

EXPANDED COVERAGE: Garcon returns to speedy form, R2
 Quarter-by-quarter breakdown; By the numbers; Lookahead to Week 13, R4



38   31

GAMEDAY

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2012



The Washington Times

washingtontimes.com/sports/football

Holiday spectacular



Robert Griffin III (left) and Kory Lichtensteiger celebrate one of the Redskins' four second-quarter touchdowns. Griffin was 20 of 28 for 311 yards and four touchdowns. Running back Alfred Morris (top) fueled the ground game, rushing 24 times for 113 yards and a TD.

Griffin feasts on Dallas with 4 TDs in homecoming

By RICH CAMPBELL
 THE WASHINGTON TIMES

ARLINGTON, TEXAS | Kenny Chesney took the make-shift stage on the field at Cowboys Stadium at halftime Thursday and returned some normalcy to this place. Guitars twanging country music is what you expect to hear deep in the heart of Texas. The sounds that preceded that certainly were not.

This, after all, is enemy territory for the Washington Redskins. It's the home of their fiercest rival. Their quarterback's name never would be chanted here.

This quarterback, though, is special. And when his name echoed throughout the stadium, it was one of the best measures to date of Robert Griffin III's impact on this team.

After Griffin led a 28-point blitzkrieg in the second quarter of Washington's 38-31 victory over the Dallas Cowboys, chants of "R-G-3! R-G-3!" rose from the crowd of 90,166, which, it must be noted, contained significant pockets of burgundy among the blue.

"It feels good that they can chant your name," Griffin said, "because they feel like at that point the game was over."

His three touchdown passes during a 28-point explosion ignited the uproar. They also propelled Washington back into the race for the NFC East title.

The Redskins (5-6) are a game and a half behind the New York Giants, who visit Dec. 3 for what is now a mega-Monday night showdown.

"I just feel like our team has got something to play for again," guard Kory Lichtensteiger said. "We're a team that's starting to hit our stride at the right time.

I think you can feel there's a little electricity in here."

The Redskins escaped, but not before unsettling their fans' Thanksgiving dinner. Their 25-point half-time lead seemed comfortable enough, especially because the defense did its part by forcing two of its three turnovers in the second quarter. But when does this franchise ever make it easy on itself?

The Cowboys scored 15 points in a span of 96 seconds in the fourth quarter to turn a 35-13 deficit into a thriller. Griffin's interception, the only blemish on a magnificent game, set up the second touchdown and made this more suspenseful than it had to be.

Rookie Kai Forbath saved the day, though, with a 48-yard field goal with 2:58 remaining. His 10th consecutive make to start his career made it a two-possession game, and the Redskins could breathe.

Ultimately, though, it was Griffin's day. During his rookie season, he repeatedly has played his best in



Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo was 37 of 62 for 441 yards and 3 TDs, but Dallas' rally ultimately fell short.



Rising from the ashes in two wins, five days

ARLINGTON, TEXAS
 There have been pitfalls and potholes and assorted other stumbling blocks this season for the Washington Redskins. But here they are, with five games to go, and all of their goals are still within reach.
 They've seen to that, improbably, with five days of inspired play against

two of their NFC East playmates, punching out the Philadelphia Eagles 31-6 and then, on Thanksgiving, holding off the Dallas Cowboys 38-31.
 Five days. That's all it took to change the course of a season, one that looked headed for the breakdown lane after a home loss to lowly Carolina had left the Redskins at 3-6. But sometimes Bye Week heals all wounds — or something

like that. The Redskins returned from their R and R, got Pierre Garcon and his troublesome foot back in the lineup and started playing their best ball of the year ... at a time when they had to play their best ball of the year. If they wanted their year to extend into January, that is.
 Now they're 5-6 and have 11 days to steel themselves for a Monday-night

matchup against the division-leading Giants (6-4), a club they had on the ropes the first time around. (I'll spare you a recap.) Win the rematch, extend their winning streak to three (for the first time in the Mike Shanahan Era) and the playoffs become even more real for the Redskins.

