



# 2013 GUIDE

# WASHINGTON REDSKINS



# TABLE OF CONTENTS:

FEATURE ARTICLES.....	3
FILM BREAKDOWN.....	37
REDSKINS FANTASY OUTLOOK.....	58
NFC EAST TEAM PREVIEWS .....	62
REDSKINS SCHEDULE PREDICTIONS.....	84
VEGAS ODDS & OVER/UNDER PREDICTIONS.....	89
REDSKINS ROUNDTABLE DEBATE.....	95

## **About the Author - Steve Shoup:**

Fanspeak.com Content Manager Steve has been a football fan since 1992 (when he was just 9 years-old). He is our resident NFL/NFL Draft Expert, and is a credentialed member of the media for multiple NFL Draft Scouting Events, to include the Senior Bowl and East-West Shrine Game.

He's been on several The FAN and ESPN Sports Talk Radio affiliates around the country analyzing the NFL & NFL Draft. And now he loves sharing his analysis with you diehard football fans!

## **Special Thanks to Contributing Writers:**

Fanspeak.com Staff Writers John Manuel, Alan Zlotorzynski, Mark Bullock, & Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com all contributed articles for the 2013 NFL Guide. A special thanks to them and their excellent insight.

2013 REDSKINS GUIDE

# FEATURED ARTICLES



# ROOKIE REPORT:

**By Steve Shoup:**

Six of the Redskins seven drafted rookies made the 53 man roster to start the season, though one is on I.R. for the season. Here is my breakdown on what to expect from all of them:

## 53 Man Roster:

### CB David Amerson:

**Outlook:** 3rd or 4th corner to start the year, when on the field, he will line up outside with a starter moving inside

**Prediction:** Amerson has looked better than free agent corner E.J. Biggers so far, and may have won himself the 3rd cornerback role, which is basically a starting position. The Redskins may not want to give him that much playing time too soon to overwhelm him, so it wouldn't be surprising to see him split the role with Biggers early in the season.

Amerson will probably be a high risk/high reward corner, very similar to DeAngelo Hall. He'll come up with some big time plays, and create turnovers, but he'll also get beaten more than you'd like to see or commit too many penalties. As a rookie that is okay for Amerson, but he will hopefully tighten up his game as the season wears on. Though some may push for it, Amerson probably won't get a real starting role unless there is an injury. He could though begin to get more playing time against bigger receivers this year.

### TE Jordan Reed:

**Outlook:** 4th tight end

**Prediction:** Jordan Reed came in with a lot of hype and potential, but he hasn't been able to showcase himself as much and has been buried on the depth chart. Reed missed all the offseason activities due to injury and even missed part of training camp and the first preseason game. On top of that Fred Davis came back healthy and Niles Paul showed some nice development. With a healthy Davis, Logan Paulsen as the best blocker and Niles Paul as a core special teamer, it's tough for Reed to crack the top three tight ends. Given that, it could be tough to see Reed active most game days this season, particularly early on in the season. Keeping four tight ends on the 53 man roster isn't a bad idea, but keeping four tight ends active on game days very much is.

Barring an injury, it is hard to see any of the top three tight ends inactive, which means Reed needs to prove that keeping the 4th tight end active is the right call for the Redskins. Reed will need to show off his receiving skills and how he can be a mismatch for the opposing defenses. Reed will likely get some time this season, but it would be surprising if he's involved in more than 100 offensive snaps.

## **RB Chris Thompson:**

**Outlook:** 4th running back, possible punt returner

**Prediction:** Chris Thompson made the 53 man roster, but now it will be interesting to see how often he makes the 46 man game day roster. While he has breakaway speed and agility, Thompson is clearly the 4th running back on this team to start the year. He's not a guy who could carry the ball 20 times a game if called upon.

Thompson is a third down back and a weapon out of the backfield. The Redskins have that already in Roy Helu Jr, who can also take over primary back assignments if needed. Helu might not be as quick and fast as Thompson, but he's proven himself at this level and is a better pass protector.

Thompson's big chance to make the active roster will be if he can secure the punt returner role. Though he had an impressive preseason finale returning punts, Thompson still probably hasn't locked down this role. He has very limited experience doing it, and did fumble on runs twice in the preseason. Thompson also has to prove that he is far and away the best option to return punts, if the Redskins are going to use an active day spot on him.

He will get some opportunities this year, but they will probably mainly come in the 2nd half of the season. By then he could possibly carve out a niche to get 3-5 touches a game and the punt returner role.

### **OLB Brandon Jenkins:**

**Outlook:** back-up outside linebacker, role player pass rush specialist

**Prediction:** Jenkins might just be a 5th rounder, but as he showed in the preseason, he's not one to overlook this season. Jenkins would have gone a lot higher in the draft if a foot injury didn't wipe out his senior season in 2012. He's fully healthy now and ready to play.

Though Jenkins is listed as a back-up outside linebacker, he's really only a pass rusher at this point. The Redskins are not going to ask him to go in to coverage at this point, and his run defense skills are probably a bit subpar. That is okay though, because the Redskins need to generate more of a pass rush this year, and Jenkins can be utilized in select packages or certain situations that allow him to make a major impact. He may play 250-300 snaps this year, but 80-90% of them should be when he's able to feature his best skill, rushing the passer.

### **S Bacarri Rambo:**

**Outlook:** Projected FS starter

**Prediction:** Rambo is set to start at free safety this year for the Redskins. While there is some concerns with him entering the season, particularly with his run support and angles to the ball carrier, Rambo should upgrade the position for the Redskins over the course of the season. At the start of the year it might be a little rough, but by the end of the season the Redskins could have an average free safety, with the potential to be even better. Rambo will be at his best when he is in a zone and can be a ball-hawking centerfielder.

## **Injured Reserve:**

### **S Phillip Thomas:**

**Outlook:** Thomas will spend the entire season on the Injured Reserve list

**Prediction:** While Thomas can't help the team this year, he should be able to work his way back to be ready for the start of next year's OTA's and other offseason activities. Thomas suffered a similar injury to what rookie LB Brandon Jenkins suffered in college last year, and Jenkins was able to be a full participant in OTA's, so that should easily be Thomas's goal as well. Hopefully he will be back healthy and ready to compete for a starting job next year.

## **Practice Squad:**

### **RB Jawan Jamison:**

**Outlook:** Will spend 2013 on the practice squad, until a running back goes down

**Prediction:** Jamison will get a chance to join the 53 man roster at some point this season. I think the Redskins see some long term potential in him, so they definitely don't want to lose him.

Also, it seems like a safe bet that at least one running back on the current roster will go down with injury. When that occurs, Jamison will get the call. Unlike in years past though when the Redskins would possibly need to insert him in the starting line-up, I think Jamison will spend his time on the inactive game day roster, given the Redskins depth at the position.

# EXPECTATIONS AFTER INJURIES:

**By Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com:**

The Washington Redskins had a bad case of the injury bug a season ago losing several key players on both sides of the ball. Perhaps the biggest injury of all was to outside linebacker Brian Orakpo. Losing Orakpo crippled the Redskins ability to put pressure on opposing offenses, thus weakening the entire defense in the process and making Ryan Kerrigan's job near impossible with double team after double team all year. The Redskins ability to stop the pass was directly affected and they finished near the bottom in overall yardage given up in 2012.



The year was clouded by much more than just Orakpo's injury as defensive end Adam Carriker, tight end Fred Davis, running back Roy Helu and safety Brandon Meriweather missed all or most of the year due to injury. Along the way, many other 'Skins suffered injuries as London Fletcher, DeAngelo Hall, Robert Griffin III and Pierre Garcon, each missed time during the season. Add to that the fact that Tanard Jackson was suspended right before the season opened and you can see the Redskins were not at full strength by any means in 2012.

The Redskins coaching staff is eager to see just how good things can be with all the weapons near 100% and fully functional for an entire season. For the offense, that starts with quarterback Robert Griffin III who, without doubt, is the most important piece of the puzzle for the Redskins. In order for Griffin to stay healthy he will need to learn to take better care of himself by getting out of bounds or sliding to avoid unnecessary hits. Griffin has acknowledged that his style needs to be tweaked in a way that will make his play less dangerous to him and the team. Also a major factor in the Redskins offensive



success will be Pierre Garcon, the Redskins were 9-1 in games he started a year ago and 1-5 in games he did not.

The expectations for these returning players are very high this year and the team's success depends on it. Many in the sports world have such difficulty believing RGIII can return from a catastrophic injury in such little time that they believe Griffin will struggle a bit in his first few weeks and may even re-injure himself. If Griffin getting cleared to play football by world renowned surgeon James Andrews isn't enough to convince you, then you're probably not going to be convinced to begin with. Fact is no one knows what the future holds, but if the past is anything to judge from Griffin has bounced back from this once before with no long standing issues and appears to have recovered fully from the injuries he acquired last year. Watching this kid for the last year should tell everyone that he is going to put his heart and soul into every play, the Redskins are one of the most dynamic teams in football that can score anywhere on the field when he is in the game.

Outside of RGIII and Alfred Morris being the main pieces on offense, Pierre Garcon is the x-factor who is also returning from a toe injury that kept him out of six ball games last season. Garcon has said numerous times that while his toe is still sore, he will start week one with no questions asked. Expecting Garcon to start 13-16 games in 2013 is reasonable depending on how his toe responds to several weeks of playing football. Garcon quickly became Griffin's favorite receiver a year ago when he was in the starting lineup and this duo could do big things with the offense that the Shanahan's have put in place.

Having Roy Helu Jr back after missing the entire 2012 season is like having money in the bank that you forgot was there. Helu looks to be in better shape than he has ever been as a pro this year and has added some muscle as well. A healthy Helu gives the offense a pass-catching third down back who can give the offense a good second running back when Alfred Morris needs to catch a breath on the sideline. Having a player such as Helu opens things up quite a bit with read option as well giving the Redskins a back with great speed to run the outside option.

Fred Davis is a player who needs a big year in 2013 for more reasons than one. Davis had the misfortune of getting hurt in a contract year which basically destroyed his chances of signing a long term extension with the Redskins and actually had him testing the free agent waters for a short time this past offseason. The Redskins also drafted a tight end in this year's draft which could point to concerns with either his injury or his future contract; then again it could just be the Shanahan's stacking themselves deep

with four tight ends. Either way a healthy Fred Davis means an offense that has more weapons throwing the ball. Davis creates mismatches all over the field with his skill package of size and speed. It didn't take long for Griffin and Davis to get used to each other last year and things should pick right back up where they left off. If all things go right for Davis, he could be looking at a nice contract by next season.

Last year Brandon Meriweather literally played in one game, and was dominate in that game before getting hurt and missing the rest of the season. A healthy Meriweather can bring a defense a centerfield type player who enjoys contact and is good in coverage. That was the type of a player the Redskins were in need of last year and he can add 3-5 interceptions a season to a defense that was already near the top of the league in interceptions a year ago. With Meriweather, a lot is unknown at the moment about just how his knee will hold up, but if available to play it's a good bet he is going to give his 100% and cause problems for offenses.

Adam Carriker was on the road to recovering 100% until he suffered a setback during rehab. A healthy Carriker opens his side of the defense up to a blitzing linebacker as Carriker is strong as an ox. This addition is hard to gauge but Carriker has the ability to push the blocker in front of him all over the field for sixty minutes. Dictating the line of scrimmage is a big deal in a 3-4 scheme as it sets the tone for the entire defense to work. Carriker is current on the physically unable to perform (PUP) list.

Brian Orakpo is one of the backbones of the Jim Haslett 3-4 defense when healthy. For the last two years he has battled injury and found himself on injured reserve to end the year. He has trained like a mad-man to get into the shape he is now and despite a thigh bruise he suffered in preseason, he's 100% and ready for week one. Orakpo was on the cusp of fully breaking out a year ago so expect him to be a game changer for the Redskins in 2013, fifteen plus sacks this year is completely not out of the question. If you add that kind of production to the Redskins defense along with Ryan Kerrigan rushing the quarterback on the other side and now this year perhaps side by side, you have a recipe for quarterbacks getting smashed or perhaps having passes forced and throwing interceptions.

If these players can return from injury with no problems this season expect the Redskins to be in the playoffs again in 2013.

# PREDICTING TEAM LEADERS:

**By Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com:**

The Redskins are coming off a year in which they broke countless team records in route to winning the NFC East and making the playoffs. While their offense was near the top of the league in 2012, their defense had issues in the secondary. 2013 should be a year in which the offense further develops as young superstar and team leader Robert Griffin III works his way through his second season.



The quarterback position is easily the most important in the National Football League, so it should come as no surprise that Robert Griffin III is the most important

aspect of the Redskins offense and team for that matter. Griffin amassed 3200 yards passing with 20 touchdowns (only 5 interceptions) and 815 yards (rookie record) with 7 touchdowns rushing in his 2012 rookie season. It should be expected that RGIII will pass more and run less this season. If he can stay healthy in 2013, 3,600 yards with 30+ touchdowns should be attainable along with 500-600 yards rushing. The big stat everyone should pay attention to with Griffin is the number of hits he takes, the exposure to hits needs to drop in 2013 if they want to keep him in the lineup all year.

One of the major producers of yards in 2013 was Alfred Morris, who rushed for 1,613 yards last year with 13 touchdowns and finished second in the NFL only to All-Pro Adrian Peterson in yards. Morris's number one attribute is his ability to make defenders miss him; there were only a handful of times a year ago where Alfred was taken down with the first hit he took. The production from Morris could possibly slip, but don't expect it to slip much as defenses in the league will still be focused mainly on stopping RGIII and the confusion that the read-option offense creates. In the second year of being in Mike Shanahan's zone-blocking scheme Morris should be able to gain in excess of

1,200+ yards in 2013. It should also be expected that Roy Helu Jr will gain somewhere between 300-500 yards rushing in the backup role.

In 2012 the Redskins had four wide receivers that obtained 500 yards or better in receiving yards led by Pierre Garcon who had 633 in ten games. That type of production should be expected again in 2013 as the receiving corps for the Redskins has had another year to develop and get used to Griffin at quarterback. It's not that much of a stretch to think Garcon will get over a thousand yards and Josh Morgan, Santana Moss and Leonard Hankerson will each once again have over five-hundred. The position to watch this year as far as extra receiving yardage should be the running back position. Reports have stated this offseason that Morris has tried to improve that section of his game and Helu is better known for being a pass catcher. The addition of Chris Thompson will also give Griffin another possible pass-catching target out of the backfield.



The special teams unit is entering a transitional stage as Danny Smith left for Pittsburgh after years of being the special teams' coordinator and Keith Burns was hired. The Redskins look to give a new look in punt returning this year as last year's return men Brandon Banks (not resigned) and Richard Crawford (injured reserve) are not on the 53-man roster. Rookie Chris Thompson looks to be the man on punt return duty this season and speed and agility are what he brings as well as good vision. Thompson returned a punt in the preseason 69 yards for a touchdown, which could be a preview of things to come. Sav Rocca and Kai Forbath are back with the team as well as long snapper Nick Sundberg.

The Washington Redskins ended the 2012 season near the bottom of the league in total defense and gave up a jaw dropping 4,720 yards passing. The run defense improved throughout the year and finished mid-pack, giving up 1,532 yards. The one thing the defense from a year ago did with consistency was create turnovers; they intercepted 21 passes and caused 17 fumbles. That kind of production on defense is a major key to a winning season in DC.

To counter the issues the Redskins had in their secondary last year they drafted 6'1" David Amerson from NC State who was an interception specialist in college, Phillip Thomas from Fresno State and Bacarri Rambo out of the University of Georgia. They also brought in free agent EJ Biggers to add depth to the unit.

Another issue the 2012 team had was getting to the quarterback as they finished near the bottom in sacks with only 32 for the year. The low sack total had many wondering if the Redskins defensive (which relies heavily at times on zone blitz packages) problems weren't caused by the lack of a better pass rush. 2013 looks to be a better year in that category as linebacker Brian Orakpo is finally back, the duo of him and Ryan Kerrigan along with Brandon Jenkins and Darryl Tapp at outside linebacker should give the Redskins a major boost in that category. It's not that crazy of a thought to think that both Orakpo and Kerrigan could be poised for 15+ sack seasons, if that indeed happens the Redskins defensive unit will be in the top 10 overall defenses in the NFL in the coming season.



The secondary returns ball-hawking cornerback DeAngelo Hall and Josh Wilson. Hall didn't have a great year in the 2012, but did play well down the stretch of the Redskins 7-game winning streak a year ago. He finished the year with four interceptions and was much improved in rush defense situations. The leader on defense will continue to be London Fletcher until he decides to hang his cleats up for good. Fletcher is the heart and soul of the defensive unit and spiritual leader of the entire team. In 2012 Fletch had a career high five interceptions even though he was slowed most of the year by lingering ankle injuries.

The Redskins defense was third in the NFL a season ago intercepting 21 passes, returning three for touchdowns. As a unit, the defense should do even better than that this year. With the added pressure coming from the front seven, quarterbacks will be forced to make passes they normally wouldn't giving the defense added opportunities to create turnovers. Once rookie Bacarri Rambo fully catches up to the speed of the NFL game, expect for him to excel in Jim Haslett's defense and develop into a top notch safety.



The Redskins gave up an overwhelming amount of yards in 2012, 6,043 to be exact, but that number should be near or under the 5,000 yard mark going forward. It's reasonable to believe this defense may have its struggles in 2013, but they should be much improved over the unit that preceded them in terms of yardage given up. With the offense that Washington puts on the field and the way they dictate the pace of the game with their lethal running attack, a top 10 defense could push this team over the top and make them a contender this year.

## **Team Individual Leaders**

### **PASSING:**

#### **Robert Griffin III**

3,600 yards passing w/30+ TD's

500-600 yards rushing 5 TD's

### **RUSHING:**

#### **Alfred Morris**

1,200+ yards rushing w/ 12TD's

#### **Roy Helu**

300-500 rushing...40 catches,  
200-300 yards receiving



### **RECEIVING:**

#### **Pierre Garcon**

1,050 yards receiving w/9 TD's

**Leonard Hankerson/Santana Moss/Josh Morgan**

Both should each have 500 or more yards receiving

**DEFENSE:**

**DeAngelo Hall**

5 interceptions

**London Fletcher**

125 tackles

**Ryan Kerrigan and Brian Orakpo**

15+ sacks each

# 2013 SPECIAL TEAMS' REPORT:

**By John Manuel:**

## Biggest Change from Last Season?

At first thought, it would be the loss of Lorenzo Alexander to Arizona. But I think the biggest change is obvious. After being the one coach who survived multiple regimes, Danny Smith moved on to Pittsburgh and Mike Shanahan brought in one of his former players, Keith Burns, to coach special teams.



Burns will have to deal with losing the former leader of the special teams Lorenzo Alexander so finding a new leader will be key. Two names that come up immediately are Reed Doughty and Niles Paul. Both have excelled in coverage over the years and Burns will need huge contributions from both of those guys.

## Biggest Concern?

Losing the One Man Gang will make us nervous on coverage teams and it must have concerned the coaches as well. Washington brought in John Potter as a kickoff specialist during the summer in an attempt to get more touchbacks. But Potter was let go and Kai Forbath will continue to handle kickoffs. Good news is that so far his kickoffs have seemed farther than last season. Danny Smith did use a system that had his kickers try and pin the kickoffs in the corner rather than go for touchbacks so that may have hurt Forbath's percentage.



It will be interesting to see how this plays out if Forbath allows returners a chance to return kicks. Without Alexander, others will need to step up and so far it has been sketchy at best watching opponents return kickoffs. The defense is still suspect so making teams go a little farther than they hoped will be an important factor. Maybe making them go a few extra plays would allow for a couple more attempts at causing a turnover. Once again guys like Paul and Doughty will be asked to step in for the loss of "Zo".

## **Who are the Return Guys?**

The third preseason game changed how the Redskins are going to handle returns when Richard Crawford went down. It opened up an opportunity for many, including rookie Chris Thompson, who stepped up and ran a punt back the distance in the last preseason game. Thompson had the explosiveness and this is what Shanahan needed to see to keep him on the 53-man roster instead of just for his play as a running back.

But I think the team has to be concerned that Thompson could make a huge mistake due to his inexperience. That is where guys like Santana Moss and DeAngelo Hall figure into the mix. They are older vets that are needed for their regular spots but both are reliable as the punt returners. I have been pulling for Santana to work in as the punt returner for a couple seasons and still think he can make plays in that spot. But I think it is Thompson's spot to lose now.

As for kickoffs Niles Paul should figure in as the guy to get the first crack Monday night since he finished last season and did fine. Kickoff returns are limited and so are returners as being huge factors. I could see Thompson or even Roy Helu figuring into the mix here but I think Shanahan has Helu figuring into a decent size roll with the offensive starters at times. Out of all the special teams jobs this is the one I have the least concern with. The team should mainly be concerned with ball security and staying away from penalties causing horrible field position.

## **Final Words**

Kai Forbath was a great find for the Redskins and finally they seem to have a consistent kicker. Consistent may be an understatement, solid lock may be better. Forbath is now 29 for 30 since the start of the 2012 preseason. Pretty amazing stuff.

