

Jhabvala vs. Kiz: Does Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch benefit more from Tony Romo's retirement?

By Mark Kiszla and Nicki Jhabvala

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Does Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch benefit more from Tony Romo's retirement?

Kiz: Well, well, well. It appears Tony Romo will indeed be in Denver to play a starring role in the Broncos' home-opener to the 2017 NFL season. But Romo will be in the CBS broadcast booth, not the Denver huddle. I will give John Elway props. It's clear he saw Romo's retirement coming. But what's not clear is: Do the Broncos have a starting quarterback good enough to win the AFC West?

Jhabvala: Both Siemian and Lynch benefit, if the Broncos were even going to pursue Romo. But Lynch benefits more so. Siemian has the advantage of added experience at this point, but if the Broncos brought on Romo and trashed their plan for an open competition between their two young quarterbacks, it would have been an affront to Lynch. Denver traded up to get him in the first round of the 2016 draft with the obvious intent of making him the team's eventual starter— if all went according to plan. Siemian won the starting job last offseason and could very well win it again this year, but by acquiring Romo, a clear starter, it would've sent the message that the Broncos had little faith in Lynch to be their quarterback of the future.

Kiz: By leaving the field before the sport took what little remained of Romo's health, he did right by his family, even if it wasn't necessarily the best thing for the Broncos. Disgruntled members of a Denver defense that began pointing fingers of blame at the other side of the ball last year will have to be convinced either Siemian or Lynch can be trusted to lead a championship contender this year. Restoring locker-room unity will be a major chore for new coach Vance Joseph.

Jhabvala: Filling the leadership void is critical to the Broncos' success this season. And Joseph admitted as much at the league meetings last week. They don't have Peyton Manning anymore. They don't have DeMarcus Ware. They need someone to step up, and the onus is on the quarterback. Lynch's ability to be more of a leader will factor heavily into his chances of winning the starting job. As will Siemian's, but his work last year earned the respect of his teammates.

Kiz: Supporters of Siemian are very protective of him. He is Denver's favorite kid brother. Hey, I get it. Siemian is fragile. He breaks easily. This is not a knock against Siemian, just a fact. If the Broncos are going to get back to the Super Bowl anytime soon, then we need to see Elway's faith in a quarterback he drafted in the first round was well-founded. It's your job now, Mr. Lynch. Don't mess it up.

Jhabvala: Siemian, no doubt, has to learn to protect himself better in the pocket. Gary Kubiak said it. Elway said it. Joseph said it, too. But Siemian also didn't have much help last season, with the porous offensive line and a weak running game. And if you'll recall, Lynch didn't fare so well in his limited playing time, either (he was sacked an average of three times a game). If this revamped offensive line, with Ron Leary and Menelik Watson, lives up to Elway's expectations, then both quarterbacks have a better shot at staying upright. But Lynch faces the same challenge as Siemian in staying healthy.

Broncos Mailbag: Should Denver trade Demaryius Thomas for Joe Thomas?

By Nicki Jhabvala

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The Broncos really need to fix the offensive line. Why are they not looking at trading for a left tackle. I feel that Denver should trade Demaryius Thomas to Cleveland for Joe Thomas. Demaryius has not been playing at a high level after receiving a big contract and his family getting out of prison. Receivers are a lot easy to come by and I feel that Joe Thomas has more to offer. Also, Emanuel Sanders can easily fill the void left by trading DT. C'mon, John Elway, make a move.

— Aaron Lanford, St. Robert, Mo.

Aaron: Who said trading for a left tackle isn't being considered? At the league's annual meeting last week, John Elway said they're considering all options — free agency, trade, draft — and never ruled any out.

But Demaryius Thomas' \$8.5 million salary for 2017 has already been fully guaranteed and he has a dead cap value of \$15.1 million this year. The financial hit wouldn't make sense for the Broncos, and let's not discount the fact that he's the team's top receiver. Say what you want about the drops, but D.T. finished seventh among receivers with 1,083 yards (in an inefficient offense, no less) and replacing someone with his skill, size and athleticism is rare.

Joe Thomas, whom the Broncos tried to get before the trading deadline in 2015, could still be on the team's radar, but the Browns won't give him up easily. Two years ago they wanted a first-, second- and third-round pick from the Broncos in exchange for the 10-time Pro Bowler.

Although he's been remarkably durable over his career, he's 32 now and entering his 11th season. The wear and tear will inevitably catch up some point. The market may have shifted more in Denver's favor if they go down that path again, but I still wouldn't expect the Browns to give up their starting left tackle easily.

Last weekend, Rob Gronkowski made an appearance at WrestleMania 33. Which Broncos player do you think would most likely go the pro-wrestling route?

— James, Littleton

James: I debated this with our esteemed producer Joe Nguyen the other day. I wouldn't recommend this for a player currently under contract — especially one four months removed from back surgery — but for a second career or an alternative career, my money's on offensive lineman Dillon Day. He looks the part, and I even received confirmation from his former teammate and producer of the Periscope series "On the Couch with Dillon Day."

Outside linebacker Shane Ray may have a future, too. I have no real reason for thinking this, but I'm going with it.

And if consideration extends to the coaching staff, I think special teams coordinator Brock Olivo, he of the K.I.L.L. principle, would be a viable contender. Just imagine the possibilities:

With holes in the O-line, and new coaching staff, can we consider this a rebuilding year?
— Howard Tillman, Savannah, Ga.

Howard: How many teams “rebuild” with the league’s leading pass defense and a pair of 1,000-yard receivers?

Why the overwhelming personal opinions from the Denver Post Broncos staff rather than news for Broncos fans? I pray we never see another “here’s why Romo should be a Bronco” story. Yes, offseason has less breaking news, so why not report more on current players and personnel, take time to interview, research and write us good stories about their stories. I do not care as much about what your opinions, arguments, pro-con, or wishers. Tell us more about the Broncos.
— Kevin Brennan, Kodiak, Alaska

Kevin: I never wrote that Romo should be a Bronco. I reported on the speculation and the possibility of Romo landing in Denver, while also reporting on the team’s current roster. Mark Kiszla has opined about Romo in Denver, but he’s a columnist. It’s his job to have an opinion and share it. Thanks for sharing yours.

Official: Tony Romo is leaving football to join CBS as Phil Simms' replacement

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

April 5, 2017

The Tony Romo saga has reached its conclusion, and a surprising one at that.

The Cowboys' all-time passing leader is leaving football to join CBS as the network's lead color commentator in place of Phil Simms. Romo, who was also reportedly pursued by NBC and Fox, confirmed the move Tuesday afternoon with a Twitter post that included the message "I guess it's time to start dressing up. #CBS" and an image of him donning a CBS sports jacket.

The Cowboys and TV network followed with separate statements, with the latter saying it is discussing a future role with Simms but welcomed Romo's "fresh and insightful perspective" as part of its NFL commentating team alongside Jim Nantz and Tracy Wolfson.

Romo is moving on from the game and is finally a free man. But there's a chance — albeit a very small chance — he may not be done with football entirely.

