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VIKINGS



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STATE OF THE VIKINGS

C.J. Ham's story is one of perseverance, determination and making the most of opportunity. The Duluth native's career trajectory has gone from earning a practice squad spot as a tryout player in 2016, to converting from running back to fullback in 2017 to making his first Pro Bowl this past January. What will be his role in 2020? ▶

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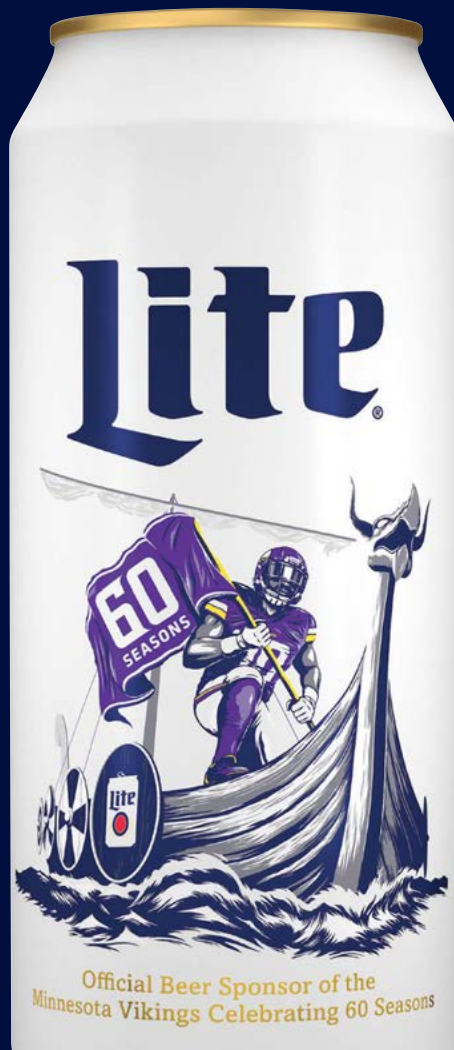
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VIKINGS NAVIGATE COVID-19'S
UNPRECEDENTED ENVIRONMENT

OFFSEASON UNLIKE ANY OTHER

BY CRAIG PETERS

THE ONGOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC canceled all in-person offseason programs for each NFL team, prompted meetings and “walk-throughs” to occur virtually and required interviews with coaches and players to be conducted via video conferences or phone calls.

The acquisition of players, first through veteran free agency, then the draft and finally the recruitment of undrafted free agents, all proceeded thanks to technology, planning sessions and a focus on achieving usual tasks – not easy, but normal – in an unusual environment.

Collaboration remained key for the personnel department, and camera phones helped coaches critique techniques of players who sent in videos of drills.

Normally at this point in the calendar, we’ve seen more than a dozen offseason practices – from rookie minicamp through voluntary

Organized Team Activity practices and a mandatory minicamp – and made multiple observations from those sessions.

Verizon Vikings Training Camp, however, is the first on-field setting for the 2020 Vikings as the team prepares for its 60th season and first without fans attending in Bemidji (1961-65), Mankato (1966-2017) or Eagan at Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center, which opened in March 2018 and has undergone a major transformation because of the pandemic.

Some say the best ability in football is availability, but in 2020, it might be adaptability.

A DIFFERENT WAY TO DRAFT

The in-person spectacle planned in April in Las Vegas, the new home of the Raiders, was a no-go. Instead of a stage in the Bellagio's famed fountain, picks were announced by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell from his basement from April 23-25.

Thanks to the Vikings Football Information Systems and Information Technology departments, General Manager Rick Spielman was able to have a fully functioning re-creation of the Thomson Reuters Draft Room in his basement.

Director of Information Technology Cheryl Nygaard was approved to be on-site just in case there were any glitches, but the three-day event unfolded without a flaw and with a seven-round record of 15 picks by one team.

Even though scouts and coaches were far-flung, Spielman has spoken of a strong togetherness that helped through the unique setup.

"When you sit back and analyze it, I'm most proud of how close everyone became even

though we were all apart," Spielman said.

"We'll have to make sure the players are good because you judge the draft three years later," he also quipped. "But the IT department, every time you threw something in front of them, they were able to come up with ways to make our processes as normal as possible without sitting in a room together."

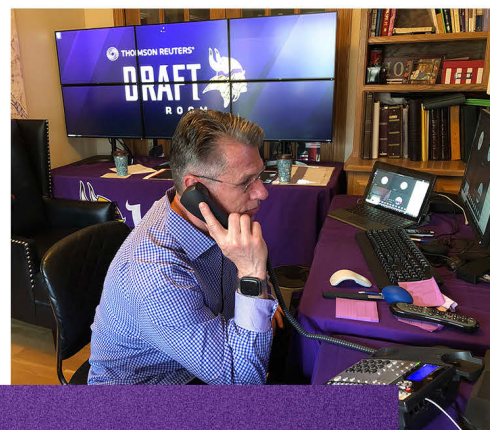
OFFSEASON PROGRAM

In addition to the basements of Goodell and Spielman, viewers also were able to see the decor of Zimmer Ridge Ranch, complete with a custom fireplace screen emblazoned with the logo for Head Coach Mike Zimmer's home in Northern Kentucky, as well as the elk mounted above the mantel.

Zimmer and Co-Defensive Coordinator Adam Zimmer set up shop at the home that has been fully completed since the head coach hosted the Vikings traveling party before a preseason game in 2016.

When they wrapped meetings, the property's 160 acres offered the opportunity to plant corn, maintain habitat for animals and swing some golf clubs on one of four holes that have been built.

Adam took charge of the meat smoker and sometimes provided a helping hand with technology. The evenings involved a whiteboard to draw up some new ideas that might be workshopped during a preseason practice.



VIKINGS RESPOND WITH PURPOSE

The NFL community of players, staff and fans responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in multiple ways. The NFL Draft-A-Thon raised more than \$7 million, helping the collective NFL family donate more than \$100 million for COVID-19 relief (relief.nfl.com).

Vikings Owners Zygi, Mark and Lenny Wilf were involved with the Wilf Family Foundations' efforts that have surpassed \$5 million in donations to COVID-19 relief efforts in Minnesota, New York, New Jersey and other places in the U.S. and world.

Vikings players also stepped forward to help. The following are a few examples:

Adam Thielen partnered with KFAN and iHeart Radio-Minneapolis in April to host a Minnesota COVID Relief Radiathon. Thielen participated in the all-day affair with guest appearances from Kirk Cousins, Kyle Rudolph and C.J. Ham. The virtual event raised more than \$280,000 that included a \$100,000 commitment from the Thielen Foundation to benefit The Salvation Army, Second

Harvest Heartland, M Health Fairview and MN Disaster Recovery Fund for Coronavirus.

It should be no surprise to anyone that Rudolph, a three-time Vikings Community Man of the Year, also stepped forward with "Rudy's Meal Plan" to provide 82,000 meals through Second Harvest Heartland.

Anthony Barr's Raise the Barr foundation provided 34 emergency grants to program recipients, and Eric Kendricks auctioned paintings he created and matched the donations of winning bidders.

Dalvin Cook and Danielle Hunter donated their \$17,000 checks from Madden to North Memorial Health Foundation.

Second-year pro Olisaemeka Udoh, whose parents are medical professionals, delivered food to health care workers in North Carolina, and 2020 first-round pick Justin Jefferson – and his Genies custom-designed avatar – worked with Bella + Canvas for a donation of 10,000 masks to Children's Minnesota.



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TCO PERFORMANCE CENTER RECEIVES MAKEOVER FOR 2020



BY CRAIG PETERS

Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center underwent a thorough retrofit and reorganization when prepping to host its third Verizon Vikings Training Camp.

Vikings Vice President of Sports Medicine Eric Sugarman, who is the team's Infection Control Officer, and General Manager Rick Spielman guided journalist Peter King throughout the facility in July. Sugarman also participated in a video conference with local media members to describe the changes in and out of the building during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NOTABLE CHANGES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- The parking spot reserved for Mike Zimmer's King Ranch F-150 has given way to a flag stand for BioReference Laboratories, the NFL's testing partner, and the low end of a ramp from the trailer.
- Players, coaches and staff will complete a pre-screening questionnaire before entering, must undergo a thermal scan once inside and wear a mask while in the building. The scanning feature will not work unless a mask is in place. Entrants also will receive a device to wear throughout the day to trace contacts within the building.
- Sofas have been removed from a locker room lounge area to prevent congregating and create more room for additional lockers needed to provide at least six feet of space between occupied lockers.
- Max capacities have been set for the weight room, meeting rooms, auditorium, hydrotherapy area and cafeteria. Players will be able to order their lunch selections each morning to allow for an optional grab-and-go service.



HYDROTHERAPY

Markers have been placed to help with social distancing in therapy pools.

LOCKER ROOM

Lockers have been spaced inside TCO Performance Center.





