

40   32

REDSKINS GAMEDAY

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2012



The Washington Times

washingtontimes.com/sports

Easy as RG3

Rookie performs admirably in opener



DAN DALY

NEW ORLEANS

What the Washington Redskins have in Robert Griffin III isn't just a quarterback, it's a performer. No mere quarterback could walk into the crocodile-filled bayou known as the

Superdome and, in his NFL debut, torch the New Orleans Saints for 320 passing yards, two touchdowns and a 139.9 rating in a 40-32 win. Only a performer — a player who relishes the spotlight, who lives for such moments — could have done that.

As Griffin put it, "It was definitely loud. You can feel it in your body. It's just crazy."

That's why the Redskins gave away much of the farm, three first-round picks and a No. 2, to get him. They were convinced he was more than just a smart, strong-armed, athletic QB. They were convinced he would *perform*, especially when his team needed him to. It's what the best players do.

Sunday was one of those times for RG3. You never get a second chance to make a first impression, right? No one expected him to play like a wizened veteran; he is, after all, a 22-year-old rookie, barely eight months removed from Baylor University and the Alamo Bowl. The hope was that he'd be able to *function* against a regular-season defense — an impressive enough feat for a newbie — and perhaps give off the vibe that: "This is just the beginning, folks. Wait until you see me in Week 17."

It took Griffin about 15 minutes to accomplish that objective. Clearly, it was setting the bar too low. At the end of the first quarter, he was 7 of 7 passing for 123 yards, including an 88-yard touchdown to Pierre Garcon. Many of the throws never broke the line of scrimmage. They were the football version of layups. But who cares? The Saints had no answer for them, and soon the Redskins had a 20-7 lead.

On display was RG3 in all his great variety. RG3 the pocket passer. RG3 the improviser. RG3 the runner (by design). RG3 the scrambler (not by design). RG3 from the shotgun. RG3 under center. Everything but RG3 the quick-kicker.

His coach couldn't have asked for much more. "The poise ... the throws he made," Mike Shanahan gushed. "Just to be able to execute the offense in this type of environment. Pretty impressive when a young guy plays with that type of composure."

Composure can only carry you so far, though. Then it's a question of: How much talent do you have? Griffin has enough, on a given Sunday, to outplay the great Drew Brees (a scatter-armed 24 of 52 with two interceptions to RG3's none) — and, in the process, to reduce the Who



Redskins rookie quarterback Robert Griffin III feels the heat coming from Malcolm Jenkins (top) and takes a shot by the New Orleans safety (above), but not before completing a pass to wide receiver Pierre Garcon that would go for an 88-yard touchdown. The TD came on the first play from scrimmage after the Saints had taken a 7-3 lead.

More coverage

Quarter-by-quarter analysis, By the numbers, Up next, **R2**
 Defense doesn't allow Brees to get into comfort zone, **R4**
 Impact of new No. 1 receiver Garcon felt from the start, **R4**
 Injury to insult: Long snapper breaks arm on bad punt, **R4**
NFL Week 1
 Stafford's struggles end just in time for Lions to edge Rams
 Roundup, standings, **R3**

Breathtaking debut one for record books

By RICH CAMPBELL
 THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NEW ORLEANS | Robert Griffin III tossed a football back and forth from his right hand to his left late Sunday afternoon inside a cramped room at the bottom of the Superdome. Still wearing his game jersey, pants and shoulder pads, the Washington Redskins' beacon of hope chatted with dozens of reporters who came here knowing they would witness the beginning of an era but unsure of how the details would unfold.

And when the first act of this new drama finished, when the Redskins completed a 40-32 upset of the New Orleans Saints and quieted the booming decibels here, Griffin held the symbol of the day in his hands.

That football was the one with which he completed an 88-yard touchdown catch-and-run to newly signed receiver Pierre Garcon in the first quarter. It was the rookie quarterback's first NFL touchdown and, just as notably, the first touchdown scored by this retooled Redskins' offense. All the explosiveness and play-making ability Washington

"We did a lot of things that we hadn't shown in preseason. I think everybody executed it to a tee, being able to adapt the offense as [the defense] started to catch on to things and continue to keep them off guard."

— Robert Griffin III

demonstrated in outscoring the NFL's best offense was there in that pigskin.

"We did a lot of things that we hadn't shown in preseason," Griffin said, eye black strips still on his cheeks. "I think everybody executed it to a tee, being able to adapt the offense as [the defense] started to catch on to things and continue to keep them off guard. I thought everybody did a great job."

Griffin's NFL debut was one for the ages. It somehow managed to match the excessive hype that preceded this day for months. He was 19 of 26 for 320 yards and two touchdowns. His passer rating was 139.9.

He became the first quarterback in league history to throw for 300 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions in his NFL debut.

How he got to that historic perch, though, is the strongest indication this is a new version of the Redskins' offense, not the anemic ones of previous last-place seasons.

"It really doesn't matter what happened two years ago, but this is a different football team," coach Mike Shanahan said. "I've been telling you that from Day 1: more character, we've got more skill."

Griffin's combination of speed carrying the ball — he ran 10 times for 42 yards — and throwing prowess proved problematic for the Saints defense.

That, plus contributions by additions Garcon, receivers Joshua Morgan and Aldrick Robinson and rookie running back Alfred Morris, crystallized, for one afternoon at least, Shanahan's vision when he assembled this team.

"It's kind of all this stuff that we see on paper, all this stuff we see on tape," said tight end Logan Paulsen, who was part of Washington's sluggish offenses

EXPANDED REDSKINS COVERAGE: WASHINGTONTIMES.COM/SPORTS/FOOTBALL

QUARTERS

1 It's hard to imagine the RG3 Era getting off to a better start. Griffin was 6 for 6 passing on the Redskins' first possession, mostly short passes that netted only 35 yards. The drive ended with a 37-yard field goal by new kicker Billy Cundiff. Griffin also gained 12 yards on the ground with his first rushing attempt. On the second possession, RG3 wasted no time in throwing his first touchdown pass. He hooked up with free-agent acquisition Pierre Garcon on the first play for an 88-yard touchdown. That made him 7 for 7 for the quarter for 123 yards. The Skins had a 10-7 lead after one.

2 Save for six seconds, the first half was everything the Redskins could have wanted. RG3 led the team to two touchdowns and two field goals in the first four possessions. The defense was keeping the Saints and quarterback Drew Brees in check. But in those six seconds in the final minute of the quarter, the Saints blocked the Redskins' first punt and Courtney Roby returned it for a touchdown. Washington had a 20-14 lead at the half, but it could have been bigger.

PLAY OF THE GAME: The Saints were within eight with 3:39 to play and had the momentum after a touchdown and two-point conversion less than three minutes earlier. On first down, DeJon Gomes got his first career interception when he snared Drew Brees' pass and returned it to the Saints' 3. Alfred Morris scored on the next play.

3 The sour end to the first half didn't seem to bother the Redskins. They got a touchdown on their first possession of the quarter, thanks in large part to a pass interference call in the end zone on the Saints' Roman Harper. Alfred Morris scored from the 1 for his first NFL touchdown. Another Cundiff field goal later in the quarter gave the Redskins 30 points for the first time since a loss to Dallas on Dec. 19, 2010. They went into the final period up 30-17.

4 The Saints got some offense going, scoring twice on fourth-down pass plays. But an interception by DeJon Gomes and a key pass play from RG3 to Logan Paulsen helped the Redskins keep them at bay. Washington scored 10 points in each quarter and hit the 40-mark for the first time since the 2005 season.

NUMBERS

15: Victories in season openers for Redskins coach Mike Shanahan, the best among active NFL coaches
3: Victories for Shanahan in Redskins season openers — in three tries
320: Passing yards for Robert Griffin III, the second-most all-time in an opener for a rookie. Cam Newton had 422 last year for Carolina.
96: Rush yards for Alfred Morris — the most for a Redskins rookie back since Charley Taylor had 62 in the 1964 opener.
46.2: Completion percentage for Saints QB Drew Brees (24-52), his worst mark in 88 games. He set a single-season record last year at 71.2 percent.

NEXT

REDSKINS AT ST. LOUIS
4:05 P.M. SUNDAY, FOX



• This will be a different Rams team than the one the Redskins defeated 17-10 in St. Louis last season. Jeff Fisher took over as head coach after the Rams stumbled to a 2-14 record last season. That record got them the second pick in this past April's draft, and they promptly traded that pick to Washington, allowing the Redskins to draft Robert Griffin III. Fisher and the Rams might not want to be reminded of what they passed up as RG3 leads the Redskins into the Edward Jones Domes after a stellar debut in which he threw for 320 yards and 2 TDs. The Rams opened the season by giving the Lions all they could handle before Detroit's Mathew Stafford threw a game-winning TD with 10 seconds left. Rams quarterback Sam Bradford, the reason RG3 is a Redskin, threw for 198 yards and 1 TD.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Redskins fans show off Robert Griffin III-themed signs during Washington's 40-32 win at the New Orleans Saints on Sunday. Griffin's rating for the game was 139.9.

REDSKINS

From page R1

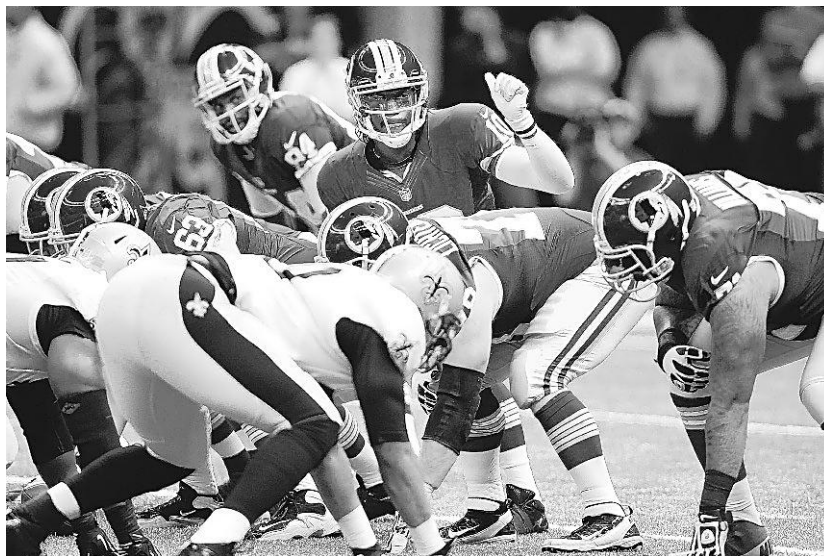
the last two seasons. "It's kind of starting to become a reality."

Griffin established a new paradigm on the second play of the game when he took Washington's second offensive snap out of the shotgun formation, faked an inside handoff to Morris and then raced around the right side for 12 yards and a first down.

He completed all six of his passes on the opening drive, which culminated in a 37-yard field goal. All the completions were screens. Griffin, demonstrating poise and savvy beyond his years, checked out of designed running plays at the line of scrimmage because of what formations the Saints showed.

"It's pretty impressive when a young guy comes in and plays with that composure especially in an environment like this," Shanahan said.

From there, the Redskins stayed ahead of the Saints' adjustments on defense. Griffin's speed is such a threat that, as Shanahan expected, Washington could effectively strike in different



Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III became the first quarterback to throw for 300 yards and two touchdowns with no interceptions in his NFL debut.

ways.

Paulsen credited offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan for masterfully operating all the new pieces on offense. In a team meeting Saturday night, Kyle predicted how the Saints would adjust to what the Redskins would begin the

game with, and then he extrapolated a series of adjustments that would evolve.

"That's almost exactly how the game fell," Paulsen said. "He's on his stuff. I think that's one of the great things about Kyle as an offensive coordinator:

he has got great foresight in terms of play-calling."

Of course, it helped for the engineer to have the proper tools. Garcon's touchdown catch and run was a revelation. He caught the ball 16 yards beyond the line of scrimmage and outran a defensive back for the remaining 72 yards.

The Redskins last season scored only one touchdown in which a player caught the ball outside the end zone and ran it in. It took these new Redskins only two drives to equal that feat.

"That is the stuff that really got me geeked up," Paulsen said.

Griffin basked in the success. The afterglow included high-fives for Redskins fans that congregated behind the visitor's bench and chanted "R-G-3!"

"You can win a high school state championship or get there a couple times, win a bowl game in college, do all those things," he said. "But to play in the NFL, the pinnacle of it all and win your first game ... it's definitely number one on my list."

With those words, he stepped away from the lectern, leaving others to wonder how quickly he and his teammates will replace it on the top.

DALY

From page R1

Dat bunch to booing their heroes. Repeatedly. Why? All together now: Because the kid's a performer. Circumstances like these just seem to make him better.

It's been a long time since the Redskins have had a quarterback like that. And frankly, it was hard to tell in the preseason how soon Griffin could be that kind of quarterback because he played so sparingly. He threw far fewer passes in August (31) than the other four rookie QBs who started in Week 1 — and didn't play at all in the final tuneup. You couldn't help wondering: Would he be as sharp as he needed to be when the bell rang?

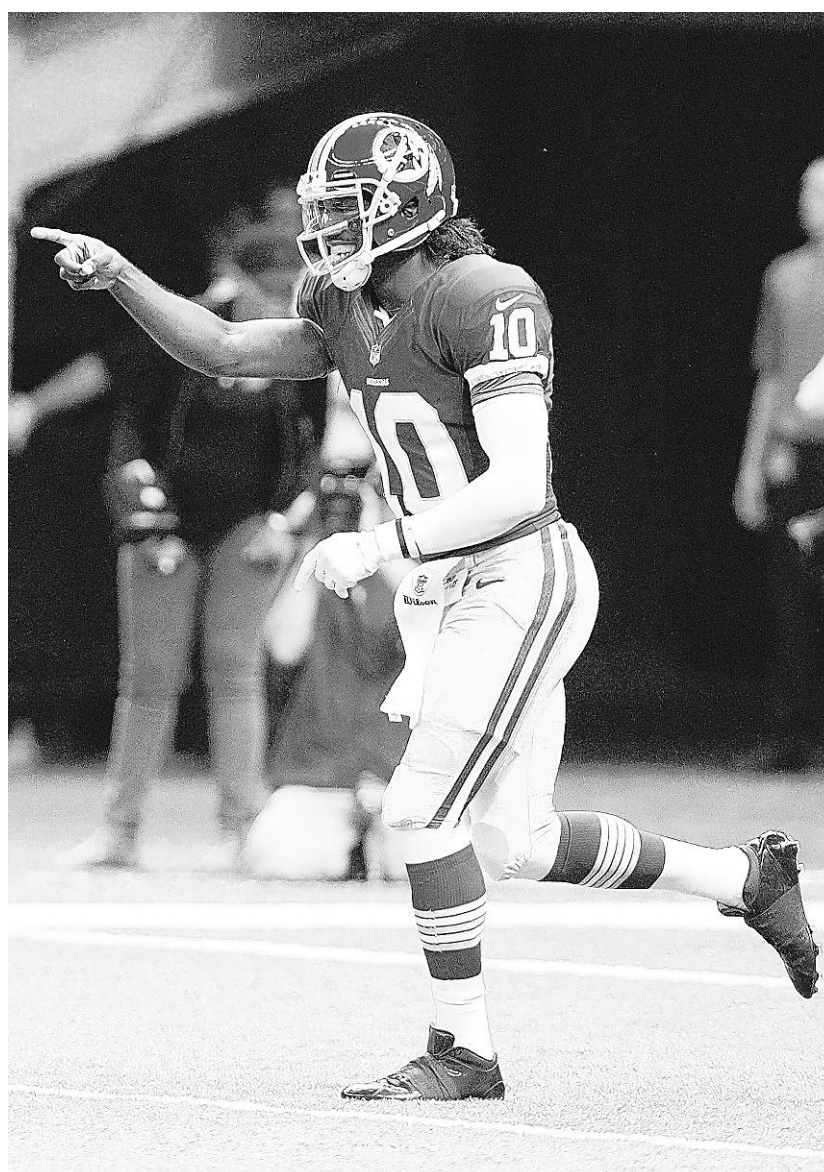
It's now obvious that it was part of the Shanahans' Grand Plan. They wanted to create as much mystery as possible about RG3 — and about the offense the Redskins would run — even if it meant he got limited reps in game situations. It was "to our benefit," Mike said, that the Saints had "not seen Robert do some of those things before."

Things like taking a shotgun snap on third-and-6, with an empty backfield, and trying to run for the first down. (Griffin came up a tad short, but Alfred Morris picked up the remaining inches on fourth.) You won't see Rex Grossman — or many other quarterbacks — do that. You also won't see them flee the pocket to the left, then throw back across the field to Fred Davis on the right sideline for a 26-yard gain to the New Orleans 19. That particular gem set up the second Redskins touchdown.

"Obviously, Robert presents a big problem," Shanahan said.

Indeed he does. And while the Saints' defense will never be confused with the San Francisco 49ers', Robert figures to present problems for any opponent because, among other things, it's difficult to defend against inspired spontaneity.

As dreamy as the day was for Griffin, it wasn't entirely hiccup-free. There were a couple of botched



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III had plenty of reason to celebrate as he went 19 of 26 for 320 yards and two touchdowns in his NFL debut Sunday — a beginning to a new era that couldn't have been scripted any better.

handoffs, one resulting in a fumble (which he quickly recovered), and in the final minutes he took a 9-yard loss when he tripped and fell on a keeper. There was also one pass — but only one — that was a bit underthrown and came dangerously close to being picked off.

You also have to be concerned about all the hits he took. Quarterbacks are going to be targets; it's the nature of the position. But you don't like to see them get blasted, as

Griffin was a few times, running for a 1-yard gain. It just isn't worth the price. And eventually, the price will be paid.

On the whole, though, it was a glorious new beginning for the Redskins. They beat a team that was 13-3 last season, beat them in their own building, and they did it, in large part, because they've found a quarterback who's that rarity: a real performer. In fact, you can hardly wait for his next act.

Redskins 40, Saints 32

Washington 10 10 10 10 40

New Orleans 7 7 3 15 32

First Quarter

Was — FG Cundiff 37, 7:05.
NO — J.Graham 20 pass from Brees (Hartley kick), 3:49.
Was — Garcon 88 pass from Griffin III (Cundiff kick), 3:28.

Second Quarter

Was — A.Robinson 5 pass from Griffin III (Cundiff kick), 11:33.
Was — FG Cundiff 41, 6:08.
NO — Roby 4 blocked punt return (Hartley kick), :40.

Third Quarter

Was — Morris 1 run (Cundiff kick), 11:24.
Was — FG Cundiff 37, 7:10.
NO — FG Hartley 21, 1:50.

Fourth Quarter

Was — FG Cundiff 45, 10:59.
NO — Moore 33 pass from Brees (Sproles run), 6:19.
Was — Morris 3 run (Cundiff kick), 3:18.
NO — Sproles 2 pass from Brees (Hartley kick), 2:25.

A — 72,180

	Was	NO
First downs	22	24
Total Net Yards	464	358
Rushes-yards	44-153	10-32
Passing	311	326
Punt Returns	4-34	2-14
Kickoff Returns	2-49	3-103
Interceptions Ret.	2-50	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	19-26-0	24-52-2
Sacked-Yards Lost	1-9	2-13
Punts	4-34.8	5-55.6
Fumbles-Lost	3-0	1-1
Penalties-Yards	12-127	12-107
Time of Possession	39:10	20:50

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Washington, Morris 28-96, Griffin III 10-42, Royster 2-10, Young 2-3, Helu 2-2. New Orleans, P.Thomas 4-17, Ingram 6-15.

PASSING — Washington, Griffin III 19-26-0-320, New Orleans, Brees 24-52-2-339.

RECEIVING — Washington, Garcon 4-109, A.Robinson 4-52, Moss 3-47, Helu 3-25, F.Davis 2-38, Paulsen 1-22, Morgan 1-21, Banks 1-6. New Orleans, Moore 6-120, J.Graham 6-85, Sproles 5-35, Colston 4-71, P.Thomas 1-12, Henderson 1-11, D.Thomas 1-5.

MISSED FIELD GOALS — None.

NFL WEEK 1

Top performers

Falcons QB Matt Ryan: 299 yards, 3 TDs
Jets QB Mark Sanchez: 266 yards, 3 TDs
Vikings RB Adrian Peterson: 84 yards, 2 TDs

GAME OF THE WEEK

Stafford, Lions stun Rams with late TD

DETROIT | Matthew Stafford stayed cool and calm after the shakiest first half of his career.

Stafford threw a 5-yard touchdown pass to Kevin Smith with 10 seconds left, lifting the Detroit Lions to a 27-23 win over the St. Louis Rams on Sunday.

The No. 1 pick from the 2009 NFL draft had three interceptions before halftime for the first time.

The Rams scored 13 points off Stafford's turnovers, including Cortland Finnegan's 31-yard return for a TD that gave them a 13-7 lead late in the first half, but they couldn't stop him in the end.

Stafford led an 80-yard, nine-play, game-winning drive that included three passes of at least 18 yards and was capped by enough patience in the pocket to connect with a wide-open Smith.

"Kevin was the last option on that play, probably behind throw it away because he was part of the play action and protection," Detroit coach Jim Schwartz said. "The head coach was on the headphones, 'Throw it away Matt, throw it away!' It shows you what a good quarterback I'd be."

Stafford finished 32 of 48 for 355 yards.

Detroit's All-Pro receiver Calvin Johnson caught six passes for 111 yards, including an 18-yard grab just before Smith was left alone for his second TD of the game.

On the pivotal play, the Rams double-covered Johnson and linebacker Jo-Lonn Dunbar seemed to lose sight of Smith.

"I knew in that formation Calvin would get all of the attention," Stafford said. "That's exactly what happened."

Sam Bradford, the No. 1 overall pick a year after Stafford, directed a go-ahead drive that set up Greg Zuerlein's 46-yard field goal to put the Rams ahead 23-20 with 1:55 left.

St. Louis coach Jeff Fisher, who is leading a franchise coming off the worst five-year span

since the 1970 NFL-AFL merger, put together a conservative game plan that almost worked.

"Our plan was to try to hold them to field goals ... and then take your shots offensively," Fisher said. "Get your points and have a chance to win the game at the end."

Bradford was hit by defensive end Cliff Avril on the game's last play, leading to some pushing, shoving and shouting that didn't get out of hand in part because the officials separated the players.

The replacement officials included line judge Shannon Eastin, who became the first woman to officiate an NFL regular-season game.

Steven Jackson gained just 53 yards on 21 carries for an offense that couldn't take enough time off the clock on its next-to-last drive to prevent Stafford from getting the ball back.

"Give the Lions credit, they made the big plays they needed at the end of the game," Finnegan said. "We did some really good things, but we've got to learn how to finish. That will come."

St. Louis' reshaped offensive line lost two starters during the game. Offensive tackle Rodger Saffold was carted off the field with a neck injury in the fourth quarter and center Scott Wells had a foot injury.

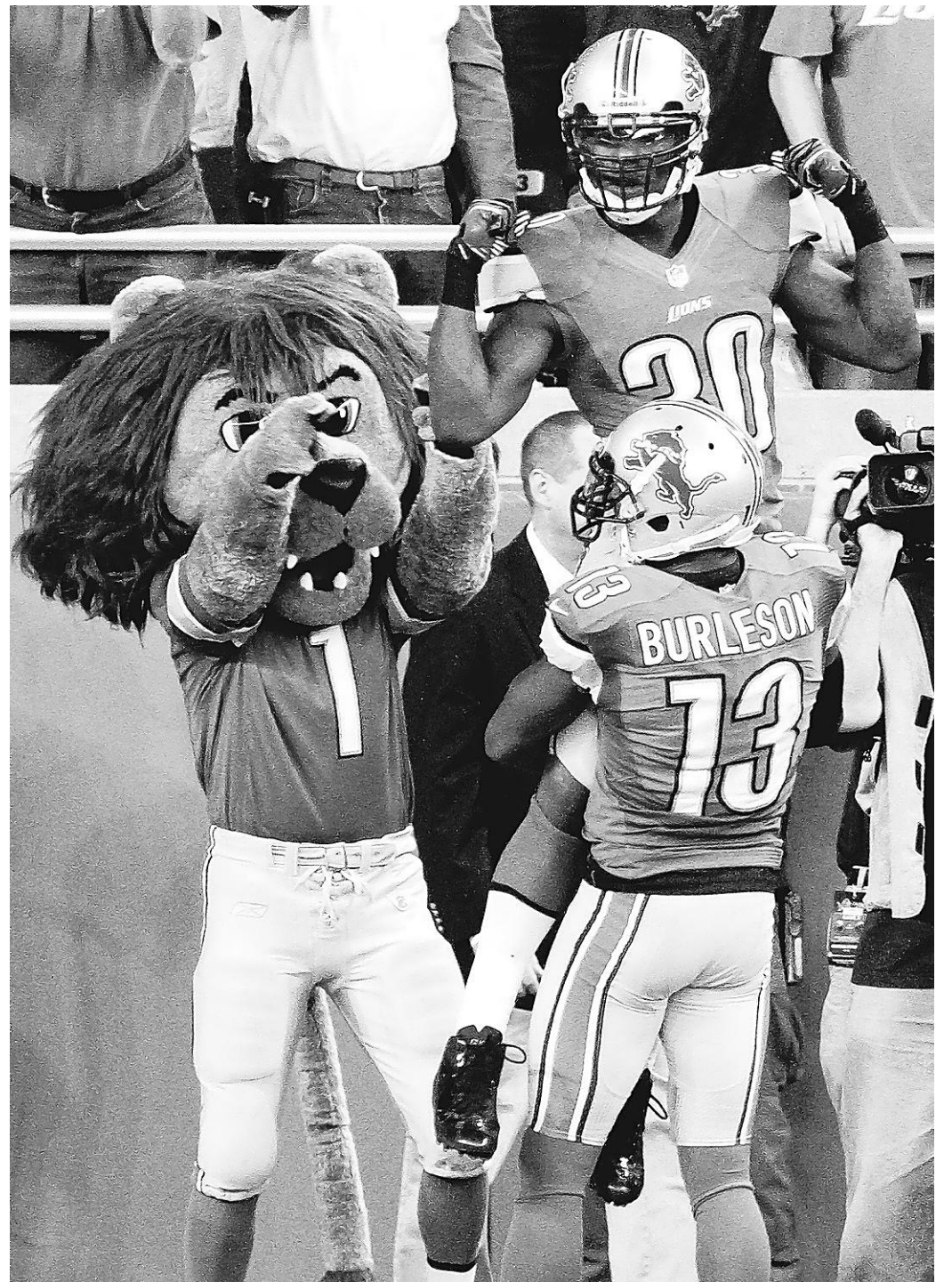
Fisher said Saffold was alert and had strength in his arms and legs.

"This is more of a precautionary deal," Fisher said. "There's a chance he'll come home with us."

Bradford was 17 of 25 for 198 yards with a TD, a 23-yard pass to Brandon Gibson early in the fourth quarter that put the Rams up 20-13.

"We gave ourselves a chance to stay in the game and win it at the end," Fisher said. "I think we got better as a team."

Early on, it looked like Stafford had taken a step back after throwing for 5,000-plus yards, 41 TDs and 16 interceptions last season to help Detroit end an 11-year postseason drought.



Detroit running back Kevin Smith leaps into the arms of wide receiver Nate Burleson after his 5-yard touchdown catch with 10 seconds left to play lifted the Lions to a 27-23 victory over the St. Louis Rams.

GAME OF THE WEEK

Ryan leads Falcons' rout of depleted Chiefs

ASSOCIATED PRESS

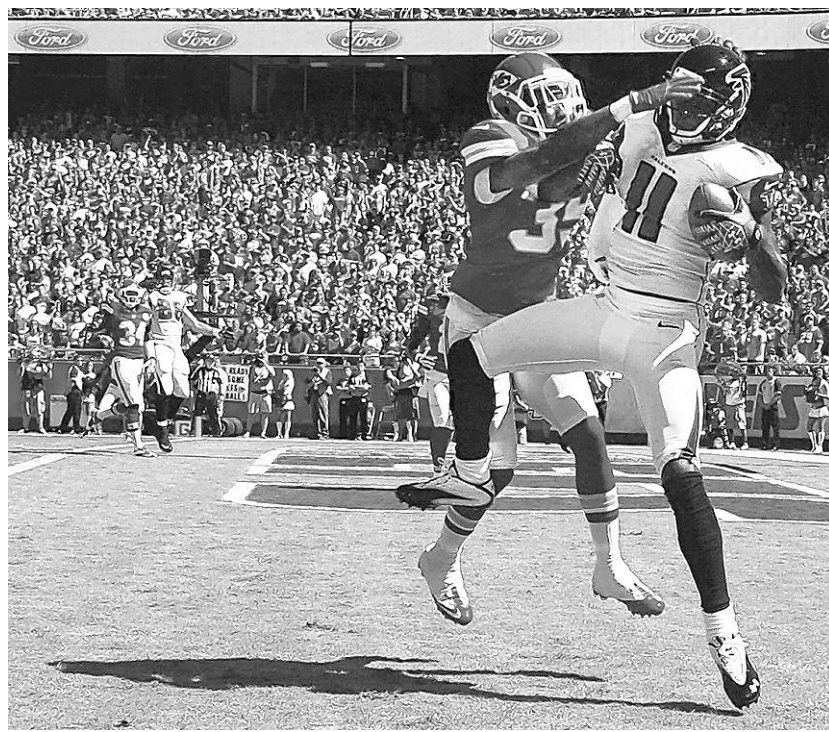
KANSAS CITY, MO. | The Falcons gladly took advantage of a short-handed Chiefs defense Sunday.

Matt Ryan threw for 299 yards and three touchdowns, one of them to tight end Tony Gonzalez in his return to Kansas City, and Atlanta used a second-half surge to pull away for a 40-24 victory.

Ryan also ran for a TD, and Julio Jones caught six passes for 108 yards and two scores, both of them enjoying a Chiefs defense missing four starters because of injuries and suspension.

The Chiefs matched Atlanta most of the first half, trailing just 20-17 at the break, but a missed field goal attempt by Ryan Succop early in the third quarter proved to be the turning point. Atlanta scored 20 unanswered points to put the game away.

Matt Cassel threw for 258 yards and had touchdowns running and throwing, but he also fumbled deep in Kansas City territory to set up a short TD, and his two interceptions created short fields that the Falcons turned into field goals by Matt Bryant, who was 4 for 4.



Falcons receiver Julio Jones hauls in one of his two touchdowns Sunday in Atlanta's 40-24 victory over the Chiefs in Kansas City.

49ers 30, Packers 22

GREEN BAY, WIS. | San Francisco's defense smothered Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay for most of the game, then made one last stand to stop a late rally as the 49ers beat the Packers.

Randall Cobb drew the Packers close with a 75-yard punt return for a touchdown, and a 2-point conversion cut the lead to 8. But Rodgers threw an interception to linebacker NaVorro Bowman and Frank Gore ran for a 23-yard touchdown.

Rodgers threw a touchdown to James Jones, again cutting the lead to 8, but the 49ers held the Packers in the final minute.

Things went so well for the 49ers that when David Akers tried a 63-yard field goal at the end of the first half, it bounced off the crossbar and then kept going through the uprights to tie an NFL record.

Patriots 34, Titans 13

NASHVILLE, TENN. | Tom Brady threw for 236 yards and two touchdowns, and defending AFC champion New England routed Tennessee for its ninth straight season-opening win.

The Patriots ruined Jake Locker's

debut as Tennessee's starter, sacking him twice and forcing two turnovers. New England rookie Dont'a Hightower returned Locker's fumble 6 yards for a TD in his own debut, and Stevan Ridley ran for 125 yards and a TD.

New England even knocked Locker out of the game in the fourth quarter. He hurt his left shoulder tackling safety Patrick Chung on a fumble return of officials should have whistled dead as an incomplete pass to Titans receiver Nate Washington, who also was hurt on the play. Matt Hasselbeck replaced Locker.

Vikings 26, Jaguars 23 (OT)

MINNEAPOLIS | Rookie Blair Walsh kicked four field goals, including a 55-yarder as regulation time expired and another one in overtime, and Adrian Peterson returned from a left knee injury to lift Minnesota over Jacksonville.

Peterson ran 17 times for 84 yards and two touchdowns for the Vikings, who led for most of the second half until Blaine Gabbert's 39-yard touchdown heave with 20 seconds left in the fourth quarter put the Jaguars back in front.

For the first time since the NFL's new overtime scoring rule was installed

last season, the first team on the board didn't immediately run off the field a winner.

After Walsh's 38-yard kick, the Vikings had to play defense again while the Jaguars had their chance to match. But Gabbert was hurried into a fourth-down overthrow. Gabbert was 23 for 39 for 260 yards and two touchdowns.

Jets 48, Bills 28

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. | Mark Sanchez threw three touchdown passes, including two to rookie Stephen Hill, and the New York Jets eased concerns about their offense with a 48-28 rout of the Buffalo Bills on Sunday.

The Jets sprinkled in their wildcat package with Tim Tebow, who was mostly quiet but recovered a late onside kick by Buffalo, and Jeremy Kerley had a touchdown catch and a punt return for a score.

Antonio Cromartie also took one of New York's three interceptions of Ryan Fitzpatrick to the end zone. It was the most points the Jets have scored in a season opener.

That's from a team whose first-team offense failed to score a touchdown in the first three games of the preseason.

Bears 41, Colts 21

CHICAGO | Jay Cutler threw for 333 yards and two touchdowns, Michael Bush added a pair of scoring runs and the Chicago Bears spoiled Andrew Luck's debut in whipping Indianapolis.

Brandon Marshall had nine catches for 119 yards and a touchdown in his first game since being reunited with Cutler.

Matt Forte ran for 80 yards and a score for the Bears, and also had 40 yards receiving. Luck finished 23 of 45 for 309 yards with a 4-yard touchdown pass to Donnie Avery.

Eagles 17, Browns 16

CLEVELAND | Michael Vick overcame four interceptions by throwing a 4-yard touchdown pass to Clay Harbor with 1:18 left as Philadelphia Eagles opened the season with a harrowing win over Cleveland.

Vick (29 of 56, 317 yards, 2 TDs) led the Eagles on a 91-yard scoring drive, capping it with his short toss to Harbor.

Buccaneers 16, Panthers 7

TAMPA, FLA. | Tampa Bay's rejuvenated defense came up with two interceptions against Carolina's Cam Newton, and the Buccaneers won their debut under coach Greg Schiano.

Josh Freeman threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to Mike Williams and Connor Barth kicked three field goals to help the Bucs stop a 10-game losing streak.

Texans 30, Dolphins 10

HOUSTON | Arian Foster had two touchdown runs, Matt Schaub threw a TD pass to Andre Johnson, and Houston's defense overwhelmed rookie Ryan Tannehill and Miami.

Tannehill, the eighth overall pick by the Dolphins in the draft, threw three interceptions in a game-turning six-minute stretch.

