

# Bengals notebook: John Ross limited, Randy Bullock's back and second-half futility

By Paul Dehner Jr. and Jim Owczarski

Cincinnati.com

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First-round pick John Ross has practiced without issue for the last few weeks, and head coach Marvin Lewis decided to make him active over Tyler Boyd on Sunday. But the rookie saw just six snaps – bringing his total to 17 in three games.

He saw one target from Andy Dalton, a deep ball that Ross stopped running on. He admitted he didn't follow through on his assignment on that particular play, but his options to make up for it were limited.

"It's like you being a kid and you go the whole year being good and you mess up that one time and now you get nothing for Christmas," Ross said after the game Sunday. "That's what it felt like. It definitely stings."

Ross reinforced the reasons why he hasn't played much, if at all, since resuming practice following a knee injury he suffered before Week 3, noting that he hasn't practiced much.

"I think it's imperative to still bring me back slowly instead of just throwing me out there and automatically assume I'm going to be the guy everyone thinks I'm going to be," Ross said. "It just doesn't work that way. Especially in this league. I can already tell, being a young guy. I just gotta continue working, gotta practice. We have a few more games left so whatever happens is going to happen. I just gotta continue working hard and put in that extra time."

**WORST SECOND HALF OFFENSE SINCE?:** The Bengals haven't just failed to score in the second halves of games this season. They failed to move the ball at all.

To say the second-half issues are worst in the league would actually be undercutting the futility.

Cincinnati has 55 first downs in second half/OT this year. That extrapolates out to 98 over the course of the full season.

That number would come out to the lowest in the NFL since the 2005 season.

The Bengals currently rank 31st in total offense, 31st in time of possession, 30th in total points and, obviously, dead last in first downs.

They've also only scored four touchdowns and four field goals in the second halves this year. When comparing that to other seasons since Andy Dalton and A.J. Green entered the league shows the remarkable drop off.

A full season at this pace would mean approximately seven touchdowns. The fewest touchdowns since Dalton and Green joined the team? Last year with 14. They've averaged 19 second-half/OT touchdowns per season in their career.

**BULLOCK BACK, BUT SHAKY:** Early on Nov. 5 in Jacksonville, special teams coordinator Darrin Simmons worked out Randy Bullock on the turf at EverBank Field and determined his veteran place kicker couldn't go – so free agent Marshall Koehn got the call, and went 1-for-1 on extra points.

This past week, the Bengals made the decision Bullock would be ready before they even left for Nashville, releasing Koehn in advance of the trip.

Bullock, who hasn't really practiced the last two weeks with a back injury, then missed his first kick – an extra point in the first quarter.

"It's been a crazy two weeks trying to get healthy and comfortable enough to play," Bullock said Sunday. "Obviously I missed an extra point. You can't do that. I'll be back at practice this week and looking forward to perfecting my craft and helping the team win next week."

Bullock admitted he experienced stiffness throughout the game, but he wouldn't attribute the missed kick to that.

He made two more point after attempts, but one hit the upright and snuck through.

"I think more than anything you have to trust what you do," Bullock said. "That was what pregame was for. Obviously I had that miss, but I came back and had made two more. That's part of it. You have a short memory and do your job when you're called upon."

# Doc: Bengals just not good enough; ice is thin around Marvin Lewis

By Paul Daugherty  
Cincinnati.com  
November 14, 2017

Groundhog Monday, Mobsters. It stinks when a season that never really started is now officially an exercise in obliging the schedule. Next Sunday, Denver. The Bengals lose the same way and explain it the same way. I've been asked by many fans to "rip those guys" more than I do. Yeah, well, maybe.

Or, maybe they're just not as talented as I thought. If you play hard and lose because you're not good enough, well, that's life, yeah?

The exodus since '15 has been formidable: Sanu, M. Jones, Reggie Nelson, Peko, Whitworth, Zeitler, Burkhead. (And, of course, Hue Jackson and Vance Joseph. Mike Zimmer left after 2013.)

