

Garett Bolles, Forrest Lamp stand out among O-linemen at NFL combine

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Garett Bolles and Forrest Lamp, offensive linemen who have visited with the Broncos at either the Senior Bowl or the combine, impressed here.

Bolles led all offensive linemen here at the combine with a 115-inch broad jump and finished second with a 4.95-second 40-yard dash. Lamp had an 111-inch broad jump (fourth among offensive linemen) and a 5.0-second 40 (fourth). He has also had 34 reps in the bench press, tied for second most among offensive linemen.

Lynch training. As the Broncos finalize their playbook here, second-year quarterback Paxton Lynch has been working out with Charlie Taaffe. The former Central Florida offensive coordinator now runs a year-round quarterback training program in Lynch's home state. Taaffe worked with Lynch prior to the 2016 NFL draft, too, and coached Jaguars quarterback Blake Bortles at UCF. Robinette makes rounds. Air Force receiver Jalen Robinette said being drafted by the Broncos and staying in Colorado would be awesome.

"It would be cool. It'd be right down the road from the Academy. The ties I have with those guys who are still there. It'd be awesome to come back and talk to them about the league and everything because I know everyone's curious about that. In my position, I don't pick favorites. Whoever is willing to give me an opportunity, I'm going to take it."

Robinette has been compared to Broncos receiver Demaryius Thomas because of his size and his success as a wide receiver in a triple-option offense.

"I've been watching D.T. throughout my college and high school years and it's an honor to even be compared to him," Robinette said. "I can see it with his size and the way we play, where he came from — at Georgia Tech they ran the triple-option."

Advanced stats. The Broncos, like all NFL teams, are embracing advanced statistics and new technologies to improve player health and performance. At the combine this week, Broncos general manager John Elway said incorporating advanced statistics is an evolving science.

"We're looking at it. We have a guy named (director of analytics) Mitch Tanney that does a tremendous job for us," Elway said. "We're still all looking at the different areas when it comes down to analytics and how it can help us. I think it's something that we don't rely on right now, but we definitely want to look at over time and see how that may be able to help us."

Broncos interviews. Tight ends David Njoku, O.J. Howard, Jordan Leggett and Bucky Hodges, along with receiver Ryan Switzer, all said they had scheduled interviews with the Broncos. Mississippi tight end Evan Engram, South Alabama tight end Gerald Everett and Washington receiver John Ross have already met with the Broncos.

Garett Bolles wants Broncos, other NFL teams to bet on him being nasty Pro Bowl tackle

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

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Garett Bolles is facing an identity crisis. NFL teams are putting the Utah offensive tackle through a gantlet of questions to determine whether he truly is separated from his tumultuous past.

Bolles' story is reminiscent of the "Blind Side" tale of Carolina Panthers offensive tackle Michael Oher. When he was a teenager in Lehi, Utah, Bolles grew up amid an atmosphere of alcohol and drugs, violence and gang activity. He was eventually kicked out of his home by his father.

But newfound faith as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a wife and a son have Bolles taking advantage of his new lease on life. He calls this phase 'New Garett.'

New Garett could be a first-round pick in the NFL draft April 27. New Garett could be a franchise left tackle. New Garett has NFL teams salivating over his potential.

But those teams — including the Broncos, who are desperate for a left tackle — have to know who they are getting in order to use a high draft pick on a soon-to-be 25-year-old lineman with so many questions in his background.

"They just really want to see what type of man I am, and if I will fall back to my old self. But I know where I'm going, and I have a plan. I have a mission," Bolles said at the scouting combine. "When you become a husband and you become a father, you have to sort of grow up and you have to become the person you want to be. And I plan to do whatever it takes. I don't even know who that old Garett is. I know the new Garett."

Bolles, 6-foot-5 and 297 pounds, is rated by most NFL scouts as one of the top-two offensive tackles available in the draft, the other being Wisconsin's Ryan Ramczyk.

First-year Broncos coach Vance Joseph spoke highly of both players this week. Joseph said Utah had the best offensive line in college football last season. The Utes have a team-best four offensive linemen (Bolles, guard Issac Isiata, center J.J. Dielman and tackle Sam Tevi) at the combine.

"Garett came in during the summer really raw," said Isiata, a powerful lineman who, like Bolles, met with the Broncos on Thursday. "He's a great player; very athletic for a big guy. He's really physical. It's easy for me to play my position because of how well he was able to play tackle. ... Garett was able to mature and learn from the veteran guys: How you have to act, how you have to grow up. It's big-boy football."

Big-boy football fits Bolles, who has impressive athleticism. He ran the 40-yard dash in 4.95 seconds at the combine and tied for the fifth-best broad jump by an offensive lineman since 2006 (leaping 9-7).

Bolles excels at blocking in the running game.

“When I’m on the field,” he said, “I want to put people in the dirt. That’s what I’m here for. And when I come off the field, I love my family. I just learned how to turn the switch to go back to the new Garrett.”

It’s been quite a journey. He credits the Freeman family for starting the shift in his life by taking him in after his father kicked him out because of his bad behavior. In his new home he began his rehabilitation, which led to him skipping an immediate jump to college football coming out of high school and going on an LDS mission in Colorado Springs.

In addition to sharing his faith while on his mission, Bolles had a strict schedule, waking up at 6:30 every morning and going to sleep at 10 p.m. It instilled much-needed discipline in his life, and helped him mature.

“I love Colorado. I have a heart there, because those are the people who I taught on my mission,” Bolles said. “So if I end up going (to the Broncos), I’d be just fine.”

Bolles worked with San Francisco 49ers left tackle Joe Staley when he arrived at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah, to restart his football career, and they have remained friends. Bolles’ impressive season at left tackle for Utah led to all-Pac-12 honors and first-round hype for him.

@jstaley74

Happy to see my buddy Garrett Bolles crush it at the #NFLCombine today. He has a bright future in the league.

