

# Minnesota Vikings

**2010 Record:** 6-10

**Pythagorean Wins:** 6.0 (26th)

**DVOA:** -13.8% (25th)

**Offense:** -11.8% (27th)

**Defense:** 0.9% (11th)

**Special Teams:** -1.2% (19th)

**Variance:** 13.8% (12th)

**2011 Mean Projection:** 8.5 wins

**On the Clock (0-3):** 0%

**Loserville (4-6):** 15%

**Mediocrity (7-8):** 34%

**Playoff Contender (9-10):** 36%

**Super Bowl Contender (11+):** 15%

**Projected Average Opponent:** -3.2% (29th)

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**2010:** I've been waiting all week for Tuesday Night Football.

**2011:** The battle of personnel attrition vs. statistical regression.

If Christopher Guest, the comic genius behind *This is Spinal Tap* and *A Mighty Wind*, decided to produce a football movie, he could use the 2010 Vikings season as its plot.

Guest's stable of improv comics each has a role. Guest portrays Brad Childress, bald, officious, and in denial about his fate. Michael McKeon plays Brett Favre, self-absorbed and living forever in the past. Fred Willard's clueless glad-hander persona is a dead ringer for Zygi Wilf. It's not even a stretch to see Eugene Levy, at his Bobby Bittman-zaniest, slipping into the role of Randy Moss. The Moss "self interview" is no different from one of Nigel Tufnel's Spinal Tap rants. The collapsing Metrodome roof is something out of "Stonehenge." Ryan Longwell's trip to Hattiesburg to grill steaks and talk Favre out of retirement is as nutty as anything in *Best in Show* or *Waiting for Guffman*. Parker Posey plays Deanna Favre, Catherine O'Hara the plucky caterer who incurs Moss' wrath for serving "garbage."

We could fill an entire chapter with 2010 Vikings jokes and still have room left over at the end for their Tuesday Night Football appearance. But there is no point. Favre is gone. Moss is gone. Childress is gone. The Metrodome will soon be gone, or renovated, or at least patched up and avalanche-proofed. Just as Guest's comedy troupe creates memorable characters and situations, then moves on, so too the Vikings

offered a one-year satire of the football world, then moved on to a new project.

Unfortunately, the nature of that new project isn't clear. On the stadium front, the Vikings are torn between a massive long-term building project — a billion-dollar stadium in nearby Arden Hills — or a series of cheaper, more convenient short-term patch jobs. They face the same dilemma on their roster. In both cases, they have no choice but to address long-term solutions while girding themselves for business as near-usual for at least another year. No Arden Hills stadium is going to sprout like a bamboo shoot by September, and the Vikings are in no position to launch the full-scale roster overhaul they so desperately need.

The Vikings, you recall, played in the NFC Championship Game in 2009. They are a veteran team, not far removed from Super Bowl contention, which is why the Favre return and Moss trade weren't foolish moves in isolation. As a pattern, they were a disaster, and the Vikings now have the roster of a team that chased a championship at all costs and fell on its face. There are on-the-decline veterans manning many key positions and very few prospects on the roster. The organization is trying to sell stadium deals, so a salary purge is ill-advised, and head coach Leslie Frazier, a holdover from Childress staff, was a pre-lockout plan of least resistance and probably knows it. So the Vikings must go through the "win now" motions while

## 2011 Vikings Schedule

Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.	Week	Opp.
1	at SD	7	GB	13	DEN
2	TB	8	at CAR	14	at DET
3	DET	9	BYE	15	NO
4	at KC	10	at GB (Mon.)	16	at WAS
5	ARI	11	OAK	17	CHI
6	at CHI	12	at ATL		

grooming a new quarterback and waiting for a bunch of 30-ish veterans to play out their contracts.

