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Vikings at Saints, Week 5 of 2026: Preview of an Elite Defense Against a High-Volume Passing Offense

Unbeaten Minnesota (4–0) visits New Orleans (1–3) on 11 October. The Vikings' league-best pass rush meets Tyler Shough's high-volume offense, with Wednesday injury reports unsettled for both sides and a week-old line of MIN -1.5.

8 min read · 6 sources

2026 season | NFC North | injury report | schedule preview

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The Minnesota Vikings (4–0) visit the New Orleans Saints (1–3) on Sunday, 11 October 2026, in a game that sets the NFL's best pass rush against one of its busiest passing offenses. The Vikings have won four straight without a productive offense. The Saints have lost three of four, the latest by 45–24 to Atlanta. This preview uses data through Week 4 and injury reports from Wednesday 7 October. Final designations were not yet published, and the betting line I could verify is from 4 October.

4–0 vs 1–3	16 vs 8	+5 / -5	MIN -1.5
Records entering Week 5	Defensive sacks, MIN vs NO (1st vs 16th)	Turnover differential, MIN / NO	Opening spread; total 45.5 (as of 4 Oct)

Game details

ITEM	DETAIL
Matchup	Minnesota Vikings at New Orleans Saints, NFL Week 5
Kickoff	Sunday 11 October 2026, noon Central / 1 p.m. Eastern [1]
Venue	Caesars Superdome, New Orleans (indoors, so weather is not a factor) [1] [2]
Broadcast	FOX; NFL+ and the NFL game center also carry it [1] [2]
Rest	Minnesota played Sunday in Week 4; New Orleans played Monday night, one day less recovery [1]

How each team got here

Minnesota: 4–0 on defense

13 Sep **Week 1: Packers, W 39–22**
Kyler Murray suffered a concussion; the quarterback position changed hands afterward

20 Sep **Week 2: at Bears, W 9–3**
Low-scoring road win in the NFC North

27 Sep **Week 3: at Buccaneers, W 23–16**
Jefferson sprained his right ankle; Football Nation's recap credits six sacks

4 Oct **Week 4: Dolphins, W 15–10**
No touchdowns from the offense; Will Reichard made five field goals

Results are from the Vikings' schedule page [6]. Minnesota leads the NFC North at 4–0. Chicago is 3–1, and Detroit and Green Bay are both 2–2 [2]. Through Week 3 the defense had allowed only 41 points in total (13.7 per game) [1]. After Week 4 the Vikings average **21.5 points per game (18th)** and rank **31st in yards per game at 262.8**, yet fourth in time of possession (32:07) [2]. They win through defense, special teams and the run game rather than yardage.

Minnesota's Week 4: a win without a touchdown

The Star Tribune said the Vikings beat Miami 15–10 despite "another rough performance" from Murray and failed to score a touchdown. Kicker Will Reichard made all five of his field goals. T.J. Hockenson caught 13 passes for 119 yards, Myles Price had two impressive returns, and edge rusher Dallas Turner had a sack and a forced fumble [4]. Murray was reported at 27 of 37 for 247 yards with 16 rushing yards, per an ESPN player-page snippet I could not open fully. The Dolphins fell to 0–4 and stayed in the game into the second half because Minnesota could not finish drives [4].

The game also cost the Vikings linemen. Left guard Donovan Jackson hurt his knee in the first quarter and was declared out. Left tackle Christian Darrisaw had a neck injury in the second quarter, returned in the third, and was later listed with a concussion [4].

New Orleans: productive but turnover-prone

Through Week 3 the Saints had lost 31–30 in overtime at Detroit, won 24–17 at Baltimore and lost 35–27 at home to Las Vegas. They led the Raiders 27–16 before two second-half Tyler Shough turnovers helped Las Vegas score 19 unanswered points[1]. On Monday 5 October they lost **45–24** to the Falcons at the Superdome and fell to 1–3, while Atlanta moved to 2–2[5]. Alvin Kamara scored two rushing touchdowns, and Chris Olave had a 116-yard game, per the team's own recap headlines[5]. I did not read the full recap, so I cannot say how the game turned.

The Saints average **26.2 points (10th)** and **367 yards (9th)**, but their turnover differential is **-5 (27th)** and they have only one interception[2]. Those season figures include the Atlanta game.

Series history

Minnesota leads the all-time series **25–13**, including a 4–1 postseason record. The Vikings won the last regular-season meeting 27–19 in 2023 and the 2022 London game 28–25. The last meeting played in New Orleans was a 52–33 Saints win in 2020[1][2].

Matchup keys

	Vikings	vs	Saints
Record	4–0	·	1–3
Points per game	21.5 (18th)	·	26.2 (10th)
Yards per game	262.8 (31st)	·	367.0 (9th)
Possession per game	32:07	·	31:30
Defensive sacks	16 (1st)	·	8 (16th)
Defensive interceptions	4 (4th)	·	1 (25th)
Turnover differential	+5 (2nd)	·	-5 (27th)

Source: NFL.com game center, through Week 4 (as of 7 Oct 2026).

