



POSTGAME NOTES & QUOTES

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS AT DALLAS COWBOYS FRIDAY, AUG. 28, 2026 • AT&T STADIUM SAINTS GAME NOTES

- New Orleans finishes 1-2 in the preseason after their 27-24 win over the Dallas Cowboys at AT&T Stadium. The Saints return to action for their regular season opener on Sunday, Sept. 13 when they play the Detroit Lions at Ford Field. Kickoff is set for 12:00 p.m. CST. The game will be aired regionally on FOX (WVUE FOX 8 in the New Orleans area) with extensive pregame and postgame coverage on the Gulf Coast Sports and Entertainment Network.
- Saints Head Coach **Kellen Moore** earned his first preseason victory as head coach of the Saints.
- New Orleans tied the preseason series with the Cowboys to 4-4, their first preseason victory against Dallas since a 16-10 win on Aug. 18, 2001 at the Superdome. Friday night's game was the first time the Saints won at the Cowboys in the preseason.
- In the first half of the contest, the Saints outgained the Cowboys in first downs (14-9), total net yards (190-151), rushing yards (119-59) and yards per carry (6.6-3.7).
- Overall in the contest, New Orleans carried 32 times for 169 yards (5.5 avg.) with three touchdowns.
- QB **Spencer Rattler** notched his second start of the preseason. He went eight-for-ten (80.0%) for 79 yards with a 99.6 passer rating, leading the Saints on three scoring drives including two for touchdowns, the last punctuated by an eight-yard scoring run by the signal-caller.
- QB **Zach Wilson** came in relief of Rattler at the start of the third quarter and went nine-for-12 (75.0%) for 93 yards with a 96.9 passer rating, leading the Black and Gold to an eight-play, 64-yard touchdown drive in New Orleans' first third quarter drive and leading them on the game-winning fourth quarter drive for eight plays and 44 yards that ended with a 53-yard game-winning field goal.
- RB **Audric Esteime** was the leading rusher for New Orleans, carrying four times for 46 yards, including a 33-yard rush. In the passing game, he had three grabs for 22 yards. RB **Kendre Miller** also carried nine times for 42 yards in the contest. WR/RS **Barion Brown** also had an impact in the run game with two carries for 19 yards, including a first quarter seven-yard touchdown.
- After being acquired from the San Francisco 49ers on Monday, RB **Zamir White** made his Saints debut and had four carries for 23 yards, including a 11-yard touchdown. White also returned two kickoffs for 54 yards.

- WR **Ronnie Bell** led the Saints in receiving with six receptions for 65 yards. Rookie WR **Bryce Lance** had two receptions for a 28 yards.
- DL **Khristian Boyd** tied for the team lead with seven stops (four solo), leading a run-stopping effort where the Black and Gold surrendered only 91 yards rushing on 26 carries (3.5 avg.). LB **Isaiah Stalbird** paced the defensive effort for the Saints, making seven stops and one sack. EDGE **Garrett Nelson** also had a quarterback takedown.
- K **Daniel Carlson** in his Saints debut, made two-of-two attempts, including a 53-yard field goal to give New Orleans the 27-24 lead with 1:55 left. Carlson also knocked through his only extra point attempt for seven total points.
- EDGE **Fadil Diggs** finished with one defensive tackle and two special teams stops to tie for the team lead.
- Rookie RB **CJ Donaldson** tied for the team with two special teams tackles and also had nine carries for 33 yards and two receptions for 25 yards.



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“Fun game. Obviously proud of our guys, just the play style, the effort, the energy that our team provided for the game. I thought getting the guys that were playing, I thought they went through the warm-up really well and then brought the energy and juice and I was just proud of our guys. These are challenging games. There are a lot of decisions that have to be made after this game. Everyone knows that, but for our guys, for our guys to lock in and just play with really good effort I’m just really proud of them.”

On what the next 48 hours look like.

“We get back. Lift in the morning. We'll have a team meeting and then we'll obviously begin the communication part of the roster moves over the next few days. And so obviously that's concluded by Sunday afternoon, and we'll work through that.”

On what went into the decision to use Daniel for that last kick? It looked like Tanner was running out on the field and then Daniel ended up coming on.

