

# Is 2018 the year for Broncos owner Pat Bowlen to be elected to the Hall of Fame?

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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Friday afternoon Terrell Davis sat in an old high school auditorium in Canton, Ohio, to celebrate his moment and week in the spotlight, as one of the Pro Football Hall of Fame's newest members. The former Broncos running back reflected on his journey to the Hall, on his father, on his Super Bowl victories, on a famous preseason hit that launched his NFL career, and on a devastating hit that left him physically scarred and prematurely retired.

"I didn't expect the owner to call me after I tore my ACL," Davis said. "You expect the trainers, maybe a teammate, maybe your position coach to call you. Pat (Bowlen) was the first one to call. That little gesture that he did, it meant the world to me. I'd run through a brick wall for that man."

"So I'm hoping he gets in."

Davis isn't alone.

The Pro Football Hall of Fame's nine-member contributors committee will convene Aug. 25 to select its 2018 finalist. Bowlen is believed to be near the top of the list, and the feeling — the hope — is that if his name is called, he will receive the required 80 percent minimum vote next February so he can join Davis in the Hall of Fame.

"He's going to get in," former Broncos coach Mike Shanahan said of Bowlen. "There's no question in my mind that he's going to get in. The question is, is it going to be next year or the year after that?"

Bowlen's legacy is wrapped in a rare combination of numbers and reverence, both spoken of often by his current and former players.

No other owner in league history recorded 300 total games in their first 30 seasons at the helm. And no other NFL team has a better winning percentage (.612) since 1984, when Bowlen purchased a majority stake in the Broncos for \$78 million. (According to Forbes' latest valuations, the Broncos are estimated to be worth \$2.4 billion.) And no other team has appeared on national television (337 games) more than Denver has.

In his 33 years of ownership, the Broncos have won 13 division titles, seven AFC championships and three Super Bowls. They have sold out every home game for a 387-game streak that stretches back to 1970. And the clincher? The Bowlen-owned Broncos have had more Super Bowl appearances (seven) than losing seasons (five).

"Look at not only the history of the Broncos and the success on the field — Pat Bowlen has run a first-class franchise since way before I got here," Davis said. "It's in the stats; just look at the numbers. It's one of the most successful winning franchises in the NFL."

But Bowlen's impact is still felt at the highest level of the NFL too.

A member of nine NFL committees, Bowlen was a catalyst in international expansion, taking the Broncos to London, Mexico City, Tokyo and beyond to compete. As chair of the NFL broadcasting committee in 1998, he brokered the league's \$18 billion TV contract — the most lucrative single-sport contract in history — and was the visionary behind "Sunday Night Football," which generated 20.3 million viewers last year and has been the top prime-time program the last six years straight.

"The fact that Sunday night is now the biggest night — that goes back to Pat. That goes back to him working with Dick Ebersol, who ran NBC Sports at the time," broadcaster Al Michaels told The Denver Post in 2015. "Sunday night has about a 50 percent larger audience than Monday night does, and you can attribute that to Pat's vision and the fact that he figured, 'Hey, you know what, if we can make our big game Sunday night with a flexible schedule and all of that, that would be the best way to maximize the value of the NFL on TV.' "

Locally, Bowlen operated quietly, funding a Broncos Boys & Girls Club and contributing more than \$30 million to Denver-area organizations through Denver Broncos Charities — and many more anonymously.

"There are so many things he did where he did them and said, 'You never tell the press about this,' " said Jim Saccomano, former Broncos vice president of corporate communications. " 'The press never knows.' "

Nearly every former Bronco has a story about Bowlen, a moment when they sat in his office and talked about life, or a time they sat side by side on stationary bikes in the team's weight room, or a time Bowlen promised a player he would arrange for his entire family to attend a game, no questions asked. Rarely do these stories include football.

"I think he just loved having that personal contact with players and former players," said Jim Schafer, Bowlen's former assistant and a close friend. "It really meant a lot to him. It was just incredible to see the love that the former players — I'm starting to tear up — had for him."

Bowlen's disinterest in the limelight has garnered respect and appreciation from his players and employees, who say their owner was hands-on but not a meddler.

The Broncos hope their owner won't be able to avoid the limelight any longer.

"Hopefully this is the year," said general manager John Elway. "As we talked about so many times how much he deserves it, what he's done for the league, his participation on different committees in the league and the relationships with the commissioners. What Pat has contributed to the NFL has grown it to where it is today. There is no question he deserves to be in there."

# Elway: QB race doesn't begin until preseason games

By Mike Klis

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Don't count out Paxton Lynch, yet.

In fact, the man in charge of the Denver Broncos' football operations indicated the quarterback competition between Lynch and Trevor Siemian has yet to begin.

"They are going to keep competing for the job," John Elway, the Broncos' general manager, said Saturday night following the Hall of Fame speech of former teammate Terrell Davis. "We've been in camp a week and two days. We'll get into preseason. We have not played a game. So as soon as we play a couple games we'll evaluate then and a decision will be made."

Elway and Broncos head coach Vance Joseph remain patient, even if so many followers are in a rush to end the quarterback uncertainty. Check that. Bronco observers aren't in a hurry so much as they're tired of a quarterback competition that has gone on since Joseph pronounced Siemian and Lynch even from the day he was hired in mid-January.

Siemian has been the better of the two quarterbacks in camp, even if he is still a ways from mastering the new offense installed by coordinator Mike McCoy. Siemian is leading in part because he is struggling less than Lynch.

"I was out at practice and saw them and they had their ups and downs," Terrell Davis said after delivering his Hall of Fame speech. "I guess for me it's Siemian because he's been there. I like the fact that he has a year under his belt. I'm not saying it's long term but right now I think Trevor could be that guy for us."

Former NFL receiver and current NBC analyst Cris Collinsworth said from the outside looking in. the Broncos' quarterback competition is no different than others.

"It always comes down to the same battle: Physical skills and traits and then you've got a year's experience," Collinsworth said, referring to Lynch in the former and Siemian the latter. "Which one? Are you willing to take a step back with Paxton, because he's going to have to go through what Trevor went through a season ago. But then you're putting off this great defense as he learns the process. It would be unfair to expect him to be (Dallas quarterback) Dak Prescott right off the bat.

"Or you go with Trevor who I thought was a pretty tough son of a gun. He took some pretty big hits last year and he advanced and had some really big moments.

"The hard part when you're the general manager and you draft a guy (in the first round), you want to see him. There are a lot of guys where you don't really see it until they play. (Lynch) played a little bit but until you give him an extended run ... I mean, Troy Aikman went 1-15. Elway didn't exactly come out of the chute so he understands you need this ramp-up period. But it's really hard for organizations to take a kid in the first round and not eventually play him. So they're going to feel that pressure, especially with the kind of defense they have."

After getting Sunday off, Bronco players will resume practice Monday and Tuesday at UHealth Training Center, then travel to Chicago for their preseason opener Thursday against the Bears.

That's when the meaningful segment of the competition begins. The Broncos will then travel to San Francisco for practices Aug. 16 and 17, and a preseason game Aug. 19 against the 49ers.

# Broncos recreate the 'Friends' theme song and we're obsessed with it

Krystyna Biassou

9 News

August 7, 2017

Today, in "content you didn't know you needed until you saw it," we bring you the Denver Broncos' quippy parody of the Friends theme song.

