

Don't Call NDSU-Sam Houston Title Bout A 'Rematch'

FCS Championship Game: Bison, Bearkats Different From Squads That Faced Off In 2012

BY DAVE KOLPACK
Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Hang on before you chalk up the Football Championship Subdivision title game as a rematch.

The coaches at North Dakota State and Sam Houston State said Thursday their teams are not carbon copies from a year ago.

"It's two new teams that are playing each other this season," Bearkats coach Willie Fritz said. "A lot of the offense and defense and kicking game principles are the same, but there are a lot of differ-

ences that I can tell from watching the tape."

The most obvious changes were made with assistant coaches, where NDSU needed to replace its defensive coordinator and Sam Houston State brought in practically a new offensive staff. Both units are even better than a year ago.

The Bison, who won last year's game 17-6, will put its top-rated defense against Sam Houston State's No. 2 scoring offense in the Jan. 5 game in Frisco, Texas.

"They are very talented. They've got very good players," Fritz said. "They're

quick and fast. They play with great leverage. It's really tough to outflank them."

Fritz has succeeded in improving his team's passing game, which worked as a surprise element last year but struggled in obvious throwing situations. The result is a more balanced offense and a quarterback, Brian Bell, who ranks 11th in FCS in passing efficiency.

"It was a little bit bumpy at the beginning of the year like it always is when you implement something new," Fritz said. "But we really took off about week four or five."

Bison coach Craig Bohl said preparing for Sam Houston State's offense is more difficult this time around.

"They have a different play caller and

their quarterback is throwing the ball significantly better," Bohl said. "They've got a lot more threats. That's really going to stress our defense."

NDSU's defense features an All-American cornerback in Marcus Williams, but is spearheaded by linebackers Grant Olson and Travis Beck. Olson had a school-record 29 tackles in a playoff win over Wofford. Beck came back the next week to record 15 tackles against Georgia Southern.

"We've got to get bodies on bodies," Fritz said, referring to his team's blocking.

Last year's game was a defensive struggle that saw NDSU escape with a 235-210 edge in total offense. The Bison broke the game open with their first fake

punt of the year to set up the go-ahead touchdown.

Fritz, asked about the fake punt, said it was an excellent call and the play was executed well. Then he added, "Shoot, I was trying to forget that."

Bohl has been known to pull off the occasional trick play in his tenure with NDSU. The key touchdown in this year's playoff win over South Dakota State was an end around that worked when 5-foot-7 wide receiver Ryan Smith basically hid behind his linemen.

"Having good players execute it is the most important thing. In every ballgame you always look at things to try and find an edge," Bohl said. "Certainly last year that (fake punt) proved to be a good play in the game."

Unflappable Frazier Leads Vikings To Playoff Brink

BY JON KRAWCZYNSKI
AP Sports Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The Vikings trudged out of Lambeau Field, their season slipping away after a nasty skid of four losses in five weeks dropped Minnesota to 6-6 and essentially turned every game from there on into a must win.

Fans were clamoring for Christian Ponder's benching. The coaching staff was catching heat for a perceived inability to make in-game adjustments. There was growing concern that Adrian Peterson's brilliant comeback season was being wasted by a team heading nowhere.

Through it all, Leslie Frazier never wavered.

For a coach who inherited a team in turmoil in 2010, presided over the end of Brett Favre's celebrated consecutive games streak, and had to navigate the collapse of the Metrodome's roof and the lockout in his first six months on the job, a little losing skid seemed trivial in comparison. He never bowed to public pressure to make a quarterback switch and never changed his message to his team.

Now Frazier's Vikings are riding a three-game winning streak into the regular season finale — and a victory over the Green Bay Packers on Sunday puts them into the playoffs.

"Just his voice and what he has brought to this team and the locker room, it's been huge," Peterson said. "Guys really connect with him on that level. Just feeling his presence through his words and the confidence he has in us. Everything he speaks out there, we embrace and trust in his word."

