

WATCH: Terrell Davis receives his gold Hall of Fame jacket

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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With less than a month before he will be enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, former Broncos running back Terrell Davis unwrapped a “pretty sweet” delivery.

Folded inside a black Hagggar Clothing Co. bag and encased in plastic wrapping was a fitted gold jacket, designed only for those elected to Canton’s hallowed halls. For the first time, Davis got a glimpse of a prize he’s coveted for nearly two decades.

“The baby’s here,” he said in a video clip posted by the Hall of Fame on Friday. “This doesn’t come in the mail often. That’s pretty sweet.”

@ProFootballHOF

.@Broncos legendary RB @Terrell_Davis received his @HagggarCo Gold Jacket 4 final fitting before he gets to put it on during #PFHOF17

Davis and the rest of the class of 2017 will be enshrined Aug. 5 in Canton, Ohio. When he was selected in February, Davis said that his longtime agent, Neil Schwartz, would — as promised — be his presenter.

“I chose him, really for a simple reason, before I got drafted, before I signed an agent out of the University of Georgia, we met in a diner in New York, and we had this long talk,” Davis said in March. “It was probably around 8 o’clock in the evening. We shut the diner down around 3 in the morning. We had a very candid conversation. It was very honest, very open. When we left that diner, he looked at me and said, ‘I want you to promise me one thing.’ And I said, ‘What is that?’ He said, ‘When you make it to Canton, I want to present you.’ I said, ‘Wow.’ And so I took that as this man having all the confidence in the world in me, and I hadn’t even played a down in the NFL. I said ‘OK, when it happens I’ll let you present me.’

“So now he’s presenting me.”

@ProFootballHOF

.@Broncos @Terrell_Davis shares who will present him in Aug. & the neat story of why he chose him, which goes back 2 his early days #PFHOF17

Davis returned to Colorado in June to watch a Broncos minicamp practice as an analyst for NFL Network. After chatting with head coach Vance Joseph and some of the players — and after showing the Broncos’ stable of running backs how to properly do the Mile High Salute — Davis opened up about his experience the previous four months.

“There’s really no way to describe the feeling in terms of what that meant to me,” he said. “Every day you go out and meet new people that congratulate you. It’s a bit surreal because it happened so long ago. I played football 17 years ago and now you finally have this honor that hits you way down the line

when you didn't do anything else to improve your position with the Hall. I was retired. It's kind of weird in that way, but I'm excited about it and I'm looking forward to it. I'm just grateful."

Pat Bowlen again expected to receive Hall of Fame consideration

By Mike Klis

9 News

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In the early 1990s, about all that soared in this country were unemployment rates and the budget deficit.

President George H.W. Bush was forced to break his promise of “read my lips: no new taxes” as America reeled through a recession. The television networks struggled to get the beverage, automobile and fast food companies to put up necessary advertising dollars.

It was a time when Pat Bowlen made his move from highly successful owner of the Denver Broncos to one of the most effective and pioneering stewards in NFL history.

A Pro Football Hall of Fame subcommittee will convene next month to select one contributor candidate to bring before the full Hall voting committee for likely final election.

Bowlen is expected to receive his strongest consideration yet as a Hall of Fame contributor. The strength of his case is two-pronged. One, his remarkable guardianship of the Broncos. Besides having the NFL’s best overall winning percentage since he purchased the team in 1984, Bowlen’s most outstanding accomplishment during his 33 seasons is the Broncos recorded more Super Bowl appearances (7) than losing seasons (5). This staggering statistic alone should qualify Bowlen for entrance into Canton’s hallowed halls.

But, there is a second point. Bowlen became such a powerful and effective leader within league circles, he changed the course for the NFL, soaring its fortunes to far-reaching heights that did not seem possible in the early ‘90s.

Hemorrhaging money from their previous rights deals with the NFL, TV network and cable executives begged mercy upon the league’s court. At the time, Art Modell of the Cleveland Browns was the NFL’s top power broking owner, as he had been for nearly 30 years.