“We were kind of in a rotation as you guys saw throughout the game, and I think just communicating, making sure everyone...it was Daniel's opportunity there. And so, he was able to get it done, so proud of him.”

On the running game.

“Again, I thought our guys played really hard. The effort, the finish. Running backs, I thought, were just really decisive runners. Our O-line did a good job. All those guys had an opportunity to play. I thought there was physicality, and Barion got involved a little bit and a few other guys, and QBs did a little bit. And so I felt like it was a good collective effort.”

On injuries from the game.

“We'll just keep an eye on Jaylan Ford and Heldman. Those guys weren't able to come back, and then Estime wasn't able to come back, so we'll just keep an eye on those guys.”

On the “clean-up” in this game compared to the previous game.

“We played a better version of football than we did last week. Simple as that. Clean from an operation standpoint. We still had the short-yardage one where we had an alignment issue, which we got to do a better job there. Missed an opportunity there. But I just liked our—I liked our communication on the sideline, I liked our execution on the field. No game's going to be perfect, but it felt—it felt the way it needs to feel.”

On what the preseason as a whole tells him about the QB situation?

“Yeah, I think both these guys are capable of playing and being really successful quarterbacks. I feel great about our quarterback room, that collection of players. They're, again, I keep saying this, they're young players. They're not veterans. They have a lot of growth opportunities ahead of them. Tyler's, I think, had an excellent offseason. His three joint practices were really, really good work. I'm just really excited with where he's going. And I think Spencer and Zach are going to provide excellent depth for us. And to have both of those guys, again, in this league is very valuable for us.”

On what this preseason and training camp informed him about the two receivers, Bryce Lance and Barion Brown.

“Yeah, I think Bryce and Barion are a good example of just steady play and taking advantage of opportunities. Probably lesser snaps early in camp, and you just kind of keep taking advantage of your opportunities, and you play a little bit more, play a little bit more, and just proud of those guys. And I think the biggest thing is just, it's the mental part. These guys are talented football players. We draft them because of that. We know that. It's their ability to execute and handle all the different things we're asking them to do. Just really happy for those guys.”



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On the receivers contributing as blockers in the run game.

“Yeah, I mean, that's a huge point of emphasis this offseason for us. Our receivers are a part of this run game, and that's how this thing's going to go. All 11 are a part of every single run. These receivers' willingness to go block safeties and get into some dirty runs, it helps our run game, and then the action game off it's going to help tie everything together. And they've got to be committed to it, and they've done that all offseason.”

On what he thought of Will Sherman playing the entire game at center.

“Really steady. I think Will's just a really steady, consistent player. His ability to kind of play anywhere on the offensive line is special, is rare. His steadiness has been very valuable for when our younger groups have gone in there, and so just proud of him. He did a really good job.”

On whether he was calling plays.

“Yes.”



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Opening Statement:

"Well, first of all, I want to share with you guys what I said to the team. I got after them pretty good at halftime. It wasn't our standard in the first half. I think we were giving up 6.8 yards of rush in the first half and we had three penalties on offense. I basically told them, you know, third preseason game my ass. I said a little bit more colorfully than that. But man, the heart of this football team, the heart of those guys, most of those guys out there were playing 80% playtime. They were gassed. The defense I thought really stepped up in the second half. The pass rush got a lot better. Sam Williams, I thought did a really nice job. The coverage aspect of it was pretty good. Then, we kind of fed off that. I thought Klayton (Adams) got into a rhythm, which was great. I thought he did a nice job mixing it up. It's hard when you have third downs and long. I've been there. There's a few of the situations I was like, "Man, glad I'm not having to call that play." Sam Howell just did a really good job moving the football team. I thought Jordan Hudson was terrific. It was cool to see Mitch (Van Vooren) get that touchdown. We missed one early in the game to him actually -- Same exact coverage, cover two, Bender down the middle field and Joe just barely overthrew it. It was cool to see us get that. I thought Sam Howell's run on the two point play was really cool.