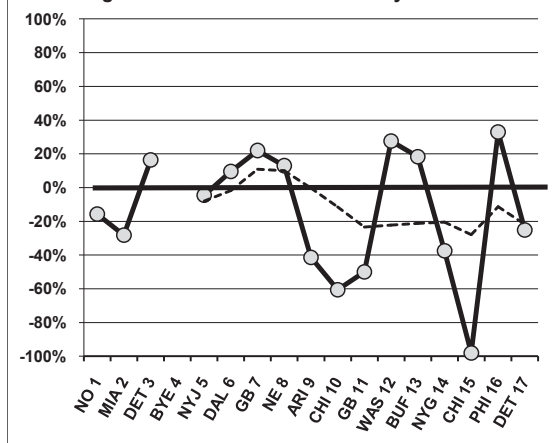
Even the new quarterback is a consolation prize. The Vikings got caught at the end of a quarterback run early in the first round. The Jaguars jumped ahead of them to select Blaine Gabbert, a move they may not have anticipated (though they should have entertained the possibility that the Redskins, who held that pick, might take a quarterback). The Titans had already selected Jake Locker, leaving the Vikings to take Florida State's Christian Ponder. Scouts were somewhat divided on Ponder; Russ Lande ranked him as the third-best quarterback, Nolan Garwocki the sixth, but no one considered him worthy of the 12th pick in the draft.

Ponder, though overdrafted, does have starter potential. He can play through injuries, and certainly has a lot of experience at it, having suffered shoulder and elbow injuries, a ruptured bursa sack, and a concussion in his college career. He appears to have a weak arm and lousy mechanics, but it is possible that his elbow injury may have been such a problem that it drained his arm strength and fouled up his delivery. He's a great leader, a good runner, and a tough guy, but you have to stack up a lot of intangibles to ignore the questionable arm and long injury history.

Knowing Ponder was a long-term project, the Vikings acquired Donovan McNabb during the Shanahan Doghouse Rummage Sale after the lockout. According to DVOA, McNabb was a league-average quarterback, a fading star who could still throw deep but has lost a lot of athleticism and was never the most precise passer. According to the Shanahan family, McNabb was responsible for the Black Death. Frazier knows McNabb from their Philly days, and it's a testimony to how seriously other coaches take Mike Shanahan's allegations that the Vikings think their allegedly lazy insubordinate is an ideal mentor.

McNabb brings the promise of stability, if not excel-

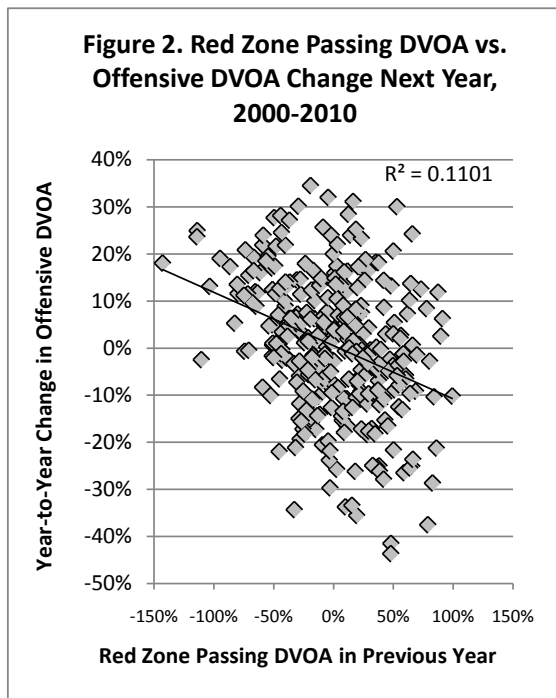
Figure 1. 2010 Minnesota DVOA by Week



lence, at quarterback. He should mesh well with new coordinator Bill Musgrave, who arrives from Atlanta looking to install a Falcons-style offense: lots of extra pass protection and old-fashioned power running. Adrian Peterson will be the focal point of the attack. The offensive line may well be better off without Bryant McKinnie, a Pro Bowler by reputation only who was released at the start of training camp because of weight issues. McNabb can still handle what Musgrave needs him to do: hand off 25 times per game, then play-fake, drop seven steps behind seven-man protection, and heave a bomb. The system has built-in training wheels for when Ponder takes the reins. The Vikings don't need an A+ quarterback to win some games this year, and they won't get one, at least not in 2011.

