

SPORTS

Bears overcome early deficit, beat Vikings

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Bears looked more like a team that was coming together than falling apart. They wiped out an early deficit and came away with the win after one of the worst stretches in franchise history.

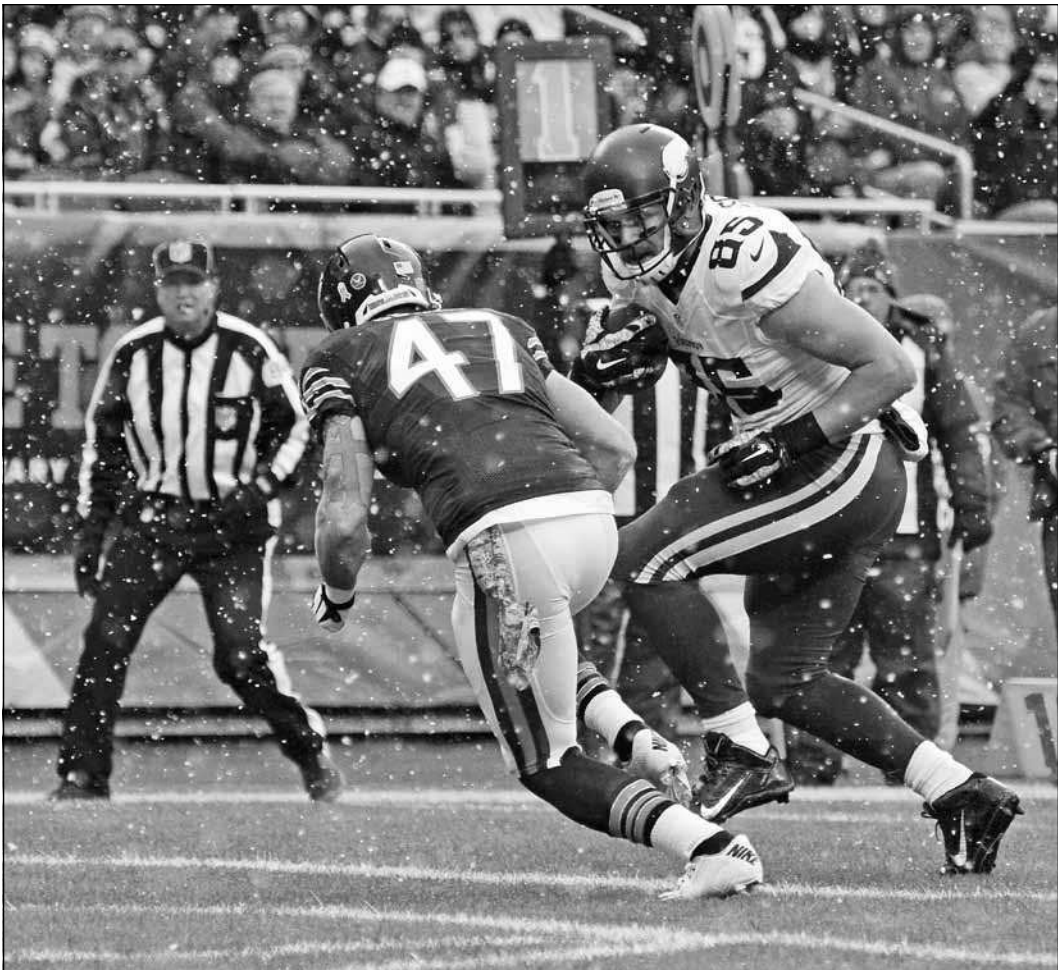
Jay Cutler threw for 330 yards and three touchdowns, and the Bears won for just the second time in seven games by beating the Minnesota Vikings 21-13 on Sunday.

Ryan Mundy intercepted Teddy Bridgewater's 29-yard pass in the end zone in the closing minute, and the Bears hung on for the win after suffering two of the worst blowout losses in franchise history.

"We've got a lot of work to do," coach Marc Trestman said. "Our team is joined at the hip to try to continue working."

Alshon Jeffery had 135 yards receiving and a touchdown catch. Brandon Marshall added 90 yards and two TD receptions, including a 4-yarder in the fourth quarter that made it an 11-point game. Matt Forte ran for 117 yards.

Jared Allen had a sack against his former team, and the Bears (4-6) prevailed after joining the 1923 Rochester Jeffersons as the only teams to give up 50 or more points in consecutive games



From right, Vikings tight end Rhett Ellison (85) runs toward the end zone before being tackled by Bears safety Chris Conte (47) to score Minnesota's only touchdown in Sunday's game at Soldier Field.

with blowouts at New England and Green Bay. But it was a different story against the Vikings (4-6).

Here are some things we learned about the Bears and Vikings:

LOCK DOWN: As bad as things were the previous two games, the Bears' defense finally did its job on Sunday. Chicago gave up a season-low 243 yards while racking up 468 and picked

up its first win at Soldier Field after dropping the first three there.

Minnesota got a 48-yard end-around by Andrew Sendejo on a fake punt to set up an early touchdown

but little else on the way to its seventh straight loss in Chicago.

