

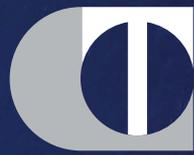
PLAYBOOK

WK 11



PRIMETIME PURPLE | VIKINGS VS. COWBOYS | NOV. 22, 2020





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KYLE RUDOLPH

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01



WEEK 10

MIN AT CHI

The Vikings earned their third victory in a row against an NFC North opponent with a determined offensive and defensive performance against the Bears. Minnesota prevailed 19-13 in Chicago thanks to winning the majority of the game's third downs.



PHOTO 1

Harrison Smith breaks up a deep pass intended for Allen Robinson II. Earlier in the game, Smith recorded the 26th interception of his career, third of the season and second in as many weeks.

PHOTO 2

Adam Thielen secures the first of two touchdowns on the night with just one arm. He later passed Jake Reed and tied Ahmad Rashad for sixth all-time in franchise history with his second receiving touchdown for the 34th of his career.

PHOTO 3

Justin Jefferson runs after one of his game-high eight catches. Jefferson totaled 135 yards while the Vikings defense limited Bears receivers to 124 total yards. The phenom tied Randy Moss' franchise rookie record of four games with 100-plus receiving yards.





04

PHOTO 4

Kyle Rudolph added four receptions for 63 yards, including a 22-yarder that converted a first-and-20. Thielen, Jefferson and Rudolph were among the seven different Vikings that caught at least one pass from quarterback Kirk Cousins, who completed 25 of 36 passes for 292 yards and two scores for a passer rating of 100.7.

PHOTO 5

Vikings defenders swarm Cordarrelle Patterson, who rushed 12 times for 30 yards. The former Viking returned a kickoff 104 yards for a touchdown – Chicago's only trip to the end zone – to open the second half.



05

VIKINGS

V S C O W B O Y S



This will be the 32nd overall meeting between the Vikings and Cowboys franchises and second at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Minnesota (4-5) enters on a three-game winning streak that has followed its Week 7 bye. Dallas (2-7) has dropped four contests in a row, but the Cowboys went toe-to-toe with the undefeated Steelers in Week 9 on the way to their bye.

Both teams have dealt with significant injuries throughout the season. The Vikings are trying

to climb their way out of a hole and into playoff contention. The Cowboys could still make a run at the NFC East.

PRIMETIME PURPLE

The Vikings are wearing their #PrimetimePurple uniforms against the Cowboys.

It will be just the eighth time for the team to wear purple jerseys and pants in a game, although the first time – Oct. 11, 1964 – wasn't intentional. A communication error led to the Vikings and Lions opening that game in white jerseys. Minnesota switched on the sideline during the game.

Vikings fans can connect with home games in a new way thanks to *Vikings Pregame All-Access* presented by The Salvation Army a livestreaming of pregame events and player warm-ups on vikings.com, the team's mobile app and official social media platforms. The livestream is designed to virtually bring fans into U.S. Bank Stadium. It begins an hour before



PREGAME
ALL-ACCESS



SUNDAY'S GAME IS
PRESENTED BY



The Salvation Army "exists to meet human need wherever, whenever and however." Visit salvationarmynorth.org to find out how you can help The Salvation Army serve families whose needs have been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Receiver Adam Thielen and his wife, Caitlin, have supported The Salvation Army and virtually participated in a recent giveaway of 2,000 turkeys through a partnership with Jennie-O.

HOMETOWN HERO

The Week 11 Hometown Hero is founder and executive director of the Northside Boxing Club, Ryan Burnet. Founded in 2016, the Northside Boxing Club provides free boxing programs to boys and girls, ages 9-21, in the North Minneapolis community. The gym serves as a safe place to teach fundamentals about life, character, nutrition, education and boxing. Additionally, the nonprofit offers free boxing classes, on-site tutoring and a nutritious meal following each session. In 2017, Anthony Barr, Eric Kendricks and Harrison Smith visited Northside Boxing Club and saw firsthand how it impacts the youth in Minneapolis. The Vikings Social Justice Committee recently awarded the Northside Boxing Club a \$20,000 donation to help further its mission of empowering youth.



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KWIK TRIP OPENING DRIVE

Sunday's Kwik Trip opening drive contestant is Brad Schiller from Farmington, MN. Brad will win a \$25 gift card for every yard earned on the Vikings opening drive plus a \$500 bonus for a field goal or \$1,000 for an opening drive touchdown. To enter, see your neighborhood Kwik Trip today!



FRONTLINE FEATURES PRESENTED BY MILLER LITE

Frontline Features will recognize extraordinary Vikings fans throughout the season who have overcome challenges to make a difference for others during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nominate a deserving frontline worker at Vikings.com/frontline.



SKOL SCRIBBLES CONTEST DRIVEN BY POLARIS

Enter the Skol Scribbles contest by submitting your idea for weekly photo transformations. You could win one of 16 weekly prize packs from Polaris. Follow the @vikings on Instagram or Snapchat Stories to learn more.



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THEY score, YOU save! Shop your local Hy-Vee store following game day to receive great fuel savings. Simply spend the same amount that the Vikings scored, and earn a 1¢ credit on your Hy-Vee Fuel Saver + Perks® card. If the Vikings score 14 points, spend \$14 or more the next day and earn 14¢ credit on your Hy-Vee Fuel Saver + Perks® card. SKOL! Promotion valid at all Minnesota Hy-Vee locations; some limitations apply. See store for details.



CENTURYLINK LEGENDS CONNECTION

Don't miss your chance to virtually meet fan-favorite football heroes all season. CenturyLink has teamed up with your Minnesota Vikings for the Legends Connection Meet & Greet Sweepstakes – an opportunity for a 30-minute virtual Meet & Greet with a Vikings Legend. Enter online at vikings.com/fans/centurylink-promo for a chance to win.



Spalon will be giving away a \$100 gift card during Sunday's game! Show us your game-day look by tweeting a photo @SpalonMontage or tagging @spalonmontage on your IG story for a chance to win!

**60 GREATEST VIKINGS FANS
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In celebration of 60 seasons of Vikings football, the Vikings are naming 60 of their most passionate supporters to the 60 Greatest Fans Team. If you know someone with unyielding dedication to the Vikings, nominate that fan today at Vikings.com/60Fans.



➔ Check out pages 41-42 to learn about the latest fans to make the team.

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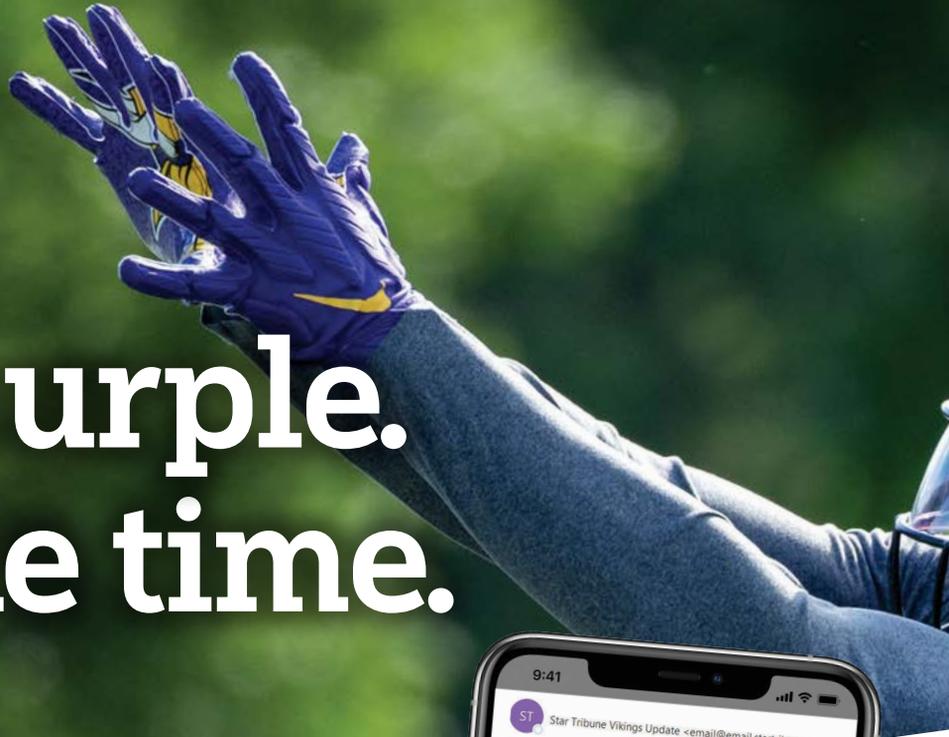
MYSTIC LAKE PASS OR PLAY

"Pass or Play" is a free game, presented by Mystic Lake, available in the Vikings App that allows users to set weekly rosters. The top three users each week will be eligible for prizes.

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2020 SEASON LEADERS

Passing (Yds)	Kirk Cousins	2,147
Rushing (Yds)	Dalvin Cook	954
Receiving (Yds)	Justin Jefferson	762
Tackles	Eric Kendricks	87
Sacks	Eric Wilson	3.5
Interceptions	H. Smith, E. Wilson	3
KOR (Yards)	K.J. Osborn	289
PR (Avg.)	Chad Beebe	2.3

2020 SCHEDULE

1	9/13	Green Bay Packers	L 43-34
2	9/20	at Indianapolis Colts	L 28-11
3	9/27	Tennessee Titans	L 31-30
4	10/4	at Houston Texans	W 31-23
5	10/11	at Seattle Seahawks	L 27-26
6	10/18	Atlanta Falcons	L 40-23
7	10/25	Bye Week	
8	11/1	at Green Bay Packers	W 28-22
9	11/8	Detroit Lions	W 34-20
10	11/16	at Chicago Bears	W 19-13
11	11/22	Dallas Cowboys	
12	11/29	Carolina Panthers	
13	12/6	Jacksonville Jaguars	
14	12/13	at Tampa Bay Buccaneers	
15	12/20	Chicago Bears	
16	12/25	at New Orleans Saints	
17	1/3	at Detroit Lions	

TOP 2 AGAINST COWBOYS

RUSHING YARDS

- 148 Robert Smith on 21 attempts at Dallas (Nov. 23, 2000)
- 140 Adrian Peterson on 25 attempts at Dallas (Nov. 3, 2013)

PASSING YARDS

- 359 Randall Cunningham on 17-of-35 passing at Dallas (Nov. 26, 1998)
- 283 Fran Tarkenton on 17-of-27 passing at Dallas (Oct. 6, 1974)

RECEIVING YARDS

- 184 Anthony Carter on eight catches at Dallas (Nov. 26, 1987)
- 163 Randy Moss on three catches at Dallas (Nov. 26, 1998)

Cousins – and the Vikings offense – have hit a nice stride out of their Week 7 bye. The quarterback has posted three consecutive games with a passer rating of 100 or higher, giving him 44 since 2015. Only Drew Brees (52) and Russell Wilson (47) have more in that time span. More important to Cousins, the Vikings have claimed wins at Green Bay, against Detroit and at Chicago. Efficient passing has been a hallmark of Cousins' third season with Minnesota. He's leading the NFL with 8.8 yards per attempt, 13.3 yards per completion and 7.86 net yards per attempt (includes yards lost on sacks). Those are all on pace to be career bests for Cousins by a wide margin. The Vikings offense has built off its commitment and success in the running game with play-action passes, a component of the game in which Cousins has thrived. Pay close attention to the details that Cousins uses to sell fake handoffs to the likes of Dalvin Cook and his footwork on bootlegs.

