



2012 WASHINGTON REDSKINS

Record: 10-6

1st Place – NFC East

Head Coach: Mike Shanahan

2012

Sept. 9	W	40-32	@ New Orleans
Sept. 16	L	31-28	@ St. Louis
Sept. 23	L	38-31	Cincinnati
Sept. 30	W	24-22	@ Tampa Bay
Oct. 7	L	24-17	Atlanta
Oct. 14	W	38-26	Minnesota
Oct. 21	L	27-23	@ NY Giants
Oct. 28	L	27-12	@ Pittsburgh
Nov. 4	L	21-13	Carolina
Nov. 18	W	31-6	Philadelphia
Nov. 22	W	38-31	@ Dallas
Dec. 3	W	17-16	NY Giants
Dec. 9	W	31-28 (OT)	Baltimore
Dec. 16	W	38-21	@ Cleveland
Dec. 23	W	27-20	@ Philadelphia
Dec. 30	W	28-18	Dallas
Jan. 6	L	24-14	Seattle (Playoffs)

10-6

Spectacular Rookie RG3 Leads Redskins to Historic Season

Often in sports, players and coaches must rise in the face of adversity and defy those who say “that’s not possible.” Overcoming such hurdles frequently serves as the dividing line between success and failure.

In 2012, the Redskins faced a daunting situation. Holding a 3-6 record at the bye week and riding a three-game losing streak, and with a coach who vowed to “evaluate” his players in hopes of seeing who would be on the team for “years to come,” the Redskins met the challenge. They reeled off seven straight wins to craft a 10-6 mark and capture the NFC East for the first time since 1999.

In the process, they earned their first playoff berth since 2007 and became the first 3-6 team to make the postseason since the 1996 Jacksonville Jaguars. The Redskins’ magical ride ended in the first round with a 24-14 loss to Seattle.

The historic season breathed new life into a franchise that had spent most of the past two decades wandering in the desert, and it thrilled a Redskins fan base long yearning for a winner. It also validated the hiring of two-time Super Bowl winner Mike Shanahan as head coach after the 2009 season. His first two years in D.C. ended with 6-10 and 5-11 marks, respectively, and the 3-6 start in 2012 further tainted his resume. But he applied his special coaching touch to help orchestrate the most fabulous turnaround in Redskins history.

A dynamic rookie quarterback known as RG3 also played a titanic role in the memorable year, posting one of the greatest rookie seasons in NFL history.

Robert Griffin III, a Heisman Trophy winner selected by the Redskins with the No. 2 pick in the draft, was nothing but spectacular. Displaying a multi-dimensional style of play that in many respects the NFL had never seen, and operating out of innovative strategies called the “pistol formation” and “zone read option,” he toyed with defenses with his pinpoint passing and speedy legs that left opponents lunging in vain. His performance was breathtaking at times.

His 102.4 quarterback rating, 1.3 interception percentage (20 touchdowns, five interceptions) and 815 rushing yards were all NFL records for rookie quarterbacks. (His interception percentage was tied with New England’s Tom Brady for the lowest in the NFL). He obliterated the Redskins’ record books with all-time rookie passing marks including yardage (3,200) and quarterback rushing records such as touchdowns (seven) and attempts (120). Among a slew of honors, he made the Pro Bowl and was named NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year, for which he beat out two other sensational first-year quarterbacks, the Colts’ Andrew Luck and Seattle’s Russell Wilson, in a lopsided vote.

Griffin, equipped with charisma, charm and a million-dollar smile, also evolved into a cultural phenomenon, with national TV endorsement deals and the hottest-selling jersey in the country. He established himself as the toast of

Washington and its most popular pro athlete, topping the Capitals' Alex Ovechkin, the Nationals' Stephen Strasburg and the Wizards' John Wall.

Another first-year superstar, sixth-round draft pick Alfred Morris, rushed for a Redskins-record 1,613 yards and 13 touchdowns, both second in the league. His yardage total broke Clinton Portis' mark of 1,516 set in 2005. He was named a Pro Bowl alternate and a member of the Associated Press All-Pro second team.

With the NFC East title on the line in a season-ending showdown between the 9-6 Redskins and 8-7 Cowboys at FedExField – a winner-take-all and loser-go-home scenario – Morris pounded the Cowboys with 200 yards on the ground and three touchdowns to lead the way in a 28-18 victory. Griffin ran for the other score, and the Redskins' defense picked off three passes by Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo, including one by unheralded linebacker Rob Jackson that essentially sealed the win.

Afterward, Griffin said it felt “awesome” to be division champions.

“I’m the happiest guy in the room,” he told reporters. “I was nine years old in 1999. I stand before you at 22 and the Redskins are NFC East champions. To me, it’s just incredible. I was talking to Alfred after the game, and this has been the first time the Redskins have been the NFC East champion since 1999, and we came in here and did it in one year. The sky’s the limit for this team, not only this year, but in the future. We are definitely looking to capitalize on it this year.”

