



POSTGAME QUOTES

Carolina Panthers vs. Atlanta Falcons

Sunday, December 23rd, 2018

Carolina Panthers

Head Coach Ron Rivera
Carolina Panthers

RE: Taylor Heinicke's performance today

I'll tell you he had some moments. He did some good things. A couple of valiant effort things and unfortunately down in the red zone we didn't have anybody able to make a play. That's probably the way I would characterize it. I thought that first drive really was well orchestrated, a really nice job and unfortunately we had some other opportunities that we didn't capitalize.

RE: Any discussion on taking Heinicke out in second half after injury?

No, he was gutting it out. I looked at him a couple of times and he would kind of give me a nod that he was okay. So, we left him in there and he tried to do some things out there.

RE: Any indication that Heinicke could be the long term back up?

We will find out. We are going to evaluate it. There were a lot of good things that he did. It's early to talk about that or not. But we will see how it all looks on tape.

RE: Does it make the Heinicke evaluation more difficult when he is injured?

It will make it but again at the same time he did some really good things. We have the opportunity to watch it to see what he is capable of and again, if you want to judge, you can judge him on how he moved the ball up and down between the twenties. I thought that was very well done. But again, we have to be able to make plays.

RE: How tough was today's game on Ryan Kalil and other players like him?

It was probably really tough. I can't speak for those guys but it was probably very tough and unfortunate too because they deserve better.

RE: How tough was today's game on you?

It was tough. Again, you are watching an opportunity to win a football game and you give up a play opening the half. That was beyond me right there. That was unfortunate.

RE: What happened during that play?

Well they ran a play action pass and one of our safeties came out of his half. You can't do that. You are a deep back safety. You have to hold your depth and stay deep. That was unfortunate.

RE: Did Rashaan Gaulden come in for Mike Adams because of that play?

No. We were planning on rotating Rashaan so to begin with that had nothing to do with the play.

RE: Christian McCaffrey breaking records today

The young man is a tremendous football player and we have to make sure we shore up a lot of things. There are some things that we could do most certainly on the offensive side to help him out and to help our quarterbacks out as well. We have some young wide receivers that have to continue to learn and grow as football players. Those guys are dynamic; they are playmakers but we have to continue to help them grow so they can become playmakers down the field. We have to be able to put the ball where they can go after it as well. There are some things we have to grow into and we are most certainly going to work that way.

RE: How did you feel calling plays today?

I felt pretty good about it. I thought we had some opportunities and unfortunately we missed them. Defensively we had some third downs that we should have converted. We will go back and look at it and maybe I could have made a different call but we will see. Again, I have to look at the tape before we start talking about what we can do and do better.

RE: When drafting McCaffrey did you expect the performance you have gotten from him?

We expected him to be a playmaker and make plays and that is what he has done for us. Whatever the numbers are, they are. But for the most part he is the type of guy that we thought he was. We felt he could carry a good load. We are asking a lot of him. I think going into next season, we will have to take a look at some of the things we can do to help him take a little bit of the load off of him.

RE: Bright spots this season

Well, some of the development of some of the young players. Again, the young wide receivers. These guys are getting a lot of opportunities to play, probably a little bit more than we anticipated. The young defensive backs are playing a lot. Some of the young linebackers have gotten opportunities to play. It's about really kind of finding our footing as these guys continue to grow and I think become good players for us.

RE: What has caused the seven game losing streak after starting 6-2?

Well, it's a mix of things. Again, we will go through an evaluation process obviously, once it is all done. That will be the biggest thing obviously is we have to take a look at being able to make plays in all three phases of football. That's the truth of it. You look at it and we have to be able to make plays when we have opportunities.

RE: Is the team going to be prioritizing the offensive line this offseason?

We will have to see. There is a lot of things. We are going to lose obviously Ryan [Kalil] so we are going to have to take a look at our center position. We like Tyler Larsen. He has done some really good things for us. He had an opportunity to play guard today because of Trai [Turner]. For the most part, we have some guys we have to look at to see how exactly they fit in and where they are fitting in. I do feel good about who we have but again, we do have some holes to fill on both sides.

RE: Is there added pressure on you and your staff because of new ownership expectations?

