

## Sports &amp; Entertainment

## Titans host Jaguars in 30th season of rivalry...from sports page 1

LAST WEEK AT WASHINGTON

Last week the Titans played their second consecutive road contest, traveling to the nation's capital to face the Commanders. After trailing 28-0 in the first half, the Titans rallied to score 13 consecutive points, but the Commanders ultimately prevailed 42-19.

Titans quarterback Will Levis completed 18 of 37 passes for 212 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions. Over the past four contests, his statistics include 71 completions and 960 yards on 115 attempts with seven touchdowns and two interceptions. His passer rating during that span is 101.4.

At Washington, Levis and wide receiver Nick Westbrook-Ikhine connected for a pair of touchdown passes: a 27-yard strike in the second quarter and a 17-yarder in the fourth quarter. Westbrook-Ikhine increased his 2024 season total to eight touchdown catches, which placed him in a tie for fourth in the NFL and alone for second in the AFC (13 by Ja'Marr Chase). All of his touchdown grabs have come in the past eight contests. He is the team's first player with eight receiving touchdowns over an eight-game

span since A.J. Brown accomplished the feat from Oct. 13 to Nov. 29, 2020. Amani Hooker recorded his team-leading fourth interception of the season to match his career high for a single campaign (2020). Hooker joined Kevin Byard (five), Michael Griffin (three), and Chris Hope (two) as the only safeties in the team's "Titans era" (1999 to present) with multiple four-interception seasons.

### THE JAGUARS

Head coach Doug Pederson is in his third season as the head coach of the Jaguars. He led the Jaguars to a division title in 2022 before the team went 9-8 in 2023.

The Jaguars hosted the division rival Houston Texans last week and fell by a final score of 23-20. The result gave Jacksonville five consecutive losses. Mac Jones finished the game at quarterback for Jacksonville after starter Trevor Lawrence exited with an injury in the first half.

Jones completed a pair of touchdown passes in the fourth quarter before the team's comeback was thwarted. Lawrence missed the two previous contests due to a left shoulder injury.

## NFL suspends Azeez Al-Shaair for three games for repeated violations from sports page 1

rules. Video shows you striking the head/neck area of Jaguars' quarterback Trevor Lawrence after he clearly goes down in a feet-first slide...You led with your forearm and helmet and delivered a forceful blow to the head/neck area of your opponent when you had time and space to avoid such contact."

"After the illegal hit, you proceeded to engage in a brawl, which you escalated when you pulled an opponent down to the ground by his facemask. After the referee announced that you were disqualified for the hit and your unsportsmanlike acts, you removed your helmet and reengaged with your opponent while walking down and across the field, which started another physical confrontation near the end zone..."

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the referee announced that you were disqualified for the hit and your unsportsmanlike acts, you removed your helmet and reengaged with your opponent while walking down and across the field, which started another physical confrontation near the end zone.

"Your lack of sportsmanship and respect for the game of football and all those who play, coach, and enjoy watching it, is troubling and does not reflect the core values of the NFL...Your continued disregard for NFL playing rules puts the health and safety of both you and your opponents in jeopardy and will not be tolerated."

Al-Shaair will be eligible to return to the Texans' active roster following the team's Week 17 game against the Baltimore Ravens.

Under the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Al-Shaair may appeal the suspension. Any appeal will be heard and decided by either Derrick Brooks, Ramon Foster, Kevin Mawae, or Jordy Nelson, the hearing officers jointly appointed and compensated by the NFL and NFLPA to decide appeals of on-field player discipline.

## Desrosiers Jr. and Marsh are named AAC Players of Week

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — University of Memphis redshirt-junior running back Greg Desrosiers Jr. and senior defensive back Kourtlan Marsh were named American Athletic Conference (AAC) Offensive and Defensive Players of the Week, respectively, the conference announced Monday.

The duo of Desrosiers Jr. and Marsh led their respective sides of the ball in the Tigers' 34-24, Thanksgiving Day win at No. 17 Tulane. Memphis snapped a 17-game AAC regular season winning streak for the Green Wave — the longest streak in league history and longest active streak in FBS. Desrosiers Jr. had a night to remember, reeling in a career-high eight receptions for 84 yards and a pair of scores to go along with 41 rushing yards and

another touchdown on six carries to combine for 125 scrimmage yards.

On the defensive side, Marsh led the Tigers with six tackles (five solo), a clutch pass breakup on a deep shot down field and a pair of forced fumbles at crucial points in the game — one of which he came up with himself. Memphis now waits to learn its postseason destination and will begin preparation for the program's 11th-consecutive bowl game.

