

SPORTS



CHEERING FOR THE CARDINALS

By Erica Dischino
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Students from Willmar Public Schools had the opportunity to cheer on the Cardinals football team Wednesday before they head for today's Class AAAA state championship game at U.S. Bank Stadium. The team was greeted with

cheers, chants, signs and lots of excitement from their fans at Kennedy, Lakeland and Roosevelt elementary schools and Willmar Middle School.

The Willmar Cardinals football team takes on the SMB (St. Paul Academy/Minnehaha Academy/Blake) Wolfpack in the Prep Bowl finals, set for 4 p.m. today in Minneapolis.



Photos by Erica Dischino / Tribune

TOP: Willmar's Jake Evans, left, and Charlie Farhat, along with the rest of the Willmar football team, are greeted by kindergarten fans Wednesday as they walk through a hallway of Roosevelt Elementary in Willmar.

BOTTOM LEFT: Willmar's Drey Dirksen gives high-fives Wednesday to students at Lakeland Elementary School. Students from Willmar Public Schools had the opportunity to cheer on the Cardinals football team Wednesday before they head to today's state championship game.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Kennedy Elementary students Ashton Setrum, 8, with Jacob Ramos, 8, high five players from the Cardinals football team Wednesday before the team heads to today's state championship game at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

State's best square off

Willmar preps for athletic, undefeated SMB

By Joe Brown
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Willmar football is on the cusp of school history. When the Cardinals walk onto the US Bank Stadium turf at 4 p.m. Friday against undefeated SMB, Willmar will try to win its first ever state football championship.

But you wouldn't know that from seeing practice this week. "It's been like any other week of practice," said Cardinals head coach Jon Konold. "They've gone through the same prep, they know the magnitude and know what's at stake. They've been loose and having fun and have been practicing well."

But the SMB Wolfpack are not like any team Willmar has come across this year.

A co-op between St. Paul Academy, Minnehaha Academy and The Blake School in its fourth year of existence, SMB has gone 35-5 in that time while making its first state



Joe Brown / Tribune

Willmar defensive lineman Carter Ochsendorf chases down Tanner Bauman during practice Tuesday at St. John's University in Collegeville.

appearance this year.

The Wolfpack also boasts some of the best junior athletes in Minnesota. Per 247 Sports, linebacker Kaden Johnson is the top junior recruit in the state while safety/receiver Craig McDonald is ranked sixth.

"SMB's got a lot of talented skill position players," Konold said. "And they're pretty big up front. It's going to be a great challenge."

McDonald in particular is a player Willmar has its eyes on.

STATE: Page B2

CLASS A STATE FOOTBALL



Jake Schultz / Tribune

BOLD head coach Steve Solem talks to his team during halftime of Friday's game against Paynesville at Paynesville High School.

Top dogs BOLD, M/W meet for Class A crown

Warriors and Mahnomen/Waubun ranked No. 1 and No. 2 entire season

By Jake Schultz
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BOLD head coach Steve Solem is one win away from riding off into the sunset like few legends have before him. That last win won't come easy, though.

Mahnomen/Waubun stands in the way of the perfect cap to

Solem's career and the Warriors' strong season. The Thunderbirds will try to play spoiler in the Class A state championship game at 10 a.m. Saturday at U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis.

TOP DOGS: Page B2

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH GATES OPEN AT 6:45 PM | FACEOFF AT 7:30 PM

Rambow
T-shirt Giveaway

#WeAreWillmar

Willmar Warhawks vs Alexandria Blizzard



VS.



Tickets

General: \$10 online or \$11 at the gate

Senior: \$7 online or \$8 at the gate

Student: \$5 online or \$6 at the gate

Season Tickets and VIP seating available. Contact Mike Bowman for more information, 1-814-330-3523 or mbowman@willmarwarhawks.com | www.willmarwarhawks.com

With rise of Bears, Vikings-Packers fighting simply to stay in NFC North race

By Chris Tomasson
St. Paul Pioneer Press

EAGAN, Minn. — After the Vikings and Packers tied 29-29 in Week 2 at Lambeau Field, talk turned to the Week 12 rematch that many figured would decide the NFC North.

