

# SPORTS

## Rookie energizes Steelers offense

By Kevin Sherrington  
The Dallas Morning News  
(KRT)

IRVING, Texas - The game had a surreal feeling to it, and not only because Vinny Testaverde misplaced his football at an incredibly inappropriate time.

Even before that fiasco of a fumble, the season seemed to be turning.

A Texas Stadium crowd streaked in yellow and black, Cowboys booed in the introductions, Cowboys fans trying to drown out Steelers fans, it was as if another high school had invaded your reunion.

This is how the Cardinals must feel when they host the Cowboys.

This is how the future must look, and the Cowboys aren't in it.

Not the kind of future Pittsburgh is building, anyway. Sure, the Steelers' 24-20 victory was a gift, but the distance between these two teams Sunday was greater than four points.

Bigger than Pittsburgh's five wins to the Cowboys' measly two.

Question: How do you quantify what a great young quarterback brings you?

Bill Parcells wasn't just feeding us all cheese last week when he called Ben Roethlisberger the best rookie quarterback he's seen in a dozen years.

Everything Big Ben did Sunday said so. Hit 21 of 25 for 193 yards and two touchdowns and withstood several avalanches and ran out from under the rest.

"I think he's going to be outstanding," Parcells said afterward. "I haven't changed my mind."

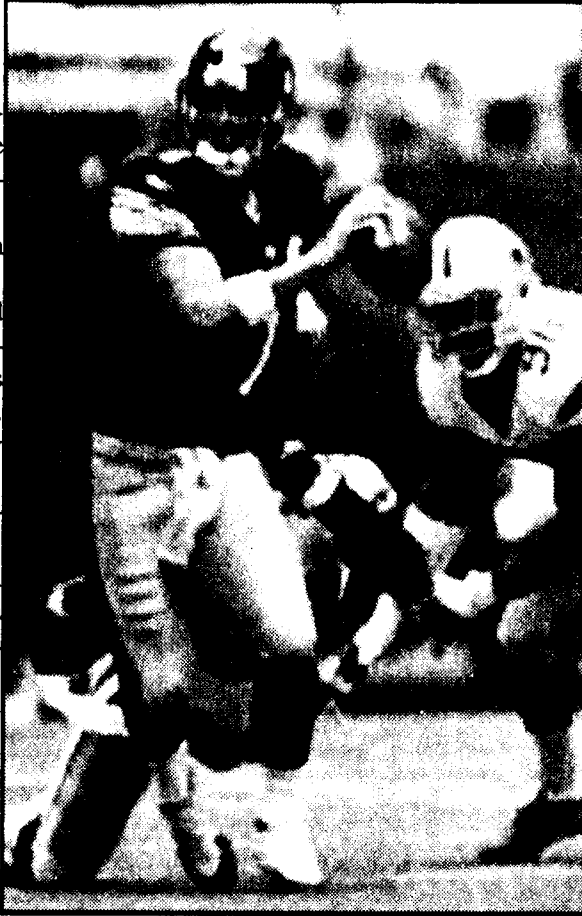
Plaxico Burress, for one, didn't know what to think when Tommy Maddox got hurt and the rookie had to start the third game of the season.

Burress would run his route, look back (ellipsis) and couldn't find his quarterback anywhere.

"Helter-skelter," Burress called it. "He was running, and we were running, and it was kinda crazy."

Until it started working.

"What it does for us," said Burress, who connected with his quarterback for a freelance touchdown Sunday, "it gives us an opportunity to get open."



Tom Pennington/Star-Telegram

Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger (7) scrambles and completes the pass for a first down in the fourth quarter of their game at Texas Stadium in Irving, Texas, on Sunday.

"Cornerbacks don't want to hang with us for three, four, five seconds."

They can't. Not when you have receivers the quality of Burress and Hines Ward.

Not when the quarterback, 6-5 and 251, is as big as some tight ends and probably more mobile, too.

First, Daunte Culpepper. Then Ben Roethlisberger. And there's still Donovan McNabb to go. Twice.

Check the drive that cut Dallas' lead to 20-17 Sunday. On the second play, Roethlisberger scrambled out of a sure sack for 9 yards.

Next, he hit Ward for 7 and 5 yards. Then the Cowboys, who'd showed all manner of blitzes and coverages in an attempt to confuse him, pinched the rookie in the backfield.

Had him cold. Until he pulled free from the cluster like some dad at a father-son picnic and showed the ball to his tight end, Jay Riemersma, who rumbled another 14 yards.

Roethlisberger then hit Ward for 11 and 4 and Duce Staley for 7, and three plays later, he passed to Jerame Tuman for a 7-yard touchdown.

Line on Roethlisberger in the drive: seven attempts, seven completions, two crises averted.

One star ascending.

Oh, he made mistakes. Held on to the ball too long occasionally, trying to find plays downfield, and he was

sacked three times.

Greg Ellis had one, and here's his take on Big Ben: "He's going to be the Rookie of the Year."

He already has the longest winning streak for a rookie quarterback since Phil Simms in 1979.

"I just can't say enough about Ben," Bill Cowher said, grinning. "He's a tough kid, a resilient kid, because they ran everything at him."

Pittsburgh did the same to Testaverde, and for the most part, he handled it well, too.

But here's the difference between the two quarterbacks, besides the rather obvious 18 years:

The Steelers went after Testaverde because if he sets up, he'll pick apart a secondary. But Testaverde's game requires a lot of protection. Roethlisberger's doesn't.

Question: Should the Cowboys bench Testaverde in favor of Drew Henson?

Answer: Maybe, particularly as it looks like this season is slipping away. But there's no indication Henson will render these results, either.

As good as he is, Roethlisberger is still learning. The more he plays, the more the Steelers give him to do. Of course, it doesn't hurt that the Steelers have surrounded him with terrific talent.

"Just put the ball in the air," Ward told his quarterback when he tried to be too perfect with his passes.

"We'll make some plays."

Not only Sunday, but for a long time coming.

### NFL STANDINGS

#### AFC EAST

Team	Record
New England	10-1
N.Y. Jets	7-4
Buffalo	6-5
Miami	5-6

#### AFC NORTH

Team	Record
Pittsburgh	10-1
Baltimore	7-4
Cleveland	6-5
Cincinnati	5-6

#### AFC SOUTH

Team	Record
Indianapolis	10-1
Jacksonville	7-4
Houston	6-5
Tennessee	5-6

#### AFC WEST

Team	Record
Denver	10-1
San Diego	7-4
Oakland	6-5
Kansas City	5-6

#### NFC EAST

Team	Record
Philadelphia	10-1
N.Y. Giants	7-4
Dallas	6-5
Washington	5-6

#### NFC NORTH

Team	Record
Minnesota	10-1
Green Bay	7-4
Chicago	6-5
Detroit	5-6

#### NFC SOUTH

Team	Record
Atlanta	10-1
New Orleans	7-4
Carolina	6-5
Tampa Bay	5-6

#### NFC WEST

Team	Record
St. Louis	10-1
Seattle	7-4
Arizona	6-5
San Francisco	5-6

## Baseball fans prepare to hit polls

The politics of America's favorite past time



David L. Pokress/Newsday

Manny Ramirez of the Boston Red Sox is tagged out by New York Yankees third baseman Alex Rodriguez during first inning action in Game 3 of the American League Championship Series at Fenway Park in Boston, Massachusetts Saturday.

Commentary by Chris La Furia  
staff writer

Recently, on the "Bob and Tom Show" in the morning, a mock pollster was asked who was going to win the Presidential debates. The man casually and teasingly responded, "The New York Yankees."

