

Carolina Panthers Media Conference

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Coach Dave Canales

Press Conference



DAVE CANALES: Opening statement? First of all, congrats to Luke Kuechly. How about that? Really amazing privilege for me to be around him as he covers us on radio, and then just being around the building supporting myself, Dan, the players, always available.

And really anybody he can help. Sometimes you'll see him with equipment doing things. Just a class act guy. Really a cool story. Just my last college football game I was a part of at USC emerald bowl Luke Kuechly was the inside linebacker for Boston College at that game, so cool to see his career unfold like that.

And of course congrats to T-Mack, offensive rookie of the year. What a tremendous honor. A lot of hard work. Lots of patience by the whole group and really by T-Mack being able to grow rapidly as a rookie and assimilate to the professional game.

So really proud of him and the progress and where he's headed.

Q. You guys hired Darrell Bevell.

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

Q. How does that change up the offense and possibly your responsibilities?

DAVE CANALES: Yeah, that's a great segue. So Darrell comes in at a really special time. This year going into the season, Brad Idzik will be calling plays for the Panthers. This is something that all of us collectively have talked about as an organization.

It was my idea to come up with this, and just looking back and reflecting on it, thinking about how we have grown this offense and really wanting to be able to advance our football on the offensive side primarily, by letting Brad, who's completely engulfed, entrenched in what you're doing offensively speaking, his continuity with the system, with our players, being able to do that, I believe will be the

best thing for us going forward.

And for myself, just thinking about the big picture of it and the cultural growth that we've seen happen over these two years all across the board really on every level of our building from strength and conditioning to athletic training, coaching staff development, player development, this is a great opportunity for me to be more involved as each year goes by.

The first year as you can imagine just really throwing myself fully into the offensive side of it and having conversations with the different parts of our team. The second year, starting to broaden my perspective more to be involved with special teams and defense, and now this step allows me to do that in a greater way from a cultural standpoint, and specifically as we're in games, my ability to be able to interact with the officials on an offensive series, you know, where in the past two seasons, I got to go to the next play. There is another one coming.

But Brad is someone I have full confidence in, a man that worked together with to really build what we're doing here.

Q. Take us through the process of deciding to give up playcalling.

DAVE CANALES: My commitment since I've gotten here has been what's best for the Panthers, putting our players in the best positions to be successful; coaches as well.

When I look at this, this allows me to be in a better position to effect our team, and this also allows Brad to effect the offense in a positive way. He's my primary architect for what we do offensively with the run game, the pass game, and the connection of it.

I saw this as an opportunity to streamline the work that goes in during the week, and to have that come alive on game day for the playcaller who has a vision for what we're doing. While this is a shared vision and a shared philosophy for how we play football, stylistically speaking we are not changing any of the words, we are not changing our approach. I, but want all of our processes to improve.

I believe this is an opportunity to do that.

Q. (No microphone.) (Regarding Dan.)

DAVE CANALES: This was my decision. It was extremely difficult for me because I do enjoy calling plays. It's a part of the game that really thrills me. I get a lot of gratification out of watching the plan unfold on Sundays, just the high stakes moments. Like those are incredible moments to be able to make critical calls and to put guys in positions to give ourselves a chance to win.

And so I certainly didn't want to give that part up. Dan, Brandt, myself, Mr. Tepper, I have their full support. This was a plan that as we thought about it and went through the process afterwards, I saw this as an opportunity to make the Panthers better, and had a plan for that.

Darrell is a big part of that. Bringing his experience from a playcaller standpoint, building our systems, helping us grow, all of those things and really having that just kind of like that -- allowing Brad to have somebody with that type of experience to lean on with my humbling three experiences that I have, you know, he's lived all those. I want him to be able to see more of that.

Certainly humbling to have to swallow that and say, okay, am I the best guy for this job? That was definitely what I wrestled with. I believe this is the right thing for the Panthers.

Q. (Regarding Brad's experience.)

DAVE CANALES: He's as ready as you're going to get. I look back to when I first started calling plays a couple years ago and Coach Bowles gave me the opportunity. He asked me, what makes you think you're ready? I said, I'm just as ready as I'm going to get without having actually done it. That's how I feel about Brad. I feel his grasp of our system and schemes, the mastery of it, those things and his camaraderie, knowing who our players are, knowing Bryce, that's a big piece of this thing.