Offensively, the Vikings can point to Ponder and Musgrave as evidence that they are moving forward. Defensively, the team is stuck in 2007. The famed Williams Wall, which has been slowly cracking since 2006 (when it allowed just 985 rushing yards and an amazing 2.8 yards per carry) is about to come tumbling down. Ray Edwards departed for Atlanta after spending the lockout pursuing his boxing career. Pat Williams is a 39-year-old free agent. If you thought the Star Caps scandal disappeared during the Clinton administration, think again: In the spring, judges ordered that Kevin and Pat Williams were both eligible for suspension, which could impact Kevin Williams' status for the start of the season. Jared Allen is still around, but the dropoff from Williams Wall to Allen and the Irregulars could be Beatles-to-Wings steep.

Age is an issue across the defense. Kevin Williams is 31. E.J. Henderson is 30. Antoine Winfield is 33.



The youngsters who were pressed into service last year didn't accomplish much: Asher Allen and Chris Cook got hurt, and Hussain Abdullah was ordinary at strong safety. Allen and Chad Greenway are the only defensive players who are healthy and in their prime. There are a few prospects, but no up-and-coming "core" of defenders.

The Vikings roster, then, is in a holding pattern: The veterans are past their collective prime, and it has been too many years since the team has invested seriously in the future. Thus you may be surprised to see that we are predicting a bit of a rebound for the Vikings. A .500 season in 2011 is very possible, for a variety of reasons with are more related to regression towards the mean than to personnel improvement.

For one thing, Minnesota's futility passing near the goal line is unsustainable. The Vikings were very good at running in the red zone last year (27.5% DVOA, sixth in the NFL), but they had a red-zone passing DVOA of -83.2%, the ninth worst figure since 2000. Red-zone rushing is more consistent than red-zone passing, and teams that struggle passing in the red zone generally improve on offense the following year (Figure 2). This is particularly true at the extreme. Teams with red-zone passing below -70% DVOA see

their overall total offensive DVOA improve the following year by an average of 12.6%.

On defense, the Vikings are likely to improve due to the "third-down rebound effect." Their defense ranked fifth on first downs last year, 12th on second downs, and 24th on third downs. The offense also might improve due to the third-down effect, although as we noted in last year's Philadelphia chapter, the third-down effect hasn't been as prevalent on offense over the last few seasons.

Even if the Vikings slip into the Wild Card picture, the long-term prognosis is pessimistic. Ponder is not a five-star prospect, and few other future building blocks are in place. To envision the Vikings making a quick turnaround, you must anoint Ponder the answer, think very highly of players like Abdullah, assume Peterson and Allen won't fade quickly in the next two years (and that Percy Harvin finds a way to stay healthy), and anticipate fertile drafts in 2012 and 2013. You must also have a high opinion of Frazier and Musgrave, who appear to be steady hands but not miracle workers, and you must believe the front office that brought you the Favre-Moss "Smell the Glove" experience can make smart personnel decisions on the fly. Barring all of that, we have to assume that the Vikings will be out of serious contention for a while, that Frazier won't be around when they do return to the Super Bowl picture, and that the team will look very different by the time they move into their new suburban dream house.

It is all very grim, despite the chance that the Vikings ride McNabb, Peterson, Allen, and a last-place schedule to a 9-7 season. What did you expect after last season? The roof collapsed. The quarterback fluttered in at the last minute and was carted off in the fetal position. A kickoff returner played quarterback for the last two games. A former superstar returned to the fold as a jabbering lunatic. These are not spackle-and-tape problems, and the Vikings weren't ready for most of them, even if they should have been. This year's team at least won't make fans wince. They can watch Ponder grow, enjoy Purple Jesus while he lasts, and debate the merits of paying hundreds of million dollars to fund a rent-free stadium while watching the Vikings in a reinflated bubble. At least the rest of the football world won't be laughing at their team.

