

# Woody Paige: John Elway will become NFL's highest-paid VP/GM shortly

By Woody Paige

Colorado Springs Gazette

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At four junctures in his football career, John Elway signed contracts making him the NFL's highest-paid player.

As owner Pat Bowlen told me in the mid-1990s, "John has earned the right to be No. 1."

Elway is about to become the league's highest-paid executive vice president-general manager.

He again has earned the right.

The Broncos and Elway are negotiating a long-term agreement that could be finalized privately this week and should be announced publicly before training camp begins July 27.

"We're working to get it done," Joe Ellis, Broncos CEO and president, told The Gazette exclusively.

"We've had some productive discussions in the last week or so and will keep talking. John's an important part of our organization, and we want to make sure he's here for a long time."

Ellis declined to elaborate.

The "What's Wrong and Which Way Elway?" public and press hysteria that has engulfed Broncos Empire soon will end, and calm and order can be restored. Panicked people can worry about who's going to be the starting quarterback.

The Duke of Denver always maintains he intends to stay with the Broncos and run the football operation for many years. "This is my home," he says, although Elway also does have other residences in Idaho and California.

John is not going anywhere.

The Godfather (and grandfather of three) has spent more than half his life in professional football in Denver. This will be his 23rd season with the Broncos franchise as quarterback and executive, and he spent another nine seasons as co-owner and head of the (defunct) Colorado Crush Arena Football League team. And Elway has owned car dealerships in the Denver area off-and-on for the same number of years he played - 16.

Few others in pro football history have been associated with the same team so long and so successfully.

In his 22 previous seasons, the Broncos have suffered only two losing records - in 1990 (5-11) and 1994 (7-9). During Elway's three decades (1980s, 1990s and 2010s) as QB and Exec VP, the Broncos have finished first in the AFC West 12 times and reached the playoffs an astonishing 15 years (68 percent).

During that span they own a 20-11 postseason record (and won their last seven in a row before Elway retired as a player, and three straight before falling short of the playoffs in 2016) and played in eight conference title games and seven Super Bowls with Elway. They've won three championships.

Consider these periods of the Broncos: Before Elway, During Elway, After Elway, Elway's Return - (B.E.), 23 seasons, 7 winning records, 2 division titles, 3 playoff appearances, 1 Super Bowl (loss); (D.E.): 16 seasons, 10 playoff appearances, 5 Super Bowls (2-3); (A.E.), 12 seasons, 1 division title, 4 playoff appearances (1-4), no Super Bowls; and (E.R.): 6 seasons, 6 winning records, 5 division titles, 5 playoff appearances, 2 Super Bowls (1-1).

Elway retired after the Super Bowl in 1999 with the most regular-season victories by a QB. With Elway in charge of football, the Broncos have the second-most victories and second-longest playoff streak (behind the Patriots).

After being drafted No. 1 overall by the Baltimore Colts in 1983, and refusing to play for the franchise, John was traded to the Broncos and signed a five-year contract for \$6 million (including a \$1M bonus), which was the richest in NFL history.

In 1987, Elway received a fresh six-year contract from Bowlen for \$12.7 million. It was the biggest deal in the league. In 1993, Elway signed a four-year pact for \$20 million, giving him the highest salary. And in 1996, Elway signed a \$29.5 million (most money ever in the league), six-year contract. However, he played only three of those seasons.

As executive vice president of football operations (the general manager title was added after the Super Bowl against the Seahawks), Elway earns, according to my estimation (since executive salaries are rarely revealed), about \$3 million annually.

His contract expires in March - before the draft.

Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome is on a reported \$3.75M contract, and Seattle's John Schneider was seeking \$4 million last year before settling for \$3.75M.

Jerry Jones is owner/president/GM of the Cowboys, so his annual income doesn't compute or count, compared to other general managers. The Patriots don't have a titled general manager, but coach Bill Belichick is the de facto GM. He is paid for both jobs at a reported annual rate of \$7.5 million.

Elway, I believe, has been offered \$30 million-\$35 million for a five-year extension, which would be his biggest contract as player or executive.

An additional title - chief operating officer - may be added, with Ellis continuing as the CEO and president and one of the three trustees of the Bowlen Family Trust, which is the majority owner of the franchise since Bowlen's announced retirement because of his worsening Alzheimer's disease. The trust has control of more than 60 percent of the Broncos, with Pat Bowlen's brother, John Bowlen (who primarily lives in Canada, but regularly attends owners' meetings), possessing nearly 40 percent.

In 1998, Bowlen offered Elway a 10 percent minority owner option for \$15 million. Elway had given the team a loan, with interest, for approximately that amount. Elway also could purchase another 10 percent for \$10 million more and become Bowlen's chief assistant and eventual COO. But Elway didn't

exercise either option in 1999 after he retired. (His 20 percent would be worth \$480 million, based on Forbes' latest evaluation of the Broncos at \$2.4 billion.)

When Elway and Bowlen discussed Elway's future with the Broncos in 2010, the owner gave Elway a choice of acquiring a piece of the minority interest or a job, but not both. Elway opted for becoming executive VP.

It was rumored, and published, that the new negotiations involving the Broncos and Elway's first and only agent, Marvin Demoff, would include another opportunity for Elway to obtain a piece of the Broncos' ownership. But credible sources say that aspect of the proposition is untrue.

Both camps wanted Elway's incredible value and contribution to the Broncos' past, present and future to be recognized in the contract. A number of different possibilities have been negotiated since talks began in October. The search for a new coaching staff, the draft, player contracts, Elway's offseason trip to South Africa, normal business operations and other side issues delayed the signing.

But, the Broncos never have delayed the process. They consider the extension a principal priority. Elway, as a player and executive, determines his own deadlines, dealings and desires. And he hasn't felt the resolution was an emergency situation - considering that his contract doesn't end for eight months (even now) - as those outside the organization in social media, TV and radio talk show media fed the frantic frenzy during spring and summer.

