



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS CAROLINA PANTHERS
SUNDAY, DEC. 30, 2018 • MERCEDES-BENZ SUPERDOME
SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- The Saints finish the season with the NFC's number one seed in the postseason for the second time in franchise history.
- The Saints finish the season with a 13-3 record, tying the 2009 and 2011 teams for the best record in franchise history.
- After securing the NFC's top seed after last week's win over Pittsburgh, New Orleans will have a bye before the divisional round of the playoffs hosted in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome.
- The Saints now have a streak of 272 regular season games without having been shut out, dating back to a 26-20 win at the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on September 6, 2002 at Raymond James Stadium, the longest running streak in the NFL and the fifth-longest all-time.
- The Saints finished with 49.0 sacks on the season, tied for ninth in team record books with the 2013 team and tied with that club for the highest takedown total during Head Coach **Sean Payton's** 13-season tenure with the Saints.
- New Orleans rushed for 184 yards on 27 carries (6.8 avg.), the second-highest total of the season to the 244 at Cincinnati on November 11.
- QB **Drew Brees**, who was inactive, officially broke the NFL record for single-season completion percentage (74.4) for the fourth time in his career, shattering his own record (72.0) from a season ago. Brees has started 217 of 220 games for the Saints (regular season and postseason) since signing as a free agent before the 2006 season. The three other quarterbacks to start for New Orleans since Brees signed with the team are Luke McCown, Sept. 27, 2015 at Carolina; Mark Brunell Jan. 3, 2010 at Carolina; and **Teddy Bridgewater**, Dec. 30, 2018 vs. Carolina (today).
- Brees' five interceptions for 2018 are the lowest in his career except for his 2001 rookie campaign when he appeared in only one contest.
- Bridgewater completed 14-of-22 passes for 118 yards, one touchdown and one interception in his first start since the Jan. 3, 2016 NFC Wild Card Playoff vs. Seattle as a member of the Minnesota Vikings. Bridgewater threw his first touchdown pass since December 27, 2015 vs. the New York Giants.
- QB **Taysom Hill** rushed three times for 11 yards and one touchdown.
- RB **Mark Ingram** played in his 106th career game today, carrying the ball five times for 28 yards in limited action.
- RB **Dwayne Washington** set a career-high with 108 yards rushing on 11 carries. He tied a career-high with a 28-yard rush.
- TE **Benjamin Watson** hauled in two passes for 29 yards.
- WR **Michael Thomas** became the single-season team record holder for receiving yards (1,405), surpassing Joe Horn's 1,399 in 2004. Thomas' 125 receptions are the fifth-highest single-season total in NFL record books.
- Smith caught three passes for 30 yards and one touchdown.
- The New Orleans defense surrendered only 3.0 yards per carry on 37 rushes.
- DT **David Onyemata** split a sack with DE **Marcus Davenport**. Davenport's 4.5 sacks were the most by a Saints rookie since Will Smith's 7.5 takedowns in 2004.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** played in his 128th consecutive game today, tallying one QB hit.
- DE **Trey Hendrickson** notched five solo tackles.
- LB **Craig Robertson** Manti Te'o recorded five solo tackles.
- LB **Alex Anzalone** notched a team-high seven total tackles (five solo).
- S **Marcus Williams** finished with five tackles (four solo).
- S **Vonn Bell** recorded six total tackles (four solo).
- P **Thomas Morstead** punted five times for 210 yards (42.0 avg.) with a long of 54 yards.



POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES
GREG BENSEL ✦ SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

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HEAD COACH SEAN PAYTON

(on evaluating the game today) "It's easy to evaluate. Just look at the film. We can spin it any way we want to. We didn't play well. We can put our own little stamp on this. It starts with me and we'll get the corrections made, but we didn't play well. Credit Carolina. They came ready to play."

(on Marcus Davenport's snaps) "He played a lot. He's been playing a lot this season. We will look at the tape. He had some pressures in the second half, but a little too late."

(on Teddy Bridgewater starting the whole game) "The plan was to play him most of the game. I thought the one interception was a play he'd like to have back, but he did a good job. He had a great week of practice."

