

## SPORTS

NFL WEEK 11 • Vikings at Denver, 7:20 p.m. Sunday (NBC)

## Phillips looks ahead, but stays in present

Key assistant who wants to be a head coach still has work to do with Vikings.

By MARK CRAIG  
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Any story on Vikings offensive coordinator Wes Phillips, what football means to this third-generation NFL

coach and what that, in turn, means to Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell must include the tale of a retired Marine Corps sniper named Lee Hays waking up in the desert in 2004 in the passenger's seat of an old state police car that had been donated to West Texas A&M's Division II football team.

Hays was the school's second-year offensive coordinator.



Vikings offensive coordinator Wes Phillips is a key asset for Kevin O'Connell.

Phillips, 25 and 12 years younger, was the first-year quarterbacks coach.

"We're on a recruiting trip from Amarillo, Texas, to San

Francisco, down to San Diego and back to Amarillo," Hays said. "The car's so old, we're carrying a jug of water because the radiator has a leak. Wes is barely making two pennies to rub together, stuck working for an old Marine. Buddy, if you can survive that, you really want to coach."

Hays drove until midnight. Phillips took over. Hays went

to sleep, figuring Phillips would wake him up to drive or look for a hotel when he got tired. Phillips instead pulled to the side of the road, threw the seat back and ...

"I wake up and the sun's up and we're boiling because it's 120 degrees in the car," Hays said. "I look over and scream, 'Goddangit, Wes! GET UP!'"

Pause.

"And that's how Wes Phillips — Bum's grandson and Wade's son — got his start in coaching."

Hays and Phillips stay in touch. Now a line coach at Lubbock-Cooper High in Lubbock, Texas, Hays texted Monday morning asking for plays to beat the Cover 4 schemes used by the Fighting Pirates' next opponent.

See **VIKINGS** on C7 ▶



Star Tribune and Associated Press photos

## WILD

## The Swedish approach to great hockey

A national skill-based system produces defensively sound two-way players.

By SARAH McLELLAN  
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STOCKHOLM — Marcus Johansson had never been to an NHL game until he played in one; he made his debut with Washington two days after he turned 20.

Filip Gustavsson didn't wake up in the middle of the night to watch the league, but he saw snippets on YouTube or when NHL Network's "On the Fly" was on in the locker room.

Joel Eriksson Ek also caught the highlights, but "there wasn't as much coverage as there is right now," he said.

Hockey players in Sweden don't have a front-row seat to their sport's best league like their peers do in the United States and Canada, but that hasn't stalled their development to the NHL.

In fact, Sweden is graduating more and more of its homegrown talent with a unique grassroots approach specializing in the skills that still define the Wild's Swedish players who are in Stockholm for the NHL Global Series concluding Sunday vs. Toronto.

"That's how I grew up," said Eriksson Ek, one of five Swedish players on the Wild, "and that's where I became the player and person I am."

See **WILD** on C3 ▶

## WHO'S FROM SWEDEN?

**Jonas Brodin (No. 25), Karlstad:** Won gold medal at 2012 World Juniors with six appearances.

**Joel Eriksson Ek (14), Karlstad:** Captured gold with Sweden at the 2017 World Championships.

**Filip Gustavsson (30), Skellefteå:** Went 5-1 to help Sweden earn silver at the 2018 World Juniors.

**Marcus Johansson (90), Landskrona:** Picked up silver medal with Sweden at 2014 Winter Olympics.

**Jesper Wallstedt (32), Västerås:** Named the top goaltender at the 2022 World Juniors.

**NHL GLOBAL SERIES Saturday:** Wild fall to Ottawa 2-1 in shootout in Stockholm. **C3**

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

UConn vs. Gophers, 4 p.m. Sunday (FS1)

## Reunion at the Barn filled with homecoming energy

Gophers-UConn matchup reunites longtime friends Battle, Bueckers, Braun.

By KENT YOUNGBLOOD  
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With the big game a few days away, after she had scored a career-high 20 points against North Dakota State, Amaya Battle sat courtside at Williams Arena and talked about her friend Paige Bueckers.

Her first thoughts weren't basketball-related. Not the

2019 Class 4A state title they won together at Hopkins High School. Or about that already-legendary 2020 Section 6 final, in a Hopkins High School gym so jammed that the fire department had to limit the crowd, with Karl-Anthony Towns and some Timberwolves teammates in attendance. The Royals and a Wayzata team that included Mara Braun went toe-to-toe all game. Hopkins won, Bueckers — the top high school player in the country who would go to Connecticut

See **HOMECOMING** on C10 ▶



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Paige Bueckers, right, and Amaya Battle's friendship goes beyond even their days playing together at Hopkins.

## FOOTBALL • NO. 2 OHIO STATE 37, GOPHERS 3

2:30 p.m. Saturday vs. Wisconsin (FS1)

## Buckeyes rout Gophers as bowl invitation in doubt

Ohio State scored two TDs in first 67 seconds of the second half to widen gap.

By RANDY JOHNSON  
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COLUMBUS, OHIO - The Gophers football team played both Michigan and Ohio State this season, leaving coach P.J. Fleck as a good person to ask about which Big Ten East Division power is better.

"What color Ferrari would you like, a red one or a white

one?" Fleck responded.

Saturday in front of 104,019 at Ohio Stadium, that red Ferrari — the second-ranked Buckeyes — raced past the Gophers 37-3 behind a dominant second half, setting up next week's showdown with the white Ferrari, No. 3 Michigan, which beat Minnesota 52-10 on Oct. 7.

For the Gophers, Saturday's loss wasn't surprising — they were 27½-point underdogs — but still showed that it's tough to stay in a race when you have a low-horsepower vehicle

See **GOPHERS** on C8 ▶