

Time for Titans to show off new offense

NASHVILLE (AP)—The Tennessee Titans go into the regular season very successful at keeping their new offense with coordinator Matt LaFleur under wraps.

The first-team offense scored only two touchdowns in seven series during the preseason, and only Atlanta (27) scored fewer points than Tennessee (40) through four games.

The result: the first winless pre-season since 1997 when the franchise debuted in Tennessee at 0-4. That team went 8-8 in the regular season playing home games 200 miles away in the Liberty Bowl in Memphis.

First-year coach Mike Vrabel made clear Friday that the Titans stayed very basic on both offense and defense to see how players responded. He also cautioned against expecting the Titans to experience growing pains simply because they have a new offense.

"I don't think that," Vrabel said Friday. "No one here should concede that. We're professional football players, professional coaches. We're expected to put a product out there that's successful and geared toward winning and production. So I wouldn't start making excuses about the new offense or injuries or anything like that."

Now the Titans can start putting together their first offensive game plan for the season opener Sept. 9 in Miami, and LaFleur should have at least two key starters back.

Three-time Pro Bowl tight end Delanie Walker did not play a snap as he sat out the opener in Green Bay before getting hurt in a joint practice with Tampa Bay but expects to be ready for the opener. Starting wide receiver Rishard Matthews was on the physically unable to perform list with an undisclosed injury before being activated Aug. 26. He watched the preseason finale, a 13-3 loss to Minnesota, with 38 other Titans from the sideline.

Walker and Matthews have been quarterback Marcus Mariota's top receiving targets over the past two seasons. Walker wasn't happy that the Titans went winless in the pre-season.

"But it is the preseason. It's almost like a scrimmage," Walker said after the loss to Minnesota. "The outcome doesn't matter at the end of the day, but you still want to get the job done, and that's getting the W."

Right tackle Jack Conklin spent the entire offseason and preseason



James Clark photos

All eyes will be on Marcus Mariota this season. Mariota is entering his fourth year as the starting quarterback for the Titans. The former No. 2 pick is 20-22 in his 42 starts and led the Titans to a playoff victory last year.

recovering from surgery to repair a torn left ACL hurt Jan. 13 in a divisional loss to New England.

Vrabel gave no indication of whether the Titans will keep Conklin on the physically unable to perform list to start the season, a move that would keep the right tackle out the first six games. The coach said only that no roster decisions had been made when he spoke to reporters at midday Friday with the NFL deadline to cut the roster to 53 looming Saturday afternoon.

"I would say Jack is progressing and doing well," Vrabel said.

Mariota completed 61.1 percent of his passes this preseason and threw the two TDs scored by the first-team unit. He was intercepted once while being sacked three times. However the Titans attack the Dolphins, Vrabel made it clear he wants consistency. The coach was not happy with the first-team offense going three-and-out three straight drives in the third preseason game, a 16-6 loss in Pittsburgh.


Actually the Titans went three-and-out on three of four drives, the fourth with the second-teamers in the game. The third drive ended when Mariota was intercepted on third down.

"You can't have three clunkers in a row where now they're getting opportunities and they're changing field position ... really forcing your defense into playing really perfect," Vrabel said.



Derrick Henry should be a big part of the Titan offense this season, which will be under the leadership of first-year coordinator Matt LaFleur. Tennessee scored just two touchdowns in preseason action.

SCHEDULE	
WEEK 1	at Miami Dolphins Sunday, Sept. 9, noon
WEEK 2	vs. Houston Texans Sunday, Sept. 16, noon
WEEK 3	at Jacksonville Jaguars Sunday, Sept. 23, noon
WEEK 4	vs. Philadelphia Eagles Sunday, Sept. 30, noon
WEEK 5	at Buffalo Bills Sunday, Oct. 7, noon
WEEK 6	vs. Baltimore Ravens Sunday, Oct. 14, 3:25 p.m.
WEEK 7	at Los Angeles Chargers Sunday, Oct. 21, 8:30 a.m.*
WEEK 8 BYE	
WEEK 9	at Dallas Cowboys Monday, Nov. 5, 7:15 p.m.
WEEK 10	vs. New England Patriots Sunday, Nov. 11, noon
WEEK 11	at Indianapolis Colts Sunday, Nov. 18, noon
WEEK 12	at Houston Texans Monday, Nov. 26, 7:15 p.m.
WEEK 13	vs. New York Jets Sunday, Dec. 2, 3:05 p.m.
WEEK 14	vs. Jacksonville Jaguars Thursday, Dec. 6, 7:20 p.m.
WEEK 15	at New York Giants Sunday, Dec. 16, noon
WEEK 16	vs. Washington Redskins Sunday, Dec. 23, noon
WEEK 17	vs. Indianapolis Colts Sunday, Dec. 30, noon



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