IN THE SOUTH



TAMPA'S RB DUO MAKES HISTORY

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WASH TAKES OVER PANTHERS DEFENSE

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FALCONS CHASE ANSWERS IN MADRID

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WHO RUN IT

Week of NOV 7 · Edition 5

THIS WEEK'S EDITION

INSIDE THE SOUTH

EDITION 5
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026

GROUND GAME RULES, RACE TIGHTENS

Tampa Bay turned a rain-soaked Sunday into a rushing clinic and climbed back into the NFC South picture, while the rest of the division spent the week shuffling rosters, coaching staffs and travel itineraries. Grab a coffee — there's a lot to get through before the Bucs kick off in Chicago.

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TAMPA'S RB DUO MAKES HISTORY

WHO RUN IT

Carolina promoted its defensive line coach to interim coordinator after firing Ejiro Evero, and head coach Dave Canales has one simple demand for him.



The NFC South offers a tempting football theory: find the teams that run the ball best, and you should find the teams winning the most. Right now, the division is making that theory sweat.

Tampa Bay leads the NFL in rushing yards per game, and Atlanta ranks fifth, yet both are 3–5. Carolina sits atop the division at 3–4 despite ranking 22nd on the ground. New Orleans is 28th in rushing offense and 29th against the run. The gap in rushing production is real; its connection to winning is more complicated.

Sources: StatMuse rushing leaderboard, lowest rushing averages and standings and run-defense leaderboard, cross-checked against StatRankings offense and defense rankings. Retrieved Nov. 7, 2026.

THE CURRENT PICTURE: TWO LEADERS, TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF TROUBLE

Regular season through Thursday, Nov. 6. Tampa Bay and Atlanta have played eight games; Carolina and New Orleans have played seven. Rankings use yards per game rather than totals for that reason. Defensive rank 1 means fewest yards allowed. YPC means yards per carry; values are rounded.

Table sources: NFL.com rushing offense and rushing defense for totals and YPC; StatMuse offensive leaders, offensive lower rankings, defensive leaders and records and defensive lower rankings.

THE QUESTION OF WHO RUNS THE NFC SOUTH MAY BE ANSWERED BY WHO RUNS THE BALL BEST.

TAMPA BAY: WINNING THE GROUND BATTLE, STILL CHASING WINS

The Bucs have the division's most complete ground game: the most rushing yards per game in the league and, as of this week, the fewest allowed. Their 5.1 yards per carry is among the NFL's best and well clear of the rest of the South, so this isn't a case of piling up yards through a mountain of inefficient handoffs.

Subtract yards allowed from yards gained and Tampa Bay is about plus-88.6 rushing yards per game, by far the best differential in the league. Yet the Bucs are 3–5, even after going 3–1 since an 0–4 start. The lesson isn't that rushing is worthless. It's that winning one phase, even on both sides of the ball, doesn't settle everything else that happens on Sunday.

A note on that No. 1 run-defense ranking: Tampa Bay moved into first after Jacksonville's Thursday-night game raised the Jaguars' average. The Bucs' margin over second-place Pittsburgh is 3.9 yards per game.

ATLANTA: A STRONG ENGINE, A LESS CONVINCING BRAKE

Atlanta belongs in the same top-10 offensive conversation, but not in the same two-way category. The Falcons average 134.8 rushing yards and allow 118.3, a differential of about plus-16.5. The offense is productive; the run defense sits in the middle of the league at 18th.

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WHO RUN IT

That distinction matters. Tampa Bay's advantage comes from creating yards and denying them. Atlanta's comes mostly from creating them. Identical 3–5 records hide very different rushing profiles.

NEW ORLEANS: THE PROBLEM RUNS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS

The Saints' 86.0 rushing yards per game and 3.5 yards per carry describe both a production problem and an efficiency problem. On defense, allowing 139.4 yards per game at 4.8 per carry compounds it. Their rushing differential is about minus-53.4 yards per game, the worst in the division.

Fixing the running game means more than finding extra carries. The Saints need the carries they already get to accomplish more.

CAROLINA: BELOW AVERAGE DOESN'T MEAN BOTTOM OF THE BARREL

Carolina deserves a more careful label. At 22nd, the Panthers are below average in rushing production, but they aren't in the bottom 10, and their 4.2 yards per carry is well

The main comparison uses winning percentage to account for the move from 16 games to 17 in 2021. To keep the signs intuitive, each ranking is converted to the number of teams it outranked (32 minus the rank), so a better ranking produces a higher number. A positive correlation means better rushing rankings tended to come with more winning; zero means little linear relationship.

Pearson correlations, rounded to two decimals; n = 10 for each team. Using the raw rank numbers instead flips every sign but changes no strength. Atlanta's defense/win-percentage value is about +0.003, which rounds to +0.00. All inputs are in the appendix.

THE BUCS' DECADE: RUN DEFENSE HAS BEEN THE CLEARER COMPANION TO SUCCESS

Tampa Bay's rushing-offense relationship is weak, at +0.19. Its run-defense relationship is much stronger, at +0.63. The examples make the contrast easy to see: the 2020 Bucs went 11–5 while ranking 28th in rushing offense and first against the run. In 2021, they went 13–4 with the 26th-ranked rushing offense and the third-ranked run defense.