There hasn't been any added pressure. Mr. Tepper has been very good about it. He is not going along slinging anything around. He has been great. He really has. Again, the disappointment obviously is that we haven't one. I get that. I understand. We are in the business of winning.

RE: Has it been communicated to you from ownership that you are coming back in 2019?

No. Again, guys at the end of the day I'm not going to talk for the owner. You can't ask me questions that I don't know the answer to. I don't know where Ian [Rappaport] gets that. I can't talk about whether or not he has or hasn't. Again, the thing we all have to understand, more so than anything else, is that it's his decision and Mr. Tepper has been great about everything. So again, we are going to just continue to move forward and continue to work.

RE: Will it be a big talking point with the team to win next week since it will be Ryan Kalil's last game and potentially Julius Peppers and Thomas Davis?

Yeah, it should be. You want to send guys out on the right note. These guys are the types of guys that deserve it. They are good football players. They have had great careers here for this organization. As far as who is and who isn't, you'll have to ask those guys. But as far as, something like that, yeah. It's important we do that.

RE: Do you want to have Kyle Love back next season?

Oh yeah. Again, we have some guys in place that we feel really strongly about. We have a good list of those guys. Again, we will go through the evaluation process and figure out who we think fits as the right kind of guy for us. Guys that can help as we try to get things re-established and win football games.

RE: How much are the big plays over the top going to bother you?

Very much so. That's probably the biggest thing I'm going to have difficulty with just because we have tried to put ourselves into position to keep everything in front of us and we have been doing for the most part a pretty decent job. It's just one or two flare ups. Today it was really disappointing most because of what the call was. I thought that was a call that was built for that type of play and unfortunately we didn't execute it.

RE: Was the discussion between Captain Munnerlyn and Thomas Davis a result of losing streak?

It probably was a symptom of the frustration more so than anything else. It was a little bit of a debate and discussion about what happened on the field and guys were trying to get it straight. If you don't have passionate guys, then it's too bad. Guys are going to get heated and upset about things if they want to win. That's why. I'd rather have guys who want to compete. At the end of the day, they made up. They are teammates. They are friends. They understand what it takes. Again, if you want guys who just sit there on the bench and be a lump then so be it. At least those guys are passionate. They want to get it straight because they want to win. I'll take that.

RE: Did you see guys continuing to fight for the win today?

I believe so. I'll watch the tape and make a determination on that.

RE: Reasoning for lack of production in red zone

There is. There are things that we are working on. As I said, once we get through with everything, we will have the opportunity to analyze, talk about it, discuss it and get the correction going. We are trying to correct it right now. We are trying to do things that we can to put the ball in the end zone. Unfortunately, we haven't.

RE: Do you have confidence in Kyle Allen in going into last game of season?

I was happy with what we saw from Kyle. You could see a little bit of the rookieness in him. One thing he doesn't have to do is he doesn't have to walk to the sidelines to get the signals from the coaches because he has the headset on so he could stay closer to the huddle. They would give him the play call and he would have to walk all the way to the huddle and it would take about four or five seconds. A little bit of things to learn but I thought Kyle handled his situation well.

RE: Plans to get a look at Cameron Artis-Payne in next week's game?

I think it will be an opportunity to look at a few other guys as well. We will see as we are going forward. For the most part we do want to play to win. That's pretty much it.

Quarterback Taylor Heinicke
Carolina Panthers

RE: Injury assessment

It's something I don't really want to talk about right now. I think we should save that for another day. I'd rather just talk about Atlanta and the game we just had.

RE: First start and settling in after that first snap

It was exciting. Everything leading up to it was exciting. I have worked really hard for this for a really long time. And you know, first snap, fumbled it and it was kind of hectic, but after that I thought we moved the ball well. Again, just those red zone things we have to figure out.

RE: About his toughness and willingness to come back in and play

Obviously I want to be out there for those guys. Those guys are awesome and they believe in me. I wanted to give my all for them.

RE: What it meant to show his teammates his toughness

It means a lot to me that they have the confidence in me and they know that I am going to fight for them and they did the same thing back. We didn't give up this game, we fought until the very end. That's all you can ask for us. We will go back again and look at film tomorrow and see what we messed up on, but the effort was there, obviously, and again those red zones mishaps we have been having for the last several weeks we need to fix up.

