

NFL PLAYOFFS

# Wild card round littered with upsets

NICK BLAKE  
sports editor

The NFL playoffs are now a week old and the field of twelve has been cut to eight.

Four games took place on Jan. 9 and 10 in the tournament's wild-card round.

The first AFC game featured the sixth seeded Baltimore Ravens and the third seeded New England Patriots.

The game took place in New England at Gillette Stadium, giving the Patriots home field advantage.

However, having home field would mean nothing for the Patriots as they were run off their own field by the Ravens, resulting in New England's first home playoff loss ever at Gillette stadium.

The Ravens started the game strong as running back Ray Rice broke free for an 83-yard touchdown run on Baltimore's first play from scrimmage.

The 83-yard trot by Rice was just the beginning of a long first quarter for the Patriots, as Tom Brady turned the ball over three times, all of which led to scores for the Ravens.

Baltimore had a 24-0 lead at the end of the first quarter, tying a second place record for most points in a quarter in NFL postseason history.

The Ravens never looked back, and the Patriots did not catch up. The Ravens defeated New England 33-14 to advance to the divisional round.

"There are games, like last year against Cincinnati, where I got too clever with my play calling," said Baltimore Ravens offensive coordinator Cam Cameron on the Baltimore's offense during the game.

"Clever just gets it handed to you in this league. Sometimes simpler is the better way to go. There are times when uncluttered is the best way," against the Patriots.

The first NFC game was between the sixth seeded Philadelphia Eagles and the third seeded Dallas Cowboys.

The Cowboys' offense came out strong and carried the team to its first postseason victory since 1996.

Dallas was able to rack up 428 yards of total offense, 27 first downs and had possession of the ball for 39:34.

Quarterback Tony Romo carried his team going 23 of 35 passing for 244 yards and two touchdowns. These numbers are some of Romo's best in the post-season thus far in his career after having less than average performances in previous years.

The first quarter ended in a scoreless tie.

The Cowboys would explode in the second quarter and take a 27-7 lead into halftime.

Dallas would remain in cruise control for the second half and take the game by a final score of 32-14 and earned a spot in the second round.

The second AFC tilt took place in Cincinnati as the fourth seeded Bengals took on the fifth seeded New York Jets.

This game would turn out to be a little more competitive compared to the first two.

The Bengals held a 7-0 lead after

the first quarter, but Jets' rookie running back Shonn Greene would rip off a 39-yard touchdown run to tie the game at 7-7 in the second quarter.

Greene ended up with 21 carries for 135

yards to become the third different rookie to rush for 100 yards in a playoff game since 2000.

The Jets would score again later in the quarter and would take a 14-7 lead into the locker room at halftime.

Late in the third quarter, Jets' running back Thomas Jones carried the ball nine yards in to the end zone giving New York a 21-7 lead.

The Bengals would refuse to give up as running back Cedric Benson broke a 47-yard touchdown run early in the fourth quarter to cut the deficit to a touchdown.

That was all the Bengals could muster up. A late field goal by the Jets would seal it as they advanced with a 24-14 victory.

The second NFC wild card game featured the fifth seeded Green Bay Packers and the fourth seeded Arizona Cardinals.

This game was an offensive showdown that saw a total of 96 points, an NFL post-season record. The teams also totaled more than 1,000 yards combined offensively.

Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers threw for 422 yards and four touchdowns, while Cardinals' quarterback Kurt Warner went 23 of 33 passing for 379 yards and five touchdowns.

The game was a back and forth offensive fireworks show that left the Packers trailing late in the fourth quarter.

Green Bay was able to find the end zone leaving the Cardinals 1:52 on the clock to put together a game-winning drive.

Arizona would in fact get into kicker Neil Rackers' range for a 34-yard, clinching field goal with 14 seconds left.

Rackers would pull the field goal wide left, however, and the game would go into overtime tied at 45-45.

On third-and-six from his own 24-yard-line, Rodgers dropped back and the pocket collapsed around him.

As Rodgers was hit, he lost control of the ball and it was picked out of the air by Arizona linebacker Karlos Dansby. With nothing in front of him but the end zone, he trotted in for the easy score.

The Cardinals survived the shootout and advanced to the next round by a score of 51-45.

There was always doubt about Kurt Warner's durability late in the season, but his coach has confidence in him. "He [Kurt Warner] is one of the best playoff quarterbacks of all time," Cardinals head coach Ken Whisenhunt said on his quarterbacks performance during the wild card game. "We thought going into today that would be an advantage for us."

