



# POSTGAME NOTES & QUOTES

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

## NEW ORLEANS SAINTS AT SEATTLE SEAHAWKS SUNDAY, SEPT. 21, 2025 • LUMEN FIELD POSTGAME NOTES

- With their 44-13 loss to Seattle today, New Orleans moves to 0-3 in the regular season. The Black and Gold will travel again next week to face the Buffalo Bills next Sunday at 12:00 CT (1:00 ET) on CBS.
- Seattle scored 21 first quarter points, the most the Saints have allowed in the opening quarter since 2006.
- The Seahawks special teams propelled them to their hot start, with a punt returned for a touchdown and blocked a punt in the opening quarter. The punt block was the first punt block the Saints have allowed in 222 games (St. Louis, 2011).
- QB **Spencer Rattler** went 28-for-39 for 218 yards, with one touchdown pass and one interception, his first of the season. He also rushed two times for ten yards.
- QB **Tyler Shough** came in late in the fourth to make his NFL debut.
- WR **Chris Olave** had eight catches in the first half, the most in one half in his career. He led the team in receiving, finishing with a career-high ten receptions for 57 yards.
- TE **Juwan Johnson** also recorded six receptions for 51 yards on the day. Johnson now has 161 career catches as a tight end, surpassing John Tice to move into fourth in Saints history among tight ends.
- WRs **Rashid Shaheed** (four receptions for 42 yards) and **Brandin Cooks** (three receptions for 24 yards) also contributed to the wideout room.
- Shaheed also had one punt return for 40 yards, surpassing Reggie Bush to move to fifth all-time in club record books for career punt return yards (756).
- TE **Jack Stoll** recorded his first NFL touchdown early in the fourth quarter on a 13 yard pass from Rattler.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** rushed 18 times for 42 yards and also recorded one reception for 14 yards. With 56 total scrimmage yards, he passed Deshaun Jackson and Rod Smith to move into 78<sup>th</sup> all-time in NFL record books.

- Kamara played in his 118<sup>th</sup> game today, moving into a tie for 34<sup>th</sup> on the club's games played list with former Saints DB and 2025 Saints Hall of Fame inductee, Brett Maxie, and DE Charles Grant.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** played his 229<sup>th</sup> career regular season game, surpassing Drew Brees for most games played in Saints history. He also moved into a tie for 12<sup>th</sup> place in NFL record books among defensive lineman with Keith Traylor.
- Jordan also started his 228<sup>th</sup> career game, tying Brees for the franchise record.
- LBs **Pete Werner** and **Demario Davis** led the way in tackles for the Black and Gold. Werner tied a career-high of 13 stops (seven solo) with one fumble recovery and Davis tallied 11 tackles (two solo). Davis now has reached the illustrious 1,500 mark for tackles in his career (1,502).
- Davis also played in his 117<sup>th</sup> game as a Saint, moving him into a tie for 37<sup>th</sup> all-time in club records with former Saints TE and current Pro Scout, Josh Hill.
- CB **Quincy Riley** saw his first career action on defense and forced a fumble of his NFL career.
- LS **Zach Wood** now holds sole possession of 23<sup>rd</sup> in club history for games played, surpassing QB Archie Manning and TE John Tice.
- K **Blake Grupe** went one-for two in field goal attempts today, making a 27-yarder and his lone PAT attempt.
- P **Kai Kroeger** punted five times for 243 yards (48.6 avg.).



## **NEW ORLEANS SAINTS HEAD COACH KELLEN MOORE**

**KELLEN MOORE:** We didn't do enough to give ourselves a chance. We got to be prepared more. Starts with me. We need to give ourselves an opportunity to compete in these games. And so too many penalties, too many missed opportunities, big special teams plays early in this game that put us behind it. And I appreciate our guys' battle through the second half. They didn't quit. I do appreciate that. But this is going to be a very powerful lesson for our guys on adversity and how we respond, and simply, we can't start the football game like that with the sequence that we had and put ourselves in a really poor situation.

### **Q. Why do you think this team was so unprepared at the start of this game?**

**KELLEN MOORE:** Starts with me. Obviously we didn't do good enough. We missed the fourth down opportunity there, penalty when we got them stopped to kick a field goal, we got a 100 percent control penalty, dumb penalty on our part. And then we had three big special teams plays in a row. We got to do a better job of putting ourselves in better situations.

### **Q. What's sort of your message to the team after a loss? You talk about adversity, but how do you kind of keep it going?**

**KELLEN MOORE:** I think that's what it's about. It's a test of adversity. It's how you respond. You have to narrow your focus, look at the items that are good and certainly recognize those, but again, we did not do enough to start the game to put ourselves in a really good position to be competitive there. And so there's no one is going to feel bad for you. No one is going to come save you or anything. We got to put in a bunch of work, and we gotta get better right now and put ourselves in better position moving forward.

### **Q. How would you describe this team's discipline right now?**

**KELLEN MOORE:** We're not clean enough. We're not clean enough. Too many penalties, again, and too many of them they're under our control. There's judgment penalties in every single game. But the ones that we can control we can't have that. We got to do a better job.

### **Q. You mentioned the three special teams plays in a row. Like what did you see that was going wrong against on you special teams?**

**KELLEN MOORE:** That's a great question. I think obviously they took advantage of a couple opportunities. They had a really good design on kick return, the punt block, we gotta be better there. Punt return, again, they made a play. So we gotta do a better job there certainly, and that will be something for us to certainly spend a lot of time this week getting better.

### **Q. Was the punt return touchdown just a matter of like outkicking the coverage on that?**

**KELLEN MOORE:** Great question. I'll have to look at it more closely, but certainly, yeah, you can kick it deep, but we still got an opportunity to get that one down and get ourselves back in position.

