

## Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now What's new with Gopher hockey, basketball, and baseball? Our sports guys have the latest 01GVNTHZJ6XY34RHKFMQ2VE5W0

INTERVIEWER: It's Thursday, and that means it's time for sports. Joining me are our sports experts, Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Wally is the founder of *MinnesotaScoreMagazine* and the co-host of *10,000Takes* sports talk show.

Eric is the other host of *10,000 Takes* and is also the Minnesota Vikings reporter for CBS Sports Radio *Eye On Football*. Let's start with some Minnesota Gopher hockey. They're expected to be a top seed when the NCAA announces its tournament bracket Sunday. They gonna be up there, Eric?

**ERIC NELSON:** Well, they certainly have a good chance because the Gophers right now are the top team in the nation. They are going to host Michigan at Mariucci Arena on Saturday night in Dinkytown. And this is the Big Ten Tournament championship game they'll be playing.

And regardless of what happens, the Gophers should be a one- or a two-seed in the NCAA tournament. And Minnesota has a top line of center Logan Cooley, Matthew Knies, and Jimmy Snuggerud. They have been fire on ice all season, Tim.

And some people are saying this is one of the greatest lines in the history of Minnesota Gopher hockey. And we all know this is a pedigree program. The Frozen Four, by the way, is in Tampa if you want to go down and catch some sunshine and some ice. Yes, it'll be April 6 through April 8 on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

And we should not leave out the women. They have reached the Frozen Four. And the Gophers will play Wisconsin in the semifinals this weekend at AMSOIL Arena in Duluth. And if they win, it's off to the Frozen Four title game and a chance to bring back some hardware, bring back that trophy.

**INTERVIEWER:** Let's move on to the hardwood here. Wally, what's new on the Karl-Anthony Towns watch and the Wolves?

**WALLY LANGFELLOW:** Oh, boy. Well, everything and nothing, Tim. So the Timberwolves released an update on Karl-Anthony Towns' injury on Wednesday. Well, it wasn't really an update at all.

As we know, he has been out since November 28. And they say it's a calf injury. And the feeling is that it might be more than a calf injury. And of course, the Wolves have not gone down that path. They have said nothing about it.

But he has been out since November. And the Wolves have basically been a 500 team. The update said he's continuing basketball activities and that he'll be back in the coming weeks.

Now, we've been hearing that for probably the last two months now, that he's improving. But look, if he does not come back and play with this team-- and I'd say before the playoffs because he can't just jump in the middle of a movie and expect him to be the Karl-Anthony Towns that he was last year-- it's going to be a tough road to hoe for these Minnesota Timberwolves.

They are not going to go anywhere without him. They might be in the playoffs, but as far as making a run, I seriously doubt it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, speaking of the Wolves, as well as the Lynx and the Wild and the Twins, even, this week, Diamond Sports Group announced they were going bankrupt. That's the parent company for Bally Sports North, near and dear to many Minnesota sports fans' hearts. What does this mean for the Twins' season and for sports on TV, in general?

**WALLY** Well, that's a great question. The Twins, it looks like you'll be able to watch games on what is now called Bally  
**LANGFELLOW:** Sports North. Who knows if it's going to be called that for very much longer.

The Diamond Sports Group, whose parent company is Sinclair Broadcasting, filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy on Tuesday. It was expected. As far as Major League Baseball is concerned, though, the Twins are one of the teams-- there's 14 teams that are in this regional sports network under the Bally flag. And of the 14, the Twins are one of the 10 that make money.

There are four teams where the Bally Sports Group is not making money. And those four may be out in the cold, although Major League Baseball might step in and take over those broadcasts. So it remains to be seen.

I don't think you have anything to worry about. If you're getting Bally Sports now, you will get Twins games. I think that that's probably going to be handled by Major League Baseball. But they owe millions of dollars. They missed a payment of over \$100 million last month. They have until Friday to figure it out.

But of course, they have the same problem that they've had all along. A lot of people have cut the cable. So they don't have cable television anymore. So they've lost that revenue. And they're not on many streaming services. And there's blackouts. If you buy the MLB.TV product, you can't get the Twins if you live in Minnesota.

