



GAME 2

WEEKLY RELEASE



vs



AUGUST 17, 2024



TENNESSEE TITANS

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 19, 2024

2024 TENNESSEE TITANS TRAINING CAMP PREVIEW

NASHVILLE — The Tennessee Titans report to Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park for the start of training camp on Tuesday, July 23. The first full-squad practice of camp is scheduled for 9:15 a.m. CDT on Wednesday, July 24.

Head coach **Brian Callahan** is set to lead his first training camp in Tennessee. He was hired as the 20th head coach in franchise history on Jan. 24 after serving five seasons as the offensive coordinator for the Cincinnati Bengals.

Additionally during the offseason, the Titans announced a new front office structure under controlling owner **Amy Adams Strunk**. **Ran Carthon** was promoted to executive vice president/general manager, while **Chad Brinker** was elevated to the newly-created position of president of football operations. **Burke Nihill** remains in his role as president and CEO.



THE BASICS

As the Titans begin preparations for the 65th season in franchise history, Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park (460 Great Circle Road) will host its 25th training camp. The club's headquarters, which opened at the conclusion of training camp in 1999, is located in MetroCenter, just north of downtown Nashville. In 2022, a renovation of the existing building and a 60,000-square-foot addition was completed at the facility.

Titans fans are encouraged to attend an open training camp practice at Nissan Stadium on Saturday, July 27 at 10 a.m. CDT as part of 'Back Together Weekend' presented by SeatGeek. Fans can attend for free but must claim a ticket online at tennesseetitans.com/backtogetherweekend, where additional details are provided.

A limited number of tickets for two additional practices already have been claimed. No tickets to attend practice at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park will be available on site for walk-up guests.

Camp news and information will be updated continuously at TennesseeTitans.com, the Titans mobile app and on official team social channels.

PRESEASON GAMES AND JOINT PRACTICES

The Titans are scheduled for three preseason contests this August, and once they open camp, they will have less than three weeks to prepare for their first test. They will open the preseason slate at Nissan Stadium against the NFC Champion San Francisco 49ers on Saturday, Aug. 10 (6 p.m. CDT).

The following week they will host the Seattle Seahawks for a pair of joint practices at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park and a preseason clash at Nissan Stadium. The teams will practice on Wednesday, Aug. 14 and Thursday, Aug. 15, followed by the game on Saturday, Aug. 17 (6 p.m. CDT).

This year's visit by the Seahawks will mark the 12th time for the Titans to host a team for joint workouts at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park. Previous occasions included 2001 (Indianapolis), 2002 (Miami), 2003 (Miami), 2004 (Atlanta), 2008 (St. Louis), 2010 (Arizona), 2017 (Carolina), 2018 (Tampa Bay), 2019 (New England) and 2022 (Tampa Bay and Arizona). In the same time period, the Titans have traveled for joint practices in 2000 (with St.

2024 TITANS SCHEDULE

PRESEASON				
Day	Date	Opponent	Kickoff	TV
Sat	8/10	SAN FRANCISCO	6 p.m.	WKRN
Sat	8/17	SEATTLE	6 p.m.	WKRN
Sun	8/25	at New Orleans	1 p.m.	WKRN
REGULAR SEASON				
Day	Date	Opponent	Kickoff	TV
Sun	9/8	at Chicago	Noon	FOX
Sun	9/15	N.Y. JETS	Noon	CBS
Sun	9/22	GREEN BAY	Noon	FOX
Mon	9/30	at Miami	6:30 p.m.	ESPN
Sun	10/6	BYE		
Sun	10/13	INDIANAPOLIS	Noon*	CBS
Sun	10/20	at Buffalo	Noon*	CBS
Sun	10/27	at Detroit	Noon*	FOX
Sun	11/3	NEW ENGLAND	Noon*	FOX
Sun	11/10	at L.A. Chargers	3:05 p.m.*	FOX
Sun	11/17	MINNESOTA	Noon*	CBS
Sun	11/24	at Houston	Noon*	CBS
Sun	12/1	at Washington	Noon*	CBS
Sun	12/8	JACKSONVILLE	Noon*	CBS
Sun	12/15	CINCINNATI	Noon*	FOX
Sun	12/22	at Indianapolis	Noon*	CBS
Sun	12/29	at Jacksonville	Noon*	CBS
Sat/Sun	1/4-5	HOUSTON	TBD	TBD

All kickoff times Central * Time, TV subject to change

Louis in Macomb, Ill.), 2012 (with Atlanta in Dalton, Ga.), 2014 (Atlanta), 2021 (Tampa Bay) and 2023 (Minnesota).

The Titans close the preseason with a visit to play the New Orleans Saints on Sunday, Aug. 25 (1 p.m. CDT).

All three Titans preseason games will air on WKRN News 2 in Nashville, as well as several regional affiliates. Titans Radio, including Nashville Flagship 104.5 The Zone, carries every contest throughout the Mid-South.

Following the Titans' preseason finale at New Orleans, they will have exactly two weeks before launching their regular season on the road at the Chicago Bears on Sunday, Sept. 8.

ROSTER COMPETITION

At the beginning of camp, NFL teams are permitted to carry up to 90 players on the roster—or 91 in the case of clubs using an exemption for a player in the league's international pathway program, including Titans tight end **Thomas Odukoya**. This year there will be only one NFL-mandated roster cutdown, and it will occur on Aug. 27, two days after the preseason matchup with the Saints. All teams must reach the 53-player limit by then.

Players placed on reserve lists such as reserve/injured, reserve/physically unable to perform, and reserve/non-football injury or illness do not count towards the 53-man active roster limit. New this year, each club may place two players on the reserve/injured list at the roster reduction to 53 players and retain the ability to designate the players for return at a later date. The two players will immediately count as two of the club's maximum of eight DFR designations during the regular season.

On Aug. 28, teams are permitted to establish practice squads with a maximum of 17 players, including one international player exemption.

BRIAN CALLAHAN AND STAFF

Callahan arrived in Tennessee with 18 years of coaching experience and 14 years of NFL coaching experience, including the past five seasons in Cincinnati.

During Callahan's time with the Bengals, he served under head coach **Zac Taylor** and was part of two AFC North titles, two AFC Championship appearances and a Super Bowl berth. He helped guide quarterback **Joe Burrow** from the No. 1 overall draft pick in 2020 to multiple single-season franchise records by his second year and Pro Bowl honors within three years.

Callahan, a former walk-on quarterback at UCLA, broke into the NFL coaching world in 2010 as an assistant with the Denver Broncos. He remained in Denver through 2015, rising to the role of offensive assistant/quarterbacks coach and playing a part in the team's Super Bowl 50 victory. He spent the next three years as the quarterbacks coach for the Detroit Lions (2016–2017) and Oakland Raiders (2018) before becoming the offensive coordinator in Cincinnati. Throughout his time in the NFL, he has gained expertise working with some of the game's top quarterbacks: Burrow, **Peyton Manning**, **Matthew Stafford** and **Derek Carr**.

Besides Callahan, there are 19 additional members of the coaching staff who are new in 2024. The number includes defensive coordinator **Dennard Wilson**, who coached the Baltimore Ravens secondary in 2023 after previously serving on the Philadelphia Eagles staff that went to Super Bowl LVII; offensive coordinator **Nick Holz**, a 16-year coaching veteran and most recently the passing game coordinator for the Jacksonville Jaguars; and special teams coordinator **Colt Anderson**, who followed a nine-year NFL playing career with four years as an assistant on the same Cincinnati staff as Callahan. The new Titans staff also includes offensive line coach **Bill Callahan** in his 47th year of coaching—his first on the same staff as his son, Brian.

NEW ADDITIONS TAKE THE FIELD

A total of 35 players on the training camp roster were added since the 2023 campaign came to an end in January. The Titans brought in 12 veteran



free agents, 14 rookie free agents, seven draft picks and two acquisitions through trades.

Once the new league year opened in March, Carthon and his staff worked through several notable signings in free agency: cornerback **Chidobe Awuzie** (formerly with the Bengals), linebacker **Kenneth Murray Jr.** (Chargers), defensive lineman **Sebastian Joseph-Day** (49ers), center **Lloyd Cushenberry III** (Broncos), running back **Tony Pollard** (Cowboys), quarterback **Mason Rudolph** (Steelers) and wide receiver **Calvin Ridley** (Jaguars). The Titans then used a trade to acquire former Kansas City Chiefs cornerback **L'Jarius Sneed** before circling back to free agency to sign wide receiver **Tyler Boyd** (Bengals) and safety **Jamal Adams** (Seahawks).

In late April, the Titans made former University of Alabama tackle **JC Latham** the seventh-overall selection in the 2024 NFL Draft. The 22-year-old, standing at 6-foot-6 and 342 pounds, is expected to man the left tackle spot as he begins his professional career.

The Titans used their second-round pick on Texas nose tackle **T'Vondre Sweat**, followed by North Carolina linebacker **Cedric Gray** in the fourth round, Louisville cornerback **Jarvis Brownlee Jr.** in the fifth round and Tulane wide receiver **Jha'Quan Jackson** in the sixth round. They had two selections in the seventh round, which they used on Miami (Fla.) linebacker **James Williams** and Michigan outside linebacker **Jaylen Harrell**.

LEVIS COMMANDS OFFENSE IN YEAR 2

Quarterback **Will Levis** is poised to begin his second training camp and his first as the team's starting signal caller heading into the season. The 33rd-overall pick in last year's draft began his rookie season as a backup before recording his initial start seven games into the season. The University of Kentucky product went on to total nine starts in 2023, joining Vince Young and Marcus Mariota as the only quarterbacks in franchise history to start at least nine games. Levis' rookie passing totals included 255 attempts, 149 completions, 1,808 yards, eight touchdowns and four interceptions, and his 84.2 passer rating was the second best in franchise history by a rookie quarterback (91.5 by Mariota in 2015). His passer rating also ranked first in NFL history among rookie second-round quarterbacks (minimum 200 attempts).

Levis was accompanied in the 2023 rookie class by a group that included first-round left guard **Peter Skoronski** (14 starts in 2023) and third-round running back **Tyjae Spears** (838 scrimmage yards), each of whom played significant roles in 2023 and look to become offensive building blocks moving forward.

Spears will share the backfield in 2024 with Pollard, a Memphis native who spent his first five professional seasons accumulating 3,621 rushing yards, 1,319 receiving yards and 29 total touchdowns for the Cowboys.

Latham, Skoronski and Cushenberry look to secure three-fifths of the offensive line. The competition for the right guard and right tackle openings offers a number of possibilities, with several suitors in the running. The Titans enter camp with 15 offensive linemen on the roster.

At wide receiver, Ridley adds his resume of 324 career receptions and 4,358 receiving yards to the offense. He spent one season with the Jaguars after beginning his career as a first-round pick in Atlanta in 2018. Boyd played eight seasons with the Bengals, primarily as one of the NFL's top slot receivers. He accounted for 6,000 yards and 31 scores on 513 catches.



Boyd and Ridley were added to a cast that already featured **DeAndre Hopkins**. Since Hopkins entered the NFL in 2013, he has more receptions (928) and receiving yards (12,355) than any other player in the league. During his first year with the Titans in 2023, he led the club with 75 catches, 1,057 receiving yards and seven touchdowns. Collectively, the trio of Hopkins, Ridley and Boyd have totaled 1,765 receptions for 22,713 yards and 145 touchdowns over the course of their careers. Fifth-year veteran **Nick Westbrook-Ikhine** and 2022 first-rounder **Treyton Burks** help round out the receiving corps.

Tight end **Chig Okonkwo** averaged 11.4 yards per reception in his initial two NFL seasons—978 yards on 86 catches. That led all qualifying tight ends in the 2022 draft class and tied for the sixth-best average among all tight ends. **Josh Whyte**, a 2023 fifth-round pick, accompanies Okonkwo and free agent signee **Nick Vannett** among the club's tight ends.

VETERAN LEADERSHIP IN PLACE ON DEFENSE, SPECIAL TEAMS

Two-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle **Jeffery Simmons** has logged five NFL seasons, during which time he has produced 26.5 sacks. The three-time team captain and 2023 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year nominee is a leader on a defense with significant experience at all three levels.

The only player on the current roster with more tenure as a Titan than Simmons is outside linebacker **Harold Landry III**. A second-round pick in the 2018 NFL Draft, Landry has amassed a team-leading 41.5 sacks since coming to Tennessee. He enters the year ranked 11th among the franchise's all-time sack leaders—fourth in the organization's "Titans era" (1999–present). The outside linebacker group is bolstered by a collection of talent that includes **Arden Key** and **Rashad Weaver**.

Murray, a former first-round pick, was lured to Tennessee to help lead the inside linebackers. He started 53 games in four seasons with the Chargers. **Jack Gibbens**, a 13-game starter in 2023, as well as Gray are two of the contenders with hopes of seeing significant roles at inside linebacker in 2024.

Like Simmons, **Amani Hooker** has been a mainstay on defense since his 2019 rookie season and returns to lead the team's safeties. He has 244 tackles and seven interceptions in two-tone blue. Adams was added to the safety corps in July. The three-time Pro Bowl selection spent the past four years in Seattle after opening his career with three seasons as a member of the New York Jets. **Elijah Molden** has worked primarily at safety since last season after beginning his career as a cornerback.

In Awuzie and Sneed, the Titans upgraded their stable of cornerbacks with a combined 143 games and 16 career interceptions. The duo also boasts 19 postseason starts—13 by Sneed and six by Awuzie. Sneed, a fourth-round pick in 2020, won the past two Super Bowls with the Chiefs before the Titans traded for him in March and signed him to a contract extension. Meanwhile, **Roger McCreary**, a 2022 second-round pick, has already gained significant experience as an outside corner and an inside nickel defender in his first two seasons, starting a total of 28 games.

The Titans have arguably one of the most accomplished kicking batteries in the NFL. Long snapper **Morgan Cox's** 216 games played rank 10th in the NFL among active players, and his five Pro Bowls are more than any other player at his position since the league began naming long snappers to the Pro Bowl in 2004. Kicker **Nick Folk** has 228 career games under his belt—seventh among active players. His 382 career field goals put him 18 away from becoming only the 14th player in NFL history to reach 400. Third-year punter **Ryan Stonehouse** spent the offseason recovering from a season-ending injury in 2023. Before the injury, he averaged a league-leading 53.1 yards per punt, making him the owner of the first two seasons in NFL history with an average of at least 53.1 yards per punt.



"BACK TOGETHER WEEKEND" JULY 27

Titans fans are invited to an open Titans practice at Nissan Stadium on Saturday, July 27 at 10 a.m. CT. This family-friendly event is part of 'Back Together Weekend' presented by SeatGeek. Fans can attend practice for free and must claim a ticket online at tennesseetitans.com/backtogetherweekend.

In addition to viewing practice, fans can look forward to a variety of activations on the main concourse such as photo opportunities with Titans mascot T-Rac and Titans Cheer, discounted food and drink, games, and more.

Gates will open at 10 a.m. with practice beginning at 11 a.m. Free parking will be available in Lots E, F, R and T, on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 9 a.m. Guests also are encouraged to utilize rideshare and other transportation options as outlined at nissanstadium.com/transportation. All Nissan Stadium policies, including the clear bag policy, will be in effect. More information can be found at nissanstadium.com/stadium-policies.

All fans attending Back Together Weekend presented by SeatGeek must claim a ticket at tennesseetitans.com/backtogetherweekend. Tickets will offer fans general admission seating in the 100-level of Nissan Stadium.

FRANCHISE TRAINING CAMP LOCATIONS

All-time Houston Oilers/Tennessee Titans training camp locations:

- 1960: University of Houston - Houston, Texas
- 1961-62: Ellington Air Force Base - Webster, Texas
- 1963: U.S. Air Force Academy - Colo. Springs, Colo.
- 1964-66: Oilers Training Facility - Houston, Texas
- 1967-73: Schreiner Institute - Kerrville, Texas
- 1974-76: Sam Houston St. Univ. - Huntsville, Texas
- 1977: Stephen F. Austin St. Univ. - Nacogdoches, Texas
- 1978-87: San Angelo St. Univ. - San Angelo, Texas
- 1988-90: SW Texas St. Univ. - San Marcos, Texas
- 1991-96: Trinity University - San Antonio, Texas
- 1997-98: Tennessee St. Univ. - Nashville, Tenn.
- 1999: Baptist Sports Park - Nashville, Tenn. (Bellevue)
- 2000-05: Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park* - Nashville, Tenn. (MetroCenter)
- 2006: Austin Peay St. Univ. - Clarksville, Tenn.;
Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park* - Nashville, Tenn. (MetroCenter)
- 2007-24: Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park* - Nashville, Tenn. (MetroCenter)

* Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park was previously named Baptist Sports Park and Saint Thomas Sports Park.

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IMPORTANT DATES

July 23	All Titans players report to Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park for training camp
July 24	First Titans training camp practice
July 27	"Back Together Weekend." Practice at Nissan Stadium free and open to the public. To attend, fans must claim a ticket at tennesseetitans.com/trainingcamp .
August 1-4	Hall of Fame Weekend (Canton, Ohio)
August 10	First preseason game vs. San Francisco
August 14-15	Titans and Seattle Seahawks combine for practices at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park
August 17	Second preseason game vs. Seattle Seahawks
August 25	Titans at New Orleans Saints in final preseason game
August 27	Prior to 3 p.m. CT, clubs must reduce rosters to a maximum of 53 players on the active/inactive list
August 28	Clubs may establish practice squads of up to 17 players, including one international player
September 8	Titans open regular season at Chicago Bears
September 15	Titans home opener against New York Jets



DAILY TRAINING CAMP MEDIA SCHEDULE

The training camp media schedule is subject to change. Practices typically last two hours, and media availability generally takes place in-person immediately following practice. All practices take place at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park unless otherwise listed. Times listed are central unless otherwise indicated.

Tuesday, July 23

12:15 p.m. Press conference with Brian Callahan

Wednesday, July 24

9:15-10:30 a.m. Practice

Thursday, July 25

9-10:30 a.m. Practice

Friday, July 26

No media access

Saturday, July 27

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Practice at Nissan Stadium

Sunday, July 28

No media access

Monday, July 29

10:30 a.m. Assistant coaches available to media

Tuesday, July 30

8:30-10:30 a.m. Practice

Wednesday, July 31

8:30-10:30 a.m. Practice

Thursday, Aug. 1

No media access

Friday, Aug. 2

No media access

Saturday, Aug. 3

8:30-10:30 a.m. Practice

Sunday, Aug. 4

8:30-10:30 a.m. Practice

Monday, Aug. 5

No media access

Tuesday, Aug. 6

No media access

Wednesday, Aug. 7

8:30-10:30 a.m. Practice

Thursday, Aug. 8

8:30-10:30 a.m. Practice

Friday, Aug. 9

No media access

Saturday, Aug. 10

6 p.m. Titans vs. San Francisco 49ers

Sunday, Aug. 11

TBA Brian Callahan press conference

Monday, Aug. 12

No media access

Tuesday, Aug. 13

10:30 a.m. Coordinators and assistant coaches available to media

Wednesday, Aug. 14

10 a.m.-12 p.m. Practice with Seattle Seahawks

Thursday, Aug. 15

10 a.m.-12 p.m. Practice with Seattle Seahawks

Friday, Aug. 16

No media access

Saturday, Aug. 17

6 p.m. Titans vs. Seattle Seahawks

Sunday, Aug. 18

TBA Brian Callahan press conference

Monday, Aug. 19

No media access

Schedule after Aug. 19 will be announced at a later date.



MEDIA INFORMATION FOR TRAINING CAMP

CREDENTIALS: Media credentials for training camp are required for access to Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park. All credential requests must be submitted through an online application process at a link provided by the football communications department. Email kconnors@titans.nfl.com for more information.

Separate credentials are issued for training camp and Titans games. Approval for one category does not guarantee approval for another.

TRAINING CAMP CREDENTIAL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED PRIOR TO A MEDIA OUTLET'S ARRIVAL AT CAMP. SAME-DAY REQUESTS WILL NOT BE HONORED.



PARKING AND MEDIA WORKROOM AT ASCENSION SAINT THOMAS SPORTS PARK:

Parking at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park is extremely limited. Please make contact with Titans media relations prior to coming to practice to receive instructions. **Media arriving at training camp without prearrangements through the football communications staff are likely to be denied parking.**

The media workroom inside Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park is located on the second floor. The workroom will be open on days the media is invited to cover practice and/or a press conference. Food is provided but only available to the working media.

Stand-ups on the field are permitted following practice and media availability, but otherwise media members will be asked to clear the field and return to the media workroom. Access to the field at other times must be prearranged with the football communications staff.

INTERVIEW POLICY DURING TRAINING CAMP: During training camp, head coach **Brian Callahan** and players typically are made available to speak with the media following practice sessions. Callahan will address the media at the podium on assigned days at the conclusion of practice, followed by player availability. On days Callahan does not speak at the podium, players will be available immediately coming off the practice field. Select players also will be made available at the podium. Coordinators and assistant coaches are available for interviews on days that are predetermined and announced by the football communications department. In accordance with the NFL's media access policy, the locker room will be open to the media on a regular basis prior to the start of the regular season.

LIVE UPDATES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND PHOTOGRAPHY: During training camp sessions, reporters are limited in shooting photos and videos to the beginning portions of practice—generally the stretch and individual periods, or to specific periods as directed by the media relations staff. During this time, live reporting on practice is allowed. However, live streaming in any format is not permitted at any practice, per NFL rules.

If a practice is **open to the public**, periodic live textual reports following stretch and individual periods are permitted throughout the remainder of practice (no photos or videos). Live streaming of the practice is not allowed.

If a practice is **closed to the public**, once the stretch and individual periods are finished and shooting has ended, reportable information observed for the remainder of the session must not be posted until the conclusion of practice.

Within reports from practice, observations on general team and individual performances are allowed. However, reporting on items related to competitive advantage is prohibited, such as positional rotation and scheme-related observations. Media also must not report specifics of conversations between players and coaches overheard on the practice field.

This policy includes, but is not limited to, website articles, social media posts, call-ins to radio stations, video reports and text messaging.

During practice, all media members are asked to stay within the boundaries on the practice field designated by the football communications staff—typically the outer boundaries of the field. Walking on or through the practice areas is prohibited.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Titans Practice Facility/Training Camp Site:
Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park
460 Great Circle Road
Nashville, TN 37228

Nissan Stadium:
One Titans Way
Nashville, TN 37213

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2024 TITANS SCHEDULE NOTES

SEASON NOTES

- **PLAYOFF OPPONENTS:** The Titans have six total games against five playoff teams from last season. They have home games against Green Bay and Houston and road contests at Miami, Buffalo, Detroit and Houston. Four of those six games are against 2023 division winners: Houston twice (AFC South), Buffalo (AFC East) and Detroit (NFC North). The six games against reigning playoff clubs are the fewest for the Titans since they had five such games entering the 2020 campaign.
- **TV BREAKDOWN:** Excluding their Week 18 matchup with the Texans, which has yet to be assigned a broadcasting network, the Titans are currently scheduled for nine contests on CBS, six games on FOX, and one game on ESPN. Due to the NFL's flex scheduling, some contests could be moved to a different network from the one appearing on the initial schedule.
- **TIME (ZONE) TRAVEL:** Besides a trip to Los Angeles to face the Chargers in Week 10, the Titans stay in either the central time zone (10 games) or eastern time zone (six) for the duration of 2024, including the preseason. Other than Los Angeles, the farthest west they travel is Houston.
- **HIGH NOON:** During the regular season, 14 of the Titans' 16 games prior to Week 18 are scheduled for Sundays at noon CT.
- **FIRST-YEAR COACHES:** Brian Callahan is one of eight NFL head coaches in their first season with their current team. He and the Titans face three of the others, all within a five-week span: Jerod Mayo's New England Patriots, Jim Harbaugh's Los Angeles Chargers, and Dan Quinn's Washington Commanders. Additionally, the Titans go against the Seattle Seahawks and new head coach Mike Macdonald in the second week of the preseason.
- **QUARTERBACKS 1-2-3:** The 2024 NFL Draft featured quarterbacks in the top three selections, beginning with Caleb Williams going first to Chicago, followed by Jayden Daniels to Washington and Drake Maye to New England. The Titans face each of those teams this season, in addition to the Minnesota Vikings, who drafted J.J. McCarthy with the 11th overall selection.
- **DIVISIONAL WAITING GAMES:** The Titans must wait until Week 6 against Indianapolis to play their first AFC South matchup of 2024. It is their longest wait for a divisional game since 2010 (Week 6 at Jacksonville). However, the Titans conclude 2024 with divisional games in five of the final seven weeks, including three consecutive division battles to conclude the schedule.
- **THREE GAMES BASED UPON 2023 FINISH:** Every NFL team has two intraconference games and one interconference matchup based on the previous year's standings. As a result of the Titans' fourth-place finish in 2023, they host the AFC North's fourth-place Bengals, and they visit the fourth-place Chargers from the AFC West and the Washington Commanders from the NFC East. Overall, the Titans' strength of schedule is .491 (142-147) based upon their opponents' combined 2023 record, which is tied for the 21st most difficult schedule out of 32 NFL teams.
- **FACING TOP OFFENSES AND DEFENSES:** The Titans face four of the NFL's top 10 offenses from last season: Miami (No. 1 overall offense), Buffalo (No. 4), Detroit (No. 3) and Minnesota (No. 10). They also contend with four of the top 10 defenses from 2023: the New York Jets (No. 3 overall defense), Miami (No. 10), Buffalo (No. 9) and New England (No. 7).

WEEK-BY-WEEK NOTES

- **PRESEASON WEEKS 1-3:** The Titans play their first two preseason games at home, beginning with a visit by the reigning NFC Champion San Francisco 49ers. Prior to joining the Titans, executive vice president/general manager Ran Carthon was with the 49ers for six seasons as director of pro personnel (2017-20) and director of player personnel (2021-22). San Francisco running back Christian McCaffrey is the reigning AP Offensive Player of the Year ... In Week 2 of the preseason, the Titans host the Seattle Seahawks, who are in their first season under current head coach and former Baltimore Ravens defensive coordinator Mike Macdonald ... Finally, the Titans conclude the preseason on the road at New Orleans, where they opened the 2023 campaign and fell by

a final score of 16-15. The Caesars Superdome in New Orleans is the future site of Super Bowl LIX.

- **WEEK 1 at CHICAGO:** The Brian Callahan head coaching era begins for the Titans with a visit to Soldier Field, which opened in 1924 ... FOX is scheduled to televise the game ... It is the first time the Titans and Bears franchises will play on Kickoff Weekend ... The Titans enter 2024 with an all-time record of 32-32 in season openers ... Although the Titans and Bears have clashed in the preseason four times in a seven-year span (2017, 2019, 2021 and 2023), this is the Titans' first appearance at Soldier Field during the regular season since a 27-21 victory on Nov. 27, 2016. Tennessee also took the last regular season meeting at Nissan Stadium on Nov. 8, 2020 by a score of 24-17 ... With a pair of top 10 picks in the 2024 NFL Draft, the Bears selected University of Southern California quarterback Caleb Williams first overall and University of Washington wide receiver Rome Odunze ninth overall ... The Bears fielded the NFL's top-ranked rushing defense in 2023 (86.4 opponent rushing yards per game).
- **WEEK 2 vs. NEW YORK JETS:** Tennessee owns a 12-13 record in home openers at Nissan Stadium since the venue opened in 1999 ... The Jets make their first appearance at Nissan Stadium since Dec. 21, 2018, when the Titans won 26-22 ... Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers, a four-time league MVP, returns for his second season with the team after suffering a season-ending injury in Week 1 of the 2023 campaign.
- **WEEK 3 vs. GREEN BAY:** The Packers have not made an appearance at Nissan Stadium since a 47-25 Titans victory on Nov. 13, 2016 ... Green Bay is led by head coach Matt LaFleur, who was the offensive coordinator in Tennessee in 2018 before going to Green Bay the following season ... Packers quarterback Jordan Love enters his second full season as the team's starting quarterback. He passed for 4,159 yards and 32 touchdowns in 2023 ... Titans president of football operations Chad Brinker was employed by the Packers from 2010 through 2022 ... The Titans own an 8-6 all-time record against Green Bay, including a 5-2 mark since 1999.
- **WEEK 4 at MIAMI (MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL):** The Titans trek to South Florida for a rematch of a 2023 Monday night thriller (Dec. 11), when quarterback Will Levis engineered a comeback victory for Tennessee. The Titans scored 15 points in a span of 51 seconds, erasing a 14-point deficit to win 28-27. They became the first NFL team since the Oakland Raiders in 1976 (vs. Pittsburgh) to win in regulation after trailing by 14 or more points with less than three minutes to go in the fourth quarter ... The Titans own a 26-19 all-time record on Monday Night Football, including nine wins in their past 12 appearances ... Featuring quarterback Tua Tagovailoa and wide receiver Tyreek Hill, the Dolphins produced the NFL's top-ranked overall offense (401.3 total yards per game) and passing offense (265.5) in 2023.
- **WEEK 5 (BYE):** The Titans are set for a bye during the first weekend in October, marking their earliest bye since Week 4 in 2020 ... They enter the year with an eight-game winning streak in contests after the bye, sharing the NFL's best current streak with the Buffalo Bills.
- **WEEKS 6 & 16 vs. INDIANAPOLIS:** Two second-year quarterbacks—Tennessee's Will Levis and Indianapolis' Anthony Richardson—could meet for the first time in their careers. Richardson's rookie season came to a premature end in a game against the Titans (Oct. 8, 2023), three weeks before Levis made his NFL debut ... Colts second-year head coach Shane Steichen served as the offensive coordinator of the Philadelphia Eagles at the same time that new Titans defensive coordinator Dennard Wilson was on the Eagles staff as defensive backs coach (2021) and defensive backs coach/defensive passing game coordinator (2022), culminating with Philadelphia's appearance in Super Bowl LVII ... First-year Titans general manager Ran Carthon spent the majority of his three NFL seasons as a player (2004-06) with the Colts.
- **WEEK 7 at BUFFALO:** Two original AFL rivals meet for the sixth time in a seven-year span ... In 50 previous all-time meetings with the Bills, including playoffs, the Titans own a 30-20 record ... The Titans won consecutive home games against the Bills in 2020 and 2021 before the Bills took the most recent matchup at Highmark Stadium on Sept. 19, 2022 ... Buffalo carries a streak of five consecutive playoff seasons and four straight AFC East titles into 2024 ... Bills quarterback Josh Allen enters his seventh NFL season and is one of only two NFL quarterbacks (Patrick Mahomes) who have passed for more than 4,000 yards in each



2024 TITANS SCHEDULE NOTES

of the past four campaigns.

- **WEEK 8 at DETROIT:** The Titans make their third all-time appearance at Ford Field, where they are 2-0 with wins in 2008 and 2016 ... The Titans are 10-3 all-time against Detroit, and their current six-game winning streak against the Lions is their longest active winning streak against any opponent. Most recently, the Titans won 46-25 at Nissan Stadium on Dec. 20, 2020 ... New Titans head coach Brian Callahan was the quarterbacks coach for the Lions in 2016 and 2017 ... Led by head coach Dan Campbell and quarterback Jared Goff, the Lions won the NFC North in 2023, marking the organization's first division title since 1993. They advanced to their first NFC Championship game since 1991, ultimately falling to the San Francisco 49ers.
- **WEEK 9 vs. NEW ENGLAND:** Led by new head coach Jerod Mayo, who attended the University of Tennessee from 2004 through 2007, the Patriots make their first visit to Nissan Stadium in the regular season since Nov. 11, 2018, a game won by the Titans 34-10 ... Mayo takes over the reins in New England after playing and coaching under previous head coach Bill Belichick ... Patriots rookie and former North Carolina Tar Heels quarterback Drake Maye was the third-overall draft pick in 2024 ... Titans quarterback and Madison, Conn., native Will Levis could make his first career appearance against the Patriots.
- **WEEK 10 at LOS ANGELES CHARGERS:** The Titans and Chargers meet for the third consecutive season ... In their only previous encounter at SoFi Stadium, the Chargers defeated the Titans 17-14 on Dec. 18, 2022 ... Most recently, Tennessee won 27-24 in overtime at Nissan Stadium on Sept. 17, 2023 ... Head coach Jim Harbaugh is in his first season with the Chargers after leading the University of Michigan to a national title in 2023. Harbaugh was the head coach of the San Francisco 49ers from 2011 to 2014 prior to coaching at Michigan. His father, Jack Harbaugh, was the head coach at Western Kentucky University from 1989 to 2002 ... The Titans look for their first road victory against the Chargers since 1990.
- **WEEK 11 vs. MINNESOTA:** The Vikings are scheduled to make their third all-time appearance at Nissan Stadium and their first since 2016 ... The most recent Titans-Vikings matchup in the regular season was at Minnesota on Sept. 27, 2020. Then-rookie Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson recorded his first career start, touchdown and 100-yard game, but the Titans won 31-30 ... In the 2024 NFL Draft, the Vikings selected Michigan quarterback J.J. McCarthy with the 11th overall pick.
- **WEEKS 12 & 18 vs. HOUSTON:** The Texans and Titans collectively feature a pair of top quarterbacks from the 2023 rookie class: C.J. Stroud (first round, second overall) and Will Levis (second round, 33rd overall), respectively ... Stroud won the 2023 AP Offensive Rookie of the Year Award, and his teammate, defensive end Will Anderson, was named the AP Defensive Rookie of the Year ... During the 2024 offseason, the Texans signed former Titans defensive end Denico Autry and linebacker Azeem Al-Shaair as unrestricted free agents ... The Titans, who lead the all-time series 23-21 heading into 2024, look to end the Texans' three-game winning streak in the rivalry ... Week 18 marks the fourth time in a six-year span the two rivals conclude the regular season against each other.
- **WEEK 13 at WASHINGTON COMMANDERS:** The Titans and Commanders clash in 2024 as a result of their respective divisional finishes in 2023 ... The Titans have won the past two contests in the series, including most recently a 21-17 victory at Washington on Oct. 9, 2022 ... During the 2024 offseason, the Commanders hired a new general manager, Adam Peters, and a new head coach, Dan Quinn ... Peters and Titans executive vice president/general manager Ran Carthon previously worked together at the San Francisco 49ers ... Quinn, who was the head coach of the Atlanta Falcons from 2015 to 2020, arrives in Washington following his role as the defensive coordinator of the Dallas Cowboys.
- **WEEKS 14 & 17 vs. JACKSONVILLE:** The annual Titans-Jaguars series heads into its 30th season since the Jaguars' inaugural 1995 campaign ... The two rivals face each other twice in the month of December ... The Titans won the most recent contest, a 28-20 victory in the 2023 season finale at Nissan Stadium ... During the 2024 offseason, former Jaguars wide receiver Calvin Ridley was signed by the Titans as an unrestricted free agent. In 2023, during his only season with the Jaguars, Ridley started every contest and caught 76 passes for 1,016

yards and eight touchdowns ... New Titans offensive coordinator Nick Holz also arrives from Jacksonville, where he was the Jaguars' passing game coordinator.

- **WEEK 15 vs. CINCINNATI:** Early in the 2024 offseason, the Titans made Brian Callahan the 20th head coach in franchise history after he spent the previous five campaigns as Cincinnati's offensive coordinator. During his tenure in Cincinnati, Callahan served under head coach Zac Taylor, helping the Bengals to two AFC North titles, two AFC Championship appearances and a Super Bowl berth ... Wide receiver Tyler Boyd spent the first eight seasons of his career with the Bengals before signing with the Titans as a free agent in 2024 ... This is the fourth consecutive season in which the Bengals have visited Tennessee in either the postseason (2021) or regular season (2022-24) ... The Titans took last year's contest on Oct. 1 by a final score of 27-3.

NEW FACES IN 2024

The following lists include coaches and players who joined the Titans after the 2023 season ended.

Coaching Staff

Brian Callahan	Head Coach
Colt Anderson	Special Teams Coordinator
Nick Holz	Offensive Coordinator
Dennard Wilson	Defensive Coordinator
Ben Bloom	Outside Linebackers
Frank Bush	Linebackers
Bill Callahan	Offensive Line
Steve Donatell	Defensive Assistant
Scott Fuchs	Assistant Offensive Line
Bo Hardegree	Quarterbacks
Steve Jackson	Secondary/Safeties
Tom Jones	Assistant to the Head Coach
Randy Jordan	Running Backs
Mark Lovat	Assistant Strength and Conditioning
Payton McCollum	Assistant Wide Receivers
Tracy Rocker	Defensive Line
John Shaw	Assistant Sports Performance - Speed Training
Grant Thorne	Assistant Strength and Conditioning
Tyke Tolbert	Wide Receivers
Zac Woodfin	Director of Sports Performance

Veteran Players – One or More Years of Prior Experience

Jamal Adams	S	Kenneth Murray Jr.	LB
Chidobe Awuzie	CB	Tony Pollard	RB
Tyler Boyd	WR	Calvin Ridley	WR
Saahdiq Charles	OL	Mason Rudolph	QB
Geron Christian Sr.	OL	L'Jarius Sneed	CB
Lloyd Cushenberry III	C	Nick Vannett	TE
Sebastian Joseph-Day	DL	Leroy Watson IV	T

Draft Picks (Round)

JC Latham (1)	T	Jha'Quan Jackson (6)	WR
T'Vondre Sweat (2)	NT	James Williams (7)	LB
Cedric Gray (4)	LB	Jaylen Harrell (7)	OLB
Jarvis Brownlee Jr. (5)	CB		

Undrafted Rookies (R) and First-Year Free Agents (1)

Brian Dooley (R)	T	Brayden Narveson (R)	K
Khalid Duke (R)	OLB	Bryce Oliver (R)	WR
Keaton Ellis (R)	S	Sam Schnee (R)	WR
Isaiah Iton (R)	DL	Jabari Small (R)	RB
Robert Javier (R)	CB	Cole Spencer (R)	G
Gabe Judy-Lally (R)	CB	Steven Stilianos (R)	TE
Dillon Johnson (R)	RB		
David Martin-Robinson (R)	TE		

As of July 18, 2024



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN 2024

WHAT TO LOOK FOR – TEAM

- The Titans franchise is set to embark on its 65th season—the 26th campaign as the Titans after 39 seasons as the Oilers
- The Titans can earn their fifth playoff berth in an eight-year span.
- The Titans are slated to play the 1,000th regular season game in franchise history in the season finale against Houston (Jan. 4-5).

HEAD COACH BRIAN CALLAHAN

- Begins his tenure as the 20th head coach in franchise history.

S JAMAL ADAMS

- Needs 3.5 sacks (21.5 entering 2024) to reach 25 career sacks. He would become the sixth defensive back to reach the mark since individual sacks became an official statistic in 1982, joining **Rodney Harrison** (30.5), **Ronde Barber** (28), **Brian Dawkins** (26), **Adrian Wilson** (25.5) and **Carnell Lake** (25).

WR TYLER BOYD

- Can record his seventh consecutive season with at least 50 receptions and 500 receiving yards. He is tied for the NFL's seventh-longest such active streak entering 2024.

LS MORGAN COX

- Enters 2024 ranked 10th in the NFL in career games played among active players (216 entering 2024).
- By appearing in all 17 contests in 2024, which would give him 233 career games, Cox would rank fourth in career NFL games among all players from the University of Tennessee. He would trail only **Jason Witten** (271), **Peyton Manning** (266) and **Dustin Colquitt** (255).

K NICK FOLK

- Enters 2024 ranked seventh in the NFL in career games played among active players (228 entering 2024).
- Needs 18 field goals to reach 400 for his career. Entering 2024, only 13 players in NFL history previously reached the mark. His 382 career field goals through 2023 ranked 19th in NFL annals.
- Goes into 2024 with an NFL-record streak of 78 consecutive field goals made from under 40 yards. His last miss in that range was a 31-yarder against New England on Oct. 5, 2017, when he played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

WR DeANDRE HOPKINS

- Enters 2024 with more receptions (928) and receiving yards (12,355) than any other player since he entered the NFL in 2013.
- Needs 72 receptions to reach 1,000 in his first 12 seasons. Only **Jerry Rice** (1,050), **Marvin Harrison** (1,042), **Larry Fitzgerald** (1,018) and **Andre Johnson** (1,012) have previously reached the mark in their first 12 seasons. Hopkins recorded 928 receptions in his first 11 seasons. Through 2023, only 14 total players in NFL history had reached the 1,000 career reception plateau.
- Needs 72 receptions, 645 receiving yards and seven touchdown catches in 2024 to become the ninth player in NFL history to total at least 1,000 receptions, 13,000 receiving yards and 85 touchdown catches during his career. Hopkins would join **Jerry Rice**, **Marvin Harrison** and **Larry Fitzgerald** as the only players to reach all three marks within their first 12 NFL seasons.
- Has at least one reception in every game he has played during his career—162 consecutive games entering 2024. With a reception in his first six games of 2024, he will pass **Keyshawn Johnson** (167) for the NFL's second-longest catch streak to begin a career during the Super Bowl era (1966–present). Hopkins' streak of games with a reception to begin his career ranks third behind only Johnson and **Marvin Harrison** (190).

OLB HAROLD LANDRY III

- Enters the 2024 season ranked 11th in franchise history with 41.5 career sacks. With 8.5 more sacks, he would become only the eighth defender in franchise annals to be credited with 50 sacks.
- With 11 sacks in 2024 (41.5 entering the season), Landry will pass **Jevon Kearse** (52) for the most sacks by a player in the franchise's "Titans era" (1999–present).

QB WILL LEVIS

- Can become the third player in franchise history to start at least nine games in each of his first two NFL seasons, joining **Vince Young** and **Marcus Mariota**.
- Can become the third player in franchise history to average at least 12.0 yards per completion in each of his first two NFL seasons, joining **Warren Moon** and **Marcus Mariota**.

TE CHIG OKONKWO

- Can join **Frank Wycheck** (six consecutive seasons) and **Delanie Walker** (five) as the only tight ends in franchise history to record consecutive seasons with at least 50 receptions and 500 receiving yards.
- Can become the franchise's first tight end to begin his NFL career with three consecutive seasons in which he posted at least 30 receptions and 400 receiving yards.

RB TONY POLLARD

- Needs 60 scrimmage yards to reach 5,000 for his career (3,621 rushing yards and 1,319 receiving yards entering 2024).
- Can notch his third consecutive season with at least 1,000 rushing yards.
- Looks to extend his streak to four consecutive seasons with at least 1,000 scrimmage yards.

WR CALVIN RIDLEY

- Needs 642 receiving yards in 2024 to reach 5,000 for his career (4,358 entering 2024).
- Needs 76 receptions in 2024 to reach 400 for his career (324 entering 2024).

DT JEFFERY SIMMONS

- Needs 3.5 sacks in 2024 to reach 30 career sacks (26.5 entering 2024). He would be the franchise's 10th player to do so since individual sacks became an official NFL statistic in 1982, as well as the organization's sixth player in its "Titans era" (1999–present) to reach 30 sacks.
- Enters 2024 on a streak of three consecutive seasons with at least 5.5 sacks. With 5.5 or more sacks in 2024, he would become the franchise's first player to reach the number in four consecutive seasons since **Ray Childress** (eight consecutive seasons from 1987–1994).

CB L'JARIUS SNEED

- Can record his fifth consecutive season to begin his career with at least two interceptions.
- Can become the NFL's only player since the beginning of the 2008 season to register three consecutive seasons with at least 11 passes defended and five tackles for loss. In that span, only Sneed, **Chris Harris** (2013–2014), **Troy Polamalu** (2010–2011) and **Charles Woodson** (2009–2010) have recorded two such consecutive campaigns.

P RYAN STONEHOUSE

- Can become the first player since the 1970 NFL-AFL merger to lead the league in gross punting average for three consecutive seasons.
- After averaging an NFL-record 53.1-yards per punt as a rookie in 2022 and then averaging 53.1 yards per attempt in 2023, Stonehouse can become the first player since the 1970 NFL-AFL merger to record three career seasons with an average of 50.0 yards per punt. **AJ Cole** (Las Vegas) could also accomplish the feat in 2023.



EVP/GENERAL MANAGER RAN CARTHON

[Video: Ran Carthon and Anthony Robinson Recap the 2024 NFL Draft](#)

[Jim Wyatt: Ran Carthon Discusses Team's Moves in Free Agency](#)

[GM Ran Carthon Motivated to Turn Titans Around, and Prove Ownership Right](#)

[Video: Ran Carthon Introduced as Titans GM](#)



Ran Carthon was named the 14th general manager in franchise history on Jan. 18, 2023. He joined the Titans after spending six seasons with the San Francisco 49ers, including the last two as the team's director of player personnel.

A year after initially joining the franchise, Carthon was promoted to executive vice president/general manager. His duties expanded to include all areas that impact the football team: roster control, team activities and personnel decisions including draft and free agency acquisitions, oversight of head coach **Brian Callahan** and his coaching staff, scouting, sports medicine, and player engagement.

"Over the past year, Ran has impressed me and our staff with his innovative approach to roster building," said Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk upon Carthon's promotion in 2024. "Ran's exceptional reputation around the league as a talent evaluator and culture builder was a clear competitive advantage during last year's free agency and draft process, as well as our recent search for a head coach. Simply put, Ran Carthon makes the Tennessee Titans a destination for the league's top talent. By expanding his role to include full roster control and oversight of the coaching staff, our organization will now benefit more completely from Ran's unique ability to build and lead a championship-caliber football team."

Shortly after receiving his promotion, Carthon and his staff embarked upon the 2024 offseason. Their efforts resulted in several notable signings in free agency: cornerback **Chidobe Awuzie**, linebacker **Kenneth Murray Jr.**, defensive lineman **Sebastian Joseph-Day**, center **Lloyd Cushenberry III**, running back **Tony Pollard**, quarterback **Mason Rudolph** and wide receiver **Calvin Ridley**. The Titans then used a trade to acquire former Kansas City Chiefs cornerback **L'Jarvis Sneed** before circling back in free agency to add wide receiver **Tyler Boyd** and safety **Jamal Adams**.

During the 2024 NFL Draft, Carthon orchestrated the selection of seven total players. With the seventh overall pick in the first round, the Titans chose Alabama tackle **JC Latham**, and at No. 38 in the second round, they took Texas nose tackle **T'Vondre Sweat**.

In his first year with the Titans, Carthon re-worked the roster with several veteran additions who would become key starters for the team in 2023, including wide receiver **DeAndre Hopkins**, outside linebacker **Arden Key**, linebacker **Azeez Al-Shaair**, cornerback **Sean Murphy-Bunting** and offensive lineman **Daniel Brunskill** in free agency. In his first draft, offensive lineman **Peter Skoronski**, quarterback **Will Levis** and running back **Tyjae Spears** were selected in the first three rounds, respectively. Carthon also used a trade to acquire kicker **Nick Folk**.

Carthon arrived in Tennessee with a range of experience from multiple teams. In San Francisco, he was the 49ers director of pro personnel for four seasons (2017-20) and then promoted to director of player personnel in 2021, serving in that capacity until joining the Titans. In his role as director of player personnel, Carthon was responsible for evaluating the top college prospects and assisting in the construction of the pro free agent board and evaluations. He joined the 49ers when head coach **Kyle Shanahan** and general manager **John Lynch** took over in 2017 and played a part in the team's three playoff appearances, two division titles and an NFC championship in 2019. Additionally, the 49ers had nine players account for 13 total Pro Bowl selections from 2021 (seven selections) to 2022 (six selections)—evidence of the talented roster the personnel staff amassed.

Before joining San Francisco, Carthon spent five seasons (2012-16) with the St. Louis/Los Angeles Rams as their director of pro personnel. He entered the NFL scouting world as a pro scout with the Atlanta Falcons for four years (2008-11).

As a player, Carthon spent three seasons in the NFL (2004-06) primarily with the Indianapolis Colts, after entering the league as an undrafted college free agent. At the University of Florida, he tallied 1,353 career rushing yards over four seasons and was part of the Gators' 2000

SEC Championship team.

Carthon was raised in an NFL family with his father, **Maurice Carthon**, having a distinguished playing and coaching career. Maurice Carthon played for the Colts and New York Giants, and he coached for New England, the New York Jets, Detroit, Dallas, Cleveland, Arizona and Kansas City.

Following his playing career, Ran Carthon received his bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Florida in 2008. As a member of the Rams (2013) and 49ers (2018) he was selected to participate in the NFL Career Development Symposium at the Wharton School of Business, and in 2022, he took part in the inaugural NFL coach and front office accelerator program.

Born Arandic Kornell Carthon in February of 1981, in Osceola, Ark., he attended Key West High School in Key West, Fla.

RAN CARTHON'S BACKGROUND:

2024: Tennessee Titans - Executive Vice President/General Manager
2023: Tennessee Titans - General Manager
2021-22: San Francisco 49ers - Director of Player Personnel
2017-20: San Francisco 49ers - Director of Pro Personnel
2012-16: St. Louis/Los Angeles Rams - Director of Pro Personnel
2008-11: Atlanta Falcons - Pro Scout
2004-06: Indianapolis Colts* - Running Back
1999-03: University of Florida - Running Back

* Also spent time with the Green Bay Packers, Seattle Seahawks and Detroit Lions

FRANCHISE GENERAL MANAGER HISTORY

Ran Carthon became the 14th general manager in franchise history when he was hired in 2023. In the "Titans era," which began in 1999, he is the team's fifth general manager.

Franchise general managers (records include postseason):

General Manager	Seasons	W	L	T	Pct
Ran Carthon	2023–2024	6	11	0	.353
Jon Robinson	2016–2022	69	47	0	.595
Ruston Webster	2012–2015	18	46	0	.281
Mike Reinfeldt	2007–2011	46	36	0	.561
Floyd Reese	1994–2006	111	106	0	.512
Mike Holovak	1989–1993	52	34	0	.605
Ladd Herzeg	1981–1988	44	80	0	.355
O.A. "Bum" Phillips	1975–1980	59	38	0	.608
Sid Gillman	1973–1974	8	20	0	.286
John Breen	1971–1972	5	22	1	.196
Don Klosterman	1966–1969	25	30	3	.457
Carroll Martin	1964–1965	8	20	0	.286
Pop Ivy	1963	6	8	0	.429
Don Suman	1961–1962	22	7	1	.750

Note: No general manager title was held in 1960 or 1970.



TITANS PLAYER PERSONNEL

Chad Brinker	President of Football Operations
Ran Carthon	Executive Vice President/General Manager
Anthony Robinson	Assistant General Manager
Brian Gardner	Director, Pro Scouting
AJ Highsmith	Director, Scouting
Jon Salge	Director, College Scouting
Rob Riederer	Assistant Director, Football Strategy
Dale Thompson	Assistant Director, College Scouting
Kevin Turks	Assistant Director, Pro Scouting
Mike Boni	Senior National Scout
Sam Summerville	Senior National Scout
Casey Callahan	College Scout
Patrick Callaway	College Scout
T.J. Earley	College Scout
Matt Miller	College Scout
Wes Slay	College Scout
Brandon Taylor	College Scout
Max Curtis	Player Personnel Coordinator
Mical Johnson	Pro Scouting Coordinator
Patrick Woo	College Scouting Coordinator
Keenan Agnew	Scouting Assistant
Corey Cooper	Scouting Assistant
Kalan Reed	Personnel Scout

2024 VETERANS ADDED UNDER RAN CARTHON

In his second offseason as Titans general manager, **Ran Carthon** worked to add several veterans to the roster since the beginning of the new league year in March. The additions include running back **Tony Pollard**, cornerback **Chidobe Awuzie**, linebacker **Kenneth Murray Jr.**, center **Lloyd Cushenberry III**, quarterback **Mason Rudolph**, offensive lineman **Saahdiq Charles**, wide receiver **Calvin Ridley**, defensive lineman **Sebastian Joseph-Day**, cornerback **L'Jarius Sneed** (via trade), tackle **Leroy Watson IV** (trade), tight end **Nick Vannett**, wide receiver **Tyler Boyd**, tackle **Geron Christian Sr.** and safety **Jamal Adams**.

Additionally, the team announced new deals or extensions with several returning members of the Titans, including long snapper **Morgan Cox**, linebacker **Jack Gibbens**, wide receiver **Nick Westbrook-Ikhine** and kicker **Nick Folk**.

New veterans added under Carthon:

S JAMAL ADAMS

6-1 | 213 | 8th NFL Season | Louisiana State

Previous Team: Seattle Seahawks

- Signed by the Titans as a free agent on July 11, 2024.
- A three-time Pro Bowler (2018-20), Adams totaled seven seasons with the New York Jets (2017-19) and the Seattle Seahawks (2020-23) before arriving in Tennessee. During that time, he registered 493 tackles, 21.5 sacks, four interceptions, including one returned for a touchdown, 36 passes defended, 50 tackles for loss, seven forced fumbles and four fumble recoveries in 80 starts.
- From 2017 to 2023, his 21.5 sacks were the most in the NFL by a defensive back.
- In 2023, Adams started nine games for Seattle and tallied 48 tackles, seven tackles for loss and two passes defended.
- Adams was traded to the Seattle Seahawks prior to the 2020 season. That year, he registered an NFL record for most sacks by a defensive back in a single season with a career-high 9.5 on his way to being named to his third Pro Bowl and second-team AP All-Pro.

➤ During his time with the Jets, Adams was coached by current Titans defensive coordinator Dennard Wilson. He earned second-team AP All-Pro honors in 2018 and was a first-team selection in 2019.

➤ Adams was selected by the New York Jets in the first round (sixth overall) of the 2017 NFL Draft.

➤ A native of Lewisville, Texas, Adams played three seasons (2014-16) at Louisiana State University and was named to the AP All-SEC first team as a junior.

13 - CB CHIDOBE AWUZIE

6-0 | 202 | 8th NFL Season | Colorado

Previous Team: Cincinnati Bengals

Pronunciation: CHIH-doe-bay ah-WOOZ-yay

➤ Joined the Titans after spending the last three seasons (2021-23) with the Cincinnati Bengals. He has appeared in 86 career games with 74 starts, tallying 368 tackles with six interceptions and 62 passes defended.

➤ In his three seasons with the Bengals, Awuzie broke up 25 passes and recorded two interceptions.

➤ Played in 15 games including 10 starts in 2023, when he totaled 56 tackles and six passes defended.

➤ Awuzie played in 49 career games with 42 starts in his first four seasons with Dallas. Recorded 213 tackles, 37 passes defended, four interceptions, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries.

➤ Originally drafted by the Dallas Cowboys in the second round (60th overall) of the 2017 NFL Draft.

➤ Played four seasons at Colorado, appearing in 47 games with 42 starts and tallying 35 passes defended, three interceptions, five forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries.

➤ He is a native of San Jose, Calif.

83 - WR TYLER BOYD

6-2 | 203 | 9th NFL Season | Pittsburgh

Previous Team: Cincinnati Bengals

➤ Signed by the Titans as a free agent after spending the first eight seasons of his career with the Cincinnati Bengals.

➤ With the Bengals, he played in 120 games with 77 starts during his time in Cincinnati, plus an additional seven postseason contests with six starts. His production at the Bengals included 513 career receptions for 6,000 yards and 31 touchdowns. He departed Cincinnati ranked fourth in franchise history in receptions and seventh in receiving yards.

➤ From 2016 through 2023, he ranked first in the NFL in receptions (390), receiving yards (4,813) and first downs (233) among wide receivers from the slot formation, per Next Gen Stats.

➤ In 2023, Boyd ranked second on Cincinnati's offense with 67 receptions and 667 receiving yards, including two touchdown grabs. It was his sixth consecutive season with a minimum of 58 receptions and 667 receiving yards, and he was one of only nine NFL players to do so each year from 2018 through 2023. Boyd appeared in all but four contests during that six-year stretch.

➤ Boyd was selected in the second round (55th overall) of the 2016 NFL Draft.

➤ A native of Clairton, Pa., Boyd attended the University of Pittsburgh, where he played three seasons (2013-15) and was named first-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference in each of his final two seasons.

53 - OL SAAHDIQ CHARLES

6-3 | 322 | 5th NFL Season | Louisiana State

Previous Team: Washington Commanders

Pronunciation: suh-DEEK

➤ Joined the Titans as a free agent after spending the his first four seasons with the Washington Commanders.

➤ A fourth-round pick of Washington in the 2020 NFL Draft, Charles has played in 35 games with 18 starts over the past four seasons. He was named the starter at left guard in Washington last season, but played in only 11 games with 10 starts due to a calf injury that resulted in him being placed on injured reserve.

➤ Positional teammates with Titans center Lloyd Cushenberry III in college, Charles helped anchor the offensive line for a LSU Tiger team that went undefeated and won the College Football Playoff National Championship in 2019.

➤ Charles is a native of Jackson, Miss.



2024 VETERANS ADDED UNDER RAN CARTHON

64 - T GERON CHRISTIAN SR.

6-5 | 315 | 7th NFL Season | Louisville

Previous Team: Cleveland Browns

Name Pronunciation: "JAIR-en"

- Signed by the Titans as a free agent on June 12, 2024.
- Prior to arriving in Tennessee, he totaled six seasons and 58 games (25 starts) with Washington (2018-20), Houston (2021, 2023), Kansas City (2022) and Cleveland (2023). He started 24 games at left tackle during that time.
- In 2023, he started nine games for the Browns at left tackle.
- He entered the NFL as a third-round selection by Washington in 2018 NFL Draft.
- A native of Ocala, Fla., Christian registered 39 starts for Louisville at left tackle.

79 - C LLOYD CUSHENBERRY III

6-4 | 315 | 5th NFL Season | Louisiana State

Previous Team: Denver Broncos

- Played his first four seasons with the Broncos. Started all 57 games in his pro career including all 17 games in the 2023 season.
- Cushenberry allowed one sack in 647 pass-blocking snaps in 2023. His 14 pressures allowed ranked second fewest for any center playing at least 15 games, per Warren Sharp of SharpAnalysis.
- Played four seasons at Louisiana State (2016-19). Started 28 of 39 total games played and contributed to the Tigers undefeated national championship season in 2019.
- He is a native of Carville, La.

69 - DL SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY

6-4 | 310 | 6th NFL Season | Rutgers

Previous Team: San Francisco 49ers

- Joined the Titans as an unrestricted free agent after spending the 2023 season with the Los Angeles Chargers and San Francisco 49ers.
- He has appeared in 71 career games, tallying 205 tackles, 11 sacks, five passes defended and one interception.
- After being drafted by the Los Angeles Rams in 2018, Joseph-Day started all 16 games in 2019 and 2020. Played in the Rams' Super Bowl LVI victory.
- Signed with the Chargers in 2022 and started 30 games for the team.
- Signed with the 49ers late in the 2023 season and contributed to a San Francisco team that went to Super Bowl LVIII.
- Played five seasons at Rutgers, where he amassed 90 total tackles, 3.5 sacks, two passes defended, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery.
- He is a native of Stroudsburg, Pa.

56 - LB KENNETH MURRAY JR.

6-2 | 241 | 5th NFL Season | Oklahoma

Previous Team: Los Angeles Chargers

- Joined the Titans after spending four years (2020-23) with the Los Angeles Chargers. Murray has played in 59 games with 53 starts and recorded 321 tackles with five sacks and 10 passes defended. He's also forced a fumble and notched two interceptions.
- In 2023, started 15 games and tied his career high with 107 tackles and seven tackles for loss. He also set a career high with three sacks.
- He was a first-round selection (23rd overall) by the Chargers in the 2020 NFL Draft.
- At Oklahoma, he earned first-team All-Big 12 recognition and was a semifinalist in 2019 for the Bednarik and Butkus awards. Finished his Sooners career tied for 11th in career tackles (335) and eighth among linebackers in sacks (9.5) in school history.
- He is a native of Missouri City, Texas.

20 - RB TONY POLLARD

6-0 | 209 | 6th NFL Season | Memphis

Previous Team: Dallas Cowboys

- Played 79 games with 23 starts in five seasons (2019-23) with the Dallas Cowboys. He totaled 3,621 rushing yards and 23 touchdowns on 762

carries, and he added 176 receptions for 1,319 yards through the air and five receiving touchdowns. Pollard also returned 63 kickoffs, including one for a score.

- In 2023, his first season as the lead running back in Dallas, Pollard started all 17 games for the first time in his career and led the team with 1,005 rushing yards on a career-high 252 carries (4.0 avg.) with six touchdowns.
- In 2022, he set career marks with 193 carries for 1,007 yards and nine scores, averaging 5.2 yards-per-carry to rank third in the NFL and earn his first Pro Bowl nod.
- Drafted by the Cowboys in the fourth round (128th overall) of the 2019 NFL Draft.
- At Memphis, played in 40 games at running back and wide receiver. Amassed 2,233 offensive yards and 18 touchdowns on 243 total touches. Also returned 87 kicks, averaging 30 yards per attempt and scoring seven touchdowns (tied NCAA record).
- He is a native of Memphis, Tenn.

0 - WR CALVIN RIDLEY

6-1 | 190 | 6th NFL Season | Alabama

Previous Team: Jacksonville Jaguars

- Joined the Titans as a free agent after spending the 2023 campaign with the Jacksonville Jaguars.
- In 2023, Ridley totaled 1,016 yards and eight touchdowns after just under two calendar years removed from playing. He missed the entire 2022 campaign and appeared in five games in 2021.
- Originally drafted by the Falcons with the 26th overall pick of the 2018 NFL Draft. He spent four seasons (2018-21) in Atlanta, recording 3,342 yards on 248 receptions and scoring 28 touchdowns.
- During a three-year career at Alabama, Ridley compiled 224 receptions for 2,781 yards and 19 touchdowns, finishing in the top three in school history in each category.
- He is a native of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

11 - QB MASON RUDOLPH

6-5 | 235 | 7th NFL Season | Oklahoma State

Previous Team: Pittsburgh Steelers

- Joined the Titans as a free agent after spending his first six seasons with the Pittsburgh Steelers.
- In 21 games played, he has started at quarterback 13 times, throwing for 3,085 yards and 19 touchdowns with a completion percentage of 63.5.
- In 2023, Rudolph started three games, throwing for 719 yards and three touchdowns. He started Pittsburgh's playoff game at Buffalo.
- In 2019, in relief of the injured Ben Roethlisberger, he went 5-3 as the starter while throwing for 1,765 yards and 13 touchdowns in 10 total games played.
- Originally drafted by the Steelers in the third round (76th overall) of the 2018 NFL Draft.
- In four seasons at Oklahoma State (2014-17), led the Cowboys to a 32-9 record as a starter to become the winningest quarterback in school history. His 13,618 career passing yards ranked fourth in Big-12 history and he was the recipient of the 2017 Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award, awarded to the top upperclassmen quarterback in the country.
- He is a native of Rock Hill, S.C.

38 - CB L'JARIUS SNEED

6-1 | 192 | 5th NFL Season | Louisiana Tech

Previous Team: Kansas City Chiefs

- Acquired by the Titans via trade after four seasons (2020-23) with the Chiefs.
- In 57 career games with the Chiefs, he tallied 10 interceptions, 40 passes defended and 6.5 sacks. One of two players to record 10 interceptions and 6.5 sacks from 2020 to 2023 (Harrison Smith).
- With 13 games of postseason experience, Sneed is a two-time Super Bowl champion (LVII, LVIII) and is tied for third in postseason passes defended since 2020 (7).
- Drafted by the Chiefs in the fourth round (138th overall) of the 2020 NFL Draft.
- As a college player at Louisiana Tech, he was named second team All-



2024 VETERANS ADDED UNDER RAN CARTHON

FREE AGENCY UNDER RAN CARTHON



Conference USA as a senior (2019). Played safety and cornerback in 51 collegiate games, recording 177 tackles, eight interceptions and 19 passed defensed.

➤ He is a native of Maiden, La.

84 - TE NICK VANNETT

6-5 | 257 | 9th NFL Season | Ohio State

Previous Team: Los Angeles Chargers

- Signed by the Titans as a free agent on May 13, 2024.
- Arrived in Tennessee with eight years of NFL experience after being selected by the Seattle Seahawks in the third round of the 2016 NFL Draft.
- Remained with the Seahawks until being traded to the Pittsburgh Steelers during the 2019 season. He later spent time with the Denver Broncos (2020), New Orleans Saints (2021-22), New York Giants (2022), Houston Texans (2023) and most recently the Los Angeles Chargers (2023).
- In 94 career games from 2016 through 2023, he logged 43 starts and totaled 91 receptions for 877 yards and six touchdowns.
- After spending the 2023 preseason with the Texans, he began the regular season on the Chargers practice squad before eventually being elevated to the 53-man roster to serve primarily as a blocking tight end and special teams contributor. In eight games, he recorded five starts and caught one pass for three yards.
- A native of Westerville, Ohio, he appeared in 53 games during a four-year career at Ohio State (2012-15). He was a member of the Buckeyes' 2014 College Football Playoff National Championship team.

72 - OL LEROY WATSON IV

6-5 | 311 | 3rd NFL Season | Texas San Antonio

Previous Team: Cleveland Browns

- Acquired by the Titans via trade after spending the 2023 campaign with the Browns.
- Played in seven games in 2023 after spending his rookie season on the Atlanta Falcons practice squad.
- Initially signed by the Falcons as an undrafted free agent following the 2022 NFL Draft.
- Played tight end at the University of Texas at San Antonio. In 37 games, he recorded 25 receptions for 297 yards and two touchdowns. Began his career at Hutchinson (Kansas) Community College.
- He is a native of Snellville, Ga.

2024

Free Agents Signed	Former Team
S Jamal Adams	Seattle
CB Chidobe Awuzie	Cincinnati
WR Tyler Boyd	Cincinnati
OL Saahdiq Charles	Washington
T Geron Christian Sr.	Cleveland
C Lloyd Cushenberry III	Denver
DL Sebastian Joseph-Day	San Francisco
LB Kenneth Murray Jr.	L.A. Chargers
RB Tony Pollard	Dallas
WR Calvin Ridley	Jacksonville
QB Mason Rudolph	Pittsburgh
TE Nick Vannett	L.A. Chargers

Free Agents Lost	New Team
LB Azeez Al-Shaair	Houston
DL Denico Autry	Houston
C Aaron Brewer	Miami
S Terrell Edmunds	Jacksonville
CB Kristian Fulton	L.A. Chargers
OLB Trevis Gipson	Jacksonville
RB Derrick Henry	Baltimore
T Chris Hubbard	San Francisco
WR Chris Moore	Arizona
CB Sean Murphy-Bunting	Arizona
OL Calvin Throckmorton	Denver
S K'Von Wallace	Seattle

2023

Free Agents Signed	Former Team
LB Azeez Al-Shaair	San Francisco
OL Daniel Brunskill	San Francisco
OL Andre Dillard	Philadelphia
LB Luke Gifford	Dallas
WR DeAndre Hopkins	Arizona
DT Jaleel Johnson	Atlanta
OLB Arden Key	Jacksonville
WR Chris Moore	Houston
CB Sean Murphy-Bunting	Tampa Bay
LB Ben Niemann	Arizona
TE Trevon Wesco	Chicago

Free Agents Lost	New Team
OLB Tarell Basham	Cincinnati
T Le'Raven Clark	Pittsburgh
LB Dylan Cole	Chicago
WR Chris Conley	San Francisco
T Dennis Daley	Arizona
G Nate Davis	Chicago
QB Joshua Dobbs	Cleveland
DE Mario Edwards Jr.	Seattle
TE Austin Hooper	Las Vegas
DB Lonnie Johnson Jr.	New Orleans
LB David Long Jr.	Miami
DT Kevin Strong	Arizona
DE DeMarcus Walker	Chicago

TITANS DRAFTS UNDER RAN CARTHON

2024				
Rd.	Pick	Player	Pos.	College
1	7	JC Latham	T	Alabama
2	38	T'Vondre Sweat	NT	Texas
3	71	(Traded to Arizona)		
4	106	Cedric Gray	LB	North Carolina
5a	142	(Traded to Carolina)		
5b	146	Jarvis Brownlee Jr.	CB	Louisville
6	182	Jha'Quan Jackson	WR	Tulane
7a	221	(Traded to Kansas City)		
7b	227	(Traded to Cleveland)		
7c	242	James Williams	LB	Miami (Fla.)
7d	252	Jaylen Harrell	OLB	Michigan

2023				
Rd.	Pick	Player	Pos.	College
1	11	Peter Skoronski	OL	Northwestern
2a	33	Will Levis	QB	Kentucky
2b	41	(Traded to Arizona)		
3a	72	(Traded to Arizona)		
3b	81	Tyjae Spears	RB	Tulane
4	110	(Traded to Atlanta)		
5	147	Josh Whyle	TE	Cincinnati
6a	186	Jaelyn Duncan	OL	Maryland
6b	189	(Traded to L.A. Rams)		
7	228	Colton Dowell	WR	Tennessee-Martin

Draft Notes

General Manager: Ran Carthon

- 3 – Pick traded to Arizona in 2023 (see 2023, 2a)
- 5a – Pick traded to Carolina in 2022 for 7a and OL Dennis Daley
- 5b, 6 – Picks and S Terrell Edmunds acquired (6 reacquired; see 7c) from Philadelphia in 2023 for S Kevin Byard
- 7a – Pick and OL Dennis Daley acquired from Carolina in 2022 for 5a; traded to Kansas City in 2024 (see 7d)
- 7b – Pick traded to Cleveland in 2024 for T Leroy Watson
- 7c – Pick and DB Ugo Amadi acquired from Philadelphia in 2022 for 6 (see 5b)
- 7d – Pick and CB L'Jarius Sneed acquired from Kansas City in 2024 for 7a and a third-round pick in 2025

Draft Notes

General Manager: Ran Carthon

- 2a, 3b – Picks acquired from Arizona for 2b, 3a and a third-round pick in 2024
- 4 – Pick traded to Atlanta in 2021 (see 2022, 2b)
- 6a – Pick acquired from Atlanta in 2021 (see 2022, 2b)
- 6b – Pick traded to L.A. Rams in 2022 for WR Robert Woods

RECENT TITANS TRADE HISTORY

2024 TRADES

Trade Date/Teams	Compensation	Overall	Player Selected	Note
1. March 29, 2024				
Tennessee Receives:	Player: CB L'Jarius Sneed			
	Draft Choice: Round 7, 2024	#252	OLB Jaylen Harrell	
Kansas City Receives:	Draft Choice: Round 7, 2024	#221	(T Travis Clayton)	Pick originally from Carolina; traded to Buffalo
	Draft Choice: Round 3, 2025			
2. April 12, 2024				
Tennessee Receives:	Player: T Leroy Watson			
Cleveland Receives:	Draft Choice: Round 7, 2024	#227	CB Myles Harden	

2023 TRADES

Trade Date/Teams	Compensation	Overall	Player Selected	Note
1. April 28, 2023 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice: Round 2, 2023	#33	QB Will Levis	Pick originally from Houston
	Draft Choice: Round 3, 2023	#81	RB Tyjae Spears	Pick originally from Detroit
Arizona Receives:	Draft Choice: Round 2, 2023	#41	OLB B.J. Ojulari	
	Draft Choice: Round 3, 2023	#72	DB Garrett Williams	
	Draft Choice: Round 3, 2024	#71	G Isaiah Adams	
2. Aug. 29, 2023				
Tennessee Receives:	Player: K Nick Folk			
New England Receives:	Draft Choice: Round 7, 2025			
3. Oct. 23, 2023				
Tennessee Receives:	Player: S Terrell Edmunds			
	Draft Choice: Round 5, 2024	#146	CB Jarvis Brownlee Jr.	Pick originally from Minnesota
	Draft Choice: Round 6, 2024	#182	WR Jha'Quan Jackson	Tennessee's original pick reacquired
Philadelphia Receives:	Player: S Kevin Byard			



RECENT TITANS TRADE HISTORY

2022 TRADES

Trade Date/Teams	Compensation	Overall	Player Selected	Note
1. March 23, 2022				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:		WR Robert Woods	
L.A. Rams Receive:	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2023	#189 OLB Ochaun Mathis	
2. April 28, 2022 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 1, 2022	#18 WR Treyton Burks	Pick originally from New Orleans
	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2022	#101 (TE Jeremy Ruckert)	Pick originally a New Orleans compensatory selection; traded to NY Jets
Philadelphia Receives:	Player:		WR A.J. Brown	
3. April 28, 2022 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 2, 2022	#35 CB Roger McCreary	
	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2022	#69 OL Nicholas Petit-Frere	
	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2022	#163 WR Kyle Philips	Pick originally from Pittsburgh
N.Y. Jets Receive:	Draft Choice:	Round 1, 2022	#26 OLB Jermaine Johnson	
	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2022	#101 TE Jeremy Ruckert	Pick originally a New Orleans compensatory selection
4. April 29, 2022 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2022	#86 QB Malik Willis	
Las Vegas Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2022	#90 G Dylan Parham	
	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2022	#169 (RB Ty Chandler)	Pick traded to Minnesota
5. Aug. 17, 2022				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:		S Tyree Gillespie	
Las Vegas Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2024		Trade conditions not met
6. Aug. 24, 2022				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:		DB Ugo Amadi	
	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2024	#242 LB James Williams	
Philadelphia Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2024	#182 (WR Jha'Quan Jackson)	Pick reacquired by Tennessee on Oct. 23, 2023
7. Aug. 29, 2022				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:		OL Dennis Daley	
	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2024	#221 (T Travis Clayton)	Pick traded to Buffalo through Kansas City
Carolina Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2024	#142 (WR Anthony Gould)	Pick traded to Indianapolis

2021 TRADES

Trade Date/Teams	Compensation	Overall	Player Selected	Note
1. March 17, 2021				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2021	#232 (DT Phil Hoskins)	Pick originally from Atlanta; traded to Carolina
Miami Receives:	Player:		T Isaiah Wilson	
	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2022	#247 QB Skylar Thompson	
2. April 30, 2021 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2021	#92 ILB Monty Rice	
	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2021	#135 OLB Rashad Weaver	
Green Bay Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2021	#85 WR Amari Rodgers	
3. May 1, 2021 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2021	#109 WR Dez Fitzpatrick	Pick originally from Houston
Carolina Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2021	#126 RB Chuba Hubbard	
	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2021	#166 DB Keith Taylor	
	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2021	#232 DT Phil Hoskins	Pick originally from Atlanta through Miami
4. June 6, 2021				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:		WR Julio Jones	
	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2023	#186 OL Jaelyn Duncan	
Atlanta Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 2, 2022	#58 LB Troy Andersen	
	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2023	#110 (DT Adetomiwa Adebawore)	Pick traded to Indianapolis



RECENT TITANS TRADE HISTORY

2020 TRADES

Trade Date/Teams	Compensation	Overall	Player Selected	Note
1. March 19, 2020				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2020	#237 (CB Thakarius Keyes)	Pick originally from New England; traded to Kansas City
Denver Receives:	Player:	DT Jurrell Casey		
2. April 25, 2020 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2021	#215 S Brady Breeze	Pick originally from New England through Denver
Kansas City Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2020	#237 CB Thakarius Keyes	
3. Oct. 14, 2020				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2021	#185 (LB Nick Niemann)	Pick traded to L.A. Chargers
Jacksonville Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2021	#249 (WR Ben Skowronek)	Pick traded to L.A. Rams
	Player:	OLB Kamalei Correa		
4. Nov. 2, 2020				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:	CB Desmond King II		
L.A. Chargers Receive:	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2021	#185 LB Nick Niemann	Pick originally from Jacksonville

2019 TRADES

Trade Date/Teams	Compensation	Overall	Player Selected	Note
1. March 15, 2019				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:	QB Ryan Tannehill		
	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2019	#188 LB David Long Jr.	
Miami Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2019	#233 RB Chandler Cox	Pick traded to Pittsburgh
	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2020	#135 (G Kevin Dotson)	
2. April 27, 2019 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2019	#116 DB Amani Hooker	Pick originally from Miami through New Orleans
	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2019	#168 OLB D'Andre Walker	Pick originally from New Orleans
N.Y. Jets Receive:	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2019	#121 TE Trevon Wesco	
	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2019	#157 LB Blake Cashman	
3. August 29, 2019				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:	OLB Reggie Gilbert		
Green Bay Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2020	#208 C Jake Hanson	
4. August 31, 2019				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 7, 2020	#224 QB Cole McDonald	
Cleveland Receives:	Player:	WR Taywan Taylor		

2018 TRADES

Trade Date/Teams	Compensation	Overall	Player Selected	Note
1. April 26, 2018 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 1, 2018	#22 LB Rashaan Evans	Pick originally from Kansas City through Buffalo
	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2018	#215 (C Bradley Bozeman)	Pick traded back to Baltimore
Baltimore Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 1, 2018	#25 TE Hayden Hurst	
	Draft Choice:	Round 4, 2018	#125 (DB Avonte Maddox)	Pick traded to Philadelphia
2. April 27, 2018 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 2, 2018	#41 OLB Harold Landry III	
Oakland Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 2, 2018	#57 DT P.J. Hall	
	Draft Choice:	Round 3, 2018	#89 (T Joseph Noteboom)	Pick traded to L.A. Rams
3. April 28, 2018 (Draft Day Trade)				
Tennessee Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2018	#152 DB Dane Cruikshank	
Baltimore Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 5, 2018	#162 WR Jordan Lasley	
	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2018	#215 C Bradley Bozeman	Pick originally from Baltimore
4. August 28, 2018				
Tennessee Receives:	Player:		LB Kamalei Correa	
Baltimore Receives:	Draft Choice:	Round 6, 2019	#191 (DB Marcus Epps)	Pick traded to Minnesota



HEAD COACH BRIAN CALLAHAN

[The OTP with Brian Callahan: Part I](#) | [Part II](#)

[Jim Wyatt: Callahan Follows in His Father's Footsteps](#)

[Jim Wyatt: Callahan Feels Like He Found the Perfect Fit With Titans](#)

[Video: Brian Callahan's Introductory Press Conference](#)



Brian Callahan was named head coach of the Titans on Jan. 24, 2024, becoming the 20th head coach in franchise history.

"This is an exciting time for our franchise, and we're thrilled to have Brian as our head coach," said Titans controlling owner **Amy Adams Strunk**. "We went through a thorough candidate search and Brian stood out as the best person to lead our football team. I want to thank the other candidates who were part of this process and wish them well moving forward.

"Brian has a track record of success and a range of experience that has prepared him for this opportunity. His football knowledge and his enthusiasm for the game really stand out, and beyond that, we think his ability to lead will make him the ideal fit for our franchise.

"If you look at his history, Brian has been a part of a Super Bowl winning team (Denver, 2015) and another team that advanced to the Super Bowl (Cincinnati, 2021). He's worked in a variety of dynamic offenses with top-flight quarterbacks. At each step of his career, he's shown the flexibility and intelligence to make an impact.

"During his time with the Bengals, he was trusted with a number of responsibilities—offensive design, quarterback development, a contributor to the free agency and draft processes—and showed the ability to be a resource in all of those areas. As we seek sustained success and pursue a championship, Brian has seen firsthand what that looks like, and he is the right person to lead us there.

"To our fans, thank you for your support and for sticking with us. You deserve a championship team, and we're going to get there. I can't wait for you to get to know Brian and his family."

Callahan arrived in Tennessee with 18 years of coaching experience and 14 years of NFL coaching experience, including the previous five seasons as the offensive coordinator for the Cincinnati Bengals.

During his time in Cincinnati, Callahan served under head coach **Zac Taylor** and was part of two AFC North titles, two AFC Championship appearances and a Super Bowl berth. He also helped guide quarterback

NFL HEAD COACHING CLASS OF 2024

Head Coach	2024 Team	2023 Team
Brian Callahan	Tennessee Titans	Cincinnati Bengals
Dave Canales	Carolina Panthers	Tampa Bay Buccaneers
Jim Harbaugh	Los Angeles Chargers	University of Michigan
Jerod Mayo	New England Patriots	New England Patriots
Mike Macdonald	Seattle Seahawks	Baltimore Ravens
Raheem Morris	Atlanta Falcons	Los Angeles Rams
Antonio Pierce	Las Vegas Raiders	Las Vegas Raiders
Dan Quinn	Washington Commanders	Dallas Cowboys

Joe Burrow from the No. 1 overall draft pick in 2020 to multiple single-season franchise records by his second year and Pro Bowl honors within three years.

Over Callahan's final three seasons in Cincinnati (2021-23), the Bengals offense ranked in the NFL's top 10 in several categories: sixth in scoring (24.9), seventh in passing (250.8 yards per game), seventh in red-zone efficiency (61.5 percent), 10th in third-down percentage (41.0) and sixth in time of possession (31:00).

From the time Burrow entered the NFL in 2020 through the 2023 campaign, he recorded the league's seventh-best passer rating (98.6) and tied for the third-best completion percentage (68.0). His 270.8 passing yards per game in that period ranked fifth.

Additionally, Cincinnati's offense under Callahan featured a trio of 1,000-yard wide receivers in **Ja'Marr Chase** (2021-23), **Tee Higgins** (2021-22) and **Tyler Boyd** (2019). Chase quickly emerged as one of the NFL's top wide receivers after being drafted in the first round in 2021. He earned three consecutive Pro Bowl nods and became the eighth player in NFL history to reach 1,000 receiving yards in each of his first three career seasons, including 1,216 yards on a career-high 100 receptions in 2023. Boyd's statistical highlights included 1,046 receiving yards in 2019, while Higgins contributed 1,091 yards in 2021 and 1,029 yards in 2022.

Bengals running back **Joe Mixon** exceeded 1,000 scrimmage yards four times in five seasons with Callahan as his offensive coordinator. From 2019 through 2023, he joined **Christian McCaffrey** and **Aaron Jones** as the NFL's only players with at least 4,500 rushing yards (4,618) and 1,500 receiving yards (1,556). Mixon was named to the Pro Bowl in 2021.

In 2023, Burrow was limited to 10 total games due to multiple injuries. Backup **Jake Browning** stepped into the lineup, and in the first action of his career, he registered a season passer rating of 98.4—qualifying as the seventh-best number in the NFL.

In 2022, the Bengals ranked seventh in the NFL in points per game (26.1), eighth in total offense (360.5 yards per game) and fifth in passing offense (265.0). Burrow earned his first career Pro Bowl selection while setting single-season franchise records for completions (414) and touchdown passes (35). The third-year signal caller also placed fifth in the NFL with 4,475 passing yards. The team's new-look offensive line came together during the season and did not allow more than two sacks in any of the final eight games of the regular season.

En route to an appearance in Super Bowl LVI, the 2021 Bengals ranked seventh in passing offense (259.0 yards per game) and tied for seventh in points per game (27.1). Burrow, after returning from a knee injury suffered in 2020, led the NFL in completion percentage (70.4) and established single-season Bengals records for passing yards (4,611) and passer rating (108.3). Chase was named the AP Offensive Rookie of the Year after posting a team-record 1,455 receiving yards, while Mixon placed third in the NFL in rushing yards (1,205).

In 2020, Callahan helped develop Burrow as a rookie despite facing the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including the cancellation of all in-person NFL offseason programs. Before a knee injury

BRIAN CALLAHAN AT A GLANCE

- Year as Titans head coach: 1
- Year as NFL head coach: 1
- Year as NFL coach: 15

Years	Team	Position
2024	Tennessee Titans	Head Coach
2019-23	Cincinnati Bengals	Offensive Coordinator
2018	Oakland Raiders	Quarterbacks Coach
2016-17	Detroit Lions	Quarterbacks Coach
2015	Denver Broncos	Offensive Assistant/ Quarterbacks Coach
2013-14	Denver Broncos	Offensive Assistant
2011-12	Denver Broncos	Offensive Quality Control
2010	Denver Broncos	Coaching Assistant
2008-09	Junipero Serra HS	Offensive Coordinator/ Quarterbacks Coach
2006-07	UCLA	Graduate Assistant
2002-05	UCLA	Quarterback



ended his rookie campaign in Week 11, Burrow's 264 completions were the most ever by an NFL quarterback through his first 10 career games, while his 2,688 passing yards were fifth.

Callahan joined the Bengals after spending 2018 as the quarterbacks coach for the Oakland Raiders. Under his tutelage, Raiders quarterback **Derek Carr** passed for a then-career-high 4,049 yards and led the AFC with a 68.9 completion percentage.

From 2016 to 2017, Callahan was the quarterbacks coach for the Detroit Lions. Working with **Matthew Stafford**, he helped the veteran finish third in passing yards (4,446) and fourth in passing touchdowns (29) in 2017, while posting a then-career-best 99.3 passer rating. In 2016, Stafford's eight game-winning drives were the most by a quarterback in a season since the 1970 AFL-NFL merger.

Callahan broke into the NFL with the Denver Broncos in 2010 and served in multiple roles for the franchise through 2015. He began as a coaching assistant (2010) before transitioning to offensive quality control coach (2011-12), offensive assistant coach (2013-14) and finally offensive assistant/quarterbacks coach (2015). In 2013, Broncos quarterback **Peyton Manning** won the Associated Press NFL MVP award after completing a league-record 55 touchdown passes. Callahan's tenure in Denver was capped by the team's victory in Super Bowl 50 following the 2015 campaign. Before reaching the NFL, Callahan spent time at his alma mater, UCLA, as a graduate assistant in 2006 and 2007. He then spent two years (2008-09) as the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for Junipero Serra High School in San Mateo, Calif.

As a former walk-on quarterback at UCLA, he appeared in 13 games as a holder on PATs. He earned a bachelor's degree in sociology in 2006 and added a master's in education in 2008.

Born in Champaign, Ill., Callahan attended De La Salle High School in Concord, Calif., where he was a part of the school's national-record 151-game winning streak and a No. 1 national ranking.

He and his wife, Allyson, have a son, Ronan, and a daughter, Norah. He is the son of longtime NFL coach **Bill Callahan**, the current Titans offensive line coach.



2024 TITANS COACHING STAFF

- Brian Callahan **Head Coach**
- Colt Anderson **Special Teams Coordinator**
- Nick Holz **Offensive Coordinator**
- Dennard Wilson **Defensive Coordinator**
- Brian Bell **Assistant Director of Sports Performance**
- Ben Bloom **Outside Linebackers**
- Frank Bush **Linebackers**
- Kylan Butler **Offensive Assistant**
- Bill Callahan **Offensive Line**
- Steve Donatelli **Defensive Assistant**
- Scott Fuchs **Assistant Offensive Line**
- Bo Hardegree **Quarterbacks**
- Chris Harris **Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/
Cornerbacks**
- Steve Jackson **Secondary/Safeties**
- Matt Jones **Offensive Assistant**
- Tom Jones **Assistant to the Head Coach**
- Randy Jordan **Running Backs**
- Anthony Levine Sr. **Assistant Special Teams**
- Lori Locust **Defensive Quality Control**
- Mark Lovat **Assistant Strength and Conditioning**
- Payton McCollum **Assistant Wide Receivers**
- Clinton McMillan **Assistant Defensive Line/Pass Rush
Specialist**
- Justin Outten **Tight Ends**
- Haley Roberts **Sports Performance Assistant**
- Tracy Rucker **Defensive Line**
- John Shaw **Assistant Sports Performance -
Speed Training**
- Luke Stocker **Assistant Tight Ends**
- Grant Thorne **Assistant Strength and Conditioning**
- Tyke Tolbert **Wide Receivers**
- Zac Woodfin** **Director of Sports Performance**

TITANS/OILERS HEAD COACH HISTORY

Head Coach	Years	Won	Lost	Tied	Pct.
Brian Callahan	2024	0	0	0	-
Mike Vrabel	2018-23	56	48	0	.538
Mike Mularkey	2015-17	21	22	0	.488
Ken Whisenhunt	2014-15	3	20	0	.130
Mike Munchak	2011-13	22	26	0	.458
Jeff Fisher	1994-2010	147	126	0	.538
Jack Pardee	1990-94	44	35	0	.556
Jerry Glanville	1985-89	35	35	0	.500
Hugh Campbell	1984-85	8	22	0	.266
Chuck Studley	1983	2	8	0	.200
Ed Biles	1981-83	8	23	0	.258
O.A. "Bum" Phillips	1975-80	59	38	0	.608
Sid Gillman	1973-74	8	15	0	.347
Bill Peterson	1972-73	1	18	0	.052
Ed Hughes	1971	4	9	1	.321
Wally Lemm	1961, 1966-70	38	40	4	.487
Hugh "Bones" Taylor	1965	4	10	0	.285
Sammy Baugh	1964	4	10	0	.285
Frank "Pop" Ivy	1962-63	17	12	0	.586
Lou Rymkus	1960-61	12	7	1	.625

Records include postseason



TITANS 2024 ASSISTANT COACHES

COLT ANDERSON SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR

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- Anderson arrived in Tennessee in 2024 with four years (2020-23) of NFL coaching experience following a nine-year NFL playing career (2009-17) as a safety and special teams standout.
- Prior to joining the Titans, Anderson spent four years as an assistant special teams coach with the Cincinnati Bengals alongside head coach Zac Taylor and assistant head coach/special teams coordinator Darrin Simmons. Current Titans head coach Brian Callahan also served on the staff.
- In 2023, Cincinnati's special teams units ranked in the NFL's top 10 in several categories: 10th in punt return average (10.2 yards per return), eighth in opponent punt return average (7.0 yards per return), second in opponent kickoff return average (17.0) and fifth in opponent net punting average (40.2 yards per punt).
- As a player, Anderson was a rotational safety whose impact was felt most on special teams. Over his nine seasons as an NFL player, he spent time with the Minnesota Vikings, Philadelphia Eagles, Indianapolis Colts and Buffalo Bills. He played in 84 career games (seven starts), and recorded 109 tackles, one interception and two forced fumbles on defense, along with 58 stops on special teams.
- Anderson played collegiately at the University of Montana. He originally joined the Grizzlies' program as a walk-on safety and went on to become a four-time All-Big Sky performer—three times as a safety and once as a special teams player. As a senior in 2008, he set a school record with 129 tackles.



DENNARD WILSON DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

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- Wilson arrived in Tennessee in 2024 with 12 years of NFL coaching experience, including nine seasons leading defensive back units.
- Prior to joining the Titans, Wilson spent the 2023 campaign as the defensive backs coach with the Baltimore Ravens, working with head coach John Harbaugh and defensive coordinator Mike Macdonald. The defense ranked first in points allowed (16.5 per game), sixth overall (301.4 yards allowed per game), sixth in pass defense (191.9 yards per game), first in sacks (60) and third in interceptions (18). Second-year safety Kyle Hamilton earned All-Pro and Pro Bowl honors.
- Before he joined the Ravens, Wilson spent two seasons with the Philadelphia Eagles, where he served as defensive passing game coordinator/defensive backs (2022) and a defensive backs coach (2021). In 2022, the Eagles ranked first in the NFL in pass defense (179.8 yards per game) en route to an appearance in Super Bowl LVII.
- Wilson spent four total seasons (2017-20) with the New York Jets—initially as defensive backs coach (2017-18) and then passing game coordinator/defensive backs (2019-20). While there he oversaw the development of safeties Jamal Adams and Marcus Maye.
- Wilson's initial NFL coaching job was with the St. Louis/Los Angeles Rams under head coach Jeff Fisher. He began his tenure with the Rams as a defensive quality control coach (2012-14) and then spent two years as the defensive backs coach (2015-16).
- From 2008 to 2011, he was employed by the Chicago Bears as a pro scout.
- The Upper Marlboro, Md., native was a three-year starter and team captain as a corner and safety at the University of Maryland. He entered the NFL in 2004 as a rookie free agent with Washington.



NICK HOLZ OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

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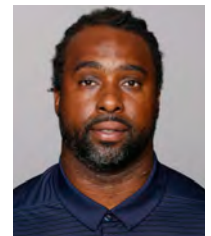
- Holz (pronounced "HOLTS") arrived in Tennessee in 2024 with 11 years of NFL coaching experience and 16 total years of coaching experience.
- He joined the Titans after spending the 2023 campaign as the passing game coordinator for the Jacksonville Jaguars. Working in an offense that featured quarterback Trevor Lawrence, he helped the unit rank ninth in passing (242.7 yards per game) and 13th in points scored (22.2 points per game). Calvin Ridley posted 1,016 receiving yards and eight touchdowns, while Evan Engram led all NFL tight ends with 114 receptions for 963 yards.
- Before his stint in Jacksonville, Holz was the offensive coordinator for UNLV in 2022, which followed 10 campaigns with the Oakland/Las Vegas Raiders (2012-21). With the Raiders, he served in a variety of roles on offense, mostly focused on wide receivers. He served on the staff of three different Raiders head coaches and worked with a notable list of offensive minds, including Greg Knapp, Greg Olson, Bill Musgrave and Jon Gruden.
- Prior to joining the Raiders, Holz was an assistant at Stanford under head coach Jim Harbaugh (2008-10) and David Shaw (2011). As an assistant quarterbacks coach, he helped Andrew Luck earn first-team All-American honors and finish as the runner-up in Heisman Trophy voting two times.
- Holz began his collegiate coaching career in 2007 at Nebraska, where he served as offensive quality control coach and video intern for the Cornhuskers under head coach Bill Callahan.
- At the University of Colorado, Holz was a three-year letter winner (2004-06) as a wide receiver and holder.



BRIAN BELL ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SPORTS PERFORMANCE

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- Bell joined the Titans in 2018 after spending three seasons with the Houston Texans as assistant strength and conditioning coach.
- After originally joining the Titans as a strength and conditioning assistant, he was named sports performance coordinator in 2022 and then promoted to his current title of assistant director of sports performance in 2023.
- He was a member of back-to-back AFC South Division Championships in his first two campaigns in Houston.
- Bell was an assistant strength and conditioning coach at Penn State from 2012-13 and the head football strength and conditioning coach at his high school alma mater, DeMatha Catholic, in Hyattsville, Md., from 2011-12.
- Bell was a tight end and fullback at Kent State from 2002-06. In 2007, Bell signed with the Washington Commanders as an undrafted free agent and served on the team's practice squad.



BEN BLOOM OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

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- Bloom arrived in Tennessee in 2024 with 15 years of experience coaching in the NFL. He was hired after spending the previous four campaigns with the Cleveland Browns.
- During his most recent stint with the Browns, Bloom served as senior defensive assistant in 2020, run game coordinator in 2021 and 2022, and defensive line coach in 2023. He broke into the NFL with the Browns from 2009 to 2010 and then worked nine seasons on the Dallas Cowboys staff (2011-19) before heading back to Cleveland.
- In 2023, Bloom worked with Browns defensive end Myles Garrett, who was named the AP Defensive Player of the Year after leading the Browns



TITANS 2024 ASSISTANT COACHES

and tying for seventh in the NFL with 14 sacks. As a unit, the Browns led the NFL in total defense (270.2 opponent yards per game), passing defense (164.7) and third-down defense (29.1 percent).

- Bloom was the linebackers coach for the Cowboys in his final two seasons with the organization (2018-19) and was instrumental in Leighton Vander Esch and Jaylon Smith earning Pro Bowl honors.
- Prior to entering the NFL, Bloom spent four years in the college coaching ranks, lastly as the assistant defensive line coach at Harvard University in 2008. That followed three years (2005-07) as defensive line/graduate assistant at Tufts University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in history in 2005 and master's in education in 2008.
- A native of Wellesley, Mass., Bloom was a three-year letter winner on the Tufts offensive line.

FRANK BUSH LINEBACKERS

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- Bush rejoined the Titans as linebackers coach in 2024, beginning his third coaching stint with the franchise that also drafted him as a player in 1985. Prior to 2024, he spent 39 total NFL seasons as a player (1985-86), scout (1987-91) and coach (1992-present).
- From 2021 to 2023, Bush coached the Atlanta Falcons linebackers. In his final season there, his platoon was part of an overall unit that ranked eighth in passing defense (202.9 opponent yards per game), third in third-down efficiency (33.8 percent) and fourth in red-zone efficiency (45.3 touchdown percent).
- Prior to joining Atlanta's staff, Bush spent two seasons (2019-20) with the New York Jets as assistant head coach defense/linebackers coach and was promoted to defensive coordinator for the final four games of the 2020 season.
- Prior to joining the Jets, Bush served two seasons with the Dolphins as the team's assistant head coach/linebackers coach (2017-18).
- Returning to the Oilers/Titans organization in 2011, Bush spent two seasons in Tennessee (2011-12) and helped a trio of young linebackers—Akeem Ayers, Colin McCarthy and Zach Brown—earn starting roles.
- Bush also coached for the St. Louis/Los Angeles Rams (2013-16), Arizona Cardinals (2004-06) and Denver Broncos (1995-03). In his time with Denver, Bush earned two Super Bowl rings (XXXII and XXXIII).
- The Athens, Ga., native was a three-year starter at North Carolina State and was selected in the fifth round by the Oilers in the 1985 NFL Draft. A starter at linebacker as a rookie, Bush earned All-Rookie honors before an injury in his second season and subsequent diagnosis of a narrow spinal canal forced an early end to his playing career.
- Following his on-field career with the Oilers, he joined the team as a college scout for five seasons (1987-91) before transitioning to the coaching staff, initially as the team's linebackers coach (1992) and then as the defensive quality control/linebackers coach (1993-94).



KYLAN BUTLER OFFENSIVE ASSISTANT

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- Butler joined the Titans for the 2021 season as part of the NFL Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowship and earned a full-time role in 2022. He previously spent seven years coaching at the collegiate level.
- Before arriving in Tennessee, he spent two seasons coaching wide receivers at Morehead State University. He also served as co-special teams coordinator in 2019 and was promoted to associate head coach for 2020-21. After the fall 2020 season was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Butler helped coach the team in its games during the spring of 2021.
- He spent two years at Glenville (W.Va.) State College, first as running backs coach in 2017 and then as offensive coordinator/wide receivers coach in 2018.
- Butler began his coaching career in 2014 at his alma mater, the University of Arizona, and spent three total seasons as an offensive



graduate assistant.

- A native of Antioch, Calif., he appeared in 35 career games as a running back and on special teams for the Arizona Wildcats.

BILL CALLAHAN OFFENSIVE LINE

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- Callahan was hired by the Titans as offensive line coach in 2024, arriving with 46 years of coaching experience, including 25 years in the NFL.
- He spent a total of six seasons as a head coach with the Oakland Raiders (2002-03) and the University of Nebraska (2004-07), in addition to part of one season as an interim head coach with the Washington Commanders (2019).
- Prior to joining the Titans, Callahan spent 22 seasons coaching offensive lines and seven years as an offensive coordinator. Those teams went to the playoffs 11 times. He helped his side of the ball finish with the No. 1 ranked rushing offense in 2000 (Raiders) and 2009 (Jets), as well as the top ranked passing offense in 2002 (Raiders). In the process, 14 offensive linemen under his tutelage were selected to a total of 35 Pro Bowls.
- When he joined the Titans, it marked the first time that he and his son, Titans head coach Brian Callahan, were employed by the same organization.
- Before venturing to Tennessee, he spent four years as the offensive line coach for the Cleveland Browns (2020-23). During that span, the Browns qualified for the playoffs twice and ranked third in the NFL with an average of 139.6 rushing yards per game.
- Callahan was on Washington's coaching staff from 2015 to 2019, working mostly with the offensive line and serving as interim head coach for the final 11 games in 2019.
- Callahan spent six seasons with the Oakland Raiders from 1998 to 2003, first as offensive coordinator before becoming the 13th head coach in Raiders history in 2002. The 2002 squad set a franchise record for total offense with an NFL-best 6,237 yards and led the NFL in passing yards (4,689) en route to an appearance in Super Bowl XXXVII. He became the fourth rookie head coach in NFL history to earn a Super Bowl berth.
- His time in the NFL also includes stints with the Dallas Cowboys (2012-14), New York Jets (2008-11) and Philadelphia Eagles (1995-97).
- Callahan served as head coach at the University of Nebraska from 2004 to 2007. He led the Cornhuskers to a Big 12 Conference Championship Game appearance in 2006 and two bowl invitations in his four seasons.
- His collegiate coaching experience also involved stops at Illinois (1980-86), Northern Arizona (1987-88), Southern Illinois (1989) and Wisconsin (1990-94).
- The Chicago, Ill., native started at quarterback for three seasons (1975-77) at Illinois Benedictine (Iisle, Ill.), where he earned honorable-mention All-America honors in 1976 and 1977.



STEVE DONATELL DEFENSIVE ASSISTANT

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- Donatell arrived in Tennessee in 2024 with two prior seasons coaching in the NFL.
- He spent the 2023 campaign with the Miami Dolphins as a defensive assistant. He was part of a Miami Dolphins staff that helped the Dolphins finish the season with a No. 10 overall defensive ranking (318.3 opponent yards per game) and a ranking of seventh against the run (97.1). The Dolphins' 56 sacks amounted to the third-highest mark in the league.
- Donatell began his NFL coaching career as a defensive quality control assistant with the Minnesota Vikings in 2022. The Vikings tied for eighth in the NFL in takeaways (25) and tied for 10th in interceptions (15).
- Prior to Minnesota, Donatell was in the college coaching ranks for four years, most recently as a defensive quality control analyst at Stanford University for three seasons (2019-21) under head coach David Shaw.
- Donatell's first coaching job was in 2018 at the University of Tennessee



TITANS 2024 ASSISTANT COACHES

at Chattanooga, where he coached outside linebackers.

- A native of Lone Tree, Colo., Donatell began his collegiate playing career at Wake Forest playing linebacker and tight end. In 2016, he was a graduate transfer tight end at Western Kentucky University.
- His father, Ed Donatell, is a longtime defensive coordinator who began coaching in the NFL in 1990. Steve's brother, Tom, is the defensive backs coach for the Washington Commanders.

SCOTT FUCHS

ASSISTANT OFFENSIVE LINE

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- Fuchs (pronunciation rhymes with "books") was hired by Tennessee in 2024 as assistant offensive line coach after spending 30 seasons coaching at the collegiate level.
- During his eight seasons prior to jumping to the NFL level, his teams went to a total of six bowl games: 2016 and 2017 at Wyoming; 2019 and 2020 at Buffalo; and 2022 and 2023 at Kansas.
- Fuchs arrived in Tennessee after serving on the University of Kansas coaching staff from 2021 to 2023. During his time with the Jayhawks, his pupils earned a total of seven All-Big 12 selections.
- In 2023, Kansas finished 8-4 to secure a winning record for the first time since 2008. The Jayhawks garnered a second consecutive bowl berth (Guaranteed Rate Bowl) for only the second time in program history.
- In 2022, Fuchs assisted as the Jayhawks qualified for a bowl game (AutoZone Liberty Bowl) for the first time since 2008 and reached the Associated Press Top 25 for the first time since 2009.
- Prior to joining the Jayhawks staff, Fuchs spent two years (2019-20) at Buffalo. His stops also included time at Wyoming (2014-18), North Dakota State (2009-13, 1994-96), Southern Illinois (2008), Grand Valley State (2007), Nebraska Omaha (2003-06), Minnesota Crookston (2000-02), Wisconsin-Eau Claire (1999) and Valley City State (1997-98).
- A native of Minot, N.D., he was a student athlete at North Dakota State and was named to the 1993 Kodak/American Football Coaches Association first-team All-America squad as a senior offensive guard.



BO HARDEGREE

QUARTERBACKS

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- Hardegree was hired by the Titans in 2024 after spending two campaigns (2022-23) with the Las Vegas Raiders.
- A Jackson, Tenn., native and University of Tennessee product, Hardegree arrived at the Titans with 16 total years of coaching experience and 10 seasons coaching in the NFL.
- Hardegree joined the Raiders as quarterbacks coach in 2022 and was promoted to interim offensive coordinator for the final nine games of 2023. Under Hardegree's tutelage as an offensive coordinator, fourth-round rookie Aidan O'Connell passed for 1,905 yards and 11 touchdowns while posting the third-best passer rating (83.9) among all qualifying 2023 rookies.
- With the Patriots in 2021, Hardegree played a key role in the development of Patriots first-round pick Mac Jones, who led all rookie quarterbacks with 3,801 passing yards and 22 touchdowns.
- Prior to joining the Patriots, Hardegree logged two years with the New York Jets (2019-20) and three seasons as quarterbacks coach of the Miami Dolphins (2016-18).
- After beginning his coaching career at Duke (2008-10), he was on the staff at Louisiana State (2011-13) before his initial NFL stints with the Denver Broncos (2014) and Chicago Bears (2015).
- At the University of Tennessee, Hardegree played quarterback and was a member of SEC Eastern Division championship teams in 2004 and 2007.



CHRIS HARRIS

DEFENSIVE PASS GAME COORDINATOR/ CORNERBACKS

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- Harris was hired in 2023 as defensive pass game coordinator/cornerbacks coach.
- He arrived in Tennessee with nine previous seasons in the NFL as a coach in addition to eight NFL seasons as a player.
- In his first season with the Titans, the defense tied for the eighth-fewest passing touchdowns allowed (20) and yielded the fifth-fewest overall opponent touchdowns (33). The defense also ranked first in the NFL in red-zone efficiency (37.7 percent).
- From 2020 to 2022, he was the defensive backs coach for the Washington Commanders.
- From 2020-22, the Commanders defense ranked eighth in the NFL in passing yards allowed (213.1 yards per game) and fourth in total yards allowed (323.4 yards per game).
- Prior to his time in Washington, Harris spent four seasons (2016-19) with the Los Angeles Chargers as assistant defensive backs coach.
- He began his coaching career as a defensive quality control coach for the Chicago Bears from 2013 to 2014.
- Harris played eight seasons at safety with Chicago (2005-06, 2010-11), Carolina (2007-08), Detroit (2011) and Jacksonville (2012). He earned Associated Press second-team All-Pro honors in 2010 with the Bears. His career totals included 16 interceptions in 101 games (88 starts).
- Harris was selected by the Bears in the sixth round of the 2005 NFL Draft following his collegiate playing career at Louisiana-Monroe.



STEVE JACKSON

SECONDARY/SAFETIES

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- Jackson returned to the Titans in 2024 as secondary/safeties coach after previously serving on the staff as assistant secondary coach in 2016 and 2017.
- A former Houston Oilers draft pick, Jackson played nine seasons in the NFL—all with the Oilers/Titans from 1991 to 1999.
- Prior to rejoining the Tennessee coaching staff, Jackson spent two seasons with the Atlanta Falcons (2022-23). He began his tenure in Atlanta as a senior offensive assistant and transitioned to coaching the secondary in 2023. He was part of a staff in 2023 that helped the Falcons place eighth in passing defense (202.9 opponent yards per game), third in third-down efficiency (33.8 percent) and fourth in red-zone efficiency (45.3 touchdown percent). Safety Jessie Bates III was selected to the Pro Bowl and earned second-team AP All-Pro honors.
- Jackson served as the secondary/cornerbacks coach for the Cincinnati Bengals in 2020 and 2021.
- His coaching stops also include time with the Buffalo Bills (2001-03), Washington Commanders (2004-11), Detroit Lions (2013) and New York Jets (2018-19).
- Jackson recorded 14 interceptions and nine sacks in his NFL career. In his final season, he helped the Titans make an appearance in Super Bowl XXXIV.
- The Houston, Texas, native was a four-year starter at Purdue University.



MATT JONES

OFFENSIVE ASSISTANT

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- Jones joined the Titans in 2023 as an offensive line assistant before taking the title of offensive assistant in 2024.
- Prior to arriving at the Titans, he spent four seasons (2019-22) at the University of Tennessee-Martin as the team's run game coordinator and tight end/offensive tackle coach.
- He helped the UT-Martin Skyhawks to back-to-back Ohio Valley



TITANS 2024 ASSISTANT COACHES

Conference titles in 2021 and 2022.

- Prior to joining UT-Martin, Jones had stops as an offensive line coach at Texas Southern (2017-18), Jackson State (2016), Tulane (2014-15), Villanova (tight ends, 2013), Avila University (2011-12) and the University of Saint Francis (Illinois) (2009-10).
- A native of Chicago, Ill., Jones attended Eastern Illinois University.

TOM JONES

ASSISTANT TO THE HEAD COACH

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- Jones was hired by Tennessee in 2024 after spending 25 seasons with the Oakland/Las Vegas Raiders.
- During his time with the Raiders, Jones filled multiple roles with a wide range of responsibilities. In his final two seasons with the organization (2022-23), he served as vice president of football operations/assistant to the head coach. He originally joined the Raiders in 1996 as an intern.
- Jones oversaw several areas for the Raiders, including day-to-day football operations, scheduling, the football calendar, CBA compliance, the Bill Walsh Fellowship Program, and communication with players, coaches and other departments. His involvement in coaching through the years included managing the affairs of 10 different head coaches and their respective staffs.
- A Bay Area native, Jones earned a bachelor's degree in political science and criminal justice from Chico State before moving on to the University of San Francisco to obtain a master's degree in sport management.



RANDY JORDAN

RUNNING BACKS

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- Randy Jordan arrived in Tennessee in 2024 with 21 total years of coaching experience in addition to a nine-year NFL playing career as a running back.
- Prior to joining the Titans, Jordan spent 10 seasons (2014-23) as the running backs coach for the Washington Commanders and added the title of senior offensive assistant in 2023.
- The Commanders ranked seventh in the NFL in 2023 with an average of 4.43 rushing yards per attempt. Second-year running back Brian Robinson Jr. surpassed the 1,000-yard scrimmage mark (1,101) for the first time in his career and also led the club with nine total touchdowns.
- Before joining Washington, Jordan spent two years (2012-13) as the running backs coach at his alma mater, the University of North Carolina. Giovanni Bernard produced one of the best seasons in UNC history in 2012, averaging 122.8 rushing yards per game to lead the ACC.
- Jordan coached running backs at Texas A&M for four seasons from 2008 to 2011.
- His first collegiate coaching position was at the University of Nebraska, where he served as the running backs coach for the Cornhuskers under head coach Bill Callahan from 2004 to 2007.
- Jordan began his coaching career with the Oakland Raiders as a special teams assistant midway through the 2003 season.
- As a running back in the NFL, Jordan appeared in 122 career games with the Raiders (1993, 1998-02) and Jacksonville Jaguars (1995-97), accumulating 152 rushing attempts for 574 yards and seven touchdowns, as well as 58 receptions for 596 yards and two scores.
- A native of Manson, N.C., Jordan attended the University of North Carolina under head coach Mack Brown from 1989 to 1992.

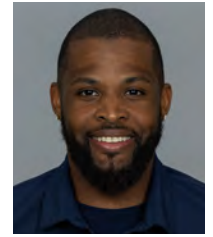


ANTHONY LEVINE SR.

