

# Bengals lose QB Dalton as Steelers win

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

CINCINNATI — The Cincinnati Bengals lost quarterback Andy Dalton in the second quarter to a thumb injury, and Ben Roethlisberger passed for 282 yards and DeAngelo Williams rushed for two touchdowns to lift the Pittsburgh Steelers to a 33-20 victory over the Bengals on Sunday.

Dalton suffered a fractured thumb and will miss at least one game and possibly two. He is scheduled to see a hand specialist on Monday.

It was a disastrous day for the Bengals, whose hopes of securing the top overall seed in the AFC took hit with Dalton and tight end Tyler Eifert leaving the game with injuries.

A.J. McCarron replaced Dalton and finished 22 of 32 for 280 yards and two TDs to go along with a pair of interceptions as the Bengals (10-3) failed to clinch the AFC North title.

## NFL ROUNDUP



Pittsburgh Steelers tight end Heath Miller (center) carries the ball as he is hit by Cincinnati Bengals defensive ends Wallace Gilberry and Carlos Dunlap during the third quarter at Paul Brown Stadium on Sunday.

DAVID KOHL | USA TODAY SPORTS

**Panthers 38, Falcons 0**

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina — Cam Newton threw three touchdown passes, including two in the first half to wide receiver Ted Ginn Jr., as unbeaten Carolina shut out Atlanta.

The Panthers (13-0) continued their franchise-best start to the season and clinched an opening-week-end bye in the NFC when the playoffs begin next month. They moved closer to securing home-field assignments throughout the playoffs.

The Falcons (6-7) lost their sixth game in a row, further damaging remote chances to reach the playoffs.

**Seahawks 35, Ravens 6**

BALTIMORE — Russell Wilson threw five touchdown passes to lead Seattle over struggling Baltimore.

The Seahawks (8-5) have won six of their past seven games and look like a legitimate Super Bowl contender once again. It was the first game this season not decided by eight points or fewer for the Ravens (4-9).

Wilson completed 23 of 32 passes for 292 yards. Wide receiver Doug Baldwin had

three touchdown receptions, and he now has eight in the past three games.

**Eagles 23, Bills 20**

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia ruined LeSean McCoy's homecoming and kept pace in the NFC East race with a victory over Buffalo.

The Eagles (6-7) stay tied for first place on NFC East with the Washington Redskins. Both are now a half-game ahead of the New York Giants, who play the Miami Dolphins on Monday night.

McCoy, the Eagles' all-time leading rusher, was traded to the Bills (6-7) in the offseason and he did not leave on good terms with coach Chip Kelly. McCoy, who said this past week that he would not shake hands with Kelly, ended up with 74 yards on 20 carries.

**Redskins 24, Bears 21**

CHICAGO — Kirk Cousins passed for 300 yards and a touchdown and rushed for another touchdown as Washington held on to beat Chicago.

Redskins tight end Jordan Reed hauled in nine passes for 120 yards and a touchdown. Washington

(6-7) snapped a nine-game road losing streak and earned its first win away from home since Oct. 27, 2014.

Bears quarterback Jay Cutler completed 19 of 31 passes for 315 yards and two touchdowns. Wide receiver Alshon Jeffery caught six passes for 107 yards and a touchdown for Chicago (5-8), which dropped to 1-6 at home.

**Jaguars 51, Colts 16**

JACKSONVILLE, Florida — Jacksonville used three lengthy scoring plays of 49 yards or more in a little more than four minutes and Blake Bortles threw three second-half touchdowns in a rout of Indianapolis.

The scoring surge started late in the first half when Jaguars' defensive end Andre Branch knocked the ball out of Indianapolis quarterback Matt Hasselback's hands before scooping it up and going 49 yards for a touchdown.

Bortles led the Jaguars on three consecutive long scoring drives. The first was an 80-yard march in eight plays and finished with a 4-yard pass to Allen Robinson.

It was Bortles' 10th touchdown pass in the last three weeks, the most by a Jaguars quarterback ever during a three-game stretch.

**Browns 24, 49ers 10**

CLEVELAND — Cleveland snapped a seven-game losing streak and running back Isaiah Crowell rushed for two touchdowns to beat San Francisco in Johnny Manziel's return as the starting quarterback.

Manziel, who was banished to the bench two weeks ago for lying to the team about partying, threw for 270 yards on 21-of-31 passing for one touchdown and one interception.

The victory assured the Browns (3-10) will not tie the 1999 expansion team (2-14) for the worst record in franchise history. It also snapped a five-game losing streak at FirstEnergy Stadium.

**Packers 28, Cowboys 7**

GREEN BAY, Wisconsin — Green Bay got touchdown passes from Aaron Rodgers on back-to-back possessions in the first half and 239 total yards from running back Eddie Lacy and James Starks in a victory over Dallas.

Lacy finished 124 yards and a touchdown on the ground, and Starks scored on a 13-yard catch and a 30-yard run. Green Bay (9-4) finished with 230 rushing yards. Rodgers completed 22 of 35 passes for 218 yards and the two scores.