SOCIALLY DISTANT DINING

Chairs have been removed from tables at TCO Performance Center, leaving one seat per table.

- ▼ *Markers have been placed to help control traffic and maintain social-distancing guidelines in the cafeteria.*



EQUIPMENT

Oakley has designed an optional extension for the face shield.



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LOOKING

SHARPE

TAJAÉ SHARPE JOINS THE VIKINGS

BY ERIC SMITH

As Tajaé Sharpe prepared to enter free agency for the first time in his young career, the wide receiver made a checklist of sorts of what he was looking for in a team.

The 2016 fifth-round pick of the Titans wanted to land with a strong organization that featured a veteran quarterback and respected offensive play-caller, plus an opportunity to contribute right away.

Minnesota certainly checked those boxes.

Vikings Offensive Coordinator Gary Kubiak has four Super Bowl wins on his resumé. Kirk Cousins is accurate and can deliver the deep ball, and the Vikings have opportunities at receiver after trading Stefon Diggs in March, even though the trade haul included a pick used on another receiver, first-rounder Justin Jefferson.

"With Coach Kubiak running the offense and the success he's had in the league all these years, I feel like this is the best spot for me to be to take my game to the next level," Sharpe said.

He described Cousins as "the best deep-ball thrower in the league last year" and

complimented the veteran's leadership.

"I think he does a great job of being a leader for this team and does a great job of delivering the football," Sharpe said. "He's not scared to stand back there in the pocket and take a hit while delivering the football. He does a great job of being accurate down the field."

Sharpe said Cousins and Thielen reached out to him shortly after he signed, and the group was able to get together for a throwing-and-catching session away from the Vikings facility this offseason.

The 25-year-old Sharpe is coming off one of his best seasons as a pro. He caught a career-high four touchdowns on 25 receptions for 329 yards in 15 regular-season games with the Titans in 2019.

The former UMass standout made his NFL debut against the Vikings back in Week 1 of the 2016 season when he caught seven passes for 76 yards in a 25-16 Minnesota win. Sharpe's seven catches are tied for his current career best, and his 76 yards are his second-most in a single game.

"I remember being a little bit nervous the night before, not knowing what to expect," Sharpe said. "But some of the veteran guys were telling me the speed of the game picks up a little bit from the preseason to the regular season."

"Just regular rookie nerves, but once I got out there, I realized it's all football," Sharpe added. "You may be playing at a higher level with new guys on your team, but it's just football at the end of the day."

Sharpe has 92 career catches for 1,167 yards with eight touchdowns (three scores of 30-plus yards) in three seasons. He missed the 2017 season with a foot injury.

Sharpe admitted his first foray into free agency was a little different than he expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented in-person meetings.

"I kind of didn't know what to expect, but honestly it was exciting just to get a new opportunity to go somewhere else and showcase your talent to different fans and in a different city," Sharpe said.

ROOKIE ROUNDUP

BY ERIC SMITH, LINDSEY YOUNG
AND CRAIG PETERS

EVEN THOUGH VIKINGS GENERAL
MANAGER RICK SPIELMAN WAS
WORKING FROM HOME, MINNESOTA
SET A SEVEN-ROUND NFL DRAFT
RECORD WITH 15 SELECTIONS.



JUSTIN JEFFERSON WR

1ST ROUND (22ND OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-1 | WEIGHT: 202
COLLEGE: LSU

The Prospect: Jefferson is the third of three brothers who played collegiately at LSU. He also is the holder of the school's single-season receptions record after posting 111 in 2019 on the way to totaling 1,540 yards and 18 touchdowns in helping the Tigers go 15-0 and win the CFP National Championship. His biggest performance occurred in the CFP National Semifinal when he caught 14 passes for 227 yards and four scores against the Oklahoma Sooners.

2020 Vision: After playing on the outside in 2018, Jefferson did the brunt of his damage from the slot for the Tigers in 2019, and that's where the Vikings are likely to begin his work. Jefferson picked up the position that he had never played and delivered a high level of consistency, catching at least five passes in 13 of LSU's 15 contests.

GM's Take: "Great route runner, great hands, big-time playmaker. The type of offense we run, his skill set fits us perfectly."



JEFF GLADNEY CB

1ST ROUND (31ST OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 5-10 | WEIGHT: 191
COLLEGE: TCU

The Prospect: Gladney started 42 of the 50 games he played for the Horned Frogs. Gladney tied for second in the conference with 15 passes defensed, including a conference-best 14 pass breakups, which was also the eighth-most nationally in 2019. Gladney was rated No. 1 in the Big 12 by analytics site Pro Football Focus with an allowed passer rating of 46.9 (minimum of 200 coverage snaps) as a junior in 2018.

2020 Vision: Gladney primarily played on the outside in college, where he shadowed larger receivers in different types of coverage. But with Mackensie Alexander gone as the primary slot cornerback, Mike Hughes could see playing time there. So, too, could Gladney, according to Spielman.

GM's Take: "There are specific traits you

have to have to play corner in this defense. Gladney fit every single trait we were looking for from a physical standpoint."



EZRA CLEVELAND T

2ND ROUND (58TH OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-6 | WEIGHT: 311
COLLEGE: BOISE STATE

The Prospect: Cleveland started all 13 games at left tackle for Boise State in 2019 and was named a First-Team All-Mountain West selection for the second consecutive year. He started all 40 games in three seasons with the Broncos and is excited to reunite with Alexander Mattison.

2020 Vision: It remains to be seen if Cleveland will earn the starting left tackle job, which could push veteran Riley Reiff inside to guard. Spielman noted that Cleveland could also begin his career at guard before moving to the outside. He has experience in a zone-blocking scheme and athleticism that should transfer to the NFL in a similar system.

GM's Take: "He's long, he's athletic, reminded us a lot of Brian O'Neill when we took him in almost the same spot in the second round [in 2018]."



CAMERON DANTZLER CB

3RD ROUND (89TH OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-2 | WEIGHT: 188
COLLEGE: MISSISSIPPI STATE

The Prospect: Dantzler was ranked as the No. 9 cornerback in this year's class by Pro Football Focus. He allowed a passer rating of just 57.0 last season, which ranked fourth among FBS cornerbacks, and led Mississippi State with 10 passes defended in 2019. Dantzler made 22 starts in 25 career games.

2020 Vision: Nicknamed "The Needle" for his long and lean frame, Dantzler projects to be an outside corner where the Vikings are reloading the roster.

GM's Take: "A big, tall, corner that is very athletic for his size ... and his length really helps him down the field, as well."



D.J. WONNUM DE

4TH ROUND (117TH OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-5 | WEIGHT: 258
COLLEGE: SOUTH CAROLINA

The Prospect: Wonnum started 30 of 43 games played at South Carolina and served as a team captain in 2019. He was named the Gamecocks 2019 Comeback Player of the Year after being limited to just five contests in 2018.

2020 Vision: Co-Defensive Coordinator/ Defensive Line Coach Andre Patterson said he looks forward to working with Wonnum because of his athleticism and intelligence; he mentioned similarities to Stephen Weatherly, a 2016 pick who signed with Carolina this offseason, but said he wants the new pick to be the best "D.J. Wonnum that he can be."

GM's Take: "D.J. fit us from an athletic trait standpoint. He was one of Andre Patterson's 'cats,' as I call them, a guy that he really wanted to get his hands on and work with."



TROY DYE LB

4TH ROUND (132ND OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-3 | WEIGHT: 231
COLLEGE: OREGON

The Prospect: The only Oregon Duck to lead the team in tackles in four consecutive seasons, Dye showed toughness and determination in closing his college career. After suffering a broken thumb on his right hand at Washington (Oct. 19, 2019), Dye missed the following week but played the final six games of the season with a protective club on his hand. He also battled through a meniscus tear that went undiagnosed until after the season.

2020 Vision: Dye might be considered small by some folks' standards for linebackers, but the Vikings view him as built for the modern NFL in which Eric Kendricks (6-foot, 232 pounds) has excelled.

GM's Take: "The most appealing thing to us about Troy was his athleticism and speed, which fits into how the game has changed."

JAMES LYNCH DT

4TH ROUND (130TH OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-4 | WEIGHT: 289
COLLEGE: BAYLOR

The Prospect: In 2019, Lynch led Baylor with 19.5 tackles for loss and 13.5 sacks, ranking in the top 10 nationally in both categories. He added three forced fumbles, five passes broken up and two blocked kicks on the way to earning Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year honors.

2020 Vision: Although Lynch did get some reps at defensive end for Baylor, he primarily played on the interior. He's expected to do the same in Minnesota, where he will most



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HARRISON HAND CB

5TH ROUND (169TH OVERALL)

HEIGHT: 5-11 | WEIGHT: 197

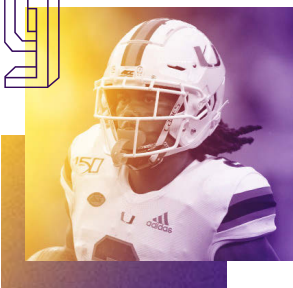
COLLEGE: TEMPLE

The Prospect: Hand began his college career at Baylor but transferred to Temple for his final college season. He recorded 59 tackles (4.0 for loss) and three interceptions for the Owls in 2019.

