

As Broncos' offseason workouts begin, Vance Joseph makes message to team clear

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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The seats started to fill a little before 8 a.m. There was Von Miller, back from his whirlwind European tour. There was Brandon Marshall, back from his trip to Africa. There was Shane Ray, sporting a fresh haircut for a new season.

Inside the Broncos' media room at their Englewood headquarters Monday morning, the team strolled in to finally hear from their new leader, Vance Joseph, more than three months after he was hired as head coach.

His message in his first address to the team: There is no time to waste.

"It was a friendly reminder of how much time we have to get ready," Joseph said. "Because it's not much time. For us it's 38 days to get ready for the fall season."

Thirty-eight days. Thirty-eight days of on-field preparation before training camp begins. Thirty-eight days to begin to install and revamp what has been a lackluster offense.

But the start to find the Broncos' starting quarterback begins now.

Trevor Siemian has been cleared to participate fully in the offseason program after having surgery on his left (non-throwing shoulder) in January. Siemian, who surprised last year to win the starting job, spent the majority of this offseason rehabilitating at the Broncos' facility with the hope of being ready when team workouts resumed.

Paxton Lynch, a second-year player who made two starts as a rookie, has not-so-subtly been told to show more — as a leader, as a decision-maker, as a pro quarterback. Lynch spent much of the offseason back in his home state of Florida working with quarterbacks coach Charlie Taaffe, a former offensive coordinator who helped Lynch ahead of the 2016 draft.

Despite the differences in experience and skill-level of his two quarterbacks, Joseph is adamant that the competition begins with a clean slate.

"It's open," Joseph said. "Fifty-fifty. It's an open competition. We got these two young guys who have bright futures. It's open and will go down to the wire, I hope. Right now, it's a new system that is going in with (offensive coordinator) Mike McCoy. It's a fair, open competition and the best guy will play."

The Broncos' offense has the pieces, or at least enough of them, to cause damage if used effectively, Joseph believes. In Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders, Denver has a pair of Pro Bowl, 1,000-yard receivers. In running back C.J. Anderson, the Broncos will get their starter back after a knee injury cost him much of the 2016 season. In Ron Leary and Menelik Watson, offseason additions at guard and

tackle, respectively, the Broncos have more than 600 pounds of aggression protecting their quarterback and creating holes for their backs, if all goes according to plan.

“Running the football is the ultimate way of putting the defense at risk,” Joseph said. “If the running game is intact, with those two receivers, it’s almost impossible to stop the offense.”

Retooling the offense to accommodate quarterbacks that differ in size and strengths is a challenge, but one McCoy has done for years in tailoring his system to his players.

The structure of the offense will not change. But nuances will, often on a weekly basis.

“That will come into play more with the game-planning stuff that starts in the fall,” Joseph said. “But right now the overall structure won’t change. It’s Mike’s basic offense, basic route tree, basic run game.”

Done are the player evaluations. The current cast knows the expectations and the general plan. The focus in free agency was to add players to get bigger and meaner in the trenches, which Joseph hopes they’ve accomplished in adding Leary and Watson to the offensive line, and veterans Domata Peko and Zach Kerr to the defensive line.

Still to come is the NFL draft later this month and the rise of the Broncos’ next offensive leader. The search isn’t just for talent, but a certain mentality. Joseph’s refrain of adding “more juice” means finding a type of a player with a specific mindset.

“That’s not by accident that you find guys like that,” Joseph said. “It’s my purpose.”

Joseph could find that and more in the April 27-29 draft, while filling the team’s biggest holes. The most glaring one is on the offensive line, in finding another starting tackle. The others are scattered throughout for depth on both lines, for offensive playmakers “who can take the ball from the line of scrimmage and go the distance,” for depth in the secondary, and for key contributors on special teams.

“You want guys that are tough and fully engaged and love to win,” Joseph said. “Defensively, that secondary — all four guys are always fully engaged. Very competitive, tough guys. That’s what you want on offense. You want guys who hate to lose and every day come to work to win. From that perspective, offensively we’ve got some guys who fit that role, but I want more.”

Trevor Siemian “a full-go” for Broncos OTAs after recovering from shoulder surgery

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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Quarterback Trevor Siemian was cleared to participate fully after undergoing surgery on his left (non-throwing shoulder) in January. The hope then was he would be ready by the start of organized team activities (OTAs), even though extensive damage was found in his shoulder. Siemian suffered a AC joint sprain last October and missed one start as a result.

“Trevor’s full-go,” head coach Vance Joseph said. “He’s been cleared to be a full participant in the offseason program.”

Running back C.J. Anderson was placed on injured reserve last season with a meniscus injury and Joseph said the team plans to “take it slow” with Anderson’s conditioning this offseason.

“It’s the offseason. I have no concerns,” Joseph said. “Phase 1 is designed to get the players into football condition. I have no concern with C.J. as far as getting in shape. The first game is not until the fall. We’ve got plenty of time to get him into shape. We’re going to take it slow and make sure he is really ready to go for OTAs. That’s the most important date for C.J. That’s when the full practice starts.”

Center Matt Paradis continues to recover from his two hip surgeries. Joseph said the goal is for Paradis to be ready by July.

Broncos' 2017 preseason opponents announced as another QB competition looms

By Nicki Jhabvala
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For the 31 other NFL teams, perhaps the usual line of thinking holds: The preseason doesn't count. The games don't count, the scores don't matter and the stats don't either.

For the Broncos, though, their four exhibition games carry tremendous weight as they host another open quarterback competition between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch.

The Broncos announced their preseason opponents Monday, with games at Chicago, at San Francisco and at home against Green Bay and Arizona, with only the date set being the Arizona game August 31. Finalized dates and times will be announced when the full NFL schedule is released later this month.

The preseason will start at the same place it did last year, at Chicago's Soldier Field, some 15 miles south of Siemian's alma mater Northwestern. Then it will head to San Francisco, to take on the John Lynch- and Kyle Shanahan-led 49ers. Week 3, when starters typically receive the most playing time of the four games, will be against Green Bay. And the final tuneup before the regular season will be against the Broncos' familiar preseason foe, Arizona.

Prior to the Broncos' first preseason game last year in Chicago, quarterbacks Mark Sanchez and Siemian were co-No. 1 with Lynch at No. 2. Sanchez started the victory over the Bears, throwing a touchdown and an interception in the first quarter before Siemian took over in the second and completed seven of 12 passes for 88 yards. His debut was brief but significant; Siemian's turnover-less performance moved him ahead in the race and Sanchez never made up the ground.

Although Siemian's tryout began long before he took the field in August, his preseason play confirmed the belief of former coach Gary Kubiak: Siemian was his starter, and was named as such three weeks after his debut.

This year Lynch returns with two games of starting experience and high expectations from the Broncos' new coaching staff. The criteria to win the job isn't written in ink, but Lynch's to-do list has been spelled out in recent weeks.

"Paxton was obviously a first-round pick for a reason," Broncos head coach Vance Joseph said Monday. "He's a big guy with a big arm and is very athletic. I think playing that position is about decision-making. If he does those things better, he has a chance to compete to be our starting quarterback."

His chance, along with Siemian's, begins in the Windy City.

Broncos' 2017 Preseason Schedule

Todd Davis, three other Broncos sign free-agent tenders

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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Four Broncos players signed their free-agent tenders Monday, the first day of the team's offseason program.

Starting inside linebacker Todd Davis was among them. He signed his second-round restricted free-agent tender worth about \$2.746 million for one year. Davis was elevated to a starting position last season in the wake of Danny Trevathan's exit and led the team with 97 tackles.

His reward? A nice raise from his \$600,000 salary. Linebackers Zaire Anderson (\$540,000) and Shaquil Barrett (\$615,000), and backup center James Ferentz (\$615,000) all signed their exclusive rights tenders.

Anderson, who was signed by the Broncos as a college free agent out of Nebraska in 2015, played in all 16 games last season after spending the entirety of his rookie season on the practice squad. He had seven tackles and seven special-teams stops a year ago.

Barrett morphed from practice player in 2014 to becoming a key piece of Denver's deep edge-rushing group, spelling Von Miller last season. The undrafted linebacker out of Colorado State has played 32 regular-season games over the past two seasons, recording 72 tackles, seven sacks, six pass-breakups and five forced fumbles, as well as a blocked kick and 14 stops on special teams. With the loss of DeMarcus Ware to retirement, Barrett's role figures to increase this season.

Ferentz was claimed off waivers from Houston in 2014, but played only four offensive snaps and eight special-teams plays last season. This year, however, his presence could be vital with starting center Matt Paradis coming off two hip surgeries in the offseason.

Broncos host Utah tackle Sam Tevi on pre-draft visit

By Nicki Jhabvala

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The Broncos' hunt for help on the offensive line continues. The team hosted former Utah right tackle Sam Tevi on a pre-draft visit Monday, according to an NFL source.

Tevi (6-foot-5, 311 pounds) previously met with the Saints and visited with 25 offensive line coaches combined at Utah's Pro Day and individual workouts, according to The New Orleans Times-Picayune.

Although Garrett Bolles, the Utes' former left tackle, has garnered more attention as a projected first-round pick in the 2017 draft, Tevi could be considered in middle or latter rounds as a developmental player.

Tevi started his college career at defensive tackle, playing 11 games and recording nine tackles and a sack in 2013 before switching to the offensive line at his coaches' request. In 2015, he assumed the starting job at left tackle and then, for his senior season, he accepted another switch to the right side.

Tevi logged 780 offensive snaps last year and, per Pro Football Focus, graded out as the team's second-best offensive player in its bowl game win over Indiana. For NFL teams in need of depth on the line, he boasts experience on both sides and could be used as a "swing" tackle.

The Broncos have made bolstering their front lines a priority this offseason. They are still searching for a second starting tackle, though, after losing Russell Okung to free agency.

