

Chiefs beat Browns to clinch playoff spot

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

KANSAS CITY, Missouri — The Kansas City Chiefs won their ninth consecutive game, beating the Cleveland Browns 17-13 Sunday to reach the NFL playoffs.

NFL ROUNDUP

The victory along with Pittsburgh's loss to Baltimore assured the Chiefs of a spot in the AFC playoffs, their second postseason berth in three seasons under head coach Andy Reid.

"We don't care if we win by one point, or 21 points," said Reid. "We were 1-5 at one point, so we appreciate every one of these things. It's tough to string a bunch of [wins] together in the National Football League."

So how does an NFL team go from 1-5 to 10-5?

"Stay the course; don't get caught up in what's being said and who is saying what," said wide receiver Jeremy Maclin, who caught an 11-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter and eclipsed the 1,000-yard mark for the season with that catch. "You have to always remember it's not a sprint, it's a marathon."

The Chiefs' nine-game winning streak tied the club record that was established in the 1969 season by a Kansas City team that went on to win Super Bowl IV. It also left the Chiefs still lurking just behind Denver on top of the AFC West standings, with the Broncos hosting Cincinnati on Monday night.

Despite the big difference in the records the teams carried into the game — Kansas City is now 10-5, Cleveland is 3-12 — the game was one of the toughest the Chiefs played during their current streak. They held a two-touchdown lead at halftime, but struggled to apply a knock-out punch.

Texans 34, Titans 6

NASHVILLE, Tennessee — Houston quarterback Brandon Weeden snapped a personal 11-game losing streak as a starter in the place where everyone goes to get well.

Completing 15 of 24 passes for 200 yards and two touchdowns, Weeden led the Texans to a rout of the inept Titans (3-12).

Racking up a quarterback rating of 116.7, Weeden broke the game open in the third quarter with scoring strikes of 15 and 13 yards to wide receivers DeAndre Watkins and Nate Washington, respectively.

In improving to 8-7, the Texans moved one step away from an AFC South title. They can clinch by strength of victory tiebreaker before Week 16 ends, or wrap it up in Week 17 with a home win over Jacksonville.

Ravens 20, Steelers 17

BALTIMORE — Ryan Mallett threw for a career-high 274 yards and Baltimore shocked Pittsburgh.

The Ravens (5-10) swept the season series and have beaten the Steelers in five of the past six meetings.

Mallett signed with the Ravens just 12 days ago after being cut by the Texans earlier in the season. He completed 28 of 41 pass with a touchdown.

The Steelers (9-6) are still in contention for a wild-card berth. The loss ended Pittsburgh's 10-game winning streak in December

Colts 18, Dolphins 12

MIAMI GARDENS, Florida — Running back Frank Gore scored two touchdowns and Indianapolis kept its playoff hopes alive by defeating Miami.

The Dolphins had a first-and-goal from the Colts' 5 in the final minute, but quarterback Ryan Tannehill threw three incomplete passes. On fourth down, Colts defensive end Robert Mathis sacked Tannehill.

The Colts (7-8), already without injured starting quarterback Andrew Luck, lost backup Matt Hasselbeck (shoulder) with 5:33 left, and Indianapolis ahead 8-6 at the time. Charlie Whitehurst came in and played the rest of the game at quarterback. Miami (5-10) suffered its third loss in a row and its seventh in the past nine games.

Bills 16, Cowboys 6

ORCHARD PARK, New York — Running backs Mike Gillislee and Karlos Williams combined for 169 rushing yards and a pair of touchdowns while leading Buffalo over Dallas.

Quarterback Tyrod Taylor also rushed for 67 yards for the Bills (7-8). Taylor now has 517 rushing yards on the season, a record for Bills quarterbacks.

Quarterback Kellen Moore could not spark the Cowboys (4-11), completing 13 of 31 passes for 186 yards and an interception.

Bears 26, Bucs 21

TAMPA —The Chicago Bears converted two fumbles into 10 points, leading the way to a win over Tampa Bay.

