

# Kiszla: John Elway's biggest gamble with the Broncos?

## Hint: It's not at quarterback or left tackle.

By Mark Kiszla  
Denver Post  
April 20, 2017

The biggest gamble general manager John Elway is taking with the Broncos has nothing to do with the uncertainty at quarterback or left tackle.

Please rate these four NFL coaches.

**Adam Gase:** Architect of the Broncos' record-setting offense in 2013. Deemed too young to be a head coach when Elway hired Gary Kubiak. Now a 39-year-old coaching star on the rise after going 10-6 in his first season in charge of the Miami Dolphins.

**Jack Del Rio:** Started 128 NFL games as a linebacker. Won Super Bowl ring as assistant with Baltimore. Served as the Broncos' defensive coordinator from 2012-14. At age 53 last season, led the resurgence of the Oakland Raiders and earned his third trip to playoffs in 11 seasons as a head coach.

**Vance Joseph:** Reserve quarterback on Colorado's national championship team in 1990. Made NFL as an undrafted free agent and played in 17 career games as a defensive back. Will make head coaching debut in September with the Broncos.

**Kyle Shanahan:** Son of the most successful coach in Broncos history. Became hot head coaching candidate at age 37, when his Atlanta offense led NFL in scoring and earned berth in the Super Bowl. Bypassed by Denver for Joseph, hired by San Francisco to oversee a massive rebuilding project.

If you rank Joseph higher than third on the list, either you view the NFL world through orange-tinted glasses or fancy yourself as football's version of the Amazing Kreskin.

Even in Denver, where it's Super Bowl or bust every year, it's unreasonable to expect Joseph to be great as a rookie NFL head coach. Every guy deserves a pardon for a few slips on the learning curve. But if Joseph doesn't make the playoffs, he will feel fingers of blame pointed at him from every corner of Broncos Country.

As a Hall of Fame quarterback, Elway clearly favors a head coach whose primary strength is building locker-room relationships rather than devising amazing game plans. Elway replaced mad scientist Josh McDaniels with the affable John Fox, picked the down-home wisdom of Kubiak over Gase's white-hot intensity and chose the people skills of Joseph when Denver could have hired Shanahan, the league's offensive genius of the moment.

To a man, Denver players have given thumbs-up on their first impression of Joseph's managerial style. But it's worth listening to the level-headed evaluation of Joseph by safety T.J. Ward, whose slobber-knocking hits get more notice than the fact he might be the most football-savvy member of the No Fly Zone.

“He’s a calm dude. It’s really hard right now to get that feel for a coach, because it’s really early. ... He hasn’t been around us that much. He came to the weight room today and watched for a little bit. But, really, we’ve had only two team meetings, and everything else has been if you go upstairs and meet with him, or just passing by,” Ward said Wednesday.

“I like to really get a feel for a coach when we get into preseason or a game, because as a player, you like to see their mannerisms under fire and in game-time situations. Then you can really get a grasp on how a coach is. I’ve had coaches that I thought would be great in the preseason. You get into a game, and they are on the sideline, losing their mind and just not being great game managers.”

The motto has remained the same in Broncos Country since 1983: In Elway we trust. As a front office executive who added a Super Bowl ring to the two trophies won as a quarterback, Elway has earned the benefit of the doubt that either Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch can lead the team to the playoffs at quarterback, and the Broncos will somehow find a capable 300-pound man to play left tackle.

But there have been 51 Super Bowl champions, and here is the list of all the coaches that hoisted the trophy as rookie head coach: Don McCafferty, who took over the Baltimore Colts in 1970, and George Seifert, elevated to head coach of the San Francisco 49ers in 1989.

History says the odds of Joseph leading his first Denver team to victory in the Super Bowl are 25-to-1.

# The Broncos have been in “the dungeon” for months now. T.J. Ward would rather be at the White House.

By Nicki Jhabvala  
Denver Post  
April 20, 2017

There are only two places an NFL season can end and in the span of two years the Broncos have experienced both. There’s the White House, reserved for the Super Bowl champions and the best of the best.

And then there’s the dungeon, this according to Broncos safety T.J. Ward.

While the Patriots paid a visit to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue on Wednesday in honor of their Super Bowl LI victory, Ward stood at the front of the Broncos’ media room with a brow dotted with sweat, fresh from another day of organized team activities.

No celebration here.

“It’s the exact opposite,” Ward said. “In the dungeon, grinding.”

With a new coaching staff, a new offense and a defense — they hope — that will reach a higher level, the Broncos are back at work with an unsatiated hunger. Few on the team seem to have felt those pangs more than the secondary and its veteran safeties Ward and Darian Stewart. And it’s their leadership, both spoken and shown, that is key toward guiding the Broncos on a path back to playoff contention.

“It’s an engaged group,” first year head coach Vance Joseph said. “You watch every game and those guys are ready to roll. It comes from the safeties. It comes from T.J. and Stewart. Those guys are on every day. To be a great secondary in this league you’ve got to be on every day.”

The No Fly Zone is among the few constants on a team of change. Last year, Denver led the league in passing defense for the second consecutive season and, according to Football Outsiders, ranked first in defending opponents’ top two receivers, ranked second against opponents’ other receivers and finished fourth against opposing tight ends.

The secondary’s numbers didn’t dwindle when many others for the Broncos did. They actually improved.

The secondary’s numbers actually improved from the Super Bowl season while other areas of the defense dipped.

But missing were the most important marks for any team: the playoffs and a shot at more bling.

Denver’s first move when coach Gary Kubiak announced his retirement in January was to bring in Joseph, a longtime secondary coach who had a year of experience as defensive coordinator. Among its next moves was elevating Joe Woods, the engineer of the Broncos’ self-titled No Fly Zone, to defensive coordinator in place of Wade Phillips.

The defense, Joseph said, will still be founded on Phillips’ teachings and his 3-4 base scheme, but with a few extra bells and a couple more whistles. A bit of surprise, a lot of swag and great expectations.

Ward and Stewart, two players rarely in need of extra motivation, have plenty this year. Although Stewart's contract was extended four years last November, the personal elation was met with collective disappointment a month later when the Broncos failed to make the playoffs.

