



**NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS PITTSBURGH STEELERS**  
**SUNDAY, DEC. 23, 2018 • MERCEDES-BENZ SUPERDOME**  
**SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES**

- With the win, New Orleans Saints start the regular season 13-2, tying the 13-2 start in 2009. It also marked the third time in team history joining the 2009 and 2011 clubs.
- The Saints return to action on Sunday (12/30) in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome when they face the Carolina Panthers. The game will air on FOX at 12:00 p.m. CT.
- With today's win, the Saints swept all of their four AFC North opponents, their first sweep of the division since realignment in 2002. It marked their first sweep in interconference play since sweeping the AFC South in 2011. It is their seventh consecutive interconference win. They also had a seven-game winning streak against interconference opponents spanning the last three of 2008 against the AFC West and all four in 2009 against the AFC East, the longest win streak against AFC opponents since the last realignment in 2002. The Saints have a five-game winning streak against AFC North opponents, dating back to a Nov. 30, 2014 35-32 win at Pittsburgh, improving their record against the Steelers to 9-7. They also have their second three-game winning streak against Pittsburgh dating back to a 20-10 win on Oct. 31, 2010 at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, the first funning from Oct. 20, 1968-Dec. 21, 1969.
- Today's win gave New Orleans a 6-1 home record in 2018 and a six-game home winning streak. It marked the third time they have won six home games in back-to-back campaigns, joining 1991-92 and 2008-09.,
- The Saints currently have a streak of 271 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 and the fifth-longest all-time.
- QB **Drew Brees** completed 27-of-39 passes for a total of 326 yards, one touchdown and a 103.2 passer rating. Brees played in his 264th career game today, putting him in sole possession of 28th all-time in NFL record books for games played. Brees has connected with WR Michael Thomas 23 times for touchdowns, making Thomas his fifth most prolific touchdown target, tied with Antonio Gates. It was Brees' NFL-best seventh and the third consecutive game where he engineered a fourth quarter/overtime game-winning drive. After New Orleans got the ball back with 4:06 remaining in the fourth quarter and trailing 28-24, Brees completed six-of-ten passes for 52 yards, including the two-yard scoring pass to Thomas.
- RB **Mark Ingram** played in his 105th career game today. He carried 11 times for 35 yards and a touchdown and catching an eight-yard pass. Ingram now has 55 career touchdowns, tied for second with Deuce McAllister. Ingram became the only Saint to ever have 50 rushing touchdowns, passing McAllister.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** carried seven times for 23 yards with two touchdowns and caught four passes for 82 yards. Kamara now has 14 rushing touchdowns in 2018, setting the Saints single-season record previously held by McAllister (2002), RB George Rogers (1981) and RB Dalton Hilliard (1989). Kamara has also set a new career-high with 18 touchdowns, tying the club record with Hilliard (1989). With 82 receiving yards today, Kamara joined Herschel Walker as only the second player in National Football League history to have 1,500 rushing yards and 1,500 receiving yards in his first two seasons.
- With 11 receptions, WR **Michael Thomas** exceeded his new career-high (115) and franchise-record total. Thomas also passed Danny Abramowicz for seventh place in the club record books for career receptions. With his one TD reception today, he moved into a tie for tenth with WR Donte' Stallworth on the Saints all-time receiving touchdown list (24).
- In his first game back since being taken off Injured Reserve, WR **Ted Ginn Jr.**, recorded five catches for 74 yards, including a crucial fourth quarter 25-yard reception on third-and-20.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** played in his 127th consecutive game today and posted two tackles, one tackles for loss, two quarterback hits and one pass defensed.
- DE **Tyler Davison** recorded his second sack of the season, taking down Steelers QB Ben Roethlisberger for a six-yard loss.
- LB **Craig Robertson** had a crucial fourth down stop on a fake punt.
- LB **Alex Anzalone** finished the game with four total tackles (three solo), one sack, two quarterback hits and one tackle for a loss.

