

Steelers win Super Bowl XLIII Thriller

Holmes' touchdown reception is game winner

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TAMPA – Pittsburgh wide receiver Santonio Holmes caught a six-yard touchdown pass from Ben Roethlisberger with 35 seconds remaining which proved to be the game winner as the Steelers defeated Arizona 27-23 in Super Bowl XLIII before a crowd of 70,774 at Raymond James Stadium. Holmes was named the game's most valuable player finishing the game with 9 catches for 131 yards and the touchdown.

"It was a play that we drew up that we were hoping to get open in the back of the corner," said Holmes. "The defensive back bit up on the short route and Ben held onto the ball long enough to get it to me."

The first quarter saw each team get one full possession and the Steelers were able to capitalize on a Jeff Reed 18-yard field goal on the game's opening possession. On that possession, it appeared that Roethlisberger's momentum carried him into the end zone after he scrambled right on third and goal from the one. Cardinals coach Ken Whisenhunt challenged and the play was reversed. The Steelers scored a touchdown early in the second quarter as Gary Russell went over right guard on another third and one and extended their lead to 10-0.

It was at this point when the Cardinals began to methodically move the ball down the field through a series of short passes. Anquan Boldin caught one of Kurt Warner's short passes and turned it into a 45-yard gain down to the Steelers one. Warner found tight end Ben Patrick for a one-yard touchdown and the Cardinals pulled to within 10-7.

The Cardinals defense began to settle in and forced Roethlisberger to throw an interception as Bryan Robinson tipped the pass and line backer Karlos Dansby came away with the interception. Arizona then started from the Pittsburgh 34 with two minutes remaining. Warner moved the offense down the field again with a short passing game and had the Cardinals poised to score with first and goal from the one with 18 seconds remaining. Warner then tried to find Boldin on a slant and never saw Steelers line backer James Harrison who intercepted the ball in the end zone and weaved his way 100 yards picking up blocks and making would be tacklers miss while jumping over a defender to find the end zone with no time on the clock for the longest interception return in Super Bowl history. This turn of events gave Pittsburgh a 17-7 halftime lead.

The Steelers had every opportunity in the second half to put Arizona away. Another reversal on a challenge by Whisenhunt that would have given the Steelers the ball in Arizona territory forced the Cardinals to punt. Pittsburgh marched down the field but was stopped on 4th and 9. Reed hit a 27-yard field goal, but an unnecessary roughness penalty gave the Steelers the ball back first and goal from the four. The Cardinals defense held again and three plays later Reed nailed a 21-yarder to extended the Steelers lead to 20-7 late in the third quarter.

A total of 23 points were scored in the 4th quarter. Warner found Larry Fitzgerald for one-yard midway through the 4th and the Cardinals pulled to within 20-14. The Cardinals would add a safety to pull to within 20-16. On the 2nd play Warner found Fitzgerald for a short pass over the middle and he turned it into a 64-yard touchdown and a 23-20 lead.

Roethlisberger found Holmes three times for 79 yards including a big 40-yard play which set up the game winning touchdown.

“Santonio is a guy that just loves to deliver in big moments and in big games, said Steelers coach Mike Tomlin. “In big moments, we know what we can get from him and we appreciate it.”