

SPORTS

IOWA 13, GOPHERS 10 vs. Wisconsin, 2:30 p.m. Saturday (TV TBA)

Awfully cold cut: Iowa keeps Floyd

Despite Ibrahim's 263 yards, Gophers faltered, lost rivalry game again.

By RANDY JOHNSON
rjohnson@startribune.com

Once again, coach Kirk Ferentz and his Hawkeyes took Floyd of Rosedale back to Iowa. This time, they took the Gophers' hopes for a Big Ten West Division title with them.

On a windy, 17-degree Saturday at Huntington Bank Stadium, Iowa's Drew Stevens kicked a 21-yard field goal with 28 seconds left in the fourth quarter, lifting the Hawkeyes to a 13-10 victory, their eighth consecutive over the Gophers in the battle for the bronze hog.

The loss by the Gophers in front of an announced crowd

of 45,816 spoiled a big game by running back Mohamed Ibrahim, who rushed 39 times for a career-high 263 yards and a touchdown, extending his streak of 100-yard games to 19.

The Gophers drove to the Iowa 9- and 33-yard lines in the fourth quarter, but Iowa's All-America linebacker Jack Campbell first forced an Ibrahim fumble to end a 16-play march, then intercepted a pass by Athan Kaliakmanis and returned it 30 yards to the Minnesota 45, setting up the winning field goal.

"We had our opportunities and didn't take advantage of them," Gophers coach P.J. Fleck said. "Iowa did."

With the win, Iowa (7-4, 5-3 Big Ten) remained in a first-place tie with Purdue in the

See **GOPHERS** on C10 ►



AARON LAVINSKY • aaron.lavinsky@startribune.com
Drew Stevens (18) kicked a 21-yard field goal with 28 seconds left for Iowa's winning margin against the Gophers.

Fleck's choice of caution
over boldness stings again

CHIP SCOGGINS



The Gophers got Hawkeye'd. Again.

They fell into the trap. Again. Same old, same old.

Play cautious, make killer mistakes, lose late.

Coach Kirk Ferentz didn't leave his timeouts in Minneapolis this time. He left the Gophers clutching a mountain of regret.

