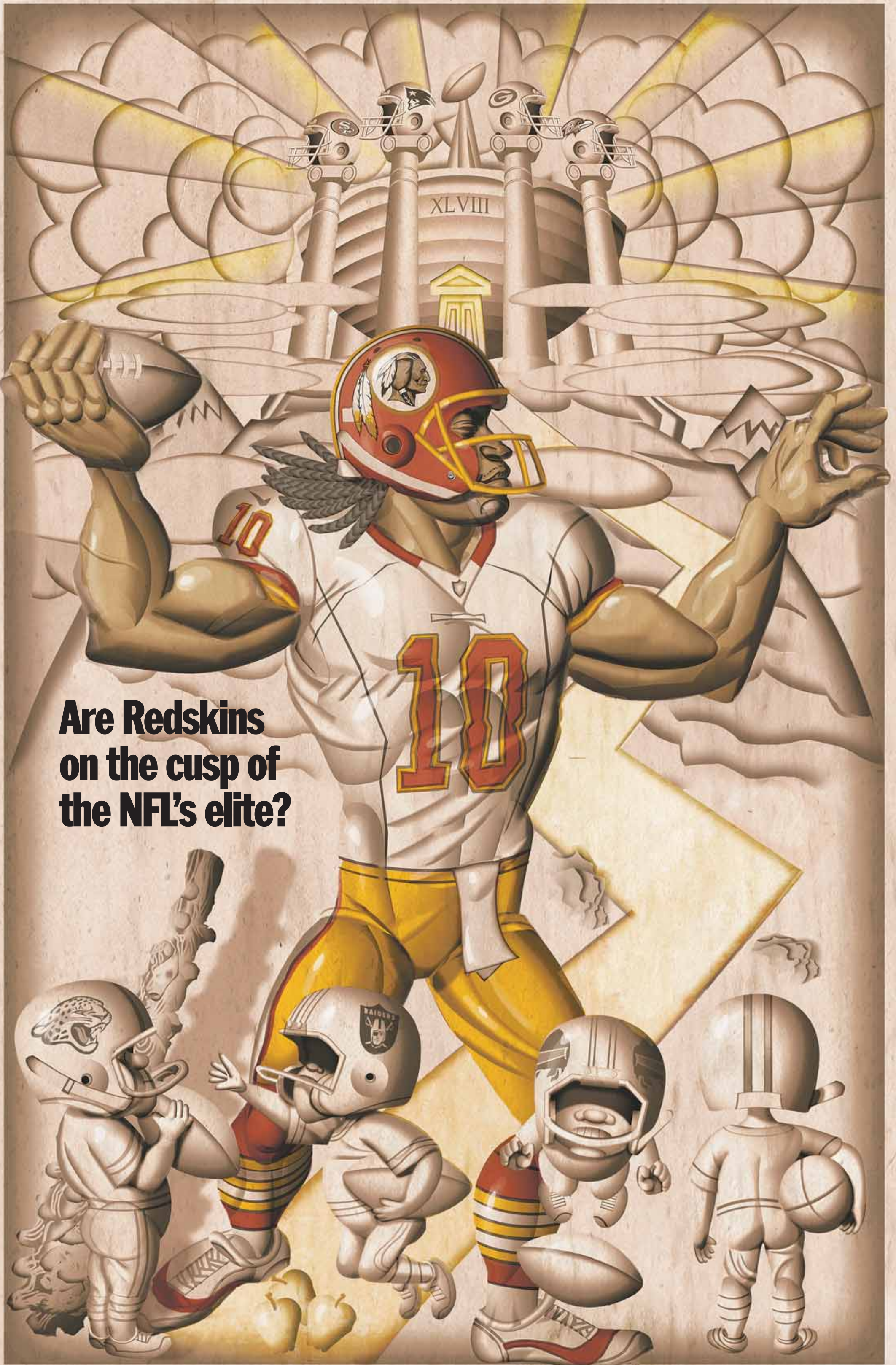


# STAYING POWER

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2013

The Washington Times

REDSKINS | E1



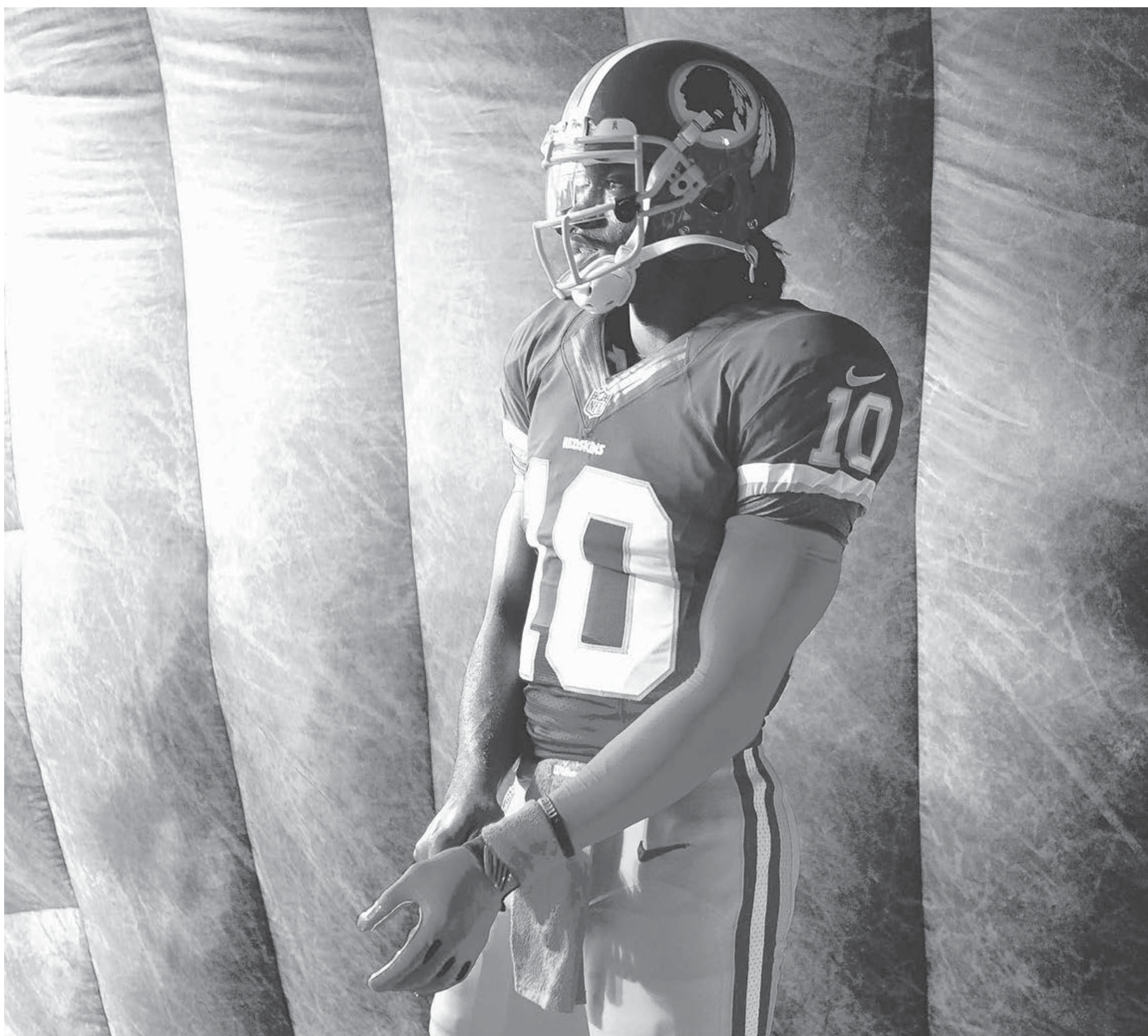
**Are Redskins  
on the cusp of  
the NFL's elite?**

■ Thom Loverro explains why RG3 has staying power. **E3**

■ Twice-released center Will Montgomery becomes a Redskins fixture. **E4**

■ 32 NFL teams ranked by current staying power. **E12**

## STAYING POWER



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

"The goal is longevity in the league," Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III says. "You also want to win. I think I proved how tough I am and the heart that I have on the football field and my teammates know that."

# Foundation of success

## Constructing an NFL team for the long haul takes vision, character, talent

By RICH CAMPBELL  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The calm inside the locker room belied the magnitude of the moment on that freezing night last December in Landover.

The Washington Redskins, irrelevant in the NFL for much of the previous two decades, had just completed the most remarkable turnaround. Their seventh straight victory — this one over the archrival Dallas Cowboys on national TV, no less — crowned them champions of the NFC East division for the first time in 13 years. Cheers, hugs and high-fives warmed the oppressed souls of Redskins fans as they streamed into the parking lot.

Deep inside the stadium, though, the mood was different.

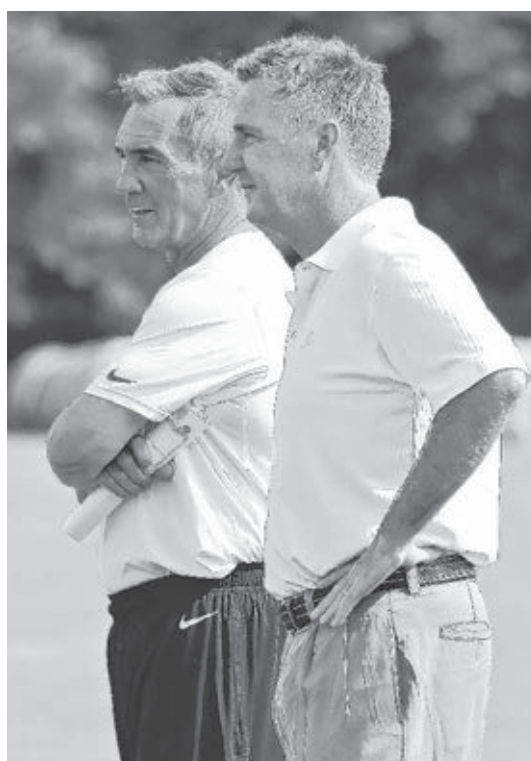
Brian Orakpo's baritone voice rose above others in his corner of the Redskins' locker room, and he didn't even play in the game, having been on injured reserve for three months. His teammates performed their usual postgame ritual. They cleaned up, changed clothes and went home.

Eight months later, at the dawn of another season, that scene resonates because of how the team's collective demeanor revealed its true expectations. The Redskins weren't satisfied by the division title that night, and they definitely aren't now.

Winning in the NFL, however, is elusive. The league is structured to foster competitive balance and parity. In the NFL, what goes up eventually comes down. The ultimate goal, then, is staying power — maximizing potential, sustaining a high standard and keeping the window to success open for as long as possible.

In the fourth season of coach Mike Shanahan and general manager Bruce Allen's partnership, the Redskins are as close to achieving true staying power as they have been since the franchise's glory years of the 1980s and early 1990s. Whether they seize it will define their 2013 season.

"There's no question that making the playoffs and winning seven in a row is an excellent season," said Bill Polian, who oversaw the Indianapolis Colts' sustained prominence as vice chairman from 1998 to 2011. "So how do you build on that? How do you replicate it? Your goal is always to get in the playoffs,



ASSOCIATED PRESS

In their fourth season together, Mike Shanahan and general manager Bruce Allen have the Redskins as close to achieving true staying power as the team has been since the franchise's glory years in the 1980s and early 1990s under Joe Gibbs.

however you get there. I think the Skins have a team that's capable of doing that right now."

### Rebuilding with character

Ask executives, coaches and players what separates teams with staying power from those without, and the answers are complex and varied enough to fill a book — collective health, skilled players, roster depth and youth, a big-game quarterback, talented scouts and established leadership, to name a few.

That's a testament to how difficult staying power is to achieve in the NFL. The differences between the few elite teams and those that only taste success can

be either minute or vast, but they all are meaningful.

That shows in the final standings every season. The Redskins last year were one of four playoff teams that did not qualify for the postseason in 2011. In each of 16 seasons from 1996 through 2011, at least five of the 12 postseason teams did not qualify the previous year.

The margin between success and failure is razor-thin in some cases, and that's where the Redskins find themselves. They have advanced out of rebuilding to the fringe of the elite with what appears to be a sustainable program.

"That's what you're looking for, when you're not sure who's going to make your football team and you have some depth at a number of positions that you haven't had in a few years," Shanahan said. "So, yeah, that does make you feel good."

"Not only do you have depth, you have guys that have the character you're looking for as well. So, very happy where we're at this year. You're always keeping your fingers crossed that you can stay as healthy as you can possibly be, and hopefully we'll be a little bit lucky — luckier this year than we have been in the past."

Shanahan during training camp spoke those words with cautious optimism. He understands there are no guarantees. But the vision with which he arrived in January 2010 continues to crystallize.

His great task after inheriting one of the league's oldest teams was injecting character, talent, specialized skills and youth into the roster. He needed a quarterback. The defensive personnel had to be overhauled to suit the 3-4 front he desired. He needed offensive playmakers around the quarterback, and he needed more athletic offensive linemen for his zone running scheme.

Washington targeted committed, dedicated players to anchor the rebuild. Coaches see the effects of that each day.

"We work hard, our guys practice hard, they study hard, they do everything, and it comes from Coach Shanahan, obviously," said defensive coordinator Jim Haslett, who coached the New Orleans Saints from 2000 to 2005. They won their division his first year but never made the playoffs again.

"They do everything they are asked to do, and they do it right," Haslett continued. "First of all, it

is a good group of guys. There's guys you can rely on, their reliability. They're accountable, and that's the kind of guys you like to surround yourself with."

That might seem to be trite praise, but actually it's a vital element of program building for those who have done it successfully — and unsuccessfully — at the NFL level.

"Our mantra was: 'Hard work, 100 percent effort all the time is the price of admission. No excuses, no explanations. Smart, fast, physical,'" said Polian, who now serves as an ESPN analyst. "Those are the pillars upon which you build your program. I know Mike does the same thing. He may use different words or phrases, but I know he does the same thing because his teams play that way."

### Roster components

Polian bristled at the suggestion that the Redskins' 2012 season left something to be desired. That Washington started 3-6 and needed a seven-game winning streak to make the playoffs does not matter to him.

"I'm not into the, 'You have to win 12 games every year,' because we won a lot of games every year and only won one Super Bowl, and nobody was patting us on the back for winning 12 games," he said. "To me, it's get in the playoffs and then do what you have to do to advance after that."

