

Plenty of implications at stake as Chiefs visit Seahawks

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

SEATTLE — From the time he entered the league in 2012, Russell Wilson for the most part has thrived late in the season with playoff berths or playoff positioning at stake.

What about potential MVP candidate Patrick Mahomes?

For all the brilliance Mahomes has shown this season in leading Kansas City to the cusp of a division title and possibly the No. 1 seed in the AFC, he's never been in the situation of showing he can win a late-season game in a hostile environment that could ultimately help determine how far the Chiefs go in the postseason.

That unknown about Mahomes makes Sunday night's matchup with Kansas City visiting Seattle fascinating. Should the second-year quarterback enter one of the most difficult venues in football and come away with a Kansas City victory, Mahomes will have answered those questions and put Kansas City potentially in position to never leave home during the postseason.

But a loss to Seattle and wins by the Chargers and Texans this weekend could put all that in peril for the Chiefs — the division title, home-field advantage and a

NFL



Seattle Seahawks
(8-6)

Kansas City Chiefs
(11-3)

Sunday, 5:20 p.m., at Century Link Field, Seattle
TV: NBC

first-round playoff bye.

"I think the message for the whole team is we're not satisfied with where we're at. We wanted to put ourselves in this position, but at the same time, we know we still have a long way to go," Mahomes said.

"We're going to keep in that mentality the rest of this season and into the playoffs (of) not being satisfied with just being here. We want to make sure we can go and win the big games whenever we need to."

Kansas City (11-3) could have made the importance of Sunday's game significantly less if it could have held on at home last week against the Chargers. But the 29-28 loss to Los Angeles left open the chance Kansas City could miss out on the division title and fall all the way to being a wild-card team depending on how the final two weeks play out.

"You can hang your head



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File

In this Dec. 2, 2018, file photo, Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson passes against the San Francisco 49ers during the second half of an NFL football game in Seattle.

and mope and do all those things you want to do, but that doesn't get anything accomplished," Kansas City coach Andy Reid said.

"You get in, you learn from it the best you can, and you go do better. That's the approach I am taking. That is the approach I felt from the guys."

Seattle (8-6) also had an unexpected thud last week losing in overtime to lowly San Francisco on the road. Ultimately what Wilson and the Seahawks do against Kansas City doesn't matter

in the big picture of Seattle trying to wrap up a wild-card spot in the NFC. A win over Arizona in Week 17 would be enough to put Seattle in the playoffs no matter what happens against the Chiefs.

With losses by either Washington or Minnesota and a win over the Chiefs, the Seahawks would be back in the postseason after missing a year ago. But they know beating the Chiefs won't be easy.

"They have such a diverse attack that you've got to be ready for a lot of stuff. Our

guys, they're up for it, they're ready for the challenge and all of that," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said. "We've got to do a great job on their really classy receivers. (Travis) Kelce and (Tyreek) Hill are just unbelievably talented guys having great years. So, there's a lot of issues here. I think our guys will be ready to do this."

Here's what else to watch for:

By committee

After leaning heavily on Damien Williams last week, the Chiefs are likely

to go with a bigger committee among their running backs especially if Spencer Ware is healthy enough to play. Williams had 123 yards from scrimmage last week, but Ware has proven to be a more durable and consistent runner in the past. Ware missed last week with a hamstring injury.

Run away

Seattle's No. 1 ranked rushing attack could end up having a big day against a Chiefs defense that is allowing 5.0 yards per rush. Seattle is averaging 154.9 yards per game on the ground led by Chris Carson, who is coming off a career-high 119 yards last week against the 49ers. Seattle's running back depth is a question as rookie Rashaad Penny may not be available because of a knee injury and both Carson and backup Mike Davis have been banged up. The Chiefs are averaging 161.3 yards rushing allowed in the past three games.

Welcome back

Seattle expects to have linebacker K.J. Wright back after missing the past five games and 11 games total this season because of knee problems. Wright probably won't get a heavy dose of plays, but his return will be important in trying to keep Kelce under control. Wright has been strong during his career defending tight ends in the pass game.

Hirscher earns Austrian-record 63rd World Cup ski win

SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMME, Austria (AP) — Marcel Hirscher returned to a hill where he raced as a kid to become the most successful Austrian skier of all time.

The seven-time overall champion won a World Cup slalom in his native province of Salzburg on Thursday for his 63rd career victory, overtaking Annemarie Moser-Proell, who had 62 wins when she retired in 1980.

"As a kid I have competed in regional races on this hill. The course was

just a bit more to the right," Hirscher said. "These are great memories. The circle closes here."

Only Ingemar Stenmark (86) and Lindsey Vonn (82) have won more World Cup races.

Moser-Proell was full of praise for the new Austrian record-holder.

"We have never seen such a perfect ski racer before," she told Austrian broadcaster ORF. "When I see Marcel now, I am amazed that I achieved something simi-

lar back then. But you can't really compare the two eras. Everything is much more professional nowadays."

Defying difficult course conditions, Hirscher held on to a big first-run lead to finish 0.38 seconds ahead of Loic Meillard of Switzerland, who was only 12th after the opening run and claimed his second podium in two days.

Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway was 0.47 behind in third.

"I would have been

happy with a top-10 result and I can't believe I am on the podium for two days in a row," said Meillard, also runner-up in Wednesday's GS. "To be on a podium with Marcel and Henrik is truly something special."

It was the fourth straight win in the discipline for Hirscher, who has won nine of the last 10 World Cup slaloms.

"It sounds amazing but it is very surreal," Hirscher said about his 63rd win. "There will be a time when

I can really enjoy this but for the moment it is really amazing to have another victory, in one of the hardest slalom races I have ever skied in."

Many racers struggled on the Schneekristall course, which had patches of weak snow in the icy top layer on the lower part of the slope. The second run had to be delayed for 15 minutes to give organizers more time to harden the surface with water and salt.

Kristoffersen called it "the worst conditions I have

skied on in my World Cup career."

"It was really on the limit. It was tough, incredible," said the Norwegian, who still led Meillard by eight-tenths at the final split but trailed the Swiss skier by 0.09 at the finish.

"Normally that would not happen," Kristoffersen said.

Hirscher started his final run with an advantage of 2.13 seconds over then leader Meillard, allowing him to take a conservative approach.

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All interested participants must attend Orientation on Tuesday, January 8th from 5:30-6:30 PM at St. Anthony Hospital. Orientation is a requirement to enroll in the program. Weekly sessions will be on Tuesdays, from 5:30-6:30 PM, mid-January to mid-April. Fee: \$100 (due the week after Orientation).

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