



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS
SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2021 • MERCEDES-BENZ SUPERDOME
SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- With the loss, the Saints' season comes to an end in the NFC Divisional Playoff. New Orleans' postseason record falls to 10-13 all-time and 8-6 at home. The Saints' record in the NFC Divisional Playoff falls to 3-5 all-time.
- For HC **Sean Payton**, the loss drops his career postseason record to 9-8 and 7-3 at home. Payton's career record in the NFC Divisional Playoff falls to 3-4.
- Offensively, New Orleans amassed 294 total yards, including 190 passing yards and 104 rushing yards. New Orleans recorded four turnovers for the first time this season, on three interceptions by QB Drew Brees and a fumble by TE Jared Cook.
- Defensively, New Orleans held Tampa Bay to 316 total yards, including 127 rushing yards and 189 passing yards. New Orleans' defense held Tampa Bay QB Tom Brady to under 200 passing yards (199) for just the sixth time in his 43 postseason appearances.
- QB **Drew Brees** passed for 134 yards and one touchdown on 19-of-34 passing. Brees has now thrown for at least one touchdown in 18 consecutive postseason games (each postseason game he has played in), dating back to Jan/ 8, 2005 as a member of the San Diego Chargers. Brees ties Tom Brady (18 consecutive playoff games from 1/19/14-1/20/19) for the second-longest such streak in NFL history, behind Brett Favre's 20 (12/31/95-1/24/10). Brees' .
- With 19 completions today, Brees now stands at 481 career postseason completions, which moves him into a tie for third in NFL postseason records with Brett Favre.
- Brees recorded three interceptions for the first time since throwing three at Tampa Bay in Week 14 of the 2016 season, and for the first time in his 18 postseason appearances.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** finished with 85 yards rushing on 18 carries and added three receptions for 20 receiving yards. Kamara surpasses Mark Ingram (276) and becomes the club's all-time leader in postseason rushing, with 357 career postseason rushing yards.
- Kamara moves into third in club record books with 33 postseason receptions, surpassing Devery Henderson (31). Kamara also surpasses Willie Jackson (267) for seventh in club record books for postseason receiving yards, now with 274.
- Kamara recorded three runs of at least ten yards, becoming the Saints' all-time leader in postseason big plays rushing. Kamara now has nine such runs in his postseason career, surpassing Reggie Bush (7) and Mark Ingram (7).
- QB **Jameis Winston** threw the first postseason touchdown of his career, a 56-yard pass to Tre'Quan Smith, on a second quarter gadget play in which he lined up as a wide receiver. Winston becomes the first Saint, other than Drew Brees, to throw a postseason touchdown for the Saints since Aaron Brooks threw two touchdowns against the Minnesota Vikings in the 2000 NFC Divisional Playoff on January 6, 2001. Winston's touchdown came on his lone passing attempt of the game.
- WR **Tre'Quan Smith** recorded two touchdown receptions, the first postseason scores of his career. Smith's first score, a 56-yard catch from Jameis Winston with 8:08 to play in the second quarter, was the Saints' longest completion of the season. Smith finished with three receptions for 85 yards and the two scores.
- WR **Emmanuel Sanders** finished with six receptions for 48 yards, his highest totals in a postseason game since recording six receptions for 83 yards in Super Bowl 50, as a member of the Denver Broncos. Sanders now stands at 49 career postseason receptions, needing one more to reach 50 in his career.
- TE **Jared Cook** recorded five receptions for 28 yards and has recorded at least five receptions in five of his six career postseason appearances.