The Bengals have not drafted well lately. Between 2013-15, they whiffed on Ogbuehi, Fisher, Hunt, Clarke and Paul Dawson, all taken in the first 3 rounds. Jeremy Hill (2014) is a semi-whiff.

The Bengals are who their record says they are. Fie on me for being overly optimistic. Won't get fooled again.

Barring a magical about face, the ice around M. Lewis is awfully thin. Seasons that turn to coaching-change speculation after nine games are not good seasons. Fan disaffection is sliding into fan apathy. Apathy is worse. A Marvin Lewis 3.0 isn't likely.

Without further ado,

## TEN THINGS

- They played better team defense after Burfict got tossed.
- He didn't do much to earn his ejection. He did enough, though. He gets targeted. He knows that. Act accordingly.
- Didn't seem to bother him much. Walked off flashing the "money" sign, high-fived a few fans. Still got paid.
- Mariota targeted Pacman. Seemingly every chance he could.
- John Ross showed you why he hasn't been playing.
- Two weeks in a row, the Bengals have had the ball 20 minutes, the other guys 40.
- Five second-half punts. One 1st down in the third quarter. On the flip, Kevin Huber is having an all-pro year.

- Never blame the refs. Don't even suggest it. Players and coach suggested it, especially when it came to Burfict's ejection and the multiple holding calls on Josh Shaw. Titans coach Mike Mularkey shrugged and said his receivers ran double moves all day, Bengals couldn't handle it without holding. "If they didn't do what they did we'd have wide open guys," he said. "Every hold they had we had a double move on and they were beat to a point they had to hold."
- Outcome could have been 41-13 instead of 24-20. A dropped TD pass, a TD taken away on an arcane rule, a missed 48-yard FG. A bad INT right after Dalton fumbled a snap, leading to an easy TD for Cincinnati. Bengals can't say they didn't get some breaks.
- Rex Burkhead carried 10 times for 36 yards, caught three passes for 27 yards and a TD and blocked a punt Sunday. Bengals retained Jeremy Hill.

# Nov. 13 Marvin Lewis press conference transcript: Fixing third down letdowns

By Staff

WKRC

November 14, 2017

Bengals head coach Marvin Lewis held a press conference on Monday to review Sunday's loss at the Tennessee Titans, discuss Vontaze Burfict's ejection and Jeremy Hill's decision to have season-ending ankle surgery:

## **Initial comments ...**

"I'm really disappointed for our guys (that we didn't) put enough good plays (together) to finish the football game and win the game. They fought their butts off. There were a lot of positive things in the game. With the defense, I saw some different things. We settled down and began to play pretty well in the second half. Our Achilles' heel — as we could tell after the game — was third downs on both sides (of the line of scrimmage). You have to prevent them from marching down the field by stopping them on third down defensively, and you want to have more opportunities to score more points by winning on third down more often on offense. That has to be a key point and emphasis for us."

## **Defensively, it seems like you're getting them into situations where they are converting on third down by an inch ...**

"No. 1, we have to understand the situation. The 11 guys, whoever is at the point of attack, have to win their opportunity. We had a third-and-one yesterday (that played) as more of a passing situation. But (generally) on third-and-one, it's likely not (a passing down). So understand that, and everybody get to the right spots. Then, maybe the (running back) doesn't fall forward for the first down. It's an important thing — is everybody always being on the same page. Then, execute whatever front pressure or front coverage that Paul (Bengals defensive coordinator Paul Guenther) has called."

## **On offense, it seems like there are more third-and-long situations ...**

"It was third-and-three, third-and-four, or third-and-five at three points yesterday, with maybe a third-and-six in there as well. Those are all things that are manageable and that you have to be able to convert. We have to keep looking at how we're (going about third downs), what we're doing with them, and how we can convert them better. And also, understand how we're being defended (on third downs) in each game. (It helps with) the adjustments that need to be made in the play-calling or formations, or whatever we need to do to get us a better opportunity to convert (third downs)."

## **Do you feel like the defense is being worn down because of how much they're on the field?**

"Yes, it does wear you down. But, the only way to get off the field is to either take the ball away or win on third down. That's the only thing that is controllable. That's what happens."