» see DALY | R2

EXPANDED REDSKINS COVERAGE THROUGHOUT THE SEASON: WASHINGTONTIMES.COM/SPORTS/FOOTBALL

REDSKINS 38, COWBOYS 31

Garcon's blazing speed back again

By NATHAN FENNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

ARLINGTON, TEXAS | In a six-second blur of fingertips and churning legs, Pierre Garcon returned.

Gone was the wide receiver frustrated by an injured right foot that had him considering season-ending surgery three weeks ago.

Instead, Garcon showed the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday why the Washington Redskins heaped \$42.5 million over five years on him during the offseason. And in the midst of a 59-yard catch-and-run for a touchdown that silenced 90,166 once-deafening fans inside Cowboys Stadium, Garcon provided a glimpse of how his speed can transform an offense.

"He's here for that," fellow receiver Santana Moss said. "We're happy to have that kind of threat out there. That gives everybody more opportunities to go and be special."

Since the preseason, Garcon, who finished with five catches for 93 yards Thursday, hadn't been right. The six-year veteran signed as a free agent from the Indianapolis Colts in March to give the Redskins a badly needed No. 1 receiver with sure hands who could stretch defenses.

But a bruised right foot during the preseason lingered. An 88-yard touchdown grab in the season-opener against the New Orleans Saints only distracted from the problem. Garcon's speed and explosiveness, the core of his game,

eroded.

A series of visits to doctors eventually revealed not a bruised foot but a plantar plate tear on the bottom of his foot.

Doctors told Garcon he couldn't injure the foot more seriously by playing. It became a matter of pain tolerance. But Garcon felt like he couldn't run full speed. He didn't feel like himself.

Fear entered for Garcon. He didn't want to undergo surgery. Could playing on the foot cause a dislocation? Or would he overcompensate and somehow injure another part of his body?

Finally convinced the foot wouldn't get worse on the field, Garcon played Sunday against the Philadelphia Eagles, his first game since Oct. 7. Garcon caught three passes for 5 yards, more decoy than deep threat.

"He's been missed in this offense for a while," running back Alfred Morris said.

On the field for 21 of the Redskins' 53 snaps, Garcon's foot didn't feel close to normal. But there weren't any setbacks.

One question remained for Garcon: How would his foot handle the artificial surface at Cowboys Stadium against the NFL's sixth-ranked pass defense?

Garcon started the game and, a few minutes later, snagged a 6-yard pass. Then he turned a short toss into 7 yards. If anything, the artificial surface, instead of aggravating the injury, made him appear quicker.

"It all came down to how the turf felt," Garcon said. "I wanted to play. I



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington wide receiver Pierre Garcon outruns Dallas' Mike Jenkins as he heads for the end zone on a 59-yard touchdown catch during the second quarter.

wanted to go out there and gut it out and I did that, really?"

Ten minutes into the second quarter, when the Redskins unloaded 28 points in a period for the first time since 1999, Garcon lined up on second-and-12.

Quarterback Robert Griffin III's short pass snuck over a defender's outstretched arms. Cutting to his right in the middle of the field, Garcon jumped and spun the other way. He snagged the ball with his fingertips, arms extended as far as his 6-foot frame allowed. His right foot landed. Then his left. The ball never snuck out of his grip.

Garcon recovered his balance and

streaked the remaining 45 yards into the end zone where, after exiting, Cowboys cornerback Mike Jenkins greeted him with a hearty shove into the blue padding surrounding the field.

The snag-and-sprint took six seconds.

No limping or favoring the ailing foot. Just the man the Redskins hoped they acquired, transforming an innocent pass into a game-breaking play and providing the sort of explosiveness after the catch only matched on the roster by Griffin.

Six seconds that screamed Garcon is back and quieted a stadium.

NOTEBOOK

Fletcher ailing, but his streak kept alive

By NATHAN FENNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

ARLINGTON, TEXAS | A bum knee couldn't prevent London Fletcher from continuing his games-played streak Thursday against the Dallas Cowboys.

The veteran Washington Redskins' middle linebacker sprained his left ankle in Sunday's win over the Philadelphia Eagles. The injury kept him from practicing Tuesday but he improved enough to only be limited Wednesday.

Still, Fletcher's streak of 234 regular-season games appeared in jeopardy until he was declared active two hours before Thursday's game at Cowboys Stadium.



Fletcher

"London is the ultimate pro," linebacker Lorenzo Alexander said. "It just shows you grit. If he's going to go out there at 37 and play hurt when he doesn't have to it makes you want to step up that much more and play even harder. That's what you need out of your leaders."

For much of the game, Fletcher looked like his old self. He delivered a pep talk to the team about 30 minutes before kickoff. Then on the Cowboys' first series, Fletcher delivered a big hit to wide receiver Miles Austin coming across the middle on a dropped ball then popped Austin again in the back of the end zone to prevent a touchdown catch.

But late in the fourth quarter, Fletcher left and didn't return after reinjuring the ankle. After the game, he maneuvered the ankle into a large plastic walking boot before speaking with the media.

"It was very hard," Fletcher said of leaving the game. "I worked so hard and to not be in a position to finish the game ..."

Fletcher's streak almost ended last month against the Pittsburgh Steelers because of recurring balance problems and a hamstring injury, but he started and made six tackles.

Garcon gets start

Playing on Cowboys Stadium's artificial turf left wide receiver Pierre Garcon's status in doubt this week as he heals from a plantar plate tear in his right foot. Garcon was active, though, a week after catching three passes for 5 yards in his first game since Oct. 7.

Garcon started the game and needed one 6-yard catch in the first quarter to surpass his game-long total against the Eagles.

The seven Redskins inactives weren't surprising: quarterback Rex Grossman, receiver Dezmon Briscoe, cornerback Richard Crawford, cornerback Jerome Murphy, guard Adam Gettis, lineman Maurice Hurt and defensive end Doug Worthington.

The Cowboys missed two key players Thursday, as nose tackle Jay Ratliff (groin) and running back DeMarco Murray (foot) were inactive.

Fixing a hole

The retractable roof on the \$1.3 billion stadium opened before the game. By early in the second quarter, that let in drizzle from a darkening sky.

The decision to open the roof is made by the Cowboys 90 minutes before kickoff. If the roof is closed to the start the game, it can't be opened. But if officials decide to close the roof in-game due to weather, it can't be reopened, either.

The roof, incidentally, remained open and as time slipped away in the second quarter, sun streaked through the roof.

Extra points

- Days after suffering a second-degree strain of his rotator cuff against the Eagles, Josh Wilson started Thursday.

- Running back Alfred Morris scored in the second quarter, his first touchdown since Week 6.

- The game kicked off at 4:41 p.m. Eastern time. Originally, kickoff was scheduled for 4:15 p.m., then adjusted to 4:35 p.m. earlier this week, then delayed again because the Texans-Lions game went to overtime.

- DeJon Gomes started at safety in place of Brandon Meriweather.

REDSKINS

From page R1

the biggest moments. On Thursday he outdid himself with a game for the ages.

"He has the clutch quality you're always looking for from your quarterback," Lichtensteiger said. "He's a guy that's not afraid of a big situation and not afraid to put the team on his shoulders."

In front of a national television audience for his first time as a professional, on the NFL's heralded Thanksgiving Day stage, Griffin completed 20 of 28 passes for 311 yards, four touchdowns and the interception.

Never mind the fact Griffin grew up three hours south of here. Never mind President George W. Bush and his former coach at Baylor, Art Briles, were among those who came out to watch him work his magic. All he did was engineer the Redskins' first victory over Dallas on Thanksgiving and become the first quarterback in the Redskins' 80-year history to throw four touchdowns in consecutive games.

"He's a gamer," cornerback DeAngelo Hall said. "We all knew that."

Griffin turned the Redskins' sloppy first quarter into a footnote. He hit Aldrick Robinson, Pierre Garcon and Santana Moss on touchdown passes for 68, 59 and 6 yards, respectively.

Rookie running back Alfred Morris also had a 1-yard touchdown run in the quarter.

The Redskins hadn't scored 28 points in a quarter since Oct. 1999, the last season they won the division.

"It was awesome," Griffin said. "I told those guys if they ball out like they have been, we can't be stopped."

It was incredible, really. For that 15 minutes, the Redskins looked nothing like the group that recently dropped three straight games and moved to the brink of a disastrous season.

On the first touchdown, Robinson outran two defenders by at least 10 yards and ran underneath Griffin's high-arching throw.

Griffin later threw the ball behind Garcon on a crossing route, but Garcon reached back, caught it, and then accelerated on his sprained right foot

around the corner and past Carr.

Moss' touchdown outdid the others. From the 6-yard line, Griffin took the snap, sprinted to his right and perfectly placed a throw on Moss' outside hip.

Griffin hit a wide open Niles Paul early in the fourth quarter for his fourth touchdown. Washington, it turned out, needed those points.

Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo threw for 441 yards on 62 attempts. Eighty-five came on a touchdown catch-and-run by Dez Bryant, yet another big play against the Redskins.

Griffin had the answer, though. He completed 3 of 4 passes for 39 yards on the field-goal drive. That included a 4-yard dart to Moss on third-and-1.

And when Hall recovered an onside kick with 12 seconds remaining, it allowed Griffin to kneel down.

He has thrown eight touchdowns in two victories in five days. And suddenly the Redskins' playoff pulse isn't so faint.

"It's big for the mindset of everybody that, hey, you might have thought we could do it," Griffin said. "Now we know we can do it. It's in our hands."

DALY

From page R1

At that point, they'll be the hot team with the hot quarterback, and who wouldn't want to be in that position? I'm referring, of course, to Robert Griffin III, who posted a perfect passer rating (158.3) against the Eagles and, in his Texas homecoming, lit up the Cowboys for 311 yards and four touchdowns through the air.

In so doing, he summoned memories of another Heisman

Trophy winner from hereabouts, Earl Campbell. Thirty-three years ago, in his first pro game in Dallas, Campbell, the Texas Longhorn-turned-Houston Oiler, helped spoil Thanksgiving for the Cowboys by rushing for 195 yards, including TDs of 61 and 27. Griffin, pride of Baylor and Copperas Cove, was every bit as spectacular Thursday; by halftime, he had the dispirited crowd chanting his name and booing the home club.

Some players, the special ones, do these kinds of things when the TV lights are brightest. And as regular-season games go, there aren't many bigger stages than Thanksgiving at Cowboys Stadium. But as he keeps showing, RG3 is completely comfortable in such surroundings. Indeed, he seems to live for such moments. The greater the scrutiny, the better he plays.

And he needed to against Dallas, because his teammates didn't exactly come out and set the tone in the first quarter. They started sluggishly on offense — dropped a pass, didn't protect the quarterback very well — and

on defense allowed the Cowboys to drive for a chip-shot field goal in their opening series.

Two plays into the second quarter, though, Griffin took matters into his own hands. On first-and-15, off a shotgun snap, he arched a 68-yard rainbow of touchdown pass to wide-open Aldrick Robinson to make it 7-3. Then Dallas began turning the ball over — and more Redskins TDs followed. A Dez Bryant fumble led to a 1-yard score by Alfred Morris. A Tony Romo interception with 30 seconds left in the half paved the way for a 6-yard TD flip to Santana Moss. In between, RG3 threw for another score, a 59-yarder to Garcon that, admittedly, was more Garcon than RG3.

