

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Remarks Honoring the 2010 Super Bowl Champion New Orleans Saints

August 9, 2010

Well, welcome, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat. It is wonderful to see all of you. Welcome, and congratulations to the 2009 [2010]^{*} Super Bowl champions, the New Orleans Saints.

I want to start by recognizing some folks in my administration who are big fans of this team: Lisa Jackson from the EPA; Secretary Donovan from HUD; Craig Fugate from FEMA. We've got a few very proud Members of Congress with us: Senator Mary Landrieu and Representative Steve Scalise are in the house.

Congratulations to the owner, Tom Benson, who has led this team through times that would test anybody, and General Manager Mickey Loomis for building this extraordinary championship squad.

Congratulations to your outstanding head coach, Sean Payton, who's done just great work. I must point out, Sean is a Chicago guy—[*laughter*]—I'm just saying—[*laughter*]—by way of Naperville. You've got to be tough to be a Chicago guy. I make some tough decisions every day, but I never decided on an onside kick—[*laughter*]—in the second half of the Super Bowl. That I—that took some guts. Were you okay with that? Did he check off with you? [*Laughter*] Yeah. I'm glad that thing went all right. [*Laughter*]

Coach Payton led this team to a remarkable season: 13–0 start, a franchise record for wins; a heck of an overtime win in the NFC Championship; and then, after falling behind in the Super Bowl, with the onside kick, huge second half, Tracy Porter's interception guaranteeing that the Lombardi Trophy would go to the city of New Orleans for the very first time. It was an unbelievable moment.

I want to congratulate the Super Bowl MVP, your quarterback, your captain, Drew Brees. Now, I have to say, all of us were very excited after the game. All my wife wanted to talk about was Baylen, that little boy sitting with Drew, and everybody going, "Aww"—[*laughter*]—which—I'm just saying, you made a lot of fans that day. [*Laughter*] Drew and his wife Brittany are expecting their second child in October. So congratulations to you both.

Drew threw six touchdowns in the opening weekend, making it pretty clear that the Saints were coming to play. And over the course of the season, he set a new NFL record for accuracy, completing more than 70 percent of his passes. I have a few staffers who were thrilled to have Drew on their fantasy team. [*Laughter*] So they are grateful for that.

And by the way, this is not Drew's first time to the White House. Last year, we filmed a PSA some of you may have seen, encouraging America's youth to get 60 minutes of physical activity every day. He tossed me a nice, tight spiral that I then lateraled to a kid on DeMarcus Ware's shoulders. Now, I also want to point out, I beat Troy Polamalu over the middle on that throw. [*Laughter*] You remember. [*Laughter*] Yeah, yeah. I mean, I'm not sure he was going top speed, but—[*laughter*].

^{*} White House correction.

Finally, Drew's agreed to serve as Cochair of the new President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition. And I want to thank all the players who put on a clinic earlier this morning with children from the Boys and Girls Club as part of the Let's Move and the NFL's Play 60 program. So thank you very much, guys, for participating in that.

So look, this was a unbelievable season. After decades of frustration, the Saints finally won the big one. The "Ain'ts" and the "Sad Sacks" gave way to the "Who Dats." Local musicians even gave a jazz funeral to retire the "Ain'ts" nickname. But I think we all know that this season meant far more than that to the city of New Orleans, and to all Americans, really.

Look, I'm a Bears fan. I'm not going to lie. [Laughter] But this was a big win for the country, not just for New Orleans, because 5 years ago, this team played its entire season on the road. It didn't have a home field. The Superdome had been ruined by Hurricane Katrina. The heartbreaking tragedies that unfolded there when it was used as a shelter from that terrible storm lingered all too fresh in a lot of people's minds.

And back then, people didn't even know if the team was coming back. People didn't know if the city was coming back. Not only did the team come back, it took its city's hands and helped its city back on its feet. This team took the hopes and the dreams of a shattered city and placed them squarely on its shoulders.

And so these guys became more than leaders in the locker room; they became leaders of an entire region. And the victory parade that we saw earlier this year made one thing perfectly clear, that New Orleans and the New Orleans Saints are here to stay.

So plenty of cities carry their sports teams through a tough season. It's a rare thing when a sports team carries a city through tough times. And that's why there's such a deep bond between this organization and the city. I'm not sure there's any other city that feels that same way right now. And that's not just for what the Saints have done on the field, but what they've done off it to see that the city keeps rising. In fact, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell recently said that every team in professional sports should use the Saints as a model for how to interact with their community.

This entire team has worked with Habitat for Humanity to rebuild neighborhoods in New Orleans. Many of these guys and the coaches and the players run foundations to help children in need. All of them are off to Walter Reed later this morning to spend some time with wounded warriors who served our country.

And obviously, the Gulf region has spent the last few months besieged by yet another crisis. But last week, we received the news that we had hoped for. Yesterday the—we learned that a procedure to prevent any more oil from spilling with a cement plug appears to have succeeded. And the final steps will be taken later in August, when the relief well is completed. But what is clear is that the battle to stop the oil from flowing into the Gulf is just about over.

Our work goes on, though. I made a commitment to the people of the Gulf Coast that I would stand by them not just until the well was closed, but until they recovered from the damage that's been done. And that's a commitment my administration is going to keep.

So with the ongoing reopening of Gulf fisheries, we're excited that fishermen can go back to work and Americans can confidently and safely enjoy Gulf seafood once again. We're certainly going to enjoy it here at the White House. In fact, we had some yesterday.

While they're here today, several Saints players are going to spend some time teaching our staff their favorite Gulf seafood recipes. So who's cooking? [Laughter] Which one—it's you

back there? All right. [*Laughter*] And Sam Kass, the White House—he's very excited. He's very excited. And after weeks of hearing about food from our response teams down in the Gulf, I can tell you that our staff's excited about the 30-foot po'boy we're serving at lunch today. [*Laughter*]

But let me just say in closing, we are very proud of this team, and we are very proud of the owner of this team, because it required a great commitment on your part to help pull this team and this city along. And so there is a heartfelt congratulations not just from those of us here in the White House, but, I think, all across America. These are big guys with big hearts and shoulders big enough to carry the hopes and dreams of an entire city with them.

So with that, congratulations to all of you. New Orleans Saints, 2009 [2010]^{*} Super Bowl champions. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tracy Porter, cornerback, New Orleans Saints; DeMarcus Ware, linebacker, Dallas Cowboys; Troy Polamalu, strong safety, Pittsburgh Steelers; and White House Assistant Chef Sam Kass.

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^{*} White House correction.