



## POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES

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### ATLANTA FALCONS VS. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2022 • MERCEDES-BENZ STADIUM SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- With the win, New Orleans closes out the 2021 season at 9-8, making them only the second current team to have at least five consecutive winning seasons, joining the Kansas City Chiefs (2013-).
- The win improves their all-time regular season record against the Falcons to 52-53. The win also gives them a 4-1 mark in contests in the Saints-Falcons series played at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, their fourth consecutive. The win improves their division record to 4-2, giving them a winning record in the NFC South for the fifth consecutive season. The win also helps them avoid being swept by the Falcons for the first time since 2016, the last time they were swept by a division opponent. Head Coach **Sean Payton's** record against the Falcons improves to 21-9.
- The win evens Payton's record against Falcons Coach Arthur Smith at 1-1, giving him at least a .500 record against 66 of the 88 head coaches he's faced. Smith is the 74<sup>th</sup> head coach Payton has a win against.
- Quarterback **Taysom Hill** started the game and threw seven-of-nine for 107 yards, a touchdown pass and a 153.2 passer rating. Hill also rushed the ball five times for 18 yards before leaving the game in the second quarter with a foot injury.
- Quarterback **Trevor Siemian** entered the game in relief of Taysom Hill and led the Saints on five scoring drives, two touchdowns and three field goals. Siemian finished the game 9-of-15 passing for 71 yards, two second quarter touchdown passes and a 111.4 passer rating. Siemian, along with quarterback **Jameis Winston**, became the first pair of Saints quarterbacks to each throw at least ten touchdown passes in the same season.
- Running back **Alvin Kamara** finished with 146 rushing yards on a career-high 30 carries. Kamara now has 4,238 career rushing yards, surpassing Dalton Hilliard (1986-93) for fourth place in club record books. Sunday was Kamara's sixth career game with at least 100 rushing yards and his third such game of 2021 with 120 rushing yards each against the New York Giants in Week 4 and New York Jets in Week 14. Kamara has 603 career rushing yards vs. the Falcons, his most against any opponent.
- Tight end **Adam Trautman**, wide receiver **Tre'Quan Smith** and tight end **Juwan Johnson** each caught first half touchdown passes. Smith led the team in receiving with five catches for 76 yards.
- Tackle **Jordan Mills** played in his 100th career regular season game.
- Rookie cornerback **Paulson Adebo** became only the fifth Saints rookie to record at least three interceptions in his rookie season after his second quarter pick off Matt Ryan. Adebo joins cornerback Robert Massey (1989), safety Sammy Knight (1997),

cornerback Marshon Lattimore (2017) and safety Marcus Williams (2017). Adebo finished the game with five tackles (three solo) and two pass breakups to go with the interception.

- Linebacker **Demario Davis** finished the game with a team leading five solo tackles, giving him 105 tackles in 2021, his fourth consecutive season of reaching the century mark. Davis becomes the first Saints defender with at least 101 stops in four consecutive seasons since linebacker Joe Federspiel (1972-80), who was inducted into the Saints Hall of Fame in 1993.
- Safety **Malcolm Jenkins's** second quarter tackle and forced fumble on Falcons running back Mike Davis set the Saints up at the Falcons 11-yardline which resulted in New Orleans' third touchdown of the day. The tackle was Jenkins' 400th of his Saints career.
- Jenkins played in his 104th career game as a Saint, moving into a tie with DT Elex Price for 48th on the club's all-time games played list.
- Linebacker **Kwon Alexander** finished the game with three tackles (two solo), a forced fumble and a fumble recovery.
- Defensive End **Cameron Jordan** recorded two tackles (one solo), two pass breakups and one sack, giving him 12.5 on the season. Jordan now has 107 career sacks, good for 26th in NFL record books. Jordan played in his 176<sup>th</sup> career game on Sunday and surpassed tight end Hoby Brenner (1981-93) to move into a tie for eighth place all-time on the club's games played list. Even though Jordan missed the first game of his career this season based on COVID-19 protocols, with the 17-game season, he reached several milestones with 16 appearances. Jordan joined punter Thomas Morstead (2009-20) as only the second player to appear in 16 games in 11 seasons. Jordan also became the only Saint to appear in 16 games in 11 consecutive seasons.
- Defensive end **Marcus Davenport** finished with 1.5 sacks and a forced fumble. Davenport's nine takedowns in 2021 are a career best.
- K **Brett Maher** converted three-of-four field goals for and all three extra point attempts.
- The Saints extended their streak to 321 regular season games without having been shut out, dating back to a 26-20 win at the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on September 6, 2002 at Raymond James Stadium, the longest running streak in the NFL.

