



POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES
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LOS ANGELES CHARGERS VS. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS
SUNDAY, AUG. 20, 2023 • SoFi STADIUM
SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- With the win, New Orleans moves to 2-0 in the preseason. The Saints return to action on Sunday, Aug. 27 when they host the Houston Texans at Caesars Superdome. Kickoff is set for 7:00 p.m. CST. The game will be aired nationally on FOX (WVUE FOX 8 in the New Orleans area).
- It is the first time since 2014 the Saints have started 2-0 in the preseason and the first preseason win streak since their wins in week two and three of the 2019 exhibition schedule.
- The Saints defense held Los Angeles to just 1-of-7 (14.3%) on third down conversions in the first half and 3-of-15 (20%) in the game.
- The Saints outgained the Chargers 339 to 309 and managed 5.1 yards per play compared to 4.5 for Los Angeles.
- DB **Lonnie Johnson Jr.** and CB **Isaac Yiadom** each recorded interceptions, Johnson's coming on a fourth down with less than a minute remaining in fourth quarter to help seal the victory.
- DE **Payton Turner** had a sack and forced fumble recovered by DT **Bryan Bresee**.
- New Orleans had 278 net yards passing in the contest compared to 189 for the Chargers.
- QB **Jameis Winston** got the start for the Black and Gold, totaling 169 passing yards and completing 13-of-21 passes in the entire first half and part of a series in the third quarter.
- RB **Kendre Miller** played a feature back role in the first half, finishing with for 36 yards, including a diving grab on a 27-yard strike from Winston. The rookie out of TCU finished off the same drive with his first NFL touchdown on a seven-yard run up the middle.
- The most explosive play for the Saints offense came in the third quarter on a 53 yard pass from QB **Jake Haener** to WR **Jontre Kirklin**.
- Haener entered the game at halftime and helped orchestrate three scoring drives. He finished 11-of-17 for 118 yards.
- WR **Shaq Davis** finished with three receptions for 63 yards, including a 42-yard grab in between defenders with under a minute remaining in the first half to set up a field goal.

- DE **Nick Lalos** had a huge day, leading the Saints with five tackles, three sacks, four tackles for loss and one pass defense.
- Making his playing debut for the Black and Gold, LB **Jaylon Smith** contributed three tackles and one pass defended.
- DT **Malcom Roach** added four solo tackles and a tackle for loss.
- Special Teams was key for New Orleans, as kickers **Wil Lutz** and **Blake Grupe** went a combined 5-of-5 on field goals. The longest of the day came from Lutz on a 51-yard try in the third quarter.
- P **Lou Hedley** had two punts downed inside the 20, including one downed at the five-yard line.

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS HEAD COACH DENNIS ALLEN

Opening Statement:

“We did some good things. It’s nice to see [Saints RB] Kendrick Miller in for a couple plays. On the touchdown it was a good route and good reception to get ourselves down the field, which was good to see.

“The three takeaways defensively were positive, but I didn't like the penalties. It was way too many. That's something we have to get cleaned up. I didn't like the fourth-and-23 play at the end of the game, that has to be better. You can't allow somebody to do that.

“I don't like the fact that we let the quarterback run way too much. He had about 120 yards rushing and 67 were from quarterback scrambles, which has to get cleaned up. We won the game and I'm pleased about that, but there's a ton of things that need to get cleaned up.”

On why joint practices with the Texans were canceled:

“They had a lot of guys get injured this past week and weren't sure that we were going to be able to have productive joint practices. We thought it was better to go ahead and cancel it and just play the game. Sometimes those things happen, and we were both in agreement with that. We'll work on our own and we have a lot to focus on, a lot of improvements to make.”

On the performance of starting defense:

“It was pretty good. The Chargers had one drive where they were able to move the ball just a little bit. Overall, it was a pretty solid performance by that group.”

On what he saw from LB Jaylon Smith:

“He made one heck of a play on the third down out route to the tight end. It was basically man-to-man coverage there, so that's the one play that stands out to me a little bit. We will go back and look at the tape to see exactly how he played but it looked like he was flying around out there, which was fun to watch.”

