

Adrian Peterson: More for the record books

Written by Ryan T. Scott

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On the final game of the season, Adrian Peterson once again ran into the record books. At this point in time the Vikings faithful, and unfaithful, should sit back and realize that we are privileged to be able to watch one of the rare “ultra-great” athletes to ever step into the National Football League. Fortunately Peterson has a much better attitude in his youth, unlike Minnesota’s most recent history making prodigy: Randy Moss.

Peterson finishes the 2008 regular season with 1,760 yards. That enormous total not only gives him the Vikings single season record, but it also quantifies him as the best running back in the NFL this season. Another interesting note is that Peterson is averaging 103.4 yards per game at this point in his career. The only player in NFL history with a higher per game average is the legendary Jim Brown with 104.3 yards per game. It should also be noted that Jim Brown is probably the most widely recognized player for the title of ‘Greatest Football Player of All-Time’. We certainly don’t want to overindulge into expectations for Peterson’s career, but we can say that the likes of Adrian Peterson have never been seen in Minnesota sports history, even if he quit today.

One of the highlights of Peterson’s accomplishments this year is his standard of excellence has been fairly matched by the rest of the team. A couple of weeks ago, I cast caution into the wind about the Vikings final three games of the season. All three games provided a considerable challenge and carried a historical bad taste along with them. The Vikings came out of that stretch with two wins and one very respectable loss. In each of those games, the Vikings had a total team effort. To try and list the specific players who have been particularly outstanding would basically end up printing the entire roster.

Though the entire Vikings team and coaching staff should be commended for their elevated play, Adrian Peterson is the reason for the season...the post-season that is. A successful running game is a prerequisite for success in the playoffs. The Vikings are not the only team entering the playoffs with a jaw dropping running game, but they do boast the leader of the pack.

Now Peterson must assume the pressure of proving that he can do the same amazing things during the playoffs when teams ratchet up their level of play. It is hard to imagine that Peterson

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could improve upon his regular season performance, but that is exactly what he is going to have to do.

As with most young superstars, it would seem that Peterson's better years are ahead of him. With as good as he is, there are several (ok, as maybe just a few) areas where Peterson could improve. As of late, Peterson has had a terrible streak of fumbling the ball. During the playoffs, teams will certainly look to capitalize on this weakness. Another area of improvement for Peterson falls under the difficult category of patience. Many times Peterson tries to do a little too much, and who can blame him for trying considering his NFL highlight reel. But in the NFL, the chess match supersedes the athletic prowess. Just as in chess, it is dangerous for your valuable pieces to move too quickly ahead of the pieces that go out before it, even though the valuable pieces have the ability to move wildly around the board. There is a time for spectacular plays, and a time to be satisfied with solid progress. When and if Peterson learns this calming skill, then our Vikings viewing and winning pleasure will be taken to new heights.

Peterson can certainly improve, and he's going to have to do it right away if the Vikings are going to make waves in the playoffs. If Peterson can elevate his game, then the rest of the team should (I repeat SHOULD) follow.

Go figure. Peterson has the best season ever for a Vikings running back and his reward is a "do better ticket." Such is life.