

Von Miller devours lineman, makes Broncos camp look easy

By Troy Renck
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Von Miller makes football look too easy.

It's not, of course. The sport features offenses with play calls longer than a Shakespearean sonnet. Defenses boast endless disguises, creating mental sandtraps for quarterbacks.

Then Miller stands across the line, and it becomes a simple game. He's faster, stronger and more talented than those looking back at him. Miller vs. an offensive lineman. It's the greatest mismatch since Little Red Riding Hood vs. the Wolf.

"I will be a better tackle because of practicing against him," said Broncos starting right tackle Ryan Harris. "To his credit, he practices hard. A guy like that could take a day off, a week off, heck, he could take the whole camp off, but he brings it everyday. Man, '58' what can't you say about that guy."

Training camp quickly becomes a grind. With Miller, you can practically hear the Beach Boys' "Kokomo" playing everywhere he goes. Work is his vacation. Twenty months removed from anterior cruciate ligament surgery on his right knee, he is dominating in practice with a butcher's smile.

"I am just having fun. Playing football is what I do best, so when I am out here, I should be happy. I should love coming to practice," Miller said. "People shouldn't have to drag me out to practice just to do something I do better than anything I do in life."

Watching Miller over the past week was akin to watching Ken Griffey Jr. show up for a backyard Wiffle Ball game. He demonstrated burst and strength uncommon in a league decorated with athletic freaks. It requires no leap of faith to see Miller becoming the league's highest-paid defensive player after this season. He will cash in either through the franchise tag or a longterm deal.

From healing and maturing, Miller boasts freedom and confidence. He shed the brace, follows a strict diet and features a larger repertoire of moves, not counting his smooth dance steps to Silento's "Watch Me" before Friday's practice.

"Most guys have like two that might work," Harris said. "He has like eight. You don't know what he's going to do next."

A 20-sack season, defensive player of the year candidate, the possibilities seem endless for Miller. At 26, he enters his prime with a clear head and open path to superstardom. Two years of clean tests and a revamped NFL policy discharged Miller from the league's drug program. He is no longer subject to multiple tests per week. And a year suspension for a mistake no longer hangs over his head.

A new defense predicated on pressure also plays into Miller's strengths. Defensive coordinator Wade Phillips will use Miller like Randy Johnson used his slider — as the ultimate wipeout weapon. Last year, health was the focus with Miller. This summer, it's havoc.

At a recent practice, he blistered a lineman in one-on-ones then jogged straight into an 11-on-11 drill and reached the quarterback. On another occasion, he raced by a lineman and celebrated by running into the locker room entrance like Bo Jackson disappearing into the tunnel at the Kingdome in 1987.

Von is Von again. Hide the linemen and children.

"Von just makes the game look easy. You can see that from running tackles over, running around the corner, acting like the old Von," Pro Bowler DeMarcus Ware said. "After his surgery, he really sort of reinvented himself. You can see it. It has carried over. He's rolling."

Shane Ray is Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson’s twin and we have proof

By Nicki Jhabvala
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This is a true story. Sort of.

Shane Ray, the Broncos’ rookie linebacker, has for years heard that he looks like Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, an allegation that deserved to be investigated fully.

Now, in honor of Throwback Thursday, The Rock/Spencer Strasmore had posted a photo on his Instagram account from when he was 16 years old. Let’s ignore the fact that he looks 36 instead of 16 and focus on the bigger issue at hand here:

Dwayne Johnson is Shane Ray and Shane Ray is Dwayne Johnson.

How? Who cares? Just look:



This revelation obviously came as a shock to Johnson ...

@TheRock
@NickiJhabvala @X_RAYted56 Ha that's crazy. Family

... and to Ray’s mother ...

@brisupermom47
@TheRock @NickiJhabvala @X_RAYted56 OMG!

... but not to Ray ...

@X_RAYted56

Lol I told yall we were related. Here's the proof.

... who, along with Broncos cornerback Chris Harris, extended a practice invite to Ray's newfound twin ...

@ChrisHarrisJr

@X_RAYted56 @TheRock Rock you might as well come to a practice lol you probably filming tho

... who politely declined, but wished them well:

@ChrisHarrisJr @X_RAYted56 Appreciate the invite brother! Y'all handle that business this year! Rootin
for ya

— Dwayne Johnson (@TheRock) August 8, 2015

I know. This is how all great friendships begin.

Von Miller on Aldon Smith: 'I'm going to be there for him'

By Nicki Jhabvala
DenverPost.com
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When San Francisco 49ers defensive end Aldon Smith picked up his fifth arrest Thursday, the team decided it had had enough.

Smith was released by the team just hours after Santa Clara, Calif., police said they had arrested him on suspicion of a hit and run, driving under the influence and vandalism. (Smith denied he was driving under the influence during an interview with a local television station.)

In the last three years, Smith has been arrested five times, spent a month in a treatment facility, served a nine-game suspension for violating the league's personal conduct and substance abuse policy and has now been released.

Miller, who had his own string of troubles, including a six-game suspension for violating the league's substance abuse policy in 2013, can relate to what Smith is going through. The two became friends as part of the 2011 draft class, and Miller credited Smith with helping get through his suspension. On Friday, Miller said he would return the favor.

"Yeah, I heard about it," Miller said of Smith's release. "That's my guy. I'm going to be with him until the very end. We're friends before anything else. That's my brother. He's going through a tough time right now. He was there for me and I'm going to be there for him.

"He's going through a tough patch — we all go through a tough patch — but I have full confidence that he'll be able to get out it and we'll see the same Aldon Smith that we saw the first two years in the league. It's just tough right now. People go through tough times, I'll be the first one to tell you. I've been through a lot of stuff, and I'm going to be there for him, however long it is, to get him back right."

Miller was recently discharged from the NFL's drug intervention program after two years of testing clean. He enters the final year on his contract — the Broncos picked up his fifth-year option — and his clean state could work in his favor in contract negotiations.

Smith's contract was also set to expire after this season, but even with his past incidents, a future contract figured to be team-friendly. The 49ers now face a \$1.6 million cap hit for releasing him.

Backup receivers shine, Peyton Manning in pistol at Day 6 of Broncos camp

By Nicki Jhabvala
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A look at the happenings at Broncos training camp on Friday:

Lowlight: Brock Osweiler has had his bright moments in training camp, but he struggled in Friday's session.

It started with a play-action pass intended for receiver Jordan Taylor that ended up five feet to the side of him in the end zone.

It was followed by a deep pass attempt during another team drill that flew over the head of every receiver in the area.

And it was capped by an interception by Taurean Nixon in team drills.

Broncos coach Gary Kubiak on Monday expressed confidence in his backup quarterback and how he's progressed in learning the offense and in running the team while on the field. But Osweiler, who is entering the final season on his contract, needs as many quality reps in camp and preseason as he can get to prove his value.

Highlight: With Emmanuel Sanders sitting out practice Friday to nurse a "very minor" hamstring injury, the Broncos' backup receivers got extra repetitions — and they took advantage. Solomon Patton, a waiver claim from the Buccaneers, starred with two acrobatic catches and repetitions in punt-returning drills.

But Bennie Fowler, a second-year receiver from Michigan State, also had a nice series in 6-on-6 drills with Brock Osweiler and the second offensive unit. After catching a pass to set up a fourth-and-1, Fowler hauled in another from Osweiler in the right corner of the end zone to cap the series.

Jordan Norwood, who also took a number of punt-return reps with Patton, received first-team reps in the slot and fielded multiple catches from Peyton Manning for first downs on 11-on-11 drills.

Position battle: C.J. Anderson continues to hold down the No. 1 spot at running back, but competition behind him is heating up. Kubiak said he's been impressed by Ronnie Hillman, who took some first-team reps Friday. Montee Ball, perhaps in an effort to show he can be used in multiple spots, ran through special teams drills, as well.

"I've had three, I've had four," Kubiak said, when asked how many backs he planned to keep on the roster. "If they're special teams players and stuff, you can always find room for them."

Quarterback watch: Kubiak kept his promise. He vowed to install an offense that would work to his players' strengths, especially those of quarterback Peyton Manning. On Friday, he had his quarterback back in the hurry-up and working the offense in the pistol formation.

"He kind of goes right back to normal when he does that stuff," Kubiak said. "We're basically taking our schemes and what we do and putting them in the gun and doing it. We're taking a look at both ends. We're going to do it all. We're going to find out what we do best, and we're going to have the ability to do it all."

Camp facts: The Broncos return Saturday for only a morning practice, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. The workout is open to the public and free of charge. Gates open at 8:30 a.m., with parking by the fieldhouse and seating on the adjacent grassy berm on a first-come, first-served basis. The stadium bag policy is in effect for all camp sessions.

Louis Vasquez welcomes new leadership role with Broncos

By Cameron Wolfe
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At first glance, Louis Vasquez would appear more likely to start, or better yet, end a fight than offer a helping hand.

The Broncos' 6-foot-5, 335-pound right guard is the biggest and most physically imposing man on the team. But you wouldn't know it from hearing him speak.

"He's not a rah-rah guy. Probably no one else can hear him except the guys in our (meeting) room," offensive line coach Clancy Barone said. "But he's certainly the leader in the room and has been so from Day One this offseason."

With the departure of left guard Orlando Franklin in free agency and left tackle Ryan Clady lost to a season-ending knee injury, Vasquez became the main source of guidance for a young, unstable offensive line.

Vasquez is exactly what he looks like on the field — a mauler and grinder, a guy you don't want face as a defensive player. Off the field, he prefers to lead by action. He believes you can show a lineman technique critique a lot better than you can tell him.

"My mentality is by the end of the fourth quarter, we want to feel your soul wilt in our hands. So I'm trying to instill that in the offensive line because it's dirty work. You might as well get nasty with it," said Vasquez, who was an all-pro and Pro Bowl selection in the 2013 season.

Last year Franklin operated as a vocal leader, and stood before the media on multiple occasions as the offensive line received criticism and dealt with desperate position shifts midway through the season.

Now Vasquez, 28, has been passed the torch with a less experienced group.

Vasquez represents the one known commodity. The Broncos could have four new starters on their offensive line, including rookie left tackle Ty Sambrailo and center Gino Gradkowski. Among the candidates at left guard — Ben Garland, Shelley Smith and Max Garcia — only Smith has made a start in an NFL game.

"They're all just big eyed and bushy tailed, trying to take in any information they can," Vasquez said.

Relationships are built in the offseason, so after witnessing Garcia's potential, Vasquez decided to take him under his wing. He made guiding Garcia's development into becoming an elite guard one of his primary missions. They work on pass protection after practices.

"As a rookie you don't take anything for granted, especially when you have an elite guard like himself just taking the time to give me some critiques. I'm always looking for someone to emulate," said Garcia, a fourth-round pick in this year's draft.

Barone said Vasquez has turned the film room into his personal classroom, often pulling Garcia and others aside not only to point out their mistakes, but to show them how to correct them.

Vasquez, a 2009 third-round draft pick from Texas Tech, was a similar player coming into the NFL. Like Garcia, he was a natural power run blocker who had to work hard on pass protection to become one of the best and well-rounded guards in the league.

In 2013, his first year with the Broncos after spending his first four with San Diego, Vasquez didn't give up a sack and was ranked 97th on NFL.com's 2014 list of the league's top-100 players.

"Louis is a stalwart. He's down there grinding every day. We have to tell him to take a day off," said offensive coordinator Rick Dennison.

He was well on his way to repeat his success in the 2014 season, but when the Broncos struggled to find consistency at right tackle from Chris Clark and Paul Cornick they kicked Vasquez outside. He struggled, posting a negative Pro Football Focus blocking grade for the season. He said he never was comfortable with the finesse position.

Now he's back at what he calls his home at right guard. His roommates will be different, and Vasquez admitted it will be a tough transition.

"Obviously, I miss my brother Manny (Ramirez). It's the nature of the beast; this business doesn't really care about your relationship with other players," Vasquez said. "Whoever is playing next to me, I have to elevate our level of play."

If the other four guys on the line turn in the work ethic and focus on technique that Vasquez does, the Broncos offensive line won't be much of a worry at all.

Derek Wolfe suffers concussion at Broncos training camp

By Nick Groke
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Derek Wolfe was dealt another blow Friday when a medical exam revealed the Broncos' defensive end suffered a concussion, the team said.

Wolfe, already vexed by a four-game suspension after testing positive for a performance-enhancing drug, left Broncos practice early Thursday after a hit to the head.

He was carted off the field with a towel over his head. Two trainers, under each of Wolfe's arms, helped him walk to the locker room.

The team immediately put him through concussion protocols.

"He's still in the evaluation process," Broncos coach Gary Kubiak said Friday.

Wolfe in July was suspended without pay for the first four games of the season after the NFL said he violated the league's performance-enhancing drug policy. He's not eligible to return to the active roster until Oct. 5, after the Broncos' Week 4 home game against the Vikings.

But Wolfe was hoping to at least prepare himself for the start of the season during training camp. Kubiak did not give a timeline for his return.

Malik Jackson is Wolfe's most likely replacement at defensive end.

Emmanuel Sanders leads list of injuries at Broncos training camp

By Nick Groke
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Emmanuel Sanders, the Broncos' second-leading receiver last season, sat out of morning practice Friday at Dove Valley with a hamstring injury.

The fifth-year slot receiver left Thursday's practice session early after injuring his leg on a full-side drill.

"I don't know," Sanders said, when asked when he will return. "As soon as I can."

Denver coach Gary Kubiak said the team will be cautious with Sanders' return. Friday, Sanders stayed on the sideline stretching alone.

"We'll see where we're at tomorrow. Probably be a day-to-day type of thing," Kubiak said. "But I'd say it's minor."

Quarterback Peyton Manning's available passing targets, at least among big-name starters, was thin.

Demaryius Thomas is being eased into action slowly. He missed most of offseason training while negotiating a contract and still needs to get in football shape.

Sanders in the early days of training camp — and now in his second season with the Broncos — has emerged as a veteran presence among younger receivers.

A handful of other Broncos also sat out of morning practice at Dove Valley:

- Steven Johnson, an inside linebacker, has a sprained knee and is expected back Monday.
- Ross Madison, safety, didn't participate because of a groin injury.
- Marvin Austin, nose tackle, and Larentee McCray, outside linebacker, also sat out with groin injuries.
- Cornerback Curtis Marsh stayed on the side without a helmet. He has a quadriceps injury.
- And Derek Wolfe, who will be suspended for the first four games of the season, was not at practice because he has a concussion.

The Broncos, though, did see the returns of inside linebacker Danny Trevathan (sick), cornerback Tervin Brandon (shoulder) and tackle Michael Schofield (back) from their injuries.

Solomon Patton grabbing attention at Broncos camp as WR and returner

By Nick Groke
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When Solomon Patton was ditched by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in May, the Broncos pounced on him like a quick snap after a hard count.

Patton, a wide receiver and returner, got a phone call the next day from Denver. The Broncos swooped him up off the waiver wire and told him to plan for training camp.

And with the Broncos' top two receivers out or in limited action, Patton is working just as quickly trying to move up the depth chart.

The 5-foot-9 former Florida standout on Friday snagged two long, impressive catches on go routes, one from quarterback Zac Dysert, the other from Trevor Siemian. The catches were two of the Broncos' biggest highlights.

"I'm not the biggest, but I definitely use my speed to my advantage and try to make plays I know my body can do, some special plays," Patton said. "I came out with a great attitude. I told myself I'd give it my all. I try to do that every day, but today, I let it all out."

With Demaryius Thomas still getting in football shape and Emmanuel Sanders out with a hamstring injury, the other receivers got a bigger opportunity.

Bennie Fowler caught a keen fade from Brock Osweiler. Peyton Manning connected with Jordan Norwood and Cody Latimer on two quick plays.

Patton grabbed the longest hauls.

"He's done that a couple days," Denver coach Gary Kubiak said of Patton. "If he can make plays as a wideout, it'll make him even more valuable to making this team."

Patton also got significant punt return duty Friday. He's likely Isaiah Burse's main competition for the punt and kickoff return jobs.

"I've got speed, that's really all I need," Patton said. "And some hands. I should be fine."

Solomon Patton eyes path from waiver claim to roster spot

By Jeff Legowold

ESPN.com

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There are moments when wide receiver Solomon Patton is busy going about the business of trying to carve out a roster spot for the Denver Broncos -- a team that has won four consecutive AFC West titles -- that it can be difficult to remember just a few months ago the Tampa Bay Buccaneers didn't have room for him.

In May. When the roster can be at 90 players.

Solomon Patton gave the Buccaneers solid return numbers, but the team chose not to keep him. Charles LeClaire/USA TODAY Sports

Patton, who continues to flash in the Broncos' passing game and be one of the most reliable candidates to be the team's punt returner, was cut loose this past May, waived by a team that finished 2-14 last season and had just begun its offseason program.

"I've said everything happens for a reason and I believe that," Patton said. "... Maybe we don't always know the reason. I'm just thankful this team wanted to put an opportunity out there."

The Broncos quickly claimed Patton off waivers, in large part because of his return potential. In seven games last season Patton averaged 11.2 yards per punt return for the Buccaneers and 23.1 yards per kickoff return.

The Broncos were one of the least productive teams in the league last season in the punt return game. In games in which the Broncos had at least one punt return (not including touchbacks, fair catches or punts that went out of bounds) they had fewer than 10 yards' worth of returns six times.

And they were one of four teams in the league that didn't have a punt return longer than 22 yards.

"We know that's a spot where we want somebody to step forward," Broncos special teams coach Joe DeCamillis said.

As a returner Patton has been the most reliable fielding punts. DeCamillis has noted Patton's decisiveness once he has the ball and an ability to run with power in traffic despite the fact he's listed at 5-foot-9-inches, 177 pounds.

"Solomon's the same thing we saw in the film," DeCamillis said. "He's extremely quick and extremely fast. He's a smaller guy, but he's very decisive. For a guy that's that size, he runs strong, which means he's going to break some tackles when he gets there, which for most of those guys, doesn't happen. We're impressed with him so far."

However, DeCamillis and Broncos coach Gary Kubiak want as few pure specialists on the roster as possible. They don't want to keep an extra kicker to use on kickoffs and they would prefer not to keep a returner who can't contribute on offense or defense.

Ultimately Patton's work as a receiver could tip the scales in his favor, but beyond their top three at the position -- Demaryius Thomas, Emmanuel Sanders and Cody Latimer -- the additional spots will be decided on the combination of work the players can do on offense and on special teams.

Patton, working with the reserves, has still made impact plays in team drills, including two Friday when he caught long scoring passes from Zac Dysert and rookie Trevor Siemian. Like all of the Broncos' hopefuls, Patton will get his first chance at game action in Friday's preseason opener in Seattle.

"You know what, he's done that a couple days," Kubiak said. "I think I've mentioned that obviously we know returning is a specialty of his, but if he can go out there and make plays as a wideout, it's going to make him even more valuable to making this football team."

"It makes me feel awesome," Patton said. "[Kubiak] came into the huddle right before I made one of those catches and said, 'Receivers, it's either you catch the ball or nobody catch the ball.' I ended up catching that ... ball so it definitely made me feel way better about offense and trying to make this team."

Broncos' Von Miller pledges to help Aldon Smith

By Jeff Legowold

ESPN.com

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Denver Broncos linebacker Von Miller said Friday that he's "been through a lot of stuff" in his NFL career and he's ready to stand by, and help, his friend Aldon Smith.

Smith, a Pro Bowl defensive end, was released by the San Francisco 49ers Friday after a Thursday night arrest on hit-and-run, driving under the influence and vandalism charges. The arrest was the third on suspicion for Smith since he was the 49ers' first-round draft pick in 2011.

Miller was the Broncos' first-round selection in 2011 -- No. 2 overall -- and has previously outlined that he got to know Smith in all of the pre-draft events the two participated in.

"That's my guy," Miller said. "I am going to be with him until the very end. We're friends before anything else. That's my brother and he's going through a tough time right now ... He was there for me and I'm going to be there for him -- wherever that may be. He's just going through a tough patch right now. We all go through a tough patch ... People go through tough times. I'll be the first one to tell you. I've been through a lot of stuff and I'm going to be there for him however long it is to get him back right."

Miller was suspended for six games to open the 2013 season for violating the league's substance abuse policy. Also, during the same training camp when his suspension was levied by the league, Miller was arrested at suburban gun shop on an outstanding traffic warrant.

Miller, poised for big season in the Broncos' new 3-4 defense after qualifying for the Pro Bowl last season, was recently formally discharged from the league's substance-abuse program after two years of clean tests. Miller is also in a contract year and has the possibility of securing one of the league's largest contracts for a defensive player at season's end.

Earlier in training camp he said he came to the realization "that I needed to put everything together to make sure I could accomplish all I want to accomplish ... I don't think I was doing that before."

