

Kiszla: In huge battle for starting quarterback, Siemian and Lynch keep coming up small

By Mark Kiszla
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You can put lipstick on a pig. But the pig still won't fly.

In the only competition at Broncos training camp that really matters, quarterbacks Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch keep coming up small. It's not pretty, and it was no different Saturday, in a scrimmage coach Vance Joseph had labeled "huge." Both Lynch and Siemian are so nice, it's as if they are afraid to win the job for fear of hurting the loser's feelings.

With five weeks and a day until Denver opens the regular season, it's too early to panic, Broncos Country. But the queasy feeling in the pit of your stomach? That's not a bad burrito you ate for lunch. It's the anxiety resulting from two quarterbacks that have inspired zero confidence.

Broncomaniacs are not fair-weather fans. They love their team like family. That's why it was so telling when a young fan stood up Thursday during a forum hosted by the Broncos and told wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders he was trying to stay positive about an offense struggling to find its footing, but ...

"It's supposed to be rocky. We're in the Rocky Mountains," Sanders replied. "We've got a quarterback competition, and that's why people say it's rocky."

At practices where Siemian or Lynch can't belch without it being instantly analyzed in 140 characters or less, much of the analysis has revealed more about any given reporter's inherent bias for his favored starting candidate rather than anything that actually unfolds on the field.

On the eve of training camp, general manager John Elway predicted the results of competition between Lynch and Siemian would be obvious and "seen by everyone." Added Elway: "It's going to show up."

Step back from an obsession with which quarterback won the day, and the early results of the competition are impossible to hide. Neither Siemian nor Lynch has played with the consistency or efficiency the Broncos need to be a championship contender.

If the light has gone on for Lynch in his second year as a pro, then the bulb isn't very bright. Oh, there are flashes of the big arm and a huge upside that made me stand up and cheer when Elway drafted Lynch — as is Lynch's nasty habit of wanting to microwave every decision. If his gratification on any given play is less than instant, Lynch reflexively tucks tail and runs, or he telegraphs a panicky throw to a secondary receiver with impatience Aqib Talib or Chris Harris Jr. pounce on like sharks to blood in the water.

Too many of Siemian's passes seem to be made by a quarterback with one eye cast downfield and one eye over his shoulder, as if he also believes the Broncos are looking for any reason to give the starting job to Lynch. Siemian rolls with the economic politics of the NFL. But he's also a case study in how

empowering it can be to have a coach in your corner, and that unshakable faith in Siemian left Denver when Gary Kubiak resigned as coach.

The decision on a starting quarterback need not be complicated. If Joseph cannot trust Lynch to make more explosive plays than mental errors, the Broncos will go back to Siemian, milk the clock, lean on the defense and hope a conservative strategy somehow produces 10 victories in a division so evenly matched that turnover margin could determine which team finishes first.

During much of last season, Kubiak looked as if he ate a bad burrito for lunch. But when Kubiak walked back on the practice field last week as the former Broncos coach, all the stress was erased from his face. Scoring points with Denver's offensive personnel is no longer his problem. The indigestion has been inherited by new offensive coordinator Mike McCoy, trying mightily to hide the deficiencies of Lynch and Siemian with smoke and mirrors.

It's possible McCoy will discover something like a rhythm for this offense. Lynch could learn to stand and deliver rather than scramble at the first sign of trouble. If given the starting nod, perhaps Siemian will stop looking over his shoulder and begin looking for Sanders down the field.

The truth, however, seems obvious to anybody with eyes. No matter who wins the starting job in Denver, the Broncos will compete against Oakland, San Diego and Kansas City with the fourth-best quarterback in the AFC West.

With time and patience, maybe the Broncos can develop Siemian or Lynch into a championship quarterback.

But it might be easier for McCoy to teach pigs to fly.

Kickin' it with Kiz: Only grumpy old men don't like Broncos star Terrell Davis in the Hall of Fame

By Mark Kiszla
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It is absolute nonsense to suggest Broncos running back Terrell Davis lowers the bar for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Curtis Martin got in the Hall, and no one would take him over T.D.

Seth, Denver

Kiz: There are grumpy old men in my profession yelling at Davis to get off their lawn, as if they are the only true guardians of that hallowed football ground in Canton, Ohio. Well, Rick Gosselin of the Dallas Morning News never rushed for 2,000 yards in an NFL season, and Ron Borges of the Boston Herald has yet to be named MVP of the Super Bowl. By any reasonable metric, the Broncos are underrepresented in the Hall of Fame.

When discussing unemployed quarterback Colin Kaepernick, you are a bit of a snowflake, Kiz. As a business owner, I have always sought employees that could do the job and fit our culture. I no more want a social justice warrior than a hard drug user or a wife beater. Each takes away from what I'm trying to achieve: a first-rate customer experience with profit that accrues to the business. Kaepernick, his skill notwithstanding, is a pain in the butt. When hired on, he knew the rules. He chose to put himself and his activism ahead of his career and is suffering the consequences. House rules!

Joe, Castle Rock

Kiz: Is there an NFL rule that requires a player to stand during the national anthem? When commissioner Roger Goodell visited Denver last week, he saluted Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall for raising his voice about social issues. To the best of my knowledge, not a single Broncos player, coach or front-office executive worried that Marshall kneeling during the national anthem was detrimental to his productivity or the team's performance. Now maybe you actually do regard a silent protest as something as bad as drug abuse, Joe. Hey, it's your house. This snowflake is thankful not to work there.

It makes no sense that sports journalists have made it their mission to paint Kaepernick as a victim. It's all politics. NFL leans right, media leans left.

Adam, Pittsburgh

Kiz: There are no politics on the scoreboard. Kaepernick has thrown 72 touchdown passes in the NFL. He also has been the starting quarterback in the Super Bowl. Dude can play a little. That's what counts for me.

Kaepernick is a team and fan-base killer. He's a bum.

Rich, representing the 970

Kiz: Can we revisit the 2013 NFL playoffs? Kaepernick lost the NFC championship game 23-17 to Seattle. Two weeks later, those same Seahawks routed Peyton Manning 43-8 in the Super Bowl. You say Kaepernick is a bum. Seattle cornerback Richard Sherman told USA Today the league's problem with Kaepernick is a control issue: "It's not about football or color. It's about, 'Boy, stay in your place.' "

And today's parting shot is a television programming request.

Kiz, if you could somehow get Southwest Airlines to quit running the same commercial six times per Rockies telecast, I'll fly you to Seattle or ... ooh, Cabo.

Thomas, Aurora

Officially official: Terrell Davis enshrined as fifth Bronco in Pro Football Hall of Fame

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Terrell Davis said he wasn't going to cry. He envisioned how this all might play out and he tried to prepare himself as best he could and if anyone was betting on him shedding tears, well, odds were against it. So he said.

Terrell Davis has been a blubbing mess for days as his dreams nearly two decades in the making have finally been realized.

But Saturday evening in front of a crowd that included his former Bronco coaches and teammates as well as his family, Davis remained composed and poised as he was enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, becoming the fifth Bronco with a bronze bust in Canton's hallowed halls.

Presented by his long-time agent Neil Schwartz, who promised Davis nearly 23 years ago that he would be here, Davis stood at the center of Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium to unveil his bust and slowly rattle off his lengthy list of Thank Yous, from his offensive line, to his coaches, to his Pop Warner coach Frank White, to his wife and family.

Seated in the audience to the right of the stadium was his former Broncos coach, Mike Shanahan; his offensive coordinator, Gary Kubiak; his running backs coach, Bobby Turner; Broncos president/CEO Joe Ellis; and a contingent of former teammates. Seated just feet from the podium were his quarterback, John Elway, and tight end, Shannon Sharpe, both donning their own gold jackets. And in the front row were his mother Kateree, wearing a blue No. 30 Broncos jersey with "Terrell's Mom" on the back, his wife, two sons and daughter.

"When I first learned that I had been elected to the Hall, I was asked how I might feel wearing this gold jacket and standing next to my bust. I guess I'd be excited, but I really didn't know," Davis told the crowd. "But now I can say the overwhelming feeling running through my body today is gratitude. I am grateful to the selection committee. I am grateful to be joining this elite fraternity with all these men. I am grateful to my friends and family and grateful to this wonderful game of football."

The youngest of six boys, Davis recalled his journey that started in San Diego and led him to Georgia and then Denver and now Canton. His motivation, he said, was a love of the game and of his father, whose passing, Davis said, was "the greatest pain I would ever experience."

"I loved the physicality of the game, but I had also convinced myself that playing football provided me a way to gain my dad's approval by proving I was tough," Davis said. "That's what drove me. I loved the game, and gaining my dad's approval."

For six months, since he was selected as a member of the Class of 2017 back in February, Davis has lived a whirlwind and surreal life that he remembers in moments.

He remembers sitting in a room while a stranger etched the final details into a bust that will live alongside the game's greats in Canton.

He remembers standing in that UPS store as he ripped open a Haggar Clothing bag and first laid eyes on The Gold Jacket.

He won't forget sitting in a high school auditorium turned into a makeshift press room, where he recalled memories of his seven-year NFL career and the relationships he built along the way.

And he's thought about his father, Joe Davis, often wondering what he would think of this spectacle and of his son.

"My dad never saw me play in the National Football League, and to this day, I think about him and I wonder, did I gain his respect?" Davis said. "Dad, I hope you're looking down, smiling and uttering the words: 'Son, I'm proud of you.' "

He's thought about his brothers, all reunited in Canton for the first time in years to celebrate what Davis said is a group accomplishment.

And he's thought about all those times he told reporters and fans that, if he never got the Hall of Fame nod, he would still be satisfied with a career that was bookended with punishing hits and packed with a pair of Super Bowl titles, a Super Bowl MVP award, a league MVP, a membership to the 2,000-yard club, and a slew of Broncos rushing records.

Those were lies, he admitted.

On Friday, inside the Canton Civic Center where he was surrounded by dozens of fellow Hall of Famers, Davis stood on another stage and thought about nothing but the present.

Highlights of his condensed career aired as Davis stood in the dark, Schwartz by his side with the gold jacket in hand. When the lights cut on, Schwartz slipped off Davis' gray suit jacket and slipped on THE jacket. A wide smile stretched across Davis' face as the auditorium erupted in cheers and he looked out and gave three Mile High Salutes.

Receiving the jacket Friday was one of the moments he longed for in each of the 11 years he was eligible to enter the Hall. But it was just the "tip of the iceberg," as Davis had been told by others who entered the Hall before him. Unveiling the bust on Saturday that will rest eternally in the Hall of Fame was the other. Thanking those who helped him arrive at the podium was yet another.

All left Davis in a state of elated shock and filled with a mix of emotions that he tried to anticipate, knowing full well he couldn't. Not as he arrived at the place of his dreams.

"Preparing for today was like preparing for a football game," Davis said. "It has required everything I could possibly give and it has changed my life."

Terrell Davis has made it. Finally.

A teary-eyed Terrell Davis receives his gold jacket. "I'm a Hall of Famer now."

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Stamped inside Terrell Davis' newest piece of clothing is a patch that reads:

Terrell Davis
Class of 2017
305

Davis, the Broncos' all-time leading rusher and 21st member of their Ring of Fame, is officially a member of a new class. Friday evening, Davis and the rest of the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Class of 2017 received their signature gold jackets in a ceremony attended by many members of years past.

For 15 years since he retired and 11 since he became eligible for the Hall, Davis awaited this moment. Each passing year and all 10 rejections before made acceptance into the Hall that much sweeter.

"This is what you look forward to, you get the jacket on," Davis said. "I just tried to have a clear mind about it and not think about anything but the moment."

After his name was called during introductions, tears filled Davis' eyes as he glanced over at his wife and children. Then he gave three Mile High Salutes and slowly made his way through "the gauntlet," a catwalk lined by fellow Hall of Famers. Hand after hand he shook before making his way to the small stage in the middle of the auditorium inside the Canton Civic Center.

"I always get emotional when I think about my family. That was it," Davis said. "I was pretty good going down the gauntlet, but then when I got to the end I looked around was like 'whoa.' It's a happy time. We're blessed. It was just great to have them there and to see this moment and to share this with them."

Moments later, Davis was called back to the stage as a short highlight reel of his seven-year career played for the audience. His agent Neil Schwartz stood alongside him, gold jacket in hand. On cue, Schwartz pulled off Davis' gray suit jacket and slid the mustard-gold jacket over his shoulders.

"You saw when my jacket came off I was pretty excited to get this jacket on," Davis said with a wide grin. "When you put it on, it makes it official. I'm a Hall of Famer now."