- LB **Demario Davis** recorded his fifth sack of the season, tying his career-high, taking down Roethlisberger for a nine-yard loss. On the Steelers' final play from scrimmage, a first-and-ten from the New Orleans 42-yard line, Davis recovered a fumble forced by DT **Sheldon Rankins** at the New Orleans 35-yard line to clinch the win. Davis finished with three total tackles, one sack and two quarterback hits to go with his first fumble recovery as a Saint.
- CB **Marshon Lattimore** finished the game with six total tackles and one passes defended.
- CB **Eli Apple** finished the game with nine total tackles (eight solo).
- S **Vonn Bell** recorded a team-high ten total tackles (seven solo).
- K **Wil Lutz** nailed a 43-yard field goal and converted four extra points. Lutz made 26 consecutive field goals before his second attempt was blocked, moving past Morten Andersen (11/1/92-9/12/93) for the longest streak of consecutive field goals in club history.
- P **Thomas Morstead** punted three times for 141 total yards (47.0 avg.) with a long of 56 yards, that was ruled out at the three-yard line.



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**SAINTS HEAD COACH SEAN PAYTON**

(opening statement) “Obviously an exciting win against a good team. A real good team. The game went back and forth. We expect it to be something that was hard fought. (We) Ending up winning (it) in to the fourth quarter. The momentum kind of shifted obviously. We had it early. They had it most of the second half and then we were able to get it back and secure the win.”

(on thoughts of resting starters next week) “We’ll see.”

(on the emotion of earning the first seed for the second time in franchise history) “These wins are something you get addicted to. The thrill of it though is that feeling of the week is a grind. There is a lot of work that goes in to it. Obviously it’s more difficult when you put in those hours in practice and you don’t have that immediate feedback with a win. That’s what makes it more difficult, but when you (are) able to get a win. It’s hard to get that feeling out of your system once you start. That’s one thing these guys have done a good job with. Coming up with plays when we needed it. We’ve won a lot of different ways this year. I’m proud of this team. Man, they showed a great resolve. Dealt with injuries. We dealt with all the adversity that you might have in a long season and it’s kind of the second step if you will. Winning the division is a goal that you set at the beginning of the year and certainly helping your seed out.”

(on the defense) “(The last defensive play was) a big time play. It’s a really good offense. We knew statistically, it was going to be a game that you had to handle situations in an aggressive way because it was a team that conversely was going to be able to score and we ran out those plays.”

(on the increase in forced fumbles and fumble recoveries by the defense this season) “Listen. It’s not just accident. It’s just not coincidence. When you don’t get them it’s not an accident either. So I think it’s credit to the coach(es) and players for hustling. But I think it’s part of our jobs.”

(on the fake punt attempt by Pittsburgh and stopping it) “It’s a big play. It was close. When the one guy goes in motion, you start looking. And I had an angle where. But it was the second time this year, you know, in big games (where the fake punt was stopped), against the Rams also.”

(on if he was expecting that fake punt) “Not necessarily, no. I mean, you go in to a game like that and you cover the shifts, the motions and you still have to defend it and it was a good play.”

(on impressions of the team’s ability to win in diverse situations this season) “I just said, we have won in different ways. It’s a hard league. It’s tough each week. These guys are a really good opponent. The team that really has been in some close games. I’m talking about Pittsburgh. It was a good win.”

(on the big catches in the fourth quarter today by Ted Ginn Jr.) “It’s a testament to him. Going through the scope (surgery). Kind of right there at the end, feeling like, man is this going to be it? The results were good. They felt positive that he would be able to come back and he helped us today.”

