

Kiszla: Trevor Siemian vs. Paxton Lynch. Let the uncivil war begin in Broncos Country

Lynch: "I believe in myself to be a starter this year"

By Mark Kiszla
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Let the bickering in Broncos Country begin. Are you with Trevor Siemian? Or do you roll with Paxton Lynch?

This isn't a quarterback controversy. It's an uncivil war not seen since Tim Tebow left Denver.

When new Broncos coach Vance Joseph insists it's an open, 50-50 competition between Siemian and Lynch to be the team's starting quarterback, I believe him.

I also believe Joseph cannot possibly know exactly what he's getting himself into by letting Broncos Country be a house divided between Mr. Skittles (Siemian) and the Pirate (Lynch).

"It's open," Joseph said, "and it's going to go down to the wire, I hope."

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Here's applause for Joseph committing to take his sweet time to fully evaluate the team's two young quarterbacks. If it requires all of training camp, or even half the regular season, to choose between Lynch and Siemian, that's fine by me.

Why? His call on the quarterback is one Joseph must get right, or he won't be the Broncos' coach for long.

A year ago, Gary Kubiak prioritized making the playoffs over finding the team's QB of the future, and he failed at both tasks. While it's understandable why Kubiak took the win-now approach with the defending Super Bowl champs, he walked out the door at Dove Valley headquarters leaving a hot potato in the lap of Joseph.

How Joseph negotiates the noise emanating from the Siemian vs. Lynch debate will reveal much about if he's cut out to be an NFL head coach. Joseph must not only sell his decision to the Broncos' locker room, he must sell it to Broncos Country.

Around here, a coach unable to control the hubbub gets run out of town real quick. Or have you forgotten Josh McDaniels? Around here, the passionate fan base will scream about the quarterback until it's nearly impossible for a coach to ignore. Or have you forgotten Tebowmania?

Whether the position is left tackle or quarterback, Joseph insists "The best guys will play."

We all want to believe sports represent the ultimate meritocracy. But when the debate is about the quarterback in a football-crazy town, locker-room politics and the court of public opinion get all tangled up with whatever evidence is recorded in the all-22 video by Lynch and Siemian.

Trevor Siemian (13) of the Denver ...John Leyba, The Denver Post
Trevor Siemian (13) of the Denver Broncos and Paxton Lynch (12) take the field before the first quarter against the Oakland Raiders on Sunday, Jan. 1, 2017 in Denver.

Think not? Well, Jake Plummer always was and always will be a better NFL quarterback than Jay Cutler, but that didn't stop the Snake from losing his job when Mike Shanahan turned over a winning team to his prized first-round draft choice.

Remove the personal bias, and the math doesn't lie. Although Siemian was more experienced in the Denver offense and produced a much larger sample size in 2016, there was no significant difference between him and Lynch in completion percentage, touchdown-to-interception ratio or quarterback rating.

"I think you learn pretty quickly, or at least I did, that you've got to earn it every year and every day in this league," Siemian said.

There's a weird dynamic between Broncos Country and their two quarterback prospects. If Twitter is a window into the irrational mind of football fanatics, then Siemian is either the next Tom Brady or Brian Griese, while Lynch is either the league's next great gunslinger or too dumb to read NFL defenses.

"I believe in myself to be a starter this year," Lynch said.

While Siemian can command a huddle and is tough as nails, New England coach Bill Belichick exposed Siemian's limited skill set with a no-frills defense during the Patriots' 16-3 victory in December. Although Lynch's lack of footwork and focus can drive a coach nuts, if new offensive coordinator Mike McCoy can't find the pages in his playbook that allow Lynch's playmaking ability to shine as the starting quarterback, then John Elway hired the wrong coaching staff.

Let the bickering begin.

Paxton Lynch is out for his third and biggest NFL victory: the Broncos' starting QB job

Lynch worked with longtime play-caller and quarterbacks coach Charlie Taaffe in Orlando before the start of OTAs

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Paxton Lynch's first offseason as an NFL quarterback included a brief vacation and then a month holed up in a converted 20,000-square-foot warehouse squeezed into the middle of an office complex 15 miles southwest of Deltona, Fla., his hometown.

For about four weeks before the Broncos' organized team activities (OTAs), which started this past week, Lynch spent his days at the D1 Sports Training center in Orlando lugging weights, sweating through conditioning drills and honing his footwork and throws with the help of Charlie Taaffe, a former play-caller and Canadian Football league coach.