Running back Doug Martin took over the NFL rushing lead for the Buccaneers, but his two fumbles were huge in shifting momentum to the Bears, who got a second-quarter field goal off the first fumble and a touchdown on the first play of the fourth quarter off the second.

Chicago (6-9) got strong running — and zero fumbles — from Jeremy Langford and Matt Forte in handing the Bucs (6-9) their third straight loss

Lions 32, 49ers 17

DETROIT, Michigan — Matthew Stafford threw for 301 yards and two touchdowns and Detroit snapped a nine-game losing streak to San Francisco.

Wide receiver Calvin Johnson, who may have been playing his final home game, caught six passes for 77 yards and a touchdown for the Lions.(6-9). Detroit will have to devote \$24 million of its salary cap next season to retain Johnson, who caught just two passes in the previous two games, unless they restructure the perennial All-Pro's contract.

Blaine Gabbert passed for 225 yards and two touchdowns for the 49ers (4-11), who were shut out in the second half.

Cardinals 38, Packers 8

GLENDALE, Arizona — Cardinals quarterback Carson Palmer passed for two touchdowns, rookie running back David Johnson accounted for 127 yards from scrimmage and a score, and the Cardinals registered nine sacks en route to their ninth consecutive win.

Two of the sacks on quarterback Aaron Rodgers resulted in fumbles

and touchdown returns by the Cardinals' defense.

With the victory, a franchise-record 13th of the season, the Cardinals secured no less than the No. 2 seed in the NFC and with it, a first-round bye in the playoffs — another franchise first.

Packers coach Mike McCarthy decided to remove Rodgers with 9:56 left to play. Rodgers was 15 of 28 for 151 yards with one touchdown and one interception.

Palmer finished 18 of 27 for 265 yards to go along with his two touchdowns and one interception. Wide receiver Michael Floyd led the Cardinals with six catches for 111 yards.

Saints 38, Jaguars 27

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana — Playing on a sore foot, quarterback Drew Brees threw for 412 yards and three touchdowns, leading the Saints to victory.

Running back Tim Hightower produced 122 yards and two scores on 27 carries for the Saints (6-9).

Brees, who completed 25 of 36 passes in his 13th career 400-yard game, did not practice during the week because of a torn plantar fascia in his right foot, but the injury did not seem to faze him.

Brees led New Orleans on touchdown drives of 80, 98, 80 and 88 yards, and the Saints dominated the Jaguars with 537 yards in total offense, and a 29-21 advantage in first downs.

Jaguars quarterback Blake Bortles wound up 27-for-35 for 368 yards with four touchdown passes and two interceptions.

Rams 23, Seahawks 10

SEATTLE, Washington — St. Louis linebacker Akeem Ayers had two key fumble recoveries, one of which he returned for a first-quarter touchdown, sparking the Rams to a big early lead on the way to a road win.

It marked only the second time, and the first since 2004, that St. Louis swept Seattle in two divisional games in the same season.

Ayers returned a fumble 45 yards for a touchdown to help propel the Rams (7-8) to a 16-0 lead, then he cemented the win with another recovery, falling on a fumble

by Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson at the St. Louis 11-yard line with 2:15 remaining.

The Seahawks (9-6) saw their five-game winning streak end. They had already clinched a playoff berth and were out of contention for the NFC West title before the game started, so the defeat had very little bearing on Seattle's postseason outlook.

Seattle wide receiver Doug Baldwin (eight receptions, 118 yards) caught a touchdown pass for the fifth week in a row, giving him a franchise record of 14 for the season, but it wasn't enough in the loss.

Redskins 38, Eagles 24

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania — Quarterback Kirk Cousins completed 31 of 46 passes for 365 yards and four touchdowns while leading the Washington Redskins to the NFC East division title following a 38-24 win over the Philadelphia Eagles on Saturday night.