(on the defense's first half performance in the first half) "It was not good. We did not get any pressure on the quarterback, we did not tackle well, holding the receivers. Pick something. Run fits were not good. Disappointing."

(on if it was difficult to generate emotion for this game) "That's our job though. That's the business we're in. We can't just turn it on and off and decide what you want to on your terms. It's not like that. This game never has been and it never will be."

(on the schedule for this week) "I'll keep you posted."

(on if there was a moment he knew the team wasn't inspired today) "From the get-go it was obvious. You take that personally as a coach. It's disappointing. We played poorly."

(on the offensive line's performance today) "We had a couple new guys in there starting. We will look at the tape. I thought we got some things going in the second half, but it's too hard to make an evaluation on all five guys 20 minutes after the game."

(on Michael Thomas breaking the Saints single season receiving yardage record) "He has so many other significant things that are going to happen in his career. He's a fantastic player for us. It was good to see him get a milestone like that and yet for him it's always about winning though. I don't know how old the record was. I had a year to coach Joe Horn. He was a good player for us in 2006, but I'm happy for Mike."

(on if the record was important enough to find opportunities for Thomas to get the record) "He needed 24 yards coming in. I don't want to downplay the significance of the record, but his career and what he does, the team stuff I think is so much more important than what was a record on a loss."

(on whether Thomas would have stayed on the field if the record wasn't achievable) "You can only list seven inactives. He probably would have been (out) at halftime."

(on drawing comparisons to the 2009 season's playoffs after losing a three consecutive games heading into the playoffs) "It is different. We've been in this situation (having clinched a specific playoff seed) multiple times. 2006, 2009. I don't like losing games period. That's a game you don't get back for those players, for me as a coach, our staff. It is what it is."

(on Dwayne Washington's performance) "I thought he ran well. It was good to see him going."

(on what it was like seeing Teddy Bridgewater play after everything he's been through) "Obviously a lot of adversity. In a pinch, we had two new guys playing (on the offensive line)."

(on the overall health of the team going into the playoffs) "I would not begin to start with (that). We do not discuss injuries. I think it's good."

(on whether this performance was a good teaching moment) “It is what it is. We didn’t play well and you’re upset about it. You don’t come in here and say that’s going to be a great learning (experience). There’s nothing about it that’s good. It’s disappointing. I told the players the same thing. You can try to spin it any style you want. You can try whatever you want. That won’t work in the end. There are some things (we need to do better). Coaches and players. All of us.”



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SAINTS PLAYER QUOTES

QB Teddy Bridgewater

(Opening statement) "It was great to get back out there again. It was not the result that we were looking for. Now, we will move forward with the postseason."

(On his performance) "It was a decent performance given the circumstances. I felt like I could have done some things better. I was proud of the guys who were out there today. Dwayne (Washington) ran the ball really well today. The guys up front did a nice job with some missing pieces out there and shuffling a little bit."

(On going on the field for the first time) "It was a really cool moment being back out there. It's been a long time."

(On if he was nervous) "There were no nerves. I've played this game. I've prepared myself mentally. I was calm and ready to go."

WR Tre'Quan Smith

(On his touchdown reception) "It was a route progression. It was basically a whirl route. I looked at the defense and knew they were going man-to-man. I wanted to go outside, but knew he wasn't going to let me out. So, I went inside. As soon as I went inside, I saw Teddy (Bridgewater) looking at me. At that point, I knew the ball was coming my way. The outside receiver, Austin Carr, did a good job of holding his man outside. Teddy put it on the money and I caught it. I knew it was coming, so I tried not to drop that one."

(On evaluating the game) "It's really tough because you don't know what the outcome is going to be with having the number one seed. Are people going to play for real or are they not? This afternoon we just didn't really play well."

RB Dwayne Washington

(On the support of the other running backs) "We all feed off each other. When one person does something good, then we all congratulate each other. At the end of the day we want everyone to succeed and have a successful running game. I think we ran for over 160 yards. That's big for us. Unfortunately, we didn't come up with the win though."

(On learning from Mark Ingram & Alvin Kamara) "I wouldn't really compare myself to them. They are like thunder and lightning. We all bring something special to the table. In terms of my ability, I feel like I have a little something both of what they have."

(On what he proved today) "Most of all that I can do it too. That was big for me especially getting my first 100-yard game."