After all, the two teams have combined to win the past seven division titles and there was no reason to believe that another team would be in the race.

But a lot has changed the past couple of months. The Chicago Bears (8-3) have taken over the division lead, and Sunday night's rematch at U.S. Bank Stadium between the Vikings (5-4-1) and Packers (4-5-1) has become almost an elimination game in the division race.

"I definitely didn't expect to be sitting where we're sitting, but our record is what it is," Green Bay quarterback Aaron

Rodgers said. "Obviously, Minnesota has a strong team. They're probably surprised where they're sitting as well. So I don't think either of us is out of the division race."

The Vikings lost a key game 25-20 at Chicago last week. The Bears, who beat the Lions 23-16 on Thursday in Detroit, have a much easier schedule to close the season than Minnesota.

"You get what you earn," Vikings running back Latavius Murray said. "We've earned our record. Green Bay has earned theirs, and the Bears have earned theirs, so you can't be surprised (by the division standings). You've got to respect what every team has done, and so I just know we can be a lot better."

The Sunday, Nov. 25, game is decisive for both teams. The winner will claim the season tie-breaker and be in second

place in the NFC North.

"It's an important game," said Packers coach Mike McCarthy. "I clearly understand everything that goes into this."

Both teams struggled after that Week 2 overtime game played in 80-degree heat. The Vikings dropped two straight, and the Packers lost two of their next three.

"The length of the game ... really affected our team probably the next couple weeks just because we had a number of injuries come at us the following week or two and I think that game played into it because we played a lot of football that day and it was hot," McCarthy said.

The Packers played that day with a hobbled Rodgers. He suffered a sprained left knee in Week 1 against the Bears, although he was able to lead a dramatic comeback win.

"I feel a lot more mobile



Jeff Hanisch / USA TODAY Sports
Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Stefon Diggs (14) rushes with the football after catching a pass during overtime against the Green Bay Packers at Lambeau Field on Sept. 16.

(now)," Rodgers said. "Obviously, I'm not wearing the brace anymore. I was in the shotgun or pistol the majority of that game, I think just about all that game, so it's nice to be able to move around like I'm accustomed to."

Rodgers completed 30 of 42 passes for 281 yards and a touchdown in his duel with Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins, who completed 35 of 48 passes

for season-high totals of 425 yards and four touchdowns.

Asked about Rodgers regaining his mobility, Vikings coach Mike Zimmer cracked, "He looks like his old self, unfortunately."

Still, the Packers are 0-5 on the road. Their schedule has been brutal. Three of the road losses were to division leaders New England, Washington and the Los Ange-

les Rams and one was at Seattle.

The Vikings also have lost on the road against the Rams. And following Sunday's game, they have consecutive games at New England and Seattle.

"This is playoff season for us," the Vikings' Sheldon Richardson said. "That's how you've got to approach it. From here on out, it's playoff season until we can't play any more."

Wild shuffle lines with brawny Jets coming to town

By Brian Murphy
St. Paul Pioneer Press

ST. PAUL — Thursday morning brought the Wild together for a brief practice at Xcel Energy Center before players scattered for Thanksgiving,

Coach Bruce Boudreau shuffled his line combinations in advance of Minnesota's first game against Winnipeg, at 3 p.m. Friday at Xcel Energy Center, since the Jets blew the Wild out of the 2018 postseason.

His top line remained intact with Eric Staal centering Jason Zucker and Mikael Granlund. But right wing Nino Niederreiter was demoted to the fourth line while Charlie Coyle was elevated to the second unit with Mikko Koivu and Zach Parise.

Marcus Foligno also moved up to left wing with Jonathan Eriksson Ek and Jordan Greenway. Niederreiter found himself sharing left wing



Brace Hemmelgarn / USA TODAY Sports
Minnesota Wild forward Charlie Coyle (3) shoots during the second period against the Vancouver Canucks at Xcel Energy Center on Nov. 15. Coyle has been elevated to the second unit with Mikko Koivu and Zach Parise.

with reserve Matt Hendricks alongside Eric Fehr and J.T. Brown.

