

NFL on Fox Pregame

Sunday, January 17, 2021

Curt Menefee

Terry Bradshaw

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Howie Long

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>> Legendary. Greatest of all time. Lasting legacies cemented over two decades. Through time, they stand together. Mirror images of statistical accomplishment. No quarterback equals their production. Records shattered. Criticisms conquered. Injuries endured. Trophies won. The number of times each has led their locker room, called an audible, launched a football, electrifying the scoreboard.

Their time at the top goes on and time is undefeated. Treasure this, America, as two greats face each other in the playoffs for the first time, perhaps for the final time in NFL history. Brady-Brees. On Fox.

CURT MENEFE: How special is this? Hands down one of the most anticipated quarterback matchups in the history of the playoffs. 43-year-old Tom Brady, the NFL's all-time leader in Super Bowl titles and TD passes, takes on Drew Brees, who has thrown for more completions and yards than anyone in the history of the league.

The Saints QB just turned 42 on Friday. The question is will he win his second Super Bowl ring this year or might this be the last time we see him ever suit up.

It's a divisional playoff showdown for the ages as the Tampa Bay Bucs battle the New Orleans Saints. The winner heads to Green Bay for next week's NFC Championship game. Time to get rolling right here from our home in Los Angeles, on the one and only Built Ford Tough Fox NFL Sunday Pregame Show brought by the Ford F Series, the official truck of the NFL.

CURT MENEFE: Come in and stay a while, folks, I'm Curt Menefee. Thank you for joining us for what should be the finale of a fantastic playoff weekend here in the National Football League. Along with Terry, Howie, Michael, Jimmy will join us in a minute, I'm ready to get rolling with the show. Can't wait for the game to start.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: Let's go.

CURT MENEFE: Let's do it. Reflecting a little bit on what happened in yesterday's action here in the divisional round. And it began with the NFC's No. 1 seeded Packers Aaron Rodgers picking apart the No. 1 defense in the Rams. Which means for the first time in his 16-year career Rodgers will host the NFC playoff game.

And last night in Buffalo, Bills Mafia was in full force. Buffalo shut down the Ravens. They'll play in the AFC Championship game for the first time since 1993. It has indeed been a while.

Michael, let's start here in the NFC. We've got Tampa taking on New Orleans. The winner goes to Green Bay. Do you think the Packers have a preference?

MICHAEL STRAHAN: Ever been beat up, Curt?

CURT MENEFE: Is that a personal question?

MICHAEL STRAHAN: In other words, yes, he has been beat up.

HOWIE LONG: It was a rhetorical question.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: When you're getting beat up, like the Packers got beat up by the Bucs, if you have never been beat up you might act like you want it again, but you don't really want it again.

TERRY BRADSHAW: I disagree. I disagree with that.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: You know what, Terry. Obviously you would know more about getting beat up. I do think that there's this myth about the dome teams going to the cold weather. And Tom Brady of all those years in New England. I don't think it affects him as much as it does the dome teams. If you're Green Bay you've been dominated by Tampa early in this year, you don't want to see it again.

CURT MENEFE: Getting down to the keys. Jimmy, do you think they have a preference?



JIMMY JOHNSON: Well, I'll tell you, a guy that's never been beat up and that's Aaron Rodgers. He's got the MVP trophy already taken. He's earned that right now. They are playing so good and playing with such confidence. They're playing their best football at the right time.

If there's any weakness at all with this Green Bay team, they don't play good run defense. But the offense is so good they get a big lead and so teams are always trying to play catch-up. We've got a great game tonight, but we'll have another great one next week.

HOWIE LONG: They did play better down the stretch to me a little better on defense. But this quarterback, and you talked about it, Aaron Rodgers is playing at as high a level as I've seen him play. And that's saying something. I think he's going to be the MVP of the league. I think in year two of Matt LaFleur's offense he's taken this offense which has had many great years under many great quarterbacks and head coaches to another level. And he's playing at a level that I think we've never seen.

CURT MENEFE: You know we mentioned in the AFC that Buffalo's in the championship for the first time, what, since 1993. They're the hottest team going in right now having won eight straight.

TERRY BRADSHAW: Right. I think head coach Sean McDermott did a great job putting that team together. He brought in Stefon Diggs. They're explosive on offense. Josh Allen in his third year went from 20 touchdowns passes to 37 touchdowns. They are explosive offensively. They'll quite run the football enough I don't think to win it at all. But who knows, this league is all about throwing and no more fun to watch than Josh Allen.

