

THE SPORTIER

Rams Outduel Wilson

Even without a fully healthy quarterback, the Rams were able to take down Russell Wilson and the Seattle Seahawks. Former Wake Forest quarterback and **financial analyst** John Wolford, making his second career start, was hit hard in the head after running the ball for a short gain. The shoulder of Jamal Adams, Seahawks safety, made contact with Wolford's helmet that resulted in a neck injury. Wolford was rushed to the hospital just 10 minutes into the game, with no fully healthy quarterbacks remaining on the Los Angeles sideline. At this point, Jared Goff entered the game. Goff, who had fractured his thumb against the Seahawks in Week 16 and had surgery just 12 days before Saturday's game, later told reporters his thumb was "not 100 percent." Still, Goff played as if nothing bothered him. His 155 passing yards was the most of any quarterback coming off the bench in a playoff game since 1999, also adding a passing touchdown onto his stat line at the end of the game. In truth, Goff was propelled by not only his run game, led by a 131 rushing yard performance by Cam Akers, but his defense. The Rams defense not only picked off Russell Wilson and brought it to the house, but they also left Seahawks star receiver DK Metcalf frustrated. Metcalf did end the game with 7 receptions for 96 yards and 2 touchdowns, which is by no means a bad statline. But when he was covered by Rams star cornerback and one of the best in the league, Jalen Ramsey, he only had 3 receptions for 33 yards. Additionally, the Rams were able to break through the porous Seahawks offensive line for five sacks, and even without Aaron Donald, the Rams superstar defensive tackle, they continued to pressure Wilson. With the 30-20 win for the Rams, they will most likely travel to Green Bay to face the number one seeded Packers next week, if the Saints beat the Bears in Sunday's Wild Card Playoffs. If the Bears pull off the upset, the Rams will travel to Tampa Bay to face Brady and the Buccaneers.

The Legend of Taylor Heinicke

As expected, the team representing the NFC East in the Playoffs, which happened to be the Washington Football Team, lost. Even though they lost, their quarterback, who had played in just one NFL game prior to Saturday's start, was a big story. Taylor Heinicke was cut from the Panthers in August of 2019, and after taking a year off, he joined the St. Louis BattleHawks from the XFL, but did not play in the five games that the team played. Luckily for him, that was not the end of his football journey. In December, the Washington Football Team signed Heinicke to play backup to quarterback Dwayne Haskins, who has since been cut by the team. Heinicke was notified Friday afternoon that Washington starter, Alex Smith, would be unable to play in Saturday's Wild Card game, which meant that he would need to lead the team. It appeared as though Tampa Bay would have no trouble with Washington without their true starting quarterback, yet that was the opposite of what actually happened. Heinicke made 44 passing attempts, completing 26 of those passes for 306 yards and a touchdown. Heinicke also ran 6 times for 46 yards, which included a miraculous 8-yard rush that began with an escape from pressure and ended with a dive for the pylon and a touchdown. On this play, Heinicke suffered a separated shoulder, and on the next drive, he was hit hard twice. Heinicke still did not miss a play, playing through his injury. Heinicke had the performance of his life, proving he truly can play a role in the NFL. Unfortunately for the team, they were simply unable to stop Tom Brady and the Buccaneers offense enough times. Brady, at 43 years old and facing one of the better defenses in the NFL, threw for 381 yards and 2 touchdowns. The Washington Football Team had a rollercoaster season, from name changes, to allegations against its owner, to the return of its quarterback from a near-death experience during a playoff race, and finished with an unheralded backup quarterback losing by only 8 to Tom Brady in the playoffs. After the 31-23 victory for Tampa Bay, the Bucs will likely face the New Orleans Saints in the following round, if New Orleans is able to beat the Bears. If not, they will face the Los Angeles Rams, who just completed an upset over the Seattle Seahawks.

Sources:

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