

Panthers Head Coach Ron Rivera:

On a pattern of early explosive plays putting the defense in a predicament this season:

“We try to get it rectified every day in practice. Unfortunately, it’s not sticking, and we need to continue to work on it as coaches to make sure we’re getting it across. The most important thing is that they have to understand how important it is to keep things in front of them, and not give up big opportunities. We had some opportunities that we missed. We had some opportunities to make plays, which we didn’t. Again, we always have to make sure at the beginning that we are putting them in a position to be successful.”

On Panthers CBs James Bradberry and Donte Jackson rotating to deep middle third:

“That was all based on the personnel group that [Cleveland] gave us. Sometimes James would end up in the middle, sometimes it was Donte. It all just depended on the formations and the personnel groupings.”

On the delay of game penalty at the end of the first half:

“We were trying to get them to jump offside. We were just out of range and unfortunately we ran out of time. We did get them to jump, but the clock had expired. We were trying to get a jump, get five yards, and then we would be in field goal range. We were outside the range.”

On infusing skill positions on the defense with more speed:

“I think we feel we have some holes we need to fill on the football team, and we’ve got some positions that we need to look at and continue to get speed. That is, I think, the biggest thing. We’re starting to see the importance of it and the significance of it when we play fast. We need to give ourselves the opportunity to be successful.”

On whether there will be more personnel changes this season:

“I don’t anticipate any more [staff changes].”

On what made the difference this game between halves:

“We missed a couple opportunities. The truth of the matter is that in the first half, we gave two plays up over the top. At that point, you have to make them earn it, which I felt we did a pretty decent job. But unfortunately, we missed a couple opportunities, as I said. We just need to go back and work on it.”

On holding Cleveland to 18 yards in the third quarter and then losing it in the fourth:

“We were doing some things that I felt we were comfortable with. I thought our guys handled it very well and unfortunately, sometimes all it takes is one big play. They had the big run on – I don’t know what you’d call it – but it was a wide receiver counter. They came off with a zoom action fake to flip, which was one of their big plays, and came back with an underneath handoff to the wide receiver on a counter. The guard came out and kicked out and there was a crease. We missed a tackle in the hole and he was off to the races. We have to be better at that.”

On Panthers QB Cam Newton and Panthers WR Devin Funchess not being on the same page today:

“I’ll have to take a look at that more closely on tape. I couldn’t tell you.”

On how Carolina responded to the Pittsburgh loss when looking at how the team played today:

“I think you could look at each game that we’ve lost and say ‘there’s a play here’ in the previous three games, and it could be something different. Football – and you guys have heard it before – is about making four or five plays, or not making four or five plays, and that’s the truth of the matter. You can go back and look at it, and you can pick any four plays out that were instrumental in this game, and change one of them, and it’s a different outcome. But you can’t. What you can’t do is that when you have an

opportunity to make plays, you have to make plays, or you can't allow plays. Unfortunately, that's part of what happened right now, so we just have to continue to work and see what happens."

On why Carolina is consistently not making the right plays on a week-by-week basis:

"The thing that we have to look at is exactly what position are we putting them in, and is that too hard? Then we'll go from there."

On how Newton's health impacting the play calling:

"You'd have to ask (Panthers offensive coordinator) Norv (Turner) that question specifically. Cam made a couple big throws that we had. We had a chance on one to (Panthers WR) Curtis (Samuel) and the defender got his hand in there and pulled it out at the last second. I don't really think [Newton's health] played into it. I thought we had opportunities to move the ball and we missed them. They called a couple of critical penalties on us too in critical situations and those things impact games as well."

On the penalty called:

"It was called, and we'll just go from there."

On if the defense was unraveling after big plays and pressing too hard:

"That could be part of it, but again, that's a question you can ask the players, to be honest. You have to ask specific guys more so than anything else to see what they have to say."

On Carolina's overall psyche:

"I would like to believe it's good because we had a good week of practice. Guys showed up, practiced hard, were there on time. Let's also not forget one thing too: this football team played very well against us. You have to give Cleveland some credit. Don't just talk about the mistakes we made. How about crediting them with some of the things they did. (Browns HC) Coach (Gregg) Williams did a nice job. He's got a group of guys who believe in who they're becoming. I think that's important if you can get your guys to believe in you, and I think Coach (Williams) has done a nice job."

