

Owens and Peterson score 2 TDs apiece in NFC's 42-30 Pro Bowl win

By BARRY WILNER,

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HONOLULU (AP) Adrian Peterson stood in front of the car he'd just won as MVP of the Pro Bowl. He wiggled the keys, leaned against the red roof and soaked in the acclaim.

Quite a way to finish off a rookie season.

Peterson ran for 129 yards and two touchdowns, and Terrell Owens made up for early sloppiness with two TD receptions in the NFC's 42-30 comeback victory over the AFC on Sunday.

Offensive Rookie of the Year Peterson's performance was the first of more than 100 yards since Marshall Faulk had 180 and Chris Warren added 127 in 1995. The Minnesota running back joined Faulk as the only rookies to be voted MVP of the Pro Bowl.

"Good company," Peterson said. "We didn't get into the playoffs, so for me to come here and do this at the Pro Bowl means a lot.

"I came with a goal: win the game and be MVP."

And the car?

"I'm going to keep it," Peterson said, smiling.

Owens' 6-yard catch from Tampa Bay's Jeff Garcia provided the winning points, and Owens knew the new ride could have been sitting in his driveway. Then Peterson added a clinching 6-yard touchdown run to steel the wheels.

"It didn't surprise me," said Owens, who finished with eight catches for 101 yards in a game that often resembled flag football on the beach. "He'll be in Minnesota his whole life and buying a lot of fur coats."

Peterson grew up in Texas, so the Hawaiian weather was more to his taste than the frigid upper Midwest. He had several highlight runs, particularly a 39-yarder on one TD drive, and a 17-yard jaunt down the left sideline for a 28-27 NFC lead early in the third quarter. Four AFC defenders missed him on that touchdown.

"He's like lightning in a bottle," Denver safety John Lynch said. "There's probably a handful of guys that you could say that has it all. And he's got that. He's got a little attitude to him.

"He's going to wreak havoc in this league for a long time."

Neither side held back the tricks, to the delight of the sellout crowd of 50,044 at Aloha Stadium. There was a fake punt, a throwback kickoff return and a handful of fourth-down gambles.

One of those was a 34-yard pass to Owens from fellow Cowboy Tony Romo that sparked the comeback. Before that huge play, Owens had a pair of ugly drops that drew boos.

He quickly turned them into cheers.

"It's not how you start, it's how you finish," Owens said.

"That's old hat," added Romo, who had to scramble away from a big pass rush before finding T.O. "We've done that before."

NFC players won \$40,000, which Owens said made the trip to the islands even better.

"Hopefully they'll continue to play it over here and we will continue to make some highlight plays," he said.

The 48 first-half points tied the Pro Bowl record for the first two periods. The only punt of the half turned into a fake and an 11-yard completion from San Francisco's Andy Lee to Minnesota fullback Tony Richardson. After Peterson gained 24 yards on two plays, Romo threw to Larry Fitzgerald, who dived across the goal line to tie it at 7.

On the opening drive, Colts quarterback Peyton Manning and Chiefs tight end Tony Gonzalez set the frenetic pace with completions of 31 and 25 yards around a botched snap that cost the AFC 20 yards. Browns receiver Braylon Edwards, one of 41 newcomers (including injured players) beat Seattle's Marcus Trufant on another 31-yarder before Lorenzo Neal dived in from the 1. The San Diego fullback, a 15-year veteran, scored his first Pro Bowl touchdown.

The scoring never abated. T.J. Houshmandzadeh caught TD throws of 16 yards from Manning and 1 from Pittsburgh's Ben Roethlisberger. The Cincinnati receiver's second score came after Antonio Cromartie, the league's interception leader, returned a tipped pass 56 yards to the AFC 29.

Just before that, a comical kickoff runback attempt by Dallas linebacker DeMarcus Ware resulted in a fumble at the NFC 29 recovered by Baltimore's Ed Reed. Tennessee's Rob Bironas kicked a 33-yard field goal.

With the AFC on top 24-7, Romo and Owens got their team back in it. The big play before Owens' 6-yard TD catch was a fourth-and-13 conversion that Owens broke for 34 yards to the 7.

"Just two teammates making something happen," Owens said.

After Bironas nailed a 48-yarder, the NFC continued its comeback. Seattle's Matt Hasselbeck was particularly sharp on a 77-yard touchdown drive he capped with a 17-yard pass to Redskins tight end Chris Cooley. Peterson broke two tackles on a 39-yard run to spark the series.

A pair of unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, of all things, against the NFC for illegal defenses allowed Bironas to make his third field goal, a 28-yarder to recapture the lead 30-28.

That prompted more shenanigans on the NFC's kickoff return. Bears record-setter Devin Hester ran right for 14 yards, then threw a perfect spiral to his left to Jason Witten. The tight end, one of 13 Cowboys in the game, showed some nice open-field moves in adding 35 yards to the runback.

Then Cromartie got his second pick when Rams wideout Torry Holt deflected Garcia's pass into the Chargers cornerback's hands. Quite a debut for someone who barely played before the 2007 season.

"I don't see it like that," Cromartie said. "I just go out and have fun and do what I'm supposed to."

But it was Peterson's debut that was most impressive. He finished off the scoring with 2:43 remaining.

"Can I top this?" Peterson said, repeating a question as he leaned against the Cadillac. "Yeah, you always set your bar high."

The AFC leads the series 20-18.