Pressure against Tyler Shough

This is the central contest. Through Week 3 the Saints threw more than any team, at **44.0 attempts per game**, and had allowed 10 sacks on Shough. Minnesota's defense under Brian Flores leads the league in sacks (16)[1][2]. Through Week 3 the Vikings also led the league in opponent third-down rate (22.7%) and opponent red zone touchdown rate (11.1%)[1].

Football Nation expects Flores to threaten six or seven rushers and then drop defenders into coverage, forcing Shough to identify the real pressure after the snap[1].

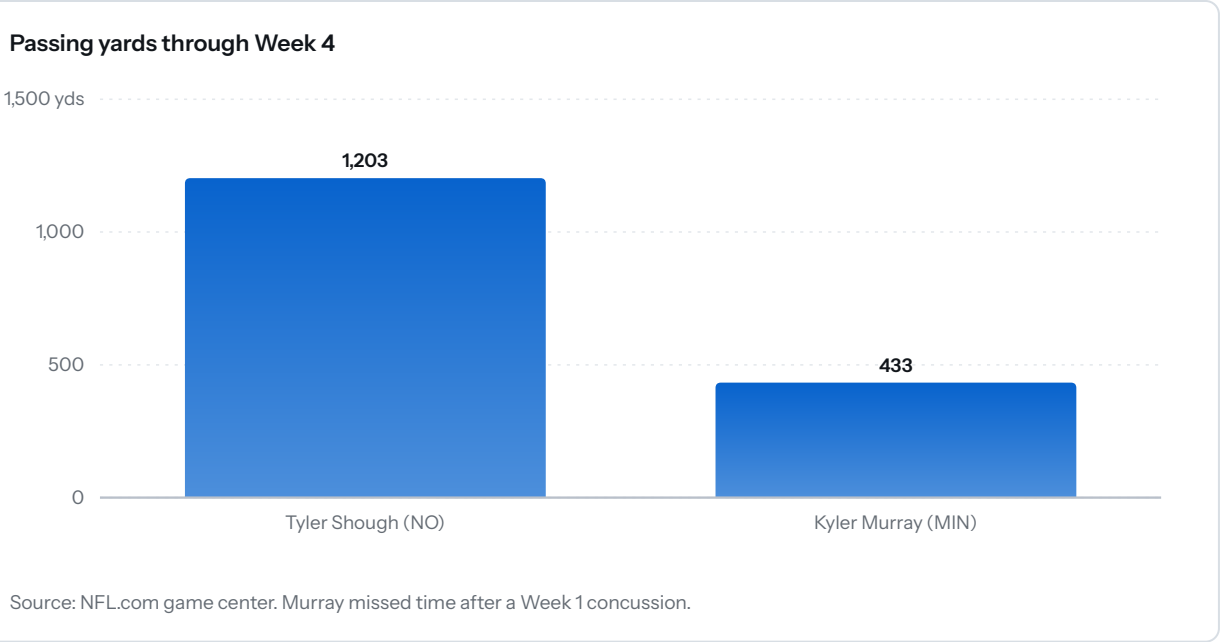
Shough has been productive: **1,203 yards, 9 touchdowns and 3 interceptions**, completing 67.2% of his passes[2]. Chris Olave leads the receivers with **35 catches for 491 yards**[2]. Juwan Johnson and Noah Fant had combined for six touchdowns through Week 3[1].

Through Week 3 the Saints converted 53.2% of third downs, against the 22.7% the Vikings allow[1]. One of those rates will give way on Sunday.

Minnesota's run game against the Saints' run defense

The Vikings run on 50.9% of their snaps, third most in the league through Week 3. In the same period the Saints allowed 128.7 rushing yards per game and 4.7 yards per carry[1]. Aaron Jones leads the team with **297 yards on 72 carries (4.1 per carry) and 1 touchdown**, and Jordan Mason is the second back[1][2].

A productive ground game would shorten the game, keep Shough on the sideline and give Murray manageable third downs. Minnesota's passing offense is the weak point. Murray has **433 yards, a 63.4% completion rate, 1 touchdown and 2 interceptions**[2], and Hockenson leads the receivers with 22 catches for 195 yards[2], a total that predates his 13-catch Week 4 and may not include it.



Source: NFL.com game center. Murray missed time after a Week 1 concussion.

Turnovers

Minnesota is +5 and New Orleans is -5. The Saints' giveaways (2.3 per game through Week 3) cost them against the Raiders[1]. The Vikings' offense produces few long drives, so a handful of short fields could decide the game.

Injuries and availability

CAUTION

These are Wednesday 7 October practice reports. Wednesday absences are often rest or maintenance, and the Friday designations and the inactive list 90 minutes before kickoff are what count.