"In football terms, the right tackle is more of a run blocker, a bigger guy. The left tackle is more of a dancer. It's got to be equal. I want two good players," head coach Vance Joseph said recently. "I don't want one guy to be a heavy-footed run blocker and one guy to be a soft basketball player. I want guys who can do both."

Despite a relatively weak tackle class in this year's draft, Denver could target a lineman in the first round, where it holds the No. 20 pick. Bolles, Wisconsin's Ryan Ramczyk and Alabama's Cam Robinson, whom the Broncos are also hosting on a pre-draft visit, are atop most analysts lists as the top tackles in the draft. Denver has 10 picks in the April 27-29 draft.

2017 NFL draft's running backs: rankings, sleepers and Broncos search for "more juice"

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

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Editor's note: Third of a seven-part series breaking down position groups previewing the NFL draft April 27-29. Today: running backs.

A former defensive coordinator turned Broncos head coach would seemingly know how to game plan against Denver's offense. For Vance Joseph, the answer was simple yet concerning.

Joseph would scheme to shut down wide receivers Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders then force the Broncos to beat them elsewhere. Other teams see that, too.

"If the running game was obviously intact, that would be tough – to stop the running game and having enough coverage for those two receivers," Joseph explained.

The C.J. Anderson and Devontae Booker combination in the backfield showed promise last year, but offensive line struggles and injuries combined to turning the running game into a dud. With two young quarterbacks, finishing 27th in rushing yards (92.8 per game) like Denver did in 2016 likely isn't going to cut it this year if the Broncos hope to make the playoffs.

With Booker and Anderson, the Broncos have two backs who can get tough yards inside. What is needed is an explosive offensive weapon.

"Every good offense needs a guy who can take the ball from the (line of scrimmage) and go the distance with it," Joseph said. "Having more juice on offense is a must in my opinion."

There are several backs in this year's draft who can take it to the house, including Denver native Christian McCaffrey. Here's a breakdown of how I see the running backs. (Disclaimer: Grades are based on-field analysis with notes on off-the-field issues.)

1. Joe Mixon, Oklahoma, 6-1, 226 pounds; Grade: Top 15, on the field... Undrafted off-the-field... Likely second round pick

Strengths: Incredible patience, cut-back ability. Has some Le'Veon Bell in his game. Workhorse back with power and speed. Seems to always get positive yards. Great hands, lateral movement and balance. Shows versatility as a slot receiver and returner.

Negatives: The much-displayed video of him punching a woman in July 2014 led to multiple teams taking him off their draft board. Average vision, sometimes too patient

2. Leonard Fournette, LSU, 6-foot, 228 pounds; Grade: Top 20

Strengths: Amazing mix of speed, power and size. Will run somebody over and look for another body. A monster when he gets his steam going. Has a lot of Todd Gurley in his game. Physical, offers solid pass protection. Nasty spin move. North-south runner.

Negatives: Doesn't have a lot of shake or elite athleticism. Goes down too many times to arm tackles. Has battled chronic ankle injuries. Needs a team to shape a power offense around him. Not a great receiver.

3. Dalvin Cook, Florida State, 5-10, 210 pounds; Grade: First round, but may fall into second round because of negatives

Strengths: Home run burst. Good vision, balance and cutback ability. Has some power, will break through arm tackles. Great at finding the edge and taking it up-field. Good hands, versatility to play slot receiver. Follows blockers well.

Negatives: Fumbles are a big issue, can it be fixed? There are concerns about his shoulder injuries dating back to high school. Multiple arrests, not convictions, as recent as 2015. Didn't do much pass protection. Likes outside running better than inside.

4. Christian McCaffrey, Stanford, 5-11, 214 pounds; Grade: First round

Strengths: Do-it-all versatile weapon as a receiver, returner and runner. Runs good routes and has good hands out of slot. Effective versus eight-man boxes in college. Can make defenders look silly in the open field. Can fight through arm tackles.

Negatives: Doesn't have the size or power to be an everydown back. His success may be dependent on having a creative offensive coordinator. Often stopped after solid contact and will stop his feet at inopportune times. Ran behind powerful offensive line at Stanford.

5. Alvin Kamara, Tennessee, 5-10, 214 pounds; Grade: Early second round

Strengths: Explosive open-field playmaker. Extraordinary ratio of touchdowns to touches as he split time in college. Versatility of slot receiver, receiver and returner. Has size, power to be a lead back. Bounces off would-be tacklers.

Negatives: Vision isn't great, will run into blockers/defenders at times. Has some injury history and durability questions. Why couldn't he start over Jalen Hurd at Tennessee?

Next up: D'onta Foreman, Texas; Curtis Samuel, Ohio State

Mid-round starter: Kareem Hunt, Toledo – He doesn't have great size, speed or power, but he does everything well. He'll be a steal and a key contributor if he falls to the right team on Day 3.

Late-round sleeper: Tarik Cohen, North Carolina A&T – As a 5-6 back from a small school, Cohen has two strikes already. His speed, elusiveness and hands remind some of Darren Sproles.

Broncos host Packers in preseason

By Mike Klis

9News

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There is not much the Denver Broncos can complain about with their 2017 preseason schedule.

It starts with trips to Chicago and San Francisco. There are worse NFL destinations in August.

Then for preseason game No. 3, when the first-stringers play the most as a final regular-season tune-up, the Broncos will host arguably the league's best draw in Aaron Rodgers and the Green Bay Packers.

The Broncos stay home to determine the final four or five spots for their 53-man roster to play the Arizona Cardinals, as usual, for the final preseason game.

All four preseason games will be televised on 9News/KTVD-Channel 20.

A closer look at the Broncos' preseason schedule:

Game, Date ... Opponent Place

1. Aug. 10-13 ... Chicago Bears ... Soldier Field

May the quarterback competition begin against former coach John Fox. The Broncos opened their preseason in Chicago last year, too. Mark Sanchez looked great on the opening touchdown drive, then threw a pick. Trevor Siemian played well and rookie Paxton Lynch got his first test in the second half.

It will be Siemian vs. Lynch this time.

2. Aug. 17-20 San Francisco 49ers ... Levi's Stadium

Site of the Broncos' Super Bowl 50 championship, Denver GM John Elway will get to check in on the progress of old friends John Lynch and Kyle Shanahan.

3. Aug. 24-27 ... Green Bay Packers ... Denver

Rodgers is coming off a tremendous year when the Pack made it to the NFL's Final Four.

4. Aug. 31 Arizona Cardinals Denver

Some well-known players may not make it on Vance Joseph's first 53-man roster. By finishing up the preseason with two consecutive home games, the NFL schedule makers could be sending a hint the Broncos will open the regular season on the road for the first time since 2010.

Vance Joseph: Siemian full go for 50-50 quarterback battle with Lynch

By Mike Klis

9News

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Nothing like an open competition to accelerate the healing process.

Trevor Siemian had extensive surgery on his left, non-throwing shoulder on January 5. Three months later, the Broncos' starting quarterback from last year wants no more downtime.

"Trevor's full go, guys," Broncos head coach Vance Joseph said Monday. "He's been cleared to be a full participant in the offseason program so he's full go, he's ready to go. No issues."

Monday was the start of the Broncos' offseason program. For the first time as head coach, Joseph addressed his players during an 8 a.m. team meeting.

Joseph's message: There's no time to waste. Only 38 days of workouts, meetings and practices to get ready for training camp. Siemian apparently didn't need to be told.

Siemian may be the incumbent starting quarterback, but he's not the presumed starter. He and Paxton Lynch will battle it out.

"It is open guys, 50-50," Joseph said. "It's an open competition. We've got these two young guys who have bright futures. It's open. It's going to go down to the wire, I hope."

Gentlemen, start your throwing -- Broncos QB competition begins

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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Trevor Siemian is healthy, Paxton Lynch has spent some time getting reacclimated to the altitude. So, from this point forward, the competition to be the starting quarterback for the Denver Broncos is on.

Coach Vance Joseph opened the offseason program Monday with an early-morning team meeting as the Broncos players checked off a variety of administrative items, including their physicals with the medical staff. Tuesday will mark the first of two weeks' worth of conditioning-only workouts.

But Joseph also opened the quarterback competition that will fill the local conversation from now until Joseph picks one of the two young quarterbacks to start the regular-season opener. Joseph was asked Monday if Siemian enters the offseason program as the starter since he started 14 games last season after winning the competition in training camp.

"It is open -- (it's) 50-50," Joseph said Monday. "It's an open competition. We have these two young guys that have bright futures. It's open and it's going to go down to the wire, I hope. Right now, it's a new system that is going into place here with (offensive coordinator) Mike McCoy. It's a fair and open competition. The best guy will play."

Joseph has consistently said the next few weeks, through the team's work in April, May and June, would be about learning the offense for the two quarterbacks. When training camp arrives in July, the two will battle for the starting job, much like last season when Gary Kubiak selected Siemian as the team's starter just before the start of the regular season.

Siemian won a training camp battle with Mark Sanchez and Lynch last summer.

Joseph also said Monday Siemian has been "medically cleared" to participate in the team's offseason program after surgery earlier this year on his left (non-throwing) shoulder. Recently Joseph said he expected Siemian to be cleared at some point early on in the team's offseason program, so Monday's declaration means Siemian is likely slightly ahead of schedule.

Siemian has been at the Broncos complex throughout the offseason going through his injury rehab. Lynch, who was the team's first-round pick in last April's draft, recently returned to Colorado to continue his workouts at Denver's altitude to be ready for the start of the team's program this week.

Joseph, who has talked about Siemian's quality work last season as well as his anticipation with the ball, was asked Monday what Lynch would have to specifically show to win the job.

"Paxton was obviously a first-round pick for a reason," Joseph said. "He's a big guy with a big arm and is very athletic. I think playing that position is about decision-making. If he does those things better, he has a chance to compete to be our starting quarterback."