# Why Running the Football is the Redskins Way

**By Steve Shoup:**

While in general we think of the NFL as a "passing league" due to the sheer number of passing attempts, but does that mean you have to throw the ball to succeed? The short answer is no of course not, but it may be surprising just how little you need to throw to win.

Last year the top three teams in terms of attempts (Lions, Saints, Cowboys) all missed the playoffs. In fact six of the top 10 teams in passing attempts and 10 of the top 16 saw their season end by the last week of the regular season. Not only did they miss the playoffs, but many missed the playoffs pretty badly. Of those 10 teams six of them (Jags, Raiders, Eagles, Lions, Browns and Cards) finished with 5 or fewer wins and made up the 2nd-7th picks of last April's draft. On the flip side four (Seahawks, 49ers, Redskins, Vikings) of the bottom five teams in passing attempts went to the playoffs.



Compared to teams leading in rushing attempts it is no contest. The top four rushing attempts leaders (Seahawks, Patriots, Redskins, Texans) all made the playoffs. Seven of the top 10 teams made the playoffs, and another one the Chicago Bears won 10 games (only team to have double digit victories and miss the postseason last year). Of the top half of the league 10 of the 16 teams leading in rushing attempts advanced to the playoffs. That means 83% of the playoff teams were represented in the top half of the league in rushing. At the bottom of the league all five teams missed the playoffs (Falcons were 6th worst in rushing attempts).

Now some may point to the read-option as the reason for the success for running teams last year, but that is short-sighted. The 49ers were a top 10 team in rushing attempts well before they made the move to Colin Kaepernick. Seattle and Washington would have run significantly behind their star running backs even if their quarterbacks were

immobile (though they wouldn't have ranked as high). Also, the Patriots, Texans, Vikings, and Broncos are also in the top 10 and none of them are ever going to be confused for read-option teams.

The fact is running the football can be beneficial to teams even when you aren't very effective at it. The Broncos, Colts and Packers were all in the top 16 in rushing attempts, despite the fact that all three of them as a team averaged under 4.0 yards per carry. Those are without a doubt passing teams first with better quarterbacks and receivers than running backs, but they still find quite a bit of value in running the football. In general it helps eat the clock and secure victories. Also it forces teams to at least recognize and respect the ground attack as part of the overall offense.

For the Redskins the ground game was a huge advantage for them. It opened up huge holes in the defense that **Robert Griffin III** took advantage with in the play action passing game. It also played to the strength of their players, as their run blocking is better than their pass blocking, and many of their receivers/tight ends are accomplished down field blockers.

This is why it is okay for the Redskins to be such a run centric team, and why even if **RGIII** isn't scrambling, we should expect the Redskins to continue to focus on the run. It's also why it is so important to focus on adding running back depth behind **Alfred Morris** and blockers along the line and at tight end.

Now many people think the Redskins will throw the ball more with Griffin this year, but looking at Mike Shanahan's track record, that doesn't seem likely (nor is it a good thing for the Redskins chances for success). Below I will list his team's rushing attempts, passing attempts, the percentage of each, where they ranked in the league and finally how they did that season, from every season since he started in Denver.

## **1995:**

Passing attempts: 594

NFL Rank: 7th Offensive Percentage: 57.44%

Rushing attempts: 440

NFL Rank: 16th Offensive Percentage: 42.66%

Finish: 8-8, 3rd in AFC West, missed the playoffs

**1996:**

Passing attempts: 536

NFL Rank: 16th Offensive Percentage: 50.5%

Rushing attempts: 525

NFL Rank: 2nd Offensive Percentage: 49.5%

Finish: 13-3, 1st in AFC West, made playoffs

**1997:**

Passing attempts: 513

NFL Rank: 20th Offensive Percentage: 49.66%

Rushing attempts: 520

NFL Rank: 6th Offensive Percentage: 50.44%

Finish: 12-4, 1st in AFC West, made playoffs and won the Super Bowl

**1998:**

Passing attempts: 491

NFL Rank: 21st Offensive percentage: 48.32%

Rushing attempts: 525

NFL Rank: 2nd Offensive percentage: 51.68%

Finish: 14-2, 1st in AFC West, made playoffs and won the Super Bowl

**1999:**

Passing attempts: 554

NFL Rank: 10th Offensive percentage: 54.36%

Rushing attempts: 465

NFL Rank: 9th Offensive percentage: 45.64%

Finish: 6-10, 5th in the AFC West, missed playoffs

**2000:**

Passing attempts: 569

NFL Rank: 9th Offensive percentage: 52.44%

Rushing attempts: 516

NFL Rank: 4th Offensive percentage: 47.56%

Finish: 11-5, 2nd in AFC West, made playoffs

**2001:**

Passing attempts: 511

NFL Rank: 20th Offensive percentage: 51.5%

Rushing attempts: 481

NFL Rank: 6th Offensive percentage: 48.5%

Finish: 8-8, 3rd in AFC West, missed playoffs

**2002:**

Passing attempts: 554

NFL Rank: 14th Offensive percentage: 54.79%

Rushing attempts: 457

NFL Rank: 11th Offensive percentage: 45.21%

Finish: 9-7, 2nd in AFC West, missed playoffs

**2003:**

Passing attempts: 479

NFL Rank: 26th Offensive percentage: 46.86%

Rushing attempts: 543

NFL Rank: 2nd Offensive percentage: 53.14%

Finish: 10-6, 2nd in AFC West, made playoffs

**2004:**

Passing attempts: 521

NFL Rank: 16th Offensive percentage: 49.38%

Rushing attempts: 534

NFL Rank: 2nd Offensive percentage: 50.62%

Finish: 10-6, 2nd in AFC West, made playoffs

**2005:**

Passing attempts: 465

NFL Rank: 25th Offensive percentage: 46.17%

Rushing attempts: 542

NFL Rank: 2nd Offensive percentage: 53.83%

Finish: 13-3, 1st in AFC West, made playoffs

**2006:**

Passing attempts: 454

NFL Rank: 26th Offensive percentage: 48.19%

Rushing attempts: 488

NFL Rank: 9th Offensive percentage: 51.81%

Finish: 9-7, 2nd in AFC West, missed playoffs

**2007:**

Passing attempts: 515

NFL Rank: 21st Offensive percentage: 54.55%

Rushing attempts: 429

NFL Rank: 18th Offensive percentage: 45.45%

Finish: 7-9, 2nd in AFC West, missed playoffs

**2008:**

Passing attempts: 620

NFL Rank: 3rd Offensive percentage: 61.56%

Rushing attempts: 387

NFL Rank: 28th Offensive percentage: 38.44%

Finish: 8-8, tied for 1st in AFC West, missed playoffs

**2010:**

Passing attempts: 605

NFL Rank: 4th Offensive percentage: 63.28%

Rushing attempts: 351

NFL Rank: 31st Offensive percentage: 36.72%

Finish: 6-10, 3rd in NFC East, missed playoffs

**2011:**

Passing attempts: 591

NFL Rank: 5th Offensive percentage: 59.63%

Rushing attempts: 400

NFL Rank: 25th Offensive percentage: 39.37%

Finish: 5-11, 4th in NFC East, missed playoffs



## **2012:**

Passing attempts: 442

NFL Rank: 30th Offensive percentage: 45.99%

Rushing attempts: 519

NFL Rank: 3rd Offensive percentage: 54.01%

Finish: 10-6, 1st in NFC East, made playoffs

## **Summary:**

### **Finished in the top 10 in the league in rushing:**

11 seasons out of 17 combined seasons between the Broncos and Redskins

### **When finishing in the top 10 in rushing:**

116-60 record (.659 winning percentage), eight playoff appearances, just one losing season

### **When finishing out of the top 10 in rushing:**

43-53 (.447 winning percentage), zero playoff appearances, three losing seasons (out of 6)

### **Finished with at least 50% rushing attempts:**

7 times in 17 seasons. Made the playoffs in six of those seasons and finished above .500 every season. (Note this does not count: 1996 where they were just half a percentage point away from having 50% rushing attempts)

### **Finished top 10 in the league in passing attempts:**

Six times they finished in the top 10 in the league in passing attempts with a record of: 44-52 (.458 winning percentage), with just one winning record and playoff appearance.

## Final Thoughts:

While much of the league may be in pass first mode, it is pretty clear that for the Mike Shanahan system to work the Redskins must remain a run focused team. He has never made the playoffs when his team has run the ball less than 47.5% of the time and seven of his eight playoff appearances his team has run the ball at least 49.5% of the time. So the idea that the Redskins are going to be throwing the ball 60% of the time and winning football games should end for as long as Mike Shanahan is at the helm. That might work for some other teams and coaches in the league, but it's not going to work here with Mike Shanahan. Running the football this much may not seem as flashy or exciting, but for Mike Shanahan it is a way of life.

The fact that the run is so important to his offense, shows just how key the health and production of Alfred Morris is to this team's success. In many ways he's as important as star quarterback Robert Griffin III. The depth behind Morris is very crucial since, if he goes down, another back has to be capable of producing similar numbers or the Redskins chances for success plummet.



# How the Redskins Can Spread the Football This Year:

**By Steve Shoup:**

One issue facing the Redskins this season, is how to spread the ball around effectively given their sheer number of weapons. Now this is without a doubt a good "problem" to have, because it signals the fact that there isn't a drop off behind the starters or the top guys. Gone are the days where guys like **Roydell Williams**, **Anthony Armstrong**, **Todd Yoder** and others represented the 3rd and 4th receivers or 2nd TE.

While in many ways it is very much a positive to have complete confidence in your full contingent of receivers, it can also lead to problems with ensuring everyone is getting the ball enough and getting enough playing time. It's not just from an ego perspective of the particular player, but from the perspective of the team's allotment of resources. The Redskins spent a certain amount of cap dollars or draft picks on these positions and they can only return value to the Redskins if they are actually utilized.

The Redskins have spent somewhat significant money (\$2 million or more average), or draft picks (4th round or higher) on four receivers (**Pierre Garcon**, Joshua Morgan, **Santana Moss**, **Leonard Hankerson**) and three tight ends (**Fred Davis**, **Logan Paulsen**, and Jordan Reed). That's a lot of guys to spread the ball around to. And that doesn't include getting targets to their running backs (which includes former 4th rounder and likely 3rd down back **Roy Helu Jr.** and FB **Darrel Young**) or deep threat receiver **Aldrick Robinson**, who saw four of his 11 catches go for 20 plus yards. Additionally, there is conversion TE project **Niles Paul** who saw five of his eight catches go for 20 plus yards.

**Here's how the Redskins broke down their targets last season (numbers from ESPN):**

**Wide Receivers (this includes Brandon Banks): 290 out of 442 = 65.6%**

**Tight Ends: 86 out of 442 = 19.4%**

**Running backs and Fullbacks: 55 out of 442 = 12.4%**

**Quarterback: 1 out of 442 = 0.2%**

### **Throws not targeted: 10 out of 442 = 2.2%**

Now with any luck the Redskins will scrap any ideas of throwing the ball to Griffin this year, so hopefully that won't be a category going forward. There will always be a percentage of throws (throw aways, batted passes etc.) that aren't targeted. That 2.2% figure seems on the lower end, but it will probably never be more than 4-5%. The real shock is of course how big the percentage is for wide receivers and consequently how small the percentage is for the tight ends and running backs.

Tight ends you would probably expect to be more like in the 22-27% range. Running backs and fullbacks typically have a wider range (that is really somewhat dependent on whether or not a team uses a fullback), but last year's 12.4% targeting of that group is still very low. Typically you see teams more in the 15-21% range. There are definitely some other outliers around the league, but typically those are teams who utilize a TE or WR in that fullback role, something the Redskins do not.

Now it was somewhat understandable why the Redskins targets among tight ends and running backs suffered last year, given the injuries to Fred Davis and Roy Helu Jr., guys who combined for 147 targets in 2011. That was out of 591 targets that season, but it should be noted that Davis missed the final four games with a suspension, and Helu missed some time with injury and also wasn't given as much playing time early since he was a rookie. Had they both been healthy last year, their numbers and those for their respective positions would have surely gone up. How much they would have increased is very much up for debate, especially considering that Fred Davis's highest target games were those without top wide receiver Pierre Garcon.

Now on some other teams the percentage of targets to running backs and fullbacks isn't as important as the actual number of targets they get. On teams like the Patriots, Broncos, Saints etc., that are throwing the ball 575-700 times, the percentage may be small, but the number of targets is actually much bigger. For instance the Broncos running backs and fullbacks combined for 86 targets out of 588 total last year. That is just 14.6% of the total passes, yet 31 more targets than what Washington did. The Dallas Cowboys backs had double the targets at 110, but it was just 16.7% of the total targets.

The Redskins were 30th in the league in pass attempts last year, and while they might increase some, they aren't going to start throwing the ball 35-40 times a game. While some may want to see the Redskins throwing that often, that just isn't their game or Mike Shanahan's. In fact the Redskins were just 2-3 when they had to throw the ball even 30 times last year. We may see the attempts rise to the 480-500 range, but if it goes higher it will likely mean the Redskins aren't winning many games.

Assuming the Redskins increase their targets to 500, here is how I see them being broken down by position. I will show a slight increase in non-targeted throws to 3% up from 2.2%. That will leave 485 throws to be distributed among the Redskins various

weapons.

## **Wide Receivers: 280 out of 500 = 56%**

I see the receivers percentage dropping. They will still be the favorite target by far, but I think the Redskins want to exploit some more potential mismatches with tight ends and backs.

### **Pierre Garcon- 88**

Garcon will see his targets go up some as he's healthier, but I don't think they will skyrocket. The Redskins just spread the ball around too much, and Garcon may see his snaps limited slightly, especially if the foot injury is still nagging. Now there is a chance that he could be more featured and get over 100 targets, but it will depend on how the other receivers are doing.

### **Joshua Morgan- 55**

Morgan may end up starting and being the possession receiver, but his targets will probably be the lowest of the top four. I also think he ends up splitting time with Hankerson.

### **Santana Moss- 57**

Moss was so effective on a per snap and per target basis for the Redskins last year, that I think they will look to further expand his role some this year. He may not play as much as some of the other receivers, but when he is on the field, I'd expect him to be the primary or secondary option on most passing plays. Moss also benefits from the fact that he really is the only slot receiver on the roster.

### **Leonard Hankerson- 48**

Hankerson is a guy who really was on par with Moss in terms of per target production and Garcon last year, and could be in line for a bit of a "breakout" season. Unfortunately he's going to have to share targets which will keep the raw numbers down, but he should at least make his presence more readily felt this year.

### **Aldrick Robinson- 32**

Robinson draws the short straw, but the Redskins will likely try to utilize him a little throughout the season. He has big time speed and could get a few targets on deep routes, and in other occasions be used as a decoy to hopefully draw safety help to one side. His targets though will be very dependent on Garcon and Hankerson. If Garcon takes his game to the next level, it will be tough for Robinson to get on the field enough.

## **Tight End: 125 out of 500 = 25%**

With a healthier **Fred Davis**, rookie Jordan Reed added to the mix and **Logan Paulsen** showing himself as a respectable pass catcher, the tight end targets should definitely go up this year. It will be tough splitting them up though because you can make a case for all of them to have fairly significant totals. The other interesting thing is that under Mike Shanahan, we've seen a pretty big distinction between the starting tight end and the back-ups. The starting TE gets the vast majority of all TE targets, with the back-ups only getting even moderate targets when there is an injury (or suspension) to the starter. However, can the Redskins justify continuing to do that given the resources invested in the TE position? That's the big question with this positional group.

### **Fred Davis: 70**

Davis is coming back from a mid-season Achilles injury, so his snap count could be limited this year. He looked good in the preseason, but it is tough to know just how much he can give you. Davis should still see his fair share, and likely the majority of the tight end targets, but it won't be the monopoly it was in the past.

### **Logan Paulsen: 25**

Paulsen might not have the speed, agility or quickness of Fred Davis, but last year he proved he could be a solid fill in for him and handle himself as a receiver. He averaged 12.3 yards per catch, and 4.6 yards after the catch average, fairly comparable numbers to Davis's 13.5 and 5.7 numbers. Paulsen is also going to earn some playing time due to his blocking ability, so he will be on the field a fair amount. I think between Davis' injury and how raw rookie Jordan Reed is, Paulsen will carve out a nice niche for himself.

### **Jordan Reed: 10**

Reed definitely has a lot of promise, but he's a one dimensional TE that will likely keep his snap count and targets down somewhat. The Redskins aren't going to ask him to do too much in-line blocking, which will limit his opportunities. Injuries slowed his progress this preseason and it wouldn't be surprising to see him inactive for much of the early season.

### **Niles Paul: 20**

I know many would probably like to see these targets distributed to the other tight ends, but the reality is the team shouldn't forget about Niles Paul. His blocking and ability to line-up at a number of positions can help him get on the field, also I doubt the team will ignore some of the big plays that he made. Paul had 5 catches last year of 20 or more yards, and his eight catches averaged 19 yards per catch. He averaged eight yards after the catch, which is the highest of any receiver or tight end. While it is all very much

a small sample size, they were very promising numbers for a young developmental player. He will likely get some looks this year to see what he can be going forward.

## **Running backs and Fullbacks: 80 out of 500 = 16%**

I'd love to think that with a healthier Helu, a year of Morris learning how to be more of a receiver, wanting to utilize **Darrel Young** more and the potential for rookie **Chris Thompson** this number would be much higher, but realistically it probably won't jump too high this year. There are enough question marks with these guys, plus the team also simply has too many other weapons. Running backs are also likely to be utilized more for fakes and blocking roles with the Redskins than some other teams.

### **Roy Helu Jr.- 33**

Helu's health is a big question mark and part of the reason why his targets aren't higher. Helu's playing time may take a big hit because Morris is the unquestionable primary back and both rookies should eat into his back-up and third down duties. Helu will probably be the best pass protector of the running backs which could keep him from going out on as many routes. He should still be targeted a fair number of times though, especially based on his total snaps.

### **Alfred Morris- 17**

Morris will be on the field the vast majority of the time which will help him get some targets (though he's likely to be part of the play fake quite a bit), but unless he shows more as a receiver his targets shouldn't be too high. Subbing him out more this year though is likely to occur, not just in an effort to get a better blocker/receiver on the field, but to help keep him fresh as well.

### **Chris Thompson- 10**

It's tough to know what to make of Thompson. Sure he's a late round pick, but you can't ignore that speed and game breaking ability. The Redskins might try to create a package of plays to utilize those talents. While some of that will of course involve him running the football, Thompson should get some receiving looks as well.

### **Darrel Young- 20**

Young I think could be the big beneficiary here among the backs. He has been so impressive catching the football these past two years that the Redskins would be crazy to not try to utilize him more often. Linebackers have had a really tough time covering him out of the backfield and it has led to a number of first downs and big plays.

# Fixing the Redskins Penalty Problem:

**By Steve Shoup:**

**Penalty Numbers courtesy of: NFL Penalties.com**

One of the biggest problems the Redskins need to fix heading into this season is their high number of penalties. Last season the Redskins committed 131 penalties (including the postseason), of which 12 were either declined or offset by the other team. Their total number was 119, which ranked 5th in both total penalties and penalties per game. All told the Redskins 119 penalties cost them 1,000 yards (4th worst number in the league). This is an area that has to be addressed this season as they simply can't shoot themselves in the foot that often and be expected to consistently win football games.

Now some people will say that teams like Baltimore, Green Bay, Seattle, Denver, San Francisco and Houston also committed quite a few penalties and had success. The problem is that of those teams only Baltimore committed more penalties per game than the Redskins. Also, not all penalties are equal, as yardage is very important. Of those teams only Baltimore committed more penalty yards per game (49ers had more total yards and penalties than the Redskins, but over more games).

Another factor to consider is the plus/minus of the yards you give up versus the free yards given to you when other team's commit infractions. For the Redskins they gave up 1,000 yards and got 846 yards back. That is a 144 yards to the negative for the Redskins. The totals of the other 11 playoff teams are:

**Ravens: -209**

**49ers: -274**

**Packers: +212**

**Seahawks: -27**

**Broncos: +117**

**Texans: +23**

**Falcons: +244**



**Patriots: +92**

**Vikings: +106**

**Bengals: -74**

**Colts: +440**

Of the 11 other playoff teams just two had more of a negative net loss of yards than the Redskins. Of the 12 playoff teams, seven finished to the good with four getting over 100+ free yards essentially.

What's perhaps most troubling for the Redskins is the fact that their stronger unit the offense was the culprit of the majority of these penalties; 70-49. The 70 penalties against the Redskins offense were tied for 3rd worst in the league, and the 2nd highest yardage total (highest though on a per game basis). On the flip side the defense was tied for 15th highest in total penalties (tied for 21st per game) and 21st in defensive penalty yards.

