Kiszla vs. Renck: Do you take seriously Von Miller’s threat to sit out the 2016 season?
By Mark Kiszla and Troy Renck
Denver Post
June 18, 2016

Kiz: How did Von Miller and John Elway get here? One minute they were exchanging bro hugs like besties at the Super Bowl and the next minute Miller is cropping Elway out of a photo from the White House and declaring on social media there’s “no chance” he will play this season under the franchise tag. This is silly. But should we take the threat seriously?

Renck: We have now seen the extremes in the situation. The Broncos made their hard-line offer and Von’s response is to take his ball and go home. It’s his best tool of leverage against the franchise tag. Do I believe he would hold out in training camp, creating a distraction possibly hard to overcome? Absolutely. Do I believe he would sit out the season? I don’t think he would, because of his loyalty to his teammates.

Kiz: OK, smart guy. Four short weeks ago, I suggested it was time to lock Miller and Elway in a room until they hammer out a long-term contract and you replied: “Be patient. What, are you double-parked outside The Denver Post?” Hope you and everybody in Broncos Country are happy now. Elway and Miller have created a soap opera that could wash that championship feeling down the drain.

Renck: Ah, Kiz, I kid because I care. You’ve had a good read on this. But let me ask you this: Did it ruin last season when Demaryius Thomas’ contract wasn’t solved until July 15? This is part of the business — it can get ugly. But but both sides are motivated to get a deal done and as long as that’s the case I still believe something will be worked out. The apple-to-apple comparisons exist with Fletcher Cox now. Von should get at least 63 million guaranteed. It’s how quickly they get him that money that will solve this problem. Cox will get 55 million in the first nine months. Von has to get a similar deal, or better.

Kiz: If they call it social media, how come it’s so often about me, me, me? Just as I don’t need to see what you ate for lunch on Facebook, Miller bickering with Elway over $120 million gets old real fast for regular folks with the rent coming due. But Miller already has banked $30 million playing for the Broncos and, as we well know, he’s a different cat. So I take his threat to sit out the season as more than a bluff. Pay up, Mr. Elway.

Renck: I’ve written multiple times that Von would be better off letting his agent handle this. He has every right to be disappointed, but showing hurt feelings and acting in a sophomoric fashion doesn’t make any sense. It’s not going to accelerate the deal. Let everyone take a deep breath. Von is the exception to the rule. The Broncos should step up and pay him. I believe they ultimately will.
Renck: Von Miller, Broncos need solution to game of chicken

By Troy Renck
Denver Post
June 18, 2016

Von Miller disarms company with his sense of humor. During the ulcer-spawning stretch run of the Broncos’ season, Miller stood in the locker room and talked about his plans to raise chickens. He drifted away for a moment, imagining the success. He would use surveillance cameras and air conditioning and play Sade to increase, um, productivity.

Forget a farmer, this Miller is a “Smooth Operator.” Unless it involves contract talks. Right now he is playing a fascinating high-stakes game of chicken.

Miller continues to show his dissatisfaction over the current Broncos offer. He took to Instagram on Thursday to clarify his stance. “I love my Teammates, Coaches, and My Fans” but there is “No Chance” I play the 2016 season under the Franchise tag.”

Miller is emotional. He is understandably disappointed and hurt that the Broncos aren’t offering what he wants. He watched last week as the Broncos agreed to a four-year contract with linebacker Brandon Marshall and continued to work on a long-term contract with receiver Emmanuel Sanders. The latter could happen, even if it means Sanders has to take slightly less than San Diego’s Keenan Allen and Jacksonville’s Allen Hurns because he’s five years older. Sanders brings toughness, energy and productivity. If the Broncos can get him at a tick under $10 million per, make it happen.

With Miller, negotiations are not that easy. He wants to be the league’s highest-paid nonquarterback. His play was a big part in allowing the Broncos to become the first team to win a Super Bowl on defense alone since the 2000 Baltimore Ravens.

Miller covets stability and wants at least $60 million guaranteed upon signing, no matter what happens.

The Broncos have offered $38.5 million guaranteed over the first two seasons. That is an extreme position, just as Miller’s threat to skip the 2016 season is. We have seen the black and white on the spectrum.

It’s time to work toward shades of gray.

How quickly the Broncos can get Miller his money is the central issue, and a road map exists based on the contract Eagles defensive end Fletcher Cox signed last week. Fletcher will get $55.54 million guaranteed in the first nine months after signing the deal in an accelerated payout. That represents a real comparable from a lesser player and indicates where Miller’s guarantee should be.

Because both sides are motivated to get a deal done, hope exists. The Broncos recognize Miller’s talent and his growth off the field. But let’s be honest, the Broncos’ reluctance to cave in and their patience has benefited them greatly in their roster reconstruction. They held firm on wide receiver Demaryius Thomas as a franchise-tag player last summer, seeing his demands to be paid like Calvin Johnson as an
outlier. They needed the Cowboys and Dez Bryant to sign a contract. And when they did, they closed the deal with Thomas.

Have the Broncos miscalculated on Von’s deal? That view can be advanced based on what Cox received from Philadelphia. The Broncos hold a realistic chance of repeating as world champions. But they can’t survive a summer of Miller distraction in training camp. His absence would demand a story every day, demand endless reactions from teammates. His absence would create a gaping hole, undermining the team’s greatest strength.

Miller wants to be a Bronco for life. The Broncos want him here. Finding a compromise is a must, because there will be no winners if this game of chicken continues into training camp and the regular season.
Broncos’ offseason turns into drama-packed four months
By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
June 18, 2016

The roller-coaster ride that carried the Broncos to Super Bowl 50 last season didn’t end when the confetti rained down at Levi’s Stadium. The car only sped up. More loops were added. More twists on the field. And many more turns off the field.

The Broncos’ offseason has been a drama-packed four months, with parties fit for a million, high-profile exits and arrivals, new contracts, restructured contracts, legal run-ins, an ongoing quarterback saga, a meeting with the president, the absence of a Super Bowl MVP from team workouts, and, oh, yes, some really, really big rings.

“I think if you’re in this league and you’re in this business, you’re going to deal with distractions,” Broncos coach Gary Kubiak said. “That’s part of it. I think the key is that you deal with them openly and honestly with your players, but you keep working. … Remember, our team dealt with a lot to start the season last year.”

It certainly did. And certainly it’s expected that some sort of drama, some level of controlled chaos, would ensue after a Super Bowl-winning season.

But the offseason of 2016 was a wild one:

THE EXODUS AND OVERHAUL

The biggest domino fell March 6, when Peyton Manning announced his retirement from the NFL. After one of the most tumultuous seasons in his career, the future Hall of Fame quarterback told a packed crowd of reporters and teammates: “There is just something about 18 years. Eighteen is a good number.”

For Malik Jackson, 90 million was a good number. The free-agent defensive end, expectedly, left for riches in Jacksonville. Inside linebacker Danny Trevathan left for about $24 million in Chicago.

The offensive line was transformed with veteran cuts, free-agent signings and the arrival of Donald Stephenson and Russell Okung.