Mike Tanier

## 2010 Vikings Stats by Week

Wk	vs.	W-L	PF	PA	YDF	YDA	TO	Total	Off	Def	ST
1	@NO	L	9	14	253	308	-1	-16%	0%	14%	-1%
2	MIA	L	10	14	364	226	-2	-28%	-33%	-9%	-5%
3	DET	W	24	10	368	295	0	16%	-11%	-23%	4%
4	BYE										
5	@NYJ	L	20	29	336	328	-3	-5%	-11%	-11%	-5%
6	DAL	W	24	21	188	314	1	10%	-8%	-3%	15%
7	@GB	L	24	28	402	379	-1	22%	17%	-1%	4%
8	@NE	L	18	28	410	362	-1	13%	21%	16%	8%
9	ARI	W	27	24	507	225	-2	-41%	5%	21%	-25%
10	@CHI	L	13	27	240	360	-2	-61%	-32%	15%	-14%
11	GB	L	3	31	300	374	-2	-50%	-22%	28%	0%
12	@WAS	W	17	13	299	216	1	28%	16%	-17%	-6%
13	BUF	W	38	14	387	239	1	18%	-23%	-32%	9%
14	NYG	L	3	21	164	395	1	-37%	-57%	1%	21%
15	CHI	L	14	40	273	293	-4	-98%	-58%	5%	-35%
16	@PHI	W	24	14	337	331	2	33%	29%	1%	5%
17	@DET	L	13	20	211	357	1	-25%	-26%	4%	5%

## Trends and Splits

	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank
Total DVOA	-11.8%	27	0.9%	11
Unadjusted VOA	-16.2%	29	-0.2%	11
Weighted Trend	-12.9%	28	3.1%	16
Variance	6.8%	13	2.7%	2
Average Opponent	0.0%	26	3.7%	17
Passing	-16.4%	30	9.9%	20
Rushing	7.8%	8	-10.0%	8
First Down	11.7%	9	-5.4%	5
Second Down	-18.3%	30	-1.1%	12
Third Down	-45.7%	31	15.2%	24
First Half	-8.3%	25	10.4%	24
Second Half	-15.3%	27	-9.0%	5
Red Zone	-28.4%	29	-1.8%	16
Late and Close	-5.8%	24	-9.6%	10

## Five-Year Performance

Year	W-L	Pyth	Est W	PF	PA	TO	Total	Rk	Off	Rk	Def	Rk	ST	Rk	Off AGL	Rk	Def AGL	Rk
2006	6-10	6.6	7.9	282	327	+4	-10.9%	23	-17.3%	31	-10.0%	5	-3.6%	27	18.0	17	10.6	14
2007	8-8	9.5	8.9	365	311	+1	2.0%	15	0.1%	16	0.3%	17	2.1%	9	11.9	4	7.6	4
2008	10-6	9.2	8.3	379	333	-6	4.9%	18	-5.8%	25	-17.2%	4	-6.5%	32	10.0	4	24.0	18
2009	12-4	11.6	10.2	470	312	+6	18.4%	7	16.1%	9	1.8%	17	4.1%	4	9.4	7	13.1	4
2010	6-10	6.0	6.7	281	348	-11	-13.8%	25	-11.8%	27	0.9%	11	-1.2%	19	35.7	25	19.7	14

## Strategic Tendencies

Run/Pass	Rank	Offense	Rank	Defense	Rank	Other	Rank				
Runs, all plays	41%	13	3+ WR	52%	13	Rush 3	1.0%	32	2+ RB, Pct Runs	60%	14
Runs, first half	47%	5	4+ WR	6%	16	Rush 4	69.1%	5	1 RB/2 TE, Pct Runs	57%	5
Runs, first down	50%	16	2+ TE	34%	9	Rush 5	23.3%	17	1 RB/3+ WR, Pct Runs	22%	16
Runs, second-long	35%	14	Single back	69%	6	Rush 6+	6.6%	21	CB1 on WR1	29%	28
Runs, power sit.	61%	15	Play action	19%	14	Zone Blitz	9.5%	6	Go for it on 4th	0.79	22
Runs, behind 2H	26%	19	Max protect	12%	9	Sacks by LB	8.1%	30	Offensive Pace	32.7	30
Pass, ahead 2H	41%	22	Outside pocket	14%	11	Sacks by DB	11.3%	15	Defensive Pace	30.6	12

The Vikings averaged 5.2 yards rushing from one-back sets, but just 3.1 yards rushing from two-back sets. Only Indianapolis (which rarely uses two backs) had a larger difference. ☹️ Minnesota had 41.4% passing DVOA when using play-action (7.7 yards per pass) but -21.9% DVOA without play-action (5.5 yards per pass). That was the highest gap in the NFL. ☹️ Interestingly, the Vikings had the highest DVOA gap between play-action passes and other passes on defense as well. Against standard passes, the Vikings gave up 5.7 yards per pass with 1.3% DVOA. Against play-action passes, the Vikings gave up 8.2 yards per pass with 57.8% DVOA.

