

Sports

Seahawks clamp down on Rams, clinch NFC West division title

ByTim Booth
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE — As he finished talking about winning a division title for the first time in his career, Jamal Adams grabbed the cigar lying on the edge of the podium and flicked the lighter in his hand. It was celebration time for Adams and the Seattle Seahawks.

“Damn right, I haven’t been here before,” Adams said, his voice rising. “So damn it, it feels good. It feels great!”

The Seahawks claimed the NFC West title on Sunday with a 20-9 victory over the Los Angeles Rams, carried by a revitalized defense and some clutch play from Russell Wilson.

Wilson scored on a 4-yard run on the opening drive of the second half and clinched the division crown with a 13-yard TD pass to Jacob Hollister with 2:51 remaining.

It’s the first division title since 2016 for Seattle (11-4) and the fifth since Pete Carroll arrived in 2010. Carroll had linebacker K.J. Wright — the longest-tenured Seahawks player — speak in the locker room after the game.

“Cherish these moments,” Wright said. “It’s been a while since we’ve been NFC West champs. And this team, especially our brotherhood, our togetherness, brought us to this moment.”

The final drive was Wilson at his best: He was 5 of 5 for 59 yards, hitting four different receivers.

Wilson connecting with



Dean Rutz/SeattleTimes-TNS

David Moore’s 45-yard reception against Rams cornerback Darius Williams set up the Seahawks’ first touchdown in the 3rd quarter on Sunday at Lumen Field in Seattle.

Hollister was a bit of redemption for the tight end who was stopped inches short of the same end zone on the final play a year ago in Week 17 against San Francisco. That gave the division title to the 49ers.

Wilson finished 20 of 32 for 225 yards. But unlike earlier in the season when it was Wilson who staked Seattle to a 5-0 start, this victory was carried by the defense. Seattle flustered Jared Goff, shut down the Rams’ run game, and held Los Angeles (9-6) to a season low in points.

The Rams became the fifth straight opponent held under 20 points by Seattle, some-

thing accomplished four other times in franchise history and not since 2014 — the last time the Seahawks reached the Super Bowl.

It’s a staggering turnaround for Seattle, which was on pace to be among the worst defenses, statistically, in league history earlier in the season. The unit is now a strength going into the playoffs.

“For everybody out there, they got to start putting respect on this defense’s name, because this defense is playing lights out,” Adams said.

Goff was 23 of 42 for 224 yards and a baffling first-half interception that cost Los

Angeles points. There’s also concern about whether Goff will be able to play in Week 17 against Arizona. Goff dislocated his right thumb after hitting it on a helmet in the third quarter, but put it back into place and didn’t miss a play.

“It’s OK right now. It’s not terrible. We’ll see tomorrow,” Goff said.

LA also lost running back Darrell Henderson to an ankle injury in the third quarter. Henderson rushed for 62 yards but was hurt being tripped from behind.

The Rams can still reach the playoffs with a win over Arizona or a loss by Chicago.

Packers rout Titans on snowy Lambeau Field

By Steve Megargee
AP Sports Writer

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Aaron Rodgers and Davante Adams created a picturesque atmosphere as they connected for three touchdown passes on a snow-covered Lambeau Field.

The Green Bay Packers teammates would love the opportunity to produce plenty of similar scenes next month by staying home throughout the NFC playoffs.

Rodgers threw four touchdown passes as the Packers trounced the Tennessee Titans 40-14 for their fifth consecutive victory Sunday night.

“It’s tough to play in the cold,” said Rodgers, who went 21 of 25 for 231 yards with an interception. “It’s tough to play at Lambeau. I think we proved that tonight.”

The Packers (12-3) already have clinched the NFC North title and can earn the No. 1 seed in the NFC playoffs if they win at Chicago (8-7) or Seattle (11-4) loses at San Francisco (6-9) next week.

This game showcased why the Packers want to make sure the playoffs go through Lambeau after losing on the road in three of the last six NFC championship games. With snow falling throughout the first half and continuing to cover much of the field the rest of the game, Green Bay moved the ball at will all night.

Chiefs top AFC seed

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Kansas City clinched the top seed in the AFC and the only playoff bye when Patrick Mahomes threw a 25-yard touchdown pass to Demarcus Robinson with just under two minutes for a 17-14 win over Atlanta on Sunday.

The Chiefs had to watch as Pro Bowl kicker Young-bae Koo missed a tying field-goal attempt with 9 seconds left to escape.

The Chiefs (14-1) won their NFL-record seventh straight one-possession game and matched a franchise record with their 10th straight win. They took any seeding drama

out of games involving Pittsburgh and Buffalo and will have that coveted first-round AFC bye when the postseason begins in two weeks.

The Falcons (4-11) took the lead when Matt Ryan hit Laquon Treadwell for a 5-yard touchdown with 4:33 to go. But Mahomes kept finding Travis Kelce to set up the TD pass to Robinson. And when the Falcons marched the other way in the closing seconds, Kansas City’s defense forced Koo’s 39-yard kick.

Instead of heading to overtime, the Falcons headed home with their seventh loss by six points or less this season.

Herbert sets rookie TD record

By Joe Reedy
AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — For all the impressive milestones Justin Herbert had piled up early in the season, they weren’t resulting in wins for the Los Angeles Chargers. Now, they are.

Herbert has led the Chargers on winning drives in three straight games while continuing to rewrite the rookie quarterback record book.

Herbert set the mark for most rookie touchdown passes in a season in the Chargers’ 19-16 victory over the Denver Broncos on Sunday. His decisive drives have come either in the last two minutes or in overtime.

“There’s a way to do it and a way not to do it. We experienced that the first half of the season but we got better from it,” said Herbert, who was 21

of 33 passes for 253 yards. “That’s one of the best things to see. You have to be tough. It’s about how you react.”

After Brandon McManus tied it at 16 with 2:47 remaining with a 52-yard field goal, the Chargers (6-9) took over at their 25 and were in the red zone in three plays. Austin Ekeler had 34 of his 45 rushing yards on two carries and Herbert connected with Jalen Guyton for a 23-yard reception to the Denver 41 at the two-minute warning.

Four plays later, Michael Badgley split the uprights from 37 yards with 41 seconds remaining for the winning points and Los Angeles’ first three-game winning streak in two years.

Herbert’s 9-yard screen pass to Ekeler in the second quarter was his 28th touchdown throw of the season, surpassing the 27 that Baker

Mayfield had for Cleveland in 2018.

“I am glad we have the young man. He works his tail off. I give him all the credit in the world,” coach Anthony Lynn said.

Herbert, the sixth overall pick in the April draft and third QB taken, also became the fourth player to throw for over 4,000 yards as a rookie, joining Andrew Luck, Cam Newton and Jameis Winston.

He also needs six completions to surpass the 379 that Carson Wentz had for Philadelphia in 2016.

“You are so busy doing the extra things that you really don’t have time to realize some of the special things we have done on offense this season,” Herbert said.

Denver (5-10) trailed 16-3 early in the fourth quarter but tied it with scores on three straight possessions.

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