In the middle of one of the most chaotic seasons in franchise history in 2010, Vikings owners Zygi and Mark Wilf were searching for a calming presence and a steady hand to quiet things down. A team that started the season with Super Bowl aspirations saw Favre's skills diminish greatly amid a tabloid scandal surrounding his time with the New York Jets. Randy Moss come and go in the span of just a few weeks and Brad Childress get fired less than a year after signing a contract extension.

Frazier took over with six games left in a lost season, then had to hold the team together after the Metrodome's roof collapsed under the weight of heavy snow — forcing the Vikings to play one home game in Detroit and another at the University of Minnesota's stadium — and Favre's streak came to an end.

Then came the lockout, which prevented his newly assembled staff from working with the players all summer long. The Vikings went 3-13 in his first full season, yet avoided the implosion that often comes with so many losses. Now, the unflappable Frazier has guided the team to a 9-6 record in what many expected to be a rebuilding year.

"Leslie's the kind of guy, 'We're still in this thing. We're fighting. We're together. We're all in,'" linebacker Chad Greenway said. "And his approach is perfect, in my mind, for what an NFL coach needs to be. He's really consistent. He knows what he wants from his players. He hires high-character guys to have in the locker room and it seems to be working pretty well."

That's always been Frazier's nature, dating to his playing days under fiery coaches such as Mike Ditka and Buddy Ryan.

"Just going back to my playing days and just being around coaches who sometimes, they could be so up and down, you just didn't know when you walked in the building what you were going to get from day to day and

EPJ Boys Bounce Sisseton



Sisseton's Garret Brooks (20) has his shot attempt blocked by Elk Point-Jefferson's Andrew Flynn, back center and Bryce Kelly, right, during the first half of their game Thursday night in the Cavalier Winter Basketball Classic at the Aberdeen Civic Arena. Looking on for Elk Point-Jefferson are Brock Zeller, left and Adam Shanks, back right.

BY JOHN PAPERDICK
Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN — Two former Chamberlain standout basketball teammates — now successful high school coaches — faced off in an unlikely place Thursday night.

Coach Cole Knippling and his Elk Point-Jefferson Huskies nipped his good friend, coach Adam Nelson and his Sisseton Redmen, 41-32 at the Aberdeen Civic Arena. It was the first game of a boys' basketball double-header, and it was EPJ's first win and Sisseton's first loss.

Knippling and Nelson led Chamberlain High School to the 2000 State A championship game, where the Cubs fell to West Central.

"It was good to get that win after our 0-3 start," EPJ coach Cole Knippling said. "We have played a lot of good teams, but sometimes it is easy to lose a lot of confidence in a hurry. We needed this, and it was nice to get a win over a good team like Sisseton and such a good coach like Adam."

Three things keyed the win for EPJ: defense, the ability to regain its composure after Sisseton went on an 8-0 run in the fourth quarter to get within four with 2 minutes left, and making seven of 10 free throws in the final 89 seconds.

"This was the first game where we played such good overall team defense like that," Knippling said. "I liked our defense, and the way we handled Sisseton's run."

He also liked his team's free throw shooting effort in the fourth quarter, especially that of senior Bryce Kelly. Kelly has been struggling from the free throw line this season. But he made eight of 10 against Sisseton, including four in a row in the fourth quarter.

"It is nice to see that kind of improvement," Knippling said.

Sisseton trailed 34-22 with 3 1/2 minutes left, but got back-to-back three-pointers from Garret Brooks and Jordan Rolstad, a steal from Brooks — who also drew a charge, and a steal and basket from Brayden Tasa. That one-minute stretch drew Sisseton to within 34-30.

However, EPJ then started makings its own great plays — including a diving out-of-bounds save by Dakota Navrkal. That saved led to two free throws from Kelly, which stopped Sisseton's run. EPJ then got a steal from Adam Shanks, which led to two free throws from Brock Zeller and a more comfortable 38-30 lead with 68 seconds left.

Kelly led EPJ with 16 points and nine rebounds while teammate Blake Donnelly had 14 points and six steals. Sisseton got 13 points and eight rebounds from Jordan Rolstad.