The Broncos’ need for a left tackle is well-documented, particularly if they don’t re-sign Russell Okung. Ramczyk and Bolles are the most likely candidates for Denver if it drafts an offensive tackle in the first round, but general manager John Elway will use free agency as his initial pursuit to improve the offensive line.

Bolles considers his age and lack of football experience — he played only three years of college ball — as a positive, citing his immense upside. He expects to be an immediate starter at left tackle in the NFL, but his resume indicates a high-risk, high-reward prospect.

He needs only one team to believe in his potential.

Former Broncos offensive tackle Ryan Harris retiring from the NFL

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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Ryan Harris began his transition from player to media member earlier this winter, heavily contemplating retirement. Friday, the former Broncos offensive tackle made it official.

After 10 years in the NFL, Harris called it a career. He initially announced it on his new job, an afternoon radio show he co-hosts with Nate Kreckman on 950 AM, then confirmed his retirement with The Denver Post.

“A lot of guys who play football don’t get to retire. The game often retires them or they wait one or sometimes two years for a call back,” Harris said on the show Friday afternoon. “I’m looking forward to the future.”

Just a week shy of his 32nd birthday, Harris feels at peace with his decision to get out of the game before the injuries of football define the rest of his life. His family and his newfound career, which he said he’s “joining for good” will be at the forefront going forward.

Harris played five seasons for the Broncos, in three different stints. He was Denver’s third round pick in 2007 starting 34 games over four seasons as the Broncos right tackle. He then spent time with the Eagles, Texans and Chiefs before returning to the Broncos again to win Super Bowl 50 as Denver’s left tackle.

“The time has presented itself,” Harris said via text. “I am extremely happy in life right now and I want to continue to pursue the joy I’ve worked so hard for. It was amazing to win a Super Bowl with the team that drafted me and the city I have made home. I’m grateful to each coach, teammate and staff that helped me enjoy a career that went beyond my wildest dreams.”

Harris was the steady rock in that Super Bowl campaign, originally signed as a backup, he became a key cog starting every game that season playing both left tackle and right tackle as the offense tried to find its way through injuries at all positions.

A unique skillset got Harris into the NFL, but his bright mind allowed him to remain there far longer than the average player. He was known around the locker room as one of the most thoughtful, well-spoken and respected players in the locker room.

Harris’ final season came in Pittsburgh, but ended in early October after a shin injury, which got infected and led to him being placed on injured reserve. Harris had one year left on his Steelers’ deal.

Harris said he was strongly considering retirement at the Super Bowl in Houston last month.

Harris currently lives in the Denver area with his wife, Jaime, and two kids, William and Betty.

Elway a tough boss in the quest for victory

By Mike Klis

9News

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Trivia time.

How many head coaches have the Broncos gone through in the last five seasons?

Answer: Five. John Fox, Jack Del Rio, Gary Kubiak, Joe DeCamillis and now Vance Joseph.

OK, so it's a trick question. Del Rio was a four-game interim head coach while Fox recovered from a heart procedure in 2013. DeCamillis filled in one game for an ailing Kubiak in 2016.

Still, it's a significant turnover for a team that in the past five years has posted records of 13-3, 13-3, 12-4, 12-4 and 9-7.

All those coaching changes has created the perception that Elway isn't the easiest boss to work for.

"If wanting to win bad is tough to work for, that's our goal," Elway told 9NEWS this week. "To win football games, that's what our fans want. So if that comes with a reputation of being hard to work for, then I'm fine with that."

Elway is here at his seventh NFL Scouting Combine as the Broncos' general manager.

"Hard to believe," he said.

His first, in 2011, was a vetting experience that netted Von Miller with the No. 2 overall pick. Elway has been picking so far in the draft since then – a tradeoff for finishing deep in the playoffs each year – that the Broncos' No. 20 overall selection next month marks their highest position since they took Miller.

Only there doesn't figure to be any Von Millers available at No. 20.

"There's not? Darn it," Elway said.

He said he is enjoying the challenge of going through the process more than ever.

"I am, yeah," he said. "Especially this year coming off the 9-7 year and not making the playoffs, it always adds a little more to it but we're excited about it. We've got a new staff hired which I'm excited about. Vance has done a tremendous job with his staff so now we've got a chance to go find some players hopefully."

Former Broncos offensive tackle Ryan Harris retires after 10 seasons

By Mike Klis

9News

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Ryan Harris is retiring from playing football before the game could retire him.

Considering what Harris endured during his 10-year career, leaving the game on his own terms is one of the more underrated upsets of the NFL offseason.

Selected out of Notre Dame by the Denver Broncos in the third round of the 2007 draft, Harris did not make it through his rookie training camp before he had to undergo his second back surgery in 11 months. Who would have bet at that point he would have made it 10 years in the league?

In all, his body has endured three back surgeries, a surgery to essentially replace the broken bones and torn ligaments in his big right toe, a leg infection, two releases, four teams and three separate stints with the Broncos.

"It's been a long journey," Harris told 9News. "You have to overcome injuries. That's the NFL. The injury rate is 100 percent. You have to have belief, you have to have a great surgeon, you have to have belief in yourself. You have to take the small increments, the changes in your flexibility for months. You have to take it in stride and it made me a better professional and it made me a better man.

"I have a complete appreciation for the game of football. I've taken so much from the game, the game has taken some from me. It's just a great time in my life to part ways and move forward."

Harris, who turns 32 next week, played mostly right tackle in his career, but impressively switched to starting left tackle during the Broncos' Super Bowl 50 run in 2015. He came on during his second season of 2008, when he played all 1,109 offensive snaps as a 16-game starter for the Broncos. He then started the first six games of 2009, when Denver started 6-0 under new head coach Josh McDaniels.

But the toe injury suffered against Baltimore in game 7 ended Harris' season and, not so coincidentally, began a Broncos slide to 8-8.

