

INSIDE: Pouncey Man of the Year nominee • My Cause My Cleats • Haden stepping up

VOLUME 32 • NUMBER 10
DECEMBER 28, 2019 (706) • \$4.95



Steelers

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PITTSBURGH STEELERS

DIGEST



HOMESTRETCH

Steelers remain in playoff hunt despite loss to Bills





**THICK
RICH
DELICIOUS**

NOTHING ELSE TASTES LIKE



Steelers stray from formula

Deep down, you knew it couldn't last. Everyone who was being honest with themselves had to know this formula for victory was very, very fragile. Certainly in today's NFL, certainly in December, and especially so against teams good enough to be one win away from clinching a playoff spot.

After starting 0-3 and losing their franchise quarterback for the rest of the season halfway through those 12 quarters of not-good-enough football, the Steelers went on a tear and won eight of their next 10 games. The glass-half-full version of those two-and-a-half months is that the Steelers won with a defense that was equal parts stifling and dynamic, supported by a flawless placekicker and an offense that was fully aware its most important job was not to screw everything else up.

It worked, because the defense was sufficiently dynamic along the way to becoming the NFL leader in both sacks and takeaways, because the placekicker was money in the bank, and because the offense embraced its primary job and generally found a way to make a play or two when needed. On that Sunday morning, the Steelers were 8-5 and occupants of the No. 6 seed in the AFC despite being last in the NFL in red zone efficiency and second-to-last in passing, despite having scored only one offensive touchdown in five of their previous six games.

The next day, they woke up at 8-6 either because their defense was "out-dynamic-ed," or more likely because their offense forgot its most important job and then scored only one touchdown for the sixth time in the last seven games. The Buffalo Bills came to Heinz Field and left with a 17-10 victory and a guaranteed spot in the playoffs for the second time since 1999.

On couches in homes throughout Steelers Nation, there already have been reasons assigned and culprits identified for this loss, and it's very likely some of the same conclusions were reached when the Steelers gathered the morning after to view and critique the performance.

Five turnovers, including two interceptions in the end zone and a lost fumble at the Buffalo 9-yard line, are way too many and in bad spots on the field, and the situation was exacerbated by the Steelers ending up a minus-3 in turnover ratio. In a one-score game, 38 pass attempts by Devlin Hodges compared to 14 combined rushing attempts by the quartet of James Conner, Benny Snell, Kerrith Whyte and Jaylen Samuels is the polar opposite of what they had learned to be their winning formula.

The Bills defensive front generally got the better



The Steelers offense couldn't afford to make mistakes against Buffalo, and this fumble by Diontae Johnson late in the second quarter was a costly one.

Digest Photo/REBECCA MEHLING

offense in great field position at the Buffalo 20-yard line.

But then came the example of the Steelers maybe trying to be too tricky, because a Wildcat snap to Conner was low, and then when he tried to hand off to Diontae Johnson, the rookie receiver lost possession of the ball and the Bills recovered at their 9-yard line and ran out the final seconds until halftime.

When the Steelers took the second-half kickoff and drove 69 yards in seven plays to score their only touchdown on an 11-yard catch-and-run by Conner to take a 10-7 lead, the Bills again appeared to cooperate with the plan by losing a fumble on their first possession of the second half. But as it happened, the Steelers offense was done for the game following Conner's touchdown, because its last six possessions of the game ended: three-and-out punt, interception, three-and-out punt, three-and-out punt, interception, interception.

It was as bad a stretch as the Steelers have had offensively in the last two-and-a-half months, and what was especially unnerving was that it all happened in a game against a playoff-bound team when the margin never exceeded one score.

In the aftermath, there was praise for the Bills, an acceptance of the mistakes that shaped the outcome, and promises to go back to work to make the necessary corrections and get back in the fight. That wasn't a surprise, because the Steelers remained the sixth seed in the AFC and therefore still a part of the conference's playoff picture, but also because that's who they are.

A couple of days before lining up with the Bills, Coach Mike Tomlin was asked what he had learned about this group of Steelers over the course of this often trying season. "That they're the type of group who are willing fighters," said Tomlin. "It's always good when you feel that, when you see that. It's not the Swiss Army Knife in that it doesn't solve all the problems, but largely we have a group that runs toward the fight. And when you have that, you have a chance."

The Steelers still have a chance, but they better get back to their formula. Because that's their only chance.

of the Steelers offensive line, and that impression is supported by the four sacks recorded by Buffalo defensive linemen. And while it's tempting to accuse the Steelers of trying to be too clever with the usage of the Wildcat in its various forms, it's also unrealistic to expect this offense to line up and be able to play it straight against a defense coming into the game ranked seventh or better in the NFL in eight different defensive categories, including yards allowed and points allowed.

And compounding the problem was the timing of some of these lapses.

Getting off to a quick start has been something the Steelers have emphasized this season for obvious reasons, but while Buffalo played the entire first quarter on their half of the field and punted twice, the Steelers failed to take advantage because their offense turned the ball over once and went three-and-out once.

If they win the opening coin toss, the Steelers like to defer because they strongly believe in the benefits of bookending halftime, which refers to scoring at the end of the first half and then taking the second-half kickoff and scoring to open the third quarter. The Bills seemed to cooperate late in the first half when Josh Allen was intercepted by Steven Nelson, whose return put the Steelers

INSIDE

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TOGETHER AGAIN: It was a night of reunions at Heinz Field when the Steelers faced the Buffalo Bills. Above it was the Edmunds brothers — from left, Bills linebacker Tremaine, Steelers safety Terrell and Steelers running back Trey. Below, former William & Mary teammates Mike Tomlin and Sean McDermott spent time with their old college coach, Jimmie Laycock.

Photos/GENE J. PUSKAR/AP (Edmunds) and KARL ROSER



ON THE COVER

Cam Heyward sacks Buffalo quarterback Josh Allen during a hard-fought battle at Heinz Field that ended with the Steelers on the wrong end of a 17-10 final score. Despite the loss, the Steelers still found themselves with a clear path to the playoffs. Cover Photo/KARL ROSER

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STEELERS DIGEST subscription information 1-800-334-4005.
STEELERS DIGEST is a member of the Professional Football Publishers Association.

STEELERS DIGEST (USPS 003-803) (ISSN 1044-2855) is published twice a month Sept. through Dec., Monthly Feb., April/May, July and August by Steelers Digest, J.V., at 53 Curtiss Parkway, Miami Springs, FL 33166, (305) 594-0508. Periodicals postage paid Miami, Florida and additional mailing offices. Annual subscription rate in USA 12 issues/\$49.95. Newsstand rate of \$4.95 per issue. Reproduction in whole or in part prohibited without permission from the publisher. POSTMASTER: Send Address changes to STEELERS DIGEST, P.O. Box 526600, Miami, FL 33152-6600.

STEELERS DIGEST is the official magazine of the Pittsburgh Steelers, and is published by Curtis Publishing Company.

Breaking down the game against Buffalo, and looking back at T.J. Watt and the 2017 draft



That was a tough, hard-fought game, but we expected that. They are a rough-and-tumble outfit. We have to tip our caps to those guys and congratulate them, not only on winning the game but not blinking and making the significant plays in the significant moments. That is something that we pride ourselves in, but we didn't make those plays today. They did. It was a 10-10 ballgame. They got a chunk play to John Brown and that produced a significant field position switch that they were able to score on that series. And then we weren't able to take care of the ball as we were trying to move it, particularly as time became a factor. We will learn from this and move forward and get singularly focused on our next opportunity. This one is gone. We lived it. There is scarcity in this business. You only get so many opportunities to state a case for yourself. There are no seven-game series and things of that nature. We respect what transpired tonight. We understand it. There is nothing we can do as we sit here but get focused on our next opportunity. We will do that, I promise you that.

Q. What did you see on the last touch-down for Buffalo?

They made a quality play. We were playing zone coverage. They had an opportunity. If they got the right play call in and executed, I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that they executed in that instance and others.

Q. What led to the turnovers?

Quality execution by those guys. Not only schematically, but the play. They have a really good defense. We knew that and they confirmed it.

Q. How tough was the turnover at the end of the first half?

It's just unfortunate. It is how it goes. Again, we have some responsibility. We will and we are. But when you have a group that played the way that (Buffalo) group played, you have to acknowledge that. Particularly their defensive unit. They really played good football tonight.

Q. That fumble came from the Wildcat. What made you want to keep coming back to that?

We have been living in that world for weeks, you guys know that.

Q. What is the mind-set moving forward?

Our mind-set is the same as it has been. We will



Linebacker T.J. Watt again was a factor for the Steelers defense against Buffalo, just as he has been ever since he joined the team as a first-round pick in 2017.

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

get singularly focused on our next opportunity at the appropriate time.

Q. I want to take you back to the 2017 NFL draft. Why T.J. Watt in the first round?

He was a really good football player. We were picking extremely late in the first round, and I just feel when you're picking that late in the round you look at who can play the game. It's the same thought process we went through when we picked Cam Heyward late in the first round of the 2011 draft. When you're that late in the round, you better trust your eyes, and by trust your eyes I mean what you see on tape. What we saw on tape were the same things that we see here. Maybe he's not 265 pounds like Bud Dupree or runs as fast as Khalil Mack and guys like that, but that's probably why he was available. But his tape spoke volumes, and it has continued to speak volumes.

Q. A lot of times when you're at a college pro day, you'll ask one of the significant players from that year who will be the significant player from that school the next year. Did anyone recommend Watt?

I didn't go to the Wisconsin Pro Day the year before. But it was interesting because sometimes you play these games about who you're interested in. So I didn't spend a lot of time with T.J. (at his pro day), but I spent a lot of time watching him. I

learned a lot about him. He's not a rah-rah guy, he's very much into his preparedness and his performance, and it was displayed just watching him over a 24-hour period. We went to dinner the night before, we sat across from each other. We were polite but there wasn't a lot of talking going on, and I appreciate that about him as well.

Q. At a recent news conference, about the fans at Heinz Field, you said, "But more than anything, they inspire us." Can a crowd really inspire grown men who are professionals?

There's no question. It's about their relationship with the game of football and with the people who love football. Often, people will ask me, "What's it like instructing those rich professional athletes?" They've had a player-coach relationship all their lives. They play, we instruct. They understand the nature of that relationship, and it's a very natural thing. The same thing goes for the fans. The players come out of that tunnel, and they're inspired by the presence and the enthusiasm and the love they get from their fans, just like they were at their universities or their high schools when they broke through the paper banner that they put back together every week. There are just certain things in terms of your relationship with the game that don't change no matter what the level of football, and gaining inspiration from those who appreciate football is one of them.



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DIONTAE DOES IT AGAIN: Wide receiver Diontae Johnson continued to come up with big plays against Buffalo, with his 29-yard reception on the first drive of the second half setting up the Steelers' only touchdown.