"Do I envision coming back and playing football? Absolute not," said Romo, who refused to coin his transition as retirement. "... I understand the questions will continue to come up about playing again, but there is no part of me that wants to play right now."

The Cowboys announced they released Romo at his request Tuesday, and owner Jerry Jones, who said before the start of free agency that he would "do right" by his quarterback, quickly claimed he held to his promise.

"We wish Tony and his family nothing but the best," Jones said in a statement. "As an organization, we did what he asked us to do in terms of his release, and we wanted to do what was ultimately in his best interest and in the best interest of his family."

And Romo concurred.

Dallas is expected to designate Romo a post-June 1 release, allowing it to spread his \$19.6 million cap charge over the next two seasons and reap a \$14 million savings this year, after the cut date. Since Romo is being released outright and not placed on the reserved/retired list — he would have had to have filed paperwork with the league and team to do so — Dallas does not retain his rights for the remaining three years (or more) of his contract. The move ends his tenure with the Cowboys after 14 years, but leaves the door open for a 15th in the NFL, should he want it.

Although there's still a robust market for Romo in the NFL, his decision was based on myriad factors, not just health or family. Since 2010, however, he's suffered three collarbone fractures, a ruptured disk and three back fractures and started only four games over the last two seasons as a result.

"The weird thing is I'd probably be playing this year healthier than I was in 2014," Romo said.

Romo's exit from football takes him out of contention to land in Houston or Denver, although the race was hardly even. Broncos general manager John Elway said at the league's annual meeting in Phoenix last week that Romo was not in their plans for 2017, and on Tuesday Romo admitted that the Texans were atop his wishlist.

"Like we've said, we really feel good about the two young ones that we have," Elway said. "Trevor (Siemian) did a good job for us last year and Paxton (Lynch) was young. The plan is to stay the course there and see what's available in the draft. So we'll go from there. We like both."

Any interest on behalf of the Broncos would have come if Romo had been made available as a free agent. Trading for the soon-to-be 37-year-old who has a lengthy injury history and a hefty contract was not in the cards. The Broncos have about \$16 million in cap space for 2017, but Romo's contract carried cap charges of \$24.7 million, \$25.2 million and \$23.7 million over the final three years.

This is why Broncos head coach Vance Joseph, as well as Elway, said repeatedly over the past month that Romo was a non-factor. He was simply unavailable and his deal was simply unmanageable.

But with Broncos' denial was the admission that they would consider all options when they became available, be it Adrian Peterson at running back or Romo at quarterback. If Romo had been released and eager to continue playing, the Broncos were expected to at least bring him in for a visit or a physical to gauge his health.

But in recent weeks, as Denver pulled away from talks of Romo and emphasized its faith in Siemian and Lynch, Houston moved ahead.

The Texans shipped off Brock Osweiler and his \$16 million salary during free agency, with the presumed hope of landing Romo. Houston needed — and still needs — a clear starter, not mention overall depth, behind Tom Savage and Brandon Weeden, and it has the means to acquire it with \$30.1 million in cap space.

With Romo now off the market and the list of available veterans dwindling, Houston's best options are limited to a couple of familiar names. Jay Cutler, the former Bronco who was released by the Bears, is available for work and is believed by many to still be a starter-quality quarterback — with a checkered past. Colin Kaepernick, the former 49er whose availability continues to be a hotly debated subject in the NFL, is also an option that Texans head coach Bill O'Brien said was discussed.

"We've watched him," O'Brien told ProFootballTalk at the league meetings. "Like I've said, we feel good about where we're at right now with Tom and Brandon Weeden, but we've watched him and discussed him. I think that's a fluid situation as far as free agency goes, not just for Colin Kaepernick but for the teams. As you know, your roster's not totally set until right before you open that season. He's a good football player, he can run, he's been coached well by (Jim) Harbaugh and Chip Kelly. Those guys are excellent coaches, so you know the background that he has. We'll continue to discuss all the positions on our team, but we've definitely watched him."

The Broncos, meanwhile, move forward with their two quarterbacks who will vie for the starting job in another open competition this offseason. The plan, as spelled out by Joseph last week, is to bring on a third quarterback.

“As a third quarterback, it’s kind of what you want. It is your preference. Again, that is a work in progress. It could be a young veteran. Why not?” Joseph said last week. “I would not perceive it being an older veteran. If it’s going to be a veteran, it’s going to be a young veteran for us. I wouldn’t discount drafting a young quarterback in the draft next month. That’s possible.”

But Romo donning orange and blue no longer is.

Broncos mailbag: Is it time to stop hating on Siemian?

By Mike Klis

9NEWS

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9NEWS Broncos Insider Mike Klis answers questions pulled from the Broncos Mailbag.

Do you have a question? Email Mike.Klis@9NEWS.com!

Why do people, especially the media, hate on Trevor so much? I honestly think he's great and deserves to be the Broncos QB of the future. I'd say most fans do, too. I'd go as far as saying maybe the next Brady with some training and development, but I don't want to sound crazy.

--Caleb Smith

Caleb: Easy now, Caleb. The term "hate" is far too strong in one sense, and "the next Brady" is way too crazy in another.

Some media and fans like Siemian. Some don't think he's good enough to guide a team through a long postseason run. I have come across one or two media/fans who really don't like him as a starting quarterback.

My take is, first, Siemian has some impressive qualities. I like how he throws the ball, specifically his "easy cheese" delivery with the pop he has on his throws. He is an accurate passer. He has underrated pocket mobility. And his poise under pressure and low-stress demeanor are perfectly suited for the quarterback position.

I talked to one NFL coach during the scouting combine who had done his homework on Siemian in case he became available. What this coach really liked about Siemian is his teammates helped him up when he got knocked down. Coaches notice these things. It shows Siemian's teammates want to play well for him.

There is reason to be concerned about how he can physically hold up to NFL punishment. And I would like to see him push his passes downfield more often. Not the deep throws--he already throws a good deep ball. I'm talking about lowering that back-leg anchor and zipping in those 18-yard completions from hash to hash.

Right now, I'd say Siemian is the safest bet to become the Broncos' starting quarterback again in 2017. As for whether he replaces first-round draft pick Paxton Lynch as the Broncos' quarterback of the future, define future.

I just don't see Elway drafting a substandard offensive tackle with his first pick because there is a 'need'. How do you see this panning out?

--Rob DuPuis, Minneapolis

Rob: I'm with ya. For one thing, many first-round left tackles start out playing right tackle or guard. The Broncos have all they need at right tackle and the guard spots, although they could probably find a place for Western Kentucky's Forrest Lamp.

The two offensive tackles that are ready to play Day 1 and would make sense for the Broncos at No. 20 are Utah's Garrett Bolles and Alabama's Cam Robinson. Bolles will likely be gone by No. 20 and Robinson is considered better suited for right tackle or guard.

So, if Bolles is gone, I do think the Broncos will take the best player available, especially if he's a tight end (Alabama's O.J. Howard, Miami's David Njoku), five-technique defensive end (Solomon Thomas, Jonathan Allen, Taco Charlton), edge pass rusher (Haason Reddick, Zach Cunningham), or, maybe, all-purpose running back Christian McCaffrey.