"I was about four games away from a big bonus and you get bull-rushed by Terrell Suggs and your toe pops out," Harris said. "But again, it's football. It's how you handle those things. Look, I've been very fortunate. I put myself in a great position. These struggles in overcoming these injuries, it's made me appreciate my career all that much more. It brought me to more yoga, more meditation, really broadening a total body health program that works for me and ultimately helped me become a world champion."

Harris forged on. After another disc problem during training camp with Philadelphia in 2011 led to a third back surgery, Harris thought his career was finished. He even started taking Law School Admission Test classes during the season. But the Broncos brought him back for two weeks of playoff insurance at

the end of that 2011 season and it gave him enough momentum to play the next two years with Gary Kubiak in Houston and the 2014 season in Kansas City.

The bumps, bruises, bandages and travel all became worth it when Harris reunited with Kubiak and the Broncos for the 2015 season. Harris started all 19 games, including three in the postseason for the Super Bowl-champ Broncos, at both right and left tackle.

Harris didn't join the Broncos in 2015 until after starting left tackle Ryan Clady went down with a torn ACL on the first day of OTAs. Perseverance was rewarded as his season ended with a parade.

Harris then signed a two-year contract with Pittsburgh last season but after playing five games, a shin bruise swelled to the size of a baseball. An infection occurred during the draining process, leaving Harris in the hospital for two weeks and taking IV antibiotics for another four weeks.

He had one year and \$1.9 million left on his contract but his retirement will spare the Steelers the expense.

Harris played 62 of his 115 NFL games, and had 50 of his 70 career starts with the Broncos. The highlight?

"Winning the Super Bowl and getting handed the (Lombardi) trophy by Peyton Manning on the stage," he said. "And then celebrating with the offensive linemen, really the whole team, the group of guys we had that won the Super Bowl. Everything I had been through to everything we had accomplished was phenomenal.

"And then to get a chance to play with the Steelers, one of the NFL's most storied franchises, and play with some of players and coaches I've always looked up to, was a dream come true."

Harris and his wife have two young children and have settled in the Denver area. He's already begun his second career as co-host of an afternoon sports radio talk show with Nate Kreckman on 950 AM.

"The biggest thing is I'm just so happy right now," Harris said. "I'm just enjoying the life that I was looking forward to. I've really worked hard to put my family in a good place for retirement. I've been planning for this since Day 1 in the NFL. I'm fortunate. Not that many guys get the chance to retire. This is that time."

49ers GM Lynch to keep Denver scholarship program

By Mike Klis

9News

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Keep striving to achieve, Colorado high school seniors.

The Lynch Family Legacy Scholarship program will continue to grant college tuition aid to the Denver and greater Colorado-area students even though the foundation's president and namesake, John Lynch, is now general manager of the San Francisco 49ers.

"We're still doing it, we're not going anywhere with those scholarships," Lynch said Thursday as he walked through the long hallways of the Indianapolis Convention Center where much of the NFL Scouting Combine activities are taking place. "We've endowed those so they're going to live on. We're going to continue to do our best and we're excited about it."

The 49ers' gig, though, did cost Lynch his role with KUSA Channel 9 and KTVD Channel 20 as color commentator for Broncos' preseason games.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time with Channel 9, primarily because I got to be around everybody I respect so much with the Broncos' organization," Lynch said. "And the fans. I will miss that. But, I'm not gone. Denver will remain a place in our hearts and I'm going to spend time whenever I can there."

GM beginnings

During his four-year Ring of Fame stint as a Broncos safety, Lynch would often wonder privately and occasionally talk publicly, about the team, its strengths and needs he'd like to see addressed in the offseason.

Looking back, the seeds of his future job as football operations executive were planted during his playing days, even if he wasn't aware of it at the time. And yes, he'd submit ideas to Broncos' coach Mike Shanahan.

"Yeah, Shanahan didn't listen much when I gave suggestions," Lynch said, laughing. "But I did. I was always a guy that drove my wife, Linda, crazy. You don't have many days off as a player and the draft weekend is a long weekend typically, and I always would spend six, seven hours watching the draft, watching the fifth, sixth, seventh rounds. And she'd be going, 'Really?'"

"So I didn't think about it like that, but I would try to do my own mock in the fourth round and it was something where I'm just a football junkie and so that was something that interested me. I don't know if I really thought about, 'Someday, I'm going to be doing this.'"

Gase talks up Vance Joseph

Adam Gase was a three-year offensive coordinator, including two years in that role with the Denver Broncos, before he got his first head coaching job with the Miami Dolphins last season. And that was sooner than most.

Was he surprised, then, that Vance Joseph had only been a defensive coordinator for one season – and his Dolphins D didn't exactly cause people to forget the Killer B's – before becoming the Broncos' head coach?

"Not really," Gase said. "When we hired him, we knew that there was a possibility this could happen. I've known Vance for a long time. This was my eighth year kind of being around him. ... And then being around him as a defensive coordinator, I was not going to be shocked. I knew there were some jobs open. He was a guy that people were going to want to talk to. I just kept thinking to myself, 'It would be hard for a team to turn him down.'

"When he gets in a room, his presence and the command he has around people, that would be a tough guy to walk away from and be like, 'Oh, I don't want to hire him.' Anybody would have been running to try to grab him up."

Liufau audition

He's got the measurables at 6-foot-3, 232 pounds with a hand width of 10 7/8 inches.

Now Sefo Liufau has to put his throws on target if he is to become a late-round draft pick.

"I think one of the biggest questions coming in, and my biggest weakness honestly, has just been being able to be consistently accurate," said Liufau, a four-year starter for the Colorado Buffaloes. "It's really big for me to show that I can go out there and throw the ball with great consistency."

Wisconsin's Ryan Ramczyk looms as a first-round decision for Broncos

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
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In what is a high-priority search for offensive linemen, the Denver Broncos didn't get to see at least one of the big guys they're interested in at work at the NFL combine.