- S **Malcolm Jenkins** recorded 11 tackles for the first time in his career, including 183 regular season appearances and 14 postseason games. Jenkins added three passes defended, also a personal best in his postseason appearances.
- LB **Demario Davis** finished with nine tackles and one sack of Tampa Bay QB Tom Brady, the first postseason sack of his career. Davis also led Saints defenders with two quarterback hits.
- LB **Alex Anzalone** recorded seven tackles, his highest total this season and highest total in his four career postseason appearances.
- For the fifth time in seven postseason appearances, CB **Marshon Lattimore** recorded two pass breakups in a postseason game. Lattimore added one tackle.
- Before exiting with an injury in the second quarter, WR **Deonte Harris** made an impact in the return game, returning Tampa Bay's first punt of the game for 54 yards and setting up New Orleans' first score of the game, a Wil Lutz 23-yard field goal with 11:34 to play in the first quarter. Harris' recorded a 67-yard punt return touchdown on Tampa Bay's second punt, but the return was nullified by a New Orleans penalty. Harris also recorded one reception for -1 yards.
- WR **Michael Thomas** was held without a reception for the first time in his career, including 70 regular season appearances and seven postseason games. Thomas was targeted four times in the game.
- K **Wil Lutz** converted on field goal attempts of 23 and 42 yards and made both of his extra point attempts, marking the third postseason game of his career in which he was perfect on his field goal and extra point attempts.
- In his 15th career postseason appearance, P **Thomas Morstead** averaged 47.0 yards on two punts, including one downed inside the 20-yard line.



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Saints Head Coach Sean Payton

On if the loss was due to the turnovers: "I thought defensively we played exceptionally well. Unfortunately, those types of things in a game like this, end up being the difference. They (Tampa) scored three touchdowns off of our first three turnovers. It's just tough to win a game against a good team like that when you do that."

On why the team did not take any chances throwing the ball down the field: "We had some down the field throws, actually. Sometimes, we were coming off to the underneath throws. We had a couple double spears. Look, we made some plays down the field. Obviously, not enough. I don't think that was our issue. I thought that we did a number of things well. Yet, we just didn't have enough snaps and gave them (Tampa Bay) some pretty good field position."

On how big the Jared Cook fumble was as the team was driving to extend its lead: "They're all significant. It's a third down, a real good play by him; and, obviously, a real good play by (Antoine) Winfield (Jr.), a headsy play. That was significant in that we just crossed midfield, I think, and we were going to be a first down. The drive to start the second half was encouraging. I just think that it's hard to beat a team that's in the playoffs, in this divisional round of the playoffs, when you have that lopsided of a turnover ratio. Credit Tampa Bay. They did enough things and played well to win."

On if this is the end of the Drew Brees era, can he describe what (Brees) means to him: "Listen, I think that is probably for another press conference. I can't speak for Drew. Obviously, I would take up all of my time on your question tonight, and I do think that it's for another press conference. Obviously, he's been tremendous for this team, this city. I could go on and on. Let's wait and answer that at the right time."

On the interceptions today: "(They were) entirely different type of plays. The first one was tight man-to-man coverage, almost a leverage play. The second turnover, I think, was on the third down conversion, the fumble. We'll look at the film. I think they were different, each one of them. Then, the last one, we were in a little bit more of an aggressive mindset or mode. Give those guys credit. They played well."

On if Tampa did anything special to stop Michael Thomas: "He drew the matchup that we thought, and those guys competed. Unfortunately, we didn't get enough attempts or enough balls his way, but that was part of the way that that game was unfolding. We received a lot of man coverage and occasionally some zone. When you get into these games, there really aren't that many surprises. It is more about the attention-to-detail. It's guys going out and executing and doing all of those things. That's the frustrating thing about the turnovers. (There) was a lot of man coverage, which is what you get from Tampa."

On if he had to change the game plan when Taysom Hill and Latavius Murray were ruled out to play: "I think that we kind of had that sense, so we were mindful when the week began not to draw too much attention to those packages. Each of them are different players. I think Deonte (Harris) getting hurt (didn't help). He was electric to start the game. I felt bad that he couldn't finish, because he had given us a real good spark. Hopefully, those guys are healthy. I will have a chance to check with the trainers right now. We will have a meeting tomorrow."

On Tampa's offense on third down: "I think that it kind of went back and forth. Obviously, later in the game with the lead, it became more challenging. You could definitely tell that they made that conscientious effort to run the ball. They did a good job with that at times. I thought that we did the same thing. Look, it's a good (Tampa) team. I just finished telling D.A. (Dennis Allen), I thought defensively, we look at their first score, if we look at drive starts, it was kind of the opposite of, really, the last game that we played them in Tampa. If you're going to look at where each team is starting with the football, it was kind of the tale of two different games."