Niederreiter finished minus-3 with no shots in Minnesota's 6-4 victory

Wednesday night over the Ottawa Senators. The Wild narrowly escaped

with the win after Ottawa rallied for three goals in the third period to tie the game 4-4.

"The second period I thought once it got to three-nothing, it was like pond hockey, run and gun," Boudreau said after the game. "And we talked about it between periods, so I thought the guys played, or tried to play, the right way. But once they made it 4-2 and then that goal that made it 4-3, I knew we were going to be on our heels."

Staal netted the game-winner with six minutes remaining, his second goal of the game, to relieve the pressure.

"It was big to turn it back in our favor, gut it out and get the job done," Staal said. "That's all you're after."

Meanwhile, the Jets come to town in the middle of a four-game road trip having lost 6-3 Wednesday at Calgary.

The Wild (28) are two points ahead of Winnipeg (26) behind Central Division-leading Nashville (33 points).

The Wild's first game against the Jets since being eliminated by Winnipeg in five games of their first-round series last season is a Friday matinee at the X. Winnipeg outscored Minnesota 16-9 in that series, including shutouts in Games 4 and 5.

Not much has changed with the Jets, who are big, fast and lethal in transition.

"It can be a frustrating game against them if you keep allowing yourself to get stopped in the neutral zone," Parise said. "If we can get in with possession, that'll be the best thing. Otherwise, remember to keep getting it behind their defense to make them go the whole length of the ice."

Double teams should mean 'easy offense,' yet Towns, Wolves struggle with them

By Jace Frederick
St. Paul Pioneer Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Timberwolves' offense was rolling in the first half of Wednesday's loss to Denver.

Minnesota had 56 points on 55 percent shooting. Its star player, Karl-Anthony Towns, had 13 points, 11 in the second quarter. Shots were falling, points were coming easy and everyone was rolling.

Then Denver adjusted. Over the first 24 minutes, the Nuggets largely covered Towns with just one defender in the post. Coach Tom Thibodeau knew a change was coming. At the break, he told Towns to prepare for Denver double-teaming Minnesota's all-star center.

And that's exactly what happened. Though the Wolves knew what was coming, they couldn't adapt to it. Their offense in the third quarter was stymied. Minnesota

scored just 18 points on 26 percent shooting. The team committed seven turnovers in the quarter — four of which belonged to Towns — as Denver flipped a six-point halftime deficit into an 11-point advantage.

"They went to the double team," Thibodeau said. "That was a problem."

It shouldn't be. Towns is in his fourth NBA season, and the all-star has been a dominant offensive force for the bulk of that time. Extra defensive attention isn't anything new to him. Yet it continues to give him problems.

In the five games since Minnesota traded Jimmy Butler to Philadelphia, Towns has committed 28 turnovers — 5.6 per game. For the season, Towns is averaging 3.7 turnovers a game. His previous career high was 2.6.

Thibodeau said "it should be easy offense" for Minnesota when



Brad Rempel / USA TODAY Sports
Minnesota Timberwolves center Karl-Anthony Towns (32) and Denver Nuggets forward Juan Hernangomez (41) get tangled in the fourth quarter at Target Center on Wednesday, Nov. 21.

opponents double team Towns. When a defense dedicates two players to cover one, someone on offense should get an open shot.

"When the second defender comes, part of the responsibility of being a primary scorer is getting off the ball quick, hitting the first open man," Thibodeau said. "And when we do that,

the offense is easy. You want two on the ball. ... So the responsibility of those players is to make the right play, and we've got to do better."

Towns seems to understand that. He was adamant he knew the double was coming Wednesday, adding he's "just trying to make plays." It seems as though he has hesitated at times when doubled,

which has led him into trouble.

"I was getting ready to look for the pass," Towns said. "I just wasn't doing what I needed to do."

Maybe there's more his teammates can do to help him. Robert Covington said spacing is key when the opponent doubles the post. He said whoever's man is going to double Towns has to make him-

self available as an easy outlet.

