



NEW ORLEANS
SAINTS

POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES
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NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS ATLANTA FALCONS
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2023 • MERCEDES-BENZ STADIUM
SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- With the 24-15 loss on Sunday against the Falcons, the Saints are now 5-6 on the season, falling to 1-2 in NFC South contests and 3-4 on the road. The Saints will take on the Detroit Lions next Sunday, December 3 at Caesars Superdome. Kickoff is set for noon central.
- New Orleans outgained Atlanta 444 yards to 396, with a 296 to 168 advantage through the air.
- The Saints had one of their most efficient rushing performances of 2023, finishing with 148 yards on 28 carries (5.3 avg).
- QB **Derek Carr** finished 24-of-38 for 304 yards, his fifth 300-yard passing game of the year.
- WR **Chris Olave** led the Saints offense with game highs in receptions (7) and receiving yards (114) all in the first half before leaving with a concussion in the third quarter. His 114 yards are a season-best for the second year wideout.
- Olave's 100 yard performance was his third of the season and the sixth of his career. His 51-yard reception from Carr was his longest of the season and a game-high.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** added 119 yards from scrimmage, his fourth 100 yard game of the year. He finished with 15 carries for 69 yards on the ground and four receptions for 50 yards receiving.
- TE/QB **Taysom Hill** was effective for the Saints offense, adding 26 rushing yards and two grabs for 55 yards receiving, including a 36 yard strike from Carr.
- WR **Lynn Bowden Jr.** had 40 yards on the ground for New Orleans on a pair of reverses, including a career-long 29-yard carry.
- TE **Juwan Johnson** hauled in four catches for a season-high 45 yards.
- S **Tyrann Mathieu** finished with two interceptions, four stops, and two passes defended. It was the fourth time in Mathieu's career he has had two interceptions and his first as a Saint.
- S **Marcus Maye** had a season-high eight tackles and two tackles for loss.
- LB **Pete Werner** added eight tackles, tying his season high with seven solo stops.
- DE **Carl Granderson** had a career-high 10 tackles to lead the Saints defensive front.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** played in his 203rd regular season game on Sunday and is now tied for 43rd all-time among NFL defensive linemen with Ken Clarke, Richard Dent and former Saints teammate Kevin Williams.

- K **Blake Grupe** made five of six field goal attempts against Atlanta. It was his third game of the season making at least three kicks.
- The five field goals ties a franchise record. It was the ninth time a Saints kicker has converted five field goal tries, and just the first since John Carney at St. Louis on September 26, 2004.
- LS **Zach Wood** played in his 109th career game Sunday, moving into a tie for 37th on the club's games played list with CB Fred Thomas and T Dave Lafary.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS
HEAD COACH DENNIS ALLEN

Opening Statement:

"I'm disappointed in the loss. I thought we had our opportunities. I think this game really boiled down to our ability down in the red area – two penalties, two turnovers, one went for a pick-six – and obviously, defensively, our inability to stop the run. That's really what the game boiled down to. That's really what the game was all about."

On red zone issues throughout the year:

"I think one of the things is when you get down there and all of a sudden you go from 1st-and-10 with a positive gain, and now it's 1st-and-20, that puts you behind the sticks and makes it more challenging. That's one area that's been a problem is the penalties, which, I mean, it's 1st-and-20. I thought that was a big factor today because a couple of those plays, I thought we would be in pretty good field position and a pretty good down-and-distance situation. I feel like penalties were a big factor."

On whether the red zone issues can be fixed:

"I thought the red zone was improving. It wasn't good enough today. We had an interception and a fumble when we got down in there, which was a problem. When you get two penalties that put you at 1st-and-20, that's a problem."

On not being able to stop the run today:

"I think they won the line of scrimmage."

On whether the line of scrimmage is a matchup issue or a scheme issue:

"I think we just have to look at it. Obviously, I felt like they did a good job of blocking us up front. We'll look at what we can do schematically to be better there, but I think that was a big factor is them winning the line of scrimmage."

On whether it's possible to fix matchup issues this late in the season:

"Yeah. We're going to keep working until we get it fixed."

On WR A.T. Perry's missed fade:

"A.T. thought that he false started and thought that they had called a false start, so he didn't run the route."

On QB Derek Carr's play today:

"Some good and some bad. I have to go back and look at the interception to see exactly what happened on that. I knew [Jessie] Bates was a really good player, and it's not the first time he's made a play like that. I thought there were some plays that Derek made, and I think there were some plays that he would like to have back."

On WR Chris Olave's performance and how his injury affected the game:

"It's not just that. We ended up losing [Rashid] Shaheed. He got hurt early in the game and tried to battle through, he wasn't himself, and we ended up taking him out. Obviously, Olave went out. He's in the concussion protocol. When you're playing without your top three wide receivers, it presents some challenges. I thought Lynn Bowden Jr. stepped up and did some nice things, so that was encouraging to see. It makes it much more challenging. I thought we moved the ball well; we just couldn't finish down there in the red area."

On similar issues in the red zone after the bye week:

"Well, specifically red zone issues? Yeah, penalties, that hurts. Not taking care of the ball, that hurts. Those are challenging things, and yet I thought we moved the ball well. We have to keep working on the red area and try to find ways that we can protect the ball better and we can't have the penalties."