Miller also said he's "never been in a better place mentally, physically, personally, just everything, I know people want to keep seeing it, I want to keep seeing it, but I'm in a great place right now."

He offered Friday he believes Smith has an opportunity to rebound as well.

"I have full confidence that he will be able to get out of it," Miller said. "We'll see the same Aldon Smith that we saw his first two years in the league."

Broncos hold Emmanuel Sanders out of practice with 'minor' hamstring injury

By Jeff Legowold

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The Denver Broncos held wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders out of Friday's practice with a hamstring injury.

Following the workout Broncos coach Gary Kubiak called the injury "very minor" and added "we expect him back pretty quick," but Kubiak added there is no reason to rush Sanders back on to the field given the team is in just its eighth day of training camp.

Sanders suffered the injury trying to run down a deep ball in Thursday morning's practice. He briefly tried to stretch his leg following the play, but then limped slightly as he left practice to go to the locker room.

Cody Latimer and Andre Caldwell got more snaps with the starters in Sanders' absence.

A week into training camp, the Broncos have had several players suffer aches and pains in practice. Cornerback Kayvon Webster got the wind knocked out of him during practice, tight end Virgil Green dislocated a finger, but finished out practice. Cornerback Chris Harris Jr. was taken out with cramps and safety David Bruton Jr. had an inflamed Achilles, but Kubiak said "he's fine, we just took him out."

Linebacker Steven Johnson, who was held out of Friday's practice, will miss some time with a sprained knee while defensive end Derek Wolfe continues to be evaluated under the concussion protocol and will not practice until he is cleared by an independent physician.

Nose tackle Marvin Austin Jr. (groin) and cornerback Curtis Marsh (thigh) were also held out of practice.

Demaryius Thomas can't make the tough call on Broncos Pro Bowl cornerbacks

By Jeff Legowold

ESPN.com

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The Denver Broncos have two cornerbacks -- Aqib Talib and Chris Harris Jr. -- who were each named to the Pro Bowl last season.

Each is comfortable in man coverage and each has said he believes the Denver secondary, with three Pro Bowl selections in 2014 (including safety T.J. Ward), can be among the best in the league. And they agree the group should be a position to earn the top spot.

But what about Harris and Talib? Who's tougher to face in practice, day after day?

The question was posed to Broncos receiver Demaryius Thomas, who was then at his elusive best when talking about his teammates.

"Gol-ly," he said, then a deep sigh. Then he simply said "huh?" and flashed the trademark smile.

"But it's hard to say," Thomas continued. "I can say this, when we played the Patriots when Aqib was on that team, that was the worst game I played as a receiver. And going up against Chris every day it's always a competition. He's not the fastest, not the quickest, but he's always in the right spot, he's scrappy, he's got heart, he goes hard, and people don't understand that but I do since I've been with him since Day 1. I hate going against both, that's what I'm saying."

Thomas skipped the team's offseason program as his representatives and the Broncos negotiated a long-term contract, so the team's coaches have slowly added to his workload each day of training camp. But he said the adjustment is made that much more demanding by the fact it's Talib or Harris usually across from him when the Broncos starters square off.

"Getting used to DBs pressing me, haven't went against that since the Colts game," Thomas said.

"Getting back used to that, we've got two great ones, so it ain't easy."

Saturday camp preview: Awaiting Sean Lee's return and more

By Jeff Legowold and ESPN.com Staff

ESPN.com

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NFL Nation reporters look ahead to Saturday practices at their teams' training camps.

AFC EAST

Buffalo Bills: He might wait until the regular season to name a starter, but Rex Ryan has billed Saturday night's intrasquad scrimmage as an opportunity for a quarterback to separate himself from the competition at the position. Matt Cassel, EJ Manuel and Tyrod Taylor will get two possessions each with the first team in the scrimmage. -- Mike Rodak

Miami Dolphins: The Dolphins are taking their second day off Saturday. Cleaning up offensive penalties will be key for quarterback Ryan Tannehill & Co. The offense was sloppy at times last week. -- James Walker

New England Patriots: The Patriots had 21 players absent for health-related reasons Friday, and then had running back LeGarrette Blount (right leg/knee) and defensive tackle Malcom Brown (ankle/foot) not finish the practice. Blount walked off under his own power slowly for further evaluation, so his status bears watching. As for Brown, he answered questions from reporters, so it didn't seem like his injury was overly serious. -- Mike Reiss

New York Jets: The Jets hit the big stage on Saturday night -- well, kind of. Their annual Green & White scrimmage will take place at MetLife Stadium, where they're expected to draw at least 10,000 fans. It won't be a scrimmage, per se, just a routine practice. After losing Antonio Allen (Achilles tendon), Dee Milliner (wrist surgery) and Devin Smith (broken ribs, punctured lung) to injuries, the goal is simply to stay healthy. -- Rich Cimini

AFC NORTH

Baltimore Ravens: The Ravens' receivers had a rare off day in this year's training camp, dropping five uncontested passes in practice. It should help that Steve Smith returns Saturday after being given a veteran day off. The Ravens are still unsure when they'll get back first-round pick Breshad Perriman, who missed his seventh straight practice with a knee injury. -- Jamison Hensley

Cincinnati Bengals: When the Bengals went through their first set of situational drills Thursday, quarterback Andy Dalton was 9-for-12 passing with a pair of well-placed throws over defenders to A.J. Green and Tyler Eifert. Dalton would love to have similar numbers and throws Saturday. That's because the Bengals will go through what they're calling a "mock game" in front of fans inside Paul Brown Stadium. Coach Marvin Lewis will draw up a variety of game scenarios for Dalton and the three other quarterbacks to lead their units through. -- Coley Harvey

Cleveland Browns: The Cleveland Browns have their second day off of camp Saturday, as they take a break following a trip to Columbus for an intrasquad scrimmage at Ohio State. Sunday's practice also will be short, as coach Mike Pettine said he is giving his team a chance to regain its legs and energy following a hefty dose of camp work. -- Pat McManamon

Pittsburgh Steelers: Quarterback Landry Jones has had a productive last week of camp, but he must translate that success to Sunday's Hall of Fame game. He will play a lot against the Vikings, though the team wants to take a look at Tajh Boyd and Tyler Murphy, too. While the team stays in Cleveland on Saturday night, Ben Roethlisberger and James Harrison will be in Canton for former teammate Jerome Bettis' Hall induction. Saturday will be a celebratory off day of sorts because of the team's admiration for Bettis. -- Jeremy Fowler

AFC SOUTH

Houston Texans: J.J. Watt has described Vince Wilfork as his older brother but yesterday he said they have a puppy-older dog relationship. Watt sheepishly shared on Friday that he is no longer allowed to dunk the football over the goalpost on top of Wilfork before practice because on Friday he hit Wilfork's hand during the ritual. -- Tania Ganguli

Indianapolis Colts: Duron Carter is making sure he stays in the mix to be the Colts' No. 3 receiver. The former Canadian Football League standout had his best practice of training camp Friday, catching three touchdown passes, including a one-headed grab along the sideline and a fade in the corner. The Colts have been rotating Donte Moncrief and Phillip Dorsett at the third receiver spot so far in camp, but expect Carter to start getting some snaps there too. -- Mike Wells

Jacksonville Jaguars: The Jaguars will scrimmage Saturday night at EverBank Field. Even though coach Gus Bradley said the team may do only one live tackling period, most likely on the goal line, this will be the best opportunity to date to get a look at running back T.J. Yeldon. Denard Robinson and Toby Gerhart have been getting the majority of the reps with the first-team offense. -- Mike DiRocco

Tennessee Titans: The Titans don't hit the field until Saturday afternoon and get another new wrinkle, a practice at Nissan Stadium. Ken Whisenhunt will run them through more game situations as the clock is beginning to count down to the team's preseason opener on Aug. 15 in Atlanta. Whisenhunt knows they'll encounter something unexpected in that game, but he's trying to limit the possibilities. -- Paul Kuharsky

AFC WEST

Denver Broncos: With the Broncos taking a careful approach with Emmanuel Sanders' hamstring injury -- Sanders suffered what coach Gary Kubiak called a "minor" injury on Thursday -- Cody Latimer figures to get additional time with the starters as the team prepares for the preseason opener in Seattle. Latimer has repeatedly shown his athleticism in camp, especially in battling for the 50-50 passes in the scoring zone. -- Jeff Legwold

Kansas City Chiefs: The Chiefs will again work on what was a weakness last year: the deep pass. Getting more big pass plays is a priority and a major reason the Chiefs signed wide receiver Jeremy Maclin. "It was a point of emphasis for us all offseason and we've worked hard on it," quarterback Alex Smith said. "I feel good about where we're at." -- Adam Teicher

Oakland Raiders: The Raiders want to see continued progress from 2013 No. 12 overall draft pick D.J. Hayden. The cornerback has been inconsistent in his first two NFL seasons, and that's continued during training camp. Oakland is counting on him to be a playmaker. -- Bill Williamson

San Diego Chargers: After five straight days in full pads, head coach Mike McCoy rested veteran players like Philip Rivers and Eric Weddle, as the Chargers worked out in jerseys and shorts on Friday. McCoy said the scheduled light day gives his players a chance to rest weary legs before Saturday's scrimmage at Qualcomm Stadium, which is free and open to the public. Gates open at 9 a.m. local time. -- Eric D. Williams

NFC EAST

Dallas Cowboys: If the Cowboys follow the same plan they had for Sean Lee in the offseason program, then he should begin to see work in 11-on-11 drills shortly. So far he has gone from individual drills to seven-on-seven work in camp. The Cowboys want to do everything they can to protect Lee, who has never played a full season due to injury, while also balancing the need for him to knock off rust after so much inactivity. -- Todd Archer

New York Giants: The Giants should ramp things up again Saturday after Friday's short walk-through, putting pads back on and going long with practice in advance of Sunday's day off. Expect a change in the first-team safety rotation. Bennett Jackson was in there four straight practices, but Jeromy Miles got the first-team reps with Landon Collins in the walk-through Friday and is earning praise from teammates and coaches for his physicality. This doesn't mean Jackson is out, but the Giants want to test every potential combination to see if they can come up with something that works on the back end of their defense. -- Dan Graziano

Philadelphia Eagles: The Eagles traded up into the second round of the draft to take Utah defensive back Eric Rowe and recently shipped Brandon Boykin to Pittsburgh. So it's no surprise that Rowe is getting some first-team reps at cornerback. Linebacker Brandon Graham says the front seven is already seeing the quarterbacks go to their second and third reads because the coverage is better. Rowe is a part of the progress, so keep an eye on how he continues to develop. -- Phil Sheridan