Then came the other side of the story. Tampa Bay finished last in rushing offense in both 2022 and 2023, yet won eight and nine games and took the division both years. The jump to fourth in rushing offense in 2024 came with a 10–7

ahead of New Orleans' 3.5. Both teams run the ball about 24 times a game, so similar volume is producing different results.

The bigger warning is on defense. Carolina allows 140.7 rushing yards per game, 30th in the NFL. Its differential of about minus-38.7 beats New Orleans' but still leaves the Panthers on the wrong side of the ground battle. Even so, their 3–4 record leads the division by winning percentage, another reminder that rushing rankings aren't standings in disguise.

Sources for the four team sections: the table sources above. Rushing differentials are the author's calculations from those figures; small differences can come from rounding.

WHAT 10 COMPLETED SEASONS TELL US

To test the relationship, I compared each team's NFL rushing-offense and run-defense rankings with its regular-season results from 2016 through 2025: 10 seasons per team, 40 team-seasons in all. The unfinished 2026 season is left out.

season, but the decade as a whole doesn't support a simple "better rushing rank, more Bucs wins" rule. For Tampa Bay, stopping the run has been the steadier statistical companion to winning.

THE FALCONS' DECADE: STRONG RUNNING GAMES, LOSING RECORDS

Atlanta shows a moderate offensive relationship, at +0.48, and essentially no linear defensive one. Its 2020 season is a useful counterexample to any universal run-defense theory: the Falcons ranked sixth against the run and still finished 4–12.

More recently, Atlanta ranked third, ninth, 10th and eighth in rushing offense from 2022 through 2025. Its records were 7–10, 7–10, 8–9 and 8–9. Four straight top-10 rushing offenses; four straight losing seasons. That doesn't make those running games bad. It makes them insufficient.

THE SAINTS' DECADE: THE STRONGEST DEFENSIVE RELATIONSHIP IN THE DIVISION

New Orleans posts positive relationships on both sides: +0.65 for rushing offense and +0.81 for run defense, the strongest single figure in the study. From 2018 through 2020, the Saints ranked second, fourth and fourth against the run and went a combined 38–10.

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WHO RUN IT

Even here the distinction matters. The 2019 Saints won 13 games with the 16th-ranked rushing offense; their fourth-ranked run defense fits the broader pattern better. New Orleans' history supports the value of a balanced ground game, but it doesn't show that rushing offense alone drove those winning seasons.

THE PANTHERS' DECADE: THE CLEAREST OFFENSIVE RELATIONSHIP, WITH IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS

Carolina's offensive correlation, +0.70, is the highest of the four teams, and its defensive figure is also positive, at +0.66. The 2017 Panthers show the upside: fourth in rushing offense, third against the run, 11–5.

Still, Carolina ranked fourth in rushing offense again in 2018 and finished 7–9, and its top-10 rushing offense in 2022 came with a 7–10 record. Last season cut the other way: the Panthers won the division at 8–9 with middle-of-the-pack rankings on both sides, 19th on offense and 20th on defense. Better rushing rankings have generally accompanied better Panthers results, but never as a guarantee.

There are limits. Ten seasons per team is a small sample. Rankings ignore the size of the gaps between teams. Coaching changes, quarterback play, injuries, schedule strength and turnovers aren't controlled for. And game flow cuts both ways: a lead creates rushing opportunities and reduces the opponent's need to run, so these correlations can't say which way cause and effect runs. This is an association study, not a prediction model.

A check using Spearman's rank correlation keeps the main team-level distinctions intact: Tampa Bay's offensive relationship stays weak, Atlanta's defensive relationship stays weak, and New Orleans and Carolina stay positive on both sides. The exact coefficients move, which is another reason to focus on the pattern rather than treat the decimals as destiny.

For Bucs fans, the takeaway is encouraging but demanding. Tampa Bay's current ground-game profile is the division's strongest, and its run defense resembles the ingredient most associated with better Bucs seasons over the past decade. But a 3–5 record makes the final point unavoidable: dominate the ground game, then finish the

Historical examples and correlations: author calculations from the dated TeamRankings regular-season snapshots and StatMuse season records linked in the references. No postseason games are included.

THE VERDICT: A FOUNDATION, NOT A FORMULA

Across all 40 NFC South team-seasons, the correlation with winning percentage is about +0.30 for rushing offense and +0.61 for run defense. The run-defense figure is roughly twice as large in this dataset, though pooling four different teams is a descriptive summary, not a controlled experiment.

The records tell the same broad story. Top-10 rushing offenses combined for a .551 winning percentage, against .460 for bottom-10 rushing offenses. Top-10 run defenses combined for .594, against .344 for bottom-10 run defenses. In this sample, a great run defense was worth more than a great running game, and a bad run defense cost far more than a bad running game.

Game-weighted winning percentages. The groups contain different numbers of seasons, and seasons ranked 11th through 22nd are left out of this comparison; the counts are in the appendix.
rest of the job. The next test is Sunday night at Chicago, against the NFL's second-ranked rushing offense.

