

Big test ahead for Broncos quarterbacks in preseason opener at Chicago

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
August 10, 2017

Two days before the Broncos were to take the field in Chicago for their preseason opener against the Bears, first-year coach Vance Joseph trotted out the scout team at Dove Valley.

“I’m not going to rescue guys with scheme,” Joseph said after Tuesday’s practice. “But I will give them enough to play well. It’s a difference between putting players out there and not having them ready to play versus helping them with scheme.”

His thinking was this: More time to prepare for an opponent, even in preseason, gives his players a better chance of playing their best. The season before the season is often labeled meaningless, but for the past two years it has been anything but for the Broncos as they continue to search for their starting quarterback and leaders at many other positions.

In preseason, jobs are won and lost even when the games don’t count.

Since April, Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch have been battling for the starting quarterback gig while learning offensive coordinator Mike McCoy’s new system. Their work in training camp is weighted heavily in the evaluation, but their performance Thursday and next week at San Francisco will count the most.

“The games matter,” Joseph said. “I want to get to the games so we can get to the bottom of this.”

Siemian will start against the Bears and play no more than a quarter and a half before Lynch takes over. Against the 49ers, they’ll swap, giving each a fair opportunity with the first-team offense and against a defense other than their own.

These games require a balancing act for all as the coaches monitor not only the quarterbacks’ — and every other player’s — performance, but also their snap counts and how much of the offense is revealed before the regular season.

“There’s a fine line there,” McCoy said. “There are certain things every team in this league are not going to show until the opener. You go in there and the big thing, we’re always going to talk is, it’s about us. We have to go out there and do our jobs regardless.”

For the quarterbacks, their jobs will be decided by their complete body of work. The biggest factor? Decision-making without a script.

“I know that during camp, they kind of throw a lot at you to see what we can do and see what we’re good at,” Lynch said. “Now that we’re about to play a team and actually game-plan a little bit for them, it cuts it down and you can kind of focus in on a little more specific stuff.”

McCoy's system, which will resemble the one he ran in Denver when he was coordinator from 2009-12, will change — quite often, he said — and is designed to be “explosive” and “uptempo” and put points on the board early and often.

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

Mastery of the playbook has yet to come for most, but the first preseason game changes the tenor and expectations. It should also provide clarity in the quarterback race.

“You want to see how guys react when they’re tired, when they’re hurt and obviously against a different opponent,” Joseph said. “I’m excited about Thursday to see how the young guys go out and play football so we can find out the best guys for our football team.”

3 things to watch (aside from QBs) in the Broncos-Bears preseason opener

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

August 10, 2017

Running backs

Starter C.J. Anderson is expected to play a maximum of three series and veteran Jamaal Charles will not play at all, leaving the bulk of the reps to Stevan Ridley, De'Angelo Henderson and Juwan Thompson. The running back race is tight — and stacked — and these reps are critical to creating separation. Ridley has impressed since his arrival on Day 1 of camp. A strong showing in Chicago and the subsequent preseason games will make for difficult roster decisions at running back.

Fourth CB battle

Rookie Brendan Langley has an edge on paper, but his experience at the position is limited and his time in a pro system is nonexistent. Lorenzo Doss has showed out in camp and continues to vie for the fourth cornerback job, a coveted and important spot on the Broncos' "No Fly Zone" secondary. "We just want to put those guys in positions where they are competing against the other team's better players as well," defensive coordinator Joe Woods said. "We just want to make sure we rotate them in right now at the two position. Give them a shot to go against some of the better receivers. Right now, they're battling."

O-line cohesion

Vance Joseph and general manager John Elway have lauded the Broncos' new-look offensive line. Thursday's game will provide limited reps to the starters — tackles Garrett Bolles and Menelik Watson, and guards Max Garcia and Ron Leary — but it will be the first test of the group's cohesion. Connor McGovern will start at center as Matt Paradis takes it slow in returning from two hip surgeries.

Broncos' John Elway refutes QB trade rumor with "fake news" tweet

By Staff

Denver Post

August 10, 2017

The Broncos are all in with their young quarterbacks, Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. And any reports to the contrary are just "fake news," according to Broncos' president of football operations John Elway.

"Rumor of us being interested in anyone other than the QBs we have is another example of irresponsible, fake news!!" Elway tweeted Wednesday.

@johnelway

Rumor of us being interested in anyone other than the QBs we have is another example of irresponsible, fake news!!

8:39 AM - Aug 9, 2017

1,638 Replies 3,417 Retweets 11,703 likes

Elway sent the tweet shortly after Sandy Clough of 104.3 The Fan in Denver reported the Broncos were actively pursuing a trade to acquire Cincinnati Bengals backup quarterback A.J. McCarron. Clough cited unnamed sources close to the Bengals.

Shortly after Clough's report hit the airwaves Wednesday morning, The Denver Post's Broncos beat writer Nicki Jhabvala also shot down the rumor as being "150 percent false."

@NickiJhabvala

I'm told the Broncos are not trying to trade for AJ McCarron. "It's 150% false," source said.

8:11 AM - Aug 9, 2017

32 Replies 80 Retweets 154 likes

John Elway on Jan. 2:

"I'm excited about the quarterbacks that we have. ... I think that we have two young guys that have a lot of talent, have a lot to work with and are both competitive and both want to win."

John Elway on March 1:

"... We got two young (QBs) that we're happy with. We think that they can be very good football players in this league."

John Elway on March 27:

"Like we've said, we really feel good about the two young ones that we have. Trevor did a good job for us last year and Paxton was young. The plan is to stay the course there and see what's available in the draft. So we'll go from there. We like both."

John Elway on July 26:

"I feel good about that spot. If you look at where we were last year, in my mind, we're in a much better position this year with Trevor having a year under his belt. Then, with getting Paxton in the draft last year, and him having played a couple games and having a year under his belt."

John Elway on Aug. 3:

"I feel like we're very fortunate to have two quality, young, talented quarterbacks. The one thing they're lacking, even though Trevor played a bunch last year, they're just lacking play time, experience. I think we've had a great competition here in camp. They're both young and they're going to make mistakes, but we feel very good about that position, and any time you can have two guys battle for that spot, you're going to get the best out of them."



Nicki Jhabvala
@NickiJhabvala

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Take this for what it's worth, but this is what John Elway has said about QBs Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch throughout the year.

9:59 AM - Aug 9, 2017

3 10 21

The Broncos open the preseason Thursday at Chicago with Siemian to start and Lynch to come in after him. Lynch will get the start in game No. 2 against the 49ers.

9 Broncos goals in preseason opener at Chicago

By Mike Klis

9 News

August 10, 2017

For a second consecutive year, the Broncos open their preseason against former coach John Fox and the Chicago Bears at Soldier Field.