Some of the biggest penalties that consistently gave the Redskins problems were the following:

**False Start: 27 total, league average 19.28**

**Offensive Holding: 21, league average 20.06**

**Defensive Pass Interference: 9, league average 7.91**

**Defensive Offsides: 7, league average 5.69**

**Personal Foul: 6, league average 2.59**

**Illegal Block Above the Waist: 5, league average 3.5**

**Unsportsmanlike: 4, league average 1.5**

**Intentional Grounding: 4, league average 0.94**

Obviously there were quite a few additional penalties out there, but these were among the highest totals and all were above league average and categories the Redskins struggled in. A couple of things really stand out. The 10 combined personal fouls and Unsportsmanlike penalties are simply unacceptable. Not only do they far exceed the league average for those combined (just over 4), but they accounted for 150 total yards. That is a significant amount, particularly for a penalty where you typically have a lot of

control over.

Also, the number of false starts and offsides penalties have to drive coaches nuts. There is no reason for the Redskins to be that undisciplined, and that is way too many free yards, (or in the case of offsides free plays). Finally, it is clear that there are some serious issues with the offensive line (and blocking in general). Not every false start or hold was their fault, but many of them were. Also, the four intentional grounding penalties are, to a large degree, on the line as well. If they weren't under pressure Robert Griffin III and Kirk Cousins wouldn't be committing those penalties.

## **Top Offenders:**

### **1. G Kory Lichtensteiger- 11 total penalties, 1 offset or declined- 6 false starts and 3 offensive holdings. Also 1 Unnecessary Roughness and ineligible downfield**

The Redskins did re-sign him to a multi-year deal, but if this keeps occurring they have to look at giving another guard (Adam Gettis, Maurice Hurt, Josh LeRibeus) a look. This is simply far too many penalties, it is essentially a penalty every 100 snaps. If they stick with Lichtensteiger, he's got to be more disciplined, and dramatically cut down on the false starts. Though holding actually costs more yards, the false starts are more frustrating because there is zero excuse for them and no benefit. The Holding needs to be cut back as well, but the false starts are definitely the most troubling.

### **2. T Trent Williams - 8 total penalties, 2 offset or declined- 4 false starts, 3 holding penalties and 1 illegal formation**

Williams had a breakout season for the Redskins, but could really increase his value if he cuts back on the penalties to the 2-4 range. The false starts again need to be eliminated. It can be tough at times on the road and with a new quarterback, but they need to be eliminated as much as possible. Two of his penalties were declined so they didn't hurt as bad in actual yardage, but would have if the Redskins had succeeded on those plays.

### **3. DeAngelo Hall - 8 total penalties, 0 offset or declined- 3 Defensive holding, 2 unsportsmanlike, 1 personal foul, 1 unnecessary roughness and 1 facemask**

Hall's got to play more controlled if he wants to stay on the field. That is five penalties that each cost the Redskins 15 yards a pop. Sure sometimes you get a guy's facemask or maybe get called for a questionable hit, but the unsportsmanlike and personal foul penalties shouldn't even be on here. One semi-positive is the fact that there were only 3 defensive holding penalties and no pass interference penalties, which is better than Hall has done in the past.

#### **4. Josh Wilson- 7 total penalties, 2 offset or declined- 5 pass interference, 1 unsportsmanlike, 1 defensive holding**

Wilson's penalty count was high especially with the 5 pass interference penalties. What's very interesting is that most of those fouls occurred in the short and not down the field like you would expect. One explanation could be that Wilson played most the year injured last season and required labrum and pectoral surgery after the year. That could explain why he wasn't able to contain receivers as easily without grabbing them. Hopefully that is the answer as the Redskins do need to cut back on these types of penalties.

#### **5. Logan Paulsen- 7 total penalties, 0 offset or declined- 3 holding, 3 false starts, 1 offensive pass interference**

The false starts have to go. Timing simply has to be better for these guys this season. The holding penalties are frustrating as well. This was a big problem for Paulsen (in limited time) in 2011 and is still an issue. A lot of times Paulsen is going to be on the edge so it is harder for him to get away with holding. The offensive pass interference (which was an issue for a number of Redskins) is frustrating as well, because it is a very rare call. Typically offensive players get away with a lot more down the field, so if it is called you know it was pretty bad.

#### **6. Robert Griffin III- 6 total penalties, 1 offset or declined (\*note another source has Griffin with 7 penalties)- 3 intentional grounding, 1 Delay of Game, 1 offensive pass interference, 1 false start**

The good news is it is doubtful that the offensive pass interference will ever come into play again considering how bad of an idea that play was. Though there was only 1 delay of game penalty, this is an area that the Redskins have to work on. It felt like at least once a week (sometimes more) they would have to burn an early timeout, because they had trouble getting the play in correctly and having everyone line-up in time. A number of times the lost timeout(s) came back to haunt them later in the half or game. The

Redskins have to do a better job of getting the plays and personnel in on time, and Griffin has to do a better job of getting ready for the play and commanding the huddle after he scrambles. Though Griffin is charged with the intentional grounding penalties, those are really on the offensive line for allowing that kind of pressure. This will be even more key this year with Griffin maybe a step slower returning from his injury.

**7. Fred Davis- 5 total penalties, 0 offset or declined- 2 offensive holding, 1 false start, 1 illegal shift, 1 offensive pass interference**

What's most troubling about Davis's total is this is just in 6.5 games. Over the course of the season he would have led the team in penalties. Again a lot of just stupid penalties that should hopefully be easily corrected.

**8. Ryan Kerrigan- 5 total penalties, 1 offset or declined- 2 neutral zone infractions, 2 offsides, 1 defensive pass interference**

These are among the most frustrating because neutral zone and offsides penalties you are in really complete control of. Kerrigan can't be giving up those free yards, and while he's obviously trying to guess the snap count, if you are committing this number of penalties it isn't worth it. Though you don't like pass interference penalties, it's not shocking that Kerrigan would commit one since TE's and backs are going to be mismatches for him to cover.

While there are obviously plenty of other penalties, these are the guys with 5 or more and the ones who really need to cut back on the infractions. A lot of these penalties like the false starts/offsides/and personal fouls should be pretty avoidable. If the Redskins can cut back on their penalties it will go a long way to helping them defend their division title this season. Obviously you can't eliminate all the penalties, but with discipline and smart play, the Redskins can significantly cut back on giving up the free yards..

2013 REDSKINS GUIDE

# FILM BREAKDOWN

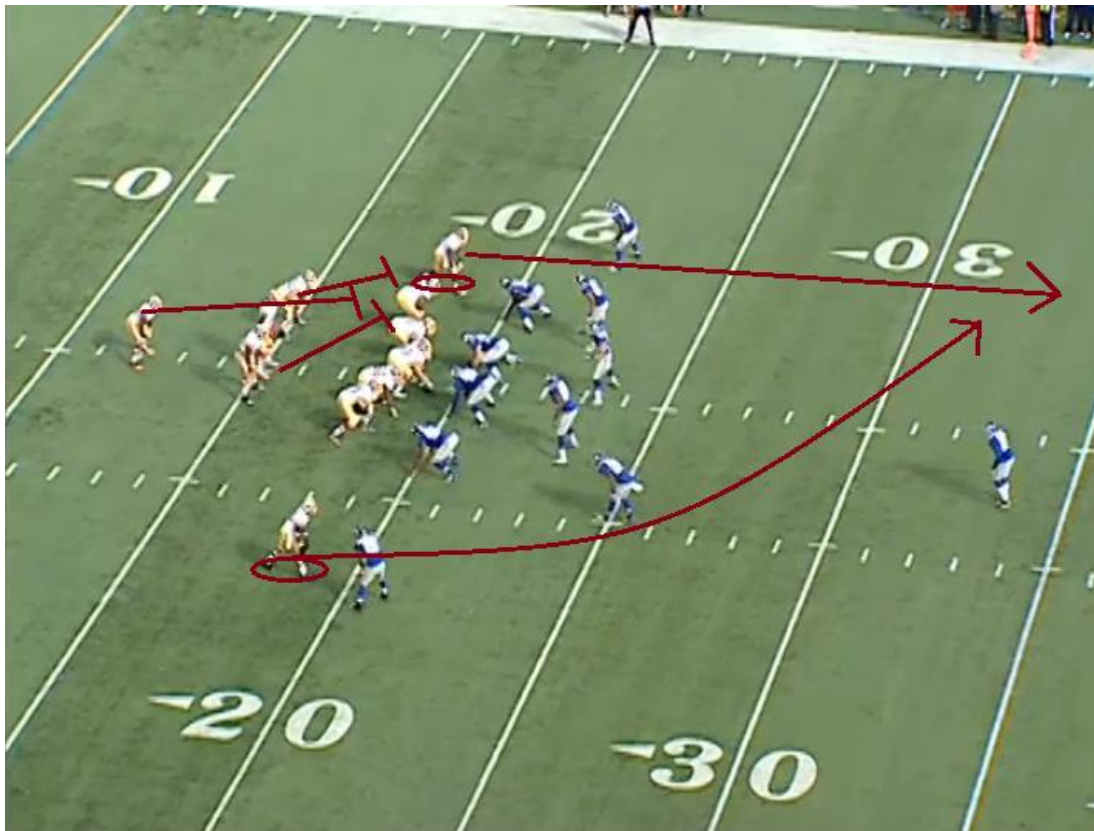


# How Redskins Like To “Window Dress” Same Concept

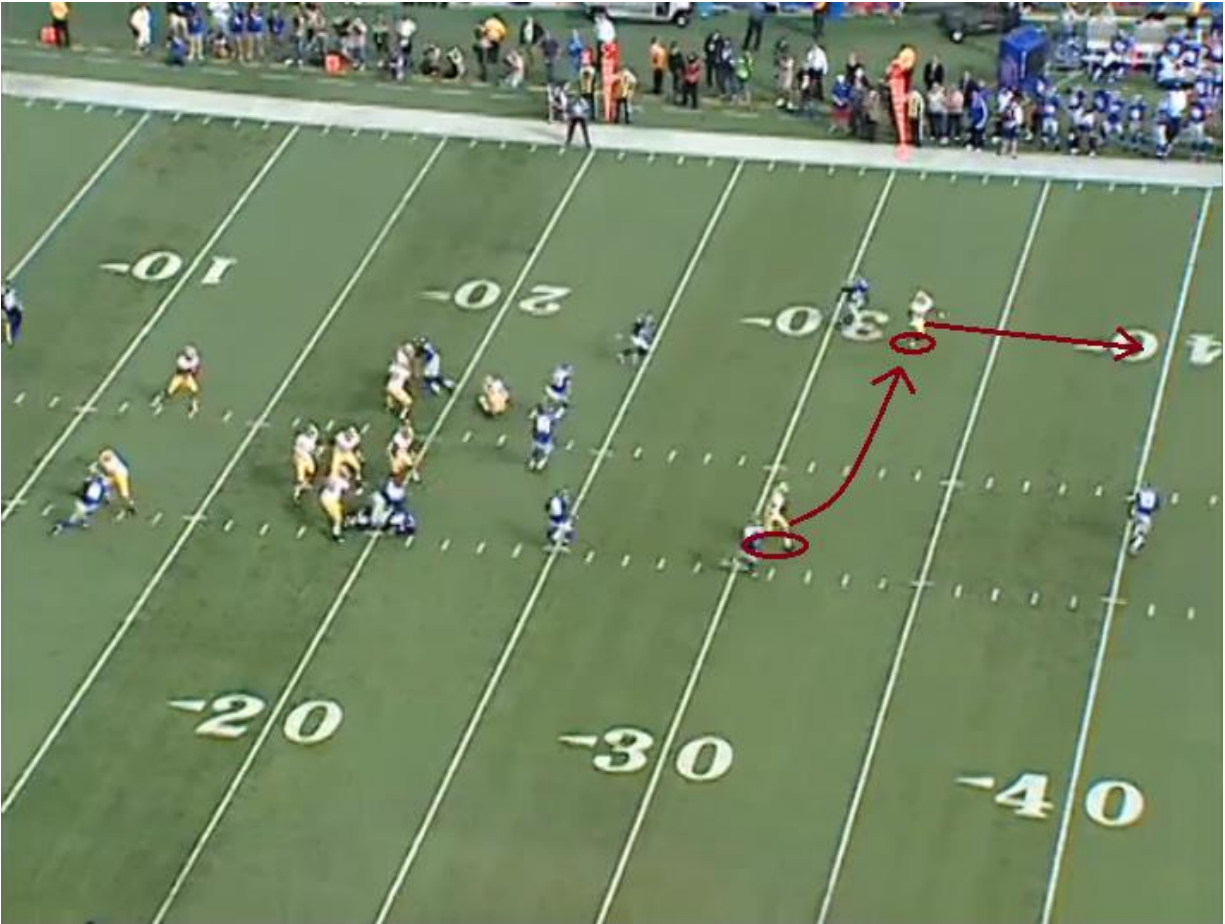
**By Mark Bullock:**

Washington Redskins Head Coach Mike Shanahan and Offensive Coordinator, son Kyle Shanahan are masters of what the NFL calls “window dressing”. This is where a team will run the same concept, but will tinker with it just enough to stop the defense recognizing it. Both Shanahan’s love to exploit holes in a defense and are happy to call the same play over and over until the defense proves they can stop it. But once a defense starts catching on, they’ll adjust something in the play; maybe add a fake hand off here or a fake end around there, just to distract the defense enough.

Here’s an example. One of the Redskins favorite play-action concepts involves using one receiver running a go route to clear out room behind him. Then they Redskins will have someone cross the defense into the wide open vacated area.

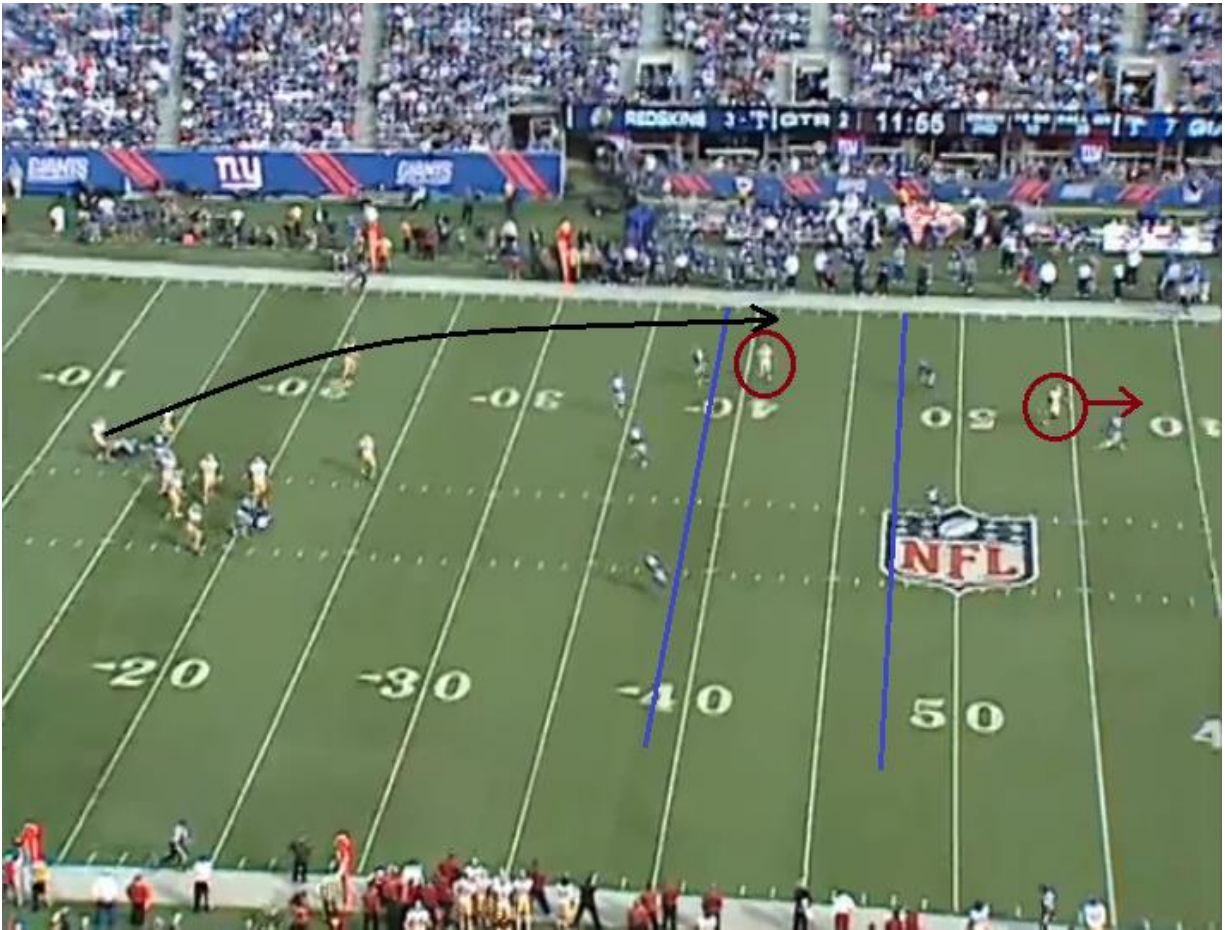


This play is set up to be a run-heavy look. There are three players in the backfield alongside Robert Griffin III, while receiver Pierre Garcon is aligned tight to the formation. It looks like Griffin will hand the ball off to Alfred Morris while the other two players in the backfield acted as lead blockers for him. But that fake is used to draw the Giants linebackers up to the line of scrimmage, making it harder for them to drop back to cover the pass. Garcon will run a go route straight up the field to clear a space in behind him, which fellow receiver Leonard Hankerson will cross into.



Garcon finds himself ahead of his corner, with the free safety struggling to get over the top of him. Hankerson begins to cut inside.

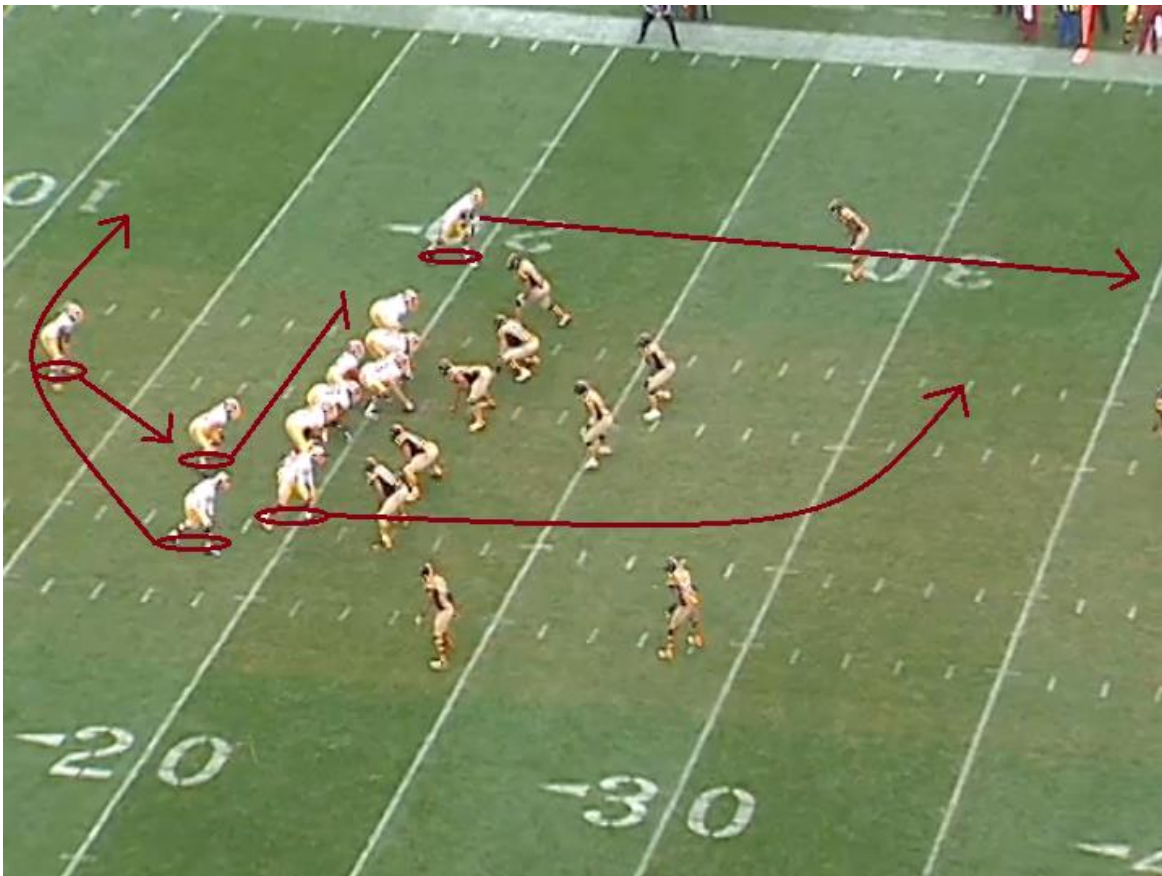




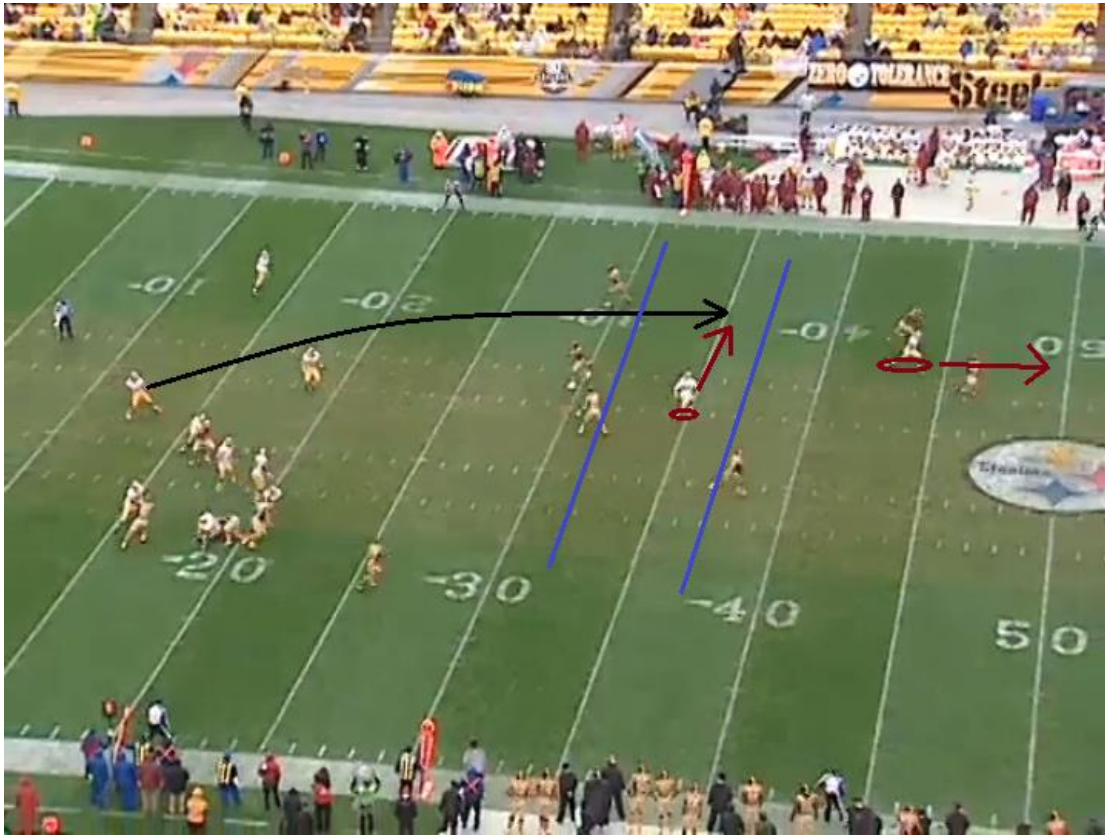
Because of the play-action fake, the linebackers are late dropping back into coverage. The threat of Garcon running deep has the defensive backs attention, leaving a big hole in the defense for Hankerson to run into. Griffin pulls the trigger and has an easy completion for a big gain.



The Redskins ran this concept all season, so it was nothing new to the Giants. But earlier in the season, Kyle Shanahan adjusted it slightly to give a different look while still running the same concept.

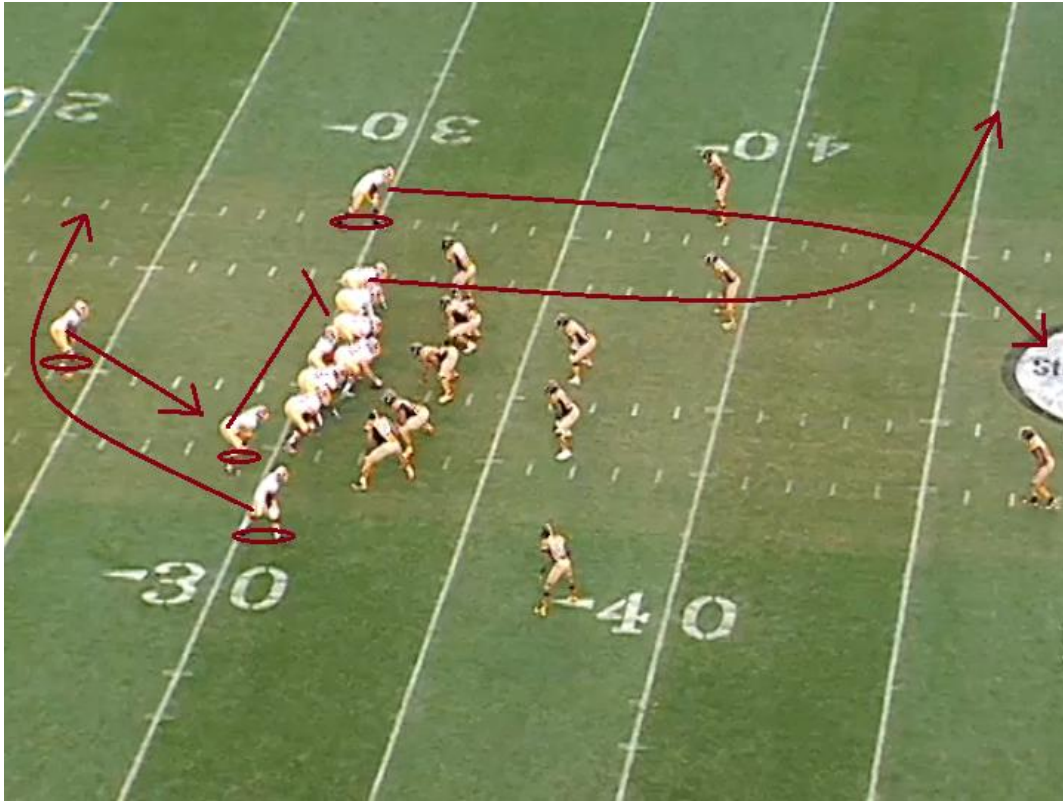


Against the Steelers, the Redskins are using exactly the same concept, just with a different look. This time tight end Niles Paul is running the crossing route while the Redskins run a fake end around.

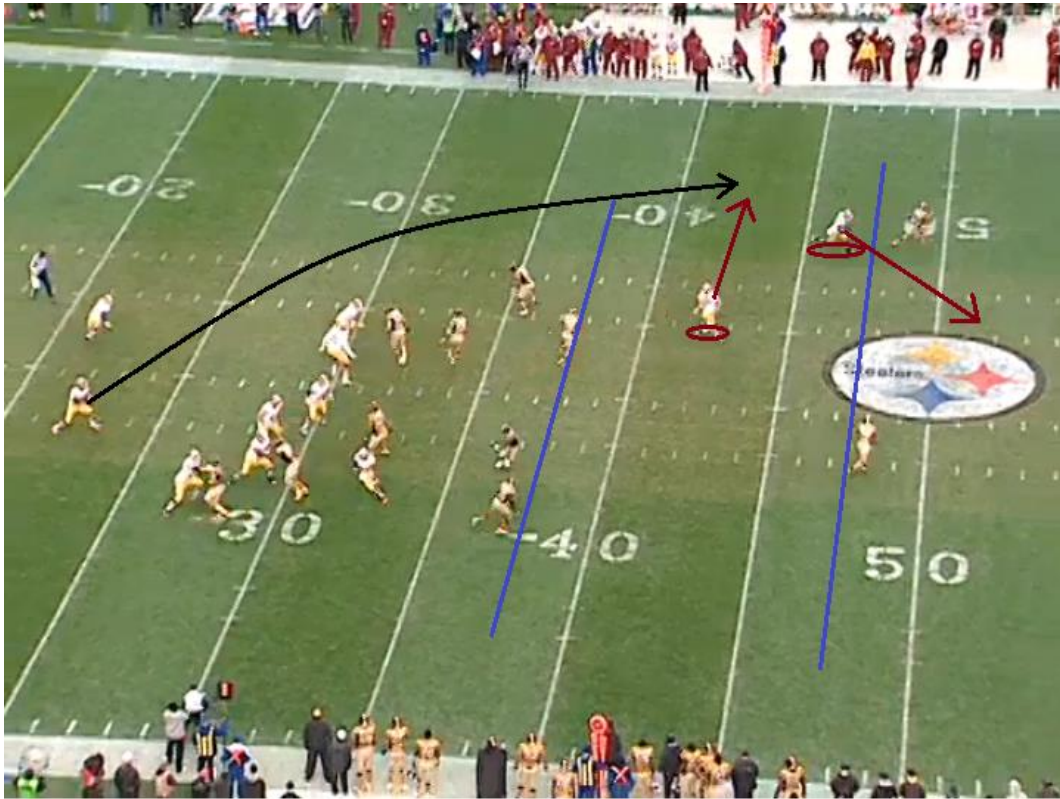


While the play looks different, the result is the same. The linebackers are drawn in by the fake end around and are late to drop back into coverage. The defensive backs are occupied by the clearing route, leaving Niles Paul acres of room to run into.

In the same game, the Redskins went back to the same concept, but again made a slight change.



Kyle Shanahan opts to stick with the same play-action and end around fake, but moves the tight end to the opposite side of the field. Instead of having to cross the field, tight end Logan Paulsen will just cut in behind the deep route of the outside receiver.



But just as before, the result is exactly the same. Linebackers are late to drop, defensive backs are occupied by the deep route and Paulsen is wide open.

The Shanahan's love to use plenty of window dressing on their favorite concepts, and it makes them very difficult to defend. Having the ability to do this helps ease the pressure on the quarterback. Robert Griffin III had a lot on his shoulders going into his rookie season, but having few concepts with multiple different looks helps make his adjustment to the NFL much easier. But even though he's entering his second season and his playbook will open up, don't expect the Shanahan's to stop dressing up their favorite plays in 2013.



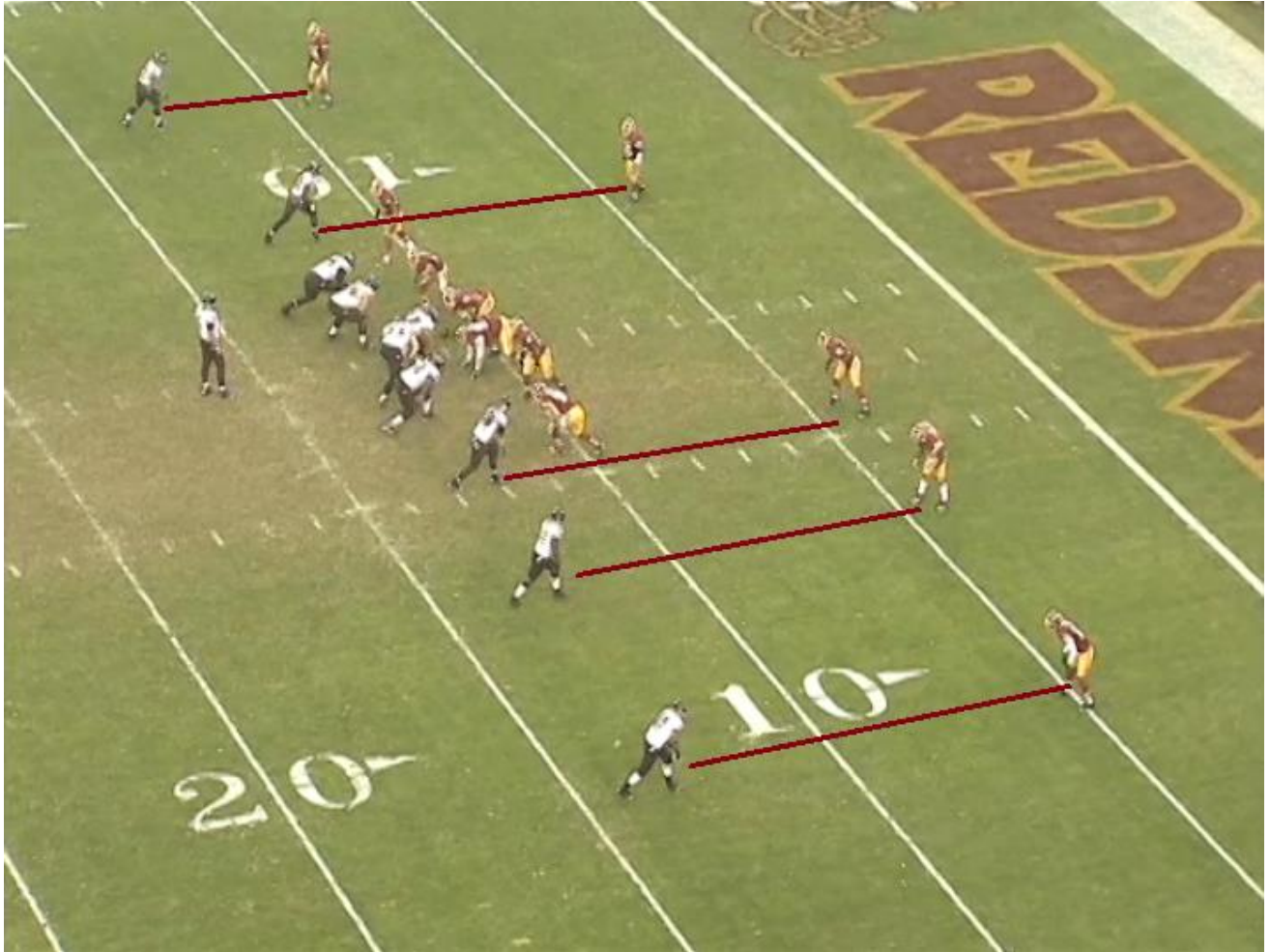
# Breaking Down Cover 0:

Redskins' defensive coordinator Jim Haslett has an aggressive approach to playing defense; blitz heavy and blitz often. Last year he was restricted somewhat after losing star pass rusher Brian Orakpo for the majority of the season, but with Orakpo back, look for Haslett to get back to what he loves doing: blitzing.

One of Haslett's favorite blitzes is "Cover 0". Cover 0 is an all-out blitz that challenges the quarterback to get a pass away before he gets sacked. The goal is to send one more blitzer than the offense can block. There are a few key points to running Cover 0:

- There is no safety help behind you. Cover 0 is pure man to man coverage. Every possible receiver (including tight ends, running backs and fullbacks) is assigned a man. If that receiver runs a route, then his man must cover him. If he stays in to block, then his defender must blitz.
- Defensive backs are in off-man coverage. Rather than being lined up on the line of scrimmage, they give themselves a cushion of about eight yards between them and their receiver.
- Defenders in coverage must not allow a receiver to run an in-breaking route. With no safety help, the middle of the field is wide open. You have to force the receiver to the outside where you can use the sideline as help.
- Blitzers need to attack separate gaps along the offensive line. For example, if two blitzers attack the "A Gap" between the center and the left guard, it's easier for the center to block. But if the two blitzers attack the A gap either side of the center, then he can only block one.

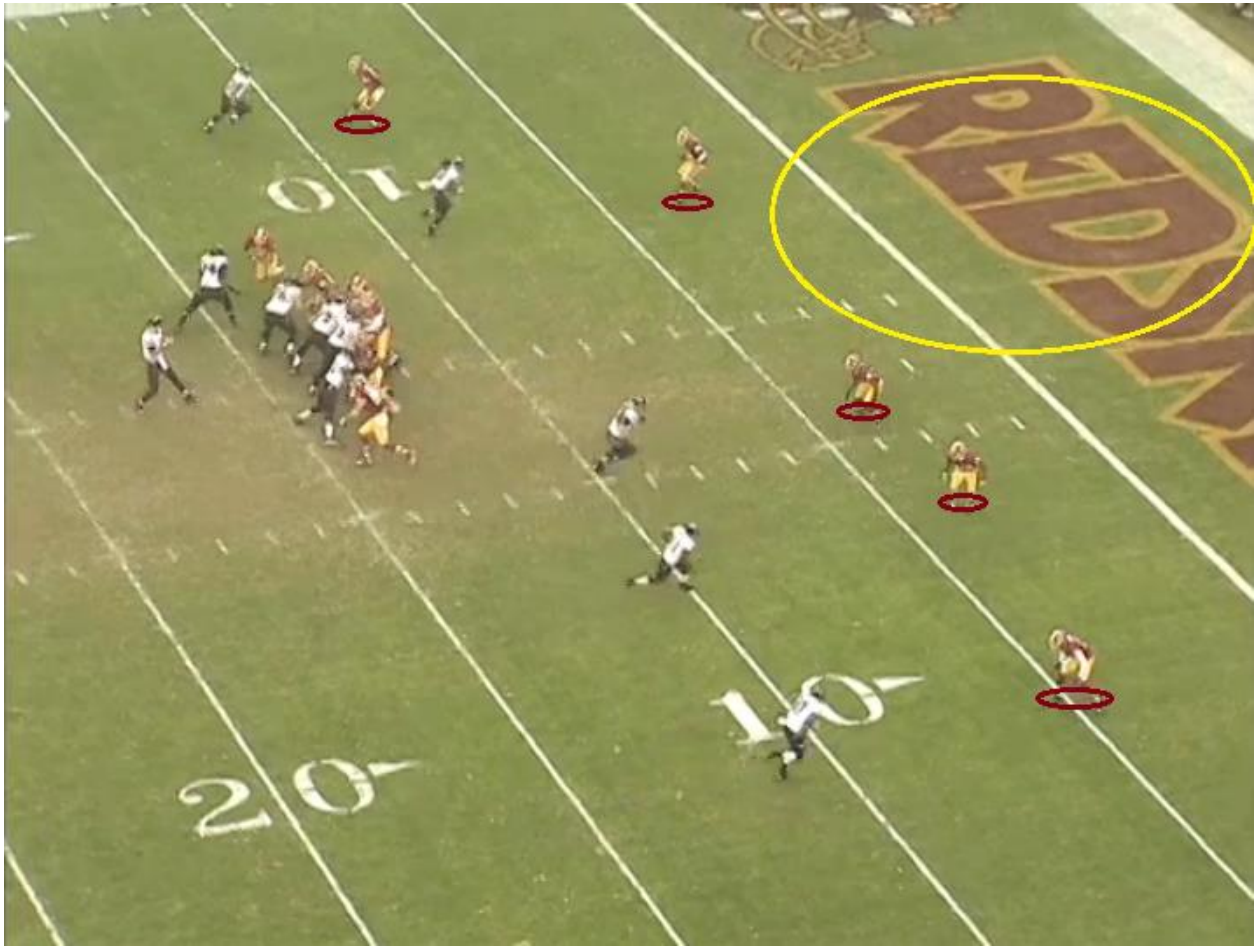
The Redskins ran the Cover 0 defense successfully against the Ravens last season.



The Ravens are in a third and long situation, so elect to spread out their offense with five receivers. The Redskins check into their Cover 0 look, with five clear man to man match ups.



That allows the Redskins to send one more blitz than the offensive line can block. They have six defenders lined up on the line of scrimmage against five offensive linemen.



The defensive backs know they have no safety help in the middle of the field, so they all take an inside shade (where they set themselves on the inside shoulder of the receiver, letting him know they aren't going to allow them to the middle of the field) on their receivers. The blitzers also do a good job of attacking separate gaps along the offensive line, making it impossible to block all six blitzers.





That allows Ryan Kerrigan a free run at quarterback Joe Flacco. Flacco attempts to scramble and buy himself time, before making an ill-advised throw that gets deflected and intercepted.

That's the kind of pressure Cover 0 can put on an offense. Problems can arise if you use it too often. A few years ago, Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo saw the blitz coming and rolled out to delay the blitz. That gave receiver Dez Bryant enough time to beat DeAngelo Hall and get open. But if you don't overuse it, or mix in some zone coverages from Cover 0 looks, it can be extremely effective on third downs.

# Overview of the Stretch Zone Run:

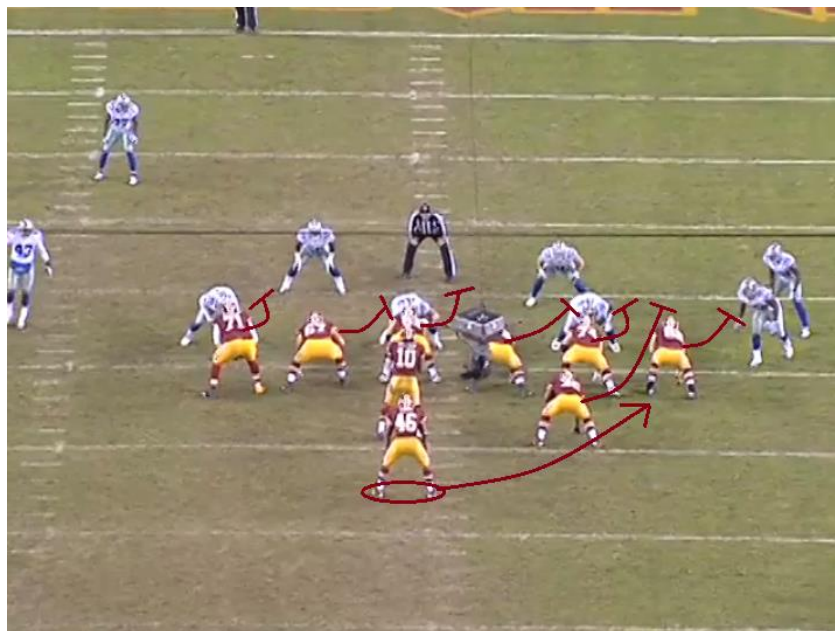
**By Mark Bullock:**

Redskins Head Coach Mike Shanahan is known for his use of the zone blocking scheme. In an NFL all about power and big mauling offensive lineman, Shanahan preferred the more finesse zone blocking involving smaller and more agile linemen. Power run schemes are all about dominating the line of scrimmage and running behind a lead blocker to fight for yards in the trenches. But the zone scheme involves stretching the defense from sideline to sideline and creating cutback lanes for the running back.