Source: author calculations from the 40 team-seasons in the appendix. The statistical cautions describe this study's design and limits, not proven causes of any team's record.

DATA APPENDIX: ALL 40 TEAM-SEASONS

Each cell lists record / rushing-offense rank / run-defense rank. Rankings are NFL-wide and based on yards per game; rank 1 is best. Year labels refer to the NFL season, not the calendar year in which its final game was played.

METHOD AND SENSITIVITY CHECKS

For each franchise, Pearson's r was calculated between each unit's teams-outranked score (32 minus its published rank) and (a) wins divided by games and (b) raw wins. No season in the sample included a tied game. One published ranking was itself a tie, Tampa Bay's 28th-place rushing offense in 2020, and it was kept as published. Correlations were calculated at full precision, then rounded. For the tier comparison, top 10 means ranks 1–10 and bottom 10 means ranks 23–32.

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WHO RUN IT

These observations aren't fully independent: division rivals play each other twice a year, and consecutive seasons share players and coaches. No claim of statistical significance or causal effect is made.

REFERENCES AND SOURCE TRAIL

Whew!! Thank you, ProFootballReference. All sources were accessed Nov. 7, 2026. All 40 historical records and rankings were cross-checked against Pro Football Reference league pages; the one difference found (New Orleans' 2018 rushing offense, seventh rather than sixth) is corrected here. For historical rankings, each snapshot date falls after the regular-season finale and before the first playoff game, because TeamRankings can include postseason games in later snapshots.

WASH TAKES OVER PANTHERS DEFENSE

Todd Wash was promoted to interim defensive coordinator with one clear mandate from Dave Canales: stop the run.



A week after firing defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero, Carolina promoted defensive line coach Todd Wash to run the unit on an interim basis, and head coach Dave Canales did not bury the instructions. Canales offered one overriding requisition to Wash after the promotion, telling him simply to “Stop the run.” The directive comes after a Panthers defense that has allowed the second-most rushing yards per game in the NFC South.

Wash ran his first practice as interim coordinator on Tuesday, and Panthers.com described him as a “football guy” preparing for a new role with the same mindset that got him the job. Defenders on the roster have publicly backed the switch, saying the unit is in good hands even amid the change at the top. Carolina also brought back DeAngelo Hall as cornerbacks coach, the first staff move since Evero's firing, adding another voice to a defense trying to find its footing midseason.

CANALES OFFERED ONE OVERRIDING REQUISITION TO WASH AFTER THE PROMOTION, TELLING HIM SIMPLY TO “STOP THE RUN.”

The early returns will be tested immediately. Carolina's Week 9 matchup with Denver puts the run-stopping emphasis front and center, and how the Panthers respond could shape perception of Wash's interim tenure heading into the stretch run.

Whether this is a short-term fix or the start of something longer will play out over the next several weeks, but for a division leader with a shaky run defense, the stakes of getting it right are immediate.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUCS

Wash's stop-the-run mandate will face its biggest test in Week 12, when Carolina travels to Tampa to face the NFL's No. 1 rushing offense.

SAINTS CUT MILLER, ADD TYSON AND BANKS

New Orleans waived leading rusher Kendre Miller and activated rookie receiver Jordyn Tyson and left tackle Kelvin Banks Jr. ahead of facing Cleveland.



The Saints shook up their roster on Saturday, waiving running back Kendre Miller just as the team activated two significant pieces off injured reserve. Miller, a former third-round pick, had been New Orleans' leading rusher through seven games before his release, a move a source familiar with the situation confirmed came as the Saints prepared for Sunday's game against Cleveland.

The corresponding moves brought back real reinforcements. Rookie wide receiver Jordyn Tyson and left tackle Kelvin Banks Jr. were both activated from injured reserve ahead of the Browns game. Tyson's return has been a long time coming; he hasn't played since injuring his hamstring in a joint practice against Jacksonville back on August 13, and he only returned to practice as a limited participant this past week before being cleared for his season debut.

DROPPING A LEADING RUSHER WHILE WELCOMING BACK A FIRST-ROUND-CALIBER TACKLE AND A HIGHLY ANTICIPATED ROOKIE RECEIVER IS THE KIND OF ROSTER CHURN THAT SIGNALS A TEAM STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT ITS BEST VERSION WITH A THIRD OF THE SEASON GONE.

New Orleans also elevated running back Zamir White and kicker Charlie Smyth for Sunday's game, giving the Saints a reshuffled backfield and a rookie receiver finally ready to contribute as the team tries to escape the bottom of the NFC South standings.

The timing underscores how much New Orleans is searching for answers. Dropping a leading rusher while welcoming back a first-round-caliber tackle and a highly anticipated rookie receiver is the kind of roster churn that signals a team still trying to figure out its best version with a third of the season gone.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUCS

A reshuffled Saints backfield and the long-awaited debut of Jordyn Tyson are developments the Buccaneers will want to track before facing New Orleans in Weeks 15 and 18.

FALCONS CHASE ANSWERS IN MADRID

Atlanta faces Joe Burrow and the Bengals at Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu with Michael Penix Jr.'s outlook in question and James Pearce Jr.'s season debut still uncertain.