Here are 9 goals for in the Broncos' preseason opener:

1. Good Quarterback Play

Forget finding the starter through a preseason game. Don't Bronco fans want Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch to both play well? Make the decision difficult. They'll probably both play this season.

2. Stay healthy

One area college football has it over the NFL is no preseason games. Which means no devastating injuries in games that mean nothing to the season standings.

3. A sack from Von's partner

We're talking at the outside linebacker position opposite Von Miller. The position where Shane Ray (right wrist) and Shaq Barrett (hip) are out a while. Kasim Edebali, Vontarrius Dora and DeMarcus Walker are the top candidates. If Miller plays, he may also turn it up on new Bears quarterback Mike Glennon.

4. Blocking Bolles

First-round rookie left tackle Garrett Bolles will be asked to protect the blindside edge against either Leonard Floyd, the Bears' first-round pick last year who had 7.0 sacks as a rookie, or veteran Willie Young, who had 7.5 sacks.

5. Run the ball

The new offensive line, sans center Matt Paradis, is especially strong in run blocking. The Broncos ranked 27th in rushing last year. They'll need to be a top 15 rushing team this year to help their uncertain quarterback situation.

6. Check out the rookies

Bolles will get his first test at left tackle. Second-round inside defensive lineman DeMarcus Walker will get playing time at outside linebacker. Fifth-round punt returner and slot receiver Isaiah McKenzie will get his first chance to display his speed. Sixth-round running back De'Angelo Henderson should get some carries. Third-round receiver Carlos Henderson and cornerback Brendan Langley are competing for top backup jobs.

7. Stop the run

The Broncos weren't very good at it last year, ranking 28th. And they won't have inside linebacker Todd Davis (shoulder) in this game. The Broncos fortified their front this year with nose tackle Domata Peko. Zach Kerr and undrafted rookie Tyrique Jarrett will mix in. The Bears will be a strong test. Jordan Howard had a terrific rookie season with 1,313 yards on 5.2 yards per carry. Chicago is also high on fourth-round rookie running back Tarik Cohen.

8. New coach's game decisions

Vance Joseph may get his first chance to decide whether to punt, or go for it on fourth-and-short. There will be a dozen other do or don't decisions for Joseph, even in a preseason game.

9. Win a roster spot

After the first series or so, most of the good guys leave. There are 90 players on the roster and only 53 spots for the regular season. There is always a preseason surprise each year. It can happen with a big tackle or by throwing a nice block on special teams.

John Elway calls QB trade rumor 'irresponsible, fake news'

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

August 10, 2017

Denver Broncos president of football operations/general manager John Elway said he liked his top two quarterbacks in January. He said it again at the scouting combine in February, at the league meetings in March, before the draft in April and just before training camp opened in late July.

He took to Twitter on Wednesday to refute a report on a Denver radio station that the Broncos were looking to acquire Cincinnati Bengals backup quarterback AJ McCarron in a trade.

@johnelway

Rumor of us being interested in anyone other than the QBs we have is another example of irresponsible, fake news!!

8:39 AM - Aug 9, 2017

1,646 Replies 3,443 Retweets 11,820 likes

Elway has said he would make any move he believed would make the Broncos better, but such a move "would have to make sense, not only now, but in the long term. My job is to look three, four, five years down the road."

Elway has also consistently, and publicly, expressed his belief that either Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch can get the Broncos back into the postseason conversation after the 9-7 finish in 2016 resulted in Denver's first playoff miss since 2010.

"I like the quarterback position with Trevor and Paxton," Elway said when training camp opened. "I like the possibilities there. ... We're fortunate to have two young quarterbacks who both can play. It's a good position.

"We've got a chance to be a pretty good football team."

It's what Elway's message was the entire offseason, including when there was speculation that the Broncos were interested in Tony Romo -- before Romo formally retired to accept a job as a network TV analyst -- even though coach Vance Joseph said Romo "was a non-issue for us."

At the time, Elway said: "I will just tell you this: There have been a lot of things out there that aren't true as far as what is going on with our quarterbacks. That is what happens. Everything gets frothed up there."

Broncos' QB battle will be focus, but here's what else to watch for in preseason opener

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

August 10, 2017

No, it's not a mandate, the bottom line or even the end of the conversation about the decisions to come for the Denver Broncos, but Thursday night's preseason opener in Chicago is the first game-day look at a remade offense.

That, a quarterback competition and what coach Vance Joseph called about "15 decisions" on the roster are all on the list of things to consider at Soldier Field. Some things to watch for in Thursday night's affair:

The quarterbacks. Of course, the position has been the biggest topic of discussion among the team's faithful, and even Wednesday team exec John Elway again was shooting down a report that the Broncos wanted somebody other than Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch to be the starting quarterback. Siemian enters the game with a lead in the competition -- largely due to Lynch's turnovers in the past week's worth of practices and the fact Lynch's accuracy wavered at times in the drills immediately after the turnovers -- but the decision hasn't been made. Both quarterbacks know the coaches want to see them operate in game situations. A year ago in the preseason opener in Chicago, Siemian, as the second quarterback into the game, was 7-of-12 for 88 yards. Lynch, largely against third-stringers, was 7-of-8 for 74 yards and was sacked three times. But it is a pivotal 10-day span for the two given the Broncos will practice for two days next week against the San Francisco 49ers leading up to the Aug. 19 game against the 49ers.

The guys in front of the quarterbacks. The Broncos spent the biggest chunk of their available money in free agency on the offensive line and used their first-round draft pick to select the guy they hoped would be the starting left tackle by the time the Sept. 11 regular-season opener rolls around. Garrett Bolles looks like he will indeed be the starter at left tackle, and the big-ticket additions in free agency -- guard Ron Leary and tackle Menelik Watson -- will be in the starting lineup Thursday night. The regular-season games will tell the tale, but the Broncos have shown the potential for far more teeth in the run game during their camp practices thus far. Elway said the position was the Broncos' biggest offseason priority. Joseph called it the most improved group in camp, and the biggest reason the team missed the playoffs last season was it never solved the issues up front.

The tight position battles. Stevan Ridley arrived straight from lunch -- with his mom, no less -- to the Broncos at the start of training camp and has made what already was going to be a difficult position for the Broncos to sort out even tougher. Ridley has shown himself to be a decisive runner who runs quality pass routes and can close the deal in the passing game. He also plays like a guy who understands what it's like when your phone isn't ringing to come join a team, because, well, he does. Jamaal Charles won't play Thursday night, but if the Broncos decide his knees will hold up to situational work in the regular season, they may end up keeping at least one more running back than they might have intended when camp opened. Also, keep an eye on rookie running back De'Angelo Henderson. He is a big play waiting to happen in the preseason. But the Broncos also are tight at wide receiver and tight end, so players will have the possibility of making a move on the depth chart over the next four games.