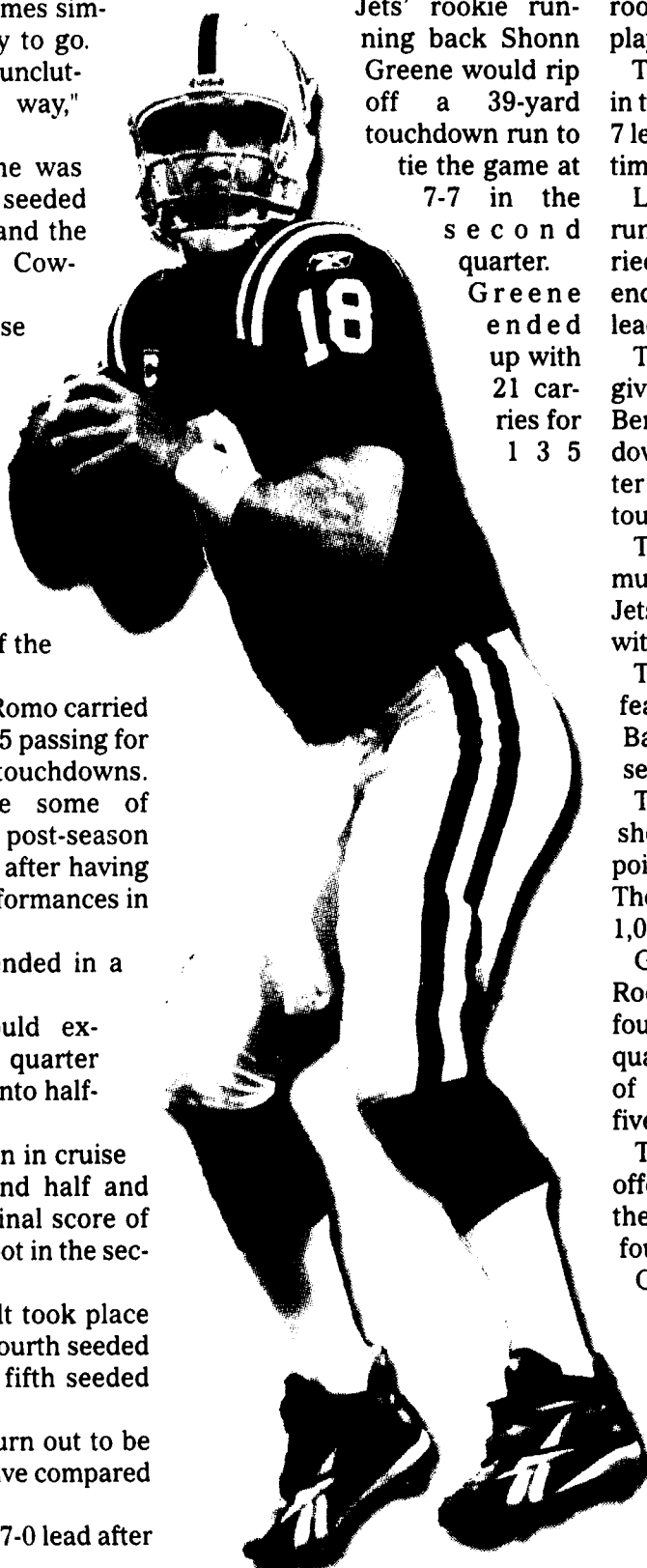
The AFC divisional round will feature the Baltimore Ravens versus the Indianapolis Colts and the New York Jets versus the San Diego Chargers.

The NFC divisional round match-ups are the Dallas Cowboys and the Minnesota Vikings along with the Arizona Cardinals and the New Orleans Saints.

The two winners will then face off for the NFC title game.

Associated Press

Peyton Manning just won his fourth MVP and will be looking for his second super bowl this February. The Indianapolis Colts will be facing the Baltimore Ravens at the RCA Dome this Sunday.



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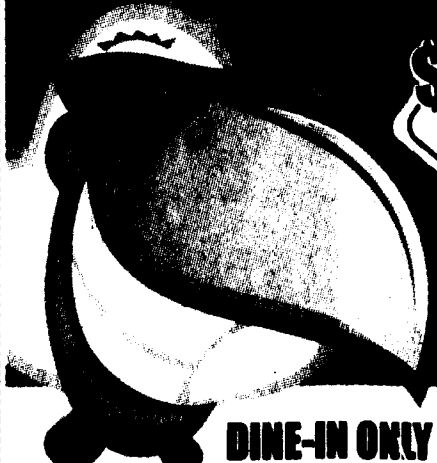
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