## Passing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	NtYds	Avg	YAC	C%	TD	Int
B.Favre	-134	-16.6%	389	2442	6.3	5.7	61.1%	11	19
J.Webb	-49	-19.0%	98	477	4.9	4.2	60.7%	0	3
T.Jackson	-84	-31.0%	66	294	4.5	3.4	58.6%	3	4

## Rushing

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Yds	Avg	TD	Fum	Suc
A.Peterson	229	10.6%	284	1295	4.6	12	2	45%
T.Gerhart	19	-2.8%	81	322	4.0	1	1	42%
P.Harvin	94	63.5%	18	107	5.9	1	0	-
J.Webb	56	53.5%	18	124	6.9	2	0	-
A.Young	-28	-67.4%	13	29	2.2	0	0	31%
T.Jackson	19	79.9%	5	63	12.6	0	0	-
B.Favre	-12	-62.8%	5	16	3.2	0	1	-

## Receiving

Player	DYAR	DVOA	Plays	Ctch	Yds	Y/C	YAC	TD	C%
P.Harvin	153	5.2%	109	71	871	12.3	6.0	5	65%
R.Moss	72	2.0%	63	28	393	14.0	2.3	5	44%
B.Berrian	-65	-26.8%	54	28	252	9.0	2.8	0	52%
S.Rice	37	-1.5%	42	17	280	16.5	2.5	2	40%
G.Lewis	-40	-26.9%	37	17	197	11.6	4.2	0	46%
G.Camarillo	35	1.5%	33	20	240	12.0	4.4	1	61%
V.Shiancoe	6	-6.1%	79	47	530	11.3	3.7	2	59%
J.Kleinsasser	19	8.1%	20	17	148	8.7	4.6	0	85%
A.Peterson	93	20.0%	50	36	341	9.5	9.2	1	72%
T.Gerhart	-20	-26.4%	29	21	168	8.0	8.3	0	72%
N.Tahi	29	47.7%	6	6	39	6.5	6.0	1	100%
L.Booker	3	-5.0%	6	5	34	6.8	6.2	0	83%

## Offensive Line

Year	Yards	ALY	Rank	Power	Rank	Stuff	Rank	2nd Lev	Rank	Open Field	Rank
2008	4.63	4.14	13	73%	8	19%	21	1.25	8	1.13	3
2009	4.18	4.01	20	59%	23	24%	32	1.18	14	0.94	8
2010	4.33	4.15	11	70%	6	19%	18	1.25	8	0.82	12

Year	LE	Rank	LT	Rank	Mid	Rank	RT	Rank	RE	Rank	Sacks	ASR	Rank	F-Start	Cont.
2008	4.27	15	4.70	7	4.06	19	3.59	27	4.34	8	43	8.9%	28	16	32
2009	3.83	22	4.59	7	4.10	16	3.67	26	3.82	22	34	6.0%	14	23	32
2010	4.50	13	4.56	7	4.22	10	3.72	22	3.73	21	36	6.8%	20	27	30

The Vikings have spent a lot of free agent money and high draft picks building an incredibly ordinary offensive line in recent years. Based on the reputations and pedigrees of some of the players, this should be a dominating unit, but Adrian Peterson spent a lot of the 2010 season fighting for three-yard gains, and Vikings coaches used Visanthe Shiancoe and others as pass protectors far more often than recommended.

