

Rookie racks up sacks in second start

Jones fills major void with Haynesworth out

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Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger (7) fumbles the ball as Titans defensive end Jason Jones (91) closes in. JOHN PARTIPILO / THE TENNESSEAN

Titans rookie defensive tackle [Jason Jones](#) transformed just the second start of his professional career into a game he will remember for a long time.

So will Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger.

Starting in place of injured Pro Bowl defensive tackle Albert Haynesworth, Jones recorded 3½ sacks against Roethlisberger, giving the standout from Eastern Michigan the franchise's second-best sack outing since 1982 when the NFL made sacks an official statistic.

"I don't know if I exceeded my expectations, I just didn't know it would happen like this," Jones said. "I'm blessed, glad I had this type of game."

He also forced Roethlisberger to fumble three times and made five tackles.

"They just made a lot of plays," Roethlisberger said of Tennessee's defense, which was also without defensive end Kyle Vanden Bosch. "Even when I got outside the pocket, they were there."

Jones was in pursuit. He knew Roethlisberger had a knack for buying time in the pocket or throwing on the run, allowing him to make plays downfield when other quarterbacks settled for throwing the ball away.

That meant Jones and the Titans had to stay with their pass rush longer because Roethlisberger rarely gave up on his receivers. And the Titans didn't give up on chasing Roethlisberger. Fellow rookie William Hayes added a sack and Tony Brown shared one with Jones.

Jones started early, reaching Roethlisberger on Pittsburgh's first possession, but he wasn't finished.

Early in the fourth quarter, he and Brown sacked Roethlisberger on a third-and-13 at the Pittsburgh 35. Jones sacked him again on Pittsburgh's next possession, forcing a punt.

With 2:26 left and the Steelers trailing 24-14, Jones earned his final sack, bringing down Roethlisberger for an 8-yard loss on first down.

"He prepared like a pro, even enough he stepped into some big shoes," Brown said. "But that just goes to show the depth we have at the defensive line."

Haynesworth is recovering from a medial collateral ligament sprain in his left knee but is expected back for Tennessee's playoff opener on Jan. 10 or 11. So is Vanden Bosch, who underwent groin-related surgery last week.

Their unfortunate predicament gave Jones at least two games to show why the Titans made him their second-round pick this year. He was inactive for three games with an injury but now has five sacks on the season.

"I told him at the beginning of the week that this is your opportunity to get on film and show the coaches what you got, show the other team what you've got," safety Michael Griffin said.

What he did impressed everyone in the locker room.

"That's not bad for anybody, especially a rookie," nickelback Vincent Fuller said.

Perhaps the biggest Jones fan — literally and figuratively — was Haynesworth.

He spent the chilly afternoon in street clothes on the sideline, jumping around as Jones chased after Roethlisberger, and sharing advice and encouragement with the rookie whenever he came off the field.

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