Bear with us -- we were on the fence before we hit play, but almost immediately realized this needs to top the charts (or at least just Despacito) like yesterday.

Featuring lyrics like "We don't have the rights to this songgggg...so we're making up the words" while Aqib Talib winks at the camera "in" Monica's apartment and "It's like you're always stuck in Broncos gearrrr," this song is a certified hit.

There's nothing that will get you more excited for this week's kickoff like Von Miller shimmying or Emmanuel Sanders imitating the theme song's iconic claps.

Four days until the Broncos take on the Bears in Chicago! It's preseason, but we'll take it.

# Broncos QBs eager to try their luck against somebody else's defense

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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There are moments, as Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch try to squeeze passes into the tightest of spots in their competition to be the Denver Broncos' starting quarterback, when they simply have to take a breath and look at the big picture.

That's because some days have been exceedingly frustrating for the two young passers. Then they remember that the defensive backs across from them much of the time just might make up the league's best secondary, with four starters who have been to the Pro Bowl over the past two years.

And oh, the Broncos also have the guy many NFL personnel executives believe is the game's best edge-rusher in Von Miller. The group overall has been among the league's top five in defense for four of the past five years. So in all of the tipped passes, skinny throwing lanes and constant lockdown mentality no matter the drill, Siemian and Lynch have to not only navigate a new playbook but a defense that is comfortable in what it's doing and usually knows what's coming -- having seen the Broncos run their pass routes for over three months.

"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?'" Siemian said. "You take a step back and cool down. Those guys are pretty good too and they're doing their job."

The Broncos have three significant benchmarks on the horizon for the two quarterbacks. There is the preseason opener Thursday night in Chicago, then two days' worth of joint practices against the San Francisco 49ers next week and the Aug. 19 preseason game against those 49ers.

How Siemian and Lynch show against somebody else's players will have a big impact in the decision about the starting job. The feeling is both have largely seen the big-play opportunities dry up in practice, whether they have tried to play it safe against the Broncos' opportunistic defensive backs or simply missed the chances they've had down the field.

"We try to set the tone against any quarterback we play," cornerback Chris Harris Jr. said. "We're very great at preparing for games, knowing what's coming, and I think that's really what makes us who we are. We take it seriously when we go in the classroom. We try to come out here and bring that classroom to the field."

Vance Joseph, a longtime defensive backs coach and NFL assistant who appreciates what a quality secondary can do, has said the Broncos' defense does indeed practice hard and makes life less than ideal for quarterbacks looking to show off. The Broncos' head coach also believes that both Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders are wide receivers who repeatedly beat one-on-one coverages, so "find them and throw them the ball."

Lynch has found particularly tough sledding over much of the last week; he threw several interceptions in practice, including two in one day. On one hand he is probably seeing throwing windows that are smaller than he will see in the upcoming work against other teams, but on the other hand he -- and Siemian -- should know what the Broncos are doing on defense after all these weeks.

"It's give and take," Siemian said. "I think we've had a really competitive camp so far, which is good. It'd be kind of worrying if the 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."

Asked this past week what the most difficult thing about learning the new offense has been, Lynch pointed at the Broncos' defensive personnel rather than difficulty in the new scheme.

"Just having to learn it and come out here and practice it against the defense you're practicing against," Lynch said. "There's very little room for error when you're practicing against these guys because of the coverages that they play and you know how good they are. There's small windows to throw it into."

It's why either quarterback can still win the job. Either Siemian keeps the lead he appears to have built or Lynch shows he can leave his mistakes behind on the practice field -- when the Broncos' defense isn't the one across from them.

"You kind of practice to play the games," Joseph said. "Even though it's preseason, you get a chance to get a fair evaluation of the players. ... 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."

# Coaches who deserve a closer look from the Hall of Fame

By Mike Sando  
ESPN  
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As six retired players and Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones took their spots in the Pro Football Hall of Fame this weekend, legendary coaches remained on the sideline. This was the ninth time in the past 11 years that no coaches earned enshrinement. Seventy-three of 75 inductees over that span were not coaches, and with Don Coryell falling short as a finalist 31 years after coaching his final game, the guys responsible for motivating grown men could use a pep talk themselves.

There is hope. John Madden waited 28 years, Hank Stram waited 26 and George Allen waited 25, which reflects the process as much as anything. Coaches compete in the same category as players on the theory both made their marks at field level, unlike contributors. It's a debatable premise and a problem for coaches whose candidacies require some deliberation

Using research from Pro Football Reference and other sources, here are six former coaches whose candidacies deserve a closer look:

## **Marty Schottenheimer**

**Regular season:** 200-126-1 (.613)

**Playoffs:** 5-13 (.278)

**Super Bowls:** none as a head coach

Where he ranks: seventh in regular-season victories, seventh in games above .500 (74), 33rd in postseason victories

What to know: The six coaches with more regular-season victories than Schottenheimer are all in the Hall of Fame or headed there (Bill Belichick). Those six also combined for 28 titles, including at least two apiece, and that is where Schottenheimer falls short.

Is 200 wins exceptional enough to get Schottenheimer into the Hall without even reaching a Super Bowl? A fair review must consider how much Schottenheimer was to blame for the incredible series of disasters that doomed his teams in the playoffs. There was The Drive, The Fumble, Lin Elliott's meltdown and Marlon McCree's fumble during what should have been a game-clinching fourth-down interception return off Tom Brady.

Heartbreaking defeats are part of the game for every coach, but some of these were especially cruel and even unlucky. For example, while data has shown that fumble recoveries are random, Schottenheimer's opponents recovered an incredible 15 of 15 fumbles in the games culminating with The Drive, The Fumble and McCree's miscue (hat tip: Jason Lisk of The Big Lead). While with Kansas City, Schottenheimer once lost a playoff game to Miami that hinged in part on fourth-quarter turnovers by Joe Montana (red zone interception) and Marcus Allen, Hall of Famers both.

Most great coaches had great quarterbacks. Schottenheimer typically did not. Three of the six coaches ahead of Schottenheimer in all-time wins -- George Halas, Curly Lambeau, Paul Brown -- coached before the NFL took a sharp turn toward becoming a passing league with rules changes enacted in 1978. The other three -- Don Shula, Tom Landry and Belichick -- enjoyed long associations with Hall of Fame quarterbacks. Bernie Kosar and Philip Rivers combined for three Pro Bowls with Schottenheimer, but a two-year stint with an aging Montana was Schottenheimer's only association with a truly great quarterback. Montana was 36 and 37 years old in his two seasons under Schottenheimer.

Schottenheimer wasn't just a compiler. He's also one of seven coaches with 300 games coached and a winning percentage of at least .600 (Andy Reid, who is becoming the Schottenheimer of this era unless he wins a title, has a chance to join the list this season).

### **Chuck Knox**

**Regular season:** 186-147-1 (.558)

**Playoffs:** 7-11 (.389)

**Super Bowls:** none as a head coach

Where he ranks: 10th in regular-season victories, 26th in games above .500 (74), 28th in postseason victories

What to know: Knox was a four-time coach of the year who twice took over losing teams and brought them to the playoffs in his first season on the job.

