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NHL: Non-contenders still problematic for Wild. C5

MLB: The Loons reveal their new kits. C12

Winner, Top 10 Sports sections in the nation

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2018

StarTribune

STARTRIBUNE.COM/SPORTS · SECTION C

# SPORTS

WOLVES 111, SACRAMENTO 106  
Tuesday vs. Houston, 7 p.m. (PST)

## No style points, but no matter

Wolves grind out 13th consecutive victory at home

By JERRY ZOGORA  
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Don't ask how, just ask how many.

For the Timberwolves, the answer is 13 after Sunday night laborer-to-Ministry victory over the Sacramento Kings.

That 13 is in consecutive home victories now that the Wolves found just enough of what they needed in the fourth quarter to break their streak. They outscored the Kings 36-26, recorded seven assists on eight made baskets, made 16 free throws and rode Jimmy Butler's 31-point first-half fourth quarter. The victory puts the Wolves at 35-24 with two games left before next weekend's All-Star break.

"We didn't play well," Wolves coach Tom Thibodeau said. "But we did enough to win in the end." It was what Thibodeau called the hustle plays that helped make the difference when the Wolves considered the same energy, the same kind of team they used to crush Cleveland and Portland and beat Toronto during the third-longest home winning franchise streak in franchise history. They followed last second losses at Cleveland on Wednesday and at Chicago on Friday by persevering against a Kings team that's now 17-38.

"It's a long season, it really is," veteran guard Jamal Crawford said. "There will be highs and lows and ups and downs, but if we can find ways to win games like even when we're not technically at our best, then it's a good thing for us." The Wolves found a way to win when backup point guard

See WOLVES on C10

**HOME RUNS**  
The Timberwolves' longest winning streaks at home:  
17 Jan. 8-Mar. 2, 2003  
14 Dec. 16, 2012-Feb. 6, 2004  
13 Dec. 18, 2017-current  
12 Mar. 20, 1998-Feb. 22, 1999  
10 Feb. 29-Apr. 6, 2001



Wolves center Karl-Anthony Towns put up a fourth-quarter shot over the defense of former Wolves center Kosta Koufos on Sunday night at Target Center. Towns led all scorers with 29 points in a 111-106 victory over Sacramento.

It's in again to talk NBA in February

JIM SOUHAN



Sunday night, the Timberwolves brought the Target Center crowd to its first dramatic victory that ended a losing streak and kept them on pace for the fourth seed in the Western Conference.

That the victory came against a lousy Sacramento team shouldn't matter, not when you haven't had a winning season since Nikola Piskic was in uniform.

What matters is our marketplace is that the Timberwolves have a chance to become the No. 1 sporting attraction in Minnesota for the next couple of months, and they didn't choke.

Forgive them if they're not sure how to walk across this stage without tripping. They're used to wearing banana peels as slippers.

The Vikings rule Minnesota sports, as we were reminded the past five months. The Twins can temporarily challenge that status with a dramatic season pace or offering fall.

The Wild has stolen eyeballs during the playoffs, and there is an argument theory among fans that a great Gophers basketball or football season would steal hearts. The Lynx represent the best of Minnesota sports this decade but have yet to achieve mainstream popularity.

The path to popularity is clear: The Wolves have their best team since ownership inhaled Lutebel's payroll with a contract offer of \$21 million that in no way could have led Spivey's family.

The stage became theirs when the Vikings folded and the Super Bowl concluded. The Wolves entered Sunday's

See SOUHAN on C10

WOMEN 101, PENN STATE 68 Wednesday vs. Michigan, 7 p.m. (No TV)

## Gophers put up big numbers to build on

U starts fast vs. Nitrary Lions, reaches triple digits for fifth time this season.

By HEATHER BULE  
Special to the Star Tribune

It's tough to script the start of a four-game home stand any better for the Gophers women's basketball team.

"We were very poised, and we look like a veteran team in many areas," said coach Marlene Stollings. "And that's where you want to be at this point in time."

Five players reached double digits in scoring as the Gophers beat Penn State 101-68 during the annual Frank Game in front of 3,794 fans on Sunday afternoon at Williams Arena. Sophomore guard Gaden Hubbard led the effort with 25 points, tying a season high. Freshman Destiny Fries

See GOPHERS on C12



Gophers sophomore guard Gaden Hubbard drove past Penn State guard Sybil Frazer in the second half Sunday afternoon at Williams Arena, on the way to a season-high 25 points.

## Archer in Twins' sights as spring training nears

The Rays right-hander has a club-friendly contract.

LA VILLE 5, REAL 111

PORT MYERS, Fla. - After failing to land Yu Darvish with a five-year contract offer, the Twins are looking at several other free-agent pitchers, as well as exploring trades with multiple teams, according to several sources with knowledge of the club's search.

One pitcher the Twins have targeted is Rays right-hander Chris Archer, and the club made a trade offer as recently as two weeks ago, a source confirmed. Tampa Bay has some interest in outfielder Max Kepler as part of any package for Archer. Kepler, with a year and 153 days of service time, is under team control for five more years, which appeals to the Rays. He

turned 28 Saturday and batted .283 last season with 19 homers and 69 RBI.

Archer, 29, is 3-0 during his six-year career. He has struck out 74 batters over the past three seasons, but he has not won more than 12 games in any year and won 10 in last season with a 4.07 ERA.

Still, Archer can pitch like an ace when he is on. He had Twins fans buzzing during a May 26 outing at Target Field when he struck out 11 over 7 1/3 innings in a 5-2 Rays victory.

If the Rays are willing to move Archer, the Twins likely will have to top other offers from across the majors. He will make \$12.5 million over the next two years with club options for \$9 million in 2020 and \$11 million in 2021. His availability makes him desirable, and past Tampa Bay in position to demand a lot in return.

See TWINS on C12