CURT MENEFE: Our show is all about this big matchup much more on it on the other side.

>> We're getting ready for two of the best to ever do it -- Drew Brees and Tom Brady. Then Tom Rinaldi tells us how these two legends are still rewriting the record books. And EA talks with Tampa Bay's Chris Godwin about getting another shot at their NFC South rivals.

ERIN ANDREWS: The Saints had your number during the regular season, and now here we go again.

HOWIE LONG: It's the divisional playoffs and the Fox Super-6 game is giving away \$250,000 to the winner.

TERRY BRADSHAW: Just pick six outcomes and you win. So whose money is it this time big guy, yours?

HOWIE LONG: Nope, yours.

TERRY BRADSHAW: Mine? I did the regular season. What are you talking about.

HOWIE LONG: Win Terry's money is for playoffs too. Download the Fox Super-6 app for your chance to win \$250,000 and Terry's all new 2021 Ford F-150. Enter now. It's free to play.

[COMMERCIAL]

>> They are dangerous offensively, but it all circles around their quarterback, Brady.

>> Caught for a touchdown by Mike Evans. Gronkowski, he pulled it in for the touchdown. For the end zone, touchdown for the Bucs, Antonio Brown. Chris Godwin, touchdown Tampa Bay. Bucs win, Bucs win.

CURT MENEFE: Look, Tom Brady and all those weapons get the headlines. But it's hard to write the story of the Bucs offense without this man. Chris Godwin, probably their most consistent player on offense and he's a guy that nobody really talks a whole lot about, Erin Andrews.

ERIN ANDREWS: His quarterback certainly talks about him. I actually asked Tom Brady a little bit about him. He said, Chris Godwin, a very mature guy. Very quiet but he said his juice really gets going when it's game time. And he can't wait to see it now today.

This Bucs team not the same disjointed group we saw during the first half of the season. It was funny, Bruce Arians, telling our group on the conference call, I don't want to go back the those first eight weeks. I'm very happy where I am.

But Godwin telling me he's thankful for the growing pains and the fact that this group went through it together and this team very happy with the chemistry they've created.

>> For the first time in 13 years.

ERIN ANDREWS: What does it feel like to be in the playoffs in Tampa Bay? That hasn't happened in quite some time, my friend.

CHRIS GODWIN: That's 100 percent correct.

ERIN ANDREWS: You've not heard that one at all.

CHRIS GODWIN: Have not heard that one.

ERIN ANDREWS: I asked your quarterback for a couple of

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

nuggets on you. He didn't say "great" once. He said "great" twice -- great, great hands. Smooth route runner. He loves you. But take me back when you first had to meet him and try to practice with him.

CHRIS GODWIN: I think the very first time it's a little nerve racking. I watched Tom play my entire childhood. He might almost be 20 years older than me, which is crazy.

ERIN ANDREWS: Shhh.

CHRIS GODWIN: Seeing him from afar and watching how accomplished he is and hearing about how fiery he is. But when I got out there and just got a feel for him, like, within the first 20 minutes I was, like, it's going to be so different than what I was expecting. He made you feel right at home.

ERIN ANDREWS: I spoke to Tom and Rob about this was the best roster they ever played with. I mean, let's go, baby. This treasure chest was huge. But everybody has to learn how to play together. I mean how difficult is that really?

CHRIS GODWIN: It's unbelievably hard.

>> I'm worried about the Bucs reaching their potential. Are Tom Brady's Bucs in trouble?

CHRIS GODWIN: So many things that go into building that chemistry and figuring out how to design plays for the right guys and figuring out how we mesh well together.

It didn't click at first. We received glimpses of it Tom would make a great pass and you were just like, whoa. We have the guys we need, but you can't expedite the process of creating chemistry.

>> (Indiscernible) for Tampa Bay. They're a legit contender.

ERIN ANDREWS: The Saints had your number during the regular season. What is the biggest difference with your group heading into round three with New Orleans?

CHRIS GODWIN: Wow, I think the biggest difference would probably be just our confidence and our continuity. And I think that that's come over the progression of the season and working throughout the entire year through the ups and downs and just really finding where we are and where we want to be.

>> Let's go!

CHRIS GODWIN: I know Tom's fired up. I know the rest

of us are fired up. We're locked in. It will be a really good show.

