

Steelers over take Buccaneers, 17-7

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — The Pittsburgh Steelers set the tone in pregame warmups, refusing to back down from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

"We don't like them," receiver Hines Ward said. "They don't like us."

That was evident even before Tampa Bay's Nate Webster stirred the Steelers by running through a group of Pittsburgh players during the pregame stretch. Keyshawn Johnson stepped in to help defuse the situation, then Jerome Bettis sent a message by shoving Warren Sapp.

"It was just a matter of who is the bigger bully," Bettis said after Tommy Maddox threw for 236 yards and a touchdown in a 17-7 victory that gave the Steelers the AFC North championship.

"We beat them up down here last year, and they said they were waiting a year for this," Bettis added. "We said: 'Hey, we'll see who's a bigger bully.' We came out here and bullied them and showed them that we're the baddest on the block."

Chad Scott returned an interception for a touchdown and the Steelers defense, which appears to be peaking at the right time, forced two fumbles inside the Pittsburgh 10 to frustrate Tampa Bay's effort to come back from a 17-point, first-quarter deficit.

"It's great when people don't give you a chance to win," Ward said. "And to beat them the way we did, it really feels good."

The Bucs (11-4) claimed the NFC South title Sunday when New Orleans lost to Cincinnati, but they were hoping to keep pace with the Philadelphia Eagles and Green Bay Packers in the race for home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs.

"We had as much to play for as they did. ... There was no letdown," said Bucs coach Jon Gruden, whose team will have to beat Chicago on the road and get help from the New York Jets against the Packers in order to earn the No. 2 seed, which would give them a first-round bye.

"We're still in the thick of things,"

Gruden added. "We've got to find a way to win a game."

It was the second straight year Pittsburgh (9-5-1) came into Raymond James Stadium and physically whipped the Bucs, who Steelers safety Lee Flowers called "paper champions" who talk a better game than they play.

Flowers' year-old comments were reprinted last week and heightened anticipation for the rematch.

"It's amazing how one little comment can change your life," Flowers said. "You make comments in the heat of the moment. Do I retract them? No, I don't. We've still got to play the game on the field."

Tampa Bay played without quarterback Brad Johnson, who sat out with a severe lower back bruise. Shaun King made his first start in nearly two seasons and struggled against a defense that had only allowed 178 yards in its previous two games.

Scott intercepted King's second pass of the night and returned it 30 yards for a touchdown that made it 14-0. The Steelers also had six sacks, one of them forcing a fumble by Rob Johnson, who replaced King midway through the third quarter.

"We couldn't get anything consistently going. We'd make a couple plays, miss a couple plays," King said. "I think it showed we haven't played together for a while. But it's one of those things you can bounce back from."

Pittsburgh rushed for 220 yards and sacked Johnson 10 times in a 17-10 victory over Tampa Bay last season. The Bucs didn't let Bettis run wild this time, but Maddox completed 17 of 23 passes, including an 11-yard TD throw to Antwaan Randle El on the opening drive.

The Bucs avoided a shutout when Rob Johnson threw an 18-yard scoring pass to Keyshawn Johnson with 1:14 remaining.

Keyshawn Johnson finished with eight receptions for 132 yards. Burress had five catches for 127 yards for the Steelers.

Avs win third straight under new head coach

DENVER (AP) — Rob Blake had two goals and an assist as the Colorado Avalanche beat the Vancouver Canucks 5-3 Monday night for their third straight win under new coach Tony Granato.

Dean McAmmond and Derek Morris had a goal and two assists each for Colorado, unbeaten in four games overall. The Avalanche are unbeaten in five straight at home after opening the season winless in eight games there.

Colorado got power-play goals from Blake, Morris and McAmmond to end a 1-for-29 streak with a man advantage in eight home games.

Morris opened the scoring on a power play four minutes in, beating Peter Skudra to the glove side from the top of the left circle — Colorado's first

goal with a man advantage in four games.

Blake made it 2-0 with 51 seconds left, flipping a wrist from the right circle just inside the opposite post.

He followed with a power-play goal at 7:02 of the second, scoring from the left circle after a shot by Morris bounced off the boards behind Skudra.

Milan Hejduk made it 4-0 with 4:02 left, beating Skudra from the right of the crease after Alex Tanguay slipped a pass between Marek Malik and Mats Lindgren.

Henrik Sedin scored Vancouver's first goal with 2:47 left in the second period when he flipped a shot over Patrick Roy, who was still on his back after trying to stop a shot by Markus Naslund.

nfl standings, schedules

AMERICAN CONFERENCE					
East					
Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
Miami	9	6	0	.600	354 274
New England	8	7	0	.533	354 322
N.Y. Jets	8	7	0	.533	317 319
Buffalo	7	8	0	.467	352 388
South					
Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
x-Tennessee	10	5	0	.667	354 321
Indianapolis	9	6	0	.600	329 300
Jacksonville	6	9	0	.400	315 295
Houston	4	11	0	.267	210 343
North					
Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
x-Pittsburgh	9	5	1	.633	356 314
Cleveland	8	7	0	.533	320 304
Baltimore	7	8	0	.467	285 320
Cincinnati	2	13	0	.133	270 429
West					
Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
x-Oakland	10	5	0	.667	426 304
Denver	8	7	0	.533	355 337
Kansas City	8	7	0	.533	467 375
San Diego	8	7	0	.533	305 336

West					
Team	W	L	T	Pct	PF PA
x-San Francisco	10	5	0	.667	347 320
Seattle	6	9	0	.400	324 341
St. Louis	6	9	0	.400	285 349
Arizona	5	10	0	.333	255 380
x-clinched division					
Saturday's Games					
Minnesota 20, Miami 17					
San Francisco 17, Arizona 14					
Philadelphia 27, Dallas 3					
Sunday's Games					
Atlanta 36, Detroit 15					
Green Bay 10, Buffalo 0					
Washington 26, Houston 10					
Carolina 24, Chicago 14					
N.Y. Giants 44, Indianapolis 27					
Tennessee 28, Jacksonville 10					
Kansas City 24, San Diego 22					
Cincinnati 20, New Orleans 13					
Seattle 30, St. Louis 10					
Oakland 28, Denver 16					
Cleveland 14, Baltimore 13					
N.Y. Jets 30, New England 17					
Monday's Game					
Pittsburgh 17, Tampa Bay 7					
Saturday					
Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants, 11:30 a.m.					
Kansas City at Oakland, 3 p.m.					
Sunday					
Minnesota at Detroit, 11 a.m.					
Dallas at Washington, 11 a.m.					
Tennessee at Houston, 11 a.m.					
Miami at New England, 11 a.m.					
Baltimore at Pittsburgh, 11 a.m.					
Cincinnati at Buffalo, 11 a.m.					
Atlanta at Cleveland, 11 a.m.					
Carolina at New Orleans, 11 a.m.					
Jacksonville at Indianapolis, 2:05 p.m.					
Green Bay at N.Y. Jets, 2:15 p.m.					
Seattle at San Diego, 2:15 p.m.					
Arizona at Denver, 2:15 p.m.					
Tampa Bay at Chicago, 6:30 p.m.					
Monday					
San Francisco at St. Louis, 7 p.m.					



Griese's status uncertain against Arizona

DENVER (AP) — Brian Griese's sprained left knee was still sore Monday, but the Denver Broncos will not know until later this week whether their quarterback will play in the finale against Arizona.

Griese, who earlier missed two games with a similar injury, did not return to the game after he was sacked by Oakland's Bill Romanowski in the second quarter of Denver's 28-16 loss

to the Raiders on Sunday.

He threw two interceptions in the first quarter and had a quarterback rating of 14.7 before being injured.

Broncos coach Mike Shanahan said Monday Griese's knee was worse than three weeks ago, when he wasn't able to play against the San Diego Chargers.

"It's quite sore today," Shanahan said. "It might be a little more serious

than the San Diego situation, so right now it's kind of hard to tell. I don't think we'll know for sure for a couple days."

Griese said the pain was similar to what he felt against Seattle on Nov. 17 when he was injured the first time.

"He just hit me right on the knee and I felt it pop in there again," Griese said after the game. "I don't know the extent, but it's the same thing I did in

Seattle, and I wasn't able to put on any pressure on it."

Wide receiver Ed McCaffrey had a bruised sternum and hand, and running back Clinton Portis had a bruised knee cap. Shanahan believes both will be ready for the Cardinals. Shanahan also said starting left guard Steve Herndon, who missed the Oakland game with a hamstring injury, was doing better but will be evaluated again Wednesday.

ap top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press' men's college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records through Dec. 22, total points based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and previous ranking:

Record	Pts	Pv
1. Alabama (35)	8-0	1,718
2. Pittsburgh (14)	8-0	1,673
3. Duke (16)	6-0	1,657
4. Arizona (5)	5-1	1,551
5. Oklahoma	6-1	1,406
6. Connecticut	7-0	1,299
7. Illinois (1)	8-0	1,279
8. Notre Dame	10-1	1,250
9. Texas	7-2	1,135
10. Indiana	8-1	1,113
11. Oregon	8-1	1,029
12. Florida	8-2	917
13. Marquette	7-1	822
14. Kentucky	6-2	806
15. Michigan St.	7-2	761
16. Mississippi St.	7-1	756
17. Missouri	6-1	726
18. Creighton	9-0	614
19. Kansas	6-3	585
20. Tulsa	6-1	334
21. Xavier	6-2	314
22. North Carolina	7-2	296
23. Maryland	4-3	212
24. LSU	7-1	173
25. Wake Forest	6-0	87

Others receiving votes: Saint Joseph's 77, Georgetown 52, Butler 51, Stanford 47, N.C. State 46, Georgia 34, Cincinnati 27, Texas Tech 25, Virginia 24, Minnesota 22, Clemson 20, Gonzaga 19, Syracuse 19, Oklahoma St. 17, BYU 16, Louisville 15, Coll. of Charleston 12, Iowa St. 11, Wisconsin 11, West Virginia 9, Wyoming 5, Penn 2, N. Arizona 1.

recreation results

CO-ED Volleyball Mini-Tournament
Wednesday December 18

ADM-Collingwood Grain over Duell Farms 11-5, 11-6

American Family Insurance over Scared Hitless 11-4, 12-10

Pirate Electric/Brewster Frontier Equity over Alex's Radiator & Repair 11-4, 11-6

First National Bank-I over Killa B's 11-6, 11-9

Killa B's over Alex's Radiator & Repair 7-11, 11-3, 11-9

American Family Insurance over ADM-Collingwood Grain 11-2, 11-0

First National Bank-I over Pirate Electric/Brewster Frontier Equity 3-11, 11-7, 11-9

Century Feeders over First National Bank-II 11-5, 11-3

Duell Farms over Scared Hitless 11-3, 11-3

Killa B's over First National Bank-II 11-4, 11-1

First National Bank-I over Century Feeders 11-4, 6-11, 11-8

Duell Farms over Killa B's 11-2, 12-10

American Family Insurance over First National Bank-I 11-9, 11-6

CCR Men's Basketball
Thursday December 19

Herf Chevrolet/Buick over Dautel Furniture 61-50

Kuhrt Ranch over Screwbands 57-45

Who will be the First Baby of 2003?

Sherman County BCR men ads run this Friday, Dec. 27, and then again within a week following the birth of the first child born at Goodland Regional Medical Center. Deadline for advertising and gift donation information is 1 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 26. Call Bill or Eric at *The Goodland Daily News* Thursday morning for more information at 899-2338.

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