

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: A beautiful day. Excuse my voice a little bit here. Told the guys they're going to get everything I had, so left some stuff out there on the field.

Great to just get back to work and the focus is right and just encouraged the group. Last week was in my estimation our best week of preparation in terms of the schemes, what to expect, looks to own on defensive side; offensively just figuring out the fronts and different things like that and taking advantage of opportunities.

We have to recreate that through our process and that was a challenge this week and the guys are up for it.

Q. Dave, you've had this rotating captain thing every week. Who decides on that? What goes into it? How do you determine who that guy is?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just look to recognize players that have shown the consistency that we're looking for and really stand for what Panthers football is about.

You know, part of it is from the week before, how they played, and then the other part is just guys that uphold the standards. Nick Scott was a captain this past week and Jeff Brown helps me keep track of who the guys are that we invite to come out there, guys that mean a lot to us.

So just getting them some recognition in front of their peers. We announce that on Saturdays before we go into the game. We have a lot of fun with it. The guys get excited about it. We have a scout team player of the week as well that we recognize every Saturday.

We try to rotate that. We've had a couple of repeat guys in that world, but they all work so hard. It's awesome when they get to be recognized in front of their peers.

Q. With two weeks left, are there any guys on the top of your mind that you kind of want to -- I mean, that you kind of want to get honored down the stretch?

DAVE CANALES: Not off the top. I have a list of guys, so we'll make that decision later in the week.

Q. Dave, you were pretty clear yesterday that individual goals and awards have a place, but below team. With that being said, disappointment to see Derrick not get honored with the Pro Bowl?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, the recognition and all that happens however they come up with the votes and recognize guys. What I saw from Derrick this year is dominant football play, a guy that stands for everything we believe in and a guy that's disruptive in every way, shape, and form; coming up with sacks this year and certainly against the run game and the way he's played, he definitely is recognized regardless of what the accolades might be by his teammates and the peers, people that he plays against.

Q. ...Jimmy Horn last week. It was only his third touch in the past six weeks.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

Q. After that early fumble that he had, is he starting to earn your respect and get back in the game plan?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Jimmy is working hard. We're asking him to do a lot in different types of packages, different motions and thing like that. He's really pressed into it. He works all the way through Saturday night. Got give Keyshawn Colman some love, one of our assistants who spends a lot time with those guys.

I love when the ball finds Jimmy because he's electrifying and can make plays for us. He certainly can help us here.

Q. Back on the Pro Bowl conversation, Jaycee Horn earned his second consecutive Pro Bowl. How did you tell him? You know, like what does that mean as a coach to see your player soaring like that?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Dan and I called him together and let him know that he was being recognized that way and was on the first team for the Pro Bowl. Just wanted him to know how proud I am of him, of the hard work that



goes into this.

I see how hard he's working on his body, on his mind, getting himself ready for game day, and it's all paying off. It's all paying off because he's doing thing the right way and has a real professionalism about him.

Q. Dave, I guess since you technically don't have a practice report today, the decision on Robert kind of floats into tomorrow; is that accurate?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, we just got him out there to do some things today. Moved him around. Put him through some individual.

Try to do a little bit more tomorrow and then kind of make decisions as we go from there.

Q. Dave, last week you guys had 20 rush attempts, the fewest you've had in a win all year. How important is it going to be to get that back to the place to normally is in those games?

DAVE CANALES: Just take what they give you. I know I want to run the ball in some way, shape, or form on a weekly basis, and when we get good matchups and feel like we can take advantage of things in the pass game, our guys have continued to grow in that world so that we can do that.

Points are points. Wanting to get the ball in Rico and Chuba's hands is a priority of mine. Sometimes it happens in the pass game with screens, getting ball in the perimeter.

It could be a check down in a pass concept that we feel good about, flooding a zone, different things like that. The easiest way is to turn around and hand it to him certainly, love having that be a part of our game.

We were in a mode where we were still going for it. There wasn't a four-minute situation. If you want to talk about the number of touches, a lot of times if you're playing with the significant lead you're going to see more runs at the ends of it.

So good things happen when you run the ball. You run the ball when good things happen. It works both ways. It's a part of who we are. I know I want to have that physical nature, let the linemen get their hands on people and feel those combos and just play a little football.

That's always a part of the early plans is to make sure those guys get touches.

Q. ...is still a pretty young guy. From draft prep and on tape, how has he been able to have such an impact so quickly? What kind of challenges does he present?

DAVE CANALES: He's an intelligent guy. We had him here for a visit and got to spend some time with him. He's right down the road in South Carolina and we had a great visit. So he's a guy I knew would find a way to adjust to the game pretty quickly.

I got give their coaching staff a lot of credit for being able to use him the way they're using him, the versatility of roles that he plays. That's takes a lot of work and that's a big responsibility for a young player, so I can only imagine it's all hands on deck there in Seattle getting him to understand where he fits in in it different calls and pressures.

