

The Blueprint: Super Bowl Edition

Written by {ga=davekolonich}
Tuesday, February 09 2010 12:00 AM -

Although the ultimate narrative of Sunday's Super Bowl will surely focus on the figurative rebirth of an American city, the actual game should be remembered for Sean Payton's gutsy playcalling.

Showing the kind of true grit wrapped in cryptic common sense, the Saints delivered a stunning message by recovering an onside kick to open the second half. Following another terrific decision to go for a touchdown on a Fourth and Goal at the end of the first half - which essentially eliminated the chance of the Colts running a two-minute offense - the Saints accomplished the following game-altering devices:

First, they simply took the ball out of Peyton Manning's hands. Considering that the Colts struggled to move the ball in the second quarter, Payton's decisions further disrupted Manning's offense, which is predicated on repetition and literally staying warm.

Second, the Saints simply announced to both themselves and their opponent that they arrived in Miami to win the championship. As for the onside kick, could there have been a more gutsy call? In the annals of Super Bowl lore, this decision has to rank Payton among the legends of Super Bowl coaches.

As for how all this relates to the Browns, let's consider Eric Mangini. In a similar situation, would Mangini have made this call?

Obviously, his 2009 roster does not equal even a tenth of the Saints' offensive firepower, which of course would severely limit any coach's confidence in his team. But, all things being equal - which they clearly aren't - do we have a coach who would take such a risk?



Straight as an Arrow

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For all those still in love with Brady Quinn, and/or for those who still defend Quinn as an "accurate" passer, I submit the following: Drew Brees.

Although CBS decided to extend the Manning lovefest into the fourth quarter, it was obvious who the better quarterback was last night. Brees - who is not very big, and who does not possess a cannon arm - missed on roughly three passes last night, while quietly shredding a solid Colts secondary.

There's something to be said for accuracy....which sadly in Cleveland at the moment, cannot be uttered at all.

Be Flexible

I loved the Saints' defensive gameplan last night. It appeared that the plan changed almost progressively through the night, as the alignments and looks that the Saints gave late in the game were different than those offered early on. In what was an intriguing chess match to watch develop, the Saints defense hung in early, and then steadily improved throughout the night.

Of course, the play of the Saints' corners and coverage linebackers was key. Although the Saints never generated a consistent pass rush, they at least offered some different rushes, while basically containing the field. The play of Tracy Porter, Jonathan Vilma and the Saint safeties in particular was impressive - especially considering how many times they were tested last night.

The play of Vilma reminded me yet again of how far the Browns still need to go in order to improve a hard-working, but talent depleted defense. In terms of athleticism, the play of Vilma both dropping back into coverage and supporting the run was beyond impressive. As it stands now, do the Browns feature a player with such versatility?



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And on a related note, it looks like the Browns could have had more of an impact on last night's game than anyone realized. [Wouldn't a certain Saints corner look good in Cleveland now?](#)

Finally

Of course, the story of the Saints 2009 season - the one that doesn't involve one of the best examples of sports positively affecting community - comes in the form of team identity. Namely, the Saints do one thing better than any other team in the league...finish games.

Again, the Saints saved their best football for the end - against another team that brought similar principles to the matchup. In terms of the arc of the game, it was apparent that the Saints grew physically, emotionally and mentally stronger as the Super Bowl reached its final quarter.

Credit the amazing leadership of Drew Brees, or even cite some mythic guidance that has carried this once woeful franchise to the heights of the NFL galaxy, but in the end the Saints embodied the spirit and soul of its leader, the fearless Sean Payton.

Now it's your turn Mangini.