Had a conversation with Bryce. Bryce is aware of what's happening. Wanted to make sure that he was a part of this process to see the vision of what I hope will come.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: I think it's humility. Watching him from afar and getting to meet him, I interviewed with Coach Harbaugh in Baltimore right before I took the Bucs job. I didn't get the job in Baltimore, but spending time with him in that building, to watch how he impacted everyone. They mirrored his respect, affection, humility. Everyone was so

accommodating. It felt like home and felt like he was at the head of that household.

I got a quick short story. In my time there we had lunch together and I turn around, he's bussing my tray. I'm like, Coach, no, no, please. I'm going to get killed for this if people find out. He was serving. It's that servanthood, that heart of being able to give your best to those around you that I really respect and try to emulate in what I do as well.

Q. (Regarding Seattle.)

DAVE CANALES: Yeah.

Q. What did you see in that time?

DAVE CANALES: Sean was incredible. I go back to he was our third quarterback at the time and we went through -- my job was to make sure all of our quarterbacks were prepared. I called it the bullpen, but you don't get all the throws that the first quarterback does, but Sean wanted to make sure he got all the throws and make sure he put himself in the most impossible physical positions to try to get the throw done.

I learned so much in our time. Different progressions, different types of drills he forced himself into were things I took with me as I continued to coach quarterbacks over the last couple years.

But brilliant. Asks the right questions, catches the loopholes in protections? And different things like that. Really sharp guy and great human, and I really enjoyed my time with him.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: Absolutely. That was something that I knew was going to be in his future. Just a matter if he was dumb enough to get into the profession. I guess he is, so here he is.

Q. (Regarding quarterbacks.)

DAVE CANALES: They're extremely helpful, and the good that comes out of it, my connections with them have been different over the years. Some guys we hit it off and had conversations; other guys there was some distance there, which I think is healthy. What they do is get to spend so much time with these quarterbacks just focusing on their technique, where their eyes are. They watch film.

Quarterbacks have video setups at their homes in different ways like that where they have a coach go through the progressions. Really valuable and extremely valuable

when you can connect with them so they understand what you're trying to get done conceptually so there is a little bit of carryover, but we're really not able to work with them on that.

Just kind of comes up organically. It's important to know what they've been working on, and the most powerful tool as a coach is what is the player committed to; hold them accountable to it. To know I'm trying to keep my eyes here and keep my base in this direction when I release the ball, different things like that.

Q. (No microphone.) (Regarding first game you called.) What was that like and what did you share with Brad to help him through?

DAVE CANALES: I was so nervous. Well beyond the preseason but it was regular season at Minnesota when I was coaching for the Bucs. You know, I'm just -- I had my game plan and I knew what my calls were. Felt like I was ready to go.

I think Todd could sense that I was pretty nervous and he came over and he just said, let it rip. That gave me the confidence to just call what -- trust what I studied and, trust what I saw and just call the game. He was like, I didn't come here to run any type of offense. I came here to make yards and score points. Let's find a way to do that.

That was so relieving to me.

Q. When you haven't yet done that, calling plays, what prepares you most for that? And when you're interviewing for that...

DAVE CANALES: Really it's just the work that goes into it, the grind, and trusting the serenity of your office with a cup of coffee and knowing those decisions will be the best for you. Especially when the moments get intense, trust that information that's what's on your call sheet versus trying to find some special play. It's not about being a guru. It's about being a coordinator and making sure that you coordinate this whole thing so you can execute.

That's always connected to what the players can execute.

Q. (No microphone.) (Regarding decision making.)

DAVE CANALES: I think it's a philosophical belief. All starts with what you believe in how you're going to score points, how you're going to be an explosive offense and set that up.

And then from there, it goes to the players. What is best for our players? We have a giant playbook. We probably

use somewhere between 30% and 40% of what we can actually do. It's because our players showed us what we can do and showed us what we need to improve upon and see if there is something we can dust off to add value, add a wrinkle to.