## **As the game wore on, injuries piled up. A lot of young guys had to step up and play. How'd the young guys do for you?**

“We didn’t do as well as we needed to. We didn’t win the game. No matter who is in there, we have to be able to execute and get things done. We allowed completions or had penalties and those things — it’s the same thing. Our execution was not of a winning standard.”

**There is a report out there that says Vontaze Burfict has been provoked at least three times, were you aware of that?**

“(The communications staff) told me of the report. The officials have a job to do. I’ve explained this to Vontaze; he understands that. They have a job to do and they are going to separate players if players are in a situation where they (need to be separated). That’s not what this is about, or where the NFL should be. So, get back to the huddle and get going. That’s the most important thing. We don’t need to jaw with anyone after the play — any of the players. That’s important. It would shock me if those things occur. I know on occasions supposedly they have, but again that would shock me.”

**What went into the decision about Jeremy Hill being put on the injured reserve list?**

“Jeremy thinks he needs to have ankle surgery.”

**Were you surprised by that decision?**

“Yeah. He’s consulted a couple of physicians, both said this is something that could wait until after the season, and he just felt like it was causing too much discomfort.”

**He said that he had been dealing with it for a bit. Was that something you were aware of?**

“I don’t think he had any instance of it since this August when he rolled his ankle during training camp, or pre-game warmups, or whenever it was. I can’t remember exactly. But that’s the only instance that he had this fall.”

**You have two good running backs left on the roster, but are you only going with two, or will you bring someone else in?**

“We’ll address that as we move forward, now that his situation has been clarified.”

**Andrew Billings was able to play quite a bit. How did you feel he performed?**

“It was a really good opportunity for him to get in there and play. It’s something to keep building upon and grow upon. I think that’s. That was probably the most snaps he’s had, and against that group of offensive players, that’s good.”

**Josh Tupou got some snaps as well, how did he look?**

“Have you been evaluating the tape (laughs)? He’s got work to do (laughs).”

**The Titans didn’t hurt you with their running game on the inside. The inside seemed pretty stout ...**

“We didn’t play well enough. The quarterback ran for 50 yards and they had another 40 or 50 yards on different kinds of outside plays that came off the option. When we adjusted some things and everybody

got on their responsibilities, we did much better. But we saw some different looks early in the game, so they had to come over and everybody see it through the same eyes and get it adjusted. Then (they) settled down and played it pretty well. We didn't play well enough to start the game or end the game."

# Fay: Is Vontaze Burfict the guy the Bengals can't live without?

By John Fay

WPCO

November 14, 2017

Let's start off by saying the disaster that is the Bengals season is not Marvin Lewis' fault. No coach could win with that offensive line.

But enough falls to Lewis' blame that it could cost him his job. Take Sunday's loss 24-20 at Tennessee: Twelve penalties for 84 yards. How many kept drives alive?

One-for-10 on third downs offensively. Tennessee was 7-for-15 on third down. A lot of that falls on coaching.

So I think Lewis and his staff could take the fall for this season that is a reeling toward somewhere between awful and abysmal.

Is that fair? No.

But you spend the No. 9 pick on John Ross, and he's the target once? The second half is a disaster in nearly every game? Your defensive backs don't seem to know the holding rules?

But if I'm Marvin and I'm defending my job, I say to Mike Brown one thing: Your dad could not win with this offense line. Hell, Jim Brown could not average 4 yards a carry behind this line.

Conspiracy theory alert: Did Mike give Marvin this line knowing this season was lost and it would justify a big shakeup?

Burfict?

Vontaze Burfict should not have been called for the unnecessary roughness penalty. He was trying to pull up, and he hit DeMarco Murray — and hit may be too strong of a word.

Whatever Burfict did on the next play, he should not have — although from the video I saw, the referee should be suspended for ejecting Burfict.

Here's the real question: The Bengals gave up seven points after the ejection, so is Burfict a guy they can't live without?

