



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS VS MINNESOTA VIKINGS
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2020 • MERCEDES-BENZ SUPERDOME
SAINTS POSTGAME NOTES

- With the win, the Saints improve to 11-4 on the season and have won at least 11 games in four consecutive seasons for the first time in franchise history. The Saints are the only team in the NFL to win at least 11 games in each season since 2017. New Orleans returns to action on Sunday, January 3rd when they take on the Carolina Panthers at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina. Kickoff is tentatively set for 12:00pm CT on FOX (WVUE-FOX 8 locally).
- With the win, the Saints clinch the NFC South title for the fourth consecutive season. New Orleans becomes the third NFC franchise to win four consecutive division titles since the 2002 NFL divisional realignment, joining the Green Bay Packers (2011-14) and Seattle Seahawks (2004-07).
- With the win, the Saints close out their 2020 regular season home slate with a 6-2 record, having won at least six home games in four consecutive seasons for the first time in franchise history.
- Offensively, New Orleans set a franchise record with seven rushing touchdowns and amassed a season-high 583 total yards. New Orleans scored 52 points, their most since scoring 52 in Week 6 of the 2017 season in a 52-38 victory over Detroit.
- New Orleans amassed season-highs in both rushing and passing yards, totaling 264 yards rushing and 319 yards passing. The Saints set a new franchise record with 21 first downs rushing and earned 36 total first downs, matching the second highest single game total in franchise history (club record is 40 vs. Dallas on November 10, 2013).
- New Orleans scored a touchdown on the game's opening drive on a 40-yard rushing score by RB Alvin Kamara, and improved their record to 22-3 in games when scoring first since 2018, the best in the NFL.
- Defensively, New Orleans held Minnesota to 364 total yards, including 274 yards passing and 90 yards rushing, their tenth game this season holding their opponent to less than 100 rushing yards. With two sacks of Minnesota QB Kirk Cousins, New Orleans improves its season total to 42 sacks, marking the first time New Orleans has had 42 sacks in four consecutive seasons since the team did from 1995-2001.
- New Orleans' defense extends its streak to 18 straight games without allowing 300 yards passing to an individual player, second to Pittsburgh's 24 among active streaks.
- For New Orleans Head Coach **Sean Payton**, the win improves his all-time record against Minnesota to 6-4 and 4-2 in home games against the Vikings. The victory against Minnesota HC Mike Zimmer improves his career record to 3-3 against Zimmer, giving Payton a .500 or better record against 64 of the 83 coaches he has faced in his career.
- The victory is the 150th win of Payton's career, including regular and postseason games. Payton becomes the 25th coach in NFL history to amass 150 career wins.
- QB **Drew Brees** became the first player in NFL history to surpass 80,000 passing yards in his career, doing so on a nine-yard completion to RB Latavius Murray with 8:40 remaining in the third quarter. Brees finished the game 19-of-26 for 311 yards, surpassing 300 passing yards for the 123rd time in his career and 3rd time this season. Appearing in his 286th career game, Brees moves into a tie with P Shane Lechler for 16th all-time on the NFL's games played list.
- RB **Alvin Kamara** tied an NFL single-game record with six rushing touchdowns, done once before by the Chicago Cardinals' Ernie Nevers on November 28, 1929. Kamara set a new Saints record with his six scores in a game.

