

Da Boys are back, surprise, surprise Vikings' playoff hopes dim with loss

You don't tug on Superman's cape. You don't spit into the wind. You don't pull the mask off the ol' Lone Ranger and you don't mess around with Jim — especially if he's dressed in silver and blue and has a big star slapped on the side of his head.

Before the start of the NFL season, some folks looked at the Dallas Cowboys and saw a team that had slipped a little from its throne over the rest of the league.

Not only were they behind the 49ers, but they were also dangerously close to earning membership in the league's club for mediocre elites filled by the likes of the Dolphins, Chiefs and Packers. Rumor was, they might even have their division crown stripped away by Philadelphia or Phoenix.

The losses of speedburner receiver Alvin Harper and All-Pro center Mark Stepnoski were just too much for the Cowboys to overcome. "Everybody, jump

ship! Jerry Jones' U.S.S. Dynasty is going down!"

Toilet talk! After eight games this season (seven of those wins and one uninspired fluke in D.C.), the Cowboys have resurfaced themselves as the NFL's lead dawg. Ask me why.

Troy Aikman has been semi-spectacular and even more consistent after recovering from that calf pull he suffered during the Washington game. Emmitt Smith has been amazing on the ground with only one game under 100 yards.

Irvin and Novacek have proved they don't need a third receiver, and the offensive line with a rehabilitated Erik Williams has been nothing short of the league's best.

The defense hasn't been great, just good enough. Of course, they got a whole lot better on Sunday in Atlanta with

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the return of Darren Smith and the debut of that fella with the last name Sanders.

Deion didn't have anything to do with the thrashing of the

Falcons — Dionne Warwick could've played cornerback, and the Cowboys still would have won.

He just adds a special brand of something to the mix for Dallas. You can't see "it." You can't touch "it." You can't step on "it" or scrape "it" off your shoe. All I know is that the Cowboys got a hold of "it," and Deion Sanders definitely has something to do with "it."

Italians call "it" machismo. The Germans call "it" Fahrvenigen. Cajuns call "it" bellgrande.

By any name "it" is still the same: A mystique, a swagger, a little extra winning whatever

that comes from an inner faith and an unshakable confidence that you're the baddest s.o.b. in the joint.

The Cowboys can simply call it "Primetime."

I'm not saying that Deion Sanders is the single reason why the Cowboys will go to the Super Bowl this season. He just brings a truckload of "it" to go along with Aikman, Smith, Irvin and Charles Haley and Co. which was pretty damn good to begin with.

The Cowboys have their magic that they possessed during the '93 and '94 seasons when they won the Super Bowl back.

They know they're the best and know how to slap "it" all over any team that gets in the way. Combine that with the Steve Young's shoulder problems and season-ending knee injuries to his 49er teammates Brent Jones and William Floyd, and you can go ahead and park "it" and the Cowboys in Tempe for Super Bowl XXX.



Chicago Bears 14
Minnesota Vikings 6



□ A fumble by Quadry Ismail sealed the victory for Chicago.

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Chicago Bears finally won again on a Monday night, and they might have doomed the Minnesota Vikings' playoff hopes in the process.

Erik Kramer threw two touchdown passes, including a stunning 48-yarder to Curtis Conway with 25 seconds left in the first half, as Chicago beat the Vikings 14-6 to end its NFL-worst eight-game losing streak on Monday nights.

The rare prime-time victory, sealed when Minnesota's Qadry Ismail fumbled at the Chicago 24 with 1:32 to play, gave the Bears (6-2) a one-game lead over Green Bay in the NFC Central entering the second half of the season. It also was Chicago's fourth consecutive win, and its first sweep over Minnesota since 1991.

It left the Vikings (3-5) needing a remarkable turnaround to make Dennis Green only the fourth coach to take his team to the playoffs each of his first four seasons.

Minnesota probably needs a 6-2 finish to have a chance, and its schedule includes Green Bay, Detroit, Cleveland and

San Francisco.

The Bears entered the game with a 12-26 record in the 11-year history of Monday night football, and they hadn't won the showcase game since a victory at the Metrodome on Nov. 19, 1991. Before a 27-24 loss to Green Bay on Sept. 11, they lost their previous seven Monday night games by nearly 20 points a game.

Even with running back Robert Smith out with an injured ankle, Minnesota controlled the clock throughout, using Moon's accurate short passing on long drives that kept Kramer and the NFC's highest scoring offense on the sidelines much of the night.

Moon finished 28 of 42 for 277 yards, and the Vikings had a four-minute edge in possession.

But Chicago sacked Moon three times, and the Vikings, who lost their third straight, consistently stalled when they got in scoring position and managed only a Fuad Revezid field goal.

Kramer completed 18 of 23 passes for 231 yards, and he had an exceptional when he got into goal-line situations.

He was 5 of 5 for 73 yards in Chicago's first scoring drive, which ended in Kramer's 4-yard pass to defensive end Jim Flanagan, a backfield substitute in goal-line situations.

Lett, Holmes face drug suspension

□ Cowboy officials said they did not know of any NFL actions.

IRVING, Texas (AP) — The Dallas Cowboys are 7-1 and tied with the Kansas City Chiefs for the best record in the NFL, but all is not well at Valley Ranch.

Leon Lett, who received a \$4 million bonus this summer as part of a lucrative contract, and Clayton Holmes could be suspended for failing to ad-

here to the NFL's substance abuse policy.

The Cowboys stonewalled all questions Monday about the possibility Pro Bowl defensive lineman Lett and reserve cornerback Holmes could be suspended for as long as six weeks after positive drug tests.

"I have no idea what's happening," Dallas coach Barry Switzer said Monday. "Some things are best not to know. That's being handled by the conference (league) office policy. They don't allow coaches to

know about those things. I have no idea when it will be cleared up."

"I haven't been informed by the NFL," said Dallas owner Jerry Jones.

Quoting sources, The Dallas Morning News reported that Lett and Holmes could miss four to six weeks for violating the policy forbidding the use of steroids, illegal drugs and abuse of alcohol.

The NFL has not contacted the Cowboys about any possible suspensions.

Switzer wanted to talk about

Sunday's 28-13 victory over the Atlanta Falcons but the rumors swirling around took center stage over Deion Sanders, Michael Irvin, Troy Aikman and Emmitt Smith.

Lett and Holmes didn't come to the practice facility on Monday, which was a day off for the Cowboys. They don't play again until Monday night against the Philadelphia Eagles.

Switzer said he was "disappointed" with the Cowboys' 7-1 record because "I expect to win every game we play."

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