Covington said the high man at the top of the play has to flash to the weak side, and someone has to cut to open the weak side up. That activity and spacing should give Towns more options for where to go with the ball.

"Just got to read," Covington said, "and we've got to react."

Jackson's pick-six lifts Bears over Lions

Field Level Media

DETROIT — Eddie Jackson returned an interception 41 yards for the go-ahead touchdown with six minutes remaining, and the Chicago Bears held on for a 23-16 Thanksgiving Day victory over the host Detroit Lions.

Chicago quarterback Chase Daniel, who hadn't started a game since Dec. 28, 2014, when he played for Kansas City, completed 27 of 37 passes for 230 yards and two scores. Daniel filled in for Mitchell Trubisky, who missed the game with a shoulder injury but is reportedly expected back in Week 13.

Tarik Cohen caught seven passes for 45 yards and a touchdown for the Bears (8-3), who won their fifth straight.

Matthew Stafford completed 28 of 38 passes for 236 yards for Detroit

(4-7) but threw two key fourth-quarter interceptions.

The Lions were missing two key offensive players, as running back Kerryon Johnson and receiver Marvin Jones sat out with knee injuries.

Stafford's 43-yard pass to Kenny Golladay set up LeGarrette Blount's second 4-yard touchdown run of the game, giving Detroit a 13-9 lead with 1:35 left in the third quarter. The Lions' 2-point conversion attempt failed.

The Bears regained the lead with 13:40 remaining on Daniel's 14-yard pass to Cohen, capping an 82-yard drive. Detroit tied it with 7:44 left on Matt Prater's 20-yard field goal.

The Lions then forced a punt, but on the next snap, Jackson stepped in front of tight end Michael Roberts and sauntered 41

yards into the end zone to give the Bears a 23-16 advantage with six minutes left.

Stafford responded by driving the Lions 64 yards into the red zone, but he was intercepted by Kyle Fuller's in the end zone with 1:07 left. Detroit still had three timeouts remaining, but Cohen's 10-yard carry on third-and-9 let the Bears run out the clock.

Chicago led 9-7 at halftime.

Detroit created the first good opportunity of the game when cornerback DeShawn Shead forced a fumble against tight end Trey Burton, and linebacker Jarrod Davis returned it 20 yards to the Chicago 40.

The Lions methodically drove for nine plays and finished off the drive on Blount's 4-yard run.

Chicago got on the



Tim Fuller / USA TODAY Sports

Detroit Lions running back LeGarrette Blount (29) runs for a touchdown during the third quarter against the Chicago Bears at Ford Field on Thursday, Nov. 22.

board on Cody Parkey's 40-yard field goal. The Bears moved ahead in the final minute of the half on Daniel's 10-yard strike to Taquan Mizzell. Chicago tried a 2-point conversation, but Daniel's pass was incomplete.

Cooper, Cowboys run away from Redskins

Field Level Media

DALLAS — Dak Prescott threw for a season-high 289 yards with two long scoring passes to Amari Cooper, and the Dallas Cowboys celebrated Thanksgiving by working their way into a tie for first place in the NFC East with a 31-23 win over the Washington Redskins on Thursday, Nov. 22, in Arlington, Texas.

Prescott and Cooper connected for touchdowns on back-to-back drives in the third quarter — scores of 40 and 90 yards — to blow the game open for the Cowboys (6-5).

Trailing 31-20 in the

fourth quarter, the Redskins (6-5) stuffed Ezekiel Elliott on a fourth-and-inches try with 5:27 left to get the ball back at their own 32. However, safety Antwaun Woods came up with the Cowboys' third interception of Washington quarterback Colt McCoy four plays later.

After another stop, the Redskins drove inside the Cowboys 15 but settled for a 31-yard Dustin Hopkins field goal with 1:13 left in the game.

Cooper had eight catches for 180 yards and the two touchdowns. Prescott, under siege in the first half when he was

sacked four times and hit 10 times, was rarely pressured in the second half. He finished 22 of 31 and rushed six times for 18 yards.

