

NAVY QB REYNOLDS BUILDING LEGACY WITH BIG VICTORIES, C1

EXPANDED COVERAGE, R4: Forbath's winner feels 'awesome'
 Postgame MRI reveals Griffin's injured knee is sprained; no serious damage found



31   28

GAMEDAY

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CRAIG BISACRE/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins rookie Kirk Cousins celebrates his two-point conversion to force overtime Sunday against Baltimore. The play set the stage for Washington to celebrate Kai Forbath's winning field goal (top).

BACKUP POWER

Redskins rise from dead with a victory for the ages



DAN DALY

This was one of those "Where do you begin?" games. This was one of those games Washington Redskins fans might be re-living for decades, depending on how the season turns out. When the first names that roll off your tongue after a victory are Kirk Cousins and Richard Crawford, you know you've seen something special. And when it happens against the esteemed team just up I-95, the Baltimore Ravens, it only makes it better.

How many times did the Redskins look dead Sunday at FedEx Field, look like they were ready for the medical examiner? Certainly with 4:39 left, when, with the Ravens leading 28-20, Niles Paul appeared to lose a fumble at the Washington 15 on a kickoff return. The replay official saved the Redskins there, though.

At the 1:42 mark, there was more hand-wringing after Robert Griffin III limped off with a sprained knee following a 13-yard scramble to the Washington 40. And with 45 seconds to go, hand-wringing gave way to utter despair at the sight of Griffin being called for intentional grounding — and then being helped to the sideline, never to return.

This saddled his successor, fellow rookie Kirk Cousins, with a second-and-20 at the Baltimore 26. Good luck with that. So that's, what, *four* times

» see DALY | R2



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III was knocked out of the game with a knee sprain after absorbing a hit from Ravens defensive lineman Haloti Ngata. Griffin's fourth-quarter exit paved the way for Cousins to come off the bench and play hero, tossing a touchdown to Pierre Garcon before running for the two-point conversion.

Cousins delivers emergency service after RG3's injury

BY RICH CAMPBELL
 THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The pain pulsing through Robert Griffin III's sprained right knee late Sunday afternoon prevented the franchise quarterback from performing his magic when the Washington Redskins needed it most.

And if the sight of trainers tending to Griffin wasn't enough to send the price of antacid through the roof in these parts, backup quarterback Kirk Cousins faced a two-point conversion needed to tie the Baltimore Ravens in the final seconds of a game with major playoff implications.

Griffin's hearing, though, was not affected by the knee-bending hit he absorbed while scrambling eight plays earlier. When offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan's play call sounded through his helmet radio headset, Griffin's disappointment waned.

"This," Griffin thought, "is awesome."

The call included the option for a quarterback draw. "We didn't think they'd be expecting it," coach Mike Shanahan said. Not with Cousins, the fourth-round rookie backup who, like everyone else on the planet, doesn't possess the combination of throwing and running ability that Griffin does.

Cousins faked the pass, then ran behind his blockers and lunged into the end zone. It sent the game to overtime, and the Redskins won 31-28 on a 34-yard field goal by Kai Forbath.

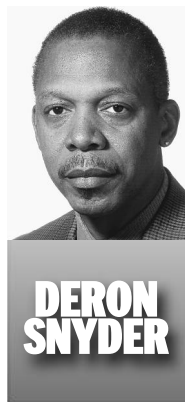
Griffin rose on his injured leg and embraced Cousins after the ball split the uprights. "Let's make the playoffs," Cousins told him. And the moment was his.

Cousins has waited and watched for most of the season as his rookie position-mate has become a star. What vindication, then, for him to complete two passes for 26 yards, including an 11-yard touchdown to Pierre Garcon, in relief to help the Redskins win their

» see REDSKINS | R2

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

Ravens, Flacco can't seal the deal



DERON SNYDER

Losing back-to-back games — on the final play of regulation last week and in overtime on Sunday — is no way to begin your stretch run. It's also no way to bolster your argument for consideration as an elite quarterback.

That's where the Baltimore Ravens and Joe Flacco find themselves after a 31-28 loss to the Washington Redskins at FedEx Field on Sunday. They're good enough to be contenders and good enough to be on the verge of victory, but not good enough to seal the deal, at least not lately.

In a game heavy on playoff atmosphere and postseason implications, the seasoned Ravens figured to have the edge. These situations are as normal to them beginning contests with midfield coin tosses. But it was the upstart Redskins who found a way to win, while the more-experienced Ravens failed late for the second consecutive week.

"It's how you start, not how you finish," said cornerback Ray Rice, who rushed for 121 yards and a touchdown that gave Baltimore an 8-point lead with 4:47 left. "I don't want to be known as 'If we get them close in the fourth quarter, the Ravens will give it away.' That's never been us and it's not going to be us."

Don't tell the Pittsburgh Steelers, who scored 10 unanswered fourth-quarter points in Week 13, including a go-ahead field goal as time expired. And don't tell the Redskins, who marched 85 yards in 13 plays — the last two engineered by backup quarterback Kirk Cousins — for a touchdown, before Cousins ran in the game-tying two-point conversion.

Flacco was virtually flawless in the first half, completing 10 of 13 passes for 127 yards and three TDs. But one miss came back to haunt the Ravens. Wide-out Torrey Smith was wide open as he streaked downfield on the Ravens' second possession, but the ball was underthrown, giving Redskins cornerback Josh Wilson an opportunity to make up ground and deflect the pass.

Flacco was at the center of two crucial miscues after intermission. He was sacked for a strip-fumble after Baltimore received the second-half kickoff. On the ensuing possession, Flacco threw an ill-advised pass in the red zone while under heavy pressure from linebacker Ryan Kerrigan. Nose tackle Barry Cofield tipped the pass and linebacker London Fletcher caught it at the 13-yard line.

"That was my fault," said Flacco. "I was enamored with giving Ray [Rice] something over the middle because they were in straight man. But I just have to get the ball out of my hand."

The Ravens have enjoyed tremendous success this season when they put the ball in Flacco's hand. Coach John Harbaugh has gone practically Air Coryell this season, as Baltimore is averaging 34 pass attempts per game, on pace for a career-high by Flacco. The transition has been necessary because while Rice remains a reliable offensive weapon, the defense isn't nearly as stout as recent vintage.

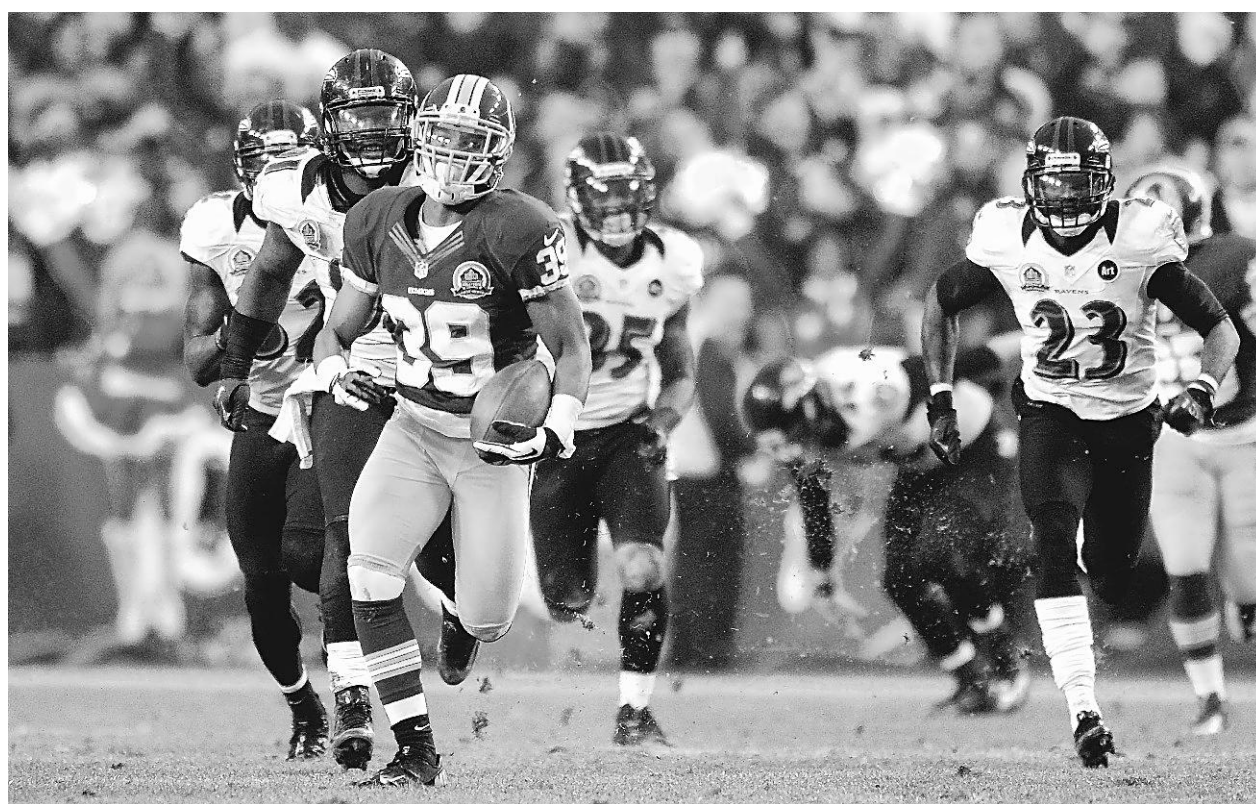
Flacco considers himself an elite quarterback but he's yet to meet the Super-Bowl-or-bust standard. Two losses in AFC championships and two losses in AFC divisional games is the brunt of his argument, which doesn't cut it for most observers outside his locker room.

"Joe is fighter like the rest of our players," Harbaugh said. "I'm not going to assess him or give a grade right now. I'm sure all of us are going to grade ourselves pretty hard. But we win as a team and lose as a team. Joe did some great things out there, put up some points. We all need to do better and find ways to finish games."

They need to do so quickly, with Denver, the New York Giants and Cincinnati coming up. Baltimore (9-4) received some help Sunday in its quest for the AFC North title when the Bengals and Steelers lost, keeping them two games behind in the win column. But Rice isn't interested in what the division rivals are up to.

"Whatever help Cincinnati and Pittsburgh give us, appreciate it, but that's not what we're looking for," Rice said. "We're trying to get better each week and make our own playoff run. We don't need anybody else's help."

But with a two-game losing streak in heartbreaking fashion, they definitely need something.



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins cornerback Richard Crawford returns a punt 64 yards in overtime, setting up Kai Forbath's winning field goal.

NOTEBOOK

Crawford a spark in return game

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

To Richard Crawford, it was so simple. Washington Redskins coach Mike Shanahan told him Friday he'd be replacing Brandon Banks on punt returns, so he got his mind right and prepared.

When he stood downfield to return in overtime Sunday against the Baltimore Ravens, it was just a matter of running.

"It was kind of like the Red Sea," Crawford said. "I saw where I had to go and I just ran that way."

Crawford ran 64 yards, electrifying the crowd at FedEx Field as he put the Redskins well within Kai Forbath's field goal range.

Not a bad debut for the seventh-round pick who had been inactive for the past five games.

"A heck of a job for your first game in the National Football League with a lot on the line," Shanahan said. "It's always good to see guys step up, and he did."

In light of Cedric Griffin's four-game suspension, Crawford was passed over at cornerback by DJ Johnson for playing time on defense, but he showed enough potential to earn a chance returning punts. Shanahan wanted an

extra body active on the defensive side, so it meant Crawford on punts, Niles Paul on kickoffs and a difficult conversation with Banks, who has struggled on returns this season.

"I said, I think these guys deserve an opportunity to show us what they can do both in the kickoff return and the punt return," Shanahan said. "But we might need you next week or the week after that, so keep on working. I'm not sure when your next opportunity will come, but you've got to help our football team win."

Jackson forces turnover

Just when the Ravens were threatening to go up by two scores early in the third quarter, Rob Jackson made a game-changing play. Finally getting some pressure on Baltimore quarterback Joe Flacco, he stripped the ball and recovered the fumble.

"I just beat [the lineman] around the edge. I saw the ball, went for it, went and got it," Jackson said. "Just like that."

The Redskins settled for a field goal, but Jackson knew how big of an impact his turnover could make.

"We needed some momentum for us," veteran linebacker London Fletcher said. "That was a big

momentum swing for us."

Paul down after fumble

Paul had the chance to validate Shanahan's trust late in the fourth quarter on a kickoff return with the Redskins down eight and less than five minutes left.

Near the left sideline, he fumbled the ball and it looked like the Ravens' David Reed recovered.

It would've essentially ended the game, but a replay review showed Reed was out of bounds before he gained possession.

"I knew I messed up. It can't happen," Paul said. "It shouldn't happen. It should never happen."

Extra points

● Running back Alfred Morris lost a fumble for the second time in as many games on the same day he broke the Redskins' rookie record for carries.

He finished with 23 carries for 122 yards.

● Left tackle Trent Williams said he was hurting after the win and understands that his thigh injury won't get better until he gets rest. "I expect it not to feel good," Williams said. "I'm used to playing through pain at this point."

REDSKINS

From page R1

fourth-straight game.

"It has been communicated to me by some veterans that they believe in me and that if my name has to be called upon that they believe I can get it done, and that means the world," Cousins said. "First and foremost, Robert has been doing an awesome job, and I have a lot to live up to if my number does get called."

Cousins did Sunday with the poise and accuracy that attracted the Redskins even after they drafted Griffin in the first round in April.

The Redskins' playoff chances benefited. They improved to 7-6 to keep pace with the NFC East-leading New York Giants (8-5), who beat New Orleans on Sunday.

Washington also stayed one game back of the 8-5 Seattle Seahawks, who

maintained their hold on the NFC's final wild-card spot by blowing out Arizona.

A comeback win of this magnitude normally results in unmitigated jubilation. The Redskins trailed for the entire second half until Cousins' two-point run tied it and sent the home fans in the bipartisan crowd of 81,178 into a frenzy. Players, however, were concerned about their starting quarterback.

An MRI on Griffin's knee Sunday night showed no significant ligament damage. "Everything is clear," Redskins spokesman Tony Wyllie said. Griffin's status for next Sunday's game against Cleveland is undetermined.

He limped off the field after Ravens defensive tackle Haloti Ngata, all 330 pounds, tackled him at full speed. Griffin's right leg slightly wrapped around Ngata's back, an unnatural bend, for sure.

"You've got to try to put aside all the worries that you have for Robert and the concern about him and is he going to be

OK and how much this offense hinges on him," left guard Kory Lichtensteiger said. "You have to put all that belief in Robert on Kirk. Kirk is a very capable guy. He knows what he's doing."

Cousins was on the sideline for almost three hours on this cold, raw day. He wore a jacket to stay warm, but he physically felt cold when he entered the game with 1:42 remaining and the Redskins at their 40-yard line trailing by eight.

Lichtensteiger knew immediately Cousins would be OK.

"All I need to hear from him is the play," Lichtensteiger said. "If he can get that out and it makes sense and the protections are going the right way, it's good."

Players expected Cousins to be ready. On many weekdays, you can find him sitting on a couch outside the Redskins' locker room with his nose buried in his playbook. Sometimes he'll be drawing

plays using a pen and a pad of paper.

Knowing Griffin blocks him on the depth chart tests his patience, but Sunday's results show he has handled it well.

Although Griffin returned to the game for four plays, his knee was too painful. He yielded to Cousins.

On third-and-5 from the 11, Cousins pump-faked, rolled to his right and found a wide-open Garcon for the tying touchdown.

"I thought, I'm going to try to make something happen and try to do my best RG3," Cousins said.

Cousins impersonated him again on the quarterback draw. From the sideline, Griffin saw the Ravens show a blitz. He knew the draw wouldn't work and Cousins would have to check out of it.

But then the Ravens backed off. The draw was on.

The hole opened for Cousins, and — what else? — the rookie seized the opportunity.

REDSKINS 31, RAVENS 28

Baltimore	7	14	0	7	0	-28
Washington	14	0	6	8	3	-31

First Quarter

Was — Morgan 4 pass from Griffin (Forbath kick), 9:38.

Bal — Boldin 19 pass from Flacco (Tucker kick), 7:05.

Was — Morris 1 run (Forbath kick), 2:55.

Second Quarter

Bal — Boldin 31 pass from Flacco (Tucker kick), 10:16.

Bal — Pitta 14 pass from Flacco (Tucker kick), 8:39.

Third Quarter

Was — FG Forbath 48, 10:27.

Was — FG Forbath 49, 1:21.

Fourth Quarter

Bal — Rice 7 run (Tucker kick), 4:47.

Was — Garcon 11 pass from Cousins (Cousins run), :29.

Overtime

Was — FG Forbath 34, 11:37.

A — 81,178.

	Bal	Was
First downs	18	22
Total Net Yards	359	420
Rushes-yards	35-186	35-172
Passing	173	248
Punt Returns	3-25	3-100
Kickoff Returns	5-145	2-37
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	1-2
Comp-Att-Int	16-21-1	17-28-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	2-9	3-24
Punts	5-50.2	5-48.0
Fumbles-Lost	2-1	3-1
Penalties-Yards	8-56	8-70
Time of Possession	29:22	34:01

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Baltimore, Rice 20-121, Pierce 8-53, Flacco 5-9, Leach 2-3. Washington, Morris 23-122, Griffin 7-34, Royster 3-11, Hankerson 1-3, Garcon 1-2.

PASSING — Baltimore, Flacco 16-21-1-182. Washington, Griffin 15-26-0-246, Cousins 2-2-0-26.

RECEIVING — Baltimore, Pitta 5-46, Boldin 3-78, Rice 3-15, Leach 2-11, Pierce 2-11, T. Smith 1-21. Washington, Garcon 5-87, Hankerson 4-67, Moss 3-52, Morgan 3-30, Young 1-28, Paulsen 1-8.

MISSED FIELD GOALS — None.

DALY

From page R1

the Redskins seemed on the verge of expiration — and their playoff hopes along with them? Frankly, it felt like more.

Somehow, though, they got from there to here: Washington 31, Baltimore 28, in overtime. And the reason they got from There to Here, when you stop and think about it, is probably the same reason they've gotten from 3-6 to 7-6 (with all kinds of possibilities still ahead of them). After a bye week in mid-November, a team that had been finding ways to lose started finding ways to win — winning big, winning small, winning freakily, but winning.

You won't come across a stranger, more glorious victory than this one. Cousins' four snaps at the end of regulation went like this: defensive pass interference (and a first down at the Washington 40) on third-and-6, a 15-yard pass to Leonard Hankerson on the aforementioned second-and-20,

an 11-yard touchdown flip to Pierre Garcon and, the coup de grace, a game-tying quarterback draw for the two-point conversion. The highest passer rating you can get is 158.3, but Cousins deserved a 1,058.3 for that pinch-hit performance.

The TD, Garcon said, came on a play the offense practices "a lot, but Kirk really had never practiced that particular play." As for the conversion, Cousins ain't exactly RG3 in the running department, "so the blocks are going to have to be made for me to score," he said. No matter. The Redskins' other kid QB came through in both instances.

That left the heroics to Richard Crawford. Yes, that Richard Crawford, the rookie cornerback who'd been inactive the previous five games, the seventh-round pick who could ride Metro without anybody recognizing him. The Redskins gave Crawford his big chance Sunday, handing him the punt-return duties and sitting Brandon Banks, and he didn't disappoint. In OT, he fielded a punt on the Washington 12, found some daylight down the left

sideline, cut across the field and ran 64 yards to the Baltimore 24 to set up Kai Forbath's decisive field goal.

The only reason he didn't run more than 64 yards — past punter Sam Koch and into the end zone — is that "a monkey jumped on my back," he said, somewhat sheepishly. "I got tired. I haven't played in two months."

Chances are he'll play a bit more in the next few weeks as the Redskins jockey for playoff position with the Giants, Bears, Seahawks et al. After all, in addition to his return in overtime, he also had runbacks of 20 and 16.

"That's what I think separates good teams: Everybody from top to bottom steps up and makes plays," linebacker Lorenzo Alexander said. "You know what you're going to get out of your veterans. Sometimes with your rookies and young players, you're not quite sure how they're going to step up in a big moment."

The Redskins' rookies and near-rookies — be it Griffin, Alfred Morris (his sixth 100-yard game Sunday), Forbath (14 for 14 on field goals) or, against the Ravens, Cousins and Crawford

— have delivered repeatedly for them. And they'll need to keep doing it, especially if RG3 can't bounce back from this knee injury and Kirk has to take over the offense.

It helped, no doubt, that this wasn't the first time Cousins had been thrown into the fire, that he'd also had to come out of the bullpen against Atlanta. Let's face it, the Ravens aren't the kind of club you want to make your NFL debut against — particularly in the final minutes of a game. And this wasn't just any game, I'll remind you; it was a game with postseason implications for both sides.

"You always want your second-team quarterback prepared," coach Mike Shanahan said. "He's done that since he's been here. ... His preparation has been great throughout the whole year."

So ended another winning week for the Redskins, their fourth straight. Years from now, it will make quite a story, the kind where the teller keeps uttering the words: "And then ... and then ... and then ..." Those are the best of all.

NFL WEEK 14

Top performers

Bears WR Brandon Marshall: 160 yards, 1 TD
Vikings RB Adrian Peterson: 154 yards, 2 TDs
Panthers QB Cam Newton: 403 total yards, 3 TDs



Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo eludes the pressure of Bengals defensive tackle Domata Peko Sunday during the second half. Romo led a comeback that culminated with Dan Bailey's game-winning field goal.

GAME OF THE WEEK

Distracted by death, Cowboys rally to win

By **JOE KAY**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CINCINNATI | Numb. Grieving. Distracted. The Cowboys were all those things on Sunday, dealing with the death of one teammate and the tribulations of another.

Winners, too, though they hardly felt like it. Dan Bailey kicked a 40-yard field goal as time ran out, sending the Cowboys to a 20-19 victory over the Cincinnati Bengals that ended a tough afternoon with a little bit of relief and their playoff chances enhanced.

Didn't last long, though. There will be a lot more emotional days ahead in Dallas.

"It's a hard, hard situation we're in," quarterback Tony Romo said. "There's no playbook for this sort of thing in life."

The Cowboys overcame a nine-point deficit in the closing minutes behind Romo, who held his hand over his heart during a moment of silence to honor teammate Jerry Brown before the kickoff. The linebacker died in an auto accident early Saturday.

Defensive lineman Josh Brent, who was driving, was still jailed in Texas on Sunday, charged with intoxication manslaughter.

The Cowboys learned about Brown's death on their flight to Cincinnati on Saturday. Coach Jason Garrett told his team that the best way to honor him was to play well in a game with playoff implications for both teams.

One of the visitors' metal lockers at Paul Brown Stadium had a strip of white athletic tape with "53 JERRY BROWN" attached to the top, a wooden stool inside sitting upside-down. Brown's No. 53 jersey was on the sideline during the game.

It wasn't much of a celebration by an emotionally spent team.

"I don't remember crying this much other than maybe the day I was born," defensive lineman

Marcus Spears said. "With Josh's situation and Jerry being gone, you felt it."

Players couldn't keep the tragedy out of their thoughts during the game, finding their minds wandering on the bench.

"I rarely let my emotions get the best of me," fullback Lawrence Vickers said. "Today they did, but this was the place to do it."

Owner Jerry Jones described his team as grieving when it took the field. It was the second consecutive week that an NFL team was playing a day after losing a teammate. Kansas City beat Carolina 27-21 one day after linebacker Jovan Belcher shot his girlfriend and then himself at the Chiefs' practice complex.

When Bailey's kick ended it, the Cowboys had a lot of thoughts racing through their heads.

"The last 24 hours has really been something I've never experienced," Romo said. "It's something I've never experienced, and I think a lot of guys will tell you that. It's just been a roller coaster of emotions."

"It was a very — and still is — a very difficult thing that this football team is dealing with."

The Cowboys salvaged the game by scoring on their last two drives against the Bengals, who had won four in a row and had a chance to move into position for an AFC wild-card berth.

Romo threw a 27-yard touchdown pass to Dez Bryant with 6:35 to go. Anthony Spencer's sack of Andy Dalton forced a punt, and Romo completed four passes on the drive to Bailey's winning kick.

Romo finished 25 of 43 for 268 yards with a touchdown, an interception and three sacks. DeMarco Murray converted a third-and-5 play to extend the final drive and ended up with 53 yards on 21 carries.

Newcomer Josh Brown kicked field goals of 25, 33, 25 and 52 yards for Cincinnati, which wasted an opportunity to move ahead of Pittsburgh for the second AFC wild card.

NFL ROUNDUP

Newton, Panthers punish rival Falcons

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLOTTE, N.C. | Panthers defensive end Greg Hardy promised "payback" and "punishment" for the Atlanta Falcons last week, and he and his Carolina teammates delivered on Sunday.

Despite playing without four starters and having 13 players on injured reserve, the Panthers dominated the NFC South champions as Cam Newton threw for 287 yards and two touchdowns and scored on a 72-yard run in a 30-20 victory.

Newton piled up a career-high 116 yards on the ground and the Panthers racked up 475 total yards to avenge an early-season loss with a dominating performance against their Interstate-85 rivals.

Carolina's defense was superb through 2½ quarters building a 23-0 lead and holding a 356-86 edge in total yards to snap a five-game losing streak against the Falcons.

Carolina came in with little to play for except to gain a measure of revenge on Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan, whom they felt disrespected them after Atlanta's 30-28 come-from-behind win earlier this season at the Georgia Dome.

Hardy was upset when television cameras caught Ryan cursing at the Panthers sideline after that game telling them to get off their field. Sunday, Hardy turned the tables on the Falcons, telling them the same thing.

Giants 52, Saints 27

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. | Rookie David Wilson returned a kickoff 97 yards for one touchdown, ran for two more scores and piled up 327 all-purpose yards and Eli Manning threw four touchdown passes.

The win allowed the Giants to maintain their one-game lead in the NFC East over Washington and Dallas. The loss all but ended the playoff hopes of Drew Brees and the Saints. The win also ended the Giants' three-game losing streak against the Saints, who turned the ball over four times in losing their third straight.

Eagles 23, Bucs 21

TAMPA, FLA. | Nick Foles threw a pair of touchdown passes in the final four minutes, including a 1-yarder to Jeremy



Panthers coach Ron Rivera shouts while Falcons head coach Mike Smith looks on Sunday after Carolina defeated its NFC South rival 30-20.

Maclin with no time remaining Sunday as Philadelphia rallied to beat Tampa Bay and end an eight-game skid — the Eagles' longest in 42 years.

Foles completed 32 of 51 passes for 381 yards in his fourth start in place of the injured Michael Vick. The rookie threw an 11-yard TD pass to Clay Harbor with 3:55 remaining, then led the Eagles on a 64-yard game-winning drive after the Philadelphia defense forced a Tampa Bay punt.

Colts 27, Titans 23

INDIANAPOLIS | Andrew Luck led Indianapolis back from a 13-point second-half deficit and Adam Vinatieri made two fourth-quarter field goals as the Colts rallied. Luck has now engineered six fourth-quarter comebacks this season for Indy.

It wasn't all Luck. Delone Carter cut the deficit to 20-14 with a 1-yard TD run on Indy's opening possession of the second half. And after Pat McAfee's 52-yard punt went out of bounds at the Titans 1-yard line, Cassius Vaughn jumped in front of Nate Washington, picked off Jake Locker's pass and scored on a 3-yard interception return to make it 21-20.

Rob Bironas gave the Titans a 23-21 lead with a 25-yard field goal, but

Vinatieri hit from 53 yards to retake the lead and from 40 to seal it.

