# SPORTS

## Bridgewater and Vikings get by Bears 13-9

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings were just getting started, with a rookie quarterback and a first-time head coach in Mike Zimmer so eager to maintain momentum he told the players to report to practice in a few days.

The Chicago Bears played again as if they were ready for this season to be over.

Teddy Bridgewater threw the go-ahead 44-yard touchdown pass to Adam Thielen in the third quarter, guiding the Vikings to a 13-9 victory on Sunday to slap one more blemish on a forgettable year for the Bears.

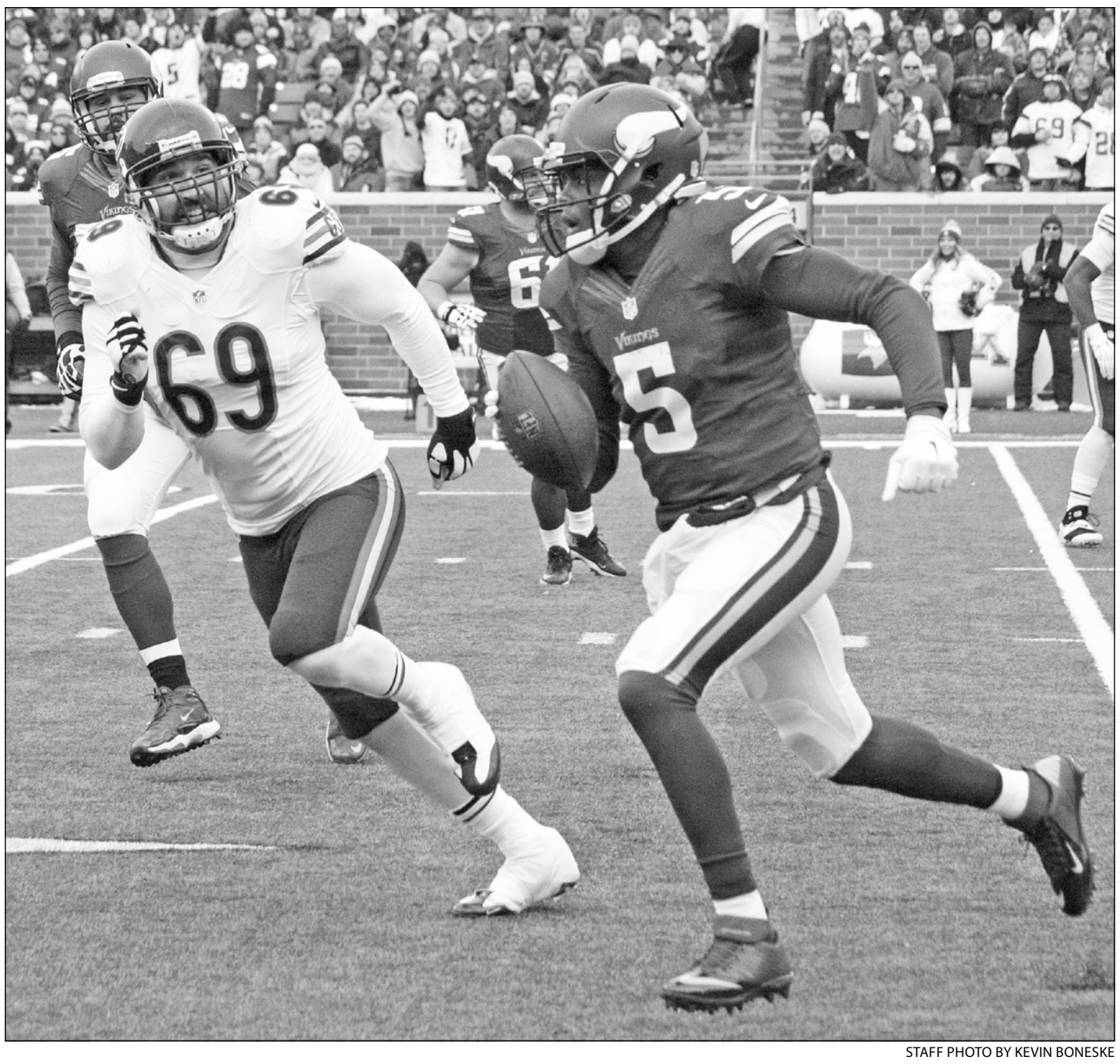
"I don't want to stop. I want to keep going," Zimmer said, joking that he gave the players a day off on Monday. They countered that they'd see him in April instead.

