

PANTHERS QB JAKE DELHOMME

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(On the camaraderie of the late picks in the draft...) “There is something about guys that either don’t get drafted or get drafted late and have success. You really kind of pull for those guys because you want to see them succeed so hopefully someone down the line will get a chance. We were lucky enough to get chances. Matt (Hasselbeck) is a guy who I probably knew a lot more about Matt first time I met him then he knew about me because of Mike McCarthy, who had him in Green Bay and then I was with Mike in New Orleans. Like Mike said, Matt is a quarterback who made himself into being a good player. He worked his tail off and you just respect guys like that. Kurt Warner is the same way, Marc Bulger, guys who really had to come, and that guy from New England, coming from the sixth round. Its just something that I think we cherish the opportunity that we have and we just want to try and hang on to it and not let it get away.”

(On the first thing he bought after he signed his contract being a tractor...) “Yes. I already had a decent vehicle, not like I need to buy a new car or something. This was a good three or four or five months after we signed a deal. Yes, I got a tractor because we needed one.”

(On the kind of farm he has...) “I can’t really say I have a farm, we just have some property back in Louisiana. We raise thoroughbred race horses, that’s what my dad and my brother do and when I’m home I’m involved with them in that. The tractor is used for cutting grass because that is one thing we know how to do in Louisiana; we can grow grass with the best of them. the tractor got there last October, I’m talking in 2004, and I’m home for two and a half months in the spring and summer and I’ll see it for a little bit and I haven’t been home since July. I can’t really say its mine; it’s pretty much my dad and my brothers.”

(On why they’ve been so successful in the postseason on the road...) “Honestly I don’t know. I’ve been asked that question a lot. I just think the big thing is we have guys, a mature group of guys. We take care of our business. It’s a business trip, do the work and when you get on the plane to go, you know you’re going for a reason and that is to play football. You have to totally focus in because when you get out on the field, besides the 53 guys on the sidelines and the coaches and maybe if you have some family members in the stands, other than that, there is no one else pulling for you. You have to just concentrate totally on what needs to be done and just go one play at a time.”

(On what concerns him about the Seattle defense...) “The biggest thing I think watching them yesterday, we watched a ton of film on them, is they are extremely quick. They fly to the ball. They play with a motor. Not surprised by that because I think that Grant Wistrom, ever since he came into the league he’s always played with a motor. You can see it in him, Bryce Fisher, (Rocky) Bernard and certainly you are watching the guys in the secondary, they get after it. But, I don’t know, Lofa Tatupu, he doesn’t play too much like a rookie. These guys, they just get after it. You know the speed. They fly to the football a good bit.”

(On the running game this week...) “Hopefully we can run the football effectively. That is what we try to do every football game. certainly we will miss DeShaun (Foster), what he’s done the last month of this season, really the last half of this season, he is hard to replace. But Nick (Goings) we feel great about him. He is a guy that works his tail off, plays numerous positions for us and just a solid player. He did a good job last week when he had to come in and hopefully we can run the football effectively to give us some opportunities in the passing game. The toughest thing going to Seattle is their defense can fly around but its going to be extremely loud. We need to hone into what we need to and somehow some way we want to try to keep the ball on drives because that offense they have over there is not too shabby.”

(On Nick Goings’ style of running...) “I think the biggest thing is he has great speed and he can really run but he sets up his blocks well and he’s always kind of going forward. He’s kind of a stocky build guy who can really break some tackles. Hopefully those things can come into play on Sunday.”

(On how Steve Smith still gets all the catches even when everyone knows that’s where he’s throwing it...) “I think the great thing our coaches do is we put them in different formations. We kind of motion him around and try and create opportunities for him. But I think the biggest thing with Steve is that when we can run the ball effectively and we get chances to go one-on-one, certainly, we do look towards him. You can kind of look at the season and see the second leading receiver probably doesn’t have that many catches, but Keary Colbert has split time earlier this year with Rod Gardner and then once Rod was released, Drew Carter has come on. So he was never really a guy to get into a great rhythm, that’s just how we’ve done things this year. DeShaun might have been our second leading receiver or close to it. Ricky Proehl, he doesn’t seem like he slows down. So we you really do have other guys that we feel very comfortable with.”

