

Broncos QB Trevor Siemian says switch recently flipped, “like things were clicking for me”

By Nicki Jhabvala

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Trevor Siemian has been here before, looking ahead to a preseason game in his college town of Chicago, awaiting his first live opportunity to audition for the Broncos’ starting job. He knows the routine, knows the inherent pressure and has shown a knack for managing both.

But recently, something changed for him as he took more repetitions and saw more time in Mike McCoy’s system. As the offense got more complex in practice, Siemian appeared to hit his stride.

“I can’t tell exactly when, but probably a week or so I just kind of felt a little more comfortable, like things were clicking for me and I got a big-picture thought of how we’re trying to attack scheme and defenses,” Siemian said Tuesday. “I just felt comfortable ... getting going and also getting a feel for all the guys. First, second, third (team), it doesn’t matter — just getting a feel for how guys run, what they do well and I think we’re all in a good spot right now.”

Thursday, in the Broncos’ preseason opener against the Bears, Siemian will start and play approximately a quarter and a half before handing the keys to Paxton Lynch. In the Broncos’ second preseason game against the 49ers in Santa Clara, Calif., Lynch will start and Siemian will likely take over in the second quarter.

Preseason action, head coach Vance Joseph has emphasized, counts the most in this quarterback competition. But in the long term, McCoy is out to build an up tempo offense that’s “explosive” and does “whatever it takes to score as many points and score as fast as we can, week in and week out.”

After 11 days of training camp, Siemian said he has a good idea of the expectations.

“I think I got a feel for all of us,” he said. “We want to put pressure on the defense every snap, every play and that’s a common theme all over the place. It’s just how well we can do it. I think with the guys we have — the receivers, running backs and the way our offensive line is coming together, I think we have a good chance to do that.”

Vance Joseph lays out playing time, general plan for Broncos' preseason opener

By Nicki Jhabvala

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Broncos head coach Vance Joseph has a clear plan in place for how he intends to use his quarterbacks and starters in Thursday's preseason opener at Chicago.

The starting defense, including pass rusher Von Miller, will play a maximum of three series to begin the game.

"It depends on how it goes," Joseph said. "If they go out there and play a dominant series, they may play one. If they have a so-so series in the first and a better series in the second series, they'll only play two. But three max."

On offense, Trevor Siemian was named the starting quarterback vs. the Bears; Paxton Lynch was named the starter for the second preseason game against San Francisco. Each quarterback, Joseph said, will play about a quarter and a half.

Starting running back C.J. Anderson will follow the script of the defense and play a maximum of three series. Veteran Stevan Ridley, rookie De'Angelo Henderson and Juwan Thompson will finish out the game. Veteran Jamaal Charles, who took more reps in practice Tuesday as the team moved back outside, will not play in Chicago.

"We want to stay with the plan for Jamaal and just give him more and more reps as we go along," Joseph said. "Being inside (Monday), we didn't want him on the turf that much with his history. Back on the grass, we gave him more reps."

The starting offensive line Thursday will consist of Garrett Bolles at left tackle, Max Garcia at left guard, Connor McGovern at center, Ron Leary at right guard and Menelik Watson at right tackle. Matt Paradis, still easing his way back from two hip surgeries earlier this year, will not play.

Injury updates

Joseph said inside linebacker Todd Davis will not play in Thursday's preseason game because of the shoulder sprain that has kept him out of practices. Davis did not workout with the team Tuesday morning and Joseph said his availability in preseason could be limited because of the injury.

"His timeline, it's day-to-day," Joseph said. "It's more precautionary for Todd than a concern."

Corey Nelson will start with Davis sidelined.

"Corey is on the lines of (cornerback Bradley) Roby," Joseph said. "He's our third inside linebacker, our starting dime player. So, in my opinion, Corey is a starter. On most teams, Corey would be a starter. If he had to play for us, I would have no problem with Corey being the (regular-season) starter for us."

As for other injured or recovering players, running back Bernard Pierce (hamstring) did not practice Tuesday and safety T.J. Ward (hamstring) observed from the sideline. Joseph said Monday that Ward will not play Thursday.

Emergency plan

The Broncos opened Tuesday's practice by working on their contingency plans on special teams.

Defensive end Billy Winn stepped in as the emergency long snapper, Siemian took over for Riley Dixon as the emergency holder, and then Dixon dropped back as kicker. On punts, kicker Brandon McManus filled the emergency slot. McManus served as placekicker and punter and handled kickoffs while in college at Temple.

Footnotes

According to ESPN, quarterback Mike Glennon is expected to start Thursday's game in Chicago and will likely play a series or two. Mark Sanchez, a familiar face in Denver after last year's quarterback competition, and rookie Mitchell Trubisky will play the remainder of the game. ... Special teams coordinator Brock Olivo was asked if Miller could seriously return punts. "We could probably put Von back there alone," he said jokingly. "I don't think there's anything Von Miller can't do. He's a great dancer, too." ... Joseph said offensive coordinator Mike McCoy and defensive coordinator Joe Woods will wear headsets on the sideline.

Broncos' top pick Garrett Bolles moves closer to starting position

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
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Garrett Bolles has the deepest voice in the offensive line room at Broncos headquarters. He's the bass in a choir of grizzled baritones.

His rumbling vocals give him a presence. But it's his play during training camp that has given the team's top draft pick an opportunity to grab a starting position at left tackle.

Bolles, the No. 20 overall pick out of Utah, was listed at the top of the rotation at left tackle when the Broncos released their first depth chart Monday morning. It was not a major surprise given that Bolles has been the first left tackle to take repetitions with the first-team offense as part of rotation that also includes Donald Stephenson and Ty Sambrailo.

Still, it's an encouraging step for a player upon whom the Broncos placed sizable expectations as they began an overhaul of their offensive line for the second straight offseason.

"We've watched the spring and we've watched the first two weeks of training camp and he's played well. In my opinion, he's earned the right to start the game," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said of the team's preseason opener at Chicago on Thursday. "With that being said, we're still competing there with Donald and Ty. But he's played well enough to start Thursday night."

The game against the Bears doesn't only represent Bolles' first taste of NFL action. It will also be the first time he has attended an NFL game.

"I always get butterflies, but once the whistle blows, it's just a game," Bolles said. "I block everything out and I'm just ready to put people in the dirt."

Plan for Charles

Veteran running back Jamaal Charles will play for the Broncos at some point in the preseason. Joseph just isn't saying when the former Kansas City Chiefs star will take the field for the first time.

"We have a plan in place for Jamaal," Joseph said. "I won't reveal that yet, but he's going to play in the preseason."

Charles, listed as the third-team running back behind C.J. Anderson and the injured Devontae Booker on the team's initial depth chart, began fully participating in 11-on-11 drills at practice last week as he continues to work his way back from multiple knee surgeries over the past two seasons.

Davis, Ward out vs. Chicago

Inside linebacker Todd Davis (shoulder) and safety T.J. Ward (hamstring) will not play in Thursday's preseason game against the Bears, Joseph said Monday.

Offensive tackle Menelik Watson, who missed his second straight practice Monday with a hip issue, is expected to return to practice Tuesday and is likely to play Thursday, the coach said.

After circuitous route to NFL, Brendan Langley fighting for spot in Broncos secondary

By Nick Kosmider

Denver Post

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Being the highest NFL draft pick in the history of Lamar University is a cherished feat for Brendan Langley.

When the Broncos selected the cornerback in the third round of the draft in April (No. 101 overall), he immediately thought of those at the Football Championship Subdivision school who dotted the circuitous path to his dream.

And not just his teammates and coaches.

“Lamar’s done a lot for me, the university as a whole,” said Langley, who played his freshman season at the University of Georgia before transferring to the much smaller school in Beaumont, Texas. “It was down to the lunch ladies, the classroom teachers and everybody else. Lamar will always have a special place in my heart, and it means a lot to me to be the highest draft pick from there.”

Now, Langley is trying to put Lamar more prominently on the map as he fights for the fourth cornerback spot in the Broncos’ vaunted No-Fly Zone secondary. He was listed in that spot on the team’s initial depth chart, which was released Monday, though coach Vance Joseph said Langley and third-year player Lorenzo Doss are running virtually even.

“He’s growing,” Broncos defensive coordinator Joe Woods said of Langley. “The biggest thing for him is he has everything you want. He has the size and speed. We know he’s tough. The biggest thing for him is it’s a learning curve. We’re exposing him to different defenses than he ran in college. So for him, each day he gets a little bit better. I know from my experience of coaching guys like (Minnesota Vikings cornerback) Xavier Rhodes, same type of guy, each day he’s going to become a better player.”

Part of the learning curve is simply growing more comfortable as a cornerback. The switch to Lamar from the bright lights of the SEC — a fateful decision, Langley said, that centered on prayer — may not have been the most conventional path to the league, but it gave Langley the chance to return to his roots as a defensive back.

Langley was a highly rated cornerback coming out of high school in Marietta, Ga., but he struggled at the position during his freshman season with the Bulldogs. He switched to wide receiver and ultimately stayed at the position when he transferred to Lamar, a school that didn’t even have a football program from 1990 to 2009.

But Langley couldn’t crack a deep rotation at receiver and requested a move back to corner as a junior. The switch paid off. During his senior season, he intercepted six passes, returned two punts for touchdowns and earned an invitation to the Senior Bowl.

“It played a big role,” Langley said of switching back to defense at Lamar. “I mean, I’m here. I just need to be able to adapt to any situation, be able to play receiver, corner, returner or whatever they’d have me do. You’ve just got to be able to adapt and be ready for whatever they bring your way.”

The secondary remains the staple of a defense that has been the backbone of the team the last two seasons. Aqib Talib, Chris Harris and Bradley Roby make up perhaps the league’s top trio at cornerback. T.J. Ward and Darian Stewart are Pro Bowl safeties.

Yet the underrated aspect of Denver’s success in the secondary, Woods said, comes from the depth in the group. That extends from Will Parks and Justin Simmons at safety to Doss and others at cornerback.

Langley wants to add to that depth. There are still raw elements to his game. Woods said playing FCS football gave a player of Langley’s talent the opportunity to make plays simply on instinct and sheer athleticism. In the NFL, his success is dependent upon learning defensive schemes well enough to play at a high speed.

“When you don’t run a lot of scheme in college and you’re exposed to a lot of different schemes in the NFL, it takes you time to learn it, and that’s where he’s at right now,” Woods said. “Right now, they are battling. Doss is making a lot of plays, Langley is coming along. It’s just a matter of evaluating those guys.”

This will not be your typical Broncos preseason game

By Rod Mackey

9 News

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The preseason may look a little different than we've seen in the past. Broncos Head Coach Vance Joseph looks at things a differently and wants his team to look good, or at least be prepared.

"If you want the guys to play their best on Thursday, you can't put them out there without having a game plan, some sort of game plan," Joseph said. "I want to give them a chance to play well. I've been around coaches who, the first game in preseason, they went training camp up until the day before. When you give the guys one day to prepare, I don't believe in that. I want to give them a chance to play their best football. Having a chance to see Chicago schemes two days (before) would help the guys play better. It would give them a chance to put their best foot forward, and not let guys go out there and be surprised by something they've never seen and not play well. In my opinion, it's fair for the players to dive into it a day before to give them the chance to play well."

The exhibition games might as well look different since training camp does. The new rules making sure those killer two a days are a thing of the past.

"Why is this style better?" asked Joseph. "Well, the CBA says it's better (laughing). That's not my thing. It was brought on by the owners and players. That's what they chose to do. If everyone is doing it, guess what? It's fair. If it's tough, if it's not tough, everyone is doing the same camp. In my opinion, it's not bad at all. It's a long season and to wear your players out during training camp makes no sense. It's different than when you played and when I played. We know who's going to be on our roster for the most part. We're making 15 decisions. It's a different league. We're coaching different. We're playing different. It's a different league."

Joseph had already announced that quarterback Trevor Siemian would start against the Bears, but today the head coach gave more details on how long they would each play.

"We're going to play those guys, the quarterbacks, probably a quarter or a quarter and a half, max. Each get a quarter and a half—no more than a quarter and a half—probably a quarter. It depends on how the game is going. The average plays per quarters in preseason are 15-16 plays. We want to get those guys probably a little bit more than that so we can have a fair evaluation there. But max, a quarter and a half."

"I think preseason, especially these first couple of games, you're focused on yourself and kind of what you do well and your scheme," Siemian said. "There's a little bit of game plan, but it's not like a normal game week yet. We're focused on what we do well. A little game plan stuff again, but it's more about us."

"I've always expected the games to kind of be the opportunity to show what you've learned out here practice. Also, I think it'll be good for our group as a whole—the offense—to go out there against somebody other than our defense that we've been going up against every day. I think everybody is excited about it and ready to go," quarterback Paxton Lynch said.

Broncos rookie class has started to assert itself

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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In the hours after the Denver Broncos closed out the NFL draft by selecting quarterback Chad Kelly with the last pick of the three-day affair, the team's football decision-maker, John Elway, had a bit of a prediction about the team's newest class of rookies.

"I like this group," Elway said at the time. "I like our roster and we don't have that much room, but I think this group could get in there and have some impact."

Most teams' personnel executives say similar things in the aftermath of draft weekend, but the Broncos' rookie class has some players who have already worked their way into the mix heading into their first preseason game.

Start with wide receiver Isaiah McKenzie, who technically became the first rookie to earn a starting job when coach Vance Joseph declared him the team's punt returner before McKenzie had actually caught a punt in an NFL game. But the fifth-round pick is a speedster who's made it clear in training camp thus far that he is the best player for the job.

That's barring a total meltdown in the four preseason games starting with Thursday night's opener in Chicago, as Joseph has already said McKenzie would return punts in the Sept. 11 regular-season opener against the Los Angeles Chargers.

"We vetted him throughout training camp; he's done a good job of catching the ball, he's a very confident young man," Broncos special teams coordinator Brock Olivo said. "... Both Vance [Joseph] and I decided, 'Let's throw him in the fire, let's see what he's made of.' Obviously he hasn't caught a punt in a game yet and that's a whole different animal, but we've got to see what the kid is made of, so we're going to roll with him."

First-round pick Garrett Bolles hasn't been officially awarded the left tackle job but seems well on his way, having taken plenty of snaps with the starters throughout training camp. Bolles will also be in the starting lineup against the Bears on Thursday.

He was formally listed as a starter on the first depth chart the Broncos released this past week, but Bolles said he'll believe it when he lines up against the Chargers and not before then -- that until Week 1, "it's a name on a piece of paper."

Also, with the injuries the Broncos have had at outside linebacker -- both Shane Ray (wrist) and Shaquil Barrett (hip) are not expected back in the lineup until after the start of the regular season -- DeMarcus Walker has gone from a second-round pick the Broncos believed could play at defensive end and defensive tackle in some pass-rush situations to now also playing outside linebacker.

Walker has worked plenty at outside linebacker in recent practices, and the Broncos would like to see how he handles the additional responsibilities against the Bears. Linebacker Von Miller has helped Walker along the way and has said Walker "can play linebacker, no doubt."

"It's whatever the coaches want me to do, to be honest with you," Walker said. "I'm just here to help try win a Super Bowl, so whatever Coach Joseph or Coach [Joe] Woods wants me to do, I'll do it."

Because Jamaal Charles will not play against the Bears and Devontae Booker is still recovering from surgery to repair a fractured bone in his left wrist, fifth-round pick De'Angelo Henderson is expected to get a selection of snaps at running back.

Henderson has flashed plenty of speed and decisiveness with the ball as he pushes hard to force the Broncos to keep an extra running back when the roster goes to 53 players. Wide receiver Carlos Henderson (third round) and cornerback Brendan Langley (third round) could see the field as early as the second quarter, too.

Langley is pushing to be the team's fourth cornerback -- he was listed ahead of Lorenzo Doss on the depth chart earlier this week, but Joseph said that decision is far from made.

Look fast, you just might see Von Miller do special (team) things

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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There are moments in most of the Denver Broncos' practices when you might see do-it-all linebacker Von Miller suddenly appear behind a punt returner or running down the field with the scout team on a kickoff return.

Yes, Miller needs something to do when he's not dancing, revving up the crowd or generally playing like one of the league's best defensive players from snap to whistle, so he asked special teams coordinator Brock Olivo if it would be all right if he took a few turns in Olivo's drills from time to time.

The five-time Pro Bowl selection is often seen sprinting through kicking drills, though there aren't many scenarios where the Broncos would use Miller in such a capacity during a game. But Olivo likes the idea of one of the league's marquee players broadening his practice horizons.

"I love the fact he comes out and jumps in our drills," Olivo said. "That's great for team morale, great for the young guys to see -- Von Miller jumping in and running down on scout kickoff team.

"He brings a whole other energy to it. He's serious about it; he came up to me at the beginning of camp and said, 'Coach, I hope you don't mind, I want to get in some of your drills.' He does it for conditioning, but he also does it because he knows what he brings to the guys -- he gets that."

Miller has often joked about convincing the Broncos coaches that he could set up and throw as a quarterback or catch a punt.

"I think I could stand back there and make a catch, maybe give a move or two," Miller said. "I know those guys like Isaiah [McKenzie] got it handled, but I like getting in there with those guys."

Olivo was asked Tuesday if Miller could catch a punt in a game in the unlikely event it was ever necessary.

"Von could probably do it -- don't think there's anything Von can't do," Olivo said. "We could probably put Von back there alone ... I'm exaggerating, but I don't think there is anything Von Miller can't do if he puts his mind to it."

'Games matter' for QB candidates Trevor Siemian, Paxton Lynch

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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Quarterbacks Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch have certainly been graded on what they've done so far in Denver Broncos training camp.

But they get their first big exam in Thursday night's preseason opener in Chicago. Because understanding the playbook, limiting mistakes, showing leadership as well as work ethic are all on the to-do list, coach Vance Joseph has been clear about how he will decide on a starting quarterback.

"And the games matter," Joseph said. " ... I've said I want to get to the games so we can get to the bottom of this."

Siemian, who will open the game with the starting offense against the Bears, likely goes into Thursday night having built a lead for the job for the second consecutive training camp. However, Joseph has already said Lynch will start the second preseason game -- Aug. 19 against the San Francisco 49ers -- and both quarterbacks will have to navigate two days' worth of joint practices against the 49ers next week in Santa Clara, California.

Joseph has consistently emphasized he wants a "fair assessment," so he has tried to keep all things equal in practice. He said he will give each of them a quarter to a quarter and a half of playing time in preseason games.

"The average plays per quarter in the preseason is probably 15, 16 plays," Joseph said. "We want to get those guys probably a little more than that just to give them a fair evaluation."

As the Broncos' offensive coaches have piled more and more of the playbook on the quarterbacks' plates, Siemian has been the more steady of the two in the last week, while Lynch had a spate of turnovers across several consecutive practices before he evened things out some Monday and Tuesday.

Both quarterbacks have found some tough football sledding against the Broncos' defensive starters, a group that includes four defensive backs who've been to the Pro Bowl over the last two seasons to go with a five-time Pro Bowl selection in Von Miller.

Siemian and Lynch almost expressed some relief in recent days about going against somebody else's defense.

"I've always expected the games to be kind of the opportunity to show what you've learned out here at practice," Lynch said. "... I think everybody's excited about it, ready to go. ... Big thing for me just moving the ball up and down the field when I'm in, executing the plays."

"Focus on my job, do my best to move the offense and put some points on the board," Siemian said. "... I just look at it like I'm just glad we're not playing our guys ... it's a pain in the butt throwing against Chris [Harris Jr.], [Aqib] Talib, all those guys, all the time."

Siemian was the second quarterback to play in the preseason opener a year ago in Chicago -- he followed Mark Sanchez -- and went on to win a three-way battle for the starting job over Sanchez and Lynch. Asked Tuesday if he had felt any additional pressure in this training camp given he came into a quarterback competition this time around with 14 starts on his résumé and understood what it would mean to win the job.