Much like Schottenheimer, Knox won consistently in multiple places without having Hall of Fame quarterbacks on his side. While Schottenheimer was once fired following a 14-2 season in San Diego, Knox lost his job with the Rams after posting a 54-15-1 record in five seasons with the team. He won division titles all five years and never finished worse than 10-4 in any of them. He twice lost NFC title games to the great Minnesota teams of the 1970s in games that turned against Los Angeles on plays made inside the Vikings' 1-yard line.

Knox famously said upon taking the Rams job in 1972 that quarterback was just another position, but that became much less the case as time passed. While with Seattle, Knox got three Pro Bowl seasons from Dave Krieg in an era when his division rivals often had Dan Fouts and John Elway. His teams were not bad enough to secure the draft choices needed to select the most heralded quarterbacks. Though the details are in dispute, Knox reportedly wanted Seattle to draft Brett Favre in 1991, when the team selected Dan McGwire instead.

Bud Grant, Marv Levy and George Allen all made it to Canton as head coaches without winning a Super Bowl. Grant and Levy appeared in four apiece, seven of them with Hall of Fame quarterbacks.

### **Mike Holmgren**

**Regular season:** 161-111 (.592)

**Playoffs:** 13-11 (.542)

**Super Bowls:** 1-2 as a head coach

Where he ranks: 16th in regular-season victories, 19th in games above .500 (50), sixth in postseason victories

What to know: Ron Wolf, Brett Favre and Reggie White were the first three 1990s Packers icons enshrined in the Hall. Holmgren would be a logical choice as the fourth pillar as a driving force behind turning around the franchise, especially considering his work before and after his time in Green Bay.

Holmgren guided two previously long-suffering franchises to the Super Bowl, winning once and losing twice. He did it by taking quarterbacks with varying pedigrees and molding them into Pro Bowl (and even MVP-caliber) performers within a specific offense for which he was the playcaller.

There were early indications when Holmgren was in San Francisco and Steve Young was a reclamation project under Bill Walsh and Holmgren. The trend continued when Holmgren's Packers acquired Favre, and when Holmgren personally acquired Matt Hasselbeck for Seattle. Favre became a three-time MVP. Hasselbeck became a three-time Pro Bowler. They combined to play 37 seasons in the NFL.

Holmgren's giant coaching tree is another consideration. Protégés Andy Reid, Jon Gruden, Steve Mariucci and Mike Sherman have combined to go 397-301-1 (.569) as head coaches.

### **Mike Shanahan**

**Regular season:** 170-138 (.552)

**Playoffs:** 8-6

**Super Bowls:** 2-0 as a head coach

Where he ranks: tied for 14th in regular-season victories, 30th in games above .500 (32), tied for 25th in postseason victories

What to know: Shanahan's hiring as the Broncos' head coach and de facto GM was the impetus behind Denver finally breaking through as a Super Bowl champion (twice). Elway enjoyed his best seasons under Shanahan, who installed a proven offensive system while upgrading the talent around the Hall of Fame quarterback.

Shanahan obviously benefited from coaching Elway. The relationship was mutually beneficial. Elway tossed 199 touchdown passes with 177 interceptions in his first 12 seasons, including four with Shanahan as offensive coordinator. His TD-INT ratio was 101-55 with Shanahan as head coach. Shanahan's regular-season winning percentage with Elway (47-17, .734) was about what it was with Jake Plummer (39-15, .722) in the lineup. He went 27-24 (.529) with Brian Griese and turned running backs with modest draft-day pedigrees into high producers.

Shanahan's offense also helped turn Robert Griffin III into a dynamic force until a knee injury derailed his career. Shanahan's handling of Griffin leading up to that injury is something Hall selectors will navigate in considering his candidacy.

Shanahan, Schottenheimer and other well-known coaches have failed in Washington under owner Daniel Snyder. Shanahan fared well during his honeymoon period with Washington, and he was a leading reason the team used a fourth-round draft choice for Kirk Cousins. Shanahan's time in Denver proved how effective he could be with outstanding ownership and a top-tier quarterback.

### **Tom Coughlin**

**Regular season:** 170-150 (.531)

**Playoffs:** 12-7

**Super Bowls:** 2-0 as a head coach

Where he ranks: tied for 14th in regular-season victories, tied for 46th in games above .500 (20), tied for seventh in postseason victories

What to know: Coughlin, like Shanahan, is one of eight coaches with at least 150 regular-season victories and more than one Super Bowl title. Don Shula, Tom Landry, Chuck Noll, Bill Parcells and Joe Gibbs are already in the Hall of Fame. Belichick will also be there. That leaves Coughlin and Shanahan, who rank tied for sixth on that eight-man list with 170 victories.

Coughlin was not known for calling plays, introducing an innovative scheme, developing quarterbacks or producing an expansive coaching tree. He did quickly take the expansion Jacksonville Jaguars to the AFC title game. He also quickly made the Giants into a contender before leading them to gold-standard Super Bowl victories over New England.

The selection committee will have to determine whether those iconic Super Bowl victories and success with two franchises offsets the way Coughlin left both organizations. He was 13-29 in his final three seasons in Jacksonville and 13-29 in his final three with the Giants. He was 144-92 (.610) the rest of the time, and endured 20 years as a head coach, same as Shanahan.

### **Bill Cowher**

**Regular season:** 149-90-1 (.623)

**Playoffs:** 12-9

**Super Bowls:** 1-1 as a head coach

Where he ranks: 20th in regular-season victories, tied for 14th in games above .500 (59), tied for seventh in postseason victories

What to know: Ben Roethlisberger became a top-tier quarterback, but he was not one when Cowher was coaching him. That means Cowher took the Steelers to two Super Bowls with two different below-top-tier quarterbacks. Cowher also took two very different teams to the biggest stage, with nine years in between those Super Bowl runs. His Steelers reached six AFC title games during his 15-year run as head coach.

# The Denver Broncos recreated the 'Friends' theme song and we can't stop watching

By Oscar Contreras

KMGH

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It's National Friendship Day and the Denver Broncos sure do know how to celebrate.

In a video posted to Facebook Sunday morning, the Broncos recreated the "Friends" theme with their own take on the lyrics to the popular early 90s American sitcom.

As you would expect, Von Miller can be seen dancing several times in the video and there's also cameos by Emmanuel Sanders, Demaryius Thomas, Aqib Talib, Chris Harris Jr. (with Monica's apartment in the background) as if they were characters in a show.

The video has been shared over 6,000 times and has more than 13,000 reactions on Facebook as of early Sunday afternoon.

# Prime Numbers: How Aqib Talib found himself in Deion Sanders' territory

By Ben Swanson  
Denverbroncos.com  
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Almost a decade ago, Aqib Talib met his idol, Deion Sanders. Now, after years of following his path, Talib has tied Sanders in a major category and has his eyes set on passing him.

*"Guys like Aqib come from small beginnings, and you don't sit up there and say, 'Man, one day I'm going to go to the Hall of Fame.' You say, 'You know what, man? I'm going to be great, I'm going to make a lot of money to rescue my family from the situation they're in, and I'm going to try to change the culture and change the community.'" – Deion Sanders*

Aqib Talib can no longer remember what he ordered when he first met Deion Sanders in 2008 over lunch, but he can picture many of the morning's details.

