

NFL

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available to players and staff.

"Additional resources including on-site services can be available for any club that wishes this assistance," Goodell said.

Goodell told teams they would be promptly advised of any changes to this weekend's schedule.

Several teams canceled media availabilities, including the New England Patriots. They are scheduled to face the Bills on Sunday.

The Tennessee Titans and Jacksonville Jaguars practiced ahead of their game to determine the AFC South champion on Saturday night. "Oh, I don't have no hesitation," Titans two-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle Jeffery Simmons said about playing. "But me personally, it's one of them things when you get shook up."

Simmons said his 15-year-old cousin, Jason "JJ" Hatcher, died Dec. 18 from a heart issue during a football practice. The teen, who was a sophomore at Hebron High School in Carrollton, Texas, is the son of former 10-year NFL veteran defensive end Jason Hatcher, who spent the last eight seasons of his career with the Dallas Cowboys.

Simmons received a call informing him of his cousin's death before the Titans played a late afternoon game in Los Angeles, a 17-14 loss to the Chargers.

"We just can't take this game for granted because you never know," Simmons said. "Sometimes we just get sidetracked. ... But the real reason why we play this game and sometimes we forget that, ... we're playing for each other. We're playing for our family. And most of all, just playing for ourselves because it's all we've been knowing all our whole life."

"And I'm sure that young man, it's all he knew his whole life," Simmons said of Hamlin. "You just never know when your last night may be. So there's just one thing you just can't take for granted. And I'm praying for him and his family."

Titans coach Mike Vrabel and Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said they hadn't had any discussions with the league about postponing this week's games.

Aaron Rodgers, the reigning two-time NFL MVP, said he was "shook up."

"Your football mortality just comes right face to face. One of your brothers in the fraterni-

ty of the NFL is fighting for his life right now," the Green Bay Packers' quarterback said on his weekly appearance on "The Pat McAfee Show" on YouTube and SiriusXM.

"I've been part of a few games where they've carted guys off and we've had players with neck injuries. It shakes you to the core. That's injuries where they're awake and alert, and many of them give thumbs up or what not, and it still shakes you. It's like 10-, sometimes 15-minute delays on the field and, 'All right, go back out and play,' even though your buddy might not ever play again and we're hoping he can walk. It's a weird feeling."

"In this situation, this is unprecedented, definitely in my time. ... I've never seen something where a player had to be given CPR on the field and supposedly didn't have a pulse." Rodgers said. "I thought, 'There's no way. They're going to go back in the locker room and then come out and play. What? That can't happen.'"

The NFL disputed a television report that both teams were told to resume play after a five-minute warmup. "It never crossed our mind to talk about warming up to resume play," league executive Troy Vincent said.

The Kansas City Chiefs practiced Tuesday for their Saturday afternoon game against the Las Vegas Raiders. The Chiefs (13-3) are battling with the Bills (12-3) and Bengals (11-4) for the No. 1 seed in the AFC.

Thus, the outcome of the Bills-Bengals game has major playoff implications. The Bills entered the game in the top spot while the Bengals had a chance to clinch the AFC North with a victory and also were in the mix for the No. 1 seed along with Kansas City.

The Bengals led 7-3 in the first quarter when the game was stopped. The NFL is scheduled to begin playoffs on Jan. 14. The No. 1 seed in each conference gets a first-round bye and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs.

It's uncertain how the league will handle seedings if the Bills-Bengals game isn't concluded. The NFL could push the start of the playoffs back one week and eliminate the extra week in between the conference championship games and Super Bowl. The Pro Bowl Games are scheduled for Feb. 5.

NFL teams changed their avatars on Twitter to a blue Bills background with Hamlin's No. 3 and the words: "Pray for Damar."

Title-seeking TCU used to underdog label

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**
AP Sports Writer

FORT WORTH, Texas — Big right guard Wes Harris and his TCU teammates are hearing again just how big and physical their next opponent is and how much of an underdog they are against Georgia in the national championship game.

They heard a lot of the same things going into their College Football Playoff semifinal against Big Ten champion Michigan, which is sitting at home while the Horned Frogs (13-1) get ready to play the defending national champions Monday night.

"It just kind of lights a fire underneath you," Harris said Tuesday.

"Definitely gave us a little bit of extra juice. We were tired of hearing about it ... and were able to make a statement to show we were a physical football team, too."

Immediately after their 51-45 win in the Fiesta Bowl on New Year's Eve, first-year Frogs coach Sonny Dykes he felt they were the definitely the most physical team on the field. TCU had four sacks and outrushed Michigan 263 yards to 186, even after the Wolverines had a 54-yard run on the game's very first snap.