"I don't think so, shoot, they haven't fired me yet," Siemian said with a smile. "I'm all right."

The two quarterbacks know no decision will be made until after the second preseason game at the soonest. And Joseph has said previously that while he didn't have a formal deadline for a decision, he has said naming a starter by the Aug. 26 preseason game against the Green Bay Packers would be "ideal."

Quarterbacks steady in game prep for preseason opener

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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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

Both quarterbacks got a little more room to breathe in Tuesday's practice since the Broncos used the day to prepare for Thursday night's preseason opener in Chicago. That meant the quarterbacks were going against a scout team defense that was being shown the formation just before the snap and then trying to play it. The result was the throwing lanes were far roomier for both than they have been against the Broncos' regular defense.

Wow moment: Siemian opened with the starters since he will start Thursday night against the Bears. Even though the offense worked in a shorter field for much of the day, one of Siemian's best throws came over the middle to Emmanuel Sanders for a catch-and-run play that likely would have ended with a touchdown.

Whoa moment: It was a game prep day and both quarterbacks were steady and enjoyed the change of pace from facing a Broncos defense that largely knew what was coming. Siemian had no major mistakes with the ball in the workout.

Paxton Lynch

Lynch worked with the second-team offense for the most part in team drills. He showed a better rhythm going against a scout team defense than he had in recent days when he had struggled with interceptions.

Wow moment: He showed some quality touch early in the workout when he dropped a ball to wide receiver Jordan Taylor in the left corner of the end zone.

Whoa moment: Like Siemian, he was steady and avoided major mistakes in the practice. He is expected to play a quarter or slightly more against the Bears.

Both Broncos QBs have chance to close in upcoming days

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
August 9, 2017

Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch both get to show off their closing skills now.

Siemian can close out the Denver Broncos' QB competition this week and next.

Lynch can close in on Siemian in exhibition games at Chicago and San Francisco sandwiched around a pair of practices with the 49ers.

While offensive coordinator Mike McCoy said everything is being factored into the equation, from questions the two QBs ask in the film room to the way they led the team at practice over the first 11 days of training camp, "you really look at the games."

After a slow start, Siemian started to separate himself from Lynch over the last week as he strung together better decisions, coverage reads and pinpoint throws while Lynch struggled to find both consistency and his receivers and kept making mistakes, like throwing the ball away on fourth down when Emmanuel Sanders was covered in the end zone.

Siemian will start Thursday night against the Bears and play up to a quarter and a half. Paxton, who will start against the 49ers, will get the next quarter and a half and undrafted rookie Kyle Sloter will finish up.

That's more work than front-line starting QBs usually get in the first exhibition games but coach Vance Joseph wants to get a bigger sample size of his quarterbacks' work under pressure.

"I just look at it as I'm glad we're not playing our guys," Siemian said Tuesday. "So, it'll be good to play against a different group. Hopefully, Paxton and I can find a little rhythm."

Both quarterbacks have had a tough time getting into a good groove while learning McCoy's new offensive scheme and facing a defense led by All-Pros Chris Harris Jr., Aqib Talib and Von Miller.

"Golly, it's a pain in the butt throwing against Chris, Talib, all those guys, all the time," said Siemian, who nonetheless has started to tighten his grip on the starting job.

"Probably a week or so (ago) I just felt a little more comfortable, like things were clicking for me and I got a big-picture thought of how we're trying to attack scheme and defenses," Siemian said, adding he's also getting a better feel for his receivers. "I think we're all in a good spot right now."

Lynch is, too, considering that Joseph insisted this week that the competition is only heating up with the onset of preseason games.

After starting out training camp strong, Lynch began making more and more mistakes with each new wrinkle the staff installed on offense.

McCoy, however, noted that sometimes it's easy to fault the quarterback when it's actually a receiver who bungled things, and while "it may not always look perfect ... I'm very pleased with the way our quarterbacks are growing in our system."

These first two preseason games will provide Lynch with a more bite-sized portion of the playbook, too.

"Now that we're about to play a team and actually game plan a little bit for them, it kind of cuts it down and you can focus in on a little more specific stuff," Lynch said.

Notes: RB Jamaal Charles, C Matt Paradis and ILB Todd Davis (shoulder) won't play at Chicago. ... Joseph said both his coordinators will work the sideline with him this season rather than call plays from the booth. ... While rookie Isaiah McKenzie has already won the punt return job, the kick return job is up for grabs and Cody Latimer gets first crack, said special teams coordinator Brock Olivo.

Broncos quarterbacks look for explosive plays in roughly 16 plays of work

By Troy Renck
KMGH
August 9, 2017

Gentleman, start your evaluations.

The Broncos quarterbacks face their biggest test to date in the preseason opener Thursday at Chicago. Trevor Siemian will start, followed by Paxton Lynch. They will receive roughly 16 plays -- a quarter to a quarter and a half -- to state their initial case. Games matter, coach Vance Joseph reminded the media Tuesday. So while Siemian sits firmly in the lead -- my observation -- after becoming admittedly more comfortable with the offense a week ago, he has not secured the position. Lynch trails, but has not lost the job either, though time is shrinking for him to make a push.

"I am focusing on my job, moving offense, and putting points on the board," Siemian said. "I just look at as I am just glad we are not playing our guys. I don't think (there's more pressure this year). They haven't fired me yet, so I think I am all right."

As the playbook has grown and pads have gone on, Siemian became more comfortable. He admitted he has a better read on the personnel and how the scheme fits in the big picture. The Broncos will play the match up game each week, as is common in the NFL, but offensive coordinator Mike McCoy wants an uptempo, explosive attack. Those are words I never wrote in the same sentence as the Broncos' offense last year.

That means McCoy seeks multiple big plays in excess of 15 yards in the passing game and 10-to-12 yards on the ground.

Siemian will work with the following line, with some first-teamers staying in the game when Lynch enters: left tackle Garrett Bolles, left guard Max Garcia, center Connor McGovern (Matt Paradis is being eased back into the flow following hip surgeries), right guard Ron Leary and right tackle Menelik Watson. C.J. Anderson anchors the running back position.

The quarterbacks have been advised to "let it go in the game." The coaches want aggression that makes the defense uncomfortable. For Lynch, this represents a time for his athleticism to show out. If he shows up enough off script, perhaps an argument could be advanced to tailor a playbook to his strengths. But improvement is necessary after falling behind.

"I have always felt that games are a time to show what you have learned in practice. I think it will be good for us as a group a whole. The big thing for me is moving the ball up and down the field," Lynch said. "I can't make it about me. It's about the how the offense does."

Broncos wide receiver to tout CenturyLink in TV/radio ads, online

By Ben Miller
Denver Business Journal
August 9, 2017

A Denver Broncos wide receiver will soon be seen touting CenturyLink in television and radio ads, as well as in online promotions.

Emmanuel Sanders, who's been in the NFL for eight years and with the Broncos for the past three years, has been signed by the Louisiana-based telecomm (NYSE: CTL) for an undisclosed sum.

" Emmanuel Sanders is a fan favorite and we're happy to have him on board to help promote CenturyLink as well as build momentum for the upcoming Denver Broncos season," said Matt Rotter, CenturyLink Mountain West region president, in a statement.

Sanders replaces Broncos' middle linebacker Brandon Marshall as the CenturyLink Bronco spokesman.

Marshall lost his CenturyLink endorsement deal last year after he joined with other NFL players in a protest during the playing of the National Anthem.

Broncos Training Camp Day 11 Takeaways: Trevor Siemian starting to feel offense 'clicking' for him

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
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The offense isn't where anyone wants it to be just yet. But when it comes to his own comfort level in it, Trevor Siemian feels like he's reached a positive turning point.

"I can't tell exactly when, but probably a week or so [ago] I just kind of felt a little more comfortable and things were clicking for me," he said after practice Tuesday.

"I got a big-picture thought of how we were trying to attack scheme and defenses. I've just felt comfortable probably that last week getting going and also getting a feel for all of the guys. First or second group, it doesn't matter. It's just getting the feel for how guys run and what they do well. I think we're all in a good spot right now."

Comfort is the first step. Figuring out the strengths of the offense is the next -- and that should come with work against other teams.

"I think when you play against other teams you solidify what you think," Siemian said. "It'll be good to play against the Bears and once we get going here, getting these live reps. There's been some really good things.

'We've had a really competitive camp and we're fortunate to go against our defense. Because golly, it's a pain in the butt throwing against Chris [Harris Jr.], [Aqib] Talib and all those guys all of the time. I think we're in a really good place.'

1. THE PLACE FOR MIKE McCOY: ON THE SIDELINE

Denver's offensive coordinator will make his game-day play calls from the bench, not from the press box. He's learned via experience that he works better from the sideline, because he prefers to communicate face-to-face with his players.

"One year I was [upstairs] and I didn't like it," he said. "I prefer to be down on the field just to be involved in everything when the players come in.

"I like to interact with all of the players, you can look in their eyes sometimes if you're struggling as an offense or something, or you have someone like [former guard] Chris Kuper back in the day who's always coming [to me] saying, 'Hey, I flat-out whiffed, call it again' -- things like that. [I can] really kind of let them know first-hand what the start of the series is going to be, possibly what we might do in the red area and really just interact with the players the entire game.

2. McCOY: 'I WANT TO HAVE AN EXPLOSIVE OFFENSE'

It's not about emphasizing the pass over the run, or vice versa. But one way or another, McCoy wants an offense that is far more capable of explosive plays than last year's offense, which averaged one play of 20 or more yards every 23.2 plays, the third-lowest rate in the league.

McCoy's San Diego Chargers offense ranked seventh in the same category, breaking off a gain of 20 or more yards once every 15.5 plays.

"I'll want to have an explosive offense. Explosive plays are going to be big in our system whether it's in the passing game or explosive runs," he said.

Downfield blocking will be crucial to making the explosive runs happen, McCoy said.

