

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Coach Dave Canales

Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Just so excited for Panthers everywhere. The neighborhood was crazy. We were yelling from our coach as a family. Walked outside where we normally ride bikes and walk the dogs and there was just neighbors out in their front yards, everyone was really excited.

But really -- and also just proud of this team, proud of the coaches, the players, everybody, everybody involved. It took the whole season. Took 17 games. Capturing opportunities along the way to be in position for this.

We're ready to chase the next championship opportunity in front of us.

Q. Hey, Dave, congratulations.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. I have just two quick ones. One you sort of answered there. I wanted a little bit more detail of where you watched it, if you were glued to every second, and so on. And then I have one follow up.

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. We were right at home sitting on our coach together. The Canales family, Scott Cooper joined us. His crew was out of town. We were just excited, just following it every single play. You know, couldn't take our eyes off the game. Rushing to grab a snack, getting back to see what happens.

Just a turn of events at the end, I didn't expect anything less from this matchup and playing the Saints and knowing the type of football they been playing down the stretch, and the Falcons really putting things together and played out just like that.

One side funny story. My brother called me after the interception, the Dee Alford interception. He's ready to celebrate. I'm like, call me back. This ain't over. If I'm on the other side I'm thinking we got a shot here. Let's go down and get the first points, onside kick, and see what we

can do.

I got kind of pissed at him.

But it was amazing. We all yelled like crazy and just really, really fortunate and proud.

Q. Great. And second one is a follow up from yesterday. We did not get a chance to ask you this in the press room because this pool report didn't come out until later. One follow up on that Rico Dowdle backward pass where the reps said because of the erroneous whistle the Panthers could have had a choice to replay the down. Did you have a choice to replay the down?

DAVE CANALES: They never came over and gave us the option. They officiated it out there and then they just put the ball down and basically I got to go get my next personnel and play ready to go.

Q. Thank you.

DAVE CANALES: Uh-huh.

Q. Hey, Dave, congrats.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. Curious just what you think this opportunity means for you, the program, and specifically Bryce?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, it's about process. It's about our mentality. We talk about attacking every game as a championship opportunity, and over the course of the season we stacked together enough wins in our division, outside of division, to prepare us for this.

So now we take the next step. Kind of chop our season up into quarters and treat it like a game. Got the first quarter, second quarter, one of our games had five quarters in it. But we have that mentality so that we can be on track to seize championship opportunities.

This is the next one, so we have just have to go right back



to work with our process. What's it's meant is just proving to the guys that if we have that mentality, if we do take advantage of opportunities and prepare ourselves each week like it's a championship opportunity, then good things will happen down the stretch.

We're in this position right now because of that hard work and focus.

Q. And then quickly, you guys -- you've only been here two years. You guys stood pat at the deadline. Almost feels like you're getting here maybe a year earlier than you guys anticipated. How would you address that and do you think that's accurate?

DAVE CANALES: You know, I can never approach any season going into it without the mentality that we're going to try to win the first championship first, regardless of what it may feel like for me as the head coach as I'm asking the guys to give me everything they have. How hard they play, how hard they practice, what they put their bodies and minds through.

It can't be anything less than the pursuit of that first championship, and that's got to be the mentality and the work that goes into it. So I don't speak to them any other way. I respect the work that goes into it as far as the staff goes and everything else.

For me, there is no forecasting. We have to be right now. Has to be this game. This is everything. These are opportunities beyond just the implications of trying to win the division, but for each individual player, their careers and opportunities, we have to regard every moment.

It's too hard and too special to not treat it that way.

Q. Congratulations first of all.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. I'm just curious, have you heard from David Tepper? He purchased the team in 2018 so he's been through a seven-year drought. Did you talk to him? Did you get a phone call from him? I imagine would be pretty excited about everything.

DAVE CANALES: Yes, we had a brief phone call. Between the two of us our phones are getting blown up a lot. When he answered the phone I said, is this the owner of the NFC South Champion Panthers, and he was just -- he got a good kick out of that.

You know, it's about all of us competing, treating every day like it's fourth and one, having that mentality. We had a

good conversation.

Q. Dave, congratulations.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. We talked about 2010 earlier this week. You know the power of a home game in the playoffs. Have you wrapped your mind around being able to kind of host this thing no matter who kind of comes out of the NFC West, or I guess of the NFC West opponents?

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. I'm just so excited to be in Bank of America Stadium one more time. The energy that's been there at the end of our season as we continue to build momentum and the fans showing up early, being loud, causing problems for the opponents' offense, I know what type of advantage that can be for us.

So I'm so excited to be here. Obviously all of us being right at home sleeping in our own beds and being able to attack it one more time is such a cool opportunity, and all starts off winning the division first. We were able to be in that position to get that done, so it's exciting.