Terrell Davis, Hall of Famer, explains his signature Mile High Salute

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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The most iconic images of Terrell Davis' seven-year career have been reenacted many times over in the 15 years since he retired from the NFL.

His Mile High Salute, a post-touchdown celebration he made famous in Denver, is as much a part of Davis as The Migraine Game, the two Super Bowl titles, the Super Bowl MVP, the NFL MVP award, the 2,008-rushing-yard season, the 1995 American Bowl hit on kickoff coverage, and the 1999 attempted tackle on an interception that ended it all.

Friday afternoon, before receiving his gold jacket and being enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Davis explained his signature salute.

"It was just simply a sign of respect," he said. "It was just my appreciation for service men and women, and I always thought the mentality that you have to have to play the running back position, you got to have the same mentality as a soldier. So I adopted that salute as the thing that I would do to my teammates, to the running backs, as a sign of respect when I scored."

Broncos coach Vance Joseph calls scrimmage “very solid for both” quarterbacks

By Nick Kosmider

Denver Post

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The starting quarterback competition for the Broncos was never intended to be a drag race.

Preseason games, first-year coach Vance Joseph said often before training camp began, would play a major role in determining whether Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch would lead the team into the regular-season opener against San Diego on Sept. 11.

That first exhibition game, at Chicago on Thursday, is still a few days away. So while Saturday’s scrimmage was a “huge” opportunity to provide some clarity in position battles across the roster, Joseph said Friday, its final whistle wasn’t met with any sweeping declarations.

“Very solid for both guys,” Joseph said Saturday, summarizing his evaluation of the two quarterbacks in a scrimmage that featured roughly a dozen plays for both players.

But Siemian continued to gain an edge in one key area: ball security. It was a major part of his equation in earning the starting job in training camp last season. And it helped him gain an edge Saturday, when he was free of turnovers while Lynch threw a costly interception.

“Over the last couple of days I’ve started to get more and more comfortable,” said Siemian, who has rarely turned the ball over during full-team periods the past week. “I’m feeling the rhythm and getting the big picture of what we’re trying to do offensively. I’m very lucky to be practicing against our defense because this is as hard as it’s going to get for us. We’re getting there.”

Siemian and Lynch each ran a series with the first team with mixed results. Siemian, who had the first shot with the top unit, completed 2-of-3 passes for roughly 20 yards and moved the Broncos into field-goal range. His top throw was a well-placed ball down the seam to Bennie Fowler for about 15 yards.

On his series with the second team, Siemian completed 1-of-2 passes. His incompleteness was a tipped pass at the line of scrimmage by defensive end Adam Gotsis, and the completion was an out route for 8 yards to rookie Isaiah McKenzie.

“I saw from Trevor that he was very consistent with his ball placement,” Joseph said. “He made the correct reads most of the time. He had one ball knocked down, not his fault. But very solid.”

Lynch, on his third play with the first team, threw an interception under pressure to Chris Harris. The all-pro cornerback said he left his receiver running a vertical route to seize a route inside and make the play.

“That’s called route recognition,” Harris said. “I’m at that level, smart to be able to let my man go and jump routes.”

“He held the ball too late on that (play),” Joseph added. “He had a guy open in the flat early on, but he held the ball, held the ball, held the ball. It’s a time clock thing. As you hold the ball, the defense, they recover — and they did and picked the ball off.”

Lynch later ran two series with the second-team offense. During the first, he missed on consecutive passes to tight ends A.J. Derby and Jeff Hueremann, leading to a three-and-out. The second-year quarterback out of Memphis bounced back with a sharp throw of about 15 yards on the sideline to Kalif Raymond on his next drive.

The play was called back by a personal foul penalty on offensive tackle Donald Stephenson that drew the ire of Joseph. Later in the drive, Lynch found Jordan Taylor with a nice throw on the sideline. That play, too, was brought back by a penalty.

“Paxton, outside the interception, was very solid,” Joseph said. “Again, his best play of the day was called back by a penalty. That would have been a pretty good drive for Paxton, in my opinion. The penalty brought it back.”

Lynch drew positives from his performance Saturday, pointing to the interception as another opportunity to learn before hitting the field in Chicago on Thursday.

“Overall, I thought it was good,” Lynch said. “I had some good plays out there that kind of got called back by penalties. There was a couple throws, too, that were bang-bang plays — defensive players made good plays on it. I threw that one pick that I can’t have, but that’s what practice is for and what training camp is for, to take your chances and make your mistakes out here so that when you get in the game you learn from them.”

Isaiah McKenzie penciled in as Broncos' punt returner to begin season; Ward to miss preseason opener

By Nick Kosmider
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Broncos coach Vance Joseph said he expects rookie Isaiah McKenzie to be the punt returner during the team's opening game against the San Diego Chargers on Sept. 11.

"He's the punt returner; that's why he was drafted," Joseph said of McKenzie, a fifth-round pick out of Georgia.

McKenzie has been at the front of the punt-return rotation throughout training camp, and last week he began earning some first-team repetitions at wide receiver, as well.

"He's a guy who can catch the ball," Joseph said. "That's critical as a punt returner. We've all seen guys who can really run fast but can't catch the football. He can catch the football. So I trust him to be our guy Week 1 against the Chargers."

T.J. Ward to miss exhibition

Safety T.J. Ward, who exited Friday's practice after suffering a hamstring injury, is unlikely to play in the Broncos' opening preseason game at Chicago on Thursday, Joseph said.

"It's a minor hamstring injury," Joseph said, indicating that Ward would likely return to action leading into the team's joint practices with the San Francisco 49ers in Santa Clara, Calif., which begin the week after the game against the Bears.

Offensive tackle Menelik Watson missed Saturday's scrimmage with a strained "hip muscle or ab muscle," Joseph said. Watson is expected to return to practice Tuesday.

Linebacker Todd Davis (shoulder) and running back Bernard Pierce (hamstring) were also held out of the scrimmage.

Lamenting penalties

The Broncos committed at least four offensive penalties during their brief scrimmage Saturday. There was a personal foul, an offensive pass interference, a holding call and a false start among the penalties.

Joseph said he addressed the issues immediately after practice. The coach wasn't the only one disappointed in the miscues.

"That's something that we don't have time for really," cornerback Chris Harris said. "We don't need those penalties. We can't afford them on the offensive side of the ball. We've got to play clean and be smart. We don't want to beat ourselves so we're not looking for that at all."

Defensive standouts

While Harris' interception of Paxton Lynch was the top defensive play of the scrimmage, there were several standouts on that side of the ball.

Defensive end Adam Gotsis swallowed up a run play and then tipped a pass at the line of scrimmage by Trevor Siemian. Outside linebacker Kasim Edebali, battling for the starting job opposite Von Miller with Shane Ray injured, was credited with a sack for the second straight practice.

"I liked the run defense," Joseph said, passing credit to the defense as a whole. "It was really stout, it was really sound."

Top quotes and 3 Broncos who stood out at Day 9 of training camp

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
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QUOTABLES

Best lines from Broncos players and coaches:

Trevor Siemian, QB, on facing his own defense daily: “Anything you pour so much into physically, mentally and emotionally, and it doesn’t work out, your first reaction is, ‘Dang, why isn’t this working?’ You take a step back and cool down. Those guys are pretty good, too, and they’re doing their job. It’s give and take.”

Chris Harris, CB, on facing receivers other than his own Thursday at Chicago: “I can’t wait to hit somebody else. I’m tired of going against (Emmanuel Sanders and Demaryius Thomas). I’m pretty sure they’re tired of going against us.”

Vance Joseph, coach, on Broncos alumni attending Saturday’s scrimmage: “It was 25 to 30 guys. I’ve known most of those guys just being in Colorado half of my life. It’s great to have them here.”

NOTABLES

Players who stood out, for better or worse:

Quarterbacks: Trevor Siemian completed 3-of-5 pass attempts across two series, one each with the first- and second-team offenses, with no turnovers. Lynch was intercepted by Chris Harris during his lone series with the first team. He threw two incomplete passes on his first drive with the second team and had two completions called back because of penalty during his second drive with that unit.

De’Angelo Henderson: The rookie running back continues to make his mark. His five carries — four of the five were with the second unit — were the most of any back during Saturday’s scrimmage. Though the absence of tackling made it difficult to gauge his true rushing statistics, he had several productive runs late in practice that led to a first down.

Donald Stephenson: The offensive tackle committed a personal foul penalty that negated a big pass play and visibly frustrated his head coach. “Be smart,” Joseph said he told Stephenson. “It was our best play up to that point in the entire scrimmage, then we get a nonsense penalty of pushing the back after the play. He blocked his guy, he did his job, the play is over. Don’t be selfish and get a penalty and back us up by 15 instead of being up 20.”

Terrell Davis' children, father and Pat Bowlen highlight Hall of Fame speech

By Mike Klis

9 News

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The proud legacy of Joe Davis was on the Pro Football Hall of Fame stage here Saturday night.

Joe Davis passed away from lupus at just 41 years old in 1985 but his spirit was very much alive through the words of his youngest son's Hall of Fame acceptance speech.

Terrell Davis, who had four great years as a Denver Broncos' running back from 1995-97, talked about his always tough, sometimes harsh father near the beginning of his 27-minute speech and to close.

"There was one special person I was determined to prove myself to," Davis said. "And that was my dad. My dad was tough on my brothers, but tougher on me because I was the baby of the family. Yes, I was a crybaby. My dad didn't like the way my mother coddled me."

Always well-spoken whether getting interviewed as a player and former player or working as an analyst for the NFL Network, Davis stood strong on the podium and held his poise even as the teleprompter of his speech malfunctioned for about 20 seconds.

It was mostly a commanding, straightforward talk as Davis mixed in plenty of his familiar stories while also thanking coaches and teammates from childhood, high school, college and the Broncos.

He mentioned how he began suffering from debilitating migraines at 9 years old, how he quit playing football after his father died, how staring down a barrel of a shotgun scared him back to the game at 14.

"Thank God someone talked the guy out of pulling the trigger," Davis said. "When I got home, I laid in my bed, I closed my eyes and I vividly relived every moment over and over again. I spoke out loud to God and I promised I would never find myself in that situation again. I knew that I had to change my life. ... That night I was determined to walk away from the irresponsible life I had been living forever."

He relayed how he nearly quit his rookie year of 1995 when the Broncos were playing a preseason game in Tokyo only to be saved by a language barrier with the front desk person.

"I was there when he was trying to make that call in Japan to try and get a flight out of there and quit," said his roommate at the time, former Bronco tight end Byron Chamberlain. "And maybe sell insurance or something. He did not make it. I always tell him I'm glad he never took Japanese in college."

Davis thanked George Allen, his Long Beach State coach during Davis' redshirt season. Allen died after that season, and a year later, the college dropped its football program.

"Coach Allen I know your listening, it was an honor to play for you," Davis said.

Davis transferred to Georgia, where a torn hamstring spoiled his senior year, although he did return to finish with four strong games.

“To Bulldog fans, I want to say it one more time, ‘Gooooooooo Dogs! Sic ‘em! Rrr, Rrr, Rrr, Rrr!’”

He then moved on to his remarkable four-season run with the Broncos. He thanked his teammates, offensive line, coaches Mike Shanahan, Gary Kubiak and Bobby Turner; trainer Steve “Greek” Antonopulos; quarterback John Elway and owner Pat Bowlen.

“Now Mr. B is at home right now fighting a courageous battle against Alzheimer’s,” Davis said. “A few weeks from now (on August 25), the Hall of Fame selection committee will be voting on the contributor category. Let’s make sure that this champion is enshrined in 2018.”

That drew perhaps the loudest applause of his speech.

His children drew the biggest laughs. As he addressed his youngest son and middle child Myles, the camera caught the young boy smiling and waving a box of candy, oblivious to his dad’s speech. The camera also caught daughter Dylan looking at her cell phone as her dad was expressing his love for her.

He finished by thanking his mom, Kateree, and his father, Joe.

“I knew I never wanted to live the life he lived, as he grew up on the tough streets of St. Louis, and more than once he had been shot or stabbed,” Davis said. “But the reason I ascribe the word, ‘hero’ to him, is that he always did his very best he knew how to prepare us for his version of life as a black man in America. And his version was harsh.

“Dad I hope you're looking down, smiling, and uttering the words, ‘Son, I’m proud of you.’”

Davis concluded his speech by delivering his patented Mile High Salute to the audience.

The Broncos quarterback battle continues as the Denver defense wins the scrimmage

By Rod Mackey

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The Broncos' real test will come against the Bears Thursday night in Chicago, but today's scrimmage was at least another step forward as the Broncos finally did some hitting.

