

# No Coasting: Cardinals, Rangers Meet In The Middle

BY BEN WALKER  
AP Baseball Writer

It's a World Series straight out of Central casting.

David Freese, the local boy who became a big hit for the St. Louis Cardinals. Big Tex himself, Nolan Ryan rooting on the Rangers. A pair of teams cut from a center slice of the country, set to meet in the middle.

Makes for a different feel this October, doesn't it?

No coasting in this Series. None of the Derek Jeters, Dustin Pedroias or Chase Utleys from the East we've grown accustomed to seeing. None of the Tim Lincecums or Brian Wilsons we watched from the West last fall.

They begin at Busch Stadium on Wednesday night, with C.J. Wilson starting for Texas against Chris Carpenter.

Oh, and no need to change any clocks. Every game is scheduled to start at 7:05 p.m. local time. Kind of nice to

avoid those late-afternoon shadows in California and skip those post-midnight final outs in Northeast. Provided there's no rain or extra innings, that is.

With MVPs Albert Pujols, Josh Hamilton and several other All-Stars involved, it's certainly an interesting matchup. Adding to the intrigue: The teams are hardly acquainted, having played only three games against each other — and that lone series was back in 2004.

According to STATS LLC, the Rangers-Cardinals matchup equals the fewest games between two opponents in the majors, tying Mets-White Sox.

Freese was eager to get going. A prep star in suburban St. Louis, he emerged as the MVP of the NL championship series, helped by his three-run homer in the clinching Game 6 at Milwaukee.

"Thanks for the love yall," Freese tweeted Monday. "For the first time gettin smoked in fantasy football doesn't feel too bad."

Whether sports fans in other spots

will watch this Series remains to be seen.

Last year's pairing of the Giants and Rangers drew television ratings that equaled the lowest ever. The numbers were down 28 percent from the year before when the New York Yankees played the Philadelphia Phillies.

The Cardinals still have a national profile, dating to a half-century ago when St. Louis was the most western point in the major leagues. In those days, the vast Cardinals radio network developed a broad fan base all over the country.

This week, the Rangers make their first trip to St. Louis.

"The Rangers are scary. They're a scary team," Freese said. "You look at that lineup, you look at that staff. It's going to be a battle."

"I think we're a team that can match up with them a little bit. And they're confident, we're confident. It's been a tough road. I've definitely been watch-

ing the ALCS for sure. That's some good ball over there," he said.

Manager Tony La Russa and the wildcard Cardinals make for a good story. Trailing by 10 1/2 games in late August, St. Louis made a late run and earned its playoff spot on the final day of the regular season.

The Rangers, guided by excitable manager Ron Washington, were in control for most of the season. Both teams can score, and both wound up relying heavily on their bullpens in the playoffs.

They also share this similarity: Neither had a payroll in the majors' top third on opening day. The Cardinals were 11th at \$105 million, Texas was 13th at \$92 million.

Not exactly a matchup that anyone predicted in spring training, at the All-Star break or in the stretch.

"This is a year where if you know anything about baseball," TBS analyst John Smoltz said, "throw it out the window."

## Rangers-Cardinals

The Texas Rangers and the St. Louis Cardinals meet in the 2011 World Series for the Cardinals' 18th and the Rangers' 2nd trip to the Fall classic.

Team history	Team history
3,103-3,240* (1972-2011)	Franchise 9,015-8,351 (1900-2011)
• 5 appearances • 2 pennants	Playoffs • 24 appearances • 18 pennants • 10 World Series wins

2011 regular season team stats (MLB rank)	
283 (1)	Batting avg. .273 (5)
210 (2)	Home runs 162 (13)
807 (3)	RBIs 726 (5)
3.79 (13)	ERA 3.74 (12)

\*As the Texas Rangers; does not include Washington Senators stats  
Source: Baseball Reference.com

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# Frazier: Vikings To Decide On QB By Wednesday

BY DAVE CAMPBELL  
AP Sports Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The stability and experience Donovan McNabb was supposed to bring to Minnesota's offense while rookie Christian Ponder learned the position has yielded one win in six games.

The Vikings sure look and sound a lot like a team on the verge of a quarterback switch.

Coach Leslie Frazier said Monday he'll take the next two days to talk with his staff and promised a decision Wednesday. Ponder relieved McNabb for the fourth quarter Sunday at Chicago with the Vikings on their way to a 1-5 record. The division standings suggest pride is all that can be salvaged from the 2011 season, though Frazier refused to turn his focus to the future.

"Right now 2012 is not really on the radar," he said.

Frazier was steadfast in his defense of McNabb until after the 39-10 drubbing by the Bears. The coach hasn't come close to criticizing the 34-year-old six-time Pro Bowl pick he pushed the organization to acquire in a trade, after the lockout prevented Ponder from practicing all spring and summer with the team. Frazier has stopped endorsing McNabb as the starter, however, a possible sign of an impending move.

"We're going to talk about a lot of things, but the primary point will be what's best for our team as we go forward," Frazier said.

Neither McNabb nor Ponder were available in the locker room Monday when it was open to reporters. The veterans on this team that's less than two years removed from missing the Super Bowl by four points, though, aren't interested in participating in a rebuilding project.

"Here's the way I look at it. We're still in 2011. We've got Green Bay next week. If you're looking forward to 2012, then I say you leave this locker room and you come back in 2012," defensive end Brian Robison said.

