

Steelers, Cards to play for title

PITTSBURGH — Arizona and Pittsburgh will play a historic Super Bowl in Tampa in two weeks: a team with a history as bad as any in the NFL against one that will try to win a record sixth title. Pittsburgh opens as a 6-1/2 point favorite.

The Steelers topped the Baltimore Ravens 23-14 last night after the Arizona Cardinals beat the Philadelphia Eagles 32-25.

In typical Steel Curtain fashion, the Steelers defense stifled Baltimore and intercepted rookie quarterback Joe Flacco three times in the AFC championship game.

Santonio Holmes scored on an electrifying 65-yard catch-and-run in the first half.

Hard-hitting safety Troy Polamalu returned an interception 40 yards for a clinching TD with 4:24 remaining for the Steelers. Jeff Reed kicked three field goals.

But the star of the day collectively was the Steelers defense. It held the Ravens to 198 total yards. Pittsburgh harassed Flacco into a 13-for-30 passing day.

The Steelers nullified Baltimore's running game, holding the Ravens to just 73 yards rushing on 25 carries.

"We didn't start this journey to get to Tampa," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said afterward. "We have some business to do there."

The matchup is intriguing — Tomlin vs. the Cardinals' Ken Whisenhunt, the offensive coordinator when the Steelers won the Super Bowl three seasons ago. He went to Arizona only after being passed over for Pittsburgh's job.

After winning the NFC West with a record of 9-7, the Cards have advanced to the NFL championship game.

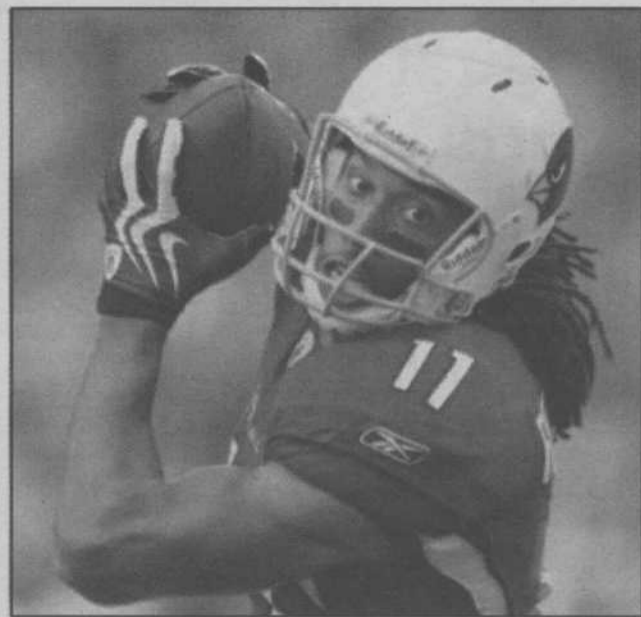
After trailing at the half 24-6, the Eagles made a

game of it by scoring three unanswered touchdowns in the third and fourth quarters. Donovan McNabb led the way with two scoring completions to Brent Celek and a third to DeSean Jackson. That gave Philly a 25-24 lead after their two-point conversion failed.

The Cardinals regained the lead on Kurt Warner's fourth TD pass. He tossed three in the first half to All-Pro receiver Larry Fitzgerald. The winning pass

was caught by Tim Hightower from eight yards out. The Cards went for two and the pass from Warner to Ben Patrick was good, making the final score 32-25.

So the Cardinals, founding members of the NFL but historically among the most dysfunctional franchises in the league, are going to their first Super Bowl. The franchise last won an NFL title in 1947 when the team was known as the Chicago Cardinals.



Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald is a big threat.

Exemption helps minority golfers

Special to Sentinel-Voice
Nearly 50 years after Charlie Sifford became the first Black to join the PGA Tour, the Northern Trust Open announced Monday an exemption in his name for a player who represents the advancement of diversity in golf.

The annual "Charlie Sifford Exemption" will be recognized Feb. 18, the day before the tournament begins at Riviera.

"It's something that should have been done a long time ago," Sifford said in a telephone interview. "This is a wonderful thing. It will give someone a chance."

The exemption coincides with the 40-year anniversary of Sifford winning the Los Angeles Open for his second and final PGA Tour victory. He spent the prime of his career simply trying to play, for the PGA had a Caucasian-only clause.

Sifford led the effort to have that clause rescinded in 1961, but he still faced ridicule and death threats.

Sifford became the first Black inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2004.

"Our hope is that the Charlie Sifford Exemption will raise awareness of Mr. Sifford's achievements while continuing to broaden the game's appeal," said Rick

Waddell, president and CEO of Northern Trust.

Such groups as the tour, PGA Minority Collegiate Golf Championship, The First Tee and the USGA will help identify the candidates.

While the PGA Tour this year features players from 19 countries, it has taken a step backward with U.S. minorities, particularly Blacks. Tiger Woods is the only member with African-American heritage, but he joined the tour years after the success of Black players such as Lee Elder, Calvin Peete, Jim Dent and Jim Thorpe.

Tim O'Neal from Savannah, Ga., has made it as far as the Nationwide Tour, while Kevin Hall, a Black golfer from Cincinnati who is also deaf, has played the PGA Tour on an occasional sponsor's exemption. Hall won a Hooters Tour event last year.

Sifford attributed the lack of Black PGA Tour members in part on the high cost to play, and the need for corporate support. Even so, he said the exemption for the Northern Trust Open can only help.

The Sony Open has a yearlong competition that awards an unrestricted exemption to Hawaii's top amateur to play in the event.

"It's a good idea, and I'm glad somebody is doing it," Sifford said.

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