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Seahawks Snap Losing Streak, Right the Ship Against Falcons

Morgan Keller, Volunteer Reporter

After a hot start to the NFL season winning three in a row under new head coach Mike Macdonald, the Seattle Seahawks hobbled into week seven at 3-3 after three straight losses, most recently to storied division rival the San Francisco 49ers.

The Seahawks fell to the 49ers last Thursday at Lumen Field in a disappointing home loss (36-24) that showcased the highs and lows of this young team and coaching staff. In a battle of two injury-riddled teams, Seattle again appeared worse off without their key defensive pieces, allowing 483 total offensive yards on the night to the 49ers, 228 of which were on the ground. This comes after letting up 420 and 516 total yards respectively to the New York Giants and Detroit Lions the previous two weeks.

The semi-highlight of the game and the season so far for Seattle is their offense under rookie play caller Ryan Grubb, as quarterback Geno Smith stands high as the league's leading passer after a 312 passing-yard performance against San Francisco. The game for the offense was marred by two interceptions and a sheepish rushing average of 2.6 yards per carry, further impacted by a fumble on special teams.

The reasons for the Seahawks' losing streak can be pinpointed with problems in turnover differential, the run defense and all-around team play—factors which were acknowledged by Seattle's coaching staff after the game. In Seattle's post-game press conference, Macdonald emphasized that work needs to be done all around but that the team has the potential to be great.

"We're not playing well enough to be the team we need to be. We have the people in the building, our players, our coaches, to become a really good football team. And right now, we're just coming up short," Macdonald said. "We gotta start faster, we have to win the takeaway differential, that's a team stat."

Despite the team's shortcomings of late, the general consensus among fans is that the Seahawks do have a lot of potential that can be fulfilled, just as long as they clean things up. Seattle University fourth-year international business major Lachlan Soughan shared this sentiment.

"It's kind of been fashionably Seahawks tradition to have at least a level of mediocrity," Soughan said. "There's positive signs but I think the potential has yet to be seen."

Including week seven, the Hawks have had an average of 14 players on their injury report, including big names in the trenches on both sides of the ball. Seattle's first-round pick this past offseason, defensive tackle Byron Murphy II, hasn't played since their win in week three but made his return against the Falcons. The Seattle coaching staff holds Murphy in high regard, with defensive



Ahmed Abdullah

coordinator Aden Durde acknowledging his importance to the team in a recent press conference.

"It's huge," Durde said when asked about Murphy's return to the team. "For us, it's been hard not to have him."

Other injuries in Seattle's defensive secondary have led to rookie defensive backs like Nehemiah Pritchett and Dee Williams getting play time. Safety Rayshawn Jenkins was signed from Jacksonville this past offseason and has recently been placed on injured reserve. In the same press conference, Durde signaled that his absence is an opportunity for players to step up and fill his gap.

Despite the ups and downs so far, the Seahawks are still in first place in the NFC West and made it stay that way as they came up against the red-hot 4-2 Atlanta Falcons, who occupy first place in the NFC South. It was posed to be tough competition for Seattle as they tried to break their losing streak, as Atlanta had won three in a row. For the trenches, it's a story of "stoppable force meets moveable object" as the Falcons' weak pass rush went against Seattle's leaky offensive line. Seattle relied on its rookies and second-year players to lead the injury-riddled team to victory on Sunday.

In a dominating 34-14 win in Atlanta, Seattle improved upon their defensive weaknesses and had a clean offensive performance. The Seahawks won the turnover battle, sealing the game in the second half as the defense caused three consecutive turnovers including a strip sack from pass rusher Boye Mafe that was returned for a touchdown by standout second-year pass rusher Derick Hall. Seattle's offense was highlighted by Geno Smith, running back Kenneth Walker and rookie tackle Michael Jerrell. With Seattle's struggling and injured offensive line, Jerrell stepped in and made a huge difference. In part thanks to Jerrell's protection, Smith threw no interceptions while Walker celebrated his birthday with two touchdowns. The Hawks will look to further improve as they come up against even tougher opposition in the 5-2 Buffalo Bills next Sunday.