"Playoffs are expected of this group," Stewart said. "Missing it last year hurt."

Ward — coming off one of his finest NFL seasons with 87 tackles, a sack, eight pass-breakups, an interception, three forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries — is in the final season of the four-year contract he signed in 2014.

"I'm definitely aware of it," he said with a smile. "If I do what I have to do and do it the right way, it'll handle itself."

Preparation started almost immediately after Ward watched his younger brother, Terron, make it to the Super Bowl with the Falcons and then fall to the Patriots in a historic thriller. The high of returning to the big game, even as a spectator, was met with a low, similar to the Broncos' year-over-year swing.

"As soon as the Super Bowl was over I started working out, trying to make this season a lot better than last year because not going to the playoffs, it hurt after winning the Super Bowl," Ward said. "I know everybody on this team came back ready for that not to happen again."

The Broncos' secondary has the advantages of time and chemistry, rarities in the revolving door of the NFL. The veteran four in Ward, Stewart and cornerbacks Chris Harris and Aqib Talib, know how each other operates. They know each other's strengths and weaknesses. They know what worked in 2015, what didn't in 2016 and what needs to work in 2017.

"Leading (in pass defense) again and winning another Super Bowl," Ward said flatly.

Because if they don't, they know where it will end.

"The dungeon," Ward said. "Until we make it to the White House, I'll be in the dungeon. ... I would definitely rather be at the White House."

# FBI returns Super Bowl 50 helmet to Broncos' Von Miller, Darian Stewart on new coaches, more

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

April 20, 2017

Von Miller received an important piece of personal sports memorabilia that he can finally place in his home. Wednesday, as FBI agents Brian Schmitt, Melissa Tallman and Clint Judd returned the linebacker's Super Bowl 50 helmet to him at Dove Valley.

Last month, the NFL confirmed they recovered Miller's helmet during an investigation into Patriots quarterback Tom Brady's stolen Super Bowl XLIX and LI jerseys. All of the Super Bowl gear was allegedly stolen by Mauricio Ortega, a credentialed media executive who at the time of the incidents worked for Honduras newspaper Diario La Prensa.

Miller said he didn't know the helmet was missing last year because he was so consumed in his busy Super Bowl MVP offseason. The helmet had been in a secure place in Denver while it was verified before being delivered to Miller Wednesday.

"That's how crazy last year was," Miller said last week. "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."

**Stewart praises staff.** Broncos safety Darian Stewart, like his teammate Chris Harris, has no worries about the defense taking a step back as first-time defensive coordinator Joe Woods replaces Wade Phillips.

"I felt like there wasn't a better coach ready for the opportunity. Joe Woods is familiar to us," Stewart said. "No disrespect to Wade, Wade was a great coach, but if you replace him, what better person than Joe."

That's been a common accord throughout the Broncos secondary in regards to Woods, who has big shoes to fill following Phillips, but his players believe he's more than ready to step up and succeed.

The same goes for Broncos head coach Vance Joseph, who met with many of the Broncos for the first time this month. He's already good impressions.

"Leader," Stewart said describing Joseph. "Happy to be here, loves to work. Just from him talking to us, I'm excited about what he's bringing to the table."

**T.J. teases Raiders fans.** For a Bay Area native, the Raiders have been a staple in safety T.J. Ward's life from the beginning. He's not shy about his dislike for the team. He had mixed feelings about the team's move to Las Vegas, but enjoyed seeing Raiders fans unhappy.

"I don't like the Raiders. I kind of celebrated a little bit, laughing at their fans," Ward said. "After what happened last year, they were killing my Twitter, killing my IG, so after they moved I had to poke a little fun. It's kind of a sad time for the Bay Area. The city is changing a lot between San Francisco and Oakland... Oakland is going to be pretty dry. It is what it is. I'm from San Francisco, so I'm happy."

# Broncos secondary enjoys productive week

By Mike Klis

9News

April 20, 2017

There were no pick sixes or bone-rattling hits. Still it's been a productive week for the Broncos' secondary.

Star cornerback Aqib Talib learned he would not be disciplined by the league for his gun-shooting incident last summer. And, as a high-level team source told 9NEWS on Monday, the Broncos are expected to exercise the \$8.526 million option on No. 3 corner Bradley Roby for the 2018 season.

On Wednesday, as the New England Patriots and not the Broncos were visiting the White House, safeties Darian Stewart and T.J. Ward let area football fans know they are more determined than ever.

"It's the exact opposite," Ward said in comparing this offseason to last year's, which included a June trip to Barack Obama's White House. "In the dungeon, grinding. As soon as the Super Bowl was over, I started working out and trying to make this season a lot better than last year because not going to the playoffs, it hurt after going winning the Super Bowl.

"I know everybody on this team came back ready for that not to happen again. I can just see it guys' demeanor, the way they are working and their attitudes. It kind of reminds me of those Super Bowl seasons."

The best player in the Broncos secondary is Talib (although Chris Harris Jr. is a close second). He will not be suspended for what Dallas police concluded was a self-inflicted incident in June 2016.

"You can't replace Talib," Stewart said. "He's a helluva player. All Pro player year in and year out."

The Broncos secondary – known as the No Fly Zone – was No. 1 against the pass last year, No. 3 in 2015, when they won Super Bowl 50.

"We all came back with fresh minds, ready to work," Stewart said. "A lot of us were disappointed last year with not getting to the playoffs. That's our mindset every year, just championships. Playoffs are expected from this group, and just missing that last year hurt. We're just ready to get back there. It was a start having all of us here day one."

# Previewing Broncos 2017 schedule

By Mike Klis

9News

April 20, 2017

Let's review old news to the 2017 Denver Broncos' schedule.

The Broncos will play home games this season against Dallas, New England, Cincinnati, Los Angeles and the two New Yorks. Plus, the usual home games against Kansas City and Oakland.

The Broncos will play road games this season at Buffalo, at Indianapolis, at Miami, at Philadelphia, at Washington and at Los Angeles. Plus, the usual road games at Kansas City and Oakland.

Los Angeles is new. The nation's second-largest city replaced San Diego as home to the Chargers.

