

Saints turned Mardi Gras season into 'Traffic Gras'



Ed DANIELS
SPORTS

I thought over the past two weeks I had seen everything "Saints."

The victory parade paralyzed traffic in the city.

Saturday night at Endymion's extravaganza in the Superdome, Saints owner Tom Benson, the krewe's grand marshal, hoisted the Lombardi Trophy to the delight of the crowd. The roar was deafening.

And, then Sunday arrived.

My wife and I made our usual trek out to St. Charles

Avenue. The crowds seemed thicker than usual. I thought it was because this was the best weather day we'd had in awhile.

Bright sunshine greeted our friends from the Krewe of Thoth. When we tried to cross from the neutral ground to the sidewalk side to say hello to a rider, we were blocked by the maze of ladders.

We had no chance.

It seemed like every band that passed in the parade was playing the song, "Halftime," the unofficial anthem of the Who Dat Nation.

After Thoth passed, we walked back to the vehicle (eight blocks) to gather sweatshirts for the evening.

What we witnessed stunned

us.

It seemed like the world had descended on the uptown route. I laughed at myself for being conscientious enough to park far enough way from the stop sign at the corner of Amelia and Freret, because cars were parked illegally, everywhere.

The parking police for the city of New Orleans could have eliminated the city's budget shortfall just writing tickets on all the vehicles parked illegally.

The parking lot at Cohen High School was packed to the max. Then we got back to St. Charles Avenue, barely.

The crowd was as thick as those you see during the endless television live shots from

Bourbon Street during Mardi Gras.

On St. Charles Avenue, police vehicles turned on their lights to try and budge traffic.

The thought crossed my mind: What if there was truly an emergency in the area? How could law enforcement respond?

Of course, the throngs were there to see this year's Bacchus, Saints quarterback Drew Brees.

When Brees asked the crowd to cheer louder they howled with delight. I watched one lady, on a ladder some 15 feet in the air, catch a trinket from Brees. She was so delighted, she nearly fell off.

Cameras snapped pictures by the thousands. The flashbulbs were the equivalent of those that go off in the stadium at kickoff of the Super Bowl every year.

After Brees passed, my wife had seen enough. And, back home we went.

If you were one of the ones who stayed to the end, you faced one epic traffic jam on the way home.

The combination of Mardi Gras and Lombardi Gras had produced yet another memorable moment.

Ed Daniels is sports director of ABC26 WGNO. He can be reached at edaniels@clarionherald.org.

BROCATO

► From PAGE 8

on the team. When Stephanie stepped up to the varsity team, the elder Helgeson became a forward.

"Stephanie struggled in her freshman year," said Thieler, currently the head coach at Archbishop Chapelle. "She was challenged because it took time for her to grow into her body. She wanted to quit. I struggled with her, but I could see a po-

tential for greatness."

That's when the big sister stepped in.

"Jessica took charge and challenged her," Thieler said. "As a result, she had a tremendous freshman year."

"I have relied on her every step of the way," Stephanie said of Jessica. "Not only did she help me improve as a high school player, but she's also helped me with the process of being a coach. She's a great role model."

The two sisters look forward

to the day when they may be head coaches together.

"Hopefully, in due time Steph will be a head coach, and if I'm still coaching, I'd be happy to schedule games against her," Jessica said. "I'd like to coach with her either as the head coach or assistant to her because we share the same philosophy. She comes to see some of my games, and I like to see her in the stands. It's comforting because she's one of my best friends."

"I'd love to coach against Jess," Stephanie said. "We're competitors. And I'd love to coach with her. It would be a great team."

Their former Dominican coach agrees.

"I think about players I've coached having the ability to fill older coaches' shoes when they retire or change jobs," Thieler said. "They will go through some growing pains like every other coach before them, including myself. To be successful, you have to throw yourself into the fire. You're going to get burned. You'll be questioned and second-guessed because it's easier to do it from the stands than being on the bench. But it's more fun being in the fire than standing on the outside."

"Sports has been the Helgesons' lives," Thieler added. "It's where their identity was established."

Ron Brocato can be reached at rbrocato@clarionherald.org.



Photo by Ron Brocato | CLARION HERALD

Jesuit's Nicky Varisco (23) takes the ball from a falling Patrick Swilling of Brother Martin, who trips over Josh Dudley (40) while driving to the goal in their District 10-5A game on Feb. 9, scheduled in the afternoon because of the Saints' victory parade. Brother Martin upset the No. 5-ranked Blue Jays, 52-44, at home.

MAJORIA DRUGS

www.majoriadiscountrugs.com

(504) 835-7211

1805 METAIRIE ROAD

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

Convenience, Competitive Prices
and Caring Staff

It's all here.
Shouldn't You Be?

SALE

CENTRUM SILVER 220 CT. OR
CENTRUM ULTRA(MEN AND WOMENS) 200'S
Price \$15.99

COLGATE TOOTHPASTE
6.4 oz. \$1.99

KLEENEX FACIAL TISSUE 280'S OR LOTION
180's \$1.99

REVLON COSMETICS
25% OFF REGULAR RETAIL PRICE

Majoria Drugs - 1805 Metairie Road Only

Sale Ends 02-27-10

STORE HOURS:

MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:00 TO 6:00
SATURDAYS 8:00 TO 4:00

Call us about our Mail Order Delivery Service!