## **NEW ORLEANS SAINTS**

### **HEAD COACH SEAN PAYTON**

#### **Opening Statement:**

"First off, I thought we fought hard did a lot of good things. Won the turnover battle and that was significant. Then when Taysom went down Trevor did a good job filling in all the things you want to do to win a game. Obviously, the other game didn't go the way we wanted. I'm proud of this group, I thought we fought hard all season."

#### **On his emotions after winning today's game but not making the playoffs:**

"It is what it is. You're disappointed. Obviously, as a team, we're watching the finish of the game. You're disappointed. You play to get in the postseason and our players the same way, feel the same way."

#### **On an update of QB Taysom Hill after being injured in the first half:**

"No, we'll have more once we do a little bit further evaluation tomorrow. Hurt his Lisfranc. We just don't know to what degree, but we'll have that get passed along to you guys as soon as we get a little bit further in his examination."

#### **On how he felt QB Trevor Siemian played after coming in for QB Taysom Hill:**

"Like the last time he came in, he functioned, did a good job, threw some touchdown passes. He played well."

#### **On whether QB Trevor Siemian's unflappability help in certain situations:**

"I've said this before he's really smart. So he can function at a pretty high level without a lot of the practice reps that generally you want to have, and that's kind of the life a little bit of the number two quarterback in our league. How well can they come in, in a moment really without having had all the practice reps? So I think his football IQ and his skill set, he made some good throws."

#### **On his team ability to overcome various obstacles this season:**

Look, tough group. Got really good leadership that helped us make up in the locker room. I think it really helped us we leaned on it. It's something that we'll be able to reflect on later in the week."

#### **On how good the defensive pass rush in the last part of the season:**

"I think it is real important. You just look at the investments in the ends and the offensive tackles. It was great to have Ram back in the lineup today at right tackle. That's significant. Obviously, when Marcus comes in and then he was gritty today. It takes some pressure off of Cam and we can get into not only our three-men, we can get into some of our four-men rush packages. I thought that was significant. You're right."

#### **On if he was keeping up with the 49ers-Rams game in addition their game:**

"Nah, we really more focused on our game. Honestly though, we had enough of a lead where we get an update. I was aware that those guys were up and then there was a late score. Then we spent like

20 minutes to figure out if Atlanta scored and so we knew going into the locker room we were going to watch some of the overtime.”

**On his feelings while watching the 49ers-Rams game in real-time:**

“Honestly, it's pretty easy to describe. Probably any and all Saints fans watching it would have felt the same way in our locker room. You're watching. You're leaning on every play. No different than a fan would be.”

**QB TREVOR SIEMIAN**

**On his emotions of not making playoffs after a win today:**

“Definitely feels a little hollow, you go through the year, it's a long season and it's so hard to win in this league that you want to cherish every time you do it. Cherish those the celebrations in locker room and all that but when you're watching another team lose for us to get in the playoffs, it's certainly a little hollow for sure.”

**On how quickly he has to get ready to play after QB Taysom Hill left with an injury:**

“Instantaneously. For Taysom and similar with Jameis, I feel like when Jameis went down is kind of how tough those two guys are. So if something's wrong it's been must be pretty wrong. So I just go in and you're in you're in the middle of the game at that point we're in the red zone. So things happen pretty quickly. It takes you a play or two to get into the game and then you're in it. “

**On if it is skill he developed to come into games and play well as a backup QB:**

“I think the week of practice, probably the harder part of being a backup or being two in this league. To be able to consistently prepare as if you're starting, even though 95% of the time, you're not going to play. Or how many times you're not going to play, just to mentally going through the week and staying in it that way is probably tougher than the day of the game. Fortunately we have a great room. Players are helpful between Taysom, Jameis, Ian and we got a great staff so other people started playing. When it happens it happens quicker. Like I said.”