He had finished a workout with Olympic gold medalist Michael Johnson, who was helping fine-tune Talib's sprinting form. The Kansas Jayhawk needed to shave valuable milliseconds off his 40-yard dash before his upcoming Pro Day.

Then it was off to the Grand Lux Café at Galleria Dallas, an upscale mall on the north side of the city not far from where Talib went to high school.

He was nervous, and this 22-year-old didn't rattle easily. At the time, he was about two months removed from winning Orange Bowl MVP and two months away from being a first-round pick in the NFL Draft. He was young, confident, audacious and talented. Little intimidated him.

But lunch with Deion — Prime Time! — was a different story.

Sanders was Talib's idol. Now, he was about to come face to face with him, and Talib struggled to accept the reality of the moment.

Perhaps it would've been even harder to imagine that, in just shy of 10 years, he would match one of Sanders' marks and have the chance to surpass it.

That would come later, though. Back to the Grand Lux.

Talib joined Sanders at a table, along with one of Sanders' former teammates. A big Cowboys fan, Talib recognized Kevin Smith, the other half of Dallas' cornerback duo from 1995 until 1999.

The conversation had little to do with football. This was more about Sanders reaching out to a young man to offer guidance and to simply get to know him. In Talib's words, "We just had regular-people conversation."

After finishing lunch, the group went their separate ways. A star-struck Talib left feeling he had just had his first welcome-to-the-NFL.

He wasn't even drafted yet, but he was on his way.

*"When you get an interception, you don't hear nothing." - Aqib Talib*

Eight years later, he was on his way to the house.

Colts quarterback Andrew Luck had just tried to force a pass by Talib on third-and-15, and he was about to pay dearly in this Week 2 matchup of the 2016 season.

Now it was all about numbers. The way Talib sees it, if he catches a pick with momentum, there's usually just one or two people he needs to outrun. Plus, offensive players don't practice tackling.

On this, his 31st career interception, there were more than just one or two people in his way.

One by one, Talib rid his path of would-be tacklers. He knocked down Colts receiver Phillip Dorsett when he outfought him to catch the ball. One down. He deftly juked tight end Jack Doyle into the dirt. Two. Von Miller helped with a block on right tackle Joe Reitz. Three. Talib then veered out of the way of Luck's diving attempt. Four.

Now there was no one between Talib and the end zone. He outkicked a sprinting wide receiver and lineman in the final few yards and that was that.

There was no Deion high-step to the end zone, but the moment — including the preparation hours and days in advance, the anticipation reading the play and the vision to run it back — was distinctly Sanders-esque.

As he crossed the goal line, Talib sealed his ninth career pick-six and his first Prime number.

Nine, of course, is not mathematically a prime number, as it's divisible by three. But it is a Prime number — that is how many interceptions Deion Sanders returned for touchdowns in his career.

And it is also a number Talib treats with considerable respect, particularly because arguably no statistic better represents Sanders' explosiveness and pure talent than that one.

"That's, like, my idol growing up watching football," Talib says. "I'd seen how great he was playing football and to make the statement that I've got the same amount of interceptions for touchdowns as him, that's huge for me.

"That's a stepping stone to where I'm trying to be in my career."

*"I got the flag, but I was feeling it! I felt like Deion! I felt like Deion right there!" – Aqib Talib*

Deion Sanders discovered Aqib Talib the same way many people did, by tuning in for the 2008 Orange Bowl between Talib's Kansas Jayhawks and Virginia Tech.

In the postgame interview with the game MVP, Talib told the Dolphin Stadium crowd and Fox Sports viewers that he felt like his idol as he high-stepped into the end zone at the end of a 60-yard interception return.

But it wasn't just the pick-six. It wasn't the high-stepping. The truth is he has always felt like Deion.

Prime Time had it all. He was flashy, both in his fashion and in his play. His jewelry and style didn't just draw eyeballs; it drew the first 13 paragraphs of his first Sports Illustrated cover story. On the field, he drew the top assignments and had the instincts and physical tools to challenge every pass thrown his way. When he did wrangle an interception with room to run, he was often untouchable. And if his play didn't grab your attention, his celebrations would.

For a young Talib, it wasn't only what Prime Time did on the field that made him an idol — it was also who he was.

"It was kind of my personality," Talib says. "That might have been what drew me to him, because he was a talkative guy. He's loud, he's funny, he always wants to speak his mind. And that's kind of how I've been all my life. I don't necessarily say I got it from Deion, but I probably got it from my mother or somebody. But it's the same traits he has."

Talib dreamed of being Deion. For an elementary-school assignment, Talib wrote that he'd be an NFL player when he grew up. Now, as an NFL player, Talib wears No. 21, like Sanders did. Sanders has his own youth football team; Talib does, too.

To the best of his best ability, Talib has done everything to follow the path that Sanders walked two decades before.

*"People tend to think it comes easy for the extremely talented, successful guys like Aqib, but it doesn't." — Ed McCaffrey*

Perhaps the biggest misconception about Deion Sanders, according to his former teammate Ed McCaffrey, is that he didn't work hard to achieve the success he had in the NFL.

"People probably thought he's just this flashy, fast guy who likes to do touchdown dances," McCaffrey says, "but man, he studied every receiver he ever went against, watched a lot of film, worked incredibly hard, kept in great shape [and] played two professional sports there for a while. ... Deion was a great teammate, he was a competitor and he worked extremely hard to be the best at his position in the NFL, and he was.

"I see that same type of determination and work ethic and skill set in Aqib."

That wasn't always the case, Talib admits.

Although he valued his time in Tampa and learned plenty from the likes of Jon Gruden, Ronde Barber and Derrick Brooks, Talib didn't extract his full potential until he was traded to New England.

"My first game [with the Patriots] was going to be against Andrew Luck and my head coach was now Bill Belichick, so me personally, I think that's when I became a real pro," Talib says. "Because knowing I'm going to be playing Andrew Luck, I'm going to be on this stage, it's Sunday night, Bill's my coach, [it's] my first game, I put way more time in at home studying for the game, and then when I got in the game, it was so much easier for me. So from that point on, that became my routine. I feel like that's when I definitely became a professional football player."

His new standards for preparation led to success. In the 59-24 rout, Talib returned an interception 59 yards for a touchdown. Since then, Talib has held himself and his preparation to the highest standards with clear results: four Pro Bowls, one first-team All-Pro selection and a Super Bowl victory.

"Aqib reached a pivotal point in his career where he had to understand the expectation that was asked of him to perform, on and off the field, as well as the expectation to just go to the next level," Sanders says. "He had the choice either to have a pretty decent NFL career, make a little money and go on with his life, or he could be great. And he chose to increase his study habits, he chose to increase his offseason workouts, his preparation — his whole knowledge of and understanding of the game — and it paid off for him."

*"The goal is just understanding of the game, understanding your opponent and understanding the scheme in which you play. And when you have peace off the field, it's so much easier to perform on the field. And I think he's arriving at that place." — Deion Sanders*

Yet, Aqib Talib is not Deion Sanders.

As a player, Talib is more physical and doesn't have the same speed. Few do. As a person, he is not the outgoing cultural figure that Sanders was. Prime Time hosted Saturday Night Live during his career and released a rap album on MC Hammer's label. The closest Talib has come to that is freestyle rapping at Denver's Super Bowl 50 media night.

