

The next big steps Von Miller, Demaryius Thomas have to take to make the Hall of Fame

By Mark Kiszla
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In all the NFL, there aren't three defensive players more physically intimidating than Broncos linebacker Von Miller. When the Denver offense needs a big play, the best athlete to count on is Pro Bowl receiver Demaryius Thomas.

Isn't that enough?

No.

If the Broncos want to get back to the playoffs, the team must ask even more of Miller and Thomas.

"I've always been kind of the people's champ in the locker room," Miller said Tuesday. While paid the big bucks to make NFL quarterbacks miserable, the Vonster is a carefree, 28-year-old prankster who dances with stars, hangs with Drake and messes with April fools by spreading an unfounded trade rumor.

Thomas has earned a Super Bowl ring and five well-deserved invitations to the Pro Bowl. Although 29 years old, Thomas sometimes seems as bashful as a child to exert his will in the locker room or on the field. And now you know why new Broncos coach Vance Joseph recently challenged Thomas "to be a dominant player all the time. I don't want him to ease into games. I want him to be a guy to step out."

In consecutive years, the Broncos have said goodbye to quarterback Peyton Manning and linebacker DeMarcus Ware. The team misses the authoritative voices of those two veterans as much as they miss their Hall of Fame talent.

As the defending NFL champ's season disintegrated after a 4-0 start in 2016, with Manning in retirement and Ware shelved by injury, there was nobody strong enough in the locker room to quell the growing disappointment and discontent.

"We definitely have a lot of strong personalities, from the (defensive backs), down to the defensive lineman, all the way to the offensive linemen and the quarterbacks," Miller said. "It's a unique locker room, and it takes unique coaching and unique leadership to send these guys in the right direction. We have a culture here. We're just trying to mold that into a championship culture again."

Two years ago, Broncos general manager John Elway gave Thomas a five-year, \$70 million contract. After protracted negotiations dragged into last summer, Elway came to terms with Miller on a six-year, \$114.5 million deal.

For superstar money, it's fair to expect more than sacks or receptions. Miller and Thomas need to take ownership of the entire team's success. Can they evolve into mentors?

“The main thing is getting with the quarterbacks in the meeting rooms and getting with them on the field, and giving them the confidence,” Thomas said.

Making spectacular plays comes naturally to Miller and Thomas.

Neither Miller nor Thomas is a natural-born leader. Miller is too busy being the life of the party. Thomas would rather keep his head down and grind than open his mouth and preach.

At the halfway point of their NFL careers, Miller and Thomas have flashed the immense talent from which Hall of Fame dreams are born.

If they want to make it to Canton, the next big step for both Miller and Thomas is to step up and lead in Denver.

Von Miller's stolen Super Bowl helmet back in Denver

By Mark Kiszla and Nicki Jhabvala

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Can the Broncos count on Demaryius Thomas to be a Pro Bowl receiver?

Kiz: How did Demaryius Thomas get to be 29 years old? He has won a Super Bowl. And lost one. He has made the Pro Bowl four times. But when the Broncos got back to work this week, and D.T. mentioned he was looking forward to his eighth pro season, it struck me how quickly an NFL career passes. New coach Vance Joseph has challenged Thomas to be “a dominant player all the time.” Is Thomas up to the challenge?

Jhabvala: Actually, he's been selected to the Pro Bowl five times. And last year, with all the issues and frustrations with the Broncos' offense, he and Emmanuel Sanders both topped 1,000 receiving yards. Plus, for all the heat Thomas takes, he hasn't missed a game the last five seasons. But talk of Thomas — in the few times fans aren't harping about his drops — is really about potential. He's the rare, oversized receiver with freakish athletic ability and football smarts. He's the full package, but his performance the last couple years, while certainly not bad (look at the numbers) seems to have fallen short of what he's capable of.

Kiz: Thomas had significant issues — and legitimate excuses — for a decline in production in 2016. Quarterback Trevor Siemian, who was learning the ropes in the NFL, was throwing him the football. And D.T. dealt with a nagging hip injury. But his yards per reception and touchdown catches have declined in three consecutive seasons. Could it be Peyton Manning made Thomas look better than he actually is?

Jhabvala: Manning made most receivers look good. Yes, there was a lot at work with the entire offense last year as they moved on without their future-Hall of Fame quarterback. The hip was clearly bothering Thomas throughout last season, and he admitted as much Tuesday. But it's about more than the numbers. Thomas, who has been with six starting quarterbacks and is now on his fifth head coach in Vance Joseph, has dealt with the most change of any Bronco on the roster. But given his experience he hasn't evolved into the offensive leader many expect him to be. Maybe Year 8 will be different.

Kiz: As opposed to the hefty contract for linebacker Von Miller, who's worth every penny, I think Broncos general manager John Elway overpaid for Thomas when the team gave him a five-year, \$70 million deal in 2015. Thomas has legit skills. But he's just a notch below a truly elite receiver that can consistently be a game-changer. If Joseph is expecting D.T. to be dominant all the time, I'm afraid the coach landed this gig in Denver about two years too late.

Jhabvala: I disagree. Remember the contract talks went down to the wire in mid-July and were contingent on Dez Bryant's deal. The two contracts were finalized within minutes of each other, so the market was set for Thomas. And he had just come off a career-best 1,619 receiving-yards season (second-most in the NFL that year behind Antonio Brown). Personal stuff, namely with his mother's release from prison, weighed heavily on him through 2015. He had a lot on his plate that few could really understand or fully grasp. But now, with offensive coordinator Mike McCoy back in the building and with Joseph's high expectations for Thomas, the opportunity could be there for him to have a breakout year after two less-than-stellar ones.

Broncos pass-rusher Von Miller: “This Von coming up is going to be my best Von.”

By Nicki Jhabvala

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On April 11, 2016, Von Miller, the Broncos’ menacing pass-rusher who has made a career of razing quarterbacks, stood on a stage in Los Angeles dressed as Prince Charming. He had the tailcoat, buttoned up to his chin, the fitted white pants and the black leather boots that rose to his knees.

By his side was his Cinderella, professional dancer Witney Carson, who led them in a Viennese Waltz to “A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes.”

Miller lived a fairytale, not just that spring day on Dancing With the Stars, but throughout much of last offseason as he jetted across the country on a media tour following Super Bowl 50 while his agents negotiated a new contract. Each week was a new appearance, a new outfit, a new role — far from the ones he was used to back in Englewood, where his fellow Broncos would soon begin their offseason workouts in his absence.

Not this offseason. Not this April 11.

After a few months to get away from football (and even join rapper Drake on his European tour), Miller was back in the Broncos’ building this week, ready to work alongside his teammates. For all, much has changed over the last 12 months.

For starters, the lean frame Miller acquired from his dancing days has a little more muscle on it.

“I was probably 230 pounds,” he said Tuesday. “I’m definitely feeling a whole lot better. I’m getting rest and being able to sleep. I’m definitely feeling a whole lot better. I’m definitely in a better place physically than where I was last year.”

