



The St. Louis Cardinals' David Freese hits a two-run home run in the second inning against the Pittsburgh Pirates during Game 5 of the National League Division Series at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, Mo. on Wednesday night. St. Louis won 6-1 to clinch the series 3-2.

MLB Playoffs

Cards On To NLCS

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Adam Wainwright went all the way and the St. Louis Cardinals got two-run homers from David Freese and Matt Adams to beat the Pittsburgh Pirates 6-1 on Wednesday night, advancing to the NL championship series.

Wainwright scattered eight hits in his second dominant win of the division series, coming through for the Cardinals in a winner-take-all Game 5.

St. Louis gets to stay at home to open the NLCS against the well-rested Los Angeles Dodgers on Friday night.

The last three seasons, the Cardinals are 8-1 when facing elimination. They also won Game 5 of the NL division series at Washington last year and at Philadelphia in 2011.

Freese homered in the second inning off rookie Gerrit Cole and Adams connected in the eighth against reliever Mark Melancon to make it 5-1. Pete Kozma added an RBI infield single, and Wainwright finished it off by striking out Pedro Alvarez with two on.

Alvarez became the first player with an RBI in his first six postseason games on a

Verlander Gets Nod For Game 5

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — It's Justin Verlander and Sonny Gray, the encore.

These decisive Game 5s sure are becoming familiar for Verlander. Not so much for the Oakland rookie.

Just like last October in Oakland, the Tigers have been pushed to a winner-take-all fifth game in their AL division series against the Athletics. And Detroit will have Verlander on the mound again Thursday night after he pitched a four-hit shutout in the 2012 clincher at the Oakland Coliseum.

The A's will counter with Gray against Verlander a second time after these two put on a pitching show Saturday night at the Coliseum.

Verlander dominated in a thrilling pitcher's duel with Gray, who matched the ace as each threw zeros but had nothing to show for it in a 1-0 A's win.

fluke hit that caromed off first base in the seventh. But the Pirates were held to one run in each of the final two games in their first playoff appearance in 21 years. They haven't won a postseason series since the 1979 World Series.

The 23-year-old Cole beat the Cardinals with an impressive effort in Game 2. They got to him early this time even though his fastball hit 100 mph in the first inning against Matt Holliday.

Freese made the kid pay for a full-count walk to Jon Jay with two outs in the sec-

ond, lining a 1-2 pitch into the visitors' bullpen in left.

The Pirates had the bullpen up in the fourth after Yadier Molina's infield hit and a throwing error put runners on second and third. Cole gave up just three hits over five innings, but was lifted for a pinch-hitter in the sixth.

Freese struggled this season to overcome a back injury in spring training and had nine homers and 60 RBIs. But just like teammate Carlos Beltran, he's an October star with seven homers, 29 RBIs and a .325 average in 36 career postseason games.

Freeman Gets To Work With Vikings

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Let the crash course begin. Josh Freeman practiced for the first time with the Minnesota Vikings on Wednesday, three days after he was signed to eventually be their starting quarterback.

With the Vikings sitting at a precarious 1-3 heading into a game against Carolina on Sunday, Freeman is trying to absorb a brand new offense and get on the same page with a new set of teammates in hopes of taking over at some point.

Coach Leslie Frazier has already said Freeman won't start this week, but after that all bets are off. He won't have a training camp or a full summer of practices to digest the offense and get a handle on his responsibilities.

But there's no doubt the Vikings are planning to get Freeman some game action as soon as he's ready.

"There are some challenges, but there are some things you can do to try to condense things and try to help a guy get on the field," Frazier said.

"But you don't want to do it to the point where you affect the rest of your team in a negative way, in our case, our offense."

"We'll work as hard as we can. He wants to work and get it. We'll put something together where hopefully real soon he'll have a chance to be able to get on the field."

Once thought of as a franchise player in Tampa Bay, the Buccaneers released the 25-year-old quarterback last week after a series of conflicts with coach Greg Schiano and the organization.

Freeman chose Minnesota over a number of suitors, knowing full well the Vikings' muddled quarterback situation offered perhaps the best chance to get on the field



DANIEL WALLACE/TAMPA BAY TIMES/MCT
Former Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Josh Freeman (5) reacts to a dropped pass by tight end Timothy Wright (81) in the end zone during the Sept. 22 game against New England. Freeman practiced Wednesday for the first time with his new team, the Minnesota Vikings.

soon and start boosting his stock as he looks to secure a long-term contract.

All indications are that Matt Cassel will start a second straight game for the Vikings. Christian Ponder started the first three games — all losses — and did not play against Pittsburgh in London two weeks ago after injuring his ribs. Cassel performed well, throwing for 248 yards and two touchdowns to lead the Vikings to their first win.

Bringing in Freeman appears to be the end of the line for Ponder, drafted 12th overall in 2011, in Minnesota. Frazier and GM Rick Spielman now want to take a long look at Freeman.

Getting Freeman up to speed is especially challenging in the middle of the season. Practice repetitions are at a premium during game weeks, and the coaching staff will have to juggle things to give Freeman a chance to get acclimated.

That was already happening Wednesday, when a group of offensive and defensive re-

serves stayed after practice to run a few plays with Freeman under center.

"It's interesting because their main goal is going out and getting a win Sunday," Freeman said. "But having the technology they have, having the playbook and having the installs and having my experience in a similar offense, with football in general, going through the installs and learning them as they might've learned them in training camp for the first time, and really starting to build up toward being able to go out and compete."

As hectic as it's been for Freeman, he is trying to ease his way into things in his new home.

"That's the goal this week is to get ready to play enough, to play in an emergency situation, to be able to go out and run a limited package," he said. "I know these coaches do a tremendous job, so I'm not going to put out a limit on the amount of information I'm going to be able to take in and digest this week."

With Matthews Out, Neal Steps Up For Packers

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Mike Neal's comfort level at his new position is being quickly put to the test by the Packers.

Green Bay drafted him in 2010 as a defensive lineman. This year, he transitioned to outside linebacker. Now he'll need to assume even more responsibility with four-time Pro Bowler Clay Matthews expected to miss at least a couple weeks with a broken right

thumb.

Pressure? Only if it's in reference to rushing the quarterback. Neal is coming off what he termed the best game of his career after six tackles and a sack against Detroit last week.

"Nothing really," Neal said Wednesday when asked how much Matthews' absence would change the defense. "We're going to miss Clay. Clay brings a lot of stuff to the table

... We're not going to be able to mimic what Clay (does) but we can control what we do, and as long as we do that, we'll be fine."

Once again, the Packers will be experiencing life without their best defensive player. Matthews hurt his thumb while sacking Matthew Stafford on the last play of the third quarter in the 22-9 win over the Lions.

Huskers Lineman Gregory Hopes To Show Boilers What They're Missing

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — This week's game at struggling Purdue might not move the needle much for Nebraska fans. To the Cornhuskers' Randy Gregory, it's a red-letter game.

Gregory has become a fan favorite for his tenacious play at defensive end. To frustrated Purdue fans, Gregory is the in-state kid who got away.

The native of Fishers, Ind., signed a letter of intent with the Boilermakers in 2011 but had to go to junior college to become academically eligible. Coming off a big first year at Arizona Western, Gregory broke his left leg in the 2012 opener.

As Danny Hope's hold on the Purdue coaching job slipped, Nebraska and other schools swooped in to woo Gregory. He visited Nebraska the weekend of its win over Michigan and verbally committed four days later. Hope was fired three weeks after that, and Gregory said new coach Darrell Hazell never tried to re-recruit him.

Gregory wore a wide grin when he met with reporters this week. He said he couldn't be happier with the way things worked out, and it was a bonus when he took his

first look at the schedule and saw an October road trip to West Lafayette, Ind.

"I know a lot of the guys on the team and was real good friends with the staff that was there before coach Hope left," Gregory said. "I went to a lot of games there, and a lot of friends I went to high school with go to school there. Big game for me. I hope I can play well, and hopefully we can come out with the W."

The 6-foot-6, 255-pound Gregory has started four straight games. He leads the defensive line with 25 tackles, including six for losses, and seven quarterback hurries. He's forced a fumble, broken up a pass and returned an interception 33 yards for a touchdown.

Gregory, who had nine sacks among his 82 tackles at Arizona Western in 2011, was brought in to beef up the pass rush. Teammates jokingly called him the "Sackless Wonder" after he went three games without being credited with bringing down a quarterback.

He looked to have a sack in the opener against Wyoming but was penalized for roughing the passer on a play where a pass wasn't at-

tempted. He and Avery Moss teamed up for a sack in the fourth game, against South Dakota State.

Gregory said he's excited about the prospect of pursuing Purdue's new starting quarterback, Danny Etling.

"I want to get after every quarterback," Gregory said, "but the fact he's a freshman, I think, kind of makes it more fun for us. Hopefully we'll rattle him a little bit, hit him a few times, shake him up a little so he won't be as comfortable back there in the pocket."



AM 1450

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8:20 am Yankton Chamber (Carmen Schramm)
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8:20 am Heartland Humane (Kerry Schmidt)



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