Washington Redskins: As Washington closes out its three-day practice session with Houston, one player has stood out: rookie receiver Jamison Crowder. He's not big -- generously listed at 5-foot-8, 195 pounds -- but he is ultra-quick and has a legitimate shot at being the Redskins' third receiver, perhaps bumping Andre Roberts from the slot. Crowder has fooled some of the Houston defensive backs with a variety of head-and-shoulder fakes; the Redskins would be pleased to see another day of such moves. -- John Keim

NFC NORTH

Chicago Bears: The Bears travel to Soldier Field for their annual Family Fest practice on Friday. In a twist, head coach John Fox will hold a 36-play live scrimmage. The starters will be full-go for 12 plays vs. the second-team defense and offense. Lovie Smith was the last Bears' head coach to allow tackling in training camp, but Smith only permitted the third stringers to be live. Following the 11:35 a.m. practice, the Bears have an off day scheduled for Sunday. -- Jeff Dickerson

Detroit Lions: The Lions will have a public scrimmage Saturday during a 10:30 a.m. practice in Allen Park, Michigan. It'll be the team's first real attempt at simulating game action before preseason game No. 1 next week against the New York Jets. Calvin Johnson sat out a similar scrimmage last year, and it wouldn't be surprising to see the same this season in order to keep the star receiver healthy. -- Michael Rothstein

Green Bay Packers: The annual Family Night event at Lambeau Field has turned into a regular practice and not a scrimmage, but it's still broadcast across Wisconsin on the Packers' preseason TV network, and in the past, NFL Network has aired it after the fact. But that won't cause coach Mike McCarthy to hide anything in case future opponents get ahold of the tape. He said it's "an install practice so whatever we show, we show." -- Rob Demovsky

Minnesota Vikings: After a walk-through on Saturday morning, the Vikings will head to Canton, Ohio, for their preseason opener against the Pittsburgh Steelers in the Pro Football Hall of Fame Game. Coach Mike Zimmer said the Vikings will tour the Hall of Fame as a team before Sunday's game. The coach also showed the team a short video on Vikings center Mick Tingelhoff, who will be inducted into the Hall of Fame Saturday. "I just thought with the team that we have and the youth that we have, I thought it was important that they see some things that gave them the opportunity to do the things that they're doing right now," Zimmer said. -- Ben Goessling

NFC SOUTH

Atlanta Falcons: The Falcons have a day of rest before returning to practice Sunday morning. Coach Dan Quinn said after Friday night's practice he hopes to have running backs Devonta Freeman and Tevin Coleman (hamstring injuries) back for individual drills next week. Until then, Antone Smith, Terron Ward, Jerome Smith and newly signed Michael Ford will take the reps at the position. -- Vaughn McClure

Carolina Panthers: Players get the day off after participating in FanFest on Friday night at Bank of America Stadium. They return to Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, on Sunday morning, where they will resume practice at 3:15 p.m. ET. Keep an eye on whether defensive tackle Kawann Short (back) or cornerback Bené Benwikere (hamstring) get on the field for the first time in camp. -- David Newton

New Orleans Saints: Players will have their second off day of camp before returning to practice Sunday evening. There will be an emphasis on cleaning up the substitution errors that plagued the backup defensive units during Friday's scrimmage. We'll also see if the rest helps some of the missing players (C.J. Spiller, Akiem Hicks, Tim Lelito) come back quickly from unspecified injuries. -- Mike Triplett

Tampa Bay Buccaneers: One position to keep an eye on in Saturday's practice is safety. Bradley McDougald appears set as one starter, but the other spot is an open competition between D.J. Swearingen and Major Wright. Chris Conte also could be in the mix if he can get back on the field after missing time with a hamstring injury. -- Pat Yasinskas

NFC WEST

Arizona Cardinals: The Cardinals will host their annual Red & White practice in front of what's expected to be a big crowd. It'll be center Lyle Sendlein's first full day with the team after getting re-signed Friday, and it'll be another chance for tight ends Troy Niklas and Jermaine Gresham to continue getting back

into football shape. Both went through individual drills on Friday but were held out of the team portion of practice as they return from injuries. -- Josh Weinfuss

St. Louis Rams: The Rams will have their second special-teams-only practice Saturday evening after holding their annual scrimmage Friday night. The battles for the spots near the bottom of the roster can start taking shape in these practices, but so far there haven't been any unexpected standouts. One player who needs to start showing up in special teams work is linebacker Bryce Hager, the team's seventh-round pick out of Baylor. -- Nick Wagoner

San Francisco 49ers: With the Aldon Smith situation in their rearview mirror, the Niners must now use practice to figure out who is going to replace the talented-but-troubled and now-released Smith at right outside linebacker. Is it undersized rookie Eli Harold, or do the Niners move veteran Ahmad Brooks over from the left side? -- Paul Gutierrez

Seattle Seahawks: The Seahawks are going to have an intrasquad scrimmage Saturday. One player to watch: undrafted halfback Thomas Rawls, who has the look of a solid power runner. This practice will show whether he can make a move on third-string halfback Christine Michael, a former second-rounder. -- John Clayton

Falcons, Bills among teams making biggest offensive transitions

By Field Yates
ESPN.com
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Team success in the NFL -- or any sport, really -- isn't simply a product of talent acquisition. Sure, it takes talent to win at any level, but talent is maximized when it's married to the right scheme.

Take Seattle, arguably the NFL's top roster entering the 2015 season. There's an abundance of talent, no doubt, but GM John Schneider and head coach Pete Carroll have also identified players who fit within their schematic principles like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The focus often turns to the secondary -- where the Legion of Boom overwhelms opponents weekly -- but not to be overlooked is that the scheme fits extend to the offense in Seattle, too (led by quarterback Russell Wilson and running back Marshawn Lynch).

So with the importance of scheme in mind, let's focus on five teams set to have a different schematic feel during the 2015 season, starting with an offense that might look as different as any other.

Atlanta Falcons

The skinny: Atlanta shook up its coaching staff this offseason, led by hiring Dan Quinn from Seattle to be its head coach. Quinn is a defensive-minded coach who tabbed Kyle Shanahan, most recently the Browns' offensive coordinator, to oversee the offense. The ramifications of Shanahan's presence are two-fold: One, expect Atlanta to be run-heavy. Consider the past three years that Shanahan has been a coordinator (see chart):

TEAM	YEAR	NOTABLE RUSHING STATS
Browns	2014	477 attempts (6th in NFL)
Washington	2013	2,164 yards (5th in NFL)
Washington	2012	2,709 yards (1st in NFL)

His teams have been sixth, fifth and first in carries. During that same stretch, Atlanta has ranked 24th, 32nd and 29th in rushing yards. Between rookie Tevin Coleman and second-year player Devonta Freeman (whom the Falcons are high on), the backfield should be busy.

The second part of the equation is a shift in blocking schemes. The offensive line will now be charged with an outside zone-blocking task, something that highlights footwork and athletic skills up front.

"Atlanta will be a mixture of one-back runs and passes with West Coast two-back runs and passes and play-action on first and second down," surmised one personnel man.

Buffalo Bills

The skinny: Ponder this question: If one were to evaluate NFL rosters based on every position but quarterback, where might the Bills rank?

It's a flawed concept, given the importance of the quarterback spot, but the fact that Buffalo is strong at several spots on offense other than under center only reinforces the likelihood of this team relying on a ground-and-pound approach under new coordinator Greg Roman.

"Buffalo will try and run more than they have and establish some two-back schemes," said an NFL personnel man.

Roman comes from San Francisco, where the 49ers averaged 491.25 attempts over the past four seasons. That would rank no lower than eighth in any season over that stretch. Some of this was attributed to game flow (i.e., the score), but Buffalo was 20th in rushing attempts last season after finishing first the year before.

So 2015 could see the Bills getting back to what worked in '13. In naming Richie Incognito as the starter at left guard, the Bills are already positioning to have a powerful left side of the offensive line. (Incognito will be flanked by center Eric Wood and tackle Cordy Glenn.)

Jacksonville Jaguars

The skinny: The Jaguars made a change at offensive coordinator, naming Greg Olson as the replacement for Jedd Fisch. The team also beefed up its coaching ranks by naming former Bills head coach Doug Marrone as the assistant head coach and offensive line coach.

The key will be quarterback Blake Bortles getting the ball out faster, as the offense surrendered 71 sacks last season. The offensive line should be better, but schematic tweaks could also help Bortles in Year 2.

"Jacksonville has got to establish a run game and some quick passing concepts to help the young quarterback," the personnel man added. "He was hit the most in the league last season and Olson is a master offensive coordinator for West Coast quick passing stuff."

An improved offensive line -- which added right tackle Jermeay Parnell in free agency -- will help Bortles, as will a schematic shift.

Denver Broncos

The skinny: It feels somewhat obligatory to mention the Broncos, as perhaps no team has generated more questions regarding scheme than Denver since the hiring of Gary Kubiak as head coach. Kubiak's offensive system has been known to feature a zone-blocking scheme and often requires the quarterback to move around (or outside of) the pocket.

But here's the truth of any coach-player dynamic as it relates to scheme: There's a middle ground that is achieved. Peyton Manning is one of the all-time great quarterbacks, and deviating entirely from what has led to his success is not what Denver is going to do. (Kubiak admitted as much recently.)

Denver will be similar to what Manning has always done, but it will have more under-center runs and an increase of first- and second-down play-action, one personnel man said.

"Expect third down to be what Peyton has always done -- a lot of one-back, 3 x 1 formations with very little shifting or motions. Also, Kubiak is a big West Coast guy so you'll see those concepts on first- and second-down dropback passes."

So even if the Broncos don't look decidedly different on offense in 2015, just a slight change from the offensive system we've seen Manning run for close to two decades is worth noting.

Tennessee Titans

The skinny: Among the most interesting pre-draft debates was whether the Titans -- in seemingly dire need of quarterback stability -- would forego the chance to take Marcus Mariota because of head coach Ken Whisenhunt's preference to build his offense around a dropback, pocket passer.

Ultimately, that proved not to be the case, as Mariota is now the focal point of the franchise. Just as Kubiak won't force Manning to be what he is not, it seems naive to suppose that Mariota will be called upon to be strictly a pocket passer -- and that Mariota isn't capable of throwing from the pocket (his 37 touchdown passes from inside the pocket in 2014 were second among Power 5 conference quarterbacks).

