

# Willis named QB 2 for Titans, will back up Tannehill

By **TERESA M. WALKER**  
AP Pro Football Writer

**NASHVILLE** — Rookie quarterback Malik Willis' quick learning curve made veteran Logan Woodside dispensable for Tennessee.

The Titans cut Woodside along with 27 other players waived or released Tuesday at the NFL deadline to trim the roster to 53. They also waived injured tight end Tommy Hudson before turning attention to their season opener Sept. 11 hosting the New York Giants.

Woodside was a seventh-round pick out of Toledo by Cincinnati in 2018. He joined the Titans' practice squad later that year and spent 2019 on the Titans' practice squad while injured. Then Woodside backed up veteran Ryan Tannehill the past two years.

His experience and knowledge of the Titans' offense couldn't beat out Willis' stronger arm and legs especially as the rookie showed weekly improvement since the start of the team's rookie minicamp in mid-May.

"He can beat you throwing in pocket, he can beat you outside the pocket throwing, he can extend plays and then he can also beat you by turning up and running," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said of Willis after their preseason finale last weekend. "So there's a lot of guys that we're going to defend like that. And it's difficult."

Tennessee traded up in the third round to make the 6-foot-1 Willis the third quarterback taken in this year's NFL draft at No. 86 overall. That was the highest draft pick Tennessee had used on a quarterback since taking Marcus Mariota at No. 2 overall in 2015.

The rookie started all three preseason games for the Titans and got rid of the ball more

quickly each game.

Willis played all but one series in Tennessee's preseason finale, a 26-23 win over Arizona thanks to a rally led by Woodside. But Willis had a 50-yard scramble after first looking downfield for an open receiver, a run that wound up being the longest in the AFC this preseason.

The rookie also led the AFC with 159 yards rushing. Vrabel said Sunday that Willis showed the ability to step up in the pocket and keep looking downfield at times.

"He also was able to have some explosive gains running, which is exactly what we talked about," Vrabel said. "The operation was better, but then there were some things that we have to improve."

The Titans also made it official, releasing their longest-tenured player in three-time Pro Bowl punter Brett Kern, a move they announced was coming Monday.

## NOTES

The Titans also sent a 2024 fifth-round pick to Carolina for OL Dennis Daley and a seventh-round pick in 2024. ... Also released: linebackers David Anenih, Jack Gibbens and Joe Jones; RB Trenton Cannon; offensive linemen Christian DiLauro, Hayden Howerton, Jalen McKenzie, Xavier Newman-Johnson, Jordan Roos, Andrew Rupcich and Willie Wright; receivers Dez Fitzpatrick, Cody Hollister, Mason Kinsey and Reggie Roberson; safeties Adrian Colbert and Tyree Gillespie; tight ends Thomas Odukoya and David Wells; defensive linemen Larrell Murchison, Sam Okuayinonu and Jordan Peevy; and DBs Chris Jackson, Theo Jackson, Greg Mabin and Tre Swilling.

# Middle Rockets steamroll the Vikings

By **Kacy Kincaid**  
Sports Writer

**CHAPEL HILL** — It was all Forrest Rockets on Thursday night in Chapel Hill in a near shutout against the Community Vikings.

Only 51 seconds into the game, Tristan Goad scored the first touchdown for the Rockets on a 59-yard run, with Jacob Tincher adding the extra two.

Turning the ball over on downs, the Vikings were unable to answer, and a few minutes later Fletcher Fields tacked on another touchdown.

The two-point conversion was good on an Isaac Cruse pass to Fields.

Unfortunately for the Vikings, the quarter continued to spiral.

A Community punt ultimately resulted in another Forrest touchdown from Tincher. Cruse and Fields connected again for the extra two, making it 24-0 with 2:44 remaining in the first quarter.

Beginning the second quarter, Cruse completed a pass to Aiden Beard, putting the Rockets at the six yard line.

Tincher stayed on fire, crossing into the end zone, not only for the touchdown, but the two-point conversion as well, bringing the score to 32-0 with a lot of game left to play.