And then there was Brock Osweiler, once deemed the Broncos’ quarterback of the future, who received a $72 million reward from the Texans for his seven starts with the Broncos in 2015. The move, arguably the most shocking in free agency, left the Broncos with a gaping hole at the most important position on the field. But looking back, general manager John Elway believes the move was decided long before free agency hit, when Osweiler was benched for Manning in the regular-season finale.

“I think that had something to do with where he was,” Elway said earlier this month. “But Houston wanted him that bad to go ahead and pay him a whole heck of a lot of money.”
LET'S MAKE A DEAL

Miami was willing to pay running back C.J. Anderson a whole heck of a lot of money. The Broncos initially used a low-round tender on Anderson, worth $1.67 million for one season. So the Dolphins capitalized by signing him to a four-year, $18 million offer sheet that the Broncos later matched. Denver seemingly underestimated Anderson’s market value, but the team’s financial situation changed drastically when Osweiler left.

While Anderson was given a healthy pay raise, outside linebacker DeMarcus Ware agreed to a restructured contract to lower his salary and cap hit for 2016.

And, on the final day of organized team activities last week, inside linebacker Brandon Marshall, a restricted free agent who attended workouts without signing his second-round tender, agreed to a four-year contract extension that includes $20 million guaranteed.

“For them to see me as an integral part of this team and of the defense, that’s huge,” Marshall said. “It speaks volumes. It means a lot to me that they believe in me because there are so many people that didn’t.”

THE QB SAGA

The Broncos traded for veteran quarterback Mark Sanchez, giving them a bit of insurance after losing Manning and Osweiler. But the search for a third quarterback continued. But the search for a third quarterback continued. Elway hosted Colin Kaepernick at least once at his home in an effort to sway the quarterback to restructure his contract and join the Broncos. Elway also kicked the tires on Sam Bradford, the Eagles’ disgruntled quarterback who signed a hefty two-year extension. But April 28, after hours of calling and negotiating while the NFL draft was going on, the hunt for QB No. 3 was settled when Elway traded up to snag Paxton Lynch in the first round. The Post-Peyton Trio was set, but the drama ensued on the practice field, where Sanchez and Trevor Siemian vaulted to 1A and 1B in OTAs.

“I think they’re looking each other right in the eye throughout the whole course of the offseason, as far who is ahead and who is one or two,” Kubiak said of Sanchez and Siemian. “I think those two guys are right there with each other. I think it’s a very competitive situation.”

LEGAL TROUBLES

Less than a week after winning Super Bowl 50, safety Shiloh Keo was arrested on a DUI charge in his home state of Idaho. In late May, receiver Cody Latimer was arrested on a misdemeanor warrant. And in early June, cornerback Aqib Talib suffered a gunshot wound by an “unknown” suspect outside a Dallas nightclub. Although he’s expected to make a full recovery, the incident forced him to miss the team’s trip to the White House. Depending on his involvement, he could face legal ramifications and a suspension from the NFL.

PARTIES AND RINGS

The Dom Perignon was flowing June 12, when the 2015 Broncos reunited at Sports Authority Field to receive their “really big” rings and, for one last time, celebrate their Super Bowl run. Osweiler, who cited
Houston’s OTAs as reason for not attending the White House trip, sat out this one too. But Von Miller attended, pushing aside acrimony over contract talks — at least for one night.

THE MILLER TALKS

Miller parlayed his Super Bowl MVP award into a grand media tour, with stops on talk shows and a spot on “Dancing With the Stars.” While holding out of the offseason program, Miller has said repeatedly that he wants to be a Bronco for life. He loves his teammates and he loves his coaches, he says. He does not, however, love that franchise tag or that six-year offer the Broncos handed him in early June that includes $38.5 million fully guaranteed at signing.

Naturally, he has voiced his angst over the contract negotiations via Instagram and Chelsea Handler’s show on Netflix.

The sides have until July 15 to reach a long-term agreement. If not, Miller has to play on the tag or not at all. Until then, may the drama continue.

A WILD RIDE

A timeline of the Broncos’ drama-filled offseason:

Feb. 8: The morning after winning Super Bowl 50, Von Miller anticipates peaceful contract negotiations with the Broncos.

Feb. 9: Broncos and a million fans celebrate the victory with a parade in Denver.


March 6: Peyton Manning announces retirement.

March 8: G Louis Vasquez, TE Owen Daniels and LS Aaron Brewer are cut. DE Malik Jackson agrees to a six-year, $90 million deal with Jacksonville. Broncos reach three-year agreement with OT Donald Stephenson.

March 9: Brock Osweiler agrees to four-year, $72 million deal with Texans. Danny Trevathan agrees to four years with Bears.


March 12: DeMarcus Ware restructures his contract.

March 15: Broncos match Dolphins’ four-year, $18 million offer sheet for C.J. Anderson after initially placing a low-round tender on the RB.

March 17: Broncos sign Russell Okung to a five-year deal that includes no guaranteed money up front.

March 31: Elway makes push to sign Colin Kaepernick the day his $11.9 million salary for 2016 became guaranteed.
April 6: Broncos agree to two-year contract with DE Jared Crick.

April 9: Broncos trade LT Ryan Clady and a seventh-round pick to the Jets for a fifth-round pick.

April 28: Broncos trade up to select Paxton Lynch at No. 26 in the draft. The move ends the Broncos’ search for a third QB, but uncertainty over who will start continues.

May 30: Cody Latimer arrested on a misdemeanor warrant after a domestic dispute.

June 5: Aqib Talib is shot in Dallas.

June 6: Broncos visit White House without Talib (gunshot) and Osweiler (cited Texans’ OTAs). Von Miller joined, though.

June 7: Minicamp opens with Sanchez taking No. 1 reps, Trevor Siemian going No. 2 and Paxton Lynch No. 3.

June 10: Cropgate. Miller crops John Elway out of a photo from their White House visit, a sign of his displeasure with contract negotiations.

June 12: Broncos get really big Super Bowl rings in a private ceremony. Everyone but Wade “Peters,” that is.

June 14: ILB Brandon Marshall agrees to a four-year extension that includes $20 million guaranteed.

June 15: Broncos end OTAs. Miller tells Chelsea Handler he won’t sit out the 2016 season.

June 16: Via Instagram, Miller says there’s “no chance” he plays on the franchise tag.
Why former Bronco Jeb Putzier has turned to an array of therapies to ease his post-football pain
By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
June 18, 2016

Jeb Putzier knows how he got here, sitting on his couch on a recent Tuesday morning, his hair disheveled and his daily regimen of therapy and supplements scribbled on a calendar on the kitchen table. His thoughts can often be muddled, but some replays remain vivid.

He remembers the brutal blow delivered by New England cornerback Asante Samuel in 2005 that left him with six stitches and a jaw that still pops out. Putzier remembers the crushing hit by San Diego linebacker Steve Foley later that season that is still floating around the internet titled “Steve Foley almost kills Jeb Putzier.”

Putzier remembers his release from the Broncos seven years ago, and he certainly remembers the steep drop that followed: his suicide attempt and an acrimonious end to his marriage that limits visitations with his two young children to once every few weeks.

“My kids. If my kids weren’t here,” he says, “I’d already be dead.”