**Q. In your history when penalties like that and slow starts like that have become a consistent theme, how can coaching overcome that or where can you pinpoint that?**

KELLEN MOORE: We got to do a great job of studying this. There's no throwing this film away and just move on. This is a 100 percent we have to evaluate every little item that happened today and get better from it. Again, we did not put ourselves in a good enough position to start the game. It starts with me. And we got to find the solution.

**Q. Obviously nitpicking with the scoreboard the way it was, but how come the decision was to go for the field goal in the first half?**

KELLEN MOORE: Just taking points at that point. We just got to get some momentum going our way. So obviously we knew it was an uphill battle at that point, and we're going to have to be really perfect to have any chance moving forward.

**Q. I mean the one before halftime in particular when you were on the five-yard line, I mean was it because you felt like a field goal could help you?**

KELLEN MOORE: Yeah, felt like we needed to earn some points out of that drive. We got some points, and we'll see if we can stop them and get ourselves at least in a position where you gotta play the game perfect to have a chance, but we just needed to get something going.

**Q. On that note, I know we've asked you about Blake Grupe before. Are you concerned about him? I know that was a long field goal.**

KELLEN MOORE: It was a longer one. We got to find a way. We just got to keep getting better, and that's all we can do.

**Q. Heat of the moment coming right out of the game, but how do you go about establishing the accountability when it comes to repeated issues like penalties and things like that?**

KELLEN MOORE: I think it's something we have to spend a lot of time, acknowledge, talk through and obviously understand it's something we can't play that way, then obviously we got to find the guys who can. But I have all the confidence in the world these guys will respond the right way. This is going to be a really valuable lesson for us today. It's going to be a really valuable lesson. Our guys are going to learn from this. It doesn't feel good at all but again, no one is going to come help you. We got to dig in together and find the solutions.

**Q. Does anything strike you about maybe what you need to do differently in terms of preparation?**

KELLEN MOORE: Obviously it's something we'll have to study. Obviously we're not -- we did not play up to our standards today. So I got to find what parts that we can improve on, get better at. And we'll find it.

**Q. The penalties (no audio).**

KELLEN MOORE: We're playing the battle the right way. I don't take that for granted. Guys are competing each and every play. Certainly the second half our guys are still going for it, which I certainly appreciate. We got to knock down the hard situations, and there's competitive situations. Again, we always talk about there's big plays that change games, and they can happen in any of the

four quarters. Whether it's the beginning of the game, towards the end, we just got to find a way to be more consistent.

**Q. I know it's easier said than done to suggest getting the ball down field more, but these 10, 12, 14-play drives when things are going well, is that by design how you want to play these teams?**

KELLEN MOORE: Yeah, I think at the end of the day it's really hard when you put yourself behind like that. They can sit there and play on top of everything. They're up by 28-plus points, whatever it is. So they're going to make you earn it. They're going to make you go the long way. We do have to find a way to get down field more on which. That's certainly the goal and the aspiration, but we got to put ourselves in position to actually be able to accomplish that.

**Q. What did you think about Spencer's play?**

KELLEN MOORE: I thought Spencer played fine. He gave us some opportunities. He did some good things. We just got in too many obvious pass situations where we weren't able to get the explosive plays, and I got to find a way to put him and help him be in better positions.

**Q. Despite the loss, what does it mean to you coming back to your home state being the head coach of the New Orleans Saints?**

KELLEN MOORE: Obviously I think a lot of us, we all have different experiences in this NFL. We all have hometowns in different spots. Obviously I appreciate my time here. I do love this place, but it's far from my thoughts right now, to be honest.

**Q. Both times you guys have tried the tush pushes here you guys have been penalized. Is that overstating things to make a direct correlation between how much you practice it versus how it looks?**

KELLEN MOORE: Yeah. Right now we're 0 for 2, and we've invested a lot of time in it, and we're 0 for 2. So obviously we got to get better there.

**Q. Quincy Riley seemed like he entered the game even before a lot of the backups started entering the game.**

KELLEN MOORE: Yeah. He played a little bit more. We kind of anticipated that being the formula. Play him a little bit more, just get him a little bit more in the rotation and we'll just kind of see how all that progresses.

**Q. Kool-Aid was healthy at that time?**

KELLEN MOORE: Yes. I believe so.

**Q. Just because of safety of avoiding any assumptions, the decision to go to Tyler Shough, can you tell us a little bit about that?**

KELLEN MOORE: Yeah. I just wanted to get as many of those young guys in and get them a couple snaps in the game at that point. Obviously we weren't going to win the football game. Try and get Tyler a few reps in the situation.

**Q. When you have this kind of start to the season, is it too early to start considering personnel changes? Do you look at that already?**

KELLEN MOORE: No. Our job is to get better right now and just get better and put ourselves in a really good position to be successful. And so we're not there yet. We're 0-3 so far. Doesn't feel good for anyone, but we got opportunities ahead of ourselves, and we got a group of guys that need to look forward, and they will look forward and get better this week and go for it next week.

**Q. Do you think that challenging environment here played a factor?**

KELLEN MOORE: Obviously we had a couple penalties on the offensive line with the presnap. Those, again, under our control. We got to do a better job there. But, again, we got behind it. We got behind in a tough environment, too early, and that's a challenging formula in this league.

**Q. Was Tyler like an emergency option today?**

KELLEN MOORE: Yeah, a little bit. He was just getting back into it. He had a great week. So we'll see how it progresses this week.

**Q. You said a couple of times here today that this whole thing starts with you. What's kind of like the first thing comes to mind with you that stands out that I want to do that better, I want to improve this or whatever it may be?**

KELLEN MOORE: Obviously we got to be prepared and put ourselves in the best position to be successful. You got to eliminate all the silly things. We need our guys to just play fast, free and confident, and we gotta get there. And, again, we got to find the formula. We got to look into this film really, really closely and hold each other accountable. Starts with me, again, and we'll find a solution.