To boot, he’s hardly celebrating a 9-7 season that resulted in no playoffs and a wave of frustration throughout the locker room, and finished with a coaching overhaul.

“When you’re not winning,” he said, “somebody is going to get upset, especially with an organization that we have here where winning is the expectation.”

This season, the Broncos are under the leadership of new head coach Vance Joseph, who told his players Monday that there is “no time to waste” in preparing for the new season. While most of the work and the changes will be made on the offensive side, the defense hasn’t been spared of transition.

Joe Woods, formerly the secondary coach who was elevated to defensive coordinator, fills the role left by Wade Phillips, a coach he watched and learned from for two seasons. Phillips’ 3-4 that features the Broncos’ deep pass rush and stifling secondary remains in place.

But gone is the Broncos' formidable leader. DeMarcus Ware, who announced his retirement in March and handed the reins to Miller to step up as the defense's — if not the entire team's — new leader.

In a lengthy conversation with The Denver Post last week, Ware said he believes Miller is ready to carry the torch.

On Tuesday, Miller concurred. "I've always had great examples of great leadership, so I know exactly what it takes and I feel like I've always done that," he said. "... It's important to me to win games and win the Super Bowl. You have to go out there and earn the respect of guys in the locker room, and I feel like my whole career I've always been The People's Champ of the locker room."

Despite the Broncos' issues last year, Miller turned in arguably his finest season, and one that perhaps is still underrated because of Denver's finish and because of the number of double-, even triple-teams, Miller faced. He finished ranked second in sacks (13.5) behind Vic Beasley (15.5), was named first-team All-Pro for the third time and was selected to his fifth Pro Bowl.

Miller said wins and titles trump all, but he came close to claiming the highest honor for a defender, falling only one vote short winning defensive player of the year.

"If we had been able to make the playoffs or if I could have made a few more plays, who knows where we would've been last year," he said. "That's just part of life. I'm not going to stay stuck in the past. I'm moving forward."

Moving forward includes a full participation in OTAs. Although his 2016 offseason didn't distract or impede his on-field work during the season, his absence was a personal reminder of the value of the offseason program.

"Last year missing them, I was like, 'You need OTAs,'" he said. "You can train on your own, but the National Football League is so competitive. The more time that you can get to perfect your craft with your teammates, you need that to get over the hump. You need to be out here with your guys. You need to be working out here in the altitude and here at the facility. I need this time here in OTAs to be a better player."

A new year, a new look, maybe a new Von Miller.

"I feel like this Von coming up is going to be my best Von that I put forward," he said. "It's going to be my best year. That's what I'm going for."

Von Miller's stolen Super Bowl helmet back in Denver

By Nicki Jhabvala

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Von Miller's Super Bowl 50 helmet that was recovered along with Tom Brady's stolen jerseys has finally made its way back to Denver.

"I haven't gotten it yet," Miller said Tuesday. "It's here in Denver, but I just haven't had time to go over and get it yet. But the helmet is here."

Miller said he didn't even realize the helmet was missing last year, in part because of his whirlwind offseason that included multiple TV appearances and a spot on "Dancing With the Stars."

"That's how crazy last year was," Miller said. "We had the best of the best and the finest investigators on the whole ordeal. They were able to find Tom's jersey and they were able to find my helmet as well. Hats off to those guys."

Miller's helmet was found in Mexico, along with Brady's Super Bowl XLIX and LI jerseys. The items were stolen by Mauricio Ortega, a credentialed media member formerly with Diario La Prensa, a newspaper in Honduras.

The exact value of Brady's missing Super Bowl LI jersey isn't known, but Houston Police listed its estimated worth at \$500,000.

A Broncos helmet was swiped from a training camp practice last August and it was valued then to be worth \$400. But Miller's is surely valued at much more since he wore it in a Super Bowl victory and was named the game's MVP.

2017 NFL draft's receivers and tight ends: Rankings, sleepers, Broncos' fits for explosive playmakers

By Cameron Wolfe
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Editor's note: Fourth of a seven-part series breaking down the NFL draft April 27-29. Today: Wide receivers/tight ends

The Aqib Talib staredown and shove of Jordan Norwood after he wouldn't stop muffing punt returns. Drops by Bennie Fowler vs. Tennessee and Kansas City that still makes fans cringe. Cody Latimer failing to live up to expectations. Again.

These incidents during the Broncos 2016 season shined a light on the need to get help at the receiving position. Defenses game planned for Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders and dared another receiver to beat them. No one stepped up consistently. Denver's third leading receiver last year was backup running back Devontae Booker with 265 yards. The lead tight end, Virgil Green, had just 237 receiving yards.

Broncos head coach Vance Joseph wants "more juice" in his offense. It starts in the draft as the Broncos seek explosive playmakers. Here's my evaluation of the wide receiver/tight end class.

Wide receivers

1. Mike Williams, Clemson, 6-foot-4, 218 pounds; grade: Top 10

Strengths: Great size makes him an ideal jump ball receiver. 50/50 balls are 80/20 with Williams. Physical as a blocker and receiver. Gets his YAC and separation through size, physicality. Good footwork at the line.

Negatives: Average speed that limits his separation, easy catches. His balance is shaky and he'll have concentration drops. Injury history is troublesome.

2. Corey Davis, Western Michigan, 6-3, 209 pounds; grade: Top 20

Strengths: Crisp route running and cuts give him separation. Routinely makes contested catches. Physical, not afraid to give a defender some punch back. Good across middle of the field. Always looking for YAC. High floor.

Negatives: Average speed leads to transition question marks. Played Group of Five competition. Can he be an elite number one or just a good number two?

3. John Ross, Washington, 5-11, 178 pounds; grade: Top 20

Strengths: A 4.22 40-yard dash is a lot of juice. Incredible footwork, juking cornerbacks out of their cleats. Versatility to play outside receiver, slot and both returner roles. A DeSean Jackson clone if it works out.

Negatives: He's had major surgeries to both knees. Durability question marks. Small stature and limited strength will hurt him against better, stronger NFL defenders. Has some focus drops.

4. Zay Jones, ECU, 6-2, 201 pound; grade: Late first round

Strengths: Great hands catcher with very few drops in a high-volume offense. NCAA's all-time receptions leader. Good at finding holes in a defense's zone. Can play slot and outside.

Negatives: Manufactured a lot of touches on short passes and screens. Doesn't play like his 4.45 40-yard dash speed. Struggles to get a lot of separation against physical or speedy cornerbacks.

5. Carlos Henderson, Louisiana Tech, 5-11, 199 pounds; Grade: Second round

Strengths: Explosive playmaker with the ball in his hands. Has deep speed on tape (4.46 40). Can play slot, outside receiver, kick and punt returner.

Negatives: Route running needs a good bit of work. May make immediate NFL splash on special teams while learning offense transition. Occasional drops. Lower level of competition.

Next up: Cooper Kupp, Eastern Washington; ArDarius Stewart, Alabama

Mid-round starter: Ryan Switzer, North Carolina. A high-floor, lower ceiling slot receiver who can be an immediate Day 1 contributor on offense and as a returner.

