

STARS & STRIPES

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF FIRST AMERICAN BANK AND TRUST

DECEMBER 2023



ON DECK *with Jim Henderson*

In this – the holiday season of leftovers --here are a few of my leftover musings as we enter the stretch run of the NFL season:

My choice for NFL Coach of the Year – Sean Payton. After a 1 and 5 start in his rookie year in Denver that included surrendering 70 points in a loss to the Dolphins, he ripped off 5 straight wins over the cream of the NFL crop. Payton was so smart to step away from the Saints before the absence of the retired Drew Brees severely tarnished Payton's reputation as an offensive genius and quarterback guru. In Denver he's embellished both.

Come back Sean. All is forgiven.

Payton once said after a tough Saints loss that for the fans "every week it's either a carnival or a catastrophe," noting how over-reactive they would be to a win or a loss. His steady hand and steely demeanor said "stay the course whatever the outcome. Let the fans get too high or too low on the weekly roller-coaster."

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I was reminded of that when Saints fans were convinced of this team's post season possibilities after a shutout of the Patriots and a narrow win over the Bears earlier in the season. The reality is that those are and were then two of the worst teams in the NFL and hardly indicative of the Saints superiority to the upper echelon of the NFL.

As of this writing, the Saints are enjoying a three-game homestand. But what's happened to the Who Dats' Dome gris-gris? The Saints haven't had a winning record at home since 2020.

My solution for the Saints' red zone ineptitude? When the Saints reach the opposition's 20 yard line, Taysom Hill and only Taysom Hill is my quarterback till the possession concludes and Jimmy Graham is my tight end. Graham's MIA status is the biggest mystery of the Saints' season to date.

In 2005 the NFL changed a rule. No longer would a team be penalized for assisting a ball carrier by pushing, pulling, or carrying him forward. Belatedly was born in Philadelphia the "City of Brotherly Love" the "Brotherly Shove"...the Tush Push if you will that calls for two massive linemen to line up behind the quarterback in short yardage...make a sandwich of the quarterback between them and the offensive line and bulldoze forward for a first down or a touchdown. The play is routinely successful. From both an aesthetic standpoint and the risk of injury to the quarterback I bet the NFL would love to make it a penalty again, but I don't know how they would officiate such a rule change.

And finally as a 77 year old former NFL play-by-play announcer I can identify with the emotions that a 78 year old icon in the twilight of his Hall of Fame career is wrestling with. Al Michaels to me is the best whoever did this when you take into account the length and breadth of his career. Now he's no longer at the pinnacle of his profession, relegated to a plethora of bad Thursday night games on a network many fans can't watch. Now when anyone with a cell phone sits in immediate judgement of his every word, he's become a weekly target of his critics who magnify any factual error and dwell on any perceived diminution of his former enthusiasm.

Michaels has said he wants to be back for one more season at least. But I won't be surprised if by his own choosing he is not.

God Bless,

Jim Henderson



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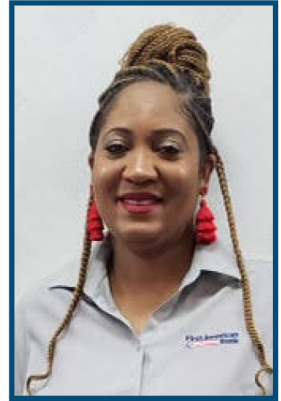
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Monday, January 1st

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Winners will be announced in the next quarterly publication of Stars and Stripes.