Siemian started 14 games last season, missing one with a left shoulder injury and one with a left foot injury, as he finished with 3,401 yards passing to go with 18 touchdowns and 10 interceptions. The Broncos went 8-6 in those games.

Lynch started two games -- a loss to the Atlanta Falcons and a win over the Jacksonville Jaguars -- as he finished with 497 yards passing to go with two touchdowns and one interception.

Broncos get to the 'football part', opening offseason workouts

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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Vance Joseph opened his first offseason program as Denver Broncos coach Monday with a team meeting and player physicals.

While the Broncos players will do conditioning work only in the opening two weeks of their program, coaches can interact with players on football matters for the first time. Joseph has joked since being hired he couldn't wait to get "to the football part." The Broncos started, at least to some degree, the football part Monday.

"I'm excited, the players seemed excited this morning, we had a good turnout," Joseph said. "It's time to go to work."

Joseph opened the day with a team meeting, and the players in attendance underwent their physicals. Because Joseph is a new coach, the Broncos can hold an extra minicamp, which will be in the last week of April, just before the draft.

Joseph's overriding message was to make the most of the time in the building.

"It was a friendly reminder of how much time [it takes] to get ready," Joseph said. "It's not much time. It's, for us, 38 days, to get ready for the fall, the season. There's no time to waste."

Joseph, who repeatedly has said the Broncos' quarterback job is wide open, reaffirmed the competition between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch will be conducted in training camp, while the next few weeks and months will be used to teach the two quarterbacks the new offense. Joseph added Monday that Siemian, who had surgery on his left (non-throwing) shoulder just after the season, has been cleared to participate fully in the offseason program.

The players will have their first workout with the strength and conditioning staff Tuesday.

"Trevor's full go, guys," Joseph said. "He's been cleared to be a full participant in the offseason program. He's ready to go. No issues."

Joseph also said the goal continues to be to have running back C.J. Anderson, who had season-ending surgery before Halloween last year, ready for the next phase of the offseason program, which begins next month.

"I have no concerns with C.J.," Joseph said. "We've got plenty of time to get him in shape. Obviously with C.J., we're going to take it slow, make sure he's really ready to go for OTAs."

2017 Denver Broncos preseason includes visit from Packers, Aaron Rodgers

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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The NFL released the preseason schedule on Monday. Dates and times haven't been announced, but here's a first look at the opponents for the Denver Broncos:

Week 1 (Aug. 10-13) at Chicago Bears

The first game of this year's training camp quarterback competition will be in the same stadium where the Broncos opened the 2016 preseason. Last year Mark Sanchez got the start, went 10-of-13 for 99 yards and a touchdown, and a few weeks later had seen Trevor Siemian win the job.

Week 2 (Aug. 17-20) at San Francisco 49ers

If Siemian gets the start in the preseason opener, Paxton Lynch likely would get the start here. Some legacy at work in this one as 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan, son of former Broncos coach Mike Shanahan, faces the team he grew up watching. Kyle Shanahan interviewed for the Broncos' job this offseason before Vance Joseph was hired.

Week 3 (Aug. 24-27) vs. Green Bay Packers

Usually the third game of the preseason is the one when fans get to see the starters the most. If that's the case, then perhaps the Broncos' faithful will get to see a little more than a cameo of Aaron Rodgers against the Denver defense. Rodgers was 6-of-9 for 60 yards and a touchdown against the 49ers in the Packers' third preseason game last year.

Week 4 (Aug. 31) vs. Arizona Cardinals

If it's the final week of the preseason, it must be the Cardinals. In what will be a festival of rookies, this game will be the 12th time in the last 14 years the Broncos will close out the preseason against Arizona.

Football Outsiders' early 2017 NFL projections

By Aaron Schatz

ESPN.com

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Things change rapidly in the NFL. A team that was bad one season is sometimes much better the next season or vice versa. But dramatic year-to-year changes actually happen less often now than they used to. From 1999 to 2008, a dozen different teams turned things around and went 11-5 or better after a season in which they were 5-11 or worse. Since 2009, only three teams have done the same thing.

The decline of parity is reflected in this first round of Football Outsiders' 2017 team projections. Eleven of the 12 teams that would make the playoffs based on mean projections are teams that made the playoffs in one of the past two seasons. Nevertheless, there will be some new blood in contention, and in particular, a new city. Both the Los Angeles Rams and the Los Angeles Chargers rank seventh in their respective conferences in this initial forecast, meaning there's a good chance one of the two teams will give Los Angeles playoff football for the first time since 1993.

Our projection system starts with Football Outsiders' Defense-adjusted Value Over Average (DVOA) ratings for the past three seasons, although last year's ratings end up about six times as important as either 2014 or 2015. (You'll find last year's final ratings [here](#).) Offensive projections also incorporate a separate projection for the starting quarterback done independent of the team. After that, we account for general regression trends and incorporate a number of other variables that measure everything from turnover ratios to personnel and coaching changes on both sides of the ball.

Each team has a forecasted record but also, for those of you wanting more detail, a more exact "mean projected wins" number. We also list strength of schedule based on average projected DVOA of next season's 16 opponents, ranked from the hardest (Dallas is No. 1) to the easiest (New England).

When considering these numbers, remember that this is not the final, official Football Outsiders forecast for 2017. Numbers will change over the next few months because of personnel moves, including the NFL draft. We also might work on improvements to our forecast system, and that would alter our 2017 projections.

Also note that stat projections naturally consider a wide range of possibilities. There's a lot of randomness in the NFL: Player development is difficult to predict; injuries have a huge impact; and even the better team on an individual day might not win because of the arbitrary bounce of a fumble or a tipped pass. A team projected to go 7-9 could realistically end up anywhere between 3-13 and 11-5. Taking the average of so many possibilities, all teams end up grouped more toward 8-8, with very few teams listed with double-digit wins or losses.

We've tweaked the results slightly to get a more realistic spread of win-loss records, but nonetheless, the numbers published below don't mean that we expect the 2017 season to end with no team below 5-11.

Here are the results:

AFC East

1. New England Patriots: 13-3 (13.2 mean wins; strength of schedule: 32)
2. Buffalo Bills: 7-9 (6.9 mean wins; SOS: 23)
3. Miami Dolphins: 6-10 (6.3 mean wins; SOS: 18)
4. New York Jets: 6-10 (6.3 mean wins; SOS: 25)

If you're sick of seeing the Patriots at the top of the AFC year after year, I have some bad news for you: New England has a top-five projection in all three phases of the game. On top of that, we also project the Patriots with the easiest schedule in the NFL for 2017. We're forecasting decline for many of their out-of-division opponents, including Atlanta, Denver and Kansas City. Meanwhile, the rest of the AFC East comes in under .500, although this initial Dolphins projection seems a bit over-pessimistic. The Dolphins' 10-6 record last season was built on an easy schedule, but Miami wasn't a bad team that lucked into a playoff spot, just an average one. On the other hand, the offensive projection is driven by the quarterback, and Ryan Tannehill has finished 24th and 27th in QBR over the past two seasons.

AFC North

1. Pittsburgh Steelers: 13-3 (13.1 mean wins; SOS: 27)
2. Cincinnati Bengals: 9-7 (8.8 mean wins; SOS: 26)
3. Baltimore Ravens: 8-8 (7.8 mean wins; SOS: 19)
4. Cleveland Browns: 5-11 (5.4 mean wins; SOS: 11)

Pittsburgh and New England come out far ahead of the rest of the league in our forecast, with the Steelers powered by the best offensive projection in the league. The Steelers have exceptional offensive line continuity, as all five starting linemen have been in Pittsburgh for at least four seasons. Pittsburgh might have the best running back and the best wide receiver in the league, and we can expect some rebound from Ben Roethlisberger after an inconsistent 2016 season. We also expect Cincinnati to bounce back on both sides of the ball, and the Bengals get eight home games again after losing one to London in 2016.

Baltimore has brought in talent on defense in free agency, but the Ravens have lost a lot, as well, with the trade of Timmy Jernigan and the surprising retirement of Zachary Orr. Cleveland continues to rebuild, but at least the defense should be better with a full season from Jamie Collins and the return of Desmond Bryant and Nate Orchard from injury.

AFC South

1. Tennessee Titans: 8-8 (8.1 mean wins; SOS: 29)
2. Jacksonville Jaguars: 8-8 (7.5 mean wins; SOS: 30)
3. Indianapolis Colts: 7-9 (6.6 mean wins; SOS: 28)
4. Houston Texans: 6-10 (6.1 mean wins; SOS: 10)

This will continue to be the worst division in the NFL, but at least Tennessee and Jacksonville seem like teams on the rise. The Titans ranked 15th in our DVOA ratings last season, best in the AFC South, and they've made some strong free-agent additions on defense. So has Jacksonville, and the Jaguars project to have a top-10 defense, but there's no reason to expect the offense to get any better.

Houston might have won the division last season, but the Texans ranked a dismal 29th in our DVOA ratings. That first-place finish doesn't do the Texans any schedule favors, because there's a big difference between playing the Patriots and playing the other AFC East teams. The quarterback position is a colossal question mark, which is enough to outweigh a defensive projection that gives the Texans a boost with the return of J.J. Watt. Meanwhile, the Colts continue to experiment with just how much a bad defense can fritter away the prime years of a good quarterback.

AFC West

1. Oakland Raiders: 9-7 (9.0 mean wins; SOS: 15)
2. Kansas City Chiefs: 8-8 (8.1 mean wins; SOS: 4)
3. Los Angeles Chargers: 8-8 (7.9 mean wins; SOS: 14)
4. Denver Broncos: 6-10 (6.0 mean wins; SOS: 6)

We launched Football Outsiders back in 2003. Some things haven't changed: In our first season forecast, no team in the AFC South came out with a winning record. That holds true in our 2017 projection. And for the first time since 2003, our 2017 projections also give the Raiders a better than 50-50 shot at a winning record. They should have a top-10 offense again, and a full year with Mario Edwards Jr. across from Khalil Mack should improve the pass rush.