## **QB SPENCER RATTLER**

**(On playing from behind..)**

SPENCER RATTLER: Yeah. It's tough. I mean, you know, you blink and the score is like that, it's tough to dig out of that hole. Thought second half we fought, but again, you know, self-inflicted wounds on all sides of the ball early on and can't do that with an offense like that. They're explosive. They had a lot of explosive plays, especially on special teams as well. Tough to get in that hole and dig out of it.

**Q. What do you think contributed to all the penalties you saw today from your offense?**

SPENCER RATTLER: We just have to be more dialed in. I mean, we knew it was going to be loud. It was a loud environment, tough environment. But I mean, we had those opportunities. We had the looks, and we just shot ourselves in the foot with the pre-snap penalties and then a couple post-snap penalties as well. So we're going to have to harp on that all week again, because we got another tough road game. We have to clean that up or it's going to be tough to win games if we can't clean that up.

**Q. What do you think kind of lagged in explosives so far? When you get in a big hole like that, it makes it tougher?**

SPENCER RATTLER: Yeah. Just like you said, when you get in a hole like that, they know the game plan after that. We're going to have to be aggressive. I tried to throw a few shots down the field when we were down three scores and tried to make something happen. Didn't connect on those, but we tried to dial some stuff up, and obviously they're going to play a little softer knowing we're down three, four scores. Don't want to be in that spot to begin with. We had a good shot dialed up for the perfect look, and I think we had a pre-snap penalty on that one as well early in the game. It's the details, the details, the details. That's all it is.

**Q. What's the team's morale like? How do you feel like you and your teammates are handling the 0 and 3 start?**

SPENCER RATTLER: It's not fun, but like the guys say, the vets say, you can't ride the roller coaster of emotions. Like we have to have a neutral thought. It's a long season. You see what's happening. We just have to be better. We have to be better on all sides of the ball. Have to be urgent about it and we just have to do it.

**Q. Is there anything consistent between the two false starts and the tush push? You guys have tried the tush push twice this year and both times had a false start. Something similar happened on both plays?**

SPENCER RATTLER: I mean we just have to be more dialed in on that play. We know what we were trying to do. The defense knows what we were trying to do. We've got to out-execute them and not get a false start on that.

**Q. On the 4th and 4, looked like you were trying to maybe direct traffic down field. What were you trying to do?**

SPENCER RATTLER: I mean, you've got to make a play. We have to work on scramble drills. We've got to work on that throughout the week, and I'm going to harp on that as well. But fourth down, end of the game, have to make a play. We just all have to be on the same page.

**Q. Was this team ready to play today? Just seemed like from the beginning you all were behind the eight ball almost every phase.**

SPENCER RATTLER: You feel good coming into a game. I mean, we felt great coming into this game. We had a great week. But you've got to go out there and do it. And obviously we knew it was going to be a tough environment. They started really fast. We had really bad self-inflicted wounds on all three phases, and you do that in this league with a good offense like that and it's going to be tough to come back from. So I think that was the name of the game today, and we've just got to clean it up.

**Q. Is there any crisis of confidence right now in the locker room at all?**

SPENCER RATTLER: I wouldn't say so, no. I mean, we know what we have to get better at. And we have to do it with urgency. It's a long year. We have to get better now, because it's not going to get any easier, and we just have to put better stuff on tape and go out there and play the ball we know we can play.

## **WR CHRIS OLAVE**

(On how to clean up things such as illegal shifts...) "We rep a lot in practice. We do a lot of up-tempo, trying to get off the ball. Here we just snapped it. We've just got to practice at a higher level."

(On what is involved to practice at a higher level...) "That's all we can go back to. We're 0-3 now. Today was a tough loss. We got beat in all three phases. That's where it starts -- practice. We have to practice at a higher level, be more technical in the details. Come back next week and try to get a win."

(On the challenge of maintaining a positive outlook...) "Man, you've got to. You can't just stop believing and have bad energy on the sideline. When adversity hits, that's when true character comes out. We're just trying to stick your chest out, keep your head up, keep pushing, taking it a day at a time. Control what you can control."

(On if Kellen Moore is changing his outlook...) "Not at all. Like I said, true character comes out when adversity hits. It's how you respond. It's like life. You get knocked down, you've got to get up every single time. We're not going to put our heads down. He ain't put his head down. We've just got to keep believing, keep a good mindset, keep attacking every day."

## **WR/RS RASHID SHAHEED**

(On why the offense struggled...) "We've just got to start faster. We've got to gain momentum. We left a lot of plays out there. We know that. We've got to come back in, watch the film and see what we can do better."

(On passing struggles...) "It starts with practice. We've just got to lock into it early on in the week and make sure it doesn't happen. I can't exactly explain why it is happening, but we've got to stop it because it's putting us in tough positions early on in drives. It's all of us. It's got to improve for us."

(On if the fight the team showed in the second half can be carried over to the next game...) "It carries over, for sure. We moved the ball late. We feel like we moved the ball decently well. We've just got to finish drives. We've got to look at what we can do better. I feel like once we watch the film and break it down, we can move on past this, and we'll be excited to go against Buffalo."

## **RB VELUS JONES JR.**

(On how the team takes responsibility for being better in situations such as the blocked punt...) "You've just got to watch film, and [learn] what can you do to prevent those things from happening. Just learn from mistakes. Togetherness is a huge thing, not pointing fingers at anybody. We all lost. The Saints took a loss. Let's get better. The beautiful thing about it, we've got another one next week. Stick together and keep fighting for one another."

(On what's the message to the team after starting 0-3...) "Adversity really brings the best out of a team. It's all about so what, now what? It's just how we're going to respond for the weeks [going] forward, Yeah. Just overcoming adversity. Stick to the plan. Togetherness. We're in this together."

## **DE CAMERON JORDAN**

(On how he felt after the game today) "I feel terrible after any loss. A game like that, you look up six minutes in and you're already down 21 (points). You get chin checked. You can say 'yeah we

responded in the second half,' sure. We put up points, the defense had a couple of three-and-outs, but that's just it. We barely even got the third down, sometimes it's those self-inflicted wounds. On offense and impeding drives, and on defense they gave up some plays."

(On if third down penalties will be a focus going into next week) "This is something we're definitely focused on. Kellen (Moore) has done a great job throwing it up on the board and addressing it. He's saying 'hey, these are things we have to not only be aware of, conscious of, but have to correct'. At the end of the day, it's got to be on the entire team to get this far behind us as fast as possible. I think "

(On his role in helping the entire defense after today) "It's got to be on us. It's got to be on guys that have seen this before. We've definitely been able to correct penalties before. I assume it's going to be on the leaders to have this talk and get it done now. On Monday, we've got to be able to say 'this is where we're at, and if we keep going this way, this is where we're going to finish up'. The reality is, at this point we're already at a juncture where we have to be as critical as we can be, right now."

## **S JUSTIN REID**

(On whether the number of penalties is surprising) "It's hard to replicate, game speed and game speed scenarios. Some of that you just get from playing the game and you get better at it that way. Hopefully you don't see the same mistakes repeating themselves over and over, and over again."



## **SEATTLE SEAHAWKS HEAD COACH MIKE MACDONALD**

MIKE MACDONALD: Great to see everybody. Obviously very pleased with our win. Really just proud of our process right now, the guys' attitudes, our approach every day. The coolest thing about our group is we're not satisfied. We have room to grow as a football team. Talk about being decisive, shocking, relentless. I thought we were those things, but especially on defense there is room for growth. We can learn from extended drives. We will look at the penalties and see what went wrong there, and if it was cost of doing business or on the other end of the spectrum. Overall just a great team effort. Guys played extremely hard, played together, and complementary football; our offense was efficient. Would've been great to not give up the ball at the end. Defensively we played hard. Did a great job. Really the story the day is our special teams unit. They're responsible for 30 points directly. That's pretty high powered stuff. So those guys deserve a lot of credit. Gave Jay Harbaugh a game ball. Tory Horton just a phenomenal game as well. D'Anthony Bell with the punt block, great all around. Really proud of it, but now we got to go back to work. Got a game Thursday. Got a great plan to get our bodies and minds right. We got to move on quickly because the game is coming faster.

### **Q. With that in mind, how nice it was to be able to rest a lot of the starters for the last quarter?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, it was critical. We played a lot of plays on defense in the first half, which is a good problem because of how quickly we were scoring. But that's one of the reasons we were getting guys out a little sooner than probably would've in a normal game.

### **Q. You say you're not satisfied. Your defense gives up 13 points. What are you not satisfied with right now?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I think when they move the ball -- we'll look at it. From my perspective we made some decisions that we have been making smarter decisions in those moments. Couple penalties that extended drives, some of the execution on third down. So there is room to grow.

### **Q. You talked a lot about trying to build on leads.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

### **Q. How do you feel about that first couple minutes of the first quarter, just that flurry there.**

MIKE MACDONALD: It was great. It was great to start the way we do. Again, our process I think is good. You know, we got to stick to that and believe in it, double down on it, the principles got us to this point. But that is how we want to play football there at the beginning of the half.

### **Q. A lot goes into punt return. What about Tory's game makes him so good?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I mean, just how he's attacked the whole process since he got here. We had ambitions for him to be our punt returner, and we're talking about countless, countless reps and hours of preparation, and he's playing really decisive right now. I can't wait to watch the play on our punt return unit and who sprung blocks and how we set the whole thing up. I can't tell you exactly what

happened on that play. Any time you spring a return like that there has to be some critical blocks that have to be executed. We will hopefully see those and I will give him a shoutout next time we get together.

**Q. The growth process of your offense seems like they begin to score early. Talk about that, how they're maturing as well.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Again, it's an emphasis on how being decisive is knowing what to do from the get-go. Klint (Kubiak) and the crew deserves a lot of credit on how we start, our openers. That's important. How you start games and having a clear idea what you're trying to execute, trying to get done.

**Q. From a depth standpoint, D'Anthony Bell going out and getting the blocked punt; also had a tackle for loss. Ty Okada making a couple big plays out there.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah.

**Q. How do you feel about those guys' contributions getting thrown in there?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I'm a broken record here: This is why we operate the way we operate. I think you felt the strength of the 70 today, and really proud of those guys. It's hard to stay ready when you're not in a prominent role and these guys have done that. Derion Kendrick, again, phenomenal game. D'Anthony (Bell) is playing really fast right now. Ty (Okada) played a solid game. So I'm proud of those guys to come in and play winning football for us.

**Q. Jaxon Smith-Njigba was pretty sick yesterday but I guess but he obviously rebounded well.**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah. Came back from the dead. Pretty cool. Not quite the flu game, the Jordan flu game, but it was pretty solid.

**Q. You mentioned Derion Kendrick, three games, two interceptions in back to back games. What stood out to you?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Should have three more. Has to go to the Leslie Frazier school of ball drills. There are a lot of cool game plan things, little nuances of the game plan that he picks up and executes that doesn't necessarily show on the scoreboard. To me that's what fires me up the most because those are little edges that we chase throughout the week that give us edges. You know, recognizing splits and distributions and those things. Playing fast, decisive, and he's just got a knack for making plays. It's pretty cool.