Late-round sleeper: Chad Williams, Grambling State. His combination of size, speed, production and physicality is enough to take a chance on despite off-the-field issues.

Tight ends

1. O.J. Howard, Alabama, 6-6, 251 pounds; grade: Top 10

Strengths: Three-down tight end with size, physicality and speed. Played in pro-style offense. Will be Day 1 contributor, starter. Playmaker, red zone threat with good hands. Great blocker.

Negatives: Disappointing production in college because he was underutilized. Would like to see more fire.

2. David Njoku, Miami, 6-4, 246 pounds; grade: Top 20

Strengths: Maybe the best athlete in this tight end crop. Shows off his athleticism getting YAC consistently. Fast coming off the line and into his breaks.

Negatives: Still raw and has a good bit to learn about the position. Can be overpowered as a blocker and will need to add strength. Makes difficult catches, but can drop easy ones.

3. Evan Engram, Ole Miss, 6-3, 234 pounds; grade: Late first round

Strengths: Seam buster, red zone threat. Has some Julius Thomas in his game. 4.42 speed makes him a matchup nightmare. Surprisingly willing and capable as in-line blocker. Elusive.

Negatives: Built like a big receiver, not a tight end. May not have size, physicality to be an in-line tight end. Drops are a problem.

4. Bucky Hodges, Virginia Tech, 6-6, 257 pounds; grade: Second round

Strengths: Big red zone threat, jump ball receiver. Physicality, size makes him a mismatch for safeties and cornerbacks.

Negatives: Played the big receiver role in college. He should be a better blocker for his size. He may not be an in-line option.

5. Gerald Everett, South Alabama, 6-3, 239 pounds; grade: Late second round

Strengths: Incredible after the catch and lives off producing YAC yards. Great balance. Has the speed to stretch a defense and power to break tackles.

Negatives: Not an in-line tight end, his blocking is typically diving at a defender's knees. Beasted on a lower-level competition. He's raw as a route-runner.

Next up: Jake Butt, Michigan; Adam Shaheen, Ashland

Mid-round starter: Jeremy Sprinkle, Arkansas. He's a three-down tight end who doesn't have a lot of 'wow' to his game.

Late-round sleeper: Tyrone Swoopes, Texas. Most people know Swoopes as a quarterback, but he's transitioning to tight end.

Broncos' Von Miller had top-selling jersey among NFL defenders last year

By Nicki Jhabvala

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Broncos outside linebacker Von Miller had the 11th-best-selling NFL jersey last year and THE best-selling jersey among defenders, according to NFLShop.com.

Miller's No. 58 jersey was a best-seller in the states of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. He was the only Broncos player to rank among the top 25.

Patriots quarterback Tom Brady led all players, while Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott, Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott, Giants receiver Odell Beckham Jr., and Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski rounded out the top five.

Broncos host OL prospect Chad Wheeler on Tuesday, will bring in OT Cam Robinson on Wednesday

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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Broncos head coach Vance Joseph told his team Monday, before the start of organized team activities (OTAs), there's little time to waste as they begin to retool for 2017. They have a lot to figure out and little time to do it.

Among the most pressing questions: Who will start at left tackle, and what will the offensive line as a whole look like?

To continue their hunt for answers, and help, the Broncos hosted former Utah tackle Sam Tevi on Monday and brought in former Southern California lineman Chad Wheeler on Tuesday, according to NFL sources. Wednesday, they will host former Alabama tackle Cam Robinson, who is widely regarded among the top three at his position in the upcoming draft.

Wheeler (6-foot-7, 306 pounds) was a four-year starter at left tackle for USC and earned first-team All-America honors en route to helping the Trojans to a Rose Bowl victory last season.

Noted for his smarts and athleticism at the line, Wheeler is projected to be a mid- to latter-round pick as a swing tackle or even a guard, where some experts believe he may be more effective.

Wheeler has dealt with a string of injuries during his career that has given analysts pause, in addition to an off-the-field issue that led to his suspension for the Holiday Bowl in 2015. Wheeler got into an altercation with police that December and was placed in protective custody for psychiatric evaluation, but was not arrested. On the field, he suffered a season-ending ACL tear in his right knee in October 2014, and his start to 2016 was delayed because of plantar fasciitis in his foot.

Robinson, who has been grouped with Utah's Garrett Bolles and Wisconsin's Ryan Ramczyk among the Class of 2017's top tackle prospects, has traveled cross-country to meet with multiple NFL teams, including the Jaguars, 49ers, Panthers and Texans, per NFL Network.

Robinson (6-foot-6, 322 pounds) started every game at left tackle for Alabama the last three years and earned a pair of first-team all-conference honors plus All-America honors his junior year. Robinson figures to be selected in the first round, but has been projected by many analysts as a better fit at guard at the pro level. Joseph has put on emphasis on getting bigger and more aggressive up front to better protect the Broncos' quarterbacks and to jumpstart the run game. His first move was bringing in guard Ron Leary, whom Joseph has called "the nastiest guard in free agency." Then he welcomed Menelik Watson, a tackle who spent four years in Oakland but lost a lot of time because of injuries.

Now Joseph must figure out who will be his left tackle.

"We've got four or five candidates that are going to compete for the job," he said Monday. "I don't know who it would be right now, but we don't play until the fall, so that's a good thing."

Soft-spoken Demaryius Thomas seeks more YAC

By Mike Klis

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He is often called by his initials, D.T., but when Demaryius Thomas was at his best, he was all about the YAC.

Yards after the catch.

Thomas, the Denver Broncos' No. 1 receiver, has gone from leading the NFL in yards after the catch in 2013 to ranking 47th in the YAC category last year.

Perhaps, the return of Mike McCoy and the bread-n-butter YAC play – the receiver screen – and a healthy hip will send Thomas on his way after the catch again in 2017.

“That was kind of one of my first thoughts -- the screen passes,” Thomas said following his team’s offseason workout Tuesday. “The years we played together with Mike were some of my best years. I look forward to it this year as well.”

In 2012, his first season with Peyton Manning as his quarterback and last season with McCoy as his offensive coordinator, Thomas ranked second among NFL receivers with 561 yards after the catch.

In 2013, McCoy left to become the San Diego Chargers’ head coach, but his offensive system stayed behind with Adam Gase and Manning, and Thomas led the NFL with a whopping 718 yards after the catch.

Last season, Thomas didn’t have McCoy, Manning or Gase and he recorded only 336 yards after the catch to rank 25th among receivers, 47th overall.

Not that full blame went to his supporting cast. Thomas wasn’t quite himself last season because of lingering hip problem.

“It was tough,” he said. “Sometimes, I couldn’t stop and sometimes I couldn’t run certain routes that I wanted to run. Sometimes, I couldn’t get off press because I had no power in it.”

Thomas still had his fifth consecutive season of at least 90 catches and 1,000 yards receiving. That’s one way to look at his 2016 season. But Thomas’ 90 catches and 1,083 yards were also his lowest output since 2011.

That’s another way to look at it. Starting with last year’s training camp and carrying on through the final month of the season, Thomas was often seen holding and favoring his hip.