ERIN ANDREWS: And they wanted this matchup. They absolutely did. I don't know if anyone checks out Tom Brady's Instagram account, but on Saturday he posted the old, "I don't know who you want us to play but I know who I want to play." Now Chris Godwin was four years old when Tom Brady entered the league in 2000. I'll say it: That's annoying. I'm just kidding. That's because I'm 42 as well.

Now of course he's one of Tom's most trusted targets. This is Godwin's first playoff run. Last week against Washington not going how he wanted it to go, but he said I'm going to look past it; I'm going to worry about catching those balls this weekend and be the real me against New Orleans. Howie, I cannot wait for this matchup.

HOWIE LONG: Yeah, it's the matchup I think everyone wanted to see. You talk about Godwin, I think he's a New England kind of guy. He's a guy that I think Tom was on the same page with the earliest this team.

But they had their struggles putting it all together. Like everything else, Tom chose wisely. Talk about Gronkowski, who has come on the latter half of the year. Brown, who Tom was instrumental in bringing in, and Evans, such a dynamic player, particularly down in the end zone. Jones and Fournette. Fournette was a great pick-up, given Jones' health. The pieces are there. The team's come together. And they've figured it out. And today is kind of the final exam for them in terms of the NFC.

TERRY BRADSHAW: People sitting at home getting ready for the game are torn between who they want to pick because those teams are so outstanding. Sweeping a football team during a season, that is playing them twice, play them again for the third time, it's very difficult.

Howie's '83 Raiders got swept by Seattle in the regular season, came back and beat them in the championship game. Went on to win a Super Bowl.

Michael, in 2007 the Giants swept by the Dallas Cowboys only to come back and beat them and go on to win the Super Bowl.

Today's game is not about -- forget about the quarterbacks -- it's about the guys that are matching it up. It's the coordinators. You're looking at Byron Leftwich, offensive coordinator for Tampa, going up against Dennis Allen, defensive coordinator, how they match up. Sean Payton, a great offensive mind for the Saints. He's going up against Todd Bowles, the defensive coordinator for the Tampa Bay

Bucs. Those are the matchups you've got to watch out for.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: And defense. I hear all this offensive talk. It's about defense for the Bucs. And you look at these stats: First in rush defense; fourth in sacks; eighth in scoring; sixth overall. You go, well, how do the Saints, how are they going to score? It's going to be a low-scoring game.

Well, the Bucs are 21st in pass defense, which is the strength of the Saints. So I mean, Jimmy, that's going to be the thing. They have to get some guys up front, get Brees off his mark. And tackling is key. They have to tackle.

HOWIE LONG: Short passing.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: Short passing, you have to tackle, get those guys on the ground.

JIMMY JOHNSON: Yes, and Michael, New Orleans they'll be shorthanded. You look at it, Taysom Hill is out. Latavius Murray is out. So all the pressure is going to be on Alvin Kamara. You look at it. Even though Tampa, you said it, they play great run defense, Kamara, he is so talented. He'll keep them honest. He'll be able to run the football.

The other thing, Brees likes to throw the ball underneath. He'll throw the ball to Kamara on option routes underneath and on the screen passes. And you mark it down. Kamara will break a couple of those for some long runs.

CURT MENEFEE: All right. We're just moments away from two of the top three quarterbacks in the history of the National Football League going head to head -- Tom Brady, Drew Brees. More on that next.

[COMMERCIAL].

>> It's the NFL Divisional Playoffs -- Bucs, Saints; Brady-Brees. It's the oldest quarterback matchup to start a game in NFL history. And on Nickel-odeon. Fox is bringing you the NFL app. Nickel-odeon, experience the game like never before with exclusive Nickel-odeon features. Large print subtitles; volume that's way too loud and can't be turned down; a reminder to take your pills at halftime. When someone scores a touchdown, your grandson calls and tells you he loves you. And the game ends at 4:00 p.m. -- no matter what. With Tom Brady and Drew Brees starting at quarterback, this is your grandfather's football game only on Nickel-odeon. Antenna not included.

CURT MENEFEE: See, lawyers, we didn't steal that idea.

That's our own.

HOWIE LONG: That's funny.

CURT MENEFEE: Old joking aside, when it comes to Brady and Brees, combined they've spent more than nine decades on this earth -- half of them while playing in the NFL with 27 Pro Bowls, 10 Super Bowl appearances and seven Super Bowl wins. But after today, only one will still be alive in the playoffs.