The NFL will release the day, dates and times of the Broncos' 16-game regular-season schedule, plus the Broncos' lone bye week, plus more exact appointments to their four preseason games, at 6 p.m. Thursday.

Here are the known opponents to the 2017 Broncos schedule:

<b>Home</b>	<b>Away</b>
New York Giants	Washington
New York Jets	Miami Dolphins
Dallas Cowboys	Buffalo Bills
New England Patriots	Indianapolis Colts
Cincinnati Bengals	Philadelphia Eagles
Los Angeles Chargers	Los Angeles Chargers
Kansas City Chiefs	Kansas City Chiefs
Oakland Raiders	Oakland Raiders

Without knowing how it lines up, the potential difficulty of the Broncos' schedule is five games played in the eastern time zone. Perhaps, this could tax the biological time clocks by season's end. Perhaps, not.

# Von Miller: 'Hats off' to FBI for finding missing Super Bowl 50 helmet

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

April 20, 2017

Von Miller said the aftermath of Super Bowl 50 was so "crazy" that he didn't even know the helmet he had worn during the Denver Broncos' victory over the Carolina Panthers was missing.

The helmet, recovered in Mexico last month along with two Tom Brady game-worn Super Bowl jerseys, was returned to Miller by FBI representatives after the team's workout at the Broncos' suburban Denver complex Wednesday.

Last week, Miller said he had been told the helmet had made its way back to Denver. He wasn't aware it had been missing since February 2016 until he was told it was recovered in Mexico.

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

In March, the NFL and the Houston Police Department announced Brady's stolen jersey from Super Bowl LI -- as well as a jersey Brady wore in Super Bowl XLIX -- had been recovered from a member of the international media.

At the time, the Broncos were notified that Miller's helmet was also recovered and that the items would be returned after they were authenticated and no longer needed in the investigation, which the FBI led.

Miller was named MVP of Super Bowl 50 after getting 2.5 sacks and two forced fumbles in the Broncos' 24-10 win over the Carolina Panthers on Feb. 7, 2016.

Brady noticed his jersey was missing just after the Patriots' 34-28 victory over the Atlanta Falcons in Super Bowl LI. He got it back earlier this month.

In its report, the Houston Police assigned a value of \$500,000 to the jersey, the same number sports auctioneer Ken Goldin, who has sold game-used Brady jerseys before, said he believed it would be worth if it were to hit the open market.

This past summer, an Arvada, Colorado man was cited for stealing the helmet of a Broncos player during an autograph session after one of the team's training camp practices that was open to the public. The helmet was returned to the team in September.

That helmet was valued at \$400. Miller's Super Bowl helmet likely would have had a far greater value if it were on the market.

# Mel Kiper Jr. still sees Broncos looking offense over draft's first two days

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

April 20, 2017

With the NFL draft just over a week away, ESPN's Mel Kiper Jr. continues to see the Denver Broncos aiming to fill some specific needs over the event's first two days.

In Kiper's three-round mock he sees the Broncos looking to fill their still-vacant left tackle position, this time with Wisconsin's Ryan Ramczyk. Ramczyk is one of the top three tackles on the board and in four previous mock drafts Kiper has given the Broncos a tackle in the first round three times -- Ramczyk once and Utah's Garrett Bolles twice. The biggest pre-draft issue concerning Ramczyk is that he had hip surgery just after the Badgers' bowl game in January, so the Broncos' medical staff could impact the team's decision.

Ramczyk has told teams he believes he'll be ready to participate by training camp.

Broncos executive vice president of football operations/general manager John Elway has said "we'll get it fixed" when asked about the team's plan at left tackle. Coach Vance Joseph has said the team has "four or five" players already on the roster who could compete for the job and that the Broncos could even see if any veteran tackles become available later this summer when rosters go to 53 players just before the regular season.

In-house the Broncos believe Donald Stephenson, who has started some games at left tackle in his career, could get a look in the offseason workouts, as could Ty Sambrailo and Michael Schofield. Ramczyk, Bolles and Alabama's Cam Robinson are considered the best tackles on this year's draft board and all three have met privately with the Broncos in recent weeks.

In the second round, Kiper sees the Broncos selecting Ashland tight end Adam Shaheen, who might be the best blocker/receiver combination in a deep class at the position. Shaheen is 6-foot-6½ and weighed 278 pounds at the scouting combine before he ran a 4.79 40-yard dash.

And in the third round, Kiper gave the Broncos Florida Atlantic defensive end Trey Hendrickson. In addition to what he did on defense, Hendrickson was a force on special teams this past season as he blocked two field goals, an extra point and a punt.

# Broncos relieved that Talib escapes suspension

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

April 20, 2017

Members of the Denver Broncos "No Fly Zone" secondary are relieved that star Aqib Talib won't face a suspension over the shooting in Dallas last year in which the All-Pro cornerback admitted he accidentally shot himself.

"Absolutely," safety Darian Stewart said Wednesday. "You can't replace Talib. He's a hell of a player, an All-Pro player year in and year out and a guy we count on week in and week out."

Talib received a letter from the league recently informing him he wouldn't be suspended or fined over the shooting.

However, the NFL also notified Talib that he "must complete a firearm safety course and must supply the league a list of all firearms he owns," NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said.

Talib, who has had firearms incidents in the past, required stitches but no surgery to his right leg after the June 5 shooting, which forced him to miss the Broncos' visit to the White House to celebrate their Super Bowl 50 title and sidelined him until August.

Talib recovered and had one of his best seasons in 2016, earning his third consecutive Pro Bowl nod and also teamed up with fellow Denver cornerback and Kansas alum Chris Harris Jr. in being selected as a first-team All-Pro for the first time in his career.

"When he told me he wasn't suspended, I was like, 'Oh, I didn't even know you might be suspended,'" safety T.J. Ward said. "That is always a relief having your guy out there and knowing that he is not going to miss any games."

His off-the-field troubles aside, Talib is a locker room leader with a charismatic personality who is popular among his teammates.

"If you want some honesty, go to Talib," Stewart said. "Go to Talib. He's a straight shooter. That's one thing you respect about him. He's not going to sugarcoat nothing or beat around the bush. He's going to tell you and he's going to be honest with you. That's all you can ask of somebody: be honest."