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

8:27 p.m. – What Went Right: The Bills took the opening possession, and starting at their own 10-yard line they came out throwing and made a couple of first downs and got the ball out to their 32-yard line. Then T.J. Watt batted a pass at the line of scrimmage, Josh Allen threw incomplete, and following an encroachment penalty on Watt, Mark Barron stuffed an attempted swing pass to RB Devin Singletary after a 1-yard gain. After the punt, the Steelers started at their 17-yard line with 12:13 left in the first quarter.

8:37 p.m. – What Went Wrong: On their opening possession, the Steelers found themselves in too many third-and-long situations. After converting one with an 11-yard pass to Diontae Johnson, Devlin Hodges' attempt down the right sideline to James Washington was intercepted by Tre'Davious White, and the Bills took over at their 25-yard line.

8:50 p.m. – What Went Wrong: The Steelers offense did nothing through three possessions, and the third of those was especially non-productive. Starting at their 18-yard line, the Steelers gained 2 yards on a run by Benny Snell, lost 2 yards on a pass to Johnny Holton, and then gained nothing on a completed pass to Nick Vannett. Jordan Berry followed with a 22-yard punt, and the Bills started at the Pittsburgh 40-yard line.

9 p.m. – What Went Wrong: The Bills took advantage of that field position and took a 7-0 lead two plays into the second quarter on a 1-yard run by Josh Allen. The nine-play drive was highlighted by a conversion on fourth-and-6 when Allen completed a 10-yard pass to John Brown, and then on first-and-10 from the 15-yard line, Devin Singletary had a nice run to the 1-yard line, and Allen scored on the next play.

9:08 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers closed to 7-3 when Chris Boswell's 49-yard field goal capped a six-play, 41-yard drive, but when Devlin Hodges hit James Washington for a 34-yard gain on the first play of the possession, it seemed as though there was the potential for so much more. After the field goal, there was 11:26 left in the first half.

9:17 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers defense allowed one first down on Buffalo's possession following Chris Boswell's field goal, but then Cam Heyward batted down a third-down pass at the line of scrimmage, and following the punt the Steelers started at their 26-yard line with 7:57 left in the first half.

9:30 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers came up with their first takeaway when a second-and-10 pass intended for Cole Beasley bounced off his hands and was intercepted by Steven Nelson. His 33-yard return gave the Steelers the ball at the Buffalo 20-yard line with a little more than two minutes remaining in the first half.

9:35 p.m. – What Went Wrong: Too cute. On



Running back James Conner gave the Steelers their only lead of the game when he capped an impressive drive to start the second half with an 11-yard touchdown reception.

Digest Photo/REBECCA MEHLING

the first play after the two-minute warning, with the Steelers having a first down at the Bills 10-yard line, the Steelers went to the Wildcat. The snap went to James Conner, who handed off to Diontae Johnson, who fumbled the ball at the 12-yard line, and it was recovered by safety Jordan Poyer at the 9-yard line.

9:58 – What Went Right: The Steelers scored their first touchdown on the opening possession of the second half, a seven-play 69-yard drive capped by an 11-yard catch-and-run by James Conner. In addition to the touchdown, Conner also had a 17-yard run that gave the Steelers a first down at the 10-yard line. On his way to the end zone after catching the short pass out of the backfield, Conner broke a tackle by Levi Wallace. With 11:18 left in the third quarter, the Steelers had a 10-7 lead.

10:08 p.m. – What Went Right: The Bills were marching down the field on the possession follow-

ing the Steelers touchdown, with a big play being a 21-yard completion to John Brown on a third-and-10. But on the next play, Devin Singletary broke through the line only to have T.J. Watt strip the ball loose, and Mike Hilton recovered at the Steelers 31-yard line.

10:13 p.m. – What Went Wrong: The Steelers offense just cannot seem to find a way to take advantage of big plays by the defense. The possession following the fumble recovery started with a 5-yard completion to Jaylen Samuels, then a sack-strip by Shaq Lawson that was recovered by Al Villanueva, and then a third-down sack by Trent Murphy for a loss of 7 more yards. After a 39-yard punt, the Bills took over at their 36-yard line.

10:26 p.m. – What Went Wrong: Another turnover, which came on a second interception by Devlin Hodges, put the Bills in the red zone as the third quarter ended. Hodges' pass was intended for Diontae Johnson at the right sideline, but the

ball was slightly behind him and hung in the air, and it was intercepted by Tre'Davious White. He returned the ball 49 yards, with Matt Feiler saving the touchdown by pushing him out of bounds at the Steelers. 18-yard line.

10:36 p.m. – What Went Right: The defense came up big after Buffalo's interception and made the Bills settle for a red zone field goal that tied the game, 10-10, with 12:23 remaining in the fourth quarter. After getting one first down that set up a first-and-goal at the 8-yard line, Frank Gore lost 7 yards on two carries, with the tackles made by Joe Haden and then Devin Bush, and then on third down, T.J. Watt dumped Devin Singletary for a 3-yard loss. The 36-yard field goal by Stephen Hauschka tied the game.

10:50 p.m. – What Went Wrong: The Bills took a 17-10 lead with 7:55 remaining in the fourth quarter on a 14-yard touchdown pass to tight end Tyler Kroft on a third-and-9 from the 14-yard line. The big play on the seven-play, 70-yard drive came on the first snap when Josh Allen connected with John Brown for a 40-yard gain to the Steelers 30-yard line.

11:23 p.m. – What Went Wrong: In the final

The Steelers' last hope disappeared when defensive back Levi Wallace came up with this interception in the end zone.

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

two minutes, the Steelers offense had two separate chances to tie the game, but both of those possessions ended with interceptions in the end zone. The first of those came at the two-minute warning, and it was a fourth-and-7 at the Buffalo 23-yard line. Devlin Hodges put up a rainbow down the middle of the field intended for Deon Cain, but the ball was intercepted by Jordan Poyer for a touchback. The Steelers defense authored a quick three-and-out, and then following the punt, the offense got another chance at their 43-yard line with 91 seconds left. The critical play here was a sack by Jordan Phillips on first-and-10 from the Bills 26-yard line. That play not only lost 8 yards, but it also cost the Steelers a lot of time, because on the next play Hodges again threw into the end zone, this one intended for James Washington, and it was intercepted by Levi Wallace.



STEELERS DIGEST | PLAYER OF THE WEEK

vs. Buffalo

T.J. WATT OUTSIDE LINEBACKER

The way the game unfolded, both offensively and defensively, was not in a manner that was conducive to the Steelers winning, and for the first time in a while the defense that made the most plays belonged to the opponent. The Steelers finished the game with just one sack and two takeaways, and T.J. Watt contributed in both of those categories.

Watt finished with four tackles, he shared the only sack with Vince Williams, and he forced the fumble that Mike Hilton recovered to account for one of the Steelers' takeaways. Watt also had two tackles for loss and two hits on Buffalo quarterback Josh Allen, and he is the *Steelers Digest* Player of the Week.



Digest Photo/KARL ROSER



5 Catches for tight end **Nick Vannett**, who hadn't caught more than two passes in any of his previous 10 games with the Steelers.

11 Targets for James Washington, the highest total for a Steelers wide receiver this season. It topped the 10 targets for Donte Moncrief in the season opener at New England.

40.6 Net punting average for Jordan Berry, despite a 22-yard punt in the first quarter.

7 Consecutive regular season home victories for the Steelers against Buffalo coming into this Sunday night game. The only time the Bills had won in Pittsburgh in the regular season had been in 1975 (30-21).

229 Total net yards for the Steelers, their lowest total since the 2013 season opener against the Tennessee Titans when they had 194 in a 16-9 loss.

5 Steelers turnovers, their highest total since the 2018 season opener at Cleveland when they had six in a 21-21 tie.

6

Steelers winning streak in one-score games that ended with the loss against Buffalo.

99 Receiving yards for Buffalo's John Brown, the third-highest total against the Steelers in 2019 behind the 101 yards by Cincinnati's Tyler Boyd and the 100 yards by Chargers tight end Hunter Henry.

2 Sacks by Bills defensive tackle Jordan Phillips, who became the first player to record more than one sack against the Steelers this season.

19 Combined tackles by brothers Terrell Edmunds and Tremaine Edmunds, who led the Steelers and Bills, respectively, in that department.

Painful lesson for Hodges, offense

By JIM WEXELL
Associate Editor

It was the kind of game that made Ben Roethlisberger a legend.

However, the legend of Duck Hodges will have to wait after the Steelers rookie QB threw two interceptions in the end zone on the final two drives of the 17-10 loss against the Buffalo Bills.

The loss was the first in four starts for Hodges, and on the heels of his career best game this was his worst.

Hodges threw a total of four interceptions and finished with a passer rating of 43.9.

The Steelers gained a season-low 229 yards of offense, but still had two chances to tie the score late in the game.

With 5:13 remaining, they took over at their 19 and drove to their 40, from where, on third-and-1, Hodges threw deep to James Washington, who reeled it in for a 32-yard gain to the Buffalo 26.

"I was thinking we're rolling now," said Washington. "But their defense is just who they are."

A delay of game was followed by a sack, and a third-and-20 pass to Nick Vannett for 13 set up a fourth-and-7.

Hodges went for it all when Deon Cain ran a double move to flash open deep. But safety Jordan Poyer cut in front of Cain for the interception in the end zone.

"I thought it was going to drop into my lap," said Cain. "And then at the last second I saw (Poyer) slip across my face."

"I've got to go attack that next time. I've got to put my head down and go back to work at the drawing board."

"I felt like it was a good jump ball opportunity for him," said Hodges. "I tried to give him a play."

It appeared to doom the Steelers with 1:54 remaining, but the defense held the Bills on the ground and forced a short 31-yard punt.

The Steelers took over on their 43 with 1:31 left. A facemask penalty moved the Steelers to the Buffalo 37, and a third-and-7 pass to Diontae Johnson for 8 yards gave the Steelers a first down, again at the Buffalo 26.

Hodges was sacked on the next play, and with 15 seconds left he decided to throw into the end zone again. Hodges rolled left to avoid pressure and threw to Washington, but Levi Wallace intercepted to end the game and send the Steelers to 8-6.

The Steelers remained in the playoff picture as the second wild card, but their offense isn't gather-



It was a frustrating evening on many levels for quarterback Devlin "Duck" Hodges.

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

ing any momentum. In six of their last seven games, the Steelers have scored only one offensive touchdown.

"That's bad. That's poor," said guard David DeCastro. "Just mistakes, you know? They cost us. The defense is playing so well. We don't need much. We just have to score in those red zones and not turn the ball over and give them short fields."