Cardinals 20, Seahawks 16

GLENDALE, ARIZ. | Kevin Kolb replaced injured John Skelton and led Arizona on the deciding touchdown drive, throwing 6 yards to Andre Roberts for a score with 4:59 to play in a win over Seattle. Seahawks running Marshawn Lynch, questionable with a sore back, carried 21 times for 85 yards.

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

EAST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
N.Y. Jets	1	0	0	1.000	48	28
New England	1	0	0	1.000	34	13
Miami	0	1	0	.000	10	30
Buffalo	0	1	0	.000	28	48

SOUTH

W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	
Houston	1	0	0	1.000	30	10
Jacksonville	0	1	0	.000	23	26
Indianapolis	0	1	0	.000	21	41
Tennessee	0	1	0	.000	13	34

NORTH

W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	
Baltimore	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Cincinnati	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Pittsburgh	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Cleveland	0	1	0	.000	16	17

WEST

W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	
Denver	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Oakland	0	0	0	.000	0	0
San Diego	0	0	0	.000	0	0
Kansas City	0	1	0	.000	24	40

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

EAST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
Dallas	1	0	0	1.000	24	17
Washington	1	0	0	1.000	40	32
Philadelphia	1	0	0	1.000	17	16
N.Y. Giants	0	1	0	.000	17	24

SOUTH

W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	
Tampa Bay	1	0	0	1.000	16	10
Atlanta	1	0	0	1.000	40	24
New Orleans	0	1	0	.000	32	40
Carolina	0	1	0	.000	10	16

NORTH

W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	
Detroit	1	0	0	1.000	27	23
Chicago	1	0	0	1.000	41	21
Minnesota	1	0	0	1.000	26	23
Green Bay	0	1	0	.000	22	30

WEST

W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	
Arizona	1	0	0	1.000	20	16
San Francisco	1	0	0	1.000	30	22
Seattle	0	1	0	.000	16	20
St. Louis	0	1	0	.000	23	27

WEDNESDAY'S GAME

Dallas 24, N.Y. Giants 17

SUNDAY'S GAMES

Chicago 41, Indianapolis 21
 Minnesota 26, Jacksonville 23, OT
 Houston 30, Miami 10
 New England 34, Tennessee 13
 Washington 40, New Orleans 32
 Atlanta 40, Kansas City 24
 N.Y. Jets 48, Buffalo 28
 Detroit 27, St. Louis 23
 Philadelphia 17, Cleveland 16
 Arizona 20, Seattle 16
 San Francisco 30, Green Bay 22
 Tampa Bay 16, Carolina 10
 Pittsburgh at Denver, 8:20 p.m.

MONDAY'S GAMES

Cincinnati at Baltimore, 7 p.m.
 San Diego at Oakland, 10:15 p.m.

EXPANDED REDSKINS COVERAGE: WASHINGTONTIMES.COM/SPORTS/FOOTBALL

DEFENSE

Brees wasn't allowed into his comfort zone

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NEW ORLEANS | Facing Drew Brees, the most accurate passer in the NFL a year ago, the pressure figured to be on Robert Griffin III. Even though he wasn't going up against Brees directly, the potential for the New Orleans Saints quarterback to pile up yards and touchdowns seemed daunting.

It didn't take long Sunday for the onus to go onto Brees. With Griffin and the Washington Redskins putting up points like this team hasn't seen under coach Mike Shanahan, the Saints needed to match. Thanks to the defense's strong showing that forced New Orleans out of its comfort zone, that never materialized.

"What we knew was they would make plays, but let's make them earn everything," middle linebacker London Fletcher said. That was really our mindset: Let's not give up the big play. Let's make them earn everything they get."

Brees used late drives to finish with 339 yards, but he was just 24 for 52. That completion percentage of 46.2 was his worst since connecting on 40.6 percent on Christmas Eve 2006. It also was his first time under 50 percent since then.

Some of that was inaccuracy late, but the Redskins' defense deserves credit.

"We were able to create some pressure, make them make mistakes," defensive end Stephen Bowen said. "I think just the way our offense played, putting up points, I think [Brees] felt like he had to make the extra play, and it caused him to make some mistakes."

Fletcher and Bowen singled out the offense's role in their own success Sunday, saying the potent scoring output allowed them more margin for error. That was something not present last year, when the defense was counted on just to keep the Redskins in games.

Sunday, they watched Griffin, Alfred Morris, Pierre Garcon and Co. go to work and backed them up.

"When you saw the way our offense



Redskins cornerback DeAngelo Hall reacts after sacking New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees in the first half. Brees, last season's most-accurate passer, completed just 46.2 percent of his attempts Sunday. It marked the Saints star's worst completion percentage since throwing for 40.6 percent on Christmas Eve 2006.

was moving the ball, eating up clock making big plays ... from our standpoint definitely that was a sight for sore eyes," Fletcher said.

The Redskins trailed once, at 7-3, and Griffin's 88-yard touchdown pass to Garcon made that deficit short-lived.

There were moments when they were in danger, such as when Marques Colston got to the 3-yard line in the second quarter before cornerback Cedric Griffin stripped him, leading to

a touchback. Or when Brees was driving to tie the score in the fourth and DeJon Gomes, filling in at strong safety for the injured Brandon Meriweather, picked him off and returned it 49 yards.

"Those are huge plays. One saves a touchdown, one sets up a touchdown," Fletcher said. "We need all those plays."

Those were crushing blows to the Saints, but the Redskins' defense pestered Brees all afternoon. They played

all man defense, no zone, and the focus was on stopping the running game.

"We wanted to make them one-dimensional," Bowen said.

Mission accomplished. The Saints finished with just 10 carries for 32 yards, between Pierre Thomas and Mark Ingram.

Meanwhile, even with tight end Jimmy Graham presenting matchup nightmares, Brees couldn't get comfortable. New Orleans committed

seven penalties costing 55 yards just on offense, just one part of a long day.

"When you make that many mistakes, you don't deserve to win," Brees said.

That was the Redskins' plan.

"We made sure that as a defensive secondary, we weren't going to let our guy beat us," cornerback Josh Wilson said. "Every man steps up, took care of their guy in the secondary and we came out of here with a 'W.'"