UP THE LEADERBOARD

Cousins enters the Week 11 game ranked 68th all-time with 172 touchdown passes. He overtook former Cowboy Troy Aikman (165) earlier this season and can pass two more Pro Football Hall of Famers (Joe Namath and original Vikings Head Coach Norm Van Brocklin) with two more scores. Charlie Conerly, Namath and Van Brocklin are tied for 65th overall with 173.

10K
IN 40

Last week, in his 40th regular-season game as the Vikings starter, Cousins became the seventh player in franchise history to throw for at least 10,000 yards for Minnesota. He needs 55 to pass Warren Moon (10,102 in 39 games) for the sixth-most passing yards by a Vikings QB.

THE BEST USE THE BEST



OFFICIAL SPORTS DRINK OF THE MINNESOTA VIKINGS



2020 SEASON LEADERS

Passing (Yds)	Dak Prescott [IR]	1,856
Rushing (Yds)	Ezekiel Elliott	572
Receiving (Yds)	Amari Cooper	655
Tackles	Jaylon Smith	89
Sacks	Aldon Smith	5.0
Interceptions	Trevon Diggs	2
KOR (Yds)	Tony Pollard	466
PR (Avg.)	CeeDee Lamb	6.8

2020 SCHEDULE

1	9/13	at Los Angeles Rams	L 20-17
2	9/20	Atlanta Falcons	W 40-39
3	9/27	at Seattle Seahawks	L 38-31
4	10/4	Cleveland Browns	L 49-38
5	10/11	New York Giants	W 37-34
6	10/19	Arizona Cardinals	L 38-10
7	10/25	at Washington Football Team	L 25-3
8	11/1	at Philadelphia Eagles	L 23-9
9	11/8	Pittsburgh Steelers	L 24-19
10	11/15	Bye Week	
11	11/22	at Minnesota Vikings	
12	11/26	Washington Football Team	
13	12/3	at Baltimore Ravens	
14	12/13	at Cincinnati Bengals	
15	12/20	San Francisco 49ers	
16	12/27	Philadelphia Eagles	
17	1/3	at New York Giants	

TOP 2 AGAINST VIKINGS

RUSHING YARDS

- 153 Tony Dorsett on 16 attempts in Minnesota (Jan. 3, 1983)
- 150 Emmitt Smith on 20 attempts in Minnesota (Sept. 17, 1995)

PASSING YARDS

- 455 Troy Aikman on 34-of-57 passing at Dallas (Nov. 26, 1998)
- 393 Dak Prescott on 28-of-46 passing at Dallas (Nov. 10, 2019)

RECEIVING YARDS

- 147 Amari Cooper on 11 catches at Dallas (Nov. 10, 2019)
- 137 Michael Irvin on 10 catches at Dallas (Nov. 26, 1998)

Since entering the NFL as the fourth overall pick of the 2016 NFL Draft, Elliott has been one of the toughest running backs to tackle. Elliott has been credited with 89 broken tackles, according to Sportradar, which ranks sixth in the NFL. That elusiveness has helped Elliott total 5,977 rushing yards, which leads the NFL since 2016 by more than 1,000 yards (Todd Gurley II is next at 4,882). Elliott's total includes 3,202 yards before contact and 2,775 after contact. Elliott led the NFL in each of his first three seasons in rushing yards per game with 108.7 as a rookie, 98.3 in 2017 and 95.6 in 2018. Playing this season without some of his past running mates on the Dallas offensive line, Elliott is averaging 63.6 yards per game in 2020. He has found the end zone for five rushing touchdowns, giving him 45 for his career. Elliott has added 36 catches for 238 yards and a score so far in 2020.

CARRYING THE LOAD

The Cowboys have turned to Elliott more than any other team has with its top running back. Sportradar stats have Elliott handling 62.5 percent of the team's rush attempts since 2016. Todd Gurley II ranks second, having handled 60.7 percent of handoffs while with the Rams and Falcons (2020).

161
OF 10+

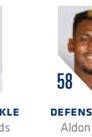
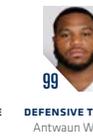
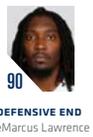
According to Sportradar, Elliott has totaled 161 rushes that have gained 10 or more yards during his NFL career. That number is 34 more than the next player, Todd Gurley II's 127, since 2016. The 161 also includes 35 runs of 20 or more yards, which also leads the NFL in that span.

VIKINGS ROSTER

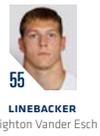
2	Britton Colquitt	P
4	Sean Mannion	QB
5	Dan Bailey	K
8	Kirk Cousins	QB
11	Tajae Sharpe	WR
12	Chad Beebe	WR
17	K.J. Osborn	WR
18	Justin Jefferson	WR
19	Adam Thielen	WR
20	Jeff Gladney	CB
22	Harrison Smith	S
23	Mike Boone	RB
25	Alexander Mattison	RB
26	Chris Jones	CB
27	Cameron Dantzler	CB
29	Kris Boyd	CB
30	C.J. Ham	FB
31	Ameer Abdullah	RB
33	Dalvin Cook	RB
37	Curtis Riley	S
38	Harrison Hand	CB
39	Dylan Mabin	CB
40	Todd Davis	LB
41	Anthony Harris	S
44	Josh Metellus	S
45	Troy Dye	LB
47	Hardy Nickerson	LB
50	Eric Wilson	LB
51	Hercules Mata'afa	DT
54	Eric Kendricks	LB
56	Garrett Bradbury	C
57	Ryan Connelly	LB
58	Austin Cutting	LS
61	Brett Jones	C
67	Jordan Brailford	DE
69	Rashod Hill	T
71	Riley Reiff	T
72	Ezra Cleveland	T
73	Dru Samia	G
74	Olisaemeka Udoh	T
75	Brian O'Neill	T
78	Dakota Dozier	G
81	Bisi Johnson	WR
82	Kyle Rudolph	TE
83	Tyler Conklin	TE
84	Irv Smith Jr.	TE
85	Dan Chisena	WR
90	Jalyn Holmes	DE
92	James Lynch	DT
93	Shamar Stephen	DT
94	Jaleel Johnson	DT
95	Ifeadi Odenigbo	DE
96	Armon Watts	DT



VIKINGS OFFENSE



COWBOYS DEFENSE



VIKINGS SPECIAL TEAMS



MINNESOTA VIKINGS DEPTH CHART & ROSTER



OFFENSE				DEFENSE			
WR	Jefferson	B. Johnson	Chisena	LDE	Odenigbo	Brailford	
LT	Reiff	R. Hill		NT	Stephen	Watts	
LG	Dozier	Samia		DT	Johnson	Mata'afa	Lynch
C	Bradbury	Jones		RDE	Holmes	Wonnum	
RG	Cleveland	Samia		WLB	Wilson	Nickerson	
RT	O'Neill	Udoh		MLB	Kendricks	Nickerson	
TE	Rudolph	I. Smith Jr.	Conklin	SLB	Dye	Davis	Connelly
WR	Thielen	Beebe	Sharpe	LCB	Dantzler	Hand	Jones
QB	Cousins	Mannion		RCB	Gladney	Boyd	Mabin
RB	Cook	Mattison	Abdullah	SS	H. Smith	Riley	
FB	Ham			FS	Harris	Metellus	

COWBOYS ROSTER

1	Hunter Niswander	P
2	Greg Zuerlein	K
3	Garrett Gilbert	QB
7	Ben DiNucci	QB
11	Cedrick Wilson	WR
13	Michael Gallup	WR
17	Malik Turner	WR
19	Amari Cooper	WR
20	Tony Pollard	RB
21	Ezekiel Elliott	RB
23	Darian Thompson	S
24	Chidobe Awuzie	CB
25	Xavier Woods	S
26	Jourdan Lewis	CB
27	Trevon Diggs	CB
29	C.J. Goodwin	CB
30	Anthony Brown	CB
34	Rico Dowdle	RB
37	Donovan Wilson	S
40	Steven Parker	S
41	Reggie Robinson	S
44	Francis Bernard	LB
48	Joe Thomas	LB
50	Sean Lee	LB
51	Ron'Dell Carter	DE
52	Connor Williams	G
54	Jaylon Smith	LB
55	Leighton Vander Esch	LB
56	Bradlee Anae	DE
57	Luke Gifford	LB
58	Aldon Smith	DE
59	Justin March	LB
63	Tyler Biadasz	C
64	Greg Senat	T
66	Connor McGovern	G
70	Zack Martin	G
73	Joe Looney	C
75	Cameron Erving	T
78	Terence Steele	T
79	Justin Hamilton	DT
80	Blake Bell	TE
84	Sean McKeon	TE
85	Noah Brown	WR
86	Dalton Schultz	TE
88	CeeDee Lamb	WR
90	DeMarcus Lawrence	DE
91	L.P. Ladouceur	LS
92	Dorance Armstrong	DE
94	Randy Gregory	DE
95	Eli Ankou	DT
96	Neville Gallimore	DT
99	Antwaun Woods	DT

 50 LINEBACKER Eric Wilson	 41 SAFETY Anthony Harris	 54 LINEBACKER Eric Kendricks	 22 SAFETY Harrison Smith	 45 LINEBACKER Troy Dye
 20 CORNERBACK Jeff Gladney	 90 DEFENSIVE END Jalyn Holmes	 93 NOSE TACKLE Shamar Stephen	 94 DEFENSIVE TACKLE Jaleel Johnson	 95 DEFENSIVE END Ifeadi Odenigbo
				 27 CORNERBACK Cameron Dantzier

VIKINGS DEFENSE

COWBOYS OFFENSE

 19 WIDE RECEIVER Amari Cooper	 75 LEFT TACKLE Cameron Erving	 52 LEFT GUARD Connor Williams	 63 CENTER Tyler Biadasz	 70 RIGHT GUARD Zack Martin	 78 RIGHT TACKLE Terence Steele	 86 TIGHT END Dalton Schultz	 13 WIDE RECEIVER Michael Gallup
			 3 QUARTERBACK Garrett Gilbert	 21 RUNNING BACK Ezekiel Elliott		 88 WIDE RECEIVER CeeDee Lamb	

COWBOYS SPECIAL TEAMS

 2 KICKER Greg Zuerlein	 1 PUNTER Hunter Niswander	 91 LONG SNAPPER L.P. Ladouceur	 88 PUNT RETURNER CeeDee Lamb	 20 KICK RETURNER Tony Pollard
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DALLAS COWBOYS DEPTH CHART & ROSTER



OFFENSE

DEFENSE

WR	Cooper	N. Brown	
LT	Erving	Senat	
LG	Williams	McGovern	
C	Biadasz		
RG	Martin	McGovern	
RT	Steele	Senat	
TE	Schultz	Bell	McKeon
WR	Lamb	Turner	
WR	Gallup	Wilson	
QB	Gilbert	DiNucci	
RB	Elliott	Pollard	Dowdle

DE	Lawrence	Armstrong	Carter
DT	Gallimore	Hamilton	
DT	Woods	Ankou	
DE	A. Smith	Gregory	Anae
LB	Vander Esch	Lee	Bernard
LB	J. Smith	Thomas	March
CB	Awuzie	A. Brown	
CB	Lewis	A. Brown	
CB	Diggs	Goodwin	
FS	X. Woods	Parker	Robinson
SS	Wilson	Thompson	

*Depth charts are unofficial and as of print deadline (Nov. 18)



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WATER BREAK
PRESENTED BY *Crown Royal*

IRV SMITH JR



BY CRAIG PETERS

Irv Smith, Jr., is approaching the abbreviation of SAK (Swiss Army Knife) in the Vikings offense. The most comprehensive display of Smith's versatility this year occurred in Week 9 against the Lions when he caught touchdowns of 9 yards and 1 yard from Kirk Cousins and helped the Vikings rush for 275 yards.

