

How the seahawks can beat the Lions in Week 4

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The upcoming face off against the Detroit Lions in the jet engine of crowd noise in Centurylink field is the definition of make or break. With a win the Seahawks will have reached .500 in the standings, and still have a likely shot at taking home the NFC West Title for the third year in a row. However, if they lose, they fall to 1-3, potentially tied for last in the NFC West race (Depending on the outcome of Rams @ Cardinals and 49ers v. Packers,) and with little chance of even winning the NFC wildcard.

However, as important as this game may be for the Seahawks, it is no less important for the Lions. The Lions hold the backhanded title of being the best team in the NFL to have not yet won a game this season. At 0-4, any slim chance of making the playoffs will be all but impossible. If, against all odds, they made the playoffs after an 0-4 start, they'd be just the second in history to do so. While the odds would certainly not be in the favor of a 1-3 Detroit Lions team, they would be far more preferable than the alternative of a winless start.

To put it simply, both teams will have to win this game if they want to have a realistic chance of making the playoffs this season. Both teams want this game to be in the W column.

So what do the Seahawks need to do in order to ensure that they don't lose this valuable game?

Continue to rush four players and only blitz occasionally

Matthew Stafford has been only partially to blame for his slow start.

When directly analyzing the Detroit Lion's stat sheet for the first 3 games, the first thing that stands out is the obvious lack of a powerful running game. Ameer Abdullah currently leads the Lions with just 87 rushing yards. Not only was his total yards number disappointing, his 3.9 yards/carry average isn't all that impressive either. However, even those below average numbers look like the stat-sheet of a super start when compared to his running-mate, Joique Bell. Bell has earned a mere 22 rushing yards with a putrid 1.1 yard/carry average. Yes, you read that right, *1.1 yards per carry*.

Granted, the O-Line hasn't just struggled with run blocking, but also with pass protection. Against the Denver Broncos, Stafford had an average of 1.9 seconds in the pocket. For the entire season, the Lions O-Line has allowed Stafford to be pressured on 22.5% of dropbacks. This may not seem too bad when you realize that this is hovering around the league middle for the first three weeks, but that stat alone doesn't show the faults that the Lion's line has been in these first three weeks. Opposing defenses have only blitzed on 19.6% of Stafford's dropbacks, far below league average. In fact, that's barely above Seattle's league low 18.7% of blitzing on opposing passes. Despite this low number, Seattle has still managed to rank 1st in the league in quarterback pressure average, getting pressure on a staggering 41.8% of dropbacks.

The Seahawks don't need to blitz to get pressure on Stafford, and can therefore put KJ and Bobby Wagner, two of the best pass coverage linebackers in football, into coverage, rather than needing them to blitz.

Run The Rock, and run it hard

Even if Marshawn Lynch has still not recovered from his calf injury yet, the Seahawks still have the ability to run the football consistently. Last week against the bears, Thomas Rawls ran for 104 yards on just 16 carries. That's right, Rawls ran for more in one week than Ameer Abdullah has in three.

While the Lions still arguably feature a better defense than the bears this season, they will likely be without their best defensive player, as linebacker DeAndre Levy is listed as doubtful to play against the Seahawks. While he hasn't set foot on the field so far this season, he was a key player in the Lion's powerful run defense, notching an impressive 151 tackles.

Two other key player from last year won't be taking the field for the Lions come Monday, Ndamukong Suh and Nick Fairley. This dangerous duo was a blocker eating force up the middle, with both Fairley and Suh both requiring their own respective double teams. However, this immovable plug of strength in the middle has been replaced with the far less threatening duo of Haloti Ngata and...Tyrunn Walker? Who?

Tyrunn Walker was the other Defensive Tackle added by the lions this offseason. While he did grade out positively per ProFootballFocus, he didn't come close to touching the +9.4 mark left by Fairley last season. While Haloti Ngata is still a great player in his own right, it is crazy to think that he will come close to the production that Suh brought to the table in 2014, especially considering how the lack of other great defensive players on the line may end up hurting his own production for the rest of the season.

Utilize Jimmy Graham on the seam route

The biggest criticism that was rightfully levelled at the Seahawks over the first two weeks was their underutilization of their most dangerous offensive weapon, tight end Jimmy Graham.

While they finally got around to utilizing him last week against the bears, this week the Seahawks would be smart to use him as much as they possibly can.

Missing linebacker DeAndre Levy will impact more than just the running game of the Seahawks. His natural ability as a coverage linebacker is well known, with him having received the 3rd highest coverage grade of linebackers in 2013, when he also led the team in interceptions with six.

Levy might have been a great fit to cover a large, fast tight end like Graham, but due to his injury the Lions are left without a real option to cover the type of player that Graham is. The 6'7" Graham has more than a 6 inch height advantage over the 6'0" safety Glover Quin and 6'1" Ameer Abdullah. The closest match for his height would be linebacker Kyle Van Noy, who stands at 6'3." However, even Van Noy isn't a good matchup, considering that he ran a 4.71 second 40 yard dash, as opposed to Graham's 4.56, and is still working on the intangibles of covering NFL pass-catchers.

Assuming the seahawks utilize him wisely, Jimmy Graham could very well go over 100 yards receiving in this game.

The effectiveness Seahawks offense will likely be what determines the determines the outcome of the game. Assuming that the Seahawks can effectively deliver on all of the aspects mentioned here, this will be an easy win.