



POSTGAME NOTES & QUOTES

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS VS. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS SUNDAY, JAN. 5, 2025 • RAYMOND JAMES STADIUM POSTGAME NOTES

- New Orleans fell to Tampa Bay 27-19, finishing the season at 5-12.
- QB **Spencer Rattler** threw for 240 yards on 26-of-42 passing, one touchdown and zero interceptions. In the first half, Rattler completed passes to 10 different Saints. The 26 completions were the highest total of the season for the rookie QB.
- RB **Clyde Edwards-Helaire** posted eight carries for 26 yards and one reception for 14 yards in his second game as a Saint.
- TE **Juan Johnson** was a consistent target for Rattler, adding six receptions for a season-best 80 yards (13.3 avg.). With 80 yards receiving Sunday, he finished the season with 548 yards, setting a new career-high and surpassing his previous best of 502 in 2022.
- WR/RS **Dante Pettis** added two catches for 16 yards, including his first touchdown as a Saint to go along with a punt return for nine yards.
- LB **Demario Davis** led the Saints defense with nine tackles (six solo) and a pass defense, pushing his season total to 136 stops, his highest total in his seven seasons as a Saint.
- LB **Nephi Sewell** made his first start of the season at linebacker for New Orleans and tied a career-high with eight stops (five solo) and a sack.
- S **Will Harris** added eight solo stops and a pass defense to lead the Saints secondary while DB **Ugo Amadi** added seven stops.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** played in his 226th career regular season game on Sunday, putting him in sole possession of 14th all-time among NFL defensive linemen past Pro Football Hall of Famer Carl Eller (Class of 2004).
- S **Jordan Howden** added three solo stops and his second interception of the season.
- LS **Zach Wood** played in his 132nd career game, moving into sole possession of 26th in record books on the club's games played list past Pro Football Hall of Famer T William Roaf (Class of 2012).

- K **Blake Grupe** was perfect Sunday, making all four of his field goal tries with a long of 49 and his only extra point attempt.
- P **Matthew Hayball** added three punts with a 43.7 gross/net punting average, including two inside the 20-yard line to increase his league-leading total to 41 on the season.
- S **Millard Bradford** elevated to the active roster from the practice squad for the season finale, led the team with two special teams tackles.

SAINTS POSTGAME QUOTES 1-5-25

HEAD COACH DARREN RIZZI

(On the loss and end of the season)

"It goes without saying that's a disappointing end to the game and the season, especially after a really – a real good effort by us in the first half. Unfortunately, they kind of flipped the script on us in the second half and some of the things that we had been deficient at appeared again. Things like third down, not finishing in the red zone, some penalties obviously, whether they were questionable or not, they were still called and so some of those things were obviously self-inflicted errors that cost us the game. As I said to the guys in the locker room, it certainly wasn't about heart, or effort, or passion, or 'want to', again. For us to be playing for nothing, essentially, meaning the postseason, for our guys to go out there and give the effort they gave is pretty remarkable. Right up to the end of the game. Right up until the very, very last play of the season our guys are fighting, scratching, clawing, and so that's a credit to them. But at the same time if we don't get these things cleaned up, the results will continue to be the same in the future. So that's unfortunate. We really wanted to try to get one here obviously, with all the circumstances that took place this week, it would've been great to bring home a win back to New Orleans to give everybody something to at least smile about for just a short term but again I applaud our guys in terms of their work ethic but unfortunately we weren't able to finish the job."

(On this potentially being the last game as Head Coach)

"That hasn't crept into my mind yet. I'm emotional because I really wanted to get this win today to end the season on a positive note for everybody – the team, the organization, the city, the fanbase – so, I really haven't started to process all the, all that part of it yet. I think you guys have pretty figured out by now that I'm a 'what you see is what you get' kind of guy so I'm going to be passionate about everything. I'm just still trying to absorb this game and still upset about this result and we'll take that and start tomorrow and we'll figure out what the plan is moving forward with that."

(On Foster Moreau's injury)

"He's dealing with a knee injury. I do not know any of the details yet. That's just way too early but I know he got a knee injury there in that last two-minute drill."

(On what changed in the second half)

"Without watching the film it's hard to see. For us, we did a good job in the first half of getting into third-and-manageable and converting and all that and we didn't do that in the second half. We ended up 3 of 13 on the day in third down and you're not going to win a lot of games when you're 3 of 13 on third down. I thought we did a much better job on first and second – that was really an emphasis coming in – we didn't want to get into a – Todd [Bowles] and their defense, they do a great job with their pressure package on third-and-long, we did not want to be in third-and-long. That was not where we wanted to live and so I thought we were really doing a good job there. We controlled the time of possession in the first half. That's why we took the ball to start the game. The game was playing out the way we wanted it to play out there in the first half. We just couldn't get a mirror image in the second half. They went down and scored on the first drive – couple penalties, we had a facemask, we had an illegal hit to the head, they had a long scramble, and they kind of got the momentum rolling in the second half and we couldn't really stop it. That's just unfortunate. It's hard to say but it's the truth."

(On the pattern of falling behind in the second halves of games)

"Yeah well there's been some examples of when we weren't very good in the first half then had a great second half and vice versa. Today, I thought we played very well in the first half across the board. What we didn't do in the first half was finish drives in the red zone and we walked out of there with three field goals if I'm not mistaken. The good red zone drive was a great job before the half. I thought our guys really did a great job operating that but we had two earlier drives that stalled and we had to kick field goals. We did have a couple fourth down conversions on the one drive – I think that was a touchdown drive – so really good job by everybody. But, unfortunately, I hear you. The playing the complete game, four quarters, is something that we have not done a good job of here, especially these final three weeks."

(On QB Spencer Rattler in the first half versus the second half)

“Yeah, you know, I don’t know. Again, without watching the film, it’s hard for me to say to put it all on Spencer [Rattler]. I’m going to tell you that anybody that puts the film on from the first half, they’re going to see a guy that played really well. Came out of the gate. [He] was delivering the ball. [He] was on target. I know he missed a couple shots there in the second half, and we had some potential completions that we missed. I hate to say it, but you’re probably going to deal with that with most rookie quarterbacks with the peaks and the valleys. But, man, if he could do what he did in the first half and continue that. As I’ve said all along with everybody, if we could get rid of the negative plays, you know, that’s going to be the big deal for us. I didn’t see a whole lot of negative plays, we just need to have the production that we had in the first half, offensively.”

(On if he considered challenging a potential touchdown catch by WR Marquez Valdes-Scantling)

“I did consider challenging it. I never saw a replay, they did not show it on the home screen board. Our guys upstairs that handle that stuff, they got the replay. They felt like it was never a catch – never really had control. They were talking about how his arm got pinned initially early, so they thought it might have been a PI, but I have not seen the play yet. All I saw was the bang bang action. But from what I was told upstairs, we wouldn’t have won the challenge. That’s the information I got.”

(On how he will approach the next few days)

“We will come in tomorrow, we’ll have everybody. We will have our final team meeting and the guys will do all their exit stuff. Listen, I will sit down with, obviously, Mickey [Loomis] and Mrs. Benson and the front office. You know, they have to go through, no matter what happens with me, they have to go through the NFL interview process. I know I’ll be a part of that. But, other than that, you know, I’ll start, hopefully get a few days off and try to reflect on everything and kind of go from there. I’m hurting right now for the guys in the locker room. You know, they’re really emotional. That was one where there were some guys that aren’t usually emotional postgame were, and it affects me. I love those guys and I love that locker room. Those guys have been unbelievably supportive of me and so that’s just a huge personal thank you – I’m getting emotional now – to the locker room. Because they’ve been unreal.”

(On the atmosphere and emotions after the game.)

“You know, at the end of every season, it’s hard. When it’s the last game, the locker room always sucks, unless you’re the team that wins the Super Bowl, the last game sucks. So whatever that last game is, the locker room is never fun. I think this one was a little bit more emotional because of the circumstances this year with a bunch of guys being out, a bunch of guys stepping up, the coaching change, so it was probably a little more emotional than I am used to but it’s never a good scene. But I had a lot of guys say a lot of nice things to me which I’ll never forget.”

