

## Redskins Legacy: '05 Rams Win Sparks Streak

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The Redskins were all but buried, written off by many in the sports media with five games left in the 2005 season. Having suffered three straight maddening losses by a total of 10 points, the 5-6 squad appeared destined for its sixth consecutive non-playoff season.

But these Redskins proved to be special and resilient. They reeled off five straight wins to finish 10-6 and earn a wild card spot.

The streak began with a 24-9 win over the Rams at the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis on Dec. 3, 2005. Redskins running backs Clinton Portis and Rock Cartwright rushed for 136 and 118 yards, respectively, while the defense held the Rams to a season-low 210 yards.

The Redskins, wearing white-on-white uniforms for the first time since early in the 2003 season, took a 7-0 lead in the first quarter. The defense forced the Rams into a 4<sup>th</sup> and 29 from their 1. A punt gave the Redskins possession in St. Louis territory, and two plays later Portis ran 47 yards for a score, his first of two on the day.

Portis was getting his wish. After a 23-17 overtime loss to the Chargers left the Redskins 5-6 and one loss from being out of the playoff race, the team's star back approached coach Joe Gibbs and demanded to carry the ball more as part of a smash-mouth offensive attack.

Starting in St. Louis, he rushed for at least 100 yards in each of the last five regular-season games behind a talented offensive line, setting franchise marks for single-season rushing yards (1,516) and 100-yard rushing games (nine).

"That was a team decision," Portis said of his desire to take on more of the load. "We knew our bread and butter. Let's stop trying to fool people and trick people and hold onto a lead. Let's run it down their throat. That's what we did."



Against the Rams, the defense forced St. Louis to punt on its first four possessions. But the Redskins failed to pad their lead, with John Hall missing a 45-yard field goal.

St. Louis tied it at 7 midway through the second period with an 11-play, 86-yard drive. Rookie quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick ran seven yards for the touchdown.

On the next possession, Cartwright ran 52 yards for a 1st and goal at the 6. But an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty pushed the ball back 15 yards, and the Redskins settled for Hall's 38-yard field goal and a 10-7 halftime lead.

After a scoreless third quarter, Portis ran one yard for a touchdown early in the fourth to cap a 69-yard drive. Completions by quarterback Mark Brunell of 30 yards to wide receiver **Santana Moss** and 29 yards to tight end Robert Royal highlighted the drive.

The Rams earned two points on a sack when Brunell fumbled the ball out of the end zone, creating a 17-9 game. But the Redskins gave themselves a nice cushion on their next drive, a nine-play, 55-yarder that ended on Brunell's 4-yard pass to tight end Chris Cooley.

Portis and Cartwright both ran four times for a total of 51 yards on the drive.

"The offensive line did a great job," Cartwright said afterward. "All I had to do was get the ball and run with it."

The 6-6 Redskins were now firmly in the playoff race, but not everyone was convinced that they'd reach the postseason.

"This was a great win for the Redskins, but they have too much to overcome to make the playoffs," ESPN analyst and former NFL quarterback Sean Salisbury wrote. "At the beginning of the season, I thought this was a middle-of-the-road 8-8 team, and my thoughts haven't changed. They went through a stretch where the defense played exceptionally well, but right now they still have too many holes to make the playoffs this season."

The Redskins surprised Salisbury and others in the media. After the Rams' game, they beat the Cardinals, Cowboys, Giants and Eagles to finish 10-6 and make the playoffs.

They topped Tampa Bay, 17-10, in the opening round, but their season ended with a 20-10 loss to the Seahawks the next week.

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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