# Von Miller recovers his Super Bowl 50 helmet

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

April 20, 2017

Von Miller has his Super Bowl 50 helmet back.

The FBI retrieved his helmet from Mexican authorities who also recovered Tom Brady's two Super Bowl jerseys in Mexico City last month. Special agents Brian Schmitt, Melissa Tallman and Clint Judd delivered the helmet to Miller at the UC Health Center on Wednesday.

Miller said last week he didn't even realize his helmet was missing after leading the Broncos to a 24-10 win over Carolina in Super Bowl 50. Miller was voted the game's MVP after his two strip-sacks of Cam Newton.

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

Miller had placed several decals of U.S. military branches on the inside of his helmet in honor of service members during the 2015 season. The league allows players to place one decal from a branch of the military on the back of their helmet during its annual "Salute to Service" week.

Miller placed one on the exterior as allowed and stuck the rest on the interior, and that helped authorities authenticate the helmet.

After leading New England to a fifth Super Bowl in February, Brady said somebody stole the jersey he wore in the Patriots' comeback win over the Atlanta Falcons. He revealed the next day that the jersey he wore in New England's 2015 Super Bowl win over the Seattle Seahawks went missing after that game, as well.

The jerseys were found along with Miller's helmet after authorities obtained a warrant to search property of Martin Mauricio Ortega, a tabloid journalist who colleagues say went to the game with a media credential, but bragged he was there as a fan.

Brian Drent, president and CEO of Mile High Card Company, an auctioneer of fine sports memorabilia in Colorado, said Ortega told him last year that he had Miller's Super Bowl 50 helmet and asked how much he might get for it.

# 'Legendary' No Fly Zone attempting to match Steelers, lead in pass defense for three straight years

By Troy Renck  
KMGH  
April 20, 2017

Let's be honest.

It's easier to pass a kidney stone than pass on the No Fly Zone. The Broncos' secondary led the league in fewest yards allowed for the past two seasons. They hit, they cover and make life miserable for opposing quarterbacks. What's left to prove?

"We're all ready to work and be legendary," safety Darian Stewart said.

Only one team has led the league in pass defense in three consecutive seasons: Pittsburgh 2011-13. The Broncos believe they can match it, while improving. It marks the third straight year with the same starters. Familiarity breeds comfort. The game becomes nuanced with players knowing where each other will be. They have become the voices inside their own heads.

"We've worked together, and we just now the ins and outs of each other," safety T.J. Ward said. "We know how each other like to play. We know what guys don't like to do in certain situations. You can't get that [on other teams]. You don't have to have a guy out there telling you what to do on this play or that play. Everybody is locked in."

For Ward, this represents a crossroads season. He has been a terrific performer for three seasons. He is entering the final year of his contract. When the Broncos want a player, they typically extend him before he reaches free agency and lets the market set his value. Ward loves Denver, loves playing for the Broncos. He remains optimistic a new deal will work out.

"I'm aware of it. I am definitely aware of it. You know what, if I do the things I have to do and do them the right way, everything will handle itself," Ward said. "I let my agent handle it. But if I put my A-plus effort in, then everything will happen the right way."

With the No Fly Zone, strength comes from numbers and versatility. Ward and Stewart light up opponents like the Las Vegas strip. Chris Harris can cover all types of receivers whether they line up wide or in the slot. And Aqib Talib matches up against long-armed threats and turns an acoustic guitar electric.

"You can't replace him. He's a hell of a player," Stewart said. "If you want some honesty, go to Talib. That's the one thing I respect about him. He's not going to sugar coat anything or beat around the bush. That's all you can ask for."

# Draft position breakdown: Defensive line

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
April 20, 2017

## 1. JONATHAN ALLEN, ALABAMA

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 286

ARM LENGTH: 33 5/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 3/8 inches

40: 5.00 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 21 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.50 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.49 seconds

Allen is a dominant force up front who swept through the major awards a defensive lineman could win and finished in the top 10 in the Heisman Trophy voting last year. He played a role similar to that of Derek Wolfe in the Broncos' defense, working inside in sub packages and at defensive end in the base alignment. He was equally disruptive in both positions and against the run and the pass, making 53 plays behind the line of scrimmage (sacks plus tackles for loss) in the last two seasons -- an average of 1.77 per game.

His power, performance and experience in a pro-style defense ensure that he should have minimal problems making the transition to the NFL. His short learning curve gives him a chance to be the most productive rookie at any position in this year's class.

Allen played through some issues with his left shoulder and underwent rotator-cuff surgery two years ago, but he did not miss a game in his final three seasons.

## 2. LARRY OGUNJOBI, CHARLOTTE

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 305

ARM LENGTH: 32 5/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 inches

40: 4.97 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 26 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.75 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.55 seconds

The first truly outstanding player in the recently launched Charlotte program, Ogunjobi provided consistent disruption despite not having much around him. He racked up 49 tackles for loss over his four years with the 49ers and started all 46 games in which he played.

Ogunjobi isn't spectacular but is quietly, persistently effective. Watching him in games where the 49ers struggled -- including the season opener at Louisville last year -- his constant effort jumps off the screen. He continually pushes and plays at full speed, no matter what the scoreboard says. Other interior D-line prospects are quicker and stronger, but none play with more effort.

## 3. CHRIS WORMLEY, MICHIGAN

HEIGHT: 6-5 - WEIGHT: 298

ARM LENGTH: 34 1/8 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 1/2 inches

40: 4.84 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 23 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.55 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.08 seconds

A versatile lineman with the ability to play inside and outside, Wormley notched 23.5 tackles for loss and 12.5 sacks the last two seasons. He does a good job using his hands and his length to break free of opposing offensive linemen, and he can quickly accelerate to get to the quarterback.

Worley is consistent in his effort and performance and versatile in his usage. He isn't a specialist; he will bring something positive on every down.

