



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS DENVER BRONCOS
SUNDAY, NOV. 29, 2020 • EMPOWER FIELD AT MILE HIGH
SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- With the win, New Orleans' record improves to 9-2, putting them three games ahead of the 7-5 Tampa Bay Buccaneers. It also gives the franchise their seventh winning streak of at least eight games, their fourth under Head Coach **Sean Payton** and third in the last four seasons. New Orleans returns to action on Sunday, December 6 when they take on the Atlanta Falcons at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Kickoff is set for 12:00 pm CT on FOX.
- The win gives the franchise four consecutive winning seasons for the first time in team history.
- The win improves Sean Payton's record against Denver to 1-2, giving him a win against all 31 other NFL teams. The win over Broncos Head Coach **Vic Fangio** gives him a regular season winning record against 51 head coaches. Fangio is now the 70th opposing coach Payton has defeated in his career.
- The win on also gives Payton his 140th career regular season win, surpassing Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy for sole possession of 24th all-time in NFL records
- Offensively, New Orleans racked up 292 yards in the win with 63 net passing yards and 229 rushing yards on the way to scoring 31 points.
- New Orleans' 229 rushing yards are the 26th highest output in franchise history.
- Quarterback **Taysom Hill** started and completed 9-of-16 passes for 78 yards, carried ten times for 44 yards and scored two rushing touchdowns, leading the Saints on five scoring drives resulting in four touchdowns and one field goal by **K Wil Lutz**.
- Hill's five rushing touchdowns this season are the most by a Saints' QB since Archie Manning in 1977.
- Lutz converted a 40-yard field goal and made all four of his extra point attempts.
- RB **Latavius Murray** turned in his strongest performance of the season, leading the team in rushing with 124 yards on 19 carries and two rushing touchdowns while also catching a pass for two yards. This is Murray's 11th career 100-yard rushing game and his second against Denver. Murray's 36-yard, third quarter rushing touchdown was also his longest carry as a Saint.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** finished with 54 yards on 11 carries.
- TE **Michael Thomas** caught four passes for 50 yards, leading the team in receptions and receiving yards.
- WR **Tre'Quan Smith**, TE **Adam Trautman**, WR **Emmanuel Sanders** and Kamara each caught one pass each.
- The Saints defense held Denver to 13 passing yards, their second lowest total allowed in franchise history (four, at St. Louis, 10/11/1987).
- Denver is also the second opponent New Orleans has held to three points this season (at Tampa Bay, 11/8/20).
- LB **Demario Davis** played in his 139th consecutive NFL game on Sunday, having never missed a contest in his nine-year NFL career. Davis led the team in tackles with nine and crossed the 950 tackle mark for his career.
- DB **C.J. Gardner-Johnson** and CB **Janoris Jenkins** each recorded an interception in the game.
- Gardner-Johnson added two pass breakups, while Jenkins and CB **Marshon Lattimore** also added one pass breakup each.
- DE **Cameron Jordan's** sack of Denver WR Kendall Hinton was the 34th different signal caller he's taken down in his career.
- Jordan now has 93.5 career sacks, moving into a tie with Henry Thomas for 47th all-time.
- LB **Kwon Alexander** recovered a fumble and returned it to the Denver 13-yard line, setting up New Orleans' first touchdown. Alexander added three tackles (two solo).
- P **Thomas Morstead** punted six times for 274 yards with a 45.7 gross punting average and a season-long of 57.

- The Saints have not surrendered 100 yards to an individual player in 54 consecutive games in the regular season and postseason combined, the longest streak in NFL history.
- The Saints extended their NFL-leading streak to 298 regular season games without being shut out. The streak dates back to September 6, 2002 when New Orleans defeated the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 26-20 at Raymond James Stadium.

SAINTS HEAD COACH SEAN PAYTON

On how difficult it was to prepare for this game given the Broncos' situation at quarterback

"When we found out yesterday, we spent some time on Wildcat offense. You know there were going to be a few different runners, a little bit more zone relative to our coverage calls, and then understanding how we're going to play this game specifically. Not just defensively, but in the other areas."

On if they were able to watch any game film on Broncos QB Kendall Hinton

"Hinton didn't take most of the snaps, but we did have film. We had college film."