Run defense. The Broncos won't fully show the tweaks they've made in the defensive scheme in the preseason -- coordinator Joe Woods has said he's just "putting some sugar" on the scheme Wade Phillips ran the previous two seasons. But the Broncos can show whether they've made progress defending the run at the point of attack. Too often teams muted their pass rush last season by consistently staying out of pass-rush situations because they could run the ball right at the Broncos' defense. So whether it's the first-, second- or third-teamers, the Broncos will have the chance to show in the preseason if they can dig in when they need to. If they finish among the league leaders in run defense this season, they'll also contend for the sack lead, they'll force teams to try their luck throwing the ball against what is likely the league's best secondary and Von Miller will be in the conversation for Defensive Player of the Year. And, oh, they'll win a bunch of games.

NFL plans to hire up to 24 full-time game officials

By Staff

Associated Press

August 10, 2017

The NFL will hire up to 24 full-time game officials.

The league will begin hiring between 21 and 24 full-time officials from among the current roster of 124 officials for this season. The decision was announced Wednesday.

"We believe this is a great development for NFL officiating overall and ultimately the quality of our game," said NFL executive vice president of football operations Troy Vincent. "We share a common goal, which is to make our game as great as it can possibly be, and look forward to working together on this new effort."

Full-time officials will be hired at each of the seven officiating positions and may serve on each of the 17 officiating crews. They will work collaboratively with their assigned crews, the league officiating staff and the NFL's football-related committees during the offseason.

"NFL officials are always looking to improve, and we believe that additional time, particularly in the offseason, will be positive," said NFL Referees Association executive director Scott Green. "We're looking forward to working together with the league on this effort."

Al Riveron, the NFL's new director of officiating, says the move is "about consistency."

"It will be an improved way to get the message out to our crews, to coaching staffs and the players," Riveron said. "The officials' first responsibility will be to us."

Unlike in most other pro sports, NFL officials have other jobs.

Riveron will have the full-timers put videos together and identify videos that will be helpful throughout the officiating program. They also will help with the developmental program.

Renck's Take: 3 keys to look for in Broncos' preseason opener

By Troy Renck
KMGH
August 10, 2017

My Wednesday morning: Land in Chicago. Check phone. Put headphones back on and crawl into the overhead bin for more sleep. The Broncos' quarterbacks have yet to throw a preseason pass, and they are under siege. A report, based on information from the Cincinnati side, circulated saying the Broncos were pursuing Bengals backup A.J. McCarron.

Multiple NFL sources told Denver7 the report was false. Broncos president of football operations John Elway took to Twitter to dismiss the speculation.

"Rumor of us being interested in anyone other than the QBs we have is another example of irresponsible, fake news!!"

Elway has repeatedly praised Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch over the last five months. Going to McCarron would signal a desperate move, unseating Siemian, the current leader in the derby, or Lynch, the kid with the high upside, with a career backup who is in line to make huge money in 2018.

Which brings us to my take -- 3 keys to watch in the preseason opener:

1) 'Sup, QBs?

The Broncos need improved play from their quarterback after ranking 26th in red zone touchdown percentage and fourth in three-and-outs last season. They are determined to get a better read after two preseason games. At that point, a starter will likely be named. And if the competition fizzles, perhaps the Broncos would look at external options. For now, they are intrigued by Siemian and Lynch, in part, because offensive coordinator Mike McCoy is promising an attack that will "be uptempo, that will change week to week, and (be) exciting for our fans."

Siemian and Lynch will play a quarter, to a quarter-and-a-half, receiving roughly 16 plays. Siemian has gained rhythm over the last four days, admitting something "clicked" during the past week. He appears decisive and comfortable. Can he translate it to the game, and establish an insurmountable lead in the derby? Lynch has struggled since the pads came on which coincided with the playbook growing. He needs to ace the game to close ground. Lynch has the hardware to do it, but needs the software. That's not a knock, only a reminder that the NFL is a mental game.

2) Run with it

The Broncos' belief in offensive improvement lies in McCoy's genius -- as coined by Derek Wolfe and Aqib Talib -- and the upgrades along the line. From coach Vance Joseph to Elway to McCoy, all believe Denver will run the ball better after averaging 92.8 yards per game last season. So watch Thursday's game from the inside out. See how rookie left tackle Garrett Bolles, right guard Ron Leary and right tackle Menelik Watson perform. Running backs C.J. Anderson, Stevan Ridley, Juwan Thompson and De'Angelo

Henderson will receive reps with Jamaal Charles' debut anticipated against San Francisco. Ridley is an X-factor. How he plays could impact what Charles needs to show in the preseason to make the team.

3) Roster roulette

Joseph let out a secret Monday. Preseason, um, is not like it used to be. The Broncos are looking to make decisions on about 15 players regarding their final roster. Remember, there is no parsing of the cuts. The roster drops from 90 to 53, meaning scouts must be on point as nearly 1,000 names hit the waiver wire at once. A position to monitor Thursday: Defensive back. Can rookie Brendan Langley become the Broncos' fourth corner ahead of Lorenzo Doss? Will Chris Lewis-Harris grab a roster spot? Where does hard-hitting safety Jamal Carter, a college free agent, fit in the mix? And upfront what about Pot Roast Jr., Tyrique Jarrett? Can he help in the run game? Offensively, is this the season Jordan "Sunshine" Taylor loses out in a numbers game following the drafting of Carlos Henderson and Isaiah McKenzie?

Nobody remembers the preseason. But these games matter to a large chunk of the roster. And for the Broncos, that includes the quarterback.

The Pick Six: Denver Mayor Michael Hancock on what kind of mayor Von Miller would be

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
August 10, 2017

1. Which Bronco on the current team would make the best mayor?

"I'll be honest with you. I think you've got people like Chris Harris [Jr.] I think Von Miller would make an awesome mayor."

2. What kind of mayor would Von Miller be?

"He'd be very inclusive. It's all about the ability to get people excited and get behind a vision and an objective, and I think Von Miller, quite frankly, can sell anything. And he can get people excited and move them forward. So I think he'd be a phenomenal mayor."

3. You were a part of the new Bud Light commercial for Terrell Davis' Hall of Fame induction. How cool was it to give him your Mile High Salute?

"Long overdue for Terrell. I was honored they asked me to be a part of it. I watched Terrell's entire career here, from the hit in Japan to his farewell, so I'm proud to be a part of it. ... He deserves every bit of it."

4. We all know your first career, long before politics, was being Huddles, a Broncos mascot in the 1980s. So you may be a little biased, but why is Huddles better than Miles?

"Because he's Miles' dad. Dad is always better than the son. No, it was a great experience. I'll tell you Miles is much more agile and athletic than Huddles ever was. The uniforms are much better. They hire gymnasts now and his personality, quite frankly, exudes through the uniform. So he does a phenomenal job."