2020 Vision: Hand could vie for playing time at either cornerback spot and is also expected to contribute on special teams. He could follow a similar path of Kris Boyd, a 2019 seventh-round pick who led the Vikings in special teams tackles as a rookie.

GM's Take: "We need to continue to build depth in the secondary; he'll come in and compete. Also, I know what he can do and contribute on special teams."

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K.J. OSBORN WR

5TH ROUND (176TH OVERALL)

HEIGHT: 5-11 | WEIGHT: 203

COLLEGE: MIAMI

The Prospect: In 2019, Osborn transferred to Miami from Buffalo and led the Hurricanes with 50 receptions, 547 yards and five touchdowns.

2020 Vision: Special teams might be Osborn's introduction to the NFL. He finished his college career with an average of 12.1 yards per return (594 yards on 49 returns), highlighted by his whopping 15.9 yards per return (255 on 16) at Miami.

GM's Take: "We think he has a legitimate [shot at] winning the punt return and the kick return job with his explosive speed and power."

10



BLAKE BRANDEL T

6TH ROUND (203RD OVERALL)

HEIGHT: 6-7 | WEIGHT: 307

COLLEGE: OREGON STATE

The Prospect: Brandel started all 48 games for the Beavers, including his final 36 at left tackle and earned All-Pac-12 Second-Team honors, as well as a nation-leading 93.1 pass-blocking grade from Pro Football Focus, in 2019.

2020 Vision: Brandel probably won't be in the mix to start right away, but he could have a shot to make the roster as a depth swing tackle. His 48 consecutive starts in college rank third among Beavers players at any position.

GM's Take: "[He is] tough, smart and physical ... and he can play either tackle or guard."



11



JOSH METELLUS S

6TH ROUND (205TH OVERALL)

HEIGHT: 5-11 | WEIGHT: 209

COLLEGE: MICHIGAN

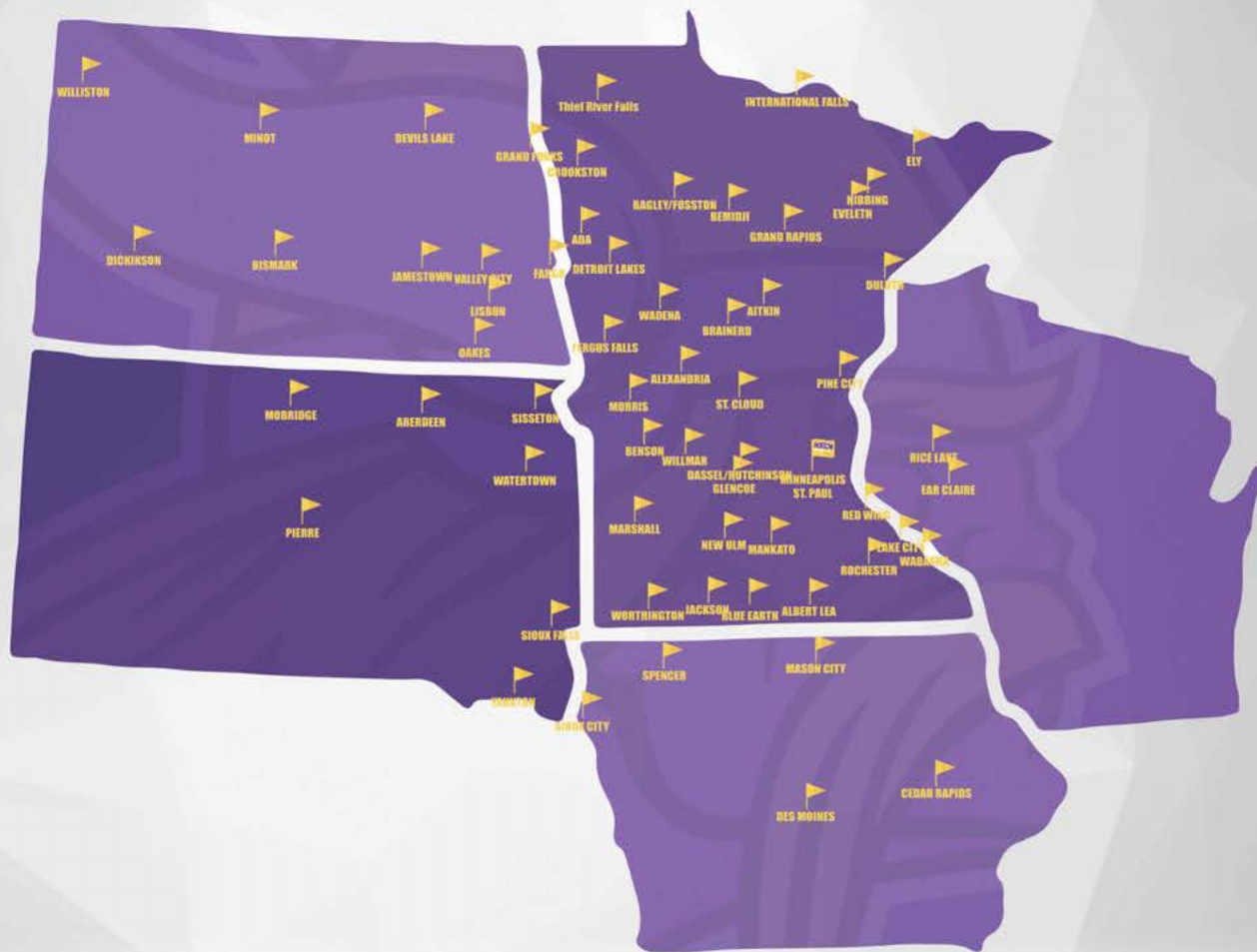
The Prospect: Metellus played in 47 contests and made 37 of his 38 starts at safety for the Wolverines, but he showed the ability to line up at multiple points of the field and make big plays against the pass and the run.

2020 Vision: In a film review for vikings.com, analyst Pete Bercich said Metellus has "tons of potential" and has shown the ability to read and react. Special teams could be Metellus' entry-level role since the Vikings are well-stocked with Harrison Smith and Anthony Harris.

GM's Take: "He's interchangeable from free safety to strong safety ... just a football player."

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KENNY WILLEKES DE

7TH ROUND (225TH OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-3 | WEIGHT: 264
COLLEGE: MICHIGAN STATE

The Prospect: Willekes is the Spartans all-time leader with 51 tackles for loss, and his 26 sacks rank third. In 2019, he was awarded the 2019 Burlsworth Trophy for the nation's best former walk-on at the Division-I level.

2020 Vision: Although he was a seventh-round selection, Patterson said the Vikings actually considered drafting him as early as the fourth, and he could prove to be another hidden gem for Minnesota's defensive line.

GM's Take: "Excellent football player ... he goes a thousand miles an hour. He loves the game and can rush the passer."

The Prospect: Stanley, a native of Menomonie, Wisconsin, was a permanent team captain for Iowa in 2019. He finished his senior campaign 237-of-399 passing for 2,951 yards with 16 touchdowns and seven interceptions, capping his career by going 3-0 as a starter in bowl games.

2020 Vision: Stanley is one of four quarterbacks on the roster and will compete for the gig behind Kirk Cousins. Offensive Coordinator Gary Kubiak spoke highly of the Iowa pedigree that allows players to "catch up to speed very quickly."

GM's Take: "I had an opportunity to see him play live a couple times. He's a big kid that has a strong arm."



KYLE HINTON G

7TH ROUND (253RD OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-2 | WEIGHT: 295
COLLEGE: WASHBURN (D-II)

The Prospect: Hinton played 40 games for the Ichabods, including 34 starts on the offensive line. He was a four-time All-MIAA selection and was a three-time All-American selection.

2020 Vision: Hinton will slide from playing primarily at tackle in college to the interior in the pros.

GM's Take: "He played tackle at a small school ... very athletic and can play center or guard. A great developmental prospect."



BRIAN COLE SS

7TH ROUND (249TH OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-2 | WEIGHT: 213
COLLEGE: MISSISSIPPI STATE

The Prospect: Cole began college as a receiver at Michigan before transitioning to safety in junior college and transferring again to Mississippi State where he started 16 of 17 games and finished with 78 tackles, including 10.5 for loss.

2020 Vision: Bercich said Cole definitely can play in the box but will need to show how well he can do in coverage.

GM's Take: "Another interchangeable guy that has length and athleticism."



NATE STANLEY QB

7TH ROUND (244TH OVERALL)
HEIGHT: 6-4 | WEIGHT: 235
COLLEGE: IOWA

THE VIKINGS SET A LEAGUE RECORD FOR A SEVEN-ROUND NFL DRAFT BY MAKING 15 SELECTIONS. THIS TOPPED THE PREVIOUS MARK OF 14 SET BY THE 1997 DOLPHINS AND EQUALED BY THE 2016 BROWNS. DRAFTS WERE SHORTENED TO SEVEN ROUNDS IN 1994.

ZIMMER SIGNS 3-YEAR EXTENSION



**VIKINGS HEAD COACH MIKE
ZIMMER IS “VERY EXCITED
AND HUMBLLED” BY A THREE-
YEAR CONTRACT EXTENSION
THAT HE SIGNED JULY 24 TO
KEEP HIM UNDER CONTRACT IN
MINNESOTA THROUGH 2023.**

“I feel blessed to be able to continue on with the Minnesota Vikings,” Zimmer said from Twin Cities Orthopedics Performance Center via video conference on July 25. “I’ve had great help with our owners – they’ve given us everything that we’ve ever asked them to do – and great help with the front office, with [General Manager Rick Spielman] and [Executive Vice President of Football Operations Rob Brzezinski] and [Assistant General Manager George Paton].

“Like I told the coaches the other day, being able to sign a long-term extension is because of what they’ve helped me do, specifically with the players ... throughout my time here,” the 64-year-old added.

Zimmer is 57-38-1 through his first six

regular seasons, helping Minnesota rank seventh in wins among NFL teams since 2014. He has led the Vikings to NFC North titles in 2015 and 2017 and an additional appearance in the NFC Playoffs last season.

“We strongly believe in his leadership and the team culture he’s fostered,” Vikings Owner/President Mark Wilf said. “We look forward to him furthering the team’s success of the previous six seasons and leading us to our ultimate goal of bringing a Super Bowl Championship to Minnesota.”

After years as a respected defensive coordinator with the Cowboys (2000-06), Falcons (2007) and Bengals (2008-13), Zimmer received his first opportunity to be a head coach in the NFL on Jan. 15, 2014. He and Houston’s Bill O’Brien are the only two coaches hired that year who remain with their teams, and only six current coaches have been with their teams longer.

“Coach Zimmer brings an intensity and consistency to the field that our players and fans alike appreciate,” Vikings Owner/Chairman Zygi Wilf said. “He holds his players and staff to a high standard and will continue to guide the Vikings to long-term success.”

The Vikings success during this time has been built on dramatic defensive

improvements from a unit that was at the bottom of the league in major categories in 2013.

Zimmer guided Minnesota to top-10 rankings in the NFL in points allowed in each of the past five seasons. The Vikings also were in the top 10 in yards allowed from 2016-18.

The 2017 squad finished 13-3 for the second-most wins in a regular season in franchise history and led the NFL in scoring defense (15.8 points by opponents per game) and total defense (275.9 yards by opponents per game).

Zimmer’s four winning seasons are tied with Jerry Burns for the third-most by a Vikings coach and trail Bud Grant (12) and Dennis Green (eight). His 57 victories are third in team history, behind Grant (158) and Green (97).

Zimmer reiterated how much he appreciates the support of Vikings fans and how much he wants to win a title for them.

“The fans have been outstanding to me. I love the culture in the state of Minnesota. I love the way that they’ve opened their arms to myself and our [Mike Zimmer Foundation],” he said. “Hopefully we can continue to build upon this and get to where we need to be, which is in the Super Bowl.”



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GARY KUBIAK

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR | ASSISTANT HEAD COACH

Kubiak was promoted to offensive coordinator this offseason after spending 2019 as assistant head coach/offensive advisor. Kubiak has been an offensive coordinator in 12 previous seasons (Denver from 1995-2005 and Baltimore in 2014). He also was head coach in his hometown of Houston from 2006-13 and Denver from 2015-16. The former Broncos backup QB began his NFL coaching career in 1994 with San Francisco, helping the 49ers win a Super Bowl. He also claimed three other rings (two with the Broncos as offensive coordinator and Super Bowl 50 at the helm).

NFL EXPERIENCE

27th season

VIKINGS EXPERIENCE

2nd season

OTHER NFL TEAMS

Broncos, Ravens, 49ers and Texans



MARWAN MAALOUF

SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR

Maalouf joined the Vikings in 2019 after six seasons as the Dolphins assistant special teams coach. He held the same role with the Ravens from 2008-11 before spending the 2012 season as the Colts special teams coordinator. Maalouf played guard at Baldwin Wallace University in Berea, Ohio, from 1996-99. He transitioned to coaching the following season as the assistant offensive line coach at his alma mater. He held the same role at Fordham (2001) and Rutgers (2002-03). Maalouf began his NFL career in 2004 in the Browns scouting administration department.

NFL EXPERIENCE

15th season

VIKINGS EXPERIENCE

2nd season

OTHER NFL TEAMS

Dolphins, Ravens, Colts and Browns



ANDRE PATTERSON

CO-DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR | DEFENSIVE LINE

Patterson is in his seventh consecutive season (ninth overall) with the Vikings and continuing his leadership of the defensive line while adding co-defensive coordinator duties. His first stint with the Vikings occurred in 1998-99. Patterson played offensive line at Contra Costa College in his home state of California in 1980 before transferring to Montana. Patterson has coached at the high school (five seasons), collegiate (16 seasons) and NFL levels. In addition to rejoining the Vikings in 2014, Patterson also worked with Head Coach Mike Zimmer at Weber State in 1988 and with the Dallas Cowboys from 2000-02.

NFL EXPERIENCE

17th season

VIKINGS EXPERIENCE

9th season

OTHER NFL TEAMS

Cowboys, Patriots, Browns and Broncos



ADAM ZIMMER

CO-DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR | LINEBACKERS

Zimmer has coached Vikings linebackers since 2014 and is adding co-defensive coordinator duties this season. After playing defensive back at Trinity University in Texas from 2002-05, Zimmer began his coaching career with the Saints as a defensive assistant. After three seasons, he became the assistant linebackers coach in New Orleans and earned a Super Bowl ring. Zimmer then became assistant linebackers coach with the Chiefs from 2010-12 before joining the Cincinnati Bengals in 2013 as assistant defensive backs coach.

NFL EXPERIENCE

15th season

VIKINGS EXPERIENCE

7th season

OTHER NFL TEAMS

Saints, Chiefs and Bengals



IMARJAYE ALBURY

**DEFENSIVE QUALITY
CONTROL/ASST. DEFENSIVE LINE**

NFL Exp: 1st season
Vikings: 1st season



ROY ANDERSON

ASST. DEFENSIVE BACKS

NFL Exp: 15th season
Vikings: 1st season



DOM CAPERS

SENIOR DEFENSIVE ASST.

NFL Exp: 33rd season
Vikings: 1st season



RICK DENNISON

**OFFENSIVE LINE/RUN GAME
COORDINATOR**

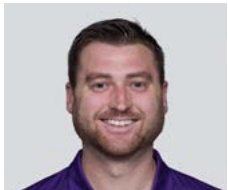
NFL Exp: 26th season
Vikings: 2nd season



RYAN FICKEN

ASST. SPECIAL TEAMS

NFL Exp: 14th season
Vikings: 14th season



ANDREW JANOCKO

RECEIVERS

NFL Exp: 8th season
Vikings: 6th season



CHRISTIAN JONES

**OFFENSIVE QUALITY
CONTROL**

NFL Exp: 2nd season
Vikings: 2nd season



DARONTE JONES

DEFENSIVE BACKS

NFL Exp: 5th season
Vikings: 1st season



DERIK KEYES

**ASST. STRENGTH &
CONDITIONING**

NFL Exp: 9th season
Vikings: 4th season



CLINT KUBIAK

QUARTERBACKS

NFL Exp: 7th season
Vikings: 4th season



CHAZ MAHLE

**ASST. STRENGTH AND
CONDITIONING**

NFL Exp: 12th season
Vikings: 10th season



BRIAN PARIANI

TIGHT ENDS

NFL Exp: 30th season
Vikings: 2nd season



AC PATTERSON

**OFFENSIVE QUALITY
CONTROL**

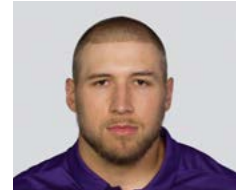
NFL Exp: 2nd season
Vikings: 2nd season



KENNEDY POLAMALU

RUNNING BACKS

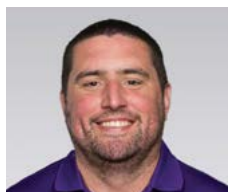
NFL Exp: 10th season
Vikings: 4th season



