

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Coach Dave Canales

Weekday Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Just had a chance to watch the film with the staff, go over some notes. We'll check in with the players kind of on an individual basis about some of the things that we can improve upon.

But as you know, for a Saturday game our shift has focus -- our focus has shifted so we can get ready for the Bucs here. Primetime opportunity, championship opportunity, everything right in front of us.

The group is excited about it. Looking forward to this week.

Q. Good afternoon, Dave. Thanks for the time today. Wondering as the Bucs kind of get some of their offensive pieces back, despite their record over the last eight weeks what still jumps out to you about those guys all being in the mix together?

DAVE CANALES: Different types of guys, a true basketball team, if you will. They got Mike Evans and they have a bunch of guys that can do different things. They have versatility. Chris Godwin had a big game. There is a lot of weapons that they can use, their two backs, certainly the tight ends.

And I'm sure you know as they continue to pile these weeks together. Having their guys back just getting that rhythm. Finding that type of thing, that's going to be the -- consistency is going to be the challenge for them to get that rolling.

We got to be aware of how they're trying to use these guys lately. We got to be clued into all that.

Q. Dave, after you watched the film with the staff, what jumped out to you as to why you had such trouble moving the ball, particularly in the passing game?

DAVE CANALES: Got to give a lot of credit to the Seahawks. They did a great job staying on top and making us have to play underneath the coverage and hit some of

the check downs. They rallied up and tackled. I thought we had some opportunities in spaces that we didn't make many yards on that.

You know, just a lot of credit to the Seahawks for mixing some things up and making some looks challenging. But we want to find that productivity down the field. The explosive element has led to a lot of our success in recent weeks. To come out of the game with two explosives, that's something we got to improve upon.

Again, we'll check in with the guys, we'll make sure that we're tying up some loose ends, and we got to get going here pretty quickly.

Q. Were there opportunities deep in that game?

DAVE CANALES: There were a couple. You know, just some one-one-one opportunities Bryce could have taken advantage of. Again, they owned their leverage. They stayed on top. The safeties kept their depth, and so they warded us off in that way.

Q. How much did Ja'Tavion Sanders going down impact your play calling ability, especially from the standpoint of 12 and 13 personnel?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just the 13 personnel, you know, not really having our three tight ends, we were able to use Jake Curhan a little bit in the run game and some things that way, but it's a couple of plays in 13 personnel will that we would've liked to put out there.

I thought Mitch and Tommy did a great job in our 12 personnel, different things we asked them to do.

Q. Without JT moving forward, obviously you have James and you have Brycen Tremayne who can do a bigger wide receiver role. How much does that change the way that you call plays? When he was out earlier in the season, will it relate to that?

DAVE CANALES: It should be pretty consistent. We trust James a lot. He has some versatility in the pass game and in the blocking game, whether it's the run or protection, so

we feel confident that James will be able to come in and allow us to build the plans like we've done.

Q. Following up on that a little bit, I mean, obviously JT is probably more consistent receiving tight end, so how much of the actual offense is built around him and is key to what you guys do, or is that just something you feel like could put in another piece and it's going to work?

DAVE CANALES: We're really going miss JT. At the same time, our focal point is T-Mack. We try to build formations and get him into spots to get him the ball. I didn't do good enough job of that last week. We'll make sure that that comes alive, and the rest of it opens up from there.

When we try to target too many people it gets watered down. You have to have a starting point with your concepts. JT has done a great job just over the course of the season giving us versatility in different ways to do things with our tight ends.

Q. I think in the first game Bryce had one of his fourth quarter OT type comebacks. Any one player, one game where he's done stuff, even when things aren't working early in the game, where all of a sudden in a key moment when the game is on the line that you've seen him do well? Why do you think that's the case?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, just working hard. You know, continually going through his progressions with rhythm, finding guys. And then it's also just the fact that we are willing to go for things on fourth down, whether it's early in the game, late in the game. But when we put those guys in those situations, those high-stakes plays, if you will, they just get comfortable in those moments.

So I love the way that Bryce continues to compete all the way through games for really the duration of the season. When we have had a chance to be close in games, even yesterday I had no doubt in my mind we were going to make something happen here. We're down ten. Let's go get the first score. It didn't work out that way, but I have faith in Bryce and in this group that we'll be able to get those done.

Q. Back to the one thing that you were talking about. You got to do a better job yourself of getting the ball to T-Mack. What did you feel like you didn't do that could have been done different?

DAVE CANALES: Just try to get him more access. We moved him around in formations some. They matched it pretty well. They sent a safety over there a couple of times

and I thought they challenged him up front with their corners. He had mixed levels of success. Sometimes he would create a surface. The ball might be going somewhere else.

But just making sure we're doing the right things, the routes that he loves and can execute, and also that fit into the scheme of what we're doing.

Q. Hey, Dave, with it being such a copycat league, I mean, would you anticipate the Bucs trying to steal a page from what the Seahawks did defensively, or is it just too late in the season for teams to kind of change what they do? What is your approach going in with them seeing that on tape yesterday?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, I think I'll speak personally. When something is within our scheme that we can do that another team has success with, those are certainly things that we should see. So there are elements of what the Seahawks did that the Bucs already have.