This was where Lynch prepared for his life as a pro in 2016 too, before the NFL scouting combine and the draft. He returned almost exactly a year later with the goal of winning not just an NFL job, but the NFL job in Colorado as the Broncos' starting quarterback.

The prevailing belief is that Siemian, the team captain who won the starting job last year, has an edge because of experience and poise, among other things. But the "best man" will win, Joseph said, and for Lynch, a victory this summer would undoubtedly be the biggest of his young career.

"I've had a year in the NFL and a year to adjust," he said. "I don't have that rookie season anymore. I'm ready to come in here and compete and have an opportunity to go out there and be the starter."

Feet come first

Lynch's winter and spring of 2016, when he was a quarterback in limbo, were spent with Taaffe at his side. Taaffe worked with Lynch to improve his footwork and knowledge of the game — of offenses, of coverages, of playing in a pro system after three years running the spread at Memphis.

Both knew Lynch could sell NFL teams with his size and athleticism.

But both knew the difficult transition that lie ahead.

"Last year it was pretty difficult for me just because what I did at Memphis was completely different than what we were doing with Coach (Gary) Kubiak," Lynch said. "The terminology was completely different. Even to where you called the strength of your formation was totally different than the way we called it in college."

A year ago the emphasis was footwork and board work, learning the rhythm and technique of playing under center, while trying to get a better grasp on reading defenses instead of turning to the sideline to receive an order from a coach.

The emphasis this year was more of the same, but with a slightly different approach.

“The thing he was most unfamiliar with coming out of college was learning to play under center,” Taaffe said. “We worked hard on that last year leading up to the combine and his pro day to be able to show the coaches and scouts he can play under center. But he felt like that was still the thing he needed to most work on, so our whole emphasis was on under-center drops, dropback play-action, bootlegs, all the things that he felt he was least prepared for going into his rookie season.”

The goal was to tweak and improve, not reconstruct.

“Because I had a year in the system, I knew how to talk the language,” Lynch said. “So it was mostly just footwork.”

The work typically started at 10:30 a.m., before or after a weightlifting session, and would last about 90 minutes. Footwork drills, quarterback-specific agility drills, five- and seven-step dropbacks. And then throwing, to any receiver in the building willing and capable of running routes, some of whom were University of Central Florida receivers.

Weightlifting sessions were tailored to the throwing sessions so as not to overload a certain muscle group, and classroom studies were replaced by talk of generalities. Lynch didn’t have the completed Broncos playbook yet, but he had a working knowledge of McCoy’s offense and visual evidence of how he has tailored his systems to his quarterbacks.

In short: Lynch knew to expect more shotgun formations.

“That is one thing I am definitely excited about just because my whole college system was shotgun really,” Lynch said. “I know we’re going to have to get under center. Pressing the ball downfield, I’m definitely excited about that, too. Having the opportunity to run around a little bit, that excites me.”

Familiarity breeds comfort and Lynch, who will be playing under his second head coach and in his second offensive system in as many years, has the benefit of time and repetitions. Not a lot. But some, with two starts and a year of learning alongside Siemian and with former quarterbacks coach Greg Knapp.

“He seems to have a much better grasp now of the mental part of learning and learning to be a professional quarterback,” Taaffe said of Lynch. “I think he’s much further along, certainly from the last time I worked with him.”

The question he still has to answer, of course, is if that progression is enough. Is Paxton Lynch an NFL starter?

Playing mind games

Maybe it comes with the gold jacket and bronze bust in Canton, but the rough patches of a legend’s career are typically smoothed over and the lows are filled by the highs in hindsight.

John Elway knows this. He had a difficult rookie season in 1983 — 47.5 percent on completions, twice as many interceptions (14) as touchdown passes (seven), and a 54.9 passer rating — that gave way to a Hall of Fame career, a pair of Super Bowl titles and a status as one of the greatest quarterbacks of all time.

Lynch's first season — 59.0 percent on completions, two touchdown passes, one interception and a 79.2 passer rating in three games — was limited, but few would guess that by the critics near and far. His first-round draft selection was questioned, his grasp of the game was questioned, his accuracy was questioned, his potential was questioned.