Elk Point-Jefferson will play Aberdeen Roncalli at the Roncalli gym at 6 tonight. Sisseton will play Parkston at 7 p.m. Saturday in the Parkston Classic.

ELK POINT-JEFFERSON: Blake Donnelly 5-2-4 14, Andrew Flynn 1-0-2, Brock Zeller 2-2-4 6, Adam Shanks 1-1-5 3, Bryce Kelly 4-8-10 16. Totals 13-38 13-26 41.
SISSETON: Jordan Rolstad 6-0-1 13, Wyatt Youngblom 3-0-2 6, Garret Brooks 2-0-2 5, Jordan Cornelius 2-0-0 4, Brayden Tasa 2-0-4. Totals 15-55 9-5 32.
SISSETON (4-1).....4 10 22 32
ELK POINT-JEFFERSON (1-3).....6 15 26 41
3-point field goals — Rolstad, Brooks; Donnelly 2. Total fouls — Sisseton 16, Elk Point-Jefferson 11. Rebounds — Sisseton 37 (Rolstad 8), Elk Point-Jefferson 34 (Kelly 9). Turnovers — Sisseton 14, Elk Point-Jefferson 20.

Double Double-Doubles Drive Tornadoes Past Parker

CENTERVILLE — Seamus O'Malley and Luke Abbas each had double-doubles to lead Centerville to a 68-51 victory over Parker at the Lance Buseman Classic on Thursday in Centerville.

O'Malley finished with 19 points, 10 rebounds and five assists to lead a balanced Centerville attack. Abbas posted 16 points and 11 rebounds. Logan Hunter had 14 points and Josh DeRaad added six assists in the win.

Eric Hunstad led Parker with 12 points. Michael Olson finished with seven rebounds for the Pheasants.

Centerville, 4-0, travels to Marion on Jan. 3. Parker, 3-3, opens play in the Big East Conference Tournament against Garretson on Jan. 3 in Howard.

PARKER (3-3).....7 21 35 51
CENTERVILLE (4-0).....15 37 55 68

Viborg-Hurley 72, Beresford 40

CENTERVILLE — The Viborg-Hurley Cougars improved to 5-0 with a 72-40 victory over Beresford at the Lance Buseman Classic on Thursday in Centerville.

Andrew Hora had 16 points and eight rebounds, and Jack Huether had 14 points and three steals to lead a balanced Viborg-Hurley attack. Trevor Jacobsen added 12 points for the Cougars, who led 21-5 after one quarter and 41-17 at the half.

Oliver Doeden led Beresford with 15 points. Logan Busch added nine points.

Viborg-Hurley faces Ethan on Saturday at the Parkston Classic. Beresford begins play in the Big Sioux Conference Tournament on Jan. 3 in Sioux Falls.

VIBORG-HURLEY (5-0).....21 41 55 72
BERESFORD (1-4).....5 17 30 40

Great Northeast Neb. Shootout

Hart. Cedar Catholic 68, West Point-Beemer 55

WAYNE, Neb. — James Kaiser

led three players in double figures as Hartington Cedar Catholic used a dominant spurt to upend West Point-Beemer 68-55 Thursday in the first round of the Great Northeast Nebraska Shootout in Wayne, Neb.

Kaiser scored 23 points, while Grant Howell added 19 points and Feilmeier had 14 points for the Trojans (5-1), who out-scored WPB 41-18 over the second and third quarters.

Thomas Wapelhorst and Justin Anderson each scored 13 points for West Point-Beemer (2-6), while Cole Schmidt had 12 points.

Cedar Catholic plays Adams Central today (Friday) in the semifinals at 5:30 p.m.

HARTINGTON CEDAR CATHOLIC (5-1).....10 30 51 68
WEST POINT-BEEMER (2-6).....17 27 35 55

Adams Central 71, Battle Creek 27

WAYNE, Neb. — Eleven players scored for Adams Central in a 71-27 throttling of Battle Creek in Friday's first round action at the Great Northeast Nebraska Shootout.

