

***New Orleans Saints Coach Sean Payton  
Saturday, January 06, 2007***

**Opening Statement:** *I think that we're in a sport that is probably in my opinion, the most difficult sport to give out an individual award. I feel that if you research the prior winners, they all had three things in common. They had a great group of assistant coaches on their staff, which I feel that I do. They probably all had a great team in the locker room with players that put the team first, which in my case I do. Finally, they have all probably had great support from the front office and ownership. I feel that as well. I think this is something that is a reflection on many people and not just one person. I'm fortunate enough to be surrounded by a lot of good people in those areas.*

**Q:** *How did you feel when you found out you were named NFL Coach of the Year?*

**A:** *We've been working on the postseason and I'm happy for the people I just mentioned, including our players. We talked about this topic a little after a handful of our players were selected to the Pro Bowl. I think that we talk about it all the time in terms of this being a team effort. It's very difficult when you try to separate and hand out individual awards. I feel like this is a reflection on our team and organization. I'm excited to be a part of it. This time in our league is a little unique, where there are probably about seven or eight coaches that are Hall of Fame coaches, which is probably one of the higher numbers at one point in time. There are guys that have come back to take jobs, who may already be in the Hall of Fame. I'm humbled a little bit, certainly as a first year head coach coming in new and just getting started with a great group of assistant coaches and a great group in the locker room. It's something that is a reflection on many people, not just myself.*

**Q:** *When you first came here a year ago, did you possess any trepidation about this job based on the state of the region and the franchise, based on their 2005 record?*

**A:** *When these jobs open, there is no utopia, otherwise they wouldn't be opening. Often there are problems. There are things that you look and see how you can correct and fix them. There's things that you look past and feel that it is something you can overcome. The initial concerns with this town having gone through Katrina and everything that it encompassed was based on housing for players and assistant coaches. There were a lot of other little things, but I think it still gets back to the people in the building, whether it's the front office, ownership, the players in the locker room or the coaching staff and if you have the right people, some of the other things that may be obstacles, can be overcome. In our case, we've done a good job of getting the right people in here on the team, whether it's assistant coaches or the other people I've talked about. When I first interviewed with Mickey (Loomis) and we talked about our goals and the things we needed to do to move in the right direction, he was extremely supportive and on board with identifying what we want from a Saint player or employee. I think we've tried to stick to that and it has served us well.*

**Q: What was your vision when you took this job in terms of playing a role in the rebuilding process in the region?**

**A:** *I said in the beginning that the first thing we can do is to improve the product that we put on the field and play better football. There's going to be a lot of individual efforts in this building, whether it is players or members of the organization in regards to helping outside of their jobs here. If we focus on and concentrate on playing good football, winning games and bringing the outstanding fan base here a better product, that's a step in the right direction. I think we have a great fan base, which is amazing. After everything they've been through, they're shining stronger now than they ever have. We look forward to giving them another game here, certainly at least one at home in the playoffs and we'll see where that takes us. It's a great opportunity for us, this city and for the fans to be excited about. We're looking forward to it.*

**Q: Have you spoken to Bill Parcells or any of your other coaching colleagues about this?**

**A:** *I haven't had a chance to talk with anyone today. We've just been working on these three opponents. I'm sure at some point when the season's over, we'll see all these guys at the combine. This is something that goes with a team that's playing well. This award goes to a head coach who has a great coaching staff, who are a lot of guys who are spending a lot of time and nights at the office coming up with the correct plans for our guys to be successful in all three phases. The coordinators and the assistants have done a great job. There's been a lot of change in terminology and scheme and the players have handled that transition well. There's an awful lot of time spent by our scouts, Mickey Loomis and his staff, as well as Tom (Benson) and Rita (Benson LeBlanc). I'm excited on behalf of those people and I mean that.*

**Q: Did the fact that you could play a role in helping the community intrigue you about this position?**

**A:** *I think that it is unique and different than the normal opportunity as an NFL head coach. It's something that you find a little bit more fulfilling than I have in my career at anytime as a coach, because you know how important it is. I think the NFL has great fans throughout this league in the various cities where the teams are located, but this situation here is different. I don't know how else to describe it. The reward is that a lot of the times a journey itself in going through the process of hiring the staff, getting your players through the first minicamp, the first draft and the first time you went to Millsaps, when the air conditioning's not working and the beds are broken, are the things you remember when it's over with. Hopefully it's a championship team that you're reflecting about the journey with. Your first goal is to win a Super Bowl. We're in a position where we play our first playoff game next weekend and that's where our focus is. But it is unique.*

**Q: What was the most difficult part of taking what you inherited and getting it to where you are today?**

**A:** *I think it all starts with raising expectations and certainly the bar for standards with which you want to operate. Anytime there's change, it's always difficult for people, whether it's players or people inside the building. Sometimes it ruffles some feathers, but that's not a bad thing. Changing the standard and changing the way you want to approach, not just football on the field, but the way you want to operate in the building is a challenge.*

**Q:** *How difficult is it to win in a consistent manner for several years in the NFL like New England has done?*

**A:** *We still have to finish this season. I think that there are a lot of areas that you have to be fortunate in. You need to fare well with injuries. That plays a part into it. You need to be real sound with your decision-making in the off-season. I think you need a quarterback and I think we do. I think that the head coach, the general manager and the coaching staff need to be on the same page. I think we are here. There's a lot that goes into winning consistently. We're just getting started. We haven't even finished the first full year, which fortunately we haven't because we're still in the postseason. I think New England's a team that has given everybody a pretty good model in our league for how to put together and how to win. They've done some of those things I just mentioned. This is a league where teams follow, look at, evaluate and copy. I think it's important to pay attention to what's successful. We're trying to do that.*

**Q:** *When you came out the preseason, did you have an idea of how dramatically you had upgraded this team?*

**A:** *It's hard, because we came out of preseason and we had acquired Mark Simoneau and Scott Shanle, whom we traded for. Those guys arrived about a week before the season started, starting the first game. Joe Vitt has those guys in here on a weekend with tip sheets and a cram course right before we are to play the Cleveland Browns. You just look forward to playing the games and seeing where you measure up, because I think that you trust that your hard work is going to give you a chance or an opportunity, but nothing's promised. I thought that it was important that we started off well at Cleveland and at Green Bay and then came home here with a big win against Atlanta. You have some young players that begin to gain some confidence, whether it's a receiver that was drafted in Marques' (Colston) case or Jahri Evans starting new at right guard and Roman (Harper) at safety. Veteran players were also being given their first opportunity to start for the first time or for a given length of time. We had just begun to put some wins together and gain a little confidence. I think that's important and goes a long way in our business.*

**Q:** *Is there any disadvantage towards being too successful too soon?*

**A:** *I think each year you start from scratch. Whenever this season completes itself, you get into evaluations of your current team and you work on the draft and free agency. Eventually your off-season program begins in March. When you start up again, you're starting over again. I don't think you're ever picking up from where you left off. You're*

*starting again. We're trying to win each year. We don't have a set planned course to win, five, seven, nine and then 11. I don't think that exists in our game. Building a good football team exists, but our goals coming in at the start of the season were to be successful. Fortunately we were able to win enough to put ourselves in the postseason and we can go from there. We have a good opportunity, but a lot of work remains with some of our goals still out there. It's exciting for this city and we're excited about this upcoming playoff game.*

**Q: Bill Parcells has a reputation for turning around teams quickly. Did he give you any advice for your job in turning this team around when you came here?**

**A:** *His advice was to find out quickly what's kept this team from winning if you can and then make the appropriate changes. I think he also emphasized the importance of finding the right quarterback and finding a guy that can come in and be the right quarterback. I think we were able to do that.*

**Q: What did you find that prevented them from winning previously?**

**A:** *We talked about the same things I talk to you guys about; Character, toughness, discipline, penalties and turnovers. Those are things that keep you from winning games regardless of what town you're at. This is a tough town to accomplish some of the things you want to in football because you have some distractions. You can go down to Bourbon Street and the French Quarter. You have casinos. You have the daiquiri stands. There are a lot of distractions, so hopefully you bring the right type of player in here that understands what's important. When those other things become more important than football, you're going to struggle. I think we have the right type of players in here and that's a start.*

**New Orleans Saints Coach Sean Payton**  
**Wednesday, January 03, 2007**

**Opening Statement:** *We're presently in this off-week and we're spending time on three different opponents. That's the only way you can approach it. We know how the scenarios play out. We know who we play if Philadelphia wins. We don't know who we play if New York wins. The games are scheduled. As a staff we're working on the three different scenarios that have to take place for anyone of those teams. We're doing a lot of film work. We'll continue to do that tomorrow. The players will be in tomorrow for a team meeting at 1. We'll lift and run. Friday we'll have a practice. I'm debating a little bit about what the schedule will be for the guys on Sunday and Monday. We won't know anything until Sunday night when the Philadelphia-New York game is over. I'm glad we came out of last week's game healthy and clean. It was a good chance for us to see some players play who normally don't receive a lot of playing time. Now the focus has shifted clearly on the upcoming playoff game for us.*