(on the difference in play-calling when Ginn is back playing) “There is a presence with him. He can run obviously. We had him down the field on a double move earlier, we just did not hold up in the protection. But yes, he’s a threat. He is also someone that the guys believe in. The third down call. That play he makes. The throw Drew makes, it was great sack protection. It was a significant play. When you are looking at about 4 or 5 of them, that was one of them.:

(on the advantage of playing at home in the playoffs) “We’ll see. Listen, it’s more of an advantage than going on the road, but it’s good to play at home. We feel like we have a good home-field advantage, but it’s still about executing and all of the details that go in to winning. We play well on the road as well.”



**POSTGAME NOTES AND QUOTES**  
GREG BENSEL ✦ SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

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**SAINTS QB DREW BREES**

(on what Ted Ginn Jr's return did for the offense) "It's big having Ted Ginn back. We've missed him. He's a great veteran presence. I think he gives us great diversity with our receiving corps. Obviously, everybody knows he can run, but he can do a lot of other things. He obviously came up with a huge catch on that third and 20 or whatever it was to keep that drive alive and for us to go and score and win the game. It was great having him back."

(on securing the number one seed in the NFC playoffs) "It's hard to secure the one seed but knowing that we've done it and knowing that the road comes through New Orleans, that gives us a lot of confidence. Obviously, we love playing in the dome. We love playing in front of the Who Dat nation. Obviously, they make this a very tough place for somebody to come in and play. Obviously, we have goals throughout the season and this was one of them."

(on if he was surprised by the Steelers fake punt late in the fourth quarter.) "No, I'm not. You try to do the unexpected. That's part of this game. Expect the unexpected and great job by our special teams tackling him about a half yard short and giving us the opportunity to drive down and win the game."

(on different storylines for each victory and finding different ways to win) "There are. I think that's what makes you battle-tested. That is what molds you and straggles you and gives you a ton of confidence and hope that no matter what you find yourself in it throughout the course of the game and you feel like you are going to find a way to win. It is going to take everybody. Everybody contributing. Certainly, the fourth quarter was that way today. Our last three victories have been from overcoming fourth quarter deficits to win the game. That's what I love about this team."

(on being able to take that next step to prepare for the playoffs) "It's a bit of a 30,000 feet view here. Let's map out the next couple weeks here as we prepare ourselves for that first playoff game. Obviously, we don't know (who) we're playing yet. As you begin to think about that, you lay out a plan for your routine. For us, it is just staying on course with our practice habits and preparation. Having a chance to get some guys healthy which I think is the biggest part of that first round bye. That is something that will be much needed and when it's time to get back to work we will get back to work."

(on the importance of knowing physically and mentally that they have a week off between next Sunday and when they have to play a playoff game) "There is a benefit to having a first round bye and being the one seed so we are going to take full advantage of that, make sure that we do all the right things to come back and give ourselves the best chance to win."

(on Ted Ginn's third and 20 catch) "It was designed to go to Ted with, obviously, other guys in the picture as part of the progression. He did a great job. Ted is a big-time player and, obviously, a guy that we count on. That was a huge play in the game. Obviously, a huge momentum shift after getting the holding penalty and we're sitting there at first and 20, second and 20, third and 20. To be able to convert that was huge."

(on what it was like to see Mark Ingram II break the club's rushing touchdown record) "It was awesome, well-deserved. He's such a stud. He's been such a staple for us and such an emotional leader for our team. That's something we're all very, very happy about for him."

(on the offense's perseverance to convert the third and 20 play) "Just to overcome something like that, we encountered a fourth down prior to that that we were able to convert with a PI. That was actually a tough situation because four minutes and 15 seconds was when we walked out there, Pittsburgh has three time outs left, and we need a touchdown. How do we score a touchdown and give them as little time as possible to try to put a drive together? Obviously, our defense came up with that huge play. A minute and 25 seconds is what they had left with no time outs. You play in that game because you know how explosive they are on the other side of the ball. Obviously, we had the holding penalty and had to convert a third and 20, but that's part of the game."

