

Q&A: DeMarcus Ware shares more about NFL career, top Super Bowl memory

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

April 8, 2017

In one of his first extensive interviews since he announced his retirement from the NFL, DeMarcus Ware sat down with The Denver Post on Thursday and opened up about his bout with injuries, his reasons for stepping away and some of his favorite moments in Denver.

But during the 90-minute conversation, Ware shared much more about his his 12-year NFL career, from his 138.5 career sacks, to his time with Von Miller and Shane Ray, to the top highlight of his career that left him tears.

What do your 138.5 career sacks mean to you now?

"I look at all these sacks and think about how I got there. It wasn't from always being the best or being the most heavily recruited or the guy that was the most-sought-after. I went back home last year and I went to the apartment I stayed in and it was No. 56. The person I tried to always model my play after was Lawrence Taylor, but I never thought about 56 that was on that apartment door. You start thinking about those small things and how they progress.

"I look at this right here (the list of quarterbacks he sacked) and look at all the accolades and I feel like it started as a child, wanting to have my own identity instead of just being a football player. I never thought about being a football player because everybody in my family was a football player. I wanted to play baseball. I wanted to run track. I blew my arm out in baseball so I started playing football. It was happenstance. I started playing football and I go to Troy and I'm a 180-pound wide receiver and they stick me at defensive end.

"It's just really amazing to think about where you start and how you finish your career."

What are you most proud of in your NFL career?

"I'm most proud of all the lives that I touched. That's what it's about. The guys in the locker room, from Derek Wolfe, to Von Miller, to Aqib Talib, to T.J. Ward, even from the Dallas Cowboys — Jason Witten, Tony Romo, all the guys that I played with — effecting some type of change in their lives. Because that's everlasting. The relationships."

Is Von ready to be the next leader of the Broncos?

"Yeah, I think he is. He's matured so much from his play, his mentality and his knack for football. I know he's ready. And Shane, same way. The way that he's really stepped up big time."

What do you think you'll miss most about playing?

"I think the locker room. There's nothing like the locker room because you got guys coming in with UGGs, Christian Louboutins, suits, sweats — everyone is different, but we all come together for the same thing: to win championships. That camaraderie is one thing I know I'm going to miss, just being able to reach out to guys and talk about football."

Would you consider coaching in the future?

"I don't know. Right now, I'm spending a lot of time with family and I'm enjoying that time. Coaching is a high demand, but I know I love to teach. I love to mentor to guys and that's one thing coaches do well."

In the span of a month, the Cowboys' all-time sack leader and all-time passing leader retired. Have you talked to Tony Romo since he signed with CBS?

"I haven't talked to him. He's been so busy. I know we'll be talking. I look forward to that conversation. I'll go back to Dallas and I'll see him and just chat it up. Especially now, we can just be open about everything."

You still see the players here in Denver?

"I do. Demaryius (Thomas), Von, Wolfe. Guys still hit me up or I'll hit them up. I hit Demaryius up because we always used to talk about his weight. He's a big dude. Not like fat, but a big wide receiver. So I text him and am like, 'Hey are you 255 right now?' He's like, 'I hate you D-Ware. You're only 230.' So we just goof around. I'm always going to have those relationships."

Do you think it'll be weird for you when training camp opens?

"It's going to be weird because my training now is just for health. I train everyday. I still train two hours a day, still jumping over stuff and everything. I can still walk around and be jacked (laughs).

"But it's going to feel really weird when the games start and I'll want to talk to Shane or Von. Like, 'Von, this is what you need to do,' or, 'You guys know that on 12-personnel, this is what's coming.' Because I used to prepare that way. So now, I'm gonna get me some hot wings, get me some pizza and some popcorn with my son and daughter and watch."

I bet it's nice spending more time with your kids.

"I'm doing more stuff with them and they're enjoying it. I had them on Facetime and I said, 'Daddy retired!' My daughter said, 'So that means you can come to my lunchtime at school?' I said, 'Yep, I'll come to your lunchtime.' I had just told her I retired and she said, 'I have this event coming up. It's Daddy Doughnut Day on Friday. You can bring doughnuts to my class.' I'm like, 'I'll be there.'"

Do you think they really grasp what you did or what it means now that you're retired?

"Nah. I don't think they're old enough to understand, but they know now that they're getting a lot more time and having a lot more fun. Instead of coming home on the weekends — because if I had to train, I'd stay here Monday through Thursday and then I'd go home through Sunday and return to Denver on Monday. That was my training regimen. Now I can stay there for five days and come back here. They're enjoying that a lot more now."

