

Title:

Dwayne Bryant's 2006 NFC North Preview

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Summary:

In Part Two of his eight-part 2006 NFL Preview, sports handicapper Dwayne Bryant (www.bullseye.com)

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2006 NFC North Preview

In Part Two of his eight-part 2006 NFL Preview, sports handicapper Dwayne Bryant provides his

1. CHICAGO BEARS

Offense: The Bears run-first attack will once again be led by running backs Thomas Jones and Matt Forte.

Defense: Chicago's unquestioned strength is their defense. This unit allowed only 12.6 points per game last season.

Special Teams: This unit needs an upgrade. Kicker Robbie Gould connected on only 3 of 8 field goals last season.

Prediction: The Bears, thanks to a suffocating defense and successful running game, should finish as the division favorite.

2. MINNESOTA VIKINGS

Offense: New head coach Brad Childress will install his version of the West Coast offense.

Defense: Like many others, Minnesota is switching to the ever-popular Cover 2 scheme. The Vikings' defense was one of the best in the league last season.

Special Teams: Mewelde Moore proved to be a solid punt returner, averaging 11.7 yards per return last season.

Prediction: An improving defense, solid special teams play and an offense with much potential should make the Vikings a contender.

3. DETROIT LIONS

Offense: No offense is more intriguing than this one. The arrival of offensive guru Mike Martz should make the Lions a contender.

Defense: The Lions are yet another team converting to the Cover 2 defense. New head coach Jim Schwartz should make the defense a contender.

Special Teams: Eddie Drummond will need to return to his 2004 form (4 return TDs). He was one of the best punt returners in the league last season.

Prediction: Detroit is a team on the rise and could be dangerous if the new offensive coordinator can get the offense going.

4. GREEN BAY PACKERS

Offense: Injuries absolutely decimated this group in 2005. The pack lost their #1 WR, QB, and RB.

Defense: There are quite a few changes to this unit. Ryan Pickett takes over at tackle. The Packers' defense was one of the best in the league last season.

Special Teams: Nothing to write home about here. The Pack's kickoff-return team ranked 28th in the league last season.

Prediction: Favre's last hurrah will not be a good one. A new coaching staff, questions about the offense, and injuries should make the Packers a contender.

FINAL THOUGHTS: The Bears are the class of this division. Each of their division rivals should be a contender.

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