

Week 14



- Snyder: Offensive output likely an aberration. R2
- Too much Gronkowski for Washington to handle. R3

# Patriots 34, Redskins 27



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ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

# SHORT OF SUCCESS



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

## Washington's offense holds it own against Brady & Co. until stumbling at the finish

By RICH CAMPBELL  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Think back six weeks ago when the Washington Redskins' offense was so pitiful that its progress was measured in completions and first downs. Three-and-outs, sacks and turnovers were the expectation. Victory seemed impossible.

If those were the Redskins' darkest times, then the past few weeks have been their most exasperating. That's how quarterback Rex Grossman sees it, at least. The offense is functional again, but victory remains elusive because the Redskins lack the ability to finish games.

So when they went toe-to-toe Sunday with the New England Patriots only to fall short in the final seconds and lose 34-27, it seemed worse than those bleak afternoons back around Halloween.

"It can be more frustrating when that happens," Grossman said. "But you're trying to build something, and there's something to build off of. You can look at it both ways. It's so disappointing that we had our chances to win but we didn't get it done."

The Redskins (4-9) lost for the eighth time in their past nine games and ensured their third consecutive losing season. There was plenty of good throughout Sunday's game, but

ultimately the bad triumphed.

Washington was in position to upstage one of the NFL's superpowers and steal a win that would serve as a modest consolation in this lost season. The Redskins drove to the Patriots' 9-yard line with 29 seconds remaining. On third-and-goal, Grossman tried a short pass to Santana Moss across the middle. It went through Moss' hands and into linebacker Jerod Mayo's grasp.

"You're always disappointed when you can't finish a game," coach Mike Shanahan said. "I thought we did a number of good things today, but at the end of the day we fell a little bit short."

Mayo's interception marred one of the Redskins' finest games of the year. You can't really call it a breakthrough, especially considering the Patriots entered the game with the NFL's worst-ranked defense, but there's no denying that Grossman and running back Roy Helu have improved the standard from those miserable midseason losses to Buffalo and San Francisco.

The offense scored more points than it had in any game this season, beating the previous high of 23 it scored against Seattle two games ago. The Redskins totaled a season-high 463 yards.

That was no small feat, either. Un-

» see REDSKINS | R3

**LEFT:** Redskins receiver Santana Moss eludes Patriots strong safety James Ihedigbo on a 49-yard touchdown catch that gave Washington its first lead. **ABOVE:** Linebacker Jerod Mayo's interception of a pass intended for Moss sealed New England's victory in the final seconds of the game.

## Where has this been all season?



DAN DALY

the cries of despair from their fans as one defeat was piled atop another.

Jabar Gaffney was so excited to catch a

touchdown pass against his former club that he did the FedEx Leap into the stands behind the end zone. Granted, he got a little too much lift and landed in the seats instead of on the ledge, but these things can happen when you're going toe to toe with one of the NFL's elite.

As the day went on, other Redskins released their Inner Child — showing, as Rex Grossman put it, that "it's fun to go out there and play football." Whether it was hurling themselves into the crowd after scores, twirling the ball on the ground after first downs or otherwise celebrating big plays, the Redskins didn't hold anything back.

"We were pumped up," Gaffney said. "Had a good team coming in here, a chance to show we could play with the best."

For 60 minutes, the last-place Redskins did play with the best, too. Indeed, with 1:09 left, they thought they had tied New England 34-34 on a 5-yard TD throw from Grossman to Santana Moss. Alas, Moss was called for pushing off, and Grossman's next pass went off Moss' hands and into those of Jerod Mayo, the Patriots' Pro Bowl linebacker. Thus did one of the most entertaining Sundays in many moons at FedEx Field end in a 34-27 loss.

» see DALY | R2



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Donte' Stallworth's 51-yard reception in the first quarter was one of the Redskins' many big plays in Sunday's loss.

## A LANDOVER LEAP



ANDREW HARNIK / THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Washington Redskins wide receiver Jabar Gaffney celebrates with fans in the end zone after his 9-yard touchdown catch in the first quarter of Sunday's 34-27 loss to the New England Patriots at FedEx Field.

## Don't be swayed by scoring surge



DERON SNYDER

That certainly was fun, way more entertaining (and competitive) than anyone imagined. Too bad the Washington Redskins can't play New England every week.