QUARTERBACK SPENCER RATTLER

(On not playing four consistent quarters of football)

“You know, I think we came out that first drive of the half, took a shot [and] it was man [coverage], so we wanted to be aggressive. And I think we ran the ball and then didn’t convert on that third down. [The] next drive I think the defense got us a turnover and we kind of got a good play going. Oh, I missed the throw on third down rolling out left, [we] got three points – scored points on that. And then that drive after, we had a penalty that backed us up to second-and-25 and then nothing really on second down [and] third down. And then [we] just tried to string it together at the end. We made some plays toward the end as a group. We’re in the mindset of, ‘We’re going to go score, get a two-point conversion [and] tie it up.’ You know, they made more plays than us, I think, in that second half, especially at the end. I thought Baker [Mayfield] just took over with his legs – good stuff to learn from for sure.”

(On what was working in the first half)

“Yeah, everything was working in the first half. I thought our quick game was good, I thought our play action was good. [We] moved the pocket, we’re spitting the ball out, running the ball. I thought we did a really good job of that in the first half. You know, [we] just got to do it in the second [half] – third quarter, fourth quarter, so that’s a group thing. That’s a team thing and we’ve got to look at the film. We’ve got a whole offseason to get better and that’s what I’m looking forward to – to attack that and come back and learn from all of these great experiences.”

(On the atmosphere in the locker room)

“You know, you’re not happy losing – we should’ve and could’ve won that game if we controlled a few things that we messed up. [It was] another game down to the wire versus a playoff team, you know, and they made some plays at the end that made it hard for us to comeback, but we kept fighting and there’s a lot of good to take from this, for sure, and then a lot to learn from, as well.”

(On his approach to learning from his opportunities this season)

“There’s a lot of good to learn from. [I] did a lot of good stuff but obviously [I have] a lot to clean up, as well. [It was my] rookie year [and I] played six games – I’m very fortunate and blessed to be able to do that and go out there and battle with these guys. I mean, these guys – that o-line today worked their butts off. [The] running backs ran the ball, I threw it to multiple different receivers, tight ends... guys played really well and I wish I could have got them the ball a couple more times and convert on a few throws, but it’s part of the game. Charge it to the game and move on.”

(On his thoughts on Interim Head Coach Darren Rizzi)

“Yeah, I mean we all respect Rizzi, you know, he’s a great coach. As a special teams coordinator, we were all cool with him – he’s a leader of men, [he] has the formula to win each week, and we’ve just got to follow it. [I] really enjoyed my time with him, you know, and yeah, I appreciate and respect Rizzi a lot.”

SAFETY UGO AMADI

(On the game coming down to the wire)

“One play too short – it was a tough loss. I feel like we had a chance as a team, but it just came down to the end and we just didn’t execute the way we wanted to.”

(On the fourth down conversion by Buccaneers WR Jalen McMillan late in the fourth quarter)

“It was tough. It was a good ball. I played my leverage and... playing as a [defensive back], you have to make the plays that come to you. I feel like that play would have been a really outstanding play if I had made that play, but it just comes with playing in the league. You have to make the plays that come with you and that’s what separates you. I’m going to work on that in the offseason.”

DEFENSIVE END CAM JORDAN

(Opening statement)

“First of all, I’d like to thank God for giving me 14 years on the football field – giving me the ambition I have, the drive that I have, the family I have, the foundation I have, the ability to call New Orleans home for the last 14 [seasons]. No, I don’t know what will happen in the future. I have a lot of love for this game, and I came off this field even more pissed than before because it’s pretty much been the epitome of our season – showing energy [and] showing what we’re about, and then giving them some dumb penalties and shooting ourselves in the foot. A couple missed tackles we should [have never given up] as entire team – plays we should have taken advantage of. To say that we’re 5-12 for the first time in my career – I’d say if anything, it fuels my fire for more. I know this team can be special. If you looked at us at the beginning of the season, you’d say, ‘Damn, don’t they have dogs, too.’ Three games later - you feel gutted, but it shows up at the end of the season – I mean same thing. Guys you hoped were starters you were going to rely on [get] hurt and that’s part of the nature of the game – next man up mentality. But, you’re always going to look at the what-if. ‘What if everyone was healthy? What if we were still putting up 35-40 points a game? What-if, you know?’ That’s what you have every off season, you have those what-ifs. All I can look forward to and all I can say is I’m going to be the best version of me that I can be – for whatever I can. This offseason, I’m going to do the same things that I’ve always wanted to do – preferably, go after being the best version of me. That’s becoming a better athlete – being a better whatever it is. Hopefully, not another interior rusher. But I’m hopefully blessed for the Saints – who drafted me with the 24th overall pick. [Inaudible sentence.] I’ve been arguing with myself back and forth with what I think could have happened, that should have happened, whatever that is. I’m 128.5 sacks deep, that has to be how many TFLs deep? How many tackles? 730-plus tackles, north of 175 TFLs, most