On being able to move the ball but not being able to score:

"If you're able to move the ball, that's obviously a positive. You feel like, well we should be able to move the ball down there in the red area. Again, I felt like we did move the ball down there in the red area, but again when it's 2nd-and-3 and all of a sudden, you're looking at 1st-and-20, it's a totally different ball game. That's what I attribute it to."

On RT Ryan Ramczyk having to leave the game for an equipment issue:

"Shoe."

On losing multiple players on a drive in the third quarter:

"That was challenging when every other play you have a guy going out. Then obviously, Ram [Ryan Ramczyk] goes out, Landon [Young] goes in, and we end up giving up the sack. I think that it was challenging to figure out the personnel there for a little while."

On his message to the team after the loss:

"Go back to work. Let's work to be better next week. Obviously, we got some guys that got to get healed up. We'll see where we are at injury wise tomorrow. We have a good opponent coming into our place next week. We just have to get ready to go play."

On substituting RB Alvin Kamara for RB Jamaal Williams:

"That was more of a situation where Alvin had played a few plays in a row and needed a little bit of a breather. That happens in games sometimes you know."

On WR Rashid Shaheed's injury:

"It was early in the game. I think it was on the first drive of the game."

On clarifying the nature of WR Rashid Shaheed's injury:

"Quad."

On whether WR Rashid Shaheed's injury was bothering him prior to the game:

"No."

On whether he feels like QB Derek Carr and the wide receivers are on the same page:

"I think there are a lot more instances where they are than they're not. It was challenging there at the end of the game when you've got your starting three receivers out. There were some plays there at the end that were challenging, guys having to play in different spots and do some different things. I think they are more on the same page than where we were. I think there are still some things that we have to improve on."

On whether taking RB Alvin Kamara out for a player was something coaches manage or whether the player says he needs a breather:

"I think it's a little bit of both. It's pretty common in our league, happens a lot. A guy gets a few plays, needs a little bit of a breather, says, 'Hey give me a play here.' You take him out, you put the next guy in. That's why you have a 53-man roster. I felt like Alvin was playing exceptionally well in the game."

On whether he felt the team took a step back after the bye week:

"No. It wasn't the outcome that we wanted, but I thought there were some good things that I saw. We could take all the good, but we didn't do a good job of stopping the run and we turned the ball over two times in the red area where we have a chance to get points. That, at the end of the day, is the difference in the game."

On FS Tyrann Mathieu's two interceptions:

"Turnover-takeaway ratio is a huge part of this game. The one takeaway right before the end of the half was big because it took points off the board for them. Certainly, the second takeaway gets our guys the ball back and an opportunity to drive down and potentially score some points. I think taking the ball away is a big factor for us."

On running a play at the end of the third quarter:

"I wanted to run a play. We felt like we had a play. We wanted to run the play."

QB DEREK CARR**On what went wrong in Sunday's loss to Atlanta:**

"Penalties and turnovers. We had a pick. We had a fumble, and then it seemed like every time we got down there, we had some kind of penalty. It's hard to overcome those in a normal drive, let alone when you're down there because now the field shrinks, and it's harder to get those yards back. That's the fact. That's just what it is."

On whether he had a chance to see what happened on Falcons S Jessie Bates III interception:

"He was playing single-high, and he left his responsibility. You don't expect him to do that. You don't plan on that for that route. I thought Shid made a good decision, but Bates is a great player, and he made a great play. Very few times have I told someone good job on a bad play, but that was one where I told him, 'Hey, you beat me. You made a great play.' It is what it is. It sucks to have that happen, but same thing, RC on the sideline was like, 'Bro, he made a great play. Keep playing. You're playing great. Keep going.' You still don't want that to happen, but they make plays too."

On not having issues moving the ball, but elsewhere:

"Yeah, red zone. I'm with you. I feel the same frustration everybody probably feels. I'm into problem solving, not creating problems. So, I'm trying to figure out why. We'll look at this one real closely, us players and coaches. We'll look at it closely, but I understand the frustration. I understand that we haven't met the expectation yet of what we can be and what we've shown to be at times, as a team I'm saying, but one of those areas for us as an offense is the red zone where we'll

have good days, good plays, and then all of a sudden, we'll have a day like today where – today, I think penalties really hurt pushing us back, and the two turnovers, which is something I take a lot of pride in not doing. I know Taysom, we count on him all the time. We're going to continue to count on him. It happens. It's part of the game. It sucks that it happened all at one time in one game, but it's a fact. I'm not going to be frustrated anymore. I'm going to be positive. I've seen when a team has battled and gone through a lot of things and still made the playoffs. What did it was us coming together. Everybody on the outside wanted this and wanted that, thought this and thought that, but I'm telling you, if we can come together and keep pushing, keep working, we played our best football the last five weeks that year, and we made it to the playoffs. That's what we have to do as a team. That's what I shared with the guys. But, if you come in with the long face and no one on Twitter likes you right now and all that kind of stuff, then this is the wrong business and this is going to be the wrong month and a half for you. This right here, we're going to find out what guys are made of with their work ethic and how they want to come to work because we still have everything that we want to do. We will correct certain things when we take a look at it tomorrow."