The negotiating, as Ellis told The Gazette, has resumed since July 4, although Elway is in Lake Tahoe competing in the American Century Golf tournament and Ellis is on vacation. Both sides have been communicating, and it could be settled long distance. But both will return to Dove Valley in the next 10 days before training camp.

Ellis wasn't specific about a timetable, and Elway has not been commenting on the subject since May when he said he expected the contract to be signed before the season.

There are questions about how long Elway will want to be an NFL executive. I'm sure he won't leave until after the next outstanding quarterback has developed and is flourishing, and the Broncos have more Super Bowl chances.

He certainly won't move to the Los Angeles Rams, as has been rumored (his agent's son is the chief executive for Stan Kroenke) or to the Colorado governor's office.

Elway forever will be Mr. Bronco. He wants to go out on top again with the Broncos in a city where he has lived for 35 years.

And the deal is almost done.

# Kickin' it with Kiz: Without Mr. B in charge, can Broncos give John Elway what he wants in new contract?

By Mark Kiszla  
Denver Post  
July 16, 2017

I would imagine the delay in extending John Elway's contract with the Broncos is about ownership. I don't pretend to know what's going on, but perhaps the Broncos are having a hard time structuring a contract for a general manager that also includes Elway's desire to be an owner, if that opportunity should arise. Would he opt out as GM to become an owner? Does he want to be owner and general manager?

## Noel, Dallas

**Kiz:** Elway wants what's best for the Broncos. And the Broncos want to richly reward Elway. That much I know. Here's my guess: The slow, unfortunate decline in the health of owner Pat Bowlen makes it hard to predict the long-term future of how the franchise will operate. We all want certainty. But maybe that's the one thing the Broncos cannot offer Elway in a contract.

What happened? Did you get your little feelings hurt because Rockies first baseman Ian Desmond ain't talking to the media? So you have the ignorance to grade his .283 batting average a D. I hope he takes you out "behind the gym" and beats the stuffing out of you.

## Nick, fighting mad

**Kiz:** I like Desmond. He can play first base, outfield and, if necessary, be a clubhouse cop, because he's unafraid to lay down the law, even if that means trying to intimidate the media. Desmond makes me smile, because here's what he and some fans don't quite grasp: My job as a journalist is not to be Desmond's buddy. My job is to report, research and give an opinion on his performance. Heading into the second half of the season, Desmond's -0.5 WAR ranked 105th of 117 National League hitters with a minimum of 200 plate appearances. The grade of D might have been generous.

Have you ever written a column without mentioning yourself in it? Your begging for attention is painfully obvious. Write about our local sports and leave "I" out of it.

## Ron, no "I" in team

**Kiz:** I hear your beef. (Oops, I did it again. Many apologies.) Here's why it's often mentioned in my column when I have a face-to-face conversation with an athlete, whether it's Nuggets forward Paul Millsap at the Montbello Recreation Center or Olympic swimmer Missy Franklin in Brazil. Unlike online news aggregators, The Denver Post cares enough to send me to cover games and ask questions for you, the reader. So, with your kind indulgence, let me offer my humble thanks to The Post for making that commitment.

And today's parting shot calls a cease-fire in our usual volley of rotten eggs to throw a bouquet:

I really like your columns. Not merely the subject matter, but particularly your writing skill. As a daily reader of your newspaper, I almost always read the columns reprinted from The Washington Post, regardless of subject, as I know the writing will be superb. You are, in my view, the equal of the writing in The Washington Post.

**Max, no relation to Kiz (honest)**

# Former Broncos QB coach 'Babe' Parilli dies

By Mike Klis

9 News

July 16, 2017

Vito "Babe" Parilli, who helped guide quarterback Craig Morton to glory in the Denver Broncos' first Super Bowl-appearing season of 1977, died Saturday morning, the New England Patriots announced.

He was 87.

Parilli was one of the top quarterbacks in the old American Football League in the 1960s. His best years were with the Boston Patriots from 1961-67 before he finished as the New York Jets' backup quarterback to Joe Namath in 1968-69. Parilli was the AFL's All Star Game MVP in 1966.

During his years with the Jets, Parilli was the placeholder for kicker Jim Turner. Both wound up with the Broncos – Turner as the team's Ring of Fame kicker from 1971-79 and Parilli as Red Miller's quarterbacks' coach from 1977-79.

Both Parilli and Turner made Denver their permanent home.

Parilli not only helped resurrect the career of the aging Morton in 1977, he is given credit for discovering a skinny, undrafted receiver from Temple named Steve Watson.

"Besides my dad, he was the biggest reason I made it to the NFL," Watson said Saturday. "I was out doing some errands and I've been thinking about all the conversations we had. It breaks my heart to know Babe's not here anymore. He was a special guy. And when you talked to him, you know that he really cared. Babe was a real caring person."

Watson had been a last-minute addition to the East-West Shrine Game in 1979 and though he didn't do anything extraordinary, Parilli saw something he liked.

"I remember asking Fran Poolsfoot, my receivers coach in Denver," Watson said for the book, "50 Greatest Players in Denver Broncos History," that will be released in November. "My first year after I made the team, I said, 'Hey coach Poolsfoot, what did you think of me in the East-West Shrine Game?' Because I had always kind of wondered. He goes, 'Stevie, you stunk the joint up. You were so bad you couldn't catch a cold.'

"And I said, 'Well, how did I make it here?' And he said, 'Babe Parilli.' He said, 'Babe Parilli stood up on the table for you and none of us could figure out why.'"

Parilli went to Temple to work out Watson. It was raining so Parilli had Watson run a 40-yard sprint in the hallway, then threw him passes in the gym.

Parilli knew what he saw. Watson in the five-year period from 1981-85 ranked third in the NFL with 5,017 receiving yards.

