

Vikings Counting On Guion But Knee Injury Persists

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Pro Football Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings were excited about the progress Letroy Guion was making in his transition from one defensive tackle spot to the other.

He showed up in ideal shape, expressed a positive attitude about the new position and hustled all over the field at the beginning of training camp.

There's one problem, though. He's hurt now and might not play the rest of the preseason, valuable opportunities before the games start to count for Guion to gain comfort and confidence.

"It's just unfortunate that he is missing all these reps," coach Leslie Frazier said. "We really needed him to get those

reps at that position. It's somewhat of a new position for him, so it's tough. But that's the way it is right now."

Guion sprained the posterior cruciate ligament in his right knee on Aug. 11 during the first series of the game at San Francisco. He sat out the next game against Buffalo last Friday, but he was back on the field this week wearing a bulky black brace until he aggravated the injury in practice on Tuesday. Guion watched from the side on Wednesday wearing a white compression sleeve over his knee, and he won't play this week against San Diego.

Frazier said he's confident Guion will be ready to start the season on Sept. 9 against Jacksonville, but with the last exhibition approaching on Aug. 30 the Vikings (29th in the AP Pro32) might de-

cide to hold him out of that one too to give him a better chance to heal before the opener.

"We need a guy who can demand a double team at that position. We've lacked that a little bit," Frazier said. "That's what helps our defense to be more successful, especially against the run. If they have to double team, it just frees up our linebackers to make some plays. He needs to show that he can do that and when he's single-blocked he can make those plays and make people have to double team him. If they can block him with a center or guard, we've got problems. We think he has the ability to demand that double team. We'll see once we get him back on the field."

The Vikings re-signed Guion in March to a three-year contract worth \$9 million

with \$2.5 million guaranteed, relatively big money for a guy who hasn't done much in four NFL seasons. Drafted in the fifth round out of Florida State in 2008, Guion has had a couple of strong training camps, but that's about it. He has two sacks and seven tackles for loss in his career.

Guion backed up the team's faith in him by dropping about 20 pounds, from roughly 330 to 310, during the winter and spring. He'd been the backup to Kevin Williams at the under tackle position, which lines up between the guard and the tackle, usually on the right side. But the attempt to replace former run-stopping stalwart Pat Williams with Remi Ayodele last year failed, and Guion was brought back as Ayodele was released.

Shedding weight at first sounds backward for a nose tackle, who sets up directly across from the center, but losing fat helped him become leaner and stronger.

"I just dedicated myself to work hard and be more focused," Guion said earlier this month.

The Vikings have repeatedly said Guion is big and strong enough to hold up at that spot, and he'll have to use his exceptional footwork to his advantage and help keep opposing offensive lines from loading up to stop All-Pro defensive end Jared Allen, who had 22 sacks last year. If for some reason he can't, or if he can't stay healthy, Fred Evans is

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Twins Fall Again During Tough Trip

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Liam Hendriks was left to wait for his first major victory yet again.

He had had 13 tries spanning two seasons as a starter.

A day after being recalled from Triple-A Rochester, for his third big league stint of the year with Minnesota, the 23-year-old Aussie struggled along with the Twins offense in a 5-1 loss to the Oakland Athletics on Wednesday.

It was another stumble on this tough road trip.

"It was just a bad day for us," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "It's too bad we lost the series."

Coco Crisp homered, hit an RBI double, and scored three runs for the A's, tinkering a bit with his batting stance.

"I felt like Cal Ripken over there with so many batting stances," Crisp said.

Yoenis Cespedes hit a go-ahead two-run single in the third inning that held up for Tommy Milone, and Crisp also singled and stole his 28th base to give the A's a much-needed boost only a couple of hours after right-hander Bartolo Colon received a 50-game suspension for a positive testosterone test. The ban came one day before he had been scheduled to start the opener of a series at Tampa Bay.

Milone (10-9) allowed one run and two hits, struck out five and walked one in eight impressive innings to end a five-start winless stretch in which he had gone 0-3 since his last victory, a 9-3 decision at Minnesota on July 14. He lowered his ERA to 3.87 from 4.03 and became Oakland's second 10-game winner after Colon, the 2005 AL Cy Young Award winner while with the Angels.

The A's won despite four errors behind Milone.

"Typically, you don't win games making four errors," manager Bob Melvin said. "The reason we did come back is Milone."

Josh Reddick added an RBI single for the A's (67-56), who moved a season-high 11 games over .500 — their best since finishing the 2006 season at 93-69. That's the last year Oakland reached the playoffs, getting swept in four games of the AL championship series by the Detroit Tigers.

Oakland began the day a half-game out in the AL wild-card race.

"When Coco plays well, we win," Melvin said.

Hendriks (0-6) is yet to win in nine starts this season. The right-hander allowed four runs and six hits in five innings — and he didn't get much help from the Twins' stagnant bats. They managed only three hits, Matt Carson getting two of them.