Sure, the Patriots generate a lot of offense. But they yield a bunch, too. They were the perfect remedy for an inconsistent Redskins attack that posted its most points and most yardage all season, albeit in a 34-27 loss Sunday at FedEx Field.

No one expected a shootout between Tom "Captain America" Brady and Rex Grossman because the latter misfires and shoots his team in the foot too often. But the Redskins couldn't ask for a more susceptible opponent if their offense ever started to click.

The Patriots' scoring prowess might skew their defensive numbers a bit, as teams hopelessly behind can pile up inconsequential yards. But New England without the ball doesn't remind anyone of Baltimore. Opportunities figured to abound against the Patriots — ranked dead last in the NFL in yards per game. The only questions involved the Redskins' ability to capitalize.

They did, to a point, amassing 463 yards. There were a slew of big plays, eight passes that covered at least 20 yards (including a 51-yard bomb to Donte Stallworth) and three runs that covered at least 15 yards. Rookie halfback Roy Helu rushed for 126 yards. Stallworth (96 yards) and Jabar Gaffney (92 yards) had huge days against their former team.

"They're both very good players," Grossman said. "I'm glad the Patriots got rid of them."

But lots of players look good against New England. So don't get too carried away by Sunday's production.

The Redskins still settled for field goals when touchdowns are necessary against Brady. They still committed mistakes and a turnover in the red zone. They still failed to a play when they absolutely, positively had to have it.

The effort would've been good enough to beat plenty of other teams. Washington's offense might have had trouble sleeping Saturday night, eager to face New England (The opposite reason might have led to difficulties for the Redskins' defense getting a good night's rest).

"We knew they played a lot of zone and there are a lot of open spaces out there," Gaffney said. "It's just about getting into



PRATIK SHAH/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Redskins' offense was humming along so well Sunday that even David Anderson, a receiver who was not on the roster at the beginning of the season, got into the scoring act with a 6-yard touchdown catch in the third quarter. While entertaining, much of the firepower can be attributed to the Patriots' pass defense, which has allowed many teams to score plenty of points.

them. We felt like we could, and we executed pretty good today."

Sunday provided something to build on, especially when you consider the reshuffled offensive line that's also missing tight end Fred Davis. Coach Mike Shanahan and his offensive coordinator will have to figure out how much of the success was a result of the Patriots' weak defense versus progress from Grossman, Helu, et al.

**Sunday provided something to build on. ... Coach Mike Shanahan and his offensive coordinator will have to figure out how much of the success was a result of the Patriots' weak defense versus progress from Grossman, Helu, et al.**

Just don't tell Stallworth that the Redskins' output gets an asterisk.

"This is the NFL," he said. "It's anybody's game on any day. No one gave us a chance to win or be in this game. We played well, just not well enough in the end."

There's no denying that they played surprisingly well, which might explain Gaffney landing on his butt after a celebratory leap into the stands. Unaccustomed to such frolicking, the fans were caught off guard and failed to catch him.

Next week, Washington gets another shot at moving the ball and putting up points against a less-than-stout defense when it faces the New York Giants. Successful teams beat the teams they're sup-

posed to beat.

For now, the Redskins can accumulate moral victories by playing well against teams that are vulnerable.

"I typically go into every game thinking it's about the offense's execution rather than what the defense is doing," Grossman said. "But there are definitely some weeks where you look at your plays and how they are going to stack up, and I thought we could get some good plays with the passing game."

If they couldn't do that against one of the league's worst secondaries, the situation is bleaker than we thought.

Helu is proving his worth as an every-down back. Gaffney and Jabar are among a number of Grossman's viable targets. The offensive line is coming together through injuries and suspensions. And Grossman is playing his position well enough to keep the Redskins competitive.

"We're all judged by winning and losing," Shanahan said. "We moved the ball fairly well and scored a few points."

But it's better to move the ball, score points and lose, than it is to lose without accomplishing the first two feats.

If losing is inevitable — not saying that it is (just saying) — the Redskins might as well provide some excitement and entertainment in the process.

It always helps when a porous defense plays along.

## DALY

From page R1

But back to our original "if." Where has this fight, this feistiness been all season? The Redskins, after all, had no business being in this game in the fourth quarter. They were already without Fred Davis and Trent Williams because of suspensions and assorted others (e.g. LaRon Landry) because of injuries; then Jammal Brown, one of their few semihealthy offensive linemen, further complicated matters when he tweaked his groin in warm-ups and couldn't play.

It figured to be a long day, especially after New England took a quick 7-0 lead on a defensive touchdown (set up by old friend Andre Carter's sack/forced fumble). There just didn't seem to be any way the offense-challenged Redskins could keep up with the high-scoring Pats, who put up 30 points against just about everybody.

But no one likes to be embarrassed, and surely that was in the back of the Redskins' minds as they geared up for New England. The Patriots, during their near-perfect 2007 season, had whopped them 52-7, and they were quite capable of whomping them just as badly this season. Tom Brady, last I checked, is still Tom Brady, Wes Welker is still Wes Welker ... and Rob Gronkowski is like no tight end you've ever seen.

So the Redskins brought their A game — or what's left of their A game, after all these casualties — and, miraculously, matched New England score for score. The biggest shock was seeing Grossman and Co. gain chunks of yardage, something they haven't done all year. In their second series, Grossman lobbed a 51-yard bomb to Donte Stallworth to set up a Graham Gano field goal. Not long afterward, Brandon Banks connected with Moss on an end-around pass for a 49-yard TD that put the home team ahead 17-14.

A trick play. Imagine that. It was the first pass, in fact, since Mike Shanahan took over as coach that wasn't thrown by a quarterback. Yup, the Redskins came at the Patriots with everything they had, spiritually and strategically. And lo and behold, it enabled them to hang with a club that's in the running for the first seed in the AFC.

It helped, of course, that they caught Brady on one of those rare afternoons when he actually looks mortal — at times. Brady's numbers were still terrific (22 of 37 for 357 yards and three touchdowns), but he was off target more than usual and was intercepted in the end zone by Josh Wilson in the late going when he had a chance to put the game away. (Though, in his defense, the pass was well within the reach of receiver Tiquan Underwood, who was outbattled for the ball.)

Then there's the New England secondary — nothing special to begin with — which, because of injuries, has been forced to use wideouts (Matthew Slater and Julian Edelman) to cover opposing receivers. Gaffney, Stallworth and Moss were running free all day, as Washington (293) just missed becoming the ninth team this season to throw for 300 yards against the Patriots.

Incredibly, it was there for the taking for the Redskins. Shanahan said he was even considering going for the two-point conversion — and the win — if Moss' touchdown hadn't been called back. The coach and his players were leaving no stone unturned in their pursuit of victory.

Hallelujah. But why couldn't the first 12 games have been like that? Why did it take utter desperation — and a visit from Bill Belichick's wrecking crew — for the Redskins to play the way they should have been playing all along?

**Why did it take utter desperation for the Redskins to play the way they should have been playing all along?**

PATRIOTS 34, REDSKINS 27

# TE Gronkowski too big, too strong and too good

## He sets record for single-season TDs at position

By NATHAN FENNO  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Rob Gronkowski is more than a mismatch.

There are the New England Patriots tight end's Velcro-like hands. The agility of a dancer. And the second-year player stands 6-foot-6, would-be tacklers bouncing off his 265 pounds like Pop Warner players trying to bring down an elephant.

"The guy's a gargoyle," Washington Redskins cornerback Josh Wilson said.

As the Patriots beat the Redskins 34-27 at FedEx Field on Sunday, Gronkowski tore up the team's usually solid defense in a swirl of tackle-breaking, highlight-making catches and runs that left a locker room filled with shaking heads.

Gronkowski caught six passes for 160 yards and two touchdowns as he broke the NFL's single-season touchdown record for tight ends.

"I even held him," disbelieving linebacker Ryan Kerrigan said, "and he somehow broke away."

Kerrigan didn't have answers, left instead with the memory of Gronkowski rampaging around the field's chewed-up turf.

There was Kerrigan's nightmare early in the third quarter. Facing third-and-12, quarterback Tom Brady found Gronkowski down the middle of the



Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski hauls in a first-quarter touchdown pass, his first of two scores, as the Redskins' DeJon Gomes defends. Gronkowski had six catches for 160 yards.

field in the face of a zero blitz. That meant the receivers had one-on-one coverage.

Kerrigan tried to hold Gronkowski. That only drew a flag. Tackling didn't work, either. Kerrigan is 6-foot-4 but looked out of place next to

Gronkowski. A few seconds later, the tight end was celebrating his 37-yard touchdown in the end zone.

"He's what you think of when you want a tight end," Kerrigan said. "It was a horrible play on my part. ... It's

not acceptable. I've got to wrap him up and hold on. It doesn't matter if it's friggng Rob Gronkowski."

Kerrigan's missed tackle was part of an afternoon-long problem for the Redskins' defense. If defenders don't wrap up and don't hold on, a tight end

doesn't need Gronkowski's physical gifts to run up video game-like numbers.

Still, Brady took advantage of Gronkowski's size, often lobbing the ball so high only the tight end could catch it.

"He's going to make plays, but we've got to make some plays, too," safety Reed Doughty said. "You can't just say, 'Oh, he's a big guy, he's going to make plays.' You've got to challenge him."

That didn't happen much, particularly early in the game.

Look no further than Gronkowski's first catch. He caught a short out from Brady, then broke away from attempted tackles by Doughty and fellow safety DeJon Gomes next to the sideline, while somehow managing to say inbounds. A few feet away, cornerback DeAngelo Hall stood, watched and didn't intervene.

Then Gronkowski sped along the sideline for his record-breaking touchdown.

"We both hit. We both wrapped," Doughty said. "I think I kind of hit him a little bit and knocked him off. I think we both thought he stepped out of bounds. He made a good play. He's a big guy. I told [Gomes] that can't happen."

Left behind were the chances the Redskins' defense gave the team to win, such as Wilson's fourth-quarter interception of Brady in the back of the end zone. So, the Redskins were left praising Gronkowski's route-running, his size, his strength, his speed and, well, everything.

"I'm glad we were able to keep it to a minimum," Wilson said, "if you call that a minimum."



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins tackle Jammal Brown (77) re-aggravated a groin injury during warm-ups, necessitating another offensive line combination. With Erik Cook deactivated, Washington had only one backup lineman for the game.

PATRIOTS 34, REDSKINS 27

# Brown lost for game before kickoff

## Right tackle re-aggravated groin injury during warm-ups

By NICK EILERSON  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

In the minutes leading up to the Redskins' kickoff against the New England Patriots on Sunday, right tackle Jammal Brown's day ended before it even began.

A re-aggravated groin injury suffered during pregame warm-ups sent him hobbling into the locker room and prompted yet another realignment of Washington's merry-go-round offensive line before its 34-27 loss.

Brown suffered the injury in the end zone during pulling drills, which involve a quick lateral movement to mimic running around the down block of an adjacent offensive lineman.

"I went to pull and my left leg slid with the dirt as I was pushing off, almost doing the splits coming out," Brown said. "So I just kind of knew right away from pulling my groin a couple weeks ago."

Indeed, it was the same right groin injury that kept Brown sidelined for the Nov. 13 loss at Miami. Eight-year pro Sean Locklear replaced Brown for that game, but Trent Williams' season-ending suspension for violating the NFL's substance-abuse policy led to a vacancy at left tackle that ultimately was filled by Locklear and rookie Willie Smith against the Patriots. Lock-

lear got the start, but the two alternated series in the early going before Smith took over for the majority of the game.

Brown's substitute for Sunday's game was Tyler Polumbus, a four-year veteran whose only other start since being signed by the Redskins last month came against the Dallas Cowboys in Week 11. Polumbus, whose start at right guard Sunday represented a shift from his more natural left guard position, filled in for Maurice Hurt at left guard against the Cowboys.

According to Redskins coach Mike Shanahan, Polumbus received no practice time this past week. That made his solid performance against the Patriots all the more impressive.

"I certainly didn't expect [Brown] to get hurt in pregame warm-ups, but any chance I get to play I'm excited," Polumbus said. "I hope he has a quick recovery, but any time I get a chance to go in there, I have fun."

Playing in his first NFL game, Smith received a rude awakening on the third snap of the Redskins' second drive. Facing third and 9 from the Redskins' 5-yard-line, Smith succumbed to the bull rush of former Redskins defensive lineman Andre Carter, who leveled quarterback Rex Grossman and forced a fumble that was recov-

ered by Patriots nose tackle Vince Wilfork for the game's first touchdown.

"I got in a good set, got in a good position on him," Smith said. "He started to bull [rush] and I tried to lean on him to stop the bull, and when I leaned he took advantage of that and pulled my arm and swung over, and that's how he got there."

Despite the setback, Redskins coaches maintained faith in the 25-year-old rookie. Smith played the entire fourth series, an eight-play, 84-yard drive that culminated in a 9-yard touchdown pass to Jabar Gaffney.

"We thought we could take a little pressure off him not throwing him in right away starting the game in case we had a few mistakes, so we alternated series," Shanahan said. "When Willie started playing well we kept him in there, and I think he did a good job."

Sunday's starting lineup in the trenches was the Redskins' sixth different combination this season, a carousel that Brown claimed has little effect on the unit's collective mentality.

"We're a tight-knit group, so I don't think it bothers us as much as it would other teams just because of our camaraderie and stuff," said Brown, who expects to heal from his groin injury this week. "We'll be all right."

## REDSKINS

From page D1

drafted rookie Willie Smith played the majority of the game at left tackle in place of suspended Trent Williams. And starting right tackle Jammal Brown aggravated his strained left groin during pregame warmups, forcing backup Tyler Polumbus to play the whole game.

The Redskins adjusted without Williams, their most athletic lineman, and suspended tight end Fred Davis, their leading receiver. They had certain receivers — specifically, Jabar Gaffney and Niles Paul — block more frequently on inside runs. They also utilized fullback Darrel Young more.

"I'd say it worked," Grossman said.

Helu's determined running was a major factor. He amassed 126 yards on 27 carries to become the first Redskins rookie to rush for more than 100 yards in three straight games.

"It's pretty cool," Helu said. "All credit to the linemen, they did great."

In the passing game, Grossman exploited New England's zone coverage. He was 19 of 32 passing for 252 yards, two touchdowns and the late interception.

He got the offense going with a 51-yard deep throw to Donte Stallworth on the Redskins' third series. That led to a field goal. And although the Redskins trailed 14-3 in the first quarter, Grossman eventually found his stride with the help of the running game.

"Unless you have just a one-dimensional offense, you have to have balance," he said. "The runs have to put you in good positions to throw the ball, put you in third-and-manageable. Getting first downs on second down to keep you out of third down, getting big chunks, it opens up the play-action pass. It's everything to this type of offense. It was pretty special today."

But — and so often this season there has been a 'but' — they couldn't make the big play in the clutch.

Two plays before the final interception, Moss thought he had tied the game. On second-and-goal from the 5, he ran a quick out from the right slot. Grossman hit him in the end zone, but officials ruled that Moss had pushed off defensive back Julian Edelman. Moss was irate about the call after the game.

"We blow our breath on one of the doggone guys over there and it's a penalty," Moss said. "Our quarterback get killed, and we almost hit some-

PATRIOTS 34, REDSKINS 27						
	New England	14	6	14	0	-34
	Washington	10	10	7	0	-27
<b>First Quarter</b>						
NE—Wilfork fumble recovery in end zone (Gostkowski kick), 12:06.						
Was—FG Gano 24, 6:42.						
NE—Gronkowski 11 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 5:49.						
Was—Gaffney 9 pass from Grossman (Gano kick), 1:20.						
<b>Second Quarter</b>						
Was—Moss 49 pass from Banks (Gano kick), 14:49.						
NE—FG Gostkowski 23, 8:54.						
Was—FG Gano 25, 2:13.						
NE—FG Gostkowski 24, :00.						
<b>Third Quarter</b>						
NE—Gronkowski 37 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 12:05.						
Was—Anderson 6 pass from Grossman (Gano kick), 6:58.						
NE—Welker 24 pass from Brady (Gostkowski kick), 4:26.						
A—77,825.						
		<b>NE</b>		<b>Was</b>		
First downs	.....	22		25		
Total Net Yards	.....	431		463		
Rushes-yards	.....	20-79		34-170		
Passing	.....	352		293		
Punt Returns	.....	2-18		0-0		
Kickoff Returns	.....	2-39		6-117		
Interceptions Ret.	.....	1-2		1-0		
Comp-Att-Int	.....	22-37-1		20-33-1		
Sacked-Yards Lost	.....	1-5		2-8		
Punts	.....	3-45.0		3-37.3		
Fumbles-Lost	.....	0-0		2-1		
Penalties-Yards	.....	4-47		8-73		
Time of Possession	.....	23:51		36:09		
<b>LEADERS</b>						
<b>RUSHING</b> —New England, Woodhead 8-41, Green-Ellis 5-19, Faulk 3-11, Brady 4-8, Washington, Helu 27-126, Royster 6-44, Grossman 1-0.						
<b>PASSING</b> —New England, Brady 22-37-1-357, Washington, Grossman 19-32-1-252, Banks 1-1-0-49.						
<b>RECEIVING</b> —New England, Welker 7-86, Gronkowski 6-160, Hernandez 5-84, Ochocinco 1-15, Underwood 1-7, Woodhead 1-4, Faulk 1-1, Washington, Gaffney 6-92, Stallworth 4-96, Moss 3-81, Anderson 2-12, Helu 2-6, Royster 2-6, Young 1-8.						
<b>MISSSED FIELD GOALS</b> —None						