5. Did you bring this record crowd?

"Yeah, I brought seven thousand friends with me. They're coming to cheer on the Denver Broncos. It's an easy sell in our metro region, to come in and support the Broncos. Everybody is excited about this team."

6. You come to training camp every year, so you've seen that is very much a community gathering. What is it about the Broncos that are so important to the area?

"The Broncos are such an indelible part of who we are as a city, as a region and really as a state. So everyone feels a sense of ownership, and that's a powerful, powerful thing, when people feel like this is our team and you'll often hear fans talk about, 'That's our quarterback,' or, 'We need to not pay someone so much,' that sort of thing, as if they're the person writing the checks. But the fans take an ownership of this team and I think that's why you see so many people check on their team."

Paul Klee: As Broncos open preseason in Chicago, QB competition should be decided — It's Trevor Siemian

By Paul Klee

Colorado Springs Gazette

August 10, 2017

For as long as the Broncos use the most convenient of the conjunctions — “or” — I am going to employ it as well.

Today I'll clean out the garage ... or I won't. I'm going to sell this juicer on Craigslist ... or I'll just keep it and make delicious juice. I'm going to work out at 6 a.m. tomorrow ... or I'm going to sleep in.

See how nice “or” is? Problem is, it's not very productive. Give a man an out, he might just take it. Trim the options to one and that's when stuff gets done.

By league rule, the Broncos were obliged to release their first depth chart of the season Monday. Lord knows they didn't want to. The position that matters the most around these hills, where “The Decision” carries import comparable to a presidential election, complete with allegations of fake news, was QB. Anyway, here's how the position looked on the depth chart:

Trevor Siemian ... OR... Paxton Lynch.

Nice, but not very productive.

The Broncos must know by now the best option to open the 2017 season is Trevor Siemian. (After 2017 is a separate conversation.) Yes, the preseason that begins Thursday at Chicago could be useful in their final decision. But the intangibles that have lifted Siemian above Lynch in training camp are unlikely to change in exhibition games: maturity, trust from teammates and, if last year is an indication, ability to grasp a full playbook.

Any day now the Broncos should — to borrow the advice John Elway gave Tim Tebow — pull the trigger. Name Siemian the starter ... or waste precious practice reps as the regular season inches closer.

Have you seen the Broncos' schedule? It's the Hunger Games, and with four of the first five at home, anything shy of a 3-2 start digs a sizable hole. An extra two weeks of the first-team offense working only with the first-team quarterback would be beneficial to all parties involved.

Yes, even Paxton Lynch. The Broncos did Lynch a favor by tabbing him QB2 against the Bears. His best chance of creeping back into this competition is to beat up on a bad team's backups. His confidence appears wobbly, evidenced by Lynch launching a football into a wall out of frustration, turning heads in the indoor practice facility, and not in a good way.

Rolling with Siemian out of the gate also takes the pressure off Lynch. This camp is the most pressure he's faced as a quarterback, and the result has been footballs thrown at a wall. Lynch's best

performance as a Bronco came last season in Week 4 — a game at Tampa in which he wasn't expected to play, so not much was expected of him. Blessed with a 7-0 lead, Lynch spelled Siemian, and the Broncos trimmed the playbook to fit what he knew.

No pressure, no problem.

But the way his shoulders slump after mistakes in practice do little to suggest Lynch is ready for a September against Philip Rivers on "Monday Night Football," the NFC's reigning No. 1 seed in the Cowboys, a road game against the Bills (and former Broncos offensive coordinator Rick Dennison, who lamented Lynch's limited knowledge of the playbook last season) and the new-and-improved Raiders. Denver's is a smart and volatile locker room. No one in there would bat an eye — or poke one — if Siemian is named the starter.

But the loud, proud "No Fly Zone" knows if it has figured out that Lynch inevitably throws to the right hash mark, opposing defensive coordinators will see the same. Even the most ardent members of Team Paxton — a special interest group that includes roughly 98 percent of Denver media, so good luck to Siemian getting a fair appraisal from the locals this season — must admit Ol' Trev's been better than Action Paxton.

Not just in this training camp. For over a year now.

Lynch is only 23. It's a safe bet he matures down the road, but his training camp has been this bad: Alfred Williams, a high-profile member of Denver's twin Super Bowl champs in the '90s, declared on 104.3 FM "The Fan" that Kyle Slotter, an undrafted prospect who played only one full season of quarterback in college, is a better option right now than Lynch.

"No, no, no. No, no, no, no, no, guys," Vance Joseph said recently when asked if a decision has been made on the quarterbacks. "No, no, no. No, no, no."

Just to be clear on what I'm saying: neither quarterback has inspired confidence the Broncos are a threat to the Patriots in the AFC. If Handsome Tom avoids the age wall, everyone outside Foxboro is playing for second. And the Patriots must be chuckling about all of this, by the way. The only team in their division with a shot to beat them, the Dolphins, just hitched their wagon to Jay Cutler. And the only team in the conference with their number, the Broncos, has an "or" tagged to its quarterback depth chart.

But when you stick to the topic at hand — Who gives the Broncos a shot to make the playoffs and, you know, see what happens? — it's Trevor Siemian.

Do the Broncos have a long-term answer at quarterback? No.

Do they have a clear winner in this quarterback competition? Yes — no ifs, ands or ors about it.

David Ramsey: 3 things to watch when Broncos battle Bears

By David Ramsey
Colorado Springs Gazette
August 10, 2017

One – The quarterbacks

It's fascinating for fans to ponder a quarterback controversy. Lines are drawn. Strong feelings develop. In Colorado this summer, Trevor Siemian vs. Paxton Lynch became the dominant sports conversation. The topic has rescued many a lagging conversation and added fuel to sports talk radio. But a quarterback controversy is draining for a team. Coach Vance Joseph and offensive coordinator Mike McCoy must soon decide who will lead the Bronco offense, and it won't be a simple decision. Trevor Siemian, the incumbent, has more experience and throws with more accuracy. Paxton Lynch boasts a stronger arm and more potential. Neither quarterback has taken control of the battle to start. The controversy soon will end, and Thursday's game should play a crucial part in the struggle to seize the starting job.

Two – The running game

A sluggish running game is a prime reason the Broncos missed the playoffs in 2016. The Broncos stumbled to 28th (out of 32 teams) in yards per game, which left the offense one-dimensional and predictable. (A powerful running game doesn't solve everything. The 2011 offense, powered by Tim Tebow, led the NFL in rushing with 164 yards per game, and the Broncos finished 8-8.) Vance Joseph gave the running game a feeble endorsement, first saying it was the most improved slice of the offense before adjusting his praise. "Running back," he said. "I would say yes. Sort of." Jamaal Charles boasts the potential to remove the "sort of" from descriptions of the run game, but we won't see him against the Bears. The longtime Chiefs superstar still is recovering from severe damage to his knee. We will see C.J. Anderson, who says he is lighter and quicker and better. "If it's time to bulk some muscle and hit somebody in the mouth, call No. 22," Anderson said, referring to himself. Anderson promises a more powerful rushing attack. We'll start to see Thursday if his promise will come true.