Wisconsin's Ryan Ramczyk was not among the offensive linemen who went through onfield workouts Friday inside Lucas Oil Stadium. Ramczyk is one of the most highly rated tackles on the draft board, so he is certainly on the Broncos' radar.

He also had hip surgery after the Badgers played in the Cotton Bowl, so he is still recovering.

"It's been really good, it's been really positive," Ramczyk said. "It's been eight weeks now of recovery. Feeling really healthy, and I'll be back in California training and rehabbing after this. The surgeon was actually there for medical check-ups and he said it looks really clean, really good."

The Broncos had a formal face-to-face interviews with Ramczyk before the offensive linemen concluded their time in Indianapolis. Ramczyk said the Broncos' decision-makers "had a lot of questions."

Denver has the 20th overall pick, followed by the 51st overall pick (19th in the second round) but Ramczyk is not expected to be available by the time the Broncos get to their second-round pick. Their decision on him, post-hip surgery, will have to be based on what they learned and what they've already seen on video.

Broncos coach Vance Joseph said Ramczyk's potential could make him a tough get even with the 20th pick.

"He plays like a NFL guy," Joseph said at the combine. "He's got long arms. He's got great feet. He's tough and smart. He's definitely a guy most teams are looking at. It's going to be tough to acquire a guy like that at 20, probably."

With Joseph having hired Geep Chryst as the tight ends coach, the Broncos have quality intel on Ramczyk: Chryst's brother, Paul, is coach at Wisconsin. Ramczyk said this week he continues to do upper body and cardiovascular work but is still limited in his movements overall.

"It cuts into, obviously, the lower body [training]," Ramczyk said. "I can't do any agility drills or heavy squats or anything like that. I'm still training upper body fully and getting some cardio ... so it's a good process."

Asked if he believed he would be ready for a team's training camp, Ramczyk said: "I should absolutely be clear by training camp, hopefully OTAs, not positive yet."

Ramczyk, Alabama's Cam Robinson and Utah's Garrett Bolles are considered the top tackle prospects in this draft. At least two of three of them could well have been selected by the time the Broncos' pick comes up at 20. In John Elway's previous six drafts as the Broncos' top football decision-maker, he has taken just one offensive player with the opening pick -- quarterback Paxton Lynch last April.

The Broncos also haven't taken an offensive lineman in the first round since Ryan Clady in 2008.

Fleet running backs worthy of Broncos' attention

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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The Denver Broncos closed out the 2016 season with three running backs on injured reserve, so you'll have to excuse them if they believe even a little more depth at the position could help.

And they are also looking to add a little more big-play pop at the position, so Friday afternoon's workouts at the scouting combine in Lucas Oil Stadium were of particular interest.

Seven of the running backs showed some of that splash-play potential, including Stanford's Christian McCaffrey, a Denver-area native, who ran 4.49 seconds in the 40-yard dash Friday afternoon. Two of those backs -- McCaffrey and North Carolina's T.J. Logan -- were also impact kick/punt returners in college.

Logan ran the fastest 40 among the running backs Friday with a blistering 4.37.

McCaffrey (5-foot-11, 202 pounds) and Logan (5-9, 196) aren't the biggest backs in the class. But the Broncos have enough size on the depth chart: running backs Kapri Bibbs and C.J. Anderson, who is on schedule to return from last season's knee injury, as well as fullback Andy Janovich. Denver is, however, in search of more open-field speed.

McCaffrey said at the combine that he has told teams he can be "an every-down back, play out at receiver, and I can return." While John Elway, the Broncos' executive vice president of football operations/general manager, has not used a draft pick on a return specialist in his tenure as the team's chief football decision-maker, players with athleticism and elusiveness in the open field who contribute as a position player will bear watching during draft weekend.

McCaffrey gained 3,864 yards in the 2015 season, breaking Barry Sanders' NCAA single-season record for all-purpose yardage. And he led the nation with 2,327 all-purpose yards in 2016, including 1,603 rushing yards.

Logan had a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown as a true freshman at North Carolina and had a 100-yard return for a touchdown this past season -- one of two kickoffs he returned for scores in 2016.

The Broncos, who struggled along the offensive line for much of the past season and saw Anderson, Bibbs and Janovich finish the season on injured reserve, were 27th in rushing last season, 27th in total offense and 22nd in scoring. They also had little impact in the return game, including no punt returns longer than 25 yards.

Because Anderson, at the moment, projects as the team's starting running back, the Broncos may be willing to add a smaller back to the mix. North Carolina A&T's Tarik Cohen, who ran a 4.42 Friday, consistently created double-take moments in his collegiate career with startling change-of-direction skills, but scouts wonder, whether he can create a role as a runner in the NFL at 179 pounds.

San Diego State's Donnel Pumphrey, at 176 pounds, had an enormous role as a runner in college as he rushed for 2,028 yards this past season and an FBS record 6,290 in his career. Pumphrey, who ran a 4.49 Friday, also led the Aztecs in both rushing and receiving in 2016.

Overall, it's considered a deep class of running backs, so the Broncos, with 10 draft picks at their disposal, could take a look deep into the board to find some help.

"We always want impact," Elway said, adding that "if you can get a player who can play at a position and be your returner, that helps you when you're putting your roster together."

Offensive lineman Ryan Harris retires from NFL

By Staff

Associated Press

March 4, 2017

Longtime NFL offensive lineman Ryan Harris has retired.

A member of the Denver Broncos' Super Bowl championship team after the 2015 season, Harris announced his retirement Friday on Twitter.

Harris tweeted that he made the decision "with gratitude and clarity." The 31-year-old Harris played five games for the Pittsburgh Steelers in 2016 before going on injured reserve after hurting his shin in a victory over Kansas City on Oct. 2. Harris had one year left on the two-year, \$3.9 million deal he signed last spring.

