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A one-man highlight reel

Cardinals receiver Larry Fitzgerald dominated the action all day.

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GLENDALE, Ariz. - It's official: Larry Fitzgerald is the most feared receiver in professional football.

The Cardinals wideout has the NFL postseason records to back it up and the film of how he tortured the vaunted Eagles defense yesterday before halftime in the NFC title game. He was still around University of Phoenix Stadium making important plays at the end.

On his way to 152 receiving yards, Fitzgerald made a strong opening statement. It looked as if he was going to be stopped when the most feared hitter on the Eagles defense, Brian Dawkins, delivered Fitzgerald a shot in the left hip. Fitzgerald didn't seem to notice. On the same play, Eagles linebacker Chris Gocong hit him a glancing blow. Nothing. The Cardinals wide receiver got to the goal line on the 9-yard play before a Cardinals teammate finally knocked him down.

The Fitzgerald highlights kept coming. A second-quarter flea-flicker served its exact purpose, getting Fitzgerald one-on-one coverage from an overmatched rookie safety. His third touchdown called for a jump ball in the corner of the end zone, except Fitzgerald already had gotten past an Eagles cornerback and had the ball to himself, not needing the five or six inches he's got on Sheldon Brown.

The fifth-year pro out of the University of Pittsburgh already has more postseason receiving yards (one postseason) than anybody in history, 452, breaking a record held by Jerry Rice, and he still has the Super Bowl to go after the Cardinals' 32-25 victory.

"It's my job," Fitzgerald said. "I want to make sure I'm accountable, and if I'm not, I get that death stare from Kurt [Warner], and I try to stay away from that as much as possible."

Fitzgerald saw a lot of one-on-one coverage and abused it in the first half as the Cardinals protected Warner. In the third quarter, he felt the Eagles defense shifting more emphasis his way, Fitzgerald said, but felt like as the Eagles began getting to Warner, that actually freed him up a bit later on as the Eagles sent more bodies after the quarterback.

The big highlight was the second-quarter flea-flicker, the Eagles swarming to J.J. Arrington, who pitched it back to Warner, who lofted it toward Fitzgerald. Eagles rookie safety Quintin Demps had no chance. Falling down, Demps got a piece of Fitzgerald's left foot, but that didn't slow him a bit. The 62-yard pass put the Cardinals up by 14-3.

Warner said Cardinals coaches had seen the play worked in past years against the Eagles, so they brought it out.

"That was a play that got past Philadelphia in past years and we thought it would be something that we could hit them with," Fitzgerald said. "We know their safeties like to hit it hard on the run, coming up and supporting."

"We thought we would get a one-on-one matchup down the field and we really made sure that we made the point of throwing it up," Arizona coach Ken Whisenhunt said. "Because the chances are, Larry is going to come down with it."

That's become part of the game plan: Larry is going to come down with it.

"I think the biggest steps that we have made is that our quarterbacks trust Larry," Whisenhunt said.

On the winning touchdown drive, Warner went to Fitzgerald when it was second and 11 (for 15 yards) and again on second and 8 (for 18 yards). Second and 7 meant another pass to Fitzgerald (for 6 yards).

"The only reason I'm still around is because I've been around great players," Warner said when asked a question about Fitzgerald.

When Fitzgerald showed up at Valley Forge Military Academy for a post-grad year before going to Pitt, the coach there said: "When he first walked in, it was like, 'Hey, so that's what those guys who play on Sunday look like.' "

Actually, it's not - not the rest of them.