

SPORTS

Bridgewater leads Vikings past struggling Bucs

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Teddy Bridgewater was coming off one of his better weeks of practice, so Minnesota coach Mike Zimmer had a good feeling about the way the rookie quarterback might play against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

“I told him before the ballgame: ‘Now let’s take it out to the game and let’s play like you can,’” Zimmer said after the Vikings beat the Bucs 19-13 in overtime Sunday. “I thought he stepped up and played much better.”

The first-round draft pick threw for 241 yards, one touchdown and no interceptions, cutting down on mistakes that have undermined his performance since taking over the starting job earlier than expected with the injured Matt Cassel out for the rest of the season.

“He was up and down. He took good care of the football, which we asked him to do. He was only sacked one time, so those things are important, too,” Zimmer said.

“We’re definitely having a hard time scoring points. We have to do a better job there, but I think his composure was very good today. He took some shots down the field, which we have to do,” the first-year coach added. “We’ve got to be able

to take some, and we missed them. But if we keep throwing, we’ll hit some.”

Bridgewater led a nine-play, 61-yard drive in the final 2 minutes of regulation to extend the game on Blair Walsh’s 32-yard field goal. Another rookie drafted in the first round, linebacker Anthony Barr, forced a fumble on the first play from scrimmage in overtime and returned it 27 yards to win it just 17 seconds into the extra period.

“It feels good. It’s a momentum booster for me,” Bridgewater said. “All we can do is continue to build off it.”

Bridgewater completed 24 of 42 passes, including a 17-yard touchdown pass to Greg Jennings for a 10-0 lead midway through the third quarter.

The Vikings (3-5) improved to 2-2 in those games, with both wins coming on the road.

Tampa Bay (1-6), playing for the first time since allowing Joe Flacco to throw five touchdown passes in the first 16 minutes of a 48-17 loss to Baltimore, fell to 0-4 at home. The Bucs have lost 16 straight games in which the opponent scored first.

Coach Lovie Smith hoped last week’s bye would help his team return with a more competitive effort.

“Ideally that’s not how we wanted to start it, as simple as that,” Smith said. “We let one slip away. But after the disappointment, you still analyze where we are, and looking at our division we’re still in it. At the end when you have a lead, you’ve got to be able to close it out, especially at home. Late in the game we needed someone to step up.”

Barr also had eight tackles and a sack for Minnesota, which had been held to 10, 3 and 16 points during its three-game skid.

“I’m thinking win, score, get out of here,” the linebacker said about the winning play.

And to think, the whole sequence began with the rookie being out of position, much to Zimmer’s consternation.

“I was a little late to get there, but I was able to get my hand on the ball and strip it, and fortunate enough to pick it up and score,” Barr said.

Barr ran down Bucs tight end Austin Seferian-Jenkins after a 10-yard gain that would have given Tampa Bay a promising start to the extra period.

“Initially, I was a little bit upset with him because he didn’t widen with the tight end enough, and he let him catch the ball,” Zimmer said. “But now that it’s over,

I’m glad he did.”

Reasons the Vikings stopped their losing streak and the Bucs remained winless at home:

**STALKING THE QB:** Bridgewater had one TD pass, threw five interceptions and was sacked 13 times in Minnesota’s two previous games. Besides not turning the ball over, he was only sacked once Sunday. Meanwhile, the Vikings sacked Mike Glennon five times and had one interception.

**SLOW START:** The Bucs trailed 3-0 at the half and only had 97 yards through three quarters. They’ve scored 27 points in the first half all season.

**QB QUESTIONS:** Glennon directed two field goal drives before giving the Bucs a 13-10 with a 7-yard TD pass to Seferian-Jenkins with just over 2 minutes remaining in regulation. Glennon finished 19 of 28 for 171 yards. No word on whether that’s good enough to keep the starting job he has held since Josh McCown injured his right thumb on Sept. 18. McCown did not play, but was active Sunday for the first time since getting hurt.

**WOEFUL RUNNING ATTACK:** The Bucs were held to 66 yards rushing. Doug Martin was limited to 27 on 10 carries before



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY BOYD FELLOWS

**Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater (5) looks to pass while being rushed from behind by Buccaneers linebacker Danny Lananah (51) in Sunday’s game at Tampa.**

departing with a sore ankle in the third quarter.

**GOOD ‘D:** The Vikings’ defense allowed a season-

low 225 yards. The Bucs were 1 of 12 on third-down conversions.

Vikings rookie LB Barr making big impression

EDEN PRAIRIE (AP) — When Minnesota went on the clock at No. 9 in the draft last spring, Johnny Manziel was sitting right there for the quarterback-starved team, and its purple-clad fan base was clamoring for the exciting Texas A&M star to save the Vikings.

Minnesota liked Manziel as well, and even envisioned him as its quarterback of the future. But the Vikings loved linebacker Anthony Barr, a converted running back from UCLA with athleticism to burn who had only played the position for two years.

Barr ended up being the selection, and though many said the Vikings were walking out on a shaky limb at the time, they never hesitated. Eight games into his rookie season, Barr is quickly emerging as a dynamic playmaker and building block for the future.