Elliott added 143 total yards, including his 18th career 100-yard rushing game and NFL-best sixth this season.

Dallas went up 24-13 on the 90-yard score on an in-cutting route from left to right. Prescott hit Cooper on the numbers between three Washington defenders. Cooper did the rest, running away from the Redskins' secondary down the left sideline for the final 75 yards.

To further deflate Washington, Demarcus Lawrence intercepted McCoy a few plays later and the avalanche of momentum fell on Dallas' side. Prescott capped the ensuing drive, twice evading a sack — one attempt by Jonathan Allen and the other by Preston Smith — to score on a 5-yard run on a broken play.

Elliott lifted Prescott into the oversized, red Salvation Army kettle behind the end zone to celebrate the TD, and the Cowboys led 31-13.

McCoy was intercepted three times and sacked three times. He completed

24 of 38 passes for 268 yards in his first week as starter since Alex Smith sustained a broken leg.

Running back Kapri Bibbs punched in a 1-yard touchdown over center with 11:43 left in the game, and the Redskins opted for an extra point to trail 31-20.

The Cowboys reclaimed the lead midway through the third quarter on a third-and-2 play-action pass from Prescott to Cooper, who made his third third-down reception of the game and sprinted 40 yards to paydirt. Dallas went up 17-13 on the score.

Washington claimed

its first lead with 9:02 left in the third quarter. McCoy threw a 10-yard TD pass to slot receiver Trey Quinn, who set up to score with a 30-yard punt return.

Elliott gave the Cowboys a 7-0 lead by capping the opening drive of the game with a 16-yard touchdown run. After depositing six on the scoreboard, Elliott stuffed \$21 — matching his uniform number — in the kettle.

Vernon Davis pulled the Redskins even at 7, hauling in a 53-yard touchdown pass from McCoy with 7:04 left in the second quarter.

SCOREBOARD

FOOTBALL

NFL American Football Conference					
East					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	7	3	0	.700	280 236
Miami	5	5	0	.500	199 256
N.Y. Jets	3	7	0	.300	208 254
Buffalo	3	7	0	.300	137 251
South					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Houston	7	3	0	.700	239 205
Indianapolis	5	5	0	.500	298 249
Tennessee	5	5	0	.500	178 189
Jacksonville	3	7	0	.300	176 219
North					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Pittsburgh	7	2	1	.750	299 225
Baltimore	5	5	0	.500	237 181
Cincinnati	5	5	0	.500	256 312
Cleveland	3	6	1	.350	218 263
West					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Kansas City	9	2	0	.818	404 294
L.A. Chargers	7	3	0	.700	262 209
Denver	4	6	0	.400	228 235
Oakland	2	8	0	.200	170 293
National Football Conference					
East					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Dallas	6	5	0	.545	234 213
Washington	6	5	0	.545	220 229
Philadelphia	4	6	0	.400	205 231
N.Y. Giants	3	7	0	.300	215 263
South					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New Orleans	9	1	0	.900	378 239
Carolina	6	4	0	.600	260 252
Atlanta	4	6	0	.400	263 276
Tampa Bay	3	7	0	.300	267 329
North					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Chicago	8	3	0	.727	317 211
Minnesota	5	4	1	.550	241 229
Green Bay	4	5	1	.450	247 243
Detroit	4	7	0	.364	238 286
West					
W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
L.A. Rams	10	1	0	.909	389 282
Seattle	5	5	0	.500	246 216
San Francisco	2	8	0	.200	230 266
Arizona	2	8	0	.200	145 248
Week 12					
Thursday's Games					
Chicago 23, Detroit 16					
Dallas 31, Washington 23					
Atlanta at New Orleans, 7:20 p.m.					
Sunday's Games					
N.Y. Giants at Philadelphia, 12 p.m.					
New England at N.Y. Jets, 12 p.m.					
Cleveland at Cincinnati, 12 p.m.					
Seattle at Carolina, 12 p.m.					
Jacksonville at Buffalo, 12 p.m.					
San Francisco at Tampa Bay, 12 p.m.					
Oakland at Baltimore, 12 p.m.					
Arizona at L.A. Chargers, 3:05 p.m.					
Miami at Indianapolis, 3:25 p.m.					
Pittsburgh at Denver, 3:25 p.m.					
Green Bay at Minnesota, 7:20 p.m.					
Monday's Games					
Tennessee at Houston, 7:15 p.m.					
Week 13					
Thursday's Games					
New Orleans at Dallas, 7:20 p.m.					
Sunday's Games					
Baltimore at Atlanta, 12 p.m.					
Denver at Cincinnati, 12 p.m.					
Carolina at Tampa Bay, 12 p.m.					
Chicago at N.Y. Giants, 12 p.m.					
Buffalo at Miami, 12 p.m.					
L.A. Rams at Detroit, 12 p.m.					
Arizona at Green Bay, 12 p.m.					
Cleveland at Houston, 12 p.m.					
Indianapolis at Jacksonville, 12 p.m.					
N.Y. Jets at Tennessee, 3:05 p.m.					
Kansas City at Oakland, 3:05 p.m.					
Minnesota at New England, 3:25 p.m.					
San Francisco at Seattle, 3:25 p.m.					
L.A. Chargers at Pittsburgh, 7:20 p.m.					
Monday's Games					
Washington at Philadelphia, 7:15 p.m.					
Thursday's results					
Chicago 23 Detroit 16					
Chicago	0	9	0	14—	23
Detroit	0	7	6	3—	16
Second Quarter					
DET—Blount 4 yard rush (Prater kick), 9:03.					
CHI—Parkey 40 yard field goal, 3:58.					
CHI—Mizzell 10 yard pass from C.Daniel (Robinson II pass from C.Daniel - failed), 0:40.					
Third Quarter					
DET—Blount 4 yard rush (Golladay pass from Stafford - failed), 1:35.					
Fourth Quarter					
CHI—Cohen 14 yard pass from C.Daniel (Parkey kick), 13:40.					
DET—Prater 20 yard field goal, 7:44.					

