

Robert's Rant: Super Wild-Card Weekend biggest shocks and surprises

By **Robert Belardi**

Opinion

It was a wild super wild-card weekend in the NFL.

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers trumped the visiting Philadelphia Eagles 31-15. The Kansas City Chiefs, steamrolled the Pittsburgh Steelers 42-21 in Big Ben Roethlisberger's final game in the NFL.

Of course, these two picks might have been the most obvious choices to select to win. But there were a few matchups that left every NFL fan stunned. Let's take a look at the biggest shocks and surprises over wild-card weekend.

Shock

Dallas Cowboys offence held to 17 points

The Dallas Cowboys entered wild-card weekend as favourites to defeat the visiting San Francisco 49ers. In this renewed playoff rivalry, it was the 49ers who looked like the better team to begin with.

The Cowboys failed to establish the run. Ezekiel Elliott, who reportedly was playing with a partially torn PCL, was held to 31 rushing yards on 12 attempts. In the air, tight-end Dalton Schultz led the Cowboys with seven catches for 89 yards. Hard to believe that when you have Amari Cooper and Ceedee Lamb.

Now Cooper at least had 64 yards on the day and a touchdown. Lamb, on the other hand, was held to just one catch. This was the No. 1 ranked offence in the NFL this past year. The Cowboys averaged 407.0 yards of offence per game.

Any time the Cowboys saw some sort of momentum swing in their way, the yellow flag hit the turf. The Cowboys were penalized 14 times losing 89 yards.

It was a tough day at AT&T Stadium.

Shock

The Buffalo Bills ruined the New England Patriots

It was a historic night at Orchard Park.

The Bills became the first NFL team in history to throw a perfect game. In a 47-17 drubbing of the Patriots, the Bills never punted, never turned the ball over and never kicked a field goal.

It was arguably the biggest shock of the weekend as every NFL pundit had predicted this game to be close. Josh Allen surely had other plans as the Bills quarterback threw for 308 yards and five touchdowns. He also ran the ball six times for 66 yards as well.

Bills tight-end Dawson Knox caught two touchdown passes. Bills running back Devin Singletary also rushed the ball in the end zone twice.

The Bills No. 1 ranked defence in all of the NFL, forced rookie quarterback Mac Jones to throw two picks. After this butt-kicking,

this even left reporters asking Patriots head coach Bill Belichick if he'll return next year. That answer, of course, was yes.

In the Patriots' largest playoff loss in the Belichick era, this was most definitely a revenge game. The Bills suffered enough when Tom Brady was in the division and since Brady left to Tampa Bay, it's been all Buffalo in the AFC East.

Surprise

Bengals defence held their own

When you begin speaking about the Cincinnati Bengals, the conversation is immediately about their offence. Quarterback Joe Burrow is a generational talent. He has his former LSU teammate Ja'Marr Chase, and another exceptional player in Tee Higgins, as his receivers. Running back Joe Mixon posted career-high numbers and ranked fourth amongst all NFL running backs with 16 total touchdowns.

But it was the Bengals' defence that played a huge role in the 26-19 victory. This was the 18 ranked defence, allowing 350 yards per game to their opponents. The Bengals also ranked 17 in total takeaways, as they had 21 in the regular season.

Despite allowing 385 yards of total offence, the Bengals defence forced a fumble and intercepted Raiders quarterback Derek Carr. These two turnovers were the ultimate difference in the game. The Raiders defence couldn't come up with anything similar against Burrow and company.

This one was expected to be a shootout. Bengals defence had a part to play in that storyline.

Surprise

Arizona Cardinals 1 total yards in 2nd Quarter

It was a total surprise to look at the overall yards in the second quarter between the Cardinals and the Los Angeles Rams Monday night.

At one point, the Cardinals had minus-four total yards early in the second quarter. Then that number moved past minus 10. Then right past the Cardinals eyes, quarterback Kyler Murray threw an unwarranted pick-six instead of taking the sack for a safety. It was 21-0 Rams and the Cardinals had just minus one yards of total offence. Imagine that.

It wasn't a very pleasant wild-card game for Arizona. Already without star wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins, the offence could not garner any momentum. The offence was 0-6 on third down and Murray had two interceptions to his name.

In all fairness, the Rams came out of the gates with a purpose. Cam Akers was running the ball with conviction. Odell Beckham, Jr., had seemingly gone back in time and even completed a 40-yard pass to Akers in the third quarter. At that point in the game, Beckham had 40 pass yards and Murray only had 28.

The Rams rolled over the Cardinals 34-11.