On Devin White's play: "He's a good football player. Both of those guys, he and Lavonte (David), man, just like our guys, they are fast to the football. You've got to account for him not only in the run game, but he's real good in coverage. He's a good player."

On if he thought that Tampa targeted Alex Anzalone: "That wouldn't be accurate. I don't think that no one targets (a certain player). There is a lot that goes into defending the run. Like I said, early on, we did that well. Then, it's just too many downs that you are defending. I can't say that enough. It was not just one player. I think that that would be inaccurate."



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SAINTS DEFENSIVE WIDE RECEIVER TRE'QUAN SMITH

How big were the turnovers?

"They were very big. I think that every turnover that we had they ended up getting points. We didn't create any turnovers for them. They basically fed off our turnovers. We can make mistakes like that especially in a game like this. Good teams like them will go down and make points out of them."

How disappointing is this loss?

"I don't have the words. It feels like it hurts more and more. We are right there and incontrol of everything. We just don't pull through because something happens and we end up being on the bad side of it. It definitely hurts a lot."

What does Drew Brees mean as a teammate?

"Drew has meant everything to me. I feel like I'm growing up like one of his own. He is just a great guy. Besides football, you can talk about him as a person. I believe he is a great guy. He is somebody you can talk to and help you understand. I try to learn as much from him as I can. It is just wonderful having him around and being around him in general. I do hope that he comes back. He's a great guy, a great competitor, great teammate and great leader."

Was the touchdown reception from Jameis Winston in the playbook or a direct borrowing from Chicago?

"It was in the playbook last week, but it was a direct borrow. Honestly, I wasn't supposed to be on that play, but things happen. Deonte (Harris) ended up getting hurt. I'm lucky I paid attention in practice and watched everything. I ended up being the one to make the play."

Did they anticipate the tight man coverage today?

"We expected them to play more zone, but they played a lot more man. At the end of the day when they did go to zone, we knew what their g to zone play was. They did a great job of mixing things up and disguising coverage."

How did it feel to go out there and play and have a big game?

"I was itching to be back with the team. Even though my performance was good, I don't see that. I'd rather take the win with zero catches and zero targets and day of the week. It was great being out there and having fun with the guys."



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SAINTS DEFENSIVE END CAMERON JORDAN

How would you describe just the process of this season, just with all the kind of craziness that every NFL player, people who you have been around a program and whatever they had to deal with just to get to this point?

"I mean, first and foremost, God has blessed me truly to not only seen health this season, but health throughout all my last ten seasons, being with the Saints, what every football player had to face this year, was seemingly, nobody saw to come in and everybody thought, COVID-19 would be over by time season started. You think about what we, we faced it as an NFL as a team, I think we did well, in terms of following protocol that has nothing to do with how I feel right now. But that's that."

Obviously, you guys had a lot more success getting to Tom Brady, in the first two meetings, what do you think kept you at bay this time?

"Awful. Without looking at the film, I'd say, you looked up and they were in a running at four yards a clip, that's something that they hadn't been able to do the two previous games. Without making them single, singularly focused on trying to air it out, he was able to get all of his passes out. He's one of the fastest releases in the game. We knew that going in. If you take away the run. You got to get the ball maybe, set a little deeper and at the end of the day, we got to him early, we got in his face a couple of times, but that's not enough. Just going look back and just hate to watch this film and hate to go into the offseason, the way we did. The team we put together this year, the 16 games we put together to get a ticket to the playoffs, everything doesn't matter until you get to the playoffs beat Tampa Bay twice, it doesn't matter if it's not the third time. This sucks. I mean, for the guys in our locker room and for our team. This is something that I think we had a special locker room, but at the end of the day we didn't get our win. We didn't do enough on the field. We didn't do enough on the field. I put on the D-line for not stopping the run. I put it on us as a defense for not getting the ball back when we had a couple opportunities through some major opportunities we had to play with it to slip through our grasp."