"We knew we were a physical team, and we got to show that during the game, and we've got to get ready to play the

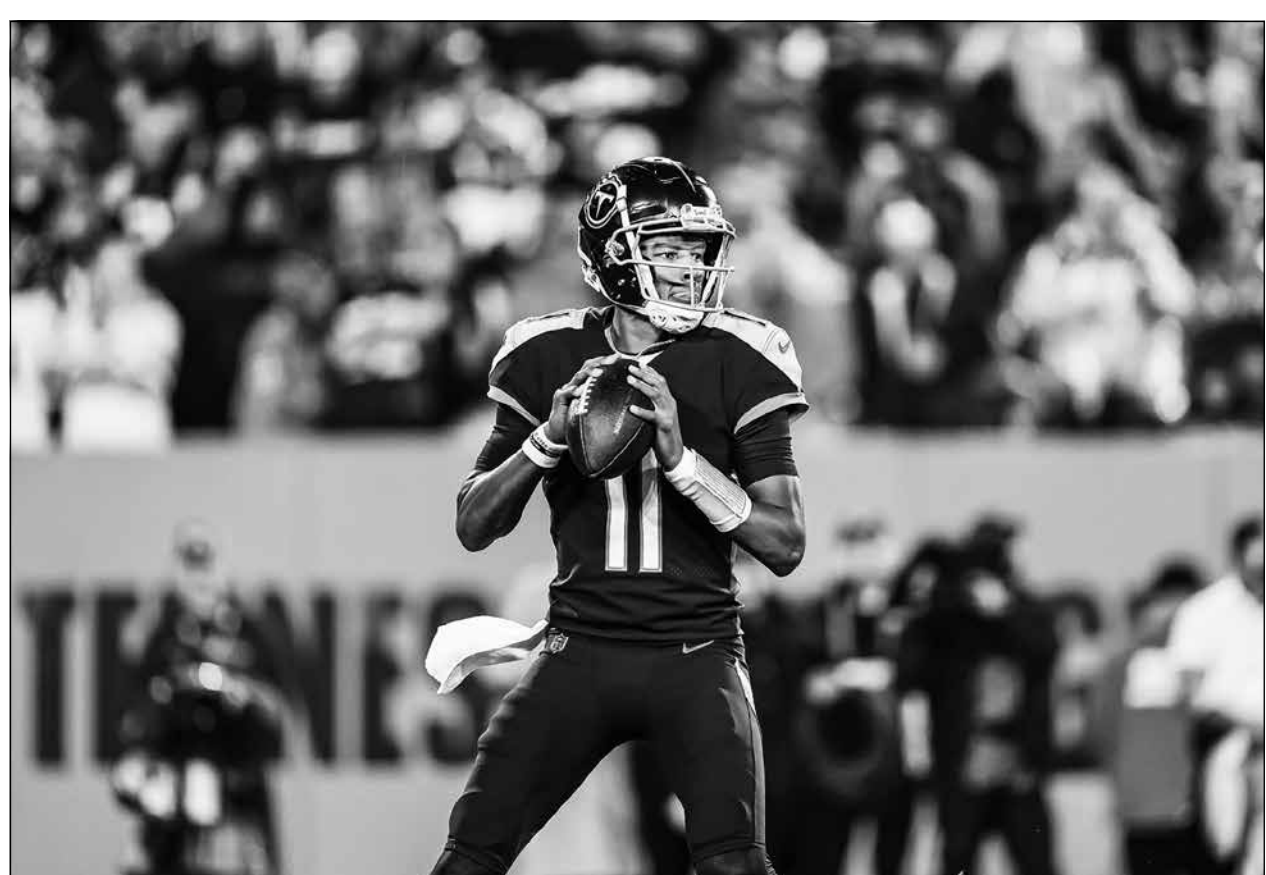


Photo Courtesy of the Tennessee Titans

Josh Dobbs will make his second career start, and his first on the road, in Saturday night's finale at Jacksonville, with the AFC South title on the line.

Dobbs excited to start with AFC South on the line

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

Joshua Dobbs has been a part of an NFL playoff team in his six-year career.

Now the journeyman quarterback has the opportunity of a lifetime with his fifth different team — and third this season.

The former University of Tennessee star has a chance to lead the Tennessee Titans into the playoffs with a victory Saturday night in Jacksonville in just his second NFL start.

Not bad for someone signed off Detroit's practice squad on Dec. 21.

No pressure at all. "I know it is a big game," Dobbs said Tuesday. "I haven't been here the entire year, but any time you have a chance to go to the playoffs, it is a tremendous opportunity. I'm excited for it."

The fourth-round pick by Pittsburgh in 2017 was on the Steelers' playoff teams in 2017 and 2020. The quarterback with a degree in aerospace engineering who has done internships with NASA through the NFL Players Association has been just as busy learning the Titans' game plan as his new teammates' names.

The 6-foot-3, 216-pound Dobbs will be making the eighth appearance of his career.

Dobbs doesn't see Saturday night's game against the Jacksonville Jaguars (8-8) as a validation of a journey that has

taken him from Pittsburgh to Jacksonville in 2019 and back to Pittsburgh for 2020 and 2021 and stints with Cleveland, a brief stop in Detroit and now back in Tennessee as validation of his career.

