

Marshall Co. runners, Stalnecker participate in state meet

Tribune Staff Report

HENDERSONVILLE — For the second-straight year, Marshall County and Forrest High Schools were represented in the Class A-AA state cross country meet.

In the girls' race on Thursday afternoon, the Marshall County Tigerettes qualified as a team, while Forrest was represented by Jaedyn Stalnecker.

Stalnecker turned in a 21:49 time in her final race with the Forrest, which was

good enough for a 32nd overall finish in the race.

Kendall Adams was the top finisher for the Tigerettes and crossed the finish line in 22:56.

Junior Kamaria Johnson wasn't far behind, finishing her race in 23:26, while

sophomore Karlie Lohr turned in a 24:20 final time.

Olympia Cathey and Alicia Ward Basabe finished back-to-back, with Cathey just edging out the dual down the stretch with a 25:45 finish time, while Basabe finished in 25:46.

As a team, the Tigerettes finished 16th out of 30 teams that participated in the meet.

Aydan Cook also earned a berth as an individual for the Tigers and ran a 20:08 in his final race of the season.

Titans sit atop AFC South again despite struggles, injuries

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

NASHVILLE — The Tennessee Titans have a stingy defense and two-time NFL rushing champ Derrick Henry on his way toward leading the league for the third time in four seasons.

They also have a comfortable lead at the halfway point of the season, looking for a third straight AFC South title.

"There's no room for cushions," coach Mike Vrabel said Monday.

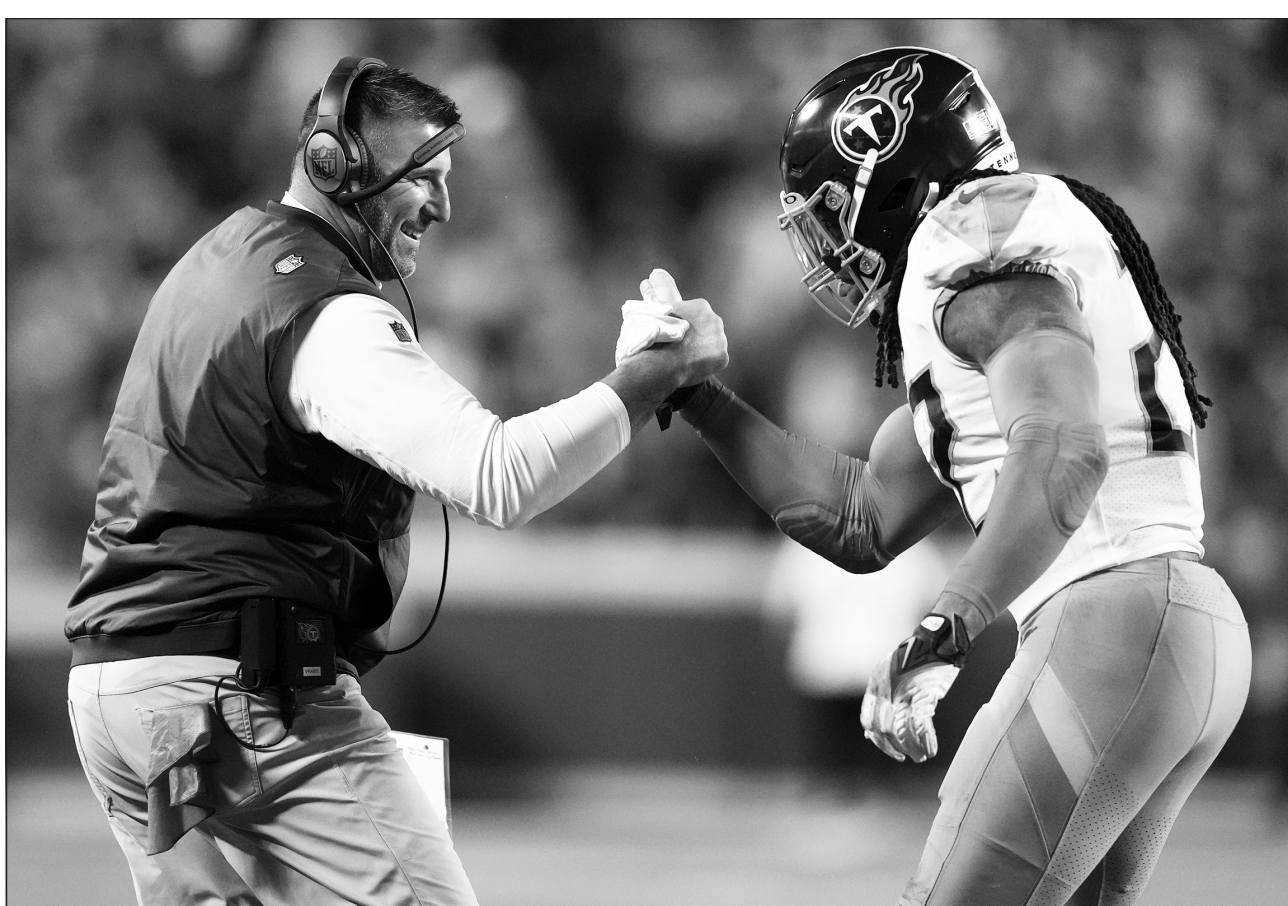
Well, they have one despite snapping a five-game winning streak with a 20-17 overtime loss in Kansas City on Sunday night. The Titans (5-3) still control their division with Indianapolis (3-5-1) the closest team having just fired its coach Monday.