(on appreciating the one seed even more having done it before) "Yes. You appreciate it very much. Obviously, a first round bye. I don't want to say it's a week off because you're working, but you're not preparing for a game. You just take a step back and assess where you're at and you're getting guys healthy and you're preparing a plan for how you're going to approach that first playoff game. Obviously, you don't find out who you play until the first weeks' games take place, but this is why you fight for that. It's great to have that week off, but it's also nice to have that one seed and know that everybody is going to have to come to us. We like to be in that position."

(on the offensive lines' performance) "Those guys did such a good job. That's a heck of a front. That is one of the better fronts in all of football. They played tremendous today, especially with all the guys that had to rotate in and out. I think Andrus Peat may have played three positions today which is pretty incredible, that versatility. Those guys deserve so much credit. They really battled."

(on whether Michael Thomas got a rise out of Antonio Brown playing well) "I'm sure. Absolutely. That's why those guys are two of the best in the game."

(on if he has stayed steady during a four-game touchdown drought) "He has. He is the same guy during the week. He approaches it with the same sense of urgency and work ethic. Obviously, gameday rolls around and he just kind of goes to another place mentally where he is in a zone. He is always open which all great receivers are. They are always open. He is a guy I know I can count on in critical situations."

(on wanting to approach the time off the same way they did during the 2009 playoffs) "I'm sure Sean (Payton) is going to look at that schedule and obviously make the best decision for what he feels like we need. Every team is different. It's one of those where you take advantage of the time to rest up, get healthy, get your body right, all those things, but at the same time you want to keep the momentum going. Just keep the good habits and process in place as well. We'll have a good plan when the time comes."



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**SAINTS PLAYER QUOTES**

**WR Ted Ginn Jr.**

(On the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 20 conversion) "It was a play that Coach called. I was on the wing on the opposite side and that play was called before. Coach dialed that up and I just made it work."

(On returning to play today) "We all knew coming into this game what it was all about. It wasn't about me coming back. It was about the team winning the ballgame. That's what we did. We went out and won the ballgame. We played as a team and won together. That is the most important thing."

(On having the #1 seed) "You don't have to travel. We have homefield advantage. We have our fans."

**CB Marshon Lattimore**

(On the defense making plays down the stretch) "We're playing as a team right now. At the beginning of the season, it was all offense. Now, we are playing hard as a defense. I can't wait for the playoffs."

(On winning in multiple ways) "We've won some tough games. We work hard every week and win as a team."

**DT Tyeler Davison**

(On winning in different ways such as today) "I think it is huge. Championship teams find a way to win however they can. You win blow outs. When the games are close you still find a way to win. I think that says a lot about our team and the grit that we have. We have playmakers all across the field. When it's time to make a play, you know someone is going to step up no matter who it is. We have a number of people who can do it. Somebody is going to step up."

(On the defense making big plays) "That's what we need to do That's the mark of a great defense. Players make big plays in big time situations like that. It's not the first time that it has happened and hopefully not the last."

**RB Mark Ingram**

(On winning in different ways) "If you want to be a good football team, then you have to find ways to win without playing a perfect game. I think we have found ways to do that these last 5-6 weeks. I think it shows a lot about the character of this team. We are battle-tested."

(On breaking the team all-time rushing touchdown record) "It's a blessing. I thank the Lord for putting me in this position. Alvin (Kamara's) coming to get it, so I won't have it for long. It's just a blessing to be around family, friends, teammates and coaches. It's for everyone who has always been there to support me. I just thank God for putting me in this position."

**S Vonn Bell**

(On the big play at the end) "That's what we talk about. We want the game on our shoulders. We are happy with the win, but we just have to keep getting better. We relish that moment. Week in and week out we prepare for that situation. We just have to be at our best in that situation. We tell the team to just put it on us."

(On everyone contributing at the end of the game) "It's special. We aren't just doing it for us. We are doing it for our city. We went out there and made plays. We went out there and competed and we never stopped fighting. That's what I love about this group."