Three - The rookie offensive tackle

The Bronco offensive line was a mess in 2016. Trevor Siemian was often on the run, trying to escape pass rushers who were barely hindered by the Bronco line. Garrett Bolles, a 6-foot-5, 300-pound left tackle, was drafted to lessen the mess. He faces a tough challenge against the Bears. He'll battle against Leonard Floyd (the ninth pick of the 2016 draft) and Willie Young, who combined for 14.5 sacks in 2016. Bolles is a fascinating rookie. He arrives in the NFL as a 25-year-old who spent two years in Colorado Springs on a Mormon mission effort. He's never seen an NFL game in person. He's been solid in training camp, impressing Joseph with his work against the Broncos' fierce pass rush. Against the Bears, in the first NFL game he's ever seen, he'll start to reveal if he was worthy of first-round selection.

NFL quarterback competitions: Where each race stands as preseason begins

By Lorenzo Reyes

USA Today

August 10, 2017

Position battles are being waged all across the country in NFL training camps, but the stakes are highest at quarterback, with four jobs up for grabs.

Some players have already taken strong first steps to securing starting gigs, while others have shown they need more work.

With every team now set to open its preseason schedule within the next few days, here's an update of the QB battles through two weeks of training camp.

Denver Broncos

First-year coach Vance Joseph listed Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch as co-starters on the first official depth chart of the preseason, but Siemian appears to have taken an early lead in the race. Siemian has limited his mistakes in training camp and is building off of his first year leading the offense, in which he started 14 games and threw for 3,401 yards and 18 touchdowns against 10 interceptions.

When the Broncos face the Chicago Bears for Thursday night's exhibition game, Siemian will start. Joseph plans, however, for Lynch to start Aug. 19's preseason game against the San Francisco 49ers. Joseph said that "games matter," meaning that the performance of each in their live reps should be a key factor in determining a Week 1 starter. But by most accounts, Lynch – last year's first-round pick – has some serious ground to make up.

Cleveland Browns

Brock Osweiler will start Cleveland's preseason opener Thursday night against the New Orleans Saints, but don't read too much into that decision. The reason coach Hue Jackson gave for the move was curious.

"Brock hasn't really gotten any first team reps and this will give him that chance," Jackson said Monday in a statement.

That makes it sound like the decision is more motivated by doing due diligence than Osweiler taking a commanding lead.

Incumbent starter Cody Kessler will enter the game second, and rookie second-round selection DeShone Kizer will be third. Kessler, though, has struggled in practices. Kizer, on the other hand, has flashed potential. But the Notre Dame product made some poor throws in a recent scrimmage and has been far too inaccurate to make a case for himself as the Week 1 starter. Kizer needs to have strong showings against the Saints and then the New York Giants on Aug. 21 to be a legitimate option.

As Jackson clarified in a news conference after the Osweiler announcement: "This thing is not over by any stretch."

But this is clearly a big step for Osweiler. Kessler entered training camp as the No. 1 passer on the depth chart because of his experience with the team. If Osweiler plays well and limits mistakes in preseason games, however, the job could be his to lose.

New York Jets

Through two weeks of training camp, a few things are clear in the Jets competition. First, journeyman Josh McCown appears to be the early leader after he has played almost all of the first-team reps. And two, his only challenger is second-year passer Christian Hackenberg, who has shown improvements after last year's tough rookie season.

Hackenberg did get practice reps with the starters on Tuesday, but all indications are that McCown will start Saturday night against the Tennessee Titans. The team's first depth chart of the year listed Hackenberg as third behind Bryce Petty, but the practice reps tell a far different story and are a better indication of the landscape.

It likely comes down to what happens in the preseason games. Hackenberg did not dress for any regular season games last year, so how he responds to live action is still a big unknown. The Jets know what McCown brings, and the 38-year-old is not their long-term future at quarterback. If Hackenberg underwhelms in exhibition games, though, McCown may win the job by default.

Houston Texans

Incumbent Tom Savage entered camp as the No. 1 and has held onto the role even with the looming presence of first-round rookie Deshaun Watson, whom the team traded up 13 spots to draft. Coach Bill O'Brien has consistently said that Savage is the team's starter, and he recently told USA TODAY Sports that he will not use a two-quarterback system.

Watson has impressed in practices with his mobility, accuracy, arm strength, work ethic and leadership skills. But it's clear that for him to see the field early on in the regular season, it will take either an injury, or for Savage to start to struggle significantly.

In his first audition Wednesday against the Carolina Panthers, Watson completed 15 of 25 passes for 179 yards, while Savage connected on 9 of 11 attempts for 69 yards.

10 players to watch in NFL preseason: Christian McCaffrey highlights talented group

By Michael Middlehurst-Schwartz

USA Today

August 10, 2017

Context is everything in the NFL preseason.

For many stars and established veterans, the exhibitions have little value beyond breaking out of a training camp cycle. Yet for those trying to cling to one of the final spots on a 53-man roster or win a starting role, the stage could define the coming year.

Mining for the meaning of individual preseason performances can be tricky, but these 10 players are worth keeping an eye on:

1. Christian McCaffrey, RB, Carolina Panthers

Fellow running back Jonathan Stewart's claim that no one can guard McCaffrey one-on-one will soon be put to the test. Clips of the former Stanford star shaking teammates Luke Kuechly and Thomas Davis have raised the already lofty hype for the Panthers' top pick. McCaffrey might not be fully unleashed in the preseason as Cam Newton recovers from a shoulder injury, but he stands out as one of the most important pieces in Carolina's needed offensive transformation.

2. Deshaun Watson, QB, Houston Texans

While fellow first-round picks Mitchell Trubisky and Patrick Mahomes head for what looks to be redshirt years in their rookie seasons, Watson is in the thick of a legitimate quarterback competition with Tom Savage. Texans coach Bill O'Brien has spoken of his top selection in mostly superlative terms, saying he's "ahead of any rookie quarterback I've ever been around." But therein lies the rub: Watson still might need an outstanding preseason — as well as a few missteps by Savage — to earn the reins to a playoff team early in his first year.

3. Paxton Lynch, QB, Denver Broncos

Time to see if the Broncos' presumed future at quarterback is ready for the present. Lynch had the luxury of lowered expectations as he learned the intricacies of being an NFL quarterback in his rookie year, making two starts as a fill-in when Trevor Siemian was hurt. Now the 6-foot-7, 244-pound passer has to show Vance Joseph enough consistency and promise to convince the Broncos' new coach to make a change behind center for the 27th-ranked offense in 2016.