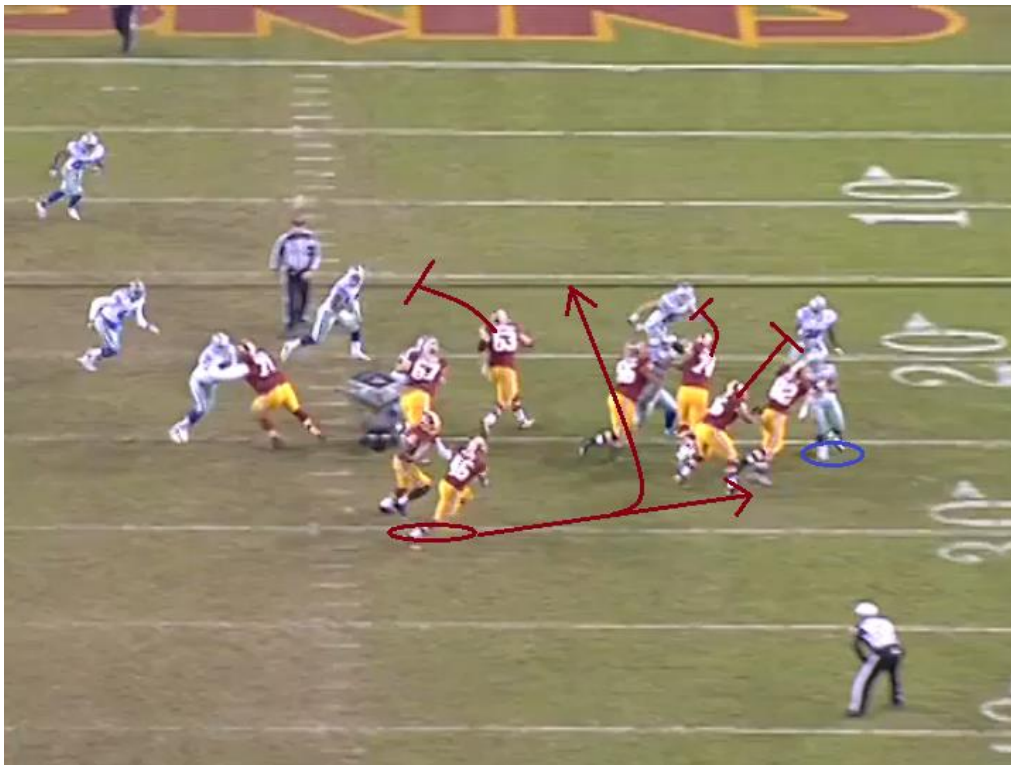
It's a system that Shanahan used as his offensive foundation on his way to two Super Bowl titles in Denver. It appeared that he could insert almost any running back into the scheme, and make them productive. But in actual fact, Shanahan looked for disciplined runners who excel at making one decisive cut and then getting upfield.

Shanahan's latest success story, Alfred Morris, is a perfect fit for what Shanahan wants in his system. He runs the system exactly how it was designed, which lead him to break the Redskins single-season rushing record in his rookie campaign.

Here's a perfect example of a well-executed stretch run.

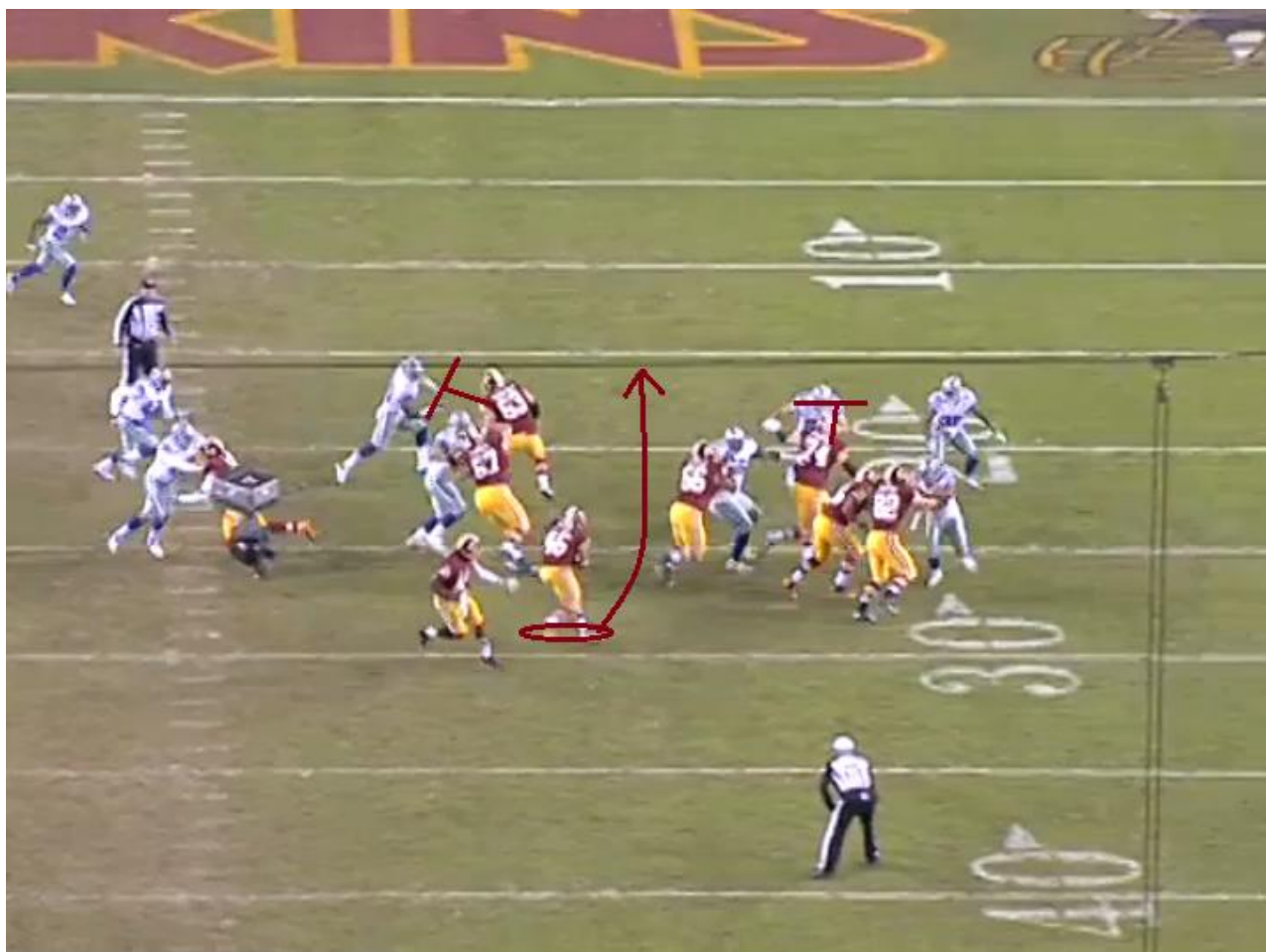


The run is to the right. Morris will be reading the edge defender being blocked by the tight end, which will tell him to either carry on towards the outside, or cut back inside. The offensive line will initially use combination blocks to secure the line of scrimmage.



Left guard Josh LeRibeus manages to secure his block on the inside very quickly, allowing center Will Montgomery to get to the second level of the defense and cut off the backside of the run. Right guard Chris Chester works in combination with right tackle Tyler Polumbus to secure the block of the Cowboys defensive linemen. Once Chester has the block under control, Polumbus begins to peel off the block and join Montgomery on the second level.

At this point, you can see a cutback lane opening up for Morris. The edge defender manages to position himself on the outside shoulder of tight end Logan Paulsen, which tells Morris to cut back inside. But Morris knows that his blockers on the second level haven't had a chance to secure their blocks yet. So Morris continues on his path towards the edge of the line instead of immediately cutting back.



Morris delays cutting back until he knows that the playside of the defense has overcommitted towards the edge and Montgomery is in position to cut off the backside of the defense. That patience is a trait that can be found in every successful running back Mike Shanahan has had. He set up his own cut back lane by pressing the edge of the defense and waiting for his offensive line to secure their blocks. Morris cuts back into the hole and goes through it untouched, picking up 10 yards on this run.

That zone stretch run is the foundation from which Mike Shanahan builds his offenses. It's very hard to defend over the course of the game without bringing at least one safety down to support the run. Once that happens, Shanahan can branch off into his play-action bootlegs and deep passes against just one deep safety. There might be doubt in the NFL that the read-option is here to stay, but the zone stretch run has been around for decades and should still be the primary concern when playing against the Redskins.



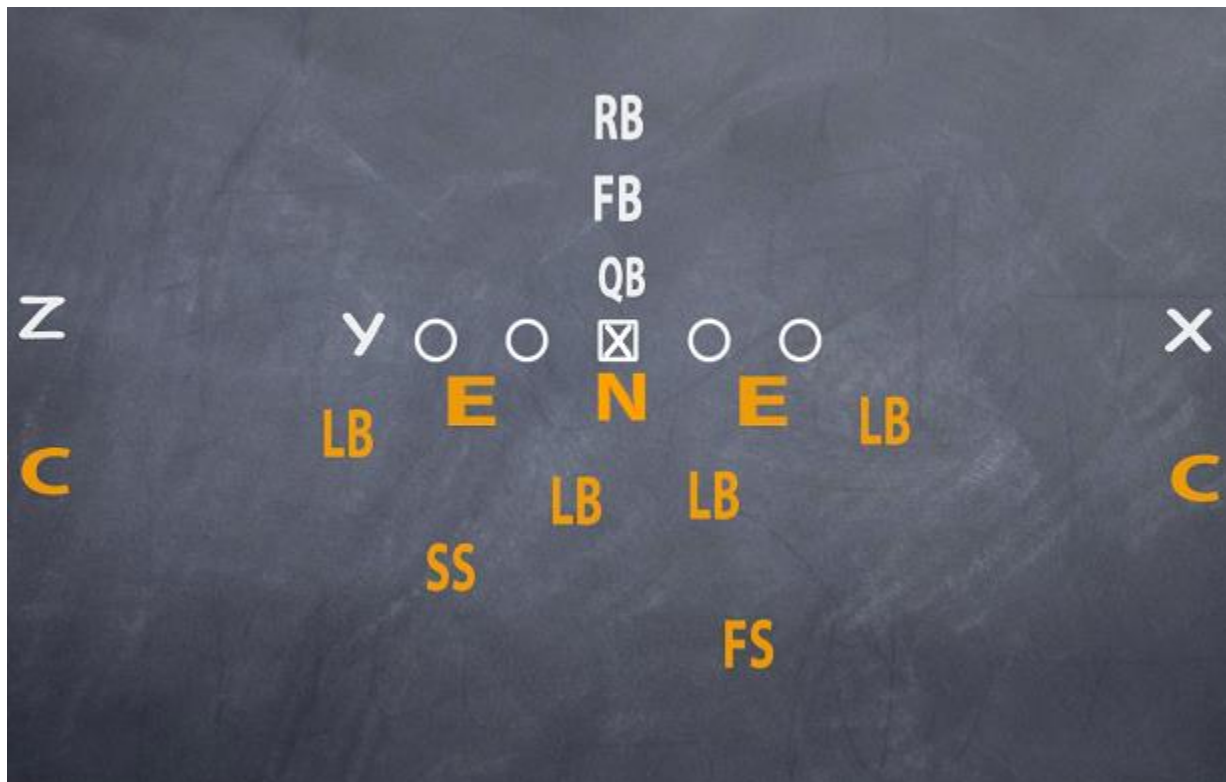
# The Zone Blitz

**By Mark Bullock:**

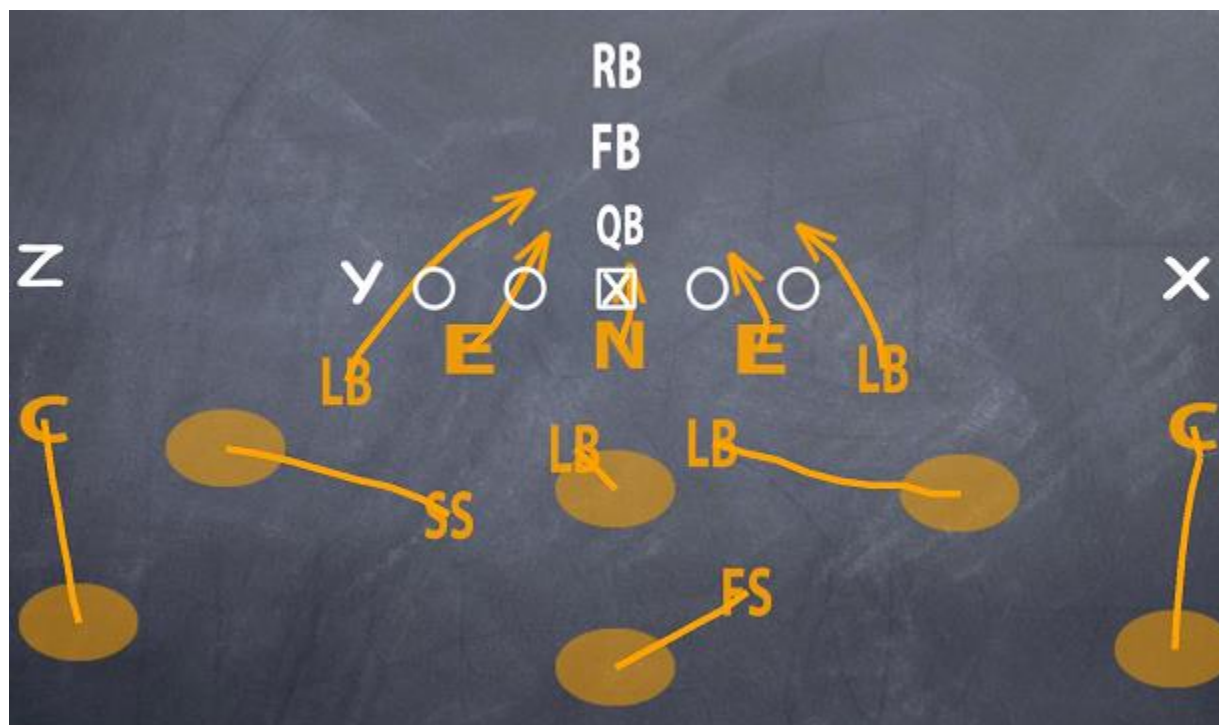
The Redskins made a big effort to boost their defense in the offseason, drafting David Amerson, Phillip Thomas and Bacarri Rambo back in April to bolster a poor secondary unit. Thomas saw an unfortunate injury in preseason cut his rookie season short, but Amerson and Rambo look set to play a big role for a defense that struggled to contain quarterback's.

One of the concepts they will have been taught early on in training camp is the zone blitz. Dom Capers and Dick LeBeau coined the concept back in their days together in Pittsburgh with the Steelers. It has since spread around the NFL as one of the more moderately safe ways to send five pass rushers. When Mike Shanahan took the job as Head Coach of the Washington Redskins, he hired Jim Haslett to be his defensive coordinator and install the same defense used by the Steelers. With that decision, the 3-4 defense and the zone blitz was brought to the Redskins.

The basic concept of the zone blitz is to be able to rush five defenders while still being able to drop six into zone coverage behind it. Let's take a look:



That is a base 3-4 defense look against a base offense. Now the most obvious zone blitz look would involve sending both outside linebackers, your best pass rushers, to rush the quarterback. The inside linebackers would then have to drop back into coverage. Here's how that would look drawn up.

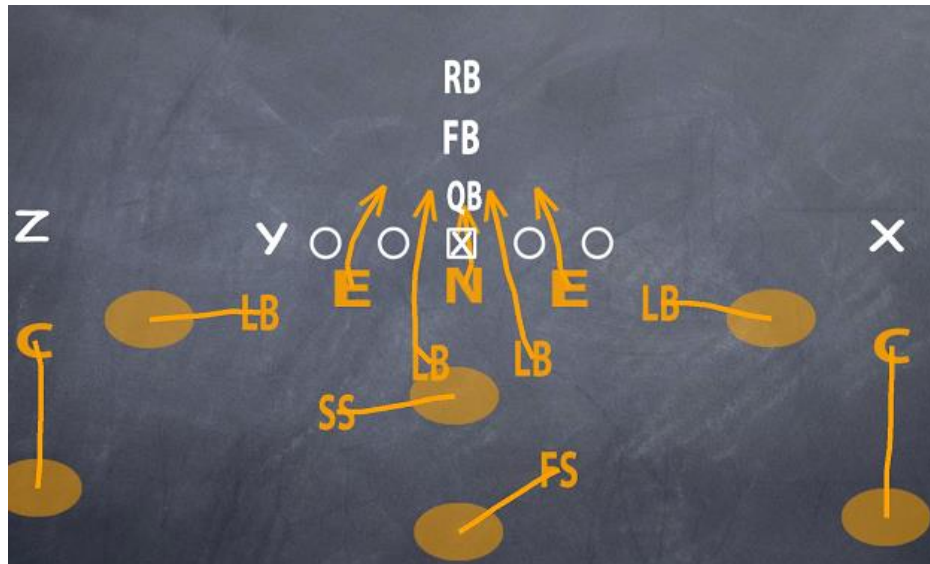


The six defenders dropping back into zone coverage will effectively make two banks of three zones, one that covers the intermediate routes, and the other covering deeper routes. As you can see in the diagram above, the corners drop back to cover a deep third of the field. The free safety covers the deep middle third of the field. This will stay the same on almost all zone blitz plays to ensure that you don't get beat deep if the blitz gets picked up.

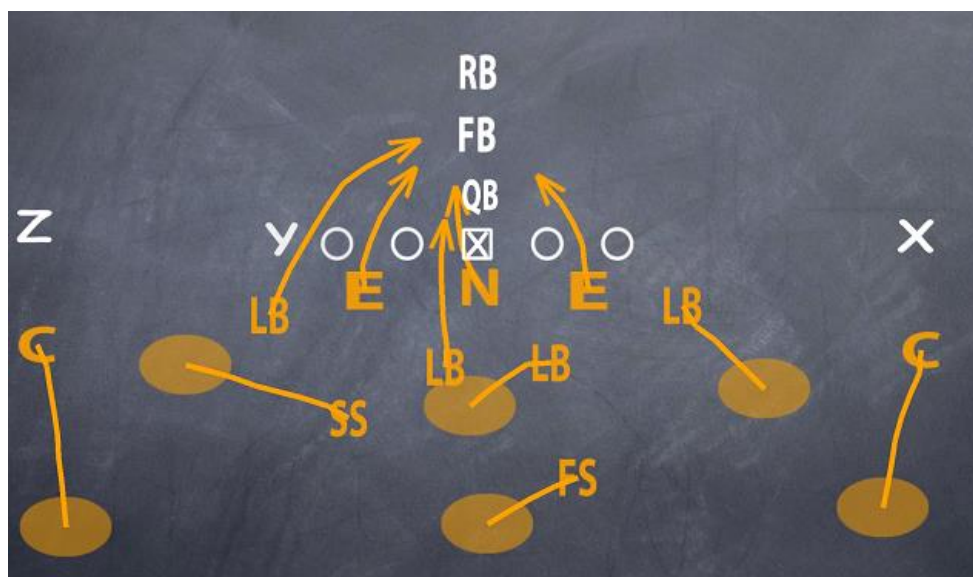
The remaining linebackers and the strong safety will drop to their zone coverage landmarks, each covering a third of the field. They'll be responsible for covering intermediate routes and reacting to anything short. Their job is to keep the play in front of them, so that they are in position to make a tackle and keep the gain to a minimum should the quarterback manage to throw to his hot receiver.