Moreover, Whisenhunt understands the value of Mariota's outstanding movement skills and will take advantage of them. It'll be a blend of what Whisenhunt knows and what Mariota presents.

"I would expect them to run their base Whisenhunt stuff with some gun runs sprinkled in for Mariota," a front-office man said.

It'll also be a change for Mariota in two simple, but noteworthy aspects: He'll huddle and take snaps from under center, things he rarely did while at Oregon. There's not much room to go anywhere but up for Tennessee in 2015, and expect this group to be a more dynamic one with the Heisman Trophy winner navigating it.

Peyton and Kubiak find a comfortable compromise

By Mike Klis

9news Sports

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Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning and Broncos head coach Gary Kubiak have found common ground.

They found it halfway between the center's backside and where the quarterback stands in the shotgun.

"I don't know if you guys saw it, but we were working our offense out of the pistol formation today," Kubiak said following his training-camp practice Friday.

The pistol formation only makes sense. Ordinarily, Kubiak prefers his quarterback to take the snap from directly under center because it aids the running game and play-action pass.

With the quarterback under center, the running back can run while taking the handoff. The action of the handoff also makes it easier to sell a fake.

If a defender is faked still – particularly a safety – there's a greater chance of an impact pass play.

Anyone who has followed Manning's 18-year NFL career, though, is left with the impression he "graduated" from the old-school, snap-under-center, handoff-action way back in the year 2000.

Taking the snap under center requires all those crossover retreat steps to the pocket, such as three-step, five-step, seven-step drops. It's a lot of running. And that doesn't include all those wide, zone handoffs.

Never the fleetest afoot. Manning prefers operating from the shotgun, where he's pretty much in passing position from the time he receives the snap.

The pistol formation, though, is a compromise. Manning stood halfway between young center Matt Paradis and the shotgun position Friday. From the pistol, running back C.J. Anderson could still stand behind the quarterback and move forward for the handoff, while Manning also gets a couple cheat steps back to the pocket for the pass.

"We've basically taken our schemes and what we do, put him in the gun and doing it," Kubiak said.

"We're taking a look at both ends. Like I told you, we're going to do it all. We're going to find out what we do best. We're going to have the ability to do it all."

Manning and the first-team offense – which again featured the Blocking Bronco Babies of Ty Sambrailo, Max Garcia and Paradis – worked on their hurry-up, catch-up situations Friday.

During a 7-on-7, 2-minute drill, Manning completed a 15-yard hook to Cody Latimer, a toss to tight end Owen Daniels in the flat and a dump to running back C.J. Anderson, who made a nifty one-handed catch, before finishing off the eight-play drive with a touchdown pass to tight end Virgil Green.

In a 7-on-7, 1-minute drill, Manning moved the team to the 26 and Connor Barth came on to drill a 43-yard field goal.

"Yeah, he kind of goes right back to normal when he does that stuff," Kubiak said of Manning.

Manning to attend Bill Polian's HOF ceremony Saturday

By Mike Klis

9news Sports

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As a straight-A football student, Peyton Manning knows how to cram.

Following the Denver Broncos' training camp practice Saturday morning, Manning will fly to Canton, Ohio so he can attend the Pro Football Hall of Fame induction ceremony that night for his former boss, Bill Polian.

Manning had called into Polian's Sirius XM radio show last month to say he would attend the ceremony and the Broncos' quarterback will fulfill that commitment.

The ceremony will begin at 5 p.m. MDT with Polian lined up to go fifth from the eight-member class.

Polian was the Indianapolis Colts' general manager who selected Manning -- and not Ryan Leaf -- with the No. 1 overall pick in the 1998 draft. Had he selected Leaf instead, Polian probably wouldn't be going into the Hall of Fame under the newly established "contributor" category.

Polian built the Colts around Manning. In 13 seasons together, Polian and Manning had 11 seasons of at least 10 wins and eight years of at least 12 wins. They helped the Colts win the 2006-season Super Bowl.

Manning will make it back for the Broncos' training camp practice Sunday, although that day lines up to be a veteran's day off, anyway.

The way Manning practiced Thursday and Friday, he doesn't need much more time to get ready for the Broncos' preseason opener Aug. 14 at Seattle. He ran the 2-minute hurry-up and 1-minute no-huddle offense well during 7-on-7 competition Friday.

On Thursday he connected with Emmanuel Sanders on a deep-post, and later on a 20-yard crossing route. Manning also completed an in-route to Demaryius Thomas, who got more playing time in team drills Thursday than he had in previous practices.

"I don't know if you all are going to believe what I say, but I think there's a little more zip on it," Thomas said of Manning's passes. "I don't know how he can do that because he's one of the oldest guys on the team but every year about this time there's always more zip on his ball. You noticed he threw a couple posts today probably 50, 60 yards. I'm like, 'Whoa.'"

Demaryius chooses between Chris Harris, Aqib Talib

By Mike Klis

9news Sports

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Denver Broncos wide receiver Demaryius Thomas was put on the spot: Which of his highly touted cornerback teammates is tougher to beat - Chris Harris Jr. or Aqib Talib?

Thomas flashed a wry smile, the kind used when you know trouble is coming.

"Golly," he said to the inquisitor. "Huh?"

He heard the question correctly. Harris was the NFL's highest-rated cornerback last season, as graded by Pro Football Focus. Not taken into account is Talib usually drew the opponent's No. 1 receiver. Harris got the No. 2 or No. 3 receiver, as he often moved inside to the slot in nickel packages.

The reason why Harris moves in is the inside area better utilizes his instincts, ballhawking and tackling ability. So, Demaryius: Answer, please.

"I can say this, I remember playing the [New England] Patriots when Aqib was on that team," Thomas said. "That was my worst game I ever played as a receiver."

He was being kind. In the November 2013 game he referred to, on an impossibly gusty, chilly night in Foxborough, Mass., Thomas had four catches for 41 yards and a touchdown. Nowhere close to his best, but not his worst.

"Going up against Chris every day, it's always a competition because he's not the fastest and not the quickest, but he's always in the right spot," Thomas said. "He's scrappy. He just goes hard. People don't understand that, but I do. I've been with him since day one. It's hard to say. I hate going against both. That's what I'm going to say."

Well said.

Thomas will go up against the likes of Harris and Talib (usually Harris) again Friday morning when the Broncos hold their seventh training camp practice.

The team's first preseason game is exactly a week away. The Broncos will play the Seattle Seahawks at CenturyLink Field on Aug. 14.

Aldon Smith reminder of what Von Miller didn't become

By Staff

9news Sports

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Dickens seemed to have foretold the stories of Aldon Smith and Von Miller.

The Tale of Two Pass Rushers. These are the best of times for Miller, the worst of times for Smith.

The saga of Aldon Smith, the now former San Francisco 49ers defensive end/outside linebacker, can't help but bring back the struggles Miller went through two years ago.

Aldon Smith and Von Miller are similar stories. Both were taken in the first round of the 2011 draft – Miller No. 2 overall by the Denver Broncos; Smith No. 7 overall by the 49ers. Both had at least 30 sacks in their first two years. Both experienced substance-abuse demons that led to lengthy suspensions.

And that's where the stories of Von Miller and Aldon Smith separate. Miller has stayed clean the past two years and is now dismissed from the NFL drug program. Smith just got his third DUI arrest and was released Friday by the 49ers.

"Yeah, I heard," Miller said. "That's my guy. I am going to be with him until the very end. We're friends before anything else. That's my brother and he's going through a tough time right now. I'm going to be the same Von that I was before. He was there for me and I'm going to be there for him—wherever that may be. He's just going through a tough patch right now. We all go through a tough patch. I have full confidence that he will be able to get out of it. We'll see the same Aldon Smith that we saw his first two years in the league. It's just tough right now. People go through tough times. I'll be the first one to tell you. I've been through a lot of stuff and I'm going to be there for him however long it is to get him back right."

If Smith signs with another team, the first thing he must do is serve a minimum one-year suspension. Miller, if he has 15 sacks or so this season, will hit free agency where the bidding will start north of \$100 million.

Credit the Broncos, Miller's parents, and his agent Joby Branion for giving the Broncos' outside linebacker the kind of support he needed as he stumbled off the field prior to the 2013 season.

To Miller's credit, he knows his journey for redemption is far from finished.

"I have a long way to go, right?" Miller said Sunday. "It's not time to start the confetti and the balloons and all that. I still have a long way to go. We still have a long way to go on defense. I still have a long way to go to be the type of player that I want to be for this organization. That's where my mind is at right now. [I am] just coming out here and having fun. All that other stuff, it's cool, but I had already come into camp with my mind in the moment, with my guys, wanting to get everybody else better and wanting to inspire everybody else to play great and let this year be the year. That's where my mind's been at, and I'm taking it one day at a time."

Harris feeling right at home in second stint with Broncos

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

August 7, 2015

Ryan Harris feels right at home, enjoying the orange-clad crowds and orange sunsets at training camp once again.

The eighth-year offensive tackle from Notre Dame kept his house in suburban Denver when the Broncos gave up on him back in 2010.

He retreated there after the Eagles cut him in 2011 and he decided against relocating when he made a comeback in Houston, where he played two years before going to Kansas City in 2014.

"I love the Denver area, especially the food scene," said Harris, who refuses to fuel up at fast-food joints. "As athletes, you're always trying to look for fresh ingredients, and Denver's got a great food scene, whether you're getting sandwiches or dinners, you've got fresh farm-to-table."

Harris signed with the Broncos on May 28 after Ryan Clady blew out his left knee. The Broncos wanted to add depth and experience to a young offensive line, but they've gotten much more than that.

Harris, who didn't have to hire any movers when he signed, saved his big move for the first week of training camp when he leapfrogged Chris Clark and Michael Schofield and wedged himself into the starting lineup at right tackle.

"Tackles are hard to find," coach Gary Kubiak said. "When we had the unfortunate thing happen to (Clady), for us to get right on top of getting Ryan Harris in here, boy, it looks bigger each and every day."

Harris didn't have to search out any new restaurants. In fact, one of the biggest changes since he last played for the Broncos was the gourmet chef the team hired last year.

"It's been an easy transition," he said, smiling.

Also protecting 39-year-old quarterback Peyton Manning — who worked out of the pistol Friday — is veteran right guard Louis Vasquez and three players whose next NFL snap will be their first: Ty Sambrailo, Max Garcia and Matt Paradis.

