Who are the sacks on?

Contributed by J.P.
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The Dolphins have given up a league worst 14 sacks, and last week gave up 5 against Atlanta. There are always many factors that go into sacking the quarterback, but who specifically is to blame for Sunday's performance?

There seems to be a perception out there that Ryan Tannehill is simply holding onto the football too long for a lot of them, including in Sunday's game. Was that the case? Let's take a look.

There's a well known 3 second rule for QB's. Many teams have buzzers in training camp and practice simulating sacks at that 3 second mark. A QB's job is to get rid of the football inside of 3 seconds; after that it's not the protections fault and it's a coverage sack. This play is a borderline example, and the only play where Tannehill holds onto the football for close to 3 seconds (and in this case does for 3 seconds).

{youtube}G0K17pmOlE8{/youtube}

As you can see in the first angle, Tannehill has his eyes on the near side of the field. Both receivers are well covered and there's no where to throw. Richie Incognito and Jonathan Martin have a miscommunication on whose responsibility the DE's stunt is, but it happened so late that I won't fault them. Tannehill gets sacked right as the 3 second mark hits, and the ball comes out. I'll count this as a coverage sack, although there is blame to be put on the QB whenever he fumbles the football, in my opinion. You need to be able to take care of the football in the pocket; interceptions happen to every QB, but fumbles are what kill you.

Let's take a look at the second play.

{youtube}2TJ8kuGrPeI{/youtube}

This one is easy to dissect. It's a play action pass and designed roll out for Tannehill to the right. Dion Sims completely whiffs on his block and Tannehill has no shot at avoiding the sack. The play runs right into the hands of the LB. Again though, Tannehill needs to take care of the football. Sacks can be drive killers, but turnovers can be game killers. I also question why Mike Sherman would call a Play Action roll out with a rookie having the responsibility of being the blind side protector against a defense that had been blitzing off the edge all day. Bad play call, awful execution and poor ball security by Tannehill. The sack isn't on him though.

This third sack is one that will probably receive mixed opinions.

{youtube}5pe5pMVoSCI{/youtube}

As we can see in the first angle, Tannehill's first read on the play is Hartline. Brian is running an in-cut route into what ends up being a wide open window on the blitz side of the play. The problem is the play action. By the time Tannehill gets out of play action, turns his head around and begins to dissect what has happened (the point of the freeze frame), the blitzer is bearing in on him. It only take 0.9 seconds for Tannehill to be hit. Whether that's enough time to get rid of the football or not I don't know, but considering he was coming off a play action, had to read zone coverage on the play, and didn't have his feet set, I'll give him a pass. Again, just a poor play call against a defense that had been blitzing off the edge all day.

The 4th sack is another easy one to dissect.

{youtube}fKeuoooph5M{/youtube}

The protection up front is good. The problem is the LB blitzing up the A-gap. Daniel Thomas reads the blitz well and is in fine position to make the block. This should be a routine play for a 6'0, 235 pound, veteran tailback. Instead, Thomas completely whiffs on his block, and in just over 2 seconds Tannehill is destroyed. Ryan had absolutely no chance to get rid of this ball, or get out of the way considering the pressure was right up the middle and sudden. This flat out can't

happen. You need better protection out of your tailbacks. Period. It's completely unacceptable.

Let's take a look at the final sack of the day now.

{youtube}b-vYUdYZnvw{/youtube}

Again, Daniel Thomas is a complete goat on this play. It's amazing to me how a 235 pound, "power" running back can be so soft in pass protection. John Jerry also does a heck of a job losing his man on this play, although part of this is, again, potentially a miscommunication on who picks up what stunt along the offensive line. Tannehill is sacked in less than 3 seconds and, again, had nobody to throw the football to and no chance to escape the pressure.

You can't let your QB get hit the way the Dolphins let Tannehill get hit in this game. You could make a case that Tannehill broke the 3 second rule on one sack, but even on that play there's a breakdown along the line and three of his four targets are blanketed in coverage.

Play calling, miscommunications along the offensive line and poor blitz pick-ups by Daniel Thomas are the main reason these sacks were given up, and similar reasons for the other 9 sacks on the season as well.

One thing that's a positive? Two of those three reasons can and should improve. I'm of the opinion that the third reason is the most concerning and should force Miami into the Free Agent pool to look for running backs. You can mask it to a certain extent, but at the end of the day you need tailbacks who can pass protect on 3rd down; Daniel Thomas and Lamar Miller flat out cannot.

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