It all starts with the players. Especially with Bryce and what is Bryce confident in, what can he do well and what does he see. You can see it by his demeanor, by his and back foot, and how quickly the ball comes out. This is where the decisions are coming from.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: I would say definitely teaching the scheme and the decision making and all that part of it comes with time and gets where -- once you're starting to groove those different concepts and you have full understanding, that's when the mastery piece comes into play.

And that's what we're after in everything we're doing.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: It's been those conversations since we've been working together. We were together for a long time in Seattle, for a couple years. We have a lot of history back there.

But once we got to Tampa, he was the person I leaned on because we were installing our offense. While I had a vision for what we were doing, it was Brad right next to me, okay, how are we going to implement these things? Brad helped me with my interview processes.

You know, at first it was interviewing for Vanderbilt way back couple years ago and then it was interviewing for the Ravens and interviewing the Bucs. He was always a sounding board for me, so he's been through this process with me this whole time.

And as we built offenses and learned our players, we start fine tune what we really want to do, and he's been a part of that every step of the way.

Q. Back in December you basically said you couldn't do this without...

DAVE CANALES: Really just means the world. It allows me to be the head coach. That's what he's -- when I was a coordinator, he allowed me to be a coordinator by making sure that his position was right and also by really actively being my pass game coordinator when we were in Tampa.

So those things, the trust factor that I have for him beyond all those things, just his work ethic, he is the hardest working person in our building. He's there early and he is there late trying to make things happen. It matters to him. That's the part that I trust about Brad.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: We're looking at things, all the things that Darrell brought from Miami and just put it all on the table. Part of us being here at the combine together, meeting during the day is to see -- we know we have our core. That will stay the same. But what are some of the things operationally? What are some of the wrinkles from a schematic standpoint we might be able to add to bring value to what we're doing?

Certainly looking at an offense that I've really respected over the years and a coaching family with McDaniels and Kyle Shanahan, and the like that I really respect. How do they get to such good football, explosive plays? Wanted to make sure we're continuing to bring things for or offense.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: Really just watching him own concepts. The feedback is really where it's starting to become powerful. Having conversations with him, we go through game plan days, our checkpoints, he and I talking on the phone, making sure we have the things that get him excited and that he feels confident in executing.

And really starting to -- the more vocal he gets with what he likes, doesn't like, the closer and closer we get to a real identity of what we're doing. While those things kind of change with the personnel, with the players that we have, that's the mastery that we're after, and the more he involves himself in what we're doing there, the more powerful it gets for us.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: Just continue to grow, be consistent, show up and be a guy that guys can count on. I say this all the time about Xavier, but his work ethic, when I see guys working hard, that usually works. Watching him grind and attack it with everything he has is why I have confidence he'll take another step this year.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: You feel like you don't have time to do everything. It will all get done.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: Personal experience.

Really quickly want to talk about Coach Capers. Coach Dom will go to Cleveland, to the Browns. Someone who has had a tremendous influence on me, a guy who started the Panthers and has the ability to walk around the parking lot and say, I remember when we planted these trees. They tower over us now and cover us, which is really symbolic for how he's covered us as a staff, the development of our defensive staff.

Coach Dom leaving us creates a lot of opportunities for coaches to step up into new roles. I don't want to get into the specifics of what those roles will be, but these are guys that learned from Coach Dom, especially with Ejiro, starting with him, the influence he's had on him and the rest of coaching staff to be able to build our defense up. These are guys that I really trust and I'm excited about where we're going.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVE CANALES: Yes.

Q. Talk about him before. Why was that important to you this offseason?

DAVE CANALES: Just watching the care that he has for what we're doing and understanding that giving him the pass game coordinator title comes with responsibility, and expanding his horizons. He took over third down last year and was also involved with some of our play pass things.

The general trajectory is to continue to get eyes on the whole pass game, to make sure -- he has a unique connection with Bryce. He was here before we got here and they have a unique relationship. I believe he understand what Bryce likes, the different things that he might want to see, questions he might have. It really kind of streamlines the information.

So that's a really critical position for us and a critical role for Mike. I was excited to give him that promotion.

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