ASSISTANT SPECIAL TEAMS

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- Levine joined the Titans in 2023 after spending the 2022 campaign working in coaching and scouting for the Baltimore Ravens.
- During Levine's first campaign with the Titans, the team had the eighth-best net punting average (43.0) in the NFL and ranked first in field goal percentage (96.7). Individually, Ryan Stonehouse led the league with a 43.9-yard net average, and Nick Folk set a franchise record with a league-best 96.7 percentage on field goals (29 of 30).
- He spent 10 years playing for the Ravens (2012-21), gaining notoriety as one of the league's top performers on special teams.
- He originally entered the NFL in 2010 as an undrafted rookie with the Green Bay Packers and spent two campaigns on Green Bay's practice squad.
- During his playing career, he appeared in 146 games and recorded 62 special teams stops, one forced fumble and one fumble recovery. As a defensive back/linebacker, he additionally tallied five starts, 149 tackles and two interceptions.
- In Baltimore, he earned the nickname "Co-Cap" for his status as special teams captain.
- A native of Abbeville, La., Levine was a defensive back for four seasons at Tennessee State University (2006-09).



LORI LOCUST

DEFENSIVE QUALITY CONTROL

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- Locust joined the Titans in 2023 after four seasons (2019-22) as the assistant defensive line coach for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.
- In her first year with the Titans, Locust worked with the outside linebackers and helped Denico Autry lead the team with a career-high 11.5 sacks. Harold Landry III returned from a season-ending knee injury during the previous season to appear in all 17 games and tally 10.5 sacks—his second-best career total.
- During her four-year tenure in Tampa Bay, the Buccaneers led the NFL in rushing defense, allowing only 92.3 yards per game. Additionally, the team ranked fifth in sacks (187), third in tackles for loss (348), first in quarterback hits (452) and fifth in takeaways (102). Nose tackle Vita Vea earned his first Pro Bowl selection (2021), while totaling 15 sacks between 2019 and 2022, a total that led all nose tackles. Locust joined fellow Buccaneers assistant Maral Javadifar in becoming the first woman on an NFL coaching staff to win a Super Bowl (LV).
- Prior to joining Tampa Bay, Locust served as the assistant defensive line coach for the Birmingham Iron of the Alliance of American Football and served as a coaching intern with the Baltimore Ravens during their 2018 training camp.
- Locust also spent time coaching with the Lehigh Valley Steelhawks (National Arena League), Central Penn Capitals (NAL), the York Capitals (American Indoor Football), the Central Penn Piranha (semi-professional) and her high school alma mater, Susquehanna Township (Harrisburg, Pa.) High School.
- She attended Temple University and also played football (2004-08) for the Central Penn Vipers in the Independent Women's Football League.



MARK LOVAT

ASSISTANT STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

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- Lovat was hired by Tennessee as assistant strength and conditioning coach in 2024 after 25 years with the Green Bay Packers.
- Lovat (pronounced "luh-VOTT") began with the Packers in 1999 as a strength and conditioning assistant, a title he held for a total of 16 seasons with the team. He was the club's strength and conditioning coordinator from 2010 to 2018.



TITANS 2024 ASSISTANT COACHES

- During his time with the Packers, he was a part of 17 playoff teams, 12 division titles and one Super Bowl championship (Super Bowl XLV). In 2011, Lovat was named the NFL Strength Coach of the Year by the Professional Football Strength and Conditioning Coaches Society. The same organization honored him with the Super Bowl Achievement Award in 2010.
- He was named the NFL Strength Coach of the Year for his work in 2011 by the Professional Football Strength and Conditioning Coaches Society, an award based on a vote of his peers in the field. In 2010, he was honored by the Professional Football Strength and Conditioning Coaches Society with the Super Bowl Achievement Award.
- A native of Pocatello, Idaho, Lovat earned a Division I baseball scholarship to Butler University in Indianapolis.
- He is the son of longtime NFL offensive line coach Tom Lovat.

PAYTON McCOLLUM ASSISTANT WIDE RECEIVERS

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- McCollum arrived in Tennessee in 2024 with nine previous seasons in coaching and two prior campaigns coaching in the NFL.
- He was hired by Tennessee after one season as a defensive assistant with the Indianapolis Colts. He helped coach a defensive unit in Indianapolis that ranked fifth in the NFL with 51 total sacks and posted the league's 11th-best third-down percentage (37.1).
- In 2022, McCollum served as an offensive analyst with Eastern Michigan. The Eagles finished with a 9-4 record, which was the school's second-best win total in the 131-year history of the program. EMU also won its first bowl game since 1987.
- Prior to EMU, McCollum was the quarterbacks coach at the University of Washington for two seasons (2020-21). In 2020, the Huskies won the PAC-12 North.
- His coaching stops also include time at North Carolina Central University (2019), North Carolina (2018), the Detroit Lions (2016-17) and Campbell University (2015).
- He was a three-year letterman at Catawba College.



CLINTON McMILLAN DEFENSIVE LINE ASSISTANT

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- McMillan initially joined the Titans in 2021 as a defensive assistant through the NFL's Bill Walsh Coaching Fellowship. He was a defensive line assistant from 2022 to 2023 before switching titles in 2024 to assistant defensive line/pass rush specialist.
- With McMillan working with the defensive line in 2023, the Titans finished seventh in the NFL in opponent rushing average (3.81 yards per attempt) and also ranked first in the NFL in defensive red-zone efficiency (37.7 percent). With 5.5 sacks in 12 games, defensive tackle Jeffery Simmons registered his third consecutive season with at least 5.5 sacks.
- Working with the defensive line in 2022, he helped the Titans finish first in the NFL in rushing defense (76.9 opponent rushing yards per game). Jeffery Simmons was named to the Pro Bowl after posting 7.5 sacks.
- In 2021, McMillan primarily worked with the Titans outside linebackers. Harold Landry III's 12 sacks led the team, set a career high and ranked 10th in the NFL. Landry was named to his first career Pro Bowl.
- McMillan was a senior analyst at Florida State from 2020 until joining the Titans in 2021.
- McMillan was defensive line coach at the University of Tennessee at Martin from 2017-19 and also held the titles of defensive run game coordinator and co-special teams coordinator in his time with the Skyhawks. He coached four all-conference performers during his tenure and in 2019 helped UTM lead the conference with 25 sacks.
- He began his coaching career at Sanford Seminole High School and Winter Park High School before stints at Weber State (2012-14), Marshall (2014-16) and Ohio Dominican (2017).
- McMillan played four years at defensive tackle for the University of



Florida, appearing in 48 games and helping the Gators win the 2006 national championship.

JUSTIN OUTTEN TIGHT ENDS

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- Outten (pronounced "OW-ten") joined the Titans coaching staff in 2023 as run game coordinator/running backs coach. In 2024, he moved to tight ends coach.
- He arrived in Tennessee with 17 years of coaching experience, including seven seasons in the NFL. His most recent stop prior to Tennessee was as the offensive coordinator with the Denver Broncos in 2022.
- In 2023, Outten's work with the Titans running backs helped Derrick Henry finish second in the NFL with 1,167 rushing yards. Henry started 17 games for the first time in his career and was selected to his fourth career Pro Bowl. Rookie Tyjae Spears' 838 scrimmage yards (453 rushing and 385 receiving) ranked seventh in franchise history among rookie running backs, and the total also placed fourth among rookie running backs in 2023.
- In 2022, the Broncos tied for fifth place in the NFL in completions of 25-plus yards. Outten called plays for the Broncos in the last two games of the season.
- Outten coached tight ends with the Green Bay Packers from 2019 through 2021, during which time the unit collectively tallied 60-plus catches and 700-plus receiving yards in each of his three seasons. During his tenure in Green Bay, six different tight ends registered at least one touchdown reception, which tied for the second-most in the NFL during that span.
- In 2020, Outten coached tight end Robert Tonyan, who totaled 11 touchdown receptions to set the single-season franchise mark for the position and tie All-Pro Travis Kelce for the league lead among tight ends.
- Outten joined the Atlanta Falcons in 2016 as an offensive intern and then as an offensive assistant in 2017 and 2018, helping to coach the offensive line.
- In addition to his time in the NFL, Outten spent eight seasons (2008-15) coaching at Westfield High School in Houston after beginning his coaching career at his alma mater, Syracuse University (2007).
- The Doylestown, Pa., native was a three-year letterwinner at Syracuse, and over his final two seasons as a player (2005-06), he appeared in all 23 games (22 starts) at center and was named team captain as a senior.



HALEY ROBERTS SPORTS PERFORMANCE ASSISTANT

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- Roberts originally joined the Titans as a sports performance intern in May 2023 and was promoted to sports performance assistant by the end of her first training camp.
- Prior to joining the Titans, Roberts spent two years (2021-22) as an assistant strength and conditioning coach at Sam Houston State University. The Bearkats won the Western Athletic Conference in 2021. In addition to working with the football team, she served the women's basketball, softball, tennis and soccer teams, and she also served as an adjunct instructor on campus.
- In 2020, Roberts was a strength and conditioning graduate assistant at the University of North Alabama, and the year prior she worked as a strength and conditioning intern for the football team at her alma mater, University of Nevada-Las Vegas.
- At the 2024 NFL Combine, Roberts served on a panel of speakers at the eighth annual NFL Women's Forum presented by AWS.
- A native of Las Vegas, Nev., Roberts received her bachelor's degree in kinesiology and exercise science from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. She earned her Master of Science in kinesiology from Sam Houston State in December 2023.



TITANS 2024 ASSISTANT COACHES

TRACY ROCKER DEFENSIVE LINE

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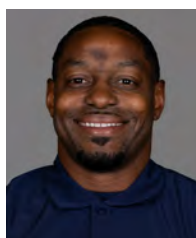
- Rocker returned to the Titans in 2024 with 32 previous years of coaching experience, including six in the NFL and three with the Titans. He coached the Titans defensive line from 2011 to 2013.
- Prior to rejoining the Titans, Rocker spent three seasons as the defensive line coach for the Philadelphia Eagles (2021-23). In that period, the Eagles tied for third in the NFL with 142 total sacks and earned three consecutive postseason berths.
- In 2023, Rocker was part of an Eagles playoff team that ranked 10th in the league in rushing defense (103.4 opponent yards per game), while defensive end Josh Sweat registered his third consecutive season with at least 6.5 sacks. Meanwhile, defensive tackle Fletcher Cox started 15 games and notched five sacks in his 12th NFL season.
- In 2022, Rocker was a member of an Eagles coaching staff that guided the team to an NFC title and an appearance in Super Bowl LVII. The Eagles fielded the league's second-ranked total defense (301.5 yards per game) and registered the third-most sacks (70, tied) in NFL history.
- Prior to joining the Eagles' coaching staff, he served on the staffs at South Carolina (2020), the University of Tennessee (2017-19) and Georgia (2014-16).
- In 2012, during his first stint with the Titans, the defense produced the 10th-most sacks (39) in the league, while defensive end Derrick Morgan enjoyed a breakout year. The prior campaign, Rocker led a young group that included Karl Klug, who ranked first among rookie defensive tackles with seven sacks, as well as rookie Jurrell Casey.
- Returning to his alma mater, Rocker coached the defensive line at Auburn for two years (2009-10) following stints at Mississippi (2008) Arkansas (2003-07), Cincinnati (2002), Troy State (1997-01) and West Alabama.
- The Atlanta, Ga., native and former Auburn defensive tackle was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2004. A two-time All-American, he was honored with the Lombardi Award (nation's top college football player) and Outland Trophy (nation's top interior lineman) in 1988, becoming the first player in SEC history to earn both accolades.
- He was selected by Washington in the third round (66th overall) of the 1989 NFL Draft and played two seasons before sustaining a knee injury. He concluded his professional career with the Orlando Thunder of the World Football League in 1991.



JOHN SHAW SPORTS PERFORMANCE - SPEED TRAINING

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- Shaw was hired in 2024 to fill the newly created coaching role of assistant sports performance - speed training.
- Prior to joining the Titans, Shaw spent five years in college coaching. Before a brief stint as the director of speed development at the University of Washington (January 2024 to March 2024), he was the director of speed development for two seasons on the strength and conditioning staff at the University of Arizona (2022-23).
- He was an assistant strength and conditioning coach for a pair of seasons at the University of Missouri (2020-21) and one campaign at the University of Kansas (2019). At Mizzou, he also served as director of sport science and mental conditioning.
- The Mobile, Ala., native began his collegiate playing career as a defensive back at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (2001-04) before transferring to Belhaven University in Jackson, Miss., to finish his career (2005-06). He then took his first steps into coaching at Belhaven as a graduate assistant/cornerbacks coach and assistant strength and conditioning coach. For the next eight years, he coached athletes at the high school level in Alabama and Mississippi, including the final six years as a strength and conditioning coach and defensive backs coach for St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile, Ala.) High School, where he was part of three AHSAA State Championships.



- Shaw earned his Bachelor of Science degree in exercise science from Belhaven University.

LUKE STOCKER ASSISTANT TIGHT ENDS

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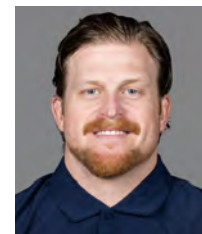
- Stocker joined the coaching staff in 2023 following 11 years in the NFL as a player.
- He initially joined the Titans staff as an intern during the 2023 offseason and then earned a full-time role as offensive assistant. In 2024, he was promoted to assistant tight ends coach.
- With Stocker working with the Titans tight ends in 2023, second-year tight end Chig Okonkwo finished second on the team in receptions (54) and receiving yards (528), which were career highs. Stocker also helped the development of fifth-round rookie Josh Whyle.
- As a player, Stocker was signed by the Titans as a free agent during the 2017 campaign and stayed with the club through 2018, head coach Mike Vrabel's first season in Tennessee. He also returned for training camp in 2021. In 19 games with the Titans (13 starts), he totaled 16 receptions for 177 yards and two touchdowns, while serving in a key role as a blocker in the running game.
- A fourth-round pick by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the 2011 NFL Draft, Stocker spent six-plus seasons with the Buccaneers until joining the Titans. He later appeared in games for the Atlanta Falcons (2019-20) and Minnesota Vikings (2021). In 142 career games, he registered 91 starts and 85 receptions for 705 yards and five touchdowns. He also participated in two playoff games with the Titans in 2017.
- The Berea, Ky., native attended the University of Tennessee (2007-10), where he tied a then-school record with 52 career games played, totaling 85 receptions for 956 yards and eight touchdowns.



GRANT THORNE ASSISTANT STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

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- Grant Thorne was hired by the Titans as assistant strength and conditioning coach in 2024 after spending 11 years with the Green Bay Packers.
- From 2015 through 2023, Thorne was a strength and conditioning assistant with the Packers after spending 2013 and 2014 as a strength and conditioning consultant with the team.
- Prior to working in Green Bay, Thorne served as a sports performance coach at Purdue University (2011-14). He also served as an instructor for clinical students while working toward his master's degree in health and kinesiology sport performance, focusing on sports-science technology and methodology.
- In 2011, Thorne gained his initial collegiate coaching experience at Stanford University, where he served as an assistant performance coach for the Cardinal football and rugby teams.
- Thorne served as a performance and monitoring assistant for the New York Jets in 2010.
- A college running back, wide receiver and kick returner, Thorne played two seasons at Long Beach City College (2004-05) before finishing at Nicholls State University (2006-07).
- He played wide receiver in the Arena Football League before joining the Rugby Union's Sedgley Park Tigers as a winger. In 2009, he participated in the USA Eagles National Rugby Team selection camp at the Olympic training center in Chula Vista, Calif.
- He also served as an assistant performance coach for Everton Football Club of the English Premier League before returning to the United States in 2009 to serve as a performance coach at Velocity Sports Performance in Manhattan Beach, Calif.
- He is a native of Tucson, Ariz.



TITANS 2024 ASSISTANT COACHES

TYKE TOLBERT WIDE RECEIVERS

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- Tolbert joined the Titans in 2024 with 30 prior years of coaching experience, including 21 seasons in the NFL.
- He has coached wide receivers with the Arizona Cardinals (2003), Buffalo Bills (2004-09), Carolina Panthers (2010), Denver Broncos (2011-17), New York Giants (2018-21) and Chicago Bears (2022-23).
- Prior to his time in Tennessee, Tolbert coached eight different wide receivers to 16 total 1,000-yard seasons: Anquan Boldin (2003), Eric Moulds (2004), Lee Evans (2006, 2008), Demaryius Thomas (2012-16), Eric Decker (2012-13), Emmanuel Sanders (2014-16), Odell Beckham Jr. (2018) and DJ Moore (2023). The grouping of Boldin (2003), Thomas (2012-16) and Sanders (2014, 2016) combined for eight Pro Bowls under Tolbert's direction.
- Tolbert's two years as wide receivers coach in Chicago also included the title of pass game coordinator. Most recently in 2023, he helped Moore tie for second in the NFL in receptions of at least 25 yards (16). Moore, in his first season in Chicago, also ranked sixth in receiving yards (1,364).
- Tolbert's first professional coaching experience was with the NFL's Bill Walsh Minority Internship Program. He first interned with the Lions during training camp in 1997 before interning again in 2001 with the Cardinals.
- Before establishing himself in the NFL, Tolbert began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at Louisiana State (1994) before moving on to Northeast Louisiana (1994, 1995-97), Ohio University (1995), Auburn (1998), Louisiana-Lafayette (1999-01) and Florida (2002).
- The Conroe, Texas, native was a wide receiver and three-year letterman at Louisiana State University (1986-90).



ZAC WOODFIN DIRECTOR OF SPORTS PERFORMANCE

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- Woodfin was hired by the Titans as director of sports performance in 2024. He arrived in Tennessee with 18 years of experience in the strength and conditioning field.
- Woodfin served two years for the United States Football League and United Football League (2022-23) as the director of player performance and wellness, overseeing the league's athletic performance training staff.
- Prior to his time with the USFL/UFL, Woodfin was the director of athletic performance at the University of Missouri (2020-21), the University of Kansas (2017-19) and the University of Southern Mississippi (2015-16).
- Near the end of his time at Southern Miss, Woodfin was named interim director of athletics while the university conducted a search for its permanent director.
- In 2014, Woodfin served as the head strength and conditioning coach at his alma mater, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he won FootballScoop's Strength and Conditioning Coach of the Year award.
- From 2011 to 2013, he received his first NFL coaching experience as an assistant strength and conditioning coach with the Green Bay Packers.
- A native of Prattville, Ala., Woodfin played linebacker at UAB and became the football program's all-time leading tackler (372 career tackles). He entered the NFL in 2005 as a rookie free agent with the Packers and also spent time with the New Orleans Saints (2005), Baltimore Ravens (2005-06) and Houston Texans (2007). He also played in NFL Europe for the Frankfurt Galaxy (2007). Woodfin started at linebacker for the Galaxy and helped lead the team to the 2007 World Bowl.
- In 2006, he got his start in the strength and conditioning field as an intern at UAB and then worked as a volunteer at the University of Alabama (2007) before becoming a performance specialist for three years at Athletes' Performance (2007-10), based in Los Angeles.
- Woodfin graduated from UAB in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in exercise science and a concentration in fitness leadership. He is certified by the NSCA and USAW.



KEY NUMBERS

4

Seasons by **Calvin Ridley** since 2018 with at least 60 receptions, 800 receiving yards and seven touchdown catches. Among all NFL wide receivers, only **Stefon Diggs** (five), **Mike Evans** (five), **Tyreek Hill** (five), **Davante Adams** (five), **Tyler Lockett** (four) and **Amari Cooper** (four) have as many.

5

NFL players since 2000 with at least 75 tackles, two sacks and seven passes defended in the postseason: **Ray Lewis**, **James Farrior**, **Brian Dawkins**, **Rodney Harrison** and new Titans cornerback **L'Jarius Sneed**.

11.4

Yards per reception in **Chig Okonkwo's** initial two NFL seasons, which led all qualifying tight ends in his draft class and also tied **Travis Kelce** and **Dallas Goedert** for the sixth-best average in the NFL among all NFL tight ends with a minimum of 60 receptions.

12.13

Average yards per completion by **Will Levis** in 2023. He ranked fourth in the NFL among qualifiers behind only **Brock Purdy** (13.90), **C.J. Stroud** (12.88) and **Matthew Stafford** (12.16).

41.5

Career sacks by outside linebacker **Harold Landry III**, who passed **Kyle Vanden Bosch** (38.5) in 2023 for 11th place on the franchise's all-time career sack list.

53.06

League-leading gross punting average in 2023 by **Ryan Stonehouse**, who in two NFL seasons recorded the NFL's top two single-season gross punting averages in NFL history.

57

Starts by center **Lloyd Cushenberry III** during the first four years of his career in Denver before joining the Titans as an unrestricted free agent in 2024.

65

Seasons by the Titans franchise, including 2024. It is the 26th campaign as the Titans after 39 seasons as the Oilers.

96.7

Percentage on field goals in 2023 by Titans kicker **Nick Folk**, who made 29 of his 30 attempts. The percentage led the NFL, established Folk's career high, and set a new franchise record.

117

Total wins by the Titans at Nissan Stadium (117-90), including regular season and postseason contests, since the venue opened in 1999. The Titans now have won more games at Nissan Stadium than any other venue, including the Astrodome (116-105-2).

838

Scrimmage yards by **Tyjae Spears** as a rookie in 2023 (453 rushing, 385 receiving). He ranked fourth among all rookie running backs.

928

NFL-leading number of receptions by **DeAndre Hopkins** since 2013. Since then he also leads the league in receiving yards (12,355) and receptions for first downs (642), and he is tied for third in receiving touchdowns (78).



NISSAN STADIUM

In 2015, the Titans and Nissan North America announced the formation of an exclusive naming-rights partnership that rebranded Nashville's downtown stadium as Nissan Stadium.

NISSAN STADIUM

Eight years later, on Nov. 17, 2023, the Titans and Nissan North America announced a new agreement: a 20-year, exclusive naming-rights partnership that brands the new Titans home venue as 'Nissan Stadium.'

Slated for completion in 2027, the new Nissan Stadium will host Titans home games, Tennessee State University football games, concerts, large-scale events and other community events.

"This partnership is a natural extension of our already longstanding friendship with Nissan," said Burke Nihill, Titans President and CEO. "Our mission at the Titans is to Win, Serve, and Entertain. We pride ourselves on collaborating with organizations who love this city and state as much as we do, and for the past 40 years, Nissan has invested more than \$10.5 billion statewide, serving as a great example of an outstanding corporate steward and community advocate. We look forward to the continued positive impact of this relationship for the Titans organization and the City of Nashville."

"Since 2015 our fans and organization have called our home 'Nissan Stadium,' and we are proud to continue that tradition in the new stadium as we deepen and expand our relationship with them," said Titans Chief Revenue Officer Adam Nuse. "The new stadium will host the world's largest events, as well as serve as a community hub for our local neighbors. We're excited to have a partner like Nissan embark on this journey with us as we look towards the future."

The partnership will feature dedicated areas in the new stadium for brand experiences and displays, innovative technology integration, and involvement in Titans broadcast platforms. Nissan also will support a to-be-determined program in the Titans' ONE Community philanthropic platform, which reaches Nashville's most underrepresented and marginalized communities with a focus on three areas – Opportunity, Neighborhoods and Education.

"Nissan Stadium is a centerpiece of the Nashville skyline and has become a household name in Middle Tennessee. It is important for Nissan to keep our name on the new stadium," said Jérémie Papin, chairperson, Nissan Americas. "As more people come to Nashville both to visit and to live in this wonderful city, Nissan Stadium is true showcase for our brand and for the career opportunities we've offered here for more than four decades. This partnership sends a strong message about the bright future for Nissan, the Titans, Nashville and the State of Tennessee."

Nissan's ever-growing footprint in Tennessee includes vehicle and powertrain manufacturing facilities in Smyrna and Decherd respectively, along with its North American headquarters in Franklin. Nissan is home to more than 11,000 employees across all three locations.

"Nissan has been a strong partner to middle Tennessee for four decades, and I'm thrilled that the Titans have united with a partner that invests in our community and its people," said Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell. "The familiarity and trust they've established with the Titans in the last eight years will undoubtedly be a great asset as we plan for the stadium's opening in 2027."



The new Nissan stadium will be built on the east side of the current stadium campus, along Nashville's East Bank. Features of the building include: a circular translucent roof; exterior porches with panoramic views of Nashville; improved sightlines for all spectators through a range of diverse seating experiences; and a 12,000 square foot community space available for use year-round. A waitlist for those interested in purchasing PSLs or suites is now open at [NewNissanStadium.com](https://www.newnissanstadium.com).

Titans/Oilers all-time regular-season record by home venue:

Stadium	Seasons	W-L-T	Pct.
Jeppesen Stadium	1960-1964	25-11-0	.694
Rice Stadium	1965-1967	11-10-0	.524
Astrodome	1968-1996	113-103-2	.523
Liberty Bowl	1997	6-2-0	.750
Dudley Field (Vanderbilt Stadium)	1998	3-5-0	.375
Nissan Stadium	1999-2024	115-86-0	.572

NISSAN STADIUM RECORD WHEN ...

The Titans at Nissan Stadium (1999-present):

	Games	Record	Pct.
Regular Season	201	115-86	.572
Postseason	6	2-4	.333
Combined	207	117-90	.565

Record When ...	Reg. Season	Playoffs
September	23-17	
October	28-21	
November	26-19	
December	34-28	
January	4-1	2-4
Thursday	5-4	
Friday	0-1	
Saturday	2-2	2-2
Sunday	100-76	0-2
Monday	7-3	
Tuesday	1-0	
Against own division	45-36	0-1
Against AFC	83-66	2-4
Against NFC	32-20	
Overtime games	8-8	1-0
In primetime	14-12	
Temperature 80+	8-6	
Temperature <40	10-11	1-2
Titans score 20 points	95-35	2-0
Titans score 30 points	39-6	1-0
Titans allow <20 points	73-15	1-2
Titans allow <10 points	17-0	
Titans net 300 yards	85-51	1-3
Opponents net <300 yards	54-13	1-2
Titans commit 0 turnovers	39-13	
Titans force 2 turnovers	72-26	



2023 TALE OF THE TAPE

OFFENSE	Titans	NFL Rank	NFL Avg
GAMES (Won-Lost)	6-11	---	---
FIRST DOWNS	298	26	327.4
Rushing	103	19	109.5
Passing	158	26	188.4
Penalty	37	4	29.5
YDS GAINED (tot)	4913	28	5636.9
Avg per Game	289.0	28	331.6
RUSHING (net)	1846	17	1915.2
Avg per Game	108.6	17	112.7
Rushes	444	20t	456.4
Yards per Rush	4.2	15	4.2
PASSING (net)	3067	29	3721.7
Avg per Game	180.4	29	218.9
Passes Att.	494	30t	572.3
Completed	304	32	369.0
Pct Completed	61.5	29	64.5
Yards Gained	3512	25	4017.7
Sacked	64	28t	44.1
Yards Lost	445	28	296.0
Had intercepted	11	10t	13.4
Yards Opp Ret	101	8t	170.2
Opp TDs on Int	1	10t	1.4
PUNTS	80	7t	70.7
Avg Yards	50.1	3	47.3
PUNT RETURNS	42	1	30.5
Avg Return	7.9	26	9.6
Returned for TD	0	9t	0.3
KICKOFF RETURNS	18	14t	18.3
Avg Return	20.7	25	23.0
Returned for TD	0	4t	0.1
PENALTIES	110	27	97.1
Yards Penalized	882	24	800.6
FUMBLES BY	19	9t	20.3
Fumbles Lost	9	15	9.5
Opp Fumbles	19	17t	20.3
Opp Fum Lost	8	23t	9.5
POSS. TIME (avg)	29:14	24	30:00
TOUCHDOWNS	31	27t	40.7
Rushing	16	11t	14.7
Passing	14	29	23.6
Returns	1	24t	2.4
EXTRA-PT KICKS	28/30	26	96%
2-PT CONVERSIONS	1/1	1t	55%
FIELD GOALS/FGA	29/30	1	28/33
POINTS SCORED	305	27	370.1

OFFENSE	Titans	NFL Rank	NFL Avg
POINTS ALLOWED	367	16	370.1
OPP FIRST DOWNS	334	20	327.4
Rushing	103	12	109.5
Passing	189	15t	188.4
Penalty	42	32	29.5
OPP YARDS GAINED	5697	18	5636.9
Avg per Game	335.1	18	331.6
OPP RUSHING(net)	1831	13	1915.2
Avg per Game	107.7	13	112.7
Rushes	480	23	456.4
Yards per Rush	3.8	7	4.2
OPP PASSING(net)	3866	18	3721.7
Avg per Game	227.4	18	218.9
Passes Att.	571	16	572.3
Completed	387	23	369.0
Pct Completed	67.8	30	64.5
Sacked	45	16t	44.1
Yards Lost	315	12t	296.0
INTERCEPTED BY	6	32	13.4
Yards Returned	86	26	170.2
Returned for TD	1	14t	1.4
OPP PUNT RETURNS	29	18t	30.5
Avg return	11.3	24	9.6
OPP KICKOFF RET	35	31	18.3
Avg return	23.3	16	23.0
OPP TOUCHDOWNS	33	5	40.7
Rushing	10	4t	14.7
Passing	20	8t	23.6
Returns	3	18t	2.4

WHERE THE TITANS RANKED IN 2023

2023 OFFENSIVE STATISTICS AND NFL RANKING

OFFENSIVE STATS	STAT (RANK)
Yards / Game	289.0 (28)
Yards / Play	4.90 (26)
Rushing Yards / Game	108.6 (17)
Rushing Yards / Play	4.16 (15)
Passing Yards / Game	180.4 (29)
Passing Yards / Play	6.21 (23)
Interception Rate	2.23% (15)
Sacks / Pass Attempt	12.96% (31)
First Downs / Game	17.5 (26)
Punt Return Avg	7.9 (26)
Kickoff Return Avg	20.7 (25)
Field Goals Made	96.67% (1)
3rd Down Pct	33.49% (28)
4th Down Pct	55.00% (13)
Red Zone Pct	47.92% (26)
Goal to Go%	63.64% (28)
Avg Time of Possession	29:14 (24)
Points / Game	17.9 (27t)
Turnover Ratio	-6 (23t)

2023 DEFENSIVE STATISTICS AND NFL RANKING

DEFENSIVE STATS	STAT (RANK)
Yards / Game	335.1 (18)
Yards / Play	5.20 (14)
Rushing Yards / Game	107.7 (13)
Rushing Yards / Play	3.81 (7)
Passing Yards / Game	227.4 (18)
Passing Yards / Play	6.77 (23)
Interception Rate	1.05% (32)
Sacks / Pass Attempt	7.88% (16)
First Downs / Game	19.6 (20)
Punt Return Avg	11.3 (24)
Kickoff Return Avg	23.3 (16)
3rd Down Pct	38.53% (17)
4th Down Pct	57.14% (26)
Red Zone Pct	37.70% (1)
Goal to Go%	42.86% (1)
Points / Game	21.6 (16)
Point Differential / Game	-3.6 (26)
Yard Differential / Game	-46.1 (27)

2023 INDIVIDUAL NFL RANKINGS

(Qualifiers only, where applicable)

Category	Player	Stat	NFL Rank
Passer Rating	Will Levis	84.2	24
Passing Yards	Will Levis	1,808	31
Passing TDs	Will Levis	8	31t
Rushing Yards	Derrick Henry	1,167	2
Rushing Average	Derrick Henry	4.17	21
Rushing TDs	Derrick Henry	12	7t
Receptions	DeAndre Hopkins	75	31t
Receiving Yards	DeAndre Hopkins	1,057	21
Receiving TDs	DeAndre Hopkins	7	18t
Sacks	Denico Autry	11.5	12t
Interceptions	Sean Murphy-Bunting	2	44t



2023 TENNESSEE TITANS REGULAR SEASON STATISTICS

Won 6, Lost 11

Date	W-L	Score	OT	Opponent	Attendance
09/10	L	15-16		at New Orleans	70,024
09/17	W	27-24	OT	L.A. Chargers	67,438
09/24	L	3-27		at Cleveland	67,919
10/01	W	27-3		Cincinnati	68,951
10/08	L	16-23		at Indianapolis	65,287
10/15	L	16-24		Baltimore	61,011
10/29	W	28-23		Atlanta	68,008
11/02	L	16-20		at Pittsburgh	65,969
11/12	L	6-20		at Tampa Bay	62,725
11/19	L	14-34		at Jacksonville	67,175
11/26	W	17-10		Carolina	62,493
12/03	L	28-31	OT	Indianapolis	65,262
12/11	W	28-27		at Miami	66,068
12/17	L	16-19	OT	Houston	66,219
12/24	L	17-20		Seattle	60,181
12/31	L	3-26		at Houston	71,517
01/07	W	28-20		Jacksonville	63,744

Statistic	Tenn.	Opp.
Total First Downs	298	334
Rushing	103	103
Passing	158	189
Penalty	37	42
3rd Down: Made/Att	71/212	89/231
3rd Down Pct.	33.5	38.5
4th Down: Made/Att	11/20	12/21
4th Down Pct.	55.0	57.1
Possession Avg.	29:14	30:46
Total Net Yards	4913	5697
Avg. Per Game	289.0	335.1
Total Plays	1002	1096
Avg. Per Play	4.9	5.2
Net Yards Rushing	1846	1831
Avg. Per Game	108.6	107.7
Total Rushes	444	480
Net Yards Passing	3067	3866
Avg. Per Game	180.4	227.4
Sacked/Yards Lost	64/445	45/315
Gross Yards	3512	4181
Att./Completions	494/304	571/387
Completion Pct.	61.5	67.8
Had Intercepted	11	6
Punts/Average	80/50.1	69/46.8
Net Punting Avg.	80/43.0	69/41.5
Penalties/Yards	110/822	98/776
Fumbles/Ball Lost	19/9	19/8
Touchdowns	31	33
Rushing	16	10
Passing	14	20
Returns	1	3

Score By Periods	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	OT	PTS
Team	58	118	59	64	6	305
Opponents	62	97	88	111	9	367

Scoring	TD	Rush	Rec	Ret	K-PAT	FG	S	PTS
Folk	0	0	0	0	28/30	29/30	0	115
Henry	12	12	0	0			0	72
Hopkins	7	0	7	0			0	42
Westbrook-Ikhine	3	0	3	0			0	20
Spears	3	2	1	0			0	18
Levis	1	1	0	0			0	6
Molden	1	0	0	1a			0	6
Okonkwo	1	0	1	0			0	6
Simmons	1	0	1	0			0	6
Tannehill	1	1	0	0			0	6
Whyle	1	0	1	0			0	6
Hooker	0	0	0	0			0	2
Team	31	16	14	1	28/30	29/30	0	305
Opponents	33	10	20	3	29/30	46/47	0	367

a - 44-yard INT return vs. Hou (12/17)

2-Pt Conv: Westbrook-Ikhine, TM 1-1, OPP 1-2

Sacks: Autry 11.5, Landry 10.5, Key 6, J. Simmons 5.5, Edmunds 2.5, Al-Shaar 2, McCreary 2, Davidson 1, Gibbens 1, Gipson 1, Johnson 1, Tart 1, **TM 45, OPP 64**

FUM/Lost: Levis 7/4, Tannehill 4/0, Garror 2/2, Moore 1/0, Philips 1/1, Spears 1/0, Stonehouse 1/1, Willis 1/1, Zentner 1/0

Passing	Att	Cmp	Yds	Cmp%	Yds/Att	TD	TD%	Int	Int%	Long	Sack/Lost	Rating
Levis	255	149	1808	58.4	7.09	8	3.1	4	1.6	61t	28/185	84.2
Tannehill	230	149	1616	64.8	7.03	4	1.7	7	3.0	70	32/230	78.5
Willis	5	4	74	80.0	14.80	0	0.0	0	0.0	48	4/30	118.8
Henry	3	2	14	66.7	4.67	2	66.7	0	0.0	12t	0/0	116.7
Hopkins	1	0	0	0.0	0.00	0	0.0	0	0.0	---	0/0	39.6
Team	494	304	3512	61.5	7.11	14	2.8	11	2.2	70	64/445	83.2
Opponents	571	387	4181	67.8	7.32	20	3.5	6	1.1	59t	45/315	96.4

Rushing	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Henry	280	1167	4.2	69	12
Spears	100	453	4.5	23	2
Tannehill	17	74	4.4	23	1
Levis	25	57	2.3	11	1
Moore	2	39	19.5	38	0
Willis	5	21	4.2	11	0
Burks	5	18	3.6	9	0
Ward	3	11	3.7	8	0
Hopkins	2	9	4.5	5	0
Okonkwo	2	6	3.0	4	0
Hooker	1	2	2.0	2	0
Zentner	1	0	0.0	0	0
Stonehouse	1	-11	-11.0	-11	0
Team	444	1846	4.2	69	16
Opponents	480	1831	3.8	56t	10

Receiving	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Hopkins	75	1057	14.1	61t	7
Okonkwo	54	528	9.8	39	1
Spears	52	385	7.4	48	1
Westbrook-Ikhine	28	370	13.2	33t	3
Henry	28	214	7.6	46	0
Moore	22	424	19.3	49	0
Burks	16	221	13.8	70	0
Philips	15	181	12.1	29	0
Whyle	9	94	10.4	24	1
Wesco	1	21	21.0	21	0
Kinsey	1	6	6.0	6	0
Rader	1	6	6.0	6	0
Dowell	1	3	3.0	3	0
Simmons	1	2	2.0	2t	1
Team	304	3512	11.6	70	14
Opponents	387	4181	10.8	59t	20

Interceptions	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Murphy-Bunting	2	12	6.0	10	0
Molden	1	44	44.0	44t	1
McCreary	1	18	18.0	18	0
Hooker	1	10	10.0	10	0
Edmunds	1	2	2.0	2	0
Team	6	86	14.3	44t	1
Opponents	11	101	9.2	29	1

Punting	No.	Yds	Avg	Net	TB	In	Lg	B
Stonehouse	53	2812	53.1	43.9	10	28	74	1
Zentner	24	1115	46.5	41.4	2	8	64	0
Folk	2	81	40.5	39.0	0	0	41	0
Team	80	4008	50.1	43.0	12	36	74	1
Opponents	69	3231	46.8	41.5	2	26	63	0

Punt Returns	Ret	FC	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Garror	21	5	159	7.6	15	0
Kinsey	11	6	100	9.1	21	0
K. Jackson	6	3	48	8.0	14	0
Philips	4	0	23	5.8	12	0
Team	42	14	330	7.9	21	0
Opponents	29	19	328	11.3	70	0

Kickoff Returns	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TD
Spears	13	270	20.8	33	0
Moore	4	89	22.3	26	0
Philips	1	13	13.0	13	0
Team	18	372	20.7	33	0
Opponents	35	815	23.3	36	0

Field Goals	1-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Folk	0/0	9/9	9/9	6/6	5/6
Team	0/0	9/9	9/9	6/6	5/6
Opponents	0/0	22/22	12/12	6/7	6/6

Folk: (50G,27G,31G,45G,29G)(33G,41G)(44G)(53G, 35G)(27G,53G,34G)(26G,27G,38G)(36G,36G,48G)(38G,51N,27G)(53G)(24G,46G)(28G,23G)(45G)(33G)(53G)
 OPP: (26G,33G,52G)(27G,30G,33G)(48G,52G)(21G)(43G,35G,28G)(41G,28G,23G,29G,20G,36G)(29G,49G,39G)(29G,30G)(25G,35G)(30G,25G)(50G)(23G,46G,23G,28G)(44B,20G,31G)(23G,27G,53G,54G)(28G,27G)(28G,38G,27G,51G)(44G,30G)



2023 TENNESSEE TITANS REGULAR SEASON DEFENSIVE STATISTICS

PLAYER	TACKLES			SACKS		QB		TFL		INTERCEPTIONS				FUMBLES		
	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	QB	TFL	No	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds	
Al-Shaair, Azeez	163	84	79	2.0	2.0	11	9	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	
Gibbens, Jack	92	54	38	1.0	9.0	7	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	
McCreary, Roger	86	62	24	2.0	25.0	4	7	1	18	18	0	6	1	0	0	
Hooker, Amani	80	65	15	0.0	0.0	2	3	1	10	10	0	7	0	0	0	
Molden, Elijah	72	46	26	0.0	0.0	4	1	1	44	44t	1	4	1	1	1	
Landry III, Harold	70	45	25	10.5	72.5	48	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Murphy-Bunting, Sean	57	42	15	0.0	0.0	3	3	2	12	10	0	8	2	1	5	
Autry, Denico	50	30	20	11.5	87.5	58	12	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	
Byard, Kevin	47	30	17	0.0	0.0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Fulton, Kristian	46	37	9	0.0	0.0	0	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	
Simmons, Jeffery	44	30	14	5.5	37.0	38	11	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	
Wallace, K'Von	42	33	9	0.0	0.0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	
Avery, Tre	31	27	4	0.0	0.0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	
Key, Arden	30	17	13	6.0	43.0	57	4	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	
Johnson, Jaleel	24	11	13	1.0	5.0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Garror, Eric	22	19	3	0.0	0.0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	
Peko, Kyle	22	12	10	0.0	0.0	5	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Tart, Tear	21	15	6	1.0	7.0	12	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Rice, Monty	17	8	9	0.0	0.0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Reese IV, Otis	16	8	8	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Weaver, Rashad	16	8	8	0.0	0.0	6	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Edmunds, Terrell	15	12	3	2.5	11.0	5	2	1	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	
Davidson, Marlon	10	6	4	1.0	8.0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Jones, Naquan	8	0	8	0.0	0.0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
McLendon, TK	8	3	5	0.0	0.0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
Brown, Mike	7	5	2	0.0	0.0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
Coburn, Keondre	7	2	5	0.0	0.0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Gipson, Trevis	6	1	5	1.0	8.0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
Wallow, Garret	6	5	1	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Bohanna, Quinton	4	2	2	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Blacklock, Ross	2	1	1	0.0	0.0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Campbell, Chance	2	1	1	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Carter, Shyheim	2	1	1	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Jackson, Matthew	1	0	1	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Vildor, Kindle	1	1	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Stallworth, Taylor	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TEAM TOTALS:	1,127	723	404	45.0	315.0	290	90	6	86	44	1	55	11	6	8	

2023 TITANS SPECIAL TEAMS STATISTICS

PLAYER	TACKLES			FUMBLES		BLOCKS		
	Tot	Solo	Asst	FF	FR	PAT	FG	PUNT
Kendall, Anthony	9	5	4	0	0	0	0	0
Rice, Monty	9	6	3	0	0	0	0	0
Gifford, Luke	6	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
Edmunds, Terrell	5	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
Jackson, Matthew	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Reese IV, Otis	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Hooker, Amani	4	3	1	1	1	0	0	0
Rader, Kevin	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Wallace, K'Von	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Weaver, Rashad	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Domann, Jojo	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Dowell, Colton	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Gibbens, Jack	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Avery, Tre	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Chestnut, Julius	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Jones, Joe	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Moore, Chris	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Murphy, Caleb	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Campbell, Chance	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Carter, Shyheim	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cox, Morgan	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Molden, Elijah	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Okonkwo, Chig	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Stonehouse, Ryan	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ward, Jonathan	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Whyle, Josh	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Autry, Denico	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
TEAM TOTALS:	82	47	35	2	1	1	1	0

MISCELLANEOUS STATISTICS

PLAYER	TACKLES			FUMBLES	
	Tot	Solo	Asst	FF	FR
Hopkins, DeAndre	3	3	0	0	0
Spears, Tyjae	2	2	0	0	1
Dowell, Colton	1	1	0	0	0
Hooker, Amani	1	1	0	0	0
Moore, Chris	1	1	0	0	0
Tannehill, Ryan	1	1	0	0	2
Levis, Will	0	0	0	0	2
Henry, Derrick	0	0	0	0	1
Okonkwo, Chig	0	0	0	0	1
Zentner, Ty	0	0	0	0	1
TEAM TOTALS:	9	9	0	0	8

Legend:

- Tot Total Tackles
- Solo Unassisted Tackles
- Asst Assisted Tackles
- Sk Quarterback Sacks
- Yds Yards Lost on Sack
- QBPs Quarterback Pressure
- TFL Tackle for Loss
- Int Interceptions
- Yds Interception Return Yards
- TD Interceptions Return Touchdowns
- PD Passes Defensed
- FF Forced Fumble
- FR Fumble Recoveries
- Yds Yards on Fumble Returns



LAST TIME IN A SEASON THE TITANS ...

TEAM OFFENSE

- Ranked 1st in Overall Offense — 1990
- Ranked 1st in Rushing Offense — 1967 (AFL)
- Ranked 1st in Passing Offense — 1992

TEAM DEFENSE

- Ranked 1st in Overall Defense — 2000
- Ranked 1st in Rushing Defense — 2022
- Ranked 1st in Passing Defense — 2000

GAMES WON (REGULAR SEASON)

- 10 Wins — 2021 (12-5)
- 11 Wins — 2021 (12-5)
- 12 Wins — 2021 (12-5)
- 13 Wins — 2008 (13-3)

ADVANCED IN PLAYOFFS

- Wild Card Round — 2021
- Divisional Round — 2021
- Conference Championship — 2019
- Super Bowl — 1999

RUSHING

- 1,000 Yards — Derrick Henry (1,167), 2023
- 1,500 Yards — Derrick Henry (1,538), 2022
- 2,000 Yards — Derrick Henry (2,027), 2020
- 300 Attempts — Derrick Henry (349), 2022
- 400 Attempts — Eddie George (403), 2000
- 10 Touchdowns — Derrick Henry (12), 2023
- 15 Touchdowns — Derrick Henry (17), 2020

PASSING

- 3,000 Yards — Ryan Tannehill (3,734), 2021
- 3,500 Yards — Ryan Tannehill (3,734), 2021
- 4,000 Yards — Warren Moon (4,690), 1991
- 400 Attempts — Ryan Tannehill (531), 2021
- 500 Attempts — Ryan Tannehill (531), 2021
- 600 Attempts — Warren Moon (655), 1991
- 20 Touchdowns — Ryan Tannehill (21), 2021
- 30 Touchdowns — Ryan Tannehill (33), 2020
- 90.0 Passer Rating — Ryan Tannehill (94.6), 2022
- 100.0 Passer Rating — Ryan Tannehill (106.5), 2020

RECEIVING

- 80 Receptions — Delanie Walker (94), 2015
- 90 Receptions — Delanie Walker (94), 2015
- 100 Receptions — Haywood Jeffires (100), 1991
- 1,000 Yards — DeAndre Hopkins (1,057), 2023
- 1,500 Yards — Charlie Hennigan (1,546), 1964
- 10 Touchdowns — A.J. Brown (11), 2020
- 15 Touchdowns — Bill Groman (17), 1961

SCORING

- 100 Points — Nick Folk (115), 2023
- 110 Points — Nick Folk (115), 2023
- 120 Points — Randy Bullock (120), 2021
- 130 Points — Ryan Succop (136), 2017
- 30 Field Goals — Ryan Succop (35), 2017
- 35 Field Goals — Ryan Succop (35), 2017
- 10 Touchdowns — Derrick Henry (12), 2023
- 15 Touchdowns — Derrick Henry (17), 2020

DEFENSE

- 7 Interceptions — Kevin Byard (8), 2017
- 8 Interceptions — Kevin Byard (8), 2017
- 9 Interceptions — Mike Reinfeldt (12), 1979
- 10 Interceptions — Mike Reinfeldt (12), 1979
- 10 Sacks — Denico Autry (11.5), Harold Landry III (10.5), 2023
- 12 Sacks — Harold Landry III (12), 2021
- 14 Sacks — Jevon Kearse (14.5), 1999
- 150 Tackles — Azeez Al-Shaair (163), 2023
- 175 Tackles — Keith Bulluck (180), 2002
- 200 Tackles — Gregg Bingham (212), 1980

TITANS RECORDS AT A GLANCE

Team record holders in major statistical categories

SCORING

- Points (Game) — 30 by Billy Cannon (5 TDs) at N.Y. Titans, 12/10/61
- Points (Season) — 136 by Al Del Greco, 1998; by Ryan Succop, 2017
- Points (Career) — 1,060 by Al Del Greco, 1991-00
- Touchdowns (Game) — 5 by Billy Cannon at N.Y. Titans, 12/10/61
- Touchdowns (Season) — 19 by Earl Campbell, 1979
- Touchdowns (Career) — 93 by Derrick Henry, 2016-23
- Field Goals (Game) — 8 by Rob Bironas at Hou., 10/21/07
- Field Goals (Season) — 36 by Al Del Greco, 1998
- Field Goals (Career) — 246 by Al Del Greco, 1991-00

RUSHING

- Rushing Yards (Game) — 250 by Derrick Henry at Hou., 1/3/21
- Rushing Yards (Season) — 2,027 by Derrick Henry, 2020
- Rushing Yards (Career) — 10,009 by Eddie George, 1996-03
- Rushing Touchdowns (Game) — 4 by Earl Campbell vs. Mia., 11/20/78; Lorenzo White vs. Cle., 12/9/90; Derrick Henry vs. Jax, 12/6/18
- Rushing Touchdowns (Season) — 19 by Earl Campbell, 1979
- Rushing Touchdowns (Career) — 90 by Derrick Henry, 2016-23

PASSING

- Passing Yards (Game) — 527 by Warren Moon at K.C., 12/16/90
- Passing Yards (Season) — 4,690 by Warren Moon, 1991
- Passing Yards (Career) — 33,685 by Warren Moon, 1984-93
- Passing Touchdowns (Game) — 7 by George Blanda vs. N.Y. Titans, 11/19/61
- Passing Touchdowns (Season) — 36 by George Blanda, 1961
- Passing Touchdowns (Career) — 196 by Warren Moon, 1984-93
- Passer Rating (Game) — 158.3 by Chris Chandler at Cin., 9/24/95
- Passer Rating (Season) — 117.5 by Ryan Tannehill, 2019
- Passer Rating (Career) — 97.8 by Ryan Tannehill, 2019-23

RECEIVING

- Receptions (Game) — 13 (three times, last by Drew Bennett at Oak., 12/19/04)
- Receptions (Season) — 101 by Charlie Hennigan, 1964
- Receptions (Career) — 542 by Ernest Givins, 1986-94
- Receiving Yards (Game) — 272 by Charlie Hennigan at Bos., 10/13/61
- Receiving Yards (Season) — 1,746 by Charlie Hennigan, 1961
- Receiving Yards (Career) — 7,935 by Ernest Givins, 1986-94
- Receiving Touchdowns (Game) — 3 (18 times, last by DeAndre Hopkins vs. Atl., 10/29/23)
- Receiving Touchdowns (Season) — 17 by Bill Groman, 1961
- Receiving Touchdowns (Career) — 51 by Charlie Hennigan, 1960-66

PUNTING

- Punts (Game) — 11 (twice by Rich Camarillo, last at Pit., 12/3/95)
- Punts (Season) — 96 by Rich Camarillo, 1994
- Punts (Career) — 923 by Brett Kern, 2009-21

PUNT RETURNS

- Punt Return Yards (Game) — 160 by Darius Reynaud vs. Jax., 12/30/12
- Punt Return Average (Season) — 15.4 by Billy Johnson, 1977
- Punt Return Average (Career) — 13.2 by Billy Johnson, 1974-80

KICKOFF RETURNS

- Kickoff Return Yards (Game) — 240 by Bobby Jancik at Oak., 12/22/63
- Kickoff Return Average (Season) — 31.7 by Darius Jennings, 2018
- Kickoff Return Average (Career) — 26.5 by Bobby Jancik, 1962-67

INTERCEPTIONS

- Interceptions (Game) — 3 (nine times, last by Kevin Byard at Cle., 10/22/17)
- Interceptions (Season) — 12 by Freddy Glick, 1963; by Mike Reinfeldt, 1979
- Interceptions (Career) — 45 by Jim Norton, 1960-68

SACKS

- Sacks (Game) — 4 (five times, last by William Fuller vs. Pit., 11/28/93)
- Sacks (Season) — 17 by Elvin Bethea, 1973
- Sacks (Career) — 105 by Elvin Bethea, 1968-83



TENNESSEE TITANS 2023 PARTICIPATION CHART

Player	9/10	9/17	9/24	10/1	10/8	10/15	10/29	11/2	11/12	11/19	11/26	12/3	12/11	12/17	12/24	12/31	1/7	Season Totals			
	@NO	LAC	@Cle	Cin	@Ind	Bal	Atl	@Pit	@TB	@Jax	Car	Ind	@Mia	Hou	Sea	@Hou	Jax	GP	GS	DNP	IA
Al-Shaair, Azeez	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	ILB	ILB	ILB	LB	LB	LB	17	17	0	0
Asiasi, Devin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Autry, Denico	DL	DL	P	DL	DL	DL	DL	DL	DL	P	DL	DL	DL	DL	DL	DL	P	17	14	0	0
Avery, Tre	IA	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	CB	P	CB	IA	P	15	2	0	2
Blacklock, Ross	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	P	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	P	3	0	0	0
Bohanna, Quinton	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	DL	P	IA	P	3	1	0	1
Brewer, Aaron	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	17	17	0	0
Brown, Mike	P	P	P	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	P	P	P	IA	IA	S	P	P	9	1	0	2
Brown, Shakel	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	0	0	0	0
Brunskill, Daniel	RG	RG	RG	RG	RG	RG	RG	RG	IA	RG	RG	RG	RG	RG	IA	RG	IA	14	14	0	3
Burks, Treyton	WR	WR	WR	IA	IA	IA	WR	WR	IA	IA	IA	P	WR	WR	WR	P	WR	11	9	0	6
Byard, Kevin	S	S	S	S	S	S	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	6	0	0
Campbell, Chance	PS	PS	P	P	P	P	X	PS	DNP	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	4	0	1	0
Carter, Shyheim	PS	PS	PS	P	PS	P	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	PS	PS	3	0	0	0
Chestnut, Julius	P	P	P	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	3	0	0	0
Coburn, Keondre	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	P	P	4	0	0	0
Cox, Morgan	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	17	0	0	0
Crowder, Tae	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	2	0	0	0
Cruikshank, Dane	X	X	X	PS	P	P	PS	PS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2	0	0	0
Davidson, Marlon	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	P	DT	DT	DT	5	3	0	0
Dillard, Andre	LT	LT	LT	LT	LT	LT	P	LT	LT	IA	P	P	P	P	P	LT	LT	16	10	0	1
Domann, JoJo	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	P	P	P	5	0	0	0
Dowell, Colton	IA	IA	IA	P	P	P	IA	IA	IA	P	P	P	P	P	P	WR	IR	10	1	0	6
Duncan, Jaelyn	IA	P	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	P	P	P	LT	LT	LT	LT	LT	P	IA	10	5	0	7
Dwumfour, Michael	PS	PS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
Edmunds, Terrell	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	S	P	P	IA	IA	P	P	P	P	P	9	1	0	2
Empey, James	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Farley, Caleb	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	PUP	0	0	0	0
Folk, Nick	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	17	0	0	0
Fulton, Kristian	CB	IA	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	IA	IR	IR	IR	IR	11	11	0	2
Garror, Eric	PS	P	PS	PS	PS	PS	DB	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	DB	DB	DB	12	4	0	0
Gibbens, Jack	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	LB	P	LB	LB	ILB	ILB	IR	IR	IR	14	13	0	0
Gifford, Luke	P	P	OLB	IA	IA	IA	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	IR	IR	IR	11	1	0	3
Gipson, Trevis	P	IA	IA	P	P	P	P	P	P	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	P	IA	IA	8	0	0	9
Gowan, Tay	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	PS	PS	1	0	0	0
Harrison, Tre'Shaun	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Haskins, Hassan	EX	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	0	0	0	0
Henry, Derrick	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	RB	17	17	0	0
Hooker, Amani	S	IA	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	IR	IR	IR	13	13	0	1
Hopkins, DeAndre	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	P	WR	17	16	0	0
Hubbard, Chris	RT	RT	RT	RT	RT	RT	RT	IA	RT	RT	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	9	9	0	1
Jackson, Kearis	P	P	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	2	0	0	0
Jackson, Matthew	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	10	0	0	0
Johnson, Jaleel	X	X	P	PS	P	P	P	IA	P	P	X	P	P	DT	DT	NT	NT	12	4	0	1
Jones, Joe	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	PS	PS	P	P	P	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	4	0	0	0
Jones, Naquan	P	P	P	P	P	NT	P	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1	0	0
Kendall, Anthony	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	IA	16	0	0	1
Key, Arden	P	P	OLB	P	P	P	OLB	OLB	P	OLB	P	OLB	OLB	P	OLB	OLB	OLB	17	9	0	0
Kinsey, Mason	PS	PS	P	P	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	P	P	P	6	0	0	0
Landry III, Harold	OLB	OLB	P	OLB	OLB	OLB	P	P	OLB	OLB	OLB	P	P	OLB	P	P	OLB	17	10	0	0
Levin, Corey	DNP	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	16	0	1	0
Levis, Will	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	QB	QB	QB	QB	QB	QB	QB	QB	IA	QB	IA	9	9	0	8
Mack, Alizé	IR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
Marsh, Armani	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
McCreary, Roger	P	CB	P	CB	CB	P	IA	IA	CB	CB	P	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	15	11	0	2
McLendon Jr., TK	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	P	DE	P	P	DE	IA	P	IA	7	2	0	2
Moa, David	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Molden, Elijah	P	S	P	IA	P	IA	S	DB	S	DB	P	P	P	P	S	S	S	15	8	0	2
Moore, Chris	P	P	P	WR	P	WR	P	P	P	P	WR	WR	P	P	P	P	WR	17	5	0	0
Murphy, Caleb	IA	IA	IA	P	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	P	P	IA	3	0	0	14



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	@NO	LAC	@Cle	Cin	@Ind	Bal	Atl	@Pit	@TB	@Jax	Car	Ind	@Mia	Hou	Sea	@Hou	Jax	GP	GS	DNP	IA
Murphy-Bunting, Sean	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	CB	IA	IA	CB	CB	CB	CB	IA	CB	CB	14	14	0	3
Murray, Justin	P	PS	P	P	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	4	0	0	0
Newman, Xavier	DNP	LG	P	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	3	1	1	0
Odukoya, Thomas	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Ojukwu, John	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	TE	TE	TE	3	3	0	0
Okonkwo, Chig	TE	TE	TE	P	TE	P	TE	TE	TE	P	P	TE	P	TE	TE	TE	P	17	11	0	0
Patrick, Jacques	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
Peevy, Jayden	IA	P	PS	PS	PS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	0	0	1
Peko, Kyle	DT	DT	DT	P	DT	DE	DT	DT	DT	DT	P	P	DT	IR	IR	IR	IR	13	10	0	0
Petit-Frere, Nicholas	SUS	SUS	SUS	SUS	EX	P	LT	RT	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	3	2	0	0
Philips, Kyle	IR	IR	IR	IR	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	IA	P	IA	IA	IA	P	9	0	0	4
Phillips, Darius	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Rader, Kevin	PS	PS	PS	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	14	0	0	0
Radunz, Dillon	IA	P	LG	LG	P	P	P	P	RG	LT	RT	RT	RT	RT	RT	RT	RT	16	11	0	1
Reese IV, Otis	P	P	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	IR	PS	PS	PS	P	P	LB	LB	LB	7	3	0	0
Rice, Monty	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	X	X	X	X	12	0	0	0
Roos, Jordan	PS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Rupcich, Andrew	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	P	P	PS	PS	PS	PS	RG	P	RG	5	2	0	0
Rush, Thomas	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Sheffield, Kendall	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	2	0	0	0
Shelvin, Tyler	IR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
Simmons, Jeffery	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	DT	IA	IA	IR	IR	IR	12	12	0	2
Simmons, Lachavious	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Skoronski, Peter	LG	IA	IA	IA	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	LG	14	14	0	3
Smith, Shi	X	X	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Spears, Tyjae	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	RB	P	17	1	0	0
Stallworth, Taylor	X	X	X	X	X	P	IR	IR	IR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	0	0	0
Stonehouse, Ryan	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	IR	IR	IR	IR	IR	12	0	0	0
Tannehill, Ryan	QB	QB	QB	QB	QB	QB	IA	IA	IA	DNP	DNP	P	DNP	DNP	QB	P	QB	10	8	4	3
Tart, Tear	NT	NT	NT	NT	IA	IA	P	P	NT	NT	NT	NT	NT	X	X	X	X	11	9	0	2
Thompson, Josh	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	0	0	0	0
Throckmorton, Calvin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	IA	P	P	P	P	P	IA	P	6	0	0	2
Vildor, Kindle	P	DNP	IA	DNP	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2	0	2	1
Wallace, K'Von	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	P	S	S	S	S	S	IA	S	S	10	7	0	1
Wallow, Garret	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	P	3	0	0	0
Ward, Jonathan	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	P	X	PS	PS	P	P	P	P	P	8	0	0	0
Weaver, Rashad	P	P	P	P	P	P	IA	P	IA	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	15	0	0	2
Wesco, Trevon	TE	P	TE	TE	P	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	TE	P	TE	P	IA	IA	P	15	10	0	2
Westbrook-Ikhine, Nick	P	WR	P	WR	WR	WR	P	P	P	WR	WR	WR	WR	WR	IR	IR	IR	14	9	0	0
Whyle, Josh	P	P	P	P	TE	P	IA	P	TE	TE	P	P	IA	IA	DNP	IR	IR	11	3	1	3
Willis, Malik	DNP	DNP	P	DNP	DNP	P	P	DNP	DNP	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	DNP	IA	DNP	3	0	8	6
York, Cade	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0	0	0	0
Zentner, Ty	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	P	P	P	P	P	5	0	0	0

Starters indicated by position (QB, RB, ILB, etc.); P = played but did not start; DNP = active but did not play; IA = inactive for game; PS = practice squad; PS-I = practice squad injured; P/SUS = practice squad/suspended; X = not on roster; IR = injured reserve; SUS = reserve/suspended; NFI = non-football illness; PUP = physically unable to perform; EX = exempt



2024 TENNESSEE TITANS TRANSACTIONS

January 6

Placed on injured reserve – **WR COLTON DOWELL**

Signed to the active roster from the practice squad – **S MATTHEW JACKSON**

Activated from the practice squad to the active roster standard elevation – **LB TAE CROWDER, DB KENDALL SHEFFIELD**

January 8

Signed to future contracts – **DB SHYHEIM CARTER, DB TAY GOWAN, WR TRE'SHAUN HARRISON, TE THOMAS ODUKOYA, OLB THOMAS RUSH and OL LACHAVIOUS SIMMONS**

January 9

Relieved of his duties – **HEAD COACH MIKE VRABEL**

January 24

Hired – **BRIAN CALLAHAN** as the 20th head coach in franchise history

Promoted – **CHAD BRINKER** to President of Football Operations and **RAN CARTHON** to Executive Vice President/General Manager

February 5

Hired as offensive coordinator – **NICK HOLZ**

Hired as defensive coordinator – **DENNARD WILSON**

February 13

Hired as offensive line coach – **BILL CALLAHAN**

Hired as wide receivers coach – **TYKE TOLBERT**

Hired as running backs coach – **RANDY JORDAN**

Hired as quarterbacks coach – **BO HARDEGREE**

Hired as assistant wide receivers coach – **PAYTON McCOLLUM**

Hired as linebackers coach – **FRANK BUSH**

Hired as secondary/safeties coach – **STEVE JACKSON**

Hired as defensive line coach – **TRACY ROCKER**

Hired as outside linebackers coach – **BEN BLOOM**

Hired as assistant to the head coach – **TOM JONES**

Moved to tight ends coach – **JUSTIN OUTTEN**

Moved to offensive assistant – **MATT JONES**

Elevated to assistant defensive line coach/pass rush specialist – **CLINTON McMILLAN**

Elevated to assistant tight ends coach – **LUKE STOCKER**

February 20

Hired as special teams coordinator – **COLT ANDERSON**

Hired as assistant offensive line coach – **SCOTT FUCHS**

Hired as defensive assistant – **STEVE DONATELL**

March 14

Signed as unrestricted free agents – **CB CHIDOBE AWUZIE, C LLOYD CUSHENBERRY III, LB KENNETH MURRAY JR., RB TONY POLLARD**

Signed as exclusive rights free agent – **LB JACK GIBBENS**

March 15

Signed as unrestricted free agents – **OL SAAHQI CHARLES, WR CALVIN RIDLEY, QB MASON RUDOLPH, WR NICK WESTBROOK-IKHINE**

Terminated vested veteran – **T ANDRE DILLARD**

March 20

Signed as unrestricted free agents – **K NICK FOLK, DL SEBASTIAN JOSEPH-DAY**

March 21

Hired as director of sports performance – **ZAC WOODFIN**

Hired as assistant strength and conditioning – **MARK LOVAT, GRANT THORNE**

Hired as assistant sports performance – speed training – **JOHN SHAW**

April 1

Traded – a 2024 seventh-round pick (221st overall) and a 2025 third-round pick to the Kansas City Chiefs for **CB L'JARIUS SNEED** and a 2024 seventh-round pick (252nd overall)

April 12

Traded – a 2024 seventh-round pick (227th overall) to the Cleveland Browns for **T LEROY WATSON IV**

April 25

Drafted - **T JC LATHAM** (first round, 7th overall)

April 26

Drafted – **DT T'VONDRE SWEAT** (second round, 38th overall)

April 27

Drafted – **LB CEDRIC GRAY** (fourth round, 106th overall), **CB JARVIS BROWNLEE JR.** (fifth round, 146th overall), **WR JHA'QUAN JACKSON** (sixth round, 182nd overall), **LB JAMES WILLIAMS** (seventh round, 242nd overall), **OLB JAYLEN HARRELL** (seventh round, 252nd overall)

May 6

Signed as free agent – **DT MARLON DAVIDSON**

May 7

Waived – **DT SHAKEL BROWN**

May 10

Signed - fifth-round choice **CB JARVIS BROWNLEE JR.**, sixth-round choice **WR JHA'QUAN JACKSON**, seventh-round choice **LB JAMES WILLIAMS** and seventh-round choice **OLB JAYLEN HARRELL**

Signed undrafted free agents – **T BRIAN DOOLEY, OLB KHALID DUKE, S KEATON ELLIS, C X'ZAUVEA GADLIN, CB ROD GATTISON, DL ISAIAH ITON, CB ROBERT JAVIER, CB GABE JEUDY-LALLY, RB DILLON JOHNSON, TE DAVID MARTIN-ROBINSON, K BRAYDEN NARVESON, WR BRYCE OLIVER, WR SAM SCHNEE, RB JABARI SMALL, G CODY SPENCER and TE STEVEN STILIANOS**

May 11

Signed - first-round choice **T JC LATHAM**

May 13

Waived – **CB ROD GATTISON**

Signed as free agent – **TE NICK VANNETT**

May 14

Signed as free agent – **WR TYLER BOYD**

May 29

Signed - fourth-round choice **LB CEDRIC GRAY**

June 5

Signed - second-round choice **DT T'VONDRE SWEAT**

June 12

Signed as free agent – **T GERON CHRISTIAN SR.**

June 13

Waived with injury waiver – **C X'ZAUVEA GADLIN**

July 11

Signed as free agent – **S JAMAL ADAMS**

TITANS PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

CHIDOBE AWUZIE (CHIH-doe-bay ah-WOOZ-yay); **TREY LON Burks** (TRAY-lin); **SAAHQI Charles** (SUH-deek); **GERON Christian Jr.** (JARE-en); **KEONDRE Coburn** (kee-AHN-dray); **SHYHEIM Carter** (shah-HEEM); **Eric GARROR** (GAIR-er); **TRE'SHAUN Harrison** (TRAY-shawn); **HASSAN Haskins** (huh-SAAN); **KEARIS Jackson** (key-AIR-iss); **Thomas ODUKOYA** (OH-due-COY-ah); **John OJUKWU** (oh-JEW-koo); **Chig OKONKWO** (oh-KAHN-kwoh); **Nicholas PETIT-FRERE** (puh-TEET FRAIR); **Dillon RADUNZ** (RAY-dinz); **Andrew RUPCICH** (RUP-sitch); **Peter SKORONSKI** (skuh-RON-ski); **TYJAE Spears** (TAH-zhay); **Nick Westbrook-IKHINE** (uh-KEEN-ay); **Josh WHYLE** (WHY-lee); **Ty ZENTNER** (ZINT-ner)



TENNESSEE TITANS ROSTER BY EXPERIENCE

<u>17TH YEAR</u>	<u>5TH YEAR</u>	<u>2ND YEAR</u>	<u>ROOKIE DRAFT PICKS</u>
Nick Folk K	Saahdiq Charles OL Lloyd Cushenberry III C Kenneth Murray Jr. LB L'Jarius Sneed CB Nick Westbrook-Ikhine WR	Mike Brown S Keondre Coburn DL JoJo Domann LB Colton Dowell WR Jaelyn Duncan OL Eric Garror CB Jack Gibbens LB Tay Gowan DB Kearis Jackson WR Matthew Jackson S Anthony Kendall CB Mason Kinsey WR Will Levis QB TK McLendon Jr. DE Caleb Murphy OLB Otis Reese IV LB Peter Skoronski OL Tyjae Spears RB Leroy Watson IV T Josh Whyte TE Ty Zentner P	Jarvis Brownlee Jr. CB Cedric Gray LB Jaylen Harrell OLB Jha'Quan Jackson WR JC Latham T T'Vondre Sweat NT James Williams LB
<u>15TH YEAR</u>	<u>4TH YEAR</u>	<u>1ST YEAR</u>	<u>ROOKIE FREE AGENTS</u>
Morgan Cox LS	Quinton Bohanna DL Marlon Davidson DT Caleb Farley CB Elijah Molden CB Dillon Radunz OL Garret Wallow LB Rashad Weaver OLB	Shyheim Carter DB Tre'Shaun Harrison WR Thomas Odukoya TE John Ojukwu OL Andrew Rupcich OL Thomas Rush OLB	Brian Dooley T Khalid Duke OLB Keaton Ellis S Isaiah Iton DL Robert Javier CB Gabe Jeudy-Lally CB Dillon Johnson RB David Martin-Robinson TE Brayden Narveson K Bryce Oliver WR Sam Schnee WR Jabari Small RB Cody Spencer G Steven Stilianos TE
<u>12TH YEAR</u>	<u>3RD YEAR</u>		
DeAndre Hopkins WR	Tre Avery CB Treyton Burks WR Chance Campbell LB Julius Chestnut RB Hassan Haskins RB Roger McCreary CB Chig Okonkwo TE Nicholas Petit-Frere OL Kyle Philips WR Lachavious Simmons OL Ryan Stonehouse P Malik Willis QB		
<u>9TH YEAR</u>			
Tyler Boyd WR Nick Vannett TE			
<u>8TH YEAR</u>			
Jamal Adams S Chidobe Awuzie CB			
<u>7TH YEAR</u>			
Geron Christian Sr. T Arden Key OLB Harold Landry III OLB Mason Rudolph QB			
<u>6TH YEAR</u>			
Daniel Brunskill OL Luke Gifford LB Amani Hooker S Sebastian Joseph-Day DL Tony Pollard RB Calvin Ridley WR Jeffery Simmons DT			

As of July 18, 2024

TENNESSEE TITANS ROSTER BY DRAFT ROUND

<u>ROUND 1</u>	<u>ROUND 2</u>	<u>ROUND 3</u>
<u>Player</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Year</u>
JC Latham T Peter Skoronski OL Treyton Burks WR Caleb Farley CB Kenneth Murray Jr. LB Jeffery Simmons DT Calvin Ridley WR Jamal Adams S DeAndre Hopkins WR	T'Vondre Sweat NT Will Levis QB Roger McCreary CB Dillon Radunz T Marlon Davidson DT Harold Landry III OLB Chidobe Awuzie CB Tyler Boyd WR	Tyjae Spears RB Nicholas Petit-Frere OL Malik Willis QB Elijah Molden CB Lloyd Cushenberry III C Geron Christian Sr. T Arden Key OLB Mason Rudolph QB Nick Vannett TE
<u>ROUND 4</u>	<u>ROUND 5</u>	<u>ROUND 6</u>
<u>Player</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Year</u>
Cedric Gray LB Hassan Haskins RB	Jarvis Brownlee Jr. CB Josh Whyte TE Kyle Philips WR Garret Wallow LB	Jha'Quan Jackson WR Keondre Coburn DL Jaelyn Duncan OL Chance Campbell LB Quinton Bohanna DL Tay Gowan CB Sebastian Joseph-Day DL Nick Folk K
<u>ROUND 7</u>	<u>ROUND 8</u>	<u>ROUND 9</u>
<u>Player</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Year</u>
Jaylen Harrell OLB James Williams LB Colton Dowell WR Lachavious Simmons OL	Gabe Jeudy-Lally CB Dillon Johnson RB David Martin-Robinson TE Brayden Narveson K Bryce Oliver WR Sam Schnee WR Jabari Small RB Cody Spencer G Steven Stilianos TE Eric Garror CB Tre'Shaun Harrison WR Kearis Jackson WR Matthew Jackson S Anthony Kendall CB TK McLendon Jr. DE Caleb Murphy OLB John Ojukwu OL Otis Reese IV LB Thomas Rush OLB Ty Zentner P Tre Avery CB Mike Brown S Julius Chestnut RB JoJo Domann LB Jack Gibbens LB Thomas Odukoya TE Andrew Rupcich OL Ryan Stonehouse P Leroy Watson IV T Shyheim Carter DB Mason Kinsey WR Nick Westbrook-Ikhine WR Luke Gifford LB Daniel Brunskill OL Morgan Cox LS	2022 2021 2020 (Was) 2020 (KC) 2019 2019 (Dal)
<u>UNDRAFTED</u>	<u>ROUND 10</u>	<u>ROUND 11</u>
<u>Player</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Year</u>
Brian Dooley T Khalid Duke OLB Keaton Ellis S Isaiah Iton DL Robert Javier CB	As of July 18, 2024	As of July 18, 2024



HOW THE TENNESSEE TITANS WERE BUILT

YEAR	DRAFTEES (28)	FREE AGENTS (59)	TRADES/WAIVERS (3)
2024	T JC Latham (1) DT T'Vondre Sweat (2) LB Cedric Gray (4) CB Jarvis Brownlee Jr. (5) WR Jha'Quan Jackson (6) LB James Williams (7a) OLB Jaylen Harrell (7b)	CB Chidobe Awuzie (UFA-CIN) C Lloyd Cushenberry III (UFA-DEN) LB Kenneth Murray Jr. (UFA-LAC) RB Tony Pollard (UFA-DAL) OL Saahdiq Charles (UFA-WAS) WR Calvin Ridley (UFA-JAX) QB Mason Rudolph (UFA-PIT) DL Sebastian Joseph-Day (UFA-SF) T Brian Dooley (FA) OLB Khalid Duke (FA) S Keaton Ellis (FA) DL Isaiah Iton (FA) CB Robert Javier (FA) CB Gabe Judy-Lally (FA) RB Dillon Johnson (FA) TE David Martin-Robinson (FA) K Brayden Narveson (FA) WR Bryce Oliver (FA) WR Sam Schnee (FA) RB Jabari Small (FA) G Cole Spencer (FA) TE Steven Stilianos (FA) TE Nick Vannett (FA) WR Tyler Boyd (FA) T Geron Christian Sr. (FA) S Jamal Adams (FA)	CB L'Jarius Sneed (T-KC) T Leroy Watson IV (T-CLE)
2023	OL Peter Skoronski (1) QB Will Levis (2) RB Tyjae Spears (3) TE Josh Whyte (5) OL Jaelyn Duncan (6) WR Colton Dowell (7)	CB Shyheim Carter (FA) OL Daniel Brunskill (UFA-SF) LB Luke Gifford (UFA-DAL) OLB Arden Key (UFA-JAX) WR Tre'Shaun Harrison (FA) S Matthew Jackson (FA) CB Anthony Kendall (FA) OLB Caleb Murphy (FA) DE TK McLendon Jr. (FA) OL John Ojukwu (FA) LB Otis Reese IV (FA) OLB Thomas Rush (FA) DB Eric Garror (FA) WR Kearis Jackson (FA) WR DeAndre Hopkins (FA) DB Tay Gowan (FA) DT Marlon Davidson (FA) OL Lachavious Simmons (FA) P Ty Zentner (FA) LB JoJo Domann (FA) DL Quinton Bohanna (FA) DL Keondre Coburn (FA) LB Garret Wallow (FA)	K Nick Folk (T-NE)
2022	WR Treyton Burks (1) CB Roger McCreary (2) OL Nicholas Petit-Frere (3a) QB Malik Willis (3b) RB Hassan Haskins (4a) TE Chig Okonkwo (4b) WR Kyle Philips (5) LB Chance Campbell (6b)	CB Tre Avery (FA) RB Julius Chestnut (FA) LB Jack Gibbens (FA) TE Thomas Odukoya (FA) P Ryan Stonehouse (FA) OL Andrew Ruppich (FA) S Mike Brown (FA)	
2021	CB Caleb Farley (1) OL Dillon Radunz (2) DB Elijah Molden (3b) OLB Rashad Weaver (4b)	LS Morgan Cox (UFA-BAL) WR Mason Kinsey (FA)	
2020		WR Nick Westbrook-Ikhine (FA)	
2019	DT Jeffery Simmons (1) S Amani Hooker (4)		
2018	OLB Harold Landry III (2)		

As of July 18, 2024



TENNESSEE TITANS POSITIONAL ROSTER - OFFENSE

QUARTERBACKS (3)

8	Levis, Will	QB	6-4	229	6/27/99	2	Kentucky	Madison, Conn.	D2-'23
11	Rudolph, Mason	QB	6-5	235	7/17/95	7	Oklahoma State	Rock Hill, S.C.	UFA (PIT)-'24
7	Willis, Malik	QB	6-1	219	5/25/99	3	Liberty	Atlanta, Ga.	D3b-'22

RUNNING BACKS (6)

36	Chestnut, Julius	RB	5-11	228	10/26/00	3	Sacred Heart	Bowie, Md.	FA-'22
25	Haskins, Hassan	RB	6-2	228	11/26/99	3	Michigan	St. Louis, Mo.	D4a-'22
35	Johnson, Dillon	RB	5-11	217	6/15/01	R	Washington	Greenville, Miss.	FA-'24
20	Pollard, Tony	RB	6-0	209	4/30/97	6	Memphis	Memphis, Tenn.	UFA (DAL)-'24
31	Small, Jabari	RB	5-9	198	1/31/01	R	Tennessee	Memphis, Tenn.	FA-'24
2	Spears, Tyjae	RB	5-11	195	6/15/01	2	Tulane	Ponchatoula, La.	D3-'23

WIDE RECEIVERS (13)

83	Boyd, Tyler	WR	6-2	203	11/15/94	9	Pittsburgh	Clairton, Pa.	FA-'24
16	Burks, Treyton	WR	6-2	225	3/23/00	3	Arkansas	Warren, Ark.	D1-'22
14	Dowell, Colton	WR	6-3	212	4/19/99	2	Tennessee-Martin	Lebanon, Tenn.	D7-'23
82	Harrison, Tre'Shaun	WR	5-11	188	6/26/00	1	Oregon State	Seattle, Wash.	FA-'23
10	Hopkins, DeAndre	WR	6-1	212	6/6/92	12	Clemson	Central, S.C.	FA-'23
19	Jackson, Jha'Quan	WR	5-9	188	5/15/00	R	Tulane	Luling, La.	D6-'24
5	Jackson, Kearis	WR	5-11	196	12/9/99	2	Georgia	Fort Valley, Ga.	FA-'23
12	Kinsey, Mason	WR	5-11	200	8/29/98	2	Berry College	Demorest, Ga.	FA-'21
80	Oliver, Bryce	WR	6-1	214	5/19/00	R	Youngstown State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	FA-'24
18	Philips, Kyle	WR	5-11	189	6/17/99	3	UCLA	San Marcos, Calif.	D5-'22
0	Ridley, Calvin	WR	6-1	190	12/20/94	6	Alabama	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	UFA (JAX)-'24
87	Schnee, Sam	WR	5-10	191	4/1/00	R	Northern Iowa	Dubuque, Iowa	FA-'24
15	Westbrook-Ikhine, Nick	WR	6-2	211	3/21/97	5	Indiana	Lake Mary, Fla.	FA-'20

TIGHT ENDS (6)

88	Martin-Robinson, David	TE	6-3	247	12/26/99	R	Temple	Landisville, Pa.	FA-'24
89	Odukoya, Thomas	TE	6-6	253	5/5/97	1	Eastern Michigan	Almere, Netherlands	FA-'22
85	Okonkwo, Chig	TE	6-3	238	9/8/99	3	Maryland	Powder Springs, Ga.	D4b-'22
86	Stilianos, Steven	TE	6-5	251	2/25/00	R	Iowa	Hayes, Va.	FA-'24
84	Vannett, Nick	TE	6-5	257	3/6/93	9	Ohio State	Westerville, Ohio	FA-'24
81	Whyte, Josh	TE	6-7	248	9/8/99	2	Cincinnati	Cincinnati, Ohio	D5-'23

CENTERS (2)

60	Brunskill, Daniel	OL	6-5	300	1/27/94	6	San Diego State	Valley Center, Calif.	UFA (SF)-'23
79	Cushenberry III, Lloyd	C	6-4	315	11/22/97	5	Louisiana State	Carville, La.	UFA (DEN)-'24

GUARDS (5)

53	Charles, Saahdiq	OL	6-4	322	7/26/99	5	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	UFA (WAS)-'24
76	Rupcich, Andrew	OL	6-6	318	4/1/99	1	Culver-Stockton	Wonder Lake, Ill.	FA-'22
73	Simmons, Lachavious	OL	6-5	315	9/12/96	3	Tennessee State	Selma, Ala.	FA-'23
77	Skoronski, Peter	OL	6-4	313	7/31/01	2	Northwestern	Park Ridge, Ill.	D1-'23
70	Spencer, Cole	G	6-3	307	4/12/99	R	Texas Tech	Louisville, Ky.	FA-'24

TACKLES (8)

64	Christian Sr., Geron	T	6-5	315	9/10/96	7	Louisville	Ocala, Fla.	FA-'24
68	Dooley, Brian	T	6-5	318	12/18/99	R	Eastern Michigan	Bowling Green, Ohio	FA-'24
71	Duncan, Jaelyn	OL	6-6	306	7/8/00	2	Maryland	New Carrollton, Md.	D6-'23
55	Latham, JC	T	6-6	342	2/8/03	R	Alabama	Oak Creek, Wis.	D1-'24
61	Ojukwu, John	OL	6-5	309	1/9/99	1	Boise State	Boise, Idaho	FA-'23
78	Petit-Frere, Nicholas	OL	6-5	316	9/15/99	3	Ohio State	Tampa, Fla.	D3a-'22
75	Radunz, Dillon	OL	6-6	301	3/28/98	4	North Dakota State	Becker, Minn.	D2-'21
72	Watson IV, Leroy	T	6-5	310	6/10/98	2	Texas-San Antonio	Snellville, Ga.	T (CLE)-'24

LONG SNAPPER (1)

46	Cox, Morgan	LS	6-4	233	4/26/86	15	Tennessee	Collierville, Tenn.	UFA (BAL)-'21
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PLACEKICKERS (2)

6	Folk, Nick	K	6-1	225	11/5/84	17	Arizona	Sherman Oaks, Calif.	T (NE)-'23
47	Narveson, Brayden	K	5-11	215	9/28/99	R	North Carolina State	Scottsdale, Ariz.	FA-'24

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TENNESSEE TITANS POSITIONAL ROSTER - DEFENSE

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN (8)

97	Bohanna, Quinton	DL	6-4	360	3/16/99	4	Kentucky	Memphis, Tenn.	FA-'23
91	Coburn, Keondre	DL	6-2	332	5/23/00	2	Texas	Houston, Texas	FA-'23
90	Davidson, Marlon	DT	6-3	303	5/11/98	4	Auburn	Greenville, Ala.	FA-'23
76	Iton, Isaiah	DL	6-2	277	8/23/01	R	Rutgers	Houston, Texas	FA-'24
69	Joseph-Day, Sebastian	DL	6-4	310	3/21/95	6	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (SF)-'24
96	McLendon Jr., TK	DE	6-4	275	2/27/99	2	Eastern Kentucky	Soperton, Ga.	FA-'23
98	Simmons, Jeffery	DT	6-4	305	7/28/97	6	Mississippi State	Macon, Miss.	D1-'19
93	Sweat, T'Vondre	DT	6-4	366	7/11/01	R	Texas	Hunsville, Texas	D2-'24

LINEBACKERS (16)

45	Campbell, Chance	LB	6-2	232	10/8/99	3	Mississippi	Ellicott City, Md.	D6b-'22
47	Domann, JoJo	LB	6-1	230	7/28/97	2	Nebraska	Colorado Springs, Colo.	FA-'23
53	Duke, Khalid	OLB	6-3	246	2/27/01	R	Kansas State	Atlanta, Ga.	FA-'24
50	Gibbens, Jack	LB	6-3	242	11/24/98	2	Minnesota	Bulverde, Texas	FA-'22
57	Gifford, Luke	LB	6-3	243	8/28/95	6	Nebraska	Lincoln, Neb.	UFA (DAL)-'23
51	Gray, Cedric	LB	6-2	234	10/30/02	R	North Carolina	Charlotte, N.C.	D4-'24
92	Harrell, Jaylen	OLB	6-4	247	5/1/02	R	Michigan	Tampa, Fla.	D7b-'24
49	Key, Arden	OLB	6-5	240	5/3/96	7	Louisiana State	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (JAX)-'23
58	Landry III, Harold	OLB	6-2	252	6/5/96	7	Boston College	Spring Lake, N.C.	D2-'18
42	Murphy, Caleb	OLB	6-3	254	12/15/99	2	Ferris State	Dowagiac, Mich.	FA-'23
56	Murray Jr., Kenneth	LB	6-2	241	11/16/98	5	Oklahoma	Missouri City, Texas	UFA (LAC)-'24
41	Reese IV, Otis	LB	6-3	214	7/2/98	2	Mississippi	Leesburg, Ga.	FA-'23
48	Rush, Thomas	OLB	6-3	251	1/31/00	1	Minnesota	Marysville, Ohio	FA-'23
54	Wallow, Garret	LB	6-2	230	1/25/99	4	Texas Christian	New Orleans, La.	FA-'23
99	Weaver, Rashad	OLB	6-4	259	11/10/97	4	Pittsburgh	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D4b-'21
52	Williams, James	LB	6-4	232	2/15/03	R	Miami (Fla.)	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D7a-'24

CORNERBACKS (11)

23	Avery, Tre	CB	5-11	185	2/26/97	3	Rutgers	Baltimore, Md.	FA-'22
13	Awuzie, Chidobe	CB	6-0	202	5/24/95	8	Colorado	San Jose, Calif.	UFA (CIN)-'24
29	Brownlee Jr., Jarvis	CB	5-10	194	7/13/01	R	Louisville	Miami Gardens, Fla.	D5-'24
3	Farley, Caleb	CB	6-2	197	11/2/98	4	Virginia Tech	Maiden, N.C.	D1-'21
33	Garror, Eric	DB	5-8	174	3/31/00	2	Louisiana-Lafayette	Mobile, Ala.	FA-'23
30	Gowan, Tay	DB	6-2	185	1/7/98	2	Central Florida	Covington, Ga.	FA-'23
35	Javier, Robert	CB	6-0	193	5/26/00	R	Towson	Bronx, N.Y.	FA-'24
32	Jeudy-Lally, Gabe	CB	6-1	189	2/16/01	R	Tennessee	Austin, Texas	FA-'24
40	Kendall, Anthony	CB	5-10	188	12/17/99	2	Baldwin Wallace	Port Richey, Fla.	FA-'23
21	McCreary, Roger	CB	5-11	190	2/10/00	3	Auburn	Mobile, Ala.	D2-'22
38	Sneed, L'Jarvis	CB	6-1	192	1/21/97	5	Louisiana Tech	Minden, La.	T (KC)-'24

SAFETIES (7)

	Adams, Jamal	S	6-1	213	10/17/95	8	Louisiana State	Lewisville, Texas	FA-'24
44	Brown, Mike	S	6-1	218	4/7/99	2	Miami (Ohio)	Grand Rapids, Mich.	FA-'22
28	Carter, Shyheim	DB	5-10	194	12/15/97	1	Alabama	Kentwood, La.	FA-'22
31	Ellis, Keaton	S	5-11	185	2/22/01	R	Penn State	State College, Pa.	FA-'24
37	Hooker, Amani	S	5-11	210	6/14/98	6	Iowa	Minneapolis, Minn.	D4-'19
39	Jackson, Matthew	S	6-1	209	11/9/98	2	Eastern Kentucky	Nashville, Tenn.	FA-'23
24	Molden, Elijah	DB	5-10	192	1/30/99	4	Washington	West Linn, Ore.	D3b-'21

PUNTERS (2)

4	Stonehouse, Ryan	P	5-10	193	5/11/99	3	Colorado State	La Verne, Calif.	FA-'22
17	Zentner, Ty	P	6-2	199	6/7/98	2	Kansas State	Topeka, Kan.	FA-'23

As of July 18, 2024



2024 TENNESSEE TITANS ALPHABETICAL ROSTER

NO.	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	BIRTHDATE	EXP.	COLLEGE	HOMETOWN	ACQUIRED
	Adams, Jamal	S	6-1	213	10/17/95	8	Louisiana State	Lewisville, Texas	FA-'24
23	Avery, Tre	CB	5-11	185	2/26/97	3	Rutgers	Baltimore, Md.	FA-'22
13	Awuzie, Chidobe	CB	6-0	202	5/24/95	8	Colorado	San Jose, Calif.	UFA (CIN)-'24
97	Bohanna, Quinton	DL	6-4	360	3/16/99	4	Kentucky	Memphis, Tenn.	FA-'23
83	Boyd, Tyler	WR	6-2	203	11/15/94	9	Pittsburgh	Clairton, Pa.	FA-'24
44	Brown, Mike	S	6-1	218	4/7/99	2	Miami (Ohio)	Grand Rapids, Mich.	FA-'22
29	Brownlee Jr., Jarvis	CB	5-10	194	7/13/01	R	Louisville	Miami Gardens, Fla.	D5-'24
60	Brunskill, Daniel	OL	6-5	300	1/27/94	6	San Diego State	Valley Center, Calif.	UFA (SF)-'23
16	Burks, Treyton	WR	6-2	225	3/23/00	3	Arkansas	Warren, Ark.	D1-'22
45	Campbell, Chance	LB	6-2	232	10/8/99	3	Mississippi	Ellicott City, Md.	D6b-'22
28	Carter, Shyheim	DB	5-10	194	12/15/97	1	Alabama	Kentwood, La.	FA-'22
53o	Charles, Saahdiq	OL	6-4	322	7/26/99	5	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	UFA (WAS)-'24
36	Chestnut, Julius	RB	5-11	228	10/26/00	3	Sacred Heart	Bowie, Md.	FA-'22
64	Christian Sr., Geron	T	6-5	315	9/10/96	7	Louisville	Ocala, Fla.	FA-'24
91	Coburn, Keondre	DL	6-2	332	5/23/00	2	Texas	Houston, Texas	FA-'23
46	Cox, Morgan	LS	6-4	233	4/26/86	15	Tennessee	Collierville, Tenn.	UFA (BAL)-'21
79	Cushenberry III, Lloyd	C	6-4	315	11/22/97	5	Louisiana State	Carville, La.	UFA (DEN)-'24
90	Davison, Marlon	DT	6-3	303	5/11/98	4	Auburn	Greenville, Ala.	FA-'23
47	Domann, JoJo	LB	6-1	230	7/28/97	2	Nebraska	Colorado Springs, Colo.	FA-'23
68	Dooley, Brian	T	6-5	318	12/18/99	R	Eastern Michigan	Bowling Green, Ohio	FA-'24
14	Dowell, Colton	WR	6-3	212	4/19/99	2	Tennessee-Martin	Lebanon, Tenn.	D7-'23
53d	Duke, Khalid	OLB	6-3	246	2/27/01	R	Kansas State	Atlanta, Ga.	FA-'24
71	Duncan, Jaelyn	OL	6-6	306	7/8/00	2	Maryland	New Carrollton, Md.	D6-'23
31d	Ellis, Keaton	S	5-11	185	2/22/01	R	Penn State	State College, Pa.	FA-'24
3	Farley, Caleb	CB	6-2	197	11/2/98	4	Virginia Tech	Maiden, N.C.	D1-'21
6	Folk, Nick	K	6-1	225	11/5/84	17	Arizona	Sherman Oaks, Calif.	T (NE)-'23
33	Garror, Eric	DB	5-8	174	3/31/00	2	Louisiana-Lafayette	Mobile, Ala.	FA-'23
50	Gibbens, Jack	LB	6-3	242	11/24/98	2	Minnesota	Bulverde, Texas	FA-'22
57	Gifford, Luke	LB	6-3	243	8/28/95	6	Nebraska	Lincoln, Neb.	UFA (DAL)-'23
30	Gowan, Tay	DB	6-2	185	1/7/98	2	Central Florida	Covington, Ga.	FA-'23
51	Gray, Cedric	LB	6-2	234	10/30/02	R	North Carolina	Charlotte, N.C.	D4-'24
92	Harrell, Jaylen	OLB	6-4	247	5/1/02	R	Michigan	Tampa, Fla.	D7b-'24
82	Harrison, Tre'Shaun	WR	5-11	188	6/26/00	1	Oregon State	Seattle, Wash.	FA-'23
25	Haskins, Hassan	RB	6-2	228	11/26/99	3	Michigan	St. Louis, Mo.	D4a-'22
37	Hooker, Amani	S	5-11	210	6/14/98	6	Iowa	Minneapolis, Minn.	D4-'19
10	Hopkins, DeAndre	WR	6-1	212	6/6/92	12	Clemson	Central, S.C.	FA-'23
76d	Iton, Isaiah	DL	6-2	277	8/23/01	R	Rutgers	Houston, Texas	FA-'24
19	Jackson, Jha'Quan	WR	5-9	188	5/15/00	R	Tulane	Luling, La.	D6-'24
5	Jackson, Kearis	WR	5-11	196	12/9/99	2	Georgia	Fort Valley, Ga.	FA-'23
39	Jackson, Matthew	S	6-1	209	11/9/98	2	Eastern Kentucky	Nashville, Tenn.	FA-'23
35d	Javier, Robert	CB	6-0	193	5/26/00	R	Towson	Bronx, N.Y.	FA-'24
32	Jeady-Lally, Gabe	CB	6-1	189	2/16/01	R	Tennessee	Austin, Texas	FA-'24
35o	Johnson, Dillon	RB	5-11	217	6/15/01	R	Washington	Greenville, Miss.	FA-'24
69	Joseph-Day, Sebastian	DL	6-4	310	3/21/95	6	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (SF)-'24
40	Kendall, Anthony	CB	5-10	188	12/17/99	2	Baldwin Wallace	Port Richey, Fla.	FA-'23
49	Key, Arden	OLB	6-5	240	5/3/96	7	Louisiana State	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (JAX)-'23
12	Kinsey, Mason	WR	5-11	200	8/29/98	2	Berry College	Demorest, Ga.	FA-'21
58	Landry III, Harold	OLB	6-2	252	6/5/96	7	Spring College	Spring Lake, N.C.	D2-'18
55	Latham, JC	T	6-6	342	2/8/03	R	Alabama	Oak Creek, Wis.	D1-'24
8	Levis, Will	QB	6-4	229	6/27/99	2	Kentucky	Madison, Conn.	D2-'23
88	Martin-Robinson, David	TE	6-3	247	12/26/99	R	Temple	Landisville, Pa.	FA-'24
21	McCreary, Roger	CB	5-11	190	2/10/00	3	Auburn	Mobile, Ala.	D2-'22
96	McLendon Jr., TK	DE	6-4	275	2/27/99	2	Eastern Kentucky	Soperton, Ga.	FA-'23
24	Molden, Elijah	DB	5-10	192	1/30/99	4	Washington	West Linn, Ore.	D3b-'21
42	Murphy, Caleb	OLB	6-3	254	12/15/99	2	Ferris State	Dowagiac, Mich.	FA-'23
56	Murray Jr., Kenneth	LB	6-2	241	11/16/98	5	Oklahoma	Missouri City, Texas	UFA (LAC)-'24
47o	Narveson, Brayden	K	5-11	215	9/28/99	R	North Carolina State	Scottsdale, Ariz.	FA-'24
89	Odukoya, Thomas	TE	6-6	253	5/5/97	1	Eastern Michigan	Almere, Netherlands	FA-'22
61	Ojukwu, John	OL	6-5	309	1/9/99	1	Boise State	Boise, Idaho	FA-'23
85	Okonkwo, Chig	TE	6-3	238	9/8/99	3	Maryland	Powder Springs, Ga.	D4b-'22
80	Oliver, Bryce	WR	6-1	214	5/19/00	R	Youngstown State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	FA-'24
78	Petit-Frere, Nicholas	OL	6-5	316	9/15/99	3	Ohio State	Tampa, Fla.	D3a-'22
18	Phillips, Kyle	WR	5-11	189	6/17/99	3	UCLA	San Marcos, Calif.	D5-'22
20	Pollard, Tony	RB	6-0	209	4/30/97	6	Memphis	Memphis, Tenn.	UFA (DAL)-'24
75	Radunz, Dillon	OL	6-6	301	3/28/98	4	North Dakota State	Becker, Minn.	D2-'21
41	Reese IV, Otis	LB	6-3	214	7/2/98	2	Mississippi	Leesburg, Ga.	FA-'23
0	Ridley, Calvin	WR	6-1	190	12/20/94	6	Alabama	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	UFA (JAX)-'24
11	Rudolph, Mason	QB	6-5	235	7/17/95	7	Oklahoma State	Rock Hill, S.C.	UFA (PIT)-'24
76o	Rupcich, Andrew	OL	6-6	318	4/1/99	1	Culver-Stockton	Wonder Lake, Ill.	FA-'22
48	Rush, Thomas	OLB	6-3	251	1/31/00	1	Minnesota	Marysville, Ohio	FA-'23
87	Schnee, Sam	WR	5-10	191	4/1/00	R	Northern Iowa	Dubuque, Iowa	FA-'24
98	Simmons, Jeffery	DT	6-4	305	7/28/97	6	Mississippi State	Macon, Miss.	D1-'19
73	Simmons, Lachavious	OL	6-5	315	9/12/96	3	Tennessee State	Selma, Ala.	FA-'23
77	Skoronski, Peter	OL	6-4	313	7/31/01	2	Northwestern	Park Ridge, Ill.	D1-'23
31o	Small, Jabari	RB	5-9	198	1/31/01	R	Tennessee	Memphis, Tenn.	FA-'24
38	Sneed, L'Jarius	CB	6-1	192	1/21/97	5	Louisiana Tech	Minden, La.	T (KC)-'24
2	Spears, Tyjae	RB	5-11	195	6/15/01	2	Tulane	Ponchatoula, La.	D3-'23
70	Spencer, Cole	G	6-3	307	4/12/99	R	Texas Tech	Louisville, Ky.	FA-'24
86	Stilianos, Steven	TE	6-5	251	2/25/00	R	Iowa	Hayes, Va.	FA-'24
4	Stonehouse, Ryan	P	5-10	193	5/11/99	3	Colorado State	La Verne, Calif.	FA-'22
93	Sweat, T'Vondre	DT	6-4	366	7/1/01	R	Texas	Hunstville, Texas	D2-'24
84	Vannett, Nick	TE	6-5	257	3/6/93	9	Ohio State	Westerville, Ohio	FA-'24
54	Wallow, Garret	LB	6-2	230	1/25/99	4	Texas Christian	New Orleans, La.	FA-'23
72	Watson IV, Leroy	T	6-5	310	6/10/98	2	Texas-San Antonio	Snellville, Ga.	T (CLE)-'24
99	Weaver, Rashad	OLB	6-4	259	11/10/97	4	Pittsburgh	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D4b-'21
15	Westbrook-Ikhine, Nick	WR	6-2	211	3/21/97	5	Indiana	Lake Mary, Fla.	FA-'20
81	Whyle, Josh	TE	6-7	248	9/8/99	2	Cincinnati	Cincinnati, Ohio	D5-'23
52	Williams, James	LB	6-4	232	2/15/03	R	Miami (Fla.)	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D7a-'24
7	Willis, Malik	QB	6-1	219	5/25/99	3	Liberty	Atlanta, Ga.	D3b-'22
17	Zentner, Ty	P	6-2	199	6/7/98	2	Kansas State	Topeka, Kan.	FA-'23

Active Roster Count: 90

As of July 18, 2024

HEAD COACH: BRIAN CALLAHAN

ASSISTANT COACHES: COLT ANDERSON (special teams coordinator), NICK HOLZ (offensive coordinator), DENNARD WILSON (defensive coordinator), BRIAN BELL (assistant director of sports performance), BEN BLOOM (outside linebackers), FRANK BUSH (linebackers), KYLAN BUTLER (offensive assistant), BILL CALLAHAN (offensive line), STEVE DONATELL (defensive assistant), SCOTT FUCHS (assistant offensive line), BO HARDEGREE (quarterbacks), CHRIS HARRIS (defensive passing game coordinator/cornerbacks), STEVE JACKSON (secondary/safeties), MATT JONES (offensive assistant), TOM JONES (assistant to the head coach), RANDY JORDAN (running backs), ANTHONY LEVINE SR. (assistant special teams), LORI LOCUST (defensive quality control), MARK LOVAT (assistant strength and conditioning), PAYTON MCCOLLUM (assistant wide receivers), CLINTON McMILLAN (assistant defensive line/pass rush specialist), JUSTIN OUTTEN (tight ends), HALEY ROBERTS (sports performance assistant), TRACY ROCKER (defensive Line), JOHN SHAW (assistant sports performance - speed training), LUKE STOCKER (offensive assistant), GRANT THORNE (assistant strength and conditioning), TYKE TOLBERT (wide receivers), ZAC WOODFIN (director of sports performance)



2024 TENNESSEE TITANS NUMERICAL ROSTER

NO.	NAME	POS.	HT.	WT.	AGE	EXP.	COLLEGE	HOMETOWN	ACQUIRED
0	Calvin Ridley	WR	6-1	190	29	6	Alabama	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	UFA (JAX)-24
2	Tyjae Spears	RB	5-11	195	23	2	Tulane	Ponchatoula, La.	D3-23
3	Caleb Farley	CB	6-2	197	25	4	Virginia Tech	Maiden, N.C.	D1-21
4	Ryan Stonehouse	P	5-10	193	25	3	Colorado State	La Verne, Calif.	FA-22
5	Kearis Jackson	WR	5-11	196	24	2	Georgia	Fort Valley, Ga.	FA-23
6	Nick Folk	K	6-1	225	39	17	Arizona	Sherman Oaks, Calif.	T (NE)-23
7	Malik Willis	QB	6-1	219	25	3	Liberty	Atlanta, Ga.	D3b-22
8	Will Levis	QB	6-4	229	25	2	Kentucky	Madison, Conn.	D2-23
10	DeAndre Hopkins	WR	6-1	212	32	12	Clemson	Central, S.C.	FA-23
11	Mason Rudolph	QB	6-5	235	29	7	Oklahoma State	Rock Hill, S.C.	UFA (PIT)-24
12	Mason Kinsey	WR	5-11	200	25	2	Berry College	Demorest, Ga.	FA-21
13	Chidobe Awuzie	CB	6-0	202	29	8	Colorado	San Jose, Calif.	UFA (CIN)-24
14	Colton Dowell	WR	6-3	212	25	2	Tennessee-Martin	Lebanon, Tenn.	D7-23
15	Nick Westbrook-Ikhine	WR	6-2	211	27	5	Indiana	Lake Mary, Fla.	FA-20
16	Treyton Burks	WR	6-2	225	24	3	Arkansas	Warren, Ark.	D1-22
17	Ty Zentner	P	6-2	199	26	2	Kansas State	Topeka, Kan.	FA-23
18	Kyle Philips	WR	5-11	189	25	3	UCLA	San Marcos, Calif.	D5-22
19	Jha'Quan Jackson	WR	5-9	188	24	R	Tulane	Luling, La.	D6-24
20	Tony Pollard	RB	6-0	209	27	6	Memphis	Memphis, Tenn.	UFA (DAL)-24
21	Roger McCreary	CB	5-11	190	24	3	Auburn	Mobile, Ala.	D2-22
23	Tre Avery	CB	5-11	185	27	3	Rutgers	Baltimore, Md.	FA-22
24	Elijah Molden	DB	5-10	192	25	4	Washington	West Linn, Ore.	D3b-21
25	Hassan Haskins	RB	6-2	228	24	3	Michigan	St. Louis, Mo.	D4a-22
28	Shyheim Carter	DB	5-10	194	26	1	Alabama	Kentwood, La.	FA-22
29	Jarvis Brownlee Jr.	CB	5-10	194	23	R	Louisville	Miami Gardens, Fla.	D5-24
30	Tay Gowan	DB	6-2	185	26	2	Central Florida	Covington, Ga.	FA-23
31d	Keaton Ellis	S	5-11	185	23	R	Penn State	State College, Pa.	FA-24
31o	Jabari Small	RB	5-9	198	23	R	Tennessee	Memphis, Tenn.	FA-24
32	Gabe Judy-Lally	CB	6-1	189	23	R	Tennessee	Austin, Texas	FA-24
33	Eric Garror	DB	5-8	174	24	2	Louisiana-Lafayette	Mobile, Ala.	FA-23
35d	Robert Javier	CB	6-0	193	24	R	Towson	Bronx, N.Y.	FA-24
35o	Dillon Johnson	RB	5-11	217	23	R	Washington	Greenville, Miss.	FA-24
36	Julius Chestnut	RB	5-11	228	23	3	Sacred Heart	Bowie, Md.	FA-22
37	Amani Hooker	S	5-11	210	26	6	Iowa	Minneapolis, Minn.	D4-19
38	L'Jarius Sneed	CB	6-1	192	27	5	Louisiana Tech	Minden, La.	T (KC)-24
39	Matthew Jackson	S	6-1	209	25	2	Eastern Kentucky	Nashville, Tenn.	FA-23
40	Anthony Kendall	CB	5-10	188	24	2	Baldwin Wallace	Port Richey, Fla.	FA-23
41	Otis Reese IV	LB	6-3	214	26	2	Mississippi	Leesburg, Ga.	FA-23
42	Caleb Murphy	OLB	6-3	254	24	2	Ferris State	Dowagiac, Mich.	FA-23
44	Mike Brown	S	6-1	218	25	2	Miami (Ohio)	Grand Rapids, Mich.	FA-22
45	Chance Campbell	LB	6-2	232	24	3	Mississippi	Ellicott City, Md.	D6b-22
46	Morgan Cox	LS	6-4	233	38	15	Tennessee	Collierville, Tenn.	UFA (BAL)-21
47d	JoJo Domann	LB	6-1	230	26	2	Nebraska	Colorado Springs, Colo.	FA-23
47o	Brayden Narveson	K	5-11	215	24	R	North Carolina State	Scottsdale, Ariz.	FA-24
48	Thomas Rush	OLB	6-3	251	24	1	Minnesota	Marysville, Ohio	FA-23
49	Arden Key	OLB	6-5	240	28	7	Louisiana State	Atlanta, Ga.	UFA (JAX)-23
50	Jack Gibbens	LB	6-3	242	25	2	Minnesota	Bulverde, Texas	FA-22
51	Cedric Gray	LB	6-2	234	21	R	North Carolina	Charlotte, N.C.	D4-24
52	James Williams	LB	6-4	232	21	R	Miami (Fla.)	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D7a-24
53o	Saahdiq Charles	OL	6-4	322	24	5	Louisiana State	New Orleans, La.	UFA (WAS)-24
53d	Khalid Duke	OLB	6-3	246	23	R	Kansas State	Atlanta, Ga.	FA-24
54	Garret Wallow	LB	6-2	230	25	4	Texas Christian	New Orleans, La.	FA-23
55	JC Latham	T	6-6	342	21	R	Alabama	Oak Creek, Wis.	D1-24
56	Kenneth Murray Jr.	LB	6-2	241	25	5	Oklahoma	Missouri City, Texas	UFA (LAC)-24
57	Luke Gifford	LB	6-3	243	28	6	Nebraska	Lincoln, Neb.	UFA (DAL)-23
58	Harold Landry III	OLB	6-2	252	28	7	Boston College	Spring Lake, N.C.	D2-18
60	Daniel Brunskill	OL	6-5	300	30	6	San Diego State	Valley Center, Calif.	UFA (SF)-23
61	John Ojukwu	OL	6-5	309	25	1	Boise State	Boise, Idaho	FA-23
64	Geron Christian Sr.	T	6-5	315	27	7	Louisville	Ocala, Fla.	FA-24
68	Brian Dooley	T	6-5	318	24	R	Eastern Michigan	Bowling Green, Ohio	FA-24
69	Sebastian Joseph-Day	DL	6-4	310	29	6	Rutgers	Stroudsburg, Pa.	UFA (SF)-24
70	Cole Spencer	G	6-3	307	25	R	Texas Tech	Louisville, Ky.	FA-24
71	Jaelyn Duncan	OL	6-6	306	24	2	Maryland	New Carrollton, Md.	D6-23
72	Leroy Watson IV	T	6-5	310	26	2	Texas-San Antonio	Snellville, Ga.	T (CLE)-24
73	Lachavious Simmons	OL	6-5	315	27	3	Tennessee State	Selma, Ala.	FA-23
75	Dillon Radunz	OL	6-6	301	26	4	North Dakota State	Becker, Minn.	D2-21
76d	Isaiah Iton	DL	6-2	277	22	R	Rutgers	Houston, Texas	FA-24
76o	Andrew Ruppich	OL	6-6	318	25	1	Culver-Stockton	Wonder Lake, Ill.	FA-22
77	Peter Skorski	OL	6-4	313	22	2	Northwestern	Park Ridge, Ill.	D1-23
78	Nicholas Petit-Frere	OL	6-5	316	24	3	Ohio State	Tampa, Fla.	D3a-22
79	Lloyd Cushenberry III	C	6-4	315	26	5	Louisiana State	Carville, La.	UFA (DEN)-24
80	Bryce Oliver	WR	6-1	214	24	R	Youngstown State	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	FA-24
81	Josh Whyte	TE	6-7	248	24	2	Cincinnati	Cincinnati, Ohio	D5-23
82	Tre'Shaun Harrison	WR	5-11	188	24	1	Oregon State	Seattle, Wash.	FA-23
83	Tyler Boyd	WR	6-2	203	29	9	Pittsburgh	Clairton, Pa.	FA-24
84	Nick Vannett	TE	6-5	257	31	9	Ohio State	Westerville, Ohio	FA-24
85	Chig Okonkwo	TE	6-3	238	24	3	Maryland	Powder Springs, Ga.	D4b-22
86	Steven Stilianos	TE	6-5	251	24	R	Iowa	Hayes, Va.	FA-24
87	Sam Schnee	WR	5-10	191	24	R	Northern Iowa	Dubuque, Iowa	FA-24
88	David Martin-Robinson	TE	6-3	247	24	R	Temple	Landisville, Pa.	FA-24
89	Thomas Odukoya	TE	6-6	253	27	1	Eastern Michigan	Almere, Netherlands	FA-22
90	Marlon Davidson	DT	6-3	303	26	4	Auburn	Greenville, Ala.	FA-23
91	Keondre Coburn	DL	6-2	332	24	2	Texas	Houston, Texas	FA-23
92	Jaylen Harrell	OLB	6-4	247	22	R	Michigan	Tampa, Fla.	D7b-24
93	T'Vondre Sweat	DT	6-4	366	23	R	Texas	Hunsville, Texas	D2-24
96	TK McLendon Jr.	DE	6-4	275	25	2	Eastern Kentucky	Soperton, Ga.	FA-23
97	Quinton Bohanna	DL	6-4	360	25	4	Kentucky	Memphis, Tenn.	FA-23
98	Jeffery Simmons	DT	6-4	305	26	6	Mississippi State	Macon, Miss.	D1-19
99	Rashad Weaver	OLB	6-4	259	26	4	Pittsburgh	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.	D4b-21
	Jamal Adams	S	6-1	213	28	8	Louisiana State	Lewisville, Texas	FA-24

Active Roster Count: 90

As of July 18, 2024

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HOW ACQUIRED KEY: FA (free agent), UFA (unrestricted free agent), RFA (restricted free agent), D (draft pick), W (waivers), T (trade)





TENNESSEE TITANS

**BRIAN CALLAHAN
TRANSCRIPT**

TENNESSEE TITANS VS. SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS
PRESEASON WEEK 1 POSTGAME QUOTES
Saturday, Aug. 10, 2024

HEAD COACH BRIAN CALLAHAN

What's the cliff notes version of how it all happened in your mind?