Right tackle Phil Loadholt (14 total penalties) is a graduate of the Alex Barron School of Snap Count Anticipation. Loadholt committed seven false starts, usually when trying to beat a speed rusher off the line. Shiancoe, who spent a lot of time helping Loadholt block on the right side, pitched in seven false starts and three holds. H-back Jim Kleinsasser, who also provided extra support on the right side, added three more holds. In short, blocking on the right side was a recurring problem. Loadholt is great at straight-ahead run blocking but can be beaten to the edge when he doesn't jump offside or hold, and he spends screens and reverses jogging around looking for defenders to stand still so he can block them.

Bryant McKinnie, who reportedly spent the lockout flirting with the 400-pound mark, got released at the start of camp. He was another example of a "name" lineman playing well below reputation. Free agent Charlie Johnson will replace McKinnie. Johnson is a typical Colts lineman: smaller and quicker than the average blocker, and harder to evaluate because of Peyton Manning's ability to make his line look good.

Steve Hutchinson will turn 34 during the season and is just a good-not-great player at a non-critical position. Center John Sullivan and right guard Anthony Herrera are both Just Another Guys; Sullivan is back from the injuries that slowed him last year, while Herrera missed the start of camp while recovering from a November knee injury. The offensive line was less of a crisis area than other units, so the Vikings didn't make major upgrades in the draft. Sixth-round pick DeMarcus Love will get a look as a swing guard. Sixth-round pick Brandon Fusco started 44 games at center for Slippery Rock and could be groomed as Sullivan's eventual replacement.

## Defensive Front Seven

Defensive Line	Age	Pos	Plays	TmPct	Overall							Pass Rush			vs. Run			vs. Pass			
					Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTKl	St%	Rk	AvYd	Rk	Sack	Hit	Hur	Runs	St%	Yds	Pass	St%	Yds
Jared Allen	29	DE	65	8.3%	8	51	23	0	74%	40	1.0	24	11	15	28.5	39	74%	2.1	26	85%	-0.6
Ray Edwards	26	DE	39	5.7%	33	33	13	2	78%	12	0.0	8	8	9	27.5	23	78%	2.0	16	94%	-2.9
Pat Williams	39	DT	30	3.9%	48	25	4	0	85%	19	1.3	19	0	1	3	27	85%	1.0	3	67%	3.3
Kevin Williams	31	DT	48	6.2%	12	37	17	2	76%	33	1.7	32	1	8	22	33	76%	1.5	15	80%	2.1
Brian Robison	28	DE	15	1.9%	--	10	4	1	64%	--	3.1	--	2	3	2	11	64%	3.5	4	75%	2.0
Letroy Guion	24	DT	16	2.2%	--	13	5	0	75%	--	1.5	--	2	3	4.5	12	75%	3.0	4	100%	-3.0

Linebackers	Age	Pos	Plays	TmPct	Overall							Pass Rush			vs. Run			vs. Pass				
					Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTKl	AvYd	Sack	Hit	Hur	Runs	St%	Rk	Yds	Rk	Tgts	Suc%	Rk	AdjYd	Rk
Chad Greenway	28	OLB	143	18.4%	4	79	28	5	5.0	1.5	4	7	77	71%	37	2.9	43	38	53%	46	5.8	34
E.J. Henderson	31	MLB	109	14.0%	26	64	18	5	4.2	1	2	5	81	65%	71	2.7	30	22	49%	55	5.9	36
Ben Leber	33	OLB	49	6.3%	99	25	10	5	5.3	0	2	8	29	41%	109	5.1	107	17	71%	4	4.8	13

Year	Yards	ALY	Rank	Power	Rank	Stuff	Rank	2nd Lev	Rank	Open Field	Rank
2008	3.46	3.50	4	55%	2	24%	5	1.03	7	0.54	9
2009	3.86	3.67	7	44%	2	25%	3	1.20	19	0.59	8
2010	3.80	3.64	6	66%	23	22%	8	1.05	9	0.71	14

Year	LE	Rank	LT	Rank	Mid	Rank	RT	Rank	RE	Rank	Sacks	ASR	Rank
2008	3.56	8	3.95	11	3.62	4	3.45	5	2.58	3	45	9.0%	2
2009	4.91	25	3.70	8	3.56	5	3.63	8	2.73	2	48	7.8%	4
2010	3.54	5	4.56	25	3.86	13	3.29	6	2.26	1	31	5.6%	26

