

Disappointed Vikings Drop Hope Of Peterson Return

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Adrian Peterson's last appearance in the Minnesota locker room was nearly 10 weeks ago. The Vikings have played all but one game this season without his swift and strong running ability.

Optimism for his return remained among Peterson's teammates, particularly following his plea agreement earlier this month that freed him from the court system with only a misdemeanor charge and probation requirements.

The hope, now, has vanished. "We know now he's not coming through those doors and coming back this year to be on our team," cornerback Captain Munnery said Wednesday, the day after the NFL gave Peterson a suspension without pay for at least the rest of the season. "We're kind of hurt that he's not, but we knew it was kind of coming, so we just have to move on."

Commissioner Roger Goodell ruled Peterson violated the personal conduct policy for the severe injuries to his 4-year-old son he ac-

knowledged to authorities occurred from corporal punishment with a wooden switch.

Even if Peterson were to shorten his suspension with a successful appeal, the Vikings actually using him yet this year would be an implausible scenario given the heat they took for initially reinstating him to the roster. Then add in the long time Peterson has been away from practices and meetings, let alone games.

"I guess it is a sense of knowing that it is over with. Kind of, I guess, puts people at ease. It's not what we wanted, but at the same time we hope that he gets another shot," running back Jerick McKinnon said. "Great player, great mentor, and I'll still look up to him. I'll stay in touch. I'm praying for him, hoping for the best."

The Vikings have six games left and host the Green Bay Packers on Sunday.

"We can't have a dark cloud over our facility or over our team," quarterback Teddy Bridgewater said, adding: "We would love to have him, but it's out of our hands."

Coach Mike Zimmer addressed the Peterson situation with the

players Wednesday morning.

"I support him and his family and he's been great with me, but other than that ... we've got to move forward. It's just the way life is," Zimmer said.

Regardless of their feelings about boundaries of parental discipline and punishment Peterson might have deserved for what was originally a felony charge, Vikings players were unanimous in their support for him and his return. Even rookies like Bridgewater and McKinnon raved about the effort Peterson put into being a leader and a mentor.

"There were times in training camp where I'd get down on myself because I may have had a bad practice or didn't like this throw or that throw, and he would always come up to me and tell me, 'Hey, you're not going to be perfect. You can't control what everyone's saying about you. You can't control every throw. You just have to trust yourself, play football and trust your God-given abilities,'" Bridgewater said. "Hearing that from Adrian, it just meant a lot."

The Vikings were also in lock-step disagreement with Goodell's

decision. The NFL Players Association has accused the league of handling the process inconsistently and unfairly, believing Peterson has already been punished by being on the exempt list with pay for the last nine weeks. Goodell has sole discretion to put a player on or take him off the list, which has rarely been used.

"Once he got taken care of what he got taken care of in the games he's already missed, I feel like he should be back," fullback Jerome Felton said.

Peterson's salary for the season was \$11.75 million. He will keep the money accrued while on the exempt list. But the NFL's punishment has now amounted to a 14-game ban, with six unpaid weeks. That's the equivalent of a fine of more than \$4.1 million.

There are three years and \$45 million remaining on his contract, but none of it is guaranteed. The Vikings would take only a \$2.4 million hit on their 2015 salary cap if they cut him before next season.

Vikings Claim RB Ben Tate Off Waivers

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The Minnesota

Vikings have claimed running back Ben Tate off waivers from the Cleveland Browns.

Tate was signed Wednesday, when running backs Matt Asiata (concussion) and Jerick McKinnon (lower back injury) both were held out of practice. The move also came the day after the NFL announced a suspension of running back Adrian Peterson for the rest of the season for violating the league's personal conduct policy.

Tate was the featured ball carrier for a while this season while he was healthy, but his playing time dwindled as rookies Isaiah Crowell and Terrance West emerged. Tate signed as a free agent with the Browns after four years with the Houston Texans.

To make room for Tate, the Vikings waived tight end MarQueis Gray.

Vikings Sink \$647,000 More Into Stadium

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings are adding \$647,000 to their share of their new stadium thanks to several design changes.

The changes are up for approval at Friday's meeting of the authority overseeing the stadium's construction.

The biggest share is almost \$235,000 to change finishes and food service capabilities in one section of the stadium. There's an additional \$116,000 to redesign the Vikings' locker room, plus \$146,000 to redesign end zone seating.

The stadium's price tag is around \$1 billion, with taxpayers covering \$477 million. It's due to open in 2016.

Preview

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(423 assists, 195 digs, 40 ace serves) and junior Karli O'Connor (332 assists, 179 digs, 28 ace serves) have shared setting duties. Freshman libero Rachel Nelson (358 digs, 27 ace serves) has been a primary passer in the back. Junior Mikayla Axtell (240 digs) and senior Ashton Auch (19.5 blocks) have also been contributors defensively.