On the challenge of losing WR Chris Olave and WR Rashid Shaheed in the same game:

"I mean, it's tough, but at the end of the day, I always say nobody cares. We care about them. We care about their injuries. I'm just so proud of the relationships that we've built, and the things that we're doing better on the field together. So, when that went down, it was like, 'Dang. Something else happened.' It's a little frustrating, but at the end of the day, nobody cares. Our guys came in and I thought the young guys and guys that maybe don't play as much came in and did their best, made some plays for us. It wasn't perfect, but they gave us a chance and competed their tail off. I was proud of them for that, but I was really excited about the gameplan and what we had for Chris and Rashid. It's a shame that they both went down early."

On the third-down pass to WR A.T. Perry:

"Yeah, I saw him kind of stutter, so I thought he was doing his release. The 1-on-1 is outside to him. They doubled inside. So, I was working outside to him, and I didn't know what he said because he was over there, but apparently, he thought he false started. As soon as I let it go, I kind of looked to the sideline. I thought there was going to be a whistle or a flag, but I think he just thought he jumped."

On whether some of the issues he identified during the bye week popped up again today or whether he felt they made corrections:

"I thought we corrected some things, honestly. I thought third downs, know we didn't hit them all, but I thought we were better. I thought we hit some big third downs. Even when we got behind the sticks, I thought we got some chunk plays to help give us a chance to get a first down again in the red zone. I thought we ran the ball in certain areas under center really well, which helped open some play-action plays for us big time, especially in the first half. So, I thought there were some things that we did better, but like every game, there are going to be things that you can point to – three or four things you can point to and be like, 'Ah, we didn't do that good,' but for sure. I don't think moving the ball has been an issue for us. I think we really have moved it well. Situational football is where we've failed. I thought we were better on third down. I don't know the number, but I felt like we hit more of them. I thought we protected well, but the red zone crept up today, for sure. That was as bad as it gets."

On how you get players to buy into not listening to outside noise:

"I would say it's harder nowadays than it was nine years ago or 10 years ago. Thank goodness I came from a time that that stuff was just new and it didn't really matter. The only thing you care about is going home and making sure you're a good husband and a good dad. Now, guys have come from high school and college, that's the world that they come from. It's a challenge because everybody cares about what somebody thinks. Everybody cares. You get a tweet, or you get this kind of stuff. Just as an older player, as a leader, you just try to encourage them that the people in this room are the ones that matter, we love you. I think we have a good group of guys that are preaching that same thing and are putting their arms around guys. They know they could have done this or could have done that. You put your arm around them, and say, 'Look bro. That stuff matters. No one's going to love your Instagram post today, but we do, and we care about you. So, give us your best.' You just try to preach that message because times have definitely changed since I first got in the league. We weren't even talking about this stuff, but now it's a real thing that you deal with. I think you'd agree that we have some great guys in that locker room in certain spots that can help with that, and try to be positive because in our building, we're going to be positive. We're going to be positive. We're going to work and challenge the heck out of each other these last six or so weeks."

On whether he was surprised about the inefficiency in the red zone coming out of the bye:

"Yeah, and I think we were running good plays. Then, we'd get hurt with a penalty. We talked about the interception. Jessie is playing the single high and he comes out on the post, leaves his responsibility and makes a great play. You don't expect that. You take the snap, and he's there, so you think you have a chance. All of a sudden, he shows up. You don't expect that. I thought he was going to walk in. He made a great play. Then Taysom's fumble, we count on him all the time. We don't expect that to happen, and we're going to keep counting on him. He's one of the best players in the NFL. So, we're going to keep counting on him, but I really thought we were running good plays. I really just think the penalties. I

don't know exactly what those were off the top of my head. I know the holdings and the stuff on the side and all that, but I didn't see them first-hand, and I'm not going to comment on them ever, but it hurt us. So, I don't think it was like a 'Oh gosh, what do we do?' I thought we were running good plays and moving the ball like crazy today, but we definitely got hurt by those things in the end."

On whether he feels like time is running out:

"We're just running out of games. We are. That's a fact, but what we need to do and what Who Dat nation can do for us is just keep encouraging our guys. We're going to come home, we're on the road, and when we come home, we're going to need them. We're all in this thing together. We're going to work like crazy to make it right. We really are. We're going to give it our best. It hasn't happened at the same time yet, but if and when it does, it's going to be a beautiful thing. So, I'm not going to stop working. Our guys aren't going to stop working, but we need everybody. We need everybody. Trust me, we're very frustrated too. I hate losing. So, to come in here, why, and all those kind of things, no one planned on it happening like this, but this is where we're at. I just challenged myself that I'm not going to get so frustrated that I just shut off and shut down, and things like that. I'm going to be super positive, and I'm going to encourage our guys until the bitter end. I believe this with everything in me that we still have time left. Time may be running out, but we still have time left. I'm going to look at it that way."

RB ALVIN KAMARA

On late-season fixes:

"I'm kind of jumping ahead, but I'm going to do the same thing every week that I do. Monday, I'm going to get my work in, Tuesday, I'm going to get my work in. Monday through Saturday, I'm going to get that work in and make sure I'm ready to play on Sunday. I'm doing it for the dudes in the shoulder pads and helmets, and I know these guys are going to do the same thing. That's all I can control. If I look around the locker room and ask these other guys who's under control, they'll say them. So, that's what I'm trying to do. It takes one more person to do a little bit more, and I'll try to find something to do to push us over the edge and fix it. I can only answer that question for me. Can it be fixed? If there's something else that can be done, let me know and I'll fix it."

