

Cutler shakes off injury, Bears beat Lions 13-7

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The Associated Press

CHICAGO — There was a big gasp going through the stadium as Jay Cutler writhed in pain on the field.

He rose to his feet. The Bears defense rose to the occasion.

Cutler returned after bruising his ribs, and Brian Urlacher made a key fumble recovery to help Chicago beat the Detroit Lions 13-7 on Monday night for its fourth straight win.

It was certainly not an easy night for the NFC North leaders, particularly their quarterback, but they came away with the win after a week off and possibly buried Detroit (2-4) in the process despite getting a major scare along the way.

That happened in the second quarter when Cutler was sacked by Ndamukong Suh and ultimately wound up going to the locker room to have his ribs examined.

“He’s a tough guy,” coach Lovie Smith said. “Most people thought Jay would get up. Unless it’s a broken leg or something like that, he’s going to get up. He is a tough guy. ... That was a gutsy effort by him. He was in some pain, but he fought through it.”

Cutler came back to start the second half and was 16 of 31 with 150 yards and a touchdown in the game, and although he said he was feeling “all right” afterward, he acknowledged he wasn’t at full strength during the game.

“But we had to fight through it,” he added.

They did just that, and with the defense locking down the Lions, the Bears (5-1) prevailed. It was a huge blow for last-place Detroit, a team many expected to contend for the division championship after making the playoffs for the first time in more than a decade.

“It’s tough,” Lions receiver Calvin Johnson said. “We had a great week of practice last week and it just didn’t translate. It just didn’t translate to the field today.”

The Lions simply never got in gear, and when they had chances, they blew them, turning the ball over four times. The biggest came early in the third quarter, when Joique Bell fumbled at the goal line with the Bears leading 13-0.

Urlacher recovered and Chicago hung on from there, sending Detroit to its fourth loss in five games.

Brandon Marshall caught six passes for 81 yards and scored a touchdown on Chicago’s first possession. Matt Forte ran for 96 yards, and with the defense doing its part again, Chicago never really was threatened in this one.

It was a rough night for the Lions, with Matthew Stafford going 28 of 46 for 261 yards after leading the late charge in last week’s win over Philadelphia. Johnson had trouble shaking the Bears’ Charles Tillman and finished with three catches for 34 yards. He dropped a deep pass over the middle on the game’s first possession even though he was wide open.

“Calvin is one of the best players in the league,” Smith said. “It’s hard for Detroit to win games without him being productive. That’s why you need a guy like Charles Tillman that can match up on him. It made them go look at other ways to get the ball down field. That’s going to lead up to wins most of the time, when we can get that kind of effort out of Charles.”

The Lions lost receiver Nate Burleson for the remainder of the season to a broken right leg in the third quarter on a hit by Tim Jennings after a catch, another blow for a team that’s reeling again after pulling out a dramatic win.

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“There is a lot of season left,” Stafford said. “We got a chance to play back home next week and play a tough Seattle team. It’s a short week for us but honestly I’m glad it’s a short week. I don’t want to be sitting around thinking about this one too much longer.”

There weren’t many scares for the Bears, with one big exception. They were leading 10-0 in the second quarter and had just taken over at their 26 when that happened.

Cutler, who had his helmet ripped off on a hit by Suh after a run last year at Soldier Field, got driven to the turf by him on an 8-yard sack. He came up kneeling and holding his head as trainers tended to him, then ran to the sideline.

Jason Campbell came in for one play, but Cutler returned right after that and threw an incomplete pass on third down before Chicago punted. But after Julius Peppers recovered a fumble by Mikel Leshoure to stop a Lions threat, Campbell was behind center while Cutler was having his ribs examined.

Smith insisted the hit on Cutler was not dirty and that Suh was simply “playing hard, trying to win the game.”

Marshall apparently took issue with the hit even though Smith and Cutler did not, posting on Twitter, “A Suh. What u did to Jay wasn’t cool. Great players don’t have to do that.”

Cutler, like Smith, thought it was clean, even though he knew it wasn’t going to end well for him once Suh wrapped him up.

When Cutler trotted onto the field to start the second half, some fans cheered.

They were really roaring moments later when Stefan Logan fumbled trying to catch Adam Podlesh’s punt. Zack Bowman recovered it for Chicago at the 27, and that led to a 21-yard field goal by Robbie Gould to make it 13-0 after Cutler had two passes broken up with the ball on the 3.

The Lions lost Burluson after a 16-yard catch near midfield on the next possession but drove all the way to the 1 before Bell turned it over. As he lunged over the pile, Henry Melton poked the ball out and Urlacher made the recovery to keep the shutout going. D.J. Moore extended it when he picked off Stafford near the goal line in the closing minutes. The Lions spoiled the shutout when Stafford connected with Ryan Broyles on a 12-yarder with 30 seconds left, but it was another big game from a defense that’s been dominating all season.

“We really wanted to make them a little more one dimensional,” Melton said. “They still ran the ball a little bit more than we wanted them to, but when it was time to get after the quarterback, we really got after him. When they dropped it off we really got after whoever they dropped it off to.”

Notes: The Bears were in line for their first shutout since they beat Miami 16-0 on Nov. 18, 2010, until Broyles’ TD. ... The Lions signed CB Justin Miller and released LB Doug Hogue before the game. ... Detroit had more yards than Chicago — 340 to 296.

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