

CATHY There's no shortage of sports news. The Vikes are still licking their wounds after the playoff loss to the Giants.

WURZER: How are the Timberwolves doing? The Wild? A lot to talk about.

So joining us are our sports guys, Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Wally is the creator of *Minnesota Score* magazine and the co-host of *10,000 Takes* sports show. Eric Nelson is the other co-host of that show and the Vikings Reporter for CBS Sports *Eye on Football* program. Hey, you guys. How are you?

WALLY Good, Cathy. How are you?

LANGFELLOW:

CATHY I'm marginal. That's OK. I'm fine, actually, I guess.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: How are you, Cathy?

CATHY I'm fine.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Besides marginal.

CATHY Well, I'm getting better because you guys are here. All right, I was going to start with the Vikings, but, no, no. Let

WURZER: us start with the Wolves, shall we?

WALLY Yeah, let's start with something current since the Vikings are now in the rearview mirror again, oh, by the way,

LANGFELLOW: for the 62nd straight year, but who's counting? So Timberwolves last night, no good news here. They lost to Denver 122-118.

No Karl-Anthony towns. Of course, he's been out since late November. No Rudy Gobert last night again. So he has now missed portions or all of the last three games. The Wolves actually led by 5 with under 3 minutes to go last night, couldn't score down the stretch.

Nikola Jokic ended up with a triple-double. So the Wolves are now two games below .500 at 22 and 24. That puts them 10th in the West. But the West is so jammed up that they are only two games out of fifth place, if you can imagine.

So they're in 10th, which technically would be a play-in position in the playoffs, but only two games out of fifth place. Denver is number one in the West and they have the second-best record in the NBA. Jaden McDaniels led the Wolves last night with 18 points.

Tonight, the Wolves are back in action. They come home and they will play at Target Center against Toronto beginning at 7:00 tonight.

CATHY Eric.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. And, Cathy, of course, the Timberwolves are still without Karl-Anthony Towns, the face of the franchise. He's an All-Star. And he's not expected to return until mid-February. He's been out since November.

So that's been a huge loss for Minnesota. And there was so much high hopes going into this year after the Timberwolves acquired Rudy Gobert from the Utah Jazz. But so far, that deal has paid very little dividends. And the new General Manager Tim Conley, who came to Minnesota from Denver, five-year, \$40 million deal, is taking a lot of heat for a trade that we here in the North Star State are already comparing it to the Herschel Walker fiasco with the Minnesota Vikings in the Dallas Cowboys back in the late-1980s.

Think about this-- for Rudy Gobert, the Timberwolves gave up Malik Beasley, Patrick Beverley, Leandro Bolmaro, Walker Kessler, who's already emerging into a young star, Jared Vanderbilt, and four first round picks that run through 2029 and a pick swap. If this thing doesn't turn around, if the T-Wolves can't flip the script, it's going to go down as one of the worst deals in the history of the Association.

CATHY WURZER: Oh. OK. Yikes. So we're going have to talk about the Vikes here. We might as well do it right now. So obviously, their season ended on Sunday against the Giants-- at home, no less. So what's the deal going forward here, Wally?

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Well, they've got some roster decisions to make, because they have salary cap issues coming up. They're going to have to figure things out. Several key players may not and probably won't be back next year, either because of free agency or because the Vikings are going to have to part ways with them because they have salary cap issues.

And you go right down the list-- Harrison Smith, who is having probably, I think could say, he's having a Hall of Fame type career. Adam Thielen, Alexander Mattison, maybe Dalvin Cook-- do they bring him back? I mean, these are decisions they're going to have to make because they do have to get under that salary cap.

Eric Kendricks, Danielle Hunter, Patrick Peterson-- the list is long. And you may see many of those, if not all of them, gone next year. Now, I would think that they would keep either Mattison or Dalvin Cook, and they'll probably keep Dalvin Cook because they still have him under contract. But it's a big chunk of their salary cap that they're going to pay him.

And right now in the National Football League, running backs are not carrying the load as far as how much of your salary cap you're going to use. And here's the kicker to this whole thing-- they've got to figure out a way to pay Justin Jefferson. Clearly, he is their MVP from this season. And they have to figure that piece out.