likely. I'm over 65 or 66 pass deflections, a lot of Pro Bowls and All-Pro [selections], and I still just want more. So, that's where we're sitting at."

(On what is needed for the Saints to be considered a contender once again)

"To gauge where the team was, or could be, or whatever that was – health would be a large part of that. But that's been the last three years of the New Orleans Saints. Coaches have always said that the best ability is availability. If you look beyond that, somewhere in this season you're wishing you could have had a couple games back where we missed over 10 tackles. You miss a lot of things when you don't have missed tackles. Besides the personal purgatory I felt like I was in this season, the ability to fight out of it to try and help the team in whatever way. That's all that ever mattered to me is trying to put your team in a winning position. Even if I'm not the best, show me who is. I still feel like I'm the best."

WIDE RECEIVER MARQUEZ VALDES-SCANTLING

(On reflecting on joining the Saints)

"Yeah, I mean obviously I wanted to come in here and help win more so that was the unfortunate part that we didn't get enough done throughout my time here, which is super unfortunate. I think we have a really good team. Even with all the turnover, and change and the injuries, I think we still had a pretty good team, and we competed. I couldn't ask to be a part of a more welcoming team. They welcomed me with open arms, and I was able to come in and make some plays to try to help us win some games."

(On whether he's thought about free agency yet)

"No, I haven't even. I'll leave that up to my agent and when it's that time we will discuss it. But, there is] a lot of football left to be played so there's a lot of teams that still [have] a lot of stuff to talk about, but I love it here. Like I said, they've welcomed me in with open arms. I finally got to play in some warm weather, so I think that's also a plus for me, too."

(On being back in his hometown of Tampa and the cold weather on Sunday morning)

"Yeah, but then it was 73 at kickoff. I live here. My house is five minutes from Raymond James [Stadium], so it sucks that I've got to get on the plane to come right back here in a couple days, but we'll see what the offseason looks like for me."

BUCCANEERS POSTGAME QUOTES 1-5-25

HEAD COACH TODD BOWLES

(On how good it feels to win the NFC South for the fourth consecutive year and clinch a playoff berth)

"It feels great. We went through a lot of ups and downs this year, a lot of injuries. Guys fought hard – we went through a hurricane by the way. With a lot of guys missing on both sides of the ball, it's even more gratifying throughout the year for us to come out on top this way."

(On the discussion of getting WR Mike Evans another 1,000-yard season at the end of the game)

"It was awfully close. It was a matter of what kind of pass we were going to throw. I didn't want an interception. We talked about screens and slants, and [we] knew they were going to double him. We motioned him over to get him open. We did a good job of getting it to him. He's earned it. He's done everything for this organization and this team and we're happy for him."

(On if he was willing for the yards after catch on WR Mike Evans' last reception to ensure he got the record)

"It was a sign of relief that we didn't turn it over [laughs]."

(On the defense only allowing three points in the second half and stepping up after halftime in recent games)

"They're mentally tough. They nickel and dimed us in the first half and we gave up some plays. They were knick-knack playing us and we got frustrated. We kind of calmed down at halftime and they came out and played pretty much assignment football."

(On the toe-tap touchdown and huge fourth down catch from WR Jalen McMillan in today's game)

"You know, he's matured. Even him getting the penalty, he acknowledged it was on him. He had his fingers taped. It wasn't really a gun salute, he was pointing it forward, but I told him the refs can't see the tape on his fingers. He came back from the penalty to get the touchdown, and I thought that was huge growth for him."