**On if he remembers a stranger season than this season:**

“No, I thought last year was pretty weird. With all the COVID things going on, but this, it's been chaos. To put it in one word, it's been chaos for us. And I think it's hard to process that now and internalize that. But I think that's something I think we can hang our hat on is the leadership of the captains. Everybody kind of riding the ship when it was chaos.”

**On QB Jameis Winston being with the team today and whether he knew that he was going to be here today:**

“It was awesome to see him in person. He's been zooming in our quarterback meetings, so we've been able to talk to him a little bit that way. But to see him in person walking around shooting threes with him a little bit pregame was great so great to see him. I found out Thursday he was making the trip so we were all looking forward to that look.”

**On everything that could possibly go wrong did this season and how they navigated through that:**

“The season is never straightforward any year. As bad as things were at times or as weird as they felt like I said, the leadership in the locker room and the coaching kept us on the straight and narrow when it could have gotten real ugly I think. So again, it stinks right now to be missing out but to get nine wins all things considered I think it's something to look back on maybe a few months or however long but it's something to be proud of.”

**On relying on another team to lose to make the playoffs:**

“This certainly feels a little weird. I've never been on a team where we are waiting on a last game, waiting for another team. You wouldn't wait for somebody else to pull through so this was a first for me.”

**CB Paulson Adebo**

**What did you see on that interception?** “Just running a double move, I stopped his speed, got my head around and just thought to get the ball.”

**How would you describe emotions right now?** “It's definitely a weird feeling. To just win a game but we didn't reach our main goal of making the playoffs. It's definitely a weird feeling and it's kind of bittersweet. There is a lot to take away from this game that was good. For me personally there's a lot for me to take away from this season and look at everything as a whole.”

**What is the feeling like in the locker room watching the Rams play and knowing there is nothing you can do?** “Ideally, you play to where you get to control your own destiny, but in this situation, we had to rely on other teams. But like you said, it is a weird feeling just knowing your fate is out of your control.”

**SS Malcom Jenkins**

**Knowing that you have pretty much seen it all, is this still a different feeling for you?** “Yes and no. I think the shock of it all is a little surprising. I was telling some of the guys, unless you win the Superbowl, things like this happen every time. You never really expect it to end. It's the part of our business that makes it so hard, whether it's end of the season, first round of the playoffs, NFC Championship, when you lose it's over. Nobody feels bad for us. Obviously, we can look at how we played over the year and there's going to be some things we want back, but at the end of the day we put ourselves in position to give us a chance. Like any other season, you're going to evaluate individually what you did as a team and look forward to next year. I don't think you get use to the abruptness of the end, but it happens every year.”

**Although you won today, does it feel like a loss knowing you are eliminated from the playoffs?**

“When the season is over, wins and losses no longer matter. It's really the reality that we won't be

able to suit up with each other next week. I think this team especially in the last month has found a rhythm and honestly, we have been having fun. I think that's the most disappointing part about today. That's what overshadows what we did here today. We had a lot of fun today. It's that we will not be able to suit up and do it again next week. You realize each year there's a ton of turnaround and this group will not be with each other next year. That's probably the most disappointing part about right now."

**What was your team's reaction today after entering the locker room after today's win?**

"Immediately we got in the locker room, and everyone started watching the TV. By the time we had got in there the 49ers had just kicked a field goal or was about to kick one. What we did today really didn't matter, we wanted to get to the postseason. Once we won and did what we were supposed to do, we immediately started watching the TV and it's hard when your fate is in someone else's hands."

## **ATLANTA FALCONS**

### **HEAD COACH ARTHUR SMITH**

#### **On today's turnovers:**

"Yeah, that's usually the story of the game. Obviously I was disappointed turning the ball over three times. All of them were at the start of a drive. Put the defense out there in a lot of the bad spots. We battled, but with turnover margins like that, you can hand them things, that's usually the way it goes. We fought, tried to do everything we could to get back in this football game. Our team doesn't quit, but obviously we came up short."

