



MONDAY NIGHT NOTES

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CONTACT: MICHAEL SIGNORA (212 450 2076)

STORIED RIVALRY RENEWED ON MONDAY NIGHT: VIKINGS-PACKERS AT LAMBEAU

It's Packers-Vikings at Lambeau Field on Monday night. What a way to end the week!

The storied rivals enter their always-intense matchup on the heels of big victories. For the visiting Vikings, it was a 24-21 triumph over the Giants in New York last Sunday, when they became the first team in history to score on an interception, kickoff and punt return in the same game.

For the Packers, it was topping Atlanta 33-25 behind rookie free-agent running back **SAMKON GADO's** 103 rushing yards and three touchdowns.

"It didn't surprise me," says quarterback **BRETT FAVRE** of Gado's performance. "In some ways, he came out of nowhere, but in some ways I did too. I told Sam this week, 'You just need the opportunity.'"

Gado hopes to keep it going Monday against one of the Packers' biggest rivals. And if recent history is an indication, the game is sure to be close. The past six regular-season meetings between the clubs have been decided by five points or less, tying for the second longest such streak in NFL history.

"I always expect to see the very best from the Vikings," says Packers head coach **MIKE SHERMAN**. "They have found ways to win close games in the last few minutes against us, and last week against the Giants. That's a message that we will convey to our players in practices and meetings this week."

The most consecutive regular-season games between opponents decided by five points or less:

Teams	Dates	Consecutive Games Decided By Five Points or Less	Leader
Philadelphia vs. Washington	1991-95	8	Phil, 7-1
Green Bay vs. Minnesota	2002-present	6	GB, 4-2
Buffalo vs. NY Jets	1975-78	6	NYJ, 4-2
Cleveland vs. NY Jets	1978-84	6	Clev, 4-2
Denver vs. Oakland	1983-86	6	Tied, 3-3
Denver vs. Oakland	1989-92	6	Oak, 5-1

Minnesota enters the contest seeking its third consecutive win after a 1-4 start. Quarterback **BRAD JOHNSON**, a winner in four of his past five Monday night starts, has started the past two games for the injured **DAUNTE CULPEPPER**. He has not been intercepted in 80 attempts this season.

"I'm excited about going to Green Bay and playing on Monday night," says Vikings head coach **MIKE TICE**. "We are playing a team that we know very well and that knows us very well. We have a chance to get back to .500 (4-5) and I like how things are coming together, but we have a long way to go."

Another Viking excited about the trip to Green Bay is safety **DARREN SHARPER**, who comes off a franchise record-tying three-interception performance last week against New York, one of which he returned 92 yards for a touchdown.

Sharper spent the first eight years of his career with Green Bay, earning two trips to the Pro Bowl, before signing with the Vikings as a free agent this spring. The William & Mary product is fifth in Packers history with 36 interceptions.

"The most important thing for us right now is getting a win and trying to keep the momentum going," says Sharper.

And of the possibility of getting an interception against his longtime teammate Favre?

"If Brett had his druthers, I think he would try to throw at me," Sharper explains. "But then also, he knows that if I do pick it, he's not going to hear the end of it."

MONDAY NIGHT MUSINGS – MINNESOTA VIKINGS AT GREEN BAY PACKERS

NIGERIAN NIGHTMARE, PART II?

- A studious soccer player from Nigeria who has no football experience moves to the United States and takes up the game. The young man plays at a small college and ends up landing a spot on an NFL roster wearing No. 35.

While this might sound like the 1987 story of former Kansas City Chiefs running back **CHRISTIAN OKOYE**, aka “The Nigerian Nightmare,” it actually describes new Green Bay Packers running sensation **SAMKON GADO** 18 years later.

In a script out of Hollywood, Gado’s amazing journey almost never happened after he was waived from the Chiefs’ practice squad in early October. In fact, the pre-med major at Division 1-AA Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia was so convinced that his football career was over, he began to contemplate applying for medical school after already passing the Medical College Admission Test earlier this year.

“In my mind, there was no way that any team would want to show interest in me because they had nothing to be interested in,” says Gado. “There was nothing on film. There was nothing in college to really pique their interest.” Gado was basically third-string at Liberty.

But something in his heart said not to give up his dream of playing in the NFL. “I decided I was going to give myself one last chance,” says Gado. “If anything came out of that, I was going to do my best to enjoy football.”

The decision paid off. Green Bay signed the 23-year-old in mid-October, and he has seen action in the past three games. Last Sunday, it all came together when he amassed 103 rushing yards and three touchdowns. For that production, Gado was named the NFC Offensive Player of the Week.

“It’s been crazy,” says Gado said of his whirlwind performance. “I don’t know if I want to let it soak in.”

WILL’S ON THE MIKE

- Packers fullback **WILLIAM HENDERSON** delayed work on his two master’s degrees – one in physical therapy, the other in orthotics and prosthetics – to take a stab at broadcasting in 2003.

He has since worked as a color commentator for NFL Europe League games and is currently in his seventh year as co-host of a *Monday Night Kickoff* show produced by Green Bay TV station WBAY.

DIPLOMATIC JAMES

- Vikings rookie defensive end **ERASMUS JAMES** might have some diplomacy in his future after he is done with football.

James’ father, **ERASMUS WILLIAMS**, is the press secretary to the St. Kitts & Nevis prime minister, **DR. DENZIL L. DOUGLAS**.

James attended junior high school in St. Kitts before moving to Hollywood, Florida as a youngster.

His father presented him with a letter of congratulations from the prime minister after James was drafted in the first round out of Wisconsin by the Vikings.

“It is indeed a proud moment for me to extend heartfelt congratulations to you for the successes you have achieved this far on your journey to stardom in the National Football League,” said Dr. Douglas in the letter. “The government and people of this proud federation extend heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to you as you strive for mastery in all your endeavors.”

WILLIAMS HAS AN ATTENTION FOR DETAIL

- Vikings defensive tackle **PAT WILLIAMS**, while playing with the Buffalo Bills from 1997-04, worked with the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency on expanding his car-detailing shop, Waterworks Auto Detail Inc., to help revitalize downtown Buffalo. The project included an opportunity for other automotive-related retail outlets to be a part of the expansion.

“It says an awful lot that he wanted to make this type of commitment to the city and the east side of Buffalo,” said **BRIAN DAVIS**, Buffalo councilman. “He could have built this anywhere, but Pat chose the east side of Buffalo.”

Williams has plans to start a similar car-detailing shop in Minnesota while involving it in the community.