The quest for the postseason, then, is simplified into winning the four-team division. Shanahan emphasizes divisional success because all eight champions are guaranteed a postseason home game.

The Redskins compare favorably to Dallas, New York and Philadelphia particularly because of how young, talented and dedicated quarterback Robert Griffin III is.

Last season, Griffin set NFL rookie records for quarterback rating (102.4), interception percentage (1.27) and rushing yards by a quarterback (815). He led an offense that averaged a league-leading 6.2 yards per play. With such a dynamic running and passing threat emerging as a locker room leader at age 23, the Redskins are well situated at the most important position in the sport.

Uncertainty about the long-term health of Griffin's right knee, in which he has twice had his ACL

## STAYING POWER

## RG3 doesn't need to scramble for answers



THOM LOVERRO

Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III is a game-changer, a player who not only changes games but also has changed the game of football with his combination of speed, smarts and skill. He is Randall Cunningham. He is Steve Young. He is Brett Favre. He is all of those things.

But is he an era or a moment?

Will Griffin become a standard by which other quarterbacks are measured for to come — like a Steve Young or a Brett Favre — or will he be the answer to a trivia question about the greatest one-hit wonder in NFL history?

Will Griffin be standing in the stadium at Canton years from now delivering his Hall of Fame induction speech? Or will he be briefly mentioned as a teammate by Alfred Morris in his induction speech?

Can he last as long as Jared as a Subway pitchman? Or will he be selling ShamWows on late-night TV?

Does Griffin have the legs to stand on for a long NFL career?

Following his knee injury last season that ultimately led to Griffin being a one-legged quarterback, crumbling to the ground in the playoff loss to Seattle in January, and surgery for torn knee ligaments — his second in four years — the debate has raged over how this talented quarterback was used last year and how he should be used moving forward.

He ran the ball 120 times for 815 yards — impressive numbers for a quarterback, one of only



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Despite all the offseason drama, Robert Griffin III will once again be king of D.C. when he steps onto the field and starts making plays.

three who ran for more than 800 yards in a season since 1970.

His father, Robert Griffin II, believes those numbers add up to a short NFL career.

"You tell a kid that you want him to be there for 14 years, guess what?" he told GQ magazine. "Historical data will tell you that the more he runs, the more subject he is to career injury. You name one quarterback out there that would rather

run the football than throw the football, and I'll show you a loser."

And in case you didn't get the message, Griffin senior told WJLA-TV (Channel 7), when asked if his son should run the ball less, "I think that message was loud and clear. What they have to do in order to have Robert, you know, be what they want him to be, because you don't want him to limp into the playoffs."

So Griffin's father would say, no, his son is not long for the NFL if he is used the same way that made him such a successful and electric rookie last season — as if passing the ball guarantees a long NFL career. You might want to ask Kevin Kolb, whose NFL career may be over after suffering a concussion in the Bills preseason loss to the Redskins — one in a series of career concussions.

Robert Griffin III had one recorded concussion last year — that we know of.

All that said, if I was staking my franchise on the long-term viability of Griffin's career, I'd take that bet, for the same reasons that I thought before the 2012 season started, we might see something kind of different with this young player.

The way his veteran teammates spoke of this rookie during training camp last year, before we ever really got a look at Griffin in the season opener against the New Orleans Saints, was not like any other way I've heard veterans describe a player. Some were in awe of his maturity, his intelligence, his talent — and his heart.

None of that was damaged by Haloti Ngata when Griffin went down in the Baltimore game last year, and none of that was damaged in the Seattle playoff game, when the world cringed as it watched Griffin play on one leg.

If anything, the maturity and intelligence should be greater after a full NFL season. And the heart? All we've heard from his Redskins

teammates is that Griffin has been the first one at Redskin Park for rehabilitation work and the last one to leave. The heart may be stronger than ever.

"I know I can go back out there and play at a high level like before and even better than before," Griffin said during training camp. "I did that in college, and I know I can do that in the NFL."

All this has gotten lost in the hype that Griffin himself has fanned during the offseason with his cryptic texts, vague tweets and comments that have fed the notion there was damage done in the relationship between Griffin and coach Mike Shanahan in the Seattle playoff game. The noise has drowned out the player everyone fell in love with last year.

The same thing happened last summer when everyone expressed concern about the Subway commercials and all the ads and attention before Griffin ever played a down in the NFL. He told everyone that once football begins, the Griffin hype machine stops and Operation Football starts. That is what happened last year, and despite the noise this offseason, there is no reason to believe it won't happen again — providing he stays healthy.

He plans on doing that, in part by being smarter when he does run, and, frankly, to be more of the quarterback that his father said he needs to be to survive in the NFL.

"The more you play the game, especially at this level, the better you're going to get," Griffin said. "There will be times this year where we don't have to run. We can sit back there and throw the ball. Be a pocket passer, which I thoroughly enjoy."

Brett Favre played 20 years in the NFL. Randall Cunningham had a 16-year career. Steve Young — 15 NFL seasons.

Griffin is all of them. He'll be selling sandwiches for a long time.



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

Nose tackle Barry Cofield (above, left), wide receiver Pierre Garcon (above, right), and linebacker Brian Orakpo (below) are among the Redskins' core group of impact players younger than 30 who add talent, experience and leadership this season.

## SUCCESS

From page E2

surgically reconstructed, weakens the Redskins' staying power. But he is scheduled to start Washington's season-opener against Philadelphia on Monday night, only eight months after his latest knee surgery.

"The goal is longevity in the league," Griffin said. "You also want to win. As a quarterback, I don't like to conform and say that you can't win outside the pocket; I think you can win outside the pocket; you've just got to be smart about it. That's what I've learned over the past six months about myself and just about what we need to do to win."

"Maybe that's keeping me in the pocket a little bit more. Maybe that's throwing the ball away a little bit more, sliding, doing all of those things that are necessary. I think I proved how tough I am and the heart that I have on the football field and my teammates know that."

Shanahan spent his first three offseasons in Washington building a quality supporting cast for his quarterback. Eleven total wins in the first two years show the difficulty of that process, but the Redskins finally have amassed play-makers on offense and the core of a fine 3-4 defense.

Sixth-round running back Alfred Morris finished second in the NFL with 1,613 rushing yards as a rookie last season, and Pierre Garcon had 633 receiving yards and four touchdowns in only 10 games.

Washington's 3-4 front requires an exceptional nose tackle and pair of outside linebackers. Both outside linebackers, Orakpo (age 27) and Ryan Kerrigan (25), have made the Pro Bowl. And Barry Cofield (29) has evolved into one of the NFL's quickest and most effective 3-4 nose tackles in just two years at the position.

"I don't see any reason they should not be contenders," Polian said. "They've got the coach. They've got the quarterback. They've got some defensive difference makers. They've got the receivers.



And most importantly, they've got a running game that's going to be there week in and week out."

## Intangibles make a difference

Talent alone doesn't win titles, though. The high-priced 2000 Redskins and the 2011 "Dream Team" Philadelphia Eagles could attest to that. Critical intangibles make the whole greater than the sum of its parts, Polian said. Good injury fortune is imperative, as are confidence, team chemistry and leadership.

Several members of the Redskins organization are optimistic they've achieved the right blend of youth, talent, experience and leadership. Defensive backs coach Raheem Morris opined as such, drawing on his head coaching experience from 2009-11 with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Tampa Bay won the AFC South title with a 10-6 record in 2010, but it was sandwiched between three- and four-win seasons, the latter of which cost Morris his job.

Morris saw proof in Washington during the offseason in his position meetings. After the Redskins drafted cornerback David Amerson in the second

round, veteran cornerback DeAngelo Hall and safety Brandon Meriweather ensured he would adjust to life as a pro.

"It's the voice of those veteran leaders going to Amerson in a meeting, handing him a paper and a pad and teaching him how to use his iPad and learn and get better every single day," Morris said. "Those guys are the guys that are leaders amongst men, and once you get those kind of guys, that's the difference between the young team we had in Tampa and the young team that we have in Washington."

Amerson, in turn, enjoys using veterans such as Hall as resources.

"If I have a question, I'll go to him and ask him," he said. "For one example, as far as press technique, pressing outside leverage. Just really let the guy come to you, be patient and squeezing inside routes and kill all outside routes."

That's part of the positive culture Shanahan has tried to establish. It includes an expectation to win. Shanahan during team meetings constantly reminds his players of their statistical achievements to reinforce belief in their abilities.

Redskins veterans, though, know the importance of navigating the difference between confidence and complacency.

Santana Moss adjusted his receiver's gloves as he sat at his locker before practice last month. The team's longest-tenured player stopped for a moment when asked to contemplate how close the Redskins are to being elite.

Moss thought about the roster and about the struggles the franchise has endured during his eight seasons. He took into account last year's success and decided there is no such thing as momentum in the NFL.

He knows from experience how elusive success can be.

"Honestly, we haven't done nothing this season, yet," he said. "You can't really dwell off what we did last year and expect it's going to happen like that for us this year. Until we go out and win some games, then we can see how close we are. And even when we do that, we have to really keep winning and keep being good to even have that kind of talk."

## Redskins primed to rewrite history

My earliest memory of the Redskins is not a good one. I was 9 years old and trying to go to sleep. The radio in the next room crackled with a news bulletin. That's how we used to get our news. The Redskins, we were informed, had fired coach Bill McPeak.

This was 1965 when the team decided McPeak's career mark of 21-46-3 didn't merit another season. It made me cry, because I thought that meant there wouldn't be any more Redskins.

"No," my dad explained, "it just means they finally figured out they still aren't any good."

There's been a lot of that with the Redskins, whose history can be summed up simply: A lot of mediocrity with one

pretty good stretch and one really good stretch. Those two stretches were a long time ago. A generation has grown up without being able to remember when the Skins were one of the NFL's dominant teams nearly every year.

Are the Redskins moving in that direction again? Are they developing the staying power to be a Super Bowl contender every year for a decent stretch?

Could be, and anyone who thinks this town is Redskins-crazy now ought to see what it's like when the Skins are consistently good. Nuts doesn't begin to describe it.

Let's start by defining staying power as maintaining a status as a legitimate championship contender. Lots of teams get to good. Few get to very good.

The Skins were good in the 1970s when George Allen was in charge. He had an impressive 67-30-1 record. He made the playoffs five times and the Super Bowl once (losing to Miami). But that Super Bowl season was the only one when he won a playoff game. His overall playoff mark was 2-5.

We bow down to the greatness of Joe Gibbs, in his first stint as coach, for leading the Skins to their only real stretch of sustained staying power. His overall mark from 1981-92 was 124-60, not as high a winning percentage as Allen. But check out that playoff mark — Gibbs was 16-5. Washington made four Super Bowls under Gibbs and won three of them. His teams made it to the playoffs eight times and went only one-and-done once. Every year, Washington was mentioned as a Super Bowl contender.

Since Gibbs retired, the team has made the playoffs only four times, and two of those came when he made a four-year return to the sidelines. Washington has won exactly two playoff games since the Gibbs I era ended.

Today, the New England Patriots are the Gibbs-like scion of staying power. Yes, the Baltimore Ravens have the longest active playoff streak at five seasons.



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Former Redskins coach Bill McPeak was a happy man when Washington acquired Sonny Jurgensen before the 1964 season. But the happiness was fleeting, as McPeak was fired after the 1965 season. He went 21-46 overall.

But New England has been consistently excellent for more than a decade. The only time New England hasn't made the playoffs since 2003 came in the 2008 season when it won 11 games. The Patriots have been to five Super Bowls since 2001. They've won three.

What other teams belong on the list? The Ravens do, and maybe the Packers because they have the game's best quarterback (for now) in Aaron Rodgers. The 49ers may be moving in that direction, along with the Seahawks.

The Redskins? It's premature to say so definitively but not premature to think, yeah, maybe.

They went one-and-done in their first playoff appearance under Mike Shanahan, losing at home to Seattle in a game where the biggest memory was franchise savior Robert Griffin III crumpled on the ground with a severe knee injury late in the fourth quarter. RG3 has now had the ACL in that right knee redone twice, the first time when he was quarterbacking at Baylor. The status of that knee is always going to be the little storm cloud hanging over this team. The Redskins are being overly cautious, which is a good thing, trying to do all they can to keep him from hurting it again. Another injury might take an eraser to any hopes of staying power.

Assuming the health of RG3, there's a lot to like about the Skins. They've put some very good weapons around the offense and they protect him with a still-developing offensive line that is better than people seem to think (when healthy, but you can say that about everything in football). The defense has some concerns in the secondary, but the front should be quite good.

The annual cry used to be that making the playoffs would be great. That can safely be changed to a mindset that not making the playoffs would be a disappointment.

But the Super Bowl? This season? Let's not get carried away. That would be great, but not making it shouldn't be considered a disappointment. Not this year anyway. Maybe soon. The Redskins seem to be moving in the right direction. Staying power, missing since the 1980s, may well be about to return.

## STAYING POWER

# 'Try to get better all the time'

## Washington veteran center Montgomery still plays like rookie

By Mike Harris  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

In a career that has taken him from Centerville High to Virginia Tech to a trio of NFL teams, Redskins center Will Montgomery has had a lot of teammates and coaches. All of them, he said, provided him with a chance to learn something.

A tip from former Redskins line coach Joe Bugel probably resonates the most.

"They're always looking to find the next-best thing, and Coach Bugel one time said you needed to do your job so good, so great that they didn't have a choice but to keep you," Montgomery said. "I took that to heart. I try to do things the right way with film study and preparation, and to play each game like they're trying to replace me."

"You just keep your nose down, try to do your job, try to get better all the time."

Montgomery is a bit like that piece you might find at a yard sale, some piece of silverware or jewelry. You buy it at a bargain and later discover it is a valuable item. One team's discards are indeed another's treasures. Finding gold among the castoffs is one key to staying power in the NFL. Like Virginia Tech did before them, the Redskins have discovered Montgomery is indeed gold.

Tech didn't initially offer Montgomery a scholarship. He went as a recruited walk-on and became a mainstay on the line. He was a seventh-round pick of the Carolina Panthers (234th overall) in 2006. He played six games there and was released. The New York Jets signed him. He played seven games there and was released.

The Redskins signed him on Dec. 9, 2008. He has played 61 games for them, starting every one the past two seasons and becoming one of the team's most respected players in the process.