On DE Peyton Turner’s forced fumble and his performance overall in training camp:

“That’s the stuff that we've seen him doing in training camp and why we drafted him where we did. Here’s a kid that has had a lot of injury issues, which has forced him to miss a lot of time. Therefore, he's missed a ton of development. It's been an unfair assessment of the player up to this point, but I do think he's had a good camp and has made some nice plays today.”

On describing the last 36 hours or so with the Hurricane and Earthquake:

“I was waiting for the officials to come in and meet with us. We have a hurricane coming in and then my phone was blowing up with an earthquake emergency. The officials came in and said it's technically an outside stadium, so if there's lightning, we might have a lightning delay.

“There's been a lot of thought that was held this week, in terms of the productivity of what we were able to get accomplished in the joint practices and then being able to play the game. I'm ready to try to get back home and get ready to go back to the dome next week.”

On RB Kendre Miller’s performance:

“He’s definitely getting better at all that stuff. He had a nice pass protection play the other day of the practices, too. Each day he continues to get a little bit better. Obviously, we've got to keep him healthy and out there getting those reps. You can see the talent level. He's a talented player and we're excited about him.”

On WR Shaq Davis performance today:

“It’s unfortunate that he got the one touchdown called back, but it was good to see. He's a big, long receiver and that’s going to need to be his world. His world is going to have to be playing big and being able to make contested catches. It was good to see it when he does.”

On QB Jake Haener having to leave for a few plays:

“It was the spotters upstairs. He was either them or the officials on the field. I didn't get an explanation of that, but I knew what it was that they were bringing him out for. We had him evaluated by our doctors and they went through the whole protocol. They said he was clear to play so he went back out there.”

On TE Jimmy Graham:

“Jimmy is with us. He's healthy and will have some more testing. He's a little shook up, but overall he's doing okay.”

On the conversation with Saints DE Isaiah Foskey after the Chargers QB Easton Stick ran:

“That was a play that he should have been able to finish and make the play. I expressed to him that I expect him to be able to make that play. That's why we drafted him. Now that being said, I've seen some improvement out of this player. I've seen him cut it loose a little bit. I hold him to that standard expectation that he should have made that play.”

On DE Niko Lalos:

“He's a guy that worked extremely hard and was on the practice squad last year. He played in the XFL this year, which was good experience for him to get out there and play. He's been putting some good stuff on tape. It's a position that we're pretty deep at, so there's a lot of competition there. We'll evaluate where that tape was, but he did do some good things tonight.”

On OL Calvin Throckmorton:

“He left the game with a rib injury.”

On cleaning up penalties:

“Pre-snap penalties can't happen, that was a total lack of focus. That has to get cleaned up. You have to look at the tape and determine from a technical standpoint what you could have done better technique wise and put yourself in a better position, specifically on some of the holding calls. From my vantage point, I don't believe they were all holding, but the flag went down. We have to look at it and see what we can do better.”

On the two offensive pass interferences in a three-play span:

“On that particular play, he's running a little slant-route and the defensive back kind of jammed him. The official explained to me that he thought he really wasn't running a route. We'll look at the technique there, but all of those are teachable moments. That's part of what the preseason is all about.”

On the biggest takeaway from this time out here with the team:

“We have a pretty good team. Now we have to go up and prove it on a weekly basis. I like the way this team is coming together and the way they are working. I like the way they're coming together as a team. It's been fun to watch.”

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS QUARTERBACK JAMEIS WINSTON

On dealing with the weather:

“Yeah, my main concern is making sure that everyone's safe. We did a good job with our travel group, making sure we had all our P's and Q's in terms of the game, so I'm happy to know that.”

On the first half execution:

“We're getting better every single day. As we go out there and look at this film, I'm pretty sure we're going to find something that we can execute better on. But we are getting better every single day and I'm happy that we got this win.”

On the wheel route to RB Kendre Miller:

“Young buck is showing up in LA. He had an incredible camp. Happy for him to bounce back and make an incredible play.”

On WR Shaq Davis:

“Shaq is playing really well. I saw strong hands and confidence getting him out of the huddle. It's so beautiful to see when these young guys get a grasp of the offense. They are able to play fast and execute.”