NICK RALLIS

**DEFENSIVE QUALITY
CONTROL/ASST. LINEBACKERS**

NFL Exp: 3rd season
Vikings: 3rd season



PHIL RAUSCHER

ASST. OFFENSIVE LINE

NFL Exp: 6th season
Vikings: 1st season



MARK UYUYAMA

**DIRECTOR OF COMPETITION
DEVELOPMENT**

NFL Exp: 13th season
Vikings: 4th season

TRAINING & REHABILITATION STAFF

ERIC SUGARMAN

VP OF SPORTS
MEDICINE/HEAD
ATHLETIC TRAINER

ROB ROCHE

ASST. ATHLETIC
TRAINER

AMANDA DEKANICK

ASST. ATHLETIC
TRAINER

MATT DUHAMEL

DIRECTOR OF
REHABILITATION

DAVID JANTZI

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TRAINER/PHYSICAL
THERAPIST

ANDRES ARMSTRONG

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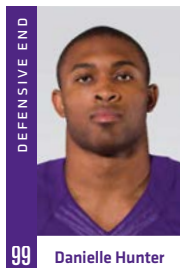
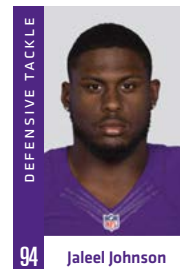
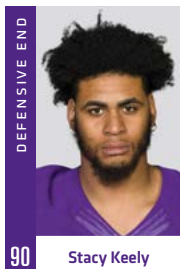
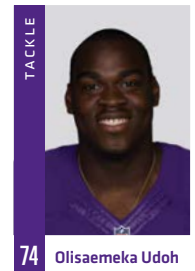
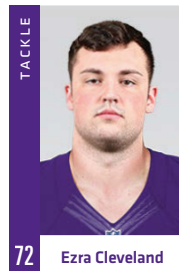


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2020 AN UNPRECEDENTED SEASON

Players pictured and team roster on Page 31 are as of the print deadline of July 28. Players had until a later deadline to opt out of the 2020 season because of COVID-19 concerns. Visit Vikings.com or download the Minnesota Vikings app for updates.



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MINNESOTA VIKINGS ROSTER

NO.	NAME	POS	HT	WT	COLLEGE
2	Britton Colquitt	P	6-3	210	Tennessee
3	Jake Browning	QB	6-2	210	Washington
4	Sean Mannion	QB	6-6	230	Oregon State
5	Dan Bailey	K	6-0	190	Oklahoma State
7	Nate Stanley	QB	6-4	235	Iowa
8	Kirk Cousins	QB	6-3	202	Michigan State
11	Tajaé Sharpe	WR	6-4	194	Massachusetts
12	Chad Beebe	WR	5-10	183	Northern Illinois
13	Dillon Mitchell	WR	6-1	202	Oregon
14	Quartney Davis	WR	6-2	200	Texas A&M
15	Alexander Hollins	WR	6-1	166	Eastern Illinois
16	Davion Davis	WR	5-11	195	Sam Houston State
17	K.J. Osborn	WR	5-11	203	Miami
18	Justin Jefferson	WR	6-1	202	Louisiana State
19	Adam Thielen	WR	6-2	200	Minnesota State
20	Jeff Gladney	CB	5-10	191	Texas Christian
21	Mike Hughes	CB	5-10	189	Central Florida
22	Harrison Smith	S	6-2	214	Notre Dame
23	Mike Boone	RB	5-10	206	Cincinnati
24	Holton Hill	CB	6-2	196	Texas
25	Alexander Mattison	RB	5-11	220	Boise State
26	Nate Meadors	CB	5-11	194	UCLA
27	Cameron Dantzler	CB	6-2	188	Mississippi State
29	Kris Boyd	CB	5-11	200	Texas
30	C.J. Ham	FB	5-11	235	Augustana
31	Ameer Abdullah	RB	5-9	203	Nebraska
32	Mark Fields II	CB	5-10	180	Clemson
33	Dalvin Cook	RB	5-10	210	Florida State
34	Nevelle Clarke	CB	6-1	187	Central Florida
35	Tony Brooks-James	RB	5-9	179	Oregon
36	Marcus Sayles	CB	5-10	175	West Georgia
37	Kemon Hall	CB	5-11	190	North Texas
38	Harrison Hand	CB	5-11	197	Temple
39	Brian Cole II	S	6-2	213	Mississippi State
40	Jake Bargas	FB	6-2	250	North Carolina
41	Anthony Harris	S	6-1	202	Virginia
42	Ben Gedeon	LB	6-2	244	Michigan
44	Josh Metellus	S	5-11	209	Michigan
45	Troy Dye	LB	6-3	231	Oregon
46	Myles Dorn	S	6-2	205	North Carolina
47	DeMarquis Gates	LB	6-2	221	Mississippi
48	Blake Lynch	LB	6-3	225	Baylor
49	Jordan Fehr	LB	6-3	230	Appalachian State
50	Eric Wilson	LB	6-1	230	Cincinnati

NO.	NAME	POS	HT	WT	COLLEGE
51	Hercules Mata'afa	DT	6-2	254	Washington State
52	Eddie Yarbrough	DE	6-3	259	Wyoming
54	Eric Kendricks	LB	6-0	232	UCLA
55	Anthony Barr	LB	6-5	255	UCLA
56	Garrett Bradbury	C	6-3	305	North Carolina State
57	D.J. Wonnum	DE	6-5	258	South Carolina
58	Austin Cutting	LS	6-3	245	Air Force
59	Cameron Smith	LB	6-2	235	S. California
60	Tyler Higby	G	6-5	300	Michigan State
60	David Moa	DT	6-3	296	Boise State
61	Brett Jones	C	6-2	315	Regina (Canada)
62	Blake Brandel	T	6-7	307	Oregon State
63	Jake Lacina	C	6-4	300	Augustana
65	Pat Elflein	G	6-3	303	Ohio State
66	James Lynch	DT	6-4	289	Baylor
67	Brady Aiello	T	6-7	311	Oregon
68	Kyle Hinton	G	6-2	295	Washburn
69	Rashod Hill	T	6-6	313	S. Mississippi
71	Riley Reiff	T	6-6	305	Iowa
72	Ezra Cleveland	T	6-6	311	Boise State
73	Dru Samia	G	6-5	308	Oklahoma
74	Olisaemeka Udoh	T	6-6	325	Elon
75	Brian O'Neill	T	6-7	297	Pittsburgh
76	Aviante Collins	T	6-4	292	Texas Christian
78	Dakota Dozier	G	6-4	312	Furman
79	Kenny Willekes	DE	6-3	264	Michigan State
81	Bisi Johnson	WR	6-0	204	Colorado State
82	Kyle Rudolph	TE	6-6	265	Notre Dame
83	Tyler Conklin	TE	6-3	254	Central Michigan
84	Irv Smith Jr.	TE	6-2	242	Alabama
85	Dan Chisena	WR	6-3	202	Penn State
86	Brandon Dillon	TE	6-5	250	Marian
87	N. Griffin-Stewart	TE	6-5	260	Pittsburgh
89	Bralon Addison	WR	5-10	190	Oregon
90	Stacy Keely	DE	6-6	220	Alabama-Birmingham
91	Jalyn Holmes	DT	6-5	283	Ohio State
92	Anthony Zettel	DE	6-4	265	Penn State
93	Shamar Stephen	DT	6-5	309	Connecticut
94	Jaleel Johnson	DT	6-3	316	Iowa
95	Ifeadi Odenigbo	DE	6-3	258	Northwestern
96	Armon Watts	DT	6-5	295	Arkansas
99	Danielle Hunter	DE	6-5	252	Louisiana State

*Roster current through 7/28/20

STATE OF THE VIKINGS

BY CRAIG PETERS,
ERIC SMITH &
LINDSEY YOUNG

20 QUESTIONS FOR '20

The shift to a virtual offseason program for all NFL teams wiped out in-person meetings and more than a dozen on-field practices that would have provided hints of what to watch during Verizon Vikings Training Camp.

Multiple questions remain unanswered. In honor of 2020, we put together 20 questions facing the Vikings in '20, which will be the franchise's 60th season.

There's certainly more, but it's a start during a time of unprecedented uncertainties.

One thing is for sure: **MINNESOTA IS THE STATE OF THE VIKINGS.**



QUARTERBACKS

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS):

JAKE BROWNING (0), KIRK COUSINS (93/88), SEAN MANNION (13/2) AND NATE STANLEY (0)

Fresh off his first career playoff victory and a contract extension, Cousins is entering his third season in Minnesota with as many offensive coordinators. The promotion of Gary Kubiak from his role as a senior assistant in 2019 and the retention of multiple offensive coaches maintained a degree of system continuity for Cousins. The quarterback shined multiple times in 2019 on his way to one of his most efficient seasons in the NFL. His 1074 passer rating was a career-best and ranks second in a season in Vikings history, and that was without Adam Thielen for about half a season.

WHO WILL BE NO. 2?

The Vikings could keep Mannion in the backup slot, appreciating his experience in the NFL as a support for Cousins. Browning, who spent 2019 on the practice squad as a rookie, and Stanley, a seventh-round selection, will make their best pushes for the gig.