On his impressions of RB Latavius Murray and the running game

"I thought it was good, really good. We blocked them. It's a good front and a good defense. It's hard to run for 200 yards in this league and I was proud of how those guys played and responded."

On how weird the game was

"I don't think 'weird' is the right word. Everything about this season is unusual, so we kind of tune out the things we can't control. We spend a lot of time on that topic. The things we can't control, and what is it we can control, and let's find a way to get our next 'W.'"

On if the Broncos' defensive schemes made things difficult for QB Taysom Hill in the passing game

"No, I thought Taysom played well. He played an entirely different type of game and that had a lot to do with me, relative to how we wanted to play this game. So no, there wasn't anything challenging. I was in his ear 24/7 just about being smart with the football."

On if they intended for Hill and the offense to be conservative with the football

"Yeah. There are a few ways to lose a game like that and we weren't interested in one of those."

On if he felt it was fair for today's game to be played give the circumstances

"Just like I said at the beginning, the beginning of what we started this season with: Focusing on the things we can control and kind of go from there."

On if he's ever had to design a defense for a game like today's

"You're not designing a defense. You're taking your defenses that are in the plan and then gravitating to a few of them that suited to because once you start defending three of four of their--you settle in on, 'This is what they're doing.' They had a little tight-end screen that made some yards. There wasn't a huge chalkboard session up into the wee hours of last night, as much as it was, 'Alright, here are the things that we think we're going to see.'"

On if he can sympathize with what Broncos Head Coach Vic Fangio had to deal with in the last 24 hours

"Yeah, I think it's tough for all [of us]. This is a challenging year. I felt bad for the cardboard fans. It is what it is."

On the luxury of being able to rely on their rushing game today

"I thought it was important. We were going to go into a game and call it much differently than we normally would based on the opponent we were playing, what happened and what changed with the opponent. I thought we did that. I thought those guys up front did a good job and certainly the runners as well. I thought we blocked well on the perimeter."

On if Fangio throws unique defensive looks that complicates the quarterback's job

"I think you're going to get some coverage shell. They do a good job defensively, but that wouldn't be how I would describe the defense. I'm going to say this again: I think there's going to be this--Taysom played this thing just how I wanted him to play it. It doesn't have to be aesthetically pleasing to be effective. The job is to win, and he did a good job of that."

On the two delay of game penalties

"That was all me."

SAINTS QUARTERBACK TAYSOM HILL

On whether he was trying to run a play on the fourth-down play in the first half

"No, we didn't have a play called. We always have the option to get into something but that (the Denver neutral zone infraction) was what we were hoping for."

On what today's game was like for him

"I think going into the game, there was so much uncertainty. You didn't know how it was going to play out offensively. I'm not surprised the game the way went after having different conversations with Coach last night and this morning. It's about what I expected."

On how impactful RB Latavius Murray was today

"Latavius was great. It was one of those things where you try to manage the ball, make sure we aren't doing anything to hurt ourselves as a team offensively. But then to take time off the clock and have the ability to hand the ball off to Latavius. You see so many great moments, with [RB] Alvin [Kamara] too. Those guys never go down on the first contact. They are making guys miss and making cuts in the hole and getting yards after contact is huge. That was the game plan for the day."

On how he evaluates his performance

"It drastically changed. As far as evaluating my performance, it's difficult thing to look at as an a competitor and feel really gratified about. At the end of the day, through my conversations with Coach, I felt like my responsibility was to get us in and out of the huddle, make sure we are lined up properly, make sure we are targeting everything directly. Overall, I was happy with the way I was able to manage the game plan. At the end of the day, it's hard to win in this league, it's hard to win nine games this early. Overall, a win's a win and we'll take it any way we can get it."

On whether the game plan was not to take any risks

"Going into the game, the game plan changed in the last 24 hours so my mindset changed as well. I really became a game manager at that point and certainly the way [Head Coach] Sean [Payton] called the game reflected that. The screen was one where Alvin kind of ran into the end and when you call a screen, you know it's either there or it's not. I probably should have thrown it away a little bit sooner but that was one that wasn't really a clean look and, to your point, we're not going to take any unnecessary risks that put our defense in a bad situation."