Modell was sympathetic to the networks, particularly long-time partner CBS, which would claim a nearly \$100 million loss in 1993 alone. The networks initially wanted a rights-fee reduction for the final two years of their contract in 1992 and 1993.

Modell was set to agree when two NFL owners, Bowlen and the Dallas Cowboys’ Jerry Jones, broke ranks.

Nonsense, they said. The NFL had helped lift these networks and cable stations to a new age of television. Modell compromised by negotiating an additional year, in 1994, at the same rights fee as 1993.

Bowlen and Jones objected again. Who were these guys?

“Ownership had always tended to follow Art and whoever the commissioner was, and they felt they were well-served,” Dick Ebersol, who was then the president of NBC Sports, said in an interview with 9News last week. “But then along came Pat and Jerry, guys who were then called mavericks—I would say in retrospect they were visionaries.”

The instincts of Bowlen and Jones were proven prescient late in the 1993 calendar year when Fox, a cellar-dwelling network so raw it didn’t have a sports department, kicked in a jaw-dropping \$1.58 billion of Rupert Murdoch’s money to win the rights to carry NFC games for the next four-year period of 1994-97.

And it wasn’t all about the money.

“We like their demographics,” Bowlen said of the Fox network in a December, 1993 interview with the Washington Post. “They appeal to a younger audience and we’re looking to grow that end of our business. That was very important. We’re not getting the kids growing up watching the game. It’s not a big erosion, but our audience is also getting a little older and Fox really does attract a younger audience. Now we’ll have both.”

It was a seminal moment. In the new deal, CBS was out and so was Modell, who resigned from his long-time prestigious post as chairman of the NFL’s broadcast committee. CBS had eventually outbid NBC for the AFC package, but it came after the league—more specifically, Bowlen and Jones—had already made a handshake agreement with Ebersol.

Sure, Bowlen and Jones were about the dollar, but not at the cost of something more valuable: Their word. They turned down CBS’ more lucrative, if tardy offer, and signed up with Ebersol and NBC.

“That was the beginning of the real deep business relationship and soon friendship between me and Pat. And Jerry,” Ebersol said.

As it turned out, the 1990s became what many analysts have deemed our country’s greatest economic growth period. With Bowlen serving as co-chairman of its broadcast committee, the NFL brought in DirectTV and helped develop the NFL Network. CBS returned in 1998, replacing NBC, which reappeared in a smashing, primetime way in 2006.

Ebersol has since called Bowlen “the father” and “single major force” of “Sunday Night Football,” the NBC bonanza that to this day almost always ranks No. 1 in television’s weekly ratings.

And those young viewers? The NFL is by far the most popular among the four major sports. In the coveted 18 to 49 years old demographic, the No. 1 series, by a wide margin, in 2016 was “The Walking Dead.” Let’s just say this show is a long way from resembling, “60 Minutes.”

NBC’s Sunday Night Football was No. 2 among the younger audience last year. CBS’ Thursday Night Football and Fox’s postgame show ranked No. 5 and 9, respectively.

The NFL may have rose from obscurity in the mid-1950s to No. 1 of the four major sports thanks to the work of Modell, Lamar Hunt, the Rooneys and the Maras.

But it was Bowlen and Jones who led the new age of ownership that ushered the NFL into the monolith it enjoys today. By almost every measure of popularity, baseball, basketball and hockey are planets while the NFL has exploded into its own galaxy.

The NFL's TV contracts went from \$473 million per year in 1989 to \$2.2 billion annually starting in 1998 with Bowlen running the league's broadcast committee, then \$3.1 billion in 2006, when he moved to the labor committee in light of an impending clash with the players union.

Today, and on through 2022, the NFL's 32 owners will split \$5 billion per year in TV revenue.

"Mr. B and Jerry Jones are the two people who really opened the flood gates of television money," Ebersol said. "It had increased every time since the '60s. But never like what happened when Fox came and the money changed.

