

Newton leads Panthers past Eagles 30-22

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By DAN GELSTON

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — They were two words on a sponsor's banner draped behind the Philadelphia Eagles' postgame podium: Imagine. Change.

For disgusted Eagles fans, that's all they can do, especially with coach Andy Reid still running the show. They won't have to imagine much longer.

After 14 seasons, one Super Bowl appearance, and, now a dreadful losing streak, the countdown to the end of Reid's tenure is hitting high gear in Philadelphia. Owner Jeffrey Lurie already has said that an 8-8 record would be "unacceptable" this year.

The Eagles would have to finish 5-0 just to get there after Cam Newton threw for two touchdowns and ran for two more to lead the Carolina Panthers to a 30-22 victory over the Philadelphia Eagles on Monday night.

Newton, who hadn't played up to his sensational rookie season, showed no signs of a sophomore slump against Philadelphia's porous pass defense. He finished 18 of 28 for 306 yards and had a passer rating of 125 in a matchup of teams with the worst records in the NFC.

Newton was only the latest player to shine against an Eagles (3-8) team about all out of hope. The Eagles haven't won since beating the defending Super Bowl champion New York Giants to

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go 3-1, a skid that has put Reid's job in real jeopardy. Unless Lurie has an implausible change of heart, Reid's run is about over, an inglorious end for the coach who led the Eagles to five conference championship games.

Lurie ducked out of a pregame press conference for the team's Hall of Fame before he could take questions from reporters. Reid said he hasn't discussed his job status with his boss.

"I'm not worried about all of the other things," Reid said. "I'm worried about winning football games and making sure I get my players coached up to where we do a better job with that."

As Philadelphia's seventh straight loss came to a close, some fed-up fans held up a banner that read, "Jeff This Is On You."

While Lurie surely joins Reid in taking a share of the blame for this ugly season, the players have been awful.

"I feel bad for Andy because he's in a horrible situation in a town that is critical, and rightly so," tight end Brent Celek said. "If I was the fans, I'd be mad, too. I don't see Andy as the problem. I see it as us."

Their latest problem was an inability to solve Newton.

Newton, the No. 1 overall pick in 2011, lived up to the hype by throwing for 4,051 yards with 21 TD passes and 14 TDs on the ground in his first year. He entered this game with only nine TD passes and four TDs rushing, a major disappointment for Panthers fans.

But Newton outshined rookie seventh-round pick Nick Foles in his Monday night debut.

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Newton had a 24-yard TD toss over the middle to a wide-open Gary Barnidge for a 7-3 lead. He connected with Brandon LaFell on a 43-yard pass to make it 14-3 later in the first quarter. LaFell was wide open on the play, taking advantage of another breakdown in coverage in the secondary.

Newton led a 95-yard drive to open the third quarter, finishing it off with a 1-yard leap to give the Panthers a 21-15 lead. Newton hit Louis Murphy for a 55-yard gain on a second-and-11 from Carolina's 16.

"I think my best game is still to come," Newton said. "I'm still focused on getting better each and every week."

Carolina (3-8) went ahead 24-22 early in the fourth quarter on Graham Gano's 23-yard field goal.

"It's been a long time in coming," Panthers coach Ron Rivera said. "Lots of people contributed and made plays. Real proud of what we did and the things we did to give ourselves a chance to win."

Bryce Brown set an Eagles' rookie record with 178 yards rushing, including TD runs of 65 and 5 yards. Brown, filling in for injured running back LeSean McCoy, surpassed Correll Buckhalter's rookie mark of 134 yards rushing in his first start since his senior year at Wichita East High School in 2008. Brown also lost two fumbles, including one in Panthers' territory.

Foles was so-so in his second straight start for Michael Vick, who sat out with a concussion. Foles was 16 of 21 for 119 yards.

"The most important thing for me was for us to get the win and that didn't happen tonight," Brown said. "I felt like a lot of that had to do with my two turnovers. It really, really cost us."

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After Gano's field goal put them up for good, the Panthers finally stopped Brown when it mattered most, stuffing him on a fourth-and-1 to take over on downs at their 40. Newton led them downfield, running in from the 2 to make it 30-22. Gano, signed last week, missed the extra point. But Brandon Boykin fumbled after a 44-yard kickoff return, the Panthers recovered and held the ball the final 4:29.

The Panthers have shown they're better than their record. They have lost six games by less than a touchdown, including a 2-point loss at Atlanta and a 1-point loss at Chicago.

"It's a huge stage, Monday Night Football, on the road," tackle Jordan Gross said. "It was just big for us and big for the guys on the team who haven't experienced something like this."

For the Eagles, it was simply the latest loss in a season stuffed with them. The Linc was quiet and empty except for some boos when busted coverage led to another Carolina TD. They fled for the exits once the Panthers took over for the final time.

Dwindling fan support is one thing. Losing it from Lurie is quite another for Reid.

"He's as competitive as anybody and he wants to win games," Reid said. "That's what he's in this business for."

NOTES: Neither Vick nor McCoy has been cleared to return to practice. The injury-depleted Eagles lost wide receiver DeSean Jackson (sternum) and defensive tackle Fletcher Cox (tail bone) in the first half. ... The Eagles inducted five-time Pro Bowl cornerback Troy Vincent and longtime front office executive Leo Carlin into the team's Hall of Fame at halftime. ... Brown's 65-yard TD run was the longest for the Eagles since McCoy's 66-yard TD vs NYG on Nov. 1, 2009. ... Buckhalter had 134 yards rushing vs. Arizona on Oct. 7, 2001. ... Newton led the Panthers with 52 yards rushing.

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