Harris played 115 games for four teams across nine seasons in the NFL, including two different stints with the Broncos, who selected him in the third round of the 2007 draft. Harris started at left tackle for Denver in the Broncos' 24-10 victory over Carolina in the Super Bowl.

'Bama star linebacker Foster sent home from NFL combine

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

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A person with knowledge of the situation tells The Associated Press that linebacker Reuben Foster, a potential top-10 pick, has been sent home from the NFL's annual combine.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the NFL wasn't commenting on the situation. ESPN first reported Foster's departure, which it said followed a heated argument with a hospital worker.

Foster is widely considered the best inside linebacker coming out of college. He had surgery on his right rotator cuff after completing his senior season. That operation was to have kept him out of on-field drills at the combine.

Linebackers arrived Thursday and had initial hospital exams and X-rays. Their itinerary Friday included full physical exams. They'll meet the media and do their bench press Saturday with on-field drills Sunday.

The Broncos should draft Christian McCaffrey No. 1

By Woody Paige

KMGH

March 4, 2017

After the 5A Colorado high school championship game, and after talking with the MVP, I wrote a column suggesting a name change for the winner:

"Valor Christian McCaffrey High School."

I doubt that any school in the country ever has or will change its name while the student hasn't graduated yet.

McCaffrey, the Gatorade Player of the Year in Colorado (for the first of consecutive seasons), was only a junior. He would come back the following season and repeat the feat, as Valor won its six straight state championship.

Wow. McCaffrey was the best high school player I've ever seen in Colorado, and I've been covering prep games in the state since 1974. (I wasn't around when Whizzer White was a high school player here.)

McCaffrey set records that never even existed. He'd already announced before we did the interview he was committed to Stanford, where his dad and mom had gone. He was an Olympic world-class athlete, and he was a great receiver for years with the Giants, then the Broncos. The McCaffreys would become the first family of Colorado high school football. Older brother Max went off to play wide receiver at Duke. Even though he was not drafted, Max, at the end of 2016, was on the Packers' roster.

Dylan McCaffrey was Valor's senior quarterback this past season. He has signed with Michigan and, in fact, was the only high school quarterback the Wolverines were interested in giving a scholarship to.

And, if that's not enough, the youngest McCaffrey, Luke, also has agreed to go to Michigan, where he will be a wide receiver.

Some family, huh?

Interesting that the youngest is named Luke. The quarterback that Christian played was Luke – Luke Del Rio.

On that chilly day late in November of 2012, I talked with Christian's father for a while, then stood on the sideline with Luke's dad, Jack.

Jack Del Rio was the Broncos' defensive coordinator. "What do you think about the two boys?" I asked Jack. "I think they both have chances to be really good college players," he replied.

Jack bounced around to a pair of schools (including as a walk-on in Alabama) before finally settling in at Florida, where he became a starting quarterback last season – before separate injuries sidelined him for the rest of the schedule.

That day I talked to Christian at mid-field -- he was quiet, unassuming and humble. "I didn't play very well, but we won, and that's all that matters," he said as he held the championship trophy.

I thought he was a bit small to become a big-time player. He was fast and elusive and smart and versatile. He played running back, wide receiver, quarterback, defensive back and as punt and kickoff returner.

The opposing team was so afraid of McCaffrey as a returner they choose to punt every time out of bounds. The last one was so short Valor got great positive, and McCaffrey would score the winning (and only touchdown). The next season McCaffrey went wild, and Valor won with a blowout.

He would go on to become Stanford's best player -- and runner-up -- after his sophomore year for the Heisman Trophy. With a new quarterback and injury problems as a junior, McCaffrey, who had been a favorite for the Heisman, slipped back. Still, he turned pro.

And on Thursday at the Combine, Christian was not as quiet and unassuming as the 16-year-old kid I met. He said in interviews he didn't get the respect of other running backs. "I feel like a lot of people don't give me credit for the skills and talents I have. It's just the way it is." He ran the 40 in an impressive 4.49 -- after bench-pressing an unimpressive 10 times. But his stock may have risen. It's thought he could be drafted from 20th in the first round to early in the second round.

And there's a lot of people in Denver who want the Broncos to draft him at 20th. And a lot of people around the NFL believe he could go to the Patriots with the last pick in the first round.

I'd been somewhat less than overwhelmed about the Broncos picking McCaffrey. But my lukewarm attitude has turned hot.

Baseball talks about five tool players -- run (base run and speed), catch, hit, hit for power, throw.

McCaffrey could be seven-or-eight tool player, almost as he was at Valor Christian.

He was a running back with the Cardinals, but he also played shotgun as a quarterback on occasion. He was a potent blocker. He lined up as a slot receiver and an outside guy. He returned punts, and he returned kickoffs. And I'm sure he could play defensive back if asked.

The 5-foot-11 McCaffrey won't be a 25-play running back, but he could be change-of-pace second-or-third back for the Broncos, a first-string slot receiver, an outside receiver and, of course, a returner of punts and kickoffs. And he'll play on defensive special teams, or run out of the punt formation as an up-blocker. It's not often, or ever, that teams can get such a multitasker or all-purpose player like Red Grange (look him up) or Gale Sayers (who had six touchdowns in one game -- catching, running, returning).

The Broncos should draft Christian McCaffrey No. 1. And Valor Christian can change its name, and add McCaffrey.

Garett Bolles brings unique perspective, nastiness to left tackle position

By Troy Renck

KMGH

March 4, 2017

When Garett Bolles ran a 4.95 40-yard dash Thursday, it opened eyes. As left tackles go, few match his athleticism or unlikely rise as a top prospect.

Bolles played football and lacrosse growing up, but couldn't avoid trouble. As a teenager, he was booted out of multiple schools. Drug use became normal. He landed in jail. His home life a mess, Bolles lacked direction and motivation. His lacrosse coach Greg Freeman and his wife Emily took in Bolles in a story loosely resembling the plot of the "The Blind Side" with NFL tackle Michael Oher.