The biggest red-zone mistake occurred late in the first half when the Steelers came out of the two-minute warning with James Conner lined up in the Wildcat. He had to dig the snap out of the dirt and handed to Johnson, who fumbled at the 9-yard line. It left the Steelers trailing 7-3 at halftime.

"Things happen," DeCastro said. "You try those tricky kinds of plays that look good on tape — I think Miami ran it — but it didn't look good when we ran it. That's life."

The Steelers, of course, are playing without Roethlisberger, but they also played on this Sunday night without wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster and tight end Vance McDonald.

"You can make excuses all you want, but we made mistakes," DeCastro said. "You have to look at us."

After the game, Hodges was asked if his confidence is rattled.

"It's disappointing right now, obviously," he said. "You hate to lose. But I think after the first loss, how you respond is going to define who I am. I mean, yeah, I'm disappointed right now, but in a couple days I'm going to still be who I am. I'm still going to be confident, still going to know that I can get the job done."

Hodges finished with 23 completions on 38 attempts for 202 yards and an 11-yard touchdown pass to James Conner against the NFL's No. 3 pass defense.

Why throw so much against the Bills?

"Obviously, at the end of the game, with the situation, we had to pass a lot more," said Hodges. "We just felt like we could come in and throw the ball. We connected on some of them and probably didn't connect on some of them like we wanted to. At the same time, whatever the play is called, we have to have the confidence to go and execute it."

"I just have to focus on next week. Go in (Monday) and learn from mistakes. Usually you can learn from these types of games more than you can from a win and a better performance. So, just go in there and learn, get better, and shake it off and go."

PNC PRESENTS

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MURRAY IN A HURRY: Linebacker T.J. Watt did what he usually does when the Steelers faced the Arizona Cardinals and applied constant pressure on the quarterback, in this case rookie Kyler Murray.

Digest Photo/RIC TAPIA

4:29 p.m. – What Went Right: After the Cardinals netted one first down on a run and then a swing pass to Kenyan Drake, the Steelers defense stiffened and forced a punt. Mark Barron sacked Kyler Murray for a loss of 6 yards on first down, and then Bud Dupree played contain perfectly on a designed quarterback run to his side, and Murray lost 2 more yards. On third down, a pass for Larry Fitzgerald was incomplete, and the Steelers began their initial possession at their 25-yard line following the punt.

4:42 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers hadn't scored a touchdown on their opening possession since the game against New England on Dec. 16, 2018, and while they didn't break that streak against the Cardinals, they did take a 3-0 lead on a 30-yard field goal by Chris Boswell that capped a 13-play, 66-yard drive that consumed eight minutes of the first quarter. The Steelers converted a third-and-13 with a pass to Trey Edmunds that was followed by a personal foul penalty on Jordan Hicks. Benny Snell converted a third-and-1 with a 3-yard run, but a third-and-3 pass to Jaylen Samuels gained only 1 yard. The Steelers led 3-0 with 4:20 left in the first quarter.

4:50 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers defense forced another three-and-out in spite of an offside penalty on Bud Dupree on third-and-10, and then Diontae Johnson did something that a Steelers player hadn't done for a while. That was return a punt for a touchdown. Johnson's return covered 85 yards, and two of the savvy plays on the return were turned in by Robert Spillane and Benny Snell, both of whom screened Cardinals players without blocking them in the back. The Steelers led 10-0 with 2:54 left in the first quarter.

4:56 p.m. – What Went Wrong: The Cardinals possession following the kickoff ended in a three-and-out, with Bud Dupree's sack on third down forcing the punt. The Steelers took over on their 34-yard line with 44 seconds left in the first quarter. But on the first play, Benny Snell fumbled and Terrell Suggs recovered on the Steelers 34-yard line.

5:07 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers defense rose up and forced the Cardinals to settle for a red zone field goal following Snell's lost fumble. The Cardinals had a first-and-goal at the 3-yard line, and a jet sweep pass to Christian Kirk was stopped for gain; Minkah Fitzpatrick burst into the backfield to dump Kyler Murray for a 1-yard loss on a read option; and then Vince Williams sacked Murray for an 8-yard loss to force the Zane Gonzalez field goal that made it 10-3 with 11:15 left in the first half.

5:28 p.m. – What Went Wrong: This time the defense had no answers. The Cardinals tied the game, 10-10, on a 5-yard touchdown pass to Charles Clay that capped a 12-play, 85-yard drive that consumed 5:12 of the second quarter. Kyler Murray converted a third-and-2 with a 10-yard pass to Damiere Byrd, and then the touchdown pass to Clay came on a third-and-4 from the 5-yard line. On the drive, Murray completed 7 of 8 for 57 yards and the touchdown.

5:39 p.m. – What Went Right: Devlin Hodges did a fine job of directing the Steelers offense into position to take the halftime lead, 13-10, on a 37-yard field goal by Chris Boswell as time expired. On the first three plays of the possession that began at the 25-yard line, Hodges completed a pass to James Washington for 12 yards, scrambled through

a big hole up the middle for 22 yards and got out of bounds, and then completed an 18-yard pass to Diontae Johnson. The Cardinals put the Steelers behind the chains when Chandler Jones strip-sacked Hodges, but Matt Feiler fell on the ball for a 13-yard loss. A 10-yard run by Kerrith Whyte and a 7-yard completion to Johnson got the Steelers back into field goal range.

5:58 p.m. – What Went Wrong: The Steelers received the second half kickoff and had to start at their 12-yard line when Kerrith Whyte was dumped after a 10-yard return. Then after a three-and-out when Devlin Hodges was marked 1 yard short on a third down scramble, Pharoh Cooper returned Jordan Berry's 69-yard punt for 29 yards and the Cardinals started at their 39-yard line.

6:08 p.m. – What Went Right: The Cardinals converted a fourth-and-6 when Chase Edmunds ran for 9 yards on a fake punt, but after driving to a second-and-5 from the Pittsburgh 26-yard line, Joe Haden read the play perfectly, came off his man and cut in front of Edmunds to intercept Kyler Murray at the Steelers 27-yard line. There was 8:06 left in the third quarter, and the Steelers led 13-10.

6:22 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers marched 73 yards in 11 plays to extend their lead to 20-10 on a big-time throw from Devlin Hodges to Diontae Johnson for a 2-yard touchdown. The Steelers ran the ball on seven of the 11 plays. The Cardinals got the ball back following the kickoff with two minutes left in the third quarter.

6:36 p.m. – What Went Right: It was a fourth-and-2 from the Steelers 6-yard line, and Cardinals Coach Kliff Kingsbury decided to go for a touchdown instead of settling for a short field goal. Kyler Murray escaped the pocket and seemed to have

Diontae Johnson scored the Steelers' first touchdown when he returned a punt 85 yards in the first quarter.

Digest Photo/RIC TAPIA



enough room to run for the first down, but instead he tried to get the ball to tight end Maxx Williams in the end zone. T.J. Watt slid over into the throwing lane and intercepted the pass in the end zone for a touchback. The Steelers led 20-10 with 12:26 remaining in the fourth quarter.

6:44 p.m. – What Went Wrong: The Steelers made one first down after T.J. Watt's interception, and then on fourth-and-8, Jordan Berry came on to punt. For some reason, Berry decided to run, and he was tackled at the 32-yard line, which is where the Cardinals took over. Three plays later, on a third-and-2, Kyler Murray hit David Johnson for a 24-yard touchdown. The Steelers lead was 20-17 with 6:44 remaining.

7:05 p.m. – What Went Right: The Steelers extended their lead to 23-17 on a 25-yard field goal by Chris Boswell with 1:42 remaining. The Steelers drove 77 yards in 11 plays and ate up 5:02 of game time on the drive, and the Cardinals also had to use their remaining timeouts.

7:10 p.m. — What Went Right: Sacks by Cam Heyward and Justin Hargrave eventually set up a fourth-and-17 from the Arizona 18-yard line. Joe Haden intercepted the pass to ice the outcome.



Cornerback Joe Haden clinched the Steelers victory when he intercepted a fourth-down pass late in the fourth quarter.

AP Photo/RICK SCUTERI

STEELERS DIGEST | PLAYER OF THE WEEK

at Arizona

DEVLIN HODGES QUARTERBACK

Maybe he wasn't the most spectacular player in a Pittsburgh uniform in the 23-17 win over the Cardinals, but this was a game where the Steelers were going to need plays from their quarterback. In virtually every situation, Devlin Hodges delivered.

Hodges completed 16-of-19 (84.2 percent) for 152 yards, with one touchdown, no interceptions, and a rating of 117.5. Hodges also scrambled five times for 34 yards. The Steelers had scoring drives of 77, 73 and 66 yards, and for an offense to move that far down the field and then score points requires solid play from the quarterback.

Hodges is the *Steelers Digest* Player of the Week.



Digest Photo/RIC TAPIA

3 Coaches who started their NFL career with at least 13 seasons without a losing record after Mike Tomlin joined Don Shula and Marty Schottenheimer.

19 Career regular season games with three or more field goals for Chris Boswell after he went 3-for-3 against the Cardinals.

84.2 Completion percentage for Devlin Hodges, who was 16-for-19. It was the second-highest percentage for a Steelers quarterback this season behind the 85.7 (24-for-28) by Mason Rudolph at Cincinnati in Week 4.

22 Yards gained by Devlin Hodges on a second-quarter scramble. It was the longest run by a Steelers quarterback since 2015 when Michael Vick had a 24-yard run against the San Diego Chargers.

2 Rushing yards for Arizona rookie quarterback Kyler Murray, who came in with three games with at least 65 yards on the ground.



Digest Photo/RIC TAPIA

85 **Diontae Johnson's** punt return was the longest in the NFL this season, topping a 78-yard return by Kenjon Barner of the Atlanta Falcons. It was the second-longest punt return in Steelers history behind a 90-yard return by Brady Keys in 1964.

4 Steelers players with a punt return touchdown and a touchdown catch in the same game after Diontae Johnson joined Antonio Brown, Louis Lipps and Roy Jefferson.

35 Years since a Steelers rookie scored TDs on a punt return and a reception before Johnson did it at Arizona. Louis Lipps had last done it in 1984.

15 Career punts of 60 yards or more for Jordan Berry, who had a season-long 69-yard punt against Arizona

0

Third downs

the Steelers had to convert on the 10-play, 73-yard touchdown drive that gave them a 20-10 lead late in the third quarter.

Preparation paying off for Haden

By JIM WEXELL
Associate Editor

Steven Nelson, your coach, Mike Tomlin, just described you and your partner in defensive cornerback play, Joe Haden, as “low maintenance.”

What do you suppose he meant by that?

“I don’t know,” said the quieter and more reserved Steelers cornerback. “What do you think it means?”