And then maybe in the second or third round, the Broncos can take an offensive tackle who has a high upside, but needs a year to redshirt. Someone like Florida State's Roderick Johnson, Troy's Antonio Garcia or Bucknell's Julie'n Davenport.

Regarding Ron Leary, Dallas converted a college tackle into a pro guard. Are Broncos going to convert him back to tackle? If not, why did they not try to get Riley Reiff? Only way to avoid losing the season! Poor draft choices.

--Tom Miller

Tom: I was told the Broncos did pursue Reiff. The former Detroit Lion instead signed with the Minnesota Vikings. The Broncos also were interested in Baltimore right tackle Ricky Wagner, who instead signed with Detroit. And the Broncos instead signed Menelik Watson.

The Broncos were trying to bring back Russell Okung but the \$25 million over the next two years he got from the Los Angeles Chargers was more than the \$20.5 million two-year guarantee Denver declined prior to free agency.

And no, the Broncos won't convert Leary back to tackle. A draft-day trade for a veteran remains possible. It's also become a little more possible the Broncos' season-opening left tackle is Donald Stephenson or Ty Sambrailo with a second- or third-round draft pick developing behind them.

I was wondering how much input and influence the head coaches have in determining whether John Elway drafts a player. It appears Gary Kubiak was a big believer in Trevor Siemian and then Paxton Lynch as well. On the other hand, who has influence on making offensive lineman selections? An explanation of the interaction that the coaches and scouts have with John Elway would be great to know.

--Slater Raub, Louisville, Ohio

Slater: Whether it's a new teacher, or new construction foreman or new coach, the seasoned boss wants new ideas and is usually receptive to what the new guy thinks.

Derek Wolfe was the first player the Broncos selected in the 2012 draft largely because new defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio banged the table for him.

There is no doubt Kubiak is the reason why Siemian was, first, drafted by the Broncos in the seventh round when many other teams didn't know who he was, and, secondly, was pushed along to the very last play of the very last meaningless game as the team's starting quarterback.

Elway listens to his coaches. He listens to Matt Russell and Tom Heckert, his top two personnel men. Elway makes the final call after considering all input.

Hey Mike, my question is do you think the Broncos are willing to trade up to grab Christian McCaffrey? They moved up last year for incompetent Paxton Lynch. So, it sounds reasonable for them to move up and grab McCaffrey because of how useful he can be to the Broncos, filling two holes on offense and on special teams, and he is more proven as a first rounder than any tackle in the first round. I don't believe a rookie should be put in right away on the tackle spot. What do you think?

--Josey Astorga

Josey: You're an intelligent football observer, although I believe you are prematurely giving up on Lynch. Trade up from No. 20 to get McCaffrey? I would be surprised. You would move up if he were an every-down back from Day 1, and a returner.

But I think initially, McCaffrey will be a third-down and fourth down player. A great third- and fourth-down player, but he might need some time before he's ready to take on 20 carries a game.

The best-case scenario for McCaffrey is he's a top 15 pick. The worst-case is he goes in the top 10 of the second round. The Broncos need a multipurpose player like McCaffrey but they might be able to get one who didn't attend Valor Christian High School with their No. 51 pick in the second round or No. 82 selection in the third.

I think the Broncos look left tackle, tight end, pass rusher, defensive end, or all-purpose running back with their first pick.

McCaffrey is in play at No. 20. I'm just not sure he's their first option. He might be. I'm just not sure.

Always enjoy your analysis. I wanted to ask you about the left tackle situation. It's obviously a pressing need and the last thing we want is for our QB (whether it's Trevor or Paxton) getting lit up. Would Denver look at trading for Joe Thomas again? I heard some talk about Jason Peters or Joe Staley. Are they waiting on the draft now to see how the chips fall? What do you believe they do?

--Matthew Padilla

Matthew: The Broncos would look at making a trade for Thomas. Problem is, Cleveland is not about to trade away their All Pro left tackle.

The Browns just spent big money to acquire right guard Kevin Zeitler and center J.C. Tretter from free agency, while also giving a \$47 million extension to left guard Joel Bitonio. Even with the out-of-the-box Browns' think tank, it doesn't make sense to then trade away Thomas.

Peters would make sense. Philadelphia asked him to take pay cut from his \$9.95 million salary this year, but he apparently refused. He's 35, but the Broncos would only need him for a year or two. The Broncos

would have to finagle their remaining \$16.5 million of salary cap space to bring him in. His \$9.95 million and the roughly \$7 million needed to sign their draft picks doesn't quite fit. But salary caps can be manipulated.

Why have the Broncos not called the Cardinals about Jared Veldheer? I'm sure a deal could be worked out as he's coming off an injury, and slated to possibly play right tackle.

--Adrian Watson

Adrian: Veldheer is the definition of untradeable. He has two years left on his contract at an average of \$7 million in cash and \$10 million-plus each year in salary cap. Which is difficult to take even if he was healthy.

Which he's not. Veldheer is coming a season-ending torn triceps injury. He has been a really good left tackle for the Raiders and Cardinals over the years. But there's way too much health and financial risk here. Now if he's released ...

Why do the Broncos not pursue Adrian Peterson at running back to get a boost at the running game and bring back the younger backs along with his veteran experience?

--John Lightle

John: Peterson's style would fit the inside zone/gap power scheme favored by new Broncos' offensive line coach Jeff Davidson. Davidson was the Vikings' offensive line coach from 2011-15. In those five seasons, Peterson rushed for 2,097 yards, 1,266 yards and 1,485 yards in the three seasons he was healthy. He gained less than 76 yards in the other two seasons that were cut short by knee injuries that required surgeries.

From afar, my problem with Peterson is his offense becomes totally dependent on him. And he is only a rusher. He is not much of a receiver or pass protector.

I hate to knock a first-ballot Hall of Famer but the Broncos can't waste all the talent they have at receiver in Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders.

I also think C.J. Anderson, the Broncos' current starting running back, is going to thrive in Davidson's running system. Devontae Booker might, too. Anderson is a much better fit running between the tackles than the outside zone plays the Broncos preferred the past two years under head coach Gary Kubiak and offensive coordinator Rick Dennison.

First off, big fan of your mailbag! I was just wondering if you have heard anything about either of the two young QBs trying to organize their own practices with the receivers to get some extra training in before activities start? I know and Trevor Siemian is injured so not much can probably be done on his part but on the other hand it would certainly be nice to hear Paxton is actively trying to take on that challenge of the leadership role before activities start up. I think he has a real shot to win the job this time around. Thanks!

--Nate Healy

Nate: Romo is finished as a football player. Siemian and Lynch are now secure enough to curry favor with their receivers by organizing their own passing camp. Peyton Manning held four of them at Duke University. Mark Sanchez hosted the Broncos' passing camp last year in Southern California.

