

Lawrence Vickers, Cowboys bracing for a brawl vs. physical Ravens

By BARRY HORN

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IRVING — Cowboys fullback Lawrence Vickers is black-and-blue familiar with the Baltimore Ravens.

In each of his first five years in the NFL, his Cleveland Browns banged heads twice every season with their AFC North rival. When he moved to the Houston Texans last season, Vickers, as luck would have it, once again squared off against the Ravens two times.

Here's the off-season free agent signee's up-close and personal scouting report on the Ravens defense that will be waiting for the Cowboys on Sunday.

"It's going to be physical," said Vickers, who has made a career as a blue-collar blocker. "Everything is physical up there. There is nothing finesse about going to play Baltimore."

And so as the Cowboys return to work today, coming off their four-day bye week, they begin preparing in earnest for what promises to be their most physically challenging game of the season thus far.

Coach Jason Garrett offered a tired pregame analysis of the Ravens as he did for last week's game against the Chicago Bears, the same he would offer if Sunday's opponent in Baltimore were the Bad News Bears.

"They are an awfully good football team in all three phases of the game," Garrett said, repeating his mantra. "They will be a great challenge for us."

Vickers was more candid.

"I'm more ready for this bye week to be over with," he said after the Cowboys' final pre-bye practice. "It's about time for me to be banged up a little bit."

Heading the banging for the Ravens as he has for 17 seasons will be linebacker Ray Lewis, the ageless hitting machine who may have slowed some but remains the unquestioned leader of the defense.

Mention Lewis' name in the Cowboys locker room and eyes widen. Backs stiffen. Everyone comes to attention.

"That's my idol," said Bruce Carter, the second-year linebacker who has begun to make an impact alongside fellow linebacker Sean Lee in the middle of the Cowboys defense. "Physically, he has the whole package. He is always around the ball, and he has the passion that can get the other 10 guys on defense on fire."

The Ravens have been on fire at home at M&T Bank Stadium, where they have won 13 consecutive games, including their first three this season. Among their 2012 victims: the defending AFC champion New England Patriots.

Last season, when they boasted an identical 2-2 record before their bye week, the Cowboys came off their respite for a road game at the Patriots. Final score: Patriots 20, Cowboys 16.

They are hoping for a better result. The trip to Baltimore is the first of a five-game gantlet that includes only one home game. And that is against the New York Giants, a team that has yet to lose at Cowboys Stadium.

The Cowboys defense should be bolstered by the return from injury of starters Jay Ratliff, Kenyon Coleman and Anthony Spencer.

Then there is also today's bonus practice to prepare for the Ravens. Mondays are usually reserved for healing Sunday's wounds.

"We didn't play a good game last week," said linebacker DeMarcus Ware, referencing the 34-18 loss to the Bears. "Now, we have the Ravens. It's a big game for us. How are we going to respond?"

"Starting with Baltimore, we've got a big stretch of games coming to find out if we really want it or not," he said. "Are we going to weather the storm through this stuff that's about to brew up in these games?"

"We will see."

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Bend woman runs well in Chicago

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Bend resident Renee Metivier Baillie took eighth place among women in the Chicago Marathon on Sunday and turned in one of the quickest performances ever by an American woman debuting at the distance.

Metivier Baillie, 30, covered the 26.2-mile course in 2 hours, 27 minutes, 17 seconds, also finishing as the top American woman in the race, won by Atsede Baysa of Ethiopia in 2:22:03. Baysa narrowly defeated runner-up Rita Jeptoo, finishing just 1 second in front of the Kenyan.

Tsegaye Kebede provided Ethiopia with a sweep of the titles, winning the men's race in 2:04:38, 14 seconds in front of fellow countryman Feyisa Lilesa. Portland resident Dathan Ritzenhein ran 2:07:47 and was the top American finisher in ninth place.

Metivier Baillie's time ranks as the fifth-fastest by an American woman in her marathon debut, behind Kara Goucher (2:25:53), Deena Kastor (2:26:58), Amy Hastings (2:27:03) and Marla Runyan (2:27:10). More than 37,000 participants completed this year's Chicago Marathon, and Metivier Baillie finished 59th overall.

—Bulletin staff report

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Crosby can't come through

Oct 07, 2012 -- 7:53pm



Photo/Getty Images

INDIANAPOLIS – Mason Crosby knew from the moment his right foot struck the ball that the Green Bay Packers were not headed to overtime.

The Packers kicker knew the ball didn't feel right on contact, so it came as no surprise when his 51-yard field-goal attempt veered left and was no good with 3 seconds left in the Packers' 30-27 loss to the Indianapolis Colts Sunday at Lucas Oil Stadium.

"Everything up until the hit felt good, and it just came off a little weird," said Crosby, who also missed a 52-yarder earlier in the game, marking the first time since Oct. 10, 2010 that he missed two attempts in the same game. "I haven't had a ball move like that in a long time. It's weird.

"It came off straight, and then it just jumped over to the left, like a knuckleball kind of. So obviously I have to look at the tape, try to slow it down, see what happened at contact. That's all we can do at this point.

"We've got to come through there. That's a big disappointment."

Crosby said that the offense failing to gain a few more yards before the kick – quarterback Aaron Rodgers was forced to take the team's last timeout with 8 seconds left when the play clock was draining – wouldn't have mattered given the way he hit the ball. He had made a 60- or 62-yarder in pregame warm-ups, so he didn't think distance was a factor.

Crosby also later said that he thought he made contact with the ball "high on my foot" which may have caused it to behave like it did in the weather-less, wind-less indoor conditions.

"The operation seemed weird, didn't seem as normal as we always have it where it's just automatic," Crosby said. "(Holder) Tim (Masthay) had to spin the ball a little bit (but) like I said, we have to look at the film. In the heat of the moment, it's just from what I see, it's something that doesn't matter. The ball's down, I've got to hit it through. That's always my mindset. The balls on the spot, I've got to drill it. It's disappointing, obviously – not being able to get us to a tie and get us into overtime."

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