But count Elway, the Broncos' general manager, among those expecting a significant year-two leap, on and off the field.

Those who know Lynch well say he is physically ready. He always has been ready in that regard, Taaffe and Joseph would argue.

At 6-foot-7 and 245 pounds, with quick feet and a strong arm, Lynch fits the mold.

"He's got that added ability of being able to extend plays and make plays with his feet, but it's hard," said Taaffe, a former Central Florida offensive coordinator. "I saw that with Blake (Bortles). I coached him four years in college and we were more of a pro-style system, so he had that kind of training going in of playing under center and reading coverages, and he got thrown into it four or five games into his rookie season. I don't know if he was ready for it."

But the Denver job requires more than that.

If Siemian's natural strengths are his arm and his mind, Lynch's natural strengths are his frame and his athleticism. The latter sold the Broncos, as well as other teams who also tried to trade up and draft Lynch. But the progression of an NFL quarterback is a steep climb that requires far more than just on-field play to reach the top.

"There's so much more than just ability," Taaffe said. "Paxton has as much raw physical talent as anyone in the league. But there is that learning curve, and there is that maturity in learning how to handle being a professional, and I think that's still a big part of what he's still learning."

Joseph calls it, simply, leadership.

"Paxton was a first-round pick for a reason," he 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."

In year two, Lynch knows the criteria and the stakes of this quarterback competition. With two victories already on his NFL resume, he's gunning for No. 3.

"I believe in myself to be the starter this year," he said. "I'm going to work hard, just like I did last year. I'm going to learn the offense, get extra work with these guys when I can and be in the building as much as I can at this time. That's what I'm aiming for. That's what I want to do."

Broncos seek more speed for roster -- and in a hurry

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

April 16, 2017

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- Vance Joseph has had plenty of time to look at the Denver Broncos' roster since he was hired as the coach in January. That means he's had plenty of time to make a wish list as the team goes about its offseason repairs.

Beyond the vacant left tackle spot, the most glaring need on offense just might be more big-play pop, especially in the running game. But with a desire to find a consistent No. 3 receiver as well as a player who might fill either of those needs and be a returner, keep an eye on speed as the Broncos make their selections during the draft weekend.

"I think overall to our offense in general, [we need] 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 [line of scrimmage] and go the distance with it. It's important to have that aspect of an offense. Running back, receiver, wherever it comes from, but definitely having more juice on offense is a must in my opinion."

Joseph has consistently said the run game will get plenty of attention overall in the new playbook. After all, the Broncos were 27th in the league last season in rushing, and within those disappointing numbers was the fact they had just four runs of more than 20 yards. Two of those came in the Week 1 win over the Carolina Panthers.

"And running the football is the ultimate way to put the defense at risk," Joseph said. "I truly believe that."

In the end, a multi-tasker like Stanford's Christian McCaffrey, who could also line up at wide receiver and present a speed option in the return game, would check off all of the proverbial boxes for Denver in one player. But the Broncos don't pick until No. 20 in the first round, and McCaffrey isn't expected to be on the board by the time that pick rolls around.

The Broncos did have McCaffrey in this past week for one of their pre-draft visits, so they are at least mulling the scenarios that would have to unfold for the suburban Denver native to end up on the roster. USC cornerback Adoree' Jackson, who has played on offense for the Trojans and is one of the most electric returners on the draft board, is another who would fit the speed-upgrade profile.

But the Broncos simply need more speed at receiver to keep teams from ganging up on Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders, and the need in the return game has largely gone unfilled the last three seasons. Thomas did not have a game with multiple touchdown catches last season; Thomas and Sanders each had a six-game stretch without a scoring catch.

Thomas' touchdown drought covered the final six games, when the Broncos teetered on the edge of the postseason field until December losses against Tennessee and Kansas City.

"We shall see what's next and who they bring in from the draft or who we might go out and pick up," Thomas said. "The guys we have right now, I think they'll bring enough juice. If we add somebody, that we will be even better."

With 10 picks to work with at the moment, it will be a good idea to keep an eye on the speed numbers as the Broncos pull some of the names off the board.

"We just want to have impact guys," Joseph has said. "As a defensive coach, I know those guys who can take the ball the distance every time they get it in their hands are the guys who worry you. You flip the field, you flip the game."

Woody Paige: Who's No. 3? Broncos could pick another Tennessee QB

By Woody Paige
Colorado Springs Gazette
April 16, 2017

Word association.