- Kamara rushed for a new career-high 155 yards on 22 carries, including a season-long 40-yard run that resulted in the Saints' first score of the game. Kamara added three receptions for 17 yards.
- With three receptions today, Kamara now has 83 for the season, setting a new career-high and extending his lead for most receptions by a running back in the National Football League this season.
- With six touchdowns today, Kamara sets a new club record for touchdowns in a season with 21. Kamara also moves into second in club record books with 59 total touchdowns in his career, surpassing Mark Ingram and Deuce McAllister's 55. Kamara needs 14 more touchdowns to surpass Marques Colston's 72 and set a new club record.
- Kamara's first 100-yard rushing game of the season moves his season total to 932 rushing yards, setting a new career-high.
- Kamara also surpasses RB Dalton Hilliard for second all-time in club record books, now with 43 career rushing touchdowns.
- RB **Latavius Murray** rushed for 72 yards on 12 carries, his second highest rushing output of the season. Murray surpasses 600 yards on the season for the fifth time in his career, including both of his seasons with New Orleans. Now standing at 4,991 career rushing yards, Murray needs nine more yards on the ground in the regular season finale at Carolina to reach 5,000 for his career. Murray added three receptions for 24 yards in the game.
- TE **Jared Cook** recorded his 500th career reception, coming on a 19-yard catch from Brees with 1:30 to play in the first half. Cook becomes only the 19th tight end in NFL history with 500 career receptions and surpasses Ben Coates and Todd Heap for sole possession of 19th for career receptions by a tight end. Cook finished the game with three receptions for 82 yards.
- WR **Emmanuel Sanders** led New Orleans in receiving yards for the fourth time this season, finishing with 83 yards on four receptions, his third highest receiving total of the season.
- QB **Taysom Hill** rushed for 18 yards on five carries with one touchdown, passed for eight yards on 2-for-2 passing, and caught one pass for 19 receiving yards, marking the third game this season he's recorded positive yardage in all three categories. Hill's 18 rushing yards moves his season total to 416 yards, surpassing New York Giants QB Daniel Jones for fifth amongst all quarterbacks' in rushing yards this season.
- Hill (416) joins Kamara (932) and Murray (656) with over 400 rushing yards on the season, marking the first time since 2011 the Saints have had three players with at least 400 yards rushing in the same season. That season, Darren Sproles (603), Pierre Thomas (562), and Mark Ingram (474) all surpassed the 400-yard mark.
- DE **Cameron Jordan** recorded the 100th sack of his career, including regular and postseason games. Jordan joins Rickey Jackson as only the second Saint to reach that mark and finished with three tackles and one forced fumble in the game.
- S **Malcolm Jenkins** finished with seven total tackles, two quarterback hits, and one forced fumble. Entering the game with 1,194 total stops, Jenkins recorded the 1,200th tackle of his career with 13:48 to play in the third quarter, taking down Minnesota TE Tyler Conklin after a five-yard gain. Jenkins also split a sack with DT **David Onyemata**.
- CB **Marshon Lattimore** recorded six total tackles and two passes defensed, his second game this season and 15th game of his career with multiple pass breakups.
- Rookie TE **Adam Trautman** recorded his highest receiving yardage of the season, finishing with 45 yards on two receptions, including a season-long 41-yard reception from Brees coming with 2:05 to play in the game.
- WR **Marquez Callaway** finished with three receptions for 26 yards, marking his first game with a reception since recording two in a Week 9 victory at Tampa Bay.
- Playing in his 143rd consecutive game, LB **Demario Davis** led New Orleans with eight tackles, and now has a team-leading 114 stops this season, his highest single-season total as a member of New Orleans. Davis needs five more tackles to reach 1,000 for his career.
- Appearing in his 189th career regular season game, P **Thomas Morstead** moved into a tie for fourth on the club's all-time games played list with DL Frank Warren, holding for field goal and extra point attempts. Morstead did not record a punt in the game.

- The Saints extend their streak to 303 regular season games without being shut out, the longest such running streak in the National Football League and fourth longest all-time. The streak dates back to September 6, 2002 when New Orleans defeated the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 26-20 at Raymond James Stadium.



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SAINTS HEAD COACH SEAN PAYTON

Sean, that's for straight division championships that obviously doesn't happen a lot. How special does that feel right now?

"I think that's the first goal. When you start a season, it certainly is not the only one and we got a good core group of players. I thought, with the injuries today, a number of guys stepped up. Obviously, the first goal is to win your division and then get your seeding as best you can for the postseason. I was proud of how they played. We played hard with a lot of different players filling in. Seven different starters out and, man, we just we just kept grinding."