Is there something in particular that they were doing on third down that was not allowing you to get off the field, like you normally do?

"It's nothing that they did. It's what we did, or didn't do. We didn't get to the ball fast enough. Kudos to them again, they've got a potent offense, we knew that coming in. We didn't have the third and longs that we had early on in the game, and we were off to straight series in a row. This is something that you have to stop the run to try and get yourself a better chance to get off a third down. It's something we knew going in and that's not happened today."

These sort of losses don't get any easier to deal with in the moment. Are you just like aware of just how hard it is to get to this point? And how do you kind of look at it in a big picture sense. Once this is all kind of settled?

"I can't even focus on big picture after we lost this game. I mean, I think about we had a couple of short three or four short fields, if we turn anyone of those opportunities into just field goals instead of actual touchdowns, then our offense having another chance. Today, we just fell short of our normal defensive expectations, our expectations as a team and to fall short when everything matters, this game hurts. Big picture, I'll let you guys worry about that. I let the organization worry about that. I can only control what's in front of me."

What has Drew Brees meant to you as a teammate of the last ten seasons?

“For the last 10 years that I've been here and for 15 or 16 years that he's been a part of the Saints, he's been everything you could imagine a leader could be. Been everything you imagine, a quarterback who details his game plan who is the first one in and first one out. Every stereotypical leadership core value you think of Drew has. Drew exemplifies. Everything that he does in terms of wanting to be a better teammate. he strives for that every day. You think about what he's been part of the league 20 years now? He's got one Super Bowl. I mean, that's phenomenal to say he's won one, but there's been a couple of times where it's been within our grasp and as a team has failed. Us as a team just didn't reach the heights that we wanted to and it's really going to go down, especially this year, is going to go down as one of my more fond teammates my most fond times of being a Saint. This locker room is special. The way we grew together as a defense the way our offense corralled this year. First, us to fall short all of it sucks and hurts and you think about again, Drew, what he went through this last season and what he went through this season (with injuries). I want more for myself and want more for us as a team and more for him.”



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Saints QB Drew Brees

On if this was his final game: “Well, I’ll answer this question one time, and that is that I’m going to give myself an opportunity to think about the season, think about a lot of things, just like I did last year, and make a decision.”

On if coming back for another season was worth it and would he have any regrets: “I would never regret it. Never. No complaints, no regrets. Man, I’ve always tried to play this game with a great respect, and a great reverence for it. I appreciate all that this game has given to me. There are obviously so many incredible memories, so many incredible relationships that have come as a result of playing this game. Man, you find out so much about yourself and you have to fight through so much when you play this game, and I’d say this season, probably had to fight through more than I’ve ever had to in any other season in my career. From injury to all the COVID stuff to just crazy circumstances, man, it was worth every moment. Absolutely.”

On if he was soaking in the moment as he ran off the field: “Listen, I always soak in the moment. And I’m looking up at my family and blowing kisses to my wife and daughter and fist bumping my boys. Yeah, I mean, they’ve become so much a part of this as my kids have gotten older, and they’re so invested in this as well. And so it makes the moment special to be able to share it all together.”

On what happened on the turnovers: “Well, a couple of them, I probably shouldn’t have thrown or maybe forced them in there. I think we were probably a little off on just the kind of overall execution. But, I mean, yeah, at the end of the day, that’s what this game came down to was those turnovers, because all of those gave them the ball deep in our territory. And you can’t do that with that offense, they’re too good. And they’re going to capitalize on that which they did. So, that was obviously the determining factor in this game.”

On the possibility of the result of this game and season impact his decision to play again: “No, this won’t have anything to do with it.”

On the touchdown pass from Jameis Winston to Tre’Quan Smith: “Yeah, great play, great execution. Alvin (Kamara) seemed to draw a lot of attention. And that allowed Tre’Quan to get through the middle of defense wide open. Jameis made a great throw. It was a big time play.”

