

Saints-Rams NFC title game a clash of like-minded coaches

NFC CHAMPIONSHIP
Los Angeles Rams at New Orleans Saints

Sun. • 12:05 p.m. • FOX

13-3 Regular 13-3
1-0 Postseason 1-0

OFFENSE			
Total yards (avg.): 421.1		Total yards (avg.): 379.2	
Pass	Rush	Pass	Rush
281.7	139.4	252.6	126.6
Postseason: 459.0		Postseason: 420.0	
186.0	273.0	283.0	137.0
DEFENSE			
Yards allowed (avg.): 358.6		Yards allowed (avg.): 349.1	
Pass	Rush	Pass	Rush
236.2	122.2	268.9	80.2
Postseason: 308.0		Postseason: 250.0	
258.0	50.0	201.0	49.0
SCORING (PPG)			
32.9 Points for		31.5 Points for	
24.0 Pts. allowed		22.1 Pts. allowed	
Postseason 30.0		Postseason 20.0	
22.0		14.0	

SOURCE: National Football League

By BRETT MARTEL
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — One way or another, the NFC Championship between the Los Angeles Rams and New Orleans Saints will be won by a coach named Sean — with an Irish surname — who designs and calls plays for one of the most innovative and productive offenses in the NFL.

The ties between the Saints' Sean Payton and the Rams' Sean McVay go well beyond a shared name.

"We both cut our teeth in this league under Jon Gruden," Payton said. "That (Rams) staff — there's a ton of guys that we're friendly with and that we know on that staff. Guys who we have worked with, and Sean and I have a real good relationship. He is an engaging guy, a fun guy to be around."



At left, in an Aug. 9, 2018, file photo, New Orleans Saints head coach Sean Payton watches from the sideline during the first half of an NFL preseason football game against the Jacksonville Jaguars, in Jacksonville, Fla. At right, in a Nov. 19, 2018, file photo, Los Angeles Rams head coach Sean McVay watches on the sideline during an NFL football game against the Kansas City Chiefs, in Los Angeles.

Gruden, the current Oakland Raiders coach, was the offensive coordinator with the Eagles in 1997 when Payton was hired as quarterbacks coach. In 2008, Gruden was the head coach in Tampa Bay when he hired McVay as a receivers coach.

During the past two seasons Payton and McVay have each led their teams to the playoffs with one of the best offenses in football, thanks in part to elite quarterbacks — Drew Brees with New Orleans (14-3) and Jared Goff of Los Angeles (14-3).

bility of playing against one another; they're looking for good ideas.

And then there are some connections on the roster and coaching staff. One of the Rams' top receivers, Brandin Cooks, was Payton's first-round draft choice in 2014. Los Angeles' running game coordinator is Aaron Kromer, a former running backs and offensive line coach under Payton, including on the 2009 Super Bowl-winning squad.

Players on both teams praise their coach's intangible feel for how a game is developing.

Saints Pro Bowl left tackle Terron Armstead extolled Payton's "fearlessness" in his play calling and said the coach has "so much believe and confidence in us and the system that we can go out and make a play no matter the down and distance."

Chiefs' bandwagon rolling into mighty Patriots at Arrowhead

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — It seems football fans everywhere are suddenly on the Kansas City Chiefs' bandwagon, enthralled by their record-setting young quarterback and exciting playmakers and hopeful their amiable old coach can finally win the big one.

Then again, maybe they're just fans of anybody facing New England.

The Patriots have dominated the AFC for nearly two decades, and the coach-quarterback combination of Bill Belichick and Tom Brady will be playing in an eighth consecutive conference title game Sunday night when New England visits the Chiefs at frigid, hostile Arrowhead Stadium.

But whereas Brady & Co. once instilled awe in their opponents, the Chiefs view their showdown as an opportunity for Patrick Mahomes



At left, in a Sept. 23, 2018, file photo, New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady throws during a game against the Detroit Lions, in Detroit. At right, in an Oct. 7, 2018, file photo, Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes throws a pass during a game against the Jacksonville Jaguars, in Kansas City, Mo.

to take the baton as the league's best quarterback and for Kansas City, seeking its first Super Bowl appearance in 49 years, to surpass the Patriots as the NFL's "it" team.

"It'll be huge," Mahomes said. "When I got here, the goal was to win the AFC championship and get to the Super Bowl, and win that. To do that early in my career, it would be a huge thing."

There aren't two more dichotomous teams than the Patriots and Chiefs.

New England has won five Super Bowls during the Belichick-Brady era, setting all kinds of records along the way. The cruel efficiency with which they've sliced up the AFC has made them the bane of fans everywhere, but New England and given them the kind of unbeatable aura that accompanied the New

York Yankees teams of Derek Jeter and the Chicago Bulls teams of Michael Jordan.

It's not just petty jealousy, though. Many fans have been turned off by Deflategate, Spygate and other instances over the years that have saddled the Patriots with a rather unsavory reputation.

Brady has mostly shrugged it off. So has Belichick, who almost seems to embrace the villain role.

"I don't think about it too much, what people might say or think," said Brady, whose team is a rare playoff underdog Sunday. "I know we're playing against a very good football team. They're the first seed for a reason. They've had a great season and we're going to have to go into a really tough environment and play our best football, and it's a great opportunity for us."

AFC CHAMPIONSHIP
New England Patriots at Kansas City Chiefs

Sun. • 3:40 p.m. • CBS

11-5 Regular 12-4
1-0 Postseason 1-0

OFFENSE			
Total yards (avg.): 393.4		Total yards (avg.): 425.6	
Pass	Rush	Pass	Rush
266.1	127.3	309.7	115.9
Postseason: 498.0		Postseason: 433.0	
343.0	155.0	253.0	180.0
DEFENSE			
Yards allowed (avg.): 359.1		Yards allowed (avg.): 405.5	
Pass	Rush	Pass	Rush
246.4	112.7	273.4	132.1
Postseason: 335.0		Postseason: 266.0	
316.0	19.0	179.0	87.0
SCORING (PPG)			
27.2 Points for		35.3 Points for	
20.3 Pts. allowed		26.3 Pts. allowed	
Postseason 41.0		Postseason 31.0	
28.0		13.0	

SOURCE: National Football League

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EAST OREGONIAN

COMING FEBRUARY 13

SCREEN time

Exclusively in the Wednesday East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald

cooking this week

Meatless Wednesday: Flavortown Market goes to the greens and beans

By Andrew Warren
TV Media

In the first round of the competition, host Guy Fieri gives the competing chefs a list of ingredients that their dishes must feature. Then, in the second round, the chefs sign a check that randomly gives each of them a meat dish that they must create. Finally, Guy gets tricky in the final round and takes away the remaining competitors' shopping carts before sending them out to shop for the ingredients needed to make their guilty pleasure dishes.

"Guy's Grocery Games" is similar to other cooking competition shows, with chefs getting the six after each round once the judges have had a chance to taste and evaluate all of the dishes. The contest is held weekly at a restaurant, and the competitors are required to "shop" for their own ingredients from the store's shelves, and all sorts of twists tie into the unique milieu.

The judges that Guy has brought in to taste this week's meatless meals are a who's who of Food Network celebrity chefs. There's a pair of "Food Network Star" winners in Dan Serrano and "Southern at Heart" and "Aunt Susanna" ("Aunt Phry") along with frequent judge and "Top Chef All-Stars" winner Richard Blais. Vegans don't have to be having, and with those three discerning judges ready to taste everything on the plate, the contestants in this week's "Guy's Grocery Games" have to pack as much punch into their dishes as they can.

Guy Fieri as seen in "Guy's Grocery Games"

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