# ESPN: Officials are provoking Vontaze Burfict by cursing him, Bengals teammate says

By Staff

WPCO

November 14, 2017

Officials have cursed at Bengals linebacker Vontze Burfict on multiple occasions and come into contact with him in three of the last four games - and there's a video to prove it, a Bengals player has told ESPN.

ESPN's Adam Schefter, one of the most reliable and best-sourced NFL reporters, posted a report on ESPN's blog Monday following Burfict's run-in with a down judge on the sideline during the Bengals-Titans game in Nashville Sunday.

The report did not include a video.

An NFL spokesman denied those charges Monday.

Burfict will not be suspended for brushing off the down judge's arm, but the NFL will review the incident and Burfict's personal fouls in the Titans' game for possible fines, according to ESPN.

# Bengals player: Refs have cursed at Vontaze Burfict multiple times

By Adam Schefter

ESPN

November 14, 2017

Officials have provoked Cincinnati Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict at least three times in the past month, according to a teammate who came to Burfict's defense Monday.

The Bengals player said he has heard officials cursing at Burfict on multiple occasions, and there is video that shows officials coming into contact with the linebacker three times in the past four games.

An NFL spokesman denied those charges Monday, saying it is not unusual for officials to come into contact with players and that there has been nothing unusual involving officials' interactions with Burfict.

But over the past month, according to a source close to Burfict, the Bengals linebacker has grown increasingly upset with officials' treatment of him and feels he is being singled out by officials.

Burfict has complained to Bengals coach Marvin Lewis, a member of the league's competition committee, but those complaints have not been brought to the league office, an NFL spokesman said Monday.

Lewis, for his part, said Monday that he doesn't believe officials are antagonizing Burfict.

"Officials have a job to do, and I've explained this to Vontaze, and he understands that," Lewis said.

"They have a job to do and they are going to separate players, and players are in a situation where they are there. That's not what this is about, where the NFL should be. So, get back to the huddle and get going, and that's the most important thing. We don't need to jaw with anyone after the play, any of the players, so that's important.

"It would shock me if those things occur," Lewis continued. "I know on occasions supposedly they have, but again, that would shock me."

Officials made contact with Burfict in an Oct. 22 game against the Pittsburgh Steelers, again in a Nov. 5 game against the Jacksonville Jaguars and then in Sunday's game against the Tennessee Titans, during which Burfict was ejected for the first time in his career.

In the second quarter of the Bengals' 24-20 loss to Tennessee, Burfict was involved in a shoving match with a Titans offensive lineman. Down judge Jeff Bergman had a hand out to hold Burfict back during the altercation, and Burfict knocked his hand away.

The league does not plan to suspend Burfict for making contact with Bergman, a source confirmed to ESPN.

# Bengals' Jeremy Hill opts for season-ending ankle surgery

By Lauren Pfahler

ESPN

November 14, 2017

Cincinnati Bengals running back Jeremy Hill has elected to undergo season-ending ankle surgery, but head coach Marvin Lewis seems to think the decision was premature.

Hill landed on the injured reserve list Saturday ahead of the team's 24-20 loss at Tennessee, one week after hurting his ankle in the final practice before the Week 9 game at Jacksonville. He was scratched from that game and did not practice all last week; however, Lewis said he was surprised to learn Hill had decided to end his season with surgery.

"I think he's consulted a couple physicians," Lewis said Monday. "Both said this is something that could wait until after the season, and he just felt like it was causing too much discomfort."

The 25-year-old had left a preseason game Aug. 27 against the Redskins with an ankle injury, but Lewis said the current injury is unrelated.

"I don't think he had any instance of it since this August," Lewis said. "He rolled his ankle in training camp, or warm-ups in a game -- I can't remember, but one of those times in the preseason. But that's the only instance he had this fall."

Hill, who becomes a free agent in 2018, started in seven games and rushed for just 116 yards on 37 attempts -- 3.1 yards per carry. This is his first season without a touchdown after recording 29 touchdowns in his first three years in the league.

The Bengals now are down to two running backs, Giovani Bernard and rookie Joe Mixon, a second-round draft pick out of Oklahoma.