Forrest rounded out the half by returning a punt and recovering a Community fumble, which led Forrest to a 48-0 advantage at half-



Tristan Goad carries the ball for the Rockets.

Tribune Photo by Kacy Kincaid

time.

The Rockets came out of the locker room still fully loaded. Adrian Elkins scored on a kickoff return to begin the third quarter. Jon Hightower went on a 22-yard run and Quincy Mitchell finished off

the possession with a 42-yard dash to the end zone. At the end of the third quarter, the Rockets led 56-0.

Mitchell didn't slow down in the fourth quarter, scoring on another nice run, while Hightower took care of

the extra points. Showing their determination with only 40 seconds left in the game, Community quarterback Jarrett Yancey crossed the goal line, and Kaeden Hensel sealed the extra two.

# Smart to face former assistant in opener

By **PAUL NEWBERRY**  
AP Sports Writer

**ATHENS, Ga.** — When you build a powerhouse program, it's inevitable that others will try to copy your success.

That means hiring people who work for you.

Georgia coach Kirby Smart will see another familiar face on the opposing sideline Saturday when the reigning national champion Bulldogs open the season against No. 11 Oregon.

Smart's former defensive coordinator, Dan Lanning, is now guiding the Ducks. In his head coaching debut, he'll take on the No. 3 Bulldogs in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff game in Atlanta.

"There's definitely some feelings of excitement for me to go play a team I care about and was a big part of for

a long time," Lanning said. "But that's not the focus. My job, as well as the players' job, is to focus on the task at hand."

As Smart heads into his seventh season as the Bulldogs' boss, the list of assistants-turned-head coaches is growing.

He is 2-0 against his ex-offensive line coach, Arkansas' Sam Pittman, and last year beat South Carolina's Shame Beamer, who was on Smart's staff in 2016 and '17.

Now, the 36-year-old Lanning will become the third of Smart's former staffers to take a shot at knocking off the old boss.

There won't be a bunch of warm, fuzzy feelings at the reunion.

"I don't think the game has anything to do with that," Smart said. "Neither Dan nor I will be worried about ▶ See **Georgia**, Page B3



Submitted photo

The Marshall County Tigerettes took a team victory behind Kendall Adams' second-place finish of 23:42 on Thursday afternoon at Fairview. The Tigers finished second overall.

# Tigerettes win meet at Fairview

Tribune **Staff Report**

**FAIRVIEW** — The Marshall County cross country teams had a strong showing last week at Fairview, with the Tigerettes winning the meet, while the Tigers finished second.

Kendall Adams was the top-finisher for the Tigerettes and finished the 5k run in 23:42.

Karlie Lohr was fifth overall and turned in a 24:38 final time, while Olympia Cathey and Kamaria Johnson finished sixth and seventh.

Kamea Johnson and Abigail Haley finished in 25:32 and 26:59, respectively.

The Tigers also had a strong showing on Thursday and were led by Ayden Cook's eighth-place

finish time of 21:07.

Connor Jones took 16th overall and finished in 22:09, while Alex Patino turned in a 22:19 final time for 17th overall.

The Marshall County cross country teams will be back in action on Saturday at UT-Southern.

## Tigerettes

2nd Place - Kendall Adams 23:42  
5th Place - Karlie Lohr 24:38  
6th Place - Olympia Cathey 24:58  
7th Place - Kamaria Johnson 25:06  
9th Place - Kamea Johnson 25:32  
11th Place - Abigail Haley 26:59

17th Place - Alicia Ward Basabe 27:49

21st Place - Aliyah Wenneker 28:41

26th Place - Maggie Steely 32:32

## Tigers

8th Place - Ayden Cook 21:07

16th Place - Connor Jones 22:09

17th Place - Alex Patino 22:19

26th Place - Logan Amonette 24:48

39th Place - Jacob Wakham 27:39

41st Place - Will Beasley 28:16

49th Place - Terrence Bishop 30:23

51st Place - Noah Long 31:09