Bridgewater threw for just 158 yards and a touchdown, and the Vikings came up short after winning two in a row.

TIMING ISSUES: The turf at Soldier Field has been a sore spot with home and visiting players for years. But clock issues? That's a new one.

The scoreboard clock started to malfunction in the second quarter, and there were problems the rest of the way.

At first, the clocks on the side were working. They were all out once the second half started, forcing the referees to keep time by hand, and stayed that way for most of the third quarter before coming back on. There were more issues in the closing minutes of the game, and Vikings coach Mike Zimmer was not happy.

"It's another new experience," he said. "It's hard to know because no one is telling you how much time is left," he said.

Zimmer used an expletive to describe the clocks, and then apologized for his language. Stadium officials were not sure what caused the problem.

NFL spokesman Michael Signora said the protocol when game clocks at the

stadium are not operational is for time to be kept on the field, with the side judge responsible for the game clock and the line judge also keeping the game time as a backup. The back judge is responsible for the play clock.

BIG TARGETS: Marshall and Jeffery had no problem exploiting the Vikings' smaller defensive backs. They repeatedly out-jumped smaller defenders, and Jeffery wound up with a season-high 11 catches in another big performance against the Vikings. He had a franchise record 249 yards at Minnesota last year.

EASING THE ANGST: Fans made their feelings clear early on by booing and not showing up. There were 6,472 no-shows and the 55,320 fans on hand were letting their team hear it after Bridgewater connected with Rhett Ellison for a 7-yard touchdown to make it 10-0 following Sendejo's end-around with the Vikings lined up to punt late in the first quarter.

NOTES: Vikings TE Kyle Rudolph returned after missing six games with a sports hernia, but did not catch a pass.... Allen is 1-9 in his career at Soldier Field.... The 243 yards allowed were the fewest by the Bears since they held Houston to 215 on Nov. 11, 2012.

Vikings look a lot like version from last year

EDEN PRAIRIE (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings have a new coaching staff. There's a fresh start at the quarterback position. The defense has been one of the toughest in the league to pass against this season.

That game at Chicago, though, was one of those seen-this-before bad movies for a team that still has a lot of flaws. Regression was one way to put it.

"None of that showed up in practice. They were enthusiastic and energetic before the game," coach Mike Zimmer said Monday.

Whatever the reason or cause, the Vikings sure looked a lot like last year's version while losing 21-13 to fall into a last-place tie with the Bears in the NFC North at 4-6.

"I feel like we had a lot of opportunities, and we messed it up," defensive tackle Linval Joseph said.

Teddy Bridgewater finished 18 for 28 for 158 yards, one touchdown and one interception, but he passed for only 56 yards through

three quarters. He took two sacks.

Just as he was moving the Vikings in position for the potential tying score with a series of underneath completions, Bridgewater overeagerly threw into double coverage in the end zone for Charles Johnson where safety Ryan Mundy picked him off to seal the game.

"I think I could have done a better job of understanding the situation," Bridgewater said.

Wide receiver Adam Thielen was open across the middle on a drag route on that play from the 29-yard line, or he could've dumped the ball off to running back Jerick McKinnon.

One problem was the clock. It wasn't working. Unable to see how many seconds were left exactly, Bridgewater said he didn't believe there was enough time to risk a gain short of the goal line.

The Soldier Field scoreboard malfunction aside, Bridgewater kept up a troubling pattern of being un-

able to complete passes down the field. His longest connection went to Johnson for 24 yards. Cordarrelle Patterson had a 17-yard reception.

Not nearly enough. Bridgewater has shown poise and prowess at times, but too often he has been no more productive or effective than Christian Ponder was last year.

"Those guys can make plays for this team. We are going to continue to find ways to get the ball out faster," Bridgewater said.

This time, the defense had plenty to blame itself for, too.

Again, reprising those struggles of 2013, the secondary couldn't keep up with Bears wide receivers Alshon Jeffery or Brandon Marshall.

Cornerback Josh Robinson, at a significant size disadvantage, was picked apart. The front four that had been so good before the bye week failed to record a sack.

Rookie linebacker An-



From left, Bears wide receiver Brandon Marshall (15) is tackled by Vikings cornerback Josh Robinson (21) in Sunday's game at Soldier Field.

thony Barr, who has had an otherwise-stellar first season, missed several tackles. Jay Cutler passed for 330 yards, by far the most allowed by the Vikings in 2014. He even ran for 21 yards.

"Too many missed tackles. Too many mistakes on defense. Some guys blowing assignments on a few plays

here and there," defensive end Brian Robison said. "When you play like that and you give up almost 500 yards, you can't expect to win a ballgame."

As for that nonexistent time when the Vikings needed to see it on the scoreboard, Zimmer was upset afterward. He said Monday he spoke with the NFL about

the issue, and the league told him there needs to be a protocol in place in case a similar scenario arises. But that was just a sidebar to where the Vikings are with six games to go.

"The Bears beat us, OK? It wasn't the clocks," Zimmer said. "The Bears beat us. They performed better than we did."

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