"Everyone was engaged," Head Coach Vance Joseph said. "They wanted to play well today. It was physical without tackling for the first two groups. The third group actually tackled. So that was fun to see those guys play."

Trevor Siemian got the start and had the better day, but he wasn't great. It's hard to be against that Denver D.

"Anything you pour so much into physically, mentally and emotionally, and it doesn't work out, your first reaction is, 'Dang, why isn't this working?' You take a step back and cool down," Siemian said.

"Those guys are pretty good too and they're doing their job. It's give and take. I think we've had a really competitive camp so far which is good. It'd be kind of worrying if defense was getting us every day or if we were getting them every day. I think it's been really competitive and that's good for the team."

"This defense has been getting after us day in and day out, but we've had good practices on the offensive side of the ball, too," Lynch said. "I think it makes everybody better when you go against the best defense in the league day in and day out—the pass rushes, cornerbacks and linebackers. It's definitely helped me to progress my game, but I'm excited to get out there and be able to run around a little bit and go against a different defense."

It's not just a different defense. It's a different team. Vance Joseph admitted they're all ready to see someone else.

"I think everyone is excited," Joseph said. "You kind of practice to play the games. Even though it's preseason, you get a chance to get a fair evaluation of the players. That's a live-like environment. It's not controlled. You want to see how guys react when they're tired, when they're hurt and obviously against a different opponent. I'm excited about Thursday to see how the young guys go out and play football, so we can find out the best guys for our football team."

The Broncos and Bears game will air on KTVD Channel 20 Thursday night at 6 p.m. MT.

Stevan Ridley knows sound of silence, wants to make most of opportunity

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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In the end, Stevan Ridley said that it's the quiet that gets to you.

One day you're an NFL player with the idea in your head that you'll be an NFL player in the future. And suddenly you're not, and 32 teams have each signed 90 players to go through their offseason programs - the math says that's 2,880 in all -- and you're not one of them.

"That's humbling," Ridley said. "When the phone doesn't ring, you learn not to take things for granted. Because when it doesn't ring, you can only work to make the most of a chance and hope you get one."

Ridley arrived at the Denver Broncos' complex on July 26, the same day a pre-training camp physical revealed that Devontae Booker had a fractured bone in his left wrist. Booker is expected to miss six weeks with the injury, and the Broncos are also trying to regulate Jamaal Charles' workload throughout training camp because Charles has played in just eight games in the past two seasons due to multiple knee surgeries.

So the Broncos needed a back who could come in, learn fast, work hard, and if things went well, show some potential. Ridley has checked all the boxes thus far.

"He understands he has an opportunity to make a football team," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "... He's a veteran player. He's been in New England, so he knows what it looks like. So I'm not surprised he's so engaged, as far as studying and how he practices."

Ridley does find himself at one of the most crowded positions on the Broncos' depth chart. Booker's injury doesn't affect his status as a player the Broncos considered as the team's No. 1 back.

C.J. Anderson has been the team's No. 1 back before and has worked as the lead guy throughout the offseason program and in training camp so far. The Broncos believe Charles can give them something in the offense if his knees are up to the challenge, and rookie De'Angelo Henderson has shown the big-play potential in practice that the Broncos want at the position.

Toss in the fact that fullback Andy Janovich is a special-teams mainstay and a quality receiving option on offense and Juwan Thompson's ability on special teams to go with his three seasons on the roster and that makes the number of running backs the Broncos will keep when they cut to 53 players a difficult total to guess.

Ridley has shown power and vision in the running game as well as the ability to run quality routes as a receiver with consistent hands. And it wasn't so long ago that he rushed for 1,263 yards and 12 touchdowns for a Patriots team that finished 12-4 in 2012 and advanced to the AFC Championship Game.

"[Ridley] runs hard. He definitely has great vision, and he could catch the ball out of the backfield," said cornerback Chris Harris Jr. "Anybody that plays in that Patriots offense could catch the ball."

There is also the matter of those months out of the league when Ridley had the desire the return but no willing takers. There is fuel there for a guy who has been on the outside looking in on the league.

“No question that motivates guys. If you’re at home and nobody’s calling you, you’re thinking it’s over,” Joseph said. “You’re training and training and then somebody calls -- some guys just see it as an opportunity they need to go for.”

With Booker out and Charles not expected to play much, if at all, in the Broncos’ four preseason games, Ridley should get a chance to showcase himself for the Broncos or any of the league’s other 31 teams.

“I know you can’t take anything in this game for granted,” Ridley said. “I don’t think I really did before, but it really hits you when you’re out there. ... I’m very thankful to have another shot.”

Terrell Davis relates how life's journey led him to Hall of Fame

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

August 6, 2017

On a rainy night in Canton, Ohio, as he accepted the greatest honor a professional football player can know, Terrell Davis spoke of his parents, the moment he changed his life and he thanked family, friends, his coaches and former teammates.

Saturday, Davis formally became the fifth player in Denver Broncos franchise history to be enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Davis took those watching and listening on his life's journey, through the moments when he changed his direction to times when he considered quitting the game, both while at the University of Georgia and during his first training camp with the Broncos.

"Can you imagine that?" Davis asked the crowd about trying to arrange a flight home from the Broncos' preseason game in Tokyo in 1995. A big hit on special teams in that game was the jumping-off point for Davis, and former Broncos coach Gary Kubiak used the tackle to illustrate for the team's rookies how careers can begin.

Davis spoke of how the death of his father -- of complications from lupus, at age 41 -- affected him, that "when he died, part of me died," and that he was "a child in crisis" at that time. Davis spoke of having a shotgun pointed at his head when he 14, and how that moment made him vow never to be in such a situation again.

He thanked his mother, Kateree: "Mom, you are my hero, I'm so honored you are my mother. ... Not once did I ever hear you complain, you have a huge heart. If someone needs help, you do something about it. Mom, you are the embodiment of unconditional love."

Davis spoke emotionally about his wife, Tamiko, and three children, and told the cheering crowd how he told Tamiko on the couple's first date that he would marry her. "Nineteen years and three children later," he said, "you are my soulmate."

Davis said he hoped he had earned a tough-love father's respect and went on to thank Frank White, his former Pop Warner coach, plus former Broncos coach Mike Shanahan and others including Kubiak and ex-Denver assistants Bobby Turner and Alex Gibbs.

Davis thanked former teammates including Hall of Famer John Elway, his former fullback Howard Griffith, his offensive linemen and many other Broncos staffers. He extolled the virtues of never quitting, then closed with a salute to the crowd and said, "today is for us, I salute every single one of you."

Davis said he would wear the Hall's signature gold jacket "all the time" after often wondering if he would ever get the call from Canton. He played seven seasons with the Broncos before knee injuries cut his career short.

Davis is one of two backs in league history -- Jim Brown is the other -- to average more than 100 yards rushing per game in the regular season and postseason combined. He averaged 142.5 yards rushing in the postseason, a record for running backs with at least five appearances.

Davis won a league MVP award (1998) and a Super Bowl MVP award (Super Bowl XXXII) and remains the Broncos' all-time leading rusher.

Vance Joseph: Isaiah McKenzie will 'absolutely' be Broncos' punt returner

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

August 6, 2017

The Denver Broncos are still five days away from their preseason opener in Chicago, but coach Vance Joseph was willing to name a new starter after Saturday's practice.

At punt returner.

Yes, Joseph said he's already seen enough from rookie wide receiver Isaiah McKenzie to say McKenzie is first in line to return punts when the regular season begins.

Asked Saturday about McKenzie's reliability catching punts in training camp, Joseph went straight to a full endorsement.

"That's critical as a punt returner. We've all seen guys who were really, really fast who couldn't catch the football," Joseph said. "I trust him to be our guy Week 1 against the Chargers."

Asked to simply confirm what he had just said, Joseph followed with: "Absolutely, he's the punt returner. ... He's the first guy out."

The Broncos used one of two fifth-round picks in April's draft to select McKenzie. And from that moment, they envisioned him as their punt returner.

McKenzie had shown he was one of the fastest wide receivers at the scouting combine, with a 4.42-second clocking in the 40-yard dash (electronically timed), and he closed his career at Georgia with five career punt-return touchdowns and six career return touchdowns in all.

The Broncos also hoped McKenzie would show enough at wide receiver to have a versatile role on offense that could even include a rushing attempt from time to time. He had 37 carries at Georgia with four rushing touchdowns. He averaged 8.9 yards per carry against largely Southeastern Conference competition.

"He's fast; that's another thing that we were talking about," Broncos running back C.J. Anderson said. "Speed kills. He's as fast as he can be. Having that mobility, you can put him anywhere or line him up anywhere and he can make plays anytime. He's a home run threat. If we put him in the right position to make those plays, his talent will flourish."

The Broncos went into the offseason in search of more impact in the return game. It's a big reason why both McKenzie and Carlos Henderson are part of the draft class.

Henderson, who was one of the best kickoff returners on the draft board, has pressed at times. Joseph has said "he's trying a little too hard right now." But McKenzie has shown the on-field composure and the ability rebound from mistakes. "He is so mature for a rookie," Joseph said. "He is headstrong. Nothing bothers him. He's had some bad days and you can't tell. He's [as] even as I've ever seen a rookie."

Trevor Siemian steady, again avoids the big mistakes

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

August 6, 2017

Every day, every practice, every throw is part of the Denver Broncos' competition at quarterback between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. Here's a closer look at their day:

Trevor Siemian

The Broncos used part of Saturday's practice for a short scrimmage as the two quarterbacks split the snaps with the starting offense. Siemian was again steady -- "consistent" is the word coach Vance Joseph has used -- and avoided turnovers.

Wow moment: The Broncos defense didn't give either quarterback much opportunity to work down the field, but two of Siemian's best throws on the day went to tight ends, including a throw up the left sideline to tight end Virgil Green and later in team drills he fired a throw over the middle to tight end Austin Traylor, who then moved to left sideline for what likely would have been a touchdown.

Whoa moment: The Broncos' offensive line doesn't have complete freedom during training camp to shove a defensive lineman who leaps to block a throw, and both quarterbacks have had moments when it's still been an issue. Adam Gotsis knocked down a Siemian throw Saturday, though Joseph said it was "not [Siemian's] fault."

Paxton Lynch

One of Lynch's better throws in the scrimmage was negated by a penalty on Donald Stephenson -- a penalty Joseph called "nonsense" after practice -- but overall he still seems to be battling his confidence at times, especially after a mistake.

Wow moment: Lynch again flashed the power arm at times, and a toss to Jordan Taylor was one of his best of the day. And his toss to wide receiver Kalif Raymond, the play that was negated by the penalty, would have been a quality gain.

Whoa moment: Lynch showed some hesitation in the pocket Saturday with the defense chasing the quarterbacks on plays that were closer to game speed. The result on one of those occasions was an interception by cornerback Chris Harris Jr. after Harris had dropped off the receiver he was covering to jump the route.

Broncos scrimmage fails to clarify QB competition

By Staff

Associated Press

August 6, 2017

The Denver Broncos always knew Peyton Manning was their top quarterback in his four training camps. The picture hasn't been as clear the last two years.

The scrimmage on Saturday failed to clarify who will be the starter when the season begins next month.

Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch have spent training camp trying to entrench themselves as the No. 1 quarterback. But with a few days before the first preseason game, there is no clear winner. Siemian, who won the starting job last year over veteran Mark Sanchez and Lynch, began to separate himself this week. But he didn't lay claim to the No. 1 spot in Saturday's scrimmage.

Coach Vance Joseph said Thursday's preseason game at Chicago will hold more meaning.

"Today was a controlled scrimmage, especially for the (starters and backups)," he said. "Thursday in Chicago, that's where the true evaluation starts for a lot of positions."

The short scrimmage was a window into Thursday, and Siemian outperformed Lynch, the Broncos' 2016 first-round draft pick. Siemian completed 3 of 5 passes for approximately 31 yards. His best pass of the day was to receiver Bennie Fowler on a post pattern that might have gone the distance in a game.

"Over the last couple of days, I've started to get more and more comfortable and I'm really feeling the rhythm and getting the big picture of what we're trying to do offensively," Siemian said. "Very lucky to be practicing against our defense because it's as hard as it's going to get."

Lynch struggled, missing on some passes and finished 0 for 4. He was intercepted by cornerback Chris Harris Jr. and his only completion was wiped out on a penalty.

"I stepped up in the pocket and flushed out. I saw Emmanuel (Sanders) breaking out of his route, I didn't see anybody around him and Chris had fallen off from the flat and kind of drifted back," Lynch said.

"Looking back you can't force those kinds of passes. If you get pushed up in the pocket, that's when I can take it down and run with it and use my athleticism."

Joseph said Lynch held the ball too long on the play, giving the defense a chance to recover. He said he was happy with Siemian's consistency and gave Lynch positive marks overall.

"Paxton, outside the interception, was very solid," he said. "His best play of the day was brought back by a penalty. That would have been a pretty good drive."

PARADIS GETS SOME REPS

Center Matt Paradis wasn't expected to take part in the scrimmage. However, he got in for some plays as he works his way back from double-hip surgery.

"He's progressing fast," Joseph said. "He felt fine this morning to play four or five plays, so we allowed him to play. The first two units was a controlled environment, but for him it's live. I'm proud of where Matt's at as far as his health."

NOTES

Offensive tackle Menelik Watson was out Saturday with what Joseph said was a "strained hip muscle or ab muscle." Joseph said Watson would be back at practice Tuesday and be ready for Thursday. ... Joseph said safety T.J. Ward has a minor hamstring injury and won't play against Chicago. It's hoped he'll be back for practices against San Francisco ahead of the Aug. 19 preseason game.

Broncos' Siemian shows consistency in scrimmage; Lynch fails to gain ground

By Troy Renck
KMGH
August 6, 2017

Scrimmages demand rapid responses.

Even in a controlled environment, they allow for deeper evaluation of the sport's most important position. Trevor Siemian pulled no punches in the quarterback derby, remaining consistent. He completed 3-of-5 passes for 31 yards. He threaded the needle on a 22-yard completion over the middle to Bennie Fowler. Siemian went 2-for-4 with the first team, his third consecutive solid day.

"Nobody is more critical of myself than me," Siemian said. "Looking back, I am doing some good things. There are some things I want to brush up on. But I think as we get going and the more live reps I get, I am getting more comfortable in this scheme."

Paxton Lynch, needing to make up ground, looked young. He went 0-for-4 and held onto the ball too long against pressure, baited into an interception by Chris Harris Jr. on a pass intended for Emmanuel Sanders. Lynch also experienced bad luck. His best play -- roughly a 15-yard completion to receiver Kalif Raymond -- was nullified when left tackle Donald Stephenson shoved defensive end Adam Gotsis in back for a penalty. Coach Vance Joseph reacted swiftly, pulling Stephenson from the unit and replacing him with Garrett Bolles.

"I view it as an even playing-field," Lynch said. "I am progressing."

Lynch's Saturday provided a Cliffs Notes version of his week: He shows athleticism but as the playbook expands he struggles with reads. Harris worked him over on the pick.

"That's called route recognition. I am at that level," Harris said. "It's smart to let my man go and jump routes. Like I have said, we are trying to drown them everyday (in attempt to make them better). Y'all can say they are struggling, but they're going against the best. It's tough going against us."

Coach Vance Joseph remained diplomatic in his assessment of the quarterbacks, recognizing the preseason game at Chicago on Thursday will carry more weight.

"I saw from Trevor that he was very consistent with his ball placement. He had one ball knocked down (by Gotsis), not his fault, but very solid," Joseph said. "Paxton, outside the interception, was very solid. Again, his best play of the day was called back. That would have been a pretty good drive for him. Very solid for both guys."

Broncos Training Camp Day 9 Takeaways: Another step forward

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
August 6, 2017

The rhythm of training camp grows monotonous after a while, but it's finally about to break.

Sunday brings a day off after Saturday's scrimmage. The Broncos practice Monday and Tuesday, but then they travel to Chicago on Wednesday in advance of their preseason opener -- the first of four days in a 10-day span in which they'll get to collide with someone other than themselves.

The change in pace -- and the chance to see another team -- comes exactly when the Broncos need it.

"I can't wait to hit somebody else," said Chris Harris Jr., who intercepted a pass during the scrimmage Saturday. "I'm tired of going against [WRs Emmanuel Sanders and Demaryius Thomas] 'E' and 'D.T.', and I'm pretty sure they're tired of going against us.

"It's at that time where you're ready to see some other receivers and get ready for the season. I think we've got four more weeks, five weeks to get ready for [the Los Angeles Chargers]."

1. SCRIMMAGES ARE GOOD, GAMES ARE BETTER

While Saturday's work helped illuminate coaches' evaluations of players and players' evaluations of themselves, the amount that all parties can extract pales compared with the games.

That starts with quarterback Trevor Siemian, who guided the No. 1 offense to its only first down of the scrimmage Saturday via a 23-yard pass to Bennie Fowler.

"I just think I know more who I am as a player after playing in live games," he said. "[In games] I did some things OK last year and I did some things I really want to work on and get better at. For me, I want to improve and add value to this team."

Isaiah McKenzie

2. ISIAAH MCKENZIE EARNS A GIG

More than a handful of positions are still up for grabs with the preseason opener still five days away.

Punt returner is not. The job belongs to fifth-round pick Isaiah McKenzie.

"He won the position. Want to write that?" Joseph said, laughing.

It's not just McKenzie's quickness in traffic and burst to the edge that allowed him to seize the job. It's the diligence he's shown to his craft and the extra work he's put in when he's made mistakes, such as the extra 50 punts he caught one day after muffing a punt in practice.

"He is so mature for a rookie. He is headstrong," Joseph said. "Nothing bothers him. He's had some bad days and you can't tell. He's [as] even as I've ever seen a rookie."

Saturday was a good day; he broke off a pair of long punt returns and had a 10-yard reception from Siemian with the No. 2 offense during the scrimmage.

"We've all seen guys that are really, really fast, but can't catch the football," Joseph said. "He can catch the football. I trust him to be our guy Week 1 against the Chargers."

3. GAUGING THE COMPETITION AT OLB

At some point, the Broncos know that Shane Ray and Shaquil Barrett will be available to them. Obviously, the sooner that comes, the better. But until then, Kasim Edeballi, Vontarrius Dora and DeMarcus Walker will grapple for playing time.

"We're trying to find the best guy to play opposite of Von in Week 1. Who's the best guy opposite of Von," Joseph said. "Who's the best player opposite of Von? We don't know yet. Walker's had some good days. Dora's had two good days ... Edeballi's in the mix, also."

All have seen some first-team repetitions in recent days. Dora rotated onto the first team Saturday and had some strong moments, particularly against the run.

"Today he was physical and tough," Joseph said.

4. MUSGRAVE'S IMPACT ON THE QB ROOM

Siemian, Paxton Lynch and Kyle Slotter are running Offensive Coordinator Mike McCoy's scheme. But it's Quarterbacks Coach Bill Musgrave who handles most of the work of guiding the three passers.

For Lynch, the area in which Musgrave has helped the most is in his confidence.

"Just coming out here and knowing that he trusts me and Coach McCoy trusts me to come out here and take your chances," Lynch said. "Obviously you're going to make mistakes but the biggest thing is putting the day behind you and moving on from it, whether it's a good day or a bad day."

Siemian said he's learned "quite a bit" from Musgrave, who has built on the foundation laid by the teachings of former position coach Greg Knapp in the 2015 and 2016 seasons.

"For me as a quarterback, you just want to be exposed to a bunch of different philosophies, kind of see what you think like and pick up whatever you can," Siemian said.

"He's a contrast personality-wise from [Knapp]. I've enjoyed them both and I've picked up as much as I could from both of them. Bill is obviously super bright and done a lot of good things around the league so I don't take a day for granted in that meeting room."

Broncos Training Camp Quick Hits: Day 9

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
August 6, 2017

Head Coach Vance Joseph wanted his team to ratchet up the intensity for its scrimmage period Saturday.

For the most part, he got exactly what he wanted.

"Absolutely I did, on both sides of the ball," he said after the brisk, 90-minute practice. "Everyone was engaged. They wanted to play well today. It was physical without tackling for the first two groups, and the third group actually tackled."

... However, there was one moment when the intensity went too far -- and it cost Paxton Lynch and the No. 2 offense a chance to build some needed momentum.

To that point in practice, four drives for the first- and second-team offenses had resulted in no points and just one first down. The No. 2 offense had gone three-and-out on one drive led by Trevor Siemian and another piloted by Lynch. It needed momentum.

When Lynch dropped back and found Kalif Raymond on the right sideline for a 14-yard gain, it looked like the offense had finally found it. But far away from the catch, back on the opposite side of the field, Donald Stephenson shoved a defender in the back, and a flag flew.

Back the offense moved -- 15 yards, to its 34-yard line. A promising gain and a potential drive to rewrite the narrative of the day was wiped out. The offense managed to move the sticks again on three consecutive runs, but a chance for a quick sprint into scoring range went by the wayside.

Joseph was understandably upset with Stephenson.

"It was our best play up to that point in the entire scrimmage, and we get a nonsense penalty, a push in the back after the play," Joseph said. "He blocked his guy. He did his job. The play is over. Don't be selfish and get a penalty and back us up 15 [yards]."

It's a scrimmage within a practice. So it's about learning lessons and applying them to when the snaps actually count. But this is when habits are formed, and that's why Joseph sought out Stephenson after practice to speak with him.

"He blocked his guy. He did his job. The play is over. Don't be selfish and get a penalty and back us up 15 [yards]."

... The offensive penalties rankled Joseph, and sat atop of the list of things he didn't like from the scrimmage.

"What I didn't like was the penalties on offense," he said. "We make our best play, we get [near] the 50-yard line for the first time and we get a push in the back."

... As expected, Siemian and Lynch split the first-team repetitions. Siemian was up first and guided the offense to a first down after finding WR Bennie Fowler on a quick slant for 23 yards on third-and-5. But the drive stalled from there, and the offense settled for a 56-yard Brandon McManus field-goal attempt that hit the left upright.

Siemian led a single drive with the No. 2 offense that went three-and-out. A false-start penalty against LG Allen Barbre knocked the offense back on that series.

"From Trevor, he was very consistent with his ball placement," Joseph said. "He made the correct reads most of the time. He had one ball knocked down -- not his fault -- but [he was] very solid."

Lynch's first drive with the No. 1 offense ended in an interception -- although the play would have likely been a sack in game conditions as OLB Kasim Edebali roared up the middle on a delayed blitz, but he held up so he wouldn't hit the quarterback.

"He held the ball too late in that play," Joseph said. "He had a guy open in the flat early on, but he held the ball, held the ball, held the ball. It's a time clock thing. As you hold the ball, the defense recovers."

Joseph said that Lynch was "very solid" outside of his interception. He had one potential first down called back via the Stephenson penalty, and another potential completion to Jordan Taylor that would have moved the sticks was blown dead for a sack.

... The only touchdown of the day came via the No. 3 offense, which drove to a 5-yard touchdown pass from Kyle Sloter to Carlos Henderson. The biggest play of the drive came when Sloter hit rookie Anthony Nash for 32 yards on third-and-15; Nash ran a crossing route and added 12 yards after the catch to move the offense into the defense's territory.

... Joseph was impressed with the run defense, calling it "really stout."

The first-team defense did a good job filling gaps and held running backs to just 14 yards on five carries, with 9 yards coming on a third-and-20 play. The second-team defense allowed 22 rushing yards, including 11 on three consecutive carries by De'Angelo Henderson that moved the chains.

... DE Adam Gotsis had an impressive performance working with the No. 2 defensive line, stuffing a run at the line of scrimmage and then knocking down a Siemian pass on consecutive plays to help force a three-and-out.

"He's bounced back," Joseph said. "He came back today and played well. He's had a great spring and a great camp. Keeping him healthy is a must so we can see what he can do."

PARTICIPATION REPORT:

... RT Menelik Watson was not in uniform for Saturday's work because of a muscle strain. He is expected to miss Monday's practice, but should return Tuesday and play next Thursday against the Bears.

... S T.J. Ward was diagnosed with a "minor" hamstring strain after leaving the field Friday. He is expected to miss the next week of work and return at some point shortly after the preseason opener.

... C Matt Paradis saw a handful of repetitions in the scrimmage, which was more than was initially expected. "He's progressing fast. He felt fine this morning to play four or five plays, so we allowed him to play."

... RG Ron Leary was limited to individual work because of a groin injury. Connor McGovern and Billy Turner handled the repetitions in his place.

... ILB Todd Davis missed practice because of a shoulder injury. Corey Nelson stepped in and worked on the first team in his spot.

... RB Bernard Pierce remains out with a hamstring injury.

WEATHER REPORT: The sun occasionally broke through a layer of clouds during the practice, with temperatures hovering between 67°F and 72°F.

ATTENDANCE: 7,085, a record for a practice held at UCHealth Training Center.

Competition in the trenches sharpening Broncos' offense and defense for regular season

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
August 6, 2017

Head Coach Vance Joseph wanted his team to ratchet up the intensity for its scrimmage period Saturday.

