

Q&A with Jerry Richardson



Jerry Richardson

Recently the Roar sat down with Carolina Panthers Owner Jerry Richardson to discuss important topics to the team and Carolina Panthers fans.

Have the offseason moves been difficult for you?

They have been difficult for everybody -- the players released, the coaches and management, the staff, the fans. You can't make the changes we have this offseason without feeling pain. Each of those players had a role in the success we enjoyed. However, we have young players who performed well for us at the end of the season and it is now time for their opportunity. It is a young roster but not one that is inexperienced.

What are your thoughts on the direction of the team?

We feel recent drafts have been productive and have players for those positions where changes were made. There are no guarantees going into any season. We saw that last year when we had 21 of 22 starters returning. I think players like Steve Smith, DeAngelo Williams, and Jonathan Stewart, plus a good offensive line, provide a lot of opportunity on offense and Jon Beason, Thomas Davis, and Chris Gamble on defense form a good core of players to build around. There are 26 drafted players on our roster over the last four years, and some like Dan Connor will get an opportunity to play. Others, like Jon, have proven more than capable.

Can you address the offseason approach?

We have never been a big player in free agency under Marty Hurney. Many of our best free agent signings have not received much attention when we signed them. Jake Delhomme did not come with a lot of attention when he was signed. Players like Ricky Proehl, Mark Fields, Marlon McCree and Tyler Brayton came to the team with little notice, but were starters and big contributors. The years when we were big players in free agency did not seem to turn out as well. The approach has worked well over eight years and we still have the goal of a championship.

What were your feelings seeing Julius Peppers leave the organization?

I think Julius was a great player for the Carolina Panthers and was sorry that things did not work out for the long term, but that was the case and we wish him the best. He always handled himself well as a Panther and will have a significant place in our history. As Marty said, we were aggressive in trying to get a long term deal and it did not work out.



Richardson is a former player who still enjoys watching practice when the opportunity presents itself.



What were your feelings on the release of players like Jake, Brad Hoover, and Damione Lewis?

They were extremely difficult decisions. They were very good players and even better people. It is impossible not to get attached to players, particularly those who have been with the team for a long time and are good people. We will miss them. That is only natural. They were tough football decisions

and were hard on Marty and John. It was the same procedure we have used over the years. A roster changes year-to-year and every six or seven there is an inevitable cycle of transition, and there is a plan for that transition, but it doesn't make it any easier.

Were they the result of the uncertainty surrounding the CBA?

We were at a point with our football team that we had to make some tough football decisions, which were separate of the CBA. As I have said, we have a number of younger players who showed promise at the end of last season and need to get on the field.

Could you address the ticket pricing decision?

The cost of doing business is a constant. We are in a privately operated stadium. Just because we don't have a salary cap this year does not mean that we do not have player salaries. Even with the ticket increase we are still in the bottom half of the League. I would also like to say that our fans have been great. The attendance in the late games last year was beyond expectations. We have tried to keep our pricing competitive with other teams and where we rank in ticket pricing reflects that.

How has the transition worked out with Danny Morrison as President?

He has been just like he was at Wofford, the Southern Conference, and TCU. He has great energy and is a great communicator and brings the highest character and integrity. He has thrown himself into the position and has learned very quickly. The same qualities that made him effective throughout his career have not changed and we are benefitting from them.



Richardson and Dan Rooney [L] co-chaired the search committee when Roger Goodell replaced Paul Tagliabue.

Has the addition of Morrison changed your role with the team?

I would say nothing has changed. Danny is running the business side of the operation. Marty and John are in charge of the football operations. I have ongoing contact with all of them and they keep me up-to-date on everything that is happening.

How much time do you spend on the CBA?

A great deal of time. It is very comprehensive. We have to create an agreement that is good for the players and good for the owners for the long term health of the game. It is something that obviously takes a lot of time and energy and will continue to do so until an agreement is reached.

How do you feel the negotiations are going?

I'll leave any comments on that to the Commissioner. He is in the best position to gauge that and I think it is best if he speaks for the League. I can only say we are seeking a fair agreement that will be good for the players, our teams, and the fans. While I cannot predict the course of collective bargaining, I do know that we will have a new agreement, hopefully before the 2011 season.

How are you feeling?

I'm getting stronger and have more energy as the weeks and months pass, and I continue to feel better. I appreciate and thank all of those fans who sent cards and notes. It was very nice of them and meant a great deal. ■



Visiting with Max Muhleman prior to a game.

