

Carolina Panthers Post-Game Quotes

HEAD COACH RON RIVERA

On the decision to eject Damontae Kazee:

"I think the referees made the correct call. We've all been talked about when quarterbacks slide and take care of themselves but it was good to see the decision to throw him out was the right one. We just have to be smart and try to protect these guys careers and their health. So yeah, we just appreciate the fact that the referees knew the process, they talked about it and I understand they went back to New York just to double check. They agreed and that's what happened."

On the team's final play:

"We had an opportunity to win and that's all we can ask for is give ourselves a chance. It was a tough game, we had some opportunities. We hurt ourselves more so than not and at the end of the day we cost ourselves the chance to win a game."

On the dropped passes:

"It was disappointing, we had the opportunities to make plays and I think Cam threw some great footballs. He made a couple of bad ones but again when you get the opportunity to make a play, you have to make it and that's what we got so we just have to continue to work at it the nice thing is that a lot of things that happened they are things that are corrected."

On his disagreements with referees:

"Of course, I'm going to disagree it didn't work in our favor. Again, I think the hard part is that it was an uncatchable ball. The other guy was trying to play for the ball and at the end of the day you can't go through a guy and that's what the referee saw so that's what we live with."

On the run defense:

"Terrible. We made too many mistakes. We didn't give ourselves a chance to win. We need to be more disciplined and then more disciplined than that. You know last week we played the way we wanted to against Dallas. Today we didn't do the things we needed to do and when you don't do those things the result is you're going to have somebody rush for almost 200 yards against you. We can't do this. We have to go back and we have to correct. It starts with me as the head coach and the defensive head coach we had that happen. I won't stand for that, I won't have that happen, we will get that corrected."

On Cam Newton performance in the third quarter:

"The disappointing thing is we had opportunities. I thought Cam did very well. He kept his focus even after the hit. And he came back and did things that he is capable of. You know we missed some opportunities the last set. We as coaches have to go back and make sure we are putting these guys in position to win, that's the truth."

On Falcon's offense:

"Well, from what I saw, for the most part, a couple of things, you saw quick throws you saw light play action, hard play action and when teams run the ball effectively you know you have to honor the play

action. And that gave them time so again kudos to them for running the ball effectively and for mixing it up using the play action and boot action as well to get the quarterback back out on the edge which helps to negate some of the direction.”

On offensive line’s performance:

“What happened last week and the way they played I think it was tremendous I thought Chris [Clark] coming in in a short week and being able to play the whole game and play like he did was tremendous. You know and mixing guys around. I think Tyler [Moton] stepped up, Greg [Van Roten] stepped up. It was pretty loud out there. They made a lot of noise it was tough on our guys to hear everything but just the fact that we have all those moving parts right now kudos to those guys for how hard they played and kudos to the coaches. I thought Coach [John] Matsko and Coach [Travelle] Wharton did a great job getting those guys ready to play.”

On the performance of the secondary:

“I thought secondary did some good things we missed some opportunities, we blew a couple of coverages back there and part of it is communications and you know again it’s early in the season and we’re going to make some mistakes, but we have to get those things corrected if we expect to win football games.”

On biggest takeaway from the game:

“The biggest take away is that we had to variate and give ourselves a chance to tie the game. And I think that’s outstanding, I really do. My biggest disappointment is that you can’t make too many mistakes in one football game. We had too many penalties that kept hurting us. We extended a drive that led to a touchdown. Instead of being first-and-10 we were at first-and-20. You can’t make mistakes and expect to beat good football teams.”

On consistency during key opportunities:

“Well again, you’re asking them to do some things that are tough and difficult at the same time, that’s what they get paid for. We’ll go back, we’ll look at the tape, we’ll evaluate and we’ll talk about what needs to happen. Again, as I said, first thing starts with us we just have to make sure we put them in a position to have success.”

On the play calling during the last play:

“No, Norv [Turner] had what he wanted called. And we had a chance, we really did. So that was the best part, we had a chance at the end.”

QUARTERBACK CAM NEWTON

On his overall assessment of the game:

“Coach [Ron Rivera] always says it. We did good enough to win the game. When you do that, you give yourself the same opportunity to lose as well. We’ve just got to be a little bit better starting with myself. ‘My faults, my bads, next play’ mentality. We’ve just got to hone in and focus just a little bit more. I’m very excited about the flashes that we showed. But at the end of the day coming into a hostile environment, every single play counts especially a division game like this.”

On the fight his team showed today:

"That's what you're supposed to do. You're not supposed to quit. We play this game to win every single football game. That's simple. That's what we get paid for."

On Damontae Kazee's late hit:

"It's self-explanatory. What needed to happen happened."

On finishing the drive with a touchdown after the late hit:

"We got a touchdown out of that. It's still early on in the season, but you never know when these games will count later on. We've just got to build great habits and stop having self-inflicted kind of issues with us including myself with accuracy, being on the same page with terminology, being on the same page with the philosophy, and it's just going out there and executing. Like I said, there was so much good in this game, but it was just as much good as it was bad. We're better than that, and we've got to find our edge."

On what it was like to score a touchdown after taking a hit:

"It was fine. It looked worse than it was. I'm just lucky nothing pretty much happened. This game isn't fit for cheap shots like that, but at the end of the day, I can't blame him. He's playing as hard as he can. I'm playing as hard as I can. That's what this football game brings."

On what was going through his head on the last drive:

"We were trying to score."

On whether he feels more protected this year:

"I'm not worried about that. I'm just focused on trying to find ways to win football games."

On the last play and what made him decide to throw the ball to DJ Moore:

"I'm just trying to get somebody an opportunity to make a play. From what I did see before I got hit, that was as close of a one-on-one as anybody had as I surveyed the field. I just tried to give him a chance."

