

Winter sports scene hot in Minnesota

Written by Fred Easter

Saturday, 19 January 2013 17:31

Fall and early winter have been interesting times on the Minnesota sports scene.

Vikings head coach, Leslie Frazier, engineered a major turnaround with the Vikes, but, apparently neglected to develop a backup quarterback. Joe Webb was the first QB in NFL history to start a playoff game without having thrown a pass during the regular season. I have to wonder if a Bret Favre or Ben Roethlisberger wouldn't have started that game with their arm in a sling and played until it fell off.

Tubby Smith appears to have a deep Gopher squad ready for a long run into the conference season, and hopefully beyond. They have depth, talent and seem to have bought into Tubby's "chew the numbers off their jersey" style of defense. They've beaten Florida State in Tallahassee, USC in Los Angeles and 13th ranked Illinois in the House of Paign.

What I do worry about is how long it'll be before some young athlete breaks a major bone sailing off that raised barn floor. The place must've been terrific back when girls played in those bloomers, and didn't cross half court and guys used the weave a lot and won games with a final score of 12-10. In this millennium, however, if a Trevor Mbakwe or Rodney Williams breaks a femur and leaves their NBA career in the third row, the numbers discussed by their attorneys could be astronomical.

While I'm on the topic of college basketball, why am I watching every women's team in the United States on television, except our Lady Gophers? It's as if the NCAA has our ladies on some sort of TV sanctions. I'd like to be able to say something insightful about Pam Borton's team, but, I've only read about them, so far. More folks would come to games if they had a chance to fall in love with the Lady Gophers like they have with the Lynx.

The Wolves, for their part, are bringing back memories of George Mikan and "Jumpin'" Jim Pollard's Minneapolis Lakers. It is refreshing to see a largely white team play in the NBA night after night.

Could someone help me understand how Kevin Love can be a rebounding beast and not be able to get a shot off in the paint? J.J. Barea seems to get more shots up onto the glass in the paint than Kevin.

I admit I was worried that we'd lose the entire NHL season. But, we are going to see what the off season additions of Zack Parise and Ryan Suter are going to mean for the Wild. I do love it when any Minnesota sports owner steps out and makes a "major market" money move.

This brings me to the Twins, who, while it's still winter here, will be in Florida trotting out their "small market" pitching staff. At least, their "big market" catcher will be in attendance, as well.

Finally, how about the U hockey programs? Don Lucia's group is currently No. 1 in the country (ask No. 2 Notre Dame if we don't deserve that status) and the U women's hockey program is always one of the NCAA's premier programs.

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So, my remote is all oiled up and ready to go. Let it snow!