

# Sammy Watkins sees NBA deals, says NFL players need to get paid more

By John Breech  
CBS Sports  
July 3, 2017

After watching dozens of NBA players agree to multi-million dollar deals since the beginning of free agency on Saturday, it appears that Bills wide receiver Sammy Watkins is getting a little envious of his fellow professional athletes.

Of course, the biggest deal to go down in the NBA was Steph Curry's five-year, \$201 million contract with Golden State. That deal was so crazy that it led dozens of NFL players to log on to Twitter just so they could send out a reaction tweet.

Watkins also sent out a tweet during NBA free agency and it seems that he has one wish: He wants NFL players to get paid more.

**@sammywatkins**

**We gotta get paid more I'm pretty sure 2014 class will change the market**

The good news for Watkins is that as long as the salary cap continues to go up, then NFL players will get paid more. On the other hand, if Watkins is hoping that NFL salaries will one day pay as much as NBA salaries, he's going to be waiting a long time because it's never going to happen.

**@Ejac561**

**@sammywatkins It could happen if y'all come together as players and partition it. Make the matter a real issues. NFL is the most watched sport.**

**@sammywatkins**

**@Ejac561 Exactly make more than NBA and they players make way more something not adding up lol**

Watkins seems to think that because the NFL makes more money than the NBA, that should mean that NFL players make more than their NBA counterparts.

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. Here's the main reason why NBA players make more: There are fewer players to pay.

The 32 NFL teams are paying roughly 2,000 players a year when you consider the 53-man roster and practice squads. In the NBA, there are only about 500 players collecting paychecks, which means each player gets a bigger piece of the salary pie.

As for Watkins' other point that the 2014 draft class is going to change the NFL's salary market, he's almost certainly going to be correct about that. Thanks to Derek Carr, who just signed the largest contract in NFL history, the market adjustment is already on its way.

Carr isn't the only player from 2014 who's going to score a huge contract. Odell Beckham, Anthony Barr, Jadeveon Clowney, Brandin Cooks, Aaron Donald, Mike Evans, Devonta Freeman, Taylor Lewan, Khalil Mack and Zack Martin all still have extensions to sign, and each of those guys will probably sign a huge deal.

As a matter of fact, Beckham and Donald will probably be setting new records at their respective positions down the road.

So yes, NFL players will be paid more in the future, but, sorry Sammy, they'll never be paid more than NBA players. If you want to read more about the NFL's class of 2014, and who doesn't, check out Will Brinson's rankings of the 14 quarterbacks who were drafted in 2014 by clicking [here](#).

# AFC West Q&A: Is the Derek Carr-Khalil Mack combo the best in the division?

By Paul Gutierrez

ESPN

July 3, 2017

The Oakland Raiders got a pretty impressive one-two punch in the 2014 draft.

They have the 2017 NFL Defensive Player of the Year, All-Pro edge rusher Khalil Mack, and quarterback Derek Carr, who tied for third in MVP voting.

Oh yeah, and each is set to begin his fourth NFL season, meaning each star is entering his prime. If the Raiders can figure out a way to pay both of them while keeping their supporting casts competitive, the combo of Mack and Carr will likely mean many restless nights for division opponents and rival coordinators for years to come.

So is Oakland's Carr-Mack combo the best one-two punch in the AFC West in terms of offensive and defensive players?

Jeff Legwold, Denver Broncos reporter: In terms of age, experience level and room to grow on the league's learning curve, Carr and Mack -- both 26 years old -- seemingly hold boundless potential at two of the most important positions on any team's roster. Given that Carr is on the brink of becoming a franchise quarterback -- he's already there in terms of contract -- the duo may be one season away from making this question a no-brainer.

In terms of overall achievement through 2016, however, Denver Broncos pass-rusher Von Miller has been a Super Bowl MVP and one of the league's best defensive players, while wide receiver Demaryius Thomas helped power the highest-scoring offense in league history in 2013 and has been a key piece for two Super Bowl teams. Entering his eighth season, Thomas will look to reestablish himself as a top-tier receiver after battling a hip injury in 2016. Miller, meanwhile, wants to top his career high in sacks for a single season -- 18.5 -- and believes Denver's defense is built for him to make a run at it, even with the double- and triple-teams he routinely faces.

Adam Teicher, Kansas City Chiefs reporter: Before I answer that, let's look at the alternatives. Denver can counter with Miller and, let's say, Thomas. While Miller is comparable and perhaps superior to Mack, Thomas is no match for Carr. Thomas had some great seasons when Peyton Manning was the Broncos' quarterback, but the receiver looks to be on the downhill slide. Kansas City has any number of defensive players to choose from. I'll go with cornerback Marcus Peters. On offense, I'll choose wide receiver Tyreek Hill over tight end Travis Kelce. Peters is perhaps the best playmaking corner in the NFL. Hill is a game-changer at wide receiver and running back and as a kick returner. Tough choice here, but I'll go with the Oakland duo because Carr is a QB. Los Angeles has QB Philip Rivers and defensive end Joey Bosa. At this point in their respective careers, Carr is a better player than Rivers. So if I have to choose, I'll take Carr and Mack.

Eric Williamson, Los Angeles Chargers reporter: Rivers and Bosa should be part of the conversation, but it's hard to argue against Carr and Mack being the most lethal combination of offensive and defensive

players in the AFC West. Carr continues to evolve and develop his game. The Fresno State product has been particularly impressive in the clutch. His fourth-quarter passer rating of 109.2 was No. 4 in the NFL in 2016, a dramatic improvement over his previous two seasons. So Carr is playing better for the Raiders when the games matter the most. Mack has 26 sacks over the past two seasons, most in the NFL. Combine that with his impact on opponents' running games, and it's easy to see why Oakland's talented duo is the best in the AFC West.

# I Just Want to Meet the Packers at Lambeau Field

By Chuck Todd

MMQB

July 3, 2017

So I have a confession to make: I'm a lifelong Packers fan who has never been to Lambeau Field. There are a lot of things I'm embarrassed about—the list is too long to get into now, but I'm sure plenty of you will remind me on Twitter!—but this one makes me blush the most. When folks find out, they are usually stunned. Fellow Packers fans, especially, sometimes question my allegiance.

The most die-hard Packers fans believe you can't claim fanatic status unless you've been to the holiest of football sights (sorry, Canton). Honestly, I don't blame them. If I were in their shoes, I might use that piece of information to lodge my own skeptical inquiry. But I swear, my Packers allegiance is real.

Don't believe me? Just ask my good friend, Steve Hayes, the editor-in-chief of *The Weekly Standard* and a frequent FOX News analyst. Steve is also a part of the D.C. Packers mafia; of course, he came about his love for the Green and Gold the normal way—he was born and raised in the Land of Cheeseheads. I first met Steve, in 2000, when he was applying for a job at a publication I was running called, *The Hotline*. I noticed his Wisconsin roots on his résumé and, naturally, asked him if he was a Packers fan. He said he was, but I wanted to know if he was truly a diehard. I have a standard question for anyone around my age who claims to be a Packers fan: Who was Green Bay's starting quarterback before Lynn Dickey? Well, Steve not only answered correctly, he noted that David Whitehurst also punted for the team. Steve got the job offer and he accepted. So thank you, David Whitehurst, for being just obscure enough to help me prove true Packer fandom and, more importantly, thanks for being the link to one of my better friendships in D.C.

Currently, I have a good excuse for not making it to many Packers games, either home or away. It's called my day job. When you work weekends in the fall, and Sunday mornings especially, it can put a crimp into your football viewing habits, let alone your ability to attend games in person. But visiting the Frozen Tundra is at the very top of my bucket list. I'm just going to have to find the right Monday or Thursday night game to work into my schedule. That said, I have made pilgrimages to see the Packers in person quite a few times—the games have just always on the road.

In January 2013, Steve and I went to a playoff game in San Francisco and witnessed that awful loss in which the Packers' defense apparently forgot that Colin Kaepernick liked to run the ball every now and then. I've seen them in the Meadowlands a few times and, of course, at RFK Stadium and FedEx Field here in D.C.

The most vivid memory I have of an in-person Packers game was my first. It was Oct. 28, 1979, against the Miami Dolphins at one of the greatest "gritty" stadiums to watch football: the Orange Bowl. I had remembered it as James Lofton's rookie year, but I now realize it was his second season with the team. What I didn't forget is that the Dolphins won comfortably, 27-7, but as far as I am concerned, the most exciting play of the game belonged to the Packers. My memory had it as a long touchdown pass from Whitehurst to Lofton; I can remember jumping up and down as Lofton ran for the end zone, with a seemingly endless number of Dolphins unable to catch up to him.

