

Redskins Legacy: Montana, 49ers Fall In 1986

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Everything pointed to an exciting matchup when the 8-2 Redskins hosted the 6-3-1 49ers in a Monday night game at RFK Stadium on Nov. 17, 1986.

You had the NFC's two winningest teams since 1981 and the winners of eight Super Bowls from the early-1980s to the mid-1990s. Toss in playoff fever, two of the league's most potent offenses and the return of 49ers quarterback Joe Montana – who was starting his second game after having back surgery to remove a ruptured disk two months prior.



"I'd like to be a fan sitting at home with my bowl of popcorn watching this one, or be jumping up and down in the stands on about every play here at RFK," Redskins coach Joe Gibbs said. "These are the kinds (of games) that are easy to get excited about playing."

The clash fell way short of its billing.

In a contest filled with mistakes, penalties and turnovers, the Redskins outlasted San Francisco, 14-6, in 3 hours and 53 minutes of play – the longest Monday night game ever.

It ended at 12:55 on Tuesday morning.

As the game dragged on, the Redskins' loquacious and colorful defensive end, Dexter Manley, was salivating at the chance to follow through on a threat. A few days before the game, he had promised to "ring (Montana's) clock," mixing metaphors in the process.

"We're not going to play patty-cake," Manley, who recorded a career-high 18 sacks that season and made the Pro Bowl, told San Francisco-area reporters. "If I get there, I'd like to ring his clock. I wouldn't want to hurt the guy. But why do you want to protect Joe Montana? If he's hurt, don't play him. If (49ers coach) Bill Walsh doesn't want us to ring his clock, don't play him."

Gibbs spoke with Manley about those comments, as always advising him to tone it down for fear of riling up opponents. In the game, Manley plowed into Montana a few times after he released the ball, once grabbing his jersey and yanking him to the ground. He also forced the quarterback to fumble once.

Still, one of the game's greatest quarterbacks ever threw for 441 yards on 33-of-60 passing. His top target was wide receiver Jerry Rice, who caught 12 throws for 204 yards.

Montana showed his rust from the layoff, though, once missing a wide-open Rice in the end zone and tossing interceptions to linebacker Calvin Daniels, safety Ken Coffey and cornerback Darrell Green.

Redskins quarterback Jay Schroeder, who threw for a team-record 4,109 yards in 1986, looked erratic, too. He completed only 17-of-40 passes for 170 yards, with a touchdown and an interception.

The combined 100 passes attempted by Montana and Schroeder were two short of an NFL record for a game.

Washington, which led the whole game, crafted a 67-yard touchdown drive in the first quarter to take a 7-0 lead. Running back George Rogers scored from a yard out. A 34-yard field goal by San Francisco's Ray Wersching accounted for the other first-half points.

The Redskins stretched the lead to 11 in the third quarter. Soon after punt returner Ken Jenkins faked a reverse handoff and ran 39 yards, Schroeder threw a 27-yard scoring pass to wide receiver Gary Clark.

The 49ers, who managed only a field goal from that point on, gained 501 total yards to 266 for the Redskins but failed to sustain much on offense, committing 15 of the game's 18 penalties.

For the Redskins, the 14-6 win moved them into a first-place tie with the Giants in the NFC East at 9-2. They finished 12-4 to earn a wild card spot, winning two playoff games before losing in the NFC championship to the Giants, who captured Super Bowl XXI.

Mike Richman is the author of [The Redskins Encyclopedia](#) and the [Washington Redskins Football Vault](#). He hosts a podcast called "Burgundy & Gold Flashback." His web site is redskinshistorian.com. Check out his Facebook [Friend](#) and [Fan](#) pages and follow him on [Twitter](#).

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