"I definitely love the way he plays, and I appreciate his work ethic," quarterback Robert Griffin III said. "He makes my job easier at the line of scrimmage, so I don't have to worry about too many things."

Said fullback Darrel Young, "Will's been a leader of this offense for a couple of years now. He's a great story. He came out of nowhere in college and now he could be a Pro Bowler. He makes this offense go. He knows stuff before it happens. I've said to him, 'Will,

why did you do that?' and he says, 'You just know sometimes. I can respect that and hopefully I can get to that level one day.'"

Montgomery is hardly small. He's 6-3 and 305 pounds. He's not going to break stopwatches with his speed. The things that stand out about him may not be noticeable with a quick look. What he does have is prodigious strength and an almost savant-like knowledge of the game. He studies it and retains everything.

"I guess everybody wants those guys who are 6-5, 320 and run like a deer," Montgomery said. "I think I've always just been pretty good at football, and I continue to improve my craft each year."

When Montgomery arrived at Tech, the coaching staff figured out pretty quickly that Montgomery was considerably better than they thought. He spent a few days working with the defensive line before moving over to offense "and the rest is history," Tech defensive line coach Charley Wiles said.

"He wasn't a wash over with us. Obvious natural strength. Amazing strength. Moved around well. But it was obvious he could be a starter on the other side of the ball. He's a guy who is probably a little more athletic than he gets credit for, a guy you really like once you get a chance to work with him."

Bryan Stinespring, the Hokies' offensive line coach, said Montgomery is "a great lesson in determination. He has those 'measurables' that you really can't measure. He's the smartest guy on the field. He's the toughest guy on the field. He's doing to do whatever he can to be successful."

"There's certain things about every individual you can't gauge on film. Desire? Drive? You get them on the field and it shows up. They start to separate themselves."

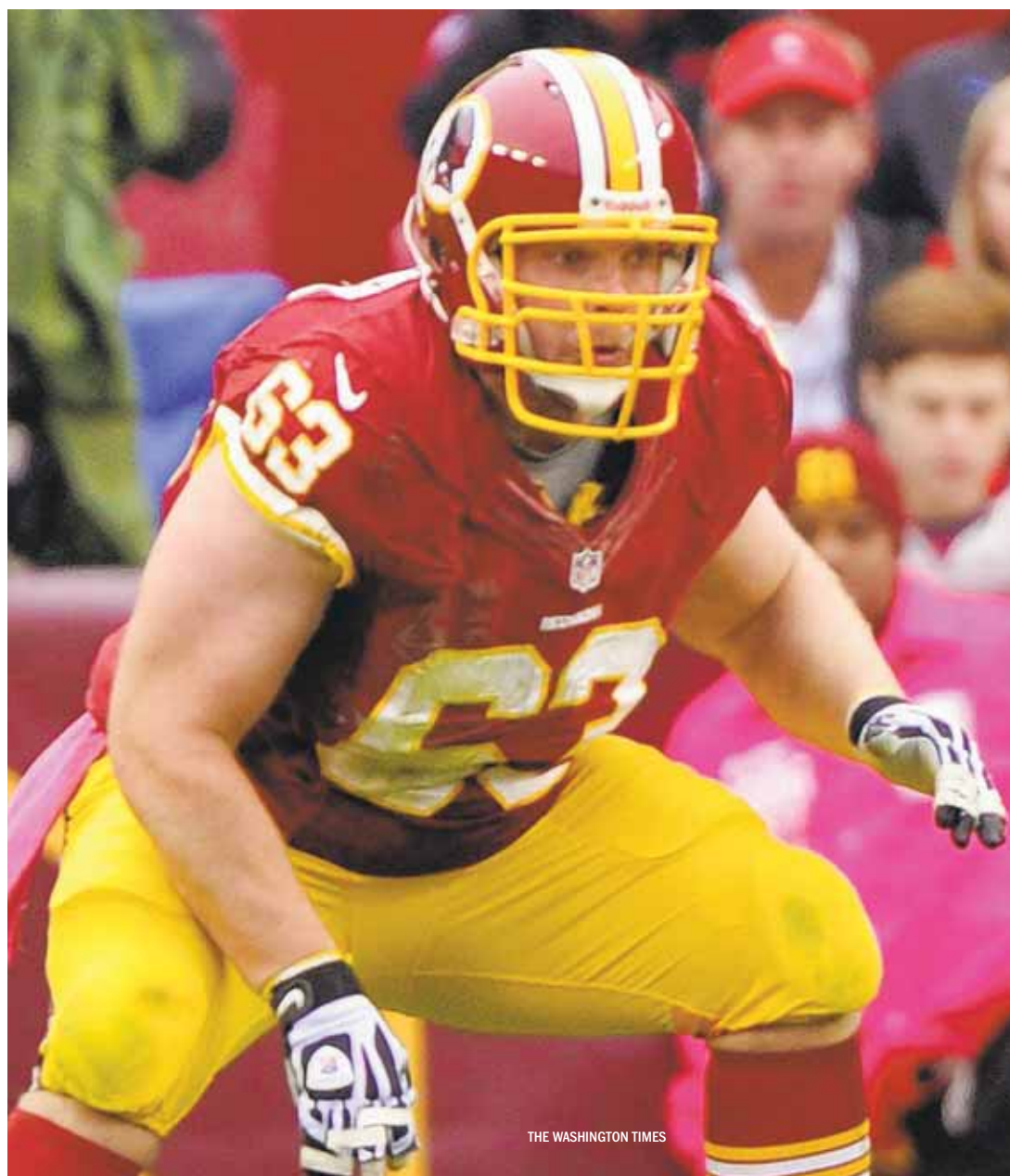
Montgomery had a stellar career at Tech, starting 36 games for a program that was consistently in the national rankings. He was the All-ACC center as a senior. Even with all that, the NFL was never seen as a certainty. The seventh round is right where he was projected to go in the draft, if he was drafted at all. Still a little too small, still a little too slow.

Yet here he is at age 30, armed with a long-term contract that pays him \$2.65 million this season and \$3.42 million next season.

It is not surprising to Stinespring.

"I knew with his resolve, he was driven to be successful," Stinespring said. "When he came here, he found a way. I knew when he went there, he was going to find a way."

Said Montgomery, "I'm still sticking around. I wouldn't mind playing another seven years or so. I'll just keep my head under the radar and keep plugging away."



**"They're always looking to find the next-best thing, and Coach Bugel one time said you needed to do your job so good, so great that they didn't have a choice but to keep you. I took that to heart. I try to do things the right way with film study and preparation, and to play each game like they're trying to replace me."**

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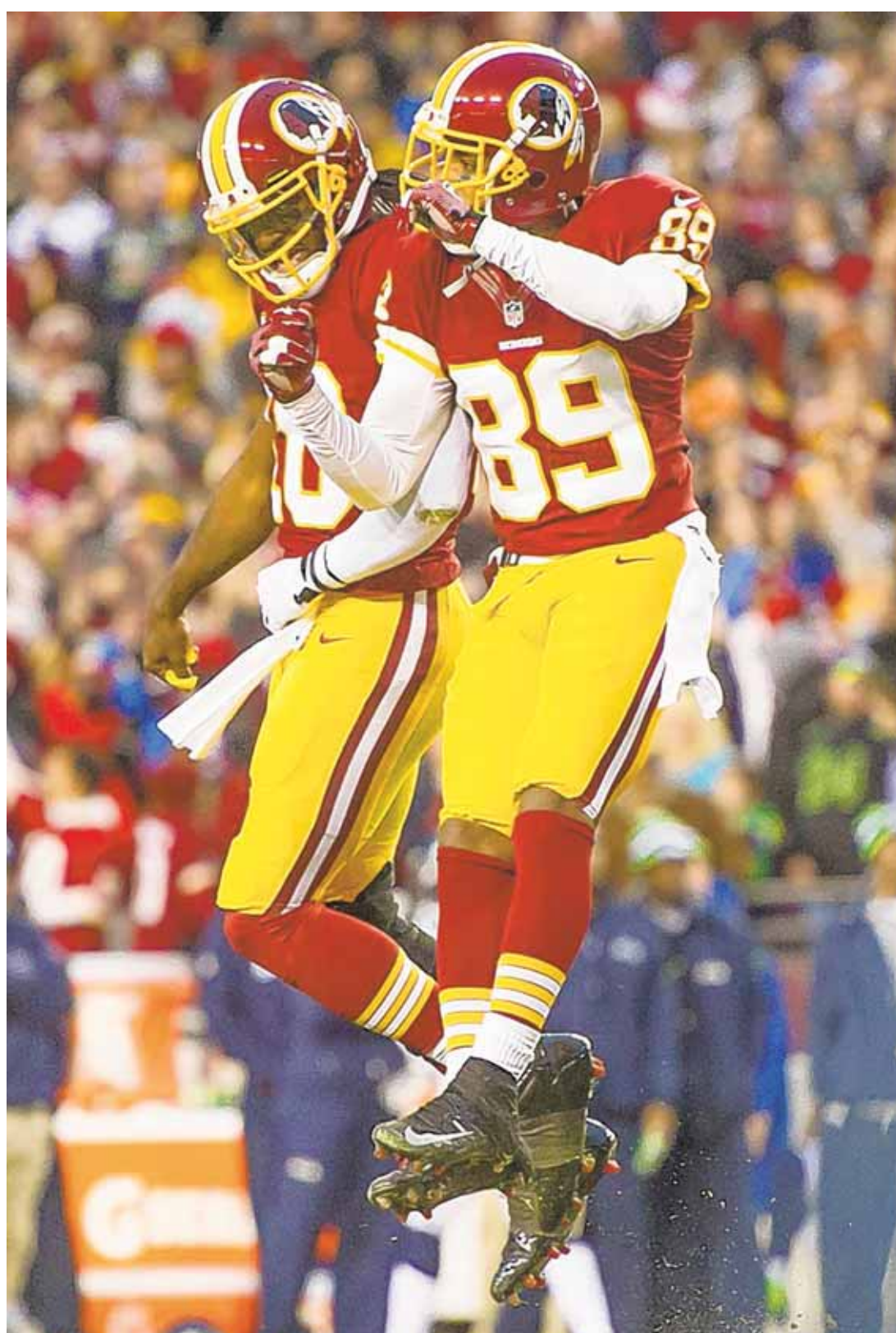
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## STAYING POWER

# 'You can't help but look up to him'



Small receiver with a knack for the big play, Moss has built trust one reception at a time

By **BRIAN McNALLY**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Washington Redskins wide receiver Santana Moss is quietly climbing the charts.

Entering his ninth year with the organization and 13th in the NFL, Moss' career numbers put him in elite company. He has appeared in 120 games with the Redskins. A healthy 2013 and Moss will have played more games in Washington than franchise legend Sonny Jurgensen (135).

Moss needs only 21 receptions to pass Gary Clark (549) on the all-time list. At 529 catches entering the season, only Art Monk (888) and Charley Taylor (649) are out of reach. With 45 touchdowns, he could pass Bobby Mitchell (49) in that category, too. That would rank sixth in Redskins history.

The 5-foot-10, 189-pounder long ago proved concerns about his size coming out of the University of Miami were unfounded. Four times, Moss has topped 1,000 receiving yards in a season.

Now he's trying to prove that age can't slow him down, either. At 34, Moss is no longer the No. 1 receiving option as he was his first six years in Washington. That is Pierre Garcon now. Even in 2011, Jabar Gaffney and tight end Fred Davis had more receiving yards as Moss missed four games. Wide receiver is just not a position where you see many players in their mid-30s.

"I know a lot of people can't do it," Redskins offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan said. "I think last year [Moss] was better for us than he was the prior two years even though the stats weren't the same."

That's because Moss was a trusted, valuable weapon for quarterback Robert Griffin III last season with 41 receptions — 15 of them on third down — and he expects to be again as a veteran slot receiver on a team that hopes to defend its NFC East title.

In the preseason, at least, Washington showed well, but this journey has barely started and Moss has been around long enough now to know what really matters. The Redskins haven't reached the playoffs two consecutive years since 1991 and 1992.

"I'll put stock in it when it's done, when it counts," Moss said. "Right now, you grade yourself off what



Moss

you put in. So when you go out there and see you're putting in wins in the preseason and putting good stuff on film then all you can do is have high hopes for what you can do in Week 1."

Those 41 catches in 2012 were Moss' fewest since he had 45 with the New York Jets in 2004. And yet

he still managed eight touchdowns and appeared in every game. Moss is no longer the deep threat he was in 2005 when he set the franchise record for single-season receiving yards (1,483). Even in 2010 he posted 1,115. Those days are gone.

But that slot receiver role is still an important one. With the veteran no longer expected to carry a heavy load, the Redskins could pick spots for Moss. Earlier in his career he faded at times late in seasons. Last year his legs appeared strong during the stretch run. Instead of working his way back into shape during training camp, Moss trained during the spring and arrived ready to go.

It made a difference last fall and the coaches have seen it again from him this summer. That's given Moss a chance to stick with the Redskins and push himself higher into the franchise's record books next to Hall of Famers like Monk and Taylor and a fan favorite like Clark. Despite his longevity in Washington, that recognition hasn't always been easy for Moss to come by.

"You can't help but look up to him," said Redskins wide receiver Leonard Hankerson, a fellow South Florida native who worked out with Moss during the offseason. "He's been doing this for a long time. He's been one of the top receivers for so long and he really doesn't get noticed for it."

Moss' name has even surfaced in the search for a punt returner in the wake of Richard Crawford's season-ending knee injury. And while not thrilled about that option, Moss said he would take on that role, too, if asked. He has three career touchdowns on special teams, but his last punt return came in 2009.

"You can see some of the plays he has made thus far at camp, [see] that he's hungry," Washington coach Mike Shanahan said. "And he's going to play at a very high level."

ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Wide receiver Santana Moss celebrates with Robert Griffin III after Griffin threw a touchdown in the wild-card playoff game against Seattle in January. Though the veteran caught only 41 passes in 2012, eight went for TDs.

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## STAYING POWER



THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Ryan Kerrigan was an All-America defensive end at Purdue before he was drafted at No. 16 in 2011. With the switch to outside linebacker as a pro, he has amassed 16 sacks, two interceptions and two touchdowns in his two seasons with the Redskins. "He's very durable and intelligent," coach Mike Shanahan says. "[H]e's kind of like a coach's dream, to be honest with you. You'd love to have a whole football team of Ryan Kerrigans."