(On the schemes he’s seen against Steve Smith...) “A lot of teams rove to him and taken two guys to cover him, a corner and rove a safety over the top. If teams do that that is when you have to be able to run the football, that is a part of the deal. When you can take two guys out with one, you need to be effective running the football. That is the whole issue. If that does happen this weekend, we have to somehow, someway way have to try and find a way to be successful running the football.”

(On being drafted in the third round and it being motivation...) “I want to say yes, but honestly if Steve Smith would have been drafted the first overall player, he would still be motivated. That is the type of guy he is. He doesn’t like to miss practice; as a matter of fact he pretty much hates it. He doesn’t like to sit out. He works his tail off and he has a competitive fire inside of him that you love to see on the field.”

(On if they are afraid of wearing him out...) “We know its one and done so if we don’t take care of business this weekend, then he has all offseason to rest. I know he feels the same way. Our life span in the NFL is short and we just try to make the most of it. I know he feels that way. I don’t think I’d tell him that because he’d be pretty upset

because there is no doubt he wants the football. He hasn't asked to stop throwing it to him. So I feel good about that."

(On Smith liking the limelight...) "That is part of the game. He doesn't go extreme with it. he's one who when he's on the field, it's an emotional game and he gets excited but off the field he's a great father, great husband and really does the right things and worries about his family first. That is part of the game, guys having fun. People can kind of go outside the lines sometimes on that but I think he stays well within the lines."

(On the noise at Qwest Field and it being less intimidating due to their road record...) "Honestly, we don't think about it a whole lot. We knew it was going to be loud last week. We knew going into New York it was going to be loud. We have to worry about what we do. I can't go into the game and say 'ok, it's going to be loud, I just have to make sure I really talk loud' and things like that because that is taking away from what I need to be doing and that is 'ok, what is my responsibility on this play and what is Seattle going to try to do to me? And where can I go with the football to be smart with it?' It's something that you can't worry about. We know it's going to be there, we do practice with crowd noise and we just have to try to make the best of it."

(On any similarities from the Super Bowl team a couple years ago...) "I think we do have some similarities. I think we have guys who understand that this doesn't come around often, to be able to play in a championship game. It wasn't long ago that this team was 1-15. I've been on the other side; I was on a 3-13 team in New Orleans. We went to the Super Bowl two years ago and then last year we didn't even make the playoffs, we were 7-9 and went in expecting big things. You have to just cherish every single opportunity you can in this league. We've had older veteran guys, like the Ricky Proehl's, his first nine or ten years in the league before he was with Seattle he never made the playoffs. So I think guys understand that this is a special time of year and you do whatever you need to do to get yourself ready to play and be helpful to your team on Sunday."

(On what they do if Nick Goings gets injured...) "We feel good with other guys, Jamal Robertson, he's a young guy who we feel really good about. Rod Smart can always come in, we can use Brad Hoover. We have a few different guys we feel we can plug in. Hopefully that won't be the case. That is the biggest thing, that's the way Coach Fox is, the next guy has to step up, that's what it's all about."

(On what he takes from two years ago...) "One thing I do is I don't take it for granted and I just work my tail off and try to go out and do the best I can. I know that sounds boring, or doesn't sound flashy, but that's the way it is. I just try to go out and be Jake Delhomme of the Carolina Panthers. I don't try to be anybody else and I don't think our team tries to be anybody else. At this time of year the coaches have a good idea of what we might do well and what we might not do well and hopefully they put us in the right situation. None of the games get easier, they all get tougher."