"We will address that as we move forward now that [Hill's] situation has been clarified," Lewis said.

# The NFL got it right (this time) on Vontaze Burfict

By Kevin Seifert

ESPN

November 14, 2017

There may come a time when the NFL will have no choice but to throw the book at Cincinnati Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict, a player who has earned every bit of his reputation for dirty and unnecessary extracurricular play. Monday, however, was not that moment, and the NFL was right to opt against a suspension for Burfict's minor contact with an official during the Bengals' 24-20 loss to the Tennessee Titans on Sunday.

The NFL rule book calls for an ejection if a player shoves, pushes or strikes an official "in an offensive, disrespectful or unsportsmanlike manner." Video of the incident shows that Burfict pushed back against the arm of down judge Jeff Bergman, as Bergman tried to end a pushing match between Burfict and Titans tackle Taylor Lewan.

The ensuing ejection cost Burfict more than half of the game. He is also in line to be fined \$30,387, the NFL's minimum fine for a first offense for contact with an official. Consider it a half-game suspension, much like the Bengals' A.J. Green received for his fight with Jacksonville Jaguars cornerback Jalen Ramsey in Week 9.

We might be having a different conversation if Burfict had used enough force to send Bergman tumbling or even off balance. In reality, it was an instinctive swat at a moment of heightened emotion.

To be clear, there should be a red line toward any physical gestures toward officials. The NFL must make clear that it is never remotely acceptable to threaten (or punish) officials for their calls. But the league has maintained that line here. It ejected a player and will issue a substantial fine for a swat.

If you think Burfict should be punished at an escalating scale, I would argue that he was. Many officials would have given another player, one who hadn't been suspended twice and fined more than \$300,000 in his six-year career, the benefit of the doubt. You had to really squint at a field-level camera angle to see the contact at all.

This isn't to absolve Burfict at all. The discipline here fits. And when Burfict does something really bad, I think you can rest assured the NFL will be waiting with its hammer.

# Vontaze Burfict won't be suspended for ejection Sunday

By Staff

ESPN

November 14, 2017

Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict will not be suspended for making contact with an official in Cincinnati's 24-20 loss to the Tennessee Titans on Sunday, a source told ESPN, confirming a report by NFL Network.

Sunday's ejection was the first of Burfict's NFL career.

Burfict was in on a tackle of Titans quarterback Marcus Mariota, who was diving for the end zone on a run. The officials marked Mariota short of the touchdown, and shortly after, Burfict appeared to make contact with the official.

The down judge, Jeff Bergman, had a hand out to hold Burfict back from more back-and-forth with a Titans offensive lineman, and Burfict knocked his hand away.

Two plays earlier, Burfict was called for a personal foul after hitting DeMarco Murray late out of bounds. Murray scored a rushing touchdown on the play after Burfict's ejection.

On his way out of the stadium, Burfict appeared to be jawing and flashing money gestures with his hands to the booing crowd.

Burfict was suspended for the first three games of this season for an illegal hit against Kansas City Chiefs fullback Anthony Sherman in the preseason. He initially had been suspended for five games but had the punishment reduced after appealing.

Burfict was also suspended the first three games of the 2016 season for numerous violations of player safety rules, including an illegal hit on Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Antonio Brown during the 2015 playoffs.

During his five-year NFL career, Burfict has forfeited more than \$800,000 due to suspensions and fines for numerous penalties ranging from unnecessary roughness, personal fouls and roughing the passer.

# Bengals' Burfict avoids suspension for contact with official

By Joe Kay  
Associated Press  
November 14, 2017

Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict won't be suspended for the contact with an official that got him ejected from a 24-20 loss at Tennessee.

A league spokesman said Monday that Burfict faces a fine only. He pushed an official's arm out of the way on the sideline in the second quarter after quarterback Marcus Mariota ran out of bounds. Two plays earlier, Burfict drew an unnecessary roughness penalty for hitting Mariota out of bounds.

"I've been saying it: He's going to be held to a different set of standards because of his past," defensive coordinator Paul Guenther said Monday. "So he's got to understand that. He does us no good when he's sitting in the locker room for half a ballgame."