The Vikings defensive line is in a state of flux because of age, legal problems, free agency, and the lure of the sweet science. Pat Williams is a 39-year-old free agent coming off an injury who is not expected back; Williams was still weighing his options in the weeks after the lockout. Newcomer Remi Ayodele was part of a Saints line that was terrible against the run in 2009 but much better in 2010. Ayodele's Run Stop Rate improved from 65 percent to 81 percent last year. He could never replace Pat Williams 2007, but he is as good as Pat Williams 2010. Kevin Williams remains one of the best all-around tackles in the league, disrupting plays in the backfield and doing a great job on screens and reverses, but he may be suspended this season in the StarCaps scandal that broke so long ago that Carl Eller and Alan Page were originally involved.

Ray Edwards left for Atlanta, leaving Jared Allen as the only sure thing on a once impenetrable line. Fourth-round rookie Christian Ballard (Iowa) is quick but undersized and technically raw; on the plus side, he has shown no interest in boxing (Edwards' off-field hobby) or dehydration tablets.

The Vikings franchised linebacker Chad Greenway before the lockout. Greenway is a consistent all-purpose defender who rarely leaves the field. He drew a lot of tough coverage assignments, picking up the likes of Jason Witten, Brett Celek, and Brandon Pettigrew, which make his Pass Stops and Defeats more impressive in context. Two of E.J. Henderson's three interceptions came on tipped passes. Henderson attacks the line of scrimmage well and is adequate in middle zone coverage, but he has gotten a lot of help over the years from playing behind the Williams Wall.

Ben Leber signed with St. Louis. Possible replacements include Jasper Brinkley, a big defender who looked good at the start of camp, and Erin Henderson, who may be E.J.'s sister.

## Defensive Secondary

Secondary	Age	Pos	Overall						vs. Run						vs. Pass								
			Plays	TmPct	Rk	Stop	Dfts	BTKl	Runs	St%	Rk	Yds	Rk	Tgts	Tgt%	Rk	Dist	Suc%	Rk	APaYd	Rk	PD	Int
Husain Abdullah	26	FS	78	10.7%	29	26	6	4	41	37%	50	6.8	43	30	7.1%	25	12.3	47%	62	8.9	57	7	3
Madiou Williams	30	FS	76	11.1%	25	18	6	6	42	31%	64	9.9	73	27	6.9%	29	19.6	40%	73	13.2	78	2	1
Chris Cook	24	CB	22	7.5%	--	3	2	2	5	0%	--	11.0	--	25	14.7%	--	10.6	31%	--	12.2	--	2	0
Antoine Winfield	34	CB	96	12.3%	6	48	21	4	21	62%	12	3.5	6	58	12.9%	67	9.1	64%	7	4.5	2	4	0
Frank Walker	30	CB	23	4.3%	--	10	4	4	6	67%	--	4.5	--	23	7.5%	--	17.7	65%	--	6.1	--	5	1
Asher Allen	23	CB	60	8.8%	37	21	9	3	10	30%	76	8.9	65	62	15.8%	37	12.5	48%	63	9.3	75	6	2
Lito Sheppard	30	CB	21	3.3%	--	12	5	0	3	67%	--	4.0	--	31	8.6%	--	11.5	45%	--	8.5	--	4	0

Year	Pass D Rank	vs. #1 WR	Rk	vs. #2 WR	Rk	vs. Other WR	Rk	vs. TE	Rk	vs. RB	Rk
2008	5	-13.8%	7	-33.5%	2	-1.5%	20	18.0%	24	9.0%	22
2009	22	19.2%	24	-7.5%	11	19.7%	29	16.6%	23	6.7%	20
2010	20	-1.2%	16	14.5%	25	14.0%	27	-6.0%	8	-16.7%	4

While he is still a very good defender, Antoine Winfield typifies the problems that the Vikings face as they move forward. Winfield graded out very well in our charting stats, still throws his body around against the run, and can be effective off the blitz. At the same time, he cost the team a lot of money and is now 34 years old. He is a holdover from the team's attempt to win the Super Bowl two years ago, and while he is still playing at a high level, he will soon need to be replaced by a player who may not even be on the roster right now. Instead of trying out young cornerbacks at the end of last season, the Vikings rounded out their bench with veterans like Frank Walker and Lito Sheppard.