#### **On the run defense:**

"Yeah, I mean, they grinded it out. Like I said, when you hand them the ball right back it's usually an advantage to the offense. I give New Orleans credit. They executed a game plan."

#### **On his initial statement to the team heading into the offseason"**

"Yeah, there will be a time and place for that starting tomorrow. My message to these guys, I was appreciative of everything they've done. Obviously we came up short of our own goals here, but this team, you know, we learned how to win close games. We scrapped and clawed. Feel like we've had a good foundation and better days are ahead."

#### **On the reports that he spoke with Arthur Blank and Terry Fontenot about Matt Ryan's future:**

"Yeah, I mean, look, I'm not going to -- internet, you can find whatever you want on the internet."

#### **On how Chris Mortenson is a reliable source:**

"Great, I'm not discrediting anyone, but I can tell you this: 100 percent fact there was a lot of nonsense that came out in the spring. You know, how you want to insinuate things, no different than the Calvin Ridley question from last week. There is not a football decision that's made with the Atlanta Falcons without Terry Fontenot and myself collaborating. That's just absolute nonsense, Michael. Absolute 100 percent nonsense. It'll never happen. We are not a -- we're not professional politicians. We don't operate that way. I know a lot of the league likes to leak rumors. That's not how Terry and I operate. I know there are a lot of respected people. They got a job to do, but that's just not what happens. Again, life is a lot better when you're not on social media."

#### **Q. Well, I wish that could be the case.**

"I know you got a job. Just don't look at your mentions."

#### **On does he expect Matt Ryan to be the quarterback next year:**

"Matt knows how we feel about him, but you're not going to get a hot take from me today to ever back ourselves into a corner. I don't care -- everything is evaluated every year, and that's the way it goes in the NFL. To make a grand statement right after a game, we're all on the same page. Do I have to declare that Kyle Pitts will be our tight end for us next year? You want me to declare that? Where you want me to go? I can go down the whole roster. We don't want to back ourselves into a corner. I know



you got to ask the question. I appreciate it. But we'll take a fair evaluation of everybody, top to bottom ever single year."

**On how Ryan played this season:**

"I'll say this about Matt, and this is what I preach about Matt. From the outside looking in, he's always had a lot invested in the perimeter. There has been a lot of good skill players on the outside the first part of his career, everything. This is what he proved is he can win, and we did it with a lot of different guys contributing. And so that says a lot about him. A lot of quarterbacks look pretty good when they got first round picks, Hall of Fame guys outside, from Tony Gonzalez, Roddy Wright. When they drafted Julio Jones, he was really the third or fourth guy, and he got into it, he became obviously a premier player. You had Austin Hooper, you know, obviously Kyle came in here and was forced into a role by circumstance, and we did it with a lot of guys that fought every single damn week. We found different ways, put Cordarrelle Patterson out there, tried to do everything we could to win the football game, and Matt proved that he didn't have to do it with nothing but first rounders out there. I think that says a lot about a quarterback."

**On Mike Davis getting more reps than Cordarrelle Patterson today:**

"We only had 19 plays in the first half. Everybody is going through something, so there is a lot of packages and this and that. We had guys that - it's week 18, so, again, there was only 19 plays. CP is obviously a big part of the game plan. We need more offensive plays. It's been the story the last five games. Like I said, we found ways to win some games, but we need to do a better job being a little more balanced, which we will."

**On the turnovers on the first play drives and how costly was that to the overall flow of the game:**

"It's hard to get into a rhythm. We took a shot down their sideline that got picked, and then we had two fumbles to start drives as well, getting the ball in plus territory. hose definitely put your defense in a bind. That was the difference in the game."

**On what the last couple games down the stretch have shown him and Terry what areas to focus on in the offseason:**

"I think you take the whole body of work. Certainly that's why -- it's such a long season. You do find out a lot about players as you go through it, which guys you can depend on as the season finishes."

**On the effect of the extra week this year:**

"I mean, everybody dealt with it, but, you know, normally you feel this time of year if you're practicing, you're getting ready for wildcard game. Everybody is dealing with the same thing, but certainly you go back and look, and is there something you could do differently, I think everybody should say, Hey, how can we improve? Certainly with the roster it definitely adds up."