On his thoughts about today's game:

"I'm not happy. We lost. I'm not happy by any means. I love Grupe [Blake Grupe] to death, but we can't kick field goals and win the game. It just is what it is. We've got to score touchdowns, and we're not scoring touchdowns. It's blatant. It's very evident."

On whether issues have been the same all season:

"Yeah, I think so. For whatever reason, it's week-in and week-out, and it keeps sticking. Like I said, we need to find something different to do and just do. I feel like there's too much talking about what we needed to play. We've got to find a real fix, not just a 'Oh, we've got to be better.' We want to be better every week. That's obvious. Let's get past that. We already know we've got to do better. How are we going to get better? What are we going to do to get better?"

On preparing for this game:

"I think we had a good week of preparation, and I'm not just saying it just to say it. I think we prepared well. I think we had a good week of preparation. For whatever reason, we got here and we could not get through it. I'm not going to say execute, because I feel like we've executed. Some things, we've got to clean up: some penalties and some ball. Derek Carr is harder on himself than anybody is. He through that pick, and he wanted that one back. We've got to find a way to get going."

WR RASHID SHAHEED

On not being able to turn red zone opportunities into touchdowns:

"We felt like we could have executed better, especially in the red zone. We moved the ball well and did all the things to get down there (into the red zone). We just have to learn how to finish those drives and the outcome would have been different."

On whether he feels like things can be cleaned up this late in the season:

"Absolutely. We have to come together as a team in situations like this. We all wanted to win. We all fought hard. We just have to find a way to dig a little deeper. Preparation during the week has got to improve. We just have to come together as a team to figure it out".

On remaining in the playoff hunt:

"It is absolutely a positive. From here on out, everything is on us. Every game is on us. We just have to figure out a way to execute. We are still exactly where we want to be. We just have to finish."

DE CARL GRANDERSON

On what needs to change moving forward:

"We've got to do our job and execute the game plan."

On the team's efforts against the Falcons:

"We're a team. We came into the game together as a team and we had one job to do. We just didn't execute."

ATLANTA FALCONS

HEAD COACH ARTHUR SMITH

On the mindset of offense on the last drive:

"Take the game over. It was a challenge all week in the line of scrimmage. We won the game. And that's what the O-line did."

On the running backs having nine-straight carries in the last drive:

"We could've picked it up. I thought about it at times, but when you're watching the intent and the way those guys were going up front, the way they were blocking and the way that our guys were running the football - and that was all three of the runners - you know, why pick it up? So, that was encouraging. That's who we need to be to close out games. And it's just one game, but we needed that win in the worst way, and I thought overall it was a good team win."

On snapping the three-game losing streak and taking over first place in the NFC South:

"Look, those things have got to play out. I mean, we've got six games to go, right? And it'll feel like six lifetimes. It's just the National Football League, and it ebbs and flows. I mean, you're caught by a couple of plays in the last two games, and we knew coming off the bye week and everything we talked about, some of the things logistically we wanted to do as a staff, we certainly did that. The ways we wanted to play, getting some guys in space I thought helped us. And then, rolling through personnel defensively, keeping guys fresh - I think you saw a little bit of that. So, we've got plenty of stuff to work on, as always, but overall, a good team win."

On the decision to play RB Cordarrelle Patterson more:

"Yeah, he's been building on it. You saw a little bit in Tampa about where you saw him. He can play all over the place, and it gives you another guy. We didn't have to go out there, but if we need to win one-on-one outside, he gives you that. And you talk about being fresh. Those are hard guys to tackle. When you're getting momentum and you're getting into the drives, and we believe in our conditioning. So, he'll continue, depending on the plan. But all these guys, as we hopefully continue to get better, they'll all be involved."

On how QB Desmond Ridder played:

"Yeah, look, overall, a lot of those drives early, he got in space. We talked about using his legs as a weapon, which I thought he did pretty well. They adjusted on some of the zone read stuff, which got us on that first drive in the third quarter. We were going fast, in and out, trying to end the half with a touchdown, not giving the ball back, and we liked the angle of it. He had to move. I believe Khalen Saunders kind of got in the way, and a little miscommunication over there, and Mathieu got up under it. The other one, he was trying to make a play, being a little greedy. But what you like about him is the way he came back. They hit pressure. The easy play would be underneath, but he believed in it, he drifted, big-time throw to Bijan [Robinson], got him one-on-one in space, which we wanted. So, he doesn't flinch. Obviously, you don't want the turnovers. Thankfully, today we were zero, and we were able to get Jessie [Bates III]'s interception and then Jessie punching the ball out. So, thankful for that. But he's resilient, and we'll keep working."

On whether he had any hesitation to put the ball in QB Desmond Ridder's hands in critical situations:

"No. You've got believe in him when you put him out there, and that's what he's done. His history will show you that. Just throughout all the games he played in college, like he's pretty damn good in critical situations in the fourth quarter. He's done that in the NFL. Like I said, we've got to keep working. We've got a lot of belief, and more importantly, those guys have belief."

On looking unhappy with being forced to call a timeout before the pass to RB Bijan Robinson:

"Talk about logistics. But, yes, somebody came out, it gets under 15, so you have a mechanism to get up on the ball so you don't have to burn it. And then it was too slow. And I guess I must be living right because the next play, we got the touchdown, thankfully."