I thought our ones went out and played pretty good offensively, scoring on two possessions, which was jumpstarted by our return game, which I think the two returns early in the game was really critical for us to get going. It's good to see that, both the kickoff return and the punt return, that flipped the field for us. Defensively, had a slow start on the first drive and then sort of bounced back and dug in a little bit after that. So that was good to see as well. I thought we got after the quarterback on their end, and I thought we protected the quarterback well on our end. We were pretty efficient. I thought we ran the ball well enough. I feel like there was 100 short yardages in that game. I don't know if you guys feel that way, but I think it was like 10 or something. Every time I looked up, we were in third-and-one or fourth-and-one. Just disappointed we didn't convert the two fourth-and-ones, that would have been great to see that, especially that 17-play drive where we're fourth-and-one in the low red zone and a chance to kind of break the game open and couldn't convert that. So, those were kind of the highlights. But I thought for the most part we played clean. I mean, we had zero penalties in the first half, which is good to see. And I thought we played an efficient brand of football, I think, offensively. So, that was a good start for us.

Your take on the two returns, scheming and how much did those two guys just make a play?

It really just guys blocking well and then those guys just doing what God let them do and using their talent. There wasn't much scheme to those. It was pretty straightforward. Go punt return, go kick return.

Just two series, but to come up with 14 points on 14 plays with your starters in there, how nice is that to set the tone that way?

Oh, it's good. Any time you can come out in the game and play efficient and put two scores on just to start out for our offense, being a new unit together with all the new faces, I think is really positive. It's just nice to be able to have some success. I think success is a good thing in preseason games when you have it, it doesn't really matter who you're playing against. It's just important to sustain some success and build some winning habits, I think, in the process. And so, I think that part was good to see.

Steven Stilianos and David Martin Robinson, how do you like the way that back end of the tight end group is working?

Really happy with that. I thought we missed (Steven) Stilianos, if we could have got the ball up a touch earlier, I thought he might have scored on that one on the sideline that he didn't get in. But I think it's a deep room. I think those guys have got talent. I think we have young players that are developing. I think Justin Outten's doing a really nice job with that room as well, just getting those guys back on the train of learning how to play tight end, and I think he does a great job. So, I'm happy with those guys and they performed well for themselves tonight.

The O-line was good in pass protection and also opened up some holes, especially the first group out there. How much of that was scheming? How much of it was just guys going and winning against their man?

Both. We did want to have at least some semblance of—I wouldn't say we game planned for the game, but you want to put guys in position to have success. We made sure we had the right type of runs versus the defense we were facing, and I thought we did a nice job of putting guys in position to have success and have a chance to go execute. So, that part was good. So, it's just a combination of guys just playing well and doing things right, and then have a little bit of scheme to go along with it. So, I thought it was a good day and on the ground for sure.

How beneficial was it to have the offense have a short yardage situation to go down and score and then also have to drive as well to score?

Yeah, it was good. We've talked about all camp on getting in football shape and being able to go, I think one of those (drives) was 17 plays. That's a lot. That's a long drive for guys to go out there and play. I think it was good for everybody to feel that, feel what that felt like and see where we are conditioning wise after 17 plays. If we feel—I thought we looked pretty good. I didn't think we look tired at any point. I thought our team looked fresh. And then they played really hard tonight, so that was good to see.

How do you feel about the timing of the passing game? The one play to David Martin Robinson in particular from Mason Rudolph seemed like there was a lot that had to go on for that to work timing wise.

Yeah, I think timing wise has been good. Any time that you—I was intentional about trying to keep the quarterbacks out of harm's way to some degree. So, the ball was coming out pretty quick and some of those play-action passes were really efficient for us. They popped open. But I think our timing in the passing game is coming along really well. A couple more weeks of this and a couple more games, I think I'll feel really good about where we're at entering the regular season. But it was good to see tonight that we could be on time and play on time and operate together. It was good.

Will Levis goes in there and gets some himself popped pretty good. Is that something that you have to have a conversation with him when he comes off, or do you feel like that's good for a guy, when he's been wearing the red 'Don't touch me jersey' all offseason?

I think there's something to that, a guy just taking a good shot early on and feeling like he's ready to play. All quarterbacks will tell you they like to get that first hit out of the way. So, we got it out of the way early. Hopefully we don't take many more of them. But it was good. I didn't mind what he did. It wasn't really an egregious put himself in real harm's way (type of hit). But, yeah, the less hits, the better obviously.

How good was it for you to see that connection with Will Levis and Calvin Ridley there on that run after catch?

It was great. We were trying to get the ball to Calvin (Ridley) two or three times there. We tried the fade in the red zone, and we tried one earlier that they kind of got their flat defender out underneath and Will (Levis) checked down to the back. But it was good to just get Calvin going and you see just how explosive he can be with the ball in his hand. So, anytime they get a chance to complete a ball together, then that's great. Just one more rep for us that we get to bank going into the regular season. Their connection is coming along really well, and I think Calvin is such a fantastic receiver.

I told Will the other day that you haven't really thrown a guy like this before. He's a different style of receiver than he's probably ever played with. So, the work is coming and so far, so good.

Did you noticed Chance Campbell a lot and how was it to see him come down with that interception?

There's opportunity for those guys in the linebacker room, and I think he made the most of it. Generally speaking, in that situation, you'd like to knock the ball down as opposed to pick it off. But it was just good. He made plays kind of all night long, and I think he made a bunch of tackles. He made some hits on the quarterback. I think he sacked the quarterback once, if I'm not mistaken. But just to see him come alive a little bit was great because we're looking for guys to keep coming in that room for depth purposes. Obviously, we lost Garret Wallow. And so, there's opportunities there and he did a nice job taking advantage of it.

As you left the field tonight, it looked like you looked up at the crowd. Did you have a chance, at what point tonight did you really start to take it all in in this first game?

That's a good question. Probably not much. I was pretty focused. In the pregame, I kind of stood around and soaked it in for a second, which was cool. You know you only get your first time your first time. So this was the first time I got to actually coach the team and be out there as the head coach of the Titans for the first time, and it was pretty awesome. It's a responsibility I don't take lightly, and it was a cool moment just for a very short period of time to reflect on that. A lot of work to go still, but it was nice to have a moment to do that.

How do you like the way things went operationally? You being that guy regulating everything.

Yeah, I thought it was really good. Our communication, like amongst the staff, and the play calling process, and on defense was great. There's one or two things that—we got really close to it and we kicked that field goal with the play clock, it almost ran out. That was partly because I didn't communicate with Colt (Anderson) fast enough. So, there's some things we'll iron out. Just more so the special teams to me, that's a tricky process sometimes we're going for it or when we're not. But I would say operation, I thought it was really good. Got the play calls in on time, the quarterbacks didn't have any issues with the play clock, we didn't have any delay of games. Those are all things that, as simple as it sounds, you try to avoid and put them in a position to not have to deal with that. So, did my best to get them in quick. I think I might have run off—I ran off the play clock maybe one time before the button went out on me and Mason (Rudolph) just had to go call a play. But other than that, I felt pretty good about the operation and the communication in the game, and there'll be some things we debrief on and make sure we get better for the next time.

How happy were you with Will Levis' willingness to check down in this game?


Very happy. There's going to be plenty of times where he's going to take balls down the field, and we're going to take shots and then there's going to be a lot of times they don't give those to you and you get a chance to check the ball down. And again, I think that's the difference between, a 58 percent passer and a 68 percent passer is being smart and efficient with the ball. And when you get a chance to go let your arm live and be live down the field, then great. But there's plenty of opportunities where efficiency can take you a long ways. And so, I thought all three quarterbacks did a nice job of that tonight.

Despite it being the preseason, how good does it feel to get your first 'W'?

It all matters to me. I think that there's habits in winning. I think that winning does mean something. Even in a preseason game, the mood in the locker room is always different when you win versus when you lose. I know it doesn't count for anything in the long run, I'll probably forget about the score of the game and who did what in a year's time. But I do think in the moment, these things matter. I think you're trying to build a winning team and a winning culture. It validates your work you put in, and so that helps. So, anytime you get a chance to go out and compete, you want to win, and I think that that's the mindset our guys had tonight. The way that they played, the effort they played with was fantastic. And so, again, even though it doesn't count, I'm still happy that we won.

A lot of firsts for you, I noticed you walked out with your dad. Who cool was that? Do you think it will become a weekly tradition?

I don't know, we'll see. I think that sort of organically happened. I think we were just kind of standing around as we all just started walking out. It was cool to walk out with him, that was neat. I think what was more fun for me was just the communication in the game about calling the run game and getting his input and going back and forth on what we were going to call next. That was a really cool process for me to be a part of just father to son, you know what I mean? I've never been able to do that with him before. So, that was great. But yeah, I don't know, maybe, we will. Now that I'm aware of it, maybe I'll do it.



TENNESSEE TITANS
GAME BY GAME
STATISTICS

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME STATISTICS -- TEAM OFFENSE

Game	8/10 vs. SF
Points	17
1st Qtr	7
2nd Qtr	7
3rd Qtr	0
4th Qtr	3
Overtime	0
TDs (Ru-P-Ret)	2-0-0
PATs (M/A)	2/2
2PT Convs (M/A)	0/0
FGs (M/A)	1/2
Safeties	0
First Downs	19
Rushing	9
Passing	8
Penalty	2
3rd Down Conv (M/A)	9/17
3rd Down Conv Pct	52.9%
4th Down Conv (M/A)	0/2
4th Down Conv Pct	0.0%
Red Zone Conv (M/A)	2/4
Red Zone Conv Pct	50.0%
Goal to Go Conv (M/A)	2/2
Goal to Go Conv Pct	100.0%
Total Net Yards	336
Total Off. Plays	68
Avg. Gain Per Play	4.9
Net Yards Rushing	138
Total Rushing Plays	38
Avg. Gain Per Rush	3.6
Net Yards Passing	198
Times Sacked	1
Yards Lost on Sacks	1
Gross Yards Passing	199
Pass Attempts	29
Pass Completions	19
Completion Pct	65.5%
Avg. Gain Per Pass	6.6
Interceptions	0
Fumbles / Fum. Lost	1/1
Penalties	3
Penalty Yards	15
Punts	2
Gross Punting Average	46.5
Touchbacks	1
Inside 20	1
Punts Blocked	0
Net Punting Average	34.5
Punt Returns	2
Punt Return Yards	26
Punt Return Avg.	13.0
Fair Catches	0
Kickoff Returns	2
Kickoff Return Yards	81
Kickoff Return Avg.	40.5
Time of Possession	35:19

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME STATISTICS -- TEAM DEFENSE

Game	8/10 vs. SF
Points	13
1st Qtr	7
2nd Qtr	0
3rd Qtr	0
4th Qtr	6
Overtime	0
TDs (Ru-P-Ret)	2-0-0
PATs (M/A)	1/1
2PT Convs (M/A)	0/1
FGs (M/A)	0/0
Safeties	0
First Downs	16
Rushing	5
Passing	11
Penalty	0
3rd Down Conv (M/A)	4/11
3rd Down Conv Pct	36.4%
4th Down Conv (M/A)	0/2
4th Down Conv Pct	0.0%
Red Zone Conv (M/A)	2/2
Red Zone Conv Pct	100.0%
Goal to Go Conv (M/A)	2/2
Goal to Go Conv Pct	100.0%
Total Net Yards	286
Total Off. Plays	54
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.3
Net Yards Rushing	67
Total Rushing Plays	19
Avg. Gain Per Rush	3.5
Net Yards Passing	219
Times Sacked	2
Yards Lost on Sacks	25
Gross Yards Passing	244
Pass Attempts	33
Pass Completions	21
Completion Pct	63.6%
Avg. Gain Per Pass	6.3
Interceptions	1
Fumbles / Fum. Lost	1/0
Penalties	8
PenaltyYards	48
Punts	5
Gross Punting Average	43.2
Touchbacks	1
Inside20	1
Punts Blocked	0
Net Punting Average	34.0
Punt Returns	1
Punt Return Yards	4
Punt Return Avg.	4.0
Fair Catches	0
Kickoff Returns	4
Kickoff Return Yards	92
Kickoff Return Avg.	23.0
Time of Possession	24:41

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME PASSING

WILL LEVIS

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Att	Cmp	Yds	Pct	Y/A	TD	TD%	Int	Int%	Lg	Sac	Lost	Rating
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	5	4	35	80.0	7.00	0	0.0	0	0.0	22	0	0	95.8
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	1	5	4	35	80.0	7.00	0	0.0	0	0.0	22	0	0	95.8

MASON RUDOLPH

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Att	Cmp	Yds	Pct	Y/A	TD	TD%	Int	Int%	Lg	Sac	Lost	Rating
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	17	10	126	58.8	7.41	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	0	0	82.0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	17	10	126	58.8	7.41	0	0.0	0	0.0	36	0	0	82.0

MALIK WILLIS

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Att	Cmp	Yds	Pct	Y/A	TD	TD%	Int	Int%	Lg	Sac	Lost	Rating
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	7	5	38	71.4	5.43	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	1	1	84.2
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	7	5	38	71.4	5.43	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	1	1	84.2

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME RUSHING & RECEIVING

TYLER BOYD

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

TREYLON BURKS

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	1	12	12.0	12	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	1	12	12.0	12	0

JULIUS CHESTNUT

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	5	9	1.8	5	0	2	37	18.5	36	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	5	9	1.8	5	0	2	37	18.5	36	0

TRE'SHAUN HARRISON

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

HASSAN HASKINS

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8	27	3.4	8	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	8	27	3.4	8	0	0	0	-	0	0

DeANDRE HOPKINS

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

Jha'QUAN JACKSON

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	1	6	6.0	6	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	1	6	6.0	6	0

KEARIS JACKSON

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

MASON KINSEY

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	2	29	14.5	17	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	2	29	14.5	17	0

WILL LEVIS

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	2	3	1.5	2	1	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	1	2	3	1.5	2	1	0	0	-	0	0

DAVID MARTIN-ROBINSON

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	2	30	15.0	18	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	2	30	15.0	18	0

THOMAS ODUKOYA

Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	1	6	6.0	6	0
8/17 vs. SEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/25 at NO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals:	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	1	6	6.0	6	0

CHIG OKONKWO												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

BRYCE OLIVER												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	2	16	8.0	9	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	2	16	8.0	9	0

KYLE PHILIPS												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	3	18	6.0	7	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	3	18	6.0	7	0

TONY POLLARD												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	4	35	8.8	24	0	2	11	5.5	6	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	1	4	35	8.8	24	0	2	11	5.5	6	0

CALVIN RIDLEY												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	1	22	22.0	22	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	1	0	0	-	0	0	1	22	22.0	22	0

MASON RUDOLPH												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	2	2	1.0	2	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	2	2	1.0	2	0	0	0	-	0	0

SAM SCHNEE												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	1	10	10.0	10	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	1	10	10.0	10	0

JABARI SMALL												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	10	18	1.8	7	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	10	18	1.8	7	0	0	0	-	0	0

TYJAE SPEARS												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	3	2	0.7	4t	1	1	2	2.0	2	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	3	2	0.7	4t	1	1	2	2.0	2	0

STEVEN STILIANOS												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

NICK VANNETT												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

NICK WESTBROOK-IKHINE												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

JOSH WHYLE												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	0

MALIK WILLIS												
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Rush	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	Rec	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	4	42	10.5	28	0	0	0	-	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA					-					-		
8/25 at NO					-					-		
Totals:	1	0	4	42	10.5	28	0	0	0	-	0	0

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME OFFENSIVE LINE

DANIEL BRUNSKILL			GERON CHRISTIAN SR.			LLOYD CUSHENBERRY III			BRIAN DOOLEY			JAELYN DUNCAN		
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	1	1	8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	1	0
8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA		
8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO		
Totals:	1	0	Totals:	1	0	Totals:	1	1	Totals:	1	0	Totals:	1	0

JC LATHAM			COREY LEVIN			JOHN OJUKWU			NICHOLAS PETIT-FRERE			DILLON RADUNZ		
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS
8/10 vs. SF	1	1	8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	1	1	8/10 vs. SF	1	1
8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA		
8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO		
Totals:	1	1	Totals:	1	0	Totals:	1	0	Totals:	1	1	Totals:	1	1

ANDREW RUPCICH			LACHAVIOUS SIMMONS			PETER SKRONSKI			COLE SPENCER			LEROY WATSON IV		
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Date/Opp.	GP	GS
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	1	1	8/10 vs. SF	1	0	8/10 vs. SF	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA			8/17 vs. SEA		
8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO			8/25 at NO		
Totals:	1	0	Totals:	1	0	Totals:	1	1	Totals:	1	0	Totals:	0	0

GARRET WALLOW			TACKLES					INTERCEPTIONS					FUMBLES			
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	No	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds	SpT
8/10 vs. SF	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/17 vs. SEA																
8/25 at NO																
Totals:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

RASHAD WEAVER			TACKLES					INTERCEPTIONS					FUMBLES			
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	No	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds	SpT
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA																
8/25 at NO																
Totals:	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

JAMES WILLIAMS			TACKLES					INTERCEPTIONS					FUMBLES			
Date/Opp.	GP	GS	Tot	Solo	Asst	Sk	Yds	No	Yds	Lg	TD	PD	FF	FR	Yds	SpT
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	2	2	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA																
8/25 at NO																
Totals:	1	0	2	2	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Additional Special Teams Tackles: Haskins 1 (vs. SF); Narveson 1 (vs. SF)

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME STATISTICS - RETURNS

Jha'QUAN JACKSON

Date/Opp.	KR	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	PR	FC	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	0	0	-	0	0	1	0	26	26.0	26	0
8/17 vs. SEA			-						-		
8/25 at NO			-						-		
Totals:	0	0	-	0	0	1	0	26	26.0	26	0

KEARIS JACKSON

Date/Opp.	KR	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD	PR	FC	Yds	Avg	Lg	TD
8/10 vs. SF	2	81	40.5	63	0	1	0	0	0.0	0	0
8/17 vs. SEA			-						-		
8/25 at NO			-						-		
Totals:	2	81	40.5	63	0	1	0	0	0.0	0	0

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME STATISTICS - KICKING

NICK FOLK

Date/Opp.	GP	PAT		FG			1-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50+		Blk	LG	Pts
		Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Pct	Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Ma	Att			
8/10 vs. SF	1	2	2	0	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	-	2
8/17 vs. SEA						-													0
8/25 at NO						-													0
Totals:	1	2	2	0	1	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2

BRAYDEN NARVESON

Date/Opp.	GP	PAT		FG			1-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50+		Blk	LG	Pts
		Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Pct	Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Ma	Att	Ma	Att			
8/10 vs. SF	1	0	0	1	1	100.0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	34	3
8/17 vs. SEA						-													0
8/25 at NO						-													0
Totals:	1	0	0	1	1	100.0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	34	3

2024 PRESEASON GAME-BY-GAME STATISTICS - PUNTING

RYAN STONEHOUSE

Date/Opp.	GP	No.	Yds	Avg	Ret	Yds	R Avg	TB	In	Lg	Blk	Net
8/10 vs. SF	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8/17 vs. SEA												
8/25 at NO												
Totals:	0	0	0	-	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-

TY ZENTNER

Date/Opp.	GP	No.	Yds	Avg	Ret	Yds	R Avg	TB	In	Lg	Blk	Net
8/10 vs. SF	1	2	93	46.5	1	4	4.0	1	1	48	0	34.5
8/17 vs. SEA												
8/25 at NO												
Totals:	1	2	93	46.5	1	4	4.0	1	1	48	0	34.5



TENNESSEE TITANS

**LAST WEEK'S
PLAY-BY-PLAY**

National Football League Game Summary

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Date: Saturday, 8/10/2024

San Francisco 49ers at Tennessee Titans

Start Time: 6:06 PM CDT

at Nissan Stadium, Nashville, TN

Game Day Weather

Game Weather: Sunny
Open Stadium on Field Turf

Temp: 77° F (25.0° C) Humidity: 43%, Wind: N 7 mph
Outdoor Weather: Sunny

Officials

Referee: Allen, Brad (122)
Line Judge: Flowers, Walter (32)
Back Judge: Walton, Tyree (2)

Umpire: Heydt, Duane (42)
Field Judge: Patterson, Rick (15)
Replay Official: Brown, Kevin (0)

Down Judge: Thomas, Sarah (53)
Side Judge: Hill, Chad (125)

Lineups

San Francisco 49ers

Offense		Defense	
WR 18	C.Conley	DL 94	Y.Gross-Matos
TE 9	B.Willis	DL 93	K.Davis
LT 61	C.Hubbard	DL 90	K.Givens
LG 65	A.Banks	DL 51	R.Beal
C 63	N.Zakelj	LB 36	C.Robinson
RG 77	D.Puni	LB 53	D.Winters
RT 68	C.McKivitz	CB 31	R.Green
TE 82	E.Saubert	CB 33	R.Ya-Sin
WR 10	R.Bell	CB 20	A.Thomas
QB 17	B.Allen	S 30	G.Odom
RB 24	J.Mason	S 27	J.Brown

Tennessee Titans

Offense		Defense	
WR 0	C.Ridley	DL 69	S.Joseph
WR 83	T.Boyd	DT 93	T.Sweat
TE 89	T.Odukoya	DT 90	M.Davidson
LT 55	J.Latham	OLB 92	J.Harrell
LG 77	P.Skoronski	OLB 49	A.Key
C 79	L.Cushenberry	LB 50	J.Gibbens
RG 75	D.Radunz	LB 56	K.Murray
RT 78	N.Petit-Frere	CB 21	R.McCreary
WR 16	T.Burks	CB 29	J.Brownlee
QB 8	W.Levis	DB 24	E.Molden
RB 20	T.Pollard	S 37	A.Hooker

Substitutions

CB 0 S.Womack, WR 3 F.Darby, P 3 M.Wishnowsky, K 4 J.Moody, QB 5 J.Dobbs, P 5 P.Harvin, WR 19 T.Taylor, CB 26 C.Lucas, RB 28 M.Breida, RB 31 K.Vaughn, S 35 T.Walker, RB 38 C.Schrader, S 41 T.Hawkins, S 43 M.Mustapha, LS 46 T.Pepper, LB 47 E.Turner, LB 48 T.Bethune, S 49 J.Mahoney, LB 50 J.Graham, DL 58 A.Barrett, DL 60 S.Brown, OL 60 S.Gutierrez, OL 62 J.Kingston, DL 66 E.Anderson, OL 66 D.Nugent, OL 67 I.Alarcon, G 69 L.Kidd, OL 75 B.Parker, DL 78 J.Garvin, OL 78 B.Bartch, TE 81 C.Latu, WR 84 J.Kirklin, WR 86 T.Martin, TE 88 J.Tonges, TE 89 M.Pline, DL 96 T.McGill

Substitutions

RB 2 T.Spears, WR 5 K.Jackson, K 6 N.Folk, QB 7 M.Willis, QB 11 M.Rudolph, WR 12 M.Kinsey, WR 15 N.Westbrook-Ikhine, P 17 T.Zentner, WR 18 K.Philips, WR 19 J.Jackson, CB 23 T.Avery, DB 25 E.Garror, RB 25 H.Haskins, DB 28 S.Carter, DB 30 T.Gowan, S 31 K.Ellis, RB 31 J.Small, CB 32 G.Jeudy-Lally, CB 35 R.Javier, RB 36 J.Chestnut, S 39 M.Jackson, LB 41 O.Reese, OLB 42 C.Murphy, S 44 M.Brown, LB 45 C.Campbell, LS 46 M.Cox, K 47 B.Narveson, LB 48 T.Rush, LB 52 J.Williams, OLB 53 K.Duke, LB 57 L.Gifford, OLB 59 S.Ray, OL 60 D.Brunskill, OL 61 J.Ojukwu, C/G 62 C.Levin, T 64 G.Christian, T 68 B.Dooley, G 70 C.Spencer, OL 71 J.Duncan, OL 73 L.Simmons, DL 76 I.Iton, OL 76 A.Rupcich, WR 80 B.Oliver, TE 81 J.Whyle, TE 85 C.Okonkwo, TE 86 S.Stilianos, WR 87 S.Schnee, TE 88 D.Martin-Robinson, DL 91 K.Coburn, DE 96 T.McLendon, DL 97 Q.Bohanna, OLB 99 R.Weaver

Did Not Play

WR 1 D.Samuel, DB 2 D.Lenoir, QB 4 T.Mordecai, WR 6 D.Gray, CB 7 C.Ward, WR 11 B.Aiyuk, QB 13 B.Purdy, WR 14 R.Pearsall, WR 15 J.Jennings, CB 22 I.Yiadam, RB 23 C.McCaffrey, RB 25 E.Mitchell, CB 28 D.Luter, S 29 T.Hufanga, RB 32 P.Taylor, FB 44 K.Juszczuk, LB 45 D.Flannigan-Fowles, RB 49 I.Guerendo, LB 54 F.Warner, OL 55 J.Feliciano, DL 56 L.Floyd, LB 57 D.Greenlaw, LB 59 D.Campbell, OL 64 J.Brendel, OL 74 S.Burford, OL 76 J.Moore, WR 83 J.Cowing, TE 85 G.Kittle, DL 91 S.Okuayinonu, DL 92 J.Elliott, DL 97 N.Bosa, DL 98 J.Hargrave, DL 99 M.Collins

Did Not Play

CB 3 C.Farley, P 4 R.Stonehouse, WR 10 D.Hopkins, CB 13 C.Awuzie, WR 14 C.Dowell, S 26 Q.Diggs, S 33 J.Adams, CB 38 L.Sneed, CB 40 A.Kendall, LB 47 J.Domann, LB 51 C.Gray, LB 54 G.Wallow, OLB 58 H.Landry, T 72 L.Watson, WR 82 T.Harrison, TE 84 N.Vannett, DT 98 J.Simmons

Not Active

Not Active

Field Goals (made () & missed)

B.Narveson (34)
N.Folk 52WR

		1	2	3	4	OT	Total
VISITOR:	San Francisco 49ers	7	0	0	6	0	13
HOME:	Tennessee Titans	7	7	0	3	0	17

Scoring Plays

National Football League Game Summary

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Team	Qtr	Time	Play Description (Extra Point) (Drive Info)	Visitor	Home
49ers	1	9:21	J.Mason 4 yd. run (J.Moody kick) (11-74, 5:39)	7	0
Titans	1	6:05	W.Levis 1 yd. run (N.Folk kick) (7-15, 3:16)	7	7
Titans	2	14:56	T.Spears 4 yd. run (N.Folk kick) (7-64, 3:52)	7	14
Titans	4	12:09	B.Narveson 34 yd. Field Goal (7-49, 4:43)	7	17
49ers	4	8:26	J.Dobbs 6 yd. run (pass failed) (8-70, 3:43)	13	17
Paid Attendance: 62,832				Time: 2:48	

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans
8/10/2024 at Nissan Stadium

Final Individual Statistics

San Francisco 49ers

Tennessee Titans

RUSHING							RUSHING						
	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		
J.Mason	6	34	5.7	13	1	M.Willis	4	42	10.5	28	0		
T.Taylor	1	21	21.0	21	0	T.Pollard	4	35	8.8	24	0		
C.Schrader	5	6	1.2	6	0	H.Haskins	8	27	3.4	8	0		
J.Dobbs	1	6	6.0	6	1	J.Small	10	18	1.8	7	0		
M.Breida	6	0	0.0	2	0	J.Chestnut	5	9	1.8	5	0		
						W.Levis	2	3	1.5	2	1		
						T.Spears	3	2	0.7	4	1		
						M.Rudolph	2	2	1.0	2	0		
Total	19	67	3.5	21	2	Total	38	138	3.6	28	2		

PASSING									PASSING								
	ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT		ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT
J.Dobbs	20	14	146	1/15	0	21	1	70.0	M.Rudolph	17	10	126	0/0	0	36	0	82.0
B.Allen	13	7	98	1/10	0	33	0	78.4	M.Willis	7	5	38	1/1	0	10	0	84.2
									W.Levis	5	4	35	0/0	0	22	0	95.8
Total	33	21	244	2/25	0	33	1	73.3	Total	29	19	199	1/1	0	36	0	85.3

PASS RECEIVING								PASS RECEIVING							
	TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		
T.Martin	7	5	58	11.6	17	0	K.Phillips	3	3	18	6.0	7	0		
T.Taylor	6	3	48	16.0	21	0	J.Chestnut	3	2	37	18.5	36	0		
J.Tonges	3	3	27	9.0	12	0	D.Martin-Robinson	3	2	30	15.0	18	0		
C.Conley	2	2	30	15.0	18	0	M.Kinsey	4	2	29	14.5	17	0		
R.Bell	4	2	22	11.0	21	0	B.Oliver	2	2	16	8.0	9	0		
C.Latu	2	2	12	6.0	7	0	T.Pollard	2	2	11	5.5	6	0		
F.Darby	2	1	33	33.0	33	0	C.Ridley	2	1	22	22.0	22	0		
E.Saubert	1	1	6	6.0	6	0	T.Burks	1	1	12	12.0	12	0		
M.Breida	1	1	5	5.0	5	0	S.Schnee	2	1	10	10.0	10	0		
C.Schrader	1	1	3	3.0	3	0	J.Jackson	2	1	6	6.0	6	0		
J.Mason	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	T.Odukoya	1	1	6	6.0	6	0		
B.Willis	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	T.Spears	1	1	2	2.0	2	0		
							N.Westbrook-Ikhine	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							S.Stilianos	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							K.Jackson	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
Total	31	21	244	11.6	33	0	Total	29	19	199	10.5	36	0		

INTERCEPTIONS							INTERCEPTIONS					
	NO	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		NO	YDS	AVG	LG	TD	
Total	0	0	0	0	0	C.Campbell	1	0	0.0	0	0	
						Total	1	0	0.0	0	0	

PUNTING								PUNTING							
	NO	YDS	AVG	NET	TB	IN20	LG		NO	YDS	AVG	NET	TB	IN20	LG
P.Harvin	5	216	43.2	34.0	1	1	61	T.Zentner	2	93	46.5	34.5	1	1	48
Total	5	216	43.2	34.0	1	1	61	Total	2	93	46.5	34.5	1	1	48

PUNT RETURNS								PUNT RETURNS							
	NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		
T.Taylor	1	4	4.0	0	4	0	J.Jackson	1	26	26.0	0	26	0		
[TOUCHBACK]	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	K.Jackson	1	0	0.0	0	0	0		
							[OUT OF BOUNDS]	2	0	0.0	0	0	0		
							[TOUCHBACK]	1	0	0.0	0	0	0		
Total	1	4	4.0	0	4	0	Total	2	26	13.0	0	26	0		

KICKOFF RETURNS								KICKOFF RETURNS							
	NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		NO	YDS	AVG	FC	LG	TD		
T.Taylor	3	59	19.7	0	22	0	K.Jackson	2	81	40.5	0	63	0		
C.Schrader	1	33	33.0	0	33	0	[TOUCHBACK]	1	0	0.0	0	0	0		
Total	4	92	23.0	0	33	0	Total	2	81	40.5	0	63	0		

San Francisco 49ers

FUMBLES												
	FUM	LOST	OWN-REC	YDS	TD	FORCED	OPP-REC	YDS	TD	OUT-BDS		
M.Breida	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
J.Dobbs	0	0	1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0		

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans

8/10/2024 at Nissan Stadium

Final Individual Statistics

R.Green	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	1	0	1	-1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Tennessee Titans

FUMBLES	FUM	LOST	OWN-REC	YDS	TD	FORCED	OPP-REC	YDS	TD	OUT-BDS
M.Rudolph	1	1	0	-5	0	0	0	0	0	0
K.Coburn	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total	1	1	0	-5	0	1	0	0	0	0

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans
8/10/2024 at Nissan Stadium

Final Team Statistics

	Visitor 49ers	Home Titans
TOTAL FIRST DOWNS	16	19
By Rushing	5	9
By Passing	11	8
By Penalty	0	2
THIRD DOWN EFFICIENCY	4-11-36.4%	9-17-52.9%
FOURTH DOWN EFFICIENCY	0-2-0.0%	0-2-0.0%
TOTAL NET YARDS	286	336
Total Offensive Plays (inc. times thrown passing)	54	68
Average gain per offensive play	5.3	4.9
NET YARDS RUSHING	67	138
Total Rushing Plays	19	38
Average gain per rushing play	3.5	3.6
Tackles for a loss-number and yards	2-6	4-11
NET YARDS PASSING	219	198
Times thrown - yards lost attempting to pass	2-25	1-1
Gross yards passing	244	199
PASS ATTEMPTS-COMPLETIONS-HAD INTERCEPTED	33-21-1	29-19-0
Avg gain per pass play (inc.# thrown passing)	6.3	6.6
KICKOFFS Number-In End Zone-Touchbacks	3-1-1	4-1-0
PUNTS Number and Average	5-43.2	2-46.5
Had Blocked	0	0
FGs - PATs Had Blocked	0-0	0-0
Net Punting Average	34.0	34.5
TOTAL RETURN YARDAGE (Not Including Kickoffs)	4	26
No. and Yards Punt Returns	1-4	2-26
No. and Yards Kickoff Returns	4-92	2-81
No. and Yards Interception Returns	0-0	1-0
PENALTIES Number and Yards	8-48	3-15
FUMBLES Number and Lost	1-0	1-1
TOUCHDOWNS	2	2
Rushing	2	2
Passing	0	0
EXTRA POINTS Made-Attempts	1-2	2-2
Kicking Made-Attempts	1-1	2-2
Passing Made-Attempts	0-1	0-0
FIELD GOALS Made-Attempts	0-0	1-2
RED ZONE EFFICIENCY	2-2-100%	2-4-50%
GOAL TO GO EFFICIENCY	2-2-100%	2-2-100%
SAFETIES	0	0
FINAL SCORE	13	17
TIME OF POSSESSION	24:41	35:19

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans
8/10/2024 at Nissan Stadium

Ball Possession And Drive Chart

San Francisco 49ers

#	Time Recd	Time Lost	Time Poss	How Ball Obtained	Drive Began	# Play	Yds Gain	Yds Pen	Net Yds	1st Down	Last Scrm	How Given Up
1	15:00	9:21	5:39	Kickoff	SF 26	11	79	-5	74	5	* TEN 4	Touchdown
2	6:05	3:48	2:17	Kickoff	SF 28	5	13	0	13	1	SF 41	Punt
3	14:56	13:26	1:30	Kickoff	SF 32	3	7	0	7	0	SF 39	Punt
4	4:43	1:46	2:57	Downs	SF 2	6	29	0	29	1	SF 31	Punt
5	11:00	9:07	1:53	Fumble	SF 46	3	16	-10	6	0	TEN 48	Punt
6	4:26	1:52	2:34	Punt	SF 14	4	21	0	21	1	SF 35	Punt
7	12:09	8:26	3:43	Kickoff	SF 30	8	70	0	70	5	* TEN 6	Touchdown
8	4:32	1:56	2:36	Downs	SF 49	6	1	0	1	1	TEN 35	Downs
9	1:32	0:00	1:32	Punt	SF 20	8	49	-5	44	2	TEN 36	Interception

(247) Average SF 27

Tennessee Titans

#	Time Recd	Time Lost	Time Poss	How Ball Obtained	Drive Began	# Play	Yds Gain	Yds Pen	Net Yds	1st Down	Last Scrm	How Given Up
1	9:21	6:05	3:16	Kickoff	SF 15	7	15	0	15	3	* SF 1	Touchdown
2	3:48	14:56	3:52	Punt	TEN 36	7	60	4	64	3	* SF 4	Touchdown
3	13:26	4:43	8:43	Punt	TEN 20	17	78	0	78	5	* SF 2	Downs
4	1:46	0:00	1:46	Punt	TEN 24	7	42	0	42	1	SF 34	Missed FG
5	15:00	11:00	4:00	Kickoff	TEN 24	7	35	-5	30	2	SF 41	Fumble
6	9:07	4:26	4:41	Punt	TEN 17	9	25	0	25	2	TEN 42	Punt
7	1:52	12:09	4:43	Punt	TEN 35	7	49	0	49	2	* SF 16	Field Goal
8	8:26	4:32	3:54	Kickoff	TEN 30	6	22	-1	21	1	SF 49	Downs
9	1:56	1:32	0:24	Downs	50	3	5	0	5	0	SF 45	Punt

(321) Average TEN 36

* inside opponent's 20

Time of Possession by Quarter		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	Total
Visitor	San Francisco 49ers	7:56	4:27	4:27	7:51		24:41
Home	Tennessee Titans	7:04	10:33	10:33	7:09		35:19
Kickoff Drive No.-Start Average		49ers: 4 - SF 29		Titans: 3 - TEN 46			

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans
8/10/2024 at Nissan Stadium

Final Defensive Statistics

San Francisco 49ers

Regular Defensive Plays

Special Teams

Misc

	TKL	AST	COMB	SK	/ YDS	TFL	Q	IN	PD	FF	FR	TKL	AST	FF	FR	BL	TKL	AST	FF	FR	
T.Bethune	5	3	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Barrett	4	3	7	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Robinson	4	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
G.Odum	3	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.Winters	2	3	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Garvin	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R.Green	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Hawkins	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R.Beal	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R.Ya-Sin	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Graham	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K.Davis	2	0	2	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M.Mustapha	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E.Turner	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Brown	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E.Anderson	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S.Womack	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K.Givens	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A.Thomas	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C.Lucas	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T.Walker	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
S.Brown	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Mahoney	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P.Harvin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E.Saubert	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J.Kirklin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
J.Dobbs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	49	22	71	1	1	5	2	0	3	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

TKL = Tackle AST = Assist COMB = Combined QH=QB Hit IN = Interception PD = Pass Defense FF = Forced Fumble FR = Fumble Recovery

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans
8/10/2024 at Nissan Stadium

First Half Summary

PERIOD SCORES

49ers	7 0 = 7
Titans	7 7 = 14

TIME OF POSSESSION

49ers	12:23
Titans	17:37

Scoring Plays

Team	Qtr	Time	Play Description (Extra Point) (Drive Info)	Visitor	Home
49ers	1	9:21	J.Mason 4 yd. run (J.Moody kick) (11-74, 5:39)	7	0
Titans	1	6:05	W.Levis 1 yd. run (N.Folk kick) (7-15, 3:16)	7	7
Titans	2	14:56	T.Spears 4 yd. run (N.Folk kick) (7-64, 3:52)	7	14

	San Francisco 49ers	Tennessee Titans
TOTAL FIRST DOWNS	7	12
First Downs Rushing-Passing-by Penalty	3 - 4 - 0	5 - 6 - 1
THIRD DOWN EFFICIENCY	3-6-50.0%	6-9-66.7%
TOTAL NET YARDS	128	195
Total Offensive Plays	25	37
NET YARDS RUSHING	40	63
NET YARDS PASSING	88	132
Gross Yards Passing	98	132
Times thrown-yards lost attempting to pass	1-10	0-0
Pass Attempts-Completions-Had Intercepted	13 - 7 - 0	19 - 11 - 0
Punts-Number and Average	3 - 51.7	0 - 0.0
Penalties-Number and Yards	4 - 24	0 - 0
Fumbles-Number and Lost	0 - 0	0 - 0
Red Zone Efficiency	1-1-100%	2-3-67%
Average Drive Start	SF 22	TEN 41

San Francisco 49ers

Tennessee Titans

RUSHING						RUSHING					
	ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		ATT	YDS	AVG	LG	TD
J.Mason	6	34	5.7	13	1	T.Pollard	4	35	8.8	24	0
C.Schrader	5	6	1.2	6	0	H.Haskins	5	20	4.0	8	0
						W.Levis	2	3	1.5	2	1
						T.Spears	3	2	0.7	4	1
						M.Rudolph	1	2	2.0	2	0
						J.Chestnut	3	1	0.3	3	0
Total	11	40	3.6	13	1	Total	18	63	3.5	24	2

PASSING										PASSING									
	ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT		ATT	CMP	YDS	SK/YD	TD	LG	IN	RT		
B.Allen	13	7	98	1/10	0	33	0	78.4	M.Rudolph	14	7	97	0/0	0	36	0	72.6		
									W.Levis	5	4	35	0/0	0	22	0	95.8		
Total	13	7	98	1/10	0	33	0	78.4	Total	19	11	132	0/0	0	36	0	79.3		

PASS RECEIVING								PASS RECEIVING							
	TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		TAR	REC	YDS	AVG	LG	TD		
C.Conley	2	2	30	15.0	18	0	J.Chestnut	3	2	37	18.5	36	0		
F.Darby	1	1	33	33.0	33	0	D.Martin-Robinson	3	2	30	15.0	18	0		
R.Bell	3	1	21	21.0	21	0	T.Pollard	2	2	11	5.5	6	0		
E.Saubert	1	1	6	6.0	6	0	C.Ridley	2	1	22	22.0	22	0		
T.Martin	2	1	5	5.0	5	0	M.Kinsey	3	1	12	12.0	12	0		
C.Schrader	1	1	3	3.0	3	0	T.Burks	1	1	12	12.0	12	0		
J.Mason	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	K.Philips	1	1	6	6.0	6	0		
T.Taylor	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	T.Spears	1	1	2	2.0	2	0		
B.Willis	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	K.Jackson	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							S.Stilianos	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
							N.Westbrook-Ikhine	1	0	0	0.0	0	0		
Total	13	7	98	14.0	33	0	Total	19	11	132	12.0	36	0		

San Francisco 49ers

Regular Defensive Plays

Special Teams

Misc

First Quarter

8/10/2024

Play By Play

SF wins toss, elects to Receive, and TEN elects to defend the North goal.

N.Folk kicks 57 yards from TEN 35 to SF 8. T.Taylor to SF 26 for 18 yards (L.Gifford).

San Francisco 49ers at 15:00, (1st play from scrimmage 14:55)

1-10-SF 26	(14:55) B.Allen pass incomplete short right to R.Bell [K.Murray].	
2-10-SF 26	(14:52) J.Mason up the middle to SF 39 for 13 yards (J.Harrell, E.Molden).	R1
<u>1-10-SF 39</u>	(14:14) <i>PENALTY on SF-C.McKivitz, False Start, 5 yards, enforced at SF 39 - No Play.</i>	
1-15-SF 34	(13:52) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass short left to E.Saubert to SF 40 for 6 yards (K.Murray, J.Gibbens).	
2-9-SF 40	(13:16) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass incomplete short left to J.Mason.	
3-9-SF 40	(13:12) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass deep right to R.Bell to TEN 39 for 21 yards (A.Hooker).	P2
<u>1-10-TEN 39</u>	(12:34) J.Mason right guard to TEN 33 for 6 yards (M.Davidson).	
2-4-TEN 33	(11:59) B.Allen pass deep middle to C.Conley to TEN 15 for 18 yards (R.McCreary).	P3
<u>1-10-TEN 15</u>	(11:23) J.Mason left end to TEN 9 for 6 yards (E.Molden).	
2-4-TEN 9	(10:46) J.Mason left tackle to TEN 7 for 2 yards (A.Key; K.Murray).	
3-2-TEN 7	(10:05) (Shotgun) J.Mason right guard to TEN 4 for 3 yards (J.Gibbens).	R4
<u>1-4-TEN 4</u>	(9:26) J.Mason up the middle for 4 yards, TOUCHDOWN.	R5
	J.Moody extra point is GOOD, Center-T.Pepper, Holder-M.Wishnowsky.	

Timeout at 09:21.

SF 7 TEN 0, 11 plays, 74 yards, 5:39 drive, 5:39 elapsed

J.Moody kicks 58 yards from SF 35 to TEN 7. K.Jackson to SF 30 for 63 yards (J.Graham).

PENALTY on SF, Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 15 yards, enforced at SF 30.

Tennessee Titans at 9:21, (1st play from scrimmage 9:09)

1-10-SF 15	(9:09) (Shotgun) T.Pollard up the middle to SF 13 for 2 yards (G.Odum; C.Robinson).	
2-8-SF 13	(8:31) (Shotgun) T.Spears left end to SF 9 for 4 yards (J.Brown).	
3-4-SF 9	(7:50) (Shotgun) W.Levis pass short left to T.Pollard pushed ob at SF 4 for 5 yards (J.Brown).	P1
<u>1-4-SF 4</u>	(7:13) (Shotgun) T.Pollard left guard to SF 3 for 1 yard (G.Odum).	
2-3-SF 3	(6:32) (Shotgun) W.Levis pass incomplete short left to C.Ridley.	
3-3-SF 3	(6:28) (Shotgun) W.Levis scrambles right end to SF 1 for 2 yards (D.Winters, G.Odum).	
	<i>PENALTY on SF-A.Thomas, Defensive Holding, 0 yards, enforced at SF 1.</i>	X2
<u>1-1-SF 1</u>	(6:06) W.Levis up the middle for 1 yard, TOUCHDOWN.	R3
	N.Folk extra point is GOOD, Center-M.Cox, Holder-T.Zentner.	

Timeout at 06:05.

SF 7 TEN 7, 7 plays, 15 yards, 1 penalty, 3:16 drive, 8:55 elapsed

N.Folk kicks 56 yards from TEN 35 to SF 9. T.Taylor to SF 28 for 19 yards (J.Brownlee).

San Francisco 49ers at 6:05, (1st play from scrimmage 5:59)

1-10-SF 28	(5:59) B.Allen pass incomplete short left to B.Willis.	
2-10-SF 28	(5:55) B.Allen pass short left to C.Conley to SF 40 for 12 yards (T.Avery; O.Reese).	P6
<u>1-10-SF 40</u>	(5:24) C.Schrader left guard to SF 38 for -2 yards (O.Reese).	
2-12-SF 38	(4:46) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass short left to C.Schrader pushed ob at SF 41 for 3 yards (O.Reese).	
3-9-SF 41	(4:09) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass incomplete short right to T.Taylor.	
	<i>Penalty on SF-N.Zakelj, Ineligible Downfield Pass, declined.</i>	
4-9-SF 41	(4:03) P.Harvin punts 49 yards to TEN 10, Center-T.Pepper. J.Jackson to TEN 36 for 26 yards (P.Harvin; E.Saubert).	

Timeout at 03:48.

Tennessee Titans at 3:48

1-10-TEN 36	(3:48) (Shotgun) W.Levis pass short middle to T.Pollard to TEN 42 for 6 yards (G.Odum; D.Winters).	
2-4-TEN 42	(3:07) (Shotgun) T.Spears right end to TEN 36 for -6 yards (D.Winters).	
3-10-TEN 36	(2:27) (Shotgun) W.Levis pass short middle to C.Ridley pushed ob at SF 42 for 22 yards (G.Odum). SF-D.Winters was injured during the play.	P4

Timeout at 02:17.

<u>1-10-SF 42</u>	(2:04) (Shotgun) T.Pollard up the middle to SF 34 for 8 yards (J.Graham).	
2-2-SF 34	(1:26) (Shotgun) T.Pollard right end to SF 10 for 24 yards (G.Odum). ** Injury Update: SF-D.Winters has returned to the game.	R5
<u>1-10-SF 10</u>	(:40) (Shotgun) W.Levis pass short right to T.Spears to SF 8 for 2 yards (K.Givens).	

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans at Nissan Stadium

2-8-SF 8

(:02) (Shotgun) PENALTY on SF-T.McGill, Encroachment, 4 yards, enforced at SF 8 - No Play.

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time	First Downs				Efficiencies	
		Poss	R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
San Francisco 49ers	7	7:56	3	3	0	6	2/3	0/0
Tennessee Titans	7	7:04	2	2	1	5	2/3	0/0

Second Quarter

8/10/2024

Play By Play

Tennessee Titans continued.

2-4-SF 4 (15:00) (Shotgun) T.Spears left end for 4 yards, TOUCHDOWN.

R6

N.Folk extra point is GOOD, Center-M.Cox, Holder-T.Zentner.

SF 7 TEN 14, 7 plays, 64 yards, 1 penalty, 3:52 drive, 0:04 elapsed

N.Folk kicks 55 yards from TEN 35 to SF 10. T.Taylor to SF 32 for 22 yards (C.Campbell; H.Haskins).

San Francisco 49ers at 14:56, (1st play from scrimmage 14:51)

1-10-SF 32 (14:51) C.Schrader up the middle to SF 38 for 6 yards (J.Brownlee).

2-4-SF 38 (14:17) C.Schrader left tackle to SF 39 for 1 yard (C.Campbell; C.Murphy).

3-3-SF 39 (13:40) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass incomplete deep right to T.Martin.

4-3-SF 39 (13:35) P.Harvin punts 61 yards to end zone, Center-T.Pepper, Touchback.

Timeout at 13:26.

Tennessee Titans at 13:26

1-10-TEN 20 (13:26) M.Rudolph pass incomplete short left to J.Chestnut (A.Barrett).

2-10-TEN 20 (13:23) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to T.Burks to TEN 32 for 12 yards (T.Hawkins). P7

1-10-TEN 32 (12:41) J.Chestnut right guard to TEN 33 for 1 yard (A.Barrett).

2-9-TEN 33 (12:04) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass incomplete short left to N.Westbrook-Ikhine (R.Ya-Sin).

3-9-TEN 33 (11:59) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short middle to M.Kinsey to TEN 45 for 12 yards (A.Thomas). P8

1-10-TEN 45 (11:25) (Shotgun) H.Haskins right tackle to SF 47 for 8 yards (C.Robinson, D.Winters).

2-2-SF 47 (10:51) M.Rudolph pass incomplete deep right to S.Stilianos.

3-2-SF 47 (10:44) (Shotgun) J.Chestnut right end to SF 44 for 3 yards (M.Mustapha). R9

1-10-SF 44 (10:03) J.Chestnut up the middle to SF 47 for -3 yards (K.Davis).

2-13-SF 47 (9:24) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to D.Martin-Robinson pushed ob at SF 35 for 12 yards (R.Ya-Sin).

3-1-SF 35 (8:48) M.Rudolph up the middle to SF 33 for 2 yards (J.Garvin). R10

1-10-SF 33 (8:09) H.Haskins left guard to SF 29 for 4 yards (A.Barrett, C.Robinson).

2-6-SF 29 (7:30) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to D.Martin-Robinson pushed ob at SF 11 for 18 yards (R.Ya-Sin; D.Winters). P11

1-10-SF 11 (6:47) H.Haskins right guard to SF 6 for 5 yards (T.Hawkins, R.Green).

2-5-SF 6 (6:05) (Shotgun) H.Haskins left end to SF 3 for 3 yards (C.Robinson).

3-2-SF 3 (5:29) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short right to J.Chestnut to SF 2 for 1 yard (C.Robinson).

4-1-SF 2 (4:47) H.Haskins up the middle to SF 1 for 1 yard (M.Mustapha).

San Francisco challenged the first down ruling, and the play was REVERSED.

H.Haskins up the middle to SF 2 for no gain (M.Mustapha).

San Francisco 49ers at 4:43

1-10-SF 2 (4:43) C.Schrader up the middle to SF 3 for 1 yard (M.Davidson).

2-9-SF 3 (4:10) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass incomplete deep left to R.Bell (J.Brownlee).

Timeout #1 by SF at 04:04.

3-9-SF 3 (4:04) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass deep middle to F.Darby to SF 36 for 33 yards (T.Avery; O.Reese). P7

1-10-SF 36 (3:17) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass short right to T.Martin to SF 41 for 5 yards (J.Brownlee).

2-5-SF 41 (2:36) C.Schrader left guard to SF 41 for no gain (C.Campbell).

Two-Minute Warning

3-5-SF 41 (2:00) (Shotgun) B.Allen sacked at SF 31 for -10 yards (C.Campbell).

Timeout #1 by TEN at 01:55.

4-15-SF 31 (1:55) P.Harvin punts 45 yards to TEN 24, Center-T.Pepper, out of bounds.

Timeout at 01:46.

Tennessee Titans at 1:46

1-10-TEN 24 (1:46) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass incomplete short right to D.Martin-Robinson.

2-10-TEN 24 (1:43) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass incomplete deep left to M.Kinsey.

3-10-TEN 24 (1:38) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short right to J.Chestnut to SF 40 for 36 yards (C.Robinson). P12

1-10-SF 40 (:53) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass incomplete short left to K.Jackson.

2-10-SF 40 (:49) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass incomplete short middle to M.Kinsey (S.Brown).

3-10-SF 40 (:45) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to K.Philips to SF 34 for 6 yards (C.Robinson; R.Green) [A.Barrett].

Timeout #2 by TEN at 00:02.

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans at Nissan Stadium

4-4-SF 34

(:02) N.Folk 52 yard field goal is No Good, Wide Right, Center-M.Cox, Holder-T.Zentner.

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time	First Downs				Efficiencies	
		Poss	R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
San Francisco 49ers	7	4:27	0	1	0	1	1/3	0/0
Tennessee Titans	14	10:33	3	4	0	7	4/6	0/1

Third Quarter

Play By Play

TEN elects to Receive, and SF elects to defend the South goal.

J.Moody kicks 59 yards from SF 35 to TEN 6. K.Jackson to TEN 24 for 18 yards (M.Mustapha).

Tennessee Titans at 15:00, (1st play from scrimmage 14:55)

- 1-10-TEN 24 (14:55) *PENALTY on TEN-L.Simmons, False Start, 5 yards, enforced at TEN 24 - No Play.*
- 1-15-TEN 19 (14:55) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short middle to M.Kinsey to TEN 36 for 17 yards (T.Hawkins). P13
- 1-10-TEN 36 (14:17) J.Chestnut left guard to TEN 39 for 3 yards (T.Bethune, A.Barrett).
- 2-7-TEN 39 (13:39) (Shotgun) J.Chestnut right guard to TEN 44 for 5 yards (R.Beal).
- 3-2-TEN 44 (12:58) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to K.Philips pushed ob at SF 49 for 7 yards (R.Green). P14
- 1-10-SF 49 (12:25) H.Haskins up the middle to SF 46 for 3 yards (J.Garvin).
- 2-7-SF 46 (11:50) M.Rudolph pass short right to K.Philips to SF 41 for 5 yards (R.Green).
- 3-2-SF 41 (11:10) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph FUMBLES (Aborted) at SF 47, touched at SF 46, RECOVERED by SF-R.Green at SF 46.

Timeout at 11:00.

San Francisco 49ers at 11:00

- 1-10-SF 46 (11:00) C.Schrader right end pushed ob at TEN 42 for 12 yards (M.Brown).
PENALTY on SF-R.Bell, Offensive Holding, 10 yards, enforced at SF 46 - No Play.
- 1-20-SF 36 (10:39) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short right to R.Bell to SF 37 for 1 yard (T.McLendon).
- 2-19-SF 37 (10:03) J.Dobbs pass short left to T.Martin to TEN 48 for 15 yards (G.Jeudy-Lally).
- 3-4-TEN 48 (9:19) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass incomplete short right to T.Taylor (R.Weaver).
- 4-4-TEN 48 (9:16) P.Harvin punts 31 yards to TEN 17, Center-T.Pepper. K.Jackson to TEN 17 for no gain (E.Turner).

Timeout at 09:07.

Tennessee Titans at 9:07

- 1-10-TEN 17 (9:07) (Shotgun) J.Small up the middle to TEN 19 for 2 yards (R.Beal).
- 2-8-TEN 19 (8:37) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass short right to B.Oliver to TEN 26 for 7 yards (J.Graham).
- 3-1-TEN 26 (8:01) M.Willis up the middle to TEN 28 for 2 yards (E.Anderson). R15
- 1-10-TEN 28 (7:23) (Shotgun) J.Small right guard to TEN 28 for no gain (J.Garvin, T.Bethune).
- 2-10-TEN 28 (6:39) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass short right to B.Oliver to TEN 37 for 9 yards (T.Bethune).
- 3-1-TEN 37 (6:03) J.Small left guard to TEN 40 for 3 yards (E.Anderson). R16
- 1-10-TEN 40 (5:24) M.Willis pass incomplete short right to S.Schnee.
- 2-10-TEN 40 (5:19) (Shotgun) J.Small up the middle to TEN 42 for 2 yards (A.Barrett; J.Graham).
- 3-8-TEN 42 (4:41) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass incomplete deep right to J.Jackson.
- 4-8-TEN 42 (4:36) T.Zentner punts 48 yards to SF 10, Center-M.Cox. T.Taylor to SF 14 for 4 yards (T.Avery).

Timeout at 04:26.

San Francisco 49ers at 4:26

- 1-10-SF 14 (4:26) J.Dobbs pass short left to J.Tonges to SF 26 for 12 yards (G.Jeudy-Lally) [S.Ray]. P8
- 1-10-SF 26 (3:50) M.Breida up the middle to SF 28 for 2 yards (J.Williams).
- 2-8-SF 28 (3:17) M.Breida left end pushed ob at SF 30 for 2 yards (J.Williams).
- 3-6-SF 30 (2:39) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short left to J.Tonges to SF 35 for 5 yards (C.Campbell) [J.Williams].
- 4-1-SF 35 (1:59) P.Harvin punts 30 yards to TEN 35, Center-T.Pepper, out of bounds.

Timeout at 01:52.

Tennessee Titans at 1:52

- 1-10-TEN 35 (1:52) (Shotgun) M.Willis right end to SF 37 for 28 yards (S.Womack). R17
- 1-10-SF 37 (1:06) (Shotgun) J.Small right end to SF 34 for 3 yards (E.Turner).
PENALTY on TEN-T.Odukoya, Offensive Offside, 5 yards, enforced at SF 37 - No Play.
- 1-15-SF 42 (:42) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass short right to T.Odukoya pushed ob at SF 36 for 6 yards (E.Turner).

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time Poss	First Downs				Efficiencies	
			R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
San Francisco 49ers	7	4:27	0	1	0	1	0/2	0/0
Tennessee Titans	14	10:33	3	2	0	5	3/5	0/0

Fourth Quarter

8/10/2024

Play By Play

Tennessee Titans continued.

- 2-9-SF 36 (15:00) (Shotgun) *PENALTY on SF-T.McGill, Neutral Zone Infraction, 5 yards, enforced at SF 36 - No Play.*
- 2-4-SF 31 (15:00) (Shotgun) J.Small right guard to SF 25 for 6 yards (A.Barrett). R18
- 1-10-SF 25 (14:16) M.Willis sacked at SF 26 for -1 yards (K.Davis).
- 2-11-SF 26 (13:37) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass short left to S.Schnee to SF 16 for 10 yards (C.Lucas, T.Bethune).
- 3-1-SF 16 (13:00) J.Small right guard to SF 16 for no gain (S.Womack).
- 4-1-SF 16 (12:13) **B.Narveson 34 yard field goal is GOOD, Center-M.Cox, Holder-T.Zentner.**

Timeout at 12:09.

SF 7 TEN 17, 7 plays, 49 yards, 1 penalty, 4:43 drive, 2:51 elapsed

B.Narveson kicks 68 yards from TEN 35 to SF -3. C.Schrader to SF 30 for 33 yards (B.Narveson).

San Francisco 49ers at 12:09, (1st play from scrimmage 12:03)

- 1-10-SF 30 (12:03) J.Dobbs pass deep left to T.Martin pushed ob at SF 47 for 17 yards (K.Ellis). P9
Penalty on TEN, Defensive Too Many Men on Field, declined.
- 1-10-SF 47 (11:46) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass incomplete deep right to F.Darby (T.Gowan).
- 2-10-SF 47 (11:40) (Shotgun) M.Breida left guard to SF 47 for no gain (K.Coburn; C.Murphy). FUMBLES (K.Coburn), recovered by SF-J.Dobbs at SF 43. J.Dobbs to SF 42 for -1 yards (S.Ray).
- 3-15-SF 42 (10:54) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short middle to T.Taylor to TEN 37 for 21 yards (K.Ellis) [S.Ray]. P10
Penalty on TEN-G.Jeudy-Lally, Defensive Holding, declined.
- 1-10-TEN 37 (10:36) J.Dobbs pass short right to J.Tonges to TEN 27 for 10 yards (T.Gowan; S.Carter). P11
- 1-10-TEN 27 (9:54) T.Taylor right end to TEN 6 for 21 yards (S.Carter). R12
- 1-6-TEN 6 (9:13) M.Breida left guard to TEN 6 for no gain (Q.Bohanna, C.Campbell).
- 2-6-TEN 6 (8:35) (Shotgun) **J.Dobbs scrambles right end for 6 yards, TOUCHDOWN.** R13
TWO-POINT CONVERSION ATTEMPT. J.Dobbs pass to T.Taylor is incomplete. ATTEMPT FAILS.
Penalty on SF, Illegal Formation, declined.

Timeout at 08:26.

SF 13 TEN 17, 8 plays, 70 yards, 3:43 drive, 6:34 elapsed

J.Moody kicks 65 yards from SF 35 to end zone, Touchback to the TEN 30.

Tennessee Titans at 8:26

- 1-10-TEN 30 (8:26) M.Willis pass deep left to B.Oliver ran ob at SF 45 for 25 yards.
PENALTY on TEN, Illegal Formation, 5 yards, enforced at TEN 30 - No Play.
- 1-15-TEN 25 (8:04) (Shotgun) M.Willis scrambles right guard to TEN 32 for 7 yards (A.Barrett).
- 2-8-TEN 32 (7:29) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass short left to J.Jackson pushed ob at TEN 38 for 6 yards (R.Ya-Sin, J.Mahoney).
- 3-2-TEN 38 (6:52) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass incomplete short middle to S.Schnee.
PENALTY on SF-T.Walker, Illegal Contact, 4 yards, enforced at TEN 38 - No Play.
Penalty on SF-T.Walker, Defensive Holding, declined. X19
- 1-10-TEN 42 (6:47) (Shotgun) H.Haskins up the middle to TEN 45 for 3 yards (R.Beal).
- 2-7-TEN 45 (6:10) (Shotgun) H.Haskins right guard to TEN 46 for 1 yard (E.Turner, T.Bethune).
- 3-6-TEN 46 (5:25) (Shotgun) M.Willis scrambles left end to SF 49 for 5 yards (T.Bethune).
- 4-1-SF 49 (4:37) (Shotgun) J.Small left guard to SF 49 for no gain (J.Garvin; S.Brown).

Timeout at 04:32.

San Francisco 49ers at 4:32

- 1-10-SF 49 (4:32) M.Breida left tackle to SF 49 for no gain (M.Davidson).
- 2-10-SF 49 (3:57) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short right to T.Martin to TEN 40 for 11 yards (T.Gowan). P14
- 1-10-TEN 40 (3:22) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short left to M.Breida to TEN 35 for 5 yards (K.Ellis).
- 2-5-TEN 35 (2:50) (Shotgun) M.Breida right tackle to TEN 35 for no gain (C.Campbell).
- 3-5-TEN 35 (2:08) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass incomplete short middle to T.Taylor.
- 4-5-TEN 35 (2:05) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs sacked at 50 for -15 yards (sack split by K.Coburn and K.Duke).

Two-Minute Warning

Tennessee Titans at 1:56

- 1-10-50 (1:56) J.Small right end to SF 43 for 7 yards (T.Bethune).
Timeout #1 by SF at 01:49.
- 2-3-SF 43 (1:49) J.Small left tackle to SF 44 for -1 yards (T.Walker, A.Barrett).

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans at Nissan Stadium

Timeout #2 by SF at 01:44.

3-4-SF 44 (1:44) J.Small left guard to SF 45 for -1 yards (T.Bethune).

Timeout #3 by SF at 01:39.

4-5-SF 45 (1:39) T.Zentner punts 45 yards to end zone, Center-M.Cox, Touchback.

San Francisco 49ers at 1:32

1-10-SF 20 (1:32) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short right to C.Latu to SF 25 for 5 yards (C.Campbell).

2-5-SF 25 (1:15) (No Huddle, Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short left to T.Martin to SF 35 for 10 yards (G.Jeudy-Lally). P15

1-10-SF 35 (:57) (No Huddle, Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short right to C.Latu to SF 42 for 7 yards (E.Garror).

2-3-SF 42 (:53) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass deep left to T.Taylor to TEN 40 for 18 yards (G.Jeudy-Lally). P16

1-10-TEN 40 (:37) (No Huddle) J.Dobbs spiked the ball to stop the clock.

2-10-TEN 40 (:36) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short right to T.Taylor to TEN 31 for 9 yards (C.Campbell; E.Garror).

3-1-TEN 31 (:20) *PENALTY on SF-D.Nugent, False Start, 5 yards, enforced at TEN 31 - No Play.*

3-6-TEN 36 (:06) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass incomplete deep left to T.Martin.

4-6-TEN 36 (:01) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass deep left INTERCEPTED by C.Campbell at TEN 1. C.Campbell to TEN 1 for no gain (J.Kirclin).

END OF QUARTER

	Score	Time Poss	First Downs				Efficiencies	
			R	P	X	T	3 Down	4 Down
San Francisco 49ers	13	7:51	2	6	0	8	1/3	0/2
Tennessee Titans	17	7:09	1	0	1	2	0/3	0/1

Miscellaneous Statistics Report

San Francisco 49ers vs Tennessee Titans
8/10/2024 at Nissan Stadium

Ten Longest Plays for San Francisco 49ers

Yards	Qtr	Play Start	Play Description
33	2	3-9-SF 3	(4:04) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass deep middle to F.Darby to SF 36 for 33 yards (T.Avery; O.Reese).
21	1	3-9-SF 40	(13:12) (Shotgun) B.Allen pass deep right to R.Bell to TEN 39 for 21 yards (A.Hooker).
21	4	3-15-SF 42	(10:54) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass short middle to T.Taylor to TEN 37 for 21 yards (K.Ellis) [S.Ray]. Penalty on TEN-G.Jeudy-Lally, Defensive Holding, declined.
21	4	1-10-TEN 27	(9:54) T.Taylor right end to TEN 6 for 21 yards (S.Carter).
18	1	2-4-TEN 33	(11:59) B.Allen pass deep middle to C.Conley to TEN 15 for 18 yards (R.McCreary).
18	4	2-3-SF 42	(:53) (Shotgun) J.Dobbs pass deep left to T.Taylor to TEN 40 for 18 yards (G.Jeudy-Lally).
17	4	1-10-SF 30	(12:03) J.Dobbs pass deep left to T.Martin pushed ob at SF 47 for 17 yards (K.Ellis). Penalty on TEN, Defensive Too Many Men on Field, declined.
15	3	2-19-SF 37	(10:03) J.Dobbs pass short left to T.Martin to TEN 48 for 15 yards (G.Jeudy-Lally).
13	1	2-10-SF 26	(14:52) J.Mason up the middle to SF 39 for 13 yards (J.Harrell, E.Molden).
12	1	2-10-SF 28	(5:55) B.Allen pass short left to C.Conley to SF 40 for 12 yards (T.Avery; O.Reese).

Ten Longest Plays for Tennessee Titans

Yards	Qtr	Play Start	Play Description
36	2	3-10-TEN 24	(1:38) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short right to J.Chestnut to SF 40 for 36 yards (C.Robinson).
28	3	1-10-TEN 35	(1:52) (Shotgun) M.Willis right end to SF 37 for 28 yards (S.Womack).
24	1	2-2-SF 34	(1:26) (Shotgun) T.Pollard right end to SF 10 for 24 yards (G.Odum). ** Injury Update: SF-D.Winters has returned to the
22	1	3-10-TEN 36	(2:27) (Shotgun) W.Levis pass short middle to C.Ridley pushed ob at SF 42 for 22 yards (G.Odum). SF-D.Winters was injured
18	2	2-6-SF 29	(7:30) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to D.Martin-Robinson pushed ob at SF 11 for 18 yards (R.Ya-Sin; D.Winters).
17	3	1-15-TEN 19	(14:55) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short middle to M.Kinsey to TEN 36 for 17 yards (T.Hawkins).
12	2	2-10-TEN 20	(13:23) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to T.Burks to TEN 32 for 12 yards (T.Hawkins).
12	2	3-9-TEN 33	(11:59) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short middle to M.Kinsey to TEN 45 for 12 yards (A.Thomas).
12	2	2-13-SF 47	(9:24) (Shotgun) M.Rudolph pass short left to D.Martin-Robinson pushed ob at SF 35 for 12 yards (R.Ya-Sin).
10	4	2-11-SF 26	(13:37) (Shotgun) M.Willis pass short left to S.Schnee to SF 16 for 10 yards (C.Lucas, T.Bethune).

Touchdown Scoring Information

		Offense	Defense	Special Teams
VISITOR	San Francisco 49ers	2	0	0
HOME	Tennessee Titans	2	0	0

Player Scoring Information

Club	Player	TD	Rush TD	Rec TD	KO TD	Punt TD	Int TD	Fum TD	Misc TD	FG	XP	2Pt Rush	2Pt Rec	Sfty	Points
SF	J.Mason	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
SF	J.Dobbs	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
SF	J.Moody	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
TEN	W.Levis	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
TEN	T.Spears	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
TEN	B.Narveson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
TEN	N.Folk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2

Possession Detail

	First Half		Second Half		Game	
	Visitor	Home	Visitor	Home	Visitor	Home
Largest Lead	7	7	0	10	7	10
Drives Leading	0	2	0	5	0	7
Time of Possession Leading	0:00	10:29	0:00	17:42	0:00	28:11
Largest Deficit	-7	-7	-10	0	-10	-7
Drives Trailing	2	1	5	0	7	1
Time of Possession Trailing	4:27	3:16	12:18	0:00	16:45	3:16
Times Score Tied Up		1		0		1
Lead Changes		2		0		2

Playtime Percentage

Percent of playtime per player on offense, defense and special teams (Unofficial)

San Francisco 49ers

Tennessee Titans

		San Francisco 49ers				Tennessee Titans								
		Offense		Defense	Special Teams		Offense		Defense	Special Teams				
T.Martin	WR	39	70%		4	21%	L.Simmons	G	57	80%	2	11%		
T.Taylor	WR	36	64%		5	26%	G.Christian	T	46	65%	2	11%		
C.Latu	TE	34	61%		9	47%	D.Martin-Robinson	TE	38	54%	6	32%		
J.Kingston	T	31	55%		1	5%	D.Brunskill	C	30	42%	2	11%		
I.Alarcon	T	31	55%				A.Rupcich	T	30	42%	2	11%		
J.Dobbs	QB	31	55%				J.Duncan	T	30	42%	2	11%		
D.Nugent	C	31	55%				M.Rudolph	QB	30	42%				
S.Gutierrez	T	31	55%				M.Kinsey	WR	28	39%				
F.Darby	WR	29	52%		5	26%	J.Ojukwu	T	27	38%	2	11%		
M.Breida	RB	27	48%				C.Levin	C	27	38%	2	11%		
D.Puni	G	25	45%		1	5%	C.Spencer	G	27	38%	2	11%		
C.Hubbard	T	25	45%		1	5%	M.Willis	QB	27	38%				
B.Allen	QB	25	45%				S.Schnee	RB	27	38%				
N.Zakelj	G	25	45%				T.Odukoya	TE	26	37%	9	47%		
R.Bell	WR	24	43%		3	16%	J.Small	RB	25	35%	1	5%		
L.Kidd	G	23	41%				K.Philips	WR	23	32%				
B.Bartch	G	22	39%		1	5%	N.Westbrook	WR	21	30%	3	16%		
C.Schrader	RB	18	32%		7	37%	N.Westbrook-Ikhine	WR	21	30%	3	16%		
E.Saubert	TE	17	30%		8	42%	J.Chestnut	RB	20	28%	7	37%		
C.Conley	WR	17	30%				K.Jackson	WR	19	27%	3	16%		
B.Willis	TE	16	29%		8	42%	J.Jackson	WR	18	25%	7	37%		
B.Parker	T	14	25%				B.Oliver	WR	18	25%	3	16%		
J.Tonges	TE	11	20%		7	37%	S.Stilianos	TE	16	23%	2	11%		
A.Banks	G	11	20%		1	5%	T.Burks	WR	15	21%				
C.McKivitz	T	11	20%		1	5%	P.Skoronski	T	14	20%	2	11%		
J.Mason	RB	11	20%				N.Petit-Frere	T	14	20%	2	11%		
J.Kirklin	WR	1	2%		4	21%	D.Radunz	T	14	20%	2	11%		
R.Green	DB			61	86%	7	37%	J.Latham	T	14	20%	2	11%	
R.Beal	DE			51	72%	3	16%	L.Cushenberry	C	14	20%			
R.Ya-Sin	CB			50	70%	5	26%	W.Levis	QB	14	20%			
M.Mustapha	DB			46	65%	10	53%	H.Haskins	RB	12	17%	7	37%	
A.Barrett	DE			46	65%	2	11%	B.Dooley	T	11	15%			
T.McGill	DT			42	59%	3	16%	T.Boyd	WR	11	15%			
C.Robinson	LB			37	52%	8	42%	C.Ridley	WR	9	13%			
D.Winters	LB			36	51%	8	42%	C.Okonkwo	TE	8	11%	3	16%	
S.Womack	CB			36	51%	5	26%	T.Pollard	RB	8	11%			
J.Garvin	LB			35	49%	2	11%	J.Whyle	TE	7	10%	3	16%	
T.Bethune	LB			34	48%	9	47%	T.Spears	RB	6	8%			
E.Anderson	DT			34	48%	2	11%	C.Campbell	LB		45	80%	5	26%
J.Graham	LB			33	46%	11	58%	M.Davidson	DT		42	75%	1	5%
T.Hawkins	SS			30	42%	11	58%	G.Jeudy-Lally	DB		32	57%	5	26%
K.Davis	DT			30	42%	1	5%	J.Williams	LB		31	55%	10	53%
S.Brown	DT			28	39%	1	5%	E.Garror	CB		29	52%	1	5%
J.Mahoney	DB			27	38%	5	26%	K.Coburn	NT		29	52%		
A.Thomas	CB			25	35%	1	5%							

C.Lucas	CB	23	32%	8	42%	S.Carter	FS	27	48%	7	37%
E.Turner	LB	20	28%	8	42%	J.Brownlee	DB	25	45%	7	37%
G.Odum	FS	14	20%	6	32%	T.Gowan	CB	25	45%		
J.Brown	SS	14	20%	2	11%	K.Ellis	DB	23	41%		
T.Walker	FS	11	15%			J.Harrell	LB	20	36%	8	42%
Y.Gross-Matos	LB	10	14%	1	5%	E.Molden	CB	19	34%	5	26%
K.Givens	DT	8	11%	1	5%	R.Weaver	LB	19	34%	5	26%
T.Pepper	LS			6	32%	C.Murphy	LB	19	34%	3	16%
M.Pline	TE			5	26%	K.Duke	DE	19	34%		
P.Harvin	P			5	26%	T.McLendon	DE	19	34%		
J.Moody	K			4	21%	M.Brown	FS	18	32%	10	53%
K.Vaughn	RB			2	11%	R.McCreary	CB	16	29%	2	11%
M.Wishnowsky	P			1	5%	T.Avery	CB	15	27%	7	37%
						O.Reese	LB	14	25%	9	47%
						M.Jackson	SS	14	25%	7	37%
						S.Ray	LB	13	23%	1	5%
						T.Rush	LB	12	21%	9	47%
						T.Sweat	NT	12	21%	1	5%
						Q.Bohanna	DT	12	21%		
						K.Murray	LB	11	20%	1	5%
						K.Murray Jr.	LB	11	20%	1	5%
						S.Joseph	DT	11	20%	1	5%
						J.Gibbens	LB	11	20%	1	5%
						A.Hooker	FS	11	20%	1	5%
						A.Key	LB	10	18%		
						R.Javier	DB	7	12%	3	16%
						I.Iton	DT	6	11%		
						N.Folk	K			6	32%
						M.Cox	LS			6	32%
						T.Zentner	P			6	32%
						B.Narveson	K			2	11%
						L.Gifford	LB			1	5%



TENNESSEE TITANS

**LAST WEEK'S
GAME CLIPS**

SIX THINGS THAT STOOD OUT FOR TITANS IN SATURDAY NIGHT'S PRESEASON WIN OVER THE 49ERS

BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
AUGUST 10, 2024

NASHVILLE – The Titans kicked off the preseason on Saturday night with a 17-13 win over the San Francisco 49ers.

Here's a look at six things that stood out in the contest:

1-2 Punch in Running Game

The Titans look different without Derrick Henry in the backfield. On Saturday night, the team took the field without their workhorse of past seasons as the page officially turned. I thought the tandem of Tony Pollard and Tyjae Spears looked good vs the 49ers, however, and the Titans hope it's a sign of things to come. Pollard carried the ball four times for 35 yards (8.8 ypc) in the contest, and Spears scored on a nifty four-yard touchdown run in the second quarter as he bounced to the outside and found the end zone. "He's been a great brother to work with," Spears said of Pollard. "We're still working, and we still have a lot of things to clean up. But we're off to a great start."

Levis Debut, and His Big Hit

Titans quarterback Will Levis had a chance to show off his progress in the preseason opener, and he played long enough to make a few plays. Levis completed 4-of-5 passes for 35 yards, including a 22-yard toss to receiver Calvin Ridley. Levis also managed to find the end zone. Before that scoring run: Levis took a big hit from 49ers linebacker Dee Winters on another run, as he attempted to score. My take: Levis needs to pick his battles as a runner, because the last thing the Titans want to see is Levis injured in the preseason. Levis was pleased with the performance of the first-team group, but he acknowledged he got

some free advice from others after taking the hit. "I got some people telling me: It's preseason, get down," Levis said. "I was trying to make something happen, but I have to be smarter."

Calvin Ridley's Explosiveness

Ridley didn't play much in his preseason debut, but he was in there long enough to show why the Titans went out and got him in free agency. Ridley caught a short pass from Levis across the middle, and he escaped pursuit to race 22 yards for a first down, putting his speed on display. Ridley has dazzled in training camp practices, and Titans fans got a sneak peek of what's to come on Saturday night. "We were trying to get the ball to Calvin two or three times there," Titans Coach Brian Callahan said. "It was good to just get Calvin going and you see just how explosive he can be with the ball in his hands."

The new kickoff is going to take some getting used to. In Week One of the preseason, fans saw the play unfold in front of their own eyes. Titans fans probably liked what they saw in the return game, as Kearis Jackson returned the Titans first kickoff 63 yards, setting up the team's first score of the night. It wasn't the only successful return on the night – rookie Jha'Quan Jackson returned a punt 26 yards, which gave the team good field position once again. "It was exciting," Jha'Quan Jackson said. "We feed off of plays like that, and it fires guys up."

Defense

Yes, it was a shaky start – the 49ers took the opening kickoff and drove 74 yards on 11 plays to take a 7-0 lead to start the contest. After that, however, the 49ers didn't score again until midway through the fourth quarter. While the 49ers starters weren't out there, the Titans were without a good deal of their front-liners as well. Jeffery Simmons, Harold Landry, L'Jarius Sneed, Chidobe Awuzie and Quandre Diggs were among those who didn't suit up on a night when

Chance Campbell led the team with eight tackles, and Campbell and Keondre Coburn recorded sacks. The Titans held the 49ers to 4-11 on third down (36.4 %) and 0-2 on fourth down.

Chance Campbell's Big Night

I mentioned Campbell in the previous graph. It was a heck of a performance for the third-year linebacker, who had the eight tackles, a sack, and a game-sealing interception on the final play of the game. "I think any time you can help the team," Campbell said, "it feels good." Coach Callahan bragged on Campbell afterward. "He made plays kind of all night long," Callahan said of Campbell. "He made some hits on the quarterback. I think he sacked the quarterback once, if I'm not mistaken. But just to see him come alive a little bit was great because we're looking for guys to keep coming in that room for depth purposes. Obviously, we lost Garret Wallow. And so, there's opportunities there and he did a nice job taking advantage of it."

###

WILL LEVIS LEADS 2 TOUCHDOWN DRIVES, TENNESSEE TITANS OUTLAST 49ERS IN NFL PRESEASON OPENER

**BY NICK SUSS
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
AUGUST 10, 2024**

The Tennessee Titans started the Brian Callahan era, or at least the preseason of the Brian Callahan era, with a win over one of the NFL's best and deepest teams.

The Titans held off a late comeback Saturday to beat the San Francisco 49ers 17-13 from Nissan Stadium and start their preseason with a victory. Quarterback Will Levis and the first-team offense were on the field for two drives, scoring a pair of short-distance touchdowns off runs from Levis and running back Tyjae Spears. Levis finished his day 4-for-5 passing with 35 yards, including a 22-yard connection with No. 1 receiver Calvin Ridley on a crucial third down where Ridley reversed field after catching a crossing route and hustled downfield to extend a drive.

Many of the Titans' top defenders, including defensive tackle Jeffery Simmons and cornerback L'Jarius Sneed, didn't dress for Saturday's game. The first-team defenders who did dress were on the field for one or two drives depending on position group. The 49ers, who didn't play many of their starters on either side of the ball, charged forward for a scoring drive to open the game but their offense did little else against the Titans' first- or second-teamers in the first half.

Here are The Tennessean's observations from the Titans' win.

First-team offense keeps things clean

Levis and the Titans' first-teamers weren't really challenged much Saturday. That's obviously a good thing since the 49ers mostly trotted second-teamers out on defense. Knowing competition level is what

it is in the preseason, the encouraging thing is the way Levis and his crew handled the operation. No penalties. No communication issues. Comfort in the red zone. Comfort on third downs. A big play from Calvin Ridley when the team needed it most.

Things clearly could've gone better in some areas. Nothing's perfect. But the right side of the offensive line looked strong after a month of uncertainty to start camp, the running backs rotation worked well and Levis looked confident and in control. Two drives, two touchdowns. Hard to quibble against that.

How about the return game?

Winning the punt returner job should be a quick cheat code for getting that 53rd roster spot. Rookie Jha'Quan Jackson seized the opportunity, scampering upfield for 26 yards the first time he got his hands on the ball and doing a good job of instinctively getting away from the ball in bad situations. That's a good sign for Jackson, who hasn't gotten all that many first- or second-team receiver reps in practice so far and probably only makes the team as a special teams guy to start the year.

But not so fast, because fellow receiver Kearis Jackson started the game opposite Jha'Quan Jackson as kick returner and had an even more electric play, returning the first ball he touched 63 yards thanks to two nifty spin moves and an open-field juke. It seems unlikely that both Jacksons can stick on the 53-man roster, so this competition may be heating up, especially if the Titans have bigger plans for kick return duties including starters like Treyton Burks or Tyjae Spears.

Will Levis, still physical

The transition from the Mike Vrabel era into the Callahan era hasn't done anything to dissuade Levis from taking hits, apparently. Levis barreled his way toward the goal line trying to run for a touchdown on his first drive and withstood a nasty

lick from 49ers linebacker Dee Winters and safety George Odum. Levis tried lowering his shoulder, but the 49ers' defenders won the power battle.

Undeterred, Levis sneaked up the middle for a touchdown one play later. Still, after a long offseason of not taking hits and playing non-contact throughout training camp, it's probably not great that Levis rung his own wake-up call hit this early.

Defense spotlight

It's tough to glean too much from the first-team defense from this one. Turns out, having Jeffery Simmons, Harold Landry III, L'Jarius Sneed and Chidobe Awuzie is pretty important. But it's fair to come away from this one impressed by the inside linebackers; Kenneth Murray II opened the game with a nice blitz and Chance Campbell was everywhere in the first half. It would've been encouraging to see the D-line get a little more push or the secondary make some more plays on the ball. But it was an altogether fine performance.

###

WILL LEVIS LEADS TWO TD DRIVES TO HELP TITANS BEAT 49ERS 17-13 IN TEAMS' PRESEASON OPENER

**BY AP
ESPN.COM
AUGUST 10, 2024**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- — Will Levis led touchdown drives on both his series and the Tennessee Titans beat the San Francisco 49ers 17-13 on Saturday night in the teams' preseason opener.

Levis, who worked in the offseason to learn new coach Brian Callahan's system, completed 4 of 5 passes for 35 yards, and capped the Titans' opening drive by scoring on a quarterback sneak.

The 49ers opened the game, going 74 yards in 11 plays with Jordan Mason scoring from 4 yards out. Brandon Allen started at quarterback for the 49ers, who did not play starter Brock Purdy nor any of their first-team skill-position players on offense.

Tennessee answered with a big assist from special teams. On their first return using the NFL's new kickoff rule, Kearis Jackson broke free through the center of the line for a 63-yard return. The 49ers were penalized 15 yards for sideline interference, setting the Titans up at the San Francisco 15. It took seven plays, and a 49ers defensive holding penalty, before Levis scored Tennessee's first touchdown on a 1-yard sneak.

After forcing a punt by San Francisco on the next series, the Titans got the football back, and Levis directed a longer scoring drive, taking the Titans 64 yards in seven plays. Levis hit Calvin Ridley for a 22-yard catch and run on third down to get the drive going. Later, newcomer Tony Pollard added runs of 8 and 24 yards on the drive that was capped by Tyjae Spears' 4-yard touchdown run on the first play of the second quarter.

Third-string quarterback Malik Willis directed a scoring drive in the fourth quarter that resulted in 34-yard field goal by rookie Brandon Narveson.

The 49ers answered with a touchdown drive that ended with Joshua Dobb's 6-yard run into the end zone. The 49ers went for two, but were unsuccessful.

MAKING AN IMPACT

Titans backup linebacker Chance Campbell, whose play has been limited to just four games in two years due to injuries, had a big first half with a sack, three other tackles and a special teams hit. He also intercepted a Hail Mary from Dobb on the final play of the game.

Also, backup defensive tackle Keondre Coleman had a sack and a forced fumble for Tennessee.

HOMECOMING

With Christian McCaffrey and Elijah Mitchell not playing in the game for the 49ers, Mason used the game against the Titans as a nice homecoming. Mason, who played high school football at Gallatin High, about 25 miles north of Nashville, rushed six times for 34 yards for the 49ers in the first quarter, including the touchdown run that gave San Francisco the 7-0 lead.

NEW LOOK TITANS

The Titans' switch from a run-based offense that featured Derrick Henry for the past several seasons to a pass-friendly system was evident on the stat sheet.

The Titans threw the football 29 times, completing 19 for 198 yards between quarterbacks Levis, Rudolph and Willis.

More importantly for the Titans, the offensive line held up well. Tennessee's only sack allowed came when Willis attempted to scramble and was stopped for a one-yard loss by Kalia Davis. The offensive line yielded 64 sacks last season and was

a point of emphasis in the off-season with the hiring of head coach Brian Callahan's father, Bill, for that role.

STANDING STRONG

The 49ers twice stuffed the Titans on fourth-and-1 plays to end Tennessee drives. The first one came on a replay challenge that overturned a run by Hassan Haskins that would have set up first-and-goal at the 1. That came in the second quarter on Rudolph's first series at quarterback, guiding the Titans second-team offense.

The second stop came just across midfield when the Niners stuffed running back Jabari Small at the San Francisco 49 with 4:32 left to play in the game.

###

TITANS' REVIEW: PASS-GAME TIMING, RETURN-GAME SUCCESS AND MORE

**BY PAUL KUHARSKY
PAULKUHARSKY.COM
AUGUST 11, 2024**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Preseason wins don't matter.

Brian Callahan said as much after the Titans beat the 49ers 17-13 at Nissan Stadium Saturday evening in Week One of the NFL's exhibition season.

But he's a new coach with a new staff and roster and a great deal of new players.

In that regard, the coach and his quarterback took meaning in the result.

"There are habits in winning," Brian Callahan said. "...I do think in the moment, these things matter. I think you're trying to build a winning team and a winning culture. It validates the work you put in, and so that helps.."

"We've got to get used to winning," Will Levis said. "Winning's fun and there is a certain responsibility that comes with it. So hopefully we do our best in all these games, get a feel for that winning atmosphere and just keep rolling."

Here are some thoughts on several of the ingredients that pushed the Titans to a good result, that would have been in place even if the 49ers last possession ended with a losing TD rather than a Chance Campbell pick of Josh Dobbs on fourth-and-6 from the Tennessee 36-yard-line:

Timing: I thought there was a lot of good passing-game timing for the offense, especially for the units that mattered the most.

Levis found Calvin Ridley in sync over the middle on a third-and-10 that Ridley ran with to turn into a 22-yard play.

"You see how explosive he can be with the ball in his hands," Callahan said.

Several other plays, including an 18-yard Mason Rudolph to David Martin-Robinson connection up the right side seemed to time up just as the Titans wanted.

It also worked hand-in-hand with keeping Levis and Rudolph clean – in 24 combined dropbacks neither was sacked.

"I think timing-wise it's been good," Callahan said. "I was intentional about trying to keep the quarterbacks out of harm's way to some degree so the ball was coming out pretty quick. Some of those ply-action passes were really efficient for us, they popped open. I think our timing in the passing game is coming along really well.

"A couple more weeks of this and a couple more games and I think I'll feel really good about where we're at in entering the regular season. But it was good to see tonight that we could be on time and play on time and operate together."

Malik Willis took the only 49ers sack of the game early in the fourth quarter. The right side of the third offensive line had some problems but he looked primed to escape before he was taken down low by Kalia Davis for a 1-yard loss.

The Titans gave up an average of four sacks a game in the preseason last year.

Returns: The Titans' new special teams got off to a big start.

Kearis Jackson returned the first 49ers kickoff for 63 yards with return during which he spun out of potential trouble twice, setting the Titans up for a 15-yard touchdown drive. And Jha'Quan Jackson took the first punt the Titans fielded in the preseason 26 yards, showing a nice burst.

Those both set up touchdowns. Kearis Jackson had a second, 18-yard kickoff return.

Consider this: In the 2023 preseason, the Titans returned seven kickoffs for 167 yards with a long of 33, and 10 punts for 97 yards with a long of 17.

Here's rookie Jha'Quan describing second-year man Kearis' work:

"When he caught it, I knew it was going to be a good return because all week we schemed up and knew what we were going to do and we trusted in our training. Seeing that he hit one spin move and then I hit a block, then everybody else was blocking, then he hit another spin move, I said, 'Ooh, he's out of the gate!' We feed off of that. The whole team feeds off of that."

Big shot: Will Levis tried to get into the end zone on third-and-goal from the 3-yard line after the Titans' first possession, but was met with a big hit from Dee Winters.

He said he needed to be smarter, but Callahan was fine with it.

"I think there is something to that, a guy just taking a good shot early on, feeling like he's ready to play," he said. "All quarterbacks will tell you they like to get that first hit out of the way, so we got it out of the way early. Hopefully, we don't take many more of them. I didn't mind what he did, it wasn't really egregious, put himself in harm's way. The less hits the better obviously."

San Francisco got called for defensive holding and Levis dug under the pile for a 1-yard TD on the next play.

Sack, pick and more: Chance Campbell played as a second-team inside linebacker and ended the 49ers' last drive before the half with a hard sack of backup quarterback Brandon Allen on a third-and-six, bursting through the middle and dropping him for a 10-yard loss. Caleb Murphy was right there with him on a well-designed rush.

Thomas Rush missed a great sack chance against Joshua Dobbs as

Dobbs took off for a 6-yard touchdown in the fourth quarter that made it 17-13 Titans.

Campbell was the defensive player of the game, as he also had the previously mentioned game-sealing interception, and matched the 49ers' Tatum Bethune with a game-high nine tackles.

A sixth-rounder in 2022, Campbell missed his rookie season with an injury and only played in four games last year.

Healthy, he could thrive in the new defense as his position is being treated differently.

"He made plays kind of all night long, and I think he made a bunch of tackles," Callahan said. "He made some hits on the quarterback. ...Just to see him come alive a little bit was great because we're looking for guys to keep coming in that room for depth purposes."

Endurance: The first drive engineered by Rudolph and the second team offense went 17 plays and 8:43 covering 78 yards before the Titans turned the ball over on downs at the 49ers' 2-yard line.

"That's a lot, that's a long drive for guys to go out there and play," Callahan said. "I think it was good for everybody to go out there and feel what that felt like and see where we are conditioning-wise after 17 plays. I thought we looked pretty good. I didn't think we looked tired at any point. I thought we looked fresh. So that was good to see."

###

TITANS TAKEAWAYS VS. 49ERS: CALVIN RIDLEY'S BURST, WILL LEVIS' POP, JC LATHAM'S 'C'

BY JOE REXRODE
THE ATHLETIC
AUGUST 10, 2024

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — “Against whom?” is the question that must be asked when an NFL player does something of note in a preseason game, but it doesn't always apply.

Think Simone Biles, the greatest American athlete of all time. Her Olympic feats have been uncontested. The flipping, twisting, contorting, balancing and landing need no interference from a Brazilian or Romanian rival to be amazing. Likewise, when Tennessee Titans receiver Calvin Ridley took a short pass from Will Levis on Saturday at Nissan Stadium and turned it into a 22-yard gain, it did not matter who was chasing him — the instant acceleration was extraordinary.

That's Ridley: a special talent, a key to this Titans season and now the subject of a sports analogy so cringeworthy that it could only be allowed to fly in the account of an NFL preseason game. Here are seven other observations of note from that 17-13 Titans win over the San Francisco 49ers, sans Olympic parallels and with an eye toward the actual football that starts in four weeks.

1. Will Levis kept it simple and smart, except when it came to his own body. Levis engineered two touchdown drives in two tries, one of 15 yards and one of 64, though apart from the Ridley catch-and-run he had just 13 yards passing. The fans never got to see him let one fly. They did see him lunge for the end zone on a scramble and take a gigantic shot from linebacker Dee Winters.

Three weeks of preseason camp have seen Levis make strides, despite a familiar Titans issue — pass protection — but he can still

further his embrace of self-preservation. Plays like that should be saved for crucial moments in games that count. Titans first-year coach Brian Callahan said Levis' decision to go for it there “wasn't anything egregious,” but Levis said: “Third down, I was trying to make something happen, but I've got to be smart.”

2. Operationally, the Titans were clean. Just as you aren't getting tons of information on a team's most important players in a preseason game, you aren't pegging any coaches. Callahan's chops as a head coach and play caller will be assessed starting Sept. 8 in Chicago. But zero penalties in the first half, with most healthy regulars getting work, was a good sign.

The Titans ended up with just three penalties for 15 yards and one turnover, on a botched pitch attempt from backup quarterback Mason Rudolph to Julius Chestnut.

3. T'Vondre Sweat is just a practice wrecker so far, not a game wrecker yet. Yes, the rookie second-round pick from Texas was doubled often in his dozen snaps. But this is when “Against whom?” matters.

The defending NFC champion 49ers were heavy on the backups Saturday as expected, with left guard Aaron Banks the only interior starter who saw any action. Sweat's quiet night isn't a concern, but it is a tap of the brakes on the hype train after weeks of consistently befuddling Titans blockers in practice.

Remember, Sweat has been working next to this team's best football player, Jeffery Simmons, who was a healthy scratch Saturday. Simmons was joined on the sideline by Harold Landry, Quandre Diggs, L'Jarius Sneed, Chidobe Awuzie and Jamal Adams. They were all missed as a Niners offense led by backup quarterback Brandon Allen cruised 74 yards for a touchdown on its first possession.

4. Tony Pollard and Tyjae Spears will be a nice backfield pairing. That's not really an observation off

the game, but the game reiterated what we've been watching in practice. Pollard looks like he has for most of his career, other than fresh off surgery — his 24-yard run was full of burst — and Spears has improved. The Titans are going to run the ball plenty, sorry to say for those of you who wanted no traces of Vra-ball left in Nashville.

But Callahan has said as much, and it makes sense even with Ridley, Tyler Boyd and DeAndre Hopkins — the one offensive starter who was hurt and out — on hand to catch passes from Levis. Which brings us to the offensive line.

5. The tackle tandem of JC Latham and Nicholas Petit-Frere looked OK. “Against whom?” Well, Nick Bosa and Leonard Floyd weren't out there. Robert Beal and Yetur Gross-Matos were. Both tackles got beat rather quickly on different pass plays. Both won, too.

Latham gave himself a “C” for his effort, saying: “I could have done a lot better in pass protection.”

“I think it was fine,” Petit-Frere said. “I still have a lot of things to work on with my technique.”

The offensive line's best work came on running plays. Against mostly backups, yes. Also, as seen recently in practices against the Titans' defensive starters. Balance and running the ball always matter in this sport, and even with Derrick Henry off to Baltimore, the Titans' ability to get push on opponents may be as important as anything in protecting Levis and giving him opportunities to throw downfield.

6. There's no backup quarterback competition. Again, this game wasn't necessary as a tell. But it hammered home the reality. Mason Rudolph has caught fire a bit in practice and looks like a nice signing as QB2. Malik Willis has improved, no doubt, but the past week was a bit rough for him and he's not on Rudolph's level. The question is whether Callahan values him enough to keep a third quarterback (the guess here is yes).

7. Jha'Quan Jackson helped himself, as did others. Jackson's 26-yard punt return was impressive, and that might be how the rookie distinguishes himself from Mason Kinsey and Kyle Philips in the battle to be this team's sixth receiver. Kearis Jackson had an even better return, 63 yards on a kickoff, but it's still hard to see his pathway to the 53-man roster.

Kinsey continues to show up as a fearless receiver over the middle. Chance Campbell (eight tackles, game-clinching interception of Joshua Dobbs) keeps making plays as a reserve linebacker and should make this team. Tight end David Martin-Robinson is impossible to ignore with his size and physicality. Gabe Jeudy-Lally keeps showing up at cornerback.

And if you want to go up the roster a bit, rookie fifth-round pick Jarvis Brownlee Jr. stands out every chance he gets to play football for the Titans. He's not perfect, but he's not a fifth-round talent, either. Considering the health questions all over this secondary, it does not require mental gymnastics to envision him as a key player for this defense in 2024.

###



TENNESSEE TITANS
FEATURE CLIPS

THE DEAL BEHIND THE DOME: AMY ADAMS STRUNK AND HER STADIUM-WINNING DRIVE

*BY JULIA MASTERS
NASHVILLE BUSINESS
JOURNAL
AUGUST 24, 2023*

According to those who know her, Amy Adams Strunk takes a small-business leader's approach to her role as controlling owner of the Tennessee Titans. She asks questions, identifies strong leaders and loves hanging out with fans enjoying a hot dog at a tailgate.

Since becoming controlling owner in 2015, her leadership style has seen six winning seasons, an AFC Championship appearance and contributed to Nashville playing host to the 2019 NFL Draft. In what may be the biggest accomplishment of her tenure, state and city leaders, after protracted debate, this year approved a \$2.1 billion domed stadium for the team, which is expected to be completed in 2027.

Set to anchor Nashville's reimagined East Bank, the stadium is poised to become one of Music City's most transformative projects — prospects that are as concerning to some residents as they are exciting to others.

Adams Strunk made few public remarks throughout the approval process, allowing Titans president and CEO Burke Nihill to be the primary face of the project. Now, she shares her behind the scenes view of the deal in an email interview with the Business Journal. The following has been edited for length and clarity.

When the deal got approved, what was that feeling like, and where were you? Who was the first person you called? I was with my family, and Burke was keeping me updated throughout the evening. My first feeling when the stadium was approved was overwhelming gratitude. We moved here in the

mid-1990s, and we're so humbled by the support this city and state has showed our team since day one. It's such a great feeling to know the Titans will be a part of this incredible community for another generation.

What excites you the most about bringing this deal to Nashville and Titans fans? What does it mean to the city? I'm thrilled that Titans fans will have a new home with the great fan experience they deserve. I'm also excited to see the biggest events in the world pass through Nashville's new stadium. But it has always been hard for me to think about this project without being most excited about what it means for Nashville as a whole. We've been a part of the conversations about the future of the East Bank for the past several years. While it won't be without its challenges, I've always supported the city's vision to transform the stadium property into something truly special for the city. Having seen the planning work, I truly believe the East Bank will be a celebrated area of Nashville for generations to come. To think the city's beautiful stadium building will be a part of that neighborhood ... it's all so exciting.

How will you evaluate the success of the new stadium? How should the public evaluate its success? There will be things we will track that I'm excited to see, like the success of our events and how many new jobs and opportunities the stadium will bring. But I'm also the kind of person who likes to go directly to the fans and hear what they think. I like visiting with them before our events and listening to their real, direct feedback. We've engaged a lot with fans during this process and are continuing to do that now, and their feedback has been really helpful in shaping our vision for the new stadium.

What do you hope the East Bank looks like in five years? The future of the East Bank makes me so excited for Nashville. I love that we'll have large, beautiful parks, especially on the riverfront. I love the idea that the former stadium site

will be used for transportation. From everything I've seen, I think the East Bank will be a place where everyone in Nashville will want to spend time. We've said before that we want the area around the stadium to feel like a neighborhood with a stadium in it, and not a stadium with a neighborhood built around it, and we look forward to being partners in that vision.

Initial renderings for a proposed Tennessee Titans stadium show outdoor terraces.

What was the most important thing to you during this process? The most important thing to me during the process was finding a long-term answer, and not dedicate resources to a short-term one that we'd just have to address again in a few years.

Was there something you did compromise on? All of the groups involved — the mayor's office, the state of Tennessee and so many others — were such great partners through this whole process. Negotiating a 30-year agreement takes a lot of time, and there was compromise during negotiation from everyone. I'm so glad we landed on a solution that resulted in a win for all involved.

How do you see your job differently now? Did the process reveal anything or teach you anything new about the Titans' business? I'm focused on helping our football team and organization perform at our best, and that will never change. That's the great thing about our mission statement, "Win, Serve, Entertain," because it's our North Star regardless of what's right in front of us at the time. Stadium construction is new to most of us in the organization, but we have a great team of people with a lot of experience working to make sure we get it right.

What lesson from your dad [Bud Adams, the team's late founder] stuck with you throughout this process? My dad loved this city, and I thought about him often throughout this process. I know he would be proud to know the team he

founded so many years ago will be a part of this community for decades to come. I want to honor his legacy and make this city proud.

What does it mean to you to be a female owner in the NFL, and how have you navigated that space? I talk with other female owners about how it would be amazing one day to have two female NFL owners playing against each other in the Super Bowl. At the end of the day, it's the same for any team owner, male or female — we just want to beat each other. It's important to me to support other women who are interested in getting involved in the NFL. We started the Amy Adams Strunk Women in Football internship a few years back, which is a program aimed at recruiting more women in sports operations roles. Our first two interns were so outstanding that we extended their time with us, then we eventually hired Mical Johnson full-time as a scouting assistant. We've also grown girls flag football here in several counties around Middle Tennessee, and this year the athletes from [Metro Nashville Public Schools] participated in a panel where they got to talk directly with some of our female leaders about different career paths in sports. We have nine women in vice president roles in our organization across a variety of departments, and I'm very proud of our progress in that area.

At what point did you feel the most confident in the deal? When were you most worried? Getting to a final agreement was a long, diligent process, but it needed to be to make sure we came to the right solution. We certainly encountered challenges along the way, but everyone involved recognized that old deal didn't make sense anymore and that we needed a new, long-term deal that made sense for all parties.

If you encounter a skeptic of the stadium, what is your message to them? I'm looking forward to making them proud of how we serve this community over the next 30 years and beyond. Again, this has always been bigger than just building a stadium. The new agreement secures our home in

Nashville for the next several decades, and we take that commitment very seriously. We understand we have a platform here, and we're going to use it to make our community a better place and we're all partners in that.

###

THE STORY BEHIND THE TITANS UNVEILING OILERS THROWBACK UNIFORMS

BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 23, 2023

NASHVILLE – "Oilers history is Titans history."

Those are the words of Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk from a year ago, when the organization was exploring the possibility of wearing Oilers throwback uniforms, with the classic oil derrick logo on the helmets.

The possibility has turned into reality, and now fans of the organization can see them for themselves.

The Titans will wear the same uniforms the Houston Oilers wore for nearly two decades in Houston, until 1998, when the franchise also wore them as the Tennessee Oilers. The uniforms represent the longest span of Oilers uniforms in franchise history, and arguably the most beloved uniform.

The uniforms will pay homage to the Luv Ya' Blue era.

"It allows us to honor as many players as we can, because it covers so much time," said Surf Melendez, Vice President and Executive Creative Director for the Titans. "It also represented our transition to Tennessee, because we wore these uniforms in Tennessee as well."

The Titans will wear the uniforms in two games this fall, both at home. The organization inquired about wearing them for a road game in Miami as well, but it doesn't appear that will come to fruition.

The light blue Oilers throwbacks will replace the light blue "Titans" jerseys as the third jersey, joining the navy and the white uniforms.

Amy Adams Strunk said last year the team wanted to continue paying homage to the franchise's history. The organization has honored Houston Oilers players at alumni events in years past, and a number of Oilers are in the franchise's Ring of Honor.

The Oilers left Houston for Tennessee after the 1996 season and played a year in Memphis, in 1997, before playing in Nashville at Vanderbilt Stadium in 1998. The Tennessee Oilers became the Tennessee Titans in time for the 1999 season.

"Oilers history is Titans history," Strunk said last year. "We know our fans feel passionately about showcasing that legacy on game day, and we're actively working on making throwback jerseys possible in the near future. Stay tuned!"

Those who stay tuned will see this:

- "Columbia Blue" jerseys with red around white on the numbers, and names on the back, with a red, white and light blue band on the sleeves.

- White helmets, with the famed oil derrick, with red facemasks and red stripes outside of a thicker light blue stripe on the top.

- White pants, or britches, with red stripes on each side of a thicker light blue stripe down the side.

- Red and white stripes on light blue and white socks.

The words 'Luv Ya Blue' will be on the back neckline of the jerseys.

Players will have the option of wearing red sleeves, red gloves, and red cleats to add to the look.

Current Titans Derrick Henry, safety Kevin Byard, defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons and quarterback Ryan Tannehill have already worn them – they took part in a photo shoot earlier this offseason.

"They loved them," Melendez said of the current Titans. "They really loved them."

Former Oilers have also seen them – Warren Moon, Robert Brazile and Elvin Bethea were given a sneak peek when they were in Nashville for an alumni event last year.

"They looooved them, and it took them back," Melendez said of the former Oilers. "The guys who wore the uniform, it took them back. And they were able to speak to the significance of wearing that uniform. This was an original AFL team, so there's a rich tradition there and now people are going to see this, and they are going to be reminded of this rich history."

Melendez knows fans are excited. The team has had Oilers merchandise available for two seasons and there has been an increased demand over the years.

Oilers jerseys are now on sale, and new merchandise will be available in the team store at Nissan Stadium.

"Amy is passionate about this, and we are lucky," Melendez said. "She loves Nashville, she loves Houston, and she loves those people. She lived it, and she's passionate about the Oilers history."

###

'EVERY DETAIL MATTERS': HOW AMY ADAMS STRUNK REINVENTED THE TENNESSEE TITANS

**BY DENNIS FERRIER
FOX 17
FEBRUARY 1, 2022**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (WZTV) — When we think of what makes a pro football team great, we always talk about star players and coaches. But when it comes to the Tennessee Titans and their remarkable six-year streak of excellence, you have to leave the field to understand what has happened here.

It's 2015. The Tennessee Titans are the worst team in football. Their organization is small and, let's be nice here, not admired.

In walks Amy Adams Strunk—a woman with no experience in the NFL. The daughter of an eccentric billionaire. What are the chances she would be anything but more of the same old, same old?

"She took the first six months that she was in charge and just stayed in the back," said Titans announcer Mike Keith. "She wouldn't do interviews. She didn't get out in front with anything. She wanted to learn as much as she possibly could."

When she was ready, it was nothing short of a reinvention of the entire organization.

"Strip it down, challenge everything we value that just overhauled the culture both on the football team and on the business side of the organization," said Titans president Burke Nihill.

Nihill was one of her outside-of-the-box hires. A lawyer in retail and tech with no NFL background.

"I do think that professional sports lends itself to a wash, rinse, repeat cycle," said Nihill. "Every season you can kind of do the same things for a while and get away with it.

And her mentality is 'Let's act like a start up, let's challenge everything, let's expect our best in every category of the business.'"

Although he won't take credit, Nihill was the one who decided to let Waverly High School play at Nissan Stadium after devastated floods gripped the community. That was a decision beyond inconvenient—a bold, impulsive act of service.

"When do we do it, it's the weekend after the first game," Keith said. "We played the home opener, we are going to Seattle the next weekend so everybody is going to travel. You've got the home opener and then you are going to the west coast and the organization does this on that Thursday night, Waverly is playing at Nissan stadium and we are going to make it happen. And I don't know anybody in the organization that just didn't pitch it. It was just one of the proudest moments that I've ever had of this entire organization."

Keep in mind this would have been unthinkable in the old days, you would have been laughed right out of the meeting.

"The service piece is really what has increasingly defined the people who work in this organization," said Nihill. "It's our heartbeat. It may sound cheesy, but the people who have come to our doors for whatever reason, it matters to them on a deeper level. We have paid a lot more attention to how we can leverage our platform, our resources to make Nashville a better place to live," said Nihill.