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

body else's quarterback and we get flagged. So it's a lot of stuff that goes on. We got to play against a team and the refs."

So, in the end, all the Redskins' offense accomplished Sunday netted the same result: defeat and anguish.

"People always say losing a close game is worse than losing a blowout," Stallworth said. "If you get blown out, it seems like nothing goes right. But when it's close, when you play the way we played, when you play the way we played against the Jets and Cowboys these past few weeks, it's really tough."

**"If you get blown out, it seems like nothing goes right. But when it's close, when you play the way we played, when you play the way we played these past few weeks ... it's really tough."**

— Donte Stallworth

**REDSKINS SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**



vs. Giants  
W, 28-14

**WEEK 2**



vs. Cardinals  
W, 22-21

**WEEK 3**



at Cowboys  
L, 18-16

**WEEK 4**



at Rams  
W, 17-10

**WEEK 6**



vs. Eagles  
L, 20-13

**WEEK 7**



at Panthers  
L, 33-20

**WEEK 8**



at Bills (Toronto)  
L, 23-0

**WEEK 9**



vs. 49ers  
L, 19-11

**WEEK 10**



at Dolphins  
L, 20-9

**WEEK 11**



vs. Cowboys  
L, 27-24 (OT)

**WEEK 12**



at Seahawks  
W, 23-17

**WEEK 13**



vs. Jets  
L, 34-19

**WEEK 14**



vs. Patriots  
L, 34-27

**WEEK 15**



at Giants  
Sun., Dec. 18

**WEEK 16**



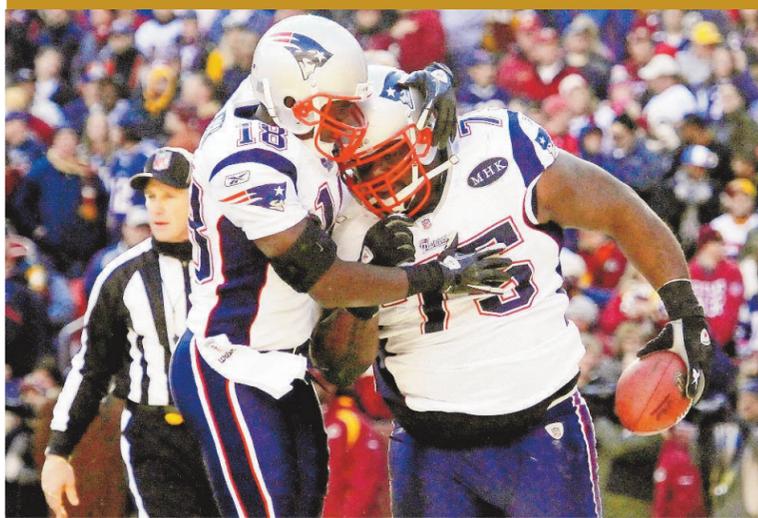
vs. Vikings  
Sat., Dec. 24

**WEEK 17**



at Eagles  
Sun., Jan. 1

**PATRIOTS 34, REDSKINS 27: QUARTER-BY-QUARTER**



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**FIRST QUARTER:** Patriots defensive tackle Vince Wilfork is congratulated by teammate Matthew Slater after Wilfork recovered a Rex Grossman fumble in the end zone.