The Falcons' Week 9 trip doubles as a continent-crossing reset. Atlanta faces Cincinnati at Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu Stadium as part of the NFL's Madrid showcase, and the Falcons arrive with plenty still unresolved. Billy Bowman Jr. has been cleared to play, but Brian Robinson Jr. was ruled out, and Divine Deablo was limited in Atlanta's first full practice on Spanish soil.

The bigger storylines sit on offense and defense alike. Reports out of Atlanta describe uncertainty around Michael Penix Jr.'s outlook even as outlets frame this as the moment for him to seize control of the offense. Bijan Robinson, who has dealt with his own recent rushing struggles, gets a chance to bounce back against a Bengals defense that has to account for Atlanta's run game. James Pearce Jr. is questionable for what would be his season debut, a return that has already been delayed once.

THERE'S ALSO A PERSONAL SUBPLOT: FALCONS SAFETY JESSIE BATES III FACES HIS FORMER TEAM IN CINCINNATI, A REUNION WITH MIXED EMOTIONS GIVEN THAT THE BENGALS HAVEN'T REACHED THE PLAYOFFS SINCE BATES LEFT AND THE FALCONS HAVEN'T GOTTEN THERE SINCE HE ARRIVED.

Cincinnati brings its own intrigue. Joe Burrow enters having beaten Penix and the Falcons in three straight meetings, and Bengals receivers Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins present a coverage problem Atlanta's secondary will have to solve. There's also a personal subplot: Falcons safety Jessie Bates III faces his former team in Cincinnati, a reunion with mixed emotions given that the Bengals haven't reached the playoffs since Bates left and the Falcons haven't gotten there since he arrived.

Atlanta has made a batch of roster moves ahead of kickoff as it tries to find its footing after a rocky start. Whatever happens at the Bernabeu, the Falcons return from Spain needing to show the offense can look like the unit it was built to be.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUCS

Atlanta enters Madrid already needing separation from Tampa Bay, which sits half a game behind the division lead; whatever the result, the Falcons come home still looking up at a crowded NFC South.

SAINTS CHASE ELUSIVE HOME WIN

New Orleans hosts a Cleveland team breaking in a new quarterback as the Saints try to find their first home victory of the season.



The Saints host the Browns in Week 9 looking for something that has eluded them all season: a win at home. New Orleans enters at 2-5, and Cleveland arrives having made a change at quarterback, though the Saints defense isn't expecting a wholesale shift in the Browns' offensive approach because of it.

New Orleans will lean on some fresh faces to try to flip the script. Rookie receiver Jordyn Tyson is focused on making his long-awaited NFL debut, and running back Audric Estimé returns to the lineup as well. Kicker Charlie Smyth is set to handle duties on Sunday, part of a Saints team searching for answers across multiple phases.

NEW ORLEANS SITS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE NFC SOUTH STANDINGS, AND HEAD COACH KELLEN MOORE HAS ADDRESSED BOTH THE INJURY REPORT AND THE ESTIMÉ SITUATION AS THE TEAM TRIES TO PATCH TOGETHER A WINNING FORMULA AGAINST A CLEVELAND TEAM IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO BEAT AT HOME.

The matchup carries extra weight inside the division race. New Orleans sits at the bottom of the NFC South standings, and head coach Kellen Moore has addressed both the injury report and the Estimé situation as the team tries to patch together a winning formula against a Cleveland team it should be able to beat at home.

Whether the Saints can turn preparation into results remains the question that has defined their season. A first home win would be a small step, but in a division as unsettled as the NFC South has been, New Orleans knows every opportunity matters.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUCS

New Orleans remains the division's clear bottom feeder at 2-5, a team the Buccaneers will see twice later this season, in Weeks 15 and 18.

DIVISION-LEADING PANTHERS HOST BRONCOS

Carolina enters Week 9 still atop the NFC South and tries to hold the line at home against Bo Nix and Denver.



Carolina remains the surprise of the NFC South, sitting atop the division entering its Week 9 matchup with Denver even as Panthers.com's own coverage notes the race has tightened since Week 8. The Panthers released their depth chart and worked through injury reports that saw five players miss Thursday practice, while the team added cornerback depth ahead of kickoff against the Broncos.

Carolina's preview material points to a new-look defense and a more mobile version of quarterback Bryce Young as things to watch, with the Panthers trying to hold serve at home. Denver, for its part, is treating the trip as anything but a trap game, with the Broncos' own coverage framing it as the next most important game on their schedule and noting Bo Nix has gotten another weapon back via the injury report.

CAROLINA HAS BUILT ITS 3-4 RECORD DESPITE RANKING AMONG THE LEAGUE'S WEAKER RUSHING OFFENSES, AND A HOME LOSS TO DENVER WOULD IMMEDIATELY REOPEN THE DIVISION DOOR THAT TAMPA BAY AND ATLANTA ARE BOTH TRYING TO PUSH THROUGH.

The stakes are real for both sides. Carolina has built its 3-4 record despite ranking among the league's weaker rushing offenses, and a home loss to a Denver team that has been playing with week-by-week focus would immediately reopen the division door that Tampa Bay and Atlanta are both trying to push through.

