



# Jacksonville Jaguars UNDER KHANSTRUCTION

BY LILTERA R. WILLIAMS

**Y**es we Khan!" the crowd of almost 7,000 fans chanted as new owner Shahid Khan made his way to the stage during the impromptu Ready To Rise Rally, a kickoff celebration held at Everbank Field on January 17, 2012 to signify the rebirth of Jacksonville's main attraction.

A slew of "Khan puns" followed thereafter, including "It's Khantagious", "Khan you dig it?", and "Yell as loud as you Khan!", as well as a crowd pleasing mustache "Khan-test."

Ready To Rise was hosted by former Offensive Tackle and the first Jaguars player to be inducted into the Pride of the Jaguars Hall of Fame, Tony Boselli.

"Once you're a Jaguar, you're always a Jaguar," he proclaimed as he addressed the excited hopefuls.

The Rise celebration opened with fan submitted videos welcoming both Khan and new Head Coach Mike Mularkey to Jacksonville.

Filled with memorable and clever messages for the city's most cherished treasure, including a creative "blood, sweat, and teal" reference, each video showcased on the stadium's maximized HD screens was a testament to the strong support system the

Jaguars have acquired over their 19 year existence.

After performances from the D-Line FEEL THE BEAT Drummers and ROAR cheerleaders, a few key players who gave it their all on the field every Sunday were introduced, including Cornerback Derek Cox (#21), Fullback Greg Jones (#33), Tight End Zach Miller (#86), and Special Teams Ace Montell Owens (#24), who urged the attentive and optimistic fans situated near the Bud Zone end of the stadium not to despise small beginnings.

Boselli then offered fans a recap of the highlights from last season, most notably Maurice Jones-Drew's accomplishment of securing the NFL rushing title and breaking the franchise's single-season rushing record with a final tally of 1,606 yards.

Unfortunately, the Jaguars ended the 2011 season with a losing record of 5-11, barely escaping a repeat of their worst franchise finish (4-12) during the team's inaugural year.

Last season's turbulent changes proved to be a challenge for the young and inexperienced squad of ambitious players.

Former Quarterback David Garrard was abruptly released a week before the regular season was scheduled to begin. His replacement, rookie Blaine Gabbert, was rushed into the leadership role and led the Jaguars to a mere 3-8 start, which



resulted in Head Coach Jack Del Rio being ousted with just five games remaining in the season.

On the same day that Del Rio's departure was announced, news that the team would be sold to Pakistani businessman, Shahid Khan began to spread, along with speculation that the Jaguars would not remain in Jacksonville.

Khan put every rumor to rest when it was his turn to speak at the Rise Rally.

"Jacksonville, I'm all in... We're going to have a lot of fun together and we're going to win together," he promised.

Fans cheered in excitement as he smiled from ear to ear, stretching the corners of his risingly popular mustache.

"I'm absolutely with every fiber of my body committed to putting a winner and a Super Bowl right here in Jacksonville," he continued.

Jaguars General Manager, Gene Smith shared his sentiments by expressing his admiration for new Head Coach Mike Mularkey.

"This guy knows offense and he knows how to assemble a strong staff," Smith said. "Going through the head coach search, there were certain things Mr. Khan and I were looking for. I truly believe Mike Mularkey has all the traits you look for in a leader, starting with the first thing, integrity."

On Jan. 10, 2012, Mike Mularkey was officially offered the Jaguars head coaching position.

"I'm really excited to be a part of this organization. I'm excited about being a part of this community and I'm really excited about being home," he openly told the crowd at the rally.



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SHERRI HILL







Mularkey is a Miami, Florida, native who played Quarterback in high school and went on to attend the University of Florida.

He was later drafted by the San Francisco 49ers in 1983 and played 9 years in the NFL at the tight end position.

His 18 year coaching experience and titles include: Offensive and Defensive Quality Control Coordinator for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Tight End Coach for the Pittsburgh Steelers, Head Coach of the Buffalo Bills for the 2004-2005 season, and Offensive Coordinator for the Miami Dolphins and Atlanta Falcons.

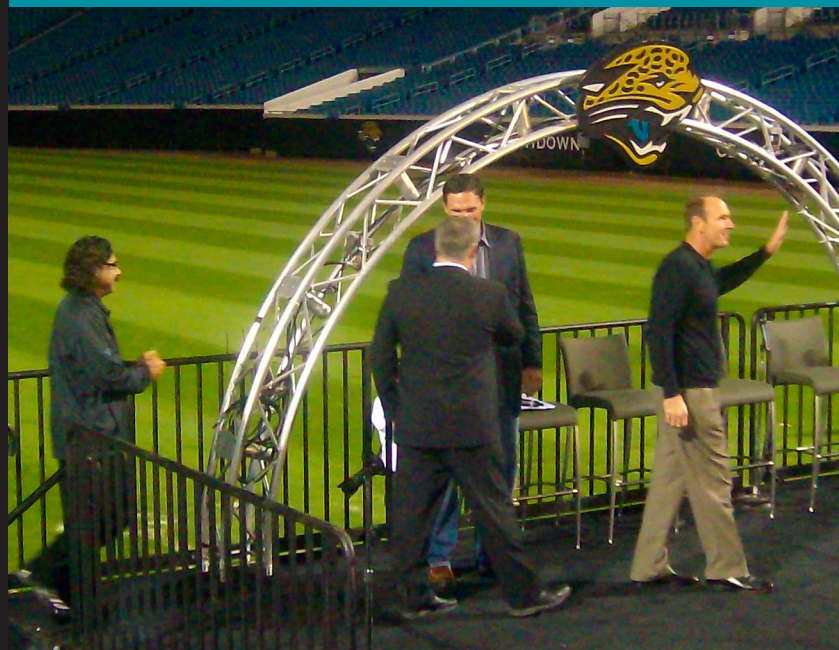
During his 8 years as an Offensive Coordinator, the majority of Mularkey's teams advanced to the playoffs.

Additionally, Mularkey's son, Patrick, has been a member of the Jaguars scouting staff for the past two years and will likely assist his father in a quest to immediately attack staff hiring.

The new Head Coach's first ordered staff changes occurred when he promoted Defensive Coordinator Mel Tucker, who was welcomed with a standing ovation and cheers of "defense", to Assistant Head Coach and former Atlanta Falcons Quarterback Coach, Bob Bratkowski, to Offensive Coordinator. Tucker filled in as interim Head Coach after Del Rio's sudden exit and supervised the team's 2-3 finish.

However, his previous efforts did not go unrecognized, as the Jaguars defense ended the season ranked number 6 in the league overall.

Mularkey defended his decision by declaring, "To the last



Left: 19 year Jacksonville Jaguars fan.

Above: Tony Boselli introducing Coach Mularkey, Gen. Manager Gene Smith and Owner Shahid Khan