(Just a terrific grab of a pass that was behind him — and an equally terrific run afterward, particularly given his injury.)

Add it all up and you get Redskins 28, Cowboys 3 — 28 Washington points in a single quarter. The only bigger quarter in Redskins history is the 35-point haymaker Doug Williams laid on Denver in Super Bowl XXII. That, too, came in the second quarter.

As Griffin put it, "We were showing not just ourselves and the Cowboys but everybody what we're capable of."

To which Kory Lichtensteiger added: "That's something we've got to keep working on — not having these big chunks of the game where we're struggling. Fortunately, we've got Pierre back, and Aldrick is playing great. It's pretty cool."

The second half, at the outset, had all the makings of a clock-killing drill. The Cowboys quickened pulses for a

REDSKINS 38, COWBOYS 31

Washington	0	28	0	10-38
Dallas	3	0	10	18-31

First Quarter

Dal — FG Bailey 30, 9:17.

Second Quarter

Was — A. Robinson 68 pass from Griffin III (Forbath kick), 13:47.

Was — Morris 1 run (Forbath kick), 7:00.

Was — Garcon 59 pass from Griffin III (Forbath kick), 2:14.

Was — Moss 6 pass from Griffin III (Forbath kick), :05.

Third Quarter

Dal — FG Bailey 33, 11:48.

Dal — Bryant 85 pass from Romo (Bailey kick), 1:24.

Fourth Quarter

Was — Paul 29 pass from Griffin III (Forbath kick), 12:48.

Dal — F. Jones 10 pass from Romo (Romo run), 9:54.

Dal — Bryant 11 pass from Romo (Bailey kick), 8:18.

Was — FG Forbath 48, 2:58.

Dal — FG Bailey 51, :18.

A — 90,166.

	Was	Dal
First downs	22	22
Total Net Yards	437	458
Rushes-yards	30-142	11-35
Passing	295	423
Punt Returns	2-13	3-17
Kickoff Returns	3-83	4-76
Interceptions Ret.	2-37	1-27
Comp-Att-Int	20-28-1	37-62-2
Sacked-Yards Lost	4-16	2-18
Punts	5-45.2	3-56.7
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	1-1
Penalties-Yards	5-41	7-45
Time of Possession	31:42	28:18

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Washington, Morris 24-113, Griffin III 6-29, Dallas, F. Jones 6-14, Dunbar 1-8, Romo 3-7, Bryant 1-6.

PASSING — Washington, Griffin III 20-28-1-311, Dallas, Romo 37-62-2-441.

RECEIVING — Washington, Garcon 5-93, Morgan 5-48, Moss 4-42, Paulsen 2-11, A. Robinson 1-68, Paul 1-29, Hankerson 1-12, Banks 1-8, Dallas, Witten 9-74, Bryant 8-145, Beasley 7-68, Harris 4-71, F. Jones 3-47, Dunbar 3-21, Vickers 2-11, Holmes 1-4.

MISSED FIELD GOALS — None.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dallas started its furious comeback with an 85-yard Dez Bryant TD.

NFL WEEK 12

Top performers

Lions QB Matthew Stafford: 441 yards, 2 TDs
Texans WR Andre Johnson: 188 yards, 0 TDs
Texans RB Arian Foster: 102 yards, 2 TDs



Houston kicker Shayne Graham (top, 17) is mobbed by teammates after kicking the winning field goal in overtime. Detroit receiver Calvin Johnson (above), who had eight catches for 140 yards and a touchdown dejectedly leaves the field.

GAME OF THE WEEK

Houston buoyed by Schwartz gaffe

By LARRY LAGE
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT | Jim Schwartz threw a challenge flag when he didn't need to, and the Houston Texans made him regret it.

Shayne Graham's 32-yard field goal with 2:21 left in overtime lifted Houston to a 34-31 win over the Detroit Lions on Thursday after their coach broke an NFL rule by attempting to challenge a scoring play.

"Obviously, that's a big break in the game for us," Houston coach Gary Kubiak said. "But I think you make your breaks when you work your tail off."

Detroit kicker Jason Hanson had a chance to take Schwartz off the hook, but his 47-yard field goal attempt on the fifth possession of the extra period hit the right upright.

Lions defensive end Kyle Vanden Bosch did, too, on the previous possession when he couldn't intercept a pass Matt Schaub threw directly at him deep in Houston territory.

Detroit might've won in regulation if its coach didn't make a costly mistake. Schwartz threw a challenge flag when Houston's Justin Forsett scored on an 81-yard touchdown run in the third quarter after two Lions tackled him.

"Give him credit for continuing to play football," Kubiak said. "We talk about that all the time. You don't stop, you play."

Replays showed Forsett's left knee and elbow hit the turf near midfield, and the automatic review that accompanies all scoring plays probably would have taken the TD off the board. But NFL rules say that throwing the challenge flag on a scoring play negates the review — and is an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty to boot.

"It's on me," Schwartz could be seen

"I knew the rule — you can't challenge on a turnover or a scoring play — but I was so mad that I overreacted."

— Jim Schwartz

saying to assistants and players on the sideline as he tapped his chest. "It's on me."

Yes, it was.

Forsett even acknowledged he shouldn't have been allowed to score.

"I know now that I was down, but I didn't think I was during the play," he said. "I didn't think my knee hit, and there was no whistle, so I kept going."

"I wasn't giving the touchdown back."

That score pulled Houston to 24-21.

"I knew the rule — you can't challenge on a turnover or a scoring play — but I was so mad that I overreacted," said Schwartz, whose temper got the best of him during a postgame handshake last year with San Francisco coach Jim Harbaugh.

I had the flag in my hand before he even scored because he was obviously down."

Kubiak had no sympathy.

"A rule's a rule," Kubiak said. "I know one thing: You've got to keep your flag tucked in your pocket."

Arian Foster ran for 102 yards and two scores, including a 1-yard run with 1:55 left in the fourth quarter to cap a 15-play, 97-yard drive that tied the game at 31.

Matthew Stafford was 31 of 61 for 441 yards with two TDs — with tiebreaking scores to Calvin Johnson and Mike Thomas in the second quarter.

Line blurs on legal, illegal hits



DERON SNYDER

In attempting to predict Russia's role in World War II, Winston Churchill called it "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." I could say the same thing about finding a solution to the NFL's safety problem.

But not Ray Anderson, the league's executive vice president of football operations. Anderson seems to disagree with the degree of

difficulty in reform. He suggests that players can change the nature of the game as easily as they change their clothes on game day.

Anderson appeared Tuesday on ESPN Radio's "Mike and Mike Show" — before Baltimore Ravens safety Ed Reed successfully appealed a one-game suspension for illegal hits — and argued that defensive players simply have to adjust their approach.

"The burden is on the defender to alter his target in situations like that, where a [receiver] is defenseless," Anderson said. "Here's the bottom line for us — hits to the head and neck area are potentially life-altering, as well as career-altering. We believe that, and we have enough to show us that. Illegal hits to the head and neck area are our biggest concern, and we are absolutely intent on getting those out of the game."

It's a noble and worthwhile goal, spurred by more information on concussions and more litigation on concussions. Regardless of the motivation, no one should be opposed to making the game safer. All you need is one look at the debilitating effects suffered by scores of former players.

Anderson accurately assesses the danger of blows to the head and neck area. He also correctly notes that fewer defenders attempt to wrap up ball carriers during tackles, opting instead for big, missile-launch hits. The threat of making helmet contact increases with that technique.

But it's not always the defensive player's fault.

Hits to the chest still are legal, a time-tested method of causing fumbles, breaking up passes and discouraging receivers venturing across the middle. Offensive players often are aware when a big boom is imminent. That can lead them to brace for impact and duck, putting their heads in the line of fire to catch blows intended for their chests.