Sanders has talked about being the host of the off-campus passing camp this year in the Houston area. It would make sense for him to handle it because, one, he has considerably wherewithal than either Lynch or Siemian. And two, he's far more established as a receiver than Siemian or Lynch are as a quarterback.

What is happening with the Broncos ownership? Is the plan still for one of Pat's kid to take over?

--Lance Vialpando

Lance: Yep, same plan. I think the Pat Bowlen trustees led by chief executive officer Joe Ellis and general counsel Rich Slivka will continue to run the team for another, oh, five to eight more years. Bronco fans shouldn't sweat the arrangement. The Green Bay Packers are a publicly-owned company run by a board of directors with Mark Murphy serving as president and chief executive officer. The Packers seem well-run to me.

The Ellis/Slivka/Elway leadership has been in place since 2011. The Broncos have had a pretty good run since then, winning five AFC West titles, two AFC Championships and one Super Bowl. So long as that leadership group is more dissatisfied with last year's 9-7 than pleased with Super Bowl 50, the Broncos should be in good shape.

Reviewing Broncos interest in Tony Romo

By Mike Klis

9NEWS

April 5, 2017

A month ago, during the NFL Combine, John Elway was interested in Tony Romo, if not completely sold.

But in the hours leading up to the start of NFL free agency, Elway cooled off considerably, multiple sources told 9NEWS.

The Dallas Cowboys are expected to release their veteran quarterback on Tuesday, although that transaction would coincide with reports Romo is retiring as a football player because of health concerns and enticing offers to move directly into broadcasting. Romo reportedly will replace Phil Simms as the lead color commentator for CBS.

Romo's retirement means Trevor Siemian is safe as a Denver Broncos quarterback. Had the Broncos wound up with Romo, there was a chance Siemian would have been traded. The feeling would have been three's a crowd, especially when one of the quarterbacks, Paxton Lynch, was a first-round draft pick last year.

Now, there's no doubt: Siemian and Lynch will compete for the Broncos' starting quarterback position in 2017. The competition will start, if only in intangible ways, Monday when the Broncos report for the start of their offseason program at the team's UHealth Training Center.

Per multiple sources close to the Broncos' situation, the team's plan, as always, was to first wait until the Cowboys released their veteran quarterback. Elway, the Denver Broncos' general manager, was interested in checking out Romo in the days leading up to the start of free agency on March 9.

If Romo were a free agent, Elway was expected to bring Romo in for a visit for not only a full medical check but to also measure how committed the quarterback was to winning a Super Bowl.

It was never certain Elway would have signed Romo. The only certainty was Elway at one point was ready to explore the possibility.

Elway wanted no part of acquiring Romo through trade for two reasons. One, the final three years of the quarterback's contract -- \$14 million in 2017, \$19.5 million in 2018 and \$20.5 million in 2019 -- would have been difficult to restructure within the confines of the Broncos' budget.

The Broncos have roughly \$16.5 million available in cap space and roughly \$7 million of that is set aside to sign their draft picks.

And two, Elway values his draft picks. He did not want to surrender compensation when it wasn't necessary.

But within a day or two of free agency, Elway backed off Romo, again, for two reasons. One, was the information Romo had been considering a move into the NFL broadcast booth. As evidenced by his

conditional pursuit of San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick last year, Elway is only interested in veteran players who are fully committed to the quest of winning a Super Bowl.

Money can't be a factor, as it was with Kaepernick, who refused to take a pay cut. When it became known Romo was considering a TV career, it sent a signal he wasn't all in on playing, much less finishing out his distinguished career with one more solid shot at winning a Super Bowl.

Another reason Elway backed off was closer inspection of Romo's medical history. A source told 9NEWS it wasn't necessarily Romo's injury history that increasingly concerned the Broncos as how quickly those injuries occurred in recent years.

Romo, who turns 37 in 2 ½ weeks, broke his left collarbone twice in three games in 2015. After missing the rest of that season, he returned in 2016 only to suffer a compression fracture in his back during his second preseason series of 2016.

That's pretty much three big hits and three breaks.

By the NFL owners' meetings last week in Phoenix, Elway all but dismissed the possibility of the Broncos pursuing Romo.

"It's not the intent to go that direction," Elway said in an interview with 9NEWS.

The reason Elway once thought about pursuing Romo? The Broncos do not want to waste their terrific defense that was chiefly responsible for winning Super Bowl 50 to cap the 2015 season and still ranked No. 4 in total defense and points allowed last year.

Despite their fine defense last season, the Broncos missed the playoffs as their two young quarterbacks – the first-time playing Siemian and rookie Lynch – combined to go 9-7 last year. Down the stretch, the Broncos scored 10 points or less in three consecutive losses – an offensive skid not endured in Denver since 1966.

Meanwhile, the window on the Denver D's excellence may be closing. Pass-rushing outside linebacker DeMarcus Ware, a former Cowboys star who did become a Bronco three years ago, retired. Star cornerback Aqib Talib is 31 and while he is still playing at an All Pro level, he also missed three games last season with a back injury. And strong safety T.J. Ward is in the final year of his contract.

Had the Broncos added Romo, they would have wanted Lynch to continue to develop as a backup for a year or two. There's only so many backup reps to go around, which is why the team would have reluctantly considered moving Siemian.

The Romo scenario is now moot. Siemian is three months into his recovery from surgery to repair the damaged joint in his left, non-throwing shoulder.

Although he will proceed cautiously through the first six weeks of the team's offseason program, he is expected to fully participate in the organized team activity practices (OTAs) that begin May 23.

It will be during OTAs that Lynch must demonstrate significant improvement if he is to have a legitimate chance at replacing Siemian as the Broncos' starter. Vance Joseph, the Broncos' first-year head coach,

said the quarterback competition won't begin in earnest until training camp and the preseason in late-July and August.

But Lynch must use the offseason to make up ground. Last season, Siemian posted an 8-6 record in the first 14 starts of his career, throwing for 3,401 yards and 18 touchdowns against 10 interceptions. The only reason Lynch got two starts was because Siemian was injured, first with his left shoulder and later with a sprained left foot.

Lynch played well off the bench in his NFL debut at Tampa Bay in week 4, but he was less effective in his two starts.

The only way Romo, Siemian and Lynch will be together for Broncos' games this season is when Romo looks down from above in the broadcast booth alongside Jim Nantz.

John Elway wasn't bluffing about Tony Romo -- he likes the QBs Denver has

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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Don't say John Elway didn't try to tell you ... and everybody else.

As ESPN's Todd Archer and Adam Schefter have reported, Tony Romo is headed to retirement and likely to a television network to be named later. And the most talked-about quarterback for many in the Denver Broncos' offseason becomes what the team consistently said he was all along.

A "non-issue."

Broncos coach Vance Joseph tied a tidy little bow around the topic last week at the league meetings, saying: "Romo, for us ... is a non-issue. We haven't had one meeting about Romo. ... That's a non-issue for us."

Bottom line is the Broncos' interest in pursuing Romo, the Dallas Cowboys' former starter, was vastly overstated since the end of the 2016 season. The feeling inside the Broncos' suburban Denver complex has consistently been that the team had other plans, even as Romo was likely interested in the Broncos on some level.