RE: The long drive and first TD pass

It was great. Obviously the fumbled snap on the first play was not what we are looking for, but a 16-play drive, eight minutes off the clock, that is pretty much what we are trying to do. Get the ball out of their hands and score. It was kind of funny being Ian [Thomas'] first touchdown, too. We were kind of fighting for the ball in the end zone. I let him have it. Hopefully I get one next week. So we'll see.

RE: What did you prove today?

I don't know. Obviously, I feel like I proved that I'm tough. I'm not really looking at anything like that. It was a hard loss. I felt we had the chances.

RE: On the first TD pass

They [the Falcons] played it really well. We pulled a guard just in case someone was there and Van Roten did a good job picking him up. They covered our guys, so I was trying to extend the play as long as possible and then I saw the linebacker with his head back to me and I saw Ian looking at me and I gave him a shot and he made a great play.

RE: On the 53 pass attempts and expectations entering the game

We were just trying to win the game. And when you get down a certain amount of points late in the game you just have to keep throwing it. I think that had something to do with it.

RE: On the pain in the second half

It hurt, obviously, I had to go back [in the locker room] and get some things done, but it's still hurting a little bit, but that's football. You get bruised up, you get hurt, you play through it. Again, I was just trying to be there for the guys.

RE: Did you learn anything from Cam Newton playing through injury the last few weeks

All year. Watching him prepare, take care of his body the way he does. I have learned a lot from him. Specifically in the last six or seven weeks. Just seeing him rehab all the time and try to get to 100 percent. The meals he eats, the film, he is a true professional and I have learned a lot from him.

RE: On the season not turning out the way everyone hoped

This is our livelihood. This is our job and we want to go out there and perform and win. When you have seven straight losses it's tough. All we wanted to do is win. Again, every week we just work hard, prepare to win and it just hasn't worked out for us.

RE: On what he saw during the interception

I was run out right, initially Ian was covered. Our under route was covered and I saw Curtis [Samuel] pop open in the back of the end zone and I thought I could just kind of stick it on him. The ball was too low. It got tipped and obviously got picked, but if I could have it back just give it a little more air and I thought we had an easy touchdown.

RE: On the moment he got hit on his elbow

It was like déjà vu from last year. Christmas Day, Houston throws me in there and I'm moving the ball and then I'm out. I wasn't going to let that happen again. I waited too long. I worked too hard. And that's all I want to do, go out there and play. I have been waiting a long time and thought we were playing well. I know you didn't ask about him, but Kyle Allen came in and stepped up. He has had a roller coaster of a year being at home for a month and a half, just like I was last year and he comes in and goes 4-for-4, so that just compliments Cam preparing us throughout the week and that's all I can say about that.

RE: Were you able to show your ability or did the injury affect what you can do

I'm not really thinking about that, honestly. You go back and look at the film. I moved the ball pretty well. We are going to look. We are going to get better from it and we'll move on.

RE: On the QB celebrations

I honestly forgot about it. I was so excited. Congratulating all the guys. I was exhausted ... eight-minute drive, 16 plays. Kind of running around a little bit. As you can see I didn't really jump as high, but it was really cool. He [Cam] was super pumped. It's cool to see that.

RE: On the opportunity to celebrate and point towards the sky for his father

That was great. It's been a long time. Obviously in preseason I was able to do it a couple of time, but when it really counts against my home team. I grew up watching the Falcons a lot, so it was cool. One of the coolest moments I have had.

RE: On the Panthers leaving a seat open for his father, did you know?

No, I was on Instagram on my way, walking over and I saw that and thought it was really cool. A lot of guys from high school knew my dad texted me about it. It was a really nice gesture they did and I really appreciate it.

RE: On being announced as a starter

I was excited, but I just wanted to start ... Again, waking up at 8:00 and knowing you're not going to take your first snap in five hours and waiting around all day. I was just ready to go.

RE: Anything that will keep you from playing next week

I'm not going to answer that right now. You will have to ask coach [Ron Rivera].

RE: On your first start against the Falcons, being from Georgia

It was cool. Me and Cam being from the same area in itself was cool. Getting my first start against Atlanta, a division opponent, obviously he [Cam] hates them, he sees them two times a year, so it was exciting.