After suffering what he estimates were more than 1,000 concussions, as well as an array of physical injuries during his eight-year professional career as a tight end, seven of those in the NFL, Putzier now spends his time searching for ways to clear his mind and end his pain. His joints ache. His head hurts. And although his injuries are far from debilitating, his mind is constantly in overdrive, causing otherwise routine activities to exhaust him.

At 37, the hope of someday being able to physically sustain a full-time job is just that — hope.

“When he shuts down, it’s like watching a wind-up toy come to the end of its line,” says his longtime girlfriend, Bailey. “He looks like a strong, healthy, able-bodied person, but you don’t see the stuff that goes on behind closed doors.”

Yes, the punishment he took on the football field is how Putzier got here, holed up in his Centennial home with a daily to-do list that includes physical therapy or music therapy or light therapy, or all three, and consuming a cocktail of supplements such as fish oil capsules and cannabidiol that has turned his kitchen cupboard into a mini-GNC.

Certainly not every former football player experiences the symptoms Putzier does. But with the heightened awareness of the long-term damage football can do to the body, many ex-players, regardless of their condition, are anxiously searching for new ways to not only treat pain but also prevent the onset of additional symptoms.

The hunt for answers when so much is still unknown about traumatic brain injuries has created a wild west for players unsure where to turn. Specialists in Colorado have joined the quest and could be on the forefront of significant progress.
Blueprint for recovery

At least twice a month Putzier voluntarily visits his version of hell. Beads of sweat dot his forehead as he slowly makes his way inside the windowless room in the office of Dr. Shane Steadman, a chiropractic neurologist with Integrated Health Systems in Englewood. There is no wall art, and the only furniture is an outsize barber’s chair that beckons Putzier with its soft black leather and plush armrests.

“I hate this,” he says as a wave of anxiety and nausea rushes over him. “I hate this so much.”

As Putzier eases into the chair, Steadman straps a pair of infrared goggles around his head. Putzier’s enlarged pupils, bouncing side to side, are projected onto a nearby laptop computer. Faster and faster they bob as the sweat drips down his face and his fingers dig into the leather.

Putzier says he was diagnosed in April with postconcussion syndrome, attaching a label to myriad symptoms he has dealt with since he retired. Steadman, an expert in functional neurology, is one of many specialists Putzier and other former players see to try to find peace.

“The goal is to try to understand the function or, in many of our patients’ cases, we’re trying to understand their dysfunction,” says Steadman, who also does full blood and hormonal evaluations to connect the physical symptoms with the neurological causes. “(We’re) trying to figure out how areas of the brain integrate with other areas of the brain and also how it integrates with the body.”

With interactive technologies such as a Neuro Sensorimotor Integrator, Steadman tests Putzier’s balance and motor skills. The videonystagmography (VNG) goggles Putzier hate so much record his drifting eyes, offering signs of how his brain is working. Coordinated head-and-eye movements target certain areas of the brain that are underperforming.

The process seems simple, but within minutes Putzier’s long hair is drenched, his face is pale and the energy he entered the office with has disappeared. The light-and-sound stimulation is overwhelming, and recovery can sometimes take as many as 18 hours of rest, he says.

“Because we’re using measuring tools, we’re able to see improvements within a short period of time,” Steadman says. “It doesn’t mean that they’re 100 percent resolved. But we’re able to see improvements within a few weeks.”

Progress for Putzier has been slow and unsteady, but noticeable in terms of his emotional stability, mental endurance and thought processing. But the incremental and often invisible changes in his mind are laid bare in specialized images taken at CereScan, a functional brain imaging and data analytics company in Littleton.

CereScan uses quantitative single-photon emission computed tomography (qSPECT) imaging to show how the brain is functioning. (Putzier began working with the company in 2011 and is now both a patient and a consultant.) Unlike magnetic resonance images (MRI) or computed tomography (CT) scans that show the structure of the brain, qSPECT scans measure blood flow, which can reveal how cells are working in the brain.

For Putzier and the dozens of other NFL players and military veterans CereScan has worked with, the images and medical assessments provide not only proof of their cognitive limitations but baselines for
treatment, be it near-infrared light therapy (NIR), hyperbaric oxygen therapy, neurofeedback, dietary changes or even yoga.

“The industry is coming to the point where the doctors need to know structural and they need to know functional,” says CereScan’s chairman and CEO, John Kelley. “Pictures are great, and the doctors rely on them. But now the brain can be mathematically mapped. So as soon as you put it into digits, now you can put mathematics to it, so the doctors will see almost like a spreadsheet of how an area, up to 160 regions, is performing.”

In October 2013, Putzier underwent a qSPECT scan that found numerous regions of his brain lacked the normal amount of blood flow; cool colors dominated many regions, accounting for his cognitive fatigue, unstable mood, light-and-sound sensitivity, balance issues and chronic headaches. Ten months later, many areas of his brain — specifically in his occipital lobe and cerebellum that were constantly rattled from hits — lit up in reds and oranges, indicative of greater blood flow.

The improvement was in part a credit to the weekly work with Steadman, but also the regular sessions of NIR, which Kelley likens to Viagra, but for the brain. Every other day for about 20 minutes at a time, Putzier wraps a foam pad dotted with small bulbs around his head to let the infrared light permeate his skull and shower the surface of his brain to increase blood flow.

But Putzier continues his hunt for help.

He has added music therapy to his regimen, often laying in bed with the infrared light device strapped around as his head as steady beats play through his earphones. The stem cell therapy received in May from Premier Stem Cell Institute in Johnstown will ease his joint pain, he hopes, and put off surgery. He recently started neurofeedback at the NeuraPerformance Brain Center in Denver to try to self-regulate and retrain his brain. And, if insurance allows it, he may try Botox, which has been FDA-approved to treat chronic migraines.

“Trying to explain to people, it’s like we have a rope with knots and we’re trying to untie the knots one at a time,” Putzier says. “But when I untied this knot, it led to other problems in between to the next knot.”

An unshakable love

Stacked on a mounted metal shelf in the closet in Putzier’s basement are nearly 30 commemorative game balls he received during his playing days. Resting on the floor are duffel bags and plastic bins stuffed with autographed jerseys of former teammates. A framed collage of newspaper clippings — “Jeb Putzier’s Walk to Stardom” — leans on a nearby wall, ready to be hung. And, in an unfinished room, old photographs and football playing cards from his early days as a Bronco are strewn across a wooden counter. Ask him about the ones in the middle and his face lights up as he tells the stories behind the images of him, Ed McCaffrey, Jake Plummer and Danny Kanell sitting on the Broncos’ team plane, or the one of him dressed up at a Halloween party.

The bulk of Putzier’s NFL career is proudly scattered in this 1,100-square-foot space. While he vows he would never play if given the chance again, there is no hiding his love for the “chess match” of football. He still watches NFL games, and for a few years after retiring he parlayed his playing career into one as a radio analyst. But that, too, had to be scaled back and eventually put on hold because of his condition.
“I think it’d be frustrating for any person,” Bailey says. “But for someone who made a career of being a professional athlete and being that big, strong, tough person to not be able to do these things — there’s pride and you don’t want to admit that you need help and that you’re vulnerable.”