**Q. It's a short turnaround to Arizona like you said. Any idea if Nick Emmanwori, Devin Witherspoon, or Julian Love will be able to play?**

MIKE MACDONALD: Yeah, I fell into the trap last week. We're going to take it day by day. Of course we want those guys to play. 'Spoon gave it a go this morning. Just couldn't get there, so that was the right decision. I know that's killing him, but the rest of the guys stepped in and played great football in his place.

**Q. What did you think of Ty Okada stepping in and playing the whole game like that?**

MIKE MACDONALD: I thought he executed the game really well. Probably all the details I can't give you right now. I know he made some plays. He would have had a sack if he didn't lift the quarterback, so that would've been cool.

**Q. With how things have gone at home, how nice was it to give your fans a performance like this?**

MIKE MACDONALD: It's critical. I mean, look, this guy over here, EJ (Ernest Jones IV), deserves a lot of credit. He has made a big emphasis of it. Guys probably listen to him more than me. It's important for us to play this way at home. It was great to do that for them, so we got to do it more often.

**Q. Sam almost had a perfect pass rating. Talk about the way he's been playing the last couple weeks.**

MIKE MACDONALD: He's just playing really good with great confidence and he's decisive. I think one ball he probably wants back on the spray off to Jaxon (Smith-Njigba). Guys are playing hard for him. Our protection right now is really good and we got to keep that going. Look, Sam be first to tell you we're excited we're 2-1 but we have to go stack some wins and win another one. He's hungry to do that.

**Q. What about just big picture your view of the offense through three games and how closely it's aligning with what you...**

MIKE MACDONALD: Same thing: We are on our way. If Klint (Kubiak) was standing right here I'm sure he could rattle off about a dozen things he wants to improve on. That's the mentality we want. Look, we're excited about the growth we have had. We love our guys. We love going work. But we understand that we can be a really good football team and we're determined to get there.

## **QB SAM DARNOLD**

SAM DARNOLD: Obviously a really good result today. You know, I thought first off, special teams, defense, the way they set the tone for this game, and then led to us having really good field position all day. I feel like we did a really good job executing. Obviously we would like to come away with a few more touchdowns or couple more touchdowns. I thought we obviously settled for some field goals there. Overall, I feel like that was a whole-team game. Like I said we stayed on top of the field position all day and just really proud of our guys. Proud of our offensive line, running backs, everyone for setting the tone. Tory Horton, man, coming to work today. It was awesome to see him get that punt return and get a touchdown, doing his thing in the pass game.

**Q. The way you started on offense the last two games in scoring, what does that reinforce to the game planning and all the preparation all week?**

SAM DARNOLD: It's huge. Just the preparation, like you said, that we put in throughout the week, that's how you want to start the game. You go through your openers and you go through certain things that you want to do against their defense. You know, sometimes, especially early in the season, you're not necessarily sure exactly what you're going to get from their defense. I feel like our guys did a really good job of executing no matter what the circumstances were, even it was a different look than what we practiced. I thought just execution was at a high level today.

**Q. You mentioned defense and special teams set you guys up with great field position several times. To go 4 for 4 on your first four possessions in the red zone, what does that mean for where the offense is at right now that you guys are finishing at that type of a rate?**

SAM DARNOLD: It's huge. Obviously got bailed out a little bit on that first drive with the penalty. Like to convert that third down. Just got to continue to be really good in practice. I think that's where it starts, is practice, executing and talking about it. If certain things don't necessarily work in practice or we need better timing, continue to work on that and even throw certain routes after practice if we need to. That's where it starts. It starts with the work we put in throughout the week, and if that continues to translate to on-field success, we're going to be all right this year.

**Q. Sounds like Jaxon Smith-Njigba was sick there for a little while, the last day or so, and didn't look like it today at all.**

SAM DARNOLD: No, he didn't.

**Q. That second play of the game that you were able to scramble, avoid pressure, and then get to him, just take us through that play.**

SAM DARNOLD: It was big time. He's such a good football player. When I get in those scramble modes and he's able to kind of detach from his guy and make a play, I know he's always going to be there -- along with all our other guys, but Jax especially. He's really good at playing ball at that point and getting open.

**Q. Quite a few plays where you throw accurately moving to your left, which I imagine is not easy. What's the key to throwing accurately across your body like that?**

SAM DARNOLD: I think just doing it a lot, getting reps at it in the offseason. You know, understanding kind of momentum. Understanding how fast I'm going and just being able to turn my shoulders. I can be running as fast as I need to be to my left, as long as my shoulders are turned. I understand that going to my left that ball is going to pull a little left as I'm throwing left, so just understanding those details. At the end of the day just comes down to getting those reps in the offseason, even now.

**Q. You mentioned Tory Horton already. To see a rookie do what he's done the last few games, what stands out most about what you've seen from him?**

SAM DARNOLD: I think just how steady he is. Even having a good game in Pittsburgh, catching that touchdown, was still eager and hungry this whole last week, wanting more and just asking a ton of great questions. Like I've talked a ton about Tory, but he's just continuing to grow. I know he's going to continue to get better and want to get better. I think that's the biggest key as a young player, is just having that want to get better and understand the offense even that much more.

**Q. Sam, he started getting going in training camp pretty early despite missing the offseason stuff being held out and such. Why do you think he was able to find a footing so quickly and show this side of him as quickly as he did?**

SAM DARNOLD: First off, he's talented. He's a really talented football player. He does all the little things that you can't really teach really well. He tracks the ball well. He's got great speed. Good hands. He's got length. So I think at the end of the day like his work ethic is what is going to set him apart in my opinion. That starts with the entire room. I feel like that whole receiver room does a really good job continuing to work and ask questions and do all the right -- the little things to continue to get better.

