

SPORTS

Vikings-Redskins preview

BY JEFF MEZYDLO  
The Associated Press

The Washington Redskins hope the momentum from a dramatic victory combined with facing one of the league's worst teams will finally propel them to back-to-back wins for the first time this season.

The visiting Redskins are looking for some consistency, particularly from Robert Griffin III, as they try to hand the Minnesota Vikings a fifth straight defeat Thursday night.

After avoiding an 0-4 start with a 24-14 win at Oakland on Sept. 29, Washington (3-5) came out of its bye and lost 31-16 at Dallas. The Redskins rallied to beat Chicago 45-41 on Oct. 20, but they fell 45-21 at Denver the next week.

Such inconsistency has frustrated the Redskins, who won their final seven games last season to record their first division title in 13 years.

Washington hopes Sunday's 30-24 overtime victory over San Diego is the one that keys a run toward the top of the weak NFC East, where it is behind 5-4 Dallas and 4-5 Philadelphia.

"The fans want to have something to believe in, and the players want to have something to believe in," Griffin said. "And because of the way our division is set up right now, we have something to believe in and we know we can control our own destiny."

After San Diego had a touchdown overturned late in the fourth quarter, Washington stopped the Chargers three times from inside the 1-yard line and held them to the tying field goal. The Redskins won on fullback Darrel Young's third touchdown of the day, a 4-yard run that capped a 10-play drive.

"The way we won the game, that can be a turning point for us," Griffin said.

Griffin didn't throw for a touchdown but went 23 of 32 for 291 yards and was a big reason the Redskins finished 12 of 17 on third down.

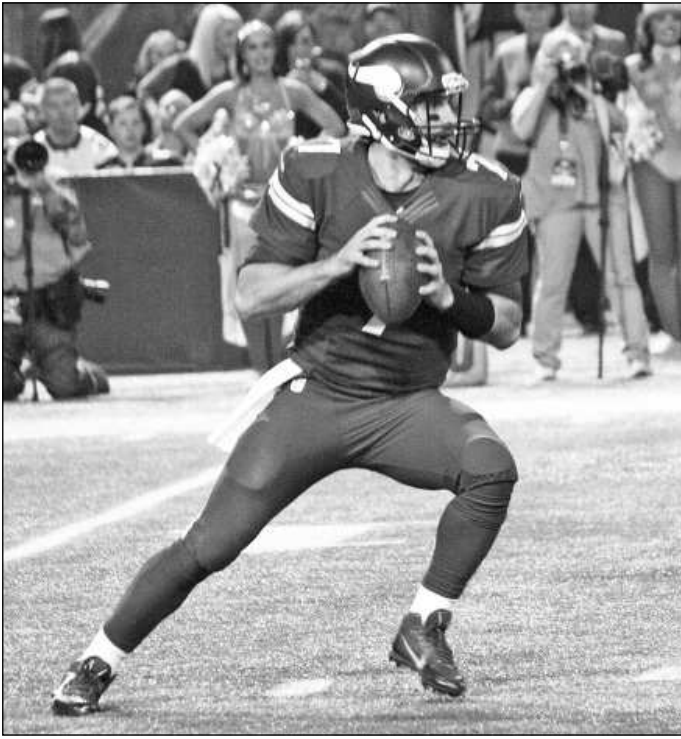
"The great quarterbacks are the guys that are consistent on third down," said coach Mike Shanahan, whose team is fourth in the NFL converting 44.5 percent on third down. "Anytime you're over 70 percent on third-down conversions your quarterback is playing extremely well.

"And that's what you've got to do. You've got to do that consistently."

Griffin has been anything



Leslie Frazier



FILE PHOTO

**Vikings quarterback Christian Ponder, shown dropping back to pass in the Oct. 27 game against Green Bay at the Metrodome, is expected to start his third consecutive game Thursday when Minnesota hosts Washington.**

but consistent of late. In Washington's three wins, he has completed 64.1 percent of his passes for 816 yards with two turnovers while getting sacked twice. In the two October losses, he completed 49.3 percent for 378 yards, committed five turnovers and was sacked six times.

Alfred Morris has been much more steady, leading all running backs this season with 5.2 yards per carry. Fifth in the league with 686 rushing yards, Morris has averaged 97.5 in the last four games while scoring three TDs.

He had season highs of 121 yards and 25 carries Sunday as Washington totaled a season-best 500 yards, including 209 on the ground.

"We've always believed in the running game," Shanahan said.

The Redskins, however, continue to struggle defensively. They have given up at least 410 yards in the past two weeks and rank 30th in total defense (398.8 ypg) while standing 31st in points allowed (31.6 per game).

The good news for Washington is that Minnesota (1-7) has hardly been better, giving up an average of 31.5 points and yet to hold an opponent below 23.

The Vikings led 23-20 late in the fourth quarter Sunday at Dallas and had the ball on the Cowboys' 41-yard line but handed off to Adrian Peterson once on the drive and were forced to punt. As Minnesota used a prevent defense, the Cowboys went on a nine-play, 90-yard drive to reach the end zone with 35 seconds left and hand the Vikings a 27-23 loss.