Kansas City essentially projects as the same team as last season but with a much tougher schedule and less good fortune. The Chiefs were 6-2 in regular-season games decided by less than a touchdown, and they led the NFL by ending 16.7 percent of opposing drives with a takeaway. The Chargers, of course, were the opposite in terms of luck, and they hope a new coaching staff will help prevent so many close losses and blown fourth-quarter leads.

Our Denver projection might be a surprise, but a full turnover of the coaching staff often presages a drop for winning teams. The Broncos already defied historical NFL trends by putting up a second straight season of otherworldly pass defense, and the odds they can do it three straight seasons are even longer. Then again, I wouldn't want to bet against them, in part because it might make Chris Harris Jr. angry on Twitter.

Full AFC standings

Here's what the 2017 AFC playoff picture would look like according to our early projections.

1. New England
2. Pittsburgh
3. Oakland
4. Cincinnati*
5. Tennessee
6. Kansas City*
7. Los Angeles Chargers
8. Baltimore
9. Jacksonville
10. Buffalo
11. Indianapolis
12. Miami

13. New York Jets
14. Houston
15. Denver
16. Cleveland

* Wild-card teams

NFC East

1. Dallas Cowboys: 10-6 (9.5 mean wins; SOS: 1)
2. New York Giants: 8-8 (7.8 mean wins; SOS: 7)
3. Philadelphia Eagles: 8-8 (7.6 mean wins; SOS: 5)
4. Washington Redskins: 7-9 (7.2 mean wins; SOS: 2)

This is the strongest division in the NFL, where last season all four teams finished in the DVOA top 10, but an arduous schedule might leave three of the four teams out of the postseason. The problem isn't just these teams beating up on each other for six games. The NFC East also draws the two West divisions, which means facing many of the league's top defenses.

We end up with Dallas repeating as the most likely scenario, although our projections might underrate the importance of its defensive losses, because there could be a compound effect from losing so many players at the same position (defensive back). The Eagles were better than their record in 2016, but our system expects regression to the mean from their defense. The same goes for the Giants' defense; but their offense should improve with the addition of Brandon Marshall. Washington will have to weather the loss of two starting receivers and an offensive coordinator, but the Redskins are still more likely to be an average team than a bad one.

NFC North

1. Green Bay Packers: 10-6 (9.8 mean wins; SOS: 12)
2. Detroit Lions: 7-9 (7.4 mean wins; SOS: 9)
3. Chicago Bears: 7-9 (7.0 mean wins; SOS: 13)
4. Minnesota Vikings: 6-10 (6.4 mean wins; SOS: 8)

When Aaron Rodgers is on his game, the recipe for the Packers is simple: good team if the defense is bad; great team if the defense is good. Our projections lean a bit more toward the former than the latter, but the Packers are still well ahead of the rest of their division. Close wins put the Lions into the playoffs last season, despite ranking just 27th in DVOA. With normal luck and without so many late comebacks, the 2017 Lions are probably going to have fewer wins, despite improvement on last season's last-place defense.

The Bears will have a better defense and get closer to .500, thanks to defensive back additions in free agency and returning injured players, including Kyle Fuller and Lamarr Houston. Minnesota's projection is a bit of a surprise, until you realize just how poor the Vikings were in the second half of last season: 24th in offensive DVOA and 19th in defensive DVOA from Week 10 onward.

NFC South

1. Carolina Panthers: 9-7 (9.3 mean wins; SOS: 31)
2. Atlanta Falcons: 9-7 (8.6 mean wins; SOS: 17)
3. New Orleans Saints: 7-9 (7.2 mean wins; SOS: 22)
4. Tampa Bay Buccaneers: 7-9 (6.9 mean wins; SOS: 16)

Carolina's projection is pretty simple: a bit of rebound on both sides of the ball, combined with an easy schedule. (It also helps to play San Francisco instead of one of the other three NFC West teams.) We're forecasting a lot of offensive regression from Atlanta, which went from 23rd in offensive DVOA in 2015 to first in 2016 and now has to adapt to a new offensive coordinator. There are good signs for Atlanta's late-season defensive improvement to continue in 2017 but not enough to counter the likely offensive decline.

New Orleans got rid of its best wide receiver in Brandin Cooks. And it once again projects to have the worst defense in the league. There's a lot of young, developing talent for Tampa Bay, so I think there's a better chance of the Buccaneers taking a step forward than an average projection of 7-9 indicates. But it's still more likely that the Bucs will just stay mediocre.

NFC West

1. Seattle Seahawks: 11-5 (11.2 mean wins; SOS: 21)
2. Arizona Cardinals: 10-6 (9.7 mean wins; SOS: 24)
3. Los Angeles Rams: 8-8 (8.1 mean wins; SOS: 20)
4. San Francisco 49ers: 5-11 (5.2 mean wins; SOS: 3)

As a writer who uses stats to analyze a sport that's tough to analyze with stats, I try to follow two rules: run the numbers unadulterated; and don't be a slave to them. So I don't mind saying that our projection system seems far too optimistic about a rebound performance from the 38-year-old Carson Palmer. That being said, last season's Cardinals were not a bad team, just an average one held back in part by a terrible special-teams performance that is unlikely to be repeated.

The Rams have been trying to compete with a defense and special-teams orientation for years now, but hiring Wade Phillips could finally make that recipe work. Every team that has ever hired Phillips as a head coach or defensive coordinator saw its defensive DVOA improve, including the Broncos, who went from fourth in the league in 2014 to one of the greatest defenses ever in 2015. Phillips' scheme will likely have a similar effect in Los Angeles, where the defense was already loaded with talent in the front seven. If the offense can be garden-variety bad instead of last year's near-historic impotence, it's enough to make the Rams playoff contenders.

The top and bottom of this division are easier to forecast than the middle. The return of Earl Thomas should help the Seattle defense rebound from its December implosion, and that makes the Seahawks the favorites in the NFC, once again. Like Cleveland, there's a good chance San Francisco will improve over last season but very little chance the 49ers will improve to 8-8 or better.

Full NFC standings

Here's what the 2017 NFC playoff picture would look like according to our early projections.

1. Seattle
2. Green Bay
3. Arizona*
4. Dallas
5. Carolina
6. Atlanta*
7. Los Angeles Rams
8. New York Giants
9. Philadelphia
10. Detroit
11. Washington
12. New Orleans
13. Chicago
14. Tampa Bay
15. Minnesota
16. San Francisco

* Wild-card teams

Broncos' Trevor Siemian 'full go' in conditioning, competing in 'fair competition' for QB job

By Troy Renck

KMGH

April 11, 2017

The answers to the texts sounded more encouraging with each passing week. Trevor Siemian relayed to Denver7 the progress on his surgically-repaired left shoulder. From "healing," to working hard and rehab "going well," to last week's, "I am stoked to get started."

He wasn't kidding, folks. The Broncos opened their first phase of offseason conditioning Monday with Siemian a cleared participant following January surgery.

"He's full go," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said Monday.

Joseph addressed his team Monday for the first time as their coach. He kept the message succinct. There is no time to waste with 38 days of work together before training camp.

"It went great," All-Pro cornerback Chris Harris Jr. told Denver7. "I love [Joseph's] energy. I think everybody was happy to get back to work."

The July practices could be interesting if Joseph receives his wish. The quarterback competition -- with the specter of Tony Romo removed -- features candidates, not favorites. Siemian is not playing catchup. And Lynch is trying to make up ground, taking a step in the right direction by arriving in Denver two weeks ago to acclimate to the altitude.

"It's going to be an open competition -- 50-50," Joseph said, adding, "We have these two young guys with bright futures. It's open and going down to the wire, I hope. The best guy will play."

Siemian underwent surgery for strategical reasons. He wanted his shoulder joint fixed so he could lift and gain strength. Siemian missed one game last season because of the injury that lingered for two months. The former Northwestern standout threw 18 touchdowns with 10 interceptions, while carrying an added burden when the ground attack disappeared in the second half.

"Running the football is the best way to put the defense at risk," Joseph said. "That can help the quarterbacks."

C.J. Anderson sits atop the depth chart. He underwent surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his right knee in October. He has healed, and is easing back into the grind. Anderson's weight has fluctuated throughout his career. However, until last season, he has shown a knack for producing when it mattered most down the stretch.

"I have no concerns. Phase 1 is designed to get the players into football condition. I have no concern as far as C.J. getting in shape," said Joseph, whose team has visited with playmaking draft prospects like Christian McCaffrey and Joe Mixon. "We've got plenty of time to get him into shape. Obviously with C.J."

we're going to take it slow and make sure he is really ready to go for OTAs. That's the most important date for C.J."

Joseph remains pleased with the Broncos' free agent additions. The Broncos delivered a nuanced attitude adjustment upfront on both sides of the ball with defensive lineman Domata Peko and Zach Kerr and offensive linemen Ron Leary and Menelik Watson.

"Tougher and meaner up front. There's something to be said about that because those teams do win," said Joseph, who relayed that center Matt Paradis (hip surgeries) should be cleared on July 1. "Big and tough works up front."

Broncos release tentative preseason schedule with opener at Chicago

By Troy Renck

KMGH

April 11, 2017

Fake games provide real impressions. And the Broncos' preseason schedule finishes with two interesting home dates against the Green Bay Packers and Arizona Cardinals to help finalize roster decisions. Those games, particularly against Green Bay, could go a long way in deciding the depth chart and possibly the winner in the quarterback competition between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch.

The Broncos released their tentative exhibition slate on Monday:

Week 1: at Bears (Aug. 10-13).

