

New Orleans Saints Playoff History



New Orleans Saints playoff history is a tale of resilience, determination, and unforgettable moments. Since their inception in 1967, the Saints have evolved from a struggling franchise into a powerhouse in the NFL, culminating in their first Super Bowl victory in 2010. The journey through the playoffs has been filled with highs and lows, showcasing the team's growth and the passionate support of their fans, known as the "Who Dat Nation." This article will explore the Saints' playoff history, significant milestones, memorable games, and the legacy they have created in the postseason.

Early Years and Struggles

The New Orleans Saints entered the NFL as an expansion team in 1967 but faced immediate challenges. The franchise struggled for the first two decades, with only a few playoff appearances.

First Playoff Appearance

1. 1987 Season: The Saints made their first playoff appearance in 1987, during a season interrupted by a players' strike. The team finished with a 12-3 record, securing a wild card spot.
2. Wild Card Round: They faced the Minnesota Vikings, where they lost 44-10, marking a disappointing start to their playoff history.

Despite this loss, the 1987 season laid the groundwork for future success, establishing the Saints as a competitive team in the NFL.

1990s and Continued Struggles

The 1990s were a mix of hope and disappointment for the Saints. They made the playoffs three more times during the decade but struggled to advance.

- 1990: The Saints finished 8-8 and secured a playoff spot but lost to the Chicago Bears.
- 1991: They returned to the playoffs but were defeated by the Atlanta Falcons.
- 1992: The Saints reached the playoffs again, only to lose to the Philadelphia Eagles.

These early playoff experiences were crucial for the team's development, teaching them valuable lessons about postseason pressure.

The Jim Haslett Era

The arrival of head coach Jim Haslett in 2000 marked a turning point for the New Orleans Saints. Under Haslett's leadership, the team began to find success in the playoffs.

2000 Playoff Run

The Saints rebounded from previous struggles and made a significant playoff run in the 2000 season.

- Record: The Saints finished the season with a 10-6 record.
- Wild Card Game: They faced the St. Louis Rams, where they lost 31-28 in a closely contested game. This marked their first playoff game at home, and the atmosphere was electric.

Despite the loss, the Saints showed their potential, setting the stage for future playoff success.

The 2006 Resurgence

The 2006 season was a remarkable turnaround for the Saints, coming just a year after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. The team embodied the spirit of the city and rallied around a strong fan base.

Rebuilding and Playoff Success

1. Coaching Change: The hiring of Sean Payton as head coach and the drafting of quarterback Drew Brees transformed the franchise.
2. 2006 Season Record: The Saints finished the regular season with a 10-6 record.
3. Playoff Run:
 - Wild Card Round: The Saints defeated the Philadelphia Eagles, 27-24, in a thrilling game.
 - Divisional Round: They faced the Chicago Bears, winning 39-14, marking their first-ever trip to the NFC Championship Game.
 - NFC Championship: Unfortunately, they lost to the Indianapolis Colts, but the season was a significant step forward.

This season was pivotal in establishing the Saints as a formidable team in the NFL and reigniting hope in New Orleans.

The 2009 Super Bowl Championship

The pinnacle of the Saints' playoff history came in the 2009 season when they achieved their first Super Bowl victory.

Regular Season Dominance

- Record: The Saints finished the regular season with a 13-3 record, showcasing an explosive offense and a solid defense.
- Key Players: Drew Brees, Reggie Bush, and the "Dome Patrol" defense were instrumental in their success.

Playoff Journey to the Super Bowl

1. Divisional Round: The Saints faced the Arizona Cardinals, winning 45-14.
2. NFC Championship: They played against the Minnesota Vikings in a dramatic game that went into overtime. The Saints won 31-28, thanks to a crucial interception by Tracy Porter.
3. Super Bowl XLIV: On February 7, 2010, the Saints faced the Colts in Miami. They won 31-17, with Brees earning the Super Bowl MVP award, solidifying his legacy as one of the great quarterbacks in NFL history.

This championship not only brought joy to the Saints' fanbase but also served as a symbol of resilience for the city of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

2010s: Continued Playoff Appearances

Following their Super Bowl victory, the Saints remained a competitive force in the NFL throughout the 2010s, consistently making playoff appearances.

Key Seasons and Games

1. 2011 Season: The Saints finished with a 13-3 record but lost in the Divisional Round to the San Francisco 49ers in a heart-wrenching 36-32 defeat.
2. 2013 Season: Returning to the playoffs, the Saints faced the Seattle Seahawks and lost in the Wild Card Round.
3. 2017 Season: The Saints clinched the NFC South and defeated the Carolina Panthers in the Wild Card Round but fell to the Minnesota Vikings in the Divisional Round due to the infamous "Minneapolis Miracle" play.

These seasons were marked by dramatic moments, demonstrating the competitive nature of the playoffs and the unpredictability of postseason football.

The 2018 NFC Championship Controversy

One of the most controversial moments in Saints playoff history occurred during the 2018 NFC Championship Game.

The No-Call Incident

- Game Overview: The Saints hosted the Los Angeles Rams in the NFC Championship Game, which took place on January 20, 2019.
- Crucial Moment: Late in the fourth quarter, the Saints were leading when a clear pass interference call was missed against Rams cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman.
- Impact: The Saints ultimately lost the game in overtime, leading to widespread criticism of the officiating and calls for changes in the rules regarding pass interference reviews.

This incident sparked a movement among fans and analysts, highlighting the need for accountability and fairness in officiating.

Recent Playoff Efforts

As of 2023, the Saints continue to strive for postseason success, with a mix of veteran leadership and young talent.

2020 Season and Beyond

1. 2020 Season: The Saints finished the regular season with a 12-4 record and advanced to the playoffs, losing to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the Divisional Round.
2. 2021 Season: The Saints missed the playoffs, but the team showed promise with a strong defense and emerging offensive talent.
3. 2022 Season: They aimed to reclaim their playoff status, focusing on rebuilding with a blend of experienced players and promising rookies.

The Saints' playoff history is a testament to their resilience and commitment to excellence. From their early struggles to their Super Bowl triumph, the franchise has experienced a transformation that reflects the spirit of New Orleans. As they continue to pursue new playoff dreams, the Saints remain a symbol of hope and determination for their fans and the city they represent. The "Who Dat Nation" stands behind them, ready to support their beloved team through every challenge and triumph on the road to the playoffs.

Frequently Asked Questions

What year did the New Orleans Saints win their first Super Bowl?

The New Orleans Saints won their first Super Bowl in the 2009 season, defeating the Indianapolis Colts in Super Bowl XLIV.

How many playoff appearances have the New Orleans Saints made in their history?

As of the end of the 2022 season, the New Orleans Saints have made the playoffs 14 times since their inception in 1967.

What is the Saints' most memorable playoff game?

Many fans consider the 'Minneapolis Miracle' in the 2017 NFC Divisional Round against the Minnesota Vikings to be the most memorable playoff game for the Saints, despite the heartbreaking loss.

Who is the all-time winningest head coach in Saints playoff history?

Sean Payton is the all-time winningest head coach in New Orleans Saints playoff history, leading the team to a Super Bowl victory and several playoff appearances.

What was the Saints' playoff record as of the end of the 2022 season?

As of the end of the 2022 season, the New Orleans Saints have a playoff record of 9 wins and 13 losses.

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