There's a famous story told around here. At a big staff meeting, Amy Adams Strunk said, "We have ugly tickets, and we will never go to the Super Bowl with ugly tickets." It was dead quiet in the room, maybe some skepticism. But now they believe everything matters.

Of course, none of it matters if you don't win football games. If you lose, you are viewed as a failure whatever you do for the community.

That might not be fair, but it is an ugly truth.

Adams' first big hire was General Manager John Robinson. You know the winning streak started the same day as that hire.

And while it's pretty obvious he is a good judge of football players, their potential, what they have left in the tank, their value as a piece of the puzzle. What you don't know is his complete buy-in to the Titans culture.

"Everything matters, it's one of our mantras: everything matters," said Nihill. "Every bit of design around the stadium, our tickets, every detail matters. It also carries over to the football team. I have watched him walk around our practice field and pick up little pieces of athletic tape to make it so everything about everything we do is first class."

Even with the crushing loss to the Bengals. Even with a Super Bowl goal defeated for another year. The Titans will be back. Because it's just what they do.

"I tell people all the time, these are the good old days," added Keith. "Enjoy this because what you are seeing on and off the field from our organization, this is the best we have ever been in 23 years."

###

**MEET TENNESSEE TITANS
OWNER AMY ADAMS
STRUNK—AND NINE
OTHER WOMEN
CHANGING THE GAME IN
THE NFL**

**BY AMY FELDMAN FORBES
SEPTEMBER 23, 2022**

Most female owners inherit a team from a father, husband or brother. Now some are buying their way into football. The Titans' titan goes deep on what it all means for the league.

Before the Tennessee Titans kicked off their NFL season with a home game against the New York Giants on September 11, team owner Amy Adams Strunk spent nearly two hours with tailgaters outside Nashville's Nissan Stadium. "Omigod, it's her," one young woman shouted, before asking for the requisite photos.

The fans, Adams Strunk says, are her favorite part of owning the team, which her late father Bud Adams founded (as the Houston Oilers in 1960) and of which she has been the controlling shareholder since 2015. "Our fans, to me, are not a statistic," she says. "I'm going to be the owner that comes up to you and thanks you."

At 66, Adams Strunk is worth \$1.6 billion from her 50% stake in the Titans and is one of a growing number of women who own NFL teams: 18 of the league's 32 franchises are at least partially female-owned, with 10 listing women as majority owners or co-owners. Most inherited teams from their fathers, brothers or husbands—or, like the Buffalo Bills' Kim Pegula and the Cleveland Browns' Dee Haslam, bought into them with their husbands.

But there are signs of change—this summer, Ariel Investments' Melody Hobson bought a 5.5% stake in the Denver Broncos for

\$245 million as part of the Waltons' ownership group that also brought in Carrie Walton Penner, granddaughter of Walmart founder Sam Walton, with a 30% stake.

"Fifty percent of our fans are women," says Adams Strunk, who is known as "Mom" to the Titans' faithful. "Even though we've never played the game, that doesn't mean we don't know the game. And we have some unique perspectives on reaching women that we can bring to the table."

While some female owners who inherited NFL teams are hands-off, Adams Strunk not only runs the Titans but has also delivered a stunning turnaround. Since 2016, the squad has had six winning seasons. More important, she helped bring the NFL draft to Nashville three years ago and has high hopes for the city to host a Super Bowl.

It's a vision her father could not have foreseen. Bud Adams, who died in 2013 at age 90, was a legend in professional football. A member of the Cherokee nation who made his fortune in oil, he was instrumental in founding the American Football League and started the Oilers for just \$25,000. In 1997, when Houston wouldn't pony up cash to replace the aging Astrodome, he relocated the team to Nashville and its new 69,000-seat stadium.

"It was a game-changing moment for this city," recalls Butch Spyridon, CEO of the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp. "It shocked the entire sports world, and Nashville started to believe in itself a little more."

But Bud Adams' death also led to a leadership struggle for the Titans as the team's losses piled up. Its ownership was split between his two daughters, Adams Strunk and Susie Adams Smith, and the wife and children of their brother, Kenneth Adams III, who died of suicide at 29 in 1987.

After a family scrum—which saw the ousting of her brother-in-law as CEO—Adams Strunk and her nephews wrested control of the team in 2015. "It was a hard decision," she says, "but my dad's legacy was very important to me and the boys."

Adams Strunk had grown up in football, but her father had never wanted his daughters working for the team. She had spent time as owner of a few of the family's car dealerships and oil interests, and raising horses (she still has a few dozen on the family ranch in Texas, along with plenty of rescue dogs). "I never thought—ever—that I would be running the football team," she says.

After she took over the Titans, she worked closely with her nephew, Kenneth Adams IV, who had worked for the team under her father since 2007, as well as with Steve Underwood, who she brought back from retirement as the team's top executive. Kenneth Adams, who is 38 and a Titans board member, says that having his aunt and other female owners running NFL teams makes a difference: "I think it's good for the NFL and we need it. It was a long time coming."

Adams Strunk brought in a new general manager, Jon Robinson, who was blunt about the team's problems on the field, and spent money on new facilities (including a new indoor training center) and new uniforms. "When you know you need to fix something you want someone telling you the brutal honest truth," Adams Strunk says. "Nothing is going to get solved if you don't know what needs to be done."

The willingness to spend money differentiated Adams Strunk from her frugal father. And while she could be tough when fixing problems, Jevon Kearse, the Titans' former defensive end, says it is her warmth that makes her a different kind of owner. "She's one of the first people to come up and give me a hug," he says. "Some of the owners come around for the

**NEW TITANS SAFETY
JAMAL ADAMS HAS A
NEW OUTLOOK ON LIFE**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 24 2024**

NASHVILLE— Jamal Adams is on a new team, surrounded by new teammates.

And, following a frustrating two seasons, he also has a new outlook on life.

"It's been tough," Adams said on Wednesday. "I've realized you can love the game, but the game doesn't love you back. And I've realized that no matter what, you have to keep your head down and keep a close circle. I was at the top of the chart, the highest of the highs, the best of the best. And (then) I was at the bottom.

"Now I am working myself right back to the top."

Adams, signed by the Titans earlier this month, practiced for the first time with the team on Wednesday.

Decked out in No.33, the veteran safety recovered a fumble, and he also got to the quarterback in a hurry on a blitz. In a game, it would've surely been a sack.

"It was great," Adams said. "To come out here and run around with my new teammates, it felt great."

Adams pointed to the sky when asked what it will take for him to regain his Pro Bowl form in Tennessee after playing in just one game in 2022, and nine games in 2023.

"The man above – that's all I can do is put my faith in Him, and continue to work hard, and continue to be a good teammate," Adams said. "I'm going to come out here and bust my ass."

A first-round pick (sixth overall) in the 2017 NFL Draft, Adams has played in 80 games over seven NFL

seasons. He's been credited with 494 tackles, 21.5 sacks and four interceptions, along with 36 passes defended, in his career while playing with the Jets and Seahawks.

Adams played his first three NFL seasons with the Jets before joining the Seahawks in 2020 via a trade.

Adams was limited to just nine games in 2023 due to a concussion, and his 2022 season was also cut short because of a serious leg injury that left him unable to walk, in a wheelchair, pondering retirement.

"I love the game," said Adams, who has been named to three Pro Bowls, and he's also been named All-Pro twice. "I wasn't healthy the last two years, and I'm getting back to my stride."

###

NEW TITANS CB CHIDOBE AWUZIE AIMS TO TURN INTO GRANDMASTER IN NEW DEFENSE IN TENNESSEE

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 3, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Chidobe Awuzie is an avid chess player who has regularly squared off against some of the best in the NFL in competitions.

The Titans cornerback took home fourth place in a recent contest on chess.com. He'd previously won the event, and he placed second another year.

"I thought it was just a fun thing," Awuzie said with a smile. "This year, people were talking about how they were training with Grandmasters. ... Now that I know people are taking it that seriously, I'll be on my bag next year."

On the football field, Awuzie is doing his best to get up to speed on a new team, while playing in a new defense under defensive coordinator Dennard Wilson.

Awuzie said the transition has been going great.

"The No.1 thing, it starts with coach Wilson right now, just setting a standard," Awuzie said. "Everyone is matching each other's intensity. Right now, he's the one setting the tone in the meeting room, and we have to come out here and match his intensity. At some point, us players, when we get comfortable in the system, we are going to be the ones setting the tone and the intensity. We're still on that path. Everyone has that same vision in mind, that aggressiveness. We just have to get there."

In seven NFL seasons, the 6-foot, 202-pound Awuzie has played in 86 career games, with 74 starts, and he's tallied 368 tackles with six interceptions and 62 passes defended.

In his last three seasons with the Bengals, the 28-year-old Awuzie broke up 25 passes and intercepted two passes in 37 games played, including 32 starts. Awuzie played in 15 games, including 10 starts, in 2023, when he totaled 56 tackles and six passes defended. Awuzie began his NFL career with the Dallas Cowboys, who drafted him in the second round of the 2017 NFL Draft.

As Awuzie gets comfortable in Tennessee, he could lean on his chess experience to help.

It turns out chess translates to football, Awuzie said.

"Chess is a game where you have to recognize positions, like, 'OK, I have been in this position before. How was I attacked? Or, maybe I made the wrong move before and now that I've seen this position before, I know the right move to make," Awuzie said. "In football, it's the same thing. Pattern recognition. You may see a formation ... and you are able to attack it. I think chess, with my mind, it has helped me diagnose things better."

###

A DAY TRE AVERY WON'T FORGET

BY JOHN GLENNON
SI.COM
AUGUST 31, 2022

NASHVILLE – In the midst of spending time with his one-day-old son on Tuesday, Tre Avery got a phone call that made him a little nervous.

Tennessee Titans general manager Jon Robinson and coach Mike Vrabel were on the other end of the line, and this was the day NFL teams were cutting rosters from 80 to 53 players.

Who could blame Avery, an undrafted free-agent cornerback out of Rutgers, for thinking his time with the team might be up?

“When they called me, I was kind of shook,” Avery said Wednesday. “But then they said, ‘Congratulations.’”

It was actually a double dose of congratulations. Robinson and Vrabel first acknowledged the birth of Avery’s baby boy – Riley – and then delivered the news he’d made the team’s 53-man roster.

In so doing, he beat out a pair of more experienced cornerbacks, Chris Jackson and Greg Mabin, among other competitors. A seventh-round draft pick of the Titans in 2020, Jackson had played 23 games for the team and made six starts. Mabin had played 39 NFL games and started seven, including two for the Titans last season.

Who would have guessed Avery would eventually emerge the winner in that group?

“As far as my odds coming into camp, I didn’t really think about it,” Avery said. “I just wanted a chance. I was grateful for the opportunity.

“Every time I got to step on the field, I just (thought) it could be my last game. So I just wanted to play, have fun. I love playing football, so I just wanted to enjoy it. That’s all.”

Avery first piqued the interest of NFL teams at Rutgers’ Pro Day last March, when he put up some impressive numbers. The 5-foot-11, 181-pounder ran a 4.43 40-yard dash, posted a 38-inch vertical jump and ran the 20-yard shuttle in a swift 3.95 seconds.

Just over a month later, the Titans signed Avery.

He was more steady than spectacular during training camp, but Avery took advantage of the growing opportunity. In the Titans’ preseason finale against Arizona, he played all 71 defensive snaps, recording five tackles. Avery finished the preseason with eight tackles (one for loss) and one pass defended.

“He was kind of seventh or eighth in the race (at cornerback) about midway through camp,” Titans general manager Jon Robinson said. “(But) it seemed like once he got to turn four, he just hitched up and kept running, kept passing guys up.

“He’s competitive at the line of scrimmage. He’s really sticky in coverage. He’s got play speed. He’s got good instincts. He doesn’t play the position like a rookie. He’s not intimidated. He gets up there and lines up on his guy, and he’s reactive. He’s really done a nice job.”

The birth of his first child one day. A berth on the 53-man roster the next.

It’s been a pretty good week for Avery.

“I just tried to do whatever they asked of me, the best I could,” Avery said. “I just tried to have fun, fly around, go as hard as I could. I guess it worked.”

###

COAL MINER'S SON: HOW CHAD BRINKER WORKED HIS WAY FROM MARTINS FERRY, OHIO, TO THE NFL

**BY JON GREENBERG
THE ATHLETIC
DECEMBER 28, 2023**

Football roads lead to football destinations so if you're wondering how someone gets to the NFL from Martins Ferry, Ohio, you start on Lou Groza Highway.

Groza is the famous son of Martins Ferry, a river town that was once busting at its seams with football and steel. Lou took his toe to Cleveland and eventually, Canton. So, as they do in small towns, they named a strip of Route 7 after him in 1986.

If you take Lou Groza Highway north alongside the Ohio River, you can find your way to Pittsburgh and that's where we find another of Martins Ferry's favorite sons, Chad Brinker, at a Thursday night football game in early November.

Brinker is in his first year as the assistant GM of the visiting Tennessee Titans and he's walking on the field at Acrisure Stadium with his boss, the impeccably dressed Titans GM Ran Carthon. But it's Brinker who's getting the attention.

It's Brinker who has a TV reporter following him around and who is greeting friends on the field and in the stands.



“Oh, yeah, you know we gave him s— for that,” Carthon said later in a phone conversation. “The big homecoming of the great Brinker. ... All jokes aside, it’s a cool moment just to show you where the game can take people, you know what I mean? Chad’s a coal miner’s son, comes from a very small town, and we’ve had these talks about where do you think you would be if it weren’t for the game of football.”

Where would the 44-year-old Brinker be without football? He’s thankful he doesn’t know.

“For whatever reason, God made me the way he made me,” Brinker said. “And I’m meant to be in football.”

There’s a poem about Martins Ferry. You might’ve read it in the epigram of the book “Friday Night Lights.” It’s titled “Autumn Begins In Martins Ferry, Ohio.” It’s written by a native son, Pulitzer Prize winner James Wright, and it’s a haunting ode to small-town life.

The ending is worth highlighting:

Therefore,

Their sons grow suicidally beautiful

At the beginning of October,

And gallop terribly against each other’s bodies.

There aren’t many poems about football, said Denison University professor emeritus David Baker, who recently spoke at a James Wright poetry festival in Martins Ferry. Part of the reason for that, he thinks, is how football involves a sublimation of individuality. The players are ensconced in helmets and pads. And notice, there are no names in the poem, just descriptions of the ethnicities of people in a steel town.

“This is a kind of brutal, sacrificial sport,” Baker said. “And, you know, James Wright’s heart was with the working-class people. I mean, his dad worked in the steel factories and his family were farmers. That was

part of his material and part of the specialness of his material. He’s speaking for a group of people that aren’t often or haven’t often been woven into lyric poetry.”

Brinker’s father, Chuck, was a coal miner (he finally retired in recent years), but Chad’s life in Martins Ferry wasn’t bleak. He didn’t play football to escape his fortunes, but he knew that football could provide a path to something greater. And boy did he “gallop terribly” as a Purple Rider running back.

“He is the best player that I ever coached and the best person I’ve ever coached,” said Brinker’s coach at Martins Ferry, Dave Bruney.

Bruney is football royalty in this slice of the Ohio Valley. Not only did he coach there for 39 years, but he has a connection to the NFL. His uncle Fred, who passed away in 2016, was employed in the NFL (or AFL) from 1953 to 1997, which was believed to have been a record until it was broken by Dick LeBeau. Fred Bruney was credited with developing the safety blitz.

Martins Ferry had its share of famous (or locally famous) athletes — the Niekro brothers and John Havilcek are from there and went to nearby Bridgeport High School, for instance — and when Brinker was a high school freshman he first wanted No. 7 because of Joey Galloway, who starred at nearby Bellaire High School. He then decided on No. 21. Bruney told him it was retired for record-setting running back Jimmy Johnson, who played in the late 1970s.

“I don’t remember saying this because it doesn’t sound like my personality,” Brinker said, “but he claims that I sat there for a second and I said, ‘Well, you can give me 32 and just go ahead and get prepared to retire that one too when I get done.’ And then sure enough, they retired 32 when I got done.”

Nearly 4,000 rushing yards and 51 touchdowns later, Brinker proved his younger self prescient. In his senior year, he ran for a whopping

2,024 yards and his coach remembers two games in particular, one from Brinker's junior year and one from his senior season.

As a junior playing against Indian Valley on a rainy night, Brinker's helmet popped off as he was fighting for yards and he got popped in the face by a defender's helmet. His face was ripped open under one cheek and he was rushed to a nearby hospital for stitches. When he returned, the game was in overtime and Martins Ferry was near the end zone.

"He walks up to me on the sideline, his whole face was swollen, and he said, 'Coach, if I can get my helmet on, put me in right here and I'll end the game,'" Bruney said. "And I said, 'There ain't anybody in the stadium who wants you in the game more than me right now, but I can't do it. I wouldn't do it to my son. I'm certainly not going to do it to you.'"

Indian Valley won the game, and the next year, when Martins Ferry faced that same team again, Brinker rushed for 319 yards and seven touchdowns in just over two quarters in a 71-6 win.

"I sent somebody in for him and he didn't want to come out," Bruney said. "And he said, 'Coach just let me finish one more drive because I owe these guys.'"

It was around this time that Jim Grobe, the new coach at Ohio University — where Bruney played in the 1970s — was building a program based on the triple-option offense he learned at the Air Force Academy. He made time to drive to Purple Rider Stadium for a game.

Purple Rider Stadium is set across the road from the town in the middle of an industrial park along the Ohio River. On Friday nights, it was the place to be, as Grobe, a native of Huntington, W.Va., found out.

"I was so impressed the first time I went, watched him play," Grobe said. "They had the gates (to the stadium) closed and they would open the gates and everybody would

sprint to get their seats. It was the wildest thing I'd ever seen. You're talking about standing room only. I guess, the bottom line was football was really important to the community."

Brinker went on to Ohio University, where he anchored Grobe's triple option for two years before the coach left for Wake Forest. In his redshirt sophomore year, he pulled off a touchdown trifecta (running, catching and throwing) in an upset win at Minnesota, something a former Ohio beat writer reminded him of one day when Brinker was at the Metrodome scouting for the Packers.

"Well, we didn't have anybody who could outwork him," Grobe said. "He was one of those guys that was always early for everything and late leaving. You had to almost run him off the practice field. Just great work ethic and, of course, great ability. He was, if not the fastest guy on the football team, he was one of the fastest guys."

As a redshirt junior, Brinker was racking up yardage but he was also waking up with headaches, blurred vision. He didn't want to tell the team doctors so he trudged to the student health center, where a well-meaning doctor told him he might be having panic attacks. Brinker threw away his prescription on his way out of the building and kept playing.

"Where we're from, you're not raised to say anything," Brinker said. "You're supposed to be tough and you gut it out. You think my dad, he's retired now but he went in the coal mines for over 40 years, you think he felt good being in the coal mines every day?"

In the fourth game of the season, Ohio was at home against Toledo and Brinker couldn't tough it out anymore.

"I remember losing peripheral vision and just having the excruciating pain in my head and I guess I was forgetting plays and stuff," he said. "So my teammates

are the ones that told the doctor that 'I think Chad's concussed, there's something wrong with him.' And then the doctor got a hold of me. And I think that was the first time I was a little scared."

Ohio's team doctor sent him in for a CAT scan.

"And that's when they found the mass on my brain," he said. An arachnoid cyst, to be exact.

Earlier that season, Ohio had played at West Virginia and on the sideline was Dr. Julian Bailes, a neurologist who had previously been a Steelers doctor. As Brinker was figuring out his next step from a medical standpoint, his mom happened to run into Bailes, the chair of the university's neurosurgery department, at the hospital she worked at in Wheeling, W.Va. Bailes remembered Brinker and agreed to meet with him and then perform surgery.

What could've happened if Brinker kept playing?

"First of all, he could've had sudden enlargement or swelling," Bailes said. "The cystic tumor could have bled, it could have hemorrhaged and anything can happen when that occurs and including someone having a stroke or dying. A lot of times people don't know they have something in their brain until something happens. His fortunately was headaches, but not many people are playing D-I football as a running back."

Bailes wound up removing the cyst that was lodged between Brinker's brain and his skull. The craniotomy wasn't a particularly memorable surgery for Bailes, but what happened next was a first for the neurosurgeon.

"The thing that made it unusual was his young age," Bailes said. "And the fact that he was a football player

and he wanted to go back to playing football.”

Bailes approved of Brinker’s return for his senior season because the skull had healed and he felt Brinker’s brain would be stable enough to take hits. But there wasn’t much precedent to go on.

“There have not been many people after brain surgery who returned to play football at a high level,” Bailes said. “I don’t know of anybody who’s had brain surgery and then gone on to play in the NFL. It is very likely it has happened, but I’ve never heard of it.”

But to prove it’s possible, a picture of Brinker in a New York Jets uniform hangs up in Bailes’ Chicago-area office.

After a scary recovery, Brinker started running track for Ohio University in the winter and returned to the football field the next year for his senior season. He rushed for a career-high 1,099 yards and 10 touchdowns.

After finishing with 2,826 yards and 27 rushing touchdowns, Brinker went undrafted and was invited to the Jets training camp, where he was a late cut. The next stop was NFL Europe but not for long.

It was 2004 and Brinker was in Birmingham, Ala. Back then, when you got injured in NFL Europe, you got sent there to do your medical rehab.

Brinker was with his wife, Rachele, and he was bored. They were at a bookstore and he picked up a copy of “Moneyball,” the Michael Lewis blockbuster about Billy Beane and the statistical revolution in baseball. Brinker was hooked. Here was this guy who grew up in the cradle of smash-mouth, three-yards-and-a-cloud-of-dust football, where collision is poetry, and he’s transfixed by the idea of arbitrage in sports.

“It was really interesting to me and it kind of sparked my interest in analytics on a small scale, because I

didn’t know how it would fit in football because football was so interdependent,” he said. “And over time, obviously, the interest grew and you started to see where analytics could help in football.”

But before that happened, Brinker went into medical sales and dealt with the usual post-football doldrums.

“I wasn’t clinically diagnosed with depression, but I was going through some things, you know, just struggling to find out who I was, what am I gonna do next,” he said.

The years went by, he was doing well in work in the medical sales business, and he decided to help coach high school football in the Columbus area with some friends. In 2008, he made a trip to the University of Cincinnati for a game against South Florida. He was on the sideline when he ran into Terry Bradway, the former GM of the Jets, and they got to talking about a potential future in football.

Brinker said he didn’t really want to coach, so Bradway brought up a front-office job and started introducing him to scouts.

It was Packers assistant director of college scouting Shaun Herock, who had scouted Brinker in college, who recommended he try getting into the Green Bay scouting internship program.

Brinker moved his family to Green Bay and found himself in football heaven. Ted Thompson was the GM. John Schneider, Reggie McKenzie, Russ Ball and John Dorsey worked under him. Future Packers GM Brian Gutekunst was a scout and Eliot Wolf was a rising star and his dad, Ron, was still a big influence.

“I did not realize until later how special that place was,” Brinker said.

Brinker started as a scouting assistant in 2010 and worked in both pro and college scouting. Then he was promoted to a pro scout.

Green Bay’s approach was to teach its football executives how to embrace scouting and player acquisition from a holistic approach. Scouting pro and college players, learning about the salary cap, delving into analytics, they learn a little bit about everything. But in the end, scouting is about making educated guesses, right?

“Ron Wolf said something like, sure, you can teach people what to look for in players, the different attributes and different position specifics, and teach them how to watch film and all the things that go with it, but there is an instinct to what we do,” Brinker said. “He said that we’re in the prediction business. We’re trying to predict human beings, right?”

He found that his football experience helped him trust his instincts. But beyond hitting the road to evaluate talent, Brinker also worked with his mentor Russ Ball, now the executive vice president and director of football operations, on the salary cap in Green Bay. He was getting a Ph.D. in football, but by this point, the Moneyball era had fully hit football, with new owners taking over teams and looking for the NFL’s version of Theo Epstein. Ex-jocks now had to compete with Ivy Leaguers for jobs.

“I thought I was missing some formal training, so to speak, and I wanted to accelerate my growth,” Brinker said. “Now, the ‘school of hard knocks’ works because Russ Ball is the poster child for it. The guy was a strength coach and he’s considered arguably one of the best football personnel/salary cap people in the league. So I could have learned from Russ and I was learning the practical experience and all that, but I wanted some formal education.”

In wanting to differentiate himself, Brinker, who already had a master’s in sports administration from Ohio University, applied to get his MBA part-time at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern. He surprised himself by getting in and his bosses not only agreed to him

doing the program, but they offered him time off to complete the grueling two-year program. Instead, Brinker didn't slow down, juggling a full workload in Green Bay, classes and a wife and three kids at home.

It sounded hard, but it beat working in the coal mines.

"I used to talk about his schedule, and what it was like at that point in time, and it was pretty grueling," Ball said. "So he's definitely made a commitment to his craft and to try to be the best he can with his opportunity. And I think it's going to pay dividends."

Carthon knew Brinker from the scouting circuit and trusted him as a contact. So when Carthon got the Titans GM job, he reached out to him for the assistant GM job. Funny enough, he didn't even know about Brinker's MBA, the thing that was supposed to differentiate him from other candidates. Carthon just knew he wanted him around to help build something in Tennessee.

"He had this unique background, you know," Carthon said. "Former player, he has a scouting background, has an analytics background, has a cap background. It was just unique. I thought he would provide really good insight for myself."

So after 13 years in Green Bay, he left. Brinker's focus as assistant GM is on strategy, from roster construction to working on the kind of statistical analysis that will help the front office and the coaching staff. The Titans are 5-10 going into the last two weeks of the season and headed for a top-10 draft pick.

"He's also helping us build out our analytics department here, which is going to be a robust project," Carthon said. "He's heading that up. He also works alongside Vin Marino from the salary cap standpoint, right, while also maintaining his background as a scout. He's a man of many hats."

Brinker wants to be a GM one day, but first, he has a job to do in Tennessee.

So, how do you get from Martins Ferry to the NFL? Just like with anything else in life, you make your own road.

###

**TITANS ROOKIE CB
JARVIS BROWNLEE JR.
GETTING HIS SWAGGER
BACK**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 12, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Jarvis Brownlee Jr. ended OTAs with a bang on Tuesday.

Just four plays into a 7-on-7 period, the rookie cornerback stepped in front of a pass thrown by quarterback Will Levis, and he picked it off.

Brownlee's defensive teammates celebrated as he raced the other way, capping off the biggest play of his offseason so far.

Brownlee, however, wasn't able to celebrate long.

Later in the period, he found himself on the ground doing push-ups after getting beat for a touchdown by receiver Nick Westbrook-Ikhine, who tossed the ball toward him as a reminder of the play he'd just given up.

"It's always about that short-term memory," Brownlee with a slight smile. "Just because I made a play doesn't mean I can give up the next one, or I can slack on the next play. For me, it's just working on that consistency and making sure I am keeping my technique the same and staying into it. And just knowing I have to have better eyes – that's why I got beat on that play. ... It's about consistency and staying into it."

The Titans drafted Brownlee in the fifth round of the 2024 NFL Draft.

A 5-foot-10, 194-pounder, Brownlee played his last two college seasons at Louisville after playing his first three seasons at Florida State. Brownlee played in 48 career college games, with 37 starts, and he tallied 174 tackles, six interceptions, and 7.5 tackles for a loss.

His first few months on the job have been a learning experience.

"He's a rookie, and that sums it up," Titans secondary coach Steve Jackson said of Brownlee. "This is new to him, what is expected of him. He is continuing to progress."

Brownlee, who played in 11 games, with nine starts, at Louisville in 2023, when he totaled 30 tackles, and an interception, admits it hasn't been easy.

"At first, I came out here, and had a lot to learn. I was still struggling with simple things," Brownlee said. "But as the days have gone on, I started getting better. I started getting in my playbook more, I started asking getting comfortable, asking more questions. And for me, my confidence is way up from when I came out here day one. I feel great, and I am finally getting my swagger back. I feel good."

Brownlee said he's picked the brains of the veterans in the room, from L'Jarius Sneed to Chidobe Awuzie to Roger McCreary, and he said he's learned a ton from them.

"Guys like Chido and Sneed, man," Brownlee said, "those are guys that I watched before I got into this league. So for me to be on the same team as those guys, it is a dream come true and I am grateful to have those two. I just try and take up all the knowledge that they can give me, and it's been helping me with my game. I have been learning a lot when it comes to formations and releases that I am getting, and those guys have been helping a lot with that."

Brownlee said he knows now he's on his own during the break until training camp.

Players will head their separate ways on Wednesday as the offseason program is now over, and they're not scheduled to report to training camp until July 23, with the first practice scheduled for July 24.

Brownlee vowed to be ready.

"I'm grinding," he said. "I'm grinding from here on out, that's the main thing. My goal is to come back in as great of shape as I've ever been in for training camp. And come with a chip on my shoulder and play with that edge, and have that confidence, that energy. I just (want to) be the best version of myself."

###

**JARVIS BROWNLEE JR.
MAKING STRIDES AS A
PLAYER AND LEADER
FOR LOUISVILLE**

**MATTHEW MCGAVICAUG
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED
AUGUST 4, 2023**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. - Coming over from Florida State last offseason, Jarvis Brownlee Jr. had a solid first season with the Louisville football program.

Despite some inconsistencies when it came to his play in coverage, the cornerback actually finished as one of the top statistical defenders for the Cardinals. He logged the third-most tackles on the team with 66, tied for the second-most interceptions with two, and tied for the second-most pass breakups in the ACC with 12.

Even with how well Brownlee performed at an individual level, it wasn't enough for him. He entered spring ball not only with a desire to improve his own game, but make strides as a leader and challenge players to match his energy.

At this point in the offseason, it seems that Brownlee has made significant progress in both areas.

"He's a guy that has a unique trait in that he can catch the ball, he's physical and he's tough," cornerbacks coach Steve Ellis said. "I think he has done an unbelievable job in the weight room this summer. I think he's up to 192 (pounds) right now, so he's really invested in his body. From an explosive standpoint, just from spring until now, he's better."

Ellis isn't just hyping Brownlee up. In spring ball earlier this year, the 6-foot-0 and 190-pound cornerback was routinely one of the best defensive backs during the open practices. Not only was he as physical as ever against both wide receivers and running backs alike, but he appeared to make good progress when it came to his play in coverage. He was a lot more

consistent when staying locked on a receiver in man coverage, and limited the amount of times he was burnt down the field.

This progression in his game has also been apparent over the first two days of fall camp. No matter who he has lined up against in 1-on-1's, 7-on-7's or in 11-on-11's, he has regularly locked down his receiver in man coverage or that side of the field in zone coverage. The only receiver to have any sort of sustained success against him so far has been Jamari Thrash, who was one of the most explosive receivers in college football last season.

In fact, Brownlee has done so well that he has teammates trying to emulate his game. Or at the very least, trying to add parts of his game to their own.

"I piggyback off of JB," cornerback Quincy Riley said. "He's a physical guy, so I took some his game and put it into mine. Last year, I wasn't so violent with breaking on the ball and my punch attack. But this year, I said I'm going to play more physical and play bigger. I just watch him, and how he'll go towards the ball, how he makes contact, and I'm like, 'I gotta play into that more.' I think that has helped me take strides in my game. I already have ball skills, now I just need that second part."

So far, adding bits and pieces of Brownlee's game to his own has worked out for Riley. On the second day of fall camp alone, Riley had multiple pass breakups, and was one of the top performers overall in the practice.

Related: Notes and Observations from Louisville's Second Open Fall Camp Practice

As far as progressing as a leader goes, that has also been evident to everyone around him. Ellis even points back to a kids camp that Louisville hosted over the summer, and Brownlee was out there for all three days trying to make an impact on the campers.

"From sun up to sun down, he's teaching the five and six-year-olds how to catch the football, how to run routes, how to tackle, because he's a guy that loves ball," Ellis said.

Ellis challenged Brownlee to "establish the standard" not long after joining head coach Jeff Brohm's staff, and Brownlee has taken that to heart. He said he has always felt like a leader due to his status as an older player, but isn't trying to be the commanding type, but instead someone that everyone on the team can look up to and come to.

"Honestly, my role is just be the best player I can be for this team, and to put us in a winning position," he said. "Yeah, I'm a leader, we all know that. But I don't try to take it like that. I just try to be a brother, and a guy that just leads by example and makes sure everybody on the right path. That's really my role."

Of course, he's also striving to become the best on-field player he can be. With how physical he already is, that mainly revolves around becoming more consistent, whether that be in pass coverage or in any other facet of his game.

"Basically, I just work on being consistent," he said. "I know if I be consistent, nobody could beat me on my game. I know if I'm consistent, I'm gonna be the best player that this team needs."

###

**TITANS BECOMING 49ERS
SOUTHEAST? ARDEN KEY,
DANIEL BRUNSKILL
CONTINUE RAN'S RUN**

**BY JOE REXRODE
THE ATHLETIC
MARCH 16, 2023**

The Titans are going for it in 2023. "It" can only realistically be considered the AFC South, but if you win that you get a home playoff game and then who knows?

You don't have to beat all the teams in the AFC with better quarterbacks than you. You have to be good enough around your good quarterback to beat three of them. Based on how the Titans have approached free agency this week, that's what they're thinking. Based on their actions in the first offseason for new GM Ran Carthon, that good quarterback, Ryan Tannehill, will be back playing out the final year of his deal. Same thing for the great running back, Derrick Henry.

(Unless the Titans trade Tannehill and move up from No. 11 to grab Kentucky's Will Levis, though it's hard anymore to find Tannehill trade partners who make sense).

Speaking of the AFC South, I doubt Duval County is fretting that edge Arden Key has moved on from the defending champion Jaguars to the Titans. But there was another Titans signing a few years ago from a divisional rival, of a guy who could play outside linebacker and defensive end, that didn't get a ton of attention at the time but has had a not insignificant impact on the Titans' handling of the Indianapolis Colts since then. Key is not Denico Autry. But Key with Autry, Harold Landry and Jeffery Simmons? It's intriguing.

Agreements with Key — who was with the 49ers in 2021 — and 49ers offensive guard Daniel Brunskill, both confirmed by a team source to The Athletic, continue the run on guys who have history with Carthon. And bolster the Titans in their area of biggest need (offensive

line) and potential area of biggest strength (pass rush).

How they fit: Key is a situational pass rusher and should be the same with the Titans unless he can carve out a bigger role than that. But that's his value and that is what Bud Dupree was supposed to be for the Titans — and was at times, especially in 2021, when Dupree, Landry, Simmons and Autry overwhelmed quarterbacks for stretches like few groups in the league. The Titans needed an add like this after losing DeMarcus Walker, who signed with the Bears. The 6-5, 240-pound Key had 4 1/2 sacks in his season with the Jaguars, but he also had a pressure rate of 14.4 percent, 20th in the NFL among players with 200 or more snaps. That rate was 15 percent in 2021 with the 49ers.

Brunskill has played all over the offensive line but is a right guard by trade and figures to step in there and replace Nate Davis, who also signed with the Bears. He was the 49ers' backup center, though, and the Titans cut longtime center Ben Jones, so that's also a possibility.

2023 impact: Landry is coming off a torn ACL. Rashad Weaver will be a third-year pro and is a solid player, but the Titans need more across from Landry. Autry is in the final year of his deal and Simmons should be getting a massive extension before the season. If Key can mesh with that group and be a force in the Titans' sub package — and those other guys can maintain or elevate their impact — this could be a terrific signing. Brunskill, meanwhile, is going to have an opportunity to start somewhere for the Titans on their rebuilt offensive line.

If he does work out at right guard and Nicholas Petit-Frere can take a step in his second season at right tackle, and if Aaron Brewer is ready to take over at center (his ideal position), and Andre Dillard is up to his potential opportunity as the starting left tackle ... well, things are starting to look less grim. But that's a lot of uncertainty. And the

Titans would still need to draft another tackle, possibly at No. 11, and a left guard.

History: A key part of the history of both players, of course, is that Carthon knows them well. The new GM is putting his stamp on this team immediately with players he believes can add to the Titans' talent and chemistry. A bigger part of the history of both players is that they've been relatively healthy. Key, a 2018 third-round pick of the Raiders out of LSU, played in all 17 games the past two seasons. Brunskill, an undrafted player out of San Diego State who originally signed with the Falcons in 2017, did miss the first three games last season with a hamstring injury but played in all 17 in 2021.

Cap update: Key signed a three-year, \$21 million deal with \$13 million guaranteed, according to NFL Network. That's a significant investment in a player who has bounced around, but if he works out as hoped, that's strong value, especially relative to the contract former GM Jon Robinson gave Dupree. Brunskill's contract details are not yet available.

Outlook: Will the Titans significantly revamp the offensive line after a terrible 2022? That remains a huge question. But the vision is coming into focus. The Niners and Eagles were loaded, and now some of their depth guys are getting bigger opportunities. The Titans have bolstered what could be another salty defense in 2023 without spending a ton. Now, the next question: What are they going to do at receiver?

###

**LEANER TITANS WR
TREYLON BURKS
MOTIVATED TO PROVE
HIMSELF RIGHT**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 29, 2024**

NASHVILLE – At some point this offseason, receiver Trelon Burks sent a picture of himself to the Titans showing off his new physique.

It was proof of the work he'd put in during workouts away from Nashville, something he was proud of.

It brought a smile to the face of General Manager Ran Carthon.

"I think Trelon's really grown up," Carthon said. "He's completely bought in. ... I think he's in a really good spot."

A lot has changed since Burks was drafted in the first round of the 2022 NFL Draft by the Titans.

Burks has a new head coach, a new starting quarterback, the franchise has a new GM, and roster has changed dramatically, especially at the receiver position, where DeAndre Hopkins, Calvin Ridley and Tyler Boyd are now regarded as the team's top three threats catching the football.

Burks, heading into his third NFL season, is ready to do his part.

Burks said he busted it this offseason to be ready, and he changed his body in the process.

"I feel terrific," Burks said after Saturday's practice at Nissan Stadium. "I just dedicated myself to it, and just wanted to grind. It's just something different that I wanted to try, and obviously it has helped a lot since we started camp. I started doing it at the end of OTAs and I kept it going all the way through. I wanted to change my body drastically, and I've done that."

So, how did he do it? And, how much weight did he lose?

"A little bit of everything -- running, lifting, eating right," Burks said with a smile. "I have a newborn on the way. I guess it's the dad bod."

Still smiling, Burks said: "I'll let y'all ask coach about my weight, but I am down, a lot. And I feel a lot better."

In his first two seasons, Burks has recorded 49 catches for 665 yards and a touchdown. In 2023, Burks caught 16 passes for 221 yards while playing in 11 games, with nine starts.

Burks wants to do more in 2024, including playing on special teams.

Burks, however, makes it clear he's not focused on proving others right when asked about the praise heaped on him this offseason by teammates, coaches, and most recently, his general manager.

"I am here just to prove myself right, man. I am not here to prove anybody wrong," Burks said. "Just do what God set in front of me to do, that's what I am going to do."

"I would say it's still the same mindset: Just go out there and be myself, don't try to be nobody I'm not. And leave everything else to God."

###

**TITANS' TREYLON BURKS
STARTING 2023 WITH
NEWFOUND CONFIDENCE
AND JOYFUL APPROACH.
HERE'S WHY**

**BY JULIAN BASENA
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
JUNE 8, 2023**

Treyton Burks is having fun playing football again. Growing into his role in year two with the Tennessee Titans, Burks is focusing more on enjoying himself and playing confidently after an up-and-down rookie season.

"I'm out there just having fun, playing with my teammates, just doing my job," Burks said after Wednesday's minicamp practice.

According to Burks, Rob Moore, the Titans wide receiver coach, has been key to his shift in attitude. Out of everything he's learned from the former All-Pro wideout, Burks said Moore has improved his confidence most.

Playing fast, having fun and worrying less about mistakes are areas Burks has seen significant growth. In his rookie year, Burks said he never truly grasped the approach until the end of the season.

"I was just like, 'if it happens, it happens — just move on,'" Burks said.

To start 2023, Burks has recaptured a more aggressive style of play, hunting for contested passes under duress. He's shown some of his ability during minicamp this week.

"That's just stuff that I've grown up (doing) before getting here," Burks said. "It just took time for me to relax and get back to myself and now I'm able to do that."

"It comes from confidence," Burks said, " ... me having confidence going up making those balls and not thinking too much during the route. Just running the route,

having fun, going up and making a play for the team."

His early improvements in 2023 are in contrast to his struggles throughout his rookie season.

Burks, a first-round draft selection in 2022, was thrust into a major receiving role at the start of his career and endured several setbacks. Billed as the replacement for A.J. Brown, Burks missed the majority of his first minicamp and OTAs because of asthma-induced breathing issues.

Due to other ailments, Burks appeared in 11 games (six starts) and recorded 33 catches for 444 yards. He suffered a toe injury that sidelined him for multiple weeks and was also subject to the Titans' quarterback turnover after Ryan Tannehill went down with injury.

Burks' best performances came when quarterback play and attitude were at their best. With Tannehill healthy in Week 11, Burks caught seven balls for 111 yards.

Burks believes Tannehill and additional veteran guidance can build his confidence further.

"That helps out a lot just because (Tannehill) knows what he's talking about so I listen," Burks said. "I haven't been in the league as long as he has just hearing from him and hearing from all the older guys has helped me."

###

**TITANS WR TREYLON
BURKS ARRIVES TO OTAS
AFTER 'CRAZY' FLIGHT,
IMPRESSES QB RYAN
TANNEHILL WITH
IMPROVEMENT**

**BY GRANT GORDON
NFL.COM
JUNE 1, 2023**

Whether it was by land, air or sea, Treylon Burks was going to arrive on time for Tennessee Titans organized team activities earlier this week.

Due to the domino effect of a delayed flight, Burks was forced to make alternate arrangements in the form of flying into Tennessee via a small Cessna.

It was an example of Burks' dedication, but an uneasy journey nonetheless for the 2022 first-round pick who has arrived at OTAs ahead of a season in which he aims to arrive as a viable No. 1 WR for Tennessee.

"That was kind of crazy though," Burks said, via PaulKuharsky.com. "It was real crazy. But I mean, you got to do what you got to do."

The 6-foot-3, 225-pound Burks had his flight from Dallas to Arkansas delayed, thereby meaning his connection to Nashville would be missed, Kuharsky reported. So, after much ado attempting to find a private pilot, Burks landed with Zach Davis. However, it was a tight squeeze of a flight for the big-bodied wideout.

"It was actually the day before where my agent called the guy, but I didn't know the plane was that little," Burks said. "I just thought it was maybe like a little jet or something. Then when we get there, it's just crazy, you know? Everything was alright."

All's well that lands safely, though, and Burks has hit the OTA practice field running ahead of a pivotal season.

Tennessee has a dearth of talent in the WR corps and Burks will need to make some strides in Year 2 after a disappointing rookie campaign.

Though it's merely the spring, so far so optimistic for Burks in the eyes of his quarterback Ryan Tannehill.

"Treylon's grown a lot," Tannehill said this week. "I'm really excited about what I've seen from him. He's flying around."

There was no pun intended by Tannehill, but flying around has been a theme for Burks so far, and that's promising for the Titans.

Burks was selected by the Titans after they traded A.J. Brown to the Philadelphia Eagles.

Following a trade that was largely panned and hoisted undo pressure upon Burks' shoulders, the Arkansas product struggled along with the rest of the 2022 Titans offense. Burks, who deals with asthma and was sidelined with a concussion last year, played in 11 games as a rookie and finished with just one touchdown off 33 catches for 444 yards.

With a year under his belt, though, Burks is impressing early in the offseason.

"He's moving fast," Tannehill said. "He's moving efficiently. He's coming out and he's working. He's in shape. All great things obviously. He's been able to catch the ball and get open his whole time here, but all the little things that go along with playing the position, being able to see the field, understand the full concept, as opposed to just a route. How he fits in the whole picture. All those things."

"I think he's playing with a lot of confidence right now. So, just want to keep him going, keep him growing. He's doing a lot of really, really good things right now. I'm really happy with his growth and want to keep pushing forward."

Burks is flying high so far in 2023, but just how high won't be seen until the season kicks off in September.

###

**NEW TITANS WR
TREYLON BURKS PUTS
HIS BOOTS ON THE
GROUND IN NASHVILLE,
READY TO WORK**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
APRIL 29, 2022**

NASHVILLE – Decked out in cowboy boots, jeans and a dapper white sports coat, new Titans receiver Treyton Burks stepped off the team's private jet on Friday looking – and sounding – the part.

The boots, by the way, weren't just for show for his trip to Music City. Burks, in fact, has several pairs, including ostrich, lizard and snake skin boots.

"I'm just a boots guy," a smiling Burks, who likes to hunt hogs as a hobby, said as he walked through the Titans locker room. "I like my boots."

After being drafted 18th overall by the Titans in Thursday night's NFL Draft, the former Arkansas receiver arrived in town today and said ready to get to work.

"Honestly, words can't explain the feeling I have right now," Burks said. "I am thankful to be here, and for having the chance to live my dream. I just want to do everything God has put in front of me, and attack it like I am."

"I'm happy to be here. I knew that (the Titans) liked me, just from the one-on-one visit that I had with them. But I just played it as: I am just going to let God take care of everything and wherever I go, I am going to be blessed to go there. Now, I feel like I'm blessed to be here, and I'm ready to get to work."

A 6-foot-3, 225-pounder, Burks caught 66 passes for 1,104 yards and 11 touchdowns for the Razorbacks in 2021 to earn first-team All-SEC honors – and get the attention of NFL teams.

During the pre-draft process, Burks said he visited 14 different teams, including the Titans.

"I went three weeks straight flying," Burks said. "I was all over the place, going from one place to the next. I racked up a lot of flying hours."

Burks felt like there was something special in Tennessee, who traded up from the 26th pick – while dealing receiver A.J. Brown to the Eagles in the process – to get him.

As Burks walked the hallways at Saint Thomas Sports Park on Friday, he said he felt comfortable. He was on his way to Nissan Stadium, set to return to the facility for a press conference later today.

"Just how Coach (Mike) Vrabel runs things, and everybody else in the organization, the mentality in the locker room and on the field and practices, I like it," Burks said. "It's about business, going about your business the right way and everything else will take care of itself."

"Just walking around the facility today, being a part of it now, it is a lot different. I am not uptight, all of that. I am comfortable that I am finally here, and I'm ready to get to work."

Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk sent the team's private jet – complete with a Titans logo – to Searcy, Arkansas, this morning to pick up Burks at 11 a.m.

He landed in Nashville around 11:45.

"Just being on that jet, and coming here, that was pretty cool," Burks said. "I am so thankful."

"I am going to go to work every day and take care of my business. I am going to be that team player that is going to motivate everyone around me, that's just who've I've always been. As a young boy playing pee-wee ball, I feel like I tried to establish myself as a hard worker."

Before heading to Nissan Stadium, Burks tackled one more topic during a quick interview on Friday: Hog hunting, as mentioned previously.

Yes, it's true.

"My favorite hobby is hog hunting," Burks said with a smile. "When I was like six years old, we would go out and hunt hogs with my uncle's friends and I just fell in love with it and have been doing it ever since."

"We use dogs, and a knife," Burks continued. "The dogs go out there and bait them, and we come in behind them and catch the hog – and depending on how big it is – we decide whether we kill it or not."

Burks smiled when asked the size of the biggest hog he's ever battled.

"450 (pounds)," he said.

"There was one time when (a hog came after us), but we got up the tree, so it couldn't get us," Burks said, smiling bigger. "It was an adrenaline rush for sure."

Kind of like landing in the NFL.

###

**NEW TITANS WR TYLER
BOYD FEELS AT HOME IN
TENNESSEE**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MAY 21, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Tyler Boyd took the field with his Titans teammates for the first time on Tuesday, ready to go.

"Came straight into work," a smiling Boyd said after Tuesday's OTA. "It just feels good to get out here and play football again. I've been working out and training, trying to find my way. ... I felt like this was the right fit."

Boyd, who spent his first eight seasons with the Cincinnati Bengals, signed with the Titans earlier this month.

On Tuesday, the veteran receiver talked about his connection with Titans head coach Brian Callahan, his offensive coordinator in Cincinnati, and why it helped lead him to Tennessee.

He also discussed the receiving corps he's joining with the Titans.

"Calvin, I knew him throughout the league, and also Hop," Boyd said of fellow receivers Calvin Ridley and DeAndre Hopkins. "Two great players, and well deserving of their accomplishments and what they do. I can learn from those guys, and they can learn from me."

"And having that trio of us is going to make this whole offense even more deadly."

Boyd has been one of the most productive slot receivers since entering the NFL. According to Next Gen Stats data from 2016 through 2023, he ranked first in the NFL in receptions (390), receiving yards (4,813) and first downs (233) among wide receivers from the slot formation.

In 2023, Boyd had 67 catches for 667 yards and two touchdowns last

season, and he's recorded 513 receptions for 6,000 yards in and 31 touchdowns in 120 games in his NFL career.

Boyd said building chemistry with Titans quarterback Will Levis is important, while expressing confidence in his new quarterback.

"He's a great, talented guy," Boyd said of Levis. "He has to get more experience in the offense, but I think he has what it takes to take this offense to where it should be."

A 6-foot-2, 203-pounder, Boyd was a second-round draft pick of the Bengals in 2016 after playing in college at Pittsburgh.

With the Bengals, Boyd posted six consecutive seasons with a minimum of 58 receptions and 667 receiving yards, and he was one of only nine NFL players to do so each year from 2018 through 2023.

Now, he's on a new team, in a new city.

And, he's excited about his fresh start.

"It's definitely weird – I'd been with Cincy eight years, this is my ninth year," Boyd said. "Just having a different (uniform) on, it's new beginnings. But I don't look at it like it might be hard, or I have to readapt. I am older, I'm a vet, and I know what to expect."

"These guys around here are all cool, and it feels right. It just feels right. ... This just felt at home to me."

###

**WR TYLER BOYD HITS
THE GROUND RUNNING
WITH TENNESSEE TITANS**

**BY TURRON DAVENPORT
ESPN.COM
MAY 27, 2024**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- Wide receiver Tyler Boyd landed in Nashville and wasted no time joining his new teammates on the field.

Boyd, who signed with the Tennessee Titans on May 13, admitted it was "a little weird putting" a different uniform on after wearing the Cincinnati Bengals colors since being drafted by them in 2016, but nonetheless, he was out there the very next day.

The veteran said he's excited about his new beginning thanks to some familiar faces, like cornerback Chidobe Awuzie -- who Boyd got to line up against in his first practice like they did when they were teammates with the Bengals. Awuzie signed a free-agent deal with the Titans in March.

Boyd said his sights were always set on Tennessee despite going on visits with other teams, mainly because of the familiarity he had with new Titans coach Brian Callahan after their five seasons together in Cincinnati previously.

"Obviously Callahan is here and that's my guy," Boyd said of the former Cincinnati offensive coordinator. "He's a heckuva coach, and I've been a part of his offense for a while now, so I just felt like it was a good fit. It just felt right."

Quietly Boyd has carved out a role as one of the league's most productive slot receivers over his career. According to Next Gen Stats, Boyd ranks first in receptions (390), receiving yards (4,813) and first downs (233) among wide receivers from the slot since he entered the league.

It's the perfect match for Callahan who had hoped someone would

emerge as the Titans' slot receiver when asked about the position before the draft in April.

"He's definitely got an advantage over any normal free agent because he's been in quite a bit of the offense in terms of names, expectations, route details, and coaching points he's heard over the last five years," Callahan said.

As an OC, Callahan was able to rely on Boyd to be a steady presence in the slot -- especially during the development of quarterback Joe Burrow. Now that same presence will be asked to help second-year quarterback Will Levis get command of the offense.

"It's a huge benefit for a young quarterback," said Callahan, who's already seen Boyd go up to Levis and discuss route adjustments.

Levis said he texted Boyd as soon as he heard the Titans agreed to terms with him and told him he can't wait to learn things about the offense from him.

"It's cool to be able to watch all these cutups of him balling out, making all these plays and on the teach tape running these routes exactly like how we're telling everyone else to," Levis said. "That's going to be some great insight to hear from a guy who's been in the offense and knows what it's like when the bolts are flying."

Given Boyd's experience, Levis can count on him to always read the coverage and make sure he's in the right place. There will be times that call for Boyd to veer away from the dedicated route and settle into a better location according to how the defense plays.

"If I know he expects me to be 3 more yards from the hash then I'll be there," Boyd said. "It's kind of a psychic thing based off of experience in the offense."

Signing Boyd marks the completion of a positional turnaround that saw the Titans' wide receiver group go from lackluster to appealing. Boyd

joins fellow free agent addition Calvin Ridley and last season's receiving leader DeAndre Hopkins for the Titans to create a formidable trio of pass catchers for Levis to throw to.

Having already played alongside Tee Higgins and All-Pro receiver Ja'Marr Chase, Boyd once again finds himself in a group of receivers that will compete for targets and look to push each other.

"I can learn from those guys, and they can learn from me," Boyd said. "As long as we can all feed off of each other and complement each other, that will take us to the next level."

Hopkins feels the same way.

"Anytime I get the chance to compete against anyone, I'm trying to outcompete them and outdo them," Hopkins said. "That's only going to make the team better."

Now it's up to Callahan to stir it all together and serve up a potent offense unlike the one that averaged less than 18 points per game over the last two seasons.

###

A FATHER, A SON AND THE BOYD'S HOMETOWN SUNDAY

**BY GEOFF HOBSON
BENGALS.COM
SEPTEMBER 29, 2021**

Tyler Boyd starts Sunday's win diving into a Heinz Field end zone.

Brian Boyd, wearing his son's No. 83 Bengals jersey, wasn't quite in his seat yet to watch Tyler Boyd walk to midfield at Heinz Field for Sunday's coin flip and the start of another passion play with the Steelers.

But when you've missed everything for the last eight years and you've been watching your son play on a TV you're sharing with your fellow inmates, it's OK you missed it when he won the toss because you saw both of you win the day.

Brian Boyd was most definitely in his seat when Tyler Boyd made one of his special plays that linger with you. He, quite naturally, converted a third down and then refused to go down - Pittsburgh style - when he bounced off Steelers linebacker Melvin Ingram and steamed into the end zone with the first touchdown that sent the Bengals on their way.

Brian Boyd's cousin got them the tickets and came up from D.C. Brian would have got them, but his cousin wanted to treat even though he'd be wearing a Steelers jersey. Was he really going to wear the Bengals jersey, he asked Brian.

"Even though I grew up a Steelers fan, I love my son more," Brian Boyd says. "I told my cousin, 'Yes, I'm going to show my support.'"

"I get excited every time I see him play. Even when he was little. I'm always going to support him."

It's not the first time Brian saw Tyler play Heinz. The means streets of Clairton are just 13 miles away as the crowd bends around the

Monongahela River. He thinks it was his junior year when he saw the Clairton Bears win the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League playoffs ("The Wipple," Tyler says) on the way to another state title his son would craft at Hershey Park.

"He did everything," Brian Boyd says. "He passed. He ran it up the middle. He caught it."

Then Brian Boyd was gone. He signed a plea deal that sent him to the Federal Correctional Institution in McDowell County, W.Va. One of 42 people indicted in a sweep of a major drug distribution network, the papers said, and Brian Boyd had one last appointment the day before he left.

"I told him," Brian Boyd says, "not to follow in my footsteps. If I found out when I was in there that he had gotten into trouble, it would have killed me."

But there he was Sunday, cheering as Tyler Boyd bounced the Bengals into the lead just like he was leading the Beard from down river.

"Then I started looking around and some people were yelling at my cousin, 'Hey, you brought a Bengals fan,'" Brian Boyd says, cackling all the way. "He said, 'That's his son.' Then when they figured out I was his father, they were saying, 'Congratulations.' They were pretty nice."

Congratulations all the way around. Tyler Boyd knew his father growing up, but he barely remembers when he lived with him. Now they're starting to get the years back since Brian was released in time last year to see Tyler play in the NFL for the first time in his five seasons.

Another win. This one over Tennessee at Paul Brown Stadium.

"It's kind of picked up where it left off in terms of the fluidity of the relationship," Tyler Boyd says. "He didn't come back any different (to me). That's what I love about it. He's a great guy. He wants to be around.

He's not there because I'm in the league. He wants to show his appreciation and support me."

Boyd's mother is a force of nature. While she kept Tyler and his older brother Brian off Clairton's mean streets that engulfed their father, Tonya Payne was a full-time social worker. At various times she supplemented the household income by also tending bar, as well as serving as a scorekeeper at basketball games, and then working an overnight shift as a caretaker at a mental health facility.

When Buffalo fans sent the donations flowing in the wake of Tyler's 49-yard touchdown catch on the final snap of the 2017 season that put the Bills in the playoffs, the former scorekeeper turned youth league director converted the Western Pennsylvania Youth Sports Association into a year-round, multi-sport organization. When her son signed a \$43 million extension two years ago, the number of teams and kids kept growing.

"She was the disciplinarian," Brian Boyd. "I guess I was maybe easier on them because they were boys."

If you want to know how Tyler Boyd bounced off Melvin Ingram for his first NFL touchdown and first NFL win back home, it goes back to Brian Boyd and the Clairton neighborhood.

Some guys want to make a play. Guys like Boyd have to.

"I can't even tell you," Tyler Boyd says. "Where I'm from, it's either ball and you get offers or a lot of people tend to go into the streets. But that wasn't really my second option. I wanted to be somebody. I wanted to make something out of myself. My mom and my step-pops, they did a great job after he left to take me down the right path."

Brian Boyd, 49, played for Clairton, too. He was pretty good, but before he graduated in 1991, he tore up his knee. He still has a pin it and he wasn't going to get an offer.

The thing is, Tyler could see what was going on. Brian would always check in and give him what he needed, but it came with a lesson.

"Where we come from, that's all you see is drug deals," Brian Boyd says. "Me being his father, I couldn't sugar-coat that ... I would explain to him, 'You can't do this. You've got to be better than what I'm doing.'"

Brian Boyd says he wasn't an addict, but he was addicted. Addicted to the money.

"We were struggling, we needed help in that area. I've got a daughter. I know what that means," says Tyler Boyd, who was also listening to his father's warnings. "That's any father. Every father wants to put all the pressure on their self and not their kids. Coming where I come from, it's hard. It's a struggle."

Both knew deep down a price would be paid. Tyler Boyd can't imagine how hard those eight years were for his father. He visited maybe once or twice. Brian would call when he could to ask about family. "He's got two daughters on his other side. My (seven-year-old) daughter. He missed my transition from high school to college. Then from college to the league."

But last Sunday was so much better than all the other Sundays. Sitting with this cousin. The rest of the family a few rows away and they would get together and chat. The Steelers jerseys congratulating him.

"It killed me every Sunday," Brian Boyd says. "I could sit there and watch every game. Monday night. Thursday night. You have to share a TV, but when they found out he was my son, they'd put the game on. It got to be they'd come get me. 'Hey Brian, your son's playing.' Hopefully the game would be on and you just wouldn't have to catch the highlights. there. Sometimes after I would go back to my room and I would sit. Depressed. I missed his whole college (experience). I won't lie. It affected me."

But Brian Boyd has some advice: "Stay focused."

Tyler Boyd turns shallow throw into 22-yard gain on third down

He made a promise to his mother before she died not to go back to prison. He visits Clairton only to see family. He lives not far away but it may as well be a million miles away. Tonya calls him when Tyler's daughter has a dance recital or anything at school.

"I'm doing pretty well. I'm just working keeping my head above. I pretty much keep to myself," Brian Boyd says. "My mother said, 'You need to make that promise and you need to not leave your kids anymore.' I can't go through it anymore."

He works as a home health care aide doing laundry and cutting grass and in order to stay busy, he landscapes after hours and on his days off.

And he watches his son beat the Steelers at Heinz for the first time. At some point this season, he'll take another trip to Cincinnati. They call. They text.

"He'll call me before a game and wish me good luck," Tyler Boyd says.

"I'll wait a few days after a game before I call," Brian Boyd says. "I know he's beat up and looking to rest."

But the days of hurting sound like they're gone.

###

**TITANS HC BRIAN
CALLAHAN THANKFUL
TO HAVE HIS FATHER,
BILL, ON COACHING
STAFF**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
FEBRUARY 16, 2024**

NASHVILLE – New Titans head coach Brian Callahan won't have to look far for valuable advice on just about anything.

He hired his dad, veteran coach Bill Callahan, as the team's offensive line coach, and he arrived with quite a reputation.

"He has been the gold standard in this business," NFL Network analyst Brian Baldinger, a former NFL offensive lineman, said of Bill Callahan. "He knows how to develop players, develop a line. He's an amazing offensive line coach. You couldn't get a better hire."

Bill Callahan brings 46 years of coaching experience to the Titans, including 25 years in the NFL and six as a head coach (two at Oakland and four at the University of Nebraska).

Callahan joined the Titans after four seasons (2020-23) as the offensive line coach for the Browns. During his time in Cleveland, the Browns qualified for the playoffs twice and in 2022, the team recorded the third-highest rushing total (2,490) in franchise history. In 2021, the Browns led the NFL in rushing average with a 5.09 mark, which was the highest by a Browns team since 1966.

"I learned a lot from him, not only technique and fundamentals, but also how to be a pro," Browns guard Wyatt Teller said of Callahan, from the Pro Bowl. "He's a hard, hard coach, so they're getting their work worth down there. ... Those guys are going to be getting a lot of work, but I know it's going to pay off."

Brian Callahan on Wednesday discussed hiring his father publicly for the first time.

He thanked the Browns for allowing his father to leave, considering he was still under contract.

"I wasn't sure he would be, contractually allowed to," Callahan said. "But they were aware enough to know the uniqueness of the situation and allow it to continue to go down that road. So appreciative of that perspective from them and allowing it to happen."

When the Browns freed up Bill Callahan to leave, Bill made it clear he wanted to join his son in Tennessee.

Bill Callahan was the Head Coach for the University of Nebraska for four seasons (2004-07), and he spent six seasons (1998-03) with the Oakland Raiders, including his final two seasons as Head Coach.

During his time in the NFL, he has spent 22 seasons coaching the offensive line and seven years as offensive coordinator. He has guided 14 offensive linemen to a total of 35 Pro Bowl selections.

"I would say, as far as experience goes, there's not really anybody that has more in all the different facets of an organization," Brian Callahan said of his father. "He's been a head coach in college and the NFL. He's called plays in the NFL. He's been arguably, in my opinion, the best offensive line coach in football for a long time. His experience and his wealth of knowledge. He's probably forgotten more football than I know. And so, it's a huge asset to us to have him. And again, not just because that's my father, but because of his experience as a football coach. And again, there's not many better out there. Nick (Holz) worked for him a long time ago. I would argue that they're probably both very different people at this point. My dad in particular. But just the ability to have that knowledge, experience, wisdom, perspective, on all the things that go on from top-to-bottom in the football process, not just the

coaching. And so, to have that available to us is huge, and trust me, he'll have quite a bit of input and ability to help us along the process."

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**TITANS ASSISTANT BILL
CALLAHAN SELECTED AS
PFWA 2024 PAUL "DR. Z"
ZIMMERMAN AWARD
WINNER**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 4, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Titans offensive line coach Bill Callahan has been selected as a 2024 Paul "Dr. Z" Zimmerman Award winner by the Professional Football Writers of America (PFWA).

Callahan and Chiefs defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo were both announced on Tuesday, and they became the 24th and 25th recipients of the Dr. Z Award, which was instituted by the PFWA in 2014.

The Dr. Z Award is given for lifetime achievement as an assistant coach in the NFL. The award is named for Zimmerman, who covered the NFL for 29 years as Sports Illustrated's lead pro football writer.

The veteran Callahan was hired as offensive line coach with the Titans earlier this offseason.

Callahan has coached 25 seasons in the NFL, and 46 seasons overall. During his time in the NFL, he has spent 22 seasons coaching the offensive line and seven years as offensive coordinator. Callahan has guided 14 offensive linemen to a total of 35 Pro Bowl selections.

Prior to joining the Titans, where he's serving on his son Brian's staff, Callahan spent the previous four seasons (2020-23) with Cleveland as the O-line coach. He also coached with Washington (2015-19), Dallas (2012-14), New York Jets (2008-11), Oakland (1998-2003; including 2002-03 as head coach), and he began his NFL career with Philadelphia (1995-97). He was head coach at Nebraska (2004-07) as part of a 15-season collegiate coaching career, and he also spent two seasons in the high school ranks.

PAUL "DR. Z" ZIMMERMAN AWARD WINNERS (For lifetime achievement as an assistant coach in the NFL): 2014 – Jim Johnson, Howard Mudd, Fritz Shurmur and Ernie Zampese; 2015 – Dick LeBeau, Tom Moore and Dante Scarnecchia; 2016 – Monte Kiffin and Wade Phillips; 2017 – Bud Carson; 2018 – Joe Bugel and Emmitt Thomas; 2019 – Gunther Cunningham and Mike Westhoff; 2020 – Bill Arnsparger and Romeo Crennel; 2021 – Rod Marinelli and Bobby Turner; 2022 – Leslie Frazier and Greg Knapp; 2023 – Don "Wink" Martindale, Bobb McKittrick and John Mitchell; 2024 – Bill Callahan and Steve Spagnuolo

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NEW HEAD COACH BRIAN CALLAHAN FEELS LIKE HE FOUND THE PERFECT FIT WITH TITANS

BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 25, 2024

NASHVILLE – Brian Callahan got emotional.

At other points during Thursday's introductory press conference, the new Titans head coach showed some fire.

With plenty of questions about the team's roster, his coaching staff and the challenges ahead in turning the Titans into a contender again, Callahan made one thing clear when asked what he wants to see from his team on a consistent basis.

"Resilient and relentless," Callahan said. "You want your team to have those two qualities, and if you have those things, if you are resilient and can handle the ups and downs, the good and the bad, and you are relentless in how you approach every day at work, every day at practice, every game you play, your results, they'll come.

"If you turn on the tape and you watch the Tennessee Titans, I hope those are the two words that come to mind."

Callahan arrives in Tennessee after 14 years of NFL coaching experience, including the past five seasons as the offensive coordinator for the Cincinnati Bengals.

Callahan was a popular candidate on the NFL circuit, with trips planned for Carolina and Atlanta after his visit to Tennessee.

But the Titans convinced Callahan to stay in Nashville. Callahan said it became evident to him the Titans would be the best fit for him and his family, and the two sides struck a deal.

"It felt just like the place I was at (in Cincinnati)," Callahan said of the

Titans. "And I mean that in the most complimentary way possible, because I loved being there. You felt the atmosphere here, you felt the intensity, you felt the want to be great. And when I walked in here Monday for the interview, that's one of the things that stood out. There's a lot of passionate people here that want the Titans to be a great football team. I felt like, "That's where I want to be."

"I felt like this was the perfect fit for me."

Over the past three seasons (2021-23), when as Callahan served as offensive coordinator in Cincinnati, the Bengals offense ranked in the NFL's top 10 in several categories: sixth in scoring (24.9), seventh in passing (250.8 yards per game), seventh in red-zone efficiency (61.5 percent), 10th in third-down percentage (41.0) and sixth in time of possession (31:00).

Callahan played a key role in developing Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow, just like he had an influence at previous stops with the Raiders, Lions and Broncos with quarterbacks Derek Carr, Matthew Stafford and Peyton Manning.

On Thursday, Callahan discussed Titans quarterback Will Levis, saying he likes his competitive spirit, and ability.

But now he has an entire team to coach, and he'll do it his way.

"My coaching style is consistent, my demeanor is pretty consistent," Callahan said. "I pride myself on being a great teacher, that is first and foremost. As a coach, that is all you really care about is how well you can teach and articulate to the players what they need to do. I have plenty of intensity. I have a pretty laid-back demeanor most of the time, as you guys will see, but when it is time to make corrections and bring the energy that is necessary, I can do that. But my coaching style is a teaching coaching style.

"We're trying to make sure that our guys know exactly what to do, how

to do it, and they can go execute at a really high level and as fast as humanly possible."

###

**FROM THE NFL
COMBINE: BRIAN
CALLAHAN SETTLING IN
AS HEAD COACH OF THE
TITANS, EVEN IF THINGS
AREN'T SETTLING DOWN**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
FEBRUARY 28, 2024**

INDIANAPOLIS – Brian Callahan strolled out of his hotel lobby early on Wednesday morning, on the way to visit with some of the prospects in this year's NFL Draft.

Callahan barely made it out the door before Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh approached him, shook his hand, and congratulated him. Callahan, in turn, congratulated Harbaugh, for his championship season at Michigan, and his own new gig in the NFL.

The coaches then headed down the escalator and into the busy hallways at the Indianapolis Convention Center, here at the NFL Combine, en route to Lucas Oil Stadium.

Callahan has had countless interactions this week, his first combine as a head coach.

"Getting a lot of 'Congrats'," Callahan said with a smile, "and I appreciate it. It's been really cool, to see everyone's excitement for me, being happy for me and all that. It makes all of this even more exciting."

It's been just over a month since Callahan was introduced as the next head coach of the Tennessee Titans. His life has been a whirlwind since, as he's worked to hire his first coaching staff while also juggling tasks at the office, from meetings with coaches, scouts, players, other team officials, media, along with a few appearances with season ticket members.

Free agency, and the NFL Draft, of course, are two big events on the horizon.

Callahan keeps a running list in the Notes app on his phone when something pops in his head he could forget.

Along the way, he's received plenty of advice.

One exchange stuck out: It was with Colts General Manager Chris Ballard.

"Just make sure you enjoy it, and have fun," Callahan recalled Ballard telling him. "He told me, 'You are ready for it, you are prepared, so enjoy it.' And I have tried to do that – enjoy the process of it all. I have had fun, and I have enjoyed it. And, he also said: Take your time. Don't be in a rush, and don't feel like you have to get everything done in one day."

A long-time assistant, most recently as offensive coordinator with the Bengals, Callahan said he's learning the flow of his day is different as a head coach.

But he is having fun as he's settling in, and prepares for what's on the horizon.

Two men he worked with in Cincinnati – Bengals head coach Zac Taylor and Bengals Director of Player Personnel Duke Tobin – said here at the combine Callahan was clearly ready for the next step.

"They're getting a good coach and we're losing a good coach," Tobin said of Callahan, and the Titans. "They're getting a guy that is a hundred percent ready for the job. Brian has the exact personality that you want in that position. He's super bright. He's a people person. He relates well to players, to staff, to everyone in the building. He's grown up around football. He's got a tremendous amount of great ideas and thoughts. He's got the right demeanor and personality. So, it's a great hire for them and it's a big loss for us. We really enjoyed our time with Brian. I knew he was ready. I knew he had, it was just a matter of another team identifying that and they did and we're really happy for him."

When Titans General Manager Ran Carthon reached out to Taylor about Callahan, he gave him a strong endorsement as well.

"He sat right by my side for five years, and became one of my best friends," Taylor said of Callahan. "He was ready for the opportunity and was a big part of our success. And I'm confident he'll be a big part of their success in Tennessee."

Callahan's first month on the job has included a lot of work, away from his family. Callahan's wife and two kids remain in Cincinnati, so they try and connect via FaceTime either early in the morning or at night. His days have been so busy, in fact, some days fly by before he realizes he hasn't checked in. The entire Callahan family plans to move to Nashville after the current school year, when they'll find their new home.

For now, Callahan is living in an apartment in the West End area.

He's eaten at places like Kayne Prime Steakhouse and Pelato in Germantown.

"Been to a Predators game," he said, "and looking forward to going back. They're hot right now."

Callahan once took a stroll down Broadway to get a feel for the city. When he's been out, he's occasionally been recognized.

"I've been pretty anonymous, I think, but a few folks have come up, which is kind of new for me," he said. "Everyone has been very kind and welcoming. A lot of hellos, and 'Welcome to Nashville'. It's been a nice welcome."

Most of Callahan's time, however, has been spent at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park.

On most days, he's there early, and out the door at 9 p.m., which is closer to a regular season schedule than an offseason one.

But there's been work to do, and people to get to know.

At a recent staff meeting, Callahan put up pictures of four or five people with the team, and called on folks to see if they knew them.

"It's one of those things to remind people: Get to know people who work here," Callahan said. "I do it just as much for me as I do for them."

Callahan is still getting to know players returning from last season.

He's called a good number of them, but not all. Some have gone out of their way to stop by his office. He'll get to know all of them when the offseason program gets under way on April 8, a date he's looking forward to.

Some, he's already getting to know well.

"I joke with Ryan Stonehouse all the time," Callahan said of the team's punter. "I think he's been in the building every single day I've been there – every Saturday, every Sunday. If I am in the building, I am going to see Stoney at some point. So, I've seen the most of him. Obviously, Will (Levis) has been around a little bit. He always stops by when he is in the building."

As Callahan headed toward his meeting with the prospects this morning, he gave a quick detail on what he's looking for in players.

High character, being coachable, consistent, and a passion for football are traits he's looking for. Callahan also wants speed and explosiveness on both sides of the football.

The past month has given Callahan a taste of what's on the horizon.

It's also made him hungry for more.

"As a head coach, there's a lot to do for sure," Callahan said. "But I have not felt overwhelmed by any of it. A lot of it, I felt like I knew was coming. And I feel really prepared for it. I haven't had any moment

where it's like 'Oh man, this is a much bigger deal than I thought it would be. I feel really good about it. I'm really, really excited.'"

###

HOW THE BENGALS CREATE AN EARLY GAME SCRIPT AND THE HISTORIC RUN ITS PRODUCING

*BY PAUL DEHNER JR.
THE ATHLETIC
NOVEMBER 10, 2023*

The Athletic has live coverage of Bengals vs Jaguars on Monday Night Football.

CINCINNATI — As Monday afternoon turns to evening, cleanup crews and stadium staff still buzz through Paycor Stadium. They work to restore order to a building that shook at the epicenter of the football world less than 24 hours prior.

While fans scroll through replays, social media content and the latest round of pundit declarations that Joe Burrow is back, Cincinnati Bengals offensive coordinator Brian Callahan hides out in his office already mentally transitioned to Sunday.

“I’m pretty deep into Houston at this point,” he said.

Meanwhile, coach Zac Taylor weaves through meetings and media requirements. Children scurry through the tunnels, trailed by their mothers, for the weekly family night for the coaching staff.

As beautiful as it would be for Callahan to rewatch the Bengals pounce on an opponent early for the fourth consecutive week, the November grind allows little time for him to bask in the glow.

Time to start building next week’s script.

Whatever’s working for Taylor, Callahan and the Bengals’ staff on these sleepy Mondays needs to continue.

The first two drives over the last four games have netted seven touchdowns and one field goal. That includes three consecutive games scoring back-to-back touchdowns to open up leads they wouldn’t relinquish.

With a healthy Burrow at the helm, they’ve been more than good. They’ve been historic.

The last time the Bengals opened three straight games with back-to-back touchdown drives was 1985. The last time any team accomplished the feat was Green Bay in 2020.

STAT	LAST 4	2022	NFL AVG (20)
Points/Drive	6.3 (1st)	2.5 (10th)	2.1
EPH/Play	0.49 (1st)	.02 (10th)	-0.1
TD%	87.5% (1st)	31.3 (10th)	22.9%
Pass%	73% (1st)	73% (2nd)	59.7%

The drives include six passing touchdowns to four receivers, a completion percentage of 85 percent and a passer rating of 138.1. They’ve run 74 plays but have even reached third down only nine times.

Outside of marveling at the franchise QB, how are they doing it?

“You’ve got to credit the coaching staff,” Burrow said. “The scripts are a collaboration, but it comes down to Zac and Brian that come up with those plays.”

Understanding this run of improbable efficiency requires an examination of the staff’s process of creating an early-game script and the nuanced objectives of the approach.

The process for Callahan opens with pinpointing the general collection of plays.

“I usually try to carry over a lot,” he said. “I’ve always found that teams and good offenses have carryover. You don’t have to start from scratch every week.”

Specifically, he’ll track back to previous games against similar schemes. In the case of Houston, Texans coach DeMeco Ryans left a similar system behind in San Francisco.

“Are there some things in the San Francisco game plan that we’ve practiced, installed and repped that we didn’t call?” Callahan said. “And

yes, there inevitably always is. You always start there, carry over as much as you can because you only have so many hours in the day.”

Finding the carryover eventually blends into looking for advantages playing off their own tendencies from recent weeks.

“You try to figure out, ‘What are our wrinkles for this week?’” Callahan said. “And that’s usually based on a couple of things, based on what have we shown. ... ‘How do we add a layer to it?’”

A prime example is a screen thrown to Ja’Marr Chase in the second quarter against Buffalo. The play was essentially the same formation and motion as an explosive completion to Tee Higgins the week prior against San Francisco. Only, this time, rather than Chase serving as an orbit motion decoy, the play was redesigned as a screen.

One missed block threw it for a 2-yard loss and a forgotten play on an otherwise memorable night, but it was wide open. A great idea foiled. The quest for the next one is always around the corner.

After a week of practice and repping the next cycle of core plays, they whittle down the expected early play calls by Friday afternoon and into Saturday morning.

“Brian gives thoughts, (offensive line coach/run game coordinator Frank Pollack) gives thoughts,” Taylor said. “We talk about them Saturday morning as a staff and formulate it. Then we talk to Joe.”

The dialogue with Burrow usually revolves around any plays he thinks were left off or picking between two plays to push up into the early script.

Taylor says there are moments — including one during Wednesday’s practice — when Burrow will suggest a play from that day get elevated to earlier in the game, but typically those conversations occur closer to game day. As with all things Bengals offense, Taylor

**TITANS HC BRIAN
CALLAHAN'S OPENING
MESSAGE TO TEAM
CENTERS ON
RESILIENCY,
RELENTLESSNESS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
APRIL 10, 2024**

NASHVILLE – New Titans head coach Brian Callahan held his first team meeting this week, and his message was clear – he wants his team to be relentless, and resilient.

Also, he wants guys to feel comfortable, and to be themselves.

The Titans began their offseason program on Monday, which Callahan referred to as "an orientation."

"We're trying to lay out expectations, guidelines, what we want our team to look like," Callahan said. "(The opening message) was two things: Two critical factors that we want our team to be when you turn our tape on is relentless and resilient, and they got that message the first day. It's a huge part of what I believe in. And, then the other part of it is, just some very simple things that we have expectation-wise. I don't do rules, I don't have a lot of things they need to abide by, but I want guys to be themselves. I want guys to be on time, and I want to protect our team. That is what I live by. So that's sort of the first opening message that they got. The opening message was certainly we want to be a relentless and resilient football team."

Callahan, formerly offensive coordinator with the Bengals, was named head coach back in January.

In the first few weeks on the job, Callahan hired his first coaching staff. Callahan has been busy in all facets since, making trips to the NFL Combine, the NFL owners meetings, and pro days, in addition to working with his new staff, gearing up for the start of the offseason program.

For the Titans, that started on Monday with Phase One.

Callahan said he's been pleased with the attendance right out of the gate.

"There's been great energy with all the players in the building," Callahan said. "I just felt the excitement. Any time there is change, you can handle it one of two ways: You can be disappointed by it, or you can be excited and ready to embrace whatever comes your way. I think these guys have done a great job embracing the newness of it all, and the excitement of what's to come, and I've appreciated that from them. I've felt really good about the start we've had this week."

The Titans are scheduled to hold a veteran minicamp from April 22-24.

The team's rookie minicamp, which will follow the NFL Draft, is scheduled for May 10-13.

The Titans will hold voluntary OTAs in May and June, along with a mandatory minicamp from June 4-6.

The offseason program will end in mid-June, and training camp will begin in late July.

"We are going to coach as hard as we can, as much as we can, for the time we are allotted," Callahan said. "And whoever is here is going to be here. But I have been very pleased with our attendance so far this week."

###

wants to lean into his quarterback's preferences.

"It depends on the whole team you're going against," Burrow said about what he looks for in an early script. "A lot plays into it. You want to get a little bit of everything — runs, passes, the whole game."

There's a line of thought about early scripts that most of the first 15 plays are set in stone. The concept was innovated over 40 years ago in Cincinnati with Paul Brown and Bill Walsh.

The game has evolved as has the early-script dynamic.

"The only play I know for sure the order it will be called is the first one," Taylor said.

After that, any of the top plays Taylor likes could be bumped down as situations dictate and send him to other corners of his 11x17 play sheet for answers. The sheet is situationally categorized, so the idea of 15 plays is a fallacy. In fact, it's rarely that number, typically trending higher.

"There's no special sauce," Taylor said. "It's just a bunch of calls I know I really like and want to make sure I get to in the first half."

The objective of getting to them early goes beyond merely picking plays they believe will work, though.

"Especially an opening script, you're setting things up," Callahan said. "They're showing things that are different and you're also at the same time trying to see how they're going to play. So maybe you're probing them at the same time. That's why you try to throw 12 personnel under center out there. What are they going to do? What's their reaction? OK, now that's how they're going to play it. Here's what's next for that. It's sort of a back and forth that's like a chess match."

Taylor and Callahan agree the process isn't overly complicated,

especially when they have been doing this together for five years and together with Burrow for four.

There have been periods when the offense struggled through the early drives, specifically in 2021 when seemingly every game involved a comeback sparked by a play just before halftime.

Bengals points/drive splits

DRIVES	LAST 4 GAMES	2022	2021
First 2 drives	6.50 (1x1)	2.50 (1-10x)	1.25 (0x0)
Rest of game	1.25 (0x0)	2.25 (2x2)	2.25 (3x3)

Bengals EPA/play splits

DRIVES	LAST 4 GAMES	2022	2021
First 2 drives	0.49 (1x1)	.02 (0x0)	-.20 (0x0)
Rest of game	-0.09 (2x2)	.05 (0x0)	.11 (3x3)

Part of the evolution of early success for the Bengals has coincided with Burrow's growth as a passer. The Bengals are the most pass-heavy team in the league on the first two drives — 73 percent versus 60 percent after — unsurprising considering they are among the most pass-heavy throughout.

"Nobody says you have to run the ball to open the game," Callahan said. "You really want to run the ball at the end of the game."

Taylor interjects that many of those throws were called runs, RPOs or passes to the edges, which count as runs in their mind.

Either way, Burrow's ability to mitigate the risk of aggressive calls, specifically early in a game, allows the Bengals to always be hammering the pedal out of the gate.

"We've definitely (been) leaning more aggressive early in games this year as Joe has gotten healthy," Callahan said. "Let's say we have a really good play-action shot we like or something that could generate an explosive, let's not hold on to it. Let's put it out there early. Some of that is Zac knowing if I just call these things, Joe is going to make the right decision and if we don't have it, check it down."

Taylor feels he's always leaned toward aggressive plays early. He runs through a list of examples from

his early seasons throwing a go ball to A.J. Green on the first play of Burrow's second career game to opening last season's "Monday Night Football" game against Buffalo launching a deep shot to Chase for a pass-interference penalty on the first play.

The key, in the minds of Taylor, Callahan and Burrow, lives in finding a balance between attacking to put teams on their heels early, probing with different formations and, most importantly, finding easy completions for Burrow to quickly establish a rhythm.

"You want to see the ball completed, you want to move the ball down the field," Burrow said. "You want to take chances, too. You want to take shots."

Oh, yeah, and one other minor detail.

"It's just, let's go score touchdowns," Taylor said.

Defensive coordinator Lou Anarumo fully understands the challenge of combating a team with a consistently dynamic early script. Specifically, the legend of Andy Reid in Kansas City.

"He's the standard when it comes to that," Anarumo said.

As the first quarter bleeds into the second against the Chiefs, Anarumo finds himself airing the same questions on repeat across the headsets.

"Are we off the script yet? Are we off the script yet?" Anarumo said with a laugh. Whether against the Chiefs or not, he acknowledges the dynamics can change notably once the early plays are exhausted.

"They are going to practice it and be ready to go, they know what is getting called," he said. "There is no indecision by the players. They know what call is coming into the huddle. But once you get them out of that, there can be some indecision in how the game is going."

It's fair to wonder how much indecision has come into play for the Bengals. The confounding nature of this four-game stretch has been what happened after the first two drives. The Bengals rank 29th in points per drive and 26th in EPA/play from that point forward. Each game produced its own circumstances and justifiable excuses. You have a fumble from Irv Smith in San Francisco as well as multiple plus-territory stall-outs against Buffalo that should have produced points.

There's no sense the game is playing out differently after the early drives or that the offense is being exposed when the core offense takes over the call sheet. "We got to be better, obviously," Taylor said, but outside of the Seattle debacle, these haven't been discouraging drives or full of ugly three-and-outs. The Bengals are actually above average, ranking 12th in three-and-out percentage in those situations (32 percent).

Plus, they've often been running the four-minute offense to salt away wins when the situational objectives again change.

The stalled and busted drives have made evident that despite four consecutive victories and Burrow heating up to elite, the room for growth is still vast.

Considering the current roll, that's one scary concept for the rest of the league.

"There's a moment where we need to go hammer it and we just haven't," Callahan said. "Both of those games should have never been close. That's where I get the most frustrated. We are really competing with what we are capable of. We are capable of so much more. In the moments when you have to not let a guy off the mat, you have to knock it out. That's the next step."

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WHAT MAKES BENGALS OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR BRIAN CALLAHAN A RISING NFL COACH

**BY DAN POMPEI
THE ATHLETIC
AUGUST 30, 2022**

CINCINNATI — One minute left, and the Bengals and Jaguars are tied at 21.

On second-and-13, Jaguars defensive coordinator Joe Cullen calls for a zero blitz. Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow checks to a screen pass to tight end C.J. Uzomah — the perfect counter move — and Uzomah goes 25 yards to set up the winning field goal.

Of course, credit for the long gain on the play went to Burrow.

But it also should have gone to Peyton Manning.

From 2012 through 2015, Bengals offensive coordinator Brian Callahan worked with Manning in Denver as an assistant in various capacities. It was Manning who influenced Callahan to prepare for every possible pressure and make him understand that the protection plan is the most essential part of any game plan.

“It’s one of the things most deeply ingrained in me from my time with Peyton,” Callahan says, “I spent hours combing through tape for Peyton, finding all the blitzes, drawing them up, presenting them to him. He always wanted answers — what calls to make to get the blitz blocked, what plays to check to, how to make a team pay for blitzing him. (Now) I always want to give Joe as many answers as he needs for what he might encounter.”

Before the game against the Jaguars, Callahan studied Cullen back to his days as a defensive line coach with the Ravens. He suspected a zero blitz might be coming with the game on the line and advised Burrow accordingly,

Callahan’s understanding of exceptional quarterbacks has elevated him and his teams.

“He’s seen a lot of successful quarterbacks and how they worked, and that experience has helped us,” Bengals coach Zac Taylor says.

“The more exposure you can get in this league to players and systems that are successful, the better you are if you are willing to learn,” says Matthew Stafford, another quarterback Callahan has coached. “He’s always finding ways to be a better coach by learning from players as well as coaches.”

The quarterbacks in Callahan’s past tell the story of where he’s been. And they also reveal where he’s going.

Randall Cunningham

In a closet of a home not far from Paul Brown Stadium, there is a porcelain figurine of Cunningham, depicted as the quarterback of the Eagles. During a move long ago, one of the figurine’s legs was broken. It was glued back together and remains in the box it came in, protected by the original Styrofoam.

Callahan’s father, Bill, who later became head coach of the Raiders and now is the offensive line coach of the Browns, was the Eagles’ offensive line coach in the mid-1990s. As a seventh grader, Brian served as a ball boy for the team during camp. Cunningham asked him to play catch once, and they struck up a relationship.

And then one day Cunningham gave Callahan that figurine, a treasure still.

“What an awesome moment it was to receive that,” Brian says. “I was in awe when I saw him. He was so big. He was a superstar at the time, but he was so nice to me, so gracious.”

Previously, Brian had spent many days around the Wisconsin football team with his brother Danny when

Bill was the offensive coordinator. To hear Bill tell it, they were “gym rats.”

But playing catch with Cunningham at Eagles camp and watching how a star quarterback carried himself was something special, and the first of many significant quarterback intersections in his life.

Rich Gannon

The Raiders were preparing for a training camp practice in 1998 when Gannon called over Callahan, then a high school freshman who also played quarterback. They chatted as Gannon warmed up. From then on, Gannon talked to him a little every day.

Callahan always had questions.

“Why did the coach call that play against that defense?”

“Why did you throw to this receiver instead of that one?”

“Against this look, should you expect blitz or coverage?”

Gannon was known for being all business, but he admired young Callahan’s curiosity and respectful approach. He gave him pointers about throwing mechanics and footwork, and he especially tried to teach Callahan about the mental part of quarterbacking — the attributes that too often are minimized but were Gannon’s NFL lifeblood. He told him about the importance of toughness, work ethic and preparedness, and explained why amazing throws have less to do with winning games than amazing decisions.

Callahan learned the most by watching Gannon interact with others.

“He was very demanding,” Callahan says of the quarterback who was voted NFL MVP while playing for Callahan’s father in 2002. “He didn’t care. He wanted to win. It was my first time seeing somebody like that where it was, either you do it right, at the level I expect, or I’m

kind of done with you. I was in awe of that kind of command. He wasn't always nice. He was prickly. But he was brilliant."

This, Callahan thought, is what a quarterback should be like.

In the evenings, Callahan followed his father to the offensive installation meetings. There, he watched head coach Jon Gruden, offensive coordinator Marc Trestman and other coaches install plays for Gannon and the other players. Then, it was Gannon asking questions.

Says Gannon, now an analyst with CBS Sports and NFL Radio, "He soaked it all up."

Tim Tebow

The 2007 Heisman Trophy winner was one of the most beloved athletes in the country when he became the starting quarterback of the Broncos in 2011. His biceps were prettier than his passes, but Tebow's performances were enchanting in a way most football coaches could not understand.

Head coach John Fox and offensive coordinator Mike McCoy knew they could not win with Tebow in a conventional system, so they decided to incorporate option plays into the offense. This was before the pistol offense became the flavor of the day and zone reads became standard in every playbook. Callahan, the team's offensive quality control coach at the time, had played in the option at De La Salle High School and coached it at Serra High School, so the other coaches asked for his help designing a run game that fit with Tebow's skill set.

"We watched all his tape at Florida and tried to figure out how to bring college concepts to the pros," Callahan says. "We did a bunch of stuff nobody was doing at the time."

Tebow was unlike any other quarterback, but he helped Callahan learn to work with other quarterbacks.

"The big takeaway was find things players do well and do it," Callahan says. "We all want to throw it 30 times for 300 yards, but that wasn't what we had. You have to work around whatever it is they can do. It has nothing to do with the kind of system you want to run. It has everything to do with putting your guys in the best position to be successful."

Peyton Manning

The Broncos replaced Tebow with Manning, and Callahan was given a critical responsibility as an offensive assistant: informing Manning of opponents' tendencies. In the later stages of the season, Manning also assigned Callahan and the backup quarterbacks to research each opponent and make a presentation the day before the game.

"Cally — everybody called him Cally — was there all night, early in the morning, breaking film down nonstop," Manning says. "It's a grind. I like coaches that are willing to do that. Some coaches just want to skip right to being a full-time position coach, coordinator, head coach, but Cally going through the grind made him learn a lot as a coach."

Working with Manning, Callahan learned the meaning of accountability.

"You had to go through everything because he did, and then he tried to find holes in whatever you told him," Callahan says. "We were playing Cincinnati. I tell him they never bring this safety blitz when the corner is in this position. OK. He writes everything in his notebook, this horrible chicken scratch. So the next morning, he opens his notebook and tells us to call up a specific play. He said, 'You said they don't bring this blitz when they have this look, but they did it here.' He had gone like two years back. It was his way of showing me that what I did wasn't good enough. At that moment, I said I would never be wrong again."

Eventually, Callahan earned Manning's trust. Manning says Callahan played a significant role in his late-career success.

"It was a whirlwind ordeal coming to Denver, trying to get established and coming off an injury," Manning says. "Cally helped a lot with my transition. He was a big part of my journey."

Watching Manning's wheels turn made Callahan understand how a coach's wheels need to turn. Manning did everything at the highest level, from watching tape to giving interviews to broadcasters in production meetings. He was so intense in walkthroughs that he often came off the field drenched with sweat. Manning's routines, focus and structure were blueprints for Callahan to share with every quarterback to come.

"It was," Callahan says, "like getting a Ph.D. in quarterback play."

Matthew Stafford

When Callahan became the Lions' quarterbacks coach, he was working in the same offense he did with Manning. So naturally, Callahan tried to handle Stafford how he and the other Broncos coaches dealt with Manning.

But Stafford was different from Manning in the way he perceived, related and played, so Callahan had to adjust. Whereas Manning left no doubt what he wanted and how he wanted it, Callahan sometimes had to coax things from the laid-back Stafford.

"I realized not everyone is Peyton, and they don't have to be," Callahan says. "I figured out there are a lot of different ways to be good. I absolutely loved coaching him, but I had to coach Matthew differently than Peyton."

It helped that Dan Orlovsky, then a veteran of 11 NFL seasons, was Stafford's backup. Orlovsky counseled Callahan on how to connect with Stafford.

“What I did with Peyton, that’s not for everybody,” Callahan says. “Dan helped me mold what I taught to the personalities I was teaching.”

Stafford appreciated Callahan’s experience with Manning, but he didn’t necessarily want the same play calls.

“Some of the things Peyton really liked, maybe I didn’t, and vice versa,” he says. “Brian had an ability to navigate that, communicate that and explain why Peyton liked something. I would say why I didn’t, and he found ways to make those dynamics work. He was always great at it.”

Callahan found Stafford to be intelligent, instinctive, tough and committed. He was relatable in all corners of the locker room. So he focused on building around those attributes.

In addition, Stafford had arm talents that were fantasy for Manning.

“The offense we were running was probably called a little different than when Peyton was running in Denver,” Stafford says. “We probably took a couple more shots down the field here and there. That’s what makes a coach a good coach, being able to get the most out of his players and understand strengths and weaknesses.”

Without flexibility, Callahan learned, he wouldn’t have a chance.

Derek Carr

Seventeen years after Callahan was a high school kid sitting in on Gruden’s install meetings with the Raiders, he joined Gruden’s staff in Oakland as quarterbacks coach. In Gruden’s second stint as head coach of the Raiders, his quarterback was Carr, who was very different from Gannon and every other quarterback Callahan had been around.

Callahan found Carr intelligent, resilient and adaptable, and also sensitive.

“Being religious is very much a part of who he is, and he would preach,” Callahan says. “He didn’t like people cussing and he didn’t like negative talk. You have to learn to work with that. I’d try not to cuss.”

Gruden, subsequently, tried to reach Carr in his colorful way by instructing, correcting and sometimes berating his backups. The head coach demonstrated how he could get his points across without ruffling Carr.

For every situation, Callahan learned, there is a workaround.

Joe Burrow

In 2021 when Burrow was rehabbing from knee surgery, Callahan told him how Manning returned from neck surgery nine years earlier. Even though their injuries differed, Callahan knew Burrow could benefit if he could think like Manning did during his comeback.

Callahan preached patience, as he had seen it benefit Manning. He told Burrow to be open with his feelings and encouraged him to ask the Bengals staff for what he needed. He told him recovery isn’t linear, that there would be tough days for him as there had been for Manning.

Burrow won the 2021 comeback player of the year award, and part of the reason, he will tell you, was the Manning mindset.

Callahan talks with Burrow about all the quarterbacks in his past. Sometimes it’s just telling an amusing story, but often it’s passing down a lesson, or as Burrow puts it, giving him a “nugget.”

“I’ve got a lot of experience with these quarterbacks and Joe’s the perfect person to impart all the things I’ve learned because he’s able to handle all of it,” says Callahan, now a veteran coach at 38 years old. “He’s in the early stages of his career, and hopefully it can help him develop at a rapid rate. You get veteran players, and their minds are made up about a lot of things. But

Joe is always open to hearing new ideas. There are things he’s still impressionable about.”

Callahan meets with Burrow and the other Bengals quarterbacks during morning installation sessions and for post-practice film review. He is responsible for base down game planning and oversees red zone plays and the protection plan, so they frequently interact in the lead-up to games. Play calling is Taylor’s responsibility, but Taylor says he and Callahan have a constant discussion between plays and series.

Burrow led the Bengals to the Super Bowl earlier this year in his first full season as a starter, but Callahan believes he has a lot of room for growth. Callahan thinks his quarterback has Hall of Fame potential and has even thought about what Burrow’s induction speech might sound like.

He sees Burrow as a blend of Manning, a Hall of Famer, and Stafford, a potential Hall of Famer. Like Stafford, Burrow can toggle between easygoing and fierce. Manning thrived with control; Burrow is the same way.

Callahan subsequently has given Burrow “the keys to the offense.” That means Burrow has autonomy at the line of scrimmage as well as input and veto power on concepts in game plans.

“If I don’t feel great about a certain route on a concept, I bring it up and there is no hesitation about changing it,” Burrow says. “That’s not always the case with all the coaches you play for. Some are very adamant it’s their way; run it how the play is supposed to be run. That’s not how Brian does it. That’s empowered me to go out and play free and fast and physical and really understand what I’m doing.”

As the Bengals prepared to play the Chiefs in the AFC Championship Game last season, Burrow told Callahan he preferred to have wide receiver Ja’Marr Chase run a fade on the backside of a red zone concept instead of the route

Callahan initially intended Chase to run. Callahan listened to his quarterback and changed the route. Late in the third quarter of the 27-24 Bengals' victory, Chase scored on a 2-yard reception from Burrow on the fade Burrow had suggested.

With Burrow, Callahan has used what he calls "my Tebow lesson" — finding the things the player does well and asking the player to do them repeatedly. For Burrow, that means a healthy dose of mid-range routes — Callahan says "his intermediate accuracy is the best in the NFL" — and consistent downfield shots to Chase.

Burrow appreciates Callahan as a coach and more. Burrow is not a small-talk guy. But Callahan asks about his family. He tries to make him laugh.

"I consider us friends, which is rare to consider yourself as a player to be friends with a coach," Burrow says.

Burrow is glad to have found himself in Callahan's path. And if the chain is unbroken, another transcendent quarterback will find himself there.

Burrow: "I thought he was going to get a head coaching job last year (he interviewed with the Broncos). I was anticipating having a new offensive coordinator. When his opportunity comes, I know he'll make the most of it and be a great head coach for a long time."

Stafford: "He is comfortable with himself and he knows the game. I think the sky's the limit for him."

Manning: "I've been really proud of him. He's got fire in him, and at the same time, Cally is in control. It's the perfect mix. He's got a great demeanor for a quarterbacks coach, offensive coordinator or head coach in my opinion."

Gannon: "I don't think there's any question he'll be a head coach. Brian's going to get that opportunity and he's going to be really good at it."

From playing catch with Cunningham, to peppering Gannon with questions, to finding plays for Tebow, to poring through tape for Manning, to adjusting his message for Stafford, to finding workarounds with Carr, to empowering Burrow, Callahan has developed a deep understanding of how to help a quarterback maximize his gifts.

And that deep understanding is a commodity that can take coaches places.

###

WHAT MAKES BRIAN CALLAHAN SO INVALUABLE TO ZAC TAYLOR AND BENGALS

**BY MIKE PETRAGLIA
CLNSMEDIA.COM
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CINCINNATI — Calling plays in an NFL game isn't a one-man job. It hasn't been for a long time. Look no further than the Bengals to understand the unique relationship between a pair of coaches with Super Bowl experience on their resume.

Head coach Zac Taylor has the final call on gamedays but what's truly important to understand is the process that goes into every play, the voices in the room that have real input and the orchestration that figures into the compilation of all the choices on the menu that Taylor has in his hands on the sidelines.

Brian Callahan has the title of offensive coordinator and, with the Bengals, that's literally his job. On many teams, the head coach entrusts the coordinator with designing and calling the plays.

But in Cincinnati, where the head coach has an extensive background in working with offenses at the college and pro level, Taylor prefers to pull the trigger during the game.

So then, what exactly does Callahan do for Taylor?

"The nice thing about having a head coach that calls the plays, they still have to do all the things that head coaches have to," Callahan told me. "Roster management and he still has to worry about anything else that comes up, defense, special teams. Those things are all things that he has to think about during the week. So, he relies on me specifically to advance everything else. So, offensively I move forward with the plan and then he catches up as he has time."

Both Callahan and Taylor have been offensive coaches on Super Bowl

staffs, Callahan in 2013 and 2015 (Broncos) and Taylor 2018 (Rams).

"He might not be in every meeting with the staff, I'll run most of those they'll catch up with whatever we do," Callahan adds. "Whatever we've got to catch up on. I do a lot of previewing of each situation. So, I'll put out a list of first, second down passes together, and it's usually a really long list of things, and then I'll get together on Tuesday night and take an hour and a half to go through and cut that list. He says I like these things here. I have these ideas. I'm going to put in here. We just kind of flow through the conversation."

Conversation and communication are two key words to keep in mind when thinking about the working relationship between Taylor and Callahan. Conversation and communication lead to decisive decision-making on gameday.

"He helps balance things when I'm not around and I'm doing head coach things, and Frank (Pollack) is doing the run game. He does a good job of meshing that as well and making sure the communication is great," Taylor said of the invaluable service Callahan provides. "I could probably talk for hours about the value that Brian has to our team because it is tremendous. And I think the players see that, how smart he is.

"He's been around some of the most successful offenses in the history of football and he's seen some of the all-time greats do it. He knows what the standard should be and what it should look like. When he communicates with the group, it always hits the nail on the head because he's been there, done that. It's where we want to be, and he does an outstanding job for us."

In speaking with both for this look behind the curtain at what goes into play-calling, it's clear that the relationship works well. The results, as both will admit, haven't always been ideal but it's the process that must be refined and perfected before

the engine starts firing at optimum RPMs.

That's what the first two seasons have been about for Taylor and Callahan, who have known each other a long time.

"We think the same and what I mean by that is I could disappear for a few hours doing head coach things and he really just keeps things smooth and on track and by the time I get back it's not a different thought process of what I would've followed myself," Taylor told me this week. "And that's from our interactions over three years, that's from our interactions of 10 years of phone calls before that because we never worked together before that. Working summer camps together and talking ball and talking scheme."

When Taylor was putting together his staff after he was hired in January of 2019, he knew who one of his targeted hires would be.

Callahan had just completed a season as quarterbacks coach with the Oakland Raiders and already had a Super Bowl ring with the 2015 Denver Broncos, working with two of the most brilliant minds in NFL offense, Gary Kubiak and Peyton Manning. And with Manning in particular, he knew one thing as the leader of the offense on the field stood above all else.

"Preparations. His preparation was so maniacal," Callahan told me. "So detailed as a quarterback, he has to prepare just like the coordinator does, just like the play caller does. (He would) always think about the game plan, how we're trying to attack, what we're trying to attack, how we're going to deploy our people against whatever they show us. And it's a really intense way of going about it. The way he went about his business and the urgency of how you had to attack all those small things and make sure you're all on the same page all the time."

But Taylor and Callahan understand clearly that being on the same page doesn't mean you agree all the time.

“As we watch tape, that’s not to say we don’t disagree,” Callahan said. “We have plenty of times where I like to play and I’ll stand up and fight for it, getting some idea and then it’ll work in the game. And then they say, ‘good job’ and vice versa out the plays that I don’t like it. He has that we may come up with a but whenever we’re done and we leave the room on the same page with what we’re going to do, for that meat for the game, and how we’re going to go attack.”

When Peyton Manning was leading the record-breaking Broncos offense from 2012-2015, Callahan was an offensive assistant to Kubiak and the Hall of Fame quarterback. Taylor wasn’t afraid to tap into Callahan’s access to some of the greatest offensive minds in the history of the game.

“‘Why did Peyton Manning do this?’ I remember texting him that all the time in 2014 or 2013,” Taylor said. “(Callahan) is not afraid to tell me what he thinks if I’m screwed up in some way or if we should be doing things differently, which you have to have in this profession. There can’t just be people telling you that you do a good job and everything’s great.”

During the weekly meetings, every coach has the option to sell their unit, whether it’s run-game coordinator Frank Pollack or wide receivers coach Troy Walters.

“It’ll be anything to the red zone and third down,” Callahan said. “Each one of our coaches has an area they’re responsible for, so they can pitch. Third down, Walters does Red Zone, whoever it is, we preview that area. We go through and we build the list, and the idea is to have a list of things to choose from and then Zac and I go through and then cut it down and make sure we we’re fine, whatever it is we’re going to run. The good thing is that Zac and I see football very similarly. We see a lot of the same.

“Ultimately when you get to game day, you’ve got a pretty good idea of

how things are going to come off your call sheet for the most part. It’s not a whole lot of guessing when we get to game day. We’re all pretty much in lockstep with how we see it.”

“You need people that can balance that for you. Brian absolutely does that,” Taylor said. “Maybe that comes from being a son of a coach, maybe that’s just his personality, whatever it is, he’s just got the right tone about him to where he makes sure we’re always doing things the right way.”

Callahan’s father, of course, is Bill Callahan, someone with his own extensive and successful pedigree in the game. Bill Callahan, who serves now as the offensive line coach in Cleveland, coached quarterback Rich Gannon and the Oakland Raiders to their last Super Bowl in 2002.

“There’s probably no one has had a bigger impact outside (the game),” the younger Callahan told me. “He’s the most impactful person in my career, just outside of being my father, just as my just as a mentor and he’s seen so much. He’s coached for so long. He’s been a head coach. He’s called plays, he’s been in college (Nebraska). He’s done it all at a really high level for a long time.

“And the things that he says, the advice, he gives the perspective that he has on things where I might get real mad about something and I might be all bent out of shape about how something went that game and he just goes, ‘mad for, what? Is that going to do to help me? What did you what do you do to fix it? How do you fix the problem?’”

Those are the words Callahan is most likely to apply now, knowing everything he does over his first two seasons in Cincinnati. It’s not so much about what went wrong but making adjustments in games and move forward. It’s making adjustments week to week so your offense is playing its best and most meaningful football after Thanksgiving.

If you think father and son talk shop a lot, think again. Besides the obvious that they’re on separate sides of a very intense AFC North rivalry, father and son keep their conversations to life’s lessons, not strategy.

“He’s always been a huge, huge influence even till now, we don’t talk about each other’s teams very often, try to keep those things out of our conversations, but just general football, career advice, wisdom, all those things,” the younger Callahan said. “Huge, huge, huge role in my development, as a coach and helped me get to where I’m at and will continue to help me for all the years that I do this. I’m sure.”

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HOW A COACHING LINK TO PEYTON MANNING HAS HELPED BENGALS QB JOE BURROW

**BY BEN BABY
ESPN.COM
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CINCINNATI -- When quarterback Joe Burrow was looking for things to do last year during the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cincinnati Bengals offensive coordinator Brian Callahan had the perfect suggestion.

Watch tape of Peyton Manning.

Manning joined the Denver Broncos during Callahan's six seasons as an assistant with the franchise. While Burrow prepped for his rookie year from the basement of his childhood home, the 2020 top overall draft pick watched and studied Manning.

Callahan's time with Manning and Denver didn't just have a big impact on Cincinnati's 37-year-old offensive coordinator. That time has also indirectly played a key role in Burrow's development as he looks to turn the Bengals into a playoff contender.

"The biggest thing that makes it applicable is Joe is very much wired the same way," Callahan said of Sunday's trip to Denver to face the Broncos (4:05 p.m. ET, CBS). "And he can handle those things, and he wants to handle those things. It's not for every quarterback."

Callahan landed with the Broncos in 2010 as a quality control assistant. Manning, a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame and five-time NFL MVP, arrived in Denver for the 2012 season.

As Manning led the Broncos led to two Super Bowl appearances, including a victory over the Carolina Panthers in 2015, Callahan worked his way up the ranks, eventually becoming the team's quarterbacks coach. And for the young assistant, it was an education in what it took to play the position at the highest level.

"The 'no stone unturned' type of mentality that Peyton had that was required of all of us that were around him," Callahan said. "I thought that's been probably the biggest foundation of how to prepare a quarterback how to play in the NFL and what's required of the staff, what's required of the quarterback."

When Callahan had the opportunity to work with Burrow, those experiences proved beneficial. Of course, there was already a strong link between Burrow and Manning.

The Burrows and Mannings got to know each other well as Burrow participated in the Manning Passing Academy before his transcendent 2019 season at LSU. Before the draft, Manning and Burrow shared a conversation that lasted roughly 45 minutes. Burrow took copious notes that he referenced during his rookie season.

And when it came time to watch tape on how to operate as an NFL quarterback, Callahan pulled up Manning's highlights, helping Burrow work on things such as his vocal command at the line of scrimmage and his pre-snap mechanics. While he didn't copy and paste anything into his own game, Burrow certainly took notes.

"Every quarterback works on their own game in the offseason and likes to improve what they can do," Burrow said Wednesday. "But at the end of the day, they're going to play the way that they play and can take concepts and eyes and stuff like that and footwork."

Burrow is coming off one of his strongest periods of football ahead of the showdown against the Broncos (7-6). In the fourth quarter and overtime of the Bengals' 26-23 loss to the San Francisco 49ers, Burrow was a combined 11-of-15 passing for 210 yards and two touchdowns.

Bengals OC Brian Callahan says Peyton Manning's constant search for how to exploit a defense is a trait

the hall of famer shares with Joe Burrow. Andrew Hancock for ESPN

Bengals coach Zac Taylor, in explaining his regret of not leaning on Burrow more in the loss, gave Burrow some very heady praise.

"You can also put the ball in your quarterback's hands, because in 15 years we're going to look back and he's going to be a Hall of Fame-type of quarterback, and give him a chance to win us the game," Taylor said Monday.

Burrow is trying to match Manning and lead the Bengals (7-6) into the playoffs in his second NFL season. While Burrow doesn't check the notes from their 2020 conversation, the two have remained in touch.

"He texted me on Thanksgiving and all that good stuff," Burrow said Wednesday. "He has been good to me."

Even though it's early in Burrow's career, Callahan can see a lot of similarities between him and Manning. Both are always looking to find the answers to questions presented by defenses and exploit them. Each have raised the level of expectations for everyone around them and set a standard to be met by players and coaches, Callahan said.

And in a decade or so, maybe current Cincinnati coaches are pulling up Burrow film to show their young, aspiring quarterbacks, much like Callahan has done for Burrow with Manning.

"They are very much built the same," Callahan said. "And hopefully when we look up in 15 years, he's had the same type of career and the same accolades are dumped all over him."