With this year being an election year, many people are forced to juggle different topics of either enjoyment or significance, whether it'd be keeping up with the election or supporting their favorite baseball team in the playoffs.

In the midst of the playoffs, we find the two teams who share a rivalry identical to the competition between the democratic and republican parties- The Boston Red Sox and the New York Yankees.

The Boston Curse. Bill Buckner. Bucky Dent. Aaron Boone. Pedro's paternity. Many factors tie into the blood-sweat-and-tears rivalry between these two teams. The match-up takes place at least 20 times per season, not including the playoffs.

Bench-clearing brawls, heated arguments, and malicious attacks in the press add to the heated tensions between two of baseball's elite teams. If you just watch the game for the enjoyment of a hard-nosed and fierce struggle between the teams, you can see a classic match-up.

Digging deeper into the rivalry, the question arises: Does the series between the Red Sox and Yankees serve as a metaphor for the upcoming election for the president of the United States?

When you take a look at the regime of George W. Bush and the 2004 New York Yankees, you can tell that both find pleasure in intimidating their opponents, similar to a class bully that habitually steals your milk money. Bush and his cohorts traveled afar and attempted to eliminate the enemy and instill their values.

Correspondingly, the New York Yankees assemble an intense arsenal of weapons and with much ease (unlike the GOP) manhandle their opponents. Weapons of mass destruction such as Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez and Gary Sheffield get the job done.

In 2004, it seems almost factual that the underdog for the presidential election is the team of Kerry and Edwards. Kerry brings to the table promises including lower taxes, costs for utilities and retrieving the troops currently stationed in Iraq. George Steinbrenner collects baseball players like trading cards. He gets who he wants and, therefore, might benefit from having lower taxes to free up millions of dollars to purchase new and more advanta-



Saul Loeb/KRT

Sen. John Kerry and President George W. Bush shake hands before the final presidential debate in Tempe, Arizona, on October 13.

geous players. Baseball democrats might run into difficulties relieving the troops of such militaristic powerhouses as the Yankees.

Another similarity lies within the aggressive campaigns of the Democratic Party. Everyday the malevolent attacks from the committee of John Kerry plaster the television. Democrats express their wishes for immediate removal of the Bush administration on a regular basis.

The Red Sox possess these similarities with party leader Pedro Martinez foul-mouthing the team that he has avoided conquering. In a recent press conference Martinez stated, "I hope they ...disappear and never come back. I would rather like to face any other team right now."

One last prominent similarity that is impossible to overlook is that Boston just happens to be the location of the Democratic National Convention and New York the site of the Republican Assembly (striking isn't it?).

As November approaches, people gear up for an election that promises to be rather immense in areas such as voter turnout and significance. In the midst of the 2004 MLB playoffs, faithful fans stand by their ball club and support with as much loyalty as the committees of each political party. As the games gain intensity and the debates heat up, the one idea that remains the question: "Who are you going to vote for?"

## Weekly sports trivia

Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service  
(KRT)

### QUESTIONS:

- Who was the first baseball player named Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season -A) Fernando Valenzuela; B) Fred Lynn; C) Vida Blue; D) Paul Blair?
- Which player doesn't belong, and why - A) Don Mattingly; B) Ken Griffey Jr.; C) Dale Long; D) Derek Jeter?
- Which NFL team originally drafted John Elway?
- Regarding when he first thought about retiring, what NFL player said this influenced his decision, "When other players started asking me for permission to date my daughter."
- Who was the Pittsburgh Steelers' first-ever draft pick -A) Charles Dickens; B) William Shakespeare; C) William Faulkner; D) John Grisham?

### ANSWERS:

- B - Fred Lynn did it in 1975 with the Boston Red Sox.
- D - Derek Jeter. The others made history by hitting home runs in at least eight consecutive games. Jeter hasn't.
- Baltimore Colts.
- A.A. Tittle.
- B - William Shakespeare. A running back from Notre Dame, William Shakespeare was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1936.