On the importance of the defense's performance in today's win

"We can have all of these conversations about being conservative offensively, because of the way our defense played and because of the way they had been playing. We had so much trust in those guys, and that to me is really why we felt like we were going to do what we did today."

On what he means when he says the gameplan changed dramatically

"We weren't adding or taking away plays, but the way that the game was going to be called and our first- and second-down calls changed dramatically. It really just boiled down to the way Coach was going to call the game."

On if he'd say the gameplan changed into a more conservative plan

"Yeah, that's what I was (implying)."

On closing out their first touchdown drive with 10 consecutive running plays, and the significance of that for an offense

"I can't say enough great things about the way our line played. Denver has a really good defense, they play assignment-sound defense. For us to be able to do that was really impressive. You lose [OL] Terron Armstead late in the week and we're trying to make sure we're taking care of James [Hurst] on the left side now. Being able to just throw James in, plug and go, and run the ball the way we did was incredibly impressive. He gives us a lot of confidence moving forward."

BRONCOS HEAD COACH VIC FANGIO

On injuries to CB Bryce Callahan and RB Phillip Lindsay

“Bryce’s foot started bothering him and Phillip tweaked his knee a little bit. That’s all I know at this point.”

On the NFL’s decision to hold out the team’s quarterbacks due to COVID-19 protocols

“I was disappointed on a couple levels. That our quarterbacks put us in this position and that our quarterbacks put the league in this position. We count on them to be the leaders of the team and leaders of the offense and those guys made a mistake and that is disappointing. Obviously, I haven’t done a good enough job of selling the protocols to them when they are on their own so part of that could fall on me. I thought I was. We have emphasized it a lot and we’re really doing good with COVID up to this point as it relates relative to other teams. There was a failing there and that’s disappointing.”

On his message to the team going forward

“Going forward, I just addressed tonight’s game with them. I have a lot of love and respect for our players. They’re competitors, they’re fighters and they did that this afternoon, all the way to the end, under some extreme circumstances that have never been seen before. They went out there and competed. I know the score is what it is, but our guys competed. They played hard, they played physical and I love them and respect them even more.”

On whether he thinks the game should have been rescheduled

“I’m not going to get into that. That’s more on the league level. Maybe something for [President & CEO] Joe [Ellis] or [President of Football Operations / General Manager] John [Elway] to address. I’m not going to go there.”

On how he felt Kendall Hinton did today at quarterback

“He did everything he could. He was excited for the opportunity. We had about a two, three, four-hour window to get him ready, which isn’t a lot obviously. He was excited for it. We were excited for him; his teammates were excited for him. That’s a big, big ask and it just didn’t work out.”

On what he told the team before the game with the odds stacked against them

“Our guys actually accepted the challenge, as big as it was. Our guys were ready to play. The only thing that I was thinking is that we have to get them ready to go out and play in all three phases, and we did that. That part of it I was pleased with. Obviously, the result is not pleasing and for our quarterbacks to put us in this situation is disappointing. I’m disappointed I didn’t do a good enough job of selling them on the importance of the protocols.”

On his understanding of why the quarterbacks were deemed high risk close contacts

“On Tuesday, of this past week, the players were off but they came in as a group to do work on their own, which is commendable. They got together and were watching video and they got lax with their masks I guess and lax with their distancing.”

On how he came to the decision to start QB Kendall Hinton and what the other options were

“Those were the options, you saw them. The wildcat every play, Kendall had some experience playing quarterback in college. That’s about what our choices were.”

On how the team can regroup with the league mandating facility closures on Monday and Tuesday

“We have to find out the status of our quarterbacks. That’s going to be important moving forward. Hopefully they will keep passing their tests every day and stay negative, and if they do that, they will be ready to be allowed back in on Tuesday.”

On what meetings were like last night and this morning to get a game plan ready for today

“It was hectic. We didn’t find out officially until well after practice yesterday. We had a few hours to put something together, to install in a meeting last night with the players and review again today with the players. It was a big ask by everyone. I commend our offensive coaches for their efforts. They tried hard and they were believing. They had the players believing it could work but in the final analysis, it was just too big of an ask.”

