



2011 WASHINGTON REDSKINS

Record: 5-11

4th Place – NFC East

Head Coach: Mike Shanahan

2011

Sept. 11	W	28-14	NY Giants
Sept. 18	W	22-21	Arizona
Sept. 26	L	16-18	at Dallas
Oct. 2	W	17-10	at St. Louis
Oct. 16	L	13-20	Philadelphia
Oct. 23	L	20-33	at Carolina
Oct. 30	L	0-23	at Buffalo (Toronto)
Nov. 6	L	11-19	San Francisco
Nov. 13	L	9-20	at Miami
Nov. 20	L	24-27 (OT)	Dallas
Nov. 27	W	23-17	at Seattle
Dec. 4	L	19-34	NY Jets
Dec. 11	L	27-34	New England
Dec. 18	W	23-10	at NY Giants
Dec. 24	L	26-33	Minnesota
Jan. 1	L	10-34	at Philadelphia

5-11

Rex-Beck Experiment Dooms Redskins in 2011

Year two of the rebuilding plan under Redskins coach Mike Shanahan was just that: a team rebuilding and trying to find traction, slip-sliding along the way.

The Redskins regressed in the win-loss column from 6-10 in 2010 to 5-11 in 2011. They finished in last place in the NFC East and out of the playoffs for the fourth straight year and recorded their third straight 10-loss season for the second time in franchise history. They also posted a 2-6 mark at home, their worst record at FedExField in the 13-year ownership regime of Dan Snyder.

The Redskins opened the season 3-1, but an ensuing six-game losing streak proved devastating. They averaged 13 points per game during that stretch and at one point produced only one touchdown in 13 quarters, a garbage time score. They also switched quarterbacks twice during that period, going from the erratic Rex Grossman to the inexperienced John Beck and back to Grossman. After a 20-9 loss to the Dolphins, the fifth straight defeat, defensive lineman Barry Cofield said it was possible that the Redskins would lose the rest of their games.

“It could get very ugly,” Cofield said. “It could get historically ugly.”

The Redskins won two other games, including one over the eventual Super Bowl-champion Giants, 23-10. That was Washington’s second win over the Giants that season, the first time the Redskins had beaten their NFC East rivals twice in one year since 1999. They became the sixth team in NFL history to defeat the eventual Super Bowl champs twice in one season, joining the 1995 Redskins among other teams.

In the end, though, 2011 marked another trying year for the Redskins and their loyal fan base. The season left Shanahan, who posted the worst record of his 18-year head coaching career, mentally exhausted.

“It always takes a toll on you,” he said. “With all the time that you put in, every time you have a loss, especially with the effort that you put in, it’s like somebody sticks a knife in you. It’s tough to go through a season like that. Thank God I haven’t gone through any like this before. I might not have been in this profession very long. But it’s something that really drives you, motivates you. It’s something that I look forward to doing – putting a great football team together and doing it the right way. And sometimes it takes a little bit longer than sometimes expected.”

The most glaring problem was the absence of a very good to elite player at the most critical position: quarterback. Before training camp, Shanahan traded one of his headaches from the prior year, Donovan McNabb, for a sixth-round pick in 2012 and a conditional one in 2013. But the coach opted not to find a starter through free agency such as Matt Hasselbeck or the draft such as Florida State’s Christian Ponder, who threw for nearly 2,000 yards for the Vikings, or Texas Christian’s Andy Dalton, who threw 20 touchdowns and nearly 3,400 yards for the Bengals and made the Pro Bowl.

Instead, Shanahan said he was staking his “reputation” on Grossman and Beck “that they can play.” The plan backfired. Grossman, in his ninth season, passed for 3,151 yards and 16 touchdowns. But “Good Rex Bad Rex” threw 20 interceptions, a number of them killers, completed 57.9 percent of his passes and finished with a paltry 72.4 quarterback rating. Beck was horrid. Having started only four games in his five-year career, all losses, he went 0-3 as a starter in 2011, threw mostly dink and dunk passes, and took 16 sacks. Both quarterbacks lacked playmakers and receivers who could stretch the field, but they proved unequivocally that finding a franchise quarterback was the Redskins’ No. 1 offseason goal.

Linebacker Brian Orakpo said the Redskins had “very high expectations” heading into the second year under Shanahan.

“The thing we lack right now is consistency,” he said after a 33-26 loss to the Vikings in the next-to-last game, which followed the 23-10 win over the Giants. “You see how we dominated a team the week before and then come out here and lay an egg this week. It’s kind of the consistency we lack. The good teams don’t do that.”

All along, the Redskins were still taking baby steps to rebound from the chaotic situation that existed before Shanahan arrived, trying to become younger, faster and deeper in personnel and talent. Based on that measuring stick, the season could be considered a success. All 12 of the draft picks made the team and only one didn’t play.

With the 10th pick in the 2011 draft, the Redskins traded down to No. 16 and selected Purdue defensive end Ryan Kerrigan, who was converted to outside linebacker and showed flashes of dominance, finishing with 7.5 sacks, second-most on the team behind Orakpo (9.0). Kerrigan earned *Pro Football Weekly*/PFWA All-Rookie honors. Joining him on the All-Rookie team was running back Roy Helu, who tallied 1,019 combined rushing and receiving yards, the first Redskin rookie to accomplish that feat in nearly two decades. Fellow running back Evan Royster also showed sparks, rushing for 328 yards with a 5.9-yard average. Eight rookies started games.

But the Redskins barely saw two of their other promising first-year players. A torn ACL in the preseason left defensive tackle Jarvis Jenkins on injured reserve. His loss was a tough one. Wide receiver Leonard Hankerson suffered a season-ending hip injury during an eight-catch, 106-yard performance against the Dolphins.

In terms of veterans, the Redskins made solid acquisitions in wide receiver Jabar Gaffney, plus Cofield and fellow defensive lineman Stephen Bowen. Gaffney posted team-highs in catches (68) and receiving yards (947), both career-highs, and touchdown receptions (5), while Cofield and Bowen made up well for the departure of malcontent defensive tackle Albert Haynesworth, the most expensive free agent bust in NFL history. In a titanic accomplishment in itself, Shanahan erased remnants of the Haynesworth nightmare by trading him to the Patriots for a fifth-round pick. New England cut him during the season.

Fred Davis also elevated his game in 2011, his fourth NFL season. He established himself as the team's premier tight end ahead of injury-riddled Chris Cooley, setting career-highs in receptions (59) and receiving yards (796). But Davis was suspended for the last four games after testing positive three times for marijuana, as was second-year offensive tackle Trent Williams for the same offense.

Shanahan sounded optimistic heading into the 2012 offseason.

"I see a big difference than two years ago," he said. "We have a much younger football team. We have a lot more depth at a lot of different positions. I feel good with the type of players that we do have. We still need a good draft [and] good free agency. We still need to improve from where we're at right now. Our record obviously dictates that, but I feel good about the football team and the direction we're headed."