

Week 1



- Reshaped defense comes up big in victory, R2
- Rookie defenders make major impact in debut, R3



Redskins 28, Giants 14



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2011

The Washington Times

washingtontimes.com/sports/football

SECTION R



ROD LAMKEY JR. / THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Rookie linebacker Ryan Kerrigan returns an interception for a touchdown early in the third quarter. Kerrigan started the play by tipping a pass by Giants quarterback Eli Manning.

ONE GIANT STEP

Big play leads to reversal of fortune



DAN DALY

Losing can become a habit. It certainly has for the Washington Redskins as far as the New York Giants are concerned. In recent years, the Giants have been the lock without a key, the puzzle without a solution, the cigarette and the blindfold.

Before Sunday's opener at FedEx Field, the Redskins had dropped six straight to Tom Coughlin's bunch and nine of 10. They had lost by a lot. They had lost by a little. But almost always, they had lost. What, they've been asking themselves, is it going to take to put a stop to that? The Giants aren't that much better than us. Or are they?

As it turned out, all it took to change the course of this series — for an afternoon, at least — was some big plays by players unburdened by the past. Rookies such as Ryan Kerrigan and Chris Neild, the Redskins' first and last draft picks. Free agent pickups such as Jabar Gaffney, Stephen Bowen and Sav Rocca. And let's not forget Tim Hightower, who the Arizona Cardinals, next week's opponent, were nice enough to send this way in a trade.

Collectively, that group produced three of the Redskins' four touchdowns, three of their four sacks, 72 of their 74 rushing yards and four beautifully placed punts inside the 20 to help the home team pull away to a 28-14 win. In terms of instant impact, you can't ask for much more.

It was Kerrigan, still settling in at his new outside linebacker spot, who made the single biggest play. Three snaps into the second half, he batted a pass by Eli Manning, gathered the ball in at the New York 9 and, depending on your point of view,

» see DALY | R3



ROD LAMKEY JR. / THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins running back Tim Hightower gets a lift from tight end Fred Davis after a touchdown. Gallery, www.washingtontimes.com/multimedia.

Confident Grossman leads way as Washington receives contributions from all over

By RICH CAMPBELL
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Jabar Gaffney had seen this Rex Grossman before. The two of them were on top of the college football world at the University of Florida back in 2001. Grossman-to-Gaffney was one of the nastiest quarterback-receiver combinations in the country.

So when Grossman said he was "feelin' like I was in Florida again" after leading the Washington Redskins to a 28-14 season-opening win over the New York Giants on Sunday, Gaffney was right with him.

"That's exactly what it looks like," Gaffney said. "Just like we were in college — nothing but confidence in his eyes."

Grossman showed some of the form that made him the 2001 Heisman Trophy runner-up. He overcame a rocky start and, for at least one week, validated coach Mike Shanahan's decision to start him at quarterback over John Beck.

He finished 21-of-34 passing with 305 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions. His 110.5 passer rating was the fourth-best of his 42 NFL games.

"I thought Rex played an excellent game [against] a lot of pressure up front, very talented football team; they play extremely hard," Shanahan said. "It's really hard to get big plays in the passing game against a defensive front that puts a lot of pressure on the quarterback."

It was high praise from a coach who is normally subdued, who has to watch the film before saying anything about anything. But this was the Grossman who Shanahan believes is capable of engineering a playoff push.

Grossman headlined a stirring start to Shanahan's second season at the helm, as the Redskins beat their NFC East rivals for the first time in

"I thought Rex played an excellent game. ... It's really hard to get big plays in the passing game against a defensive front that puts a lot of pressure on the quarterback."

—Mike Shanahan

» see REDSKINS | R3

OPENING DAY SNAPSHOTS



PRATIK SHAH/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The New York Giants kick off to the Washington Redskins to start the 2011 season. The game was a matchup of the cities most directly affected by the 9/11 terrorist attacks.



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Scott Ryan and his girlfriend, Amy Rider, react to the 9/11 tribute before the Redskins and New York Giants clashed in a divisional matchup.



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell (left) is greeted by fans as he walks down a tunnel at FedEx Field following pregame ceremonies. Mr. Powell served as an honorary captain for the Redskins.

Season starts with a verdict for the defense



DERON SNYDER

New York defense and elicited a huge so-what?

The Giants' starting middle linebacker was third string a few days ago. Two of their best defensive linemen spent the day in street clothes. Their top defensive back went down with a season-ending knee injury in the pre-season.

Under those circumstances, you'd expect Washington to crank out some yards and put up some points. If so, big deal. Conversely, failing to produce against an injury-ravaged unit wouldn't bode well for the new-look 'O' and their much-maligned QB. And they would have heard about their ineptitude all week long.

But the Redskins' defense wasn't going to be graded on a curve for Sunday's effort. There would be no points deducted for holding down an undermanned foe. Instead, coordinator Jim Haslett's

troops had an unadulterated chance to make a positive impression and begin their road to redemption after last season's horrific performance.

Statement delivered. First step taken.

They pitched a shutout in the second half of Washington's 28-14 victory, yielding just one drive longer than 15 yards. Rookie Ryan Kerrigan returned an interception for a touchdown, and fellow rookie Chris Neild contributed two sacks. Linebacker London Fletcher and cornerback Josh Wilson stuffed halfback Ahmad Bradshaw on fourth-and-1 with the Redskins clinging to a seven-point lead.

Everywhere you looked, the Redskins were making plays on defense. Some were drafted last April, like Kerrigan and Neild. Others were holdovers, like Fletcher and safety Reed Doughty, who led the team with eight tackles. Still others were free agent acquisitions, like Wilson and defensive end Stephen Bowen, who was credited with a sack and two quarterback hits.

When we last saw the Redskins' defense, it was finishing a season in which it ranked 31st out of 32 NFL teams, a sharp decline from its top-10 ranking the previous three seasons.

"We went from a 4-3 defense — and a very successful 4-3 defense — and making the transition

takes awhile," Fletcher said. "Last year, some of the plays the Giants ran today would've been big plays. But this year, having the scheme under our belts and the addition of the new guys makes a big difference."

Maybe it's just that simple, where a little more familiarity, a little more talent and a little more youthful energy equals a whole lot more improvement. Maybe coach Mike Shanahan's vision of an active, ball-hawking, havoc-wreaking defense is en route to becoming a reality. One game is too early to tell for sure, but Redskins nose tackle Barry Cofield isn't waiting for additional evidence. His verdict is in.

"We're convinced of that," Cofield said, asked if his unit can rank among the best. "That's what we believe and that's what Haslett preaches. We compare ourselves to the great 3-4 defenses across the league, compare ourselves man-to-man at every position, and we don't sell ourselves short."

They certainly came up short early in the game, yielding touchdown drives of 70 and 85 yards through the Giants' first five possessions. Doughty and cornerback Kevin Barnes were burnt on a 68-yard pass from Manning to Hakeem Nicks, setting up the Giants' first score. And Manning went 4-for-4 for 58 yards on New York's other scoring drive, late in the first

half. But that pretty much concluded the Giants' highlight reel. Washington gave up just two first downs after intermission before linebacker Brian Orakpo blocked a field goal attempt with 5:04 remaining. On the previous play, Doughty tackled Bradshaw for a 2-yard loss on third-and-1.

Orakpo said aside from the newcomers, the defense is pretty much the same with "a few tweaks here and there," and they're just focused on themselves — not outsiders' impressions. He said his unit wasn't fazed when Grossman took a sack and fumbled, setting up a short field for the Giants' would-be game-tying touchdown drive.

"We were laughing when the 'O' turned the ball over," he said. "We were ready to go."

They proved it by holding the Giants to three-and-out, forcing them into the blocked field goal attempt. There would be no let-down against the team that has dominated the rivalry recently. It was a great day for the defense, but beating the Giants was the most important outcome, by any means necessary.

"It was a good test for us because they've had our number," Orakpo said.

The defense passed its test and has begun posting some (good) numbers of its own.

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Buffalo	1	0	0	1.000	41	7
Miami	0	0	0	.000	0	0
New England	0	0	0	.000	0	0
N.Y. Jets	0	0	0	.000	0	0

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	1	0	0	1.000	34	7
Jacksonville	1	0	0	1.000	16	14
Tennessee	0	1	0	.000	14	16
Indianapolis	0	1	0	.000	7	34

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Baltimore	1	0	0	1.000	35	7
Cincinnati	1	0	0	1.000	27	17
Cleveland	0	1	0	.000	17	27
Pittsburgh	0	1	0	.000	7	35

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
San Diego	1	0	0	1.000	24	17
Denver	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Oakland	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Kansas City	0	1	0	.000	7	41

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Washington	1	0	0	1.000	28	14
Philadelphia	1	0	0	1.000	31	13
Dallas	0	0	0	.000	0	0
N.Y. Giants	0	1	0	.000	14	28

South

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Carolina	0	1	0	.000	21	28
New Orleans	0	1	0	.000	34	42
Tampa Bay	0	1	0	.000	20	27
Atlanta	0	1	0	.000	12	30

North

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	1	0	0	1.000	30	12
Detroit	1	0	0	1.000	27	20
Green Bay	1	0	0	1.000	42	34
Minnesota	0	1	0	.000	17	24

West

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Arizona	1	0	0	1.000	28	21
San Francisco	1	0	0	1.000	33	17
Seattle	0	1	0	.000	17	33
St. Louis	0	1	0	.000	13	31

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

REDSKINS 28, GIANTS 14

Two rookies on defense have memorable debuts

Neild records 2 sacks; Kerrigan scores TD on pick

By NATHAN FENNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Forgetting about Chris Neild would've been easy.

After all, 252 players were picked before the big nose tackle April's NFL draft. One selection separated Neild from Mr. Irrelevant, the moniker thrust on the draft's last, lonely pick. But Neild was anything but irrelevant Sunday in his regular-season debut with the Washington Redskins at FedEx Field.

The rookie recorded two sacks and helped send the New York Giants' usually reliable offense off-kilter en route to the Redskins' 28-14 victory.

"I didn't expect that," Neild said, "at all."

The big man couldn't suppress a wide grin.

On a Redskins roster infused with youth — it includes nine rookies and 25 players with three years or fewer of NFL experience — Neild stood out. So did fellow rookie Ryan Kerrigan. While Neild was the Redskins' final pick of the draft, Kerrigan was the first.

"Man, rookies are coming in and making plays," veteran outside linebacker Brian Orakpo said. "That's what we need, guys with hungry attitudes."

Starting at left outside linebacker,

Kerrigan recorded perhaps the game's pivotal play.

Three plays into the second half, the Giants faced a third-and-11 at their 18-yard line. When a lineman tried to cut block Kerrigan, he knew a quick pass was coming. Kerrigan dodged the block, then tipped Manning's pass. Arms stretched as far as his 6-foot-4 frame allowed, Kerrigan pulled in the football and raced nine yards for a touchdown.

Not since Champ Bailey in October 1999 had a Redskins rookie returned an interception for a touchdown.

As the team's defense mobbed him in celebration, Kerrigan couldn't see anything. That stuck in his mind.

"That kind of set the tone for the second half," said Kerrigan, who hadn't scored a touchdown since high school. "We talked about that at halftime, that we needed to come out with more swagger and fly around, have more fun. "Fortunately the ball found my hands. Twice."

More unexpected was Neild's play. A bemused look hung on his face in the locker room after the game, as rivers of sweat drained off his shaved head and into his thick beard. He recorded three sacks last season for West Virginia, none the previous season. Adjusting to the Redskins' one-gap system after

using a two-gap approach at West Virginia hasn't been easy.

But two sacks in his first NFL game? The right words escaped Neild to describe the unusual turn of events. His left bicep is home to a tattoo of a hand crushing a football. That was a good picture for what he did to Manning.

The backup to veteran nose tackle Barry Cofield first struck in the third quarter, bowling through the Giants' line and throwing down Manning for a 6-yard loss. That forced the Giants into third-and-15 and, eventually, a punt.

Of no solace to the Giants was that Neild actually missed his assignment on the play, landing him in position to harass Manning.

Then on the last play of the fourth quarter with the Giants reeling, Manning faked a handoff. Neild didn't bite and dropped the quarterback for an 8-yard loss.

Neild didn't expect to sleep Sunday night after the performance. Besides, there was film to watch from an afternoon he couldn't quite believe.

"This was a real big day for us," Neild said. "It was all about adjusting to the speed of the game and how the Redskins play."

And it's one day Neild won't forget.



ROD LAMKEY JR. / THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins nose tackle Chris Neild, pressuring Eli Manning in the third quarter, had two sacks of the Giants' quarterback. The Redskins opened the season with a 28-14 win over their NFC East rival.

REDSKINS 28, GIANTS 14

Redskins TEs give foes double trouble

By STEPHEN WHYNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

When the Washington Redskins took three pass-catchers in the second round of the 2008 draft, it was a gamble that receivers Malcolm Kelly and Devin Thomas and tight end Fred Davis would provide three big targets in the offense.

While Kelly and Thomas have busted, Davis spent Sunday busting out with the best game of his career — six catches for 105 yards — and continued to put some struggles of youth behind him.

"I'm put in the situation to finally make plays, and I had to," Davis said. "When you get the opportunity, that's what it's about."

With Chris Cooley limited because of an injured left knee, Davis' role in the offense got bigger. In Sunday's 28-14 victory over the New York Giants, Davis justified that extra faith from coach Mike Shanahan and offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan by being the most effective weapon for quarterback Rex Grossman.

Splitting out wide at times, Davis created big-time matchup problems for an already banged-up Giants defense and provided a significant deep threat from a position not known for that kind of production.

"Fred stretches the field vertically as well as any tight end in the league," Grossman said.

That's by design. The Redskins lined up in a lot of two-tight end sets and relied on Cooley for blocking skills, while Davis went down the field. The young tight end said he lost 12 pounds in the offseason for the purpose of being able to spread out the offense.

"I wanted to be able to run all day and be able to make plays down the seam," he said. "I see a lot of tight ends make plays down the seam, and in this offense you can do a lot from the tight end position. I just wanted to benefit from it."

Going places tight ends usually don't



ANDREW HARNIK / THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Fred Davis (83) catches a 23-yard pass Sunday in the win against the Giants.

venture too often, Davis took a few hits but most importantly held onto the ball and minimized the mistakes.

A career-best in yards only served as further evidence that a shaky rookie season and an oversleeping incident from minicamp in 2008 is ancient history for Davis.

"I'm really proud of Fred how he's handled himself," Mike Shanahan said. "He made some big-time plays today." Cooley made a couple of catches and moved into first place in franchise history with receptions by a tight end (422), but more games like this from Davis could put him on the path to challenging that record down the line.

As for 2011, having Davis and Cooley — if healthy — both in the lineup can make this offense dangerous.

"To have, in my opinion, two of the best route-running, pass-catching, all-around good tight ends with Cooley and Fred, you'll see us in a lot of two-tight end situations for the rest of the year," Grossman said.

For Davis, that just gives him more chances to make plays. More than anytime else in his career, he looks poised to seize that opportunity.

REDSKINS

From page R1

seven meetings.

The afternoon was even more emotionally charged than usual. A FedEx Field crowd of 80,121 observed the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in a pregame ceremony and other times throughout the afternoon. Gen. Colin L. Powell, the former secretary of state, addressed the Redskins in the locker room before the game.

The Redskins received contributions from all over the roster, as true contenders do. The defense held the Giants scoreless in the second half, and rookie linebacker Ryan Kerrigan scored the decisive touchdown in the third quarter on a 9-yard interception return.

Rookie Chris Neild, the penultimate player taken in April's draft, had two sacks. Veteran tight end Fred Davis had a career-high 105 receiving yards on five catches. Pro Bowl linebacker Brian Orakpo blocked a field goal.

This was Grossman's day, though.

The game began like a repeat of Washington's recent defeats to the Giants. New York won nine of the previous 10 meetings by controlling the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball. New York surprised the Redskins on Sunday by blitzing and playing more man-to-man coverage than they expected.

Grossman struggled to find his rhythm, and his first four passes were incomplete. The Redskins went three-and-out on their first two drives.

"You always have confidence that eventually we'll get into a rhythm," Grossman said.

And he was right. It started with a third-down completion to Santana Moss out of the right slot. A 10-yard checkdown to running back Tim

GIANTS REDSKINS STATS						
	N.Y. Giants	7	7	0	0	14
	Washington	0	14	7	7	28
First Quarter						
NYG—Manning 2 run (Tynes kick), 9:53.						
Second Quarter						
Was—Hightower 1 run (Gano kick), 11:25.						
NYG—Bradshaw 6 run (Tynes kick), 2:48.						
Was—Armstrong 6 pass from Grossman (Gano kick), :37.						
Third Quarter						
Was—Kerrigan 9 interception return (Gano kick), 13:03.						
Fourth Quarter						
Was—Gaffney 4 pass from Grossman (Gano kick), 5:04.						
A-80,121.						
		NYG	Was			
First downs	15	22			
Total Net Yards	315	332			
Rushes-yards	20-75	26-74			
Passing	240	258			
Punt Returns	2-27	5-53			
Kickoff Returns	2-21	2-48			
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	1-9			
Comp-Att-Int	18-32-1	21-34-0			
Sacked-Yards Lost	4-28	4-47			
Punts	6-45.2	6-43.0			
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-1			
Penalties-Yards	8-63	3-25			
Time of Possession	27:24	32:36			
INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS						
RUSHING —N.Y. Giants, Bradshaw 13-44, Jacobs 6-29, Manning 1-2. Washington, Hightower 25-72, Helu 1-2.						
PASSING —N.Y. Giants, Manning 18-32-1-268. Washington, Grossman 21-34-0-305.						
RECEIVING —N.Y. Giants, Nicks 7-122, Manningham 4-49, Ballard 2-59, Hixon 2-21, Bradshaw 1-10, Hynoski 1-4, Ware 1-3. Washington, Moss 6-76, Davis 5-105, Gaffney 3-54, Hightower 3-25, Armstrong 2-24, Cooley 2-21.						
MISSED FIELD GOALS —N.Y. Giants, Tynes 38 (BK). Washington, Gano 39 (WR).						

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Hightower followed. Grossman was rolling.

"He was down there with [offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan] getting his coaching up," receiver Anthony Armstrong said. "I think really

everybody had a feeling within themselves that we were going to move the ball, score and have success."

And it's no coincidence that Grossman became sharp when the blockers in front of him began allowing him time to scan the field and throw. If Grossman's checkered career has showed anything, it's that he's dramatically better when he's comfortable in the pocket.

He was sacked four times and hit seven, but he persevered.

"His demeanor, even when we do give up a pressure or a hit or a sack, he's not [mad] at us or blaming us," left guard Kory Lichtensteiger said. "He keeps his composure and just goes on with his next play. He made a hell of a lot of good throws today."

Lichtensteiger could have been referring to any number of passes. There was the fourth-and-5 that Grossman converted by throwing to Moss against soft coverage to extend the Redskins' first touchdown drive.

On the Redskins' second touchdown drive, he completed all five of his passes to different receivers, moving the Redskins 80 yards. His 6-yard fade pass in the back left corner of the end zone settled into Armstrong's grasp after falling over cornerback Aaron Ross' shoulder.

Grossman was solid while protecting the lead in the second half after Kerrigan's interception. He did fumble on a sack after Jason Pierre-Paul blew by left tackle Trent Williams, but Washington's defense bailed them out, and Orakpo blocked the 38-yard field goal.

That allowed Grossman to flash back to those Saturdays in Gainesville when he and Gaffney reigned. On third-and-goal from the 4, Gaffney ran free to the post on a slant. Grossman drilled him in stride in the end zone, sealing the win.

"It was a fun day," he said. "It was a day I'll never forget."

"[Grossman's] demeanor, even when we do give up a pressure or a hit or a sack, he's not [mad] at us or blaming us. He keeps his composure and just goes on with his next play. He made a hell of a lot of good throws today."

—Kory Lichtensteiger, offensive lineman

DALY

From page R1

either strolled or sauntered into the end zone to give Washington its first lead at 21-14.

Almost everything flowed from that — Neild's (two) and Bowen's (one) muggings of Manning, Gaffney's clinching 4-yard touchdown catch with 5:11 left, Rocca's pinning of the Giants at their 9-, 10- and 17-yard lines. Only once in the second half did the Giants cross midfield, and they came away empty at the Washington 31 when London Fletcher and Josh Wilson stuffed Ahmad Bradshaw on fourth-and-1.

As another newcomer, Barry Cofield, put it (in what might well be the Understatement of the Week): "We've got a lot of new faces on this

defense that fit the scheme well. And coach Shanahan has a lot of new players on offense as well."

Those new faces couldn't have been much more visible Sunday. Granted, Hightower will have better consistent days — he was boom or bust against the Giants — but he did have a 22-yard gain and, later, a walk-in touchdown for the Redskins' first score. He also had three catches for 25 yards, giving him 97 yards from scrimmage (on a career-high 28 touches).

Neild's sacks, meanwhile, came in limited playing time — by his count, a mere 10 snaps. One of them caused a fumble at the New York 2 near the end of the third quarter, but Manning averted disaster by pouncing on it. (Neild, by the way, is the guy with the bushy beard, the one who, if he wasn't playing pro football, would probably

be starring in "Ice Road Truckers" on the History Channel.)

It was left to Gaffney to supply the knockout blow — the first time the Redskins have delivered it under Shanahan, hard as it is to believe. Their biggest margin of victory last season was six points, and their six wins came by a total of 23. Jabar's TD put them up 14 and spared them from having to sweat out the final minutes. How often has that happened of late?

"You've got to put games away," he said. "It was great to get that two-touchdown lead at the end."

It didn't matter that the Giants were missing Justin Tuck and Osai Umehyiora, their twin pass-rushing terrors, and others on their formidable defense. This is the NFL. You go to battle with the team you have. Besides, the Redskins, given their recent troubles against the New Yorkers, will

take a victory over them any way they can get it.

Let's face it, if Shanahan is going to build anything here, it has to start with the Redskins playing their division rivals — all of them — tougher. They were 2-4 against the NFC East in his first season, pretty much in line with their 21-41 division record over the last decade. So when presented with an opportunity Sunday because of the Giants' battered state, the Redskins did what they needed to do. They beat a club that has owned them of late, coming back twice from a seven-point deficit. They weren't great in any one area, but they were good enough in most of them to grind out the win and take a positive vibe into their Week 2 matchup with Arizona.

It's always hard to know how much to read into a club's preseason

performance. But the Redskins' 3-1 mark in exhibitions ended up being fairly predictive of how they would fare in the first game. They didn't jump out to a quick lead the way they'd been doing, but they played with great energy and just kept coming — until the Giants finally caved.

No, this is what you were looking for from the Redskins as they begin Year 2 of the Shanahan Era. This was progress. They looked like a solid team, a surer team, a team that has a better idea about what it's doing — even if, because of the lockout, it didn't have the benefit of an offseason. The Giants club they face the next time figures to be more of a challenge, won't be missing as many players; but by mid-December the Redskins could be much improved, too, provided they can build on this encouraging effort.

REDSKINS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1



vs. Giants
W, 28-14

WEEK 2



vs. Cardinals
Sun., Sept. 18

WEEK 3



at Cowboys
Mon., Sept. 26

WEEK 4



at Rams
Sun., Oct. 2

WEEK 6



vs. Eagles
Sun., Oct. 16

WEEK 7



at Panthers
Sun., Oct. 23

WEEK 8



at Bills (Toronto)
Sun., Oct. 30

WEEK 9



vs. 49ers
Sun., Nov. 6

WEEK 10



at Dolphins
Sun., Nov. 13

WEEK 11



vs. Cowboys
Sun., Nov. 20

WEEK 12



at Seahawks
Sun., Nov. 27

WEEK 13



vs. Jets
Sun., Dec. 4

WEEK 14



vs. Patriots
Sun., Dec. 11

WEEK 15



at Giants
Sun., Dec. 18

WEEK 16



vs. Vikings
Sat., Dec. 24

WEEK 17



at Eagles
Sun., Jan. 1

REDSKINS 28, GIANTS 14: QUARTER-BY-QUARTER



ROD LAMKEY JR./THE WASHINGTON TIMES

FIRST QUARTER: Giants receiver Hakeem Nicks is brought down by Redskins safety Reed Doughty just short of the goal line. The play set up a touchdown.