WR Michael Thomas

(On breaking the franchise single season receiving yardage record) "It's a blessing. I feel like I'm going to be judged on my progress year in and year out. I feel like we play this game to win, so that's the most important thing. Getting the record is there, but there's not much to talk about."

(On Coach Payton being disappointed in today's loss and if this game means a lot) "I am not a coach. So if that is what he told you, then that is what it is. I have to get ready for the playoffs and play for a championship. Whatever it takes, then that is what it is. Now, we need to start focusing on the playoffs."

DE Cameron Jordan

(On assessing the defensive performance with nothing on the line in terms of seeding) "There was plenty on the line. We have 16 given opportunities each season. I feel like we are unbeatable when we play our best ball. Today, we did not play our best ball. I'm upset about that. I'm not excited that we didn't put our best foot forward heading into the playoffs. We were showing that we were progressing every game. I don't think we showed that in this game."

(On if the game had an exhibition feel) "Every time you take the field, you are trying to put your best foot forward and make a statement with your defense. I just don't think anybody can mess with us when we are playing our best. You can label it as an exhibition, but it was a game against a divisional opponent and we ended up losing that game. I'm at a loss of words. I'm overly irritated about it."



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PANTHERS HEAD COACH RON RIVERA

(On getting a win) "It kind of cleansed it a little bit, going forward. The big questions that will linger for us is 'What if? What if? What if?' I get that part of it. To get off the schneid, I think, is pretty cool for the guys. It gives us the opportunity to head off into the offseason a little bit with their heads up. It's probably the best way to send Ryan (Kalil) and Pepp (Julius Peppers) off on their way. (They are) two great Panthers. It's kind of nice for them."

(On the locker room experience following the last game for Kalil and Peppers) "The guys were really appreciative we won for them. They kind of took that sense and that feel, which is really cool. I have been fortunate that I've been around some guys when they have walked away from the game. I was around when Mike Singletary did it. That was a cool deal as well."

(On winning today preventing the team from getting a higher draft pick) "It is not about draft picks. It is about winning and losing. That's what it's about. We didn't come in here to lose and throw in the towel. We came in here to compete. Sure, they (Saints) had some guys that they didn't play. That is beside the point. You still have to compete. That is the way we will always approach it as long as I am the coach. I just believe that that is the right way to do things. We are professionals, and we come here to do our job."

(On QB Kyle Allen) "He showed us that he is capable. He is a young man that has some growing and has some things to learn, but I do think that he is a guy that is going to come in and compete and give us everything that he has."

(On Allen's steady approach) "He is one of those guys that can take a moment and make it what it is. Some guys get moments like that and seem to blow it out of proportion. Kyle always seems to have that same, steady approach. I appreciate that. The moment just never seems to get too big for him; and, I think one thing that we have to understand about a lot of these young players coming out of college football, especially quarterbacks, is that a lot of these guys are throwing it 40-50 times a game. When you throw the ball that many times, you are put under a tremendous amount of pressure. With all of the scrutiny they get, too, in the media, I think they are really learning how to deal with and cope with those things. That's why you see guys like Baker Mayfield having the type of year that he's having. You see guys that seem to get it a lot sooner than (in the past)."

(On Allen's pocket-presence) "That is exactly what I saw. I thought that he had a tremendous amount of poise. I don't think that he made the moment bigger than it was. I thought that he took it for what it was, and that was an opportunity to go out and play. One of the things that we talked about last night as a group, several of the guys talked about opportunity, opportunity. In fact, one of the guys mentioned Kyle's opportunity. I thought that was really cool that the teammates were thinking about those things."

(On why Devin Funchess didn't play) "It was just a decision that I made going forward."

(On his thoughts on the Saints' offensive performance) "That would be unfair to do because they didn't play Drew (Brees) and they didn't play Alvin (Kamara). I do appreciate the way that our guys played hard and came out and fought. To do that (make comments about the Saints), would be very unfair to them. I know what Coach Payton is capable of as a play caller. I know who Drew Brees is and the rest of that offense, so I just think that they are the #1 seed in the NFC for a reason."



