



New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation
2020 St. Charles Avenue | New Orleans, LA 70130 | 504/524-4784 | 504/524-4780 fax
www.NewOrleansOnline.com - The City of New Orleans' Official Tourism Web Site

Lea Sinclair
Communications Director
504/524-4784 (office)
504/491-5330 (mobile)
lea@notmc.com

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

From NFL Underdogs to "America's Team"

New Orleans, LA – When the Saints won Super Bowl XLIV in 2010 they wrote history and marked a turning point not only for the team but also for their city. More than just a professional football franchise, the *black and gold* have been an intricate part of New Orleans' unique cultural fabric since the '60s.

The Saints were founded as an NFL expansion team in 1966. They were originally named for the jazz song "When the Saints go Marching In" and the team's birth was officially announced on November 1, All Saints' Day. From 1967 through 1974, the Saints played their home games at Tulane Stadium, a football stadium home to many events and three Super Bowls before it was demolished in 1980. They opened the 1975 season in the newly-built Louisiana Superdome which remains their home to this day.

There's no hiding the fact that the Saints have historically had a horrendous record. They went more than 10 years before they finished with a .5 record and more than 20 years before they had a winning season. When they lost their first 14 games in 1980, local sports commentator Buddy Diliberto called for fans to wear paper bags over their heads at home games to avoid embarrassing themselves. Fans also started jokingly calling their team "The Aints." With new rosters and coaches, the team's luck slowly started to change over the years and between 1987 and 1992, they made the playoffs four times. By 2000, the Saints secured their first playoff win when they beat the St. Louis Rams and in 2006 they reached the NFC Championship.

Until 2010, the Saints had been one of only 5 teams to never make the Super Bowl. The others included the Cleveland Browns, Houston Texans, Jacksonville Jaguars and Detroit Lions. The losing history that spanned more than 40 years made the team's success so much more important. Fans around the country cheered the Saints as the historical underdogs, representing not just a team, but a city that had overcome so much.

Even through their hard times, the Saints and their die hard fans have been noted for character and flamboyancy. "Who Dat!," derived from "Who dat say they gonna beat dem Saints?", is a common battle cry that became a household phrase. Notable Saints players over the years have included Archie Manning (QB), Billy Kilmer (QB), Dalton Hilliard (RB), Rickey Jackson (LB), Bobby Hebert (QB), Morton Anderson (K) and Rueben Mayes (RB). Many Saints players have also made history in the NFL record books. Kicker Tom Dempsey made a record 63-yard field goal in 1970; Rickey Jackson holds the second most opponents fumbles recovered; and Drew Brees holds a few records including most completions in a season and most completions in a Super Bowl. For more information on the Saints, visit their web site at www.neworleanssaints.com.

The New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation promotes the city as a leisure tourism destination throughout the year. NOTMC's annual marketing campaigns include strategic print, broadcast, and Internet advertising and public relations. Web sites: www.NewOrleansOnline.com; www.NewOrleansMuseums.com; www.HearNewOrleansMusic.com.

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