Harris said all this angst over the young offensive line is nothing new to him.

"My first year I started here, 2008, Ryan Clady was a rookie and I had never played and people had concerns there and I think we gave up 12 sacks on the whole season," Harris said. "And that goes back to the whole thing 'you're not until you are.' And that happens very quickly. You're not experienced until you play and then all of a sudden you're an experienced group."

Harris said he's constantly peppered with questions from the young O-linemen, and not just about football.

"There's so much they're dealing with," Harris said, like where to get groceries and gas, whether to buy or rent.

"There's a lot coming at them outside of football and then you add the fastest, strongest players they've ever played against and there's a lot happening," Harris said. "So, I try to really engage the young guys and say, 'Hey, I saw that happen. Think about doing it this way or do it that way.' Because there are a lot of questions."

That mentorship must be paying off. Pro Bowl linebackers DeMarcus Ware and Von Miller said they see daily improvement from the young, revamped O-line.

"They're all in sync and they're all working together," Miller said. "That's what you want in an offensive line. If you have five guys, five tough guys, working together, it's going to be pretty tough on the other team. That's what we see out here with those guys. You can't even tell they're rookies."

NOTES: WR Emmanuel Sanders (hamstring) sat out Friday. Kubiak called his injury "very minor." ... Solomon Patton, claimed off waivers from Tampa Bay in May, caught two deep balls, one from Manning and the other from Trevor Siemian. "Obviously, we know his returning is a specialty of his. But if he can go out there and make plays as a wide out, it's going to make him even more valuable to making this football team," Kubiak said.

Keeping tabs on the sidelines

By Barry Wilner
Associated Press
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Coaches, players and game officials will be allowed to examine video on the sideline during preseason games. There's some strong thought they will be able to do so in the regular season by 2016.

NFL teams began using Microsoft Surface tablets last year to examine photos of plays, and the feedback was so positive that Seahawks star quarterback Russell Wilson said, "It's a difference maker for me." In several preseason games this summer, reviewing video of plays will be tested on new Surface Pro 3 devices.

Video was available on the tablets on an experimental basis for last January's Pro Bowl, and Saints quarterback Drew Brees credited being able to review it as leading to a touchdown pass.

Officiating crews will use the Surface Pro 3 to conduct video reviews rather than going "under the hood" during the preseason.

"We will use the tablets in 10 games through the first three weeks of the preseason," said Dean Blandino, the NFL's vice president of officiating. "The goal is to be more efficient in administering replay reviews. Rather than going under the hood, the referee will have the tablet brought to him so he can review the play, similar to what was done at the Pro Bowl.

"Having New York involved in the replay review process for the first time last season was a very positive factor in streamlining the process, and we would like to determine if using the tablets could streamline it even further."

If all goes well, Microsoft, in the midst of a five-year, \$400 million deal with the league, will make presentations to the NFL's competition committee and then to the owners after the season.

"The NFL has a process in implementing new technology and paradigms to the game," said Jeff Tran, Microsoft's director of sports marketing and alliances. "Part of that process is the preseason test to ensure everything works without a hitch."

There were few hitches in using the tablets last season.

"As technology advances, so will the ability of our coaches, players and officials to adapt and adopt new uses," Troy Vincent, who oversees football operations for the league, has said. "The future of the sideline is very exciting and promising."

The new tablets also have been upgraded with a system allowing reviews and marking up of full-color images of plays following each series for use during the regular season. Tran said the review process is seven to 10 times faster over previous use of printed pages.

Other enhancements made to the Surface Pro 3:

—The pen used on the tablet now has color codes for coaches and players to make annotations.

“It sounds minimal and trivial, but this was done from feedback they gave us,” Tran said. “They are now able to identify specific players and plays by color: blue, yellow, orange and green.”

—A full whiteboard feature has been added on which coaches and players can annotate messages or create plays, or draw to illustrate some facet of the action.

—While there were few complaints about glare on the tablets caused by the sun or inclement weather, that issue was addressed and improvements were made.

—The upgraded tablet can handle both lower and higher temperatures on the sideline.

Microsoft spoke with more than 50 NFL players about various activations to gauge how the Surface tablet affects the game. Adding video drew the most support.

“It helps them save seconds, which ultimately leads to minutes. It’s a game of inches, but it is also a game of seconds and minutes,” Tran said.

“I always say: KTN. Keep taking notes,” Wilson added. “I even take those notes while playing the game.”

In addition to working with players, coaches and officials, Microsoft has addressed the fan experience. As part of its effort to look to “The Next 50” and future of football, Microsoft is incorporating Next Generation Stats into its NFL app on Xbox One and any Windows 10 device, for this season. The app will be launched this month.

Starting this season, players will have a tiny microchip in their pads to collect data that will show every single movement. The chip will provide information on their speed, velocity, location, and distance traveled. For example: Just how fast is Pittsburgh All-Pro receiver Antonio Brown?

“It’s great for fantasy and general football fans to marvel at the athleticism of some of these players,” Tran said. “And to see the positional data, so fans are able to see how a play unfolds.”

All of these upgrades — whether involving the people playing the games, coaching in them, officiating them or simply watching them — no longer are the wave of the future. They are the present.

Local military join USAA and Broncos for combine experience

By Allie Raymond
DenverBroncos.com
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Fifty local military members from different branches of service took to the UHealth Center Friday morning to participate in an NFL-style combine in an event put together by the Broncos and USAA.

The men and women all had the opportunity to compete in the drills similar to those used by NFL coaches to evaluate potential talent. Under the watchful eye of Broncos greats hanging from the walls of the Broncos field house, military members participated in the 40-yard dash, three-cone drill, broad jump, vertical jump and bench press.

“The NFL military combine we run with the Broncos is a great partnership between the Denver Broncos and USAA,” said Brian Eaton, director of sponsorships for USAA. “As the official military appreciation sponsor it’s important for us to showcase military appreciation, to show the military community how much we love and respect them all year long. This is a great opportunity for the military to come out and demonstrate their physical fitness in the drills that are actually conducted at the NFL Combine.”

The combine represents the evolution of military appreciation events that USAA and the Broncos are creating to foster understanding and appreciation for the local military community.

Jonathan Leger and Samuel Macklin were two participants at the combine for the first time.

“This is really cool,” said Leger. “I’ve never done a 40-yard dash or done cone drills or anything like that. I played football in high school but we didn’t do anything like this. I’m really appreciative that I got chosen to come up here.”

Macklin echoed Leger’s excitement and awe at the event.

“I’m thankful I can be here,” Leger said. “It’s definitely a once in a lifetime thing. They hooked us up and it’s just nice to get our here and meet like-minded people and have a good time. I’m looking forward to meeting the players.”

Following the event, the participants got the opportunity to enjoy a VIP hospitality area where they watched the Broncos’ training-camp practice, took photos with the Lombardi trophies and met Broncos players after the session.

Denver Broncos and USA Football award equipment grants to local youth and high school programs

By Staff

DenverBroncos.com

August 7, 2015

USA Football, the sport's national governing body in the United States, and the Denver Broncos recently awarded football equipment and uniform grants to youth and high school football programs throughout Colorado based on merit and need.

USA Football partners with the Broncos and all NFL clubs to annually distribute more than \$2 million in equipment and uniform grants to youth and high school football programs across the United States. The grant program has supported youth organizations and high schools in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., since 2006. USA Football equipment and uniform grants are made possible through support from the NFL Foundation.

Grants are valued up to \$1,500 for youth organizations and \$2,500 for high school programs, offering new equipment, uniforms, equipment reconditioning and flag football equipment to provide young athletes greater access as well as the fun and fitness benefits of the sport. Grants are fulfilled by USA Football and its equipment and uniform partner Riddell

USA Football is the official youth football development partner of the Broncos, the NFL and each of the league's other 31 teams.

"We are pleased to work with USA Football and our teams to donate much-needed equipment to youth football leagues and high school football programs nationwide," said Alexia Gallagher, director of the NFL Foundation. "These equipment grants will help ensure that youngsters who share our love of the game are able to play it safely."

"The health and safety of every young football player is our No. 1 priority," USA Football Executive Director Scott Hallenbeck said. "Having proper equipment is an important step toward that goal. Even with fundraising and strict attention to budgets, many leagues and school districts need help to properly outfit their young athletes who love to play football and enjoy the fun and fitness that comes with it. We are proud to lead this important program with support from the NFL Foundation and Riddell."

Colorado youth and high school programs awarded a 2015 USA Football Equipment Grant:

ORGANIZATION CITY

Aurora Bears Youth Sports	Aurora
Aurora Central High School	Aurora
AYL Warriors Youth Sports	Highlands Ranch
Boys-Girls Club of Metro Denver	Denver
Commerce City Youth Athletics	Commerce City
Denver West High	Lakewood
Greeley West Football	Greeley
Hinkley High School Football	Aurora

John F. Kennedy High School Denver
Legacy High School Broomfield
Lincoln High School Denver
Loveland Youth Athletic Association Loveland
North Metro Junior Football League Thornton
North Suburban Thunder Henderson
Northern Colorado Pop Warner Association Windsor
Pirates Football Lakewood
Thornton Jr. Football League Thornton
Vista Peak Preparatory Aurora

About USA Football: Indianapolis-based USA Football (www.usafootball.com) is the sport's national governing body, leading the game's development for youth, high school and other amateur players. The independent nonprofit partners with leaders in medicine, child advocacy and sport to establish important standards rooted in education. USA Football advances coaching education and player skill development for safer play and positive experiences through athletics. Follow USA Football at www.facebook.com/usafootball or on Twitter @USAFootball.

About NFL Foundation: The National Football League Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of those touched by the game of football – from players at all levels to communities across the country. The NFL Foundation represents the 32 NFL clubs and supports the health and safety of athletes, youth football, and the communities which support our game. For more information on The NFL Foundation, visit: www.NFLFoundation.org.

Broncos Training Camp Quick Hits: Day 8

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
August 7, 2015

Solomon Patton took Gary Kubiak's words to heart.

As the offense huddled late in practice, the Broncos' head coach walked over with words of advice.

"He came into the huddle right before I made one of those catches and said, 'Receivers, it's either you catch the ball, or nobody catch the ball,'" Patton recalled.

The words have deeper meaning for Patton. His return abilities alone give him a shot to stick on the 53-man roster; his experience on kickoff and punt returns with Tampa Bay last year sets him apart from a group of returners who possess extensive regular-season experience with one or the other, but not both.

