

SIMMONS SAYS

JEFFERY
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NFL's weakest division

I'm ready to make a bold prediction. Every team in the AFC South is bad.

It only took about seven hours (mostly due to storms in Miami) on the first NFL football Sunday for me to realize that the AFC South will likely be a pillow fight for a lone playoff spot.

The Tennessee Titans, a squad many around here hold near and dear to their hearts, played the longest game in NFL history Sunday. That meant optimistic fans had to endure extra misery watching the team's best players drop left and right.

Marcus Mariota was uninspiring in what was supposed to be a new-look offense, and that was before he took a hit to the hand that knocked him out of action for the second half. Time seems to be ticking on Mariota, who fans thought was going to take the franchise back to the heights reached in the Steve McNair era. To this point, it's hard to figure out if Mariota is that much of an upgrade over the much-maligned Vince Young.

For reference, Mariota – in his fourth year – is now 20-23 as a starter. After 43 starts, Young was 28-15. Mariota has the edge in playoff wins (one to zero), though Young appeared in two Pro Bowls in his first four years.

To make matters worse for the Titans, Pro Bowl TE Delanie Walker was lost for the season. Walker suffered a gruesome ankle injury, one that was almost immediately judged as season-ending.

As bad as the Titans were, the rest of the division wasn't much better.

The lone winner was my favorite team, the Jacksonville Jaguars. The Jags followed up making the AFC championship game last year by surviving against the Giants, winning 20-15.

In a shock to almost nobody, Blake Bortles wasn't great. Jacksonville's offense went into a shell after Leonard Fournette was hurt and it took a defensive TD to hold on against New York – a 3-13 team last year.

Even if the Jags somehow pull off an upset this week against the Patriots, don't buy the hype. The Jaguars seem to love to beat themselves, evidenced by Bortles keeping his job and Sunday's 11 penalties.

The Colts and Texans were each hopeful that their seasons would go well with the return of injured quarterbacks. Even with Andrew Luck and Deshaun Watson, respectively, back in action, both teams lost in Week 1.

One of these teams will make the postseason . . . only because they have to.



Brianna Winkler locks in on a return shot during Monday's home match. WCMS swept both sets against Franklin South to improve to 7-2.

Jeffery Simmons photos

Domination WCMS sweeps South

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Getting back home seemed to heal the Lady Pioneers.

After a crushing loss to CTC rival White County on the road last week, the Warren County Middle School volleyball team took its frustration out on Franklin North Monday. The Lady Pioneers dominated at home, winning 25-9 and 25-15.

"We had a strong service game. Our serves were more consistent," said coach Kelly Clayborne. "The girls were moving and calling the ball better. After our loss last week, we have been trying to improve our communication on defense."

"I thought the girls looked more comfortable on the court."

Warren County (7-2) got rolling in the first game when Brianna Winkler got to the service line. Winkler sprayed hard serves through the Franklin North defense, powering the Lady Pioneers to a 14-5 lead.

Warren County also benefited from a scrambling defense to save points, with Krista



Jessie Young skies for a spike during Monday's win.

Chisam and Caitlyn Adams showing their speed to keep the ball in play. When it got to the net, Jessie Young and Mia Hobbs took care of business to quickly finish the first game.

Continued on 2B

Lady Pioneers thrive in heat

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Depth was the MVP for the Lady Pioneers Saturday in the Ladies Championship.

Coach Todd Willmore dug deep on his bench to survive two games on a hot day, allowing the Warren County High School soccer team to find the energy to tie Pope John Paul II 3-3 and beat Cheatham County 7-2.

"It was extremely hot, especially in the second match," said Willmore. "Even though the girls struggled with the heat a bit, they did an excellent job preserving to the end. We were subbing every 5-10 minutes in the second game."

The Lady Pioneers found

themselves having to dig deep to forge a tie against the Lady Knights. Warren County fell behind 3-1 in the second half, but were able to scrap for two goals to tie. Katie Toney, who scored twice in the contest, and MaKenna Mason each had second-half goals, though Willmore thought his team just missed a huge come-from-behind win.

"We had them struggling in the last five minutes and had several opportunities to take the lead. To their credit, they held us off," said Willmore. "It would have been interesting to see if we had a couple more minutes. I feel like they were a bit tired and our girls were energized."

Continued on 2B



Photo courtesy of Painted Barn Media

MaKenna Mason, pictured in a previous game, scored in each of Warren County's matches Saturday in the Ladies Championship. The Lady Pioneers beat Cheatham County 7-2 and tied Pope John Paul II 3-3 in Nashville.

SUCCESSFUL DEBUT



Photo courtesy of UT athletics

Krojhn Calbert celebrated with his teammates after getting his first action as a Vol Saturday in a 59-3 win over ETSU. Calbert is listed as a backup guard on the depth chart for this week's game against UTEP.

Krech advances to region tourney

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
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(McMinnville, Tennessee)

Conditions weren't favorable for low scoring, but Colton Krech was able to weather it and punch his ticket to the region golf tournament.

Krech fired 77 at the District 6-AAA tournament played at Cookeville Eagle Golf Club, putting him among the five individual qualifiers who will move on to next week's region tournament in Cleveland. Teammate Levi Craven narrowly missed out on advancing as well, falling short on a third playoff hole after shooting 79 through 18 holes.

"I'm proud of the guys. They've played well. It's not been easy staying motivated because we can't compete as a team, but they really showed up this week," said coach J.W. Holt.

Peyton Haston was the third Pioneer to play and finished his season with a round of 89.

The rest of the district teams were able to qualify either as a team or individuals. Teams have to feature at least four golfers on the boys side, while girls teams feature two scores. Warren County only had three boys play this season, but Krech could keep the program's run of state qualifiers intact.

Continued on 3B



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