

SPORTS

Vikings loss, for Bridgewater, was ‘eye-opening’



From left, Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater (5) releases a pass while being rushed by Lions defensive end Ziggy Ansah (94) in Sunday’s game at TCF Bank Stadium. Bridgewater was sacked eight times and threw three interceptions in Minnesota’s 17-3 loss to Detroit.

EDEN PRAIRIE (AP) — Minnesota Vikings fans, quickly enamored with the rookie who’s supposed to solve this team’s long-running quarterback problem, have chanted Teddy Bridgewater’s name at each home game this season.

The “Teddy! Teddy! Teddy!” chorus that came from the crowd on Sunday was for encouragement, not excitement.

Bridgewater’s second NFL start was a sharp drop-off from his first, as the Vikings were overwhelmed by Detroit’s league-leading defense in a 17-3 defeat by the Lions.

“You’re not just going to go out there and be perfect. There’s some throws that you’re not going to be able to control and there will be things that happen throughout the course of a game that you won’t be able to control,” Bridgewater said.

“But at the same time, for me, it was an eye-opener. After my performance against Atlanta, I believe the expectation level is high. But I have a high expectation level for myself also.”

Bridgewater passed for 317 yards in three quarters on Sept. 28 when the Vikings beat the Falcons 41-28. His sprained left ankle forced him out of the end of that game and kept him out last week at Green Bay while the Vikings were blown out 42-10.

The natural assumption was that, with Bridgewater back, the offense would again be productive despite the difficult opponent. But it never got going.

“We’re all pointing fingers at ourselves. We’ve just got to do better, man, as a unit. The fans don’t like seeing that. That’s just poor effort from us. Hopefully next week we just get better,” wide receiver Cordarrelle Patterson said.

Bridgewater completed better than 62 percent of his passes, but he threw three interceptions, albeit two that came from tipped balls.

“I believe, with all my heart, that Teddy Bridgewater is going to be the franchise quarterback here for a long, long time. I believe that the team believes that, too,” coach Mike Zimmer said.

“Guys in the organization, the players, everybody believes this guy will be the future and a bright future for this organization. We have to make sure we continue to help him to be successful: playing, coaching, whatever it is.”

The Vikings (2-4) play at Buffalo this week. Much of the time until then will be figuring out how to give Bridgewater more time to throw. Sacked eight times by the Lions, he simply had nowhere to go.

Zimmer said he’s “not opposed” to changes on the offensive line, a group he said he anticipated would be a team strength entering the season.

Left tackle Matt Kalil has allowed the most of the 22 sacks surrendered by the Vikings, second-most in the NFL, but on Sunday the pressure came from everywhere.

“The guys overall are

not bad football players. They’re just not playing real good right now,” Zimmer said.

None of the front five were in the locker room on Monday while it was open to reporters, but wide receivers Greg Jennings and Jarius Wright and fullback Jerome Felton were among the players who refused to blame the problems on the line. Bridgewater said after the game he could run through his reads and get rid of the ball faster.

“I don’t expect for the offensive line to point the finger at us. I’m not going to point the finger at them. Because protection is across the board. Run blocking is across the board. Making things happen, making plays, is across the board,” Jennings said.

Zimmer was angry after the game about trends of a lack of discipline and threatened to fine players “to the max” if more guys arrived late to meetings or appointments, as had happened a few times last week. He softened on Monday: “That was probably Zimmer being Zimmer. I was not in the best frame of mind.”

Still, the message was clear. Felton, who acknowledged he was “a little nervous” entering the team meeting on Monday, said Zimmer promised to cut playing time for continued mistakes on the field.

“I want them to understand that it’s not OK to lose, that we have to change the mentality and the mindset of this,” Zimmer said.

Zimmer upset with Vikings after 17-3 loss to Lions

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Mike Zimmer’s blunt delivery of hard truths has sometimes been blamed for his inability to land a head coaching job sooner.

When the Minnesota Vikings hired him to take over before this season, Zimmer said his personality wouldn’t change. He backed that up Sunday with some straight talk about his team after a woeful home loss to division rival Detroit.

Teddy Bridgewater was sacked eight times and threw three interceptions in Minnesota’s 17-3 defeat to the Lions, and afterward Zimmer promised a stricter approach coming off of two straight embarrassing performances in division games.

“I’m the boss,” Zimmer said. “Their job is to please me. Not the other way around.”

The Vikings (2-4) were coming off a 42-10 loss at Green Bay and had 10 days

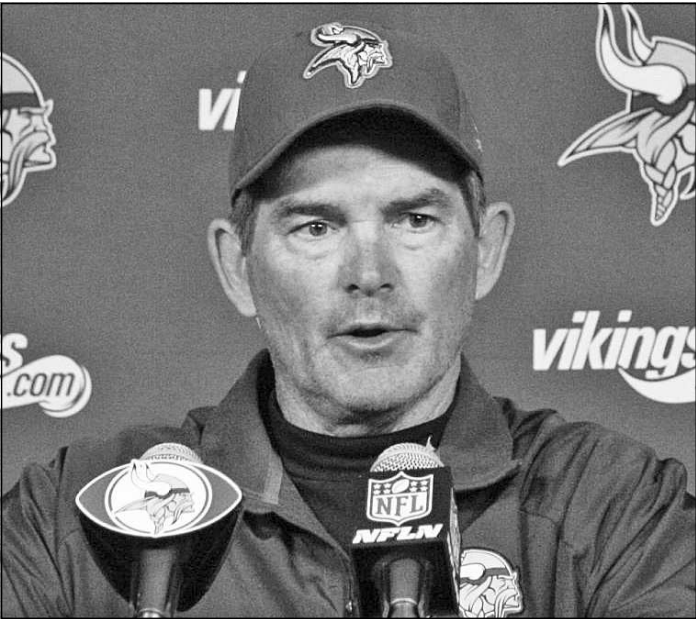
to prepare for the Lions (4-2).

Bridgewater made his second career start after missing last week’s game with an ankle injury. Vikings fans hoped that the switch from Christian Ponder back to Bridgewater, who threw for 317 yards to beat Atlanta on Sept. 28, would be the cure for all that ails the offense.

But the ferocious Lions defense was in Bridgewater’s face all game long and blanketed the Vikings receivers. The Vikings converted just 3 of 14 third downs and managed only 212 total yards.

When Bridgewater did have time, he was uncharacteristically inaccurate. He completed 23 of 37 passes for 188 yards and threw a costly interception in the end zone in the first quarter. Another interception went through running back Matt Asiata’s hands and his third was batted at the line of scrimmage.

“Overall we just have to be better,” Bridgewater said.



Minnesota Vikings head coach Mike Zimmer speaks with reporters following Sunday’s 17-3 loss to the Detroit Lions.

“Not just better on the football field, but better outside the football field, whether it’s around the facility or something else. So we just have to come back next week and learn from today and move forward.”

And that was Zimmer’s biggest concern.

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