Trade talks are over as Indianapolis prepares to play Dolphins

BY MICHAEL MAROT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS — Indianapolis Colts running back Jonathan Taylor walked into the media room Thursday just as he does every week, ready to get back to football.

The fact he still was doing it in Indy was the surprise.

For three weeks, Taylor heard his name bandied about in trade rumors as one of the top players on the market and everyone it seemed expected him to be dealt before Tuesday's trading deadline.

Instead, four days after thanking Colts fans for their support during his first 6 1/2 years in the league, Taylor was back here, talking about Sunday's game against Miami.

"It's all water under the bridge now," Taylor said. "That's why I was excited to come see you guys because I'm thinking we're going to be talking about the Miami Dolphins now. I thought you were sick of it?"

The Colts (2-7) signaled they were headed for a rebuild by firing general manager Chris Ballard on Oct. 19 and trading away two locker room lynchpins, All-Pro guard Quenton Nelson and Pro Bowl defensive tackle DeForest Buckner, the following week for draft picks.



KELLY JORDAN/Associated Press

Jonathan Taylor remains a fixture in the Indianapolis Colts backfield despite persistent rumors that the buid-for-the-future team approach would see the 27-year-old traded.

On Tuesday, the Colts dealt two veteran receivers — six-time Pro Bowler Keenan Allen and Josh Downs — for more draft picks.

The common thread was all four were on expiring contracts and were unlikely to return to a team staring at a sixth consecutive season out of the playoffs.

Taylor, though, was expected to bring the biggest haul of picks. Ynder contract through 2028, the 2021 NFL rushing champ finished third in rushing last season and remained in the top 10 despite getting fewer carries heading into the deadline.

But when the Colts didn't get the package they wanted, they opted to keep Taylor around. He said he has not spoken with team co-owner Carlie Irsay-Gordon or anyone else about the direction of the Colts saying "that's way above his pay grade," and he still could be traded in the off-season.

Clearly, the moves have taken a toll inside the locker room.

"We lost some gold standard guys, like true pros," Taylor said, tapping his heart as he spoke specifically about Nelson and Buckner. "So I asked myself, what can I do to try and, not be those guys, but emulate those examples they showed me. I watched those guys when I came here and so I'm like 'OK, he's the example?' That's what I want to do."

Indy now faces Miami (1-7) without its top two receivers, moving Laquon Treadwell into the No. 1 role with slot receiver Ashton Dulin, punt returner Anthony Gould, rookie Deion Burks and veteran Nick Westbrook-Ikhine taking on more significant roles. Westbrook-Ikhine was activated from the practice squad earlier this week.

Receivers coach Reggie Wayne said he's had no trouble motivating those guys.

"I shouldn't have to rally anybody, right? It's a bunch of guys who have got to be hungry dogs," he said, tipping his hat with the word 'opportunity' on the front. "Obviously, you don't want to see any of your teammates gone, but the fact of the matter is they are and now it's an opportunity for these guys to step in. Think about Anthony Gould, he's been waiting for this opportunity since he got here (in 2024), so now it's time to shine."

Taylor feels the same way as the Colts try to snap a five-game losing streak against a Dolphins team without starting quarterback Malik Willis, who is on injured reserve, and possibly starting center Aaron Brewer, who is in the concussion protocol.

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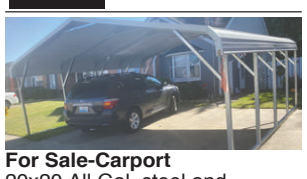


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