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**SECOND QUARTER:** Redskins wide receiver Santana Moss gets behind Patriots safety James Ihedigbo to haul in a 49-yard touchdown pass from Brandon Banks.



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**THIRD QUARTER:** Patriots wide receiver Wes Welker (83) scores the go-ahead touchdown in front of Redskins cornerback DeAngelo Hall as Rob Gronkowski (87) celebrates.



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**FOURTH QUARTER:** Patriots linebacker Jerod Mayo seals the game with an interception of a pass that bounced off Santana Moss in the final seconds.

**1** Say this for the Patriots: They took advantage of the opportunities they had. New England had the ball for only 3:07 in the opening quarter, but still led at the end of it. The first score came on defense, as Rex Grossman held onto the ball too long in the end zone, allowing Andre Carter to beat Willie Smith and knock the ball away. Vince Wilfork picked up the fumble in the end zone for a touchdown. The Pats' other score came on a two-play, 60-yard "drive" that consumed less than a minute and consisted of two passes from Tom Brady to Rob Gronkowski — the first of which was aided when cornerback DeAngelo Hall stood there like the house by the side of the road, to borrow from the great Ernie Harwell. The Redskins blew a chance at a TD in the middle of the quarter but converted late, as Roy Helu set up a Grossman-to-Jabar Gaffney 9-yard score. Helu ended up outrushing the Patriots 55 yards to 1 in the quarter.

**2** The quarter certainly started with a flourish, with Brandon Banks hitting Santana Moss for a 49-yard touchdown on a reverse pass to give the Redskins their first lead of the afternoon. But despite defensive atrocities throughout the quarter by New England, the Patriots were even with their hosts at halftime. They could easily have been ahead, too, having squandered TD chances on a pair of drives that ended in field goals. Midway through the quarter, Aaron Hernandez dropped a sure TD pass from Brady on third down. And the Pats had a great opportunity on the final drive of the half — aided by an absurd roughing call on London Fletcher — but couldn't close it out and settled for three once again. Of course, the Redskins benefitted from an equally ridiculous call, this one a roughing the passer penalty against Carter, that helped set up a field goal of their own just before that final Patriots drive.

**KEY PLAY**

For a team that was trailing, Washington seemed like it had the momentum as it drove for what could have been the tying score in the fourth quarter. The Redskins appeared to have it when Santana Moss caught a 5-yard TD, but he was flagged for offensive pass interference after pushing off a defender. Two plays later, Moss couldn't handle a Rex Grossman pass over the middle and saw it bounce into the arms of Jerod Mayo for a game-sealing interception.

**3** There were positives once again for the Redskins in the third quarter, as the offense continued to take advantage of New England's pitiful pass defense and picked up another touchdown when another receiver (David Anderson this time) ran free in the end zone to give Grossman an easy target. But that play and the continued piling up of yards weren't enough to put the Redskins ahead, as Brady kept coming up with answers. Not that they didn't have help. Take Hall, for example. In his second boneheaded play of the day, he was flagged for a 5-yard holding penalty, then managed to get 15 more yards by picking up the flag and throwing it. That paved the way for another Gronkowski TD, this one coming at the expense of Ryan Kerrigan. More impressive was Brady's work later in the quarter, when he eluded the type of rush that always seems to frazzle Grossman and hit Wes Welker for a 24-yard score.

**4** Both teams had their chances to make something happen in the final quarter, but mistakes prevented any headway by either offense and left the game as it was at the end of the third for a tenuous Patriots win. The Redskins' first drive of the quarter was backed up from the start when a holding penalty against Maurice Hurt wiped out what would have been a 26-yard gain, prompting a rare three-and-out. The Patriots started their next drive at midfield and were headed for what could have been a putaway TD when Brady threw behind Welker at the goal line, then saw Josh Wilson make a great play to pick him off in the back of the end zone. That gave the Redskins 6½ minutes to mount a game-tying (or go-ahead) drive, and a pair of third-down completions by Grossman helped move things along. But it all went for naught when Moss was flagged for pass interference, then lost the ball for an interception.