RE: How much are you drawing on your father

If he was here right now, he would be trying to get in here right now and tell me how proud he is of me. That's all I need. I know he is watching. It was a special day.

***Quarterback Kyle Allen
Carolina Panthers***

RE: How past experiences prepared him for today

Today was all about confidence, you get it going and play confident. Over the years you build up this confidence that you know what you can do as a player and you know what you can do when you have confidence in the players around you. I've been coached all year to do this stuff so when your number's called you've got to do your thing.

RE: What it meant to get called back by the Panthers after getting cut by them earlier in the season

It means everything. I think it's a testament to my mindset and a testament of who I am. I'm not going to quit. I'm going to keep coming to work every day whether they call me, cut me, they bring me back. I'm going to come and I'm going to do my thing every day. I think it's a testament to my mindset. I appreciate them trusting me, I appreciate them giving me that opportunity to go out there.

RE: What it was like playing in Bank of America for the first time

It was great, but I wish we would've come out with the win today. I'm out there every week when Cam's playing and we have big games, so I feel the energy, but I wish we would've found a way to win today.

***Cornerback James Bradberry
Carolina Panthers***

RE: How the Panthers mindset changes going into next week

Like Coach said, it's about pride. We'll know going into the week how prideful we are starting with that Wednesday practice, we're going to get it going from there.

RE: The message to the team today

It's all about pride man, finish strong.

RE: What the team has learned from the seven game skid

As a team, you can't wait around to make a play. Sometimes we had opportunities to make plays and we didn't make those plays. You've got to be one of those guys that goes out there and makes a play. Don't wait for somebody else to make it.

RE: How disappointing it is to not send veteran guys like Ryan Kalil out with a win

That's the thing that hurt the worse for me, not getting this home win for those guys like Pep and stuff. It's bad, but I mean at this point, we've just got to move on to the Saints and try to end the season on a positive note.

***Center Ryan Kalil
Carolina Panthers***

RE: Waving good-bye one last time running off the field

A lot of good memories here, with a lot of great guys. Lot of great coaches, some bad mostly good. Very blessed to be able to play as long as I did, and can't really find the words to describe it right now.

RE: Difficulty summarizing entire career, just only 10 minutes after its completion.

Not everybody gets to decide when they want to go out. It's such a brutal, physical game. So, I'm very fortunate to be able finish this season, my 12th year. I leave this place with a lot of great memories, and just very blessed.

RE: Getting to spend time with his son on the field prior to the game

I'm going to miss it a lot. I've been playing football my whole life, so there's nothing really left to graduate to. The skill sets of football, and run and pass blocking sort of end here. It's been a great ride, and like I said, I'm very blessed, and just thankful to a lot of people that helped me get here.

RE: Soaking up next week, being the season, and career finale

I think the best thing that I can do is approach it like I would any other week. That's the way I'll get the most out of it, and that's the way I'll remember this place.

***Defensive Tackle Kyle Love
Carolina Panthers***

RE: Sack on Matt Ryan and fumble recovery

I just had a hunch they were going to be aggressive on me. Atlanta is known for doing a lot of play action pass, seven-man protection, get one guy on the route, which is usually Julio. I was just extra aggressive knowing he was going to be aggressive and I just made a play. At the end of the day that's what it is about. One of our star D-tackles was down, Kawann, and I just wanted to step up and be that next man up and kind of fill in the void for him and play the best that I could.

RE: Importance of getting to Matt Ryan

He gets a lot of time because his O-line, they block pretty well. It's very important for us, especially the D-tackles to try and push the pocket to help the ends. At the end of the day we just want to help our secondary out so they don't have to be chasing Julio around the whole day. If we can do that and put some pressure on him and try to make him force bad throws, that's a win for us at the end of the day whether we get the statistics or not. If we can kind of force him to do something he doesn't want to do, that's great for us.

