

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

Friday, December 26, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: All right, it was an excellent week. Great focus by the group. Ready to go. Locked in. This is the type of process we have to be able to lean on, especially this time of year. So the guys are excited and fired up and ready to go.

Q. Dave, do you do anything different this morning -- you said locked in -- to reset guys after they've had a day off?

DAVE CANALES: Nope. Just hop right into our normal routine and ask s them to be in it. We can't ease into this thing. Took advantage of a great opportunity yesterday on Christmas to spend time with family. That's wonderful. It's always good to just be able to reconnect with people and remember what we're playing for.

When we do that, though, we have to go right back to work, and so the guys were ready to go. Captured them in the meetings. The coaches did an excellent job bringing the energy and that led into a really good practice.

Q. Dave, we haven't seen Trevin Wallace in two weeks. We obviously know his history of shoulder injuries. Can you give us an update on what's up with him?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Trevin had surgery on his shoulder and he was a stud about it. It was a playable condition but it just wasn't -- he wasn't really turning the corner to be able to play confidently the way that we know he can, and so we reevaluated that and really just collectively made this decision to make sure we can get this thing right, get ahead of it right now and rehab him getting ready to go for the spring and get him strong.

The shoulder injuries and those types of surgeries take time. If anybody out there has had experience with that you know there is a lot though goes into it. So that's what we had to do there.

And Claude is ready to go, step in, and keep pushing this thing forward.

Q. What about Turk?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, Turk is day-to-day. You know, we were able to do a little bit more, a little more stuff with him. He looked better each day. Right now we're going to have to reevaluate him all the way through the weekend to see if we can get him back out there, knowing how important this game is, also knowing how important the next one is.

For Turk just making sure that can do his job well. So he's trending in the right direction, but it's day to day.

Q. You have a chance to beat your third No. 1 team in the NFC. I wanted to ask about that anyway. But then come to find out, the last team to do that was the 2014 Seahawks. So just what do you remember about that season, why you were able to do it, and what kind of lessons have you learned in that Packers game, that Rams game about what it takes to face these teams?

DAVE CANALES: I love these opportunities because it calls upon your best and requires us to play our best football, knowing we're playing an excellent opponent in the Seahawks, the football they've been playing for a while now.

So it calls upon that focus and calls upon all of us playing together and doing right and making sure that all our basics, all of the calls, all the alignment, the information we're gathering for before the snap, it just heightens it.

While I would love to -- I try to frame every game that way so that our players can understand every game is a championship opportunity. Some games you don't have to oversell. This is a great team coming in here, and the guys respect that, they respect this opportunity. That's the way we attack the work this week.

Q. On the Seahawks, entering the season Darnold was known as a quarterback that couldn't win the big game and now he's emerging as an MVP contender. As a former QB coach, what can you say about his progression throughout the last five years or so?

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

DAVE CANALES: I mean, just pointing to the last two seasons, nobody has won more games than Sam Darnold from a quarterback standpoint. He's done an excellent job of bringing groups together. He brings leadership, his experiences, the veteran mindset. And then of course just a talented passer and a great athlete.

I just see him continuing to grow in his game. I'm really impressed with his ability to go from Minnesota, do what he did there, go to Seattle with a whole new group of guys and understanding the challenges from a quarterback perspective of finding that chemistry and that cohesiveness on the offense, which he's been able to do.

Q. Big challenge on Sunday?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. Great team.

Q. Dave, from the standpoint of Claude growing kind of in this system, in this defense, why has he been able to kind of be that de facto starter when somebody else is injured?

DAVE CANALES: It's his style of play. He's an aggressive player. He's a fantastic athlete. We've seen that on special teams for a while now, being able to play in space and showing up with physicality; that's his nature.

And the rest of it has just been accumulating the information. He's a guy that studies a lot. He's conscientious about his preparation. Pete Hansen does a great job with those linebackers. And then it's about opportunity and understanding for Claude here, wherever, this opportunity, this moment is so critical and so huge for him.

I see a guy that's really focused and intent on seizing this movement. He's a great teammate. He's a guy that doesn't say a lot, but he does whatever we ask him to do and been a stud for us.

Q. Over the summer you said something along the lines of teams should be afraid of to play us, afraid if they face us. You guys have beat a lot of these top teams, No. 1 teams in their divisions. Did you kind of envision this is the position you guys would be in at this point in the season as you're contending for the playoffs?

DAVE CANALES: I knew what we had in this building from a player standpoint, and my question was how quickly can we become a team? How quickly can we become the 2025 Carolina Panthers?

Because our play style, the things that are important to us, the things we believe in, that's what's most important. If we can assemble this group to play really good football on a consistent basis, we'll be a hard team to deal with.

And I knew that, and I wanted our players to know. It was a message for our group to understand that. Let's go. This is a new year. We have new challenges in front of us. Let's attack it with everything we have, all together, and just really trying to boost the confidence of a group that there was a bunch of new pieces, young players, veteran players coming from other plays.

How quickly can we find good ball together. That's always been the goal for us. We got another opportunity in front of us to find our best football.

Q. T-Mack good to go?

DAVE CANALES: T-Mack is good to go. He had a great practice today. As you can understand this late in the season things come up; we worked through those things and he's been a real pro about getting his body ready and his mind right, being in tuned when he's not out there full time.

But today he had a great full practice and looked great.

Q. Curious what you've told your guys -- we know what you said about not scoreboard watching. Have you addressed that at all with the players?

DAVE CANALES: I have not. Our focus has been on the Seahawks. That's a good enough challenge. This is a really well-balanced team. You talk about offense, defense, and special teams, the coaching staff as well; a lot of the men that I really respect over there.

They play good football, and so our focus and energy all has to be on a play-to-play basis getting ready for the Seahawks coming in here.

Q. How has Ickey responded returning to practice?

DAVE CANALES: He looked great. Worked through it through the weekend. Denny did a great job with his crew down there getting Ickey ready, and Ickey applied himself and tried. He took it all the way to game day last week trying to get out there for his teammates and was able to get back on the field this week and practice for us.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports