



INSIDE: Emotions overflow as Williams scuffles postgame, G2
Field conditions make bad day worse for RG3; Defense can't stop Seattle run game, G4

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GAMEDAY

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END OF THE LINE



Decisions questioned after Griffin knocked out of playoff loss

By RICH CAMPBELL
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Robert Griffin III exhaled deeply and saluted the crowd as he walked off the field in the fourth quarter Sunday night. His sprained right knee, aggravated in the first quarter, finally gave out. It gruesomely buckled, brace and all, when he tried to pick up a low shotgun snap rolling on the ground.

Fans cheered their hero, the face of this resurgent Washington Redskins franchise, as he exited the stage, knowing they'll have to wait at least through the offseason to watch him work his magic again.

Griffin's early knee injury turned the thoroughbred quarterback into a gimpy also-ran. It kept the Redskins' offense in neutral and allowed the Seattle Seahawks to come from behind for a 24-14 playoff victory that ended Washington's historic season.

The fallout of the loss and Griffin's re-injury immediately landed on coach Mike Shanahan's shoulders. He and Griffin defended the decision to let the quarterback continue playing despite the results on the scoreboard, and despite the ailment that sent Griffin for an MRI exam Sunday night.

After Griffin fell awkwardly on his right leg during a first-quarter pass and obviously was hobbled, Griffin talked Shanahan into letting him stay in the game.

"I thought he did enough for us this year to have that opportunity to stay in the football game," Shanahan said. "It's always a tough decision when to pull a guy and when not to. He said, 'Trust me. I want to be in there, and I deserve to be in there,' and I couldn't disagree with him."

The decision triggered an avalanche of second-guessing as the Redskins' offense sputtered and Griffin ultimately re-injured his knee.

Washington totaled 129 yards and averaged 6.5 yards per play on two touchdown drives to begin the game. Griffin was injured on the third-to-last play of the second drive.

On the remaining six possessions Griffin played, the Redskins averaged only 1.57 yards on 23 plays. They gained only 36 total yards and four first downs.

"We weren't the same team," Shanahan said. "There's no question about it."

Then why leave Griffin in the game? "You got to go with your gut, and I

PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins tight end Logan Paulsen bends over to help quarterback Robert Griffin III after he was injured during the fourth quarter Sunday at FedEx Field.

» see **REDSKINS** | G2



Risking hobbled QB outweighed any reward

With about two minutes gone in the fourth quarter of Sunday's playoff game against the Seattle Seahawks, Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III managed to pick up 9 yards on a run.

"Run" is a very generous word for what the prize of the franchise did on that play.

Hobbled, perhaps? Shuffle-stepped? Limped? Whatever, it was obvious

RG3 wasn't himself and it begs a very big question: Why was he in the game when he was clearly much less than 100 percent?

Amid a report posted Sunday morning on USA Today's website that Dr. James Andrews did *not* clear RG3 to return to action Dec. 9 against the Ravens, it becomes very fair to ask if the Redskins are taking unnecessary

chances with the player they gave up so much to get.

The Redskins had no choice but to get Griffin out with 6:19 left when his braced-up right knee took an ugly twist as he reached to try and pick up a fumble. More news on the extent of that injury should come Monday.

Griffin shouldn't have been out there at that point.

Despite Sunday's 24-14 loss to the Seahawks in the wild-card round of the playoffs, the growing legion of Redskins fans shouldn't be too disappointed with the result.

The day started out great. The Redskins scored easily on their first two possessions to put Seattle down 14-0. It

» see **HARRIS** | G2

EXPANDED PLAYOFF COVERAGE: WASHINGTONTIMES.COM/SPORTS/FOOTBALL

NOTEBOOK

Emotions get best of Williams during a postgame scuffle

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Trent Williams shoved Seattle Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman in the face in the aftermath of the Washington Redskins' season-ending playoff loss Sunday and expressed regret minutes later.

Sherman appeared to make a "good-bye" gesture with his hand after the Seahawks beat the Redskins 24-14, and Williams took exception to it when the teams met at midfield.

"Just high emotions, man. You know I let 'em get the best of me. It's nobody's fault but mine," Williams said. "I've got to calm down a little bit. When you lose a game like this with high intensity, I was a little on edge. I reacted in an immature manner."

Williams, a team captain who has been praised for his growth as a person and player during this Pro Bowl season, didn't want to explain what exactly Sherman had done to anger him.

Replays showed Williams shoving Sherman with his open right hand. He needed to be restrained by wide receiver Brandon Banks.

The 24-year-old left tackle took

responsibility for his actions.

"I'm taught better than that. I've just got to be better, man," Williams said. "It's my first playoff run and I had a season end like that and then to kind of be taunted, it takes a bigger man to walk away the next time. I've just got to be a bigger man."

Lichtensteiger limps off

Kory Lichtensteiger didn't practice all week because of a sprained left ankle, but he started Sunday against the Seahawks after testing it before the game.

Very early on, though, the veteran left guard had to leave the game and give way to rookie Josh LeRibeus.

"I just felt like when I really tried to push into [Alan] Branch, something kind of gave way. I didn't have the stability, I guess," Lichtensteiger said. "I didn't think stability was going to be a problem. But I didn't have the strength in there that I thought I did."

Lichtensteiger said last week he knew he would have to do more than jog to feel good about playing on the ankle. He did.

"I tried to simulate about everything



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins left tackle Trent Williams is restrained from Seattle players after his confrontation with Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman. "Just high emotions, man. You know I let 'em get the best of me. It's nobody's fault but mine," Williams said.

that we do in our offense and it all felt good. I was pushing against big Doug Worthington and everything felt good," Lichtensteiger said. "I guess you can't really simulate game speed when somebody's really coming into you. So I think that's what it was. I just, I guess, overestimated how good it was feeling."

Rocca bombs punts

Punter Sav Rocca's right knee hasn't

been nearly as scrutinized as Robert Griffin III's, but he has been playing with a torn meniscus for the past few months.

On Sunday, though, Rocca looked like a star.

When the offense sputtered in the second half and the defense faltered, he boomed a 50-yard punt and two 53-yarders. The Seahawks scored on just one of those drives, needing to go 79 yards to do so.

Extra points

- Safety DeJon Gomes was active after missing the regular-season finale against the Dallas Cowboys with a left knee injury.

- Linebacker London Fletcher said he would go through his normal process of deciding whether to come back next year. The 37-year-old has played in 240 consecutive regular-season games, tied for the active NFL record.

SEAHAWKS 24, REDSKINS 14

Seattle	0	13	0	11-24
Washington	14	0	0	0-14

First Quarter

Was — Royster 4 pass from Griffin (Forbath kick), 9:57.

Was — Paulsen 4 pass from Griffin (Forbath kick), 2:26.

Second Quarter

Sea — FG Hauschka 32, 12:05.

Sea — Robinson 4 pass from Wilson (Hauschka kick), 4:38.

Sea — FG Hauschka 29, :00.

Fourth Quarter

Sea — Lynch 27 run (Miller pass from Wilson), 7:08.

Sea — FG Hauschka 22, 5:32.

A — 84,325.

	Sea	Was
First downs	22	15
Total Net Yards	380	203
Rushes-yards	37-224	23-104
Passing	156	99
Punt Returns	2-19	2-12
Kickoff Returns	2-46	5-97
Interceptions Ret.	1-2	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	15-26-0	13-29-1
Sacked-Yards Lost	5-31	2-16
Punts	3-34.7	4-48.3
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	2-1
Penalties-Yards	4-30	3-15
Time of Possession	34:20	25:40

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Seattle, Lynch 20-132, Wilson 8-67, Turbin 8-22, Robinson 1-3. Washington, Morris 16-80, Griffin III 5-21, Young 1-3, Cousins 1-0.

PASSING — Seattle, Wilson 15-26-0-187, Washington, Griffin 10-19-1-84, Cousins 3-10-0-31.

RECEIVING — Seattle, Miller 4-48, Tate 4-35, Baldwin 2-39, Robinson 2-23, Rice 1-27, Lynch 1-9, Turbin 1-6. Washington, Garcon 4-50, Moss 3-19, Hankerson 2-27, Paulsen 2-15, Royster 1-4, Morgan 1-0.

MISSED FIELD GOALS — None.

REDSKINS

From page **G1**

did," Shanahan said. "I'm not saying my gut is always right, but I've been there before. In different situations, I get to know Robert better and better as time goes on. I'll know how stubborn he is. He's a competitor, and I'll probably second-guess myself."

Griffin told Shanahan he was hurt, but he distinguished between being hurt and being injured. It's an accepted distinction in the football world. Being hurt means playing through pain. Being injured means sitting out.

"I don't feel like me being out there hurt the team in any way," Griffin said. "I think I did put myself at more risk by being out there, but every time you step on the football field ... you're putting your life, your career, every single ligament in your body in jeopardy. That's just the approach I had to take towards it. My teammates needed me out there, so I was out there for them."

It worked against the Redskins, as it turned out.

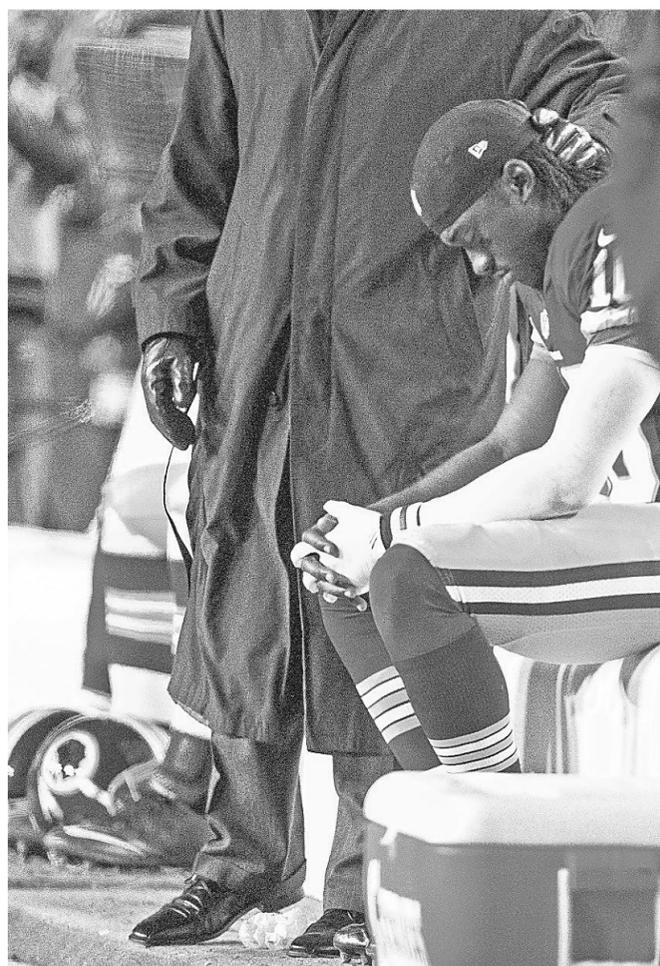
In their first home playoff game since January 2000, they lost for the first time in eight games dating to Nov. 4. It was a bitter end to a campaign that fostered more optimism than any since they last won the NFC East title in 1999.

The Redskins won the final seven games of the regular season to finish 10-6 and win the division. Their core of young offensive playmakers provide reason to believe there will be many more of these playoff games in future years, although Griffin's injury cast immediate doubt about his status moving forward.

"It's just truly exciting," Griffin said, "even though today is a very dim day."

It was a stunning conclusion to an evening that began with such promise.

The Redskins' offense initially played like the league's top-ranked unit. They met little resistance on the opening drive, marching 80 yards on nine plays for a touchdown. Griffin threw



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III sits on the bench after re-injuring his right knee in the fourth quarter Sunday. Washington's offense stalled with a hobbled Griffin under center, not scoring after the first quarter.

a 4-yard dart to running back Evan Royster to give the Redskins a 7-0 lead.

After the defense held the Seahawks three-and-out, Washington's offense did it again. Griffin had an 8-yard run on a zone-read keeper, showing a level of

burst he hadn't since he sprained his right knee Dec. 9.

Washington drove 54 yards for a touchdown in 11 plays. The crowd of 84,325 got louder as the yards piled up. Griffin's 4-yard touchdown throw to

Logan Paulsen made it 14-0. The Redskins were the steamroller, and Seattle was the asphalt.

But — there was a huge but — Griffin was injured. On first-and-goal from the 4-yard line on the second drive, he extended an ill-fated pass play by running to the right sideline. As he threw near the boundary, he fell awkwardly with his right leg underneath him.

Griffin got up limping as badly as he ever had since the initial injury. And from that point on, the Redskins offense lost its fuel.

"Robert not being able to run definitely hampers some of the stuff we do," Paulsen said. "It kind of took a lot out of the playbook, all the play-action stuff we have off of it, all the runs we have off of it, so that's a good percentage of our offense that we can't really run as effectively."

Griffin obviously was limited. It didn't help he banged his right throwing hand on one of his linemen's helmets in the first quarter. His throws languished, and he wasn't the running threat he appeared to be at the beginning of the game.

Meanwhile, Seattle's Russell Wilson showed why he drawn comparisons to Griffin. He extended passing plays behind the line of scrimmage, scrambled for positive yards and threw accurately when he needed to.

Wilson ran for 67 yards and threw for a touchdown, while bruising running back Marshawn Lynch ran for 132 yards on 20 carries. They executed the zone-read option just as the Redskins do at their best, and they kept Washington's defense off balance.

The final act for Washington was indeed tragic. Griffin's knee gave out in the fourth quarter, presenting the Redskins with their worst-case scenario.

The game was lost, the season was over, and their franchise quarterback's status is in doubt.

"I've just got to make sure that I get back healthy no matter what the injury is," Griffin said.

How quickly the magic stopped.

HARRIS

From page **G1**

was the Seahawks' largest hole this season. But RG3 took a tumble soon thereafter and hobbled back to the huddle. He then disappeared for a brief time into the training room.

He didn't miss a snap. Perhaps he should have. He clearly wasn't the same afterward.

Redskins coach Mike Shanahan, RG3 and other Redskins all talked about competitiveness afterward. RG3 said he was OK, said he could play. Shanahan said he listened and went with his gut, though he acknowledged he could second-guess that call.

"I don't feel like me being out there hurt the team in any way," Griffin said.

Lorenzo Alexander said RG3 "has earned the right to make his own

decision. He had a great season. You allow your star players, a London Fletcher, a Robert, if he's hurt and feels like he can play through it, you let him go out there and play through it."

Nice thought, but no. Wanting to be out there all the time is part of what makes RG3 great. Sometimes, someone has to step up and say no. And in fairness to Shanahan, it is understandable that it is hard for him to be that guy. He still has to do it. Shanahan said Griffin "gave me the right answer," when he asked RG3 about the knee. Here's an idea — go with your eyes and not your ears.

"I don't know how much Robert had to do with staying out there," Hall of Fame quarterback Warren

Moon said while standing outside the Seahawks' locker room. "But it was obvious he didn't have the ability to play at a high level. That's why you have a backup quarterback. It was hard watching him put himself in danger of further injury."

Whether a 100-percent RG3 would have made a difference Sunday will be forever debated. Seattle is too strong a team to hold down all day. The Seahawks have a pretty sharp rookie quarterback of their own in Richmond's Russell Wilson. After doing nothing early in the game, the Seahawks did pretty much what they wanted afterward and finally took the lead with 7:08 left in the fourth quarter.

Again, no shame for the Skins in

this loss. Or this season. Just some questions.

Why not see if backup quarterback Kirk Cousins, also a rookie, could have done something? He bailed out the team in that Ravens game when RG3 finally went out for good, then looked really strong as a starter the following week in a victory over Cleveland on the road.

Why put RG3 at unnecessary risk?

There's a lot to like about this team beyond RG3. Rookie running back Alfred Morris set a team single-season rushing record. Pierre Garcon, when healthy, was a legitimate weapon at receiver. Logan Paulsen showed serious promise at tight end. The offensive line held up much better than anyone had a right to expect.

The town fell in love with him, as it should have. Of course, you want him out there every single play. Just not when he's obviously hurt.

And that's just on offense. The defense, Sunday's misadventures notwithstanding, made a ton of progress as the season rolled by. That was without standout outside linebacker Brian Orakpo, who missed almost the whole year with an injury.

Let's not forget the Redskins also seem to have found gold in a new kicker. Kai Forbath made his first 17 field goals, a record for the start of a career.

Yep, this team is set up to be pretty good for a pretty long time.

But, and this is no disrespect toward the capable Cousins, don't think for a second that bright future isn't built around a healthy RG3. He's so talented, as he showed so often this season. He's so good. The town fell in love with him, as it should have.

Of course, you want him out there every single play. Just not when he's obviously hurt.

WILD-CARD WEEKEND

RAVENS

Lewis extends career at least 1 more game

Linebacker had 13 tackles against Indy

By JASON BUTT
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

BALTIMORE | Ray Lewis' spectacular 17-year NFL career will continue for at least one more week.

Returning to the field 12 weeks after tearing his right triceps, Lewis helped the Baltimore Ravens defeat the Indianapolis Colts 24-9 in the wild-card round of the NFL playoffs.

The Ravens (11-6) will now visit Denver on Saturday in the divisional round.

For Lewis, the emotions began pouring in on the ride to M&T Bank Stadium on Sunday morning. Lewis rode in silence with teammate Brendon Ayanbadejo, partially reflecting on his career and what the significance of what his last game in Baltimore would be.

And like he typically has throughout his tenure with the Ravens, Lewis didn't disappoint. He finished the day with 13 tackles and a pass deflection, one he should've had for an easy interception.

With the game on ice and the Ravens taking knees, the Baltimore fans began chanting, "We want Ray! We want Ray!" Ravens coach John Harbaugh then put Lewis in for the game's final play as the safety in the victory formation. Once the ball was snapped, Lewis did the dance he does when he's introduced in front of the home fans, something he learned from a childhood friend in his hometown of Lakeland, Fla.

When the game concluded, Lewis ran a victory lap around the stadium as fans stayed in their seats until the players completely left the field.

"There was probably no greater moment than seeing my kids, my mom, my dad, my family right there in the end of the end zone," Lewis said. "That was probably when I lost it emotionally, because I knew that everything I have always done has always been for them."

Lewis announced he was retiring at the end of this postseason on Wednesday, whenever

that may be for the Ravens, who have now won a playoff game in each of the last five seasons.

For Lewis, he still has a shot at a second Super Bowl title if Baltimore continues winning.

"He's a heck of a football player," Harbaugh said. "It's always so funny to hear people say, 'Well, he's not the same that he was 10 years ago.' Well, who is?"

Though Lewis once again provided the emotional lift, it was Ravens outside linebacker Paul Kruger who provided the spark for the defense. Kruger finished the game with 2.5 sacks and a forced fumble, which was recovered by defensive end Pernell McPhee in the first quarter.

Kruger also added five quarterback hits of his own as he had his way with whoever he was matched up against.

"The game plan set up real nice and after we got off a little bit, it just set up real nice," Kruger said. "Then the offense started throwing the ball a little bit and it was time for us to tee off."

Though the defense gave up 419 total yards to a young Colts team, it held Indianapolis to just four scoring opportunities on field goals.

Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri made three of four kicks, accounting for all nine of the visiting team's points.

At the half, Baltimore held a 10-6 lead, which it extended with 8:33 to go in the third quarter. After quarterback Joe Flacco threw a deep pass to receiver Anquan Boldin for 46 yards, Flacco found tight end Dennis Pitta for a 20-yard touchdown two plays later, giving the Ravens a 17-6 lead.

The Colts responded with Vinatieri's third field goal of the day, after running 15 plays and 7:46 off the clock. This drive was Indianapolis' second that lasted more than seven minutes, though the Colts were only able to muster three points on both possessions.

"We had our opportunities but we couldn't get it done," Colts quarterback Andrew Luck said. "We made too many mistakes and left too many plays out there."

DIVISIONAL ROUND

SATURDAY

4:30 p.m. Baltimore at Denver, CBS

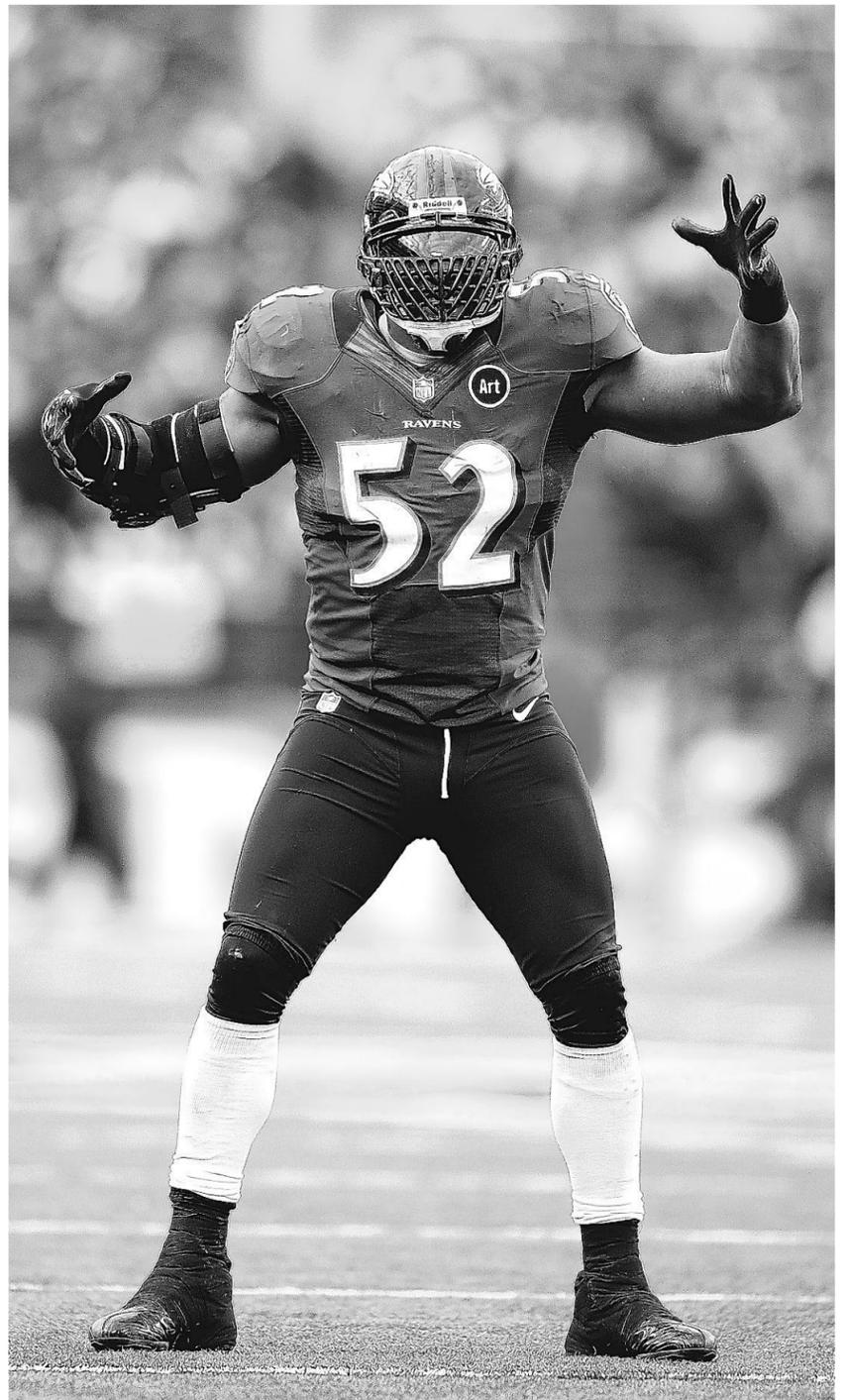
8 p.m. Green Bay at San Francisco, Fox

SUNDAY

1 p.m. Seattle at Atlanta, Fox

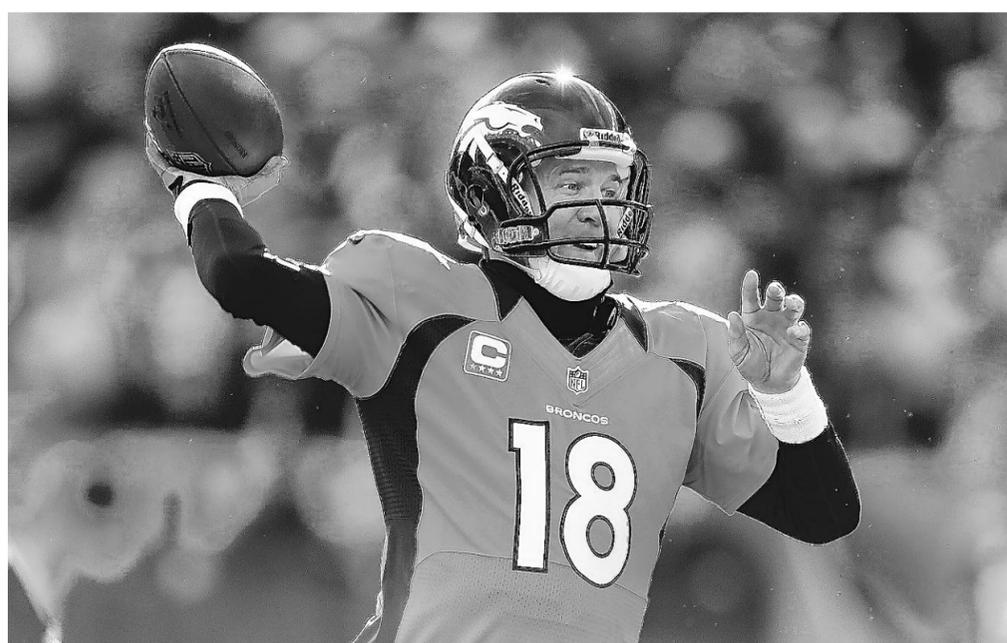
4:30 p.m. Houston at New England, CBS

THE WASHINGTON TIMES



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis dances Sunday near the end of Baltimore's 24-9 win over Indianapolis.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

After leading his team to the top seed in the AFC, Peyton Manning will open his playoffs Saturday against the Ravens in Denver.