However, Sanders has provided him with a mold that's close to who he is, even if they don't share the same physical attributes or the commercial success.

"What they have alike is their instincts," says John Elway, the legendary quarterback who dueled with Sanders on the field and the current Broncos President of Football Operations and General Manager who scouted Talib in his free agency. "They both have great instincts. They do a great job reading routes, reading splits and so, instinctually, they're very much alike. Deion was probably a little bit faster, but I think Aqib's more physical. But other than that, they're both great, great corners."

As Talib reaches this career benchmark where he can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with his hero, it's even more intriguing to think where he can go from here. He's still at the top of his game as part of the NFL's most dominant secondary, and there's time to move beyond Sanders and make his own records.

"I think when you're still in the middle of it, you still figure that you have a lot more to give," Elway says. "So it's nice to be able to break a record like that, especially the guys you looked up to, but I also think you look at it and say, 'I'm not stopping.'"

Talib is looking ahead. He sees the three players ahead of him on the pick-six charts — Rod Woodson, Charles Woodson and Darren Sharper — and knows each played somewhere between 14 and 18 seasons. Talib, in his ninth, understands there's an opportunity to create a legacy all his own.

"I want to have the most, of course," Talib says. "I want to end my career with the most interceptions for touchdowns, of course. But it was just that milestone. Being tied, it was like a rude awakening that it was possible.

"That's why we play the game. Of course, we've got idols and things like that, but I want my youth football program and my kids and grandkids to know Aqib Talib."

# Terrell Davis should make you proud

Aric DiLalla  
Denverbroncos.com  
August 7, 2017

Davis left plenty of reasons for fans to be impressed. The reasons to be proud are even more important.

Terrell Davis should impress you.

His 2,000-yard season and regular-season MVP award should make you stop and think about the type of player Davis was during his career with the Broncos.

His 101.7 yards per game and 142.5-yard playoff rushing average should summon Lombardi memories and banish doubts surrounding a late-round pick's limits.

Davis' 6,413 yards and 56 rushing touchdowns in his first four seasons should generate an appreciation for greatness when it breaks through tackles right in front of us.

He built his case for the Pro Football Hall of Fame with those numbers – and they're damn good ones.

The video board showed some of the accompanying highlights Saturday night as Davis delivered his speech at the Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinement ceremony.

The tackle in Japan. His three touchdowns in Super Bowl XXXII. The run to push him over 2,000 yards.

Impressive, no doubt.

But that's not what should make you proud of Davis.

Pride should stem from the ways in which Davis lived up to the teachings of his parents. From his mother, he learned courage and compassion.

"I don't know how you did it, Mom," Davis said. "You clothed us, you fed us and you never left anybody behind. You taught me responsibility, to always give back.

"Mom, you are the embodiment of unconditional love and I love you very much."

Those ideals were evident Saturday as he spoke to his wife, Tamiko.

"Nineteen years and three children later, I've come to recognize you are my soul mate," Davis said. "You have taught me everything about love. So thank you being such a wonderful wife and mother."

Or perhaps Davis' selflessness elicits pride.

Even on this enshrinement night – his own night, 11 years in the making – he made sure to address the Hall of Fame and call for Owner Pat Bowlen’s induction.

“Let’s make sure that this champion is enshrined in 2018,” he said.

But Davis’ toughness, a trait he attributes to his late father, was his most admirable quality on display Saturday.

After seasons of fighting through the repercussions of a torn ACL, Davis reminded everyone how that pain can pale in comparison to loss.

Before an audience of millions, Davis described the man who raised his children with a foundation of tough love and discipline; of a father who didn’t want his sons to relive his own tough upbringing; of a dad who never sugarcoated the “harsh” version of life awaiting a black man in America.

His words seemed as cathartic as they were grateful.

Davis relived seeing the “original iron man” fall to lupus at the age of 41, years too early to see his son play in the National Football League.

Years too early, even, to see Davis play a game at Long Beach State or Georgia.

As the youngest of six boys, Davis said he’d always aimed to prove himself to his father. He found that outlet on the football field. Beginning in Pop Warner, Davis ran people over to display his toughness in front of his dad.

“That’s what drove me,” Davis said. “I loved the game and gaining my dad’s approval.”

Though he began to develop migraines – which would bother him throughout his career and famously reappear in the second quarter of Super Bowl XXXII – Davis continued to play.

Anything for his father. Anything for approval.

Then came, as Davis put it Saturday night, the greatest pain he would ever experience.

When his father died, the 12-year-old Davis lost his passion as a football player – and far more as a son.

“When he died, a part of me died,” Davis said. “I went into a tailspin. I quit playing football. I was failing school. I was clearly a child in crisis.”

It wasn’t until a shotgun was pointed at his face at age 14 that Davis pulled out of the cycle in which he found himself and returned to football.

It’s skipping a few steps, certainly, to jump right back to Davis’ Hall of Fame enshrinement.

But to see him on stage at the Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium? That's the ultimate testament to Davis' resilience.

He certainly had plenty of people to thank for helping him reach the moment: teammates, coaches, friends and family.

[VIEW GALLERY | 28 Photos](#)

Terrell Davis unveils his Hall of Fame bust

Still, it wasn't hard to see that for as many supportive people Davis had in the crowd, he may always yearn for one more.

"To this day I think about him," Davis said, "and I wonder did I gain his respect?"

As he paused to crane his neck toward the sky, Davis seemed genuine in his search for an answer.

"Dad, I hope you're looking down, smiling and uttering the words, 'Son, I'm proud of you.'"

There was no reason not to be proud on this night, one of joy and celebration of the accomplishments of Terrell Davis.

Each of the seven inductees was grateful to be on stage Saturday as they joined the 303 previous members of the Hall of Fame. But none showed the pure elation of Davis as he pulled the covering off his bust and leaned down to kiss the head of his bronze likeness.

There could be nothing sweeter for the man who lost his father and nearly lost his own life.

On this night, Davis could not have been more alive.

So cherish the statistics and the highlights, but recognize what's more important.

Terrell Davis should make you proud.

# Best quotes from the 2017 Pro Football Hall of Fame induction speeches

By Staff

USA Today

August 7, 2017

Saturday night's Pro Football Hall of Fame induction ceremony took more than four and a half hours to complete, but the seven honorees provided some notable highlights.

Here are the standout quotes from every speech:

## **Kenny Easley**

"Folks will look at our busts and start the debate all over again: Who was better, Ronnie Lott or Kenny Easley? So I'm going to settle it now publicly and for good. In the last 30 years, there has been no better thumper, ball-hawking, fiercely competitive or smarter defensive back in the NFL than Ronnie Lott. He was the best. There, it's settled, and because I said so."

"Please allow me this opportunity and this moment for a very serious message for which I feel very strongly about. Black lives do matter, 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. We've got to stand up as a country, as black Americans and fight the good fight to protect our youth and our American constitutional right not to die while driving or walking the streets black in America. It has to stop, and we can do it, and the lessons we learn in sports can help."

## **Jason Taylor**

"I'm ashamed to say this, but I'm going to say it on national TV in front of all you people as well. After about the fifth day of training camp my rookie year, between the two-a-days, the heat and humidity, Jimmy (Johnson), I went back to my room one night and I called my mom and said, '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 on home and get a job or go to the military, or you can get your butt to bed and go back to practice.' So, coach, you almost made me quit. But I'm glad I didn't, and I'm glad you kept pushing me and you forced me to grow and become the player I am, so thank you for that."