BRONCOS CORNERBACK ESSANG BASSEY

On the team’s mindset entering the game without a quarterback

“It was just kind of, play with the cards we were given, you know, make the most out of the situation. I know on defense you’re not worried about what the offense does. We were going to go out and play hard and that was

kind of the same mindset. We just got to pick it up a little bit more, be a little extra focused just because we knew it was an uphill battle coming into today, but that was pretty much the mindset going into the game.”

On what he saw during his interception

“It was zone coverage. [CB] A.J. [Bouye] matched the route, covered it up and then he made a great play on the ball and I just happened to be in the right spot at the right time and was able to get the tip. Tips and overthrows are the best way to make a play as a DB so I just took advantage of the great play A.J. made and did what I could with it after I got it.”

On his impression of how QB Kendall Hinton accepted today’s challenge and being a college teammate of Hinton

“I’ve known Kendall for like five years now and I’ve always known he’s a competitor. He’s been like a brother to me. I know he’s focused going into games and the type of player and type of person he is. It was a lot of pressure on him and its short notice and he handled it unlike anybody I’ve ever seen. He was calm and he was focused like he always has been, and you know I was really proud of him. Proud to know him and like I said, I was really, really proud of how he went about the situation.”

On if today was a fair fight

“That’s not for me to say. We just tried to do what we could with the circumstances we were in. It’s not for me to say whether it was fair or not. Things happen and we had to keep rolling.”

On what lessons the team will take away from this week

“Number one, how serious the situation of COVID and everything is, take it a little bit more serious. Not to say that we weren’t before, but as we know now, anything can happen so keep trying to do everything we can to not put ourselves in that kind of situation again. The next thing is probably to continue to stick together as a team because obviously it was a really, really tough situation, unlike anything anybody has ever seen going into a professional football game. We stayed together as a team and we’re going to need that going forward.”

On how his performance has improved over the last few games

“Every day and every practice, every game, I’m just trying to get better and I feel like I have been since I first stepped into the lineup and since I first started playing. Every day I try and keep getting better and better. I was able to make a play today, hopefully I can make more in the future and that’s going to, like I said, come from me continuing to learn and grow and continue getting better.”

BRONCOS RUNNING BACK ROYCE FREEMAN

On all of the preparations that went into today's game

“Definitely thrown a curve ball but we just had to scramble to get something going and prepare to go into this game—just trying to game plan to get something going offensively, strategize and put something together.”

On if there was a possibility he could have passed the ball

“I think we had a combination of all types of things. There was some plays where I'd be able to throw a pass, but just by dealing with the situation at hand, it just didn't come up. We had a variation of different type of plays and the coaching staff, offensively, did a good job of last minute putting the game plan together to give us a chance to go out there and play.”

On how hard it was to run the ball against the Saints defense

“They're a tough defense regardless, but our o-line definitely held their ground—they had to fight them all the way through. I told them after the game that I'm so appreciative for them and that didn't give up. They went out there and fought to the end, and especially being put in a position like running Wildcat or handing the ball off and running it at quarterback, it definitely made me feel confident, especially running behind the o-line that we have.”

On how the team feels about the quarterbacks that were sidelined for the game

“We don't feel any type of way towards them. I honestly think that it's just a tough situation to be in. We know where their hearts are, and we know that they would love to be out there with us. Honestly, it's a great group of guys. Sometimes things happen, sometimes things come up, and we can't hold it against them. Once we are able to get them back, it will be with open arms. Those are our brothers. Like I said earlier, they wanted to be out there with us, but we just dealt with the situation at hand.”

On preparing for the Saints defense and how hard it was to prepare without a quarterback

“Like I said earlier, we knew they were a tough defense coming in, regardless. You know they're going to be around the box and their front and secondary are very physical. We knew it was going to be a grind out type of

game regardless. Knowing that both sides might run the ball heavy—just mentally preparing for that heading in [to the game]. I've never been a part of anything like this, this takes it all—no quarterbacks and then going out there and playing quarterback, and last minute adjustments against a great team like the Saints, definitely something new but just something that we had to battle through today.”

On his reaction to being told that they wouldn't have any quarterbacks for the game

“I didn't know what to think. I've heard, especially this year, of games getting pushed back. You've heard of different things happening with the league and all the protocols—but my first, initial thought was just wondering if we were going to be able to get them back for the game? And if not, then what were we going to do? So, it's just something new for both sides—probably a curveball, but like I said, we just handled the cards that we were dealt today.”

