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SPORTS

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TEXAS AT LSU · 6:30 P.M. SATURDAY · ABC

STATUS REPORT



STAFF PHOTO BY MICHAEL JOHNSON

LSU coach Lane Kiffin tries to pump up the crowd up as the Alabama offense tries to convert a crucial third-down play in the third quarter on Saturday in Tiger Stadium.

LSU's 6-3 start spurs questions about present, future under Kiffin



Scott Rabalais

It's been nearly one year since Lane Kiffin became the LSU football coach.

In some ways, it's gone by in a flash. Especially in the context of this Saturday's historical game against Texas being LSU's last home game this season.

In some ways, it's felt quite long. From the leaving Ole Miss saga to all of the legal hassles of trying to add Dae'Quan Wright and Zxavian Harris to the roster (remember them?).

I think back to that late November night last year when Kiffin arrived, flying from the middle fingers and insults in Oxford to an adoring throng of LSU fans pressing against the fence at Baton Rouge Metro Airport.

Specifically, I remember the young man who shouted out "We're never losing again!" as Kiffin's motorcade zoomed out of the gate.

That was fantasy. The reality is a long, difficult season in the Southeastern Conference, a season that finds LSU 6-3 overall and clinging to thinning hopes of reaching the College Football Playoff.

So many thoughts about where Kiffin and LSU are right now, I thought it best to break them down piece by piece:

Is the Kiffin era already a failure?

It is far, far too early to draw any conclusions, good or bad. You can have your opinions and I have mine, but LSU can still get in the CFP this season if it finishes 9-3. In fact, ESPN's playoff predictor says the Tigers have a 79% chance to make the playoff if they sweep Texas, Tennessee and Arkansas.

Can LSU close the season 3-0 is the real question. It's a season in which

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Tyson's usage shows how Saints may try to utilize WR

BY MATTHEW PARAS
Staff writer

Coming off a hamstring injury, Jordyn Tyson had a strict snap count for his NFL debut. The New Orleans Saints rookie wide receiver didn't break it, either.

"No more than 30," Tyson said.

The 21-year-old played just 18 snaps in Sunday's 23-22 overtime win over the Cleveland Browns. Even with limited reps, Tyson's usage and effectiveness provided a glimpse at how the Saints plan to deploy the wide receiver as his workload likely increases.

Analysis

➤ **Panthers at Saints.**
NOON SUNDAY, FOX

Coach Kellen Moore used Tyson in ways that were reminiscent of his film at Arizona State. The Sun Devils saw Tyson as a versatile chess piece, and so do the Saints. Tyson had nine snaps apiece between inside and outside. Of the nine snaps outside, Tyson spent five on the left and four on the right.

New Orleans sent Tyson in motion on five of his 16 routes, good for the highest motion percentage of any Saints receiver on Sunday.

Tyson's four catches for 30 yards and a fumble may be considered underwhelming, but don't just look at the box score. A closer examination shows Tyson is just getting started.

"The volume is about what we expected," Moore said. "Again, he hasn't played a lot of football in a long time. So he's been itching to play a ton of football. We've got to build him up the right way. I thought he had a positive impact on the game over those snaps.

"Obviously, the big turnover was a really big

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STAFF PHOTO BY BRETT DUKE

Saints wide receiver Jordyn Tyson makes his first NFL reception before the ball is punched out by Cleveland Browns linebacker Carson Schwesinger and recovered by the Browns on Sunday afternoon at the Caesars Superdome.

Shorthanded Cajuns able to get past SUNO

BY KEVIN FOOTE
Staff writer

Going into Monday's 56-39 victory over Southern of New Orleans in the Cajundome, UL coach Quannas White knew there would be challenges.

After all, the list of players not available was a long one.

Trent Middleton and Josiah Harris are still in concussion protocol. Dani Pounds was ill. Todd Jones and Deion Ware haven't played yet this season.

When Jeremiah Evans fouled out after only 16 minutes, the Cajuns had only eight players dressed out left.

"I'm proud of the group that played tonight," White said. "Those guys found a way to just battle in there and did some really good things. We did some good things defensively and offensively. So now we just got to build on this and get back to the drawing board, watch film and move forward."

White wasn't sure how many players would return for Friday's game at UNC-Wilimington.

"Next man up mentality, man. You figure it out," he said. "Nobody is going to pity you or cares how many guys you got out there. You've got to find a way to win."

There was a lot of sloppiness for the Cajuns on Monday. They shot 24.1% from the field and 20% from 3-point land on 35 attempts. They did hit 21 of 28 free throws."I thought we settled, especially in the first half," White said. "I thought we did a better job of attacking the basket in the second half."

SUNO made 28.6% of its shots and 13.3% from be-

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STAFF PHOTO BY BRAD KEMP

UL forward Mikhail Dulkay drives to the basket against Southern of New Orleans on Monday in the Cajundome. Dulkay scored 10 points in UL's 56-39 victory.

Cajuns may be facing 'biggest test' in ULM



Kevin Foote

➤ **UL at UL-Monroe.**
8 P.M. THURSDAY, ESPN2

It might seem peculiar that UL coach Michael Desormeaux said the 8 p.m. Thursday game at UL-Monroe is "the biggest test of the year to this team."

But if you peel back a few layers, there's quite a few valuable lessons to be learned from it. It starts with understanding how many question marks this young team had going into the season.

"Nobody was more nervous than me for the (season opener) Lamar game," Desormeaux said. "I had no idea what it was going to look like. We'd been practicing and we practiced well and we made a lot of progress, but I had no idea."

That young team has progressed in several ways. It handled the trip to USC quite well. After each loss, the Cajuns have showed a level of maturity by rebounding for a win.

But the defense struggled with communication against the hurry-up offense at Louisiana Tech, and it's possible this young team wasn't focused on the game before the bye week against a Southern Miss team that had struggled earlier this season.

"How much have we learned?" Desormeaux said. "How much have we've grown?

"We've got to keep working on that mindset, and we've got to keep working on our mental approach, because the reality is you can't keep getting burnt. You can't keep touching the damn fire. At some point, you've got to figure it out. You've got to learn."

After a physical victory Saturday against South Alabama, hardly any players will be at 100% against the Warhawks.

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