Whether the offense or defense is winning the battle on the ground simply depends on whom you ask.

The victor is obvious, if you ask safety Darian Stewart.

"The defense is definitely winning," Stewart said. "They've broke some good runs and they have great vision amongst all four of [the running backs]. I definitely consider us winning since we started camp."

"We're running the ball effectively," he said. "We're finding the right spots. We're picking the right spots."

Defensive end Derek Wolfe, who is obviously championing the defense's efforts, refuted that notion, saying the proof is in the pudding — er, the tape, rather.

"I've seen it on the film where everybody is fitting in the same gaps and holding the point," Wolfe said. "[NT] Domata [Peko] is doing a great job in the middle, [DE Jared] Crick is holding it over there — he's put on some extra weight. Our linebackers are hitting and we're fitting really well."

In the media or on the field, no one's budging. But the players know who wins these battles isn't really important. Rather, it's how their altered approaches to the run on offense and defense fare against other opponents. Based on their impressions so far, the outcome will be positive.

"I think our offensive line is doing a great job," Wolfe said. "They're nasty, they're playing mean and playing tough. They're way bigger — [OT] Menelik Watson is a huge dude. [G] Ron Leary, me and him are going to make each other better because he's a great player and I'd like to think of myself as a pretty good player."

Anderson likewise thinks the defense is stouter against the run.

"They're doing a really good job," Anderson said. "Their linebackers are running completely different than what they did last year."

If it all adds up, the offense or defense still may not decisively edge out one another on the ground, but it might just be enough to consistently edge their opponents on both sides of the ball in 2017.

Paul Klee: Denver Broncos great Steve Atwater should join Terrell Davis in Pro Football Hall of Fame

By Paul Klee

Colorado Springs Gazette

August 6, 2017

It was 1989 when Steve Atwater met his football hero.

It was Tuesday when I met mine.

Atwater — whose Super 32 performance was the trophy-less equal to Von Miller's MVP work in Super Bowl 50; the fearless ringleader of twin Super Bowl-winning defenses; one of the 10-best safeties ever to play, per six-decade evaluator Gil Brandt; the smile behind the smash — had scored tickets to the NBA All-Star game in Houston. There, across the way, he spotted his guy.

"Imagine you're 21, 22 years old — and there's Ronnie Lott," Atwater said Tuesday. "I stopped in my tracks. I walked over and met him. And he was the nicest guy you'd ever want to meet."

Imagine you're a grown adult — and there's Steve Atwater. And he's the nicest guy you'd ever want to meet.

I was never a jersey guy. It seemed silly to wear another man's name when 12-year-old me knew, someday, obviously, others would wear mine. (The first of many wrong sports predictions.) I owned only one — Atwater's No. 27. Back then, the reasons Atwater was my guy were football and competitive reasons. He made eight Pro Bowls, 173 tackles in one season and built a career worthy of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But our priorities, and what matters, change. Now the reasons are life reasons.

Steve Atwater is 50, a successful real estate manager, a loving husband and father. As a college freshman, he spotted Letha across the Arkansas campus and told her, "Before we leave here I'll make you my girlfriend." They'll make it 27 years of marriage in December. They have four children — Stephen, who played football at Georgetown and graduated from Stetson Law School with designs on becoming an NFL agent; Di Andre, who played at Princeton; Paris, who played one season at Pomona-Pitzer (Calif.) and is an intern with Altitude 950 AM; Malaysia, the safest daughter and sister in the Denver area. The Atwaters recently moved back to Denver, where you will see Steve often in the coming years. He's starting his third career, this one as a fan liaison and analyst with the Broncos, with whom he played 10 punishing seasons, and as a radio co-host with Brandon Krisztal at Denver Sports 760 AM.

Steve Atwater brings a pen and notepad to work. He picks the brains of players and coaches for information on the team he once starred for. Last week, he spent 10 minutes with a tiny Broncos fan he'd never met — and who didn't know who he was — simply because he can.

All of that is why I bought a No. 27 jersey. I just didn't know it yet.

"Life is about how you treat people. It's not about football. This is just a game," Atwater said in a long chat last week. "When you get done playing football, you've still got to deal with people for the rest of your life. You treat people like crap, you're going to be by yourself. That's no fun."

Why does he encourage others to pay it forward?

“Dennis Smith and Mike Harden,” he said, naming two contemporaries at safety. “They did it for me.”

There is a certain anxiety inherent with meeting someone you admired as a kid. If they’re not the person you envisioned, it’s going to tickle. If they are, well, you leave the room with a fist pump.

I left with a fist pump after meeting the man who trounced Christian Okoye on a Monday night, whose Raider hating remains timeless (“Oakland, Vegas, wherever,” he said), who capped Colorado’s first Super Bowl title with a jarring hit on Green Bay’s Robert Brooks (and, on the snap before the final snap, also succeeded in knocking out himself and teammate Randy Hilliard).

“What I remember about that play is what my family told me afterward, that they were crying,” Atwater said. “I was down on the field and not moving. But I remember everything after.”

NFL Films ranked Atwater No. 9 among history’s most feared tacklers. That seems low.

Atwater doesn’t know how many concussions he sustained over 11 seasons at safety in the NFL.

“Back in the day, they used to say, ‘You were dinged.’ I didn’t even know what a concussion was,” he said. “They’d say: ‘How many fingers I got up? Three. OK, you’re good. Get in there.’”

And if Atwater knew then what we know now, he still would allow his kids to play football.

“I would probably start them a little later than I did. A lot of times people start their kids at 6, 7, 8 years old. I probably would have waited until 12 or 13, let their brain develop a little more,” he said. “But I definitely would still let them do it. I would make sure the program they’re in is following the correct protocol. It’s a risky game, and you have to know that going in.”

I could listen to Atwater tell football tales for hours. Maybe you could, too.

On the Broncos as 11-point underdogs to the Packers in Super Bowl XXXII: “On Friday night we were watching film and it was like, ‘We got it. We got these guys. We don’t need any more film.’ Neil Smith, Alfred Williams, Tyrone Braxton, J-Mob (John Mobley) — we knew if we just do what the coaches told us, we wouldn’t be in trouble. Even against Brett Favre.”

On playing at Mile High in Week 4 of the 1999 season, as a member of the N.Y. Jets: “One of the worst days of my life. I’m used to the national anthem and looking at the south stands. Now I’m all turned around. I was totally uncomfortable. It was like I’m looking across the field at my family. I felt like a traitor. And that was the game when ‘TD’ got hurt (with a knee injury that effectively ended Terrell Davis’ career).”

On his central role in the Broncos-Raiders rivalry: “If the Raiders called today and said, ‘Steve, man, we’re going to give you \$2 million to put on this black and gray,’ I wouldn’t do it. I couldn’t do it.”

I told Steve Atwater that I would start a GoFundMe page if it comes to that.

“You won't have to,” he said. “When I see that Raiders (logo) it still does something to me.”

Atwater, in Canton on Saturday to witness TD's induction, was a finalist last year for the Hall of Fame. He should be a no-brainer — for his merits (first-team All-1990s, as voted on by actual Hall of Fame voters), punishing style of play (Atwater said Ravens great Ed Reed is the safety he's admired the most since his own playing days) and character (which doesn't factor, but should).

With my recorder turned off, Atwater added the only credential he needs: “Watch the film.”

We all did, and it gets even better after meeting him.

After scrimmage, Trevor Siemian appears to have lead in Broncos QB race

By Lindsay Jones

USA Today

August 6, 2017

When Vance Joseph grades his top two quarterbacks each day of training camp, the Denver Broncos' first-year head coach is looking for consistency, command, solid decision-making, and ultimately, one quarterback to separate himself from the other.

Though Joseph has no plans to name a starter soon, it appears that, at least in practice, some separation is materializing in the battle between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch.

Siemian, the incumbent starter, went three for five in Saturday's scrimmage against the starting defense, with his best throw coming on a 22-yard completion to Bennie Fowler on a perfectly timed route down the left seam.

"He was very consistent with his ball placement, he made the right reads most of the time, he had one ball knocked down, not his fault, but very solid," Joseph said.

Lynch, meanwhile, went zero for four in the scrimmage. His best play, a completion to Kalif Raymond on a 10-yard out-route that would have moved the offense past midfield, but was wiped off because of a block in the back penalty on offensive tackle Donald Stephenson.

Lynch also threw an interception to Chris Harris and admitted after practice that he didn't see the Pro Bowl cornerback. Lynch said that when he felt the pass rush, he should have taken off running rather than making a bad decision.

"You can't force those kind of throws," Lynch said.

Joseph described Saturday's scrimmage as "very solid" for both quarterbacks, who split snaps with the first-team receivers and No. 1 running back C.J. Anderson.

Thursday's preseason opener against the Chicago Bears should be an even better gauge to see if Siemian is truly starting to pull away from Lynch, much like he did once preseason games started last season.

Still, Saturday's scrimmage, which were in a controlled environment and running off a script, continued the trend the Broncos have seen out of both quarterbacks since training camp opened late last month. Siemian hasn't been particularly sharp, but he's made fewer mistakes. Lynch, while continuing the flash the athleticism that made him a first-round pick in 2016, continues to struggle with decision-making and turnovers.

"Consistency is relative," Siemian said. "I know there are things we must improve."

CTE fears reverberate for NFL legends at Pro Football Hall of Fame

By Jarrett Bell
USA Today
August 6, 2017

Terrell Davis is being celebrated as one of the greatest ever with his fresh enshrinement into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, but given the potential for long-term effects of brain injuries he clearly wonders about the price he's paid to be so honored.

"I can't lie," Davis said Friday, when asked about the topic by USA TODAY Sports during a Hall of Fame news conference. "We're all scared. We're all concerned, because we don't know what the future holds."

On the heels of a recently released study that revealed that 110 of 111 deceased former football players had been stricken with the degenerative brain disease chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), Davis' response adds context amid the glorious annual festival that honors the game, its legends and values attached to football that some insist reflect those of American life.

For all of the pomp and pageantry, it was fitting that Davis – who had maybe the best three-year stretch ever by a runner in history with the Denver Broncos, which included back-to-back Super Bowl triumphs, a 2,000-yard season and a signature moment that came wrapped in a migraine headache – served up a sobering reminder of the human toll.

"When I'm at home and I do something, if I forget something, I have to stop to think: Is this because I'm getting older or am I just not using my brain, or is this because of what happened as an effect of playing football?" said Davis, 44. "I don't know that. So yeah, I'm scared."

The irony is not lost on Davis that one of the most memorable episodes of his career involved playing through a head injury. In Super Bowl XXXII, Davis suffered from a migraine headache and missed virtually an entire quarter of a game against the Green Bay Packers for which he was honored as MVP. At one point, Davis told coach Mike Shanahan that his condition was so bad that he couldn't see.

What did Shanahan do? He put Davis back in the game after a Broncos drive advanced to the goal line. Shanahan merely wanted Davis in the game as a decoy – to throw off the defense with the threat of a run.

How shameful. Whatever risk to some disaster that could have caused further, maybe extensive damage to Davis went by the wayside.

"I think about that moment a lot, because if they had the rules in place back then, I don't go back into that game," said Davis, referring to the concussion protocol rules that maintain that players cannot return to a game if diagnosed with a concussion after being examined by an independent neurotrauma consultant.

Davis isn't sure whether he also suffered a concussion in that game because he was never examined for that, but admitted it was possible, if not likely.

"And that changes a lot," Davis pondered of being removed from the game. "Am I here? At this podium? Thank God it didn't happen back then."

Davis' last sentence says something about the tough-man culture that exists in football. In the past decade as awareness has increased and protocols have been established and revised, the culture has shifted somewhat. But there are undoubtedly many cases when players suffer head injuries that others may not detect, and they continue to play through them.

Many players, even while expressing concerns, accept the risk of head injuries as part of playing football.

"I worry about everything that can possibly happen to my body, not just concussions," Seattle Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett told USA TODAY Sports. "I worry about the hip, I worry about the knee, the neck, the hands. There are so many things that can happen."

Bennett said that he addresses CTE concerns in a book, *Things That Make White People Uncomfortable*, slated to be published next year. He likens playing football to striking a deal with the devil. That doesn't mean he's come to grips with long-term risks of head injuries.

"I haven't," he said. "I'm fearful every day. I'm a real human being."

Kurt Warner, the former quarterback who joined Davis among the seven-member class of new Hall of Fame inductees, once sparked headlines by maintaining that he didn't want his sons to play football and was concerned about what the quality of his life would be decades down the road because of the head injuries that he suffered.

Warner, who told USA TODAY Sports that he suffered three concussions playing football, has softened his stance as it comes to his kids as the process for evaluating and treating concussions has evolved.