(On if he argued the penalty that McMillan got called on him)

"Once they say you pointed a gun, you're not going to argue it too much. I argued a lot of calls and didn't win."

(On QB Baker Mayfield's throw to McMillan on fourth down)

"It was a hell of a throw. It was a hell of a throw when we needed it. We needed every bit of it. We knew it was going to be a tough game. Those guys fought hard. [I'm] proud of our resilience to come back and win it."

(On Mayfield's scrambling today, specifically the play coming out of halftime)

"It was huge. He had a couple of them. He had a couple of them – it was huge for us and we needed every bit of it. They did a good job against us in the run game, and they were shutting us down on first down. We had trouble getting going in the first half and the defense didn't help by letting them stay on the field longer offensively. We came out in the second half – we knew it was going to be tough when we started. These things are never easy. They're not given, they have to be earned. It was a hard-fought win."

(On S Jordan Whitehead getting injured in a car accident on Saturday morning)

"It was tough because Jordan – ever since I've been here, the six years I've been here, he's never been late, he's never been in any trouble, he's a model citizen. He's the guy that helps everybody else and it was very unfortunate for that to happen. We wish all parties involved get well [and] get well fast. It was kind of reality shock for us of how some things can be taken away from you at a moment's notice. We discussed it last night in the meeting – we talked about it. When you love somebody, they're going to make a mistake, and you have to understand that, and you have to love them anyway. He would've played for us, and we were going to play for him."

(On if he's had a chance to talk to S Jordan Whitehead after his accident)

"I talked to him this morning. I'll call him when I leave here."

(On if they can take momentum from being 6-1 following the Bye Week)

"[It] gets us a home game [and] it gets us in the tournament. You can't win them unless you're in them. We're happy to have a home game. It doesn't matter who we play, it's going to be a tough road ahead but we're confident that we can play good ball and we'll be ready for whoever we play."

(On how overcoming a lot of challenges this season helps prepare them for the playoffs)

"[It] makes you stronger. You can't not fail or have some bad things happen to you and be successful. You have to go through that part of it. That makes you mentally tough, it makes you resilient and helps you grow. It helps you understand the mistakes and things you have to do better. We went through a bunch of that, as most teams that make it do but it helped us grow in the second half of the season and correct things and they're seeing the fruits of their labor."

(On the pass rush pressuring Saints QB Spencer Rattler in the second half)

"We did a better job on first down so we can pass rush. [In] the first half, they were getting a lot of third-and-short, second-and-shorts and we weren't getting there, and the ball was coming out and they were kind of dinking and dunking on some. [In] the second half, we got first down stops, and we got it manageable for third down for those guys to get after it."

(On how important it was to get WR Mike Evans another 1,000-yard season to keep his 11-year streak going)

"It was huge. Everybody wanted him to have it. Obviously, Bucky [Irving], with experience, probably should've gone down. We talked about that, but we ended up getting off the field defensively and we got another shot at it, so we're happy for him."

(On if he had any choice words for the team at halftime)

"They weren't so much choice words – they were more or less, what we have to do to win and what they were doing to us and what we were going to adjust to and what we had to do. We knew it was going to be a fight, and we understood we'd be down by 10 and we were getting the ball back and we had to get some stops for the offense. I thought they did a good job, obviously, with the drop punt and the turnover of holding those guys right there, getting just three points out of both. They came alive in the second half, and they calmed down – that's the biggest thing. We had three different guys starting in the secondary with the three guys down and they calmed down and played assignment football."

(On if he thought the team was just nervous or what the problem was at the beginning of the game in regard to the penalties)

"[We had] a ton of penalties. We kind of shot ourselves in the foot offensively. [We] gave them some plays. When we didn't get the penalties, we had some positive stuff happen, but that can't happen going forward. You're not going to beat many teams like that."

(On the fourth-and-8 decision to go for it and how much that has to do with confidence in QB Baker Mayfield)

"It was confidence in the offense as well as being where we were on the field [and] having to punt. We probably wouldn't have got too many yards out of that punt so you might as well go for it on fourth-and-8. We were trying to win the game. We knew we had to win to get in the playoffs. There's no tomorrow, so we had to play."