Bolles worked in the garage door repair business with Freeman. With structure came hope. Bolles served an LDS Church mission in Colorado Springs, where his strong faith became instilled.

"I love Colorado. I have a heart there because those are the people I taught on my mission," Bolles told Denver7. "If I end up going there, I'd be just fine."

Several teams covet Bolles, who is considered one of the draft's best tackles. He met with the Broncos. They could go in a number of directions with the 20th overall pick, but many mocks have them selecting Bolles or Wisconsin tackle Ryan Ramczyk, who is limited at the combine with three months of recovery remaining following hip surgery.

Bolles has microwaved his development. He entered Snow College in Utah as a defensive lineman, switched sides and dominated. At Utah, he started one year, earning first-team All-Pac 12 recognition. He brings quick feet, and maturity gained from his dark past.

"I just really want to see what type of man I am. I have a plan, I have a mission. When you become a husband and you become a father, you have to sort of grow up and you have to become the person you want to be. And I plan to do whatever it takes," Bolles said. "And I don't even know the old Garett, in case you guys were wondering."

At least not off the field. Between the lines, Bolles brings intensity. He is a mauler, someone who plays with violent intentions. He believes he can start for an NFL team as a rookie -- "They are not drafting me to sit on the bench" -- and brings swagger that stands out in an event with elite athletes.

"I want to put people in the dirt. And that's what I am here for. As an offensive lineman, you want to be the nasty (*****) you can be. Whoever is front of me, I want to drive them in the dirt," Bolles said. "I want to put people in the dirt. And that's what I'm here for. So I'm just going to try to be that every single day. And when I come off the field, I love my family. I have learned how to turn the switch and go back to the new Garett."

CU quarterback Sefo Liufau ready to prove himself again at NFL Combine

By Troy Renck

KMGH

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The embrace practically represented a book closing on CU records.

Thursday, Sefo Liufau hugged radio host Kordell Stewart as he walked through the media room at the Indiana Convention Center. As Buffs, Liufau and Stewart threw for 93 touchdowns. Stewart led a team that contended for national titles, Liufau helped the program rise from the ashes, winning 10 games last year.

Liufau established a reputation built on toughness and leadership. He looks like a quarterback, standing 6-foot-3 and weighing 232 pounds. However to play the position in the NFL level, he must show improved accuracy during drills at the combine.

Liufau completed 62.8 percent of his college passes, while working as a brute in the short-yardage running game. One team even asked Liufau this week if he would consider a position switch, presumably to tight end or fullback. Drills at the combine test precision, and can be difficult given the quarterbacks are working with unfamiliar receivers. Christian Hackenberg hurt himself last year, for instance, with several overthrows and poor footwork.

For the former Buffs leader, this week represents a chance for Liufau to turn heads and open minds again.

"Definitely similar circumstances with people not believing in my ability to play," Liufau said. "It's another opportunity for me to go out there and prove myself."

Liufau parlayed a strong Senior Bowl into an NFL combine invite, creating speculation he could be a late-round draft choice.

"It started when I was hanging around my dad and his army unit. You weren't really allowed to complain," Liufau said. "I guess that's where my mental toughness started. ... I just want a chance to keep playing."

Air Force WR Jalen Robinette looks to launch NFL career with help of rule change

By Lindsay Jones
USA Today
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Thanks to a 2016 rule change by the Department of Defense, former Air Force Academy wide receiver Jalen Robinette won't have to wait to make an impact as an NFL player.

Robinette is expected to be an early-to-mid round draft pick in April, shortly before graduating from the Academy in Colorado Springs. Assuming he makes his new team's roster, Robinette will be able to bypass the military's requirement of two years of active duty. The Department of Defense waived that requirement for professional athletes last summer after Navy quarterback Keenan Reynolds was drafted by the Baltimore Ravens.

"It came at a good time and I think it's great for everybody, for the academies, for the players, for the coaches and just for the guys who want to chase their dreams but also go to the Academy too with recruiting," Robinette said Friday at the NFL scouting combine.

Robinette will be expected to fulfill his military obligations in a reservist role, but the specifics of his assignment won't be decided until later.

Knowing he can go straight to the NFL has allowed Robinette to spend this winter focused on finishing up classes at Air Force – he is currently enrolled in six courses – and training for the combine.

After playing in a triple-option offense for the Falcons, Robinette knows he has a lot to prove to NFL teams about his ability to play in a pro offense with a large route tree. He's hoping teams will look at his size (6-foot-3, 220) and production at Air Force while playing in a limited passing game and see his pro potential.

Robinette caught only 120 passes in four seasons, and just 35 catches in 12 games last year. But in 2016 he averaged 27.4 yards per catch and scored six touchdowns. Robinette said he has watched tape of Denver Broncos receiver Demaryius Thomas and former Detroit Lions receiver Calvin Johnson, both of whom played in a triple-option offense at Georgia Tech, to try to learn how to make the transition from that scheme to the NFL.

"I'm not huge into numbers," Robinette said, "but you look at the numbers, that alone says that if I'm able to produce this much in a triple-option offense, then integrating me to a pro style, I think my chances are pretty good."

The weirdest questions players have been asked at the NFL Combine

By Sam Gardner
FoxSports.com
March 4, 2017

The NFL Combine is about far more than running the 40-yard dash, and one of the most important aspects of the league's annual scouting showcase is the interview process. Throughout the week, the more than 300 players in Indianapolis engage in all kinds of discussions with teams — from informal chats with scouts and position coaches to grueling formal sitdowns with head coaches, GMs and even owners — and inevitably a weird question or two is bound to be asked.

In 2010, former Miami Dolphins general manager Jeff Ireland made headlines when he asked Dez Bryant whether his mother was a prostitute. (Ireland, now a scout with the Saints, later apologized.) Last February, former Jaguars defensive end Austen Lane — a fifth-round pick in the same class as Bryant — sent out a series of tweets recalling some of the unusual Combine queries he received. And those are just the start, with other questions testing players' creativity, critical thinking and, often, their patience.

With that in mind, we asked 35 participants at the 2017 Combine about their most off-the-wall interviews. The premise was simple: "What's the strangest or most memorable question you've heard in a conversation with a team, and why do you think teams ask them?" Their answers are below.

Jamaal Williams, RB, BYU

The weirdest one I've ever gotten is, "Are you a cat or are you a dog?" Of course you want to be a dog, so you've got some feistiness in you. I'd like to hear what people would say if they're a cat, but I'm not sure what a compliment would be for a cat. If you're a cat and you get blown up on a play, do you get back up and you've got eight lives now?

Sam Rogers, FB, Virginia Tech

I haven't gotten anything out of the ordinary, nothing that I was truly shocked about. Just basic stuff about scheme, drawing up your favorite play — football stuff, honestly. But I've heard a lot about stuff like that, trying to throw guys off and then come back to football. I remember at the Senior Bowl, I had a Coach draw up a play for me, then he turned the paper over and started talking to me about just random stuff, trying to get my mind off what we just did. Then he said, "All right, now I want you to draw that play up again." It's kind of a way of seeing how you learn and how you understand things. And the whole point of all this stuff is to get you off your game, get you out of your comfort zone and see if you can handle the pressure. Because in the NFL you're probably never going to feel truly comfortable.

Corey Levin, OG, Tennessee-Chattanooga

I think I got a trick question. Someone asked me what kind of alcohol I like to drink. And when I told him that I hadn't been drinking leading up to the Combine, they were like, "Well, what did you drink before that?" They wouldn't let me not answer. So that was probably one of the weirder questions I got. I think they just try to pick your mind and see if you'll say something that they can use. It's probably just a way they try to trip you up and see how you handle adversity.

Rushel Shell, RB, West Virginia

It's been straight-up, no jokes. But those questions are just to see your creativity, the way you think. You prep interviews, probably a couple times a week, and they put you in some real awkward situations just to show you that sometimes coaches do silly stuff to pick at you and see how you respond. So I'm ready for anything, whatever it may be.

Dare Ogunbowale, RB, Wisconsin

I've heard about those in the past, but I didn't encounter any questions like that. They just want to see how you react to things that you're not expecting, I guess. I'm sure it's probably good for comedic relief, too. This is a stressful time, and when you're asked a funny question like that, it does lighten the load.

Sean Harlow, OT, Oregon State

There were a couple goofy tests on paper. It was like, "Banana = 7" or, "7 = Grape," and then you have to do addition and stuff like that. But as far as questions, nothing's been off the wall. People like to mess with you a little bit with the tone of their voice, but then they'll tell you they're messing with you. So you've got to be prepared for the unexpected, for sure, but they're also not trying to waste anybody's time. There's only a short period of time to get everyone through.

Antonio Garcia, OT, Troy

Fortunately I haven't (received a strange question), but one weird thing I can say — I'm not going to say the name — pulled out some cards and had a card trick to show me and we kind of ended up playing a game. That was pretty weird, I thought. That was the only thing that was different. It was kind of just a memory thing, laying the cards out, flipping them over, and then you pick the two that equal 11, or whatever.

Cameron Lee, OG, Illinois State

I have had some interviews where it wasn't necessarily one question, but it was just so fast that they're asking the next question before I got the first answer out. So no crazy questions, but the entire interview itself went so fast that you don't have time to think. I think they just want to see how you handle this and see if you have the ability to think and articulate and speak and communicate.

Javarius Leamon, OT, South Carolina State

Not really, not yet. But I've got a couple more meetings, so I might still get one. You kind of prepare (for them), but it's mostly just going with it and answering the best you can. If they hit me with a question like that, I'll just answer it.

Former Mizzou star Shane Ray set to launch hometown charity in Kansas City

By Tod Palmer
Kansas City Star
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Giving back to his hometown of Kansas City always went hand-in-hand with Denver Broncos outside linebacker Shane Ray's dream of NFL stardom.

A consensus All-American and the 2014 SEC Defensive Player of Year after breaking Mizzou's single-season sacks record, Ray was a first-round pick by the Broncos and is a rising NFL star with 12 career sacks, including eight last season.

The other part of his vision will begin to be realized Saturday with "Shane Ray's Cotton Club Event" at the Firestone Building, located at 2001 Grand Blvd.

The event celebrates the launch of Rays Awareness, a charitable foundation he established "to inspire kids to dream" and "assist youth and their families in underserved areas in Kansas City/Denver to reach their full potential through sports programs and activities."

"When I was young playing football, I used to tell my mom (Sebrina Johnson) that, if I made it, I wanted to bring something back to the city," said Ray, a Kansas City native and Bishop Miege graduate. "This is really just one of the building blocks for something that I want to develop into something so much bigger."

Shane Ray's Cotton Club Event, which is set for 9 p.m. to 2 a.m., costs \$25 per person or \$350 per table. Tickets are available at www.raysawareness.eventbrite.com.

"I used to tell Shane, whatever you dream, speak it into existence and you can do it," Johnson said. "We didn't know this football thing would happen this way, but ... I'm honored and blessed that we're able to give back to the community."

The event will double as Johnson's birthday celebration.

"It's a real exciting weekend," Johnson said. "We've been working on this for a long time, and it's finally coming to fruition. I'm just really proud of him and honored that we were able to launch it on my birthday. I didn't want any gifts. I just wanted to be able to launch his foundation and give him support and get Kansas City involved in what we're trying to do."

Guests must dress in Roaring 20s attire and will enter on a red carpet to enjoy an evening with Da Truth Band, a local jazz and blues ensemble, along with a Roaring 20s-themed dance group.

Ray's other outreach work includes Shane Shoes, which provides cleats and other footwear for children in need, and a role with the American Diabetes Association, speaking with Congressmen about research and funding for a disease that's impacted his family.

“I can raise awareness of so many things,” Ray said. “I feel like I’ve been blessed to experience a lot of different goods and bads in life, and I can shed light on a lot of different areas.”

He hopes to have the kind of impact late Hall of Fame outside linebacker Derrick Thomas had with his Third and Long Foundation, which was active in impoverished neighborhoods like Ray’s stomping ground as a child, “The Murder Factory.”

“There haven’t been too many athletes to unify the city and bring everybody out since Derrick Thomas,” Ray said. “With my foundation and my charities, I want to build it to where I can have the same kind of impact here. I can bring in people and celebrities, have events for Kansas City to come out and show support but also for a good cause.”

Ray hopes his civic ambition will inspire other community leaders to engage in or partner with him for philanthropic endeavors.

“Whatever we want to do collectively as a city, we can do that,” Ray said. “I’m really just trying to restart something that I saw when I was a kid. I want to bring that back for my generation.”

Shane Ray’s Cotton Club event is the beginning.

“Our focus for the Ray’s Awareness Foundation is to teach kids to dream,” Johnson said. “As adults, we forget how to enjoy that and be able to do that. I thought it would be fun to start with the adults and for us to pretend to be at a different era and remember how fun that is. We can, in turn, teach our kids to dream as well.”

Report: Reuben Foster sent home from Scouting Combine

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
March 4, 2017

A relatively uneventful Scouting Combine instantly got more eventful.

Alabama linebacker Reuben Foster will be sent home, according to ESPN. He reportedly got into it a “heated argument” with a hospital worker.

No specific details have emerged regarding the nature or context of the argument. Presumably, it relates to a medical examination of Foster, part of the mass poking and prodding that occurs in Indianapolis.

NFLPA president Eric Winston, reflecting on his own time at the Scouting Combine, said on Friday’s PFT Live that the general goal of the process is to “piss off” the players. In Foster’ case, mission accomplished. Apparently.

Burning questions for top OLs Garrett Bolles, Forrest Lamp, Ryan Ramczyk and Cam Robinson

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
March 4, 2017

Four potential first-round offensive linemen. Four big questions.

This year's line class not only lacks the depth of recent years, but doesn't come with anyone who clearly belongs atop the draft. This year could see the top 10 picks pass without an offensive lineman taken, which hasn't happened in 12 years.

GARETT BOLLES: IS ONE YEAR STARTING AT THE FBS LEVEL ENOUGH, GIVEN HIS ADVANCED AGE?

No player among the 330 at the Combine took a more circuitous path to Indianapolis than Bolles, who had drug issues, an arrest and was eventually on the street before he got his life back on track.

p> In the process of finding his way to football, Bolles went on a one-year Church of Latter-Day Saints mission, which he served in Colorado Springs, and played at junior college before heading to Utah, where he became a starter at tackle in 2016.

Bolles will be 25 before he takes his first professional snap. If a team brought him along by using him at another position, such as right tackle, he might not be playing on the left side until he's 27 or 28.

But age doesn't translate to hits. Because he wasn't playing football in his lost years, he's accumulated the physical wear of a 21- or 22-year-old -- and in Bolles' eyes, that's what matters, not the birthdate on his driver's license.

"I think that's a positive thing for me, because that's just less wear and tear on my body," he said. "I've never been cut open, I've never had a surgery, I've never had a major injury. You've got to knock on wood because football is rough game."

And he also doesn't want to wait to play left tackle.

"They're not drafting me to sit on the bench," Bolles said "They're drafting me to come in and make a big impact."

FORREST LAMP: WHAT'S THE RIGHT POSITION?

Although he worked at left tackle at Western Kentucky -- and had his best work there -- a shorter-than-expected arm measurement at the Senior Bowl helped lead to continued speculation that Lamp would have to move to guard or even center as a professional.

Lamp is willing to accept any spot -- "I'll play wherever I can to help a team," he said. But the game that opened eyes was against Alabama, which boasted the best defensive line in college football last year, led by potential top-three pick Jonathan Allen.

"I think I can play tackle," Lamp said. "Everybody says the Alabama front, all three of those guys, will probably get drafted in the first round. So if I can block those guys, why wouldn't I be able to block anybody?"

But in his quest for playing time, not only does the position not matter -- the side doesn't, either.

"Sides don't affect me. I played left and right guard at the Senior Bowl. I think I even played right tackle. I've played left tackle," Lamp said. "The biggest difference is going from guard to tackle."

RYAN RAMCZYK: HOW'S THE HIP?

"Really good," the Wisconsin offensive tackle said, believing that the medical checkups conducted by teams should squelch the concerns about his January hip procedure.

"The surgeon was actually there for medical check-ups and he said it looks really clean, really good," Ramczyk said.

A full recovery is still over three months away, so he will have some catch-up work in the weight room to do. He said that he can still do upper-body and cardio work, but has to avoid squats and agility drills.

Ramczyk also must answer questions about how he only started one season at the FBS level, having transferred from Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He also gave up the game for a year at age 18, backing out on a commitment to play at Division II Winona (Minn.) State before landing at Stevens Point.

"It's been a big question in interviews," he said. "I took a year off and realized what I had given up and ever since then I've been competing and just playing football and loving it."

CAM ROBINSON: GUARD OR TACKLE?

In the wake of NFL Network's Mike Mayock saying Monday that he saw the Alabama product as more of a guard prospect, Robinson's response about the potential of being guard was simple -- and illustrated the risk of moving a tackle to the inside.

"I don't know," he said of being a guard. "I never played it."

So not only does he see himself as a tackle -- but the best tackle in the class.

"It's what I believe," Robinson said. "I believe in what I've put on film for the past three years. I think I've put it on film and I don't have to talk much more about it."