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

SECOND QUARTER: Redskins quarterback Rex Grossman (8) celebrates with receiver Anthony Armstrong after scoring a touchdown that made it 14-14.



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

THIRD QUARTER: Redskins linebacker London Fletcher contributed to a solid defensive effort with this stop of Giants running back Ahmad Bradshaw.



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

FOURTH QUARTER: Redskins receiver Jabar Gaffney gathers in a 4-yard touchdown pass that sealed Washington's 28-14 victory over the New York Giants.

1 Three things were apparent during the first quarter of the Redskins' season.

Quarterback Rex Grossman can be made to feel very uncomfortable with a decent pass rush. The Giants put some pressure on Grossman and he didn't handle it well. To be fair, he had some nice throws, but the bad outweighed the good.

Second, Graham Gano may have vanquished the minimal competition in preseason but coach Mike Shanahan probably needs to keep an updated Rolodex for available kickers. Gano missed a 39-yarder on the drive after the Giants' touchdown.

Finally, the deep ball could be a problem. It looked like Reed Doughty got beat on a 68-yard pass from Eli Manning to Hakeem Nicks that set up the Giants' score. LaRon Landry, the regular strong safety, is susceptible to the deep ball, too.

2 With a little help from his friends up front, Grossman looked like a different quarterback. Taking advantage of better protection (and perhaps processing things a bit quicker), he was the central figure in the Redskins' two scores.

He was helped by a beauty of a catch by Anthony Armstrong early in the quarter, an 18-yard completion that set up Tim Hightower's first touchdown as a Redskin. After the two-minute warning, Grossman had a brilliant stretch with a 39-yarder to Jabar Gaffney followed by a 9-yarder to Hightower followed by a 6-yarder to Armstrong for a TD with 37 seconds left.

For the quarter, Grossman completed eight of 10 passes for 114 yards. His 13 completions in the half went to six different receivers.

The Giants' touchdown in the quarter came on the ground, a 6-yard run by Ahmad Bradshaw.

KEY PLAY

The obvious choice is rookie Ryan Kerrigan's 9-yard interception return for a touchdown. The less obvious choice, and the winner here, is a tackle made by running back Tim Hightower in the fourth quarter. The Giants' Michael Boley picked up a Rex Grossman fumble and looked like he might be end-zone-bound. Hightower somehow got to Boley and pulled him down on the Skins' 27. The defense held, Brian Orakpo blocked a field-goal try and the Redskins went down the field and scored again.

3 This was a defensive period, in a big way for the Redskins. At the start, top draft pick Ryan Kerrigan batted a Manning pass, then caught it and ran into the end zone from nine yards out for the only touchdown of the quarter. The last rookie to score on an interception return for the Redskins was Champ Bailey (59 yards) on Oct. 17, 1999.

Later in the quarter, the Giants went for it on fourth-and-1 on the Skins' 31. Ahmad Bradshaw took the handoff, only to be stopped for no gain by London Fletcher and Josh Wilson. On the final play of the quarter, Manning was sacked back to his own 2 by Fletcher and Chris Neild. It could have been worse, as Manning fumbled but recovered it himself.

The Redskins' offense didn't put up any points. It didn't matter because the Redskins defense scored a touchdown and kept the Giants from doing the same.

4 The final quarter of the Redskins' season-opening victory was a cross section of their highlights of the day, with the offense and the defense taking turns in the spotlight. The defense continued to shine, holding the Giants without a point in the second half. The unit's big moment of the period came after Grossman fumbled while being sacked, allowing the Giants to take over on the Skins' 27. The defense forced a field goal try that was blocked by Brian Orakpo.

The offense, silent like the Giants up to that point in the half, went right down the field to score the game's final touchdown. Grossman directed a 70-yard drive that took 5:33 off the clock and culminated with a 4-yard pass to Gaffney. The Giants gained a mere 25 yards on their final two drives. New York gained 213 yards in the first half, and only 102 in the second.