**On how New Orleans kept Kyle Pitts out of it today:**

"He was fighting through stuff. He gave everything. I don't think a lot of guys would've played in his circumstance. We certainly tried, and I'm sure you'll get the hot takes about the target, he was the primary in a lot of play calls. I don't know if they took him away. But I can sit here and look at it and say he wasn't 100 percent, but I appreciate him going out there and trying to help us."



## **QB MATT RYAN**

### **On turnovers hurting the team on Sunday:**

“Yeah, I mean, we knew coming into it we had to be efficient and take care of the ball. Tried to push one down the field to Russ and probably shouldn't have made that decision. You know, that's a tough one. And then pair of fumbles, but those two before the half really hurt, and, you know, breathe some life into them and gave them an opportunity to score some points before the half, which is always tough to overcome. So it was disappointing for sure. We've got to do better than that as we move into next season. We got to be really efficient and take really good care of the football.”

### **On what they can take from this season, especially being 7-2 in one-score games:**

“I do think that there are positives to take from that. In close, you know, one-score games we were very efficient. We need to put ourselves in more of those than we did this year. I think that's the next step. I also think learning how to close some of those games out earlier and figuring out ways to win, where it doesn't have to be one possession, you know, I think those are places we can make growth. But I'm optimistic. I think we've got a lot of good, young players, guys that gained a lot of experience this year, guys that fought the entire way. I think that's going to serve us well as we continue to grow and build.”

### **On his future and whether he would like to stay in Atlanta moving forward:**

“Yeah, I mean, I want to be here. You know, I believe in this team, and the coaching staff I think did a great job. I really feel fortunate to have been here for as long as I have. You know, but I'm optimistic, I really am. I want to be here. I feel good about this group of guys, coaching staff, everybody, the direction it's going. I really think we're going to make improvements this off-season and continue to grow as a team and be better than what we were this year.”

### **On whether he's been given assurances that he will be back next season:**

“No, I mean, I've just -- we haven't talked about it. We were playing the season and doing those kind of things and going through a game plan week to week. So I also know that every year is different. Everybody, that's the nature of this league. I feel good about it. I really do. I feel like I'm in a good space and our team is in a good space and we can improve and be better as we move forward.”

### **On whether he has input on offseason transactions:**

“I understand my role, you know, what that is. You know, certainly throughout my entire career I have given honest feedback, but, you know, I also understand that they have a job to do. It's their responsibility to find players, to decide who stays, who goes, figure out contracts, the cap, all those things. I don't claim to be an expert in that area.”

### **On which honest feedback he would give about this season:**

“Yeah, I think number one, those conversations are better had in our facility, you know, and behind closed doors. But I'm optimistic. I really am. I think Arthur talked a lot about wanting to create a culture. I think he's done a very good job of that, creating a tough, physical football team. We're making strides toward that. I thought the fight, toughness from the guys, resiliency all year was really good.”

There is a lot of growth that can come from that with young players being in those situations and maturity and toughness, mental toughness, those kind of things I think a season like this can provide. So I'm optimistic. I really am."

**On whether he believes toughness is the identity Arthur Smith is trying to build in Atlanta:**

"I mean, he would be better to answer that question of that, but from my perspective, that's what he's asking from us as players: tough, smart, physical players. You know, I think guys have tried to do that. Guys have really worked towards that the way we practice, the way we train, all those things I think trend in that direction. I think being in year two in a system, not just myself, but the guys that are back, I think there are great strides that can be made there."

**On whether his streak of consecutive seasons with 4,000 passing yards ending bothers him:**

"Not really. I know, I think I'm at the point in my career -- don't get me wrong, I'm proud of how long it lasted for sure -- but the objective is to be playing, you know, now and to have the opportunity. And so from that standpoint, the statistical stuff is very nice and I'm proud of it, but at the same time, I really care about winning. You know, I want to be playing in the playoffs and making a push to win a championship. That to me is the more important goal as we move forward."