**Q. A lot of talk in the offseason, but how much have you guys all emphasized being better at home, starting fast at home and winning home games?**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, I think that's obviously a key to win at home. At the end of the day like our goal is just to go out there and execute. The winning is going to take care of itself as long as we go out there and play one play at a time and that's kind of our mindset.

**Q. When Kenneth Walker III cut that run back, were you thinking about throwing a block there? Looked like you were gonna.**

SAM DARNOLD: Yeah, that was a tough look for sure. I'm not sure exactly how it looked, but I was looking for a block and I was like ah, I don't think I should block, so I'm going bail out of here, and then somehow still ended up on my ass. But, yeah, it was fun to kind of get out there, and K9, the way he cuts I knew or had a feeling it was going to come back to me. Got to have a better plan next time I guess.

**Q. Is that something he had to make a really business decision on especially considering the state of the game that you guys are at?**

SAM DARNOLD: It was just at the end of the day I think I would love to go help my teammate and K9 go get a block for him. At the same time there were a lot of guys on that end of the field, a lot of big guys, a lot of D-linemen, I don't know if I would've won that battle had I chose to go out there and get a block for him.

**Q. What progress have you seen from the offensive line in the three weeks?**

SAM DARNOLD: They're continuing to talk, they're continuing to get to know one another, get to know the calls, get to know how deep they're pass setting certain games, you know, the run game communication on that. I feel like they're continuing to get to know each other a ton that way, and you can tell. There is still a lot of room to grow, not only in that area, but also as a whole. All the skill players, me, I feel like the last couple throws that I had weren't necessarily as accurate as I would've hoped for. So just going to continue to learn being get better and grow as an offense.

**Q. Quick turnaround to Thursday and Arizona. How do you approach this stage of your career planning for a game on only a couple days' rest differently than if you were, say, getting ready to play on Sunday?**

SAM DARNOLD: Just speeds up the process entirely. Tomorrow I'm sure we'll be meeting quite a bit and maybe have a walk-through, something like that. But, it just speeds up our process. Tomorrow is a Wednesday, a normal Wednesday, then you got Thursday, Friday, and all of a sudden you have the Friday and Saturday is one day on Wednesday. You look and you're playing on Thursday, which is now our Sunday. So everything is just so condensed, the time. So for us, we got to be ready. We got to have our bodies and mindset right and ready to go by Thursday. We know we'll have a really good game plan by the time Wednesday night comes around.

**Q. You have obviously been a starter in this league, but you've been a back up, too. There is a lot of work that goes into that. In a game like this is it good to have Drew get in and get some playing time?**

SAM DARNOLD: It was awesome. Whenever Drew gets an opportunity to go in there I know he's going to take full advantage of it. I know, like I said, I wasn't a huge fan of my last two passes that I threw in the game. It was like I was joking with the guys, but it was kind of like, if there are any

hoopers in here, you go out there and you don't want to miss your last shot ever. Whether it's a layup, you want to get the ball in the bucket, the last shot you take. For me to end it on two incompletions, that was not my favorite thing in the world, but I know he's going to go in there and do a good job when he gets in there.

**Q. Sam stylistically, through three games how close do you feel like you are as a offense to being the kind of offense that you guys wanted to be?**

SAM DARNOLD: I think we're right there. We're kind of knocking on the door of what we want to be as an offense and executing at the level we want to execute at. We just got to keep taking it one day at a time. Things will fall into place. We have to continue to have that worker's mentality and grow from this one. Watch the tape because there is a lot of stuff to learn from on this tape and be ready to go by Thursday.

**FastScripts Transcript by ASAP Sports**

## **NT JARRAN REED**

(On defending the home field) "We have to start protecting our home field. When our fans come and see us, they're expecting a win at home, and we expect to win at home. We have to use that to our advantage, our crowd and everything."

(On the 12s today) "It was amazing, man. It was so loud, and half the plays they were calling, I couldn't even hear. I was getting down and playing. That's what we need though. We need to feed the fans and chaos."

(On Byron Murphy II's sack) "Once again, I'm not surprised. He's worked so hard. I'm so happy for him to see his hard work paying off."

(On Derion Kendrick) "This guy, he's been special since he came in. He's been really special. The way he attacks the ball and the way he practices every day. I'm so excited, man. It just reminds me of when I came in as a rookie."

## **LB UCHENNA NWOSU**

(On how they were able to dominate today) "The preparation. It started with practice. Our focus all week has been great. Locked in. We like to call it loose and focused. Still having fun but still locked in. It started way back on Monday. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.

(On if there was anything specifically they did to shut down the Saints offense) "We just kept doing what we do best: stopping the run and making plays in the back end."

(On the team confidence after everything comes together in all three phases) "It [helps] a lot. We play better, we play faster, we play everything. We just keep building off of it and it builds our confidence going into next week too."

## **TE AJ BARNER**

(On the special teams units) “What that unit did against a good team like that is really powerful for our team.”

(On how special teams helps the offense when they get the ball in good position) “Short fields are everything. There are statistics behind it that are multiple point swings in our favor when those things happen. And the momentum of the game too. That’s huge.”

(On Tory Horton and what has impressed him most) “He’s a mature kid. He played five years in college. Had a really successful college career and it’s translated to the league.”

### **RB KENNETH WALKER III**

(On special teams setting the tone early) “It was just a great job by the special teams unit. Jay Harbaugh, he coached them up well, and our guys went out there and made plays. Tory Horton, he came out here and balled out tonight. Congrats to the rook.”

(On seven scores on the first seven possessions, finishing in the red zone) “I felt like that wins games. We are striving toward the right direction, where we can finish in the end zone. Points wins games. I feel like we did a great job tonight—today—with that.”

