

A6 STAR TRIBUNE • MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2013



Vikings coaching legend Bud Grant sat on the bench with injured running back Adrian Peterson after the end of the game.



Two symbols of decades of good times at the Metdome—a game program and peanut shells—pretty much tell the story.



Crews began carrying out rolled-up Philadelphia Phillies fans after the cheers had stopped and the fans had mostly cleared out of the Metdome.

Lights out.

• METRODOME FROM A1

bitter December chill to bid farewell to the much-maligned Teflon-covered stadium that was often the butt of jokes but served its local teams so very well.

They came from Iowa and North Dakota and as far away as London to catch a piece of history and maybe, in a season of too many "I's" and too much disappointment, to see a victory. In coming weeks, the Dome, named for one of the state's most prominent politicians and home for decades to the Twins, Vikings and University of Minnesota football team, will be razed to make way for a \$1 billion, state-of-the-art upgrade.

"People called it a dump," Louke said and he looked around the stadium. "But it was our dump. And we loved it."

Quiet ending

Unlike the Metropolitan Stadium finale 30 years earlier, when fans stormed the field, ten-crown-pollsters and snarled up the scoreboard, the Dome went out Sunday with a bit of a whimper.

With extra security officers lining the field at game's end and an additional 50 off-duty Minneapolis police officers working the concourse and the crowd, damage was slight—folding chairs, cup holders and signs were reportedly the biggest losses.

"No one was injured. Everything was respectful," said Michelle Klein-Helgen, chairman of the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority, which runs the Dome and is overseeing construction of the new stadium. "It was a great



Among the last to leave, Laurie Hladky of Egan became tearful as she said goodbye to stadium-seating neighbor Sue Hladky, at left.

abs."

Hours before the Dome's revolving doors stopped turning for good, fans gathered in nearby parking lots for a final tailgating bash.

Ducked out in purple and gold jerseys and stocking caps and beads and face paint, they grilled burgers and beers, gaudily could beer and sipped stronger spirits in a suburban December chill that made the county confines of the Dome, even at its advanced age, seem all the more appealing.

While the stadium goes down and the new one goes up,

the Vikings will play the next two seasons outdoors at UCF Bank Stadium on the University of Minnesota campus. The new stadium is scheduled to open in time for the 2016 NFL season.

"It's a bittersweet end to a season ticket-holder from Plymouth. 'And I'm taking it all in. I just want to say I've been here,'" Moon, his wife, Jenni, and their party of eight pulled into a parking lot a few blocks from the stadium well before sunrise after dropping off their kids at grandma's house in St. Louis Park.

"We were the first ones in the lot," Jenni Moore said. "We wanted to make sure we got a spot." Despite the cold and a stinging wind, the Moores and friends stayed comfy with hot chili and chicken wings.

"It's the end of an era, but it's been a lot of fun," said Sam Poole, a fan from Chicago City, as she tossed peppers and potato skins on a smoky grill.

By 10 a.m., the sweet scent of both wafted across the parking lot. By 11 a.m., a steady stream of fans hustled up the street and through the stadium gates, where ticket holders received con-

memorable purple pennants.

By the time the Lions kicked off at noon, the crowd was in a frenzy. For the next three hours fans cheered and grooved and cussed and pumped fists in a game that was more routine than remarkable.

But to most watching, the details didn't seem to matter.

"This is history going down," said Paul Lang, 35, who grew up in Bloomington but now lives in Oregon. "It's a big deal."

"This is our childhood," said her friend, Alana Thornland, of Hopkins. "We grew up here."

Three hours later, the

only thing to leave it behind.

As a final round of fireworks took the fans home to bed, the critics, the snipers picked the box seats, tossing each fan over the side of the second-deck railing, fluttering to the seats below.

"Yeah," Crawford said as she tore up. "It's kind of sad."

"It's very sad," Schmitz said as she hugged her sister. "But we thought we'd leave the fans as they were and go down with the Dome."

Total health enrollment could soon top 2 million

• HEALTH CARE FROM A1

market analysis firm.

The administration said that of the more than 11 million people now enrolled in the federal insurance exchange, almost 1 million signed up in December. Most came days before the Christmas deadline for coverage to start in January. There were 22,000 in October, the federal website's first, error-prone month.

"We experienced a welcome surge in enrollment as millions of Americans seek access to affordable health care coverage," Marylyn Twyman, the head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said.

The numbers don't represent a national accounting. The federal website serves 36 states. Yet to be reported are December results from the 14 states running their own sites.

Overall, states have been signing up more people than the federal government. Most of that has come from high performers such as California, New York, Washington, Kentucky and Connecticut. Some states are struggling.

Still, the end-of-year spike helps on Christmas Eve.

suggests that the federal insurance marketplace is starting to pull its weight. It comes at a critical moment for Obama's sweeping health care law, which becomes "real" for many Americans on Jan. 1 as coverage through the insurance exchanges and key patient protections kick in.

The administration's concern now shifts to keeping the momentum going for sign-ups, and heading off problems that could arise when people who've already enrolled try to use their new insurance.

"They've got the front end of the system working really well," said insurance industry consultant Robert Lazzarini. "Now we can move on to the next question: Do people really want to buy this?"

The folding, insurance exchanges are online markets for subsidized private coverage. Obama needs millions of younger, healthy Americans to sign up to keep costs low for everyone. Open enrollment was overhauled to address widespread technical problems, contributed to December's figures, but thousands of people waited on hold for phone help on Christmas Eve.

Russian attacks ignite fears over Olympics

• BOMBING FROM A1

for new attacks against civilian targets in Russia, including the Sochi Games.

President Vladimir Putin's government has worked to protect the Olympics with some of the most extensive security measures ever imposed for the games. But the bombings underscored the threat the country faces from a radical Islamic insurgency in the North Caucasus that has periodically spilled into the Russian heartland, with deadly results, including several recent attacks.

Security has become a preeminent concern at all major international sporting events, especially in the wake of the bombing at the Boston Marathon in April, but never before has an Olympic host country experienced terrorist violence on this scale in the run-up to the games. And would-be attackers may have more targets in mind than the Russian state.

Current and former U.S. law enforcement and intelligence officials said Sunday that they were more concerned about security in Russia during the Sochi Games than they have been about any other Olympics since Athens in 2004.

Boston officials attributed Sunday's explosion, in Volgod's main railroad station, to



A surveillance video showed smoke pouring out of a Russian rail station Sunday after a suicide bomber left many dead and injured.

been carried out by a man and a woman working together.

"Most likely the number of victims could have been much higher if the so-called protective system had not stopped the suicide bomber from getting through the metal detectors into the waiting rooms, where there were passengers," Markin said in a statement.

Sunday's attack was the second suicide bombing in Volgograd in recent months. In October, a woman identified as Naida Aisylova detonated a vest of explosives aboard a bus in the city, killing herself and six others.

In that case, the authorities said she was lured by marriage to an explosive expert working with an Islamic rebel group. A month later, the authorities announced that they had killed her husband in a raid. But Sunday's attack indicated that the threat was far from extinguished.

It was not clear why suicide bombers have now twice chosen targets in Volgograd, formerly Stalingrad, site of one of the crucial battles of World War II. It is the nearest major Russian city to the Caucasus, and its proximity may be partly why.

The cause of Monday's explosion had yet to be determined. Within hours of the attack, the authorities blamed a suicide bomber, and cited the gruesome discovery of the severed head of a woman, which they said could aid in identifying a suspect. Officials later said they found evidence suggesting the attack might have