

CATHY Now for something completely different. How about sports? And there is no one better to round up the sports news we need to know than Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Wally is the creator of *Minnesota Score* magazine and the co-host of *10,000 Takes* sports show on radio and TV.

Eric Nelson is the other co-host of that show and the Vikings reporter for CBS Sport~~E~~*Eye on Football*. Hey, you guys. How's it going?

WALLY Good. Little chilly, but good.
LANGFELLOW:

CATHY Oh, well, it's going to get worse.
WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. Thanks, Cathy, for that optimism.

WALLY Isn't that always the Minnesota thing to say? It could be worse.
LANGFELLOW:

CATHY Well, just look at the Vikings I guess, yeah.
WURZER:

WALLY Boy.
LANGFELLOW:

CATHY I'm not going to even go there. So let's begin, shall we, with Minnesota Gopher basketball.
WURZER:

WALLY Yeah, they played well last night. I mean, right now, moral victories are probably all they can stack up because
LANGFELLOW: they're not getting many of the real kind. They lost by 4 to Indiana last night. I was at The Barn for the game.

Announced crowd just over 9,000-- there were probably far less than that. But it was a decent crowd. And the Gophers led late in the game but they just couldn't finish. They missed their last 11 shots and ended up losing the game 61-57.

But some positives-- they were only with seven scholarship athletes because of injuries they're missing three or four guys, including starter Dawson Garcia, who's been their leading scorer this year. So I think, despite the fact that they lost the basketball game, despite the fact that they're now 1 and 8 in the Big Ten, and they still haven't won a home Big Ten game, I think that Ben Johnson's team is playing better.

And I think that that's the positive that you have to pull from this. I mean, look, they gave up 25 points and 21 rebounds to Trace Jackson-Davis for Indiana, and he's an All-American. But I think Ben Johnson pulls the positives out of this and hopes to get some of his players back by Saturday. They play at Northwestern on Saturday.

It's just going to be one of those years, Cathy. They're not going anywhere, that's for sure. It's a building project. And I think that last night's game was something they can build on, let's put it that way.

CATHY Say, a listener wants to know how the Gopher women are doing. We should probably mention them.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Well, they're struggling. They have a young team. There's a lot of expectations with some of these players that Lindsay Whalen has brought in-- Mara Braun, being one of them. But yeah, they're near the bottom of the heap in the Big Ten.

And I would say that if a year from now-- this is my opinion-- but if you don't see significant improvement, Lindsay Whalen, the Hall of Fame player, might be on the hot seat. Because as a coach, she has not gotten this team into the NCAA Tournament yet-- a couple of WNIT appearances, but nothing like March Madness, which is what you're measured by as a men's or women's basketball coach when it comes to NCAA hoops.

CATHY I'm going off-script here for just a moment, you guys, but is it hard, just generally speaking, for a player in any sport to become a coach? They know the game, right? So you'd think they'd be pretty good coaches. Does anyone have any thoughts as to making that leap and if it's successful for most athletes going to the coaching realm?

WALLY Interestingly, I think, Cathy-- I'll just jump in real quick and then Eric can finish. I think a lot of times, it's players
LANGFELLOW: who are further down the bench, who spend more time on the bench listening to coaches and gathering information, because they had to be more cerebral in their game. Those players tend to be better coaches. Look at in the NBA-- Larry Bird had some success as a head coach-- great player. Magic Johnson had limited success as a head coach-- great player.

And the list goes on. There are examples, obviously, of coaches who have succeeded who were great players. But a lot of times-- Kevin O'Connell, the Minnesota Vikings head coach, was a backup quarterback in the NFL. He wasn't Tom Brady, he wasn't even Kirk Cousins. So I think that those are the type of examples that you see.

CATHY Eric, anything to add on this?

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, Cathy, it's one of those things where greatness on the field, or the ice, or the court does not guarantee success as a head coach or a manager. You take a look at what's going on in Indianapolis now with the Colts-- they hired Jeff Saturday, who was a very good center playing for Indianapolis, made a number of Pro Bowls-- they hired him, he went 1 and 7 as an interim coach.

Now, the Colts owner Jim Irsay is saying he's one of the four guys to be the finalist to be the permanent head coach. And there's already a petition out down in Indy saying, we don't want him. Don't insult us. He has very little experience and he went 1 and 7 with his audition.

So that's just one example. Magic Johnson was another guy who tried head coaching with the LA Lakers. It didn't work out. He walked away from it.

CATHY Right. Say, let's go back to the script here and talk about, speaking of winning and that kind of thing,

WURZER: Timberwolves-- where were they, in New Orleans, is that right?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. They were at the other end of the Mississippi River last night. They got to win against the Pelicans. All five starters scored in double figures. So that's encouraging for Head Coach Chris Finch. Anthony Edwards, Ant, erupted.

He had 37 points, six rebounds. The T-Wolves continue to play without Karl-Anthony Towns who is one of their top players, if not their best player. From the New Orleans perspective, they did not have Zion Williamson.

And the Pelicans, I believe, now have lost seven in a row. And Zion was an outstanding player at Duke. He's battled injuries. Earlier this year, he looked dominant, especially in a game against the Timberwolves about a month and a half ago. But without him, the Pelicans are struggling.

And tomorrow night at Target Center, it's a playoff rematch-- the Memphis Grizzlies come to Minneapolis, Cathy. They'll take on Minnesota. If you remember that playoff series last April, the Grizzlies won it in six games, but Minnesota had three double-digit leads that they coughed up, games they could have and should have won, but didn't seal the deal. So I'm sure the T-Wolves will be looking for a little revenge tomorrow night.

CATHY OK. And before we go, anything you want to report on the Vikings?

WURZER:

WALLY Yeah, Cathy, a couple of interesting notes came out in the last day or two. Kevin O'Connell, who led his team to a
LANGFELLOW: 13 and 4 record this year, first year head coach, did not even get into the final five as a finalist for Coach of the Year in the NFL. Pretty remarkable considering that this was all based on regular season.

They won the NFC North. They're a playoff team. You didn't know how they were going to do in the postseason, but a lot of East Coast bias, I would say, in regard to that. On the flip side, Justin Jefferson, the only non-quarterback as a finalist for MVP of the league.

So I guess it's a good news, bad news scenario. Jefferson could possibly become the first non-quarterback MVP since Adrian Peterson, the last one to do it when he was a Vikings running back.

CATHY All right. And, Eric?

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Well, the Vikings home venue, US Bank Stadium, was recently ranked by a publication out of the UK as one of the most unsightly buildings on the globe. I think it's the 12th-ugliest facility slash building on Earth. This is according to, again, an outlet in the UK, the United Kingdom.

CATHY Earth, that's worse.

WURZER:

ERIC NELSON: Well, in the US, it's ranked right there with the J Edgar Hoover building in Washington, DC and some others. Yeah, it's certainly not the kind of ranking you want. But as far as the Vikings and what they're doing now, they are in fast break mode looking for a new defensive coordinator to replace Ed Donatell.

Some of the names that have come up or people the Vikings are interested in-- Mike Pettine, Brian Flores, Sean Desai, Ryan Nielsen. Whoever gets this job, Cathy, it's going to be heavy lifting, because that defense isn't very good. They're going to have to be miracle workers, I'd say.

CATHY No kidding. Thank you, Eric Nelson. Wally Langfellow, I'll talk to you next week, OK?

WURZER:

WALLY See ya.

LANGFELLOW:

CATHY Thanks. That's it for *Minnesota Now* here on MPR News. Thanks for listening.

WURZER: