

## Reeling Raiders Rely on Passing Game

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*By Greg Benson*

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For all the progress head coach Dennis Allen has made with the Oakland Raiders, the team took a big step backward last Sunday in a hard-fought loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, 32-42.

After going 1-3 to begin the season, the Raiders showed signs of steady improvement, playing well in a losing effort against the undefeated Atlanta Falcons and beating Jacksonville and Kansas City, back to back.

Even going in at halftime on Sunday, the Raiders led the Bucs 10-7 and held Tampa Bay running backs to only 34 yards.

Then, like a mad Mighty Mouse, one little ground-grubbing gerbil shredded the whole thing up. Tampa Bay rookie running back Doug “Muscle Hamster” Martin ran wild through gaping defensive holes and outstretched arms, scoring four touchdowns on 251 rushing yards.

With starting running back Darren McFadden sidelined with a high ankle sprain, and playing from behind, the Raiders resorted to a pass-heavy offense. Quarterback Carson Palmer targeted 10 different receivers on 62 attempts in the game — double what would be average. But two costly interceptions late in the game squashed the hopes of a fourth-quarter comeback.

Reliable tight end Brandon Myers and rookie wide receiver Rod Streater were Palmer's top two targets. And now, with both McFadden and backup rusher Mike Goodson hobbled with high ankle sprains, Palmer will be even more reliant on the entire receiving set for offensive production.

**CAPTION: Raiders rookie wide receiver Rod Streater caught 4 passes for 54 yards in the 32-42 loss to Tampa Bay on Sunday.**

*PHOTO BY GREG BENSON*