"Because of how tough that economy was on things like the beer, they were pulling back on advertising. It was the first time they were proposing freezing the TV money for an additional year. Pat and Jerry stood up to that and it turned out well for all the other owners and as a result of that they became real power brokers in the league."

All those names except Modell from the "old guard" ownership are in the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

More recently, Jones and Eddie DeBartolo, owner of the San Francisco 49ers' run of dominance in the 1980s and 1990s, from the transitional ownership group were inducted into the Hall.

Bowlen has so far been overlooked, but perhaps that will change next month when the nine-person contributor committee convenes to put forth one candidate for final Hall of Fame election on Feb. 3, 2018 in Minneapolis.

Bowlen received strong support from the contributor committee last year and it was surprising Jones got the nod instead. It wasn't that Jones wasn't deserving. The surprise was he moved ahead of Bowlen in the line of immortal enshrinement.

Jones bought the Cowboys in 1989, five years after Bowlen and two siblings purchased 60.8 percent the Broncos for \$51 million. (The next year, the Bowlens bought the remaining 38.2 percent interest for \$20 million. And Pat Bowlen has always held controlling interest.)

Bowlen's Broncos have also won more than Jones' Cowboys. In fact, no NFL team and only one franchise from all four major sports – basketball's San Antonio Spurs -- has won with greater efficiency than the Broncos since Bowlen bought the team in March, 1984.

HIGHEST REGULAR-SEASON WIN PERCENTAGE

AMONG NORTH AMERICAN PRO SPORTS TEAMS (1984-PRESENT)						
	Team	League	W	L	T	Pct.
1.	San Antonio Spurs	NBA	1882	966	—	.637
2.	Denver Broncos	NFL	322	204	1	.612
3.	New England Patriots	NFL	322	205	0	.611
4.	Los Angeles Lakers	NBA	1814	1044	—	.607
5.	Pittsburgh Steelers	NFL	312	214	1	.593
6.	San Francisco 49ers	NFL	310	215	2	.590
7.	Utah Jazz	NBA	1553	1105	—	.584
8.	Green Bay Packers	NFL	303	222	2	.577
9.	Houston Rockets	NBA	1514	1144	—	.570
10.	Detroit Red Wings	NHL	1347	849	203	.565

Granted, Jones continues to be the league's unquestioned ownership fixer who recently worked the room to put Stan Kroenke's Rams in Los Angeles and Mark Davis' Raiders in Las Vegas. Sadly, Bowlen's work has been done since Alzheimer's forced him to relinquish day-to-day operations in 2011.

But during the league's remarkable transformative period from the late 1980s until its most recent collective bargaining agreement with the players' union in 2011, Bowlen's contribution was unparalleled. In fact, former NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue has said Bowlen was the only owner who was heavily involved in all four transformative aspects of television, labor, global growth and new stadium construction.

Bowlen wound up serving on nine NFL committees where he helped groom some of the newer owners to become future guardians of the game.

"He was so good to me when I came into the league," Robert Kraft, who bought the New England Patriots in 1994, told 9News on the eve of Super Bowl 50 in San Francisco. "Such a special friend.

Anyone who's a fan of the NFL or the Broncos has to ... such a good owner and committed to winning. And probably has given me the roughest time in the 22 years but he's a great friend."

Patrick Dennis Bowlen was 40 years old and the Broncos' owner for about one week when he called in an anxious employee formally named Steve Antonopoulos but forever known as "Greek." Antonopoulos had already worked for two owners in his first eight seasons on the Broncos' training staff and Bowlen made three.

The reason for this meeting with the boss is Antonopoulos had been working on putting together a sports medicine clinic. When Bowlen bought the team from Edgar Kaiser Jr., "Greek" initially figured it was a stroke of tough-luck timing.

But Bowlen was always more approachable than his misunderstood aloof veneer suggested. "Greek" was given a chance to pitch his idea.