Your son plays football?

"He plays flag football and soccer. And my daughter, she's in competition cheer and volleyball."

Is she the one they throw in the air?

"No, she's the holder. She's strong. I went last weekend to a cheer competition and I had to be there at like 7 a.m. and I didn't know they were screaming and yelling by 8. They're coming out of the tunnel and doing everything, and I'm like, 'Are you freaking kidding me?' And my daughter, the night before, she was like, 'Dad I have a present for you. I want you to wear this.' She pulls out a shirt that says "Cheer

Dad" on the front. I was like, 'You want me to wear that?' She said, 'Yes. I want you to wear it to cheer.' This is what I have to look forward to."

Do you want your son to go on to play tackle football?

"I want him to learn football before he puts pads on. He wants to play and I'll let him play. But usually kids will be scared to get hit, so learn the game so you're confident and when you get hit, you're smarter about it."

We talked about this before, on who showed you the ropes in the NFL and you mentioned Greg Ellis, your former Cowboys teammate who mentored you when you entered the league. Was he the one who showed you the value of mentoring, or has this been your nature all along?

"It's always been my nature and that's why I always gravitated toward guys who are giving and want to see someone else do better. Greg he told me all the time: 'D-Ware, I'm not fast. The thing is, I'm a technician and if you learn technique, you can learn to be fast, you can learn to be quick, you can learn to overcome your inefficiencies and become a better player. But if you're very good AND you have the technique, then you're unstoppable. Because now you're a thinking machine.'"

Do you think about the Hall of Fame?

"I don't. I'll think about it when the time comes. Because I'm not the judge of that. I've done everything I can do."

If given the chance is there anything in your career you'd do differently now?

"I gave it everything that I had, so from a football standpoint, I feel like there was nothing else I could do. But from a mentor standpoint, I feel like I should have done more, not just in the locker room, but have like a group and bring all the guys together and talk about life and delve even deeper so you can change guys off the field."

What was it like for you last year as you were recovering from multiple injuries but also seeing Shane really come into his own on the field.

"Like I did what I needed to do. From when he first came in as a young pup, I could see the change in him. In life, change is going to happen and you have to be able to accept it and change with it. I saw how he progressed so much — started listening and put his ego to the side."

If you had a year or two left on your contract with the Broncos, would you have come back?

"I would. Yeah, I would have come back because I would've felt like I had something to prove. That's everything, because I've always been the underdog."

How bad was your back injury over the last two years or so?

"The last year it was really hard. Really, really hard. I messed it up like the fifth game of the Super Bowl season. After that Raiders game (Oct. 11, 2015), it was never the same. But I was smart enough to be able to play with it. My 70 percent was good enough. I wasn't 100 percent. I felt it every once in a while, but it took a long time to recover afterward. On Sunday, I could go out there and play, but it would take like five days of recovery to get back there."

Were the back problems you dealt with here in Denver the same ones you dealt with in Dallas?

"Every year, I've always had some type of back problems. My whole career."

Is that just your body or is that because of the position (DE/OLB)?

“The position. Pass-rushers always have it. Which one doesn’t? The main guys, all of them have it. You’re twisting and bending in an unorthodox position with a 6-foot-6, 350-pound lineman on your back.”

Go back to 2014, that stretch where you were released by Dallas and then you sign with Denver. Kind of a whirlwind. What was that experience like?

“It was really emotional, because you start with a team and play with them for so long (10 years) and then all of a sudden ... It’s a business. It wasn’t because I couldn’t play anymore. It was because of the salary cap. I had the opportunity to pick up and start over, which is hard, but I accept change. I also knew what Elway was trying to do by bringing T.J. in, bringing Talib in, bringing me in, and I thought to myself, ‘I get to pass rush with Von, too.’ I thought about how much I could help Von to where we could be the best tandem to ever play in the NFL while I’m here.

“So it was hard, but I accepted and, like I said, once I do that, I don’t turn back.”

What did it feel like to finally win a Super Bowl?

“I got a story for you. So when we beat the Patriots in the AFC championship that year, I was already thinking about the next game. I walk to the locker room and everyone was outside with the confetti and everything. Pat or Seth (Patrick Smyth, the Broncos’ vice president of public relations, and Seth Medvin, Broncos strategic communications manager) came and got me out of the locker room and said, ‘DeMarcus, they’re all out there celebrating.’ So I went outside and was like, ‘This is cool.’ But it didn’t really sink in. I said, ‘I get to go to the Super Bowl and prove a point. I still have something I need to prove.’