4. Dalvin Cook, RB, Minnesota Vikings

With Latavius Murray still working his way back from an ankle ailment, the former Florida State star is atop the Vikings' current depth chart and has an open runway to the starting job. Cook has drawn praise from coaches and teammates alike, including on the pass blocking that could make him a three-down

threat. He'll have to prove that his poor testing at the scouting combine was an aberration and won't hinder his ability to be the same big-play weapon (48 total TDs in three years) he was in college.

5. Jamaal Williams, RB, Green Bay Packers

As the first of three running backs selected by Green Bay in April, the fourth-round selection from BYU has already separated himself from his fellow rookies and could make a play for a substantial role. Supplanting Ty Montgomery as a starter is a tall order, given that the former wide receiver averaged 5.9 yards per carry in limited work after transitioning to his new position. But Williams has already made his mark in training camp with his pass blocking, an area in which Montgomery still needs more polish.

6. Cooper Kupp, WR, Los Angeles Rams

Jumping from Eastern Washington to the NFL could make for a jarring transition, but Kupp is already on track to earn a spot as a slot receiver on the first-team offense. With both second-year quarterback Jared Goff still finding his footing as he adapts to Sean McVay's offense, Kupp could be a valuable safety valve - if he can consistently create separation against cornerbacks.

7. Myles Jack, LB, Jacksonville Jaguars

No. 4 overall pick Leonard Fournette will be the center of attention for many as he moves into what could be a featured role at running back, but don't look past Jack. The do-everything defender was limited as a rookie as he continued to recover from a knee injury suffered in his final year at UCLA, but he now takes over for veteran Paul Posluszny as the playcaller at middle linebacker. With last year's No. 6 defense making personnel improvements elsewhere, Jack's performance could be one of the key factors for this unit to join the league's elite.

8. Taco Charlton, DE, Dallas Cowboys

Regardless of how long defensive end Tyrone Crawford is out with an ankle injury suffered Tuesday, the Cowboys' deficiencies along the front four are evident. David Irving and Damontre Moore will both serve multi-game suspensions, while Randy Gregory remains banned indefinitely. Charlton is a project but can create havoc in the passing game, a needed feature for a Dallas defense that will lean on creating turnovers and big plays to help hide its shortcomings.

9. Robert Nkemdiche, DT, Arizona Cardinals

Having his work ethic criticized by Bruce Arians and recording one tackle in five games as a rookie raised concerns about Nkemdiche and the path he had set out on as a pro. But the former No. 1 overall recruit appears to be stepping up in the wake of longtime cornerstone Calais Campbell's departure, as Arians and others have lauded him for a rededicated approach. Nkemdiche already showed some impressive flashes in the Hall of Fame Game, but a defense that lost five starters will need him to be the disruptive force he's shown himself he can be in stretches.

10. Eddie Vanderdoes, DT, Oakland Raiders

Though much has been made of the Raiders' ascension to expected contender status, last year's 26th-ranked defense still has some significant unknowns - especially up front. A third-round pick, Vanderdoes

has impressed in training camp by consistently establishing a push up front. Alongside fellow rookie Marquel Lee at middle linebacker, Vanderdoes is penciled in as a projected starter who will be counted on to give offenses more to worry about than reigning defensive player of the year Khalil Mack.

NFL to hire first group of full-time officials

By Lindsay H. Jones

USA Today

August 10, 2017

The NFL will finally have full-time officials.

The league and the NFL Referees Association announced Wednesday a joint agreement to hire between 21-24 full-time officials for the 2017 season. Those positions will come from the current pool of 124 officials.

The full-time officials will be hired at each of the seven officiating positions and may work on any of the 17 officiating crews. They will also have additional duties working with league staff in the offseason.

“We believe this is a great development for NFL officiating overall and ultimately the quality of our game,” Troy Vincent, the NFL’s executive vice president of football operations, said in a statement.

Previously all NFL officials were part-time employees who held other jobs outside of their refereeing duties.

The push to hire full-time officials has intensified in recent years as criticism of officiating has intensified after several high-profile questionable calls (or non-calls), like Dallas Cowboys receiver Dez Bryant’s non-catch in a playoff game against Green Bay in 2014, as well as issues with calling pass interference and hits on the quarterback.

The idea is that having referees working on officiating full-time could help increase preparation, consistency and communication.

Still, the addition of full-time won’t change the biggest challenge officials face, which is making judgment calls in real time. Plays like pass interference and holding are considered judgment calls and are non-reviewable.

NFL Training Camp WR/TE Battles: The Must-Watch Competitions Among Pass-Catchers

By Chris Burke
MMQB
August 10, 2017

We've laid out which quarterback battles still have to be decided during the preseason. Ditto for the running backs.

Next up, it's the other playmakers on offense: wide receivers and tight ends. Even more so than in the backfield, the fallout from at least a few of these competitions will send recognizable names to street when teams have to cut their rosters down to 53 guys.

Here are 11 of the better WR/TE battles still ongoing:

ARIZONA: JOHN BROWN VS. HIS HEALTH

Way back at the NFL combine in February, Arizona coach Bruce Arians declared it a "wide-open competition" to find the starter opposite Larry Fitzgerald on the outside. But he added, "Hopefully, John Brown can come back and be as healthy as he was two years ago."

That's the key. In 2015, his second season in the league, Brown topped the 1,000-yard mark and seems destined to repeat the feat on a consistent basis. Last season, Brown battled leg injuries throughout and in October was diagnosed as having the sickle-cell trait, and his production dropped to 39 receptions for 517 yards.

The Cardinals believe they can manage that health issue, but Brown already has missed time this summer with minor hamstring and quad issues. The uncertainty has left the door open for J.J. Nelson and Jaron Brown (coming back from an ACL tear).

BUFFALO: ZAY JONES VS. ANDRE HOLMES AND ANQUAN BOLDIN

The Bills added another wrinkle to their positional battle Monday, when they nabbed Boldin from free agency. The 36-year-old is limited athletically for his position these days, but he led the Lions in TD receptions a year ago (eight) and remains an ultra-reliable pass catcher.

At this point in his career, Boldin is best suited as a move-the-sticks guy from the slot. That doesn't help the Bills decide whom to pair with Sammy Watkins in two-receiver sets. For what it's worth (answer: very little), Holmes was listed as a starter on Buffalo's first depth chart of August.

The reality is that the Bills would prefer Jones to do enough in the coming weeks to lock down the No. 2 job, with Boldin hopping onto the field in three-wide sets. Holmes is the odd man out in that scenario.

CHICAGO: ZACH MILLER VS. DION SIMS AND ADAM SHAHEEN

Sims just signed a three-year, \$18 million contract (with \$10 million guaranteed); Shaheen was a second-round pick in April, at No. 45 overall. The Bears are going to use both of those players, the amount they do probably contingent on how quickly Shaheen, who played his college ball at D-II Ashland, can acclimate himself as a blocker.

