

'We've still got work to do'

Party's over for Tobin; Cards prep for Vikings

BY SLIM SMITH
THE TRIBUNE

The man who had orchestrated the biggest win in Arizona Cardinal history sat limply in an orange leatherette chair at the Cardinals complex Sunday, fielding questions in the same flat, unemotional tones that one normally reserves for a talk with the guy who does your taxes.

Cardinals coach Vince Tobin, while gratified by his team's play in a 20-7 upset win over Dallas on Saturday, maintained a low-key demeanor during his press conference where he talked about the significance of the win and the greater challenge that awaits his team Sunday.

CARDS AT VIKINGS

- WHEN: 2:15 p.m. Sunday
- WHERE: Metrodome, Minneapolis
- TV: Ch. 10
- RADIO: KSLX (100.7 FM), KDUS (1060 AM)
- RECORDS: Arizona 10-7, Minnesota 15-1
- LINE: Minnesota by 15

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CARDS: Tobin not in celebratory mood after wild-card win

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If Tobin was swept away in the outpouring of emotion that greeted the team on its arrival at Sky Harbor airport Saturday night, where thousands of fans gathered to welcome the return of the conquering heroes, he had those emotions in check by Sunday.

"It was tremendously exciting for everybody that was out there," Tobin said. "When we flew in and taxied up you could see all the fans over there and, to me, that's what it's all about. The first time that you do anything is always the most special. And this is the first time that we had been in the playoffs and the first time we had won a playoff game since the Cardinals have been here. I think everybody just wanted to be a part of it."

Tobin said he and his coaching staff didn't celebrate after the team's arrival.

"We've still got work to do," Tobin said. "We're not in a celebrating mood. We've got to play Minnesota. So we went home, went to bed and came over here (Sunday)."

The 10-7 Cardinals will travel to Minneapolis to meet the Vikings on Sunday in an NFC divisional playoff game. Minnesota, at 15-1, holds the best record in the NFL this season. That's no fluke, Tobin said.

"They're obviously a very, very talented football team," Tobin said.

"They've broken all the records for scoring in the league and they've got a lot of weapons. They can run the football, or they can throw it. They have a very mobile quarterback and their defense is playing better and better as the year has progressed. What can you say? They don't have many chinks in their armor."

With receivers Randy Moss, Cris Carter and Jake Reed, running backs Robert Smith and Leroy Hoard, and quarterback

Randall Cunningham, Tobin said the Vikings' offense has far more weapons than the Dallas team the Cardinals dispatched Saturday.

"Every game is different because the personnel is different," Tobin said. "Probably the big difference is that they've got so many more weapons. Where Dallas relies on Michael Irvin, Minnesota has a lot of guys, which makes it a lot more difficult."

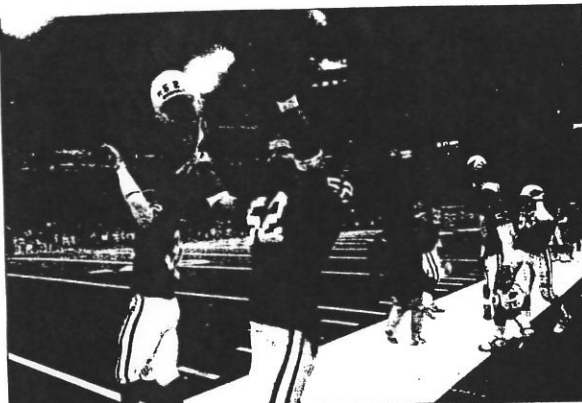
Going into Saturday's game, Dallas was given a considerable edge because of its playoff experience. But Tobin said Sunday he's not sure how important that playoff experience really is.

"A lot of times all the playoff experience means is going into the thing having everybody telling them how different the playoffs are," Tobin said. "Our team, because of all the adverse situations that we've gone through, was a much more mature team because they had played under pressure a lot more than most teams that go into the playoffs with a 9-7 record. How we got there, I think, made us more battle-tested and more playoff ready than some other teams."

Tobin indicated one of the keys in springing upset No. 2 will be the play of the Cardinals' defense, which has played well over the course of the team's current four-game winning streak.

"The thing that we've done well defensively is keeping teams from scoring a lot of points," he said. "A lot of times, defense is rated by the number of yards you give up, but the bottom line is that, to win you have to score more points than the other team. These last few games, teams have not scored much on our defense."

"That will be awfully important to us because we can't get into a scoring contest with them. Hopefully, we'll keep it a low-scoring game and get it into the fourth quarter to give us a chance to win."



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Worth the wait

From Cardinal players like Zack Walz (top photo, 52) and Andre Wadsworth (bottom, right) to fans like Hector Lopez (bottom left) of Tucson, there was plenty to celebrate Saturday as Arizona ended its 51-year victory drought in the NFL playoffs.



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