

# Vikings Name Cassel As Starting QB

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Matt Cassel has seen a lot in 10 years in the NFL, including by his count seven different offensive coordinators in his last six seasons in the league.

So when Cassel re-signed with the Minnesota Vikings in the offseason and started to digest Norv Turner's new system, he knew he'd have to work harder and study longer than he ever had before to win the starting job.

Mission accomplished.

Cassel was named the starting quarterback over first-round draft pick Teddy Bridgewater on Monday for the regular season opener against the St. Louis Rams, an achievement that resonated with a player who has evolved from no-name rookie to backup sensation to embattled starter and then to a journeyman veteran scratching and clawing to get another shot.

"I've been through a lot in my career," Cassel said. "I've been through the ups, I've been through the downs. I've been through the highs and the lows. At this point nothing really surprises me in my career. Because of those (experiences), it callouses you to a few different situations that as a younger player I might not have taken it as well."

One of those situations happened last year in Minnesota, when Cassel outplayed Christian Ponder and Josh Freeman during the season, but wound up starting only six games during a miserable 5-10-1 season. The Vikings fired coach Leslie Frazier and the rest of the staff after the season, hired Mike Zimmer and Turner to turn things around and brought Cassel back to bring some stability to the position.

Cassel has been sharp while starting all three preseason games. He has completed more than 66 percent of his passes for 367 yards with two touchdowns and one interception.

"Matt did not do anything to lose the job this preseason," Zimmer said. "I think he's played great. The team has a lot of confidence in him. They feel good about his veteran leadership and presence."

The Vikings traded back into the first round on draft night to get Bridgewater with the 32nd pick and have pegged him as the long-term answer for the team's unsettled quarterback spot. After



DAVID EULITT/KANSAS CITY STAR/MCT  
**Kansas City Chiefs defensive tackle Jaye Howard (96) strips the ball out of the hands of Minnesota Vikings quarterback Matt Cassel (16) for a first-quarter safety in preseason action on Saturday in Kansas City, Mo. The Vikings won, 30-12.**

an understandably up-and-down preseason opener, Bridgewater has played well in the last two games. In all three games, Bridgewater is 26 of 40 for 266 yards, four touchdowns and no interceptions while getting most of his action with the backups and has impressed with his unflappable demeanor and low-key presence.

"I told Teddy this morning that I'm so happy he's here with us," Zimmer said. "I'm glad he's the guy we picked. I've loved everything that he's done. It wasn't anything that Teddy did or didn't do. Teddy will be, still in my estimation, a great player for this franchise for years to come."

Bridgewater took the news in stride, saying he was looking forward to learning from Cassel, continuing to refine his understanding of the offense while staying ready if he's needed at any point this season.

"When camp first started, I just wanted to learn as much as I could and try to get better each and every day, try not to make the same mistakes twice," Bridgewater said. "So I take my hat off to Matt. He's been playing great this preseason. I'm just going to continue to learn under him."

In his first season as a

head coach, Zimmer was asked if Cassel was his starter for the entire season or if there was a chance for Bridgewater to see time at some point in his rookie year.

"We will hold the quarterback position to the exact same expectations as we do every other position. If you perform, you play. If you don't perform, then the next guy will get an opportunity at some point. And when we decide to do that, we sit down and discuss it."

"That position, just like the outside linebacker spot, we have an expectation of performance and as long as

those guys perform, they play."

**NOTES:** The Vikings announced their first round of cuts on Monday. Safety Mistral Raymond was waived/injured with a leg injury after three seasons with the team. The other cuts were: CBs Derek Cox and Robert Steeples, WRs Andy Cruse, Kamar Jordan, Ty Walker and Erik Lora, tackles Pierce Burton and Kevin Murphy, DLs Kheeston Randall, Tyler Scott and Jake Snyder, TE Kory Sperry and S Brandon Bishop. ... TE Chase Ford was activated from the physically unable to perform list.

## Lancers

From Page 7

"Her experience is huge, in terms of understanding the (Great Plains Athletic Conference), understanding the pace of the league and what we have to fight through to win those games," Climer said. "It's also nice that we have a sophomore setter and three freshman setters coming in this year, and they can learn from her."

Sophomore Amber Dysthe (119 assists, 41 digs, 8 blocks), a former Parker standout, saw time at setter last season when Illg was injured. Freshman setter Lindsey Jaxien (Platte Center, Nebraska) is also on the varsity roster. Two other freshmen setters, Morgan Hay (Parker) and Gabby Swanson (Wausa, Nebraska), will open the season on the junior varsity.