Chargers 34, Steelers 24

PITTSBURGH | Philip Rivers threw three touchdown passes, two to Danario Alexander, and San Diego beat Pittsburgh.

The win was San Diego's first in 15 regular-season visits to Pittsburgh and snapped a four-game losing streak.

The Chargers dominated from the outset, never letting Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger get comfortable in his first game back after missing nearly a month.

Seahawks 58, Cardinals 0

SEATTLE | Marshawn Lynch had three touchdown runs and Seattle set a franchise record for points. The Seahawks forced eight turnovers. Richard Sherman and Bobby Wagner each had two interceptions.

Seattle kept firm grasp on the final NFC wild-card spot and kept alive slim chances of catching San Francisco in the NFC West race.

The Seahawks also picked up their first division victory and assured coach Pete Carroll of his first eight-win season in three years with them.

49ers 27, Dolphins 13

SAN FRANCISCO | Frank Gore ran for a 1-yard touchdown, reached 1,000 yards rushing for the sixth time in his career, and San Francisco beat Miami.

Gore finished with 63 yards, Anthony Dixon also had a 1-yard scoring run and Colin Kaepernick ran for a late 50-yard touchdown and threw for 185 yards in his fourth straight start since being promoted over Alex Smith.

Vikings 21, Bears 14

MINNEAPOLIS | Adrian Peterson rushed for 154 yards and two touchdowns and Harrison Smith returned an interception for a score to lead Minnesota over free-falling Chicago.

Peterson topped 100 yards before the first quarter was over, helping the Vikings overcome another lackluster day from quarterback Christian Ponder to get a victory that will keep their faint playoff hopes alive.

Jets 17, Jaguars 10

JACKSONVILLE, FLA. | Shonn Greene and Bilal Powell ran for short touchdowns and New York kept its postseason hopes alive.

The Jets were shut out at halftime for the second consecutive week, but they didn't need to change quarterbacks to spark the offense this time around. Instead, they just pounded the Jaguars up the middle.

Rams 15, Bills 12

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. | Sam Bradford threw a 13-yard touchdown pass to Brandon Gibson with 48 seconds left to lift St. Louis.

Bradford was 5 of 8 for 68 yards to cap a 14-play, 84-yard drive. St. Louis continued its late-season resurgence by winning its third straight for the first time since closing the 2006 season with three victories.

Browns 30, Chiefs 7

CLEVELAND | Rookie Travis Benjamin's electrifying 93-yard punt return touchdown gave Cleveland momentum and the Browns won their third straight game.

The Browns (5-8) have one more win than last season.

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

EAST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
y-New England	9	3	0	.750	430	260
N.Y. Jets	6	7	0	.462	245	306
Buffalo	5	8	0	.385	289	352
Miami	5	8	0	.385	240	276

SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
x-Houston	11	1	0	.917	351	221
Indianapolis	9	4	0	.692	292	329
Tennessee	4	9	0	.308	271	386
Jacksonville	2	11	0	.154	216	359

NORTH	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
Baltimore	9	4	0	.692	331	273
Pittsburgh	7	6	0	.538	278	264
Cincinnati	7	6	0	.538	321	280
Cleveland	5	8	0	.385	259	272

WEST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
y-Denver	10	3	0	.769	375	257
San Diego	5	8	0	.385	292	281
Oakland	3	10	0	.231	248	402
Kansas City	2	11	0	.154	195	352

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

EAST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
N.Y. Giants	8	5	0	.615	373	270
Washington	7	6	0	.538	343	329
Dallas	7	6	0	.538	300	314
Philadelphia	4	9	0	.308	240	341

SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
y-Atlanta	11	2	0	.846	337	259
Tampa Bay	6	7	0	.462	354	308
New Orleans	5	8	0	.385	348	379
Carolina	4	9	0	.308	265	312

NORTH	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
Green Bay	8	4	0	.667	296	259
Chicago	8	5	0	.615	308	219
Minnesota	7	6	0	.538	283	286
Detroit	4	8	0	.333	300	315

WEST	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA
San Francisco	9	3	1	.731	316	184
Seattle	8	5	0	.615	300	202
St. Louis	6	6	1	.500	236	279
Arizona	4	9	0	.308	186	292

x-clinched playoff spot
 y-clinched division

THURSDAY'S GAME

Denver 26, Oakland 13

SUNDAY'S GAMES

Minnesota 21, Chicago 14
 Washington 31, Baltimore 28, OT
 Cleveland 30, Kansas City 7
 San Diego 34, Pittsburgh 24
 Indianapolis 27, Tennessee 23
 N.Y. Jets 17, Jacksonville 10
 Carolina 30, Atlanta 20
 Philadelphia 23, Tampa Bay 21
 St. Louis 15, Buffalo 12
 Dallas 20, Cincinnati 19
 San Francisco 27, Miami 13
 Seattle 58, Arizona 0
 N.Y. Giants 52, New Orleans 27
 Detroit at Green Bay, late

MONDAY'S GAME

Houston at New England, 8:30 p.m.

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

QUARTERS

1 Both offenses came out firing, trading all-but-uncontested touchdowns on the first three possessions of the game. The ground game was at the forefront, with Alfred Morris rolling up 46 yards on the Redskins' opening drive and Ray Rice matching that total on his second run from scrimmage alone. But the Redskins' 14-7 edge at the end of the quarter came thanks to Robert Griffin III getting in sync with his receivers a bit more effectively than Joe Flacco did, including key completions to Santana Moss, Leonard Hankerson and Joshua Morgan on the second TD drive.