Bears coach Marc Trestman and general manager Phil Emery didn't make it to Tuesday. Both were fired Monday. (See related story on B3.)

Blair Walsh kicked two field goals, linebacker Audie Cole had 11 tackles, three assists and a pass breakup in his first start of the season and the Vikings (7-9) ended Zimmer's first season on a winning note. Bridgewater was so thrilled by Zimmer's first NFC North win that he gave him the ball from the last snap of the game.

"I was so excited and so caught up in how well the guys played today. We showed a lot of character," said Bridgewater, who went 17 for 25 for 209 yards to finish 6-6 as a starter in his first year.

Jay Cutler returned from a one-game benching with 172 yards on 23-for-36 passing without a fumble or an interception, but he rarely threw long and the offense was off all afternoon with a series of unforced errors.



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

**In front from left, Bears defensive end and former Vikings player Jared Allen (69) pursues Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater (5) in Sunday's game at TCF Bank Stadium.**

The Bears (5-11) finished with their worst record in 10 years.

"I don't think anyone knows what's going to happen," said Cutler, acknowledging his own uncertain status. "No one knows what direction we're going. But I'm pretty confident that we'll know relatively soon."

After the Vikings drove to the 3, Matt Asiata was stuffed for no gain on the same play on third-and-1 and fourth-and-1 to give Cutler and the Bears one last opportunity with 2:53 left and a four-point deficit. They bungled it, metaphorically for this mess of a season. Three penalties, including two false starts, plus an incomplete pass doomed the drive.

"Just boneheaded mistakes sometimes, and it happens to all of us," said Matt Forte, whose eight receptions gave him an NFL-running-back-record 102 for the season.

The Bears missed the playoffs for the fourth straight year after reaching the NFC championship game following the 2010 season.

Alshon Jeffery had only two catches for 34 yards after totaling 23 receptions, 384 yards and three touchdowns over the past two games against the Vikings. Without Brandon Marshall to attract attention elsewhere, the Vikings, led by cornerback Xavier Rhodes, had Jeffery well under control.

Kyle Fuller intercepted a short pass by Bridgewater that was behind Cordarrelle Patterson but bounced off both of the wide receiver's hands. Fuller reached the end zone with his return, but the replay revealed his knee was down at the 9-yard line.

That was the second of three touchdowns, two by the Bears, overruled by an official review. The Bears had to settle for the second of three field goals by Jay Feely, who later missed a 43-yard try.

Bridgewater responded with a bang, connecting with Thielen for 22 yards and finding him wide open for the score on the ensuing play for a 10-6 lead when Fuller and safety Brock Vereen blew the coverage.

"It's huge for our confidence going into next year. We had a good team, and we just had a lot of close games that we lost," Thielen said. "We want to be in the playoffs."

**NOTES:** Forte took the record from Larry Centers, who had 101 catches for Arizona in 1995. Forte also topped 1,000-yard rushing mark for the fifth time in seven years. ... Asiata had 91 yards on 19 carries, including a season-long 19-yard run, to finish with a team-leading 570 yards rushing. He had 10 touchdowns and 882 yards from scrimmage. ... Cole had an interception negated by an offside penalty on Corey Wootton, but Cutler finished turnover-free for only the third time in 15 games this season. ... Bridgewater finished with a 64.4 completion rate, the third-highest by a rookie in NFL history behind Ben Roethlisberger (66.4) and Robert Griffin III (65.6).

NHL

## Wild erase 2-goal deficit to defeat Winnipeg 3-2

WINNIPEG, Manitoba (AP) — Darcy Kuemper thinks the Minnesota Wild are finally back on the right track.

Kuemper made 28 saves after missing a game with food poisoning and Marco Scandella scored the tiebreaking goal with 12 seconds left in the second period as the Minnesota Wild rallied from two down to beat the Winnipeg Jets 3-2 on Monday night.

Scandella's ninth of the season was Minnesota's third goal in the second period and helped the Wild snap a five-game winless skid.

"We've had quite a bit of bad luck with illness and injuries," Kuemper said. "It's been a tough road. We're trending in the right direction. It was nice to get rewarded tonight. We really picked up our game in the second half and it showed with a big win."

Kuemper made a couple of big saves late in the game to preserve the win.

"That's what we need from him," Wild head coach Mike Yeo said. "If we get that kind of goaltending on a consistent basis, we're going to be a dangerous team."

Ryan Carter and Justin Fontaine had the other goals for Minnesota (17-13-4). Sutter and Kyle Brodziak each had assists on the goals.

It was Winnipeg's (19-11-7) first loss in regulation in its past six games (4-1-1).

Michael Frolik and Mathieu Perreault both scored on the power play for the Jets.

Michael Hutchinson started his third straight game for Winnipeg and stopped 28 shots.

Winnipeg didn't get its first shot on goal until 7 1/2 minutes into the game. The Wild had seven at that point.

Frolik scored his eighth goal of the season unassisted at 16:00 with a shot that went off Kuemper and into a top corner.

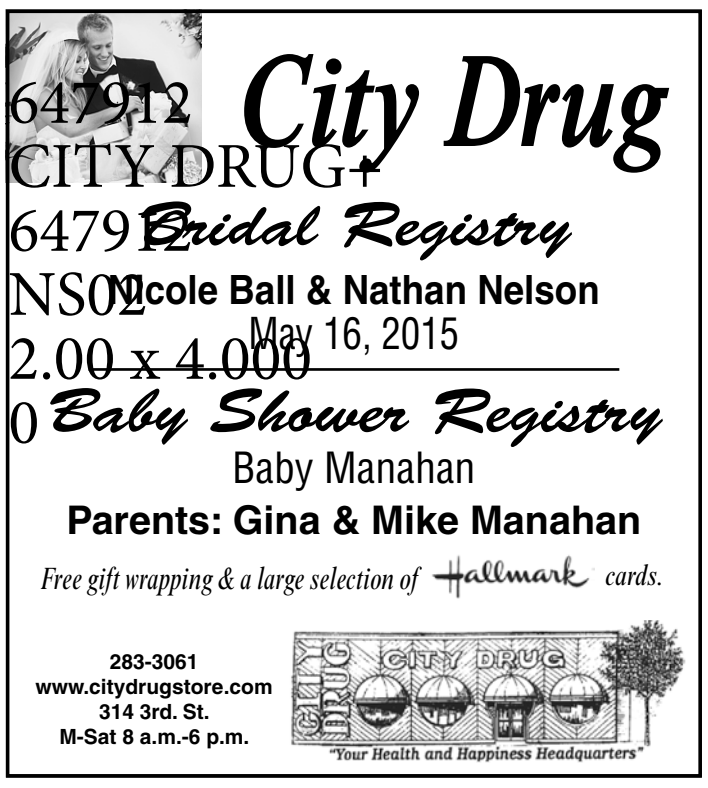
"We feel comfortable to play with the lead, but after the second period we said we are one goal short. We want to feel comfortable in those situations, too, so we just want to go there and have a push," Frolik said.

"We got a couple chances there, but (the puck) didn't go in. We just have to kind of learn from it and forget this one and go for the next one."

The Jets carried their third power play of the game into the second and Perreault scored his ninth of the season at the 20-second mark to make it 2-0.

Blake Wheeler sent a quick pass across the front of the net and Perreault shot the puck over Kuemper's left pad. Bryan Little also assisted on the goal, extending his point streak to four games with two goals and three assists.

Carter made it 2-1 with a close, high shot over Hutchinson at 4:12, while Fontaine evened the score at 16:31 when he went to the net on a breakaway and received a nice pass from Sutter.

"I'm real happy with how we played the game and the contributions from everybody at both ends of the rink," Yeo said. "I think we did a lot of really good things. There's a small margin between winning and losing. It's one save at a crucial moment, one goal at a crucial time. We were able to bust through."

**NOTES:** Minnesota goalie Niklas Backstrom is out with a stomach virus. ... Winnipeg forward Evander Kane is out until February with a lower-body injury. Kane took a shot by teammate Jay Harrison to his foot area during last Saturday's 4-3, overtime win over Minnesota. ... Winnipeg recalled forward Patrice Cormier from the AHL's St. John's IceCaps. ... The Jets are still without their injured top-four defensemen Toby Enstrom, Zach Bogosian, Jacob Trouba and Mark Stuart. ... Minnesota center Mikael Granlund broke his left wrist in last Saturday's loss to Winnipeg and will be out about four weeks. Defenseman Jonas Brodin didn't travel to Winnipeg after sustaining an upper-body injury in the same game.