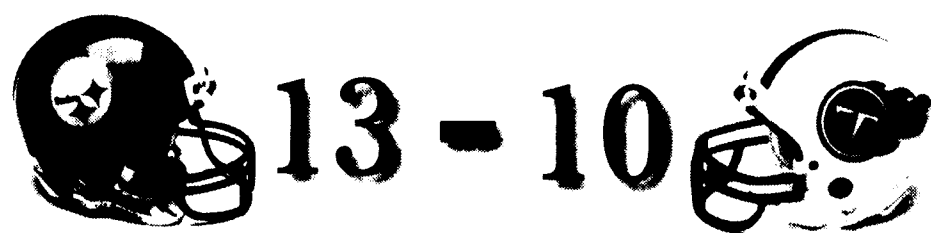


PRO FOOTBALL

Steelers win epic battle



SHAWN ANNARELLI
sports editor

A clash of wills pitted the Steelers and Titans past regulation and into overtime for the NFL season opener.

The Steelers rode the arm of Ben Roethlisberger and the leg of kicker Jeff Reed on a 65-yard overtime drive. Reed split the uprights on a 33-yard field goal to win the game for the Steelers.

Roethlisberger finished the game completing 33 of 43 passes for 363 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions.

"Ben provided quality plays for us time and time again," said coach Mike Tomlin.

Winning doesn't always come without a loss, though. All-Pro Steelers safety Troy Polamalu sprained his MCL in the first half of the game and is expected to miss three to six weeks of play, according to Tomlin.

In the first quarter the Titans' defense dominated the Steelers' offense and allowed just one first down, one total yard and recorded two sacks in the first quarter.

For the rest of the game the Steelers out gained the Titans 356 to 214 yards, though the

Steelers only gained 36 of those yards on the ground.

The Steelers defense struggled early on and allowed three drives into Pittsburgh territory. In the first half the Titans suffered a missed 37-yard field goal. James Farrior blocked another field goal and Troy Polamalu made an acrobatic one-handed interception at the five-yard line.

Each team was held scoreless until Roethlisberger connected with a wide open Antonio Holmes on a streak with 1:22 left in the first half.

The Titans struck back before the half ended with a three-play, 71-yard drive and a touchdown pass from Kerry Collins to Justin Gage to tie the game at 7-7.

The half ended with Titans' cornerback Cortland Finnegan returning a tipped Roethlisberger Hail Mary 80 yards back to the Steelers 20-yard line as time expired.

After a defensive struggle in the third quarter, the Titans took their first lead of the game in the opening drive of the fourth quarter off of a Rob Bironas' 45-yard field goal to go ahead 10-7.

The Steelers responded on the next drive with a field goal

to tie the game at 10 apiece.

With just under a minute to go in regulation, the Steelers nearly ended the game when Roethlisberger found wide receiver Hines Ward open over the middle of the field. Ward caught the ball and turned for what seemed to be a clear path to the end zone.

Titans' safety Michael Griffin caught him from behind and stripped the football at the five-yard line to turn the ball over to Tennessee.

Tennessee chose to bleed out the clock to take the game to overtime.

In the final drive of the game Ben Roethlisberger completed four of six passes for 63 yards, to set up Reed's game-winning field goal.

"[We] were not perfect by any stretch," said Tomlin. "We had trouble in the running game. It was good to get some lessons with a win."

Quick Hits

| | Pit | Ten |
|-------------|-------|-------|
| First Downs | 19 | 18 |
| Total Yards | 357 | 320 |
| Turnovers | 3 | 2 |
| Penalties | 6-60 | 5-28 |
| Possession | 36:11 | 28:21 |

PRO FOOTBALL



Rod Woodson poses as he is inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Photo contributed

Hall of Famer Rod Woodson

Being a huge Steelers fan, you can imagine my excitement as I covered my first Steelers training camp and approached the sideline where the players and coaches were standing.

Over the summer, I interned with a local newspaper north of Pittsburgh called the *Pine Creek Journal*, and part of this article is from that publication.

My assignment at Steelers training camp was to get an interview with left tackle Jason Capizzi, a former graduate of a local high school, Pine-Richland. However, after not being able to find him on the field and

head coach Mike Tomlin telling me that he was not out practicing, I had to come up with another game plan.

As I looked around the playing field, I desperately tried to think of a plan B. Defensive coordinator, Dick LeBeau, who has 50 years of NFL experience, (14 as a player and 36 as a coach), was my answer.

After watching the Hall of Fame Class of 2009 being inducted into Canton on Aug. 8 and reading an article from ESPN about Rod Woodson's career, I wanted to get LeBeau's thoughts on Woodson being the best defensive back ever in the NFL specifically Woodson versus Deion Sanders.