# 'He's ... going to be a force'

## Steady play of outside linebacker Kerrigan has impressed teammates and coaches alike

By Mike Harris

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

In just two seasons, outside linebacker Ryan Kerrigan has become entrenched as a mainstay of the Redskins. He's started every game. He's amassed 16 sacks, intercepted two passes, scored two touchdowns. It took him about no time to become a vital cog. He had an interception for a touchdown in his debut.

What made him so good so quickly?

"Have you seen him?" backup outside linebacker Darryl Tapp said, casting a glance in Kerrigan's direction. "The man is like 6-4, 260. He can run with the running backs, he can tail off and cover wide receivers. He can rush the passer. There's not too many things he can't do. He keeps working. He never comes to work thinking he knows it all. He's a special player."

Many things go into building staying power. One of them is not whiffing on draft picks, on finding the special player in any slot.

The Redskins maneuvered themselves into position to pick Kerrigan at No. 16 in the 2011 draft. That's a spot where you can still get a standout, though it isn't as easy as when you pick higher. Making the right pick in the middle portion of the first round is crucial.

Washington got Brian Orakpo, Kerrigan's book-end, with the 13th pick in 2009. Two years later, it scored again with Kerrigan.

A defensive end at Purdue, Kerrigan was a unanimous All-American and the Big Ten defensive player of the year as a senior. The Redskins thought he could easily slide into an outside linebacker spot in their 3-4 scheme, and they've been proven correct.

"He's probably way ahead of the curve," said Bob Slowik, the Redskins' linebackers coach. "He just keeps getting better. I think he'll make an even bigger jump this year than he did as a rookie."

Kerrigan grew up in Muncie, Ind. He followed the Colts and quarterback Peyton Manning and saw firsthand what a successful NFL franchise did for the entire region.

"Colts fans just popped up by the thousands in Indiana as Peyton Manning did his thing in Indianapolis," Kerrigan said.

One of his goals, he said, is to do the same thing in D.C.

"When I was drafted here, I took it upon myself to be someone to help turn the franchise around," Kerrigan said. "[The team] has done a good job of

bringing in the right personnel, not just players but coaches and support people, to help lay the foundation for a successful franchise for years to come. I hope I can continue to be a part of that. I'd certainly like to think I'm someone who is going to be with this franchise for a long time. I love it here. I love the fans. I love the vibe associated with the Redskins. I hope I'm one of the pieces that stays here a long time."

The Redskins have no objection to that. Though he has a long way to go to catch teammate London Fletcher and his 240-game streak in terms of durability, Kerrigan has shown plenty of that in his brief career in addition to his considerable skills. He knows skill is only part of the equation. Good fortune has something to do with it, too.

**"I'm proud of the way I adapted to [playing linebacker], but there's still a long way to go, and that's what keeps me motivated."**

"You also have to stay motivated," Kerrigan said. "You see some guys get a big contract, and maybe lose a little motivation once they get some money. You have to keep doing what got you to that point. I was motivated coming out of the draft. I knew I had to play outside linebacker and I accepted the challenge. I'm proud of the way

I adapted to it, but there's still a long way to go, and that's what keeps me motivated."

Orakpo doesn't think his pass-rush partner will ever have any issues with motivation. Orakpo played in the Big 12 at Texas and acknowledges he didn't know much about Kerrigan when the team made its pick in 2011. Kerrigan made a quick and positive impression.

"We feel like we make a fierce combination together," Orakpo said. "I think he's going to be doing this for a very long time. He's not going to be no one-hit wonder type of guy. He's a guy who is going to be a force around this league for a long time. A lot of people have already taken notice."

Mike Shanahan is entering his 20th season as an NFL head coach. That's a lot of draft picks, a lot of chances to make the right pick and a lot of chances to make mistakes. Chances are pretty good he'd take Kerrigan again.

"You can count on him," Shanahan said. "He's very durable and intelligent. You never have to worry about his work ethic or his weight. So he's kind of like a coach's dream, to be honest with you. You'd love to have a whole football team of Ryan Kerrigans. That's what you're looking for, and I think you'll see him get better and better as time goes on."



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES



ASSOCIATED PRESS

### WITH THE 16TH PICK ...

Drafting Ryan Kerrigan at No. 16 was a hit. But many teams swing and miss: Here are four of the more well-known hits followed by four of the bigger misses:

Player	Year	Team
Jim Richter, C	1980	Bills
Jerry Rice, WR	1985	49ers
Santana Moss, WR	2001	Jets
Troy Polamalu, S	2003	Steelers
Pete Koch, DE	1984	Bengals
John Bosa, DE	1987	Dolphins
Dan McGwire, QB	1991	Seahawks
William Green, RB	2002	Browns





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## STAYING POWER



THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The last time Robert Griffin III faced the Eagles at home, he received plenty of attention (above) after directing a 31-6 victory. But that reception will be nothing compared to Monday night's season opener, when Griffin takes his first snaps in a game since injuring his knee in a wild-card playoff loss in January. After being cleared by his surgeon, Dr. James Andrews, last week, Griffin got the go-ahead from coach Mike Shanahan four days later.

## REDSKINS SCHEDULE

**Monday, Sept. 9**  
**vs. Philadelphia Eagles**  
6:55 p.m., ESPN

Quarterback Robert Griffin III will return to game action just eight months after having surgery to revise the reconstruction of the ACL and repair the lateral collateral ligament and medial meniscus in his right knee. On the Monday night stage, he must answer questions about his health and whether he can make decisions on the field to preserve it.

**Sunday, Sept. 15**  
**at Green Bay Packers**  
1 p.m., Fox

This game against the defending NFC North champs could have playoff seeding implications. It should be a great opportunity for the Redskins to showcase their improved pass rush. Only four teams surrendered more sacks per pass attempt last season than Green Bay. Griffin constantly mentions Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers when describing the type of passer he wants to become.

**Sunday, Sept. 22**  
**vs. Detroit Lions**  
1 p.m., Fox

The Lions have never won in 21 trips to Washington. They recaptured their losing ways last season (4-12) after reaching the playoffs in 2011. The Redskins must play with the lead because their offensive line isn't suited to handle Detroit's pass rush if they get behind.

**Sunday, Sept. 29**  
**at Oakland Raiders**  
4:25 p.m., Fox

This is an occasion to retell stories of the long-standing feud between Mike Shanahan and the late Raiders owner Al Davis. It stemmed from a salary dispute involving Davis' decision to fire Shanahan in 1989. The Redskins should exploit a defense that can't rush the passer.

**Sunday, Oct. 13**  
**at Dallas Cowboys**  
8:30 p.m., NBC

The Redskins need to be 3-1 coming off the bye week if they are to assert themselves atop the division. They swept Dallas last season for the first time since 2005. The Cowboys couldn't stop the deep passing game in the first meeting and left themselves vulnerable to the run when they adjusted in the second.



**Sunday, Oct. 20**  
**vs. Chicago Bears**  
1 p.m., Fox

Chicago won as many games as the Redskins in 2012, but the franchises had significantly different offseasons because the Bears missed the playoffs on a tiebreaker. They replaced coach Lovie Smith with Marc Trestman.

**Sunday, Oct. 27**  
**at Denver Broncos**  
4:25 p.m., Fox

Shanahan's return to Denver is one of the highlights on the schedule. He probably will end up in the Hall of Fame because of what he accomplished as head coach there from 1995 to 2008 — two Super Bowl championships, three AFC West titles and a .616 winning percentage.

**Sunday, Nov. 3**  
**vs. San Diego Chargers**  
1 p.m., CBS

This might amount to a must-win game because of the brutal four-game stretch ahead. Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers is determined to reduce his turnovers after totaling 35 interceptions the past two seasons. A hungry Redskins defense will be ready to eat.

**Thursday, Nov. 7**  
**at Minnesota Vikings**  
8:25 p.m., NFL Network

The Redskins' second trip to the Metrodome since 1998 could have NFC wild card tiebreaker implications. Stopping RB Adrian Peterson will be the top priority, as it was in last October's 38-26 Redskins victory. Minnesota might have pulled away earlier in that game if QB Christian Ponder wasn't so inaccurate.

**Sunday, Nov. 17**  
**at Philadelphia Eagles**  
1 p.m., Fox

It will be interesting to see how much the Eagles have grown under coach Chip Kelly since the season opener. Will Michael Vick still be playing quarterback, or will he be hurt by then? If LeSean McCoy (below) is healthy, this will be a difficult game. Fortunately for the Redskins, they'll have the previous weekend off.

**Monday, Nov. 25**  
**vs. San Francisco 49ers**  
8:30 p.m., ESPN

Here's a chance to measure up against the defending conference champions on the league's biggest regular-season stage. If Griffin is healthy to this point, this game could be reminiscent of the titanic Redskins-49ers games in the late '80s and early '90s when both teams contended for the NFC title each year.

**Sunday, Dec. 1**  
**vs. New York Giants**  
8:30 p.m., NBC

It's ridiculous that the top two teams in the NFC East don't play each other until this late in the season. That means the healthiest team in the final month will have a great advantage in the divisional race. The Redskins believe they're tougher than the Giants, so look for them to pound the run.

**Sunday, Dec. 8**  
**vs. Kansas City Chiefs**  
1 p.m., CBS

What appears now to be a lull in the schedule might not be. New coach Andy Reid is familiar with the Redskins from coaching the past 14 seasons in Philadelphia. He inherited some talent on offense — RB Jamaal Charles, WR Dwayne Bowe — and traded for QB Alex Smith.

**Sunday, Dec. 15**  
**at Atlanta Falcons**  
1 p.m., Fox

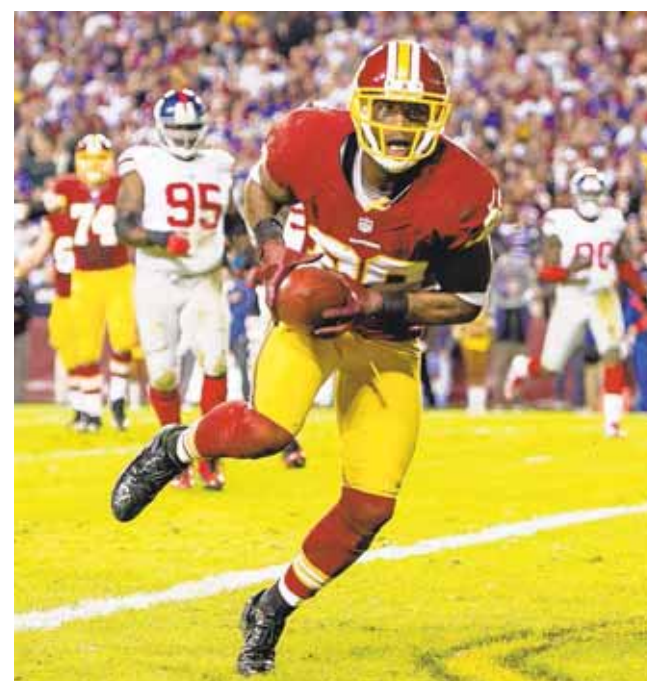
This and the 49ers game are the Redskins' reward for finishing first in the NFC East last season. This might be Washington's toughest game on paper, if only because Atlanta has gone 34-9 at home since QB Matt Ryan joined the league in 2008.

**Sunday, Dec. 22**  
**vs. Dallas Cowboys**  
1 p.m., Fox

Two divisional games to end the season, and if recent history is a good indication, the title will be decided by these outcomes. How smoothly Dallas returns to a 4-3 defense this season under new coordinator Monte Kiffin will help dictate the temperature of coach Jason Garrett's seat by this point.

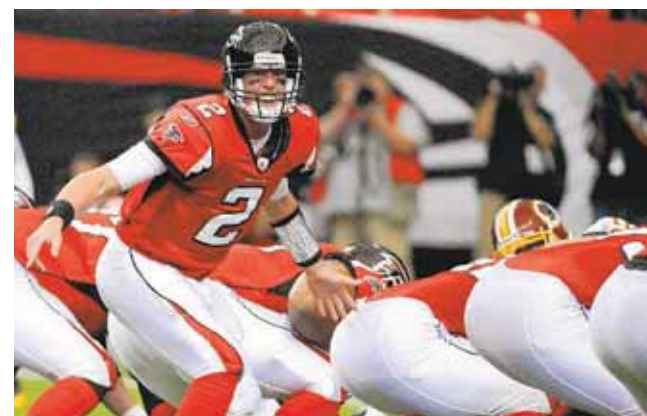
**Sunday, Dec. 29**  
**at New York Giants**  
1 p.m., Fox

Washington and New York run it back after playing just four weeks earlier. QB Eli Manning might have ended the Redskins' season on Monday night last December if it weren't for a third-down overthrow late in the game. Both games last season could have gone either way. — Compiled by Rich Campbell



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Pierre Garcon and the Redskins picked up a pivotal home victory against the Giants last season on a Monday night in December. It will be more than a year when the teams finally meet again — this time on Sunday night, Dec. 1 at Giants Stadium.



THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Redskins face a late-season test Dec. 15 against the Falcons in Atlanta, where quarterback Matt Ryan is 34-9 in his career.



ANDREW HARNIK/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Rob Jackson's fourth-quarter interception of Tony Romo was the defining play in the Redskins' Week 17 NFC East-clinching victory over the Cowboys last season. This season, the teams face off for the second time in Week 16 at Cowboys Stadium.

STAYING POWER

PREDICTIONS

BRIAN MCNALLY, BEAT WRITER

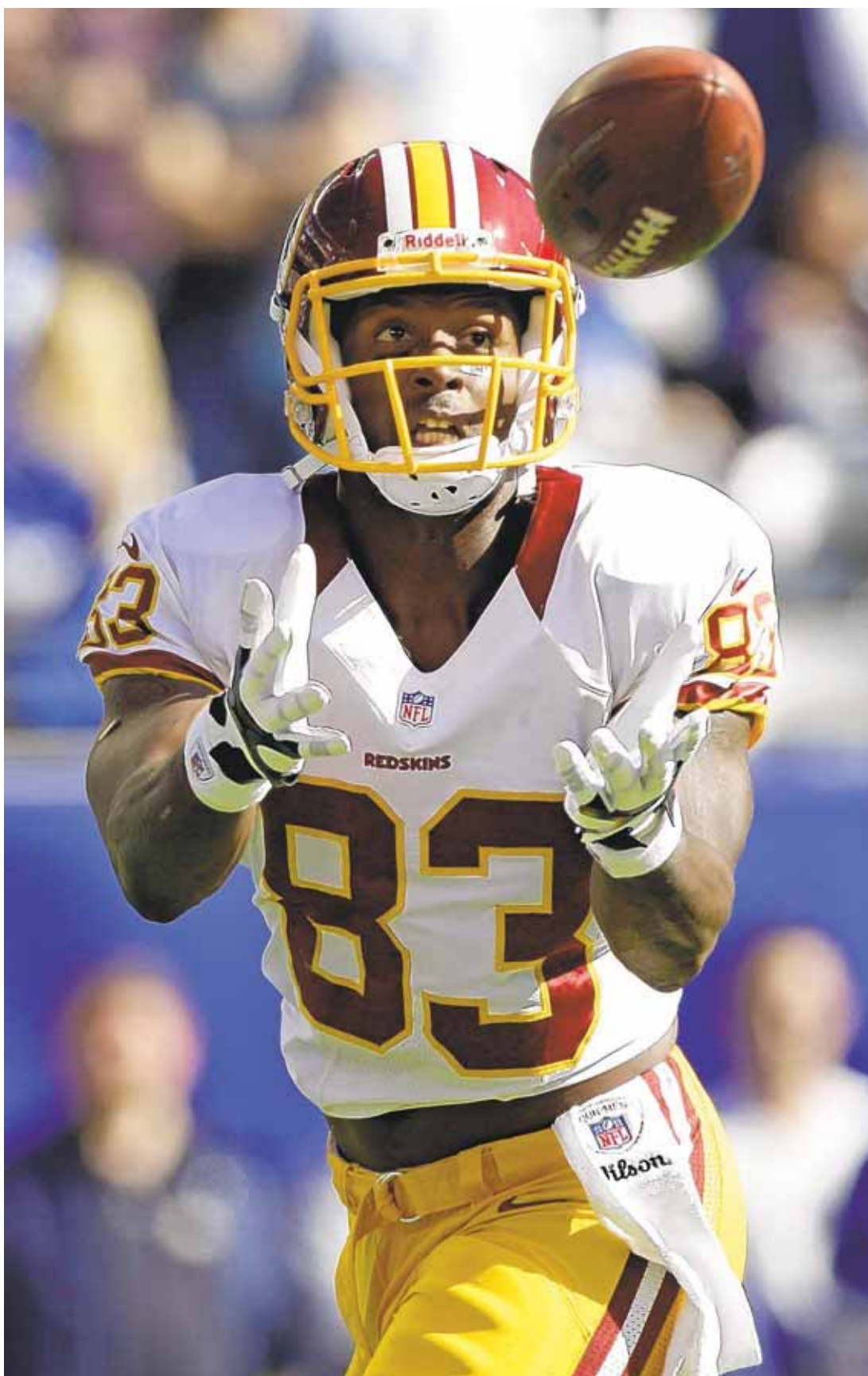
**REDSKINS RECORD:** 10-6  
**TDs/INTs FOR RG3:** 26/9  
**PASS YDS/RUSH YDS FOR RG3:** 3,700/630  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Darryl Tapp impresses in Jim Haslett's system  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Kai Forbath fails to live up to last season's standard  
**NON-RG3 IMPACT PLAYER:** Ryan Kerrigan  
**TEAM RUSHING LEADER:** Alfred Morris  
**TEAM RECEPTIONS LEADER:** Pierre Garcon  
**NFL PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Packers, Redskins, Falcons, 49ers, Cowboys, Bears  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Texans, Patriots, Broncos, Bengals, Ravens, Dolphins  
**NFC CHAMP/AFC CHAMP:** Packers, Broncos  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Denver  
**NFL MVP:** Aaron Rodgers  
**OFFENSIVE ROY:** Montee Ball, Denver  
**DEFENSIVE ROY:** Jarvis Jones, Pittsburgh

MIKE HARRIS, SPORTS EDITOR

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 11-5  
**TDs/INTs FOR RG3:** 25/7  
**PASS YDS/RUSH YDS FOR RG3:** 3,737/322  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Fred Davis finishes with 80 receptions  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Pierre Garcon gets hurt again  
**NON-RG3 IMPACT PLAYER:** Brian Orakpo  
**TEAM RUSHING LEADER:** Alfred Morris  
**TEAM RECEPTIONS LEADER:** Fred Davis  
**NFL PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Redskins, Packers, 49ers, Falcons, Seahawks, Giants  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Broncos, Texans, Patriots, Colts, Bengals, Ravens  
**NFC CHAMP/AFC CHAMP:** Packers, Broncos  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Packers  
**NFL MVP:** Aaron Rodgers  
**OFFENSIVE ROY:** Cordarrelle Patterson, Vikings  
**DEFENSIVE ROY:** Star Lotulelei, Panthers

NATHAN FENNO, COLUMNIST

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 9-7  
**TDs/INTs FOR RG3:** 22/10  
**PASS YDS/RUSH YDS FOR RG3:** 3,500/500  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Josh Morgan has breakout season  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Return game proves to be inconsistent  
**NON-RG3 IMPACT PLAYER:** Brian Orakpo  
**TEAM RUSHING LEADER:** Alfred Morris



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Coming off a season-ending injury, big things are expected of tight end Fred Davis in 2013. Sports Editor Mike Harris and Thom Loverro of ESPN 980 predict that Davis will lead the Redskins in receptions.

**TEAM RECEPTIONS LEADER:** Pierre Garcon  
**NFL PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Giants, Packers, Falcons, Seahawks, 49ers, Redskins  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Bengals, Texans, Broncos, Ravens, Colts  
**NFC CHAMP/AFC CHAMP:** 49ers/Patriots  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** 49ers  
**NFL MVP:** Peyton Manning  
**OFFENSIVE ROY:** Tavon Austin, Rams  
**DEFENSIVE ROY:** Tyrann Mathieu, Cardinals

MATT PALLISTER, FANTASY COLUMNIST

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 9-7  
**TDs/INTs FOR RG3:** 20/10  
**PASS YDS/RUSH YDS FOR RG3:** 3,150/225  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Leonard Hankerson leads the team in TD catches  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** RG3 struggles  
**NON-RG3 IMPACT PLAYER:** Ryan Kerrigan  
**TEAM RUSHING LEADER:** Alfred Morris  
**TEAM RECEPTIONS LEADER:** Pierre Garcon  
**NFL PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Cowboys, Bears, Saints, Falcons, Seahawks, 49ers  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Bengals, Ravens, Broncos, Colts, Texans  
**NFC CHAMP/AFC CHAMP:** 49ers, Patriots  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Patriots  
**NFL MVP:** Drew Brees  
**OFFENSIVE ROY:** Giovani Bernard, Bengals  
**DEFENSIVE ROY:** Alec Ogletree, Rams

THOM LOVERRO, COLUMNIST

**REDSKINS RECORD:** 10-6  
**TDs/INTs FOR RG3:** 21/10  
**PASS YDS/RUSH YDS FOR RG3:** 3,788/511  
**BIGGEST SURPRISE:** Rex Grossman starts a game  
**BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:** Rex Grossman starts a game  
**NON-RG3 IMPACT PLAYER:** Fred Davis  
**TEAM RUSHING LEADER:** Alfred Morris  
**TEAM RECEPTIONS LEADER:** Fred Davis  
**NFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** 49ers, Seahawks, Packers, Falcons, Redskins, Giants  
**AFC PLAYOFF TEAMS:** Patriots, Broncos, Texans, Steelers, Bengals, Colts  
**NFC CHAMP/AFC CHAMP:** Redskins, Broncos  
**SUPER BOWL WINNER:** Broncos  
**NFL MVP:** Peyton Manning  
**OFFENSIVE ROY:** Tavon Austin, Rams  
**DEFENSIVE ROY:** Star Lotulelei, Panthers

REDSKINS 2013

**Design:** Matt Pallister  
**Cover Illustration:** Alexander Hunter  
**Copy Editing:** Lyn Pusey  
**Sports Editor:** Mike Harris  
**Deputy Sports Editor:** Marc Lancaster

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## STAYING POWER

## POWER RANKINGS



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

The coach-quarterback combination is key to any franchise's staying power. In Jim Harbaugh and Colin Kaepernick, the defending NFC champion 49ers are set up to succeed for years to come.

## 1. SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

The 49ers have an extremely talented roster and, most importantly, an explosive young quarterback in Colin Kaepernick. Coach Jim Harbaugh has proven he's a winner at Stanford and through two seasons in San Francisco. The team gained experience from losses in the NFC Championship Game and Super Bowl in consecutive seasons. The 49ers also drafted six players in the first four rounds this year, led by LSU S Eric Reid. Their receivers will get healthy eventually. The 49ers are set to be good for a long time.

## 2. ATLANTA FALCONS

QB Matt Ryan has 56 wins in his first five NFL seasons. He'll likely break Ben Roethlisberger's NFL record of 60 in six seasons. Ryan is one of many young playmakers on Atlanta's loaded roster. The Falcons added RB Steven Jackson, 30, to an offensive corps that features physical WRs Julio Jones and Roddy White. First-round rookie CB Desmond Trufant and second-round CB Robert Alford should eventually stabilize the pass defense.

## 3. NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

The Patriots have established the modern-day blueprint for staying power: an elite quarterback and masterful head coach have produced nine AFC East titles in the past 10 seasons. Tom Brady is 36, though, and is dealing with a depleted receiving corps. The Pats return 10 starters from a defense that ranked 29th in yards per pass. Re-signing CB Aqib Talib is a step in the right direction.

## 4. GREEN BAY PACKERS

An elite quarterback can cover for many other deficiencies, as Aaron Rodgers has proved in Green Bay. Defenses started disrespecting the Packers' running game last season and instead defended the pass with two high safeties. General manager Ted Thompson adjusted by drafting Alabama RB Eddie Lacy in the second round. Of mild concern: Green Bay in the offseason devoted \$55 million in signing bonuses to two players — Rodgers and OLB Clay Matthews.

## 5. BALTIMORE RAVENS

The defending Super Bowl champs have had only three losing seasons since 2000. General manager Ozzie Newsome and longtime top college scout Eric DeCosta have combined for one of the best draft records in recent history. If Baltimore steps back this season after losing FS Ed Reed, ILB Ray Lewis and others, it would be only temporary. It still has franchise QB and Super Bowl MVP Joe Flacco and RB Ray Rice.

## 6. HOUSTON TEXANS

The Texans have proven the most important component to staying power is talent. Stars on both sides of the ball got them to within one win of home-field advantage throughout the AFC playoffs. QB Matt Schaub, RB Arian Foster and WR Andre Johnson arguably comprise the best offensive trio in the NFL. DE JJ Watt, the reigning NFL defensive player of the year, and LB Brian Cushing are joined by free agent FS Ed Reed.

## 7. DENVER BRONCOS

Denver, winner of the woeful AFC West, has reloaded for another run at the Super Bowl. The

Broncos' staying power, however, largely depends on how long 37-year-old QB Peyton Manning plays at a high level. Disciplinary problems — DUI arrests of two personnel executives and the substance-abuse suspension of All-Pro DE Von Miller — marred an otherwise productive offseason.

## 8. SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

The Seahawks' roster checks a lot of boxes: Good young quarterback; talented back seven on defense; strong running game. They seem to be a team rising fast behind QB Russell Wilson. Teams will try to contain the 5-11 speedster in the pocket, but that didn't happen often at the end of last season. Some key free agent additions — injured WR Percy Harvin (hip), DE Cliff Avril and CB Antoine Winfield — have positioned Seattle for an entertaining NFC West rivalry with the 49ers.

## 9. CINCINNATI BENGALS

It's difficult to achieve staying power while competing in the AFC North against organizations such as Pittsburgh and Baltimore. The Bengals, however, have made the playoffs in three of the past four seasons with a prime combination of talent and youth. QB Andy Dalton and WR A.J. Green, both in their third year, form an explosive tandem. The Bengals' defensive front seven, led by DE Michael Johnson and DT Geno Atkins, is young, fast and physically imposing.

## 10. NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

Another prime example of how an elite quarterback compensates for deficiencies and establishes staying power. The Saints surrendered an NFL-record 7,042 yards last season and played without suspended coach Sean Payton but still won seven games with Drew Brees, now 34, at the helm. New defensive coordinator Rob Ryan is implementing a pressure-filled 3-4 scheme. Generating a consistent pass rush will be the Saints' greatest challenge.

## 11. PITTSBURGH STEELERS

One of the NFL's most stable organizations wobbled a bit last season as part of an ongoing transition. The Steelers' effort to make their stellar defense younger and more opportunistic continued in the offseason. They parted with OLB James Harrison and NT Casey Hampton and drafted Georgia OLB Jarvis Jones 17th overall. At age 31, QB Ben Roethlisberger must live without top deep threat Mike Wallace, who signed with Miami.

## 12. NEW YORK GIANTS

As long as Tom Coughlin, 67, is coaching and Eli Manning, 32, is quarterbacking, the Giants will contend for the playoffs. They haven't had a losing season since Coughlin's first year in 2004. WRs Victor Cruz and Hakeem Nicks and RB David Wilson are young, explosive scoring threats. If the Giants could regain some toughness up front in stopping the run, they would be the favorites in the NFC East.

potential for staying power exists. Third-year QB Christian Ponder has new WRs Greg Jennings and rookie Cordarrelle Patterson to target. His completion percentage improved from 54 to 62 last season, a sign of significant growth. But defensive stalwarts Jared Allen, 31, and Kevin Williams, 33, are in the last year of their contracts.

## 16. CHICAGO BEARS

The Bears have relatively weak staying power for a team that won 10 games last season. Despite a 7-1 start, they missed the playoffs when Minnesota finished with wins at Houston and vs. Green Bay. Chicago replaced coach Lovie Smith with Marc Trestman. Now QB Jay Cutler has entered the last year of his contract. LB Brian Urlacher retired. They need to pass protect better and diversify the passing game to break through in a tough NFC North.