Quarterback. Orange. University of Tennessee. Denver Broncos.

And you immediately think:

Peyton Manning.

Think again:

Joshua Dobbs.

The Broncos need and want a third quarterback this season.

Most of the free agent quarterbacks already have signed with other teams, and the Broncos are not bringing back Jay Cutler under any circumstances (John Elway never liked him a whit). They won't consider Colin Kaepernick (after he turned down Elway a year ago at this time, and he's now a baggage handler), and RG3 and Johnny out-of-Football never will play in Denver.

The Broncos might contemplate Christian Ponder, who is 29, but it seems like light years since he was the Vikings' starter. This line, though, would be slick: "Christian Ponder hands the ball to Christian McCaffrey, and they are both very religious Christians."

It's highly probable that the Broncos will choose another young quarterback. Elway, as might be suspected, is passionate about quarterbacks. He has picked four in the past five drafts - Brock Osweiler, Zac Dysert, Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. All still are in the league (if you count Brock).

Coach Vance Joseph said at the league meetings that adding a veteran as the No. 3 quarterback "makes no sense." He then said: "I wouldn't discount drafting a quarterback ... That's possible."

However, the Broncos have given no indication who it will be, and when. They did interview one - Pat Mahomes of Texas Tech - but he'll go in the first round. They have watched quarterbacks at the Senior Bowl, the NFL combine and Pro Days, and they possess dossiers on the top 21. They could try to uncover another in the last round, as they did with Siemian (who was injured late in his senior season) and Dysert (a third-stringer on six teams in four seasons).

Or they could choose a QB in the fourth round, where Dak Prescott was selected last season. Prescott, as I wrote before the draft in 2016, was my preference.

This year before the draft, my preference is Dobbs. He would be an exceptional pick and pick-up. The 22-year-old, 6-foot-3, 210-pound graduate in space aerospace engineering is among only four quarterbacks in

SEC history to throw for 50 touchdowns and run for 30. The others were, uh, Tim Tebow and, ugh, Johnny Manziel and, oh, Prescott.

Dobbs was mentored, over the phone and in person, for the past four years, by Manning His Own Self.

"The best advice, easily, I've gotten from Peyton Manning is the importance of preparation," Dobbs told profootballtalk.com.

"He just talks about his preparation each and every week, his pre-snap process and his communication at the quarterback position. And then to go on the field with him and see the importance of each and every rep ... that's definitely made me a better quarterback."

Dobbs was the most impressive quarterback at the Senior Bowl and was in the top three quarterbacks in all the measurables at the combine. He is the most intelligent quarterback in the draft. The consistent criticism is his accuracy, despite Dobbs completing 63 percent of his passes as a senior.

One NFL scout said Dobbs' Pro Day was the best of all the college quarterbacks, and Jon Gruden said after grilling Dobbs during his taped QB Camp: "He's going to be a steal for somebody in the draft."

Why not the Broncos?

Full disclosure: Tennessee is my alma mater, and I'm obviously biased. But I once told Dan Reeves after I covered a Stanford game in 1982: "I've just seen a kid who will become the greatest quarterback in the NFL." And Reeves replied: "We'll never get Elway, so forget about it."

And the Broncos did OK drafting Vols Al Wilson and Malik Jackson, and signing a guy named Manning off the street.

Speaking of, if the Broncos want to improve Siemian, Lynch and, possibly, Dobbs, Elway (who worked with offensive coordinator Mike McCoy) would be wise to ask Manning to drive down the street several days, or perhaps for two weeks, during OTAs and training camp and talk to, and coach up, the quarterbacks.

The Broncos also should draft Alvin Kamara, the Tennessee running back they've interviewed, in the second round. He could be the best of the bunch.

Orange is the ideal color for Alvin and Joshua.

Black & Gold Game notebook: Ray happy to be back in Columbia

By Peter Baugh & Tyler Kraft

Columbia Missourian

April 16, 2017

After Saturday's Black & Gold scrimmage, Missouri alum Shane Ray stood on Faurot Field. Now playing professionally for the Denver Broncos, the 23-year-old defensive lineman was happy to be back in Columbia.

"It's always love," Ray said. "This is my home. I put in a lot of work with my teammates here to build Mizzou to be something great."