“What his abilities are just fit the scheme perfectly because he can do so many things well,” veteran linebacker Chad Greenway said Monday. “If you draft him and stick him at defensive end or stick him at linebacker all the time, it doesn’t give him range to kind of do everything he’s good at. The scheme’s a great fit for him. He’s playing well, obviously

and not just on the last play. He’s playing good football throughout the four quarters.”

That last play that Greenway referenced was Barr’s game-winning trifecta on Sunday in Tampa.

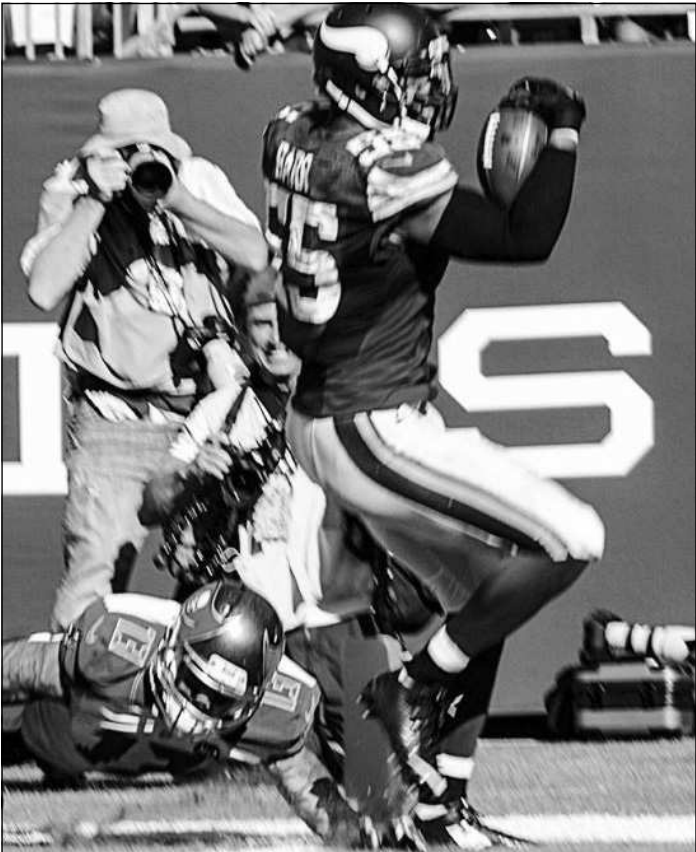
After the Vikings (3-5) gave up a late touchdown drive to the lowly Buccaneers that helped force overtime, Barr chased down tight end Austin Seferian-Jenkins, stripped the ball and took it back 27 yards for a touchdown to clinch the 19-13 victory.

The play saved the team from what would have been a disastrous loss. It hosts the struggling Washington Redskins on Sunday with a chance to get to 4-5 and stay relevant going into its bye week.

“I’ve seen Coach smile for the first time in a couple weeks,” Barr said, “so that’s a good sign.”

Coach Mike Zimmer said Barr’s short history of playing linebacker has helped him avoid picking up bad habits.

“He’s very, very talented, but I think the thing I love the most about him is the way he studies when we’re in here in meetings,” Zimmer said. “He takes a lot of notes. He’s very prideful about not making the same mistake twice and



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY BOYD FELLOWS

**Vikings linebacker Anthony Barr (55) runs into the end zone in front of Buccaneers receiver Mike Evans (13) to score the winning touchdown in overtime during Sunday’s game at Tampa.**

he continues to get better. He wants to be very, very good.”

And just as the questions about Barr’s impact started to pile up on Monday, Zimmer tried to let a little air out of the balloon.

“Early in his career he’s already made a bunch of huge plays for us and that’s always great to have a young guy that’s going to be an up-and-coming star in this league,” veteran defensive end Brian Robison said. “To do the things he’s been doing has just been awesome for our defense.”

After the Vikings drafted Barr, they tried to trade back up into the first round to get Manziel. The Cleveland Browns outbid the Vikings to get him at No. 22, but Manziel has yet to play a snap this season.

The Vikings grabbed Teddy Bridgewater at No. 32, and on Sunday the rookie quarterback calmly led a two-minute drive for the tying field goal.

That put Barr in position to win it in overtime, ending an ugly three-game losing streak and giving the Vikings hope that with Bridgewater under center and Barr on defense, they have found two cornerstones to build on.

“I think I’m pretty versatile and I think this defense definitely allows me to line up in different areas and use my talents in a positive way to help the team win games,” Barr said. “I’m just going to continue to build on what we have.”

HOCKEY

► continued from B1

ond period, before Joel Zieroth put the visitors back on top at 8:06.

Then Jasper’s second goal of the period tied the game once again at 11:02, only to see Golka and Matt Houston score for Dryden before the period was over to make it 4-2 after 40 minutes.

A Spicer power-play goal 7:13 into the final period pulled Fort Frances to within one, before Golka’s second goal of the night with 1:18 remaining closed out the scoring for the Ice Dogs.


Tate Sproxtton made 30 saves to record the win in goal for Dryden, while Ferguson stopped 20 shots in the loss for the Lakers.

Fort Frances, which remains atop the five-team SIJHL standings with a record of 10-4-0-1 and is currently ranked 13th in the Canadian Junior Hockey League’s top 20, returns to action tonight to face the Thunder Bay North Stars at Fort William Gardens.



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