

SPORTS

TWINS PREVIEW WEEK

Season opener at Kansas City
3:10 p.m. Thursday (BSN)



Defense takes on added dimensions

By La VELLE E. NEAL III • Star Tribune

FORT MYERS, FLA. - One thing about the new defensive rules bothers Carlos Correa: He no longer can enjoy having soft grass or turf under his feet as the pitch is delivered.

Nope. The Major League Baseball overlords have spoken. While banning the shift, infielders must keep both feet on the infield dirt during pitches as they attempt to end baseball's version of the prevent defense.

"The part I don't like is that I can't play on the grass because it gives me more range against slower runners," Correa said. "I'm a grass player because of my arm. I guess

it's the same for everyone."

During his first spring training game in February, Correa engaged umpires about how close he could get to the grass without sounding alarms.

He's not the only one adjusting to MLB's rule changes. In addition to being tied to the infield dirt as the ball is thrown, there can be only two infielders on each side of the second base bag.

Pitchers are required to work faster, with 15 seconds allowed to deliver a pitch with no runners on base. And the introduction of the pitch clock forces teams to pay more

See **TWINS** on C5 ▶

Inside: Major league team power rankings. **C4** • Hoffman released, Coulombe traded. **C5**

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VIKINGS

Goodbyes give way to new business

As stars leave, larger roles shift to newer players.

By BEN GOESSLING
ben.goessling@startribune.com

PHOENIX - One day, perhaps within a decade or so, Adam Thielen and Eric Kendricks could be back at U.S. Bank Stadium, watching their names and numbers unveiled in the Vikings Ring of Honor to the roar of adoring fans.

This coming year, though, the two players will be on the Vikings' schedule as opponents for the first time: Kendricks as a linebacker for the Chargers and Thielen as a receiver for the Panthers. Both had played their entire careers in Minnesota; both had been named to All-Pro teams for the Vikings, and both started every game for a Vikings team that won 13 games on the way to an NFC North title in 2022. The Vikings released both of them this month, in a period of the NFL offseason that co-owner Mark Wilf said is "always a bittersweet time."

"Guys like Adam and Eric, such huge parts of our franchise, will be Viking legends one day down the road and [we have] just great respect for them," Wilf added.

Neither the veterans' stature in Minnesota, nor the fact the Vikings went 13-4, kept the team from including the two players in a set of changes that will remake the roster for 2023 and might not be finished. Wilf said before the 2022 season

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WOLVES AT PHOENIX
9 p.m. Wednesday (BSN, ESPN)

Behind Conley, big plays happen

Steady veteran has been "perfect piece," Finch says.

By CHRIS HINE
chris.hine@startribune.com

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. - Harrison Barnes of the Kings missed a free throw with the Timberwolves ahead 114-106 and 3 minutes, 8 seconds remaining Monday at Golden 1 Center.

After clanging off the rim, the ball didn't land in the hands of the initial rebounders under the basket. Instead, it bounced outside the lane.

There were a number of times this season, and even in last season's playoff series against Memphis, when the Wolves would have surrendered an offensive rebound in this scenario, and almost inevitably an opponent would hit a backbreaking three-pointer off that miss.

On Monday, Mike Conley came to the rescue. Conley got in front of Barnes, and got in position to get the rebound. Possession over. Wolves ball. They would go on to win 119-115.

The play typified what Conley has brought the Wolves since coming over in the three-team trade that sent D'Angelo Russell to the Lakers. He is another veteran presence, a

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San Diego State's run thrills Dutchers

PATRICK REUSSE



There have been family gatherings on occasion throughout the winter to watch Brian Dutcher's San Diego State basketball team. Last week, Jim Dutcher, the family's basketball patriarch, was left to watch as a single as the Aztecs competed at the South Regional in Louisville, Ky.

"I had a bad cold and I

didn't want to pass it on to anyone else," Jim said.

Thus, the combination of joy and anguish and long-distance strategic suggestions was contained by Jim alone inside his residence at the Presbyterian senior center that overlooks Minnesota Valley Country Club.

"I had told the family that if Brian's team somehow wins the regional, we're all going to Houston for the Final Four," Dutcher said. "So, we're leaving Friday, 11 or 12 of us."

The man called "Dutch" probably figured it was a long-shot promise for picking up the tab, what with his son's Aztecs facing No. 1 overall seed Alabama in the Sweet 16.

Then again, Dutch knew that Brian had himself a team that would not go down without fighting fiercely.

"He has a team that really lives its motto: 'Lock 'em up,'" Dutcher said. "They are dedicated to defense. The four teams they've played in

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JOHN BAZEMORE • Associated Press

San Diego State coach Brian Dutcher — the son of former Gophers coach Jim Dutcher — yelled during the Elite Eight.