So it's a crazy problem that Major League Baseball has. They're going to have to sort through it. But right now, you will get the games if you've been getting them in the past-- complicated but simple.

**INTERVIEWER:** OK. So I want to move back on campus here and back to Gopher basketball. The men lose star recruit Dennis Evans, freshman Jaden Hanley. It's tough in Gopher nation.

**ERIC NELSON:** Yeah, absolutely, Tim. The Gopher men cratered this season. It was a historically bad year for Ben Johnson and his crew in his second season as the head coach.

You brought up Dennis Evans, this five-star recruit out of Riverside, California. They were counting on him to step in and make an impact right away-- a shot blocker, a guy who was going to make an impact down low on the block and the paint, a scorer, a rebounder. Now, Evans is already recommitted to Louisville-- and they had a worse record than Minnesota, believe it or not-- and then Jaden Henley.

So these are dagger defections, if you will, for the Minnesota Gopher program. The question now is, can Ben Johnson go into the transfer portal and add some players for next season? Because the Gophers need to start making progress.

But I think there is a misconception here in Minnesota. This has never been an elite program. So to think the Gophers are ever going to get to the level of Kansas or Kentucky or UCLA or Duke or North Carolina or pick your college basketball superpower, I think that's a fantasy.

What we do have to hope, if you're a Gopher fan, is that the team can get back to where they were when they mistakenly let go of Tubby Smith. He took the team to the tournament three times in six years, was gassed unfairly by Norwood Teague. And Minnesota's still trying to recover from that.

As far as the women go, they are looking for a new head coach. Lindsay Whalen is out. We all know that. There is a good core. The cupboard isn't empty in Mara Braun and Amaya Battle, Mallory Heyer, and Niamya Holloway, these young recruits Lindsay brought in. So if they stay and don't go, there is a bright future, I think, for Gopher women's hoops.

**INTERVIEWER:** And the NFC North had some quarterback drama here this week. Kirk Cousins restructured his contract amid the tear-down, I guess, of the Vikings. And of course, Aaron Rodgers can't help but make news, right?

**WALLY LANGFELLOW:** Well, yeah. That's Aaron Rodgers' job is to be in the headlines. Now, the good news is that he's leaving the NFC North, if you're a Vikings fan. Because, let's face it, the Vikings have had their struggles with Aaron Rodgers from time to time, although they have handled him, at times, as well.

But he's going to the New York Jets. Ironically, of course, that's the same path that Brett Favre followed many years ago. Back about 2008, I want to say, is when Favre left Green Bay for the Jets and then, famously, came to Minnesota and helped the Vikings get to an NFC Championship game. So maybe-- who knows-- maybe Aaron Rodgers will end up here after Kirk Cousins' contract runs out at the end of this upcoming season, and all will be well once again.

**INTERVIEWER:** We'll stake out the Saint Paul Airport there and wait for the flight to come in.

**WALLY LANGFELLOW:** Exactly. And you could get the MPR helicopter out and follow him out to Eagan this time. And it's a lot shorter drive from the airport to Eagan than it was to Eden Prairie.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what about Kirk Cousins and that restructuring? It looks like they're hanging on for a while here.

**WALLY LANGFELLOW:** Well, yeah, I think they are. And basically what they've done, though, is they've cleared some room for some of the signings that they have already made and plan to make.

And if you look at it closely, it looks like the Vikings, at the end of the upcoming season, are probably going to part ways with Kirk Cousins. He will become a free agent if they do not extend him. It sounds like they offered him another one-year.

And Kirk Cousins and his agent wanted more than that, so they decided, well, you can play for one more year here, and that's what he's going to do. He'll play in 2023 as a Minnesota Viking, barring a trade, of course. But I think they still feel like they can win this coming season, so they keep Cousins around. That's the general concept.

**INTERVIEWER:** Well, we'll be watching. Thanks, guys.

**WALLY LANGFELLOW:** Thanks, Tim.

**ERIC NELSON:** Yeah, thanks, Tim.

**INTERVIEWER:** That was Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Wally is the founder of *Minnesota Score Magazine* and the co-host of *10,000 Takes* sports talk show. Eric is the other host of *10,000 Takes* and is also the Minnesota Vikings reporter for CBS Sports Radio *Eye on Football*.