(On getting the #1 seed) "I'm speechless. We have a lot to work on. We are going to keep getting better, but we are going to run everything through the Dome. What a feeling."

## **WR Michael Thomas**

(On today's game) "We just wanted to come in here and get a victory against a tough opponent. They are a tough team who we have a lot of respect for. They have a lot of history. They are a team that is trying to make the playoffs, so we knew it was going to be a battle. We responded."

(On the game-winning touchdown) "My number was called. Drew (Brees) made eye contact and it was time to make a play and put the game away."

(On the #1 seed that was earned today) "It's a blessing we worked for it. We just have to keep getting better and correct our mistakes. Opponents are going to be coming to the Dome, so we just have to protect it."

## **LB Demario Davis**

(On the fumble recovery in the fourth quarter today) "The defense was on the field and we knew we needed to get a stop. The offense had just led a great job to put us in position for us to win the game. We knew that we just needed to prevent a field goal. It was just one of those situations where 11 guys on the field saw him catch the ball. Our guys hunted him and right before he went to down somebody stripped it. I was right there and saw the ball come out. We knew we needed to jump on the ball and put the game away."

(On forcing fumbles) "In this league, that is the trump card. Today it put us in a position to win. It's not always pretty. They were able to convert some third downs, but we were able to get the turnovers."



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**STEELERS HEAD COACH MIKE TOMLIN**

(On the loss today) “(It was a) Tough loss. We had our chances, surely, in the football game. We overcame some adversity, some of it created by us. We did not make enough plays in the end. We accept responsibility for that; we acknowledge that. We tip our caps to New Orleans. It was a tough fought game. It was a tough environment today. I appreciate the effort of the men. It was just not enough positive playmaking in the three phases to secure victory. The significant plays, obviously, we turned the ball over in scoring territory twice in the second half. (Those were) big-time plays tilted in the game. Then, we couldn’t get the necessary stops when we needed it on defense. Obviously, I told them to go for it on the fake punt. We were unsuccessful there. I take responsibility for that.”

(On the rationale of calling the fake punt) “I just wanted to be aggressive. I wanted to ensure that we had an opportunity to win the game. First of all, I liked the play...I thought where the game was and the time of which was left in the game, I thought that if we did not stop them, that we would have the opportunity to have the ball last. We did. Obviously, unsuccessful.”

(On the power-formation call when Steven Ridley fumbled) “It was third down and two. We felt like we were in two-down territory, we probably would have gone for it on fourth down. Had we been unsuccessful and maintained possession of the ball, it’s a calculated risk that you take.”

(On if he thought the fourth quarter pass interference call was a tipped ball) “I thought that it was tipped, but I didn’t have the courtesy of a replay. We were asking for clarity on it, but you know that things start moving fast in those moments.”

(On the fourth down pass interference call in the first half) “I’m not here to evaluate the officiating. I’ll let those guys evaluate themselves in the appropriate manner. I’m here to talk about what we did today and what we did not do. The officiating did not determine the outcome of the game. We find comfort in that. The quality of our play and execution determined the outcome of the game, not any of that (officiating).”

(On how the team handled the adversity today) “Like the professionals that we are, we play on, like we always do and like we expect to do. There is going to be ebbs and flow in games. There is going to be things that go against you in a football game. We’re cognizant of that.”

(On needing help to make the playoffs) “We made the bed, we’ll lay in it. I expect us to lay in it very well and perform. We will control what it is that we can control, like our preparation to play next week. All other things out of our control, we won’t worry much about. Like everyone else, we had 15 opportunities at this point to make a case for ourselves. We won’t lament about our position. We will accept it and control the things that are in front of us, and that is next week’s preparation.”





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**STEELERS PLAYER QUOTES**

**QB Ben Roethlisberger**

(On the message for the team going into next week) "That's pretty much it. The story's not written yet. I told the guys in there, I said 'listen, this chapter of the story is not done. Obviously, we don't control it, but let's see what happens.'"

