

## Trace the Saints ski mask craze back to this local designer

---

[expo.nola.com/life-and-culture/g66l-2019/02/6790f0ca9b377/trace-the-saints-ski-mask-craze-back-to-this-local-designer.html](https://expo.nola.com/life-and-culture/g66l-2019/02/6790f0ca9b377/trace-the-saints-ski-mask-craze-back-to-this-local-designer.html)

By Laura Testino, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune | Posted February 20, 2019 at 06:00 AM | Updated February 20, 2019 at 10:26 AM

By Laura Testino, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune | Posted February 20, 2019 at 06:00 AM | Updated February 20, 2019 at 10:26 AM



Detrell Wright's ghost designs and clothes became popular among Saints fans in January 2019 after being worn by friend and Saints player Alvin Kamara. Wright is photographed here at his Fontainebleau home in New Orleans, La. Monday, Jan. 28, 2019. Photo by David Grunfeld, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

**Drew Brees was supposed** to get a ski mask, too. A black one with a gold ghost patch up top was waiting in Detrell Wright's pocket. Like that infamous yellow flag, both stayed tucked away during the NFC Championship game.

"I didn't sell it to nobody," Wright said.

The 25-year-old New Orleans fashion designer is at least partially responsible for the ski mask craze that took hold toward the end of the season. Other than the mask Wright held for Brees, the black-and-gold color combo he designed sold out at a pop-up shop held the Saturday before the fateful game against the Rams.



[https://youtu.be/ZZEGqyp\\_54o](https://youtu.be/ZZEGqyp_54o)

Alvin Kamara and Mark Ingram wear Wright's ski masks during the a post-game interview on Jan. 13, 2019. The Saints defeated the Eagles in the playoff game 20-14.

His close friend Alvin Kamara had appeared in the mask alongside Mark Ingram during a post-game interview after the Saints-Eagles playoff matchup the Sunday before. Interest in his ski masks skyrocketed the week leading up to the NFC Championship.

"I felt like if they'd won, it'd probably be hard for y'all to get in contact with me right now," Wright said, laughing.



Detrell Wright props his feet on a black crate in his New Orleans home. A group of the crates zip-tied together hold the Made in the Hood apparel, like his shirt and hat, designed in his room. Photo by David Grunfeld, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

**But they didn't win.** For Wright, that meant no trip to Atlanta to sell masks ahead of a Saints' Super Bowl appearance.

So, on a recent Monday, Wright was instead at home in New Orleans thinking about his next projects. He had flown back from Orlando the day before with Kamara, who played in the Pro Bowl.

Wright started making the ski masks last summer, but he and his friends wore them like beanies. Rolled up, the masks made the sturdier, bulkier bottom band that he and his friends preferred. Wright, who has been designing clothes for a living since 2012, didn't set out to spur a trend that was "gonna explode."

His focus has never been on a "best" design but rather the designs that are next up.

That persistence is where the ghost design came from. The caricature of the relentless Pac-Man nemesis symbolizes Wright's tenacity: he'll go after his goals, no matter how small or large.

"I was always chasing my dream," Wright said. "I just felt my dream was something that I had to constantly prove, over and over and over."





West Jeff no. 8 running back Dwayne Lee is stopped on a play by Karr no. 8 defensive back Detrell Wright during a game between Edna Karr and West Jefferson at Behrman Stadium Saturday, September 20, 2008. Photo by Susan Poag, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune





Edna Karr's Detrell Wright intercepts a pass intended for Salmen's Greg Brickley in the endzone for a second-quarter touchback during a playoff game Friday, November 27, 2009, at Hoss Memtsas Stadium in Harvey. Photo by Scott Threlkeld, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

**In 2012, Wright found** himself in Kansas City living with his cousin, Kendrick Lewis, during what should have been his sophomore year on a football scholarship at Mississippi's Alcorn State. His experience at the school wasn't setting him on the path he knew he needed to have a real shot at his goal of getting to the NFL. He'd watched Lewis, who had also grown up playing football in New Orleans, make it to the NFL playing for the Kansas City Chiefs.

Telling his mom he was leaving Alcorn was the hardest, but also the best decision Wright ever made, he said. He wasn't himself there. The football camaraderie wasn't like it had been at Edna Karr, and the school didn't have the architecture major he wanted to pursue.

Lewis was the one who asked Detrell's mom if his cousin could stay with him in Kansas City.

