



## POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES

### LOS ANGELES CHARGERS VS. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS FRIDAY, AUGUST 26, 2022 • CAESARS SUPERDOME SAINTS HEAD COACH DENNIS ALLEN

(Opening Statement): “Good to get a win. It’s good to see offensively, I thought there that the first half we had a good rhythm offensively and thought we did some really good things (with) Jameis (Winston) and Andy (Dalton) at the quarterback position. (I) Thought Mark (Ingram) and Alvin (Kamara) had a couple of nice runs in there. It’s good to get some points. It’s good to get some points at the end of the first half. Defensively we started out three and out which was good. I didn’t like the explosive play or the third and long. It was not the best call I’ve ever made. They ended up scoring a touchdown on that drive. (I) Didn’t think the tackling was good as we need to in the first half, but I thought we kind of responded in the second half. We were much better on third down in the second half and tackled a lot better. We did what we needed to do to win the game.”

(On the starters playing together in the first drives): “Yeah, you wanted to get Jameis out there in some game action. It’s been a while since he’s, he’s been in that environment. Jarvis Landry is a new player in our system so it was good to kind of get him out and playing. Marcus Maye and Tyrann Mathieu out there playing together. So, obviously we’re going to take a look at the film and there’s certainly a lot of things that we were still putting up, but (I’m) overall pleased with the result.”

(On his reaction to Winston’s performance and his touchdown drive in his brief action): “I thought he was confident in the pocket. I thought he was decisive with his reads. There were a couple of plays where he really stepped up in there and rifled the ball in. So I was impressed with what he was able to do. It was good to see.”

(On his plan for Jameis going into the game in terms of number of drives) “Well, I think the plan going in was for our starters to probably get around 10 to 12 plays and I kind of had that in my mind, that if we had a nice, long touchdown drive, that we’d probably get him out pretty quickly after that.”

(On Penning and Tre’Quan injury updates) “No, I don’t. Tre’Quan I believe it was a little bit of a shoulder and Penning is his toe. They are both going to be evaluated. I do not have any updates on that.”

(On the next few days trying to get down to 53-man roster): “Well, a lot of tough decisions. You know, I think by Tuesday at three o’clock our time I think it is we’ve got to get down to 53 players on the roster. And so we’re going to go back and reevaluate this tape. There will be a lot of meetings, a lot of discussions to make sure we’re keeping the right 53 for the New Orleans Saints and what we feel like gives us the best opportunity to win.”

(On reaction to Kirk Merritt in the game and throughout camp): “Yeah, yeah. Look, I think there was a lot of things that were encouraging. There certainly (are) still some things that we’d love to see him clean up a little bit. We had one alignment error that cost us a penalty, so yeah, there were some encouraging things, but yeah, I think he’s still got some development to do.”

(On James Hurst’s injury recovery update regarding Penning’s injury): “I feel like James Hurst is going to be back sooner rather than later. So that’s obviously a good thing. But really, I don’t like to get into the hypotheticals because I don’t really know the extent of Trevor’s injury right now. But I do know James is kind of in a great spot.”

(On Justin Evans in special teams): “Well look, I’ll be honest with you that was one of the areas that we had a discussion with him [Evans] about improvement in that area. So that’ll be part of the evaluation process, but he made a nice play punching that ball out and there’s another, I think it was a third down stop, that he made a nice play on so he’s a guy that’s caught my eye a little bit.”

(On where the team is and if they’re ready for the regular season game): “We’ll find out right? I’m confident in the guys that we have in that locker room. I’m confident that we’ll be able to find 53 guys that I think are going to be a tough, competitive group and they’re going to fight you tooth and nail all the way to the end and that’s, that’s kind of what I want our team to be. I want it to be a really tough group and I think we got that, so I’m excited about it.”



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#### QB JAMEIS WINSTON

(On how it felt to be back playing) “Grateful. I’m so grateful just to be back in the dome (Caesars Superdome), playing in front of our fans.”

(On the first drive) “There is always room for improvement. We want to (work through) some procedural things. Like I said, I’m just grateful for the opportunity to be back.”

(On getting hit on the first drive) “It’s just part of the game. I’m happy it happened, I guess. Like I said, I’m just grateful to be out there. It meant a lot.”

(On being able to trust his receivers) “When you’ve got great talent around you, it’s always better. Jarvis (Landry) has been a superstar in this league for a long time. We didn’t even have Mike T (Michael Thomas) out there, so I was just happy that we made it efficient between the run and the pass and had some of our superstars step up and make some big plays.”

(On Jarvis Landry) “He’s just an excellent football player and has amazing football awareness. That is always good for a quarterback.”

(On his emotions leading into the game) “Gratitude. I just kept telling the Lord, ‘Thank you. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to be back on the field in front of these fans in the same place where I was carried off.’ I am just grateful to be back. I’ve been telling all of the people that helped me with this process, ‘Thank you’.”