The second-round pick of the 2019 NFL Draft showed the reasons he was predicted to be an X-factor heading into his second pro season. Listed at 6-foot-2 and 242 pounds, Smith helps Vikings coaches create mismatches and force opponents to choose between using a base defense or specialty package.

The Vikings can be productive in the run game or pass game with Smith "in-line" at the line of scrimmage or as a "move" tight end, often in a set that incorporates two or three tight ends.

The tight end position runs in Smith's blood. His father and namesake played seven NFL seasons, including five for a New Orleans team that drafted him in the first round of the 1993 NFL Draft with the 20th overall pick.

The younger Smith's uncle, Ed, played the position for three NFL seasons.

Smith grew up in Arizona and Louisiana. He played high school at Brother Martin in New Orleans before heading to Alabama and setting Crimson Tide single-season records for a tight end with seven touchdowns and 710 yards as a

junior in 2018. He became a pro at age 20.

In his first campaign in Minnesota, Smith set a Vikings record for a rookie tight end with 36 receptions, including his first career touchdown that sparked a major comeback win against the Broncos in the 2019 Salute to Service game at U.S. Bank Stadium.

Coincidentally, Smith's first touchdown of 2020 also occurred in a Salute to Service home game. So did the second.

While Smith may miss the "barbecued shrimp or crawfish – anything seafood, that's my thing, especially Cajun seasoning" from the Gulf Coast, he's generally getting acclimated to Minnesota – with help from teammates like Tyler Conklin, who spotted Smith shivering on the sidelines at Lambeau Field in Week 8 and offered a parka, saying "Here, my friend. You're from the South, Cuz. You need it more than me."

"He knew I was cold. That was definitely the coldest game I've played in," Smith said. "I know if you grew up here, it's not that cold, but for me, it was probably the coldest game I've played in, so it was cool that Conk' showed me some love and gave me the jacket because he knew how cold I was. It's a different kind of cold up here."

We caught up with Smith for a Water Break, presented by Crown Royal.



Q. I feel like New Orleans isn't a place that's very well-understood by outsiders. What's the biggest misconception about New Orleans?

A. "If you don't really know, the only thing you see really is the parties, loud music and jazz music, but it's a big culture. People are very open-armed. If you're a good person, they're going to love you and show you how much by great food, big parties, a lot of camaraderie. It's a very family oriented city."

Q. Does the family aspect sometimes get lost in translation?

A. "Yeah, if you're not from there, you just, by the way we talk and things we do, other people wouldn't understand. They don't know why you do those things and what people are talking about. At the end of the day, it's very loving. I'm very thankful for it being family oriented."

Q. What did you expect when you were drafted by Minnesota? Is there something about here that has surprised you?

A. "When I first got here, I heard, 'Minnesota Nice,' and everybody is very nice. It's definitely true, as far as if you're nice to somebody, they're going to be nice to you back. I feel like that's very true out here. It's how the world should live."

Q. Have you tried any of the winter activities? Snowshoes? Ice fishing?

A. "I want to try ice fishing because I like to fish. In Louisiana, we catch a lot of fish, so I definitely do want to try ice fishing."

Q. Do you have a teammate in mind to be your guide?

A. "I know Riley [Reiff] is a big outdoorsman, so I'll ask Riley for sure and some of the offensive linemen."

Q. Is there a tight end that's played in this system or a similar one that you most try to replicate?

A. "I've watched a lot of Owen Daniels. [Offensive Coordinator Gary Kubiak] coached him. We're pretty similar in size and different things like that, so I definitely have a lot of regards for him and how good of a player he was. Delanie Walker is kind of similar to my size. At the end of the day, I'm not Gronk-sized (Rob Gronkowski), but I really like the way they play, just leaving it all out there on the field, so I'd say Owen and Delanie, and Shannon Sharpe for sure, too. He was a lot of fun to watch. Those are definitely guys that played the game the right way."

Q. What's your key to blocking bigger guys?

A. "Honestly, it's a mindset. Obviously you practice your technique, work a lot of technique and hand placement, getting your body in the right direction, and pad placement. It's very-fine details for sure, but at the end of the day, you can use all of the details, and if you're not a dog out there and not confident in your abilities ... then you don't have anything, so I would definitely say it's a mix between technique and just having to let that dog out."

Q. When you get a pre-snap look that's favorable, like it appeared on the second touchdown against the Lions, how do you keep your poker face?

A. "Well, shoot, I mean that's kind of all week in practice, you kind of know the couple of plays, that if they get called, you've got a good chance of getting the ball and getting in the end zone, especially kind of with Coach Kub' ... it's definitely going to be a touchdown. You hear the play called in the huddle and you just feel that energy. At that point, you've just got to go out there and do your job and execute, and the fun is going to happen."



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A HOME
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MINNESOTA

RUDOLPH
REFLECTS ON
10 SEASONS

BY ERIC SMITH



Over the past few years, Kyle and Jordan Rudolph have been in the process of building their dream home. The Vikings tight end is from Ohio, and his wife hails from Indiana, but there wasn't any question as to where the Rudolphs would construct their forever home.

Minnesota became the resounding answer over the course of 10 seasons in Vikings Purple that have been accented with a tireless commitment to the community.

The Rudolphs – along with 4-year-old twin daughters, Andersyn and Finley, plus 22-month old son, Henry – officially moved into their new house on Lake Minnetonka on Thursday.

"This will actually be our first weekend in the new house," Rudolph said. "It's exciting because having been here a decade, we've absolutely fallen in love with the Twin Cities and the state of Minnesota. This is our forever home ... the house that we'll raise our kids in and send them off in.

"Minnesota is home for us. We feel like we have so many roots that we've laid here and feel so entrenched in this community that it would be hard for us to kind of start over anywhere else," Rudolph added. "We're close enough to both of our families that we still get to see them – but at the same time, no matter what happens for me and my career ... this is home now."

Rudolph laughed when asked about the design process and said he gladly stepped aside when planning the minute details.

"That part of the process was really cool because you are kind of always looking at things that you want," Rudolph said. "But my wife has every Pinterest imaginable. She actually loves the whole interior design thing."

Rudolph just had one request when determining the location.

"The thing I'm most excited for is to be on the lake," Rudolph added. "When you live in Minnesota and it's home full-time, there's nothing better than being out on the lake in the summer."

In some ways, the past decade has flown by for Rudolph, who arrived Up North as a second-round pick back in the 2011 NFL Draft.

And while he's certainly made an impact through the years by contributing to wins, he

and his family might be more well-known for their constant commitment to the Twin Cities community.

A three-time Vikings Community Man of the Year (and nominee for the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year), the 31-year-old has made an indelible mark on the hearts and lives of countless families through his work at the University of Minnesota Masonic Children's Hospital.

Kyle Rudolph's End Zone, an interactive space that provides a respite from everyday hospital life, was unveiled in December of 2017. This year, his holiday-themed get-togethers around the holidays have had to be virtual, but he's still connecting with and encouraging patients and families who are facing tough challenges in life.

Rudolph said his bond with the community played a part in the family deciding to make Minnesota their permanent home.

"Every year you just meet new people and make new relationships," Rudolph said. "After 10 years, all of a sudden, you look back and are like, 'Why would we ever leave here?'"

On the field, Rudolph has 18 catches for 238 yards and a touchdown through nine games in 2020.

And while that may not equate to the personal stats that helped Rudolph make a pair of Pro Bowls and become one of the league's most reliable tight ends over the past 10 years, one could argue that Rudolph is more of a well-rounded contributor and player than ever before.

Just ask Vikings Head Coach Mike Zimmer.

"I know that his catching numbers are down a little bit, but I think his overall game is improving," Zimmer said. "His protection, his run blocking, the way he's running routes, we've just got some other places where we're getting the ball.

"Plus, we haven't thrown the ball a lot the last couple of ball games," Zimmer added. "Those numbers will start coming back up, but I feel like

he's playing as good as he's played since I've been here, anyway."

Put another way, it's likely that the Vikings don't rank fifth with 153.6 rushing yards rushing yards per game without Rudolph's commitment to that phase on offense.

And that Vikings running back Dalvin Cook probably isn't leading the NFL with 954 rushing yards and 12 rushing scores.

"Rudy's playing well. He's been really good on the line of scrimmage," said Vikings Offensive Coordinator Gary Kubiak. "I'm always trying to get those guys involved, all of them, and Rudy does a great job and he's played very consistently and very unselfish for our football team.

"I think it's one of those deals where you never know where his big night is coming," Kubiak added. "Rudy's given us everything he's got, and a lot of Dalvin's yards, Rudy gets a lot of credit because he's been great on the line of scrimmage."

Added Vikings right tackle Brian O'Neill: "If you're able to turn on the film and watch, there's a lot of times he's asked to block somebody 1-on-1 without any help, and he's done a phenomenal job. His communication's on point. The whole tight ends room has been on point and is a big reason for our success. Rudy leads those guys and spearheads that group, and we're really thankful for them, the communication they bring, the effort they bring and their willingness to block in the run."

Through 10 seasons, Rudolph has established himself as one of the Vikings top tight ends in franchise history.

He leads all players at that position with 48 touchdown catches, which also ranks fifth all-time in team history. His 443 receptions also rank fifth all-time and are second among tight ends behind Steve Jordan. Rudolph's 4,392 receiving yards rank 10th among all Vikings players.

Through 2016-2018, Rudolph was among the league's most productive tight ends in the receiving game, as he tallied 204 catches for 2,006 yards and 19 touchdowns.

Rudolph, who is poised to start his 91st consecutive game and pass Chad Greenway for the 20th longest streak by a Viking at any position, explained how his role has evolved over the past 15 months.