Darren McFadden paced the Cowboys (4-9) with 111 yards on nine carries. Matt Cassel finished 13-for-29 for 114 yards and no touchdowns with one interception.

**Chiefs 10, Chargers 3**

KANSAS CITY, Missouri. — Kansas City extended its winning streak to seven games with a victory over San Diego.

The victory moved the Chiefs to 8-5 overall and they continue to lead the run for an AFC wild-card slot.

Rain began falling Sunday morning and it did not stop from opening kickoff to the game's final play. While field conditions appeared solid, it was impossible for either team to keep the football dry and the chains moving.

**Saints 24, Buccaneers 17**

TAMPA, Florida — Drew Brees threw for two touch-

downs and converted third downs all day, leading New Orleans over Tampa Bay.

The Buccaneers (6-7) saw their wild-card hopes take a hit as they weren't able to score at length on the NFL's worst defense. Tampa Bay had a chance to tie the game late, but punted rather than face a fourth-and-10 with 4:21 left.

The Saints (5-8) converted 12 third downs, including two key conversions on their final drive to eat up clock with the lead. Brees threw for 312 yards and Tim Hightower, filling in for the injured Mark Ingram, rushed for 81 yards and a touchdown.

**Jets 30, Titans 8**

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey — Ryan Fitzpatrick threw three first-half touchdown passes and New York remained in the thick of the AFC wild-card race by cruising to a win over Tennessee.

Fitzpatrick finished 21-of-36 for 263 yards and no interceptions as the Jets (8-5) extended their winning streak to three games — their first three-game streak since Nov. 27-Dec. 11, 2011.

Fitzpatrick threw touchdown passes to wide receiver Brandon Marshall (six catches for 125 yards), wide receiver Eric Decker (seven catches for 74 yards) and running back Bilal Powell (five catches for 46 yards).

**Rams 21, Lions 14**

ST. LOUIS — Todd Gurley's 49-yard run in the third quarter led to his go-ahead touchdown two plays later and St. Louis snapped a five-game losing streak with a win over Detroit.

Gurley's 5-yard score at the 3:57 mark of the period capped an 80-yard drive, nearly equaling the Rams' total yardage to that point. Prior to that possession, they managed only 111 yards and seven first downs in their first game under interim offensive coordinator Rob Boras, who replaced the fired Frank Cignetti on Monday.

Rams quarterback Case Keenum, who returned to the lineup after missing two games with a concussion, completed 14 of 22 passes for 124 yards with an interception.

## Red Sox

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"He'd come in the house crying, and we'd just send him right back out there," said his dad, Bonnie. "I told him 'If you want to play, go play.'"

The brothers did not feel the need to show mercy.

"I was too old, I had to drop the hammer on him," said Damon Price, smiling at the memory of when he could best his little brother.

The brothers did not lower the basket.

"They wouldn't cut him any slack," said Debbie Price.

David Price kept playing, even though he kept getting beat.

Eventually, his growth spurt took place. Along with it came back yard victory.

"By high school he could hang with any of them," said Debbie Price. "It toughened him up, plus he could shoot basketball as well as any of them. Even at a young age."

The Price family used to visit a nearby park on the weekends. By late afternoon, a softball game with the adults would get going, lasting until dusk when it was hard to see. David Price wanted in, but he couldn't get what he wanted at first.

He was 6 years old.

"He was able to catch the ball, but when they picked teams, they wanted to pick an older person to play, so he'd come over to us all mad and say 'I can catch the ball,'" said his father, Bonnie. "They started leaving him alone, let him go out there and hit 'em out there and he'd catch them."

"After they watched him, he didn't have to worry about being chosen, they would choose him and he would play with the adults."

As colleague Scott Lauber's story last week illustrated so well, Price was a standout athlete in high school. From there, it was a short and quick hop to being

picked by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays with the first pick of the 2007 draft.

Price has vaulted to the top of his chosen profession, a leap that does not feel that far to his family.

His dedication, discipline and focus all contributed.

"He could always be very focused and not allow anything that was happening in his perimeter to really bother him," said Debbie Price. "You could tell he's just focused in on that one bit, even when he was a 10-year-old, I remember that."

"If you played something he's never played and you beat him, he wants to keep playing you until he finally beats you — and then he wants to keep on playing you until he beats you every time."

That mix of competitive fire, practice and talent propelled Price into the Red Sox' best-laid plans.

They needed someone special, and they found him in Price.

Of all the talented ballplayers, they nabbed the one with the perfect blend of makeup, moxie and tools.

"There's a thin line, it's more mental, I think, to be honest," said Damon Price. "A lot of those guys who make it to the minors, they're talented and the best from whatever school where they came from. But David, he wants to do better and better. He wants to do more. He's like a sponge. He wants to learn a new pitch, he's always wanting to know and learn more until he can beat you by 30 this time — and the next time by 35."

**Pedro will pitch in more**

Expect Pedro Martinez to play a more active role next season as an assistant to Dave Dombrowski. This past season he was busier than usual with outside commitments, mostly related to his Baseball Hall of Fame induction.