On how uncharacteristic the turnovers were: “I’d say it’s pretty uncharacteristic, because we preach playing winning football and you turn the ball over four times. So you’re minus four total in the turnover ratio. And that’s not winning football, especially in the playoffs, especially against a team like that.”

On what will go into his decision making on whether or not he comes back: “I’ll keep that to myself right now.”



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SAINTS LINEBACKER DEMARIO DAVIS

How do you feel after the loss?

“Losing never gets easier. We just talked about it in the locker room. The reason everybody makes it this far as that they don’t accept losing. It’s going to sting. It’s going to hurt. It’s tough. You always have to put things in perspective. At the end of the day, we are still getting a chance to play a game. We are going to spend the rest of the night worrying about how we lost the game and what we could have done different. There are people that are dealing with a lot more tonight. You have people out there wondering what they are going to eat tonight. When you put things in perspective, then we have nothing to do but keep our heads high. You have to give credit to Tampa Bay. They played a phenomenal game. They earned the victory. It is going to hurt. You just have to find a way to shake it off and rise through the ashes. I live life by 10 percent is what happens to you and 90 percent is how you respond to it. When you get knocked down, the only way that you are going to find success is to get back up.”

Was Tampa Bay doing anything different tonight?

“They came at us with a balanced attack. They were able to run the ball effectively on us. They were able to hit us with a couple of play actions. They did a good job of executing when they got good field position. You just have to give them credit. They played the best overall football game.”

Was it tough to play this season?

“I wouldn’t say that it was tough. It was just different. It was a unique season. I told the guys in the locker room that this season was one for the ages. None of us will ever forget this season. No matter if we would have won it all or came up short like we did. This one was one for the ages with a lot of memories just because of the uniqueness of this season. I think we are all blessed to have made it through this season healthy. I think our hearts have to be with people who have lost people, their family members and those who were close to them during this world pandemic. Our hearts need to be with those on the frontlines. We are grateful for them. I feel like we have to keep it all in perspective.”

What did Kwon Alexander bring to the linebacking corps and was he missed in the playoffs?

“Kwon is a phenomenal player and one of my favorite teammates ever. He plays with a lot of energy and a lot of passion. I think both of us are Southern boys. We think a lot alike and it was fun having the opportunity to play with him. It was definitely a blow when we lost him. It’s a next man up league. We have been fortunate to have great players in that linebacker room. It’s next man up. Alex (Anzalone) came in and played phenomenal. It’s just the way that it goes. When your time comes, you have to be ready.”

What has Drew Brees meant to him as a teammate?

“Everything. He is more than what’s advertised. Drew is the reason why I came here. When I came to New Orleans, I wanted to help Drew Brees win another Super Bowl because I feel like he deserves it. With the accomplishments that he’s had in this game, I want him to have more championship trophies on the mantle. That was one of the major driving points for me coming here. It’s been one of the

reasons why I've shown up every single day. He is a great teammate, a great leader and a great man in the community. He's a great husband and a great father. He's an example for all of us to look to and try to emulate."



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Saints Running Back Alvin Kamara

On how uncharacteristic the team played: “Take all of the emotion out of it. If you turn the ball over four times and the other team turns the ball over zero times, it’s not a winning formula. You can’t turn the ball over and expect to win, especially not in the playoffs, and, especially not against a good team. (It) was uncharacteristic and it cost us.”

On how much Drew Brees means to him: “He hasn’t announced anything yet, so I’m not going to say that (about a possible retirement). Drew is Drew; he is still my teammate.”

On what Tampa did to slow down the Saints: “We turned the ball over four times. That is not a winning formula for any game, I don’t care who you play. It’s just going to make it tough. (We) turned it over once, (and) we were still in it. We turned it over twice, we were still in it. Once you get to three and four turnovers, it’s hard to combat that. I don’t care who you are. We’ve done a good job of being pretty protective of the ball. It was terrible timing to have those four (turnovers). Like I said, it sucks, but it is what it is.”