But Kubiak has mentioned at press conferences that whoever handles returns must play a role on offense or defense. So the second-year wide receiver knows he must find ways to get open for receptions. And given his skill set, some have to be of the spectacular variety.

Solomon Patton

His two deep receptions late in the practice elicited some of the loudest roars from fans during training camp. The first saw him break open on a go route up the left sideline; Zac Dysert then spotted him for a 33-yard touchdown pass to cap the No. 3 offense's work in a two-minute drill period.

On the second pass, he got open deep past Taurean Nixon, reached out and made a beautiful over-the-shoulder reception of a deep bullet fired by rookie Trevor Siemian.

These aren't the first explosive receptions he's made during training camp. But coming in close succession and in front of a UHealth Training Center-record crowd of 5,507, they were hard to ignore.

"Obviously we know returning is a specialty of his, but if he can go out there and make plays as a wideout, it's going to make him even more valuable to making this football team," Kubiak said. "He's done it a couple days in a row."

At 5-foot-9 and 177 pounds, Patton is the Broncos' smallest wide receiver. Only one player on the entire roster is lighter (175-pound CB Tony Carter); only one is shorter (5-foot-8 RB C.J. Anderson). But he uses his lack of size to his advantage.

"I've got speed. That's pretty much all I need. And some hands," Patton. "So I should be fine."

NOTES:

... After working in shoulder pads Thursday, the Broncos worked without them for the first time since last Saturday's practice.

... Patton's touchdown catch from Dysert was the only touchdown for the offense in its two-minute drill period. The scenario involved the offense taking possession a 23-21 deficit, two minutes remaining, two timeouts and the football at its 30-yard-line.

... QB Peyton Manning and the No. 1 offense drove to a 44-yard Connor Barth field goal against the first-team defense. Manning went 3-of-3 for 31 yards via passes to Andre Caldwell, Jordan Norwood and Cody Latimer.

... In the duel of the second units, the defense came out ahead after rookie CB Taurean Nixon intercepted a Brock Osweiler pass to Nathan Palmer in the right flat.

... Although Patton stole the show late, WR Bennie Fowler had arguably the best single reception of the day with a 1-yard touchdown from Osweiler to cap a move-the-ball seven-on-seven period. Fowler ran a fade route to the back right corner and leapt for the pass, managing to keep his feet in-bounds despite a push from CB Kayvon Webster.

... Kubiak used some pistol looks in the offense as he and the coaches continue to meld old and new concepts into the Broncos' attack. "We've basically taken our schemes and what we do, put [Manning] in the gun and doing it," Kubiak said. The Broncos used some pistol formations on occasion over the last three seasons. "We're taking a look at both ends. Like I told you, we're going to do it all. We're going to find out what we do best. We're going to have the ability to do it all."

... RB Montee Ball had some of his strongest runs of training camp, including one where he read the flow of the play perfectly, cutting back left as the blockers went right for what would have been a long gain under game conditions.

... Rookie Max Garcia and 2014 practice-squad player Matt Paradis worked on the first team at left guard and center, respectively, for a second consecutive day. Paradis had one low and wide snap on a shotgun play that Manning fielded, but in general the timing between Paradis and Manning appeared better than it did during their first practice together Thursday.

... One of Anderson's best runs came when he used a seal block from Garcia on DE Kenny Anunike to burst forward. But one play later, Anunike got a pressure of Manning by sprinting forward, then quickly cutting back and forcing pressure to Manning's right side.

... WR Jordan Norwood took advantage of the extra repetitions created by Emmanuel Sanders' hamstring injury and had several receptions from Manning and Osweiler.

... DE Malik Jackson blew up a handful of run plays with penetration into the backfield. Jackson also generated some pressure on Manning during the course of the day.

... Barth received all the kicks in the field-goal period and went 5-for-5 on attempts of 27, 36, 43 (twice) and 54 yards.

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Best of Training Camp Day 8
PARTICIPATION REPORT:

... WR Emmanuel Sanders sat out practice with a hamstring injury. "It'll be a day-to-day type thing," Kubiak said, categorizing the injury as "very minor."

... WR Demaryius Thomas continued to see his team repetitions increase as he works his way back to full participation after missing the offseason because of an unsigned contract tender.

... DE Malik Jackson was back to a full workload after being eased into team-period work one day earlier.

... ILB Brandon Marshall got team-period work for a second consecutive day.

... ILB Danny Trevathan returned from an illness Thursday and participated in individual and seven-on-seven work.

... DE Vance Walker returned to practice Friday after an excused absence Thursday.

... DE Antonio Smith worked most of the practice and saw team repetitions throughout the morning.

... OT Michael Schofield returned to practice after missing Thursday's work because of a back issue, but was limited.

... ILB Steven Johnson watched practice from the sideline after suffering a knee sprain Thursday.

... CB Teverin Brandon returned after missing three consecutive practices due to a shoulder injury he suffered last Sunday.

... DE Derek Wolfe is going through the league-mandated concussion protocol and did not practice.

... OLB Larentee McCray, S Ross Madison and NT Marvin Austin remained sidelined with groin injuries.

... CB Curtis Marsh sat out because of tightness in his quadriceps muscle that set in during Thursday's practice.

... TE Jeff Heuerman (torn ACL) is out indefinitely. He cannot go on the injured reserve list until the 75-man roster deadline Sept. 1.

INJURY REPORT:

... CB Kayvon Webster received attention from Head Athletic Trainer Steve Antonopoulos, but "just got the wind knocked out of him," Kubiak said, and will be fine.

... CB Chris Harris Jr.'s practice work was truncated because of a cramp.

... TE Virgil Green had a dislocated finger, but finished practice.

... S David Bruton Jr. left practice because of a sore Achilles tendon but is "fine," Kubiak said.

WEATHER REPORT: Mostly sunny skies with some passing high clouds. Temperatures rose from 81°F/27.2°C to 85°F/29.4°C by the time practice concluded.

ATTENDANCE: 5,507, a record since camp moved to Broncos headquarters in 2003. Total camp attendance: 30,422 (average: 4,346).

DeMarcus Ware and Von Miller set high expectations for 2015

By Allie Raymond
DenverBroncos.com
August 7, 2015

Outside linebackers DeMarcus Ware and Von Miller played coy when asked their personal goals for the 2015 season. But with a little prodding and reminders of records and rankings within reach, the pass-rushing duo open up about expectations for this season.

For Ware, his 127 career sacks ranks 14th all-time. He needs 15 sacks to surpass Michael Strahan's 141 ½ for the No. 5 spot all-time, something that he sees as an achievable feat this season.

"That's something that I always strive for and look towards," Ware said. "I know who's there—Michael Strahan—a guy that I always looked up to. That's a big feat, but it is accomplishable this season."

Miller, who ranks third in NFL history (since 1982) in sacks per game (0.88) in a minimum of 40 games, is looking for his fourth double-digit sack season.

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Best of Training Camp Day 8

"I just want to come out and be the Von that I know I can be," Miller said. "I want to be dominant. I want to be inspiring to my teammate. I want to inspire my teammates to play better and I want to feed off them and I want them to feed off me—just have one of those dream seasons, just like every year."

Confidence definitely isn't an issue when it comes to Miller and Ware. They speak highly of each other and the overall defense.

Ware, entering his 11th season in the NFL, is a nice complement to Miller's youth and both are excelling under new Defensive Coordinator Wade Phillips and his staff.

"Von just makes the game look easy," Ware said. "Von has really picked up. Von is Von again. You can see that from him running tackles over, running around the corner, acting like old Von. After his surgery last year, he really sort of reinvented himself. You can sort of see it this year. It carried over to this year. He's rolling."

The Broncos have just surpassed the first week mark of training camp and will soon start game prep for their first preseason contest at Seattle. But Miller already likes what he sees from the defense thus far.

"It's great. We're blitzing," Miller said. "I'll be rushing the quarterback and chasing after the quarterback. It's nothing too new. It's going to be a great defense. It plays to all our strengths. [CB] Chris Harris [Jr.] is going to have a great year; [CB] Aqib [Talib] and all of those guys should get a whole bunch of picks. We should get a whole bunch of sacks. We're still just building, we're still just taking it one day at a time, but I feel good for where we are right now. We still have a long way to go, but if we can keep taking it one day at a time, like I said before, we'll be alright."

NFL rules video highlights need to avoid fights

By Andres Mason

DenverBroncos.com

August 7, 2015

Amid the rules changes and points of emphasis presented in a video shown to players and coaches this week, the NFL wants to make one point above all clear for 2015: don't get into fights.

Embarrassed by the fracas in the dying moments of the Patriots' Super Bowl XLIX win over the Seahawks, the video shown by referee Jeff Triplette to the Broncos and the 31 other teams highlights that incident, along with other unruly scrums. Fines will be assessed to players who just happen to be "in the area" of a fight.

"Peacemaking won't be accepted as an excuse for entering the area," warned the video, which featured NFL Executive Vice President of Football Operations Troy Vincent and covered all the rules tweaks.

Much has been made of the impact of changes to the placekicked point-after-touchdown, and Triplette noted that a second video was made regarding PAT tweaks, including the impact of keeping the football in play after a blocked kick or a turnover on a two-point conversion attempt. Triplette screened that video for media that cover the Broncos on Friday after practice; it was nearly as long as the video covering all the other rules changes, and included an explanation of the possibility of a 1-point safety on a conversion attempt.

Among the other key points and rules tweaks:

NFL officials at Broncos practice

... Earl Thomas's hit on Wes Welker during the fourth quarter of the Broncos' 26-20 loss at Seattle last September was shown as an example of the additional protection provided to an intended receiver who is defenseless. No penalty was assessed, and the play was considered legal under last year's rules, because Welker was not considered "defenseless." Now, a receiver in his position will be.

The penalty is 15 yards for unnecessary roughness; in that instance, it would have been half the distance to the Seahawks' goal line based on the location of Kam Chancellor's interception. Under the new rules, the Seahawks would have taken possession at their 7-yard-line instead of the Denver 35.

... Peel-back blocks are now a 15-yard penalty. Players will have to watch low blocks in which they are moving back toward their end zone as a result.

... On punt-rush plays, you can no longer push teammates into the punt-protection formation. This was already prohibited on field-goal attempts, but now expands to punts.

... Games will be stopped if a player "exhibits obvious signs of disorientation" and is not pulled from the game by team medical personnel. A concussion spotter will be stationed in the press box to monitor players for any potential signs of concussions.