“That was the message I gave the guys all week. I told them, ‘They put me in this Super Bowl and we are NOT losing. We’re here now.’

“Once the clock wound down and we won the Super Bowl, it was unreal, but I didn’t quite feel it. I’m a mellow dude. I don’t get too high or too low. I saw the confetti, I saw Peyton (Manning), I saw Von, I had my family there.

“But it really hit me when I walked into the locker room. I’m not a big celebration person, so I walked into the locker room — I was the first person in the locker room — and ‘Flip’ (Chris Valenti, Broncos equipment manager) put the trophy in my locker. It’s sitting there and nobody was in there, so I picked it up and that’s when I got really emotional. This is what I worked for. This is why I lead. All the blood, sweat and tears. And then Peyton comes in and it’s just me and Peyton. Everyone else is out there celebrating. We look at each other and we hugged each other with the trophy in between.”

That’s the highest highlight for you?

“That’s the highest. Walking in at the quietest time in the locker room and seeing that trophy in my locker. That was ... I can’t even describe the feeling.”

Will you get a copy of the Lombardi Trophy?

“I will. I’ll put it in the house.”

Strange saga leaves Denver Broncos with same quarterback situation

By Woody Paige

KMGH

April 8, 2017

The Romo Saga is over.

The Broncos lost out on Tony Romo a second time.

It's generally forgotten that the Broncos tried to sign the QB in 2003.

In the 2002 season the Broncos' starting quarterback was Brian Griese, who had become John Elway's successor in 1999. But Griese was injury- and accident-prone. He missed 13 games in four seasons because of a frail body, and he also tripped over his dog on a staircase, causing another injury.

Griese's record as a starter was 27-24, but he had mammoth cleats to fill. After back-to-back Super Bowl victories with Elway, the Broncos didn't win a division with Griese, and only made the playoffs once as a wild card, without Griese playing in the postseason game in Baltimore.

The Broncos were searching for another starter in 2003 – and landed former Cardinals' quarter Jake Plummer, who was a free agent, in March. Griese was finished here. Coach Mike Shanahan couldn't find any trade takers, so he released Griese in early June.

Shanahan was looking for a young backup to develop – veterans Gus Frerotte and Steve Beuerlein had filled their replacement role – and liked a kid from his alma mater. Tony Romo was undrafted out of Eastern Illinois, where Shanahan had once been the starter as a freshman before rupturing a lung in the spring game. The lung was removed, and Shanahan's playing career was over, and his coaching career (while still in school) began.

Romo was invited to the 2003 combine as a fill-in quarterback, but didn't impress most NFL teams.

Shanahan offered him a sizable free agent bonus (\$20,000) and seemed in position to sign him. However, another Eastern Illinois graduate, new Cowboys assistant head coach and quarterback coach Sean Peyton, also liked Romo – and had tried in vain to persuade the Cowboys to draft him in the fifth round. However, Peyton was permitted to offer Romo a \$10,000 bonus to sign.

Romo took half the cash to sign with Dallas.

In a story for espn.com a couple of years ago, Jean-Jacques Taylor quoted Shanahan and Romo.

"When you offer a free agent \$20,000 it means you're pretty interested because you don't just throw that kind of money around to free agents," Shanahan said. "They (Cowboys) offered him \$10,000, but they had a history of keeping three quarterbacks, and we had a history of keeping two, and I think that's why he chose the Cowboys."

Romo said the money "was a non-issue for me. I never make certain decisions in life based on money. I probably would not have gone anywhere where there was a young great player in position, just because eventually you want to grow into being that guy."

The Broncos had just signed Plummer, still a young quarterback on the rise. He would get the Broncos to a 13-3 record, a division title and the AFC Championship in 2005

The Cowboys had three quarterbacks, including potential starter Quincy Carter (previously a second-round pick). Romo must have thought he could "eventually" beat out the Cowboys contenders. He did. Carter became a drug casualty in 2004. The others fell away, and head coach Bill Parcells brought in veteran Vinny Testaverde, and Drew Henson. A year later, Drew Bledsoe came in and became the starter. Finally, early in 2006, Romo became the starter.

In 2006 the Broncos traded up in the first round and drafted Jay Cutler. Plummer started the first 11 games, then was benched by Shanahan, who turned to the rookie.

As we know, Cutler never succeeded in Denver and cost Shanahan his job. Plummer never played again after his announcing his retirement at season's end (despite being traded to Tampa Bay).

Romo was the Cowboys' starter for 10 years until he suffered serious injuries in 2015 and '16.

Dak Prescott, who was the Broncos' second favorite to draft last season, took over, and Romo's career in Dallas concluded.

Funny how things work out.

The naked-and-afraid Cutler can't smell a job these days, and Romo turned down a chance to play for the Broncos (or the Texans), choosing to become a broadcaster.

He might have become the fourth Broncos' quarterback to reach the Super Bowl. He could have become the second former Cowboys' quarterback to play in the Super Bowl for Denver. Dallas discard Craig Morton faced his old team in XII, and lost badly.

Romo could have become a Hall of Famer if he had won a Super Bowl with the Broncos. Instead, he likely will fall short of the honor.

And Phil Simms, who beat the Broncos in the Super Bowl with the Giants, is replaced by Romo on the No. 1 CBS team with Jim Nantz. Oddly enough, most Denver fanatics might be more excited that Simms is out because of Romo than they would have been if Romo came to Denver.

Elway would have made a run at Romo if he had been released, and the Broncos' exec VP could have talked to him and got a feel for his attitude and his health, and his willingness to take a severe cut in salary with an incentive-laden contract.

Instead, Paxton Lynch is in Denver instead of Dallas (which wanted him last year in the draft), and Prescott, who could have been in Denver, is in Dallas, and Romo is in the broadcasting booth (and could be the analyst for the Broncos-Cowboys game).

And Trevor Siemian will be the Broncos' starting quarterback again.

It was a strange saga.

49ers' Tramaine Brock cut after arrest for suspicion of felony domestic violence

By A.J. Perez

USA Today

April 8, 2017

San Francisco 49ers cornerback Tramaine Brock was released by the team Friday, one day after being arrested on suspicion of felony domestic violence in Northern California.

In a one-sentence release to USA TODAY Sports and other outlets, the 49ers announced they had cut Brock.

Santa Clara police officers in who responded to a report of domestic violence around 9:35 p.m. PT Thursday arrived to find “visible facial injuries” to a woman Brock is dating. He remained jailed Friday afternoon, according to online inmate records.

The felony charge carries a maximum of four years in prison.

Brock has started 31 of the 49ers’ 32 games over the last two seasons and has played his entire seven-season NFL career with the team.

Report: Richard Sherman trade talks were Sherman's idea

By Shalise Manza Young

Yahoo

April 8, 2017

Now that Tony Romo's release from the Cowboys and move to the CBS booth has played out, one of the NFL offseason stories that still has legs is a potential divorce between Richard Sherman and the Seattle Seahawks.

On Wednesday, Seahawks general manager John Schneider told a Seattle radio station that news reports of the team shopping the two-time All-Pro cornerback "are real," but that still didn't answer one big question: Why? Why would the Seahawks be looking to trade one of the game's best cornerbacks, who is still in his prime?

We may now have an answer.

ESPN's Adam Schefter, on a Friday edition of "Sportscenter," said that the idea of a split came from Sherman, not the Seahawks.

"It has been my understanding all along that Richard Sherman was the one who initiated this. He was the one that wanted to be traded initially. The Seahawks were obliging him and his request," Schefter said.

If that's true, Sherman and his camp have been publicly saying something different.

Last week, he was on Seattle radio and said he "wouldn't want to leave this city and my guys," and earlier this week, Sherman's brother told NFL Network's Ian Rapoport something similar.

2017 NFL Mock Draft: Run on pass-rushers in first round, Fournette goes in top five

By Jared Dubin
CBSSports.com
April 8, 2017

The 2017 NFL Draft creeps ever closer every day. We're now less than three weeks away from the Cleveland Browns officially being on the clock. There are twists and turns throughout the draft process every year, of course, but in the end, the cream usually rises to the top. This year, the draft is deeper along the defensive line than it is anywhere else, and that's true both in the middle to late rounds as well as the Day 1 talent. This week's mock reflects that belief.

Scroll on down for Mock Draft 8.0.

1. Cleveland Browns

Myles Garrett, DE/OLB, Texas A&M: There's no such thing as a sure thing, but it seems like something pretty unexpected would have to happen for Garrett not to go No. 1 at this point.

2. San Francisco 49ers

Solomon Thomas, DE, Stanford: If Garrett wasn't an option in this draft, Thomas might be in the mix for the No. 1 overall selection. The 49ers scoop him up at No. 2, adding another top talent to their developing defensive line.