Parilli also coached for the Pittsburgh Steelers in the NFL, two World Football League teams and several Arena Football League teams before retiring to his Denver home in 1997.

# NFL business that will, won't happen over next three years

By Kevin Seifert

ESPN

July 16, 2017

Our ESPN Insiders have provided an expert assessment of how NFL teams are positioned to compete during the next three seasons. That will bring us to the year 2020, the dawn of a new decade and the start of a key period for owners and players as they posture for the expiration of their 10-year collective bargaining agreement. (Assuming they don't agree on an extension before the current CBA expires after the 2020 season.)

What will the NFL look like at that point? What advances will it have made? What issues will it have solved, and what problems might still remain? Let's take a closer look.

## Guaranteed contracts

You've heard the argument: NFL players have the shortest careers -- less than four years, on average -- while playing a game that maims some of them. Yet their contracts are never fully guaranteed, meaning teams can release them at any time without paying the full amount due. But establishing a fully guaranteed paradigm is not a matter of changing policy. (It's not mentioned in the CBA.) It would require a fundamental change in the market. Players have long agreed to these terms during individual negotiations. What would incentivize owners to guarantee contracts fully when they don't have to? A high-profile player could hold out and force a one-off concession, but it's tough to imagine all players benefiting in the same way. And even if owners changed their approach, it's fair to wonder if they would simply reduce multiyear, partially guaranteed offers to one-year, fully guaranteed deals. In short, it's difficult to conceive a meaningful path to fully guaranteed multiyear deals across the league.

**Verdict:** Won't happen

## International franchise

As the NBA has demonstrated, you don't need to place a franchise overseas to establish an international following. Smart marketing, offseason player promotions and international participation in the game can achieve a similar outcome. The NFL's international emphasis will continue and perhaps intensify as it pursues a goal of matching its domestic fan total internationally. But that is more likely to manifest in an increase of one-off games in Mexico City, London and other cities. Owners aren't interested in expanding beyond 32 teams, and there isn't a franchise with a poor-enough stadium situation to force a relocation crisis in the next three years. The only reason for pause is that, one year ago, few thought the NFL would move the Raiders from Oakland to Las Vegas. If the NFL can move to Vegas and accept the presumed problems it once avoided, it can talk itself into moving anywhere when a few powerful owners get behind it.

**Verdict:** Won't happen

## **Helmet overhaul**

The NFL is eager to shift the conversation on concussions. It committed \$100 million last fall to research remedies for health issues of all kinds, including a reimagining of helmets. The helmet was originally designed to prevent skull fractures, not concussions. The first potential redesign is the VICIS Zero1, a helmet designed to protect against rotational injury -- the cause of concussions -- rather than just linear contact. Almost three-fourths of NFL teams had at least one player test the helmet this spring. Whether or not it succeeds, you can expect additional new products to appear in the coming years. The private sector has been incentivized, and it's reasonable to believe that helmets will look and function much differently by the year 2020.

**Verdict:** Will happen

## **Developmental league**

There is widespread agreement among football executives, from the league and the teams, that there is a need for more offseason work for young players -- especially quarterbacks -- than the CBA currently allows. But there is no unifying solution. Some prefer a traditional domestic spring developmental league modeled after NFL Europe. But it would be costly and would probably overlap with the handful of offseason practices teams are allowed. Others would settle for a quarterback "academy" that would give practice-like reps and individualized tutoring to young prospects. Some think that expanded practice squads are the answer. And a few hope the next CBA will relax team-based offseason training restrictions. This muddled situation has left it to others to create a model the NFL might eventually buy into, most recently The Spring League.

**Verdict:** Might happen

## **Reduction in broadcast revenue**

Television rights fees have been the largest driver of the NFL's economic explosion in the past decade. But recent upheaval in the broadcast and cable industries, and a notable ratings dip in 2016, has prompted a fair question: Will the gravy train end? If it does, it's unlikely to come in this three-year window. Contracts with CBS, Fox, NBC and ESPN all run through at least 2021. The NFL already has begun a transition to over-the-top (OTT) internet broadcasts, partnering first with Twitter and now Amazon for 2017. Rights fees are relatively small now but are growing; Amazon will pay five times (\$50 million) what Twitter paid (\$10 million) per season. There might be a time when the NFL is impacted by a bursting television bubble, but that moment does not appear close and new opportunities already exist.

**Verdict:** Won't happen

## **Nonsentient officiating**

The international proliferation of technology-based officiating tools has not extended to the NFL, much to the chagrin of fans who see the impact of these tools on other sports. Behind the scenes, the league has researched the possibility of placing GPS-like chips in footballs, on goal posts and on the goal line. It stands to reason that reliable data would, if nothing else, help replay officials confirm some on-field calls, such as whether the ball crossed the plane of the goal. But the technology's growing dependability

has not yet convinced the competition committee. The league's old-guard faction has been committed to retaining the "human element" of officiating. At some point relatively soon, however, it won't be able to deny (credibly) the ways technology could supplement decision-making. The experimenting will start small but grow over time.

**Verdict:** Will happen

### **Disempowerment of Goodell**

Ha! (Sorry.) Players hate the closed-loop authority commissioner Roger Goodell maintains over most aspects of discipline, as prescribed in the 2011 CBA. This "judge, jury and executioner" lament has fueled countless public dust-ups and legal disputes. Goodell ultimately has prevailed in most of them. This authority allows Goodell to address what he considers matters of NFL integrity as he sees fit, even in a union environment. Why would he give it up? Owners might convince him to take a personal step back, leaving the work to designated staff members. But that's much different than submitting discipline to neutral arbitration, as players would prefer. To negotiate it out of the next CBA, players would have to give up something significant, and all for an issue that impacts a statistical minority of them. There is no reason to expect change here in the next three years -- or ever.

