After enduring a gut-wrenching five-game losing streak, Carolina Panthers wide receiver Steve Smith sat back in his locker following Sunday's 21-13 victory over the Washington Redskins at FedExField and

took a deep, satisfying breath.
"A relief," Smith said. "We got the win."
The Redskins took an early 3-0 lead, but after running back DeAngelo Williams' 30-yard touchdown run – his longest run of the season – late in the first quarter, Carolina never trailed.
And it was a defensive stand followed by a meticulous scoring drive that turned the contest in Carolina's favor. On the ensuing Redskins' possession after Williams' score, Washington began a drive with 24 seconds left in the first quarter.
Sixteen plays and 10 minutes later, the Redskins had the ball on the Panthers' 2-yard line and faced fourth-and-goal with 5:21 remaining in the second quarter. Washington elected to go for its third fourth-down conversion of the drive.
Quarterback Robert Griffin III took the shotgun snap and sprinted toward the right corner of the end zone, but he was met by defensive end Charles Johnson and stopped for no gain.
"It was very uplifting," head coach Ron Rivera said of the goal line stand. "What we did defensively was one of those things that really gives you a big boost, and our guys really responded well to it."
The Panthers offense couldn't have responded any better. Quarterback Cam Newton engineered a 12-play, 98-yard touchdown drive that culminated with Smith's 19-yard touchdown reception on third-and-10 with 1:03 left in the first half.
"That was as an opportunity as an offense to impose our will and get a score right before halftime," Newton said.
Newton converted three third downs during the momentum-swinging drive, the first with an 11-yard run on third-and-2 from the Carolina 10-yard line, the other with a 17-yard pass to tight end Greg Olsen on third-and-6.
"Every drive you want touchdowns, but when you start there, your first goal is to get two first downs and get out of the hole you're in," left tackle Jordan Gross said. "Then we were able to keep plugging along on that drive and got the touchdown to Steve."
Thanks to the second-longest drive in team history, Carolina entered halftime with a 14-3 lead, their largest first half advantage of the season.
"That's perfect football right there," Smith said of the methodical scoring drive to end the half. "It was much needed."
Carolina's stingy red-zone defense continued into the second half. The Redskins were forced to settle for a 25-yard field goal midway through the third quarter, cutting the Panthers' lead to 14-6.
But wide receiver Armanti Edwards produced the game's longest play to help Carolina extend its lead. On first down from the Panthers' 9-yard line, Newton play-faked and launched a pass down the left sideline from the edge of his own end zone.
Edwards was wide open and hauled the pass in at the 35-yard line. With the help of a bone-jarring block by Smith, Edwards sprinted down to Washington 9-yard line for an 82-yard

gain.
"It was great to see Armanti get an opportunity out there and see him make a big play," Rivera said. "I was really fired up."
Two plays later, Newton charged into the end zone for a 1-yard score, giving the Panthers a 21-6 lead. Washington found the end zone for the first time with 1:34 remaining in the game, as running back Evan Royster rushed for a 2-yard score.
Smith recovered the onside kick, but the Redskins got the ball back with 17 seconds left. Linebacker Luke Kuechly sealed the Panthers' first road win with his 15th tackle of the day, dropping wide receiver Brandon Banks for a 9-yard loss as time expired.
"Our guys have given themselves chances to win. This was one of those chances that we capitalized," Rivera said.