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Injury report not bad for once

Hawks expect Tatupu, Kerney back for Eagles

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By CLARE FARNSWORTH
P-I REPORTER

RENTON -- The Seahawks' feel-good Sunday spilled over into a feel-better Monday.

The dour development from Sunday's 34-13 victory over the 49ers in San Francisco was injuries to middle linebacker Lofa Tatupu and defensive end Patrick Kerney. But coach Mike Holmgren was optimistic Monday that each of the Pro Bowl players from a year ago will be available for this week's game against the Philadelphia Eagles at Qwest Field.

HAWKS VS. EAGLES

WHEN/WHERE: Sunday, 1:15 p.m.,
Qwest Field

TV/RADIO: KCPQ/13; KIRO-AM/710

Tatupu strained his groin, while Kerney aggravated his left shoulder -- the same one that needed surgery during the offseason to repair a torn labrum.

Neither is expected to practice much this week, but each should be able to play.

On Tatupu, Holmgren said, "I believe he'll be able to play in the game Sunday."

On Kerney, he offered, "He is much stronger right now than he was yesterday. So our hope is, if he can regain his strength, which is the biggest thing, then we should have him as well.

"It scared him. Because it was the shoulder that he had operated on and he did so much rehab on."

The Seahawks pushed their record to 2-5 and climbed into a tie for second place in the NFC West with their win over the discombobulated 49ers. They will, of course, need to play better -- and that means having Tatupu and Kerney available -- if they are to upset the Eagles (4-3).

"We know that Philadelphia is coming in here and they're an outstanding football team," Holmgren said. "Hopefully we get a little bit lucky with our injury situation."

The news wasn't as good in regard to quarterback Matt Hasselbeck and wide receiver Deion Branch, who have missed the past three games with back and heel problems, respectively.

Hasselbeck was in Marina Del Rey, Calif., on Monday for a scheduled visit with Dr. Robert Watkins, the back specialist who diagnosed that the problem Hasselbeck was having with the right knee he hyperextended in the Week 5 loss to the New York Giants was related to

an old bulging disc injury.

"Matt's thing is the same," Holmgren said. "He will rehab during the week. They'll check his strength. Right now, it's on a week-to-week basis."

Until Hasselbeck can return, backup Seneca Wallace will remain the starter.

The situation with Branch, meanwhile, is not the same. Holmgren said he doubts that Branch will be available this week, but that he could be available for the Nov. 9 game against the Dolphins in Miami.

Branch has been out with what was originally called a bruised heel. But Monday, Holmgren said, "There's a little uncertainty to what it is, to be honest."

Branch worked out last Wednesday, but his foot was sore the next day.

"It's just a tough one," Holmgren said. "It's hard to figure. When he can work out and then the following day be OK, that's when he'll play."

Until Branch returns, the passing game will continue to use backup hands to catch balls from the backup quarterback.

Wallace completed eight passes to his wide receivers against the 49ers -- four to Koren Robinson, three to Bobby Engram and one to Keary Colbert. Only Engram figured into the team's plans at the start of the season, and he was still sidelined after cracking a bone in his right shoulder in the preseason opener.

But it was an improvement from the previous two games, when Wallace and No. 3 quarterback Charlie Frye combined to complete eight passes to the wideouts in losses to Green Bay and Tampa Bay.

"We're not out of the woods yet on offense, that's for sure," Holmgren said.

But he is refusing to let that crimp his play calling, as it did against the Packers and Bucs.

"You reach a point, what the heck," he said. "It's really one of those things, if you're going to go down or take some hits, go down with your own guns blazing. Let's just have some fun doing this, and let's see how that works."

FOCUS ON: LEONARD WEAVER

Even Mike Holmgren, who called the plays, refers to them as "first-down-getting plays." So how does the Seahawks coach explain those two short passes to fullback Leonard Weaver going for 43- and 62-yard touchdowns Sunday in the team's 34-13 victory over the 49ers in San Francisco?

Asked what was going through his mind as he watched his 242-pound blocking back weave his way to the end zone twice, Holmgren offered, "I mean, I just said, 'Finally. Finally we got a couple.'"

"I've been watching it go the other way a little bit for the last few weeks, and that's what you need. Every once in a while you just need one where you go, 'Wow. That's pretty good. I didn't expect that.' "

Weaver also ran his way into a select group. Since 1970, only four running backs had had two TD receptions of 43-plus yards in one game -- San Diego's Don Woods (1974), Buffalo's Joe Cribbs (1981), Cleveland's Eric Metcalf (1992) and Miami's Patrick Cobbs (this season). Weaver became the fifth, and the first fullback.

-- *Clare Farnsworth*

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