The Redskins (8-7), who have won three in a row since starting 5-7, will compete in the playoffs for the first time since 2012.

The Eagles fell to 6-9 and will miss the postseason for the second time in three years under coach Chip Kelly. While Kelly won 20 games in his first two seasons, the Eagles still haven't won a playoff game since he arrived.

Philadelphia has given up 34 touchdown passes this season, the most in franchise history.

Running back DeMarco Murray gave the Eagles hope when he rushed for a 4-yard touchdown to close the gap to 23-17 with 4:47 left in the third quarter.

From there, it was all Washington.

Murray fumbled a pitch from quarterback Sam Bradford and Washington cornerback DeAngelo Hall scooped the ball up and scampered 17 yards for a score and a 30-17 advantage.

Cousins later tossed his fourth touchdown pass, this time to wide receiver Pierre Garcon from 13 yards out. A two-point conversion gave the Redskins a commanding 38-17 lead.

The Eagles' fans then quickly escaped for the exits.



Matthew Adams (without shirt) leads the pack of runners at the start of the 10th annual Epic 5K Finale on Sunday morning at West Market Square in Bangor. Adams, who is from Seward, Alaska, went on to win the race with a time of 15 minutes, 47 seconds.

Alaskan runner wins Epic 5K road race

BANGOR — Snow-covered roads and a 32-degree temperature failed to deter a field of 149 runners, including an Alaskan runner who went shirtless in a convincing victory during the Epic Sports Finale 5K Sunday morning.

Matthew Adams, 28, of Seward, Alaska, toured the 3.1-mile course in 15 min-

utes, 47 seconds in a 5:05 pace. The race started and finished at West Market Square, covering parts of State, Hancock and Main streets.

Ken Akiha of Orono finished second in 16:12 while Erik McCarthy of Old Town (16:17), Eric Mauricette of Gaylord, Michigan, (17:54) and Ian Fraser of Brewer

(18:06) rounded out the top five.

Two college runners home for the holidays, Angelyn Masters and Adrienne Carmack of Veazie, both 20, crossed the finish line in a first-place tie in the women's division with a 20:36 clocking. Masters, who is competing at the University of New Hampshire, and Carmack, who is

running at Colby College, turned in a 6:38 pace.

Adrienne Carmack's older sister, Mary, finished third in 21:19 and was followed by Phoebe Peckham of Orland (21:35). Emily Kagan, a Bangor native and UFC fighter now living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, rounded out the top five in 22:05.

Manning

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interview on ESPN.

"Angry, furious, disgusted is really how I feel," Manning told ESPN's Lisa Salters on Sunday. "Sickened by it. I'm not sure I understand how someone can make something up about somebody, admit that he made it up, and yet somehow it's published in a story. I don't understand that."

"It's completely fabricated, complete trash, garbage. It makes me sick that it brings Ashley into it, her medical history being violated. Any medical treatment that my wife received, that's her business."

The documentary titled "The Dark Side" reportedly based its investigation on

comments made by Charlie Sly, a pharmacist now based in Austin, Texas. Sly has since recanted his story.

Sly formerly worked at Indianapolis-based Guyer Institute and he told Al Jazeera that the Mannings were going to the clinic after normal business hours to receive intravenous treatments.

Sly also claimed the Guyer Institute shipped HGH to Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Ryan Howard, Washington Nationals infielder Ryan Zimmerman and former boxer Mike Tyson.

Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker James Harrison and three members of the Green Bay Packers — defensive Julius Peppers and linebackers Clay Matthews and Mike Neal — also were mentioned. The report said Matthews received painkillers and Harrison, Pep-

pers and Neal received performance-enhancing drugs.

ESPN reported that Harrison denied the allegations.

William Burck of Quinn Emanuel, the attorney for Howard and Zimmerman, issued a statement criticizing the report.

"It's inexcusable and irresponsible that Al Jazeera would provide a platform and broadcast outright lies about Mr. Howard and Mr. Zimmerman," he said.