**Q:** *Have you changed your schedule for this bye week based on the team's performance against Baltimore following the earlier bye week this season?*

**A:** *There are a couple of things that are different. The scheduling is different than the last bye week and looking back on it, part of it is that you have to give credit to the team we played. We played the Ravens after the bye week. That might have something to do with it. They have a pretty solid team. I think the scheduling is a lot different here in regards to the way you lay out your practices. There are some things that are a little different than the normal bye week in the regular season. This schedule that we're flowing with now is a little bit different. The decision as to the direction we approach this week had more to do with this week we have off than the last schedule we used.*

**Q:** *Is there a team out of the three potential opponents that you would want to face or do you not care who the opponent is?*

**A:** *I think you prepare for all three and you wait and find out who you're going to play. We've played two-of-the-three with the third being Seattle who we have not played. I think that you just wait and see how it unfolds. You don't have favorites as who you would rather see or not see. I think the key is waiting to find out who you're going to see and getting ready to play. That's all you can do.*

**Q:** *Have you tweaked the schedule in the last couple of days?*

**A:** *We didn't know until recently the schedule for these games. If the Philadelphia-New York game were played on Saturday, you might know earlier who you're playing. It's being played on Sunday. I wanted the guys to have a couple days after this game to get away and then to bring them back starting tomorrow. That's what we're doing. I'm wrestling with the Sunday and Monday schedule a little bit and leaning toward having a walk through and some additional time on Monday, rather than Sunday.*

**Q: Will the team have Sunday or Monday off?**

**A:** *They will be off on Sunday or Monday.*

**Q: Is having to deal with all of these schedule changes much better than scheduling for the off-season at this time?**

**A:** *I think that's accurate.*

**Q: Can you discuss what type of practice you will have on Friday?**

**A:** *We're going to practice against each other and work on red zone and third down. We're going to practice in no different a manner than when we were at Millsaps College working against each other. We might use a period in practice to put an emphasis on these teams that we are looking at, but we're going to practice against each other. I think that's important. We may put the shoulder pads and the pants on to make sure we're ready. We're going to practice Friday. It will be a full practice. Tomorrow will be more of a lift and a run.*

**Q: Is there any advantage or disadvantage to facing a team in the playoffs that you have already played in the regular season?**

**A:** *I don't know that there's a specific advantage or disadvantage. I think it's very common in the postseason to end up playing somebody you've already played. It's not uncommon at all to even be playing somebody in your division like Philadelphia and New York are playing each other this weekend. Each year it kind of shakes out a little bit differently. There are a few teams from one division that goes to the playoffs and sometimes there's a few less. I don't know if there's an advantage or disadvantage. Certainly, it's consistent with both teams. If we were to play somebody that we've played already, there would be a little bit of familiarity with them and they'd have the same (advantage) than if you played somebody you didn't (play before). Right now this bye week gives us an opportunity to cover these three teams and make sure we have a handle on them from a scouting report standpoint, personnel-wise on Philadelphia, Dallas and Seattle. That's what we're trying to do as best we can now with this coming week. Our guys are getting treatment. There have been a lot of guys in the training room the last few days. Those are some of the advantages of having this week off leading up to next weekend's games. We have to wait and see.*

**Q: Can you discuss where your team is at injury-wise?**

**A:** *I'm anxious to see how Joe Horn's doing. I have an idea of how he's doing. Without seeing him on the field, it's tough to tell. I'll see him run tomorrow and we'll see him practice Friday to evaluate his condition. There are no major updates. I think we have some bumps and bruises, but I don't think we have anything substantial to report. We came out of the game fairly clean the other day. Mark Campbell's a little bit further*

*along now and feeling better. Horn's the guy that we have to wait and see where we are are with.*

**Q: Will you or the coaches be doing anything out of the ordinary when you are watching the playoff games on television this weekend?**

**A:** *I don't think so. I'm sure we'll watch them on television. We'll be putting together game plans, scouting reports and putting together all of the busy things you need to put together to practice. I'm sure guys will have a chance to see the games on television. We'll see the taped copy of them when they come back. Nobody's going to the games. We'll be here.*