(On getting a touchdown on the game’s first possession) “It is always important to start fast. We talk about that a lot, coming out there and starting fast and scoring early. I feel like that’s important, and also just keeping the momentum going.”

(On the importance of winning at home) “That was a big emphasis this week. Jay Reed even talked about it, he was like, we gotta protect our house. We gotta start winning at the crib. We did that today.”

(On Tory Horton’s game) “He’s special. We’ve seen him in training camp, making plays all throughout training camp. It’s just good for him to come out here and showcase to everyone else.”

(On whether it is good seeing Wright and Holani get a chance to play) “Definitely, because I know they can ball. It’s always good to see the other running backs get their chance and get their shot at playing.”

### **S TY OKADA**

(On getting the start at safety) “It was an awesome experience. Having the comfort that I got from the trust in my teammates and them reassuring me like, ‘hey, you have 10 of your brothers out there with you.’ Going out there was very exciting, for sure, but at the same time just having their trust and all them backing me was a feeling like I can go out there and do this and take advantage of the opportunity.”

(On why there’s a feeling like no one is satisfied even after winning 44-13) “I think Coach Mike [Macdonald] does a really good job of instilling that in us. And I think we’re going to look back at this film and see that there are a lot of areas where we fell short. And we have some really big goals as a team and in order to attain those, we know that we have to play some incredible football. We’ll go back with a fine-toothed comb on this one and we can’t be satisfied with that win. Although [we’re] very happy and it’s not easy to win in the National Football League, we got to come back and learn from certain mistakes that we made. Especially in the middle to later part of the game.”

(On winning big at home) "I don't know if you guys saw that Richard Sherman came in and spoke with us and he was like, you have to feed these fans and they will be the loudest fans in the world for you. We feel that. It's up to us to make that happen. To be able to build that trust again with the fans and continue to put a great product out there for them to get excited about and for them to rally behind, that's what we always strive to achieve."

(On when Richard Sherman spoke with the team) "He spoke with us recently just as a team about how amazing our fan culture is and how great it is and all the support that we have from the 12s."

## **S D'ANTHONY BELL**

(On being elevated from the practice squad and blocking a punt) "It means a lot. That's what I always pride myself on being ready for the opportunity. I was able to make a play for the team and help us win, and I'm just blessed. God bless."

(On Jarran Reed's pregame speech) "The message was we lost that first home game. We want to get the 12s rocking, and we want to be able to make everybody scared to play in Lumen Field. We want to go out there and put fear in everybody that plays here, and we want to get the fans involved. Playing good football gets the fans involved. That's what we want to do."

(On what he saw on the punt block) "It was something that we had prepped for all week. So, shout out Coach Jay (Jay Harbaugh). He had seen it, and he was like, 'Hey, when we get an opportunity here, let's take advantage of it.'"

(On Derion Kendrick) "Yeah, we made DK (Derion Kendrick) feel a part of the team as soon he came in. He came in talking on the first day. We love his personality. We love him as a player. And we're doing whatever to embrace him and help him learn the defense."

## **CB DERION KENDRICK**

(On earning his second consecutive game with an interception) "Honesty, I'm pissed off. I'm supposed to have four picks right now, but I'll take it. But I'm just keeping my head down and taking it day by day. I'm not getting ahead of myself, not looking at the past, and then going out there and trusting the process."

(On how his confidence is growing after coming back from injury) "Confidence never went nowhere. I feel like just have to keep stacking and try to get one every game. That's my goal."

(On winning at home in front of the fans) "Protecting that house, that means a lot to us. The fans are going to pack out the stadium every time, bring the energy, so we have to do the same. Just protect that house and give them the dub every time."

(On Jarran Reed's pregame speech) "Yeah, just from the first game, we didn't finish how we wanted to. It felt like we could pull that game out. So, every game we have to come, step out there and leave no doubt."

## **DT BYRON MURPHY II**

(On what it means to win at home) "It was huge, it was a big win for us. Going into this week we said we wanted to be a dominant team, and we showed that today. We have to keep going and keep building off that success."

(On his sack) "It felt great, there is nothing like getting a sack. You get sacks by rushing as one, everybody on the same timing, everybody communicating with one another. That's how you get sacks, that's how you create opportunities for a sack. I appreciate the guys that are rushing with me."

(On the big plays made by special teams) "That hypes everybody up, both sides of the ball offense and defense. And vice versa, if the defense goes out there and gets a four-and-out, a pick, sack, that turns up the offense and special teams. We're all one, 12 as one."

(On how the defense is playing) "Throughout the week it starts there. It's the way we work and our preparation. From starters all the way down it doesn't matter, we hold each other, especially in the D-line room, to a standard. There is no drop off, when you're in there you have to take advantage of that, take advantage of your opportunity, and make the best out of it."

## **LB ERNEST JONES IV**

(On the emphasis on getting wins at home) "When I got here, those first couple home games I played, I noticed that I've never heard fans make as much noise. Then we get into this year, I kind of noticed with the [home] record that we're not playing too well at home. On the road we're kicking butt. But, we gotta win games at home, and when you have a crowd and you have fans that show up like the 12s do, you gotta go win at home. You got to put emphasis that when you do get a home game, you go out there and you ball out and you feed them chaos."

(On the difference in playing with a sizeable lead) "I was telling the guys on the sideline, I don't know how many times since I've been here we've played with that much of a lead. So, when we get leads like that, pin your ears back and let's go hunt, man. Let's go get after the ball, get after the quarterback, and they get nothing."

(On being able to keep Alvin Kamara bottled up) "It was nice, when you have a good back like that. I think for this defense, we kind of heard the noise earlier in the week, I believe one of their coaches, were excited about the challenge of having him and them thinking they were going to run the ball on us. So, we took that personal. Listen, it's going to be tough to run the ball against us, just because of the mindset and the physicality that we play. Honestly, it's just this. We're going to make it hard on you to run the ball on us, and if you do, good luck to you."