On how difficult it is to know that he won’t play with certain teammates again: “It’s the nature of this league, from the coaches, to equipment staff, to training staff. It changes every year. The door is always revolving, people coming in and people going out. It’s one of them things.”



BUCCANEERS POSTGAME QUOTES 1-17-21

HEAD COACH BRUCE ARIANS

(On how the defense was able to force four turnovers in Sunday's game)

"I think our guys knew they had to play tight coverage. Coming in, we're going to play man-to-man, get on them, not let them get going and not let [Drew Brees] dink and dunk. Get after him, get off the spot and make him throw on the move. They ran the ball pretty [well] on us there for a spurt, but once we got the lead, we kind of had them where we wanted them."

(On LB Devin White's performance)

"It was great. Just to see Devin make those plays – that's what he's capable of making. Everybody was criticizing how he can't cover anybody – I think he just proved that he can."

(On the defense's performance after allowing 38 points against New Orleans in Week 9)

"It's a different football team than that week. I try to tell everybody that – nobody wants to believe me. This is what we're capable of playing. Defensively, we've had some rough spots at times, but we've had some really, really good times. This was one of the best times."

(On RB Ronald Jones II and RB Leonard Fournette's performances)

"It's a great combination to have 'Ro' (Jones II) healthy again and then Leonard's playing really [well]. The blocking unit did a great job of blocking those guys – the tight ends, especially. The last time we played them, our tight ends struggled with these big guys. Joe Haeg did a great job and Gronk (Rob Gronkowski) did a great job also."

(On how the offense's zero-turnover performance made the win possible)

"Going into the game, we knew all week we had to protect the football. Protect the quarterback, protect the football and take it away. That was the outcome of the game [and] that was what decided the game. It was going to be the turnovers and we talked about it all week."

(On the celebration in the locker room)

"It's jamming pretty good right now. I don't have any dance moves, so I'm not in it."

(On holding Saints WR Michael Thomas to zero catches)

"Carlton [Davis III] has played him [well] over the years and he's a physical corner. I thought Todd [Bowles] had a great gameplan for all their guys. [Jared] Cook and Deonte Harris were the guys that scared me, but the guys really punched the ball out – got one [fumble] with Cook and got the interception from him. The guys really stepped up."

(On the offensive line's protection for QB Tom Brady and G Aaron Stinnie's performance in his first start)

"Tom was clean most of the day. He did a really good job – I thought – of protecting the football [and] not taking any chances – got close a couple of times. Aaron Stinnie played



his tail off – I knew he would. He’s been around now for a year and a half, two years. He’s a good little player.”

(On where this win ranks in his coaching career)

“It’s up there – probably with the Green Bay win in Arizona that put us in the championship game. That went to overtime. [I am] looking forward to going back to work this week and playing another great team [under] different circumstances and get ready to play.”

(On S Antoine Winfield Jr.’s forced fumble)

“I can’t say enough about him. To me, he’s the Defensive Rookie of the Year. 7.5 sacks isn’t anything [compared] to what he’s done.”

(On if he had any doubt this team would perform at this level late in the season)

“No. I just saw the steady progress. We battled through some injuries, losing Vita [Vea], losing O.J. [Howard] and those guys – and we battled through some injuries today. [Jack] Cichy breaks his arm on the first punt, so we’re down to three linebackers. Our guys stepped up there at the end of the game [when] we were almost out of corners. I can’t say enough about our guys – this is a very resilient team. These guys work and they have a great belief in each other.”

(On the decision to go for it on fourth-and-1 from their own territory in the first quarter)

“I had a lot of confidence that we’d get it done. Tom [Brady] does a really good job on that stuff and got us in the right [position]. We had a couple plays called and he could take the sneak if he wants it.”

QUARTERBACK TOM BRADY

(On how Tampa Bay’s defense put the offense in positions to succeed)

“The defense was incredible all game. The turnovers were huge. Last time we played them, we lost the turnover [margin], minus three. Today was plus four – you’re not going to lose many games when you’re plus four. Just a great effort – they came up huge. Offensively, made some plays when we needed to. The running game was great, the line protected great up front – just a great week of prep. Really proud of our team and everything we put in to get to this point. There’s only four teams left – we’re one of them. It’s tough to get to this point, so we need a big week [and] a great week of practice. We’ve got one of the best teams in the league, obviously, in Green Bay. [They are] the top seed, Aaron [Rodgers] is playing incredible [and] they’ve got a great defense, so it’s going to be a great matchup.”