On whether he thought he lost the play to RB Bijan Robinson after calling the timeout:

"No. Somebody subbed. Yeah, that was the one error that we had. Hate wasting a timeout. Wasn't going to take a delay of game there, and so we had to use it. But we'll get that fixed."

On S Jessie Bates III making plays:

"Yeah. There were some things that Jessie, like a lot of our guys, they're prideful players. He puts a lot of work in. It's something he felt he got a jump on it. And then, it's the effort. Not only that, he got down the sideline and then Zach Harrison - Zach making those blocks. I mean it takes everybody, but great playing. And then Jessie's play punching the ball out on [Taysom] Hill, that was kind of a turning point in the game."

On whether Offensive Coordinator Dave Ragone was in the booth today and whether he feels like that helped:

"Well, first, for me, Dave and I collaborate on everything. And both of us didn't need to be down, and I think there were some things with Dave's experience that he could help Des as he was seeing unfold up top as they communicated. So, instead of both of us being down, it was just a logistical thing where I thought - and I thought it worked well today. Dave's got a good presence and good feel, and the communication between the staff and me and the quarterbacks, I thought helped. Again, you see some things down here, but we just thought it would be a changeup, and obviously, happy with the results today."

On the atmosphere of the team and building over the last couple of weeks:

"I think, Jeff, I mean you've covered sports a long time. I keep saying, it's not just coach talk. This is a different group, and I mean that in a great way. I mean these guys work so damn hard. And I know everybody works hard; it's pro sports. But if you had seen our Wednesday practice, it felt like training camp. It was a damn battle. These guys wanted to win, and I would argue that it paid off. It felt like a heavyweight fight. It was physical as hell out there. I think it was kind of cathartic for a lot of those guys because they know they put a lot of work in, guys were frustrated, felt like there was a play or two here. That's what the games have come down to. We lost those two at the end, and we had an opportunity, thankfully, to go take it out on somebody else. So, it was probably more cathartic, I would say. But it's the whole team. It's a close team."

On whether S Richie Grant and S DeMarcco Hellams were part of the rotation on defense or was it something that Hellams was pushing for:

"Both. I think people want to get you in so much sub-defense. They weren't playing a lot of heavy personnel on some of their tight end package. It felt little. That's a lot of the NFL right now. So, people do that, then they try to get the smaller guys into the run fits. You're just trying to change it up, putting guys in spots where you think you can maximize them. And that's a credit to DeMarcco as well. Even you saw Tre [Flowers] go out there a little bit too."

On whether there was something that stood out to him with having Offensive Coordinator Dave Ragone in the booth:

"Yeah, because you do so much self-scouting. Everybody's got tendencies, so you're going to always try to break yours; they're trying to break theirs. But it's not just what they're playing, how they're playing, what the matchup looks like up top. I've got my view. I've got the Surface. Sometimes, it's like a NASCAR pit crew. I just think there were some things I wanted to see. It was more about some of the matchups really and just how they're playing, where their safeties are, if they're leaning to a certain guy or not. Pre-snap, what they're trying to roll on the quarterback that you may not be able to see from ground level."

On the red zone play overall and on defense:

"Yeah, we got down there twice. Obviously disappointed to turn the ball over, but the other one, we ran in. Then defensively, we gave up some yards, but it comes down to situational football, and two enormous plays down there and holding them to field goals. So, we'll get some of that other stuff cleaned up. They had some new wrinkles. They hit a lot of shots kind of between the 20s. But when it came to those critical downs, that was the difference."

QB DESMOND RIDDER

On his mindset this week after being named the starter again:

"I mean, this week was huge as a team for a whole. It was go out there and get a win, however it came, good, bad, ugly, go out there and get a win. And that's what we did, came out here and played as a team, both offense, defense, and special teams. Obviously, a lot of things we can go back and clean up. A lot of things we can be better at but we're pretty happy because we came out of here with a win."

On being able to respond after the turnovers:

"I mean, it's always the next-play mentality. No matter what happens, good, bad, ugly, just move on to the next play. And not only with myself, but everyone on the field, everyone's got to move on; everyone's got to keep going and play each

play as a new play, and obviously we got the matchup we wanted, Bijan on the backer, [I] was able to give him a ball. The O line did a heck of a job all day of giving me enough time to stand in the pocket, deliver a ball, and they did a heck of a job in the run game, moving the line of scrimmage, not only the offensive line, but defensive line as well. That's through our team is where we're going to live and die at is our front five.

On the offense being able to seal the game by running the ball:

"It was huge. You know, all week they were challenged to go back and be that line that we know they can be. They stepped up to the challenge and did a great job. And right there before we took that field with like seven minutes left, Drew Dalman, our center, told me, he said, hey, let's end this game with the ball in our hands, and I said, yes, sir, let's go. And obviously we did, and we came back. And the defense, great job of shutting them down, and we were able to finish with the ball in our hands. Obviously, [Younghoe] Koo coming down and making the kick, but yeah, it was a huge drive."

