Bengals beat Colts 42-28 to stay perfect at home

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Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Andy Dalton regained his passing touch on a wintery afternoon, keeping the Cincinnati Bengals firmly in control of the AFC North.

Dalton threw for three touchdowns and ran for another on Sunday, giving his best performance since October, and the Cincinnati Bengals remained perfect at home with a 42-28 victory over the Indianapolis Colts.

The Bengals (9-4) improved to 6-0 at Paul Brown Stadium on a cold, windy day — 28 degrees at kickoff with a wind chill of 19 and light flurries.

Dalton threw for three touchdowns as the Bengals went up 21-0 and stayed ahead. His 8-yard run finished it off in the fourth quarter. Dalton was 24-of-35 for 275 yards without a sack or interception.

BenJarvus Green-Ellis had a pair of 1-yard touchdown runs — one of them on a review that overturned a call — as the Bengals piled up 430 yards.

The Colts (8-5) had another slow start in the cold, falling behind 21-0 before Andrew Luck threw

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four touchdown passes to keep them close. They never caught up as Dalton got the better of a head-to-head matchup of up-and-coming quarterbacks from Texas.

Despite the loss, the Colts were in position to clinch the AFC South later Sunday if Tennessee lost at Denver.

Indianapolis is in good shape but has some concerns. The Colts were drubbed 40-11 in Arizona two games ago and needed Adam Vinatieri's five field goals to beat Tennessee 22-14 last week.

The Bengals are having their best season at home since 1988, when they won all eight regular-season home games and two playoff games on the way to a second Super Bowl appearance and loss to San Francisco.

They're in position to clinch their first AFC North title since 2009 with two home games in the last three weeks.

Dalton was the AFC's offensive player of the month for October but has been inconsistent since then. He was sharp from the outset on Sunday, completing 6-of-7 for 81 yards on the Bengals' first drive, including a 29-yard touchdown pass to Marvin Jones.

The Colts have been outscored 49-9 in the first quarters of their past six games.

The Bengals got a pivotal touchdown on a reversed call with 1:06 left in the first half.

They went for it on fourth down from the Colts 1-yard line and Green-Ellis tripped and his knee hit at the 1 before he stretched into the end zone.

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He was initially ruled down — he started tripping after nose tackle Josh Chapman dived and swiped at his foot — but the officials overturned the call, deciding Green-Ellis had tripped on his own.

Trailing 21-0, Luck finally rallied the Colts.

He completed a slant pass that Da'Rick Rogers took 69 yards for a touchdown and another short pass that LaVon Brazill turned into a 19-yard touchdown, slipping through the hands of six defenders.

Dalton and the Bengals never let the Colts get closer than seven points.

Both teams reconfigured their offensive lines because of injuries. Cincinnati's had a good day in the cold. Dalton wasn't sacked and Green-Ellis and Giovani Bernard ran for a combined 147 yards.