Blake Overmiller led with 18 points, while Tyler Kirkegaard, Mark Brown and Matt Brown all added eight points for Adams Central (8-0).

Zach Bellar scored eight points in the loss for Battle Creek (1-5).

BATTLE CREEK (1-5).....11 21 25 27
ADAMS CENTRAL (8-0).....28 40 57 71

Swiftel Classic

Estelline 70, Gayville-Volin 19

BROOKINGS — The Estelline Redmen put three players in double figures and had 11 players score in a 70-19 victory over Gayville-Volin at the Swiftel boys' basketball Classic on Thursday.

Brian Vohlken led Estelline with 15 points, 12 rebounds and

six assists. Garret Reed had 13 points and nine assists. Brady Miller had 10 points and Ben Shay posted five steals in the win.

Brandon Van Osdel scored seven points to lead Gayville-Volin. Ryan Adams grabbed nine rebounds and D.J. Hawthorne had eight boards as the Raiders claimed a 48-43 edge on the boards.

Estelline, 3-1, plays Dell Rapids St. Mary on Saturday in Brookings. Gayville-Volin travels to Scotland on Saturday.

GAUVILLE-VOLIN (0-4).....3 7 10 19
ESTELLINE (3-1).....10 28 50 70

Pipestone 43, Gregory 36

BROOKINGS — Pipestone, Minn., jumped out to a 29-14 half-time lead and coasted to a 43-36 victory over Gregory at the Swiftel Classic on Thursday.

Jacob Derby led Pipestone with 11 points. Collin Moeller added nine points, 12 rebounds and five steals in the win.

Gavin Thomas led Gregory with 16 points. Andrew Taggart had 12 rebounds off the bench. Jayden Bartling was scoreless, but added five assists and four steals for the Gorillas.

PIPESTONE.....18 29 33 43
GREGORY.....7 14 21 36

Oelrichs 62, Deuel 53

BROOKINGS — Eriq Swiftwater scored 17 points and Ray Rouillard had 13 points off the bench to lead Oelrichs to a 62-53 victory over Deuel at the Swiftel Classic on Thursday.

B.J. Brings Him Back added 12 points for Oelrichs, which outscored the Cardinals 21-10 in the fourth quarter to claim victory.

Lincoln Swenson led Deuel with 18 points. Justin Cassels added 10 points and six assists.

OELRICHS.....15 25 41 62
DEUEL.....12 21 43 53

Lake Preston 53, Waverly-South Shore 48, OT

BROOKINGS — Lake Preston survived a fourth quarter surge by Waverly-South Shore to claim a 53-48 overtime victory at the Swiftel Classic on Thursday.

WSS outscored Lake Preston 18-12 in the fourth quarter, but Lake Preston came back from four points down with 1:32 to play to send the game into overtime. The Divers took that momentum into overtime to claim victory.

Cole Casper scored a game-high 24 points, and Layne Jensen had 10 points and 18 rebounds to lead Lake Preston. Michael Bradford added 11 points in the win.

Sam Pond and Austin Comes each had 10 points for Waverly-South Shore. Jeremy Johnson grabbed 10 rebounds for the Coyotes.

WAVERLY-SOUTH SHORE.....9 18 26 44 48
LAKE PRESTON.....15 19 32 44 53

Lincoln HI 45, Florence-Henry 31

BROOKINGS — Lincoln HI, Minn., duo Ryan Rybinski and Jordan Beck combined for 35 points to lead the squad to a 45-31 victory over Florence-Henry at the Swiftel Classic on Thursday.

Rybinski had 19 points and Beck added 16 points for Lincoln HI, which outscored Florence-Henry 19-7 in the fourth quarter.

Craig Reiter led Florency-Henry with 13 points.

LINCOLN HI.....11 19 26 45
FLORENCE-HENRY.....10 17 24 31

Verdigre Holiday Tour.

Osmond 59, Allen 35

VERDIGRE, Neb. — Osmond outscored Allen 30-16 in the second half on the way to a 59-35 victory over the Eagles in the