They've done great job just continuing to grow that throughout the season.

Q. Dave, I know the next few weeks are about the division race and everything like that. The three seed is still in sight. Even if you don't get some help this week to close out the division early, this game could be meaningful for that. Is that part of the kind of I guess motivation this week when you're talking to the players? Do you mention that at all?

DAVE CANALES: Not really, no. It's a championship opportunity and that's the way we have to keep it. I fully believe in that part of our process. We can't change what we're doing based on what's happening outside of these walls, outside of this building, and what's happening in that that game. Learning habits, learning how to win in different ways, different modes collectively in all three phases is so important for us as we continue to build our football.

We can't pass up opportunities to do that. We'll compete all the way to do end of this thing.

Q. When you're going that route of winning a game, losing a game, win game, lose a game, curious as the head coach in your mind do you go, all right, how do I change this mojo? Do you think about things at, I don't know, practice or meetings to try to change and kind of string a few together here?

DAVE CANALES: I spend a lot time thinking about that in terms of messaging. I know I have to be consistent about the things that we believe in, because over time that consistency will lead to an identity, a belief.

And then it also just gives me a chance to challenge our group, to challenge our guys to have consistent product



come alive. Are there things that we can all own as coaching staff? Absolutely. We have to look at those things as well. We are really transparent with our players about situations that we could have done better with the call or this or that, and we ask the players to be accountable also to their role and executing fundamentals and being where they're supposed to be in our different concepts.

And so that's got to be the focus. You can't improve anything you can't measure. I can always measure the fundamental basic parts of tackling, blocking, making sure we are targeted properly in the run game and the pass game. On defense making sure we're owning our leverage, playing with each other, rallying up with great effort, all those things. Always comes back to that.

I can't even take my brain to a lot of the bigger agendas or things that might be happening. It's always going to be about the basics. But within that, to your question, yes, I'm looking for ways to try to reemphasize our principles by how we approach it.

We've had a couple different modes during practice, during meetings. We don't change it a lot, but there is tweaks, there are tweaks. Earlier in the season it was like can we win on the road, so I bumped the meetings back up to make it feel like we were meeting at the same time as we would at home.

I don't know if that was a big difference, but it was a change. I also want them to know we're going to compete and we're going to compete to find any little edge that we possibly can, whether it's the practice style, the meeting types or what time we set curfew and different things like that.

Q. Anything you saw in the early years in Seattle when you were building that you ball back on now?

DAVE CANALES: I just witnessed Coach Carroll compete and try to find ways to affect his team by how he presented his meetings, by the energy that we bring. He spent a lot of time challenging the staff, especially late into the season. We're all tired. We got bugs going around the building and different things like that that just -- things everybody deals with.

He would always challenge us first. They will go as you go. If you bring great energy today in these meetings and you bring great energy on the field, they'll match that energy and then they'll take off with it. Understand that this is so important today; what can we do to try it affect it in a positive way.

Q. Dave, this will be your first time since leaving Seattle that you'll face them. Do you think there will be any emotions in that, even if it's just looking across the sidelines and seeing the logo?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. Just pure gratitude for opportunities. The opportunity that Pete gave me early on in my career at USC and then to give me a chance to go the NFL as 27 year old.

My wife is from Seattle so we spent 13 graded years around her family, around cousins, Christmas and holidays. While I was working the family was getting together and doing different things.

So I just have so much gratitude for everyone in that building, John Schneider as well, for opportunities, and Pete for putting me in different roles.

So I'll have a lot of really positive, really grateful emotions going on in this game. And that's a good place to be. You know, because whether we're playing the Seahawks or not, when I walk out onto the field, when I leave that locker room the last time before we start a game I pinch myself every time. Regardless of what stadium it's in it's like, how cool is this? 20 years ago I'm calling plays for a JV football in Carson, California, and I get to call plays today, get to make time out decisions and challenges and different things as a head coach.

This will be definitely special in that way.

Q. You've been around quarterbacks a lot. Where do you think and how do you think Sam kind of unlocked his game, Darnold?

DAVE CANALES: Just the accumulation of time, seeing things, the same way it happens with all quarterbacks. The more they're exposed to from a defensive standpoint, the more comfortable they are when those things happen. Understanding how to relate and connect to your skill players, different guys, different body types, and learning how to adjust that and have those conversations where you're helping guys grow.

That's a huge responsibility of the quarterback. Something that Bryce has been doing here with our young skill group is spending that time talking about the route, fine tuning details of it. Those are all the things that really for Sam, looking at his success in Minnesota last year and then this year going to a new group with new players to throw to, guys he hadn't played with before and finding out that chemistry, it comes with a lot of experience and a ton of hard work.



So those guys trust him. I know that staff trusts him by how they play their games and what they ask him to do.

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