#### 4. MALIK McDOWELL, MICHIGAN STATE

HEIGHT: 6-6 - WEIGHT: 295

ARM LENGTH: 34 3/4 inches - HAND SIZE: 10 1/2 inches

40: 4.85 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 23 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.53 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.69 seconds

The questions around McDowell do not center around his peak performance level. When he's at his best, he's a terror on the inside, capable of not only drawing double teams, but creating penetration through them. Even at 295 pounds, he has the quickness necessary to work in a stand-up alignment in a 3-4 scheme.

But at times last year, McDowell appeared to give less than his full effort. At the Combine, he defended himself by saying that he had "a lot of stuff going on this past year, health reasons, just body stuff." But amid reports that McDowell did not interview well with teams, the character and effort questions persist. If he proves that the concerns were false, he will be one of the best value picks of the draft.

#### 5. CALEB BRANTLEY, FLORIDA

HEIGHT: 6-3 - WEIGHT: 307

ARM LENGTH: 32 inches - HAND SIZE: 9 3/4 inches

40: 5.14 seconds - BENCH PRESS: 21 reps

SHORT SHUTTLE: 4.62 seconds - THREE-CONE DRILL: 7.66 seconds

Individual numbers don't tell the tale for Brantley, who notched 2.5 sacks and 9.5 tackles for loss last season. It's about how he sets up players around and behind him to make plays. Jarrad Davis and Alex Anzalone both developed into playmaking linebackers against the run because Brantley was one of the nation's best defenders at occupying multiple blockers.

There's nothing fancy about Brantley's game. Against the run, he prevents carries up the middle. He is also a strong interior pass rusher who consistently flushes quarterbacks out of the pocket. In the NFL, he could be an edge rusher's best friend.

#### REST OF THE TOP 15

6. Dalvin Tomlinson, Alabama

7. Tanoh Kpassagnon, Villanova

8. DeMarcus Walker, Florida State

9. Nazair Jones, North Carolina

10. Jaleel Johnson, Iowa

11. Tanzel Smart, Tulane

12. Eddie Vanderdoes, UCLA

13. Vincent Taylor, Oklahoma State

14. Montravius Adams, Auburn

## 15. Carlos Watkins, Clemson

### BRONCOS DL OUTLOOK

Derek Wolfe is the only constant in the starting lineup, as the Broncos targeted the line in free agency by signing nose tackle Domata Peko and defensive end Zach Kerr to add bulk and power to the line.

"Those guys are huge," OLB Von Miller said. "Peko, he's athletic. We were working out [last week] 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 feel and correct some of those weaknesses that we had last year."

Their arrivals should allow Jared Crick to assume more of a pass-rush specialist role. But the Broncos still need to see more from last year's second-round pick, Adam Gotsis. Defensive Line Coach Bill Kollar told the Georgia Tech product he needs to get stronger in the weight room. If he can do that, he will be more effective at the point of attack against the run.

### TEN-YEAR HISTORY: DBs DRAFTED BY BRONCOS

Five times in the last 10 drafts, the Broncos have used a first- or second-round pick on a player who would be a defensive lineman in a 3-4 alignment. Of the 10 defensive linemen selected in that span, five played out the full extent of their first contract: Marcus Thomas, Robert Ayers, Derek Wolfe, Malik Jackson and Sylvester Williams.

2007: Tim Crowder, Texas - Round 2, No. 56 overall; Marcus Thomas, Florida - Round 4, No. 121 overall

2008: Carlton Powell, Virginia Tech - Round 5, No. 148 overall

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

2010: None

2011: Jeremy Beal, Oklahoma - Round 7, No. 247 overall

2012: Derek Wolfe, Cincinnati - Round 2, No. 36 overall; Malik Jackson, Tennessee - Round 5, No. 137 overall

2013: Sylvester Williams, North Carolina - Round 1, No. 28 overall

2014: None

2015: Darius Kilgo, Maryland - Round 6, No. 203 overall

2016: Adam Gotsis, Georgia Tech - Round 2, No. 63 overall

# T.J. Ward grinding away in 'dungeon' as he eyes playoff return

By Aric DiLalla  
DenverBroncos.com  
April 20, 2017

Last offseason, T.J. Ward split his time between a parade through Denver, a trip to the White House and a Super Bowl ring ceremony.

This year, he's spent his precious days off in the dungeon.

At least, that's what Ward is calling the purgatory and grind he's facing in the wake of a season that ended without a playoff berth.

"[This year was] the exact opposite," Ward said Wednesday. "[I've been] in the dungeon grinding. As soon as the Super Bowl was over, I started working out and trying to make this season a lot better than last year, because not going to the playoffs, it hurt after going to the Super Bowl to not even make it to the playoffs.

"I know everybody on this team came back ready for that not to happen again. I can just see it in guys' demeanors, the way they're working, so it kind of reminds me of that Super Bowl season."

The Broncos' struggles in 2016 hardly fall on Ward, who matched his career-high in forced fumbles and also recorded an interception, a sack and 87 combined tackles.

As a leading presence in the locker room, however, he's trying to lead through example as the Broncos attempt to march back to the playoffs.

Of course, the season isn't without its distractions for Ward, who is entering the final year of his contract. But he said Wednesday his focus on returning to the postseason has largely kept him from dwelling on the financial implications of the season.

"I'm aware," Ward said. "I'm definitely aware of it. You know what, if I do the things I've got to do and do those the right way, everything will handle itself. I try to stay away from all those type of thoughts ... and just let my agent handle it.

"But if I put my A-plus effort in then everything will happen the right way."

And so, as the rest of the NFL world has its eyes on the Patriots' visit to the White House, Ward said he's locked himself away to work.

"I would definitely rather be at the White House," Ward said, "but when you don't go to the White House, [you've] gotta go to the dungeon.

"Until we're back at the White House, I'll be in the dungeon."

# Together again, DBs 'locked in' for another big year

By Staff

DenverBroncos.com

April 20, 2017

Chemistry, cohesion, consistency and effort.

The "No-Fly Zone" wouldn't have reached its perch without those attributes -- all of which have only improved with the time that Chris Harris Jr., Aqib Talib, Darian Stewart and T.J. Ward have spent together.

"We just know the ins and outs of each other," Ward said Wednesday. "We know how each other likes to play, what guys don't like to do in certain situations.

"Having the defense and knowing the small intricacies as four veterans, you can't [just] get that, man."

