

NINA MOINI: The Minnesota Timberwolves and Denver Nuggets are preparing for Game 5 of their playoff series tonight. If the Wolves win, they advance to the Western Conference Finals. That's after a decisive victory Saturday when they beat Denver by 16 points. It came at a cost, though, injuries for two starters and fines for a member of each team. Joining me to talk about this and other Minnesota sports are our contributors, Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Thanks for being here, guys. Happy Monday.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. Happy rainy Monday, Nina.

WALLY Hi, Nina.

LANGFELLOW:

NINA MOINI: Yeah, it's a rainy Monday. Wally, let's start with the Nuggets and the Timberwolves. It's the third season in a row, I understand, that these teams are meeting in the playoffs, and they seem to have a beef. What happened Saturday?

WALLY Oh, boy. What didn't happen on Saturday? Well, first and foremost the Timberwolves won the game on Saturday,
LANGFELLOW: as you already pointed out. Secondly, there was a little scrum at the end of the game because Jayden Daniels, he decided to lay up a ball in the basket with just a few seconds left. And I guess there's an unwritten rule in the NBA where you don't do that. And Nikola Jokic, the star player for Denver, came running down the court and pushed and shoved Jayden, and it kind of ensued from there.

It's silly. Personally, I think you play till the buzzer. I've never been a big fan of standing there and dribbling out the clock, but I guess that's the way they do things these days. So the rivalry is definitely there. And as you said, they've played in the past. These two teams have met several times over the years now, and it's become a heated rivalry.

But the big news today, of course, is that Anthony Edwards, Ant, will not be playing for a couple of weeks. He was hurt on Saturday, hyperextended his left knee in addition to a bone bruise on his left knee. So it's not great news for the Timberwolves. Now, they just need one more win against Denver to move into the Western Conference Semifinals. But it's a big hill to climb when you're missing two of your five starters.

Now, they did do that on Saturday. Ayo Dosunmu came through with 43 points, a career high for him. They're going to need their bench, and they have a deep bench, so that's the good news. The bad news is you've lost one of the best players in the league, and then you lost Donte DiVincenzo who got hurt in the first moments of the game on Saturday. He's out for the year. He will not be back till next year. He blew out an Achilles. So they've got a hill to climb, no doubt.

Now, if they can get by Denver, they'll move into the next round. Hopefully, Anthony Edwards can be ready to play some time during the second round. But you got to win one more first, and Denver's been known to come back from 3-1 deficits. They've done it a few times over the last few years. So don't count your chickens before they hatch. And oh, by the way, tonight's game, set your alarm clocks once again. It starts at 9:30 PM Central time.

NINA MOINI: All right. Oh, wow. That is quite an eventful game they had. Switching over to hockey, guys, the Minnesota Wild are also deep in their first round of playoffs, and the Frost are about to begin theirs. What's the latest there, Eric?

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, Nina. On Saturday, high drama in St. Paul. Another overtime game. This time, Minnesota gets the win, 3 to 2 over Dallas. Matt Boldy gets a deflected goal with just 28.9 seconds left in the first overtime. Grand Casino Arena erupted, and the Wild came up with a clutch win. They evened the series 2-2.

And the goalkeeper Jesper Wallstedt-- they call him the Wall of St. Paul-- stopped 43 of 45 shots on goal, so he was outstanding. And it really, Nina, looked like Minnesota was doomed. Dallas led 2 to 1 in the third period, but Marcus Foligno tied the game with 5:20 left in regulation, so off we go. Game 5 is Tuesday in Texas. Face off, 7:00 PM on ESPN.

This is one of those games that actually won't start late, so there won't be sleep deprivation for these two fan bases-- unless it goes five overtimes, which, in hockey, that could happen. If the Wild, though, are going to find a way to win the series, stopping the Star's power play is something they need to figure out. Dallas is 8 for 19 in power play chances. On the flip side, Minnesota is 1 for 15 on the power play when they have the man advantage in the last three games. They need to flip that script.