"Dan Snyder, I had a good talk with Dan last night. Thank you for the opportunity to come to Washington. I know i didn't give you much, two and a half sacks. Stole a lot of money from you, but I appreciate it. Hey, I'm just being honest, all right?"

## **Morten Andersen**

I looked around for help. Anyone, anything? Coach [Bob] Wilbur came over and whispered to me, 'Just kick the (expletive) out of it. And if you don't, I'm sending you back on the boat.' Message received. The ball flew high and through those white things, and I looked over at my teammates and I think they liked what they saw." - on his first high school football practice after arriving from Denmark

On joining the Falcons at age 46: "In early October 2006, I was watching the Falcons play their second regular-season game. Their kicker had a bad day. I turn to my buddy Eric, and say, 'I'm switching to water ... now. Because the phone is going to ring soon.' I didn't get much of a reaction from him. 'I know,' I said, 'I know. It hasn't rang in 20 months.' Shortly after the game finished the phone did ring."

### **Terrell Davis**

"When I was 12, my father became ill and until he went to the hospital, I didn't know how sick he was. He was the original iron man. It didn't matter how many times he'd been sick or hurt, he'd always bounce back. But not this time. My father died of lupus when he was 41, and obviously my dad never saw me play in the National Football League. Until this day, I'd think about him and wonder, did I gain his respect? Dad, I hope you're looking down, smiling and uttering the words, 'Son, I'm proud of you.' "

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

### **LaDainian Tomlinson**

"My name began with the man who owned my great-great-great grandfather. Now it's proudly carried by me, my children, my extended family. People stop me on the street because they know me as L.T. the football player, but after football, people have begun to recognize me as LaDainian Tomlinson, not simply for what I did as a football player but for who I am as a man. The family legacy that began in such a cruel way has given birth to generations of successful, caring Tomlinsons."

"I firmly believe that God chose me to help bring two races together under one last name: Tomlinson. I'm of mixed race, and I represent America. My story is America's story. All our ancestors, unless we're American Indian, came from another country, another culture. Football is a microcosm of America. All races, religions and creeds living, playing, competing side by side."

"America is the land of opportunity. Let's not slam the door on those who look or sound different from us. Rather, let's open it wide for those who believe in themselves. ... I'm being inducted into the Hall of Fame because my athletic ability created an opportunity for me to excel in the sport I love. When we open the door for others to compete, we fulfill the promise of one under, under God, with liberty and justice for all."

"On America's team, let's not choose to be against one another. Let's choose to be for one another. My great-great-great grandfather had no choice. We have one. I pray we dedicate ourselves to be the best team we can be, working and living together, representing the highest ideals of mankind, leading the way for all nations to follow."

"One of the most eloquent orators of all time said it best in his farewell address. Paraphrasing and humbly building upon what President Obama said, we all have to try harder, show up, dive in and stay at it. I am asking you to believe in your ability to bring about change. To hold fast in the idea whispered by slaves. 'Yes, we can.' "

### **Jerry Jones**

"I wanted someone I knew well. I wanted someone that could get it done to be our coach. I wanted Jimmy Johnson. I said he'd be worth five first-round draft choices or five Heisman Trophy winners. Of course, I sure did get laughed out of town when I said it. It was my first experience as an owner and a general manager – a difficult and very unpopular decision. 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. We were back-to-back; we were driven; we had thick skin; we took all the criticism they could dish out. I thank you."

On the NFL's future: "We have challenges. We're facing them head on. We're embracing the future. We're not afraid. The game is too great. It will sustain and thrive for generations to come. God willing, I'm going to try to be right in the middle of it all, stirring it up, making sure we stay on top if we can."

On Tony Romo: "No quarterback in Cowboys history was asked to carry as much of the load for his team as Tony. He beat all the odds and delivered some of the most remarkable plays and unforgettable performances in our team history."

### **Kurt Warner**

"In the ultimate team game, I'm not much for singling guys out because of all of you played a special role in my being here," Warner said. "But I would like to recognize one teammate who had a more profound impact on me than any other – Trent Green. Our paths crossed in the most incredible of ways, and I acknowledge you could easily be the one standing up here tonight, but the class that you showed while dealing with the toughest of situations is etched in my mind. Your willingness to share your football secrets so I could succeed was incredibly valuable, but the character you displayed and the way you modeled the definition of teammate was priceless. Those lessons followed me the rest of my career. Thanks for sharpening my character with your own."

"Don't miss your moments. I believe I stand here tonight because of what I did with the moments I was given. My enshrinement makes the statement that although impact is measured over a career, it is established in the moments, regardless of how many or how few you're blessed with."

# Hit alarm on Paxton Lynch if Trevor Siemian wins Broncos' QB job by default

By Charles Robinson

Yahoo Sports

August 7, 2017

For a moment Saturday, Denver Broncos linebacker Von Miller rubbed the hair on his chin and considered a question about today's NFL and the idea of winning games through classical – if not archaic – means. Age-old principles like running the football, not turning the ball over and putting pressure on opponents defensively.

It was a question about mentality, but Miller is quite perceptive. He knew that like most things in Broncos training camp, this was a quarterback question. And to that, he rattled off a list.

“There's going to come a time when you play a great offense and you're going to need your offense, too,” Miller said of the list. “All offenses in the league aren't incredible. But when you come across those teams, you've got to score points.”

Those kidding themselves can try and frame this conversation in a multitude of ways. Breath can be wasted talking about offensive line additions or backfield depth. The belief that skill position players can elevate surrounding talent can be debated, or that offensive coordinator Mike McCoy might bring improvement after his stint as a head coach with the San Diego Chargers. All of that is worthy of some thought. But really, this is all about one thing now.

The quarterbacks. Just like last season. And to the behind-closed-doors chagrin of the Broncos staff, that is the problem right now. This feels just like last season.

It's unsettled. Things aren't going according to plan with Paxton Lynch. As much as general manager John Elway might say publicly that things are working themselves out and Paxton is a better pro and Trevor Siemian is competing, this all feels very familiar and very undone.

Here's an early assessment of the derby from behind the scenes, from a handful of team personnel:

First, Siemian. He is ahead in this race basically by default. He is solid and brings a pro mentality every day. But he's also more steady than spectacular – a reality that speaks to what Elway and the personnel staff believe about him in the longer term. And that longer view is that Siemian is an option whose greatest upside might be no better than a middle-of-league starter. Adequate NFL starting material, but not special. Perhaps he will be capable of winning games consistently, but his talent doesn't appear to be that of a guy who can elevate the unit around him for the next decade.

Next, Lynch. More than anything, Elway and the personnel staff want him to seize this job and take a big step forward, but he hasn't done it at this point. Given the talent that Elway believes he has, the grand design is to get Lynch into the starting job at some stage this season. Preferably, things would click for him and he'd win the job outright. But the opposite has happened. If you believe the practice tape that others have watched, Lynch has lost every single practice session to Siemian. His sparse collection of good days has been – at best – on par with Siemian's good days. Lynch's bad days have been

exponentially worse. Most notably, a practice in which he threw three straight interceptions and left Elway clenched-jawed.

So, yeah, as far as the Lynch plan goes, it's not in the greatest of spots right now.

Here's the Broncos' silver lining: It's still the first week of August and neither quarterback has faced a defense that isn't their own. And lest anyone doubt it, Denver's defense is elite and also knows its opposition inside and out. All of that puts the still-developing in-house quarterbacks at a sizable disadvantage. Given those realities, nobody should assume the offense is going off a cliff. Not yet.

All of that said, there are a few worrisome aspects of where this has the potential to go. This season should be considered a referendum on the quarterback position in Denver. It's Year 3 for Siemian and that is enough time for him to point his arrow in a consistent enough direction for the staff to cement an opinion on him. Although it's only Lynch's second season, he has to show growth on and off the field. The Broncos can't just say he's a better pro and not have it reflect more consistently on the field. If Elway wants him to win the starting job, it needs to reflect a lot on the field.

That brings this all back to square one (and 2016), with Denver lacking clarity at the starting quarterback spot. This is where Tony Romo would have come in handy. Romo would always have been a massive injury risk, but his existence on the roster would have allowed for much more patience with Lynch, who is under a huge microscope right now.

Instead, Denver has two guys who haven't blown anyone away yet. That sets up a frustrating scenario. If Siemian takes the job by default, it's bad. If Lynch doesn't get himself right and gets an opportunity simply because Elway wants it, that's also bad. The ideal scenario would be Lynch suddenly putting it all together and seizing the job over the next few weeks. Or Siemian going out in the preseason games and showcasing elite intangibles that can transform moderate talent into a top-10 quarterback.

If neither of those scenarios happen, then Denver has the same problem it had when Peyton Manning retired: It doesn't have a long-term quarterback. And with this highly paid defense, that's going to be a problem. The Broncos can't hold the fort forever. One way or another, the offense has to get itself together.

Von Miller understands that.

"Three-and-out, three-and-out, three-and-out – that will kill you," Miller said. "You've just got to be good over there [on offense]. It's the National Football League. You have to be good. As long as we're good over there – we don't even have to be elite. I mean, I would love that. I've played with elite offenses before. But we don't have to be like that. We just have to be good. We can't be bad. Bad over there doesn't win championships. If we're good, we'll be able to play in any football game."

Miller is right. But that determination is still hanging on a familiar question. It's early August and the Broncos are still grasping for answers at quarterback. And if this starting job is a victory by default, then Denver has already taken its first loss of the season.

# NFL hires Trent Baalke in consulting role

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
August 7, 2017

Former 49ers General Manager Trent Baalke has landed a new job.

Adam Schefter of ESPN reports that Baalke has been hired by the NFL as a football operations consultant. Baalke is expected to work in a variety of areas, including officiating video review and player development and evaluation.

Former Giants coach and current Jaguars executive vice president Tom Coughlin served in a similar role with the league during the 2016 season. Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz also served as a consultant to the league's officiating department in 2015.

Baalke was fired by the 49ers after the team went 2-14 during the 2016 season. He took over the job in 2011 and had immediate success with Jim Harbaugh as coach, but things went the other way quickly when Harbaugh left the team after the 2014 season.

# Report: Tim Tebow, Kyle Orton among QBs Dolphins considered

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
August 7, 2017

The Dolphins signed Jay Cutler on Sunday, ending speculation about what move they would make at the quarterback position in the wake of Ryan Tannehill re-injuring his left knee during practice last week.

Cutler wasn't the only name under consideration by the team. Armando Salguero of the Miami Herald reports three other names that were bandied about at some point before Cutler became the newest member of the team.

As you'd expect, Colin Kaepernick was one of the names. The other two reported by Salguero were Tim Tebow and Kyle Orton.

Tebow, who now plays minor league baseball in the Mets system, played for Gase when Gase was the quarterbacks coach in Denver during the 2011 season. The Broncos won the AFC West and beat the Steelers in a playoff game that year before trading Tebow to the Jets the next offseason. Current Dolphins exec Mike Tannenbaum was the Jets General Manager at the time, but Tebow's stay with the team was far less fruitful on the field.

Orton was also on the 2011 Broncos, so familiarity with Gase seems to be the common thread with them and Cutler and Salguero adds that some names were discarded quickly.

Orton was waived in November after losing the starting job to Tebow early in the season. He has not played in the NFL since 2014 while Tebow's last stint was with the Eagles in the 2015 preseason, so it wouldn't be a surprise if any consideration of bringing them to Miami fell into the short-lived category.

# Jay Cutler agrees to terms with Dolphins, per AP source

By Steven Wine  
Associated Press  
August 7, 2017

Jay Cutler has decided to postpone retirement for the chance to be Ryan Tannehill's replacement.

Cutler agreed to terms Sunday on a contract with the Miami Dolphins, a person familiar with the situation said. The person confirmed the agreement to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the Dolphins weren't expected to announce the deal until Cutler signed the \$10 million, one-year deal.

Cutler will compete with Matt Moore for a starting job while Tannehill remains out with a left knee injury that could sideline him for the entire season.

Dolphins coach Adam Gase was offensive coordinator for the Chicago Bears when Cutler had a career-best quarterback rating with them in 2015. Gase joined Miami in 2016, and Cutler parted with Chicago in March after eight seasons.

Cutler, 34, drew little interest in the spring as a free agent, perhaps partly because of his prickly personality and tendency for turnovers.

"I guess I know a different guy than what everybody else portrays," Gase said in May, when Cutler was hired by Fox as an analyst to work on its No. 2 NFL team.

Tannehill, who missed the final four games of last season with two sprained ligaments in his knee, reinjured it a week into training camp Thursday. The damage is similar last year's injury, a person familiar with the diagnosis said, which has left the Dolphins consulting with specialists to determine whether surgery is the best option for Tannehill.

He's expected to be sidelined a minimum of six weeks, but the deal with Cutler signals the Dolphins anticipate Tannehill will need a lengthier recovery.

Cutler is 68-71 as a starter with a career quarterback rating of 85.7, 208 touchdown passes and 146 interceptions. Several NFL starting QBs are older, including New England's Tom Brady, who just turned 40.

Moore turns 33 next week and has 28 starts in 10 seasons. Last year he helped the Dolphins clinch their first postseason berth since 2008, going 2-1 as a starter to end the regular season before a first-round playoff loss at Pittsburgh.

Gase gave Moore only a tepid endorsement Friday, saying: "Right now Matt is our quarterback."

The Dolphins decided not to pursue Colin Kaepernick, who parted ways with the San Francisco 49ers in March and remains unsigned. Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem at games last season to protest police brutality, and there has been speculation he's unemployed because of his politics.

# Terrell Davis lauds Lincoln High, mother and father

By Kevin Acee

San Diego Union Tribune

August 7, 2017

Terrell Davis centered his Pro Football Hall of Fame acceptance speech on the message of setbacks and rising above them as he navigated his journey from Southeast San Diego to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

On a stage in front of a crowd thinned by a rain that started just before his turn at the dais, with more than 100 Hall of Famers seated on the stage behind him and his bronze bust beside him, Davis detailed his circuitous route from the Valencia Park Pop Warner and Lincoln High to two colleges and through an injury-shortened NFL career that culminated with him becoming one of 263 players in the Hall.

