

Titans coach not ruling out Murray vs. Jaguars

The Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee fans wanting to see Derrick Henry start at running back instead of DeMarco Murray will get their chance to see what that looks like in the Titans' most important game of the season.

Coach Mike Mularkey isn't ruling Murray out of the Titans' regular-season finale against Jacksonville on Sunday. Mularkey said Tuesday that the veteran will be limited at best if an injured knee allows him to play at all.

The Titans (8-7) need a win Sunday, or losses by both Buffalo and the Chargers, to end a playoff drought stretching back to 2008 for this franchise if they can snap a three-game skid.

"These guys realize what's on the line right now," Mularkey said. "Nobody has to tell anybody that this is our last chance. We've had a number of opportunities we've missed; we still have another one.



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Titans quarterback Marcus Mariota (8) hands off to running back DeMarco Murray (29) during the second half of a game against the 49ers on Dec. 17 in Santa Clara, Calif.

"There's a reason we have another one, because we've won enough games to be in this position. They realize what they have to do without putting any more pressure on themselves."

The Titans still have a chance at the No. 5 seed in

the AFC playoffs, though advancing likely means the No. 6 seed and a rematch with the AFC South champion Jaguars in the wild-card round. Mularkey said the Titans will plan on Jacksonville (10-5) trying to win and not rest anyone for the postseason.

"Coming off a loss, I'm sure they don't want to go into the playoffs with another one," Mularkey said. "I would expect we're going to get the best from them knowing (Jaguars coach) Doug Marrone and Tom (Coughlin). I wouldn't think anything less than

that."

For now, Mularkey and the Titans are busy preparing a game plan knowing that an MRI confirmed what trainers expected after Murray hurt his right knee late in a 25-23 loss to the Los Angeles Rams.

Mularkey says he considers Murray day to day, basing his decision on how Murray has handled other injuries and quickly responded to treatment.

Mularkey says whether Murray plays will depend on pain. Murray led the AFC with 1,287 yards rushing with 16 starts last season despite tearing the plantar plate in his right foot during the season.

That leaves Henry, the 2015 Heisman Trophy winner, poised for the fourth start of his career. Henry leads the Titans in rushing with 693 yards on 148 carries.

Mularkey has said he considers both Murray and Henry as starters for Tennessee, but the running backs have opened a game together in the same

backfield only in a loss at Arizona this season.

Henry is averaging 4.7 yards per carry, better than the 3.6 yards Murray is averaging on his 184 carries for 659 yards. But Murray has been much more valuable in the passing game, both in protection for Marcus Mariota and as a target.

Murray ranks fourth on the Titans with 39 catches and has 266 yards receiving with a touchdown. Henry has only 10 catches for 70 yards all season.

Mularkey said Henry has gotten better in pass protection.

"Obviously all the experience and the time — what a difference a year makes for him," Mularkey said.

"He's much better than he was his rookie year. It's pretty overwhelming when you get into the protection schemes, especially when a defense goes substituted defense with nickels and dimes. It gets complicated, but he's definitely improved from his first year to this one."

NFL Roundup

Fox: 'Not worrying about future coaching'

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Chicago Bears coach John Fox insists he is not worrying about his future.

With a 14-33 record in three years, Fox might be coaching his final game for the Bears when they finish

the season at NFC North champion Minnesota on Sunday.

Fox says he has "never had trouble getting employment in this league" and is "not going to start worrying about it now."

He would not say Tuesday if he has had any discussions with management, adding "those things are for the offseason."

The Bears beat winless Cleveland on Sunday after dropping six of seven games.

Arians denies he's leaving Cardinals: Arizona Cardinals coach Bruce Arians says a report that he and the franchise have agreed to part ways after this season is untrue, labeling it "fake news."

An article in *Pro Football Weekly* cited "multiple sources" as saying the split would come next week at the end of Arians' fifth season as the team's head coach.

But Arians said on Tuesday that no decision on future seasons has been made. The 65-year-old coach said he'd never met the article's author or knows where any supposed meetings on the subject took place.

Arians can become the winningest coach in Cardinals history with his 50th victory at Seattle in the season finale on Sunday.

Arians is 49-32-1 in five seasons with the Cardinals, including the postseason. They are 7-8 this season.

Ex-Steelers star Harrison signs with Patriots: Former Pittsburgh Steelers star James Harrison has signed with the New England Patriots.

The Patriots announced the move Tuesday, three days after Harrison's unceremonious departure from Pittsburgh.

The 39-year-old linebacker posted a photo of himself with 40-year-old quarterback Tom Brady in New England's locker room on his Instagram account, writing that he finally has a teammate "that's older than me!"

Harrison visited the Patriots after clearing waivers and becoming a free agent after his release by Pittsburgh.

To make room on their roster, the Patriots released linebacker Trevor Reilly.

From wire reports

Surging Ravens look for one more win to end playoff drought

The Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — Playing their best football at just the right time, the Baltimore Ravens need only to beat Cincinnati at home on Sunday to reach the playoffs for the first time in three years.

Baltimore has won five of six, the lone flaw in that stretch a 39-38 defeat against AFC North champion Pittsburgh on the road.

So, the Ravens (9-6) will enter the finale against the Bengals (6-9) riding a wave of momentum that started with a 23-0 rout in Green Bay on Nov. 19 and extended through last Saturday's 23-16 win over Indianapolis.

"It's very important and I'm very happy with it," coach John Harbaugh said Tuesday. "That's the idea."

The NFL moved the Bengals-Ravens game and several others from noon to 3:25 p.m. to lessen the possibility of matchups becoming meaningless as the day wears on. Though Harbaugh understands the reasoning, that doesn't mean he likes it.

"I don't think the NFL did us any favors by moving it back, but they don't care about us," the coach said, referring to the notion that ticket-holders who had New Year's Eve plans now must choose between football and dinner reservations.

"That's kind of tough for the fans. I'm sure they have New Year Eve's plans," Harbaugh said. "I

hope our fans are OK with it. I hope they're into it; I hope people get there. The people that have plans, I hope they give their tickets to somebody else so they get there. I want the place to be packed and loud."

Despite their recent surge, the Ravens have been performing before thousands of empty seats at each home game.

In a letter to season-ticket holders, team president Dick Cass acknowledged that the decision by some players to take a knee during the national anthem before a Sept. 24 game in London was a factor.

"We have had significant numbers of no-shows in the past when our play on the field has not met the high standard we and you have set for the Ravens," Cass wrote.

"But this year has been different. The numbers are higher, and it is noticeable. There are a number of reasons for the no-shows, but surely the one-time protest in London has been a factor."

Those who show up this Sunday afternoon will be watching a game the Ravens must win to clinch a No. 5 seed in the playoffs and a first-round matchup in Kansas City.

"I think that we are really coming into our own," safety Eric Weddle said. "We're playing the style and game that we envisioned at the beginning of the season. We are a team with momentum, and we just have to get one more."

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