Taysom Hills touchdown late in the game. Were you thinking at all about putting (Alvin) Kamara in and trying to get him that record?

"Obviously, his performance today was unbelievable. I was thinking about our best play there, it was fourth down, and we felt that was a play that would be tough for them because obviously, it's a quarterback design run with an extra guy. But late in the game, I was mindful of it. A lot of these players, I'd say most of these players have no idea how good Gale Sayers was and growing up in Chicago, certainly you were familiar with his ability and I was happy. Listen, it was a big deal. He played fantastic today and Minnesota was banged up to. They had a lot of new faces playing linebacker and it's been a little unusual year that way."

Alvin said, after the Adam Trautman had his big catch, you went to him and said, okay, now go in. I guess it kind of all worked out. Just like, you drew it up, right.

"Yes, these games unfold differently. Sometimes, it's just hard, going in on a short week to try to envision how the game is going to unfold. But I thought we blocked them well, up front, we got enough stops defensively and then the rest of it took care of itself. But it was good win."

How important was this, when given you stopped the losing streak, and it wasn't just a skin of your teeth, you guys won by a pretty significant margin?

"They're all important. Here's the thing is, there are only 16 regular season games. So they are all of the same value and the postseason, it's not a best of seven. It's just one game at a time, and you have to win. Yes, to your point, though, look, we've gotten on a run there with nine wins in a row, and had two difficult games where we didn't play maybe as well, we played a really good team last week, it was good to get back in and kind of get it turned around in the win column. We knew going in obviously, that we just needed a win, to get the division and but there's more at stake. I think it's important, we're playing well, this time of the year."

Is there a temptation to get away for like, at what point do you have to say, look, it's work and just run it right at them? Let's just keep running it or is that maybe the game plan for the start?

"Just statistically and analytically. We wanted to on first down, try to establish the line of scrimmage, you can never predict the success you may or may not have in a given game. As the game is unfolding, and you pay attention to all of it and we had some play action passes mixed in, a few drop backs, we really didn't have a lot of third downs. It was one of those CFL games where we were converting basically getting first downs on first and second down and generally speaking, when you're doing that you can have a really good game. When you can keep your punter on the sideline for the whole game. I told Thomas (Morestead) sorry. But you're doing some things well, and part of it is just how the game was unfolding. Again, I say this man has been a lot of injuries on Minnesota's front. (Mike) Zimmer, I know real well, they're, one of the better defenses, better coached defenses and they have a lot of a lot of guys out and that can be difficult."

With those injuries, was this a game where you guys really look to use shifts and motions and stuff to get them moving a little bit? It seemed kind of effective on some of those rounds especially early.

“No, it wasn't because of injuries it was a little bit more because of some other things. You can force the nose tackle to be the three and you can force the three to be the nose, but it had nothing to do really with their depth.”

Sean, how this game would kind of set up with the injuries that Minnesota had and your ability to be able to run the ball or are you able as a play caller to kind of protect Drew Brees who's coming back from an injury a little bit more?

“I said this in the production meeting. I felt we were fairly healthy defensively. They were fairly healthy offensively a couple players maybe each, but flipside, their defense had gone through a lot of injuries and our offense we were without two starting guards and three receivers and so when it came to that part of the game you're going to have to look at your program and go to the third column but to your question. Yes, we wanted to try to attack maybe where the young players were playing in both in the run and the passing game but we thought running the ball was going to be important. I thought we blocked him well James Hurst made his first started guard for us all year. We were without Andrus (Peat) Of course, without Nick Easton. Without a number of guys. It helps you control the game when you're able to do that.”



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SAINTS DEFENSIVE END CAMERON JORDAN

Fourth straight division championship, just how good does this feel right now?