"Look at last year and this year – say, the last year-and-a-half – and my receptions and pass-catching numbers aren't what they were the three years prior," Rudolph said. "I've kind of flown under the radar in that aspect, and I actually enjoy that and would rather have it that way. Obviously, I'm used to catching the football, but over the last year-and-a-half, my role has changed and has forced me to really put a point of emphasis on the rest of my game.

"Since Coach Zimmer came here seven years ago, he's always challenged me in every aspect of my game [beyond] pass catching," Rudolph continued. "He knows that pass catching is something that I do well and is something that comes natural to me, so he's always challenged me in run blocking and pass protection, things that are more difficult for me."

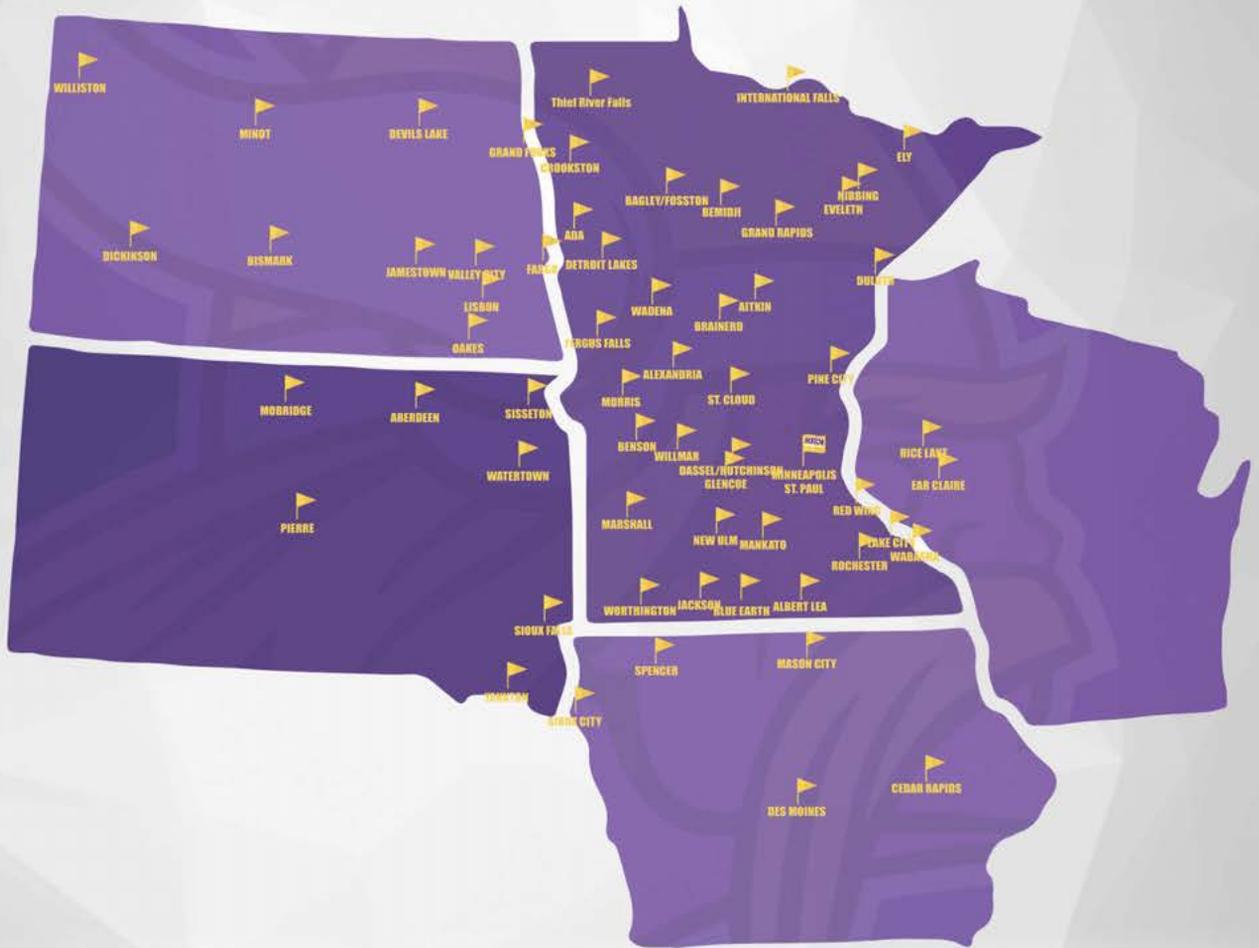
"The whole tight ends room has been on point and is a big reason for our success. Rudy leads those guys and spearheads that group, and we're really thankful for them, the communication they bring, the effort they bring and their willingness to block in the run."

TACKLE BRIAN O'NEILL



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Rudolph credited former position coaches Pat Shurmur and Clancy Barone, who both brought experience working with the offensive line, with helping his commitment to becoming “more of a complete tight end.”

“Even though my pass-catching numbers are down, it’s still good to hear from the head coach when he says you’re playing your best football because I personally feel that, even if the stat sheet doesn’t indicate it,” Rudolph said.

Over the past year, Rudolph has continued to prove his sure-handedness in the passing game.

It was the veteran who caught the game-winning score to silence the Superdome in a Wild Card playoff win over the Saints in January.

Rudolph also hauled in a one-handed score in Week 3 over the Titans, a play that was reminiscent of him using a single mitt to snag scores on the road in Seattle and Dallas during the 2019 season.

And speaking of the Cowboys, Rudolph said one of the most popular players in their history is a reason why he has no problem taking on whatever role is asked of him these days.

Jason Witten spent 16 seasons with the Cowboys and is Dallas’ all-time leader in catches (1,215) and yards (12,977). He is second in touchdowns with 72.

Rudolph said he spent time with Witten, who is now with the Raiders, at the Pro Bowl after the 2012 and 2017 seasons.

Rudolph noted Witten is “someone I’ve looked up to my whole life,” and said the likely future Hall of Fame tight end made a mark on him in terms of how to handle himself on and off the field.

“Maybe a guy that hasn’t been here for 10 years or someone who hasn’t gone through some of the

heartache we’ve gone through over the years [would complain about an evolved role],” Rudolph said. “All I really care about is being on the first team that brings a championship to Minnesota.

“I had an opportunity to get to free agency a couple years ago, and I passed because this organization means way more to me than individual statistics,” Rudolph added.

“Could I go to another team and put up big statistics in the pass game? Absolutely, but it wouldn’t mean as much to me as winning a championship here in Minnesota. When you go to the playoffs and get close to the Super Bowl, there’s just a certain buzz around the Twin Cities.”

Time will tell if the 4-5 Vikings can put a disappointing start behind them and make a second-half run at the playoffs.

If Minnesota can get there, it would be the fifth trip to the postseason for Rudolph.

But no matter what happens – whether that’s this season or for the rest of his NFL career – there’s zero doubt about where Rudolph and his family will create memories that will last a lifetime.

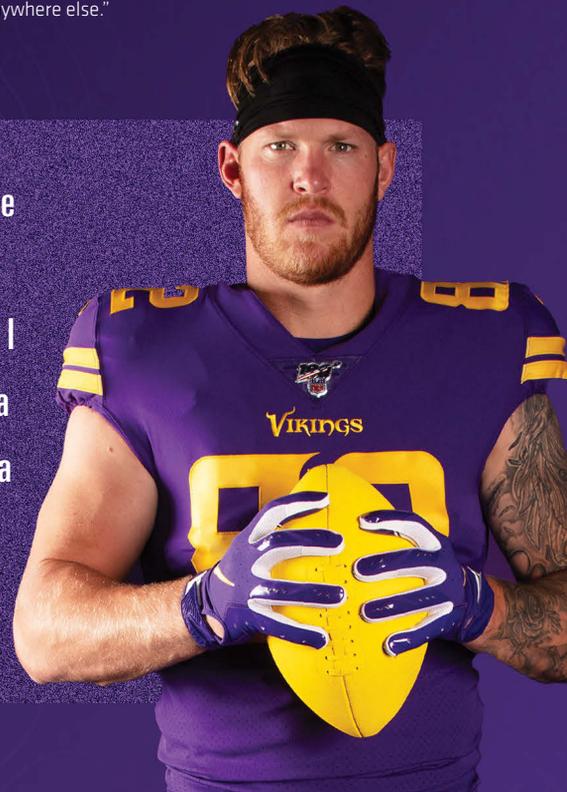
“It’s unbelievable,” Rudolph said. “I joke around with a lot of guys in the locker room about this, but coming here as a 21-year-old kid ... I went to school in South Bend [at Notre Dame], and didn’t think there was much of a chance to get drafted by a team farther north than there.

“Yet here we are in Minnesota,” Rudolph added.

“I came up here after the draft for my press conference ... but in the blink of an eye, all of a sudden, we’re looking back on a decade here. And I don’t want to go anywhere else.”

“It’s unbelievable. I joke around with a lot of the guys in the locker room about this, but coming here as a 21-year-old kid ... I went to school in South Bend [at Notre Dame], and I didn’t think there was much of a chance to get drafted by a team farther north than there. Yet here we are in Minnesota ... and I don’t want to go anywhere else.”

