

Move aside Alexander, we can do it without you

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When one thinks of the Seahawks this season, the name Shaun Alexander surely comes to mind. The leading rusher has led the Seahawks to the verge of a place in the Super Bowl. However, as all could see on Saturday afternoon, the Seahawks are much more than a one-person team, but rather the media have largely focused on Alexander, ignoring the many talents of the team.

Underrated throughout the season, the Seattle Seahawks were able to stay under the radar and maintain the best record in the NFC. This achievement was not only accomplished by a solid running game, led by Alexander, but also a lethal passing game as well as stingy and overlooked defense.

The media storm that followed Alexander all season was well deserved, but also made coverage of the Seahawks' other stars players little known outside of local media coverage. Matt Hasselback secured his position as one of the league's premier quarterbacks, ranking fourth in the QB rating as well as fourth in touchdown passes.

Better late than never, Hasselback's stellar season rose to prominence on Saturday after Alexander left the game in the first quarter due to a concussion. His expert passing game led the Seahawks to victory over a notoriously stingy Redskins defense. However, his expertise, while still backseat to the running attack, shined all season.

The Seahawks are living up the talents they have shown throughout the regular season. National media coverage has mainly focused on Alexander and not the whole game, since so far the Seahawks have not made much progress in previous years. Last year's loss to the St.

Louis Rams only highlighted the view of the Seahawks as talented but unable to capitalize on their successes.

This season the Seattle Seahawks have been able to stay mostly off the radar and build the strongest team left in the playoffs. The Indianapolis Colts, who were hyped all season as a Super Bowl pick, lost convincingly to the Pittsburgh Steelers, proving that unless a team plays as a whole, they will not win.

In front of a national audience, Alexander's early departure left many worried about



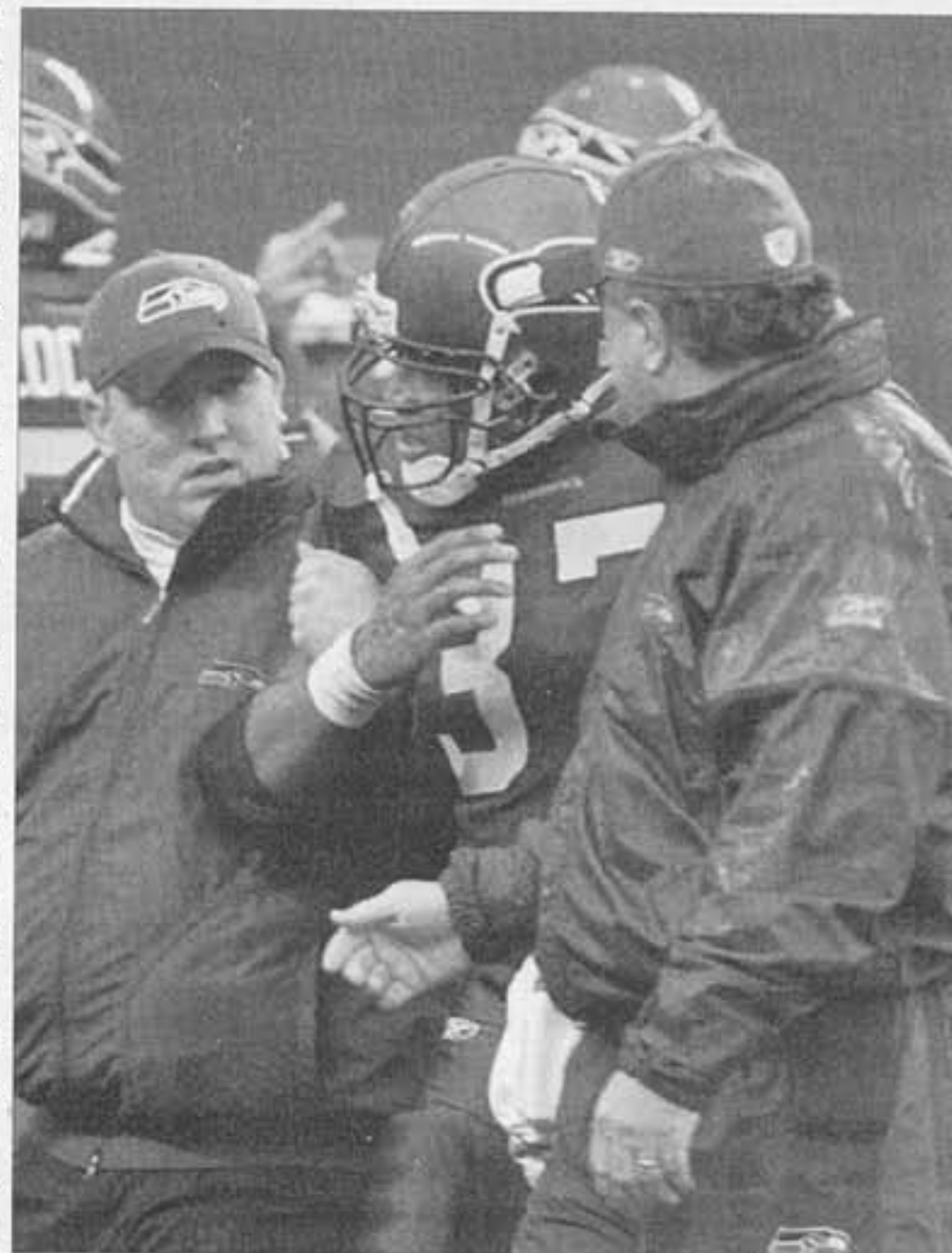
AP Photo/John Froschauer

Seattle Seahawks wide receiver Darrell Jackson celebrates after scoring a 29 yard touchdown in the second quarter during their NFC divisional playoff football game in Seattle, Saturday, Jan. 14.

whether the Seahawks would collapse without him. Losing the franchise player can spell the end of your championship dreams, as Carson Palmer and the Cincinnati Bengals proved the previous week. Still, the Seahawks rose to the challenge and were able to secure themselves as the team to beat in the NFL.

An overlooked defense was able to stop a determined Washington Redskin's offense. Media coverage is only now picking up on the young, yet powerful, defense. LeRoy Hill and Lofa Tatupu are starting rookies who have helped make Seattle's run defense the third best in the NFC, and seventh overall. Unwilling to bestow hype upon this young defense, sports pundits will realize in this year's playoffs as well as future seasons the tenacity of this defense as these rookies as well as other young players mature into one of the league's best defenses.

Part of the media's hesitation with the Seahawks is their inability to deliver in terms of championships. Without the success of teams, media coverage will remain solely focused on one player such as Alexander. The Seahawks are positioned to prove to a national audience that they are the best team in the NFL. A team not only with the league's best running back but also a talented veteran quarterback and a young defense that will mature into a great backbone for the team.



AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Seattle Seahawks' Shaun Alexander is led from the field after being injured in the first quarter against the Washington Redskins during their NFC divisional playoff football game in Seattle, Saturday, Jan. 14.

With the weight upon their shoulders, it is up to the Seahawks to prove that they deserve the hype other teams, such as the Colts, have enjoyed all season. With a win against the Panthers on Sunday, they can secure their position as a well-rounded, focused team that is greater than the sum of its parts.