**Verdict:** Won't happen

### **Sponsorship logos on jerseys**

Teams have been selling corporate sponsorships on their practice jerseys since 2009, a hysterical transaction considering that they are seen only in practice and most NFL practices are closed to the public with increasingly limited access for visual media. The next step is game jerseys, a transition that seems inevitable. The NFL is not usually first into any arena, revenue or otherwise, but the NBA already has jumped ahead. Its teams will wear corporate logos on game jerseys starting with the 2017-18 regular season. In the end, do you really think NFL owners would turn down the additional revenue to maintain the tradition or sanctity of their game uniforms? Exactly.

**Verdict:** Will happen

### **Player supply changes**

There were anecdotal revelations earlier this decade of a decrease in Pop Warner participation, presumably a result of concussion concerns from parents. (Even some NFL players advise parents to not permit their children to play football until they're in middle school.) The decrease has not yet manifested at the high school level, according to the latest numbers from the National Federation of State High School Associations. So it would take some time, far more than three years, before a participatory decrease impacts the NFL. What seems more likely than a shortage of players is a change in their economic demographics. Author Malcolm Gladwell has predicted an eventual "ghettoization of football," assuming that affluent parents are more likely to prohibit their kids from playing, while those who are poor will view it as a more favorable opportunity. In 2014, Green Bay Packers CEO Mark Murphy said he had noticed that trend taking shape already.

**Verdict:** Will happen

### **Kickoffs go away**

The NFL seemed to put itself on a path toward eliminating kickoffs, for safety reasons, when it moved the touchback from the 20- to the 25-yard line in 2016. The idea was to incentivize returners to take touchbacks, and thus expose them to fewer injury-causing runbacks. But some teams responded with intentionally shorter kickoffs. In the end, the change reduced returns slightly and brought injury totals down enough to satisfy rule makers. But the injury numbers -- or at least part of them -- are random, and unfortunately, the NFL is probably one series of significant injuries away from a more dramatic step. Even now, nearly 60 percent of kickoffs go unreturned. The play has been dying a slow death for years.

**Verdict:** Might happen

# Former Patriots QB Babe Parilli dies at 87

By Staff

Associated Press

July 16, 2017

Babe Parilli, the former Patriots quarterback who starred in the team's American Football League days, died Saturday. He was 87.

New England announced the death. The cause of death wasn't disclosed.

Parilli played for the then-Boston Patriots from 1961 to 1967. He was voted to three AFL All-Star games and was the AFL's Comeback Player of the Year in 1966.

Parilli was named to the All-AFL 10 Year Anniversary Team in 1971 and his 31 touchdown passes in 1964 were a team record until 2007. Parilli is fourth on the Patriots' career passing list with 16,747 yards and is in the team's Hall of Fame. He also was known as excellent holder and was nicknamed "gold finger."

He began his pro career with the Green Bay Packers in 1952, and also played for the Cleveland Browns, Oakland Raiders, New York Jets and the CFL's Ottawa Rough Riders. He was the backup to Joe Namath when the Jets won the Super Bowl in 1969.

Vito "Babe" Parilli was born in Rochester, Pennsylvania — not far from Namath's hometown of Beaver Falls. Both Parilli and Namath played under coach Bear Bryant in college, Parilli at Kentucky, and Namath at Alabama. Parilli led Kentucky to victories over Oklahoma in the 1951 Sugar Bowl and TCU in the 1952 Cotton Bowl. In 1982, he was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

Parilli was a head coach in the World Football League, also served as an NFL assistant and coached in the Arena Football League.

# Vito "Babe" Parilli: 1930-2017

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
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The life of Vito "Babe" Parilli in football was unlike any other.

Parilli, who died Saturday at the age of 87, was the quarterbacks coach for the Broncos from 1977-79, working on the staff of one Ring of Famer (head coach Red Miller) while guiding another Ring of Famer (Craig Morton) to some of the best seasons of his career.

Those three years forever connected Parilli to the Broncos and to Denver. But they tell just a small fraction of his story, a journey of nearly 50 years in the sport that saw him cross paths with one legend after another.

After growing up in Rochester, Pennsylvania, Parilli played at Kentucky under perhaps the greatest coach in college football history, Paul "Bear" Bryant. He guided UK to its greatest football success, leading them to wins in the Sugar Bowl and Cotton Bowl in consecutive seasons. That earned the notice of the NFL and the Green Bay Packers, who drafted Parilli with the No. 4 overall pick in the 1952 NFL Draft.

A whistle-stop, 18-season playing career followed, beginning with two years in Green Bay. It included two separate stints with the CFL's Ottawa Rough Riders, and a year with the Cleveland Browns under Hall of Fame coach Paul Brown, when he was a first-hand witness to Brown's early attempts to use a radio receiver in a quarterback's helmet. Parilli returned to Green Bay in 1957, playing two more seasons as a backup behind Bart Starr before he was cut in 1959 by a head coach just getting his feet wet -- Vince Lombardi.

As Parilli told the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel in 2003, he got the better of Lombardi on the golf course - but that might have been a mistake.

"We were only playing for a dollar," Parilli said. "But afterwards, he threw the dollar at me and said, 'That's the last dollar you'll ever make from me.' And before the season started, he cut me."

However, that set up the decade that would help define Parilli's legacy: 10 seasons as an American Football League quarterback. After playing for the Rough Riders in 1959, he joined the new league's Oakland Raiders in 1960, then was traded to the Boston Patriots in 1961.

The Patriots gave Parilli the chance he desperately wanted: a full-time starting role with a U.S.-based pro team. He flourished, establishing franchise passing standards that stood for two decades during seven seasons that saw the Patriots go 44-32-7 in his starts. Parilli still ranks fourth in Patriots history in completions, yardage and touchdown passes behind Tom Brady, Steve Grogan and Drew Bledsoe.