KYLE RUDOLPH



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Remembering

BY TOM WEST

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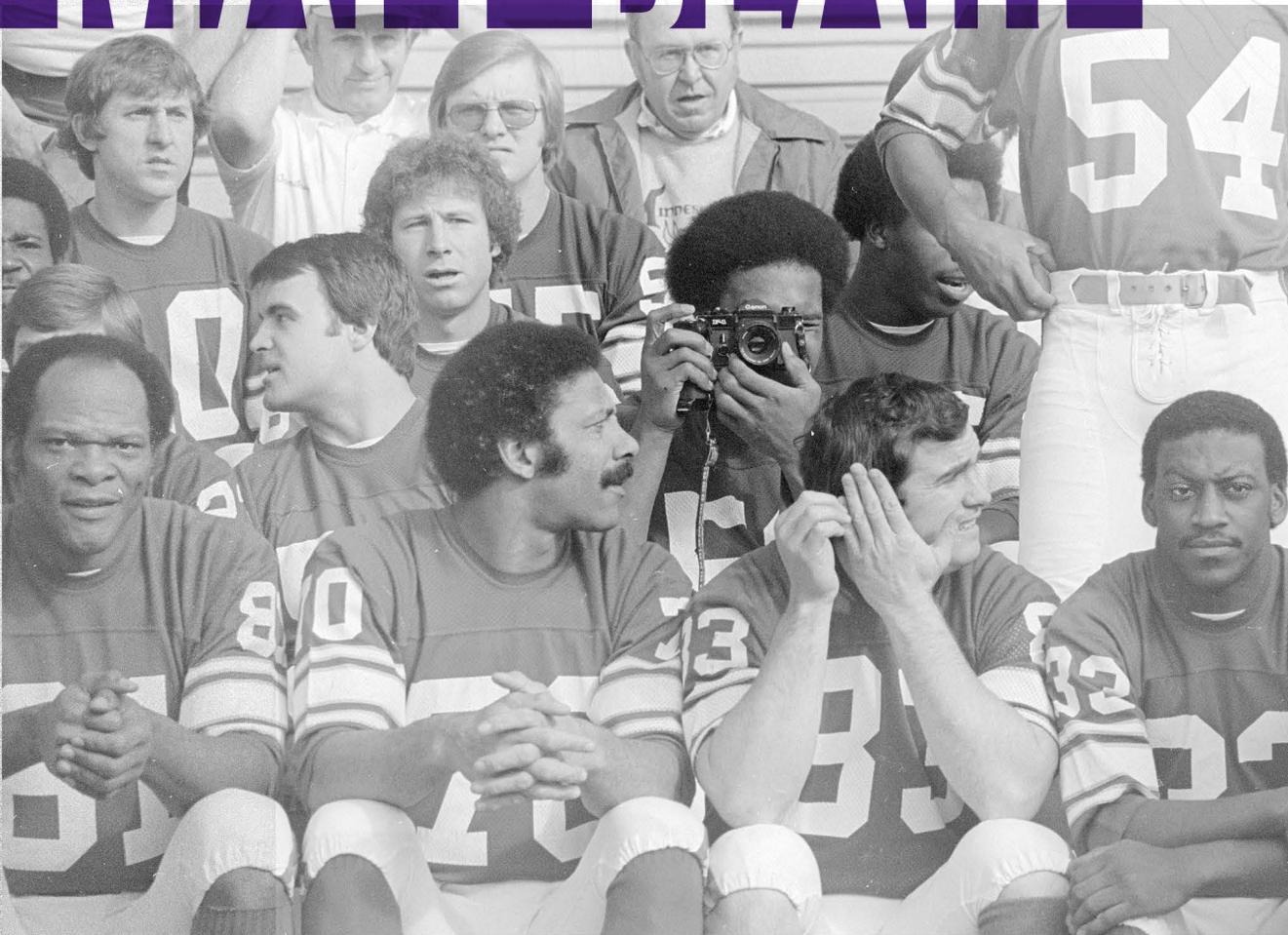


Photo taken during Super Bowl XI team photo sitting.

With heavy hearts, the Minnesota Vikings family is mourning the loss of Matt Blair. A player of unmatched skill on the field, Matt's generosity and spirit in the community was equally unique. Always willing to help a teammate or support a worthy cause, Matt's life was vibrant. He brought joy to everyone he touched.

"Matt Blair was a great presence at Vikings events and a tremendous teammate long after playing. He embodied the best of what it means to be a Viking," said Vikings Owner Mark Wilf. "Matt is a Ring of Honor player whose legacy will live on forever with the franchise and in the community he loved."

Blair passed away Oct. 22 at age 70.

Drafted in the second round out of Iowa State in 1974, Blair played all 12 of his NFL seasons for the Vikings (1974-85). He started 130 of the 160 regular-season games he played, racking up 1,452 tackles, the second-most in team history.

Only Scott Studwell and Roy Winston played more games at linebacker for Minnesota.

After becoming a starter in 1976, Blair went to six consecutive Pro Bowls (1977-82) and earned a First-Team All-Pro selection from *The Associated Press* in 1980.

Blair holds the team record with 20 blocked kicks (16 PAT, 3FGs, 1 punt) and also recorded more sacks (23) and interceptions (16) than any linebacker in team history.

A part of Vikings teams that reached Super Bowls IX and XI, Blair recovered two fumbles by the Rams in Minnesota's 24-13 victory in the 1976 NFC Championship.

Blair was named to the 50 Greatest Vikings in 2010 and inducted into the Vikings Ring of Honor on Oct. 25, 2012. His purple jacket and a floral arrangement were placed at his Ring of Honor display at U.S. Bank Stadium on Nov. 8 when Minnesota hosted Detroit.

"Aside from being a tremendous athlete and player, Matt was a better man," Studwell said. "He was smart, worked at his craft and gave everything for the team. He was a great teammate and fun to be around. He took his work very seriously but had a great life away from football. I'm sad to see him go."

In addition to helping write Vikings history, Blair captured it along the way through his passion for photography. Keen-eyed, Blair chronicled teammates behind-the-scenes, and he later drew acclaim for his images of landscapes. His work is featured in U.S. Bank Stadium's Art Collection.



BY LINDSEY YOUNG

KINDNESS

Provides Lasting Image

There aren't many people kinder than Matt Blair.

I first met the former Vikings linebacker at the 2011 Uptown Art Fair, of all places.

Known on the field as a dominant defender under Hall of Fame Coach Bud Grant, Matt also had a creative side. It wasn't uncommon for Matt to be spotted on the practice-field sideline with camera in-hand, and he'd later develop images of his coaches and teammates in an at-home dark room.

As a Minnesota native, I had learned about Matt Blair the Linebacker from my dad. And as someone with an interest in photography myself, I found Matt's story to be an incredibly compelling one.

I remember feeling a little starstruck, seeing him at the art fair that day. Amid crowds of colorfully dressed, oft-eccentric artists, Matt wore a non-assuming, pale yellow polo and a white baseball cap emblazoned by the Vikings Norseman.

I mustered the guts to introduce myself, and Matt's smile almost immediately put me at ease. He greeted me with warm eyes and engulfed my hand in his own. I specifically remember noting the size of his hands and the way the tip of his left-hand ring finger jutted out awkwardly.

The two of us chatted about the Vikings, a shared interest in photography and the fact that I someday hoped to work as a writer in sports. To write about the Vikings would be my ultimate goal, I noted. The two of us snapped a photo together, which he would later autograph for me in the distinctive script now easy for me to recognize.

Matt graciously agreed to a 1-on-1 interview for a two-part story that was published by Bleacher Report. He invited me to meet with him after an interview with



WCCO at Lifetouch Studios – coincidentally located just down the street from the Vikings Winter Park practice facility where I'd work four years later.

I learned so much about Matt that day.

Sure, he told me about his upbringing and his football journey. I heard the story behind his crooked finger, the result of it getting stuck in the helmet of a Denver Broncos player during a game. He explained his love for photography, which started with the purchase of his first-ever camera prior to a trip to Europe.

But what I really learned was so much more about Matt's character. The love he had for his family and his former teammates. The genuine interest he had in the lives of others, including myself.

I kept in touch with Matt following that interview and would chat with him every so often. Not long after that story, he sent me a small, softcover book he'd published of his photography. I'm not sure he understood how much that would mean to me.

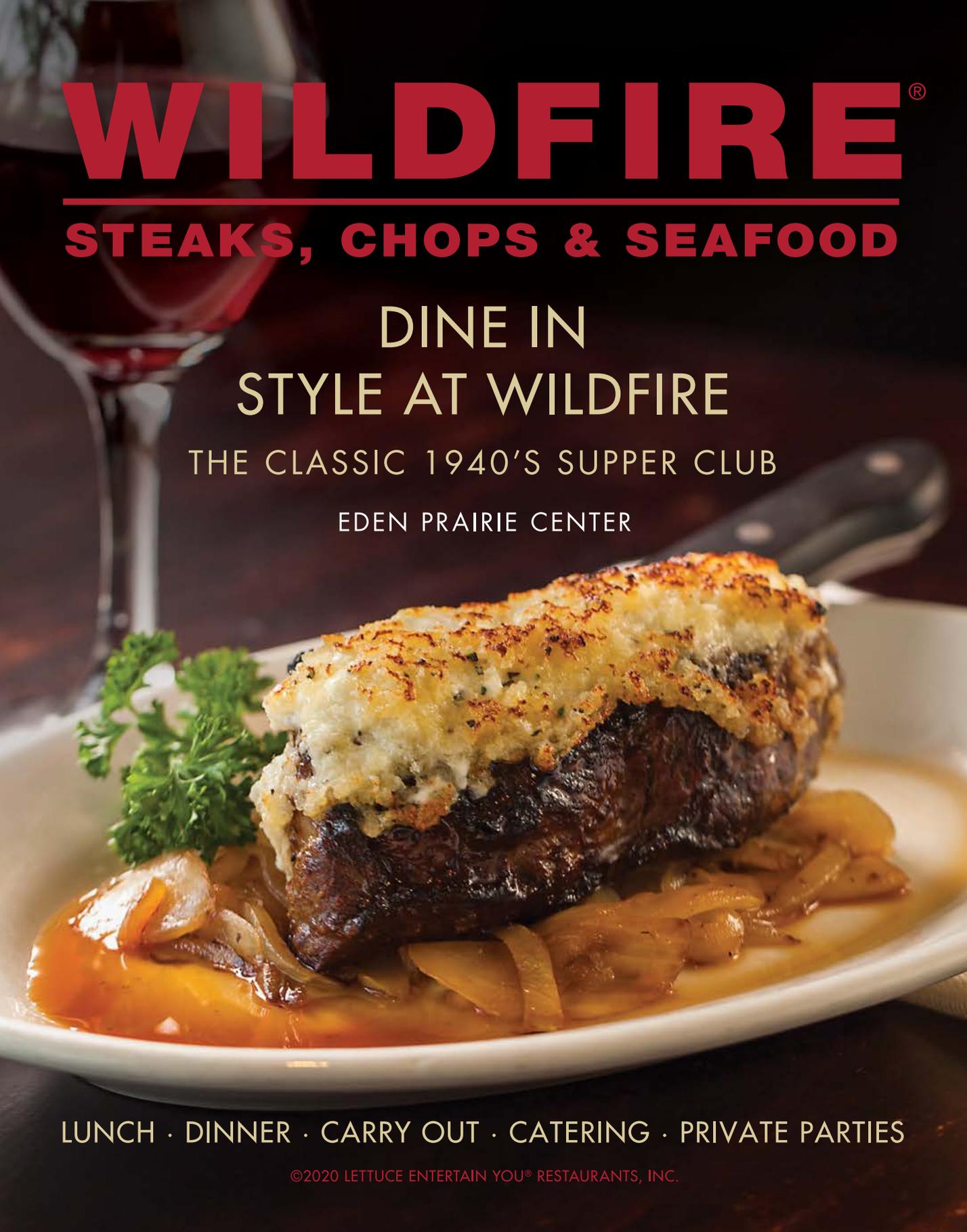
After joining the Vikings in 2015, the dream job I once told Matt about, I was able to see and interview him on a few more occasions. And in August 2016, almost exactly five years after posing for a photo at the Uptown Art Fair, I stopped at the home of Matt and his wife, MaryBeth, who were hosting a garage sale.

It only seemed fitting to take a photo.

After learning that Matt passed away, I reflected on his generous sharing of his time and talent and the kindness that he and MaryBeth extended to me.

Thank you, Matt, for being so gracious to this Andover native who became a Vikings writer. You will be deeply missed.

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bEast Texas

Gladney and Boyd Bring Toughness to Vikings

BY ERIC SMITH

Spend a few minutes in conversation with Jeff Gladney and Kris Boyd, and it doesn't take long for their Texas twang to come out.