There was pain, but no need for surgery. Rehab did the trick.

“It was bad at times,” he said. “It got worse at some times. I never thought about surgery. I could get it, but I didn’t think I needed it and I don’t really need it.”

“Right now, I feel great. I’ve been running routes and it hasn’t been bothering me. It just depends on how you get hit now. It’s basically maintaining the hips.”

Manning is still gone and he ain’t coming back, but Thomas hopes McCoy’s return can rekindle the offensive magic from a few years ago, regardless of whether Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch emerges as his quarterback.

Play calling is significant to YAC. The vertical throws aren’t necessarily good for YAC. Those catch-and-run screens, though, are made for YAC.

“We’ve got the potential now as well because it’s the same offense and the same system,” Thomas said. “You will have guys running wide open over the field and it’s just about executing now. As it goes on, we’ll be sitting in a group with the receivers, running backs and quarterbacks watching those clips from those days when we broke the records and put up so many points throughout the year just so they can see it.”

Demaryius Thomas hopes to leave hip troubles in the past

By Mike Klis

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Demaryius Thomas won't say exactly what was wrong with his hip last season, but as the Denver Broncos have opened their offseason program, Thomas did offer the injury bothered him and that he believes he can prevent it from impacting the season to come.

"It was bad at times, it got worse sometimes," Thomas said Tuesday, just after the Broncos' first offseason workout. "I never thought about surgery. I could get it, but I don't think I need it, I don't really need it. Right now, I feel great. I've been running routes and it hasn't been bothering me. It just depends on how you get hit now. It's basically maintaining the hips."

Thomas initially injured the hip in the Broncos' 21-20 victory over the Carolina Panthers in the season opener last September. He underwent an MRI exam in the days following the game and the results were not only examined by the Broncos' medical staff, but sent to other orthopedists as well for a second opinion.

The injury nagged Thomas throughout the year. He played 16 games for the fifth consecutive season and also had his fifth consecutive 1,000-yard season. But, hampered with a sore hip, his 12.0 yards per catch average was the lowest of his career.

He never looked comfortable. Toss in a few more of the dropped passes that have troubled him in recent seasons, and Thomas often wore the look of frustration as the team's offense, without an effective run game, didn't consistently close out drives on the way to a playoff miss.

"It was tough," Thomas said. "Sometimes I couldn't stop and sometimes I couldn't run certain routes that I wanted to run. Sometimes I couldn't get off press because I had no power in it. Like you said, it wasn't my excuse. I was out there, going out, trying to help my teammates out and trying not to make it look bad on my part."

Thomas said, other than rehab on his hip, he took most of February off. He still won't get into many specifics about the injury, which has been rumored by some to be at all levels of severity last season.

Asked Tuesday if he knew specifically what the injury was, he said: "Yeah."

Asked what the specific injury was: "Nothing right now."

Asked what was wrong with it, he said, with a smile: "I forget."

And asked if he believed it would come up again this year, Thomas said simply: "No, it won't. I will be on top of it. I'm going to do whatever I got to do to be 100 [percent]."

With a full offseason, Von Miller says 'best Von' is on the way

By Mike Klis

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In the end, leaving the 2016 season behind him won't be a difficult thing for Von Miller to do as he wraps himself in the freshness of new start.

After all, the Denver Broncos finished last season with a 9-7 record and missed the playoffs for the first time since 2010. Miller lost the Defensive Player of the Year Award by one vote to the Oakland Raiders' Khalil Mack. Miller also didn't record a sack over the last four games of the season.

"Now it's just all football," Miller said Tuesday after the Broncos' first offseason workout. "I'm here, settled in and just time to play."

It is all different this time around. There's been no "Dancing With the Stars" or tour of the late-night talk-show circuit. Miller has still traveled near and far -- search for Drake, Nicki Minaj and Miller's name for a start -- but he reported with the rest of the Broncos players this week to start the team's offseason program. He was not present a year ago, having been tabbed as the franchise player in what became a rather testy contract negotiation with the Broncos.

He signed a record \$114.5 million contract just before training camp opened and took the practice field for the first time in late July.

"Definitely feeling a whole lot better, getting rest ... definitely in a better place physically that I was last year," Miller said Tuesday.

Miller said after he finished that post-Super Bowl stint on DWTS a year ago he weighed about "230," which is far lighter than where he has said he wants his playing weight to be in most seasons (between 245-250 pounds). And while what Peyton Manning had jokingly called Miller's "world tour," was completely voluntary in the post-title-game swirl, Miller said he does notice a difference this time around.

"I pretty much didn't have an offseason last year there was so much stuff," Miller said. "I wasn't going to use that as an excuse, I lost by one vote. ... It was close, I got close this year, if we were able to make the playoffs and I was able to make a few more plays, who knows? But I feel like this Von coming up is going to be my best Von that I've put forth, best year. A full offseason, a full OTA, be here every single day. It's not all the noise on the outside with the contract, this and that, doing all that stuff. I've always been able to handle that type of situation; I felt like that's what I was built for. It really didn't bother me. ... I'm moving forward."

Miller did finish with 13.5 sacks last season, his fifth career season with at least 11 sacks, and opposing offenses routinely made him their first priority as he spent the season often wrestling with double- or even some triple-teams. And while he lived the life of a Super Bowl MVP to the fullest last year at this

time and hoped for a new contract, he believed he could still get his work in, on his own, off the field just as he would have had he been around the Broncos last April, May and June.

However, as he begins this year's work, he said Tuesday that he has changed his thinking on that.

"They are extremely important," Miller said of the team's workouts. "I felt like last year, when I was missing them, 'Man, I don't really need OTAs, I can train on my own.' But you really need it ... the more time you can get to perfect your craft with your teammates, you need that to get over the hump. I need this time here ... to be a better player."

Broncos general manager John Elway has said one of the Broncos' major offseason goals was to "stay great on defense." Miller and the team's secondary -- with four players who have each played in the Pro Bowl over the past two seasons -- are at the center of that.

"We have a high standard here, I don't think it was the noise that got us off that path," Miller said. "It just happened. We've got the best secondary in the National Football League still, we still have all our key components. This year is going to be a good one for us."

Von Miller more concerned about Super Bowls than Super Bowl wear

By Mike Klis

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Calling the FBI. Calling the FBI. Or maybe just call them later.

It was the great Super Bowl artifact heist. Tom Brady got his jerseys back from his past two Super Bowls wins.

But Von Miller still hasn't seen the helmet he wore as Super Bowl 50 MVP. It's around. Miller said it's at the local FBI headquarters in Denver.

"Just waiting to bring it over whenever we get time, or for me to go pick it up," he said. "They got it, the finest have it so I'm OK."

Turns out, a media poser, Martin Mauricio Ortego, had been taking Super Bowl souvenirs for a couple years and bringing them back to his home in Mexico. The FBI tracked down the guy. Brady got the jerseys back he wore in Super Bowl XLIX (49) and LI (51).

