

**INSIDE:** A closer look at QB Devlin Hodges • Fashion Show a big success

VOLUME 32 • NUMBER 6  
OCTOBER 26, 2019 (702) • \$4.95



# Steelers

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PITTSBURGH

**DIGEST**



## STEPPING UP!

Steelers impressive in road victory over Chargers





**THICK  
RICH  
DELICIOUS**

**NOTHING ELSE TASTES LIKE**



# Defense starting to deliver

CARSON, Calif. — This Steelers defense is the real deal, and it supported the case for itself by adding two more elements to its resume. Scoring touchdowns and closing out a victory with a stop against a top-caliber quarterback in the game's final minute.

The Steelers defeated the Los Angeles Chargers, 24-17, at a quaint soccer field known as Dignity Health Sports Park, and they were 2-4 going into their bye largely as a result of how their defense began the game and then finished it off.

With Mason Rudolph having been concussed the previous Sunday at Heinz Field, the Steelers pretty much knew for certain that they would be starting their third different quarterback vs. the Chargers. And despite the excitement for the debut of the man they call "Duck," Devlin Hodges would be the most inexperienced guy under center for the Steelers since, well, since Rudolph got his first professional start less than a month ago.

Since the Steelers seem to be in the business this season of devising ways to support a green quarterback, the basic plan from Rudolph's debut in San Francisco figured to be dusted off and implemented to some degree against the Chargers. Run the ball, control the clock, convert third downs, avoid turnovers — none of that is exactly groundbreaking but all of it is tried and true when it comes to winning games in the NFL.

The Steelers did all of those rudimentary things to varying degrees of success, but then they supplemented it with a defense that's getting better each and every week, that's evolving from complementary to a force in and of itself.

Expecting Hodges to hit the ground running and direct scoring drives soon after the opening kickoff wasn't realistic, and so it made sense for the Steelers to ease him into his first NFL start, because allowing him to warm to the task made much more sense than exposing him in ways where he could make some critical mistakes to dig a hole for the entire team.

So as Hodges began as a manager of the game, the defense took over and made the kinds of plays that allowed him and the offense the comfort of playing with an early lead.

The Chargers ran four plays and made one first down on the game's opening possession, and the Steelers went three-and-out the first time they had the football. On the second play after Jordan Berry's 59-yard punt, Philip Rivers threw an incomplete lateral to Melvin Gordon, and Devin Bush was one of the few players in the immediate area to recognize



Linebacker Devin Bush paved the way for the victory against the Chargers with two key takeaways in the first quarter, including this interception of a batted pass.

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

ognize the ball sitting on the grass all by itself was live. He scooped it up, and 9 yards later he was celebrating his first NFL touchdown.

Just in case a 7-0 lead didn't calm the jitters, Bush was back at it on the very next series. After Rivers converted a third-and-4 with a 13-yard completion to tight end Hunter Henry, he was looking for more on the next play. But Tyson Alualu worked himself close to the release point and batted the ball in the air, which then turned into an interception when Bush got himself into position and made the catch. At that point, the Steelers had 14 takeaways on the season, and their rookie inside linebacker had a hand in six of them.

Staked to good field position at the Chargers 40-yard line and fueled by the momentum of a second takeaway in such a short period, the offense came onto the field and got the ball to James Conner either on handoffs or short passes to eat up that yardage and make it 14-0 when Conner covered the last dozen on a run around the left end.

The outcome by no means had been sealed, but the Steelers had created for themselves an advantage of playing from ahead with their rookie quarterback, and that allowed them to manage the next two-and-a-half quarters and get themselves into the final seven minutes with a three-touchdown lead.

Rivers being the player he is and the Chargers having the offensive weapons they do, there was some unnecessary excitement from there to the

end of the game, and Hodges contributed to that with an ill-advised throw down the field that turned into an interception when Johnny Holton didn't do enough to work back to the football to help his quarterback.

But two wrongs don't make a right, and the Chargers converted the turnover into their first touchdown of the night, and that served to energize them. A Steelers defense that entered the game without starting inside linebacker Mark Barron and starting cornerback Steven Nelson, a defense that at the time also was playing without in-game casualties Stephon Tuitt and Joe Haden started to leak oil. In the past, this would have signaled an impending collapse, but it didn't turn out that way.

After a couple of near misses on interceptions that would have iced the outcome, Cam Sutton intercepted Rivers with the Steelers protecting their one-score lead in the game's final minute to allow Hodges to take his first NFL snap in victory formation.

"What Coach Tomlin talked about this week was engineering a win," said Bush. "Our plan was to set up a short game for Devlin, keep things simple for him, not make things erratic for him, put points up on the board early. But I think there are some things we need to clean up at the end of the game to make sure there is no doubt."

Bush is right, and there's plenty of season left to add that to the resume as well.

# INSIDE

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**HOME GAME?:** Yes, it pretty much felt like “Steelers Country” when Steelers fans took over the Dignity Health Sports Park for their “road” game against the Los Angeles Chargers.

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

## ON THE COVER

Running back James Conner was the offensive star, scoring two touchdowns, when the Steelers pulled off an impressive Sunday night victory against the Los Angeles Chargers in Carson, California.

Cover Photo/DAVE ARRIGO

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of *Steelers Digest* will be printed and mailed in mid-November. It will include a complete recap of the Steelers’ games against the Miami Dolphins and Indianapolis Colts, as well as analysis on all the latest developments involving the Steelers.



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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 victory vs. the Chargers, QB Devlin Hodges, special teams, and more

It was a big win for us on the road, in a very fragile state. It's good to go into the bye (week) on a good note and gather ourselves a little bit. We need it. We have a lot of injuries, and we had a few more tonight. I'm going to outline those. Stephon Tuitt has a pectoral injury, and he's being evaluated. T.J. Watt has an oblique injury, and he's being evaluated. James Conner has a quad injury, being evaluated. Joe Haden has a groin injury. I think that's kind of the story tonight. Guys kind of stepped up and stepped up in a big way.

We live by the creed, "The Standard is the Standard," but those are just words. The players, the guys, make that reality. I think we had a lot of quality efforts tonight from a lot of people.

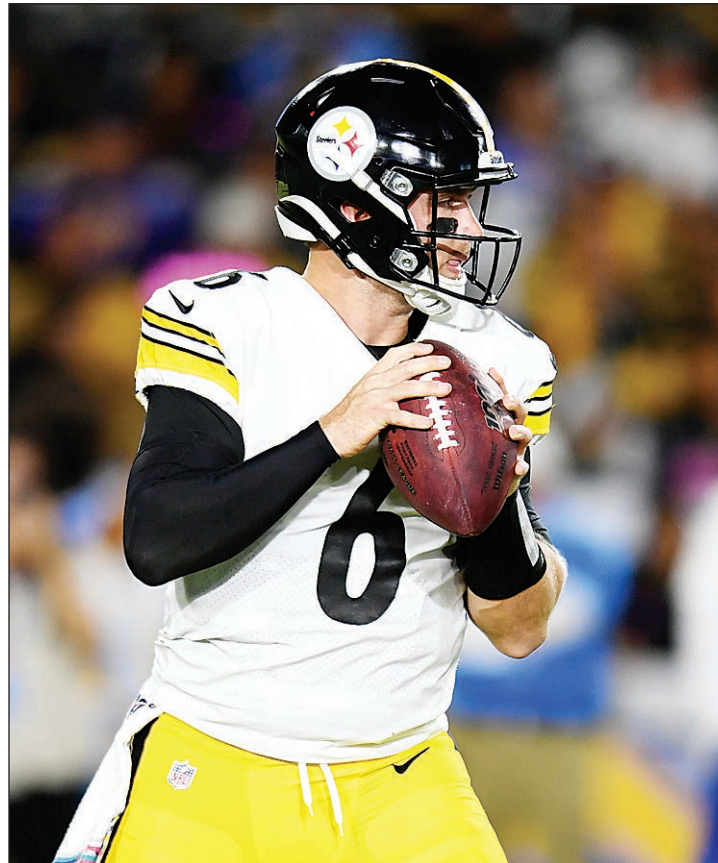
Devlin (Hodges) obviously gets a lot of attention from his effort and what he brought, but there were a lot of others. Artie Burns in place of Steven Nelson at cornerback, I thought his play was solid and significant. Benny Snell, as Conner wasn't able to continue, the plays that he gave us were significant. It's just a good overall team win.