But as I sat down to write this column, the journalist in me went and found the actual box score. I'm glad I double-checked. I remembered the long touchdown correctly, but I had the wrong player. The catch was made by tight end Paul Coffman (who was pretty darn good back in his day).

Even though we lost, what I loved most about my first Packers game was how—even though the game was in Miami, during the Dolphins' heyday no less—I suddenly realized I wasn't alone . . . Packers fans were everywhere that day in Little Havana. I was 7 at the time, and what I remember most is the fan sitting near us who had shaved his head and then painted it with the iconic 'G'. Now that was cool; no Dolphins fan would ever do that, or so I wanted to believe.

As you have probably figured out by now, I am not from Wisconsin, nor is any member of my immediate family. I grew up in Miami in the 1970s and '80s, when the Dolphins owned that city. And while all of my early football memories are at the fabled Orange Bowl, it was to watch and fall in love with the University of Miami, not the Dolphins.

Hopefully I've established that my Packers love is real and not some bandwagon decision I made after watching Brett Favre? . . . Fav-re? . . . Farrev? . . . Favre! in *Something about Mary*. I have paid my dues and even stood by a franchise that once considered an 8-8 record and just missing the playoffs to be a good season. I've never been anything but a Packers fan. And to be honest, I don't remember being allowed to root for any other team.

My love of the Packers was passed down to me by my late father, Steve. While he spent most of his life in Miami, he always viewed himself as a Midwesterner first (he was born in Waterloo, Iowa, and moved to Miami before high school). And there's no team that epitomizes the Midwest he lionized more than the Green Bay Packers. Though they're separated by a five-hour drive, Waterloo and Green Bay could easily be twin cities; they are that similar. So, for him, passing on his love of the Packers was about more than just football, it was about grounding me with Midwestern values. (My father was so obsessed with making sure I had some Midwestern roots that my first bank account was set up at Waterloo Savings and Loan. Somewhere I still have that passbook, but I digress . . .)

It wasn't easy being a Packers fan living in Miami during the 1970s and '80s, where Don Shula, Larry Csonka, Mercury Morris and, eventually, Dan Marino ruled. But my father worked hard to prevent me from rooting for the Dolphins, both with positive reinforcement and some negative! The positive reinforcement came in the form of books. The first book longer than 100 pages that I remember finishing: Jerry Kramer's *Instant Replay*. And the second such book: Vince Lombardi's *Run To Daylight*. So to say my dad indoctrinated me is, well, a bit of an understatement. As for the negative campaign my dad ran against the Dolphins? His go-to was pitting the Dolphins against our beloved Miami Hurricanes (a member of the Todd family has been a Hurricanes season-ticket holder since 1958). My favorite rant of his had to do with the fact that Joe Robbie, the Dolphins owner, controlled the concessions money at Miami Hurricane football games; it bugged him to no end that the Dolphins made money off the Hurricanes. In case you're wondering, no, I wasn't allowed to have anything from the concession stands at Hurricane games until the Dolphins finally started to share more money with UM (sometime in 1982 or '83, I think).

Needless to say, my dad's efforts worked—and then some. Not only am I a lifelong Packers fan, I have also indoctrinated my 10-year-old son. How do I know? He is so devoted that he cried when the Packers lost to the Falcons in the playoffs last season. It was the first time I remember him crying over a game he

wasn't involved in himself. I have never been more proud. This year I'll be putting Instant Replay on his summer reading list.

And, yes, my son already believes that if Aaron Rodgers played for the Patriots, then New England wouldn't have lost the two Super Bowls that they did. Perhaps he's been influenced by something he's heard countless times at home . . .

### **Ten Things I Think I Think**

1) I think the best teenage athletes seem to be gravitating to other sports, not football.

Admittedly, this is only an observational view. But my eyes tell me that both baseball and basketball are seeing a surge in big athletic kids—that is, a bunch of young men that traditionally look more like football players than baseball or basketball players. More and more, I find myself seeing someone such as Aaron Judge or Boogie Cousins and thinking, They would be a great defensive end, tight end, wide receiver or even quarterback. I'm convinced that even just 10 years ago they would have been putting on helmets.

