



Redskins Legacy: Replacements Shock Cowboys

Posted Oct 24, 2014



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The Redskins are heavy underdogs heading into Monday night's clash against the Cowboys. That's not surprising, with a 2-5 squad that has struggled most of the season playing on the road against a 6-1 team that has won six straight and is the talk of the league.

But Washington has faced long odds before in a Monday night game against the Cowboys in Dallas. Turn the clock back to Oct. 19, 1987, when the matchup seemed like David vs. Goliath.

It was the third and final game of the replacement series that was implemented after the regular players went on strike that season to demand a more lucrative form of free agency.

The fierce rivals had each won both of their replacement games and stood 3-1 prior to their battle for first place in the NFC East.

The big difference is that no Redskins had crossed the picket line, while about 20 Cowboys had returned to play, the most of any team. At least six Cowboys starters were in uniform that night, including two future Hall of Famers, running back Tony Dorsett and defensive tackle Randy White, plus quarterback Danny White and defensive end Ed "Too Tall" Jones.

You would have been hard-pressed to find a betting man that would take the Redskins even-up. But whenever the Redskins and Cowboys meet, one can expect the unexpected.

This game was no different: Redskins 13, Cowboys 7.

Before a crowd of 60,612 at Texas Stadium and a nationally-televised audience, the Redskins took the lead on Obed Ariri's 19-yard field goal six minutes into the game and never looked back.

Washington's defense, led by no-names such as linemen Dan Benish and Steve Martin and linebacker Eric Wilson, never allowed Dallas' offense to get untracked. Benish and Wilson both recovered fumbles, and Martin posted two of the Redskins' six sacks.

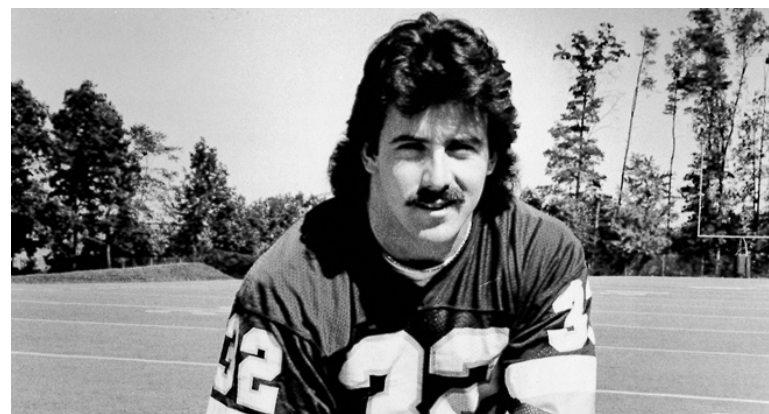
The Redskins received a blow late in the first quarter, when quarterback Ed Rubbert was sidelined with a bruised shoulder. He was replaced by Tony Robinson, a one-time Heisman Trophy candidate who was on a work furlough from prison following a cocaine conviction. Robinson played the rest of the way, completing 11-of-18 passes for 152 yards with two interceptions.

Washington went up 10-0 in the third quarter on Ted Wilson's 16-yard reverse and Ariri's conversion. Dallas scored a few minutes later on Danny White's 38-yard pass to replacement player Kelvin Edwards.

But White was visibly frustrated at times and would do no more. Robinson, for his part, led the Redskins to victory despite not producing glittery stats. Four of his completions, including gains of 30 and 42 yards, came on third-down plays as the Redskins clung to their lead in the second half.

Robinson's favorite target was tight end Craig McEwen, who caught seven passes for 108 yards. Teammate Lionel Vital, a running back, rushed for 136. The Redskins had cut McEwen and Vital during the 1986 and 1987 training camps, respectively, before re-signing them after the regulars went on strike.

"Me and Tony just had something going," said McEwen, who was one of at least 10 replacement players signed to the Redskins' regular roster. "(Coach) Joe Gibbs saw it. I wasn't fast enough to get to the end zone on one breakaway, but the guy I was playing against, I just had his number."



After Ariri's 39-yarder with 6:13 to play, the Redskins' defense stopped one last Cowboys surge that ended when White's pass bounced off Edwards' hands inside the 5.

Washington's ecstatic replacements celebrated by dancing and carrying Gibbs off the field on their shoulders.

The improbable win ranks seventh on the NFL Top 10 for greatest upsets ever. It ended a replacement series when the Redskins were one of only two teams in the league to go 3-0.

The 4-1 squad now held first place in the NFC East and, with the regulars back, went on to finish 11-4 in the regular season (one game was canceled), before beating Chicago and Minnesota in the playoffs and Denver in Super Bowl XXII.

The feats of the replacements, including those on that magical night in Dallas, will never be lost in that championship season.

*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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