We turn to Tom Rinaldi to help give us a little perspective on a matchup unlike any we've seen in the postseason. Hello, Tom.

TOM RINALDI: Hello, Curt. Inevitable. That's the word that Drew Brees used to describe this first-ever matchup between two 40-plus-something starting quarterbacks in the postseason. But maybe the better label would be improbable. With combined age of 85 years old, how is it that they're still out there? They're an alchemy of commitment, desire and undying competitive fire.

There is such blessing in beginning. When everything about the game is a gift. The passion is pure. The future clean. The path clear. We all know it doesn't stay that way. The force of time and weight of life and wear of seasons, they have their way with us. So we fall and fail and stop. Somehow they don't. They're still playing the long game.

>> Tom, what do you think makes a good ball player?

TOM BRADY: There's challenges when I was young. There's challenges now. And I think just understanding what those are -- when you're 25 it's different because you think it goes on forever.

DREW BREES: I've always said as long as I'm having fun, playing at a high level and I'm able to stay healthy, why wouldn't I play this game as long as I can?

TOM RINALDI: Consider, since 2004 they've taken 36,451 snaps. They have 442 career wins. That's more than 27 and a half regular seasons worth. But they persist. And perhaps their greatest victory against their most common fault, time.

DREW BREES: Eventually your physical skills diminish, but the more experience you have, the more repetition, the more wisdom -- if you can keep the physical skills there, then you are not only in the prime but you are in your best prime.

TOM BRADY: This is the time to capitalize. Now I have



the mental knowledge, there's no blitzes or defenses I haven't seen. I feel like I have the answers to the test.

TOM RINALDI: The laces get dirty, the ball battered, but the gift only lasts as long as it's used. A combined 41 seasons in, they resist and remain against the ebb and the age and the fade. They do more than endure, they prevail. For how much longer, that's not the point. Today they're here. Then. Now. Still.

TOM BRADY: The ball doesn't care how old I am.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: That was an incredible piece by Tom. That brought back some memories and brought tears to my eyes.

HOWIE LONG: That's why he's here, TB.

TERRY BRADSHAW: It was nice. I'm an old timer. I've got to tell you, like most of you, I can't wait to watch this football game. Two great quarterbacks. And I had some kind of stat thing I wanted to use, but who cares about that junk.

I want to go back and just tell everybody out there, especially all you future quarterbacks, I've done this twice already this year, here's the third time. Watch their technique throwing the football. Watch how they handle themselves in the pocket. Watch the lack of panic in both of these quarterbacks. Always a high release, leg forward, accurate as all get out. And both are on fire. Brees hurt earlier, back playing great football. And Brady in the last five wins, 14 touchdowns to just one interception.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: When you're watching these two don't you get the sense that as you watch Tom Brady you know that there's more to it? He's not done. This is not it for Tom Brady. But when you watch Drew Brees there's a finality to each game that's being played right now. I kind of feel like I kind of understand how Drew feels because having a contract with the network before you retire --

HOWIE LONG: You had something?

MICHAEL STRAHAN: I was fortunate -- yeah, I had one with you -- you didn't know. If you had known I probably wouldn't have gotten the contract so we didn't tell you until it was too late.

HOWIE LONG: Full basket.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: I got the basket. But to know that you kind of feel retirement, when you start thinking about it, it's probably time to get there. I know for Drew, had I won a Super Bowl earlier in my career like he did I don't know if

I would have lasted as long as I did. But to see him, it kind of makes you sad because you realize one of these will be the final time that Drew Brees is on the field. But to watch these two play, everybody at home, enjoy this; soak it in, because even after this game you're going to have another great one with Aaron Rodgers. But soak this in. This is a once-in-a-generation matchup.

JIMMY JOHNSON: Michael, think about this. They're playing with players one-half their age. And in the past -- I talked to their head coaches. And the coaches mentioned this about them: They said, you know, a lot of veterans, as they get experience and they go through the years, they tend to slack off a little bit. Well, not these two Hall of Famers, because they said both of them, as the years have gone by, they've spent more time taking care of themselves physically. They've spent more time in preparing for ball games. So they're better prepared than what they were than when they first came in the league.

I'll tell you what, Howie, these two are two of the greatest players ever to play in the NFL. It's going to be quite a treat.