... Cowboys WR Dez Bryant's non-catch from their divisional-round loss at Green Bay last Jan. 11 was cited as an example of a play that is still not a catch because control of the ball did not endure until he

landed on the ground. The play was shown from three angles to underscore the NFL's point on the matter.

Broncos Day 8 Training Camp Takeaways: Offense making progress

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
August 7, 2015

Among the Broncos' offensive players, only Owen Daniels knows more about the concepts Head Coach Gary Kubiak wants to install than James Casey.

He knows the cerebral demands of installing this offense. He's seen how difficult it can be for some players to grasp.

But what he sees from his new team is a collective understanding of the offense. The offseason of classroom study and the summer of on-field work is starting to pay dividends, especially as the installation pace accelerates and more concepts take root.

James Casey

"I think we're very, very advanced right now where we're at in camp," Casey said. "Obviously Peyton [Manning] helps speed up that process because he's seen so much football and he's such in command out there, that I think we're ahead [compared with] anything I saw in Houston."

Even with Manning's presence, the Broncos' progress surprises Casey.

"I think it is surprising that everyone's picking up everything so fast, because there's a lot of little intricacies in this offense, a lot of details. Everything's very on-point. Coach Kubiak has got assignments for everybody in certain positions, and everyone's really buying in, really taking it upon themselves to know exactly what they're doing. I'm seeing a lot of great things out here in practice.

"We're still learning. We're still building on seeing what we're good at [and] seeing what we're not good at. But by the time we get to these preseason games, hopefully we'll have a good idea of what we're doing and we can go demonstrate this in these preseason games."

The first preseason game will not reveal much, especially for the first team. The learning will continue into the regular season.

But even with the shuffling along the offensive line as the Broncos try to find their starting unit, the offense is starting to click after a rough opening to training camp.

And now, the takeaways:

1. VON MILLER'S EXUBERANCE.

During Tuesday's practice, the outside linebacker was so amped up after going under Ryan Harris' arm without losing any speed that he sprinted all the way back to the locker-room doors. Friday morning, he

hopped and danced his way from pre-practice stretching to the first period of defensive work, waving his arms and jumping to fire up the UCHealth Training Center-record crowd of 5,507.

"I'm just having fun," Miller said. "Playing football is what I do best, so when I'm out here, I should be happy out here, I should love coming to practice.

"People shouldn't drag me out to come to practice just to do something that I do better than anything that I do in life. While I'm out here, I just enjoy my teammates and just try to stay in the moment."

It helps that Miller continues to breach the pocket off the edge, providing a difficult challenge for RT Ryan Harris. Miller forced Manning to step up in the pocket for some throws; against quarterbacks who do not possess Manning's feel for the pass rush, Miller will rack up the sacks.

2. MANNING'S COMFORT LEVEL.

In recent days, the offense has begun incorporating some concepts of recent years into a scheme that, in the end, will likely be a melding of Kubiak's typical offenses and the one the Broncos ran the last few years. There were more shotgun and pistol looks Friday, with handoffs setting up some long runs that were reminiscent of the 2013 season in particular.

But there was one play in particular that showed that Manning is doing just fine in an offense with a bit more work under center. During a team period midway through practice, Manning dropped back, read the defense and threw even before he was set, finding Daniels on a short crossing route.

A pass like that reminds you that Manning is one of the all-time great multi-taskers to come through the sport. There are some players who pass through the NFL without the ability to walk and chew gum at the same time. Manning, on the other hand, is pretty much the opposite.

Just because Manning might end up operating under center more often does not mean he won't be able to read and slice up a defense with the same efficiency and speed as he did in previous years.

3. PARADIS, GARCIA BACK UP FRONT.

Kubiak, Offensive Coordinator Rick Dennison and Offensive Line Coach Clancy Barone opted to work Paradis and Garcia for a second consecutive day on the first team at center and left guard, respectively.

Even if they don't earn starting jobs during this training camp, their work together could offer a glance at the Broncos' long-term future up front. Two things jumped out: their occasional double-teams of NT Sylvester Williams -- which says a lot about Williams' play during training camp -- and their work on one of C.J. Anderson's best runs of training camp. In the parlance of Vince Lombardi, they created "a seal here and a seal here," and Anderson ran "in the alley."

No one expects them to be perfect, and Garcia and Paradis weren't. When Malik Jackson rushed inside, Garcia had trouble with him. Garcia won't be the last guard to find difficulty containing Jackson when he bursts to the inside. But each day helps their progress.

4. SAMBRAILO A QUICK STUDY.

More and more, Ty Sambrailo is settling in at left tackle, and DeMarcus Ware's guidance is a significant reason why. When Ware and Sambrailo duel in one-on-ones, the rookie wins his share of the meetings, and is doing a better job getting his feet positioned to guiding Ware outside and away from the pocket when the Pro Bowler attempts a speed move to the edge.

"Some moves that I would do on him, at first they would work. I would ask them, 'Why do you think these moves would work?' These right here are some of the hand gestures or hand movements that you can move to stop it," Ware said. "The next day he comes out and he stops me.

"And I'm like, 'You know what? The next guy that pass rushes is going to do the same thing, and they're going to be surprised when you go against them.' He's one of those guys that is going to step up big for us, so why not tell him how to play and what to do? It makes him more effective quickly."

And given all that has been placed in front of Sambrailo so soon, the Broncos need him to continue applying these lessons quickly.

Joe Don Duncan

5. JOE DON DUNCAN'S ATHLETICISM.

Ten to 15 years ago, Kubiak leaned towards converted running backs as fullbacks, because they had skills to be viable threats when needed as ball carriers and pass catchers out of the backfield. Howard Griffith and Mike Anderson were the best examples of this trend.

But in 2015, he looks for converted tight ends that offer the flexibility to line up at fullback and the positions where tight ends line up -- close to the offensive tackle or just outside in the slot. With players like those, Kubiak and Offensive Coordinator Rick Dennison can change their formation without changing personnel.

That's what made Casey a good fit in Houston and now Denver, and that's what makes Duncan an intriguing prospect. For the second consecutive day, he used his athleticism to get open for a big reception downfield.

"It's very rare. That's why he's here," Casey said. "That's why he's in the NFL. That's why he's playing fullback and some tight end stuff because he is a bigger guy. He's like 260-something and he can run well, catch and he can block."

Duncan's biggest task is learning the nuances of fullback, but with more downfield receptions, he could become a threat on wheel routes out of the backfield and short routes across the middle. Few linebackers can cover a 270-pounder with speed and good body control.

Five years after induction, Hall of Fame is Floyd Little's second home

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
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In February of 2010, legendary Broncos running back Floyd Little got a phone call from Vice President Joe Biden, the first of two stunning calls that week. The vice president's Secret Service detail was skeptical of his assertion that he knew the soon-to-be Pro Football Hall of Famer, so he gave Little a call.

"Floyd, I'm sitting here with eight Secret Service guys and they say I don't know you," Vice President Biden said, as Little recalls.

The two had gone to Syracuse University at the same time, as Little said in his reply over the phone. "I told you," Little heard Biden say as the vice president chastised his doubtful security members.

"I know both Beau and Hunter, your sons," Little continued.

"I told you!" Little heard Biden say again in the background.

"Thanks," Biden said after catching up with his friend, who had just been elected to be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. "Good luck and congratulations," and then once more in the background: "You guys don't know I know Floyd Little!"

Shortly afterward, another Joe called up Floyd Little. This time it was Joe Greene, the dominant defensive lineman who was inducted into the Hall of Fame after a 12-year, four-Super Bowl career with the Steelers.

"Floyd, congratulations on being inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame," Greene told him, Little says. "I want you to know in my 15-year career you were the best overall player I have ever played against. I'm not talking about the best running back, I'm saying the best player."

The call left Little awestruck.

"I was just so emotional after hearing that from one of the greatest players who's ever played," Little said on Friday.

[VIEW GALLERY | 20 Photos](#)

Broncos legends tour the Pro Football Hall of Fame

Little returned to Canton, Ohio on Thursday, just like he does every year. This year marks the fifth anniversary of his Pro Football Hall of Fame induction and with time it's grown to have an even more profound emotional impact than in 2010.

When he was first added to the annals of football history for his professional career, Little knew it was the pinnacle of his football days, but the effect didn't quite hit him. The Pro Football Hall of Fame's mission statement—"to honor the heroes of the game, to preserve its history, to promote its values and to celebrate excellence everywhere"—was recited, Little didn't quite feel it fit him at the time.

"It never really resonated with me. But the statement is to honor the heroes of the game. I'm one of those people that the statement is talking about," Little said in a hushed tone, as if in sudden realization of his massive accomplishment. "I mean, my history, my likeness, my voice, my legacy would be here in eternity, that you could come and that you could hear me and you could see me. I mean, for all the fans and the friends and the family, my great-great-great-grandkids will be able to know who I was. That's the preserving the history that promote the values of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, which is integrity, which is courage, communication or commitment, respect and excellence."

But mostly what he's found with his induction into the hallowed ground in Canton over the past five years is a sense of belonging — a family. And the past two days that he called "two of the greatest days of my life" have reinforced that feeling.

"[Deacon Jones] used to always say 'You belong to a team now where you can't be traded,'" Little recalled his fellow Hall of Famer saying. "'They can't cut you, they can't fire you and even in death you're still a Pro Football Hall of Famer.' All of these things today and yesterday, it's starting to mean something more to me because I look out at the Hall of Famers — some of my heroes of the game, some of the guys I admire — I'm a part of that family."

With his induction in 2010, Little received his gold jacket. Stitched inside it is the number 257, his enshrinement number. And whenever he looks at that number he realizes what a small group he's a part of.

"There's no words to truly describe the emotions and the feelings that I have about being on this elite team," Little said.

Truth be told, the significance of the achievement is a bit overwhelming for him. Instead of just Floyd Little, now he is Hall of Famer Floyd Little. With the stature afforded to a Hall of Famer comes the recognition of the standard he must uphold.

But it's given him one of the best experiences of a lifetime, right up there with those he's spent with his wife and children and a personal tour of the White House by Vice President Biden.

"He wrapped his arms around me and my wife and he gave us a tour of the White House. We were his guests," Little said. "That is significant for a guy who was born in Connecticut, had all the challenges in the world without a dad and to wind up in the most prestigious sports fraternity that ever existed."

Ultimately, Canton has become Floyd Little's second home.

Every year his Pro Football Hall of Fame family has a reunion in the small Ohio town and when he arrives at the Hall, he always receives a warm greeting but it's not "Welcome back, Floyd."

It's "Welcome home."