Baltimore free safety Ed Reed was suspended one game by the NFL for illegal hits, but his punishment was changed to a \$50,000 fine.

Just like that, in the instant a defender calculates speeds and angles to determine the proper target area, a hit can go from legal to illegal. Expecting defensive players to adjust to last-second changes in their opponents' pad level is almost unfair. The "head and neck area" isn't always stationary, especially when players are running, cutting and trying to protect themselves.

That's a valid point for defensive players who complain about the NFL's recent crack-down on hits. But any argument that mentions the past has no place in the discussion. Reed acknowledges the need to make football safer, but also falls a bit into the history trap.

"We grew up watching the game be played a certain way and playing it a certain way," he told the Baltimore Sun after handing out

Thanksgiving meals. "It is tackle football. It is a contact sport and a brutal one, a violent one at that, the No. 1 violent sport, sad to say.

"I know concussions have been a big thing, he said. "I've had concussions before, and I know guys are going to have concussions. If you want to stop it, stop the game. Like people say, it's starting to be a flag football thing."

Hardly, but I understand his frustration. Unintended consequences of the new culture have appeared.

In Week 9 at FedEx Field, Carolina linebacker Thomas Davis received an unnecessary roughness penalty for hitting quarterback Robert Griffin III. RG3 still was in the field of play, but he was headed out of bounds.

Last Sunday at Pittsburgh, Baltimore safety Bernard Pollard thought quarterback Byron

Leftwich was running out of bounds. So Pollard eased up, fearing a flag, a fine or both. Leftwich cut up field and scored a touchdown.

I doubt if the NFL wants players to adopt Pollard's new mindset. "Now if a quarterback is going to the sideline and I've got a chance," he told reporters Wednesday, "I swear to you I'm going to kill him."

Truth be told, Pollard can do that (figuratively) with a perfectly legal hit. Which may or may not draw a penalty.

Good luck to the NFL in trying to solve this complex situation. Good luck to NFL coaches in trying to teach what's expected. Most of all, good luck to defensive players in trying to follow the murky, theoretical guidelines.

How either of those parties will figure this out is a mystery to me.

EXPANDED REDSKINS COVERAGE THROUGHOUT THE SEASON: WASHINGTONTIMES.COM/SPORTS/FOOTBALL

QUARTERS

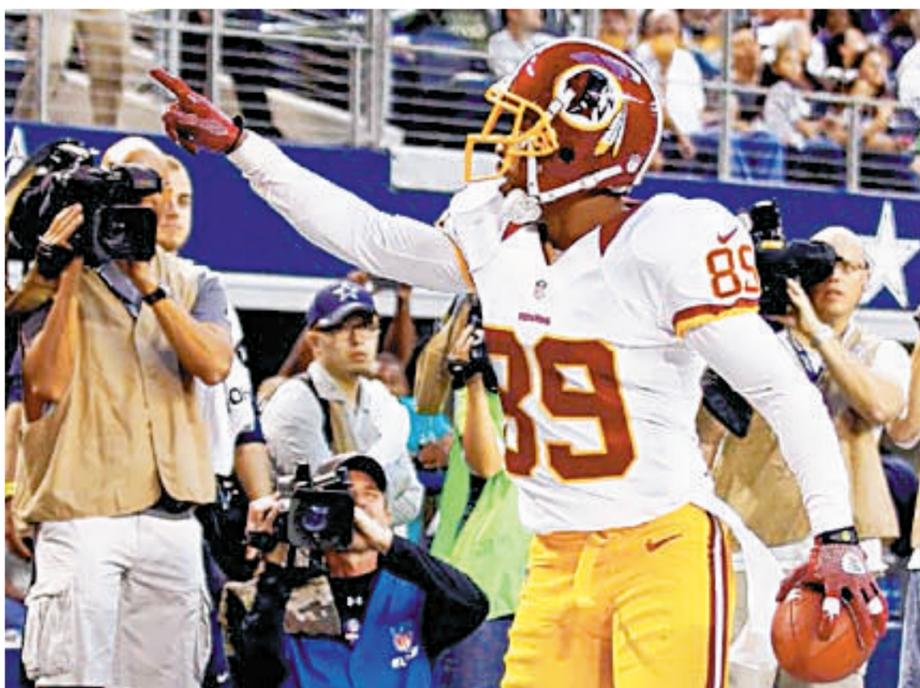
1 Too much turkey pregame? Perhaps, as both teams stumbled out of the gate. The Redskins' opening possession went no-gain run, dropped pass, intentional grounding penalty. Eek. The Cowboys then hurt themselves with a third-down penalty that blunted a long drive and forced them to settle for a field goal. More bumbling followed, but maybe the biggest takeaway was the pressure Dallas put on Robert Griffin III, keeping him from looking like himself until an option run for a first down on the penultimate play of the quarter.