On offensive coordinator Dave Ragone moving up to the coaches' booth and how that impacted the game:

"Like you said, it was just another set of eyes being at that level. Usually, it's Art and Rags up here, and then we got our assistant coach [Patrick] Kramer up in the box. But, yeah, it's another set of eyes. It's able to see from a different vantage point and then, you know, communicating with them on the sideline, communicating with Kramer on the sideline. And then, like we said, too Taylor [Heinicke] and Logan [Woodside] do a great job of being another two sets of eyes just to be able to help me out there in whatever I need."

On getting involved in the run game and whether that is something the team will look to continue to do:

"It had nothing to do with the offensive scheme or anything like that. We saw throughout the entirety of their season that they struggled with quarterback play extension, with quarterbacks scrambling up and out of the pocket. So that we knew if one, two and possibly three wasn't there, that three was probably going to be my legs and just take off and go. I got off a couple of the reads and just found an open spot in the pocket and got out."

On Jessie Bates III 92-yard interception return touchdown and what was going through his head on that play:

"That's huge. Obviously, that's a huge momentum swing in any game when you get a pick six, especially one that long. It obviously kind of deflates the other team. But for us as an offense, we kind of had to stay ready, because at that point -- and then they go back out on the field. It felt like we hadn't been on the field for quite some time. It was a great job with the offense coming back out and responding, but obviously like you said, a great job with the defense stepping up, creating the turnover and creating points off that turnover."

On Jessie Bates III being a game changer and how he impacts the team:

"Like you said, energy and then play making, the way he's able to play the field, play that safety position, be able to be all over the field and confuse quarterbacks. I mean, he does a great job of it. That's obviously, you know, why he's our number one safety back there, and like you said, just the energy. He's not only a great energy provider, but he's a great leader on this team, great person to have on our team, and he's just going to continue to do great things for us."

On his touchdown pass to Bijan Robinson:

"It was the same play we ran earlier that I kind of scrambled on down there in the red zone and like almost ran into Kyle [Pitts]. It was the same exact play. That one was zone coverage. This one we got matched up in man. Felt pressure, took my drop, saw the matchup with him and Demario [Davis] and just put up a ball for him to go get."

On the importance of this game and whether it felt like a relief to win:

"I wouldn't say relief. More so just excited, just excited to go out there and get the win. Obviously, having a tough three or four weeks, just being able to go out here and get a win at home is huge."

On Arthur Smith talking about the intent of Wednesday's practice and what he remembers from it:

"Wednesday was a day that we went out there. I mean, it's week 12. A lot of guys on Wednesday when you put the pads on can go out there and maybe have a softer practice or a jog-through practice or not full speed, but what we do in our style of play is full speed and pads, you know, almost every time we can do it. So our intent out there on Wednesday was just fast, physical, great energy, great practice. The weather wasn't perfect, but it was what we needed. And like we said, it was just a great one to start off the week with."

On whether he has done anything specifically to try and foster a culture of good energy:

"No. I mean, like I said, I think my entire time just coming out this week was playing free, playing fast and having fun. I think I did that out there in practice and obviously did it today."

On the 95-yard drive in the fourth quarter:

"Like we said, I think the number one thing for the key of all the drives was the guys up front. Those five men up front did a heck of a job of, like we said, giving me enough time, blocking for Bijan, blocking for CP [Cordarrelle Patterson], blocking for Tyler [Allgeier], and did everything that they could do to move the line of scrimmage."

On Dave Ragone moving up to the coaches' booth:

"Like we said, it was just another set of eyes up there. Being able to communicate, having another set of eyes not only up in the box, but like we said, we got multiple on the field with Taylor and Logan and Coach Kramer, but it was just another set of eyes to give a different perspective and hopefully be able to communicate and see things better."

On his first interception of the game:

"I was just going to Bijan. I probably threw it about six inches too far inside. He kind of -- you know, there was hands up down there in the red zone, [he] might have lost it, whatever it was. [It has] got to be a better ball. Got to put it on him."

On the final drive and whether the offensive linemen were fired up about running the ball:

"The linemen were all juiced up. Like we said earlier, we had to challenge them earlier in the week to go out and play their brand of ball, which is tough, nasty and physical and move that defensive line, and which we did. We wore them down in that fourth quarter, was able to possess that ball for the last five-and-a-half, six minutes, whatever it may have been, and they did a heck of a job of being able to get up there and keep the ball moving forward. Props to Bijan, Tyler and CP of all being able to go out there and take control of the ball, get those first downs and keep it moving."

On having the division lead going into December:

"That just means we've got to show up every week to be able to play. We obviously knew this game was huge for that, which was one of the driving reasons of going out here and getting a win. But now we've got to keep it. We haven't won back-to-back games since the first two weeks. We've got to go on the road against the Jets who are a great team, great up front on both sides of the ball and we've got to be able to go out there and get a win."

On what it felt like to get pulled and then now be back to being the starting quarterback:

"Honestly, you know, it taught me how to be a true backup. It taught me that you're obviously preparing as the starter every single day. But like I told someone earlier in the week, you know, I don't think I've actually been a backup in my career. I've never came off the bench in the fourth quarter of a game to go in and have to play and go win a game. So, for me, that taught me not only respect that you got to have for backups, but just the ability that it doesn't matter who it is, whether it's the quarterback position, safety position, center position, it's the next-man-up mentality. When your number is called, you've got to be ready to go, and you've got to go out there and execute the same game plan that everyone else has been working on all week that you might not have got the same amount of reps at."