This year, he wants to be

more involved, including making himself available to the youngest pitchers in the system. His attendance at the organizational meetings in Nashville last week is only one indication of his eagerness and willingness to lend his talents and opinions.

**Beltre right at home?**

Speaking of the Hall of Fame, one of the reports out of the winter meetings was that the Rangers are interested in seeing third baseman Adrian Beltre finish his career in Texas. Beltre has one year remaining on his Rangers deal, and he will be paid \$18 million next season at the age of 37. He may opt to sign an extension that lasts until he decides to retire with what will likely be Hall of Fame-worthy numbers.

In light of Pablo Sandoval's underwhelming season last year, it still feels odd to recall that Beltre was a Red Sox for one season in 2010 before exercising his option to become a free agent. For his age 32-36 seasons, Beltre signed a five-year deal worth \$80 million. For his ages 28-32 seasons, Sandoval signed a five-year, \$95 million deal.

In his past five seasons, Beltre has compiled 31.4 WAR (Wins Above Replacement), including a 5.8 WAR last year. Last year Sandoval was a minus 0.9 WAR player. And over his last five seasons, he has compiled 13 WAR.

And the Red Sox just traded their top third-base prospect of the past few years, Garin Cecchini, after trading Will Middlebrooks a year ago.

All of the above is recapped mainly to reinforce the point of how special of a player Beltre was and still is. It also reinforces the obvious point of how different the Red Sox' situation at third base would be if the team engaged in a serious pursuit of Beltre after the 2010 season.

## Spooner sparks Bruins by Panthers

BY MIKE SHALIN  
THE SPORTS XCHANGE

BOSTON — Ryan Spooner wasn't alive when Jaromir Jagr broke into the NHL with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1990.

On Saturday, the 23-year-old center scored two goals to lead Boston to a 3-1 victory over Jagr and the Florida Panthers.

"He's a guy that keeps learning and a young guy and I can't say enough about the way he sees the ice," said center Patrice Bergeron, who had two assists in the win, one to Spooner on the power play, where the Bruins often play three centers at the same time. "He's definitely a threat to when he's on his game and on the ice and making plays like that."

Spooner, notching his third career two-goal game, scored his sixth and seventh goals of the season as the Bruins (16-9-3) beat the Panthers (14-12-4) for the ninth straight time at TD Garden and improved to 12-1-1 in the last 14 games against Florida, 18-3-1 in the last 21.

Goaltender Tuukka Rask (14-2-1 against Florida) had an easy path until the third period, when the Panthers took over the play and former Bruins right winger Reilly Smith scored on a slap shot with 6:04 left — a shot Rask should have had.

Panthers' goaltender Roberto Luongo was barely to the bench for an extra attacker when Boston left winger Brad Marchand scored his team-leading 14th goal of the season into the empty net with 1:23 left.



BOB DECHIARA | USA TODAY SPORTS

Boston Bruins center Ryan Spooner (middle) is congratulated by teammates Loui Eriksson (21) and Patrice Bergeron (37) after scoring his second goal of the game during the second period against the Florida Panthers on Saturday at TD Garden in Boston.

After a slow start to the season, Rask, who made 13 of his 26 stops in the third period, is 6-0-2 in his last eight starts. And, after a 2-6-1 home start, the Bruins are 4-1 in their last five at TD Garden. They also moved to within six points of the first-place Montreal Canadiens in the Atlantic Division, with two games in hand (Montreal had a game Saturday night).

Luongo, who had a rough time of it in goal for the Vancouver Canucks when the Bruins beat them in the 2011 Stanley Cup final, made 22 saves but gave up a soft second goal to Spooner. He fell to 10-11-3 on the season.

"It was a pretty flat game; it was a defensive-minded game and there wasn't a whole lot of scoring chances," Florida coach Gerard Gallant said. "Fortunately for them they got that first goal and it held up for quite a while, and we just didn't generate enough tonight."

By not scoring, the 43-year-old Jagr remained tied with Marcel Dionne for fourth place on the NHL's all-time goals list, with 731.

Panthers center Dave Boland, who scored the 2013 Stanley Cup-winning goal for the Chicago Blackhawks against the Bruins at TD Garden, was guilty of throwing a poor pass toward the blue line as the Bruins took the lead 11:35 into the game. The puck went directly to defenseman Torey Krug, whose shot was tipped out of the air by Spooner.

Luongo immediately waved his glove calling for a high stick, the goal was reviewed, the replays were inconclusive and the goal stood.

Spooner made it 2-0 on the Bruins' league-leading power play eight minutes into the second.

Before Smith scored, earlier in the third period, Bruins left winger Zac Rinaldo nailed Panthers rookie center Connor Brickley with a hard check and former Bruins right winger Shawn Thornton stepped in and pummeled Rinaldo to the ice. Brickley, who absorbed three major hits in the game, went to the locker room — joining center Derek McKenzie, injured earlier — but returned to finish the game.