

## How do you stop the league's top scoring offense?

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Better yet Youth Destiny Vaeao Jersey , how do you do it on the road? And lastly, how do you do it with a decimated secondary? Those are the challenges facing the Super Bowl Champion Philadelphia Eagles as they limp in to a crucial Week 11 matchup. While the Eagles' offense has struggled to get off the ground, the New Orleans Saints' offense has been a lightning bolt. They own the highest points per game total (36.7) and have averaged 42 points in the last three games. They're even more dangerous at home (37.2) and they storm out of the gates with a league leading 19.4 points in the first half. That last number is only rising. In the last three games the Saints have averaged a gargantuan 29 first half points. The first step in stopping them is understanding what they do well, which is a tall task in itself because there's a ton to digest. One area that boosts their scoring is their 5th ranked red zone offense. They've found pay-dirt on 73% of their trips inside the 20-yard line. That number reaches 86% in the last three weeks. For the Saints, their success obviously starts with future Hall of Fame quarterback Drew Brees. Keeping the focus on the red zone, no quarterback with over 30 attempts has a better QB Rating (117.4). He's 46/66 (69.7%) with 16 touchdowns and 0 interceptions when the field condenses. His main weapons are the supremely talented Michael Thomas and the swiss army knife Alvin Kamara. Those two lead the league in red zone targets with 18 and 21 respectively. Thomas has hauled in 15 of those targets with 6 touchdowns while Kamara has caught 16 passes, adding 3 touchdowns of his own. Kamara's contributions on the ground have also been a boon. He's toted the rock 38 times with 9 of those finding the end zone. Those numbers are second only to MVP candidate Todd Gurley. So the Saints have three elite red zone players operating at a high level, but wait, there's more. Perhaps the biggest pain in the caboose for defensive coordinators this year has been game-planning for what the Saints do with their backup dual-threat quarterback Taysom Hill. Digging into what the Saints do well inside the 20, you have to start with Hill because he requires an entirely separate game-plan on his own. DUAL-THREAT TAYSOM The variety in which the Saints deploy Taysom Hill makes him more than just a one-dimensional gimmick. He does just enough with his arm to be a threat and is a weapon with his legs out of read and sprint options. They won't just line him up at quarterback, they'll put him out wide as a receiver and in tight doubles as a blocker. It's a nightmare for defensive coordinators. Not only do they have to prepare for an explosive, dynamic offense, but they must also spend a considerable amount of time game-planning for a back-up quarterback. It's not like preparing for something like wildcat; as noted above there is a bevy of concepts to be aware of when Hill is on the field. Along with the typical option concepts, they'll also run outside zone, power, etc etc. Each week they sprinkle in a new wrinkle and it's been a productive component of the offense. Adding to their toolbox, last week against the Cincinnati Bengals the Saints threw in a jump pass at the goal line that should've been a score. The Saints have even thrown him a screen pass against the New York Giants. It didn't work out and went for a loss of 4 yards, but you still have to be cognizant of it as a possibility. SKINNING THE BANJO If you stifle the back-up quarterback (such an odd sentence), you still have to deal with the aforementioned Michael Thomas. The Saints will target him on isolation concepts with fades Womens Corey Clement Jersey , slants, and comebacks and that in itself is tough enough to defend. Thomas is a top tier receiver and an exceptional route runner and expecting any corner to stick with him on an island is a lot to ask. The Saints don't just relay on those isolation routes though as they do a wonderful job of scheming him open with route combinations. In Week 1, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers were caught completely off-guard by a switch release concept that wreaked havoc on their coverage assignments. What makes this concept work is the intersecting releases. I'm making the educated guess that the Buccaneers defense is in "banjo coverage" based on their alignment. Typically it's a man switch if the two highlighted defenders are staggered so as to avoid picking each other. Instead, they're parallel. Regardless, they're confounded by the action that unfolds before them. In banjo the outside corner Ryan Smith would have the receiver who ends up outside (the "1"). The inside defender, safety Justin Evans, would have the receiver who ends up inside (the "2"). Watch how the Saints switch who is the "1" and who is the "2" twice in the same release. Toast. The widening and vertical action of Thomas mixed with

the inside and shallow action of Ted Ginn make both Smith and Evans wrong. Smith ends up in no man's land and Evans ends up chasing the flats. After the play you can see Smith communicating that he was expecting Evans to stick inside or something to that effect. I highlight this rep way back from Week 1 not because I expect to see this exact concept, although we may.

