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## **BUCCANEERS RB CARNELL "CADILLAC" WILLIAMS & SEAHAWKS LB LOFA TATUPU NAMED NFL ROOKIES OF MONTH FOR DECEMBER/JANUARY**

Running back **CARNELL "CADILLAC" WILLIAMS** of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and linebacker **LOFA TATUPU** of the Seattle Seahawks are the NFL Offensive and Defensive Rookies of the Month for December/January, the NFL announced today.

### **OFFENSE: RB CARNELL "CADILLAC" WILLIAMS, TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS**

- Running back **CARNELL "CADILLAC" WILLIAMS** ended the season in fine fashion, helping the Tampa Bay Buccaneers to their second NFC South division championship in four seasons under head coach **JON GRUDEN**. In five December/January games, Williams twice rushed for 100 yards, totaling 462 yards and averaging 92.4 rushing yards per game. A first-round pick from Auburn (No. 5 overall), he started December with a 96-yard effort in a hard-fought 10-3 win over New Orleans, followed by a 112-yard, two-touchdown outing against the rival Carolina Panthers in Charlotte. Williams turned in one of his best performances of the season in a thrilling 27-24 overtime win over the Atlanta Falcons on December 24, rushing for 150 yards and one touchdown, including 45 yards on seven carries in the extra session. The Attalla, Alabama native set a franchise record with six 100-yard rushing games and a club rookie record with 1,178 rushing yards.

Williams was previously honored as the NFL's September Offensive Rookie of the Month and on Wednesday was named the Associated Press Offensive Rookie of the Year.

### **DEFENSE: LB LOFA TATUPU, SEATTLE SEAHAWKS**

- Linebacker **LOFA TATUPU** was a defensive standout throughout the year for the 13-3 Seahawks, continuing his stellar play as the season concluded, helping his team to the NFC's No. 1 playoff seed and the best record in franchise history. A second-round pick from Southern California, Tatupu helped the club to a 4-1 record in December/January games, totaling 23 tackles, two interceptions, 1.0 sack, one fumble recovery and seven passes defended. The son of 14-year NFL veteran **MOSI TATUPU**, Lofa scored his first NFL touchdown in a 42-0 win at Philadelphia on December 5, scoring on a 38-yard interception return. The following week in a 41-3 triumph over San Francisco, he recovered a fumble to set up a touchdown on the very next play. Tatupu, the club's leading tackler this season, helped the team surrender just 94.4 rushing yards per game, fifth fewest in the NFL, and permit only one opposing running back to rush for 100 yards. Tatupu finished the season as one of only four NFL linebackers with at least three interceptions (three) and 3.0 sacks (4.0).

Tatupu is the second Seahawk ever to earn an NFL Defensive Rookie of the Month award, joining **ROCKY BERNARD** (September, 2002).

### **2005 NFL ROOKIES OF THE MONTH**

	<b><u>Offense (College)</u></b>	<b><u>Defense (College)</u></b>
<b>September</b>	RB Carnell Williams, Tampa Bay (Auburn)	LB Odell Thurman, Cincinnati (Georgia)
<b>October</b>	TE Heath Miller, Pittsburgh (Virginia)	LB DeMarcus Ware, Dallas (Troy)
<b>November</b>	RB Samkon Gado, Green Bay (Liberty)	DE Trent Cole, Philadelphia (Cincinnati)
<b>December</b>	RB Carnell Williams, Tampa Bay (Auburn)	LB Lofa Tatupu, Seattle (Southern California)

**Other nominees for December/January NFL Offensive Rookie of the Month were:**

- Philadelphia wide receiver **REGGIE BROWN** (second-round, Georgia), who led the team in December/January with 23 receptions, 266 receiving yards and two touchdowns, finishing as the NFL rookie leader with 571 receiving yards.
- Tampa Bay guard **DAN BUENNING** (fourth-round, Wisconsin), who started all 16 games for the Buccaneers, helping teammate Carnell "Cadillac" Williams to a franchise record six 100-yard rushing games in 2005.
- San Francisco running back **FRANK GORE** (third-round, Miami), who rushed for 282 yards and two touchdowns in December/January and added seven receptions for 107 yards. His 608 rushing yards were the most by a 49er rookie since **ROGER CRAIG**'s 725 yards in 1983.
- Cleveland quarterback **CHARLIE FRYE** (third-round, Akron), who was 92 of 153 (60.1 percent) passing for 944 yards in five December/January starts to lead the Browns to a 2-3 record. Frye passed for four touchdowns and ran for another against four interceptions.
- Tampa Bay tight end **ALEX SMITH** (third-round, Stanford), who posted 17 receptions for 133 yards in five December/January games, finishing the season with 41 receptions, tops among rookie tight ends and third-most among all rookies.

**Other nominees for December/January NFL Defensive Rookie of the Month Award were:**

- New England cornerback **ELLIS HOBBS** (third-round, Iowa State), who has evolved to become a starter for the AFC East champions. Hobbs led the Patriots' secondary with 20 tackles, a pair of interceptions, and six passes defended en route to a 4-1 record in the season's final five games.
- San Diego linebacker **SHAWNE MERRIMAN** (first round, Maryland), who recorded 3.0 sacks and a pass defended in the Chargers' five December games. On Feb. 12, Merriman will become the fourth-youngest player to play in the Pro Bowl at 21 years and 263 days.