"The only way this works is you telling me every time you don't feel quite right," Warner said of his current message to his sons. "That's probably the one thing I wish I would've learned a little bit earlier."

While Warner pledges vigilance in monitoring his sons, he realizes that in dealing with head injuries during his career he also received that same attention from someone – his wife, Brenda, also his Hall of Fame presenter.

"She was my Jiminy Cricket, the one on my shoulder going, 'Hey, let's be smart. Are you where you need to be when it's time to play?' " Warner told USA TODAY Sports. "Where we have the mentality of being the tough guy, she was the one saying, 'Let's do the right thing – not just for today, but for the long haul.' "

It's the fear that comes with football for those who play – and those who love them the most.

2017 Hall of Fame inductee Terrell Davis and his agent share a special bond

By Jason La Canfora

CBS Sports

August 6, 2017

Back before Terrell Davis became "TD," before he would chat with Jay Leno on "The Tonight Show" after earning a Super Bowl MVP or get fitted for a mustard jacket to wear to Canton, Ohio, he made a promise that didn't seem plausible to keep at the time.

Ed. note: This feature originally ran on June 30. Don't miss Terrell Davis and all the 2017 honorees being inducted to the Hall of Fame at Canton Saturday night. You can find all the info you need to know on the induction [here](#).

Davis, a San Diego native, had just finished his college career after transferring to Georgia and was hopeful of getting drafted, though far from certain of it, while trying to pick an agent to represent him. One such meeting would end up resonating far beyond the rest, a conversation that Davis still vividly recalls to this day; one that served as a shocking harbinger of an improbable Hall of Fame career.

Davis' football journey will be fully recognized upon his induction next month, with the man whom he once spent roughly eight hours chatting with at an otherwise nondescript New Jersey diner over 20 years ago now considered a lifelong friend, and entrusted with presenting him when the Class of 2017 is enshrined on Aug. 5.

The last few months have been a blur for Davis, who went from Long Beach State to Georgia (after Long Beach terminated its football program) to being selected 196th overall by the Broncos to going on one of the most prolific four-year tears of anyone in NFL history. Injuries would limit his longevity (he played just seven seasons), but few runners have ever dominated like Davis did in his prime, and no one was better as he led Denver to back-to-back Super Bowls in 1997-98.

The promise that proved prescient

Recently, Davis has been tied up with jacket fittings, bust sculptures and making ticket and travel arrangements, with enshrinement day fast approaching. None of it seemed possible back in December of 1994, when Davis was just hoping to get a shot at a training camp somewhere after injuries marred his final college season, which is why the words of his future agent, Neil Schwartz, caught him so off guard.

Schwartz, who had just landed his initial first-round pick Wayne Gandy a year ago, was a rising young agent who'd become borderline infatuated with Davis. He'd heard from some of the running back's former Long Beach teammates about his ability, and a few general managers mentioned to him they thought Davis had immense potential. Schwartz loved the kid's attitude and mentality.

So the New York native brought Davis north for a recruiting trip, took him on a quick tour of New York City. Then, with Schwartz living in Jersey at the time, they did what people do there: capped the evening off at a local diner. They ended up locked in conversation until nearly sunrise the following day, sharing

dreams and aspirations, before Schwartz made a request he'd never considered making before, and would never make again after leaving the Plaza Diner in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

"I remember he and I sat in this diner for like eight hours, and when we came out it was like three or four in the morning," Davis told me amid his HOF planning this week. "And we talked about everything, life, we just had a great connection. And actually what happened was, when we left that diner that night -- or really that morning -- Neil asked me to promise him something. And I was like, 'Sure man, whatever.' And he said, 'Promise me that when you make it to the Hall of Fame you'll allow me to present you.'

"Now, he said this way before I was drafted. I had no teams. I had no nothing. I was a guy from Georgia without a whole lot of people clamoring for me, and that showed me that he had confidence in me. And for him to have the confidence to say that -- when somebody has that kind of confidence to say that, it was great for me to hear."

Schwartz had done his homework on Davis and was smitten enough with him to disregard his own mantra at the time -- which was to only represent offensive and defensive linemen. He wanted guys with a grunt's attitude; dealing with prima donnas and drama was out. But the more he watched his film and talked to evaluators he trusted, he was convinced that the no-name runner who had been trapped behind Garrison Hearst at Georgia could become a Pro Bowl back. After making two trips to Athens to meet with Davis and his family, he was consumed with landing him.

"I don't think we left that diner until five in the morning," said Schwartz, who went over every part of Davis' winding college career with him, the injuries and setbacks. "I'll never forget it my entire life. And the thing that's crazy is I never asked any player that. It was just something I felt about him.

"I just realized that there was greatness written all over this kid. You think about it, I've represented a lot of first-rounders (Darrelle Revis among them) and I've never told one that I think you're going to the Hall of Fame. And it's like when I met (Grammy-winning artist) Lauryn Hill, you can just feel greatness. When I started managing Lauryn, it was the same kind of feeling. ... Of course, he looked at me like I was crazy."

The memories shared between player and agent stacked up nearly as quickly as the Denver star's pro accolades: Davis eventually making a three-second cameo in one of Hill's music videos (back when she was with The Fugees); the men sharing a crazy evening together at the Grammys ("My wife couldn't make it out to California for them so Terrell was my date," Schwartz quips); Schwartz helping Davis get a highly lucrative endorsement deal with pharmaceutical giant Novartis, of all companies, after one of their drugs helped Davis overcome a migraine mid-Super Bowl to lead Denver to its first Lombardi Trophy in just his third season.

And that bond will now be punctuated by Schwartz presenting his friend in Canton.

A partnership that almost didn't happen

Over the years, as Schwartz worked behind the scenes to help champion Davis' Hall of Fame credentials in an induction process that can be both cruel and political, he thought perhaps Davis might still select someone else to present him if or when that day actually came. He would have understood perfectly if he had.

But Davis says he never wavered, and though he considered some other friends and mentors, Schwartz was the man for the job.

"He's been great for me my entire pro career," said Davis, who topped 2,000 yards rushing in 1998. "And we've had a great friendship and I felt it was only appropriate that he be the one to present me."

"The fact that he's still giving me the privilege is just incredible to me," Schwartz said. "I am totally humbled and honored. He could have said, 'Hey, Neil, I know I said that 23 years ago, but I have to give the honor to somebody else.' And everybody would have understood."

Of course, when they finished their epic chat in that Bergen County, NJ diner, Schwartz didn't think their journey would take such a circuitous path. Oddly enough, despite their immediate connection, Davis actually initially signed with another agent upon the urging of his girlfriend at the time and some family members.

"When we left that diner I thought, no way this guy is not going to sign with me," said Schwartz, who went on to national diner fame when "Hard Knocks" captured his late-night negotiations with the Jets to end a Revis contract holdout. "We hit it off, and when he didn't sign with me I felt heartbroken, because I felt we had a great synergy and the connection was there. It was all real -- he was the kind of kid I wanted to represent, and he's great person. So I was hurt, but I only wished him the best of luck."

"What I remember most about when I picked an agent is even though it wasn't Neil, he never bashed him or anything," Davis said. "And my girlfriend and I would call Neil all the time and Neil would answer our questions and he was like, 'Don't do this. Have your agent do that. Don't sign that.' And it was all good advice. But it was never like, 'Forget them.' He never talked bad about my agent, and I was thinking the whole time, like, this is the guy for me."

Joining the NFL and making a change

As fate would have it, the player and agent would run into each other several times at the old Blue-Gray college all-star game, which used to be held in December. Davis ended up being roommates there with another future Hall of Fame back, Curtis Martin, and Schwartz only became more and more impressed.

Calls from Davis became more frequent. When the Broncos selected Davis in the sixth round, he was uneasy and concerned, going in just the second-to-last round possible. Schwartz counseled him that it was actually a blessing in disguise, with new coach Mike Shanahan bringing with him a blocking scheme from San Francisco that was perfectly suited to Davis. The depth chart was weak and Davis could duplicate the exploits of Roger Craig, Schwartz insisted.

"So, then a few weeks later he calls me and says, basically, that I want you to do my contract -- what should the numbers be?" Schwartz said. "So I break it down for him and tell him what to ask for and I'm obviously not charging him and I'm not representing him, but that's the contract he ends up signing. I think he knew in his heart of hearts that there were a lot of outside influences on him in the agent-selection process."

Finally that summer, with Davis securing a role on special teams, and with no big deals anywhere in sight and his future uncertain, and with the commission of his rookie deal still entitled to his other agent, the running back called Schwartz once more.

"When I made the team in Denver I fired my agent during training camp," Davis said, "and I called Neil up and said I wanted him to come on board, and he cried like a baby."

Schwartz disputes that account, ever-so-slightly.

"Then he calls me up during camp and says, 'I'm ready to get married,'" Schwartz said. "That's kind of my line with these guys -- don't get married just to have divorces. And, yeah, I did cry. I teared up. I don't know about crying like a baby, but I definitely got choked up and I teared up, and he could tell that over the phone."

"You've got to understand, from the moment I met him this kid he was as humble as ever. He's just a good, humble person, and you know what, I fell in love with the kid. He's always been an interesting person in the sense of you could just talk to him about life and he always wanted to know how he could get better and how to be successful. TD was always thirsty for knowledge on the field and off the field."

Keeping a promise

Schwartz never really brought up the promise they made at that diner as Davis achieved greatness. But it would naturally come up occasionally.

When Davis, who had eight rushing touchdowns in four playoff games en route to the Super Bowl in 1997, finally made it into the semifinal stage of the process a few years back, Schwartz was by his side. "When we got into the room (where finalists wait to find out if they were inducted), he said to me, 'You know you're still doing my induction speech,'" Schwartz said. "And I was like, 'Wow.' I wasn't going to bring it up to him, but he brought it up to me and I had goosebumps, chills, that he was going to give me that honor."

Still, that was three years ago, so this past February, when Davis and Schwartz were among the other semifinalists again, the agent expected nothing and said nothing.

"He was there, he was right there in the room with me," Davis said. "Of course, he remembered (the promise), and I remembered it. It was great."

"When he got the knock at the door, when he knew that he got in, he looked at me and goes, 'You're on, we made it,'" Schwartz said. "It was typical TD. The word he used was 'we.' TD always gives credit to other people. And I said, 'You made it.' And he said, 'No, we made it, and you are doing the speech.'" According to Joe Horrigan, executive director of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, players choosing their agent to present them is "not as uncommon as you might think." Horrigan said it first happened with Mike Haynes in 1997 and most recently with Cortez Kennedy in 2012 (when he asked the widow of his former agent, Robert Fraley, to present him). The other two times it's occurred came in 2011, when running back Marshall Faulk (Rocky Arceneaux) and corner Deion Sanders (the late Eugene Parker) both had their agents present them. Exclusive company, for sure.

Getting ready for Canton

The process has changed some now, so instead of reading long speeches the presenters are interviewed by NFL Films, who produce edited clips to be played at the ceremony. Schwartz's visit from them is set

for July 14, while Davis has already sent his tailored mustard jacket back to the Hall of Fame and is trying to stay on top of the whirlwind going on around him.

It's the culmination of lots of work, shattering the odds, for Davis and Schwartz.

For the agent, it ranks among his greatest professional achievements of his career, along with Davis winning Super Bowl MVP and with Hill and The Fugees thanking him in their Grammy-winning speeches. "Words can't describe it, I'm speechless," Schwartz said. "I teared up again. The same tears of joy I had when he told me he was going to sign with me, are the same tears of joy I had when he asked me to induct him."

For Davis, who amassed 6,413 yards in his first four seasons alone (an average of 1,603 per season) with a whopping 56 touchdowns in that span, it cements his place among the legends of the game. The man who rushed for a staggering 1,140 yards in just eight career postseason games -- averaging an unthinkable 5.6 yards per carry with 12 rushing touchdowns -- is about to join the immortals, keeping a promise along the way.

"There are definitely times when I am still in disbelief," Davis said. "It's like I cannot believe this is happening, man. You start having these moments and you reach these peaks that get better and better with time as you get closer and closer to that weekend.

"And then the jacket shows up and it's like, 'Oh my goodness, I cannot believe this.' All this stuff is happening, and every time it happens I just can't believe that it's real. It really is surreal. It's like you know it's happening, but you're like, 'Damn, it's really happening now. It's on now.'"

PK Brandon McManus is 'true weapon' for Broncos, drills 73-yard field goal in practice

By John Breech
CBS Sports
August 6, 2017

One of the most debated coaching decision of the 2016 season came back in November when Broncos coach Gary Kubiak allowed his kicker to attempt a 62-yard field goal in what turned out to be a 30-27 overtime loss to the Chiefs.