###

BENGALS HEAD COACH ZAC TAYLOR HANDS OFF PLAY-CALLING DUTIES TO BRIAN CALLAHAN ... FOR A DAY

**BY JAY MORRISON
THE ATHLETIC
JANUARY 25, 2020**

MOBILE, Ala. — Bengals head coach Zac Taylor and offensive coordinator Brian Callahan have a unique Saturday routine that helps them prepare for the game the following day.

They play fantasy football but with a twist.

Rather than drafting players, they're crafting ideas. Taylor will pick a recent NFL game and grab the game book, which includes all of the play-by-play data, and right before they have their final team meetings of the week Saturday night in the hotel, he and Callahan will role-play their way through the chosen game using down and distance and other situations to see what they would call if presented with the same variables.

"It's just a chance for us to work through the game plan we have for that week," Callahan said of their Saturday night in-season ritual. "We'll try to look at a game that might be the style of game and similar to how we're going to have to play that next day. If you're playing a really good defense, well let's pick a game with a really good defense because you tend to get into more third downs and see more third-and-longs. You're punting the ball more and it's a field possession game, and all these things start to marinate throughout the week and when it comes to Sunday, you've talked about a lot of those things before they happen, and it's easy when they come up. You're ready for it."

Saturday afternoon in Mobile, Ala., they added another element to their brand of fantasy football, skipping the role-playing and instead employing role reversal as Taylor handed Callahan the play-calling

duties for the Senior Bowl at Ladd-Peebles Stadium.

Taylor explained the thought process behind the decision Thursday afternoon during a break between meetings and practice.

"I thought it would be good for Brian," he said. "And at the same, I've been interviewing (assistant coaches) a lot, so Brian really formulated the game plan with the rest of the offensive staff. He's got total ownership. I decided to just let him take it and run with it."

The other part of the equation is that allowing Callahan to create the game plan and call plays freed Taylor to be more involved in the process of evaluating players, which was the No. 1 priority for the coaching staff this week.

"I've got to really pay attention to these defensive prospects as well as the offensive guys," Taylor said. "So for me to have all my time and attention over there on the offense, calling plays and deciding what schemes we're going to run isn't the best way to spend my time. I need to be more involved with these defensive guys because there's a good chance there's going to be a heavy emphasis on them for us in the draft."

Callahan's play calling got off to a great start as the South offense won the coin toss, elected to receive and went 65 yards in seven plays to take a 7-0 lead after a 16-yard touchdown pass from Oregon quarterback Justin Herbert to Florida running back Lamical Perine.

But the South wouldn't reach the end zone again until there was 6:08 remaining as the North, coached by the Lions, cruised to a 34-17 victory.

"Procedurally, it was good," Callahan said. "It was fun to call plays. The pass protection was a little shaky from time to time, so we had to make some adjustments and make sure we helped the edges, but it was a lot of fun."

Saturday was just the second time Callahan has called plays since he became an NFL coach in 2010. The other was in the fourth preseason game in 2018, when Raiders coach Jon Gruden gave Callahan the opportunity for many of the reasons Taylor did in the Senior Bowl.

The outcome of the game had little meaning and Gruden had other, more pressing things to do.

"It's kind of a common practice in that fourth preseason game because the play caller is usually the coordinator and in most cases, the coordinator is getting ready for the opening-day opponent," Callahan said. "In Oakland, we kind of split the team. The starting guys that weren't going to play in the fourth preseason game were getting a couple extra days to work on Week 1, so me and three other guys coached the rest of the team through that game, put the game plan in, installed it, taught it."

"For Jon to allow me as a younger staff member and the quarterback coach to call a game meant a lot. Those guys are competing for jobs and they're trying to make teams. That wasn't lost on me. It was important. It's not important in the grand scheme of it's not going to go on my record and it's not going to be anything that anybody looks at or even remembers that I called that game. But it was important for me to do a good job for those guys and put them in position to have success. I didn't take it lightly. And I don't think you get better at calling plays unless you call plays."

In that first experience, Callahan called a win as the Raiders beat the Seahawks 30-19. But that wasn't the only difference between that experience and the Senior Bowl.

Taylor informed Callahan he would call the plays even before the staff left for Mobile. Because of the nature of the event, an exhibition all-star game, Callahan didn't have to go heavy into the scheme. But the dynamics of the Senior Bowl also created some extra work as Callahan

had to change all of the terminologies.

“He had to do that because these guys are going to scatter and go play for a lot of different teams,” Taylor said. “So there were a lot of things that we tweaked so that players didn’t have our information and walk away from the game with if they took good notes. As we were getting on the plane to come down here, I’m looking at the call sheet and some of the words I didn’t even know because he had changed everything.”

The biggest hurdle Callahan faced in the Senior Bowl was a trainwreck of an offensive line. The North registered eight sacks against the trio of South quarterbacks — Herbert, Oklahoma’s Jalen Hurts and Colorado’s Steven Montez — and added several more pressures, two of which led to interceptions.

The South lost two offensive linemen to injuries during the game and four others never suited up. Oregon’s Calvin Throckmorton was a late addition, arriving in Mobile late Tuesday night after the first practice.

Throckmorton also was a late addition during a humorous scenario late in Saturday’s game. The South had recovered a North fumble two plays after a missed field goal, and when the South’s offense took the field, it had only four offensive linemen.

That’s because Throckmorton was doing an interview on the sideline with former Bengals offensive lineman Dave Lapham for bengals.com, and neither realized there had been a turnover and Throckmorton needed to be on the field.

“I thought I heard someone yelling, but we had our backs to the field and had no idea,” Lapham said. “Brian came over to me after that and said, ‘We’re down to five linemen. Do you think you can play?’”

“We were a snap away from a tight end having to play tackle,” Taylor said.

While talking Friday night about his opportunity to call plays, Callahan mentioned how it would be a watered-down version of the offense because he wouldn’t need to make any scheme adjustments. But he found himself doing exactly that because of all the injuries and the linemen’s inability to block the North’s edge rushers.

“We ran it a lot more than we’d like to in an all-star game, but we’re trying to help those guys so we could at least have a chance to get something,” he said. “We couldn’t push the ball down the field much. We had a hard time holding on to it and we had to help the edges some, too, so we had to adjust in that manner.”

Another unusual element to Callahan’s day as a play caller was just a few snaps after the Throckmorton situation.

With the South trailing 31-10 and only a few minutes remaining, Tennessee wide receiver Jauan Jennings made a request for a specific route. Callahan told him he would call it, but then he had to pull Jennings out of the huddle to get different personnel in.

Callahan sent Jennings — and his requested call — back in one play later, and the wide receiver caught an 18-yard touchdown pass from Hurts.

“We had some challenges today, but I enjoyed the process,” Callahan said. “It was good experience.”

###

GM RAN CARTHON MOTIVATED TO TURN TITANS AROUND, AND PROVE OWNERSHIP RIGHT

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
FEBRUARY 29, 2024**

INDIANAPOLIS – Ran Carthon just received a promotion, with a bigger title and, contractually, more control.

As Executive Vice President/General Manager of the Titans, Carthon has a new head coach in Brian Callahan that he's fired up about, and as he looks ahead, he has some big ways – a premium draft pick and plenty of cap room – to improve the football team he's in charge of rebuilding.

He's both flattered, and motivated.

"You can't ask for a bigger honor to be bestowed upon you than for an owner to put their trust in you," Carthon said from the NFL Combine. "I want to prove Miss Amy right. I know how much this means to Miss Amy, what this organization means to her and the family. So yeah, I want to prove her right.

"My No.1 thing is to always give this city and this state something to be proud of, and that's how I approach every day. Even though contractually I have roster control and these things, Cally and I are still going to make every decision together. Even in the moments that we disagree, we are going to find a way to come to the best resolution because it is not just solely about me, it is not solely about him. It is about making the best decision for the organization, and that's what we're going to do."

Carthon, Callahan and the Titans have plenty of work to do, of course.

On the heels of the team's 6-11 season, Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk decided to part ways with coach Mike Vrabel.

There's been plenty of speculation that the decision was about more than just the results, but the results were reason enough. After all, the franchise hasn't won a playoff game since the 2019 season, and teams in 2020 and 2021 went one-and-done in the playoffs, quickly quashing bigger expectations. The Titans lost seven straight games to close out the 2022 season, blowing a big lead in the AFC South in the final month of that season, to finish 7-10. The franchise has lost 18 of its past 24 games over the past two seasons while being riddled by injuries, and plagued by insufficient offenses. The magic Vrabel used to win close games earlier in his regime vanished somewhat in 2023, when the team lost seven one-score games.

Now, Carthon has a big role in helping to get things back on track. Last month, Carthon's duties expanded to include all areas that impact the football team, including roster control, team activities and personnel decisions including draft and free agency acquisitions, oversight of Callahan and his coaching staff, and scouting.

Callahan, hired from a big group of candidates, said working with Carthon in his first month on the job has been "incredible."

"As you guys know, Ran's a relationship builder," Callahan said of Carthon. "It's kind of his superpower, I like to say. But us being on the same page, if you're on the same page with the front office and the coaching staff, you can really do a great job finding the right people and right players to fit your team when everyone's looking for the same thing. And so that part's been really fun. I enjoy being around Ran every day. And Chad Brinker too. Between me, Ran, Chad and Anthony Robinson, we probably are in and out of each other's office probably 10, 12 times a day. I mean, we're always talking, going back and forth. But it's been a really, really fun partnership to build and relationship to start to grow with. It's been a blast."

Carthon is excited about it, too, of course.

But, as Carthon shared the Indianapolis Convention Center hallways with Callahan, and not Vrabel, here at the combine, he was also completely prepared to answer questions about his previous partnership with the franchise's former head coach.

While spreading optimism about what's ahead with Callahan, Carthon, when asked, also cleared up a few things about his relationship with Vrabel then, and now.

And, he said he feels some responsibility for things working out like they did, with Vrabel out of a job.

There are plenty of theories about how things unfolded inside the walls of Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park as it relates to decision-making in the last year, of course.

NFL Network analyst Charles Davis provided this one in an interview with TennesseeTitans.com:

"When you're the GM, and you have a coach like Mike Vrabel, you are trying to work in tandem, in concert, with somebody like that, but Mike Vrabel has a presence, he's a force of nature, and he's not even trying to be – it's just who he is," Davis said. "And that force of nature (now) not being there gives Ran Carthon a chance, maybe his voice will be quote/unquote heard, not that it wasn't, but people will get to look at him with new eyes.

"It's just how it works – Mike was the established guy, and Ran was the new guy. Ran wants to be collaborative, and now he'll have a chance to do that with Brian."

Carthon said he and Vrabel did work together through issues, after he arrived in Tennessee, from San Francisco, following Vrabel's fifth season with the team.

While they didn't see eye to eye on everything, they worked things out.

A part of Carthon regrets not publicly clearing some misconceptions up about their relationship earlier, and he said that's a lesson learned.

"Mike deferred to me sometimes (on decisions), and I deferred to him," Carthon said. "There were guys that I didn't have exposures to that had been with the team, that I said: 'Hey Mike, you spent more time with this guy, and you know him a little bit better than I do, so I'm going to defer to you.' I did defer to him sometimes, but that's part of being in a partnership. But he deferred to me as well. It's a two-way street.

"People made so much about he and I's relationship that was completely false. At least from my vantage point, we never had an argument, we never really had much disagreements on players."

In fact, Carthon said he's remained in touch with Vrabel even after his departure. The two have wished each other well in their own endeavors since.

Carthon said his 16-year-old daughter sees a photo of herself – with Vrabel – every time she picks up her phone.

"Mike and I have texted since, and he congratulated me when we hired Cally," Carthon said. "If you look at my daughter's screensaver on her phone, it's her and coach Vrabel, because they had a really close relationship. If there was any true beef between us, it wouldn't happen that way. Even when we let (Mike) go, my daughter reached out to him, and he texted her back. And they have a good relationship. ... There's no real animosity (with us) or anything like that."

"I have so much respect for Mike and what he has done, and what he has meant to this game. Of course, you wanted it to work out, and I feel responsible for why it didn't, and you have to. But with where we are with Cally, it's onward and upward."

Yes, onward and upward.

On the final day of February, the Titans are less than two weeks away from the start of free agency, with money to spend. The Titans rank among the top teams in the NFL in cap room.

The Titans have the seventh overall pick in the first round of the draft, with eight picks total.

While questions surround the future of running back Derrick Henry, there are reasons to be optimistic about the team's young quarterback, Will Levis, who just completed his rookie season.

In many ways, it's a fresh, new start for Carthon.

He has high hopes, and yes, plenty of motivation.

"Our long-term goal," Carthon said, "is to build this football team into a consistent winner."

###

HOW TITANS GM RAN CARTHON GOT HIS DREAM JOB

*BY TURRON DAVENPORT
ESPN
SEPTEMBER 4, 2023*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- As Ran Carthon was being introduced as Tennessee Titans general manager in January, his mind flashed back to 2003.

The thought brought a smile to his face. Carthon was a senior at Florida when his then-girlfriend, Heaven, asked him what he wanted to do for a living.

"I told her, 'One day I want to be a GM of an NFL football team,'" Carthon said. "She later told me that she almost stopped dating me because she never met somebody that lived in la-la land."

Carthon thanked myriad people during his speech before he smiled at Heaven, who's now his wife, and said "Honey, today that dream comes true."

Carthon became the fifth GM of the Titans since the franchise moved to Nashville in 1997, achieving a goal dating back to childhood. It was an arduous process. He employed unconventional methods to get his foot in the door after spending 2004 to 2006 as a running back with the Indianapolis Colts before finishing the second half of his third and final season with the Detroit Lions.

"He can connect with anyone," Houston Texans coach DeMeco Ryans said of Carthon, whom he worked with in San Francisco. "Everybody is Ran's best friend. He's ... very relatable, very personable."

CARTHON'S PASSION FOR scouting started in 1995, when he

was 14 years old and studying draft previews. When draft day came, he and his younger brother would record the all-day event on their VCR. Carthon watched each selection, rewinding and scribbling the picks on his "little legal pad."

That passion only grew in Indianapolis.

Future Hall of Famers like quarterback Peyton Manning and running back Edgerrin James were pivotal for his development on and off the field. He had to be ready for Manning's famous "Omaha" calls at the line of scrimmage, constant audibling and knowing everyone's job on any given play.

"You can't just know your spot when playing with a guy like that," Carthon said. "You have to know what everybody is doing."

"It opens up your eyes from the vantage point of being a talent evaluator, being able to understand who is making the mistake, who is right, who is wrong."

Even as a player, he scoured advanced scouting reports. James was impressed with the way Carthon read every report and evaluated film, calling his former teammate "a student of the game."

"Ran, he was going a little bit deeper," James said. "He's studying the sheets and really knew everything when he didn't have to."

Carthon was first exposed to the NFL personnel world when he was in college. The New York Jets staff visited Florida for pro days, and his father, Maurice -- a former NFL fullback -- was a member of the Jets' coaching staff. They ended up putting Ran to work as he timed the 40-yard dash and tabulated results. He also would meet with the coaches and watch film.

"That was my introduction to the business side of it and not just be a fan of the draft," Carthon said.

As Carthon's playing career was ending, he knew he had to create

connections that would help him take steps toward becoming a GM -- including taking workouts to network to set -- but little did he know, it would be the key to his future.

THE WORKOUT CARTHON took with the Atlanta Falcons might have been the most valuable. He was able to establish a relationship with then-general manager Thomas Dimitroff, and that led to a scouting job in 2008.

He spent four seasons attending games, practice sessions and studying prospects' tapes.

Carthon's next job was director of player personnel with the Rams from 2012 to 2016. He was still a scout, but he was also in charge of pulling together reports from other scouts and coaches to present to the general manager and head coach.

The most pivotal move came in 2017 after he joined the San Francisco 49ers as director of pro personnel. Carthon was required to have extensive knowledge of all 32 NFL rosters.

"I came from a good situation in San Francisco," Carthon said. "It was a really great building with a lot of strong relationships there."

Carthon went on to become the director of player personnel in 2021, a move that put him on track to become a GM.

"Ran's had a tremendous amount of experience in a variety of roles," 49ers general manager John Lynch said. "He did a tremendous job in our pro department. Then we wanted him involved in more than just the pro department because he was worthy of that. So Ran got involved in our college process."

The 49ers selected former Louisiana running back Elijah Mitchell in the sixth round of the 2021 draft, in part, because Carthon pushed for it. The football research and development manager, Demetrius Washington, came to Carthon saying his numbers were telling him Mitchell was the

best outside zone running back in the draft, but he wanted Carthon to watch the game film.

Carthon agreed with Washington, and they took their findings to 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan. DeMeco Ryans, who was the defensive coordinator at the time, agreed as well, and the 49ers selected Mitchell instead of a linebacker they originally focused on selecting.

Injuries to running backs Raheem Mostert and Jeff Wilson Jr. thrust Mitchell into duty in 2021, where he rushed for 963 yards and five touchdowns as a rookie in 11 games and helped push the 49ers to the NFC Championship Game.

San Francisco's success in the draft and free agency led to a Super Bowl appearance in 2019 and back-to-back NFC Championship Game appearances in 2021 and 2022. The 49ers' winning ways landed Carthon in the conversation for multiple general manager roles.

CARTHON INTERVIEWED FOR the general manager position with the Chicago Bears, New York Giants and Pittsburgh Steelers in 2022.

The opportunity to become the Titans' general manager may not have been possible if Carthon didn't attend The NFL Front Office Accelerator program in December. The program is designed to enhance opportunities for diverse front office prospects to strengthen relationships with club ownership and executives.

"The goal of our accelerator program is to foster relationships between owners and potential candidates for front office positions," said Steelers president Art Rooney II, chairman of the NFL Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. "Both the clubs and the accelerator participants understand the importance of the exposure, professional development and networking opportunities."

The accelerator program put candidates like Carthon in a meet-

and-greet setting with NFL team leadership groups.

"I am extremely appreciative to commissioner [Roger] Goodell, [NFL chief diversity and inclusion officer] Jonathan Beane and all those beautiful people at the league office there that spearheaded the program," Carthon said.

"It works. I'm here in part because of it, so it works."

During the program, Carthon was encouraged to meet with the Titans leadership panel that included controlling owner Amy Adams-Strunk, president/CEO Burk Nihill and chief external and league affairs officer Adolpho Birch III.

"What impressed me the most was his growth mindset and clear vision," Adams-Strunk said of Carthon.

Adams-Strunk was also struck by Carthon's "ability to connect" with the Titans' leadership group.

Developing relationships has always been one of Carthon's strengths, going all the way back to his time in Gainesville, Florida, where he was nicknamed, "The Mayor."

"He gets to know people in a really authentic way," Lynch said. "I can't tell you how many times I was like, 'Ran, I need you to go find this out.' He'd always deliver because people connect with Ran."

When Carthon landed his first scouting job, there were three Black general managers (Ozzie Newsome, Baltimore Ravens; Rick Smith, Texans; Jerry Reese, Giants) in NFL history.

Now he's one of eight in the NFL.

"There have been plenty of men that have come before me that have laid this foundation," Carthon said. "It is paramount in my mind to do the work and be successful in order to leave the door open for other young Black men that are coming behind me."

CARTHON WAS TESTED immediately in his new role. The Titans entered the offseason with multiple holes to fill -- including retooling the offensive line, adding playmakers to an anemic offense and replacing free agents that went on to other teams -- with limited cap space.

Under Carthon's leadership, the Titans added low-cost starters for a franchise with approximately \$14.4 million left of a possible \$224.8 million salary cap for 2023.

"He's a guy that's motivated for the right reasons to do what he does best, evaluate football players," Miami Dolphins coach Mike McDaniel said of Carthon, who he knows from his days as 49ers offensive coordinator. "He has a great scope of what it takes for a team to win and all the different variables that are encompassed in that."

Carthon opened the line of communication with defensive tackle Jeffery Simmons' agent, Paul DeRousselle, about a contract extension soon after he got the job. Simmons had already made it clear after the 2022 season finale that he wanted a new deal to stay with the Titans and didn't want to play on the franchise tag.

"When I first met Ran, he told me I would be here in Tennessee," Simmons said. "I would say Ran kept his word."

The two parties kept the communication going through free agency and brokered a deal that made Simmons the highest-paid player at his position at the time with a four-year, \$96 million extension through the 2027 season.

"[Negotiations were] collaborative and never combative," DeRousselle said. "We never got away from the

purpose. We didn't negotiate through the media. We just did good, clean business."

Then the focus turned to the draft in April where the Titans held the No. 11 pick. Carthon said he woke up at 3 a.m. and struggled to go back to sleep one of the nights leading up to the draft because he wondered who would be there when the Titans were on the clock.

That No. 11 pick ended up being Northwestern offensive lineman Peter Skoronski, a player they thought would be gone.

Carthon was excited when they were put on the clock. He likened the moment to when a player scores their first touchdown and does a dance to celebrate before the coach tells him to act like he's been there before.

"I told Ran, you never forget your first [pick]," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said.

The Titans still needed to address the wide receiver position after finishing 30th in receiving yards last season. Carthon decided to play the long game, trusting his belief an option would open as teams continued to churn their rosters.

Then the Arizona Cardinals released two-time All-Pro receiver DeAndre Hopkins in late May. Tennessee moved in quickly by hosting Hopkins on his first free agent visit in June. As Hopkins waited to make his decision, Carthon had to free up cash.

Five-time captain Kevin Byard was asked to take a pay cut earlier in the offseason but he refused. Carthon and the Titans went back to Byard in July about restructuring his deal.

This time it was a success.

The Titans were able to sign Hopkins to a two-year deal worth \$26 million a little over a month after they first brought him to Nashville.

Carthon breathed a sigh of relief before speaking to the media on Day 1 of training camp. He called the process of signing Hopkins "a long date."

The ever evolving roster construction process came to an end as the Titans released their initial 53-man roster. There's still more work to be done but after seven months into the job, Carthon is comfortable with the group he has in place.

"I'm in a lucky spot to come into a place that's pretty much established and has a culture." Carthon said. "Myself, [assistant general managers] Chad [Brinker] and [Anthony Robinson], we get to come in and add our flavor, bring it all together. It's a collaborative effort."

###

**RAN CARTHON SHARES
WHAT HE'S THINKING
ABOUT FUTURE
FOOTBALL PLANS AND
THE MUSIC CITY**

**BY JULIE BROWN PATTON
CITY LIFESTYLE
MAY 30, 2023**

Ran Carthon became the Tennessee Titan franchise's 14th general manager in January.

Previously, he served for two seasons as director of player personnel with the 49ers after handling five seasons as the director of pro personnel in San Francisco.

Ran, 42, was one of seven candidates to interview for the position with the Titans. "I want us to build the best team possible – a competitive, sound football team that Nashville and other surrounding areas are proud of," he says.

"We're excited to add Ran to our organization," Titans Controlling Owner Amy Adams Strunk states. "He brings a variety of valuable experiences to our team. I was impressed with his natural leadership qualities and ability to connect with people. With talent evaluation being critical to this role, the roster they've built in San Francisco stands out. He played an important role there constructing one of our league's best teams."

Ran's father, Maurice, also played in the NFL with the New York Giants and Indianapolis Colts.

Ran himself played running back for University of Florida and signed as an undrafted free agent with the Indianapolis Colts in 2004. He played for three NFL seasons with the Colts and Detroit Lions.

This new Titans' leader says he doesn't miss playing as much as he misses locker room camaraderie. "In my new role, I have to leave the locker room more to the guys and let it be their personal space."

So far, he says one of the toughest parts of his new job is being away from his family. "In terms of the job, I've been doing this for a while, but I knew things would come up that I had no experience with. In those cases, you lean on your mentors and people who've been there."

Football executives and former players Martin Mayhew and John Lynch Jr. are a couple of the advisers with whom Ran says he's fortunately collaborated.

Regarding Ran's main considerations heading into the NFL draft as a first-year general manager, he says, "The cool thing about this experience was having a partner in Mike Vrabel. He's done it all before. Of course, there was pressure because this was my first time facilitating an NFL Draft as a general manager, but I had a lot of experience around me to lean on and bounce ideas off of."

We also had to just trust our board, and not allow outside circumstances dictate our plan. I think we did that well."

Ran says he's looking forward to exploring Nashville. "I've found a few places I already frequent, so I'm excited to keep growing that list."

Regarding hobbies, Ran quips, "If you ask my wife, she'll tell you I have no hobbies. I have no life outside of my family and football. I do like music, though. I'm not musically inclined myself, but I appreciate it."

He says he relishes being around creators, so when he goes to Miami in the summers, he joins studio artists to just watch them create their music. "I'm looking for a studio in Nashville to engage with and spend time drawing inspiration from artists and musicians," he announces.

Ran's charitable interests lie in taking action on things that touch his heart. "I always want to lend a

hand and show up for things that make an impact," he adds.

A good example of Ran's idea of support is the "Fatherhood Ticket Program" he created in Atlanta, which gives two tickets and two sideline passes to a deserving father.

"Usually kids write-in and tell us why their dad deserves it. We hear those stories about single parent households where dad wasn't really involved, but you rarely hear the stories about where dad was involved and played a big role. It's a great way to celebrate the men who are stepping up to fill such an important role in a kid's life. I definitely want to bring the Fatherhood Ticket Program to Nashville. I think the community will love it," he says.

Regarding how his family's brood is getting acclimated, he says, "Our daughter is going off to college this year. I also have an assistant general manager in my house. My oldest son, at 6 years old, critiques every signing we do and every draft pick. My kids are amazing. I love spending time with them. Our house is always busy, and no one is short on opinions."

He shares that he met his wife, Heaven, during college in a Haitian-Creole class.

Ran's Father's Day tradition? "It's the best. I like to just chill out for the day. The kids will bring me breakfast and then I just have a relaxing day for myself."

###

FROM THE SENIOR BOWL: TITANS GM RAN CARTHON LIVING HIS CHILDHOOD DREAM WHILE KEEPING HIS FOCUS ON THE "MAIN THING"

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 31, 2023**

MOBILE, Ala. – Way back in middle school, Ran Carthon did his homework leading up to NFL drafts.

The son of an NFL player, Carthon used to go to the local convenience stores and buy all the magazines – Athlon Sports, Street & Smith, etc. He researched the prospects, and the teams.

And then on draft nights, he'd get out a legal pad and try to predict the NFL landing spots for players.

"I didn't know what I was doing at the time," a smiling Carthon said from the Senior Bowl on Tuesday. "I didn't realize there was a career based on this when I was doing it. Back then, it was just something I liked doing. I think I recorded every draft from '95 or '96 up until the year I came out in '04."

Later, after his own college and NFL playing career, Carthon began taking things even more seriously. When he went back to the University of Florida to get his degree, he got his big break.

He credits former Gators coach Urban Meyer for giving him a chance to help out with the staff, and after one Florida Pro Day, he met with some NFL scouts, and he began to make connections.

All of that helped lead Carthon to where he is today – general manager of the Tennessee Titans.

On Tuesday, Carthon was on hand for his first Senior Bowl as a GM.

The Titans hire Carthon, who spent the previous six seasons with the 49ers and prior to that worked with

the Rams and Falcons, two weeks ago.

His world has been a whirlwind since.

Here at the Mobile Convention Center and at Hancock Whitney Stadium on the campus at the University of South Alabama, it's included a lot of handshakes and hugs from those wishing him congratulations.

"I think it goes back to the moment the news broke," Carthon said. "From the moment the news broke to the time I boarded my flight back to San Jose – a matter of maybe an hour-and-a-half – when I got on the plane, I had 600 text messages. It's just a testament to the relationships I've build around the league. Everyone knows my nature is to be low-key, off the grid. One of my buddies from another team told me: Those days are over. But I know it's coming from a good place. People are generally happy for me and happy for me to get this opportunity and it's been coming from guys I look up to in the industry to guys I have mentored.

"It has been great, but you'll hear me say constantly: I just want to keep the main thing the main thing. So being out here on the football field, being around talent, being around the staff, that is getting back to the main thing for me."

Carthon, who spent the previous two seasons as Director of Player Personnel for the 49ers, had traveled to Mobile in the past to scout players.

On Tuesday, Carthon said he feels like he's made great progress in getting more familiar and comfortable, and on the same page, with those he's now working with, from head coach Mike Vrabel and members of the team's scouting staff, who also made the trip here from Nashville.

He's also learning the prospects better as well.

So, what's Carthon looking for in future Titans?

"From a physical attributes standpoint, you want guys that are tough and physical," Carthon said. "But more than anything you want guys that love football. You want guys who are passionate about it, that football is life, and that is what they live for – they live to play this game.

"I'll give you an example: Fred Warner, who is one of the elite players in our league, he is never not in the building. And even after he got paid, he is never not in the (49ers) building. We have guys like that who are currently on our team. We just want to add more guys like that."

Carthon, who has spent time with prospects in interviews, is quick to point out he's just part of the team, despite his big title.

He's made that clear at Saint Thomas Sports Park from the day controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk hired him to replace Jon Robinson.

"One of the young guys in the office said to me: I'm excited to work for you," Carthon said. "And I stopped him and said, 'No, work with.' We are in this together. I am in this position, yes, and I embrace it. But this is a collective thing. I don't have all the answers and I am not going to always be right just because of the title I have. It is going to be collaborative – I want to hear what the scouts have to say. They have the most exposure to (the players), so I want these guys to feel very much a part of it. We're going to be a partnership."

After this week's Senior Bowl, the Titans will continue the work leading up to April's NFL Draft. The NFL Combine in Indianapolis is a month away, and Pro Days are on the horizon.

The team has some tough decisions to make regarding current players, and new additions, in free agency.

Carthon wants to do his part to help take the Titans to the next level.

"It has been a good team here, a competitive team, a winning team," Carthon said. "I have been brought in to help elevate that and bring another component to it. So, I am here to partner with Mike and partner with Ms. Amy and work with these scouts and do our part in taking the Tennessee Titans to the next step."

###

TITANS' 1ST BLACK GM SAYS HE STANDS ON 'SHOULDERS OF GIANTS'

**BY TERESA M. WALKER
ASSOCIATED PRESS
JANUARY 20, 2023**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Ran Carthon looked up, pausing before answering a question his aunt warned would come.

He is the first Black general manager in the history of the Tennessee Titans, a franchise founded in 1960 as the then-Houston Oilers in the original American Football League.

“I understand I’m standing on the shoulders of giants, and there have been plenty of men that have come before me that have laid this foundation that allowed me to be in this spot,” Carthon said Friday at his introductory news conference.

Carthon, who turns 42 in February, has been too busy putting himself in this position and hadn’t had time to contemplate the history of the moment. Not after a whirlwind week of interviews, a wild-card playoff victory with the San Francisco 49ers and accepting his new job.

Becoming an NFL GM had been Carthon's only goal after he went from undrafted rookie running back out of Florida to a brief playing career before front-office jobs in Atlanta and with the Rams and the 49ers.

“It’s paramount in my mind to do the work and be successful to leave the door open for other Black men that are coming behind me because there are a lot of talented young Black men who can do the job,” Carthon said. “They just need the opportunity.”

The Titans made Carthon the sixth person of color among the past eight GMs hired, and he now is the NFL's eighth Black general manager and ninth person of color overall.

The NFL has held two accelerator programs since late May to promote more minority candidates for front-office jobs. Carthon said he met Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk and Burke Nihill, the team's president and CEO, during the owners' winter meetings in December.

For Strunk, the hiring moved quickly starting Jan. 12. The Titans interviewed two internal candidates, and Arizona hired their director of player personnel, Monti Ossenfort, on Monday.

Carthon interviewed with the Titans on Jan. 13 in Nashville, flew back for the 49ers' wild-card win over Seattle, then returned to Nashville for a second interview Tuesday. He learned he was being offered the job while at the airport.

He replaces Jon Robinson, fired Dec. 6 in his seventh season in the midst of what wound up a seven-game skid as Tennessee finished 7-10. The Titans missed a third straight AFC South title with a loss in the regular season finale in Jacksonville.

Strunk said Carthon stood out as the clear choice with his background as a former player who grew up around the game. Carthon's father, Maurice, not only played in the NFL but also coached with seven different teams.

The Titans also liked Carthon's record of success evaluating talent as a pro scout for the Atlanta Falcons starting in 2008, as director of pro personnel for the Rams between 2012 and 2016 and his last six seasons with the 49ers, the last two as director of player personnel.

“We called as many potential references as we could find to learn more about Ran as a person, talent evaluator and leader,” Strunk said. “Whether current and former colleagues, the scouting community, the former teammates, the feedback was unanimous. Ran is exceptional.”

Carthon, who also interviewed last year for general manager jobs with Chicago and the New York Giants, said his vision for the franchise includes lifting trophies and holding parades in Nashville. Strunk said she has those same high expectations despite how this last season ended.

“We have some big questions to answer offseason, but I’m excited for what the future brings,” she said.

The Titans are projected to be \$23.3 million over the 2023 salary cap by Spotrac.com. Both quarterback Ryan Tannehill and two-time NFL rushing champ Derrick Henry, who finished second in the league in rushing in 2022, are going into the final seasons of their current contracts.

Two-time Pro Bowl defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons has made clear he wants an extension. The Titans also hold the No. 11 overall pick in the April draft.

Carthon and coach Mike Vrabel, 48-34 in his five seasons in Tennessee, both emphasized their plans to collaborate on roster building down to position coaches working with scouts to identify talent.

“We got a lot of work to do,” Vrabel said. “We’re excited to get to work on that.”

###

**AFTER A GRAND
ENTRANCE, NEW TITANS
GM RAN CARTHON
READY TO GET TO WORK**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 19, 2023**

NASHVILLE — Ran Carthon made a memorable entrance on his first day on the job.

After being named general manager of the Titans earlier in the week, Carthon received a rousing, celebratory welcome to Saint Thomas Sports Park when he walked through the doors on Thursday afternoon.

"I've never had a party this big," Carthon said as he flashed a big smile.

Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk then officially introduced Carthon, formerly director of player personnel with the San Francisco 49ers, to employees of the team.

Carthon, accompanied by his wife and children, seemed to be taken by surprise by the gathering, as members of the organization filled the lobby and lined the staircases of the recently renovated MetroCenter facility.

Carthon then addressed the crowd, and said he's ready to get to work.

"We are all here, rowing in the same direction," Carthon said, "and we all want to hoist the Lombardi (Trophy) one day. All of us play a part in that. So, I am here to do the work. I am willing to do the work. And I look forward to working with everybody."

Strunk, who led interviews with seven candidates since the end of the 2022 season, informed Carthon earlier this week he'd been chosen as the team's next GM.

"How do you feel about being the Titans general manager?," Strunk asked Carthon when delivering the

news. "Well, we'd love to have you."

Carlton flew to California after his second interview in Nashville, and he returned with his family on Thursday.

After making a grand entrance, Carthon made the rounds in the building, going from the locker room to the team's indoor practice facility to the C.O. Brocato Draft room to his new office.

"The welcome, walking in," Carthon said. "It just makes everything that I thought when I met (for the interview) real, and it confirms this is a great place, and we're going to do some great things together here. I am excited."

Carthon will be introduced to Nashville media at his introductory press conference at noon Friday at STSP.

###

**PERSEVERANCE PAYS
OFF: TITANS DB SHYHEIM
CARTER SHED TEARS OF
JOY AFTER MAKING HIS
LONG-AWAITED NFL
DEBUT**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
OCTOBER 5, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Shyheim Carter admits his emotions got the best of him on Sunday.

But who could blame him?

After four teams, after three seasons on and off practice squads, and after being waived eight times in his career, the Titans defensive back made his NFL debut on Sunday at Nissan Stadium against the Bengals.

Carter took a moment to let it soak in.

"A few tears were shed," Carter said with a smile. "It was so surreal. ... Honestly, just watching God work, seeing Him unfold everything. It was able to bring me tears of joy and put a big smile on my face."

Carter played 11 snaps at safety against the Bengals, and 11 more on special teams, where he was credited with a tackle.

Carter is currently a member of the team's practice squad, but he was a gameday elevation for the Cincinnati game.

Carter initially joined the NFL in 2020 as an undrafted free agent with the New York Jets. He's spent time on practice squads with the Jets, Falcons, Texans and Titans over the past four seasons. He's been with the Titans since the end of the 2021 season, but he's been on and off the practice squad during that stretch.

Carter never gave up, which is why his coaches and teammates were so happy for him on Sunday.

"All the credit goes to him, the time and perseverance," Titans safeties coach Scott Booker said of Carter.

"He's a guy who is always very positive in meetings, a professional as far as coming and working and learning multiple positions. Myself, his teammates, everybody was really happy to see him out there. It was a very big deal for him, personally, to be out there, and it was great to see as his coach."

Titans cornerback Sean Murphy-Bunting said he talked to Carter about his accomplishment before the game. Carter was officially elevated on Saturday, and he reverted to the practice squad after the game.

"I didn't realize the journey he went through," Murphy-Bunting said. "He showed me all the teams (he's been with). ... I felt excited for him, because I know how hard he works day in and day out. ... He shows up to work like he's starting every day. It's definitely a great feeling, a grateful feeling."

Carter was a star in both high school and college.

At Kentwood (La.) High School, where he played both quarterback and cornerback, he was named class 1A Offensive MVP by the Louisiana Sports Writers Association and the Louisiana Football Coaches Association in 2014 and 2015. As a senior, recorded 57 tackles and five interceptions, while adding 2,443 passing yards, 1,648 rushing yards and 30 total touchdowns on offense.

In four seasons at the University of Alabama, Carter appeared in 50 games with 23 starts and tallied 101 tackles, six tackles for loss, three interceptions with two returned for touchdowns, 21 passes defended and two forced fumbles.

Prior to being signed by the Texans in 2021, after previous practice squad stints with the Jets and Falcons, Carter spent the spring working as a graduate assistant at Alabama under his former head coach, Nick Saban.

"I think Shyheim Carter would fit in probably one of the top two or three players on the team from a

knowledge standpoint," Saban said prior to Carter's last season at Alabama. "He can answer every question in a meeting about every position...I think that's what creates a lot of diversity for him as a player, to be able to play multiple positions because he's very smart and it means something to him."

Carter has proven that with the Titans.

After getting his first taste of regular season action on Sunday – before then his game action came in the preseason – Carter is as hungry as ever.

His plan: Keep working.

"I come in (every day) not knowing if I'm going to be elevated, if I'm going to be on the practice squad, or if I'm going to be released," Carter said. "I come in with the mindset that I'm going to be evaluated every day, in everything I do. I just keep my head down and work."

"It was a great experience (on Sunday), a great opportunity. For it to be my NFL debut, it was fun. ... I just want to do whatever I can to create a role, and keep going."

###

**EYE ON THE TITLE
LLOYD CUSHENBERRY III
KNOWN BY HIS PARENTS
AS A GENTLE GIANT
WHOSE DREAM IS
COMING TRUE**

WAFB.COM

JANUARY 12, 2020

CARVILLE, La. (WAFB) - One of the "big" reasons LSU has had such a prolific season offensively is the man in the middle of the line.

Center Lloyd Cushenberry III, a 6-foot-4, 315-pound junior from Carville, La. quarterbacks the unit that was named the best in college football this season.

So, your son's in the national championship game.

"It's a dream come true; it's just something we always imagined going through and it's coming true," said Lloyd Cushenberry II.

"He told me one day, 'Mom, that's going to be me one day,' and I said, 'Yeah and I'm going to be a proud mama,' and it's a dream that's came true. And I said, 'When you hit the field, remember, someone is looking at you, so do your best,'" added Debbie Cushenberry.

So, what kind of kid was he?

"Humble, quiet, very intelligent, didn't have to do no homework with him. He had his homework done," Debbie Cushenberry answered.

"One of the best, man. You couldn't ask for a better kid, man," Lloyd Cushenberry II noted.

Is he kind of a gentle giant?

"Yeah, yeah. That sums it up right there. He's a great kid, man. Staying humble all the way through and just, enjoying the ride, and having nothing but fun," Lloyd Cushenberry II pointed out.

"He loves the game and he takes it seriously. So, if he sees something not going right, he's going to correct

it. They all connect together. They're all humble guys, willing to work with each other, listen to each other. That's what makes a team," Debbie Cushenberry explained.

"Brotherhood thing - on and off the field," added Lloyd Cushenberry II.

"I see that he's a good coach with them. He has a lot of respect for them and they have a lot of respect for him. That's what makes a team - when your coaches are right connected with you," Debbie Cushenberry described.

The fact he snaps to a Heisman Trophy winner. He'll have that for the rest of his life.

"That was a blessing, man. For Joe [Burrow] to come ... that was just God-sent, man," said Lloyd Cushenberry II.

So, what did it mean to beat Alabama this year?

"Oh, it meant so good. I told my boy ... that's what, this summer I told him, 'I want you to win them all but go beat Alabama,'" Debbie Cushenberry replied.

How does it feel, Lloyd?

"Feel great," said Lloyd Cushenberry III. "On to the next one. On to the next one."

Kelly Orgeron joined by LSU, Clemson fans volunteering at food bank ahead of game

LSU players look relaxed, exude confidence during media day; practice in Saints indoor facility

"The day of the game, I had some co-workers who were Alabama fans and they come back saying, 'Alabama,' and I'd say, 'You've got to let me come back and say LSU,'" Debbie Cushenberry stated.

Those people you work with, you really think they're Alabama fans?

"No. I think they just do it to me," she answered.

"Yeah, it was our turn," Lloyd Cushenberry II added.

Lloyd Cushenberry III has started at center for LSU in 27 straight games.

###

TITANS TRUSTING IN CUSHENBERRY'S BRAINS, BRAWN AT CENTER

BY JOHN GLENNON
NASHVILLE POST
JUNE 11, 2024

Titans coach Brian Callahan spends the majority of his time bettering the team's offense.

Defensive coordinator Dennard Wilson focuses his attention on the other side of the ball.

But both men share the belief that when it comes to pressuring a quarterback, the middle of the pocket is the most critical of all battlegrounds.

"You can manage edge rushers," Callahan said. "You can help on edge rushers. But if the middle of your pocket gets pushed, there's not a lot of places for the quarterback to go."

Added Wilson: "When you dominate the offensive line through the [interior], there's no step-up lanes for the quarterback. And if there's no step-up lanes, if we go back to the corners being connected at the top of the route with no step-up lane, where is there for the quarterback to throw?"

Those comments are a clear reflection of the philosophy behind the Titans' offseason signing of center Lloyd Cushenberry, who will be asked to fortify a trench position that was all too often overrun in 2023.

Titans quarterback Will Levis was pressured on 45 percent of his throws last season, per Pro Football Focus, the second-highest rate among quarterbacks who played at least nine games.

Most of the problems stemmed from Tennessee's turnstile situation at left tackle. But the center of the line failed to hold all too often as well.

Former Titans starter Aaron Brewer, who stood 6-1 and weighed 295

pounds, was mobile but not particularly meaty — and as a result was on many occasions overwhelmed in pass protection. He surrendered the second-most sacks among league centers (six), allowed the second-most quarterback hits (seven) and the third-most pressures (34), per PFF.

Enter the 6-4, 315-pound Cushenberry, who allowed just one sack, four hits and 14 pressures in about the same amount of snaps while in Denver last season. His pass-blocking grade of 76.4 ranked third among centers who played at least 10 games, well above Brewer at 52.5.

"I've always believed in the firmness of the interior of the pocket," Callahan said. "Strong players tend to keep it that way, so there's a place for the quarterback to move and to run and to step up, when needed. That's a huge benefit. These guys inside on the other side of defense keep getting bigger and better and stronger and faster every year. You want people that can match that, and Lloyd can do all those things."

What the Titans have found so far in the offseason is that they admire Cushenberry's brains as well as his brawn.

Titans offensive line coach Bill Callahan began to understand that almost as soon as Cushenberry signed his four-year, \$50 million deal with Tennessee, ending a multi-team pursuit of the four-year veteran.

"The thing that strikes me about Lloyd is he's a guy who could have gone anywhere," Bill Callahan said. "But he wanted to be with a team that could improve his game, and he wants to be great. It really struck me that the game goes deeper than the wallet for him. He has a tremendous passion, curiosity and intellect that goes beyond anything. So he's great for our room, super for the team in terms of running the show up front."

Likewise, Cushenberry said the presence of Bill Callahan, who's

coached NFL offensive lines for 22 years, was a big plus for the Titans.

"That was a big reason [I signed]," Cushenberry said. "He's very detailed ... He has a whole encyclopedia of terms and things he teaches. So, it's a lot to have learned."

"I love going back and watching old film and just picking his brain sometimes. He does a great job because he remembers things as well. I remember in meetings, he pretty much told us a whole series of what happened in a game in 2009 with the Jets. It was amazing to hear."

The Titans have wasted no time in challenging Cushenberry this offseason.

That's because one area the team wants improvement, in addition to pass protection, is efficiency on the offensive line. Tennessee was flagged for 30 false starts last season, the second-highest figure in the league behind the New York Jets (31). In comparison, Brian Callahan's Cincinnati offense last year was whistled 13 times for false starts.

Part of the problem in Tennessee was that there were cadence and communication issues between Levis and Brewer — and between Brewer and his fellow linemen.

What better time to work on that than the offseason?

"We've been hammering [Cushenberry] every single day, and the whole offensive line, about how we're not going to hold back when it comes to cadences, and we're going to empty the bag and start using them all right now," Levis said. "We can't be the team we were last year with all the shooting-ourselves-in-the-foot penalties."

"So they've been doing a really good job with that, and obviously [Cushenberry] is leading that group. He has a lot of great experience and has a really good hold on our protection system. He's been great for me, and he's been great for

everyone else in the offense. I feel really comfortable with him when I get under center or when I'm in the gun with him."

It's possible, of course, that the bond between the two was strengthened in late April before a Predators playoff game, when Cushenberry assumed the center position on a Bridgestone Arena stage and snapped a sizable catfish — Nashville's unofficial good-luck charm — to Levis, sending the crowd into a frenzy.

"I didn't know we were going to do it until about 10 minutes before that," Cushenberry said. "So leading up to it, my heart was racing. In my head, I was just like, 'Get the snap to him.' I didn't want to mess that up in front of thousands of people."

Cushenberry executed the shotgun snap smoothly, the same way he's handled his first offseason.

###

**LLOYD CUSHENBERRY
EAGER TO LEARN FROM
BILL CALLAHAN TO
REBUILD TITANS
OFFENSIVE LINE**

**BY TERRY MCCORMICK
TITANINSIDER.COM
MARCH 14, 2024**

As the Tennessee Titans begin the process of rebuilding their offensive line, they know the culture, as well as the personnel, has to change on a unit that gave up 64 sacks in 2023.

The first move along that road to a rebuild was signing center Lloyd Cushenberry to a four-year deal on the first day of free agency.

Cushenberry, 26, comes over from the Denver Broncos to put a big body in the middle of the Titans offensive line. At 6-4, 315, Cushenberry replaces the undersized Aaron Brewer and gives the Titans three more inches of height, and more importantly, 40 pounds of man to play the center position.

Cushenberry was matter of fact when asked what attracted him to the Titans in his foray into free agency, and he replied, "Bill Callahan."

"His resume speaks for itself. He's coached a lot of great guys and I've heard a lot of great things about him. I think it's a good opportunity for me to continue to grow my game and take the next step as a player," Cushenberry said.

Cushenberry said it is his understanding that Callahan bring a high level of detail and expectation and he is eager to be his pupil.

"It's a different level of offensive line play that he kind of unlocks. It's a lot that goes in to his game planning," Cushenberry said.

As for rebuilding the culture as part of revamping the offensive line, Cushenberry said it is of the utmost importance.

"It's a big part of offensive line play, just having a good culture and having a good room, a good group of guys that's willing to play for each other. That's what I look forward to trying to build," he said.

Cushenberry's NFL foundation was laid by a familiar name to Titans fans, as he was coached by Mike Munchak in Denver.

"Coach Munch was amazing and I see a lot of similarities to what Callahan is teaching. Coming in, he helped me lay a great foundation and since that point, every year I've gotten better and that's what I want to continue to do," Cushenberry said.

###

**TITANS LONG SNAPPER
MORGAN COX
NOMINATED FOR ART
ROONEY
SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
NOVEMBER 22, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Titans long snapper Morgan Cox has been nominated for the Art Rooney Sportsmanship Award.

The award is presented each year to an NFL player who best demonstrates the qualities of on-field sportsmanship, including fair play, respect for the game and opponents, and integrity in competition.

On Wednesday, the NFL announced the 32 player nominees for the ninth annual award. Each NFL team nominated one of its players for the award, which recognizes players around the league who exemplify outstanding sportsmanship on the field.

Created in 2014, the award honors the late founding owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers and Pro Football Hall of Famer Art Rooney Sr.

Cox, who played at the University of Tennessee, joined the Titans in 2021 after playing 11 seasons with the Baltimore Ravens. The Collierville, Tenn., native has been named to five Pro Bowls, and he's one of the team's captains this season.

After every game, Cox identifies a player or two from the opposing team's special teams unit, and he offers words of encouragement and support, while praising them for their work and commitment.

Cox also regularly brings together the two teams in postgame for an on-field prayer.

"I could not be more excited and prouder to hear that Morgan has been nominated for the Art Rooney award," Titans special teams

coordinator Craig Aukerman said. "Morgan has demonstrated excellence in competition and sportsmanship both on and off the field. His respect of the game and to his opponents is second to none. As a team captain, Morgan's leadership qualities and willingness to mentor younger players have helped them achieve a high level of integrity to succeed in the National Football League."

A panel of former players from the NFL Legends Community — Warrick Dunn, 2014 Art Rooney Sportsmanship Award recipient Larry Fitzgerald, Pro Football Hall of Famer Curtis Martin and Leonard Wheeler — will select eight finalists (four in the AFC and four in the NFC) from the 32 nominees.

The eight finalists will be listed on the Pro Bowl ballot under the NFL Sportsmanship Award category when players vote in December.

"Sportsmanship is the core of the game, the vanguard of public confidence, the keeper of game integrity," said Troy Vincent, NFL executive vice president of football operations. "These Rooney Sportsmanship Award nominees exemplify the spirit of fair play and the values of respect, integrity, commitment to team and resiliency at the highest level of competition."

The winner of the Art Rooney Sportsmanship Award is determined by a vote of current NFL players. From the eight finalists, each team's players will submit a consensus vote of their choice for the winner. As in Pro Bowl voting, a team cannot vote for its own player.

The winner will be announced as part of NFL Honors. He will receive a \$25,000 donation from the NFL Foundation to a charity of his choice.

###

**FROM THE PRO BOWL:
LONG SNAPPER MORGAN
COX REFLECTS ON LIFE'S
BLESSINGS, AND HIS
JOURNEY TO THE TITANS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
FEBRUARY 2, 2023**

LAS VEGAS – Morgan Cox has experienced a lot during his 13-year playing career.

The Titans long snapper has played in a Super Bowl and been named to five Pro Bowls. He's played in over 200 career games, in stadiums all over the country. He's made lifelong friends, and countless memories.

As Cox took a helicopter ride on Thursday morning into the Grand Canyon, over Lake Mead and the Hoover Dam, and then over the Las Vegas strip, Cox reflected on his journey, and the blessings that have come with it.

"I've seen God's hands on a lot of things as I kind of reflect on my career," Cox said. "I am grateful for the opportunities I have been given, and the unique experiences I have gotten to have because of this game."

Cox is in Las Vegas for the 2023 Pro Bowl Games. It's his first trip as a Titan after being named a Pro Bowler on four earlier occasions during his playing days with the Ravens, where he won a Super Bowl ring during the 2012 season.

Cox, who just finished his second season in Tennessee, admits this one is special. A Collierville native who played at the University of Tennessee, Cox is representing his home state – and the team he grew up cheering for as a youngster.

While overlooking the Las Vegas Strip on Thursday, Cox told a story about the time he traveled to a Titans game his senior year in high school with his buddies.

They took his mom's Suburban, and they painted "Titans" on it. They

also painted letters on their chests, spelling out T-I-T-A-N-S.

"It was a memorable trip," Cox said with a smile.

Long before that, Cox remembers watching the Titans play in Super Bowl XXXIV, at his aunt and uncle's house in Memphis. The Titans-Rams game was projected on a bed sheet.

"I remember (Kevin) Dyson stretching out the ball," Cox said, "and being heartbroken."

Cox never dreamed he'd end up playing in the NFL himself.

It started with a childhood competition, and it's continued because of a lot of hard work.

As an 11-year-old, Cox went out for a football team called the 'Buccaneers' in the Collierville Youth Athletic Association. The coach was his dentist, Bill Burriss.

On the first day of practice, Burriss brought all the players up and said they needed to fill the position of 'long snapper'. Everyone got in line, and they all got a chance to snap.

"My first shot at it was really pretty bad," Cox recalled. "So, they moved onto the next person."

But Cox said his father, who happened to be at practice that day, encouraged him to try it again, so he went to the side and practiced. He started to get the hang of it, and he got back in line.

The following year he was back in the mix, as a seventh grader, for the long snapping position at Evangelical Christian School.

"Over time," Cox said, "I got better and better."

Cox played in high school at ECS, got recruited by the University of Tennessee, and after paying his dues for a few years at the school – and learning from FG snapper Adam Miles and punt snapper Ryan West – he got his chance.

Cox ended up playing in 38 games in three seasons at Tennessee, and was then signed by the Ravens as an undrafted free agent in 2010.

As they say, the rest is history.

Cox is humbled to be at the Pro Bowl again.

"It's an honor for me to be here, being a part of the Titans now," Cox said. "To be in my 13th year and to be able to experience the Pro Bowl again, it is truly an amazing honor and tough to put into words what it means to me."

Along the way, Cox said the backing from family and friends has made it even more special.

"The support from my home state has been amazing," he said. "No shortage of ticket requests, but that's been great as well. It's awesome to be able to play in front of people I've been around my whole life. I grew up in Memphis, went to school in Knoxville and everybody converging in Nashville is pretty cool."

Cox plans to enjoy the events surrounding the Pro Bowl Games this week.

He's scheduled to take part in a "Kick-Tac-Toe" event, and has other things planned as well.

"This isn't my kind of town to be honest," he said. "I'm a big saver, not much of a spender."

As he looks ahead, Cox plans to keep working to sharpen his craft.

Even after 13 years, he believes there's always room for improvement.

"I've put in a lot of time and work in kind of honing the craft," he said. "I can never say I have perfected it. I don't think there is such a thing. You're constantly want to chase perfection and find ways to improve your game, whether it be snapping, blocking, covering. I can always improve."

Cox is already looking forward to Year 14.

He's hoping it will be with the Titans.

"God has a plan, and I certainly hope to be back with the Titans next year," he said. "I am going to play as long as I possibly can. I love what I get to do, and I am grateful. I feel like I am still playing at a high level, and I am going to keep playing as long as I can."

###

**LEBANON'S COLTON
DOWELL ALL SMILES AS
HE BEGINS HIS NFL
JOURNEY WITH THE
TITANS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TITANS ONLINE
MAY 16, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Colton Dowell took his rookie mishap in stride.

While working on a footwork drill over the weekend, the Titans receiver stumbled and fell to the ground during the team's rookie minicamp.

It happened right in front of a big group of reporters on hand to cover the debut of the team's first-year players – and also, directly in front of Titans coach Mike Vrabel.

"My body was moving faster than my mind," Dowell said with a smile. "I had a lot of adrenalin going. ... I'd be lying if I said that was the first time I've ever done that, and I'm sure that's not going to be the last time.

"But it's a great thing I can look at it and know I'm not where I need to be at yet. And I can just keep getting better."

So, what did his new head coach say?

"Coach Vrabel, he just kind of looked at me and just moved on," Dowell said, smiling even bigger. "He knows it happens – I am a rookie. So, it is what it is."

Dowell, a seventh-round draft pick of the team, settled in and made some plays – including some nice catches – over the weekend.

The 6-foot-3, 212-pounder sure looked the part as he lined up across from defenders, and in a group of other receivers added by the team since the draft. Two others in his position group over the weekend were undrafted free agents, while two others were in town for a tryout.

The Titans saw something in Dowell that led the team to pick him in the draft, and on Monday he'll join the veterans on the field for the first time in the offseason program. Organized team activities start next week.

This start of this experience is special for Dowell, who grew up in Lebanon, Tennessee, attended Wilson Central High School, and played at Tennessee-Martin.

Growing up, Dowell attended training camp practices at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park, and he went to Titans games at Nissan Stadium.

Over the weekend he put in a Titans helmet for the first time.

"I'd like to say he'd be happy," Dowell responded when asked what a younger version of himself would be thinking right now. "And he'd realize this is a dream come true. This is just the start, and I want to continue to make that younger self happy as I keep going."

Dowell said the support from those back home has been great.

"It's been awesome," he said. "I've said it a couple of times, but when you are wanted and you are supported by people you don't even know, it is really great, and I cherish that. It is really a blessing to have that in my life right now because I know as quick as it came it can leave, so I am thankful for that and really enjoying it."

Dowell smiled when asked if he was able to commute from home.

He's actually staying at a nearby hotel with the team's other rookies, rooming with quarterback Will Levis.

Dowell is beginning his new life, as a pro.

"It's been awesome," Dowell said. "I've had a really good time being able to dive completely into football, and not have to worry about classes or anything else

coming up. I don't even have to worry about where I am going to eat at – we eat right in there (pointing inside), so it is really awesome to see the level of professionalism that can come with playing this game. I've had a great time."

###

**TITANS' COLTON
DOWELL WILL BE A
HIGHLY SCRUTINIZED
SEVENTH-ROUND DRAFT
PICK**

**BY JOHN GLENNON
NASHVILLE POST
MAY 6, 2023**

Seventh-round draft picks in the NFL do not normally draw a lot of attention.

Nor are they generally burdened by expectations.

There are at least two reasons to believe the scenario will be different, however, for wide receiver Colton Dowell, the Titans' seventh-round pick in April's NFL Draft.

First of all, Dowell is a local. He grew up a Titans fan in nearby Lebanon, attended Wilson Central High and played his college football at UT-Martin, about 150 miles west of Nashville.

Second, and more important in the grand scheme of things, the Titans really need help at wide receiver, even though the team waited until pick No. 228 in the draft before addressing the position by selecting Dowell.

So expect the spotlight to shine a little brighter on Dowell starting at rookie camp on May 13 than it might normally on an FCS player chosen 32 picks before the end of the draft.

"They just said that I could come in there and carve my role in their offense with hard work, and I am buying into that," Dowell said. "I am a hard-working guy. That's basically what they said. It is up to me how far I go."

Dowell's background alone makes him an intriguing local story.

He and his father, a former fire chief in Lebanon, attended multiple Titans training camps as fans over the years, never guessing Dowell

might one day be selected by the home team.

An under-the-radar recruit in high school, Dowell chose UT-Martin of the Ohio Valley Conference over offers from Chattanooga, Richmond, Mercer and Furman.

The 6-3, 215-pound Dowell, who has recorded an unofficial time of 4.4 seconds in the 40-yard dash, gradually turned himself into an NFL prospect at UT-Martin. In 2022, the 24-year-old caught 67 passes for 1,036 yards and six touchdowns — including an eye-opening seven-catch, 112-yard performance in a loss to the University of Tennessee.

Those kinds of numbers led to the Titans' storybook selection of the underdog, home-state kid.

"It shows to me, and I hope it shows to a lot of other kids around my area, that hard work and perseverance, you know, they outshine going to a small school," Dowell said. "UT-Martin, I love it, but going to a small school, it doesn't define you. Your hard work defines you."

Said Titans general manager Ran Carthon: "It was a cool phone call. He's right here locally, right down the road. And to hear a player say, 'This was the phone call I was hoping I was going to get.' Not just a phone call of being drafted, but wanting to play for your team."

But the tale will be an even better one if Dowell can fill a need for the team beyond just playing special teams.

The Titans parted ways with leading pass-catcher Robert Woods (53 catches, 527 yards), meaning the returning receivers — Treylon Burks, Nick Westbrook-Ikhine, Kyle Philips, Racey McMath and Mason Kinsey — accounted for a combined 69 catches for 962 yards and six touchdowns in 2022.

Since then, the Titans added veteran Chris Moore from the Houston Texans.

"I would say I'm a deep threat and I get out and stretch the field," Dowell said. "I make those contested catches. I'm a big-body guy, so I like to use my body to maneuver myself around the [defensive back] and just make those tough, contested catches."

The Titans, like most teams, haven't received a ton of production from seventh-round picks over the years.

Two of the big exceptions were cornerback Cortland Finnegan (2006 draft), a five-year starter, and center Eugene Amano (2004 draft), a four-year starter.

A more recent seventh-round contributor was cornerback Chris Jackson (2020 draft), as he played 25 games in his first two seasons (starting six) before a knee injury limited him to just one game last year.

Might Dowell turn into a "lucky seven" in a draft class Carthon described as "rolling the dice?"

The opportunity certainly exists.

More importantly, the need exists.

###

**UNPACKING THE 'UPSIDE'
TENNESSEE TITANS HOPE
TO FIND IN DRAFT PICK
JAELYN DUNCAN**

**BY PAUL SKRBINA
THE TENNESSEAN
APRIL 30, 2023**

The weight of the wait didn't weigh Jaelyn Duncan down.

Duncan, the Tennessee Titans' sixth-round pick in the 2023 NFL Draft, has a history of waiting.

Duncan didn't start playing football until he was 14 years old.

For the next four of five years, the 6-foot-6, 306-pound tackle who played at the University of Maryland, had little idea about what he was doing.

"It probably took me until my redshirt freshman year, maybe even a year after that," Duncan said. "Throughout high school I was just out there moving people and just being a bigger body, not really using a lot of techniques. So when I got to college, that was one of the main focuses.

"It probably took me until my redshirt freshman year, maybe even a year after that."

Duncan was a three-time All-Big Ten honorable mention selection in five seasons with Maryland, where he allowed 58 quarterback hurries, 15 quarterback hits and 19 sacks in 2,551 snaps spanning 43 games, including 39 starts. He also was selected to play in the East-West Shrine Bowl.

He knows the learning will be accelerated come training camp.

"Just technique things, hand timing, punch timing, hand placement, just keeping great balance, stuff like that," Duncan said of areas where he needs to improve. "You don't want to lean and stuff. Just being more consistent and finishing, just continuing to drive and get it done every play."

Duncan's relationship with football began late, he said, because "some life stuff was going on. It wasn't the right circumstances at a young age."

Duncan won't be walking into completely unfamiliar company when he joins the Titans. He and Titans first-round pick Peter Skoronski, who faced off in the Big Ten, worked out together and shared the same trainer. He also will reconnect with Titans tight end Chigoziem Okonkwo and defensive tackle Sam Okuayinonu, with whom he played at Maryland.

"He's a guy we envision having a ton of upside," Titans general manager Ran Carthon said. "He's really, really athletic. He has some high-end traits we'd love to work with and develop. We look forward to working with him."

The weight of the wait of being picked didn't discourage Duncan, even though he said he thought he would have been picked Friday during the second or third round.

"You just sit around the house, wait for your phone to ring," he said. "I've been a little bit anxious and a little bit nervous, but God has a plan, so I've just been waiting."

He had three meetings with the Titans before the draft, including one at the combine and one at the Senior Bowl.

His next stop will be rookie minicamp, which for Duncan, can't come soon enough.

###

TITANS CB CALEB FARLEY 'EXTREMELY GRATEFUL' TO BE PLAYING AGAIN

**BY TURRON DAVENPORT
ESPN.COM
JUNE 7, 2024**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- The mere experience of being out there on the field is something that Tennessee Titans cornerback Caleb Farley doesn't take for granted every time he puts on a jersey and laces his cleats. There was a point where Farley thought football was no longer a possibility for him.

"I've been feeling extremely grateful," Farley said on Thursday. "I don't think you guys understand. I really truly believed I would never play football again. To be out here and running around, I just feel grateful."

Farley, a 2021 first-round pick by the Titans, has faced his share of adversity since entering the NFL. Various injuries limited Farley to 12 games over the past three seasons. Farley's most recent injury, a herniated disk, required a microdiscectomy and raised concerns that he would never be able to step on the field again.

Less than a year ago, Farley's home in Mooresville, North Carolina, was leveled in an explosion that killed his father, Robert Farley, and injured another man. Farley has battled his way back to the football field and taken part in all of the Titans OTAs along with minicamp.

Farley's perseverance has impressed new Titans coach Brian Callahan.

"I'm proud of the fact that he keeps working at it," Callahan said in May. "What might have shut a lot of guys down and the fact that he keeps coming out, keeps trying to play, keeps rehabbing is really impressive."

Farley credits his faith as the primary source that "nudged him along during some very low and

dark moments." He also made sure to point out how new Titans teammate Chidobe Awuzie has been a steadying presence since he joined the team as a free agent in March.

"I don't think anybody could really relate to what he's going through," Awuzie said Thursday. "It's always about how you respond to it. I saw very quickly he's a very competitive guy."

Farley admitted to having a lot of emotions and passion from the adversity. But in his mind, getting to put the pads on and play football is an ideal opportunity to release it all. While he's thankful for all of the well-wishes and sympathy he has received, Farley is only focused on the opportunity in front of him.

"I'm ready to come to training camp not to participate, to come compete," he said.

###

TITANS CB CALEB FARLEY KEEPING THE FAITH DESPITE HEARTBREAK, LINGERING HEALTH ISSUES

BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 11, 2024

NASHVILLE – Titans cornerback Caleb Farley sat alone at his locker in the final days of the 2023 season, a Bible in his hands, as he readied himself for practice.

When approached, a smile came to his face, which is usually the case for the outwardly upbeat Farley.

Then, Farley shared a secret.

"That's not how I always feel on the inside," Farley said. "But that's how I choose to obey. It's my faith. But I am human, like everybody else. All of this has been incredibly hard, since I have been in the league. But that's what I have been told to do in my book here (the Bible), so that's what I obey. And I do it because it does lighten the burden on me. Inside, it does help me get through these things."

Life hasn't been easy for the 25-year-old Farley, a first-round pick of the Titans in the 2021 NFL Draft.

Back in 2018, Farley lost his mother to breast cancer. In August 2023, his father was killed suddenly in a house explosion in North Carolina due to a natural gas leak. Farley was in Nashville at the time, and he hurried back home following the tragic event.

Farley rejoined the Titans not long after in the fall, and he said having teammates around helped him through it all.

"They've all been a blessing to me," Farley said. "I thank God for every single one of them."

Through it all, Farley has continued to deal with frustration about his health.

Farley didn't play at all in 2023 because of lingering issues related to his back, which now have his career in jeopardy. He spent the whole season on the team's Physically Unable to Perform list, but he was able to practice the last few weeks of the season.

"It forces me to stay out of the past," Farley said of trying to keep a good disposition. "I can't change nothing. I have to stay in the present, because when I think about the past, I get sad. When I think about the future, I get anxious.

"I just stay in the present, and I'm doing my best."

Selected 22nd overall back in 2021, Farley has played in just 12 games over the past two seasons while dealing with injuries. In addition to lingering issues with his back, Farley tore his ACL during his rookie season, which cut that season short.

This past season, Farley was involved with the team, but not available to play because of issues related to a nerve. Farley had back surgery leading up to the draft, and he also had a back surgery in 2022.

"My back is fine," Farley said. "Nothing in my back hurts. But there's a nerve that has been affected at different times that has caused a lack of strength in my left leg. It is an odd situation."

For a second, he went back to the past.

"I wish I could go back to college," Farley said, "when I was doing those heavy ass deadlifts, and never do them."

But Farley quickly went back to looking ahead again.

Three years into his NFL career, Farley now has one year left on his contract.

The general manager who drafted him is gone, and now the only NFL

head coach he's ever played for is no longer with the organization either.

Farley can't do anything about any of that, so he plans to keep working, and control what he can control.

"I'm just going to push it," he said. "It's do-or-die for me. It's now or never. I'm just going to push it, and whatever my body allows me to do, my body allows me to do, I'll do. A lot of things are out of my control, but what I can control is my effort and how much I push it. That's what I plan to do.

"I'm going into my last year. I haven't really been able to play at all, healthy anyways. I've been fighting the situation, trying to get healthy for so long. The type of situation I have going on now, no doctors can help me. I don't know what is going to happen with it, if it's going to get better or not. I am just going to empty the tank, put as much effort in as I can and get my body as ready as I can.

"But I still love football," Farley continued. "I always say I am going to play until the wheels fall off, so I am going to put in the effort I need to. But I am confident. I wouldn't be here if I didn't think I could make an impact in this league, and that is what I am here to prove."

###

**DOUBT TENNESSEE
TITANS' CALEB FARLEY
AT YOUR OWN RISK. HIS
MOTIVATION COMES
FROM LATE MOTHER**

**BY GEORGE ROBINSON
THE TENNESSEAN
APRIL 30, 2021**

It doesn't take long to realize the kind of player the Tennessee Titans selected with the 22nd pick in the 2021 NFL Draft on Thursday.

Caleb Farley isn't interested in talking about the injuries he has suffered, including his two back surgeries and a knee injury before college. His recent positive COVID-19 test result is of no mind, and his decision to opt out of the 2020 college football season at Virginia Tech has already been discussed ad nauseam.

Farley is a Titan. And that's enough for him.

Would have been enough for his late mother, too.

"I was telling my mother I was going to be a first-round draft pick when I was like 7 years old," he said. "I hope she's smiling down on me from the sky."

Any physical obstacles Farley has faced through football pale in comparison to the loss of his mother, Robin, to breast cancer in 2018.

The memories of conversations he had with her as a child are still fresh, and his thoughts drifted to her when the Hickory, North Carolina, native heard his name called Thursday.

"She always believed in me," he said.

Robin was diagnosed with cancer in 2009 and endured two years of chemotherapy and radiation. For a while it looked like she had beaten the disease. But the cancer returned aggressively and invaded her bones.

"After some time it started to wear on her," Caleb's father, Robert Farley, told The Tennessean. "I think Caleb accepted what happened because he knew that his mother had faithfully lived the life she wanted to live. She didn't die in regret."

Robin died without seeing her son play college football.

She attended every game from the time he began playing little league at 7 through his high school career at Maiden High School in North Carolina, where he starred as a quarterback.

Caleb tore the ACL and MCL ligaments in one of his knees prior to arriving at Virginia Tech in 2017. He took a redshirt his first year on campus, and was moved to wide receiver. Months later, in January 2018, Robin died with her family, including Caleb, by her side.

"He never once thought about not playing football after his mother's death," Robert said. "He's always been committed to it. His mom encouraged that commitment. I mean it was difficult on all of us and it took some time to adjust but Caleb pours himself into football. He loves it that much."

Football is Caleb's love, but family has been the foundation. It's the reason why he decided to opt out last fall despite coming off a 2019 year in which he led the ACC in passes defended (16) and finished with four interceptions as a converted cornerback.

It was a risky move. He was the first high-profile college football player to make that decision, and some questioned whether it would hurt his rising draft stock.

"Yeah, it's just frustrating," Farley said about having to answer questions about his health. "It gets to the point where you want a team to draft you, that believes in you, and if you don't believe in me, then play against me."

"Caleb opted out because of his concern with COVID," Robert said. "It was as simple as that. It had nothing to do with his injuries. He wasn't hurt. You have to understand, we were still learning about the short- and long-term effects of this virus. He didn't want to risk his health or possibly the health of his family members."

Virginia defensive back Caleb Farley, right, intercepts a pass intended for Miami wide receiver Dee Wiggins during the first half of an NCAA college football game, Saturday, Oct. 5, 2019, in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)

Caleb maintained a strength and conditioning schedule last fall. Despite not seeing the field in 2020, his instincts and ability in man coverage were enough to convince NFL scouts. The Titans felt his 6-foot-2, 207-pound frame and athletic skillset at cornerback — a position of need — were too good to pass up.

"He's long and I think (man coverage) is something they did a lot of at Virginia Tech," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said. "Those guys were manned up outside without a whole lot of help. He's coming from a very aggressive scheme that puts a lot of pressure on those guys on the outside."

Farley was invited to attend the draft in Cleveland on Thursday, but a positive COVID-19 test result earlier in the week prevented him from attending.

Farley was tested again Thursday and that result came back negative, he said. But the questions about his health remain. And so will the memories of his late mother, and the motivation she gave him to overcome any obstacles en route to the NFL.

"When coach called me to tell me I was going to be a Tennessee Titans, the first thing out of my mouth was 'When can I get the playbook?'," Caleb said. "I'm extremely excited

to get back on the field and rep these colors."

###

**HEADING INTO HIS 17TH
NFL SEASON, TITANS
VETERAN KICKER NICK
FOLK STILL FINDING
WAYS TO IMPROVE**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 29, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Nick Folk has built his career on consistency.

Heading into the 2024 season, the veteran kicker carries an all-time NFL-record streak of 78 consecutive field goals from under 40 yards – a streak going back to 2017.

Folk has made 83.8 percent of his kicks during his 16 NFL seasons, and he was near perfect for the Titans in his first season with the team last year.

Folk, along with others, dealt with a shake-up earlier this offseason, with a coaching change.

At least a part of him wondered what it might mean for him.

The Titans ended up re-signing Folk, and he's glad to be back.

"For me, it's always been a patient game," Folk said. "I kind of understand the game, and I understand the business side of it. I was patient with it, and I knew I wanted to play. I told that to Ran (Carthon) at the end of the season, that I wanted to keep playing, that I loved it here.

"I wanted to come back, and I'm excited to be back. Now it's about getting ready for another season."

In 2024, all NFL kickers will deal with a new kickoff format. Folk will make the adjustment under a new special teams coordinator in Colt Anderson.

Folk, who will turn 40 in November, said he's made some adjustments to himself as he's gotten older as well.

"A lot of it has to do with how I've trained, the timing of training, the timing of kicking," Folk said. "When I was younger, I used to be able to kick a lot, go multiple days in a row, kick a lot more balls. Now I am very rep conscious, if you will. I've always kind of been quality over quantity and I know there's going to be days when I need the quantity, but I still want to make it quality.

"You could maybe look at my technique and say not much has changed, but there are little nuances. You could probably talk to a golfer, and they'd say the same thing. You might not see the changes, but they're making small, minute changes. And I think a lot of that changes as your body changes. When you get older, maybe you're not as flexible, the leg is not as lively, so you're going to have to change some things technically to continue going. So, it is just small, little things ... to try to find ways to continue to improve."

Folk was magnificent for the Titans in 2023, when he made 29-of-30 field goals and 28-of-30 extra point attempts.

At the conclusion of the 2023 campaign, Folk's career 382 career field goals ranked fourth among active kickers behind only Matt Prater (401), Mason Crosby (400) and Justin Tucker (395), and Folk's number also ranked 19th in NFL history. His 1,632 total points scored ranked 23rd in league annals.

Among all active NFL players at the conclusion of 2023, Folk's 228 career games ranked 10th.

The Titans acquired Folk in a trade from the Patriots prior to last season, and he kept his strong career going while kicking in all 17 games. Folk's first season in the NFL was in 2007, with the Dallas Cowboys. In addition to the Titans, Patriots and Cowboys, he's also kicked for the Jets, Buccaneers.

In Year 17, Folk aims on being dependable again this fall.

"Just continuing to work, put your head down and refine the craft every day," he said. "You are going to have ups and downs, and you try and make the good days better than the bad days.

"It's been a good offseason so far. I feel like I'm kicking pretty well. So, I'm going to keep rolling and keep the rhythm going and get ready for training camp at the end of July. I want to make sure I am working toward Week One of the season so I'm ready to roll then."

###

WHAT I'VE LEARNED**BY PETER KING****NBC SPORTS****NOVEMBER 12, 2023**

Tennessee kicker Nick Folk, 39, is on an all-time streak for aging kickers—for all kickers, really. Since his age-36 season in 2020, Folk has made 91.3 percent of his field goals (115 of 126), including all 65 from inside of 40 yards. The one recent kicker in the Hall of Fame, Morten Anderson, made 79 percent of his field goals from age 36 to 39; the one looming Hall of Famer, Adam Vinatieri, hit 85.4 percent of his kicks in the same four-year span. Only three much younger kickers—Younghoe Koo, Matt Gay and Daniel Carlson—have been more accurate, and none by more than a percentage point, since 2020.

Folk's a fascinating story—out of football as recently as 2018—and when you understand his family background, you can better understand why he can step up to big kicks and be a relative flat-liner. What Nick Folk has learned about how to succeed as an NFL kicker:

“I think the biggest thing is perseverance. You look at my career and it's full of ups and downs. Keep focusing on the journey and persevere through the journey. Results come with the work. How much work are you willing to put in? Good example is what happened in New England. I had an appendectomy Thanksgiving week in 2019, then got re-signed. Next year they draft a kicker and I get COVID. I'm on the COVID practice squad, but I end up winning the job. On the practice squad again to start '21, kick that season. I signed a two-year deal in March of '22. They draft a kicker in April of '23. I get traded here to Tennessee. The whole time, all I can control is my kicking. That's what I do—focus on the journey. Perseverance is what I'd tell any young kicker.

“So many people in my family were in the medical field. They dealt with high levels of pressure. My mom, Dr. Lorraine Stiles, was a

pediatrician. My grandfather, Dr. Quentin Stiles, was a cardiac surgeon, and he and his team pioneered a lot of the bypass stuff way back. He used to tell me stories of holding beating hearts in his hands. He's dealing with life and death on a daily basis. My grandmother, Dr. Claire Stiles, was an anesthesiologist, in the first or second class with women at Harvard Medical School. My aunt, Lorraine Stiles, was a high-risk OB-GYN. She told us a story once of a woman who wasn't feeling well and she examined her and figured out they had almost no time to save the baby and the mom, and they got rushed into surgery and it was almost bite down on a stick and here we go. They both made it, I believe.

“Pressure was part of their daily lives. I would say that's part of how I was raised by my family all the way from my parents to grandparents and everyone in between. They understood what life really is about. One of the things I've learned in my job is there's a lot greater things happening in the world. We're playing a game. It's very serious to everyone in the locker room, everyone on each team, but at the end of the day, there's a lot more important things out there.

“I just try to live in the moment with everything I do. When I'm out there trying to make a kick, the reality is we're just a big team and my job happens to be the guy kicking. I just try to do my job the same way the other 10 guys out there try to do their jobs. There's not really what I would call extra pressure on it. I've kicked a million footballs in my life. What's one more?

“[Kicking so well now], I think a lot of it is experience. You're able to glean information from good years, good kicks and bad years, bad kicks. I think my teammates know I've done everything I can to prepare so that I can perform at the best level for them.

“One other thing: The most important kick is the next kick.”

###

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT TENNESSEE TITANS KICKER NICK FOLK

***BY NICK GRAY
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
SEPTEMBER 17, 2023***

Nick Folk began Year 16 of his NFL career on Sept. 10 when the Tennessee Titans faced the New Orleans Saints in Week 1.

Folk, 38, was acquired by the Titans from the New England Patriots for a 2025 seventh-round pick after the team ran through three kickers in the preseason and was looking for stability.

The ex-Arizona Wildcats player has stayed in the NFL with his dependability and consistency inside 50 yards.

Here's what to know about the Titans' new kicker:

Nick Folk goes from Dallas to the New York Jets

The Dallas Cowboys took Folk in the sixth round of the 2007 NFL Draft. He earned a Pro Bowl nod after a good rookie season (26 of 31 field goals made) that included the winning 53-yard field goal against the Buffalo Bills on Oct. 8 on "Monday Night Football."

Folk was even better the next season, making 20-of-22 field goals, including both attempts from more than 50 yards., but he missed 10 attempts in 2009. He was released before the end of the season, and signed with the Jets in 2010.

During the next seven seasons, Folk was good enough (making 82.2% of his field goal tries) to entrench himself as the Jets kicker. He is second on the Jets' all-time points scored list and is the most accurate kicker in team history (minimum 100 field goal attempts). He was released in a salary-cap move after the 2016 season.

Tampa Bay struggles

The lowest point of Folk's career came with Tampa Bay in 2017 — specifically, in a 19-14 loss to New England on "Thursday Night Football" on Oct. 5.

Folk replaced the struggling Roberto Aguayo to start the season but missed five field goals and two extra points in the first four games. Against the Patriots, Folk missed from 56, 49 and 31 yards in the five-point loss. He was placed on injured reserve shortly after the game, ending his season. The Bucs released Folk in the offseason.

Nick Folk's revival with the New England Patriots

Folk did not kick in the 2018 NFL season, spending time in the Alliance of American Football league in spring 2019.

He was not on any NFL team to start the 2019 season until October, when the Patriots signed him to replace the injured Stephen Gostkowski.

Folk kicked well enough: 14 of 17 on field goals and 12-for-12 on extra points, even after missing a week because of an appendectomy. The Patriots attempted to replace him with a younger option in Justin Rohrwasser, but re-signed Folk before the 2020 season.

He was a consistent and accurate kicker for the Patriots during the next three seasons, making 89.3% of his field goal attempts and 91.3% of his extra point tries.

Nick Folk off to good start with Tennessee Titans

Folk was 5-for-5 on field goals, accounting for all of the Titans' points, in the 16-15 loss to the Saints. He already has gained the trust of the Titans coaching staff, as evidenced by a decision to attempt a 29-yard field goal with 2:20 left and Tennessee down by four points.

"Find a way to get (the ball) inside the 40 and kick a field goal to win the game, that's what I believed," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said about the decision to kick at that point.

Not the biggest leg at this stage of his career

Folk made a 50-yard field goal in Week 1, which may be toward the edge of his range at this point of his career.

He career long is 55 yards, made with the Jets in 2015. As accurate as he has been from inside 50 yards, don't expect the Titans to try many 60 yarders in 2023.

Folk also had one touchback in six kickoffs against the Saints, which is in line with his recent history. Last season with New England, he had three touchbacks on 33 kickoffs. He was never the full-time kickoff player for the Patriots, with 49 in four seasons.

###

STARTING ILB JACK GIBBENS MAKING THE MOST OF HIS SECOND CHANCE WITH THE TITANS

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
SEPTEMBER 21, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Jack Gibbrens put in the work last offseason, doing everything he could to make the Titans roster out of training camp.

Yet when the Titans made their cuts at the end of last August, the Titans rookie linebacker was informed he was being waived by the team.

"After training camp, I got sent home," Gibbrens, who initially joined the team as an undrafted free agent in May 2022, recalled earlier this week. "So, I drove back to Texas."

A week later, however, Gibbrens got another call from the Titans.

The team wanted to sign him back to the practice squad, and that's where he spent most of the 2022 season, before ending the year on the team's 53-man roster.

"When I got back out here, I just kind of said: I am going to make the most of this opportunity," Gibbrens said. "They gave me a second chance and I just kind of took the mindset of: 'I have to get better every day. I have to fight to earn every day.' And that's the same mindset I am trying to have right now."

"Everybody is trying to earn their job every day; nothing is guaranteed in this league. So, just make the most of every opportunity you get every time you get to step on the field."

A year later, things are much different for Gibbrens.

Gibbrens isn't just on the team – he's one of the team's starters, at inside linebacker, next to Azeez Al-Shaair.

Gibbrens has recorded 11 tackles in the first two games, including a tackle for a loss. Gibbrens played in 45 of the team's 68 defensive snaps (66%) against the Chargers, along with 12 snaps on special teams.

Titans Coach Mike Vrabel, who nicknamed Gibbrens "Dr. Gibby" last year because of his smarts, said the inside backer has improved over the past year.

"I just think he's a tall, linear, lengthy player," Vrabel said of Gibbrens. "And I think he worked extremely hard to improve his lower body strength. (Gibbrens) was running just as well (this year), was running better than he ran last year. Just from a tracking standpoint. Not that that's the end all, be all. But, he knows what to do. He communicates. He's a good communicator and he's where he's supposed to be."

The 6-foot-3, 242-pound Gibbrens didn't take the easy path to the NFL.

Gibbrens played four seasons at Abilene Christian (2017-2020) before transferring to Minnesota, where he played his final college season in 2021. Gibbrens spent time working as a financial analysis intern while also serving as a teaching and research assistant in college.

But he never stopped chasing his NFL dream, even after going undrafted.

Gibbrens ended up appearing in five games with two starts a year ago for the Titans, registering 27 tackles, an interception, and a special teams stop. He spent 11 games on the team's practice squad in 2022.

Now, he wants to keep doing his part on the Titans.

"Coach Vrabel always preaches: It doesn't matter how you got here, it's just what you do when you get here," Gibbrens said. "It's been a journey, obviously last year getting cut, being on the practice squad and then finally getting an opportunity

to play, and this year in a completely different role.

"I'm just trying to keep the same process that I've had since I got here: Just get better every day, keep my head down and keep working."

###

**HOW TENNESSEE TITANS
PICK CEDRIC GRAY SAW
HIS MOM'S ADVICE PAY
OFF IN 2024 NFL DRAFT**

**BY NICK SUSS
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
APRIL 27, 2024**

Cedric Gray's mother Esther has officially been proven right.

The Tennessee Titans drafted Gray, a linebacker out of North Carolina, early in the fourth round of the 2024 NFL Draft. A two-time All-ACC player who ended his college career with three-straight 100-plus tackle seasons, Gray said he turned down opportunities to transfer in high school and college to stay where he felt most comfortable, bearing in mind what his mother likes to tell him.

"Something my mom always told me was 'Don't rush your blessing,'" Gray said. "This blessing, it came today."

Gray prides himself on being a "sideline-to-sideline" linebacker, someone who plays a complete game with an emphasis on athleticism who's just as comfortable filling in against the run as he is rushing the passer or dropping in coverage. He looks up to star NFL inside linebackers like Zaire Franklin and Fred Warner. He was North Carolina's defensive play caller for two seasons in college and thinks he'll be able to take over that skill with the Titans as well.

He admits his knowledge for the game developed later in his career. When he was in high school, he was a "see ball, hit ball" player. It wasn't until the summer before his sophomore year of college when his understanding broadened. And from there, he quickly emerged as one of the best linebackers in the ACC.

Despite this success, and the Titans' need for an inside linebacker, Gray says the Titans never met with him in the pre-draft process and he didn't have that big of a sense that the

Titans would be picking him Saturday.

The Titans had the confidence to pick him anyway, slotting him into a linebacker room that also includes Kenneth Murray II, Otis Reese and Jack Gibbens.

This is the type of player Gray says Titans fans should expect in him.

"A guy who gets to the ball a lot. A guy who can cover a lot," Gray says. "Linebackers today in the NFL need to have the athletic ability, the athleticism to be able to match up with running backs, tight ends and receivers and be able to make plays."

###

**CHARLOTTE'S CEDRIC
GRAY GAVE UP
CATCHING TDS AT UNC.
IN EXCHANGE, HE GOT A
CHANCE AT THE NFL BY
ALEX ZIETLOW**

**BY ALEX ZIETLOW
CHARLOTTE OBSERVER
APRIL 16, 2024**

Ask Cedric Gray about his football-playing life before he arrived at UNC, where he eventually became a standout four-year linebacker as the Tar Heels surged into a new era of success, and you learn something pretty quick: All along, he thought he'd be a receiver. He made that known to everyone. "Oh yes!" said Cedric's mother, Esther, when asked about her son's wide receiver dreams. She laughed. "I mean, a receiver is all the pride and joy. You get to have all the fun and score touchdowns."

Four years ago, Cedric Gray exchanged touchdown catches for interceptions. Yards for tackles. Playing with Drake Maye in youth 7-on-7 camps to practicing against him in college. When he arrived on the Chapel Hill campus from Ardrey Kell High School in Charlotte, he even exchanged his No. 11 jersey number he wore throughout his life — his favorite player was the remarkable Julio Jones — for No. 33. As a result, he's now a few days away from the NFL.

Gray, the 6-foot-2, 234-pound linebacker, will be one of the handful of prospects from the Carolinas to hear his name called at some point during the 2024 NFL Draft, which will be hosted in Detroit from April 25-27. Gray's draft profile states that he'll contribute most as a weak-side linebacker at the next level, that he has the athleticism and traits to handle man coverage and that he can be a disruptive defender when "playing proactively and taking aggressive, downhill shots" through gaps. He's projected to be a third-round pick — a result of his prolific career at UNC and the agility and speed (4.64 40-yard dash) he

showcased at the NFL Scouting Combine in February. And when he does hear his name called, he'll be proud to call Charlotte home, he said.

"I'm very proud to come out of Charlotte," Gray said at his Pro Day in March. "We have a lot of talented guys to come out of Charlotte. Definitely the best football that's being played in North Carolina at the high school level. So just glad to be a part of that group, glad to represent my city well, and to be the next Charlotte guy to come out and put on."

Gray, 21, was born in Fort Washington, Maryland, about 20 miles south of Washington, D.C. He's the youngest of three brothers, Devon (nine years older) and Michael (six years older), and has played football and basketball all his life. He's remained competitive and singularly focused throughout. A few flashpoints that give you a picture of who Cedric Gray is: There was the time when he was 8 years old, when he scored the game-winning touchdown in a youth championship game on a fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line, a result of a play that his coaches spelled out simply for their team: Get Cedric the ball. (Cedric's mother still has a photo of that day, with Cedric holding up a trophy larger than him and smiling ear to ear.)

At 11, Gray moved from Fort Washington to Charlotte and used football to find his friends, find his community. Throughout high school, with all the pressures to transfer to another football program, he stayed at Ardrey Kell.

At 19, in the third game of his sophomore season, he started his first game at linebacker for the Tar Heels and "it was on" from there, posting 99 tackles and 2.5 sacks and two interceptions that sophomore year — one INT was the game-sealer against Miami in a 45-42 shootout that marked Gray's arrival. And simply throughout college, he was consistent — as a player on the field, yes, but also as a presence; not

resentful because he only played special teams as a freshman; not tempted to leave by any other opportunities out there; not motivated to do anything but lead the team he's on.

Gray finished his senior season with 121 tackles, five sacks, two forced fumbles and a fumble recovery en route to a First-Team All-ACC nod, a Butkus Award Semifinalist nomination and a second-team All-American accolade. He hopes to showcase all this at the next level. "This is something I've dreamed of since I was a child," Gray said, reflecting on his move from Maryland to Charlotte, his transition from wide receiver to linebacker, his switch from college standout to an NFL prospect with everything to prove. "So if this is what it takes, this is what it takes."

###

BORN & BRED: SECOND HOME

**BY LEE PACE
THE RAM CLUB
OCTOBER 13, 2023**

In another time and place, Cedric Gray could be wearing the red, yellow and black of the University of Maryland. And Power Echols could be adorned in Spartan green and white and rampaging through Big Ten backfields.

Gray and Echols are the opposite of legacy members of the Tar Heel football roster, players like Drake Maye and Caleb Hood, whose fathers (Mark Maye and Errol Hood, respectively) wore the Carolina blue jersey many years ago.

Gray and Echols were born and grew up in distant locales with far-flung geographical influences, Gray spending 10 years in the District of Columbia area before moving to Charlotte in 2012 and Echols having the Big Ten influence of his father, a former Michigan State defensive back, and spending his adolescence in Arizona before moving to Charlotte when he was 12 years old.

But no matter.

Both fell under the umbrella of Mack Brown's emphasis on recruiting in-state talent and, in particular, the Charlotte area. Gray came to Chapel Hill from Ardrey Kell High in south Charlotte in 2020, and Echols from Julius Chambers High (the former Vance High) northeast of the city the following year.

"If you control Charlotte, you win the state in recruiting," says Tommy Thigpen, the Tar Heel linebackers coach who recruits the Queen City and the surrounding area. "And if you win the state of North Carolina, you'll be right there for the ACC championship. Coach Brown made a big statement as soon as he got here, getting Sam Howell [from Sun Valley High in the southeast suburbs of Charlotte]. We've done well there ever since."

And Gray and Echols represent the opposite ends of the spectrum in how their recruiting stories unfolded— with Gray getting scant Power 5 attention as a wide receiver and Echols establishing himself as a fierce linebacker in the ninth grade and able to write his ticket to any elite school in the country.

Gray was a victory for the Tar Heels in talent evaluation, in sniffing out a diamond in the rough.

Echols was a win in offering a collegiate opportunity and program juice that beat off everyone from Clemson to Tennessee to Penn State.

"Coach Brown always says, the evaluation is the most important thing," Thigpen says. "We don't care about the so-called stars or whatever. People who give out stars are in the recruiting business, not the football business. There can be a huge difference."

Gray won "offensive player of the year" honors on his team as a sophomore in 2017, prompting Kell assistant coach Trey Kavanaugh to tweet at various times, "Will be telling your story for a long time" and "This kid's special." He played both ways as his career evolved, lining up at receiver and at safety and linebacker on defense. But the consensus among the college scouts was that his size and skills were not ideal fits for either side of the ball.

Through 2018 and early into 2019, Gray's social media timeline included "Blessed to receive an offer from" with Youngstown State, Campbell, Marshall, Kent State, UMass, Appalachian State, Toledo and Coastal Carolina the schools jockeying for position.

Thigpen saw something more.

"You talked to the local coaches and his name just kept coming up," he says. "It's not what the recruiting services think, it's what do your peers think about you, what do opposing coaches think about you? A common theme about Ced was

that he's a dawg and he's an alpha male. He loved football. He was crazy aggressive and had a huge football I.Q. As a 17 or 18-year-old, his demeanor was just different."

Gray committed to the Tar Heels in April 2019, the spring before his senior year, signed in December and enrolled in January 2020.

He learned his way playing under Chazz Surratt and Jeremiah Gemmel as a freshman and was given the chance to start in the third game of the 2021 season. Since then, he's started 25 straight games, hardly ever leaving the field, and in 2022 was first team All-ACC, his 145 tackles and 82 solos ranking first among all Power 5 defenders.

"I look at guys and the offers they had and see where they are now and just kind of chuckle," he says. "It was frustrating, but I carried a chip on my shoulder. It's been there ever since. God had a plan for me, and it's worked out best for me. You can only go to one school, so it doesn't matter how many offers you get. I brought the mentality I was just going to grind until my opportunity comes."

Meanwhile, there was no question about Echols.

Brian Echols played at Michigan State for head coach George Perles and secondary coach Mark Dantonio in the late 1990s. When his son was born, Echols wanted a name that reflected the essence of "power."

"I had all these ideas and tried different words that I thought represented what the word 'power' stood for," says Echols, today a private school athletic director in Mesa, Ariz. "Finally, I realized the best word was 'power' itself."

Father gave son an introduction and access to all sports as a youngster and watched as Power gravitated to football, that passion enhanced by watching NFL Films tapes of John Facenda's voice narrating old-school, smash-mouth games on the frozen tundra.

“His eyes lit up watching those films,” Brian says. “He was so dialed-in. He connected the dots as a kid.”

That’s what Thigpen saw when Echols was in the ninth grade. He not only showed that signature tenacity but speed as well, clocking a 4.5 time in the 40-yard dash at summer camp in Chapel Hill before he played a high school down.

“He was an alpha, alpha male, the most impactful and most feared guy in Charlotte,” Thigpen says. “He was a natural terror on the football field. He was so much fun to watch. You throw a fade he’s going to run to the fade. Blitz him and he’ll destroy your running back. His energy and love for football were really contagious.”

Carolina was the first school to offer Echols, this in the spring of his sophomore year. He committed in January 2020, while a junior in high school, then enrolled the following January. He drew a round of “oh my” the first day of live contact that spring when he flattened a senior offensive guard in the backfield. He stepped into the starting lineup as a sophomore in 2022, earning honorable mention All-ACC honors while making 103 tackles, with 70 solo stops that ranked fifth in the Power 5. At Miami in mid-October, he was all over the field, notching 14 tackles.

“Power knows one speed,” Thigpen says. “He will impose his will on you. He loves football. He’s violent and extremely intelligent. He and Ced are both like Sam Howell—they’re football junkies. They’re always watching tape, always figuring out how they can get better.”

Gray and Echols rarely left the field during the 2022 season not only because they were so lethal together but also because the Tar Heels had limited depth at the position. Brown told them every week, “Don’t get hurt, don’t get a targeting flag and don’t let your helmet pop off. We can’t have you coming out.” Gray in

No. 33 and Echols in No. 23 harkened comparison to another dynamic duo of yesteryear—Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen from the Chicago Bulls’ 1990s championship runs.

They also stood out in 2022 because they were the one position on defense that was truly outstanding, with the unit in tandem ranking No. 101 among FBS schools in scoring defense with 31 points allowed per game and No. 115 in total defense with 436 yards allowed. The front wall didn’t generate enough pass rush, the back line allowed too many explosive plays. With this being year two in coordinator Gene Chizik’s system, with some staff tweaks, with the return of several injured defenders and the addition of several newcomers via the transfer portal, Gray and Echols are both confident the defense will stage a turnaround in 2023.

“Last year everyone was getting accustomed to a new defense,” Gray says. “I definitely think we were a very talented team on defense but definitely had a few wrinkles to shake out. Toward the end of the year, I think you saw better defensive play. We will only grow now that we have that year under us. I am very confident. I think we will have a special year.”

“I am really tired of talking about it,” Echols says. “It irks me we even have to have this conversation about the defense. I know how good we are. Now I just want to put it on the field.”

Thigpen says to have one player like Gray or Echols every 10 years is a delight to a coach. But have two at the very same time?

“Power and Ced make practice enjoyable,” Thigpen says. “I call it ‘recess.’ It’s fun. You go out there they push each other so hard. The power and energy are like nothing you’ve ever seen.”

###

**NEW TITANS OC NICK
HOLZ READY TO WORK
ALONGSIDE HC BRIAN
CALLAHAN**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
FEBRUARY 14, 2024**

NASHVILLE – On the same day he was hired as head coach of the Tennessee Titans, Brian Callahan last month made his plans of calling the team's offensive plays known.

On Wednesday, Callahan introduced Nick Holz, the man he hired as his offensive coordinator.

So, what will the dynamics between the two look like?

Callahan said the working relationship will develop further in time, but he knows it can work since he operated in a similar structure at his previous job, as offensive coordinator with the Bengals.

"It's a little different than maybe you're used to around here," Callahan said, "having an offensive head coach that's calling the plays with an offensive coordinator by title, that doesn't call the plays. But it's a set-up I'm trying to emulate from how we were set up in Cincinnati with myself and (head coach) Zac Taylor. And it's a system that I know is important, and I know that it works.

"(Most) of Nick's job is to make sure the offensive staff and the offensive players and the offensive scheme keeps running all the moments I am not available to be there, particularly during the course of the week. There's a preparation part of it that is critically important to me."

Holz brings 11 years of NFL coaching experience to the Titans, and a total of 16 years coaching.

He joins the Titans after one season with Jacksonville as their Passing Game Coordinator.

"You need to be yourself first," Holz said of how he'll handle the set-up,

and approach his job. "I am not going to try and be Brian. We are different people in that regard. ... As each day goes, just seeing a few more things I can take off his plate It is really kind of an open dialogue the whole time in how we're trying to figure stuff out, and structure it this way."

Holz has deep ties with the Callahan, and his family. Holz and Brian Callahan were teammates at De La Salle High School (Calif.), and Holz got his start in coaching on Bill Callahan's staff at the University of Nebraska in 2007. Bill Callahan was officially named offensive line coach with the Titans.

Prior to joining the Jaguars, Holz spent 10 years (2012-21) with the Oakland/Las Vegas Raiders and served in a variety of roles on offense, mostly focused on wide receivers.

As an offensive unit, Holz said he wants to see players playing with effort and toughness, and "we really want to see guys playing with great speed, detail and execution."

Callahan and Holz believe they're like-minded in their offensive philosophy, and approach.

He plans to do his part to help the Titans be successful as a unit.

"Everybody has their own management style," Holz said. "I don't think you'll see me as a yeller and a screamer or anything like that. But I think if you build relationships with people, you kind of empower them to do their jobs.

"I feel like the people I have worked for, they empowered me ... As a leadership style, the same thing with the players, 'We're going to give you this, and you keep going and we'll build the connection in that regard.'"

###

**WITH NEW FACES
AROUND HIM, TITANS
VETERAN SAFETY AMANI
HOOKER READY TO LEAD
THE WAY**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 5, 2024**

NASHVILLE – When veteran safety Amani Hooker looks around, he sees a lot of newness.

New head coach, new defensive coordinator, new position coach, and plenty of new faces around him on the defense.

Hooker, heading into his sixth season with the Titans, wants to do his part to help lead the way.

"It's all about accountability, with me as well," Hooker said. "This is all new for me – it's a new style, a new defense, new scheme, so just like everyone else is learning, I am doing the same thing.

"But my job is to make sure everyone learns at a progressive level and we're doing it together as a unit."

Hooker is the second-longest tenured Titan alongside defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons, behind only outside linebacker Harold Landry. Hooker and Simmons were part of the 2019 draft class, and they've been mainstays ever since.

Before looking ahead, Hooker looked back at last season, and it reminded him of things he can do better moving forward.

"(Things I can) improve on is having ball disruption, getting my hands on the ball, whether that is interceptions, pass break-ups, forced fumbles," Hooker said. "Overall, just being the best overall safety I can be. I know I have a long road to get there, but I know my capabilities are there and I just have to improve this offseason and help my guys around me."

In five NFL seasons, Hooker has played in 66 games, with 37 starts. He's tallied 245 tackles, seven interceptions, and 22 passes defenses, along with two quarterback pressures and two forced fumbles.

In 2023, while playing in 13 games, Hooker totaled 80 tackles and an interception, along with three tackles for a loss.

Hooker said he's excited about the additions the team has made around him, including the addition of veteran cornerbacks L'Jarius Sneed and Chidobe Awuzie.

"We have two dogs – we have Chido and Sneed out there," Hooker said. "I can't wait to go full speed with them, with the pads on. I have been watching them make plays for the other team against us, so I am excited that they're on our team now and it's going to be a lot of fun.

"These guys have proven they can be in the right position to make the plays, and when I'm out there I am able to do my job now, and start searching for plays as they come to me. Knowing you have guys that are aggressive out there, it makes me as a safety have that same mentality that they have and bring it to our defense."

Hooker said he's also fired up about new defensive coordinator Dennard Wilson, and the mindset he's preaching.

Across the board, Hooker said guys are excited, and they see opportunities, whether they're new to the team, or been around several years like himself.

"I'll just say it's a lot more aggressive," Hooker said of the defense. "It has been aggressive there's times when it can be aggressive and there's times when not to, so our coaches are doing a good job teaching that."

###

AMANI HOOKER

TITANS SAFETY AMANI HOOKER THANKFUL FOR CONTRACT EXTENSION WITH THE TEAM

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
SEPTEMBER 9, 2022**

NASHVILLE – The Titans on Friday agreed to terms on a multi-year contract extension with safety Amani Hooker.

After practice on Friday, Hooker said he's thankful for several reasons.

"It means a lot," Hooker said. "It shows how much the Titans believe in me and trust me, and I have that same trust and confidence in them. I am just going to do my job to make sure I can help this team win and help them win a Super Bowl."

Hooker said he called his parents when the deal became official.

Growing up, Hooker recalled cutting grass, walking dogs, and working a construction job to make money. Hooker said he knew after two days the construction job wasn't for him.

The NFL has worked out well for Hooker and his family.

"My parents, they were with me when I was in little league and they knew my dream when I was in kindergarten," Hooker said. "For them to see where I am at today, I know they are very proud of me, and I wouldn't be here without them."

"Growing up, the dream was for me to get to the NFL, and it was also my dream to stay in the NFL and be able to provide for my family. Being able to do that is a blessing from God."

Hooker, heading into his fourth season, has played in 44 games, with 15 starts, for the Titans since being picked in the fourth round of the 2019 NFL Draft.

Over the years, Hooker has developed into a key player on the team's defense.

In 2021, Hooker started 12 games and finished the year with 62 tackles, and an interception. Hooker also added an interception on the team's playoff contest against the Bengals.

Hooker had a team-high four interceptions in 2020.

In three seasons, Hooker has recorded 119 tackles, five interceptions, 12 passes defended and a forced fumble.

With five career interceptions, Hooker is tied with Juan Thornhill for the third-most among safeties from the 2019 draft class, behind only Darnell Savage Jr. (eight) and Taylor Rapp (seven). From 2020 to 2021, only 11 NFL safeties had more interceptions than Hooker.

Hooker, whose contract was set to expire after the 2022 season before the extension, said the thought of playing alongside veteran safety Kevin Byard long-term is key.

"It is definitely a blessing," Hooker said of Byard. "Watching KB and how he is around the building, I wanted to mimic that because I've seen the success that he had off the field, and on the field as well."

"We have been together for four years, and we're about to be together for another four right now. So we're going to be able to be on the same page and be able to make plays and we'll be the best we can be."

The Titans kick off the 2022 season against the New York Giants on Sunday at Nissan Stadium.

###

BYARD SAYS HOOKER HAS FOLLOWED PROPER PATH TO LEADERSHIP

**BY MICHAEL HOGAN
SI.COM
JUNE 3, 2021**

Amani Hooker figures to make a bigger impact in more than one way this season.

First, the Tennessee Titans safety figures to be a full-time starter for the first time in his career after the team released veteran Kenny Vaccaro as part of a secondary overhaul in March.

He also hopes to be more of a leader for the defensive unit.

And nobody knows how to properly establish leadership than the man he will be playing beside in the defensive backfield this season, Kevin Byard, who has been a team captain in each of the past two seasons.

In order to become a good leader, Byard said, one must first be a good follower. And Hooker has done that well over his first two NFL seasons.

“I think Amani has been a great follower since he’s been here,” Byard said. “Watching me and (Vaccaro), or just watching any of the veteran guys and learning from them, learning how to be a pro.”

A third-round pick out of Middle Tennessee State in 2016, that’s exactly how Byard became one of the Titans’ most prominent voices in the locker room, for both on and off-field matters.

The Pro Bowler and All-Pro observed and learned from the likes of defensive back Jason McCourty and linebacker Brian Orapko.

Not only would Byard listen to what veterans had to say on a daily basis, but he paid close attention to the smallest of details. In the NFL, of course, doing the “little things” matters most.

“One thing that I did when I first got into the league was I looked at the parking lot,” Byard said. “When I got there in the morning, I was looking at cars ... what car is here early in the morning? Okay, this guy here. I was asking Jason, ‘Hey, what time are you getting here in the morning? Why are you coming here so early?’ They were getting rehab or doing the little things.”

A fourth-round pick out of Iowa in 2019, Hooker’s ascension to a more significant role on the defense started last season. His snaps with the defense increased, and when Vaccaro missed three games due to a lingering concussion, Hooker was called upon to start.

He finished tied for the team lead in interceptions with four and second in passes defended eight while also making 51 total tackles. All of those marks are career-highs.

Entering the 2021 season, Hooker is in a position to evolve as a leader for many reasons. Many younger players will fill the secondary after numerous moves in free agency and the NFL Draft.

But most importantly, he’s taken after many veterans over his first two seasons, including Byard.

“He’s into that role where he’s out there playing, he’s out there being more vocal, making calls and checks. That’s the start of it,” Byard said. “Going out there being sure of yourself, knowing what you need to do. When you assure yourself and know what you need to do, you can coach another guy up. I think he’s been doing pretty great at that.

“I think we’re going to be pretty good running mates this year.”

###

**WR DEANDRE HOPKINS IS
LOVING LIFE IN
TENNESSEE, WITH
TITANS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 25, 2024**

NASHVILLE – This time last year, DeAndre Hopkins was just settling in on his new team in Tennessee.

Now, the Titans receiver is already facing questions about his future.

On Thursday, Hopkins made it clear he'd like to remain in Tennessee for years to come.

"I love Tennessee, and I love what Miss Amy is doing," Hopkins said of controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk, and the franchise. "I think this is the happiest I've been in any organization, so let that speak for itself.

"(I like) how Miss Amy runs things. It's a great place to be. She is putting pieces together to try and win, and it's exciting."

Earlier in the week, Titans General Manager Ran Carthon was asked about the team's interest in retaining Hopkins beyond the length of his contract, which expires next March.

"He's one of the guys that's on our team, and we've talked about a number of guys on the team to have those conversations," Carthon said. "One thing I appreciate about D Hop is, if you guys have gotten to know him, D Hop is straight forward and D Hop and I, we can have some straightforward conversations, and we have and we do. And so D Hop knows how we feel about him, and I think that's a big thing, especially for a veteran at this stage of his career. I think the way he's shown up here, the way he's bought into a new staff, kind of shows how he feels about us and what we have going."

Hopkins, headed into his 12th NFL season, caught 75 passes for 1,057 yards and seven touchdowns in his first year with the Titans in 2023.

Hopkins, who played previously with the Houston Texans and Arizona Cardinals, said he feels good heading into 2024.

He also said he feels great about where he's living.

"I'm a country boy, so I grew up on country, I grew up around places like (Nashville), a little smaller," Hopkins said. "It's familiar, being from South Carolina."

###

**TENNESSEE TITANS'
DEANDRE HOPKINS HAS
POST-NFL PLAN, AND IT'S
ALL ABOUT COUNTRY
MUSIC**

**BY NICK SUSS
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
OCTOBER 5, 2023**

DeAndre Hopkins' plan in life means going from 'Put me in, Coach' to Coachella, from being pressed to CMA Fest.

Hopkins, the Tennessee Titans' star receiver, re-enrolled this semester at Clemson, taking online classes to pursue a degree in parks, recreation and tourism management. He wants to organize country music festivals once his playing days are done — a fitting desire for a South Carolina boy who calls Nashville home.

More importantly, he says, he wants to get his degree to fulfill a promise to his parents.

"My father died when I was 6 months," he said. "When I went to school, it was kind of something that I promised my mom. My mom and obviously my father, I kind of vowed that I would make both of them proud and graduate."

Juggling a college course load with an NFL schedule isn't easy. But neither is Hopkins' profession of choice after he's done with football.

DeAndre Hopkins the country music fan

Music festivals are integral to why Hopkins signed with the Titans in the first place. Titans general manager Ran Carthon took Hopkins and his girlfriend to CMA Fest in June when the veteran receiver was a free agent the team was wooing. As part of the visit, the Titans had country superstar Tim McGraw reach out and send Hopkins a personalized message.

"Believe it or not, he's a big Tim McGraw fan," Carthon said. "I'm thankful to Tim and his team because they reached out and let him

know that we wanted him here in this city."

Hopkins told *The Tennessean* he grew up listening to stars like McGraw and Kenny Chesney. He's a lifelong fan who took a class on country music history during his first stint at Clemson from 2010 to 2012. His passions have converged since coming to Nashville; just last week, he posted a TikTok video featuring a cameo from country star Kane Brown.

Hearing from McGraw during CMA Fest was a big deal for Hopkins. They mostly talked business, Hopkins says, which isn't much of a surprise given what McGraw's responsibilities were that weekend.

So you want to organize music festivals?

Tiffany Kerns is the senior vice president of industry relations and philanthropy for the Country Music Association. One of her responsibilities is overseeing CMA Fest, which she says she has to work on and think about year-round.