Gladney, a Vikings 2020 first-round pick, hails from New Boston, which is 156 miles northeast of Dallas. Boyd spent his formative years in Gilmer, which is 130 miles due east of Dallas (shorter as the crow flies).

Roughly an hour drive – merely a fraction of the vast Lone Star State – separates the towns. Just don't make the mistake of saying the two cornerbacks hail from East Texas.

You'll quickly get corrected that the area is actually referred to as bEast Texas. Let Boyd explain.

"That actually came about when Twitter started to blow up for football recruiting," Boyd said. "When they'd talk about guys from certain areas, they'd call out Dallas and Houston and on ... but when it came to East Texas, they would put a lowercase 'b' on there.

"This ain't just East Texas, it's bEast Texas because they take football to another level," Boyd added. "When they talked about it, from backups to starters to mamas

and uncles and brothers ... they were all like, 'Yeah, that guy is a beast. We played against him.' Just a lot of praise."

Gladney added with a laugh: "Nothing but beasts. We produce nothing but beasts."

Gladney and Boyd aren't the only Vikings players from that area. Boyd was high school teammates with practice squad linebacker Blake Lynch when they helped Gilmer win a 4A Division II state title in 2014.

Lynch was the game's MVP as the duo helped Gilmer rally from an 18-point deficit for a 35-25 win, which claimed the school's third state championship.

"East Texas, I ain't even going to lie to you ... it's eat, sleep and breathe football," Boyd said. "I had moved from Dallas [in middle school] ... so it was kind of slow when I got out there.

"I was going to go back to Dallas, but I stayed because I knew Gilmer was good in football," Boyd added. "It was a tradition there ... just football, football, football."



The two young cornerbacks know each other well. New Boston and Gilmer weren't on each other's annual regular-season schedule, but the schools held an intense scrimmage each summer.

The two met up a few times there, then kept running into each other in the Big 12, where Boyd played at Texas and Gladney starred at TCU.

The duo became teammates for the first time this spring when the Vikings tabbed Gladney with the 31st overall pick in the 2020 NFL Draft. That was a year after Boyd, a 2019 seventh-rounder, made his mark as a rookie by excelling on special teams.

And it's clear Gladney and Boyd have brought their brand of Texas toughness to the Vikings.

"Just coming from the state of Texas in general, football is such a big deal," Gladney said. "But when you come from areas like me and Kris – my town is actually a bit smaller than his – it's like we have a chip on our shoulder more than anyone else."

Added Boyd: "That area is way tougher. We're just some country-fed boys ... out there lifting up hay bales and messing with all types of bulls."

Entering the 2020 season, both players were viewed as key pieces of a young secondary that didn't feature a cornerback older than 23.

But with Mike Hughes and Holton Hill on Injured Reserve, and rookie Cameron Dantzler missing a few games with various injuries this season, Vikings Head Coach Mike Zimmer called on Gladney and Boyd to start Minnesota's Week 9 game against Detroit.

Gladney has played nearly every defensive snap since a Week 4 win in Texas over Houston.

And Boyd has seen a heavy uptick in his defensive snaps of late. The special teams ace has more than held his own on defense, too.

"All the corners [have] played better," Zimmer said. "I think Kris [has] played a lot more disciplined.

"Jeff continues to get better each and every week as far as understanding things,

understanding his role and what the offense is capable of," Zimmer added.

Both Gladney and Boyd said they haven't been fazed by getting thrown into the fire, especially in back-to-back wins over Green Bay and Detroit.

In a way, they've been molded for this opportunity from their Texas roots.

"We both have embraced it. At this point, with the limited number [of cornerbacks] we do have, we know everyone is depending on us," Gladney said. "Really, these are the moments – not the circumstance of everyone getting hurt – but these are the moments you ask for.

"You're pushed out there and everyone is depending on you," he added.

Said Boyd: "It's all we know. Once you're out there, you have to do your job and get the job done, man. It's a mutual understanding between us two. We don't even have to say anything. We already know from how we grew up and how we handle things ... nothing has changed. The only thing that's changed is the colors on our uniform. We've got to bring that same mentality."

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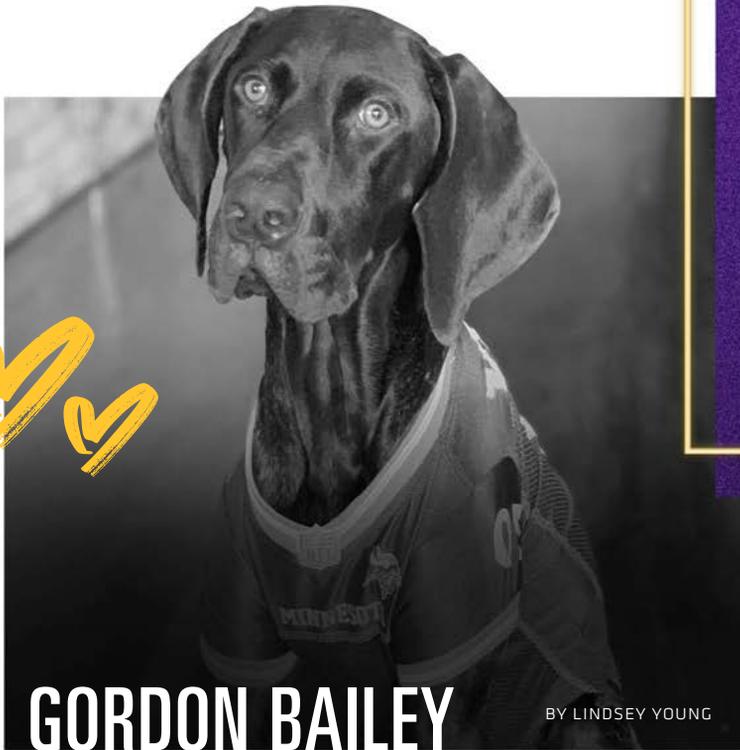


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BY LINDSEY YOUNG

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GORDON IS KNOWN FOR FOLLOWING HIS DAD AROUND CONSTANTLY

NASA NAMESAKE?

GORDON SHARES A NAME WITH AN ASTRONAUT FROM BAILEY'S HOME STATE, OKLAHOMA

POPCORN-LOVING PUP:

PEOPLE FOOD IS AGAINST THE RULES, BUT GORDON SOMETIMES SNEAKS SOME POPCORN

Dogs with human names are pretty great, right?

For instance, I know a Canadian golden retriever named Carl.

But Gordon the German Shorthaired Pointer might just take the cake. And at nearly 2 years old, Gordon's dynamic demeanor makes him a perfect fit for his "dog dad," soft-spoken Vikings kicker Dan Bailey.

"He's just full of personality," Bailey said. "He's very vocal. Not in a bad way, but he likes to have your attention all the time. He'll - I can't even describe it - it's kind of like a whine, but it's not really a whine. He doesn't bark a ton, but he just makes some really crazy noises and is very, very vocal. He has a ton of energy.

"He's like Velcro. Anywhere you go, he's right there at your hip. Has to be beside you - or whoever - all the time," Bailey continued. "He's just playful. He's very high-energy, high-drive, just go, go, go all the time. It's just a ton of personality, which is what I wanted. He can be a little overbearing at times, but he's a good dog, for sure."

Growing up, Bailey never had a dog of his own (although he has vague memories of a beagle who destroyed the family's backyard).

He did, however, have a soccer teammate whose family bred German Shorthairs. Bailey enjoyed spending time with the dogs. He also later went bird and duck hunting with friends who were

“Man, if I just look at the world through [Gordon’s] eyes and get out of my own way and quit stressing about things, life would probably be a lot more simple and a lot more enjoyable.”

- DAN BAILEY



accompanied by Brittany and Labrador breeds.

“Once I got older and out of college, I was like, ‘I’ve got to get me a dog. It’s been probably 20 years that I haven’t had one.’ So pretty much since then, I’ve had one,” said Bailey, who owned a chocolate Lab before Gordon.

And the question remains: What – or who – inspired the name?

“There’s a little bit of randomness to it. I was just trying to think of a name that I liked. This is going to sound a little bit nerdy,” Bailey laughed, “But I’ve always enjoyed space and the history of that, NASA. There was an astronaut, one of the Mercury 7, and his name was Gordon Cooper, and he’s [also from Oklahoma]. So that was kind of part of it.

“I mean, I didn’t [directly] name him after an astronaut, but I liked the name – Gordo – and it’s turned out to fit his personality perfectly,” Bailey added. “Kind of the crossover there with some of my personal interests over the years, it just worked out.”

Bailey hasn’t gone hunting with Gordon yet, but he hasn’t ruled out one day picking the activity back up and bringing along his pup pal.

“He’s really smart, and he’s really attentive to anything I try to teach him. He usually catches on pretty quick,” Bailey said. “But he’s gotten almost too smart for his own good. He’ll do anything if I have food. He’s very food-driven. He’ll sit, stay, roll over. ... The one that I struggle with is if he gets off on a scent or something, he doesn’t like to come back, so I have to get his attention with food or something.”

And although Bailey is intentional about Gordon’s dog-food diet, it only makes sense that a classy-named canine would also have a taste for “people food” – popcorn, to be specific.

“If I’m making a bag of popcorn, he’s already like Velcro, but he will not give it up. So if I accidentally drop a piece or something, he’s all over it. He loves popcorn,” Bailey said. “But other than that, I’m pretty strict on it. I try not to feed him any people food at all. But sometimes, you know, it happens ‘on accident.’”

It’s safe to say that Bailey’s a dog person for life.

The companionship and love a pup provides, he said, truly embody the “man’s best friend” adage. And especially during a 2020 of political and societal division and a global pandemic, it’s possible that Gordon can teach

us a thing or two about outlook.

“I’m sure everybody’s been through it – there’s times where it just feels like the world’s crashing in on you, and to have [Gordon], that companion in the house that just has no concept at all of what’s going on – to him, everything’s the same – it kind of helps you put things back in perspective.

“I can think, ‘Man, if I just look at the world through his eyes and get out of my own way and quit stressing about things, life would probably be a lot more simple and a lot more enjoyable,’” Bailey added.



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FROM
THE
START

BY CRAIG PETERS

The Minnesota Vikings and Dallas Cowboys franchises technically share a birthday. When NFL Owners met in Miami, Florida, on Jan. 28, 1960, they voted to approve an expansion plan, granting a franchise to Dallas to begin play that fall and one for the Minneapolis/St. Paul area for 1961.

Each franchise struggled to find its footing in the early days. The Cowboys went 0-11-1 in their inaugural campaign.

The Vikings shocked the Bears in their first game of the 1961 regular season but finished the campaign with a 3-11 record.

Prior to the stunner on opening day, the Cowboys were the Vikings first opponent in an exhibition game. The contest was held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on Aug. 5, 1961. The announced attendance that Saturday night at Howard Wood Stadium was 4,954. Dallas prevailed 38-13.

By the end of the decade, the Vikings and Cowboys had moved to the top of the

division standings and were becoming dominant squads.