RE: What drives him to play hard

My mother and my father. My dad is a military guy and me and Coach Rivera have a lot in common when it comes to that. My goal at the end of the day is to provide for my family and I'm going to work my butt off. I want to play as hard as I can, not just for me, but for Coach Rivera, I feel like he deserves that. He's a great guy, he's a great head coach. I've been around some good head coaches, don't get me wrong, but I just love what he brings to the table and that makes me want to go harder just for him. I feel like he deserves a winning team. I'm going to give him everything I've got every play, just out of respect for him. That's what drives me to play hard, and not to mention being a backup guy. A lot of teams, when you play their backups it's like, "Oh can we depend on these guys?" I want them to feel comfortable when I come in the game, just as if Poe and Kawann were to go in to the game. I'm going to give that same effort.

***Running back Christian McCaffrey
Carolina Panthers*****RE: Having a great individual season while having a 6-9 record**

I mean, at the end of the day. I just want to win. All that other stuff is great but there's nothing like winning. Losing sucks. But man, the only thing you can do is fight. It's a tough sport and it's not always good to you but you've got to stay poised through the good and bad.

RE: Surpassing his father's single-season career high in receptions

He's got a comeback. He's got three Super Bowls. So he's got me there but it's good. I got lucky they threw me the ball a lot. It's my job to make those catches.

RE: Taking time after the season to reflect on his accomplishments this season

You always reflect on the good and bad of the year. Man, I love football. As long as I'm playing, I'm always working to get better I think. You have to be careful reflecting too much. We'll watch the tape and at the end of this game, approach it just like every week and see what you can do to get better and capitalize on your strengths and continue to work on your weaknesses.

***Cornerback Captain Munnerlyn
Carolina Panthers*****RE: Words to describe the season**

It's just very frustrating. It hurts because I know the work that we put in. I know the guys in the locker room, and what we have been through. To start 6-2 and to end like this, it just hurts.

RE: What today meant for several veterans

You will have to ask those guys that. I just know being a teammate, you try to go out there and play for guys like that. Obviously, they might be done, it might be their last year. So, you try to go out and play for guys like that. Try to lay it all on the line for those guys so they can go out on top.

RE: What those veterans mean to the organization

Big, big. You look at guys like TD, who's been around 14 years. He's been the Man of the Year, in the community, he does things. Guys like Pep and Kalil, who've been around here for a long time. Being drafted by this organization, being through the ups and downs, and things like that. You try to put yourself in the best position for those guys to let them go out on top, but we didn't do that this year.

Defensive End Julius Peppers
Carolina Panthers

RE: Personal opinion on legacy with the Carolina Panthers

We will get into that when it's time. We still have a game left to play. I'll save that answer for a later date.

RE: Importance of having his children at the game today

Yes, they're here. They're always here though actually. It's always special to have them here. Again, we will talk about what's going to happen next year and all that stuff at a later time.

RE: What Ryan Kalil means to the organization

He means everything. He's one of the greatest teammates I've ever played with. Professional guy, very selfless, great example for everyone to learn from, so this organization is going to miss him and I wish him the best.

RE: Ending the season without a playoff birth

It's always disappointing whenever you don't make the playoffs, but there's always next year.

Guard Greg Van Roten
Carolina Panthers

RE: If enjoys his role at guard

I've enjoyed playing guard, but whatever the team needs me to do, I'm ready to do. If they need me to bounce back I can do that, if they need me to be backup I can do that. I'm not a guy that thinks, "Oh I should be this guy." I'm a team player and that's what I'm going to continue to do, got me this far.

RE: This being Ryan Kalil's last home game as a Panther

A lot of guys, they don't get to leave when they want to leave, how they want to leave. So for him to comeback after all his battled through the last few seasons and to play every game at the level he's played, it's impressive. Ryan's always said he'd rather leave a year too early than stay a year too late. It's impressive and I think he's handled it with a lot of class and grace and dignity.

Wide Receiver Jarius Wright
Carolina Panthers

RE: The fight this team has

We're fighters. I was telling somebody earlier; our record doesn't speak for this team. We're a good team with a bad record. You go back and you look at some of those games, within 3 points, within 7 points. This could've easily been a great year for us, but we just have to regroup and get ready to finish the last game.

RE: His role on the field

I just do whatever they ask of me, whether that's run, whether that's pass, blocking, whatever they ask of me. I just want to get my job done, especially being a veteran guy, I just want to show the younger guys how it's supposed to be done and lead by example.