(On if S Mike Edwards left the game due to cramping)

"Yeah, it was cramps. He wanted TV time [laughs]."

(On the defense getting a stop following the dropped punt)

"That was big. It showed everybody was all in. Nobody flinched. They went out there, they played good ball, they got the ball back for the offense, and right there, I knew everybody was locked in and we had a chance."

(On if he has a preference on when they would play next week)

"I'm just happy to be in. We'll play whenever they tell us."

(On the significance of the Buccaneers having four consecutive division titles and five consecutive playoff appearances for the first time in franchise history)

"It says a lot about the organization. Obviously, the Glazer family – it starts with them. It says a lot about the organization with Jason [Licht] and Brian Ford. It says a lot about the coaches doing a hell of a job with player turnover, getting younger guys ready, getting injured guys ready to play. It says a lot about the team and the guys that we bring in here, the type of guys that play and trust each other and understand what our goal is every year, and for nobody to flinch and not listen to any outside noise."

(On if he would match up the team's draft class against any other)

"I mean, there are great players all over. I like our draft class. I think they play very well. I liked the draft class last year – I think they play very well. [We] just have to keep getting better. I think longevity kind of defines a draft class, not one year, but they played well this year."

(On what about this coaching staff allows them to make critical adjustments at halftime)

"They don't flinch. They see a lot of guys get injured and we bring guys in off the street or we bring in backups and they coach the guys to be ready to play and understand what they have to do. They don't shy away from their assignment, they don't make excuses, and they can get the job done. They make life easy around the building, but when it's time to work, they do a hell of a job, and I would be nothing without them."

QUARTERBACK BAKER MAYFIELD

(On the sideline mood leading up to the last throw to wide receiver Mike Evans)

"The conversation was like 'alright, well, obviously we can't turn the ball over, can't give them another chance, but how do we want to [format] this play to get Mike [Evans] the ball to where he can't get double covered?'. That was what we came up with and Mike [Evans] did the rest. And he deserves that because this guy means so much to the community, this team, this organization, for years. For him to be able to reach that feat 11 years in a row and tie Jerry Rice is – it's unbelievable."

(On the fourth down conversion in the fourth quarter to wide receiver Jalen McMillan)

"They were running one of their third down coverages, bringing a safety down. They were running man. They were showing two-high, bring a safety in to kind of rob some crossing routes over the middle. I knew I was going to have a one-on-one with Jalen [McMillan] running a corner route and just buying time trying to hold the safety in the middle and he made a great play."

(On the touchdown throw to wide receiver Jalen McMillan in the fourth quarter)

"Overall today we, offensively, just too many penalties. Too many long distance. Second-and-longs, third-and-longs, so we were in a situation right there where scramble drill took over. They were dropping out of their coverage and Jalen [McMillan] recognized it quickly and just turned out right and fundamentally sound, toe-tapping on the sideline in the endzone and making a great play."

(On wanting to get Mike Evans over 1,000 yards)

"He always has [put the team first]. That's why you love him. That's why we appreciate having him. We're lucky to have him and he's underappreciated throughout the media, the league and he's one of one. He deserves that. Obviously, you saw the stadium erupt, the sideline erupt. You can tell how much people care about him and what that means for everybody around him."

(On his thoughts when running back Bucky Irving scored late in the fourth quarter)

"Shit. We won the game, great. But now I'm going to be the guy that didn't get the 1,000 yards so now [Mike Evans] is going to have play 11 more years after that if we're going to get him that. No, but obviously the important thing is winning. All jokes aside the most important thing is winning. But you have a little second on the sideline there to realize you're that close to it and God is great, got us the ball back, defense got us a stop and so we were able to get one more play to him."

(On the motivation today)

"It's a win or – win or you're going on vacation and nobody in this locker room wants to go on vacation yet so this is a tough group. We knew it was going to be a scrappy ball game. It's a division rival and the Saints came here last year when we had a chance to clinch in Week 17 as well and they beat the brakes off us so we had to realize what type of game it's going to be – physical game, win at any cost and not matter what it looks like."

(On how he feels clinching a playoff birth in his second year with the Bucs)

"It feels good, but our goal wasn't just getting into the playoffs. We want to go all the way. Like I said, this is a tough, resilient group that's been tested throughout the year and so we're built for the playoffs."

(On S Jordan Whitehead's accident on Saturday being another struggle the team had to face and what they can say about their resiliency)

"First and foremost, you want the health and safety of everybody involved, especially when it's one of your teammates. Somebody else was involved in it too and they're in the hospital so [my] thoughts and prayers with everybody involved in that. It's just continuing to have to face whatever adversity or test, whatever comes up and guys handling it and finding a way. That's what it's all about."

(On having a career high 68 rushing yards in Sunday's game)

"68 [yards]? Wow. They were dropping it in coverage. Like I said, we were in a lot of those longer yardage situations so they were dropping eight, dropping out in coverage, sinking underneath that, not trying to let us convert it through the air so [I was] trying to take advantage of that with my legs and just make the most of the opportunity."

(On if he knew this was the Buccaneers' first win this season after being down by 10 points in a game)

"No, I did not know that."

(On if he plans to celebrate tonight by watching some football with his teammates)

"Yeah, we'll watch and see who we're going to play. Was the Rams-Seahawks game the same time? Oh yeah, afternoon game, west coast. I guess we'll watch and see who we're going to play."

(On his reaction to missing WR Mike Evans on the go route earlier in the game)

"Like I said earlier, shit."

WIDE RECEIVER MIKE EVANS

(On what was going through his head after the Buccaneers scored in the final minutes and he had yet to reach the 1,000-yard milestone)

"I was hoping we would get a stop because I can't pass up history and Coach Bowles didn't want to let it pass up or Liam [Coen], so I'm happy they had me go out there and get that because it's been hard to do for 11 straight years and to be tied with one of the, if not the greatest receiver of all time – it means a lot to me and my family."

(On the support from the crowd when he reached 1,000 yards for the season)

"It was amazing, man. They made it that much sweeter. NFC South champs and then tied I'm in history with Jerry Rice, so that made it that much [sweeter]. I love those guys to death."

(On the team dynamic to ensure he had the opportunity to make history)

"The defense, they knew that the record was on the line, too. So, they were trying to get off the field. And obviously [the Saints] were down eight points, so they were trying to stop them to give me another opportunity to chase history, so I appreciate them for that. And, like I said, 'We've got a lot more work to do.'"

(On what it means to him that the whole team was willing to take a risk for him knowing that a turnover in that situation could've potentially cost the team its season)

"We felt like we have it won. The play call was so good by Liam [Coen]. That was actually the play that Bucky [Irving] scored on – we [were] going to run that play again in the red zone to get the five, but Bucky is just so

good that he made a play. Baker Mayfield] found him, and he scored to give us the lead. But shoutout to my teammates and coaching staff for making this possible.”

(On how it was to make history in front of fans, family, friends, teammates and all of Tampa Bay)

“Shout out Tom [Brady] – I got my boy in the building. I did it with Tom here, Baker [Mayfield and] my family. Everyone all week, all year really, [has] been wanting me to get this record because history is hard to come by. I’m just very blessed and thankful that I had this opportunity.”

(On how he feels about his offseason decision to stay in Tampa now that he has made history)

“It feels great. I mean, I probably was never going to leave Tampa anyway. The business part took over a little bit, but I’m happy to be here and I definitely made the right decision.”

(On former Buccaneers quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick supporting him on social media)

“He helped me get 1,000 yards, as well. All my quarterbacks I’m super appreciative of because they believed in me and that’s all you can ask for in a quarterback – that trust and that respect.”

(On how special this 1,000-yard season is with his injuries this season)

“It makes it that much sweeter. Missing time, it was a grind to get back – it really was. This was probably my worst hamstring injury since my rookie season. I got hurt in OTAs and I was out for like 6 weeks. This is probably like my second-worst hamstring injury I’ve had in my life. Bobby [Slater] and the training staff did a hell of a job getting me back. He was telling me, every time I was outside running in that heat and running all of [those] sprints, he kept saying, ‘We are going to get [these] 1,000 yards and we are going to the playoffs.’ I just stuck with it, and we got it done.”

(On if he thought it was possible to get the record going into the second half still needing 50 receiving yards)

“It’s always possible. I’m a big play receiver, so I always think it’s possible to get a 40-yard gain or a 30-yard gain. I’ve been doing that my whole career. But the Saints, they didn’t make it easy. They knew what was at stake. They were talking the whole time. They said, ‘Stay on 13, outside leverage, I’ve got your help inside.’ They kept saying it over and over, so we knew that they were aware of the record. I’m just happy I got it.”

(On his nerves as the game went on regarding whether he’d be able to get the record)

“I knew I was going to get it. I was getting that no matter what. I knew we [were] going to get this ball no matter what. After we got the ball back, I knew I was getting it. So, I looked at Coach Bowles and Liam [Coen] and they said, ‘Go out there – we are going to try and get you this record.’ So, I wasn’t worried at all. In 2017, I got it on the last drive against the Saints. I had missed a little bit of time that year, but that was just a bad year for me, and I was still able to get it in 2017 to keep this streak going, so it was just the Saints again this time.”

(On WR Jalen McMillan and his fourth down catch that kept a second-half drive alive, the ensuing penalty and then his ability to cap off that drive with a touchdown)

“He just wanted his touchdown to be a little bit farther – that’s all it was. ‘J-Mac’ [McMillan] has really [come] on strong the second half of the season. He was injured initially, and like I’ve been saying all year, he’s a hell of a player. Bucs fans for a long time are going to have to watch out for ‘J-Mac’ because he’s a hell of a player [and] a great teammate. Devin Culp made some big plays on third down today, so the U-Dub (University of Washington) boys did their thing today and helped us win.”

(On his support for Pro Football Hall of Famer Randy Moss)

“I’ve trained with Randy. I’ve been praying for him and his family. He’s one of the best receivers ever. He told me when I broke his record to start a career – I broke his record initially of six-straight (to begin a career) – he challenged me to do it every year of my career. So, that’s always been in the back of my mind coming from one of my idols – a guy I’ve trained with [and] a guy who has helped me get to where I am. I’ve been praying for you big bro and I’m going to try to do what you challenged me to do.”

(On how the adversity faced in the regular season will prepare them for the upcoming postseason)

“It comes with experience – our experience will be a big part of how far we can go in the playoffs. I think we’re going to get some guys back, some key guys that we need for this postseason run.”

(On QB Baker Mayfield missing an open throw to him on a deep ball in the first half that could've got him the record sooner)

"It happens – it's football. I drop passes, we miss blocks – things happen. I could never be mad at Baker. He has been our rock this whole year. Even when I was out, he was still making plays. He's an unbelievable player - I'll never be mad at 'Bake' for just missing a throw. It comes with the game."

WIDE RECEIVER JALEN MCMILLAN

(On WR Mike Evans hitting 1,000 yards and the consistency necessary to reach that feat)

"Yeah, that's just [who] Mike is. Day in and day out, he brings intensity and he's the same guy every day. And, you know, I am trying to follow in his footsteps. Hopefully I can do what he does."

(On how it feels to clinch a playoff spot via a win)

"Oh, awesome. I mean, there was a lot of momentum for us going in and we are just going to keep capitalizing on that."

(On the offensive performance)

"A lot of things to work on. Of course, there are going to be plays that we wish we could have back, but at the end of the day, we are satisfied with this win and just ready to improve."

(On being a part of this rookie class that has made so many key contributions)

"Oh, it's been awesome – the way we've bonded, the way we just make plays. We just feed off of each other at the end of the day. When Bucky [Irving] makes plays, I want to make plays. When Devin [Culp] makes plays, everybody wants to make plays. So, I mean him (Culp) being him, and Bucky being who he is, it just motivates me more."

(On seeing TE Devin Culp get more opportunities)

"Yeah, I mean, I am so proud of him. You know, he wasn't getting many at the beginning, but I told him when he gets his chance, don't look back. And that's what he is doing right now. I'm very proud of him."