Although Brandon McManus missed the kick, there's a reason Kubiak actually let him try it, and that's because he nails kicks like that regularly in practice.

The Broncos kicker showed off his big leg again on Friday when he nailed a 73-yard field goal.

New Broncos coach Vance Joseph let McManus try two kicks from that distance, and the veteran kicker came through on one of them.

Here's what it looks like when a kicker attempts a field goal from 73-yards away. On a kick from that far, the holder places the ball down at his own 37-yard line.

Although looks to be the kick McManus fell short on, Joseph was impressed with both kicks.

"That's a true weapon, guys. I mean, that was amazing," Joseph said after practice. "That was what, 73 yards, maybe? In the first one, he just swung his leg and he was, what, two yards off."

After missing the first one by just six feet, McManus promised to make his second attempt.

"The second one he said, 'I'll make it for you this time,'" Joseph said. "Well, thank you, I want to see that. Then he swung it. I mean, that's special."

After watching McManus hit from 73 yards, Joseph started to sound a lot like Kubiak, which means he's not going to be afraid to give McManus a few shots from far away during regular season games.

"Of course," Joseph said when asked if he's let McManus try extremely long field goals. "Whatever wins games, we want to go for it."

Letting a kicker trying a long field goal in Denver isn't exactly crazy. Former Broncos kicker Matt Prater holds the NFL record, which was set in 2013 when he hit a 64-yarder in Denver.

As a matter of fact, three of the five longest field goals in NFL history were kicked in Denver.

The ball allegedly travels farther in Denver's mile high air, a fact that Ravens kicker Justin Tucker pointed out in 2013. Tucker claims he once made a 79-yarder during warmups in Denver.

"In practice I've hit from 79 yards," Tucker said. "That was in Denver before our opener in September [2013]. The weather was perfect; the field was good. With the altitude in the Rocky Mountains, the ball jumps off your foot."

Tucker now seems to think he can hit an 84-yard field goal, and he might not be wrong. After all, he did hit a 75-yarder during warmups before the Pro Bowl in January.

Only 16 kickers in NFL history have even hit a field of 60 yards or more in a game, including Tucker, who nailed a 61-yarder against Detroit in December 2013.

Hitting a 70-yarder though is a different story, and that's mainly because there's not many kickers who could actually pull it off in a game.

Raiders kicker Sebastian Janikowski hit a 70-yarder in warmups once, but that came in Denver. Seahawks kicker Blair Walsh also once hit a 70-yarder in pregame warmups while he was playing for the Vikings.

If it's going to happen in a game, it's going to take a kicker with a huge leg playing for a coach who loves to gamble. Raiders coach Jack Del Rio, who's earned the nickname blackjack due to his in-game gambles, and Janikowski might be our best bet for ever seeing that happen.

Hall of Fame 2017: The Terrell Davis Effect

By Tim Rohan
MMQB
August 6, 2017

Last Feb. 4, Terrell Davis was in a hotel room in Houston surrounded by his family, waiting for word on whether he would be voted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, when there came a thunderous rapping at the door—the telltale knock of David Baker, the Hall’s towering president and the man whose arrival signals that a player is headed for Canton. Davis answered, then broke down crying.

He had doubted the day would ever come. Davis had started his career like a Hall of Famer, rushing for 1,117 yards as a Broncos rookie, in 1995, followed by a three-year tear during which he was the best running back in the NFL: 5,296 yards rushing, 49 touchdowns, two Super Bowl titles and the ’98 MVP trophy. But in ’99 he tore two right-knee ligaments trying to make a tackle after an interception, and he was never the same. Davis retired during the preseason in 2002, at 29. “It was in the back of my mind, like, Man, maybe I didn’t play long enough,” Davis says. “And maybe that would be the one thing the voters would hold against me.”

The 48-person selection committee has discussed Davis at length over the years. He was one of the 25 semifinalists every year since he became eligible in 2008, and he made the cutdown to the 15 finalists in 2015, ’16 and ’17. “The central issue was not, Was he a Hall of Fame performer in those three years?” says Ron Borges of the Boston Herald, who didn’t vote for Davis this year. “No one would dispute that.” The question was, Are three seasons of elite production enough to earn a bust in Canton? What about two seasons? Or one? Where is the line? “I don’t think we ever sorted it out,” Borges says.

One year that Davis was up for the Hall, a voter brought up Clinton Portis as an argument against Davis. Portis had rushed for more than 1,500 yards three times in four years. “Does anybody think Clinton Portis is a Hall of Famer?” the voter asked.

When Davis did get in, it was in part because it was a soft class—surefire first-balloters Ray Lewis and Randy Moss headline the first-time eligible candidates next year—and in part because voters weighed more heavily his status as one of the best running backs in postseason history. Davis averaged 142.5 rushing yards over eight postseason games and was the MVP of Super Bowl XXXII, when he ran 30 times for 157 yards and three touchdowns in Denver’s 31–24 win over the Packers.

But looking ahead, some on the committee fear that Davis’s induction, which takes place on Saturday, will set an unwelcome precedent. There are dozens of star players who, like Davis, had their careers shortened due to injuries. As voter Rick Gosselin, a longtime writer for The Dallas Morning News, who voted for Davis, puts it, “Everybody’s going to [say], ‘Here are my three best seasons. Judge me on that.’”

Look at running back Priest Holmes’s three best years, for instance—with the Chiefs from 2001 to ’03, he had 456 more yards from scrimmage and eight more touchdowns than Davis had in his three-year stretch. Sterling Sharpe of Green Bay played just eight seasons from 1988 to 1994 but led the NFL in receptions in three of those years.

And Tony Boselli, the first pick of the expansion Jaguars in 1995, made five consecutive Pro Bowls at left tackle and was first-team All-Pro three times until a left-shoulder injury cut short his career in 2001. Back then Boselli didn't have the Hall on his radar. "I had heard people tell me, 'You'll never make it,'" he says. "I thought to myself, Why go there if it's not going to happen?"

But each summer Boselli would see the new class and compare himself with the linemen being inducted. One such player was Orlando Pace, who made seven Pro Bowls and earned three All-Pro nods and went in last year. Fellow players started whispering in his ear: You belong in there. In his ninth year of eligibility, in 2016, Boselli made the semifinals of the selection process. "It's funny how perception changes," he says. "I didn't become a better player from [one year to another]."

This year Boselli was in the final 15. Because the announcement is made in the city in which the Super Bowl is being played, he awaited the outcome in the same hotel as Davis. Boselli spent an hour and a half alone in his room—he was too nervous to have other people around—waiting for Baker to come knocking. For the first time, Boselli allowed himself to dream a little. What if he did make it? Who would be his Hall of Fame presenter? What would he say in his speech? It was getting close to the time Baker would be making his rounds when . . . knock, knock, knock.

The maid. Did Boselli need anything?

A few minutes later the phone rang. Boselli hadn't made it.

He was at least heartened to see Davis get in. "Obviously it can't just be one year," Boselli says of the longevity debate. "But if over multiple years if you're considered one of the greatest to ever play the position, then you've made an impact on the game. That's a Hall of Famer to me."

Talking Football with the 2017 Pro Football Hall of Fame Inductees

By Kalyn Kahler

MMQB

August 6, 2017

What would your dad think of you getting into the Hall of Fame? What would he say to you? A reporter asked Terrell Davis these questions during his press availability, just a few hours before he received his gold jacket. Davis paused and took a deep breath. He shook his head, struggling to find words. His father, Joe, died of Lupus when Terrell was just 14 years old. “Y’all are trying to take me there,” Terrell said, fighting back tears. “I hope my dad would say he is proud. That’s it. I grew up with my dad and I just want to play for him, you know?”

Terrell’s bloodshot eyes marked the start of an emotional weekend for the former Broncos running back, and for the rest of the Hall of Fame Class of 2017. The enshrinees spoke to the media on Friday afternoon and reflected on how far they’d come over their careers and how many editions of their speech they’ve written. Here are some highlights of what the newest crop of Hall of Famers had to say.

THE MMQB: Have you had a wow moment yet this weekend?

KURT WARNER: The awe moment with all of this, is to realize these guys that you tried to emulate, that you grew up watching, that were your heroes growing up, they actually know your story. You come into this and you feel like, I don’t really think that I belong, I don’t belong in this room. But then these guys come up to you and tell you what your career meant to them—guys that you tried to be like. It’s hard to put that into words and I think that is the awe part of it. When you don’t understand how you fit in, and people start to tell you how you impacted them, it starts to sink in. Oh, I guess that’s why I am here. It’s not only fans and people watching, but guys that did it as well as anybody has ever done it, and maybe even before you that were inspired.

KENNY EASLEY: It’s been a big hug fest. That’s the thing about these Hall of Famers, when you make it to this level, whether you deserved it or not, to these guys it doesn’t matter. You’re here. And they hug you hard, because they are so happy you are here. That’s the thing that has been most interesting to me, guys who have been in the Hall of Fame for 30 years will walk up to me and say, Are you Kenny Easley? And I say, Yeah, and they will give me a bear hug, like, I’m glad to see you. And I really didn’t expect it! I really didn’t expect from the guys who have been here for a long time, I expected them to be standoffish, but it’s not like that. It’s like, We’ve been waiting for you.

JASON TAYLOR: Walking that gauntlet yesterday at the Hall of Fame game seemed like a mile and a half, walking across that football field. I remember I stood on that field for the Hall of Fame games I played in, and I watched those guys walk, never did I think that I would one day make that walk. It’s pretty crazy.

THE MMQB: What was the lowest point in your football life, a time when you would never have expected you’d end up in the Hall of Fame?

TAYLOR: In 1992, when I first got to Akron, as a homeschooled kid, the NCAA pulled my scholarship and declared me ineligible. I had to leave school, so that was probably the low point. I thought I wouldn’t

have a chance to play college football and I certainly couldn't pay to go to school. That was certainly the low point.

LADAINIAN TOMLINSON: I was always a pretty good athlete, and one of those fast kids, faster than most of the kids my age. But when I was in the sixth grade, I broke my foot, and I lost a lot of my skills. I really was depressed at that point. I couldn't play football that season, and when I came back the next season, I was no longer a starter. I was basically a guy sitting on the bench, just cheering for my teammates. So, certainly at that point, you are like, Man, I used to be this good athlete and was out there playing and now I don't get a chance to play much anymore. You doubt yourself, even if you are going to be good enough to play in high school.

DAVIS: There were a few points, but the first one was when I lost my dad. When I lost my dad, I quit playing football. There was no way I saw myself here when that happened. That's one. I mean, that would be it.

MORTEN ANDERSEN: I never thought I would be here, honestly. That was never on my radar screen. My most important thing was, How can I get better? Because next year there are going to be guys younger than me, cheaper than me and maybe close to being as good as I am, and they want my job. There are 32 jobs of what I did in the world. There are no backups; it's not like a lineman where you have backups. This was it. You have 32 jobs, so job security was paramount for me. And the only way I knew how to do that was to be as good as I could be every single year so that it was undeniable. They had to keep me, no matter what the salary situation was. This is our best option at this position. They can slide that nameplate in and out of those lockers really, really fast.

THE MMQB: When you see the latest report about CTE having been found in 110 of 111 deceased NFL players who donated their brains for research, how do you feel? Are you concerned for your own future?

DAVIS: I can't lie. We're all scared, we're all concerned. We don't know what the future holds. When I'm at home and I do something and I forget something, I have to stop and think, Is this because I am getting older? Or am I just not using my brain? Or is this an effect of playing football? I don't know that. Yeah, I'm scared. I try to stay as active as possible and try to keep my mind as sharp as possible. I also know that the game has gone through great lengths to change the game from Pop Warner to the pros. People ask me the question, Would you let your kids play football? It's like, yeah, I will. Now, 10 years ago, I may have said something different, but now the way they are teaching kids to tackle, the fact that they identify concussions a lot faster, they sit you out of plays, you don't practice as long, all that stuff is helping the game of football. But back to your question, yes, I'm concerned.

TAYLOR: Yeah, the research is out there. The data, however it is collected or disseminated, is still real. The effects of this game are real. It is a very violent and physical sport. In coaching now I tell people, there is a 100 percent chance you are going to get hurt playing this game. Whether it be banging a finger or something worse. We take that risk in playing this game. We appreciate the things they are doing to try to make it safer. You want to continue to make this game as safe as you can, regulating practice and structure around preparing for Sundays. Sundays, you can't stop violence, it is a tough game. So am I concerned? Sure. You have to be. I played with teammates, a former teammate of mine, a Hall of Famer that is no longer with us [Junior Seau] because of some of those things, and that's really hard.