With a victory in their bowl game, the Tigers could earn 11 wins for just the second time in program history (2019; 12 wins).

For complete information on Memphis Tigers Football, visit [www.GoTigersGo.com](http://www.GoTigersGo.com).

## Giving a firearm as a gift? Here are some safety reminders from NSSF

### From The Hunting Wire

With gift-buying season upon us, it's natural for gun owners who enjoy target shooting, hunting, collecting or just plain plinking to want to share their enjoyment of firearms with others. What better way to do that than to gift a firearm to a family member, close friend or relative? The first thing to remember if you're thinking about giving someone a gun is that ownership of a firearm brings with it serious responsibilities and legal obligations that other consumer products don't. So, let's look at some questions you may have about giving a firearm as a gift.

### Consider a Gift Card

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) recommends that if you want to give someone a new firearm, rather than going to a gun store, buying it on your own and giving it to, say, your father, consider instead purchasing a gift certificate from that retailer and giving it to dad as his present. That way he'll get the exact gun he wants, and there's no question about who is "the actual buyer of the firearm," which is a question any purchaser must certify on the federal ATF Form 4473 at the time of purchase.

### Buying a Gun as a Gift

Consider using a gift certificate from a firearm retailer near where the recipient lives. Let's assume, however, you do not want to give a gift card because you want to give "Old Betsy," your favorite old deer rifle, to your son or daughter or you want to see the joy on their face when they unwrap their present. The first question you then must ask is whether the intended recipient can legally own a firearm at all. Remember, you can never under any circumstances transfer a firearm to someone you know — or have reasonable cause to believe — legally can't own one. That's a federal felony, so be careful.

Pre-January 1, 1899, antique firearms are generally exempt from a transfer requiring a background check, but be safe and check with your retailer or local law enforcement before you hand over your prized possession.

The next question is whether the person can own the gifted firearm where he or she lives. With more than 20,000 different gun laws on the books, even the kinds of firearms that law-abiding citizens can own vary from place to place. For example, juveniles (under age 18), generally speaking, are precluded by law from possessing a handgun, and some states restrict certain types of firearms and magazine sizes. Check out the ATF website for an overview of local laws or contact your state's attorney general's office.

It is legal to purchase a firearm from a licensed firearm retailer that you intend to give as a gift. There's no law that prohibits a gift of a firearm to a relative or friend who lives in your home state. However, whether you purchase a new firearm or want to gift a gun you already own, keep in mind that some states (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington State) and the District of Columbia require you to transfer a firearm through a local licensed firearm retailer so an instant background check will be performed to make sure the recipient is not legally prohibited from owning the gun. Maryland, Minnesota and Pennsylvania require a background check for a private-party transfer of a handgun and other specific types of firearms. Other states also require the recipient of a firearm to have a specific license or permit before taking possession of a firearm. There are exceptions\*, so it's important to carefully check the law of your state or ask your local firearm retailer.

If the person you want to give the gift of a firearm to does not reside in the same state as you, then

under federal law you have to ship the firearm to a licensed firearm retailer in the state where the recipient lives who can transfer the firearm after a background check.

### Shipping a Firearm

You can only ship a handgun by common carrier (but not U.S. mail) and a long gun by U.S. mail or common carrier to a federally licensed retailer, but not to a non-licensed individual in another state. With all carriers, federal law requires you to declare that your package contains an unloaded firearm. To be safe, always consult your carrier in advance about its regulations for shipping firearms.

### Giving a Gun as a Gift

As you can see, there are a lot of things to consider when making a gift of firearm to ensure you do it properly. Using a gift certificate from a firearm retailer near where the gift recipient lives might be the best solution in order to avoid legal pitfalls and state law variations.

If you do purchase a firearm as a gift, consider also purchasing the gift of safety to accompany that firearm. Most new firearms include a locking device in the box such as a cable lock or trigger lock, and all handguns (new or pre-owned) purchased from federally licensed dealers must be accompanied by a locking device. There are, however, many secure storage options available to prevent unwanted access, including lock boxes, lockable gun cases, and safes that hold multiple firearms. Owning firearms and securely storing them when not in use go hand in hand.

It's often an emotional moment when a treasured family heirloom is passed down to the next generation. These moments are part of what our cherished enjoyment of firearms is all about and represent that unique bond that sportsmen and sportswomen have with their fellow enthusiasts.

So, enjoy the holidays and do it right!

\*In New Mexico and Virginia,

for example, a background check is required on "sales" of firearms—those transferred for a fee or other consideration—but not when a person transfers ownership of a firearm without compensation or exchanging anything of value. In Minnesota, background checks through an FFL are not required if the recipient has a valid transferee permit. Finally, many states which generally require background checks also have exceptions for transfers between immediate family members.