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I highlight this rep because the Buccaneers were dealing with a secondary that was (and still is) dealing with pre-snap communication errors and busts. With what's happening in the Eagles secondary right now banking on pristine communication and sound execution on difficult switch releases is a bad bet. HE WASN'T READY With everything the Eagles defense will have to process against the extensive Saints red zone offense, they'll still have to be ready for the quick strike. I've charted 3 touchdowns for the Saints that have been the result of Brees receiving the snap as soon as he gets under center. They'll also lull you to sleep with motion. In the play below, Kamara moves from left-to-right and takes an angle that would make you believe he's going to settle into a running back alignment. The Minnesota Vikings are standing straight up, processing this action, and are caught flat-footed. The Eagles will have to be on their toes pre-snap. If Brees senses they're taking too long to get aligned, he'll rush to the line and fire off a quick hand-off. It's worked for them all season. SAME STORY, DIFFERENT DAY One concept that the Saints will dial up is something the Dallas Cowboys ran against the Eagles successfully last week. This hi-lo read will give Brees the option to throw the deep out/flag route that Allen Hurns runs below and they'll use Kamara as a more integral part of the combination than Ezekiel Elliot is utilized. Still, it stresses the defense similarly. This is an ideal play-call against this type of defense. Here's how Matt Bowen of NFL Matchup describes the Cover 3 "Cloud": None of this happens. I'm hesitant to place blame on Ronald Darby for not getting a jam or protecting against the corner route with a flat route in front of him. Cloud doesn't always require a re-route and Hurns' "nasty split" alignment may relieve him of this duty. Either way, Hurns gets a clean release and Corey Graham is late to get to the sideline. So how will the Saints use this and also add more danger the above concept? Easy. They have one of the most dangerous receiving backs in the game. Instead of using Kamara as a decoy to hold a flat defender, they'll unleash him in the open field with option routes. So you've seen this work against zone and above you see it create a rub against man coverage. This gives Kamara an advantage at the break-point and sets him up to dart outside for an easy pitch and catch touchdown. IN SUMMARY The variety in which the Saints have approached their red zone snaps is truly something to behold. They can beat you in so many ways and have a bevy of different concepts, alignments, and personnel groupings on tape. All of that will have to be broken down Womens Corey Graham Jersey , digested, and planned against. Beyond the defensive game-plan, Jim Schwartz will be tasked with coaching up a defensive unit that is on life support. If he's forced into vanilla deployments due to a lack of chemistry and experience on the back end, the Eagles may find themselves in a boat race. The Eagles boast the 4th ranked red zone defense and have yet to allow over 30 points this season. That streak is in serious jeopardy. The Philadelphia Eagles officially announced the inactives list for their Week 7 game against the Carolina Panthers. The following seven players have been ruled OUT: Haloti Ngata, Darren Sproles, Sidney Jones, Corey Graham, D.J. Alexander, Nathan Gerry, and Matt Pryor. The most significant news is that starting defensive tackle Haloti Ngata won't play. He was limited in practice all week before being listed questionable on Philadelphia's final injury report. The Eagles are down to just Fletcher Cox, Treyvon Hester, and Bruce Hector as healthy, full-time defensive tackles. Very thin there. Pryor is the only healthy scratch from the inactives group. He's now the only player on the 53-man roster who hasn't been active for a single game this season. Due to all the injuries, Jordan Mailata is active for the first time in his NFL career. That's cool! He's very unlikely to play, of course, with Halapoulivaati Vaitai and Isaac Seumalo ahead of him on the depth chart at tackle. Philadelphia Eagles Inactive List DT Haloti Ngata - Injury. RB Darren Sproles - Injury. CB Sidney Jones - Injury. S Corey Graham - Injury. LB D.J. Alexander - Injury. LB Nathan Gerry - Injury. OT Matt Pryor - Reserve tackle. Carolina Panthers Inactive List The Panthers aren't dealing with any significant injuries on their 53-man roster. LB Andre Smith G Brendan Mahon G Amini Silatolu DE Marquis Haynes DE Bryan Cox, Jr. RB Cameron Artis-Payne CB Corn Elder

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