We knew we couldn't give Duck (Hodges) a lot of exposure to the defense, so we had to do some things to the other areas. We talked openly about it last night. Scoring on defense is significant, quality special teams play is significant, quality running game to minimize his snap exposure. And not just him, but anybody playing at the quarterback position with a limited amount of experience. I think sometimes the more exposure is not necessarily good. So, we limited that by the things that I outlined. Just a good overall team win. We'll be excited, we have a long flight ahead of us to get home, but I'm sure everybody will enjoy it.

**Q. You're a guy who dives into the pre-draft process every year. As a player who broke Steve McNair's all-time passing record at the FCS level, did Devlin Hodges show up on your radar?**

Not on my personal radar. I'm a guy who gets into the process late and has to cover a lot of ground, so usually I'm led by others, guys who are regional scouts or positional scouts, or Kevin Colbert. Those guys do a great job of getting and doing the recon, getting out and scouting the landscape. Devlin Hodges drew the attention of several people in our scouting department and that's how we got on his trail.

**Q. Did you see Hodges on video before**



**The Steelers produced a great complementary effort to help quarterback Devlin Hodges win in his first NFL start.**

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

**he showed up at rookie minicamp for a tryout?**

I did not watch game tape. I watched the profile tape, and oftentimes that's the case when you start talking about guys who are camp invites. You get a gist of who they are, and you get enough to get an understanding of what maybe walks through the door, and then you develop your opinions based on what happens that weekend.

**Q. So what was the gist you got when you watched the profile tape?**

That he knows how to play. That he's got good savvy and feel for the game, but he's got some physical limitations to overcome, and that's probably what you speak to when you talk about a guy who broke Steve McNair's records but wasn't on everyone's radar. The quarterback position in particular in today's game has some cookie-cutter boxes to check if you're talking about evaluating, and in particular evaluating at the higher end of the position. When guys don't meet certain height standards, or ball velocity standards, or arm

strength standards, they have some obstacles to overcome. And also you have to acknowledge that the quarterback market is now flooded with guys under 6-foot-1, and so what used to be unique — maybe there were one or two guys you were evaluating in that way — now there are quite a few guys you're evaluating in that way. And him being from Samford and not from Oklahoma like Kyler Murray for instance, Hodges just got lost in that shuffle, I'm sure.

**Q. In general when evaluating college players how do you account for the level of competition, and how much of a factor is that alone?**

It's not a factor we weigh very heavily. Let's face it, we didn't invest a lot in Hodges initially. We just gave him a rookie tryout camp invite. We didn't weigh those variables as heavily as you'd like to think we did. We liked what we saw on the tape, he

**See TOMLIN, page 6**

got the ball out in rhythm, he was an anticipatory passer, and that was enough to invest a weekend. And then what he did here kind of built the relationship from there.

**Q. So Hodges came here on a tryout basis during the weekend of rookie minicamp, and then what did you see at that time to convince you to keep him over Brogan Roback, who already was on your 90-man roster and had been through an NFL training camp the previous summer?**

Exactly what I just stated. I was really impressed by his ability to anticipate and get the ball out on rhythm even with new exposure to offense and receivers. That's an indication of football intellect or feel for the game that's been consistent throughout. He's had bumps along the way that young guys experience — he didn't make our opening 53-man roster. But there was enough there to maintain our interest, because he's got some of those things that you can't coach — the ability to anticipate and get the ball out on rhythm.

**Q. All last season, your team finished with 15 takeaways. This season through six games, you have 15. To what do you attribute this improvement?**

We've been talking openly about a desire to be

better in that area. We haven't been bashful about it. But more than just the words, it has been the actions. The day-to-day habits we're trying to create culturally in terms of ball awareness and ball disruption and the addition of some guys have been central to that. We're just working our tails off, and I know that we need it. And we're going to need it in this game tonight.

**Q. In their first five games as NFL players, Benny Snell and Ulysees Gilbert both made multiple tackles on special teams. Does that tell you anything about their futures on offense and defense, respectively, as they mature as NFL players?**

No question it does. Just my experience tells me that young players who find ways to be productive no matter where you put them is an indication of productive players moving forward over the course of their careers. They're football players first, they're positional players second. So when you have guys who are natural football players, you put them on special teams and they make the plays because they're competitors and they're football players. And we challenge guys openly in that way. We show them Hines Ward's tackle statistics when he was a special-teamer early in his career, and so forth and so on. A lot of guys have really earned their way and carved out a niche for themselves at least initially in that space. Production in that area

usually is an indicator of production as they get an opportunity to become positional guys.

**Q. Does production on special teams get you a shot at a position quicker?**

This is how it does: If you become a necessary guy as opposed to a useful guy on special teams, you're in a helmet every week. And every week we step into stadiums, things happen. Tyler Matakevich is a guy who is a "special-teamer," but just about every week in some form or fashion you see Tyler playing defensive football for us. And because you're a necessary component of that phase, you're always available, you're always in a helmet, and that puts you in position to seize opportunities.

**Q. Do you have rules for when you want your kickoff return guy to bring the ball out vs. take a touchback?**

I do, and the parameters and variables are different week to week. Sometimes weather is a factor in terms of windage, the hang of the football based on the kicker's ability. The kick can be 1 yard deep into the end zone, but it can be a very different kick if it's 3.7 second hang time 1 yard deep in the end zone as opposed to 4.5 second hang time 1 yard deep in the end zone. There are a lot of variables and those change week to week, and so it's something we talk about and think about in terms of making that determination.



Rookies Ulysees Gilbert (54) and Benny Snell (24) have made several plays on special teams early in this season, an encouraging sign when it comes to their future in the NFL.

AP Photos/MARGARET BOWLES



**. USH'S FINAL PUSH:** Linebacker Devin Bush reached across the goal line at the end of his 9-yard return fumble return for a touchdown, which gave the Steelers a 7-0 lead a little more than 4 minutes into the game.

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER



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James Conner's first touchdown (left) gave the Steelers a 14-0 lead 11 minutes into the game; linebacker Vince Williams and the Steelers defense completely shut down running back Melvin Gordon. *Digest Photos/KARL ROSER*

**8:25 p.m. – What Went Right:** After returning the kickoff to the 25-yard line, the Chargers gained 19 yards on their first offense play on a pass from Philip Rivers to tight end Hunter Henry. After that, though, it was a three-and-out, and following the punt the Steelers began their opening possession at their 21-yard line.

**8:30 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** Not an auspicious start for the Steelers offense. Devlin Hodges underthrew JuJu Smith Schuster down the left sideline on first down; James Conner lost 1 yard; and then a third-down pass to Vance McDonald gained 5 and brought on Jordan Berry. His punt traveled 59 yards and Desmond King made the fair catch at the Chargers 21-yard line.

**8:35 p.m. – What Went Right:** Two plays after Jordan Berry's punt, the Steelers were on the scoreboard thanks to their defense. On second-and-10 from the 21-yard line, Philip Rivers threw a swing pass to Melvin Gordon that was a lateral, and when Gordon didn't catch the ball, Devin Bush scooped it up at the 9-yard line and ran it in for the touchdown that gave the Steelers a 7-0 lead with 10:51 left in the first quarter.

**8:40 p.m. – What Went Right:** The defense recorded its second takeaway of the game, and

Devin Bush again was involved. A Philip Rivers pass was batted at the line by Tyson Alualu and Bush intercepted the ball to give the offense possession at the Chargers 40-yard line. Seven plays later — all touches by James Conner — the Steelers had a 14-0 lead thanks to a 13-yard run by Conner with 4:29 left in the first quarter.

**8:55 p.m. – What Went Right:** The Chargers again managed a single first down on a possession before being forced to punt, and the Steelers took over at their own 14-yard line following the punt and the fair catch by Ryan Switzer. The piece of bad news was that Stephon Tuitt sustained a pectoral injury on the previous defensive series, and his return to the game was listed as questionable.

**9:11 p.m. – What Went Right:** The Steelers increased their lead to 21-0 on a 26-yard swing pass that James Conner carried 26 yards for the touchdown to cap a 14-play drive that covered 86 yards and ate up 9:09 of game time. On the drive, the Steelers were 3-for-3 on third downs, including the touchdown play. There was 6:34 remaining in the first half.

**9:28 p.m. – What Went Right:** The Chargers started at their own 14-yard line after Chris Boswell's kickoff, and they moved the ball into

position for Chase McLaughlin to attempt a 43-yard field goal. His attempt hit the left upright, and the Steelers took possession at their 33-yard line with 32 seconds left in the first half.