Apparently, Miller can get his Super Bowl 50 helmet back whenever the exchange is arranged.

But what about his cleats? Miller didn't know his helmet was stolen until a year later when he got a call from Broncos' security boss Keith Bishop saying it was recovered from the thief.

"That's how crazy last year was," Miller said, referring to his whirlwind Super Bowl 50 tour.

But Miller was aware he was missing his Super Bowl shoes shortly after the game on Feb. 7, 2016 at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. It didn't hit him they were stolen. But he wondered where they ran off to. Miller won the 50 game for the Broncos with two strip sacks of Carolina quarterback Cam Newton that led to two touchdowns in a 24-10 win.

"I don't worry about those," Miller said of his cleats. "I've still got to check those out. But I play with two pair of cleats. I've got the second pair. I've got the second-half cleats. I don't have the first-half."

Wait. Miller wears two pairs of cleats for each game?

"I changed cleats at halftime because the field was kind of slippery," he said. "They'll turn up. My mom personally has my jersey. I'm fine."

Maybe if Miller were a little more materialistic about such things, he'd be sweating it. With five years left on his contract, Miller said it's not garb he's worried about.

"We're going to play in two more Super Bowls," he said. "Those next two Super Bowls, I guarantee you I'll walk away with my finger tape, my helmet, I promise you I will have all of my stuff."

Broncos' Von Miller believes this year's Von will be his 'best Von'

By Troy Renck
KMGH
April 12, 2017

Von Miller walked onto the stage, providing a juxtaposition from a year ago. No music accompanied his entrance. No costume was required to embrace his “country swagger.” He wasn’t leaned out – he dropped to roughly 230 pounds – to recreate Michael Jackson’s “Bad” video. Tuesday, Miller wore a plain orange hoodie, and a serious demeanor at Dove Valley.

When the first-team All-Pro starts talking in third person, be afraid NFL. Be very afraid.

“It’s all about football. There’s no outside noise,” Miller said, referring to his “Dancing With the Stars” appearances. “I am definitely in a better place physically than I was this time last year. I am getting rest and being able to sleep. I feel a whole lot better. I think this year will be the best Von I have put forward.”

Despite a dizzying six months after winning Super Bowl 50 MVP honors, Miller translated seamlessly to football. He finished with 13.5 sacks, and remained a wrecking ball. Miller admitted Tuesday that missing the entire offseason a year ago was not advantageous. He benefits from being around his teammates. They view him as a leader; caulking that binds the entire locker room.

“I am going to be here everyday. The more time you can perfect your craft with your teammates, you need that to get over the hump,” Miller said, admitting last season’s playoff admission stung. “When you’re not winning. Someone’s going to be upset. A lot of guys got frustrated...I need this time here in OTAs to be a better player. I didn’t have it last year and came off fine. But you definitely need OTAs to play at your highest potential.”

For Miller, 28, this represents an interesting season. Everything seems possible. Defensive Player of the Year honors – he lost by one vote last year – a larger presence, a push toward the Hall of Fame. Miller continued to evolve as a mentor under DeMarcus Ware’s watch. With Ware retired, Miller, more than ever, is the face of the defense, if not the franchise.

“I’ve always had great examples of great leadership so I know exactly what it takes. I feel like I have always done that. Now we are missing one of the greatest in DeMarcus. It’s like when Peyton (Manning) left. You don’t just fill that void,” Miller said. “It’s important to me to win games and win the Super Bowl. You have to go out there and earn respect (of teammates). I feel like my whole career I have been the People’s Champ of the locker room.”

Miller remains encouraged by new coach Vance Joseph’s first impression. He praised Joseph for his leadership in a room of dominant personalities, especially on defense.

“I love him already. He’s going to do great,” Miller said. “It’s a unique locker room. We have a culture here.”

As for Miller's Super Bowl 50 helmet, seized by Mexican authorities as part of the recovery of Tom Brady jerseys, the Broncos star doesn't have it. Yet.

It arrived in Denver, and Miller figures to pick it up eventually. In truth, he never knew it was missing because he hadn't planned to keep it. The theft, unknown at the time, represented another memorable moment in Miller's tornado of an offseason.

The past few months, Miller has done little dancing. Just listening. He traveled Europe, worked out and attended multiple Drake concerts.

"It was cool," Miller said. "He's the G.O.A.T."

Footnote

Alabama tackle Cam Robinson will visit the Broncos on Wednesday. Most mock drafts continue to project the Broncos to select a tackle in the first round among Garrett Bolles, Ryan Ramczyk and Robinson. If the Broncos don't go for an offensive lineman in the first round, some names to monitor: Utah tackle Sam Tevi visited, and the Broncos have interest in Julie'n Davenport. It remains no guarantee the Broncos go with a with tackle. Monday, Joseph talked about his desire to add "juice" to the offense, leaving a playmaker at tight end a possibility.

Von Miller predicts 2017 season will be his best yet

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

April 12, 2017

Von Miller swears missing the Denver Broncos' offseason program last year didn't adversely affect his play. Still, after coming up short in his bid to win Defensive Player of the Year and defend his Super Bowl title, he's thrilled to be working out with his teammates this spring.

Miller called these initial workouts under new coach Vance Joseph "extremely important" in his quest to lead the Broncos back to the playoffs and fulfill his pledge to have his best season in 2017.

"Last year, I was like, 'Man, you don't really need OTAs. You can train on your own.' But you really need these," Miller said Tuesday. "The National Football League is so competitive, so the more time that you can get to perfect your craft with your teammates" the better.

Miller's 2016 offseason was a whirlwind of global flights and TV appearances including Dancing with the Stars.

"Honestly, I didn't even know my helmet was missing," Miller said.

Investigators who located Tom Brady's missing Super Bowl jerseys in Mexico also found Miller's Super Bowl 50 helmet, which he said is back in Denver.

Miller signed a seven-year, \$114.5 million contract at the deadline last summer after skipping the Broncos' entire offseason program. Then, he collected 13 1-2 sacks and a career-best 78 tackles in 2016. But he went without a sack over the final month of the season as the Broncos missed the playoffs by one game and Oakland defensive end Khalil Mack edged him by a single vote for Defensive Player of the Year.

"I pretty much didn't have an offseason last year with so much stuff (going on)," Miller said. "And I wasn't going to use that as an excuse. I lost by one vote. ... I got close this year. If we were able to make the playoffs or I was able to make a few more plays, who knows where we would have been?"

Miller said he's moved past the disappointment.

"I'm not going to stay stuck in the past. I'm moving forward," Miller said. "This Von coming up is going to be the best Von that I put forward. It's going to be my best year. That's what I'm going for. I have a full offseason, full OTAs, I'm going to be here training every single day. It's not all that noise on the outside from the contract and this and that and doing all this stuff. Not that that was a big deal for me, but now it's just all football. I'm here, I'm settled in and it's time to go play."

Asked if he felt better physically than he did a year ago, Miller said: "I was on Dancing with the Stars at this time. I was probably 230 pounds. You know, I'm definitely feeling a whole lot better, getting rest and being able to sleep."