"I think the thing that's going to allow us to have explosive runs is the way the line is played -- but not just the line but the way the receivers are blocked. They're been very unselfish," McCoy said. "[Wide Receivers Coach] Tyke's [Tolbert] done a phenomenal job with the receivers and the running game.

"I think as you watch the practice, the commitment they have, the blocking, and they understand that the guys up front are going to block their tails off for the passing game."

3. WALKER SEEKS OUT EXTRA COACHING ON COVERAGE:

If DeMarcus Walker is to succeed as an outside linebacker, he'll have to be able to handle his share of work dropping back in pass coverage -- which is likely to be the most difficult aspect of his at-least-temporary transition from defensive end to outside linebacker.

"I'm getting better every single day," Walker said. "I'm taking down a lot of notes and a doing a lot of film study. These vets are doing a great job of coaching me up. Even Talib, and he's not even an outside linebacker and he was telling me his responsibilities and why I have to take in everything."

Still, you don't see many players of 280 or more pounds dropping into coverage -- even ones as mobile and lithe for their size as Walker.

"He's a big man," Defensive Coordinator Joe Woods said. "When you look at him, he's really developed and he has a lot of lower body power but he's nifty. He has a little bit of quickness. You see him go through drills. You see the power on his lower body. We put him in a situation where he had to go out and cover and he's done a good job."

4. COREY NELSON IS SEEN AS A STARTER

While ILB Todd Davis recovers from a sprained shoulder, Nelson has handled first-team work. It's not a stretch for Nelson, who started five games last year while Brandon Marshall dealt with injuries and has a role in various sub packages.

"Corey is on the lines with [CB Bradley] Roby. He's our third inside linebacker -- our starting dime player in sub," Head Coach Vance Joseph said. "In my opinion, Corey is a starter.

"On most teams, Corey would be a starter. If he had to play for us, I would have no problem with Corey being a starter for us. He has a huge role for us on defense. Obviously for [Special Teams Coordinator] Brock [Olivo], he's a full core [special-teams] player for Brock. He's a valuable part of our team."

Broncos Training Camp Quick Hits: Day 11

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
August 9, 2017

For the first time in training camp, the Broncos practiced with an eye on game-day preparation.

Instead of the first-team offense going against the No. 1 defense, the top offense faced a scout-team defense. The tenor and energy was different.

"Today's practice started a little slow," Head Coach Vance Joseph said. "It was a different mindset -- a little more into game tempo. We had helmets. For the first time all year, it [the script] was on cards, so the mindset kind of shifted.

"But we stopped it and started over and got back to our mindset. I don't want our mindset to change during game week. I want the same intensity and the same effort and the same response when we play."

... Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch are each expected to receive a maximum of a quarter and a half of work, with the rest of the snaps going to third-teamer Kyle Sloter.

"Probably a quarter," Joseph said. "It depends on how the game's going. The average plays per quarter in the preseason is about 15 to 16 plays. So we want to get those guys a little bit more than that so we can have a fair evaluation."

... Red-zone work was the primary point of emphasis Tuesday, with all three quarterbacks throwing multiple touchdown passes. Siemian opened a goal-to-go period by hitting Emmanuel Sanders and A.J. Derby. In the same period, Lynch started at the 28-yard line and drove the offense to the end zone, hitting Derby for 13 yards and then finding Cody Latimer for a touchdown on a post route.

... Special-teams work took on a different feel Tuesday as the Broncos worked on their emergency placekicking plans, which involve DE Billy Winn as the long snapper, QB Trevor Siemian as the holder and P Riley Dixon as the placekicker.

"We're fortunate to have Trevor, because he's good at it. You can trust him. He'll take control of the situation, just like a good quarterback does," Olivo said.

Olivo said that Winn volunteered to handle emergency snaps. He and Siemian were the first players on the field for practice to practice snapping; they were quickly joined by regular long snapper Casey Kreiter, who simulated placekicking while their teammates arrived for the day's work.

"Billy looks good [at snapping], he really does," Olivo said. "He's big, strong. He'll get in there. He's accurate enough. He'll keep working on it. We've been using Billy as the backup snapper on punts, as well. He'll be in the bullpen when asked."

... Practice got a bit testy during the one-on-one drills between the offensive and defensive linemen, as Adam Gotsis and Allen Barbre got into a scuffle during the period. Ty Sambrailo and DeMarcus Walker also briefly mixed it up.

PARTICIPATION REPORT:

... RT Menelik Watson returned to practice after missing the previous two days with a muscle strain. He is expected to play Thursday.

... RG Ron Leary (groin) and C Matt Paradis (offseason hip surgeries) continued splitting first-team repetitions as they work their way back to full strength following their injuries. Paradis will not play against the Bears, but Leary will.

... ILB Todd Davis was in uniform Tuesday, but he will not play against the Bears because of a sprained shoulder. "His timeline is day-to-day," said Joseph, who added that Davis' absence Thursday "is more precautionary" in nature. Joseph added that he expects Davis to play "some" in the preseason, depending on the progress of his recovery.

... S T.J. Ward remained sidelined because of a hamstring injury. He will not play against the Bears. Justin Simmons is expected to start in his place.

... CB Dontrell Nelson did not practice.

... RB Bernard Pierce was sidelined because of a hamstring injury.

... RB Jamaal Charles saw extensive work Tuesday after being held out of practice Monday. "Being inside with the turf day, we didn't want him on the turf that much [Monday]," Joseph said.

WEATHER REPORT: After working inside the Pat Bowlen Fieldhouse, the Broncos went back outside Tuesday, working under partly cloudy skies. Temperatures remained between 60°F and 68°F during the practice.

ATTENDANCE: 4,344.

Isaiah McKenzie doesn't care if you call him small, he'll just run by you

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
August 9, 2017

Just in case the 5-foot-7 Isaiah McKenzie didn't remember that he's not quite the size of an average NFL player, his teammates have graciously taken on the responsibility of reminding him.

Von Miller, who calls McKenzie "little crawfish," is just one of the helpful guys in the locker room.

"It's an everyday thing," McKenzie said. "[WR Emmanuel Sanders] 'E' and all of them say, 'You're tiny.' Even the short guys that are on the team say, 'You're small.' I'm like, 'What?'"

"I take heed to it, and I'm just like you know what, I'm small, whatever — I can run though."

Run, he can. And catch. And juke.

Those skills led Head Coach Vance Joseph to name him the starting punt returner after Monday's practice.

And it's that last line of McKenzie's retort — the one that echoes unbridled confidence — that impresses Special Teams Coordinator Brock Olivo.

The fifth-round pick showed Olivo that mentality throughout training camp as he did enough to start as a rookie.

"We drafted him to be the punt returner, and we vetted him throughout training camp," Olivo said of the decision. "He's done a good job catching the ball. He's a very confident young man; you guys know that from speaking with him. Both Vance and I decided, let's throw him in the fire. Let's see what he's made of."

"Obviously he hasn't caught a punt in a game yet, and that's a whole other animal, but we've got to see what the kid's made of, so we're going to roll with him."

McKenzie's first opportunity for game action will come Thursday against the Chicago Bears. His six punt return touchdowns at Georgia will give way to a blank NFL slate, and he'll need to again make a name for himself.

With gunners flying down the field at him — and without the reassurance they'll pull up — McKenzie will receive his first real taste of the NFL game.

His post-practice work can only help so much, but it has been impressive in its scope. Nearly every day, McKenzie has remained on the field to catch more punts and work on his mechanics.

None of that has surprised Olivo.

“After speaking with Isaiah on the phone the first time and throughout the offseason, you can see the kid has a lot of determination,” Olivo said. “And he plays a lot bigger than he is. And that’s what you love in a player like that. His ability to put in the extra time afterward to become the best catcher that he can become.”

Even Sunday, as his teammates cherished their second off day since the beginning of training camp, McKenzie made his way back to UCHealth Training Center.

“He came up on Sunday, on the players' day off, and watched film with me when he could have easily taken the day off and lounged around,” Olivo said. “He took time to come up here and watch punt returns. We watched old film from last season, NFL film [of] punt returns. He wants to be really, really good. I love that about him. So we’re going to roll with him.”

That film study featured a healthy dose of Kansas City’s Tyreek Hill, whom Olivo called the standard for punt returners.

As a rookie, Hill averaged 15.2 yards per punt return and scored two touchdowns. He added another touchdown on a kick return.

Hill may also represent what McKenzie could someday bring to the Broncos’ offense. In addition to his special-teams prowess, Hill scored six rushing touchdowns and three rushing touchdowns. Better yet for the Chiefs offense, Hill was explosive; He averaged 11.1 yards per carry and took a 70-yard run to the house.

While McKenzie’s straight-line speed doesn’t quite match up with Hill’s, the Georgia product’s 3-cone time was second-best among wide receivers at this year’s Combine and speaks to his agility.

He’ll hope to show that agility off Thursday as a starter on special teams and with the reserve offense.

“That was my first goal, making the team,” McKenzie said. “I told everybody that when I got here. Being drafted in the fifth round is not easy, but I have to come out here every day and do my job as well, just like everybody else.”

So far, so good, but the real test has yet to begin.

Come Thursday, the little crawfish is going to enter a very big river.

David Bruton Jr. finds peace on road away from football, toward becoming physical therapist

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
August 9, 2017

For three months, David Bruton Jr.'s classmate in biology lab didn't recognize the former NFL player.

They went to class each week at the University of Colorado Denver, and the guy never asked Bruton if he was a Super Bowl 50 champion or three-time NFL captain.

Then Bruton cut off his dreadlocks. Suddenly his hair was in stark contrast to the way he wore it while with the Broncos.

And that's when his classmate approached.

"[He] came up to me and was like, 'David, do you have a cousin who plays for the Broncos?'" Bruton said Monday. "I was like, 'What do you mean?'"

"He goes back to his table, grabs his computer, opens it up. ... He opens it up and shows a picture of me and him at this event at Sports Authority [Field at Mile High]. And I was like, 'Man, that's me.'"

The classmate had to be convinced. He still hardly recognized Bruton, who played seven years with the Broncos.

