MPR News | Minnesota Now Minnesota Vikings at 2-0 after rainy Chicago game, Lynx split games following FIBA break 01M32QEMWXMDH6C42A96NPYA5T

NINA MOINI: It was a soggy Sunday in Chicago and the Minnesota Vikings came out on top. They beat the Bears 9 to 3 in the rain. Meanwhile, Lynx guard Olivia Miles rained down more baskets. She passed Caitlin Clark's record to become the WNBA's highest scoring rookie. Joining me now to talk about these and other Minnesota sports stories are weekly sports contributors Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Hey, guys. Happy Monday.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, same to you Nina.

NINA MOINI: So a soggy Sunday, Wally. The Vikings are now 2 and 0. Tell us about that game in Chicago. I bet you have even better imagery for us.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Well, as I spoke to Eric yesterday, we talked about the fact. I said, this is your kind of football. There was-- there's no dome, there's weather, there's green grass.

NINA MOINI: Grass.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: And the Vikings won. 4 for 4 for my partner. Yeah.

NINA MOINI: All right.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: No, it's fun to watch. Even though it was a low-scoring game, I thought it was a fun football game to watch. It came right down to the end. Vikings had to make some stops at the end of the game. They put some time back on the clock even. Felt like the US and Russia in the 1972 Olympics putting time back on the clock. I'm going, oh my goodness, what is going on?

NINA MOINI: Momentous.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Yes, exactly. But they get the win. That's the most important thing. Played really well defensively, obviously, and only allowing three points. I mean, quarterback Caleb Williams for the Bears gets hurt in a critical moment as he was going towards the end zone. Wasn't able to finish the game. Unknown how long he's going to be out. But he has a hamstring injury. And he could have scored on the play where he got hurt. So that would have put the Bears into the lead. And so that was a critical play.

They to bring the second string quarterback in, and he did not do so well. Vikings were able to keep the Bears out of the end zone all day. They had some huge plays. They blitzed Caleb Williams 27 times during the game. That's really an unusual number to be blitzing a quarterback. They sacked him three times. They intercepted one pass. The Vikings defense also came up with a critical fumble down on the 1 yard line when the Bears were about to score. So Chicago had their chances. There's no question about that.

The Vikings made some special teams plays. They blocked a field goal. Isaiah Rodgers got his hand on a field goal late in the game. Kicker Will Reichard kicked three more field goals for the Vikings, including a doink at the end of the game that hit the upright and went in. So there were a lot went right for the Vikings yesterday. And I think the biggest thing is that they are now 2 and 0, and they beat both of their rivals in the NFC North.

And then 31-year-old running back Aaron Jones carried the ball 23 times. Is the most carries he's had since 2022 when he was playing for the Packers. And he had 105 yards. So a lot of good for the Vikings. No, they didn't score any touchdowns. So all you fantasy football players are probably whining about it, especially those with Justin Jefferson and some of the other Vikings. But the good news is they are 2 and 0 now and both of them in the NFC North. So all good.

NINA MOINI: OK. Eric, it sounds like it is a strong start for the Vikings. What's next for them?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, absolutely, Nina. Minnesota one of just nine undefeated teams through two weeks. And that could change tonight. The New York Giants are an underdog. They're 1 and 0 against the LA Rams out there in SoCal. But next week it'll be interesting. Minnesota at Tampa Bay. It will be a 3:05 PM kickoff on Fox. The Buccaneers are 0 and 2. They lost yesterday to Wally's lowly Cleveland Browns 23 to 19. And you want weather? Well, they had it down there in Tampa as well.

The game was delayed for over two hours because of lightning and severe storms in the Tampa-St. Pete metro area. No surprise. The Tampa region is a hot spot for lightning and powerful storms. And, hey, the NHL team is called the Lightning. But I'll tell you what, today the Buccaneers, Nina, are getting beat up like a piñata by their fan base, by the media after the loss to the Browns. So Tampa Bay is going to be a desperate team on Sunday. The can't afford to start 0 and 3.

According to the Tampa Bay times, 84 teams have started a season at 0 and 2 in the last decade, and just 14% go on to make the playoffs.

NINA MOINI: Wow.

ERIC NELSON: So this is almost a must win for the Bucs. Now Minnesota is favored by 1 and 1/2 points. And the weather could be a factor. The forecast on Sunday in Tampa, cloudy and 88 degrees. So I would expect the home team, Buccaneers, to wear white jerseys, forcing the Vikings to be in purple, which will heat up faster than the lighter colors. I mean, it could be a sauna down there in Florida.

By the way, Tampa Bay's top running back is Bucky Irving, who played part of his college career at Minnesota before transferring to Oregon, and safety Antoine Winfield is one of the Bucs star players. He also played for the U of M and also went to Eden Prairie High School. So going to be an interesting match-up, 2 and 0 versus 0 and 2 down there in the sauna known as Tampa Florida on Sunday.

NINA MOINI: All right. Well, wow. It sounds like the beginning early part of the season does seem to matter a ton. Wally, I mentioned, though, Olivia Miles breaking the rookie scoring record. What else happened for the Lynx this weekend?

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Well, they split their two games. They lost on Friday. By the way, these are their first two games in about three weeks because they had this international tournament that the US participated in and some of the Minnesota Lynx were part of that.

NINA MOINI: Right.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: And you do think that they-- and WNBA would have thought this through a little bit more because I think that they lost a lot of momentum, the league did, in having this tournament right near the end of their regular season. Really tough. So the Lynx come back. They lose on Friday. They did win yesterday, which is good. They went to Connecticut and won the basketball game 101-89. Olivia Miles breaks the all-time rookie record. She now has-- it was 700 and-- well, it was 769 points. That's Caitlin Clark's record. And oh, by the way, they will see Caitlin Clark, the Lynx will, twice this week.

NINA MOINI: Oh.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: They'll see him tomorrow, and then they'll see him again here at Target Center later in the week. That'll be on Thursday. So they'll get an opportunity to see Caitlin Clark and company, and Olivia Miles will get to go up against her. But she had 21 points in the win yesterday. Napheesa Collier had 23 points. The Lynx can clinch the best record in the league if they can beat Caitlin and the Indiana Fever once out of these two games. They will have the best record in the league. And then they will advance to the playoffs with home court advantage throughout the playoffs as long as they're alive.

NINA MOINI: OK. Eric, let's go back to football real quick. The Gophers were at home with a pretty hefty lead. What stood out to you from that game? They beat Akron.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, they won it 41 to 7. It was a bounce back win for the Gophers, Nina, after their disappointing loss to Mississippi State. Drake Lindsey, the quarterback, threw for 204 yards and three touchdown passes. Their star running back, Darius Taylor, did not play, so TJ Thomas came in, ran for 122 yards, and a touchdown. So a very good game for TJ. But the Gophers are already done celebrating this win. They have to focus on Saturday night.

NINA MOINI: Right.

ERIC NELSON: Nina, you're going to have to stay up late to see this one. This is the latest start of the week in college football, 10:00 PM Central on Fox.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, right.

ERIC NELSON: Minnesota, 2 and 1, at Washington, 3 and 0, out in Seattle. The Huskies are favored by 9 and 1/2 points. They have a quarterback by the name of Desmond Williams Jr. He's throwing for 890 yards with five touchdowns, just one interception this season. Now, Minnesota and Washington have an interesting history. They've played just 17 times before. This will be the first time they meet as Big Ten opponents.

The last game between the schools, 1977. Minnesota won at 19 to 17. Warren Moon, who went on to win five Gray Cup titles with Edmonton in the Canadian Football League, he also played for Minnesota in the NFL, was the Huskies quarterback that day. And Moon is now in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. And then if you go back to January 2, 1961, the Gophers are ranked number one in the nation, believe it or not, and Washington knocked them off 17-7 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California.

And one other footnote on this game-- I'm going to be out in Seattle, so I'm looking forward to seeing this-- Washington has one of the coolest traditions in college football. The campus is located next to Union Bay of Lake Washington, and some of the fans actually boat to the game. In Seattle they call it sailgating.

NINA MOINI: Oh, wow.

ERIC NELSON: Not tailgating, sailgating. And by the way, at the exact same time, Minnesota United soccer will play the Seattle Sounders--

NINA MOINI: All right.

ERIC NELSON: --over at Lumen Field in Seattle.

NINA MOINI: Thank you both, Wally and Eric. Appreciate you. That's Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Thanks for joining us today. We'll be back tomorrow at noon with a conversation with a Minnesota mother about her experience with postpartum psychosis and the work she's done to raise awareness about the illness. We hope you'll join us back here tomorrow at noon. Until then, have a great rest of your Monday.

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