**On his optimism and how far away he feels the team is to making a playoff push:**

"I think we were about two or three games away, you know. There were some games that if you just look at it objectively, that's probably what we needed to do. Win nine or ten games and give you the opportunity to get in. And so every season is different, you know. There is no crystal ball for us moving forward, but we're not far off really. You know, finding ways to win a few games early in the year, too, you know, where we had chances, I think that's going to be important in getting off to a good start. All these things are important. They all count one. Sometimes they sting a little bit more at the end of the year when the pictures has kind of unraveled itself to you, but I've learned that those ones in the beginning of the year are just as important. And so we're not far off."

**On whether there's a specific type of receiver he likes playing with:**

"I've played with all kinds of different guys throughout my career. You know, I trust our personnel guys, coaching staff, to find the guys that they feel like fit what we want to do. But, you know, I feel like I'm at a point where I can work with different guys and different skillsets and feel comfortable with that."

**On WR Russell Gage's last few months:**

"I think Russ did a good job. I really do. I think battling through injury early in the year kind of takes a little bit of time to get your legs back underneath you. But second half of the season or last six weeks, whatever, I think he's played well for us. Made a lot of plays of done a nice job. Had a bigger role for us, and I think stepped up and made a bunch of really good plays for us."

**On whether he'd like to have WR Russell Gage back next year:**

"I mean, I would love to. I love Russ as a teammate. I love how much he's grown as a player during his time here. Also understand the nature of this league. It's hard to predict how things are going to go. As far as my opinion of Russ, I love him. I think he's a great teammate and a very good player."

## **DL GRADY JARRETT**

### **On the toughness of the Saints unit:**

"It was tough for the whole team today. We got the ball with some short fields; things were a little leaky, but there were some good plays out there and guys fighting hard, so I'm proud about that. It is not the finish that we wanted, but we have to build off what we did."

### **On his plans for next year and where he thinks the defense can grow:**

"As I said early, everything in the league is year by year. I mean, we just played our last game, so there is a lot of stuff that has to go on between now and the next training camp across the league. I can't really speak on what's going to happen next year. I know anytime there's an installation of a new defense, the more time they spend together, the better they get. There is no excuse. We just have to go out there and be able to execute what every coach calls and do it at a high level. At the end of the day, it's a little too early to speak on what is going to happen next year. We still haven't had our exit meetings so that time will tell."

### **On how this season has taught him and the team how to win close games:**

"It's something to grab on too. Winning close games is always important. The margin of victory in this league is always small. Each week anybody can get beat. So to be able to come out on top when it is a close game is definitely something to build off of and that we are proud of."

### **On how the turnovers affect the flow of the game from a defensive perspective:**

"It's from a whole team perspective, the offense and defense. Like I said earlier, we have to go out there and execute. Nobody wants to have a turnover. People don't turn the ball over on purpose. It's frustrating for the offense... its frustrating for the defense, but we have to go out there as a whole team and respond. You have to do what you have to do....You can't cry over spilled milk. Whether you sit there and sulk in the middle of the game or not. That will not do anybody any good. At the end of the day, you still have a game to play. You want to pick up your guys and try and keep them motivated. You have to think if we go out there and make a big stop and they kick a short field. They know that we have their back. Turnovers affect the whole team, and like I said, nobody does it on purpose. You just have to be able to respond in those situations and that will help them to do better."

## **TE HAYDEN HURST**

### **On how the season went:**

"Not exactly what I dreamed of in April. All I can do is do the best with my opportunities whenever they come. I think I showed that this year in flashes, especially today. But all I have to do is control the controllable and all that other stuff that is out of my control. I just have to show up and play."

### **On his feelings about going somewhere else:**

"I just want an opportunity wherever it is. Here or wherever. I know the type of player that I am, what I can bring to the table and bring to a team. All I ask for is opportunities."

**On coming back with the Atlanta Falcons next season:**

"That's up to Arthur and Terry. All I can do is show up and make the most of my opportunities and I think that I showed that this year. I honestly have no idea."

**On what he learned this season:**

"It's a business, I've learned that. All that I can control is what I put out on the field on Sundays. All the stuff whether my number gets called or doesn't get called, I can control how I react to it and go out there and play for my teammates."