3. Chicago Bears

Marshon Lattimore, CB, Ohio State: Chicago's defense is more than one player away, but adding elite talent to the back end is a smart play. Lattimore is the best corner in this draft, and would immediately elevate the Bears' secondary in Year 1.

4. Jacksonville Jaguars

Leonard Fournette, RB, LSU: Jacksonville has devoted the past few offseasons to revamping its defense. It's about time to add another element to the offense, with Fournette providing both power and speed out of the backfield to relieve Blake Bortles of responsibility.

5. Tennessee Titans (from L.A. Rams)

Jamal Adams, SS, LSU: The Titans need help in the defensive backfield more than anywhere else. Adams is maybe the best back-end playmaker in this draft, and well worth a top-five selection.

6. New York Jets

Deshaun Watson, QB, Clemson: The Jets have several holes other than quarterback, of course, but a team that hasn't had an answer at the position this long can't afford to pass on a potentially special talent like Watson.

7. Los Angeles Chargers

Malik Hooker, FS, Ohio State: The bones of a really good defense are already in place in L.A. Adding Hooker to the back of the secondary would be the finishing touch.

8. Carolina Panthers

Derek Barnett, DE, Tennessee: If there's one thing Dave Gettleman has shown during his time as Carolina's GM, it's that he subscribes to the maxim that you can never have too many pass-rushers. Barnett racked up 33 sacks in three seasons at Tennessee and added 52 tackles for loss as well. He can slide in as a rotational rusher immediately and take on a bigger role as he learns from the guys ahead of him.

9. Cincinnati Bengals

Reuben Foster, LB, Alabama: The Bengals have several strong linebackers, but we also know they don't necessarily have a long-term answer in the middle. Kevin Minter was only signed to a one-year deal, after all. Foster can be the answer beyond that.

10. Buffalo Bills

Corey Davis, WR, Western Michigan: Buffalo saw 167 targets, 90 catches, 1,233 receiving yards, and eight touchdowns walk out the door in free agency. The Bills need to replace that production, and drafting Davis here would be a great step in that direction.

11. New Orleans Saints

Marlon Humphrey, CB, Alabama: The Saints have been dreadful against the pass for years and badly need to add secondary talent. Humphrey has crazy speed, good size at 6-0, 197 pounds, and the ability to work in press coverage because of his stout frame.

12. Cleveland Browns (from Philadelphia)

O.J. Howard, TE, Alabama: The Browns added an elite talent at No. 1 in Myles Garrett. At No. 12, they do the same by snagging Howard, who is not your average tight end. He has the flexibility to hurt defenses from all over the formation.

13. Arizona Cardinals

Mitchell Trubisky, QB, North Carolina: With Trubisky still on the board, the Cardinals take an athletic passer who can learn behind Carson Palmer and then add another element that Bruce Arians' offense hasn't had when he's ready to take over.

14. Philadelphia Eagles (from Minnesota)

Christian McCaffrey, RB, Stanford: The Eagles spent a bunch of their free-agent money making their offense more Carson Wentz-friendly. Adding a versatile weapon like McCaffrey amounts to doubling down on that effort. There are few things more important than putting your franchise quarterback in position to succeed.

15. Indianapolis Colts

Dalvin Cook, RB, Florida State: Speaking of putting your quarterback in position to succeed, it's about time the Colts gave Andrew Luck a dynamic runner in the backfield to relieve some of the pressure of carrying the entire offense.

16. Baltimore Ravens

Mike Williams, WR, Clemson: The Ravens need to add a long-term weapon to help take this offense to the next level. Williams has the size-speed-hands-body control combination to be a No. 1 receiver for years.

17. Washington Redskins

Jonathan Allen, DL, Alabama: Washington needs to figure out its run defense, badly. Allen has the ability to play all over the defensive front, a plus in Washington's flexible defensive scheme.

18. Tennessee Titans

John Ross, WR, Washington: Ross might have blazing speed, but he's not just a speedster. He's a complete wideout. The Titans have a power running game and Delanie Walker working the middle of the field, but don't have an outside complement to those elements just yet.

19. Tampa Bay Buccaneers

David Njoku, TE, Miami (Fla.): The Bucs added DeSean Jackson to give them a deep speed complement to Mike Evans' size-and-power game. Adding Njoku to the mix would make their passing attack even more dangerous.

20. Denver Broncos

Ryan Ramczyk, OT, Wisconsin: We know that Paxton Lynch or Trevor Siemian will be the quarterback in Denver. Whoever wins the job needs help along the offensive front. Ramczyk can step in and start from Day 1.

21. Detroit Lions

Taco Charlton, DE, Michigan: The Lions have a huge need along the defensive front, as they badly need a complement to Ziggy Ansah in their pass rush. Charlton showed at Michigan that he has the ability to consistently make plays in the backfield.

22. Miami Dolphins

Forrest Lamp, G, Western Kentucky: With Laremy Tunsil expected to kick outside to tackle this season, the Dolphins can slide Lamp into the middle of the offensive line and make a strength even better.

23. New York Giants

Cam Robinson, OT, Alabama: The Giants' offensive line was a major problem last season. Though there might be some temptation to find an answer to life after Eli Manning, that doesn't have to be done in the first round. Upgrading the front is a more pressing need.

24. Oakland Raiders

Zach Cunningham, LB, Vanderbilt: The Raiders could use a player like Cunningham, who flies all over the field to make plays in the run game. They ranked just 18th in run defense last season and don't have long-term linebacker answers beyond Bruce Irvin.

25. Houston Texans

Patrick Mahomes, QB, Texas Tech: The Texans will not have Tony Romo under center next season. He will be calling games for CBS instead. Bill O'Brien is a fan of Tom Savage, but there's too much unknown here for the Texans not to add another QB.

26. Seattle Seahawks

Garett Bolles, OT, Utah: Bolles lands in Seattle and kicks the recently signed Luke Joeckel inside to guard, helping Seattle fill two openings with one pick.

27. Kansas City Chiefs

Haason Reddick, LB, Temple: Reddick would be a picture-perfect fit in Kansas City, given his flexibility to play the run and the pass from all over the defensive formation. The Chiefs could use help both inside and outside at the linebacker spot, with some of their top options getting up there in age.

28. Dallas Cowboys

Charles Harris, DE, Missouri: The Cowboys have to add talent both in the defensive backfield and along the defensive line. Harris could be next in the line of Missouri pass-rushers to hit in the NFL if Rod Marinelli gets his hands on him.

29. Green Bay Packers

T.J. Watt, OLB, Wisconsin: Watt doesn't have to move too far to find his first professional home, as the Packers add an athletic pass-rusher to a defense that started last season hot before slowing down the stretch due to injuries.

30. Pittsburgh Steelers

Jabrill Peppers, S, Michigan: Peppers is still more athlete than football player at this point, but the bet here is that the Steelers can mold the former into the latter. They've done it before.

31. Atlanta Falcons

Carl Lawson, DE, Auburn: Lawson would prove an excellent complement to NFL sack leader Vic Beasley.

32. New Orleans Saints (from New England)

Takkarist McKinley, OLB, UCLA: The Saints snagged Marlon Humphrey early, and now add an athletic pass-rusher to continue remaking their defense.

Does Siemian have upper hand on Paxton Lynch?

By Chris Wesseling

NFL.com

April 8, 2017

Now that Tony Romo is out of the picture, the Denver Broncos' quarterback job is up for grabs between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch.

Although coach Vance Joseph has preached an open competition between the incumbent starter and the 2016 first-round draft pick, Siemian remains the favorite to be under center in Week 1.

After speaking with Joseph, NFL Network's James Palmer told Omar Ruiz of Up to the Minute Live that Siemian has the "upper hand" entering the offseason program.

Siemian might have been widely viewed as a pet project of former coach Gary Kubiak, but the new coach has been impressed after taking an in-depth look at the 2016 game film.

Despite subpar pass protection and an inconsistent ground attack, the Broncos coaching staff believes "he played very well last season," Palmer added. "They believe he played at a higher level than many assume."

Joseph went a step further, maintaining that Siemian didn't get the credit he deserved in league circles.

The high praise didn't end there, either. Joseph also raved about Siemian's intelligence and intangibles.

"Players want to play for him," Joseph told Palmer. "They want to win for him."

Joseph has taken a different view of the raw but talented Lynch, pointing to leadership, studying and understanding the offensive system as areas in need of improvement.

If Lynch does make significant strides in those areas, he can turn this into a legitimate battle by training camp.

From the tone of Joseph's comments, though, it certainly doesn't appear that Siemian has lost any ground since December. Palmer reported at the time that the former seventh-round pick was regarded inside Broncos headquarters as the likely starter for the next couple of seasons.

For the first time, Vegas casinos will take bets on the NFL draft

By Michael David Smith
Pro Football Talk
April 8, 2017

Bettors in Las Vegas casinos will be able to place bets on the NFL draft for the first time this year.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board granted approval for betting on the draft this week. Bets on the draft have never been allowed in Nevada before, although some online sports books based overseas have offered NFL draft bets.

Bets on which player will go first overall or on any individual team's selection will not be allowed, as it would be too easy for someone with inside information about a team's plans to win. But Nevada sports books will offer prop bets.

Those bets will include how many quarterbacks are taken in the first round, whether more offensive or defensive players are taken in the first round, when the first kicker will be taken, the number of players taken from a particular college, which conference has the most players taken, the number of players taken at a certain position, and so on.

Nevada sports books have long made a huge portion of their proceeds from betting on NFL games, and now they're looking to make money in the offseason as well.

Broncos, Arrow team up to power Colorado robotics team to international competition

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
April 8, 2017

For 4388 Ridgebotics, a Fort Collins-based competitive robotics team with championship dreams, a sponsor was their only hope. The trip to Houston for the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Championship seemed to be financially out of reach — that is, until the Denver Broncos and Arrow Electronics stepped in.

The Broncos and Arrow had announced they would support a Colorado FIRST robotics team's trip to the international championship, which hosts teams from 39 countries and takes place April 19-23. After qualifying for the championship, Ridgebotics also took home the sponsorship.

Ridgebotics got the opportunity for the sponsorship after qualifying for the international championship in the Colorado regional that took place at the University of Denver on March 24.

"Before the sponsorship, we weren't sure if we were going to go, considering the funding that we had at that time," Ridgebotics' captain Carissa Vos said. "So we were all looking forward to when we heard we could apply for this and potentially get it. ... And once we found out we got it, we were super excited. We've been awaiting this day ever since."

For many members of the team who are also Broncos fans, the funding isn't even the best part. The best part is being able to represent the Broncos.

"I can't even describe it," Vos said. "Once we found out, I was like, 'Oh my gosh, we're going to have the Broncos' logo on the back of our shirts and ... we're going to have the Broncos and Arrow [as] part of our name when they announce our team a couple times throughout the competition.' And we have the jerseys and some pants and hats — that's just super cool, too."

As part of the sponsorship, the Broncos invited Ridgebotics to visit UCHHealth Training Center, where they have the young engineers an opportunity to get an inside look Friday at how the team operates. The Ridgebotics members also received shirts, hats and a pair of Broncos jerseys representing the team name before they were to leave for the four-day competition.

The students were pleasantly surprised the Broncos had a sponsorship for a high-school robotics team, as those on the Ridgebotics team knew they would need some help to get to Houston.

"When it was announced at [FIRST Robotics Competition] Kickoff, that was just really cool to see," Vos said. "And I was like, 'All right, we've got to go for that.'"

In Houston, they will compete in the FIRST Robotics Competition, where teams of high-school students and mentors over six weeks compete in a difficult field game with robots they built over a six-week period.

Kapri Bibbs, Bennie Fowler III sign exclusive-rights tenders

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
April 8, 2017

Running back Kapri Bibbs and wide receiver Bennie Fowler III signed their exclusive-rights tenders Thursday, leaving just three Broncos exclusive-rights free agents who have yet to sign their tenders.

Center Matt Paradis, long snapper Casey Kreiter and wide receiver Jordan Taylor signed their tenders on Monday.

Bibbs, a three-year veteran, saw the first regular-season carries of his career in 2016, and he gained an increased role in the wake of C.J. Anderson's season-ending injury in October. As a reserve running back, Bibbs recorded 129 rushing yards on 29 carries and two receptions for 75 yards, including a dazzling 69-yard catch-and-run touchdown on a screen pass against Oakland. His season ended four weeks later when he suffered a season-ending high-ankle sprain against the Jaguars.

Fowler missed the first two games of the season with an elbow injury suffered in training camp, but he played in 13 of the remaining 14 games. He totaled 11 receptions, 145 receiving yards and two touchdowns in 2016.

The three Broncos yet yet to sign their tenders are inside linebacker Zaire Anderson, outside linebacker Shaquil Barrett and center James Ferentz.

Five under-the-radar draft inside linebackers you should know

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
April 8, 2017

One area in which the Broncos' personnel department has succeeded in recent years has been its ability to find 3-4 inside linebackers from the late rounds, undrafted pool and other teams' discard piles.

In the case of starter Brandon Marshall, the Broncos leaned on their original scouting report from the 2012 draft when they decided to sign him to their practice squad a year later; as it turned out, they found a gem. The eventual pairing of Marshall with 2012 sixth-round pick Danny Trevathan gave the Broncos one of the best 3-4 inside-linebacking tandems in the game during the defense's dominant 2015 campaign.

If the Broncos look to bolster their linebacking corps late in the draft, there are plenty of possibilities, including this quintet of under-the-radar prospects:

ALEX ANZALONE, FLORIDA
HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 241
ARM LENGTH: 32 1/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 1/8 inches
40: 4.62 seconds - BENCH: 16 reps
SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.25 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 6.88 seconds

Despite limited first-team experience at Florida (just 10 career starts), Anzalone displayed potential as an instinctive run stopper during Senior Bowl practices. He consistently read plays as they developed, stuffing multiple carries in succession during a full-pad practice. Although he has more work to do in pass coverage, he has the quickness and size to develop into a solid defender against tight ends.

Health is the primary issue for Anzalone. He dealt with shoulder injuries early in his career and missed five games last fall because of a broken left arm. He completed his recovery in time to take part in the Senior Bowl on Jan. 28.

JAYON BROWN, UCLA
HEIGHT: 6-0 - WEIGHT: 231
ARM LENGTH: 31 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 3/4 inches
40: 4.67 seconds - BENCH: 17 reps
SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.51 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.20 seconds

A product of perennial high-school powerhouse Long Beach Poly in California, Brown broke into UCLA's starting lineup as a junior in 2015 and demonstrated good range, instincts and open-field tackling ability. The Bruins also used him in the box, where he was a playmaker, posting seven tackles for losses and 2.5 sacks as a senior.

But Brown's calling card is in pass coverage. Just one potential 3-4 inside linebacker in this year's class averaged more passes defended per game last season than Brown -- Oklahoma's Jordan Evans. Brown broke up 0.75 passes per game last year and added three interceptions.

Brown also improved on his 40-yard dash time at his Pro Day, slicing 0.11 seconds off his Combine time of 4.67.

JORDAN EVANS, OKLAHOMA

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 232

ARM LENGTH: 31 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 3/4 inches

40: 4.60 seconds - BENCH: 9 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.35 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.09 seconds

Evans' timing numbers don't jump off the page, and the three-year starter didn't even receive an invitation to the Scouting Combine. But he has a knack for being around the football, and his work in pass coverage gives him a good shot to find a long-term role in the NFL.

During his Sooners career, Evans averaged 0.47 passes defended per game -- the most of any linebacker in this year's draft class. That average included a pace of 0.92 passes defended per game last season, which is also the best among this year's linebackers.

CONNOR HARRIS, LINDENWOOD

HEIGHT: 5-11 - WEIGHT: 242

ARM LENGTH: 30 1/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 3/8 inches

40: 4.73 seconds - BENCH: 18 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.31 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.13 seconds

As you would expect for a draftable prospect from a Division II school, Harris put up massive numbers, averaging 13.2 tackles per game. He started each of the 48 games in which he played at Lindenwood, working at middle linebacker.

Harris is one of the better pure tacklers among linebackers in this year's class. When he has the chance to wrap up the ballcarrier, he rarely fails to finish the job. At 242 pounds, he has the size to take on guards that reach the second level.

His work at the Senior Bowl revealed some areas in which he must improve, particularly in pursuit. Early in the week's practices, he often got caught up in heavy traffic in the box and struggled to keep up with the play. He improved and adjusted to the speed of the action as the week progressed, showing potential for growth once he gets into an NFL camp.

MARQUEL LEE, WAKE FOREST

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 240

ARM LENGTH: 32 1/2 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 1/2 inches

40: 4.78 seconds - BENCH: 25 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.33 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.28 seconds

At the minimum, Lee should be a solid two-down linebacker and special-teams contributor. He logged 15.5 sacks and 42 tackles for losses in his three seasons as a starter. That gave him an average of 1.55

plays for a loss of yardage per game in that span, one of the best rates for any Division I linebacker over those seasons.

Lee posted a pedestrian 40-yard dash time of 4.78 seconds at Wake Forest's Pro Day, which could lead to questions about whether he can handle coverage responsibilities in the NFL. He made few plays on the ball in pass coverage at Wake Forest, breaking up just two passes and recording no interceptions in three years as a starter.