On the quarterback situation:

"I mean, it's neck and neck and love both those guys. They're both great competitors. What I love about them both is both guys want to win the spot. Both guys want to compete, but both guys are really happy for each other when they do well. That was last week, Sam cheering on Joe, Joe cheering on Sam in this game. That's the tough part of this weekend because I am really proud of this team and how much we've accomplished over the past seven, eight weeks. And the human element of this is hard. We've got a lot of really good football players and it's hard to keep them all. You can't unfortunately keep them all, but we'll get a little bit of sleep tonight, get in tomorrow and start making some tough decisions.

On the measurables of the quarterbacks:

"We're looking at everything. I think all the things that you're identifying are real. I think we're looking at everything. We chart every pass in training camp. We chart obviously the stats from the preseason games, all the decisions that they make in the run game. What you've got to remember is part of the deal is how you handle the run game checks and things like that. We're a volume based offense and it really is a true battle. We've got some tough decisions coming up."

On Jonathan Mingo:

"I think Mingo's played really, really well, not just in the preseason games, but throughout the course of training camp. He played really well on offense, played really well on special teams and he deserved to not play tonight."

On Marist Liufau:

"Fractured his forearm. So, I think he's going to have surgery as early as Monday. What a great competitor and he'll be back."

On if he will be on the IR:

"We'll look at it. I mean, it sounds like it's going to be surgical. So, you're talking about some weeks, but I don't want to put a timeframe on it right now."



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On the balance of making decisions on his roster versus seeing who's available from other teams:

"That's a really great question. I think as a coaching staff, these next 24 hours plus, we do focus on our own roster and our guys, the guys that we know, the guys that we love, the guys that we care about, the guys that I've gotten to know their families, that I've gotten to know what motivates them, why they play this game. The personnel guys and the scouts, they're diving into potential other roster moves and that's part of the business. But we've got some time, but we have to make sure we get the decisions right, which we will, about our roster first. Then of course we handle it the right way with the guys that we love and care about."

On the difficulties of one big cut:

"It's never easy. It was never easy when you were a quarterback coach, when you were an offensive coordinator, when you were a quality control, because you get to know these guys and you know them on a deeper level. My opinion is when you make these moves, you be honest with these guys. You leave them with the positive things that you love about them and which you think they have that makes them special as a player and a person. You also give them a little bit of feedback in terms of, hey, whatever team you land next, maybe you think about this or that. Maybe it's a role on special teams and maybe it's a little bit more of a, hey, a little bit better coverage skills or whatever it is. That's our philosophy here with the Cowboys."

On Klayton Adams calling plays:

"First of all, I wanted to give Klayton the opportunity to do that. He deserves it. I want to develop our staff. I think that's important. I was given opportunities when I was a coordinator to call plays at different spots. Even as a quarterback coach, I had to call a couple plays or at least a quarter or two in preseason. I think that's important. I know he was a little nervous and anxious going in. That's all part of it. But I thought he really settled in. We didn't help him a lot in the first half. We committed a bunch of penalties and put ourselves behind the sticks. Holding penalties just kill drives. We were a little sloppy with our hands, but I really thought he settled in nicely and managed some situations that came up in two minute and end of both halves. I thought he did a really good job and I don't have to tell you guys how much I love him and appreciate him for the coach and leader that he is."

On if he gave advice:

"Yeah. I gave him some of my thoughts. I tried to leave him alone. It really was weird not calling the game. I don't like it. I feel like I'm not in control as much as I like to be. But again, I tried to stay out of it. I gave him a few things throughout like any head coach would do. But it really gave me a good chance to really be more involved on defense and special teams. I was truly trying to watch a lot of the matchups and truly dive into the personnel side of this thing because again, these are the big decisions and I thought, again, every man in that locker room played really, really, really hard."

On what losing Liufau does to special teams:

Yeah. I mean, again, losing Marist as a football player is tough. Unfortunately, it's part of the business. You guys all know him and the way he'll attack his rehab. So, we'll get surgery done as soon as we can and next man up. But yeah, he was a critical, critical part of not just two or three special teams, really all four. He's a four-core guy that you just rely on and he plays the game with violence. We have some other guys in that locker room that do that as well."