For a Panthers team that has made headlines more for front-office intrigue than big offensive performances, simply protecting a home game against a quality AFC opponent would be a meaningful step toward validating their spot atop the standings.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUCS

Carolina's hold on first place is the division's biggest surprise of the season, and the Buccaneers get their last shot at the Panthers in a Week 12 home game at Raymond James Stadium.

NO PASSES NEEDED: BUCS SHUT OUT FALCONS

Bucky Irving and Kenny Gainwell combined for 310 rushing yards as Tampa Bay beat Atlanta 16-0 without completing a single pass.



Raymond James Stadium turned into a mud pit on November 1, and the Buccaneers decided the only sensible response was to stop throwing altogether. Baker Mayfield attempted three passes and completed zero of them, yet Tampa Bay still rolled to a 16-0 shutout of Atlanta because the Bucs ran the ball 56 times for 324 yards, a franchise record that broke the previous mark of 283 yards set in 2015. Three Chase McLaughlin field goals and a single rushing touchdown were all the scoring Tampa Bay needed in steady rain that turned the game into a ground-and-pound affair from the opening snap.

The engine behind it was a backfield that made NFL history. Bucky Irving carried 27 times for 170 yards and a touchdown, including a 46-yard burst on 2nd-and-1 that set up his own 4-yard score four plays later. Kenny Gainwell added 25 carries for 140 yards, closing out the game on Tampa Bay's final drive. According to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Irving and Gainwell became just the fourth teammate pairing ever to each record 20-plus carries and 125-plus rushing yards in the same game, joining Jim Brown and Bobby Mitchell from 1959, and per Elias Sports, the first ever to both clear 25 carries and 125 yards apiece. It was the first time a Buccaneers duo topped 100 rushing yards each since Warrick Dunn and Mike Alstott did it in 1998.

IRVING AND GAINWELL BECAME JUST THE FOURTH TEAMMATE PAIRING EVER TO EACH RECORD 20-PLUS CARRIES AND 125-PLUS RUSHING YARDS IN THE SAME GAME, JOINING JIM BROWN AND BOBBY MITCHELL FROM 1959.

Atlanta had no answer. Bijan Robinson managed just 76 yards on 19 carries, his longest gain a 26-yarder that ended in an interception on the ensuing drive. Michael Penix Jr. threw four interceptions, and the Falcons finished with 99 rushing yards on 28 carries. Atlanta never seriously threatened to score.

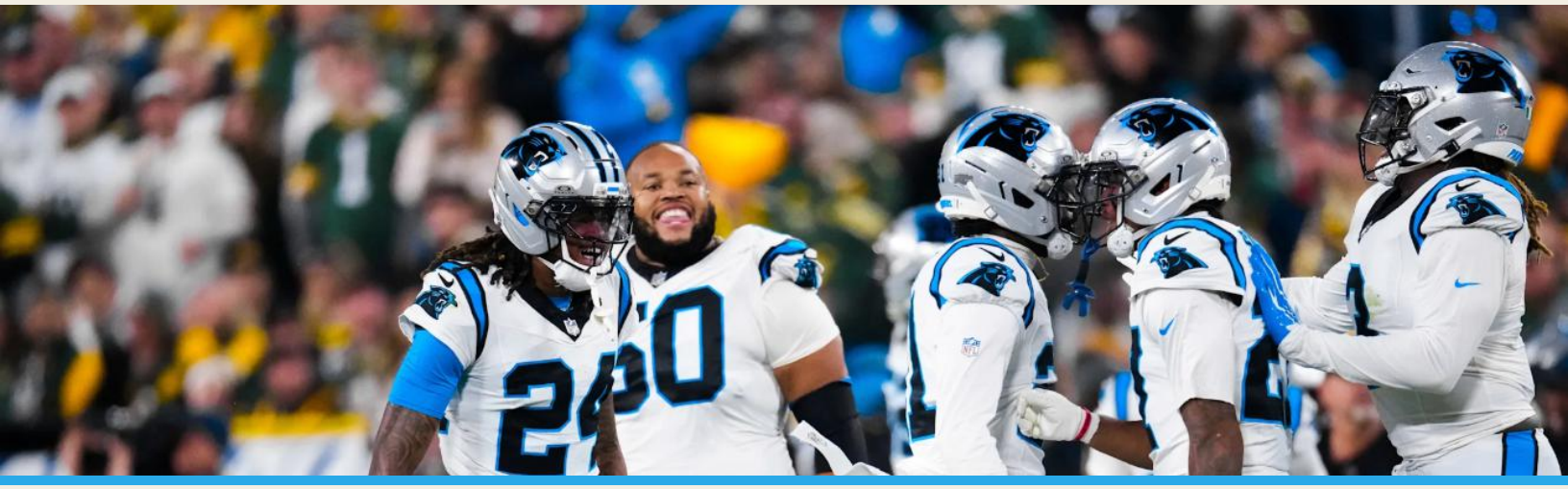
The win pushed Tampa Bay to 3-5, continuing a stretch that has seen the Bucs go 3-1 since an 0-4 start, and left them half a game behind division-leading Carolina. The Buccaneers now turn to a Week 9 road trip to face the Chicago Bears on Sunday Night Football, with Atlanta and Carolina both still on the schedule before the season is through.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUCS

The win pulled Tampa Bay within half a game of the NFC South lead entering a Week 9 trip to Chicago, with Atlanta and Carolina each due back on the schedule later this season.