That's despite serious second-half offensive issues and a quarterback in Ryan Tannehill who has missed two straight games with a sprained right ankle. That's just part of the injury woes that have hit this franchise hard for a second straight season.

Yet the Titans already have swept Indianapolis and are 3-0 in the division. They've already won at Houston (1-6-1) with two left against the Jaguars (3-6), including the regular-season finale in Jacksonville. Tennessee also is 4-2 in the AFC.

What's working

The defense. Losing Pro Bowl outside linebacker Harold Landry



AP Photo/Charlie Riedel

Despite injuries throughout the roster, and a loss during primetime football, the Tennessee Titans still have a firm grasp on the AFC South lead.

III just before the season didn't help with him coming off a career-best 12-sack performance. They're the NFL's stingiest unit on third down, allowing a mere 28.5% conversions and have the second-best run defense, allowing 87.6 yards per game.

They've allowed more than 22 points only once all season.

What needs help

The offense. More specifically after halftime where Tennessee has been outscored 96-33, not counting the game-winning field goal in overtime to Kansas City. The Titans are still

looking for their first touchdown in the fourth quarter where they've been outscored 35-9.

Tennessee has only 51 catches for 658 yards with one touchdown combined from its receivers after trading A.J. Brown to Philadelphia during the April draft. Treylon Burks, drafted with the selection received in that deal, ranks fifth on the Titans with 10 catches for 129 yards. He's missed four games on injured reserve.

Stock up

Henry has proven he's healthy and recovered from the broken foot

that kept him from a chance at threepeating last season. He leads the NFL once again with 870 yards rushing and is second with nine rushing touchdowns entering Monday. But he had only seven carries for 22 yards in the second half in Kansas City.

He has become the franchise's top scorer in rushing TDs, passing Earl Campbell with two TDs in Kansas City, giving him 74 in 94 games. Henry set the franchise mark for combined TDs rushing and receiving a week ago in Houston, topping the mark previously held by Eddie George.

Henry is just the fifth

NFL running back since 1950 with 17 or more games with at least 100 yards rushing and two or more rushing TDs in his first seven seasons, joining LaDainian Tomlinson, Jim Brown, Emmitt Smith and Shaun Alexander.

Stock down

CB Caleb Farley. The first-round pick of 2021 appeared recovered from the ACL injury that ended his rookie season after three games, but the starting job that was his for the taking belongs to rookie Roger McCreary. What appeared to be a surprise draft pick at No.

35 overall in the second round wound up filling a big need.

Injured

Tannehill's sprained right ankle has cost him two straight starts, snapping a 49-game start streak for this franchise. Burks is among 13 Titans currently on injured reserve along with fellow rookie receiver Kyle Philips. They also lost three-time Pro Bowl left tackle Taylor Lewan one snap into their second game.

Burks is eligible to be activated this week, or at least open a 21-day window to return. Vrabel praised the rookie for how hard the rookie's worked to be ready for his return.

Key number

9 — The points scored in the fourth quarter, which would be higher if not for a missed field goal in the opener. Two field goals came in the Oct. 23 win against the Colts. At some point, Tennessee will have to score more to reach the postseason for a fourth straight season.

