

SPORTS

Vikings hope to have QB Bridgewater vs Packers

EDEN PRAIRIE (AP) — The sprained left ankle for quarterback Teddy Bridgewater is not considered serious, and the Minnesota Vikings are optimistic the rookie will play against Green Bay despite only three days to rest for Thursday night's game.

Coach Mike Zimmer said Bridgewater was feeling "a lot better" the day after the injury. He had an MRI test that showed no major damage.

"Hopeful," was Zimmer's answer Monday when asked if he believes Bridgewater will be able to face the rival Packers. Bridgewater was not present for the portion of practice that was open to reporters.

Bridgewater passed for 317 yards and a key 2-point conversion and rushed for 27 yards and a touchdown in his first NFL start, a 41-28 victory over Atlanta that could hardly have been better for the first-round draft pick from Louisville until his left foot rolled underneath him during a short run early in the fourth quarter.

He had X-rays, which were negative, and returned to the sideline without crutches by the end of the game. The perpetually upbeat Bridgewater acknowledged Sunday the decision on whether he'll play this week will be up to the coaching staff and athletic trainers, but he said he wasn't worried about his ankle as he rode off on the cart. Bridgewater said he probably could have come back in the game if it were necessary.

Christian Ponder, the starter for the majority of the previous three seasons, took over but did not attempt a pass.

Bridgewater has experience recovering from injury in a shortened week. He broke his left (non-throwing) wrist and sprained his right ankle during a game in 2012 against Connecticut, and the Cardinals had to play at Rutgers five days later.

Bridgewater didn't start the game, but he came off the bench to throw two second-half touchdown passes to lead a Louisville rally for the win and the Big East Conference's bid in the Bowl Championship Series.

"He's the toughest quarterback in the nation," one of his teammate, Preston Brown, said after that game.

The Vikings, after raving over the last several months about Bridgewater's poise, athleticism and grasp of the game, will now have their first true assessment of that toughness.

With Matt Cassel out for the season with a broken left foot, Ponder started the week as the only healthy quarterback on the active roster. McLeod Bethel-Thompson was signed to the practice squad last week, and Chandler Harnish was signed to the practice squad Monday.

Harnish played at Northern Illinois under coach Jerry Kill, now the coach at Minnesota.

The Falcons talked all week about needing to heed Bridgewater's ability to run with the ball, how that changes the entire dynamic of an offense, and he showed that on a few of



Teddy Bridgewater

his five carries.

"He's a special player," running back Jerick McKinnon said.

The Packers have struggled to stop the run, allowing a league-high average of 176 yards per game, and mobile quarterbacks like Colin Kaepernick and Russell Wilson have especially given them trouble in recent years.

So the Vikings probably can't afford to be without one of their best assets against a Packers team that revived its offense Sunday in a 38-17 win at Chicago over the Bears.

The Vikings forced back-to-back punts in the fourth quarter Sunday while trailing 28-27, but for the game the Falcons converted 10 of 15 third downs. Over the last two weeks, the Vikings have allowed 19 of 28 third-down conversions. They're tied for the second worst in the NFL in that category.

"It's terrible. We've got a lot of work to do. I'm extremely disappointed in that. We'll put a lot more time and effort into it than what we have," Zimmer said.

NOTES: TE Kyle Rudolph's recovery from sports hernia surgery remains on track for less than two months, reinforcing the team's decision to avoid designating him as the one player who can be put on injured reserve with intent to return each season. Rudolph said he was dealing with the injury since the beginning of training camp and had the muscle tear fixed on both sides of his abdomen. "Just get it fixed now so in November, December, January, I'm playing at a high level," Rudolph said.

Packers looking to improve defense

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Mike McCarthy hadn't yet watched the film of Sunday's victory over the Chicago Bears.

But the Green Bay Packers coach already knew plenty about how his defense did.

The Packers had given up 496 yards, including 235 yards rushing, dropping them to 26th in the 32-team league in defense (390.0 yards per game) and last in rushing defense (176.0 yards per game) entering Monday night's New

England-Kansas City game.

"I'm aware what the numbers are," McCarthy said Monday, one day after a 38-17 victory at Soldier Field put the Packers at 2-2 entering Thursday night's game against another NFC North rival, the Minnesota Vikings (2-2).

"Nobody likes it."

But it's up to McCarthy, defensive coordinator Dom Capers and the coaching staff to fix it on a short week.

Although the Vikings will be without six-time Pro Bowl running back Adrian

Peterson, they got plenty of production in the run game during Sunday's 41-28 victory over Atlanta.

Rookie Jerick McKinnon carried 18 times for 135 yards and Matt Asiata ran 20 times for 78 yards and three touchdowns.

McCarthy, who didn't watch his team's film because he "started on Minnesota" during the flight back from Chicago, said he talked over the team's problems against the run with his assistant coaches Monday.



STAFF PHOTOS BY KEVIN BONESKE

From right, the Vikings' Darian Erickson (8) runs with the football while being pursued by Northeast Range's Kyle Durbin (4) in Friday's game at John Thompson Field. Erickson rushed for 122 yards and a touchdown and also returned a kickoff 70 yards for a touchdown.