Well, girlfriends can be described as “high maintenance,” and that’s not a good thing. So “low maintenance” must be a good thing, right?

“Right, right, right,” Nelson said as he smiled. “I guess if you put it in those terms.”

Haden had just intercepted two passes against the Arizona Cardinals to 1) Get the defense off to quick start in the second half and position the offense to drive for a 20-10 lead, and, 2) End the game with an interception of Kyler Murray at mid-field on a fourth-and-17 play.

The Steelers needed both interceptions to pull out a 23-17 road win and keep their playoff chances alive.

They were the third and fourth interceptions of Haden’s season, which 1) Put him in a 13-way tie for second place in the NFL, and, 2) Gave Haden his highest number of interceptions in a season since 2013. His career high is the six he intercepted in his rookie season of 2010.

So, Haden’s in his 10th season at a young man’s position and he’s playing like, well, a young man.

“He’s a pro’s pro,” Nelson said. “To see him every day, and kind of pick his brain and see how he works, is really helpful.”

And what does Nelson admire most about Haden’s game?

“Just every, every day he comes into work ready to put it all out there,” Nelson said.

For Haden, there’s been no change in the way he’s approached this season, nor in his success as a ballhawk in this latter portion of the season.

In the first eight games, Haden had 4 passes defended and 0 interceptions.

In the next three games, Haden had 11 PDs and 4 interceptions, including two that ended wins against Cleveland and Arizona.

He had to be doing something different, didn’t he?

“No, nothing different from the beginning of the season,” said Haden. “I could have had a lot more picks. I was just dropping them, balls hitting me in the face. So I don’t feel like I’m doing anything out of character. I’m always just locked in, just trying to do my job, and now I’m just in the right position and balls are ending up coming my way.”



Veteran cornerback Joe Haden, who a teammate called a “pro’s pro,” is enjoying another solid season for the Steelers.

Digest Photo/RIC TAPIA

But didn’t he jump out of position for his first interception against Arizona?

Haden had aligned over outside receiver Charles Clay, but jumped the slot receiver’s route for the interception.

“No, I was in position,” Haden said. “It was a cover-2, but I was just acting like I was in cover-3. He ran that route and I wanted him to think I was going deep, but I really did have the flat.”

So, that experience is paying off. Tomlin said as much after the game.

“He’s just a quality, low-maintenance, high-production, veteran player, and Steve as well,” Tomlin said of his cornerbacks. “Obviously Joe made the splash today, so he deserves the recognition, but I can’t say enough about both of those low-maintenance, high-production, veteran corners that provide a nice, high floor for us in terms of performance.”

OK, Joe. What does he mean by “low maintenance”?

“He means,” Haden said, “that just as far as practice, being always available, don’t really need to cater to us too much, we do what we need to do, we’re going to be on time with everything, we’re going to be just where we need to be, we’re going to be true professionals.”

“Some guys, when they’re doing really well, they

get a little comfortable, start acting a different type of way. But me and Steve, this is what we do. Professionals grind. We love to do this stuff, and (Tomlin) just knows we’re going to be in the right spots. He knows we’re going to be doing what we need to do.”

A personal question, Joe: Your wife, is she high or low maintenance?

Haden chuckled.

“My wife,” he said before wisely pausing and considering his next few words, “I think she’s medium maintenance.”

“Yeah. That’ll keep me out of trouble, for sure.”

However, danger lurks for quarterbacks who want to challenge Haden, the player whose 135 passes defended leads the NFL throughout this quickly concluding decade.

“Joe is just a quality professional,” Tomlin said two days after the win in Arizona. “He prepares all of the time. He has a systematic approach to that preparation, and I really think it puts him in position to have a high floor, to be opportunistic, to be the guy that’s in that spot in that significant moment.”

“I don’t think there’s anything mystical about those plays. I think you create your fortune, and he’s a guy that continually puts himself in position to be fortunate.”



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STEELERS ROSTER

(Listed numerically by position; as of Dec. 16)

QUARTERBACKS

NO.	NAME	HT.	WT.	EXP.	COLLEGE
2	Mason Rudolph	6-5	235	2	Oklahoma State
5	Paxton Lynch	6-7	244	3	Memphis
6	Devlin Hodges	6-1	210	R	Samford

RUNNING BACKS

24	Benny Snell Jr.	5-10	224	R	Kentucky
30	James Conner	6-1	233	3	Pittsburgh
33	Trey Edmunds	6-2	223	2	Maryland
38	Jaylen Samuels	6-0	225	2	N.C. State
40	Kerrith Whyte	5-10	204	R	Florida Atlantic

WIDE RECEIVERS

13	James Washington	5-11	213	2	Oklahoma State
14	Tevin Jones	6-2	225	1	Memphis
17	Deon Cain	6-2	202	2	Clemson
18	Diontae Johnson	5-10	183	R	Toledo
19	JuJu Smith-Schuster	6-1	215	3	USC
80	Johnny Holton	6-3	190	3	Cincinnati

TIGHT ENDS

81	Zach Gentry	6-8	265	R	Michigan
88	Nick Vannett	6-6	261	4	Ohio State
89	Vance McDonald	6-4	267	7	Rice

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

53	Maurkice Pouncey	6-4	304	10	Florida
66	David DeCastro	6-5	316	8	Stanford
67	B.J. Finney	6-4	318	4	Kansas State
71	Matt Feiler	6-6	330	3	Bloomsburg (Pa.)
72	Zach Banner	6-8	360	2	USC
73	Ramon Foster	6-5	328	11	Tennessee
76	Chukwuma Okorafor	6-6	320	2	Western Michigan
78	Alejandro Villanueva	6-9	320	5	Army

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

NO.	NAME	HT.	WT.	EXP.	COLLEGE
79	Javon Hargrave	6-2	305	4	South Carolina State
93	Daniel McCullers	6-7	352	6	Tennessee
94	Tyson Alualu	6-3	304	10	California
96	Isaiah Buggs	6-3	295	R	Alabama
97	Cameron Heyward	6-5	295	9	Ohio State

LINEBACKERS

26	Mark Barron	6-2	230	8	Alabama
41	Robert Spillane	6-1	229	1	Western Michigan
44	Tyler Matakevich	6-1	235	4	Temple
48	Bud Dupree	6-4	269	5	Kentucky
51	Tuzar Skipper	6-3	246	R	Toledo
55	Devin Bush	5-11	234	R	Michigan
56	Anthony Chickillo	6-3	255	5	Miami (Fla.)
90	T.J. Watt	6-4	252	3	Wisconsin
92	Olasunkanmi Adeniyi	6-1	248	1	Toledo
98	Vince Williams	6-1	233	7	Florida State

DEFENSIVE BACKS

20	Cameron Sutton	5-11	188	3	Tennessee
22	Steve Nelson	5-11	194	5	Oregon State
23	Joe Haden	5-11	195	10	Florida
25	Artie Burns	6-0	197	4	Miami (Fla.)
28	Mike Hilton	5-9	184	3	Mississippi
29	Kameron Kelly	6-2	205	1	San Diego State
31	Justin Layne	6-2	192	R	Michigan State
34	Terrell Edmunds	6-1	217	2	Virginia Tech
37	Jordan Dangerfield	5-11	199	3	Towson
39	Minkah Fitzpatrick	6-1	207	2	Alabama

SPECIALISTS

4	P Jordan Berry	6-5	195	5	Eastern Kentucky
9	K Chris Boswell	6-2	185	5	Rice
57	LS Kameron Canaday	6-4	245	4	Portland State

RESERVE LISTS

7	QB Ben Roethlisberger (IR)	6-5	240	16	Miami (Ohio)
10	WR Ryan Switzer (IR)	5-8	185	3	North Carolina
21	S Sean Davis (IR)	6-1	202	4	Maryland
45	FB Roosevelt Nix (IR)	5-11	248	5	Kent State
50	LB Ryan Shazier (PUP)	6-1	230	5	Ohio State
54	LB Ulysees Gilbert III (IR)	6-0	230	R	Akron
91	DL Stephon Tuitt (IR)	6-6	303	6	Notre Dame
95	DL L.T. Walton (IR)	6-5	305	6	Central Michigan

STEELERS COACHING STAFF

Mike TomlinHead coach
 John MitchellAssistant head coach
 Randy FichtnerOffensive coordinator/quarterbacks
 Keith ButlerDefensive coordinator
 Danny SmithSpecial teams coordinator
 James DanielTight ends
 Eddie FaulknerRunning backs
 Adrian KlemmAssistant offensive line
 Shaun SarrettOffensive line
 Ray Sherman.....Interim wide receivers

Tom BradleyDefensive backs
 Karl DunbarDefensive line
 Jerry OlsavskyInside linebackers
 Teryl AustinSenior defensive assistant/secondary
 Garrett GiemontStrength and conditioning
 Denzel MartinCoaching assistant
 Blaine Stewart.....Coaching assistant
 Matt SymmesCoaching assistant
 William GayCoaching intern

POUNCEY

has quiet passion to help others

By TERESA VARLEY
Assistant Editor



When Maurkice Pouncey says something, he says it with authority. He says it with passion. He says it with meaning.

So when he said he wanted to work to make the Pittsburgh community a better one, a closer one, he didn't just sit back and wait for something to happen. He did something himself.

Pouncey's mission was to bring together the community and the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, something talked about in a meeting with police and several players a few years ago. He wanted to do something to build trust and develop a relationship that will hopefully last and will improve relations long term.

That drive, that desire to always work for something better, is one of the many reasons Pouncey was selected as the Steelers Walter Payton Man of the Year nominee, presented by Nationwide.

"This is big for me and my brother (Mike)," said Pouncey, immediately giving credit to his twin brother Mike Pouncey, who plays for the Chargers. "We like to give back to the community, especially where we are from and the cities where we play. I have gotten a lot of support in both areas. It would be crazy just to pick the place where I grew up, and not here in Pittsburgh too. I just love the people here. Working with the police, knowing how good of people they are. It's too hard not to give back. I wouldn't feel right. I couldn't sleep.

"It's a good thing. We are very blessed to have the money and success we have, so it's only right to do it. We did the stuff growing up, helping out with different events, even before we made it to the NFL. We were always giving back. We are just taking it to the next level. It's our responsibility to do this. All the blessings you have, I might look at it differently than other people, but you should do this."

Maurkice and Mike Pouncey started the Team Pouncey Foundation, with a mission to promote future success for disadvantage youth by assisting programs which provide opportunities for at risk youth. They have donated more than \$10 million to those organizations through the years and they also host the Pouncey Twins Youth Football & Cheerleading Camp in their hometown of Lakeland, Florida, which includes football and cheerleading instructions and is free to all kids.