**10 p.m. – What Went Right:** Yes, the Steelers ended up settling for a red zone field goal after having a first-and-goal from the 2-yard line, but they marched 73 yards in 13 plays and ate up 6:48 of clock time, and most of their yardage came via the running game. Also, it should be noted that Devlin Hodges did a very nice job of fielding some errant snaps from Maurkice Pouncey while in the shotgun formation. The Steelers led 24-0 with 8:12 remaining in the third quarter.

**10:06 p.m. – What Went Right:** The Chargers' first possession of the second half was a three-and-out, with T.J. Watt getting in Philip Rivers' face and batting down his attempted pass on third-and-3. After the punt, the Steelers started their second possession of the second half from their 26-yard line.

**10:15 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** The Steelers appeared to have recovered a muffed punt at the

**See CHARGERS, page 10**

## vs. L.A. Chargers

### DEVIN BUSH INSIDE LINEBACKER

It's always preferable for the visiting team to get off to a quick start on the road, and it's super preferable to get off quickly when your team is starting a rookie quarterback. The Steelers jumped out to a 14-0 lead in the game's first 10 minutes, and those touchdowns had Devin Bush's fingerprints all over them. Literally.

The first of those came on an incomplete lateral from Philip Rivers to Melvin Gordon, and with the ball sitting on the grass Bush alertly scooped it up and ran 9 yards into the end zone for the score. The second touchdown was set up when Tyson Alualu batted a Rivers pass at the line of scrimmage, and Bush intercepted the carom to give the offense possession at the Chargers 40-yard line. That drive ended with a 12-yard run by James Conner for a 14-0 lead.

Bush, who added seven tackles and a pass defended, is the *Steelers Digest* Player of the Week.



Digest Photos/KARL ROSER

## INSIDE THE GAME | FROM PAGE 9

Chargers 8-yard line with 2:59 remaining in the third quarter, but a review ruled that Justin Layne stripped the ball out of Desmond King's hands after King had called for a fair catch. The Chargers were awarded the ball at the spot of Layne's recovery.

**10:29 p.m. – What Went Right:** The possession ended with the field goal that ruined the Steelers' shutout, but the defense stiffened after the Chargers moved to a first down at the Pittsburgh 16-yard line. A sack by Anthony Chickillo on second down, and Joe Haden's pass defended on third down had the Chargers settle for the field goal that made it 24-3 with 14 minutes remaining.

**10:36 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** It was his first bad decision of the night, and it resulted in a turnover. With a first down at midfield, Devlin Hodges tried to go down the field to Johnny Holton, but his pass was intercepted by Rayshawn Jenkins, and after a 7-yard return the Chargers took over at their 30-yard line with 10:36 remaining.

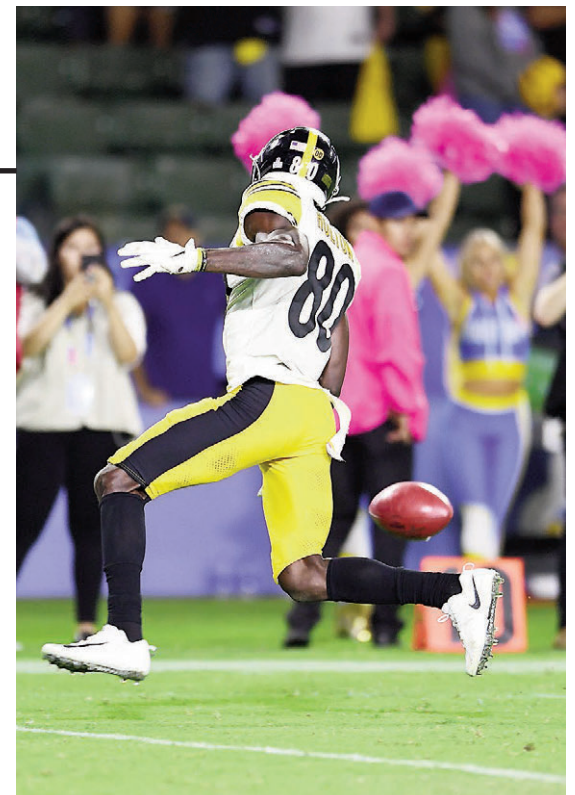
**10:47 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** The Chargers cut further into the Steelers lead with a 10-play, 70-yard drive that ended with a 5-yard touchdown pass to Hunter Henry. On the play, back judge Brad

**Wide receiver Johnny Holton made a key play late in the game when he was able to down the ball at the Chargers 1-yard line before they began their final drive.**

Freeman was standing right there, less than 1 yard from the play in the back of the end zone, and he immediately ruled the pass incomplete. But then after a conference, the ruling on the field was changed to a touchdown. It was 24-10 with nearly seven minutes remaining.

**11:04 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** The Chargers drove 79 yards in eight plays to cut into the Steelers lead again, and they capped it with a 10-yard touchdown pass to Hunter Henry. There was 1:29 remaining in the fourth quarter.

**11:11 p.m. – What Went Right:** Two big plays by special teams. First, Cam Sutton recovered the attempted onside kick following San Diego's second touchdown, and then on fourth-and-1, Jordan Berry's punt was downed at the 1-yard line by Johnny Holton. On San Diego's second offensive play, Cam Sutton intercepted Philip Rivers with 41 seconds left and the Chargers were out of timeouts.





Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

26

Years since a Steelers player had a receiving TD, a rushing TD and at least 90 scrimmage yards in a first half before **James Conner** did it against the Chargers. Barry Foster had been the last to do it in 1993.

32

Years since a Steelers player had a fumble return for a touchdown and an interception in the same game before Devin Bush did it against the Chargers. Delton Hall did it against San Francisco on Sept. 13, 1987.

2

Receptions for Chargers wide receiver Keenan Allen, who had 14 catches for 148 yards and a touchdown against the Steelers in 2018.

15

Years since the Steelers had last won a game with a first-time starting QB. That happened in 2004 when Ben Roethlisberger started in a 13-3 victory against Miami.

62

Victories in 62 games for the Steelers when they have a halftime lead of 20 points or more.

30

Years since an NFL team had two quarterbacks make their first career start over the first six weeks of a season after Devlin Hodges joined Mason Rudolph as first-time starters for the Steelers. Steve Walsh and Troy Aikman were first-team starters for the Dallas Cowboys in 1989.

9 Undrafted rookie quarterbacks to win their first career start after Devlin Hodges joined that group against the Chargers.

7 Missed tackles forced by James Conner on five receptions in the first half, according to Pro Football Focus. That tied for highest total in the NFL this season for a full game.

4 Fumble recoveries in the first six games for Devin Bush, which matches the highest total for any player in the league for ALL of 2018. It's the most for an NFL rookie since 2003 when Terrell Suggs also had four.

34:05 Time of possession for the Steelers, who had the advantage in that statistical category for the first time this season.

# 'Duck' keeps making his own luck

By JIM WEXELL  
Associate Editor

Devlin Hodges wore a shirt to the post-game podium that read, "I'm The Boss" on top of a cartoon duck.

Hodges was both the boss and the Duck in the week of the upset of the Los Angeles Chargers.

He earned his nickname in becoming a champion duck-caller while growing up in northern Alabama, but he was also the boss who completed 15 of 20 passes for 132 yards and a touchdown in the Steelers' 24-17 road win.

What could be unexpected about any of that?

"Probably the fans," Hodges said after the game. "Traveling this far, making it like a home environment. We never, never had to go on silent count. We did our cadence all the time. That was the most surprising thing today."

Such a naive young duck.

Steelers fans always "travel well," and Hodges will come to expect that. But he's certainly a quick study.

Take his rise from rookie minicamp tryout invite to starting quarterback in the space of six months.

We'll start at the very beginning, when Hodges threw his first pass.

"Ever since I threw my first touchdown pass when I was 5 years old, I've loved the game," he said. "I love playing quarterback. I love everything about the game, about the position. I love having the ball in my hands every snap. It is just a fun game for me and something I have enjoyed since I was 5."

He ran the option in high school, but only because the team was lacking in athleticism. But his coach knew Hodges could throw the ball. That coach asked Nick Saban to take a look, but the Alabama coach deemed the 6-foot-1 Hodges too small.

Unflustered by one lost dream, Hodges committed to Southern Miss, and then de-committed when former Heisman Trophy winner Pat Sullivan wooed Hodges to Samford, a Division I-AA school in nearby Birmingham.

As promised, Hodges started right away, and remained at the helm when one of Hal Mumme's proteges, Chris Hatcher, took the head job at Samford.

Mumme was the innovator behind the popular "Air Raid" offense in college football, and Hatcher's version — the "Hatch Attack" — suited Hodges perfectly.

In four years he passed the late, great Steve McNair to become the all-time passing yardage



Devlin "Duck" Hodges already has become a fan favorite in Pittsburgh.

Digest Photos/KARL ROSER

leader in FCS history, and finished his senior season as the winner of the Walter Payton Award, which Hodges calls "the Heisman of FCS."

Perhaps more importantly, Hodges was spotted by the Steelers.

J.P. Rooney, the son of Steelers player personnel coordinator Dan Rooney Jr. and grandson of the late Steelers owner, works on the Samford football support staff as a student. He became a fan of the team's record-setting quarterback and passed Hodges' name along to his father, who

checked with college scouting coordinator Phil Kreedler to see if they should look into Hodges.

Kreedler already had watched at least one tape of Hodges. The Duck had masterminded a comeback win for Samford over Kreedler's beloved alma mater, Furman, and Kreedler already had been won over by Hodges' grit. So he waved Rooney Jr. on, and he and another Steelers scout, Mark Gorscak, dined with Hodges and other Samford seniors the night before their 2019 pro day.

Hodges threw at two pro days that next day last

March: Samford and UAB. And he threw well. So, after Hodges went undrafted and unsigned a month later, the Steelers invited him to try out at their rookie minicamp. There, he beat out two other QBs to earn a spot on the Steelers 90-man roster.

Mike Tomlin sharply corrected a reporter who had asked about using Hodges as a “camp arm,” and Tomlin’s rebuke became prophetic as Hodges quickly proved reliable and endeared himself to the veterans.

“We called him JaMarcus Duck,” Maurkice Pouncey said in speaking for the offensive line. “All camp people kept saying, ‘Hey Duck, Hey Duck, Hey Duck.’ I thought his last name was Duck. So we called him JaMarcus. JaMarcus Duck.”

Pouncey laughed, but he isn’t laughing about Hodges’ ability. Not after Hodges had good pre-season performances against the Bucs and Chiefs.

However, that wasn’t enough to make the team. The Steelers kept their three veteran quarterbacks on cutdown day, but on Sept. 9 — while knowing Hodges was still available — they traded Josh Dobbs to Jacksonville for a draft pick and signed Hodges to the practice squad.

He was promoted to the 53-man roster a week later after Roethlisberger was placed on injured reserve.

And yet, Hodges wasn’t done moving up the

organizational ladder. He replaced Rudolph after the second-year quarterback was knocked out of the Baltimore game early in the third quarter.

Hodges entered in relief and completed 7 of 9 passes for 68 yards and led the Steelers to a go-ahead touchdown.

“Before he went in, we looked over and saw him rocking back and forth, bobbing his head along to a song over the PA system,” Pouncey said. “I said, ‘Well, OK, he looks ready to go.’ And then he got in the huddle and seemed fine. Then he changed the protection up front before his first pass and we were like, ‘All right. He knows what he’s doing.’ That’s when we began to realize we can win with this guy.”

The Steelers eventually lost to the Ravens in overtime, but Hodges guided the team to a win against the Chargers.

In two appearances, he’s completed 22 of 29 passes for 200 yards, one touchdown with one interception, and a passer rating of 91.2.

Is he a fluke?

“From what I’ve seen, he’s made every throw,” said retired quarterback Charlie Batch. “When you can anticipate like he did with that (Diontae) Johnson throw on the out, his first completion, that was impressive. Turn around, bang. One thing is to anticipate balls all over the place, but when you talk about right here on the first play; changed

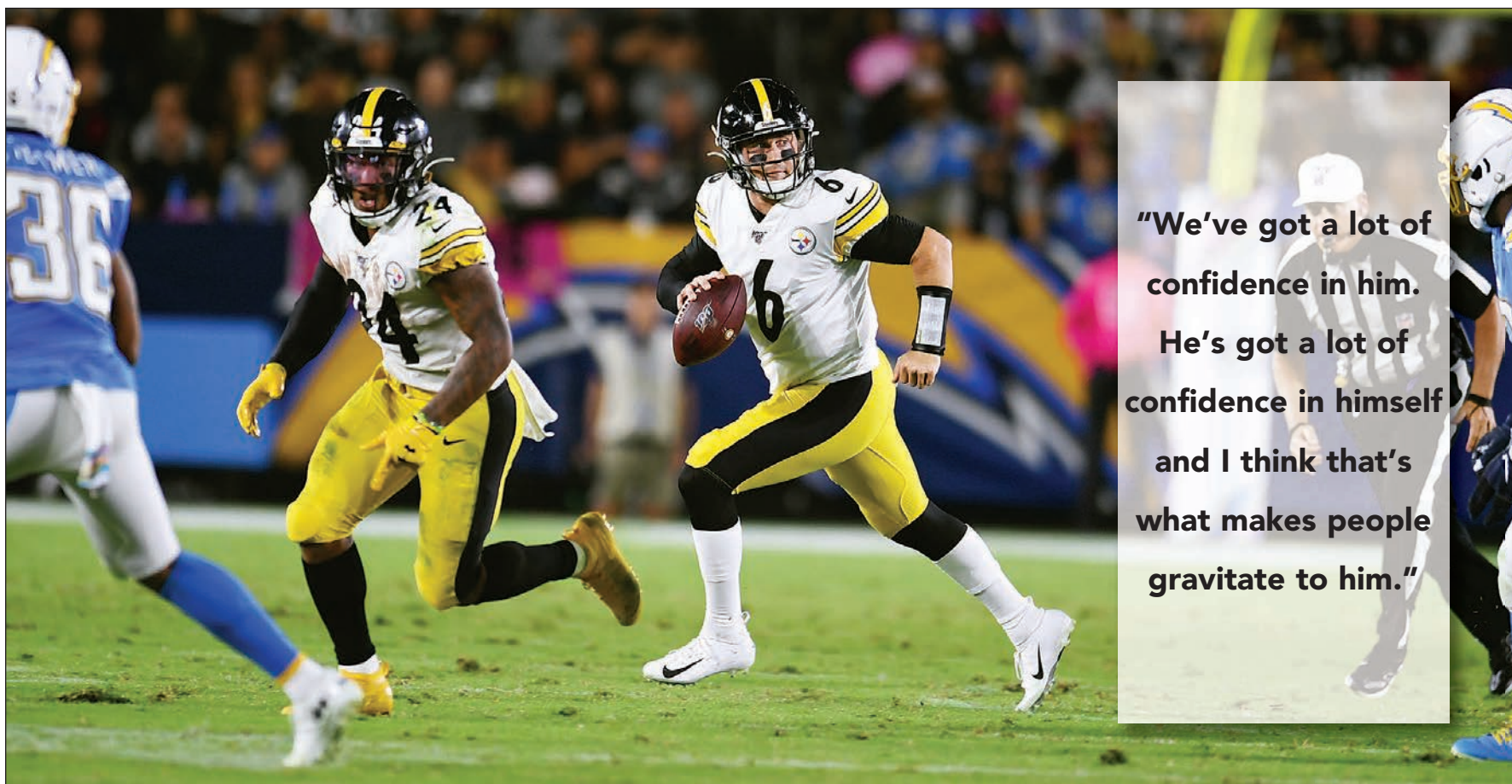
the protection and made that throw? He can do this.”

Another expert, Minkah Fitzpatrick, the young free safety whose first pro interception was off Tom Brady, also believes in Hodges.

“He has a lot of confidence,” Fitzpatrick said. “That’s really big for any quarterback. He plays with confidence, which allows him to play relaxed — not too relaxed, but relaxed. It allows him to make smart decisions with the ball, allows him to make big plays. He sees the whole field. When you’re all high-paced and wound up, you don’t see everything. He sees the field pretty well. I know he does those things well.”

Confidence, for sure, isn’t lacking in Hodges. At his first practice as the starter, a V-formation of geese flew overhead. He thought briefly about throwing a ball at them — kind of like Napoleon Dynamite’s Uncle Rico saying, “I can throw this football over them mountains.”

“We’ve got a lot of confidence in him,” Tomlin said after the win in L.A. “He’s got a lot of confidence in himself and I think that’s what makes people gravitate to him. But we’re not getting overexcited. This is a guy that played good tonight with very limited experience. We’re thankful to get a win. Hopefully it’ll be a good learning experience for him and us collectively as we move forward.”



**“We’ve got a lot of confidence in him. He’s got a lot of confidence in himself and I think that’s what makes people gravitate to him.”**



**SMITH-SCHUSTER SCORE:** Wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster got the Steelers on the scoreboard late in the first quarter when he broke loose for a 35-yard touchdown.

Digest Photo/DAVE ARRIGO

**1:06 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** It started on the opening kickoff when Johnny Holton made a poor decision to bring the ball out of the end zone and compounded it by only getting the ball out to the 11-yard line. The Steelers then gained 2 yards on a pass to JuJu Smith-Schuster and then lost 4 yards on a pass to Smith-Schuster. Then came a false start penalty on Maurkice Pouncey and an 11-yard pass to Vance McDonald that brought Jordan Berry onto the field for a punt. Following his 45-yard punt, the Ravens began at their 41-yard line.

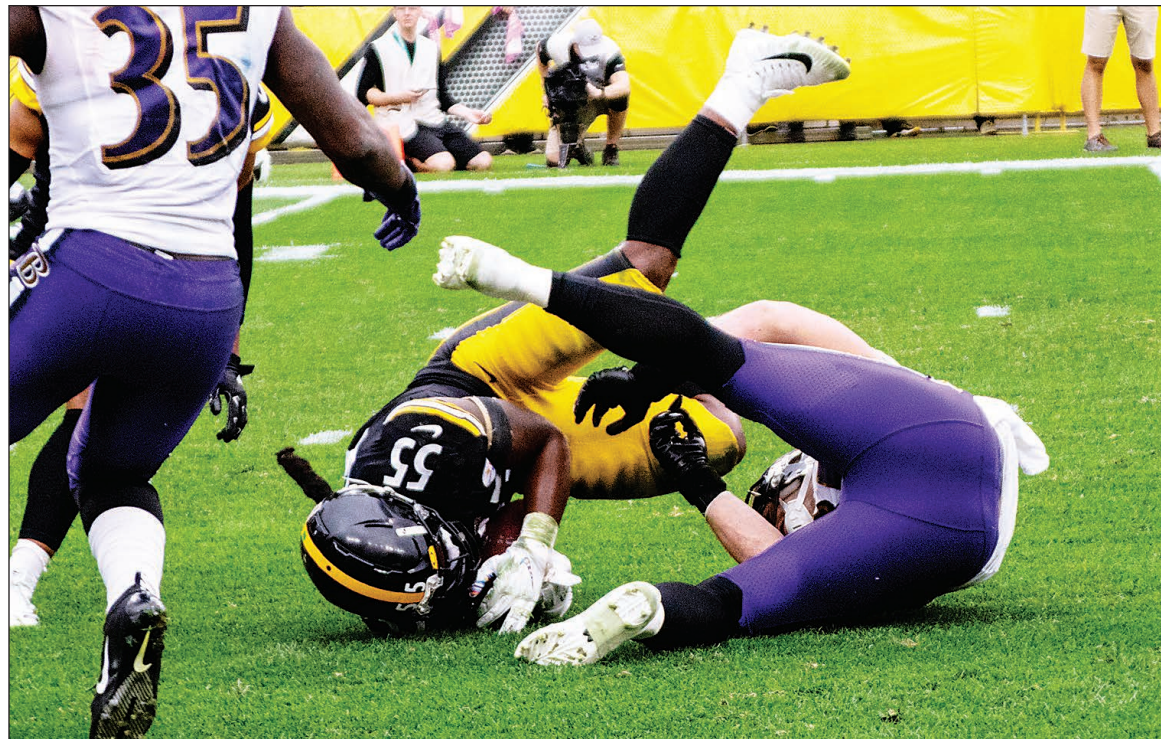
**1:14 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** The Ravens got into position for Justin Tucker to kick a 27-yard field goal that gave the Ravens a 3-0 lead with 7:21 left in the first quarter. Lamar Jackson converted a third-and-8 with a 10-yard completion to Mark Andrews. The Ravens gained 35 yards rushing on the drive.

**1:23 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** Things went from bad to worse for the Steelers until the Ravens scored a touchdown on a 2-yard run by Mark Ingram to extend their lead to 10-0 with 4:48 left in the first quarter. Tucker's kickoff following his field goal was returned to the 24-yard line by Ryan Switzer, but a holding penalty on Ola Adeniyi had the offense start on its 12-yard line. On the first play, out of the wildcat, Jaylen Samuels' pass was intercepted by Josh Byner at the Steelers 15-yard line. The Ravens needed four plays to get the ball into the end zone and were helped on separate plays by a holding penalty on Mark Barron and then a roughing the passer penalty on Stephon Tuitt.

**1:31 p.m. – What Went Right:** This time, it began with a wise decision by Johnny Holton to down Justin Tucker's kickoff for a touchback, and then the Steelers got around to playing regular offense and found it can work just fine. In five plays, the Steelers drove 75 yards for a touchdown that came on a 35-yard pass to JuJu Smith-Schuster that cut Baltimore's lead to 10-7 with 2:41 left in the first quarter. James Conner gained 19 yards on three carries, and in addition to the touchdown pass, Mason Rudolph also hit James Washington for a 21-yard gain over the middle.

**1:45 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** The Ravens had three offensive possessions to the point where there was 11:21 left in the first half, and they had scored on each one. Their third possession covered 75 yards in 13 plays and was capped by an 11-yard pass to Marquise Brown for the touchdown that gave Baltimore a 17-7 lead with 11:21 left in the first half. The Ravens converted one third down with a 1-yard run by Gus Edwards, another with a 6-yard run by Edwards, and a third with a 21-yard pass to Mark Andrews.

**2:08 p.m. – What Went Right:** On a third-and-11 from the Baltimore 11-yard line, Lamar Jackson's pass for Mark Andrews was tipped by Minkah Fitzpatrick and intercepted by Kam Kelly,



Rookie linebacker Devin Bush came up with an acrobatic interception of Lamar Jackson on a pass intended for tight end Nick Boyle in the third quarter. Digest Photo/DAN OSKOWSKI

and his 10-yard return put the Steelers offense in business at the Baltimore 12-yard line. After an off-side penalty and a 4-yard run by James Conner, the Steelers were looking at a second-and-1. But after Jaylen Samuels lost 5 yards on a wildcat sweep and Pernell McPhee sacked Mason Rudolph for an 11-yard loss, Chris Boswell came on to kick a 41-yard field goal to cut the Ravens lead to 17-10 with 4:39 left in the first half.

**2:14 p.m. – What Went Right:** The kickoff team allowed a 46-yard kickoff return by Justice Hill, the defense bailed the team out by posting consecutive sacks on second and third downs — by T.J. Watt and then Vince Williams — to force the Ravens to punt. When the ball bounced into the end zone for a touchback, the Steelers took possession at their 20-yard line with 3:13 left in the first half.

**2:29 p.m. – What Went Right:** The Steelers' second interception of the quarter was turned in by Mike Hilton, and it came on a pass for Seth Roberts. After taking over at the Ravens 25-yard line, the Steelers were helped by a roughing the passer penalty on Michael Pierce that was sandwiched around a couple of incomplete passes by Mason Rudolph. Chris Boswell's 29-yard field goal cut the Ravens lead to 17-13 at halftime.

**2:53 p.m. – What Went Right:** The rookie giveth, and then the rookie taketh away. With the Ravens facing a fourth-and-6 near midfield, Devin Bush was flagged for violating the neutral zone, and then after the 5-yard assessment, the Ravens again went for the first down and Lamar Jackson

ran for the yard and the first down. On the next play, Jackson threw down the middle for Nick Boyle, and as Boyle was coming down with the ball Bush took it out of his hands for the interception that gave the Steelers the ball at the 13-yard line.

**3:03 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** After the Bush interception, the Steelers were looking at a third-and-11 from their own 12-yard line. Mason Rudolph moved out of the pocket before hitting James Washington for a 25-yard gain, and after he released the ball, Earl Thomas hit Rudolph under the chin with his helmet and knocked him out. The ensuing roughing penalty gave the Steelers a first down at the Baltimore 48-yard line, but Rudolph was helped off the field and replaced by Devlin Hodges.

**3:18 p.m. – What Went Right:** The Steelers rallied around Devlin Hodges and completed the drive that began shortly before Mason Rudolph was knocked out of the game. Hodges completed a 13-yard pass to Diontae Johnson for one first down, and then a 14-yard completion to Vance Johnson put the ball at the 1-yard line. James Conner scored from there, and the Steelers led for the first time, 20-17, with 3:42 left in the third quarter.

**3:30 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** The Ravens responded to the Steelers' go-ahead touchdown with a 12-play, 67-yard drive that ended with the 26-yard field goal by Justin Tucker that tied the game with 11:39 left in the fourth quarter. Lamar

See RAVENS, page 16

**vs. Baltimore**

**VINCE WILLIAMS**  
LINEBACKER

Once the Steelers signed Mark Barron as an unrestricted free agent and traded up 10 spots in the first round to pick Devin Bush, it seemed as though the team might be phasing Vince Williams out of the mix on defense. But during the almost three full games Williams missed this season with a hamstring injury, his value as a run-stuffing inside linebacker was easy to recognize.

Williams returned for this game vs. the Ravens, and he didn't need a lot of time to warm up to the speed of NFL regular season football. Williams led the Steelers with nine tackles, including one for loss, he had one of the Steelers' five sacks, and he broke up a pass in the 26-23 overtime loss to the Ravens at Heinz Field.

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



Digest Photo/ARRON ANASTASIA

**INSIDE THE GAME | FROM PAGE 15**

Jackson converted a third-and-7 with a 9-yard pass to Willie Snead, and then he went right back to Snead on the next play for a 23-yard hook-up. A holding penalty on Nick Boyle helped the Steelers keep Baltimore out of the end zone.

**3:39 p.m. – What Went Right:** On a second-and-8, Devlin Hodges was flushed out of the pocket to his right and threw down the middle of the field. The pass was intercepted by Earl Thomas, but the play was nullified by a holding penalty on Tony Jefferson that gave the Steelers a first down at their 40-yard line.

**3:58 p.m. – What Went Right:** When Jordan Berry's 45-yard punt was downed by Artie Burns at the Baltimore 1-yard line, the Steelers defense took over from there. After two incomplete passes, Gus Edwards barely got the ball out of the end zone on a third-down run, and the Ravens punted. The big play on the Steelers possession was a 21-yard scramble by Devlin Hodges. Chris Boswell kicked a 33-yard field goal with 2:37 left to give the Steelers a 23-20 lead.

**4:08 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** The big play on the Ravens possession that ended with Justin Tucker's 48-yard field goal that tied the game, 23-23, with 10 seconds left was a roughing the passer



**Mike Hilton set up a field goal on the last play of the first half when he came up with an interception.**

Digest Photo/REBECCA MEHLING

**4:17 p.m. – What Went Right:** The Steelers won the overtime toss, and Mike Tomlin elected to defend a goal. On the Ravens' three offensive plays, they netted minus-6 yards as a result of a sack by Bud Dupree. After the punt, the Steelers got the ball at their own 32-yard line needing only a field goal to win.

**4:21 – What Went Wrong:** On their second offensive play, Devlin Hodges completed a crossing route to JuJu Smith-Schuster, who had the ball punched out and recovered by Marlon Humphrey. The Ravens took over at the Steelers 34-yard line.

**4:25 p.m. – What Went Wrong:** After taking possession following JuJu Smith-Schuster's lost fumble, the Ravens kept things conservative and settled for 8 yards on three running plays. Justin Tucker then won the game for the Ravens with a 46-yard field goal.



75

Receiving yards for JuJu Smith-Schuster, which gave him 2,676 for his career, the 10th-highest total in a player's first 35 career games since the 1970 AFL-NFL merger.

3 First downs for Baltimore on its opening possession, which was three more than the Steelers allowed on the first drives of its previous three opponents.

3 Consecutive overtime games without a victory for the Steelers, who are 0-2-1 since defeating the Cleveland Browns in the 2016 season finale.

3 Consecutive games at Heinz Field with four field goals for Baltimore kicker Justin Tucker.

11 Penalties assessed against the Steelers, their highest total since Sept. 24, 2018 against Tampa Bay. Their previous high this season had been six.

13:26 Time of possession advantage for Baltimore, which had the ball for 39:00 compared to the Steelers' 25:34.



Digest Photo/REBECCA MEHLING

42

Years since a Steelers undrafted rookie had multiple completions in a game before **Devlin Hodges** did it against Baltimore. The last to do it had been Tony Dungy in 1977.

21

Yards gained by Devlin Hodges on a fourth-quarter scramble, the longest run by a Steelers quarterback since 2015 when Michael Vick had a 24-yard run at San Diego.

5

Years since a Steelers non-quarterback had thrown an interception before Jaylen Samuels did it against the Ravens. Punter Brad Wing threw a pick in the 2014 season finale against the Cincinnati Bengals.

19

Consecutive games the Steelers had won when allowing an opponent under 300 total yards. The last team to defeat the Steelers without reaching 300 yards of offense: The Baltimore Ravens in 2016 (21-14).

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## CATCHING UP WITH THE COORDINATORS

### OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR **RANDY FICHTNER**

**Q. Is Devlin “Duck” Hodges proof that NFL scouts still can’t scout that position?**

No. I don’t know. It’s a unique position now. The game has changed so much in college. You’re starting to see some change in this league as well. It probably wasn’t always the same, and so when you’re trying to evaluate guys who, maybe number one, have never been under center, and then you want to put them under center, run pro-style type formations with fullbacks and multiple tight ends and things like that, that’s a world they don’t come from, from most colleges. I think there is a learning curve there. I don’t think it’s unique to any one team. Every team is trying to find that method of how do you evaluate today’s college quarterback.

**Q. How did you come aware of him?**

I think Kevin (Colbert) found him. I think that he might have had a quick

tryout the week before, maybe with the Giants, and then when they let him go, we were looking for numbers for our rookie minicamp the following week, and from the minute he got here, you like the personality. You love his savvy as a quarterback. You like the way he gets the ball out of his hands. I’ll still say I don’t know everything about Duck, but we’re learning, and so far I think we’ll protect the football, and I’ve said this to the group, I say it to myself, I’ll say it to you every week. We’ll win games when we decide to stop beating ourselves.

**Q. What about back in May when he came for his tryout?**

The very first time he got here, I just remember him throwing. I just remember him pushing the ball down the field, and I remember him making completions. Before I even knew

**See FICHTNER, page 21**



Digest Photo/KARL ROSER



Digest Photo/ARRON ANASTASIA

### DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR **KEITH BUTLER**

**Q. Why wasn’t T.J. Watt on the field for the first couple plays of the game-tying drive by the Ravens when his replacement, Ola Adeniyi, was flagged for roughing the passer?**

Because we were going to put him in on third down. That was second down, if you remember. We were wanting to rest T.J. at that point in time and get him in on third down. That is the reasons he wasn’t in there. He had been playing most of the game. Our plan was to put Ola in there the first and second down. He was productive. Shoot, there wasn’t anything wrong with what he did. And then we were going to try and have T.J. come in and play third down.

**Q. Does T.J. Watt get winded quicker with all the emotion he plays with?**

You play that position, the outside linebacker position, you’re not just dropping all the time. You are wrestling with freaking 320-pound guys all the time. Those of y’all that have wrestled before know how it feels to wrestle and when you get through wrestling, you are tired as all get out. You can’t wait for that dadgum two minutes to stop. And then, you get to go two more minutes. That situation for us, we wanted to be in the best shape we could. So, we rotated our defensive linemen, we rotated our outside linebackers, we tried to keep guys from being in there at the same time. We think about what we are doing in terms of how we rotate and how we substitute and what we are going to need to do and how we are going to do it. Especially at the end of a game. Everyone knows what happens at the

**See BUTLER, page 21**



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## BUTLER | FROM PAGE 19

end of the game in the NFL. For most games in the league, there are a lot of games in the league that will come down to the last two minutes of the game. That is good for the NFL, but bad for the hearts of coaches. That is the way it is going to be. We accept that. I thought we did all right. Obviously, not good enough. We have to make one more play.

### Q. What is the difference between the defense's number of takeaways this year after not getting nearly as many last year?

I think we talk about the ball awareness, we talk about trying to get the ball out. We talk about interceptions, which we did the same thing last year. Sometimes they happen, sometimes they don't. We try to punch the ball out. They punched the ball out more than we did there at the end. Turnovers are big. We have to try to keep getting them. I think we have 12 this year so far. We have to continue to do that. And if we can do that and try to put our offense in position to score as much as we can. When we get in bad field position, we have to have them go up by three, we can't let them have a touchdown.

## FICHTNER | FROM PAGE 19

what his name was, because I messed it up a few times, I just started calling him Duck. Then he started talking a little history about him duck-calling and things like that, and I don't know the first thing about all of that, and I couldn't basically say Devlin, so I said Duck, and that's how I know him.

### Q. Do you have an emergency quarterback in some case something would happen during a game?

Last week, number 10 (Ryan Switzer) for us is always there for that. He always takes snaps before a game. He'll always have the extra wristband off to the side. You know, that type of thing. You might not be able to do as much. There may be a lot on the wristband you may never call, but there's a lot that you could still do.

