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Vick returns, falls short in 17-13 loss to Texans

HOUSTON (AP) — Michael Vick's return was less than triumphant.

Domanick Davis ran for two quick touchdowns early in the third quarter and David Carr made his own unplanned appearance Sunday, rallying the Texans to a 17-13 victory Sunday over the Falcons.

It was Vick's first game since fracturing his right leg in the second week of preseason.

"I think I've got my elusiveness back," Vick said. "I have to take my hat off to their defense. They gave me some looks I hadn't seen in a long time. They did their homework and it was just their day."

Vick, the top overall draft choice in 2001 who set an NFL rushing mark for quarterbacks with 1,066 yards over his first two seasons, made his debut with 2:14 remaining in the third quarter. He completed a 9-yard pass to Justin Griffith on his first play, though the drive ended with a punt.

Vick relieved Doug Johnson, who started eight times in Vick's absence. Johnson was 12-of-27 for 116 yards and an interception that cost the Falcons (2-10), who have lost three straight and 10 of 11.

Texans linebacker Jay Foreman was miffed the Falcons didn't start their best quarterback.

"At the start we thought he was hurt, then we could see he was throwing on the sidelines and wasn't hurt," Foreman said. "They took the Texans like it was a warmup game, and we took it personal."

Cornerback Marcus Coleman had a slightly different take. "Apparently he could have started. We're just glad he didn't," Coleman said.

Vick was 8-of-11 for 60 yards and ran three times for 16 yards in just over a quarter of action.

Before Vick came back, it was last year's top draft pick making the first unscheduled appearance. Carr was supposed to miss the game after spraining his right shoulder two weeks ago. But he was pressed into action when Tony Banks broke his right hand on another player's helmet near the end of the first half.

Carr, playing in obvious pain, led a 63-yard drive on the Texans' first possession of the second half, getting 36 yards himself with a Vick-like run to the Atlanta 22. Davis ran untouched for a 7-yard touchdown and a 10-7 lead for the Texans (5-7).

Johnson's next play was an interception thrown right to Coleman, who ran it back 22 yards to the Atlanta 13. Davis took it from there, punching it in from 2 yards for his second score in less than three minutes.

Davis, the Texans' standout rookie, ran for 101 yards on 24 carries. It was his fourth 100-yard performance.

Carr, who slumped in discomfort after some of his five pass attempts, completed two for 25 yards and an interception. Vick also showed he wasn't himself when linebacker Shantee Orr caught him and forced an intentional grounding penalty that led to Jay Feely's 42-yard field goal with 1:24 left.

Coleman covered the ensuing outside kickoff and the Texans exhausted the clock.

"We knew we had to raise the level of our play, because we know what type of player he is," said Orr, promoted from the practice squad three games ago. "When he rolled out on the second or third play, you could see he was ready to play. It was an awesome accomplishment to stop him."

Carr downplayed his injury, which appeared worse when he was tackled after the long run.

"I don't think I reinjured it, just aggravated it, so it made it a little difficult to throw," Carr said.

Texans offensive coordinator Chris Palmer said the Texans considered substituting rookie Dave Ragone, who has not played yet, had the situation called for more passing.

T.J. Duckett, getting the start after Warrick Dunn suffered a season-ending left foot injury last week, had a 1-yard TD run in the second quarter. He finished with just 31 yards on 12 carries against a notoriously soft Houston run defense.

Kris Brown hit a 40-yard field goal later in the quarter for Houston. The Falcons, who led 7-3 at halftime, fell to 0-6 when leading at the break.

NOTES: Duckett has scored touchdowns in five straight games. ... The Texans' Kris Brown has made 15 straight field goals of 40 yards or less. He missed a 52-yard try toward the end of the first half when he banged it off the right upright. ... Texans reserve safety Ramon Walker, who blocked a punt and a field goal try last week against New England, tore a ligament in his left knee and is out for the season.

"At the start we thought he was hurt, then we could see he was throwing on the sidelines and wasn't hurt."

— Jay Foreman
Texans linebacker

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Banks leaves game with broken hand

HOUSTON (AP) — Pressed into service Sunday to replace injured backup Tony Banks, Domanick Davis didn't take long for Texans to rally starting quarterback David Carr to test the wounded right shoulder that had kept him out of action the past two weeks.

At his own 42-yard line after his third play after starting the second half of the Texans game against Atlanta, Carr went back to pass, then his right upheld for 36 yards before he was slammed to the turf — right shoulder first — by defensive back Kevin Mathis. It was the longest run of two-year NFL career, and maybe the most painful although Carr downplayed the hurt.

"I knew the kind of pain that was in," center Steve McKinzie said. "Every time he threw or down, it hurt him."

"I don't think I re-injured it, just aggravated it so it made it a little difficult to throw," Carr said. Grimacing, hunched over and obviously hurting, Carr stopped to his feet.

"It was my own fault," Carr said, explaining why he didn't just slide to avoid a tackle near the end zone and I thought he was going to score."

Five plays later, Domanick Davis ran in from seven yards out for a touchdown to give the Texans a 10-7 lead, a lead he never surrendered en route to a 17-14 victory.

"He did land on his shoulder and it did bother him," Texas coach Dom Capers said. "I'm very interested to see how he was going to do. David went out and put together a courageous effort."

Carr had to come in after Banks broke his hand late in the first half, an injury Capers said would likely end Banks' season.

It appeared Banks, a seven-year veteran in his second season with Houston, hit his hand on a helmet as he completed a 12-yard pass to Domanick Davis.

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