



# POSTGAME NOTES & QUOTES

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

## NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS, SUNDAY, OCT. 13, 2024 • CAESARS SUPERDOME SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- The Saints fell to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 51-27 on Sunday. New Orleans returns to action on Thursday Night Football on Amazon Prime (can also be viewed on WDSU 6 locally) against the Denver Broncos. Kickoff is scheduled for 7:15 pm C.T.
- After initially falling behind 17-0 in the contest, New Orleans scored all of their 27 points in the second quarter. The 27 points scored in the second quarter was the second-highest total by the Saints in a second quarter all-time, behind the 28 scored in the second quarter at Cincinnati on November 11, 2018.
- New Orleans tied a season-high from their season opener vs. Carolina, with three takeaways, including a season-high three interceptions.
- Making his NFL debut, rookie QB **Spencer Rattler** finished 22-of-40 for 243 yards with one touchdown and two interceptions, while adding 27 rushing yards on four carries.
- His touchdown strike was to fellow rookie WR **Bub Means**. The connection marked the first time a rookie QB making his first NFL start threw a TD pass to a rookie for their first career touchdown reception since September 28, 2014 (Blake Bortles to TE Nic Jacobs, Jacksonville Jaguars).
- RB **Alvin Kamara** led the Saints backfield with 13 carries for 40 yards and a touchdown while adding five receptions for 24 yards receiving. The score extended his team record 85 career touchdowns and moved him into a tie for 57<sup>th</sup> place in NFL history with Pro Football Hall of Fame WR Tommy McDonald (Class of 1998) and WR Mark Clayton.
- The score also marked the 60<sup>th</sup> rushing touchdown of his career, moving into a tie for 53<sup>rd</sup> place all-time with Terrell Davis (Pro Football Hall of Fame Class of 2017), Ahman Green and Brandon Jacobs.

- Kamara's five grabs brings his career total to 533, now third in franchise history.
- Rookie wideout Bub Means had the most productive game of his young career against Tampa Bay seeing a more extensive role after Chris Olave suffered a concussion, finishing with five grabs for 45 yards, including his first career score from Rattler on a ten-yard connection.
- TEs **Juwan Johnson** and **Foster Moreau** were effective for the Saints offense in the first half. Johnson finished with three receptions for 48 yards (16.0 avg) while Moreau hauled in both of his targets for 54 yards, including the team's longest play of the day, a 41-yard reception from Rattler.
- WR/RS **Rashid Shaheed** added one reception for 11 yards and was huge on special teams, adding a kickoff return for 25 yards and two punt returns for 56 yards, including a 54-yard return for a touchdown in the first half for 92 all-purpose yards. With the score, Shaheed became the third Saint to have multiple punt return touchdowns in their Saints career, joining Reggie Bush (four) and Tyrone Hughes (two).
- Shaheed now has 665 career punt return yards. On Sunday, he surpassed former Saints Mel Gray and Darren Sproles to move into sixth all-time in club record books.
- Making his 50<sup>th</sup> start of his career Sunday, CB **Paulson Adebo** tied for a team-high ten tackles while adding two passes defensed and an interception returned for 20 yards, his tenth career pick.
- CB **Marshon Lattimore** had a season-high ten stops (six solo). DB **Jordan Howden** also tied for the team lead with ten stops (three solo) to tie a career-high, adding one assisted special teams stop.
- S **Johnathan Abram** added seven tackles (three solo), one pass defense and an interception returned for a career-long 30 yards.
- LB **Willie Gay Jr.** returned from injury against the Bucs and finished with four tackles, one sack for a loss of eight yards and two pass breakups.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** added one tackle, one pass defense and an interception for the Saints defense. The pick was his third in his career and his first since the 2017 season.

- CB **Alontae Taylor** added six tackles (four solo), including one stop for loss and one pass breakup.
- DB **J.T. Gray** had a game-high three special teams stops (two solo), extending his team-leading total to 13 on the season, 80 for his career. He now has more than his totals in 2023 (11) and 2022 (12) in just six games this season. Gray also finished with a career-high two solo defensive stops and the first defensive forced fumble of his career.
- P **Matthew Hayball** punted six times for 266 yards (44.3 gross avg), including three downed inside the 20-yard line and his season-long of 58 yards to give him a 42.3 net.
- K **Blake Grupe** drilled field goals of 42- and 29 yards and made all three PATs. Grupe has made all ten field goal attempts on the season for a club-best 47 points.