(On the first time being in live action) “It’s football. I love football. That’s why I enjoy playing. The Lord blessed me with abilities to go out there and play. I’m used to that. What I was really grateful for was the opportunity to go out there and do that and compete.”

(On if he feels ready for the season) “Like I say, I am grateful for every chance I receive out there on the field. I’m happy that I was able to go out and execute today.”

(On the team heading into the regular season) “We’ve just got to continue to get better, and continue to do some things and gel more. These next two weeks are going to be critical. We are going to keep getting better and keep gelling.”

(On when he found out that he would play) “I can’t remember. He (Coach Allen) gave me the heads up that I would go out there and be balling. I told him, ‘Thank you.’”

(On getting hit tonight) “I know that’s going to happen. Like I said, I’m just grateful that I was able to be out there with my teammates and compete, and be back out there in the dome (Caesars Superdome) in front of these fans.”

(On completing all of his passes on the opening drive) “Yeah, we had great balance of the pass and the run. Gratitude for being out there is way more important to me than completing passes. Like, I (just) had a season where I did not finish, so I am just thankful. That means a lot more to me than (the) completions.”



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#### **LB Eric Wilson**

(On what he put on tape in the three preseason games): "I think I've played well through training camp in practice and in the games. I've had some production and made good plays. I've got around the ball and made some tackles. It's great to get out there and fly around. ."

(On his priority tonight) "My priority was just to get better. I want to show them what type of player that I am. They see it on film, but to see it each and every day in practice is different. I think I've done a great job of adjusting to the scheme and different techniques that we use. I think using those techniques has made me that much better, which is great."

(On his first Caesars Superdome experience) "I loved it. I have played here before when I was on the (Minnesota) Vikings. I love it being our home stadium. The fans get involved. They get loud and I appreciate that."

(On if they talk about the cuts) "It's just the nature of the business. It might not be as talked about as a regular thing, but people know about it. That's why you try to put the best film that you can out there even if you don't make that team, then you might make another team. Guys know that and that's why we work each and every day to make each other better."

(On the plan for the first team defense) "The plan was to start strong and start fast. I think we did that. Even going forward when some guys went out, we played really well. They had a couple of drives. Sometimes you are going to get punched in the mouth and it is how you respond to that. I think after that we responded well on offense, defense and special teams."

(On the dynamic of the linebacker room) "I think it is good to be in there with different guys to make sure that our communication is on point. We have that relationship and that camaraderie. Demario (Davis) does a great job of being a leader and talking out there. He does a great job making sure that everyone is on the same page and when he's not in everyone tries to pick up and maintain that."

#### **RB Mark Ingram II**

(On the first drive): "I felt like we did well. We had the two penalties that took away some good plays. We need to clean that up, but we were able to overcome it. We put together two good drives and scored touchdowns. It's definitely what you want. We started out real well as far as coming out (of) the gate. We had a long drive with successful plays. We want to get rid of the penalties, but we were able to get into the end zone despite the bad things that we did. It was good."

(On Jameis Winston's play) "He was comfortable. He was high energy. He started the game. He's a great leader and he was poised. I think he drove us down the field. We got a touchdown. He stood in there and made some good throws. He got us in and out the huddle and that's what you want from your guy. I think he did a great job."

#### **WR Kirk Merritt**

(On the touchdown) "Just being able to play here and score in the endzone is a feeling like no other. I ran an ally split on a delay route. Ian (Book) trusted me enough to throw the ball and I'm really appreciative of that."

(On if the plan was to play receiver tonight) "Yes sir."

(On if there was pressure) "There's no pressure really. We are just out there playing football. I just play together with my brothers and be great. That's what Jarvis Landry was talking about pre-game."

(On if he feels like he'll make the team) "I'm going to leave it up to the coaches to decide that. It is all out of my hands. I did what I could do for the preseason. Hopefully it is enough."

(On playing in the Caesars Superdome for the first time since the 2014 Louisiana State High School Football Championships with Destrehan High) "It was a crazy feeling, a surreal moment for me and my parents. My parents were in section 343. That's the same section that we've had season tickets since I was like 6 until I was in high school. It was crazy to see them in the section and to score in the end zone right next to them. It was a great feeling."

# TRANSCRIPTS

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## LOS ANGELES CHARGERS at NEW ORLEANS SAINTS POSTGAME TRANSCRIPTS

Friday, August 26, 2022 ⚡ Caesars Superdome ⚡ New Orleans, La.

### HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

#### **On an overview of training camp and the three preseason games:**

"I like the way that we came together as a football team. I think that our team has improved from the first day of practice until now. I think that we got full evaluations, which is what we were after, in these three preseason games. Now, we're ready to get on with it."