2 So apparently the aforementioned run was indeed RG3 getting into his groove, as he and his mates proceeded to assemble their best stretch of play all season. On the third play of the quarter, Griffin hit Aldrick Robinson for a 68-yard score. That began a run of touchdowns on four consecutive possessions for the Redskins, capped by a Griffin bullet to Santana Moss with five seconds to play in the half. In the meantime, the defense forced a fumble and picked off Tony Romo to keep feeding RG3's machine. A remarkable display.

PLAY OF THE GAME: Let's go ahead and give some love to the kicker for a non-game-ending field goal. Kai Forbath's 48-yarder with 2:58 remaining — no gimme there — made it a two-possession game, and the Cowboys simply didn't have time for two scores after that.

3 After a Cowboys field goal on the first drive out of halftime, both teams essentially held serve throughout the period — until the thunderbolt near the end. Romo's scrambling hookup with Dez Bryant that somehow resulted in an 85-yard touchdown reawakened the home crowd and made things a bit more interesting heading into the final stanza.

4 Interesting indeed. Even after Griffin answered Romo with a TD toss on third-and-inches, the Cowboys kept rolling as the Redskins' secondary reverted to form and scored twice, plus a two-point conversion, to make it a 35-28 game with more than half the quarter remaining. Contributing to their cause was a rare bad play by Griffin, a what-was-he-thinking interception. But the Redskins finally sustained a drive, chewing up 5 minutes, 20 seconds to set up Kai Forbath's field goal and leave the Cowboys in an untenable situation. They opted for a field goal first, but couldn't recover the ensuing onside kick.



Redskins receiver Santana Moss (above) celebrates a touchdown in the final seconds of the first half. The score was the third TD pass of the quarter for Robert Griffin III and completed a 28-point outburst in the second quarter. Safety DeJon Gomes eludes the tackle of two Cowboys after he recovered a Dez Bryant fumble in the second quarter.



NUMBERS

- 295:** Points for the Redskins through 11 games. They scored 288 last year
- 28:** Points in the second quarter for Washington, which ties for second-most in any quarter in team history after a 35-point second quarter vs. the Broncos in Super Bowl XXII
- 6:** TDs of at least 60 yards for the Redskins this season after Thursday's 68-yarder to Aldrick Robinson

NEXT

GIANTS AT REDSKINS
8:30 P.M., DEC. 3, ESPN

• Another week, another first for Robert Griffin III. Eleven days after the Turkey Day matchup in Dallas — the QB's first against Washington's longtime rivals — RG3 makes his primetime debut on Monday night against the Giants at home. It will be an opportunity for the Redskins to exact revenge after a 77-yard touchdown to Victor Cruz ruined what seemed to be a Griffin-led comeback in New York on Oct. 21. Oddly, Eli Manning hasn't thrown a TD since that game-winning pass. Not coincidentally, the Giants are 1-2 in that stretch, including two straight losses entering Sunday night's game against the Packers.



Victor Cruz

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