**Q: Will the games be required viewing for the players?**

**A:** *No. The players will watch them. I think they know some of these teams pretty well. In the case of not having played Seattle, they probably don't know them as well.*

**Q: Will you watch the games as a staff and break them down as they occur?**

**A:** *You can't watch a game on television and break it down at the same time. When you watch a game on television, you receive a little bit different take on the game which can be healthy. When you watch the game on television, you are able to see or hear things that you wouldn't be able to off of the film you receive in the exchange. Seeing the television copy has its benefits, yet you receive the film of it the next day and you break it down and take a look at it. The bye gives you a chance to break down these other games that they've played already, to study these games that they've played already and to begin to formulate your own game-plan ahead of time. Once you find out who you're playing, you put the plan in place and you're a little bit further along there. That's what it allows you to do. It allows you to get past some of the busywork, but certainly you want to factor in the game that's being played this weekend into your reports and study. You deal with the logistics of when we're playing next weekend and then set the schedule to what the team is used to. I think from a television standpoint, it doesn't allow you to break the game down quicker; it just gives you another way to look at a game.*

**Q: Has TIVO changed the way you watch these games at all?**

**A:** *Usually the television version whether it's TIVO'ed or not gives you one way of watching the game. Generally in our profession, most of the study we conduct is off of the edited tape version through the computers. When you're able to see a game on TV, a lot of times you'll see something, something happens on the sideline or there will be a report that will give you a little bit more insight than you would have received from just looking at the video. I'm sure we'll watch the games and be ready. Most of it is now film work.*

**Q: Is Hollis Thomas available to practice Friday?**

**A:** *He's available to practice right now.*

**Q: Have you talked to Hollis and what do you think of his conditioning?**

**A:** Yes. He's doing well. He was in here yesterday lifting and running. He was in here today. I was encouraged with where he was at weight-wise and he'll have this week where he'll be lifting and running. He'll be at the team meeting tomorrow. He'll practice Friday. He's back in the mix.

**Q: Can you discuss your decision-making process of why you kept certain players from the 2005 team and did not keep others?**

**A:** I think the first thing that we wanted to address and what we felt was most important were the character and the toughness of a player. Ability's important. Is he someone that learns fairly quickly? I think finding the right guys and the right fit from a character standpoint, guys that are unselfish and are willing to put the team ahead of themselves are things that we talk about often and are the things that we felt we identified that were most important as a staff and as an organization. Those are the things we talked about as it came to free agency. Those were things we talked about as it came to the draft. Those are things we talked about when it came to evaluating our own players currently in the building. Those are the same things we'll talk about this coming off-season.

**Q: Was there any point this season when you realized you might have something special as a team?**

**A:** I think starting off the season with two road wins and then winning on Monday night gave us a little momentum. I think that was important to get the season started that way. You're looking at a team for its first time together with a new coaching staff that had a tough training camp. It's always a lot easier to sell your product when you're winning than when you hit adversity. Getting the Cleveland game on the road and then winning at Green Bay and then playing a 2-0 Atlanta team in a big game at home and getting to 3-0, while you don't know where it was going to take you, was certainly the right step to start on. It just seems like so long ago now as you look back on the season, but you play 16 weeks and there's always that momentum that goes up and down. You just try to ride out the tough weeks and capitalize on the weeks that are going well. There were certainly some big wins along the way. The win in Atlanta was a big win on the road, coming off of some tough losses. Tampa Bay on the road was another big win. These are games that come to mind. Even though we lost the game, the Pittsburgh game was an important game for our team. We went down 14 and came back to get ahead at the half. We had a chance at the end there against a good football team. There are those periods in a season where you can look back and I think you grow as a team. I think that starting with the first three weeks of the season were important from a momentum and confidence standpoint.

**Q: How good is your defense?**



**A:** *"I think our defense has done a good job. They went into New York last week and did an excellent job against a solid offensive team. Statistically you can look at certain things numbers wise. Currently we're ranked 11<sup>th</sup> at the end of the season. We've made progress in those areas, yet you can stir those numbers to fit any argument you want. What I think is most important is that we're playing a complementary style of football both on offense, defense and special teams. I think we're tackling well, getting to the ball well, playing good pass defense and we have smart, tough guys that understand the scheme Gary (Gibbs) has put together. I like our defense. It's a good deal of the reason that we're sitting where we are at the bye.*