AFC PLAYOFFS

Ravens win means no Colts for Manning

By ARNIE STAPLETON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER | Peyton Manning will have to wait until next season to face the Indianapolis Colts.

His old team lost 24-9 at Baltimore in the AFC wild-card game Sunday. So the Ravens (11-6) will visit Denver next weekend to face the Broncos (13-3), the AFC's top seed.

Had the Colts won, there would have been a circus-like atmosphere all week in Denver in anticipation of the reunion between the Broncos quarterback and the team he played with for 14 seasons before their split last spring.

Instead, the Broncos get a chance to send Ray Lewis into retirement Saturday.

Manning will face the Colts sometime next season in Indianapolis — the exact date won't be known until the 2013 schedule comes out.

The Broncos are coming off a bye and riding an 11-game winning streak that includes a 34-17 win at Baltimore in Week 15.

"It matters in the fact that you have film from having played them and you know them a little better than you know Indy," Broncos tight end Jacob Tamme said. "But we would know Indy just as well as any other team we play in the playoffs. So, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter."

The Ravens weren't at full strength last month. Sunday marked the first time all season that they had defensive playmakers Lewis, Ed Reed, Terrell Suggs and Haloti Ngata on the field together.

"It means nothing that we beat them in the regular season. I know we beat them pretty good, but in the playoffs it's just a different game," wide receiver Brandon Stokley said.

Like Tamme, Stokley is a former

teammate of Manning's in Indy, and he said the four-time MVP and the rest of the Broncos know better than to let their guard down now.

"That was the same scenario against Pittsburgh when Peyton and I were in Indy. We whipped them pretty good and we played them a couple of weeks later after a bye and they beat us in the playoffs, you know?" Stokley said. "So it doesn't matter what you did in the regular season."

Asked last week if he'd watch the Colts game with anything more than a technical interest, Manning said: "I've always watched the playoff games. It's certainly one of the three teams that we could play. It's an exciting time for football."

The Broncos worked all of last week as they prepared for the possibility of facing the Colts, Bengals and Ravens, and they had a team lift on Saturday. They return to work Monday.

NFC PLAYOFFS

49ers draw different Packers for rematch

By NANCY ARMOUR
ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREEN BAY, WIS. | The San Francisco 49ers can toss their film from the season opener against Green Bay in the trash for as much good as it will do now.

Cedric Benson is gone, and the Packers' running game is now powered by DuJuan Harris and Ryan Grant — neither of whom was on the roster Dec. 1, let alone back in September.

Randall Cobb, whose 75-yard punt return gave the Packers a fleeting chance late in the 30-22 victory by San Francisco, is now one of Aaron Rodgers' favorite receivers.

And a defense that may as well have been holding rookie orientation for all its newcomers is now a savvy, stingy bunch of veterans.

"A lot's happened," coach Mike McCarthy said. "We're a different football team. We're a different football team than we were four weeks ago."

The Packers (12-5) play San Francisco (11-4-1) Saturday night in an NFC divisional game after beating Minnesota in the wild-card round. The 49ers are early 3-point favorites.

San Francisco has had its share of changes this season, too, the most significant being coach Jim Harbaugh's decision to stick with Colin Kaepernick after Alex Smith recovered from his concussion.

But that's nothing compared with the Packers, who've had so many injuries and lineup changes that defensive coordinator Dom Capers was watching film of the season opener Sunday partly to remind himself of who was — and wasn't — on the field way back when.

More than a dozen starters or projected starters have missed a game or more with an injury, including: Charles Woodson, who played Saturday for the first time since breaking his right collarbone Oct. 21; Greg Jennings, who

"I don't think we had our identity [in Week 1]"

— Aaron Rodgers

missed eight games with a torn muscle in his groin; Clay Matthews and Jordy Nelson, who missed four games each with hamstring injuries; and Benson, who played only five games before a season-ending foot injury.

Change has been the only constant on the offensive line the second half of the season, with the Packers on their fifth starting lineup.

Same in the secondary, where three players started at right corner over the last seven games.

That kind of upheaval would doom most teams, but the Packers have managed to thrive. Somewhere amid the chaos, they not only found solutions, they found themselves.

"Everybody starts the season and has an idea and vision of who you want to be," McCarthy said Sunday. "But the reality of it is, you go through a 16-week season, there's a lot of things happen. There's obstacles that you have to get through. There's injuries to different players, players coming in, players going out. I think all those things factor in to who you really are and who you think you are."

The biggest difference the 49ers will see is in the Packers' running game. Green Bay managed a measly 45 yards on the ground in the opener, and Rodgers and Benson were the only two ball carriers.

"I don't think we had our identity at that point," Rodgers said. "We were trying a lot of different things."

The running game still wasn't clicking when Benson got hurt, and the Packers had only minimal success with Alex Green and James Starks.

It took the pint-sized Harris to bring Green Bay's offense into balance.

EXPANDED PLAYOFF COVERAGE: WASHINGTONTIMES.COM/SPORTS/FOOTBALL

QUARTERS

1 For a team that would prefer to lean on Alfred Morris, given Robert Griffin III's current mobility issues, the Redskins got about all they could have asked out of the opening quarter. With the FedEx Field crowd roaring, Griffin and Morris rolled down the field on the first drive, which Griffin capped by hitting Evan Royster for a 4-yard score. Seattle then went three-and-out thanks to a big sack by London Fletcher and Stephen Bowen, giving Washington the ball back. Another long drive ended in Griffin hitting Logan Paulsen for a score, and the Redskins ended up holding the ball for 11 minutes in the quarter. Not bad.

2 And everything the first quarter gave the Redskins, the second quarter took away. Just about, anyway. The Seattle offense opened the quarter on the move and had to settle for a field goal on its first and last possessions of the period — the latter coming from a now very hobbled Steven Hauschka — but it basically owned the quarter. The Redskins officially ran six offensive plays in the quarter, and by halftime, it was a one-point game.

PLAY OF THE GAME: Nothing the Redskins had shown in two-plus quarters indicated they were poised for a comeback, but still, they were within one score when RG3's knee finally gave out on a bad snap with 6:25 remaining. Kirk Cousins couldn't reprise his miracle finish from the Ravens game and that was it.

3 This quarter ended in stalemate, thanks mostly to one play. The Seahawks were rolling through the Redskins' defense coming out of halftime and cruised to the Washington 1-yard line. That's where Barry Cofield got his helmet on the ball being carried by Marshawn Lynch and the star back coughed it up, with Jarvis Jenkins recovering just in front of the goal line. The teams traded punts after that, and even though the Redskins hadn't done much positive lately, they still led.

4 Lynch finally broke out and did what Morris couldn't all afternoon, bouncing out twice on a 27-yard TD run that put the Seahawks in front with 7:08 remaining. A two-point conversion gave them a seven-point edge, and the hobbled RG3 and Kirk Cousins after him were unable to respond.

NUMBERS

224: Rushing yards for the Seahawks; the Redskins hadn't allowed more than 186 this year
8-6: Mike Shanahan's career postseason record
10,235: Days since Washington's last postseason loss at home — Dec. 30, 1984 against the Bears. The Redskins had won five home playoff games in a row.
2: Sacks for safety Reed Doughty, who had 3.5 sacks in 92 games before Sunday



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III falls to the ground after fumbling and injuring his knee on a bad snap in the fourth quarter of Sunday's loss.

SEAHAWKS 24, REDSKINS 14

PAIN IN THE GRASS

BY NATHAN FENNO
 THE WASHINGTON TIMES

As Robert Griffin III planted his right foot in pursuit of an errant snap late in the fourth quarter Sunday, what little remained of the Tifway Bermuda grass exploded around him.

By then, FedEx Field's playing surface looked like the aftermath of a monster truck rally. A gash of brown dirt dotted by the token shred of grass stretched from end zone to end zone. The logo at midfield was too blurred to recognize. Hunks of turf went missing in the sections fortunate to retain any green.

Griffin's right foot slid. A shower of dirt and clumps of turf kicked up. The quarterback's knee wrenched in a grotesque, unnatural way that even the bulky black brace he wore couldn't stop. A small cloud of dust followed his right foot as he tumbled to the ground.

The quarterback didn't return to the game, leaving questions about the health of his re-injured knee — no diagnosis was immediately forthcoming — and the FedEx Field playing surface that has long been an object of derision.

"That's just part of our home-field advantage," Griffin said after the Washington Redskins' 24-14 wild-card playoff loss to the

Griffin's struggles exacerbated by poor playing conditions

Seattle Seahawks.

Did that 'home-field advantage' cost the Redskins the rookie quarterback they've constructed their franchise around? No one in the locker room pointed fingers at the surface. Not quite. But Redskins players made clear this is an issue they've faced for an extended period of time and one that continued during their first postseason game since 2008.

"It's actually better today," receiver Pierre Garcon said with a knowing grin. "Some days it'll be wet or slick. Today it was just all dirt. ... It was actually not as bad as previous times." But the wince-inducing frame-by-frame of Griffin's injury tells a different story. Turf flies everywhere. His ankle moves like it's on an ice rink. Then the knee buckles, he crashes to the dirt and the stadium falls silent.

Even after backup quarterback Kirk Cousins replaced Griffin, dirt spiraled off the football on one of his throws.

This was normal, and that might have been the scariest part.

"It's the same thing we've been dealing with for the last eight weeks at home," fullback Darrel Young said.

"Nothing different than what it has been," running back Alfred Morris said.

Added guard Kory Lichtensteiger: "I wouldn't go and throw anybody under the bus like that. It could be better, I guess. But both teams are playing on the same thing."

The field quickly unraveled from the green surface that greeted the national television audience. Players slipped and slid. Griffin's jersey was covered with chalk and dirt and green paint that used to cover the field after his second drive of the day.

There wasn't rain or snow to blame. And there weren't other games here earlier in the week, as is often the case at the high-traffic stadium.

Safety Reed Doughty, like his teammates, pointed to both teams contending with the same field conditions.

"They're not ideal," Doughty said.

Asked if they were worse than usual, Doughty cocked an eyebrow.

"Here?" he said. "No."



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Seattle running back Marshawn Lynch made his way through the Washington defense to score on a 27-yard touchdown run during the fourth quarter that proved to be the game-winner Sunday at FedEx Field.

No answers for Seahawks' zone-read run

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
 THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Staring at a potent one-two running punch of quarterback Russell Wilson and running back Marshawn Lynch, the Washington Redskins knew they were in for a tough time against the Seattle Seahawks in the NFC wild-card round. They made it the game plan to stop them.

But when Wilson and Lynch got going with their zone-read running game Sunday, they were just about unstoppable to the tune of 199 yards on the ground in the 24-14 defeat of the Redskins.

"I think we didn't fit it up as we had practiced throughout the week. We were seeing the zone read since the beginning of OTAs with Robert [Griffin III] and our offense," inside linebacker London Fletcher said. "So we knew how to fit it up; guys just didn't play it the way we're supposed to every single time."

The Redskins' defense was felled by misdirection, missed assignments and missed tackles. Lynch cut back across the field often for big gains, and Wilson

took advantage of so much of the focus being on the Pro Bowl running back.

"Marshawn, when they gave it to him, he was running hard. We had a lot of missed tackles. Then you try to key on him, and you give Russell Wilson a little bit of time, he was able to hit the edge," linebacker Lorenzo Alexander said. "They changed up some of their blocking schemes as far as what we had planned for them, as far as them blocking back on the end. It exposed us a couple of times, so we had to make some adjustments there."

Players and defensive coordinator Jim Haslett last week brushed off the notion that seeing Griffin and the Redskins' offense doing the zone read would help them prepare for the Seahawks. They hadn't really practiced against it since training camp.

But they did see what the Seahawks did with the zone read and knew what they had to do to stop it.

"You have to be technically sound. You've got to rally to the football, but you've got to do assignment football," safety Reed Doughty said. "If one guy misses, then the next guy's got to make it, and the next thing you know, it's an

8-yard gain."

Or longer. Lynch used a cutback on his 27-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter that gave Seattle its first lead of the afternoon. That came on the same drive as Doughty making a perfect read on Wilson, something Fletcher pointed to as a result of players executing correctly.

But it didn't happen enough. And the Redskins were left paralyzed by the same kind of attack their offense tormented the league with for much of the regular season.

Given that the offense managed just 203 total yards, the defense had increased pressure to make something happen.

"We just needed to go out and make plays," said Fletcher, who was part of a crucial forced fumble of Lynch in the third quarter along with nose tackle Barry Cofield. "Defensively sometimes you have to pick your offenses up, and we needed to make, I think, one more play when the score was 14-13. We needed to make one more play to kind of swing the momentum for us. We weren't able to do that, weren't able to get off the field."

Wilson beats RG3 at his own game

He was given short shrift entering the season, primarily due to his diminutive stature. He went on to win Seattle's starting job, but nationally played second fiddle to Robert Griffin III and third banana to Andrew Luck in this season of high-profile rookie quarterbacks. But Russell Wilson is the one who has advanced to the playoffs' next round while the other two have begun their offseason vacations.

Only a special player could out-RG3 in RG3's house, flip the script and force the Redskins to swallow what their face of the franchise dished out all season. But Griffin couldn't keep up with Wilson, not with a bum right knee entering the game and a banged-up passing hand suffered in the first quarter.

Unencumbered by a bulky brace, aching joints and bruised extremities, Wilson demonstrated why his name has crept into Rookie of the Year conversations, flummoxing Washington in a 24-14 victory in a NFC wild-card game Sunday at FedEx Field.

Wilson didn't produce eye-popping statistics, but he provided steady leadership and a calm demeanor as the Seahawks fell behind 14-0 in the first quarter. His passing and running on three consecutive drives to end the first half resulted in 13 points and a one-point game at intermission.

"His demeanor never changes," Hall of Fame quarterback Warren Moon said outside the Seahawks' locker room. "He's like [Tom] Brady and [Peyton] Manning, their face never changes, even today at 14-0. That's what I look for in a quarterback. Are his eyes wide? Is he rattled? But he's so confident in his preparation, he never wavers."

Neither does his team's belief in him. Unlike Griffin and Luck, Wilson didn't come in as a ballyhooed franchise savior. More than a few teammates, let alone NFL pundits, wondered if the 5-foot-11, 206-pounder could play at a high level. But he won them over as the season wore on, to the point where no one was surprised at Sunday's comeback.

Wilson even got to show off his downfield skills, helping to spring



DERON SNYDER

Marshawn Lynch on two long runs, including the 27-yarder for Seattle's go-ahead touchdown with 7:08 left in the fourth quarter.

"I guess it's from watching the offensive line block all the time," Wilson said. "Marshawn always tells

me, 'I got your back, I got your back.' I just try to help him out once in a while."

Wilson finished with 187 yards passing and 67 yards rushing, with a huge hand in the Seahawks' scoring drives.

He accounted for all but 5 of the 66 yards when Seattle got on the board with a 32-yard field goal. He knocked a fumble away from a Redskins defender on Seattle's next possession, allowing Lynch to scoop the ball in stride and rumble 20 yards. Wilson did the rest from there, capping the 73-yard drive with 4-yard touchdown pass to Michael Robinson.

With 3:36 left in the first half, Wilson directed a 10-play, 63-yard march for a short field goal as time expired.

"He's just very poised," said tight end Anthony McCoy. It doesn't matter if we're down by 21 or if we're up by 21. ... He's been doing that all year so it's no surprise that he's [succeeding] in big games like this."

The zone read that RG3 and Alfred Morris have run to perfection was duplicated perfectly by Wilson and Lynch.

Wilson is playing better than most anyone expected entering the season. Now, no one expects anything less.

"It was a slow process," McCoy said. "We had to figure out what kind of offense we were going to run. ... They figured out this whole option attack, and it's been going great."

The same was true of the Redskins before their season ended Sunday. Fans didn't get to see a healthy, effective RG3 in the final game this year at FedEx Field. But they were able to see a reasonable facsimile lead the other team to victory.