

## Titans-Dolphins preview with The Phinsider: How good will the Miami defensive

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The Dolphins defensive line has been a problem for the Titans the last 2 times these teams have faced off. Will they be able to create the same type of pressure with Ndamukong Suh being gone? I think the defensive line is probably the strength of the defense. Authentic Logan Ryan Jersey, which sounds funny when you add in Ndamukong Suh not being on the team, but it is probably true. Cameron Wake is still Cameron Wake and will disrupt the offensive line. Robert Quinn being added this year looks like a great move as he returns to being a true hand-in-the-dirt pass rusher. Behind them, Charles Harris, Andre Branch, and William Hayes should all see plenty of playing time, keeping everyone fresh throughout the game. At defensive tackle, Suh not being in the middle will definitely be noticed, but Akeem Spence, Jordan Phillips, Davon Godchaux, and Vincent Taylor have all been really solid this summer. They may not have the greatest individual performances to equal what Suh can do on any play, but together, they should be able to make up for him no longer being there. That was a long way of saying, yes, I think the defensive line can give the Titans, and every team, fits this year. They do, however, have to play up to their potential and be there on every single snap.

2. Everyone seems to point to the Dolphins' linebackers as being a matchup the Titans can take advantage of with Delanie Walker and Dion Lewis. Can you tell us about that group and if you think that is true? While I really like the defensive line, the linebackers are definitely among the top concerns. Kiko Alonso is healthy and, I hope, will look more like 2016 Alonso than 2017 Alonso, where he was slowed by various injuries and was having to spend more time trying to cover for others' mistakes than just being able to play his game. The Dolphins also did not do him any favors in coverage, asking him too often to be in man coverage on players he should not be trying to cover. Raekwon McMillan and Jerome Baker are basically rookies (McMillan missed all of 2017 after tearing his ACL on the opening kickoff of the preseason and Baker is truly a rookie), so there will be plenty of mistakes out there as the two of them grow into their roles. The saving grace may be Minkah Fitzpatrick who will primarily play nickel cornerback or free safety, but can definitely be asked to cover Walker and Lewis, playing more of a linebacker role at times. Linebacker will be a question mark early this season, and the Titans should definitely attack the group and see what happens.

3. What is the workload distribution going to be like between Kenyan Drake and Frank Gore? There has been a lot of talk this offseason about how the Dolphins are trying to replace Jay Ajayi with Gore, and that could not be further from the truth. Drake is the starter for this offense, and he will get carries as if he is the starter. That said, Adam Gase likes running back by committee systems, so Gore will still see plenty of playing time, as will rookie Kalen Ballage. I would expect Drake to see the majority of the playing time. Women's DaQuan Jones Jersey, with Gore second at about half of that, then Ballage come in for mismatches. That will change as the season wears on, but early I would not expect to see Gore as much, just so the coaches know his legs will be ready later in the year.

4. How much are you going to miss Jay Cutler? Just kidding. How much better will this offense be this year with Ryan Tannehill back under center? Jay who? Oh, was he the guy the Dolphins signed for \$10 million to play in the longest preseason ever? I mean, it feels like the Dolphins have played 24 preseason games since they lost in the 2016 playoffs. Someone should look into that. Okay, other than trying to pretend the 2017 season did not happen, Tannehill coming back should be huge for the team. Just on a quarterback comparison, Tannehill has to be two to three games better than Cutler and Matt Moore, which would push Miami to the 8-8 or 9-7 range, which feels about right for this team. Tannehill has a confidence level this summer that we have not seen from him previously. The offense seems to be clicking with him in there, and they have shown some of the uptempo offensive scheme that Gase has wanted for the past two years. Everything is not perfect, including Tannehill still making some throws that show he has some rust to work through, but it definitely feels like the offense is in a much better place with 17 behind center.