**WR RUSSELL GAGE****On looking back at the season:**

"For sure there are things I can improve on. Overall, I think I'm proud of what I've accomplished throughout the season. There were ups and downs, personal goals that I reached and some I didn't reach. Overall, I'm proud of what I've accomplished. I wouldn't say I'm satisfied, but I'm proud of what I accomplished, and I can't wait for this offseason to build and get ready for the next season."

**On where he sees himself in the future:**

"I love Atlanta. I don't know what the future holds for me, but this is a great organization, and I definitely would love to be a part of it. It's always going to have a special place in my heart because they are the ones who gave me an opportunity."

**On if he feels like he's made money in the last month:**

"Honestly I'm not sure. I've been around football, but this is my first time being a free agent so I honestly couldn't tell you anything about the process. Couldn't tell you about how coaches think or anything. We lost this game, that's unfortunate. That's kind of how my mind is set. I live in the most present situation, and I don't think about anything but what's going on. We'll see moving forward what Atlanta wants to do and go from there."

**On testing free agency to see what is out there:**

"It's good to have the option. My mom always says it's good to have options and all of that. I love Atlanta, I love it here. In my mind, they have first priority as far as I'm concerned for me. If those guys start talking, I'm going to talk back. They have a special place in my heart here and I'm hoping the same on their end. It's how I look at it."

**On going "airborne":**

"I didn't do that on purpose. I'm glad it was successful this time. For me, it's like a spin move. People spin move and they don't really plan for it, it just kind of happens. That's how it happens for me. I'm not saying it's the best move, but it's just something that kind of happened. He was coming down kind of fast and I just jumped. Those guys did a great job at blocking the other player. I think he was supposed to be free, and it worked out."

## **LB FOYE OLUOKUN**

### **On if he had about his accomplishment of having the 7th most tackles in a single season in NFL history, what that means to him:**

“That’s the first time telling and knowing. I mean, I go through a lot of work and stuff in the offseason and I know people who like to downplay all of the tackles and stuff, but if you look back on it, all the work that you put in and where I came from, just getting tackles and having the team rely on you like that — that’s what really means a lot to me. Numbers are numbers, but having the team rely on you to be in those positions and come out with that amount of work in my last season of the contract, that’s cool stuff just thinking about it from the outside looking in. What did you say, seventh? I’m looking at it like if I played better, I could have been sixth. It’s a cool thing to think about, but I’m going to cut on the film in the offseason and look through where I could have got better though.”

### **On what his younger self would think about the seventh-most tackles stat:**

“I would be crazy. You told four-year-old me one, that I’d be playing football because I was a hooper now. So you told four-year-old me that I’d be in the NFL and have the seventh most tackles, that’s crazy to think about. But as I said, when you’re in the moment, you’re just trying to get better and trying to make the play you’re supposed to and whatever happens with the numbers happens. But from the outside looking in, that’s a cool stat.”

### **On the team’s strengths, what he’ll miss about this team:**

“The resiliency. I mean, it’s a new staff and a lot of things were new for us. And then every game, there was a lot of dog in us. Obviously, there’s a lot of stuff we can clean up going into next year, but just the fight that we always brought — I know that’s kind of said from year to year — but you look at other teams in similar situations and they don’t have the same kind of fight that we have. So it’s a lot of respect to all of the players I play with and what we’re trying to accomplish and I just have a lot of respect for them.”

### **On if he wants to test free agency:**

“Really that’s up to my agent. I remember earlier in the season, he said if I don’t get restructured in that pre-season — I’m not just going to take an offer. Just listen and everything, but if the Falcons and I can work it out, that’d be nice.”

### **On what he needs to see from a team to want to play there, whether it’s with the Falcons or elsewhere:**

“One for me, where I feel like I could be successful. I think you know, I don’t really know how free agency works in other people’s minds, but I don’t just want to go where they offer me money and I’m not going to be successful in the scheme. I want to go where I’m going to be successful and we can end up winning games. So at the end of the day, I’m still a football player and a competitor and then hopefully people respect me on that level to where I get the money and I’m playing in the right scheme.”