



By Greg Benson

San Leandro Times

The stage was set before a sold-out O.co Coliseum Monday night. Ice Cube just jazzed the crowd with his O Town rap and legendary KISS rocker Gene Simmons belted out an inspirational rendition of the Star Spangled Banner.

The bayside breeze swirled with electricity as the Raiders bobbed up and down along the sideline, eagerly anticipating a prime-time showdown with their AFC West rivals across the field.

It was now time to see how far this team had progressed in the process of developing a new team, in a new era, with new coaches, new players and a new general manager — something this franchise hasn't seen in nearly 50 years.

What resulted on the field could only be explained as a work in progress.

Sure, workhorse Darren McFadden posted decent numbers, but that was because no one else on offense could produce positive plays.

McFadden led the team in rushing and receiving — setting a franchise record for receptions (13) by a running back and nearly matching Tim Brown's all-time record (14)... for any Raiders player in a single game.

The offense sputtered in the first half. Quarterback Carson Palmer continually checked down to dump the ball off to McFadden — time after time. The Raiders were losing altitude quickly, then special teams took a nose dive.

Long snapper Jon Condo went out with a concussion in the second quarter, and things just got ugly from that point on. Condo's replacement, linebacker Travis Goethel, struggled in his new role — skipping his first snap along the ground to punter Shane Lechler (leading to a tackle and turnover on downs). The next attempt was slow and off target leading to a blocked punt — something Lechler has avoided for six seasons. Then another skipped snap ended with the Chargers taking possession at the Raiders 42 yard line. San Diego's kicker Nate Kaeding put it through the uprights from 45 yards out to lead the Raiders 22-6 with 5:06 left to play in the game.

“It was hard because you didn't know what you were going to get from one play to the next,” said head coach Dennis Allen about losing Condo and relying on Goethel. “We're going to have to have a plan for that going forward and we have to make sure we don't let that happen again.”

Special Teams Takes a Nose Dive

Thursday, 13 September 2012 16:09

Well, coach, with a short week of practice and a long flight to Miami, there's not much time to salvage the wreckage before possibly ending up as fish food in Florida.

CAPTION: Carson Palmer sets his sights down field but checks down to hit running back Darren McFadden for a short gain.

PHOTO BY GREG BENSON