Now the interesting thing with the zone blitz is that you can send the blitz from basically anywhere you like. Your only restrictions are having two banks of three defenders in

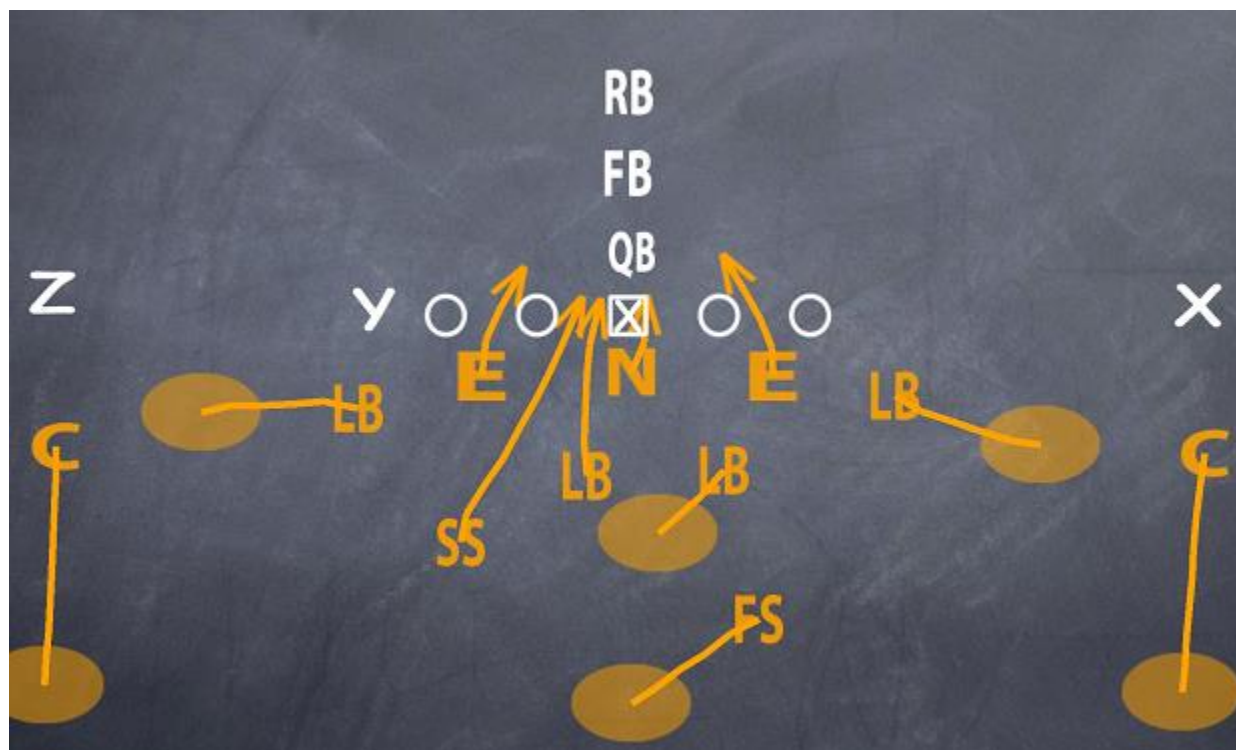
zone coverage and having five rushers. The best teams, like the Steelers, will disguise where they are blitzing from. Another common look is to send both inside linebackers on a “double A gap blitz”. Both inside linebackers will attack the gap between the center and the guards.



In that situation, the outside backers drop into coverage and the strong safety comes down to play the middle third. It forces your best pass rushers to drop into coverage instead of getting after the quarterback, but it brings heavy concentrated pressure up the middle of the offensive line, which isn't easy to block. But you could get more creative than that. How about one inside and outside backer from the same side?



That blitz would put stress on the offensive line, with heavy pressure coming from one side. They'd have to work quickly to be able to pick everyone up. But the fun doesn't stop there. If the defense really wants to get creative, they can send a safety on a blitz as well.



So as you can see, there are a large number of possibilities for the zone blitz concept. While the defense is only rushing five defenders, the offense doesn't know where those five blitzers will come from and won't until after the snap. If used creatively, it can be incredibly hard to block while still having a safe zone defense behind it. As one of their favorite zone coverage concepts, look for the Redskins to use the zone blitz heavily throughout the season as a way to bring pressure while still helping their rookie defensive backs adjust to life in the NFL.



2013 REDSKINS GUIDE

# REDSKINS FANTASY PREVIEW



**By Alan Zlotorzynski:**

Head Coach Mike Shanahan essentially proclaimed his team eliminated from the playoffs following a Week 9 home loss to the Carolina Panthers that dropped the Skins to 3-6. But behind two rookies, QB Robert Griffin III and RB Alfred Morris, Washington won seven straight games to advance to the playoffs for the first time since the 2005 season. The Skins became the first team since the 1996 Jacksonville Jaguars to reach the playoffs after a 3-6 start.

### **Offense:**

QB Robert Griffin III ranked first in rush yards (815), yards per rush (6.8) and yards per scramble (9.6) among quarterbacks with at least 50 rushes last season. His rushes will decline this season, as he recovers from surgery to repair his right ACL and LCL performed on Jan. 9. However, Griffin was on the field more than two weeks ahead of schedule, as the Redskins began their first training camp in on July 25. He will need his arm a lot more this season.



While he was deadly accurate throwing the ball, his numbers were pedestrian in terms of fantasy value. He ranked 22nd in yardage (3,200), and T-19 in TD passes (20). The injury could affect his ability to throw on the run and that would not be good. Last year, one of the things that made Griffin so dangerous was his ability to throw accurately when outside the pocket. His 60 percent completion rate prior to the injury on those throws was the best in the NFL. Griffin ranked seventh or eighth among quarterbacks in fantasy points in 2012.

RB Alfred Morris was the Redskins MVP down the stretch last season. He finished second in the NFL with 1,613 rush yards this season -- the third-most rush yards by a rookie in NFL history -- and he did it with big plays. Morris had 55 rushes with gains of 10 or more yards last season, second-most in the NFL behind Adrian Peterson (61). Since the start of 2001, only Peterson last year's season and Ricky Williams in 2002

(57) finished a regular season with more 10-yard rushes than Morris in 2012. In the Week 17 showdown with archrival Dallas for the NFC East title, Morris ran for 200 yards (just the fifth Redskin to do so) to break the franchise season mark, a total exceeded by only two rookies in NFL history (Eric Dickerson and George Rogers).

At WR there are plenty of options but no real threats in the fantasy world. Pierre Garcon injured his right foot on an 88-yard touchdown pass from Griffin in the opener last year and was not the same again until Week 12. But he was very productive during those final six straight victories even though he was not 100 percent. Garcon, who was held out of spring practices as he recovered from shoulder surgery, caught 44 passes last year and led Washington with 633 receiving yards.

Josh Morgan led the Redskins with 48 catches and could be better this year after having the screws removed that were placed in his right leg during surgery in 2011. Santana Moss was demoted to third receiver and responded by turning a team-high eight of his 41 catches into touchdowns while averaging 14 yards. Big target Leonard Hankerson was a little-used rookie in 2011 before injuring a hip, was Washington's fourth 500-yard receiver in 2012. After catching 24 passes for 325 yards, TE Fred Davis injured his Achilles tendon in Week 7 against the Giants, ending his season. Davis is a good receiver, but is no more than a fantasy number 2 tight end.

## **Defense/ST:**

The Skins ranked eighth in fantasy points in 2012 but only 28th in yards allowed (6,043) and T-23<sup>rd</sup> in sacks (32), but a T-3<sup>rd</sup> in interceptions (21) helped this unit to the fantasy top 10. Injuries are already an issue, as DE Adam Carriker and ILB Keenan Robinson will miss significant time. Kicker Kai Forbath was perhaps the biggest surprise of Washington's season. He beat out veterans Olindo Mare and Josh Brown to replace off-target veteran Billy Cundiff during a Week 6 audition. He then went on to set an NFL record hitting his first 17 field-goal attempts, 12 of them from beyond 42 yards.

## **Schedule:**

The Redskins' 2013 schedule includes six games against teams that had double-digit wins last year and five games against teams that had double-digit losses. The winning percentage of this year's opponents based on their 2012 record is .498 (the 17th highest in the league). Making the schedule a bit more challenging, four of the six games (Denver, Atlanta, Green Bay and Minnesota) will be played on the road. The

other two (San Francisco and Chicago) are home games. RG3 will face the 12<sup>th</sup> easiest fantasy QB schedule while Alfred Morris will face the 5<sup>th</sup> toughest fantasy RB schedule. It may not matter who is at quarterback for the Redskins during the fantasy playoffs, provided they are able to replicate the success they had running the ball last season. Kansas City, Atlanta and Dallas were among the bottom nine-fantasy defenses against RBs.



**FANTASYPROS**

MOST ACCURATE EXPERTS. MOST INNOVATIVE TOOLS.

1<sup>ST</sup> FINALIST FSTA AWARDS 2011 2012 WINNER WINNER! FSTA AWARDS 2011 #1 ACCURACY AND NFL 2012 FANTASYPROS

[www.fantasypros.com](http://www.fantasypros.com)

The image is a promotional graphic for FantasyPros. It features the company name 'FANTASYPROS' in a large, bold, white and yellow font with a dashed underline. Below the name is the tagline 'MOST ACCURATE EXPERTS. MOST INNOVATIVE TOOLS.' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom, there are five award medals: a gold '1<sup>ST</sup>' medal, a blue 'FINALIST FSTA AWARDS 2011' medal, a gold '2012 WINNER' medal, a blue 'WINNER! FSTA AWARDS 2011' medal, and a gold '#1 ACCURACY AND NFL 2012 FANTASYPROS' medal. The website address 'www.fantasypros.com' is centered at the bottom in a small, white, sans-serif font. The entire graphic is set against a dark, textured background.

2013 REDSKINS GUIDE

# NFC EAST TEAM PREVIEWS



# NFC EAST:

## New York Giants

**2012 Finish 9-7 2<sup>nd</sup> in the NFC East**

**Key Additions:** TE Brandon Myers, TE Michael Palmer, WR Louis Murphy, DT Cullen Jenkins, DT Mike Patterson, ILB Dan Connor, K Josh Brown, CB Aaron Ross

**2013 Draft:** OL Justin Pugh, DT Jonathan Hankins, DE Damontre Moore, QB Ryan Nassib, S Cooper Taylor, OL Eric Herman, RB Michael Cox

**Key Losses:** RB Ahmad Bradshaw, TE Martellus Bennett, DE Osi Umenyiora, S Kenny Phillips, DT Chris Canty, LB Michael Boley, LB Chase Blackburn, OT Sean Locklear, K Lawrence Tynes, DT Rocky Bernard

**Key Injuries:** S Stevie Brown, RB Andre Brown, WR Ramses Barden, OL David Diehl

### 2012 Season Recap:

The Giants were the defending Super Bowl Champions, but were unable to even get into the postseason, let alone defend their title, after finishing with a 9-7 record. The Giants came out flat last year, losing their opening game at home to the Cowboys, marking the first time a defending Super Bowl Champion has lost that kick-off game since the NFL started it nine years

prior. They picked it up, winning six of their next seven games, to get to 6-2 at the mid-way point. However, they closed out the season poorly, dropping five of their remaining games and came up just short. It was a disappointing season for the defending champs as they controlled their own destiny, but were unable to win key games down the stretch.





## **OFFENSE:**

### **Quarterback:**

Eli Manning still remains one of the better quarterbacks in the league but he did see some of his numbers drop this past year as his receiver corps was thinned out due to injuries and free agent defections. Manning disappeared in a couple of games, which cost the Giants when it mattered most. The Giants should have a better array of weapons for Eli to work with this year and they bolstered their line in the draft to protect him. New York also drafted Ryan Nassib to serve as Eli's apprentice going forward as well.

### **Running back/Fullback:**

The Giants lost their 1,000 yard back Ahmad Bradshaw this offseason, but still feel pretty confident with 2012 first round pick David Wilson leading the way. Wilson didn't get much work early in the season after an early fumble, but he looked like a big play running back late in the season. The Giants lost their back-up running back Andre Brown due to a preseason injury, which makes Wilson pretty much the guy in New York. It's a thinner running back situation than the Giants would have liked, but Wilson gives them a chance to be successful. Henry Hynoski is a solid fullback, and he is capable of helping the Giants as a runner, and receiver if needed to go along with his strong blocking ability.

### **Wide Receiver/Tight End:**

The Giants struggled last season as top receiver Hakeem Nicks was in and out of the line-up and rarely seemed to be 100%. New York also didn't have a third receiver capable of replacing the very solid Mario Manningham, which further complicated their passing game. This season the Giants figure to be in a better position as Nicks should be healthier than last season and second year WR Rueben Randle looks poised to step up his role on the team. With more consistent receiving threats opposite him, Victor Cruz should be in a better position to get his numbers back to their 2011 levels.

At tight end the Giants watched the very impressive Martellus Bennett walk in free agency, but they wasted little time bringing in his replacement, Brandon Myers from Oakland. Myers had a bit of breakout year in Oakland catching 79 balls for 806 yards. His targets may drop given the Giants other weapons, but Myers will have a much more talented quarterback to work with this season.

### **Offensive Line:**

This was not a strength for the Giants last season as they started allowing more pressure of Manning later in the year and rushing lanes weren't as consistent. This year

though the Giants feel it will be a different story. First round rookie Justin Pugh is expected to replace RT David Diehl who is currently injured. Pugh has good upside and should form an impressive tackle pairing with star LT William Beatty. Along the interior the Giants are hoping for more consistent performances from veterans; LG Kevin Boothe, C David Baas, and RG Chris Snee. Depth is a slight concern, though once Diehl is back, his versatility should help.

### **Offensive Player to Watch: RB David Wilson**

## **DEFENSE:**

### **Defensive Line:**

The Giants lost Osi Umenyiora, Chris Canty and Rocky Bernard, but they replaced them with free agents Cullen Jenkins and Mike Patterson along with rookies Damontre Moore and Jonathan Hankins. The Giants still have star defensive end Jason Pierre-Paul returning, along with Justin Tuck, Linval Joseph and Mathias Kiwanuka. While there are some concerns about replacing three veteran players and with JPP dealing with injury issues, this unit should actually be better than last season. Pierre-Paul along with other Giants defensive linemen had some of their worst seasons last year, but it is reasonable to expect that they will be back to their normal level of production this year.

### **Linebackers:**

The Giants struggled with this group last season, but could have a little boost in production this year. OLB Keith Rivers only played in about 25% of the defensive snaps last season, but was one of the team's most sure tacklers. Spencer Paysinger is expected to start at the other outside spot, and he could end up being the team's best coverage linebacker, which was a huge weakness last year. New York also made a shrewd signing by adding Dan Connor to be the man in the middle. Connor isn't elite, but he's consistent and should be a sizeable improvement over Chase Blackburn from last season.

### **Secondary:**

The Giants cornerbacks have under-performed the past few years, but it is a group that has plenty of natural talent. Corey Webster is coming off his worst year as a pro, but should rebound this season. The 2011 first round pick, Prince Amukamara, proved himself to be a capable starter, but he still needs to take that next step to be more consistent. Behind the starters the Giants brought back Aaron Ross in free agency. Ross isn't spectacular, but he should improve the Giants depth. Second year corner Jayron Hosley is also expected to take on a more significant role this season. If youngsters like Amukamara and Hosley step up their game this could be a pretty solid unit. If they don't and the veterans don't improve much this year, it could be another long



year for the Giants secondary.

The Giants are extremely weak at safety, where their top starter Stevie Brown will miss the year with an ACL injury. That leaves Antrell Rolle and Ryan Mundy as the projected starters, neither of whom are expected to make much of a positive impact. Rookie Cooper Taylor is basically the only real depth they have for the position at this point, making this a likely area for the Giants to find a free agent or perhaps work out a trade.

### **Defensive Player to Watch: LB Dan Connor**

### **Special Teams:**

The Giants will be going with a new kicker in Josh Brown this season and should continue to have a strong kicking game. Punter Drew Weatherford is one of the league's better punters, averaging 47.5 yards per punt. What the Giants do in the return game will be interesting to watch. David Wilson was their kick returner last season, but they can't use him now that he's the starter and Andre Brown is out. Rueben Randle will likely remain as the punt returner, but he could face some competition this season.

### **Overall: 9-7 Finish 2<sup>nd</sup> in the NFC East**

The Giants will finish about the same as last season. They are a good team, but they just don't seem to be deep enough to win 10 or more games and retake this division. The other issue with the Giants is they face a pretty tough schedule and that could cost them an extra game or two. It is likely that the Giants will control their own destiny again, as they face the Redskins twice in December, including the final game of the year. If they can sweep those games, then the Giants could jump back atop the division.

NEW YORK GIANTS				
Week	Date		Opponent	Steve's Prediction
1	September 8	@	<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	W
2	September 15		<a href="#">Denver Broncos</a>	W
3	September 22	@	<a href="#">Carolina Panthers</a>	L
4	September 29	@	<a href="#">Kansas City Chiefs</a>	W
5	October 6		<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	W
6	October 10	@	<a href="#">Chicago Bears</a>	W
7	October 21		<a href="#">Minnesota Vikings</a>	L
8	October 27	@	<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	L
9	Bye Week			
10	November 10		<a href="#">Oakland Raiders</a>	W
11	November 17		<a href="#">Green Bay Packers</a>	W
12	November 24		<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	L
13	December 1	@	<a href="#">Washington Redskins</a>	L
14	December 8	@	<a href="#">San Diego Chargers</a>	W
15	December 15		<a href="#">Seattle Seahawks</a>	L
16	December 22	@	<a href="#">Detroit Lions</a>	L
17	December 29		<a href="#">Washington Redskins</a>	W
Record: 9-7 (3-3)				

# **Dallas Cowboys:**

**2012 Finish 8-8 3<sup>rd</sup> in the NFC East**

**Key Additions: S Will Allen, LB Justin Durant, G Brian Waters**

**2013 Draft: C Travis Frederick, TE Gavin Escobar, WR Terrance Williams, S JJ Wilcox, CB BW Webb, RB Joseph Randle, OLB DeVonte Holloman**

**Key Losses: DE Kenyon Coleman, DE Marcus Spears, OLB Victor Butler, ILB Dan Conner, S Gerald Sensabaugh, WR Kevin Olgetree, RB Felix Jones**

**Key Injuries: DT Jay Ratliff, G Nate Livings, DE Tyrone Crawford**

## **2012 Season Recap:**

The Cowboys entered 2012 with high expectations, but their season quickly went downhill as they entered the mid-way point of the season with a 3-5 record. To their credit they picked it up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year going 5-3, and a chance to go to the post season heading into their final game. Unfortunately 2 of the 3 games they lost in that stretch were to the Washington Redskins, including that final game of the year. Those losses sent their arch-rival to the postseason and the Cowboys back home with another disappointing season. Though it looked like Jason Garrett was on the hot seat, the Cowboys decided instead to change the pieces around him. They brought in revered defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin to turn the defense around and gave play-calling duties to offensive coordinator Bill Callahan.

## **OFFENSE:**

### **Quarterback:**

Though much of the focus for blame last year was on Cowboys Quarterback Tony Romo, much of it was undeserved. He did have three games with 3 or more interceptions, but he threw just a total of 7 in the remaining 13 games. Romo also threw for 4,900 yards and 28 touchdowns last year, and did so despite not having much protection or the threat of a running game. Romo signed a big extension this offseason so the pressure is on, but there is little reason to think he won't have



another statistically great season. The real issue will be, can he avoid those 2-3 games each year where he completely struggles. If he can eliminate those, the Cowboys could be post season bound.

### **Running backs/Fullbacks:**

The Cowboys are hoping that top back DeMarco Murray can stay healthy this season, after back-to-back injury plagued years. Murray for his career has averaged 4.8 yards per carry, but in two seasons has managed just a total of 325 carries. Murray also presents a quality target out of the backfield and already has 60 career catches for 430 yards. Backing up Murray is a three man group of Lance Dunbar, Phillip Tanner and rookie Joseph Randle. Last year Dunbar and Tanner averaged 3.6 and 2.4 yards per carry respectively and Randle is a 5<sup>th</sup> round rookie who seems a ways off from contributing significant time. If Murray goes down again this will be a weak spot for the Cowboys this season.

### **Wide Receivers/Tight Ends:**

The Cowboys have arguably the best wide receiver in this league not named Calvin Johnson and the best tight end in this league not named Jimmy Graham, in Dez Bryant and Jason Witten respectively. The pair combined for 202 receptions and over 2,400 yards last season. The scary thing is they could even be better this season. Witten was dealing with a spleen injury and had just 8 catches through the first 3 games. Bryant was much stronger in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the year, after having three games in the first half with less than 20 yards receiving. He never fell below 50 receiving yards in any of the final 8 games.

To go along with their two stars, the Cowboys have a solid group of additional weapons. Miles Austin is one of the better number two receivers in the NFL. He's got good speed and size and has averaged over 4 catches and 60 yards a game over the past three seasons. Dallas also drafted pass catchers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> rounds with tight end Gavin Escobar and wide receiver Terrance Williams joining the mix. Though both are a bit raw, they could help this team down the stretch this season.

### **Offensive Line:**

This was a major problem area for the Cowboys last season as Romo was under constant pressure and running lanes just weren't available for Dallas running backs. The Cowboys made some tweaks this year drafting center Travis Fredrick in the first round, and moving RT Doug Free to RG, which should hopefully be a better position for him. This is still probably one of the weaker units in the league, but any improvement from last year will be a welcomed change for Tony Romo and the Dallas running backs.