It's not just booking talent and locations. It's communicating with managers and publicists. It's concocting weather contingency plans and making deals with vendors and ensuring large crowds can stay safe in crowded spaces. It's understanding the difference between how to court an emerging artist with three people in her camp and how to approach a legacy act with 30 or 40 employees on the bankroll. It's about being intimately familiar with every corner and crevasse of the music industry and structuring a four-day event so that the only people who feel any burden or stress are those planning everything.

Her best example actually relates back to McGraw. At about the same time McGraw was palling around with Hopkins, he also was preparing to sing "Humble and Kind" with a chorus of schoolchildren on the final day of the festival. During rehearsals, one of the children passed out from low blood sugar.

Staff had to find a way to cool him down in the sweltering Nashville summer, get some food in his system and make sure he was able to perform without scaring the other kids.

The boy rebounded and sang that night. McGraw went off-book and started talking about the CMA Foundation "as if he were a staff member," Kerns said, as he went beyond what anyone behind the scenes could have imagined to help raise awareness for the organization's charitable causes.

"I got to see both the, 'Oh man, we couldn't have expected that' and the, 'Man, it couldn't have been planned better,'" Kerns said. "It all happened in the same day in the same performance."

Student life and festival life

Prior to the Titans' Week 3 game against the Cleveland Browns, a clip of Hopkins walking around the Titans' practice facility while attending a Zoom class went viral on social media. His classmates were just as gobsmacked to see him as the general public.

According to Mack, the class is a junior-level parks, recreation and tourism management course. Between undergraduate and graduate students, Clemson has about 600 people pursuing PRM degrees. Mack says a lot of class time is spent on perfecting résumés and giving students tools to be able to succeed in their chosen field. It's not exactly a group project kind of class, so Hopkins shouldn't have to worry about skipping practice to help his classmates design PowerPoint slides.

"It was kind of crazy," said R.J. Mack, one of Hopkins' classmates. "I'm just used to having all the football players in my class. That's nothing out of the normal. But seeing him in my class, it was like, 'Oh, snap.' He's doing the same thing I'm doing but he's already made it in life."

When asked about the rigors of going back to college in the middle of an NFL season, Hopkins pointed out it's not like he's going to law school. His professor understands his schedule and Hopkins says his grasp of the playbook is strong enough now that he isn't splitting his study time between football and school.

Festival season mainly lives in the summer. Kerns says the best way to crack into the music festival industry is to observe and learn as much as one can about what's going on behind the scenes, so he'll have opportunities to do that once the season is done.

Kerns is quick to warn, however, that the job isn't for everyone.

"The first thing that I say to anyone is let's make sure that there's due diligence in finding out what programs that are out there that pour into you as you go on this journey," she said. "Don't try to figure this out on your own."

Hopkins probably doesn't need to worry about that part. He's already hanging out with Brown and talking shop with McGraw. Nashville is his playground and he's taking advantage of it to get closer to pursuing another passion of his.

But he's not losing sight of his promises, either.

"I don't think I do it for the support or the validation of anyone but myself and my father and my mom," he said.

###

TITANS WR DEANDRE HOPKINS VOWS TO KEEP COLLEGE GRADUATION PROMISE TO HIS MOM

BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

NASHVILLE – Receiver DeAndre Hopkins is committed to winning, and doing his part to help the Titans win in any way possible.

But the 11-year pro also made a commitment to his mother years ago, and he plans to follow through on that promise as well.

Hopkins is attending online, and virtual, classes at Clemson University after he recently re-enrolled in school as a student.

"It's important because I come from a family where not a lot of people graduated," Hopkins said on Friday. "My father died when I was six months (old), and when I went to school that is something I promised my mom. ... I vowed that I'd make both of them proud, and graduate, and that's something I promised my mom that I would do, knowing that my father would want me to graduate college."

Hopkins left Clemson after the 2012 season to enter the NFL, and he was a first-round pick of the Houston Texans in the 2013 NFL Draft.

Recently, Hopkins decided to pick up where he left off.

Hopkins is working toward a degree in parks, recreation and tourism management.

"I always was interested in managing facilities," Hopkins said. "Before I came to Nashville, I always wanted to put on music festivals and country music festivals, growing up on country music. That was my interest, going into that degree."

Hopkins said his teacher is very understanding of his NFL schedule, so that helps.

A five-time Pro Bowler, Hopkins also has a pretty understanding NFL coach in Mike Vrabel.

Titans coaches and trainers are working with Hopkins as he does his best to recover from the ankle injury he suffered in the season opener at New Orleans.

Hopkins didn't practice on Friday after being limited in Thursday's practice. Hopkins was a full participant in Wednesday's practice.

Hopkins didn't practice at all last week, but he ended up playing against the Chargers.

The Titans face the Browns in Cleveland on Sunday.

"I feel good," Hopkins said. "I feel good about everything going into this week. ... Me being, as you guys say, an old veteran player, I am just taking some time to kind of get healthy all the way. I wouldn't say it's the same as last week. I would just say Vrabel, (I'm) just trusting in Vrabel's plan."

Hopkins said the plan is for him to make the trip to Cleveland.

His status for Sunday is to be determined. Hopkins is officially listed as QUESTIONABLE for Sunday's game.

In two games this season, Hopkins has 11 catches for 105 yards.

"I've played a lot of ball, and missed very few games," Hopkins said. "I'm just trusting the plan, and just be ready to go out when my number is called."

###

DEANDRE HOPKINS WILL LET HIS HANDS DO THE TALKING

BY CLAY SKIPPER
GQ.COM
SEPTEMBER 7, 2023

It's just past 8:00 AM on a Sunday in August when DeAndre Hopkins glides into a meeting room at the Tennessee Titans' practice facility. He's cheerful, if a bit tired: the star wide receiver and his new teammates were in Minnesota last night for a preseason game, and didn't get back to Nashville until 2:30 AM. Coffee is summoned, along with cinnamon and honey. The honey comes in one of those adorable bear-shaped bottles, and all but disappears into the 10-inch vacuums that are Hopkins's hands. Once caffeinated, he ties his dreadlocks back behind his head, and begins to talk about the last several months. "This is probably one of the more exciting offseasons I've had," he says.

It has certainly been eventful, and for good reason: Entering his 11th season, Hopkins finds himself at perhaps the most critical point in his career. In May, the Arizona Cardinals, his former team, released him. He hit the NFL job market with one of the league's most dazzling LinkedIn pages: first among all active receivers in yards and receptions, and third in touchdowns. And there are those hands, hovering up anything that gets even remotely close. Over the last three seasons, he has dropped just three of the 315 balls fired his way.

And yet, finding his next team was a protracted process. Hopkins is 31 now, entering his second decade in a league where the average career lasts about three years. On top of that, he's spent a good chunk of the last two seasons on the sideline, for injuries and for a suspension after failing a test for performance enhancing drugs. That left some teams a bit lukewarm on the idea of signing a free agent that, just a couple years ago, was one of the hottest receivers in the NFL. "There

were some teams that I had on my list that I gave them calls and they didn't give a call back," he says.

Don't get him wrong, he's happy to be in Tennessee—he just landed with a bit of extra motivation. "I'm very grateful for where I am, I think I made the best decision," he says. "But when you're a player and some people feel like they're great without you, and then you see what they have on paper, or you see what they do, you mark those games down, as a competitor. I can't wait to play 'em and, honestly, try my best to crush they ass."

I ask if he'd like to be a bit more specific which teams he's talking about. He takes a long pause and a sip of his honeyed coffee, before repeating the question—as if he doesn't have the list memorized, or perhaps weighing whether or not he wants to stir things up.

"Detroit Lions, they didn't want me," he says, finally. "Dallas Cowboys didn't want me. Giants didn't want me. Shit. Who else ain't want me? San Fran ain't want me."

He relays this with a chuckle that carries more equanimity than bitterness. His words come low and slow in a slightly Southern lilt from his days growing up in the South Carolina country. Maybe it's because he's dressed down—white T-shirt, bright Titan-blue shorts, black socks, and navy blue slides—and a bit underslept, but Hopkins exudes calm. It's been hard-earned. His father died in a car accident when Hopkins was a baby. About ten years later, his mom was attacked by a woman who threw acid on her, an assault that put her in a coma and ultimately left her blind. That's always provided him a measure of perspective. Now he's rounding it out with experience. He has the benefit of having already played with something to prove after years spent already proving it. In 2020, he was traded by the Houston Texans, the team that drafted him in 2013. He was one of the best receivers in the NFL, and still seemed to be on his way up. The Texans sent him to the Cardinals

anyway, in exchange for a running back most considered to be on his way down. "It didn't hurt me, as much as it hurt them," Hopkins says, when I ask if that stung. (He's not wrong: the Texans have failed to win more than four games in any of the three seasons since they've traded Hopkins away.)

So today, he comes off as a guy not easily bothered, even in the midst of what was an uncertain—or, as he says, exciting—offseason. "I've never really been a person who got up or down too much about what's going on around me, like with football, because I know once I get on the field, my play is going to speak for itself," he says.

Be that as it may, sitting here, before the season, he has some things he'd like to say anyway: about what went wrong in Arizona, why he decided to join the Titans, and a message for the teams that he can't seem to reach by phone.

"I don't look at age, but it's some of the reason some teams might've passed up on me. Their #1 DB would have a hard time against me on the island," he says. What teams might've seen as age, Hopkins sees as experience, a backlog of routes run and balls caught that has him feeling pretty good about what he still has left in the tank: "It ain't too many people out there that can say honestly that they can lock me down, guard me for a full four quarters."

DeAndre Hopkins's hands have always stood out. As a kid, when people would shake his hand, they would comment on how big it was. In fifth or sixth grade, his aunt had to explain to him that he needed to be a bit gentler with the passes he was throwing to his rec basketball teammates—he had such a strong grip on the ball that his teammates couldn't catch the frozen ropes he was whipping their way. Eventually, of course, he turned to catching instead of throwing. Rob Moore, his new wide receivers coach at the Titans, said the first thing he noticed about him was how those hands "attack the football," giving

Hopkins a much larger range of reception than is available to most other people. “You see why he’s a security blanket for a lot of quarterbacks,” says Moore. “Because he has that knack for getting his hands on the football and completing the catch. Some guys can get to it but can’t finish it.”

That Hopkins does finish it is not just because of the whirlpools on the end of his arms. It’s knowing how to properly deploy them, combining deft timing, elite body control, and fearless competitiveness. “We always felt like the tighter the coverage, the more open he was,” says Mike Vrabel, who, in addition to being Hopkins’s new coach at the Tennessee Titans, was defensive coordinator for the Houston Texans in 2017 and 2018, and so faced Hopkins in practice. “That didn’t bother him. Guys on body, just hanging on him or close to him, is something that he would almost rather have. He would rather feel and know where they were, it felt like.” Ryan Tannehill, the Titans quarterback, says the first pass he threw to his new teammate was a go-ball down the sideline in tight coverage. “I put the ball kind of high so he can go up and get it, and sure enough, he goes up and makes the play,” he says. “He’s a guy who can always create a little bit of space.”

One of the other major attributes that helped separate Hopkins from more mortal receivers was his durability: he played in 132 of his first 134 career games. But in 2021, his second year in Arizona, that changed. First, an aggravated hamstring forced him to sit out three games in the middle of the season. In his second game back, he tore his MCL and missed the rest of the year. They were the first significant injuries of Hopkins’s career. Then, ahead of last season, the league announced that Hopkins failed a test for performance enhancing drugs, which resulted in him being suspended for the first six games of 2022. (Hopkins maintains that he has no idea how ostarine, the substance he says he tested positive for, got into his system. “I didn’t take the shit,” he tells me.)

When he returned in the middle of last year, he played the remainder of the year and averaged nearly 80 yards per game, making him, once again, one of the top 10 receivers, production-wise. But all the time missed had done damage to Hopkins’s reputation. Was his body breaking down? In 2021’s annual NFL Top 100 preseason poll, a ranking of the top 100 players as voted on by fellow players, Hopkins was number eight, and the second receiver on the list. Ahead of this season, he had fallen to number ninety.

Hopkins has heard this talk, particularly with regard to his torn MCL. He points out that the tear happened not because his knee gave out, but because two guys landed on his leg. A “freakish accident,” he calls it. “Of course you hear all the rumors, like, Oh, he’s getting old, and stuff like that, but those injuries happen to people who are 20 or 21.” Of course, it’s easier to bounce back when you’re 21 than when you’re 31. Which is why Hopkins has grown newly obsessed with taking care of his body. In fact, he goes as far as calling his injuries a blessing. “I don’t look at anything as a mistake,” he says. “Obviously, God is telling me I need to do something different. That’s just how I look at stuff, on a spiritual level.” In this case, what God was telling him was that he needed to supplement what was partially God-given—his hands, his durability—with a better fitness and nutrition plan. For instance, he says it wasn’t until Arizona that he got a chef, who started helping him rethink a pregame meal routine that, back when he was with the Texans, was not always as stellar as his play.

“Being in Houston, there’s so much food and it’s so accessible,” he says. “If you don’t really have a strong will, or a chef, how would you know not to go to Mastro’s and get you whatever steak you wanted?” He remembers one game day morning in particular when, feeling like shit after taking down a Texas-sized serving of red meat the night before, he went to stadium early to try and

sweat it out in the steam room. All that did was give him cramps when the game started. “I didn’t understand you can’t just drink water when you get out of the steam, you gotta drink salt and potassium,” he says. Though he laughs at the memory, his point is a powerful one: Hopkins has always been elite because of his in-game ability to control his body in tight spaces, but he’s learning more and more about how to take care of it before he even puts on his pads.

So he applied the same logic to his training. After his MCL surgery, he looked for the best trainer he could find, and got connected to Nicholas Hill at Exos, a strength and speed coach who has worked closely with other NFL stars like Odell Beckham, Jr., and Saquon Barkley. Up until then, Hopkins says he relied mostly on his natural athleticism. “I’m from the country, so I go run some hills and lift some weights, and I’m good, you know?” he says. Hill introduced him to track-based work, incorporating exercises that taught Hopkins new things about acceleration, mechanics, and body positions and angles. Think about that for a second: Hopkins racked up more than 11,000 receiving yards before he knew how to train for speed. “He’s building strength that he didn’t have before,” says Hill. “He’s getting better at 31 years old, which is a scary thought.”

Hopkins agrees. “This is probably the best shape I’ve been in physically since I’ve been playing, since I came into the NFL from college,” he says, before acknowledging that most older players tend to say that. “But I feel like my training and my body has—not changed, but adjusted to my training routine and my eating habits. I feel healthier after practice.” On top of that, he has the type of veteran savvy that only comes through experience. Last year, he performed well in a rather disappointing situation in Arizona, playing for a team that cycled through four quarterbacks, and finished the season on a serious losing skid. “I still thrived in the

offense with a lot going on outside the game of football,” he says. “That’s not just being smart or good. That’s being mentally strong as well.”

A testament to this mental strength: Hopkins’s NFL-topping 11,298 career receiving yards have come while playing for thirteen different starting quarterbacks. The fact that he has thrived in an 11-year game of quarterback musical chairs speaks to Hopkins’s mindset, a balance of acceptance and positivity, and an ability to find opportunity no matter the external circumstance. It’s something Hill saw early on during his work with Hopkins, when the PED suspension came down. “He was like, I want to use this time, I don’t want to waste it,” he remembers. “He was very positive about it: It is what it is, there’s nothing we can do about it, let’s take advantage of this additional time.” It’s that type of ease that anchored Hopkins during a chaotic offseason, and that has him feeling confident in learning yet another offensive system. “I didn’t mind not knowing where I would land up,” he says. “To me, I was like, that’s longer I can be in the gym. That’s longer I can go work and craft. I don’t mind at all, cause I know the work I put in the offseason, it’ll show anywhere I go.”

When Hopkins was released by the Cardinals, he immediately became one of the more intriguing stories of the NFL offseason. Because he had been stuck on those mostly underperforming teams with that carousel of mediocre quarterbacks, people couldn’t help but wonder: Would we see an all-time receiver land at a place where he might run down a Super Bowl ring before his career is over?

Hopkins believes that the 2021 Cardinals team he was on, during the season he got injured, had a shot, referring to that year as “our Super Bowl year in Arizona.” They were 7-1 when the hamstring first sidelined him. They lost five of their next nine games, and then lost in the first round of the playoffs. Then came the 4-13 finish last year and

Hopkins’s release from the team. I ask him what went wrong. He takes a long pause, considering. “I feel like we stopped having faith in each other, as a team,” he says. “I feel like if the trust isn’t there, it’s hard to win games.”

Hopkins says that as soon as he saw the Titans practice, he recognized a different kind of work ethic, one he hadn’t seen on past teams. “I wouldn’t say it’s because of Arizona, the reason I came here, to have that 360 switch, but I would say it was definitely part of my decision to be somewhere that did have a winning culture, or a fighting culture.”

One of the big reasons for that type of culture is head coach Mike Vrabel, who spent eight of his 14 NFL seasons playing linebacker at the New England Patriots for the ultimate culture-builder Bill Belichick (the two won three Super Bowls together).

“What I love about Vrabel is that he keeps it real with you,” Hopkins says. “He doesn’t care who you are.”

Case in point: After Vrabel left his defensive coordinator position at the Texans to take the Titans head coaching job after the 2018 season, he saw a clip of Hopkins dropping a pass against the Colts. Hopkins received a postgame text from his former coach. Why didn’t you catch that? That ain’t you, Hopkins remembers it saying. Or take a more recent example. “From the second day I got here, he called me out in a team meeting about a play that I fucked up on,” says Hopkins. “I was like, damn, it’s only been one day. I’m over here thinking I’m good, I made a couple plays. We get in the team meeting, and he called me out.” Hopkins can’t remember that happening since the very beginning of his career. “I was like, okay, this is a different standard of football, and I like this,” he says. “This is how you win.”

Except, last year, the Titans struggled to win, losing their last seven games to finish 7-10. If his motivation was only about winning,

it might’ve made more sense for Hopkins to sign with the Kansas City Chiefs or the Buffalo Bills, two of the other three teams (along with the New England Patriots) that he says did call him. The Chiefs won the Super Bowl last year, the Bills are a serious threat to make it there this year, and both teams have generationally good quarterbacks.

But those teams wouldn’t pay Hopkins what he thought he was worth. “You have to know your value and have some level of respect for who you are as a human being,” he says. “Is the possibility of you going somewhere who is a Super Bowl-caliber team, on paper, is that worth you being paid minimum? It doesn’t add up.”

So he signed a two-year, \$26 million deal with a team that he feels is, like him, being overlooked. He points to the fact that the Titans, reduced to using their third-string quarterback, were still one game away from making the playoffs last year. Plus, every other year during Vrabel’s five-year tenure has been a winning one, and includes two division titles and one AFC championship appearance. “I feel like the Titans have a chance to win the Super Bowl, and they’ve shown that, over the past couple years,” he says. “There’s not many teams that can say that they just ran over the Titans.” Though, as Hopkins has learned, NFL fans tend to have a short memory, particularly when recent struggles cloud past success. “A lot of people have written them off, like they’ve written me off,” he says.

If Hopkins has played long enough to know his worth, he’s also played long enough to know not to tie all of it up in football. “You cannot just try to be a football player,” says Hopkins. “You can’t let that consume who you are, because you’ll get lost.”

Look no further than the ink on his body to spot the symbols for some of the other things he cares about deeply: a peace symbol on the back of his left hand; a Buddha on the inside of his right forearm; the

hieroglyphic symbols for “family” on the side of his head; a portrait of his mom and dad on the inside of his biceps. His family and his spirituality have managed to give him a measure of peace: “I do understand that life is like a cycle, and you choose your happiness,” he says. “Even as a kid, I always took a positive aspect to certain negative things.”

He points to his father’s death and his mom’s assault.

“Was I mad before? As a kid? Yeah, I used to be very angry, because I used to be very confused about not having a father,” he says. He used to struggle with the fact that other kids would have their mom and dad at their games, and Hopkins might only have an aunt. “As I got older, I just realized my mom is working two jobs, trying to take care of four kids. What happened to my dad, it’s like, shit, I can’t do nothing about it. I can only try to, as I got older, be the man in the household that he’d want me to be.”

This is the mentality that allows Hopkins to see his injuries as a blessing, his suspension as an opportunity, and, this offseason, to let go of any grudges. “My mom forgave the woman who threw acid on her and left her blind. Me seeing that and having someone like that in my life, it’s hard for me to sit there and be mad about a football team trading me, or someone not wanting me for my abilities. It’s like, do I care? Yeah. But, shit is that like the end-all, be-all? No, life goes on.”

The next big chapter of that life officially starts this weekend, in New Orleans, when Hopkins will first take the field as a Titan and answer the questions that have been following him the last couple of years. The league will be paying close attention, especially, perhaps, those teams that weren’t sure if he still has the juice. I ask Hopkins what the teams that passed on him should know. What did the Titans get that they all missed out on?

“Man, shit, you ask the people around this building, since I been

here, what they got?” he says. “That’s a wolf. Not a dog. Wolves eat dogs. You feel me? They got a wolf.”

###

**DEANDRE HOPKINS IS
HAPPY TO MAKE THE
SPECTACULAR FEEL
NORMAL FOR TENNESSEE
TITANS FOOTBALL**

**BY NICK SUSS
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
JULY 29, 2023**

Just because it's new for the Tennessee Titans doesn't mean it's new for DeAndre Hopkins.

Hopkins generated headlines and fanfare with a highlight catch over cornerback Kristian Fulton at Titans training camp Friday, picking a contested ball out of the air and muscling his way to the ground through Fulton. To Titans fans, it's the kind of play that energizes an offense that desperately needed a top-tier pass catching threat.

To Hopkins, it's a weekday.

"I've been doing that since I've been at Clemson, so obviously now you guys get to see it," Hopkins said Saturday. "It's what I've been doing since I've been playing football. Obviously Ryan (Tannehill) trusts me to just put the ball up in the air and for me to come down with it. Hopefully we can keep doing that to build that rapport."

Hopkins said he hasn't had a problem feeling like himself through three days of practice, even after a bizarre offseason that saw him released by the Arizona Cardinals in May and unsigned into July. He didn't officially sign with the Titans until two days before training camp opened, but that didn't stop him from staying in shape and honing his skills; Titans coach Mike Vrabel said he has been pleased with Hopkins' conditioning.

Heading into his 11th year as a pro, Hopkins is once again adjusting to life with a new quarterback. He said he and Tannehill still have things to work on but they have been able to "put a lot together" in their quest to build chemistry. That manifested early, with Tannehill completing passes to Hopkins in team periods

on both of the first two practice days.

Hopkins has been impressed with second-year receiver Treyton Burks, complimenting him for his willingness to seek out and even demand extra practice reps to work specific routes. And he said he thinks backup quarterbacks Malik Willis and Will Levis are getting better and putting the work in to be NFL passers.

But mostly, Hopkins is just sliding into his new role. He's wearing No. 10, just as he did in Houston and Arizona. Not that there was any conflict about that. He said he didn't have to petition or give any huge payout to get the number, which he says he has always worn in honor of an unlikely idol of his.

"(Lionel) Messi was one of my favorite athletes," Hopkins said. "Just being a soccer fan, I always felt like if I had a chance, I wanted to put some respect to Messi."

###

**COMFORTABLE
SURROUNDINGS LEADING
TO OFFSEASON GROWTH
FOR TITANS' JHA'QUAN
JACKSON**

**BY JUSTIN MELO
BROADWAY SPORTS
MEDIA
JUNE 17, 2024**

Tennessee Titans rookie wide receiver Jha'Quan Jackson has been acclimating to professional football. From getting into a huddle to defeating press-man coverage, Jackson has showcased consistent improvement. One thing that's helped him is his relationship with running back Tyjae Spears.

Jackson and Spears have leaned on each other beyond football. Whether it was navigating Nashville following the NFL draft, or playing top golf and laser tag to ensure an escape from football was present when appropriate, Jackson has counted on his best friend. It led to desirable on-field results throughout OTAs and mandatory minicamp.

Jackson recently spoke exclusively with Broadway Sports. Jackson discussed his acclimation growth throughout minicamp and OTAs, route running in a new offense, his bond with Spears, and more. We also discussed his relationship with wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert and veteran players like Jeffery Simmons and DeAndre Hopkins.

JM: You've now completed three offseason workout phases as a Tennessee Titans rookie receiver. You participated in rookie minicamp, mandatory minicamp, and OTAs. How do you feel you're acclimating to professional football? What was the overall experience like?

Jha'Quan Jackson: It's been a great experience so far. It's an honor to be here. It's the blessing of a lifetime. I've dreamed about playing in the NFL ever since I was a young boy. I've always wanted to be the best player I can be.

Going into that first week of minicamp, I was learning the playbook and getting to know the coaching staff. I was learning about the organization and how the culture wants to function. We had OTAs the following week and that's when they started ramping up my reps.

The reps ramped up once again when I got to mandatory minicamp. By the time minicamp came around, I felt like I knew the playbook inside-out. I was getting my splits right and being a great communicator.

I was seeing coverages faster as well. That first week, you're just trying to get your feet underneath you. It's a new offense so you're trying to do the right things, trying to be in the right spot at the right time.

It goes back to what coach Brian Callahan did with the Cincinnati Bengals. There's a lot of different ways you can scheme things up to get your guy open.

JM: Expanding on that, did you have a "Welcome to the NFL" moment during that first week of practice? Something that made you say wow, this is definitely different?

Jha'Quan Jackson: I mean, that was probably the first time I really got into a huddle (laughs). We didn't huddle in college. We used to get the call from the sidelines. That's where we got our signals from. I could probably mention a few things, but really being in the huddle for the first time was the biggest difference.

JM: I love that (laughs). Wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert attended your pro day at Tulane. Do you remember your interactions with him at pro day?

Jha'Quan Jackson: I definitely do. It was great. I had great interactions with every member of the Titans I met with throughout the pre-draft process. When coach Tolbert came to Tulane, we spoke before the pro day workout even started. We talked about my background and my family. We didn't even really talk

about football until after the workout.

We got on the white board a little bit. He wanted to see how fast I could recall the offense. He was impressed with what I showed him that day. I recalled the offense to him.

Who would've thought I would be with the Titans, man? Remember Justin, the last time you and I spoke, you told me I was going to be a Titan [at the Senior Bowl] (laughs). That's crazy that you called it in January. It's funny. I'm back with my guy [Tyjae Spears] and a lot of other great players.

It's a great organization with an amazing general manager and head coach. I can't forget the owner Mrs. Amy Adams Strunk. She's an amazing person.

JM: She sure is! I appreciate your kind words. What's your relationship like with coach Tolbert today? How is he helping you get better?

Jha'Quan Jackson: It's been great. It goes beyond coach Tolbert. All of the assistant coaches around him have been great as well. They're always ready and willing to help. You might see the defensive backs coach telling the receivers how the DB might play a route. Everybody wants to help everybody.

It's been nothing but love since the moment I got here, not just from the coaches, but from the veteran receivers as well. Guys like Arden Key, Tony Pollard, Tyjae Spears, and Jeffery Simmons have been trying to help out us rookies.

Everybody is pushing us to be great. From the head coach to the defensive coordinator, it's all of their first seasons in charge. It's a new team and a new organization. It's a new offense and a new defense for everybody, not just for the rookies.

Even the veterans feel like it's a brand new team. Everybody is really starting from square one. It's all about how quickly you can learn

and pick up the scheme. Coach Tolbert has been a great asset for us in that regard.

Coach Tolbert wants us to be the best players we can be. We're working on developing the tools we need to be successful. He coached Darnell Mooney in Chicago, Anquan Boldin, Odell Beckham Jr., Peyton Manning, and so on. He's been around a lot of great players.

JM: He has a terrific resume. One of the biggest challenges any rookie receiver faces is getting used to seeing more press coverage. You didn't see a lot of it at Tulane. How are you managing so far? The Titans have an incredible room of cornerbacks that will challenge you at the line of scrimmage.

Jha'Quan Jackson: That's one of the biggest things when going from college to the NFL. You have guys that are just as fast as you. Everybody is good in this league. You have some guys that lean on football I.Q. and technique. Game speed, tendencies, it's all completely different from college.

At the end of the day, constantly working on your craft is what separates you and makes you better. It goes back to what coach Brian Callahan did with the Cincinnati Bengals. There's a lot of different ways you can scheme things up to get your guy open.

Press coverage doesn't necessarily have to be harder. It's all about knowing who you're up against. If you're going up against L'Jarius Sneed or Chauncey Gardner-Johnson, or somebody like Sauce Gardner, there are different types of players and different ways to win in this league.

It's all about how you prepare yourself for that specific opponent.

JM: Your relationship with Tyjae Spears has been well documented. You guys were best friends and roommates at Tulane. What's it been like to reunite with him?

Jha'Quan Jackson: It's been great. Once I got the call, everybody knew he was at my draft party (laughs). He was right there with me. He thought I was going to get drafted by a different team. We were both so excited when the Titans made that call.

I've been here in Nashville ever since I got drafted. It goes beyond being with Tyjae. I'm loving the city of Nashville. It's nice, calm, and quiet. I'm thankful that I get to wake up and spend almost every day with my best friend.

JM: I love the way you guys are leaning on each other. It goes way beyond football.

I told Tyjae Spears just yesterday when we were together, I probably would have been sad if I got drafted somewhere else. I would've been alone in that city. You can try to make it feel like home wherever you end up, but it's hard when you don't have anybody that you really know in that city. Being with him makes it feel like home.

He told me he was sad a lot last year when he first got to Nashville. Don't get me wrong, he was so happy to be a Titan, but he didn't have anybody from back home here. I don't know what that feels like because I've been lucky enough to have him by my side every step of the way. I can't imagine not having him here with me.

I felt way more confident and better about myself when I got here. I'm talking about life away from football. We can go play top golf or laser golf together. Hey man, let's do something to get you out of the house. He didn't really have that person last year.

We both feel so comfortable right now.

JM: We couldn't be happier for you both. As you continue getting familiar with everybody else on the team, what's your first impressions of Will Levis as a quarterback?

Jha'Quan Jackson: All three quarterbacks have been doing a great job. It's a new offense like I said earlier. We're all hammering down and learning the new system. From the first read to the second and third, it's totally different. Those quarterbacks are learning the playbook to make sure they put the ball in the right position.

That's true for Mason Rudolph as well. Malik Willis is doing a great job every single day. All three of those quarterbacks are competing. They're trying to be the best quarterbacks they can be.

JM: You practiced returning kicks and punts at OTAs. That's something you did frequently at Tulane. Are you hoping to be the starting kick and punt returner this season?

Jha'Quan Jackson: My goal is just to come in every day and go to work. Everything else will work itself out. I'm leaving that up to the coaches. They'll be the ones to make those decisions. They want to put the right guys on the field to help us win games. I try to be the best teammate I can be. I'm pushing myself to be better and I'm pushing my teammates to go harder as well.

JM: We've appreciated your time today. This has been outstanding. You're now on a midsummer break before training camp begins in late July. What are your goals heading into camp?

Jha'Quan Jackson: My main goal is to ensure that I'm both physically and mentally ready for camp. I have to make sure I'm prepared and up to par. This is going to be my first training camp at the NFL level. I'm going to keep my eyes and ears open.

I'm going to be a sponge. We have guys like DeAndre Hopkins, Calvin Ridley, and Tyler Boyd in our receiver room. Those guys are going to help make me a better player. I'm going to listen to all of their tips so I can catch on faster.

Say we have a formation out there with a play-call and concept versus a certain coverage. I know those receivers are going to help me understand what and why our approach is. It's all about those quicker tendencies. I'm trying to learn something in five seconds as opposed to 12 seconds (laughs).

I want to be efficient. That's how you line up fast and play fast.

###

ARDEN KEY IS SET TO PLAY CRITICAL ROLE FOR TITANS' DEFENSE, WRITES MIKE HERNDON

**BY MIKE HERNDON,
COLUMNIST
PAULKUHARSKY.COM
AUGUST 2, 2023**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- It has been impossible not to notice Arden Key early in Titans' training camp.

When the free agent addition isn't popping up in the backfield again... and again... and again, he's – loudly – rooting on his defensive teammates and chirping at the offense. His energy level is intense and unrivaled among players on both the current Titans squad and any other version of the team that I've covered over the past six years.

Key brings an easy smile, a big personality, and a loud voice to a team that has sometimes lacked that type of presence. Defensive coordinator Shane Bowen talked on Tuesday about him being able to bring some teammates along, which can be an asset for a team over the grind of a 17-game season.

Of course, being loud and energetic means nothing if there isn't production to go along with it. Practice sacks don't count, but if they did, Key would probably already be ready to renegotiate his contract. His current running total – as estimated by Key and Austin Stanley of AtoZ Sports – is now at 14 through his first five training camp practices in Tennessee, including a seven-sack day last Friday.

Speaking of Key's contract, it's worth noting that he received the most guaranteed money (\$13 million) of any of the Titans' veteran additions this offseason, including DeAndre Hopkins (\$10.98 million) and the man often tasked with blocking him in camp, Andre Dillard (\$10 million). That's a pretty clear indication of how Ran Carthon and Mike Vrabel viewed

him as a free agent and it makes him one of a very short list of Titans players who are virtually guaranteed to be on the roster in 2024.

Key was the first name I mentioned back in February when I previewed the market for edge rushers. As I wrote then:

“The best options aren't big names, but could be good investments, starting with Arden Key, who saw his career get revived in San Francisco in 2021 and then provided good value as a rotational rusher for the Jaguars last season.

His 18.1 percent win rate was 15th among 49 edge rushers with at least 325 pass rush snaps last season, sandwiched between Montez Sweat and teammate Josh Allen. He'll be 27 next season and seems to still be ascending as a player at the NFL level after a slow start to his career.”

Key's career has become quite a redemption story. After breaking out with 11 sacks as a sophomore at LSU, he was largely viewed as a future first-round pick. Injuries and off-field issues, which included him checking into rehab for marijuana addiction, dropped his draft stock in 2017, leading to him being selected by the Raiders in the third round with the 87th overall pick.

In Oakland, he was thrown directly into the fire, playing more than 50 percent of snaps in 13 of 16 games as a rookie for the league's worst defense. Key struggled to produce, notching just one sack despite heavy playing time.

He was reduced to a rotational role in 2019 and had his season ended early by a foot fracture, producing no sacks and just 12 total pressures by PFF charting. After getting healthy before the start of the 2020 season, Key remained in a depth role, contributing two sacks in over 14 games. Before the start of the 2021 NFL draft, Key was released by the Raiders.

Key's time with the Raiders was clearly a failure, but there are some advanced numbers that suggested

the career rebirth that we've seen over the past two years was coming. His pass rush win rate, again as charted by PFF, went from 9.1 percent in 2018 (60th among 109 qualified edge rushers) to 11.2 percent in 2019 (38th out of 118) to 11.6 percent in 2020 (36th out of 117).

Next came an extremely smart move by Key.

He signed a one-year, \$1 million contract to go play under defensive line guru Kris Kocurek in San Francisco, a man widely viewed as the best in the business at developing young pass rushers. Despite playing just 35 percent of defensive snaps on a loaded defensive line that also featured Nick Bosa, Arik Armstead, Samson Ebukam, and D.J. Jones, Key produced career highs in sacks (6.5), total pressures (39), QB hits (14), and pass rush win rate (11.8 percent) while lining up all over the 49ers' defensive front.

That breakout season earned him a pay raise, and he signed a one-year, \$4 million contract in Jacksonville, where again, he found himself in a rotational role behind Josh Allen and first overall pick Travon Walker. Like in San Francisco, Jaguars defensive coordinator Mike Caldwell deployed Key all over the defensive line, giving him almost 100 snaps as an interior rusher as well as his rotational spot on the edge. Key's performance continued to improve, setting yet another career-best mark in pass rush win rate at 13.8 percent to go along with 51 total pressures and 13 QB hits.

While in Jacksonville, Key also produced the highest PFF run defense grade that he's earned in his career at 75.1, good for 17th among edge rushers, something that the Titans will want to see expanded as he transitions into more of a full-time role.

There is good reason to believe that Key's best football may be ahead of him as well. He's still just 27 years old, and by his own self-admission,

has grown a lot over the course of his five-year NFL career.



While talking to the media – and teammate Azeez Al-Shaair – on Tuesday, Key claimed that he “used to be fat” during his time in San Francisco, something he’s focused on during training over the last two offseasons. His performance in training camp to this point indicates that the increased focus on conditioning has paid off for the talented edge rusher.

What will be fascinating to watch as the season begins is how the Titans choose to deploy their pass rush pieces. Both Denico Autry and Key have inside-outside versatility from a rush standpoint as Key has primarily lined up as a defensive tackle on third downs for both the 49ers and Jaguars the last two seasons. That’s something Autry has done frequently since signing with Tennessee in 2021. In fact, Key mentioned Autry last week as a guy who he’s studied and modeled some of his game after even before joining him with the Titans.

That versatility should allow Bowen to hunt matchups throughout the season and keep defenses from knowing where any of the Titans’ top pass rushers might be lining up consistently.

To get a feel for Key as a player, let’s look at some snaps from last season in Jacksonville, starting with his usage as an interior pass rusher. This first clip features Key lined up in as a three-technique in the gap between the left guard and left tackle. He uses an impressive chop-swim combo to beat Dalton Risner and sack Russell Wilson.

Here is another similar rep.

Key’s positioning is even wider here as he’s lined up outside of Titans’ right tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere, but he quickly jumps inside and uses another swim move to beat Jordan

Roos and flush Josh Dobbs from the pocket. Key was a menace in both matchups against Tennessee last year.

While I think he’s most effective rushing from inside, Key can also create pressure as a traditional edge rusher. Here, he beats Broncos left tackle Calvin Anderson with a nice cross-chop move, forcing a rushed throw from Wilson.

And here, he uses his hands to get inside leverage against Cowboys left tackle Tyler Smith and pushes his way all the way to a sack of Dak Prescott.

As I mentioned above, Key scored highly as a run defender last season and the tape backs it up. He only played limited snaps on early downs, but when he was out there, he was effective at setting the edge as he does here against Tyler Smith. This is textbook from Key here.

I’ll finish with something that was a bit of a surprise for me when I really cut on the Key tape... his motor and instincts are outstanding. Here, he flashes high-level awareness as he notices the back leaking out for a screen during his pass rush, redirects, and breaks up the play, nearly grabbing a one-handed interception in the process.

Key’s motor was non-stop on tape, constantly making plays like the one below where he chases down a screen from the backside of the play and puts a massive hit on Chargers running back Joshua Kelly.

Key’s fit into this defense is excellent, especially from a pass-rush standpoint. No team likes to use games and stunts up front more than the Titans and Key should thrive in that scheme with his athleticism benefitting from playing with two of the best “pickers” in the NFL in Jeffery Simmons and Autry.

I’d describe Key’s game as a mash-up of Landry and Autry, bringing some elements of Landry’s athleticism and Autry’s length and power to the table for a unique blend of skills.

The Titans’ ability to mix and match where Simmons, Autry, Landry, and Key all line up along with the talent level of those four players give Mike Vrabel’s defense one of the best fronts in the NFL heading into 2023, and early returns on Key suggest that we all may be underrating what this group could be.

###

**KINSEY SET TO MAKE
NFL DEBUT**

**BY DAVID BOCLAIR
SI.COM
OCTOBER 23, 2021**

NASHVILLE – Mason Kinsey is in line make his NFL debut Sunday.

The Tennessee Titans designated the groundbreaking wide receiver as a standard elevation to the active roster off their practice squad Saturday, one day before they face the Kansas City Chiefs at Nissan Stadium.

“A lot of early mornings and late nights for this,” he wrote on Twitter. “I trusted his plan. Thank you God.”

The move means he will automatically revert to the practice squad on Monday, but he should get the chance to show what he can do on Sunday.

Cornerback Chris Jones also was named a standard elevation from the practice squad.

It is likely that Kinsey’s primary responsibility will be as punt returner given that Chester Rogers has been ruled out for the game with a groin injury. Rogers is the only player who has returned punts for the Titans this season, and he ranks fourth in the league with an average of 12.0 yards per return.

However, there also should be plenty of opportunity for Kinsey, 23, to play on offense as well. Rogers and Cameron Batson, who was placed on injured reserve Monday with a season-ending knee injury, have been the Titans’ primary slot receivers this season, and that is a position at which Kinsey got plenty of work during the preseason.

Kinsey was the first player from Division III Berry College to sign an NFL contract when he joined the Titans as an undrafted free agent in 2020. He did two stints on New England’s practice squad during that season before he returned to Tennessee during the offseason.

He was the Titans’ leading receiver in the preseason with 14 catches for 131 yards and one touchdown (no one else caught more than six passes). He also returned one punt for 11 yards.

“I never really lost focus. I knew I was at a D-III school and it was going to take a lot,” Kinsey said during the preseason. “I just stayed laser-focused on that. I knew what it was going to take, and I knew kind of how I had to approach it. That was my mindset.

“... I’ve grown a lot. It’s been exciting, man. It’s been everything I’ve dreamed of. I love this place. I love this team.”

###

**TITANS BIRTHDAY BOY
HAROLD LANDRY AIMS
TO CELEBRATE ALL
YEAR IN 2024**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 5, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Harold Landry smiled when wished a happy birthday.

It's today, in fact.

"How old am I?," Landry said. "28."

The Titans edge rusher seemed to bristle a bit seconds later on Wednesday when asked about his knee, which he now considers a thing of the distant past.

"I don't even know how long it's been (since surgery), it's been so long," he said. "That's an afterthought. It's all good."

It's been nearly two years since Landry suffered a torn ACL just weeks before the 2022 season, a year he spent on Injured Reserve.

Heading into 2024, Landry said his focus is on having the best season of his NFL career.

A second-round pick of the Titans in the 2018, Landry is now the longest tenured Titan, something he can hardly believe.

"It's crazy," said Landry, smiling again. "Obviously it's a great thing when you can be with one organization for that period of time. I am really just taking it one year at a time. I feel that is a pretty cool achievement, to be the longest tenured Titan.

"But I am just focused on trying to go out there and have a career year this year."

Landry tallied 10.5 sacks and 48 quarterback pressures in 2023, after spending the entire 2022 season on IR. Prior to the injury, Landry recorded 12 sacks and 49 pressures in 2021.

This offseason, Landry said his training has been great, and he's on the same page with his new coaches and teammates.

"Play in and play out," Landry said, "I want to be a consistent, impact player, and that is what I am focusing on this year, going out and cutting it loose and trying to make an impact day in and day out."

Landry made it clear the locker room is in a good place as well.

"I'll just say I feel like the energy right now is at an all-time high, whether that's in meetings or on the field," Landry said. "There's a lot of excitement in the building with all the new faces. I feel like we have so much talent, and that's what I feel like the excitement is around – the potential.

"The energy is at an all-time high and we're just focused on getting all the details down and going out there stacking days. ... This could be an awesome year."

###

**TITANS PASS RUSHER
HAROLD LANDRY III
TURNS IN 1 OF NFL'S BEST
COMEBACK SEASONS
AFTER TORN ACL**

**BY TERESA M. WALKER
ASSOCIATED PRESS
JANUARY 5, 2024**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee pass rusher Harold Landry III has produced a comeback season for the decades.

Fresh off earning a Pro Bowl nod with his best season yet to earn a five-year contract extension, Landry was poised for a strong follow-up. Except the outside linebacker tore an ACL days before the 2022 season opener. With a full year for recovery, Landry returned for the 2023 opener.

Now Landry has 10 1/2 sacks. That makes him just the third NFL veteran since 1982 (when the sack became an official individual statistic) and first since 2001 to miss an entire season and return with at least 10 sacks the next.

Joe Johnson did it in 2000 with 12 sacks for New Orleans before Charlie Clemons had 13 1/2 sacks — also for the Saints — in 2001.

“It definitely feels good knowing all the work that I put in is paying off,” Landry said.

Getting back to this level wasn't easy after what Landry called an injury and recovery that “probably was the hardest thing that I've had to go through in my life.” The slow start to this didn't help, and Landry credits his wife and two sons for being his best support.

“It just hurts when you're not seeing the results just yet,” Landry said.

Better yet? Most of Landry's production has come since Week 6.

Landry had only one sack and a tackle for loss when the Titans flew to London to play Baltimore, and that's where the 41st overall pick of

the 2018 draft started looking like himself. Tennessee lost, but Landry had his second sack of the season and a pair of tackles for loss.

“I just feel like it kind of just started to click for me and I was able to improve each week and kind of get back into the groove playing like the player that I know I can be for this organization,” Landry said.

Landry has been one of the NFL's best-producing pass rushers ever since.

He is tied for sixth in the NFL with 9 1/2 sacks and tied for third in the league with 13 tackles for loss with Maxx Crosby of the Raiders and Khalil Mack of the Chargers since Week 6. Only Cleveland's Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah (15) and Tampa Bay's Lavonte David (14) have had more.

As the Titans (5-11) conclude this season on Sunday against Jacksonville (9-7), Landry is second in sacks only to Pro Bowl alternate Denico Autry, who has a career-high 11 1/2 sacks.

They give the Titans the NFL's only team with two defenders with double-digit sacks. Only 10 teams have more than Tennessee's 45 sacks, up from 39 last season and the franchise's highest total since having 55 in 2000.

Titans coach Mike Vrabel says he just likes where Landry is at with his maturity, consistency, daily approach and work ethic.

“He does a lot of different things for us,” Vrabel said. “I think that he's really factored in, I think, starting to feel better, cutting it loose. And happy for whatever personal success that he has or making a bunch of plays and helping us out.”

Landry ranks fifth on the Titans in total tackles (69), third with 46 quarterback pressures and his 14 tackles for loss are a team-high. He's been at his best in the final 15 minutes where he has gotten 8 1/2 of his sacks.

It helps having Autry, having a career-year with 11 1/2 sacks and 28 1/2 in his three seasons with Tennessee. Landry wouldn't mind joining Autry by finishing off this season with a couple more sacks and a win.

“You always want to set personal records from a production standpoint,” Landry said. “And if I go out there and handle my business from a production standpoint, all that does is help the team find a way to get a win.”

###

**HAROLD LANDRY
"ECSTATIC" TO BE BACK
ON THE FIELD FOR
TITANS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 28, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Harold Landry stepped up to the podium on Friday after practice, and the big smile on his face said it all.

"I'm excited to be here for sure," the Titans edge rusher said. "It's been awesome. Being away from the game as long as I have, missing all of last year, obviously you miss making plays in front of fans at the games because, you know, that feeling is euphoric.

"But honestly, being away for that long, you start to appreciate it and miss it even more, just like coming out on the practice field and hearing Jeff (Simmons) talk (trash), or just hearing your guys joking around. But everybody is just out here grinding and having a good time. ... I'm ecstatic to be back."

Landry, who tore his ACL leading up to last season, didn't take part in OTAs or the minicamp during the offseason.

But on the first day of training camp, Landry was on the field with his teammates, without a knee brace.

And, he feels great.

"What happened was I tore it a while ago," Landry said of the knee. "And now it's damn near perfect."

A second-round pick of the Titans in the 2018 NFL Draft out of Boston College, Landry made it to his first Pro Bowl in 2021 after racking up 12 sacks and 49 quarterback pressures.

The sack total ranked 10th in the NFL and led the team, and it finished off a four-year stretch in which Landry accumulated a team-high 31 sacks, the second-highest total by a Titans/Oilers player in his

first four NFL seasons since 1982, when individual sacks became an official NFL statistic 1982 (37 by Jevon Kearse).

He was looking forward to picking up where he left off before the injury.

A year later, he's champing at the bit for the 2023 season to begin.

Landry still has time to work, but the worst is behind him.

"It's a long process, and throughout it you're definitely frustrated a little bit because there's times you're doing everything you can and you feel like you're kind of staying the same," Landry said. "Then out of nowhere, you just stick to the plan, trust the people you're working with and you make those jumps.

"Now, being where I'm at, it feels great. I don't even think about it when I'm out on the field. It's awesome, so kudos to all the people I've been working with and all the time and energy because it feels great."

Is there a chance he could come back better than ever?

Landry said he's been motivated by seeing others return in grand fashion after an ACL injury.

"I'm definitely stronger, more explosive for sure, faster," Landry said. "I mean, I would say I'm most definitely just more strict on my diet because I'm into that stuff and I was doing everything possible to make my knee feel better the next day.

"... Expectations are high, you know what I am saying? I worked my ass off to get to this point, and the people here have helped me so much. I feel great."

###

**ON THE DAY HAROLD
LANDRY SIGNED HIS
LUCRATIVE NEW
CONTRACT, THE TITANS
OLB SAID HE'S INDEBTED
TO THOSE WHO HELPED
HIM REACH SUCCESS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MARCH 10, 2022**

NASHVILLE – Harold Landry III strolled down the hallway at Saint Thomas Sports Park on Thursday, his two young boys on the move in front of him, his wife doing her best to keep them under control, and happy.

Landry, on the day he signed his lucrative contract extension with the Titans, had plenty of reasons to be thankful.

He started with his wife, Danielle, for helping him reach success.

"I wouldn't be here signing this contract today without her," Landry said of his wife. "Everything she does for me, it is incredible, really, how she raises our kids, how she makes sacrifice after sacrifice to make sure I am able to handle my business with football. I am extremely thankful for her, and what she has done for me.

"She deserves so much credit for me being here today."

Landry, a second-round pick of the Titans in the 2018 NFL Draft out of Boston College, inked his new deal on Thursday before holding a press conference at the team's training facility. The outside linebacker earned his new deal with the team after racking up 12 sacks and 49 quarterback pressures in 2021.

The sack total ranked 10th in the NFL and led the team, and it finished off a four-year stretch in which Landry accumulated a team-high 31 sacks, the second-highest total by a Titans/Oilers player in his first four NFL seasons since 1982, when individual sacks became an

official NFL statistic 1982 (37 by Jevon Kearse).

On the day he signed his contract, Landry reflected on his path to the NFL, while thanking those around him.

Born and raised in Spring Lake, N.C., just down the road from Fort Bragg U.S. Army military base, Landry said his parents, Doreen and Harold Landry, sacrificed back then just like his wife does now to give him a chance to be successful.

Landry's dad was a FedEx driver, his mother worked in IT support. Landry said his parents sometimes worked multiple jobs so he and his sister had everything they needed.

"I'll be honest: I've never had a job my whole life besides football," Landry said with a smile. "I am so grateful to the parents that I have, because they did everything they had to do to make sure I could just focus on sports and football.

"As a kid growing up, every day, as soon as the sun came up, we were outside playing sports, and we didn't come home until the street lights came on. It was sports, sports, sports."

Landry's goal back then?

"I always wanted to make my parents proud, whether it was football, baseball or basketball," Landry said. "I just always wanted to put smiles on their faces. As I got older and got to high school it was the same thing.

"My motivation, it was simple: I wanted to be the best."

Landry earned All-America and all-state honors at Pine Forest (Fayetteville, N.C.) High School, and he also earned a scholarship to Boston College.

Once there, Landry said he got really serious about putting himself in a position to have an NFL career.

Landry recorded 26 sacks while at Boston College, which put him on

the radar of NFL teams. The Titans picked him 41st overall in 2018.

And then, over the past four years with the Titans, Landry has emerged as one of the NFL's best pass rushers. At the same time, his family has grown as well. Harold and Danielle, who met while at Boston College, have two sons – Greyson (4) and Ollie (2).

"I feel like these past four years, they have been amazing, to be honest," Landry said. "Obviously there's ups and downs – you play this game long enough you are going to experience a whole bunch of different things. And I feel like I have experienced a lot in my four years here, and it's done nothing but take me to the next level, and make me a better player for it.

"I feel like I have grown so much as a player, and as a man, the past four years."

From 2018 to 2021, Landry joined Pittsburgh's Cameron Heyward as the NFL's only players to be credited with at least 250 tackles, 30 sacks and two interceptions. His 12-sack season in 2021 was the highest total by a Titans player since Jason Babin reached 12.5 sacks in 2010. Landry also tied for second on the squad with 75 tackles, ranked second with a career-high 49 quarterback pressures, led the team with 14 tackles for loss, and added a forced fumble. He joined Micah Parsons, Aaron Donald and Heyward as the only NFL players in 2021 to post at least 75 tackles and 10 sacks.

Landry said he won't let up now.

Money, he said, won't change him.

He's thrilled to remain in Nashville, because he said it's where his family is happy.

The Titans, of course, are sure happy to have him.

"My motivation," Landry said, "is when I step on the field, I want to be considered the best player on the field. So, that is the motivation. The

money, I am extremely blessed and grateful that this organization believes in me, and gave me this contract. But I feel like the money is a byproduct of the work that I put in to achieve the goal of being considered one of the best players in the NFL.

"All of this, I am just feeling so blessed and grateful and thankful for the life that I get to live and experience, with the awesome family that I have. ... And I am so thankful that this organization has the faith and trust they have in me. I am just extremely grateful and thankful for all of this."

###

**FROM MOTOR CITY TO
MUSIC CITY: TITANS
FIRST ROUND PICK JC
LATHAM ARRIVES IN
NASHVILLE, AND HE'S
READY TO GET TO WORK**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
APRIL 26, 2024**

NASHVILLE – A lifelong dream became reality for JC Latham on Thursday night in Detroit.

A day later, the newest member of the Tennessee Titans opened up his portable gaming monitor on the plane ride to Nashville, and he played Madden – as the Titans.

"It was surreal," Latham said with a smile. "It's a surreal moment, knowing I'm a Titan now, and I'm finna be in the game. It's a great feeling."

Latham slept a few hours last night in Motor City, after being picked 7th overall in the first round of the NFL Draft.

When he woke up, he noticed the text messages and DMs had piled up even more from the night before. Former Titans lineman Taylor Lewan congratulated him, and new teammate Calvin Ridley followed him on social media. On Thursday night, Titans quarterback Will Levis and offensive lineman Peter Skoronski FaceTimed him, welcoming him to the team.

"At some point, I'm going to get back to everyone who wished me congratulations," Latham said. "But it's going to take a while. I probably got like a thousand."

Yes, after playing at the University of Alabama the last three seasons, Latham is now a Titan.

On Friday morning, he boarded a plane in Detroit with his mom, dad, stepmom, brother, girlfriend, and his best friend, and went from Motor City to Music City.

A few hours later he was entering the front door at Saint Thomas Sports Park, where he was greeted by Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk, along with Kenneth Adams IV and Barclay Adams from the team's ownership group.

Titans General Manager Ran Carthon also greeted Latham with a handshake and a hug, and so did head coach Brian Callahan.

Levis was on the lobby as well, welcoming him to town.

"How was your draft night?," a smiling Levis asked Latham.

Latham said it was great, and his first day in the facility as a Titan was officially underway.

"It's been crazy busy," Latham said of the last 24 hours. "But it sums up everything I have been doing, having traveled all over the place and meeting so many people. This is kind of like a crash course on everything."

Latham, who made a pre-draft visit to the Titans earlier this month, took another tour of the facility on Friday. He saw his locker inside the team's locker room, and he walked around the indoor practice facility.

He also picked out his NFL number. Latham wore 65 at Alabama, but that number is retired with the Oilers/Titans organization. Hall of Famer Elvin Bethea wore 65 for the Oilers during his 16 seasons with the team.

"But 55 will do me just right," Latham said, smiling again. "That was my number originally."

The 6-foot-6, 342-pound Latham also grabbed lunch in the cafeteria.

"I had me some barbecue chicken," Latham said. "Had some macaroni & cheese, baked beans and some broccoli, too."

Latham, who made a total of 12 30 visits leading up to the draft, said after a whirlwind life the past few months, he's ready to play football.

Latham played in 41 games at Alabama over the past three seasons, with 27 starts. He was a first team All-SEC selection in 2023, when he started all 14 games at right tackle. Latham was also a second team Associated Press All-American in 2023.

Carthon said on Thursday night the team plans to start Latham out at left tackle in the NFL.

"Every night I am thinking about it, every time I put some music on," Latham said of playing his first game. "Every single hour of the day that goes by, it's like, 'pretty soon you are going to be (on the field).'"

"I'm just so happy to be here, and ready to get going."

###

TITANS DRAFTED JC LATHAM TO PLAY LEFT TACKLE — BUT HE PLAYED ON RIGHT SIDE AT ALABAMA

**BY NICK SUSS
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
APRIL 25, 2024**

JC Latham played 1,753 snaps in three years at Alabama. A big, whopping zero of them were at left tackle.

Meet the Tennessee Titans' new left tackle.

"We're going to start him at left tackle," Titans general manager Ran Carthon said Thursday night, minutes after selecting Latham with the No. 7 pick in the 2024 NFL Draft.

One year after drafting All-American left tackle Peter Skoronski in the first round and bumping him inside to guard, the Titans took a first-round right tackle and move him to the left side. They're confident in his traits. His 6-foot-6, 342-pound frame. His power. His ability to anchor himself in pass protection. His athleticism that led coach Brian Callahan to say: "There's not a whole lot of guys who look like him on Earth."

Latham played left tackle in high school, as the best linemen often do. But he flipped to the right side when he got to Alabama out of courtesy to upperclassman and eventual top-10 pick Evan Neal. Neal headed to the NFL after Latham's freshman year, but Alabama passed the left tackle baton to Tyler Steen, the Vanderbilt transfer who became a third-round pick in 2023. Heading into Latham's junior year, Alabama brought in five-star recruit Kadyn Proctor, who immediately produced as a freshman All-American at left tackle, with Latham staying on the right side.

"There's a precedent. Guys have played right and played left and made the switch," Callahan said. "It's not super uncommon. It's

happened before. We have a comfort level with the player and the athlete and what he's capable of. Having him go to left and starting out there, look, if he doesn't feel comfortable there and it doesn't look natural, we'll move him back to right. Like I said the other day, we need tackles, period."

JC Latham: Tennessee Titans OT history

Latham is quick to point out this won't be the first time he has switched positions. Or the second, for that matter. When he transferred to IMG Academy in Florida after his sophomore year of high school in Wisconsin, he was a defensive end. And a good one at that, ranked the No. 8 overall prospect in his class by Rivals.com. But he got to IMG, arguably the nation's premier college feeder program, and had other talented defensive ends in front of him.

So, just as he'd later do because of Neal, he saw an opportunity and changed positions.

"I was the No. 2 player in the country, No. 1 at my position, after two seasons," Latham said. "One of my closest friend's family tells me that success is when preparation meets opportunity. I hold that near and dear to my heart. I apply that as soon as I get into the building and get to work."

But can he play left tackle for the Titans? Quarterback Will Levis was bullied, bruised and battered from his blind side as a rookie, and his predecessor Ryan Tannehill dealt with the same level of punishment for the year and a half prior. The Titans allowed a higher pressure rate on pass plays than any team in the NFL in 2023.

The team is clearly investing in and building around its passing attack with Levis, receivers Calvin Ridley and DeAndre Hopkins, dual-threat running backs Tyjae Spears and Tony Pollard, high-priced center Lloyd Cushenberry III and Callahan's experience as a quarterbacks coach and offensive

coordinator. Finding a left tackle was the last step, and arguably the most important one.

But as Callahan sees it, the Titans didn't explicitly need a left tackle. They needed a good tackle. And that's how they see Latham.

"He almost expected (to move to left tackle), which is the attitude you want guys to have," Callahan said. "I think he possesses the requisite traits to do it. There's not going to be too many guys that are going to turn down a chance to play on the left side, either. They all think they can do it. So I think he's fully capable of it."

###

**‘TRENCH KING’ JC
LATHAM IS HERE TO
HELP ALABAMA
FOOTBALL REESTABLISH
ITS RULE**

**BY NICK ALVAREZ
AL.COM
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

Jerome Latham watched his son’s third-grade football practice intently.

People thought Jerome forced his sons into the game. He didn’t. The boys went to Jerome, a former high school player himself, with a request. They wanted him to stop coaching and help them. The lessons started early. Young JC Latham would learn how to play any position, then find his niche; he’d list his top five colleges before taping the piece of paper on the back of his bedroom closet. But wait, before any of that could happen, Jerome noticed a problem in front of him.

The coaching staff, Jerome recalled, told players it was OK to walk to the line of scrimmage after breaking the huddle. No, that wouldn’t do. So, Jerome “put a kibosh on that” and came out of a pseudo-retirement to coach Pop Warner.

His son would learn the right habits, and if Jerome couldn’t provide it personally, he’d bring Latham to someone who could. That meant Jerome taking a break from coaching until JC and his younger brother, Langston, were off to college. Along the way, Latham inherited the drive. Nature reinforced by nurture. And now, their efforts are the bedrock of No. 3 Alabama’s right tackle.

Latham is the only returner from last year’s line who started all 13 games. Hours after the Sugar Bowl on New Year’s Eve 2022, the junior made his goals for this fall clear — make Alabama’s offensive line the best in the nation; go undefeated; bring home a national title; and win the Outland Trophy presented to the nation’s best interior lineman. His

declaration preceded the hiring of offensive coordinator Tommy Rees and projections of a run-first offense behind one of the largest sets of blockers in the SEC.

If the Crimson Tide possess an edge this season, which continues Saturday against No. 11 Texas in primetime (6 p.m., ESPN), it’ll be fronted by Latham, who calls himself the “Trench King.”

“Just seeing how I matched up with other people at my position and seeing the competition out there, I knew that I needed to take more advantage of the opportunity that I have right now,” Latham said, “... Just making sure every chance I get to showcase my best, making sure I do it every single play. Just let it be known that’s the standard of what I am.

“Honestly it’s really who I’ve been since I was little. Anything that I do that I have a passion for, I always wanted to be the best at.”

Bill Young saw that passion at Wisconsin’s Catholic Memorial High. He remembered the gangly kid that multiple coaches referred to as a “puppy” with a jovial attitude when Young visited Tuscaloosa for a spring practice a couple of months ago. Three inches taller and nearly 150 pounds heavier than his varsity days, Latham had grown into a star, but he still had that smile, Young recalled.

Originally born in Mississippi, Latham and his dad were living in Oak Creek, Wisc., 11 miles south of Milwaukee, when they connected with Andre Powell, a former Penn State linebacker with NFL experience. Latham and Powell’s son, Andre Powell Jr., became best friends and in talking shop, Jerome soon approached Powell about coaching Latham on a few things. Jerome wanted a coach to supplement the hand and footwork drills he and Latham would do before practices.

When Powell enrolled his son 35 minutes away at Catholic, a program known for its football

team, Jerome made sure Latham followed. At the time, Latham wasn’t even an offensive lineman. He lined up at nose tackle primarily, practicing as a blocker for the first time during his sophomore year playoff run. Down 24 at halftime in the state title game, Young decided it was better late than never.

Latham wrapped his arm around the seniors on the sideline, offered a pep talk, then executed a few combo blocks and forced three fumbles defensively to spark a comeback, eventually beating West De Pere, 37-24.

“Some guys grow up when they’re 40 (years old),” Young said, “others do it when they’re 20.”

After the victory, Jerome sat Latham down and they had a talk about being a big fish in a small pond. They were grateful to Catholic and Young, and vice versa — Young said he hadn’t seen anything like Latham in his 50-year career — but Latham’s progress would take him to Florida’s IMG Academy. After the season, Jerome contacted IMG’s coaches and set a meeting.

Due to a few spring injuries on the Ascenders’ roster, Latham switched to left tackle under coach Bobby Acosta, now at UAPB, and George Hegmain, a Super Bowl champion with the Dallas Cowboys. On the school’s YouTube series “Brotherhood,” Latham is interviewed and shown harping on the details, saying he felt like he needed to be prepared for any defense.

Jerome would call Acosta constantly for updates, and Acosta relayed what he saw when he looked out of his office window and onto the field each night. Eyes closed and alone, Latham ran through his practice routine. Meanwhile, once the SEC offers rolled in, Latham cross-referenced his childhood list with his personal research of schools sending linemen to the NFL. Alabama had been on the list since elementary school.

IMG and Tide alum Evan Neal took Latham under his wing in Tuscaloosa. Latham didn't allow a sack across 14 games as a freshman guard before winning the right tackle job a year ago and tallying 29 knockdown blocks. But a two-loss 2022 wore on Latham. He voiced the "disrespect" he believed he and the Tide were facing at preseason media days in Nashville, two years removed from its last title. He was open about reasserting Alabama over Georgia and the rest of the college football world.

"He means that. That's who JC is," Acota said of Latham's preseason declaration.

Like Neal did before him, Latham started group chats with the young offensive linemen on the team. He'd organize group dinners, forming a bond with another IMG teammate, current sophomore guard Tyler Booker. This week, Latham referred to leadership not as a challenge, but "more of an expectation" to provide a blueprint.

Senior center Seth McLaughlin noted that while Latham gave himself his Trench King nickname, others are starting to catch on and the mantra is wearing off on the group.

He's trying to reduce his penalties (he committed 10 last fall and allowed two sacks) and added 25 pounds of muscle in the offseason. The 6-foot-6, 360-pound Latham said in August the weight gain is to round out his NFL profile. Like Tide head coach Nick Saban tells players, development is about building value for yourself. The dynastic head coach reminded Jerome of a personal hero, Grambling State's late Eddie Robinson. When Jerome met Saban, he realized the influence Saban could have on his son.

"(Latham) is a full-blown disciple of Nick Saban," Powell said. " ... I just see what is innately in JC in the Coach Saban fashion. He does enjoy the work. He loves being bigger, stronger, faster. He loves being dominant."

Starting halfway through last season, Latham said he began thinking about his goals in potentially his final year with UA. Just like Saban, Latham seemed to learn more from losses than wins and Latham blamed one specifically on himself, the Tide's overtime defeat at LSU, citing his penalties and sacks.

It's what partially motivated him to look ahead after stomping Kansas State. Latham foregoed the team's 24-hour rule of celebrating wins and looked ahead. Recent mock drafts have Latham as one of the first offensive linemen off the board, confirming what coaches have seen for years.

While Latham was still an underclassman in high school, something Jerome kept hearing bugged him. Too often, people were telling players to make sure they had backup plans once their NFL hopes faded. When he got Latham to IMG's Bradenton, Fla., campus, defensive line Ernie Logan sat with father and son and asked Latham what his dreams were. Latham mentioned a pro career, but it wasn't atop the list.

"If you want to go to the NFL, damnit, you don't let anybody stop you and stop your dream," Jerome remembered Logan saying, "If you want to go to the NFL, you try to dream and achieve and get to the NFL."

Jerome tagged Logan as a straight shooter. He liked how Logan delivered the message, too, with vigor. Glancing over to Latham, Jerome noticed a smile flash across his son's face.

###

IS WILL LEVIS THE NEXT JOSH ALLEN? TITANS' SECOND-YEAR QB DRIVEN TO JOIN RANKS OF NFL'S ELITE

BY PETE PRISCO
CBSSPORTS.COM
JULY 26, 2024

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- Some of the top things to do in the Tuscany region of Italy are to enjoy a wine tasting in a Tuscan castle or maybe visit the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Or even hit the beaches with their crystal-clear waters nestled on the rocks for a day of relaxation.

There probably isn't a spot on most people's itineraries where they make time for football-throwing sessions with dad, who is a former Division III tight end, or hopping the fence to get in some sprint work on a locked-up soccer field.

That was indeed part of the itinerary for Will Levis on his visit to Italy in early July, so much so that the second-year Tennessee Titans quarterback actually scouted out the soccer fields and a gym for his workouts before making the trip with his extended family.

"We were 45 minutes from Siena, which is kind of the big city, so I went to a gym there and I thought it was Gold's gym, but it turns out it was Gold Gym," Levis said. "First gym I ever saw that opened at 10 a.m. I had to wait until 10 a.m to go there every day. I was doing stuff in there that nobody in there has probably ever seen, just in terms of the football stuff we do. It was funny. There were a couple soccer fields I scouted out beforehand. One of those I had to jump the fence to go on. I had the cops called on me. I got out of there before anything crazy happened."

The video player is currently playing an ad. You can skip the ad in 5 sec with a mouse or keyboard

There was no arrest, although Levis said he had to use a translator app to help get him out of the situation

since nobody really cared he was an NFL quarterback. He can laugh about it now, but the whole situation goes to show a lot about who he is as a quarterback and why he will be a special one.

We know the skill set is there by watching his throws as a rookie last year, the power arm and the quick release. But it's the drive and determination of scheduling workouts in paradise that will make him into a big-time NFL quarterback.

The great ones all have it. Peyton Manning was legendary for his workouts on the road and Levis is no different. It doesn't mean he will be in that class, but it sure doesn't hurt to work like him.

"This is important to him," Titans first-year coach Brian Callahan said. "Being a good quarterback matters to him. He wants to be great. He does everything in his power to do that. I respect that. It's not fake. It's real. He's willing to do whatever it takes. When you have that mindset, you can solve a lot of problems like that."

Callahan knows a lot about working with special quarterbacks. In his career, he's coached Manning, Matthew Stafford, Derek Carr and Joe Burrow the past four years when he was the offensive coordinator of the Cincinnati Bengals. Callahan is considered a quarterback guru of sorts and certainly knows what it takes to be a good one.

He sees that in Levis. In fact, Levis was a big reason why he was drawn to the Titans job.

"I was excited as hell to come down here and work with him," Callahan said.



Why wouldn't he be? Levis impressed as a rookie last season after taking over as the Titans starter eight games into his rookie season, showing off his big arm and his ability to stand in and make throws

in the face of constant pressure. To say Levis was beat up is not doing it justice when it comes to how many hits he took.

Yet he never backed down. Not once. Even when he had games that might not be impressive on paper or on tape, the one thing that never wavered was his toughness and his ability to stare down the gun barrel.

"Playing quarterback, toughness is one of the most important parts," Callahan said. "You are going to get hit and teammates need to know you can bounce up after a hit and make a throw the next time when everything is collapsing around you. The pocket is going to be muddled and you have to navigate it. That was the most impressive thing about him last year. For a quarterback who hadn't played much to do that, take hits, get back up and play hard, was impressive. He did some dumb things like lowering his shoulder into people, stuff like that. But he was trying to earn the respect of his teammates so they would ride with that guy."

Levis said he felt those hits after the season. The shots took their toll.

"There are things I can learn from and not take as many hits," Levis said. "My body was pretty beat up. I have to be better in that area."

He paused for a second and chuckled.

"I have yet to slide in a game," he said. "I have to implement that."

Despite playing behind a bad offensive line, with not much help in terms of speed on the outside, the second-round pick did enough to show that he can be the Titans' long-term answer. He led the Titans to a 3-6 record in his nine starts with eight touchdowns and four interceptions. The numbers aren't gaudy, but when you see his throws on tape, especially in the comeback victory against the Miami Dolphins late in the season, it's easy to understand why the Titans feel they have a real franchise quarterback.

When Levis came into the draft last year, I had him ranked as my top quarterback. I saw a kid who played in a bad system as a senior at Kentucky with little around him, yet despite an injury he continued to play most of that season and took a beating.

His stock crashed some and his reputation also took a beating. He became the quarterback everybody loved to rip that year. It reminded me of another quarterback who seemed to have a lot of the same draft cult analysts ripping him to shreds during the draft process a few years back.

That quarterback is Josh Allen of the Buffalo Bills. Like Allen, Levis didn't have big-time completion numbers and accuracy was something many scouts said would hold him back. Like Allen, I thought he would get past it.

Levis fell to the second round. He saw Bryce Young, C.J. Stroud and Anthony Richardson all go before him. Stroud had a special rookie season for the Texans last year, but Levis was as good as the other two, especially since Richardson was limited to four games because of injury.

I see a similar trajectory for Levis as Allen. Yes, that's high praise, but I believe that's where he is headed.

Levis also had to overcome doubts about him away from the field heading into the draft. Many NFL personnel people and draft analysts questioned his persona. Was he mature enough? That's because he had some social media stuff that made him seem different, such as eating a banana with the skin on. That made people question him.

"Rightfully so with some of that stuff," Levis said. "A lot of people might have been perturbed by how I handled myself on social media. They thought I was drawing too much attention to myself. It was just something I enjoyed doing, something I could make some extra money from since I wasn't making anything from NIL. When people

get to know me and see the real person, that's what people on the internet don't get to see."

Callahan admits he heard some of those pre-draft critiques of Levis, even though the Bengals had Burrow and Callahan didn't do a deep dive on the 2023 quarterback class.

"All I knew about Will as a person is what I heard and I heard all the stories of him being kind of quirky and weird," Callahan said. "Everybody heard them. But Will has done a really good job of being himself. He is really comfortable with who he is. He has grown up since then. There was some growing up that had to happen. I don't see Will Levis, the college kid. I see Will Levis, the pro quarterback. His demeanor and the way he communicates and speaks is much different than a lot of the stuff that was out there."

Tightly wound was another knock on Levis by some scouts. They said he was too hard on himself, which would make it tough to get past the bad plays that all quarterbacks have, even the great ones. Levis admits now he's worked on that part of his game, sometimes even catching himself when he is too tough on his play.

That happened Tuesday. Levis walked off the field thinking he had a tough time. After watching the tape following practice, he saw it a lot differently.

"Looking at the tape, I had a pretty good day," he said. "Coming off the field, I didn't think it was close to that. I have to do a better job of that. You have to take the good with the bad and move one."

You can tell watching practice that the misses bother him. He missed a big-time throw down the field Wednesday, and after practice he said he could have thrown a better ball. Oh, well. The good news was he seemed to quickly move on from it and had a good practice.

That's because he's much more comfortable in his skin. It's his team now -- and he knows it. That's why he got a group together to go to Cabo this summer to work out when the team was away from the facility. It was part workout, with a lot of bonding.

"He's taken the next steps to be the face of the franchise and the responsibilities that come with that," Callahan said. "He's done a nice job building on that. Going to Cabo was part of that."

"It took me a little time to realize that," Levis said. "I still have to earn a lot of stuff. Being the starting quarterback gives me a lot of grace. As the starter, I feel a lot more confident and a lot less nervous than last training camp. I wasn't sleeping at night because I was worried about fumbling a snap or getting the play call wrong. I don't even think about those things anymore. I am a lot more confident."

Levis did work on his footwork this offseason, both at the facility and with his quarterback coach away from it. That has tightened up his ability to get the ball out -- with force. If you thought his arm was big last year, you should see it now. The release is quick, the ball on the receiver in a hurry.

"We wanted him to get his base wider so he could play a little bit better from the ground to generate power with his legs," Callahan said. "He has natural arm strength, but it doesn't have to be that hard. It helps get the ball out quicker and he can be more efficient in his movements."

"I can see the results too," Levis said.

So could those watching practice thus far in camp. Levis has been sharp, the ball out quickly and accurately. The team didn't want him throwing deep passes early in camp, in large part to keep the receivers from running those deep routes as they get acclimated to being back on the field. But on one play Tuesday, the read was for a

deep throw and Levis ripped it. He missed the throw, but there seemed to be some route issue against that four-deep coverage. Levis blamed himself, but did mention that he wasn't supposed to throw deep at all.

"That's the right read against that coverage," he said. "So I let it go."

That's the gunslinger in him. The big arm will show off a lot this season, but it's clear he's much more comfortable in this new Callahan offense. It's why you can expect big things from him and the rebuilt receiver room that includes Calvin Ridley and Tyler Boyd to go with DeAndre Hopkins.

The table is set and Callahan is excited to see where his second-year quarterback can go as a player. He has his ideas, so when I asked him what the ceiling could be for Levis, he didn't hesitate.

"I think he can be one of the top-five quarterbacks in football," Callahan said. "He has everything you need to get to that point. Now he has to prove it. The good thing is he's trying to prove to people who believed in him they were right rather than trying to prove people wrong. It's been a fun offseason coaching him. He's everything you want. He's readily coachable and he has a good sense of the things he can and can't do."

Levis echoed some of the same sentiments when asked about his belief in himself.

"I never doubted myself," he said. "I always felt I was the No. 1 guy coming off that draft and I still feel that way. I don't want to prove (the many doubters) wrong. I just want to prove myself right."

Stroud has a big head start in that race to be the best, but the way I see it Levis is Josh Allen 2.0. Allen started his career slowly and then took off and is now one of the top-two quarterbacks in the league. The draft cult was wrong about him and they will be wrong again.

Will Levis will be a star -- provided he doesn't get locked up trying to work out in some foreign country.

###

WILL LEVIS LOOKING TO RAISE TITANS FROM WORST TO FIRST IN AFC SOUTH

**BY ARMANDO SALGUERO
OUTKICK.COM
JULY 18, 2024**

Tennessee Titans quarterback Will Levis saw the Houston Texans go from last place in the AFC South two years ago to first place last season, and he's also seen the recent influx of talent into a suddenly competitive division. So, excuse him if he's thinking his team is similarly ready for a worst-to-first leap this coming NFL season.

"Yeah, I mean, that's our goal," Levis told OutKick on Wednesday. "It's crazy to think how our division has gone from a second thought in the league to now one of the most competitive, exciting, young divisions. We know what it's going to take because of that now.

"The NFL is the NFL because anyone can win on any day, and we understand that. As much as people like to believe we're not going to be worth anything this year, we're going out there, not necessarily to prove them wrong, but to prove ourselves right and show people what we're about."

The Titans got good news from play of Will Levis just before NFL trade deadline.

Will Levis Must Join List Of Fine QBs

Levis and the Titans report to training camp next Tuesday. And if the Titans, lined with new talent, boasting a new coaching staff, and carrying high hopes, are indeed going to be a factor in the chase for the postseason, Levis has to lead the charge.

Tennessee, you see, plays in a conference stocked with great quarterbacks. Consider the lineup:

Josh Allen, Aaron Rodgers, Joe Burrow, Lamar Jackson, Russell

Wilson, Justin Herbert, and Tua Tagovailoa all play in the AFC. That isn't even mentioning Patrick Mahomes who reigns over all of them as a three-time Super Bowl champion.

So, if the Titans are going to compete at any high level, Levis has to find a way of climbing onto that list of outstanding quarterbacks by this time next year.

"Yeah, we know it's a competitive league," Levis said. "We're not focused on the names on the other teams. We're just focused on the names in our locker room and how we can [lift] up each other to the best of our abilities and reach our potential.

"But, yeah, it's a grind for sure. Because of all those people, we know there's [competition] and anyone can win on any given Sunday. But it's not going to be worth it for us to focus on people other than ourselves."

A Busy Offseason For Titans' Levis

Levis has indeed been focusing on himself this offseason. He's been doing promotion work on behalf of NOBULL apparel, for which he is a spokesman. He's learning a new offense installed by new Titans coach Brian Callahan. He's been working on getting his body right after struggling with some lower body injuries last season, and says that has led to him losing four or five pounds.

Levis has, in short, been managing a hectic offseason, so that when the regular season comes, he's in position to make a seismic second-year leap that so many NFL players experience from their rookie to the second season.

"I think just having a year of being the guy and going through all the spring and OTA periods stuff of being the starter, and really taking the bull by the horns, has been big for me -- as opposed to last year waiting around, waiting for an opportunity, and jumping in midway through the season," Levis said.

"Having a full offseason and now a full training camp, I'm really, really excited getting the ball rolling and developing as a player and a leader."

Titans Bonding Before Training Camp

That leadership was recently on display when Levis gathered receivers DeAndre Hopkins, Calvin Ridley, tight ends Chigoziem Okonkwo and Josh Whyle, and running back Tyjae Spears in Cabo San Lucas for four days and three nights of work and bonding.

"I wanted to bring out as many guys as possible, but we had a great group of six of us out there," Levis said. "I took that really seriously, and we got some really good work out there. And even more importantly, some really great team bonding and getting to know each other.

"It was a great time."

Levis is in an interesting situation now. He's not yet arrived, but he exudes a confidence that suggests that arrival looms. It's in everything he says during our 15-minute conversation.

Will Levis Eyes AFC Playoffs

Consider his collaboration with NOBULL...

"We obviously have a lot of competitors and we're trying to disrupt the market," he said. "And I'm trying to do my part in blowing it up how I can. And being as good a face for it as I can."

Then on his role in the Titans' new and evolving offense...

"I think that as long as the quarterback earns the trust of the coach in the system, then we have opportunities to do some really cool and fun things," Levis said, "so that's my goal to continue to earn that trust and get the ball in the air as much as possible. Start whipping it around."

And, perhaps most importantly, getting the Titans back in the postseason for the first time since the 2021 season...

"We're trying to make a playoff run," Levis said. "We've been looking the last couple of years to make something shake, and we feel like we have a team now to make it happen."

###

INSIDE THE EDUCATION OF TITANS QB WILL LEVIS

BY ALBERT BREER
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED
MAY 28, 2024

NASHVILLE—Will Levis had been in Tennessee Titans coach Brian Callahan's office for all of five minutes, still in workout clothes after finishing a May OTA day filled with practice and meetings, and Callahan shot Levis a smirk as he fired up footage of the quarterback's first start.

I'd asked Callahan to take me through some tape to show why he was so all-in on Levis, to the point where the Titans, in Callahan's first year and in possession of the seventh pick, didn't so much as sniff around on the quarterbacks available high in the draft. The first play he showed was a first-and-10 at Tennessee's 36 in the first quarter, right after the Titans converted a fake punt, with Derrick Henry square behind Levis and tight ends to each side.

"This is one of them," Callahan says, now smiling as if to anticipate the reaction. "Some of these play-actions, some of these deeper shots. I watched this ..."

"This is a stupid f---ing throw," Levis interjects with a grimace.

"I didn't have to have to say it," Callahan responds. "But, yes. That's the point."

We'll go through this particular snap in-depth in a bit. But for now, in a nutshell, what would play out on the screen was a microcosm of how Callahan's initial, and more thorough, study of his quarterback had gone. On one hand, on this play, the coach saw a 24-year-old make a throw that no more than a couple of dozen people on the planet could execute. On the other hand, as Levis intimated himself, the throw was also the wrong one to make.

So continues the education of Will Levis.

It's been a weird road here for the first pick in the second round of the 2023 NFL draft. He flashed early on at Penn State from 2018 to '20, but was stuck behind veteran Sean Clifford. His stock soared after his '21 transfer to Kentucky, with his arrival coinciding with the hire of offensive coordinator Liam Coen from the Los Angeles Rams. Things weren't as smooth in '22 after Coen's departure, which left Levis's draft projections—after five collegiate seasons—scattered all over the map. He fell out of the first round and landed with the Titans.

Now, he's here in Nashville, entrenched as the starting quarterback after nine up-and-down starts last year with a lot to prove. His first NFL coach, Mike Vrabel, is gone. He's fully aware of how things might've gone a different way with a different hire.

Instead, this latest turn just so happened to break his way.

Levis plans on taking advantage of it—and paying off the gamble by Callahan and the Titans. Reaching the comfort level the quarterback and coach have already, with brutal honesty on the agenda daily, is just the start, as Levis sees it.

June's almost here, offseason programs are in high gear and the NFL break is right around the corner. Here's what we've got in the takeaways ...

- Why Patrick Mahomes is even more valuable to the Chiefs than you might think.
- A timeframe for, and the trouble with, an 18-game schedule in the NFL.
- The only player who was the subject of trade talks at the top of the draft.

And a whole lot more. But we're starting with Levis, the Titans, and the chance for everyone to take advantage of a unique opportunity.

Tennessee Titans coach Brian Callahan

Callahan and the Titans are gambling on Levis developing into a top-tier NFL quarterback. /Nathan Ray Seebeck-USA TODAY Sports

Callahan's research ahead of the 2023 draft into Levis was cursory at best. He was the OC in Cincinnati, the Bengals have Joe Burrow, and there were better uses of his time than to grind tape on a player his team was never going to pick.

So while a little film work, and a little more from Bengals quarterback coach Dan Pitcher (who'd watched Levis more intently) gave Callahan some depth of knowledge going into his January interviews, he had catching up to do as he prepped for his four Zoom interviews. The one he did with Titans GM Ran Carthon revealed, to both, a level of chemistry everyone wanted to explore, which was one reason why Carthon pushed to get Callahan in-person for a second interview the Monday (Jan. 22) after the divisional playoffs.

With Tennessee up first, and Carolina and Atlanta slotted for their second interviews with him that Tuesday and Wednesday, Callahan crammed on those three. It meant studying rosters in general, quarterbacks in particular and, as part of it, Callahan watched four full games of Levis, along with cut-ups of all of his 2023 pass attempts.

"Every time I watched him, I was like, 'This guy's a pretty good player,' " Callahan says. "And I think everybody was a little shocked that he slipped the way he did [in 2023]."

Callahan communicated to Carthon, president of football operations Chad Brinker, and the rest of the Titans crew what he saw, which was captured succinctly on that Week 8 snap against Atlanta—Levis had what you can't coach, and could be coached up on what he wasn't bringing to the table yet.

Callahan told the Titans, in fact, that a lot of what he saw in Levis's 2023 rookie tape matched the Kentucky tape from '21, when the quarterback broke through working with Coen.

"You see he's athletic, he's strong, he's tough," Callahan says. "He'll stand in the pocket and he's got a great release. It's quick. And he's got a really legitimate arm. And he will play a little bit in that kind of swashbuckling style. He was trying to earn guys' respect. He was trying to show people he could play. That's part of earning your way as a young quarterback. He did some things that I think that his teammates rallied around, which was fun to watch."

Carthon's instinct on Callahan was confirmed quickly, and the Titans never let him leave Nashville—hiring him that Monday before he could even get on the plane to Charlotte. In turn, with the perception that Tennessee—with Ryan Tannehill a free agent—had uncertainty at quarterback, Callahan acted quickly. His first call after being hired was to two-time All-Pro and captain Jeffery Simmons, and his second call was to Levis.

He told the quarterback he wasn't going in with any preconceived notions, which was music to Levis's ears after his personality had been dissected nonstop before the draft. He told Levis he just wanted him to be himself.

"I remember being very at ease," Levis says. "He instilled a lot of confidence in me as a player and did his best to explain to me what he saw on tape with me and that he was excited to coach me and that he knew that I could be a great player in this league. To hear that from a dude who's going to be walking in, leading the charge for hopefully a long time from here on out, was cool."

And as Carthon, Brinker, Callahan and the coaches and scouts dove into their draft prep, it only reinforced what the coach said to the GM in their interview about Levis.

"I'd told Ran the truth," Callahan says. "I said he has real talent, real ability and I think he's got a chance to be a very good starting quarterback in the NFL. He's got enough tools to where his ceiling is high. If he's all the things mentally you need to be to play quarterback, his physical talent, it's a high ceiling. He's got a chance to be (a) really, really good, top-end starting quarterback. And I believe that. ...

"[The scouts] still do their due diligence and put grades on guys and all that. I had the conversation with Ran. Part of it was like, 'If Will's coming out in this draft class, I don't know that I feel like anybody is better than him at this point.'"

It may sound like a strong statement to make, given the type of class that was coming.

That said, it was backed with actions. The Titans didn't have any quarterbacks to Nashville for visits prior to the draft, and they didn't have big contingents at their pro days, either. The assumption had been, from the start, that Tennessee would take a tackle. That's exactly what it did, selecting Alabama's JC Latham with the seventh pick.

Meanwhile, the Titans spent the money they were saving in having a cheaper quarterback to support Levis, signing top free agents Calvin Ridley, Tony Pollard and Lloyd Cushenberry, which helped fortify the foundation of younger talent they'd be bringing along.

So, the idea goes, one way or the other, they'll know if they're right on Levis faster than they might have otherwise.

Tennessee Titans receiver DeAndre Hopkins and quarterback Will Levis

Levis tossed four touchdown passes in his rookie debut last year, including three scores to Hopkins. / Andrew Nelles / The Tennessean / USA

Now, we can go back to that first-quarter play against the Falcons, and a few more from that game that

explain the gamble, with Callahan holding the clicker and Levis following along.

The two paint a vivid picture of where they're going.

- On that first play, Levis carries out play-action to Henry to his right, and drops straight back in the pocket. As he sets up, Atlanta clearly isn't fooled. Nose tackle LaCale London's quickly in Levis's face, as he looked to his left. London gets to Levis, knocks him off-balance, and Levis somehow wills the ball deep downfield and to his right, just outside corner Dee Alford and past safety Richie Grant. It fell incomplete, but hit Treyton Burks on the hands.

Meanwhile, tight end Chigoziem Okonkwo was wide open in the opposite flat, releasing late into his route, as the play intended, to give Levis an outlet.

"This was not an advisable throw, nor was it an advisable position to be in," Callahan says. "It was like, Holy s--t, this is not smart. I look at it as I go. God, if Will can just learn that on a first-and-10, let's just throw the ball right there in the flat. That's Chigs in the flat. Chigs in the flat is going to catch this ball, and he's going to run for 12 yards and it's going to be first-and-10 again at the 50-yard line. Instead, Will's trusting his arm and his ability."

"That's a clear out," Levis adds. "We're trying to take the safety out of it, throw the dagger behind it. Dagger slips. I can sort of see out of the corner of my eye that the clear wins. I'm trying to pull him to the sideline. Just come down and take the check down."

"The other part of this, it's a f---ing unbelievable throw," Callahan continues. "You watch it from the end zone, there's a guy in his face, it's horrendous eyes, horrendous progression, guy bearing down on him. He can't step into the throw. This guy's 40 yards down the field, and he just sort of flicks it while he's getting hit and drops the ball right in his hands. It's an incredibly accurate

throw for what was going on. I'm watching this, I'm like, Goddamn."

Gathering himself, Callahan then summarizes: "First of all, decision-making can be coached. This right here, you don't coach that. Will's mom and dad gave that to him."

- The next play was a third-and-1 from the Titans 48, with Tennessee down 3-0 at the end of the first quarter. From under center in an I-formation with two tight ends, Levis carries out play-action to his right to Henry, then is patient in letting Henry leak out to the flat.

With Atlanta linebacker Nate Landman blitzing, Levis calmly stands his ground, and feathers a ball over Arnold Ebiketie's head to Henry, who turns it upfield for 5 yards and a first down.

"I was watching this game and I was like, Man, this reminds me of the junior year tape that I watched from Kentucky," Callahan says. "This doesn't seem like much, but this is a third-and-1, and this is thrown to a back that generally isn't a great catcher of the football. Just knowing that, he puts it in an accurate spot and puts a little touch on it so he can handle the ball. Small, minor thing, but just shows some awareness."

"This is one of my favorite plays of this game, too, just for that reason," Levis adds. "This wasn't the premier [option on the play]. We're trying to get to the shallow backside, have him get lost and come back. We always say if we have the back, take it. He's there. There's [a linebacker] in my face, not a throw that you necessarily practice. You got to get it up and down, put it in his hands, just let him get the first."

Callahan then says, "What I kept reminding myself of when I'm watching the game, I'm like, This is this kid's first start. He played the game like someone who's played the game. It didn't look, at any moment, like the game looked too big or too fast. I didn't feel like I was watching a rookie."

Levis, by the way, hit DeAndre Hopkins for a 47-yard touchdown on the next play.

- From there, Callahan pulls up a third-and-3 with 10:29 left in the first half. Levis identified the coverage, saw a look, and took a shot—standing in with Calais Campbell closing on him, and delivering a perfect pass down the right sideline that hit Treyton Burks on the hands. It was incomplete but subtly showed things the earlier shot did, too.

In watching it, Levis immediately mentions how off-rhythm he is during the play. The key, though, and the reason Callahan is showing it is because it almost didn't matter.

"Bad timing, bad footwork, but I like the decision," Callahan says. "I had a feeling that there was probably some alert here and there was a go route that was versus the press. Great, he's got it, take it. The timing was wrong. The footwork was bad. This is the same idea as the first play. These are all things that are incredibly easy to fix and incredibly easy to impart the knowledge where, OK, good, you want to take the go route."

Except that, as Callahan continues, "If you knew it was zone coverage and you just wanted to take a completion on third-and-3, that is situational awareness."

And, indeed, slot receiver Kyle Philips was open in the flat, running a pivot route out of a bunch look for an easy first down.

"Early in the game, we got pressed and I didn't throw it," Levis says. "Coach said next time we get any press with Treyton, let's hit the go. If it's first or second down, take it. Or third-and-long, yeah, take it. But that was in my head. It's third-and-3. I see press, I'm on it, but I know the situation. I know that pivot's going to get it."

- After that, Callahan puts up a first-and-10 at the two-minute warning that looks like, well, not much. Levis drops back off play-action,

subtly shuffles to avoid the rush, and puts the ball on Okonkwo a little low. Okonkwo drops it, but still there's a lot for a coach to like.

"Watch his pocket movement, a little slide away from the pressure, trying to buy himself an extra second, off-platform throw but still accurate, puts the ball in a good spot, obviously it's a drop," Callahan says. "That's NFL quarterbacking. That's what it looks like. That's what your pocket looks like. That's what the throws feel like. It was just the subtleness of how that played out, you're like, This doesn't feel like he's making his first start."

"This is the play all day," Levis says. "We're running play-action off split zone. Tight end's going to take the Will [linebacker] here. He's thinking he's blocking it. He's coming up the pipe. We're clearing out the safety and the corner on the front side. Those two receivers, it's really Chig down to the running back. ... I could lead him to the sideline more. The movement probably changes the location."

"If you're nitpicking," Callahan adds, "you'd love to see him hit him in stride on the move so he doesn't have to stop and turn."

- Callahan wrapped up the film session with the final two big-play touchdowns of Levis's four-touchdown afternoon. The first one was good for 61 yards to Hopkins and the second for 33 yards to Nick Westbrook-Ikhine.

On the Hopkins score, Callahan says, "He puts the ball ... it's in a great spot. It's a big touchdown. I don't know how you couldn't watch this and not be like, Hell, yeah, I want to coach this guy."

"Earlier in the game, we were seeing these safeties getting a little [aggressive] with the depth they were playing at, really when they ran their quarters coverage," Levis adds. "This is his cloud, and he's still very aggressive inside. Seeing that inbreaker (route), he's playing that, and we end up, we would call

it pump, so we'd pump to the inbreaker. He's just showing like he's coming in, safety stutters his feet for a second, throw it behind him."

Touchdown, Titans.

And on the second snap, playing the tape back, Levis rolled right, had two defenders coming free at him, and threw the ball back to the left corner of the end zone for the score.

"They're running the corner post here, and you get Jesse Bates in the post who's a smart player but a little over aggressive and you get the win," Callahan says. "To throw this ball with two guys bearing down and just putting it in an unbelievable spot, I didn't need to watch a whole lot more after I watched this game."

Tennessee Titans quarterback Will Levis

Levis goes through offseason workouts learning Callahan's offense. / Denny Simmons / The Tennessean / USA

Then, there was the other part of the assessment on Levis coming out—his personality.

Some of it Levis understands, and some of it he sees as ridiculous. And headlining the latter category is all of the stuff you've seen on social media. That he eats bananas with the peel on. How he puts mayo in his coffee. Which, he gets, is largely his own doing.

Carthon told Callahan that he'd addressed the stunts already with the quarterback. The GM's stance to his 2023 second-round pick was that if what everyone saw on video really is Levis, then roll with it. But if any of it was an act, or a swing at boosting engagement on Instagram or TikTok or whatever else, he should knock it off.

Callahan called the hysteria over it "really bizarre" and Levis agrees.

"It was mostly people that don't know me," he says. "Any team or any coach that got a chance to sit

down with me and understand who I am as a person realized that, sure, that's definitely part of my personality, but it's nothing that you should be worried about. I don't regret it at all. I still think it's funny. It's still something that I get a laugh at. That's the reason why I did it. I don't care how people responded to it.

"It's something that I enjoyed and got a little laugh out of. And, hopefully, that's the case [for other people]. Then I'm happy about it. It's all good, and it's something that's going to be tied to me forever. A little Hellman's marketing deal came out of it, too."

The other part is, well, actually important to Levis's professional success.

The same way teams raised it in the pre-draft process, Callahan and Carthon discussed it as they got to know each other—Levis can come off as, and really can be, wound pretty tight. And the coach was explaining it this Thursday afternoon as Levis was walking into the room. Callahan didn't stop, or pause, as the quarterback sat down. "Come on in, Will," he says before continuing. None of it was anything that they hadn't already talked through.

"It doesn't have to be head down all the time," he says as Levis sits down. "You can be relaxed and you can enjoy the process and you can enjoy practice and you're gonna enjoy communication back and forth. I think those things are where you start."

"It's been tough," Levis says. "I'm just hard on myself. That's [the] individual I am. I mean, I have very high standards. And if I'm not perfect, it's easy for me to get down on myself sometimes. But with a new offense, for the first time, taking the reins and having the ability to be the guy, I definitely felt that at first."

On the flip side was the intent of not just fishing around the quarterbacks in the draft, but giving Levis the job

from the start—the hope being that he, Callahan, OC Nick Holz and quarterbacks coach Bo Hardegee could accelerate the process of establishing trust.

That was key for a guy who hasn't had the same OC in consecutive years since he was a teenager and, as such, is more at risk of getting confused during the learning process.

"Right now, it's our first time as a team going through it all," Levis says. "And I'm able to live in that 100-200 world, but he's starting to mix in, sprinkle in the different layers and further the things that we could think about doing."

Callahan then explained how, from his vantage point, it's part of not just building an offense, but tailoring it to Levis.

The first stage is showing players everything that's available to them. From there, it's going over things a second time during OTAs, and then a third time in training camp to figure out what's best for the group, and the quarterback. That way, when the season starts, gameplans seem like light lifting.

And that'd be much more difficult to pull off if Levis was in some faux competition for the job. As Callahan saw it coming in, that's one big reason why establishing the guy he saw as clearly the best option at the most important position made sense.

Which, again, worked to unwind any tension Levis had, and strengthen their trust.

"I think you do a disservice to guys, particularly if you're drafting them, and you make them compete for a job. Guys need to play," Callahan says. "They need to be put in a position where they are the quarterback. There's something about that that matters to a team and a locker room. If you're going to do it, do it. It all sounds good—He should sit. That's not the reality. That's not the financial reality of the NFL, either. You're trying to take advantage of a young quarterback

on a rookie contract, that's the other part of it.

"There's something about being the quarterback and knowing ... when you walk into the building and walk onto the field, you know that you're the quarterback and you know that everyone around you knows that you're the quarterback. It allows you some freedom. Especially when you're a young player, there's no growth unless you make mistakes.

"The problem is, if you're competing for a job, you're not going to be willing to make the mistakes you need to make in order to improve at a rapid rate. You're more worried about the perception of the mistake than actually learning from the mistake. I think that does guys a disservice, and I think it stunts growth when you have to be constantly worried about it. If I know I can make this throw, but it's going to be kind of hairy, and I probably shouldn't, but I'm going to do it anyway. Maybe it takes a hell of a throw, but I can coach off that."

"It's the first time in my career where I've felt comfortable going to a coach and suggesting something, because I feel like I'm comfortable enough with the offense to where I know the machinations of it."

- Will Levis

It'd be silly, of course, to say in May that this will all turn out like things did for Callahan, Zac Taylor and Pitcher in Cincinnati with Burrow. Levis is far from that, which, of course, is something he'd readily admit.

But, obviously, all of these guys think that by doing things this way, like Callahan did with Burrow, Levis is getting his best chance to get there. And that's something Levis feels every day, even in May.

"It's the first time in my career where I've felt comfortable going to a coach and suggesting something, because I feel like I'm comfortable enough with the offense to where I know the machinations of it," Levis says. "That's been cool for me, to be

able to speak my mind. And even if they say no, I know at least I tried and we talked about it."

That effectively means that Callahan's intent, to accelerate Levis's development by getting him to trust his coaches and make and learn from mistakes, is being carried out.

For now, it's created a situation where both Levis and Callahan answer quickly when I ask whether they think that the NFL missed on the ex-Kentucky star by letting him fall all the way to the 33rd slot in the 2023 draft.

"Yeah," Levis says, smiling.

"I do, too," Callahan says.

Even better, now Levis has the chance to reward the people around him for having that faith in him—both those who were with him last year, and those that are here now.

"It definitely leaves a little bit of a chip on my shoulder and makes me want to go out there and work and keep showing people that teams might have made a mistake by not taking me," Levis said. "Hopefully I'm that guy that they talk about that did slip, and I can be that example for other kids that are in that same position in the green room like me."

"There's a part of that, I feel it from Will," Callahan adds. "I don't feel this, I'm going to show the world that they were all wrong. I don't feel that. What I more feel, and this is just my opinion of how I see his demeanor, it's more about I'm trying to prove these people right."

"I'm trying to prove this organization right," Levis says.

And the Titans are giving him every opportunity now to do just that.

###

HOW WILL LEVIS EARNED LIFETIME SUPPLY OF HELLMANN'S, AND HOW THE 'MAYO MOCHA' RECIPE WAS BORN

**BY NICK SUSS
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
NOVEMBER 22, 2023**

The leaves are changing. There's a chill in the air. Every day gets dark a little earlier. And there's a creamy dollop of Hellmann's mayonnaise plopped in your coffee mug.

You know, football weather.

Long before rookie Will Levis was the Tennessee Titans' quarterback of the future, he was the man who drank coffee with mayonnaise in it. Now he has the pleasure of being both. Back in August, Levis secured a lifetime endorsement deal with Hellmann's, America's biggest mayo brand, to be the condiment's athletic spokesperson. Hellmann's announced the partnership with a faux press conference, in which Levis proudly advocated on behalf of the Mayo Mocha, sipped his signature drink and even ate a mayo-topped muffin for good measure.

"It's hard to articulate, but people love talking about him," said Chris Symmes, director of marketing for Hellmann's. "He has this charisma that I don't think you see too often with athletes. He's clearly very comfortable in front of a camera. He likes to have fun. He's clearly a very gifted athlete. And people love talking about him. He does stuff that makes people want to talk about him."

The story behind Will Levis' lifetime mayonnaise endorsement

Levis had been on Hellmann's radar as a potential spokesperson since his culinary quirk started going viral on social media when he was still in college at Kentucky. In addition to his coffee experiment, he also gained notoriety for eating bananas, peel and all. The stunts were what they were: stunts. He's since said he

doesn't actually drink coffee with mayonnaise on the regular (he's a one-cream, one-sugar guy), but he knows gimmicks attract attention and get people talking.

Brands salivate at the value of charismatic athletes who are game to get silly. Hellmann's sent Levis a care package in February complete with a Letterman's jacket and bucket hat to rep the brand as well as a panini maker and recipes. Still, in the process of preparing for the NFL draft with a cadre of aspiring quarterbacks, Levis said the care package provided him, Max Duggan, Clayton Tune and Dorian Thompson-Robinson roughly a week's worth of meals.

Levis took to TikTok to thank Hellmann's for the haul. Symmes' courtship only intensified from there, culminating in the press conference ad in August.

"I think there's always some doubts like 'mayonnaise and coffee, it's a little peculiar,'" Symmes said. "But that wasn't really the intent. The key part of this was how Hellmann's can be used as a versatile ingredient."

Titans quarterback Will Levis squirts mayo onto a muffin in an advertisement for Hellmann's, the company he's a spokesman for.

Versatile for Will Levis, and for Nashville

Ahead of Levis' NFL debut in October, Hellmann's partnered with Humphrey's Street, a nonprofit South Nashville coffee shop with two locations, to make the Mayo Mocha available to curious Titans fans with adventurous palates. Humphrey's Street's baristas competed to perfect the recipe, going through several rounds of drink creation and taste testing, before landing on a concoction that's been described as having a brownie batter or chocolate ganache taste.

The drink was only supposed to be available from Oct. 25-31, but thanks to Levis' four-touchdown debut; positive press for Humphrey's Street's business model

of providing job training for teenagers in national outlets such as Axios and BuzzFeed; and customers actually liking the product, the Mayo Mocha has twice returned to menus.

"I personally wish we had done a blind taste test with customers so they didn't know," said Camille Cannada, senior director of development for Harvest Hands CDC, the nonprofit arm of Humphrey's Street. "Because I don't think they would've known."

For enterprising roasters, Hellmann's recipe for an at-home Mayo Mocha is simple to replicate:

Pour 1 ¼ cups of hot milk into a bowl and whisk vigorously for 1-2 minutes until frothy.

Pour two hot espresso shots into another bowl. Whisk in one tablespoon of Hellmann's REAL mayonnaise and one tablespoon of chocolate or mocha flavored syrup until smooth and well-blended.

Pour into a large coffee mug and top with frothed milk. If desired, add a sprinkle of cinnamon.

'It Must Be The Mayo'

As part of his sponsorship deal, Levis gets a "lifetime supply" of Hellmann's. The average consumer, Hellmann's says, goes through three 30-ounce jars per year. Since Levis' passion for the product outpaces the average consumer, Hellmann's is starting him off with six jars per year and he can request more whenever he's running low.

Levis says he's already on his second shipment.

After Levis threw for 238 yards and four touchdowns in his NFL debut, Titans fans online started rallying together with the cry "it must be the mayo." Symmes jokes that he didn't coin the phrase but he supports the idea.

Hellmann's can't comment on whether there are more projects planned with Levis or how the

partnership has helped sales or boosted their profile. But Symmes says the goal is to get people to use more mayonnaise, and targeting tailgaters and Super Bowl party hosts is part of the plan.

"As a marketer, it's fantastic to have an athlete/celebrity that is game to do fun stuff," Symmes said. "I think that was evident before he even joined the NFL or the Titans. So I think it gives us, as we think about what the future holds, I think it gives us a lot of freedom to think about ways to partner with him in the future. It's fun to have different ideas floating around given his willingness to not take himself too seriously and also just have a good time with things."

###

TO UNDERSTAND HOW WILL LEVIS' DRAFT SLIDE COULD TURN INTO ROCKET FUEL, START IN HIGH SCHOOL

**BY NICK SUSS
THE TENNESSEAN
MAY 10, 2023**

Will Levis has a big mouth.

That's not a figure of speech.

When it comes to food, the Tennessee Titans' second-round pick and potential quarterback of the future is less Julia Child and more a child dipping his hot dog in chocolate milk to test his mom's patience.

Culinary experiments made Levis famous on social media. Long before he was the lightning-rod prospect NFL draft pundits compared to everyone from Josh Allen to Blake Bortles, he was the Kentucky passer who went viral for stirring mayonnaise into his coffee and eating bananas without peeling them.

He doesn't do these things because he likes the taste. He does them because he can. It's audacious. And people react to his audacity.

Like when Levis was at Xavier High School in Middletown, Connecticut. He and some teammates were eating McDonald's. Levis told his friends he could down a Big Mac in five seconds. No one dared him. He just wanted to do it.

So he did.

"A lot of people wouldn't do that because it's weird," said Kyle MacGillis, Levis' high school receiver and close friend. "But he's funny like that. He doesn't really care what a lot of people actually do think about him. He's genuine. I think he's just like 'I bet I can do this.' And then he goes and does it. It's not like he's trying to prove anyone wrong or something."

Now Levis actually does have people to prove wrong. Twenty-six NFL teams passed on Levis before the Titans traded up to pick him 33rd in the 2023 NFL Draft. Levis languished backstage for 31 picks across the four-hour first round, drawing sympathy from some and mockery from others.

Levis has never much cared about being laughed at, though. He's the mayonnaise-in-his-coffee guy. He's the don't-peel-your-bananas guy. He's the guy who doesn't mind swallowing two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onion and three sesame seed buns whole.

A few draft-night memes won't hurt him.

"Regardless of where I got picked I feel like it's not going to change my work ethic," Levis said. "Regardless of if I went first overall or 33rd. You can't let the circumstances dictate your preparation and the level of intensity you bring every day."

Meet Will Levis

The first impression of Levis often elicits the same reaction: That guy looks like a quarterback.

He's 6-foot-4 and 229 pounds with biceps that look like they belong in a 1980s action movie. Every time he throws, he flashes the tattoo on his billboard of a right arm. It reads "2nd Chronicles 15:7" a verse seemingly written for a quarterback: Be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.

Levis' work wasn't instantly rewarded. Because of injuries, he didn't emerge as a star high school talent until his junior year. He went to Penn State and backed up Trace McSorley and Sean Clifford for three years before transferring to Kentucky. He led the Wildcats to a 10-3 season his first year as a starter but regressed as a senior.

Still, Levis arrived at the NFL Scouting Combine in February a projected top-10 pick. Along with quarterbacks Bryce Young, C.J.

Stroud and Anthony Richardson, Levis was in the conversation to go first overall.

Former Titans quarterback Matt Hasselbeck was one of Levis' league-assigned mentors at the combine and was instantly impressed.

"They said, 'What does Will Levis look like,' and I said 'He looks like a create-a-player on Madden,'" Hasselbeck said. "He's got everything you'd be looking for physically."

But Levis' self-described cannon arm wasn't what stuck with Hasselbeck. The subtle and not-so-subtle quirks of Levis' personality impressed the retired 18-year NFL veteran. Like the way Levis was always the guy who broke down the huddle before and after drills. And how Levis was vocally and emphatically cheering on receivers he'd just met doing their bench presses as if he was, as Hasselbeck puts it, "a tag-team partner at WWE WrestleMania."

The morning of the quarterback and receiver workouts, the NFL tweaked what brand of shoes players were allowed to wear because of a partnership with apparel brand NOBULL. Hours before the biggest workouts of their lives, players were told they couldn't wear the cleats they'd brought.

"Guys freaked out," Hasselbeck remembered. "A lot of guys really freaked out. Will, he didn't even blink. He was like 'Alright, no problem.' He was kind of like 'Can I just put tape on it? Let's find solutions. Let's not gripe.' That was probably the first time I noticed him other than his physical stature."

The joker becomes the butt of the joke

Food-based material isn't the only way Levis knows how to provoke a laugh.

"He does a great Borat imitation. He'll probably kill me for saying that," said Andy Guyon, Levis'

coach at Xavier. "That would always make us laugh."

"Me and him actually quote a lot of different comedy movies together," MacGillis added. "Like 'Step Brothers' all the time. Borat I think is honestly his favorite. But he knows a lot of funny movies."

Levis was 7 when Borat hit theaters. He wasn't exactly doing timely material in high school.

But it's obvious something Levis did in high school resonated with his peers, because he wasn't the only one who weathered four hours of NFL draft coverage on what was supposed to be a celebratory night.

MacGillis and some of Levis' teammates watched at a nearby house. Guyon hosted a draft party at Xavier that began with around 150 people in the building. Instead of showcasing celebrations, a local news station ran footage of Guyon sitting by himself, dejectedly watching the draft on his phone.

"If you looked at NFL Memes on Twitter and stuff they were getting him pretty good," Guyon said. "It hurt a little bit. I definitely felt for the family. But they're strong people. They're good people. That which doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Why Will Levis?

The Titans were cagey on draft night about why they drafted Levis. Coach Mike Vrabel and general manager Ran Carthon labeled Levis the Titans' third-string quarterback behind Ryan Tannehill and Malik Willis. When asked who Levis reminds him of, Carthon said the only player he wants to compare Levis to is Levis.

Discussions about Levis' talent and projectability divide football experts. Some point to Levis' impressive stature, bountiful physical tools and experience in pro-style offenses as a reason why he should've been a top-five pick. Others saw Levis as a Day 2 prospect because his Kentucky tape

leaves much to be desired. He's been erratic, inconsistent and turnover-prone, and his play was significantly worse against Power Five competition than it was against softer opponents.

One of the common criticisms hurled Levis' way is he played a lot worse in 2022 than in 2021. The numbers don't exactly bear that out (he averaged more yards per attempt and had a better passer efficiency rating as a senior while his completion percentage, touchdown percentage and interception percentage all essentially stayed the same), but something was different.

His Pro Football Focus grade dipped from 90.6 to 68.6. His passer rating on throws targeted 20 yards downfield or longer fell by nearly 12 points. Adjusting for sacks, he went from averaging 5.98 yards per carry with nine rushing touchdowns to averaging 4.24 yards per carry with two rushing touchdowns while battling a toe injury.

Everyone from Levis to Vrabel to Hasselbeck tells the same story on why Levis regressed. A new offensive coordinator changed the playbook to an offense less suited for Levis' strengths, particularly one that de-emphasized play-action passes, and two of the Wildcats' starting offensive lineman and Levis' favorite receiver turned pro.

"It's kind of tough for all 11 guys to be on that same page," former Kentucky cornerback Keidron Smith said. "Not everybody's maturity level is at the same point and not everybody's able to comprehend the playbook at the same time. It's difficulties when it comes to playing offense, having a new offense and having the expectations of doing well and the season that we had. It was a lot of built-up things that people had on their shoulders."

Smith said Levis wore the pressure well. Levis battled through injuries when he could've packed up and prepared for the draft. He describes Levis as the kind of person who leads without needing a push.

"For him, it comes easy," Smith said. "Him being comfortable up there and speaking in front of a whole bunch of guys and reaching them, that's one thing. And he knows how to speak to people. He's not going to cuss anybody out or anything. He finds a way to reach his players and his teammates and the coaches really like that about him."

Levis and the Titans: A perfect match?

The Titans called Levis to tell him they were picking him as he was walking through the door into his family home in Connecticut. He left Kansas City after his long wait on Day 1, but travel holdups meant the family barely made it home to hear his name called.

Levis couldn't control his tears when Carthon, Vrabel and Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk called with the news.

The next night, Levis' loved ones gathered for a proper party. Friends, family, coaches and teammates celebrated Levis, and he responded with a speech thanking everyone for standing by him.

"His underlying message was his journey wasn't easy," MacGillis said. "A lot of weird stuff happened. So obviously why would the draft be any easier? But he ended up exactly where he knew he needed to be."

Being an NFL quarterback means weaponizing adversity into triumph. Hasselbeck was a sixth-round pick who worked his way up from a practice squad to starting in a Super Bowl. Tom Brady, Levis' childhood hero, also was a sixth-round pick. NFL MVPs Aaron Rodgers and Lamar Jackson had to withstand similar long waits backstage at the draft before hearing their names called.

Hasselbeck brings up another example of a quarterback he feels is analogous to Levis: Donovan McNabb, the Philadelphia Eagles'

all-time leader in passing yards, touchdowns and wins, who was booed relentlessly by Eagles fans on draft night.

“The reaction Eagles fans had when he got drafted, they didn’t trust Andy Reid,” Hasselbeck said. “Sorry, I think they were wrong. In this case, if anyone’s not trusting Ran Carthon and Mike Vrabel, you probably know how I feel.”

###

**TK MCLENDON MAKING
IMPACT AS TITANS
UNDRAFTED FREE
AGENT, TIGHT END TO
DEFENSIVE LINE
CONVERT**

**BY BLAINE KELLAR
TITANS INSIDER
DECEMBER 5, 2023**

Azeez Al-Shaair celebrates a defensive play with rookie defensive end TK McLendon. By Angie Flatt

The last five years of TK McLendon's football career took him through three different colleges, an offense-to-defense position change and an undrafted rookie contract with the Tennessee Titans.

It also offered him his first NFL start last week.

Four years removed from catching gauntlets at tight end for Copiah-Lincoln Community College and LSU, McLendon is making his impact on defense for the Titans.

"I'm just here to do whatever I can," McLendon said after Sunday's overtime loss to the Colts. "Starting off on the practice squad to making the active roster, it's a hard job. But I'm just here to do whatever they want me to do."

McLendon has played in every game since being elevated to the 53-man roster in early November. He logged 15 defensive end snaps at Tampa Bay and Jacksonville before picking up his first career start against Carolina.

But coming out of junior college in 2018 as one of the nation's top transfer tight ends – and far before that, growing up playing the position – McLendon likened himself to NFL stars Antonio Gates and Travis Kelce.

He signed and transferred to LSU as a junior, appearing in three games and catching one ball against Georgia Southern during the Tigers' national championship season.

McLendon made the switch from tight end to defensive line one year after LSU's title run. A few months following a redshirt season he entered the transfer portal and landed at FCS Eastern Kentucky.

"Here's a guy who's played tight end his whole life," ECU head coach and Nashville native Walt Wells said. "In high school everybody plays everything, but if you're playing everything you're not learning anything."

The Colonels targeted him through defensive line coach Jeremy Hawkins, who recruited McLendon to LSU when serving as assistant director of player personnel.

McLendon said Hawkins was one of the first people to call once he hit the transfer portal, and the two created a plan for his success at a still-new position.

"We were looking for transfer defensive linemen, so (Hawkins) brought the film in," said Wells, who took a chance on the 6-foot-3, 270-pound project.

"Because of (Hawkins') connections we were able to get practice film, which was huge because he didn't have any game film from playing on the defensive line."

Wells said the position change wasn't much of a challenge once McLendon arrived in Richmond – the staff saw pro potential through his size, movement and power at the line of scrimmage.

McLendon grew an inch and gained 30 pounds to start his first season at ECU.

"When you watch him just naturally run, obviously he was a tight end so he's a gifted athlete," Wells said. "Probably not just flat-line fast that you want in a tight end, which makes him fast for a defensive lineman."

As a senior McLendon racked up a team-leading 11.5 tackles for loss

and six sacks, five of which came in five different games.

"I just stuck with the plan," he said, "and look where I'm at now."

Those figures – plus some of Hawkins and ECU's coaching connections with the Titans – helped garner NFL interest for him and fellow undrafted free agent Matthew Jackson, a Hillsboro High School alum and Colonels teammate.

Hawkins was part of the Titans' Bill Walsh Diversity Coaching Fellowship in training camp last season. Wells worked alongside recently fired special teams coordinator Craig Aukerman at Western Kentucky in the early 2000s.

Jackson underwent a position change at the pro level too, moving from linebacker to safety. He's played in over half of Tennessee's special-teams snaps in seven of his nine appearances this season.

McLendon, who signed with the Titans over Kansas City as a UDFA, may see his ever-increasing role grow with two-time All-Pro Jeffery Simmons sidelined. He recorded two tackles and played a career-high 21 snaps (11 defense, 10 special teams) against Indianapolis.

"They continue to grow and take pride in the fact that the Titans took a chance on them, both as undrafted free agents," Wells said of McLendon and Jackson. "And they continue to be thankful and work their tails off to be the best player they can be for them."

###

**WHAT TENNESSEE
TITANS' ROGER
MCCREARY IS LEARNING
FROM VETERAN
DEFENSIVE BACKFIELD**

*BY ALEX DAUGHERTY
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
JULY 25, 2024*

Cornerback Roger McCreary is confident in his chances to be one of the Tennessee Titans' starters on defense.

He also knows — given the additions general manager Ran Carthon made to the Titans' defensive backfield this offseason — the task won't be easy.

In March, Carthon signed eighth-year cornerback Chidobe Awuzie and traded for fifth-year cornerback L'Jarius Sneed. Then, two weeks before training camp began, he added three-time Pro Bowl safety Jamal Adams.

McCreary, a third-year player who finished third in pass breakups (6) and fourth in combined tackles (86) on the Titans last season, is suddenly one of the least experienced players in the Titans' defensive backfield.

"Those guys are who you look up to and just want to play with," McCreary said at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park on Thursday. "They make you better just by how they play."

Awuzie, 29, played seven seasons with the Dallas Cowboys and Cincinnati Bengals before signing with the Titans. He has 369 tackles and six interceptions in 86 career games.

Sneed, 27, played four seasons with the Kansas City Chiefs where he was part of two Super Bowl wins. He was traded to the Titans for a third-round pick on Mar. 29.

"Those guys are great," McCreary said of Sneed and Awuzie. "We studied them up close when we played them. They are veterans, and

they give me tips on what I should do."

###

Tennessee Titans' Roger McCreary wants to be aggressive like Jamal Adams

While McCreary learns technique and skill from Sneed and Awuzie, he's learning to be more aggressive from the Titans' newest addition Jamal Adams.

Aggressive play near the line of scrimmage is the calling card of Adams, who is looking to reestablish his NFL presence after missing 24 games over the last two seasons. Injuries suffered while playing with the Seattle Seahawks seemingly derailed his career and had many wondering if he would play again.

Adams signed a one-year, \$1.125 deal with the Titans on July 11, something he sees as a "prove it" deal.

One of the most physical safeties in the game during his time with the Seahawks and New York Jets, Adams has 21.5 sacks and 494 tackles in 80 career games. McCreary says he's eager to grow the physical side of his game learning from Adams.

"I've seen his games, I know how he plays," McCreary said about Adams. "He's aggressive and I see how he is in that box. I'm trying to be aggressive like him."

As the Titans continue through training camp, McCreary has a clear shot to be one of the Titans' starting defensive backs. With Awuzie and Sneed ahead of him, he would slot as the nickel corner, a position that Adams has also played in his career.

With more defensive veteran leaders in the room, McCreary is also ready to establish himself as a leader.

"For me, I'm trying to be more of a vocal guy," McCreary said. "We got new guys coming in, so my main goal is to be that vocal leader and set the example."

**TO UNDERSTAND ROGER
MCCREARY'S PATH TO
TENNESSEE TITANS,
START WITH THE STERN
WORDS OF A COACH**

**BY BEN ARTHUR
THE TENNESSEAN
JUNE 12, 2022**

In 2017, at a Williamson High School football practice in Mobile, Alabama, Antonio Coleman chewed out Roger McCreary.

The defensive coordinator, Coleman felt his star senior was going through the motions. McCreary's activity level looked lackadaisical, so Coleman reminded him that next for him was Power Five football, where lagging could cost his team a touchdown. Lagging in the NFL could cost him his job.

"Do it right all the time!" Coleman told McCreary. "Do it right every time!"

McCreary didn't talk back or pout.

He cried.

"Coach, I apologize," he said through tears. "I get exactly what you're saying."

As Coleman tells it now, "That really let me know that the game of football and what I was saying to him really meant something to him."

Nearly five years later, McCreary is beginning his NFL career with the Tennessee Titans. A second-round draft pick, he'll compete for starting snaps at cornerback and nickelback during his rookie season.

In the offseason program, McCreary already is impressing his new coaches with his mindset.

"He wants to have the right answers all the time and that's unrealistic as a rookie," defensive coordinator Shane Bowen said.

It's an approach molded by his upbringing.

'We often said he had ice water in his veins'

Felicia James, McCreary's mother, ingrained a routine in her son from the time he was a toddler.

She had delivered him before starting 10th grade. By 2 years old, he accompanied her to her high school basketball practices and games, and they always went outside. A single mother, she taught him how to catch a football and baseball. How to dribble and shoot a basketball. He played soccer, too.

James shuttled him between practices and the park as he grew older. If work kept her from taking him to the next sport or activity, she had somebody waiting to do it for her.

Keeping McCreary busy and his mind focused was a priority for James. Free time increased his chances of drifting into the streets of their Mobile neighborhood, where shootings and stabbings were commonplace. The bad influences landed a nephew who grew up with McCreary in jail.

So she automated her son's schedule. If he wasn't at school or playing sports, he was at home getting ready for bed or waking up getting ready for the day.

"Just trying to keep his head going right instead of going left," James said.

James played football growing up. She was a nose tackle and linebacker, playing on organized teams in Mobile with boys. She built a reputation as hard hitter, according to Coleman.

A strict disciplinarian, a vocal James could speak with authority on football, where her son starred at

multiple positions in all three phases for Williamson.

"She was one of those parents who'd cuss me out if I didn't do (well) in the game. She would cuss the coach out," McCreary said. "That's the kind of strong, tough love she would always give."

It fueled his drive.

Since high school, he's made off days work days. At Williamson, McCreary called Coleman to open the weight room on Saturdays and Sundays. On Mondays at Auburn, McCreary came to the football offices eager to find a competitive advantage against the elite receivers the Tigers faced weekly in the SEC.

McCreary could take a piece of information once and be able to absorb and apply it, Auburn defensive backs coach Zac Etheridge said. If there's something he's unsure about, he'll ask about it, preferring to pull the coach off to the side for a one-on-one conversation.

"He understands formations and splits and alignment on the field and what that tells him is coming," said Miami defensive coordinator Kevin Steele, McCreary's defensive coordinator at Auburn from 2018-20. "He's not just out there covering routes and guarding people. He's a smart guy that studies the game, that understands concepts and what people are trying to do to him."

Despite his smaller frame — the Titans list him at 5-foot-11 and 190 pounds — McCreary excelled as an outside cornerback at Auburn, where he led the SEC and tied for seventh in the FBS in passes defended last season. His former coaches point to his strength being a key part of his success in single coverage.

Coleman recalled McCreary benching 355 pounds when he weighed around 170 pounds in high school.

"I wasn't benching that much and I was a defensive lineman," said Coleman, who played two NFL

seasons after a career of his own at Auburn. “So you could tell there was something special about him.”

McCreary’s demeanor is unwavering on the field, according to his former coaches. He stays emotionally neutral after good or bad plays.

“We often said he had ice water in his veins,” Steele said. “Nothing bothered him.”

‘I always tell him to stay in the moment’

At the end of every season, on the Friday night before the final game, Etheridge honors his senior defensive backs departing the program. They go bowling. Expectations for the final game are discussed.

For the 2021 rendition, at the team hotel, McCreary got up to speak. The clarity and delivery of his message about the next day’s Iron Bowl against Alabama floored Etheridge. It fired up the entire room, he said. McCreary had never talked like that before.

He proceeded to have perhaps the best game of his career in the quadruple overtime thriller, a loss for Auburn. McCreary posted four of the Tigers’ seven pass breakups. He locked up future first-rounder Jameson Williams and second-rounder John Metchie III.

The performance cemented his status as a top cornerback in the 2022 draft.

“Everything that (we had) worked on since the time I got (to Auburn) to one of the biggest games of his career and facing those top receivers, he was just in a different mode and you could just tell that it paid off in that game,” Etheridge said.

It meant Coleman’s message four years prior – when he ripped into McCreary at practice – had paid off.

He took nothing for granted before and during the game of his life.

“Our relationship will always be great because it’s about Roger succeeding at whatever he wants to do at the highest level and enjoying life and working hard because he earned every moment that he’s having right now,” Coleman said.

“I always tell him to stay in the moment.”

###

**TENNESSEE TITANS'
ROGER MCCREARY
WILLING TO SACRIFICE
BAKED BEANS TO
IMPROVE**

**BY MARK INABINETT
AL.COM
MAY 5, 2023**

During his rookie season, Tennessee Titans cornerback Roger McCreary played more defensive snaps than any player in the NFL. Despite his ironman status, the former Auburn All-American wants to go into the 2023 campaign even better prepared physically for the rigors of an NFL season.

“You can’t get much faster than what you are now, really,” McCreary said on Wednesday, “so really I was just focusing more on my body – being more professional, being more healthy, and all that stuff because the season is long and I learned that guys are just going down, so I feel like that’s what I need to focus on, just being more healthy and just trying to focus more on my body.”

How serious is McCreary about his preparation? A player whose scouting report said “likes cereal and bologna sandwiches and baked beans” made changes to his diet.

“I’ll admit diet, I still need to work on that,” McCreary said. “That’s something I still need to work on. I’m getting better. ...

“I’ve been trying. I’ve been doing good. I haven’t had baked beans in a while.”

While at Auburn, McCreary ate a bowl of baked beans topped with sugar for his Friday night meal before games.

McCreary is hoping the changes lead to improved performance on the field.

Among the NFL’s cornerbacks in 2022, McCreary ranked fifth in total tackles and second in solo tackles. But only one defensive player was

thrown at more by opposing quarterbacks, and he gave up six touchdowns in coverage last season as he spent much of 2022 as the nickel or slot corner for the Titans.

“I spent a lot on just watching over the last games – the bad plays, the good plays,” McCreary said. “First starting out with the bad plays. I pay attention mostly to that. Playing that slot, that was something different for me, so I feel like that was something I needed to focus on and look to see what I need to improve on the most, and I noticed what I needed to work on in the offseason. ...

“I feel like I wasn’t at the top of my game at the nickel, so I feel like it would be great just to get back from Day 1 to how they want me to play the nickel, literally everything from off to press to knowing the plays to better reaction to knowing how the game speed goes and everything, so I felt it was just great seeing myself on tape.”

The Titans have started their offseason program after posting a 7-10 record in 2022. Seven consecutive losses to close the season ended a three-year playoff streak for Tennessee that included the AFC South title the previous two seasons.

McCreary is experiencing his first full NFL offseason.

“It’s been great just to have that little down time just to get your body back right after a long season, after the rookie season and everything,” the former Williamson High School star said. “It was all great, and coming back here, meeting the new people that have come on the team, new coaches and stuff, it’s just great, again, how we’ve started to find a foundation here, and I feel like the stuff we got going on now in the offseason is going to be great. ...

“Last year, I did a lot. I feel like I did a lot. Now I feel like I know a lot. I feel like I know what’s coming at me now, so just coming out there, going over the plays, I just feel

confident, I just feel comfortable that I know what I’m doing. I did it before.”

###

TITANS ROOKIE ELIJAH MOLDEN'S GOAL? PROVE HIS NFL VETERAN DAD'S HARD WORK PAID OFF

TURRON DAVENPORT
ESPN
JUNE 20, 2021

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- Elijah Molden was still in high school when then-University of Washington defensive coordinator Jimmy Lake started teaching him the Huskies' scheme. Lake received a call from Molden's mother, Christin, saying the young defensive back had sketched out pictures of the defense he had learned and covered his bedroom wall with them like posters.

"This guy means business," Lake thought to himself.

That's the impression Elijah, who was taken by the Tennessee Titans in the third round of the 2021 NFL draft, often leaves on those when talking about football. After all, playing cornerback is the family business. His father, Alex, was selected by the New Orleans Saints with the 11th pick in the 1996 draft and went on to play eight seasons with the San Diego Chargers and Detroit Lions.

"It wasn't like, 'You're going to get to the NFL or else.' But it was kind of just assumed that I would get here," Elijah said.

Elijah's path to the NFL was created in part by a great understanding of football passed along from his dad, who spent countless hours breaking down film and coaching his son from a young age.

Growing up Molden

Elijah is the second oldest of Alex and Christin's eight children. Each of them was given a development plan. It started with gymnastics to learn balance. Then they transitioned to soccer to work on foot quickness and changing speeds.

After that, the Molden kids were allowed to play whatever they wanted -- not just football.

"Just because Daddy played doesn't mean you have to," Alex told his children. "But if you do, I got the playbook."

Elijah's love for football was sparked early when he was able to go into the Chargers' locker room with his dad. He got to hang out with greats such as running back LaDainian Tomlinson, linebacker Junior Seau and safety Rodney Harrison.

Watching his father run out of the tunnel before games to blaring hype music made Elijah want to follow in Alex's footsteps.

"There wasn't a day where I woke up and didn't want to be a football player," Elijah said.

He started asking detailed questions about football in the fourth grade. Alex wasn't surprised because he could see Elijah's passion and competitive spirit growing.

The next year, Alex and Christin allowed Elijah to play tackle football a year earlier than they had planned because Elijah needed that physical aspect of the game. His speed and strength stood out.

"I would get giddy," Alex said. "[Elijah] was using stiff-arms, blowing kids up. He was having so much fun. When he put on the pads, it was just like me when I played. It gave him so much freedom."

Breaking down film with Dad

Elijah initially wanted to play running back because he loved Adrian Peterson. But Alex encouraged him to play defensive back once he got to the eighth grade, knowing he could begin to share his knowledge and experience.

"I had to approach him," Elijah said of Alex. "He'd never just show me. He was hands-off until I showed him I wanted to know."

Alex wanted his son to think like an eight-year NFL veteran rather than an eighth-grader. Unlike typical fans, the two didn't take in a football game in a few hours. Watching games turned into a four- or five-hour session.

"I would pause it after a big play and ask him if he knew why it happened," Alex said of their film study. "I'd explain to him what the DB's read was. You have to learn the reads and the keys. I would break things down like route patterns.

"When [opposing offenses] get to the 50-yard line, what are you thinking? I'm telling him, 'They're going to take their shot.' When you get 3-on-1, what are you thinking depending on what receiver is on the field side? They're trying to isolate. That really helped with football IQ, having him watch film and break down what the receiver or offensive coordinator was thinking. It's all about tendencies."

This is where the foundation of Elijah's football knowledge was built, which impressed the Titans in pre-draft interviews.

"I think he's been raised well. He was just really intelligent," GM Jon Robinson said after the Titans selected Elijah in the draft. "He knew about our football team. He had prepared for the interview by watching our football team. He spoke highly of how we played and the effort and the finish with which we play."

How Elijah ended up in Lake's hands

Alex got to coach Elijah as his position coach at West Linn High School in Oregon. One of his proudest memories came when Elijah was only 14 and locked down an opposing team's wide receiver who had been offered a scholarship to Arizona. When Elijah was a freshman, he got his own scholarship offer from Oregon, his father's alma mater, after attending one of the school's football camps.

Other offers followed.

When he was a junior, Elijah was offered a chance to visit the University of Washington and watch spring ball on an unofficial visit. Alex didn't think the long drive to the Seattle area was worth it -- especially since the school was a Pac-12 rival of Oregon's. So Elijah and his mother took the three-hour drive without him.

They were blown away by the campus and the program, so they arranged another visit, with Alex this time. Everything changed for Alex after he met Lake. Suddenly, the idea of turning over the keys to Elijah's success to his alma mater's rival wasn't such a bad idea.

"[Lake] broke down film, and the attention to detail was on another level," Alex said. "Also, the success he had with defensive backs made me realize this was the perfect breeding ground. He coached in the NFL. That set off bells with me. Yeah, I would have loved for [Elijah] to be a Duck, but it was a perfect scenario for him to go there."

Lake, who coached defensive backs in the NFL for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (2006-07, 2010-11) and Detroit (2008), sold them on Washington's track record with defensive backs, such as NFL first-rounders Kevin King and Desmond Trufant.

"There was already proof in how we developed those guys, how they moved on and were successful in the NFL," Lake said. "Alex knew a lot of the guys that I had coached in the NFL and those guys being All-Pros, one of which was a future Hall of Famer in Ronde Barber, so he respected the process."

Lake, who's now the head coach at Washington, said Elijah was one of his favorite recruits to watch on film. He loved Elijah's physical ability and leadership, noting how the team would "sway with however Elijah was playing."

Elijah's inquisitive side came out as well. He asked detailed questions

about the Huskies' techniques and scheme. Lake was impressed that Elijah wanted to know what everyone around him was doing in addition to what his own duties were.

"He prides himself on learning every detail of the defense," Lake said. "You could see that he was a football junkie. When you got him on the phone, you could tell that he had a passion for playing."

Another Molden's NFL journey begins

Elijah developed into a top NFL prospect, finishing with 153 tackles (seven for a loss), five interceptions, 19 passes defended and four forced fumbles in 36 games at Washington.

"With what I taught him and what Coach Lake taught him at UW, he was seeing things at a totally different rate of speed," Alex said.

NFL scouts saw Elijah as one of the best nickel defenders in the 2021 draft class.

ESPN NFL analyst Louis Riddick jokingly referred to Elijah as the "Jedi of the slot" because of how well he played the nickel position.

"It's Luke Skywalker-type stuff. He can see all of these things, but there's never any panic," Riddick said. "There's a lot of chaos around him, but he's in control. That to me signifies a guy who's really dialed in to the game at another level. He comes from great bloodlines, and that stuff transfers. He'll quickly adapt to the pro game."

Making it to the NFL was always Elijah's goal, but the rookie said he isn't satisfied. For him, it's time to make sure all of the hard work his father poured into him pays off.

Elijah's message to his dad for Father's Day shows how much all of the lessons mean to him.

"Thank you for letting me live out my dreams and always giving me advice, keeping things in perspective," Elijah said. "When I

step on the field, I can do what I do because of you, and when I'm off the field too. I appreciate that, and I love you!"

###

**HEADING INTO YEAR
THREE, VERSATILE
TITANS DB ELIJAH
MOLDEN READY TO DO
MORE**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 22, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Elijah Molden first walked in the doors at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park in 2021 as a third-round draft pick of the team.

In a snap, the Titans defensive back is already in year three, and he can hardly believe it.

"It doesn't feel it," said Molden, shaking his head.

With the experience, Molden has a better understanding of what to expect heading into the 2023 season.

But he's hardly comfortable, and he doesn't want to be.

"There is (a comfort level), but at the same time I am trying to elevate my game," Molden said. "I don't ever really want to come in and be lackadaisical or too comfortable. So, what that means to me is learning a new position and testing the limits every day."

The versatile Molden has worked at a number of spots during his first few years with the team on defense and on special teams, and when he's played, he's performed well.

Unfortunately, Molden has also dealt with injuries, including a persistent groin injury that nearly sidelined him for all of the 2022 season. A year ago, Molden played in just two games, with one start, playing in 16 games, with seven starts, in his rookie season in 2021.

Molden said he's feeling better physically, but he admitted it's been tough mentally with the adversity, and setbacks.

"It's been really tough," said Molden, who tallied 60 tackles and an interception as a rookie. "It's hard to explain. I feel like my family and a couple of other people really know what was going in and the deal behind everything. I just want to put it behind me, really. I am feeling a lot better now and I am definitely on the up-and-coming, and the Titans have been really helpful in the transition from rehab to action and now back on the field practicing."

This offseason, Molden has worked some at safety.

It's something Molden's coaches spoke to him about at the end of last season, and head coach Mike Vrabel discussed it with reporters during OTAs.

"We've actually played him in the back part of the field a little bit," Vrabel said of Molden. "I think that will be good for him. It will help him expand that role and expand his versatility. So, he can easily come down and play nickel. He was our [punt protector] on the punt team (in OTAs). So those are three valuable roles for a young defensive player. We need every player we can get out there healthy and being able to use that versatility.

"We talked about it in the offseason and just where we may need some depth," Vrabel continued when discussing giving Molden some experience at safety. "It's more or less to try and give guys another role outside of just a nickel, or maybe we're in a game and we're playing a lot of defense and you need a safety. So instead of having him always just being a corner conversation, [we] figured it would translate from the nickel back to safety."

Molden said he's willing to do whatever is asked of him.

Molden ended the offseason work on a high note, making an interception on the final day of OTAs.

"In this league," Molden said, "it's like the more versatile you are, the

more you're able to help out and be able to play anywhere."

The countdown to year three is ticking.

"I'm just really happy to be out here and have some fun again," Molden said. "Starting to feel healthy and all those things ... I'm starting to come back and feel like myself again."

###

**CALEB MURPHY
SETTLING IN WITH
TENNESSEE TITANS**

**BY MAX HARDEN
LEADER PUBLICATIONS
JUNE 26, 2023**

NASHVILLE — Former Dowagiac and Ferris State star Caleb Murphy is already settling in with the Tennessee Titans.

The undrafted free agent turned heads during the organization's rookie minicamp in May and organized team activities this month, where he has worked with both teammates and coaching staff to get his feet wet in their system.

During an interview with Titans media, Murphy expressed why he decided to sign with Tennessee to begin his NFL career.

"I just felt like Tennessee is a good spot," he said. "They work hard. (Head coach Mike Vrabel) said all good things to me when we had our conversation after the draft. There's just a lot of availability and opportunity here so you have to continue to work hard because coach Vrabel prides himself in people working hard."

Since arriving in Nashville, Murphy has immersed himself with the Titans playbook.

"It's different than anything else you've ever been a part of football-wise," he said. "I feel like there's a lot more knowledge and terminology that you need to know going into it and as long as you're studying – it's good to pick up on, it's easy to pick up on – but you just got to continue to stay in the books."

After a record-setting collegiate career in Big Rapids, Murphy is determined to take his game to the next level.

"It's all about perfecting technique," he said. "I'm trying to learn more about my craft and learn more about my abilities and what I can do off of other things. Offensive linemen,

they get to their sets regardless so you just have to figure out how to beat guys to their sets."

Murphy said he has enjoyed learning from the veterans on the team.

"Arden Key, Harold Landry, Rashad Weaver, Sam Okuayinonu, just watching them and the way they have body lean and those types of things," he said. "I'm just going to continue to try to craft myself into what it needs to be in order to be a Titan."

###

**TITANS ROOKIE EDGE
RUSHER CALEB MURPHY
WORKING TO MAKE A
NAME FOR HIMSELF IN
THE NFL**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 26, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Caleb Murphy wasn't drafted, but the edge rusher arrived in the NFL after a decorated collegiate career which saw him post some pretty mind-boggling stats.

Murphy, who played at Ferris State, set the single-season sacks record for all NCAA divisions with 25.5 in 2022, one year after tallying 14.5 sacks at the school.

Murphy also led all divisions a year ago with 39 tackles for loss, which matched the all-time, single-season record at any NCAA level.

Yet with the Titans, where he signed as an undrafted free agent after the NFL Draft, Murphy is just another rookie trying to make a name for himself.

Case in point: After offseason practices, Murphy could oftentimes be seen carrying extra helmets and gear of his veteran teammates.

"You have to do rookie duties," Murphy said with a smile. "You have get them things they need in the meeting rooms, making sure we're on top of our jobs and they lead us the right way. Little things like that, carrying helmets, it's not a problem at all."

Murphy, who received interest from a number of teams leading up to the draft, said he's doing everything he can to stick out for teammates and coaches in Tennessee.

"I felt like Tennessee was a good spot for me – they work hard, and I think there's an opportunity for me here," Murphy said. "I have to do my part which is to work hard myself – Coach (Mike) Vrabel

prides himself in working hard, so that is what I am going to do.

"It is definitely different coming in as a rookie, and you have to stay in the books."

A 6-foot-3, 254-pounder, Murphy looks the part in practices.

He's also done his part to put in extra work, and his teammates are noticing.

"I love Caleb," veteran Arden Key said. "He's a young guy who is willing to learn. He is always asking questions, coming up to me or Harold (Landry). He is a guy who is seeking knowledge. He is doing what coaches ask of him, and he is taking what he learned off the field and putting it to use on the field."

Titans outside linebackers coach Ryan Crow said Murphy just needs to keep working.

"Like all rookies, the first thing is he has to learn what to do, and be able to do it at a high level, and execute at a high level," Crow said. "I think for Caleb, special teams is important as well – find a way to get on special teams and continue to earn more roles as we continue to develop.

"The thing I love about Caleb is he came from a place where they won two national championships, and regardless of the level that's an awesome thing to have is a winning background. I am excited that he is here, and I'm excited to see him grow."

Murphy said he's working daily to improve his technique so he can add to his craft, and ability.

Murphy, who transferred to Ferris State from Grand Valley State, was an All-America performer in college. Nearly half of Murphy's tackles last season were for negative yards as Ferris State dominated their opponents on the way to their second consecutive NCAA Division II championship.

Murphy said it's too early to even start thinking about what he needs to

do to stick on the team's active roster for the 2023 season.

Right now, he focused on one thing.

"For me, myself, I just have to work hard, and worry about myself, and do what I can to help the team," Murphy said. "I've been watching the veterans – Harold Landry, Arden Key, Rashad Weaver, Sam (Okuyinonu), too. Watching those guys work, I'm hoping that makes me better and helps me craft myself into what I need to be to be a Titan.

"I just have to push myself as hard as I can."

###

THOMAS ODUKOYA: 'I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT AMERICAN FOOTBALL'

**BY KOEN VAN DER VELDEN
DE VOLKSKRANT
JANUARY 5, 2024**

Thomas Odukoya came into contact with American football ten years ago. Now, he is part of the Tennessee Titans roster, where he is awaiting his first game.

A few times a week, Thomas Odukoya (26) is on the scales at his club Tennessee Titans. His weight, about 115 kilograms, and that of his teammates is meticulously tracked. Those who are overweight will be fined, others will have to gain weight. To maintain his physical fitness, Odukoya consumes five thousand calories a day.

On a terrace in his home base Nashville, he chooses a hamburger with fries for lunch. He leaves the last bites.

It is his second season in the wonderful world of the NFL, the most popular sports league in the United States. Foreign players are rare there. Odukoya, who was born in Amsterdam and grew up in Almere, is the only Dutchman in the competition. Only three compatriots preceded him. The recently deceased Harald Hasselbach, two-time Super Bowl winner with Denver Broncos, is the best known.

With his stature, Odukoya (1.98 meters) seems to be made for American football, a sport for sturdy guys in which a combination of strategy, athleticism and the necessary physical violence must conquer territory from the opponent.

From football to football

It's hard to imagine that he ever played football. Odukoya played in the youth of FC Omniworld, the predecessor of Almere City. "I didn't know anything about American football," he said in the run-up to the

last game of the season, Sunday against the Jacksonville Jaguars. "I didn't get to know it until I started playing it."

He was 16 when a friend took him to the local Flevo Phantoms, one of the few American football clubs in the Netherlands. If he didn't want to give it a try. Odukoya was immediately sold. 'Football is a real team sport, with all kinds of players', he says enthusiastically. "The smallest, fastest athletes in the world play in the NFL alongside the heaviest and strongest. It's that mix that makes it special.'

He likes the physical aspect of his sport, says Odukoya, a so-called tight end. "On one attack I can receive the ball, on another I make a block for a teammate," he explains his position. 'As a tight end, you have to be a jack of all trades.'

Sparring partner

Odukoya is part of the so-called 'practice squad' of the Titans, a group of sixteen reserves that prepares the first team for games at practices. He is expected to mimic the tight end of the upcoming opponent. If necessary, he can fill in.

His coaches are full of praise for him. "He's working really hard and getting better and better," head coach Mike Vrabel said earlier. "We're lucky he's playing with us."

The pats on the back are nice, says Odukoya, but "at the end of the day, you want to play. A few times this season I had the feeling that it was going to happen, but it never happened.' Where other players from the reserve group got their chance, Odukoya didn't get it. If his situation does not improve, he will consider a transfer to another club.

Waiting for his breakthrough, he realizes the improbability of his path to the NFL. The step from Almere to the Titans could hardly be bigger.

Odukoya remembers how there used to be a handful of spectators on the sidelines during matches of the Flevo Phantoms at Sportpark de

Marken in Almere. When he made his debut in the Titans' first team in an exhibition game in the fall, there were 60,000 fans in the stands of the imposing Nissan Stadium. "I had never felt my heart beating so fast," says Odukoya.

Self-promotion

He holds out his hand in front of him with outstretched fingers. "If I had done this, I must have shaken a lot. I don't know what it was, but when the ball was put into play, the nerves were gone."

With the Flevo Phantoms, Odukoya excelled every week, but American scouts were nowhere to be seen in the Netherlands. If he wanted to be discovered, he had to take action, and so Odukoya put together a band of highlights of himself. He sent it to multiple U.S. coaches and got an audience at West Hills College in California. At the age of 19, Odukoya moved to America.

After a stopover in Kansas, he ended up at the University of Eastern Michigan, where his talent began to stand out. After four seasons, he applied for the NFL draft, the selection round in which clubs pick young talents from the shop window. Odukoya was overlooked, but the disappointment didn't last long. Tennessee Titans wanted to sign him.

And so he suddenly found himself in the locker room among players he used to see on television. "That was a bit intimidating, but you soon notice that they are ordinary guys.' He recently went out for dinner with Derrick Henry, Tennessee's biggest star.

Cut-throat competition

The competition in the NFL is fierce, Odukoya noted. "It's a tough world. Every preparation we start with about ninety players. You work together all summer, but when the season starts, about forty players are sent off. There is a high turnover rate between teams. For many players, it is uncertain whether they

will still be at the same club next season. Or that they stay healthy.'

Odukoya knows the risks of his sport, which scientists have linked to brain damage. After their death, several former players were diagnosed with the progressive brain disorder CTE, the result of frequent blows to the head. 'I'm definitely thinking about that', says Odukoya.

At his training on Wednesday afternoon, where journalists are allowed to watch for twenty minutes, he wears a helmet with extra protection. The specimens used in the competition have also been modernized over the years and are intended to prevent brain injury. Odukoya: 'I hope that cte will be a thing of the past for our generation.'

He knocks on the table. 'I've never had a concussion. I used to go full head into it, but now I try to protect myself more. That's what we're trained to do.' At the insistence of the NFL, the language used in the locker room has also been adjusted. 'You don't hear instructions like 'put your face in' anymore these days.'

Nevertheless, concussions are still common. "I had a teammate who was out for a month," says Odukoya. 'When he was at the training complex for a check-up after all this time, you could see from the look in his eyes that something was wrong in his head. Of course, that's scary.'

Career is over in no time

A player's career in the NFL lasts about three years on average, or the length of Odukoya's contract in Tennessee. He tries to enjoy his adventure as much as possible. He will think about a plan B later.

With his salary, he can move forward for the time being: in the eighteen weeks of the regular season he earns more than two hundred thousand. It's dwarfed by quarterback Ryan Tannehill's \$37 million, but Odukoya has no complaints. Should he move on to the 53-man main squad, he will also

receive a significant salary increase. A smile. 'That's an extra reason to go for it.'

The bosses of the NFL are happy to have him there. The league aims to stimulate international growth, among other things by luring foreign players. Odukoya got his chance in Tennessee thanks to a program created specifically for that purpose. 'In the Netherlands, American football is a small sport', he says, 'but countries like Germany, Sweden and Austria now supply quite a few players to American universities.'

Odukoya was there when the Titans played in London earlier this season, another way the NFL is looking to expand. 'A special moment', says Odukoya. He wanted to share it with friends and family, so he bought 26 tickets. It cost him thousands of dollars, but it was worth it to him.

His family follows the Titans closely, even though Odukoya didn't participate yet. His Nigerian father is watching from Manchester, his mother is watching in front of the television in the Netherlands.

When the season is over, Odukoya will go to Almere again for a few weeks. As always, he will stop by Sportpark de Marken, the place where it all began. 'Catching up with my coaches', says Odukoya.

Maybe he'll take some of his U.S. teammates with him. They are curious about his motherland, where children play football and American football hardly exists. It didn't stop Odukoya from taking a shot at the NFL. If it is up to him, others will follow him.

###

**TITANS ADD TE THOMAS
ODUKOYA OF THE
NETHERLANDS AS PART
OF THE 2022
INTERNATIONAL PLAYER
PATHWAY PROGRAM**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MAY 3, 2022**

NASHVILLE – The Titans have added tight end Thomas Odukoya to the team's roster as part of the 2022 International Player Pathway program.

Odukoya, who is from the Netherlands, is one of four players league-wide to join an NFL club through the program, which is part of the league's efforts to strengthen the pipeline of international players while aiming to provide elite international athletes the opportunity to compete at the NFL level, improve their skills, and ultimately earn a spot on an NFL roster.

Titans GM Jon Robinson informed Odukoya of the news during a Zoom call. He's expected to be in Nashville next weekend for the team's rookie minicamp.

Odukoya, who played college football at Eastern Michigan University, started playing football at age 16 in the Netherlands where he was named the Dutch National MVP. He was a team captain for two seasons and received Academic All-MAC.

Odukoya (6-6, 263) played in 40 career games at Eastern Michigan, where he caught 21 passes for 194 yards and four touchdowns. Odukoya played in 13 games in 2021, when he tallied 13 catches for 130 yards and two scores.

In addition to Odukoya, three other players joined AFC South clubs as part of the program.

This year's participants are:

Player/Position/Country/NFL Club

Marcel
Dabo/DB/Germany/Indianapolis
Colts

Adedayo Odeleye/DL/United
Kingdom/Houston Texans

Thomas
Odukoya/TE/Netherlands/Tennessee
Titans

Ayo Oyelola/DB/United
Kingdom/Jacksonville Jaguars

The four AFC South clubs will carry these players on their roster until the end of training camp. At that time, the players are eligible for an international player practice squad exemption, granting the team an extra practice squad member. Clubs have the opportunity to elevate the player to the active roster during the season.

###

**FEEL BETTER, PLAY
BETTER: TITANS TE CHIG
OKONKWO EXCITED
ABOUT HOW HIS BODY
FEELS, AND VIBES
AROUND TEAM**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 19, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Feel better, play better?

Tight end Chig Okonkwo believes changes he's made this offseason, as well as a new feel on the team this offseason, could pay off for the Titans this fall.

Time will tell, but right now it's all smiles for the third-year pro.

"A fresh start is always good, especially when you are coming off losing a lot," Okonkwo said. "The building, the vibes are immaculate right now. They are great. The future is exciting right now.

"I feel like guys are more relaxed now, in the building. Guys are coming in and they're not as tense, not as stressed out. And it allows people to be a lot more free in the locker room, a lot more free on the field."

A fourth-round pick of the Titans in the 2022 NFL Draft, Okonkwo is looking to be at his best in 2024.

In 2023, Okonkwo caught 54 passes for 528 yards and a touchdown while playing in 17 games, with 11 starts. A year before, Okonkwo caught 32 passes for 450 yards, but with three touchdowns, and a 14.1 average per reception (compared to 9.8 yards in 2023).

This offseason, Okonkwo said he focused on making changes to the way his body moves on the football field.

Earlier this offseason while in Florida, he worked to prepare himself to make strides.

He did a lot of stability work, in an effort to get in and out of his cuts better. Okonkwo said he could tell a difference in practices in May and June.

"I feel like I maximized the potential I had in my body, and if I wanted to get better, I had to change the structure of how I move and stuff," he said. "(I feel) a big difference, even the way I feel, my body. I feel a lot better when I move. After a long day of moving, I don't feel as sore."

A new coaching staff, and new offensive weapons around him, also has Okonkwo optimistic about what's ahead.

Brian Callahan is known for his offensive mind, and receivers Calvin Ridley and Tyler Boyd coming aboard alongside DeAndre Hopkins should make things better for the offense.

And, the way Okonkwo sees it, all of the team's tight ends should benefit, from himself to Josh Whyle and Nick Vannett.

"I think more down the field, attacking stuff, I would say," Okonkwo said of potential changes for the tight end. "Using our speed to get those balls down the field. A lot of stuff has been shorter stuff in the past. I think we're going to be able to open up a lot more things.

"It is very exciting when you see the stuff we're bringing in. It feels like we're going to be relying a lot on the pass, and that is going to be a big part of my game, too. So, I am very excited for that. I am very excited to have those guys on the outside, and get a lot of the attention, and then make plays on the inside."

###

**‘JUST A FINAL SHOVE,
MAN.’ A DAY IN THE
TRAINING CAMP LIFE OF
TITANS TE CHIG
OKONKWO**

**BY JOE REXRODE
THE ATHLETIC
AUGUST 2, 2023**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Chig Okonkwo emerged from the Tennessee Titans locker room at 9:25 a.m. Tuesday, the second day in full pads for a team and player pursuing the same objective — block better.

Okonkwo showed as a rookie fourth-round pick out of Maryland last season that he can run, change speeds, nail routes, win downfield and make plays in the passing game. Fellow second-year pro Treylon Burks has been the early standout of camp, and that in tandem with the addition of DeAndre Hopkins makes the Titans look a lot more dangerous on the outside than anyone would have guessed as of mid-July. Add Okonkwo and healthy second-year slot receiver Kyle Philips to the equation and Ryan Tannehill has intriguing options at hand when he’s not handing to Derrick Henry.

And when he has enough time to throw behind a highly unproven offensive line. One thing that can help this offense is Okonkwo getting to the point where he can more effectively help that front when needed, which will also get him on the field more often. Which will remove his presence as any sort of tell for defenses. The Athletic watched Tuesday’s practice from the perspective of Okonkwo as he continues to work on blocking, special teams and the skills that should allow him to improve on last year’s 32 catches for 450 yards and three touchdowns — 24 of those catches, 278 yards and two touchdowns in the final seven games.

Okonkwo guzzled a bottled water and started jogging toward Field 3, the most distant of three grass practice fields at St. Thomas Sports Park. He gave a “Shhhh” sign with his right index finger into the filming camera of social media coordinator Katie Moseley, then did some head bobs into the filming camera of social video producer Troy Wisneski. Team stretch ended at 9:40, at which point Vrabel gathered the entire team close for a few words that could not be picked up by observing media or fans.

Then it was time for individual drills. The first two for Okonkwo were special teams drills on Field 2, and Vrabel was front and center for the first, stopping it often to give technique instructions as would-be blockers tried to hold up would-be tacklers. Most of the participants were receivers, but Okonkwo, rookie tight end Josh Whyle and rookie linebacker Thomas Rush took turns engaging each other.

Then it was a kickoff return drill for Okonkwo, with special teams coordinator Craig Aukerman running the show. The point was to “flatten your guy out so he can’t cut across your face and make the tackle,” Okonkwo said later, and he did his best to stay in front of receiver Nick Westbrook-Ikhine and redirect him. Then Rush did the same with Okonkwo sprinting toward him.

At 9:51, it was time for Okonkwo to leave the skill group on Field 2 and get with the big uglies on Field 1. Combination blocks were the order of the day. Okonkwo and Jamarco Jones — who is trying to earn the starting right tackle spot for the first six games while Nicholas Petit-Frere sits out a gambling suspension — lined up next to each other and fired forward when offensive line coach Jason Houghtaling barked, “Turbo!”

Petit-Frere was waiting for them with a blocking pad, and they combined to drive him backward.

Players rotated spots often, Okonkwo holding the pad for a rep and combining on another rep with Chris Hubbard, the primary competitor with Jones to fill Petit-Frere’s spot.

“Pad level! Pad level!” Houghtaling reminded one and all, and it’s leverage and precision that have occupied Okonkwo’s focus in an offseason of trying to become a more well-rounded player.

“And you can feel it too, when you’re going, if you can stick a guy versus not quite getting it right,” he said. “Technique is a lot more important than strength. Strength doesn’t matter. Everybody’s strong.”

At 9:57, Okonkwo got back into skill mode on Field 1. A Titans practice tradition is a gathering of the entire team and Vrabel in the center. An offensive player and defensive player face each other. At Vrabel’s whistle, the offensive player circles back and is flipped the football, the defensive player circles back the other way, and they meet in the middle to see if the ball carrier can elude the defender. There’s no tackling to the ground, but there’s an “Ooooooooohhhhh!” every time a defender is jukeed and left grasping air.

Okonkwo elicited no such reaction, but he made a nice move on linebacker Chance Campbell, getting past him going left with Campbell getting a touch on Okonkwo. The 6-3, 238-pound Okonkwo got a defensive rep too — he may not play as much on special teams this season, but he has to be ready — and that was more impressive. He was all over one of the shiftiest players in camp, 5-11, 196-pound rookie receiver Kearis Jackson.

At 10:04, it was time for a 25-minute team period on Field 3. The closest thing the Titans have to real football in practice. No tackling to the ground. No hitting quarterbacks. But serious hitting all the same. And the first play of the team period

illustrated the work Okonkwo is trying to get done.

He lined up as an in-line tight end, on the left side of the line. In front of him was new outside linebacker Arden Key, whose energy, voice and playmaking have been constants throughout camp. Key has been trouble at times for new left tackle Andre Dillard. On this play, it was Okonkwo who engaged him with a big pop on a handoff to Derrick Henry, and Henry cut left off the block to reach the second level.

To the naked eye, it also looked like Okonkwo may have given Key's jersey a tug. Key said later it was not holding, and Okonkwo said of the finish to the block: "A shove. Just a final shove, man."

But the fact that it looked like it might have been speaks to the details Okonkwo and the Titans are pursuing.

"I think the biggest thing for Chig is going to continue to be his hand placement," Vrabel said. "I don't think we're going to make him any bigger, he's not going to be a 260-pound player. But I think we have to just continue to focus on his hands and making sure that they're inside, that they're strong and they're powerful. (He's) not going to be able to sustain against Arden or any player with your hands outside. You just don't have enough power. He's willing. I just think that the technique has to improve."

So ... holding then?

"No, I felt like on the first glance ... like he let go when Arden broke the framework of his body, and tried to give him a shove, as what we coached to," Vrabel said. "I looked at it with a critical eye and I didn't see restriction at the point of attack. But again, I'm not an official. I just try to look and see what they call. I felt like he did let go and he did try to give him a shove. Then we'll see if that guy, in that case, Arden, can tackle Derrick. So again, I think it could have been better. I thought that it was smart not to grab him and

tug him. It was smart to give him a shove at the end like we teach. So started off not so well and probably then finished OK."

That's the level of analysis that can go into one rep. For the rest of the team period when the first-team offense was on the field, Okonkwo was in the lineup more often than not. He moved all around, did some more blocking — including a good pass protection rep on a completion to Hopkins — and ran several types of routes downfield. Tannehill targeted him on a short pass over the middle, but Amani Hooker read it perfectly and broke up the pass.

Okonkwo got open with sharp routes against Kristian Fulton, Sean Murphy-Bunting and Kevin Byard, but the ball went elsewhere each time. When the twos and threes hit the field, he mostly stood close to Tony Dews, who has switched this season from running backs coach to tight ends coach. Dews' instruction, for Okonkwo and other tight ends, was frequent.

More special teams drills followed the team period, with Okonkwo and others getting low to bat a large blue ball back toward Dews three times while shuffling from left to right — a drill designed to work on lateral quickness. After that, Okonkwo and Whyte were back at each other, one trying to block and the other trying to slip past. At 10:47, it was time for another long team drill. But this time, as planned before practice, just the twos and threes would go.

Okonkwo and other starters ran 10 sprints on Field 2 while it got started. Then they jogged over and cheered on their teammates. The horn sounded at 11:12 after a series of plays run by Malik Willis and Will Levis. Vrabel gathered the team close in the middle of Field 3. And at 11:16, it was time to break — some players heading to fans to sign autographs, some doing media interviews, some getting in individual work such as catching passes from the Jugs machines.

Okonkwo and Dews stood by those machines for several minutes, Dews

grabbing Okonkwo's arms and getting into some technique intricacies. Reporters gathered around Okonkwo a few minutes later and he was asked about playing for Dews.

"It's been fun, it's been interesting," Okonkwo said. "The man's loud. A loud guy, man, he likes to coach you really hard. It's a different coaching style, you just have to understand it, and you just have to get used to it. He just coaches you hard and that's how I wanted to be coached."

And that was after a light day. Heavier ones are on the way.

###

**TITANS TE CHIG
OKONKWO, P RYAN
STONEHOUSE NAMED TO
PFWA'S ALL-ROOKIE
TEAM**

***BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 24, 2023***

NASHVILLE – A pair of Titans have been named to the Pro Football Writers Association's All-Rookie team – tight end Chig Okonkwo and punter Ryan Stonehouse.

Okonkwo, a fourth round draft pick of the team from Maryland, finished the 2022 season with 32 catches for 450 yards and three touchdowns.

Stonehouse, signed as an undrafted free agent from Colorado State, finished the 2022 season with a gross average of 53.10 yards per punt (90 punts for 4,779 yards). Stonehouse broke Sammy Baugh's single-season NFL record of 51.40 yards per punt, which was established in 1940 and was never matched among qualifiers (2.5 punts per team game) until Stonehouse's rookie campaign.

The rookie team was chosen in voting conducted by the Professional Football Writers of America (PFWA).

###

CHIG OKONKWO'S CREW: TITANS REMIND HIM OF HOME, REFLECT NFL'S AFRICA PUSH

**BY JOE REXRODE
THE ATHLETIC
AUGUST 22, 2022**

Titans rookie tight end Chigoziem Okonkwo got the football bug in second grade, his first year of playing and the first year he realized he could make some money off it.

So obsessed was young Okonkwo with the sport that he made sure it was on any TV he was around in his hometown of Powder Springs, Ga. He read whatever he could read, memorized every stat, every player, every bit of analysis he could find. He so impressed his classmates at the lunch table that he started charging them \$1 apiece — or an ice cream cup, their choice — for his commentary. They paid it, until the principal found out, halted the operation and called Okonkwo's parents.

"I told (the principal) it would never happen again," Okonkwo's mother, Isioma, recalled of a conversation from 15 years ago. "But I was so proud of that boy. He came home and thought he was in trouble, but I said, 'That's a very, very good thought, that is our culture, and maybe some time in the future you can bring that out. For now, allow your friends to come listen to you talk about the football for free.'"

Entrepreneurship is a staple of the Igbo people of Nigeria, Isioma said, and that's the first thing that came to mind for her and her husband, Charlton, when they heard of their youngest child's exploits. Nigerian culture is something they talked about throughout the raising of Okonkwo and his two older sisters. It is something Okonkwo became more aware of at 15 when his father tragically passed away of a heart attack while out to dinner with his mother. And it is something he celebrates daily now.

Saturday, a night that saw Okonkwo catch a touchdown pass from Malik Willis in a 13-3 preseason win over Tampa Bay at Nissan Stadium, could be the last time a group of Titans who have bonded over their shared heritage are all in uniform together. Tuesday is another roster cut day, to get it down to 80. The Titans waived four players Monday, so one more must go. Okonkwo and four Nigerian teammates have very different stories and football trajectories.

Okonkwo, a promising fourth-round tight end out of Maryland, will be on the team and potentially a handy addition to the passing game. Ola Adeniyi, born in Nigeria, raised mostly in Houston and a Nashville revelation last season, should again provide quality outside linebacker depth. David Anenih, born in Dallas to parents who had recently moved from Nigeria, has been a pass-rushing standout in two preseason games, and the rookie looks like a practice squad candidate at least. Rookie tight end Thomas Odukoya, born in Amsterdam to a Dutch mother and Nigerian father, can occupy that practice squad without costing the Titans a spot — that's the advantage of the NFL's International Player Pathway program, which got Odukoya to Nashville.

"But I feel like I've got to come out every day and prove I deserve that spot," said the 6-foot-6, 253-pound Odukoya, who dominated club football in the Netherlands, sent highlight tapes to coaches all over the United States, played for two junior colleges and finally found success at Eastern Michigan.

The guy to watch Tuesday is defensive tackle Sam Okuayinonu. "Sam O.," as they call him around Titans camp, is a popular figure around the team. He's close with Okonkwo, his Maryland teammate, and that relationship is part of why Okuayinonu signed with the Titans after going undrafted. He was a captain at Maryland and he's doing all he can to add his name to an NFL trend and pursuit — the league is pouring resources into outreach

efforts in Africa. Last season it reported more than 100 players on active rosters who were either born in Africa or whose parents were born in Africa.

Okuayinonu also is quite undersized for an NFL defensive tackle at 6-1, 269, and based on his opportunities and play in camp he's an active roster long shot, a practice squad hopeful and a Tuesday cut candidate. Ask Okonkwo about Okuayinonu and he'll tell you he's "an inspiration to me" and someone who shouldn't be underestimated. He's certainly been through more than most, seeing things as a young child that no one should have to see.

Born in Monrovia, Liberia, to a Liberian mother and Nigerian father, Okuayinonu was raised there by his mother, Clara, and was attending her college graduation party as a 5-year-old in 2003 when gunfire turned the celebration into chaos. The Second Liberian Civil War, which had been raging since 1999, had reached the doorstep of Monrovia. He ended up separated from his mother, fleeing with his aunt and cousin.

"The gunfire was so heavy, we couldn't turn around," said Okuayinonu, who ended up south of a primary bridge near the city, hiding in an uncle's house, protected from becoming a child soldier but not from seeing dead bodies floating in the water or starving people resorting to cannibalism.

He found out his mother was still alive when her first shipment of food — delivered by clandestine kayak — arrived. They could not speak or communicate for months, until the August 2003 ceasefire resulted in the reopening of the bridge and thousands of people streaming across to find their loved ones. That's a memory seared into Okuayinonu's brain.

"An incredible moment, a blessing," he said. "My mom's my everything. I got to reunite with her, and a lot of kids didn't get that privilege."

They moved together a few years later to Lowell, Mass., where some of their family members had already relocated. That's where he fell in love with American football. That's how it usually goes for kids from other parts of the world with a sport that dominates American culture but does not have the global pull of sports such as soccer or basketball, and that's what the NFL wants to change. That's how it went for Chic Ejiasi, too.

Ejiasi was born in Houston to parents who had recently emigrated from Nigeria. The family moved a few years later to Iowa, where Ejiasi's parents worked as nurses and he became an Iowa Hawkeyes enthusiast. He eventually walked on to Kirk Ferentz's program, lettering all four seasons as a defensive back and contributing to Big Ten championship teams in 2002 and 2004. He graduated with a health and sports studies degree in 2005, tried coaching briefly but ultimately returned as the program's first director of player development — helping players transition from high school to college, helping them excel in college, helping them find internships and employment.

The Titans hired him away from Iowa in 2016 to be their director of player engagement. He has been with the franchise since and he and his wife, Ellie, have a 2-year-old son named Obi — officially Miles Obioma, Obioma translating to "kind hearted." Ejiasi's job is much the same, helping Titans transition to this life. He loves serving and seeing young professionals benefit from and give to their community. He might be having as much fun during this preseason camp as he's had in this job.

"Taking over the league," Ejiasi said with a smile of the increase of African players in the league and with the Titans, which has meant in recent weeks a lot of sharing of stories, conversations about culture and even discovering others on the team with African heritage — such as receiver Nick Westbrook-Ikhine and safety Josh Kalu.

"It's like we kind of all have that understanding of how we grew up," Ejiasi said, and they all have strong feelings on how that culture led them here.

Ejiasi: "For me it was, we were very academically focused in our family. All about giving our best and trying and being the best we could be, especially academically."

Anenih: "I would say it's a pretty big difference from American culture. In terms of how to live, maturity. Like my parents, they've done a really good job of teaching me how to live and good habits to have. ... Respect. Respect for your elders, that's probably the biggest thing I would say."

Adeniyi: "We see our elderly, we respect them. We respect everybody we come around. Coaches, custodians, cafeteria ladies. That's what it is."

Okuayinonu: "To me it's like there's a little bit more pressure to go harder, knowing the sacrifices my mom made to make this possible for me."

Odukoya: "Obviously there's the genetic component of being big and strong, and I'm proud of that, but I also think Nigerians are known for their hard work and work ethic, which you need in the NFL. That shared culture, we definitely take pride in that."

Okonkwo: "Relentless hard work. That's the only way you're going to get anything in life."

Okonkwo also realized he had misperceptions of Nigeria until he visited for the first time. This was in 2017, three years after the tragic passing of his father, to visit extended family and celebrate the life of his father with them.

"People obviously have a negative perception of Africa. They think it's like dirt, everything is poor. That's not the case. It's literally like anywhere else," Okonkwo said. "If you see my uncles' houses over there, they're bigger than multi-

million dollar houses here. That's a big thing I took away, the perception and reality. Everything isn't dirt and poverty."

Okonkwo would like to go back soon to get involved in outreach efforts, NFL-devised or otherwise. Adeniyi is committed to doing so next offseason, as part of NFL Africa. Former Giants star defensive end Osi Umenyiora, who was born in London to Nigerian parents, brought the idea to NFL commissioner Roger Goodell years ago and led in June in Ghana an event called NFL Africa: The Touchdown.

It included a combine-like development camp, a flag football clinic and fan events. The idea is to find and develop talent but also to increase international exposure to the game. The Philadelphia Eagles, for example, are marketing in Ghana as part of an effort to create regional fandom for various teams in different parts of the continent. This had to make business sense for the league to happen. The NFL reports 85 foreign-born players took at least one snap in the 2021 season — compared with 62 in 2014 — and that Nigeria, Canada and Australia are driving the growth.

But for Umenyiora and others with African roots who took part and will continue to take part, it's personal and about providing opportunities. The NFL isn't the only pathway for football to change a life. College football can open many more doors for kids with ability. Foreign-born FBS players more than doubled from 2014 to 2020, from 162 to 325. Roman Oben, the NFL's vice president of football development and the first Cameroon-born player drafted into the NFL, said he got emotional on the trip to Ghana.

"The school kids, the genuine passion and excitement they had, the appreciation, it takes you back," said Oben, a 12-year offensive tackle who won a Super Bowl with the Bucs. "It makes you think about where you came from."

And sometimes that's best explained with a story. Second-grade Okonkwo was surprised that day he came home from school and his parents weren't mad about his entrepreneurial efforts. A couple years later, he came home proudly showing them a 93 he got on a math test.

"A 93?" Isioma Okonkwo said to her son. "Did somebody get 100? Why weren't you the one who got 100?"

###

**CONNECTED BY THEIR
WEST AFRICAN LINEAGE,
TITANS TEAMMATES
CHIG OKONKWO AND
SAM OKUAYINONU
DISCUSS THEIR JOURNEY
TO THE NFL IN MUSIC
CITY FOOTBALL, TRACK
2**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
AUGUST 4, 2023**

NASHVILLE – The second edition of Music City Football takes a look into the NFL journey for second-year Titans teammates Chig Okonkwo and Sam Okuayinonu, two players with African lineage.

The 11-minute feature, titled "Afrobeat", went live on Thursday night on Tennessee Titans YouTube channel.

There are more than 125 African-born or first-generation players in the NFL, including Okonkwo and Okuayinonu.

At the start of the episode, Okonkwo and Okuayinonu sit down with Director of Player Engagement Chic Ejiasi, whose parents are from Nigeria, for a dinner, and it spawns into a deeper dive into the personal lives of the two Titans.

Okonkwo, a tight end, discussed the impact his father's death had on him at a young age. Okonkwo was just 15 when his father died of a heart attack.

"In the Nigerian culture, I became the man of the house right then, at 15," Okonkwo said. "All I wanted to do was make sure my family was straight. ... When my dad died, it opened my eyes to, Man, the world is real."

Okuayinonu, a native of Liberia, lived in the country until he was 12 years old, when he escaped the country's civil war.

"Growing up in Liberia, it was great," Okuayinonu said. "My mom and my grandmom, my grandmom worked really hard to get us into a comfortable place in Liberia. (Then) in 2003, the civil war broke out in my country, and it was a really tough time. A lot of kids didn't get to see their parents again.

"Me and my mom ended up getting separated during the war, and that was a tough time for me, because my mom is my best friend. She's my everything."

Okuayinonu and his mom reunited after the war. Okuayinonu returned to Liberia in 2021.

Music City Football, which will air exclusively on YouTube, will include roughly four to six stories that will air into the fall.

The premier episode, which debuted in May, featured new Titans General Manager Ran Carthon.

"We have incredible access, and we feel like with that access, there's another level to the layer we can tell," said Surf Melendez, Vice President and Executive Creative Director for the Titans. "We're trying to create a closer connection with our fans, with our team, so they see things they don't normally get to see. We want to be close with our fans."

Also in the works:

-A feature on new Titans linebacker Azeez Al-Shaair and his road to the NFL. A crew went to Tampa, Fla., to visit with Al-Shaair and his mother, showing his long journey, which included a time when he was homeless.

-A feature on Titans fan Colin Jones, a drummer in Circa Waves with a Middle Tennessee connection. Jones, who lives in London, is a big Titans fans who even named his son "Tennessee."

All the episodes will be roughly eight to 12 minutes.

"Every episode has its own story," said Michael Fertig, Producer, Video Content with the Titans. "We're trying to humanize our players, coaches, and members of the organization. We're trying to go beyond the podium, beyond what people see on a Sunday. We're trying to show these are real people with real lives, and they struggle with real things just like everybody else, but they're a part of this great organization."

Subscribe to the Tennessee Titans YouTube and never miss an episode of the Music City Football, presented by SeatGeek.

**3 THINGS TO KNOW
ABOUT OHIO STATE OL
NICHOLAS PETIT-FRERE,
A TENNESSEE TITANS
THIRD-ROUND PICK**

**BY MIKE ORGAN
THE TENNESSEAN
APRIL 29, 2022**

Ohio State offensive tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere was taken by the Tennessee Titans in the third round with the No. 69 pick of the 2022 NFL Draft on Friday.

Petit-Frere comes from Titans coach Mike Vrabel's alma mater where he got a wealth of experience in his college career.

Here's what to know about Petit-Frere:

As versatile as he is large

Ohio State's Nicholas Petit-Frere addresses media before Maryland game

Petit-Frere is huge at 6-foot-5, 316 pounds and he's also flexible with the ability to play either tackle position on the offensive line.

His wide base gives allows him to cover a lot of space when he moves laterally.

Petit-Frere's footwork is exceptional for his size and the main reason he was used at right and left tackle. He is better at right tackle, which is where he is expected to begin his NFL career.

Lofty expectations

Petit-Frere grew up in grew up in Tampa, Florida, and played football and basketball at Berkeley Preparatory School.

He quickly became a better football player than basketball and developed into one of the nation's top offensive line prospects by the time he was a senior. He was a consensus five-star recruit who also received offers from Alabama, Florida and several other Power

Five programs before choosing Ohio State.

After redshirting his freshman year at Ohio State, Petit-Frere earned the starting right tackle position heading into the 2020 season. He played in 35 games between 2018-21 and started in 20.

Petit-Frere earned All-America first-team honors in 2021 by the Football Writers Association of America and CBS Sports. He was also on the 2021 Outland Trophy Watch List.

Improvement needed

Quarterback Ryan Tannehill was sacked 47 times last season so it's easy to see why the Titans went after an offensive lineman.

The problem, however, is that Petit-Frere was a better run blocker in college than pass protector.

He'll need to work on his pass blocking to become the valuable asset the Titans hope he will become.

###

PHILIPS EAGER TO RETURN AFTER FRUSTRATING ROOKIE SEASON

BY TERRY MCCORMICK
TITANINSIDER.COM
JULY 29, 2023

Kyle Philips' rookie season didn't go exactly as planned.

The slot receiver started out strong, catching six passes for 66 yards, including one that set up a last-second field goal (missed by Randy Bullock) in the season opener against the New York Giants.

He even added a 46-yard punt return in that game to provide plenty of excitement and hope for Titans fans for the fifth-round pick from UCLA.

From there, Philips' train derailed. He had just two more catches for 12 yards and even muffed a couple of punts before landing on injured reserve after week five with a AC joint problem in his shoulder.

"It was real frustrating. You want to be a part of the team and help the team out. It sucks," Philips said of missing three-fourths of the season." You see your guys going in every day and putting in a lot of work and not being able to do that with them. It kind of eats at you a little bit."

Like so many others on the 2022 Titans, his season was lost to rehab in the trainers room. Philips kept working each week to get back to finish his rookie year, but it didn't happen.

"I didn't really (know I couldn't get back) until the end of the season. Each week I was coming in, trying to get better, trying to get back and I really didn't know until the last game and season was over at that point," he said..

While Philips didn't actually play much as a rookie, it doesn't mean he still feels like one in this camp.

"I wasn't able to play, but I was still able to meet with the coaches, learn offenses, learn defenses, watch a lot of film and seeing how guys run certain routes, certain stems they make and all that stuff, I was able to learn a lot," he said.

Healthy again, and having added a few pounds, Philips is excited for what could be for him this season. He figures to be the team's slot receiver, serving as a chains mover and compliment to DeAndre Hopkins and Treylon Burks..

"It feels night and day. Coming in as a rookie, you never know how things are going to go. Having that year under me, knowing what to expect, what these practices are going to be like, it gives me a lot of confidence going into it," Philips said.

He also figures to be a good fit for Tim Kelly's up-tempo offense that features a lot more shorter, quicker throws..

"I feel like Tim has done a great job implementing this offense, putting it in in very great details, so we know what to do and can go out there and play fast," he said.

Saturday's camp action

Quarterback Malik Willis continues to learn and Saturday was no exception. Willis had a pass picked off in team drills when outside linebacker Rashad Weaver dipped back into the passing lanes and corralled the ball well before it reached its intended target.

But Willis showed his growth on the next play. He dialed up a perfect strike about 50 yards downfield to Chris Moore for a touchdown.

"I think that's the life of any player. As an o-lineman, if you lose a rep to a great defensive lineman, you can't come back the next play and not play as hard as you can," Willis said of his redemption.

Willis later had an even better throw to Colton Dowell deep on the left sideline. The ball hit Dowell in the hands, but safety Mike Brown raked it out for an incomplection before he could put it away.

Play of the day

In one-on-ones, Kristian Fulton was draped all over Treylon Burks on a go route, but Ryan Tannehill put the ball in a perfect spot and Burks made a diving catch in the end zone. Also in contention, was Weaver's interception off Willis. Also, had Dowell been able to hold on to Willis' sideline throw in the bucket, that might have been a winner.

Right tackle revolving door

Jamarco Jones and Chris Hubbard alternated reps at right tackle on Saturday, after Jones was out on Friday. Rookie Jaelyn Duncan, who got the first-team reps on Friday, worked with the second team on Saturday.

Inside linebacker battle

The Titans have a battle at inside linebacker to play opposite Azeez Al-Shaair between Monty Rice and Jack Gibbens. Rice got the first-team work on Wednesday and Saturday, while Gibbens worked with the first unit on Friday.

Out of practice

Tight end Josh Whyle has not done anything much beyond stretch the past two days. He was not on the field at all in Wednesday's work.

###

**WHY NEW TENNESSEE
TITANS RB TONY
POLLARD FEELS RIGHT
AT HOME IN NASHVILLE**

**BY PAUL SKRBINA
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
JULY 31, 2024**

Tennessee Titans fans leaned over the blue padded wall at Nissan Stadium and took turns screaming his name.

Tony! Tony! Tony! Tony!

A woman with a blue Titans flag. A young boy with a football. A young girl with a mini helmet. A boy with a powder blue Oilers jersey.

They all wanted the attention of new Titans running back Tony Pollard.

They got it.

Pollard obliged requests for autographs and fist bumps and selfies for more than 20 minutes Saturday after a Titans open practice, part of the team's "Back Together Weekend."

Shadowing him most of the time was his girlfriend, Kania Taylor, and their 1- and 3-year-old daughters.

Pollard, who grew up a Titans fan in Memphis, feels at home in Nashville after signing a three-year, \$21.75 million free agent contract in March. His professional career was born in Nashville, too, where the 2019 NFL Draft was held, and the Dallas Cowboys picked him in the fourth round.

"That definitely went into my decision making," he said. "Just being close to family, having games so close to home so I can have a good home crowd coming out to support. Just coming where I was wanted."

Pollard, who spent the past five seasons with the Cowboys, had just finished posing for pictures with his family in the end zone before he spoke.

Tony Pollard shows off, shows out

Fans at Nissan were screaming Pollard's name earlier Saturday, too.

Quarterback Will Levis acquainted Pollard's hands with the football 40-some yards downfield and watched him run another 33 yards to the end zone, causing fans to rise to their feet in salute of the feat. Pollard had snagged the ball away from cornerback Roger McCreary's reach.

They cheered again when his last-second block in the backfield allowed a scrambling Levis to find a receiver downfield.

"That's a little showcase of what Tony's capable of," first-year Titans coach Brian Callahan said. "He runs routes and catches the ball like a receiver. He runs the ball as good as any running back."

Pollard was a receiver during his senior season at Melrose High School. With the Memphis Tigers, his receiving yards outdid his rushing yards 1,292 to 941. He also tied an FBS record with seven kick-return touchdowns.

"I love being able to show all of my ability on the field," he said. "I was more natural, more comfortable at running back but I was always good at open field."

Pollard was signed to try to help fill the void left by Derrick Henry. Pollard's contract makes him the 10th-highest paid running back in terms of average per year.

A little help from his friends

With Henry gone to the Baltimore Ravens, the load of the Titans' backfield has been left to the legs and hands of Pollard and Tyjae Spears.

They are similar backs who both can run and catch the ball.

Pollard, who topped the 1,000-yard mark the past two seasons and was given the franchise tag by the

Cowboys last season, is used to sharing responsibilities.

He shared a backfield with Ezekiel Elliott for four seasons, during which he accumulated 3,621 rushing yards to go with 23 touchdowns. He also caught 176 passes for 1,319 yards and five touchdowns.

He shared time in the backfield with Darrell Henderson at Memphis, where Pollard is second all-time in all-purpose yards (4,860) and Henderson third (4,790).

How he and Spears will complement each other remains to be seen.

"That's a good question," Callahan said earlier during camp. "I think Tyjae's got a little bit different route-running ability. Tony, he's a smoother runner. They're both really explosive. Of all the groups that we have, I think those guys are the ones that are the most exciting for me."

###

**WHY NEW TENNESSEE
TITANS RUNNING BACK
TONY POLLARD MADE
MEMPHIS MENTAL
HEALTH SUMMIT A
PRIORITY**

**BY DAMICHAEL COLE
MEMPHIS COMMERCIAL
APPEAL
MAY 4, 2024**

Tony Pollard was on a tight schedule. The former Dallas Cowboys turned Tennessee Titans running back was making a quick stop in Memphis, and it was important for him to attend a mental health summit.

Pollard stopped by the Bend Dxn Break Athletes Summit on Saturday afternoon at Hope Church. He was joined by keynote speaker C.L. Shepherd and notable Memphis celebrities, former Grizzlies player Tony Allen and rapper Project Pat.

The group spoke to Memphis-area high school students on Saturday. The two-day event started on Friday. Nearly 500 students across the Memphis area attended the events, coming from high schools such as Whitehaven, KIPP, Manassas, Germantown, ECS, Oakhaven, Houston and Briarcrest.

“Just being able to talk to the youth, I’m just trying to make sure they’re going down the right path and got their heads on right,” Pollard, a former Memphis football and Melrose standout, told The Commercial Appeal.

Shepherd, who goes around the country speaking at engagements similar to two-day summit, wanted to empathize with the students as someone who struggled with mental health as a teenager.

For Project Pat, Saturday was about continuing to show up and let his voice be heard around Memphis where he can leave an impact. Allen has increased his presence at these type of events in Memphis over the past few months.

“I love to target areas in need, because at one point, I was that person,” Allen told The Commercial Appeal. “Growing up, I had a lot of issues that I thought was normal. That’s what I want to do. Change the community norm.”

Tony Pollard talks joining Tennessee Titans

Multiple students at Hope Church attended in Dallas Cowboys No. 20 Pollard jerseys. After Pollard signed with the Tennessee Titans, those jerseys are now throwbacks.

Pollard joined the Titans in March, putting him closer to his Memphis roots. While Pollard said he made a business decision in going from Dallas to Nashville, he called being closer to home “the icing on the cake.” Playing less than three hours from Memphis impacted his decision.

“I’ve been enjoying it. I’ve been able to come home a lot more, see my family, kids get to play with their cousins and things like that,” Pollard said.

Being close to home also means Pollard can keep a closer eye on the Tigers football team.

“Ever since I’ve been there, it’s been a good program,” Pollard said. “Every year, they’re getting guys in the league, so they’re definitely in the right direction.”

###

HOW TITANS ROOKIE WR EARNED THE NICKNAME 'THE PROFESSOR'

**BY MICHAEL GALLAGHER
THE NASHVILLE POST
AUGUST 15, 2022**

Thirteen practices into his rookie season, and Tennessee Titans receiver Kyle Philips has already earned a reputation for being deceptively difficult to cover.

But Philips' uncanny ability to seemingly always have the right answer during team meetings has also earned him a nickname from the Titans coaching staff.

"He's a bit of a know-it-all, but that's why I call him 'The Professor' because there's nothing he doesn't know," Titans wide receivers coach Rob Moore said on Monday. "His passion for the game shows up a lot. When you talk to him about it, he really does have a good mind for the game. You can make adjustments [for him] in a quick moment, and he can adjust to it."

Added Philips: "It definitely makes me feel good. But it also puts a little bit of a target on my back. He'll throw some trick questions out there to try and catch me. When he does, he doesn't let me live it down. So, it goes both ways."

From terminology to route running, Philips spends most of his free time breaking down film — of himself, of his teammates and of any receiver who happens to have a highlight reel on YouTube.

"I started [studying receivers] in middle school," Philips admitted, adding he will watch a video on YouTube and say to himself, "I want to try and add that to my game."

Although Tennessee's WR group is relatively young and inexperienced, Robert Woods notwithstanding, Philips disclosed there is plenty to learn from the group of fellow pass catchers.

The Titans have a solid mix of physical, speed and possession receivers. That eclectic mix of size, quickness, strength, route running and elusiveness is what Philips credits for helping him round out his skillset.

"I study every receiver I can," Philips said. "Just being out here, I'd say [I study] a lot of Robert Woods, Mason Kinsey and Nick Westbrook-Ikhine. I like to take an aspect of every little bit of their game — with Robert just how good he is with his hands, Nick his releases, and Mason just how explosive he is in and out of his cuts."

###

WHO IS DILLON RADUNZ AND WHY DID THE TITANS DRAFT HIM IN ROUND 2?

**BY MICHAEL HOGAN
SI.COM
MAY 2, 2021**

The right tackle competition for the Tennessee Titans got much more interesting on day two of the NFL Draft.

A few weeks ago, coach Mike Vrabel, when asked about the position, said there was no predetermined depth chart. Those with a chance to end up on top include free agent Kendall Lamm, the recently re-signed Ty Sambrailo and David Quessenberry.

Dillon Radunz, Tennessee's second-round pick, will add some youth to the battle. While the 6-foot-6, 298-pound North Dakota State product knows he will be the least experienced player compared to the three veterans, but he also has every intention of winning the job. Because that's just who he is.

"I'm always going to want to start. I'm not going to speak it into existence that I won't be (the starter), if that for some reason happens," Radunz said. "I'm always going to be competitive. I'm always going to want teams to win. I'm always going to want my team to win, so I'll push the guys in front of me and make sure they're on their P's and Q's about that. It's going to be a competitive atmosphere."

What to know about the newest candidate to be the Titans' right tackle:

He prides himself on versatility. A few days before the NFL Draft, ESPN's Jeremy Fowler reported that Radunz's stock was rising because some people around the league believed he could play all five offensive line spots.

Radunz said he focused on making himself versatile throughout the draft process. That will be important

because he primarily played left tackle in college. He will be shuffling over to the other side in the NFL, at least early on, and may also be expected to play other positions.

"I've been working on it in the offseason, doing drills and stuff with the right tackle if that is the position they want me to be at," he said. "So, I've been working on both sides of the ball, switching up my stance like that, so that is probably the biggest challenge and then making sure everything you're dotting your I's and crossing your T's when you switch over."

He has plenty of experience with NFL players and coaches. Leading up to the NFL Draft, Radunz trained with one of the best offensive tackles in recent league history, Joe Staley, the former San Francisco 49er who made six Pro Bowl appearances and made the Pro Football Hall of Fame All-2010s team. He has also worked with former NFL offensive line coach Paul Alexander.

"I flew out to California immediately after that game, went to train with Joe Staley, ex-49er, future Hall of Famer, so he was super good in my development," Radunz said "He was a huge testament to that, so shout out to him. I did that a lot with previous NFL players. I worked out with Paul Alexander. He was a previous NFL coach."

And of course, he has played with some NFL players at NDSU, including the No. 3 overall pick in this year's draft, quarterback Trey Lance, and 2016 No. 1 overall pick, quarterback Carson Wentz.

He feels like his stock rose at Senior Bowl. Radunz played in just two games in the past several months due to COVID-19, and only one of those was for the NDSU Bison due to COVID-19. The other was at the Reese's Senior Bowl, where he was named player of the week after a strong showing throughout.

different about hitting guys," he said. "So, being able to just hit pads, being able to train with other offensive linemen, they understand the physicality of the game, so having them hold pads for you and stuff. It's been difficult, but at the same time, I think I did a good job at it. Things showed at the Senior Bowl, and we'll continue to do that through OTAs and rookie minicamp."

Titans general manager Jon Robinson agreed.

"Their season was shortened obviously. That Senior Bowl exposure was really good for him to go against some of the best of the best in college football," Robinson said. "Got a chance to spend some time down there with him, get to know him. He's about what we're about, you know, football-wise and makeup and commitment to being a good football player."

He's durable. After redshirting as a freshman, he entered the 2017 season with a much larger role. However, he tore his ACL after playing 15 snaps in NDSU's season-opener the following season and went on to miss the entire season.

After that, though, he went on to start 32 consecutive games for the Bison. He enters the NFL about as healthy as could be.

"My body is super fresh," he said. "I literally have no injuries at all, no nicks and bruises. I was able to gain a lot of strength too through that because I wasn't playing in the season, so my body's in tip-top shape. It's just a matter of getting back into or I should say coasting into that football shape that I was talking about since I haven't played football, but I'd say there's a lot of positives about only playing one game."

###

EDGE RUSHER SHANE RAY AIMING TO PROVE HE STILL BELONGS IN THE NFL, WITH TITANS

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
AUGUST 1, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Shane Ray worked, and he prayed.

A first-round pick in the 2015 NFL Draft who hasn't played a snap in the league since 2018, Ray had plenty of reasons to give up the dream, and move on.

But he refused to do so.

So, when the Titans called Ray's agent back in May and offered the edge rusher a tryout during the team's rookie minicamp, the 31-year-old Ray jumped at the chance. Ray was on a tryout list with a bunch of players in their early 20s who'd just been passed over in the 2024 NFL Draft.

"There's levels of pride that have to escape your body," Ray said with a smile. "I joke with a lot of the young guys, and I tell them: I feel like an old rookie."

The Titans didn't immediately add Ray after that tryout.

In fact, he had to keep waiting, and working.

Then last week, the team signed Ray at the start of training camp, opening the door for another opportunity to prove himself, and stick.

And Ray is thankful.

"For me, it's been one step at a time," Ray said on Wednesday. "Training, training, training, and talking to my agent, praying to God: Is there something? Is there something available? Does somebody want to bring me in? Is there an opportunity? Those moments were highs and lows because sometimes it was like, 'Hey, we might have something,' and other times like, 'Hey, man, we got

to go train for another five, six weeks.'

"So, for me, the call itself was amazing. Then, walking to the building was amazing, meeting the coaches was amazing, and having my first minicamp workout back was amazing. Every step that I've taken up to this point is another milestone that, for a long time, I just dreamed about it, and prayed about it, and worked for.

"This opportunity, I have been preparing for this for a long, long, time."

Selected by the Broncos in the first round of the 2015 NFL Draft after earning All-America honors at Missouri, Ray has played in 49 career NFL games, with 15 starts. He's tallied 14 career sacks, including eight in 2016 while playing in 16 games. He was a Super Bowl champion in Denver in 2016.

Injuries derailed Ray's career, however.

In past offseasons, Ray was signed by the Ravens (2019) and Bills (2023) after long waits without a team, but was released both times.

In between, Ray played for the Toronto Argonauts in the CFL.

He's spent most of the past five years working out, hoping for another opportunity in the NFL. He went to the gym every morning, where he was running and lifting, and working on his hands in pass rush drills.

"I put myself in a routine and a schedule, training like I was in the NFL, even though I wasn't at the time," Ray said. "That was my life for four years straight. This opportunity, I have been preparing for this for a long, long, time."

In his first week on the job, Ray has looked like a roster contender, flashing with rushes.

Each day, he said he's feeling more like himself.

With the Titans, Ray has an opportunity as the team looks for help behind Harold Landry, Arden Key and Rashad Weaver, competing with hungry youngsters like Jaylen Harrell, Caleb Murphy and others. Earlier this week, Titans Coach Brian Callahan acknowledged the team is awaiting word from the league about a potential suspension for Key to start the season.

Ray is hungry, too.

He's just a different man now, in his 30s, with a 5-year-old daughter, and something to prove.

"When I came into the league, I came in with all the (high expectations), and now coming back it is really just on me working, and building," Ray said. "It feels good to earn what I am getting. But my life is completely different now.

"I love this game. Unfortunately, I got banged up early when I felt like it was time for me to take it to the next level in my career, and it kept me out of the league for a long time. Now I have another chance, and I feel like I am ready. I've worked, and I've prepared. Now it is on me, and I want to show what I can do."

###

**NEW TITANS WR CALVIN
RIDLEY HAS A NEW TEAM
AND PLENTY OF
MOTIVATION**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MARCH 15, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Calvin Ridley has a new team, and plenty of motivation.

Ridley, who officially signed a lucrative, multi-year contract with the Titans this morning, said he's ready to go.

"This is my first day, and I'm learning what it is to be a Titan," Ridley said at a Friday morning press conference. "But it's amazing, man. This is my third team. They gave me some years here, so I am excited to show my talent and my skills and learn the city and learn the fans. Honestly, I am overwhelmed."

A first-round pick of the Falcons in the 2018 NFL Draft who jumpstarted his career last season with the Jaguars, Ridley agreed to terms with the Titans earlier in the week after drawing interest from a number of teams.

Ridley said he's looking forward to a new start.

He knows he has something to prove.

"I do listen to some of the stuff," Ridley said, "just to give me a boost to go out there and play well."

During his five-year NFL career, Ridley (6-1, 190) has totaled 4,358 yards and 36 touchdowns on 324 receptions while playing in Atlanta (2018-22) and Jacksonville (2023).

Last year for the Jaguars, Ridley recorded 76 receptions for 1,016 yards and eight touchdowns. He registered four of his 15 career 100-yard performances in 2023.

"I'm a good player," Ridley said. "I am the type of player who deserves this contract, I am going to say that. I am the type of player you want in

the building, someone who is going to work for your organization. ... (The Titans) got a player who is going to come in and work for whatever ya'll gave me. Ya'll got a player."

Selected 26th overall by the Falcons in the 2018 NFL Draft, Ridley got off to a great start in his first three NFL seasons, recording 1,374 yards and nine touchdowns on 90 catches during the best season of his NFL career in 2020 after posting 60-plus catch and 800-plus receiving yards seasons in 2018 and 2019.

After a shortened 2021 season, Ridley was acquired by the Jaguars in a trade with the Falcons while he was suspended for the 2022 season for a violation of the league's gambling policy.

Then came the 2023 season, which helped change the course of his career.

Ridley wants to change the recent fate of the Titans as well.

"I want to bring this team through the roof," Ridley said, "and do everything I can to help. From now on, I'm only going up, because my work ethic is good. I am going to put the work in to be good. I am only going up from here. I am ready to take off."

###

###

AFTER A YEAR OF GROWTH, LB OTIS REESE IV PLANS TO GET BIGGER STRONGER, AND BETTER IN SECOND NFL SEASON

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MARCH 22, 2024**

NASHVILLE – When the Titans signed linebacker Otis Reese IV last May, his first priority was to make the team.

The undrafted free agent did that and more in his rookie NFL season, a year when he built confidence, and improved as a player.

"I think I learned a lot," Reese said at season's end. "Being able to play in the (seven) games I played in, special teams and the games I played on defense, getting that experience meant a lot.

"Games started slowing down for me a little bit. So, I want to take that into the offseason and build on that and just get better."

Reese, who played in college at Mississippi, started the final three games of the season in 2023 while playing in the seven games total. Reese tallied 16 tackles, including nine in a game against the Texans.

Reese spent a good chunk of the year on the team's practice squad, but injuries at the position opened the door for him to get playing time.

"I always knew I could play football at any level," Reese said. "It's just about having pride and having courage and believing in yourself, and executing at the highest level."

Reese's mission now is to build on the success, while getting bigger, and stronger.

Reese said he planned to go back home to Georgia to train during the offseason, but he's spent part of the offseason at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park as well.

Reese, who is 6-foot-3, said he planned to put on some weight as well. Reese, who played at 222 pounds in 2023, said he hopes to be at 227 pounds in 2024. He plans to eat better, and be more consistent with his diet this offseason.

After playing at 210 pounds his final year in college, he feels like the extra size helped him.

Now, he wants to help the Titans even more moving forward.

"It's always a blessing to walk in the door in the NFL," Reese said. "Every day I walk in here, I am grateful for the opportunity to be here. It's just a blessing to play this game. It was a roller coaster (rookie year), some ups and downs, but that comes with the game is part of the business."

###

TITANS REBORN RUDOLPH HAS PROVEN HIS READINESS

*BY JOHN GLENNON
NASHVILLE POST
MAY 30, 2024*

Heading into Week 16 of the 2023 season, the Pittsburgh Steelers looked dead in the water.

They were in last place in the rugged AFC North, had made the decision to bench quarterback Mitchell Trubisky and were without the services of injured Kenny Pickett, who had started most of the season. Pittsburgh had lost three straight games and had been held under 20 points in five straight contests.

Enter current Titans quarterback Mason Rudolph, who had made all of two starts over the previous three years and was third on the Steelers' depth chart.

In a showdown game against Cincinnati — and with current Titans coach Brian Callahan watching from the opposite sideline — Rudolph produced a shocking performance. He completed 17-of-27 passes for 290 yards, two touchdowns and zero interceptions, guiding the offensively challenged Steelers to a 34-11 win.

How happy were Steelers fans with their team's Dec. 23 offensive outburst? Many sang "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" in the home stands, serenading the team's new quarterback.

It was the start of a three-game tour de force for Rudolph, who would go on to lead the Steelers to wins over Seattle and Baltimore as well, the final victory earning Pittsburgh an unlikely playoff berth. In those final three must-win, regular-season contests, the 28-year-old Rudolph completed 53-of-71 passes (74.6 percent) for 716 yards, three touchdowns and zero interceptions, guiding the Steelers to back-to-back games with 30-plus points for the first time since October of 2020.

The Steelers lost their playoff game, 31-17, to Buffalo, but Rudolph put up solid numbers, going 22-for-39 for 229 yards, two touchdowns and an interception.

Overall, Rudolph's four-game stretch was an impressive display of staying ready and prepared, especially after playing so infrequently for the better part of four years.

"I got an opportunity to play and loved it, had a lot of fun," Rudolph said Wednesday following a Titans OTA session. "I got a lot of great relationships with the guys in Pittsburgh and we were able to clinch a playoff berth. Didn't get it done [in the playoffs], didn't play as well as we would have liked. But I was happy with the way I played, the way we played, felt like we kind of fed off each other there at the end."

Thanks to those four games, the free-agent market for Rudolph was much better in 2024 than what greeted him in 2023, when his phone wasn't exactly lighting up with offers.

The Titans — in part because of what Callahan had seen a few months earlier — signed the 6-5, 235-pound Rudolph to a one-year, \$3.6 million deal to back up starter Will Levis. Rudolph likely has a leg up on teammate Malik Willis, a third-round Titans pick in 2022, because of his experience and recent track record.

"He's been in Pittsburgh for most of the time I was in Cincinnati, so a very familiar divisional opponent," Callahan said. "Mason, when he's had a chance to play, has played pretty well, and he was never the full-time starter. But you see his record as a starter (8-4-1). He did a really nice job doing what they needed him to do when he played, and that's the name of the game if you're a backup quarterback, to be ready to play."

A third-round draft pick of the Steelers in 2018, Rudolph was attracted to the Titans in a sign of

mutual respect for Callahan, knowing the Titans' first-year leader worked with quarterbacks like Peyton Manning, Matt Stafford and Joe Burrow in the past.

"I think the pieces they already had in place [was an attraction], and coach Callahan, I've got a lot of respect for him [from] the division," Rudolph said. "Being an offensive teacher, an offensive mind, [and he] spent some time obviously with Peyton back in Denver, with Matt Stafford, did a good job with the Bengals offense."

Just how much Rudolph plays this season remains to be seen.

The Titans would love to see Levis play all 17 games, but the injury rate of quarterbacks in the NFL makes that seem unlikely.

Ankle injuries kept previous Titans starter Ryan Tannehill out of multiple games in 2022 and 2023, ultimately costing him his job. An ankle injury also sidelined Levis for almost all of the Titans' final three games last season.

No one can predict if or when Levis might suffer an injury. But should the circumstances dictate, Callahan will expect the next man up to do more than simply hand off the football.

"When your moment comes, [you have] to perform well enough to help your team win, and [if] you play for four or five or six games, you're expected to go out and play well enough to win those," Callahan said. "I think he's proven that over his career when he's had opportunities and he's played well. He's big, he's strong, he throws the ball well, he's accurate, and he's got the playing experience to back it up."

We know this much about Rudolph, based on his effectiveness after a long wait last season: The man won't be caught unprepared.

"I did all the things that a back-up quarterback can do to kind of maximize your readiness," Rudolph

said. “Felt like I had good training camps each year [in Pittsburgh], and didn’t get an opportunity until I did. You can’t really predict when it will come, but you can be ready and I felt like I was.

“That’s how I prepare. I’m always going to be ready.”

###

**NFL STAR JEFFERY
SIMMONS COMES HOME
TO MACON FOR SECOND
ANNUAL COMMUNITY
FUN DAY**

**BY BENJAMIN ROSENBERG
COMMERCIAL DISPATCH
JULY 9, 2024**

MACON — When Jeffery Simmons was growing up in Noxubee County, the youth football infrastructure was not exactly robust, despite a strong pipeline of players making it to the top levels of college football and even the NFL.

Now that Simmons has become arguably the most decorated player to ever come out of Noxubee County High, the Tennessee Titans' star defensive tackle has dedicated much of his time off the field to giving back to his hometown.

He was back home in Macon on Saturday for the second annual Jeffery Simmons Community Fun Day — featuring food, games, live music and fireworks — and he also spent time with the players in the Noxubee Titans youth football program he founded earlier this year. More than 120 boys and girls aged 5-12 are part of the Noxubee Titans, according to Simmons' business manager, Freddie Poindexter.

“At the end of the day, we have to be there for the kids,” Simmons said. “This is about the kids and whatever we can do for the kids, promoting good behavior and whatever it may be to stay in school. When you've been through it, you've been there before, you don't want to go back. I don't want these kids to experience what I went through as a kid.”

Simmons played for the Macon Broncos youth program before becoming a dominant force on the football field in high school, helping the Tigers win three MHSAA state championships. The top prospect in his class in Mississippi, Simmons had offers from Alabama, Ole Miss and plenty of other top programs,

but he chose to remain close to home and play at Mississippi State.

In three years with the Bulldogs, Simmons racked up 32.5 tackles for loss. Even after tearing his ACL while training for the 2019 NFL Draft, Simmons was selected 19th overall by Tennessee, returning to the field midway through his rookie season. He became a true star in 2021, finishing with 8.5 sacks and making his first of back-to-back Pro Bowls.

Following his second Pro Bowl in 2022, Simmons signed a four-year contract extension with the Titans worth \$94 million, and he has spent a good chunk of that money helping kids back in Macon. The practice facility at Noxubee County High has bore Simmons' name since 2020 and was officially dedicated as the Jeffery B. Simmons Field House in 2022 after Simmons presented the program with all new equipment.

“I do it because I care about my community,” Simmons said. “I just want to push something positive to our community. At the end of the day, that's what it's about, just giving back. I enjoy doing this and we want everyone to have a good time. You get on social media, you see things you don't want to see, but hopefully today, we just bring everybody together for one big fun day for the kids and for the community.”

Tyre Phillips, J.T. Gray and Willie Gay, all former MSU players currently in the NFL, were also in attendance Saturday to support Simmons and the Noxubee Titans. The high school team has remained a powerhouse since Simmons graduated, winning another state title in 2017 and appearing in the championship game each of the last two years.

The Tigers are now led by rising senior quarterback KaMario Taylor, a Mississippi State commit and the No. 6 player in the state for his class, according to the 247Sports Composite rankings.

“(Simmons) definitely inspired me,” Taylor said. “When he signed that big contract, it inspired a whole bunch of kids to keep playing football, keep grinding, because he's been through the same things we've been through. It means a lot because we know he doesn't have to do this. He takes his time to give back to this small town, and we're thankful for it.”

Simmons also started the Give Em A Reason Foundation to “inspire youth and youth empowerment through sport, by way of self-esteem building and opportunity creation” in 2023. He was rewarded for his philanthropy as the Titans' nominee last year for the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award, which recognizes an NFL player for excellence on and off the field.

“The award's cool and all, (but) I don't do it for the publicity. I don't do it for the awards,” Simmons said. “Being a nominee for the Walter Payton Man of the Year, it's a dream come true, but the real dream come true (would be) winning it. That just shows how much I care about my community. I don't do it for publicity; I do it because I care.”

###

WHY TENNESSEE TITANS STAR JEFFERY SIMMONS IS SENDING 'SECOND DAD' TO SUPER BOWL | ESTES

**BY GENTRY ESTES
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
FEBRUARY 4, 2024**

High school football coach Tyrone Shorter long believed his first Super Bowl would be to see former pupil and current NFL star defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons.

In a way, Shorter was correct.

While Simmons' Tennessee Titans won't be playing in Sunday's Super Bowl, it's because of Simmons that Shorter and his wife are planning to be in Las Vegas to witness the game.

As the Titans' nominee this season for the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award, Simmons had two Super Bowl trips — tickets, flights, hotel accommodations — to give out.

"They were the first people that came to mind," Simmons said, "because he has done so much for me, just mentally or off the field. . . . He's not just my high school coach. I look at him as a second dad."

Simmons surprised Shorter in person, telling him he had a Christmas present for him.

Shorter and his wife are to fly out Friday and back on Monday, enjoying a weekend that'll include time spent with Simmons, his former player at Noxubee County High School in Mississippi.

"It's just the guy he is," said Shorter, now the coach at nearby Louisville High School. "To me, I'm just glad that I had an influence on his life and helped mold him to be the man that he is today. He could have given those tickets to anybody, but he decided to give them to me and my wife. It just makes me feel good. That's the reason why I do what I do, coaching high school football."

The Payton Award is one of the most prestigious in the NFL because it recognizes outstanding service and impact away from the field in addition to strong play on it.

The reasons for Simmons' inclusion, according to the Titans, are his community efforts for families and children both in Nashville and back in Mississippi.

Among the highlights: In November, Simmons handed out more than 500 turkeys to families for Thanksgiving. In July, he held a full week of events in his hometown of Macon, Mississippi, hosting a football camp and community fun day while giving gift cards to local athletes for a shopping spree.

"Some of the things that he's doing now (in giving back)," Shorter said, "we talked about that stuff when he was in high school. . . . It makes me so proud of the man that he's become."

Simmons referred to Shorter as "Coach Dad," an indication of a relationship that's far deeper than most high school coaches and players have. It goes back to when Simmons was a fifth grader, hanging around the football fields. Shorter put him to work as a water boy then.

Louisville head coach Tyrone Shorter signals for a time out at the MHSAA Class 4A State Football Championship on Saturday, December 5, 2020, at Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium in Jackson, Miss.

Years later, when Simmons entered high school, he was determined to play quarterback. That wasn't going to happen. "You're going to be a d-lineman," Shorter told him.

"He looked at me like, 'Huh? I ain't going to play football then if I can't play quarterback,'" Shorter recalled with a laugh.

Shorter wasn't about to let him quit playing football, either, telling him as far back as ninth grade that he had the potential to make it to the NFL.

"I think (the tight relationship) is because he looked up to me as a father," Shorter said. "He called me Coach Dad, because he didn't grow up with his father. He didn't have that male figure in his life. . . . I was there for him, whatever advice, whatever he needed, we made sure that he had it."

At the Super Bowl, Shorter says he'll be rooting for the Kansas City Chiefs, because he coached against defensive lineman Chris Jones and linebacker Willie Gay — both attended Mississippi State, like Simmons — during their high school careers.

For Simmons, too, it'll be a nice moment. He was thrilled to get the chance to treat someone who he says taught him how to be a man and told him: "Use football. Don't let it use you."

"He always held me accountable," Simmons said. "I was grateful to have him in my life, so it's like a small token of appreciation to him and his wife to get to go to the Super Bowl."

###

**TITANS DL JEFFERY
SIMMONS NAMED WEEK
12 NFLPA COMMUNITY
MVP**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
NOVEMBER 24, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Titans defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons has been named the Week 12 NFLPA Community MVP after providing turkeys to more than 500 Nashville families for the Thanksgiving holiday.

"The Bible says in Luke 12:48 that 'To whom much is given, much will be required.' Growing up in Noxubee County, Mississippi, I watched my mother make countless sacrifices for me and my four siblings, especially during the holidays," Simmons said in a release provided by NFLPA. "Knowing that God has put me in a position to be a blessing to others means the world to me, and I realize there is still so much work for me to do in the community. I want to sincerely thank everyone for helping with the Give Em A Reason Foundation Turkey Distribution."

Coach Mike Vrabel gave Simmons permission to leave Tuesday's walkthrough early so he could attend an event for his Give Em A Reason Foundation, and cars lined up outside of Nissan Stadium for the drive-thru turkey delivery.

Simmons partnered with Kroger to help feed families for the holidays.

"Being able to give back to the community means so much to me," Simmons said earlier this week. "This is a time of giving, and being in the position I am today ... I always think about how I am thankful to play the game of football. I'm thankful to be able to give back to the community. I think, around this time, maybe someone didn't have the money, or whatever it might be, to buy a turkey? I think about those things."

Following the event, Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, FrankTown Open Hearts, and other local nonprofit organizations were able to use and distribute the remaining turkeys to additional recipients who were unable to attend.

"Just the excitement on their faces," Simmons said. "All the 'thank you's', the 'thank you for what you do for the community.' That's what it is all about. I don't look for the publicity on the outside, I do it because that is my heart. I do it for my community. ... It meant a lot to be out there."

In honor of Simmons being named this week's Community MVP, the NFLPA is making a \$10,000 contribution to his foundation or charity of choice. In turn, Simmons will take part in a virtual or in-person visit to a school or children's hospital. Along with the other 2023-24 Community MVPs, he will also become eligible for this year's Alan Page Community Award, which is the highest honor that the NFLPA can bestow upon a player.

Now in its 10th season, the Community MVP campaign is part of the NFLPA's continued efforts to support the year-round, civic outreach and engagement of its player members. Please visit the NFLPA Community MVP website to learn more about the program.

2023-24 NFLPA Community MVP winners:

Week 1: Alexander Mattison, Minnesota Vikings

Week 2: Bijan Robinson, Atlanta Falcons

Week 3: Justin Hardee, New York Jets

Week 4: Frank Ragnow, Detroit Lions

Week 5: Arik Armstead, San Francisco 49ers

Week 6: Emmanuel Ogbah, Miami Dolphins

Week 7: Calais Campbell, Atlanta Falcons

Week 8: Cam Heyward, Pittsburgh Steelers

Week 9: Kayvon Thibodeaux, New York Giants

Week 10: Saquon Barkley, New York Giants

Week 11: Jalen Pitre, Houston Texans

Week 12: Jeffery Simmons, Tennessee Titans

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Week 12: Jeffery Simmons, Tennessee Titans

HOW TITANS' SIMMONS SAW FOOTBALL AS LIFE- CHANGING OPPORTUNITY

**BY TURRON DAVENPORT
ESPN.COM
OCTOBER 18, 2023**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. -- The bye week couldn't have come at a better time for the Tennessee Titans.

A frustrating 24-16 loss to the Baltimore Ravens pushed the Titans (2-4) to the bottom of the division, causing team captain Jeffery Simmons to suggest his teammates do some soul-searching.

"We need to figure out the guys that want to be out there," the defensive tackle said. "We need to reevaluate our team and figure out who wants to play football for the Titans."

The pain shows on Simmons' face after every loss.

It's from the competitive spirit he developed from going against his older brother, Dylan Bradley, whose NFL aspirations were cut short due to injuries. They competed in everything from tackling drills to video games and more.

"He used to be so competitive," Simmons said. "I used to be mad at him. We used to fight each other every time he beat me."

During position meetings, Titans defensive line coach Terrell Williams pulls up clips of Simmons hustling to the football even when the play isn't near him as an example of how he wants the other players to compete.

"There's nothing better than showing guys that are at [Simmons'] status and still play hard," Williams said. "Not every Pro Bowler is running to the ball the way he is. If Jeff Simmons can run to the ball, the rest of the guys better get going, too."

Simmons and Bradley are only two years apart, so Simmons had to wait

his turn to start playing when he was watching his big brother play at 5. The two used to practice tackling by putting their pads on so they could hit each other and by hitting a tree in their backyard.

"Tough" is how Simmons described it.

Bradley said he knew his little brother was built different when he had tighrope ankle surgery during his senior year in high school. The procedure normally has a four-to-six-week recovery time, but Simmons came back to play two weeks later.

As the oldest of five siblings (three sisters and Simmons), Bradley had to be "the man of the house." He quickly saw football as a way that he could make things better.

"Football gave me the opportunity to change my life and my family's life," Bradley said. "So, I had to put all my energy into football."

Simmons took on the same belief from a young age. Growing up they always talked about being able to make things better for the family.

That's why Simmons was emotional during his press conference after he signed a four-year, \$94 million contract extension, making Simmons the second-highest paid defensive tackle in the NFL -- behind only the Los Angeles Rams' Aaron Donald. Simmons came a long way from when he had to share the bed with his brother.

"Every day I wake up and think about those hard times and how my mother didn't feel like it," Simmons said as he fought through tears. "Sometimes, I'll be like 'I'm hurt' and think about my mom. My family, that's my motivation."

Their uncle, Jason Hatcher, played defensive line for the Dallas

Cowboys. Having played the same position, Simmons and Bradley wanted to follow in their uncle's footsteps.

Simmons remembers going to his uncle's house in Dallas and seeing the things that football provided.

"It was like me being around that made me love the game more because I know my uncle also came from a small town [in Louisiana]," Simmons said. "That motivated me, just knowing that I could do the same thing."

Meeting his uncle's teammate, Hall of Famer Demarcus Ware, was a huge moment for Bradley to push for the NFL.

Simmons was a freshman on the football team at Noxubee County High School in Mississippi when Bradley was starring on the team as a senior.

Ole Miss and Mississippi State recruited Bradley in high school, but he chose to play at Southern Miss from 2013 to 2016.

Bradley signed with the Minnesota Vikings as an undrafted free agent in 2017, but he was waived during the final roster cuts and re-signed to the practice squad. He had a good chance to make the roster in 2018, but an ankle and knee injury ended his dreams.

As for Simmons, he would also become a standout for Noxubee County before suiting up for Mississippi State, where he'd go on to be an All-American from 2016 to 2018.

Although it wasn't career-ending, Simmons had a devastating injury in February 2019 before the scouting combine. He thought he just hyperextended his knee, but Hatcher, who served as a pre-draft mentor, had to break the news he got from Simmons' trainer, Tony Villani of XPE Sports, that the injury was actually a torn ACL, according to Simmons.

Simmons told ESPN he called Bradley in tears and told him he considered going back to Mississippi State. Before the injury, Simmons was projected to be a top-10 pick.

But Bradley promised things would work out.

"You're the best defensive tackle in the draft," Bradley said. "You'll get picked in the first round."

The injury gave the brothers the opportunity to lean on one another as the draft approached and spend some time together.

Simmons almost joined the Vikings like his brother, as Minnesota considered taking him at No. 18. but they took center Garrett Bradbury instead.

The Titans gave Simmons the call of his life when they were on the clock at No. 19. The two brothers, who were wearing matching outfits, embraced as soon as Simmons got off the phone. They were on their way to Nashville.

Bradley worked for a framing company when he first got to the city. He got into training when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, first by helping his sister lose a significant amount of weight through workouts they did in Simmons' garage.

Bradley got the certification to be a trainer soon after that, which led to an offer to work at a sports training facility called D1 that opened in Spring Hill, Tennessee -- where he is now the head strength and conditioning coach.

Simmons approached Bradley last winter about being his trainer after he decided to stay in Nashville to train during the offseason. Bradley was honored to train his younger brother along with former Titans' and current Buffalo Bills defensive lineman DaQuan Jones.

"I could tell training is his passion," Simmons said. "This past offseason, I'm like, 'I'm going to give you a

chance.' He did a hell of a job with that, helped me get stronger as well."

He was coming off a season where he had to push through an ankle injury for most of it. Simmons told ESPN he had to get shots in the ankle over the last eight weeks just to be able to play.

The emotions came spilling out after a loss to the Jacksonville Jaguars in Week 18, which made the Titans miss the playoffs, when Simmons was asked about playing through his injuries.

That loss also marked the first time that Simmons would miss the playoffs.

"As his older brother, I was like, 'Don't let them see you cry,'" Bradley said. "But that's him allowing himself to be vulnerable and showing his passion. If everyone on a given team had that much passion about football that team wouldn't lose."

With Simmons' passion comes belief. In himself and his team, and though the Titans haven't gotten off to the start they would have wanted, Simmons believes things can turn around.

"We have a long season ahead," Simmons said. "We have a bye week, and hopefully guys get healthy, hit that reset button and come back ready to roll."

Their next shot to start to turn the season around comes Week 8 when they host the Atlanta Falcons on Oct. 29 (1 p.m. ET, CBS).

###

**KEY TO CITY PRESENTED
JEFFERY SIMMONS
DURING FUN DAY**

**BY GRANT MCLAUGHLIN
DISPATCH
JULY 5, 2023**

MACON – When Macon resident William Mitchell was looking for something to do with his daughter, Rachel, this weekend, he wasn't sure what would shake out.

After hearing that Tennessee Titan Defensive End and former Noxubee County High School football player Jeffery Simmons was hosting a community fun day, he knew just what to do.

“I watched (Simmons) play all four years of high school football,” Mitchell said. “We were just at home and I really wanted to bring her out to this, and because she loves water games.”

Mitchell was one of around 3,000 people who signed up to attend the Jeffery Simmons Fun Day event at the Noxubee County Sportsplex, featuring local food vendors, music and games for children, as well as a firework show that evening, Simmons said.

Simmons told The Dispatch he wanted to come home and host an event to pay homage to his hometown of Macon and bring people out for the Fourth of July holiday.

“(Events like this) motivate me,” Simmons said. “This is where I started from. I am going to help people from all over, but right here in Noxubee County is what made me. I wanted to bring something back to where I came from.”

Mayor of Macon, Buz McGuire, said the city provided fireworks for the event, and also presented Simmons a key to the city for his philanthropic efforts in Noxubee County.

“For me, the most important thing is he's willing to give back to his

community,” McGuire said. “I know he's done some work at (Noxubee County High School), and now he's putting on this day. I'm sure there'll be other things in the future too.”

In 2021, Simmons provided free meals to Macon Electric workers and 4-County Electric Power Association linemen for their work following a severe winter storm, and funded a \$50,000 renovation project for NCHS to revitalize its field house and weight room in 2022.

Simmons also donated \$75,000 to the Starkville Parks and Recreation Department that same year to build a turf field at the Starkville Sportsplex.

Simmons said he plans to continue making trips back home to work with local high school students and put on more events, but could not comment on the nature of those future endeavors.