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PANTHERS PLAYER QUOTES

QB Kyle Allen

(On his first NFL start) "First start was incredible man. I said this last week when I went in the game, I just felt at home right when I got on the field. Coming up to this game, there were little nerves here and there throughout the week, but once I got on the field I felt back at home. Just taking it play by play, executing and having a plan every single play and just trying to focus on the now. I think we did a good job of that today."

(On getting this opportunity to start) "It felt incredible, it's the preparation and opportunity. We had a team meeting last night and we spoke a lot about opportunity and I think this league's filled with opportunities and the guys that stay in the league for a long time are the guys who take advantage of those opportunities. Obviously, there are a lot of things to clean up throughout this, but I said this in my Wednesday press conference, we just wanted to come out of here with a win. For all those guys who have struggled this whole season, for guys like Ryan (Kalil), for guys like Pep (Julius Peppers). Just send them out in a good way and to be up however many that was at one point, 23-0, 30-0, it was just awesome."

(On his confidence) "It's just been built up for a long time. I've been around a lot of great quarterbacks, I've watched the quarterbacks in this league and I knew I can have success in this league. I think it's self-confidence, I think it's other people believing in me and giving me that confidence. I just think that at the quarterback position, if you do not have confidence, you do not have anything."

LB Luke Kuechly

(On ending the season with a win) "It is a good feeling, guys work really hard every week. To go out there and put up a performance that gives us an opportunity to win and guys prepared this week extremely hard. I think that is a testament to this team and this coaching staff for keeping guys involved and thinking about the right things and being positive. It would have been easy this year to just pack it in and say this last game doesn't mean anything, but it speaks to the characters of the guys in this room, it speaks to what coach (Ron) Rivera is able to do. His ability to motivate and keep guys together, no matter who it was, from top to bottom on this team everybody played hard and that is what makes this team special."

(On sending Ryan Kalil and Julius Peppers out with a win) "You talk about two guys who are two of the best players in this team's history and to send them out with a win after the way this season has gone is something that is cool. Those guys deserved this, they've worked extremely hard. Ryan (Kalil) and Pep (Julius Peppers) been through a lot of different situations and tough times. Those guys are the epitome of what this team is about; tough leaders, good leaders. We are lucky to have those guys on this team and have the opportunity to play with them."

C Ryan Kalil

(On ending his career with a win) "There is just so much that you cannot control, not everybody gets to do the Peyton Manning and go out with a Super Bowl win. Listen, there is a lot that I have been proud of that I accomplished, playing 12 years for the same team is not the norm in this league, so I am very grateful. There are a lot of people that have helped me accomplish that. For me today, the person I kept thinking about the most was my dad. I have spent a lot of time with him throughout the years working on my craft; his confidence has helped me along with way."

(On reading articles about his legacy with the Carolina Panthers) "A lot of family members have been sending me stuff. I saw some of the nicest things people have ever said about me these last couple of

weeks. So, I have been very grateful for that and feel very humbled. I will tell you what, if you ever want a confidence booster you should retire; a lot of nice things will be said about you.

RB Christian McCaffrey

(On possibly playing quarterback in today's game) "They told me I was next, so I figure I should get the wing loose... Just played some backyard football, but I have been a running back my whole life."

(On Kyle Allen's Performance) "A lot of poise, I think. He is a guy who has always answered the call and had a couple great throws today. He was calm and collected the whole time. It was really cool to see him. I played with him in the Army All-American game in high school. Just being able to line up in the same backfield as him to start the game makes you remember that things come full circle. I was really happy for him."

(On the team's performance) "It shows you the kind of locker room we have. We have a lot of guys who are unbelievable leaders. We have some big-name guys and some guys who kind of go under the radar a lot too, but will always fight. That is what I thought was cool today."

(On his playing time in today's game) "They had told me before the game, 'we are going to get you in and get you out.' I did not know what that meant, so I just prepared like I was going to play the whole game and whenever they take me out I will listen to what they say."

CB Captain Munnerlyn

(On the team winning the last game of the season) "We had lost six, or seven in a row, so it was definitely a good thing that we were able to go get this win."

(On sending Ryan Kalil and Julius Peppers out with a win) "It means a lot. Those guys put a lot into this franchise, like I said. To send those guys out with a bang is amazing."