

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now All the Minnesota Sports News You Need to Know - September 15th Edition 01GD19A7T2P4M22XY41ETPS8NE

CATHY WURZER: Oh, there's a ton of sports news right now, so we're going to get right down to it with our sports experts, Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Wally's the founder of *MinnesotaScore* magazine and the co-host of *10,000Takes* sports talk show on radio and TV. Eric is the other host of *10,000Takes* and the Minnesota Vikings reporter for CBS Sports Radio's *EyeontheNFL*. Hey, you guys. How are you doing?

WALLY Good, Cathy. How are you doing?

LANGFELLOW:

CATHY Good.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Greetings, Cathy.

CATHY Greetings, Eric. I'm with Sven Sungaard, who I know you both know. So we're having a good time here talking
WURZER: about being a brand new member at NPR. But we're going to wait on that conversation. We're going to talk sports right now.

Vikings, Vikings, Vikings. Wally Langfellow getting ready for-- [BEEPING] what was that?

WALLY That's a notification that the Cleveland baseball team just scored a run against the White Sox.

LANGFELLOW:

CATHY Oh. [LAUGHING]

WURZER:

WALLY My phone's got all kinds of little gadgets on it.

LANGFELLOW:

CATHY Nice. OK. Not that you're following that team or anything. Let's talk about Vikings getting ready for Monday Night
WURZER: Football in Philadelphia?

WALLY Yes, they're Monday night in Philly, of course, coming off the win over Green Bay. Vikings' defense played really
LANGFELLOW: well. There's a lot of talk about what Justin Jefferson did, and he had a great game. But it's the Vikings' defense that held Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers' offense at bay for most of the day. A big goal line stand included in that.

So we'll see if they can do the same thing against Philadelphia. Philadelphia's got a dynamic offense. They won their opener. It should be an interesting match-up on the road, in a place where I was a few years ago for that NFC Championship game, where the Vikings lost. And it's a mean, nasty crowd that goes to those Philadelphia Eagles games.

One other Vikings note, they have signed former Concordia, Saint Paul defensive end, Chris Garrett, to their practice squad. Chris played for the Rams last year-- the Super Bowl champion Rams-- and he was on the practice squad for most of the year. But basically comes home, where he played college football over at Concordia, Saint Paul.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Chris and watching him at Concordia. Good football player. I wish him well. Hopefully he and Kevin O'Connell-- who, of course, was with the Rams last year, probably had a lot to do with the fact that he is now a member of the Minnesota Vikings. So congratulations, Chris.

CATHY Yeah. Eric?

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, and back to Justin Jefferson, Cathy, he is clearly trending up. He's already one of the top wideouts in the NFL. You look at his numbers. He's played two full seasons and now one game here in 2022. Already 205 catches, 3,200 yards. He averages over 15 yards per reception. He has 19 touchdowns.

I'm already hearing people say he could be in that same galaxy that Randy Moss is, or Cris Carter, or Sammy White, or Anthony Carter-- some of the other great stars from the past for Minnesota. So he really is a bright young star in the NFL. And regarding what Wally said about Philadelphia, this game will be on ABC, free television Monday night football.

And I was at the last Monday Night Football game at the old vet stadium in Philadelphia back in 2002. That was on ABC. These people take pride in booing. I saw banners that said, America's Booing Capital, playing off the ABC acronym.

CATHY Wow.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: The fans go to bed angry, they wake up angrier. This will be a huge challenge for Minnesota. And if you're a Viking fan, do not wear purple into the stadium. And if you do, watch out for batteries, and pennies, and who knows, maybe even a punch.

CATHY Oh my gosh. Really?

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Oh, yeah.

CATHY Yikes.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: I'm not kidding.

CATHY OK. Wow. We wish everyone well, then. Hey, let's talk about Gopher football. Are they as good as they look,

WURZER: Wally?

WALLY Oh, boy. That's a loaded question. They played two really have-nots in New Mexico State and in Western Illinois.

LANGFELLOW: They blasted Western Illinois. And it's all well and good, and they're good tune-ups. I would certainly like to see them play a more difficult-- I don't want to call it preseason, but non-conference schedule.