On whether there was more the secondary could have done on QB Baker Mayfield's touchdown throw to WR Jarvis Landry:

"We lost on containing the quarterback and that allowed time. That's hard for anybody in coverage back there, when a guy has time. We have to look at what happened and what the breakdown was there."

On how the two big plays over the top changed the defensive gameplay:

"Well, you have to pay attention to certain aspects of the game. Again, it does play into it, but the biggest thing is to stick to what you've worked on and stay there. I thought we handled a lot of those situations pretty well. Someone mentioned how well we played in the third quarter, but we have to sustain that over a period of time."

On whether scoring just three points in the first two possessions of the second half effectively lost the game:

"I wouldn't say that because again, we had some opportunities. You look at the chances we had offensively and defensively, and you have a chance to impact it by making a play. Like I said, this game comes down to four or five plays, and whether you make them or you don't. That's the impact."

On being 2-5 in games decided by seven points or less, versus being 7-1 in close games last year:

"Well that's the nature of football. You have to also understand that there's a second team out there playing. It's not just about the mistakes you make, but about the plays that they make. Like I said earlier, you have to give credit to Cleveland. We had some opportunities to make plays, and we didn't unfortunately. They made a couple plays."

On the drive at the end of the first half and whether it could have gone differently considering Carolina still had a timeout to use:

“Maybe if we make a play. Again, you just don’t know. To assume something would be really easy. I could’ve called a different defense in certain different situations as well. Sometimes it happens, I guess. It’s hard to explain.”

On how it feels to have a veteran team go south like this:

“It’s tough. It’s part of the game. It’s a tough nature of it. Sometimes, some things happen and you have to go back and look at each game, and break it down and see exactly what happened – which we’ve done. When you look at those things, those are things that have to get corrected and that you have to get better at.”

PANTHERS PLAYERS

Panthers QB Cam Newton:

On struggling to finish games:

“I don’t know. It’s extremely frustrating to come up short each and every week with similar settings and not be able to push through. I wish I had the words to say but I don’t. In this league, that’s what I always come down to: finding ways to keep the game close. We just haven’t found a way to win.”

On the Browns defense and offensive struggles:

“We were moving the ball. That’s the explanation that remains a question mark. We move the ball on teams. We move up and down the field. We’ve just found ways to come up short. The only thing that comes to mind is that we’re not playing good complimentary football. When the defense is getting stops and turnovers, we can’t just have this lackluster performance and find ways to not get points. Those opportunities slip through our grasp and find ways to come back and bite us. Early on in the second half, we had opportunities, favorable field position, and we just have to find ways to score points, touchdowns, preferably. Now everyone goes to shuffling, running around with their heads cut off and panicking at the end of the game. We should’ve done the hard work when we had opportunities. It’s just a detriment to everyone. I’m going to do my part. I’m starting with myself. We all put ourselves in this situation. There’s no one person to blame. We just have to keep moving forward.”

On his improvement:

“No one wants me to succeed more than me. I practice for those moments. As a player, you live for those moments. And, when those things keep constantly happening not in your favor, it can be easy to lose confidence and try to blame something. I still stay the same. As far as me getting better, I know I will get better.”

On facing adversity:

“We’re in a position where we’re done with the cliché sayings. It just comes down to us doing our job. That’s pretty much what it is, in all three phases of football. Even though coach can get up and motivate us, we can get up, scream and holler, it just comes down to us doing our job.”

On if he feels that he and Panthers WR Devin Funchess are not on the same page:

“I wouldn’t say that. It comes down to execution. We talked it out and got on the same page. From executing the given gameplan, it was not necessarily his fault a lot of times. It was more about understanding how the defense maps out whether you are hot or not. Just like I said, executing.”

On if it is more difficult to get the timing down with Funchess:

“No. We are professionals. It does not matter if you get the reps in the week or not. Do your job.”