REDSKINS NOTES

Sundberg's arm injury a bad break

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NEW ORLEANS | The Washington Redskins would have been more than content to sit on their 13-point lead going into halftime Sunday. Robert Griffin III had the Superdome quiet and the New Orleans Saints wondering what they could do to change the game.

One play brought the crowd to life. With 46 seconds left in the second quarter, Martez Wilson blocked Sav Rocca's punt and Courtney Roby recovered it for a touchdown. It wasn't enough to stem the tide in the Redskins' 40-32 victory, but it was a special teams blunder.

"It's just not executing details of the assignment," special teams standout Reed Doughty said. "We know what we got, and we didn't carry it out."

Wilson appeared to blow by Doughty to block the punt. He said there was no miscommunication on the play, just lack of executing details.

Rocca was as surprised as anyone to see Wilson coming at him that quickly.

"I caught the ball, I went to punt and someone was there," he said.

Roby's touchdown on the blocked punt cut the Redskins' advantage to 20-14, and the play also had a long-term effect.

Long snapper Nick Sundberg broke his left arm on the play.

"I tried to get a hand on a guy, he dipped in to try and get around the corner," a frustrated Sundberg said. "When he dipped in, I threw my arm out and his helmet just crushed it."

Sundberg broke the same ulna bone in high school, just in a different spot, and knew right away what happened. An X-ray confirmed the break, but "there really wasn't another choice" for him to remain in the game.

Sundberg snapped the ball nine more times the rest of the game, but he doesn't know how long he will be out.

Cundiff perfect

Billy Cundiff has been asked countless times about his memorable chip-shot miss for the Baltimore Ravens in last year's AFC championship game. One way to not worry



New Orleans defensive end Martez Wilson blocks a punt by Washington punter Sav Rocca just before halftime, a play that resulted in a broken arm for Redskins long snapper Nick Sundberg and a touchdown for the Saints. Still, Washington captured a 40-32 victory.

about that kind of scrutiny is just not missing.

Cundiff pulled that off Sunday, going 4 for 4 on field goals and booming his kickoffs. He connected from 37, 41, 37 and 45 yards.

"It was nice. During pregame, I actually felt like we started to establish a rhythm, which is about right," Cundiff said. "You have to treat each time we go out as a new opp to develop that rhythm."

Cundiff, who said he missed just once on practice kicks before the game, had no issues with his first attempt, which appeared to just be good, just barely. That kick was clean, just like the rest of Cundiff's day.

"I felt like I got out there and got some reps early, so I was able to reinforce that positive feeling about what we were doing," he said. "Getting a lot of kicks at the beginning really helped."

One of Cundiff's kickoffs hit the top of the uprights, so distance wasn't a problem. That wasn't the furthest he has hit one; Cundiff put a kickoff in the stands last year.

Morris shines

Rookie sixth-round pick Alfred Morris found out Saturday he was starting Week 1, something running backs coach Bobby Turner said Morris deserved for a strong preseason.

Then Morris ran for 96 yards and two touchdowns, showing he might deserve to shoulder the load moving forward.

"I know what I'm capable of," Morris said. "I know what type of guy I am; I know my work ethic, and I'm going to go out there and get it done no matter what."

Extra points

Safety Jordan Bernstine suffered a severely sprained right knee on a kickoff in the fourth quarter. Coach Mike Shanahan said he is expected to miss significant time. ... Veteran quarterback Rex Grossman was inactive Sunday, and rookie Kirk Cousins backed up Griffin.

OFFENSE

Garcon's impact felt from the start

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

NEW ORLEANS | Pierre Garcon caught the high pass from Robert Griffin III and tried to turn on the afterburners.

"The end zone looked like it was far," he said. "I looked on the screens a couple of times like, 'Gosh.' But I'm glad it worked out for us."

It worked out on that play, an 88-yard touchdown that sparked the Washington Redskins' 40-32 season-opening victory against the New Orleans Saints. But the rest of the afternoon didn't go as planned for Garcon, who didn't appear on the field again after suffering a right foot injury.

The 26-year-old hurt his foot on the touchdown, which was the longest Redskins pass play since 1987. He still finished the game with the most receiving yards on the team with 109 because he was a popular target early on.

"I'm glad we've got Pierre on our football team, to say the least," coach Mike Shanahan said. "He's a big-play guy. ... He wants the football, so we gave it to him early and he made a number of big plays."

Garcon, who caught Griffin's first three passes, had his back stretched out and missed some plays but didn't seem to be bothered by that.

X-rays on the foot were negative, Shanahan said, but Garcon was too sore to return. The receiver was optimistic about his short-term future.

"I'm feeling good. Should be good to go next week," he said. "We'll get it checked on, I'll be ready back for St. Louis."

If Garcon is good to go next week at the level he was on the 88-yarder, the Rams could be in trouble. It was the kind of play the Redskins expected when they signed him in the offseason, turning a short catch into a crowd-killer just one play from scrimmage after the Saints took a 7-3 lead.

"It was a momentum shift. It was very important; it was a game-changer," he said. "We really needed that. It came at a great time. We got lucky and caught them out of position. It was a great call by coach; coach was expecting it before the play, and it worked perfectly like we drew it up."

Perhaps not exactly, unless Kyle Shanahan knew that the Saints would put safety help on Josh Morgan instead of Garcon. Leaving the Redskins' top receiver in one-on-one coverage was a big mistake.

Morgan was laid out after Garcon made the catch, but it was worth it.

"I told 'P' on his touchdown pass that he's going to thank me when he watches the film," Morgan said. "I got two people up out of there for him."

Garcon did the rest, outracing safety Patrick Robinson to the end zone and making Griffin's first NFL touchdown pass a memorable one.

Obviously, the Redskins are at their best in the passing game with Garcon healthy, as he proved in the first quarter. Yet the most satisfying part was that the Redskins' offense kept churning even without Garcon.

Aldrick Robinson stepped in for Garcon and made four catches for 52 yards.