

Week of rematches in NFL

Next playoff games all between teams who met in regular season

By BARRY WILNER THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Do-overs, all over the place. All four of next weekend's playoff games will be rematches from the regular season...

The Panthers manhandled the Giants at the Meadowlands on Sunday 23-0, becoming the first road playoff team to post a shut-out since 1980.

Next up for Carolina is that return trip to frigid Chicago. The Bears beat the Panthers 13-3 at Soldier Field on Nov. 20...



The Panthers' Steve Smith jumps in the end zone past the New York Giants' Will Allen to score Carolina's second touchdown on a 12-yard run in the third quarter of their wild-card game Sunday in East Rutherford, N.J.

NFL PLAYOFF SUMMARIES

- Wild-card playoffs Saturday, Jan. 7 Washington 17, Tampa Bay 10 New England 28, Jacksonville 3 Sunday, Jan. 8 Carolina 23, New York Giants 0 Pittsburgh 31, Cincinnati 17 Divisional playoffs Saturday, Jan. 14 Washington at Seattle, 4:30 p.m. (WXIN-Channel 5) New England at Denver, 8 p.m. (WISH-Channel 8) Pittsburgh at Indianapolis, 1 p.m. (WISH-Channel 8) Carolina at Chicago, 4:30 p.m. (WXIN-Channel 5) Conference championships Sunday, Jan. 22 AFC game, 3 p.m. (WISH-Channel 8) NFC game, 6:30 p.m. (WXIN-Channel 5) Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 5 Detroit AFC champion vs. NFC champion, 6:30 p.m. (WRTV-Channel 6) Pro Bowl Sunday, Feb. 12 At Honolulu AFC vs. NFC, 6 p.m. (ESPN) ***



Washington running back Clinton Portis runs past teammate Derrick Dockery to score during the first quarter of the Redskins' 17-10 wild-card win Saturday in Tampa, Fla.

Table with columns for Team, Score, and Quarter details for Pittsburgh vs Cincinnati and Cincinnati vs Houston.

TEAM STATS table for Pittsburgh vs Cincinnati game.

INDIVIDUAL STATS table for Pittsburgh vs Cincinnati game.

Table with columns for Team, Score, and Quarter details for Jacksonville vs New England.

TEAM STATS table for Jacksonville vs New England game.

INDIVIDUAL STATS table for Jacksonville vs New England game.

AFC

Steelers (12-5) at Colts (14-2), 1 p.m. Sunday, WISH-Channel 8

Indianapolis was still unbeaten when it hit a long touchdown pass to Marvin Harrison on its first play of the Monday night meeting with Pittsburgh.

In their most recent meeting, the Broncos built a big lead, 28-3, only to see the Patriots storm back within eight and begin a drive. But Denver held on.

These Patriots are healthier, especially on defense, and on a roll. But the Broncos were 8-0 at home this season, and teams have run well against New England.

Nothing will faze the Patriots as they seek an unprecedented third straight Super Bowl crown.

NFC

Redskins (11-6) at Seahawks (13-3), 8 p.m. Saturday, WXIN-Channel 59

Seattle was spotless at home in compiling the NFC's best record, but one of its two meaningful defeats came at Washington, 20-17 on Oct. 2.

Indeed, when Chicago ended Carolina's six-game winning string in November, the Panthers gained only 238 yards and Jake Delhomme was sacked eight times.

Still, the Panthers have a big edge in experience and are unafraid in postseason road games. They won two of them after the 2003 season and already have a lopsided one this winter.

Panthers (12-5) at Bears (11-5), 4 p.m. Sunday, WXIN-Channel 59

Carolina dominated New York, looking much like the team that won three post-season games two years ago to get to the Super Bowl.

Blanking an offense with such play-makers as Tiki Barber, Jeremy Shockey and Plaxico Burress was impressive, and the Bears can't match such firepower.

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Bounce

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

The Bengals (11-6) will spend an offseason reliving the play that effectively scuttled their first playoff appearance in 15 years...

"I was really upset," receiver T.J. Houshmandzadeh said. "Not because of the fact we lost him. He's young and he's got to go through so much now tearing his knee."

"We had that letdown, we didn't get that (second-half) field goal and it kind of deflated us," said Kitna, who took over for Palmer and spent most of his time scrambling.

Enough

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

Pittsburgh was left afterward to level accusations of artificial noise. Pardon the Steelers if they had difficulty telling the difference between indoor and outdoor NFL crowds.

The Steelers are healthy and highly efficient as usual. He was 14 of 19 for 208 yards and three touchdowns against the Bengals.

Smith's return to health has helped rejuvenate a Steelers line that looked leaky earlier in the season when the Colts were contributing to a three-game losing streak.

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Pittsburgh also didn't have third-down back Verron Haynes last time against Indy, and bruiser Jerome "The Bus" Bettis wasn't on the kind of roll he is now.

The Steeler defense is looking fierce again, too. They socked Bengals QB Carson Palmer on the second snap and knocked him out with torn knee ligaments.

Indianapolis is an early 9 1/2-point favorite for a reason. The Colts' defensive line has shown that it can flummox the Steelers' offensive front.

The Colts' defensive line has shown that it can flummox the Steelers' offensive front. The linebackers are quick to run support and can shut down the tight end passing that Pittsburgh loves so much.

Needless to say, the atmosphere certainly will be a big boost to the Colts after the Steelers looked so frazzled last time.

Pittsburgh's victory at Cincinnati Sunday was the Steelers' first playoff road victory since 1989.

They may need another Sunday full of turnovers and injuries to extend that streak to two.

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