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NFL Wild Card Weekend Recap

Sam Bunn, Volunteer Reporter

The NFL playoffs are back. After a tumultuous season, the NFL Wild Card weekend opened Jan. 15 and featured plenty of games that left us on the edge of our seats.

Kansas City Chiefs 42, Pittsburgh Steelers 21

This divisional matchup started off rocky for the Chiefs. A slow start from MVP candidate Patrick Mahomes resulted in a forced fumble recovered for a defensive touchdown and gave the Chiefs an early hole to climb out of. Kansas City was able to right the ship afterwards, with Mahomes throwing for 404 yards and five touchdowns. The Steelers simply weren't able to keep up. Star running back Najee Harris gained just 29 yards on the ground and lost a crucial fumble.

San Francisco 49ers 23, Dallas Cowboys 17

Second-year Electrical Engineering student and Cowboys fan Johan Ibarra was excited before the game.

"My whole family are fans [of the Cowboys]," Ibarra said. "There's a lot of energy."

Unfortunately for Johan and other Cowboys fans, head coach Mike McCarthy made a baffling call at the game's most pivotal moment. With under a minute left, Dallas was marching down the field, needing a touchdown to steal the game from the Niners. With fifteen seconds left, McCarthy called a run play and allowed time to run out under his nose, much to the astonishment of fans. McCarthy's defense also failed to gameplan for star wideout Deebo Samuel. Samuel and running back Elijah Mitchell won the game for the Niners, racking up a combined 168 yards and two touchdowns on the ground. Unfortunately, the victory came at a cost for San Francisco, with quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo and key defenders Nick Bosa and Fred Warner leaving with injuries.

Mercedes Garcia, an avid 49ers fan and marine and conservation biology major, was thrilled that her team pulled off the upset.

"It was a great game," Garcia said. "Although, I could've gone without all the injuries going into next week."

Tampa Bay Buccaneers 31, Philadelphia Eagles 15

The Eagles surprisingly snuck into the playoffs despite going 0-6 against playoff teams during the regular season. It did not come as a surprise for most fans when the Buccaneers jumped out to a 31-0 lead, with four different players scoring a touchdown by the end of the third quarter. Meanwhile, all Eagles not named Ryan Kerrigan (one and a half sacks) put up the combined resistance of a wet paper bag. Next season looks promising for Philly, but for now they've got a long plane ride home.

Buffalo Bills 47, New England Patriots 17

Never before in NFL history has a team played a perfect offensive game. But history was made when Buffalo's offense took the Patriots to town on Sunday, scoring a touchdown every time they touched the ball. Josh Allen threw more touchdowns (five) than incompletions, with two scores going to emerging red zone threat Dawson Knox. The Patriots were forced to move away from the running game early, with leading rusher Damien Harris gaining just 30 yards on nine carries. The Bills look to keep up this offensive firestorm next week against the Chiefs in a game that is shaping up to be a shootout.

Cincinnati Bengals 26, Las Vegas Raiders 19

It's hard to overstate how much this victory means to a Bengals team that hadn't won a playoff game since George H.W. Bush was president. Ja'Marr Chase torched the Raiders all afternoon with nine catches for 116 yards, and both Tyler Boyd and C.J. Uzomah found the end zone. Las Vegas quarterback Derek Carr had 29 completions in 54 attempts, a lost fumble and threw an interception to seal the loss. Going into a matchup with the Titans and Derrick Henry, the Bengals are significant underdogs. However, this young and scrappy team has shown us that anything is possible.

Los Angeles Rams 34, Arizona Cardinals 11

Wild Card Weekend finished with a matchup between two talented west-coast teams. In the end, Los Angeles emerged victorious over their division rivals. Arizona was in trouble as early as the second quarter when Rams cornerback David Long Jr. intercepted a pass from Cardinals' quarterback Kyler Murray and returned it for a touchdown that put the Rams up 21-0. That pick-six was the worst moment of a terrible day for the young QB, who finished with 137 yards, two interceptions and a quarterback rating of 7.6. Next week, the Rams will be taking on the Buccaneers in a crucial battle that determines which team will move on to the NFC championship game.

Third-year Criminal Justice major Danielle Miller is going to be watching that game closely.

"I don't really have a favorite team," Miller said. "But I root for whoever is playing against [Buccaneers quarterback Tom] Brady."

Now that the wildcard round is over, attention shifts to the next round of the playoffs this weekend. The stakes will only get higher from here on as the winners this week play each other next week with a trip to the Super Bowl on the line.