

Chargers top fading Cowboys 28-6 on Thanksgiving

By SCHUYLER DIXON
Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Philip Rivers was more than comfortable on the Thanksgiving stage for the first time in his 14 NFL seasons.

Same with Keenan Allen, who didn't have to wait nearly that long.

Rivers threw for 434 yards and three touchdowns, Allen had a career-high 172 yards in his second straight huge game and the Los Angeles Chargers beat the fading Dallas Cowboys 28-6 on Thursday.

Desmond King returned an interception 90 yards for the punctuating touchdown. The Chargers (5-6) moved within 1 1/2 games of AFC West-leading Kansas City after starting 0-4 while the Chiefs won their first five.

"Playing on Thanksgiving was everything it was cranked up to be," said Rivers, who was 27 of 33 in his ninth career 400-yard game. "As a quarterback, you want to play well and throw it to your guys, and we did a lot today. But I'm more excited about our team."

The defending NFC East champion Cowboys (5-6) have lost three straight games by at least 20 points for the first time since 2004, all without suspended star running back Ezekiel Elliott in a damaging slide for their fading playoff hopes.

Dallas, playing its 50th Thanksgiving game, finally ended a touchdown drought at a team-record 10 quarters on Rod Smith's 2-yard run early in the fourth quarter. The Cowboys have been outscored 72-6 in the second half of the three losses.



Los Angeles Chargers' Hunter Henry (86) celebrates his touchdown catch with Tyrell Williams (16) and Keenan Allen (13) in the second half against the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday in Arlington, Texas.

AP Photo/Michael Ainsworth

Quarterback Dak Prescott has looked lost without Elliott, his backfield mate for a pair of remarkable rookie seasons that led the Cowboys to the best record in the NFC last season. Prescott had two interceptions, giving him five in two games after throwing just four a year ago.

Last year's NFL Offensive Rookie of

the Year has nine picks for the season and the Cowboys already have twice as many losses as a year ago with Elliott only halfway through a six-game suspension for alleged domestic violence.

"The last thing I'm doing is pointing a finger and saying, 'We need this guy, we need that to happen,'" said Prescott, who was

20 of 27 for 179 yards in his third straight game without a TD pass. "I'm going to say we've just got to figure out what's going on and get out of this slump."

Rivers had seven completions of at least 22 yards, including Allen's 42-yard catch-and-run when he weaved through five defenders for a 22-6 lead.

Allen, in his fifth season, has two of his three biggest yardage games in the past two weeks. He had 11 catches and a score after 12 grabs for 159 yards and two TDs in a 54-24 win over Buffalo.

"When I first got here, he was a little heavy," first-year coach Anthony Lynn said. "I think once he got his weight down, you could see the run after catch, the quickness, all those things you see in a No. 1 receiver."

LA, with 500-plus total yards (515) for the first time in two years, overcame the loss of kicker Nick Novak to a back injury, the second straight game that Dallas' opposing kicker was injured and in the same game that Dallas' Dan Bailey returned after missing four games with a groin injury.

Just like last week in the Cowboys' blowout loss to division-leading Philadelphia, neither of the kickers mattered much with the Dallas offense sputtering and the defense not getting key stops.

Novak returned to make a 22-yard field goal after the injury, but left for good after missing an extra point. Punter Drew Kaser was 1 of 3 on extra points. The Chargers went for a fourth-and-13 in field goal range in a scoreless game early in the second quarter with Novak's status in doubt, coming up a yard short.

Minnesota beats Detroit 30-23, adding to division lead

By LARRY LAGE
Associated Press

DETROIT — Case Keenum stood in the pocket to take a hit, dipped his right shoulder to slip out of a sack and shuffled his feet in the pocket to give his receivers more time to get open.

Looking like a savvy winner, instead of a journeyman, he picked apart Detroit's defense with his arm and made plays with his legs to help the Minnesota Vikings beat the Lions 30-23 Thursday.

Keenum threw for two touchdowns and ran for a score in the first half to give the Vikings a double-digit lead and they went on to win a seventh straight game.

They took a huge step toward winning the NFC North by taking a three-game lead over the second-place Lions.

Keenum, undrafted out of Houston in 2012, is suddenly 7-2 this season after going 9-15 with the Houston Texas and the St. Louis/Los Angeles Rams.

"I want to be great and I have confidence in myself that I can be great," he said.

The Vikings signed him to be a backup and he has made the most of his opportunities with Sam Bradford injured and Teddy Bridgewater recovering from a knee injury.

Keenum was 21 of 30 for 282 yards with both TD passes going to Kyle Rudolph, giving the Vikings a 20-3 lead late in the second quarter.

"Case is amazing because he does so many small things to pick up first downs and keep drives alive," Rudolph said.

"Every time he finds a way to convert another third down, it

means we've got three more plays to attack the defense. With the number of big-play guys we've got now, we can do a lot of damage with those three plays."

Detroit (6-5) made mistakes in every phase of the game and Minnesota took advantage. Keenum's 1-yard pass to Rudolph was made a little easier because the Lions had just 10 defenders on the field.

And, Keenum's 9-yard run came after Matthew Stafford was charged with a fumble while trying to hand off to Ameer Abdullah.

Instead of winning to pull within a game of Minnesota and having a potential tiebreaker, the Lions' loss hurts their chances of making a second straight post-season appearance.

"Don't count us out just yet," Detroit coach Jim Caldwell said. "We've got a lot of football yet to play."

FALLING SHORT

The Lions rallied to pull within four points early in the fourth quarter on Stafford's second TD pass to Marvin Jones, who leaped to beat two defensive backs for the 43-yard score as his quarterback was on the turf with an injured right ankle.

Xavier Rhodes sidetracked Detroit's comeback hopes with an interception at the Detroit 37 late in the game.

Detroit's Darius Slay blocked a field goal with 1:15 left and teammate Nevin Lawson recovered the ball and returned it 77 yards for an apparent TD, but it was negated by Slay being offside and that quieted a roaring crowd.

BY THE NUMBERS

Latavius Murray had 84 yards rushing and a 2-yard score, giving the Vikings a 27-10 lead early in the third quarter.

Minnesota's Adam Thielen had eight receptions for 89 yards and deflected credit to his quarterback.

"Case Keenum is one tough human being," he said. "When he's hanging in there — giving you time to get open — you feel like you're letting him down if you can't do it. He's willing to get crushed to make a play, and that makes us want to come though on our end."

Everson Griffen had two sacks, tying his career high with 12 on the season, for the Vikings.

Stafford struggled even before he was hurt late in the game, missing open receivers, and finished 20 of 35 for 250 yards with two TDs and an interception on fourth down with just under three minutes left. Jones had six catches for 109 yards and two TDs. The Lions were held to a total of 53 yards rushing.

PIGSKIN PICKERS

FINAL WEEK

Overall: 86-24
Last Week: 6-4
Churchill vs. Hermiston
Marshfield vs. C. Grove
Santiam vs. Monroe
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Alabama at Auburn
WSU at Washington
OSU at Oregon
Seahawks at 49ers
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