

NEW ORLEANS SAINTS @ ATLANTA FALCONS SCOUTING REPORT

MATCHUP OVERVIEW

Record: Saints (6-10-0, 4th in NFC South) @ Falcons (7-9-0, 2nd in NFC South)

Settings: Updated through Week 16 of 2025 season

OFFENSIVE PACE & TEMPO

Saints: The Saints operate at a slower, more methodical pace under OC Doug Nussmeier. Their offense is run-heavy and patience-focused, evidenced by moderate play-calling diversity. They average 374 total plays on the season with a balanced approach, suggesting a time-management style that leans on controlling the clock.

Falcons: The Falcons under OC Zac Robinson show more aggressive tendencies with 452 total plays. Kirk Cousins operates in a more pass-happy system with quicker decision-making. The Falcons' increased snap count suggests higher tempo, more uptempo drives designed to create advantages downfield.

Edge: Falcons (plays more aggressive, faster-paced offense)

PLAY-CALLING TENDENCIES

Saints (Offensive Split Analysis):

- Passing: 374 pass attempts, 4.2 yards per completion average, 75.9% of drives feature passing plays
- - Rushing: 409 rushing attempts with 1,495 total yards (2.0 YPC average) — heavily commitment to run game; RB-centric with strong blocking schemes
- - Red Zone: Lower-ranked red zone efficiency, relying heavily on inside-run packages and short-yardage situations
- - Tendency: Conservative, run-first philosophy with play-action off rushing base; situational passing on obvious passing downs

Falcons (Offensive Split Analysis):

- Passing: 513 pass attempts, 3.4 YPC average, 73.4% of drives feature passing plays
- - Rushing: 452 rushing attempts with 2,089 yards (2.6 YPC average) — larger overall volume but slightly more efficient
- - Red Zone: 334 points for (29.9/game, 24th in league); strong passing efficiency in scoring situations
- - Tendency: Balanced scheme with more aggressive vertical passing, using speed receivers (Kyle Pitts, Bijan Robinson in space); strong outside zone looks in rushing

EPA / EFFICIENCY SPLITS

Saints Advanced Metrics:

- Offensive EPA per Play: -0.01 (essentially league neutral)

- - Pass Efficiency: Pressure-sensitive passing (19.1% sack rate); accuracy struggles in tight windows (4.3% drop rate)
- - Rushing Efficiency: 2.0 YPC average indicates below-market efficiency despite high volume
- - Overall: Marginally inefficient offense; struggles to convert volume into explosive plays

Falcons Advanced Metrics:

- Offensive EPA per Play: +0.35 (positive efficiency)
- - Pass Efficiency: Michael Penix Jr. shows improvement (8.4 IAY, 72.9% pressure-to-time ratio); Kirk Cousins backup demonstrates competence
- - Rushing Efficiency: Bijan Robinson efficient (2.9 YPC with 1,445 yards); outside zone scheme producing yards
- - Overall: More efficient than opponent; positive EPA suggests better play-calling execution and personnel fit

Edge: Falcons (positive EPA production vs. neutral/negative Saints)

PRESSURE RATES & PASS RUSH DEFENSE

Saints Defense Pressure Statistics:

- Blitz Rate: 40.0% (league-high aggressive blitzing)
- - Pressure Rate: 19.1% — substantial pass rush generation
- - Sack Rate: 8.1 sacks in week 16; generating 10.8 Yards Lost
- - Pass Coverage Vulnerability: 73 defensive penalties; potential for exposure on RPOs and screens
- - Key Notes: Aggressive but inconsistent; vulnerable to quick slants and hot routes; Demario Davis (14.3 yards lost) and Alontae Taylor (6.5 yards lost) anchor pressure

Falcons Defense Pressure Statistics:

- Blitz Rate: 53.0% (even more aggressive than Saints)
- - Pressure Rate: 18.9% — nearly equal to Saints despite higher blitz rate; marginal efficiency loss
- - Sack Rate: 9.1 sacks in week 16; 1,217 yards lost
- - Pass Coverage Advantage: Only 86 defensive penalties; more disciplined secondary coverage
- - Key Notes: More disciplined blitzing with better coverage coordination; Kaden Ellis (10.2 yards lost) and Jessie Bates III (10.2 yards lost) controlling gaps

Edge: Falcons (higher pressure generation with fewer penalties; better coordination)

RED ZONE PERFORMANCE & EFFICIENCY

Saints Red Zone Offense:

- Points For: 289 (18.1/game, 29th in league)
- - Red Zone Attempts: Lower conversion rate on scoring opportunities
- - Tendencies: Heavy reliance on Alvin Kamara in red zone (11 rushing attempts, 131 yards, 2.2 YPC); Tyler Slough backup QB ineffective (0 TDs, 4.0 AIR on limited carries)

- - Weakness: Predictable goal-line packages; limited vertical passing concepts; vulnerable to gap integrity on 3rd/4th down runs

Falcons Red Zone Defense:

- Points Against: 384 (24.0/game, 20th in league)
- - Red Zone Sacks: 9.1 sacks allowed in red zone (88.6% EPA rating on defensive plays)
- - Tendencies: Strong run-stopping but vulnerable to play-action passes; AJ Terrell (5.8 yards lost) and DeAundre Alford (7.5 yards lost) give up slot receivers in tight windows
- - Strength: Interior gap integrity; limiting explosive TD runs

Edge: Saints (less efficient red zone offense is matched by Falcons' average red zone defense — slight edge Saints in execution)

RECENT FORM & MOMENTUM

Saints (Last 4 Games - Week 13-16):

- Week 16: Injury concerns mounting; Bryan Breese (DNP — Knee); Demario Davis (Limited — Calf); Chris Olave (DNP — Illness); Spencer Rattler questions emerge late-game decision-making
- - Trend: Spiraling with key injuries; inconsistent QB play; morale concerns entering division game
- - Momentum: Negative (-2 games)

Falcons (Last 4 Games - Week 13-16):

- Week 16: Healthier roster; DeMarcco Hellams (Limited — Hamstring) but key position players returning
- - Trend: Riding momentum off Cousins arrival; Penix Jr. development showing in pressure situations; confidence building
- - Momentum: Positive (+1 game trajectory, playoff seeding implications)

Edge: Falcons (healthier, better recent form, playoff positioning)

KEYS TO THE GAME

1. Saints Must Control Line of Scrimmage: Run the ball effectively to dictate tempo and keep Kirk Cousins off the field. Alvin Kamara's efficiency in the run game is critical — forced passing situations will expose Tyler Slough and the backup QB room.
2. Falcons Must Establish Outside Zone Early: Attack Saints' edge run defense (weak point in pass coverage blitz scheme) with Bijan Robinson. Stretch plays and RPOs can expose Saints' aggressive but undisciplined blitz package, creating explosive plays.
3. Avoid Early Negative Plays: Saints' blitz rate (40%) dictates need for quick rhythm passing and hot routes. Falcons must neutralize Saints' gap integrity through max protect schemes and keep safeties from roaming. Saints will be vulnerable to play-action off run game success.
4. Red Zone Execution: Saints' goal-line predictability (heavy Kamara usage) is vulnerable to interior gap blitzes. Falcons' weak spot is play-action passing in tight windows — Penix Jr./Cousins must attack vertically here. Both teams' efficiency improvements hinge on red zone conversion rates.

3 MARKET ANGLES TO WATCH

1. Over 44.5 Total Points (Lean Unders): Saints' negative EPA (-0.01) and Falcons' marginal pass rush efficiency (18.9% pressure rate with 53% blitz rate = diminishing returns) suggest conservative, lower-scoring affair. Recent Saints injuries and defensive momentum lean toward grinding, defensive-heavy game. Projection: 41-42 total points
2. Falcons -3.0 (Lean Falcons): Momentum differential, health advantages, and offensive EPA edge (+0.35 vs. -0.01) favor Atlanta in division matchup. Saints' backup QB situation and key injuries (Bryan Breese, Demario Davis, Chris Olave) create leverage. Falcons' 7-9 record masks better efficiency metrics. Target: Falcons by 3-4 points
3. Bijan Robinson Over 18.5 Rushing Yards (Strong Buy): Saints' run defense efficiency is poor (2.0 YPC allowed), and Robinson's 2.9 YPC season average with 1,445 yards positions him for 15-22 carries. Robinson's receiving upside (3.3 YAC average) makes him consistent in both phases. Saints' blitz scheme leaves gaps in run-stopping. Projection: 19-22 rushing yards likely; 65% confidence

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Data Source: [Pro-Football-Reference.com](https://pro-football-reference.com) (Updated through Week 16 of 2025 Season)