For the past three seasons Pouncey has donated tickets to Steelers home games to the Pittsburgh Police for them to take youth in city

Digest Photos/REBECCA MEHLING and KARL ROSER

neighborhoods to games, as well as enjoy a pregame tailgate party inside of Stage AE. The tickets are distributed to different police zones each week, allowing a wide range of kids the opportunity to not only see a game, but spend quality time interacting with the police and getting to know the men and women who are there to protect them.

"I think sometimes the message gets blurred some with some of the incidents," said Pouncey. "The things we do in the community, and how Pittsburgh is, how involved they are in bringing up the youth and making sure everyone knows they do a lot of great things. To bring up the kids that way is awesome.

"This gives the kids a chance to see the police beyond the uniform. They are human. They are great people. They have kids and family members too. Just because they wear a badge you shouldn't look at them a certain way. They are a lot of great people that help with a lot of great causes."

Pouncey's actions have made a difference, something that is clearly noticeable to the men and women in the police department.

"When we first got together last season to see what we could do to build better bridges in the community between the police and especially the youth, he was one of the key ones who said I want to do it," said Pittsburgh Police Chief Scott Schubert. "He has helped out immensely, giving us tickets to the games where we were able to pick kids in the community who wouldn't have an opportunity to go to a game. And they go with our officers. Those four or five hours that they are together helps build that relationship. It wouldn't be possible without Maurkice. He is so humble about it, but he does such an amazing job. He is truly making a difference in the community. We love the partnership we have with him and partnership we have with the Steelers organization.

"I can't say enough about Maurkice and what he has done. He has truly stepped up. He doesn't want credit. He just wants to do it. I send him pics after every game for him to see the kids enjoying things. He is a genuinely nice guy. He is doing it for the right reason. I think people will see that passion from him and follow. That is what you are seeing now. It becomes contagious. We will all come and go, but we have to have a foundation built that this is something bigger than us and will last a lifetime."

The police officers take the kids to the games in their police vans, spend time getting to know them during the pregame fun at Stage AE, and then are able to share with them an experience of a lifetime at the game.

"He is truly making a difference," said Schubert. "We can have officers and the kids from the community spend about five hours together not on the street, not at the station and have fun together. The kids get to know the officers, the officers get to know the kids, and the adults in the community who are chaperones.

"The main thing is to get the youth, or anyone in the community, to look beyond the uniform, and the badge and patch, and see the individual. The same thing on our side. We don't want to see everybody as a victim, or a witness, or someone who is going to be arrested. We want to see the person. That has paid off huge dividends. You see people in the community going to the game and have developed a relationship with them and that's priceless."

Pouncey hasn't stopped there. He was one of the players to donate to the Pittsburgh Police Fund through the Steelers Social Justice Grant program. He does his annual Thanksgiving turkey giveaway for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank alongside police officers, providing Thanksgiving dinner to hundreds of Pittsburgh families every year. He also recently donated horses to the police department for their mounted unit.

There are other things he does quietly, things we sometimes never know about because attention is something he doesn't seek. Just getting him to talk about sending the kids to games took time, prying it out of him.

"I think the awesome thing about him is the quiet manner in which he goes about it," said Coach Mike Tomlin. "It's almost like he is uncom-



"I can't say enough about Maurkice and what he has done. He has truly stepped up. He doesn't want credit. He just wants to do it."

fortable getting recognition for the things he does. That is why I appreciate it. He has always been an active member of the community. He has always been engaged, particularly with young people. But very rarely does he draw attention, nor does he want to."

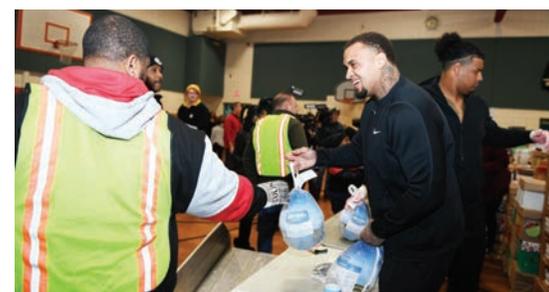
He doesn't do it for a pat on the back or for attention. He does it because he cares.

"It amazes me how humble he is," said Chief Schubert. "He doesn't want publicity for it. He just wants to make a difference. Giving back to the community is important to him. It speaks volumes of his character and who he is. I know he is not originally from Pittsburgh, but he sure is making Pittsburgh proud."

He is constantly participating in events teammates host and working with charities in the Pittsburgh area to make a difference.

And he does it all with a smile and a quiet joy.

"I hate the attention. I am humbled by things," said Pouncey. "Coming where we come from, you are always grateful. It's not about me. I got out and play football. I know there are people who need help in this world. I know I can't help everybody, but the people I can help, hopefully I make a difference in their lives."



Putting their best foot forward

By TERESA VARLEY | Assistant Editor

When the Steelers took the field against the Arizona Cardinals and Buffalo Bills, there was a lot of passion on display.

But the passion wasn't just be about the game.

For the fourth year the NFL allowed players to represent a charity that they are passionate about in a unique manner with the league's player cause initiative, My Cause, My Cleats.

The initiative was created for NFL players to showcase a charitable cause that is meaningful to them and players took part in helping with the design of their cleats. Below is a breakdown of the players' causes and why they choose what they did.

Photos by REBECCA MEHLING and KARL ROSER



OLA ADENIYI

Cause: Sickle Cell

When he heard the news in college, Ola Adeniyi was surprised. It certainly wasn't what he expected. That he had the sickle cell trait.

"I never knew about it," said Adeniyi. "I am the first in my family to play football and that is how I found out. When I first found out I was like, 'Whoa.' When they first told me, I thought I had the whole thing, the whole disease. I just have the trait. I am a carrier. You have to make sure you are safe because you don't want your child to get it."

Adeniyi wore his cleats to support sickle cell, something that means a lot to him because he wants to bring awareness to others who might be in the dark about it like he once was.

"I had friends who lost family members to it," said Adeniyi. "I didn't know the importance of it until I got to college and found out I had it. That is why I am supporting it."

"I have the trait. Everybody has different levels of it. If you take care of your body, that is one of the keys, especially playing football."

"You have to be aware. It's something you should know. You have to be cautious choosing your partner. You don't want your children to have it. The chance of living past a certain age is hard. When I realized I had it, it made me more aware. You just have to pay attention and be aware of it."



TYSON ALUALU

Cause: Colon Cancer

When something hits close to home, you want to do something about it.

That is exactly why Tyson Alualu wore his cleats to support his family and bring awareness to colon cancer.

"I lost my grandfather to it, and very recently my little sister was diagnosed," said Alualu. "She has more tests to do, but she is going through it. That is why I chose it, to represent them."

"After you pass the whole emotional stage you find strength through it all. It's a daily reminder for me to be thankful for health and reminds me to continue to prepare for strength for them and for me, specifically my sister."

Alualu was happy to wear them and doesn't take for granted the NFL allowing it.

"I think the NFL does a good job using the platform to bring a lot of awareness to those things," said Alualu. "I like the direction they are taking it."



MARK BARRON

Cause: Together Assisting People (TAP) and My Brother's Keeper

Mark Barron shared the love when it comes to his cleats, supporting two different charities that have special meaning to him.

Barron's cleats supported TAP (Together Assisting People) and My Brother's Keeper, one that he has a personal connection with and the other that hits home for how he wants to give back.

"I have a personal relationship with TAP; the guy who started it I played college football with and they still help me working together with my events," Barron said of the organization which was started by his former University of Alabama teammate, Chris Rogers, and is an education and career-focused mentoring program for inner-city youth.

"As far as My Brother's Keeper, I found out about them when I was in Los Angeles. What they do is in alignment with what I want to do as far as helping inner-city kids, providing them opportunities to get further in life."

"They're both kind of similar. They both kind of focus on inner-city kids, youth, younger kids in the inner city. I'm an inner-city kid myself, and I kind of grew up with limited opportunities and I was just fortunate enough to make it out. To see organizations that are reaching back trying to help those kids out and create those opportunities for them, of course I'm going to support those types of organizations."

Like his teammates, Barron is thankful to have the opportunity to share the message of what the organizations do through his cleats, hoping to give them any kind of boost he can.

"They are doing a great job as far as that," said Barron. "It's extremely important. We are in a position in life where we can affect a lot of people either financially or just by our presence. If we can bring awareness to certain things it helps. It's great the NFL makes a big deal of it and allows us to help the organization by giving them exposure."

JORDAN DANGERFIELD

Cause: FDNY and NYPD

Jordan Dangerfield has a world of respect for those who protect and serve. The men and women who risk their lives on a daily basis as firefighters and police officers.

But he holds the men and women of the FDNY and NYPD just a little closer to his heart, and it's easy to understand why.

His father, the late David Dangerfield, was an FDNY firefighter and his mother, Erica Dangerfield, is a retired NYPD detective, both of them stationed in the Bronx, New York, and that is why he supported the FDNY and NYPD with his cleats.

"I wanted show love and support for my parents for putting their life on the line every day, while still raising me and my brothers and sisters," said Dangerfield. "And show support for both of those organizations for putting their lives on the line every day.

"It's about mom and dad. I am picking that area because that is where they worked. But it's for all the firefighters and police officers out there. They do a lot. I feel like, maybe not taken for granted, but I feel like we are not as thankful for them as we should be. I want to honor them."

Dangerfield knows the danger they face daily. And he remembers being a kid, in the fifth grade, when his parents were faced with the horror of dealing with the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

"I didn't really understand at the time," said Dangerfield. "When I came home from school, my parents expressed what was going on. Everything was happening on television and the news. They both had to go down there at times, but they wouldn't allow both parents to be there together.

"They were OK, thank God. But I knew some of the police officers and firefighters that passed through my parents.

"My dad passed in 2009. It wasn't from 9/11, but it sped up the process with his heart problem.

"I just want to show support for them."



BUD DUPREE

Cause: Multiple Sclerosis

For Bud Dupree, his cleats are personal. Very personal.

Dupree is bringing awareness to multiple sclerosis and the way it can impact an individual's life after his younger sister, Zoria, was diagnosed with the disease.

"I chose it because my sister is going through it," said Dupree. "I wanted to show awareness for her, and support for her, in this situation. I want to make sure she knows I am with her, supporting her through this.

"It was scary at first when I first learned about it, what was going on with her. Now she is getting treatment and the doctor is happy. We are trying to make sure she has the best doctor and getting what she needs to help her out."

Dupree said he has chosen other causes to highlight in the past, but this time it has deeper meaning.

"It's great to be able to do this," said Dupree. "This year it's more personal because it's someone in my family going through the situation.

"It's a great opportunity for us to go out there and support family members and others too, people we might have personal relationships with. It's a blessing to be on that platform and bring help and awareness."



TREY EDMUNDS

Cause: Lupus

The most important causes are normally the ones closest to the heart, and for Trey Edmunds that is the case.