REDSKINS NOTES

Hightower does it his way for 72 yards, TD

BY THE NUMBERS

600: Career completions for quarterback Rex Grossman after a 10-yard pass to Tim Hightower in the first quarter, Grossman's second completion of the day. It left him a cool 5,700 completions behind career leader Brett Favre but only 2,809 out of the career top 10.

422: Career catches for Chris Cooley after he hauled in a 6-yarder from Grossman with nine minutes left in the game. That moves him ahead of Jerry Smith and into the No. 1 spot all-time among Redskins tight ends.

31:50: Minutes and seconds it took first-round draft pick Ryan Kerrigan to score his first pro touchdown.

110.5: QB rating for the game for Grossman, his highest since Dec. 11, 2006, and only his third game above 100 since then. Grossman completed 21 of 34 passes for 305 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions.

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

While quarterback Rex Grossman spread the ball around in the air, the running game was all about Tim Hightower. The Washington Redskins rushed the ball 26 times, and Hightower got the call on 25 of those plays.

That's exactly the way he likes it.

"I plan on that," he said after Sunday's 28-14 win. "I hate coming off the football field. I use my words wisely: I hate coming off the football field. I don't like watching. I'm a team guy, but I like being that guy; I like the responsibility and putting the team on my back. That's the kind of guy I am."

Hightower wound up with 72 yards and a touchdown, and the Alexandria native was a bit frustrated by that lack of production.

But even though Hightower won't make the list of fantasy football rushing leaders, his presence opened up the offense for the passing game. There's a reason backup Roy Helu touched the ball once, and it's because of Hightower's effectiveness.

"I'm doing whatever I've

got to do," Hightower said. "Sometimes it's not always going to be where you want it to be, I'm just showing up, man — whether it's receiving, whether it's picking up blitzes, whatever it is, man — I've got to do what I've got to do."

With coach Mike Shanahan noting — as always — that improvements are needed, players think the running game can be part of that, too.

"Tim, he runs very hard. He's hitting the hole hard," tight end Fred Davis said. "It can do better, too. That's the funny thing about it — we can still be better."

Don't expect Hightower to slow down, either. Next week he and the Redskins face the team that traded him six weeks ago, the Arizona Cardinals.

"This one means a lot," he said. "I'm looking forward to it. It'll be an emotional day for me; it'll be a record-setting day for me."

Orakpo plays hurt

Brian Orakpo has developed into the face of the Redskins' defense and one of the better pass-rushers in the league, so when he left the game in the first quarter there was reason for worry.

Orakpo sprained his right ankle on the first defensive series and missed the next one before returning heavily taped. He managed to play most of the rest of the game, but Shanahan still was concerned about his star outside linebacker.

"Initially I thought he was out for the game, so hopefully it's not too bad," Shanahan said.

Powell visits Redskins

Before he went out onto the field as the Redskins' honorary captain on the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell had another job — stepping inside the home locker room at FedEx Field as a source of inspiration.

Later, taps played to the sound of wild cheers, and the pregame ceremony using clips from the Pentagon ceremony added to an already charged atmosphere.

"Colin Powell's in the locker room giving you a pregame speech and then fans are chanting 'U-S-A, I was overwhelmed,'" Grossman said. "It was a fun day. It was a day I'll never forget."

**WEEK 2
CARDINALS AT REDSKINS**



Kickoff: 1 p.m. **TV:** Fox
Radio: AM-980, FM-92.7, FM-94.3

What to watch: Redskins running back Tim Hightower gets a shot at the team that traded him in July for a late 2012 pick and a 35-year-old defensive end. With all due respect to Vonnie Holliday, that's a bargain basement price. In the preseason, Hightower averaged 6.8 yards per carry and showed a pass-blocking ability that makes him a complete player. He'll be out to show the Cardinals what they gave up on.

● Cardinals quarterback Kevin Kolb threw for 309 yards and 2 TDs in his first game in Arizona, a 28-21 win.

● It will be interesting to see how often cornerback DeAngelo Hall is lined up against Arizona receiver Larry Fitzgerald. That matchup of Pro Bowlers would be compelling, but the Cardinals could avoid it by lining Fitzgerald up on the left.

Larry Fitzgerald