McNabb statistically is coming off his best game for Minnesota. He went 19 for 24, including a glaring drop by Bernard Berrian on a third-down slant pattern where the ball hit the wide open receiver squarely in the hands. McNabb still has turned the ball over only twice in six games, and Brett Favre had lost four fumbles and been intercepted 10 times by this point last season.

But McNabb was sacked four times on his last six snaps and went down without resistance when he was tackled for the safety in the first quarter. He has four touchdown passes this year



BRIAN PETERSON/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT

Minnesota Vikings quarterback Donovan McNabb dropped back to pass, but he is tackled by Chicago Bears Stephen Paea in the end zone for a safety during the first quarter at Solider Field in Chicago, Ill., on Sunday. McNabb was benched for Christian Ponder during the game. The Vikings will decide who will start this Sunday on Wednesday.

and three completions longer than 35 yards.

The Vikings could make a strong argument that, despite the lack of development time for Ponder, playing the rookie is not only good for the future but the right move to give the offense more life for the present. Frazier said he doesn't want to flip-flop from week to week, so if Ponder gets the nod the job will probably be his for good — and McNabb, conceivably, could've played his final NFL game.

The defending champion and undefeated Packers appear on the schedule for two of the next three games, but Frazier said the quality of the opponent won't factor into the evaluation.

"The only qualifier is what's best for our team, and that will be the criteria we use when we sit down and continue these discussions over the next couple days," Frazier said.

Ponder was Minnesota's first-round draft pick this year, taken 12th overall out of Florida State. He has shown elusiveness and confidence in the pocket, though he was erratic against the Bears, and Frazier said he was impressed by the way Ponder

moved the team up the field.

"For a guy who gets limited reps in practice, it seems he had a good grasp, like we thought he would, of our offense," Frazier said.

Once the quarterback decision is made, there are many more problems to address.

"I've never been 1-5 ever," defensive end Jared Allen said.

The offensive line lost two starters to injury against the Bears and was overwhelmed by both the pass rush and the safety-stacked front on running plays. After watching the Bears get beat up by Detroit's defense the week before, the Vikings couldn't generate any pressure on Jay Cutler or make the strategic moves to counter the extra blockers the Bears left in. Their tackling of Matt Forte was substandard, and the downfield coverage of Chicago's unremarkable receivers was worse.

Even their usually sound special teams were terrible.

Ryan Longwell's 38-yard field goal attempt went way left, albeit in a stiff wind, and his kickoff — after a forced turnover and quick touchdown gave the Vikings some life early in the third quar-

ter — sailed straight to Devin Hester.

Hester zoomed for a 98-yard return, the fourth time in 10 career games against Minnesota he has brought a kick back for a touchdown. Chris Kluge had trouble with the gusts, too, with a gross average of only 37.2 yards on five punts. Marcus Sherels contradicted convention by calling for a fair catch of a punt at the 5-yard line, two plays before McNabb was sacked for a safety.

Allen was careful to declare the defeat a total team failure but also questioned the tackling and coverage in the secondary. Frazier called out the offensive and defensive lines for not playing physical enough and said cornerback Cedric Griffin needs to be a lot better, and improve quickly. The coach, who has rarely been critical of his players, even said he didn't see them handle their first victory well last week.

"We didn't go out there with the type of energy and focus that you have to play with on the road as an opponent in your division," Frazier said, "and that comes back to me."

## Coyotes Drop In Poll

VERMILLION — The South Dakota football team is ranked 19th in the latest FCS Coaches Poll, which was announced on Monday. It is the sixth straight week the Coyotes have been ranked in the top 25, the most since moving to Division I FCS status.

The Coyotes (4-3) are one of only two Great West teams ranked in the latest poll. They are also ranked No. 25 in The Sports Network/Fathead.com FCS poll.

Georgia Southern remains the top-ranked team, receiving 27 first-place votes, while Northern Iowa is second.

## Soccer

From Page 12

in conference action, which gives USD two chances to establish themselves in its new league home, Teslow said.

"We want to finish; want to win, because they're both rivals," said the Sioux Falls native, who had two shots on goal Monday. "We tend to come out harder in the second half, but we need to do that the whole game against those guys."

## USD VB

From Page 12

"Coach kept telling us to stay focused and stick with what we do best," Logato said. "And I think we played relaxed and finally got it done."

Needing to find some sort of spark, USD again went with junior transfer Bailey Lupardus as the starting setter — her third start of the season. And she didn't disappoint, recording 28 assists and 11 digs.

The Coyotes also experimented with having both setters, Lupardus and usual starter Tori Kroll in the game at the same time. Oddly enough, Kroll also finished with 28 assists and 11 digs.

"Bailey earned the right to start, but we wanted to find a way to get her and Tori in there at the same time," Houk said. "We thought if we could keep Drake on their heels, we could do some good things."

Amber Aschoff chipped in

with 11 kills for USD, which had 30 attack errors and 10 serving errors. Tahnee Reed added nine kills and Riley Haug chipped in with 14 digs.

The Coyotes begin a three-match Summit League road trip Saturday at Missouri-Kansas City. USD will then bus to road matches at Western Illinois and IUPUI next week.

"We love being at home, obviously, but it can be a real positive to be on a bus together," Houk said. "We all do this for the relationships, and being on a bus for eight hours is the best way to bond."

Either way, home or away, the mission is the same, Logato said.

"It's nice to be at home in front of our people, but we need to get the job done away from the Dome," she said. "Like coach says, the ball is still round and the court is the same size, so it doesn't matter who you play."

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