

SPORTS

Vexing Vikings

BY THOMAS PRESNALL

THE SEASON FOR THE Minnesota Vikings has been confusing, to say the least. Kirk Cousins and Co. pulled off two stunning victories, first against the L.A. Chargers and the following week against their division rivals, the Green Bay Packers. Wins over those two teams, both of whom seem playoff-bound, should have served as a foundation for the Vikings to make a playoff push as well as a glimmer of hope for fans who suffered through a season littered with heartbreaking losses and nail-biting wins. The key phrase there: should have.

The past two weeks of the season saw the Vikings fall flat on their faces. During Week 12, the Vikings went down to San Francisco, where the defense allowed the 49ers to run for 208 yards on the ground as well as 230 yards through the air for quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo. While Cousins kept up with #10 in red and gold, the same could not be said for Dalvin Cook or Alexander Mattison. Combined, both of the running backs for the Vikings rushed for 60 yards on 17 carries. To put that into perspective, Elijah Mitchell, the 49ers leading back that day, ran for 133 yards on 27 carries. That's 10 more carries than Mattison and Cook along with more than double their yards. But the 49ers are a good team with a good coach. There's no shame in losing to them. Losing to the winless, now no longer, Detroit Lions is another matter.

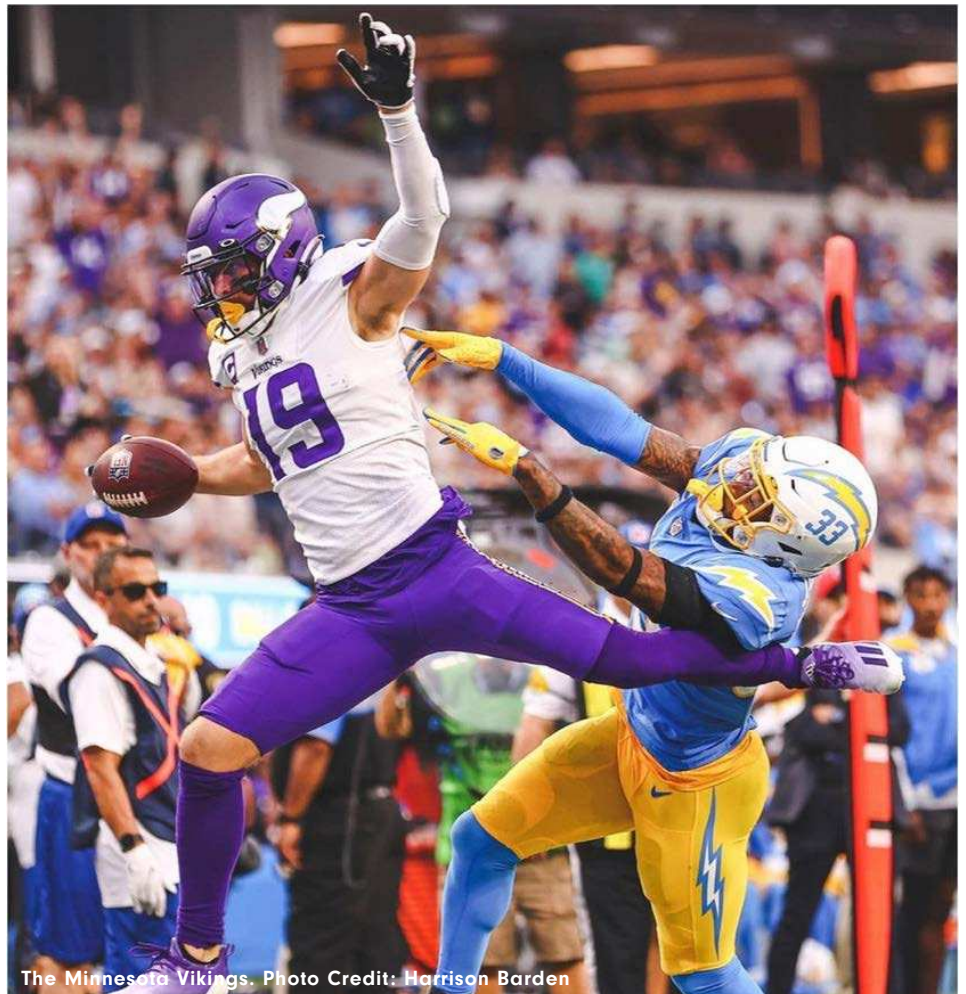
Kirk Cousins played fantastic against the Lions. He threw for 340 yards completed two touchdowns, and had no interceptions. Mattison wasn't too bad either as he rushed for 90 yards on 22 carries. Justin Jefferson torched the Lion's defense for 182 yards on 11 catches. The defense got to the Lion's QB, Jared Goff, three times and picked him off

once. With statistics like those and yet still losing the game, every Vikings fan has to be scratching their head wondering what the heck happened? To put it simply: Jared Goff made one more throw than Kirk Cousins did.

With 0w:04 seconds on the clock and the downs at 4th & 2, the Lions were losing by 4 points, which meant that they had no choice but to score a touchdown to win the game - and they had only one chance to do so. All the Vikings had to do was play defense, something they usually do well. But unfortunately, they didn't play it well enough as Goff found wide receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown in the endzone be-

tween two defensive backs as time expired. The game ended 27-29 in the Lion's favor. Goff got his first victory with his new team, Detroit's new head coach got his first win as well, and the Lions avoided another winless season.

It's do-or-die for the Vikings. They currently stand at 5-7, second in the NFC North behind the 9-3 Packers. Two of their next five games will be against playoff-caliber teams in the Packers and the star-studded L.A. Rams. Wins against the Steelers and Bears would be nice, but after a loss to Detroit, the Vikings need to show the rest of the NFL that they can bounce back and contend with the best of the best in their conference.



The Minnesota Vikings. Photo Credit: Harrison Barden