Q. You've played both of your potential opponents. What's the advantage maybe going into a playoff game having that, I mean, teach film essentially?

DAVE CANALES: It's an opportunity to correct some things that we wanted to correct and try to replicate things that were successful for us. Gives you a little bit of familiarity and confidence to know, okay, this is a team that we've seen before. We played them tough.

And thinking about the Rams coming in and getting that win, just different teams that we've played. The Niners, seeing that opponent and how disciplined they are and how focused. So we just -- I mean, we got see what happens and shakes out here to know who we're playing, but it certainly does give a -- the familiarity gives a level of confidence to know like what we're going up against and how to prepare.

Q. Hey, Coach, congratulations.

DAVE CANALES: Thank you.

Q. Wanted to ask you are you wearing a championship hat and T-shirt?

DAVE CANALES: I am not. I need to get that done. Just short of driving back to Bank of America Stadium to the office to pick up our shirts and hats. There will be a time for that.



I'm just super proud right now.

Q. How do you -- what's going to be your message to the team and will you all have a celebration in the locker room at any point tomorrow morning or?

DAVE CANALES: No. Tomorrow is going to be a full on game plan prep day for the staff. Guys will come and move their bodies and stuff, but we'll go right back to work when they get back.

Q. What was the most anxious moment for you today?

DAVE CANALES: Oh, certainly the on-sides kick and really the series before the -- the series of the interception when the Saints were moving the ball really effectively down there.

And the interception was huge, but there was still time on the clock and of course he goes down and Tyler Shough does a great job getting them down there and launching that ball into the end zone for that go-head touchdown.

Shoot, there are a bunch of moments all the way through it. What a great game. What a great competitive moment for those guys.

Q. How much does it take the sting out of what happened yesterday and do you tell the players now anything can happen? What's the message?

DAVE CANALES: Championship opportunity right in front of us. How long can we keep that statement true. That was my message to the group over a month ago. 1-0 with a chance to win the division. That has to be our focus one week at a time. We won one, lost one, but did enough to put ourself in this position.

So here we go. We got another week we get to hang around with each other. We love working together and being on the grass in that type of environment. That was my message last week. Guys, like let's go get this win so we can do this again another week. We're having way too much fun.

We didn't get that done yesterday, but here we are with everything in front of us and everybody's record is obsolete now. It's all 0-0 and we got the 1-0 mentality with a chance for a championship, and here we are.

Q. Coach, congratulations. Going back to Joe's question about arriving maybe a year early, I understand that the focus is week to week and day to day. In the 30,000 foot view, did you anticipate being

here at this point when you originally were hired by the franchise?

DAVE CANALES: That's always the approach. The approach is to win the division. Every game is a opportunity. That's got to be my mentality and that's the way we work in the offseason. Everybody, all collectively works too hard not to being that. It comes from belief, confidence, and the ability to have good processes to play good football. If you can play good enough football you can beat anybody. That's a true statement.

So just keeping that focus and mentality alive so that the work is right and so that the focus is there. That's been our approach since we got here.

Q. Just a quick follow. Has there been any preliminary indication if it's Saturday or Sunday for you guys yet?

DAVE CANALES: I don't know that.

Q. Hey, Dave, congratulations. Been some good questions asked so the only question I had remaining was about that run game that you guys have. I know you're going to be doing some prep for the game coming up. What are the challenges and solutions that you're maybe seeing for the run game that you guys have?

DAVE CANALES: Just staying connected up front, making sure nobody is running through gaps and the running backs got to be violent and run through stuff. There is going to be arm tackles and sometimes there will be an extra hat, and that's your guy. Just be violent, physical, and make sure we are getting efficient runs.

I felt like our run game just wasn't efficient. I can live with that. If you run it twice and you're in third and short that really helps the third down stuff as well.

Yeah, we'll right back at it. We'll look at whatever opponent comes up and see how we can attack them, because we're going to try to run the ball at some point.

Q. Hey, Dave, how is it going.

DAVE CANALES: Hey, Cass.

Q. You touched on this a little bit earlier, but just want to get a little more detail. There were a lot emotions in the locker room last night understandably. What is the best way to sort of facilitate such a quick mental turnaround with the guys this week?

DAVE CANALES: The work always brings us back.



Whether it's a big win, big loss, they're all big, but whatever the outcome of the last game is the work snaps us out of it. The work brings us back.

I'm so grateful to have one more opportunity to get back to work where we can get on that grass. We go through the preparation and have our meetings, and once we're in cleats and on that grass the next thing becomes really clear, the focus of what we're doing, the walk-throughs and the opponent. It just becomes all about that.

And that's what's so cool about this time of year. It's like here we go. We get one more opportunity. Let's make this statement true. 1-0 with the chance to make the championship. How long can we keep that statement true?

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