Is this the front end of a trend? Are parents urging their kids to go into other sports? If my son had the ability to pick his professional sport, I'd probably point him toward either baseball or basketball. Financially, it's a no-brainer: the lack of guaranteed contracts in the NFL, compared to the guaranteed money in the other leagues, would be a huge factor. Toss in the physical toll that football takes on your body, including concussion concerns, and it's case closed.

I bring this up because the NFL isn't acting like a business concerned about where it will find its future employees. If they were concerned, not only would they be more aggressive on the safety front—say, leading the effort to abolish tackle football before the age of 15—they would also be giving its employees more financial stability. Football is never going to be the safest of American sports. Many athletic endeavors come with physical risks; actually, many non-athletic jobs come with physical risks. Right now, football doesn't act like an employer who values compensating its employees for the additional risk they are taking by playing this sport over another. If they did, they'd start by guaranteeing contracts; they would have stepped up a lot sooner on taking care of its retired players.

Look, I love football; in fact, the sport is truly in my son's blood (his maternal grandfather was a star QB at Louisville in the '60s and a backup to Jack Kemp in Buffalo for two years). But I'd like to see the folks that run football value its employees more. If they don't, then expect both baseball and basketball to continue to flourish and attract America's next generation of great male athletes.

2) I think I have to ask: Can we stop whining about folks in sports expressing their political views?

I've never understood why this offends folks. What does Tom Brady's politics have to do with his ability to win games for the Patriots? Why don't people realize that Colin Kaepernick's protest didn't prevent anyone else from standing for the national anthem? While I understand that many of us view sports as a refuge from our divisive times in today's political world—watching sports is how I wind down on a daily basis—we shouldn't forget that these athletes also are citizens who have First Amendment rights. I think folks who get worked up about athletes expressing political views are the ones to blame for allowing politics to invade their sporting lives, not the other way around.

I get that things are heated, but we are really veering off course if we decide whom to root for on Sundays based on which political party they support. If we can't accept that someone from our favorite team doesn't share our politics, then how can we expect the two political parties to ever work together to get things done? Republican Packers fans are not the enemy of Democratic Packers fans, and vice versa. Keep your venom focused where it belongs: on hating Vikings and Bears fans!

3) I think the Raiders are going to kill L.A. football.

Neither the Rams nor the Chargers will ever be "L.A.'s team" now that the Raiders are going to Vegas. The Raiders' home games are going to become an event for L.A.'s celebrity class, especially if Derek Carr & Co. end up being as good as they are projected to be in the next few years. And that's going to translate into making the Raiders Southern California's "it" football team—not the Rams or the Chargers. Someday, the NFL will regret not stepping in to save the Chargers in San Diego; they could have helped finance a stadium; they didn't need another taxpayer-funded boondoggle; they could have done this themselves and made a great fan base even more attached to the Chargers. The Rams, on their own, will still struggle to compete for L.A.'s attention, but it will be even harder to re-establish their roots while competing against the Chargers and the Vegas Raiders.

4) I think, regarding Colin Kaepernick, the only real backlash the NFL will face is if he doesn't get a chance to fail on the merits of his talents.

For any owner or front office worried about signing Kaepernick because either you fear either a backlash for signing him or a backlash for cutting him, see above. It's not Kaepernick's fault that he has political views. The worst outcome for the NFL is that he doesn't get a shot. Don't overthink this: if you need a competent backup QB, give him a shot. If he isn't worthy of the job, that will become evident. But if it appears that he's being blackballed, then NFL owners across the board will be viewed as trying to mute speech. Trust me: other players will view this as a warning from the league not to speak out or you'll be out of a job—that's not a good look for any industry.

5) I think this is my Mount Rushmore of NFL coaches: Vince Lombardi, Bill Belichick, Jimmy Johnson and Don Shula.

I'm guessing most readers will agree with two of these four—Lombardi and Belichick—while quibbling with the other two. But I wanted to use my time leasing column space from Peter King to suck up to my favorite coach of all time: Jimmy Johnson. I have Johnson in there because he was Belichick before Belichick; He mastered the player development and roster management aspect of the job like no one before him, and there was no one as good as he on that front until, well, Belichick. I read once that Belichick makes an annual pilgrimage to the Florida Keys to talk football and fish with Jimmy. Another item on my bucket list: somehow getting a chance to interview the two of them while fishing off the Keys. As for Shula, despite his longevity and success, I'm amazed at how often football writers and analysts gloss over his achievements in these coaching G.O.A.T discussions. More than any other coach of his generation, Shula was the first who seemed to be comfortable changing his style to fit his team, rather than the other way around. Shula's teams in the 1970s were ground-and-pound. In the '80s he adapted earlier than most and went with the aggressive passing approach. It seems obvious in hindsight, but as most long-time football fans know: most coaches (even really good ones) stick to one style their whole careers. Only the G.O.A.T coaches have the smarts and humility to adapt.