"I had all these elaborate graphs, pictures, charts, and he stopped me about 5 to 10 minutes into it and he says, "You know what? I think you should do it. Go for it.'" said Antonopoulos, who is beginning his 42nd season with the Broncos. "I look back on that, he quickly pulled in all the information and was able to make a quick decision. It was the right decision because it turned out to be a financial coup for the Broncos in the long run.

"He got the NFL to approve licensing rights for using the Denver Broncos' sports medicine. And to do that today it would have cost millions of dollars. I don't remember what it was then, but it was nominal. But he got the NFL to OK that.

"He's a quick thinker. He didn't like a lot of bull. He was a decision maker. He'd listen and then he'd make his decision. It was the same thing with the players. He'd listen and then he'd throw his two cents in and go on."

Bowlen eventually settled into a 28-year daily routine that began with Antonopoulos. Each day, Bowlen parked his car and strode immediately into Antonopoulos' training room. Not because "Greek" was his friend, although he is. And not because Bowlen was maniacal about fitness, although he was to the point he used to compete, quite successfully, in Ironman Triathlons.

"The most important thing to him was to know how his players were," Antonopoulos said. "He cared about his players more than anyone I had ever been around. The sense of compassion he had. Yeah, sure, he was the owner and he had a stake in it, but he really cared about the personal lives, cared about their injuries.

“He wanted to know what was going on with them. It was just amazing over the years how he developed that compassion. It was there till the last time he was around the facility. It was a major deal to him. Always has been, always will be.”

Perhaps some of Bowlen’s concern for his players’ well-being was about the pursuit of victory. But as it turned out, genuine interest in his players blurred into players wanting to win for him.

One of Bowlen’s favorite players was Champ Bailey. Bowlen OK’d the famous swap of Broncos star running back Clinton Portis to Washington in exchange for Bailey, a star cornerback, plus a second-round draft pick that turned out to be running back Tatum Bell. With all due respect to Randy Gradishar (and with Von Miller closing fast), Bailey turned out to be the best defensive player in Broncos’ history.

“But I can’t say at the time I wanted to get traded,” Bailey said for the book, “The 50 Greatest Players in Denver Broncos History,” that will be released in November. “I was a guy who was a Washington Redskin at 25 years old, who was starting to understand how big a market it was to play in Washington, playing in the NFC East. To be a part of an organization that was top 5 in value in the league. I didn’t want to leave. There were endorsement opportunities.

“But after a year or two (in Denver), I knew the difference was Pat Bowlen. You’ve got a guy who’s running the team the way he runs it -- you’re going to have success. And I knew I had a better chance at having success in Denver than I did in Washington. And that was the best thing that happened to my career.”

Gary Zimmerman played seven seasons with the Minnesota Vikings and five with the Broncos. Yet, when Zimmerman was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2008, he not only told all concerned his wish was to be enshrined as a Bronco, he stamped his sentiment by having Bowlen present him during the ceremony.

“Just the way I was treated, my family was treated, it was just unbelievable,” Zimmerman said for “The 50 Greatest Broncos,” project. “And not just me, the way Mr. Bowlen treated everybody in that building as family: The equipment guys, the janitors, everybody who works for the Broncos are treated with kindness. That meant a lot to me and you wanted to play for him.

“Mr. B, he’s so generous. He did a lot of stuff people didn’t know about. He was a behind-the-scenes guy. We had similar perspectives because he always wanted to be in the shadows, never wanted to be in the limelight. I took notice in everything he did. He made the biggest difference in my career.”

For many Broncos fans, when they think of Pat Bowlen, they inevitably recall four words: “This one’s for John!”

Bowlen’s speech may have astonished 90 million U.S. viewers for its brevity and selflessness but Zimmerman and Antonopolos never blinked.

Shy by nature, especially compared to those in position of power, Bowlen seemed a tad uncomfortable as he stood on the Super Bowl-winning stage on January 25, 1998 at San Diego's Qualcomm Stadium. Bowlen's Broncos had just pulled off one of the biggest upsets in NFL history by defeating the heavily favored Green Bay Packers in Super Bowl XXXII. The win had ended the Broncos' unfortunate run of losing Super Bowls in blowout fashion and gave Denver its first world championship.

