

CARDS: Rackers boots career-high six field goals

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168 yards while coming up with five sacks and four turnovers.

With both Seattle and St. Louis losing Sunday to even their records at 2-2, the Cardinals — despite a stunningly bad start — find themselves only a game out of first in the NFC West.

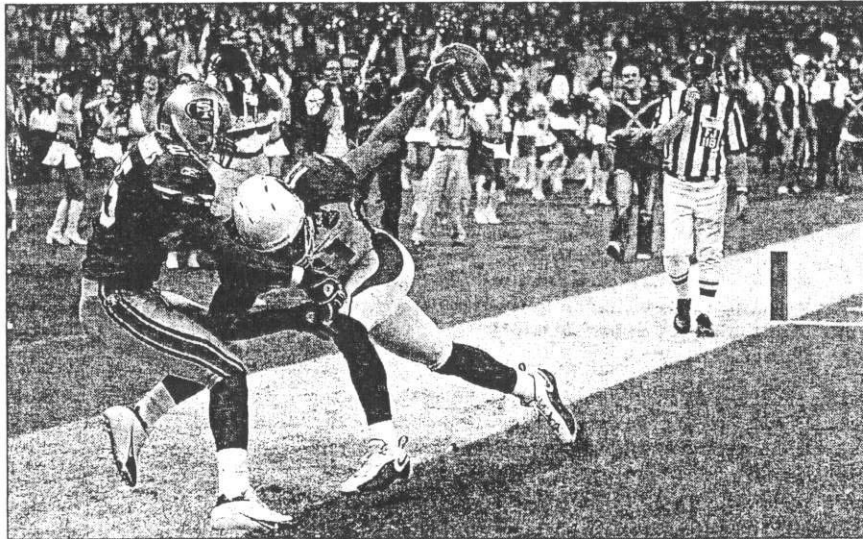
“Just because we started 0-3 doesn’t mean we couldn’t finish strong,” McCown said. “This game was a microcosm of that.”

The reflection was true after Arizona found itself in a 14-0 hole in the first quarter during an ugly start — or, in the spirit of the evening, *muy feo*.

On the game’s first play, 49ers defensive lineman Bryant Young blew past guard Elton Brown — who started again after being benched the previous week for poor play — and crushed McCown, forcing a fumble.

San Francisco linebacker Brandon Moore picked it up on the Cardinals 11-yard line and fumbled when he reached the goal line, when fellow linebacker Derek Smith fell on it for a touchdown.

Two possessions later, the Cards blew an impressive drive when running back Marcel Shipp fumbled when he was hit, and 49ers cornerback Derrick Johnson returned it 78 yards for another



touchdown and a 14-0 lead.

“Nobody got discouraged,” Cardinals coach Dennis Green said.

The comeback didn’t come quickly. Again the Cards had to rely on kicker Neil Rackers, who is a Pro Bowl lock if he keeps up his pace. Rackers booted a personal-best six field goals and could have had a seventh had Green chose to rub it in with Arizona on the San Francisco 13 to end the game.

Meanwhile McCown kept throwing against a battered and bad 49ers defense, finally cracking the Cards’ 10-quarter no-touchdown streak with a scoring pass to Larry Fitzgerald with five seconds left in the first half.

Counting the early turnovers, the Cards’ offense could lay claim to responsibility for all 45 points — but that’s the kind of thing a team can smile about when they win convincingly.

“I think the way we won was even better, down 14 and having to fight back,” receiver Anquan Boldin said. “That was great.”

Boldin finished with eight catches for 116 yards, Fitzgerald seven for 102, and as Green said, “I think we may have to live with the fact we have to throw the ball more.”

It was the first time in 44 games the Cardinals came back from a 14-point deficit to win the game.

TIPTOE THE LINE: Larry Fitzgerald shows the ball as he tries to keep both feet in bounds for a touchdown Sunday in Mexico City. San Francisco cornerback Willie Middlebrooks tries unsuccessfully to break up the play.

EDUARDO VERDUGO,
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The players savored it, too.

The smiles were wide as the game clock wound down, and with two minutes left and his offense grinding down the clock, defensive end Bertrand Berry grabbed the same flag Griffith had and walked around, waving it toward the crowd.

“Here we are,” Berry bellowed, as the crowd cheered.

The Cardinals were part of NFL history Sunday. They are hoping the win is a springboard to some history of their own.

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