

By JOE BIDDLE

Titans Coach Mike Munchak is enjoying his favorite part of the NFL calendar.

Don't bother to hazard a guess as to Munchak's choice.

You won't get it.

It's the first 10 days of training camp. Huh? This guy has been involved in 30 NFL training camps. He was a Hall of Fame offensive lineman for the Houston Oilers. He hung up the cleats and became an assistant coach for the Oilers/Titans.

Munchak is in his second season as Titans head coach. Although NFL training camps have changed dramatically in recent years, Munchak holds firm that it's the first 10 days that give him the most satisfaction and joy.

Why? It's all about football. Teaching football. Teaching technique. Watching his team take shape, forming what will be its identity.

Mike Munchak is first and foremost a teacher. His classroom is the football field.

"Really, it's the first 10 days for me because there are no games to be played," Munchak said on the eve of training camp 2012.

"You can concentrate on football. These next 10 days, it's about technique and getting used to your pads again, getting used to the plays, getting after it a little bit, getting physical and getting

camaraderie with your teammates.”

Training camp hasn't always been this way. Back in the day NFL players used training camp to get in shape for the season. In recent years, players have shown up in shape. They virtually train all year around. They have Organized Team Activities before training camp. They have off-season workouts.

So when training camp opens, it's about getting to work.

“You start with everything basic in the first couple of days,” Munchak said. “You're getting back to not doing a lot of lifts n those first couple of days of easing into it to where you're getting under gap control, going back to basic football. ... The point to me is the emphasis is just on us. It's not on who we're playing or what's about to happen in the future.”

Munchak makes sure the players are not overburdened with distractions. They are all housed in a local hotel. They eat three meals at their training table.

“The first 10 days, the only decision they make is when they want to go to the bathroom. You give them an itinerary and they see that 24/7, it's all about football. I think that kind of eases their mind and it's fun to watch all that happen.”

That is not to say that Munchak and his staff have nothing but football on their minds.

The real world hit them hard early Monday morning when reserve wide receiver O.J. Murdock took his life in his hometown of Tampa. The Floridian died after shooting himself with a shotgun.

Murdock had been given permission to report late to training camp and now his death hangs over the facility.

Munchak also has the Kenny Britt problem to solve. Days prior to training camp, Britt tried to enter a Fort Campbell gate at 3:30 in the morning. After failing a field sobriety test, he was charged with DUI.

It marked the wide receiver's eighth scrape with the law and he faces suspension by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell, or the Titans.

It proves that even in good times, bad things can happen.

Contact Sports Columnist Joe Biddle at joebiddle11@gmail.com .