"It was probably the biggest day in the franchise history," Antonopulos said. "And it wasn't about him. Sure, it was about the Denver Broncos but at that moment, it was about John."

To Bowlen, it was not his Broncos. The moment belonged to John Elway, who had taken the Broncos to three previous Super Bowls, but had also absorbed the brunt of criticism for the team getting whipped each time.

"You would think an owner being a millionaire, billionaire, whatever, they would have an air about them," Antonopulos said. "And yes, he had an air about him that helped make him the kind of successful person he was. But his air was behind the scenes. He never wanted to be in the frontline of anything. He wanted to stay in the back. He was there every day. He showed his compassion and care, communicated with players as needed.

"And of course, the compassion he had for John Elway was unprecedented in an owner-player relationship."

The spoils of Bowlen's work didn't end when he relinquished day-to-day operations of the Broncos in 2011. An underrated aspect of Bowlen's legacy is he has left the Broncos in terrific shape.

His final decisions of Broncos owner were to hire Elway as head of football operations and promote Joe Ellis to president and chief executive officer.

"It goes back to he hires people and lets them do their job," Antonopulos said. "I don't think he ever meddled with the coaches. He wanted to know about what was going on. He'd stop by the coach's office every day to find out what was going on, but he never meddled and he let them do their job.

"He had the right people in line with Joe and John. And if Pat had his presence about him today, he'd be proud of himself for what he did because it has been better since John came in. This thing has solidified because of that."

In the first five seasons after Bowlen stepped aside, the Broncos won five AFC West Division titles, appeared in two Super Bowls with one world championship.

Many successful people may secretly hope their team or company does not run as well without them. Bowlen was never wired that way. Starting with how he viewed the true ownership of the Broncos.

“This is their team,” Bowlen said in an August, 2013 interview while looking out his office window at the crowd that had gathered at a Broncos training camp practice. “It’s not my team. I think if you manage your club well, the fans appreciate that.”

Ask fans in Detroit, Cleveland, Jacksonville – or even Chicago, Oakland or Kansas City – if an owner managed a team any better than Bowlen has with the Broncos. Ask owners of baseball, basketball and hockey what they think of Bowlen’s work in enhancing the product that is the National Football League.

“I’ll never forget Pat telling me this. He told me: Our product is the most important product that you guys put on the air,” Ebersol said. “More important than any movie or television series. Because, with us, you’ve got a guaranteed audience. Whether or not people think a comedy is funny or that a drama has a sexy lead, our strength has been proven time and time again. And we believe it’s only going to get stronger.”

The Hall of Fame subcommittee would have a difficult time finding a candidate who has made a greater contribution to the National Football League than Pat Bowlen.

Sacco Sez: Tobin Rote's tale

By Jim Saccomano
DenverBroncos.com
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Though his time in Denver was inauspicious, Tobin Rote's career prior to being a Bronco was the stuff of legend.

I have always been interested in the uniform numbers that players wear.

After all, everybody has a number — great player or special teams reserve.

In fact, Broncos uniform numbers will be the focus of a new segment on my "Denver Broncos Sideline Stories" television show this fall.

One of the most significant historical figures in pro football history was the very first number 11 in Broncos history.

It was back in 1966 when Tobin Rote was signed as a backup quarterback by a real bad Broncos team. Rote wore number 11, played in just three games and completed just three of eight passes before being waived into retirement by Denver. I was a season ticket holder and remember noting how old and flabby he looked in his brief stint here.

But there was way more to Tobin Rote and his place in pro football history than his brief time here demonstrated.

Allow me to take a look back at the greatness and dignity of this quiet Texan.

Most readers and Bronco fans are aware that the NFL of today includes the 10 teams that were members of the American Football League from 1960-69, including Denver.

The AFL was by far the most successful expansion league in professional sports history, and just one quarterback ever led both an NFL team and an AFL team to its league championship, and that man was Tobin Rote.