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(Opening Statement) “Just a couple of injury deals to make you guys aware of. Chris Olave is in the concussion protocol, and Tyrann Mathieu had a forearm injury and did not return to the game. Those are the injuries that I am aware of to this point. I am thoroughly disappointed in the game. It was not acceptable. It was not good enough. It wasn’t good enough from a coaching standpoint. It wasn’t good enough from a playing standpoint. We’ve got a lot of getting better to do, and we’ve got a short time to do it. We need to get some guys healthy, but we’ve got to play better than we did today in all areas.”

(On the defensive issues throughout the game) “We didn’t tackle. I think that was the biggest thing. I thought our tackling was atrocious in the game. When you don’t tackle, you give up explosive plays, you give up big plays. It just kind of snowballed on us a little bit, but it was not good enough.”

(On the yardage given up) “We have to tackle better. I thought that was the biggest thing in the game. We didn’t tackle in the game. Look, make no mistake about it, when it comes to the defense, that’s on me. I have to do a better job with our guys. I have to make sure we understand what we’re doing. If we have to do more tackling drills or if we have to – whatever the case may be, but it was not a good defensive performance at all. That needs to be an area that we can count on. It’s been an area that we can count on, but right now it’s not.”

(On Spencer Rattler’s Performance) “Overall, I thought he did some good things. There were some encouraging things, some things he’s going to learn from, from a mistake standpoint on his part. I don’t think we did enough around him to help him. It was hard for us to be able to run the football. I thought they really won the interior part of the line of scrimmage, really probably on both sides of the ball on the line of scrimmage. I thought he did some things really well early in the game, in particular the first half. In the second half, it kind of went on. I thought they started pressuring him a little bit more. We weren’t able to be as good in protection, which made it a little more challenging for him.”

(On any commonalities in the problems with the tackling) “Part of it is angles. It’s technique. It’s wrapping up. There are a lot of fundamental things that were not good enough with tackling. I think it starts with leverage and angles. That’s where it starts, then the fundamentals of actually making a tackle. We have to do a better job of wrapping up, but that’s two weeks in a row that we haven’t done a good job of tackling. That’s probably our biggest concern. You talk about explosive plays, and a lot of those come on underneath plays that become explosive plays.”

(On if the tackling can be resolved ahead of Thursday’s game against the Broncos) “It’s something we better fix in four days.”

(On if there is a reason why defense has been struggling) “I don’t really know. You know what I mean? I don’t have that answer right now as to what that challenge is. One of the areas it starts with is being able to put yourself in a position to be able to get off the field. When you get off the field, you play less plays. I think that’s part of our issue too.”

(On tackling technique versus effort) “I think it’s a combination of both. I think later on in the game, we could have attacked the ball carrier a little more. We will look at the tape, but it was not good enough. I have to do a better job.”

(On how to refocus on Thursday night) “You’re probably a little too early to ask me that question.”

(On the mindset of the team amid the injuries) “It’s challenging, but we can’t sit here and sulk and moan. We have to figure out how we’re going to get better. I told the team we have to get better, and have a short period of time to do it. Everybody needs to look at themselves – coaches, players, everybody –

and make sure we're doing everything we possibly can to get this thing going in the right direction because right now, it's not where we want it to be."

(On the effort of the team) "I'm saying we missed a lot of tackles, and need to do a better job of tackling."

(On coaching and schematic changes) "We made a couple of changes as the game went on in terms of how we were setting up front in terms of how we were setting up front to try to deal with some of the run plays we were getting. We played poorly, and when you do that, obviously you have to look at yourself as a coach, myself, all the coordinators, position coaches. I think we all need to look at ourselves and see how we can be better. That's what we will do this week."

(On Jonathan Abram's attempt to call a timeout) "The officials didn't see it. It happened right about the time the snap was being made. I don't think anyone really saw it in time to get the timeout called."

(On the decision to stick with the corners on the sides) "We matched them the first game last year, and then the second game, we didn't match. I think we have confidence in our guys. I didn't feel like that was the challenge today. I felt the challenge was the underneath throws that became long plays and the running plays that became long plays because we didn't do as good of a job getting them (to the) ground as we needed to."

(On the pressure) "There was a lot to be frustrated about. There are not a lot of areas – other than having three takeaways in the game – there weren't a lot of areas defensively we can say were good. I want to go back to the drawing board and figure out how we can be better."

(On the team morale's on the sideline) "I think all the way through the first half, our guys were in it, our guys were excited (and) our guys kept battling. Even with losing guys like Chris Olave, who I think's an important part of what we do, and Tyrann Mathieu and some of those guys, I thought our guys fought. There was a lot of energy in the building at that time. It really didn't start to snowball until the second half."

(On his extra advice for Spencer Rattler ahead of his first start) "Nothing other than just go out there and play. You know what I mean? Let's don't put too much pressure on this deal. Just go out and do what you've been doing since you were (points) that high (young). Then go have fun doing it. Look, I thought early on in the game, I thought he did some really good things. I think as the game went on, the score changed and things became more difficult."

(On if he will stick with starting Rattler at quarterback) "Yeah, that's my intention."



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### QB SPENCER RATTLER

(On his touchdown pass to Bub Means) "I was definitely happy on how Bub was playing. It was kind of quiet these first four or five games. He's been grinding in practice. We've been talking about when your time comes to make those plays. I was happy for him. I think that he was one of our leading receivers and he made some big-time plays. We all just have to play better as a group."

(On losing Chris Olave early) "It was tough. He'll tell you himself that it is next man up mentality. It's unfortunate to see your top guy go down really early in the game. I hope it's a speedy recovery. I hope that he is back fully healthy. It's tough. We really wanted to get him involved in this game."

(On the pressure Tampa Bay was bringing in the second half) "I caused a few of those sacks. The offensive line fought their butts off all day. They played really well. I thought we did some things to help them up front. I just need to continue to work that pocket and get the ball out. I have to give credit to their defense. They played really well in the second half."

(On if he felt comfortable with the bootlegs) "Yes, it worked really well in the first half. We were pinning those edges and really getting them on the fakes. That gives you a lot of space and take some pressure off your offensive line definitely early in the game. Stuff was coming open. I thought the tight ends did an amazing job of feeling that space and that zone in the first half. We were making plays of it in the keeper game. We'll be better. We have to get back to the drawing board and get back to work."

(On his emotions today) "It felt very calm. It was fun to be out there. It felt really good. I definitely have a lot of stuff to clean up after my first start. I'm going to be better."

(On the speed of the game) "Football is football at the end of the day. Every week you are going to play the best guys in the world. We have to execute. We can't shoot ourselves in the foot. I have to be better. We have to be better."

### WR BUB MEANS

(On the connection with Spencer Rattler carrying over) "It just carried over. We had confidence with each other. We had chemistry, so we just went out there and balled. I knew eventually that I would get an opportunity. When my opportunity came I made the play. That's a blessing. I can never complain about getting an opportunity to play. I just go out there and compete."

(On who keeps the ball on the touchdown reception) "I don't know. We have to figure that out. I forgot about that. It was (Spencer Rattler's) first touchdown too. I'm proud of him."

### CB PAULSON ADEBO

(On what led to the uncharacteristic defensive performance) "We didn't execute as high as we can. I think every single one of us needs to look ourselves in the mirror starting with me personally. I need to look at myself in the mirror and see what I can do better. How can I have more of an impact on the game? The good thing is that we play quick on Thursday, so we can get the bad taste out of our mouth. There is a lot for us to work on."

(On the missed tackles) “The missed tackles were definitely a problem. It is one of those things that we are going to have to look to get fixed before Thursday.”

(On why the game turned out the way that it did) “Tackles are a part of it. Anytime that you can’t get someone on the ground (it is a problem). It starts with me and the whole defense. I wouldn’t question the effort. Personally, I need to look at myself in the mirror and I will.”

(On keeping the spirit up) “It’s a long season. We don’t want to have this type of game happen again. We will get to Thursday and we’ll play a lot better. That’s our whole focus right now.”