Week 2: at 49ers (Aug. 17-20).

Week 3: vs Packers (Aug. 24-27)

Week 4: vs. Cardinals (Thursday Aug. 31).

The Broncos open the preseason on the road for the 20th time in 21 years. It marks the second straight season in Chicago, where former Denver coach John Fox leads the Bears. The Broncos face the Packers for the first time in the preseason since 2008.

Per the team, the exact dates and times will be announced later this month as the NFL releases the complete 2017 regular-season schedule. It could be revealed as soon as next week.

Nuggets, Avalanche miss playoffs: A look at Denver's history of winning and losing

By Mark Belcher

KMGH

April 11, 2017

In just a weekend, two professional Denver teams both sealed their fates: The Colorado Avalanche and the Denver Nuggets will not play past their final regular season game.

The Avalanche lost Sunday, ending their season, and the Nuggets saw themselves knocked out of the playoffs. With the hopes of thousands of fans dashed, many are looking to other professional teams for consolation.

But is there consolation to be found in Denver? Denver7 took a look back at the history of winning and losing in Denver.

A look back at large professional teams which have played in Colorado since at least the 1990s showed only two franchises hold winning all-time records: The Broncos and the Avalanche (when not including ties).

Both organizations also proved to be the most decorated, when looking back at their history of play. Without further ado, here's a look back at the teams you can look to for repeated success:

The Denver Broncos

In terms of championships, no team bested the Broncos, which own three Super Bowl Championships, and the most recent championship for the City of Denver.

The Broncos have won a total of 465 games, lost 393 games and tied 10 games when not including playoff games. That's a winning record of .542 percent.

In addition to the three championships, the team owns eight AFC Championships.

Clearly, if you want to bank on a team to have a winning season, the Broncos aren't a bad bet.

The Colorado Avalanche

Yes, the Avs were just eliminated and will go through a possibly tumultuous offseason, but the organization has a winning history. Without considering ties, the Avs own a record of .571 percent. The team has won a total of 845 games compared to 635 losses, with 101 ties to the team's name.

Avalanche teams have won two Stanley Cups and been conference champions twice, but the team has only made the playoffs three times in the past 10 years.

With such a winning history, it shouldn't be long before the Avalanche are back to their winning ways.

The Colorado Rockies

The Rox have the worst winning percentage of any major Colorado team, but they've also played the most games. What saves the Rockies is their League Pennant, earned in the 2007 season.

Of the thousands of games played by this MLB franchise, the team has won 1709 in regular season play, losing just under 2,000 games. That's a .466 regular season record. It's worth it to point out that there's only a handful of teams with winning all-time records in all of MLB.

Although in total, the Rockies have only owned winning records in six seasons, the Rockies are on a roll currently, and the hype around the team is high.

Seeing as the Rockies have a long season ahead of them, there's reason to be optimistic about the team.

The Denver Nuggets

Throughout time, professional basketball teams in Colorado own a .497 percent record, boasting a record of 1967 wins to just about 2,000 losses.

That combines both the Denver Rockets, which played in the ABA, and the Denver Nuggets, a later iteration of that same team.

If looking at the record of the Nuggets, one will find a host of playoff appearances, but no NBA championships or conference championships.

The Nuggets record for regular seasons is 1530 wins to 1620 losses. That's a .486 percent record.

The Colorado Rapids

It's very worth mentioning the Colorado Rapids, the professional soccer (football) team of the Centennial State. The team has a record of 248 wins to 276 losses, but has found success in the past.

The team found greatest success as a unit in 2010 when players brought the MLS (Major League Soccer) cup to Denver for the first time ever.

The young organization certainly has a bright future.

Siemian medically cleared as Broncos begin offseason work

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
April 11, 2017

Trevor Siemian won't be sitting back and watching Paxton Lynch take all the snaps at the Denver Broncos' minicamp in two weeks.

Coach Vance Joseph said at the start of his team's offseason program Monday that Siemian had made a quicker-than-expected recovery from his offseason shoulder surgery.

"Trevor's full-go, guys," Joseph said. "He's been cleared to be a full participant in the offseason program. So, he's full-go. He's ready to go, no issues."

Siemian had surgery on his left shoulder Jan. 3 after playing three months with what's been described as a grade-5 A.C. joint sprain, which he suffered in Week 4, forcing him to miss 1½ games. He also missed a game with a sprained foot.

The severity of his shoulder injury is usually seen in car crashes, not on football fields, and the recovery can take up to half a year.

Joseph said at the NFL combine last month that Siemian's statistics — going 8-6 while throwing for 3,400 yards with 18 TDs and 10 interceptions — were all the more impressive when you consider he played most of the season with a severely damaged left shoulder.

It was expected that Lynch at least initially would get more snaps when the Broncos begin their on-field work with their April 24-27 minicamp.

Lynch won't have that head-start now.

Joseph reiterated this is an open competition between Siemian, a 2015 seventh-rounder from Northwestern who won the job last year, and Lynch, the 26th overall pick in last year's draft who is still adjusting to the pro offense after running the spread at Memphis.

"It is open, guys, it's open, 50-50, it's an open competition," Joseph said. "We've got these two young guys who have bright futures and it's open. It's going to go down to the wire, I hope. Right now it's a new system that's going into place here with (offensive coordinator) Mike McCoy. So, it's a fair, open competition and the best guy is going to play."

Siemian has been working out in Denver for several weeks and Lynch returned recently to acclimate himself to the altitude.

"He's been fine. He's been around the last couple of weeks. He's been engaged. He's excited to be here. He's got a big smile on his face, so that's important," Joseph said.

Asked what Lynch could do to impress the coaches, Joseph said, "Paxton was obviously a first-round pick for a reason. He's a big guy with a big arm. He's very athletic. I think playing that position is about decision-making. And if he does those things better, he'll have a chance to compete to be our starting quarterback."

WEIGHTY ISSUE:

Joseph said he's not concerned about running back C.J. Anderson's weight right now. A recent photo taken of Anderson at Joe Mixon's youth football camp led to speculation that Anderson was out of shape as he recovers from a torn meniscus that sidelined him for half of last season.

"Well, it's the offseason. I have no concerns. Phase I is designed to get the players in football condition. So, I have no concerns as far as C.J. getting in shape," Joseph said. "The first game's not until the fall, so we've got plenty of time to get him in shape. Obviously, with C.J., we're going to take it slow, make sure he's really ready to go for OTAs. That's the most important date for C.J. That's when the full practice starts, OTAs."

That will be May 23.

NOTES: The Broncos' preseason schedule consists of games at Chicago and San Francisco and home games against the Packers and Cardinals. ... Joseph wouldn't say if there were any players who didn't report, saying, "I didn't take roll, but it was a good turnout." ... Asked if his starting left tackle was currently on the roster, Joseph demurred: "Hard to say. We don't play for a while." ... Joseph took in the Rockies' home opener Friday and the Nuggets' home finale Sunday. "It's been fun. It's a great sports city and the city's grown since I've lived here before. It's a big city now. The traffic, I mean, wow. It's heavy traffic."

Vance Joseph's goal: 'Juice' up Broncos offense

By Pual Klee

Colorado Springs Gazette

April 11, 2017

Who is the QB to be?

"It is open, guys, 50-50. We've got these two young guys that's got bright futures," Broncos head coach Vance Joseph said. "It's going to go down to the wire."

Perhaps the Broncos should pass on Christian McCaffrey and draft a hybrid: Paxton Siemian, the 6-foot-7 Northwestern grad who pitches Skittles as expertly as he grows facial hair.

"There's no time to waste," Joseph said in a getting-to-know-you news conference Monday.

OK, then. Let's get down to the nitty gritty: The Broncos need some serious help on offense.

"Juice," as Joseph calls it.

Who on this offense scares the Raiders and Chiefs? Demaryius Thomas is a shaken Coke can. He can blow up at any time. Emmanuel Sanders, unless it's the final game with only his health on the line, can go big. After that. Denver's offensive fridge has only bottled water.

Somewhere along the way, the Broncos offense got boring. It was out of necessity as much as choice; the line cratered, allowing open season to smack the quarterback, and swift playmakers are as rare as Colorado natives. Who are recent Broncos who could bust the big one? Trindon Holliday against the Ravens? Omar Bolden against the Colts? C.J. Anderson when he's healthy?

"I think overall with our offense want to add more juice there, whether it's a receiver or a running back," Joseph said. "Every good offense needs a guy who can take the ball from the LOS (line of scrimmage) and go the distance with it. That's important to have, that aspect on offense - running back, receiver, wherever it comes from."

That sound you hear is a new coach who's now watched the film from "Titans 13, Broncos 10," "Patriots 16, Broncos 3" and "Chargers 21, Broncos 13." Denver's "O" was football Nyquil.

"Definitely having more juice on offense is a must, in my opinion," he said.

Believe Joseph when he says quarterback will be an open competition between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. Believe me, or not, when I say Siemian will win the starting job.

Mike McCoy's job as offensive coordinator will be the toughest on the block. Unless the Broncos slide up in the draft for McCaffrey, stay put at No. 20 and get lucky with Washington speedster John Ross, or take a risky leap on Day 2 with Oklahoma tailback Joe Mixon, McCoy is assigned to build a Ferrari with Hyundai parts.

Sports aren't so complicated. You want dudes the other team doesn't want to deal with. The Broncos need more dudes the other team doesn't want to deal with.

On the first day of the offseason workout program, the first day he could meet with his new team, Joseph sounded and looked more like a man in his element. No surprise there; the locker room is where Joseph is most comfortable and why he was pegged to succeed Gary Kubiak.

The defense is packed with enough robust personalities to fill several captain's chairs. Between Von Miller, Aqib Talib, Chris Harris Jr. and T.J. Ward, the question is when, not if, somebody steps up and speaks out. I asked Joseph: What do you seek in leaders on offense?