No surprise, though, that this series is even. Like the Nuggets and Timberwolves, these are bitter rivals. This is the third time the teams have met in the playoffs. The Stars have won the previous two, and Minnesota is looking for payback. And let's not forget, Nina-- our younger listeners may not be aware of this. These are the same Stars who were once the Minnesota North Stars before they left the Twin Cities, went down I-35, and relocated in the Dallas Fort Worth Metroplex back in 1993.

As for the Minnesota Frost, Walter Cup playoffs for them begin on Saturday, 1:00 PM Central time. That's Game 1 against Montreal. The Victoire are the top seed, and the Frost are the three seed. Victoire in French means victory, and the Montreal--

NINA MOINI: I gathered.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. Had more victories than anybody else except Boston. They were tied with 16. So they're a very good team. 62 points. The Frost have 50. Montreal was 4 and 0 against Minnesota this season, but two of those were overtime wins. Minnesota's Kelly Pannek and Britta Curl-Salemme are two of the PWHL's top offensive players, but they will be tested by Montreal goalie Ann-Renee Desbiens. She has 19 overall wins and the top goals against average in the league, a microscopic 0.95.

NINA MOINI: OK. So we did hockey. Now, we're going to talk about the Twins, Wally. They've had some rough games, I understand. They lost five in a row. What's going on there? I was kind of hopeful for him this year.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Oh, boy. Yeah. Five in a row, and 9 out of 10. So it's not just the last five. And in those five games, they have led for exactly 2/3 of an inning. So they led for two outs during one inning of one game, the only time they have led in those five losses. So yeah, it's been ugly for the Twins, to say the least, Nina. Hopefully, they can get back on track. They're back home now. They've got a couple of series at home. That starts tonight.

And then this weekend, they've got four more games. So with the two series in town, hopefully, the Twins can break that streak and get back on the winning track, so to speak. They were outscored, by the way, by the D Rays 16 to 5 in the series. And as I mentioned, they only led for a short time. They host Seattle tonight. It's the first of three.

And then they open a seven game home stand-- that's part of the seven game home stand this weekend. They have four more as the Toronto Blue Jays come to town. And hopefully, the Twins can get back on track. But it has not been good. They're not pitching. They're not hitting. They're not fielding. That usually adds up to a bad recipe of wins and losses.

NINA MOINI: Yikes. I hope they're able to turn something around. Eric, the NFL draft ended this weekend. Tell us who the Vikings picked up.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah, Nina. The Purple had eight choices in the draft. It was conducted Thursday through Saturday. The top pick was Florida defensive lineman Caleb Banks. He was chosen 18th overall in Round 1. The Vikings are hoping to cash in on Banks. He can play defensive end or nose guard.

And look, he's the size of a grain silo. He's 6 feet, 6 inches tall, 327 pounds. He's going to block out the sun-- except they do play indoors, so that's not really an issue. But this guy has huge upside. But he's broken his foot multiple times since 2024. He played just three games for the Gators in 2025. So hopefully, he will be 100% physically.

The other draft choice is Round 2, linebacker Jake Golday out of Cincinnati. They had three picks in Round 3. They get a defensive lineman Domonique Orange out of Iowa State, and offensive tackle Caleb Tiernan out of Northwestern, a safety Jakobe Thomas out of Miami. Round 5, they had two picks. They get fullbacks Max Bredeson out of Michigan-- he played with JJ McCarthy when they won the national title for the Wolverines a few years ago-- cornerback Charles Demmings out of Stephen F. Austin State.

And then in Round 6, they get a running back, Demond Claiborne, out of Wake Forest. I also need to mention they made a major trade. They dealt their star linebacker, Jonathan Greenard, to Philadelphia. It was a cap cutting move, and they got three picks in return. And how about this, Nina? The draft was staged in Pittsburgh. NFL Nation flocked to the Steel City. A total of 805,000 fans showed up for the three day event. This wasn't a game. This is just guys being picked by teams.

NINA MOINI: All right.

ERIC NELSON: Breaking Detroit's record of 775,000 two years ago.

NINA MOINI: All right. Wally Langfellow, Eric Nelson, thanks, as always, guys.

ERIC NELSON: Thanks, Nina.

WALLY Thanks, Nina.

LANGFELLOW: