

U.S. team vows to continue after yacht capsizes

By STEVE McMORRAN
Associated Press

AUCKLAND, N.Z. — American Magic will miss the next round of racing in the America’s Cup challenger series after its dramatic capsize, but the team is determined to be ready for the series semifinals in 11 days.

The New York Yacht Club-backed team faces a huge repair job after a high-speed crash while leading the race Sunday, Jan. 17, against Italy’s Luna Rossa left its yacht Patriot with a gaping hole in its hull.

Skipper Terry Hutchinson on Monday, Jan. 18, said the yacht sustained internal and external structural damage, and would need to replace the complex system that controls its foils and almost all of its electronics. The work is likely to take 8 to 10 days, leaving American Magic on a tight deadline to have any race time before the semifinals begin.

Hutchinson feared Patriot might sink but a lengthy salvage effort involving fire officers, Coast Guard and rival teams saved the high-tech 75-foot yacht, which was towed back to its base in Auckland, New Zealand late Sunday night.

“Fortunately we didn’t sink this one, and we’ll live to fight another day,” Hutchinson said. “While the boat has a bit of damage to her, the crew is safe and at the end of the day that’s really all you can ask for.”

Hutchinson said American Magic’s rivals, notably the defender Team New Zealand, have offered personnel and facilities to help rebuild Patriot.

“We’ve had great support from all the teams and everybody has offered up their services to get Patriot back on the water,” he said. “As competitors we sit here and argue with each other about little things about racing sailboats. At the end of the day you couldn’t come across more sportsmanship or more generous teams. In all sincerity in the world they’ve extended pretty much all of their facilities to use to rebuild Patriot.”

American Magic lost its first three races in and was heading for its first win of the series when the capsize occurred.

“Our team has an incredible amount of resolve to it,” Hutchinson said. “We’ve battled a lot of different things over the course of this program and the last three days (of racing) really haven’t been the standard that we’re after. Yesterday capped it all off. When you walk around and look at everyone in the face and look at everyone in the eyes, you get a sense of we’re going to do whatever it takes.”

Hutchinson said team members, sponsors and the New York Yacht Club had never wavered from the commitment.

“We’re all in this together. You can walk into our camp and you can see a genuine component of wanting to win this regatta,” he said.

Hutchinson described the experience of the crew as Patriot reared up, then heeled over as “pretty hair-ball.” Several of the crew were submerged beneath the yacht’s giant mainsail.

Saints’ QB exits playoffs, perhaps career, on sour note

By BRETT MARTEL
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Nearly two hours after the New Orleans Saints’ season had ended, Drew Brees stood on the Superdome field in street clothes, throwing passes to his children while his wife, Brittany, captured images of those moments with her cell phone.

Brees routinely throws the ball around with his kids after home games, but after a 30-20 playoff loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sunday night, he lingered longer than usual — and there was no telling whether that familiar post-game scene would play out again.

Two days after Brees’ 42nd birthday, his 20th NFL season ended with statistically his worst playoff performance.

Brees threw three interceptions, his most in 18 postseason appearances. His 134 yards passing were a career-playoff low. And because of COVID-19 restrictions, there were fewer than 4,000 fans in the 73,000-seat Superdome to bid him farewell — if indeed it was his final

game in a Saints uniform.

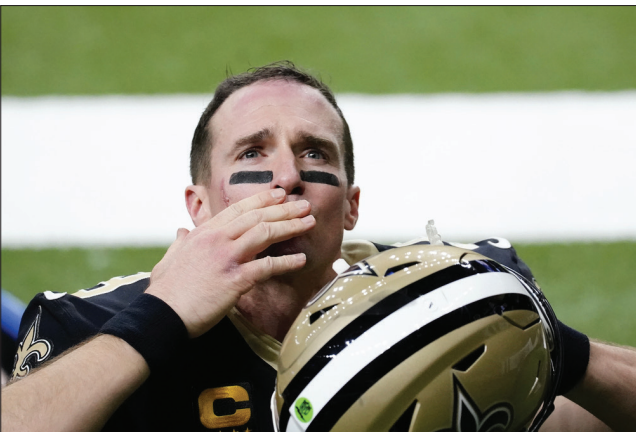
For now, Brees won’t say. But he’s also said nothing that would lead one to believe he’s prepared to play next season, his last under contract.

“I’ll answer this question one time and that is that I’m going to give myself an opportunity to think about the season, think about a lot of things just like I did last year and make a decision,” Brees said.

That decision for the NFL’s all-time leader in yards passing will come after a fourth straight season that saw the Saints (13-5) win 11 or more games and go to the playoffs, only to come up short of the Super Bowl.

This season, Brees missed four games with multiple broken ribs and a punctured lung, but came back in time to see New Orleans through to its fourth straight NFC South crown and a playoff victory over Chicago in the wildcard round.

“I would never regret it. Never. No complaints, no regrets,” Brees said. “I’ve always tried to play this game with a great respect



Brynn Anderson/AP Photo
New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees blows a kiss to his family and fans after an NFL divisional round playoff football game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Sunday, Jan. 17, 2021, in New Orleans. The Buccaneers won 30-20.

and a great reverence for it, and I appreciate all that this game has given to me.

“There are obviously so many incredible memories and so many incredible relationships that have come as a result of playing this game,” Brees continued. “You find out so much about yourself and you have to fight through so much when you play this game. And I’d say this season I probably had to fight through more than I’ve ever had to in any other season in my career,

defensive end Cameron Jordan, Brees’ teammate since 2011.

“He’s the first one in, the last one out. Every stereotypical leadership core value you think of, Drew has. He exemplifies everything that he does in terms of wanting to be a better teammate.”

Veteran linebacker Demario Davis said playing with Brees has meant “everything” to him.

“When I came to New Orleans, I wanted to help Drew Brees win another Super Bowl because I feel like he deserves it for the accomplishments that he’s had,” Davis said. “I wanted him to have some more championship trophies on the mantel.”

Brees, who brought the Saints their only Super Bowl appearance and win in the 2009 season, is not only the all-time leader in yards passing with 80,358, but also completions 7,142. He began this season first in touchdowns, but is now second with 571, behind the 581 of Tampa Bay’s Tom Brady, who is moving on to his 14th conference title game at age 43.

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