It was the second game in a row that the Bengals (3-6) had a star player ejected before halftime. Receiver A.J. Green was kicked out of a loss at Jacksonville after grabbing cornerback Jalen Ramsey around the neck, tackling him and punching him.

The outburst by Green was out of character. He apologized after the game. Green was fined \$42,541 by the NFL but wasn't suspended. Ramsey also was ejected from the game but wasn't suspended or fined.

Coach Marvin Lewis has warned Burfict about exchanging words with opponents after a play.

"I've explained this to Vontaze," Lewis said Monday. "He understands that. (Officials) have a job to do and they're going to separate players. ... So get back to the huddle and get going, and that's the most important thing. We don't need to jaw with anyone after the play, any of the players."

An ESPN report quoted an unidentified Bengals player saying officials have provoked Burfict. Lewis said "it would shock me" if that were true.

Burfict's latest problems add to his history of fines and suspensions.

His biggest meltdown came in the final minute of a playoff game against the Steelers in the 2015 season. His hit to Antonio Brown's head drew a 15-yard penalty that moved Pittsburgh into range for a field goal and an 18-16 victory.

The NFL suspended Burfict for the first three games of the 2016 season in response to his hit on Brown and his history of egregious conduct. He got another three-game suspension to start this season after his egregious hit on Kansas City running back Anthony Sherman during a preseason game.

The Steelers have won their past five games against the Bengals, including a 29-14 victory in Pittsburgh this season. The Steelers (7-2) play a Monday night game at Paul Brown Stadium on Dec. 4.

Since the Bengals' playoff meltdown, Burfict and running back Le'Veon Bell have exchanged taunts on Twitter. After JuJu Smith-Schuster scored a touchdown Sunday during a 20-17 victory at Indianapolis, he and Bell re-enacted Green's takedown of Ramsey as their end zone celebration.

The Bengals play at Denver (3-6) on Sunday, completing a stretch of three straight road games. The Broncos are coming off a 41-16 home loss to New England on Sunday night, their fifth straight defeat. Brock Osweiler is expected to start against a Bengals defense that has self-destructed lately.

Cincinnati hasn't been able to move the ball on offense or get off the field on defense, resulting in a huge imbalance. In the past two games, the Bengals have run 75 fewer plays than their opponents. The Jaguars and Titans each held the ball for more than 40 minutes.

The defense allowed opponents to convert 19 of 33 third down plays in the past two games. In the second half alone Sunday, Bengals penalties allowed the Titans to convert a third-and-10, a third-and-8, another third-and-10 and a third-and-5.

#### HILL OPTS FOR SURGERY

The Bengals put running back Jeremy Hill on injured reserve Saturday because of an ankle injury, ending his season. Hill got hurt in practice the day before the loss in Jacksonville. Lewis was surprised that Hill decided to have surgery, which prompted the move.

"Jeremy thinks he needs to have ankle surgery," Lewis said. "I think he consulted a couple of physicians, both said this is something that could wait until after the season, and he just felt it was causing too much discomfort."

Hill's injury leaves rookie Joe Mixon and Giovani Bernard in the backfield. The Bengals are expected to add another running back this week. They have the worst-ranked running game in the NFL.

# Lewis doubts Tez story, elaborates on Hill

By Geoff Hobson

Bengals.com

November 14, 2017

Jeremy Hill: surprises Lewis.

Look for the Bengals to sign a running back to the active roster as early as Tuesday to fill the vacancy left by Jeremy Hill's abrupt departure to season-ending injured reserve on Saturday.

Since Hill was a surprise scratch last week in Jacksonville with an ankle issue, there had been indications head coach Marvin Lewis was mystified by the injury. On Monday Lewis admitted he's surprised Hill has opted for surgery now.

"Jeremy thinks he needs to have ankle surgery," Lewis said in his Monday news conference. "He's consulted a couple of physicians, both said this is something that could wait until after the season, and he just felt like it was causing too much discomfort."

Lewis was surprised to learn that Hill had tweaked his ankle in the practice the day before the Jaguars game.