His shoulders, pummeled by defenders, became so sore late last year he was unable to lift his kids and help with small projects around the house. His hips took a beating with the constant shifting, cutting upfield and repeated tackles. And his knee pain is a sore reminder of it all.

“But that’s part of the price to pay in playing the game,” says Mark Schlereth, 50, a former Broncos guard who played 12 NFL seasons and had 29 surgeries. “I knew what I was doing to myself. I’m not naive. I didn’t think, ‘Oh, I had no idea that this is what it was going to feel like.’ No, I knew. You didn’t have to tell me that what I did to myself was abusive. I signed up to do it.”

Putzier and Bailey remain hopeful that he will recover enough to resume the activities he enjoyed even just four years ago. But as the many treatments slowly try to untangle those knots, the most obvious question — the one at the heart of players’ search for solutions — can’t be ignored.

“Why do some guys go on to live very functional lives, and some guys, their brains just kind of break down?” Schlereth says. “I always thought your body is such an unbelievable compensation machine. Why do some guys seem to be able to overcome and other guys can’t? I’ve always felt like there’s some genetic predisposition.”

Fear of the future

Dr. Sherrie Ballantine-Talmadge, a physician and pain-management specialist at the University of Colorado’s Sports Medicine and Performance Center in Boulder, has an adage she shares often with colleagues but admits is rarely said outside her clinic’s doors.

“Once you’ve seen one concussion, you’ve seen one concussion,” she explains, “meaning each concussion is different and each concussion within each person is different.”

That, in part, is perhaps why Putzier is a self-described shell of himself and Hall of Fame quarterback Warren Moon, who played 23 years of pro ball, has the mind and the body of a man much younger.

“I had six concussions, and I don’t know how many more times where I was dinged in the head, where I kind of lost my faculties for a few seconds and was able to get everything back and stayed in the game,” says Moon, 59.

The public discourse regarding football-related injuries is louder now than ever, but far more is unknown about traumatic brain injuries than known.

“It’s an awareness problem,” says Dr. Geoffrey T. Manley, a professor and vice chairman of neurological surgery at the University of California, San Francisco. “I see us in the very early days of this. With brain injury in general, we’re at least 20, 30 years behind cancer and heart disease.”

Which is why Moon and some other retired players feel fortunate but anxious — anxious about when the symptoms may hit them.
“Physically I feel really good, but I worry every day when are some signs going to show from concussions and head injuries that I did have in my career,” says Moon, who plans to donate his brain to research for chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). “You live every day wondering if this is ever going to creep into your body, just because you’re seeing so many of your peers who are around the same age struggling with this type of stuff.”

When Moon retired, he received a complete physical assessment in Seattle to determine any physical deficiencies to help him manage his minimal pain and ward off the cognitive symptoms he so fears.

“Football takes a tremendous toll on your body, and you don’t really realize it until you’re actually done,” Moon says. “Once you get away from it, you start to feel those effects.”

Tyler Polumbus felt it. He felt it before he got away from the game.

The former Broncos offensive tackle retired in April after an MRI showed a herniated disc in his neck that has been causing a shooting pain down his left arm. The images also showed four degenerated discs in his lower back that caused significant pain last season. Surgery on those probably isn’t an option, he says.

“We all think we’re invincible,” says Polumbus, 31. “It never once hit my mind until that the concussion stuff, and that was the first time I was really like, ‘All right, I need to be careful here.’ And even then, you never think you’re going to be one of the stats. Now that I’m retired and I’m actually seeing the MRIs and I’m actually seeing the causes of why I’m in pain, it makes me more concerned that while I was playing I just thought it was bumps and bruises.”

Polumbus now counts himself among the fortunate but cautious. In the past three months he has shed nearly 40 pounds through diet and exercise, in part, he says jokingly, to stave off calls that may lure him back to the field. His only surgeries (on his shoulders) came in college, and he was reported to have only two concussions in his NFL career, both in 2012 while he was with Washington. But he has dealt with a persistent headache ever since.

The aura of invincibility and the high pain threshold that helped him get to the NFL and last eight seasons are now causing him to be nervous about the unknown.

“A little bit,” he admits. “Honestly, that’s my worst problem right now. I’ve just been living in pain for so long, I thought it was normal. Now that I realize that I’ve got that many (degenerated) discs, I’m more worried about it than I was.”

Soon, Polumbus will travel to New Orleans for a complete brain and body assessment at Tulane University, coordinated by The Trust, an organization established by the NFL Players Association to support former players. He hopes the examinations, combined with the MRI he received, will give him a solid framework to build a treatment plan — much as the qSPECT images gave Putzier a blueprint for recovery.

Because, like Putzier and Moon and many other retired players, Polumbus knows how he got here. And he, too, is hunting for answers.
“I’m not crippled by any means, but it’s significant pain,” he says. “Honestly, it’s one of those things I never know — our pain threshold is so different from other people that I always wonder, should I be living with this? I’m concerned about it, so I’m trying to be proactive about it.”
Broncos' offensive tackle Michael Schofield improves thanks to added weight

By Mike Klis
9News
June 18, 2016

At no position did the Denver Broncos improve this offseason more than at offensive tackle.

They added left tackle Russell Okung and right tackle Donald Stephenson through free-agent deals that will pay them a combined $11 million this season.

And returning starting right tackle Michael Schofield is better through added poundage.

After not playing a down during his rookie year of 2014 and three games into his second season of 2015, Schofield suddenly started playing every down through the final 16 games, including playoffs, last year because of injuries to first, Ryan Clady, and then Ty Sambrailo.

Schofield, a third-round draft pick out of Michigan, saw his weight drop from his listed 301 pounds to the 295-298 range last season.

His is up to a steady 308 pounds this offseason.

Playing mostly at his less experienced left tackle position this offseason, Schofield was one of the team’s most improved players this spring.

“Last season I was kind of on the lighter side,” Schofield said. “So this offseason I really focused on getting my weight up. And my girlfriend is living with me so she’s been cooking a lot for me so that’s been helping out a lot.”

On paper, he Broncos are planning to start Okung at left tackle this season, Stephenson at right tackle, shift second-year tackle Ty Sambrailo to starting right guard and have Schofield serve as the game-day “swing” tackle.

With Okung sitting out team drills this offseason to recover from shoulder injury, the Broncos’ coaching staff had Schofield work exclusively at left tackle during OTAs and minicamp.

“More positions you can play and everything, if I’m not the starter than you’ve got to be able to swing tackle,” Schofield said. “I’ve got to be able to play everywhere.”

Not that Schofield is conceding to the Broncos’ grand plan.

“No way. I don’t want to give up my starting spot,” he said. “Definitely not. I’m going to be out there in camp trying to go 100 percent every time trying to win a starting spot.”
Schofield had several clean games for the Broncos last season, and he was a consistently strong run blocker. His pass blocking, however, was vulnerable to certain matchups, most notably in a 15-12 home loss to the Oakland Raiders on Dec. 13 when he was burned for four of Khalil Mack’s five sacks that day.

“It was definitely a roller coaster year last year,” Schofield said. “I played really well in some games and obviously that one game I played really, really bad. It’s a new year, a new me is what my mentality is this year. Just trying to get better every day.”
Wade Phillips gets correct Super Bowl ring after original had 'Peters' engraved

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
June 18, 2016

It was a brief run, but Coach Peters is out for the Denver Broncos and Coach Phillips is back, with the correct Super Bowl ring on his finger.

This past Sunday night, at a lavish ceremony to unveil the Broncos’ Super Bowl rings, defensive coordinator Wade Phillips opened a large box only to discover "Peters" on the side of his ring instead of his last name. But all is well -- and forgiven. Jostens, the company that made the diamond-encrusted rings -- with 212 diamonds in each ring -- has sent Phillips a new one that he has proudly shown on social media. The rings were given to players, coaches, some front-office executives and some others on the football staff.

Phillips doesn’t get to keep the ring with “Peters” on it, and he joked on Twitter that “Jostens wants me to send back Coach Peters Ring. He needs it.”

The Broncos’ assistant director of college scouting is named Adam Peters. His name was correctly displayed on the ring he received Sunday night.

Phillips said Monday that he was happy he’d receive a replacement as quickly as possible from Jostens. Phillips actually wore the ring with "Peters" on it to a team event earlier this week at the downtown stadium, and several fans posed for pictures with Phillips as he held up the ring. A Jostens representative was at the ceremony Sunday night and apologized to Phillips almost immediately after he discovered the mistake.

Phillips directed the league’s No. 1 defense last season, and the Broncos powered through the playoffs and went on to win Super Bowl 50. In his long career, last season was the first time Phillips had been part of a Super Bowl win.

The Broncos finished the season ranked No. 1 in most of the league’s major defensive categories, including overall defense, pass defense, sacks and third-down defense.

The rings the Broncos presented to the team were believed to be the biggest of the Super Bowl era. Each ring -- with 5.05 total carats' worth of diamonds -- has the number "50" in the middle with "World" across the top of the face of the ring and "Champions" across the bottom. The rings also feature three Lombardi trophies for the franchise's three Super Bowl wins, plus a Broncos logo in the middle.

One side of each ring says, "This one's for Pat," in honor of team owner Pat Bowlen, and the other side bears the recipient's name.
Miller makes it clear he'll sit out 2016 if no deal is done
By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
June 18, 2016

The Denver Broncos' summer break began with an ominous message from superstar Von Miller. The Super Bowl MVP suggested he'll sit out the 2016 season if general manager John Elway doesn't meet his contract demands in the next month.

One day after saying on Chelsea Handler's new Netflix show that there was no way he'd consider skipping the season, Miller posted a photo on Instagram on Thursday that said: "I love my Teammates, Coaches, and My Fans" but there is "No Chance" I play the 2016 season under the Franchise tag.

If the sides can't agree on a long-term extension by July 15, Miller would have to play this season on the franchise tag of $14.129 million — or he could choose to sit out the season altogether.

If he played for the tender, the Broncos could use their exclusive franchise tag on him again next year, putting him in the same situation.

If he didn't suit up in 2016, they'd only be able to use a non-exclusive franchise tag on him in 2017. That would allow other teams to swoop in and offer him a megadeal that would be difficult for Denver to match.

That's a risky proposition, a superstar missing a season in his prime and watching his popularity and marketability take a hit. But playing on a one-year deal could also prove hazardous to Miller should he get hurt.

The offseason began with Miller declaring 12 hours after the Super Bowl in which he starred that his contract negotiations would be peaceful.

Acrimony set in last week, however, when the team leaked details of its offer that Miller's camp rejected.

The six-year, $114.5 million offer included $38.5 million in guarantees over the first two seasons, far below the going rate for elite players. The Broncos offered a third year at $19.5 million that would only kick in after the 2017 season.

Miller wants that third year fully guaranteed from the start. His price assuredly has risen in the last week, too, because a couple of days after the negotiations between Miller and the Broncos hit a standstill, Eagles defensive lineman Fletcher Cox signed a six-year extension that runs through 2022 and includes $63 million in guarantees.

That's the most ever for a non-quarterback. And he'll get $55 million of that within the first nine months because a big portion of the guaranteed money kicks in a month after the next Super Bowl.
This would seem to set both a new benchmark and blueprint for a megadeal with Miller, who was a one-man wrecking crew of Cam Newton in Denver's 24-10 win over the Carolina Panthers in the Super Bowl four months ago after clobbering Tom Brady in the AFC championship.

After collecting five sacks in the playoffs, Miller skipped the team's offseason program that wrapped up Thursday with a final weight lift and a team photo. His only appearances with teammates came this month when he accompanied them on their White House visit and to their championship ring ceremony at their stadium.

At that ring ceremony, Hall of Famer Shannon Sharpe took a serving tray and turned it into a collection plate, imploring everybody to pitch in and help GM John Elway sign Miller. The tongue-in-cheek gesture actually netted some greenbacks.

After the Broncos took a pause in talks with Miller's agent and pivoted to finishing a four-year, $32 million deal with linebacker Brandon Marshall, Miller took his first social media swipe at Elway.

He cropped his boss out of a photo teammate DeMarcus Ware originally posted on Instagram that featured Miller, Ware, coach Gary Kubiak, Peyton Manning and Elway.

Miller appeared to extend an olive branch to the front office on Wednesday when he made an appearance on Chelsea Handler's new show on Netflix and said he's still hoping for a long-term deal to get done: "The franchise tag, it's a one-year deal. I would like a little bit more stability. I want to be a Bronco forever. I just want the feeling to be the same from the Broncos."

When Handler asked him if there's a chance he'd sit out the upcoming season, Miller said: "No, I mean ... we still have a month. I just can't see myself with any other team. My boys — T.J. Ward, Aqib Talib, Kayvon Webster, DeMarcus Ware, all those guys, I built very, very close relationships with those guys, and I would like to continue to build that for the rest of my career."

Then came Thursday's Instagram salvo when he made it clear he wants an extension or else.
Von Miller has spoken. He announced there is "no chance" he will play the 2016 season under the Broncos franchise tag.

Now, John Elway must act.

Elway made a comically ridiculous low-ball offer to Miller, the NFL’s most overwhelming pass rusher. Miller lifted the Broncos to a Super Bowl victory, carrying a stumbling offense all the way to a massive parade in downtown Denver.

And he was rewarded with an insulting contract offer from Elway.

Miller deserves, when you consider NFL standards, at least $65 million in guaranteed money. Elway offered $39 million. The Eagles just signed lineman Fletcher Cox to $63 million in guaranteed money. Let’s get this straight: Miller is superior to Cox.

I understand contract negotiations are complicated. And I understand a battle is raging that could soon end in peace. Last summer, Demaryius Thomas and the Broncos were locked in a similar struggle over money. Once the two sides settled, it was almost as if the struggle had never happened.

But these negotiations sometimes veer to wild, sad destinations.

Jim Brown towers as the greatest football player ever, with Jerry Rice running a close second. In the summer of 1966, Brown was planning to shoot a movie with Raquel Welch, the reigning sex symbol of the day. The movie shoot was scheduled to creep into the start of the NFL season.

