

PANTHERS HEAD COACH MATT RHULE

POSTGAME VIDEO CONFERENCE

August 19, 2022



Patriots 20, Panthers 10

MR: Appreciate you guys coming. Thought it was a good football game. Really proud of a lot of our guys. Thought the two defense went out there at the start of the game and thought did a really nice job versus their? Ones.

Good work. They have a lot of good players. We unfortunately gave up the one explosive that led to a score, and then gave up the rest of the points off short fields.

One, obviously the fumble by Sullivan. Excellent job by the defense to get out there and get that stop, hold them to a field goal and keep it a close game.

After the pick six, which was great by Tae Hayes, the unfortunate -- got the penalty and I gave them a short field. Thought there were a lot of things on defense that looked like we had made improvement.

I thought the special teams looked that way.

Offensively weren't able to move the ball enough today.

Struggled up front at the end of the game.

So there is a lot of work to be done.

With that I'll see what questions you have.

Q. Matt, a couple weeks ago you said after this game you would consider naming some starters. Now that this game is over, are you ready to name a starting quarterback?

MR: Not yet. You know, not prepared for anything right now other than watching this tape. Like I said all along, when we know we know, and we'll announce something when it's right.

Right now this moment is about the guys that played for me tonight.

Q. Can you tell us the rationale behind putting PJ in for that last series?

MR: Yeah, Corral was down. He was injured. He got his foot stepped on, so they took him for x-rays, so he was out.

Q. I know you said you want to focus on the guys that played tonight, but should we read anything into neither Sam nor Baker playing tonight?

MR: No. The ones didn't play and those guys are both competing to be with the ones, so we wanted to make sure they had a chance. We didn't want to put one or two guys out there play them behind the second offensive line. The second and third quarterbacks, really the third and fourth, they went out there and played behind the second offensive line.

Just like we held Derrick Brown who didn't even play last week, we held most of the ones, except for maybe Tommy Tremble just because we needed some tight ends. We are so thin at the position right now.

Q. What were you able to gather about Corral tonight when he was in there?

MR: I thought he looked sharp early. I thought he competed balls. I thought at the end a lot of the situations normally probably with four minutes left and timeouts, we probably run a draw or screen or something and punt the ball and try to play defense.

Those were invaluable reps for Matt to be down there. There will come a time he'll have to lead a drive coming out of someone else's end zone with the crowd being like that and getting those guys in the huddle and making sure they have the snap count and making sure we're not false starting.

Even as he came off the field I got after him a little bit about it. In a good way. These are teaching moments, right? What we don't want to do is come out in these games and make it easy for the guys because, hey, he's a two, he's three.

We want to give them opportunities to show that, hey, I can play for you. So preparing them for their opportunity. I thought Matt did a lot of good things and there is a lot to learn from on the tape.

Q. Not a lot of starters played, but Ickey and

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Christensen opened up that game. Was that as much about giving those guys a chance to work together?

MR: Yeah, Ikey is just young, and as I said to you guys, a young left tackle. We need to make sure he's prepared for the season, so he needed the reps.

To go against Judon, to go against Deatrich Wise, those are excellent pass rushers. Even as we were walking off the field at the end of the game, because obviously he gave up a hit on a TE and then a sack. Hey, what happened and his thought process, and helping him learn from that so he can, hey, this is what happened. I expected a bull; I went to this.

Invaluable, invaluable work, and the same thing for Brady. So, you know, we wanted to get those guys some reps and we did.

Q. JC was reported to start this game then later was removed. Can you talk us through what happened there?

MR: Yeah, I wasn't going to play him. I told him, hey, get ready to play. We were short on some corners, so wasn't sure if I was going to need him or not. Duke Dawson couldn't go.

In the end he got good work in the pre-practice, and I felt good that Stan and those guys would be able to play. For me he was a game-time decision. I wanted him to warmup and be ready to go in case I needed him.

JC wanted to go, but at the end of the day we made the decision just to practice and pre-practice, have him run the conditioning, and knew that the other guys would be able to play well.

We all saw some good things. Tae Hayes, obviously he just kind of makes a play every day, play every day in practice, so it was a good opportunity for a lot of guys.

Q. Wanted to ask you about Tae Hayes. Just what have you seen from him throughout camp and this week?

MR: Really good football player he was with us last year for a little bit. It's weird because it's preseason, but we had at one point our Mike linebacker playing defensive end. We had Will linebacker, we had all kinds of guys playing different positions. Daviyon Nixon is a three technique. He's having to play the other end.

Tae Hayes just showed up, Wasson showed up. So it's part of the preseason and guys get a chance, but the thing

about Tae is he makes plays. Made a play last week in the game, couple plays. He makes plays in practice and he made a play today.

He's challenging right now.

Q. Can you talk about what you saw from Brandon Smith?

MR: You know, Brandon is really coming on for us. In terms of today, I saw him running around being physical, striking. We know what a great athlete he is. It's about his ability to play in the box and what he can do. I'm anxious to watch the tape and see more of the finer details, but we really are excited about what he is going to be, and these are valuable reps for him right now.

He has a veteran laden room in the linebacker room, and those guys are helping raise him up. He and Mosby, they played a lot of football tonight, which was good.

Q. Did Terrace Marshall re-aggravate anything? What was the plan with him today?

MR: There was really to plan. I was hoping he would be able to play. Terrace practiced on Monday, finished it, felt sore the next day, felt like he couldn't go.

So I was hoping he'd be ready for the game, but the medical staff and he, they worked on it and couldn't get ready for the game.

So we need Terrace to start practicing. We need him to step up.

Shi had a great camp, Higgs had a great camp. We are down some receives right now. Zylstra is out with a hammy; he is out with a hammy. We need Terrace to get back, because he was having a great camp until he got hurt.

Q. How are you feeling about your tight end position right now?

MR: Well, we're a little beat up. Ian is down, Colin is down. I think it's unfortunate that Sully fumbled that one ball because really I thought he had a great week. Caught the ball well and blocked the ball well. I think he had at least one other catch across the middle.

So he made that play and I was kind of like, he's ready to get going and then put the ball on the ground. We will have to continue to work with Sully. I'm really excited about him.

Gio had another catch again. Excellent special teams player.

So I feel like we don't have the one, hey, this is our one tight end we are going to go to all the time. We have a bunch of guys that we feel like that can get open and catch the football that are versatile and that can block.

It allows us to play with multiple groupings. We are still pretty vanilla right now. There is no reason to show teams early in the year exactly what we're going to do.

We like the versatility of Tommy and Sully. The thing I like about the offense, now we obviously didn't put up a ton of points and we were battling for everything we got, but I like the fact that the ball is going to so many people and it's not just driven through one person.

Q. When you wrapped up in Spartanburg you mentioned how you thought this team bonded in ways it hadn't in years past. Have you learned anything new about this group of guys after this trip?

MR: Yeah. This was unbelievable. This was great for us, going to dinner together, hanging out together, practicing together. If I were you -- I'm not telling you what to do -- I would ask the JJs and the Shaqs, you know, how close this team is.

I think at the end of the day like we worked really hard this week. This is a really good team, right, and we practiced against them. Even the way our vets are on the sideline. They're watching the game the entire game. They're locked in. They celebrated.

I told them if they got a pick six to have a little fun. It's the guys that don't have the jerseys on that got the penalties. If you have a jersey on you're fine.

So it was all the other guys, so they all kind of walked by me. But we have a fun team and a good group. This was a really great time for us. It was good work against a great, great organization.

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