He played college football at Rice University and was drafted in the second round by the Green Bay Packers in 1950, a long time ago — but again, like numbers, all years are philosophical equals. They all count.

He played for some of the most woeful teams in NFL history in Green Bay from 1950-56, although in his final year there, Rote accounted for a pro-football-record 29 touchdowns, the highest total ever in the era of the 12-game schedule (the rest of the Green Bay offense accounted for just five scores, by the way).

Then he was traded to the Detroit Lions, a franchise that had already won two NFL titles in the 1950s and, under defensive coordinator Buster Ramsey, had invented the blitz.

The Lions were a powerhouse team in that decade and Rote split time with Hall of Famer Bobby Layne in that 1957 season, although Rote surpassed Layne in almost every key offensive statistic.

When Layne broke his leg, the rotation ended and Rote took charge completely, quarterbacking the Lions to the 1957 NFL championship with a 59-14 win over the Cleveland Browns. He threw four touchdown passes and ran for another in the title game.

After leaving the Lions, Rote played in Canada until 1963. In the AFL's third year, the San Diego Chargers were looking for a veteran quarterback to stabilize their brilliant offense while Kansas rookie John Hadl was getting acclimated to pro football. They selected Rote and he had a great year.

The Chargers only lost three regular season games (including a Week 5 loss to the Broncos) en route to the championship game vs. the Boston Patriots.

That San Diego team was one of the greatest in AFL (and very likely pro football) history, certainly a match for the New York Jets and Kansas City Chiefs teams that won Super Bowls later in the decade.

The Chargers won easily, 51-10. Rote passed for 173 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another in the rout.

He had become the first quarterback to win titles in both the NFL and AFL, and it is interesting to note that his team scored over 50 points in each game. The final championship-game point totals were 110-24 for Rote's clubs.

By the way, Boston's quarterback was Babe Parilli, and both he and Hadl eventually coached in Denver. Parilli was the quarterbacks coach for Denver's first Super Bowl team in 1977 and Hadl was the first quarterbacks coach for John Elway in 1983.

But back in the day, before he was an older and overweight number 11 for the Broncos, Tobin Rote made his mark on the history of pro football.

If you look closely enough and give history its chance, it all ties together.

Paul Klee: With 30th birthday on the horizon, Demaryius Thomas reflects on Broncos, health and, yes, quarterbacks

By Paul Klee
Colorado Springs Gazette
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Old Man Demaryius turns 30 this year.

"I think it's, uh, next year," Thomas said with a let's-change-the-subject laugh.

Where does the time go? They grow up so fast.

"December 25th counts as next year, right?"

Perhaps age is just a number. But in football years, 30 a big number, indeed. On the way to DT's kids camp at Mullen High School — 250 little fellas horsing around like hooligans, none more so than the Big Fella, DT — it occurred to me: His good buddy, Calvin Johnson, retired from football at 30.

What does that mean for Demaryius?

Megatron unplugged after six straight seasons of at least 1,000 receiving yards (DT is working on his sixth straight) and with few peers at wide receiver (DT's streak is the longest in the NFL). Hmmm. With no other reason to ponder the "R" word, it still was worth asking: How much longer, DT?

"I've got longer than 30. I think I've got a couple good years left. This is the best I've felt my whole career," Thomas said. "I haven't had the problems I usually have with my hip. I wake up now and don't feel it. I knew that's a good sign, because usually I'll wake up in the morning and say, 'OK, my hip's tight. I've got to loosen it up to get going.' I can tell it's different (now)."

It's always different at Dove Valley. At quarterback, the story goes from Orton to Tebow to Peyton to Brock to Peyton to where we are now, Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. At head coach, in Thomas' time, McDaniels to Fox to Kubiak to Joseph. On the receiving end, the one constant is DT.

