



Patron Saints: How the Saints Gave New Orleans a Reason to Believe

ALAN DONNES

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In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans, devastating not only buildings and homes, but the hope, spirit and faith of its people. The Saints were cast out on the road, not knowing when they would return home, and faltered to a losing 3-13 season amidst the chaos. People wondered whether the city could even sustain an NFL team anymore.

Then, a funny thing happened on the way to economic devastation. The city of New Orleans, its population cut in half and its local industry in tatters, rallied to buy up the first season-ticket sellout in franchise history. Led by coach Sean Payton and quarterback Drew Brees, coming off a near-career-ending shoulder injury, the Saints engineered a worst-to-first season that gave their fans a reason to believe, both in the team and in themselves. Together they inspired each other to do the impossible: put the Saints in the NFC Championship game, and put New Orleans on the road to recovery.

Though the Saints emerged from the NFC Championship with a stinging loss to Chicago, they returned home as true champions. In PATRON SAINTS, Saints reporter Alan Donnes has compiled over 100 interviews with the players, coaches, politicians and colorful locals who made it happen. Together, these powerful voices recount the fractious history of the team and the city, how the horror of Katrina brought them together, and how one winning season has brought hope to a place that hope forgot.

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