### **Offensive Player to watch: WR Dez Bryant**

## **DEFENSE:**

### **Defensive Line:**

The Cowboys are moving from a 3-4 to a 4-3, and the most interesting part of the transition will be how the defensive line takes to the new scheme. Former rush linebackers DeMarcus Ware and Anthony Spencer are going to be key to this unit's success. If they can continue to generate the same level of pressure as before, the Cowboys should be in good shape. Unfortunately Spencer underwent a minor procedure in August and may not be ready to start the season. The line will also be without defensive tackle Jay Ratliff to start the season as he was placed on the reserve PUP list.

### **Linebackers:**

This is an area where the Cowboys are expected to excel, as both Sean Lee and Bruce Carter are expected to be 100% coming back from injuries. Lee and Carter form one of the better young linebacker duos in the league, and now that they are both healthy they could be poised for a huge season. Joining Lee and Carter in the starting line-up is Justin Durant who has been in the league since 2007. Durant is a good fit for this team as he's got good range and instincts and he is known as a very good run defender. He'll likely be subbed out on most passing downs, but he can still hold his own when he's on the field in coverage.

### **Defensive Backs:**

The Cowboys on paper have one of the better corner duos in the league in Brandon Carr and second year corner Morris Claiborne. Claiborne flashed big play potential at times, but he struggled some as a rookie, committing 8 penalties and allowing nearly 70% of the passes thrown against him to be completed. He should though be expected to improve this season, as we've typically seen corners start playing at a high level in year two. Behind Carr and Claiborne the Cowboys are pretty thin, so they really need them to pick their game up this season.

The safety position remains a serious question mark for Dallas as their projected starters Will Allen and Barry Church would be back-ups on most teams in the league. Possibly with a the scheme change and hopefully an improved defense in front of them, Allen and Church can at least be average, but not much more can be expected of them.

### **Defensive Player to Watch: LB Bruce Carter**

## **Special Teams:**

Dan Bailey is one of the better kickers in the league who just simply doesn't get enough credit. He had a good year for the Cowboys last season, and should be counted upon for another big performance. Punter Chris Jones doesn't figure to be much of a weapon as a punter and this could be a weakness for the Cowboys. Dwayne Harris was a very effective punt returner last season and he could be in line to handle both return jobs for the Cowboys this year.

## **Overall: 8-8, 3<sup>rd</sup> in the NFC East**

The Cowboys figure to have a strong passing attack and a pretty decent defense, but too many issues remain to consider them a viable contender for the NFC East. Until the Cowboys can show an improved run game and solid offensive line, they will be limited in what they can accomplish on offense. Questions about some players returning from injury and the safety play could leave the defense under-performing yet again, leading to another year without a winning record.

DALLAS COWBOYS				
Week	Date		Opponent	Steve's Prediction
1	September 8		<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	L
2	September 15	@	<a href="#">Kansas City Chiefs</a>	W
3	September 22		<a href="#">St. Louis Rams</a>	W
4	September 29	@	<a href="#">San Diego Chargers</a>	L
5	October 6		<a href="#">Denver Broncos</a>	L
6	October 13		<a href="#">Washington Redskins</a>	L
7	October 20	@	<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	L
8	October 27	@	<a href="#">Detroit Lions</a>	W
9	November 3		<a href="#">Minnesota Vikings</a>	W
10	November 10	@	<a href="#">New Orleans Saints</a>	W
11	Bye Week			
12	November 24	@	<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	W
13	November 28		<a href="#">Oakland Raiders</a>	W
14	December 9	@	<a href="#">Chicago Bears</a>	L
15	December 15		<a href="#">Green Bay Packers</a>	L
16	December 22	@	<a href="#">Washington Redskins</a>	L
17	December 29		<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	W
Record: 8-8 (2-4)				

## **Philadelphia Eagles:**

**Key Additions:** OLB Conner Barwin, S Patrick Chung, NT Issac Sopoaga, ILB Emmanuel Acho, CB Cary Williams, CB Bradley Fletcher, P Donnie Jones, TE James Casey

**2013 NFL Draft:** OT Lane Johnson, TE Zach Ertz, DT Bennie Logan, QB Matt Barkley, S Earl Wolff, DE Joe Kruger, CB Jordan Poyer, DE David King

**Key Losses:** OT King Dunlap, OT Demetress Bell, RB Dion Lewis, DE Darryl Tapp, DT Cullen Jenkins, DT Mike Patterson, P Matt McBriar, CB Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie, CB Namdi Asomugha

**Key Injuries:** WR Jeremy Maclin, WR Arrelious Benn, LB Jason Phillips, LB/DE Phillip Hunt

### **2012 Season Recap:**

2012 was a year to forget for the Eagles as they only managed 4 wins all season, despite starting out the season 3-0. Injuries ravaged the offense as the offensive line was missing four starters, many for most of the season. Michael Vick, LeSean McCoy and DeSean Jackson all missed significant time as well. Defensively the team completely imploded, dealing with plenty of infighting, and the team released former double digit sack defensive end Jason Babin before the year was out. The Eagles parted ways with longtime coach Andy Reid after the season and went with Oregon's Chip Kelly as his replacement. It's a bold move, but one that probably needed to be made after how last season went.

### **OFFENSE:**

#### **Quarterback:**

Chip Kelly's hiring was the best thing that could happen for Michael Vick's career as it made him the front runner for the starting job in Philly. Vick's running ability will be highly valued in the offense, and his big arm should allow him to make teams pay for being fooled by the misdirection in the offense. Vick could be primed for a season nearly as good as his 2010 campaign. Behind Vick, the Eagles have a pair of young promising quarterbacks in Nick Foles and Matt Barkley. Foles isn't a great fit for this offense, but he proved last year he can play at this level. Barkley will need some time, but he gives the Eagles a young capable back-up if the Eagles look to trade Foles next season.



## **Running back:**

LeSean McCoy struggled last season as he ran behind a line that was missing four starters for much of the year. Things were made worse for McCoy when Vick went down with injury putting all of the defensive focus on him. He made the most of it, still managing over 1,200 yards in 12 games last season. With a new offense that figures to feature the run prominently, McCoy should be in line for a career year. Behind McCoy the Eagles have a pair of promising young backs. Bryce Brown should be their number two, and he showed well in replacing McCoy last season.

He's got big play ability, but his ball security is an issue. Chris Polk, also figures to get into the mix as well. He isn't as dynamic as Brown, but is probably more reliable as a blocker and receiver.



## **Wide Receiver/ Tight end:**

The Eagles suffered a major loss with Jeremy Maclin going down early in training camp. The Eagles still have a solid group of guys with DeSean Jackson, Jason Avant, Riley Cooper, and Damarius Johnson, but it's definitely not as good of a group as it would have been with Maclin. Jackson figures to have an expanded role in this offense, as the Eagles will probably try to utilize his open field ability with more screen passes and even some runs. Avant will remain the consistent slot option, while Cooper is the possession guy and red zone target. The interesting guy to watch is Johnson. He's got exceptional quickness and speed, and Chip Kelly will surely find ways to get the ball in his hands on a consistent basis this season.

The real interesting thing will be to see how the Eagles tight ends are used. Philadelphia decided to keep four tight ends in veteran Brent Celek, hybrid free agent James Casey, rookie Zach Ertz and top blocker Emil Igwenagu. It's a really talented and versatile bunch as guys like Celek, Casey and Ertz can split out wide, while Casey and Igwenagu can line up in a fullback role. They will likely use a lot of two and three wide receiver packages and find ways to create mismatches for this group.

## **Offensive Line:**

The Eagles had arguably the league's best offensive line in 2011, and quite possibly the

league's worst in 2012 after they were ravaged with injuries. This year the Eagles line is healthy again and with the addition of first round pick Lane Johnson, they are expected to be one of the stronger units in the league. With multiple players coming back from serious injuries there is always a chance of a guy coming back at less than 100%. The Eagles should also be a bit concerned with their lack of veteran depth for this group. If any of their starters were to miss significant time, the Eagles would have some issues replacing them. The good news is after last year's performance things can only improve this season. Even if they aren't fully healthy they should provide far better protection for Vick and have a positive impact on the Eagles running game.

## **DEFENSE:**

### **Defensive Line:**

The Eagles are moving to a 3-4 and will be featuring a much different defensive line than what they had last season. Second year DL Fletcher Cox, figures to feature prominently in this new defensive alignment. Next to him the Eagles have a solid nose tackle in Issac Sopoaga, who should help limit the run this season. At the other end spot, Cedric Thornton has won the spot and has shown some nice promise. Behind the starters the Eagles have some really impressive depth with a group that features 2<sup>nd</sup> rounders from the last two years, Vinny Curry and Bennie Logan, to go along with a solid Clifton Geathers. It's not a great group overall, but they should be pretty productive for the Eagles this season.

### **Linebacker:**

This will be an intriguing group to watch, depending on how Trent Cole takes to his new position. He should still be able to rush the quarterback effectively, but he may see a drop off in run production or if he's asked to go into coverage. Opposite him the Eagles are hoping that Connor Barwin improves upon his disappointing 2012 season with the Texans. Inside, the Eagles look to be pretty good between DeMeco Ryans and Mychal Kendricks, who both project to be at least good starters. Depth wise the Eagles are a bit thinner, relying on Brandon Graham, Jake Knott, Casey Matthews, and Najee Goode. There is a little promise in the back-up group, but for the most part there would be a pretty big drop off from the starters.

### **Defensive Backs:**

The Eagles completely revamped their secondary depth chart, bringing in new starting corners Cary Williams and Bradley Fletcher, to go along with nickel corner Brandon Boykin. While there isn't a star in the group, that is a solid top three corner group for the Eagles. Unfortunately their depth was completely decimated with preseason injuries. Currently the only corner behind the top three the Eagles can even consider relying on

is 7<sup>th</sup> round rookie Jordan Poyer. While there is some concern with this group of corners, it is still a better situation than how the safeties look.

Philadelphia already cut free agent signing Kenny Phillips, leaving them very thin at free safety. Currently incumbent Nate Allen is expected to start, but he could be pushed by 5<sup>th</sup> round rookie Earl Wolff. At strong safety the Eagles should feel pretty confident in the play of Patrick Chung, but he has had some injury concerns in the past, making depth a key. Kurt Coleman and Colt Anderson are the two remaining back-ups, but neither figures to be a good option if they are needed for more than spot duty.

### **Special Teams:**

Second year kick Alex Henery had a good year making 87% of his kicks, though he did miss two field goals shorter than 40 yards which can be killer for a team. The Eagles brought in Donnie Jones to handle their punting duties this year, and should see at least a mild improvement to their average distance. The return game should be primarily DeSean Jackson as the punt returner and Damarius Johnson as the kick returner, with guys like Brandon Boykin and Jordan Poyer also in the mix. Jackson and Johnson both have game breaking ability and it would not be surprising to see this unit have 2-3 returns for touchdowns this season.

### **Overall: 7-9, 4<sup>th</sup> in the NFC East**

The Eagles probably won't make it out of the cellar of the NFC East this year, but it should be a much closer race. Chip Kelly's offense with its fast pace and creativity should get the most out of playmakers like Vick, McCoy and Jackson. The real test for this team will be their defense. Can they consistently get enough pressure on the quarterback and will the secondary hold up? Those are the two things likely to keep this team from making any sort of playoff run. While it won't be the season most Eagles fans are looking for, it should be an improvement and possibly set up a promising future.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES				
Week	Date		Opponent	Steve's Prediction
1	September 9	@	<a href="#">Washington Redskins</a>	L
2	September 15		<a href="#">San Diego Chargers</a>	W
3	September 19		<a href="#">Kansas City Chiefs</a>	L
4	September 29	@	<a href="#">Denver Broncos</a>	L
5	October 6	@	<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	L
6	October 13	@	<a href="#">Tampa Bay Buccaneers</a>	W
7	October 20		<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	W
8	October 27		<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	W
9	November 3	@	<a href="#">Oakland Raiders</a>	L
10	November 10	@	<a href="#">Green Bay Packers</a>	L
11	November 17		<a href="#">Washington Redskins</a>	W
12	Bye Week			
13	December 1		<a href="#">Arizona Cardinals</a>	W
14	December 8		<a href="#">Detroit Lions</a>	W
15	December 15	@	<a href="#">Minnesota Vikings</a>	L
16	December 22		<a href="#">Chicago Bears</a>	L
17	December 29	@	<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	L
Record: 7-9 (3-3)				

# Washington Redskins

**2012 Finish: 10-6, 1st in the NFC East, 1st round loss in the playoffs**

**Key Additions: CB E.J. Biggers, LB Nick Barnett, DE Phillip Merling**

**2013 Draft: CB David Amerson, TE Jordan Reed, S Phillip Thomas, RB Chris Thompson, LB Brandon Jenkins, S Bacarri Rambo, RB Jawan Jamison**

**Key Losses: S Madiou Williams, CB Cedric Griffin, LB Lorenzo Alexander, OT Jammal Brown, TE Chris Cooley, LB Chris Wilson**

**Key Injuries: DE Adam Carriker, DE Doug Worthington, LB Keenan Robinson, S Phillip Thomas**

## 2012 Season Recap:

Mike Shanahan started out his Redskins career 11-21 his first two seasons, and appeared to be headed for his third straight losing season in 2012 as the Redskins stood at 3-6 heading into their bye week. With their playoff hopes all but dashed, the Redskins rallied to win their final seven games to finish 10-6 and win the NFC East for the first time since 1999.

Led by rookie sensation, quarterback **Robert Griffin III** and late round gem **Alfred Morris**, the Redskins offense finished 5th in total yards and 4th in total points. The offense played to Griffin's strengths and implemented a zone read/pistol offense that left defenders guessing all season. Though their defense was typically their downfall last season finishing 22nd in points and 28th in yards, they improved down the stretch and kept the score close enough for the Redskins to win.

Washington's storybook season came to an end in the wild card weekend of the playoffs, losing to the Seattle Seahawks 24-14. The Redskins marched out to a 14-0 first quarter lead, but the Seahawks responded with 24 unanswered points, and QB **Robert Griffin** suffered a knee injury that got progressively worse and severely affected his play. Griffin eventually went down with a torn ACL and LCL that required offseason surgery.

## Offense:

### Quarterback:

**RGIII** led the league in both rushing yards per attempt and passing yards per attempt for

quarterbacks on his way to winning the NFL's Rookie of the Year Award last season. Injuries though are a real concern going forward, as not only Robert Griffin is coming back from his 2nd ACL surgery since 2009, but he's now suffered concussions in each of the last two seasons. Griffin is likely to be ready for week one, but his injury concerns should be something to watch all season. Overall his passing production should at least be on par with last season, but he may not be the same as a runner this year. If Griffin were to miss any time the Redskins would turn to 2nd year player **Kirk Cousins**, who came in for relief last season, and worked with the first team in camp. Cousins is a very promising young QB, and would probably start on a number of teams in the NFL.

### Running back/Fullback:

Alfred Morris was an unheralded 6th round pick last year, and due to multiple preseason injuries he had a chance to start the season. Morris quickly established himself as not only the Redskins starter, but one of the premier backs in the league. He rushed for 1,613 yards and 13 TD's on 335 carries (4.8 ypc) last season,



good for second in the league in both yards and TDs. Morris figures to be once again the focal point of the Redskins offense this season, and should again be among the league's best. Morris will probably see his carries drop slightly and may see a dip in ypc, but he should easily surpass 1,200 yards if he stays healthy. Backing him up this year will be 3rd year RB **Roy Helu Jr.**, who missed most of last season due to injury. Helu will offer the Redskins more speed at the position and should be a weapon catching the ball as well. At fullback the Redskins have one of the best in the league in **Darrel Young**, who excels not only at blocking, but as a runner/receiver as well.

### Wide Receiver/Tight End:

**Pierre Garcon** was the Redskins best receiver down the stretch last season, and figures to put up even better numbers this season as he doesn't (hopefully) have to deal with the foot injury that bothered him a year ago and cost him 6 games. Garcon became a big yards after the catch weapon for this offense last season and should once again be effective in the screen game and crossing routes. Starting opposite Garcon should once again be Josh Morgan, who led the team in catches and targets last season. Morgan was a reliable possession target last year, but it is hopeful now that he's fully recovered from his 2011 broken leg, he can offer more for the Redskins passing offense. **Santana Moss** has now become a slot only guy, but had a highly effective season last year, pacing the team with 8 TD catches and coming up with numerous

clutch 1st downs. He doesn't play as much so his overall production will be limited, but when he's on the field he's a weapon. **Leonard Hankerson** and **Aldrick Robinson** are a pair of third year receivers, who offer quality depth and should continue to carve out roles on this team.

**Fred Davis** is back as the starting tight end after suffering a mid-year Achilles tear, which could lead to a decrease in production. So far he looks to be back to normal, but his production bears watching. Behind him though the Redskins have blocking tight end **Logan Paulsen**, who filled in pretty well for Davis the final nine games of the year last season. Paulsen doesn't stretch the field like Davis does, but he still gives solid production and is a big target in the red zone. The team drafted Jordan Reed in the 3rd round this April, but he is more of a longer term project and is likely behind 3rd year **Niles Paul** on the depth chart. Paul, whose main value is his special teams' ability, did manage to haul in 5 receptions that went over 20 yards last season out of his eight total catches. If he can be a more reliable receiver, he could be a solid number two tight end.

#### **Offensive Line:**

Last year the Redskins offensive line started 79 of a possible combined 80 regular season games. That led them to have a better season than most expected, as they helped propel the Redskins offense to be one of the league's best. Everything wasn't rosy for the line last year though, as Alfred Morris dealt with too much contact at or behind the line of scrimmage and the team's sack rate was among the league's worst for much of the season. Washington is bringing back their entire starting line, and hopes the continuity will help mitigate any talent issues. Left tackle **Trent Williams** is the star of the line, though he's dealing with a sprained wrist and may be playing this season in a cast. Center **Will Montgomery** and right guard **Chris Chester** are very good starters, and keys to this team's success. Left guard **Kory Lichtensteiger** had a rough first year back from a 2011 ACL injury and led the team with 10 penalties. He isn't a star, but if he cuts his penalties down he could at least be solid. Right tackle is the big question mark as **Tyler Polumbus** struggled quite a bit there last season.

**Offensive player to watch: WR Pierre Garcon**

#### **Defense:**

##### **Defensive Line:**

The first four games could be a real test for this unit as projected starting DE **Jarvis Jenkins** is serving a suspension for testing positive for performance enhancing drugs. This comes on the heels of losing top back-up Adam Carriker for likely the entire season



due to injury. The Redskins will rely on veteran back-up **Kedric Golston** and former back-up NT **Chris Baker** to hold the fort down while Jenkins is out, but there is likely to be a drop-off. **Stephen Bowen** and **Barry Cofield** are two good productive starters, but this unit lacks an elite player. That has caused problems in the past, and could be an issue again if the depth doesn't step up.

### **Linebackers:**

The linebacking corps is the heart and soul of this defense as outside backers **Brian Orakpo** and **Ryan Kerrigan** are probably the team's two best defensive players. Both Orakpo (who is coming off a missed season due to injury) and Kerrigan are very capable of putting pressure on the quarterback and making things happen in the backfield. Fourth year inside linebacker **Perry Riley** looks to take his game to the next level this season, and is considered a good all-around defender. Veteran **London Fletcher** saw his production and effectiveness fall last season, but he rebounded down the stretch to help this defense. What he can bring the table this season is a tough question to answer heading into this season. If he plays like he did last year the Redskins could have some problems, but if he is back to his previous level of play, the Redskins could have the best linebacking unit in the NFC. Depth is strong across the board here for the Redskins, though they will be without top back-up **Rob Jackson** for the first four weeks due to a suspension. The team lost 2nd year ILB Keenan Robinson to injury, but mitigated that loss with the signing of veteran Nick Barnett.

### **Secondary:**

This unit was the Redskins biggest weakness last season, and the Redskins looked to improve this year by signing corner E.J. Biggers from Tampa and drafting defensive backs in the 2nd, 4th and 6th rounds. Biggers and 2nd round corner David Amerson will join incumbent starters **DeAngelo Hall** and **Josh Wilson** at the top of the depth chart. Hall has had issues in recent years with giving up too many catches and yards. Wilson has been the more consistent corner, but his size can limit him from effectively covering some of the bigger receivers in the league. Biggers and Amerson add size and potential, but there are some question marks surrounding both players. Overall it should be a solid group, and if someone struggles they should have the depth to replace them.

Safety is still more unsettled than cornerback at this point. Projected starting strong safety **Brandon Meriweather** is coming back from a late season ACL injury, and has been limited for much of practice this training camp. Though the hope is that he will be ready to start the season, the chance that he will be healthy enough for 1,000 or more plays this season seems slim. Unfortunately top back-up SS rookie Phillip Thomas, will now miss the season due to a Lisfranc injury. Though Thomas wasn't expected to start, he would have likely gotten a fair amount of work this season at both SS and FS. Starting free safety currently looks to be 6th round rookie Bacarri Rambo. Rambo has some good potential, but still figures to have his fair share of growing pains this season. Depth is now in question without Thomas in the mix, though veteran **Reed Doughty** has

been a solid in the box safety when called upon.

### **Defensive Player to watch: ILB Perry Riley**

### **Special Teams:**

Street free agent **Kai Forbath** was a tremendous find for the Redskins last season when he made his first 17 field goals attempts after joining the team in Week 6 last year. In fact Forbath missed just a single field goal attempt all year, giving the Redskins the consistency they've lacked in their kicking game for years. Forbath's accuracy shouldn't be the issue this season, but his distance on kick-offs did put the defense in some bad situations last year.

Sav Rocca is a solid veteran punter who will boom some punts and is pretty good from a hang time stand point, but he's not consistent enough. His average distance has been in the bottom third the last two seasons, and it will likely be an issue again. The returners are up in the air at this point, but it is likely that Niles Paul is the kickoff returner. But the preseason injury to Richard Crawford puts a big question mark next to the punt returner spot on the depth chart. Whoever ends up with the return jobs should provide an improvement over the inconsistencies of **Brandon Banks** the last couple of years.

### **Overall: 10-6, finish first in the NFC East**

The Redskins figure to be similar to last season where their offense carried them to the playoffs. The defense should be improved this year, particularly from a pass rush perspective, but it still figures to be the weak point of this team. The Redskins schedule is tough overall, but does start out favorably during the first four weeks before the Redskins bye. That could be key, since it is likely that players like RGIII, Brandon Meriweather and Fred Davis may not be at their peak early in the year. Also suspended players Jarvis Jenkins and Rob Jackson won't miss as many key games. The NFC East figures to be competitive this year, with the Giants and Cowboys both likely to be in the mix, but the Redskins should be able to take the division once again based on their superior offense.

WASHINGTON REDSKINS			
Week	Date	Opponent	Steve's Prediction
1	September 9	<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	W
2	September 15 @	<a href="#">Green Bay Packers</a>	L
3	September 22	<a href="#">Detroit Lions</a>	W
4	September 29 @	<a href="#">Oakland Raiders</a>	W
5	Bye Week		
6	October 13 @	<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	W
7	October 20	<a href="#">Chicago Bears</a>	W
8	October 27 @	<a href="#">Denver Broncos</a>	L
9	November 3	<a href="#">San Diego Chargers</a>	W
10	November 7 @	<a href="#">Minnesota Vikings</a>	W
11	November 17 @	<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	L
12	November 25	<a href="#">San Francisco 49ers</a>	L
13	December 1	<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	W
14	December 8	<a href="#">Kansas City Chiefs</a>	W
15	December 15 @	<a href="#">Atlanta Falcons</a>	L
16	December 22	<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	W
17	December 29 @	<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	L
Record: 10-6 (4-2)			

2013 REDSKINS GUIDE

# SCHEDULE PREDICTIONS



2013 WASHINGTON REDSKINS SCHEDULE:						
Week	Date	Opponent	Steve's Prediction	John's Prediction	Mark's Prediction	Phil's Prediction
1	September 9	<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	W	W	W	W
2	September 15 @	<a href="#">Green Bay Packers</a>	L	L	W	L
3	September 22	<a href="#">Detroit Lions</a>	W	W	W	W
4	September 29 @	<a href="#">Oakland Raiders</a>	W	W	W	W
5	Bye Week					
6	October 13 @	<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	W	W	W	W
7	October 20	<a href="#">Chicago Bears</a>	W	W	L	W
8	October 27 @	<a href="#">Denver Broncos</a>	L	L	L	L
9	November 3	<a href="#">San Diego Chargers</a>	W	W	W	W
10	November 7 @	<a href="#">Minnesota Vikings</a>	W	W	W	W
11	November 17 @	<a href="#">Philadelphia Eagles</a>	L	W	W	W
12	November 25	<a href="#">San Francisco 49ers</a>	L	L	L	L
13	December 1	<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	W	W	W	L
14	December 8	<a href="#">Kansas City Chiefs</a>	W	W	W	W
15	December 15 @	<a href="#">Atlanta Falcons</a>	L	L	L	L
16	December 22	<a href="#">Dallas Cowboys</a>	W	W	W	W
17	December 29 @	<a href="#">New York Giants</a>	L	L	W	W
Final Record Prediction:			10-6	11-5	12-4	11-5

**Each writer chose their 3 KEY games for the Redskins this season.  
Which games are the biggest on the Redskins schedule this season?**

## **STEVE:**

### **Key Game 1: Week 8 @ Broncos**

This is a key game for a number of reasons, not the least of which Mike Shanahan returning home to Denver. For the Redskins as a team I have them at 5-1 heading into this game. If they can pull off an upset here, they could be in prime position to pick up a first round bye in the playoffs. And if they can beat Denver, it gives them a lot of credibility that they could go all the way this year.

### **Key Game 2: Week 10 @ Vikings**

Many people consider this game an easy win, but the Redskins are on a short week and traveling to Minnesota, which has upset written all over it. Last year Adrian Petersen wasn't 100% when these teams faced off, so the Redskins better be ready to stop the Vikings rushing attack if they want to get the win here.

### **Key Game 3: Week 16 vs. Cowboys**

The NFC East figures to be a close race right down to the wire, and this could be a game that not only knocks the Cowboys out of the playoffs, but secures the Redskins spot for the postseason.

## **JOHN:**

### **Key Game 1 - Week 6: Sunday, Oct. 13, at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.**

I got a win here although my first thought was loss. But then I thought who still coached Dallas (Jason Garrett), who wishes he coached Dallas (Jerry Jones) and who is under center (Tony Romo.) Dallas was bad at home in primetime last year and I feel the Redskins can go in again and win at JerryWorld. I don't think it is a great situation in Dallas, much like the Philadelphia/ Andy Reid situation of the past two seasons.

## **Key Game 2 - Week 12: Monday, Nov. 25, San Francisco, 8:30 p.m.**

I sat in front of my computer for 10 minutes before I started typing to decide which way to go on this one. I just think that San Francisco and Seattle are going to be very good. I hope they can get to Kaepernick and force mistakes. I think the Skins give a great effort in a potential game of the year candidate but the 49ers are just better.

## **Key Game 2 - Week 13: Sunday, Dec. 1, NY Giants, 8:30 p.m.**

Back to back night games at FedEx. John Mara please make your way to FedEx to see your boys get thrashed. Mara is going to wish he took away draft picks from the Redskins after Griffin works his team again and this time handily. Not sold on the Giants D one bit.

## **MARK:**

### **Key Game 1: Week 1 vs. Eagles**

The Redskins open up the season in the national spotlight on Monday Night Football against their divisional rivals, the Philadelphia Eagles. It's incredibly important for the Redskins to get a win and show to the world that Robert Griffin III is healthy. The entire offseason has been filled with talk about his knee and how he's used in the offense; but I think that will all start to calm down if the Redskins can go out and get a win, setting the tone for the season.

### **Key Game 2: Week 9 vs. Chargers**

Coming off their bye week, the Redskins face three very tough games against the Cowboys, Bears and Broncos. If they drop a couple of losses in those three games, it could send the Redskins season into a tailspin. The Chargers, on paper, don't look like the toughest team right now, but if they can get Phillip Rivers back to his best, the Redskins know exactly the effect a good quarterback can have on a team.

### **Key Game 3: Week 16 vs. Cowboys**

The Falcons in Atlanta represent as tough a challenge as anyone on the Redskins schedule this year. Immediately after that game, the Redskins wrap up their season with two games against divisional rivals the Cowboys and Giants. These games could be



key to winning the division, so the Redskins need to win against the Cowboys to take some pressure off against the Giants in week 17.

## **PHIL:**

### **Key Game 1: Redskins @ NY Giants Week 17**

Week 17 away in New York has the makings of what essentially could be an NFC East title game where the winner moves on to the playoffs and the loser goes home for the year. The Redskins will likely enter the game either still battling Dallas or NY (or both) for the division lead, which could push this game into being a primetime event (flex scheduling) meaning it will be viewed in every home on America. The whole season could be decided with this game making it potentially the biggest of the year for both teams.

### **Key Game 2 - Dallas @ Redskins Week 16**

Week 16 at home against the Dallas Cowboys may be the biggest game of the year in more than just rivalry terms. Dallas has the potential to be a force in the NFC East if they can keep their team healthy. The Redskins could enter this game deadlocked with the Cowboys and/or the Giants in the NFC East, making this game a must win.

### **Key Game 3 - 49ers @ Redskins Week 12**

Week 12 at home against the San Francisco 49ers is will be a pivotal game as it could showcase two of the top rushing attacks in the league and a possible playoff matchup. Kaepernick versus RG3 in primetime is the headline that will carry this game onto the national scene. This game also has importance because it could affect the wildcard positioning at the end of the season if both/either teams don't win their respective divisions.

2013 REDSKINS GUIDE

# OVER/UNDER BETTING AGAINST THE SPREAD



## **By John Manuel:**

Here are the Vegas lines for the Redskins schedule and my call for every game. What is your bet on these lines?

### **Week 1 - vs. Philadelphia Eagles**

**Line: Redskins by 6.5**

**My Call: Redskins cover**

With the return of Griffin and the uncertainty of the Chip Kelly led Eagles, I think this is an appropriate number. Although many feel this game could be close, I just don't see the Eagles stopping the Washington offense. But if the Skins defense can't stop the Eagles I will be a loser for sure.

### **Week 2 - at Green Bay Packers**

**Line: Packers by 6**

**My Call: Take the Skins and the points**

A lot of this spread will depend on how Griffin looks week one and if the Packers have any success slowing down Colin Kaepernick in San Fran also. I think if the number is decent size the Skins can hang in a shootout at Lambeau.

### **Week 3 - vs. Detroit Lions**

**Line: Redskins by 9.5**

**My Call: Take Lions and the points**

I am going with the Lions being more of the 2011 Lions than the 2012. The Redskins

win but it is closer than most hoped. We owe the Lions a beat down though from the McNabb benching game still.

#### **Week 4 - at Oakland Raiders**

**Line: Redskins by 11.5**

**My Call: Redskins cover**

Oakland should be horrible and we should have a good idea by the end of the first month. Washington needs to go into the mess that is the black hole and win big to finish off a good first quarter of the season.

#### **Week 5 - Bye**

#### **Week 6 - at Dallas Cowboys**

**Line: Cowboys by 2.5**

**My Call: Take the Redskins and the points**

I waver on this game but think it is best to take Washington and any points you can get here. Monte Kiffin will need to prove that he can handle the Skins offense better than Rob Ryan did before I bet against Washington.

#### **Week 7 vs. Chicago Bears**

**Line: Redskins by 6**

**My Call: Take the Bears and the points**

A lot will depend on how things work out with Marc Trestman and Jay Cutler early on. So far it looks good so I think the Skins win but the Bears keep it real close.

## **Week 8 at Denver Broncos**

**Line: Broncos by 7.5**

**My Call: Take the Redskins and the points**

I feel the Skins will be riding high into Denver so oddsmaker will expect a letdown. I don't. I think they play a close game and maybe pull off the upset over Peyton Manning.

## **Week 9 vs. San Diego Chargers**

**Line: Redskins by 10.5**

**My Call: Redskins cover**

I don't like this San Diego team at all. They have lost a lot of talent and have been hurt by injuries in preseason. Redskins should lay a whoppin' on San Diego that even Norv Turner will feel in Cleveland.

## **Week 10 at Minnesota Vikings**

**Line: Pick'em**

**My Call: Take the Redskins**

My feeling is that Minnesota is a .500 team at this point and the Redskins should go in and take care of business. Of course a lot will depend on stopping or even slowing down Adrian Peterson, which won't be easy.

## **Week 11 at Philadelphia Eagles**

**Line: Redskins by 2**

**My Call: Redskins cover**

No one knows where to go with this game now. Just thinking the Redskins pull out another close one like last year in Philly?

## **Week 12 vs. San Francisco 49ers**

**Line: 49ers by 1.5**

**My Call: 49ers cover**

I hate to say this but I think San Fran wins by a field goal. I keep thinking about how they went into New England last season and played. Then again at Seattle was a primetime game also.

## **Week 13 vs. New York Giants**

**Line: Skins by 3.5**

**My Call: Take Giants plus points**

Skins win by 3 in a Vegas special. Fedex will be rocking for the incoming Giants and I see it kind of like last year's tough battle.

## **Week 14 vs. Kansas City Chiefs**

**Line: Skins by 9.5**

**My Call: Take Chiefs and the points**

Real nervous after tough games versus New York and San Fran so I think KC gives them a battle. I think the Chiefs will be decent but the Skins will have momentum and a higher spread will come from Vegas.

## **Week 15 at Atlanta Falcons**

**Line: Falcons by 7.5**

**My Call: Falcons cover**

It's the regular season so Atlanta is a good bet. I think the Redskins have a letdown following a tough month of games.

## **Week 16 vs. Cowboys**

**Line: Redskins by 6**

**My Call: Redskins cover**

Romo comes here needing a win and has a Romo big game debacle. Or the Cowboys may not even be in the mix and Jerry and Jason Garrett could be at odds by then.

## **Week 17 at New York Giants**

**Giants by 8.5**

**My Call: Giants cover**

I'm banking on the Redskins having at least a two game lead in the NFC East and using this as a semi-playoff rest. Giants handle the Skins at home.



2013 REDSKINS GUIDE

# REDSKINS ROUNDTABLE DEBATE



**ENJOY THE DEBATE!!**

## **OFFENSE:**

### **1. What should the expectations be for RG3?**

**Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com:**

The expectations for Griffin are going to be huge no matter what. His numbers from last year are going to be the measuring stick to which he is compared. If they dip, the 'experts' are going to be saying he rushed back or the injury changed his game. As far as numbers go he will likely throw more than run this year, so more passing yards and less rushing yards (more sliding/going out-of-bounds): 16 games played, 3,600 passing with thirty touchdowns, 600 yards rushing for the season.

**John Manuel:**

If he can stay healthy and it is a major if, he should be in the mix for league MVP. I know it is saying a lot but he was in that mix mid-season as a rookie and other than a lingering knee issue, I feel he should have another huge season.

**Mark Bullock:**

You always look for a second year player to improve over his rookie campaign, however good it was. But when you consider his recovery from offseason knee surgery and the Redskins facing a tougher schedule (at least on paper); I think we should expect a similar season to last year. The Redskins would certainly take a 20 touchdown and five interception season from him if you offered that right now.

**Steve Shoup:**

With Griffin set to start Week 1, he should be able to put up relatively similar passing numbers to what he did a year ago. The team will likely throw a little bit more, but not



have a drastic increase in this area. The big question mark is how much impact he can have on the ground. The 120 combined scrambles and runs were too many, and I would expect the team to keep it under 80 runs this year.

## **2. Given the Redskins again didn't make significant upgrades on the offensive line, how reasonable is it to expect them to maintain or improve on their production from last season?**

**Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com:**

I think it's very reasonable to expect them to improve on the production from a year ago as long as the returning lineman can stay healthy. While the Redskins didn't land any new blockers on the line, what they did do was log another year together in the system which is vital.

**John Manuel:**

Good news is they didn't lose anyone especially either Shanahan. So I have faith that they can work the offensive game plans around the line's deficiencies much like last season. Trent "The Club" Williams needs to be out there for 16 games.

**Mark Bullock:**

Very reasonable. Cohesion is a huge part of what makes offensive lines successful, particularly in a zone blocking scheme. We saw a significant improvement last year despite not making many changes (only replacing Jammal Brown for equally bad Tyler Polumbus). If they remain healthy, there's no reason to believe they can't at least maintain that level of performance.

**Steve Shoup:**

I think this is one area where the Redskins should expect some regression. The Redskins offensive line starters played in about 95% of all the offensive snaps last year. That is very unlikely to happen again. Given how unproven the Redskins backups are, this will likely lead to more issues along the offensive line this season.

## **DEFENSE:**

### **3. What should be the bigger concern -- rush or pass defense?**

**Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com:**

In the 3-4 scheme the Redskins use the pass rush as the key element that has to be successful for everything else to work correctly. Without a successful pass rush, a good pass defense will mean very little if the quarterback has all day to find an open receiver. Ryan Kerrigan and Brian Orakpo need to have huge years; if they do I expect the defense to be top 10-15 in the NFL this season.

**John Manuel:**

Right now I am going with rush defense because I think they really were not that good last season just that the pass defense made them look OK. I don't want to see teams pound them with the run like Seattle. Orakpo's return helps the pass defense but not really the run.

**Mark Bullock:**

For me it's pass defense. We saw at the end of last season, you can somewhat manufacture a pass rush by sending different blitzes from different looks. With Brian Orakpo back, that should only help the pass rush. But the guys behind him have got to back him up with solid coverage and good tackling, something we've yet to see from the Redskins secondary on a consistent basis.

**Steve Shoup:**

With how bad the pass defense was a year ago, it would be easy to say that's the bigger issue. However, I don't believe that to be true. The return of Brian Orakpo should help the pass defense, but the defense didn't see any significant upgrades this year. The Redskins face a far tougher schedule against running teams than they did a year ago.

**4. Ranking 1-10 with 1 being not concerned at all and 10 being VERY concerned, how concerned are you by the Redskins safety situation this year?**

**Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com:**

I'm at about a 7 just for the sheer fact that a rookie will start at free safety in Bacarri Rambo and Brandon Meriweather has had issues staying healthy. I believe that once Rambo fully catches up to the speed of the NFL game and improves the angles he takes on the football field he will be fine. The depth at this position is thin, but Reed

Doughty does bring some experience with him and is decent in rush defense playing strong safety.

**John Manuel:**

9. Because I still don't think they have a stay at home free safety on the roster. So many times Madeiu Williams was left in the back and could not make plays. Losing Philip Thomas and the uncertainty of a rookie in Rambo and Merriweather's injury concerns keep that number high.

**Mark Bullock:**

I'd say about six. Whenever you have a sixth round rookie who's been questionable with his tackling thus far as your starting free safety, you have to be concerned. But at the same time, Bacarri Rambo has plenty of potential and will learn quickly from any mistakes. The Redskins were a playoff team with a worse secondary last year, so I'm not overly concerned about it.

**Steve Shoup:**

I'd say 9.5. Phillip Thomas is already out for the year. Brandon Meriweather is a big question mark and likely will be all season. While Bacarri Rambo has shown some promise, he is still a rookie and will likely struggle at times this year. There also is very little depth behind the starters, meaning if Meriweather can't go, the Redskins are in a lot of trouble.

## **OVERALL:**

### **5. What can the Redskins do to cut down on their penalties?**

**Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com**

This is the age old question coaches have been trying to figure out since penalties in football began. Truth is, being better disciplined is a good starting spot for the Redskins. The coaching staff can only do so much to ready the team to not commit penalties; game time situations happen in the spur of the moment and can't be predetermined in most cases.

**John Manuel:**

I can't think of anything other than play smarter. It worries me when leaders like London Fletcher pick up personal fouls so I hold him accountable to set a better example. The coaches also need to take some responsibility as well.

**Mark Bullock:**

Practice reps and discipline. Players have to practice lining up correctly, not jumping before the snap and avoiding mental mistakes. If they consistently make the same mistake over and over, then they need to be taken out of the game until they can be relied on.

**Steve Shoup:**

The number one thing the Redskins can do is stay more disciplined. Far too many of their penalties were either false starts or offsides. And those for the most part can be avoided. Another big issue for the Redskins is to keep their cool. They had 10 personal foul penalties, many of which could have easily been avoided last year.

**6. What should we expect from the Redskins return game this year?****Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com:**

I'm a little worried about the special teams unit this season as they get used to new coach Keith Burns and playing without Lorenzo Alexander. Alexander meant a lot to the unit and someone will have to step into his role and make plays. I like the idea of Santana Moss returning punts if that is what Shanahan decides to go with (hand may be forced since Richard Crawford is on IR), Moss is still very athletic and agile for his age and has prior experience with returning.

**John Manuel:**

Assuming it is Niles Paul on kickoffs, I am fine with that. Paul is not the burner Brandon Banks was but I think he can take advantage of the minimal opportunities the kickoff returner can get. With Crawford's injury I'm a lot more nervous about punt return duties. At this point we really don't know who it's going to be yet.

**Mark Bullock:**

With Richard Crawford out for the year, it appears Chris Thompson will take over the return duties. Thompson has explosive speed and acceleration with an ability to cut on

a dime, but his lightweight frame makes him vulnerable to fumbles and injuries. Sounds rather like Brandon Banks, but I think Thompson will prove to be more explosive.

**Steve Shoup:**

The number one expectation should be better decision making. Brandon Banks had many issues, but his biggest flaw was returning the ball when it would have been better to fair catch or kneel down. With Richard Crawford out, the punt return job is up in the air and probably won't make a significant impact.



# CREDITS:

**PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ICON SPORTS MEDIA, INC.**

**THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR WRITERS AND EDITORS** –John Manuel, Alan Zlotorzynski, Phil from HTTR4LIFE.com, Mark Bullock, and of course Steve Shoup!

Be sure to check out our Redskins Football coverage all season long at <http://fanspeak.com/washingtonredskins/>.

**Happy Redskins Football Season!**