"You want guys that are tough, engaged and love to win. Defensively, that secondary - all four guys are always fully engaged, very competitive, tough guys," he said. "That's what you want on offense: guys who hate to lose, who every day come to work to win. That's important. From that perspective, offensively, we've got some guys who could fit that role, but I want more."

A coach who lobbies in public for the front office to find his type of players? Hey, I dig it.

But the exchange that told the most about Joseph's M.O. - relative to quarterbacks, at least - arrived when he was asked about Dak Prescott, the quarterback who slipped to the fourth round before helping the Dallas Cowboys to a 13-3 record and No. 1 overall seed in the NFC.

"I wouldn't say everyone missed on him. He went to a good football team. He went to the perfect team for a young quarterback - big-time running back, with an experienced, dominant O-line," Joseph said. "It wasn't a miss on that. He went to the perfect football team. That plays a role for quarterbacks."

It would with the Broncos, too.

Denver Broncos announce 2017 preseason schedule, which includes home game against Green Bay

By Pual Klee
Colorado Springs Gazette
April 11, 2017

It's not Tony Romo.

So who's the Broncos quarterback — Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch?

"It is open, guys, 50-50," new head coach Vance Joseph said Monday. "It's an open competition."

If that's the case, Denver's starting quarterback will be chosen with the help of its preseason schedule, which was released today (exact dates arrive later):

Aug. 10-13: Broncos at Chicago

Aug. 17-20: Broncos at San Francisco

Aug. 24-27: Green Bay at Broncos

The third preseason game is typically when most of the starters play so Broncos fans could have an extended look at Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

Aug. 31: Arizona at Broncos

Agent's Take: Five NFL Draft blockbuster trades for veterans that need to happen

By Joel Corry
CBSSports.com
April 11, 2017

Most trades leading up to or during the NFL Draft (April 27-29) are for current or future draft choices instead of veteran players. Draft picks are the most cost-effective players in the NFL. Their salaries are determined by a rookie wage scale that doesn't pay productive ones anything close to their true worth.

NBA teams and the Patriots take a more enlightened approach to trading veterans. Signability is more of a primary consideration with moves involving players in a contract year. There are differences in NBA and NFL free agency rules. Compensatory draft picks for lost free agents do not exist in the NBA.

The "Patriot Way" is to get rid of a player a year too early rather than a year too late, whether it's trading or releasing a player. The Patriots, the reigning Super Bowl champions, didn't miss a beat last season after jettisoning arguably their best two defensive players from 2015. Chandler Jones was dealt to the Cardinals early last offseason for a 2016 second-round pick (61st overall) and guard Jonathan Cooper, the seventh overall pick in the 2013 draft, since pass rushers are paid a premium. The Patriots weren't going to pay Jones the going rate for productive pass rushers, which is in the neighborhood of \$17 million per year, with over \$50 million in guarantees.

Linebacker Jamie Collins turned down an \$11 million per year extension during training camp, which was the Pats' impetus for dealing him to the Browns as last season's trading deadline approached. Instead of waiting until next year to receive a third-round compensatory selection at best for Collins leaving in free agency, the Patriots took a third-round compensatory pick in this year's draft (103rd overall) from the Browns.

The Eagles and Ravens made one of those infrequent trades involving a player last week. Ravens defensive tackle Timmy Jernigan was acquired by the Eagles in a swap of third-round picks. The Eagles dropped down 25 spots to the 99th overall pick while the Ravens moved up to the 74th overall pick. The Ravens re-signing Jernigan, who is entering his contract year, was unlikely after retaining free agent defensive tackle Brandon Williams with a five-year, \$52.5 million deal containing \$27.5 million in guarantees.

Here are five veteran players that NFL teams should seriously consider trading in the days leading up or during the NFL draft using the Patriot Way or adopting an NBA philosophy.

Kirk Cousins QB / Washington

Destination: 49ers

Trade compensation: 2018 first-round pick and 2017 second-round pick (34th overall) Redskins president Bruce Allen confirmed to The MMQB's Albert Breer at the NFL's annual owner's meetings in

late March that Cousins was offered a five-year extension over the \$23,943,600 franchise tag he's currently scheduled to play under this season. According to the Washington Post's Mike Jones, this is the same \$20 million per year offer with "low" guarantees that was made around the time of the NFL Combine in late February. The offer is below the average of 2016's top-15 quarterback deals, which is approximately \$21.225 million per year.

Structure is everything with NFL contracts, since the deals aren't fully guaranteed. Any Redskins offer with less than \$40 million fully guaranteed at signing won't be taken seriously by Cousins' camp. The five-year, \$75 million contract the Redskins gave free agent cornerback Josh Norman last April with a player-friendly structure has \$36.5 million fully guaranteed at signing.

Allen indicated that the Redskins are committed to getting Cousins signed before the July 15 deadline that franchise players have for long-term deals. It's probably going to take a contract in the same ballpark as the five-year extension that Andrew Luck received from the Colts last offseason, which reset the NFL pay scale, to lock up Cousins long-term. Luck's contract averages \$24.594 million per year and contains \$87 million in guarantees, of which \$47 million was fully guaranteed at signing.

There's a lot of skepticism about the Redskins ever getting into this territory for Cousins. Waiting is going to make signing Cousins more difficult for the Redskins because Derek Carr, Matt Ryan and Matthew Stafford are in line for offseason extensions from the Raiders, Falcons and Lions that should eclipse the \$25 million per year mark.

Cousins would reportedly welcome a reunion with 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan. The first-time head coach was Cousins' offensive coordinator with the Redskins during his first two NFL seasons.

The most recent relevant veteran quarterback trade data point is the Eagles receiving a 2017 first-round pick (14th overall) and a conditional 2018 fourth-round pick from the Vikings for Sam Bradford after Teddy Bridgewater went down late last preseason with a gruesome knee injury. A fairer approximation of Cousins' trade value could be the first-round pick (15th overall) and two third-round picks in the 2008 draft that the Chiefs received from the Vikings for defensive end Jared Allen after he had been given a franchise tag. A swap of 2008 sixth-round picks was also a part of the trade. Above-average starting quarterbacks are generally more valuable than pass rushers, even elite ones. Although an argument can be made that there isn't any price too steep for a franchise quarterback, the 49ers parting with the second overall pick in the upcoming draft probably wouldn't be on the table if there were serious trade discussions.

Why the trade won't happen: The 49ers are in great position to get Cousins for nothing by being patient. The Redskins having two cost-prohibitive options in 2018 to restrict Cousins again makes it likely the quarterback hits the open market next year. Using a transition tag, which would give the Redskins matching rights for an offer sheet signed by another team, will cost \$28,732,320. A third franchise tag will be \$34,478,784. Additionally, the Redskins would probably want a king's ransom for Cousins, even though a 2019 third-round compensatory pick, which is at the end of the round, is all they would get if he leaves in free agency next offseason.

Richard Sherman CB / Seattle

Destination: Raiders

Trade compensation: 2017 second-round pick (56th overall), 2018 fifth-round pick and CB David Amerson

Surprisingly, the Seahawks are open to moving the four-time All-Pro. There are conflicting reports about whether a trade was initially Sherman's idea or Seattle's idea.

Seattle would be justified in seeking similar compensation as the Jets received for Darrelle Revis, who was recovering from a torn ACL in his left knee, when he was traded to the Buccaneers shortly before the 2013 draft. The Buccaneers got a 2013 first-round pick and a conditional 2014 fourth-round pick. The conditional pick would have become a third-round pick if Revis had remained on Tampa Bay's roster on the third day of the 2014 league year (March 13). Revis, a couple months shy of his 28th birthday, signed a six-year, \$96 million contract as a part of the transaction. Sherman, who just turned 29, earned his fourth straight Pro Bowl berth in 2016 but didn't earn All-Pro honors for the first time since 2011.

I was involved in a pre-draft trade of a high-caliber veteran cornerback during my agent days. The Dolphins gave us permission to shop three-time Pro Bowler Patrick Surtain, who was entering his contract year, in 2005 because our contract demands for an extension were deemed excessive. After the Chiefs expressed interest in Surtain, we started negotiating a new contract for him while the two teams agreed on trade compensation. Surtain, whose 29th birthday was approaching, went for a 2005 second-round pick (46th overall). 2005 fifth-round picks were also swapped with the Chiefs moving up 24 spots. At the time, Surtain was in the discussion for best NFL cornerback not named Champ Bailey.

Acquiring a veteran player at a need position would lower the draft choice compensation. That's where Amerson, who is close to four years younger than Sherman, comes in. The Raiders rewarded him with a four-year, \$33 million extension containing \$17 million in guarantees last summer after a breakout 2015 campaign in which he was an early season waiver wire pick up. Opposing quarterbacks completed 55.8 percent of passes (58 of 104 attempts) when targeting Amerson for a 62.7 passer rating according to Pro Football Focus (PFF). Amerson regressed in 2016. PFF had 64.5 percent of passes (60 of 93 attempts) completed against him for a 101.1 passer rating.

Sherman would help shore up a weak pass defense for a Raiders team expected to be Super Bowl contenders. The Raiders ranked 24th against the pass last season allowing 257.5 yards per game and tied for 20th with 27 touchdowns given up through the air.

Seattle would pick up \$2.231 million of 2017 salary cap room by acquiring Amerson. Sherman's 2017 cap number is \$13.631 million. There would be a \$4.4 million cap charge from his \$11 million signing bonus with the trade while Seattle would be paying Amerson \$7 million in 2017. The Raiders have already paid Amerson a \$1.5 million roster bonus that was due on March 11. Amerson is under contract through the 2020 season with annual salaries of \$6M in 2018, \$7.5M in 2019 and \$7,880,123M in 2020. His \$5.5 million 2018 base salary is guaranteed for injury and becomes fully guaranteed next February 7.

The remaining two years on Sherman's contract for \$22.431 million are a good value for an elite cornerback. The Raiders would lose \$4.431 million of their over \$31.1 million of existing cap room by taking on Sherman's \$11.431 million 2017 salary.

Why the trade won't happen: Cornerback is already a weakness for Seattle with Sherman. Starting cornerback DeShawn Sheard tore the ACL in his left knee during a January playoff loss to the Falcons. It remains to be seen whether the real Amerson was the player in 2015 or 2016.

AJ McCarron QB / Cincinnati

Destination: Browns

Trade compensation: 2017 second-round pick (52nd overall from Titans) and a swap of 2017 third-round picks (Bengals' 73rd overall for Browns' 65th overall)

Most of the public attention has been focused on whether the Patriots will be willing to trade 2014 second-round pick Jimmy Garoppolo, who is entering his contract year. Garoppolo looked like a quality starting quarterback in the six quarters that he played while Tom Brady was serving a four-game suspension for Deflategate before spraining the AC joint in his right shoulder.

McCarron, a 2014 fifth-round pick, might be a better fit requiring far less draft capital. Browns head coach Hue Jackson was the Bengals' offensive coordinator in 2014 and 2015 so he already knows McCarron's capabilities. Giving up at least the 12th overall pick in this year's draft would be a necessity with Garoppolo.

McCarron took over at quarterback down the stretch of the 2015 season after a broken thumb sidelined Andy Dalton. In seven games (three starts), he connected on 79 of 119 passes (66.4 completion percentage) for 854 yards with six touchdowns and two interceptions, which was good for a 97.1 passer rating. McCarron would have a playoff win to his name but for the Bengals' ill-timed defensive penalties late in a wild-card loss to the Steelers. He didn't throw in any passes in 2016.

McCarron will not be entering the opening market like Garoppolo after the season despite being in the same draft class. He didn't earn a year of service toward free agency in 2014 because he spent most of his rookie season on the non-football injury list with a shoulder injury. McCarron will be a restricted free agent in 2018. Assuming McCarron is given the highest restricted free agent tender, which will be a minimum of \$4.106 million, the Bengals would get a first-round pick if they didn't match another team's offer sheet for him.

Inexperienced young veteran quarterbacks since the turn of the century typically have gone for second or third-round picks in trades. In 2007, the Texans acquired restricted free agent Matt Schaub from the Falcons in a sign-and-trade deal where they gave up two second-round picks (2007 and 2008) and switched 2007 first-round picks. Schaub had only started two games during his three seasons in Atlanta. The Chargers traded Charlie Whitehurst to the Seahawks in 2010 for a 2011 third-round pick. A swap of 2010 second-round picks was also made with the Chargers moving from 60th to 40th. Whitehurst hadn't thrown any regular season passes when dealt.

Why the trade won't happen: There isn't any urgency for the Bengals to trade McCarron, especially to an in-state division rival. The Bengals control McCarron's rights next year and could get a 2018 first-round pick in return with offer sheet that isn't matched.

Malcolm Butler CB / New England

Destination: Saints

Trade compensation: 2017 second-round pick (42nd overall) and a conditional 2018 fourth-round pick (becomes third-round pick if Butler is named to Pro Bowl on the original ballot or second round pick if first team All-NFL)

Butler, a restricted free agent, visited the Saints last month. An offer sheet won't be signed because the Saints think giving up the 11th overall pick in the upcoming draft is too steep of price to pay to sign Butler. Contract parameters were reportedly discussed in conjunction with the visit.

Logistically, Butler would have to sign his \$3.91 million restricted free agent tender prior to being traded and a long-term deal would be signed in the process. Presumably, the value of Butler's unrestricted free agent years would be in the same range of \$13-14M per year as the deals recently signed by A.J. Bouye, Stephon Gilmore and Desmond Trufant.

A trade that could be used as an indication of the type of compensation that the Patriots should receive is DeAngelo Hall's. He was acquired by the Oakland Raiders from the Atlanta Falcons in 2008 for a 2008 second-round pick and a 2009 fifth-round pick. Hall was a two-time Pro Bowler when he was traded. Butler's lone Pro Bowl selection was in 2015.

Why the trade won't happen: New England would have two new starting cornerbacks in 2016, after Logan Ryan bolted to the Titans in free agency. So much secondary upheaval may not be worth it to the Patriots without getting a first-round pick in return.

Sheldon Richardson DE / N.Y. Jets

Destination: Broncos

Trade compensation: 2017 third-round pick (82nd overall)

A change in scenery may be best for Richardson since the Jets have one too many quality 3-4 defensive ends with Muhammad Wilkerson and Leonard Williams on the roster. The 2013 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year's long-term prospects with the Jets took a hit when his defensive linemate Wilkerson signed a five-year, \$86 million contract with \$53.5 million in overall guarantees last summer.

The Jets shopped the talented-but-troubled Richardson before last season's trading deadline. The first-round pick the Jets reportedly were seeking for Richardson is out of the question because of a subpar 2016 season and his well-documented off-field issues. The swap for third round picks in the Timmy Jernigan trade probably helps define trade compensation for Richardson. Moving Richardson would wipe his \$8.069 million fifth-year option salary from the Jets' books.

Joseph: Trevor Siemian 'full go' for Broncos' QB battle

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

April 11, 2017

Trevor Siemian is ready to roll.

Broncos coach Vance Joseph told reporters Monday that Denver's quarterback is "full go" with "no issues" following offseason surgery on his non-throwing shoulder, per NFL Network's James Palmer.

Now fully cleared to participate in the offseason program, Siemian, last year's starter, is set to battle second-year passer Paxton Lynch for the team's No. 1 job. Joseph emphasized Monday that both arms will have an equal chance to win the role.

"It is open, guys. 50-50. It's going to go down to the wire, I hope," Joseph said, per Mike Klis of KUSA-TV in Denver.

Palmer, though, reported Friday on NFL Network's Up to the Minute Live that the more experienced Siemian holds the "upper hand" entering the offseason program, noting that Broncos coaches believe "he played very well last season," while adding: "They believe he played at a higher level than many assume."

Siemian's growth came behind a shoddy offensive line for an attack that never truly found its groove on the ground, forcing the 25-year-old into too many high-pressure passing situations.

When Lynch stepped on the field, he displayed elements of the juicy athleticism that made him a first-round pick, but was also held back by raw inexperience. A full offseason will help both quarterbacks prepare for one of the league's more intriguing quarterback duels.

Denver reportedly kicked the tires on Richardson before last season's trade deadline. He would help fill the void created on the defensive line when Malik Jackson left for the Jaguars during free agency in 2016.

Why the trade won't happen: Richardson could be an expensive one-year rental since he will be an unrestricted free agent in 2018. He'll also likely view Wilkerson's deal as his salary floor with a bounce-back year. Taking on a player with significant baggage may be an unnecessary risk for first-time head coach Vance Joseph.

“50-50” open competition for Broncos at quarterback

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
April 11, 2017

The Broncos have convened for the launch of the offseason program, and new coach Vance Joseph has reiterated that it's a two-man competition for the most important job on the field — and that no one enters it with an edge.

“It is open, guys,” Joseph said of the Trevor Siemian/Paxton Lynch battle. “50-50. It's going to go down to the wire, I hope.”

Actually, going down to the wire could be a bad thing, since it will keep the eventual starter from getting enough reps as the starter, since the backup will be getting plenty of them, too. Which could set the stage for whoever wins to job to be the guy who has the privilege of losing it.

The good news for Siemian is that he's been cleared to participate in the offseason program after shoulder surgery performed promptly after the season. That will give him a fair chance to compete; the real question is whether and to what extent the competition will tilt in the direction of Lynch, given what the Broncos gave up to get him.

The final decision will be largely subjective, and an added factor could be Lynch's perceived ability to hit a higher ceiling if he has a chance to play. Sure, Siemian may be better at first since he started in 2016. But to fully develop Lynch, the Broncos will need to throw him into the fray and suffer through the short-term growing pains.

Four Broncos start offseason program by signing tenders

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
April 11, 2017

The Broncos gathered in Denver for the first day of their offseason program on Monday and four members of the team marked the occasion by signing contracts tendered by the team earlier this offseason.

Three of the players are members of the linebacking corps. Todd Davis signed his restricted free agent tender while Zaire Anderson and Shaquil Barrett were exclusive rights free agents. Center James Ferentz was also an exclusive rights free agent before signing his tender on Monday.

Davis was tendered at the second-round level and will make over \$2.74 million in his fourth year with the team. Davis had 97 tackles, a half-sack and a forced fumble after moving into the starting lineup at an inside linebacker spot last year.

Barrett has seven sacks over the last two seasons and could be in line for a bigger role with DeMarcus Ware hanging up his cleats. Anderson saw action in every game and made half of his 14 tackles in special teams work.

Cam Robinson has load of visits set up

By Darin Gantt
Pro Football Talk
April 11, 2017

Alabama left tackle Cam Robinson may be the top prospect at his position in the 2017 NFL Draft, but no one's quite sure where he slots into the first round mix.

As a result, his pre-draft visit dance card is all over the map, literally and figuratively.

According to Aaron Wilson of the Houston Chronicle, Robinson will visit the Texans (25th), Broncos (20th), Bengals (ninth), and Giants (23rd).

That goes along with previously reported visits to the Jaguars (fourth), Panthers (eighth), and Bills (10th).

While "top tackles are safe picks" is one of those pieces of conventional wisdom that has grown less wise in recent years, the law of supply and demand dictates that he's going to be a first-rounder. But trying to predict where in that round he's going to fall is tricky.

Vance Joseph wants to squeeze 'more juice' from the Broncos offense

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
April 11, 2017

Last month, the Broncos focused on adding power and bulk to their offense, particularly up front.

The next task? Adding "more juice" to the skill positions, which would give the offense an explosiveness it lacked last year when it finished last in the league in plays that gained 20 or more yards.

"Every good offense needs a guy who can take the ball from the [line of scrimmage] and go the distance with it. That's important to have," Joseph said, citing running back and wide receivers as areas that needed additional punch.

The draft is filled with prospects who can help. That list begins with Stanford's Christian McCaffrey and Washington's John Ross at the top of the draft, but goes far deeper.

"From the first round to the fifth or sixth round," Joseph said. "That's not by accident that you find guys like that. It's by purpose. You have to have an idea what it looks like and go find those guys, because they won't fall to you. You've got to go find those guys and draft them."

Some of the answers could already exist on the roster. At the NFL Annual Meeting in Phoenix two weeks ago, Joseph discussed using wide receiver Demaryius Thomas in different ways, including in the slot and on screen passes, to create more opportunities and maximize his explosive potential.

Fellow 1,000-yard wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders could also be moved around to create some opportunities.

"Absolutely. We've got those two guys, and probably two or three more guys we can use differently to create more juice," Joseph said.

Vance Joseph wastes no time cranking up urgency as Broncos get to work

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
April 11, 2017

The regular-season opener is five months away. Rookies won't arrive for their first meetings and practices for another month. Starters at some positions, including left tackle, may not yet be on the roster.

All that gives the impression that there is a long time between now and Week 1. Vance Joseph wanted to convey the opposite, offering what he dubbed a "friendly reminder" that the clock is already ticking.

"It's not much time. For us, it's 38 days," the Broncos' new head coach said, citing the number of days the Broncos have for organized workouts and practices between now and the end of OTAs.

"There's no time to waste. That was the overall message."

In that limited time, the learning goes in all directions. Players must learn the schemes, although there is plenty of carryover from last year, which will aid returning veterans. The new coaches, in turn, must learn more about their players' abilities, everyday habits and how their personalities fit.

"That takes time," Joseph said. "I've met probably half the team until today. It takes time to see what you're working with here."

"Obviously, the film in the past, the discussion about players, that kind of helps you. But as far as knowing what we've got to work with here, that takes time. That's going to take an entire offseason to figure out. I'm looking forward to it, though."

Joseph often speaks of how this job offers something relatively unusual for a new head coach: the chance to win now. He inherits a team with an elite defense that believes it is a tweak or two from returning to the Super Bowl, a level it reached twice in the four seasons before his arrival.

That's an opportunity, but it also comes with a downside: He has no chance to grow into the job. When the head coach has to "win from now on," as John Elway often says, the honeymoon is brief.

On Monday, Joseph embraced that.

"The honeymoon's over, guys," he announced to the media. "It's football time."

Open competition at quarterback kicks off

By Ben Swanson

DenverBroncos.com

April 11, 2017

The Broncos' offseason program began Monday, and with it, the competition for the starting quarterback position also kicked off.

"It is open, guys — 50-50," Joseph said. "It is an open competition. We've got these two young guys that [have] got bright futures. It's open and it's going to go down to the wire, I hope. Right now it's a new system that's going into place here with [Offensive Coordinator] Mike McCoy. It's a fair, open competition and the best guy's going to play."

Though the team is going into the program with the position up for grabs, Joseph emphasized that the process of creating a new offense at this time is not dependent on knowing the Broncos' eventual starter.

"I think the structure of your offense won't change," Joseph said. "That would come into play more when the game-planning stuff starts in the fall. But right now, the overall structure won't change whether it's Trevor [Siemian] or Paxton [Lynch] playing the quarterback position for us right now. It's Mike's basic offense, basic route tree, basic run game that's going in, so that won't change until the fall."

Joseph touched on each quarterback's standing as they begin preparation for the season, noting Siemian's health following his recovery from shoulder surgery and Lynch's potential for growth in his second offseason.

"Paxton was obviously a first-round pick for a reason," Joseph said. "He's a big guy with a big arm. He's very athletic. I think playing that position, it's about the decision-making, and if he does those things better, he has a chance to compete to be our starting quarterback."

The opportunity for Siemian and Lynch lies ahead each player, and every meeting, rep and day counts.

Trevor Siemian a 'full go' as offseason workouts begin

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
April 11, 2017

As the quarterback competition in Denver begins, Trevor Siemian has been cleared fully to participate in offseason programming and OTAs, Head Coach Vance Joseph said.

“Trevor is full go, guys,” said Joseph on Monday as the Broncos arrived back at UCHealth Training Center for offseason workouts. “He’s been cleared to be a full participant in the offseason program. He’s full go. He’s ready to go.”

Siemian underwent surgery on his non-throwing shoulder after the season ended. The first-time starter played through a grade 5 AC joint sprain during the latter part of the year.

Running back C.J. Anderson, who tore his meniscus in October against the Houston Texans, is on a slightly slower track back to action.

“Obviously with C.J., we’re going to take it slow [and] make sure he’s really ready to go for OTAs,” Joseph said. “That’s the most important date for C.J. That’s when the full practice starts.”

And with the regular season still five months away, Joseph said he isn’t worried about Anderson's Week 1 availability.

“Well, it’s the offseason,” Joseph said. “I have no concerns. Phase 1 is designed to get the players in football condition. I have no concerns with C.J. as far as getting in shape [for] the first game in the fall.”

Center Matt Paradis was the final Bronco on whom Joseph provided an update. Paradis underwent surgery to alleviate pain in his hips, which bothered him all season. The 27-year-old player has not missed a single snap in the previous two seasons.

“He’s fine,” Joseph said. “He’s still rehabbing. Our goal for Matt’s going to be July 1.”

Broncos' preseason schedule released

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

April 11, 2017

The first four games of Head Coach Vance Joseph's tenure are set.

Denver will kick off its 2017-18 preseason schedule with a trip to Chicago in Week 1, travel to play the 49ers in Week 2 and return home for a Week 3 date with the Green Bay Packers and a Week 4 clash with the Arizona Cardinals.

The Broncos' preseason slate was announced Monday afternoon during a schedule reveal on NFL Network. Specific dates and times for the preseason games will be set at a later date.

ESPN's Adam Schefter previously reported the NFL is "aiming to release its 2017 regular-season schedule the week of April 17-21."

Denver also opened the preseason in 2015 with two road games before heading home.

Week 1 (Aug. 10-13), at Chicago Bears:

Denver travelled to Chicago in Week 1 of the 2016 preseason and shut the Bears out in a 22-0 victory. Chicago mustered just 130 yards against the Broncos during that Aug. 12 meeting.

The game will be Denver's second-straight trip to Chicago after not playing the Bears in the preseason since 2012.

Week 2 (Aug. 17-20), at San Francisco 49ers:

The Broncos hosted the 49ers in Denver in Week 2 of the 2016 preseason. The Niners came away with a 31-24 win in a game marked by Trevor Siemian's first start as he worked his way toward winning Denver's quarterback competition. He led a 10-play, 86-yard touchdown drive against the Niners' first-team defense before later throwing an interception.

The 2017 matchup will mark the sixth-consecutive season in which Denver has faced San Francisco in the preseason.

Week 3 (Aug. 24-27), vs. Green Bay Packers:

For the first time since 2008, the Broncos will face the Packers in the preseason. That 27-24 loss, which came during Mike Shanahan's final year as head coach, was also in Denver.

The Broncos did host the Packers in a regular-season matchup in November of 2015. The Broncos' defense stifled Aaron Rodgers, who they'll see a fair amount of in this year's preseason contest. Starters traditionally play at least half of the third preseason game, which serves as a dress rehearsal of sorts before a team's regular-season opener.

Week 4 (Thursday, Aug. 31), vs. Arizona Cardinals:

Arizona last travelled to Denver for Week 4 of the 2015 preseason. The Broncos lost that game 22-20 in their final tune-up before their Super Bowl 50 season.

The Broncos have closed each preseason slate with the Cardinals since 2015.

Broadcast information:

Preseason television (9NEWS)

The Broncos have an agreement with 9NEWS/KTVD-Channel 20 to televise the club's preseason games locally for the seventh consecutive year.

English radio (KOA NewsRadio)

For the 48th consecutive year, KOA NewsRadio (850 AM & 94.1 FM) will broadcast all Broncos games as the team's flagship radio station. The Fox (103.5 FM) will simulcast games for the fifth consecutive year along with the more than 60 Broncos Radio Network affiliates located throughout the Rocky Mountain West.

Spanish radio (KNRV)

Denver's Spanish radio home of the Broncos, KNRV (1150 AM), will broadcast all home and away games for the second consecutive year.

Todd Davis, three more Broncos sign tenders

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

April 11, 2017

Four more Broncos signed tenders Monday as they reported to UCHealth Training Center for the first day of the offseason workout program.

Inside linebacker Zaire Anderson, outside linebacker Shaquil Barrett and center James Ferentz, who all received exclusive-rights tenders in March, joined restricted free agent Todd Davis in signing those tenders.

Davis, in his first full year as a starter, filled in admirably following the departure of Danny Trevathan after the 2015-16 season. The 24-year-old out of Sacramento State recorded 97 tackles alongside Brandon Marshall.

Anderson, who played in 16 games and started one in 2016, recorded 14 tackles and forced a fumble. Barrett, who was slotted in a reserve role behind Von Miller, has seven career sacks and tallied 1.5 in 2016. He also forced a fumble against Kansas City in December.

Ferentz didn't see any regular-season action behind Matt Paradis, who didn't miss a snap for the second-consecutive year.

As players with fewer than three accrued seasons, ERFA's may only re-sign once their team issues tenders.

The players who have already signed exclusive-rights tenders are center Matt Paradis, running back Kapri Bibbs, wide receiver Bennie Fowler III, wide receiver Jordan Taylor and long snapper Casey Kreiter.