In 1968, Parilli joined the New York Jets and earned a Super Bowl ring as Joe Namath's backup quarterback while soaking up knowledge from the Jets' Hall of Fame-bound coach, Weeb Ewbank.

Parilli retired from playing in 1970 and began another adventure as a coach that included his three years under Miller on the Broncos' sideline and a stint as Chuck Noll's quarterbacks coach in Pittsburgh tutoring Hall of Famer Terry Bradshaw.

Parilli also coached in three other leagues: the World Football League (as head coach of the New York/Charlotte Stars and the Chicago Winds), the United States Football League (as the Denver Gold's offensive coordinator under Morton) and as the head coach of six different Arena Football League teams, including the Denver Dynamite from 1989-91.

In 1997, Parilli concluded his head-coaching career with the AFL's Florida Bobcats. It was a team that was basically homeless; because of venue and management problems, it played its "home" schedule in places like Boston, Los Angeles and Ottawa, Canada.

Midway through that final season, Parilli's team faced off against a future Pro Football Hall of Famer: Kurt Warner, who was guiding the Iowa Barnstormers. A few months later, Warner would get his NFL shot with the St. Louis Rams, but on that night, Parilli's humble Bobcats stoned the legend's team, 68-55.

It was the sort of wily triumph that was Parilli's specialty. Knocked down so many times, but never out, he was one of the game's true survivors, leaving behind a legacy as unique as the sport itself.

# Fifteen players to watch at Broncos training camp -- 12.

## Adam Gotsis

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
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Defensive end Adam Gotsis' progress would have been worth watching even before he was forced to undergo knee surgery that will keep him out until sometime during the first week of training camp.

Now, eyes will be on him to see how he responds after a second procedure on his knees in the last two years.

The injury wasn't related to the torn anterior cruciate ligament that he suffered during his senior season at Georgia Tech; his June surgery was on his other knee. Nevertheless, it was a frustrating setback given that Gotsis had just hit full speed for the first time as a pro -- and was showing flashes of the raw talent that made him a second-round pick in 2016.

"They say it takes you a year to get back to yourself coming off of an ACL injury," Defensive Coordinator Joe Woods said during OTAs. "Last year when he came in, he was coming off that ACL and I don't feel like he had the opportunity to train physically in the offseason and get prepared for his rookie season.

"When you look at him now, he looks like a new person. I watch him through drills. He has great athleticism for his size and he's built like a superhero. He's doing great things for us right now."

Before his recent surgery, Gotsis was causing the same kind of disruption during OTAs as veteran Derek Wolfe, generating consistent pressure from the inside and holding his ground at the point of attack. Gotsis also got his arms up when he couldn't reach the quarterback for a sack, leading to several deflected passes during OTAs.

Gotsis' play and strength earned him a nickname from his teammates this offseason: "Little Wolfe."

"He's doing great. I'm really proud of him," Wolfe said before Gotsis had his recent injury. "He's really turned it around. Last year, [Defensive Line Coach Bill] Kollar was on him every day, all day. He's actually getting a good job out of him. It's good to see him doing well."

Now, the key question Gotsis must answer in training camp is this: Can he pick up where he left off before his recent surgery? The answer could determine whether he can harness his athleticism and energy into on-field performance.

# As camp approaches, Ed McCaffrey keeping a close eye on receiver competition

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
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Ed McCaffrey is still keeping an eye on the Broncos.

His sons may be on other NFL teams and he may have stepped away from calling Denver's games on the radio, but he's still watching, keeping tabs on his former team and its group of receivers as they prepare for the 2017 season.

"No two seasons are the same and no two teams are alike, and neither is the same player from year to year," McCaffrey said. "So I'm waiting for training camp. When I see them in training camp, I'll probably have a feel for who they're going to play. There's always a guy who stands out and makes plays. They're going to have some young guys, some new guys, some old guys.

"What I think that [Head] Coach [Vance] Joseph is looking for is consistency. That's what [Wide Receivers] Coach [Tyke] Tolbert's looking for. There's guys that flash here and there that have made plays. A lot of different guys on this roster have made plays, but they're looking for consistency."

Receivers Cody Latimer, Bennie Fowler III and Jordan Taylor factor into that competition as veterans who contributed a combined 430 yards and four touchdowns in 2016, but to take advantage of a big opportunity behind starters Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders, someone needs to show more than just the flash of potential.

"We need to see them do it all the time, or at least most of the time," McCaffrey said. "And right now I think they have a lot young, talented guys but no one has completely captured that position. I think it's still completely up for grabs, and I think there's a great opportunity here for someone to set themselves apart in training camp."

Fighting for that spot — or simply for a spot on the active roster — are rookie draft picks Carlos Henderson and Isaiah McKenzie, two speedsters who could add new elements to the offense. McCaffrey is hesitant to offer any analysis until he can see them go up against Denver's defense in camp, but he knows if they succeed against the Broncos' deep cornerback corps, they have something to offer the team on game days.

"I see a lot of talent, but the best test for me is watching them against this Denver Broncos defense," McCaffrey said. "If you can get open against Chris Harris Jr. and Aqib Talib and Bradley Roby, you can get open against anybody. That's the test for me. ... There's a lot of incredible college players that are really, really good in college. It takes another leap to become successful in the NFL and I tend to see or at least have an opinion on who I think is going to make that leap once I see them competing against the very best, and the receivers on this Denver Broncos roster are going to get to do that against their own defense pretty soon."

With camp set to begin on July 27, McCaffrey will get the opportunity to gauge the Broncos receivers for himself very soon. As a former NFL standout, his attention will be dialed in on the group of wideouts and evaluating the intricacies that could decide separate some young receivers from the rest.