This has just been his journey, and now he has the chance to lead the Titans (7-9) to something this franchise hasn't done since the first three years of its existence in the original AFL — three straight division titles — and a fourth straight playoff berth.

"You just have to live in your world, maximize your journey, the opportunities that come, and take advantage of them," Dobbs said. "I'm excited for this one this weekend."

The Titans chose to start Dobbs over rookie Malik Willis, who is 1-2 as a starter and ran for his lone touchdown this season in his most recent start. Dobbs threw for more yards by halftime than Willis, the third-round pick out of Liberty, had managed in any of his starts. Dobbs finished with 232 yards passing.

Titans coach Mike Vrabel said Dobbs quickly adjusted despite playing with teammates whose first names he didn't know in last week's 27-13 loss to Dallas. Vrabel also isn't worried about Dobbs being around Tennessee only a short time, noting half the battle is acting like a quarterback.

Vrabel also sees Dobbs as bringing a calming presence and

confidence.

"Joshua is going to be very well prepared and understands that we will have to go into a great environment on Saturday night ...," Vrabel said. "He understands that. He has played quarterback. He has played in front of big crowds. He has played in big games."

One big advantage Dobbs will have in trying to snap the Titans' six-game skid, the franchise's longest since 2015, is having two-time NFL rushing champ Derrick Henry back. The Titans scratched Henry against Dallas despite the running back ranking second in the NFL in rushing.

Henry currently ranks third with 1,429 yards and is tied for second with 13 rushing TDs.

Dobbs, who never beat Henry and Alabama in college, thinks it'll be a lot of fun being in the same backfield.

"I watched Derrick play a lot of football in college across the sideline from him, since being in the league across the sideline from him," Dobbs said. "So he's a dynamic back, as we all know. I'm excited to hand the ball off to him and watch it from a field perspective, what he's able to do."

Notes

They signed DT Curtis Brooks, DB Shyheim Carter and OLB Sam Okuayinonu to the practice squad.

Bennett: Georgia must fix mistakes to win another title

By **CHARLES ODUM**
AP Sports Writer

ATHENS, Ga. — No. 1 Georgia is far from satisfied, despite being unbeaten and one win away from back-to-back national championships,

Coach Kirby Smart and quarterback Stetson Bennett said Saturday night's 42-41 College Football Playoff semifinal win over Ohio State showed flaws the Bulldogs must fix in practice this week. That need to improve provides extra motivation for the national championship game against quarterback Max Duggan and No. 3 TCU on Jan. 9 in Inglewood, California.

"We didn't play our best game, starting with me," Bennett said after the Peach Bowl win over the Buckeyes. "Coach Smart said in the locker room, we had two three-and-outs to start the second half. Like that doesn't happen, and that falls on me, and that falls on our offense. We've got to fix that. So we're go-

ing to go to work."

Bennett, the former walk-on who last season led Georgia to its first national title since 1980, has usually saved his best performances for the biggest stages. He delivered another clutch effort with two fourth-quarter scoring passes against Ohio State as the Bulldogs rallied after trailing by two touchdowns.

Overall, Bennett threw for a career-high 398 yards with three touchdowns but he bemoaned his mistakes, including an interception, that helped place Georgia in a 38-24 deficit in the fourth quarter. Noah Ruggles' 50-yard field goal attempt for Ohio State with three seconds remaining sailed wide left, setting off a celebration on the Georgia sideline.

"Got to go back and look at the tape and see what we could clean up because it felt like there was a 30-minute period there where I just played bad football," Bennett said. "So we've got to fix that."

Bennett, who also ran

for a touchdown, was named offensive MVP for his fourth consecutive postseason game, including both CFP games last season.

Georgia's proud defense has set season highs for points allowed in two straight games, including a 50-30 win over LSU in the Southeastern Conference championship game. After allowing 502 passing yards to LSU, the Bulldogs gave up 348 yards with four touchdowns through the air to Ohio State's C.J. Stroud.

Georgia's defense allowed 10 or fewer points in six regular-season games, including two shutouts, but defensive back Javon Bullard says expectations change in the off-season when facing the nation's top teams.

"We knew coming into the game, it wouldn't be perfect," said Bullard, the defensive MVP. "You come into a game like this, college playoff, we know you are going to give up some plays, they are going to make some plays, we're go-

ing to make some plays. You can't get too high up and can't get too low."

The defense will be challenged by high-scoring TCU in the national championship game. The Horned Frogs average 41.1 points per game to rank fifth in the nation following a 51-45 win over No. 2 Michigan in the Fiesta Bowl semifinal.

Georgia, which leaned heavily on its defense in its 2021 national championship season, fell from second to fifth in the nation in scoring defense, at 14.79 points allowed per game.

Smart said the Bulldogs "didn't play our best football game" against Ohio State. "If we want any chance at winning a national championship, we have to play a lot better football," he said.

Georgia had a team meeting on Monday to review the Ohio State game and will open practice for the national championship game on Tuesday.

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