The cousins, whose mothers are close, had grown up hanging out together at their grandmother's house on Frenchmen Street. They'd ride their bikes through the neighborhood and visit a corner store at Claiborne Avenue. It had a Pac-Man arcade machine.

Living together wasn't a stretch, so Andrea Wright told Lewis she had no problem with it.

"Kendrick was a young man and he was very responsible, so I knew he wasn't going to go down the wrong path," she said.

Kendrick Lewis, Wright's cousin, posted a photo to his Instagram with his family on Nov. 27, 2018 while wearing a hoodie with Wright's ghost design.

**The move to Kansas City** set in motion the foundation for Wright's current success.

Lewis gave his cousin \$1,200 to help fund his first designs, and Wright never looked back. As he kept creating and selling, his Instagram following continued to swell. Wright, who goes by @tvche on the platform, now has more than 60,000 followers.

When he was pursuing football, Wright felt that his destiny was often in the hands of others who determined, for example, where he'd be able to play and how often, he said.

"What I do right now, I'm in control of my own destiny," Wright said. "I feel like what I put in is what I'll get out."

Wright taught himself to sew by taking the seams out of his clothes and sewing them back together. He got good enough to teach his grandmother, who could sew, how to put a zipper in a man's pants, Andrea Wright said.

"That was one thing she never could do," she said.

Even though Lewis and his friends could afford to buy clothing from other brands, they supported Wright and bought his custom shoes, jeans and other designs.

"Even if they bought shoes from him or whatever and he had his money in his pocket, he still would treat them," Andrea Wright said. Detrell still lives with Andrea and his younger sister, I'Onesty, in a house in New Orleans.

Wright posted a photo of himself and Kamara to his Instagram account for Kamara's 23rd birthday.





Dinah L. Rogers, NOLA.com | The Local clothing designer Detrell Wright and New Orleans Saints running back Alvin Kamara hand out turkeys at Alvin Kamara and Larry Morrow's first annual Turkey Giveaway and Thanksgiving Fest Monday (Nov. 19) at Stallings Playground. Photo by Dinah L. Rogers, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

**Wright's current friendship** with Kamara grew out of their mutual interest in fashion. Lewis and Chiefs teammate Eric Berry were friends, and Berry's younger brothers, Evan and Elliott, wore Wright's clothes. The brothers played football at the University of Tennessee, where Kamara, their teammate, saw the clothes and took notice.

The mutual friendships led to Kamara and Wright becoming friends around 2016 when Kamara was in his last year of college at Tennessee and Wright was back in New Orleans.

Kamara told Wright he'd help out his clothing brand whenever he got to the NFL.

"And then he wound up getting drafted here," Wright said.

Kamara kept his promise. Once in New Orleans, he sported T-shirts and hoodies with Wright's ghost long before he appeared for the post-game interview with the ski mask rolled down. Wright didn't get a heads up about Kamara and Ingram's plans.

"When that happened," Wright said, "it was time to get some more ski masks."



Isiah Dorsey, 3, wears a navy ski mask with a red ghost. The son of a family friend spends a lot of time with the Wright family. He is photographed here in their New Orleans home on Monday, Jan. 28, 2019. Photo by David Grunfeld, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

**Wright held his pre-NFC Championship** game pop-up at Freewater Studios, a design studio in the CBD owned by mutual friends of he and Kamara. Kamara and Andrea Wright were among those who helped Detrell that day. He was overwhelmed by the turn out; people were spending an hour in line during the noon-to-5 event.

“I usually don’t really work my stuff,” he said. “I go out and engage with people, ‘Thank y’all for coming’ and stuff. I had no time to do that.”

Friend James Mayes, creator of New Orleans clothing line eMline, said the motivational vibe among their friend group is fueled by the positive energy of each other’s successes.

“When you know somebody personally, and stuff like that happens you’re just happy,” Mayes said. “And honestly, I feel like it’s overdue for him.”







Wright, 25, is photographed in his New Orleans home. In the background are clothing designs he has made, printed out and hung on the wall.

**At the beginning of** February, Wright moved his business into a semi-permanent pop-up shop location at Lot 1701 on Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard. He's selling more of his apparel. And the ski masks remain a hit, of course. He expects sales to continue through the start of next season.

"Now the narrative's changed, from taking what we want to being robbed, for real," Wright said. "We got robbed, put the ski mask on ... That's what ski mask will symbolize next year."