LINEBACKER LUKE KUECHLY

On Atlanta's success running the football:

"They did a great job in the run game. We've got to tackle better. I missed some tackles today that I've got to make. We'll get that addressed. Everybody has to be in the right spot at the right time, playing in their right leverages, and we've got to make tackles. We missed a couple today. I missed a couple today, and we've got to get that fixed."

On Atlanta's ability to pass:

"When a team can run the ball, it opens up a lot of things for the offense. They were able to run the ball. They were able to play bootleg. They were able to just throw it on straight dropbacks. If you give a team the opportunity to use the whole playbook, it makes it hard on us."

On communication among the Carolina defense:

"We're good. Sometimes guys get dinged up, and people have to step in. Corn [Elder] and Rashaan [Gaulden] stepped in and made some plays for us. It's one of those things where everybody has to be on the same page. It's something that we stressed during the week, and it's something that we're going to work on moving forward."

On making defensive stops to give the offense a chance to win:

"You're down two scores and you can hang them up if you want to, but this team won't do that. It's never done that, and it's not going to do that moving forward. That's what happens when you fight the whole game like that. You get a big stop at the end. Our defensive line played great. Shaq [Thompson] was able to jump in there and make a tackle, and you give the ball back to the offense. That's what you're looking for. That's what you need. We've just got to make a couple more plays earlier on."

On Atlanta's play:

"You've got to play good football all game. All 60 minutes Atlanta played good today. They did a great job running the ball, and everything was wide open off that. If they can run the ball, they can boot it, and they can throw it. There were some moments in the game where we played really well, but the key to playing in this league and in this division is being consistent. We have to do a better job of being consistent."

On Matt Ryan's rushing touchdowns:

"He was active running the ball today. We'll see what happened on that, but it's something we'll get addressed."

CORNERBACK JAMES BRADBERRY

On making defensive stops to give the offense a chance to win:

"That was our goal. When we went onto the field on the last drive, Luke [Kuechly] harped to us that we've got to give our offense another chance. That's what we did. Unfortunately, we didn't do that in the beginning of the game, so we put our offense behind."

On what Carolina can learn from this game:

"Just learning how Atlanta wants to attack us. Of course, teams we play in the future are going to attack us the same way because they see a weakness. We'll go into the film room, correct whatever mistakes we had and go from there."

WIDE RECEIVER TORREY SMITH

On the response to Damontae Kazee's hit on Cam Newton:

"Just whoever did it... this probably isn't the most mature answer, but in the heat of the moment, I'm standing up for any of my guys."

On how the team rallied around that moment:

"Yeah, I mean you've just got to keep fighting. That's the character of this team, and unfortunately, we came up short, but there's no question that we believed we were going to win until the end."

Unfortunately, we shot ourselves in the foot too many times. I mean, I had three penalties. I got bailed out on the false starts, but you know, that's unacceptable. That's not something that I do all the time, and that's definitely not something that I'm expected to do as a veteran and one of the leaders of the team, so I have to be better. Look myself in the mirror and be better for next week."

On what catching the touchdown meant for the momentum of the team:

"You just want to make plays. And everything was near misses, near misses, near misses, and to be able to come down with it on something we've been practicing for a while was pretty cool, but ultimately it doesn't matter. We came up short and looking forward to getting back to work."

DEFENSIVE TACKLE KAWANN SHORT

On the importance of getting a defensive stop late in the game:

"Very important. Just as a defense you want to keep getting stops. That was an important stop that we needed to get to give the offense back the ball. That's what we did."

On whether Atlanta did anything differently than they have in previous games:

"No, we just missed tackles. We were not getting in our gaps. We didn't communicate well up front. We've got to go back to the drawing board and not really get ahead of ourselves."

On Atlanta's success running the game:

"With any team, you want to make them one dimensional. They came out and ran the ball and threw the ball well. It's on us to get a stop, and we didn't do it. As a defense, you want to make them one dimensional, and we didn't do it today."

On what Carolina can take from this game:

"This one loss doesn't define who we are or are trying to be as a team. It's a long season. This one loss hurts, especially because it's a division game. We've got to come back and correct what we've done wrong, and hopefully, it won't happen again."

WIDE RECEIVER JARIUS WRIGHT

On the struggles of the receiving corps:

"You just have those days. You can't be perfect every day. You can't come out and... there's only one guy that's perfect. We're going to have bad days. We're going to have great days. You've just got to take the good with the bad."

On whether the hit on Cam Newton changed the course of the game:

"It did kind of get us fired up. You never like to see anybody come at your guys in that way. If you ask me, it was a malicious hit intended to hurt him. I don't know what they talked about in their locker room. It wasn't right. It's not right to be an NFL player – you know he's a quarterback, you know he's going to slide – to dive at a guy like that."

On whether he agrees that the penalties should have offset:

"I definitely agree with the ejection, and I agree with what Torrey [Smith] did. That's our quarterback. We're going to fight for him. We're going to protect him. If something happened to me like that, I would expect Torrey to do the same thing, and if something happened to Torrey like that, I would do the same thing for him, so at the end of the day, we have to be smart about it, but we do have to have each other's back at the same time."

GUARD GREG VAN ROTEN

On communication between the offensive line:

"When I get up to the line, I say I got this guy and you got that guy. We didn't care if they knew we were coming to them. We didn't care about disguising signals or anything like that. We just wanted to make certain that we were on the same page, and we needed to be able to play fast. They are a fast defense that is built on getting up field and penetrating. We couldn't be hesitant to figure out where we were going. We were not worried about our communication giving them an advantage. Our advantage is that we knew the snap count. They might know we are coming for them, but we know when the ball is being snapped so it's a give and take."