After the AFL-NFL merger in 1970, the Vikings and Cowboys appeared in eight of the next nine Super Bowls. Dallas played in V, VI, X, XII and XIII, claiming titles in VI and XII. Minnesota played in VIII, IX and XI. Before the merger, the Vikings also played in Super Bowl IV (Jan. 11, 1970) after winning the NFL Championship in 1969.

The teams also had epic playoff clashes that decade. Minnesota hosted the first postseason game between the teams on Dec. 25, 1971, but Dallas prevailed 20-12 on the way to winning Super Bowl VI.

The Vikings returned the favor as visitors two years later in the 1973 NFC Championship by defeating the Cowboys 27-10 on Dec. 30, 1973. Chuck Foreman rushed for a 5-yard touchdown and John Gilliam caught a 54-yard pass from Fran Tarkenton before Bobby Bryant put the game away with a 63-yard interception return for a touchdown in the fourth quarter. It was Minnesota's first road playoff victory.

The teams met again in the postseason on Dec. 28, 1975, when Dallas prevailed 17-14 in the Divisional Round hosted by Minnesota.

The term "Hail Mary" was coined by Cowboys QB Roger Staubach in reference to his 50-yard touchdown pass to Drew Pearson, but in Vikings lore, the play remains "Pearson's Push-off."

Dallas also topped the Vikings in the 1977 NFC Championship (Jan. 1, 1978) on the way to winning Super Bowl XII.

The franchises have only met in the playoffs three times since (after the 1996, 1999 and 2009 seasons).

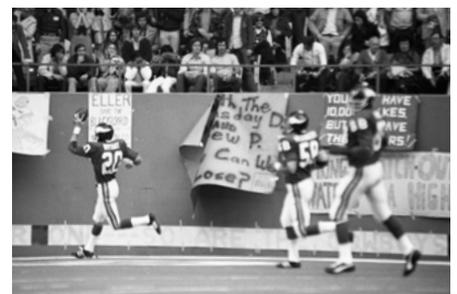
DID YOU KNOW?

Minnesota is a perfect 3-0 against Dallas in Thanksgiving games.

Darrin Nelson's 24-yard touchdown run gave the Vikings a 44-38 overtime victory in 1987.

Randy Moss (51, 56 and 56), Cris Carter (54) and Leroy Hoard (50) each had scoring plays of at least 50 yards in a 46-36 Vikings win in 1998.

Moss feasted again two years later with 144 yards and two more scores on seven catches, and Robert Smith rushed 21 times for 148 yards and a score in a 27-15 Vikings win.



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Paul and his family make the four-hour drive from Iowa to Minneapolis for Vikings game days.

FEATURED FAN

PAUL

SOME OF PAUL BEAVER'S EARLIEST VIKINGS MEMORIES REVOLVE AROUND THE TV IN HIS CHILDHOOD HOME OF SIOUX CENTER, IOWA, WATCHING GAMES WITH HIS FATHER.

They rooted for Bud Grant, Jerry Burns and the Purple People Eaters. Paul doesn't remember a time in his life where he didn't cheer for the Vikings, despite having never lived in Minnesota.

"It's just always been that way. I don't think I really had a choice," he quipped.

Later, he and his wife attended some games at the Metrodome, purchasing "the cheapest tickets we could find" and taking turns holding 2-year-old daughter Madison on their laps.

"She wouldn't really watch the game ... so she was a little bit of a distraction," Paul laughed. "But she definitely enjoys the Vikings now. She's a big fan."

Madison, who nominated her father for recognition as one of the Vikings 60 Greatest Fans, now attends most games at U.S. Bank Stadium with her parents, her husband, her two

siblings and their spouses. Even Paul's 18-month-old granddaughter has been to a couple of games already.

Every Sunday, they wake up at 6 a.m. and pile into two vehicles for the four-hour trek from Iowa to Minneapolis, making a pit stop in Mankato for breakfast.

"We kind of make a day of it. We're usually up in Minneapolis around 11, we walk over to the stadium together and sit down for the game," Paul said. "It's just fun. It's something we've done for years."

Paul first became a Season Ticket Member in 1998, and he hasn't looked back since.

"Randy Moss was drafted that year, and that was exciting. Man, we were good," he recalled. "That year ended disappointingly because of that field goal, by gosh, it's all we needed against the Falcons [in the NFC Championship Game]. But that was a fun year. I think that probably got us hooked, right there."

Paul's favorite all-time Viking is Adrian Peterson, who made an everlasting impression in his 2007 rookie season.

"That guy could run," Paul said. "And [Voice of the Vikings'] Paul Allen, his 'He's loose!' thing – it was just fun. I just enjoyed watching him. Adrian, he'd never go out of bounds – he'd run over somebody."

Paul and his family have eight seats in U.S. Bank Stadium's Polaris Club, where they watch the action from the 50-yard line.

As much as Paul enjoys watching the Vikings, he equally appreciates the opportunity to share the experience with others. He's blessed, he says, and every season makes sure to give several tickets away.

From donating tickets for charity auctions, to inviting friends or acquaintances who may otherwise be unable to attend a game, numerous Vikings fans see games in-person every year thanks to Paul.

"There's a family who had a health issue, so once that was somewhat resolved, we've given them tickets to a few games. There's a youth pastor, and his kids love the Vikings, so I give them tickets every year," Paul said.



PRESENTED BY **usbank**



JACKIE ANDERSON

Jackie called it a “dream come true” to attend her first game at the Old Met as a child. She became a Season Ticket Member when the Metrodome opened and drives four hours each way to attend home games. She’s traveled to several road games, including London twice!

CURRENT CITY:
ROLLAG, MN
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
JOHN RANDLE



AMANDA LUCIUS

Amanda’s commitment to the Vikings runs so deep that she scheduled her wedding during the team’s bye week to avoid missing a game. On her honeymoon in Hawaii, she got up at 6 a.m. to watch the Vikings play. According to her husband Mitchell, Amanda cries whether the team wins or loses. Her passion is undeniable!

CURRENT CITY:
APPLE VALLEY, MN
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
CRIS CARTER



JADEN BANDY

Although Jaden lives in Maryland, he’s rooted for the Vikings “from the time he could first walk and talk.” His family thought he may just like the color purple, but Jaden had no interest in the local Ravens. While most parents pass their rooting interests to their child, 14-year-old Jaden has converted his to Vikings fans.

CURRENT CITY:
ROCKVILLE, MD
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
ADRIAN PETERSON



ZOE MADDEN

At just 9 years old, Zoe loves to research player and team stats, and her dream is to become a football analyst. She loves to play fantasy football – and does quite well! – against her family. Zoe’s favorite sport is flag football, and she has a huge football card collection. She never misses a Vikings game and cheers until the very end.

CURRENT CITY:
COON RAPIDS, MN
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
ADAM THIELEN



GERALD FORTIN

Gerald became a Vikings Season Ticket Member in the 1961 season and never missed a game at the Old Met or the Metrodome, often planning events around the Vikings schedule. After retiring to Florida in 1998, he passed his tickets along to his daughter, who has inherited his love for the team.

CURRENT CITY:
THE VILLAGES, FL
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
FRAN TARKENTON



DAN PAULOS

Dan was destined to be a Vikings fan before he was even born. In an effort to embrace American culture after immigrating from Greece to Minnesota, Dan’s grandparents and their children became avid Vikings fans. Dan grew up in New York but traveled to Minnesota with his father each season for a Vikings game.

CURRENT CITY:
SEATTLE, WA
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
THIELEN & KENDRICKS



DAN HILDRETH

Dan in 1998 created the first Vikings fan website, The Viking Underground. Through the platform, Dan combined his love for the team with a philanthropic spirit and raised thousands of dollars for the Vikings Children Fund. The Viking Underground eventually merged with *Viking Update*, founded by Vikings Legend Bob Lurtsema.

CURRENT CITY:
LAKEVILLE, MN
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
TOMMY KRAMER



DARYLE VOSS

A native of Oklahoma, Daryle fell in love with the Vikings at age 6. Because of all the Vikings gear he wore, his junior high football coach nicknamed Daryle “Vike.” Daryle and his son Grant (named after Bud Grant) made the trip from Oklahoma to Minnesota for 21 straight Vikings Training Camps. He’s been to 12 playoff games, including the Minneapolis Miracle.

CURRENT CITY:
ARDMORE, OK
FAVORITE
ALL-TIME VIKING:
FRAN TARKENTON

Pierre
NOUJAIM

Ron
JOHNSON

Hobie
ARTIGUE

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BY CRAIG PETERS



VIKINGS, UNITED HEROES LEAGUE SUPPORT

MILITARY FAMILIES

Families were invited to United Heroes League's headquarters in Hastings recently to select custom-edition Vikings Salute to Service gear, footballs and football gloves thanks to a partnership between the team and UHL.

The salute included a surprise in the form of tight end Kyle Rudolph, center Garrett Bradbury and running back Alexander Mattison connecting with families virtually thanks to a robot with a video screen and corresponding jersey.

While meeting the Matthews family, Rudolph advised fifth-grader Liliana Lacie and second-grader Acie Matthews III to make sure to listen to the advice of their mother, Vivian, and father, National Guard Master Sgt. Acie Matthews, Jr.

Acie III, who played tight end for Brooklyn Park in this modified season, soaked up the opportunity to learn from Rudolph.

They talked about favorite pass routes, exercises and touchdown celebrations. Rudolph likes corners and post patterns in the red zone; the variations that are possible with squats; and his "Duck, Duck, Goose" – I know, I know, "Duck, Duck, Gray Duck" in Minnesota – celebration with teammates in Chicago in 2017 the best.

"It was awesome," said Matthews, Jr., who

has served more than 19 years and coached his son's team. "Acie has been playing football for a few years now, and this year ... tight end was one of the positions he played quite a bit at, so getting to talk to Kyle Rudolph was outstanding.

"And for me, I appreciate the advice that Kyle Rudolph gave, outside of football and catching touchdowns," he continued. "I like that [Acie III] had an opportunity to see there's more to a football player than just what you see on TV."

Staff Sgt. Threasa Gallegos enlisted at 17 and has served for 22 years, including 17 full-time. The single mom recently returned from a deployment to the Middle East.

Her oldest daughter, Leylah Gallegos, is in basic training now, but daughter, Kiyannah McGriff, and son, Wayne McGriff, were able to tour United Heroes League and meet Bradbury.

"I don't catch any touchdowns, but I do play for the Vikings," quipped the second-year center.

Bradbury discussed flag and tackle football participation by Kiyannah and Wayne and asked if they dressed up for Halloween. Kiyannah had been Little Red Riding Hood, and Wayne had dressed as The Joker.

"I think that's really cool," Gallegos said of the opportunity to connect virtually with Bradbury. "It's awesome that athletes overall look up to military members and appreciate us."

United Heroes League President and Founder Shane Hudella, who retired as an Army 1st Sgt., described the way his training has helped the nonprofit adjust to a year unlike any other.