### Q. What are the benefits of having a scheme where the quarterback is always in the shotgun?

Well, obviously that's where we've spent most of our time. We've developed a whole package around our Hall of Fame quarterback in the gun and gun-runs, and things that are very appealing to his eye. If you've noticed, we've been under the center a whole lot more. That's an attempt to

**Safety Minkah Fitzpatrick has shown steady progress since joining the Steelers.**

Digest Photo/ARRON ANASTASIA

### Q. How does having Ryan Shazier around impact the young players?

It helps them because of the experience. Most of us, him in particular, learn by our mistakes. He has been down the road and he can try to help them from making the same mistakes he did and as a consequence make them better.

### Q. How far has Minkah Fitzpatrick progressed?

A lot more progressed than he was. He is learning the defense quite a bit. He is still learning it but he is a smart guy and he can handle some of the stuff we are going to put on him. I am really interested to see how he develops as the year goes along because he has gotten better and better.



**Wide receiver Ryan Switzer always takes some quarterback snaps before every game.**

Digest Photo/KARL ROSER

maybe help others and to help the quarterback, so it might open things up more for you if you handle it the right way.

### Q. What are the benefits and disadvantages of running out of the shotgun?

I don't know that there is. It might make you a little different team because you're playing in up-

point stances by offensive linemen. Then when you get into other situational kind of football, you're in down stances. So, if you're spending most of your time up, you're not doing as much down. When you put them down, maybe it's not as comfortable for them. Also, there's the mechanics of footwork and operation, operation of the quarterback taking snaps.

# Holton, Sutton, Alualu and Duck

From the notebook of a sportswriter who's ready for a break after one of the more newsworthy and, frankly, exciting 2-4 starts to a season in memory:

- So, they beat the Chargers with a third-string quarterback making his first start and kept alive flickering hopes of a revival without Ben Roethlisberger, and possibly their most dominant defensive player, Stephon Tuitt.

- Since I began covering the team in 1995, the Steelers started 2-4 three times — 2013, 2006, 2003 — and all three times that skid was extended to 2-6 with two more losses. The latest two teams finished 8-8; the 2003 team finished 6-10.

- Is exciting really the word to describe that pattern? Well, no, but the way teams in this division are playing, 8-8 could be good enough for first place, while 9-7 might guarantee it.

- The reason it's been exciting is that the two quarterbacks who have replaced Roethlisberger are showing sparks of brightness for the future. Mike Tomlin wouldn't discuss which of the two would start next, but logic and his repeated commentary about limiting Hodges' "exposure" would indicate the Steelers will start Mason Rudolph after the bye week.

- Rudolph is more experienced and his strong arm keeps defenses more honest.

- Hodges may have a better arm than he showed on Sunday night's first attempted deep ball to JuJu Smith-Schuster, which fell short, but for the second consecutive game a Hodges throw into the deep middle was intercepted by the free safety. The one in Los Angeles was not negated by a penalty.

- The word written in my notebook after Hodges' interception Sunday night was this: Why?

- Holding a seemingly insurmountable 24-3 lead with 10:45 remaining, the Steelers had reached midfield with a first down when Hodges threw deep for Johnny Holton. Now, Holton would make one of the game's key plays later on special teams, but his receiving experience is limited to surprise deep attempts that never surprise. This one didn't surprise Rayshawn Jenkins, who broke over the top of Holton — who didn't come back for the ball — for the interception, and life.

- Philip Rivers then remembered who he was and got hot. He drove the Chargers 70 yards for one touchdown pass, and after a Hodges pass to Ryan Switzer lost 2 yards on third-and-7, Rivers drove the Chargers 79 yards for another score. They foolishly attempted an onside kick with 1:29 and three timeouts left.

- I would have kicked deep to a team whose



Cornerback Cam Sutton came up with two huge plays late in the fourth quarter, including his game-clinching interception on the Chargers' final drive.

Digest Photos/KARL ROSER

long kickoff return this season is 26 yards and forced Hodges to convert one first down. The onside kick — while needing a great grab and hold by Cam Sutton — gave the Steelers enough room to not convert but still punt the ball back deep. And that's when Holton paid off by downing that punt at the 1.

- The other word that works: *Whew*.
- Sutton did make another play. His interception at the Chargers 34 virtually ended the game and gave him statistical cred on a defense that's getting better each week.
- And that's part two of the "excitement" of this 2-4 season thus far — and also why Tuitt's injury might be a gut punch.
- As of press time, the lineman who's been the Steelers' most dominant defender, and who at age 26 appears on the brink of an All-Pro season, was still being evaluated. From past experience with not only Tuitt's injuries but Cam Heyward's torn pectoral muscle in 2016, optimism is in short supply.
- Tuitt, combined with Heyward and the OLBs, gives the Steelers the ability to "get there with four," a defensive strategy that every coordinator

wishes he had the talent to employ. And Tuitt might be the best — or at least most promising — of that group.

- Enter Javon Hargrave and Tyson Alualu, a quality veteran who batted a pass into the air for Devin Bush's second turnover of the first quarter.
- That's enough to keep this defense afloat, but perhaps not enough to keep it progressing into the dominant force it appears destined to become.
- Alualu and Sutton showed off the defensive depth, as did Artie Burns, who received a game ball for his work in place of Steven Nelson. But the bye week will be necessary to not only give Tuitt time — if time will even help — but also Nelson, Mark Barron, Joe Haden, T.J. Watt and maybe even Sean Davis.
- It's a deep unit that's being barraged by injuries. A week off before playing the winless Miami Dolphins no doubt will be appreciated by the walking wounded, too.
- A home game against the 3-2 Colts follows that game, so the Steelers have legitimate reason to hope for a .500 record at the halfway point of a schedule that eases noticeably down the stretch.

• Notes on .500 records, backup quarterbacks and injuries might not be the most glamorous read for Steelers fans a day after a big upset, but consider the alternative that was brought to cinematic life when Rivers grabbed Mike Hilton in frustration as he walked off the field.

- People continue to say — as Tomlin did before the game — that Rivers is a "Hall of Fame-caliber quarterback," but he just lost a home game to Duck Hodges and his team fell to 2-4. This was in front of one of the more impressive Steelers road throngs in a strong history of "traveling well."
- The Chargers even started to play "Renegade" in the fourth quarter.
- "That was amazing, until they made it a joke," Bush said of the 15 or so seconds the song played over the PA. "It was cool."
- Bush has been pretty cool, too. His two turnovers Sunday were his fifth and sixth of the season. The Steelers now have 15 takeaways after six games, or as many as they had all of last season.
- The excitement never ends in what should be a dull, even bleak, season but isn't even close to that.

**Veteran Tyson Alualu (94) made big contributions for the Steelers defense, including tipping a pass that ended in an interception and making stops in the run game.**





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# STEELERS ROSTER

(Listed numerically by position; as of Oct. 14)

## 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
45	Roosevelt Nix	5-11	248	5	Kent State

## WIDE RECEIVERS

10	Ryan Switzer	5-8	185	3	North Carolina
11	Donte Moncrief	6-2	216	6	Mississippi
13	James Washington	5-11	213	2	Oklahoma State
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
91	Stephon Tuitt	6-6	303	6	Notre Dame
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
44	Tyler Matakevich	6-1	235	4	Temple
48	Bud Dupree	6-4	269	5	Kentucky
54	Ulysees Gilbert III	6-0	230	R	Akron
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)
21	S Sean Davis (IR)	6-1	202	4	Maryland
50	LB Ryan Shazier (PUP)	6-1	230	5	Ohio State

## STEELERS COACHING STAFF

Mike Tomlin .....Head coach  
 John Mitchell .....Assistant head coach  
 Randy Fichtner .....Offensive coordinator/quarterbacks  
 Keith Butler .....Defensive coordinator  
 Danny Smith .....Special teams coordinator  
 James Daniel .....Tight ends  
 Eddie Faulkner .....Running backs  
 Adrian Klemm .....Assistant offensive line  
 Shaun Sarrett .....Offensive line  
 Ray Sherman.....Interim wide receivers

Tom Bradley.....Defensive backs  
 Karl Dunbar .....Defensive line  
 Jerry Olsavsky .....Inside linebackers  
 Teryl Austin .....Senior defensive assistant/secondary  
 Garrett Giemont .....Strength and conditioning  
 Denzel Martin.....Coaching assistant  
 Blaine Stewart.....Coaching assistant  
 Matt Symmes .....Coaching assistant  
 William Gay.....Coaching intern

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# A night of fashion passion

By TERESA VARLEY  
Assistant Editor

It was fashion at its finest when Steelers players and their families hit the runway at Rock Steelers Style 2019: "Take the Stage," the team's annual fashion show held at Stage AE.

The players showed off all the latest fashions, from game-day attire, to western wear, to formal wear as they took the stage by storm.

"For sure this is fun," said James Conner, one of the shows co-captains along with Joe Haden. "Just to be one of the captains is pretty cool. You get a chance to show some style. I had to look in the closet and see what I had to pull out and look good."

"Usually every time your team is together it's for practice or a game. This is a much lighter, fun event. You get to see the guys in a different setting, everyone brings their families. It's fun to see."

The electric evening, presented by Neighborhood Ford Store, Peoples Gas, PNC Bank, UPMC and EMBRACE Pittsburgh, kicked off with "green football field" carpet arrivals. Guests were also able to take in the beauty of the style lounge, enjoying culinary delights while perusing all of the latest Steelers fashions from the Steelers Pro Shop.

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Photos by REBECCA MEHLING, TAYLOR OLLASON and KARL ROSER





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The show, which was chaired by Art and Greta Rooney and Mike and Kiya Tomlin, put fashion at the forefront, but there is a lot more meaning to it. All proceeds benefited the UPMC Sports Medicine Concussion Program and the Cancer Caring Center, two charities that have a long relationship with the Steelers.

For the players, being able to mix fashion and giving back to the community is the perfect combination.

"I enjoy clothes. My wife does. My kids do," said Haden. "I love it. I love dressing. I love fashion. This is something that is right up my alley. And we are

doing it for two great charities. You can kill two birds with one stone. That is the goal. That is having fun and looking out for good causes. This is something special. It's 1000% about helping others."

The players certainly didn't disappoint with their fashion sense.

"Growing up I always liked clothes, liked looking nice," said Haden. "I liked people putting stuff together. I feel like I have a good eye for putting stuff together. It's amazing to be out there showing our style, having everyone together, all of the families together for a good cause, for a good time. To be able to relax. Football is tough. To have every-

one in a spot where we are able to have a good time with each other's families is always a good thing."

With WDVE Radio host Bill Crawford, who wore a custom suit by Pittsburgh designer David Alan, as the emcee, the laughs were plentiful and the fashion on point.

The show got under way with a familiar look, players sporting their Nike game jerseys on the runway, while having fun as they took the stage to songs they handpicked.

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## FASHION | FROM PAGE 29

"I love it. We have them pick their own music to walk to," said Greta Rooney. "Each player gives us a song. When they come out, they are a little more relaxed, it shows their style, their personality. It's fun to see how they transform off the field."

It was the ladies who wowed everyone next with designs from Kiya Tomlin's Game Day collection and the Kiya Tomlin Work/Shop collection. Players' wives and significant others, as well as professional models, showed that you can be stylish and comfortable all at the same time.

"I am excited to show my collection with the Steelers and for it to benefit the charities and raise money," said Kiya Tomlin. "We did a mix of our current season, and then gave it a Steelers mix, a game-day mix."

"I was excited to dress the wives. My whole col-

lection is inspired by women such as them, multi-tasking, do it all behind the scenes. They live a similar lifestyle that I do, where we do a lot of the behind the scenes work and occasionally we have to show up for things. I am excited to dress the women who inspire my collection."

The show went old school for a bit, honoring the 40th anniversary of Super Bowl XIV with Lynn Swann and John Stallworth taking center stage in their jerseys, which were then auctioned off and the winner was able to have them personally signed.

The fashion scene headed in another direction with the Steelers' Western Style theme getting the crowd going. With Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road" playing, cowboy hats and boots were the choice of many.

It was the kids who were in the spotlight next, modeling fashions from Outstuff and as always stealing the show.

And what would a show be without entertainment. The highlight hands down was an epic lip sync battle between Zack Banner and Terrell Edmunds.

Banner lip-synced to "Flashdance What a Feeling," from the movie "Flashdance," which was filmed in Pittsburgh.

"It hits home," said Banner. "It's Pittsburgh." And he added, "I am the 2019 version of Shaquille O'Neal."

Banner killed it by winning the battle, hitting on

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## FASHION | FROM PAGE 31

every move of the classic song, from the singing, to the dancing to the clothing. His night was complete when he won the "Swag Award."

Edmunds did his thing as well, lip syncing to the Temptations classic "My Girl," with the rest of the "Temptations" joining him, including Trey Edmunds, Kam Kelly and Tevin Jones. And it was perfection, from the lip syncing to the dance moves.

"I sing all of the time in the car," said Edmunds. "When it's a high note, I always tune myself and it looks like it's me. Hopefully I am good. It's fun. It's exciting."

Pittsburgh rapper Frzy, who won an Emmy for "Sweater Sessions," a hip-hop tribute to Fred Rogers, "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," performed in a scene dedicated to the iconic Rogers. Other performers throughout the night included the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater and University of Pittsburgh Dance Team, as well as the King Cobras of Pittsburgh, with whom Harley Tomlin performed.

But again, fashion was the passion for the night, with styles ranging from the Steelers Pro Shop, to Moda to Macy's, which dressed the team's rookies for their walk down the runway. Players and their families closed it out with a formal scene in fashions to fit their taste.

"Athletes are really getting into fashion in every sport," said Demetria Boccella, the show's creative director. "You see these guys dressing to the nines. The Steelers show is one of the most popular style events in the NFL, so we have to step it up. We have to make sure the players are on point with their looks."

And on point they were.



# COMING UP

Monday, Oct. 28

## MIAMI AT PITTSBURGH

**Time:** 8:15 p.m.

**Site:** Heinz Field

**Television:** ESPN

**Series record:** Steelers lead 14-13 (including playoffs)

**Last meeting:** 2016 playoffs at Pittsburgh; Steelers 30, Dolphins 12

**Series trend:** The Steelers have lost the last two regular season meetings after a five-game winning streak that began in Ben Roethlisberger's rookie year in 2004 and went through a 23-22 victory at Miami in 2010.

**Scouting report:** The Dolphins began a rebuilding project this year with the idea of accumulating draft picks and cap space, but that came at the cost of being competitive this season. Starting with a 59-10 loss against Baltimore in the season opener, it has been a painful season for Miami, which traded two recent first-round picks, including 2018 selection Minkah Fitzpatrick to the Steelers. Cornerback **Xavien Howard**, who tied for the NFL lead with seven interceptions in 2018, is the best player on the roster.

**Worth noting:** The teams will be meeting in a Monday night game for the sixth time. The Steelers are 3-2 in the first five games, including a 3-0 victory at Heinz Field in the last Monday night matchup in 2007.



Sunday, Nov. 3

## INDIANAPOLIS AT PITTSBURGH

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

**Site:** Heinz Field

**Television:** CBS

**Series record:** Steelers lead 23-6 (including playoffs)

**Last meeting:** 2017 at Indianapolis; Steelers 20, Colts 17

**Series trend:** The Steelers have won the past five meetings, including 51-34 and 45-10 victories in the last two games at Heinz Field.

**Scouting report:** The Colts suffered a major setback during the preseason when franchise quarterback Andrew Luck abruptly announced his retirement, but they have rallied around **Jacoby Brissett** to put themselves in contention to make a playoff push. Indianapolis has assembled one of the best offensive lines in the league, thanks in large part to 2018 first-round pick Quenton Nelson. Running back Marlon Mack and wide receiver T.Y. Hilton are the playmakers on offense. Pass rusher Justin Houston is the main newcomer on a defense that shut down the high-powered Kansas City offense.

**Worth noting:** The Steelers have a perfect 5-0 record against Baltimore/Indianapolis franchise in the playoffs, their most postseason victories against any opponent.

## 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.)	8:15 p.m.
Nov. 3	INDIANAPOLIS	1 p.m.*
Nov. 10	L.A. RAMS	4:25 p.m.*
Nov. 14	at Cleveland (Thu.)	8:20 p.m.
Nov. 24	at Cincinnati	1 p.m.*
Dec. 1	CLEVELAND	4:25 p.m.*
Dec. 8	at Arizona	4:25 p.m.*
Dec. 15	BUFFALO	1 p.m.*
Dec. 22	at N.Y. Jets	1 p.m.*
Dec. 29	at Baltimore	1 p.m.*

\*-Game subject to flex scheduling

## SNEAK PEEK



**RAMS COME TO HEINZ** — The Steelers will complete their three-game homestand Nov. 10 when the Los Angeles Rams come to Heinz Field. Coming off a loss in Super Bowl LIII, the Rams started the season 3-0 before hitting a speed bump. Running back **Todd Gurley** had five touchdowns in the first five games and wide receiver Cooper Kupp was averaging more than 100 receiving yards per game.

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