THE MMQB: How many drafts of your speech did you write? What will it be about?

WARNER: You've got to wait for that one. I'm not giving anything away. It was just one constantly moving draft. I took a long time before I even started my speech. I had ideas, I had thoughts, and I wanted to shape my thinking before I started writing it on paper. But then once I wrote it down on paper, there were a number of drafts. I would take it paragraph by paragraph, point by point, and I would just try to shape it. One part that they kept telling me was make it shorter, make it shorter, so I had to try to cut things out. It was about getting the wording right more than anything. From when I first laid it out, the primary structure is the same, but how it is being said now is a little bit different. Even though I started late, I put a lot of time into it. I really went over it and thought about it and prayed about it. More importantly for me, even than thanking the right people, is sharing the right message. This is going to be my last moment, so to speak, on this kind of stage. I want to share the right message that goes along with the entire journey.

ANDERSEN: I wrote two or three drafts. I wrote the speech over a period of the summer. I started in June, and I spent a couple months on it. It's going to be about, if I account for crying and maybe a smattering of applause here and there . . . we are under 15 minutes, so I feel pretty confident I can land the plane in 14 minutes.

TOMLINSON: [My speech will be about] family history and what my last name means to me, and how important it is to me and my family to have this legacy in Canton . . . [I've been] doing it in front of the mirror, standing up, speaking, looking in the mirror speaking. But of course I work in the studio all the time, so I have that experience. But for me it is about driving home some of the stories I really want to tell and have that emotional impact, for people to understand where my feelings are coming through.

JERRY JONES: You're all going to be—knowing me and the times we've interviewed—you're going to be pleasantly surprised.

THE MMQB: Terrell, you were a Hall of Fame finalist for three years, and there was debate over whether your three best seasons were enough to qualify you for the Hall. Do you think that your inclusion will have an impact on other guys who have short careers?

DAVIS: I hope so, because for me, Gale Sayers was that guy, that everybody compared me to. Now, the precedent is set. The voters are now looking at careers and the quality of it, not necessarily how long you have played, which is a great thing for the Hall of Fame. It should be based off quality, how well you played while you were playing. Priest Holmes was nice, Priest was nice, and he's never talked about. The injuries didn't help, but you look at the numbers, and I think they are comparable to mine. Not necessarily the postseason numbers. I certainly hope so, I like Priest. I root for him and hopefully one day he will be wearing that gold jacket too.

THE MMQB: Kurt, will you address St. Louis Rams fans who are still your fan, but no longer Rams fans?

WARNER: I'm not necessarily going to address it in my speech. I think for me, there are so many people and so many fan bases and so many groups that went into me getting here. Hopefully in other opportunities I will get a chance; up to this point I have tried to do that. I think for me, [the speech] is more about being inclusive with everybody and letting everybody know as a whole, their part in this. It wasn't necessarily one person or one group or one team more than another . . . the fans in St. Louis were instrumental to where I'm at, to where my family is, and how much we love that community.

Those things I am going to try to stay away from, because I think there is a time and a place for all of that, and I think St. Louis knows how much they meant to us.

THE MMQB: LaDainian, what does it mean to you to be going into the Hall as a San Diego Charger?

TOMLINSON: When you think about the history of the organization and 56 years in San Diego, it's pretty significant. At the luncheon we just had, seeing Ron Mix and Kellen Winslow and Dan Fouts, and guys like that, and being welcomed in at the luncheon as another San Diego Charger that is here. I'm honored, emotions are really starting to run crazy, but I'm so happy I get this opportunity.

THE MMQB: Jerry, what lessons have you learned in your time as owner of the Cowboys?

JONES: There's no short list. I underestimated how hard it is to win ball games. I had spent a lot of my life in the discipline of business and you can be very successful in business, tremendously successful, and you can come in 15th or 20th, and you can get a lot done and take care of your family, and get a lot of pat on the backs. In our game, in the NFL, you stay out of the one hole very often and you don't get a lot of credit, that's the Super Bowl. So the bottom line is, it's tough. You guys have heard it described a lot of ways, but that really creates a challenge. I believe in driving across the lake, rather than laying up and shooting straight to the hole. And you get your ball in the water a lot of times. Seriously, I am still founded in risk-reward. I like to think my experience has given me better judgment on how much risk to take for the reward. The fallacy there is if you take a huge risk, and the reward wasn't worth it, that's not smart. I like to think I can do better with risk and reward. But what I have learned is if you don't do something that has some risk to it, you will never move, you've got to stretch out.

THE MMQB: How would you describe your career in one word?

ANDERSEN: That's always hard to put one word on it, but . . . long. It's been a career of will and will winning over all the other characteristics that sometimes come forth. The one single most important thing I've had throughout the years, when it didn't look good, was will. Will to excel and will to do it for as long as I can, at the highest level.

Highlights from the speeches of the 2017 Pro Football Hall of Fame class

By Frank Schwab
Yahoo! Sports
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What a fun, eclectic class the Pro Football Hall of Fame welcomed on Saturday night.

In Canton, Ohio, the seven new inductees were officially enshrined with each giving a speech that mentioned teammates, friends, family, coaches, and their journeys in general. There were some touching moments and some serious ones. Here are the highlights from each of the seven speeches (to read about each new Hall of Famer's greatest moment, click on the links below):

Seattle Seahawks S Kenny Easley

Easley was first to speak at the ceremony. Easley often mentioned his religious faith, and how grateful he was to to "Hall of Famer No. 306." The most touching part of his speech came when he talked about his parents: his mother, who fell ill last week and couldn't attend Saturday's ceremony, and her support when he left his home in Virginia for UCLA, and his late father. Easley got serious near the end of his speech and said he had a message that was important to him: "Black lives do matter," Easley said. "And all lives matter, too. But the carnage affecting young black men today, from random violence to police shootings across this nation, has to stop." A little later he said his teleprompter cut off, so he finished his speech.

Memorable quote: "You see, this joy I have tonight, the world didn't give it to me, and the world sure can't take it away."

Miami Dolphins/New York Jets/Washington Redskins DE Jason Taylor

Early in his speech Taylor thanked his mother Georgia, who he said was the toughest person he ever met. He continued talking about a tough upbringing and Georgia Taylor's guidance while she wiped away tears. Taylor broke down crying himself when talking about his agent and friend Gary Wichard, who died in 2011, and said Wichard was the father he never had. He singled out many teammates, and also Alonzo Mourning, the former Miami Heat star who was in Canton. He also joked to Redskins owner Daniel Snyder that he "stole a lot of money" from him after not playing well in his one Washington season. Near the end of his speech he had another emotional moment, telling his kids that he hoped he'd be remembered as "a Hall of Fame dad."

Memorable quote: "After about the fifth day of training camp my rookie year, between the two-a-days, the heat and humidity, Jimmy [Johnson, his first coach], I went back to my room and called my mom and said, 'You know what mom? I don't know if this NFL thing is for me.' I was that beaten down after five days. She said, 'Well you can come home and get a job or go to the military. Or you can get your butt to bed and get back to practice.' So coach, you almost made me quit, but I'm glad I didn't. I'm glad you kept pushing me and forced me to grow and become the player I am."

New Orleans Saints/Atlanta Falcons/Minnesota Vikings/Kansas City Chiefs/New York Giants kicker Morten Andersen

The NFL's all-time leading scorer began his speech with: "Good evening Canton, Ohio. Good morning, Denmark," a nod to where he was born. He said he planned to spend less than a year in the United States as a foreign exchange student, but he was asked if he could kick for Ben Davis High School in Indianapolis. He told a funny story about his first practice playing American football, and how players "blocked my view of those funny-looking posts sticking up in the air." And when the ball was snapped back he thought, "Man, the ball is not round." He said he made his first kick and it changed his life.

Memorable quote: "I've learned with age comes wisdom and perspective. I know now that quality life is all about purposeful living with people you love and respect. The focus is on 'we,' and not 'me.' This I learned from football."

Denver Broncos RB Terrell Davis

Davis' speech focused on his hard road to the NFL. As the youngest of six boys, he said he wanted to prove his toughness to his dad, and that's part of what drew him to football. Davis talked about how he started getting in trouble after his dad died when he was 12, and he was a "child in crisis." He said he had a shotgun pointed at him at 14, and was lucky to escape alive. He vowed then to get on a better path. He ended up at Long Beach St., whose football program folded when he was there. He transferred to Georgia (and wondered if he'd ever play again after a hamstring injury), became a sixth-round pick of the Broncos, and ultimately became a Super Bowl MVP, league MVP and Hall of Famer. During his speech was one of the best moments of the night, when Davis was talking to his young sons, and one wanted to show everyone he got Sour Patch Kids candy, and the other made a face for the camera.

Memorable quote: "I had one of my worst practices prior to the game [Davis' first preseason game his rookie year, which was in Tokyo], I thought I had blown my chance of making the team, so I decided to quit. Can you imagine that? I called the front desk at the hotel and arranged for a flight home, but because I couldn't speak Japanese, we couldn't communicate, so I couldn't leave."

San Diego Chargers/New York Jets RB LaDainian Tomlinson

Near the end of Tomlinson's speech he talked about his great-great-great grandfather, who was a slave, and he made inspiring comments about improving race relations and everyone getting along. Those comments drew two standing ovations. It was a very powerful moment.

Before that, Tomlinson told a touching story about wanting to go former Cowboys Jay Novacek's football camp when he was 12 years old to meet his idol Emmitt Smith. His mother told him it would be too much money, but weeks later she told him she saved up the money so he could go. Tomlinson spoke of getting a handoff from Smith at the camp, and later Smith ran into him – literally, Tomlinson said Smith almost knocked him over – and he was awestruck. On Saturday, with Smith behind him with the rest of the Hall of Famers, Tomlinson said, "Because of two astonishing moments with my idol, a 12-year-old kid who entered camp lacking in self confidence as an athlete, left on top of the world feeling he could truly fulfill his dream of playing in the National Football League."

Memorable quote: "In sports, we're evaluated on our desire, ability and we're given a chance to compete. America is the land of opportunity. Let's not slam the door on those who may look or sound

different than us. Rather, let's open it wide for those who believe in themselves, that anything is possible."

Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones

Jones started his (long) speech by recalling his own football days at the University of Arkansas, working up from 13th string to being a starter on a national championship team. Football had a hold of him, and buying the Cowboys was a way for him to have a career in the sport. He said it was risky to buy the Cowboys – he said he had some business failures before then – but "it was time to put up or shut up." It was unclear how Jones would address Jimmy Johnson in his speech. Johnson happened to be on stage because he presented Jason Taylor earlier in the evening. Jones and Johnson had a messy breakup after winning a couple Super Bowls. Jones singled out Johnson as he talked about hiring him: "Jimmy, it was a great decision. You were a great teammate. You were a great partner. Contrary to popular belief, we worked so well together for five years and restored the Cowboys' credibility with our fans ... I thank you." Johnson gave a thumbs up, and then cheered. Later, Jones cracked a joke about when he fired Johnson: "After Jimmy screwed up and we parted ways ... " Johnson smiled and raised his hands. Shortly after that, Jones called Johnson a genius. Jones also explained his gold sneakers: They were sent from Nike founder Phil Knight to match his gold jacket.

Memorable quote: "That's football. Maybe it's someone who did play football. Someone who was scared every single day of my life, his business life, but football taught you to not show it and go on. Michael Irvin taught me the art of smiling in the face of adversity. The rougher it was, the harder he laughed. He was a football player. Frank Broyles taught me the games were won in the fourth quarter. He was a football coach. I did see things sometimes against the grain and sometimes it rubbed people the wrong way."

St. Louis Rams/New York Giants/Arizona Cardinals QB Kurt Warner

At one point during his speech Warner was talking about being on the bench for four years in college and asked the Hall of Famers on stage if any of them had spent a total of four years on the bench at any level. Nobody raised their hand. That sums up Warner's crazy story. He talked about his unbelievable ride, from Northern Iowa to famously bagging groceries (he told a story of seeing Dan Marino on a Wheaties box in "aisle 7 at 3 a.m." and how it motivated him to keep chasing his football dream) and stops in the Arena Football League and NFL Europe before eventually authoring one of the greatest tales in sports history. One memorable moment came when Warner singled out Trent Green for his class. Warner talked about how Green helped him after Green suffered a knee injury, which allowed Warner the opportunity to start for the 1999 Rams. The Rams won a Super Bowl that season, with Warner winning NFL MVP and Super Bowl MVP.

Memorable quote: "People say Hollywood couldn't have written it any better. After this, they don't have a chance."