“First to win a fourth (straight) division, that’s huge. We’ve been in this position before in terms of winning the division. I said it preseason, can’t knock the divisional champs off the top of mountain until you do. And as we’re sitting here, I don’t know if you see this mask that’s protecting me, I believe that says 2020 NFC South division, that’s one off our checklist. We’ve got to head into this next game and try and sweep the NFC South, which I’ve just gotten told has never been done before. So, this next game is our biggest game, because it’s the next game.”

One of the big reasons today your team got there, Alvin Kamara, six rushing touchdowns, NFL record-tying. What was it like watching him ball out today?

“Man, ball out, I mean, he was going crazy. His earlier touchdown is probably going to stick out in my mind. I mean, he broke what? Three, four tackles? Took off for another 20 something yards for a touchdown. AK special, we’ve always known that. He has the juice, and he shows it each and every time he touches the field. To go for six, I don’t even know how to put that into words. That’s just something that you’re always going to remember, especially being on Christmas Day. And he was wearing, he was wearing Christmas cleats. I mean, at that point, he should have worn some Grinch cleats because Minnesota’s not going to like him too much longer. It is what it is. We won, we took care of what we can control. And we’re on to this next week.”

When Marshon (Lattimore) was talking about winning the division, he’s like, we’ve done it all four years I’ve been here. But you’ve been on teams that haven’t done it before. Like, how much do you kind of cherish this just knowing that it’s not always going to end like this?

“Look, you have to enjoy each and every one of these wins. You have to enjoy each and every day that you’re able to wake up, God blessed you with breath to wake up and take advantage of each and every opportunity. I mean, guys like Trey (Hendrickson), guys like Marshon (Lattimore) have never, not won the division, you know. So, that’s a huge blessing in itself. I’ve been here, I’ve won divisions, I’ve played in playoffs, but what I haven’t done is win a Super Bowl. So we’re on the same mindset. We’ve won a division before, that’s nothing new to us right now. What would be news is to be in the NFC Championship game as a champion, heading into a Super Bowl, win that. That would be what we have left to accomplish as a Saints team.”

Sean (Payton) hit the Sean Payton and the gritty, what’s it like having a coach like that?

“First of all, when he hit that gritty, you can’t tell me he wasn’t in the mirror at the crib testing it out? Because he didn’t just bring that out. He hit that. I mean, he hit that better than a lot of guys on our team, a lot of guys in general can do. I mean, I saw some gritty earlier on by Adam Thielen, early in the season. I mean, he’s got it down now. Just know, Sean came out ready. He was game ready.”

What’s it like having a coach like that? Who is celebrating with you in the locker room and is, you know, a player’s coach?

“I mean, he’s already got his dance named after him. You’ve got to hit the Sean Payton. And you know what it is. I don’t know, hey, something like that. Then he came out and hit the gritty. I mean, the

boy was turned up. Look, it gets us excited. Again, we're on the same mindset, we're on the same energy level. We know it starts and begins with us as a team, we are in each other's corners. So he rides for us, just like we take the field and we have to run out for the Saints. So it is hand in hand. That energy was just, it is what it is."

You mentioned Alvin's (Kamara) shoes before. And he'd mentioned that he I guess expects to get fined because they don't meet protocol or whatever. But I'm just curious, your thoughts on where he's wearing holiday theme shoes and then does a historically significant performance wearing them? What's your thought on that whole scenario?

"When the Hall of Fame calls to get the cleats or the jersey, whatever it is. Now he just has got to charge them. Break even."



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SAINTS RUNNING BACK ALVIN KAMARA

On scoring six touchdowns: “Crazy. You know, the O-line did a great job. I didn’t really have to do too much. Man, those guys did a great job and the receivers did a great job setting the edge and coming across and doing the dirty work. Man, it just feels good to have one of those days, just for the team, just for offensive morale. So, like I said, I always say this, I’m not focused on personal goals and yards and stuff like that, as long as the team’s having success, then personal success will come.”

On his cleats: “Oh, man, I got all of them from my rookie year to right now. And I’m going to keep them too. They’re going to go up in my...they will go in the cabinet. They will go into the little cabinet. I have got them all.”