Next steps

Take advantage of a home schedule that features five of the final nine at home after five of the first eight, including the overtime loss to the Chiefs, came on the road. It won't be easy with a pair of Thursday night games, including a trip to Green Bay on Nov. 17 and a visit from Dallas on Dec. 29.

NFL injured reserve rule change forcing teams to be choosy

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

NASHVILLE — Tennessee Titans cornerback Elijah Molden is used to the business of pro football as a second-generation NFL player.

Molden didn't worry that the injured groin putting him on injured reserve Sept. 9 would cost him a full season even after an offseason NFL rule change limiting teams to bringing back only eight players from injured reserve to the active roster this season.

"It is definitely a game that the front office plays, you know chess, not checkers," Molden said. "So I talked with my agent, talked with the coaches and front office and let them work it out."

As the NFL hits the halfway point of the season, Molden remains on injured reserve as one of 13 Titans sidelined by injury. That's the most in the league per [Sportrac.com](https://www.sportrac.com), a year after the Titans set an NFL record last season using an NFL record 91 different players in a non-strike season.

The Titans already are halfway to the 26 placed on injured reserve a year ago and used the unlimited return rule to help earn the AFC's No. 1 seed.

They are among at least eight teams with at least 10 players on IR as of Monday, a number that changes daily. That includes the defending champion Rams at 11 after finishing last season with only nine. Among that group is starting left tackle Joseph Noteboom, who replaced Andrew Whitworth after his retirement.



AP Photo/Mark Humphrey

Elijah Molden is on the injured reserve list as one of 13 Titans currently sidelined with injury.

The rule changes means every NFL team has to think very carefully about injuries. Not only did the NFL limit the number that can return, but players now must spend four games instead of three on injured reserve. Practice squads stayed at 16 to ensure available players in shape to provide needed help when injuries hit.

Buffalo general manager Brandon Beane likes the rule changes.

"There's a line that the league worries about roster stashing, just putting guys on to get another guy so I think you want to make sure that people aren't stashing," Beane said. "That's going to be what the league stance is. I think it's come to a pretty

good medium."

Under early injured reserve rules, a player was out for a year. Then in 2012, the NFL allowed teams to designate one player to return before doubling that in 2017. The coronavirus pandemic led the NFL to allow teams to bring back an unlimited number of players from injured reserve for 2020 and 2021.

"Now it's down to four weeks, and I think that's more reasonable because fans pay to see these good players," Beane said. "And if you put a good player down you want to be able to bring him back."

Dallas (6-2) hopes to get left tackle Tyron Smith back in December after tearing a hamstring late in training

camp. The Cowboys, with 12 on injured reserve, also lost long snapper Jake McQuaide (torn triceps) and slot corner Jourdan Lewis (broken foot) for the season.

San Francisco (4-4) has nine on injured reserve and has been hit hard.

Quarterback Trey Lance is out for the season, while both starting defensive tackles, including Javon Kinlaw, are out. Niners coach Kyle Shanahan says everyone gets frustrated with the injuries, especially those that have decimated the defensive line.

"It just makes it harder to perform at the level we need them to the more they're out there, but that's part of the NFL," Shanahan said. "And it's why you want depth, and

it's why you hope guys can return and not have too bad of injuries."

Teams also have to balance risk versus reward when deciding whether or not to put a player on injured reserve. Bring someone back too soon, it could cost a team the chance to bring back another player. Keeping a player on the roster also gets expensive.

"A, you potentially could get the player back sooner than the four-week mandate and B, there's cap implications because you're going to be paying two players to really do one job and you've got to account for that salary cap wise," Titans general manager Jon Robinson said.

Deciding when to bring a player back starts with opening a 21-day practice window. Robinson said the player has to tell team officials how he really feels along with feedback from team doctors and watching how the player practices.

"Ultimately, you're going to err on the side of caution when it comes to the health and safety of the player," Robinson said.

The big question is whether the eight-player limit in a 17-game season is too few, and that's something nobody will really know until after this season. Committees will break down the numbers before the league's spring meetings to see if a limit of eight was the correct amount.

"Let's see this year how many teams max it out at eight, and I think if a lot of teams are maxing out that means it probably is," Beane said.