On whether it has changed his appreciation or approach to the role at all:

"I mean, it makes you appreciate everything, obviously, just being grateful to have the opportunity to come out here and play the game we love. Obviously, everyone who's on that field, everyone who's dressed wants to be out there playing. Obviously, in our position as a quarterback position, it's only going to be one person. So, yeah, it obviously feels great to get back out there, and like we said, to go get a win as a team."

On his decisions of when to scramble and how he felt about those decisions:

"I think I did a good job of just going through my progressions, and then like we saw on film from numerous teams before, they kind of struggled with quarterbacks play extending, quarterbacks getting out of the pocket. So once I saw the first couple reads weren't there, I found a window and made it get out. Because they run a lot of match coverage, whether it's one high or two high. Underneath, they're all matched, eyes are off the quarterback, so at that point it's take it and run."

On whether he could see Bijan on the touchdown pass because of the rush:

"I didn't really feel the rusher. I knew he was coming and whoever was coming was coming hot. And I just saw the back of Demario's jersey and Bijan running with him. And like I told Bijan, at that point, that was just backyard ball, threw it off the back of my foot, gave him a ball he could go get, trusted him. Like I said, we repped it before, and that was the play we ran earlier in the game that I actually scrambled on, kind of ran into Kyle down there in the red zone, and we went back to it, got a different look, and we executed it."

On the early game fourth-and-two and what was supposed to happen:

"I mean we were supposed to get a first down."

On whether he made the wrong decision by keeping the ball:

"No. We ended up kind of filtering it through wrong up front. We had two ended up coming off outside, so if you're handing it off, Tyler is getting smacked. I pulled it. I got a guy sitting on me waiting outside. So we go back, I could probably re-ID it better, work things out, and we'll get it blocked up."

On whether he feels like the team had been sluggish in the last two games:

"I wouldn't say sluggish. But sometimes, like we said, it's week nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Things can start to get in a routine and become repetitive and go day after day, week after week, and sometimes guys can get lost in that. Obviously,

especially rookies obviously, me being a rookie last year, and you know, it's a long season. And obviously those rookies aren't used to it, but just everyone in general, it's a long season. So just everyone having the energy and passion to come up here every single day, go to work and get better. That's something we've got to keep up and keep that energy going."

RB BIJAN ROBINSON

On when he realized that QB Desmond Ridder's pass was coming to him:

"I knew it right after I saw the linebacker come. He was trying to match me, and I knew Desmond was going to throw it right away. That was the point when I knew."

On how far into the tunnel he ran after his touchdown:

"Not that far. It was like five feet. I wasn't trying to slip. But that was a great play by Desmond [Ridder] and me, just trying to track the ball in the air. We caught it and got the touchdown."

On holes opening up more in the second half:

"Hey, that's the O-line. I don't know what they were on this week but they were just overpowering everything. At practice, they had a different mindset. Just seeing all five of those guys go out there and dominate the will of another defense, it speaks a lot for how good the O-line can be when we just play together and play our hearts out. But those five guys, the tight ends, the receivers, it was all part of the plan this week to do what we do on the ground game and let everything else open up. That was really fun to watch and really fun to be a part of."

On QB Desmond Ridder bouncing back in-game:

"Desmond always bounces back. When something bad happens, it never gets to him. He's always trying to look for the next play. He's always trying to look for the next drive to be a successful drive. That's what I respect about Desmond. Things can go wrong in the game but he's trying to come back, he's trying to improve. That's what is going to make him a great quarterback one day. When something bad happens, just try to get away from it and go out there and improve the next drive."

CB A.J. TERRELL JR.

On getting turnovers on defense:

"Jessie [Bates III], again, making that play. But that's everyone in the defense winning their one-on-one, making big plays and coming up with the ball anytime the ball hits the ground. It's not finished until we get the ball. That was a big play, a big momentum-swing for us, and we took advantage of it."

On how much Wednesday's practice set the tone for today's game:

"A lot. Coming off the bye week, we understood what was at task with the division game. We had a lot going into this game. We were on a losing streak. Just a lot at stake at the moment, but we just came out, understood where we were. We control our own future. The season wasn't over. We have a lot of division games left, and as long as we get that down, we can the playoffs."

On how much of a relief today's game was:

"It's big. Just us being us. We don't listen to outsiders or anything like that. Whatever we practice and go through in the team room, whatever Art [Arthur Smith] says and how we attack practice. All those things will carry into the week when we play teams. Like I said, just going 1-0 each week, and we can control everything."

OLB ARNOLD EBIKETIE

On how it felt to get the sack on third down:

"It felt good. Every time you go out there and get a sack, it definitely feels good. Just being able to step up and being out there for your teammates."

On what was it like for the defense as a unit to get stops:

"It was huge. Every time we're out there, especially when the offense is doing well and putting the ball in the end zone. The motto always is, "If they don't score, they don't win." So, I think we try to lean on that and hold them from scoring. Overall, we did a pretty good job."

DL CALAIS CAMPBELL

On the plays made on defense:

"That pick-six was huge. It helps with that belief. You've got to get energy on the drives, make a play. And the forced fumble while they were moving the ball, running the ball pretty well right there. Those were big-time plays. I told the guys

before the game, 'Big-time players make big-time plays in big-time games.' It's an old saying. Been around for a long time. I've been hearing that since I was six. At the same time, this was the biggest game we're going to have up to this point in the season. Obviously, we're going to have more instances like this with other teams going forward. But up to this point, this was the biggest game of the season. He showed why they brought him here and why he's the guy."