On getting a convincing win after two straight losses: “Yeah, that is the main focus every week. We want to win. So, obviously just dropping two, like we have the past two weeks sucks. But we just had to stay focused and stay focused, kept preparing. Just kind of stay true to what we believe in and focus on what is going on inside our building and we were able to come out and put on a show. A lot of guys’ families are here. It’s Christmas, obviously, so. Man, it just felt good. We’re back in the winning column.”

On exchanging the Hall of Fame the fine for his cleats: “Oh, they’re probably going to fine me. If they fine me, whatever it is, I’ll just match it and donate it to charity. You know that the Grinch always tries to steal Christmas.”

On when he found out about hitting the touchdown record: “I mean, so when I had three, I went to Coach Thomas, my running back coach. I went to JT (Joel Thomas) and I was like, man, what’s the record? And he was like, hold on, let me figure it out. And then he came back to me and told me six. And I was like, let’s go, like maybe I can get it. And then Sean (Payton) gave Taysom (Hill) the one touchdown when I had five. I wasn’t really worried about it. I was just like, shoot it’s all good, whatever, we’re right there, I’m second at least. And then (Adam) Trautman went and caught that ball and Drew (Brees) gave him a good ball and he didn’t score. I was looking for him to score, but in the back of my mind, I’m like alright, this might be my chance. And Sean (Payton) was like, go. So, I just told the O-line, I was like, get me in there. Let’s get it. And we were able to get it. We had the celebration planned out, man. It’s a great moment. I wouldn’t want to do it with another group.”

On how the shifts in motion helped open up lanes: “Man, I mean, it helps. We got receivers that want to go down there and block and get dirty. You know, with Quez (Marquez Callaway) out there. He’s doing a great job, to be in his first year. He’s coming on and he’s learning and he’s excelling, in the role he’s playing. Austin Carr, JJ (Juwon Johnson), all of those guys. Man, they’re doing what they got to do, (Jared) Cook, Josh Hill. They’re doing what they got to do. And not to mention, like I said, the O-line. They’re doing a great job, these shifts in motions kind of throw off the defense. And when you have guys that are willing to put in that extra effort to make the scheme work and bring it to life, it makes it all that much more worth it.”



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New Orleans Saints QB Drew Brees

On how dominant the offensive line was: “I think so. Today was one of those days where I thought our scheme was really good. I thought that the guys up front did excellent job getting hat on a hat, pushing their guys back. And then our runners did a great job with just hey, man, one cut, go, get what you can. Obviously, we had a couple big runs as well. But I mean, it was really just those chunks, right? Seven, eight yards a pop. The passing game was really just a complement to the run (game) tonight. But listen, everybody played great. We knew what was at stake. Christmas Day game, in our stadium, in front of our fans, really in front of the world, right, and an opportunity to win the division tonight. And we did all those things.”

On the importance of winning their fourth straight division title: “Yeah, listen, it is significant, especially in this division where, normally, we're sending multiple teams to the playoffs. So you're fighting tooth and nail each and every year, especially against your divisional opponents in order to put yourself in a position where you can win one of these titles. For the longest time since we've been here for, since 2006, I feel like every year has been a flip flop. It's another team winning the division. Rarely has there been a scenario where a team has won in consecutive years. Carolina did it, what, I guess '13, '14, '15. And then now we are '17, '18, '19, '20. So listen, that is hard to do with the quarterbacks in this division and with the teams and the fact we're putting multiple playoff teams out there every year. There's a lot to be said about that.”