5. Looking at this roster, they seem to be solid at every position but maybe not great anywhere. What are your honest expectations for the Dolphins this season? Can they be a playoff contender? Like I said about Tannehill, 8-8 to 9-7 feels about right. That said, they could go on a run somewhere and pull

off a double-digit win total, but they could also get smacked in the mouth early and struggle for several weeks, dropping back down to 6-10 or 5-11. I think your assessment of solid all over, but nothing great (other than Cameron Wake and safety Reshad Jones) is pretty accurate right now. There are several players who could break out, including Tannehill, Drake, and Fitzpatrick, but we will have to see how the seasons unfolds. [http://www.sndpic.com/nike\\_nfl\\_jerseys/nike\\_tennessee\\_titans/nike\\_titans\\_1142.jpg](http://www.sndpic.com/nike_nfl_jerseys/nike_tennessee_titans/nike_titans_1142.jpg) I think they are pushing for that final Wildcard spot this year, and they could end up claiming it, but I am definitely not ready to say they are going to unseat the Patriots atop the division or make a deep run into the playoffs. Thanks again to Kevin for taking the time! Welcome to "Keeping Up With Marcus Mariota," where I take a look at Titans quarterback Marcus Mariota's weekly tape and determine what I saw. Yeah, yeah, I know I predicted the Titans to lose to the Jaguars on Sunday and that didn't happen. I'm pretty good at willing Tennessee to victories when I pick against them, though, so you're welcome. What I didn't expect was Marcus Mariota filling in for a concussed Blaine Gabbert. Mariota, sitting due to a nerve injury in his elbow, suddenly came in and had to quarterback the Titans offense to victory. Mariota's pedestrian numbers (12 of 18 for 100 yards Authentic Will Compton Jersey , zero touchdowns and zero interceptions while putting 51 yards on the ground) suggest he didn't contribute all that much to the Titans' 9-6 victory on the road. But truth be told, this is one of those performances where Mariota's raw stats don't do him justice, as he was a big reason why Tennessee was able to move to 2-1. For starters, Mariota's first three passes (His actual third pass, a throwaway in the area of Jonnu Smith, doesn't count) all came on third downs, and all three of them were dropped. [gamepass.nfl.com](http://gamepass.nfl.com) This is an accurate third down throw to Rishard Matthews, who has this ball stripped from him before he can get two feet down. So while Matthews is able to avoid a fumble, he provides his quarterback with a costly drop. [gamepass.nfl.com](http://gamepass.nfl.com) Tajae Sharpe drops Mariota's second pass, also on third down. This one is inexcusable, considering Sharpe is uncontested and should have an easy first down falling to the ground. The Titans are forced punt as a result. [gamepass.nfl.com](http://gamepass.nfl.com) It can be argued that Mariota's third pass, again on third down, was not an accurate throw, but this is still a play Corey Davis needs to make, as the ball is placed in a spot where only he can get it. Eventually, Mariota decided to just do everything himself, and managed to convert some key third downs later in the game, such as this run on 3rd and 2. [gamepass.nfl.com](http://gamepass.nfl.com) Eventually, Mariota's receivers managed to haul in some throws in the second half. [gamepass.nfl.com](http://gamepass.nfl.com) This is a vintage pocket play from Mariota. He recognizes the blind side pressure, moves up the pocket while keeping his eyes up, resets himself and beats the stunt with a crucial pass to Corey Davis to convert the first down. At the time of this play the game was tied a 6-6, and the drive eventually ended with a Ryan Succop field goal that ultimately decided the game for Tennessee. [gamepass.nfl.com](http://gamepass.nfl.com) On the last drive, Matt LaFleur gets the ball into Mariota's hands once more with a read option play. While Mariota isn't quite as good of a runner as Cam Newton, he's still really good, and I commend LaFleur for using this play at the right time, as #8 goes through a small gap for another third down conversion. This wasn't a spectacular performance by any means, but Marcus Mariota was huge in this one thanks to his contributions on third down. While he continues to recover from injury, starting 2-1 on the season is massive for the Titans. They get a big test at home with the Eagles coming to visit, which is why their start to the season is critical. To conclude, Mariota had a good performance that was much better than what the box score said of him.

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