Cornerback Cedric Griffin suffered his second major knee injury in 10 months last October. Griffin tore his left ACL in the 2009 NFC Championship, battled back into the lineup by Week 3, then tore his right ACL against the Jets. Griffin was rehabbing diligently on his own in the offseason, but his future is uncertain. Chris Cook, a second-round pick last year, only played five games and missed most of the season with injuries to both knees. Cook also suffered a broken leg and some sprained ankles in college, so injuries may be a chronic problem. Cook was accused of gun charges in an offseason argument with a neighbor but later cleared. The incident started when Cook rode his bicycle around the street to be "a nosy neighbor" (his words) during an arrest next door to his mother's house, the neighbor accused Cook of calling the police and called him a "snitch," and things somehow got more ridiculous from there. Cook may need to ride his bicycle around the secondary to patch all of the holes in the Vikings defense this year.

Safety Madiou Williams left via free agency. The team re-signed Husain Abdullah and backup Eric Frampton, but safety will be another position of concern unless Frampton comes al ... no, that joke is beneath us.

## Special Teams

Year	DVOA	Rank	FG/XP	Rank	Net Kick	Rank	Kick Ret	Rank	Net Punt	Rank	Punt Ret	Rank	Hidden	Rank
2008	-6.5%	32	-0.5	19	-4.9	24	-4.4	22	-24.6	32	-3.8	26	5.2	7
2009	4.1%	4	7.7	4	-6.3	28	18.7	2	0.5	21	3.7	13	1.4	11
2010	-1.2%	19	2.0	12	-15.7	31	4.3	11	6.2	11	-3.7	22	1.8	12

If Football Outsiders readers or writers were football players, we would be like Chris Kluwe. We would love our jobs and do our very best, then retreat into a world of Warcraft, comic books, Syfy original movies, and other geeky pleasures in our free time. In NFL circles, Kluwe is an oddball, and if he played a position other than punter or kicker, his "eccentricities" would be used to explain his failure the first time he slumped or had a bad game. As it stands, Kluwe is still probably two shanked punts away from hearing that playing Guitar Hero or reading *Preacher* distracts him from his job. It's a parochial word, but luckily Kluwe has thick skin, and a high armor class.

Ryan Longwell made most of his headlines last year as a Favre Retrieval Unit; try not to hold it against him. On the field, he's the classic veteran dome kicker, deadly from inside 40 yards but rarely called upon to kick from distance. Unfortunately, Longwell's kickoffs were poor last year, and the kick coverage was even worse; Minnesota opponents got a league-leading 9.5 estimated points worth of field position on kick returns. The Vikings re-signed Longwell last year but rescinded his Mississippi barbecue privileges. Greg Camarillo lacks Percy Harvin's big-play ability as a punt returner, but he takes what the coverage unit offers and gets up after tackles without clutching his head or limping. Harvin is electrifying on kickoff returns but takes too many hits. Everyone from Lorenzo Booker to Joe Webb got chances to return kicks last year, and the Vikings may reserve Harvin for critical situations.

## Coaching Staff

New offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave is expected to use a lot of two-tight end sets to emphasize the running game and provide pass protection for Christian Ponder. This will not be a major change for the Vikings, who used six or more pass protectors about as often as Musgrave's Falcons last year (56 percent to 57 percent) and often employed Visanthe Shiancoe and Jim Kleinsasser in two-tight end sets. The main difference is that Brad Childress used max protect out of necessity, because of injuries to the receiving corps, some deficiencies on the offensive line, and a quarterback older than Enoch. Musgrave will use them by design.

Mike Singletary's get-tough sermonizing should be much more effective now that he is the linebackers coach under a defense-minded head coach. Singletary gets to be more of a drill sergeant and less of a general; long-range tactics just weren't his bag.