On what it was like watching Alvin Kamara rush for six touchdowns today: “You know what, it was awesome. It was awesome. I mean, six touchdowns for a running back is just astounding, right? And so, obviously, he got a few in the first half and then kept getting them. And I can remember him scoring and me being like, ‘I think that's five.’ And then Taysom (Hill) gets a touchdown there in the fourth quarter. And then Sean (Payton) kind of mentioned to me, he said, ‘Hey, if Alvin gets one more touchdown, he ties this record with Gale Sayers.’ Obviously, you're looking at the scoreboard, we're up three possessions, let's see how close it is. So they go down and score, we get the ball back, at that point it's get a first down and we're on a knee. Well, we had the opportunity, we felt like, hey, let's throw it before the two minute warning and we get the big play to (Adam) Trautman that gets us down in scoring range. So man, some things had to happen there in order to have the opportunity. But then at that point, it's like, man, we're getting this record.”

On accomplishing the first goal of winning the division and how the mindset shifts to accomplish the next goal: “Listen, you win the division and what does that do? Obviously, there's some pride with that, you're a division winner, right? You've earned that, but it guarantees you a home playoff game. And now it's about putting yourself in the best seed possible, especially in this scenario now where only the one seed gets the first round by, right, everybody else is playing ball. But who knows how this thing shakes out, and the best seeds get to host the games. And so, obviously we want to be playing our best football too going into the playoffs. So hopefully we'll continue to get some guys healthy here. We've got a couple extra days being that we played early this week. So man, let's go have another great one next week and then kind of be on the upward swing going into playoffs.”

On welcoming Alvin Kamara taking on a heavy workload while he recovers from his injuries: “Yeah, you know what, I don't know how I was going to feel coming off a game with only five days rest with everything, but I actually felt pretty good. I felt better this week than I did last week. And so listen, that's the goal is just to continue to get better and better each week. Continue to get all the strength back, get all the feel, and rhythm back.”



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VIKINGS HEAD COACH MIKE ZIMMER

(Opening Statement) "It was very disappointing defensively today. We couldn't stop the run. We didn't cover well. We couldn't put any pressure on the quarterback. We didn't tackle. It was disappointing. I thought offensively we played well. We moved the ball. We ran the ball. We did a nice job in protection until the end and then they got some zero blitzes in there. It was really disappointing defensively. You have to really work hard to give up 52 points."

(On if he foresaw this in practice) "No, but I saw it in the last game too."

(On the lack of inexperience) "I don't think being young has anything to do with tackling. They manhandled us upfront very well. We didn't tackle well. When we had chances, we didn't cover very well today. Defensive backs came off the receivers. That was disappointing."

(On coming back from this game) "I don't know. We were a little undermanned, but they should be playing better than that. It wasn't so much the 6 touchdowns. They just mashed us upfront. We couldn't slow them down. It was one of those kind of days."

(On if he classifies this as a bad defense) "It's a bad defense. It's worst one I have ever had."

(On Alvin Kamara's six touchdowns) "It's not so much the six touchdowns. He's a hard running back. He's a good player. He's good all of the time."



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VIKINGS QUARTERBACK KIRK COUSINS

(Opening Statement) "You have to credit the Saints. They beat us today. There were a lot of positives on offense. We weren't good enough on third down to extend some drives and get more points. We just weren't able to find a way to get the win. It's tough to be out of the playoffs. We feel like we let down our fans and that is disappointing and gut wrenching."

(On if he thought it would be a shootout) "You just never know. Early it felt like we may have to be aggressive and outscore them. Our defense did generate some turnovers. You just never know where the game can go. You just play for the next day. Going into the game, the call sheet was a very aggressive call sheet. There were a lot of plays there all day long."

(On the headset malfunction) "During the two minute drill the headset went out so I wasn't getting the play. That's what happened."

(On having to play catch-up) "That's just part of the deal. It's the game that you play. If anything it gave us a chance to put our foot on the gas pedal and try to keep up with them."

(On the offense being able to do a few more things) "I think we were in position to flip the field as opposed to punting back to mid field. Best case scenario you are trying to get point off turnovers. It is certainly disappointing to not go three and out and not sustain the drive."

(On having problems scoring off turnovers) "I do think points off turnovers is an important statistic. In football games, you want to be opportunistic. You could point to that as a disappointment where we have fallen short."