WILL THE VIKINGS KEEP TWO OR THREE QUARTERBACKS ON THE ROSTER?

When teams reduce from the offseason max to 53, it's always a tough choice on whether to keep two or three. The QB position is so important, and teams wouldn't want an investment who is cut getting poached from their practice squads. Most would rather allot the precious roster spot to a player more likely to play.

RUNNING BACKS

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS):

AMEER ABDULLAH (58/22), MIKE BOONE (24/2), TONY BROOKS-JAMES (3/0), DALVIN COOK (29/28) AND ALEXANDER MATTISON (13/0); FB C.J. HAM (47/10) AND FB JAKE BARGAS (0)

Kubiak's career will always be linked to success in the ground game. He was asked during a media session this summer about the value of the position and quipped, "You're probably talking to the wrong guy there. I love running backs."

The Vikings appear ready to continue their commitment to the running game that helped Minnesota improve its rushing yardage from 1,493 yards in 2018 (30th in the NFL) to 2,133 a season ago (sixth in the NFL).

WHAT WILL THE ENCORE LOOK LIKE?

Cook rushed 250 times (43 more attempts than his first two seasons combined) for 1,135 yards and 13 of his 17 career rushing touchdowns last season. He also caught a career-best 53 passes for 519 yards. Mattison toted the rock 100 times for 462 yards and a score and added 10 catches for 82 yards in his rookie campaign. Can they build on those strong efforts?

HOW MUCH WILL MINNESOTA USE A FULLBACK?

Ham's story is one of perseverance, determination and making the most of opportunity. Since joining Minnesota in 2016, the Duluth native not only converted from running back to fullback, but he appeared in his first Pro Bowl last January. Ham started a career-high seven games and lined up on 354 offensive snaps (35 percent), a major uptick from two starts and 139 snaps in 2018.



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WIDE RECEIVERS

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS): BRALON ADDISON (2/0), CHAD BEEBE (6/0), DAN CHISENA (0), DAVION DAVIS (2/0), QUARTNEY DAVIS (0), ALEXANDER HOLLINS (4/1), JUSTIN JEFFERSON (0), BISI JOHNSON (16/6), DILLON MITCHELL (0), K.J. OSBORN (0), TAJAÉ SHARPE (47/29) AND ADAM THIELEN (90/56)

The overwhelming brunt of experience with this group is at the back end of the alphabet. Thielen's starts outnumber the combination of the 11 other players on the roster by 20 games. He started at a torrid pace with seven touchdowns in Minnesota's first seven games but suffered a hamstring injury on the unlucky seventh score. Johnson did an admirable job of filling in for Thielen and showed versatility as a rookie.

HOW FAST CAN SHARPE AND JEFFERSON IMPACT THE TEAM?

Sharpe earned a first down on 75 percent (69 of 92) of his receptions in Tennessee. Will his prior experience in offenses used by the Titans help him make an immediate impact? Jefferson has been said to be "pro ready" because LSU's pro-style offense in 2019 was so prolific. The new additions' impacts will be important in keeping coverages honest.

WILL RECEIVERS BE ABLE TO SEPARATE FOR A ROSTER SPOT?

It's probably a little more open after the aforementioned four. A healthy Beebe has impressed coaches in his first couple of seasons that have been halted by injuries. Special teams are likely to play a part in the final roster spots at the position.



TIGHT ENDS

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS): TYLER CONKLIN (31/4), BRANDON DILLON (1/0), NAKIA GRIFFIN-STEWART (0), KYLE RUDOLPH (128/120) AND IRV SMITH, JR. (16/7)

Rudolph, a 2011 second-round pick, is now the longest-tenured Viking. He has opened 81 consecutive games, the most by any active tight end by 49 starts. He's moved up to fifth in receptions (425) and touchdown catches (47) in franchise history and ranks 10th in receiving yards with 4,154. Four more scores will move him past Sammy White for fourth, and six of the 6-pointers will allow him to overtake Anthony Carter.

IS THERE A YEAR 2 JUMP FOR SMITH?

Each offseason, there's a player on each side of the ball who is seemingly ready to take the next jump in his NFL career. Offensively, that buzz has been generated by Smith, a second-round pick in 2019 who played in all 16 games as a rookie. Smith hauled in 36 catches (a record for a Vikings rookie TE) for 311 yards and two scores, and he seemed to get better as the season went along. Kubiak said he saw plenty of flashes from Smith last season and is ready to tap into more of that talent in 2020.

WILL THE VIKINGS INCORPORATE 2- OR 3- TIGHT ENDS OFTEN?

It wouldn't be surprising. Back in December when Vikings fans painted Los Angeles Purple, Minnesota's opening drive against the Chargers ended with a 1-yard touchdown pass to Smith. The Vikings used 23 (two running backs and three tight ends) personnel for the scoring play, as well as two other snaps. Minnesota also used 12 (running back and two tight ends) five times during the crisp, 75-yard drive.

OFFENSIVE LINE

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS): BRADY AIELLO (0), GARRETT BRADBURY (16/16), BLAKE BRANDEL (0), EZRA CLEVELAND (0), AVIANTE COLLINS (5/1), DAKOTA DOZIER (54/11), PAT ELFLEIN (43/42), TYLER HIGBY (0), RASHOD HILL (43/16), KYLE HINTON (0), BRETT JONES (46/17), JAKE LACINA (0), BRIAN O'NEILL (30/26), RILEY REIFF (120/112), DRU SAMIA (2/0) AND OLISAEMEKA UDHOH (1/0)

The Vikings have a mix of veterans and youngsters within this unit and will look to a pair of talented linemen to be building blocks for the foreseeable future.

O'Neill is entering his third campaign after starting 26 of 30 games played in the previous two seasons at right tackle. He took a sizable leap in Year 2.

Bradbury, a 2019 first-round pick, became the first Vikings center to start all 16 games as a rookie. And while he endured ups and downs, Bradbury said this offseason that he is better prepared for the rigors of an NFL season.

WHICH PLAYERS WILL MAKE THE STARTING FIVE AND WHERE WILL THEY BE?

Without offseason practices, this could be the biggest question when the Vikings finally hit the practice field. O'Neill and Bradbury are penciled in as starters, but the other spots are more unsettled.

There's been a buzz that Reiff or 2020 first-rounder Cleveland could start in either combination at left tackle and left guard. Elflein, Samia, Collins and Dozier could also challenge for one or both guard spots.

HOW FAR AHEAD WILL THE 2019 PICKS BE OF NEWCOMERS?

Samia and Udoh both essentially redshirted in 2019, with each getting extensive playing time in Week 17. Both know the offensive scheme, and that could give them a leg up ahead of fresh faces on the roster. They also spent a considerable amount of practice time alongside each other as rookies, with Samia at right guard and Udoh at right tackle most of the time.



LINEBACKERS

DEFENSIVE LINE

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS):

JALYN HOLMES (11/0), DANIELLE HUNTER (78/49), JALEEL JOHNSON (37/4), STACY KEELY (0), JAMES LYNCH (0), HERCULES MATA'afa (6/0), DAVID MOA (0), IFEADI ODENIGBO (17/0), MICHAEL PIERCE (60/30), SHAMAR STEPHEN (82/49), ARMON WATTS (7/1), KENNY WILLEKES (0), D.J. WONNUM (0), EDDIE YARBROUGH (31/6) AND ANTHONY ZETTEL (49/16)

Hunter keeps earning more respect across the league and stacking sacks. The phenom pass rusher in 2019 became the youngest player (25 years, 40 days) in NFL history to accrue 50 career sacks. (Sacks became an official stat in 1982). He hasn't shown any signs of slowing down, and it will be interesting to see how he's looked at as a leader of this defense with the departure of Everson Griffen, who voided his contract this offseason to become a free agent.

OPPOSITE HUNTER, DO THE VIKINGS GO WITH ODENIGBO AND ROTATE?

The defensive end spot opposite Hunter is a little up-in-the-air; in addition to the loss of Griffen, Stephen Weatherly signed with the Panthers in free agency. But Co-Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach Andre Patterson is confident in the position and specifically noted excitement about Odenigbo's continued development. The 2017 seventh-round draft pick took a big step forward last season, playing in all 16 games and racking up 7.0 sacks. It seems likely that Odenigbo could step into a starting role with players like Yarbrough or one of this year's draft picks contributing in a rotation.

HOW WILL THE VIKINGS PLUG THE D-LINE INTERIOR?

Minnesota will try to fill the void left by nose tackle Linval Joseph, who joined the Chargers

after his release by the Vikings. The Vikings retained Stephen, who returned to Minnesota last season after spending the 2018 campaign in Seattle, as well as Johnson and Holmes. Watts came on strong during the back half of his rookie year. Patterson emphasized "great talent" on the interior of the line and said he appreciates the age range there. Another intriguing player is Mata'afa, who signed with the Vikings as an undrafted free agent in 2018 but spent the campaign on IR with a torn ACL. The tackle played in six games last season.

