

SPORTS

Minnesota Vikings lament another lost late lead

EDEN PRAIRIE (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings have little left to play for, with a fan base largely focused on positioning for next year's draft. Landing the first overall pick is a realistic outcome.

Their competitiveness hasn't waned despite this dismal 2-8-1 record, but their late-game command has sure been missing. That goes for everyone.

Consider the reaction from both sides of the ball after their latest collapse Sunday in Green Bay that led to a 26-26 tie.

"The game was in our hands, and we just have to find a way to make some plays on defense at the end of the game to get the victory," said cornerback Chris Cook.

Said wide receiver Greg Jennings: "I thought we did some very positive things, but we just couldn't stick it in the end zone when we needed to. That's the difference in games, when you settle for three instead of getting six."

The Vikings lost a 23-7 lead that lasted until less than 12 minutes remained in regulation, and missed several opportunities to win the game after the Packers caught up. Four times this season, the Vikings have held a lead inside the 1-minute mark and failed to win.

If those four finishes were reversed, well, the Vikings would be 6-5 and tied for first place in the now-unremarkable NFC North.

"It's not all about Xs and Os on a board. The game has always been that way. It's the same way when I played and the same way today," coach Leslie Frazier said Monday. "Sometimes it's just a matter of who can make a play."

One or two close losses could be considered bad luck. When the pattern persists like this, there are clearly weaknesses being exploited by the opponents, a sign of a team with a record that's close to commensurate with the roster.

There were problems immediately apparent in the first quarter of this season, particularly on defense when Chicago and Cleveland rallied for last-minute victories against the Vikings in consecutive weeks.

Injuries since have exacerbated the vulnerability to long scoring drives with the game on the line, and the production of timely turnovers has been next to nonexistent since totaling 12 takeaways over the first four games. Over their last seven games, the Vikings have forced only two turnovers.

With rookie cornerback Xavier Rhodes out because



Vikings fullback Rhett Ellison (40) runs toward the end zone between the Packers' M.D. Jennings (43) and Davon House (31) in Sunday's game at Lambeau Field.

of a concussion, backup safety Robert Blanton was thrust into the nickel cornerback spot Sunday down the stretch. The Packers started overtime with the ball and were on the verge of a punt from their 20-yard line after a third-and-9 sack by Chad Greenway, but Blanton was called for

holding wide receiver Jordy Nelson.

That gave the Packers a first down, and with new life they drove to the 2 and kicked a field goal.

Despite 146 yards rushing by Adrian Peterson and 91 on the ground by Toby Gerhart, plus a turnover-free performance by Christian

Ponder, the Vikings again played a Sunday game on American soil and failed to win. Their only victories this season came in London over Pittsburgh and on a Thursday against Washington.

"It definitely wasn't celebration," Peterson said after the game. "It is what it is."

Rhodes played probably his best game as a pro until getting hurt, with four tackles and four of his team's nine passes defended. He'll have to pass his post-concussion tests to be cleared to play this week, and since the Vikings released cornerback A.J. Jefferson Monday their depth chart in the secondary is again unsettled. Cornerback Josh Robinson is already out with a broken sternum.

Frazier said Robinson won't be placed on injured reserve, however. Another seriously injured player expected back before the end of the season is tight end Kyle Rudolph, who could begin practicing on his broken left foot next week, Frazier said.

Safety Harrison Smith, who has missed the last six games because of a turf toe injury on his left foot, is on track to return to practice today. He's eligible to be taken off injured reserve and return for the final three games.

Frazier, ever the optimist, continued to speak of pride and hope when reflecting on the tie against the Packers and looking ahead to the final five games.

"I do sense that there's a belief there that things are heading in the right direction," Frazier said. "We've just got to get a W."

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

RRCC comes back to defeat Gogebic, then loses to Vermilion

Voyageurs 3-1

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

After trailing by 23 points at halftime Friday, the Rainy River Community College women's basketball team came back in the second half to defeat Gogebic Community College, 64-63, to open last weekend's Vermilion Tourney in Ely.

RRCC head coach Dieter Humbert noted the Voyageurs held Gogebic, an NJCAA Division II team, to 4 points in the final 14 minutes.

"It was a very exciting win – the biggest comeback in my history as a coach," Humbert said.

RRCC, which only had six players available for Friday's game, had four players score in double figures led by Roneisha Jordan with 19 points. Alisha Brinker added 16 points and hauled in 19 rebounds to record a double-double.

Brittany Raisanen led three Gogebic players scor-

ing in double figures with a game-high 20 points.