**REDSKINS NOTES**

**Penalty for Fletcher hit leaves defense miffed**

By **NATHAN FENNO AND RICH CAMPBELL**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- 126:** Rushing yards for Roy Helu, making him the first Redskins rookie with three consecutive 100-yard games
- 9,011:** Career receiving yards for Santana Moss, making the veteran the 11th active receiver to reach 9,000
- 463:** Total yards for the Redskins, a season high
- 3-6:** New England's all-time record against the Redskins. Sunday's win was the Patriots' first in Washington
- 0-4:** Redskins' record against AFC opponents this season, having lost all four games against the AFC East
- 15:** Touchdown catches this year for New England tight end Rob Gronkowski, breaking the NFL record of 13 for a tight end

A personal foul against linebacker London Fletcher on Sunday left Washington Redskins' defenders questioning how, exactly, they're allowed to hit the quarterback.

With 57 seconds left in the first half, New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady scrambled and slid. At the last instant, Brady ducked and Fletcher, with no time to stop, plowed into him.

Fletcher was called for a forearm to the head of the quarterback. Replays showed Fletcher's arms around Brady's ribs and nowhere near the quarterback's head.

"I thought it was horrible," coach Mike Shanahan said. "That's what I saw on the replay."

After the play, linebacker Brian Orakpo said Brady told the defenders "it was a bad call."

"It just gets to a point even when we do get to [Brady] we don't know if we can bring him down in a certain way," Orakpo said. "The times we were getting there, we weren't bringing Brady down because we didn't want a call, a penalty."

Defensive end Stephen Bowen wondered if once-normal hits are being refereed out of football.

"I think it was a bad call," Bowen said. "They've got to let people play. This is a violent game. People are going to get hit. If you're not in it to get hit, what are you in it for? It's part

of the game."

**Banks takes to the air**

When Brandon Banks finally got on the field for his first offensive snap of the season, he made a play with his left arm instead of his legs.

Banks took a reverse toward the left sideline on first-and-10 from the New England 49-yard line on the first play of the second quarter. When Patriots safety James Ihedigbo ran up to stop him, he launched a pass that receiver Santana Moss caught. Moss broke a tackle and scored to give Washington a 17-14 lead.

"When I let go, it kind of was a bad pass," Banks said. "Then Tana made an adjustment by coming in and catching the ball and breaking a tackle. It was a bad pass. It could've been better, but he made me look good."

Banks, a 5-foot-7 return specialist, did not warm up his arm before the game so as not to give away the play. He also didn't take his gloves off.

"I can't throw without the gloves," he said. "They give me a little extra grip. My hands ain't but so big."

**Turf conditions steam team**

The chewed-up turf at FedEx Field a day after the Army-Navy game didn't please the Redskins.

There were significant brown patches between the hash marks, especially close to midfield.

Tackle Jammal Brown believed field conditions contributed to the left groin injury he aggravated during pregame warm-ups.

"I slipped a little bit as I was doing my drills, got overextended," said Brown, who did not play as a result. "That field out there wasn't too good. I went to go right. When I went to push off this [left] leg, I put all my weight on it and it slipped out from under me. I kind of almost did the splits."

Orakpo called the field "messed up" and the "worst I've ever played on in my life."

"The Army-Navy game really tore it up," Orakpo said.

The Redskins left the end zones painted with "Army" and "Navy" as part of their weekendlong salute to the military.

**Cook, Torain inactive**

Lineman Erik Cook, the team's only backup center, wasn't active for the first time this season. Combined with Brown's pregame injury, the Redskins played with one backup lineman.

Running back Ryan Torain was not active, either. Torain fell out of the backfield rotation with Roy Helu's emergence and additional work for Evan Royster after his elevation from the practice squad.

**WEEK 15  
REDSKINS AT GIANTS**



**Kickoff:** 1:05 p.m. **TV:** Fox **Radio:** AM-980, FM-92.7, FM-94.3  
**What to watch:** Washington played its best game of the year against the Giants in the opener. That might as well have been three seasons ago. Since the 28-14 win on the 10-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the teams have taken divergent paths.

- The Giants are contending for the NFC East title despite a tough run through their schedule. Losses to 49ers, Eagles, Saints and Packers brought them back to the pack.
- In the first meeting, the Giants blitzed on defense and pounded the run on offense — both with success. Their defense eventually backed off, and quarterback Rex Grossman finished with a 110.5 passer rating. It was the last game in which he did not throw an interception.