This creeping bothered Brown’s boss Art Modell, owner of the Cleveland Browns. He threatened Brown, saying the running back’s $60,000 annual contract was in severe peril. At the time, this was big money. Thursday marked the 50th anniversary of Modell’s threat.

A month later, Brown delivered a thunderous response. He retired, choosing love scenes with Raquel over sweating beside his teammates. He was 30 years old.

A repeat of this disaster is unlikely. Miller and, especially, the Broncos have too much to lose.

At first glance, the Broncos offer looks generous. Miller will be paid $114.5 million over six seasons. But when examined more closely, the concrete portion of the contract is for only $39 million over two seasons.

Miller seeks guaranteed money in the range of $70 million. He might not pocket quite that much money, but he’ll come close.
Or he’ll sit. You might think he’s bluffing. I think he’s holding the best cards.

I admire Miller’s strategy. He made a dramatic announcement, a risky announcement, an emphatic announcement.

For the past few months, I’ve heard from various Bronco fans who talked about the franchise tag, which would pay Miller $14 million in 2016. Well, these fans say, if Elway and Miller fail to reach common contract ground, the Broncos can just franchise No. 58.

Think again.

Yes, there is risk in handing a mountain of cash to any athlete. Miller, despite his greatness, remains an unfinished product, much more effective against the pass than against the run.

Joe Collier served as lead architect of the Orange Crush defense that lifted the Broncos to their first Super Bowl in 1977. He remains a devout fan, watching each Broncos game on the big-screen TV in his Littleton living room.

He admires Miller. He also expects more from Miller.

“He’s super,” Collier said. “He’s a super kid. He’s got all the attributes.”

Yet Miller still reaches for his potential as a complete linebacker, Collier said. He’s dominant. He could travel somewhere beyond dominant.

“Quite often when you think of yourself as a pass rusher, you just fly off the ball,” Collier said. “His one intent is to get to the quarterback, but in some situations you’ve got to anchor down at the line of scrimmage and play against the run.”

Collier crafted NFL defenses from 1962 to 1992. He knows how difficult it is to change a player, especially a great player.

“His mindset is to get to the quarterback,” Collier said. “I don’t know if it will get any better.”

I believe Miller will get better, much better. He remains hungry for football grandeur.

He’s made his stand. Settle this contract soon, or try to survive in 2016 without me.

Well played, Von.
Broncos’ Von Miller opens up about contract negotiations: ‘It just hurts’

By Greg Bishop
Sports Illustrated
June 18, 2016

Last week, Von Miller returned to Denver to receive his Super Bowl ring, autograph 1,000 items and buy 50 champagne bottles as the Broncos celebrated their championship from Sunday night late into Monday morning. SI.com spent Monday with Miller. He had a lot to say—about contract negotiations, Johnny Manziel, Drake... and even about that champagne. We asked who foots the bill for those 50 bottles, and Miller gave a simple answer: “I got it, man. It’s Denver, not L.A. About $200 a bottle. [Broncos general manager] John Elway got me. I got them. [Laughs.]”

Here are other quick tidbits of note from our conversation.

On contract negotiations

“I don’t like to think about it,” Miller says of the contract. “That’s like negative energy. I’m going to be here.”

The linebacker repeatedly said that he’s not getting caught up in the negotiations, even on the same day that Fletcher Cox signed with the Eagles for $63 million guaranteed, or $23 million more in guaranteed cash than the Broncos’ best offer to Miller so far. Miller was happy for Cox, but he remained honest about his own situation.

“It just hurts,” Miller says. “I’m not even going to lie. It’s a business but at the end of the day, I got feelings, too. I know some fans don’t know that some of the reports aren’t even true. When I get on Instagram, no matter what I post, there’s going to be 400 comments. Guys bashing me. Take the deal. You greedy bastard. I thought you wanted to be a Bronco for life? And it kind of weighs on you after a while.”

Miller compared what he wanted from this courtship to what he received from his alma mater Texas A&M when the university recruited him in 2007. The school sent handwritten letters almost daily, cropped him into a team photo and generally fawned over him in ways that schools like LSU and Michigan did not.

“You know you got that girlfriend that’s really not like that attractive but she’s like really good for you, and she’s going to do everything she can to keep you?” he says. “Instead of that really, really hot chick that just talks to you on Mondays. It was like that, above and beyond. That’s the same type of feeling I’m looking for from the Broncos.”

Miller’s father, Von Sr., weighed in as well, and he didn’t rule out sitting out or holding out as an option, even as he described that possibility as an extreme scenario. “You’ve got this spectrum [of options] from left to right,” Von Sr. says. “And the left is all of the worse [scenarios], and then you tend to go over to the right where everything is good. So we want to stay on the right but that’s a potential to go far left.
Far left is sitting out. That has to be one of the last and final options that you have. He’s not looking forward to that. He loves being with his team. He loves his teammates. And his teammates know.”

So sitting out is a possibility, even if it’s a remote one?

“It’s got to be there,” Von Sr. says. “It’s got to be a part of the play. It’s got to be part of the process. Do we want to go down that road? I would say not. We definitely don’t. I don’t want him to go down that road.”

On Aqib Talib

Miller says he saw CB Aqib Talib at the ring celebration after Talib suffered a gunshot wound to his lower right leg in Dallas. “That’s my guy,” Miller says. “We’re from the same spot. I’m from [near] Dallas, too [DeSoto], so I kind of know the situation out there. It’s just an unfortunate situation. But he’s lucky. He got a young son and a young daughter.”

On Johnny Manziel

Miller says he remains in regular contact with Manziel, the former Browns quarterback and A&M star. “I want to be that consistent friend,” Miller says. “I see the reports [of Manziel’s drug use, rehab stints, etc.], but when I see him, I feel like he’s at peace. I’ll be the last guy who ever stops being friends with Johnny. Life is what’s most important there. I still think he’ll be a great NFL football player. But life is about more than just football.”

On hanging at Drake’s house

Miller has been living in the Hollywood Hills for much of the offseason. He has spent some time in Calabasas, Calif., hanging with Giants WR Odell Beckham Jr. who is living sometimes at Drake’s house. Miller described the compound—complete with a basketball court, a sand volleyball court, a 30-foot waterfall and a grotto—as “an inspiration.”

“It just shows you what kind of guy [Drake] is,” Miller says. “He basically gave Odell his house for a couple months.”

On Peyton’s future

Miller thinks Peyton Manning, the Broncos QB who retired after the Super Bowl, will eventually become an NFL personnel executive. “I think he’d be good running a team,” Miller says. “He’s just that type of guy. He can relate to everybody. I can see him being a great GM in the league.”

On his offensive skills

Miller says he lobbied Gary Kubiak, his coach, to play some offense this upcoming season. “If you just put me out there, they’re going to think I’m getting the ball,” he says. “Then just throw it to [the wide receivers]! Of course, I’m biased about it, but like I really do think that it could happen. I’m fast. I can jump. I can catch.”
Winners and losers of final minicamp week

By Gregg Rosenthal
NFL.com
June 18, 2016

The real offseason starts now. After 24 minicamps this week, teams escaped their facilities this week and won't be back until late July. Players like Jason Pierre-Paul can warn about the dangers of the coming weeks and there will inevitably be some mishaps for us to report on. But this isn't just vacation time for players.