And perhaps it makes sense he didn't recognize the former safety and special teams weapon -- because David Bruton Jr. is carving out an entirely new path.

Understand this: Bruton thinks he can still play football in the NFL.

He looked out at the Broncos' practice Monday and estimated he's still faster than 90 percent of the players on the field.

Can he still backpedal? Can he still run?

Yes, is his definitive answer.

Whether that's factual is anyone's guess, but Bruton believes if he got back in the gym, he could still find a role on this team.

When he has a lab report due, though, workouts have to take a backseat.

That's just how it goes when you're taking prerequisite classes for physical therapy school and shadowing the Broncos' training staff.

Bruton, who retired in late July after weighing the health risks, is starting this next chapter of his career at the University of Colorado Denver.

And as he does, the Broncos made sure to end the previous one the right way. Bruton may have spent his last season in Washington, but Broncos President and CEO Joe Ellis recognized the three-time captain Thursday with a framed Broncos jersey.

"It means the world to me," Bruton said. "It means more than Super Bowl 50. It means more to me than that. And it's not because I didn't play. It's not because of anything, because I did a lot for us to get there. I played a lot, I helped a lot, I still coached a lot even when I got hurt. But just to see the organization's appreciation for me, that speaks volumes.

"It's great to have a Super Bowl ring and a trophy and be able to kiss the trophy and this, that and the other, but not many guys are presented such gestures and appreciation as I was. And I definitely am extremely grateful that the Broncos see me fit for such a gift."

When's the last time you heard that?

When's the last time you heard a player -- on any team -- admit a Lombardi trophy had been upstaged?

That's the way Bruton feels about this organization, and he said Monday he wished he'd never left for Washington.

"To this day, like, man, if I'd just stayed in orange and blue," Bruton said, trailing off.

But then consider Bruton has moved past football, even though he said the chills he felt Monday wouldn't let him completely dismiss his passion for the game.

He's found peace with his decision to reenter school and begin his road toward becoming a physical therapist.

He's wanted to take this path for some time now. Bruton said he's always been fascinated by the amount of work it takes to get the human body to perform, but his interest may have grown a bit due to his own unfortunate luck.

"I saw it a lot as a player," Bruton said, laughing. "Especially early in my career, I saw the training room a lot."

As he watched Director of Sports Medicine Steve "Greek" Antonopoulos during his time with the Broncos, that appreciation only grew.

During his playing career, Bruton was already getting a crash course from Antonopoulos in sports medicine. Bruton's training has intensified in the previous few weeks, and there was more to learn than just the various parts of the body and how to use the recovery machines.

That's not to say those basics aren't important, but Bruton has been exposed to more integral lessons during his shadowing process.

“It’s definitely been something that’s been eye-opening and makes me realize that this is what I want to do,” Bruton said. “It’s not just the physical sense of things. It’s also the emotional and psychological approach to a certain guy, because each guy is different in how they respond to a certain exercise. You might have to tailor your gameplan just a little bit.

“That’s something that I can do well – adjust. Because I’ve had to do that for years on years on years.”

His first day of class at UC Denver required that same type of flexibility.

Bruton hadn’t taken a science class since junior year of high school -- and he was struck by how little he knew as he pulled out his notebook and pen.

“Honestly, that first month was like a foreign language to me because I haven’t seen science in so long,” Bruton said. “All I’d seen was X’s and O’s and players on tape and studying individual players, so it definitely was a learning curve for me, and I had to take advantage of some classmates who’d been through school for a while or were going back for a second degree and just using the resources there at school to help me get a feel, get into the groove and then flourish when I got my bearings right.”

“Learning curve” doesn’t seem to do Bruton’s challenge justice, but his long-instilled disposition to work hard led him to remain in school.

In his eyes, there’s just no other option.

“I don’t foresee myself not becoming a P.T.,” Bruton said. “I see myself being Dr. Bruton and having that doctorate, and telling my mom, ‘Don’t call me son, call me doctor.’”

He’s joking, of course. But his vision for his future is clear, and it doesn’t necessarily end in the professional or collegiate ranks.

Bruton said he hopes to work with Colorado’s general public, which appeals to him because of the number of amateur and former professional athletes in that group.

When that day comes — when David Bruton Jr. becomes Dr. David Bruton Jr. — he will have to leave the Broncos again.

And this time, he’ll know he made the right decision.

Broncos receiver Hunter Sharp experienced highlights, and a lowlight, against Air Force

By Brent Briggeman
Colorado Springs Gazette
August 9, 2017

Hunter Sharp took a moment after a Denver Broncos practice this week to reflect on the unpleasant memories he carries from his last football game in the state of Colorado.

Sharp had enjoyed a career day at Air Force, catching 13 passes for 193 yards and three touchdowns for Utah State. But Aggies quarterback Kent Myers looked elsewhere on the final two passes, including a fourth-down attempt with 47 seconds remaining that was broken up by Weston Steelhammer. Air Force escaped with a 35-28 victory.

“I wanted the ball on the last play so bad,” Sharp said. “The quarterback threw it to the wrong spot.

“But, yeah, that was my best game.”

In Sharp’s two seasons at Utah State he passed 150 receiving yards in three games. Two of those came against Air Force, as he averaged 12.5 catches for 178.5 yards and 2.5 touchdowns in those games.

Sharp signed with the Broncos in December as a practice squad player. He spent the 2016 offseason with Philadelphia as an undrafted rookie but reached an injury settlement with the Eagles just before the beginning of the regular season.

Mountain West well-represented at Broncos training camp

By Brent Briggeman
Colorado Springs Gazette
August 9, 2017

One out of every 11 players in Broncos training camp has something in common – they played at schools currently in the Mountain West.

“It gives me a lot of confidence to see guys that came from the same conference I came from – the one that they look down on,” said receiver Hunter Sharp, who starred at Utah State. “We’re still able to come here and play at the same level as the guys they ranked ahead of us.”

Sharp is a long shot to make the Broncos’ roster, as he was listed at No. 6 on the depth chart released Tuesday. But he’s here now, and he is one of eight players from Mountain West programs vying for spots on Denver’s roster. This list includes players from Boise State (center Matt Paradis and defensive end Billy Winn), Colorado State (outside linebacker Shaquil Barrett and offensive lineman Ty Sambrailo), Hawaii (linebacker Jerrol Garcia-Williams) and Nevada (linebacker Brandon Marshall and tight end Virgil Green).

To provide a comparison to the Mountain West’s eight players in Denver’s camp, there are 11 from the SEC, eight from the Pac-12 and six from the Big 12.

Of the 90 players in Broncos camp as of Tuesday, 33 come from programs outside the Power Five conferences.

Small-school players have always made an impact. Jerry Rice and Walter Payton head a long list of Hall of Famers from programs not in major conferences. But with rules changes granting the Power Five autonomy to govern themselves and as the disparity in resources grows larger, smaller schools would be wise to trumpet their players who go on to professional success.

In the case of the Mountain West, there are many examples. Derek Carr (Fresno State) just signed the richest contract in the NFL with the Raiders. Jay Ajayi (Boise State) ran for 200 yards three times for the Dolphins last year on the way to the Pro Bowl. Brian Urlacher (New Mexico), Marshall Faulk (San Diego State), Chad Hennings (Air Force) ... the list goes on.

“I think the consensus now is, even with quarterbacks, it doesn’t matter where you’re coming from,” said Wyoming quarterback Josh Allen, a candidate to be taken first in next year’s NFL draft. “You look at the best quarterbacks in the NFL and they’re from all over the place. It’s not just Power Five schools. That helps recruits who are deciding whether they should walk on at Power Fives or take a scholarship at a Group of Five.”

It’s easy to forget this when seeing which college football games dominate network broadcasts on Saturdays, and when you see that 24 of 25 teams ranked in the preseason Top 25 come from the five major conferences.

But athletes continue to come from those schools on the periphery, and some are eyeing a career with the Broncos.

“I see a comparison and it helps me, uplifts me to go harder,” Sharp said. “I’m a big believer in that especially because I come from a small school. That will always be my mentality.”

Broncos burning question: Is defense good enough to carry them past AFC's best?

By Sean Wagner-McGough

CBS Sports

August 9, 2017

The Denver Broncos don't have a quarterback. Sure, technically they have two quarterbacks competing for one starting job, but unless Paxton Lynch turns out to be the next Dak Prescott, or unless Trevor Siemian undergoes a massive transformation, the Broncos will essentially enter the season without a quarterback -- in the sense that they won't have one they can depend on to actively contribute to a winning effort.

That's the reality of the Broncos' situation. They're not going to win because of their quarterback. When they do win, it could well be despite their quarterback.

But that doesn't mean the Broncos can't be one of the AFC's best teams. The pieces, besides quarterback, are in place. Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders form one of the game's best receiver duos. C.J. Anderson still has loads of potential.

But the most important piece -- the one that can carry them all the way into the postseason -- is the defense.

The Broncos' defense is good enough to get them back into the playoffs. Don't forget: Two seasons ago, the Broncos won a Super Bowl despite trotting out the corpse of Peyton Manning and at times, the very tall, but very bad Brock Osweiler.

It could happen again.

Still dominant

Despite the fact that the Broncos missed out on the playoffs with a 9-7 record last year and despite the fact that they got gutted in free agency following their Super Bowl win, their defense didn't really decline all too much. They were still awesome, if not historically dominant.

That's two years in a row they finished atop the league in DVOA. Keep in mind: The Broncos lost Malik Jackson and Danny Trevathan before the season. Brandon Marshall missed five full games.

Once again, the Broncos got gutted, losing defensive coordinator Wade Phillips this offseason to the Rams. There's no way to know how much Phillips' absence will impact the Broncos -- new head coach Vance Joseph was a highly respected defensive coordinator, which could minimize the impact -- but I'm betting it won't result in a catastrophe. The Broncos simply have too much star power on the defensive side of the ball. Most coaches could have success with this group.