#### **On RB Joshua Kelley's performance tonight:**

"I thought that Josh gave us a spark tonight. I thought that he created some things for us; that draw was a big one. I thought that he was a bright spot for us tonight, for sure. I thought that he gave us some energy."

#### **On his evaluation of the roster leading into final cut-downs:**

"I think there is a lot to be decided here, especially at the back-half of our team. We have to make sure that we take a good, hard look at it. Then, we have to take a look at the rest of the NFL. That's what we're going to try and do, try to put our best group together. Then, you also know that it's never over. It's a long season. But I like this football team. I think that we're a lot better football team than we were at the beginning of training camp. Now, we're ready for what's next."

## **QUARTERBACK CHASE DANIEL**

### **On tonight's performance and returning to the Caesars Superdome:**

"There are a lot of good memories here for me. Obviously, started the first four years of my career here, then came back for Year 5 [with the Saints] in 2017. It was good to get some experience with the second O-line and second receivers against their starting defense. They're a really good defense. Went three-and-out the first time, and didn't really talk about that pick-stunt that they did. Then, we were able to have a 15-play touchdown drive against their ones. That was really cool. I thought that we were able to move the ball really well. I thought that our running backs played really well. I thought that J.G. [WR Jalen Guyton], with the catch down the sideline, played excellent. For us, in the first half, it was good. We were down in a 14-0 hole. To score 10 points back there to end the half, it was good."

### **On playing with a younger supporting cast:**

"They keep me young [*laughter*]. I turn 36 in a month. We play a sport for a living. We play a game. [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley says it all of the time, you have to have fun with football, and I'm still having fun and I'm still playing pretty well. It was just fun to get out there with the guys and get another chance before the regular season starts."

### **On the quarterback group:**

"It all runs through [QB] Justin [Herbert]. He's one of the best quarterbacks in the league, if not the best. [QB] Easton [Stick] and I do a good job trying to support him any way we possibly can, whether that's on the field, off of the field, film work. Whatever he needs, we try to give it to him. The transition is now, so everything rolls through him starting tomorrow. Whatever we can do to help him get ready for the Raiders game, we're going to do it. I think Easton said something about it; it's the same three guys for the second year and that's rare, that doesn't happen. We just sort of picked up from Day 1 and we were rolling. We just rolled. We crack jokes on each other. It's a fun room."

## **RUNNING BACK JOSHUA KELLEY**

### **On if he had ever completed a hurdle in-game before tonight:**

“Actually, I have. If you go back to my archives at UCLA, in college, I did it quite a bit. I had a lot of practice at it, that’s why it kind of seemed a little bit natural. I tried to do my best. Shoutout to the offensive line; if it wasn’t for them, I wouldn’t have gotten there.”

### **On using this preseason to overcome prior adversity:**

“It really has. It’s helped my confidence a lot. For me, I’m not really overthinking the game, I’m just out here playing. A lot of the veterans that I’ve been rallying behind, they’ve just told me to stay with it. Experience is valuable for me. I’m going into my third year and things are slowing down out there. I’m just being confident in myself and what I can do.”

### **On what he learned about himself this preseason through the competition for the second running back spot:**

“I think the biggest thing is that no matter what obstacles are thrown at me, whether good, bad or indifferent, I’m going to keep going. I believe in myself. I know that I can be a really good running back in this league. I think what it really showed me was that I’m a competitor at heart. However the chips may fall, I put myself in the best position that I could. I left it all out there.”

## **RUNNING BACK LARRY ROUNTREE III**

### **On his touchdown tonight:**

“It felt good. I haven’t been there in a while [*laughter*]. It was 11 guys working hard. The first time, we didn’t get in, but the second time, we made sure that we got in. It felt really good to get into the endzone and have a rushing touchdown, but it was a group effort. I thank my O-line.”

### **On the competition for the second running back spot:**

“We feed off of each other. Even Ek [RB Austin Ekeler], even though Ek wasn’t playing [tonight], he feeds off of that. We feed off of each other. When somebody goes in, we tell them to be the best version of themselves. It’s really not a competition thing, it’s just you being the best version of you. Going out there, running hard and trucking guys, that’s just me being me. JK [Joshua Kelley] hurdling, that’s him. It’s something that you feed off of and it’s very contagious, I would say.”

### **On what he displayed in three preseason games:**

“I feel like I could have shown a little bit more, but I think just being a complete player, knowing how to catch the ball, run and block. Those are the three things that you have to do as a running back. You have to protect the running back, run, catch the ball, and get up the field. I feel like I showed a little bit. There’s a little bit more meat on the bone. I think that I came in prepared this camp, more than I did last year as a rookie. I think that all of the offseason prep of training, working with [Running Backs] Coach [Derrick Foster], and learning all different types of concepts, it paid off.”