NFL executives, coaches and reporters all get their vacation time over the next six weeks before settling in for the craziness. Before we all downshift, let's take a look at some of the winners and losers from this week.

Winners

Rex Ryan's undying optimism: If this is Rex Ryan's final season as an NFL head coach, then he's going out his way. Only Rex could declare his team the winners of the offseason after watching his No. 1 receiver Sammy Watkins undergo offseason foot surgery and seeing his first-round pick Shaq Lawson undergo shoulder surgery that could keep him out for most of the season.

Throw in Karlos Williams' pregnancy-related conditioning problems and LeSean McCoy's nagging injuries, and there has been plenty of reason for consternation in Buffalo this offseason. But not for Rex.

Melvin Gordon truthers like myself: Speaking to an NFL Media luminary this week about Melvin Gordon, the following phrase was uttered: "The guy can't play."

I disagree. Watch Gordon down the stretch last year and you see how incredibly bad his offensive line was and how he mostly shook the indecision that plagued him early last year. This offseason brought more bad news in the form of microfracture surgery, but Gordon was back on the field by minicamp practicing fully with sharp cuts. The Chargers have an intriguing backfield with Gordon and Woodhead. It looks like Gordon will be more than ready for Week 1 as a starter for a bounce-back sophomore year.

Rookie receivers that can move around the formation: I'm speaking specifically about Giants wideout Sterling Shepard and Titans fifth-round receiver Tajae Sharpe. These are admittedly the types of players that excel in non-padded practices, but both players made big noise in OTA season. Chris Wesseling did a great job recapping all the rookie news in his buzz column.

Bad "Blind Side" jokes in Carolina: Michael Oher's new contract in Carolina is a nice comeback for a player whose career arc was pointed down the last few years. His teammates did a great job celebrating the news on Twitter with choice Sandy Bullock clips. The headline writers of America and the guy in your my office were less successful.

Losers

Comfort of Jets fans: This Ryan Fitzpatrick story has gone from annoying to exasperating to even making Todd Bowles feel dead inside.
"With all due respect, I'm through talking about Fitz," Bowles said this week.

No coach would answer repetitive questions about his missing presumptive starting quarterback with as much patience and understanding as Bowles this offseason. It's hard to knock him off his affable-yet-serious tone, which is why he's such a perfect fit for New York. But he knows this Fitzpatrick mess has gone on too long and they need to find a resolution before training camp.

Bowles won't set a "drop-dead deadline" for Fitzpatrick to sign, but there was a change in tone around the Jets this week. Bowles talked up Geno Smith being "light years" ahead of where he was last year. He entertained possibly signing another veteran quarterback, presumably to back up Geno. Kimberly Martin of Newsday puts some of the blame on Bowles' decision to name Fitzpatrick the team's starter minutes after the season ended. It's a great point, and it's not the only thorny situation for Jets fans to compartmentalize this time of year.

Muhammad Wilkerson believes the Jets don't want him. We believe they just want him less long-term than Sheldon Richardson, which is a decision we discussed on Thursday's Around The NFL Podcast. Wilkerson was the Jets' best defensive lineman last year and their best over the last four years. This shouldn't be so hard.

Darren McFadden: The Dallas running back's cell phone excuse for breaking his elbow was curious, yet ultimately irrelevant. The Cowboys didn't need much of an excuse to give Ezekiel Elliott all the touches. Elliott's complete game is already wowing the Cowboys staff in practice. McFadden has to worry now about Alfred Morris passing him on the depth chart because keeping both active on gamedays will be tricky since they don't help on special teams.

Wade Peters: Long live Son of Bum: Wade Phillips!

Jared Goff optimism: We aren't going to overreact to a rookie quarterback struggling in early practices. That's what rookie quarterbacks do. The problem is when that rookie quarterback is fully expected to start 16 games and be the face of a franchise in its first year in a new city. While Carson Wentz can luxuriate at the bottom of the Eagles depth chart (or in a New Jersey bathroom), Goff is under far more pressure in Los Angeles. It is very early, but NFL Media's Steve Wyche says he's "nowhere near" ready at this stage. That's what camp is for.
Guaranteed money is the only real sticking point in Von Miller deal

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
June 18, 2016

The Broncos and linebacker Von Miller have agreed to the years (six) and total payout ($114.5 million) on a long-term deal that must be signed, if at all, before July 15. The contract hasn’t been finalized for one reason and one reason only: The two sides can’t agree how much of the money will be guaranteed in full at signing, how much will be guaranteed for injury only at signing, and when any injury-only guarantees will convert to full guarantees.

The Broncos offered Miller $38.5 million fully guaranteed at signing. Under the terms of the offer, a total of $58 million would become fully guaranteed in March 2018, with the extra amounts guaranteed only for injury until then.

Miller wants a much greater overall guarantee (possibly $70 million or more), with the total guarantee fully vesting not in March 2018 but in March 2017. The dollars paid to Miller under the six-year contract don’t change; the debate centers on how much will be fully guaranteed when Miller signs the deal — and when any additional injury guarantees will become fully guaranteed.

With the Eagles giving Fletcher Cox (who has made it to one Pro Bowl in four seasons) $63 million in guarantees, with more than $55 million becoming fully guaranteed by March of 2017, Miller can plausibly seek a total guarantee of $70 million or more with the vesting of a significant chunk of it by March 2017. If the Broncos, who haven’t engaged Miller’s camp since the Cox deal was done (and vice-versa), still refuse to alter their proposed structure of $38 million fully guaranteed at signing and $58 million fully guaranteed by March 2018, the question becomes why won’t they?

As we see it, there are five potential explanations for Denver’s position:

1. They fear a return of his substance abuse issues.

If this happens, and if Miller ultimately is suspended for it, the Broncos would be able to void any remaining guarantees and to recover potentially significant portions of signing bonus money. Given that Miller has completely exited the substance-abuse program, it’s unlikely that within the next two calendar years Miller would be subject to another suspension — especially since it now takes more violations to trigger a suspension.

2. They fear an Albert Haynesworth scenario.

Haynesworth signed a massive contract with Washington in 2009, and he then proceeded to underachieve. After five years with Miller, however, the Broncos should be able to tell whether or not he can be trusted with a major payday. The fact that they’re already willing to give him $38 million fully guaranteed at signing suggests that they’re not concerned about Miller suddenly becoming lazy or content.
3. They don’t want to fund the guaranteed money.

The outdated rule requiring fully guaranteed payments to be placed in escrow has made plenty of teams unwilling to fully guarantee significant amounts at signing, resulting in few players receiving full guarantees beyond the first two seasons. In this case, Miller isn’t looking for $70 million or more to be fully guaranteed at signing. He wants the guarantee to fully vest in March 2017, which is the point at which the Broncos would be required to fund anything beyond the amounts fully guaranteed if/when he signs. So this isn’t the same as, for example, the Dolphins be required to fork over $60 million when signing Ndamukong Suh last year. The Broncos would, for example, pay $45 million now (some to Miller and the rest to escrow for 2017) and, for example, another $25 million to escrow in March 2017, based on a $70 million total guarantee.