"Well, I'm neurotic, so I watch everything," McCaffrey said. "I watch their stance, their get-off, how they get off bump coverage, their stems, how they're coming out of their breaks, whether they have good hands or not, whether they're creating separation out of their cuts and just who's making plays. I mean some guys will come in extremely talented but they're not very polished; they're not great route-runners. Other guys may come in, they're not quite as physically gifted but they're very polished, they run great routes and they have sound technique."

This time is a period of transition for the younger players and making a successful move from college to the pros can depend on many factors, from how they adjust to the offensive system, the strength program or a role on special teams. These are all things he'll keep an eye out for at camp.

At this point, the one thing that McCaffrey does know for sure is that this team still has the potential to take home a Lombardi Trophy and, like many NFL teams, they are approaching the season confident they can achieve that goal.

"I was blessed to have played 13 years and every team I played for thought we were going to win a Super Bowl," he said. "And a couple of those teams were 6-10 and a couple — or three of them, at least — won the Super Bowl. This team is going to go in with the intent of not getting to the playoffs, not getting to the Super Bowl but winning the Super Bowl."

"I always think you have a chance with a great defense and this defense is still very, very solid. They're an elite defense, they could be the best in the league if things come together for them. I think the offense needs to be able to control the ball better, move the ball better and put more points on the board. ... It takes a team to win a Super Bowl. It's not one side of the ball. It's offense, defense, special teams. It takes everybody. But I think if this offense can get a little more consistent, have a few more playmakers, put a few more points on the board, with the defense they have and solid special teams, they're going to be in the hunt."

# John Elway, Broncos reportedly close on lucrative new five-year extension

By Jared Dublin

CBS Sports

July 16, 2017

John Elway will be staying in Denver for a while. According to a report from Woody Paige in the Colorado Springs Gazette, Elway and the Denver Broncos are close to reaching an agreement on a contract extension.

Elway's current contract, which Paige reports pays him around \$3 million annually, expires in March. His new deal will reportedly be worth \$30-35 million over five years, making him highest-paid executive in football outside of Bill Belichick, who serves as the Patriots GM and coach. Here's Paige's explanation:

As executive vice president of football operations (the general manager title was added after the Super Bowl against the Seahawks), Elway earns, according to my estimation (since executive salaries are rarely revealed), about \$3 million annually.

His contract expires in March - before the draft.

Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome is on a reported \$3.75M contract, and Seattle's John Schneider was seeking \$4 million last year before settling for \$3.75M.

Jerry Jones is owner/president/GM of the Cowboys, so his annual income doesn't compute or count, compared to other general managers. The Patriots don't have a titled general manager, but coach Bill Belichick is the de facto GM. He is paid for both jobs at a reported annual rate of \$7.5 million.

Elway, I believe, has been offered \$30 million-\$35 million for a five-year extension, which would be his biggest contract as player or executive.

Either way, it's a lot of money for the Broncos to keep their most important player in franchise history in his current role running the team. Elway may also gain the title of chief operation officer, in addition to his current titles of executive vice president and general manager.

Joe Ellis, the Broncos' CEO and president, will continue in those roles. "We're working to get it done," Ellis, Broncos told The Gazette. "We've had some productive discussions in the last week or so and will keep talking. John's an important part of our organization, and we want to make sure he's here for a long time."

Elway has been running the Broncos' football operations since 2011. During that time, the Broncos have the second-best winning percentage in the NFL behind only the New England Patriots.

Elway signed Peyton Manning, DeMarcus Ware, Aqib Talib, and more to help build the Broncos into a perennial contender before they won Super Bowl 50 under former head coach Gary Kubiak, who was Elway's former backup quarterback. Kubiak retired earlier this offseason due to health reasons, and Manning hired former Dolphins defensive coordinator Vance Joseph as his replacement.

# Ex-Pats quarterback Babe Parilli dies at 87

By Jared Dublin

CBS Sports

July 16, 2017

The New England Patriots announced on Saturday that former Patriots quarterback Vito "Babe" Parilli died at the age of 87.

Parilli played professionally for 15 years, seven of them (1961-67) with the then-Boston Patriots. He was originally drafted with the No. 4 overall selection in the 1952 NFL Draft by the Green Bay Packers, with whom he spent four of the first five NFL seasons of his career. He played the 1954 and 1955 seasons in Canada, then moved to the Cleveland Browns in 1956 before returning to Green Bay a year later. He also played for the Oakland Raiders in 1960 and the New York Jets in 1968-69.

During his time with the Patriots, Parilli led the league in completion percentage, passing yards, and passing touchdowns once each. His 31 passing touchdowns in 1964 stood as the Patriots record for 43 years until Tom Brady threw 50 touchdowns during the 2007 season.

Parilli is currently ranked fourth in Patriots history in career passing yardage and fourth in touchdown passes as well. He was named to the team's Hall of Fame back in 1993.

Parilli was selected for three Pro Bowls and named a first-team All-Pro once while with New England, and during his initial season in New York, he was Joe Namath's backup on the Super Bowl champion Jets. Due to his performance, he was selected for the 1960s All-Decade Team.

After his playing career ended, Parilli had an extended coaching career as well. He coached on and off from 1973 through 1997 in leagues such as the World Football League and the Arena Football League.

# Packers disclosure shows NFL teams split a record \$7.8B in national revenue in 2016

By Sean Wagner-McGough

CBS Sports

July 16, 2017

When I grow up, I want to be an NFL owner.

On Wednesday, the Green Bay Packers -- a publicly owned team -- released their annual financial disclosure. In that disclosure, the Packers revealed that they acquired \$244 million in their share of the NFL's national revenue in 2016, according to Bloomberg.

The bulk of the NFL's national revenue comes from the league's TV deals. It's split evenly by all 32 teams, which means by multiplying \$244 million by 32, we can arrive at the total figure of \$7,808,000,000.