HUI—E.Jackson 41 yard interception return (Parkey kick), 6:00.
 A—65,684.

TEAM STATISTICS			
	CHI	DET	
First Downs	19	17	
Total Net Yards	264	333	
Rushes—Yds	15-38	24-111	
Passing	226	222	
Sacked—Yds Lost	4-12	2-14	
Comp-Att-Int	28-38-0	28-38-2	
Punts	5-47.0	5-45.4	
Punt Returns	4-46	3-25	
Kickoff Returns	1-17	0-0	
Interceptions Ret.	2-41	0-0	
Penalties—Yards	3-20	5-54	
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	0-0	
Time of Possession	27:14	32:46	

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
RUSHING— CHI, Cohen 3-14, J.Howard 7-13, Mizzell 1-7, C.Daniel 4-4. DET, Blount 19-88, Riddick 2-12, Zenner 2-9, Ellington 1-4.
PASSING— CHI, C.Daniel 27-37-0-230, A.Miller 1-1-0-8. DET, Stafford 28-38-2-236.
RECEIVING— CHI, Gabriel 7-49, Cohen 7-45, T.Burton 4-28, A.Miller 3-41, Robinson II 2-37, Mizzell 2-21, C.Daniel 1-8, Bellamy 1-7, J.Howard 1-2. DET, Riddick 7-48, Ellington 6-28, Golladay 5-90, M.Roberts 3-16, Bellore 2-12, Blount 1-15, T.J.Jones 1-15, An.Jones 1-4, Zenner 1-14, Willson 1-4.
MISSED FIELD GOALS— CHI, None. DET, None

Dallas 31 Washington 23			
Washington	0	7	610— 23
Dallas	7	3	14 7— 31
First Quarter			
DAL—E.Elliott 16 yard rush (Maher kick), 10:02.			
Second Quarter			
WAS—V.Davis 53 yard pass from C.McCoy (Du.Hopkins kick), 7:04.			
DAL—Maher 28 yard field goal, 1:28.			
Third Quarter			
WAS—T.Quinn 10 yard pass from C.McCoy(-kick failed), 9:02.			
DAL—A.Cooper 40 yard pass from Prescott (Maher kick), 6:47.			
DAL—A.Cooper 90 yard pass from Prescott (Maher kick), 2:10.			
Fourth Quarter			
DAL—Prescott 5 yard rush (Maher kick), 14:11.			
WAS—Bibbs 1 yard rush (Du.Hopkins kick), 11:43.			
WAS—Du.Hopkins 31 yard field goal, 1:13.			
A—92,076.			