And PJ Fleck has said as much. He said he's more than willing to do that. He may not have a choice here once they add USC and UCLA to the Big Ten here in a couple of years. That may not be a choice. You may have to play.

If you have an expectation to get into what looks to be now a 12 team college football playoff-- so that means the top 12 teams in the nation-- they're not going to look at you and say, wow, you beat up Western Illinois, you beat up New Mexico State, that doesn't do anything. Because those type of games, it's really a no-win situation. You don't get a lot of credit for beating them. And if you lose to one of those teams, like they did last year when they lost to Bowling Green, then that sinks your chances of ever being a contender for a playoff spot.

So I think you're wise, if you really want to be considered one of those teams, is to toughen up that schedule. So yes, they've looked very good, to answer your question, in the short realm. But long term, they're probably going to have to get a tougher schedule.

Colorado is certainly from a Power Five conference, but they're not very good, either. They're favored by 27 and 1/2 points, the Gophers are, on Saturday. So it should be yet another win for Minnesota. But you got to keep going, you got to play who was ever on your schedule, and this week it's Colorado.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, and they are out of the Pac-12, what's left of the Pac-12. Cathy, in two years, USC and UCLA will leave that conference and come to the Big Ten. LA is a midwestern city.

But they lost to TCU 38 to 13. Last week to Air Force 41 to 10. Now the Gophers won convincingly in Boulder against Colorado last season at altitude. So as Wally said, it's a game they should win. We won't really know a lot about this team until a week from Saturday, when they go to East Lansing, Michigan, and take on the Michigan State Spartans-- one of the top teams in the nation.

One other Gopher note, too. Nebraska has let go of their head Coach Scott Frost. PJ Fleck's name is coming up as a potential Cornhuskers' candidate, but he's downplaying it. And a lot of this speculation is fueled by the media, so I'm not sure there's anything there.

CATHY WURZER: Say, I just saw a couple of pictures from Target Field. It looks like, Eric, there was nobody out there for the Twins game.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah.

CATHY WURZER: What's going on with the Twins? I'm a little worried about them. Should I be?

ERIC NELSON:

ERIC NELSON: Oh, absolutely. I was there last night, and they had just under 15,000 fans. 19,500 on Monday. The Twins are 22nd in attendance in Major League Baseball out of 30 teams. They are five games behind Cleveland. Right now the Guardians are playing the Chicago White Sox. So they're going to go into a huge series beginning Friday at Cleveland, basically needing to win four games minimum, maybe 5, to stay relevant.

If not, this season could be over. And the twins, they're in freefall mode. I know they've beaten Kansas City the last two nights, and they're 11 and 4 against the Royals this season. But the Royals are bottom feeders. They're going to have to prove it in Cleveland this weekend.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Yeah, and Cathy, that's where I am this weekend. I'll be at several of the games in Cleveland this week. That's where I am right now, as a matter of fact, getting ready for the Twins and Cleveland series this weekend.

And Eric hit the nail on the head, that the Twins are going to have to take a minimum of three, probably 4, and the best case scenario, all five. But it's going to be difficult. Cleveland has played well, coming into this afternoon's game with Chicago. They've won six in a row. They've got a four-game lead over Chicago, five over the Twins.

Cleveland has won nine of the games so far against the Twins this year. So they're one win away from taking the season series, which would give them a tie break against the Twins and make the postseason. So it's all tilting Cleveland's way right now, but that could change. You just never know.

And it's interesting, because they're playing each other here on the strip. And so that's what makes this even more interesting, that the Twins still have, what, 16 left for Chicago and five this weekend with Cleveland.

CATHY Well, clearly something just happened on your phone there, Langfellow, so you might want to check it out.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Guardians alert, Cathy. That's his Guardians alert.

CATHY All right, I got to go, you guys. You both be careful, enjoy the weekend. We'll talk to you next week.

WURZER:

WALLY Bye.

LANGFELLOW:

ERIC NELSON: Thanks, Cathy.

CATHY See you. Wally Langfellow, Eric Nelson. Wally's he's the founder of *Minnesota Score* magazine, the co-host of

WURZER: *10,000 Takes* sports talk show. Eric is the other host of *10,000 Takes* and he works for CBS Sports radio.