"It's amazing and surreal to be standing on this stage," he said at the start. "... Now I can say the overwhelming feeling running through my body today is gratitude."

Davis dedicated his speech to his mother, a nurse who worked double shifts while raising six sons, and his father, who died of Lupus when Davis was 12.

"There was one special person I was determined to prove myself to," Davis said. "That was my dad. My dad was tough on my brothers but tougher on me. I was the baby of the family and, yes, I was a crybaby. My dad didn't like the way my mother coddled me. I always felt he looked at me a little differently than he did my older brothers."

Davis recalled playing Pop Warner and immediately falling in love with the physicality of the game.

"I also convinced myself football provided me a way to gain my dad's approval by proving I was tough," he said.

Davis also recounted how he quit football at age 12 after his father, Joe, passed away.

"When he died, a part of me died," Davis said Saturday. "I went into a tailspin. I quit playing football. I was failing school. I was clearly a child in crisis. My daily ritual was hanging out with friends and getting in trouble."

He shared that at 14 he found himself staring down the barrel of a shotgun, after which he vowed to change his life.

"I transferred to Lincoln High School," Davis told the crowd. "I worked to get better grades. I joined the football team. Lincoln provided me the fresh start I needed. I want to thank my late coach, Vic Player for being a true role model. I want to thank all my teammates and teachers at Lincoln."

One of the greatest postseason performers in NFL history had a career that was as spectacular as it was truncated – and even more unlikely that it would end with him as one of 310 members of the Hall.

Davis played at Long Beach State until it folded its program and then struggled at Georgia. He was a sixth-round pick (196th overall) of the Denver Broncos but became their No.1 back by the season opener.

In Super Bowl XXXII at Qualcomm Stadium following the 1997 season, Davis ran for 157 yards and a Super Bowl-record three touchdowns and was named MVP in his hometown. The following year, he ran for 2,008 yards and was named regular season MVP.

After thanking former teammates and coaches, including Frank White, a Pop Warner coach who lived with Davis during his career with the Denver Broncos and remains a friend and adviser, Davis thanked his mother, Kateree, and wife, Tamiko.

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

# Broncos Film Room: Debunking the misconceptions about Siemian and Lynch

By Andre Simone  
BSN Denver  
August 7, 2017

There's no doubt that we have a legitimate quarterback battle brewing in the Mile High City, but it's also true that we've gotten lost in a false narrative that's taken over the discussion and clouded the truth. We're all guilty of it.

The Denver Broncos two young quarterbacks, Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch, aren't all that they're made out to be and that might just be a good thing.

Allow me to explain.

## **Trevor Siemian isn't a game manager**

The narrative that is furthest from the truth is that Siemian is simply a game manager with no flashy tools or upside.

His best success has come when he's thrown deep; see Week 3 at the Cincinnati Bengals and Week 12 against the Kansas City Chiefs or his best day in camp thus far.

Siemian never truly got a chance to show-off his arm in 2016, when teams only had to stop his outside receivers due to a revolving door at tight end and in the slot. Not to mention the offensive line's struggles in pass protection making deep throws virtually impossible to unfold. Add all that on top of the lacking run game, allowing defenses to key in on Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders with no repercussions.

Part of this misconception about Siemian's arm and accuracy is simply that he appears more accurate and smarter than Lynch because his transition has been smoother, but ball placement and accuracy have actually been an issue for Siemian in his NFL career. Consider that he's never had an above 60-percent completion rate all throughout college and his one season in the pros. It's clear when watching film that his ball placement and in particular throwing behind his receivers was one of his biggest issues in 2016 even on short-to-intermediate throws.

There's also a misconception about him being a safe thrower, which isn't supported by his interception numbers and how he could have had several more just last season. He also wasn't all that conservative at Northwestern throwing 24 career picks to only 27 touchdowns.

While everyone is talking about Lynch's athleticism, Trevor is more athletic than given credit for, showing some really nice skills throwing on the run and on scrambles.

The defining "false narrative" on Siemian is that he was drafted in the seventh round due to his game-managing skills. A hard narrative to buy considering he was never the full-time starter at Northwestern.

The reason he was drafted is that he looks the part with his ultra-quick release and already advanced footwork. He's got the size and the arm. He looks, plays, walks, and talks like a pro. So even though he wasn't the full-time starter on a fairly mediocre team, the Broncos took a chance on his tools and personality. That's what we call an upside pick, folks.

### **What's the real issue with Paxton?**

With Lynch being a highly touted first-rounder the misconceptions are more nuanced here. Sure, Lynch's best assets are his arm and his legs, all powered by his big frame, but he's not an inaccurate quarterback by any means.

In fact, the skill that stood out most and was most promising from his collegiate tape was Lynch's ability to make plays under duress – showing great poise in the pocket – and his accuracy on intermediate throws. Particularly throws over the underneath defender and right in front of the high defender covering over the top. Those are tough plays to make.

You see, Lynch's issue isn't accuracy at all, not his arm at least. His issue with staying consistently accurate is between the ears and below the belt. The first thing that you'll notice is that his ability to quickly process information and go through his reads is still catching up, which is to be expected, coming from a spread offense at Memphis. His accuracy is also affected by his footwork, another raw part of his game that still needs work with a much larger percentage of snaps under center as a Bronco.

Lynch is working on all that while also having to learn NFL language, learning two new playbooks in two seasons, calling plays from the huddle and having to memorize a lot more information than was ever required of him before.

All this requires patience, but it's also a talent that's hard to predict until you see the kid in the line of fire. Being able to read NFL defenses at NFL speed is a rare talent that very few people possess. If you want to monitor Paxton's progress in preseason or when you go to camp, watch his feet, watch how many reads he goes through in the pocket, see if he's holding onto the ball or keeping the offense in rhythm. His accuracy is a byproduct of all of that.

Much like Siemian's best day came when he made big plays deep, Lynch's best days came yes when he aired it out and ran it, but also when he was efficient in the red zone.

Lynch's big college breakout game came against Ole Miss when he handled pressure beautifully, making big plays throwing on the run while running away from pressure and while standing tough in the pocket. He has the poise and guts to make NFL plays against talented defenses; he just needs to catch up to the speed of the pro game and avoid mistakes.

Taking too much time in the pocket and speeding up his decision making is key for Paxton, especially as he learns a new offense and is trying to smoothen out his lower body mechanics.

### **What it means for the future**

There's still a whole bunch to work on for both of these quarterbacks, and the timing of it all could be tricky. Denver, of course, would prefer to figure out a long term solution sooner rather than later – or

establish that they don't have a solution so they can move on. Ultimately, consistency lies at the core for both, regardless of tools or big time upside.

Siemian's arm is more than good enough, but he also can't take all the risks he did in 2016. Cleaning up his decision making and ball placement will make or break him this season and beyond. With Lynch, it's a little more complex; he needs to first grow up as a football player. While the future remains bright for Lynch, who still has every necessary tool and more, there are mechanical issues that have to be overcome.

If it feels like things haven't always gone according to script in the quarterback competition maybe it's because the script is outdated.

This quarterback battle isn't of upside against playing it safe; it's a battle of two young quarterbacks who are far from perfect, but both have intriguing and different skill sets. Get behind who wins out and don't put any limits on their ceiling, you never know, they just might surprise you and turn into something special.