Edmunds' decision to represent and support lupus was an easy one, as it is an illness that has affected several people he cares deeply about.

"I have some family members and some close friends who have been affected by it," said Edmunds. "I know it's an illness that is affecting a lot of people. It's growing all of the time. I want to bring awareness to it and shine a light upon what is going on. Also, I want to try to get some positive shout outs, recognition to my friend and my family member who went through it and beat it."

Edmunds said he appreciates the NFL for allowing players to have a platform to support those closest to him, and it's something he will always take part in.

"I love the idea of My Cause, My Cleats," said Edmunds. "I try to take advantage of it each year and I will keep doing it as long as I am in the league. It's heartwarming for us. For us to go out there and acknowledge other people is special. The smiles we see on their faces and the joy it brings them when we do it, I love it."



B.J. FINNEY

Cause: Childhood cancer, breast cancer and pancreatic cancer

When he was deciding what he wanted to represent, B.J. Finney couldn't pick just one thing because of the personal connections he has.

So instead he is representing three forms of cancer with his cleats, including childhood cancer, breast cancer and pancreatic cancer.

"Knowing people who have gone through those types of cancers, being close to them, including family, that is why I chose to represent all of them," said Finney.

When he was at Kansas State, Finney and his teammates had a special bond with a young cancer patient, Kaiden Schroeder, who was a fan of the team. Sadly, Schroeder lost his battle with cancer, but he remains in Finney's heart.

"I got to know him well. He came around a lot," said Finney. "He spent over half of his life in the hospital fighting his battle, and he lost it when he was 12 years old. Cancer took him. I have his jersey and his funeral program in my locker. You will see the backwards K's, the double K's on my cleats. That is for the group we had, Kaden's Crusaders.

"I am representing pancreatic cancer for my aunt Dina Ramsey. She is a huge influence in my life. She had a tumor and cancer in her pancreas so that is why I chose that one.

"And breast cancer, having a former teacher of mine and family friend, as well as other family friends who went through it.

"It means a lot to be able to show my support for all of them."



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ZACH GENTRY

Cause: Children's Cancer Fund of New Mexico

When rookie Zach Gentry thought about what he wanted his cleats to represent, the first thing that came to his mind was doing something to help those where he is from. Gentry is from Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he attended Eldorado High School.

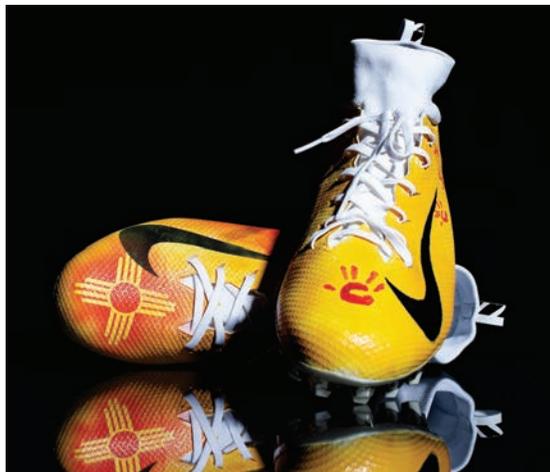
So it was an easy decision for him to use his cleats to support the Children's Cancer Fund of New Mexico. The fund exists to help children and their families cope with the day-to-day emotional, financial, and educational needs of living with and fighting cancer. Their main program is Helping Hands, which helps to ensure all needs met by providing families assistance with rent, utilities, food, transportation, clothing, and special needs based on each individual child and to grant special requests as their children go through their battle.

"I wanted to do something for where I am from. I wanted to do something that help my city, my state," said Gentry. "I think it's a really important fund to give help to. They do a lot of different work, helping the families and kids, at the hospital and away from the hospital. I thought it was a good cause."

Gentry has seen first-hand the struggles families and kids go through when battling diseases like cancer. Since coming to the Steelers he has visited the kids at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and while at the University of Michigan took part in hospital visits as well.

"In Ann Arbor they had the Mott Children's Hospital, and I have gone there to visit kids," said Gentry. "Every Thursday they have athlete night. All of the athletes all over campus come that night, visit the kids, make a connection with them."

"It's fantastic the NFL is letting us do this. It's something people see on television. They see someone wearing their cleats, they research it and want to help out. It's something that spreads the word and allows us to use our platform to make people more aware."



JOE HADEN

Cause: Special Olympics

Joe Haden's cleats are personal. Extremely personal.

He supported Special Olympics because of his brother, Jacob Haden, who is five years younger than him and a Special Olympian. The younger Haden has a cognitive disorder which affects his ability to speak and communicate verbally.

"I think it's really good to be able to do something like this," said Haden, who is the Global Ambassador for Special Olympics. "You have a lot of people in the league that have a lot of stuff going on at home with their families, things they care a lot about, that mean a lot to them. For the league to let us do this is special. I am a guy that likes to wear different color cleats and they always fine you. Now when they let you get a cause out, something that means so much to you, it's special."

Jacob Haden calls his older brother Joe his "1," because he is the oldest sibling. And Joe takes that to heart, protecting his younger brother at all costs, looking out for him, starting from the time when they were young.

On a normal summer day, the Haden boys were swimming at their aunt's house. They all came in after a while, except for Jacob. They couldn't find him. Joe, who was 9 years old at the time, went outside and saw a shadow in the bottom of the pool. It was 4-year-old Jacob. He jumped in and saved him, his aunt performing CPR, and a helicopter eventually transporting him to the hospital.

"It was the scariest day of my life," said Haden.

Jacob doesn't let his condition hamper him, and it's his passion that has led Joe to get more and more involved with Special Olympics.

"He is one of my best friends," said Haden. "I have four younger brothers. Three play college football and he is a Special Olympian. He has always been doing it, bocce ball, track. We would always go to those events. My third or fourth year in the NFL I ended up becoming the Global



Ambassador for Special Olympics. I would go to the regional games. It was a great time. They would have flag football, bocce ball, track, basketball. It was just so much fun to see how much joy we brought to those kids just to play the games.

"At the end of the day everybody got their ribbons and awards, but it wasn't about that. It was about them having the opportunity to play."

Haden's eyes light up when he talks about Jacob. You can tell immediately how proud he is of him, how much he loves him, and how much he respects and admires the strength he has in dealing with his challenges.

"I am so happy for him, so proud of him," said Haden. "Just for him to live his life the way he does, being so happy and proud. He has a speech delay, so he can't really talk. For him to be so happy, and have so much joy every day, it teaches me never take for granted what you have, just being able to talk, interact with people, being able to get people's attention and for them to know what I am talking about."

"Sometimes talking to him I can't understand what he is saying. I will be like, 'Jacob, what are you trying to say? That is when it gets to me the most. He never gets down, he will still be trying to let me know what he is trying to say, what he is talking about. It takes a big man to do that."

"When I am having a tough day, he makes life a lot easier."

JAVON HARGRAVE

Cause: Breast cancer

When Javon Hargrave's mother, Yvette Bates, was diagnosed with breast cancer earlier this year, he immediately did everything he could to support her battle.

Now, he is able to take it a step further, and publicly show his love and support for his mom by wearing his cleats to support breast cancer awareness and research.

"I did it to represent her," said Hargrave, who said his mother is doing well. "She is always in good spirits, so it makes it easier for all of us. She is pretty strong. She hasn't been showing she is down. It's just tough to see somebody go through something like that."

"It's good to be able to represent her for that week and just show it. It's my first year doing it. I am just doing it for her."



See CLEATS, page 26

CAM HEYWARD

Cause: Love Like the Boys and the 10.27 Healing Partnership

Cam Heyward is a player who has strong roots in Pittsburgh, including the Squirrel Hill neighborhood where a little over a year ago a gunman took the lives of 11 innocent victims during a horrible shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue.

It was a tragedy that touched Heyward in so many ways, because of his love of the city and because of his friendship with Michele Rosenthal, the former Steelers Community Relations Manager who lost her two brothers, Cecil and David Rosenthal, in the shooting.

It's that bond that made Heyward decide to dedicate his cleats to the victims, and the causes that have since been created to honor their memory and help provide support.

Heyward's cleats supported two causes, Love Like the Boys and the 10.27 Healing Partnership.

The 10.27 Healing Partnership is a collaboration of community, government, and faith-based organizations dedicated to helping communities and individuals heal from trauma.

Love Like the Boys was set up in partnership with Achieva to honor the Rosenthal brothers and their kind hearts and gentle manner. The idea is for individuals to perform Random Acts of Kindness in memory of Cecil and David.

"I wore them to honor all of those impacted by the Tree of Life shooting that happened last year," said Heyward. "I am working with two different programs, Love Like the Boys, which works with one of our friends whose two brothers were involved with it. It's just about doing good deeds. I am also working with 10.27 Healing Partnership, who is helping to repair some of the brokenness that happened.

"I am just thankful to be able to do something for them. I lived in that community and I know how great the people there are. I want to let them know I care about them.

"I wanted to let them know I am still thinking about them. We understand there is going to be time to grieve and time to recover from this. You never fully recover, with that respect I wanted to make sure I did something for the people I love."



DEVLIN HODGES

Cause: Catch-A-Dream Foundation

For Devlin Hodges, other than the football field, being out in nature hunting is where he finds joy.

And it's something he wants others to experience and enjoy as well.

That is why he supported the Catch-A-Dream Foundation with his cleats. The foundation grants once-in-a-lifetime hunting and fishing experiences to children 18-years old and younger who have a life-threatening illness.

"That is something that hits home for me," said Hodges. "Hopefully I can wear the cleats and raffle them off or something and raise some money for the foundation. I always wanted to be involved in something like this, some kind of foundation that takes kids who might not to go do these things as much I do. Even if it's just a one-time experience for them and see if they like it. I am excited to do it."

For Hodges, this is the perfect collaboration.

"For me and for the foundation it's the opportunity of a lifetime," said Hodges. "To be able to do this at this stage, with everyone knowing me as Duck, people will pay attention. The foundation has partnered with the camouflage that I wear, so I am going to have my camouflage cleats involved with the foundation. It's going to be super cool. I am really excited."

TYLER MATAKEVICH

Cause: Show Your Softer Side

Tyler Matakevich had no intention of getting a puppy when he went to do a photo shoot for Show Your Softer Side, a public service campaign that was created to change the mind-set of young people who "view the maiming and torturing of defenseless cats and dogs as a sign of toughness." The organization helps find homes for dogs and cats who are considered "rescue" pets, those abandoned or taken from abusive situations.

As soon as the Labrador puppy sat on his lap, his softer side came out and he was a goner.

"It was like they set me up," laughed Matakevich. "I had to take her home."