2 Flacco got rolling in the second as the Redskins sputtered, slicing up the woe-filled Washington secondary for a pair of TD passes. Most egregious was Anquan Boldin burning DeAngelo Hall for the second time in the game, this time for a 31-yard score. Washington's offense stalled, with Morris fumbling deep in Redskins territory to set up a Flacco-to-Dennis Pitta TD and Griffin and Morris botching an option pitch to end another drive.

PLAY OF THE GAME: Kirk Cousins' first two passes after stepping in for RG3 resulted in a pass interference call and a completion that put the Redskins on Baltimore's 11 with 36 seconds left. It was his third that will be on season highlight films, an arcing toss to Pierre Garcon in the corner of the end zone that made it 28-26. Cousins' run for the two-point conversion put the game in OT.



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Redskins defense forced two turnovers — including this interception by London Fletcher (59) — to slow the Ravens during the third quarter.

3 Kai Forbath accounted for all of the scoring, as the offenses continued to regress. Forbath connected from 48 and 49 yards to follow up a pair of Flacco turnovers. First was a fumble forced and recovered by Rob Jackson; later came a London Fletcher interception prompted by pressure from Ryan Kerrigan.

4 After Rice extended the Ravens' lead to 28-20 with just under five minutes to play (thanks in large part to Boldin torching Hall once again), the Redskins got the rally they needed to stay in the playoff hunt. But a devastating hit on the end of a 13-yard RG3 scramble could determine the course of the rest of the Redskins' season.

OT Baltimore got the ball first but couldn't do anything offensively. Richard Crawford returned the ensuing punt 64 yards and the Redskins started their possession already in field-goal range. An offside penalty put Washington at the Ravens' 19, and Morris ran twice before the Redskins turned it over to Forbath on third down. His 34-yarder sailed through easily and the Redskins had their fourth consecutive win.

NUMBERS

6: Games this season in which the Redskins have scored at least 30 points, the first time they've done that since 1996

186: First-quarter yards for the Redskins, the most in the opening quarter by any team in the NFL this season

172: Career wins for Mike Shanahan, moving him past Joe Gibbs for 12th all-time

20: Combined passing yards in the third quarter for Robert Griffin III (17) and Joe Flacco (3)

4: Home wins for the Redskins this season, their most since 2008

NEXT

REDSKINS AT BROWNS
1 P.M. SUNDAY, FOX



• One way or the other, this game will be a matchup of rookie quarterbacks. If Robert Griffin III plays, it will be his first regular-season meeting against another member of the rookie starting QB class of 2012, Cleveland's Brandon Weeden. While Weeden hasn't gotten nearly the publicity of RG3, Andrew Luck or Russell Wilson — or even Ryan Tannehill —

has helped lead the Browns to three straight wins, including a 30-7 victory over the Chiefs on Sunday. If RG3 cannot go, the Redskins will start their other rookie QB, Kirk Cousins. The fourth-round pick threw a TD and ran for the two-point conversion in the final seconds of regulation during Sunday's 31-28 overtime win against the Ravens. There will be a second rookie matchup in the backfield, with sixth-round pick Alfred Morris on one side and No. 3 overall pick Trent Richardson on the other. Morris had his sixth 100-yard game of the season Sunday (122), while Richardson scored two TDs.

REDSKINS 31, RAVENS 28

Griffin escapes with knee sprain

MRI finds no major damage to ligaments

By NATHAN FENNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

In a hallway deep beneath FedEx Field, eight men surrounded Robert Griffin III. Some wore earpieces. They rushed the quarterback past white walls and idling Cadillac Escalades and into a black sedan.

"Back up! Back up!" one Washington Redskins staffer bellowed.

Another staffer stood in the middle of the hallway and held out his arms, trying to prevent the bright television lights and snapping cameras from following Griffin and his injured right knee to the makeshift motorcade. In sweat pants hiding a bulky black brace on the knee, he walked slowly but without a noticeable limp.

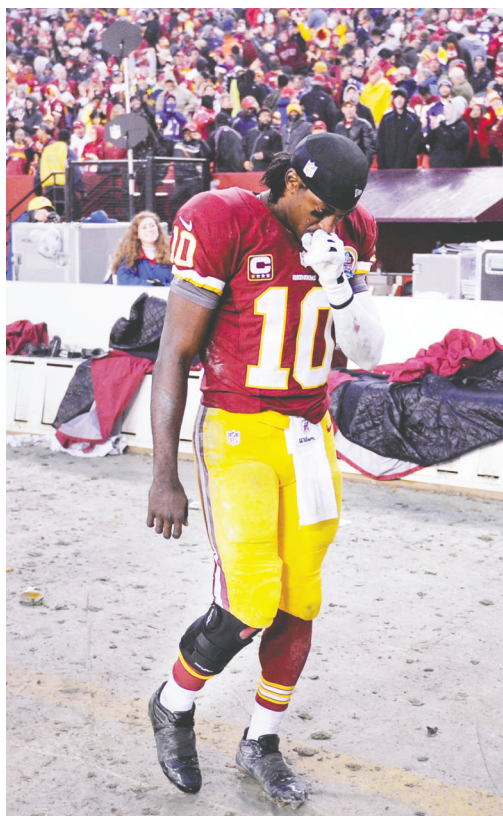
On the fog-shrouded Sunday, the quarterback screamed and cried and finally cracked jokes as he insisted, with his endorsement-winning smile, everything would be fine. As darkness settled, his motorcade departed for an MRI that revealed no serious damage in the knee, according to a team spokesman, only a sprain. His charmed rookie season will continue.

"Your positive vibes and prayers worked people," Griffin tweeted. "To God be the Glory!"

An unlikely win didn't seem to matter as much as the health of Griffin's knee.

Despite a style that invites contact, Griffin has avoided injury with the same ease he dodges tacklers. Like the October concussion that left him unable to remember the quarter or score but kept him off the field just three days. Nothing seemed to faze the 22-year-old.