MLB said it was never made aware of the allegations but after reviewing all available information said "we intend to conduct a thorough investigation."

Manning told ESPN on Saturday night that he has been to the facility but not for anything unsavory or unethical.

"Yes, I have been a patient under Dr. Guyer," Manning

told ESPN. "I have had nutrient therapy, oxygen therapy and other treatments that are holistic in nature but never HGH. My wife has never provided any medication for me to take."

"Ashley and I never attended the clinic together after hours. There were times when I went in the morning and there were times when I went after practice, so this thing about 'after hours' is so misleading because it may have been 5:15 p.m. because their office closed at 5."

Sly made his original claims to British hurdler Liam Collins as part of the Al Jazeera investigation. He later backed off his comments and said Collins secretly recorded him without consent.

"The statements on any recordings or communications that Al Jazeera plans to air are absolutely false and incorrect," Sly said in a statement.

Falcons

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Falcons rookie linebacker Vic Beasley stripped the ball from Newton and defensive end Malliciah Goodman recovered the fumble to seal the win.

"They may have taken us lightly," Beasley said. "But we didn't take them lightly."

One week after battling New York Giants wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. physically and verbally, Carolina Pro Bowl cornerback Josh Norman struggled to keep up with Jones. But Norman wasn't matched up on Jones on the biggest play of the game.

On third and 14, Ryan scrambled to his left and heaved a deep ball to Jones, who was covered by corner Charles Tillman and linebacker Luke Kuechly. Neither could climb with Jones, who leaped up, made the catch and strolled into the end zone for the winning touchdown.

"Just how we drew it up," joked Falcons coach Dan Quinn.

Jones finished with 178 yards on nine receptions and broke his own Falcons record for receiving yards in a season.

Ryan completed 23 of 30 passes for 306 yards. His touchdown pass to Jones was the 200th of his career.

Leading 14-10, the Falcons were driving inside Panthers' territory, before Ryan mis-handled a shotgun snap that

was recovered by Norman and returned to the Falcons' 36-yard line. Carolina had to settle for a 47-yard field goal from Graham Gano, though, cutting the Atlanta lead to 14-13 with 7:59 to play.

Ryan redeemed himself on the following drive, marching the Falcons back down the field and setting up a 36-yard field goal by Shayne Graham that put the Falcons up 17-13 with 2:23 to play. Graham tacked on a 54-yard field goal with 1:30 to play.

The Falcons' win comes just two weeks after a 38-0 loss to the Panthers in Carolina.

"This was a measuring-stick game, a complete team win," Quinn said.

Both teams mounted long scoring drives on their opening possessions. Newton capped an 11-play, 80-yard drive with an eight-yard touchdown run and then celebrated with fans in the stands and danced with teammates. It would be Newton's last end-zone dance of the day.

The Panthers, who averaged 38.8 points in their last five games, were held to a season-low 13 points.

"We didn't coach to our abilities or play to our abilities," Carolina coach Ron Rivera said. "But give them credit. This is part of the journey. We have to refocus. But we've accomplished a lot. Let's not lose sight of that."

Atlanta answered on its ensuing drive, with running back Devonta Freeman tying the score on a 4-yard touchdown run early in the second quarter. Freeman finished with 73 yards rushing.

strated by Al Jazeera."

The Colts released a statement Sunday: "We've been made aware of the recent Al Jazeera report concerning Peyton Manning and find it utterly ridiculous," the Colts' statement read. "We are thoroughly familiar with Peyton's tireless work habits, his medical history, and, most importantly, his integrity. Peyton played the game in Indianapolis for 14 years the right way. He never took any shortcuts and it would be absurd to suggest he would have taken prohibited performance enhancing drugs."

"We also note that the 'source' of this allegation has since recanted his story. The entire Indianapolis Colts organization and the Irsay family hope this crude effort to besmirch Peyton's reputation will not be permitted to tarnish the legacy of a great Colt."