(On Michael Thomas's late touchdown) "I saw it, I thought it was a good call. I was seeing the replay and once you saw it you say alright, we have a 1:22 or 1:25 left, whatever it was. Instead of getting it at the one-yard line, it gave us more time."

(On not running the ball much to start the second half) "That was just what we wanted to do. We felt like we could do what we wanted to do out there; throwing it and getting different packages with different guys. So, it was just more of that than anything."

(On the officiating in tonight's game) "We never talk about the officiating. Officiating does not win or lose football games, regardless of what you think about them."

(On Joe Haden's performance) "Joe (Haden) has been a playmaker for us. Joe is a veteran guy, he is a competitor. I am sure there are a lot of guys in the locker room that are taking this hard. If they weren't I think we would be more worried. I will check in with Joe and see how he is doing, but like I said, he is a veteran guy that we believe in and he made some great plays tonight."

(On his thoughts on the Steelers season) "It is kind of crazy. You know, we have obviously had some ups and downs. We controlled our own destiny for a while. We won a bunch in a row, we lost some in a row. It has been a crazy one, but I hope it is not done yet."

(On the team's message going into week 17) "This is AFC North football. It is in our house and is an opportunity to give our fans another chance to see us go play hard football. We need to go take care of our business first and foremost. I am not sure what time the games are this next week, but we have to take care of our business first and see what happens."

**CB Joe Haden**

(On if pass interference calls should be reviewable) "It is what it is, it is an offensive game. You can't touch these guys. The second time I pushed off they didn't say anything about Michael (Thomas) doing it in the endzone on the last play. It is just tough being a defensive back, but that is what we do. It just sucks sometimes when those games and some of these plays are so big and they are weighed differently, so we need to make a break; I am talking about momentum and everything. It is very unfortunate. It sucks and I am pissed, but next time I have to make sure I can make those plays without getting a call."

(On how to improve his performance) "When I see coach Tomlin on Wednesday, I will talk to him and see what I can do to play better."

(On the Steelers playoff chances) "I don't know. We do not control our own destiny, so whatever happens, happens. We will beat Cincinnati hopefully, that is our last game. We have to finish out strong and then whatever happens, happens."

(On his emotions after the game) "I am very frustrated, very pissed. It means a lot to me to come out and bust my tail and try to play good defense. It is just tough the way the game is changing."

## **WR Antonio Brown**

(On losing control of their playoff position) "It is a part of process man. It is not a position you want to be in, but unfortunately it is the situation we are in. We have to come out next week and take care of business and hopefully another team can help us out."

(On his second half touchdown) "Ben (Roethlisberger) made a great throw, he was able to get a clean release and was able to connect."

(On Juju Smith-Schuster's fumble) "He (Juju Smith-Schuster) has been great all year. He is the reason we are (productive). In those situations, you just want to support him. It is kind of unfortunate, but he is a great player. We have all been through it before and it is something to learn from."

(On the team's message going into next week) "We have to go out and finish strong and hope that things can work out in our favor."

## **DL Cameron Heyward**

(On his thoughts on tonight's game) "We just did not finish. It came down to a couple plays, but that was just the way the ball went today."

(On the pass interference call on fourth down) "I was late. My guys told me it was tipped. I couldn't get a good read on it, but it is just the call they made."

(On the struggles of allowing scores off defensive penalties) "I never want to have penalties that can make a game, because we had clear opportunities to win the game and we didn't seize those moments. That is what good teams do, I think we are good team, but we have to make those critical adjustments and make those critical stops when we need it."

## **G David DeCastro**

(On the Steelers playoff chances) "Cleveland has been playing well, but we need to focus on beating the Bengals. That is all we can control right now."

(On the defense's reaction to the defensive penalties throughout the game) "All we can do is keep playing football. Once the calls are made, we just have to keep going. The guys did a good job battling until the end, but we just couldn't get it done and make opportune plays."