"Rod is one of the very best ever," LeBeau said. "I think they (Woodson and Sanders) are both wonderful players, but I just think Rod had more versatility, and the fact that he could play safety. They were both great return men and both great corners. I'm not sure that Deion could have played safety the way that Rod played. I don't know that Deion could blitz the way Rod blitzed. Rod was a big part of our blitzing package when he played here, and he was very effective."

Rod Woodson is the best defensive back in NFL history when considering his statistics, his versatility, and the way he represented himself.

Woodson's statistics speak for themselves. He ranks first with total interception return yards (1,483), first in interceptions returned for a touchdown (12), and third in NFL history with career interceptions (71).

Woodson also became the first player in the NFL to play in the same season after having reconstructive knee surgery. This was accomplished when he played in Super Bowl XXX (Steelers lost to the Cowboys 27-17).

Additional jaw-dropping statistics include the fact that out of his 17 year career, Woodson made the Pro Bowl 11 times. Even more impressive is that he is the only player to ever make it as a cornerback, safety, and return man.

"Rod is one of the best football players that I've ever seen in any era," LeBeau said. "His longevity, to play 17 years in the defensive backfield is hard to do because you've got to keep your movement skills. What he has accomplished certainly makes him to be one of the best football players ever."

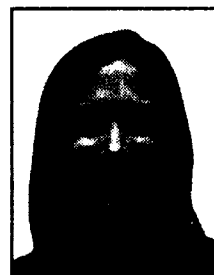
For an athlete to be the absolute best at their position, they must top the chart of statistics. Woodson did that.

However, it is not always about the numbers a player puts up. There is much more than the raw numerical data. It is about something deeper and something that is not always right in front of you like statistics. Athletes are also judged by the way they represent themselves and the attitude they carry. Woodson surpasses this test as well.

He was a team player. Ravens former head coach Brian Billick said in an article from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* that when Woodson played for the Baltimore Ravens, he let linebacker Ray Lewis have the spotlight "because Rod saw it was good for the team. That says a lot about Rod Woodson. Sometimes guys demand that role but he saw a purpose in Ray Lewis having it."

What a great experience at Steelers training camp. When I was finished asking LeBeau questions, he thanked me for waiting around for him.

If only LeBeau knew how long I would have been willing to wait to talk to one of the best, if not the best, defensive coordinator in NFL history.



CHRISTINE NEWBY
managing editor

LAST WEEK IN SPORTS

Friday, September 4

The women's tennis team lost to Westminster 6-3.

The women's volleyball team lost to Gettysburg and Geneva in the Gettysburg Invitational.

Saturday, September 5

The men's cross country team won the Westminster Invitational while the women came in fourth place.

The golf team won the Pitt-Bradford Invitational.

The men's waterpolo team lost to Navy 18-2.

The women's tennis team lost 9-0 against Mercyhurst.

The women's volleyball team defeated Neumann at the Gettysburg Tournament.

Sunday, September 6

The men's soccer team won the Herb Laufer Memorial Tournament.

The men's waterpolo team lost to Queens and Concordia.

The women's soccer team won the Herb Laufer Memorial Tournament.

Tuesday, September 8

The women's tennis team defeated La Roche 9-0.

Wednesday, September 9

The women's tennis team defeated Fredonia 9-0.

Wins are in bold.

THIS WEEK'S SPORTS SCHEDULE

Friday, September 11

Men's soccer will battle Buffalo State at the Fredonia Tournament at 2:30 p.m.

Women's soccer will play Rochester at the Fredonia Tournament at 3 p.m.

Women's tennis hosts Frostburg State at 4 p.m.

Women's volleyball hosts and plays Bethany at 3:30 p.m. and Lycoming at 7:30 p.m. at the Behrend Invitational

Saturday, September 12

Men's soccer plays Fredonia at the Fredonia Tournament at 5 p.m.

Women's soccer plays Fredonia at the Fredonia Tournament at 7 p.m.

Women's tennis hosts and plays Geneva at 10 a.m. and Bethany at 1 p.m. at the Behrend Invitational.

Women's volleyball hosts and plays Roberts Wesleyan at 10:30 a.m. and Grove City at 2:30 p.m. at the Behrend Invite.

Sunday, September 13

Men's water polo hosts Queens at 10 a.m., and then Salem International at 1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 15

Women's volleyball battles away at John Carroll at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, September 16

Women's tennis plays away at Pitt-Bradford at 4 p.m.

Men's soccer hosts Grove City at 4 p.m.

Sports in bold are at home

Career by the numbers

| | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------|--|
| 1 | Only player from draft class of 1987 to make Hall of Fame. | 75 | Member of NFL's 75th Anniversary Team |
| 3 | Positions at which he was named All-Pro (cornerback, returner, and safety). | 12 | Interceptions returned for touchdowns. |
| 11 | Trips to the Pro-Bowl. | 4 | Kick-offs returned for touchdowns. |
| 6 | Times selected All-Pro. | 17 | Total Touchdowns. |
| 1,050 | Tackles | 71 | Career interceptions. |
| | | 1,483 | Interception return yards. |