

How Wolves became a top defensive team. **C3**

Top 10 Sports section in the nation

Awarded by the Associated Press Sports Editors (2023)

Wild face uphill climb to break out of slump. **C7**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2023

★ StarTribune

STARTRIBUNE.COM/SPORTS • SECTION C

SPORTS

WISCONSIN 28, GOPHERS 14

A whimper, not a bang



ALEX KORMANN • alex.kormann@startribune.com

Gophers defensive back Tyler Nubin, left, was comforted by his brother, running back Jordan Nubin, after their team lost to rival Wisconsin, giving the Badgers possession of Paul Bunyan's Axe.

Wisconsin bamboozles U as season ends on four-game skid

By RANDY JOHNSON
rjohnson@startribune.com

His eyes red from tears and his voice cracking, Cody Lindenberg sat behind a table and offered his thoughts, as difficult as it was to do.

An hour earlier, the Gophers had lost 28-14 to Wisconsin on Saturday at Huntington Bank Stadium, seeing the Badgers parade off with Paul Bunyan's Axe for the first time since 2020 and watching Minnesota's regular season finish with a fourth consecutive loss and a 5-7 record.

Lindenberg, a fourth-year sophomore linebacker who was

limited to three games this season because of injuries, was hurting for his senior teammates. Those players — who had been part of the 11-2 breakthrough in 2019 and back-to-back nine-win campaigns the past two years — played their final home game in front of 48,119 and left not with a third consecutive victory over Wisconsin, but with disappointment.

"They've meant so much to the program," said Lindenberg, who followed seniors Tyler Nubin and Brevyn Spann-Ford in the interview session. "There's some historic moments those guys have

See **GOPHERS** on C5 ▶

NO MORE AXE

The Gophers fell to 3-4 against the Badgers with P.J. Fleck as their coach. The 28 points given up Saturday was the most since 2019.

2017 L, 31-0

2018 W, 37-15

2019 L, 38-17

2020 L, 20-17 (OT)

2021 W, 23-13

2022 W, 23-16

2023 L, 28-14

141-73

Margin the Gophers were outscored this season in a winless November (0-4).

Gophers finally put an end to a season laden with letdowns

CHIP SCOGGINS



was a pig. That's the extent of it. They won a bronze pig for the first time in forever. After that, meh. A real dud.

Given a chance to salvage at least a modicum of positive vibes Saturday, they drop-kicked that into the frigid air by relinquishing Paul Bunyan's Axe to the

Wisconsin Badgers in a 28-14 loss at Huntington Bank Stadium.

The ledger for the season is a 5-7 record, Floyd of Rosedale in the trophy case after a win over Iowa and four consecutive losses to close the season.

The Gophers have not defeated their two biggest rivals in the same season since 1990. That streak continued after a performance that exposed all the flaws and issues that doomed P.J. Fleck's seventh season at the helm.

The offense was predictable and unreliable. The defense

See **SCOGGINS** on C5 ▶

For Williams, Minnesota recalled joy of outdoors

Whether with a bat or a shotgun, Red Sox slugger rarely missed his mark.

DENNIS ANDERSON



When I first saw the photo sent to me by a reader of Ted Williams, the late great Boston Red Sox slugger, standing alongside nearly 40 drake mallards and a dozen or so pheasants — all apparently felled near the Twin Cities — I wondered what the weather was like in Minnesota 81 years ago this week.

Published Sunday, Nov. 22, 1942, in the old Minneapolis Star,

the photo of The Kid, as Williams was nicknamed at age 19 when he first reported to the Red Sox training camp, suggests to anyone who knows anything about ducks that a major weather change in the days just before the photo was taken must have pushed vast flights of mallards over Williams's decoys.

Otherwise, Williams could never have killed that many mallards — not even together with his girlfriend, Doris Soule, who's also in the photo, and especially not in Minnesota, a flyover state where in autumn migratory waterfowl come and go, oftentimes quickly.

See **ANDERSON** on C7 ▶



AARON LAVINSKY • aaron.lavinsky@startribune.com

Chanhassen tight end Kade Bush, right, made the winning catch despite St. Thomas Academy linebacker Cade Caruso's best defense in overtime Saturday night.

PREP BOWL

Three more titles to end the season

The high school football season drew to a hard-hitting close on Saturday with three more state champions crowned on the field at U.S. Bank Stadium. Chanhassen capped the day by knocking off St. Thomas Academy in overtime to end an undefeated season (13-0) with a state title.

Coverage, **C8, C12**

Class 5A: Chanhassen 34, St. Thomas Academy 31 (OT)
Class 3A: Stewartville 43, Annandale 13
Nine-Player: Nevis 14, Kingsland 12