The Tigers dress only two seniors and four juniors among its 16 varsity players. "You look at our team, and we have four freshmen and five sophomores out there," Costain said.

The Tigers have finished strong, winning five of seven. One of those two losses was to Watertown, a team Harrisburg faced in the regular season finale.

"We have to take care of ourselves. Both times against Watertown, we focused on what they were doing," Costain said. "We need to take care of the ball on our side."

Getting to the net defensively will be crucial, Costain noted.

"We need to utilize our height to block. We need to take some heat off our back row," she said. "We also need to be aggressive on every point."

Roosevelt

Earning a 12th straight state tournament appearance was not easy for the Rough Riders. Extending a string of four straight championship match appearances and eight straight top-three finishes might prove even more difficult.

"We had to work hard to get here," said Roosevelt head coach Holly Lynch, who has coached the Rough Riders during the entire run. "We've had 10, 11 different lineups. We face adversity, and we've had to work through it."

Senior Tagyn Larson, a University of Iowa basketball commit, has sparked the offense, recording 502 kills with a .313 hitting percentage. She also has team-highs of 40 ace serves, 67 blocks and 305 digs on the season.

Senior Paige Rome (214 kills, 48 blocks, 113 digs), senior Madison Tyler (109 kills, 239 digs), sophomore Kalei Wilson (100 kills, 61 blocks) and junior Kyra Wagner (98 kills, 101 digs) have also been effective offensively. Junior Bailey Lamb has distributed the ball, recording 814 assists.

"The team has come together nicely, as far as the ability to run different options," Lynch said. "Our offense is nice."

Larson and junior Rylie Kooima share top honors in digs. Lamb has 239 digs and sophomore Maia Gabrielson has 172 digs for the Rough Riders.

"We use eight girls primarily," Lynch said. "We try to keep the passes the same throughout the match."

Roosevelt faced Aberdeen Central a month into the season as the squad was in a skid of seven losses in nine matches. The Riders come into the rematch having won six of seven and having been just the second AA opponent to take a set from top-seeded O'Gorman this season. (Brandon Valley was the other on Oct. 28. The Knights also dropped a set to Class A fa-



Pierre's Kelsey Schmitz attacks the ball during a match earlier this season. Schmitz and the Lady Gavs made the tournament for the first time since 2008.

State AA Tournament Schedule

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
S.F. O'Gorman (30-5) vs. Pierre (8-15), noon Huron (18-5) vs. R.C. Stevens (25-7), 1:45 p.m. Watertown (19-4) vs. Harrisburg (12-10), 6 p.m. Aberdeen Central (20-2) vs. S.F. Roosevelt (18-18), 7:45 p.m.	O'Gorman-Pierre loser vs. Huron-Stevens loser, noon Watertown-Harrisburg loser vs. Aberdeen Central-Roosevelt loser, 1:45 p.m. O'Gorman-Pierre winner vs. Huron-Stevens winner, 6 p.m. Watertown-Harrisburg winner vs. Aberdeen Central-Roosevelt winner, 7:45 p.m.	SEVENTH PLACE: Consolation losers, noon FIFTH PLACE: Consolation winners, 1:45 p.m. THIRD PLACE: Semifinal losers, 6 p.m. CHAMPIONSHIP: Semifinal winners, 8 p.m.

vorite Sioux Falls Christian on Oct. 9.)

"We saw them early, when we had a different lineup," Lynch said. "They are athletic, smart, aggressive and relentless. They come to play."

For the Rough Riders to continue their impressive tournament run, they will need to hold nothing back.

"We have to play with no regrets," Lynch said. "We are fortunate to play in the state tournament. We want to leave here with no excuses, no regrets."

"You don't get a second chance at this."

Pierre

Losing six straight and eight of nine matches entering the post-season isn't exactly the way you want to go into districts, but Coach Chris Swiden and the Lady Gavs got the ship righted in time to avenge a loss to Mitchell and beat a highly-respected Spearfish team in post-season play and earn the program's first trip to state in six years.

"We knew it would be a long learning season," he said. "I thought that by the end we'd be a pretty good team."

In the process, all 16 players on Pierre's state tournament roster found a way into

the regular rotation at some point in the season.

"We learned a lot on the go," Swiden said. "We had two or three with varsity experience to start the season."

Part of that process was finding a setter. Swiden ended up finding two, senior Jamie Hyde (204 assists) and junior Jordyn Lemieux (195 assists).

"Jordyn was an outside hitter, and she's been our best back row setter," he said. "Jamie was a right-side hitter, and she's been our front row setter."

The veterans Pierre did have entering the season have played key roles.

"Kelsey Schmitz (169 kills, 171 digs) has been our best hitter. She had 20 kills against Spearfish," Swiden said. "Kallie Stout (421 digs) in the back row has been phenomenal defensively. When we have played well, it is because she has our back row playing well."

Sophomore Peyton Peitz (107 kills) and junior Macy Halverson (94 kills, 38 ace serves) have also been weapons offensively. Junior Sammi Claussen has a team-best 28 blocks.

The Lady Gavs have a tough task off the bat, facing defending champion O'Gorman, but Swiden said that Pierre cannot afford to play timid.

Carrier Dome To Host AHL Game

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (AP) — When Howard Dolgon bought a minor league professional hockey team in this snowy city more than two decades ago, he was ready for the challenge.

Several teams previously had tried and failed, but the game is popular in upstate New York and Dolgon figured he could make it work with the right marketing.

"The great phrase at the time was this was a hockey graveyard," Dolgon recalled. "Why come here? Teams come here to die."

That was in 1994, and Dolgon hasn't looked back. His Syracuse Crunch is now the senior independently owned

team in the American Hockey League, and for him the sky's always been the limit.

Which brings us to Saturday, when the Crunch will host the first — and most likely the only — professional hockey game inside the Carrier Dome.

Right where Jim Boehm Court rules at this time of year.

The Frozen Dome Classic will include three games: a benefit featuring fire department teams from Syracuse and nearby Utica; a game between Division III schools Oswego State and Utica College; and the finale — the Crunch against the Utica Comets in the evening.

Hoeck

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from three a year ago.

Second-seeded Aberdeen Central (20-2) clearly has the best shot to upset Sioux Falls O'Gorman (26-4), but that wouldn't matchup wouldn't come until Saturday night's championship.

What about in the first two days?

"One at a time," Aberdeen Central coach Dennis Northrup told me Wednesday, smiling.

The Golden Eagles and Pierre were the only state tournament entrants not to play O'Gorman this season, but Aberdeen Central gave the Knights a challenge in last year's semifinals — losing by scores of 22-25, 23-25, 21-25.

Yes, that was a year ago, but the Golden Eagles felt like they had a championship-caliber team, Northrup said.

"I look back and think we could have won them all," he said.

The first team to get its crack against O'Gorman is eighth-seeded Pierre (8-15) in today's opening match at noon. The Governors were the only other team in the field to not face the Knights this season.

But don't think that matters. The Lady Governors are 1-9 against the other seven tournament teams.

You can talk about how solid teams like Aberdeen Central and Watertown are, or how balanced the ESD is, but Buddenhagen is quick to point out that O'Gorman "is like a brick wall."

Yeah, no kidding.

The Knights are a perfect 19-0 against South Dakota teams this season, and have played in three out-of-state tournaments — in Minnesota, Las Vegas and Iowa. And of those 19 in-state wins, 16 came via a 3-0 sweep and the other three went four sets.

O'Gorman is led by 6-foot-4 outside hitter Taryn Kloth, who signed with Creighton, and 6-foot-3 middle hitter Jessica Mieras, a South Dakota State basketball recruit. Add to that senior setter Dalee Stene, a 4-year varsity starter, and you've got the makings of a dominant team.

But is the year an ESD team breaks through to hoist the championship trophy?

Sioux Falls teams have won six of the last eight state titles, with the most recent exception being Aberdeen Central in 2009 — before that, it was Rapid City Stevens in 2007.

"You can't overlook anybody," Northrup said. "You don't get to catch the ball and control it, so weird things can happen."

"I've been around this thing long enough to know better."

Having seen O'Gorman in person this season, I'd bank on them easily reaching the final, and most likely having to beat Aberdeen Central for the championship.

Unless, of course, one of the other four ESD schools decides to shake things up a little bit.

That'd certainly make for a fun story, wouldn't it? A year after having just three teams in the state tournament, the ESD gets five in this year and mounts a serious threat at a title.

"It just shows that the conference is pretty strong this year, having five of us in," said Watertown coach Kim Rohde, whose Arrows (19-4) are the No. 3 seed.

"It's nice to have the conference being able to represent itself."

Part of that, to be fair, is because teams like Sioux Falls Lincoln and Sioux Falls Washington were down a bit this season.

"Honestly, I think things go in cycles, and maybe Sioux Falls was in a down cycle," Buddenhagen said.

With the tournament being held in an ESD town, you can bet any casual fans — and there aren't likely to be many, with Yankton in the field — in the Summit Center stands are hoping to be able to root for a league team.

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