On what a Saturday night normally looks like for him and what percentage of the game plan was kept

“Most of the time it's going over protections and going over things with the o-line—little adjustments, maybe the curveballs that they might throw at you and making sure you're sound on all the nuances and the things that come out of left field. Going into yesterday we were able to keep some of the game plan but we knew it was probably going to be heavy on the run game. We have great backs and we have an o-line that definitely works and definitely moves the pile, so going into that we all have confidence in each other and that's what we leaned on.”

On how much time they spent going over the playbook before the game

“We spent a good amount of time going over the new, little plays that we were going to put in. Like I said earlier, our staff did a great job of putting it [the game plan] in and making it real concise for us to just go out there and play. Preparing for anything, whether me and [RB] Phil [Lindsay] switched off or one was leading the way, and then we also have [RB] Melvin [Gordon III] who is going to get his yardage as well, running behind our o-line. At the end of the day, we were just trying to dial in as much as we could as far as game planning and simplify, then go out there and just play as hard as we could because we know there's going to be a tough defense regardless. [We were] hoping to go out there and do some things on the ground.”

BRONCOS QUARTERBACK KENDALL HINTON

On what the last 24 hours were like for him

“Yeah, I can easily say that was the most eventful 24 hours of my life, but when I got the call there was pure excitement. Of course, there was nerves and disbelief, but the encouragement the team gave me and guys just keeping me up the whole time. They made it a lot easier for me.”

On if he understood how big of a request this was

“Yeah, coming in I knew that I had no idea what the speed of the game was like. I'm familiar with our concepts but it's a lot different from quarterback. So, coming in we knew it'd be a tough situation for sure. That was a challenge that I wanted to take on.”

On how many plays he had to learn

“We cut the playbook into like a 10th just because we only had so much time to prepare. So, it's tough to say. Maybe 20 to 30 plays—somewhere around there that were going in into the game.”

On how much sleep he got last night and how early he was up this morning

“Yeah, so like I said, going into the facility last night and just getting those extra reps before all the guys got there for a walk through. After that, going back to the room and studying. The matter of falling asleep was the nerves is going to keep me up or the studying. Eventually got some sleep, hopped up this morning and got back to it.”

On if he ever thought he would play quarterback again before today

“No, I never thought I'd be back in the reigns, but as time went on and I felt the guys having my back it did make me feel comfortable being more vocal and playing that quarterback role that I was familiar with. So, yeah, it took some time, but after a while it's like riding a bike.”

On what it was like experiencing the speed of the NFL and the Saints defense

“The rush wasn't too much of an issue—our o-line did great—just the overall speed of the game. How the linebackers closed within seconds, it's just something you got to experience to kind of prepare for that. You don't know until you see it.”

On if he ever dreamed of playing quarterback in the NFL and what it was like to achieve that

"I would not say this is how I planned it out in my dreams, but it usually doesn't work out how you want it. So, just getting this opportunity and this experience has been amazing. Imagining myself playing quarterback in the NFL four years ago, it's completely different being in a completely different situation. But, it's an experience like none, so."

On how his body feels

"Yeah, physically I feel like I just finished a football game. I haven't been tackled for two years. Tomorrow morning probably won't be fun, but it was great to get back out there and get some contact."

On what he was doing when out of the NFL

"A month ago, I was selling fundraising and just trying to scrape up what I could—trying to stay in shape and figuring out what was next. I always kept that positive attitude about what was next when it came to football, but reality did hit and I kind of started having to be an adult."

On if he expected to play better today

"Yes, absolutely I expected to play to play better. The Saints have a great defense, but I honestly don't feel like I played nearly to the best of my ability. And of course, a day or two of practice would have definitely helped. I definitely think I could have did more things out there."

On what his phone has been like over the past 24 hours

"I shut down the social media yesterday just trying to prepare for this game. As for text messages and whatnot, it's been so much encouragement. It's been ridiculous—the support—from all over. So, I'm super grateful for that and ready to reply back to those."

BRONCOS SAFETY KAREEM JACKSON

On his mindset going into the game without a true quarterback

"Defensively for us, you've just got to go play ball. Obviously, the situation, a tough situation going into the game without a quarterback. Obviously, we didn't know what was going to happen offensively, what they were going to do. We just have to just focus on what we can do defensively and go out and execute, do what all we can do on our side of the ball."

On finding out the quarterbacks wouldn't be allowed to play

"I think Saturday we had our walkthrough when the guys got pulled off the field. I think I was the last one out of the locker room and [Broncos QB] Drew [Lock] came back in and was kind of telling me the deal and saying that they possibly wouldn't be able to play. Obviously, I'm not really sure the protocols as far as any team not having a quarterback under the circumstances and situation. Earlier in the year, our game got pushed back. I would say it may have been different circumstances, but I just feel like we weren't given that same opportunity as far as pushing our game back or delaying it or anything like that. I'm not sure what could have happened, but just going into the game, it's a tough situation. At the end of the day, I'm proud of the guys for going out. [Broncos QB] Kendall [Hinton] stepping in and being asked to play quarterback, the test that [was] tasked on him and his shoulders offensively. At the end of the day, we went out, we played and just have to put this one behind us."

On if his disappointment is toward the league or the quarterbacks

"For me, I'm not really disappointed in our guys, the quarterbacks. I know the protocols have picked up a little bit. Wearing that mask and being in the room on a day-to-day basis definitely becomes kind of irritating, but honestly, we have to do what we have to do. But at the same time, I just feel like going into the game, we weren't given a chance. Like I said, earlier in the year, we had a game get pushed back, a bye-week taken, and to have to continue to play this game and not being given the chance to at least figure things out as far as our quarterback situation. That was definitely disappointing, but at the same time, we've still got to follow the protocols and do what we have to do to keep guys safe. Definitely [is] tough when it comes to that."

On being off the next two days per league rules

"I don't think it's hard for me. When I leave that locker room, I'm definitely forgetting about this. I think we've got a great group of guys that can definitely put this one behind them and start a move on the next week. We've got a tough task coming up going to Kansas City [on] Sunday night, so [we] just have to have a great week of practice and move forward."

On if he believes the game should have been moved and if he feels he received an explanation

"Definitely don't have the explanation. I feel like maybe it could have been moved, but at the same time, maybe the league [was] just making an example of us as far as us not doing the things we need to do in that particular room, that quarterback room. Obviously, guys didn't follow the protocols so for them to see that, I guess they

felt like they had to make an example. At the end of the day, it is what it is. You've just got to keep pressing forward as a team."

On why the league made the team play the game and how tough it is to know the team was at a disadvantage

"It's tough because week in and week out, we prepare to go out and we want to give ourselves a chance. Obviously, that's what practice is for. For us to go out and practice and scheme and go into these games on the weekend and have confidence in what we've practiced all week. Then, we get put in a situation where, obviously, it's guys' fault for not wearing their mask, but at the least, maybe move the game to the next day or whenever just so we're given a fighting chance. Obviously disappointing. I'm not sure why it wasn't moved. I have no clue. I didn't ask any questions. I have no clue. Obviously, nothing was told to us. Just that we were going to go into the game without any quarterbacks. As a competitor, [it's] definitely frustrating. I think as a team, we went out and did what we could."

On whether the quarterbacks' actions have an effect on the team

"I don't think that does anything [to their leadership]. At the end of the day, we're still going to respect those guys as competitors and as our teammates. I definitely think they understand the situation that they put us in as a team, with them not following the protocols. I had a chance to talk with those guys earlier and obviously, they feel bad for putting us in that situation. As competitors, they want to be out here as well. For them to not be able to come out and compete with us, obviously put us in that situation as a team. Those guys were definitely regretful about the situation, but when those guys come back, we're going to welcome them back, just the same as before the situation happened. I think they feel bad; they're probably in the dumps more than we are for having to go out and play the game. At the end of the day, like I said, there's another opportunity next weekend, just have to go have a great week of practice and put this one behind us."

On Saints QB Taysom Hill and their offensive gameplan

"I feel like they executed what they wanted to do. They ran the ball on us early on. I think we came out, we got some stops and under the circumstances, they obviously had a ton of opportunities to turn the game on. That offsides definitely hurt us. They did what they were supposed to do. They came in and executed and they beat us. Simple as that."