I just know that Coach Bowles, the way he's training his defense, the way that he tries to attack and do different things, you know, for me and just watching film of the Bucs I'm sure they're going to lean on the core of what they do. They're going to ask their guys to execute. That's really what it comes down to.

We're all very similar in that regard. None of us are going to completely abandon our game plan to make things completely different, but there will be wrinkles. I expect that for sure. I expect to see the things that were successful this past week, if it's in their scheme, we should see those things.

Q. Dave, I was going to ask something similar. As a bit of a variation, when T-Mack came into the league there were some folks who were pretty vocal about his ability to get off press coverage. Do you think he has improved there? And back to Steve's question, do you think that's something Todd might be doing more of this week?

DAVE CANALES: It's absolutely improved from the first game on. It's something that I think whether you're playing Mike Evans, whether you're playing T-Mack, whatever big receiver there is out there, you got to challenge those guys. They're bigger men. There is a lot more surface. You got to get your hands on them because they create separation and they can make it a long day.

That's a good way to challenge a lot of big receivers, not just T-Mack. But he's done a great job of continuing to evolve his game and adjust to different types of coverages.

Not just the one-on-one coverages, but also coverage with help. He had a really nice corner route in the game where it was inside trail. They played it that way on purpose. He doubled up and created a surface. We didn't get him a target on the play, the ball went to the other side.

But it's those types of things he just continues to add to his tool belt. I'm really proud of the way he's progressed this season.

Q. And then do you expect David Moore and Rob Hunt to play this week?

DAVE CANALES: We're still considering all those things.

Q. Thanks.

DAVE CANALES: Uh-huh.

Q. Quick one from me. I know that the messaging all week was no scoreboard watching in the Tampa Bay game. How much effort has already gone into trying -- obviously the players know the score. Everyone knows what happened in that Tampa Bay-Miami game now. How much effort is going into this week to the messaging of, okay, that opportunity was missed but we got to refocus for week 18?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely that's got to be the mentality, and that's a weekly thing, a weekly discipline, that we have to get back to work and focus on the task at hand.

It's a true championship moment. Shirts and hats games, it's what you work so hard for all year. It's right in front of us, some primetime football in Tampa. It's going to be fantastic.

We're excited about it, and that's enough. That's enough for the guys to understand this is your shot. This is the last shot we have. I think the important part for me is when you truly get to that moment where this is the last game, unless you win, that's got to be the focus on a weekly basis.

This is the only one we have. This is it. It requires everything of us. It requires a discipline to block out external distractions being different things that might take you away from your normal preparation physically, mentally, emotionally. Just making sure that we got ourselves fresh and completely prepared so we can be confident and fast on game day.

This is truly it. This is what you preach about. It's a great reminder for the group, and I can't wait to get the guys back into the building tomorrow so we can get right to it with the game plan.

Q. Good afternoon, Coach.

DAVE CANALES: Hey, Jeff.

Q. Hey, just following up on Robert Hunt possibly returning can you speak to the offensive line's struggles to create many clean pockets Sunday? The Seahawks schemed well, but even with Ickey returning are injuries starting to catch up with the group?

DAVE CANALES: I thought the group generally did a good job. The Seahawks certainly got some wins. They had some nice stunts where they came free, some one on one wins. I felt like consistently though there was enough time to operate, and Bryce felt that, too. He was going through his progressions. There were times he had to move and get of the pocket. That's life in the big leagues. That's the NFL.

I didn't see the offensive line as being a real limiting factor to what we could do yesterday. Collectively we didn't take advantage of some opportunities in the run game and also in the pass game, but I have confidence in this group.

And I'm proud of Ickey to be able to get himself back off a knee sprain, to get back out there for his teammates. Really proud of the way he played. He wasn't perfect but I'll take Ickey with the version of Ickey we got just because of the heart and soul of the guy, how much he cares about his teammates.

Q. Coach, when you look back at yesterday's game is there anything you wish you handled differently in that game, decisions on that...

DAVE CANALES: I missed the last part of your question but I think I can answer the first part. You don't live with regrets. These are the plays we practice. These are the things we ask our guys to execute on. We have full faith in the group to do it. Are they things we evaluated that we talked about this morning? Absolutely. There are things always to improve after every game.

You go out there and you play your best game and you try to throw out the things you can execute really well, the plays that you can play fast with on offense, defense, and special teams. I truly believe that's what we went into it.

It also gives me an opportunity to give the Seahawks credit. This is a really good team. They limit us in some different ways based on how they played and the plays that that he made. So it was a great opponent. We played them well for three quarters and it got away from us at the end because we weren't able to stay out there and get

more points.

I am proud of the group, how hard we played. We got to bounce back and make sure we take the Bucs this week and just continue to move our football forward. Still continue to look for that game, looking for our guys to play complete football all together. Not a perfect game, but where all groups are firing on all cylinders.

That doesn't mean every play works, but there is something about it when guys are executing well, playing off each other, playing together, a team becomes really hard to beat. That is what we're looking for this week. Just put our best football out there.

Q. One follow up to that. The run game yesterday, was it where you want it to be? How do you continue to balance that with the possible lack of succession...

DAVE CANALES: The run game was good and bad. We made some good yards. We were 1-11 on third down. You're going to run out of opportunities to run the ball when that happens. We got to better on third down, continue our drives so we can get back to our run game, get into a little bit more of our play-actions.

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