Then came the moment that sucked the life from the stadium. As 1:56 remained in regulation, Griffin scrambled 13 yards in front of the Baltimore



PRESTON KERES/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES
Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III walks on the sideline with a brace on his right knee after a hit from Haloti Ngata took him out of the game.

Ravens' sideline, no different than this season's 111 previous rushing attempts. When he tumbled to the ground, his right leg whipped in the air. In that instant, Haloti Ngata plowed into Griffin and the bulk of Ngata's 330 pounds crashed into Griffin's knee in midair.

Center Will Montgomery looked up at a video board in time to see his quarterback's leg wobble and bend like a piece of spaghetti.

Griffin remembered thinking, "Oh, lord, here we go."

He screamed.

"Like a man, of course," Griffin added.

The pain was intense, but the worry wasn't. Griffin tore his right anterior cruciate ligament as a sophomore at Baylor in 2009. This didn't feel the same.

He exited for one play, told trainer Larry Hess he was going back in, returned to run four more plays and, after throwing the ball out of bounds, dropped to the turf. The knee wasn't right. He couldn't move. He couldn't continue.

"I knew I wasn't myself," Griffin said.

As backup quarterback Kirk Cousins finished the drive to send the game to overtime, Griffin laid on the blue training table. A player held up a burgundy coat to try and block onlookers.

Dr. James Andrews, the renowned surgeon who is the Redskins' senior orthopedic consultant, joined the crew examining Griffin. The medical staff told Griffin the knee's ligaments, including the ACL, "feel good."

Running back Alfred Morris saw tears. Griffin limped around the sideline clutching a radio connected to an earpiece in his left ear that relayed the play calls. He wanted to be on the field. Coach Mike Shanahan had to prevent him from returning. Instead, Griffin told Morris to finish the game off.

"That's just his love and passion for the game," Morris said. "That's the type of person he is. He loves doing it. I'm not surprised ... shedding tears because he wants to be out there helping this team win."

The tears soon disappeared.

An X-ray turned out "very good." Griffin remembered the medical staff prodding the painful portion of his knee "like 14 times."

"I don't know if any of you guys have been to the doctor," he said, then laughed at his joke. "I'm good for one every week"

Off to the side, a TV showed his face on ESPN. The quarterback was smiling.



CRAIG BISACRE/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Redskins kicker Kai Forbath (2) celebrates with holder Sav Rocca after converting the winning 34-yard field goal in overtime against the Ravens on Sunday.

COOL UNDER PRESSURE

By STEPHEN WHYNO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Kai Forbath had nerves, "just a little more than normal." A few teammates did, too. The game and the Washington Redskins' playoff hopes were on the line as the rookie kicker — who was perfect in his NFL career — stepped onto the field in overtime.

But if anything is automatic for the Redskins this season, it's Forbath. Just like 13 times before, including twice Sunday, he connected on the field goal, this time from 34 yards out to give his team a 31-28 victory over the Baltimore Ravens.

"Those are the moments that kickers want," Forbath said. "When they come, you've got to take advantage of them, and thankfully we did."

Forbath had taken advantage of every field-goal attempt since signing with the Redskins in October. He made it from 48 and 49 yards out to keep Washington alive in the second half against the Ravens.

After Richard Crawford's punt return put the ball well within his range, Forbath had a few minutes to consider the spot he was in.

"I was trying to just think about it like being out at practice every day," he said. "I just tried to stay calm, just make good contact with it and knock it even."

It didn't even matter that the FedEx Field turf was chewed up from rain and more than four

"I don't really remember it. It all just happened so fast. Sav was picking me up. I didn't know what was going on. My helmet came over my eyes. The feeling was just awesome."

— Kai Forbath

quarters of football. Holder Sav Rocca had his spot, and Forbath patted down the grass with his hand to make sure everything was all right.

"It just says a lot about his preparation and his mentality as a kicker just to not let things that he can't control get to him," long snapper Nick Sundberg said. "There are so many external factors — wind, rain, the field being sloppy — that a lot of guys let get in their mind. He's nails."

Linebacker Rob Jackson had some concern, even amid Forbath's perfection. "You never know," he thought. "They could block it, bad snap." No problem, there. Sundberg got it back, and, at that point, special teams captain Lorenzo Alexander's worry disappeared because he knew the field-goal protection unit was much improved from a year ago, when blocks were a frequent occurrence.

This one wasn't getting blocked. It was all up to Forbath.

"I have confidence in him. Complete

confidence," Alexander said. "When you got a guy kicking it like that, I'm excited."

Excitement didn't describe Forbath's reaction: "Better than I could've imagined it would feel." For just a couple of seconds, fans were able to forget about Robert Griffin III's knee injury as teammates mobbed the 25-year-old.

"I don't really remember it. It all just happened so fast," Forbath said. "Sav was picking me up. I didn't know what was going on. My helmet came over my eyes. The feeling was just awesome."

Even with some struggles on kickoffs, including one out of bounds against the Ravens, Forbath didn't let that affect him.

Forbath nailed a touchback late in the fourth quarter, then was good as gold in overtime.

"We gave him a game ball in front of the team. It doesn't surprise me how he handles himself," coach Mike Shanahan said. "I'm glad he's on our football team, that's for sure. He's made everything."

And he's made believers out of his teammates because going 14 for 14 isn't a fluke. Forbath has figured out a successful recipe, and no one wants him to change it now.

"Muscle memory is a crazy thing. As a specialist, it's one thing that we rely on more than anything. We go out there and turn our brain off, don't think about anything and just do what your body knows how to do," Sundberg said. "He trusts himself, and I think that's one of his biggest upsides."