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Limping Lomax won't offer excuses for 'one of my worst performances'

By Lloyd Herberg
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EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Neil Lomax offered no excuses Sunday, even if others tried to supply him with a few after the Cardinals lost to the New York Giants, 44-7.

"It was one of my worst performances in a long time," he said. "I'll take a lot of the blame."

But what about the fact that he hadn't played in three weeks and wore a thigh-to-ankle brace on his left leg to protect his battered knee, the one with the torn ligament? What about not being able to step up, plant his leg, push off and throw like he normally does? What about some dropped passes? What about throwing into a strong, swirling wind while the likes of Lawrence Taylor rushed toward him?

"I've got all kinds of excuses," he said, "but the bottom line is I just didn't perform well. A lot I'd like back."

He wasn't alone.

The Cardinals played perhaps their worst game of the season in losing for the fifth consecutive year at Giants Stadium. Lomax had his worst performance since 1982, when he completed only 5 of 17 passes for 74 yards and one interception. But that performance came in a victory against the Chicago Bears.

Sunday, he completed 9 of 25 for 103 yards and two interceptions before Cliff Stoudt relieved him in the fourth quarter.

"It's an embarrassment to us all," Lomax said.

His teammates said Lomax, who was having another Pro Bowl season before the injury, had nothing to be embarrassed about, despite the results.

Wide receiver J.T. Smith said if Lomax was hurting, he never said anything about it in the huddle or on the sideline.

Tight end Rob Awalt said he could tell that Lomax was not his normal self, but said Lomax still is better at 80 percent than most other quarterbacks are at full strength.

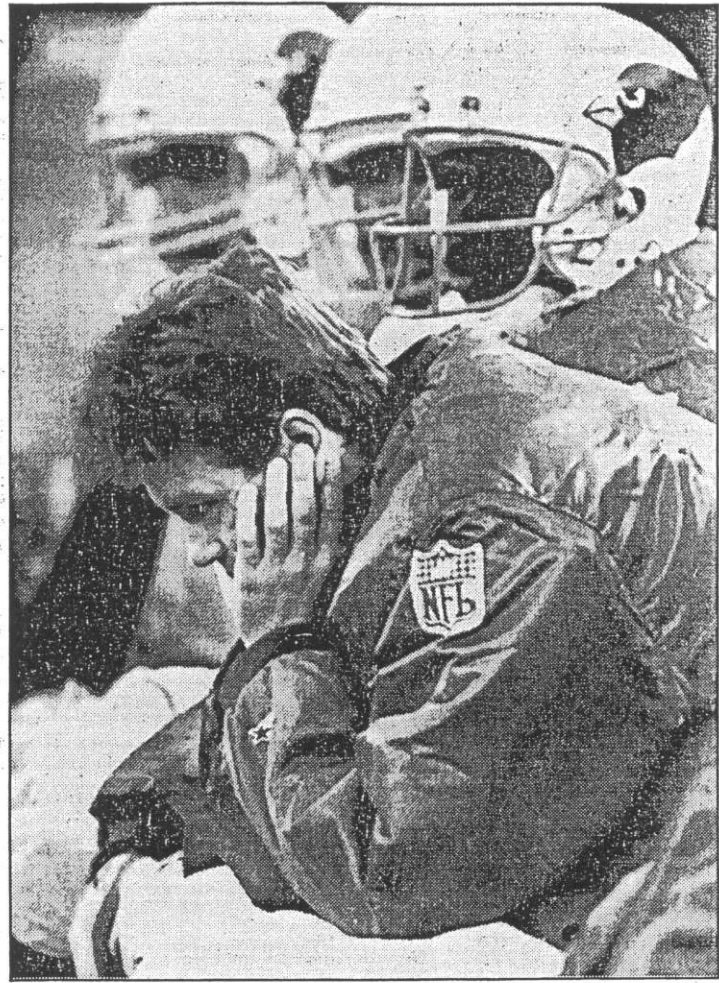
Wide receiver Roy Green said he knew Lomax's knee was bothering him because "a couple plays he didn't get anything on the ball." But he said he was not surprised to see Lomax playing despite the injury.

"He's always hurting," Green said. "We knew all along he was hurting. . . We love to have him out there, he's our starting quarterback. But to come in and jeopardize your career for a game, that says something."

"To not feel comfortable on the football field is not a good feeling to have."

Lomax said he hopes to be able to start Saturday against the Philadelphia Eagles at Sun Devil Stadium.

"His knee's a little sore, but that was to be anticipated," said team physician Russell Chick. "He had a little trouble stepping up and planting his left leg, but, hopefully, it will become a little less sore by



The Associated Press
Cardinals punter Greg Horne cradles his head in his hands after a botched snap in the third quarter led to a Giants touchdown.

next week."

Lomax said the knee, which was injured three weeks ago in the first meeting with New York, never was quite right. No matter. Lomax said he wasn't prepared for the kind of performance that befell him.

"I felt pretty good coming into the game," he said. "I didn't think the knee would be a big factor."

Maybe it was the different coverages the Giants threw at Lomax and his receivers. They double-teamed Green and played zone coverage against the rest, while using an inside linebacker to cover fullback Earl Ferrell.

"I've seen it all, been through it enough times," Lomax said. "I can't use that as an excuse."

PLAY OF THE GAME: With Phoenix trailing, 17-7, and a strong wind at his back, Greg Horne prepared to punt early in the third quarter. The snap from Mark Walczak sailed over Horne's head. The Giants, taking over on the Cardinals' 23-yard line, scored in seven plays to make the score 24-7.

PLAYER OF THE GAME: Joe Morris, who gets hotter as the weather gets colder, rushed for 122 yards on 32 carries for the Giants, who had averaged only 89.5 rushing yards per game. It was the first time a Giant had gained more than 100 yards rushing since the third week of the season.