(On if this trip to a conference championship game feels different than his previous trips)

“[I’m] just so proud of everyone – the whole organization. Our coaches have put in so much work and effort getting us to this point and preparing us every day – just done an amazing job. Guys really come together – it’s a really unique team. We have great chemistry, we have fun at practice and we’ve worked really hard to get to this point, just like the other three teams remaining. It’s hard to get to this point – there’s nothing guaranteed from this point forward – but we’ve got to go out there and we’re going to have to play our very best to beat one of the best teams in the league.”



(On how well the younger players on the team handled the spotlight)

“They played incredible. This team has been doing that all year at different times. The defense has picked us up, some weeks the offense has been a little bit better. Special teams has been so consistent. The way the defense played today – they were spectacular. The way the offensive line played, Leonard [Fournette], ‘Ro’ (Ronald Jones II) – it was just huge. All those guys came up big and we talked about it all week what we were going to need to win [and] to get it accomplished. It’s a long ways from the last time we played these guys at home. We started the season here and it’s a lot better feeling sitting in this tent this time around than the first time I was sitting here about 18 weeks ago.”

(On what it meant to defeat New Orleans after losing both regular season meetings)

“It feels great, obviously, to beat a great football team. That’s what feels best. It’s a team effort and again, it just speaks to the commitment level of everyone in the organization – the coaches, the players and everyone coming together. To beat great teams like this – this team has been one of the best teams in the league for a long time. 13-3 a few years ago, 13-3 last year, 12-4 this year. They do a lot of things the right way and I knew for us going into this week, we had to play a great game. Our defense stepped up [and] played huge, our offensive line was incredible – it was just a hard-fought game [and] a very physical game. We’ll need to get our rest the next couple of days and then be ready to go for practice on Wednesday.”

(On how the team prepares for cold temperatures in Green Bay for the NFC Championship Game)

“You’ve just got to have some mental toughness, wear some warm clothes and be ready to go. It’s chilly, man. That’s January football [in the] northeast [and] Midwest. We’ll be prepared. The team that plays the best is going to win, not the team that’s the coldest. We’re going to have to go out there and play well. We’re going to be challenged and it’s going to be a great game.”

(On G Aaron Stinnie’s performance in his first start)

“Stinnie did a great job, stepped in – the whole line did a great job., Ryan [Jensen], Stinnie, obviously, Ali [Marpet] – just such a warrior out there – Donnie [Smith] played an incredible game, big Tristan [Wirfs] does great, Joe Haeg came in. Everyone up front played huge. We need that – it starts with those guys, always. Great to see those guys come through.”

RUNNING BACK LEONARD FOURNETTE

(On the way he and RB Ronald Jones played)

“I’m telling Ro, excuse my language, but ‘[Forget] the injury. We need you, I’m not going to lie to you – we need you.’ I’ve been in these types of games. It’s funny – we have four good running backs – Ro came in fresh; I came in fresh. I said, ‘Man, understand this – you don’t get many chances to make it to the playoffs [and] to have the run that we’re on right now.’ I’m a living example. We (the Jacksonville Jaguars) went from the AFC Championship to the next two years not even making it to the playoffs. So big congrats to Ro for fighting through the injury – a hand and a quad. That’s difficult to play with. I



played with it in college and it's hard. Also, shoutout to coach T-Mac (Todd McNair) who was drilling us on the sideline every possession, giving us tips. '[Did] you see that look Leonard? How do you feel about this run? How do you feel about that?' They did a great job as a whole with our running back coach too."

(On how eager he is to get another shot at the Green Bay Packers)

"I'm just grateful to be in the NFC Championship. Right now we're celebrating the moment. That's going to come when Monday comes, right now we're just getting this excitement out our system, and then when Monday hits we know it's on to the next."