## 17. ST. LOUIS RAMS

Coach Jeff Fisher's first season produced a five-win improvement. The Rams are stabilizing now that QB Sam Bradford will play for the same offensive coordinator, Brian Schottenheimer, in consecutive seasons for the first time in his career. They added speed at the receiver positions — first-round pick WR Tavon Austin and TE Jared Cook. They believe their offensive line, with former Pro Bowl LT Jake Long, is better equipped to protect Bradford. If Bradford takes advantage, the Rams would take a major step forward.

## 18. MIAMI DOLPHINS

Miami's staying power depends on overtaking New England in the AFC East, which is why general manager Jeff Ireland spent on speedy playmakers during the offseason. WR Mike Wallace is a weapon for second-year QB Ryan Tannehill. Free agent CB Brent Grimes and third-overall pick Dion Jordan, a former Oregon DE, should help improve a poor pass defense.

## 19. DALLAS COWBOYS

Three straight non-winning seasons sparked changes in Dallas, and instability is the opposite of staying power. Coach Jason Garrett relinquished play-calling duties to offensive coordinator Bill Callahan. New defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin, patriarch of the Tampa-2, is converting Dallas' personnel to a 4-3. QB Tony Romo now has more say in play calling and game planning, but he hasn't proven he can win big games.

## 20. TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

Several elements are helping to increase the Bucs' staying power: Coach Greg Schiano established a disciplinary culture in his first season. RB Doug Martin emerged as a rushing (1,454 yards) and receiving (472) threat as a rookie, and they upgraded their secondary by acquiring CB Darrelle Revis and S Dashon Goldson and drafting CB John

five wins over the last five seasons. It's uncertain whether 29-year-old QB Alex Smith, the No. 1 overall pick in 2005, is a long-term solution. But the Chiefs do have talented RB Jamaal Charles, WR Dwayne Bowe and ILB Derrick Johnson, each of whom is younger than 30. They could turn it around quickly in a wretched division.

## 24. CAROLINA PANTHERS

Carolina has gone four years without a winning record, but the roster isn't bare. That means coach Ron Rivera is on the hot seat entering his third season. The Panthers have a good foundation in QB Cam Newton and LB Luke Kuechly, young studs on both sides of the ball. Newton's completion percentage dropped slightly in his second year, but he also threw five fewer interceptions. He lacks a deep receiving corps.

## 25. DETROIT LIONS

They're proof of how difficult it is to achieve staying power. The Lions won only four games a year after a 10-6 record earned them their first playoff berth since 1999. WR Calvin Johnson is 27 and QB Matt Stafford is 25, but Detroit lacks balance in the running game. The Lions' selection of three top-15 defensive linemen from the past four drafts helps to explain that. They signed free agent RB Reggie Bush to make the offense multi-dimensional, but they're at the bottom of a strong division.

## 26. PHILADELPHIA EAGLES

New coach Chip Kelly used an up-tempo speed-option offense to establish Oregon as a national power. He inherited a weak quarterback situation in Philly, though. QB Michael Vick won the job over second-year QB Nick Foles, but Vick has turned the ball over too often when healthy in recent seasons. Kelly is going to a 3-4 defense, too, so this once-dominant team has a long way to go before it returns to the top of the NFC East.

## 27. BUFFALO BILLS

Forget staying power — the Bills would settle for their first winning season since 2004. Buffalo underwent a complete overhaul during the offseason following four straight seasons of six or fewer wins. New coach Doug Marrone and new general manager Doug Whaley drafted former Florida State QB E.J. Manuel 16th overall. They continued targeting offense with WRs Robert Woods in the second round and Marquise Goodwin in the third.

## 28. NEW YORK JETS

Two seasons removed from the AFC Championship Game, the Jets are trending in the wrong direction. They fired general manager Mike Tannenbaum in the offseason and left coach Rex Ryan as a lame duck in the last year of his contract. QB Mark Sanchez doesn't complete enough passes (54 percent last season), leaving the job open to rookie Geno Smith. New GM John Idzik got rid of 11 starters, most notably trading cornerback Darrelle Revis.

## 29. ARIZONA CARDINALS

The Cardinals don't have a quarterback. That's a trend among teams at this level of the rankings. QB Carson Palmer will bridge the gap between this season, the first for general manager Steve Keim and coach Bruce Arians, and whatever passer they draft next offseason. It also hurts that the other three teams in the NFC West are ahead of Arizona and on the rise. Free agent RB Rashard Mendenhall must spark the running game if the Cardinals are to compete.

## 30. OAKLAND RAIDERS

This will be a cover-your-eyes and hold-your-breath type of season in Oakland. Raiders general manager Reggie McKenzie is trying to restore the organization's salary cap health by getting rid of bad contracts in one season. The leaves about \$45 million in dead money this year, or one-third of the salary cap. The bright side: About \$50 million in cap space next year with which to build. The first step will be finding a quarterback.

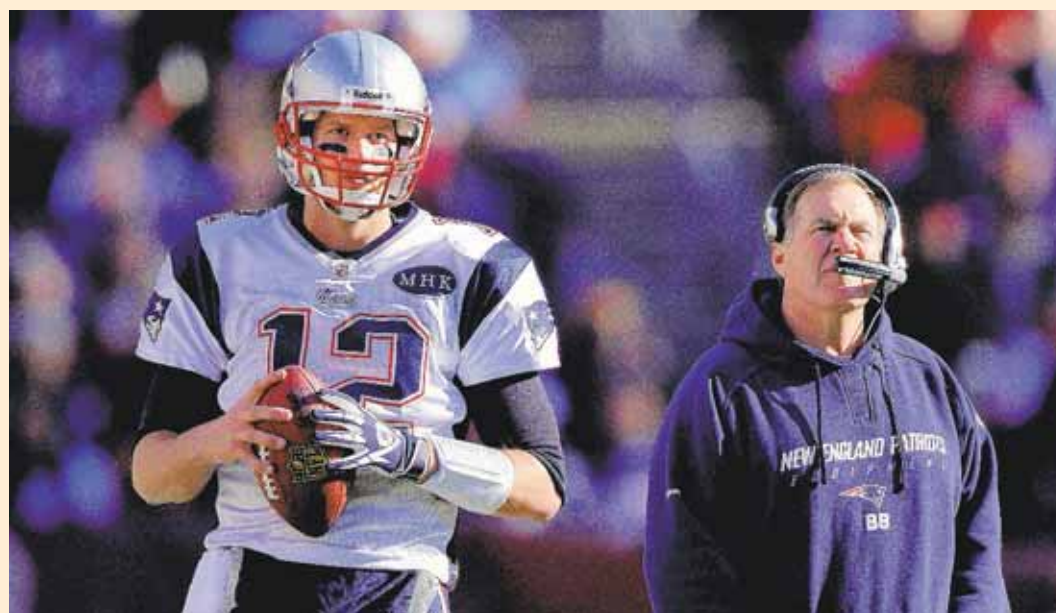
## 31. JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

QB Blaine Gabbert has not played at a level commensurate with his 2011 first-round draft status. He becomes rattled when the pocket breaks down, and it's not as though he has a supporting cast capable of lifting him. Jacksonville's best hope is that new general manager David Caldwell and new coach Gus Bradley blend their enthusiastic approach with exceptional talent acquisition over the next couple of seasons.

## 32. CLEVELAND BROWNS

An organization marred by instability since its rebirth in 1999 again turned the coaching staff and front office over. New coach Rob Chudzinski is stuck with QB Brandon Weeden, whom the Browns spent the 22nd overall pick on in 2012. Weeden, who will be 30 in October, didn't consistently see the field well or throw accurately as a rookie. The Browns have won five or fewer games in eight of the past 10 seasons, and there aren't many reasons to expect a step forward this year. RB Trent Richardson must stay healthy.

— Compiled by Rich Campbell



Tom Brady, Bill Belichick and the New England Patriots have set the 21st century standard for staying power in the NFL. The Patriots have made the playoffs in 10 of the 11 full seasons in which Brady has been healthy. And in the year he was knocked out in Week 1, Belichick managed to get 11 wins out of his team.

## 13. INDIANAPOLIS COLTS

Nothing helps the staying power ranking more than a smart, talented, young QB. Andrew Luck threw for a rookie-record 4,374 yards and 23 touchdowns last seasons in helping the Colts finish 11-5 after going 2-14 the previous season. If the Colts progress in the second year of their transition to a 3-4 defensive front, they could reclaim the division throne from Houston. They signed former Redskins SS LaRon Landry to help that.

## 14. WASHINGTON REDSKINS

The Redskins have advanced from a three-year rebuilding period and are positioned to make the next step — as long as dynamic QB Robert Griffin III is healthy. Their depth has significantly improved, and they finally have top offensive talent in RB Alfred Morris, LT Trent Williams and WR Pierre Garcon. Their staying power is weakened, though, by a \$36 million salary cap penalty that will have a lasting impact and the loss of two first-round picks in the trade for Griffin.

## 15. MINNESOTA VIKINGS

The Vikings won 10 games and made the playoffs with a one-dimensional offense, so the

than Banks. But QB Josh Freeman is not a convincing solution, and Tampa Bay is looking up at Atlanta and New Orleans in the NFC South.

## 21. TENNESSEE TITANS

The Titans are within striking distance of some staying power, but they play in a difficult division and are still waiting on QB Jake Locker to take a step forward. The completion percentage issues he faced in college have continued in his first two pro seasons (56 percent). Explosive RB Chris Johnson should thrive behind an offensive line fortified by the selection of Alabama RG Chance Warmack.

## 22. SAN DIEGO CHARGERS

If Philip Rivers, 31, reduces his turnovers and improves his accuracy under new head coach Mike McCoy, the Chargers could return to respectability. They have a young, talented defense led by DEs Corey Liuget. San Diego will have to fight, though, to overcome recent unproductive drafts.

## 23. KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

Hiring Andy Reid as head coach this offseason should stabilize an organization that has averaged

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# Public gets Free TV with no monthly bills

Federal law makes TV network giants broadcast Free TV signals regionally in crystal clear digital picture in all 50 states allowing U.S. households to pull in Free TV with a sleek \$49 micro antenna device engineered to pull in nothing but Free TV channels with no cable, satellite or internet connection and no monthly bills

► **Who Gets Free TV:** Listed below are the Washington DC area zip codes that can get Free over the air TV channels. If you find the first two digits of your zip code immediately call: **1-888-752-7147**

WASHINGTON DC - Today's announcement by CompTek has the Free TV Hotlines ringing off the hook.

That's because Washington DC area residents who find their zip code listed in today's publication are getting Free TV channels thanks to an amazing razor-thin invention called Clear-Cast\*.

Washington DC area residents who call the Toll Free Hotlines before the 48-hour order deadline to get Clear-Cast can pull in Free TV channels with crystal clear digital picture and no monthly bills.

This announcement is being so widely advertised because a U.S. Federal law makes TV broadcasters transmit their signals in digital format, which allows everyone to receive these over-the-air digital signals for free with no monthly bills.

Here's how it works. Clear-Cast, the sleek micro antenna device with advanced technology links up directly to pull in the Free TV signals being broadcast in your area with crystal clear digital picture and no monthly bills.

Clear-Cast was invented by a renowned NASA Space Technology Hall of Fame scientist who currently holds 23 U.S. Gov't issued patents. For the past 20 years, he has specialized in developing antenna systems for NASA, Motorola, XM Satellite Radio and companies around the world.

His latest patent-pending invention, Clear-Cast, is a sleek micro antenna device engineered to pull in the Free TV signals through advanced technology with no cable, satellite or internet connection and no monthly bills.

"Clear-Cast is being released to the general public because we just don't think people should keep paying for TV when they can get it for free," said Conrad Miller, Manager of Operations at CompTek.

"There's never a monthly bill to pay and all the channels you get with Clear-Cast are absolutely free. So you see, Clear-Cast is not like cable or satellite. It was engineered to access solely the over-the-air signals that include all the top rated national and regional networks, like ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, PBS, CW and about 90% of the most watched TV shows like America's Got Talent, NCIS, 60 Minutes, American Idol, The Big Bang Theory, The Bachelorette, Person of Interest, CSI, The Mentalist, Two and a Half Men, Sunday Night Football plus news, weather and more all for free with no monthly bills," Miller said.

"That's why Clear-Cast is such a great alternative for everyone who is sick and tired of paying expensive cable and satellite bills every month," he said.

"People who get Clear-Cast will say it feels like getting an extra paycheck every month. You see, with Clear-Cast you'll receive free over-the-air broadcast channels with crystal clear digital picture, not the cable or satellite only channels. So being able to eliminate those channels puts all the money you were spending back in your pocket every month," Miller said.

And here's the best part. The sleek micro antenna device called Clear-Cast is so technically advanced it pulls in even more of the channels being broadcast in your area for Free with no monthly bills.

That way you can channel surf through the favorite TV shows. The number of shows and channels you'll get depends on where you live. People living in large metropolitan areas may get up to 53 static-free channels, while people in outlying areas will get less. That means even if you're in a rural area that just pulls in NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX and PBS broadcasts there's hundreds of shows each year to watch for free.

