

SPORTS

The Detroit News Friday, November 27, 2009 | Section B



Harris' double-double lifts Michigan in OT
COLLEGE BASKETBALL, 7B

PACKERS 34, LIONS 12

Lions picked over

Stafford intercepted four times in holiday loss

BY JOHN NIYO
The Detroit News

Detroit — It was fun while it lasted.

But four days of hype surrounding Matthew Stafford's miracle finish in the victory over Cleveland last weekend gave way to a sobering reality check Thursday. An emotional pregame lift from their rookie quarterback didn't last long for the Lions, who were trampled by the Green Bay Packers, 34-12, in the 70th Thanksgiving Day game.

It's the sixth consecutive loss — by an average margin of 23.2 points — for the Lions (2-9) in their annual holiday tradition. That's the longest losing streak for the home team in this series that began in 1934.

Coach Jim Schwartz, who'd talked for months about defending the Lions' Thanksgiving turf, called it a "disappointing loss." But deflating might be a more accurate description.

On the heels of last week's drama, this one went down like week-old leftovers. Stafford, a surprise starter after suffering a separated left shoulder against the Browns, threw four interceptions, while Aaron Rodgers and the Packers (7-4) picked apart the Lions defense. And in the end, this one didn't look much different than the Lions' 26-0 loss a month ago at Lambeau Field.

"Yeah, I mean, obviously it's tough," said Stafford, who didn't get the green light to play — aided by some pain medicine — until

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Robin Buckson/The Detroit News

Packers tight end David Lee ties the score on the first play of the second quarter by going over Louis Delmas (26) and DeAndre Levy at the goal line.

Scores

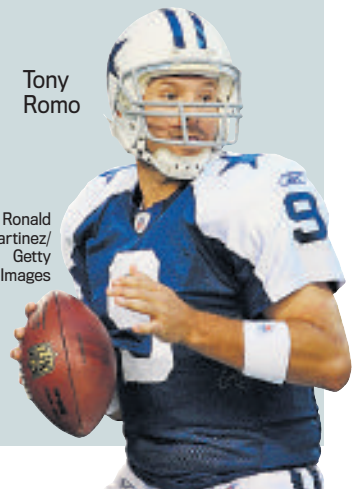
Dallas 24, Oakland 7
Denver 26, N.Y. Giants 6

More inside

Stunned: Stafford's start unnerves Culpepper. **4B**

Leaky: Secondary gets torched again. **6B**

Romp: Romo, Austin lead Cowboys. **6B**



Tony Romo

Ronald Martinez/Getty Images



Robin Buckson/The Detroit News

Matthew Stafford scrambles out of bounds, but the Lions quarterback couldn't escape another bad day.

A thankless return to reality

Detroit

You can't force it. That's the latest lesson for Matthew Stafford, and the oldest lesson for the Lions.

You can't force throws, kid, not against a wily defender like Charles Woodson, not in the NFL. And you can't force magic, either. It was almost as if the Lions were determined to ride the freshly minted legend of their battered rookie no matter what, and sorry, it just doesn't work that way.

Of course, the Lions are perfectly capable of getting pummeled no matter who throws the ball. The Packers started slowly and then rolled, 34-12, handing the Lions their sixth straight Thanksgiving Day blowout, and completing their whirlwind, four-day trip from Stafford Mania to

Rookie Reality.

After throwing five touchdown passes in a teeth-gritting, shoulder-aching performance against Cleveland, Stafford started unexpectedly Thursday, without practicing during the week, and tossed four interceptions, two to Woodson. If there's a lesson here, it's that you can't skip lessons. Calvin Johnson also played with an injured knee and was rendered mostly non-existent, catching two passes. Determined to show what they had, the 2-9 Lions instead confirmed what they lacked.

Their secondary still can't cover anybody, and by "anybody," I mean "elderly folks, too." They still can't run the ball, partly because Kevin Smith can't stay on



BOB WOJNOWSKI

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Shaq pays for girl's funeral

Basketball star **Shaquille O'Neal** paid for the funeral of a 5-year-old North Carolina girl after being moved by national news coverage of the case of **Shaniya Davis**, who police say was kidnapped and killed.

More than 2,000 people attended the girl's funeral in Fayetteville, N.C., Sunday. Her body was found Nov. 16 beside a rural road.

"I was sitting at home watching it on the news and the story brought a tear to my eye," O'Neal told The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer.

Corey Breece, of Rogers and Breece Funeral Home, which handled the service, declined to tell the Fayetteville Observer how much it cost but added a child's funeral "averages around \$4,500."



O'Neal



Jack Dempsey/Associated Press

Colorado's **Dan Hawkins** used "10 wins, no excuses" as this season's mantra.

Colorado coach will be retained

Colorado coach **Dan Hawkins** will get a fifth season in Boulder instead of a pink slip and a \$3.1 million buyout.

Athletic director **Mike Bohn** announced he's sticking with his coach despite a 16-32 record in four seasons.

The Buffaloes (3-8, 2-5 Big 12) end their season today against Big 12 North champ Nebraska (8-3, 5-2).

Sosa is sued in Dominican court

Sammy Sosa is being sued for \$203,000 by a businessman who claims the former major league slugger owes him a commission on a house sale, among other things.

In legal documents obtained by The Associated Press, Sosa has been ordered to appear in a Dominican court on Dec. 2.

Contact us

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