4. They are concerned he’ll have an injury that impairs his performance.

Injury guarantees apply only if the player can’t pass a physical. Miller could, in theory, suffer an injury in 2016 or 2017 that doesn’t keep him from playing but that keeps him from playing at a dominant level. That would allow the Broncos to cut Miller (or squeeze him to take less money), if the date on which the money becomes fully guaranteed is delayed into year three of the deal.

5. They want to keep their options open.

In theory, the Broncos could decide at some point in the next two years that they have found a younger, cheaper player who can do the same thing Miller does. It’s a dynamic that happens constantly in the NFL, with veterans thrown overboard in favor of lower-priced talent having comparable skills. It’s hard to imagine that happening before 2018 or 2019 with Miller, whose dominance blossomed in the playoffs last season — and who is still on the front end of his prime.

Again, the issue isn’t total dollars. The issue is whether and to what extent the Broncos will give Miller an assurance that chunks of the total dollars will be paid. For now, they’re willing to commit for two years. Miller wants two years now and a third-year commitment in nine months — along with a greater overall guarantee than Cox received.

It’s for the parties to decide the specific structure. But with a consensus as to years and total dollars and a willingness by the Broncos to fully guarantee roughly one third of the entire contract when Miller signs it, common sense suggests that if the two sides would commit to a true back-and-forth negotiation, they’d be able to quickly reach a resolution regarding how and when to pay out roughly two thirds of the $114.5 million over six years that the Broncos are willing to pay and Miller is willing to accept.
Wade Phillips says Jostens wants his “Coach Peters” ring back
By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
June 18, 2016

Broncos defensive coordinator Wade Phillips initially received from Jostens a Super Bowl 50 ring that spelled his last name P-E-T-E-R-S. Jostens has quickly sent Phillips a ring with his name properly spelled on it.

As of Thursday night, it appeared that Phillips would get to keep both rings. As of Friday morning, that wasn’t the case.

“Of course, Jostens wants me to send back Coach Peters Ring,” Coach Phillips said on Twitter. “He needs it.”

Phillips later revisited the blunder, in poetic fashion: “It was the really wrong ring, but it’s no big thing. Now I have the really right ring, with no strings.”

It’s unclear whether this means Jostens has told him to keep the “Coach Peters” ring. The best outcome at this point would be for the Broncos or Jostens to auction the “Coach Peters” ring publicly, with the proceeds going to the charity of Coach Phillips’ choice. We’d even promote the auction here, free of charge and without expectation of any rings bearing name Floria, Furio, Fiorio, or Glorious. (Actually, the last one would be preferred.)
McManus' Mile High Menu: Acorn
By Brandon McManus
DenverBroncos.com
June 18, 2016

After living in the Denver area for almost two years now, my wife, Nadia, and I (newly married) have decided that every Friday we will have a date night that consists of visiting a restaurant we have never been to before. Each week we will alternate who picks the restaurant but the key is to pick a new place and to make it a surprise. We know Denver has a great food scene and wanted to highlight some of the restaurants that will fill up our stomachs every Friday night.

Nadia and I are not reviewing the restaurant, nor are we food critics; we just want to bring you along our food escapades around the Denver area. Please enjoy our opinions and photos of what we sank our teeth into and hopefully you will taste some of our recommendations for yourself, on your own night out.

Week 5: Acorn
Located within The Source, a reclaimed 1880s foundry turned new epicurean marketplace in Denver’s River North Art District. Acorn boasts Chef/Owner Steven Redzikowski’s eclectic, contemporary American cooking in an environment for families as well as a special night for two.

Offering small plates & artisanal cocktails in an industrial-style space with graffitied walls, Acorn boasts one of the coolest environments in town. This time of year, diners have the option to eat inside or outside, with these spaces divided by a wall of garage doors that open to provide a sense of the outdoors in either setting.

Acorn’s family-style starters and entrees are based off an ever-changing seasonal menu. Chef Redzikowski’s oak-fired oven and grill was inspiration for a menu with particular tastes that will be sure to leave guests satisfied.

We arrived a little early, so we took some time to sit at the bar and order a few featured cocktails. The bar staff was helpful in providing detailed descriptions of drinks to help us decide on just the right one. Our waiter Dan was attentive and offered some of his favorites from the hearty menu Acorn provides.

Nadia and I were joined by my mother, giving us a chance to sample more food than usual this week.

Beverages

- Brazilian Twist (smith & cross, disaronno, kronan swedish punsch, banana orgeat, banane du brésil, orange, lime, angostura bitters)
- A Tipple In Tain (glenmorangie 10yr, blueberry, ginger, teakoe 39th parallel pear, lemon, cocktail punk orange bitters)
- Sunset Sour (1792 bourbon, ancho reyes, lemon, cocktail punk cherry bitters, boulevard ginger lemon radler)

Shared Plates
Yellowtail Hamachi Crudo

Delicious raw yellowtail tuna drizzled with passion fruit vinaigrette was a perfect start to our meal. The light-bodied fish with Persian cucumbers was a delectable treat that should be tried every trip.

Wagyu Beef Tartare

All three of us raved over this dish. It is not too often Nadia will eat raw meat but forkful after forkful, she continued to enjoy this tasty dish. Paired with egg yolk and fried bread, this is a masterful plate that is a must for any patron.

Morel Mushroom Toast

This plate offered an interesting taste, topped with ricotta cheese and the taste of oak in the toast, and was a dish enjoyable for mushroom lovers.

Tomato Braised Meatballs

One of the staples of the menu that can be ordered all year long, these meatballs are sure to please. Just like how grandma would want it, each tomato meatball atop stone-ground grits gives this bite a unique texture and flavor that reminds you of your childhood.

Oak Grilled 7x Ranch Wagyu Short Ribs

Tender, thinly sliced meat that had us calling for round two. The radishes and cucumber that adorned this plate added a light, summer flare.

Braised Rabbit Spaghetti

Trying rabbit for the first time, we were all pleased with the delicious surprise that accompanied the saffron spaghetti. The rabbit meat was not gamey and was so tender you could pull the meat apart.

Bacon Wrapped Pork Tenderloin

Our waiter Dan’s favorite dish was definitely one of the best flavors of the night. Topped with delicious ancho chili vinaigrette, you can’t go wrong with pork wrapped in more pork.

Entrees

Oak Grilled Mary’s Free Range ½ Chicken

This entrée wasn’t your typical run-of-the mill chicken dinner. Seasoned to perfection, this meat was juicy and tender, encased by a crispy skin that was perhaps the highlight of the dish. Don’t forget the mashed potatoes!

Dessert

Cracker Jack Sundae
Tasty! Graham cracker crumbs topped with chocolate, topped with peanut butter, accompanied by cracker jacks. We ate every last bite of this unique dessert.

Strawberry Rhubarb

Angel food cake chunks amidst rhubarb made for a fresh, airy dessert. Paired with vanilla ice cream, this treat had us tasting a little tangy and sweet.