HOWIE LONG: Some years ago, obviously Drew changed the culture down in New Orleans, and Tom Brady walked in that locker room down in Tampa Bay and changed that culture. And Bruce talks about the first nine weeks of the season not wanting to look back at it -- I understand why -- because it just took time, in spite of all the talent they have down there, to get things all together, get them on the same page, figure out who they are.

I think a big part of it has been the protection. And it was something that lacked versus New Orleans. It was the difference in my mind in those two games. It was protection and Tampa Bay shooting themselves in the foot.

And I think the protection comes from play-action pass, six, seven in protection, with Gronk, not as a receiver but as a pass blocker. And Aaron Stinnie, the pride of St. Anne's-Belfield, under John Blake, gets the start at right guard today. Look for six, seven in protection when they take those shots down the field. Protection has been considerably better.

CURT MENEFEE: Before we get more from you, Jay Glazer, about these two quarterbacks, injuries at the running back position for both these teams could affect today's game. Let's get the Ins and Outs brought to you by GEICO.

JAY GLAZER: We'll start here. As Jimmy told us earlier, the Saints are without Latavius Murray and Taysom Hill. I talked to the head coach Sean Payton this morning. He



said you guys all know what Taysom Hill does for offense, how much variation we can do. But what you don't know is the effect he has on the attitude of our running game. When he's in there our running backs run so much more violently. There's a totally different attitude when he's in there.

On the other side, I talked to Bruce Arians this morning. He said Ronald Jones, he's going to be active. He missed last week's game with a quad injury. He said I'm going to still start Leonard Fournette; however, I'm going to work Ronald Jones in. Series by series, and then after that go with the hot hand.

Stray, I just want to come off what you just said. Still shaking from that piece from Tom Rinaldi. Incredible, right? Drew Brees, tonight will be the last game he plays at the Superdome and whatever his last game is, if they lose tonight, they lose next week, that will be the last game he plays in the NFL. I really believe this is it.

TERRY BRADSHAW: Believe it or is that a fact?

JAY GLAZER: That is it. Drew Brees will be done, Tom Brady will continue. Drew Brees, this will be his last game in the Superdome.

CURT MENEFEE: Absolutely. Thanks for the breaking news there as well. Look, the winner of this game will face Aaron Rodgers and Green Bay in Green Bay next Sunday on Fox. That will set the NFC Championship game. The AFC title tilt is already set. Buffalo got in last night. And today, Kansas City took on Cleveland. They say good news and bad news. Patrick Mahomes, hooking up with Travis Kelce for a 20-yard touchdown, that put them up by 10. But in third quarter, Mahomes took a hit that knocked him out of the game with a concussion. He did not finish. So we will find out his status for next week. But they do win 22-17. They will host the AFC championship game.

Now just download the Super-6, you can play for today's game and a chance to win 250,000 of Terry's money.

TERRY BRADSHAW: I don't have any more money.

CURT MENEFEE: It's guaranteed to go to someone today, a random player on the Super-6 App will win that all new Ford F-150. All right, guys. They will win later. We want to know who you think will win right now. Let's talk about the Bucs and Saints. Pick a winner. We will start with Jimmy Johnson.

JIMMY JOHNSON: Well, I want to win Terry's horse that he said he was going to give me last week. I'm going to pick the New Orleans Saints by three points.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: You know what, Jimmy said earlier Tom and these guys are playing with guys half their age. I'm doing this show with guys, I'm half their age. Pick whichever one you want to pick. I'll go with Tom Brady. I'm going to take the Bucs by seven. Hard to beat somebody three times.

HOWIE LONG: It's a fight for the basement. Jimmy was in it. Now I'm in it. I want him to be back in it. So I've got to go Tampa Bay by three.

TERRY BRADSHAW: I'm the world's biggest homer I love. From Louisiana, grew up with the Saints, I'm picking the Saints by - get ready for this, America - 17 points. You heard it.

JAY GLAZER: I'll pick for my doppelganger, Tony Gonzalez, he can't take the Chiefs. So he's going to go for the Saints plus three.

CURT MENEFEE: We'll find out who is right, but more importantly, we'll find out who moves on. Tom Brady against Drew Brees. The Bucs against the Saints. A trip to the NFC title game is on the line. Kickoff is on the other side. As always, we thank you for watching the Built Ford Tough Fox NFL Sunday Pregame Show. Enjoy the game.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