Minnesota (Wednesday report) [3]

- **Justin Jefferson (WR):** He returned to practice for the first time since spraining his right ankle on 27 September, with limited reps. He missed all but seven snaps of the Tampa Bay and Miami games combined.
- **Jordan Addison (WR):** Strained hamstring; did not practise. He played 75 of 78 snaps against Miami and caught four passes for 52 yards. Coach Kevin O'Connell: "Just has a little hamstring soreness… Consider it minor if it's anything at all."
- **Christian Darrisaw (LT):** Concussion; did not practise.
- **Charles Demmings (CB):** Hamstring; did not practise.
- **Brian O'Neill (RT):** Limited with a knee injury that needed imaging after the Dolphins game.
- **Donovan Jackson (G):** Torn left meniscus requiring surgery, expected out for the rest of the regular season with a postseason return not ruled out [1].
- **Punter Brett Thorson:** Expected back after missing two games with a hamstring strain. The team released punter Johnny Hekker from the practice squad.

With the guard spot already lost and the tackles hurt, the interior and left side of the line are the biggest concern against New Orleans' rush. Note that Football Nation said Darrisaw "received a rest designation" in Week 4, but Minnesota's own Week 5 reporting lists a concussion [1] [3].

Odell Beckham Jr.

Minnesota signed Beckham, 33, to the practice squad on Wednesday after the Giants released him. O'Connell said he could play against the Saints and recalled that Beckham played for him with the Rams in 2021 within days of signing [3]. The Vikings need receiver depth. Free-agent signing Jauan Jennings has drawn only four targets on 90 routes run, per Pro Football Focus, though O'Connell praised his run blocking [3].

New Orleans (Wednesday report) [3]

- **Did not practise:** WR Barion Brown (thigh), LB Kaden Elliss (calf), edge Anfernee Jennings (knee), RB Alvin Kamara (back), WR Chris Olave (rest) and QB Tyler Shough (left hand).
- **Limited:** S Julian Blackmon (shoulder), TE Noah Fant (abdomen), S Mike Reid (ankle).
- **Full:** LB Jaylan Ford, DL Davon Godchaux, edge Carl Granderson and S Lorenzo Styles Jr.

Olave's absence is a rest designation, and Shough's left-hand injury is worth watching but is not reported as serious. Neither is confirmed as inactive. The linebacker and edge group is thin, which suits Minnesota's run-heavy approach [1].

Market and prediction

The only line I could verify is from FanDuel on 4 October (2:32 a.m. Central): **Minnesota -1.5 (-112)**, Saints +1.5 (-108), moneyline Vikings -126 and Saints +108, and a total of **45.5**, down from 46.5 [1]. That implies a score of roughly Minnesota 23.5, New Orleans 22.0. That check predates both Week 4 results, including the Saints' 21-point loss and Jefferson's practice return, so the line has probably moved.

Football Nation's pick, also written before those results, is **Vikings 24, Saints 20** [1]. Its reasoning is that the Vikings' defense is better equipped to decide the game than either offense. Its counterargument is that New Orleans has far the better offense on paper. It would revisit the pick if the spread reaches Minnesota -3 or the total falls to 44.5 [1].

KEY FINDING

Football Nation's upset path for the Saints: protect the football, hold Minnesota under four yards per rush, and force Murray into 30 or more dropbacks [1].

What to watch

- **Jefferson's snap count.** He is back at practice but limited. A full-strength Jefferson would change Minnesota's offensive ceiling after two games with a thin receiver group.
- **The offensive line.** Jackson is out and Darrisaw is in concussion protocol, which matters most if Minnesota wants to run 50% of the time.
- **Shough's hand and the Saints' response.** New Orleans gave up 45 to Atlanta and now faces the league's sack leader.
- **First down for the Saints.** If they stop Jones without extra defenders, they can keep two safeties high and squeeze Minnesota's receivers [1].
- **Turnovers.** The Vikings are +5 and the Saints are -5.

Bottom line

Minnesota is a slight favourite, with the better defense, the better turnover profile and a run game that suits the Saints' weakest area. New Orleans has the stronger offense on paper and plays at home, but it was blown out on Monday and is thin at linebacker and edge. The Vikings' own offense, which scored no touchdowns in Week 4, is the biggest risk to the favourite. The pick of Vikings 24, Saints 20 is one outlet's view from before Week 4. Before relying on it, check the Friday designations (Jefferson, Addison, Darrisaw, Shough, Kamara, Olave) and the current line.

▼ Terms used in this document (3)

- **Play action** — A pass play that starts with a fake handoff to draw defenders toward the run.
- **Red zone** — The area inside the opponent's 20-yard line, where drives turn into touchdowns or field goals.
- **Third-down rate** — The share of third-down plays that gain a first down.

SOURCES

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