The pass rush

Speaking of star power, it starts with the Broncos' pass rush, which starts with Von Miller. We all already know how dominant Miller is, but let's run through a few examples from this past season, when he

racked up 13.5 sacks (second in NFL). According to Pro Football Focus, Miller was the second-most productive pass rusher among all 3-4 outside linebackers, totaling 79 total pressures. Only Khalil Mack finished with more.

But he's not the only dangerous pass rusher on the Broncos' roster. Shane Ray, who is expected to take over for future Hall of Famer DeMarcus Ware, began to thrive in his second season.

"And Shane's been ready," Miller said in April, via ESPN.com. "He's been ready for a long time."

In 2016, Ray doubled his sack total after a four-sack season as a rookie. According to PFF, he was the 12th-most productive pass rusher among all 3-4 outside linebackers with 45 total pressures. The bad news is that Ray suffered an injury at the end of July and is expected to miss 6-8 weeks. The good news, of course, is that he'll only miss 6-8 weeks, which means he won't miss most of the season.

And then there's Derek Wolfe, their defensive end who notched 5.5 sacks for a second straight season. He's still only 27. As a team, the Broncos finished with 42 sacks last year, tied for third-most in football.

There's no doubt that the Broncos will miss Ware, one of the most consistent pass rushers in the history of football. But consider this: In 2016, Ware appeared in just 10 games and registered only four sacks. It's not like he was a dominant presence last year. And the Broncos did just fine without him. Assuming Miller maintains his current level of production (elite), Ray continues to grow (he's only 24), and Wolfe continues serving as a complimentary option, the Broncos' pass rush should be one of the league's best.

No Fly Zone

Just as important as the pass rush is the secondary -- specifically, Chris Harris, Aqib Talib, and Bradley Roby. The trio forms the league's best cornerback group.

Last year, Talib was the best of the bunch. Though he notched just three picks last year, he allowed the second-lowest passer rating when in coverage (49.5) among all cornerbacks -- only Xavier Rhodes of the Vikings pieced together a lower passer rating, per PFF. Talib didn't allow a touchdown all year.

Harris, generally considered as the best of the group, was ranked lower than Talib, but that doesn't mean he was bad -- far from it. He finished with the league's ninth-lowest passer rating (68.5) when in coverage, three touchdowns allowed, and two interceptions.

Roby isn't on either's level, but he isn't that far off. He allowed an 80.1 passer rating in coverage, per PFF, which ranked 20th. For a third corner, that's not too shabby. Neither were his two picks and just three touchdowns allowed.

As a team, Denver allowed the fewest passing touchdowns (13) and lowest yards per attempt (5.8).

The recipe to beat AFC's best

Here's why this matters: To win the AFC, the Broncos will have to take down more than a few high-flying offenses. The conference is run by the top offenses.

First, there's the Patriots -- easily the favorites to wind up in Minneapolis as the AFC's Super Bowl representative. Then, there's the Steelers, who are regarded as the best threat to the Patriots, which makes sense given their offense features Ben Roethlisberger, Le'Veon Bell, Antonio Brown, and Martavis Bryant. Finally, the Raiders, a team with an outside shot at being among the AFC's best, boast the

league's top offensive line, a fresh Marshawn Lynch to run behind that line, one of the best receiver duos in Amari Cooper and Michael Crabtree, and Derek Carr -- who was considered to be an MVP candidate before he suffered a season-ending injury last year.

Combined, those three teams averaged 26.2 points per game last season. The Broncos averaged 20.8 points per game. So how can the Broncos keep pace with those offenses when they're trotting out Siemian or Lynch behind a shaky offensive line?

They don't have to, because the Broncos' defense is almost guaranteed to turn those games into low-scoring contests. Over the past two seasons, the Broncos have played those three teams nine times -- including the playoffs. In those nine games, they allowed an average of 18.8 points per game.

They can beat the Patriots because they have the formula to do so. For the The Players' Tribune in June, Ware broke down how it was possible to beat Brady:

The way to beat Tom Brady is to hit him. As many times as you can, hit him. And even then, it might not be enough. In the AFC Championship Game a couple of years ago, we sacked Tom four times and we hit him 20 times.

He's right. We all remember that AFC Championship game. Brady still does too.

Earlier that season, the Broncos beat the Patriots in overtime by sacking Brady three times. Last year, despite losing to the Patriots, the Broncos held them to just 16 points. Brady posted one of the worst stat lines of his career in that game, going 16 of 32 for 188 yards (5.9 YPA) for zero touchdowns, zero interceptions, and a 68.2 passer rating. In Brady's past three games against the Broncos, he completed 50.8 percent of his passes for 778 yards (6.0 YPA), four touchdowns, two picks, and a 73.2 passer rating.

That's why the Broncos can beat the Patriots. They've figured out how to turn him into Blaine Gabbert. That's largely due to their insane pass rush, but it's also due to their secondary, which can handle all of the Patriots' weapons.

The same recipe will be needed against the Steelers and the Raiders. And it'll work. According to PFF, both Roethlisberger's and Carr's passer ratings placed in the middle of the pack when they were under duress.

Roethlisberger's 70.2 passer rating under pressure ranked 14th in the NFL. He posted a 5/4 TD/INT ratio on 109 attempts under pressure, which means his touchdown percentage was 4.6 under pressure and his interception percentage was 3.7. Compare those splits to his actual numbers over the course of the season: a 5.7 touchdown percentage and a 2.6 interception percentage.

Meanwhile, Carr's 70.0 passer rating under pressure tied for 15th in the league. He posted a 3/3 TD/INT ratio on 116 attempts, which means both his touchdown percentage and interception percentage under pressure were 2.6. Compare that to his actual numbers from the entire season: a 5.0 touchdown percentage and a 1.1 interception percentage.

Like most quarterbacks, both Roethlisberger and Carr become prone to mistakes when they face pressure. And the Broncos can certainly generate pressure.

That doesn't mean the Broncos are going to have their way with those teams. Some things you just can't stop. Rob Gronkowski represents a mismatch for every team regardless of defensive personnel, it's

impossible to commit extra defenders to all three of the Steelers' playmakers (Bell, Brown, and Bryant), and the Raiders' offensive line is going to make it awfully tough for Carr to feel the pressure.

The Broncos shouldn't be favored over those teams. But they shouldn't be written off either.

If there's one defense in the AFC that has the best chance to take down all three teams, it's the Broncos. That's why no one should write them off due to their inferior quarterback play, even if their margin of error is smaller than other teams due to their quarterbacks. Defenses can still win championships. And the Broncos still have a championship-caliber defense.

Pro Football Hall of Fame: Your Arguments, Ideas and Complaints About Voting Process

By Peter King

MMQB

August 9, 2017

So, for all of you looking for a training camp column here, I'll be doing more of those in the coming days—including on Tyreek Hill and the Chiefs, which I thought I'd be writing today. But then the Hall of Fame avalanche came. You had scores of questions about it, and so I decided to do a Hall column, because of your intense interest after the Saturday night enshrinement.

Before I begin, let me explain a couple of things, as one of 48 voters for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. I've done it for 25 years.

- I share my opinions because I think it's important to be as transparent as we can in the voting process. Not everyone agrees with me. Some voters don't, and the Hall doesn't ... because of the fear that it would inhibit voting one's true conscience. But when I speak, I don't speak as a representative of the Hall of Fame. I speak as 1/48th of the voting committee.

- I deserve the slings and arrows about my votes, and my opinions. It's okay to send them my way. But I do want you to know, contrary to popular views outside the meeting room, that I try to look at every case with zero prejudice. I don't care if a guy was lousy to me when he was in the arena. I don't care if I covered him a lot or barely at all. I try to ask myself if he belongs with the greatest in the game's history. Period.

- I often struggle with the thought that I've done this long enough, and another fresh mind should consider some of those up for election. I believe voter term limits should be considered by the Hall. I stay because I believe I have value to the process. But if someone said, "Time to go," I'd be thankful for the time I had. It's an honor to sit in the chair and to be a judge for this illustrious place.

With that said, on with your questions.

TERRELL DAVIS EFFECT

I find it interesting that you talk about the Terrell Davis effect on the HOF selections. Davis rushed for over 2,000 yards in a single season. He was an NFL MVP. He won two Super Bowls. Look at a guy like Jerome Bettis. He never led the NFL in rushing in any of the seasons he played. He never won an NFL MVP. He won a single Super Bowl. But because he is the "most nimble big man" to ever play football (Peter King's words, not mine), he gets in. So you can talk about Terrell Davis lowering the standard for the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But know that those standards were lowered the day you let a guy like Jerome Bettis in because he simply had a long career and happened to play for one of the most storied franchises in football. If Bettis had played for Tampa Bay, he'd be in the Hall of Pretty Good.

—Reed L.

That's your opinion, and the opinion of many. What is indisputable is that we just elected a player (and I am absolutely fine with it, by the way) who had three superb years and one very good one and who is the best rusher, arguably, in postseason football history. It all happened in a four-year period. To think that a player who had a four-year run of greatness and nothing else can get in the Hall of Fame and that wouldn't have an impact on future candidates is foolish. How can it not? Similarly, to totally discount the longevity factor as a factor for inclusion in the Hall is foolish. Bettis was good for a long time. That counts.

THE CASE FOR ... GEORGE SEIFERT

Peter, I am sure you don't want your mailbag to turn into why isn't "this" person in over "that" person. I should start by saying you guys do a great job overall. But one omission really bothers me and I was reminded of it when I saw your back and forth with a user on Twitter about the candidacy of Tom Flores. I agree with you that Flores falls short of induction for me, but why do you think George Seifert hasn't gotten the traction I feel he deserves? I know the two common arguments against him are: 1) he just picked up a team that Bill Walsh built, and 2) he went 1-15 in his final season as a coach. I'm not saying both of those don't have merit but they are cop-outs that obscure one of the great careers a coach has ever had. Walsh himself credits Seifert for constructing the defense that formed the backbone of the 1984 and 1988 title teams. Seifert's groundbreaking use of the "elephant" position was something that had not been done before. Oh and that 1-15 season? Rookie Chris Weinke was his QB. But it's all Seifert's fault? I know the standards as a coach are high to get in. But Seifert isn't mentioned. We appreciate him in San Francisco. I wish the voters like yourself could see it.