Roneisha Jordan

Gogebic shot better than the Voyageurs from the field overall, 27-61 (44.3 percent) to 27-66 (40.9 percent), and from 3-point range, 4-10 (40 percent) to 2-11 (18.2 percent). However, RRCC shot better at the charity stripe, 8-16 (50 percent) to 5-11 (45.5 percent), and had a 47-37 advantage in rebounding.

VERMILION 70, RAINY RIVER 57

The Voyageurs lost for the first time this season when they were unable to overcome a double-digit halftime deficit Saturday and fell in the tournament's title game to Vermilion, 70-57.

"Vermilion is a vastly improved program," Humbert said. "They've got a new coach (Tomi McDonald) that is doing a great job."

Jordan and Brinker both recorded double-doubles. Jordan had a game-high 22 points and 15 rebounds, while Brinker added 14 points and 10 rebounds.

Lindsey Zeitler led Vermilion with 17 points, while Taneisha Brooks added a double-double with 15 points and 10 rebounds.

The Voyageurs, whose record now stands at 3-1, will play their next game Dec. 6 at Fergus Falls.

Friday's game
Rainy River 64, Gogebic 63
Rainy River 21 43 - 64
Gogebic 44 19 - 63
Rainy River: Roneisha Jordan 19, CaseyLynn Fulton 12, Alisha Brinker 16, Sarina Phrathep 10, Ebony Joseph 6, Tali Plate 1. 3-pointers: Phrathep 2. Free throws: 8-16. Fouls: 15. Fouled out: Phrathep.

Saturday's game
Vermilion 70, Rainy River 57
Rainy River 20 37 - 57
Vermilion 34 36 - 70
Rainy River: Roneisha Jordan 22, CaseyLynn Fulton 6, Alisha Brinker 14, Sarina Phrathep 4, Ebony Joseph 11. 3-pointers: Joseph. Free throws: 10-19. Fouls: 20.

MEN'S BASKETBALL

Voyageurs fall to Gogebic, then down Itasca

RRCC now 2-2

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Rainy River Community College men's basketball team split the two games the Voyageurs played last weekend at the Vermilion Tourney in Ely.

On Friday, RRCC opened the tournament against an NJCAA Division II team, Gogebic Community College, and lost, 82-59.

"Friday we played pretty poorly as far as shooting," said Voyageurs head coach Jack Cook, who also noted the team missed a lot of layups in the second half.

RRCC, which trailed by only 5 points at halftime, ended up shooting 24-66 (36.4 percent) from the field overall and 7-22 (31.8 percent) from 3-point range, while Gogebic went 34-77 (44.2 percent) from the field and 9-32 (28.1 percent) behind the arc.

Three Voyageurs

scored in double figures with Fedner Fleurant and James Sauser Denesia each having 12 points and Jimson Clerveus adding 10 points.

Jorden Laplant led four Gogebic players in double figures with a game-high 13 points.

RAINY RIVER 112, ITASCA 103

Both teams scored over the century mark Saturday when the Voyageurs led by 10 at halftime and went on to defeat Itasca, 112-103.

"Saturday we came out and played a lot better," Cook said.

RRCC shot 40-85 (47.1 percent) from the field overall and 11-25 (44 percent) from 3-point range, while Itasca went 34-87 (37.8 percent) from the field and 3-13 (23.1 percent) behind the arc.

Eight Voyageurs scored in double figures led by Clerveus with 17 points.

Johnathan Matthews led three Itasca players in double figures with a

game-high 42 points.

RRCC, which is now 2-2, returns to action on Dec. 6 when the Voyageurs play at Fergus Falls.

Friday's game
Gogebic 82, Rainy River 59
Rainy River 32 27 - 59
Gogebic 37 45 - 82
Rainy River: Fedner Fleurant 12, Jimson Clerveus 10, Devin Washington 2, Bryan Hasbargen 6, Harold Jenkins 4, Andrew Nichols 2, James Sauser Denesia 12, Brandon Dudley 6, Demetrius Murphy 5. 3-pointers: Hasbargen 2, Sauser Denesia 2, Dudley 2, Murphy. Free throws: 4-13. Fouls: 12.

Saturday's game
Rainy River 112, Itasca 103
Rainy River 52 60 - 112
Itasca 42 61 - 103
Rainy River: Fedner Fleurant 1, Jimson Clerveus 17, Devin Washington 12, Harold Jenkins 12, Myron Harris 7, Andrew Nichols 14, James Sauser Denesia 10, Demetrius Murphy 15, Deion Miley 14, Devante Miley 10. 3-pointers: Deion Miley 4, Nichols 2, Sauser Denesia 2, Clerveus, Washington, Murphy. Free throws: 21-36. Fouls: 33. Fouled out: Sauser Denesia



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