Miller got his vacations out of the way after the season ended, taking in Drake concerts in Dublin, Paris and Amsterdam.

Meanwhile, DeMarcus Ware retired .

"That's tough. It's just like when Peyton (Manning) left. You can't really just fill that void. You've got to just modify the team and move on," Miller said. "Other leaders will step up."

He's also thrilled by the additions of run-stuffers Domata Peko and Zach Kerr.

"Have you seen those guys? Those guys are huge," Miller said. "Peko, he's athletic. We were working out today and I was like, 'Yeah, he's going to be great for us.' So, just by looking at those guys you can already tell that they're going to fill and correct some of those weaknesses that we had last year."

Also gone is defensive coordinator Wade Phillips, who joined the Rams and was replaced by former secondary coach Joe Woods.

"Coach Phillips will go down as one of the best defensive coordinators to ever coach the game. But Joe is a good coach as well," Miller said. "It's not like we're just going to totally abandon what we did last year."

As for Joseph, who replaced Gary Kubiak in January, Miller said: "I love him already," and said Joseph "connects well" with all the big personalities in the Broncos locker room.

Miller said he hung out with fellow Texas A&M alum Myles Garrett , an edge rusher that many, including Miller, expect to be the top pick in the draft.

"He's A-1," Miller said. "I haven't come across somebody that young with that type of mentality. He studied architecture and paleontology and all of these dope studies. ... Right now he's going to the AFC North and I don't see anybody up there that's really going to be able to handle him."

Von Miller predicts 2017 is 'gonna be my best year'

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

April 12, 2017

One vote.

That's what separated last year's Defensive Player of the Year, Raiders pass-rusher Khalil Mack, from Broncos whirlwind Von Miller, the ill-fated runner-up.

The MVP of Super Bowl 50 made it clear on Tuesday that he views that loss as tangible motivation heading into this season.

"I pretty much didn't have an offseason last year with so much stuff," Miller said of last year's holdout that kept him away from the team until mid-July. "I wasn't gonna use that as an excuse, but I lost by one vote. The year before, I don't know how many votes it was that I lost by. I got close this year. ... This is part of life, I'm not just gonna stay stuck in the past."

Miller, 28, then previewed what Broncos fans -- and opposing passers -- can expect come September.

"I feel like this Von coming up is going to be my best Von that I put forward. It's gonna be my best year, that's what I'm going for," Miller said. "I have a full offseason, full OTAs, I'm gonna be here every single day training. It's not all luck. ... Now it's just all football. I'm here, I'm settled in. It's time to go play."

In a landscape still crowded by Mack, J.J. Watt and Aaron Donald, Miller has his work cut out for him if he plans to run away with next year's Defensive Player of the Year award.

That said, Miller operating at peak capacity is as much in the conversation for MVP as he is for one of the league's lesser trophies. The sky is the limit.

Von Miller: Myles Garrett should be top pick in 2017 NFL Draft

By Dan Parr

NFL.com

April 12, 2017

Just about everyone expects Myles Garrett to be the No. 1 overall pick of the 2017 NFL Draft.

Von Miller says that's the way it should be.

Miller had high praise for Garrett, his fellow former Texas A&M Aggie pass rusher on Tuesday, saying that he deserves to be, and will be, the first player selected when the draft (April 27-29 in Philadelphia) begins.

"He should be the No. 1 pick. He is going to be the No. 1 pick," Miller said.

Miller went a step further, saying he doesn't think anyone in the AFC North can handle Garrett.

Now, it's no surprise that someone has such a high opinion of Garrett's talent, and, yes, it would be unusual for an NFL player to have anything less than favorable things to say about a top prospect from the school he attended.

It's also true that the top tackle in the AFC North, Joe Thomas, would be Garrett's teammate if Cleveland does indeed take him with the No. 1 pick. The reason Garrett is so highly regarded is because teams don't see many OTs in the league who will be able to stop him.

The Ravens took Ronnie Stanley sixth overall last year, presumably, to be a player who can hold his own with elite pass rushers.

Garrett's freakish ability is going to be tough for any tackle to keep at bay, though -- Miller and the rest of the NFL know it.

Demaryius Thomas: I can be the guy to get offense sparking

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
April 12, 2017

Catching 90 passes for 1,083 yards and five touchdowns would typically be seen as a strong season for an NFL wide receiver, but the response to Broncos wideout Demaryius Thomas' 2016 campaign wasn't greeted with non-stop fanfare.

Those numbers were his lowest in all three metrics since the 2011 season and the Broncos offense represented the biggest reason why the team fell short of the playoffs. New coach Vance Joseph's response was to say that he wants Thomas to be "a dominant player all the time" and take on a bigger leadership role than he's played in the past.

Thomas sounded ready to accept Joseph's challenge when he spoke to the media on Tuesday.

"It means a lot [for Joseph to say that]," Thomas said, via the team's website. "Definitely, the first thing I thought was more opportunities and chances to get the ball more, but also [that I can] be that guy to get the offense sparking. I'm excited about it and I look forward to it. I just have to step up to the plate."

Thomas noted a couple of things he believes will help him this year. One is that he's over a hip injury that limited him in the latter stages of the 2016 season and the other is the return of offensive coordinator Mike McCoy, who ran the offense when Thomas broke out in his third NFL season. If the team can get improved quarterback play as well, the pieces for a bigger year for Thomas would all appear to be in place.

Von Miller: This will be my best year yet

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
April 12, 2017

Broncos linebacker Von Miller was appearing on “Dancing With the Stars” and hoping to reach agreement with the Broncos instead of taking part in the team’s offseason program this time last year, although the time away from the team didn’t seem to slow him down much on the field.

Miller had 13.5 sacks and three forced fumbles in another strong season off the edge in the Denver defense. It wasn’t quite enough to make him the choice as the defensive player of the year as Raiders defensive end Khalil Mack got one more vote to take the award, but it seemed like the kind of performance the Broncos would happily take every year.

On Tuesday, Miller said that he expects to give the Broncos even more this time around. He said having a full offseason with the team and the desire to erase the frustrations from the way things ended last year will bring the best version of Miller to the stage.

“I feel like this Von coming up is going to be the best Von I’ve put forth,” Miller said, via Nicki Jhabvala of the Denver Post.

The Broncos stayed in house by promoting Joe Woods to defensive coordinator with Wade Phillips moving on to the Rams, so there aren’t likely to be major changes to the way the defense operates in 2017. That should keep Miller well-positioned to remain the same disruptive force he’s been for years at the very least.

Von Miller: 'It's going to be my best year'

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
April 12, 2017

Von Miller came within one vote of being named Defensive Player of the Year last year despite missing the entire offseason because of an unsigned franchise tender.

He traveled the world. He showed off his moves on Dancing with the Stars. And after he got up to speed in the preseason, he was back at his usual level, earning Pro Bowl and All-Pro nods and finishing with a double-digit sack total for the fifth time in six seasons.

"I feel like I've always been able to handle those types of situations. I feel like that's what I was built for. It really didn't bother me," he said Tuesday. "I felt like that's why I was able to come out and have the type of season that I had [last] year."

