitting starters a little earlier knowing you have to beat the Bucs in the finale?

DAVE CANALES: I don't envision us doing that. It's a conversation that Dan and I have to have philosophically about how we're approaching this.

Again, I think it kind of goes back to answering it the same way. All the reps are so valuable. As we continue to grow

together as a team, every series matters as we're trying to develop our schemes and concepts and make sure that we go into each week with that so that we can learn the lessons and take the next step when the Bucs week comes on.

But all our focus has to be right here and right now on the Seahawks.

Q. Dave, probably hard for you to be objective about this I would think, but wondered what you would say about T-Mack's case for offensive rookie of the year?

DAVE CANALES: I certainly think he's made enough of an impact to be in the conversation. Obviously the individual goals, the individual things come with success of a team, and I think T-Mack would see it the same way. It's all of us. It's the offensive line blocking, Bryce delivering the throws, the defense playing well.

You know, all those things tie-in. When you win people get accolades.

So our goal should always be the group effort and all those other things, all the other recognition will come along with that.

Q. And then wondered if you had in any update on opening up Rob's 21-day window.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, really excited. He's making progress. That's a real possibility for this week to see if we can get him out there in a capacity to do some individual drills to start leaning on people. He's worked his way into that area and I know we've been talking about this for weeks.

That's something that we're really excited about potentially doing this week. We're not 100% sure, but we are going to have to make that decision here in the next couple days.

Q. Thanks.

DAVE CANALES: Yep.

Q. Good morning, Coach. How are you?

DAVE CANALES: Good morning.

Q. I also had a question on award season. Do you think Bryce is the most improved player in the league?

DAVE CANALES: I don't know that. You would have to look across the league. What I know is I'm just really proud of the progress that he's taking and the type of football that



he's been playing; just really consistently leading us and make be sure we can push our things forward. For the last two weeks I just saw a guy who has been competing for his teammates trying to find ways to win.

I've been really proud of the way he's done that and led the group and given us an opportunity really in both games to come out with the win.

Q. He guided the team to a big win yesterday, despite the running game. With his two explosive throws yesterday and going back to the two fourth down throws against the Rams, are you getting more comfortable with calling for more throws outside of the numbers?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely, and that's something we've grown into. Some of the aggressive nature we've had this year on fourth down is because of Bryce's ability to execute the plays and trust his guys to make plays for him.

But I love putting him in those positions because he consistently makes the right decisions.

Q. And just one more. Legette had one bad drop and he seemed to lose awareness on the sideline. With Moore getting healthy, is he in jeopardy of losing some of his starting snaps?

DAVE CANALES: No, he's not. X is a guy that I love. He works his tail off. He would love to have those plays back. I am sure he would be up here telling you that for sure. He's a guy that we're going to continue to trust he's going to work through this. In this one game he didn't come up with the opportunities that he had, but I trust he'll get right back to work.

He'll be a part of our game plan this week as well.

Q. Thanks and good luck.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. Hey, Dave, so yesterday when we were asking about Bryce Young's ankle you said that you didn't exactly know what happened on the play that looked like Austin Corbett stepped on his foot. Did you get a chance to look at it on film, and what happened from your perspective?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just the timing of it, we were a little tight there. You can't drop step when you're on offensive line. In those situations you got to be firm at the line of scrimmage. And then I think also Bryce just coming away from center on some of the play-actions can get a

little bit more depth on the first steps. So it's a little bit of a combination of both things, but it's something he we certainly can't have and really stats up front by neutralizing the line of scrimmage so we can get the play started.

Q. Is Bryce's ankle good to go, planning on full practicing this week?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, that's the plan right now.

Q. And then finally, how close was Ickey to playing on Sunday? And anything you can say about Yosh Nijman's day would be great, too.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Ickey was really close. Didn't feel confident he could execute all the parts of his job with his inside leg having the injury, knowing he's going to have to post on that leg versus a power rush which they were a power rushing team.

And then just any type of situation that could come up in the run game, you know, where he might get rolled up. So just didn't feel fully confident he would be able to do his job at his highest level.

I feel confident that he'll be able to do that this week but we have to put him through his paces and make sure what he's -- he feels great and ready to go.

I thought Yosh did an excellent job for us. He was solid in the run game, covering people up in the pass game. He gave us enough time. They got a couple edges on him, but for the most part he gave us a chance to play winning football.

I'm really proud of Yosh and the way he stepped in.

Q. Hey, Dave, how is it going?

DAVE CANALES: Hey, Cass.

Q. Understanding that you added a bunch of pieces on defense this year, now that you're kind of towards the end of the season and you kind of compare last year versus this year, how much has having DB back just made a difference for everybody on that side of the ball?

DAVE CANALES: It's huge. Not just from a production standpoint and the plays that he makes, but just the mentality and the way that he works, the way he's so consistent with his effort and strain of plays. A beautiful picture of it just last week against the Saints on a screen play that could have got a lot more yards.



He's coming out the stack making big hits and he affects everybody. Across the line to have that kind of effort on a play in and play out basis, just an incredible leader to have. He has been a huge impact on our group.

Q. One more real quick. NextGen had a cool stat this morning that Jaycee was not targeted once on 29 coverage snaps. I guess the DPI negates that. But as somebody who creates offensive game plans, like how easy/feasible is it to completely avoid a corner for an entire game?

DAVE CANALES: It's very challenging, and sometimes you're looking for the next-best opportunity to try to take your targets. But there are certain looks where the ball has to go there, and I'm going to ask my guys -- speaking for us, I'm going to ask my guys to make plays even when we face some pretty good corners out there.

For Jaycee, I saw him just really just challenging things on a down in and down out basis. And that's exactly right. He should feel that confidence. He's long. He's fast. He's aggressive. He's got a great mind, competitive mind where he understands concepts and things that are happening.

I loved watching him in the aggressive style that he played with yesterday.

Q. Sweet, thank you.

DAVE CANALES: Yep.

Q. Hey, Dave, good afternoon.

DAVE CANALES: Hi, Mike.

Q. When the schedule came out you were pretty positive about the late bye week. A lot of people had their opinions, but I'm curious in hindsight, you brought it up last night, how the rookies were ready to play because of that bye week and getting their body right. How beneficial was that late bye week in earnest now that you've blown past it and had a couple games since?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I try to look at opportunities. We don't get to chose when that happens. The opportunity it presented us is a chance to finish strong at the end, to get something back into the tank for the finish.

You know, that's happening for us right now.

And also knowing that it was a long season going week in and week out and making modifications to our plan, understanding we're playing every Sunday, one after the

other, with the Monday night there as well.

But there were certainly challenges that came with that. Then there was also just if we can play good enough football to where we're playing these types of meaningful games this thing will help us, and it has. It's given us time for guys to get back out there and it's given guys a little bit more in the tank for the finish.

So we're really fortunate at this point to be able to be feeling the affects of that in a positive way.

Q. The Pro Bowl announcements are coming out tomorrow. I'm sure you're going to hear much earlier than that. What's your approach beyond just telling the guys individually, and how do you try to get the team maybe in on the celebration?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we'll announce it as a group and we'll celebrate that together. The reason we like to do that is because while certain guys may get recognition, it's always going to come down to this was a team effort. When you win games you get notoriety. We see that happen around the league where teams that are dominating during a season end up having more players make the Pro Bowl.

The success comes with it, but it's like everybody is tied into it. Everybody had a part of it, and certainly the guys have to go out there and make their plays. Yeah, we celebrate it together. We celebrate it as a group. It's not a huge focus of what we're doing to be honest, but it is something to celebrate and we really appreciate those moments.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports