



POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES

GREG BENSEL ✦ SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS CAROLINA PANTHERS SUNDAY, JAN. 8, 2023 • CAESARS SUPERDOME SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- The Saints lost to the Carolina Panthers 10-7 to conclude their 2022-23 season to finish 7-10.
- New Orleans outgained Carolina 304-203 and had 16 first downs to Carolina's 14.
- QB **Andy Dalton** completed 15-of-25 passes for 171 yards and one touchdown. Dalton moved into a tie for 27th all time in touchdown passes (244 with John Hadl) and 24th in all time passing yards with his performance (38,150 past Dave Krieg). Dalton finished the season, completing 252-of-378 passes (career-high 66.7%) for 2,871 yards with 18 touchdowns and nine interceptions.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** finished the day with 107 rushing yards on 23 carries (4.7 avg.) and one catch for three yards. He led the Saints in rushing for the fifth consecutive season, carrying 223 times for 897 yards (4.0 avg.). This made Kamara the only Saints to have five consecutive seasons leading the team in rushing, surpassing RBs Mark Ingram II (2014-17) and George Rogers (1981-84). Kamara and Ingram (2012, 2014-17) are also the only two Saints to lead the club in rushing five times overall. Adding in 57 receptions for 490 yards for 1,387 total yards from scrimmage, this was Kamara's sixth straight year with at least 1,300 yards from scrimmage, becoming the first player to accomplish this feat since Julio Jones (2014-19). With Kamara's eighth career 100-yard rushing game, he surpassed RB Chuck Muncie for the sixth most 100-yard rushing games in franchise history.
- WR **Chris Olave** went over 1,000 yards on the year, finishing with a club-best five receptions for team-high 60 yards with a first quarter 25-yard touchdown, for season totals of a team-high 72 catches for a club-best 1,042 yards (team-best 14.5 avg.) and four touchdowns. He joins Michael Thomas (2016) and Marques Colston (2006) as only the third Saint to cross the 1,000-yard threshold in their rookie seasons. Olave also joins WR Danny Abramowicz (1967, 50 receptions for 721 yards (14.4 avg.)) as only the second Saint to lead the team in receptions, receiving yards and yards per catch in his rookie campaign.
- New Orleans scored a touchdown on its opening drive of the game, an eight-play, 75-yard drive ending with the 25-yard touchdown pass from Dalton to Olave, making these last two weeks the first time it has scored touchdowns on the opening drive in back-to-back games since weeks 16 and 17 of the 2020 season.
- The Saints defense allowed negative four passing yards in the first half, the lowest number of net passing yards allowed in the first half of a Saints contest since -15 on Oct. 29, 1989 vs. Atlanta.
- New Orleans allowed less than 20 points for the eighth straight game, the first time they have done that since an eight-game span from 12/16/91-10/11/92. The Saints allowed ten points in each of the final three games of the season. The last time New Orleans had a streak of giving up no more than ten points in a game for three or more straight contests was a six-game run from 9/8-10/20/91.
- The Saints allowed 32 net passing yards, as Panthers QB Sam Darnold managed to completed only 5-of-15 passes for 43 yards with two interceptions and a 2.8 passer rating. The 32 net passing yards by Carolina was the sixth-lowest total by a Saints opponent in a single game. The 2.8 passer rating by Darnold was the lowest that an opposing quarterback (min. ten att.) had against New Orleans all-time.
- LB **Demario Davis** finished the afternoon with eight tackles (three solo) to tie for the team lead, bringing his season total to a club-best 109 stops.
- DE **Cam Jordan** added seven tackles and one stop for loss.

- DT **Shy Tuttle** finished with five tackles (three solo) and one pass defense to finish the campaign with a career-high 49 stops to lead Saints defensive tackles.
- S **Tyrann Mathieu** recorded his third interception of the year and finished with eight total tackles (four solo) and his first forced fumble of the season.
- Mathieu set a career high with 91 tackles on the year, breaking his previous record of 89, which he had twice as a member of the Arizona Cardinals and Houston Texans. Mathieu also finished the season with a club-best three picks and one fumble recovery to lead New Orleans with four takeaways.
- S **Daniel Sorenson** grabbed a crucial interception late in the fourth quarter, his second in the last three games. Sorensen finished with four total tackles.
- DB **J.T. Gray** had one solo tackles, a sack for an eight-yard loss and one solo special teams stop. Gray finishes the season leading the team with 12 coverage stops, leading the Saints in special teams tackles in back-to-back seasons.
- LB **Andrew Dowell** finished with one special teams tackle and a forced fumble on punt coverage.
- P **Blake Gillikin** punted five times for 224 yards with a 44.8 gross punting average and a 40.4 net with two inside the 20-yard line and a career-long 68-yard punt, tied for the eighth-longest in club history. Gillikin's 32 inside-the-20 for 2022 is the franchise's highest total since the statistical category was first tabulated in 1976.



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(Opening Statement): “Obviously, a disappointing loss. We did not do enough good things to win the game. I thought we dominated in a lot of different areas with the exception of the scoreboard. We had some opportunities we didn’t take advantage of. That’s what happens when you don’t take advantage of the opportunities. You let a team hang around. They just hung around, and they kept fighting and had an opportunity to win at the end.”

(on the second half struggles) “Look, I think there was some miscommunication on a couple of things. I thought there was a couple of times Andy (Dalton) got a little pressure. I thought there was a couple of times where there was a miscommunication or a misread in the passing game. We did not catch the ball like we needed to catch the ball. I think there was a multitude of things. I don’t know that it was effort. We certainly didn’t execute very well.”

(on not taking advantages of opportunities in the game) “I think we have to go back and look at it. We missed a field goal, and we fumbled it in scoring position – missed a field goal and had one blocked at the end. I thought we executed poorly in the series after the interception on potential field goal position. We went nowhere, and that field goal block, it was a bad series.”

(on how Chris Olave’s performance has impressed throughout the season) “(Olave) has been the same guy each and every week. He’s highly talented. He has a lot of things he has to continue on to get better at. I think there’s a lot of growth left in that player. I think we are expecting to see that growth in that player. Certainly a good start, but not near where he can be. I think he’s going to have a good offseason, so that we can take that next step into developing him into the type of receiver I think he really can be.”

(on his characterization of the season) “Look, I think challenging. We obviously didn’t win as many games as we would have liked to. I thought our guys fought and battled. I thought they overcame some adversity. There’s a handful of games there that feel like if we would have been able to make a couple of critical games, then those games could have been different. Then, I think we would be talking a little bit differently in here, but that’s the nature of game that we play. We have to find a way to be able to make the critical plays in critical situations to give ourselves a chance to win the game.”

(on how disappointing the game was today to lose after winning the last three contests) “I’d say it was disappointing. I’d say it’s disappointing because in terms of moving the ball and yardage, I thought statistically we had an advantage. It felt like, defensively, we played a solid game today. I do not think we tackled as well as we can. I thought we made some plays, a couple takeaways, yet were not able to capitalize on some of those things. That was the frustrating thing. That is what was disappointing.”

(on his explanation for the last offensive series) “We were hoping to be able to convert the first down and get ourselves into a more manageable field goal position. We got behind the sticks a little bit. We’d been rushing the ball well. I think we were averaging four-point-something per carry. We felt like we could run the ball a little bit. We felt like we could utilize some of their timeouts. We had a little bit of a misread at the end in that ball to (Chris) Olave. It was a sloppy series. We didn’t execute very well there.”

(on what life lessons he would share with the team from this season) “The life lesson is you only get so many opportunities in life at success. You have to take advantage of those opportunities when they present themselves. I think the other life lesson is that the strongest people are the ones who can persevere through whatever adversities through at you, whether it be injuries, losses, personal issues in your home life. I think our group is tough-minded in that regard. I think it’s going to serve us well going forward.”

(on a misread where a receiver was not near the ball) “It was a little double-move pump. I’m not sure exactly what happened on that play. Andy (Dalton) left the ball inside, and (Chris) Olave was outside. Those are all things we will discuss as a staff and see where we’ve got to get better.”

(on what the offense needs for next season) “There’s probably a better time for us to answer that question in terms of what we need going forward in the offseason. Mickey (Loomis) and I will sit down and talk about a lot of different things. We will evaluate our program from top to bottom. We will make whatever adjustments we need to make, and then, we will have a plan moving forward.”

(on anticipated roster changes being high in 2023) “I don’t know that. Look, certainly, we have these magnets on our board that have our depth chart. A red magnet means an unrestricted free agent, and

certainly, there's a lot of those red magnets up there. We know in the business of pro football there is always change. There will be change. To what extent? I think those are decisions we are going to have to come up with in the next week or two."

(on potential coaching changes) "I think, again, like I just said, we are going to evaluate everything. Nobody's making any decisions on anything 30 minutes after we walked off the field. We will see what we need to do to give ourselves the best opportunity to go forward."

(His thoughts on Marcus Davenport's ejection) "I did not see exactly what it was. Was it a closed fist? A punch? Certainly, it looked like Marcus gave him a little slap or something, but I don't know what happened. My thoughts are I don't ever want us to be put in that position."

(on going through the week after Bills S Damar Hamlin's injury) "I'd say it was a challenging week for a lot of people. Again, earlier I said, what our guys go through to do the job that they do and to see something as traumatic as that happen, it's tough to deal with it. Yet, as the week went on, we kept getting a little more and more encouraging news. I think that was an uplifting thing to our team."

(on the inability to win close games this season being a headscratcher) "No, I'm not going to say those are a headscratcher. I'll tell you, there's a handful of plays in each and every game that you're going to look back at and say that was the determining factor. The headscratcher is we didn't make those critical plays at those critical moments when we needed to. How? How do you get to the point to where you're making those plays? That what we've got to challenge ourselves in the offseason to figure out."

(on being as even keeled as he is and how that will go into the season's evaluation) "A little bit of both. I think it is a long season. Certainly, it is a long offseason. I think it's two-fold. I think it's a good thing to have a couple of days to really sit back and reflect on the good, the bad and the ugly from the season. Then, once you've had a chance to sit back and reflect on that, then it's all about getting a plan in place to fix issues. That's exactly what we will do."

(on Trevor Penning's start today) "It's probably not fair for me to give you an assessment of (Penning's) play. Although, just off the cuff, I was encouraged by a few things that I saw. I saw a few effort plays downfield and things of that nature. As far as getting a really good evaluation of the player, I'll have to watch the tape. Then, I'll probably be able to get you a better idea."

(on slow starts to moving the ball) "I think the reason is execution. I don't think we've executed in the second half of the game. We have to be better at that."

(on his personality to both the team and media): "I just think that's my personality. I have the highs and lows. I just probably don't live that in front of you as much as everybody else. This is an emotional game. You have to keep your head on you so that you can make decisions."



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(on good starts without being able to finish) “The way we started this game, I mean it's exactly how o to start. It's a couple of weeks in a row that we have a strong first drive, getting the touchdown and we had opportunities at other points in the game too, and we just weren't able to take advantage of them. Didn't make the play when we needed to, and at the end of the day, that hurt us. It felt like we should have come in at halftime and that game, the score should have looked a lot different than what it did.”

(on two missed deep balls) “There's a couple chances where I have to get the ball out of my hands quicker than I'd like to and taking shots down the field. That's what we were trying to do on the certain plays. And so sometimes, we have to get the ball out of your hands before you want to and then balls aren't always going to be exact and you can't see exactly where they're coming on the route and all that kind of stuff. If there's an adjustment, it depends on how they're playing, the route. They can take different angles and different things.”

(on how he felt the season went for him) “Obviously this isn't... when I signed to come here, the expectation wasn't to play. And then when I got my opportunity, I felt like I was ready. I felt like I took advantage of it. I felt like I helped this team and I put some good stuff out there that allowed them to continue to have faith in me to be the guy leading this team, leading this offense. I think what we're going to do, now that the season is over, we're going to look back and today was another perfect example of it and look back to the several plays in the games that we lost that we could say, man, if we would have made that play, if we would have made this one play then the game would have been a whole lot different. And that's the reason why we're sitting here at seven and 10, not in the playoffs. And I think just kind of moving forward in the mindset that we have to find ways to win those close games. Because a good team to make it to the playoffs are winning those games. And for me, I'll do the same thing. I'm going to go back and look at everything that I did this year and there's going to be a lot of stuff that I felt like I did really good and there's going to be a couple things I'm going to say “You know what?” I can play smarter at certain times.”

(on if he sees himself being back next year) “I have really enjoyed my time here in New Orleans, working with this group of coaches, being on this team with this group. I've had a lot of fun this year. So as this offseason gets going, we'll kind of let the whole process take care of itself and there'll be communication back and forth, and we'll just see how it goes from there.”



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SAFETY TYRANN MATHIEU

(on how he would characterize this season) "Obviously, we felt like we were a playoff team. We lost a lot of close games in the regular season. Our attitude was much better (as the season progressed). Defensively, we really came together. I thought we finished the season fairly strong as well."

(on what part of the season did he feel like he fully grasped the system) "It is fair to say that early on in the season that I took a lot of punches. I've been doing this a long time, so I just keep coming to work and keep trying to get better. I stick with my teammates through it all. I felt like I did that for the most part. I feel like I finished the season strong."

(on his return to New Orleans this season) "It's been a blessing. A lot of home cooked meals. I've been bumping into people that I haven't seen in years. I just saw one of my uncles working at the gate before the game. I'm definitely grateful. I had the chance to play with a lot of guys that I admired. There are a lot of great figures in New Orleans. It has been a blessing for me. It is definitely humbling for sure."

(on if he envisions a team that can ascend quickly) "We finished the season strong, so there is a lot of positive momentum for us. It's also a lot of motivation as well going into the offseason. I think each man, individually, has to commit to that going forward. I personally (think) that we have a pretty good football team. It didn't always look like that through the season. I think we came together. We began to play hard for our coaches as well. I think all of those things are positives."

(on creating turnovers at the end of the season) "I think coming into the season that we realized that we were a talented group and we had high expectations to be one of the leaders in turnovers in the whole NFL. The ball doesn't always bounce your way, but we continued to come to work each and every day. Our coaches continued to coach us the same way. If you stick with something long enough, the ball will eventually bounce your way here and there. It is definitely a positive being able to create turnovers and give your offense a short field. It's a team morale booster as well when you can make those plays. We will make a lot more of those plays next year."

(on today's performance) "Coming into the week we knew that we were in the top three in passing yards allowed per game. We just set a goal for ourselves that we weren't going to allow that team to throw for more than 120. Throwing the ball wasn't in their game plan. I felt like those guys stuck with the run a lot more. I think it is always a good feeling when you can hit a goal that you set for yourself or your unit. I feel like all of us played hard. I felt like we came together."

(on what they hope will carry over to next year) "We need to start the right way. I felt like early in the season we let a few games get away from us, games we were in control of. There were four or five of those games where if one of us makes a tackle or one of us makes a play, then we win that game. There are high expectations and high standards, but I think we are all capable of it. I'd like to see us not pressing as much. We need to let it all flow and come together. This is a lot of motivation for us."

DEFENSIVE END CAMERON JORDAN

(on his thought on how the season ended) "How this game ended seemed to depict the Saints season in its entirety. We had chances to score and we didn't. We had a chance to make big plays. We had missed tackles. We have the ebbs and flows. The team doesn't give up fighting, but we let teams hang around until the fourth quarter and we end up getting beat. How many times have we seen that this year? It just seems like the game we lost was exactly how it happened. They shouldn't have been in the race and they stayed in the race. We ended up losing."

(on the team's potential) "You can look at players who have made strides. On the defensive side of the ball and the offensive side of the ball. We have good players in that locker room. We have potential great players in the locker room. In the wins, you see a lot of the things we need to do: Time of possession, get into the red zone and score, make plays on defense. It has got to go both ways. There is a lot of potential in our locker room, but we did not capitalize on our potential each and every game. There's no one else to blame for it except us. I think that every game we had control of it or an ability to take control of the game. We didn't capitalize and ended up losing. You have to capitalize."

(on his goal this offseason) "Win a Super Bowl. Come back after this offseason and rally everyone who's a part of our 53-man roster and eradicate those mistakes. Put together phenomenal games each and every time we (take the) field. Every time we touch the field the idea's to play a perfect game. It's impossible to play a perfect game, but we can all strive for perfection."

(on their lack of passing in today's game) "Sam Darnold did a good job of getting out of the pocket. When he was rolling out of the picket, then he really wasn't completing anything. He made plays with his feet down the field. We came out and lost the game in the second half. That's irksome. We are going into this offseason knowing we should have beaten the brakes off somebody and we didn't. You don't have a right to say you should have when we did not. It's never a should have."

(on the message to his teammates this offseason) "Take it to the offseason. Let this log burn. There is nothing to be proud of going 7-10 and not making the playoffs for the second time in a row. Let it burn. Let it simmer. Let it carry you over to your workouts. Let it do whatever you got to do to get your mind right. Don't let it be in the back of your mind. Let it be in the front of your mind. We have to think about the entire season and what happens. The plays we made, we can always make more. The first half of the season we didn't have enough turnovers. The second half of the season you saw a completely different energy around the team. That's the energy you need from the jump."

(on giving up 20 or fewer points in eight consecutive games streak to close the season) "I wish that started from September on. If there are plays that need to be made, then we need to capitalize on those opportunities. There are a lot of them. There was a turning point in there and we knew we had to be more than what we were. We fought back, but all we are looking for is to get a win. We failed to reach our potential this season. There nothing to sugar coat about that. All we can do is look at ourselves this offseason and see how we can get better and come back with a vengeance."

(on if he thinks this team is close) "I'm always thinking this team is close. I am always thinking my team is going to win. There is not ben game, a play, a drive or series that I believe in what our offense, defense and special teams is doing. I still think we have some of the best special teams in the league. I still think that when our offense clicked it was lights out. I still think our defensive side of the ball stepped up in a big way and if we can do that from that jump that there will be no one messing with us. These games, again, we have been in position to win them. It's not like we have been down by two or three touchdowns and losing by 30 or 40 points. These are games that are coming down to one possession. I think if you look at the 10 games (we lost) there aren't many that came down to more than one possession. You can go all the way back to the game in London. This is on us. It is always going to be on us."

(on if any change after a non-playoff season would surprise him this offseason) "You see change after winning seasons. There is for sure change after devastated losing seasons. Part of this game is not knowing what's going to happen next season. That's why you have to cherish the time on the field. That's why each and every one of these plays is important because you don't know when it is going to be your last. You need to know that you played to your potential and gave it everything that you had. For every individual player, the mortality of football is real. You go into the offseason thinking you are okay, but could end up on a different team. You never know what God's plan is. You need to make sure you work your butt off on every opportunity that he gives us. That is from year one to year 12. The locker room is going to change. You see superstars from the league traded. You see coaches who want to be there retiring or running out or whatever it is. There is always going to be locker room change. I can't say that we are all going to be back together. I can tell you that I'm going to bring the same mindset I bring to the offseason. Relax. Spend time with the family. Be focused. Hone in. Get back to football and try to dominate each time I touch the field."



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Opening comments: “Truly proud of the men in that locker room, and how we finished. We talk about it all of the time, being part of our DNA, the physicality and effort, being #1, playing smart. And, most importantly, the last one is finish. In all three phases, the guys showed up today. We’ve dealt with so much different (things this year). As I always talk about, “Don’t allow ‘it’ to get in the way. (We had) so many different ‘its’ throughout the course of the year. For those guys to circle the wagon, and once again find a way to come out and win a football game is extremely impressive. We won our last game at home in front of our fans. And, we won our last game of the year on the road. (There is) a lot to build on moving forward. Again, couldn’t be so proud of the men in that locker room.”

(on what the game-winning field goal meant for Eddy Pineiro) “It meant a lot. Again, when you go back and look at the year, he got so scrutinized against Atlanta. We missed a field goal, and I told you guys that we were not bringing anyone else in, (and) we were not trying anyone else out. We believe in Eddy. Eddy stayed the course, and he helped us win a lot of football games. He won this one today for us.”

(on if he was concerned, given the team missing several defensive players, that the game would get away from them following the Saints’ first score) “It was not a concern. It was the mere fact I was just trying to regroup collectively as a staff, and, most importantly, as players. We had a lot of guys out. And, we also had a lot of guys that stepped up. (Amare) Barno being one. (He) played well on special teams, came up with a sack. I’m very proud of his performance today. Again, guys just have to step up and make plays. They did that today.”

(on what it says about the team to win this game that had no playoff implications, after struggling on offense) “I think, as you look back on it, and I told those guys, there’s times where we played three and a half quarters well, and we have to learn how to finish. To have the flip side to where we don’t do a lot in the first three and a half quarters, but find a way to finish, I just think it was just profound, the character in that locker room, how those guys pulled and come together for one another. Unfortunately, for D’Onta (Foreman), the guy hit him first. We’ve got to make sure that we keep the team first. I love and respect him. He apologized to his teammates. Chuba (Hubbard) stepped up in a big way and did some outstanding things. That’s just what this team is all about. When one guy goes down, the next guy is there to pick up the load.”

(on Michael Jordan’s play today and his touchdown) “(Austin) Corbett, he went down. Mike had to step in. I thought he did a great job of just being attentive and understanding, knowing where the ball was at that particular time, and diving on it. He was emotional, just like a lot of those guys. Once again, they just poured it out for one another. I’m very proud of the way he stepped up.”

(on if he thinks should be the full time coach next season) “It’s not about me. It’s about those men in that locker room. It’s about this organization, the coaching staff, support staff. Everybody pulled together this year to endure all of the things that we had to go through. It’s just not just me. So, I just commend everybody in this organization the way we just rallied and pulled together.”

(on if he’s been told that he will interview for the job) “You know, to be quite honest, I am going to stay in the moment, and just reflect on where we are right now. I don’t really want to discuss anything about job opportunities moving forward. Again, I’m going to be where my feet are right now.”

(on what he told the team after the win) “Just how much I loved those guys, (and) how much they persevered through so much. It was glorifying to see the last element of our DNA today, which was finish, particularly which in a manner which we struggled most of the game and found a way to come together at the end. That was glorifying.”

(on if he and the staff let the defense win the game, following Sam Darnold’s early struggles) “No, I really felt like running the football, we got some yardage there. I wanted to try to establish that because we did not really do it in the first half. So, I saw it was making some yardage there, and doing some things to wear them (Saints) down a little bit. It did not really have anything to do with the mere fact of the interceptions. If you look at how, again, they’re resilient. He (Darnold) bounced back. We talked all year about Sam, ‘go win with your feet, with your legs.’ And, he did that. Then, having to

come up with a big throw at the end across the middle (was big). Terrace (Marshall), particularly being from this state. His family was here today. (It) was just an awesome job for him and great execution by Sam.”

(on his message to the team) “Proud of them, the way they finished, the way they continued to fight throughout the year. Then again, just finishing on a great note and trying to propel this to the offseason.”

(on the team’s message to him) “It really wasn’t about me. It was about us and how we persevered and won football games. I try to deflect because it’s many parts, but all one body of work. We are all in this together.”

(on how this Panthers team should be remembered) “Resilience. Perseverance. Tough, mentally (and) physically. There is a lot to say when you pull that dash out with this football team. Again, I’m very proud of them.”



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QUARTERBACK SAM DARNOLD

(on the way the team finished) “We finished. Just to be able to win that game, obviously it wasn’t pretty. The first half we did not play our style of football, but we came out in the second half and ran the ball really well. We had a good first drive scoring some points and then our defense did what they do. Our special teams did well. We put punter Johnny Hekker probably in too many situations to punt, but Johnny is one of the best at what he does and he showed it by putting them deep in their own territory a couple of times and our defense got stops.”

(on pass to wide receiver Terrace Marshall Jr. to setup game-winning field goal) “He [Marshall] ran a great route. We had max protection, we thought that they were bringing the house and it turned out I had one-on-one on my backside and I wanted to take advantage of that opportunity.

(on the emotion after the game) “It (was) just about what we have been through this year. Listen, this is the NFL. Every team goes through a lot. But for us, the way we battled through what has happened this year, I am just really proud of the guys. I thought Coach Wilks did a great job getting us ready for this game. Again, it wasn’t pretty at times, but we got it done.”

(on the message going into the final drive) “We practice situations like this all the time in practice. Knowing the situation and knowing we had timeouts, I thought we were able to move the ball well in that two-minute drive.”

KICKER EDDY PIÑEIRO

(on his feelings about the game-winning field goal) “It was more than just a kick. To be able to do it for my teammates, our coaches, the whole organization, that’s the way you want to finish a season.”

(on ending the season strong after missing a big field goal earlier in the season against the Falcons) “After missing a big kick early in the season against Atlanta, I promised myself that I never wanted to feel like that again. It happens. You’re a hero one day and a villain the next. Today we came up on top and it was amazing.”