

No NFL receiver has gained as many yards in his first two seasons as the Vikings' Justin Jefferson.

WHAT MAKES JUSTIN JUST SO GOOD?

Story by ANDREW KRAMMER • Photo by CARLOS GONZALEZ • Star Tribune staff

With a veteran's eye, Justin Jefferson immediately spots the mistake in a rare lowlight from his first two NFL seasons.

Sitting in the equipment room at TCO Performance Center last month, the Vikings' 23-year-old superstar receiver watches on a smartphone as a third-down pass falls to the turf with All-Pro cornerback Jalen Ramsey defending in a loss to the Rams last season.

Jefferson points at the screen when his knees briefly stutter and his head ducks in front of Ramsey about 5 yards downfield.

"This is really my fault," Jefferson says. "I'm knee stuttering too early, allows him to not bite on it as much. You see how he bit on it? But he had time to really recover because I did it so early. If I would've did it more at like 8 to 9 to 10 yards [downfield], he probably would've stuttered, and I probably would've got by him."

Self-critique precedes growth, and no receiver in NFL history has grown as quickly as Jefferson, whose 3,016 receiving yards are the most by any player in his first two seasons. Watching all 292 passes thrown his way, charting every route and interviewing teammates, coaches, analysts and Jefferson himself reveal the anatomy of an all-time great in the making: a football brain beyond his years, natural body control, **See JEFFERSON on C6 ►**