Let's state the obvious: That's a ton of money. It also represents an increase in revenue. According to Bloomberg, the Packers reported that they got \$222.6 million in national revenue last year.

"We're very fortunate that we've seen the kind of growth that we have, and I feel very confident that we'll continue to see it, at least through the rest of this collective bargaining agreement," Packers president Mark Murphy said on a conference call, per Bloomberg.

According to Bloomberg, the league's overall revenue is estimated to be \$14 billion for 2017. As for the Packers, their total revenue was \$441.4 million.

Nobody should be surprised by the amount of money the NFL and its teams are bringing in -- especially with added revenue of relocation fees. But it is noteworthy because it comes at a time when NFL players are becoming increasingly vocal about the state of their contracts. As NBA players have landed monster contracts this summer, NFL players have used social media to point out the disparity in contracts. They want more money.

One example: James Harden just signed a new contract with the Houston Rockets that's worth a reported \$228 million. Meanwhile, Derek Carr just signed a new contract with the Oakland Raiders that's worth a reported \$125 million. Harden is a better player relative to his peers than Carr, but he's not \$100 million better.

Unfortunately for the players, the current CBA won't expire until after the 2020 season. However, it might be tough for players to get what they want, as our Amy Trask -- the former CEO of the Raiders -- recently explained on Twitter:

**@AmyTrask**

**Chiming in on chitter chatter about NFL labor issues to again note that an issue for players is that the average career very short so (1/2)**

**@AmyTrask**

**(2/2) a strike can consume a significant percentage of it - owners know this, understand this leverage and can play brinkmanship.**

# Broncos, John Elway making progress toward deal

By Lakisha Jackson

NFL.com

July 16, 2017

The Broncos are moving closer toward a new deal for their top football executive.

NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport reported Saturday evening that the team and general manager/executive vice president John Elway are making progress toward an extension that would keep him in Denver for the foreseeable future.

"We're working to get it done," Joe Ellis, Broncos CEO and president, told The Gazette in Colorado Springs. "We've had some productive discussions in the last week or so and will keep talking. John's an important part of our organization, and we want to make sure he's here for a long time."

Talks ramped up this week after a period of stagnation and there is optimism it will get done at some point before the season, Rapoport added.

Elway told The Associated Press back in May that he did not "think there will be any doubt" a deal gets done before the season opener.

The new deal would likely place Elway among the highest paid GMs, if not the highest.

# Roby brings several NFL players to help run free youth camp

By Justin Felder

FOX 5

July 16, 2017

Bradley Roby had lots of familiar faces at his first free youth football camp. He knew lots of the parents bringing their kids to participate and lots of friends showed up to say hi. He also had a connection to the group of NFL players who served as coaches.

"It's great, I just appreciate them so much," said Roby, "they didn't have to come."

The former Peachtree Ridge High School and current Denver Broncos defensive back had a big group of kids at the Buford Youth Sports Complex for his event. Along with him were guys he knows from his Ohio State days, including Saints receiver Mike Thomas and Giants cornerback Eli Apple. He also had several former High 5 Sports alums he grew up alongside, like fellow Peachtree Ridge alum and current Cincinnati Bengal Kevin Minter.

"Some of these [NFL players] are from the area," said Minter. "I feel like it speaks to the talent of the area, and also the respect we have for Roby and the respect we have for what he's doing."

Roby tried his best to talk to as many of the kids in attendance as he could, using free moments to walk around giving high fives along with tips on football fundamentals.

"For the young guys to see that it is possible," said Roby on why he wanted to host the camp. "You can come up in this area and make it to the top. It's a blessing for us to be where we're at, it's only right that we want to come back and show these guys, 'hey, you can do it, too.'"

# Roby rounds up slew of NFL players for first annual football camp

By Collin Huguley  
Gwinnett Daily Post  
July 16, 2017

On Saturday morning at Buford High School, Gwinnett's youth football players received the opportunity of a lifetime.

Peachtree Ridge graduate and Denver Broncos cornerback Bradley Roby held his first annual NFL skills camp and brought along a large number of his peers to help out as coaches in an effort to show nearly 200 middle and high school football players of Gwinnett that reaching the highest level is possible.

"When I was young, I would want NFL guys at my camp," Roby said. "And to have an opportunity, for free, to go meet some NFL guys and go out and have a good time, I think it was great for the community and for the individuals that came."

In addition to Roby, the coaching staff included former Gwinnett standouts Cincinnati Bengals linebacker Kevin Minter (Peachtree Ridge), Houston Texans cornerback Robert Nelson (North Gwinnett) and Broncos offensive lineman Max Garcia (Norcross).

Roby also brought in a few former college teammates from Ohio State and Denver with New Orleans Saints wide receiver Michael Thomas, New York Giants cornerback Eli Apple, and Broncos cornerbacks Brendan Langley and Lorenzo Doss.

And what made this camp so unique was how hands-on the football pros were with the campers.

"(Having so many active NFL players on staff) is what was so good about this camp," said North Gwinnett wide receivers coach Gerald Mitchell, who also helped coach the camp. "I do a lot of these camps and I've never seen a camp that has this many guys that are in the NFL that are actively participating in training the kids. Because normally, NFL guys will come out and make an appearance but they kind of sit back and don't do anything."

Players from a wide range of ages and sizes competed at this camp and the hope of the coaches was to show every kid there that hard work could allow them to reach any goal, regardless of how lofty it may seem.

"(Having NFL players as coaches) shows these kids that anything is possible," Nelson said. "As you can see, Bradley and I are not the biggest guys in the NFL but it is about the heart to be the best in the NFL because size doesn't matter. There are a lot of smaller guys out here and this gives them the courage and motivation, seeing us, to know that they can do the same thing."

The Gwinnett County connection for the coaches such as Roby, Nelson, Minter, and Garcia is the most special one.