There's no question about the talent of the starting quartet; all are recent Pro Bowlers, and two of them were first-team All-Pros last season. But what will take them to another level this season is two years' worth of accumulated knowledge regarding each other's strengths, weaknesses and roles.

Other secondaries need time to adjust and get their communication down pat. The Broncos' defensive backs need only a pre-snap hand signal or a nod of the head to stay on the same page with each other.

"You don't have to have a guy out there telling this guy what to do on this or that play. Everybody's locked in," Ward said. "They know what they do.

"Even if you get a late communication, guys [realize], 'I'm not in this position that I'm usually at, but I know what this guy does, and I can fulfill it.' That's what we have."

What the Broncos' secondary possesses is rare: a core collection of veterans on their second or third contracts for multiple seasons. Usually when an experienced position group succeeds like that, free agency and the salary cap combine to rip it apart. Stewart prevented that from happening this offseason by re-signing with the Broncos last November.

"Three years together -- you really don't see that a lot, especially having the years we have under our belt," Stewart said. "I think there are going to be a lot of plays made just [because of] us being comfortable with one another and then adding a new group to the coaching staff."

Those new coaches -- Marcus Robertson and Johnnie Lynn -- should enhance the unit's play with Joe Woods moving up to become the defensive coordinator. They bring "a lot of smarts," Stewart noted.

"We just added another level to our room, just helping us make more plays," Stewart said. "Strong minds in the room, and I think we're going to be able to do some great things adding them to the bunch."

# Ranking every NFL head coach, from Bill Belichick to the Class of 2017

By Pete Prisco  
CBSSports.com  
April 20, 2017

Call it the great coaching divide. That is what we have in the NFL today. There is New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick, and the rest -- no matter how you stack them -- are way, way, way behind.

Belichick is arguably the greatest coach of all time, a sentiment bolstered by continued success in the era of free agency and roster turnover. Of course, Tom Brady cures almost any ills and allows Belichick to be bold with his roster, but even so he is a detail freak who gets the most out of his players and is unreal when it comes to game planning.

Add all that to his five Super Bowl rings and Belichick is the obvious No. 1 on my list ranking current coaches from 1-32. Nobody else is in the conversation and it's not because there aren't plenty of good coaches in this league.

Belichick drives fantasy players nuts because they never can tell what the Patriots will do on offense from week to week. And on defense, Belichick's hybrid unit is as unpredictable as they come. It's all testament to his greatness: You never know what is coming.

He is not afraid to take chances. Those Super Bowl rings -- including the latest, the epic comeback vs. Atlanta after trailing 28-3 in the second half -- are his skins on the wall. They allow him freedom to gamble, though any risk is always calculated.

I can't read enough about Belichick and his philosophy. Books or stories about him are textbooks on coaching and team building. This might sound like I am slobbering about the guy, but he has made some bonehead decisions late in games -- which I am quick to point out, much to the chagrin of Patriots nation -- though none of them diminish his football genius; it just shows that even the best can screw up situational coaching.

Even though he got lucky getting Brady in the sixth round -- that's the only way to describe drafting the greatest of all time that late -- Belichick also has helped mold Brady into the player we see today.

It's always a treat to log onto Patriots.com and watch Belichick break down tape of players and plays. I recommend it to anybody who wants to take a look behind the curtain at this football savant.

For this list, I'm ranking 27 coaches who have experience, with the five first-time coaches tied at No. 28. It wouldn't be fair to rank them since they have yet to coach a game. They have a long way to go to sniff Belichick territory. Then again, so does everybody else.

## 1. Bill Belichick, Patriots

Five Super Bowl victories solidifies this spot. It's hard to consider any conversation about the best ever without his name coming up. How much longer will he do it is the question. He has a winning percentage of .673, which is 11th all time, one spot behind Don Shula. He has 237 regular-season victories, which is fourth all time, and he can tie Tom Landry for third if he wins 13 next season. Shula

appears to be out of reach with 328, but he did it in 33 seasons. Belichick has done it in 22, although 14 of Shula's seasons came with a 14-game schedule and one shortened to nine because of a strike. The guy is legend, and it is a treat to watch him work -- even when he blows the end of games. Yes, that's another dig.

## 2. Mike McCarthy, Packers

There were some who wanted him fired the past two seasons. That was purely absurd. He has the second-best winning percentage (.651) of any active coach, behind Belichick. He has had double-digit victories in eight of his 11 seasons with the Packers, with only one losing season. He also has a Super Bowl win, but gets dinged some for his 10-8 playoff record. With Aaron Rodgers, some expect more. Maybe one more ring ends the debate.

## 3. Andy Reid, Chiefs

He has had three losing seasons in 18 as a head coach, one of those in his first with the Eagles in 1999. He has had 11 seasons of 10 or more victories, including the past two seasons with the Chiefs. He has been to the playoffs 12 times, but reached the Super Bowl only once and has an 11-12 postseason record, which hurts. Even so, he's a damn good coach. I know he doesn't have a ring, but he has done some amazing things, which is why he's in this third spot, above some guys who have won rings.

## 4. Pete Carroll, Seahawks

He has been an NFL coach in three different spots, totaling 11 seasons. His has a .588 career winning percentage, but he has a .629 percentage in his seven seasons in Seattle, with one Super Bowl victory and was a yard away from a second. He has at least 10 victories in each of the past five seasons. His easy-going approach with players has paid off big. It's hard to believe he turns 66 this September, but there is a lot of good coaching left in him.

## 5. Mike Tomlin, Steelers

In his 10 seasons with the Steelers, he has never had a losing record. That's impressive. He has seven seasons of double-digit victories and is 1-1 in Super Bowls and 8-6 overall in postseason play. There are some who question whether he's just a guy who oversees everything rather than a hands-on coach. I don't buy that. He knows what it takes to win, no matter how he gets it done.

## 6. Sean Payton, Saints

There are some who will say three consecutive 7-9 seasons should drop him, but I don't buy it. Take a look at the roster. Yes, he's responsible for some of it, but I think the blame goes above him. The defense has lacked play-makers. Payton is still one of the league's best offensive minds. If he were a free-agent coach, he would be signed in an instant. He has five seasons of double-digit victories and no season worse than 7-9. He also won a Super Bowl. If they fix the defense this season -- and they've made strides -- they will be in the mix again to get back to the Super Bowl.