On his injury in the game:

"Yeah, it did not feel good. I had to go down for a second, but I was able to go back in and keep playing, so I'll be fine."

On needing a win against the Saints:

"I think this game is always going to be a big game just because of the rivalry. I think with where we're at in our season, the way things have gone, this was an important game, and we knew the potential that it had for us. I think that this team is a team that has underachieved for a while. We could've been playing so much better than we've been playing. But all of that does not matter anymore. We'll go into our bye, make our corrections and get more wins against a divisional opponent at home. And that put us in first place. First play today doesn't matter. We need to keep going forward, keep building on it and stack wins. But the energy of this team, the focus of this team, the way we're going through things at practice - it was a great week at practice. After the game, I told a bunch of the guys, 'You felt the difference at practice. Let's do that again this week. Let's prepare the same way so we can come out and hopefully get another win next week against another hungry opponent.'"

S JESSIE BATES III

On his mindset during his pick-six:

"Just trusting my instincts. Just coming off that bye week, I think everybody had to come to life and reset with this bye week. I saw 22 motion. It's just simply film study and all the extra meetings that we do, all our coaches with the cut-ups. I give all the props to them. Then it's just me making a play. It's a play they've run and shown on film. I took advantage of it and got my fourth (interception) - for a touchdown, too. It was a very special moment for me for sure."

On this week's practice leading into the game:

"Coming off a bye, a lot of people like to ease into stuff. I thought (Arthur Smith) did a really good job. We had full pads on Wednesday. That set the tempo for the week on what we wanted to do. If you turn on that tape, I think you'll know what we did."

On how big his forced fumble in the red zone was:

"Anytime you get a turnover in the red zone, you take away points from the opposing offense, it gives our offense a chance to go down there. They had a super long drive after that. It was critical. Anytime you can get a turnover - Richie did a really good job. Nobody sees Richie with the open-field tackle, and then I come out of nowhere and punch the ball. Like I said, it's just another example of what our defense wants to be moving forward. We just want to continue to make plays."

LB KADEN ELLISS

On what he learned about his teammates coming off the bye:

"After the loss to Arizona, I knew a lot just off the demeanor coming in Monday and Tuesday after. I knew that we were going to be better. I actually realized at that point that I was with the right team and picked the right spot this offseason because of how people bounced back. It's easy when there's prosperity, but it's not as easy when things aren't going your way. Seeing how we bounced back and how that continued coming off the bye week in this week of work that we put in, that's how we got here. Being with this group is awesome with the resiliency and fight that we have."

On the defense's effectiveness in the red zone:

"[Jessie Bates III] is special. Let's start off there. He's outstanding, making big plays. They hit us with a couple of explosive plays, penalties - certain things that got them on the plus side of the field - but we made the stops we needed. It comes down to execution. That's all it is. You just have to do your job. It's not exciting, besides Jessie's explosive play. The rest of it is doing your job. You have to do things consistently and go the long and hard way on that stuff."

On establishing the team's identity:

"Shoutout to the O-line. They were challenged this week, and they brought it. They brought some special juice today. Watching them pass block, run block and do what they did today was amazing. Obviously, our skill positions - our running backs and quarterback - all took advantage of that space that they gave them, so that was awesome. We knew we'd find out coming off those three losses what we were going to be. We were excited for this game. You could not practice all week and still be excited for this game because that's the kind of game it was. To show up Wednesday with that taste in your mouth all bye week and put in the work that we did, it speaks volumes of this team and its maturity."

T JAKE MATTHEWS

On the success offensively:

"Well, we have a really talented group of players. We were able to mix it up on them. We were also able to be consistent, which is key."

On how the bye week helped the team get the win:

"It was refreshing. With the way the last few weeks have gone, with having chances to win and not be able to pull it out, today, we were able to put our foot in the ground and get the win. We knew it was going to be a challenge, and that's what this game is all about. Even when you get knocked down, you be a pro and find a way to win."

On whether he felt like this week felt different because they were playing a rival:

"Yeah. No question it was different. As a group, we put all the responsibilities on ourselves to win and had a lot of pride today. We were able to prove what we are capable of, and now we have to keep stacking up wins."

OL MATTHEW BERGERON

On bringing momentum into next week:

"I just feel like this team's mentality is to put our heads down and work. We'll come in Monday and watch film and correct the mistakes. It's obviously not a perfect game. We had some mistakes in there, so we'll try to figure that out and get ready for the next game because it's a big opponent. They [New York Jets] have a big defensive line, so it's going to be a big challenge for us."

On the success in the second half:

"I feel like when I got here, I realized the identity was to run the football. That's something we've been trying to do all year. Obviously, we had a better game than we have in the past, so we're trying to replicate that and correct the mistakes. We'll go back to work next week. We're not going to try to ride the rollercoaster. We're going to try to be as consistent as we can and get the win next week."

On playing close to home next week:

"I have a lot of family and friends coming, so I'll be glad to see the whole family. I've been down here in the south for a little bit, so it's great to go up and see my friends and family. I'm just happy they get a chance to watch me play. It's going to be good."