TEAM STATISTICS			
	WAS	DAL	
First Downs	18	20	
Total Net Yards	331	404	
Rushes-Yds	20-80	34-146	
Passing	251	258	
Sacked-Yds Lost	3-17	4-31	
Comp-Att-Int	24-38-3	22-31-0	
Punts	5-45.6	6-47.8	
Punt Returns	2-40	0-0	
Kickoff Returns	1-44	1-19	
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	3-14	
Penalties-Yards	4-25	4-30	
Fumbles-Lost	2-0	1-0	
Time of Possession	26:37	33:23	

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
RUSHING— WAS, A.Peterson 12-35, C.McCoy 5-28, Bibbs 3-17, DAL, E.Elliott 26-121, Prescott 6-18, Rd.Smith 2-7.
PASSING— WAS, C.McCoy 24-38-3-268. DAL, Prescott 22-31-0-289.
RECEIVING— WAS, Jo.Reed 6-75, Doctson 6-66, T.Quinn 5-26, Bibbs 3-19, V.Davis 2-73, A.Peterson 2-9. DAL, A.Cooper 8-180, E.Elliott 5-22, Jarvin 2-25, Gallup 2-19, N.Brown 1-22, Olawale 1-10, Hurms 1-7, Beasley 1-5, Schultz 1-(minus 1).
MISSED FIELD GOALS— WAS, None. DAL, None

HOCKEY

NHL									
Eastern Conference									
Atlantic Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	S	GF	GA		
Tampa Bay	22	15	6	1	0	31	83	64	
Toronto	22	15	7	0	0	30	76	58	
Buffalo	22	14	6	2	0	30	70	62	
Boston	21	11	6	4	0	26	60	52	
Montreal	22	11	7	4	0	26	72	75	
Detroit	21	10	9	1	1	22	60	67	
Ottawa	22	9	10	3	0	21	73	94	
Florida	19	8	8	1	2	19	69	69	
Metropolitan Division									
	GP	W	L	OT	S	GF	GA		
Columbus	21	12	7	1	1	26	71	67	
NY Rangers	22	12	8	2	0	26	68	65	
Washington	21	11	7	2	1	25	72	69	
Carolina	21	10	8	2	1	23	58	61	

JENNA

From Page A1

But in January 2018, Jenna was again diagnosed with a brain tumor. In July, there was significant tumor growth that was too aggressive for chemo or surgery. Jenna was put in hospice care.

Taggart remembers the calamity around the house in those final days.

“There was a lot of nurses staying at our house. Both my aunts are nurses and RNs, so they stayed overnight for six, seven days until (Jenna) passed,” Taggart said. “We had family there every day. There was not a lot of privacy. We woke up every day and there’s people at our house, people coming to visit, people bringing food. Sometimes it was really overwhelming, especially when people started coming in and started talking to you.”

In a dour situation, Jenna didn’t want her family dwelling over her in those final days.

“She basically told us: ‘Why waste these last few days with her?’” Taggart said. “Have fun, make the best of it. She shouldn’t bring us down; she should be inspiring us.”

Jenna died on July 18, at 13 years old, leaving behind her parents, Troy and Brenda, her twin sister, Jorja, and her older brother.

“I think the family felt a sense of calm when she passed because she had been suffering a lot,” said Willmar head football coach Jon Konold. “They had that closure.”

Around the time of Jenna’s death, Willmar had its football camp, and Taggart had an



Photos by Joe Brown / Tribune
As a sophomore, Taggart Reynolds has made an impact as the center on the Willmar offensive line.

outlet for his sorrow.

