

## Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Sports with Wally and Eric 01GCF8NT2QTBVZ6XTRGCXRGXFB

We've entered the shoulder season between summer and winter sports. So there are a lot of teams playing and a lot to talk about on the sports scene. Who better to ask about it all than our resident sports pros, Wally Langfellow, Eric Nelson? Wally is 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*. How are you guys doing?

**WALLY** Very good. How are you today, Kathy?

**LANGFELLOW:**

**INTERVIEWER:** Fine. It's been busy. Eric?

**ERIC NELSON:** Hello. How are you doing, Kathy? Good to be on.

**INTERVIEWER:** Likewise. Good to hear your voice. All right, let me see, today's Thursday, right? I'm getting my day screwed up because of the short week. Twins and Yankees are wrapping up a four-game series in the Bronx today, right?

**WALLY** They are. They'll play tonight. And then the Twins come home, mercifully away from Yankee Stadium, this weekend. Because as you probably know by now, things are terrible when they play New York, worse when they play in New York. And yesterday was no different. They lost a doubleheader.

But they do come home this weekend to play Cleveland. Cleveland is in first place in the American League Central Division. Now it's going to be a busy weekend in downtown Minneapolis. And the Twins are going to have, probably, some trouble getting fans into the gates despite the fact that they'll be playing for first place. So tomorrow night is the first game of that series with Cleveland.

And of course, there's high school football all over the place on a Friday night. Then on Saturday, the Twins play. But the Gophers are also playing, Gopher football. They don't play at the exact same time, but you're probably going to do some picking and choosing as to how you're going to spend your Saturday. And then Sunday, of course, the Minnesota Vikings open up against the Green Bay Packers-- that's a 3:25 kickoff-- while the twins play at 1:10.

So there will be some crossover there. Downtown Minneapolis will be very busy on Sunday with both the Twins and the Vikings, Packers playing. So it's going to be a busy weekend. Twins need to win some baseball games. And we shall see if they come out on the high side. They trail Cleveland by 2 games coming into the weekend, and that's not counting tonight. So assuming that they lose another one to the Yankees, which I don't think is a great-- I'm not going out on a limb there-- they could be 2 and 1/2 or possibly a game and a half out coming into the weekend.

**INTERVIEWER:** Eric?

**ERIC NELSON:** Yeah, and you know Kathy, historically, the New York Yankees have literally been kryptonite for the Minnesota Twins, especially in the Bronx. Whenever the twins go to New York City, they get mugged. I mean, they've lost the first three in this series, as Wally just mentioned. Since 2002, the Yankees are 98-37 against Minnesota. And they've won 22 of the last 24 at Yankee Stadium. So it's been pure domination.

But beyond this, when the Twins face powerhouse teams, they become a speed bump. They get run over. They're 0-6 against the LA Dodgers, who have the top record in Major League Baseball. They're 0-6 against the Houston Astros, who are one of the best teams in baseball as well. So if the Twins even do get into the playoffs, you have to wonder, what's going to happen when they play some of these superior teams? Usually it's not a good result.

**INTERVIEWER:** Well, given what you just said, Eric, it doesn't sound like it's going to be terribly positive if they get into the playoffs.

**ERIC NELSON:** Well, they've lost their last 18 postseason games. They haven't won a playoff game since the early 2000s. So the narrative is not good. And they may not even punch a playoff ticket. Wally's Cleveland Guardians have a 2-game lead. And the Chicago White Sox are tied with Minnesota now.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh, that's right. OK, let's talk about the Vikings, you guys. Wally, you mentioned, that's going to be a big game. It's always a big game when the Vikings play Green Bay.

**WALLY LANGFELLOW:** Yeah, well, you have 17 regular season games, so they do tend to be more important than a one baseball game out of 162, that's for sure. But yeah, I mean you're opening up against the Packers. Not only are they your arch rivals, but they're the team to beat in the NFC North. There's no question about it. As long as Aaron Rodgers is wearing a Green Bay Packers uniform, they are probably going to be the favorite in the division.

And to start your season off, it's a good measuring stick for the Vikings. Maybe they catch them at the right time. Let's not forget the Packers opened up with a thud last year, getting shut down by New Orleans. So maybe, just maybe this is the right time for the Vikings to be playing the Packers. I don't know. They don't play them again until early January. So getting off on the right foot would be huge, particularly against a team that is favored to win.

Kevin O'Connell coming in, new head coach for the Vikings. He'll get his-- he'll be indoctrinated into a Viking-Packer rivalry immediately. And it'll be interesting to see how many of those Packer backers show up at the House of Noise, otherwise known as US Bank Stadium, on Sunday. But it'll be an interesting match-up. Again though, don't get too down if they lose, and don't get too hyped up if they win. Because there are 17 of these games.

**INTERVIEWER:** Eric?

**ERIC NELSON:** Kathy, NFC North games, though, are critical. If you're going to win the division, you have to beat the teams you play the most.

**INTERVIEWER:** Right.

**ERIC NELSON:** And you face Green Bay, Chicago, and Detroit twice each. That's six games. And the Packers clearly are the gold standard in the division. And the Vikings have started slow the last couple of seasons and have never recovered. Remember, they got out of the gate last year 0-2, losing a couple of crushing defeats, dagger defeats as I call them, at Cincinnati and at Arizona. So they really need to flip the script and get off to a fast start.

And of course, whenever the Packers come into Minneapolis, it brings out the venom in the Purple Nation. You've got Aaron Rodgers, a guy that people love to hate. And more bad news, though, for Minnesota Vikings fans, Aaron Rodgers is coming back on those State Farm commercials with his good buddy Jake. So you're going to see a lot of Aaron Rodgers on the field and on the tube between breaks with those TV commercials that the NFL likes to jam down your throat.

**INTERVIEWER:** I did not know that. The things I learned from you, Eric Nelson, I'm telling you. Say, before you guys go, we did a little conversation yesterday with the director of the new hockey movie *Hockeyland*, which is-- actually, it looks like a pretty good documentary.

**ERIC NELSON:** Yeah, as a matter of fact, I saw it on a media screening preview. And we have the producer and director on both our TV show and our radio show this week. So yeah, great stuff. I thought they did a really good job of kind of giving you the essence of hockey, high school hockey in northern Minnesota. Basically, what they've done is they embedded themselves in the 2020 season with the Hermantown Hawks boys hockey team and what was Eveleth Gilbert.

Of course, that is no longer. They are now-- that was the last season as Eveleth, which of course, historically, was big in Minnesota because Eveleth won a bunch of the first state hockey tournaments. So yeah, very interesting. I would highly recommend it. It's opening up across the state this weekend and across the nation next weekend. I highly recommend it.

**INTERVIEWER:** And before we go here, I want to mention the Gopher football game. You mentioned it a little bit here, Wally. They're at home Saturday against Western Illinois?

**WALLY** Yes. Yeah, that's a team-- again, Minnesota heavily favored against Western Illinois. And from the Gophers  
**LANGFELLOW:** perspective, it's a chance to get to 2-0. They really won't be tested until next week when Colorado comes in to Huntington Bank Stadium, Colorado out of the Pac-12.

**INTERVIEWER:** OK. Got to go, you guys. Thanks so much. Have a good weekend.

**WALLY** See you, Kathy.

**LANGFELLOW:**

**INTERVIEWER:** Wally Langfellow, Eric Nelson, our sports guys. Wally is the founder of *Minnesota Score* magazine. Both are the co-hosts of *10,000 Takes* sports radio and TV talk show.