S Mike Adams:

On expectations for the remainder of the season:

“[They’re] pretty high. You know, we had high expectations for the season, and unfortunately it hasn’t been going our way. Unfortunately it didn’t go our way, but at the end of the day, the only people we can blame are ourselves. We were put in great positions to make plays and we just haven’t been making them.”

On where the breakdowns have been for the Panthers:

“It’s just not making the big plays when we have to. Earlier on, they had a couple of deep shots and a couple of big runs. We’ve watched them on film and they’ve been playing well, but this is inexcusable for us. We’ve still got to go out there and execute those plays. We didn’t do that earlier on and we dug ourselves a hole.”

On getting this season back on track:

“We’re on a skid – a losing streak right now, so obviously, we didn’t get that bad taste out of our mouth. It’s frustrating because we’re a better team than that. I’m not blaming it on [the Panthers’ Week 10 loss against the Pittsburgh Steelers] because that game is over and done. We’re a veteran team. We always look to move forward, but we just haven’t been making the plays that we’ve needed to make at crucial times.”

CB James Bradberry:

On containing Browns QB Baker Mayfield:

“At times, we let him get out of the pocket, but our front seven got after him. We got some sacks and made him throw some wild throws.”

On the Browns wide receiving corps:

“We just didn’t respond fast enough today. They jumped on us quick, and we just responded too late. There was nothing that was a surprise – they did pretty much what we saw on film.”

On the Panthers defensive performance:

“We just didn’t execute properly – just mental breakdowns. We just didn’t execute at the end of the day.”

WR Devin Funchess:

On lack of playing time:

“I know what Devin Funchess can control. When I am on the field, you are going to get a 120% out of me. That is what I do every time you see me on the field.”

On the mistiming with QB Cam Newton:

“That was my bad. That was my miscommunication on the one play that I kept going straight. That was my bad on the miscommunication. I was trying to do too much. I was trying to get everybody lined up and forgot the main part of it.”

On when the Panthers got in scoring position in the first two series of the second half, but were unable to score:

“I put that all on myself on the one drive, but after that, we cannot take turns on making mistakes. We all have to play a sound, four-quarter football game. We have the Saints next Monday, so [we have] to make sure we come back and go to work Wednesday and come on Monday to get the job done.”

DE Julius Peppers:

On the team's feeling right now:

“We are going to continue to play hard and continue to stick together. We are going to keep trying to get it right. We have a game next week against the Saints, a primetime game and a divisional game. That is what our focus is going to from here. There is really nowhere else to turn to. It is on to the next game. That is what we are going to work on tomorrow and focus on.”

On the team's confidence:

“To be honest with you, I do not feel that it is a loss of confidence in anything. I just feel we are not putting a good product on the field. We felt like we were going to win today. We felt like we were going to win last week. We feel like we are going to win every game. It is not for a lack of confidence. It is just a lack of execution.”

On the possibility of being his last season:

“It is not about me right now. I will have a period of reflection at some point. Right now, it is about us trying to focus on getting another win. Nothing else matters right now besides getting a win next week. That is where we are at, trying to get a win.”

S Eric Reid:

On the coverage on Browns QB Baker Mayfield's 51-yard touchdown pass to Browns WR Jarvis Landry:

“It dropped in there. I had my hand on him, but (WR) Jarvis (Landry) did a good job bringing it in. Just a play I have to make.”

On Cleveland's 66-yard pass on the Browns' first drive of the game:

“It gave them momentum. Obviously, we do not want to start a game that way. It gave them a lot of yards to start with. I know it gave them confidence. I wish we can have that one back.”

On his coverage on the play:

“That is one of the plays that I am in position. I am trying to get my head around to find the ball. I had my hand on the ball, I just have to get it out. It is unfortunate.”

TE Ian Thomas:

On his individual performance:

“It's not about me, but I feel like the team played well. We could have played better, but that's how it went.”

On filling the role of TE Greg Olsen:

“I had to step my game up and do what I could do to fill that void. We just have to do a little bit more on the offensive side and defensive side if we want to come out with a win.”

On the Panthers' remaining schedule:

“We're coming in with the same mindset every week to take it right at them, and hopefully we'll come out with the win next weekend.”