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**HIGH TIMES:** Bears linebacker Lance Briggs, right, celebrates with teammate Brian Urlacher Sunday after Briggs ran back an interception for a touchdown against the Bills.

# Beware of Bears

Leinart will face Chicago's dominant defense in 2nd start

By **DARREN URBAN**  
TRIBUNE

Matt Leinart has reason to be confident.

The rookie quarterback's first NFL start, against Kansas City's then third-ranked defense, resulted in a healthy stat line: 22-for-35 passing for 253 yards, two touchdowns and one interception.

For start No. 2 Monday night against the Chicago Bears, the Cardinals' newest star goes against a team he faced in the preseason. That game also saw Leinart produce pleasant numbers: 15-for-21 for 144 yards, one touchdown and no interceptions.

But that Bears defense wasn't this



**MATT LEINART:** Cardinals quarterback was 15-for-21 for 144 yards against the Bears' defense in the preseason.

Bears defense.

Leinart knows this. So do the 5-0 Bears.

"Matt Leinart is a good football player, but this is the first time we will have played him as I see it," Bears coach Lovie Smith said. "The preseason games are important (but

they're glorified practices to me, so we're anxious to play them again."

Leinart takes another huge step in his NFL education in front of the nation on "Monday Night Football." Universally praised for his play and poise against the Chiefs, the Bears provide Leinart with a more difficult chore.

Leinart wavered Wednesday when asked about the exhibition game in Chicago. On one hand, he pointed out that the success was a positive and that the Bears still had many of their defensive starters in the game when he first appeared.

He also said he "could care less"

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how he did in that game, and acknowledged while the Bears played hard that August night, it won't compare to what he will see Monday.

Still, Leinart didn't seem fazed about going against the newest incarnation of the Monsters of the Midway.

"Sometimes we try to get too ahead of ourselves, all of us," Leinart said. "The game is a simple game."

Leinart continued what has been an ongoing theme about the Arizona offense, emphasizing the Cards had to "continue to pound the run" and get the ball to running back Edgerrin James more often.

He also praised the change in offensive philosophy last week, when the Cardinals

took out most of their pre-snap shifting and motion so Leinart could come to the line of scrimmage, look over the defense and take his time to make his read.

The Cards also broke the huddle early — trying to do so with 18 or 20 seconds left on the play clock — to give Leinart more time to digest the defense.

"It makes the game so much easier," Leinart said.

The key to the Bears is their dominant defensive line, Leinart said. It's a group that disrupts all facets of an offense and puts heavy pressure on a quarterback, freeing the back seven of the Chicago defense to roam and hit and cause turnovers.

A scheme to counter that defense includes lots of quick throws and apparently, a heavy dose of James.

That may be easy to plan but hard to execute, since Leinart and the Cards will be missing Pro Bowl receiver Larry Fitzgerald with a hamstring pull and have a reconfigured offensive line that could feature two fresh starters.

"You can't be in a situation where you think you can throw as much as we did before, and that may be a good thing," Cards coach Dennis Green said.

If Leinart needs to know anything about the Bears' defense, it's this: After a fumble gave the ball to Buffalo last week on the Bills' 42-yard line with less than three minutes left, the starting Bears defense lobbied hard to go back on the field to preserve a shutout. The Bears were winning 40-0 at the time.

The starters got their

wish, and when the Bills still managed to score, the defense reacted as if they had lost the game.

"People that see us on film," Bears linebacker Brian Urlacher said, "will know what we are about."

Rather than the Bears' defense making life difficult for just his quarterback, Green emphasized "it's going to be tough on the whole offense."

Still, Leinart wasn't supposed to play as well as he did against the Chiefs. And the rest of the Cardinals' offense doesn't plan on being another round of Bears fodder.

"Anybody," receiver Anquan Boldin said, "can have the ball moved on them."

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