—Danny, San Francisco

Good argument, Danny. Seifert is an interesting case. I think he's hurt, some, by the fact that he won with a totally inherited team. And when he went to Carolina, he coached three years and never had a winning season. Coaches who coach in multiple places should be judged on the totality of their careers and not just in one place. It's why Bill Parcells is in, in large part: four teams, four teams led to the playoffs, two Super Bowl wins. I think Seifert is hurt by the total wins (114) and the fact that he didn't do much in Carolina.

... GIL BRANDT

I've had the distinct pleasure of listening to Gil Brandt on satellite radio for the past few years. While I'm not surprised by the ignorance of Jerry Jones that Brandt is not in the Cowboys Ring of Honor, I'm flummoxed as to why he hasn't been chosen for the Hall of Fame. Can you explain the chances of his candidacy?

—Brad E.

I think they are good. Brandt is up for inclusion this year as the lone nominee from the Contributors category, and whether it is this year or the next few, I do think eventually his candidacy is strong enough that he will make it.

... ROBERT KRAFT

Why hasn't Robert Kraft been inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame? He has had much more success than Jerry Jones who was just inducted. Seems rather confusing to fans.

—Jim

Kraft has built a great franchise and has had a major role in helping the NFL become the dominant sport in America. Jones was not elected because of his record with the Dallas Cowboys exclusively; if so, he would not have made it—even though people conveniently forget he was the owner who fired a tired regime and installed a new and energetic one, which led to three Super Bowl wins in his first six years as owner. Because those titles happened two decades ago doesn't mean they didn't happen. But overall, Jones got in for his impact on football; as Washington's Bruce Allen said, he's the most significant single figure in the game in the past quarter-century.

... FRANK GORE/PATRICK WILLIS

As a Niner fan watching Willis and Gore, they were the highlights of some very bad teams. Gore seems to have compiled enough stats for consideration. What about Willis? Arguably one of the most dominant players at the position but his short career might keep him from consideration. However that short career with seven Pro Bowls and five first team all-pros might be enough? What do you think?

—Jason B.

I like the candidacy of Gore more than Willis, though I think both have a chance. Let Gore finish his career first; that's the only fair way to judge him. I think his endurance and his longevity, and the fact that he's still primed to be the primary back for a team at age 34 this year in Indy, is amazing. And he's likely to finish in the top five rushers of all time, and he had a 1,000-yard season at age 33. I admire him a lot.

... JERRY KRAMER

What will it take for Jerry Kramer to get the Senior Nomination for the HOF this year? He is the only member of the 50th anniversary team not in the HOF ... five NFL titles ... multiple times all-pro, and made the pivotal block on the play that gave Vince Lombardi and the Packers a third consecutive NFL title.

—Mark C.

He may make the cut this year; I don't know because I'm not on the Seniors Committee, which will nominate two players this year. In the past, I have not been a Kramer advocate for a couple of reasons. He has been a finalist 10 times. Ten times he didn't get the requisite votes to make it. And nine of those times, he was a finalist in the modern era, which means that a jury of his peers—writers and media people who covered him a lot—voted him down. So we, the 48 people now voting, are now supposed to right whatever wrong that was. And maybe it is a wrong. But other than being browbeaten by the general public over Kramer, how exactly would we know that? Not a soul in the voting room right now covered Kramer as a player; no one was a football writer in 1960. The Seniors Committee is comprised of people who try to go over players whose cases have been lost in the weeds or ignored over the years. Kramer's case clearly has not been.

Finally, a few years ago, I asked Bart Starr if there was anyone else he thought had been forgotten unjustly in the Hall process, and he said left tackle Bob Skoronski. He was effusive in his praise of Skoronski. I asked him if he wanted to mention anyone else, and he said no. Did he forget Kramer? I suppose it's possible. But I gave him his chance, and he didn't mention Kramer.

... PAT BOWLEN

Love the work you guys do; it makes for the best professional procrastination on Mondays especially. I would be curious to hear your thoughts on Pat Bowlen's HOF worthiness. I understand Jones has been a front man for the NFL in many ways and is deserving of the award, but I also know for a fact Mr. Bowlen has been a key member of the ownership circle and has contributed a significant amount to the league and the game as we know it today. He has also done it with a fraction of the spotlight and, say, personality of Mr. Jones. Some of us really appreciate the understated professionalism. With Mr. Bowlen's health failing, it would be awesome to see him recognized.

—Drew T.

Drew, I think Pat Bowlen belongs. I am one of the nine members of the Contributors' Committee. Five sit in the room each August to pick the finalist or finalists. Last year, the five-member group advanced Jerry Jones and Paul Tagliabue. We do not see the vote totals, but I thought Bowlen was very close. After the discussion period, I would not have been surprised if he had been one of the two candidates made a 2017 finalist. But he wasn't. I think this year, he and Gil Brandt along with former GMs Bobby Beathard and George Young—and others, to be sure—are strong candidates and could come out of the room.

... GINO CAPPELLETTI

Followed your work for many years and you are (by far) my favorite NFL writer. As a lifelong Patriots fan from the 1960's, I've always wondered why Gino Cappelletti is not in the Hall of Fame. All-time leading scorer in AFL history as a wide receiver and place kicker. Has there ever been any talk of him by the veterans committee?

—David G., Milford, Mass.

Thanks for the kind words, Davis. I am not on that committee, and thus I don't know if Gino has ever been at the front of the list. But I agree he is a unique candidate. I'd be interested in delving into his case.

... JOE KLECKO

Do you think Joe Klecko will ever get in? Why do you think he's not already in there?

—@MDiFebbo (via Twitter)

I think he's not in because some view his career wasn't long enough. I think 155 games is plenty long, especially when he's the only player in history to have made the modern Pro Bowl at three positions—defensive end, defensive tackle, nose tackle. I'm an advocate.

INCREASE HOF CLASS SIZE

You've written a lot how you are a proponent of the limits on Hall of Fame classes because it keeps it special and means more to those who make it. But it's for the players and the fans. Players that have to wait don't like the process. Fans don't like the process. When my kids are old enough I want to take them and show them the stars that got me into football. I don't want to explain, "Well, Terrell Owens was a great wide receiver but because of other qualified people he's still not in." Up the classes. Let the deserving get enshrined.

—Arjun

I don't agree. I don't see scores of deserving candidates being held back by the class-size restrictions. It's hard to get in, and should be. And Terrell Owens is not being kept out by class size. He is being kept out because there are some on the committee—they have voiced their opinions loudly—who don't think he belongs in the Hall, or who think there are other right now who are more worthy.

VERY GOOD QUESTION, PETE

Are the Patriots going to have HOFers other than Brady/Belichick? Seems odd that nobody from the three-in-four-year run is in yet.

—Pete

I'd say Adam Vinatieri, when/if he ever decides to retire, has the best chance. Richard Seymour has a shot, and of course Ty Law. Not sure if anyone else has a strong case.

THE SPEECHES ARE TOO LONG

I heard you talking to Rich Eisen about limiting the length of the speeches, and I agree. They never used to be so long; it gets worse every year. However, the most offensive was Jerry Jones, who went on for nearly an hour! He is a very entertaining speaker, but it was so disrespectful to Kurt Warner to make him and his fans sit there cooling their heels while he somehow felt compelled to mention or thank every person he has ever come in contact with—including Rupert Murdoch.

—Virginia M., Richmond, Va.

The best speech was LaDainian Tomlinson's. It lasted 25 minutes. How easy it would be to find three minutes he could have cut out of it, kept the impactful message, and made it 22 minutes. In my opinion, it's absurd to have a 4-hour, 48-minute event. It has to be lassoed.

WISH I'D HAVE SAID THIS

My father was a scholarly Episcopal priest. He was widely acknowledged as an outstanding preacher. I once asked him about the secret to his success. He replied: "If you can't say what you want to say in 12 minutes, it's probably not worth saying." I became a chancellor of three state university systems. Whenever I had to prepare a speech, I began by recalling the wisdom of his advice.

—John R.

Brevity, John. Thank you.

MEDIA FAVORITISM?

Why do you think there seems to be a perception among a lot of fans that the media who votes on the Hall of Fame tend to try harder to get former players that are currently in the media into the Hall? Jerome Bettis, Terrell Davis, Tony Dungy, and Kurt Warner all come to mind.

—Jimmy A.

John Lynch, Boomer Esiason, Cris Collinsworth, Steve Mariucci, Rodney Harrison, Daryl Johnston, Jimmy Johnson, Chris Spielman, Tedy Bruschi, Rich Gannon, Steve Tasker, Phil Simms and Ron Jaworski all come to mind for me. What do they have in common? They're TV stars. They're former football players or coaches, most near the top of their profession. They're not in the Hall of Fame. That's 13 prominent TV people. I have never bought the fact that because someone is on TV it gives him an edge for the Hall. Silly talk.

SHOULD THERE BE A SECOND TIER HOF FOR WARNER?

Long-time reader and admirer of your MMQB column, and subsequently of the entire MMQB crew. Great job all around. Since I follow football closely only since the early 2000s, I can't really comment on any of the older players who are enshrined, or not. But I was lucky enough to witness the careers of Peyton Manning and Tom Brady, who obviously is not finished yet. And their HOF credentials are certainly beyond doubt. But does Kurt Warner really belong in the same class? Of course, his career is an amazing story. But did anyone consider him during his playing days at the same level as Manning and Brady? Should there be a two-tier HOF? I realize that this is not realistic but it may reflect the reality that in the HOF there is quite a gradient of accomplishments, just as there is in the NFL. And please, let yourself never be silenced by those who ask you to stick to sports only.

—Joerg, San Jose

Thanks for the kind words. The fact that Warner isn't on the level of, say, Manning or Brady, makes me think of this: Warren Moon is not on their level. Eddie LeBaron isn't. They're in the Hall too. I don't think you can create levels of the Hall of Fame. I think you have to give people the credit they deserve. Warner, for instance, is a two-time MVP, the only man in history with three 350-passing-yard Super Bowls (414, 365, 377), and one of the truly unique candidates in Hall history. He had a five-year donut hole in the middle of his career, and came back to be great again. I believe he deserves his bust, even if he's not Brady-esque. Few are.