Then last week Hill said he's been battling the injury since last season.

"I don't think he had any instance of it since this August when he rolled his ankle during training camp, or pre-game warmups, or whenever it was," Lewis said. "I can't remember exactly. But that's the only instance that he had this fall."

It has been speculated since the Bengals drafted Joe Mixon in the second round earlier this year that Hill is most likely headed to free agency after this season. He'll be heading in with a surgically-repaired ankle.

Lewis responded skeptically to Adam Schefter's report for ESPN quoting an unnamed Bengal that officials are provoking linebacker Vontaze Burfict by cursing at him and initiating contact.

Burfict got ejected late in the first half Sunday in Tennessee for brushing away an official that broke up a confrontation between him and Titans offensive lineman Jake Conklin. That came two snaps after Burfict was flagged for unnecessary roughness when he bumped Titans running back DeMarco Murray after the play well out-of-bounds, two penalties that some teammates said after the game were borderline.

"I think he's getting targeted a lot," said wide receiver A.J. Green. "On some of those plays I don't think anybody else would make it. They wouldn't get that call. I think he just has a target on his back. That's the way he is. He's an emotional guy. That's the guy we want. I wouldn't trade him for anybody in the world."

Defensive lineman Chris Smith didn't see the ejection play, but he thought Burfict tried to hold up on Murray.

“My opinion, yeah it,” Smith said of targeting. “I think they say before the game, ‘Watch 5, 5.’ The (unnecessary roughness penalty) they called on him, he literally threw his hands up. He just bumped the guy ... What else are you supposed to do? ... If that’s what they’re going to call that’s what they’re going to call, but I didn’t really think that was fair.”

On Monday, Schefter found an anonymous teammate to say more than that in charges the NFL denied and Lewis doubted. A source close to Burfict also told him he’s upset with officials and feels he is being singled out.

“It would shock me if those things occur. I know on occasions supposedly they have, but again that would shock me,” Lewis said. “The officials have a job to do. I’ve explained this to Vontaze; he understands that. They have a job to do and they are going to separate players if players are in a situation where they (need to be separated). That’s not what this is about, or where the NFL should be. So, get back to the huddle and get going. That’s the most important thing. We don’t need to jaw with anyone after the play — any of the players. That’s important.”

# Vontaze Burfict won't face ban for flag in Bengals' loss

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

November 14, 2017

Vontaze Burfict will play on.

The Cincinnati Bengals linebacker will not be suspended for making contact with an official during Sunday's 24-20 loss to the Titans, according to NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport.

Burfict's extracurricular entanglement will be reviewed using the standard process for a possible fine, Rapoport was told, but the defender will be eligible for next Sunday's tilt with the Broncos.

Burfict made contact with the official after trying to take down Tennessee signal-caller Marcus Mariota. The sixth-year linebacker was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct and ejected. The booting came just two plays after Burfict was slapped with an unnecessary roughness flag for bumping Titans running back DeMarco Murray out of bounds.

A suspension seemed like a possibility for Burfict, especially after Oakland's Marshawn Lynch was banned one game for making contact with an official earlier this season. The league, however, saw this incident through different eyes.

# Reports: Vontaze Burfict won't be suspended

By Josh Alper

Pro Football Talk

November 14, 2017

Bengals linebacker Vontaze Burfict found himself back in hot water on the field Sunday when he was ejected from the team's loss to the Titans for making contact with an official.

PFT reported later on Sunday that the league would consider suspending Burfict, who has twice served three-game suspensions for violating the league's player safety rules. The action and context of Sunday's ejection as well as Burfict's history of infractions were to be involved in the decision-making process.

The action consisted of Burfict pushing an official's hand away from him while the official was keeping Burfict and Titans players away from each other during some post-play jawing. While there was contact, it wasn't over the top and Ian Rapoport and Tom Pelissero of NFL Media both reported on Monday that Burfict will not be suspended as a result.

Burfict will be subject to a fine if the league feels one is warranted for his behavior on that play or for an unnecessary roughness penalty he picked up shortly before his ejection.