On getting something out of this week:

“This week was amazing. It's always great to compete against another opponent. We've been competing against each other for three weeks now, so I think we had a great opportunity against a great defense and a great team to compete with, and everything went well.”

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS HEAD COACH BRANDON STALEY

On the offense's performance tonight:

"I think that it was an uneven performance in the passing game for us. We didn't protect the passer very well. I didn't think that we threw it with accuracy. I just thought that it was inconsistent throughout the night. Certainly, the three turnovers, that really told the story tonight."

On the offense's 'slow start' was 'attributed to anything in particular':

"No."

On QB Easton Stick's accuracy tonight:

"I didn't think that we protected the passer very well. I think that our route detail with some of those second- and third-group guys wasn't very crisp, so I thought that our timing was poor most of the night."

On if the first interception 'was the defensive back making a play on the ball or the pass and route':

"A combination of those factors."

On why QB Max Duggan did not enter the game:

"Just the flow of the game. It was a tight game and we were trying to work our way back. That's kind of what I told you guys. I really want Easton [Stick] to get the work. Easton needed to play in a game like this. He was able to fight through some things. He was able to give ourselves a chance to win in the end, in that two-minute drill. I thought that two-minute was a real bright spot for us, overall — two-minute, end-of-half. Then, the two-minute at the end of the game, being able to make some plays. We just have to be much more consistent in all phases in the middle of that game."

On LB Daiyan Henley:

"I liked the way that Daiyan [Henley] played. I thought that he was aggressive. I think you see what an outstanding tackler he is. He can really feel the run game. He is physical. He's outstanding in the blitz game. He just needs to keep improving because he'll learn a lot from it. He had the green dot a lot of the night tonight, so I thought he communicated well. Then, he hung in there in the second half, when [LB] Blake [Lynch] kind of went out. He stayed there the whole way with [LB] Mikel [Jones] and those guys held the rope for us."

On if the 'kicking structure' was planned:

"Yes, that was the plan, to get both of those guys an opportunity."

On 'what the day has been like' for him:

"I would not have known that there was tropical storm. This is a normal day for us, from start to finish. I know that Hurricane Hilary was out there."

On if he knew that there was an earthquake today:

"I was told that, but I did not feel it, no."

On the defense's performance:

"The defense, in general, I thought was really solid most of the night. I think there was those three big plays, that was kind of the story, but otherwise, I really liked the way the group competed. I thought that they gave us a chance. I thought our run defense, our third-down defense, our red zone defense, was really good. I did not like the two-minute, end-of-half. Really, it was one play. I didn't think that we capitalized in the first half. There were at least five opportunities for interceptions, that I felt like our guys needed to come down with. My father would say, if you come down with one-third of them, I think we would have been in a lot better shape. We didn't capitalize on their mistakes and they capitalized on ours tonight."

On an evaluations of the special teams units:

"Our punt team was a real bright spot for us because we planted a lot tonight. Our punt team was a real bright spot. [P] JK [Scott], his hang time was excellent. Our coverage was excellent, made a lot of big plays. Our protection was solid. I think that the whole operation is improving. Our gunner play, like I've been telling you, I think we're a lot deeper team. I liked the way that group competed tonight."

On OLB Tuli Tuipulotu:

"He's really instinctive, number one. He kind of knows where the plays are going before they happen. Then, he's really physical. This guy is going to come off and he's going to dominate a tight end one-on-one. He has proven that that's a mismatch, which is a good thing for an edge player. That's what we're looking for. Then, he's outstanding in the movement game. Then, against the bigger O-linemen, he can strike and shed and win at the ball. I thought he had a good night

tonight, and that's how he practiced. It's how he's practiced against our first group with the Chargers and how he competed against the first group from the Saints, most of the practices this week."

On WR Quentin Johnston:

"It was a good day for Q [Quentin Johnston]."

On WR Derius Davis' 'muffed punt':

"Just have to trust his fundamentals. I think a learning experience for him, on a kick that's kind of sidelining over there, is just really making sure that we track it. I think his punt fundamentals are where, I think, he has the most room to grow. That was an instance of it. When he was returning the football tonight, I liked his ball security."