6) Bay of Pigs, no more, I think.

As a kid, one of my favorite sports columnists to read was Pete Axthelm, in Newsweek. And nothing made me angrier at him back in the '80s than his coining of the term "Bay of Pigs" to describe the twice-a-year matchup between Green Bay and Tampa Bay.

Well, Mr. Axthelm, if you can hear me in that great press box up in the sky: these "pigs" are flying now. I begin every season assuming the Packers will be in the hunt for the NFC Championship. When you have Aaron Rodgers, you can feel that cocky. But the one NFC team that scares me the most in 2017: Tampa Bay. The Bucs look like a juggernaut in the making. For as great as he's been in college, and even in his first few years as a pro, Jameis Winston gets overlooked when it comes to "the league's best young QBs" conversation. Part of that may be the off-field issues from his college days, so there are some people who won't root for him. Part of it may be that he doesn't play for one of the NFL's elite franchises, such as the Cowboys. But I've watched Winston a lot (my wife went to FSU, so I have to pretend the Seminoles are my second favorite college football team . . . oops, honey, you weren't supposed to read that!) and he just doesn't get rattled.

When Tampa inevitably gets deep in the playoffs, I'm convinced Winston has that "it" factor a QB needs to meet the moment. And now, he's surrounded with great playmakers. Mike Evans is a human highlight machine and DeSean Jackson is going to love getting one-on-one coverage by playing the opposite side of the field from Evans. Bottom line: Tampa Bay is going to be a lot of fun to watch this season. As a Packers fan, I sure hope the Cowboys or Panthers get stuck playing the Bucs in the playoffs before the Packers have to face them.

7) I think these are the most underrated football collectibles: old cards.

One of my guilty pleasures is collecting baseball and football cards. Most of my collection is baseball, but I have become more and more infatuated with old football cards. I define "old" as being from the 1950s, '60s and '70s. There are some great collections you can build fairly inexpensively because, in the card world, baseball is still king. Two of my favorite collections are the 1955 Topps All American, which includes former Colorado Buffalo standout and Supreme Court Justice Byron "Whizzer" White, and the 1977 Topps Mexican series, which is simply the 1977 Topps football set in Spanish. By the way, I hate the Osos of Chicago as much as I hate the Bears. Vamos Empacaderos Vamos!

8) I think we need to fix the voting process for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Please?

While I do think this multi-layer approach enshrines most of the players who belong in the Hall, it's unnecessarily complicated. Most of all, it doesn't seem to have a basic criteria that is even remotely easy for the average fan to follow. And, to me, the current process does not do a good job of making sure every position in every era is given a shot at having their Hall-worthy stars get a Canton bust.

9) In rank order, but subject to change in the future, I think this my Mount Rushmore of Packers quarterbacks: Bart Starr, Aaron Rodgers, Brett Favre and Lynn Dickey.

Starr is first because of the championships, plain and simple. Rodgers over Favre because, well, I think he is slightly better. They have the same number of rings, but ask yourself this: How many times have you thought Rodgers was to blame for a Packers' playoff loss, and how many times have you blamed Favre? As for Dickey, I put him into the last slot because he was QB during what I thought was the Packers' heyday (at least that's how I thought of it as a kid). Packers fans can attest: those Dickey-led teams were as much fun to watch then as Favre and now Rodgers. Dickey wasn't a scrambler, but wow,

could he deliver when the game became a shootout. My favorite Monday Night Football memory involves the Packers and Washington. Green Bay eked out a 48-47 win over the eventual Super Bowl champions. It was Dickey-Lofton-Jefferson-Coffman at their best!

10. I think this man was the best potential political pundit who never realized how good he could have been: the late Dennis Green.

Let's just say, I find myself quoting Green more than any other football coach when it comes to covering today's political landscape: He is who we thought he was.

\* \* \*

Finally, let me thank Peter King for the opportunity to hijack his column. This was a real treat as well as a challenge. Don't blame him if this column gets you fired up in any way—blame me. And I hope folks remember that when it comes to sports, I'm a believer that fan is short for fanatical, meaning my opinions about the teams I love can (and should) border on the irrational every once in while. If you have to be logical about it all the time, then it isn't very fun. And, Peter, since NBC has the Super Bowl this year, I can promise this: If the Packers make it, I'm bringing Meet the Press and having you on the roundtable.

# Virgen's View: Chad Kelly, a unique Mr. Irrelevant

By Steve Virgen

LA Times

July 3, 2017

With an "Irrelevant Weekend" in front of him, it could have been seen as a perfect opportunity for Chad Kelly to improve his image from what he called "adversity," that he experienced during college.

The message of celebrating the underdog and someone for no reason at all is a positive one and it just might detract from the off-the-field trouble that plagued Kelly.

Yet, here in Newport Beach, Kelly had decided he just wanted to be himself, calm and cool, have some fun, and have his brother, Casey, along for the ride. Kelly is a unique underdog, to be sure, but one that seems to be now on the right path toward achieving success in the NFL.

Kelly's face lit up when he arrived at John Wayne Airport on Thursday night as fans were there to welcome him as Mr. Irrelevant XLII. He was the final pick, No. 253, in the NFL Draft, a quarterback taken by the Denver Broncos. But he became No. 1 in the hearts of those who love the annual tradition in Newport Beach.

Kelly loved it all too. He packed in plenty of activities in a matter of three days: a visit to Grit Cycle in Costa Mesa, interviews at the ESPN Los Angeles and NFL Network (Culver City) studios and the annual Lowsman Trophy All-Star Banquet at Balboa Bay Resort on Friday. He spent time with underprivileged families as part of Serving People In Need at 30th Street on the peninsula on Saturday morning. He also received gifts at a meet-and-greet at A&O Kitchen and Bar at Balboa Bay Resort, where Newport Beach Mayor Kevin Muldoon gave him a "key to the city." Kelly took a ride on a Duffy boat and tasted some of Newport Beach restaurants to end his day.

A stop at Mariners Church was on the schedule Sunday morning before leaving on his flight back to Denver.

"The biggest thing is you just come here to have fun, and learn something," said Kelly, 23, who began his college career at Clemson, where he ran into controversy and ended up in junior college before moving on to Mississippi, where he was a star. "Everyone in here [at Balboa Bay Resort for the Lowsman Trophy banquet] is a successful person in their own way and if you can learn from them, someone who works at a bank or someone who works at a school, whatever you can take away is going to be knowledge. And that becomes power down the road."

Kelly did his best to have fun while in Newport Beach, yet he was also careful. He had injured his knee in November and he suffered a right wrist injury on his pro day. That would be the hand he throws with.

However, Kelly managed to have a great time. His brother did, too.

Casey Kelly, 16, who at 6 feet 3 is about an inch taller than his older brother, tried surfing on Saturday morning. Casey Kelly enjoyed watching his brother receive honors and advice on Saturday night. Their uncle, the Hall of Fame QB Jim Kelly, sent a video message wishing Mr. Irrelevant the best in the NFL.

“It was kind of awesome,” Casey Kelly said of the Lowsman Trophy banquet. “It was surreal. He accomplished his dream of becoming an NFL player and now he gets the love too of all these people around him and cheering him along the way.”

You could tell the brothers, from Buffalo, N.Y., genuinely love each other. Chad Kelly could have picked anyone to join him for his Mr. Irrelevant experience in Newport Beach. He chose his brother.

“Me and Chad’s relationship is one of a kind. It’s very close,” Casey Kelly said. “We talk to each other every day, face time at least five times a day. We text the whole day. It’s just awesome having a brother so close like that. And you get to talk to him about everything and anything. It’s just great.”

Chad Kelly said he wanted his brother with him because he is his right-hand man and his best friend. Chad Kelly knows family is important, especially during this time as he prepares for an NFL career.

He is a unique Mr. Irrelevant, and that’s saying a lot. Looking at the history of Mr. Irrelevants, safe to say this one will definitely be remembered.

# An Irrelevant Weekend in Newport Beach

By Staff

Newport Beach Indy

July 3, 2017

He may have been the last man selected in this year's NFL draft, but that means that Ole Miss quarterback Chad Kelly is this year's Mr. Irrelevant, and will be celebrated with a flurry of activities in Newport Beach this weekend.

Launched in 1976 by NFL alumnus Paul Salata, Irrelevant Week (or in this case, weekend) is the annual celebration recognized by the National Football League that honors the last player to be picked in the NFL Draft.

"We established Irrelevant Week to drive home an important message – that it's not a negative to be picked last in the NFL Draft; rather, it's an honor to be drafted at all," says Salata. "The last draft pick's demonstration of perseverance is lesson that resonates not only with NFL players and fans, but also with people everywhere."

Over the past 40 years, Irrelevant Week has become a much-anticipated and beloved celebration honoring football's underdog, while also making charitable contributions to the community. In fact, through Irrelevant Week, the organization has donated more than \$1 million to charities over the past three decades.

Previous beneficiaries include the American Cancer Society, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Goodwill Industries, YMCA, Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity, NFL Alumni, and the American Red Cross, among others.

This year's Mr. Irrelevant, Chad Kelly, was selected No. 253 overall by the Denver Broncos in the final round of the 2017 draft. Unlike Mr. Irrelevants of the past, Kelly's name is familiar to many football insiders, and more than a few fans.

Kelly's uncle is former Buffalo Bills quarterback Jim Kelly, who had an 11-year career in the NFL, led the Bills to four consecutive Super Bowls in the 1990s, and eight postseason appearances total, earning him a spot in the Hall of Fame.

The focus of international acclaim and media attention, the annual Irrelevant Week celebration includes an Arrival Party welcoming him to town, where NFL fans and the local community come out in force to cheer the player and shower him with gifts from businesses and patrons near and far.

Mr. Irrelevant is the guest-of-honor at the annual Lowsman Banquet on Friday, June 30, an evening gala that gives past and present sports stars and celebrities a chance to roast and toast the newest member of this exclusive club.

The high-spirited celebration includes a silent auction and the awarding of the Lowsman Trophy. The Lowsman Trophy is a parody of the Heisman Trophy, which is awarded to the outstanding American

college football player of the year. The Lowsman Trophy itself mimics the Heisman, but depicts a football player fumbling a football.

Mr. Irrelevant begins his day with a Giddy Up and Go spin class at Grit Cycle.

On Saturday, Kelly will attend a Balboa Peninsula Bronco Beach Bash featuring families of Serving People in Need and KidWorks.

The final Irrelevant Week event is the Roundup at the Resort at Balboa Bay Resort, where Kelly will be showered with gifts and well wishes before he bolts back to Denver to earn a spot on the Broncos' roster.

"I – and the entire team at Irrelevant Week – remain steadfast in our commitment to applauding those who exude the principles of enduring effort and sportsmanship," said Salata. "The Irrelevant Week tradition shares an inspirational story about a champion of perseverance, and that's an important message for today's society."

# Uncle's advice to Chad Kelly: 'Shut your mouth, work hard'

By Vic Carucci  
BuffaloNews.com  
July 3, 2017

Chad Kelly has made his share of mistakes off the field and has had more than his share of misfortune when it comes to his health.

As the Denver Broncos' rookie quarterback tries to rebound from all that caused him to go from a once highly touted NFL prospect to the very last pick of last April's draft, he is getting some advice from someone who knows all about achieving success at his position: his Hall-of-Fame uncle, Jim Kelly.

During a recent interview with NFL Network, Chad said the former Buffalo Bills great told him the following: "Shut your mouth, work extremely hard and be the first one in there, last one to leave, and to lead by example. When you're down in the fourth quarter, those guys are going to look to you to make a play. It's up to you to gain that respect and to show them that you're the guy."

For now, the younger Kelly is at the very bottom of the Broncos' quarterback depth chart behind Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. The Western New York native and former University of Mississippi standout is still recovering from surgery on his right wrist, which caused him to be a spectator through offseason workouts.

He said he hopes to begin throwing within the next two weeks.

"I think it hinders it a little bit, but until you go out there and make a couple mistakes, you got to learn," Kelly said. "Right now, I'm kind of just visualizing everything, pretending like you're calling out the MIKE even in your hotel room every day. You got to pretend like you're out there doing exactly what those other quarterbacks are doing so when you're out there, you can't miss a beat.

"You definitely are behind the curve not going through OTAs and minicamp, but if my name is called, I have to be prepared."