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS):

ANTHONY BARR (85/85), TROY DYE (0), JORDAN FEHR (0), DEMARQUIS GATES (0), BEN GEDEON (39/22), ERIC KENDRICKS (74/70), BLAKE LYNCH (0), CAMERON SMITH (5/0) AND ERIC WILSON (48/10)

Kendricks has seemed to ascend each year, which is impressive considering how strong his rookie season was in 2015. He and Barr can continue increasing their roles as leaders on the field and off it.

WHAT WILL NEW SENIOR DEFENSIVE ASSISTANT DOM CAPERS ADD TO THE WAY THIS GROUP IS DEPLOYED?

Head Coach Mike Zimmer's Double-A Gap blitz has benefited from Kendricks and Barr for multiple seasons, but the look's success created copycats around the league, which led to more reps against the challenge for offensive lines. Capers could help influence the variation of blitzes by linebackers or help refine the art of the blitz by Vikings players.

WILL GEDEON OR WILSON RETURN TO THE THIRD STARTING SPOT, OR WILL A NEWCOMER RISE THE RANKS?

Gedeon dealt with multiple injuries in 2019, but Wilson was always ready when his number was called. There is intrigue in seeing how fast newcomers can pick up the scheme.



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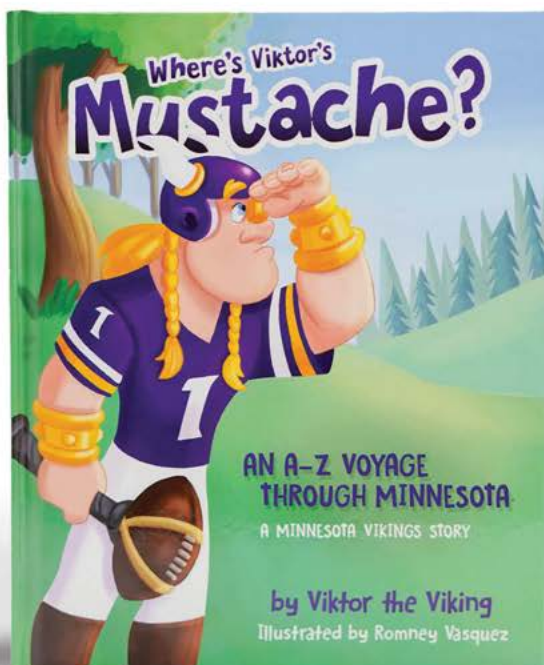
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CORNERBACKS

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS):

KRIS BOYD (16/0), NEVELLE CLARKE (0), CAMERON DANTZLER (0), MARK FIELDS II (1/0), JEFF GLADNEY (0), KEMON HALL (0), HARRISON HAND (0), HOLTON HILL (24/4), MIKE HUGHES (20/5), NATE MEADORS (2/0) AND MARCUS SAYLES (0)

The Vikings will have three new starters at this position after the departures of Xavier Rhodes, Trae Waynes and Mackensie Alexander. Minnesota also has a new defensive backs coach in Daronte Jones, who previously spent time with Miami and Cincinnati in the same role.

And while there is plenty of youth on the roster, there is a bevy of talent, too. Hughes and Hill have each made a handful of starts, and Boyd is also a candidate to compete for a starting job in 2020. The Vikings additionally addressed the cornerback spot three times in the draft, starting with Gladney, a former TCU standout, in the first round.

WHEN WILL THE VIKINGS FIRST ENCOUNTER GROWING PAINS AT THE POSITION?

The Vikings will face prolific and veteran quarterbacks almost each week in 2020, beginning with Aaron Rodgers on Sept. 13. If the Week 1 lineup includes Hughes, Hill and Gladney as the starters, that means Rodgers will face a trio of corners who have never started against him.

The Vikings cornerbacks might endure some growing pains early on in 2020, but they also have the potential to flourish by the time the December rolls around with road games against Tom Brady, Drew Brees and Matthew Stafford scheduled in three of the final four weeks of the season.

WILL MINNESOTA HANDLE ITS NICKEL PACKAGE WITH A CORNER OR EXTRA SAFETY?

Hughes and Gladney could challenge for the nickel spot, as could Sayles, who starred in the Canadian Football league in 2019.

But the Vikings could choose to put an extra safety in for a "big nickel" package.

SAFETIES

ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES/STARTS):

BRIAN COLE II (0), MYLES DORN (0), ANTHONY HARRIS (65/31), JOSH METELLUS (0) AND HARRISON SMITH (114/113)

Smith and Harris are one of the best tandems in NFL. Entering their ninth and sixth pro seasons, respectively, the duo is heading into its second full season with Harris as the starter. He stepped into the role partway through the 2018 campaign and never looked back.

WILL HAVING ZERO IN-GAME EXPERIENCE BEHIND SMITH AND HARRIS BITE THE VIKINGS?

Harris and Smith are a reliable pair, to be sure, but there's quite the drop-off

in experience behind them. If either player is sidelined, Minnesota's options at backup are a trio of rookies. It certainly seems like the Vikings could be in deep water if forced to call on their reserve safeties, but if anyone can develop a young defensive back quickly, it's Zimmer.



HEAD COACH MIKE ZIMMER

**COACHING HISTORY: SEVENTH SEASON
IN MINNESOTA; 57-38-1 RECORD; 2-3
PLAYOFF RECORD**

In the six seasons since he arrived in Minnesota, Zimmer has cultivated and crafted one of the league's stingiest defenses. The Vikings have ranked no worse than 11th in points allowed per game in that span, and they finished in the top nine in points allowed per game in each of the past five seasons.

But with plenty of fresh faces on that side of the ball, and with the turnover coming during a virtual offseason, Zimmer has yet to see how has more to learn about this year's group.

**HOW WILL ZIMMER HANDLE THE
DEFENSIVE TURNOVER AMIDST
AN UNUSUAL OFFSEASON?**

Zimmer has a sturdy reputation as a defensive mastermind since landing in the NFL in 1994. That included six years of continuity with the Vikings, when nine starters were with Zimmer for at least five consecutive seasons.

A handful of those players are now gone, as others now have the chance to shine on defense. Zimmer tabbed two of his closest assistants — defensive line coach Andre Patterson and linebackers coach Adam Zimmer — to be co-defensive coordinators.

But the prideful Zimmer will take it upon himself to ensure the Vikings defense stays at the elite level that has defined recent years.

SPECIAL TEAMS

**ON THE ROSTER (NFL GAMES): K DAN
BAILEY (138), P BRITTON COLQUITT (160)
AND LS AUSTIN CUTTING (16)**

The lack of an offseason could create rust in the timing, but perhaps the snap, set and kick will be like riding a bike? The good news is, the Vikings are returning the same three specialists from 2019, and the trio of Bailey + Colquitt + Cutting quickly became a well-oiled machine. Hopefully, the unit picks up where it left off and keeps a smooth operation rolling into 2020.

**CAN OSBORN WIN THE PUNT
RETURNER JOB?**

The Vikings drafted receiver K.J. Osborn 176th overall, and Special Teams Coordinator Marwan Maalouf feels confident in the speedy youngster's potential at punt returner. Osborn started all 13 games as a senior at Miami and led the team in receiving, but he also stood out as a punt returner, averaging 15.9 yards per return. Maalouf pointed

out that he gets downhill quickly and has a knack for tracking and catching the ball. With the role being somewhat of a revolving door last year after the departure of mainstay Marcus Sherels, will Osborn lock up the position?

**WHO IS GUNNING FOR
THE GUNNER POSITION?**

Some of the best displays of determination each week occur on punts when gunners on the outside will their way through one or two blockers and tackle the returner, force a fair catch or down the ball inside the 20-yard line. Straight-line speed helps and so does quickness at the line of scrimmage, but willpower may be the best attribute. Boyd really came on strong as a rookie and led Minnesota in special teams tackles. Former safety Jayron Kearse also excelled in the role, but his departure creates a job opportunity.





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We have had an open dialogue about the issues that have happened. We have gotten a lot closer than I think any of us could potentially even think about. I'm thankful for the platform that I've been given. These issues are very real. We need to educate ourselves as much as we can, but we have to do it together."

ERIC KENDRICKS

TAKING ACTION



VIKINGS UNIFIED FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

BY LINDSEY YOUNG

The speakers were in six different physical locations, but unity permeated the nearly 90-minute conversation.

Representatives of the Vikings Social Justice Committee – Chief Operating Officer Andrew Miller, General Manager Rick Spielman, Co-Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach Andre Patterson and players Eric Kendricks, Anthony Harris and Ameer Abdullah – met virtually with media members in June and discussed events that followed the senseless death of George Floyd.

Miller opened by saying the Vikings have “both a privilege and an obligation” to make a difference. The organization has engaged in conversations to identify the best actions to take.

“We’re proud of the fact that we’re united. We’re united as an organization, as employees, as players with the fact that we want to make a positive impact in our community,” said Miller, who then announced a \$5 million donation by the Wilf family to social justice causes.

“We’re committed as an organization to eliminate racism, to influence positive reform of law enforcement, to promote racial and social equity through education and the ending of food insecurity,” Miller added. “We’re committed to building on the foundation of our internal culture to become champions of diversity and inclusion.”

Kendricks expressed gratitude to the Wilfs not only for their financial backing but for their willingness to be involved at the grassroots level, interacting and engaging with players during the Vikings Social Justice Committee meetings.

“We have had an open dialogue about the issues that have happened. We have gotten a lot closer than I think any of us could potentially even think about,” Kendricks said. “I’m thankful for the platform that I’ve been given. These issues are very real. We need to educate ourselves as much as we can, but we have to do it together.”

Togetherness in efforts for social justice is not a new concept for the Vikings, however.



ANDRE PATTERSON

For me, it changed a lot of men sitting in that room. And right then and there, I knew that the Vikings had put together something that was very powerful and had the ability to create change."

Patterson recalled the Social Justice Committee's launch in 2018, saying he and Spielman had lengthy conversations about the concept and brought together "a wide spectrum of players" to form the group.

"One of the most powerful meetings that I've ever sat in in my lifetime was our first meeting together," Patterson recalled. "We decided to just open it up and let the players who come from all different backgrounds express where they came from and express their different experiences in race relations.

"For me, it changed a lot of men sitting in that room. And right then and there, I knew that the Vikings had put together something that was very powerful and had the ability to create change," he continued. "Everyone just sat there and listened to one another. There wasn't anybody trying to get their point across or anybody trying to change anyone else's opinion. They just listened to one another, and that was a tremendous experience for everyone in that room."

Floyd died in Minneapolis on May 25. One police officer has been charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter. Three others have been charged with aiding and abetting.

Following the tragedy, the Vikings held a

virtual team meeting in which the players were encouraged to talk with one another about the events that had transpired.

Patterson reminded that the team had yet to gather in-person during the spring due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and had this been a "typical" offseason, natural conversation would have occurred among teammates in the locker room.

He also pointed out that in the six seasons since joining the team under Head Coach Mike Zimmer in 2014, the Vikings have faced a variety of tough circumstances. From painful playoff losses to significant player injuries, Zimmer's eye surgeries and the tragic and unexpected death of offensive line coach Tony Sparano, the team has weathered those things together.

"I just wanted to make sure when this happened that our players did that even though we were spread out over the country," Patterson said. "That they reached out, communicated and talked to each other to help each other get through – because the biggest thing is when you keep all this trapped inside, it just builds and builds and builds and you have an explosion."

Harris was asked if the current climate and additional team dialogue has opened the door for sometimes-uncomfortable but

effective conversations with teammates of different backgrounds.

"I believe if you haven't experienced something or it isn't something that you deal with on a daily basis, you could be blinded by the topic or by the issue," Harris said. "[But with] all the events going on, with the advancements and being able to catch things on camera, even though you can't say you've experienced it or you can't put yourself in the shoes of an African American man, I think the videos allow you to insert yourself into a situation and understand from a human perspective what's going on.

Added Harris: "That's what really gives you the extra drive to pick up the phone and say, 'I know we don't talk that deeply or that often, but I just want to get more knowledge on your background, where you grew up, some things that you personally experienced, that you saw or some stories you can share that I may not have ever seen if not for technology or you sharing those conversations.'"

Kendricks assured that these conversations will continue, whether it's during an impromptu phone call or in a planned meeting.

"More minds are greater than just one, and that's the attitude we're taking," Kendricks said. "We're all putting our heads together and trying to really create change."



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AT  10.11
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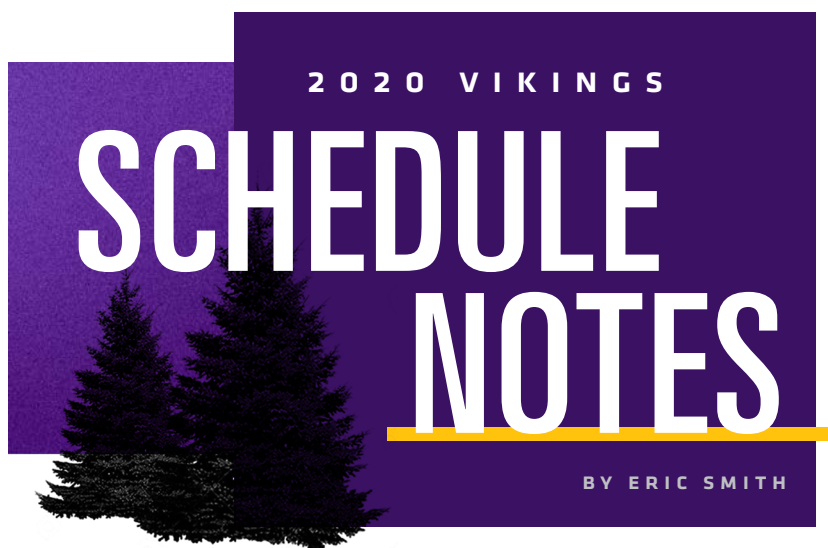
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FLEX SCHEDULING BEGINS IN WEEK 5 | ALL TIMES CT



01

HISTORIC OPENER

Here's how many times the Vikings have opened a season at home against the Packers in team history: zero.

That will change in 2020 in the seventh overall meeting between the rivals on a Kickoff Weekend.

The Vikings are perfect in their past three season openers at home, getting wins over New Orleans, San Francisco and Atlanta.

02

SUNDAY AT NOON...

JUST HOW ZIMMER LIKES IT

The Vikings are scheduled to play a dozen times on Sundays at noon (CT), a rare frequency for a 2019 playoff team but something that will make Head Coach Mike Zimmer smile.

Those in the NFL are creatures of habit, from "Recovery Monday" to the final walk-through of the week on a Saturday morning to prepare for a mid-Sunday kickoff.

Since the start of the 2015 season, the Vikings are 35-14-1 under Zimmer in games that begin at noon (CT).

03

BYE PRECEDES

CRUCIAL NFC NORTH GAMES

Players and coaches will tell you the first thing they look for when the schedule comes out is the bye week to find out when their breather between the grind falls.

The Vikings bye week comes in Week 7, after an even split of home and road games in the first six contests.

But what's important to note is that Minnesota goes to Green Bay, hosts Detroit and then travels to Chicago in the three games immediately following the break.

04

AFC SOUTH EARLY

MEANS LATE HEAVY DOSE OF NFC GAMES

The Vikings will get an early dose of the AFC South in 2020.

Minnesota will visit Indianapolis, host Tennessee and travel to Houston in Weeks 2-4. Aside from Week 13 against Jacksonville, 11 of the final 12 games are against NFC foes, setting up some interesting matchups with playoff implications.

05

RARE 3-GAME HOMESTAND

The Vikings have three consecutive home games for just the second time in the Zimmer era and first since 2014.

Minnesota will be at U.S. Bank Stadium in Weeks 11-13 against Dallas, Carolina and Jacksonville, respectively.

The Vikings are 23-9 (.719 win percentage) at U.S. Bank Stadium since the venue opened in 2016.

06

AVOIDING COLD-WEATHER GAMES

Minnesota will play four road games in their final eight contests, beginning with Week 10 at Chicago.

But the other three roadies are at Tampa Bay (Week 14), New Orleans (Week 16) and Detroit (Week 17).

Overall, the Vikings play 10 of their 16 games under fixed roofs and two more in venues with retractable roofs (Colts and Texans).

That could bode well for someone like Dan Bailey. The Vikings kicker made all 29 of his extra points and was 16 of 17 (94.1 percent) in 2019 when playing indoors or at a stadium with a retractable roof.

07

CHRISTMAS IN NEW ORLEANS

The Vikings will play on Christmas Day for just the fourth time in franchise history in one of the most-anticipated games of the season.

Minnesota has knocked New Orleans out of the postseason in two of the past three years – both times in dramatic fashion. The most-recent instance came in overtime in a January Wild Card game when Kirk Cousins found Kyle Rudolph for the walk-off score.

A young girl with dark hair in a bun, wearing a grey cardigan over a white shirt and blue jeans, is looking up with an expression of wonder at a science exhibit. The exhibit features a complex arrangement of white, blue, and orange springs and wires. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space, likely a museum or science center.

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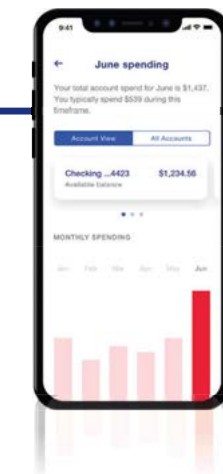
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