FOOTBALL

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where an incomplete pass on fourth down took the Vikings' offense off the field.

Skala scored his second touchdown of the game on a 22-yard run with 4:22 to play in the third quarter and Joe Wenzel ran in the two-point conversion to give the Nighthawks a 16-8 lead.

L-BF then scored on the ensuing kickoff, which Erickson returned 70 yards for a touchdown.

"We had a great return," Bilben said. "Darian, once he sees an opening, he's going to go and he made the most of that. He looked like the Darian of old on that kick return."

The Nighthawks remained in front, 16-14, when the Vikings' pass for the two-point conversion failed.

L-BF took its first lead of the game with 9:36 left in the final quarter when Rylan Henrickson recovered a Northeast Range fumble and ran 23 yards into the end zone.

"I think that was the game," Bilben said. "Once we made that play and that fumble recovery, I saw the air kind of go out of (the Nighthawks)."

Erickson ran in the two-point conversion to extend the Vikings' lead to 22-16.

After L-BF stopped the Nighthawks on downs near midfield with 6:50 to play, the Vikings put together a 53-yard scoring drive capped off with a 16-yard touchdown run by Erickson with 3:23 remaining.

Erickson accounted for



At right, the Vikings' Quin Vork (2) grabs the shirt of Northeast Range's Joe Wenzel (23) for the tackle with the Vikings' Jaydon Thompson (18) and Evan Wimmer (44) also in pursuit in Friday's Homecoming game at John Thompson Field.

more than half of L-BF's 220 yards on the ground by rushing for 122 yards on 14 carries with a touchdown. Franz added 85 rushing yards on 18 carries with a touchdown, while Henrickson ran for 13 yards on five carries.

Vork completed only one pass in five attempts with Franz recording the six-yard reception.

L-BF sophomore Jayden Thompson, who stopped a Northeast Range drive late in the fourth quarter with an interception, tallied two interceptions for the game.

The win improved the Vikings' season record to 2-3 overall going into next Friday's game at Silver Bay.

"We want to continue to improve everyday, and I think we're doing that...."

Bilben said. "We want to eliminate the mistakes. We had a few mistakes in the first half, and we eliminated that, and I think we're going to keep getting better and these kids are just gaining confidence."

L-BF 28, NR 16
NR 8 0 8 0 - 16
L-BF 0 8 6 14 - 28
Scoring: NR: Brody Skala, 4-yard run (Skala run); **L-BF:** Peter Franz, 1-yard run (Darian Erickson pass from Quin Vork); **NR:** Skala, 22-yard run (Joe Wenzel run); **L-BF:** Erickson, 70-yard kickoff return (pass failed); **L-BF:** Rylan Henrickson, 23-yard fumble return (Erickson run); **L-BF:** Erickson, 16-yard run (run failed).
Team statistics: **L-BF:** 220 yards rushing, 6 passing, 226 total. **Rushing:** **L-BF:** Erickson, 14-122, 1 TD; Franz, 18-85, 1 TD; Henrickson, 5-13.
Passing: **L-BF:** Vork, 1-5, 6 yards. **Receiving:** **L-BF:** Franz, 1-6.

VOLLEYBALL

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lor Wendt recorded 15 set assists.

L-BF swept Cherry in the final match, 25-18, 25-20. Larson had six kills and 10 digs. Knaeble recorded 14 digs and three ace serves. Karly

Swenson had five kills, three blocks and two ace serves. Taylor and Sydney Wendt each tallied seven set assists. Nelson and Kennedy added four blocks.

The Vikings' season record now stands at 9-10 going into Thursday's home match against Nashwauk-Keewatin.

FHS FINISHES 7TH

FHS went 2-2 in the tournament and ended up in seventh place.

The Broncos won their first match in two straight games over Bigfork, 25-10, 25-14.

FHS's statistical leaders included: Maddie Filipiak, six kills and three ace serves;

McKenna Rasmussen, six kills and four ace serves; Teagan Anderson, 19 set assists; Tessa Walls, four kills; and Lauren Rautio, 13 digs.

The Broncos then dropped their next two matches, losing in three games to Holy Angels, 30-28, 21-25, 7-15, and falling in two straight games to Cloquet, 14-25, 16-25.

FHS closed out the tournament by sweeping Eveleth-Gilbert, 25-8, 25-15.

Anderson had 16 set assists and two ace serves. Filipiak recorded four kills and five ace serves. Rasmussen tallied five kills and two ace blocks. Walls had four kills and two ace blocks. Clara Palm picked up nine digs.

The Broncos came out of the tournament with an overall season record of 10-4 going into Tuesday's match at Mesabi East.

South Ridge, the only team to win all four tournament matches, ended up winning the championship after defeating Hermantown in the title match.

For the most current information on Rainy and Namakan Lake levels, visit the following:

www.ijc.org/en/RLWWB

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