

Bijan Robinson runs roughshod over the Packers as the Falcons breeze to a 35-14 victory

BY STEVE MEGARGEE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREEN BAY, Wis. — Once the Atlanta Falcons finally reached the red zone, they kept coming back again and again.

Bijan Robinson rushed for 194 yards and two touchdowns as the Falcons capitalized on the return of quarterback Michael Penix Jr. and trounced the punchless Green Bay Packers 35-14 on Thursday night.

Atlanta (1-2) erased an early 7-0 deficit by scoring 27 straight points to take control amid a chorus of boos at Lambeau Field. The Falcons outrushed the Packers 242 yards to 17.

It was a stunning turn of events for an Atlanta offense that hadn't run a single play inside an opponent's 20-yard line during the first two weeks of the season.

“That was the weight off the shoulders — just getting back to the red zone,” Robinson said. “And we knew we had to punch it in every opportunity we get when we get down there. That was the main focus — to get the ball down there and let's put the ball in the end zone. When we scored, it was definitely something we enjoyed, and we kept on doing it.”

Penix went 18 of 25 for 256 yards with one touchdown and an interception in his first action since tearing the ACL in his left knee during a loss to Carolina on Nov. 16.

“I'm proud of him,” Falcons coach Kevin Stefanski said. “It's not easy to rehab from injuries. That's a tough thing to do, that he's put

himself through — the extra workouts in the weight room, the extra treatments in the training room, all those times that he's out in the field and he's running when no one's watching.”

Atlanta had struggled to produce any offense whatsoever in two games with Cooper Rush at quarterback. The Falcons became the first team since the 2008 Rams not to run any plays in the red zone through the first two weeks of a season.

That wasn't a problem Thursday.

Robinson and Drake London became the first teammates to each compile at least 190 yards from scrimmage in a road game since Lawrence McCutcheon and Ron Jessie did it for the Rams at Miami on Oct. 3, 1976. London caught nine passes for a career-high 194 yards.

“Me and Drake, that's my real-life brother,” Robinson said. “I call him my blood brother. We do everything together.”

Green Bay (1-2) lost a home opener for the first time since falling 30-22 to the San Francisco 49ers in 2012. The Packers had won 13 straight home openers from 2013-25 to share the NFL record with the Miami Dolphins, who also won 13 in a row from 1976-88.

“We've got a couple extra days here, and everybody's got to take a long, hard look at themselves,” Packers coach Matt LaFleur said. “We've got to find solutions and just come back ready to work.”

Green Bay's Jordan Love went 28 of 53 for 312 yards with two touchdowns — one

to Christian Watson and another to Matthew Golden — and an interception. MarShawn Lloyd and Kaleb Johnson combined for 17 yards on eight carries.

Love was working behind an offensive line missing left guard Aaron Banks and right tackle Zach Bako-Bewele, who tore his patellar tendon Sunday and will miss the rest of the season. Banks was dealing with a toe injury.

Jager Burton, a rookie fifth-round pick from Kentucky, made his first career start at left guard, and 2025 second-round selection Anthony Belton started at right tackle.

The lack of discipline that hindered Green Bay in its first two games cropped up again Thursday.

Green Bay led 7-0 and had forced an apparent third-and-11 incompletion late in the first quarter when Brenton Cox Jr. was called for roughing the passer. Robinson delivered a 55-yard carry on the next play to set up his own 3-yard touchdown run.

The Packers had committed an NFL-high 26 penalties through the first two weeks of the season.

Atlanta dominated the rest of the first half and led 17-7 at the break.



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Nick Folk put Atlanta ahead by hitting a 44-yard field goal with 4:48 left in the second quarter. After Atlanta's Zach Harrison blocked Trey Smack's 47-yard field-goal attempt, Penix threw a 5-yard touchdown pass to Austin Hooper on third-and-goal with 59 seconds left in the half.

Green Bay wasted a red-zone opportunity on its first drive of the second half when Love couldn't connect with Watson in the end zone on fourth-and-1 from the 7. Atlanta poured it on from there.

“It felt great to get a win. It felt great to come out of there healthy. Just blessed, just blessed,” Penix said.

INJURIES

Falcons: CB A.J. Terrell (groin) didn't play after getting placed on injured reserve this week.

Packers: LB Edgerrin Cooper was evaluated for a concussion in the second half. G Jacob Monk hurt his quadriceps late in the fourth quarter.

UP NEXT

Falcons: At New Orleans on Monday, Oct. 5.

Packers: At Tampa Bay on Oct. 4.

MAN

FROM PAGE B3

millions of dollars on some of the world's best players over the following two decades.

City has been the most dominant team in England over the last 15 years, winning eight Premier League titles since 2012 as well as the Champions League in 2023. Over the period in question — 2009-18 — City won the league three times, in 2012, 2014 and 2018.

Friday's news comes after Pep Guardiola stood down as City manager at the end of last season following an unprecedented period of success.

Guardiola always maintained the club's innocence.

“What people accuse us of we do not agree with what they say,” he said in 2023.

On Friday, former Manchester United and England player Rio Ferdinand suggested City's titles should be expunged and awarded to the runner-up for each season in question.

“Another premier league

medal to be added to the cabinet,” he posted on X in reference to City's 2012 title win over United.

The Premier League competition has had financial fair play rules designed to ensure clubs essentially spend what they earn from deals that are assessed to determine if they are at legitimate market value. City had previously been accused by UEFA, European soccer's governing body, of overstating sponsorship revenue to comply with Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations.

In 2020, UEFA ruled City had committed “serious breaches” of FFP regulations from 2012-16. But a two-year ban was later overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport because allegations were either rejected or found to have happened too long ago to be investigated.

The Premier League charges came subsequently, after a four-year investigation. City was accused of more than 100 breaches including providing misleading information about its finances and failure to co-operate with the investigation.

Douglas reported from Sundsvall, Sweden.

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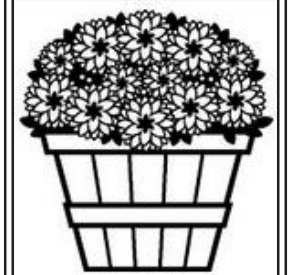


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