And why not? The team has an elite defense, led by a secondary with four Pro Bowl players to go with a perennial Defensive Player of the Year candidate, linebacker Von Miller.

The Broncos have also been to the playoffs in five of the last six seasons, won five division titles, been to two Super Bowls and won Super Bowl 50. The "down" year of 2016, the first playoff miss since 2010, still included nine wins.

Since the start of the 2010 season, the Cowboys had won at least nine games just twice. So there was always plenty of "interest" stirred up by those who said they were close to Romo, who said they were locked in on what the quarterback was thinking. Call it the ghost of Peyton Manning.

The Broncos showed when they signed Manning in 2012 that they were willing to dive into the free-agency market to spend big on a veteran quarterback who had a résumé like Manning's. As Elway put it: "I like signing Hall of Famers with chips on their shoulders."

Manning changed the direction of a franchise before he retired after four seasons. And that was, and always will be, a once-in-a-franchise-life opportunity.

This was different. Despite Manning having missed the 2011 season after neck surgery and facing an uncertain future about what his recovery would be, the concerns were greater about Romo's ability to stay healthy in any future football endeavors.

In 2012, the Broncos had already decided to move on from Tim Tebow at quarterback and were trying to make a long-term plan at the position when the Indianapolis Colts turned Manning into the most accomplished free agent to ever arrive on the open market.

And even as folks kept waiting for the punchline or focused on when Elway tagged any discussion about quarterbacks with "right now," Elway and Joseph never really wavered in what they said this offseason. They consistently said they like their potential with Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch on the depth chart at quarterback.

They said those two will battle it out in training camp to be the team's starter. And Joseph even said that one of them "will be No. 1 and the other will be No. 2."

At one point last month, Elway went as far as to say, "I will just tell you this: There have been a lot of things out there that aren't true as far as what is going on with our quarterbacks. That is what happens. Everything gets frothed up there. We just continue to go down our plan."

Elway never rules anything out and at some point he almost certainly did a little what-if in his head about Romo, even as the two posed for a photo at a GOP event earlier this year.

But, in the end, Elway wasn't bluffing, wasn't posturing, wasn't trying to cover his tracks.

And Romo, from the Broncos' perspective, was always somebody else's quarterback because the Broncos believe they have two of their own.

Trevor Siemian, Paxton Lynch will find plenty of pressure with votes of confidence

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

April 5, 2017

This just in -- again: The Denver Broncos like the two quarterbacks they have.

Oh, wait, that's not really an attention-grabber. But with the revelation that Tony Romo is headed to a television booth and not behind center, the quarterbacks the Broncos have said they're happy to have an exclamation point on that vote of confidence they've repeatedly received throughout the offseason.

This shouldn't be a surprise to Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. John Elway, Vance Joseph and Mike McCoy -- the team's chief football decision-maker, head coach and offensive coordinator, respectively -- have consistently and without fail said the Broncos' plan is to let Siemian and Lynch battle it out in training camp before one is named the starter.

That's the message Siemian and Lynch have received from inside the building. It was even the message former coach Gary Kubiak left them with at the end of the 2016 season before he stepped away from coaching.

As Kubiak put it at the Super Bowl earlier this year, just after he had formally left the Broncos: "That's a good problem to have. The strength of the young part of the football team is those two kids. I think they're both going to be starters in this league, but it's like I told them: Only one can be the guy there, so it's going to be interesting to see how they do and compete. I'm going to be watching like everybody else."

So the message to these quarterbacks, from January through February and March and now into April, consistently has been that one of them will start. And even as the usual "Broncos are interested in everybody" swirl kicked up during free agency, the actual decision-makers held the line.

Over and over again, they said they like their situation at quarterback. Over and over again, they said they like what Siemian and Lynch can be for their team.

And from Siemian's and Lynch's perspectives, it's always great to hear your team believes in you and your potential. Still, while Tuesday's news about Romo's future as a television analyst served as confirmation he would be doing something else this season other than playing quarterback for the Broncos, it also should serve as a tidy, high-profile reminder to Siemian and Lynch as well.

Buckle up, lads. The rest of the football world now sees that the Broncos, with an executive in Elway who has made no secret of his constant and fervent desire for his team to always be in the Super Bowl conversation, really did put their chips in front of Siemian and Lynch.

They have a defense that has been, and should continue to be, among the league's best. They have a roster with a healthy slice of youth. They have two wide receivers who have had five and three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons, respectively, and been named to multiple Pro Bowls.

They also have plenty of uncertainty on the offensive line with the potential of as many as three new starters, and center Matt Paradis, easily the unit's best player in 2016, working on a return from surgery on both hips to go with a running game that needs work.

But every bit of this, all of it, now is formally in full public view and in the collective lap of Siemian and Lynch. Like it or not, fellas, you are now officially the story for the Broncos.

You always were, but for a lot of folks who chose to ignore all of the words spoken by Elway, Romo's decision to work in TV makes it all very real.

And when Siemian and Lynch battle it out this summer to be the Broncos' starter, throwing with accuracy, managing the offense and making the correct decisions at the line of scrimmage all will be on the to-do list. But simply handling the pursuit of the job will matter greatly as well, as both will have to show composure and leadership, and need to help give the offense a little of that swagger Joseph has talked so much about.

In fact, the one who shows he's most ready for all that comes before and after each throw likely will get the ball. And Tuesday, Siemian and Lynch just got confirmation of that too.

Dallas emerges as a favorite to host 2018 draft at Cowboys' training facility

By Field Yates

ESPN.com

April 5, 2017

Dallas has emerged as a favorite to host the 2018 NFL draft at the Cowboys' new training facility in Frisco, Texas, league sources told ESPN on Wednesday.

Philadelphia is also in contention, while Kansas City and Green Bay are considered long shots. An official decision on the 2018 draft site is not expected to be made until after this year's draft.

But Dallas is pushing to host the draft and has the infrastructure to get it done at The Star -- the Cowboys' new training facility.

The draft never has been held in Texas. A move there would represent yet another venue for the event after a run from 1965 to 2014 in which the draft was held annually in New York City.

New York City is not in consideration for next year's draft, a source told ESPN, and doesn't sound as if it will be in the mix any time soon.

After two years in Chicago, the draft will return to Philadelphia later this month for the first time since 1961.

Analysis: How can Trevor Siemian improve, win starter's job with Tony Romo scrubbed from picture?

By Troy Renck

KMGH

April 5, 2017

An outcome without Tony Romo is a conclusion I saw coming last week. Not him walking away to pursue a career as a CBS analyst, necessarily, where he lands one of the most prized gigs in the business. What seemed likely, what I could feel coming was Romo not playing for the Broncos. Upon arriving at the NFL owners meetings last week in Phoenix, multiple sources cast Romo's situation as "Texans or retirement."