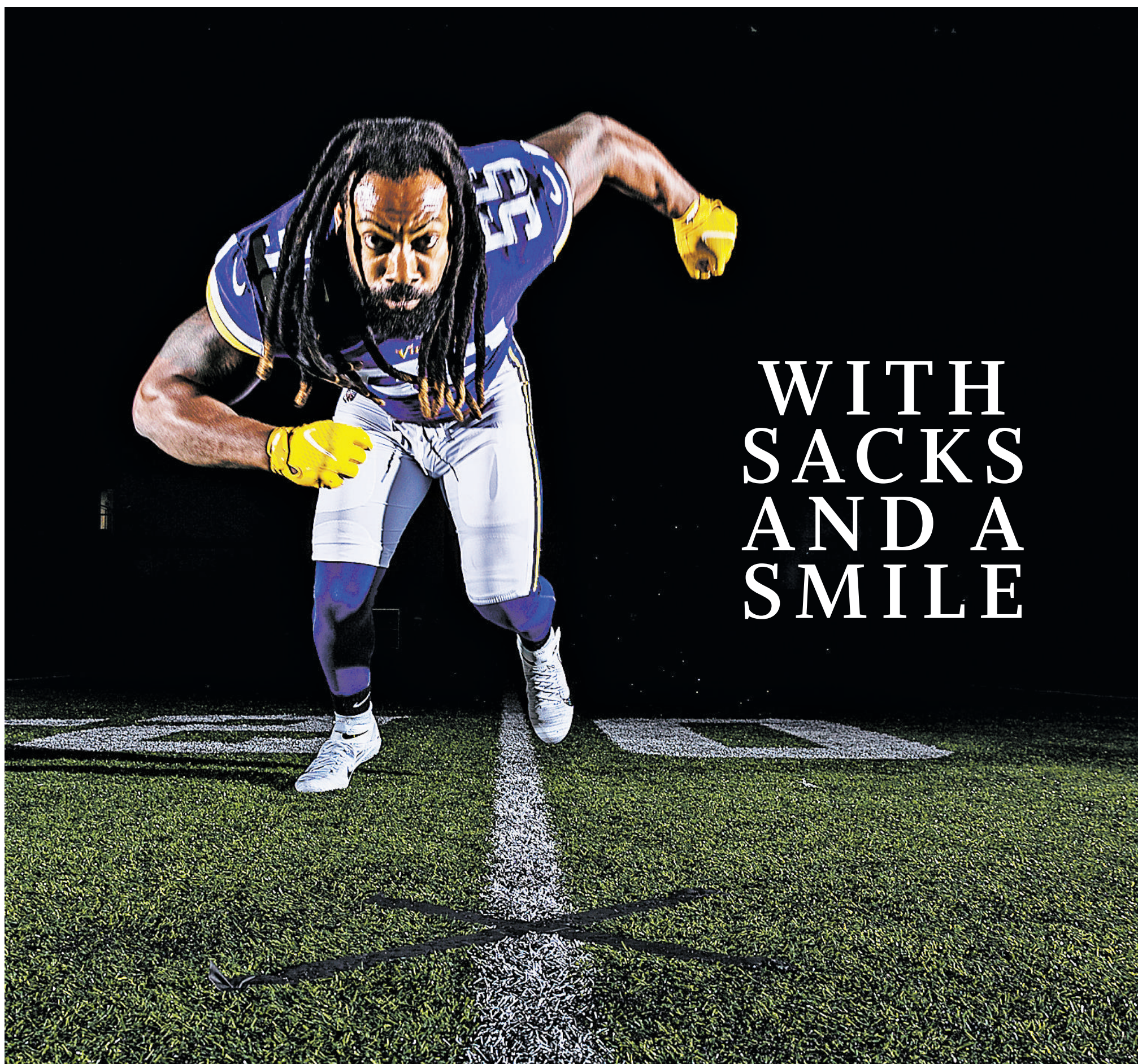
The Gophers were officially eliminated from Big Ten West contention on a

frigid Saturday night in the most Gophers-way possible.

They gave the Iowa Hawkeyes an opening and their nemesis did what they so often do. They turned mistakes into their own gold and strutted home with the bronze pig that has basically become a rumor on the Minnesota side of the border.

The Hawkeyes claimed their eighth consecutive victory over their rivals, a 13-10 triumph featuring a fourth quarter that deserves its own oral history.

See **SCOGGINS** on C9 ►



By MARK CRAIG • mcraig@startribune.com

Unfortunately for the Packers, everything Za'Darius Smith envisioned when he was released by Green Bay and signed by the archrival Vikings is coming true halfway through what Smith calls the best season of his life.

"I would love to retire here," Smith said. "That would be big! Why? Because that would mean I get to play the Packers twice a year until I retire."

Smith's face lights up. His booming laugh fills the equipment room at TCO Performance Center. Sorry, Cheeseheads, but this large linebacker is loving his new life and the fact it's the Packers (4-7) who have fallen apart and not his body. Make that a 30-year-old body that has a team-leading 9½ sacks in nine games just one season removed from back

Za'Darius Smith will let
anyone know that he's found
a new home as a Viking.

NFL WEEK 11

Vikings vs. Dallas, 3:25 p.m. Sunday (Ch. 4)

SO LONG, PACKERS

Za'Darius Smith was released by Green Bay, where he was part of three 13-victory seasons, notching 13½ sacks in 2019 and 12½ in 2020.

Photo by CARLOS GONZALEZ • Star Tribune

surgery and only two games played.

"I've never heard of anyone coming back from back surgery and having as good a year as I'm having," Smith said. "It's unheard of."

That was Smith's pitch for NFL Comeback Player of the Year. But there's an even bigger award — Defensive Player of the Year — that's worked its way onto the table thanks to Smith's play and the Vikings being 8-1, coming off an upset of the Bills in the league's game of the year. They head into home games on Sunday against the Cowboys, which will be shown to most of the country, and Thanksgiving night against the Patriots, which everyone who's still awake can watch.

So, Za'Darius, who is the league's best defender right now?

See **VIKINGS** on C6 ►