Only three NFL players ever had five straight years of 90 catches and 1,000 yards: Torry Holt (six straight from 2002-07), Marvin Harrison (five straight from 1999-2003) and, yes, DT (five and counting). In 2010, Denver drafted Demaryius four picks before they took Tim Tebow. They found a cornerstone before Josh McDaniels had his cover blown. Now there are two Broncos left standing from the 2011 draft (Von Miller, Virgil Green), one from 2012 (Derek Wolfe) and none from 2013. Thomas is the only one left from the 2010 roster, the longest-tenured Bronco. Time flies.

Thomas is on pace to be the best wide receiver there's ever been with the Broncos. If he stays healthy as a horse, Thomas will pass Rod Smith with the most receiving yards in club history midway through the 2019 season, the final one of his contract. He's supposed to make \$14 million that season, which would

be his 10th here. Not even Megatron played a full decade with the same team. So, well, you never know. The odds are stacked against it.

Demaryius Antwon Thomas (DAT guy) hasn't missed a game in five full seasons. That's the stat that stands out. He played in 17 games in the 2012 season, 19 in 2013, 17 in 2014, 19 in 2015. How? Thomas says his clean bill of health stems from a long-ago conversation with ex-Broncos Brian Dawkins and Champ Bailey. They told him what to eat (schools of salmon) and how to train. Dawkins and Bailey should run a football camp for adults. Their health plan has worked wonders.

"They gave me the path and I took it and ran with it," he said. "Ever since then I haven't missed a game and don't plan on missing one."

Ah, the quarterbacks question. We can't talk Broncos without it. Thomas played with four QBs at Georgia Tech (where he was teammates with Calvin Johnson, and Thomas has said Johnson is "the reason" he went to Tech) and six starting QBs in Colorado. DT said Trevor Siemian is the more vocal candidate. "You know Paxton's still young" in the leadership department, Thomas said, and every department. The offense still needs a leader.

"Everybody has their day," Thomas said. "The first couple weeks it was Trevor. The last couple of weeks when he (Lynch) was out there lighting it up, it was just like 'Whoa, where'd that come from?'"

Broncos coach Vance Joseph has said the quarterback competition could go until the end of the preseason. I doubt it. This is Thomas' third quarterback conundrum with the Broncos, after the Peyton-Brock melodrama and Tebow-Orton mega-drama. DT knows when to call the fight.

"About a week and a half into training camp, before we go to San Francisco," Thomas said.

The Broncos will practice with and against the 49ers in San Francisco (in Santa Clara, actually, near the site of Super Bowl 50) on Aug. 16-17. They play a preseason game there on Aug. 19. "It does make a big difference" when the coach, or John Elway, chooses the quarterback, Thomas said.

"It's totally different. In the meeting rooms it's different," Thomas said of the post-Peyton era. "Of course, Peyton is the master of timing. Those young guys are learning. They haven't been around it. Peyton just knew it. He could talk to any receiver. That's the advantage he had.

"The younger guys — Paxton and Trevor — they've both got their own thing."

To make the playoffs, the Broncos need DT's greatest hits. They need him healthy, happy and hoarse (from speaking up in the locker room and huddle). They need 1,300 yards (his total in Manning's final season, in an offense that sometimes sputtered) and nine touchdowns (his average over the past five seasons, a fair sample size). They need his old-man strength and know-how.

Woody Paige: Broncos quarterbacks set to hold passing camp in Los Angeles

By Woody Paige
Colorado Springs Gazette
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With only 19 shopping days left before the Broncos begin training camp, who is the best quarterback currently in Denver?

Connor Cook?

Cook was the MVP in the Big Ten championship game twice, won the Rose Bowl as a starter and played in the College Football playoffs.

The Broncos brought in Cook for a pre-draft meeting last year, and some balloons believed John Elway would select him in the first round. The Broncos traded up to pick Paxton Lynch, and Cook lasted until the fourth round, when he was chosen by the Raiders.

He didn't play until New Year's Day. Without quarterback Derek Carr, who had broken his fibula, the Raiders started backup Matt McGoin at Mile High stadium against the Broncos in the final regular-season game. However, McGoin was forced to depart early with a shoulder injury, and Cook made his NFL debut. The Broncos won 24-6.

But unlike Trevor Siemian, who was the winning quarterback on Jan. 1, and Lynch, who was not inserted at any point by Gary Kubiak in his Broncos farewell, Cook actually started a playoff game - vs. the Texans and ex-Broncos quarterback Brock Osweiler. Cook threw three interceptions, and Brock and Houston prevailed.

When worlds collide ...

It was rather bizarre to talk to Cook briefly Thursday in Denver.

No, you didn't miss BREAKING NEWS over the holidays. Cook hasn't been dealt to the Broncos for Siemian, Lynch, Chad Kelly or Kyle Sloter.

He's in town working out with former Spartans teammate Bennie Fowler, a two-year Broncos veteran trying to earn a wide receiver spot again.

"You might have been with the Broncos," I said to Cook. "That really would have been interesting," he replied.

End of conversation.

Why is Cook the best current NFL quarterback in Denver? Because Siemian, Lynch, Chad Kelly and Kyle Sloter are not in Denver. Sloter, the undrafted free agent from Northern Colorado who likely will end up on the Broncos' practice squad, is getting ready in Greeley.

Kelly has been busy celebrating Mr. Irrelevant Week in southern California. The last pick of the draft received the "Lowman (not Heisman) Trophy" at a banquet, visited Disneyland and hung out with a surf board on the beach. The cast has been removed from his surgically repaired right wrist, and Kelly intends to begin throwing in mid-July before the rookies report on July 23.

The veterans show up on the 26th, and the first public practice session will be held the following morning.

Meanwhile, Siemian recently posted on his Instagram account a video of his golf swing at the prestigious Brandon Dunes Club in Oregon.

He has great potential ... as a golfer.

And Lynch has been making random appearances around the country and tweeting out birthday wishes to Elway. "Thankful every day for the opportunity you've given me," the young quarterback wrote to the old quarterback. A bit of kissing up?

Siemian and Lynch are supposed to gather with other Broncos outside Los Angeles later this week for a "passing camp", two players told me. It's unknown if Kelly and Slotter will join them. The summer retreat is to include QBs, wide receivers, tight ends and running backs - which could be a maximum 29 veterans and rookies, but perhaps half will participate.

Payton Manning hosted an annual rite of passage ... er ... passing for a few receivers and tight ends at Duke when he was the Broncos' quarterback for four years.

Last year Mark Sanchez organized a passing camp in SoCal, but was passed by in training camp. How did that work out? Sanchez was cut. During minicamp Emmanuel Sanders emphasized that the Broncos needed a passing camp, and, apparently, the quarterbacks got the hint and finally decided to stage an "event" that may incorporate a group hug and other activities.

But there will be no coaches, and it won't count in the Trev-Pax Duel standings.

And this is my all-time ranking of the quarterbacks who now live in the Denver area: 1. Elway ; 2. Manning; 3. Babe Parilli (now 87); 4. Jake Plummer; 5. Brian Griese; 6. Don Horn; 7. Bill Musgrave; 8. Lynch; 9. Siemian; 10. Kelly.

One will be the Broncos' quarterback in 65 days.

Lynch.

Darian Stewart returns to the Rocket City for fourth annual youth football camp

By Taylor Tannebaum

WHNT

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In the early 2000's, former Lee High School standout Darian Stewart would light up Milton Frank Stadium on Friday nights. More than a decade later, the Denver Broncos safety is inspiring the next generation on the same field where it all started for him.

On Saturday, Stewart hosted his fourth annual Stewart Standouts Youth Football Camp. Dozens of kids went through football drills and scrimmaged while the Super Bowl champion coached and cheered them on.

"You know, I'm just happy to come back and do stuff for my city," said Stewart. "That's what its all about. To me, I just think I'm a normal human being but to them I'm Superman. I'm someone they look up to. I'm happy to be that positive role model."

Stewart is heading into his eighth season in the NFL. In November of 2016, he signed a 4-year contract extension with the Broncos for \$28 million.