## 7. John Harbaugh, Ravens

He has five seasons of double-digit victories in nine with the Ravens, and he has one Super Bowl victory, that coming in the 2012 season. He has had only one losing season, a 5-11 stinker in 2015, and he's only 13-19 the past two seasons without a playoff berth. It hasn't helped that he has changed offensive

coordinators like he changes underwear. That makes Ravens fans a little jumpy when it comes to their coach. This could be a big year for Harbaugh and his job status. Three non-playoff seasons would be tough to overcome.

#### 8. Adam Gase, Dolphins

He is a star in the making. Gase took over the Dolphins last season and got a team hardly stacked with talent to 10-6 and into the playoffs. He has great give-and-take with his players, knowing when to push and when to pull back. He is also a great offensive mind, which you need in this league today. One more thing: He is a maniac when it comes to working, which can be seen in his preparation. A few years from now, he might top this list when Belichick retires if he can keep it going forward.

#### 9. Bruce Arians, Cardinals

He had his first losing season as Cardinals coach in 2016, going 7-8-1 in what can only be described as a major disappointment. But, counting his interim stint with the Colts in 2012, Arians has a .648 winning percentage, third best among active coaches. His players love him, and he's a keen offensive mind. If there's one criticism, he needs to fix his special teams.

#### 10. Bill O'Brien, Texans

O'Brien has gone 9-7 in each of his first three seasons with the Texans, making the playoffs the past two and winning a playoff game last season. That's unreal considering the quarterback situation since he has been there. He has coached the heck out of this team without a true franchise passer. Imagine if he gets one? He's a smart offensive mind who plays without a true weapon under center. That's the definition of frustration. Yet he's 27-21 over three seasons (.567). That is coaching.

#### 11. Chuck Pagano, Colts

Does this seem high for a guy on the hot seat after last season? Maybe, but he has a .613 winning percentage and still hasn't had a losing season in five with the Colts. This is a team that hasn't had a lot of talent, yet it has been to the postseason three times during Pagano's tenure. The past two 8-8 seasons, coming in a bad division, don't help his ranking. But the talent level wasn't good and Andrew Luck has suffered nagging injuries. If he had been fired, I think another team would have hired him quickly.

#### 12. Dan Quinn, Falcons

He took the Falcons to the Super Bowl in his second season, and was a blown 28-3 second-half lead away from winning a ring. The decisions made late in that game will help him grow, and he has shown amazing maturity getting past it. One of the hidden stories behind last season's Super run was how he became more involved with the defense in the second half of the season, spurring the turnaround. He has a great temperament to be a long-term success. In two years, I bet he's much higher on this list.

#### 13. Mike Zimmer, Vikings

It's hard to evaluate him based on an injury-decimated 2016. No coach, not even Belichick, could have sustained success through that, and yet Zimmer got the Vikings to 8-8. The year before, Zimmer led the Vikings to a division title in his second season. I think that's more of who he is as a coach than last

season. His fiery approach is perfect for the modern NFL player. The offensive coordinator issues last season -- with Norv Turner walking away -- stain his résumé a little.

#### 14. John Fox, Bears

In his 15 seasons with Carolina, Denver and Chicago, he has been to two Super Bowls, losing both, and has five seasons of double-digit victories. He has had a rough go of it in Chicago the past two seasons, going 6-10 and 3-13, but he has had some injury issues. Even so, his belief that running the football wins games is out of date. Failing to change with the times on offense has held his teams back. His .533 winning percentage isn't that impressive, but he was 38-10 in his final three seasons in Denver. If only they had won a Super Bowl.

#### 15. Marvin Lewis, Bengals

He has the exact same winning percentage as Fox (.533) but has never reached a Super Bowl. In 14 seasons with the Bengals, he has six seasons with double-digit victories and four losing seasons, including 2016 when his team went 6-9-1 and missed the playoffs for the first time since 2010. There's pressure to win this season, or he could be out. There are a lot of Bengals fans who want him out, but ownership has been patient, and understandably so until last season. It's hard to argue with his record the past six seasons.

#### 16. Ron Rivera, Panthers

He led the Panthers to an NFC title in the 2015 season before a Super Bowl loss to the Broncos. Carolina had a Super hangover last season and fell to 6-10 after going 15-1 the previous season. In five seasons with the Panthers, he has two seasons of 10 or more wins, but losing records in the other four. His winning percentage is .557, thanks in large part to the 15-victory season. He is a defensive-minded coach, and he loves to run it and play great defense to win games. That's his style.

#### 17. Jason Garrett, Cowboys

Garrett has a .558 career winning percentage and led the Cowboys to a 12-4 record and a division title last season. He has had only one losing season in seven as Cowboys coach, including his interim stint in 2010. He is 29-19 the past three seasons and overcame the loss of quarterback Tony Romo in training camp last season to make the playoffs with rookie Dak Prescott. That was impressive. Early in his Cowboys career, he was criticized for game management and play-calling, but he has improved those areas the past few seasons.

#### 18. Jack Del Rio, Raiders

Del Rio has turned the Raiders into a legitimate Super Bowl contender. If quarterback Derek Carr didn't go down last season, they could have pushed the Patriots in the AFC. Del Rio was previously the coach in Jacksonville and led the Jaguars to the playoffs twice in nine seasons. He has a .509 career winning percentage, but expect that to go up the next few seasons with this young, talented team.

#### 19. Dirk Koetter, Buccaneers

He went 9-7 in his first season with the Bucs, justifying ownership's decision to fire Lovie Smith and make Koetter the coach after he served as offensive coordinator in 2015. Koetter is a bright offensive mind who has nice give-and-take with players. I always expected him to be a better NFL coach than

college coach, where he served stints at Boise State and Arizona State. That's because he's a true football guy. He has no time for glad-handing the alums. I think Tampa Bay is finding that out, and his young team should push for a division title next season, which should move him up the list. I think he's the right guy and will have long-term success in Tampa.

#### 20. Jay Gruden, Redskins

He has done a nice job turning the Redskins around, going from 4-12 in his first season in 2014 to 9-7 the next and 8-7-1 in 2016. He made the playoffs in 2015, but missed out last season with a Week 17 home loss to the Giants that hurts him some on this list. His winning percentage is .448, which isn't pretty, but the first year drives it down. He is a smart offensive coach who needs to figure out how to get his team to play better defense. A change in coordinators this season might help.

#### 21. Jim Caldwell, Lions

Going into 2016, many expected Caldwell to struggle and maybe get fired with first-year GM Bob Quinn bringing in his own guy. But Caldwell got the Lions to the playoffs, where they lost a wild-card game to the Seahawks. If not for a late-season collapse, they would have won the division. They finished 9-7. In his three seasons with the Lions, he is 27-21. Before that, he was coach of the Colts when they went to the Super Bowl in 2009, his first year with the team. They lost to the Saints in that game. The Colts let him go after they went 2-14 without Peyton Manning in 2011.

#### 22. Ben McAdoo, Giants

He took the Giants to the playoffs his first season as coach in 2016, going 11-5 before losing to the Packers in the wild-card round. McAdoo, who was the offensive coordinator before taking over for Tom Coughlin, continued as the team's play-caller. The offense struggled in 2016 with McAdoo handling both roles. That will be something to watch going forward.

#### 23. Mike Mularkey, Titans

The Titans are Mularkey's third team after previous stops with the Bills and Jaguars. Those two stints didn't end well. He was 14-21 in two seasons with the Bills and 2-14 in one season with the Jaguars. After taking over as interim coach of the Titans in 2015, he was hired as the full-time guy last season and led the Titans to a 9-7 record. His outdated belief in running the football paid off last season as the Titans nearly won the division. The question is whether this team can continue to push for a playoff spot with that style.

#### 24. Hue Jackson, Browns

It's unfair to grade Jackson by his first season with the Browns. They had little talent, quarterback issues and understandably finished 1-15. He was 8-8 in his only season as the Raiders' coach in 2011. I still think he can be a darn good coach, but the body of work is so small. The Browns need to be patient and let him coach a few more seasons before passing judgment.

#### 25. Doug Marrone, Jaguars

He was 15-17 in two seasons with the Bills, including 9-7 in 2014 before he quit. He was 1-1 as Jacksonville's interim coach after taking over for Gus Bradley last season, which led to his hiring on a full-

time basis. He is a no-nonsense guy who will bring discipline to the team, but how much is he going to be a puppet for Tom Coughlin?

26. Doug Pederson, Eagles

When a guy starts a rookie quarterback his first season as coach, it's tough to evaluate him. But Pederson did a nice job getting the Eagles to 7-9, although they did start fast before fading. Even so, the former quarterback who learned under Andy Reid seems to have a good feel for being a head coach. As quarterback Carson Wentz improves, Pederson will look a lot better as well.

27. Todd Bowles, Jets

In 2015, it looked like the Jets struck gold with Bowles when he led them to a 10-6 record in his first season as their coach. He did it with Ryan Fitzpatrick at quarterback, which is even more impressive. But then last season, it all came apart. The Jets finished 5-11 and many were questioning Bowles. Can he turn it around? The talent isn't good on his roster, and the quarterback situation is a mess. It will be a miracle if he does -- no matter what type of coach we think he can become.

28. (tie) Sean McVay, Rams; Anthony Lynn, Chargers; Vance Joseph, Broncos; Kyle Shanahan, 49ers; Sean McDermott, Bills

We have no idea how these first-year guys will perform, even if you think you do, so they land here. There is a lot to be excited about in these cities, but isn't it always that way for first-time coaches?

# Phil Simms will move to CBS studio show as analyst

By Kevin Patra

NFL.com

April 20, 2017

Tony Romo might have taken his job in the booth next to Jim Nantz, but Phil Simms will remain at CBS.

The network announced Wednesday that Simms will move to The NFL Today show as a studio analyst. Simms spoke with Sports Illustrated's Richard Deitsch about the move Wednesday.

"Listen, I didn't make any comments for a lot of reasons and you want to sit there and think about it," Simms said. "Initially was my pride hurt? Absolutely. Of course it was ... So it took a little bit. Not long. I started thinking about it in a positive way and then I became excited about it.

"[CBS Sports Chairman] Sean [McManus] had talked to me over the years about maybe going into the studio. I now get to follow the league like I want to. That was probably the most frustrating thing about my job. You do one or two games a week, you can't really pay attention to the other teams like I wanted to do. When you do games, you are all-in on those games. On Inside The NFL, I get to say things about stuff that I never get to say in a broadcast."

Simms will replace Tony Gonzalez in the CBS studio, and will join James Brown, Bill Cowher, Bart Scott and Boomer Esiason.

The announcement comes two weeks after CBS signed Romo to replace Simms as the No. 1 game analyst. The ex-Dallas Cowboys quarterback usurping the lead role left Simms in temporary limbo.

Simms has been in broadcasting since retiring following the 1993 season. He had been CBS's top in-game analyst since pairing with Greg Gumble in 1998, following stints at NBC and ESPN.

# Von Miller got his Super Bowl 50 helmet back

By Joseph Alpher  
Pro Football Talk  
April 20, 2017

Broncos linebacker Von Miller didn't know his Super Bowl 50 helmet was missing until it turned up in the possession of the same man who stole Patriots quarterback Tom Brady's jerseys from the last two Patriots Super Bowl wins, but he's aware of where the helmet is now.

FBI agents returned Miller's helmet to him at the Broncos' facility on Wednesday. Miller initially joked that it wasn't his helmet, but then moved on to thank law enforcement for their work.

"I just want to thank the FBI and Mexican authorities for getting it back and working on it," Miller said. "I don't know how you can find one helmet in the world like that. It's really incredible."

FBI Agent Brian Schmitt credited the recovery of the helmet and Brady's jerseys from Martin Mauricio Ortega to old-fashioned police work. That police work included following up on a tip from a 19-year-old Patriots fan and memorabilia collector who wondered why Ortega had Brady's Super Bowl XLIX jersey before this year's theft made major headlines.