"I wasn't given a lead and trying to blow it," Hendriks said. "We had some good at bats against Milone. It was just one of those days where

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Minn. St.-Mankato Football Coach Faces Porn Charge

MANKATO, Minn. (AP) — The head football coach at Minnesota State, Mankato, was charged Wednesday with two counts related to child pornography after authorities said they found nude images of children on his cellphone.

Todd Hoffner, 46, of Eagle Lake, was charged with one count of using minors in a sexual performance or pornographic work, and one count of possessing child pornography. Both are felonies.

Police began investigating last week after a university official went to them with three videos of children that were said to be on Hoffner's work-issued cellphone, according to the complaint filed in the case.

Hoffner's attorney, Jim Fleming, said his client intends to fight the charges and will be pleading not guilty at a later date. He had no further comment.

The complaint said Hoffner brought his univer-

sity-issued cellphone to school officials earlier this month because it wasn't working properly. Hoffner was given a new one, and was told technicians would retrieve videos and pictures from his old phone for him.

A technician came across the videos while going through the data, and police were contacted.

Hoffner is on leave and a university investigation is pending.

Bail was set at \$10,000 with conditions at a Wednesday afternoon hearing. Fleming said Hoffner was expected to post bail.

Hoffner is entering his fifth year as Minnesota State, Mankato's head football coach. He led the team to the playoffs in 2008 and 2009, and a share of the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference title in 2011.

He has a 34-13 record at Minnesota State, Mankato, and was named NSIC coach of the year in 2009.



The Oakland Athletics' Coco Crisp (4) is congratulated by third base coach Mike Gallego as Crisp rounds third base on his seventh inning home run against the Minnesota Twins at O.co Coliseum in Oakland, Calif., on Wednesday. The A's topped the Twins, 5-1.

SUSAN TRIPP POLLARD/CONTRA COSTA TIMES/MCT

Japan Builds Early Lead, Beats Panama 4-1 At LLWS

SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (AP) — The Little Leaguers from Japan are playing textbook baseball.

Strong pitching, solid defense and powerful bats have carried the team from Tokyo to a berth in the international final at the World Series following a 4-1 victory over Panama on Wednesday.

Kotaro Kiyomiya homered in the first, and starter Ryuji Osada struck out seven.

The left-handed Kiyomiya displayed prodigious power for a 13-year-old slugger. His blast landed nearly halfway up the hill beyond the right-field wall, about 310 feet from the plate.

"As soon as I hit it I knew it was a home run," he said through an interpreter. "That's why I didn't take off quickly."

Panama finally got on the board in the fifth after Edwin Nieto hustled around first to score on a dou-

ble by Daniel Cruz and an error.

But Osada got the next batter to ground weakly to short to end the threat.

Texas and Tennessee play the nightcap in the U.S. bracket.

On the international side, Japan is a traditional power, having appeared in the World Series finals four out of the previous six years, including a title in 2010.

Now, Tokyo is two wins away from taking home another title to Japan. Noriatsu Osaka retired the side in order in the sixth for the save.

The two teams then lined up for the customary postgame high-fives at the plate before Japan's players sprinted out to center to pay homage to the bust of Howard Lamade just beyond the outfield wall — another Japan tradition at the World Series. The main Little League stadium is named after Lamade.

Japan pounded out eight hits but squandered a couple other scoring opportunities. Despite the first-inning homers, manager Yoichi Kubo thinks his boys aren't swinging the bats well.

"We have not adjusted to this big stage" at the plate, Kubo said. "Our pitching has been very good."

The Panama team from Aguadulce moves into the elimination bracket to play Mexico on Thursday, with the winner of that game facing Japan in the international championship game on Saturday.

It's time for Panama manager Luis Gonzalez to settle his players down.

"We will have a team meeting to get them to relax because we have to be ready to play another game," Gonzalez said through an interpreter.

While they struggled at the plate, Panama pitching settled

down after the rough first. Kiyomiya's homer to right was nearly caught by a fan watching the game from a beach chair carefully perched on the steep hill; Shun Osahima followed with a solo shot to right two batters later.

Twelve-year-old reliever James Gonzalez got a strikeout to end a bases-loaded jam the next inning before Panama. He allowed a run and two hits in three innings, benefiting from some nifty glove work like 13-year-old shortstop Daniel Cruz's diving stop to his right and Edisson Gonzalez's sweep tag at first to end the bottom of the fourth.

Panama pitchers were often serenaded to chants of "Strike him out" in Spanish by their fans, who were yelling the phrase when Osahima tripled down the left-field line to tack on an insurance run in the bottom of the fifth.

Mets Shut Down Santana For Season

NEW YORK (AP) — Johan Santana is done for the year, and to say he had an up-and-down season would be an understatement of Cy Young proportions.

Explaining that their struggling ace is worn down from two years of rehabilitation and near-constant maintenance, the New York Mets placed Santana on the 15-day disabled list Wednesday with inflammation in his lower back and said he is not expected to pitch again in 2012.

Doctors recommended rest, but not surgery.

"I wanted to keep pitching. I felt that I could pitch. But at the same time, I'm listening to them," Santana said. "They said that everything that I have done has been a lot. At some point I have to take some rest. At this point I think I agree with everything and we've just got to make sure we stay healthy and look forward to next year."

The 33-year-old Santana missed last season following major shoulder surgery in September 2010 to repair a torn anterior capsule. He got off to a strong start this year and pitched the first no-hitter in Mets history June 1 against St. Louis. But he threw a career-high 134 pitches in that game and is 3-7 with an 8.27 ERA since.

"I don't have any second thoughts about the way it was handled," general manager Sandy Alderson said. "This has not been a shoulder issue. So from that standpoint, I just don't see a direct correlation."

The tailspin got ugly after Chicago Cubs outfielder Reed Johnson stepped on Santana's foot on a play at first base July 6. Beginning with that outing, Santana went 0-5 with a 15.63 ERA in his final five appearances — becoming the first Mets pitcher to give up at least six runs in five consecutive starts.

The two-time AL Cy Young Award winner was 6-4 with a 2.76 ERA through June but ended up 6-9 with a 4.85 ERA. He threw 117 innings in 21 starts.

"At this point I'm very confident he'll be back next season and ready to go and hopefully in a stronger position than he was coming into this year," Alderson said. "If you look back at the season and what we reasonably could have expected at the beginning of the year, he's actually accomplished quite a lot. I think as we got close to midseason we recognized that, who knows how long Johan can sit?"

"I can't go here and say this is a shock or even a surprise. It's disap-

pointing, but that's the nature of things," the GM added. "I don't believe that fewer innings would have preserved Johan. ... I don't think he was overused. There were times when he had extra rest."

A few weeks after Johnson stepped on his foot, Santana was placed on the DL with a sprained right ankle. He was sidelined for three weeks, a stint that was also intended to recharge his surgically repaired shoulder.

But in his first game back, Santana lasted only 1 1/3 innings against Atlanta — the worst start of his career. He said Wednesday that he's been feeling tightness in his back for a couple of weeks, but it really stiffened up on him in his most recent outing last Friday at Washington.

"The work he did to try to command stuff, the absolute effort he had to put in to make each pitch, wore him down. And so, that was obvious. And you just knew that some adjustments had to be made," manager Terry Collins said. "I think the rest is the perfect medicine for him right now."

Santana had an MRI on Tuesday that revealed the inflammation and the left-hander was prescribed rest, medication and intermittent exercise.

Soccer: Bucks Down Warriors

SIoux FALLS — Osmar Pacheco's goal in the 57th minute proved to be the game-winner as the Yankton Bucks beat Sioux Falls Washington 2-1 in boys' club soccer action from Tuesday night in Sioux Falls.

Yankton's Zach Benjamin scored the first goal on a header from Derek Gravholt. Washington tied the game in the 25th minute.

In the 57th minute, Pacheco scored on an assist from Benjamin.

Landon Breen made seven saves at goal for Yankton (2-0), which returns home to host Sioux Falls Lincoln on Saturday at 3 p.m. at Lewis & Clark Soccer Park.

In the JV boys' game, Washington beat the Bucks 1-0.

Girls

Washington 2, Yankton 0

SIoux FALLS — The hometown Washington Warriors used two goals late in the second half to blank the Yankton Gazelles 2-0 in girls' club soccer action from Tuesday night.

Yankton's defense allowed only four shots on goal.

The Gazelles will host Sioux Falls Lincoln at 1 p.m. on Saturday at Lewis & Clark Soccer Park.

Ump Joyce Credited For Life-Saving Effort

PHOENIX (AP) — Umpire Jim Joyce is being credited with taking quick action to help save the life of a food service worker who collapsed of an apparent heart attack at Chase Field.

Russ Amaral, vice president of ballpark operations, says Joyce happened to be walking past Jayne Powers when she collapsed before Monday night's game between the Arizona Diamondbacks and Miami Marlins.

After deciding it wasn't a seizure, as some of her co-workers suggested, Joyce quickly started CPR.

Marlins bullpen catcher Jeff Urgelles, a former firefighter and paramedic, was called to the scene and began helping Joyce.

Paramedics arrived moments later and transported the woman to a hospital, where her condition improved.

Joyce, Urgelles and others involved were honored in a brief ceremony before Wednesday night's series finale. Urgelles carried the Marlins' lineup card to home plate.

Joyce is best remembered for blowing the call that cost Detroit's Armando Galarraga a perfect game on June 2, 2010. A major league umpire for 24 years, he was the crew chief for the Diamondbacks-Marlins series. Galarraga famously said he had no ill feelings after the umpire acknowledged he had missed the call and apologized for doing so.

Joyce did not respond to a request made through Major League Baseball on Wednesday to comment on this week's incident.

But he told MLB.com on Tuesday that he knew he had to act quickly when he saw the woman go down.

"I knew something was wrong," Joyce said. "And I knew if something wasn't done, this lady could actually die in front of me. It was more instinct than anything else."

He also said he and his wife had an emotional visit with Powers in the hospital on Tuesday.

In Wednesday's pregame announcement, the Diamondbacks said Powers was having a pacemaker installed and would be released from the hospital in a few days.