On if LB Amen Ogbongbemiga not 'suiing up tonight' was 'injury related':

"Yes. The second practice, we were just kind of precautionary with him. Hope to get him back next week."

On if this game is 'good preseason tape to use as a teaching moment':

"Yeah, I think so. At halftime, we had done all the things that you don't want to do, in terms of winning and losing. Yet, we were right there. Then, at the end of the game, which was still true. I thought we played with more energy in the second half. I thought we competed better in the second half. But, like I told the guys, you gave yourselves an opportunity in two-minute, and that's how the NFL is. It was 19-10. We were able to overcome the turnovers, some of the fourth downs that we didn't get, which are kind of like turnovers. I thought that we were able to hang in there and give ourselves a chance. It's going to be good for our guys to see how you can stay alive in a game like that and give yourself a chance, but then it's going to be great for our guys to know why we lost the game, because we lost the major items that you can't lose in this league."

On DL Scott Matlock:

"That screen play, you want to talk about a big-time play. He has been solid. He has proven himself against the ones. He's improving and he's the right guy to be coaching."

On the rookie defensive players:

"These young guys that we drafted, the three defenders that we drafted, I think the most exciting thing is how instinctive they are and how physical they are. They're instinctive and they're physical. They've proven that they can hold up against our best group and their best group on that team that we just played."

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS QUARTERBACK EASTON STICK

On his performance tonight:

"Up and down, to say the least. The two turnovers in the first half just can't happen, it put the defense in a really tough spot. The defense played great all night, kept us in it and gave us a chance there at the end. We just weren't able to finish it."

On the first interception:

"It came out really clean and honestly wasn't expecting it to be that clean. It was a weird look and I hesitated and threw it right in his chest."

On his first rushing touchdown:

"A zone-read play."

On if he was 'prepared to play the full game':

"I was prepared to play a bunch. I love being out there. I really appreciate [Head] Coach [Brandon] Staley letting me go the full way. Disappointed with the way it ended."

On his takeaways from the game:

"You hate losing, especially the way we did. I'm excited to go back and watch it, it'll be good learning for me. I haven't had a chance to play for an extended period like that before, it was a ton of fun being out there with the guys. I really appreciate Coach Staley, like I said, letting me go [play]. Those guys battled, we rolled everybody through there and everybody battled. It'll be big for me to go back and watch it and learn from it, so I'm excited to do that."

On last time he played in a full game:

"It's been a long time [*laughter*]."

On the first two-minute drill:

"It was big. The defense played really well and gave us a chance the whole night. We had a bunch of three-and-outs in there. To move the ball like that and finish, it was huge. A bunch of guys had catches, a bunch of guys stepped up. The O-line battled, those guys played really hard. It was great to get close there and the defense gave us a chance. We weren't able to finish."

On WR Quentin Johnston:

"He had a good night. That's what you're going to see. Playing in this league is really difficult. Being a rookie, he's learning a ton. He's had a really great camp. He's going to be a really good player and I think tonight was a good step for him."

On 'managing the pressure' from the game tonight:

"I think it wasn't anything crazy. The offensive line played well. Honestly, that's football, there's going to be muddy pockets and that's just part of it. All those guys that played tonight, I thought they played well. We're out there learning together. That's all part of it. They did a good job."

On 'different reads' from the game tonight compared to what the Saints showed in practices:

"It definitely is a different structure. We saw them for the two days of practice, that was awesome to get a chance to see some different structures and different personnel groupings. They definitely play a different style than what we've seen in training camp with our defense. It was good to play against somebody else. This tape is going to be good for all of us — for me, particularly — to go back and learn from."

On communication with the coaches:

"There's constant communications. [Offensive Coordinator] Kellen [Moore] does a really good job talking through things in those TV timeouts. [Quarterbacks Coach] Doug [Nussmeier] does, as well, prepping everybody for what's to come on the drive. The communication has been really good."

On any 'differences' in what the Saints displayed tonight compared to the two-minute simulations in joint practices earlier in the week:

"They rolled coverages pretty well. They did that all week in joint practices. They show you a little bit of everything. They do a good job with the disguise. It was

pretty consistent with what they did all week. That's a good team, they played really hard."