PANTHERS WEIGH DEALING PRO BOWL TALENT

Carolina is reportedly fielding calls on Pro Bowl defenders as the division leader navigates the trade deadline with limited cap space.



Even while sitting atop the NFC South, Carolina has spent the week fielding trade calls rather than just making roster tweaks. Reports indicate the Panthers are receiving interest in a top defender and are exploring trading as many as two Pro Bowl players before the deadline, moves that would reshape a defense already adjusting to a new interim coordinator.

One of those Pro Bowl-caliber pieces has been described as a potentially “expensive” target for any team calling in, underscoring the price Carolina could command even as it weighs whether to sell. The team has also been linked to defensive back additions, suggesting the Panthers could be looking to both subtract and add as they try to balance a division lead with a roster that has limited cap space.

> **FOR A TEAM THAT HAS RIDDEN A SHAKY RUN DEFENSE TO FIRST PLACE DESPITE RANKING NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST THE RUN, ANY SUBTRACTION AT THE DEADLINE CARRIES REAL RISK.**

Carolina did make a smaller, confirmed move this week, adding a cornerback and a defensive assistant to the staff and roster. But the bigger questions hover over the names being shopped, with outlets framing the next move as one the Panthers cannot afford to get wrong given their position in the standings.

For a team that has ridden a shaky run defense to first place despite ranking near the bottom of the league against the run, any subtraction at the deadline carries real risk. Carolina's front office has to decide whether short-term stability or long-term asset management matters more with the division within reach.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUCS

Any deadline subtraction from Carolina's defense could help Tampa Bay in the Week 12 rematch, particularly against a Bucs backfield that just set a franchise rushing record.

TAMPA'S RB DUO MAKES HISTORY

Bucky Irving and Kenneth Gainwell etched their names in franchise history in Week 8



The Tampa Bay Buccaneers' running game didn't just dominate the Atlanta Falcons in Week 8. It earned a place in NFL history.

Bucky Irving and Kenneth Gainwell became just the fourth pair of teammates in league history to each record at least 20 rushing attempts and 125 rushing yards in the same game, according to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

The milestone came during Tampa Bay's 16-0 shutout victory over Atlanta on November 1, 2026, at Raymond James Stadium.

The performance placed Irving and Gainwell in a remarkably exclusive group that includes Pro Football Hall of Famers Jim Brown and Bobby Mitchell.

TWO RUNNING BACKS, ONE HISTORIC AFTERNOON

Irving and Gainwell combined for 310 rushing yards, accounting for nearly all of Tampa Bay's franchise-record 324 yards on the ground.

Both running backs established career highs in rushing attempts and rushing yardage.

Irving also scored a rushing touchdown, while Gainwell helped Tampa Bay control possession and sustain drives throughout the second half.

Their production was particularly significant because the Buccaneers finished the game without completing a pass, relying almost entirely on their ground attack.

JOINING AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB

According to the Pro Football Hall of Fame, only four teammate pairings have accomplished the combination of at least 20 rushing attempts and 125 rushing yards apiece in the same NFL game.

THE BUCCANEERS' BACKFIELD DUO DELIVERED A HISTORIC RUSHING PERFORMANCE AGAINST ATLANTA, ACCOMPLISHING SOMETHING ONLY THREE OTHER TEAMMATE PAIRINGS HAVE ACHIEVED IN NFL HISTORY.

Before Irving and Gainwell, the achievement had not occurred in 50 seasons.

The historical comparison is especially notable because Brown and Mitchell were two of the NFL's most accomplished players, both eventually earning induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

While the milestone does not establish Irving and Gainwell as Hall of Fame-caliber players, it places their single-game production alongside performances from some of the league's most recognizable names.

AN EVEN RARER NFL FIRST

The Buccaneers' backfield also established a separate NFL record.

According to Elias Sports, Irving and Gainwell became the first teammates in NFL history to each record at least 25 carries and 125 rushing yards in the same game.

That distinction makes Tampa Bay's accomplishment unique even among the four historical pairings.

The Buccaneers also established a franchise record with 324 rushing yards against Atlanta, surpassing their previous single-game mark of 283 yards set in 2015.

Combined with their 258 rushing yards against Carolina in Week 7, Tampa Bay accumulated 582 rushing yards over two games, another franchise record.

A CONNECTION TO BUCCANEERS HISTORY

For longtime Buccaneers fans, two running backs producing more than 100 yards in the same game brings back memories of Warrick Dunn and Mike Alstott.

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TAMPA'S RB DUO MAKES HISTORY

The celebrated "Thunder and Lightning" combination accomplished that feat against the Minnesota Vikings in 1998, when Alstott rushed for 128 yards and Dunn added 115.

Irving and Gainwell became just the second Buccaneers duo to surpass 100 rushing yards apiece in the same game, ending a 28-year gap between such performances.