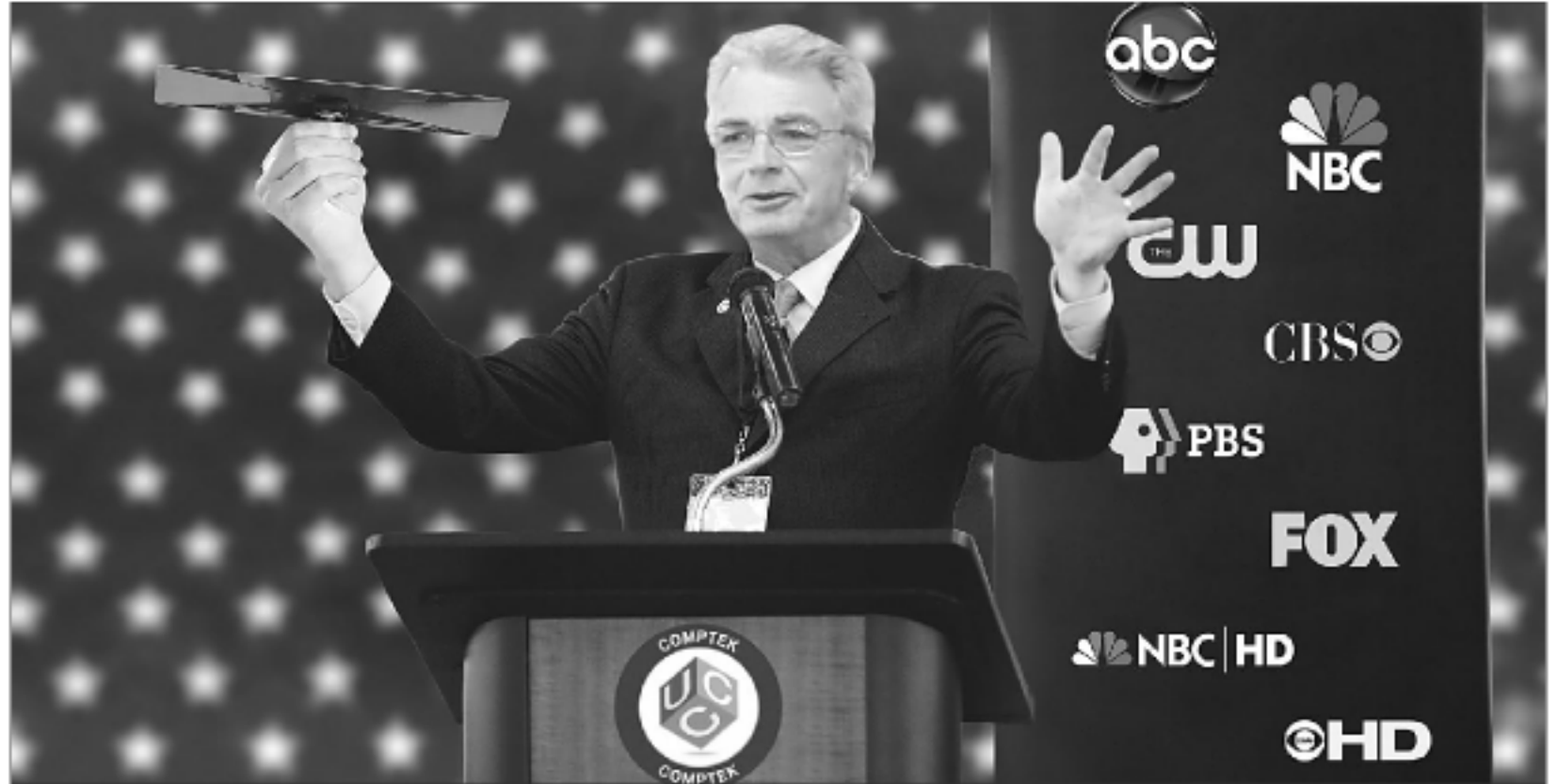
Consumers report that the crystal clear picture quality with Clear-Cast is the best they've ever seen. That's because you get virtually all pure uncompressed signals direct from the broadcasters for free.

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So, Washington DC area residents lucky enough to find their zip code listed in today's publication need to immediately call the Free TV Hotline before the 48-hour deadline to get Clear-Cast that pulls in Free TV with crystal clear digital picture. If lines are busy keep trying, all calls will be answered. ■



► **How to get Free TV:** Listed below are the Washington DC area zip codes that can get Free TV channels with no monthly bills. If you find the first two digits of your zip code immediately call **1-888-752-7147** beginning at precisely 8:30am this morning. Today's announcement photo above shows just a handful of the major over-the-air broadcast networks you can receive with Clear-Cast for free. It saves a ton of money by not picking up expensive cable only channels like ESPN so there's never a monthly bill. This is all possible because a U.S. Federal Law makes TV broadcasters transmit their signals in digital format, which allows everyone to use Clear-Cast to pull in Free TV channels with no monthly bills. CompTek is giving every U.S. household a 50% off discount to help cover the cost of Clear-Cast. Clear-Cast, the sleek micro antenna device is a one-time purchase that plugs in to your TV to pull in Free TV channels in crystal clear digital picture with no monthly bills. Each Clear-Cast normally costs \$98, but U.S. households who beat the 48-hour deadline are authorized to get a 50% off discount for each Clear-Cast and cover just \$49 and shipping as long as they call the Free TV Hotline at **1-888-752-7147** before the deadline ends or online at [www.clear-cast.com](http://www.clear-cast.com). Trademarks and programs are the property of their respective owners and are not affiliated with or endorsing Clear-Cast. ► **SXS812**

Alabama 35, 36	Colorado 80, 81	Hawaii 96	Kansas 66, 67	Massachusetts 01, 02, 05	Montana 59	New Mexico 87, 88	Oklahoma 73, 74	South Dakota 57	Virginia 20, 22, 23, 24
Alaska 99	Connecticut 06	Idaho 83	Kentucky 40, 41, 42	Michigan 48, 49	Nebraska N/A	New York 00, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	Oregon 97	Tennessee 37, 38	Washington 98, 99
Arizona 85, 86	Delaware 19	Illinois 60, 61, 62	Louisiana 70, 71	Minnesota 55, 56	Nevada 88, 89	North Carolina 27, 28	Pennsylvania 15, 16, 17, 18, 19	Texas 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 88	West Virginia 24, 25, 26
Arkansas 71, 72	Florida 32, 33, 34	Indiana 46, 47	Maine 03, 04	Mississippi 38, 39	New Hampshire 03	North Dakota 58	Rhode Island 02	Utah 84	Wisconsin N/A
California N/A	Georgia 30, 31, 39	Iowa 50, 51, 52	Maryland 20, 21	Missouri 63, 64, 65	New Jersey 07, 08	Ohio 41, 43, 44, 45	South Carolina 29	Vermont 05	Wyoming 82, 83
									Washington DC 20



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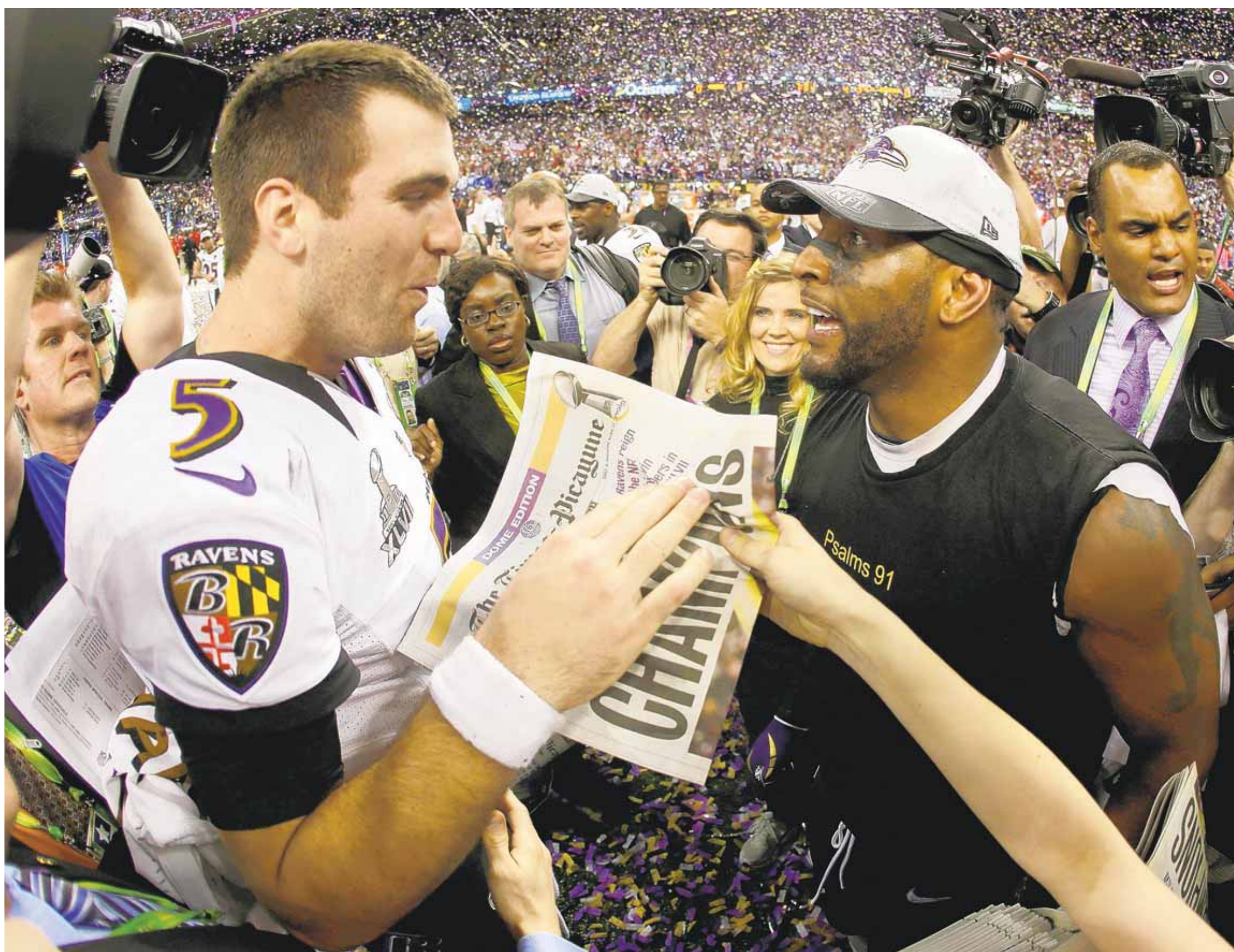
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## STAYING POWER



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ravens quarterback Joe Flacco proved his worth in leading Baltimore to a Super Bowl title in February, and now he becomes more of a recognized leader with the retirement of linebacker Ray Lewis.

# 'The Ravens know who they are'

## Expect champions to adjust, continue their winning ways

By Jason Butt  
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**OWINGS MILLS, MD.** | Even Super Bowl champions are susceptible to change.

The 2013 Baltimore Ravens certainly don't look like the unit that took the field a season ago to win the NFL's ultimate prize.

After 17 seasons and two Super Bowl titles, linebacker Ray Lewis retired. The Ravens allowed Ed Reed to sign with Houston in free agency.

They cut safety Bernard Pollard, who later signed with Tennessee. They traded receiver Anquan Boldin

to San Francisco for a 2013 draft pick. The list continues with linebacker Dannell Ellerbe now in Miami, linebacker Paul Kruger moving on to Cleveland and cornerback Cary Williams joining Philadelphia. Starting defensive tackle Ma'ake Kemoeatu was not retained.

In total, that's eight starters from a championship team that weren't on the field for Baltimore on Thursday, when the Ravens opened their season on the road against the Broncos. Previously, no Super Bowl champion ever lost more than five starters before the next season.

Strangely enough, there's been a level of calm throughout the team's headquarters despite the departures. There have been plenty of questions about the direction the organization is heading with so many big names gone from a championship team — none bigger than Lewis.

"Keep questioning it," outside linebacker Terrell Suggs said. "We're never really going to see what it's like until we all line up, until we get on the field. This is the first time in the [team's] history, since the Ravens moved back from Cleveland in '96, that there is no Ray Lewis or Jonathan Ogden. It's definitely going to be interesting to see what it looks like, but I've said it before, his legacy ... [Lewis] has left a standard here and every man on our defense will be held accountable for playing to that standard."

### Consistent winners

After defeating the Colts in the wild card round in January, John Harbaugh became the first NFL coach to win a playoff game in each of his first five seasons in charge.

During this time span, the Ravens have also appeared in three AFC Championship games with one

Super Bowl title. They're also the only team to appear in the past five postseasons.

Building this type of team is a tough task, considering the "win now" mentality coaches and players are forced into. Lack of production in just one season can lead to one's ouster.

Unlike the college ranks, where a coach is asked to build a team in three or four years, professional coaches are tasked with shaping a team to win immediately.

After a 5-11 campaign in 2007, owner Steve Bisciotti brought in Harbaugh to restore Baltimore's winning ways.

Harbaugh succeeded early and hasn't looked back. Throughout the process, Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome has constructed the roster with the long-term in mind. It would have been easy for Newsome to keep Reed around and pay more than he was valued at 33 years old, solely for his years of service to the club.

"Somehow you have to find a balance between doing what's right and maintaining stability and being a competitor now and years into the future," said Ted Sundquist, the Denver Broncos' general manager from 2002 to 2008. "All while giving your head coach the resources and the support he feels he needs right now to address that ever-present win now or else that comes from fans and the media and the game in general."

When Sundquist was with Denver, the Broncos posted winning records in five consecutive seasons from 2002 to 2006. He understood the balancing act it takes to win over a long period of time while focusing on the immediate goals at the same time.

As an observer and analyst of the game these days, Sundquist believes there are a handful of teams that can adjust to change and adapt with different personnel groupings each year. Among those, he said, are the Giants, Patriots, Packers and Steelers.

Sundquist believes Baltimore has quietly fit itself into that category.

"There are some questions — OK, can they keep that excitement and everything we just had from winning a Super Bowl or are they going to hit one of those dips?" Sundquist said. "And I think Ozzie Newsome has done exactly that. The Ravens know who they are as an organization. They have an identity."

"They can look in the mirror and say these are the types of players, coaches and scouts that we want in Baltimore. I think they can withstand losing some of the players — Ray being gone, Ed being gone, Anquan being gone. There are a lot of big things, productive names and leadership going on there, but they're one of the few clubs in the league that can withstand that."

Then again, how often is a team forced to adjust to losing eight starters?

With all the factors that go into creating the perfect mesh of players for an NFL team, plugging-and-playing doesn't figure to be as easy as it sounds.

"Pro football players are used to change, they're used to adversity," said Matt Bowen, a former Washington Redskins safety who now works as an NFL analyst for Turner Sports' Bleacher Report. "Take the Ravens' season last year, it wasn't perfect by any means. But they peaked at the right time."

"That's probably the mentality in that locker room right now. They're saying, look, we lost some key players and a veteran player. But you know what? We're getting paid to play football and paid to defend our Super Bowl championship. Let's go out there and make some plays and defend our Super Bowl championship."

### Who's the leader?

Lewis was Baltimore's unquestioned leader dating back to the 2000 season, which was capped with a victory over the Giants in Super Bowl XXXV.

Reed was a close second, mentoring the entire secondary as someone the younger corners could turn to for advice on and off the field. That changes, with the focus turning to two men, one on each side of the ball: Suggs, the 2011 NFL Defensive Player of the Year, and quarterback Joe Flacco, the MVP of Super Bowl XLVII who signed a \$120.6 million contract this offseason.