WILL EARLY RETIREMENTS AFFECT THE HALL?

We are seeing more players retiring earlier than they used to. Do you think this will affect future HOF voting? I'm referring specifically to Calvin Johnson who was only 29th in total yards, 22nd in receiving TDs, and 43rd in receptions when he retired because he didn't stick around long enough to accumulate more stats. But he ranks much higher in per-game averages and was dominant over a several-year period. Do you think eventually total career stats will be used less and per-game averages will be used more if players continue to leave the game early?

—Charlie A., Detroit

Great question. I do not vote for the Hall on stats alone. I believe we have to believe what our eyes saw. Johnson was a truly dominant players, as you say. I like his candidacy.

AN AMNESTY YEAR

Are you in favor of an amnesty year for the HOF to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the NFL?

—@wixieearlwilson (via Twitter)

That's a great question. Several of my peers want to do that, feeling that, say, a 20-member class in 2020, the NFL's 100th-anniversary year, would help pay tribute to the greats of all eras. Color me skeptical, but open to listening to the arguments for it.

INTERESTING CONCEPT

Should the committee be larger with more current HOFers as voters?

—@Cowboys832 (via Twitter)

I've heard that a lot over the years. I'd be okay with it. Two issues: If, say, a former Steeler gets on the committee, do the Raiders then say, Wait a minute—we want representation too. There's a danger in making the committee so big that it becomes hard for everyone to have an open discussion. Forty-eight people in a room debating players is a lot. If every team were represented, there'd be about 80 in the room. The second issue is that I don't buy the sentiment that players would be totally egalitarian about their votes. Some would be absolutely honorable. Some, I fear, would be slanted toward their former mates. Again: I'm fine with whatever the rules are. I think a committee that big would start to become unwieldy.

ON KEN ANDERSON

What are the chances the veterans committee will put Ken Anderson in the HOF?

—@jamiedyke1 (via Twitter)

Anderson's support is growing. I think he'll get in the room for finalist consideration in the next few years. When? No idea. But his case has a lot of fans.

ON T.O.

Are you guys going to put your petty differences aside and vote in the 3rd best WR in NFL history?
#NoTOinHoFisajoke

—Chris F.

I have no petty differences with Terrell Owens and his candidacy. You'll have to ask some of the others on the committee about their views.

Former Denver Bronco David Bruton Expects Big Things From Team

By Michael Spencer

CBS Local

August 9, 2017

Former Bronco David Bruton joined CBS4 Sports Michael Spencer on Xfinity Monday Live at the ViewHouse Centennial this week.

The Broncos honored Bruton, who recently announced his retirement, after Monday's practice in a small ceremony in which they presented him with a framed jersey from his playing days.

"It was the best moment of my Broncos career," said Bruton. "For this top class organization to recognize me, it was very touching."

Bruton, who is studying to go to physical therapy school in 2019 has been working with the Broncos training staff during training camp.

"It's definitely been a great experience, a lot of hands on experience," said Bruton.

"It says another great thing about the Broncos is that they open their arms for me to better myself as not just a football player, but a potential doctor or doctor of physical therapy."

As for the 2017 team, Bruton expects big things from the Broncos.

"I'm a Broncos fan, so I'm going to say all the way for sure," said Bruton. "That's what I'm hoping for, that's what I'm expecting and every guy in that locker room; they expect nothing less."

The Broncos will play their first preseason game Thursday in Chicago and will play their first regular season game on Monday Sept. 11 against the LA Chargers.

Here's how Vance Joseph will approach the Broncos' first preseason game

By Zac Stevens
BSN Denver
August 9, 2017

On Thursday, football is finally back for the boys in Orange and Blue.

Well, for the most part. As the team hits the field against the Chicago Bears, it will be the first time that the 2017 Denver Broncos have faced an opponent other than themselves.

Although it's "just" a preseason game, and thus will have no meaning in the standings, there will be many important implications as to how the final roster will be comprised and what it will look like for the opening of the regular season, Sept. 11 against the Los Angeles Chargers.

As a first-time head coach, Vance Joseph called the first exhibition game "huge" for himself as well as for many players on the roster — specifically mentioning the quarterbacks.

With different parts of the team at different stages of development — an unknown starting quarterback and a defense scattered with Pro-Bowl players — the way Joseph and his staff handle the first preseason game will be anything but straightforward. Here's what to expect and look for as the Broncos take on the Bears.

Heavy Dose of QBs

In a typical preseason, the starting quarterback will progress from playing a few series the first game to a little over a quarter the second game to a half or three quarters the third game.

In 2017, the Broncos quarterback situation is anything but typical, meaning they won't follow that progression. With Trevor Siemian getting the start on Thursday, he and Paxton Lynch are expected to "each get a quarter, quarter-and-a-half, but no more than a quarter-and-a-half," according to Joseph.

"Probably a quarter, it depends on how the game is going," he added. "The average plays per quarter in preseason are 15, 16 plays. We want to get those guys probably a little bit more than that so we can have a fair evaluation there, but max a quarter-and-a-half."

Additionally, Joseph said that "some" of the Broncos' starters will stay in the game once Lynch comes in.

Nearly Dormant Defense

The defense won't put in a full night's work against the Bears. In fact, if they perform well, they won't even have to put in a quarter night's work. With five Pro Bowl players on the defensive side of the ball, the first-team defense will play three series at the most. That's only if it doesn't go well, too.

“Depends how it goes. If we got out there and have a dominant series, they may play one [series],” Joseph said. “If we have a so-so series the first and a better series in the second series, they may only play two. Three max the first game.”

This plan will include Von Miller, as well. After saying earlier in the offseason that Miller may receive “very few” reps in preseason, Joseph did say that at this point Miller will play with the first-team defense on Thursday.

A Few Good Backs

Although the Broncos are currently carrying seven running backs on their roster — not including fullback Andy Janovich — they will only have four available for Thursday’s game.

With Bernard Pierce missing the past week with a hamstring injury, Devontae Booker out all of preseason with a fractured wrist and Jamaal Charles being held out as he slowly progresses back from knee injuries the past two seasons, the Broncos will get a heavy dose of a few running backs.

Starter C.J. Anderson will play with the first-team — a maximum of three series — and then the game will be turned over to Stevan Ridley, De’Angelo Henderson and Juwan Thompson.

Ridley, Henderson and Thompson will each get a significant workload to prove their value with what is expected to be one of the most intense position battles of the preseason.

Vanilla Game Plan

Preseason is about finding out what players can play, and thus deserve a spot on a team, and which can’t. It’s not about implementing and practicing your regular-season game plan. Joseph won’t deviate from that script.

While the coach wants to have enough of a game plan to allow his players the opportunity to succeed, he doesn’t want to give anything away to regular-season opponents. Thus, the Broncos game plan, on both offense and defense, will be fairly basic.

“My opinion on that is this: preseason games, I want to give them enough to play well. I don’t want to surprise players. I don’t want to rescue them with scheme, either,” he said. “I want to see on offense who can block, who can catch the ball, who can run with the ball. On defense, who can get off blocks, who can rush and who can cover. So, I’m not going to rescue guys with scheme, but I’m going to give them enough to play well.”

According to Joseph, regular-season scheme will be implemented in the preseason, but not until Week 3 against the Green Bay Packers in what he calls “our simulated game plan.”

Almost a Full Crew

Outside of Charles (rest) and Pierce (hamstring), the Broncos will also be without linebacker Todd Davis (shoulder), safety T.J. Ward (hamstring) and center Matt Paradis (rest).

Joseph called Davis “day-to-day” and said his absence is more precautionary. Ward is expected back on the field after Thursday’s game when the team travels to San Francisco to practice and play against the 49ers.

With Paradis receiving a rest day, as he works back from double hip surgery in the offseason, Connor McGovern will start at center. The rest of the starting offensive line will be Garrett Bolles at left tackle, Max Garcia at left guard, Ron Leary at right guard and Menelik Watson at right tackle.

Trevor Siemian: Things recently started “clicking for me”

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
August 9, 2017

The Broncos revealed their plans at quarterback for the first two preseason games on Monday when coach Vance Joseph announced that Trevor Siemian will start this Thursday and that Paxton Lynch will get the nod in the team’s second game.

Joseph hasn’t set a date to make a call about Week One of the regular season so the competition may stretch beyond those two games. If it does end at that point, there’s a good chance it will be because Siemian’s play matches up with the way he feels about his improved grasp of the offense.

“I can’t tell exactly when, but probably a week or so I just kind of felt a little more comfortable, like things were clicking for me and I got a big-picture thought of how we’re trying to attack scheme and defenses,” Siemian said, via the Denver Post. “I just felt comfortable ... getting going and also getting a feel for all the guys. First, second, third (team), it doesn’t matter — just getting a feel for how guys run, what they do well and I think we’re all in a good spot right now.”

Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy said Tuesday that all of the team’s quarterbacks have been getting better every day, so Siemian may not be alone in feeling like he’s gotten a better handle on what the team is looking for at the position. Thursday night will provide a chance to see if that feeling translates to the field.

Jamaal Charles won't play this week

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
August 9, 2017

Broncos coach Vance Joseph said on Monday that running back Jamaal Charles will see game action in the preseason, but his first taste of it will not come this week.

Joseph said Tuesday, via Nicki Jhabvala of the Denver Post, that he has ruled Charles out of Thursday's game against the Bears. Charles, who signed with the Broncos this offseason, last played in a game in Week Seven last season while he was still a member of the Chiefs.

The Broncos will also be without running back Devontae Booker, who is recovering from wrist surgery, and Joseph said that C.J. Anderson will play a maximum of three series during the game. That should leave plenty of work for rookie De'Angelo Henderson and Stevan Ridley as the preseason gets underway.

Center Matt Paradis and linebacker Todd Davis are also going to remain on the sideline in Chicago on Thursday.