Unlike Dunn and Alstott, whose contrasting running styles inspired their nickname, Irving and Tampa Bay has now surpassed 200 rushing yards in consecutive games for the first time in franchise history, establishing a productive foundation for an offense that has recently relied on its running backs to carry much of the workload.

Whether that level of production can continue remains to be seen. But the performance against Atlanta demonstrated the potential of a backfield

Gainwell rely on similar combinations of quickness, vision and acceleration.

Their performance against Atlanta demonstrated how two productive running backs can complement each other without requiring dramatically different styles.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR TAMPA BAY

The historical milestone comes as the Buccaneers continue to lean heavily on their rushing attack.

capable of generating significant yardage from multiple contributors.

For Irving and Gainwell, November 1, 2026, will remain a noteworthy date.

Their names now appear in a statistical category shared by just three other teammate pairings across more than seven decades of NFL history.

And for the Buccaneers, it represents another milestone in the franchise's record books.

ATLANTA

#RiseUp

WORD UP

What the people inside the building are actually saying.

> We have to find ways to stay on the field on third down in a game like that, and we did not.
>
> KEVIN STEFANSKI — HEAD COACH

THEY OUT HERE SAYIN'

Rumors and hot takes circulating this week. Read, don't repeat blindly.

CIRCULATING

FALCONS REPORTEDLY SHOPPING TWO VETERANS

Yahoo Sports reports Atlanta's trade plans include parting ways with two veteran players before Tuesday's deadline.

CIRCULATING

PENIX'S OUTLOOK QUESTIONED BY SITE

The Falcoholic flagged uncertainty about Michael Penix Jr.'s outlook heading into the Bengals matchup in Madrid.

CIRCULATING

BATES AMONG DEADLINE TRADE PITCHES

An NFL trade-deadline roundup floated deals involving players like Jessie Bates III, Tony Pollard and Riq Woolen as the deadline nears.

BIRD WATCH

Where the Falcons stand and what lies ahead.

SHUT OUT BY TAMPA BAY IN WEEK 8

Atlanta was blanked 16-0 by the Bucs, who gashed the Falcons for a franchise-record 324 rushing yards behind Bucky Irving and Kenny Gainwell.

NEXT UP: BENGALS IN MADRID

The Falcons face Joe Burrow and Cincinnati's offense in Week 9 at Real Madrid's Bernabéu, with James Pearce Jr. questionable and Brian Robinson Jr. ruled out.

REMATCH WITH BUCS SET FOR WEEK 16

Atlanta gets a shot at revenge on the road against Tampa Bay on December 27 after falling to 0-2 against the Bucs this season.

BIRD DROPPINGS

The good, the bad and the most ridiculous falling out of Falcons social media.

FALCONS FAN DEFLECTING FROM LOSS



DELAY OF GAME

Tryin' hard to run away from the ass-whoopin' they so loudly ran into.

HORSE INTERRUPTS BUCS-FALCONS BROADCAST



TRIPPIN'

Some people just can't appreciate a good football game.

FALCONS TOUT HEAD-TO-HEAD RECORDS AFTER DIVISION STRUGGLES



DELAY OF GAME

Complete nonsense after getting embarrassed. 12 months of daily "LeAD thE eNtiRE nFC sOutH iN HeAD tO hEAd mAtChuPs" while being the least accomplished team in the Division.

NEW ORLEANS

#WhoDat

WORD UP

What the people inside the building are actually saying.

> You can go to (his college games at) Colorado, you can go to his first two years here in the NFL and you're seeing a player that's got experience. He started a bunch of games last year and he got a ton of work in the preseason, and he's been in the fire so far this season. We're still defending the Browns.

BRANDON STALEY — DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

> We're gonna come in with a chip on our shoulder, for sure. They've been chirping a little bit, we see what the quarterback said. So we're gonna come in hot, ready to play.

CARL GRANDERSON — EDGE/DEFENSIVE END

THEY OUT HERE SAYIN'

Rumors and hot takes circulating this week. Read, don't repeat blindly.

CIRCULATING

BACKFIELD SHAKE-UP DURING BYE WEEK

New Orleans waived leading rusher Kendre Miller and activated receiver Jordyn Tyson and tackle Kelvin Banks Jr. off injured reserve ahead of the Browns game.

CIRCULATING

BUY OR SELL AT THE DEADLINE?

Yahoo Sports questioned whether the Saints should buy or sell before the trade deadline given their 2-5 start.

CIRCULATING

ANOTHER EX-SAINT LANDS IN DENVER

Yahoo Sports noted yet another former Saints player has signed with the Broncos this week.

FROM THE PULPIT

Where the Saints stand and what lies ahead.

SAINTS SIT AT 2-5

New Orleans returned from its Paris trip and bye week to host Cleveland (5-3) at the Caesars Superdome, looking for its first home win.

NEXT UP: BROWNS AT HOME

The Saints host the Browns in Week 9 with Jordyn Tyson making his debut and Kelvin Banks Jr. back at left tackle.

BUCS ON DECK IN DECEMBER

New Orleans closes the NFC South slate against Tampa Bay twice — hosting the Bucs' Week 15 trip on December 20 and visiting in Week 18 on January 10.