### Find Firearm Retailers Near You Safety Reminders for New Gun Owners

If you're gifting a firearm this holiday season, make sure the recipient knows the essentials of safe firearm handling and secure storage, especially if they're first-time gun owners or have children at home. Explore Project ChildSafe® resources for new gun owners.

### Other Gift Options for Target Shooters

Not sure what to get the target shooters in your life this holiday season? We've got you covered with these 10 great gift ideas.

#### More Ways to Give

Those who donate to worthy causes, consider making a gift in support of Project ChildSafe®, NSSF's award-winning community gun safety program that helps prevent firearm accidents, thefts and misuse, including suicide.

The Project ChildSafe Safety Sweepstakes has opened and offers nine great prizes manufactured or donated by Vault Pro, Swarovski Optik, Optics Planet, Winchester, OpticsPlanet, Sig, Franchi, Pack'n Heat and Hornady. Anyone may enter, and those who are planning to attend SHOT Show can enter during the registration process. Funds raised help support NSSF's Project ChildSafe firearm safety program.

## NFL announces former rugby star Jordan Petaia as the first IPP pick ... from sports page 1

labies for the last seven years. I will be forever grateful for the experiences, skills and good mates that these teams have blessed me with," said Petaia. "It feels like the right time with my age and stage in life to pursue this dream I've had for a long time. Thank you to everyone involved in the NFL IPP program for giving me this once in a lifetime opportunity. I am very grateful and excited for the experience that lies ahead. Wishing everyone in Rugby Australia the best for 2025 — I hope it's a great year and I will be supporting closely from afar."

Starting in January 2025, athletes on the program are invited to train in American football — both on the field and in the classroom — for 10 weeks at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida, before showcasing their skills in front of NFL club scouts as part of the University of South Florida's Pro Day in March. Players can be signed as a free agent or, if eligible, selected during the 2025 NFL Draft. Each NFL club is permitted one roster exemption for a qualifying international player from the start of the club's offseason program through the roster reduction to 53 players. At that time, qualifying international players are



eligible to be signed to a 17th practice squad roster spot reserved for international athletes across any of the 32 teams.

The program has historically welcomed athletes from diverse sporting backgrounds, including rugby, basketball, Gaelic football, track & field and more, and is supported by an elite football coaching staff.

The full IPP Class of 2025 will be announced in the coming days.

The IPP program is part of a long-term commitment by the NFL and its 32 clubs to accelerate global football development efforts and establish a pathway for international talent to play the game at the highest level.

Since its inception, 41 international players have signed with NFL teams (allocated, drafted or signed as a free agent), with 23 IPP athletes currently on NFL rosters. Six of these players — Jordan Mailata (Australia), Jakob Johnson (Germany), Efe Obada (United Kingdom), Sammis Reyes (Chile), Thomas Odokoya

(Netherlands) and David Bada (Germany) — have seen active rosters since 2017.

Petaia will train at the NFL Academy campus on Australia's Gold Coast to prepare for the IPP camp before flying to the U.S.

The league opened an NFL Academy in Australia in September 2024 to serve the Asia-Pacific region. The NFL Academy is a major global initiative offering talented student-ath-

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letes the opportunity to combine full-time education alongside intensive training in American football — under the guidance of a world-class coaching staff. The Australia program opened in partnership with A.B. Paterson College, supported by the City of Gold Coast and the Queensland State Government. For more information on the NFL Academy, visit [www.nflacademy.com](http://www.nflacademy.com). For more information on the In-

ternational Player Pathway program, visit [www.nfl.com/international/player-pathway](http://www.nfl.com/international/player-pathway).

**International Player Definition:** A qualifying International Player (IP) is defined as a player whose citizenship and principal place of residence are outside the United States and Canada, and who has a maximum of two years of United States high school experience. In addition, an IP must: (i) satisfy all NFL player eligibility rules; and (ii) have been eligible for a prior NFL Draft. An IP can also play any position, including kicker or punter.

**Relevant IPP Program Rules:** Each of the 32 NFL clubs can fill a 17th roster spot on the practice squad with a qualifying international player. A player may be an International Practice Player for a maximum of three (3) seasons, with a season defined as being on the Practice Squad or Active/Inactive List for at least six games (a bye week counts as a game).

After an IP's third season as an International Practice Player, the player remains eligible to be signed to a club's Active/Inactive List or Practice Squad subject to standard roster rules (i.e., Standard, Exception, Veteran player).

Watch for The Mid-South Tribune's 30th Annual Black History Month Special Edition in February 2025!