Shanahan lauded his squad for its resilience.

“For them to fight for seven weeks to put themselves in this position just says a lot about who they are and what level they’ve played at for about seven weeks,” he said. “That we accomplished our first goal is really a tribute to the character of the guys in that locker room.”

Having clinched the division on such a high note, the Redskins were beaming with confidence and momentum. But they failed to make a run to the Super Bowl, falling to the Seahawks, a wild card team, in the first playoff game at FedExField in 13 years.

Losing was painful enough. But the way the season crumbled amid controversy hurt even more. With the Redskins leading, 7-0, late in the first quarter and closing in on another score, Griffin rolled to his right and threw an incomplete pass in the end zone, before landing awkwardly out of bounds. He limped back to the huddle.

He said after the game that his right knee buckled on the play and “scared” him a bit – the same knee where he sprained his lateral collateral ligament (LCL) about a month prior, and the same knee where he tore his anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in college at Baylor.

Two plays later, Griffin threw a short TD pass to tight end Logan Paulsen for a 14-0 lead. But the once-prolific quarterback wasn’t himself from then on, throwing one interception that was underthrown when it appeared he was unable to plant his right leg. And as he shut down, so did the offense, and the Seahawks climbed back despite a valiant effort by Washington’s defense. The

Redskins clung to a 14-13 halftime lead until midway through the fourth quarter, when a touchdown and two-point conversion put Seattle up, 21-14.

On the ensuing drive, center Will Montgomery rolled a snap, and the Seahawks recovered the ball on the 5. Griffin had tried to pick it up, but his right knee twisted in a scene much more gruesome than the first injury. He lay in agony on the field but walked off on his own power, before Seattle kicked a field goal for a 24-14 lead. With backup quarterback Kirk Cousins in the rest of the way, the Redskins failed to mount a comeback.

Afterward, reporters grilled Shanahan about his decision to keep Griffin in the game after his first injury and not replace him with Cousins, another rookie who had impressed while subbing for RG3 late in the season. The coach said Griffin assured him that he was well enough to play effectively. He also revealed that the Redskins' orthopedist, Dr. James Andrews, had cleared Griffin to continue playing.

"I talked to Robert, and he said to me, 'Coach, there's a difference between being injured and being hurt,'" Shanahan said. "He said, 'I can guarantee I'm hurt right now, but give me a chance to win this football game because I guarantee I'm not injured.' That was enough for me. I thought he did enough this year to have that opportunity to stay in the football game. He said, 'Trust me. I want to be in there, and I deserve to be in there,' and I couldn't disagree with him."

Griffin, a fierce competitor, said there was no way he was hanging up his cleats after the first injury against Seattle, and that he did not hurt the team by staying in the game.

"My job is to be out there if I can play," he said. "The only time I couldn't play was when I went down. I took myself out of the game. That's just the way you have to play. I'm the best option for this team, and that's why I'm the starter."

Two days later, with many local and national media second-guessing Shanahan for leaving RG3 in the game, the nationally renowned Andrews conducted extensive surgery on his right knee. In a statement, the doctor said a full recovery was expected, and that it is "everybody's hope and belief that due to Robert's high motivation, he will be ready for the 2013 season," although other medical experts speculated that it could take longer for Griffin to return to peak game condition.

Griffin vowed that the Redskins would be even more successful in 2013.

"I just wanted to say to the fans in D.C. and across the nation, this year they've been great for us just cheering us on," he said after the loss to Seattle. "At away games they show up in the masses and at home they really make it feel like a home field advantage. We said this when I was in college, we actually got a chance to sit at the dinner table and experience success, and it was a good meal. But now we want to go back and get dessert, and we'll be ready to get dessert next year."

“10 for 80”

The 2012 season marked the 80th anniversary of the Redskins, who kicked off in 1932 in Boston. Thus, 10 names known as the “10 for 80” were added to the team’s all-time greatest list to form the 80 Greatest Redskins. The “10 for 80” were announced prior to the season and took a bow at FedExField when the Redskins hosted Carolina on alumni day on Nov. 4, 2012. Unlike in 2002, when the 70 Greatest Redskins were announced, assistant coaches and front-office personnel were eligible for inclusion in 2012. Current Redskins had to be on the roster for at least 10 seasons.

The “10 for 80” consisted of (Redskins years noted):

Jon Jansen
OT, 1999-2008

Chris Samuels
OT, 2000-2009

Clinton Portis
RB, 2004-2010

Sean Taylor
Safety, 2004-2007

LaVar Arrington
LB, 2000-2005

Roy Jefferson
WR, 1971-1976

Terry Hermeling
OT, 1970-1980

Bobby Beathard
GM, 1978-1989

Joe Bugel
OL Coach, 1981-1989 & 2004-2009

Richie Petitbon
Assistant Coach, 1978-1992
Defensive Coordinator, 1981-1992
Head Coach, 1993
Safety, 1971-1972