So just imagine what he could do if he's an everyday presence at team-organized offseason work.

Miller has.

"If I didn't have [those off-field commitments last year], who knows where I would have been?" he said.

And he envisions a player better than the one that already has a resume that places him on a Hall of Fame trajectory.

"I feel like this Von coming up is going to be my best Von that I put forward," he said.

"I have a full offseason. Full OTAs. I'm going to be here every single day training. It's not all the noise on the outside from the contract and this and that, and doing all this stuff -- not that it wasn't a big deal for me.

"Now it's just all football. I'm here. I'm settled in, and it's time to go play."

Last year, Miller's offseason got off to a late start because of the Broncos' run to Super Bowl 50. Weeks later, he began training for Dancing with the Stars, from which he was eliminated on May 2. Even though he didn't go through the offseason regimen with his teammates, his schedule was crammed.

This year, the Broncos' offseason began earlier than expected, and Miller took advantage. He focused on rest and rejuvenation. He already sees the difference.

"I'm definitely a whole lot better. [I'm] getting the rest and being able to sleep," Miller said. "I'm definitely in a better place physically than where I was last year."

He's also a lighthouse of stability surrounded by a tempest of change. With DeMarcus Ware retired, Shane Ray becomes his edge-rushing partner. Joe Woods has taken over as the defensive coordinator. Two-thirds of the starting defensive line could be new with the free-agent arrivals of Domata Peko and Zach Kerr.

Ray's work in place of Ware the last two years ensures that he and Miller will be up to speed. The secondary behind Miller remains intact. Woods will carry over the bulk of Wade Phillips' philosophies.

But it's Peko and Kerr — and their combined 659 pounds of bulk — who could make the biggest difference in helping Miller reach new heights.

"Have you seen those guys? Those guys are huge," Miller said. "Peko, he's athletic, and he was working out today, and I was like, 'Yeah, he's going to be great for us.'

"Just by looking at those guys, you can already tell they're going to be [able to] correct some of those weaknesses we had last year."

If Peko, Kerr and any additions through the draft make the Broncos stout against the run, Miller will have more opportunities to attack the quarterback. More pass-rushing opportunities means more chances for Miller to do what he does best -- and to do that better than ever before.

"It's going to be my best year," he said. "That's what I'm going for."

Draft position breakdown: Tight ends

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
April 12, 2017

With tight ends more prominent in NFL offenses than ever before, a once-a-generation draft class at the position comes at the right time.

1. O.J. HOWARD, ALABAMA

HEIGHT: 6-6 - WEIGHT: 251

ARM LENGTH: 33 3/4 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 inches

40: 4.51 seconds BENCH PRESS: 22 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.16 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 6.85 seconds

Of the tight ends in this year's class, Howard is the most ready to step in from Day 1 on every down. He is the complete package who can handle in-line work as a blocker with the flexibility to line up outside and use his size to make catches despite blanket coverage from defensive backs.

During Senior Bowl week, Howard was the best player on the field, easily executing a variety of routes with smooth changes of direction and outstanding adjustment to the ball in flight. The only issue for Howard is in concentration, which leads to the occasional drop, but he recovers well, ensuring that his flubs are isolated incidents.

2. DAVID NJOKU, MIAMI (FLA.)

HEIGHT: 6-4 - WEIGHT: 246

ARM LENGTH: 35 1/4 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 inches

40: 4.65 seconds BENCH PRESS: 21 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.34 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 6.97 seconds

No tight end in college football was better down the stretch of the 2016 season than Njoku, who hit his stride with seven touchdowns in his final six games for the Hurricanes, including a 76-yard catch-and-run against Duke to conclude the regular season.

Njoku can stretch the field like a wide receiver; his average of 16.6 yards per catch at Miami was the highest among draftable tight ends.

His blocking needs refinement, and he will likely always be a better receiver than a blocker. Weight-room work and coaching should help him improve there. But as a receiving target, he would represent an immediate upgrade for at least half of the league.

3. EVAN ENGRAM, MISSISSIPPI

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 234

ARM LENGTH: 33 1/2 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 inches

40: 4.42 seconds BENCH PRESS: 19 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.23 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 6.92 seconds

Engram turned in his best work against the best competition on Mississippi's schedule last year. His two biggest games came against Alabama (nine catches, 138 yards) and Florida State (nine receptions, 121 yards), highlighting a season in which he averaged 84.2 yards per game and scored once every eight receptions.

His route-running is as impressive as his timed speed, making him a matchup nightmare for opposing linebackers -- and even some cornerbacks. A unique athlete, Engram will have a speed and quickness advantage over players who are 20 to 30 pounds lighter.

At 234 pounds, Engram was the lightest tight end at the Combine, some 18 pounds below the average for the position. That size ensures that some teams may see him as a wide receiver more than a tight end. But despite his size, Engram is a willing blocker, and will provide enough of an obstruction when working from an in-line alignment to justify every-down use.

4. ADAM SHAHEEN, ASHLAND

HEIGHT: 6-7 - WEIGHT: 278

ARM LENGTH: 33 1/2 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 5/8 inches

40: 4.79 seconds BENCH PRESS: 24 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.38 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.09 seconds

Shaheen's amazing fluidity for a player of his size drew the attention of scouts the last two years. His fast-rising stock compelled him to turn pro with one year of eligibility remaining; his Combine performance then ensured it would be a wise choice.

A high-school basketball standout who earned a scholarship to Pittsburgh-Johnstown, Shaheen eventually returned to football and used the athleticism he developed on the hardwood to his advantage. He added 75 pounds to his frame in college, but kept his agility.

Shaheen's blocking could use some refinement. In Division II, he was able to rely on size and overpowering athleticism to easily handle defenders. In the NFL, he will have to improve at establishing his base and using proper hand placement. His willingness to learn and his size ensure that it should only be a matter of time before he gets the hang of it.

5. BUCKY HODGES, VIRGINIA TECH

HEIGHT: 6-6 - WEIGHT: 257

ARM LENGTH: 32 1/2 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 1/8 inches

40: 4.57 seconds BENCH PRESS: 18 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.29 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.05 seconds

Hodges is perhaps the most unique athlete in this draft. At 257 pounds, he has the size to hold his ground on the inside, and could potentially add another 10 pounds to his frame. His straight-line speed represents what you would expect from a player 20 to 30 pounds lighter.

Virginia Tech converted Hodges from quarterback to tight end during his redshirt 2013 season and capitalized on Hodges' knowledge of the offense by moving him all around. He lined up inside, outside, in the slot and in the backfield, and was an effective receiving target from wherever he began the play.

Hodges' route-running needs work; his cuts aren't always as precise as they could be, which prevents from getting separation. He didn't need to rely on his routes in college, since he could win one-on-one matchups in tight coverage.

REST OF THE TOP 15

6. Jake Butt, Michigan
7. Gerald Everett, South Alabama
8. Jordan Leggett, Clemson
9. Michael Roberts, Toledo
10. Jonnu Smith, Florida International
11. Jeremy Sprinkle, Arkansas
12. Eric Saubert, Drake
13. Cole Hikutuni, Louisville
14. George Kittle, Iowa
15. Scott Orndorff, Pittsburgh

BRONCOS TE OUTLOOK

Virgil Green leads the group as he heads into the final year of his contract. A capable blocker who provides steady play, he is the known commodity of the group. Questions loom beyond him.

Jeff Heurman and A.J. Derby each head into their third pro season -- typically the fork-in-the-road juncture for young players. Heurman's progress starts with staying healthy after two campaigns marred by ACL and hamstring injuries. Derby, a converted college quarterback, showed promise as a receiving target, but must grow as a blocker.

Late last year, the Broncos promoted then-rookie Henry Krieger-Coble from the practice squad. A talented target, the Iowa product hopes to build on the foundation established during a strong training camp. He is the wild card of the position group.

TEN-YEAR HISTORY: TEs DRAFTED BY BRONCOS

The Broncos selected just nine tight ends in their previous 25 drafts, but that rate has increased in the last decade-plus. Five of the nine tight ends selected came in the last 11 drafts, including four in the last eight.

2007: None

2008: None

2009: Richard Quinn, North Carolina - Round 2, No. 64 overall

2010: None

2011: Julius Thomas, Portland State - Round 4, No. 129 overall; Virgil Green, Nevada - Round 7, No. 204 overall

2012: None

2013: None

2014: None

2015: Jeff Heurman, Ohio State - Round 3, No. 92 overall

2016: None

Von Miller relieved to have Super Bowl 50 helmet back in Denver

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
April 12, 2017

Forgive Von Miller for not noticing.

Between a Super Bowl parade, Dancing with the Stars tapings, appearances on numerous talk shows, a Saturday Night Live cameo, a visit to the White House and everything else that occupied his busy 2016 offseason, Miller's Super Bowl 50 helmet was the last thing on his mind.

But a year later, after an FBI investigation sparked by the disappearance of Tom Brady's Super Bowl LI jersey, the Super Bowl 50 MVP's helmet was found in Mexico at the home of a credentialed journalist who had stolen several pieces of equipment from previous Super Bowls. When the investigation began, the FBI was unaware Miller's helmet was even missing, according to Fox Sports' Jay Glazer. The helmet turned up during the course of the investigation and has since been returned to Denver.

"I didn't even know my helmet was missing. That's how crazy last year was," Miller said Tuesday. "But we had the best of the best, the finest investigators on the whole ordeal. ... They were able to find Tom's jersey, and they were able to find my helmet, as well. Hats off to those guys."

After travelling to Europe during his downtime in 2017 before the Broncos' offseason program, Miller returned to the surprising news that the helmet was awaiting his retrieval. Though he hasn't gotten it from the authorities yet, Miller plans to return it to its rightful place in his possession as soon as his schedule allows.

"It's here in Denver, but I just haven't had time to go over and get it," he said. "But the helmet is here, and as long as it's close, they've got it."

Demaryius Thomas eager to embrace Coach Joseph's challenge

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
April 12, 2017

Weeks before Head Coach Vance Joseph addressed his team for the first time, he issued one of his key players a challenge.

From his table at the AFC Coaches Breakfast at the Annual League Meeting in March, Joseph shared with reporters his expectations for Demaryius Thomas.

"I want '88' — that's what I call him — I want him to be a dominant player all the time," Joseph said. "I don't want him to ease into games. I want him to be [the] guy. I want him to step out and be [the] guy. It's time.

"He's a great player. He can take over a game, but I want his mindset every game to be [that in] every game we play, [he can] walk on the field and take over the game. Again, running the football will force them to load up the box and give him one-on-one opportunities. I want him to win every one-on-one. I want him to become a leader of our football team."

Thomas was listening, and he liked what he heard. By the time Thomas sat in the team room at UCHHealth Training Center and listened to his new head coach, he was fully onboard Joseph's plan to make him a staple of the Broncos' offense.

"It means a lot [for Joseph to say that]," Thomas said Tuesday. "Definitely, the first thing I thought was more opportunities and chances to get the ball more, but also [that I can] be that guy to get the offense sparking. I'm excited about it and I look forward to it. I just have to step up to the plate."

If Thomas returns to his 2012-14 form, that will surely fulfill Joseph's hopes for the eighth-year wide receiver.

He was by no means average in either 2015 or 2016. He tallied at least 1,000 yards in each of those two seasons and earned a Pro Bowl selection.

Perhaps, then, that should signal the impressiveness of his previous seasons.

He recorded at least 1,400 yards, 90 receptions and 10 touchdowns in each of the three years. His 2013 season was arguably his best, as he caught 92 passes for 1,430 yards and 14 touchdowns. Thomas caught the most of Peyton Manning's record-breaking 55 touchdowns that season and earned second-team All-Pro honors.

Four years later, Thomas doesn't see a reason he can't recapture that same sort of production.

"We've got the potential now, as well, because it's the same offense and the same system," Thomas said.

“As [the offseason] goes on, we’ll be sitting in a group with the receivers, running backs and quarterbacks watching those clips from those days when we broke the records and put up so many points throughout the year just so they can see it.”

Much of that confidence stems from the return of Offensive Coordinator Mike McCoy, who left for the Chargers’ head-coaching job after the 2012 season.

With McCoy back in the fold, Thomas anticipates an offense more similar to the one from its league-leading years, rather than the one that has struggled at times over the last two seasons.

“The sky is the limit,” Thomas said. “It’s just going out as a group of guys on the offensive side of the ball and executing. We have playmakers and we’ve got good coaches to call the plays. We’ve got two quarterbacks that can play and you’ve got running backs out the backfield, offensive line. It’s about going out and executing now.”

Joseph, who’s repeatedly said he welcomes offensive input from each of the many minds on his staff, already has some preliminary ideas about how to increase Thomas’ production.

Those plans range from putting Thomas in motion to changing his alignment in different formations. With the help of those schematic elements, Joseph thinks Thomas can gain an advantage over defensive backs.

“He can play the slot and he can play outside,” Joseph said. “He’s a great runner with the football with wide-receiver screens. That has been his trademark for years. Catch the screen and go 60 and 70 yards.”

Toward the end of the season, Thomas likely could not make those plays due to a lingering hip injury.

As the Broncos played their final few games, Thomas had trouble stopping, running certain routes and getting off press coverage. There simply wasn’t any power in his hip to help him explode off the ball, he said.

That has since changed, as he’s run routes without any pain.

When asked if he knew the specific ailment that affected his hip, Thomas stayed coy.

“Yes,” he said.

What was it?

“I forgot.”

Thomas did remember enough to say that the issue won’t recur in 2017, as he has a plan to “be on top of it and do whatever I need to do to be 100 [percent].”

There’s plenty of reason to believe Thomas will follow through on that claim.

The former first-round pick hasn't missed a game since 2011 and has started 80-consecutive regular-season games for the Broncos.

If Joseph and Thomas have their way, start No. 80 will be the beginning of a season full of production.