Matakevich wore his cleats to support Show Your Softer Side, an organization he got involved with through the family of a former Temple University teammate. She asked him to do the photo shoot, and he was more than happy to oblige.

"I walked into the room and there were about five or six puppies, all black Labs," said Matakevich. "They gave me one. Within 10 minutes she just fell asleep right in my arms. I was like, wow you set me

up. I can't give her back. That happened on a Friday, my girlfriend picked her up on Saturday and I had her on a Sunday."

That was about two and a half years ago and now Bailey is part of Matakevich's life, and he wouldn't want it any other way.

"Just being around them and realizing they don't have a place to go, I wish I would have taken them all," said Matakevich. "I donate now to their fundraisers. They keep me updated on everything they have going on. You just feel so good knowing you are helping a good cause and giving these dogs a good home. If I do it again, I won't leave empty-handed."

STEVEN NELSON

Cause: Type 2 Diabetes

Family first.

It is something everyone preaches, and Steven Nelson put family at the forefront with the cleats he wore.

Nelson supported type 2 diabetes with his cleats, something to show love and support for his grandmother, Catherine Butler, who is currently dealing with the disease.

"Thank God she is doing well," said Nelson. "She is not overly sick. But she does have it and has had it for as long as I can remember. It runs on her side of the family. One of my uncles passed away from it, one of her brothers.

"I have always wanted to do something focused on it, something for diabetes."

Nelson was thrilled to show his love for his grandmother and appreciates that My Cause, My Cleats has become an outlet for players to show what they are passionate about.

"It's amazing the NFL lets us do this," said Nelson. "It shows the compassion players have for causes and shows support for families who might have a loved one dealing with it. I think it's a good way to show what us players are about."

When Nelson is done wearing the cleats, he knows exactly where they are going.

"I called my grandmother and told her what I was doing," said Nelson. "She told me bring me those cleats. I have to."



JAYLEN SAMUELS

Cause: Myeloma Cancer

Jaylen Samuels' grandmother never got to see him play in the NFL. But she will be close to his heart this week as he is supporting her through his cleats.

Samuels' grandmother, Janelle Kelsey Samuels, died from myeloma cancer before she had the chance to see what her grandson accomplished, from playing football at North Carolina State to being drafted by the Steelers and playing in the NFL.

"Last year we had the My Cause, My Cleats game and I didn't do anything," said Samuels. "I forgot about it. I was a rookie. This year I gave some thought to it for a while. I wanted to do something for them, for my grandmother and my

MAURKICE PONCEY

Cause: Team Pouncey Foundation

Maurkice Pouncey is keeping his cause close to him, supporting the Team Pouncey Foundation that he and his twin brother Mike are passionate about. The foundation does work in both players cities, but the majority of the work is done in their hometown of Lakeland, Florida.

"We love Lakeland so much," said Pouncey. "We do things in other cities where we play. Lakeland is our hometown. We love giving back to the kids there. We love seeing the changes we make. Smiles we put on families faces when we are there."

The Pouncey brothers have provided more than \$10 million of impact to at-risk youth through grants and programs in Florida and have changed countless lives through their football camps with the children they have touched.

"We have been very lucky," said Pouncey. "Our supporting cast there is awesome. They have always been on board with team Pouncey. My brother and I are always going to come back, even after football. We want to change lives, make a difference and let people live up to their dreams."



grandfather. I honor them, my grandmother and my grandfather, who both passed away, all the time. I have them tatted on me and everything. I wanted to do something special for them.

"I just thought about that. I thought I could recognize her throughout the game. She never saw me play in a college game or NFL game. I know she would be proud of what I am doing now. I wanted to honor her for the game."

Samuels said he is grateful the NFL allows players to honor those close to them through the initiative and he always likes to see what other players do as well.

"It's unique," said Samuels. "Players get to support their cause, their foundation. It's fun to see the different cleats the players come up with, showing the design, showing their cause. It's special."



JuJu SMITH-SCHUSTER

Cause: JuJu Foundation

JuJu Smith-Schuster has not been shy about giving back since he was drafted by the Steelers, but this offseason he wanted to take it to another level, so he launched the JuJu Foundation, dedicated to supporting youth initiatives and lifting the spirits of those in need.

"It's a dream come true to establish our foundation," said Smith-Schuster. "This will be a meaningful platform to make a positive difference in the lives of others."

Smith-Schuster supported his foundation with his cleats, showing the side of him committed to giving back to others. He recently hosted the inaugural JuJu Foundation Luau, an event that had a lot of different levels, from a fundraiser for the foundation to an opportunity to give back to the community.

The main aspect of the event was when Smith-Schuster surprised over 50 kids from the Boys & Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania with new bikes. Smith-Schuster chose to give bikes because of the social media frenzy that occurred his rookie season when his bike, which was his main form of transportation because he didn't have a driver's license yet, was stolen.

"It's just about giving back," said Smith-Schuster. "It's an idea from my rookie year when the bike became a big thing. I thought why not give back to the kids too, give bikes to kids who don't have one. The bike thing became such a big thing for me that I wanted to turn it into something to help."



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BENNY SNELL

Cause: Lung and breast cancer

Sometimes it's tough to pick just one cause to help and for rookie Benny Snell, that was the case.

He decided on two because he wanted to honor multiple people who hold a special place in his heart.

"I went with lung cancer and breast cancer," said Snell. "It's important to me because it affected people close to me. To see how strong they are, who they are as a person, it built me into who I am today. This is what I want to do."

Snell said he was excited to have those he is honoring get the first look at him with them on.

"When they saw me, and I am playing, and they see me in the cleats and know the meaning behind them, I know they will get a smile on their face and be happy about it," said Snell.

This is Snell's first opportunity to take part in My Cause/My Cleats and he is thrilled the NFL has provided players the platform to share what is in their hearts.

"It lets us be who we are," said Snell. "Not just football players. It's deeper. Its way deeper than football. This is a great thing the NFL has provided for us. I am looking forward to it."



ALEJANDRO VILLANUEVA

Cause: Special Operations Warrior Foundation

As a former Army Ranger, Alejandro Villanueva knows the sacrifices those in the military make. And he knows many of them sadly make the ultimate sacrifice, often times leaving behind families, from young children to college age kids.

While there are hundreds of charities out there supporting the military, there is one that has really touched Villanueva. It's the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, an organization that supports some of the military's most elite forces who are often called upon for the most dangerous missions.

The Special Operations Warrior Foundation provides support for families of severely wounded and fallen forces, focusing mainly on providing educational aid to the surviving children of special operations personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty. The foundation also provides immediate financial grants to severely combat-wounded and hospitalized special operations personnel and their families.

"The way that the war has been fought over the past seven years has relied heavily on special operations forces," said Villanueva. "They brunt a little more than their share of the fight than the rest of the units. That community is very small.

"I think what the foundation is doing is pretty remarkable. I know people on the board, it's a well-run organization, the way they spend their money and allocate their funds is well done.

"I have always been in contact with the special operations community. They have been unbelievable to me. I feel extremely humbled to have been a part of them and obviously to still be welcome with open arms."

Villanueva is hoping by wearing the cleat and



bringing the organization to the forefront that it does nothing but help them, and in turn help those who have given so much for our country.

"It's an organization that doesn't spend a lot of money advertising themselves. The money goes the right way," said Villanueva. "They are spending as much as they can on the families of the victims, on sons and daughters of soldiers who have lost their lives, kids that might not be able to go to college. It's a very cool organization. I love the people who run and what they stand for. At the same time, it gives the recognition to the families and the victims of the foreign wars that people aren't hearing about on the news because the war has taken a step back."

NICK VANNETT

Cause: Never Ever Give Up: The Jessie Rees Foundation for Childhood Cancer (NEGU)

A year ago, when he was thinking about what cause he wanted to support, Nick Vannett went with his heart.

His heart had been touched by the story of Jessie Joy Rees, a young California girl who was diagnosed with brain cancer and died less than a year later at age 12.

Rees wanted to bring awareness to childhood cancer and came up with the motto, Never Ever Give Up (NEGU). She used that motto to inspire others, and after her death it continued with Never Ever Give Up: The Jessie Rees Foundation for Childhood Cancer (NEGU)

"She felt like whenever she was in the hospital, where she spent a lot of time, and she couldn't go

home for the holidays and so forth that there were a lot of toys in the hospital," said Vannett. "She created JoyJars, fitting as much as you can into a jar with toys and sending them to hospitals across the world.

"It's spreading love, giving hope and encouraging kids to never give up."

Vannett, who is from Southern California, has visited with kids in hospitals in that area and taken JoyJars with him.

"I will go to hospitals there and team up with the people and give the kids JoyJars and brighten their day with it. I used to hang out with kids at the hospitals in college and enjoyed it. I got a lot out of it, seeing how joyful they are. Seeing the smile on their face is powerful.

"Everybody has a cause they support. It shows we care about the community too. We aren't just playing football. We are more than that."





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WORLD HEADQUARTERS



Cam Heyward
CAM HEYWARD

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Nelson, McDonald and Heyward

From the notebook of a sportswriter in the gloaming of a football season that's gone from bad, to better, to whoa-they-can-do-it, and now back to well, they gave it a nice try:

- Is it over? Well, the Steelers have beaten only one team .with a .500 record or better, and that team, the Los Angeles Rams, is just 8-6.

- The Bills were the team they needed to beat, at home, to not only set their playoff chances at 95 percent, according to one computer, but to show themselves they could make some noise in the playoffs.

- The Bills are a legitimate playoff team, but beatable. Because the Steelers couldn't, the hope of them becoming that plucky, lucky, fast-and-loose, defensive-minded team "hard out" is now just to score more than one touchdown against a quality defense.

- Is that perception a reality? Maybe. Unless they play near perfect ball.

- "Small mistakes turn into big mistakes, and that's what happened," said Ramon Foster. "We just have to be better."

- Here's the roll call of the small mistakes to see if the perception is just a knee-jerk reaction.

- On the first possession, Tevin Jones dropped a pass and Duck Hodges was penalized on an odd motion call that negated a quality James Conner run. The official missed a facemask on second-and-15 and Hodges' first interception followed. All of which could have been avoided.

- A 22-yard punt at the end of the next series set up the Bills' first touchdown, which they scored after converting a third-and-18/fourth-and-6.

- Steven Nelson's first interception of the season, and scintillating 33-yard return, set the Steelers up at the Buffalo 20. From the 10, a poor snap to Conner, in Wildcat, was eventually fumbled by Diontae Johnson.

This play is no doubt talk-show grist for at least a week, and it cost them at least a field goal at the end of the half.

- A touchdown and 10-7 lead opened the second half for the Steelers, and a T.J. Watt forced fumble set them up to take command in front of the roused fans. But a second-and-5 turned into fourth-and-16 after back-to-back sacks. They represented a fourth of the sacks taken by Hodges all season, and the Bills added two others as the Steelers matched a season-worst four sacks allowed.



