



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE
280 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017
(212) 450-2000 * FAX (212) 681-7573
WWW.NFLMedia.com

Joe Browne, Executive Vice President-Communications
Greg Aiello, Vice President-Public Relations

AFC NEWS 'N' NOTES

FOR USE AS DESIRED
AFC-N-12 11/1/05

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION,
CONTACT: STEVE ALIC (212/450-2066)

EMERGING PLAYERS LIFT THEIR GAME

Experience, dedication and opportunity are ingredients for success. For many NFL players, all three are intersecting in 2005 as they raise their game to a higher level.

"Everyone in this league has talent," says Pro Football Hall of Famer and former Kansas City Chiefs quarterback **LEN DAWSON**. "I had to get an opportunity to play. In my first five years, I never started or finished a game.

"I continued to learn as long as I played, but once I played three or four years as a starting quarterback, I felt more and more comfortable," adds Dawson, who today provides color analysis for the Chiefs Radio Network. "At that point, I felt in control and I knew what to do. As a football player – not just as a quarterback – I understood the game better. I understood what defenses were trying to do to us."

Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback **BYRON LEFTWICH** understands what Dawson is saying. In his third season, Leftwich was voted the team's offensive captain by his teammates this year for the first time. His leadership is something his statistics cannot quantify. The 25-year-old has double-digit TDs (10) for the first time in his career through seven games.

"I believe that I am a better player and we are a better team this year," says Leftwich of the 4-3 Jaguars. "It's always fun when you play on a good football team.

"It's truly my team this year. I came here as a rookie and you assume the leadership role naturally by this position. But as time goes by, you can become the true leader of the team and I think that is what's happening here."

In Chicago, the NFC North's first-place Bears (4-3) are benefiting from the play of running back **THOMAS JONES**. The sixth-year pro from Virginia is on his way to his first 1,000-yard rushing season with the league's sixth highest rushing total (713). "I haven't really had an opportunity to get the ball 20 times a game like I have now," says Jones.

"I work hard every day, I watch a lot of film, but I've always been like that," he says. "I'm able to get the ball 20 to 25 times a game now, so sometimes, if things don't go right in the first half, in the second half the defense is tired and I'm able to get the ball and make big plays. When you don't get the ball that many times, you don't have the opportunity to get in a groove and that's what I've been used to in my career."

Former NFL head coach **TED MARCHIBRODA** has had a hand in winning games and developing players throughout his 31 years of coaching in the league. Marchibroda led the Colts to three consecutive division titles (1975-77) and in 1995 came within a game of the Super Bowl. The 1975 NFL Coach of the Year helped spur the development of quarterbacks **ROMAN GABRIEL**, **BERT JONES**, **JIM KELLY**, **JIM HARBAUGH** and **VINNY TESTAVERDE**.

"The greatest satisfaction and gratification that a coach can have is seeing an individual emerge," says Marchibroda, who today provides analysis on Colts radio broadcasts. "That's why you get into coaching. All coaches have had players like that. These players devoted themselves to the game. They wanted it bad and they were willing to pay the price."

Titans defensive end **KYLE VANDEN BOSCH**, acquired as a free agent during the offseason from Arizona, stands tied for the NFL lead in sacks with 8.0. In his fifth year from Nebraska, the 6-4, 278-pounder has contributed mightily to a young Tennessee defense.

"I have worked very hard on my technique," says Vanden Bosch. "I have always played hard and have been an effort player. Improving my technique gives me a chance of becoming a complete player.

"The longer you play, things start to slow down on the field and you start to recognize things. I know what to watch for now both on the field and when watching tape. You look for tendencies of the quarterback and of tackles you are going to face. You get to a point where you are able to watch people instead of watching plays."