As a redshirt sophomore at Missouri, Ray was a consensus All-American and the SEC's Defensive Player of the Year. He was a member of Denver's Super Bowl-winning team as a rookie and now has high expectations heading into his third NFL season.

"One sack a game," Ray said. "Sixteen games in a year, I should have a sack a game. Can't nobody block me."

Draft position breakdown: Edge rushers

By Andrew Mason
Denver Broncos.com
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Don't be surprised to see a handful of edge rushers go off the board within the first 25 picks. This year's class is that good.

1. MYLES GARRETT, TEXAS A&M

HEIGHT: 6-5 - WEIGHT: 272
ARM LENGTH: 35 1/4 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 1/4 inches
40: 4.64 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 33 reps

Garrett is perhaps the best edge-rushing prospect since fellow Texas A&M product Von Miller in 2011. Miller went No. 2 behind Cam Newton that year. Garrett shouldn't have to wait even that long.

An injury to Garrett's lower leg cost him two games and nagged at him throughout the 2016 season. That depressed his production a bit; he had 8.5 sacks in 11 games after posting at least 11.5 sacks in each of his first two years. In spite of the injury, he still posted 15 tackles for losses and forced a pair of fumbles.

Garrett's wingspan of 82 5/8 inches is longer than that of any other edge rusher likely to be selected in the first two days of the draft. With his upper-body strength and ability to create leverage, he uses this attribute exceptionally well.

2. SOLOMON THOMAS, STANFORD

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 273
ARM LENGTH: 33 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 3/8 inches
40: 4.69 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 30 reps
SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.28 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 6.95 seconds

Thomas played just two seasons at Stanford, but maximized them, racking up 11.5 sacks and 25.5 tackles for losses during the last two seasons.

His raw strength and ability to apply it separate him from the rest of this class. He has enough speed to win one-on-one matchups by going outside, but some of his best work comes when he works the inside shoulder of the tackle. He has the athleticism to go low and inside while maintaining his momentum.

It will be fascinating to see how the team that drafts Thomas plans to use him. If he adds 10 pounds to his frame, he could go inside in pass-rush situations. If he maintains his speed with some extra bulk, he could be a devastating interior force.

3. DEREK BARNETT, TENNESSEE

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 259
ARM LENGTH: 32 1/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 inches
40: 4.88 seconds
SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.44 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 6.96 seconds

If you're hung up on workout numbers, Barnett's 40-yard dash time might raise an eyebrow. The numbers that matter for Barnett involve on-field production; he averaged one sack per game in the last two seasons and broke Hall-of-Famer Reggie White's school record for sacks.

What sets Barnett apart from other edge rushers in the class is work against the run; he is perhaps the best in his position group at reading runs as they develop and not being caught out of position.

Barnett is an old-school player. He is not vocal or demonstrative; he just goes about his work and plays with the same energy in the final two minutes as he does when the game begins.

4. T.J. WATT, WISCONSIN

HEIGHT: 6-4 - WEIGHT: 252

ARM LENGTH: 33 1/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 11 inches

40: 4.69 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 21 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.13 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 6.79 seconds

In a single season as a starter, Watt provided the power that made Wisconsin's defense go, finishing the 14-game campaign with 15.5 tackles for losses and 11.5 sacks, making him a certain bet to join older brothers J.J. and Derek at the next level.

The only concerns regarding Watt involve his health and his lack of college experience. He did not play at all at Wisconsin until 2015 after a right knee injury wiped out his redshirt freshman season of 2014. He also had a left-knee issue during the 2015 offseason.

5. TAKKARIST MCKINLEY, UCLA

HEIGHT: 6-2 - WEIGHT: 250

ARM LENGTH: 33 3/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 1/4 inches

40: 4.59 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 24 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.62 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.48 seconds

A two-year starter for the Bruins, McKinley exploded last year with 10 sacks and 18 tackles for losses. Both of those tallies exceeded his combined totals from the previous two seasons.

McKinley is one of the toughest defenders in this draft. He's also one of the best at adapting as the play progresses, and he will quickly get his arms up to try to break up the pass if he can't get to the quarterback. His 10 passes defended in the last two years are a testament to that ability and his mindset of making plays any way he can.

REST OF THE TOP 15

6. Taco Charlton, Michigan

7. Charles Harris, Missouri

8. Tarell Basham, Ohio

9. Tim Williams, Alabama

10. Derek Rivers, Youngstown State

11. Carl Lawson, Auburn

12. Jordan Willis, Kansas State

13. Dawuane Smoot, Illinois

14. Trey Hendrickson, Florida Atlantic

15. Tyus Bowser, Houston

BRONCOS EDGE-RUSHER OUTLOOK

Even after the retirement of DeMarcus Ware, the Broncos are still in outstanding shape here, with Von Miller and Shane Ray set to be one of the league's best duos and a starting-quality reserve in Shaquil Barrett who should receive plenty of snaps this season giving each of them some rest.

With Ware now out of the mix and Dekoda Watson off to San Francisco on a free-agent deal, the Broncos signed former Saints outside linebacker Kasim Edebali on March 13. Edebali is poised to assume Watson's role as a special-teams contributor who can provide an occasional burst in the pass rush when needed.

Overall, the Broncos appear set. Barrett and Ray aren't due to become unrestricted free agents until March 2019, and the Broncos have a fifth-year option on Ray that would keep him in Denver for the 2019 campaign. But if the value is there, it would be no surprise to see the Broncos add to their stable.

TEN-YEAR HISTORY: EDGE RUSHERS DRAFTED BY BRONCOS

No position is more coveted on defense, and that bears itself out in the Broncos' recent draft history. The team has picked four edge rushers in the first round in the last 10 drafts.

2007: Jarvis Moss, Florida - Round 1, No. 17 overall

2009: None

2009: Robert Ayers, Tennessee - Round 1, No. 18 overall

2010: None

2011: Von Miller, Texas A&M - Round 1, No. 2 overall

2012: None

2013: Quanterus Smith, Western Kentucky - Round 5, No. 146 overall

2014: None

2015: Shane Ray, Missouri - Round 1, No. 23 overall

2016: None

Sacco Sez: Beake family's impact felt throughout Colorado youth football

By Jim Saccomano
DenverBroncos.com
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The National Football Foundation Colorado Chapter recently held its annual banquet honoring the top 14 high school senior student-athletes and lifetime achievement award winners.

One award at the dinner went to Marcia and John Beake (who was of course the Broncos' general manager from 1985 through 1998). They worked quietly in the background doing service for Colorado youth football for decades.

That's how their plaque read, and we on the board of directors made sure it was so: Marcia and John Beake.

John began his coaching career at Nyack (N.Y.) High School, where his teams lost only four games over the course of six seasons and then at the New York Military Academy. During this time, he also spent his summers coaching at Kutsher's Sports Academy with future Hall-of-Fame coach Hank Stram.

Meanwhile, Marcia was a high school physical education teacher in the 1960s and eventually became a graphic artist.

Stram, struck by John's coaching ability and success, plucked him from high-school coaching to make a direct jump to the professional level, joining Stram in Kansas City with the Chiefs. John won his first Super Bowl with Stram in Super Bowl IV.

The Beakes went from Kansas City to Colorado State University to the New Orleans Saints and eventually to the Broncos in 1978, but they never stopped being involved at the game's lower levels or behind the scenes in the NFL.

Marcia's art skills led her to painting most of the game balls that the Broncos awarded in the 1980s.

While John advanced to become the general manager of the Broncos, Marcia started the Fort Collins High School Booster Club. They put their kids first and maintained their Fort Collins home, where the family was so happy in school and playing sports that John actually commuted to his job running the Broncos.

In the 1990s, Marcia served on the board of directors of the Denver-based Air Force Academy Quarterback Club for six years and was instrumental in its growth during her term as president.

One of their children, Chris, was a cadet, quarterback and graduate of the Air Force Academy and today is a defensive assistant/defensive line coach on Vance Joseph's Bronco staff.

But the Beakes' most important contribution in relation to the National Football Foundation's Colorado Chapter was their commitment to the NFF's Play It Smart program, which places an academic football coach in high schools to help student-athletics stay on track academically. It helped send a lot of Denver-area kids to college and gave hope to hundreds who might not have had much otherwise.

Without Marcia's energy, the program may not have gotten off the ground. She implored the NFL for financial support, which then-NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue and the NFL charity committees eventually provided.

Through their endeavors to build the game at local levels and with initiatives that help children beyond the gridiron, Marcia and John have impacted the sport for many years to come.