On whether he would you say in all his years of experience in the NFL, this is one of the best groups overall of talent you have had in a training camp ever:



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"It's hard to compare. I've been here five years and I'll say this, I'm thrilled with this roster. I said it a week or so ago. I've maybe said it twice when we were in Oxnard. And I don't want to look back, but you asked the question, if you put our roster from last year tonight compared to our roster tonight, this year, and it's significantly different. And not only that, but I do think that the guys that are here that were great players maybe last year now have a stronger voice and the leadership from the locker room. I want this team to be led by the locker room. I'm the head coach and that's part of the deal, but I hear Kenny Clark all the time now. I hear Quinnen Williams. I hear Dee Winters. I hear Jake Ferguson. And I think that's one of the things that excites me the most is the way these guys have come together and truly are a special bonded group and the brotherhood of the room."

On him saying he is more involved in the defense now and if he is sure he wants to say that:

"Yeah, I had nothing to do with the defense. I was a spectator, Tim, you're right. I was just listening. No, look, I thought, give them credit. Kellen and his staff do a nice job. It's a lot of misdirection motions and things like that. We didn't set edges very well. We just didn't get the edges set early in the game. So they got the ball outside in the perimeter a couple times. One of the first touchdowns was the same play they ran early in the game and our eyes were bad. In the first half, we were kind of reacting to everything. But no, I'll ride with those guys. I don't know if they want me over there. Maybe I'm the problem, but I'll ride with those guys every day of the week."

On how he derives meaning, when the first two games, everybody praises the defense though its not the starters, and tonight not so good early, still not the starters:

"I hope it means that we have some pretty cool depth pieces. I think that's part of it. This is a violent game. There's going to be injuries. You lose a guy like Marist for a little while, guys have to step up. But I think it was good for (Christian Parker) to have to make some corrections and adjustments and things like that. Let's do that now. Let's not wait till we're in the Meadowlands on Sunday night and the shit hits the fan and all of a sudden you're having to solve problems. So I think it was good and I think we did settle in and I thought they made some nice adjustments and we settled the front down a little bit. We did a better job moving some of the fronts to close gaps in the running game because they were moving us pretty good early on. Again, we weren't as deep, so we didn't have as many guys to rotate through like we would on a normal game."

On whether he knows if he has his swing tackle:

"Yeah, I think we feel good about our tackle group. I think I want to see the film, see how Nate did. Nate and Drew have been competing, but I want to see the film. But I thought we had a couple really good days. We're using those guys a little different ways as well, but I hope so."

On what he means when he says "different ways":

"Jumbo tight ends. Jumbo tight ends because we're trying to get them to play on the right and the left. And what we ask these guys to do, we did it on purpose. We basically practiced Nate on the left for what, four weeks, and then right before the Arizona game, a couple days before, we moved from the right and did the same thing with Drew. And you do that for a reason. Everything's backwards. My set, my stance, my punch, my outside post hand is different and it's not easy to do, but I'd rather do it now so they get the experience and when they're forced into action, which they will be at some point, they have the confidence to go out there and play at high level."

On whether Tyler Smith could be an option:



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"I don't like to move two people if that makes sense. You'd rather not move two people, meaning you bump him out and you have to bump somebody in. So, I'd rather not do that, but all options are open, but that wouldn't be the first choice."

On if Tyler Smith has gotten any reps outside:

"No. And there's a reason for that. Tyler Guyton's playing as good a football as I've seen him play since he's been a Dallas Cowboy and he deserves to be praised for that and I'm really excited to see how he does. But yeah, I think he's playing at a very, very, very high level."

On Tyler Guyton having an injury-free camp:

"I think it's more of the mindset. I want to give Tyler a little bit of credit. Sometimes when you talk about injuries, you're like, "Well, you got some good breaks." His mindset's been different. From the time he came back in the building, he's been different. His attitude at practice, the intensity that he's been practicing at, the one-on-one reps. He's playing with a lot of confidence right now. And I think that I would be remiss if I didn't say how proud I am of Tyler and how hard he's worked."

On Jordan Hudson's potential return to college:

"Honestly, I don't know the rules, but I do know that Huddy played great tonight. Sam made some beautiful throws. We'll figure that out over these next couple days."