(On guys in the secondary stepping up because of injuries) "I think it is the preparation. Kudos to the coaches, they're able to get guys ready. Also kudos to those players, they come in, they dominate. Whoever is up, we have the utmost confidence in whoever that is."

(On how well the first half went) "Of course there is a good feeling, but there is always that feeling that you don't want to get relaxed, you don't want to get complacent. You want to keep your foot on the gas. I was proud of how we were able to do that. As Coach Mike was saying, defensively, we have such a high standard, guys in that locker room, we're pissed off we let a few drives get extended. We're excited about working through that and getting to Arizona."

(On the play of Derion Kendrick) "I'll say this: When I got there in L.A., when DK was coming in, you could tell he was still trying to find the maturity aspect of it. For the two-three weeks I've been around him, the guy is a different dude now. I think it's a credit to the guys in the locker room who are in his position, who are in his ear. DK is a baller. DK is a bona fide ball hawk, put him in great positions, he's going to go out there and make plays. I'm truly proud of him."

## **WR TORY HORTON**

(On what he saw on the punt return) "Shoot, green grass. I just made the most out of the opportunity. The core guys, the holdup team, the corners, they did a great job on that play. That's something that we've repped and they went out there and put all their ten toes down on that play. They made the best of it. Celebrating that punt return with those guys because I wouldn't have gotten started without them."

(On if he saw Chazz Surratt's block on the punt return) "Oh yeah. I knew he was going to take him out for me. I just had a two way go. I kind of slowed down a little bit and let him make that block and then after that it was off to the promise land. Hell of a job (by) him. He's been working hard every day. To see him on the field and that being the last block that I kind of needed, I kind of knew it was a touchdown from the jump."

(On if they told him it was the longest punt return in franchise history) "Yeah, they did. That was crazy. It was funny because I came to the sideline and (said) 'I'm still gassed from that punt return' and then I looked on the little iPad and I saw it was 95 yards and I was like, 'No wonder I'm so tired, I just ran the whole field.' But that just goes to show if you're dialed in and you just try to make the best out of opportunities, just stack them one block at a time. For me, I didn't know that was the longest punt return, I didn't know how far that was, I was just so amped about the blocks that those guys made and how that opened up for me."

(On his receiving touchdown, the throw from Sam Darnold and the chemistry he's established with him) "Sam (Darnold) is a hell of a quarterback. He put that ball on the money. That's something that we kind of worked on a little bit here and there. He's on top of his game. He sees a little crease and he's going to put it where it needs to be. That's something that you want from a quarterback. That awareness, that smart mindset on the field, he kind of takes that place. It was a great ball. Shout out to Sam. Shout out to the offensive line for holding up. It doesn't get started without the offensive line so shout out to those boys."

## **WR JAXON SMITH-NJIGBA**

(On how he is feeling after the game) "Yeah, I'm feeling better. Especially after the win. It was a tough Friday and Saturday for me, but I woke up feeling good today. Not quite (the Jordan Flu Game), but the win makes me feel a lot better."

(On how much fun the team had playing in the game today) "It was a fun game. Everybody was flying around. Special teams units were doing their thing, defense was doing their thing and the offense came alive. It was a fun game all around, an exciting game. Now we're just going to get ready for next week."

(On the offense's efficiency) "Like I said, we're going to get more opportunities the more games that we play, and show who we are. That's just a little taste. We can execute, we can push the ball down field, we can go up-top, we can run the ball, we can do it all. I'm excited for what's next."

(On Sam Darnold's elusiveness) "Yeah, I saw him escape back to the left. I was just trying to get open for our quarterback. Those are big plays in the NFL - scramble drills. I'm just coming alive and making sure that I'm there when I need to be."

## **G GREY ZABEL**

(On what led to such a dominant start to the game) "I think it goes to our coaches, our special teams, guys coming off, being prepared for the game, and going and making good, explosive plays for us."

(On the emphasis of winning at home) "Yeah, we want to protect Lumen Field, go out and do our jobs every single play. We've got to give our fans something to show up for. I think today was a great example of why they've got to show up to Lumen Field and get loud. Causing false start penalties, and that start was just unbelievable. You got to be able to put a show on for the fans."

(On when he knew Sam Darnold would play well) "I'd probably say back in May, early June. He's an incredible quarterback. It's so fun blocking for him. People don't give him enough credit for how dynamic he actually is. So, I knew that's the type of player he is and that he was going to do that today."

## **CB JOSH JOBE**

(On how much more comfortable he feels with the defense now that he has been here longer) "It was great. Just working through it every week, day by day, just working hard, preparation. The team just staying together and the comradery of the team has been great. That's great for us."

(On seeing so many guys on defense stepping up when players go down with injuries) "It's next man up, that's the standard that we set. You have to keep a high standard. It doesn't matter who's on the field. We're all as one, when we stand together. That's the main thing."

(On not feeling satisfied despite winning by 31 pts) "We just got to keep going. It's a big win, but we have to continue. It doesn't matter if we beat a team by a lot, or by a little. We got to keep going every week."

(On having so many big plays in the first quarter) "It's momentum that keeps us energized and keeps us going. It gets us fired up, seeing everybody doing well as a team, it's a great feeling."

(On what about this defense fits his skills) "It's great, man. Whatever Coach (Macdonald) calls, we buy in, by the week. Just being decisive, every day, every week."

(On the play of Derion Kendrick) "Since he came in, man, he's setting the standard. He already knows what we've been doing. He's a great player, a great guy. He's just doing what you got to do. Every time you come in the building, every day is an interview for all of us. We're just keeping that standard high."