“Everything is not set in stone,” he said. “I don't want to speak on anything just yet right now. But we want to grow this city. We don't have a lot here. So, I think that's where it starts.”

Another attendee, Johnathan Morris, said he brought his whole family out to the event to support Simmons, but also to see the firework show and enjoy the holiday as a family.

“I'm a big fan of Tennessee Titan Jeffery Simmons, and we came out to support (him),” Morris said. “But it's also pretty nice because it has a lot of stuff for the kids.”

###

**FOUR YEARS LATER,
TITANS DT JEFFERY
SIMMONS STILL BUOYED
BY CONTROLLING
OWNER AMY ADAMS
STRUNK'S TRUST IN HIM**

**BY JIM WYATT
TITANS ONLINE
APRIL 14, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Four years ago, after being selected by the Titans in the first round of the 2019 NFL Draft, an emotional Jeffery Simmons vowed to reward controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk for having faith in him.

Simmons, sitting two seats down from Strunk at his introductory press conference, tucked his head and shed tears when Strunk spoke about her trust in him while welcoming him into the organization.

Simmons, who was recovering from an ACL injury at the time, had faced questions following an off-field incident he was involved in back in high school. The well-publicized incident resulted in heavy scrutiny over the pick, but Strunk spoke about second chances, and her faith in Simmons.

"Coming from a woman," Simmons, fighting back tears, said of Strunk at the time. "I'll tell her in front of you guys that she can trust me. I won't let her down."

Strunk was involved in the process that led to the Titans selecting Simmons.

"We are getting a great football player, that goes without saying, but we are getting a great man," Strunk said in April of 2019. "We are a nation that gives second chances, and this young man, Jeffery Simmons, he deserved that second chance."

On Wednesday, the Titans officially awarded Simmons with a second contract.

The big defensive lineman signed his long-term contract extension before another emotional press conference when he once again thanked Strunk for believing in him.

Simmons said he exchanged texts with Strunk after the two sides agreed to terms.

"From day one I told Miss Amy that I would never let her down," Simmons said. "I texted Miss Amy after we came to an agreement, and I told her how much I appreciated her trusting in me from day one. What she sent back to me, she told me: 'You promised me that you would never let me down and you haven't.' And that right there, it hit something inside.

"To have a female owner, a lady owner, in the NFL to trust in you so much, from the adversity I went through on my journey to get here, it means so much to me. Miss Amy, I appreciate you so much."

Simmons has held up his end of the bargain since the Titans selected him with the 19th overall pick on the 2019 NFL Draft out of Mississippi State.

Simmons has been named to two Pro Bowls in four years, and since joining the Titans he ranks second on the team with 21 sacks, trailing only outside linebacker Harold Landry III (26.5). His career totals also include 196 tackles, 19 passes defended, two forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries.

After missing the first six games of his rookie season due to a pre-draft injury, Simmons played in 56 of the team's last 60 games (54 starts). He was a team captain in each of the last two campaigns.

Simmons said he's grown on and off the field over the past four years.

"I know for a fact I have grown," Simmons said. "If you don't grow, especially as a player in this league. From year one, I am going into year five now, I don't think I'd be standing at this podium right now.

"As a man, I try to be better than I was. That's been my motto forever: Be better than I was yesterday, on the field and off the field. Of course, I feel like I have grown as a man, and as a player."

###

ON HIS BIG DAY, TITANS DT JEFFERY SIMMONS IS SMILING THROUGH THE TEARS

**BY JIM WYATT
TITANS ONLINE
APRIL 13, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Jeffery Simmons had a lot of things on his mind when he stepped up to the podium on Wednesday.

Among his thoughts: "I'm going to try not to cry today."

Then the big defensive lineman looked at his mother, and the tears started streaming down his cheeks. At one point he paused for 12 seconds before gathering himself.

"My mom, single parent," Simmons said. "Just to see the journey we have been on as a family. It's crazy," Simmons said. "I think, man, from house to house, apartment to apartment. Sharing a bed with my brother. Now, we're good. ... It's generational wealth, as we call it. It's who I do it for. Every day I wake up, I think about those hard times where I know my mom didn't feel like it. Sometimes I am hurting, but I think about my mom, having raised five kids on her own. For me to say, I don't want to do this. That's my motivation, my family."

Titans General Manager Ran Carthon, Coach Mike Vrabel and a big group of family members were on hand at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park on Wednesday for a press conference celebrating the long-term contract extension Simmons signed earlier in the day.

At the conclusion of the press conference, Simmons talked more about his mother, Brenda Bradley, and his upbringing.

Simmons said his mission since first stepping on the football field as a five-year-old – when he used to put on his shoulder pads and hit a big pear tree in the backyard – has always been to make his family proud.

###

And give them a better life.

"I didn't want to make too much eye contact with my mom today because I knew she'd be there crying, and then I'd cry, too," Simmons said with a smile. "But to think about that upbringing, and all the adversity we've been through. ... I know she is proud of me."

Simmons said the family moved six or seven times when he was younger, including a move from Louisiana to Mississippi.

At most places, Simmons shared room with brother, and his two sisters also shared room. Simmons said his mom adopted his uncle's daughter, a cousin, who he also calls a sister.

With a household of five kids, Brenda Bradley had to work all kinds of jobs, from working at a convenience store to working at a prison. She did everything she could to make ends meet, Simmons said.

"But she never missed a birthday," Simmons said.

Simmons said he pulled weeds as a kid to make extra money, to keep her from having to pay for his football uniforms.

Not too long after signing his first NFL contract with the Titans in 2019, Simmons bought his mom a house in Spring Hill, Tennessee, so she could be close.

Now, after signing a mammoth deal with the Titans, the two-time Pro Bowler knows his family will be taken care of for years and years and years to come.

He's also now finally ready to reward himself – he plans to buy a new home, perhaps with a pool.

"I never picture myself wearing another color than two-tone blue, other than a gold jacket," Simmons said. "This is a great day. I hope I retire here, and I hope I can make this franchise happy."

IT'S BIGGER THAN FOOTBALL': TITANS' JEFFERY SIMMONS SPENDS WEEK GIVING BACK IN MISSISSIPPI

**BY STEFAN KRAJISNIK
THE TENNESSEAN -
MISSISSIPPI CLARION
LEDGER
JULY 9, 2022**

STARKVILLE – Before he was an All-Pro and All-SEC defensive tackle, Tennessee Titans star Jeffery Simmons was a manager for his high school football team.

Simmons was in middle school but served as a varsity football manager when he walked through the weight room at Noxubee County High School and saw the rusty weights and bent bars.

It's a sight that stuck with him, particularly as he saw opponents such as West Point with better equipment to help build a "winning culture."

So Simmons made a promise. He wasn't a 6-foot-4, 300-pound menace yet, but his potential had always been apparent as a five-star prospect. Once he made it to the NFL, Simmons said, he'd ensure future Noxubee County athletes had access to better equipment.

The former Mississippi State standout fulfilled the promise Thursday as he stood outside newly named and renovated Jeffery B. Simmons Field House. The only thing more eye-popping than the shiny oversized scissors used in the ribbon cutting was his neon yellow shorts suit.

"I cannot really show my appreciation for Noxubee County enough," Simmons said.

Simmons' time in high school wasn't always as successful as his football career. As a senior in 2016, he was found guilty of malicious mischief and pleaded no contest to a simple assault charge. It came after he was helping break up a fight

between his sister and another woman. Simmons was shown on video striking the woman before walking away.

Simmons said the donations and work he does for his high school are not an attempt to cover up for what happened.

"I moved on from all that," Simmons said. "I don't even talk about it anymore. I don't live in the past. My thing is, what I'm doing now is to make sure my name, my brand — the Jeffery Simmons brand — will leave a legacy not just for me but for my kids and their future.

"That's my biggest thing. I have nephews, nieces. What can I do to make sure they're good in their future and make sure they don't have to live off that — live off something that happened 20 years ago, 30 years ago."

NCHS athletics director Karen Dixon — who has known Simmons since he was in her fourth-grade class — says once the school was informed of Simmons' plan with the weight room, it was their idea to name the field house after him.

The unveiling in Macon, Mississippi, was only the start of an eventful week back home for Simmons. He made the short trek Friday to Starkville, where he signed a \$75,000 check for Starkville Parks and Recreation toward a new turf field at the Starkville Sportsplex.

The field was also named in his honor and was used through the weekend for his third annual youth camp.

"It's bigger than football," Simmons said Saturday. "It's not all about just these young kids seeing us play on Thursdays, Monday nights and Sundays. These kids matter. The town of Starkville matters. The town of Macon matters."

Tennessee Titans defensive lineman Jeffery Simmons reacts after a play in the first half against the

Cincinnati Bengals at Nissan Stadium.

Simmons was joined at his camp by NFL players Elgton Jenkins, Tyre Phillips, J.T. Gray and Gerri Green, among others. The group remains tight-knit as their careers have shifted away from Mississippi, and Simmons says there is never hesitation when they ask each other to help with events such as youth camps.

Mississippi State quarterback Will Rogers also received an invitation from Simmons. He remembers the angst of being a kid at a youth camp with successful football players around. Now he notes the commitment that comes with being on the adult side.

"They're pros, for sure," Rogers said. "The way they conduct themselves — not only on the field but also coming back and doing things like this for the community. Helping people that don't have as much ... It's humbling to see and definitely something I'm going to learn from."

###

**DESPITE CHANGES
AROUND HIM TITANS
GUARD PETER
SKORONSKI MORE
CONFIDENT AND
COMFORTABLE HEADING
INTO SECOND NFL
SEASON**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MAY 22, 2024**

NASHVILLE – When Peter Skoronski looks back at his rookie season, he realizes the strides he's already made.

"This time last year, I felt like I was all over the place," Skoronski said after Tuesday's OTA. "I didn't even know how to play guard, or get into a guard stance."

Fast-forward to 2024.

Skoronski, the 11th overall pick of the Titans in the 2023 NFL Draft, is now in his second NFL season, and he's much more comfortable at the guard position after playing tackle in college at Northwestern.

Skoronski has a new head coach (Brian Callahan), a new position coach (Bill Callahan), and plenty of new faces around him, from center Lloyd Cushenberry to left tackle JC Latham, the expected starters on each side of him this fall.

But Skoronski feels more comfortable, and ready to be successful at left guard.

"My comfort level is night and day, comparing last year to this year," Skoronski said. "A lot more comfortable in the position. I played (14) games at guard, so definitely night and day. Having a year in the league, for sure, (helps). But also having a year at guard and just having that overall comfort level where I'm not so nervous, I'm not a rookie any more."

He's also ready to show Latham the way.

"Definitely a similar situation coming into it," Skoronski said of Latham, the team's 7th overall pick in this year's draft. "I feel like now I have a little more perspective having gone through a year, so helping him any way I can in terms of whether that be on the field or off the field. He has been great so far. I think he is just ready to get out there and play ball. He is eager to learn, really eager to play. Making mistakes like everyone, but everyone does, and I sure as hell made a ton of mistakes. Just helping him learn and get better."

Listed at 6-foot-4, 313 pounds, Skoronski said he's a little heavier than where he started out the offseason program, but "it wasn't really intentional, it was just working out and trying to eat right."

"You have to be big and strong to play inside," he added, "so I'm not complaining about anything."

Skoronski also said he has been more intentional about pass protection so far this offseason, "whether that be hands or posture."

"I feel like that's something that kind of got away from me toward the end of the year last year," he said. "So, I've definitely been trying to focus in a little more on that. Having Bill here, he's been big on that too. We spend a lot of time doing that too, especially hands."

Looking back at last year, as a group, Skoronski knows the offensive line can be better.

In 2023, Titans quarterbacks were sacked a total of 64 times.

"I think you have to have a little bit of a culture established in your online room," he said. "You never want to be that group where people are pointing a finger to. We know we can be better. Bill has done a great job setting that culture here, but someone like me is coming back and knows that feeling of being that group that maybe was a liability, and not wanting that to happen again. I think that is a motivating factor even going through drill work now."

So, what's it going to take?

"It's reps, that's the biggest thing," Skoronski said. "Tons of new guys, tons of new technique. So it's everyone working together and getting used to that, and that can really only happen through reps. We're going to get plenty of them now and in camp, so we'll get that rapport going."

###

**TENNESSEE TITANS
DRAFT PICK PETER
SKORONSKI'S
GRANDFATHER PLAYED
FOR VINCE LOMBARDI:
WHAT ELSE TO KNOW**

**BY MIKE ORGAN
THE TENNESSEAN
APRIL 28, 2023**

The Tennessee Titans selected former Northwestern offensive tackle Peter Skoronski with the 11th pick in the first round of the 2023 NFL Draft Thursday.

Skoronski was the third offensive lineman taken in the draft behind Ohio State's Paris Johnson Jr. to Arizona and Tennessee's Darnell Wright to Chicago.

Here are three things to know about Skoronski:

Grandfather played for Vince Lombardi

Skoronski's grandfather Bob Skoronski was an offensive tackle for the Green Bay Packers when Vince Lombardi was building a dynasty. He spent nine seasons with the franchise.

He was a rookie in 1956, spent two years in the U.S. Air Force, and returned to Green Bay from 1959-68.

Bob Skoronski, 84, played in two Super Bowls, was an All-Pro in 1966 and is in the Green Bay Packers Hall of Fame.

Peter Skoronski tweeted earlier Thursday that his grandfather served as his inspiration to make it to the NFL.

Nation's best pass blocker

Skoronski finished the 2022 season with Pro Football Focus' highest pass-blocking grade in the country at 93.0. That also is one of the highest ratings of all time.

The 6-foot-4, 315 pounder allowed only six pressures on 480 pass-blocking snaps.

Skoronski posted a 79.1 run-blocking grade, which was fifth among Power 5 offensive tackles.

Skoronski was Northwestern's first offensive lineman to earn the Rimington-Pace Big Ten Offensive Lineman of the Year. He also became only the third Wildcat offensive lineman to earn two All-Big Ten first team awards under Pat Fitzgerald.

He was a finalist for the 2022 Outland Trophy.

Didn't translate

Even with Skoronski anchoring the line, Northwestern was not among the top offensive teams in the Big 10.

The Wildcats finished 10th in the Big Ten and 94th nationally in passing (210.3 yards) and ninth in the Big Ten and 98th nationally in rushing (125.1 yards).

Northwestern scored only 10 passing touchdowns and 11 rushing.

###

**FOR TENNESSEE TITANS
1ST-ROUNDER PETER
SKORONSKI, CHICAGO
HOMECOMING COMES
WITH BIG CHANGE**

**BY NICK SUSS
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
AUGUST 11, 2023**

Peter Skoronski isn't at the position he's used to, and isn't in the position to complain about it.

Skoronski's been starting at left guard for the Tennessee Titans since the day he arrived in Nashville after the Titans made him the No. 11 pick in the 2023 NFL Draft. The only problem? Skoronski isn't a guard. Never has been. He was an All-America left tackle at Northwestern and a five-star recruit as a left tackle before that.

He's always played the most premium position on the offensive line and he's always done it well. But now, in the days before his preseason debut as an NFL guard, Skoronski isn't caught up in where he's playing so long as he is, in fact, playing.

"My real goal is just to be a great NFL player," Skoronski said. "I'd love to just be on the field if at all. Beggars can't be choosers I guess in that sense."

The Titans' preseason opener against the Chicago Bears on Saturday (noon, News Channel 2) represents a big moment for Skoronski for a few reasons. One, it's his first opportunity to play in the NFL. Two, it's his first opportunity to play guard in the NFL. And three, he's playing in friendly confines. Skoronski grew up and played high school and college football in the Chicago area and says he's been coordinating ticket requests with friends and family for months.

It's hard to call this a grand homecoming for Skoronski. He hasn't been in Nashville long enough to miss a Windy City winter. He's only been with the Titans for about as long as a college freshman

would spend in the dorms before packing a few loads of laundry in the car and heading home for Thanksgiving dinner.

Instead of laundry, Skoronski's bringing a bus-load of offensive linemen home with him. Skoronski says he's in charge of sating their Thanksgiving-sized appetites by picking the restaurant for the linemen dinner Friday night.

Whether it's picking the perfect eatery or sliding inside to guard for the first time in his life, Skoronski has the same mission.

"I'm trying to be a great teammate," Skoronski said.

Why guard matters

Titans offensive line coach Jason Houghtaling says it wasn't hard to project Skoronski's skills at guard.

"You watch that tape from his college days at Northwestern," Houghtaling said. "When he gets his hands on people he can control them. That's the name of the game there. Just his physicality. Any of their in-the-box runs, he looked really comfortable climbing to second-level defenders, redirecting and all those things."

There's a stigma in football circles that guards are less important than tackles. And it's not hard to see why. Defensive ends and outside linebackers have always been the biggest threats to quarterbacks. So tackles, naturally, are most important for protecting passers. This is especially true of left tackles, since most quarterbacks are right handed and left tackles are tasked with preventing rushers from sneaking up on quarterbacks from behind.

From 2000-20, there were 76 tackles picked in the first round versus 35 guards and centers combined. Six guards and centers make at least \$15 million per year compared to 22 tackles. If an offensive lineman wants to be picked higher or paid more, he's better off on the outside.

But times are changing. For nearly a decade, the league's most fearsome pass rusher has been Aaron Donald, a defensive tackle. And as a new generation of interior pass rushers like the Titans' Jeffery Simmons, the New York Jets' Quinnen Williams, the Washington Commanders' Daron Payne and the New York Giants' Dexter Lawrence are approaching their prime and earning big pay days, guards are only going to become more vital.

"Guys like Jeff are some of the best in the league at getting to the quarterback and stopping the pass game," Skoronski said. "That makes your job important. If they're paying the guy across from you, you better be good at it too."

Making the most of the preseason

The Titans' other guard, Daniel Brunskill, knows a thing or two about changing positions. He was a tight end until his senior year of college when he moved to tackle, and he's played center, guard and tackle as a pro. Unlike Skoronski, Brunskill was undrafted. He made his pro debut as an Atlanta Falcon in a preseason game against the Miami Dolphins in 2017, mostly playing as a reserve tackle.

To Brunskill, the challenge of playing your first preseason game is the immediacy of it all.

"They had told us the ones were going to go a certain amount and then all of the sudden the ones went like one drive and it was like 'Hey, go!'" Brunskill remembers. "You've got to go from zero to 100 right now and just kind of go out there and perform."

That type of urgency is what Brunskill is telling Skoronski and the other rookies to be prepared for. Football moves fast. One second you're on the bench. Another there's been a turnover so you're scrambling to find your mouthpiece before running out onto the field. Preseason simulates that at warp speed, with units cycling through

and players trying new positions on nearly every drive.

Not that Skoronski's teammates are concerned about the first-rounder acclimating. Titans tackle Nicholas Petit-Frere, who is suspended the first six games of 2023 for violating the NFL's gambling policy, was in Skoronski's position last year: a former five-star recruit from the Big Ten thrust into starting as a rookie Day 1.

But Petit-Frere doesn't consider his situation and Skoronski's equal.

"Peter's in an even better position than me," Petit-Frere said. "He's coming in and he's really come out running."

###

BEHIND THE SCENES ON TITANS DRAFT NIGHT: HOW PETER SKORONSKI LANDED IN TENNESSEE

**BY DAN POMPEI
THE ATHLETIC
MAY 4, 2023**

CHICAGO — In an alcove of a cozy restaurant, Peter Skoronski, known for being impenetrable, is surrounded by hope.

His phone rings, Skoronski answers, and his eyes get wide.

He could have been at Kansas City's Union Station, hobnobbing with Roger Goodell, Mel Kiper Jr. and Bryce Young. He could have been bowing before 1,500 media members, 300,000 fans and 54 million who watched on ABC, ESPN or NFL Network.

Ever an offensive lineman, Skoronski preferred a dimly lit hideaway with family, friends, coaches and teammates, the people, he says, who helped him get here. So he invited about 75 of them to a private gathering — sorry ABC, ESPN and NFL Network.

Piece Pizza in Wicker Park was where his family celebrated his baptism to Christianity 21 years ago, and the place they celebrate his baptism to the NFL today.

Among the people in that alcove eating New Haven-style pizza are his grandmother Ruth, wife of the late Bob Skoronski, his sister Elizabeth and brother Robbie, a contingent from Connecticut where his family's roots grew, and many Northwestern teammates and classmates.

With the phone to his ear, Peter bounds up a few stairs to the back of the restaurant as if he is hunting linebacker. Just past a board listing the eight beers brewed on-site, he covers one ear and talks on his phone.

Skoronski removes a cap with a question mark on it. He and his

family had the question mark caps made for a Christmas party. He will be wearing another hat soon.

He puts the phone down, turns to the crowd and yells, "Tennessee!"

Cheers, raised fists.

Chants, "Pete! Pete! Pete!"

As it should be, mom Anne gets the first hug, then his father, Bob Jr.

Next is his agent, Tommy Condon. Robbie and Elizabeth give him a group hug.

Kurt Anderson, his offensive line coach at Northwestern, gives his special salutation — the "too sweet high five" inspired by professional wrestlers with only the middle fingers and thumbs pinched together.

Then Anderson gives him an embrace that would break a lesser man's ribs. Northwestern head coach Pat Fitzgerald wraps his arms around Skoronski next. Skoronski makes his way around the room, hug after hug after hug.

His father addresses the group. "He's earned every single thing he's gotten," he says. "He took zero shortcuts. Ever. His teammates know. So do his coaches. No shortcuts. We should all be like that."

Peter's grandfather Bob, a stalwart of the Lombardi dynasty as the left tackle for the Packers for 11 years, loved custard. Peter loves custard, so much, in fact, that his brother and sister call him "Custard." So now, it's time for some celebratory custard, distributed in small plastic containers.

And Peter is ready — more than ready — for that first beer of the evening — a Miller Lite.

"Very relieved, very happy," he says in a private moment between sips. "I couldn't be happier with the destination. I knew when the process started that the Titans were

a great option. I'm ready to be a Titan."

He could have been a Packer like his grandfather — he was always a Packers fan. Or a Bear in his hometown. He could have been an Eagle or a Jet or who knows what.

The hope was only for a place he would belong.

At Maine South High School in Park Ridge, Ill., Skoronski received his first college scholarship offer as a sophomore. Among his many suitors were Michigan, Notre Dame and Stanford. The reality is he would have been given a football scholarship any place he wanted. Well, almost any place.

Intrigued by Vanderbilt's academic reputation and the thought of calling Nashville home, he visited the university his junior year. And he might have chosen Vanderbilt, but Vanderbilt did not offer him a scholarship. Perhaps that explains why the Commodores were everyone's favorite opponent back then.

At Northwestern, he was a day-one starter at left tackle. Over three seasons, his consistency, fastidiousness and brute force made the case that he was the best blocker in the college game. Skoronski was voted Big Ten offensive lineman of the year and a consensus All-American.

To train for the combine after his final college season, he hired offensive line savant Duke Manyweather and trained at Sports Academy at The Star in Frisco, Texas.

Early in the year, Skoronski's arm length — or lack of it — became a talking point. Manyweather recommended Skoronski hang from a pullup bar daily to stretch the muscles and tendons, potentially lengthening his arms by as much as a half-inch. Skoronski tried it, but his arms still measured 32 1/4 at the combine in March. Over the past two decades, that put him in the fourth percentile of NFL tackles.

So began the narrative that Skoronski would have to play guard, which could have diminished his stock for two reasons — it was a new position for him, and guards aren't valued as much as tackles. Other than hanging from a pullup bar, there wasn't anything he could do about it.

At the combine, Skoronski was interviewed by most of the teams in the league, including 14 formally — the Cardinals, Chargers, Commanders, Giants, Falcons, Jaguars, Jets, Lions, Packers, Raiders, Seahawks, Steelers, Texans and Titans.

None of the interviewers brought up his arm length, but most asked him what position he saw himself playing. His answer to them all was, "I think I can play tackle. But I'm more than happy to move inside or play anywhere."

Still, Skoronski was irked by the idea that he couldn't be a tackle because his arms were too short.

"I sort of let them know that I didn't like being reduced to a measurement like that," he says. "And most teams were pretty open to understanding. No one really put me in the box of 'you can't play tackle.' So I was encouraged by that."

A few of the interviews were memorable. He enjoyed time with Steelers coach Mike Tomlin and seemed to connect with Titans coach Mike Vrabel. "I liked his energy," Skoronski says.

The conversation was a little less comfortable with the Falcons — undoubtedly by design. Skoronski had been told that some interviewers are purposely abrasive in an attempt to see how prospects react. He was prepared.

"The head coach was on me the second I got in there," Skoronski says of Arthur Smith. "I was giving them generic answers to their questions, and he said, 'You're really boring me right now. Your answers are so boring.' The whole

meeting, he kept looking at his computer. I was kind of laughing to myself and said, 'Sorry, I don't know what you want me to do. I'm answering you honestly.'"

The combine is known for testing participants' physical skills and mental acumen. It is less known for testing endurance, but that is absolutely a part of the process. Twelve of Skoronski's formal combine interviews came rapid-fire one morning over four hours.

It didn't help that he had a sore throat and congestion that required a box of tissue nearby. His combine numbers still were impressive — his vertical jump of 34 1/2 inches was the best among offensive linemen, and his 30 bench-press reps of 225 pounds were second most among offensive tackles. Skoronski was disappointed with his 40-yard dash time of 5.12 because he had run faster in training.

For Northwestern's pro day two weeks later, Skoronski still was not feeling himself. His conditioning was off, and it showed in positional drills. "I felt pretty gassed," he says. "A few things were sloppy, in my opinion. I wasn't pleased."

At the pro day, Skoronski met individually with offensive line coaches of the Bears, Bills, Jets, Raiders, Steelers and Titans. Each of them did a sample installation for him, then asked him to repeat back to them what he had learned.

About nine more offensive line coaches asked him to talk offense with them in video conferences in the following weeks. Among them were coaches from the Bucs, Cardinals, Chiefs, Cowboys, Packers and Ravens.

Between the combine and the draft, Skoronski moved back to his Evanston apartment and trained with Bears great Olin Kreutz, who has worked with numerous prospects and NFL offensive linemen.

Only the Eagles and Jets invited Skoronski for top-30 visits.

In Philadelphia, he spent significant time with general manager Howie Roseman, head coach Nick Sirianni and offensive line coach Jeff Stoutland. The Eagles made it clear they thought he could play tackle in the NFL. He came away impressed with the organization and how they treat people, thinking it would be an excellent place to play.

After talking with Jets general manager Joe Douglas, offensive coordinator Nathaniel Hackett and offensive line coach Keith Carter, Skoronski thought the Jets were on the right track. He was intrigued by the opportunities there.

The Bears and Packers also invited him to their facilities on their local prospect days. In about two hours at Halas Hall, Skoronski spent most of his time with offensive line coach Chris Morgan and never met with general manager Ryan Poles — perhaps a tipoff about how the team felt about him.

His visit to Lambeau Field also did not encourage him about a future with the team. He underwent medical testing and met with offensive line coach Luke Butkus — that was it.

"If I hadn't been a Packers fan," he says, "I probably would have considered it a waste of time."

A little over three months ago, Ran Carthon was introduced as the Titans' general manager. He came from the 49ers, where, as their player personnel director, he helped the team draft offensive tackle Mike McGlinchey in the first round and trade for offensive tackle Trent Williams.

Carthon played running back for the Colts and Lions. He is the son of Maurice Carthon, who played fullback for Bill Parcells and later coached on his staff. As much as anyone, Ran understands the value of a domineering blocker. And he understands the Titans didn't have enough of them last season when they gave up the fifth most sacks in the league.

In the offseason, two of the pillars of the Titans' offense, tackle Taylor Lewan and center Ben Jones, became casualties of time and were released. Another starter, guard Nate Davis, went to Chicago as a free agent.

They needed replacements, and they needed upgrades. So when Carthon watched the tape of Skoronski, he was desirous.

"I thought he was a complete offensive lineman," Carthon says. "You like the efficiency he plays with. He's one of those guys who just knows how to block his man and does it at a high level. The number one word I think of when I think about the way he plays is efficient."

Nobody respects commanding blockers more than Vrabel, the former Super Bowl champion linebacker who has presided over four rushing offenses that finished in the top five of the league in five seasons as the head coach in Tennessee.

Vrabel did his own research on Skoronski, including making a call to Fitzgerald. He had a thorough understanding of the player and person before he shook his hand and interviewed him at the combine.

"There wasn't a whole lot of concern with him," Vrabel says. "The reason you have to interview some of these players is you have to figure out if they are a fit. It was easy to see he'd be an easy fit. It was an easy conversation."

The comfort level with Vrabel and the organization was such that the Titans didn't think it was necessary to bring Skoronski to Nashville for a top-30 visit.

"He was just clean," Carthon says. "After our meetings with the scouts and meeting with him at the combine, we didn't have any further questions we wanted to dig on. It was easy for us."

The evaluation was made easier, Vrabel says, by watching tape of Skoronski back-to-back with tape of other top tackle prospects. Carthon added that they separated the tackles in part by who fit their scheme best.

Analytics for blocking efficiency broken down by run and pass confirmed what the eyes attested, Carthon says, as did blocking win percentages in man and zone concepts.

And so Carthon chuckled at the arm-length discussion.

"He's played at a high level against some high-round draft picks, NFL players with arm length," he says. "Although it doesn't check a box you typically would want, he knows how to play the game within the confines of what he has."

The Titans are not typecasting Skoronski as a guard. Or tackle. Carthon is impressed that he has the physical capability to play either, as well as the willingness. Vrabel says he will not even rule out center.

"I would not put a restriction on where I felt he could play," he says. "When he starts working here, we will do drills that are conducive to overall offensive line fundamentals. Then when we put him in team reps in training camp, we'll figure out where he can help the team."

Before the draft, the Titans, picking 11th, thought Skoronski was beyond their reach. Carthon suspected the Raiders might take him with the seventh selection. It turned out their reach was long enough.

When the Titans chose him, Carthon's phone buzzed. And buzzed and buzzed. About nine texts came in from his friends around the NFL.

"Loved him."

"He was one of our top guys."

"Had he been there for us, we were taking him."

And then there was one from John Lynch, his former boss with the 49ers.

"Great pick," it said.

The next day, Skoronski and his parents were flown to Nashville on a private G2 jet, courtesy of the Titans.

The Titans could have selected quarterback Will Levis with the 11th pick. Instead, they picked Skoronski and chose Levis in the second round. That's interesting because Levis' grandfather Dave Kelly was the defensive line coach at Yale when Skoronski's father was a defensive lineman for the Bulldogs. Bob Skoronski has known Levis' mother, Beth, since she was a little girl.

Peter is where he should be, in Nashville, after all.

At the indoor practice facility at Saint Thomas Sports Park, the first-round pick smiled easily and held up a jersey with his name and the number 1 on it.

On his right was Carthon. On his left, Vrabel.

He wore a Titans cap, and the team photographer captured the moment, this time for the world to share.

There was Peter Skoronski, once again surrounded by hope.

###

PETER SKORONSKI WAS THE ONLY PLAYER TO DECLINE NFL DRAFT INVITE. HIS LIFE STORY EXPLAINS WHY

**BY PAUL SKRBINA
THE TENNESSEAN
MAY 1, 2023**

Long before the NFL became a reality, little Peter Skoronski dreamed big about being a lot of things — a lifeguard, a crossing guard, an airport worker.

And a musher. Wait, a musher?

The Tennessee Titans' first-round draft pick, an offensive lineman out of Northwestern who stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 313 pounds, wanted to be the guy who controls the dogs from a sled in the Iditarod.

"One year we found someone that had the Huskies and the sleds ... " Skoronski's father, Bob, said Friday after watching his son's introductory press conference at the Titans' practice facility.

"His uncle actually gave him that for his birthday," Skoronski's mother, Anne, added.

"He was standing on the back of one of the sleds and did the mushing," his father continued. "He was a small, little boy but he was really into that."

While those dreams of being pulled across the Alaska wilderness grew smaller as Skoronski grew larger, he still is an avid follower of the famous sled dog race.

Skoronski's parents didn't allow him to play football until he was a 12-year-old sixth-grader playing against seventh- and eighth-graders. They couldn't remember exactly how big their son was then, but he was big enough that he had a stripe on his helmet, signifying he wasn't allowed to carry the ball.

"I had to play O-line," Skoronski said. "So there wasn't really much of

a question about it. I was an O-lineman right off the bat."

What type of offensive lineman Skoronski will be for the Titans — a tackle, which he played in college, or a guard — remains to be seen. But one thing is for sure: the kid who received a tackling dummy as a birthday gift when he was younger, the not-so-little kid who would sit in his backyard and draw up football plays, is in the NFL now, the 11th overall pick of the 2023 NFL Draft.

The pomp and circumstance of the draft wasn't Skoronski's jam, which is part of the reason he respectfully declined the offer to be there. He also wanted to share the moment with those close to him, at a place close to his heart.

With around 100 family, friends and former coaches in attendance, including a "busload" who flew in from Connecticut, Skoronski took the call he's been waiting a long time for Thursday night from new Titans general manager Ran Carthon, owner Amy Adams Strunk and coach Mike Vrabel.

"We knew somebody was going to call at some point," Skoronski's father said. "We kind of mentally eliminated the Titans because everyone said they were going to trade up for a quarterback. Even though this was a destination that we were very much hoping for, I did everything I could to not pay attention to what was going on just because of the nervous aspect of it."

Those nerves settled after Skoronski was picked. By Friday, a smiling Peter Skoronski was plastered on the Titans' Twitter profile.

Though he wasn't in Kansas City for the draft, Skoronski made it a point to go there for another reason. Leading up to the draft, Skoronski and fellow draftee Bijan Robinson took part in a "day in the life" experience at Whiteman Air Force Base. The trip included a flight over the site of the NFL draft in a National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

Skoronski did it, in part, to honor his grandfather, who missed two seasons after his rookie year in the NFL to serve in the Air Force.

"He's as humble as the day is long," Skoronski's college coach Pat Fitzgerald said.

'Look at the bloodlines for this kid'

Fitzgerald was at Maine South evaluating another player when the school's football coach, Dave Inserra, suggested that Fitzgerald remember the name of an eighth-grader who was coming in the next school year. The name was Peter Skoronski.

"I'm like 'Dave, whatever. Come on, man,'" Fitzgerald said. "He's like, 'You won't forget (his name).'"

Curious, Fitzgerald went home and googled the name. What he found was a surprise. What he found was that Skoronski's grandfather, also named Bob Skoronski, was a Pro Bowl tackle and captain under Vince Lombardi with the Green Bay Packers, whom he helped to five NFL championships and two Super Bowl champions in his 11 seasons with the team. He died in 2018.

Fitzgerald also found that Skoronski's father was a defensive lineman at Yale.

"Oh, wow. Look at the bloodlines for this kid," Fitzgerald thought to himself. "It will be interesting to see if he ends up being a player."

Fitzgerald found out for himself after Skoronski chose Northwestern over Notre Dame and Stanford.

Skoronski had the highest pass-blocking grade in the nation (93.0) and allowed just six pressures on 480 pass-blocking snaps. He was the Big Ten offensive lineman of the year last season, a first in Northwestern history. Twice he was named All-Big Ten first team. He was a unanimous first-team All-American in 2022, another Northwestern first. He also was a finalist for the 2022 Outland Trophy, awarded to the nation's best

interior lineman on both offense and defense.

Inserra's premonition wasn't the first about Skoronski. When he was 4, his father told Inserra he had his next offensive lineman.

"His dad looked at me and said 'I've got a tackle for you,'" Inserra said. "It's a very athletic family. He wasn't saying 'I've got a QB, I've got a receiver, I've got a RB.' He straight up said, 'I've got a tackle for you,' when he was 4 years old."

'That's unheard of'

Skoronski chose not to graduate early from high school, like some college football players do. Instead he wanted to chase down another goal — being his school's valedictorian in a class of 630. Mission accomplished.

Staying for his full senior year of high school also allowed Skoronski to participate in track and field, in which he also was an all-state selection, and spend some more precious time with his friends and family.

Staying also meant Skoronski reported to college on Father's Day, giving the high school All-American and three-time all-state selection just 15 install practices and two weeks to prepare for his first college season. No matter, Skoronski started as a true freshman and went on to start 33 games in his three seasons with the Wildcats.

"That's unheard of," Fitzgerald said.

There will be an NFL learning curve, of course. But if Skoronski's past is indicative of his future, which includes blocking for Derrick Henry, that curve will be short.

"Peter has an ability to move people against their will in an era of football where it's all high school 7-on-7 and throwing the rock all over the place," Fitzgerald said. "Peter's fundamentals and his functional strength, he's got unbelievable strength numbers. ... It's a perfect fit for what the Titans do."

Skoronski showed up in Nashville on Friday wearing a simple blue suit, a simple blue tie, brown dress shoes and a big smile, his parents by his side, the future he's dreamed about right in front of him. He held up a blue Titans jersey with his last name and the number 1 on the back as he stood quietly between Vrabel and Carthan.

"Peter is exactly who he is. He's not going to be the loud guy boasting walking down the hallway," Inserra said. "He's not going to overtake a room. But when it's time for business, heads up, because he's all business."

"The Rams were asking me and they were like, 'It's been easy for him. How's he going to deal with a challenge?' I was like, 'It hasn't been easy for him. Everything behind the scenes, you can't understand how hard he's worked. He's prepared to the utmost for everything.'"

Including the Iditarod, which he follows closely to this day.

###

NEW TITANS CB L'JARIUS SNEED THANKFUL TO BE VESSEL OF GOD FOR HIS FAMILY

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
APRIL 4, 2024**

NASHVILLE – L'Jarius Sneed walked the hallways at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park for the first time on Tuesday, and he was beaming with pride.

After agreeing to a whopping new contract with the Titans following the team's trade with the Chiefs, Sneed couldn't help but think of his good fortune.

And, about how far he'd come.

"It is a feeling that I can't explain," said Sneed, his six-year-old son and his mother by his side for the experience. "I've tried not to shed tears, but I was just thinking about how blessed I am. To be able to give my kids this experience, that I wish I had when I was little. I am glad God made me a vessel to show my kids."

Sneed arrives in Tennessee after experiencing big success with the Chiefs.

In Kansas City, he won two Super Bowl rings, and developed into one of the NFL's top young cornerbacks.

It's where he was first able to begin giving back to those around him after going through tough times growing up, when nothing came easy. Sneed managed to fight through it all, a childhood when both his parents were imprisoned, and times were hard as he tried to find his own way, his brothers leading the way then.

After being introduced as the newest Titan on Tuesday, Sneed reflected on his life's experiences, and how much he wanted to change things moving forward.

"I want things different," Sneed said. "I even sat down with my

family, and I have meetings with my family, on how I want to be better at this. 'I want this, I want that. I don't want things done this way.' It is cycle breaking. I want to break the cycle for my family, for generation curses. And I thank God for letting me be that person to change their lives."

Sneed is doing that by the way he lives, with perseverance, and faith.

After playing football at Minden High School (Louisiana), Sneed didn't have offers from big schools as he looked to play at the next level.

"Louisiana Tech, Grambling, Southern, Alabama State, Nichols State," Sneed said, "and that was it."

Sneed picked Louisiana Tech, where he made the transition from receiver to defensive back.

"My first year of college, 2016, I could say it was hell," Sneed said with a chuckle. "We had two-a-days, it was my first time playing defense. It was a whole lot of new stuff. But I found my way."

After playing at Louisiana Tech, Sneed wasn't sure what would come next, but he had the NFL on his mind.

Sneed said he got a "late invite" to the NFL Combine, where he had a chance to put his talents on display.

The Chiefs ended up drafting him in the fourth round of the 2020 NFL Draft, and he earned All-Rookie honors from the Pro Football Writers Association of America his first NFL season.

In 57 games (54 starts) over four seasons (2020-23) with the City Chiefs, Sneed totaled 303 tackles, 19 tackles for loss, 6.5 sacks, 10 interceptions, 40 passes defensed, four forced fumbles, three fumble recoveries. He developed a reputation for being one of the league's rising defensive standouts.

When the Chiefs placed the franchise tag on him last month, the

Titans targeted, and eventually traded, for him.

"I am definitely living proof that if you put the work in, it doesn't matter where you are from or what school you went to," Sneed said. "If you stay close to God, things will work out, with His will."

In addition to his accomplishments on the field, Sneed did some pretty cool things off it in Kansas City as well.

After his rookie season, he bought his mother, Jane, a four-bedroom house in Minden, Louisiana.

A year ago, he surprised her with a new car – a black Audi.

Since his second year in the NFL, Sneed has also raised more than \$35,000 for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

"Kids with needs, foster kids," he explained. "If they need prom dresses, other things. I wish I had that when I was little, someone to help me, because my mother and father weren't there when I was young.

"For me, it is such a blessing, being the baby boy of the family, to be able to take care of your family and put them in a better position, and to be able to help others who need it."

On the field, Sneed plans to pay off for the Titans with his aggressive style of play.

The 6-foot-1, 192-pounder is talented, and confident.

"Confidence, resiliency, relentless," Sneed said of what he brings to the Titans. "I am a hell of a player. I love my game. I don't fear anything. I am not afraid to lose, but I am going to win most of my reps."

Off the field, he plans to continue leading the way for his family.

In addition to his son, Kyson, Sneed also has a two-month-old daughter, Kaimira.

Young Kyson gave a thumbs up when asked about his dad's new team as he bounced through the Titans facility this week, after giving his dad some comic relief through the trade process.

"He tells me: Dad, why did (the Chiefs) get rid of you?," Sneed said with a laugh. "To be six years old, he knows what's going on. But he likes the (Titans') logo, the colors. He has a new team now, a new family."

So, too, does dad.

And he's ready to get started on his new chapter, in Tennessee.

"A new team, a new city to raise my kids," Sneed said. "I can't wait to see what Nashville brings me and my family."

###

**TITANS RB TYJAE
SPEARS: "I HAVE THE
GREATEST GIFT IN THE
WORLD, AND THAT'S MY
DAD"**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 15, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Margene Spears was cooped up inside his Louisiana home, recovering from a knee scope after a staph infection.

While he recovered, those around him went on with their daily lives.

Spears remembers one day when his older children raced to go outside.

One child stayed behind.

"Two-year-old Tyjae," Margene Spears recalled with a smile. "He didn't want to leave me. As a two-year-old kid, with his older brothers wanting to go outside and play, he was barely able to talk and was like, "Daddy, can I do anything for you?" He wanted to get me water. He wanted to help me.

"Ever since then I just noticed he was different."

Roughly 20 years later, Titans running back Tyjae Spears smiled when hearing his father had retold that story.

Spears, set to begin his second NFL season, said his father has looked out for him since the day he was born.

And, on Father's Day weekend, he thinks about how lucky he's been.

"In my life, I look at a lot of different things, and sometimes I think I don't have this or that," Tyjae Spears said. "But I have the greatest gift in the world, and that's my dad."

Tyjae Spears was born in 2001 in Hammond, Louisiana. He was raised in Ponchatoula, in a big family with five brothers and three sisters. Tyjae was the baby for a long

time, until one of his sisters was born.

Even at a young age, Margene Spears said there was something special about his son, as a youngster, and as an athlete. After Spears first began playing in Pop Warner, in fact, some used to tell the elder Spears his young son would be playing on Sundays one day.

"They were right," he said with a smile.

Margene Spears said he did his best to steer Tyjae out of trouble, and keep him involved in sports, football in particular.

While other kids in the neighborhood lost their way in the streets, Margene kept Tyjae focused, and he became a star at Ponchatoula High School.

"Football is what kept him calm," Margene Spears said. "When football was going on, he was good. When football season stopped, I had my hands full."

Tyjae Spears ended up playing college football at Tulane University, not too far away.

It allowed Margene Spears to continue going to all his games.

But as young Tyjae emerged as a star, things weren't always easy. After suffering a torn ACL in high school, Spears suffered another torn ACL in college.

A part of him wanted to give up football. Margene Spears wouldn't let him.

Along the way, dad got to repay his son for his good deed as a kid.

"After my (ACL) surgeries, my dad was the one making sure I had pillows under my leg, had ice in my ice machine," Tyjae Spears said. "He was the one helping me out of the bathroom, making sure I wash off. He's always been there."

Their relationship today is as strong as ever. Tyjae Spears said he talks to

his dad every day, sometimes five times a day. Margene Spears went to 18 of 20 Titans games last season, including preseason. He made the drive 8 ½ each way to Nashville for home games.

When talking about his son, Margene Spears beams when thinking about the young man he has become, then about the player he is on the football field. This fall, Tyjae Spears is expected to have a much bigger role alongside running back Tony Pollard on a team looking for production following the departure of Henry. During his rookie season, Spears showed flashes of stardom.

Margene Spears also smiles when thinking about the adversity his son has faced in his life, and that he's been able overcome it.

"I'm so proud of him," he said.

He laughed when telling a story about teen-aged Tyjae and one of his brothers joining him for work one day. Margene Spears does carpentry work, remodeling houses in Louisiana.

"He went with me, and I tried to get him to hold sheetrock over head," Margene recalled. "He'd be complaining, whining. I told them both of you play football, taking hits. But you can't hold a piece of sheetrock over your head?"

Tyjae Spears remembers that day.

"It was after a heavy squat day," Tyjae recalled. "Do you know how heavy sheetrock is? It's heavy, plus you're holding it over your head."

Margene Spears said he hopes his son knows how proud of him, so tells him daily.

Tyjae Spears said he can tell from the look on his dad's face. He knows his dad changed some things in his own life to be more present in his.

He wants to repay him every day of his life, and as he grows older.

"My relationship with my dad, it makes me see what real love, genuine love is," Tyjae Spears said. "And as days go on, I always wish I could be a better son to him in different ways.

"When I have kids in the future, I'm going to try to be the same, but it's going to be hard with the great example he's set in my life."

###

**HOW TYJAE SPEARS,
REPAIRED KNEE AND
ALL, IS SPRINTING TO
STARDOM WITH
TENNESSEE TITANS |
ESTES**

**BY GENTRY ESTES
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
SEPTEMBER 7, 2023**

When the topic comes up, rookie running back Tyjae Spears extends his right leg instinctively, stretching out across the steps on which he's seated. As he does, a large scar becomes visible.

"Some dark times," he says, thinking back. "... I've been through a lot."

That scar says more than Spears will — or needs to — about his knee.

It's a part of his story that's already well-known. It's why some NFL teams reportedly removed him from their draft boards. It's why Spears felt the need to warn attendees at his event on Day 2 of the draft: "Pump the brakes. I don't want to see long faces at the end of the night if I don't get picked."

The knee is also why Spears once considered giving up football, the sport in which he's so immensely gifted that the Tennessee Titans took him in the third round anyway, turning Spears' draft gathering into a party that the bayou town of Ponchatoula, Louisiana (population just shy of 8,000) won't soon forget.

Now that Spears has made it out, he doesn't plan on going back.

"I guess what people consider their chip (on their shoulder), my chip is where I come from," Spears says. "I just can't go back to it."

He doesn't mean that as a slight on his upbringing or where he's from. He speaks with pride about his family, his eight siblings — five brothers, three sisters — and his parents who worked hard to make ends meet. And also about his hometown. Did you know, for

instance, that Ponchatoula is the Strawberry Capital of the World? "We got the best strawberries in the world, man," Spears says.

It's not just the small town or "humble" beginnings (an adjective that can be a cliché, though Spears agrees with it). His ambition runs a lot deeper than that. Through the parts of his story that aren't as well-known, ones that collectively molded him into someone who understands how special the opportunity he has.

But, yeah, it's the knee, too.

"I didn't come from the worst place," Spears says, "but I didn't come from the best place. There's a lot of things that I went without. I just don't want to have those same feelings recycled again. As I get older in my life, I just don't want to go without anymore, and I don't want my kids to go without. ... I'm depending on myself, and I've got a dad and a mom depending on me, too. Also nephews and little cousins and nieces and all looking up to me.

"So if I stop now, if I quit now, I'm quitting not just on myself. I'm quitting on all of them."

Early steps with Tennessee Titans, Derrick Henry

Two ACL surgeries. Arthritis. After the Titans took Spears, NFL Network's Ian Rapoport told viewers that Spears lacked an ACL, leaving questions about whether he'd last past his first NFL contract. Colleague Daniel Jeremiah echoed, "He was not on every draft board, but nobody disputes how talented he is."

You can imagine, of course, how this struck Titans fans. A running back with a bum knee? In the third round? For the Titans? Who already had Derrick Henry? Who badly needed a wide receiver or tight end? And who, above all, had their roster obliterated by injuries for two seasons in a row?

The Titans did draft Spears out of Tulane as a complement to Henry —

for now. Long-term, it's not reaching to believe that Spears is earmarked as Henry's replacement.

"Oh, he's a three-down runner," Titans general manager Ran Carthon assured during the draft. "He can run between the tackles. He's elusive. He can make guys miss as well as contribute in the passing game."

It's not unprecedented for a running back to excel with knee trouble. In 1991, the great Peter King documented for Sports Illustrated how most teams were scared of drafting Thurman Thomas before the Buffalo Bills took the risk in the second round, their owner Ralph Wilson telling GM Bill Polian, "Life's a gamble. Go ahead."

Thomas ran for 12,074 yards, caught 472 passes and totaled 88 touchdowns in 13 NFL regular seasons, and he did it — he said years later — with a torn ACL, according to NewYorkUpstate.com.

Obviously, it's way too early to compare Spears with a legend like Thomas. But this preseason showed Carthon's initial assessment to be correct, just as it has replaced concern about Spears' knee with anticipation for the explosiveness he'll add to the Titans' offense.

Spears ran for 117 yards on 22 carries (5.32 average) in three preseason games. That included an impressive 33-yard touchdown against the Vikings in which he leaped over a defender near the line of scrimmage and somehow never broke stride, sprinting untouched into the end zone.

"I know I can't do nothing like that," Henry said. "It's great to have a change-up and have a back that can be explosive. I know when he hit the ground, he took off."

After offseason practices this summer, Spears could often be seen catching passes from a machine.

He proved his toughness, too, with his willingness to pick up blocks in pass protection.

“A lot of times these fast, speed backs don’t want to really stick their face up in there on pass protection,” Titans quarterback Ryan Tannehill said, “and he’s proven on multiple occasions that he’s willing and able to step up in there against a linebacker. ... I love Tyjae, man. I’m excited to have him on our team.”

That job at Wal-Mart

The first time Spears hurt his knee was in high school. The second time, it was while scoring a touchdown early in the 2020 season for Tulane. And he realized it instantly. NOLA.com wrote that he crawled and tossed “his helmet off in frustration” before trainers made it to him.

Facing another lengthy ACL recovery, Spears started wondering whether he’d make it back to football.

“It was very difficult for him. It was difficult for all of us,” said Nicole Hart, Spears’ mother.

About that time, during the COVID-19 pandemic, he worked at Wal-Mart to make some extra money. The job entailed unloading delivery trucks. An 18-wheeler would arrive with, say, up to 3,000 items and “we had to take off every single piece,” he remembers. “That humbled me so much. I said, ‘Man, I’m going to do whatever I’ve got to do in football, because I do not want to work a real job.’”

“I think that job may have lasted a week, a week-and-a-half,” said Hart with a laugh.

“We don’t really realize that a lot of things really do happen for a reason,” she added. “In the midst of him going to get a job at Wal-Mart, maybe that was during a time when he was battling with, ‘Do I really

want to play football? I just want to give up. I want to quit.’ Maybe he had to have that moment to see, ‘Man, this is not what I really want to do.’”

Spears made it back and rushed for 863 yards in 2021. Then in 2022, he had 1,581 rushing yards and 19 touchdowns in his final 14 games for the Green Wave, who went 12-2.

A stellar season for Spears was punctuated by an MVP performance in a Cotton Bowl victory over Southern Cal. He ran for 205 yards against the Trojans, making eight consecutive 100-yard performances for a player who’d jumped well on the radar entering the NFL draft.

There was one team in particular that Spears hoped was interested in him.

Back home for Titans-Saints

As fortune has it, Spears’ first regular-season game for the Titans will be Sunday against the New Orleans Saints.

In the Superdome. About 45 minutes from his hometown.

Yes, Spears grew up a Saints fan.

That made for a punch in the gut when, during the draft’s third round, the Saints had the No. 71 pick and used it to take a running back: Kendre Miller from TCU.

Spears had held up well in public all night. But after that, he went off to collect himself, and “in the middle of that is when he actually got the call” 10 picks later from the Titans, said Hart.

“The whole world could have put two and two together and figured out I wanted to go to the Saints,” Spears says. “I’m here in Tennessee, and I love it. I feel like things happen for a reason.”

Plenty of friends and family from Ponchatoula will be on hand for Sunday’s opener, but it still probably won’t be enough. So many want to be there that Spears jokes,

“I’m putting a limit on it. I’m buying 10 tickets. That’s all I’m buying. If I’m feeling good, I might get 15.”

It’s the first real taste of NFL stardom for Spears. There hasn’t been much to this point. Spears says he’s still able to go around Nashville without being bothered or noticed — and he knows enough to appreciate that. He once went to an event with Henry and saw how many people approached the Titans’ star for pictures and autographs. “Man, how do you do it?” Spears asked him. “That’s just what comes with it,” replied Henry.

“People still don’t know who I am,” Spears says. “So I can go and have fun with my family and friends and whoever else I want to take out, because nobody knows me. But is it going to be the same in six, seven months or a year?”

“I don’t think it’s going to be the same.”

###

**ROOKIE RB TYJAE
SPEARS THANKFUL FOR
HIS NFL OPPORTUNITY
WITH THE TITANS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TITANS ONLINE
MAY 22, 2023**

NASHVILLE – The day after the NFL Draft, Tyjae Spears drove through the streets of New Orleans looking for Titans jerseys.

Spears had been selected by the team less than 24 hours earlier, and he wanted to represent his new squad at a party celebrating the development.

This week, Spears had his own team-issued jersey.

The former Tulane running back took part in rookie minicamp last weekend before joining veterans in the offseason program this week.

The Titans are scheduled to begin OTAs next week.

The 5-foot-11, 195-pound Spears looked good in the open rookie minicamp, catching a number of balls out of the backfield, and then showing off his speed – and moves – in space. He also had some nice runs after taking handoffs.

"It felt good," Spears said. "It's just a blessing to be a part of the team. It feels good, coming from where I came from. I am on an NFL team, and I am super-excited.

"All the guys I've encountered, they've been great. Every coach, they demand a lot out of you. It's a great organization, great people."

Spears, selected in the third round of the NFL Draft, ran for 1,581 yards and 19 touchdowns in 2022 for the Green Wave, averaging 6.9 yards per carry. He also caught 22 passes for 256 yards and two touchdowns. Spears had a big game in the Cotton Bowl against USC, when he ran for 202 yards and four touchdowns. He was named the Cotton Bowl MVP after the team's win.

In four college seasons, Spears ran for 2,910 yards and 31 touchdowns while also catching 48 passes for 564 yards and three scores. Spears was the 2022 American Athletic Conference Offensive Player of the Year, when he tied for the FBS lead with 21 scrimmage touchdowns.

Spears, whose locker is located right next to veteran running back Derrick Henry's locker, brushed off a number of questions about his health, specifically one his knees.

He made one thing clear:

"I feel perfectly fine – there ain't nothing wrong with me," Spears said. "I am healthy.

"I guess (my health) is a question that's always going to pop up, but I am here. And (the Titans) had a lot of faith in me to get me where they got me at. So, I am healthy and they know I am healthy."

Spears, who is from Ponchatoula, La., is fully aware he'll get to head back home to Louisiana when the Titans open the season on September 10 against the Saints.

He also knows a lot of work needs to be done between now and then, and he's just getting started.

"That is so far away," Spears said with a smile. "I am just taking it one day at a time."

Spears also knows he's thankful for the opportunity.

"Lately, I have been praying a lot," Spears added. "And the main thing I try to start and finish with is how thankful I am for being here, being a part of an NFL organization. Because I think back, and only two or three people where I am from got that opportunity. So, I am super blessed, and super appreciative."

###

**TITANS PUNTER RYAN
STONEHOUSE AIMS TO BE
BACK BETTER THAN
EVER AFTER SURGERY**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 9, 2024**

NASHVILLE – The last time Titans fans saw punter Ryan Stonehouse he was being helped off the field at Nissan Stadium with a season-ending injury.

The next few days were rough.

"You feel sorry for yourself for a day," Stonehouse said on Monday. "Because your whole life has changed from doing one thing to totally doing something opposite. I think you maybe sit in it for two days. The first day you are confused. What do I do now? When do I get surgery? What does the (recovery) process look like? The next day, it sets in: Well, my season is over, and this sucks."

It didn't take Stonehouse long, however, to turn the page, and find optimism.

In his first public comments since injuring his left knee in the team's December 3 game against the Colts, Stonehouse said he had surgery on his non-punting leg on December 15. Stonehouse declined to reveal the specifics of the injury.

And while he's on crutches, and in a giant knee brace now, he hopes to begin walking without the crutches later this week. He's been rehabbing the knee every day since he returned to Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park after the procedure.

"I feel great," Stonehouse said. "I literally feel like I could not feel better, after surgery. Right now, all I care about is rehab, and getting back. And you just have to attack it."

In 2024, Stonehouse plans to be back, and better than ever.

"There's nothing I want more than to not just be back, but be back better

than I was this year," Stonehouse said. "And I'm confident I can do that."

But even Stonehouse knows that won't be easy after he became the first player in history to lead the NFL in gross punting average in each of his first two NFL seasons.

Before landing on Injured Reserve to finish the 2023 season, Stonehouse averaged 53.06 yards per punt. His 53 attempts (2,812 yards) qualified him for the single-season charts, and as a result, he finished with the top two numbers of all-time in his first two NFL seasons. Stonehouse posted a 53.1 average in 2022.

Stonehouse welcomes the challenge.

"The cool thing about what I went through this year is I feel like I know exactly what I need to do to be better than I was this year," Stonehouse said. "Like, I need to improve on plus-50s, and that sort of stuff. I feel like I know exactly what I need to do, and if I can just get back to where I was, I don't have any worry. I know what it takes. And, I enjoy the process of improvement."

###

**TITANS PUNTER RYAN
STONEHOUSE'S JERSEY
AND CLEATS HEADED TO
THE PRO FOOTBALL
HALL OF FAME AFTER
RECORD-BREAKING
ROOKIE SEASON**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 10, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Titans punter Ryan Stonehouse set records during his rookie season.

Now, his jersey and cleats are set to make their way to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

The Titans on Tuesday are in the process of mailing memorabilia to Canton, Ohio, for a display after Stonehouse finished the 2022 season with a gross average of 53.10 yards per punt (90 punts for 4,779 yards). Stonehouse broke Sammy Baugh's single-season NFL record of 51.40 yards per punt, which was established in 1940 and was never matched among qualifiers (2.5 punts per team game) until Stonehouse's rookie campaign.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame contacted the Titans requesting items to commemorate his record-breaking season.

"It's surreal, honestly," Stonehouse said on Tuesday. "It's the last thing I was expecting. But it's such a cool honor. Going undrafted, and kind of having the odds against you, to be able to do something that hasn't been done for 80-something years, it is such a big honor to me. And to break it from a guy like Sammy Baugh, it's special."

Stonehouse, who made the team as an undrafted free agent from Colorado State, finished the 2022 season with a net punting average of 44.03 yards per punt, establishing a new NFL record for the highest net average by a rookie punter. He broke the record set by Indianapolis' Rigoberto Sanchez, who averaged 42.64 net yards per punt as a rookie in 2017.

Stonehouse said he'll work this offseason to be even better in 2023.

"I think this season had some highs, and I think managing those highs and trying to remain consistent was my main goal the whole time," Stonehouse said. "I felt like I did that a lot with my gross. Heading into next year I want to improve on some of the things I need to keep up in those highs, like the inside the 20 or the net average. Similarly, with how the gross went this year, I'd love to build that consistency."

"I think overall it was such a long rookie year for me, with the draft prep, and competing with Brett (Kern) in the preseason games. It flew by so quick, now that you reminisce on it. But it was such a cool way to start my career."

###

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STONEHOUSE AIMS TO BE
BACK BETTER THAN
EVER AFTER SURGERY**

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TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JANUARY 9, 2024**

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###

**TITANS ROOKIE DL
T'VONDRE SWEAT
SURPRISES HIS MOM
WITH HER "DREAM
HOUSE"**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
AUGUST 2, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Titans rookie defensive lineman T'Vondre Sweat is a self-proclaimed "mama's boy."

And, for good reason.

Sweat said his mom has sacrificed a lot for him over the years, regularly working three jobs to make ends meet so her three sons could be more comfortable. There were times, Sweat said, when she didn't eat, just so her young boys could.

"Without my mom," Sweat said, "I wouldn't be here today. I can't say in words how much I appreciate her."

Sweat offered his mother, Lashunda Ross, more proof on Friday.

He surprised her with her "dream house."

It all unfolded this morning in Houston, when Ross was handed flowers as she walked into the house her youngest son bought for her.

She then watched a video with this message:

"I just want to thank you a lot for all you have done for me," Sweat, wearing a Titans shirt, said from Nashville, where he's in the middle of training camp. "I can't be more thankful for a mom like you. Everyone in the world already knows you're special to me. I just want to say: I love you, I love you, I love you. I want to thank you for everything you've done for me since I was a little kid with my other two brothers."

And...

"Mom, I just want to say: I finally got the house you wanted. Dreams do come true. I can't appreciate you

more. And, I hope you love your new home."

Sweat beamed with pride the day before, when he talked about his mother, and the opportunity he was getting to purchase her a home in Houston, Texas.

Sweat said his mom had been living in an apartment, but they began looking for homes for her in recent months, after he signed his rookie contract.

Growing up, Sweat said the family didn't have things easy. There was a point when his mom, himself, and his two brothers had to move into his aunt's apartment.

"There were six kids in one apartment," Sweat recalled. "And that's hard."

Lashunda Ross worked at a hospital, at a Foot Locker, and at other jobs to make ends meet.

Through it all, she attended all of Sweat's games, from his Pop Warner days to his high school playing days to his years at the University of Texas.

"She's always been my No.1 fan," Sweat said of his mom. "She's always been by my side."

Now, she has a new home, thanks to her youngest son, the baby of the family.

Sweat, selected in the second round of the 2024 NFL Draft, said he's thankful for having the chance to repay his mom for all she's done.

"I have to say, I appreciate the Titans, Miss Amy, Ran Carthon and everyone for believing in me and helping me with this opportunity. Without them believing in me, I wouldn't have the opportunity to help my mom like this," Sweat said.

"My mom, she's special. I love her to death, and I respect her so much. She's a very, very, very strong woman, and she's sacrificed so much. I can't say in words how much I appreciate my mom being in

my life, so I'm happy I can do this for her. And, for all the guys out there: Love your moms, man, because you only get one."

###

NO SWEAT? TITANS NT T'VONDRE SWEAT MAKES NICE FIRST IMPRESSION IN ROOKIE MINICAMP

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MAY 12, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Titans rookie T'Vondre Sweat looked like a dancing bear as he maneuvered his way through the stand up dummies at rookie minicamp over the weekend.

The 6-foot-4, 366-pound defensive lineman showed off some pretty nifty footwork and agility as he raced around the pads.

On another drill, Sweat exploded out of his stance, pushed past another pad, and then leveled a red dummy at the conclusion of a practice rep in individual drills.

Eyes of nearby spectators lit up, about the same way Sweat did when he heard a question from a trainer during a break in the action: Need some water?

"Hell yeah!," Sweat said before dousing his mouth.

Rookie minicamp is on the books for Sweat and the team's other first-year players.

Two practices down and many more to go as the team's second-round pick does his best to get up to speed as quickly as possible in the NFL.

"I felt great," Sweat said. "Just being here, in Nashville, it's amazing. It was awesome to be out there. ... Anyone, when you haven't played football in a minute, of course you're going to come out with a little rust. But once you're going, you're going."

Sweat said he worked with other Texas Longhorns from the time the NFL Draft took place, and minicamp, to prepare himself.

This week, he'll be incorporated into work with the veterans in the

offseason program, with OTAs and a minicamp, on the horizon.

Titans Coach Brian Callahan said he was impressed with what he saw from Sweat right out of the gate.

"He looked good," Callahan said of Sweat. "I thought he moved well. You never know when guys get here, what they're going to look like. And I thought he did a nice job. Looked like the guy we saw on tape, which was good to see."

Sweat, who said during a conference call after being selected he wanted to play in the 350- to 355-pound range this fall, has already been in communication with team nutritionist Lauren Silvio about his diet.

Sweat said he'll work with Silvio and the team's coaching staff to find "that perfect weight for me," but he's not sure what it will be at this point.

Already, Sweat said he's already gotten a pretty good feel for defensive line coach Tracy Rucker, a coach he plans to bust his rear end for on a daily basis. Rucker worked with Sweat on his technique on the practice field during rookie camp, stressing the importance of keeping his feet going forward in drills.

"As far as skill set, he's a big man and this is a big man's league," Rucker said of Sweat. "And, I think that definitely helps us up front. Hopefully this guy develops into what we all want him to be. It's going to take time ... but he wants to (be great)."

After his first weekend in Nashville, Sweat is even more excited to get going.

"I'm not here to prove anything," he said. "It's a blessing to be here, in this organization. Just getting to come out here, competing with my teammates, being the best for the team. It's pretty exciting."

"I have a lot to work on. I am not a perfect person, no one here is perfect. There's a lot of stuff I have to work on, and I just have to come

out here, get better at my craft, and take it day by day."

###

THE TWO SIDES OF TEXAS SUPERSTAR T'VONDRE SWEAT

BY DAVE WILSON
ESPN.COM
DECEMBER 30, 2023

YOU CAN'T MISS T'Vondre Sweat. It's not just that he's 6-foot-4 and 362 pounds, although it has something to do with that.

But then you add the chain. It has a dinner-plate sized, diamond-encrusted medallion that says "MAKE 'EM SWEAT." He doesn't know how much it weighs, only that it sometimes hurts his neck.

"He's about 380 with that big chain on," said Jay Oliphant, Sweat's high school basketball coach.

Sweat loves the chain, which is inspired by the giant clocks Public Enemy rapper Flavor Flav wears. It's big, it's flashy.

It was also his mom's idea.

That makes sense because if you talk to anybody who knows Sweat, the first thing they'll tell you is that he's a mama's boy.

"You get out there and make 'em sweat," Lashunda Ross, his mom, said of the inspiration for the medallion. "They're nervous when they see you. They always have two people double-teaming you."

The medallion has a second side, though. One that people rarely see. And that was all Sweat's work. The back is covered with photos of his mom, his great uncle, his grandmother and great-grandmother.

This is the duality of T'Vondre Sweat, the wrecking ball who is the physical embodiment of Texas' climb to its first College Football Playoff appearance. The goofy, fun-loving mama's boy is also the Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year and weeks ago claimed Texas' first Outland Trophy, given to the best

interior lineman in the country, since 1977.

He'll play a key role for the Longhorns on Monday when No. 3 Texas faces No. 2 Washington in the College Football Playoff at the Allstate Sugar Bowl (8:45 p.m. ET, ESPN/ESPN App) with the Longhorns looking to free up defenders to slow down the Huskies' dangerous passing attack.

"He is hard to move," Texas defensive coordinator Pete Kwiatkowski said Thursday. "He takes up a lot of space. Takes multiple blockers, and so that frees up the linebackers. Gives us a little bit more luxury to play with lighter boxes."

And Sweat has already served notice to the Huskies that he's ready.

"Let me see how I can say this ... They're a great group of guys, the O-line," Sweat said. "I mean, they won awards. They're just awards to me. You know what I mean? And they've got to face guys like us, so we'll see how it goes down."

He has made 'em sweat all year, following four years of unheralded dirty work on the D-line, with his highest accolade being named honorable mention All-Big 12 last year. He has managed to break out despite arriving as one of the lowest-ranked recruits on Texas' roster, a 3-star on a team that has long underachieved with superstar prospects.

He did it by putting on 100 pounds since leaving high school in Huntsville, a town of about 45,000 in East Texas about 70 miles north of Houston. He did it by smothering defenders -- Texas allowed just 80.9 rushing yards per game, fourth best nationally -- flexing and mean-mugging all over the field.

None of this surprised his coach at Huntsville High, Rodney Southern, who told Sweat when he played for him that he'd eventually be an NFL player. But Southern is surprised at just how giant Sweat has become.

"The last time he came to my office, he walked in the door, stood in the doorway and I mean, he filled up the entire doorway," he said. "What you see now is just a bigger, happier version of what I had."



LIKE THE CHAIN, there are also two sides to T'Vondre Sweat.

"He plays like a bully," Texas nickelback Jahdae Barron said. "A bully, in my eyes, is somebody that wants something and takes things from whoever they want. That's who Sweat is as a player."

"Violent," linebacker Jaylan Ford said. "He makes big people look small. This dude's a beast. He's literally making people move out of his way."

When he's not on the field?

"Goofy," Barron said.

"I know everyone on the team," Ford said. "I'd say [Sweat's] probably the easiest person to talk to, honestly. He just talks to anybody and everybody. It doesn't really matter. He'll probably have a 30-minute conversation with the guy. He's probably the nicest, softest, down-to-earth guy."

He didn't even want to play football to begin with -- "I was a coward, I can't lie," he said of his early years in the sport -- but his mom and his aunt Lisa concocted a plan to help him get excited. Lisa would make cookies, and it was clear to five-year-old T'Vondre that if he scored, he'd get one.

"He'd look over to see if she had the cookies, then he'd take off running and make a touchdown," Ross said. "He was greedy, and he can eat." The reward system worked.

"Maybe that's why I'm so big," Sweat said.

Now, as a fifth-year senior, he's the second-biggest player on Texas' best team since 2009.

Not that he wasn't big at Huntsville. He was 6-4, 280, so athletic that he played at defensive end, once racking up 4.5 sacks in a game. He also starred on the basketball team, where he was named the district's defensive player of the year.

Sweat brags about how nice he was on the court, saying he could play any position from point guard to center.

"I've had a couple of good bigs at Huntsville, but he's the only big that I've had that could actually go out there at 260-plus pounds and he could guard a point guard, he can handle the ball, he can do a little of it all," Oliphant said. "He was telling you the truth on that."

Even while reminiscing and hyperbolizing, Sweat is humble. "I shoulda gone D-III in basketball," he said.

Basketball spotlighted his athleticism, kept him in shape and showed how light he was on his feet, making him more attractive to Texas, where former defensive line coach Oscar Giles took a shine to Sweat. He started racking up offers, about 17 in all. But Texas made the most serious push to get Sweat to sign.

"We wondered why not many people were on him," said Bryan Carrington, the cornerbacks coach at Arizona State, who was one of Sweat's main recruiters at Texas when he was the Longhorns' director of recruiting. "He got offered by Texas A&M, Alabama, TCU, Missouri. But we didn't feel like those schools recruited him hard enough."

Sweat agreed, saying there was only one consistent school in his ear. "I really felt like they didn't want me," Sweat said. "Nobody was recruiting

me hard but Texas and Coach Giles."

It might not have mattered anyway. Texas' location made all the difference for his priorities.

"I'm a mama's boy," Sweat said. "I didn't want to be so far but I didn't want to be so close."

And Sweat joked that growing up as a huge fan of Kevin Durant held a little sway, too.

"Honestly, the reason I came to Texas was because I thought I was going to meet KD," Sweat said.



SWEAT ARRIVED IN Austin and embraced his new home. He says he started connecting with people outside of football, but was getting a chance to get early playing time as well. Then, he went all-in, and fell in love with country music.

"I'd love to be buddies with Luke Combs," he said, saying "Crazy Beautiful" is his favorite song, adding he also is a huge fan of Morgan Wallen and Brett Young.

"Some of my teammates don't even like riding in the car with me," Sweat said. "Ride with me, you leave me alone. You're gonna listen to this."

And then he got to work in the weight room -- and at the dining table. "When you play at the University of Texas, one thing they do is make sure you eat," Sweat said. "You don't have to worry about food."

By 2021, Sweat packed on those 100 pounds and looked the part, but was uncertain of his future when Tom Herman was fired and Steve Sarkisian replaced him. But Sarkisian hired former Longhorns (and Alabama and NFL) defensive

line coach Bo Davis back, and he brought with him a reputation as a molder of NFL talent.

That fall, Texas was blown out at Iowa State, 30-7, and Davis got on the bus after the game and heard laughing. A recording of Davis' reaction was leaked to social media, and it wasn't pretty.

"This s--- ain't a game to me," Davis screamed. "If you think it's a game, get the f--- off this bus. I got my ass kicked and you motherf---ers were laughing."

It became an inflection point in the Longhorns' turnaround, something Sarkisian discussed this season after Texas went back to Ames and won, 26-16.

"I think you could feel the passion in Bo's voice," Sarkisian said. "Bo made it very clear that we're here to win championships and we're here to compete for championships and that's day in and day out ... The fact that people remember that, I think, is a good thing."

Last month, Sweat was on a podcast and said he was the player laughing, joking that he thought maybe the statute of limitations was up on it.

Davis didn't say if he knew, but the two have come a long way since that moment. Sweat says that Davis forged a brotherhood among the defensive linemen that has made all of them better, with Sweat and Byron Murphy becoming perhaps the best pair of tackles in the country.

"It's been fun coaching him because he's got some humor with him and you enjoy that," Davis said. "But he is serious about when it's time to go to work."

Davis' handiwork has been evident in Sweat's breakout season, which came in his fifth year after he decided to bypass the NFL for one last year at Texas.

"He added several zeros to the dollar amount he's gonna get and maybe a couple of commas," Southern said.

But the NFL will have its own assessment of his size.

"Some will question the value of a 360-pound defensive tackle in the first round, but I just really like the player and think he could help an NFL defense in any situation," Mel Kiper Jr. wrote in his most recent Big Board, where he has Sweat ranked as his No. 21 overall prospect.

In 2015, Alabama coach Nick Saban told ESPN that behemoth tackles like 6-5, 349-pound Terrence Cody, a two-time consensus All-American, were going out of style.

"Cody couldn't play for us now," Saban said. "It would be hard to put him in the game, the way it is now, and he was a great player for us. Five or six years ago, nobody could block the guy."

Davis was also Cody's D-line coach. But he said that doesn't hold true for Sweat.

With Sweat in the game, Texas gets pressure on opposing quarterbacks 38% of the time, compared to 31% when he's not, according to ESPN Stats & Info. Opposing quarterbacks complete 58% of their passes to 62% when he's out, and are off-target on passes 16% of the time compared to 7% when he's not on the field.

"A lot of guys are big, but they don't have any hip flexibility," Davis said. "[Sweat] can move like a 290-pound guy. He can turn and get skinny. That's the amazing part you see when you watch him and see the things he does."

Sweat said he's aware of the discussions, saying Davis let him know how to end them.

"If you don't want the weight to be an issue, go be a dawg," Davis told him. "Don't come to me, try to come out two or three plays. Go be you."

Sweat has been himself all year. And he and the Longhorns have reaped the rewards.

"His level of maturity and growth as a teammate has been awesome to watch," Kwiatkowski said. "He's a very influential guy in that locker room."

Sweat has piled up awards, helped lead Texas to the CFP and even got to catch a touchdown pass and strike a premeditated Heisman pose in the Big 12 championship game against Oklahoma State. "Scoring a touchdown in my first Big 12 championship game, and winning it was just amazing," he said. "I mean, it can't be a better feeling than that."

The big man has made 'em sweat all year.

###

TEXAS LONGHORNS: T'VONDRE SWEAT'S PATH TO COLLEGE FOOTBALL STARDOM

BY JOSH CRISWELL
HOUSTON CHORNICLE
DEC 14, 2023

T'Vondre Sweat has evolved into arguably the most-feared defensive lineman in college football over the course of his five years at the University of Texas. He's also a self-described mama's boy, something that shined through as the Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year accepted the Outland Trophy—awarded to the top interior lineman in the sport—late last week.

"I give all the shout out to my mom, man," Sweat said on the ESPN broadcast, donning a chain containing a photo of his mother, Lashunda Ross. "Without that woman, I wouldn't be able to do a lot of things. That woman just stayed on my neck 24/7, and all I can say is I love that woman to death."

Ross admits her son's words almost brought her to tears on national television, as her reaction was displayed on the screen in real time via a video feed.

"Aw man, I wanted to cry," Ross said. "I really wanted to cry when he was saying those words. I got very emotional when he was talking and saying that in front of the whole [country]. Everybody is watching, but it felt really good, and he tells me all the time.

"When he sees me or we're on the phone or before the game, he always tells me, 'Mom, I appreciate you. Thank you so much for everything and thank you for being there.'"

With a laugh, Ross credits herself for the light-hearted, fun-loving nature of Sweat's personality, something UT fans have become well-acquainted with. This was on full display during the Longhorns' Big 12 title game win over Oklahoma State—a victory that helped secure the program's first

College Football Playoff appearance—when Sweat checked in at tight end and caught a touchdown pass, which he celebrated by striking a Heisman pose that almost instantly went viral. "I spilled my whole drink," Ross recalled, failing to contain her laughter.

Hearing from these two paints the picture of a loving mother-son bond, but in terms of Sweat's ascent to college football stardom, the driving force behind his success goes deeper. In a time when high-level youth athletics is littered with helicopter parents constantly questioning coaches, Ross took a different approach—and one that's paid obvious dividends.

In Sweat's early football-playing years, Ross "used to be that mom that was like, 'Don't yell at my baby.'" But as she raised her sons, an understanding was developed that "dealing with boys, you have to be hard on them, you have to keep your foot on their neck." In Huntsville High School football coach Rodney Southern and basketball coach Jay Oliphant, Ross found partners who were more than willing to embrace this type of mentality.

"She's been very valuable in his life," Southern said. "She stayed on him, and she told me way back that she wanted me to stay on him. Obviously, that was easy for me. He's talented, he's a great kid, he's so fun-loving and happy, it wasn't hard to stay on a guy like that."

In Southern's 22 years as a head coach, he's told three players that they have an opportunity to play on Sundays in the NFL. The first two—Miami Dolphins tight end Durham Smythe and former Texas quarterback David Ash—were from his time at Belton High School in Central Texas, with Sweat being the third.

Between Southern and Ross, the pair ensured that Sweat attended as many college camps as possible. He ended up with roughly 17 Division I offers, ultimately choosing the Longhorns over the likes of

Alabama and other powerhouse programs.

"[Southern] came to me and told me that T is a special kid and he sees something in him, and he doesn't want him to go the wrong way," Ross said of a conversation they had nearly a decade ago. "I agreed with him, so if somebody is coming and telling me something about my kid, I'm not going to get mad. I'm going to help them. ... If he's not listening, not doing what he's supposed to do, get on him. I give you this permission, because you don't find that too much.

"That's what's wrong with a lot of parents now. They don't want nobody else to discipline their kids when they're in the wrong. I'm not that type."



University of Texas defensive tackle T'Vondre Sweat poses for a photograph with his mother, Lashunda Ross.
Courtesy of Lashunda Ross

Recently named the top interior lineman in college football, Sweat played on the edge throughout his entire high school career, in addition to lining up at tight end during his freshman season. He arrived at Huntsville around 220 pounds and gradually grew into his body frame, playing his final two seasons at roughly 285 pounds. He's now listed at 6-foot-4, 362 pounds, yet hasn't lost the quickness and agility that—combined with his overpowering strength and size—terrorized high school opponents.

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Sweat was a similarly dominant force on the hardwood, with double-digit rebound, three-plus block performances becoming the norm by his junior year. He contemplated skipping his senior season to focus on lifting weights, before coming to an agreement with Oliphant that both parties would be better off by him returning to the team. Huntsville proceeded to win the District 20-5A title, with Sweat being named the league's Defensive MVP.

"He was extremely quick on his feet," Oliphant said. "He could guard guards, he could guard wings, he was just an extension of talent. What he's doing now doesn't really surprise me at all because he's always been a good, superior athlete. ... Sometimes he would get a rebound and dribble it coast-to-coast. He could do almost anything he wanted to, and it speaks volumes on his talent and athletic ability."

Sweat found himself pondering another decision a couple years later, one that would've had significant ramifications had he followed through.

Ross remembers her son being "scared and nervous" around the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit during his sophomore year of college, and says he contemplated giving up at UT. Her message was direct, reminding Sweat that he didn't come this far to let it all slip away.

"My thing is we don't give up, we don't quit," Ross added. "I said, 'You've got this. We're in this together. Me and you are going to figure it out, and we're going to get through it together.'"

According to Ross, Sweat responded, "Yes ma'am, I'm going to stick it out. I'm not going to give up," to which Ross noted, "That's the attitude I like to hear." Then Sweat added a promise, alluding to his likely future in the NFL.

"He said, 'One day, you're not going to have to work—and I'm going to

make that promise to you," Ross said. "He's sticking by what he said to me, and I'm going to hold him to his word."

###

**TITANS EDGE RUSHER
RASHAD WEAVER
LOOKING FORWARD TO
DOING MORE IN 2024**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 24, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Rashad Weaver used to mull over thoughts about his lost season in 2021, when a broken fibula ended his rookie campaign after just two games.

Not any more.

These days, the Titans edge rusher is all about the present – and doing his best to make an impact now.

"It's Year 4, so it's time to take a leap not only for myself, but for this team," Weaver said. "I can truly show the full value of what they got out of this pick, plus more, because that has always been my goal. And if I do my job and reach my personal goals – my personal goals are tied in with this team - it will only elevate the team.

"Winners are loved everywhere, and it will benefit me and the team in every way possible."

A fourth-round pick of the Titans in the 2021 NFL Draft, Weaver has played in 33 games over his first three NFL seasons, with four starts.

In those contests Weaver has tallied 45 tackles, 5.5 sacks and 45 quarterback pressures. In 2023, Weaver played in 15 games and totaled 16 tackles, six pressures and no sacks a year after recording 5.5 sacks and 39 pressures in 2022.

Looking ahead to 2024, Weaver figures to have an opportunity to do more.

Following the departure of Denico Autry, Weaver is expected to be looked to as one of the pass rushers needing to make more of an impact behind Harold Landry and Arden Key.

"At the end of the day, Nico is gone, and that's a spot from a seasoned vet that played great reps and did a lot of great things here," Weaver said of the potential for more opportunities. "That will be open and in the league these days you need three good pass rushers... I'll do what I need to do. I'll be where I need to be, and I'll take advantage of what I need to do."

Weaver said he's worked this offseason to be in the best shape possible.

He spent the early part of the offseason doing a lot more running while training on Florida. During OTAs and minicamp, he's focused on his footwork, and being able to explode more off the line of scrimmage.

Weaver said he's felt a difference on the field.

Now, he wants to make more of a difference this fall.

"It is a different room, it's a different team," Weaver said. "I think there will be plenty of opportunities, it is all about what I do with it. ... If I do what I need to do, it will be taken advantage of. If not, it will be on me. It will be nobody's fault but me."

###

**BIGGER STRONGER OLB
RASHAD WEAVER
ANXIOUS TO SEE HIS
HARD WORK PAY OFF ON
FIELD FOR TITANS**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 5, 2023**

NASHVILLE – Rashad Weaver chuckled when asked what he sees when he looks at his rookie photos.

"The boy looks a little frail," Weaver said with a smile. "He looks a little slender."

The Titans outside linebacker doesn't look that way now.

With some hard work – he spent a good chunk of his offseason working with a trainer known as "Monster Maker" – Weaver feels bigger and stronger than ever.

But it didn't come easy.

"That entails workouts for three hours in the weight room, where you lay on the ground and say: 'I hate this' every day," Weaver said. "And on the off days you go run hills, 50-yard sprints up the hills that's working your speed and your leg strength and your drive.

"But I know it's working, because I can feel the difference. And, the easiest way to know something is working is when you see the difference or other people see the difference in you and they make remarks about you.

"For someone like me, it just makes me want to keep going."

Weaver, a fourth-round draft pick by the Titans in 2021 who is now heading into his third NFL season, is looking to make a bigger difference for the team in 2023.

He plans to do it by taking advantage of the work he's put in away from the facility, combined with the work during the team's offseason program, including OTAs and minicamp.

A 6-foot-4, 259-pounder, Weaver played in 16 games for the Titans in 2022, and he totaled 5.5 sacks, 39 quarterback pressures, and 27 tackles. It came one season after his rookie year was cut short after just two regular season games because of a broken leg that had him getting around on a scooter for a long stretch.

When last season ended, Weaver said he went into "hibernation mode," sleeping for nearly two weeks to let his exhausted body recover.

He then went to work.

Weaver said most of his focus this offseason has been on his lower body strength, although he'd packed some muscle mass on his upper body as well while working at an old gym in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, before returning to Nashville to work at Ascension Saint Thomas Sports Park.

And when he watched film of himself this offseason, he took notes.

What he saw was a guy who wasn't always able to finish because of what he felt was a lack of lower body strength. Surgeries in recent years to repair a torn ACL and then the broken leg proved to be big hurdles.

"The biggest thing for me (to focus on) was strength, and that's where I put a lot of work in this offseason," Weaver said. "I'd never been a huge weight room guy, but coming off leg injuries in the past, those are things that knock your leg strength back.

"So now I can go out here and really bully guys and have play strength and play through contact and finish a lot of things that were really just right there last year, and really be better overall. ... These are grown men out there."

Weaver now feels like he's one of those grown men.

Heading into Year 3, he looks and feels more explosive.

He wants to see it play out on the field.

"I made it here for a reason," Weaver said. "So, it's up to me to do what I do with the opportunity."

###

**TITANS WR NICK
WESTBROOK-IKHINE
LOOKING TO PROVE
HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JULY 1, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Nick Westbrook-Ikhine arrived in the NFL in 2020 just looking to survive.

Signed as an undrafted free agent, Westbrook-Ikhine made the team that year.

Then he made it again in 2021.

And in 2022.

And then, 2023.

Would you believe he's now the longest tenured Titan on offense?

"I guess I'm the most senior," Westbrook-Ikhine said with a smile.

Now, Westbrook-Ikhine is looking to prove himself once again, to a new staff, and with plenty of changes around him.

"It's totally different," he said. "It's a completely different staff, system. It's cool, that I'm used to the people around the building, but it's all new. It's nice to get a fresh start in that way, but also a new opportunity moving forward."

A roster underdog in his first season in the NFL, Westbrook-Ikhine played primarily on special teams in 2020.

Since, he's earned roster spots, and playing time. In fact, he's turned into a regular contributor over the years at receiver, and on special teams.

While playing in 61 games, with 30 starts, over the last four seasons Westbrook-Ikhine has caught 94 passes for 1,276 yards and 10 touchdowns. He's scored at least three touchdowns in each of his last three seasons, and in 2023 he caught 28 passes for 370 yards and three scores. Westbrook-Ikhine caught 38

passes for 476 yards and four TDs in 2021, and 25 passes for 397 yards and three TDs in 2022.

This offseason, the Titans signed veteran receivers Calvin Ridley and Tyler Boyd, and they're expected to bolster a receiving corps that returns 12-year veteran DeAndre Hopkins.

Westbrook-Ikhine will do his part to carve out a role for himself once again, most likely vying with returning receiver Treylon Burks and others for additional snaps, and opportunities.

Westbrook-Ikhine is up for the challenge again, with challenges.

"Trying to delete the old terminology in my brain," he said. "I feel like that is always something tough when you go from one offense to another. There's a lot of similarities around the league, but trying to delete certain things that maybe I spoke a certain concept this way, but we all have to speak the same language moving forward.

"I feel like everyone is learning together, but I feel I do have a nice step up just being in a system that's similar for some years now. I know the concepts, so I know the details from prior offenses. So, I feel like I can help the young guys in those little details. I've always kind of picked up offenses pretty well, and I'm trying to pick it up as quickly as I can so I can be a guy (others) can go to when they have questions."

In many ways, Westbrook-Ikhine does feel like he needs make a name for himself again under new head coach Brian Callahan, and offensive coordinator Nick Holz.

But that's no different from when he first arrived, back in 2020.

"You definitely have to prove yourself," he said. "Complacency kills, so you can't be complacent. The fact that I've been here, going into year five, doesn't really mean anything. It's a totally new staff, and a totally new year, a new room.

"So, you always have to prove yourself in this league."

###

THIS RECEIVER TOOK A DIFFERENT ROUTE

**BY DAVID BOCLAIR
SI.COM
JANUARY 19, 2022**

NASHVILLE – Nick Westbrook-Ikhine readily admits it. He had a Plan B.

His first choice was to play football for a living, but he was not convinced it would happen. It did not help that he was not selected in the 2020 NFL Draft following a productive career at Indiana University.

“There was a time I was interviewing for jobs while finishing up my senior year at IU where [I thought] I just have to have that backup,” he said. “You never know what is going to happen. But I knew I was going to have an opportunity and just figured I would make the best of what I have. That’s really all I could ask for – to have this opportunity.”

To say that he has made the most of it would be an understatement.

There were 35 wide receivers selected in the 2020 NFL Draft, and the Titans did not take any of them. Instead, franchise officials covered their bases with four undrafted players at that spot (they did not sign more than two at any other position). Krisitian Wilkerson (Southeast Missouri State) has appeared in four games with the New England Patriots, and Mason Kinsey (Berry College) made his NFL debut with the Titans this season but has not seen the field since. Kyle Williams (Arizona State) has never played in a game.

Westbrook-Ikhine, on the other hand, has played 30 out of a possible 33 games and has progressed from a special teams performer to a role player on offense to his current role as a significant contributor in the passing game. He was the Titans’ second-leading receiver this season with 38 receptions for 476 yards and four touchdowns. In the three games A.J. Brown spent on injured reserve,

it was Westbrook-Ikhine who played more snaps than any of the team’s other wide receivers.

Only 19 of wide receivers drafted in 2020 have caught more passes through their first two seasons than Westbrook-Ikhine, who has 41 for 509 yards and four touchdowns. Just 14 have more touchdown passes.

“There’s definitely times I’m sitting at the house and I kind of realize the position I’m at and the blessing I have to be on this team (and) have a role – a solid role – on this team,” Westbrook-Ikhine said. “Yeah, I’m definitely proud of what I’ve been able to accomplish.”

That road from obscurity to importance makes Westbrook-Ikhine the exception Saturday when the Titans host the Cincinnati Bengals in a matchup that features a handful of sure-things – or as close to it as you can get.

Combined, the offenses include two wide receivers who were top 10 overall picks – Tennessee’s Julio Jones (sixth, 2011) and Cincinnati’s Ja’Marr Chase (fifth, 2021) – and three others who were second-round selections – Tennessee’s A.J. Brown (2019) and Cincinnati’s Tee Higgins (2020) and Tyler Boyd (2016).

All of them have lived up to expectations. Jones, Brown and Boyd have multiple 1,000-yard seasons to their credit, and Jones is one of the NFL’s all-time leading receivers. Higgins topped 1,000 receiving yards for the first time this year, and Chase set an NFL rookie record with 1,455 this season.

Westbrook-Ikhine won’t be mentioned in the same breath as any of them anytime soon, but – in the most literal sense – he absolutely is in their league.

“We have always had confidence in (Westbrook-Ikhine),” coach Mike Vrabel said. “I think he has developed. ... He blocks for us. He plays on special teams. He knows multiple positions. Those types of players are very valuable to a team.”

Even if they are not obvious choices from the outset.

Or, if they question whether they belong every now and then. Westbrook-Ikhine, for example, admits to occasional insecurity about his career choice.

“I feel like that’s just a natural human thing,” he said. “Doubt creeps in at times. I feel like it kind of shows its head when you play poorly because there’s doubt in your mind. I just have to kind of roll with those punches and realize what God put me on this earth to do – this gift and talent he gave me – and try to use it to the best of my ability.”

###

**TITANS TE JOSH WHYLE
WORKING TO
CONTRIBUTE MORE IN
YEAR 2**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
JUNE 7, 2024**

NASHVILLE – When Josh Whyle looks back at his rookie year, he's far from satisfied.

A year later, the Titans tight end has a new outlook.

"I was out for six games last year, and I wasn't too happy about that," Whyle said after a minicamp practice this week. "We didn't win a lot last year, so that's no bueno. But going into this year, having a full offseason, and coming into your second year, it's so much different than your rookie year.

"As a rookie, you are just trying to survive. Now, you are able to breathe. The game slows down a little bit. And I've felt that a lot so far this year. So, I am really excited to keep moving in that direction."

Drafted in the fifth round of the 2023 NFL Draft out of Cincinnati, Whyle ended up playing in 11 games for the Titans in his injury-shortened season in 2023, with three starts. He totaled nine receptions for 94 yards and a touchdown, along with a tackle on special teams.

Heading into 2024, there's optimism surrounding the 6-foot-7, 248-pound Whyle, from his coaches, and teammates.

"He's had a great offseason, I'll start with that," offensive coordinator Nick Holz said of Whyle, who set the school record at Cincinnati for career touchdowns (15) by a tight end. "(Josh) has really good ball skills for a big guy. So that kind of target, especially in the red zone and on third down and things like that. He's more of a matchup (problem) than he is probably given credit for. So, we'd love to get him in some of those 1 on 1 situations (because) he

has so much height and he has really good ball skills."

Titans quarterback Will Levis has seen a different Whyle in Year 2.

Levis and Whyle are good buddies, on the team, and away from the facility.

The two regularly golf together, and hang out.

"I love Josh," Levis said of Whyle. "He's a juice guy that we have on this team, and it's been cool to see him come out of his shell, and to be a fun presence in this locker room. He works his tail off, he is prepared every day. He puts a lot on himself; I feel like that is why we're pretty similar. Ever since we came in here as rookies, we have kind of been hip to hip, being able to keep ourselves accountable. He's made huge strides – you can tell just from the moment he got here for workouts, he really worked on himself and his body and how he's going to approach this year. It has paid off for him a lot, and I'm looking forward to continuing to see him develop."

Whyle said he's done his best to prepare himself for Year 2.

Physically, he feels leaner, and stronger, even though he said he's roughly the same weight.

"But it's better weight," Whyle said. "I feel good."

In the coming weeks and months, he'll gear up for a second NFL season he's excited about.

The team is different, from coaches to players. At the tight end position, Whyle returns alongside Chig Okonkwo, while veteran Nick Vannett joined the team over the offseason.

"Right now, it's so early," Whyle said. "I just want to contribute to the team any way I can, any way they ask me to. So that is what we're working to do right now.

"But it's all been really exciting, (the changes). It's been really cool, to

meet all the new guys, and just as an offense in general, being so dynamic. We have a lot of playmakers on this team, and I think right now it is time to figure out what everyone can do and put them in the best spots for their skill set."

###

**JAMES WILLIAMS
WATCHED EVERY NFL
DRAFT PICK BEFORE
TEARS STARTED WHEN
TENNESSEE TITANS
CALLED AT NO. 242**

**BY GEORGE ROBINSON
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN
APRIL 27, 2024**

James Williams never turned away from the television.

Miami's 6-foot-4, 228-pound football star sat through three days of the 2024 NFL Draft waiting with friends and family who didn't say much as names flew off draft boards and landed with the league's 32 teams. And Williams waited patiently.

When the Tennessee Titans called toward the end of the draft, Williams was so emotional, he broke down, realizing his dream wouldn't have to be delayed as the Titans made him the 22nd pick of the seventh round (242nd overall) on Saturday.

"It was very emotional for me," Williams said. "Waiting to see my name called, to be the first one of my family to hear my name called. It was a blessing and I thank God for that, most importantly. It was a amazing phone call and it broke me down."

A hard hitter from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Williams started 12 games last fall as a safety with the Hurricanes and had a career-high 73 tackles. He had four interceptions and 13 pass break-ups in his career. But he'll make the switch to linebacker with the Titans.

"It's a great adjustment, I just have to do some learning but I'm ready for it and embrace it," Williams said.

Despite being chosen 15 spots from the final selection of the draft, Williams wasn't fazed. He talked about his eagerness to arrive in Nashville, a city he's never been to and knows very little about but is also anxious to start the process of transitioning to linebacker.

"It's a whole new position for me," he said. "I've got to learn a whole new thing from square one so I'm embracing it, I'm open, I'm willing to do it. I'm dying to do it. I can't wait to get up there."

Williams had more than 30 offers that included Tennessee, Alabama, LSU, Georgia, Michigan, Vanderbilt and Ohio State. He was a five-star prospect by 247Sports, ranked as the No. 1 safety and No. 13 overall prospect in the 2021 class.

The Hurricanes put him at safety but quickly found out he could shift down into the box as an extra linebacker. The Titans' made Williams the fourth of five defensive players chosen in this draft, including Texas defensive tackle T'Vondre Sweat (second round), North Carolina's Cedric Gray (fourth), Louisville's Jarvis Brownlee (fifth) and Michigan's Jaylen Harrell (seventh).

Williams said Gray was one of the Titans' best picks and Williams is already familiar with Brownlee, a Miami native.

"He's somebody I always competed with and helped me be the best version of James, so I appreciate him for that," Williams said about Brownlee. "And getting to be on the same team (with him) is amazing."

"Tennessee is on to something," Williams added. "They really want something, and they got something. For sure."

###

**TO UNDERSTAND
TENNESSEE TITANS'
MALIK WILLIS, START
WITH HUGH FREEZE'S
'OH MY GOSH' MOMENT**

**BY BEN ARTHUR
THE TENNESSEAN
MAY 22, 2022**

Hugh Freeze wanted to pull his hair out.

The Liberty Flames football coach watched his team go through a red-zone drill during practice. That's when his star quarterback, Malik Willis, threw an interception. A defensive lineman tipped the pass and a defensive back scooped it up.

Freeze, fuming, saw Willis go over to the defense and congratulate the two players responsible for the turnover. He told them how great of a job they just did.

Then Willis came over to his frustrated coach. And like the countless other times Freeze has been angry, his quarterback just placed his arm around him:

We'll make the next one, coach. Well make the next one.

"While it may drive me crazy, it made everybody in that locker room want to follow him and want to be around him," Freeze said. "He has this attractive humility about him to where it was never really about him. It doesn't mean he's not competitive. ... He's just got that rare quality in today's time where he's not seeking others' approval."

Willis' former coaches and trainers who spoke to The Tennessean described the Tennessee Titans third-round rookie as joyful with a magnetic aura.

It offered a glimpse into the personality of the man the Titans drafted as their potential quarterback of the future. Willis will sit behind veteran incumbent Ryan Tannehill for at least a season.

'He sets the temperature for the room'

John Ford recalled the mornings during the 2016 high school football season.

The coach at Roswell High School in Georgia at the time, Ford and his staff would hold meetings, watch film and plan practice at the field house. And every day, no matter what, Willis stuck his head through the door, smiling and grinning ear-to-ear:

Hey, coaches. How are you doing?

"He had such a great demeanor at all times," said Ford. "Always smiling. Always connecting with others. Making others around him feel better.

"He's not a thermometer. He's a thermostat," added Ford. "He sets the temperature for the room and always does it with tremendous joy. ... If you have a bad day around Malik Willis, there's something wrong with you."

In college, Willis went on quarterback retreats during spring break. The group – which featured future first-round draft picks Dwayne Haskins, Justin Fields and Trey Lance – would spend a week in Los Angeles or Miami to train daily.

"Even amongst a group of peer, elite quarterbacks, he was always the one people gravitated to," said Sean McEvoy, a private quarterback coach who has worked with Willis since he was a junior in high school.

Willis is "mild-mannered" until you get him talking about something he's passionate about, McEvoy explained. Football, golf, music and video games are some of those passions.

On those topics, he'll go from just hanging out to leading the conversation.

"Very much likes to think through things," McEvoy said. "He likes to process. I think he's very thoughtful in opinions he expresses. Like he

wants to feel he's wrapped his head around (a concept) before he'll give an opinion on a topic.

"I think it's very similar to the way he processes things on the football field."

Developing as a quarterback

When Willis arrived at Liberty in 2019, the NFL was the furthest thing from Freeze's mind when assessing his new quarterback.

The Flames knew he could run. They felt confident they could win games with him. But he attempted just 14 passes in two years before transferring from Auburn. His limited snaps focused on his running skills. The biggest unknown was whether Willis could be a functional passer.

He was on the scout team his first year at Liberty, ineligible to play as a transfer. By spring 2020, Willis was an "average" practice player still learning the offense and honing his mechanics, according to Freeze.

Then came the following season.

"We get to the fall and turn the lights on and five games in you're thinking, 'Oh my gosh,'" Freeze said. "'He's got something to him.'"

Freeze, a college coach for 13 years, including five seasons at Ole Miss in which he beat Alabama twice, said Willis can make "every throw" and has the best arm strength of any player he's ever coached. Coupled with his running ability, he said Willis has a skillset similar to Lamar Jackson and Josh Allen, though he prefaced with, "I'm certainly not saying he's ready to be in a sentence with those guys."

In two seasons at Liberty, Willis completed 62.4% of his passes for 5,117 yards, 47 touchdowns with 18 interceptions. He also had 338 carries for 1,822 yards and 27 TDs for the Flames.

"His arm is dynamic," said Quincy Avery, a top quarterback trainer who works with Willis. "He has an

ability to extend plays and do so much with his legs that, as a young quarterback trying to figure things out, he's going to have the ability to do some things that are going to allow him to be successful, even if he doesn't understand every single defense you're throwing at him."

There's the potential that made Willis a potential first-round pick – and there's the concerns that caused him to fall to the Titans in the third round.

He took a lot of sacks at Liberty, finishing No. 1 in the FBS with 51 in 2021. The 18 interceptions came in 23 starts for the Flames.

Freeze said the sacks weren't Willis' fault, proclaiming his team "just didn't protect well" and if not for Willis, the sack numbers would've been "double."

As for the interceptions, Freeze said there were some "bad ones." But there were too many good reads and throws to be overly concerned, Freeze explained.

"You can take a cut-up of his two years (at Liberty) and you can pull those and certainly make your case to be negative with him," said Freeze, "but I guarantee you I can pull 10 times that many where you say, 'Oh, wow. What a throw.'"

Freeze described Willis' growth as a passer at Liberty "transformational." But his journey started at home in the Atlanta area, where he's worked with McEvoy since transferring from Westlake High School – where Cam Newton attended – to Roswell ahead of his senior year. Avery entered the picture early in his college career.

In high school, building consistency in Willis' throwing mechanics took priority. It was tightening up his upper-body arm motion. Tweaking his arm path to make it more efficient and free flowing. Making sure his full cleats were in the ground so he had a good base to generate consistent power.

In the pre-draft process, McEvoy and Avery built on the things he wasn't asked to do at Liberty. They dove into NFL concepts, studying coverages he'd face at the next level.

Avery said the knock on Willis for playing in Freeze's run-pass-option scheme is "overblown."

"There aren't a lot of guys in college who do necessarily the same things that they're going to be doing in the NFL," said Avery. "It's just, 'How quickly are they going to pick up the playbook?' And I think he is really smart and will be fine."

But Freeze said he'll need to speed up his reads, as he'll face faster and more athletic defenders at the NFL level. McEvoy wants to see his consistency as a pocket passer improve; knowing when to use his athleticism versus when to just check the ball down and take the yards he can get.

After operating primarily out of the shotgun at Liberty, Willis will play more under center for the Titans. He had exchange issues on the first day of rookie minicamp earlier this month, though it was clean the following day.

"I just expect myself to come to work every day as long as God wakes me up," Willis said at rookie minicamp. "Just come out here and enjoy myself and try to be the best player I can be. Fight through the mistakes, fight through the successes."

"Either way it goes, you got to stay calm, cool and collected."

'It's a game at the end of the day'

Willis backed up Jarrett Stidham for two seasons at Auburn. Then he was the odd-man out in the competition

to replace him in spring 2019, leading him to the transfer portal.

A three-star recruit in the 2017 class, Willis was listed as an "athlete" by major recruiting sites. Virginia Tech, where he initially committed, wouldn't give him a chance to play quarterback, according to Ford. People constantly told him to try receiver and defensive back. He wasn't a quarterback full-time until his senior year of high school.

But Willis always knew he was a quarterback.

"You got somebody who plays receiver or plays safety or plays something (else) that you could put at quarterback and win. But I was the opposite," explained Willis. "I was a quarterback that could play (other positions). ... So it wasn't really a conviction. It's an identity. It's what I am."

What he is, too, is a "kid at heart," Freeze said.

Like how he maneuvered the question about his relationship with Tannehill, who had made headlines saying it's not his job to mentor Willis.

When first asked about Tannehill's comments, Willis said "what comment?" before laughing and saying "everything's cool," diffusing what had become a hot-button narrative in the NFL.

"It's a game at the end of the day," said Willis. "I mean, it's a very important game to a lot of people, but it's a game at the end of the day. You go through way worse stuff in life. You have to understand that and be resilient as a person outside of football. I feel like when it comes to football, you just have to be strong minded and understand it's not your identity."

"I feel like you're supposed to use this platform for something," he continued. "I use it for God."

**NEW TITANS DC
DENNARD WILSON AIMS
TO COACH WITH
"ENTHUSIASM UNKNOWN
TO MANKIND"**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
APRIL 11, 2024**

NASHVILLE – Since Dennard Wilson was hired as defensive coordinator of the Titans, the team has made some key additions to bolster the defense.

Former Bengals cornerback Chidobe Awuzie was acquired in free agency, and then the team traded for former Chiefs cornerback L'Jarius Sneed.

Linebacker Kenneth Murray Jr. (Chargers) and defensive lineman Sebastian Joseph-Day (49ers) are intriguing new pieces, and the coaching staff will work to get the most out of them following the departure of starters Azeez Al-Shaair and Denico Autry.

At the same time, teams across the division have gotten better. The Texans, the defending AFC South champs, for instance, recently acquired former All-Pro wide receiver Stefon Diggs. He'll join what was already a formidable offensive unit.

Wilson, hired by head coach Brian Callahan back in February, said he's focused on the Titans.

"Really, I don't focus on what other teams have," Wilson said. "To me, they're nameless faces. We are going to play a certain style. We are going to play with confidence. So, it doesn't matter who they have on (the other) team. It's 11 versus 11, and in terms of the defense, it's 11 versus 1 – it's 11 versus the ball.

"So, you can get a whole lot of receivers, a whole lot of weapons. But there's only one ball. And it's our job to surround the football and take it away."

Wilson, who has 12 years of NFL coaching experience, arrived in Tennessee with an impressive resume.

He spent one season (2023) in Baltimore as Defensive Backs coach, and prior to joining the Ravens, Wilson spent two seasons with the Eagles, first as Defensive Backs coach (2021) and then as Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/DB's (2022). Before that, Wilson spent four seasons (2017-20) with the Jets as Defensive Backs coach (2017-18) and Passing Game Coordinator/DBs (2019-20).

Wilson entered the NFL as a coach in 2012 with the St. Louis Rams as a Defensive Quality Control coach. In 2015 he was elevated to Defensive Backs coach. Prior to joining the NFL coaching ranks, he spent four years (2008-11) as a pro scout for the Bears.

On Wednesday, during the first week of the team's offseason program, Wilson smiled big when discussing some of the team's new players, and the returning ones.

He knows the defense is a work in progress, on paper, and ultimately, on the field. New players will be added via the draft, and free agency.

Earlier this week, the first slide he showed his new players on power point read: Opportunity is now here.

Wilson said he plans to "coach the hell out of is players."

He's loves the early interaction as the process begins.

"It's been outstanding. It's been great," Wilson said. "The first couple of things, this week, it's about a building block, it's about creating a foundation, it's about establishing culture. It's about setting a precedent about where we are going, what we need to get there, and how we are going to get there. And have been extremely receptive. As a coaching staff, myself included, we come out here and try to have enthusiasm unknown to mankind, to get these guys to come

back and want to be coached, and want to be around us. So it has been very receptive. Guys are buying in, guys are learning every day, and we're just stacking bricks and stacking bricks until we build a wall that is strong."

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**TITANS DC DENNARD
WILSON TO TAKE PART
IN THE NFL'S COACH
ACCELERATOR
PROGRAM AT THE
LEAGUE MEETINGS NEXT
WEEK IN NASHVILLE**

**BY JIM WYATT
TENNESSEETITANS.COM
MAY 16, 2024**

NASHVILLE – First-year Titans defensive coordinator Dennard Wilson will be among the coaches taking part in the 2024 Coach Accelerator Program at the NFL meetings next week in Music City.

The Springs Meetings are scheduled for May 20-22 in Nashville.

The Accelerator program is part of the league's efforts to strengthen the pipeline of diverse coaching candidates. It serves as a platform for clubs and owners to engage with qualified coaching candidates from diverse backgrounds.

Candidates can build relationships with club owners and executives and further develop and hone their leadership skills. To date, the program has successfully contributed to an increase in diverse candidates being interviewed for open positions, and many past participants have been promoted and hired into more senior coaching positions.

While with the San Francisco 49ers, Ran Carthon took part in the NFL's Front Office Accelerator Program prior to be hired as General Manager by the Titans.

"Developing diverse coaching talent through the Accelerator program is a key priority," said NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. "In its fifth iteration, this program continues to be an effective avenue for club owners and executives to be exposed to the skillset and unique backgrounds of highly qualified coaching candidates, and for the program's participants to network with one another and engage in professional development sessions."

Wilson, who joined the Titans earlier this this offseason, has 12 years of NFL coaching experience, including nine seasons coaching defensive backs.

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Wilson spent one season (2023) with the Baltimore Ravens as Defensive Backs coach. Prior to joining the Ravens, Wilson spent two seasons with the Philadelphia Eagles, first as Defensive Backs coach (2021) and then as Defensive Passing Game Coordinator/DB's (2022).

Wilson spent four seasons (2017-20) with the New York Jets as Defensive Backs coach (2017-18) and Passing Game Coordinator/DB's (2019-20). Wilson entered the NFL as a coach in 2012 with the St. Louis Rams as a Defensive Quality Control coach. In 2015 he was elevated to Defensive Backs coach. Prior to joining the NFL coaching ranks, he spent four years (2008-11) as a pro scout for the Chicago Bears. He originally entered coaching as a Defensive Backs coach for his high school alma mater, DeMatha Catholic (MD) from 2004-06. He also spent two seasons (2007-09) at the University of Maryland as a graduate assistant.

In addition to networking and personal development programming, the league will provide coaches with insight to future initiatives, both on and off the field, to contextualize how the game will continue to develop and where the NFL is evolving.

"Since its inception, the Coaching Accelerator has prepared candidates to succeed in various coaching roles while cultivating relationships with executives and key decision makers," said Mark Wilf, Minnesota Vikings owner and president. "The program proves to be mutually beneficial for participants and clubs as it breaks down barriers to access and educational tools vital for success. I am proud of the progress already made and look forward to seeing the continuous growth of the Accelerator."