(On what the offensive coordinator Dan Henning has done for him...) “I think the biggest thing is experience. Coach Henning has been there before; he’s been on Super Bowl teams with the Redskins. One thing about him is that he’s not afraid to put the ball in my hands in crucial times in the game. He trusts us because he sees the way we work and prepare. We come up with ideas to him, but we better have a reason for it, we can’t just fly off the seat of our pants with something. He’s just a steady hand. Him and Richard Williamson and Jim Skipper, our running back coach, receiver coach and offensive coordinator, they have a lot of years of working and they’ve been in big games and they do a good job of putting us in position.”

(On being more animated last Sunday...) “I think I was like that in New York too. I think biggest thing was we were able to really control that game. Last week, that game had a lot of twists and turns, they would come back and we would answer. Certainly I wanted to go out and play well because I really stunk up the joint when we went to Chicago in early November. I felt very disappointed that I let my team down and I just wanted to do well. A lot has to do with this time of year. You have to enjoy it. you have to have fun and if I’m not out there having a good time and getting fired up, that is not me. I get excited out there. Certainly was a big win for us and we just wanted to do well. Sometimes I really act like a kid I guess you could say.”

(On what he remembers about his game at Qwest Field last year...) “It was part of our losing streak I know that. I can’t remember if we were 1-5 at the time or 1-6, it was one of those deals. It was a game that we did some good things. We tried to come back and make a run of it at the end but we just came up short. That is what I remember from that game. I think Joey Harris was starting at running back for us that game. Hopefully we’ve come a long way since then.”

(On what Ricky Proehl has meant with his veteran leadership...) “It’s hard to put into words because he means so much. For one he’s been there before, two, he makes plays for us whenever we need in crucial situations and he takes care of himself. He takes care of his body, the lifting the film and we have a bunch of young guys, especially receiver wise on this team and they follow him. Even other guys on the team, Ricky has been in these big situations and to see how he prepares, and obviously he’s been on teams that have done it the right way. You want to listen to guys like that.”

(On what Mike McCarthy put them through and Matt Hasselbeck...) “There is a quarterback school that Mike McCarthy has and there are all kinds of drills, footwork drills, jump roping and jumping over bags and ball skills. Skill after skill after skill and Hasselbeck would do this and Hasselbeck would do that, you get tired of it at one point because I didn’t even know Matt at the time. But, when we got together a couple years ago at the Quarterback Challenge and sit down with him and talk about Mike. The thing I like about Matt is that I think he’s like me in a way in that we’re not afraid to be the butt of the joke and we like to have a good time and we can kind of rag on each other a good bit and I think we’ve done that the last couple of years getting to know each other and I’m certainly proud of the way he’s playing. I’m happy for him.”

(On the key for them on Sunday...) “Hopefully not to turn the ball over and be successful running it. That is every game. Certainly you’d love to win time of possession and turnover battle, but it’s easier said than done. I know offensively speaking that is what we need to try to do. Somehow, some way we have to try to put up some points.”

(On if he thought Steve Smith might get some votes for MVP...) “I know Shaun (Alexander) won MVP, I have no idea who came out second or third, I have no idea what was the vote margin and don’t take this the wrong way, but I really don’t care. I promise you Steve Smith doesn’t care either. The ultimate goal is to try to get to the Super Bowl and win it. Shaun had an unbelievable year, he broke an NFL record, that is kind of hard not to give him that, he’s good, he’s a great back.”

(On how they stay away from road fatigue...) “This is new territory for us because we do have to travel all the way across the country where our run a couple of years ago we didn’t have to travel all that far. Coach Fox, we didn’t go in pads today, we’ll probably be in in tomorrow, but I think that is just being smart because we are beat up a little bit. The biggest thing is that guys have to realize that this doesn’t come around often. You have to do whatever it takes. I think our wives and our families they understand that because it’s a special time. Take care of your body, get in the weight room, do a little extra. Come in on your off day and stay here, watch a little film. If we don’t get it done, we have all offseason to do what you need to do. This doesn’t come around often, just cherish it.”

(On when they come out...) “We’ll be out there Saturday. We’re coming out Saturday.”