It has become a great honor for those NFL players to be role models for the kids that may walk the same halls and play on the same fields they did growing up.

“It’s huge for these kids to see that guys from around here can make it,” Minter said. “There are so many kids that come out of Gwinnett in every facet. It is good for these kids to see that and it allows them to strive to make it, too.”

While not every player that attends this camp will be a collegiate or NFL standout, this is still an ample opportunity for them.

The coaches from Gwinnett once attended the same football camps and have made friendships and connections that last for years because of the bond that football can create.

“(The kids) can see how this organization can bring people together,” Nelson said. “(Some of the other coaches and I) have known each other for years and we’re staying connected. At this camp, the kids get an opportunity to get to know each other and stay connected for the rest of their lives. If they don’t make it to the NFL, they still have a relationship and brotherhood from guys that they met on this day.”

But there is also a chance that some kids from this camp follow in the coaches’ footsteps and compete at the highest level of the sport one day and that is what drives Roby to do this camp.

The opportunity to be a mentor and guide for a young, promising football player is one that he relishes and he hopes that the next generation can learn from him and carry that mantle on to younger players that they may coach one day.

“Eventually, these kids will be in my shoes,” Roby said. “A few select number of these kids will make it to the NFL. Then, it will be their job to come back and show love and put on a camp for the young guys. You’ve always got to pay it forward and be a good role model and example, and that is what I wanted to do today.”

# Broncos, Elway make progress toward a possible deal

By Mike Florio  
Pro Football Talk  
July 16, 2017

The Broncos and G.M. John Elway may soon have a new contract in place. Unless they don't.

Woody Paige of the Colorado Springs Gazette reports that recent communications have occurred between Elway and the team, and that a deal could be done soon.

"We're working to get it done," Broncos CEO and president Joe Ellis told Paige. "We've had some productive discussions in the last week or so and will keep talking. John's an important part of our organization, and we want to make sure he's here for a long time."

While it's possible that a deal could be done soon, a league source tells PFT that there are no guarantees. Elway has a reputation for operating on his own timeline. If for whatever reason he decides to wait, he'll wait.

If he waits until the after the season, he would become a free agent. While that's considered to be unlikely, it remains a possibility until a new deal is signed.

Paige suggests that Elway's duties could expand to include the role of Chief Operating Officer. A source tells PFT that any role beyond the football operations is highly, highly unlikely. (He's currently both the G.M. and the executive V.P. of football operations.)

As to speculation that Elway could emerge with partial ownership of the team, that won't be easy to accomplish. Pat Bowlen's stake of roughly 60 percent continues to be held in a trust that was devised and constructed by Mr. Bowlen before he became incapacitated by Alzheimer's disease. The trust contemplates that, eventually, one of Mr. Bowlen's children will be ready to assume the ownership mantle, based on the assessment of the trustees. Until then, it will be very difficult (if not impossible) to carve off any of Mr. Bowlen's share of the team for Elway, since doing so would run counter to the terms of the trust he created.

However it plays out, Elway continues to be expected to remain with the team. If he were to leave for another team (like the Rams), he'd have to deal with an owner. In Denver, Elway essentially operates autonomously, since there currently isn't an owner — and there may not be one before Elway decides to retire.

Finally, Paige pegs the value of the contract at anywhere between \$6 million and \$7 million per year. It's too early to know whether that's accurate. And, frankly, there may never be any way to know for sure what Elway makes, unless he or Ellis decide to disclose it.

# John Elway the GM not looking for another John Elway the QB

By Michael David Smith

Pro Football Talk

July 16, 2017

John Elway was considered perhaps the best quarterback prospect ever heading into the 1983 NFL draft, and he went on to have a Hall of Fame career. But now that he's the Broncos' General Manager, not their quarterback, he doesn't need another John Elway.

Elway said on the Dan Patrick Show that he has cast a wide net in looking at quarterbacks, and he's looking for players who will live up to the best of their own abilities, not players who can emulate Elway himself as a player.

"Quarterbacks in this league have to be put in the best position to succeed, and I think that's doing what they do best," Elway said.

Elway obviously hit a home run at the quarterback position when he signed Peyton Manning as a free agent, but the question of whether he can draft a franchise quarterback remains to be seen. So far Elway has spent a second-round pick on Brock Osweiler in 2012, a seventh-round pick on Zac Dysert in 2013, a seventh-round pick on Trevor Siemian in 2015, a first-round pick on Paxton Lynch in 2016 and a seventh-round pick on Chad Kelly in 2017. Osweiler is in Cleveland now and Dysert is in Dallas, while Siemian, Lynch and Kelly are still in Denver.

If one of those last three turns out to be a long-term answer as a franchise quarterback, then Elway will have accomplished the most important job a G.M. has. Even if none of them is the next John Elway.

# Video shows Broncos' Cody Latimer slapping strip club bouncer

By Michael David Smith

Pro Football Talk

July 16, 2017

In the latest misstep for Denver draft disappointment Cody Latimer, a newly released video shows him slapping a bouncer at a strip club.

The video, obtained by TMZ, shows Latimer in an argument with a man identified as a bouncer for Diamonds Cabaret in Latimer's hometown of Dayton, Ohio. Latimer slapped the bouncer, who responded by pepper spraying Latimer. A man identified as Latimer's uncle then lunged at the bouncer, who hit the uncle and knocked him to the ground.

TMZ says Latimer acknowledged he is the person shown in the video but said he wasn't trying to start a fight. Dayton police say they were never contacted in connection with the incident and there is no investigation.

Latimer was arrested last year for failing to appear in court for a traffic infraction. That incident took place after Latimer called the police on his girlfriend to say she slapped him. She was arrested for assault and disturbing the peace, and Latimer bailed her out.

The Broncos chose Latimer in the second round of the 2014 NFL draft. In three NFL seasons he has 16 catches for 158 yards and one touchdown.