CAROLINA

#KeepPounding

WORD UP

What the people inside the building are actually saying.

> Stop the run.
>
> DAVE CANALES — PANTHERS HEAD COACH

> football guy,
>
> TODD WASH — PANTHERS INTERIM DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

> Every single day, he's pushing us, pushing us. And that's what we need. He wants us to definitely be in shape and be able to play as many plays as you can.
>
> DERRICK BROWN — DEFENSIVE TACKLE

THEY OUT HERE SAYIN'

Rumors and hot takes circulating this week. Read, don't repeat blindly.

CIRCULATING

PANTHERS SHOPPING PRO BOWL TALENT

Yahoo Sports reports Carolina is exploring trades involving two Pro Bowl players before the deadline, with one described as an “expensive” target.

CIRCULATING

TOP DEFENDER DRAWING TRADE INTEREST

A report indicates the Panthers are fielding trade calls on one of their top defenders ahead of Tuesday’s cutoff.

CIRCULATING

HOT SEAT TALK HEATS UP

Cat Crave named five Panthers on the hot seat entering what it called a do-or-die game against the Broncos.

CHECKING THE TRACKS

Where the Panthers stand and what lies ahead.

NFC SOUTH LEAD, TIGHT BUDGET

Carolina is described as the NFC South-leading team but working with limited cap space as the trade deadline approaches.

DEFENSE GETS NEW VOICE

Todd Wash has taken over as interim defensive coordinator, with Dave Canales making stopping the run the top priority against Denver.

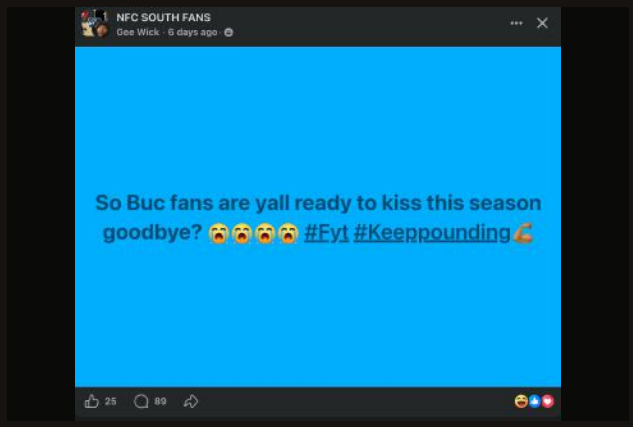
STILL SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS AFTER TAMPA BAY ROUT

The Panthers were routed 43-13 by the Bucs in Week 7 and will see Tampa Bay again in Week 12 on November 30.

CAT SCAN

Examining what's goin' on inside Panthers social media.

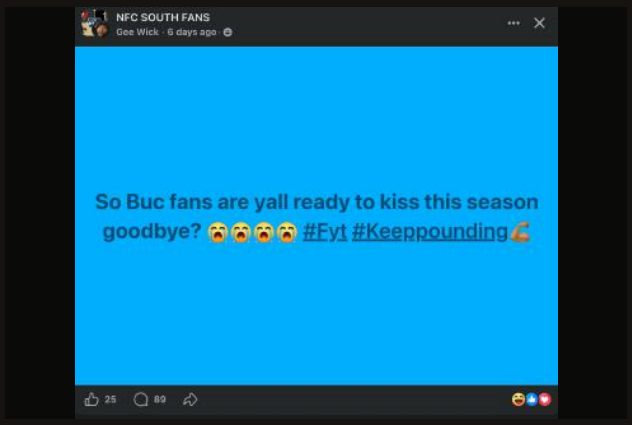
BUC FANS WRITING OFF SEASON EARLY



FALSE START

False Start. These dudes backed into a Playoff spot last season tied with two teams, and really ran off with the "kInGs oF tHe sOuTH" foolishness.

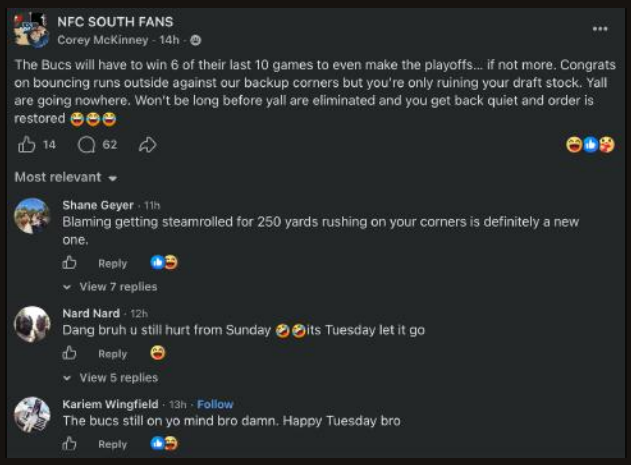
BUC FANS READY TO KISS SEASON GOODBYE



FALSE START

. Narrarator: "Well, ol' Gee Wick, would soon find himself in a pickle after getting dismantled online."

BUCCANEERS PLAYOFF ODDS DISMISSAL



DELAY OF GAME

. LoL.....This dude is having a hard time coping with getting dog-walked.