Throughout the preseason, the two could be seen jawing at each other in practices, mostly in good fun. Suggs has always been vocal, but more so in a boisterous, fun-loving manner. Flacco's personality is subdued and quiet.

"I'm always a leader, I'm not really going to change my role," Flacco said. "We don't have Ray Lewis here anymore, if that's what you're asking. But me and him are probably different in the terms that we lead anyway, and I'm not going to change what I do at all just because I make more money. That has nothing to do with leading a football team."

Said Suggs: "I think there's definitely a responsibility that comes with that. But I'm honored to have that responsibility, so to say. But, it's not just me. I'm only a few years ahead of Haloti [Ngata] and a few years ahead of [Lardarius] Webb. It's primarily going to fall on the vets that have been here the longest, but most definitely on the guy that's been here the longest."

That would be Suggs, selected by Baltimore with the 10th overall pick of the 2003 draft. Even so, it seems he's aware he won't be able to shoulder the leadership void by himself.

"[Flacco] came to a team that was primarily known for the defense, but now, we've got ourselves a big gun over there that cannot only get it done, but he can win championships," Suggs said. "So, it's really good to be comfortable as a defender, to finally have a quarterback that you can rely on."

### New faces

This offseason, the Ravens focused on shoring up the middle of the defense. Sure, the Ravens won a Super Bowl at the conclusion of the 2012 season. That doesn't mean the title came without its flaws.

For the first time in the Harbaugh era, the Ravens finished the regular season as low as 17th in total defense and 20th in rush defense. Stopping the run was a big focal point for the organization.

To fix that, the Ravens brought in defensive ends Chris Canty from the Giants and Marcus Spears from the Cowboys, which allows Ngata to primarily play at nose tackle.

Daryl Smith, last with the Jacksonville Jaguars, is taking over Lewis' position at middle linebacker. Josh Byner is filling in for Jameel McClain at Weakside linebacker, for as long as needed. (McClain has yet to be a cleared after suffering a spinal cord contusion against Washington in 2012 and will start the season on the physically unable to perform list.) Elvis Dumervil, who

had 11 sacks in Denver a year ago, will share strong-side linebacker duties with Courtney Upshaw.

Michael Huff, formerly of the Raiders, is now the free safety instead of Reed. Either James Ihedigbo or Matt Elam will start at strong safety instead of Pollard.

With the turnover experienced, there's a reason why so many observers are taking a look at how the 2013 team looks in relation to last year's group.

"I don't want to compare the teams," Byner said. "We're just going to let it happen the way it happens. I think last year's team is a great team. A lot of people said the defense wasn't that great, and yeah, we started off a little rocky, but we came together when they needed us to, down the stretch and through the playoffs. You never know. We'll play this year out and see what happens."

Leaders come and go, Harbaugh believes, and that will be evident as the season unfolds.

"I'm more [in] the belief that an organization or team is not about one guy," Harbaugh said. "I think Ray would tell you that, and I know Ed would tell you that, and all those guys would tell you that. The distribution redistributes. It will redistribute to the guys on this team."

### RAVENS SCHEDULE

Sep. 5	at Denver
Sep. 15	Cleveland 1 p.m.
Sep. 22	Houston 1 p.m.
Sep. 29	at Buffalo 1 p.m.
Oct. 6	at Miami 1 p.m.
Oct. 13	Green Bay 1 p.m.
Oct. 20	at Pittsburgh 4:25 p.m.
Oct. 27	BYE
Nov. 3	at Cleveland 4:25 p.m.
Nov. 10	Cincinnati 1 p.m.
Nov. 17	at Chicago 1 p.m.
Nov. 24	N.Y. Jets 1 p.m.
Nov. 28	Pittsburgh 8:30 p.m.
Dec. 8	Minnesota 1 p.m.
Dec. 16	at Detroit 8:40 p.m.
Dec. 22	New England 8:30 p.m.
Dec. 29	at Cincinnati 1 p.m.

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

## STAYING POWER

## Newsome blueprint works in fantasy, too



MATT PALLISTER

The secret to staying power is to not outsmart yourself. Just like Baltimore general manager Ozzie Newsome knows what he's looking for in putting together a team and doesn't stray from that, you should do the same if you want to be competitive each year as a fantasy owner.

You won't see Newsome or any of the top talent evaluators in the NFL do things like draft Tim Tebow or Geno Smith. Consistent success comes from consistently making good decisions. The quickest way to sap your staying power is to make bad decisions.

For instance, I once selected Koren Robinson (Google him) in the third round. Why did I do that? Well, I was not too far removed from winning this particular league four times in its first eight years as well as an overlapping stretch of making the playoffs six seasons in a row. I figured I was the smartest guy in the room and no matter what I did, it would work out. I was wrong. I strayed from a proven formula and it cost me — to the tune of a 2-11-1 record, easily the worst I've ever done.

If you want to be the Ozzie Newsome of your fantasy football league(s), it's simple. Just draft good players. That's it. That's the secret to staying power. If you're the guy who targets the Mannings, Bradys, Petersons, Rices and Calvin Johnsons of the world, you'll be more successful in the long run than the guy who tries to get everyone talking about him by "thinking outside the box." You're not going to start a trend or go down in fantasy football lore by drafting the Koren Robinsons of the world. Especially in the third round. You'll just end up starting a well-deserved wave of laughter and mockery and going down in flames by October. You'll be this year's New York Jets.

Even if you're new to fantasy football, you've probably paid attention to the NFL enough to know which players have established staying power. So let's look at some players (all but one 25 or younger) who seem to be on the verge of developing it — players who should be at the center of fantasy drafts for years to come.

## Quarterbacks

**Colin Kaepernick, 49ers:** The arm. The legs. The ability to perform under pressure. A great coach. Had Michael Crabtree not ruptured his Achilles tendon, Kaepernick would be getting drafted in the top 20 this year and he's yet to play a full season. He's the offensive future of the NFL and, thus, fantasy football.

**Robert Griffin III, Redskins:** The arm. The legs. The, uh, knee. Griffin was deserving of his Rookie of the Year award, and the only thing standing between him and a decade of dominance is that surgically repaired right knee. Surgically repaired twice including college. RG3 is slated to start Week 1 and has declared his knee "100 percent." If he's right, sit back and enjoy the show.

**Russell Wilson, Seahawks:** I've made my feelings on Wilson well known. He lacks transcendent athletic ability, but, like Kaepernick he seems to possess an innate understanding of what to do with the football in any given situation. Having said that, if he sticks with the Seahawks in their current form, he may be hard-pressed to put up big passing numbers year in and year out. His rookie record-tying 26 TDs may be his ceiling, although having a healthy Percy Harvin (if such a



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome is laughing at your overly complicated fantasy football strategy. If you want to be successful year after year, follow his lead and draft good players — players like Alfred Morris, the Redskins' second-year running back (below).

thing exists) may help boost his numbers down the road. For fantasy purposes, he could end up in Eli Manning or Ben Roethlisberger territory — steadily good, occasionally great.

**Andrew Luck, Colts:** Luck has the best chance to be the successor to Peyton Manning and Tom Brady — the traditional pocket passer who can dissect any defense. I expect him to increase his touchdowns and reduce his interceptions in his second year and be a lock for 30 TDs a season by 2014.

## Running backs

**Doug Martin, Bucs:** Martin was a top 5 pick in most drafts this year, so he's on everyone's radar entering his second season.

He had the best single-game rushing performance of 2012 with 251 yards against the Raiders. He also scored four TDs in that game. Martin is especially valuable in an era of specialization as he plays all three downs. He's set up for sustained success, as long as he avoids injury.

**Trent Richardson, Browns:** Drafted 28 picks ahead of Martin in last year's NFL draft, Richardson was expected to have the kind of season Martin did. But like many running backs, he was slowed by injuries. His status as a top 10 fantasy back this year is based largely on potential. He'll have to prove he can stay healthy and provide more dynamic plays. As the focal point of the Browns' offense, he should get plenty of chances.

**Alfred Morris, Redskins:** Morris is a less attractive fantasy option than Martin or Richardson at

this point because he was rarely used in the passing game as a rookie. There has been talk he'll be more involved this year, but even if he's not a significant contributor on third down, it's hard to ignore the numbers: a franchise-record 1,613 yards and 13 TDs. By comparison, Martin had 1,454 yards and Richardson just 950. They each had 11 TDs. The key to Morris becoming a top-tier back over the long haul is limiting his workload. If he manages another 335 carries this season, that's a red flag for the future.

## Receivers

**A.J. Green, Bengals:** It's no exaggeration to say that Green is the most important Bengal of the past 20-plus years. Cincinnati was a mess for the great majority of time between the heyday of Boomer Esiason and Green's arrival in 2011. Green's first two seasons coincided with the franchise making back-to-back playoff appearances for the first time. His first year was good (65 receptions, 1,057 yards, 7 TDs), but his second year was great (97-1,350-11). With the further development of QB Andy Dalton (also entering his third season), that trajectory should continue and make Green the rare safe pick at WR for the foreseeable future.

**Julio Jones, Falcons:** Jones is making Atlanta's brain trust look like geniuses after the Falcons traded up to take him with the eighth pick of the 2011 draft (four picks after Green). Like Green, he flashed his potential as a rookie and lived up to it consistently last year. He increased his receptions (54-79), yards (959-1,198) and TDs (8-10). Playing alongside Roddy White, he's no threat to catch 100 passes, but the presence of another top 10 receiver makes it a near certainty that Jones will continue to avoid double-teams and be one of the league's best big-play receivers.

**Jimmy Graham, Saints:** The veteran of this group at 26, Graham was a basketball player at Miami who decided to give football a try his senior year. Good call. In his second full season in the NFL (2011), he caught 99 passes — 82 more than he caught with the Hurricanes — for 1,310 yards. That yardage total would have been an NFL record had the Patriots not left Rob Gronkowski in to catch a pass from the backup QB at the end of a meaningless season finale. Graham dealt with nagging injuries last season but still finished with 85 receptions for 982 yards and 9 TDs. Factoring in Gronkowski's extensive injury history, Graham is the safest bet to become the best tight end of his generation.

## Sleepers

**Torrey Smith, Ravens:** Given what he has gone through in his short life and how he has handled it, you have to root for a guy like Smith. With Anquan Boldin's departure, he is now the guy for Joe Flacco. If he shows this season that he can be a dependable No. 1 WR and not just a big-play complement, he's going to make fantasy owners happy for many years.

**T.Y. Hilton, Colts:** I don't care if he's listed behind Darius Heyward-Bey on the depth chart. He already has proven in one season that he's better than the former Maryland speedster. Reggie Wayne won't be around too much longer, so I expect Hilton to become the next great Colts receiver — possibly as soon as this year. He may not be the next Marvin Harrison, but trust me, he's not the next Koren Robinson.



## Custom Balls for Recreational Players Add Distance and Reduce Slicing up to 75%

John Daly Touts Polara's Effectiveness

By Leonard Finkel

Golf is a difficult game. Golfers want to hit the ball as hard as they can to maximize distance, but fight a slice when they do. Hitting the ball longer AND straighter means fewer lost balls to replace, less time searching for wayward drives and above all, greater enjoyment from shooting lower scores! Tour pros get help the average golfer doesn't. Golfweek (4/26) revealed that golf ball manufacturers customize dimple patterns to provide specific flight characteristics for PGA Tour pros. Shouldn't those benefits be available to everyone? Polara Golf accomplishes that goal with its XD ball, delivering extra distance while correcting slices by up to 50% with its unique, asymmetrical dimple pattern.

PGA Tour legend John Daly proclaims, "Polara Golf has created terrific products for recreational golfers that allow them to Grip It and Rip It, get more distance, be more consistently in the fairway and have a lot more fun on the golf course!" With the Polara ball, you too can Grip It and Rip It like John Daly without fearing that nasty slice! For those needing extra correction, the Polara Ultimate Straight reduces slices up to 75%. "Everyone loves to hit their low loft driver. But if you have a bad slice, using a 3-wood or at least 12° loft on your driver lets you hit the Ultimate Straight ball much farther and much, much straighter," Daly points out. "Try both balls to see which one works better for you. With either ball, you'll certainly experience the anti-slice effect."

Golf Tips Magazine stated, "If you're a recreational golfer who tends to find the rough more than the fairway, your fast track to straighter shots has arrived. It's a golf ball that flies straight, even when you put a slice swing on it." Daly concludes, "I've had my own issues with wild shots in the past and Polara balls would have corrected them all. Polara balls are the perfect solution for any golfer who wants more distance but struggles with a slice."

Order 6-ball trial pack for as low as \$7.95 each [www.BuyPolara.com](http://www.BuyPolara.com) or call (800) 274-8673

## Robotic Testing Validates Claims

Polara went to Golf Labs to validate its ball's performance, with eye-opening results. During robotic testing, a significant slice was induced. On average, Polara reduced the slice by up to 75% over traditional balls including premium brands. Independent test manager Richard Levine, PhD, reported, "The Golf Labs' robot was set up to simulate a 90 foot slice based on launch conditions of an average golfer. With the Polara Ultimate Straight ball we found that compared to several popular golf balls, which all sliced about 90 feet, the Polara ball corrected up to 70 feet of the 90 foot slice."

## Garnering National Acclaim

Bill Pennington (New York Times) wrote, "The design of the (Polara) ball corrects slices and hooks by 75 percent. When I took the ball to a New Jersey driving range, regular golfers and the occasional pro could not slice or hook the ball with any regularity." Veteran journalist Ron Claiborne (ABC News, Good Morning America) reported, "I carefully teed up a Polara ball, arrow on top, as instructed. I reared back and let it rip. The ball soared high into the sky, arched and landed on the fairway about 250 yards away. It had flown straight and true from tee to landing. I was in shock. No slice! I hit another Polara. The same thing. And another. I simply could not hit a bad shot. It was a miracle."

Polara balls are designed for the vast majority of golfers: recreational players who want to take advantage of technology improvements and have more fun. "We're not trying to remove skill from the game," said Polara's David Felker. "We're just trying to remove the frustration." With Polara balls, hit longer, straighter shots and have more fun - guaranteed or your money back. For a limited time Polara is offering 6-ball trial packs for as low as \$7.95 each (free S&H, continental US only). Polara balls are available at stores nationwide, but this specially priced offer is only available at [www.BuyPolara.com](http://www.BuyPolara.com) or call (800) 274-8673.



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