The Broncos had prepared to move on, growing more comfortable with an open competition between Trevor Siemian and former first-round choice Paxton Lynch. Any interest in Romo was qualified. It required he become a free agent, where a deal with a low base salary, likely in the \$5 million range, could be negotiated. Even then, there were no certainty of the Broncos' interest because of concerns about his back, which he broke on his third play of the preseason a year ago.

Romo will be talking about the Broncos, not playing for them. His fragility made any pursuit risky. Romo competes, scrambles, plays hurt, but there was no guarantee he could stay upright, particularly for a Broncos team with a huge question mark at left tackle.

I have no doubt general manager John Elway and Vance Joseph believe in Siemian and Lynch. The question is this: Do they believe either can lead Denver back to the playoffs and to a championship? This isn't Cleveland. The Broncos don't rebuild. They reboot. They possess a title-caliber defense though a correction against the run is required. Their offense, however, did not carry its weight. Pick a stat -- the 56 three-and-outs, the 40 sacks, the 92.8 yards rushing per game -- and the picture is sobering.

The reaction to the struggle was blunt. With Gary Kubiak stepping away, the Broncos revamped their offensive staff, welcoming back Mike McCoy, adding quarterbacks coach Bill Musgrave, and reintroducing a power blocking scheme with line coach Jeff Davidson.

In various ways, it should help. But it starts at quarterback. And that conversation, even with his healing left shoulder likely to limit him this month, begins with Trevor Siemian. He went 8-6 last season, showing promise, but failing, too, in big moments.

Siemian earned the respect of his teammates by playing through injuries, and working relentlessly. He could digest an entire game plan quickly and execute it in practice. He was voted a midseason captain, a notable achievement for a first-time starter on a veteran team.

Siemian's off-field acumen remains ideal. His on-field performance requires work. What does Siemian need to do better to hold off Lynch in the quarterback derby?

1) Recognize, release

Siemian turned down Harvard to play at Northwestern. He is a smart guy. As such, he knows he must release the ball more quickly and be willing to scramble with intent. In his best performance of the

season against Kansas City at home, Siemian ran with purpose while also keeping his eyes down field. He became layered, dimensional. Then he hurt his foot, and the end of the season became clumsy, including his worst game at Kansas City with a playoff berth hanging in the balance. McCoy's system should benefit Siemian. Siemian thinks so. He is anxious to get started, believing the scheme will be a terrific fit.

2) Protect the ball

Siemian values the football. You have to in the modern NFL, especially with the Broncos' defense. A quarterback has to play to the team strength, straddling that line of managing the game, while also managing to make plays. Last year he turned the ball over 12 times, throwing 10 picks and losing two fumbles. With experience, his pocket presence should improve. It must for the offense to take off.

3) Protect himself

Availability remains a tool. Siemian hurt his right shoulder on a missed tackle in preseason, his left shoulder on a sack at Tampa Bay and his foot against Kansas City. He is not a big guy. Siemian underwent elective surgery to help him regain strength in his shoulder and add upperbody muscle. However, he must learn to take fewer hits. It is a skill, falling before absorbing a violent tackle. Peyton Manning turned it into an art form. Siemian took too many sacks and too many hits.

There were signs last season that Siemian could be a guy capable of leading a team for years. His poise, his grit, his arm strength drew praise after he beat out veteran Mark Sanchez. Yet, there is a qualifier. Siemian had a nice season. A consistent ground game that runs on its own terms would be his best friend. Regardless, for the Broncos to reach their lofty expectations, Siemian must be better

Tony Romo is not walking through the door, leaving the Broncos' season, in many ways, hinging on the accelerated development of a young quarterback.

Report: Tony Romo plans to walk away, pursue broadcast opportunities

By Troy Renck

KMGH

April 5, 2017

Weighing health and age against limited opportunities, Tony Romo will walk away from football to pursue a career in broadcasting.

It ends a three-week Romo-coaster ride that featured odd starts, stops and a soft market, all factors that influenced his decision. Romo, who turns 37 this month, appeared in five games over the past two seasons because of multiple collarbone injuries and a broken back. He lost his starting job to rookie Dak Prescott, and stepped aside in an emotional press conference last season.

Another is on the way as the Cowboys' all-time leader in passing yards and touchdowns prepares to walk away and become the lead NFL analyst with CBS, paired with Jim Nantz, the Sports Business Journal reports. Tuesday, the Cowboys submitted paperwork to the league regarding Romo, designating him a post June 1 release.

"I guess it's time to start dressing up," tweeted Romo, pointing to a suit jacket adorned with the CBS logo.

For the Broncos, this news comes as little shock. They were never trading for Romo. Their interest was predicated on the veteran becoming a free agent, and even then, it was waning because of health concerns. If Romo hit the market, the Broncos could negotiate a contract with a base salary in the \$5 million range with incentives based on games played. Romo had a \$14 million salary this season with Dallas, making a dramatic paycut less than desirable.

Houston, the slight favorite for his services after trading bust Brock Osweiler to Cleveland, was reportedly offering a similarly low base income. Romo's decision allows Dallas to spread out its cap hit. He would count \$10.7 million in 2017 and \$8.9 million in 2018.

"Obviously, Houston was at the top of the list of teams I looked at," Romo said on a conference call.

Last week, the Broncos talked confidently about their belief in starter Trevor Siemian and former first-round pick Paxton Lynch. They are set to vie for the No. 1 job in an open derby beginning this month as offseason workouts begin on April 10.

"I will say this, I am growing more comfortable with our young guys. They are both so different," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "Trevor is a guy that plays the game with great awareness. He's good with the football. He can really throw the football. He throws the ball really well. Paxton is a young guy with great upside. He's tall, he's long and he can make plays with his legs. Playing quarterback in this league is about decision making. That is important. They both have to learn that part of playing the game. If they do that, we're going to win football games. It's going to be a great competition in the spring and the fall, and the best man wins."

Siemian continues on track following January shoulder surgery on his non-throwing left shoulder. He will likely be limited this month, but there appears nothing that would prevent him from being ready as the summer and training camp grow closer. Lynch, who arrived in Denver this week from Orlando to acclimate to the altitude, is looking to take a big step forward in his second season after experiencing a grueling learning curve as a rookie.

For Romo, the Broncos, at times this offseason, appeared to represent a potential finishing spot in a place where he nearly started his career. Former Denver coach Mike Shanahan, using his Eastern Illinois ties, attempted to sign Romo as an undrafted free agent in 2003. In the end, Romo chose Dallas, and after nearly three years on the bench, became an all-time great for the Cowboys. He walks away after multiple injuries and his wife expecting the couple's third child. There is always the possibility he could play again, but that does not appear likely at this time.

The Broncos, in truth, needed resolution. Last year under similar circumstances, the Broncos walked away from Colin Kaepernick the Monday before the draft after he talked directly with general manager John Elway twice. The Broncos kept their options open because of an organizational philosophy to "never rule anything out." But they appeared to be leaning toward their in-house options last week.

"Like we've said, we really feel good about the two young ones that we have. Trevor did a good job for us last year and Paxton was young. The plan is to stay the course there and see what's available in the draft. So we'll go from there. We like both," Elway said last week. "Paxton was a first-rounder last year for a reason. Then Trevor came in and played very well. It will be a great competition between them in the spring."

And it will not involve Romo. He provided clarity on Tuesday, choosing Door No. 3. No Texans, no Broncos, but rather a potential career in broadcasting.

Tony Romo's retirement leaves Denver Broncos in (another) QB dilemma

By Paul Klee

Colorado Springs Gazette

April 5, 2017

When you really think about it, following sports is a silly decision we made in the first place. Divorce must have a higher rate of happy endings.

About the only guarantees in sports are heartbreak and the refs hating your team. Nice options, huh?

Likewise, there was no guarantee that Tony Romo would play for the Broncos or, more accurately, play well for the Broncos. His 6-to-7 TD-to-INT ratio in limited playing time the past two seasons is fair reason to dismiss Romo as a bad idea for a team that drafted a first-round quarterback just last year. If the Broncos already had a quarterback who can win a game when C.J. Anderson inevitably gets hurt, Von Miller and the defense have a rare off day, and it seems nothing is going right, I would have bought into the anti-Romo crowd.

But they don't. They have two question marks at quarterback.

Like we were saying, no guarantees.

It's relative, but I'm the weirdo who has more faith in Trevor Siemian to become that guy than I do in Paxton Lynch to become that guy, but one season, when they were 24 and 22 years old, respectively, is such an unfair sample size that we're all guessing about both guys. Romo, though? He's been that guy.

Romo's transition Tuesday - retiring from the playing field to enter the CBS booth - makes all the sense in the world. The guy's made \$127 million and change in 14 years as a professional athlete, and that's without endorsements. When he has stored away enough cash to make certain another Romo never has to work for a paycheck again, why on earth would you return to a game that revolves around pounding the quarterback into the ground?

But it's a bummer for the Broncos. There's no sensible way around that. By adding Romo - and there's no guarantee they even wanted him, but their M.O. in the John Elway era suggests he's exactly what they wanted - the trouble spots would have been less troublesome. As any Peyton Manning supporter would tell you, a veteran quarterback can improve everything from the running game and offensive line to the quality of the commercials in the long breaks between snaps.

Romo was great on the DirecTV ads. He'll be great on CBS. Besides, he can't be worse than Phil Simms.

Losing out on Romo - if it can be called losing out, since the Broncos repeatedly expressed their intrigue and affinity for Siemian and Lynch, even while that seems like a stretch after one of the worst offensive seasons in club history - is hardly a death knell on the 2017 season.

Weird things happen in the NFL, case in point being a fourth-round quarterback named Dak leading the Cowboys to 13 wins and booting a potential Hall of Famer right out of Jerry World.

There was no guarantee the Broncos would get the Romo who averaged 31 touchdowns against 12 interceptions over the four seasons that preceded his bum injury luck, or the Romo who got hurt and lost his starting gig in Dallas to a rookie QB drafted 109 slots behind Lynch.

With Romo, however, the Broncos would have gone from a team that doesn't look better than the one that just missed the playoffs to the second-best team in the AFC. The Patriots appear hellbent on surrounding Handsome Tom with every Pro Bowler available, plus that Pro Bowler's uncle and brother, so New England is still the team to beat until proven otherwise.

Yes, it could be recency bias at work, but my lasting image of Tony Romo was his 2013 performance against the Broncos inside that massive, totally Texas stadium in Arlington. At one point there was a country music concert blaring at one end of the arena, the Cowboys cheerleaders doing their thing on the other end, and the most entertaining game of the past four seasons smack dab in the middle. Romo threw for 506 yards and five touchdowns. Manning had 414 and four, but his ordering Knowshon Moreno to fall down short of the goal line (to prevent Romo from getting the ball back) ranks among the most undersold Manning moments of his fantastic era in Denver. The Broncos won, 51-48. It was ridiculous fun and more evidence that a veteran quarterback's value is more than his passing numbers.

Was Romo a perfect quarterback? Of course not. Was he better than Denver's options in 2017? No guarantees, but I'd like the Broncos with him next season more than without.

Tony Romo's retirement is good news for Denver Broncos

By David Ramsey
Colorado Springs Gazette
April 5, 2017

The Tony Romo mania that swept through Colorado never made sense.

Romo is battered, damned with an extremely iffy reconstructed clavicle.

Romo is done. ESPN, AP and just about everyone else is reporting Romo, 37, is retiring.

Good for him. He won't further risk injury, and creaky, agonizing old age, as he sits and talks in a broadcast booth.

And good for the Broncos. Instead of handing the offense to an exhausted, battered quarterback, the franchise, and fans, can now concentrate on healthy, youthful and gifted Paxton Lynch.

Is Lynch a genuine NFL starter? Is Lynch the right Broncos quarterback for 2017, and far beyond? We don't know yet, but it's time to find out if he was worthy of his first-round selection. Adding Romo would have only delayed discovering the crucial answers to all the Lynch questions.

Why did Romo mania sweep through Bronco-land?

Peyton Manning is the reason. In 2012, a seemingly broken-down quarterback rode in from Indiana and revived a fallen franchise. Manning, even after four neck surgeries, remained the NFL's premier offensive force. He restored the Broncos to elite status.

In the four seasons before Manning's arrival in Colorado, the Broncos lost 36 games. During the four seasons Manning wore an orange No. 18, the Broncos lost 14 only games, won the AFC West four straight times and traveled to two Super Bowls. Manning, creaky and limping, willed the Broncos to a Super Bowl victory over the Panthers before finally saying goodbye.

The probability was remote for a repeat of this highly unlikely, and highly entertaining, football tale. Broken-down quarterbacks are almost never miraculously restored to their days of greatness, or, in Romo's case, sort-of-near-greatness. Many Bronco fans got lost in the Romo dream.

It's better to remain in reality. Trevor Siemian is too fragile, his frame too slight, to survive as an NFL starter. He's an ideal backup. Steady. Accurate. Experienced. But he'll never crack the list of the NFL's top 15 quarterbacks. He lacks the arm strength and nerve to keep climbing.

Lynch could be the man to lead the Broncos back to the playoffs. The defense remains mighty and sinister and properly violent. The offense only needs to climb into the top half of the NFL for the Broncos to return to Super Bowl contention.

Lynch is blessed with a powerful right arm. He's a swashbuckler in the mold of John Elway. Swashbuckling, as Elway once showed Colorado, has its ups and downs. Lots of thrills. Lots of interceptions.

The best thing about Lynch?

He's 23, heading into his prime years.

Romo, 37, is done. Good for him. Good for the Broncos.

Amazon lands deal to stream NFL 'Thursday Night Football' games

By Staff

USA Today

April 5, 2017

The NFL has a new streaming host for part of its Thursday Night Football package.

Amazon said in a statement late Tuesday it had won the streaming rights, taking a mantle previously held by Twitter.

The \$50 million, one-year deal will allow Amazon to stream the 10 games broadcast by NBC and CBS next season, according to the The Wall Street Journal and The Sports Business Journal.

The games will be available exclusively to Amazon Prime subscribers, per The Sports Business Journal. Amazon beat out Twitter, Facebook and YouTube for the rights, according to the report.

Twitter paid \$10 million last season to provide live streaming services for the same number of games, a bid to gain more users.

The NFL is expected to announce its full schedule for the 2017 season, including Thursday night games, later in April before the draft.

Report: Elway only wanted Romo if he could bring title

By Chris Wesseling

NFL.com

April 5, 2017

At this time last month, Denver was viewed as the prime landing spot for Tony Romo.

As much confidence as general manager John Elway and new coach Vance Joseph have professed in young quarterbacks Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch, the Broncos would have been interested in a veteran of Romo's stature under the right conditions.

It was no secret that one of the those conditions was that the Cowboys release Romo rather than holding out for a trade.

If Elway was going to graduate from piqued interest to sold on the idea, though, he needed to know that Romo was harboring a single-minded obsession with winning a Super Bowl before retirement.

"One of the conditions was that Romo was all-in on the pursuit of a Super Bowl to kind of cap his career," Mike Klis of KUSA-TV in Denver told NFL Network's Will Selva on Tuesday.

Elway wanted assurances that other considerations such as money, geography, health and television opportunities were secondary to embracing the chance to win in Denver.

Would Romo be comfortable closing out of his career without the Cowboys star on his uniform? Was the brittle quarterback still on the fence about playing football?

When word leaked last month that Romo was seriously weighing television offers, Elway had his answer.

"I think Elway wasn't sure how committed Tony Romo was to that all-consuming quest that he wanted from his quarterback," Klis added. "I think that had a big part of why Elway backed off of Tony Romo a few weeks ago."

Looking back at the past two months in the Romo saga, it's hard to escape the irony. Interested teams such as the Broncos and Texans needed to see commitment from Romo, who would have been tempted to continue his football career had either of those hopeful contenders shown their own commitment by trading for him.

Tony Romo to replace Phil Simms in broadcast booth

By Kevin Patra

NFL.com

April 5, 2017

Tony Romo is leaping out of the frying pan and into the fire.

The newly retired quarterback is leaving the Dallas Cowboys to join CBS, CBS Sports chairman Sean McManus announced Tuesday.

"Tony has been one of the NFL's biggest stars for the past decade, and we are thrilled to welcome him to CBS Sports," McManus said in a statement released by the network. "He will bring the same passion, enthusiasm and knowledge that he displayed on the field to the broadcast booth. He brings a fresh and insightful perspective to our viewers having just stepped off the field. We know Tony will quickly develop into a terrific analyst, and alongside Jim Nantz, will become a must-listen for fans each week."

Romo will pair with longtime friend Jim Nantz as the station's No. 1 NFL duo, along with sideline reporter Tracy Wolfson. Romo will replace Phil Simms as CBS's top analyst.

"When you think about the NFL, two of the most iconic brands are the Dallas Cowboys and CBS Sports," Romo said in the statement. "Going from one legendary team to another as I begin the next phase of my career is a dream come true. I have always known that once my playing career was over I wanted to become a broadcaster. I am ecstatic for the opportunity to work with Jim as I learn the craft and convey to fans my passion for this great game."

The Sports Business Journal first reported the development.

Romo has been linked to CBS for the past few weeks as retirement seemed more and more likely. He tweeted out a photo of himself in a CBS jacket.

Jumping right into the TV booth could come with a rocky transition. In-game analysis is an especially difficult conversion right out of the box with little to no practice. It's certainly more difficult than first becoming a ponderous studio analyst.

FOX analyst and voice of "Madden NFL 17" Charles Davis grew into the gig, starting at low-level jobs. He recently told Around The NFL colleague Marc Sessler those reps away from the bright lights were invaluable.

"Now, the one thing you have to be careful of is, you're starting at a super-high level," Davis said of big-name players starting out in high-profile gigs. "So your mistakes are really glaring. When you start like me when you're a nobody, and you beat the bushes and you call high school games and Pop Warner games and Little League baseball and women's volleyball and the whole thing. You're doing that on a regional basis and you're making mistakes and it's not really the same glare. I don't have (Sports Illustrated media reporter) Richard Deitsch climbing all over me when I'm calling a Division II women's basketball game, but it gives me a chance to get my reps without that. If you're at the highest level, you get dinged right from the start."

Romo won't just be starting a new, high-pressure gig that has crushed the likes of Boomer Esiason in the past and led to endless criticism of Simms. Romo could also take on the challenge of becoming a golf broadcaster down the line.

We could even see Romo, a scratch golfer, at this weekend's Masters in Augusta, NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport noted. The timing of the Masters could explain why the retirement news dropped Tuesday.

It might not be smooth sailing out of the gate in 2017, but Romo has the popularity, intelligence and charisma to be a TV star among NFL analysts.

What's next for Broncos, Texans?

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
April 5, 2017

With quarterback Tony Romo apparently out of play for the foreseeable future, the Broncos and Texans needs to move on with their alternative quarterback plans.

For the Broncos, the plan apparently is to stand pat with Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch competing for the starting job. A veteran presence also is possible (currently, there are no others on the roster), but a big move to bring in someone like Jay Cutler or Colin Kaepernick seems unlikely.

For the Texans, it's Tom Savage and Brandon Freaking Weeden. Last week in Arizona, coach Bill O'Brien didn't slam the door on Colin Kaepernick. (Jay Cutler and Bill O'Brien would be an entertaining sitcom that gets canceled after four episodes because one of the main characters has strangled the other.) O'Brien also addressed the difficulty of plugging in a new quarterback after the offseason program; if a move is going to be made, then, it could be made sooner than later.

Either way, the closure (for now) of the Romo situation gives the teams that were considering him clarity. And now they can continue down the unclear path of staffing the most important position on the field.

Amazon lands Thursday Night Football streaming package

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
April 5, 2017

Ta-ta, Twitter.

The one-year Thursday Night Football streaming arrangement between the NFL and the 140-character-or-less social-media platform has been deleted. Amazon now steps in, at a considerable markup.

Via multiple reports, Amazon has secured the 10-game package for \$50 million. Twitter paid \$10 million in 2016.

The games will be available only to Amazon Prime subscribers, the \$99-per-year service that provides a wide range of shopping benefits and streaming video.

Via John Ourand of SportsBusiness Journal, Amazon wanted to get the deal done now in order to sell advertising around it. While this may not mean that Amazon will be replacing the advertising that comes from the NBC and CBS broadcasts, Amazon can do plenty of creative things through its platform, including but not limited to the installation of buttons that allow the products advertised during the game to be bought immediately.

The Amazon experiment will be far more intriguing than the one-year Twitter dalliance. In the next wave of TV rights deals, Amazon could emerge as one of the league's major partners, given its ability to deliver unique (and thus more effective) advertising based on the shopping habits of the user.

In particular, this would allow Amazon to identify and market to people with significant disposable income, allowing Amazon to sell advertising to companies with high-priced products that most people wouldn't be able to afford.