## **S JOHNATHAN ABRAM**

(On if fundamentals were an issue today and can they get fixed) “Of course. You wouldn’t be here as a pro if you didn’t have the fundamentals to tackle. We are all pros. Those guys get paid, so kudos to those guys. They came out and played hard. They outexecuted us today. That’s morseo of what it is. The backs ran hard. The quarterback had a few turnovers, but besides that he played well.”

(On cleaning up the missed tackles) “We need to make a conscious effort to get 11 guys to the ball. We need to be where we are supposed to be. We need to clean up our angles and approaches. We need to get the guy down. That’s something that we need to work on, but we will get better.”

(On what they could have done to carry the momentum from the second quarter) “Execution. Football is not a hard sport. They call a play on offense. We call a defense. It’s all about who executes the best. Oftentimes, you don’t see a guy lose because the guy was so much better than the other one. If it is a blown coverage, then it looks a lot worse compared to a guy being near and making a catch. That is why it is a 50-50. We just have to do a better job of executing in the second half. The first half we got off to a slow start and then we started executing well. We just got away from it in the second half.”



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(On team's feelings given what has happened in Tampa this week) "I mean it makes it extra special for these guys. The biggest thing is a lot of them were playing with heavy hearts. Just seeing what is happening in Tampa Bay, our hearts pour out to the city. It's a tough city, it's a strong city. We do not know what we are going back to, but in our small part, this time we wanted to win one for the city. We are going to try and help any way we can when we get back. We went through a week like this and coming out on top, it made the guys feel special."

(On what allowed Saints' scoring run in second quarter) "A bunch of turnovers. They returned a punt for a touchdown, they got two interceptions, got inside the red zone. That kind of was the tale of the tape. We regrouped in the second half, held to zero, I was proud to see it. The offense got clicking, the defense didn't give up a second half score, so we turned it around against a tough team."

(On the key to delivering second half shutout) "Well it's composure, more or less, and then we were setting the edge more with our outside guys instead of trying to draw from, you know, if we can cut him (Spencer Rattler) off in the pocket and just keep him as a pocket passer, we had a chance to get a little bit of pressure on him."

(On the run game and Sean Tucker's performance) "Sean [Tucker] did an excellent job. We had some good runs in the first half. With the penalties, we shot ourselves in the foot so much we had to throw it. But in the second half, between Sean and Bucky [Irving], with Sean filling in, especially, has got a lot of speed. This is the Sean Tucker we thought we'd get when we got him last year, and he's come into his own."

(On momentum swings and regrouping) "It says a lot about the growth of the team, the leadership of the team. Obviously, the guys accepting coaching and making adjustments in the second half, and coming out understanding what they've got to do. We didn't finish that game against Atlanta, but we finished this one."

(On impact of Zyon McCollum's interception) "It was huge. I think it was a three or four-point game at that time. I think we were up by four, so to get it on the plus side of the field and get some momentum going, and then going for another score right there was huge."

(On McCollum's impact considering Atlanta game ending) "You need to have short term memory. You might have some bad plays here and there, but he came back, he played aggressive, he played well, he understood the assignment, and the ball didn't go over our heads, which was huge. They got the one deep ball on the tight end with busted coverage, but the wideouts didn't beat us from the outside, so that was big."



(On Robert Hainsey's role in the game at center) "It's tough, and the guys have played with him before. He's tough and he's been a team player all the way. He's played against the Saints. He started a lot of games for us last year, and for him to come in and not miss a beat and play as tough as he did, it's a credit to him."

(On pride considering what Tampa community and Southwest and Central Florida have been through) "Well, it's a tiny break from what they've been dealing with, but if we gave them a chance to smile for a couple of hours, while everybody went through what they went through, then that was all worth it right there. I tell the guys all the time, we talk about family as a team, as long as your family is safe, all the other things are replaceable. We're going to do everything we can to try to take care of ourselves and our team and help the community."



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### QB BAKER MAYFIELD

(On settling down in the second half) “That was a full group effort on offense. (There were a) few bad situations there, some tipped balls. The first interception was definitely the worst one, just not a good decision. The guy had it covered up pretty well.”

(On Robert Hainsey) “Bob is one of my best friends. I love Bob. He hasn’t wavered throughout the whole thing. He’s continued to lead and help Graham (Barton) throughout this process. He gets his opportunity and takes advantage of it. Big time for him and all of the guys up front.”

(On if there was a commonality between the three interceptions) “The first one to (Paulson) Adebo was just decision and the other two were just the tipped passes. Stuff is going to happen. (There are) some tight windows against a defense like that, they are going to capitalize on it. We will look at the tape and we will learn from it and move forward. Unfortunate to have three turnovers, but we put up 50, so hat’s off.”

(On bouncing back in the second half after multiple turnovers) “I’ve had some not-so-pretty games in the past, but I trust this group; and, the most important play is always the next one, good, bad, ugly, it doesn’t matter. You’ve got to play the next one. I’m surrounded by a group that they have that confidence (to come back) as well.”

(On how the team handled this week and the distractions of the hurricane in the Tampa Bay region) “Our group handled it extremely well. For the Glazer family to provide everything that they did and for everybody to be safe, for our operations guys to handle everything, it is not an easy task. For them to allow us to come here and limit the amount of distractions (helped). Yeah, there is a lot going on, but for them to do what they did, I can’t say enough about them. I am very thankful that they allowed us to be able to take it one day at a time and find a way to win this football game.”

(On giving the Tampa community something to feel good about) “The last few weeks in the Tampa area and all of the South Florida area (have been hard). I think today was, kind of, a team embodying and embracing everything that everyone is going through. I just try to handle it the best way that you can and fight through it and find a way to make it work. That is life. Obviously, a natural disaster is not easy to deal with. You find a way to make it work and you come together. That is what this group did.”

(On regrouping after a tough second quarter) “Just (look forward to) the next play. Obviously, some bad luck on the tipped balls. The first one, like I mentioned, was not a good decision. We are still in that ballgame. It’s a one-score game going into halftime. We were saying in the locker room, ‘As long as we just don’t shoot ourselves in the foot,’ (we will be ok). The defense is playing well. We didn’t help them out with short fields. It’s one play at a time.”

### CB ZYON McCOLLUM

(On his interception) “I was on the sideline and I was talking to Antoine (Winfield Jr.), and I was like, “If they are going to play over the top, then I am just going to play aggressive. I’m going to slip every route. I slipped that route and found the ball.”

(On the play of Tykee Smith) “He carries himself like a vet. He is a really good player. He always has composure. The moment is never too big for him. He is starting to settle in now that we are playing some games. He is going to be a special player in this league, for sure.”

(On what seeing the Tampa running game does for the defense) “It invigorates us. It gives us energy. It makes me want to play even harder and go even harder When we are playing complementary

football like that, our defense is playing off the offense (and) our offense is playing off (the defense), then this team can be special.”

## **WR CHRIS GODWIN**

(On what this win means following the hurricane) “I think it means a lot. At the end of the day, it’s a game. There is a lot of real life happening back home. I think that if we are just able to give some people a little bit of a reprieve from the things that they are facing right now, I think that’s a plus for us. There are a lot of people going through a lot of bad stuff right now. We do not really know what we are going back to. I’m glad that we were able to come in and leave with a victory against a divisional rival.”

(On how to regain momentum in the second half) “I think just maintain our composure. We didn’t do a great job of that in the second quarter and it resulted in unnecessary penalties and some turnovers that are uncharacteristic of us. I think we just realized that we just have to play our game and just make sure that we stay cool and let our football do the talking. That’s what we did coming out in the second half.”

(On how difficult it is to keep composure) “It is incredibly tough. We can only control what we can control. I think us realizing that we all have each other’s back as teammates and that we are all going through the same thing (is important). We are all what we have here. As long as we all have each other’s backs and go out there and fight (we can win).”

(On his long touchdown) “It was just a checkdown. We had a shot called downfield that they had covered up. They got me the ball and it happened to be good timing, I made a cut back on the backer. Then, I was just trying to get as much yardage as I can. It ended up being perfect timing, break two tackles and I see nobody in front of me. I can’t get caught. That is the only thing going through my mind. It was an exhilarating play. It felt really good, especially at that moment in the game.”