Steven Nelson's first interception of the season gave the Steelers a great scoring opportunity, but they ended up wasting it.

Digest Photo/REBECCA MEHLING

and on their final drive the officials overruled another apparent offside with a procedure call, before the line allowed another sack and Hodges threw a desperate interception.

- The small mistakes piled up. But, for the most part, they are correctable.

- There are also the situational problems that must continue to be addressed. The Steelers entered the game dead last in both red-zone and third-and-short offense.

- The Steelers had converted only 34.3 percent of their red-zone chances into touchdowns, but went 1-for-2 on this Sunday night. They had converted only 36.1 percent of their third-and-3's, or less, but were 3-for-3 against the Bills with a pass to Zach Gentry, a sneak by Hodges and a bomb to Washington.

Washington.

- It's improvement, and they'll build on it.

- There are holes, but holes that JuJu Smith-Schuster and Vance McDonald can help fix when they return from injuries. Add them to the development of Washington, Johnson and Nick Vannett and the situation is tenable. In my opinion, they only have to win one more to make the playoffs, and those players would bolster not only the talent level but the energy level too.

- Of course, the beauty of this team, and what would make them a plucky underdog in any playoff game, is its chemistry. Defensive captain Cam Heyward was asked about the poor offensive showing and he dismissed it because his unit allowed a third-and-18 conversion that led to the first Buffalo touchdown.

"What did the offense have to do with that?" Heyward said. "What are we thinking? It's an advantageous situation for the defense and we didn't get off the damn field. ... There was a situation where we must make a stop, surrender three. I think we were in good field goal range late.

"You get to that point, we've got to make plays. I don't look at it as the offense had to do anything else. I think the defense had to get off the field and we did not. We didn't get the job done today."

- Yep. There's still hope. And just enough time.

- The next possession was ruined by an interception on second-and-2 — an interception by the best player (Tre'Davious White) on the No. 3 pass defense in the NFL. On second-and-2. A series after being sacked on second-and-5.

- This small mistake in playcalling would have turned into the ultimate mistake had right tackle Matt Feiler not hustled to knock White out of bounds and save four points. The field goal tied the game.

- On the first possession of the fourth quarter, the Steelers lined up to punt on fourth-and-3, and the Bills appeared to jump offside. Three officials made three different calls, according to Steelers long-snapper Kameron Kanaday, who was called for illegal procedure. Instead of a first down, the Steelers punted and the Bills scored the winning touchdown.

"I do the same thing every time," said Kanaday. "I have to look at the front. I did nothing different. I was (peevied)."

- On the Bills' drive, Tyson Alualu forced Devin Singletary to fumble but the Bills recovered. That small bounce turned into a game-winning touchdown.

- On their penultimate drive, the Steelers had a delay penalty, dropped a pass, and allowed a sack before throwing an interception in the end zone,

Steelers huddle together to

On a day designated as "Giving Tuesday," the Steelers organization did just that.

They gave back. In a big way. Players, front office personnel and management all joined together for one cause.

Helping others.

The Steelers teamed with Convoy of Hope to host Huddle for the Holidays, a unique one-of-a-kind outreach that provided necessities and the simple pleasures in life for 500 individuals, from kids to senior citizens.

Heinz Field was transformed from a football mecca into an oasis of love and caring, with every corner a place for individuals to benefit from the art of giving back.

Local organizations, including Amachi Pittsburgh, Latino Community Center, Urban League, Youth Places, YMCA, Jeremiah's Place and

Urban Impact, just to name a few, invited those they serve to attend and enjoy a night of pampering and outreach.

There were the essentials like health & wellness screenings, haircuts, job services and even manicures, to needs like shoes, clothing and food, to the fun like family portraits, balloon making, arts & crafts and of course Santa's workshop where kids always get treated with new toys.

A hot meal was provided for all the guests and at the end of the night all families were provided with groceries to help them through what can often be tough times.

"We have so many volunteers here tonight. It's another example of how generous the people of Pittsburgh are," said Steelers President Art Rooney II. "It's exciting to see everybody come out to help out the community. I want to take my hat off to

Vance McDonald who was the impetus to get this started and partnering with Convoy of Hope. It's a great night.

"It's that time of year when you have to bring the joy and help people that have a harder time enjoying this time of year. The more we can do to help people feel better about where they are in life, and being able to deal with everything that comes with the holidays. It's time to bring the joy."

Convoy of Hope is a faith-based organization whose main passion is to feed the world through "children's feeding initiatives, community outreach and disaster response." The organization was founded in 1994 and has served more than 115 million people throughout the world.

Vance McDonald got involved with the organization when he was with the San Francisco 49ers. McDonald and teammates went to Haiti with the



give back

By TERESA VARLEY | Assistant Editor

organization, helping those who were affected by the tragic earthquake there. McDonald was so moved he stayed involved with the organization, helping those in the communities where he lives and works, as well as doing outreach with them to help victims of Hurricane Harvey, as he is a Texas native. This year he wanted to bring the outreach to those in the Pittsburgh community.

"It's something I have looked forward to," said McDonald. "My wife and I have spent time in Pittsburgh, and it's become home, so you want it even more for the community and the city. Its so neat for the people to see Heinz Field, to walk around on the field. The way people love the Steelers, it makes it even more special. I am hoping we make a big impact here tonight. There is so much good that can happen.

"Convoy of Hope just lays it out to help other

people. It's an honor to be a partner with them. I love the humility they bring to everything. Every person that walks through the door they call them 'guests of honor,' that is how they view them and that is how they want to send them off, to show them how much they mean to them and they are people that matter. Every person they are serving, number one it's 'I want to show you how much of a prized possession you are, not only to me, but in the eyes of God.'

"You are going to be putting smiles on kids' faces. You are also going to be helping out moms. You are getting all of the goods and services and picking things that fit the holiday season and things that might be overlooked by some families because of the circumstances. You are serving all aspects of the family."

The event was part of the NFL's goal to have

100 Million Minutes of volunteerism and community activism this year as the league celebrates its 100th season, a goal they have already exceeded.

"It's a great way to engage the players, front office, ownership and coaches to come together to serve their community," said Kirk Noonan, Chief Innovation Officer, whose department works with sports teams to help serve communities. "The vision for this tonight, it comes from Vance. He has this vision to feed the hungry and help the poor and suffering, and that is what Convoy is all about. He and Kendi, his wife, are determined to help others through service and that is what they are doing.

"This is a chance to come together as a giant team and serve the community. When there is an overflow of giving and service, great things happen."



COMING UP

Sunday, Dec. 22

PITTSBURGH AT N.Y. JETS

Time: 1 p.m. (subject to flex scheduling)

Site: MetLife Stadium

Television: CBS

Series record: Steelers lead 20-5 (including playoffs)

Last meeting: 2016 at Pittsburgh; Steelers 31, Jets 13

Series trend: The Steelers have won four of the past five meetings, including a 24-19 victory in the 2010 AFC Championship Game.

Scouting report: The Jets' first season with Adam Gase as head coach has not gone according to plan, starting with former Steelers running back **Le'Veon Bell** failing to make much of an impact. Likewise, linebacker C.J. Mosley couldn't make much of a difference on defense after being signed as a free agent from Baltimore as he landed on injured reserve after playing only two games. Second-year quarterback Sam Darnold has battled inconsistency throughout the season, though he did get hot during a three-game winning streak where the Jets scored 34 points each time. Unfortunately for the Jets, that winning streak came after they had started the season with a 1-7 record.

Worth noting: The Steelers' last 10 regular season victories against the Jets were by 11 points or more, starting with a 45-24 rout in 1986.



Sunday, Dec. 29

PITTSBURGH AT BALTIMORE

Time: 1 p.m. (subject to flex scheduling)

Site: M&T Bank Stadium

Television: CBS

Series record: Steelers lead 28-23 (including playoffs)

Last meeting: 2019 at Pittsburgh; Ravens 26, Steelers 23 (OT)

Series trend: The Steelers had won four of the previous five meetings before Baltimore won at Heinz Field in October. The Ravens will be going for the first series sweep since 2015.

Scouting report: The Ravens might have clinched the No. 1 seed in the AFC playoffs by the time the Steelers get to Baltimore for the season finale. Baltimore had rung up 10 consecutive victories through Week 15 and done so against a schedule that included seven teams with winning records. **Lamar Jackson** has emerged as a leading contender for MVP honors after joining Michael Vick as the only quarterbacks to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a season as well as ranking among the NFL leaders in passer rating. The defense got a big boost with the midseason acquisition of cornerback Marcus Peters, who has two pick-sixes.

Worth noting: The road team has won the last three meetings, including the Steelers' 23-16 victory at M&T Bank Stadium last season.

2019 REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE

Sept. 8	at New England	L, 3-33
Sept. 15	SEATTLE	L, 26-28
Sept. 22	at San Francisco	L, 24-20
Sept. 30	CINCINNATI (Mon.)	W, 27-3
Oct. 6	BALTIMORE	L, 23-26 (OT)
Oct. 13	at L.A. Chargers	W, 24-17
Oct. 20	Bye week	
Oct. 28	MIAMI (Mon.)	W, 27-14
Nov. 3	INDIANAPOLIS	W, 26-24
Nov. 10	L.A. RAMS	W, 17-12
Nov. 14	at Cleveland (Thu.)	L, 7-21
Nov. 24	at Cincinnati	W, 16-10
Dec. 1	CLEVELAND	W, 20-13
Dec. 8	at Arizona	W, 23-17
Dec. 15	BUFFALO	L, 10-17
Dec. 22	at N.Y. Jets	1 p.m.*
Dec. 29	at Baltimore	1 p.m.*

*-Game subject to flex scheduling

KEY DATES

Jan. 4-5 — Wild Card Playoffs

Jan. 11-12 — Divisional Playoffs

Jan. 19 — AFC and NFC Championship Games

Jan. 20 — Deadline for college players that are underclassmen to apply for special eligibility. A list of players who are accepted into the NFL Draft will be sent to clubs on Jan. 24.

Jan. 25 — Senior Bowl, Ladd-Peebles Stadium, Mobile, Alabama

Jan. 26 — NFL Pro Bowl, Camping World Stadium, Orlando, Florida

Feb. 2 — Super Bowl LIV, Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Fla.

Feb. 24-March 2 — Combine Timing and Testing, Lucas Oil Stadium, Indianapolis, Indiana

March 10 — Deadline for clubs to designate Franchise or Transition Players.

March 18 — The 2019 League Year and Free Agency period begin at 4 p.m. ET

March 29-April 1 — Annual League Meeting, Palm Beach, Florida

April 23-25 — NFL Draft, Las Vegas, Nevada

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