The result prompted Minnesota defensive linemen Kevin Williams and Brian Robison to question the team's play-calling on both

sides late in the game. "I like for them to talk to their coaches (or) myself about whatever concerns they may have and try to get those worked out," coach Leslie Frazier said. "But I do understand their frustration and I respect their opinions." Any potential dissension would seem a long-time coming for the Vikings, whose four-game losing streak is their longest since a six-game slide Nov. 14-Dec. 18, 2011.

"The frustration grows with each loss with everyone involved," Frazier said. "We need to put some wins together starting this Thursday night."

Frazier appears set to stick with Christian Ponder after he completed 25 of 37 passes for 236 yards, throwing for one touchdown and running for one. However, he threw his sixth interception in five starts — all losses — and lost the ball on a sack in the end zone that was recovered by Dallas for a touchdown.

Ponder, though, has run for 113 yards and four TDs on 14 carries over his last three games.

Peterson matched a season high with 140 yards on 25 attempts Sunday after totaling 150 on 36 carries in the previous three games. He's been limited to 180 rushing yards in four games against the Redskins.

Griffin ran for a career-high 138 in the last meeting, including 76 on a fourth-quarter touchdown as Washington won 38-26 last Oct. 14. Ponder threw for 352 yards but had three turnovers.

Kyle Rudolph caught one of Ponder's two touchdown passes in that game, but he broke his left foot Sunday and will miss at least a month.

CROSS COUNTRY

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junior Kailee Kiminski, placed eighth at state in 15:11.1.

The Broncos' top individual finished a minute behind Trost. Falls freshman Lexi Erickson placed 30th in 15:40.3.

"(Competing at the state meet) was crazy," Erickson said. "There's so many girls, and it's just so different from just regular-season meets, but it was a good race. I had fun."

Though her time was a half second slower than in the previous year, when she ran in cooler conditions, Erickson improved her place by 16 spots.

The only other Falls runner to finish in the top 100 Saturday was senior Sydney Raboin, who placed 83rd in 16:10.6.

"The weather was really nice (Saturday) and everybody just gave it their all for the last race," Raboin said.

Falls' two other seniors who ran in the last race of their high school cross country careers, Amy Auran and Lexi Owen, finished 151st and 152nd, respectively, in times of 17:26.2 and 17:26.3.

"It's definitely bittersweet (running in the last high school cross country meet)," said Auran, who competed at state four years in a row and was an individual qualifier her freshman season. "I ran my hardest. That's all I can do."

"It was pretty exciting," said Owen, who was in her first season of cross country. "I got a little nervous before the start, but I think I did pretty good for my first time being here (at state)."

The Broncos' fifth and final runner who counted toward the team total, seventh-grader Faith Black, finished 168th in 18:08.8.



STAFF PHOTOS BY KEVIN BONESKE

**From left, the Broncos' Faith Black (725), South Ridge's Rachel Land (715) and Park Rapids' Abby Mueller (746) run along a straightaway in Saturday's Girls State Class A Meet at St. Olaf College.**

With three of the top top-five runners graduating after this season, Hjelle said the Falls is "definitely going to be in a rebuilding mode for next year."

"It's going to be something that we haven't experienced on the girls side for quite a while," he said. "To have three seniors like this to run at the state meet like this (Saturday), it's just a thrill for them and the parents, and it's going to be sad to say goodbye to them, though."

State Class A Meet  
GIRLS

**Team scores:** Annandale 85, Lac qui Parle Valley 113, Perham 138, Weseca 144, Holy Family 154, St. Cloud Cathedral 171, Luverne 185, Spectrum 222, Lake City 232, Park

Rapids 244, Dover-Eyota 248, St. Paul Academy and Summit 253, Holdingford 262, Fairmont 300, International Falls 327, South Ridge 485.

**Top 10 individuals:** 1. Emi Trost, Cannon Falls, 14:40.3; 2. Mary Nass, St. Paul Academy and Summit, 14:50.5; 3. Becca Wilkin, Trinity, 14:52.3; 4. Elizabeth Schlafke, Annandale, 14:53.8; 5. Courtney Alama, Annandale, 14:56.3; 6. Madison Schandemeier, Luverne, 15:02.4; 7. Tierney Winter, WEM-JWP, 15:10.9; 8. Kailee Kiminski, Esko, 15:11.1; 9. Kayla Huhnerkoch, Redwood Valley, 15:13.6; 10. Emily Donnay, Eden Valley-Watkins/Kimball, 15:14.1.

**International Falls runners:** 30. Lexi Erickson, 15:40.3; 83. Sydney Raboin, 16:10.6; 151. Amy Auran, 17:26.2; 152. Lexi Owen, 17:26.3; 168. Faith Black, 18:08.8; 170. Lexi Edwards, 18:34.7; 173. Jenna Anderson, 18:46.4.



**At right, the Broncos' Lexi Owen (724) runs downhill in front of Perham's Mary Riestenberg (736) in Saturday's Girls State Class A Meet at St. Olaf College.**

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