"Most of our staff here are military veterans, and one of the key things you learn when you serve is you have to improvise, adapt and overcome," Hudella said. "It's very cool to see the Vikings adopting that as well. Even though players may not be able to be out in the community in person, they ... figured out a way to still give that special moment to military families."

The Vikings also delivered a \$10,000 grant to help the nonprofit provide football equipment free of charge to military families.

"With the craziness of 2020, it's been hard for a lot of nonprofits, us included," Hudella said "We were really amazed and really grateful when the Vikings stepped up big ... so that we could ensure military families still had everything they needed for their kids to play football."

GEAR TO *Support*

This Giving Season you can support the Minnesota Vikings Foundation by securing a limited-release Forge Ahead Together T-shirt made possible by Thousand Hills Lifetime Grazed 100% Grass Fed Beef.

T-shirt orders began Nov. 19 in honor of Minnesota's Give to the Max Day and will end on Giving Tuesday (Dec. 1) – but only while supplies last! Shirts will be mailed within four weeks of the campaign closing.

Every T-shirt ordered will increase the impact the Minnesota Vikings Foundation has on youth and families.

The Foundation's Vikings Table food truck program adjusted its plan in March to best respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and has delivered more than 12,000 free meals in partnership with nonprofits that serve youth and families in need.

Now more than ever, your support this Giving Season increases our impact. All proceeds support the Minnesota Vikings Foundation advancing youth health and education initiatives.

One T-shirt is \$30, which includes shipping. This is a limited release, so place your order for this Forge Ahead Together T-shirt today! Scan the QR Code with your camera to shop available sizes.



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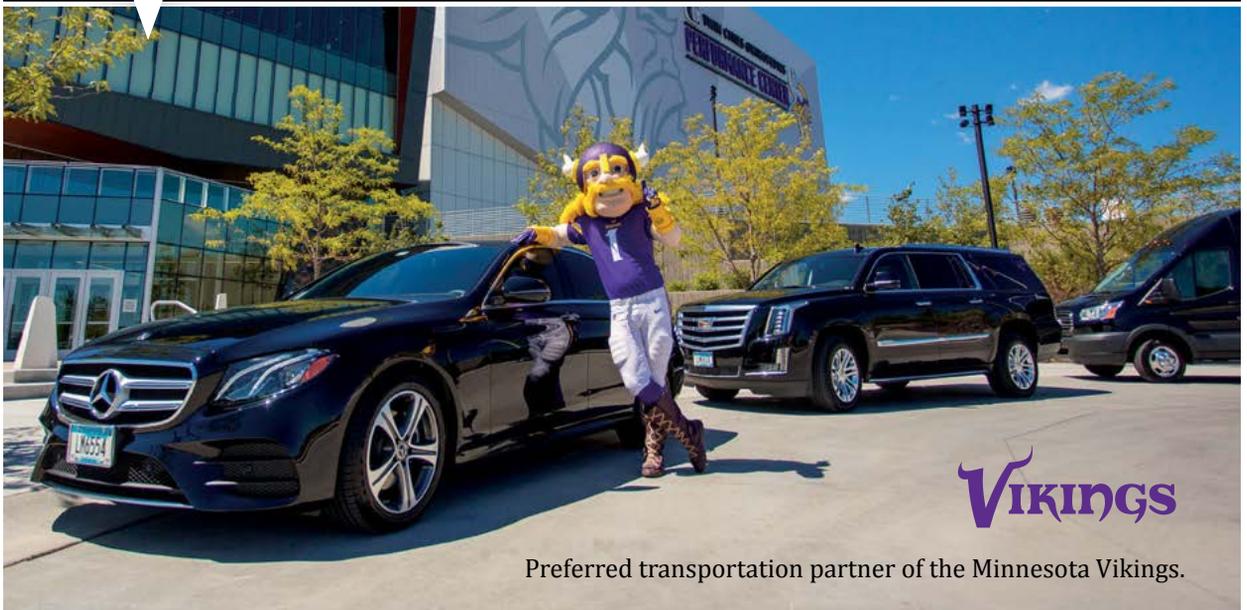
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FAVORITE ON-FIELD EXPERIENCE:

The annual Salute to Service game. There is usually a flyover during the National Anthem in addition to a full-field flag. Witnessing it all makes me beyond grateful and blessed for the service and sacrifices that protect our country and freedoms.

FAVORITE OFF-FIELD EXPERIENCE:

The culmination of all the beautiful women (on the outside, but especially on the inside) I have met. These women have become my best friends. I have been a part of several of their weddings, and they are people that I know will be in my life forever.

DID YOU KNOW?

My rookie year I performed at the Hall of Fame Game in Canton, Ohio. Other unique performances include a Rush lacrosse game in Saskatchewan, Canada (second year), "Touchdown in the Tropics" (third year), and a cheer clinic in Playa Del Carmen, Mexico (fourth year).



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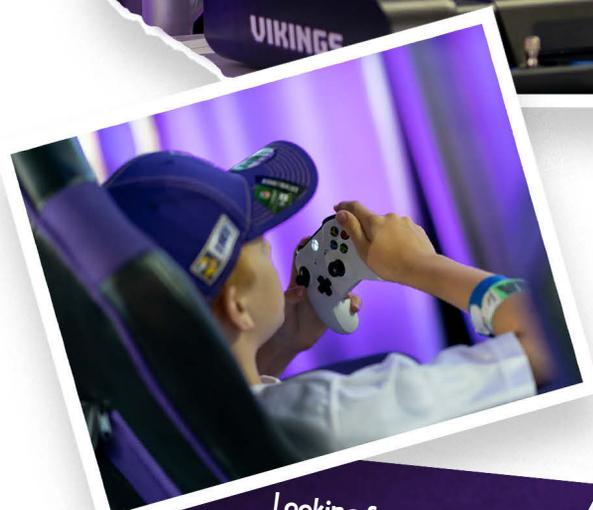


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Athletes can play on either Xbox One or PS4. NFC teams will play on Dec. 12 and 13 with the championship taking place during Super Bowl week. Winners will receive a grand prize of a Xbox Series S or PlayStation 5 with limited edition controller + NFL Gear!

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Looking for another way to connect with Vikings families? Join the Minnesota Vikings Kids Facebook group where fans are encouraged to interact with each other and their favorite team!



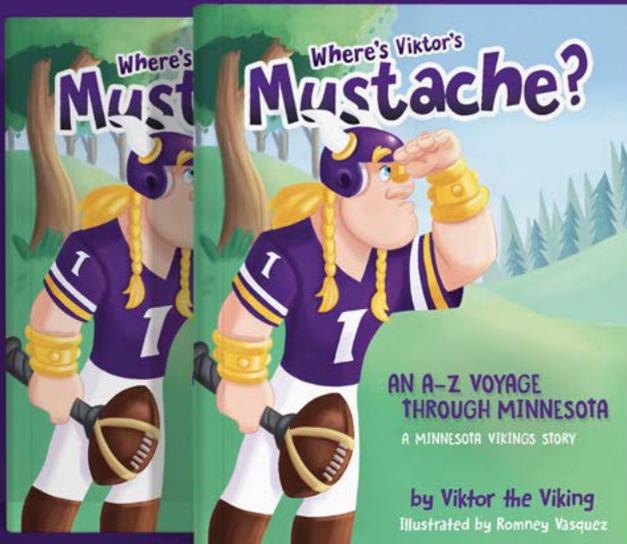
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X'S & O'S WITH MIKE ZIMMER
PRESENTED BY U.S. BANK

TUNE-IN INFO: 6-7 P.M. WEDNESDAYS

Paul Allen interviews Vikings Head Coach Mike Zimmer at the midpoint of each week for an in-depth recap of the team's previous game and a look ahead to the upcoming opponent. Allen also connects with an assistant coach for a deeper look at a particular position. The series features both video and audio components and is available across multiple platforms.

UNDER CENTER WITH KIRK COUSINS

PRESENTED BY FLEET FARM

RADIO TUNE-IN INFO: 6-7 P.M. TUESDAYS
TV TUNE-IN INFO: WEDNESDAYS AT 8 P.M.
ON WFTC | 10:35 P.M. ON KMSP FOX 9

The Vikings starting quarterback teams up each week with Twin Cities sports anchor Mark Rosen to deliver unique content via a weekly series that features current Vikings players, prominent Minnesotans and guests with connections to Cousins. Other segments focus on game highlights and reactions. Use #AskKirk to submit a question.

VIKINGS VANTAGE

PRESENTED BY PEPSI

TUNE-IN INFO: 6:30 P.M. FRIDAYS

Wind-down your week with *Vikings Vantage* by recapping the week that was at Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center. Vikings.com's Gabe Henderson and Chris Corso co-host the program that includes interviews with current players and media members who cover the team.

SKOL STORIES

PRESENTED BY CENTURYLINK

TUNE-IN INFO: 6:30 P.M. THURSDAYS

Embark on a voyage through Vikings history with Mark Rosen, who covered the team for decades, and Pete Bercich, the former linebacker and assistant coach. *Skol Stories* offers rich storytelling that reconnects fans with their favorite memories and links younger listeners to the legacy of the franchise.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS PODCAST

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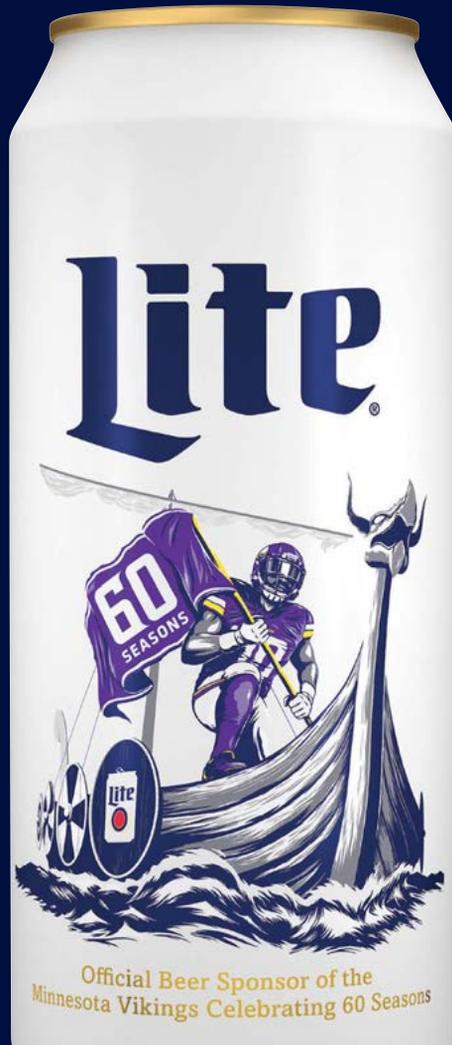


VIKINGS REWIND
PRESENTED BY PENTAIR

TUNE-IN INFO: 6:30-7 P.M. MONDAYS

Vikings Rewind takes listeners through a fast-paced recap of the previous day's game. The program features in-game commentary by "Voice of the Vikings" Paul Allen, analyst Pete Bercich and sideline reporters Ben Leber and Greg Coleman.

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