MPR News | Minnesota Now 'The purple are perfect:' Undefeated Vikings look to recover injured players during bye week 01M4RRE9NBNBSD9F8ZY3ZXA9EQ

NINA MOINI: The Minnesota Vikings are going into a break with more wins on their record and more injuries on their roster. They are undefeated 5 and 0 this season. Joining me to talk more about this and other Minnesota sports stories are weekly sports contributors Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson. Hey, guys. Happy Monday.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. Happy Monday, Nina.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Happy Monday, Nina.

NINA MOINI: Wally, I feel like you got to be having a good Monday after the Vikings latest win there in New Orleans yesterday.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: I am having a good Monday. And my baseball team, Cleveland, is in the ALCS. That's beside the point. But yes, Vikings played well yesterday. Kyler Murray looked like the Kyler Murray, the quarterback, that they had wanted and need for this season.

And I thought that he played well down the stretch against Miami last week. That seemed to carry over this week. He completed his first 12 passes, had only 6 incompletions on the day, ended up with 229 yards, 24 for 30 in passing, plus a touchdown, a really a nifty catch by-- nifty. There's a word from the past.

NINA MOINI: I love nifty.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: You love nifty? Yeah. But a really nice catch by Justin Jefferson in the back of the end zone. Jefferson makes a huge difference. He was playing basically in front of his home crowd. He grew up in the New Orleans area, and he had a nice day. Finished with 79 yards, 6 catches, and that touchdown.

And then there's Aaron Jones, the running back for Minnesota, 113 yards on 25 carries and a touchdown. So they got some really good contributions from several guys, and they played that great defense that they play. They gave up one touchdown to the New Orleans offense.

But basically, the Vikings did what they needed to do to win every week. Now, again, the Saints are not the NFL's best team. Neither was Miami last week. Neither was Tampa the week before. But you got to play and beat the teams that are on your schedule, and they've been doing that.

And oh, by the way, Will Reichard, our field goal kicker, another 3 for 3, including a 55 yarder. He has now made 34 straight field goals. Just unbelievably good. By the way, the Vikings now have a two game lead in the NFC North. Everyone else in the division is three wins and two losses. Vikings are 5 and 0.

NINA MOINI: A lot of niftiness there. But Eric, what's not nifty is all these injuries the Vikings are dealing with. Tell us about that.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Yeah, they are a mash unit right now, Nina. Yes, the purple are perfect at 5 and 0. And by the way, just three undefeated teams left in the NFL. San Francisco, also 5 and 0. Kansas City's 4 and 0. So the Vikings are in rare air.

But the injuries continue to mount. We'll start with tight end T.J. Hockenson injured early in Sunday's win down in New Orleans. He's in concussion protocol. Offensive left tackle Christian Darrisaw missed the Saints game with concussion. Hopefully, he can return when the Vikings play their next game on October 25 when they host Indianapolis.

Then, you have offensive guard Donovan Jackson. He's got a knee injury, also did not play against New Orleans. He's on injured reserve. Wideout Jordan Addison has a bad hamstring, didn't play yesterday. So maybe the bye week-- which is coming up. They will not play this Sunday-- is coming at the exact right time for Minnesota so some of these guys can get healed up.

What Kyler Murray did yesterday behind a patchwork offensive line I thought was incredibly impressive. Now, the next opponent for Minnesota is Indianapolis, and the Colts lost to the Steelers yesterday in Pittsburgh 34 to 22. They are 2 and 4 on the season.

And there's a couple of prominent ex-Vikings on the Colts. Quarterback Daniel Jones, who was here a couple of years ago, and safety Cam Bynum. And by the way, Minnesota will want to make sure they keep an eye on running back Jonathan Taylor out of Wisconsin. He's one of Indianapolis's top players. But clearly, on paper-- and I realized they play the games on grass or field turf-- but clearly, another winnable game for the Minnesota Vikings.

NINA MOINI: All right. We'll see what happens. Eric, it was like 80, 90 degrees this weekend, but it's hard to believe we're into hockey season already. But the Wild have played-- I'm seeing here-- five regular season games. They've won three of them. Tell us about how they did Saturday.

ERIC NELSON: Yeah. And go figure, Nina. They just came off a Florida road trip to Tampa Bay and Florida down in the Miami, Fort Lauderdale area, where they split two games. Normally, you want to go to Florida in January or February. They were actually gone when we had great weather here in Minnesota. I mean, heat wave, right?

So yeah, tonight Vegas comes in, 10 points. Minnesota has 7 points. This will be in St. Paul. The puck will drop at about 7:10 PM. The Wild are tied for third place in the NHL Central. They're just one point behind Utah. Now, on Saturday, as I mentioned, Minnesota was down there in SoFlo and knocked off the Florida Panthers 4 to 1 on the road in the Panthers home opener.

How about Kirill Kaprizov? Three goals, one assist for Minnesota. And Wild goalie Jesper Wallstedt has been brilliant. He stopped 29 of 30 shots in the win over Florida. His goals against average-- the GAA, as they say in the NHL-- is 1.78. That's impressive.

Now, the Golden Knights, the opponent tonight. They are a perennial power in the NHL. Vegas has the second most points in the league. The Golden Knights played in the Stanley Cup Finals last season, losing to Carolina four games to two.

And by the way, Kaprizov leads the Wild with 8 points this season. Quinn Hughes has 7, but Quinn Hughes is the elephant in the room, their outstanding defenseman. He has still not received that contract extension. And the longer this goes on, people are wondering, will he be in Minnesota big picture? So they want to get that thing finished sooner rather than later with Quinn Hughes.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. Let's take a quick left here back to football for a moment, though, Wally, because the U of M Gophers also played Saturday against Purdue. Tell us a little bit about how that game went for anyone who missed it.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Oh, boy. If you missed it, you probably should be glad that you didn't see it.

[LAUGHTER]

NINA MOINI: No need to go back and watch.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Oh, what a disaster. They lost 41-13. They really were never in the football game. The game was played in West Lafayette, and it was former Gopher Fame Ijeboi who killed them. 195 yards and 3 touchdowns really exposed Minnesota's weakness defensively.

And their defense had played so well against Michigan the week before and so well against Washington the week before that. They just got carved up by Ijeboi and that Purdue offense. And Ijeboi, by the way-- I say he's a former Gopher. He was their second leading rusher last year, played for Minnesota for two years but didn't really get or think he was going to get the opportunities this year with Darius Taylor in the mix.

And so he thought, I'm going to go into the transfer portal, ended up at Purdue. And boy, this is a comeuppance. He came back and said, you know what? You probably should have hung on to me and given me some more opportunities. And so he went out there and proved it on Saturday.

Gophers now fall to 4 and 2 overall, 2 and 1 in the Big Ten. And they missed their chance to enter that rivalry game against Iowa not necessarily as a favorite, but in contention. And I think that this really costs them because Iowa is now 5 and 1. Iowa-- oh, by the way, their only loss was to Ohio State. They're ranked 17th in the nation.

And the Gophers schedule does not get any easier from here on out. By the way, Minnesota only rushed for 27 yards as a team against Purdue the other day. But their schedule gets really difficult. They have Iowa, then they have fifth ranked Indiana, and then they come home to play 12th ranked UCLA. So it's a rocky road for the Gophers coming up.

NINA MOINI: All right. Thanks as always to the both of you. Hope you have a great week.

WALLY LANGFELLOW: Thanks, Nina.

ERIC NELSON: Enjoy the heat wave, Nina.

NINA MOINI: Thank you. That's Wally Langfellow and Eric Nelson, our sports contributors for you.