CATHY WURZER: Eric, what do you think about maybe making changes somewhere else when it comes to maybe a coach or two?

ERIC NELSON: Well, the guy who is the pinata, he's getting banged on by just about everybody, is the defensive coordinator Ed Donatell. And his defense was not very good. On a weekly basis, the Vikings were getting gashed. And the New York Giants did it again last Sunday in that playoff win in Minneapolis.

Don't know for sure what Kevin O'Connell's going to do there, the head coach. There could be a change on the horizon or they might want Ed Donatell to switch up the scheme. The Vikings run what they call a 3-4 defense. Most of their history they've been a 4-3 team.

So is it a scheme issue? Is it coaching? They were very soft in pass coverage. We saw that against multiple teams during the regular season. And I think the other way to look at this is, is anybody surprised this is how the season finished up?

As Wally said, it's 62 years of purple pain. This is just another chapter in the longest novel in professional sports of failure of not delivering a championship. And I think Viking fans, I think they want to get away from it for a while. They don't want to get their hopes up anymore and have them dashed. And that's all that happens.

CATHY It's just too traumatic. I'm telling you.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: It is.

CATHY All right, let's talk about something a little more positive, perhaps. Go for men's hoops?

WURZER:

WALLY Well, yeah, I suppose we could put a positive spin on it.

LANGFELLOW:

CATHY I'm trying.

WURZER:

WALLY Sorry. Well, I'm going to try. So a week ago, they went to Ohio State and they beat the Buckeyes in Columbus.

LANGFELLOW: And it was a big win for the Gophers and for Ben Johnson, and happy to see them get their first Big Ten win, and on the road, no less, against a good Ohio State team.

Then they came home on Monday having played, really, three good games in a row, including the win over Ohio State. And they got clobbered by Illinois. So in the Big Ten, they are 1 and 5, in last place-- which is 14th in the Big Ten. So you could do the math on that-- 7 and 9 overall.

The bad news is, unless you're just a college basketball fan in general, and don't really care if the Gophers win or lose, Purdue is in town. Purdue is 17 and 1 overall, 6 and 1 in the Big Ten-- first place Purdue. And they are at The Barn tonight at 6:00 at Williams Arena.

And Purdue handed it to the Gophers back in December, 89 to 70. So it's going to be a very tall task for Minnesota tonight. But they're at home at The Barn, so it's always fun to go in there.

CATHY Yeah, that is true. That is true. OK, where can we find some positivity here. Eric, how about the Wild?

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Well, the Wild, Cathy, play tonight in Raleigh, North Carolina-- that hockey hotbed. So they'll take on the Carolina Hurricanes. They did win in DC on Tuesday 4 to 2 over Washington. Felipe Gustavsson, their young goaltender, who has shown flashes of brilliance, he was in the nets in that victory.

Marc-Andre Fleury, of course, is the veteran. Those two are sharing time as goalies for the Minnesota Wild. The Wild have now gone six straight games on the road without a loss. So that's a stat that you like as you move deeper into the NHL season.

We know they're good at home usually, but you've got to be good on the road too if you want to be elite. So I would say the Wild right now are a positive. And, Cathy, if I was going to add one other positive sports note to things, the Minnesota Lynx are going global.

They will take on the Chicago Sky May 13, 2023, so later this year, in Toronto at Scotiabank Arena-- first-ever WNBA game in Canada. And I'm being told there's a huge appetite for women's basketball north of the border. Certainly for the men there has been-- a lot of great players have come out of Canada-- Steve Nash, Andrew Wiggins, and many others. And so they're growing the sport of hoops up there in the land of pucks.

CATHY I did not know that. See, the things you tell me, Eric. It's amazing.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: I just want to educate you, Cathy.

CATHY And thank you. I appreciate that. I wish you both a fine day. We'll talk to you again next week.

WURZER:

WALLY Thanks, Cathy.

LANGFELLOW:

CATHY See you later. Wally Langfellow, Eric Nelson-- Wally's the creator of *Minnesota Score* magazine. He's the co-host of *10,000 Takes* sports show. Eric Nelson is the other co-host of the show, Vikings reporter for CBS Sports *Eye on Football*.