Getting it out

Being around the guys helped ease Taggart’s pain. Along with his mom’s cancer battle, sports have proven to be Taggart’s catharsis in crisis.

“I use my sports to go get it all out,” said Taggart, who also wrestles and throws shot put and discus on the track team. “Get my anger out. Get my questioning out. Just let it out and play harder. That’s what I use for my inspiration. It’s going to be tough after the season ends. But as soon as wrestling starts, I’m better.”

Konold added, “He wants to be around the guys. He wants to make

sure he’s staying busy and I think that helps him.”

The center for the Cardinals’ offense, Taggart has shown poise uncommon for a sophomore.

“He’s got a lot of leadership qualities. He’s only a sophomore, but he’s the most vocal kid on the line,” Konold said. “He also plays a little nasty, and he’s brought that to the table. He and Andrew Reigstad have that nasty streak to them and the other guys have bought into that and developed into doing those things as well.”

Through Taggart and the team’s success, sports have also provided a getaway for the rest of the family.

“It gives us something



Willmar’s Taggart Reynolds, right, puts a block on a Becker defender during a regular-season game on Oct. 12 at Hodapp Field.

“

Taggart’s a kid that has a good head on his shoulders. He also has a good support system and I can’t say that enough. Coaches, kids, teachers, they look out for him when we can’t. He’s really taken all this and turned it into a way to better himself.

BRENDA REYNOLDS

to look forward to every week,” Brenda said. “It’s pulled family and friends together. He’s got a good little cheering section with family. It brings us all together through this time and we keep revisiting each other and staying active, and it’s fun at the same time.”

Taggart’s family is fully invested. They’re talking to him after every game and pointing out every big block he makes while watching a replay of the contest.

After years of watching his mom battle cancer, Taggart knows the therapeutic benefits of his family’s cheers.

“(A) big thing about battling this with my mom is staying happy,” Taggart said. “When you’re happy, your body fights better. The way you fight when you’re not sad or down, you have a will. You keep pushing. And my mom’s fighting as hard as she can.”

A constant reminder

Taggart doesn’t need to look far to find motivation. On the back of every player’s helmet is a tribute, with a sticker with Jenna’s name between a pair of wings.

“We pray before every game. I play for her this season,” Taggart said, showing off the worn sticker on his No. 59 helmet. “I dedicated my season to her, to play harder and play my best for her.”

Brenda said one of the other sophomores on the team, Tyler Ludwig, came up with the sticker memorial.

“(Taggart) said, ‘I’m fine with it as long as it says Jenna or has to do with her and not me,’” Brenda said.

“The day we put them on, I got tears in my eyes,” Taggart said. “But now when I see them, I get happy. I use it as an inspiration and know she’s always with me

during the games and she’s watching over us, keeping us safe from injuries and pushing us through games.”

With Taggart pushing through personal pain, Willmar got back to state for the first time since 1988, which was the start of Brenda’s senior year at Willmar High School.

“Taggart’s a kid that has a good head on his shoulders,” Brenda said. “He also has a good support system and I can’t say that enough. Coaches, kids, teachers, they look out for him when we can’t. He’s really taken all this and turned it into a way to better himself.”

This afternoon the Cardinals will play in their first state final since 1973, hoping to win the Class AAAA championship for the school’s first football title.

“To be able to support these boys succeeding and putting their heart into this, it’s huge,” Brenda said. “Being able to follow them in a community that has poured their hearts out to support us, it’s been great. Seeing all the boys, especially Taggart, overcoming something like this, dedicating games to (Jenna), it’s just amazing.”

Through it all, Taggart has lived in the moment. Win or lose, Jenna’s inspiration has pushed Taggart to get better. Helping Willmar achieve a first for the school would be the ultimate tribute to his sister.

“I can’t put into words what I would feel,” he said. “It would just be so amazing to get it for her, my mom and the whole family. It would be an awesome feeling to play with the best team Willmar’s had, possibly ever.”

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