



in New Orleans, Vikings quarterback Brett Favre throws an interception at the Saints' 22-yard line with 14 seconds left in regulation. It is both inexplicable and inevitable. "I can't believe what I'm seeing," says Vikings radio announcer Paul Allen, who surely can. The Saints, obviously, win in overtime.

As a result of all this, Vikings fans were a bit wary on Sunday. But my best friend in Minneapolis likens the Vikings to the mafia in that you can't escape them except by death. "You can say you're out, you can say

you no longer care," he texted me, "but when Bud strolled out to midfield in his golf shirt, I wanted to get in a stance and knock someone into next week."

Grant is Minnesota's Dad—we all still want to please him—but he of all people knew what was coming. The best running back of his generation, Adrian Peterson, fumbled late, leading to the Seahawks' go-ahead field goal. Still, the Vikings were in position for a 27-yard game-winning kick with 22 seconds left. A text from my sister-in-law just before the boot: *they might just do it!*

My weary reply: *not holding my breath.*

The kicker, Walsh, who had scored all of the Vikings' points and was thus the principal reason they were still in the game, pulled the kick left. No matter. He was simply playing his role in a drama much older than he. "At least it was only the fifth-worst loss in our lifetime," said another friend in Minnesota.

As my phone sprang to life with texts and tweets, I thumb-typed a two-word message to my sister-in-law. It gave me no pleasure to write: *told you.* □

GO FIGURE



5

Consecutive FCS national championships for North Dakota State, which beat Jacksonville State 37-10 last Saturday in Frisco, Texas. The Bison are the first college football team at any level to win five straight titles.

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Wins, through Sunday, in franchise history for the Bruins, who joined the Canadiens as the only NHL teams to reach that mark. Boston beat New Jersey 4-1 last Friday night in Newark for the milestone victory.



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Age of Bill Gullfoil, of Fairway, Kans., who will try to qualify for the U.S. Olympic table tennis team at the trials in Greensboro, N.C., Feb. 4-8. Gullfoil, who would be the oldest Olympian ever, also tried out for the U.S. team in 2012 but lost in the first round.