CORNERBACK SEAN MURPHY-BUNTING

(On the key to the defense creating four turnovers in Sunday's win and on his interception)

"Just the adversity – we've been fighting adversity all year. We've been battling the naysayers and those that say we can't do things. At the end of the day, we're all fighters – especially in that room – we like to battle. We like to give it our all. We wanted to make sure this wasn't our last one. As far as the interception goes, it was a group effort. The D-line got to the quarterback, so I did my job. It was man-to-man, so there really wasn't much to it. I got my hands on him, got my head around and got the ball. I'm actually kind of upset I didn't get in the end zone, but Mike [Evans] did, so that's all that matters."

(On the performance of LB Devin White)

"Devin is a baller. He's just known for making plays. He was the energy bug out there and that kind of energy is contagious. It runs through our entire defense and it runs through our entire team. That's what he does – he makes big plays [and] splash plays whenever you need them. He came through for us and did everything."

(On what gave the team confidence it could beat the Saints after losing to New Orleans twice in the regular season)

"We played like we had total belief. At the end of the day, the entire year we believed we could win games, but I don't think that everybody was on the same page and communicating and doing those things. But tonight was just different. Guys were out there flying around from the first quarter to the fourth quarter and there wasn't any hesitation in between. Usually we start games slow and then we've got to pick it up and fight back, but going into halftime... it was tied. It was just different – it was a different atmosphere, it was a different team [and] it was a different unit because everybody was together. Everybody went into this game knowing we could win the game. Not just going in to play – we went in to win and came out with that outcome."

TACKLE DONOVAN SMITH

(On the celebration in the locker room following Sunday's win)

"Everybody was fired up. Obviously, they beat us twice in the regular season, but at this point nothing matters. We came out in Round 3 with the knockout – we came out on top. Everybody in the locker room was hyped."



(On if he has played better than he is currently)

"I feel like I've been doing the same thing for the past five or so years. We've been building. You've got to get hot at the right time, [we are] feeling good – obviously, I'm feeling good. The rest of the guys are feeling good and it's showing, so we're going out there, playing Bucs ball and it's gelling together fine."

(On the key to the offensive line having success)

"Just winning our one-on-one battles. We knew what it was going to be coming into the game and we just had to win our one-on-one battles – them versus us. Obviously, we came out on top. I tell you guys all the time – I rock with my guys all the time [and] they stepped up big. Big shouts out to the defense – I think it was four turnovers. Any time you do complementary football to get turnovers and can come back and score and put points on the board, it's huge. Big shoutout to all of them on the [defense]."

LINEBACKER DEVIN WHITE

(On the defense's performance and his individual effort in Sunday's win)

"It's all a team effort. I think the number one thing is Todd Bowles said, 'We're going to be feisty, we're going to challenge those guys' and he's going to take us over them. I said the same thing. I said, 'Man, I'm going to take my guys over their guys.' I know one thing – we might be young, but we can get after it when we've got our minds set to it. Everybody's saying it – 'Where's the Tampa Bay defense from the Green Bay game?' We were really feisty with them, we were really challenging them at the line of scrimmage and we were really getting after the quarterback. I think we had that same mentality [tonight]."

(On how forcing one turnover leads to the defense forcing more later in the game) (2:54)

"The thing of the game is that if you take the ball away more than you give it away, you win the game. All we want to do is win the game. We knew that was going to have to come [and] we knew we were up for the challenge. At the end of the day, everybody's energy feeds off one another. When Sean [Murphy-Bunting] got a pick, it's like, 'Who's going to get the next pick?' You've just got to keep it going – it's a momentum thing [and] it's a mindset. That's one thing about our guys in the back end – they got talked about, they stepped up to the plate, they got talked about and now they're stepping back up to the plate [again]. It's the playoffs – they know everything is on the line. You've got guys out there playing through injuries and everything, and everybody puts it on the line. That's why I love playing with these guys."

-BUCCANEERS-