Besides having a veteran setter, the Lancers boast a solid offensive attack. Five of the team's top six hitters return from last season: Boyle, Groseth, junior Bailey Kuchta (242 kills, 210 digs, 27 blocks, 20 ace serves) and sophomores Allison Cross (190 kills, 74 blocks) and Sierra Kloth (131 kills, 46 digs).

"Laura, Bailey and Sierra all have experience on the out-

side," Climer said. "In the middle, Allison led us in hitting percentage (.228) last year, and we have Jena back. It's a well-rounded group that also has depth."

Miller returns at libero for the Lancers, who also return juniors BreAnne Thege (155 digs) and Kayla Jones, and sophomores Sam Bischoff (43 digs) and Kesley Abbey (41 digs) in the back.

Sophomore Haley Hohn-Donat (16 kills, 5 blocks), who saw limited time last season, and freshman Adriel Hoften (OH, Elk Horn, Iowa) will also

dress varsity to open the season, as will freshman defensive specialist Taylor Murtha (Sioux Falls).

The Lancers also have several talented individuals who will begin the season on the JV roster. Battles for every varsity spot have been spirited, according to Illg.

"The girls are just playing like crazy," she said. "It's dog eat dog every time we're out on the court."

Climer noticed the improved overall talent of the full squad on the first day of practice.

"On day one we mixed everyone up, and it was amazing how well everyone played together," she said. "I'm confident enough to put the next person in, and that hasn't always been the case."

The Lancers finished 13-20 a year ago, 2-14 in the GPAC. The mark was one victory shy of the most for a Lancer squad in the GPAC era (14-21 in 2008).

MMC was picked 10th in the poll for a second straight year, but their goals are higher.

"Northwestern is our first conference home game, and I couldn't be more thrilled," said Climer, referring to the defending league champs, picked first in this year's preseason poll. "We need to focus on playing our game, and last year we started to do that more. We can't worry about who our opponent is."

The Lancers have one GPAC Tournament appearance in school history, in 2000 — the first year of the league. MMC is determined to end that drought this season.

"Our main goal is the conference tournament," Miller said. "For that to happen, we all have to focus and stay together as a team."

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at [twitter.com/JCimburek](https://twitter.com/JCimburek). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net)

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## Women

From Page 7

what their capability is."

Epp is impressed with the level of talent on the field for the Lancers so far.

"We have some of the more talented soccer players we have had," he said. "Even the subs are better. The girls on the bench have the ability to get in there and perform."

Consistency with new players will be the key, if the Lancers want to make it back-

to-back appearances in the GPAC playoffs.

"We will need to be more consistent in the beginning of the season," Epp said. "If we can build some momentum throughout the season, it will help us in the long haul."

Mount Marty will travel to York College today for their season opener. Game-time is set for 4p.m.

You can follow Nick Robinson on Twitter at [twitter.com/RobinsonNick2013](https://twitter.com/RobinsonNick2013). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net)

## Men

From Page 7

strength," he said. "We scored a lot more goals last year than we did the year before. Our offense will be even tougher than the year before."

In order to reach the post-season, the Lancers know they have to pick it up on the defensive side of the ball.

"We didn't match up well defensively," Epp said. "We've got those guys back and we will see a great improvement from last season."

Epp feels Mount Marty has the talent, but wants to find his team's motivation throughout the season.

"Our goal needs to be making it to the GPAC tournament for the first time," he said. "We have the talent to do it, we just need to keep everyone healthy and to stay motivated."

The Mount Marty Lancers open their season today at York College at 6 p.m.

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## Yankees Rout Royals 8-1

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Derek Jeter drove in two runs in his final scheduled trip to Kauffman Stadium, backing a sharp outing from Michael Pineda and helping the New York Yankees beat the Kansas City Royals 6-1 on Monday night for their fifth straight win.

Jacoby Ellsbury drove in a run in the seventh inning with the 1,000th hit of his career, then added a two-run homer in the ninth. Stephen Drew and Martin Prado also homered for New York.

Pineda (3-2) gave up a solo shot to Mike Moustakas leading off the third inning, but that was about it in his third game back from the disabled

list. Pineda struck out five without a walk in 6 1-3 innings to win for the first time since beating the Cubs on April 16.

James Shields (12-7) allowed six runs over 6 2-3 innings for Kansas City.

The game was a makeup of a rainout in June. And if you're willing to count it as a true series, it would be the first time in their last 11 that the Royals have dropped one.

Jeter, who is retiring after the season, answered a standing ovation as he stepped to the plate in the third inning with a groundout to shortstop that gave New York a 1-0 lead.

Moustakas tied the game with his 15th homer in the bottom half.