What, then, of the 32-year-old Miller? He has been a solid producer for the Bears when healthy, posting a career-best 486 yards receiving in just 10 games last year. The problem is that he rarely has stayed 100% for long. He's listed as the second-teamer for Thursday's preseason opener, behind Sims.

Chicago also boasts a pair of developmental tight ends in Daniel Brown and Ben Braunecker. Miller's veteran presence is valuable on a roster that's in flux, but are the Bears prepared to cut one or multiple young TEs to let him hang around?

CINCINNATI: JOHN ROSS VS. BRANDON LAFELL

Until Ross can get on the field following his offseason shoulder surgery, it's pointless to pencil him in as a starter. Rookies face a steep learning curve as it is, let alone when they're delayed into August. So, for now, LaFell looks like the sidekick to A.J. Green. Ross, 2016 second-rounder Tyler Boyd and '16 sixth-rounder Cody Core are fighting to be next up.

The outlook could change in a heartbeat if and when Ross joins the fray. LaFell outperformed expectations last season (64 catches, 862 yards, six TDs), but that's close to his ceiling. He's 30 years old now, with a contract that includes no guaranteed money beyond this season.

DENVER: VIRGIL GREEN VS. JEFF HEUERMAN AND A.J. DERBY

The two most dangerous pass-catching TE threats on the roster are Heurman and rookie Jake Butt. The former tore his ACL as a rookie in 2015 and has nine career catches; the latter is rehabbing his own ACL tear, suffered in December, and—barring a miracle—will not be ready for the start of the regular season.

Even with a full deck, Green might hold his starting spot because of his blocking ability. Letting him live inline, with either Derby or Heurman shifting around the formation as receiving threats is probably the best this group can offer.

INDIANAPOLIS: PHILLIP DORSETT VS. CHESTER ROGERS AND KAMA AIKEN

T.Y. Hilton and Donte Moncrief are cemented as the Colts' No. 1 and No. 2 receivers, respectively. Per Mike Wells of ESPN.com, the third slot "is, without a doubt, Rogers' to lose."

Rogers had some moments as a UDFA pickup last season. But were he to retain the third receiver job, it would be a glaring indictment on Dorsett, a 2015 draft selection. There has been very little buzz out of Colts camp surrounding Aiken, who signed a cheap one-year deal to move from Baltimore to Indianapolis this offseason.

L.A. RAMS: THE ROOKIES VS. THE VETS

In one corner the Rams have free-agent addition Robert Woods and the perennially frustrating Tavon Austin. In the other, it's third-round pick Cooper Kupp and fourth-rounder Josh Reynolds. As the preseason begins, it's a split decision—Woods, Kupp and Austin all were listed as starters ahead of the Rams' preseason opener, but Austin has been battling a hamstring issue.

Kupp is almost a lock to start, as of early August.

"I see a mature rookie," Rams coach Sean McVay said, via a team transcript. "I think one of the things that really impressed us about Kupp, just watching him in college is that [he is] one of those receivers that sees the game through the quarterback's eyes. ... He's one of the more mature rookies that I've ever been around and we're expecting some good things from him moving forward."

Reynolds is dealing with his own hamstring injury, and second-year receiver Mike Thomas (who's facing a four-game suspension) just came off the PUP list. This has the makings of a competition, but it's not there yet.

MINNESOTA: LAQUON TREADWELL VS. JAIRUS WRIGHT, RODNEY ADAMS, MICHAEL FLOYD, ETC.
Is Treadwell ready for legitimate playing time, following his complete bust of a rookie season? He reportedly has been working with the first-team in heavy doses, joining Stefon Diggs and Adam Thielen in three-receiver sets.

The window on Treadwell's opportunity may well be four games. That's how long Minnesota will be without Floyd, as he serves a suspension for violating the league's substance-abuse policy. No one else among the Vikings' WR depth chart has pushed his way onto the field, but Floyd could once he's back.

OAKLAND: CORDARRELLE PATTERSON VS. SETH ROBERTS

The Vikings spent four seasons trying to figure out how to make Patterson a larger part of the offense, only to settle repeatedly for using him as a kick returner and bit weapon. He did catch a career-high 52 passes last season, but for just 453 yards (8.7 yards per catch).

Roberts has had similar production, decent but not necessarily good—last season, he notched 38 receptions for 397 yards and five TDs.

One of the two will be the Raiders' top target out of the slot, as Amari Cooper and Michael Crabtree handle the workload outside. Patterson's breakaway speed and size (6' 2", 220 lbs.) continue to make him an intriguing option. Can Oakland unlock him in ways Minnesota never could?

PITTSBURGH: MARTAVIS BRYANT VS. THE NFL

The Steelers are still waiting on the league to reinstate Bryant from his indefinite suspension. (Gerry Dulac of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reports that moment could come as soon as this week.) Until it does, Bryant remains unable to practice with his team.

Whenever he can play again, Bryant would drop back onto the depth chart as Pittsburgh's No. 2 receiver, behind only Antonio Brown. In his stead, the Steelers have the likes of Sammie Coates and Darrius Heyward-Bey for an outside role; Eli Rogers and rookie Juju Smith-Schuster have been battling in the slot.

Only the NFL can end this "battle."

SAN FRANCISCO: JEREMY KERLEY VS. TRENT TAYLOR

"Trent's not scared of anything," 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan said of Taylor last week, via the team's website. "He's not a huge guy, but he's not going to turn anything down. He's going to do his job. He's going to get in front of a guy and he's going to bring it as hard as he can. If you don't do that in our offense, you can't play it for us."

Is all that enough to bounce Kerley from the starting slot role? Kerley caught a career-high 64 passes last season, but that was in a different system, with a different coach and quarterback. The 49ers are not going to commit to him just because he's been around longer than the rookie Taylor.

On the flip side, the slot role should be better defined this year. Kerley essentially fell into No. 1 receiver duties a year ago (his 115 targets lapped the 49ers field). With Pierre Garcon on board and a somewhat stable situation at QB, Kerley could benefit from the relative calm.

Full-Time Officials: The NFL Finally Makes the Move

By Albert Breer

MMQB

August 10, 2017

On Wednesday, the NFLRA, the union for NFL officials, approved a joint plan with the league to begin implementing full-time officials immediately.

The goal will be to get to 21 to 24 full-time officials, though that could take some time. It's expected that there will be some full-timers in place before the start of the 2017 regular season next month.

"I think they're going to get plenty of applications," NFLRA executive director Scott Green told the MMQB.

Under the plan, negotiated by the league and union, each of seven field officiating positions will be represented, with no more than five full-timers coming from one position. The full-time officials will draw from the current roster of 124 game officials, and the full-time officials will be permitted to have outside employment so long as, as Green explained it, "the hire will recognize the NFL as its primary employer."

Of particular importance to the NFLRA was that becoming full-time wasn't compulsory for any official—and that they'd retain the option of staying part-time. By spreading the allotment of 21 to 24 spots among the seven different field positions, it shouldn't be hard to accomplish that.

"They started talking about it back in May," Green said. "And the concept for us was to get as many guys [full-time jobs] as possible. Initially the numbers were low, and there was a focus on just the referees, and we were encouraged that they were willing to look at additional people, and at all positions. We think it's beneficial. Once that was on track, we got work tasks, their vision, and making sure it wasn't compulsory."

From the NFL's standpoint, according to a league source, it was essential that communication between the field officials and its Park Ave. office was ramped up—and the feeling is that's been accomplished too.

The full-time officials will be expected to be in New York at least once a month, and can be called in on other occasions (with 48 hours notice required). The thought is that better back-and-forth between new officiating czar Al Riveron and his staff, and those in the field, will lead to more consistency in officiating across the board.

What does the league want to eliminate? One crew being known for holding, another crew being known for pass interference, and coaches planning for games accordingly. As the NFL sees it, better lines of communication from the field to the office should help with that.

As for the differences in jobs, the biggest ones will come during the designated "dark period" that runs from the end of each individual official's season until May 15. The NFL is not allowed to use the part-timers in any way over that stretch. Now, however, the league will have officials working during that

time, which will give them input on rules changes and other competition committee decisions in the winter and spring.

The league has emphasized that its focus has been on improving the state of officiating throughout this process. Safe to say, the NFLRA is OK with that.

“We would hope to see that, too,” said Green. “But the fact is, other sports have had full-time officials for years, and they get criticized plenty. It’s part of the job.”

And now, after a laborious process—it’s been almost five years since the NFL and NFLRA agreed in their 2012 CBA to experiment with full-time officials—there will be a little more to each of those jobs, which can’t hurt.

“We’re happy to be able to come to an agreement, and we’re committed to making it work,” Green said. “Anything that helps the game, we’re 100 percent for that.”

John Elway responds to rumors that Broncos are trying to trade for a QB

By John Breech
CBS Sports
August 10, 2017

It doesn't look like the Broncos quarterback competition will be getting a mystery third contender.

With the battle between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch going nowhere so far, there had been at least one report that the Broncos were interested in trading for another quarterback who could possibly win the starting job in Denver.

@1043TheFan

BREAKING: Sandy Clough is reporting that the #Broncos are aggressively pursuing a trade for #Bengals backup QB AJ McCarron. #Decision17

8:02 AM - Aug 9, 2017

34 Replies 121 Retweets 108 likes

If any Broncos fans were hoping that AJ McCarron -- or any other quarterback -- might end up Denver, you might want to give up on that hope now because John Elways says it's not going to happen.

The Broncos general manager took to Twitter on Wednesday and used one of Donald Trump's favorite phrases to deny the report that the Broncos are interested in trading for a quarterback.

@johnelway

Rumor of us being interested in anyone other than the QBs we have is another example of irresponsible, fake news!!

8:39 AM - Aug 9, 2017

1,672 Replies 3,494 Retweets 12,076 likes

The only thing Elway left out in that tweet was the #FakeNews hashtag. If Elway isn't trying to trade for a quarterback, that means he's comfortable moving forward with either Siemian or Lynch, which could mean Broncos fans are in for another ugly offensive season. With Siemian under center in 2016, the Broncos offense ranked 27th overall in the NFL in total yards.

It's not like Lynch would exactly be a step up, though. For one, he couldn't beat out Siemian for the starting job last season. Also, after just a week of camp, he seems to be trailing in the competition again this season.

Siemian sounds like a guy who expects to win the job. The former seventh-round pick said this week that he's already starting to feel comfortable in the system of new offensive coordinator Mike McCoy.

"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."

Although Siemian will be starting the team's first preseason game on Thursday, that does NOT mean he's going to be the team's starter. Broncos coach Vance Joseph made that clear on Tuesday when asked if the preseason start meant Siemian was going to be his guy during the regular season.

Basically, someone's going to win this competition, but it won't be AJ McCarron.

Broncos breakout star: Shane Ray will shake off injury to dominate in 2017

By Zack Kelberman
CBS Sports
August 10, 2017

Just because a player is drafted in the first-round doesn't mean he's a lock to start right away. Take Shane Ray, for example.

The Broncos traded up to choose the Missouri pass-rusher with the 23rd overall pick in the 2015 NFL Draft, then immediately sat him behind veteran DeMarcus Ware. Ray didn't start a game in his rookie season, totaling 15 tackles and four sacks as a situational defender.

It was more of the same in 2016. Ware was penciled in to start opposite Von Miller at outside linebacker, the same configuration that helped win the Super Bowl the previous year. That is, until Ware was bitten by the injury bug, forcing his removal from the lineup and the insertion of Ray.

The Broncos' defense didn't miss a beat.

Led by Miller's 13.5 takedowns, Denver finished third in the NFL in sacks (42) and fourth in total defense. They were buoyed by Ray, who doubled his sack total, jumping from four to eight. He also finished with the team's second-best pass-rushing rating (78.3), according to Pro Football Focus, and his overall PFF grade took a leap of more than 30 points last year:

@PFF

After improving in his second season, is Shane Ray ready to dominate in 2017?

4:16 AM - Jul 17, 2017

1 Reply 30 Retweets 91 likes

There's reason to believe he'll make another huge leap in 2017. But don't take my word for it ...

@nflnetwork

"The @Broncos have one of the best pass rushers in the game." - @WillieMcGinest on @StingRay56

6 Replies 150 Retweets 362 likes

With Ware out of the picture, the result of his abrupt offseason retirement, Ray finally was handed a full-time role at outside linebacker. And he's put in the work to reflect his new responsibilities, often sharing videos of his intense training on social media:

@Kelberman247

No days off for @StingRay56. Bill Belichick would be proud. #Broncos

6:52 PM - Jul 11, 2017

Replies 2 Retweets 5 likes

Momentum and job security on his side, Ray isn't aiming merely for double-digit sacks. His goals are much, much loftier -- one per game, 16 total.

"Nobody can block me for a whole game," Ray said, via the Broncos' official website. "One sack a game for me is equivalent to 16 games -- that's 16 sacks. That could lead the league, not to mention playoffs or any of that stuff. That's how I break stuff down for me and that's what I'm going to do."

The Broncos haven't had a defender reach 16 sacks in a season since Miller logged 18.5 in 2012. It is not an easy feat. Consider: Last year's Defensive Player of the Year, Oakland's Khalil Mack, recorded "only" 11 sacks. Mack's career high? 15.

Working against Ray is torn wrist ligament he suffered in late July that is scheduled to keep him sidelined for six-to-eight weeks. However, the Broncos hold out hope he'll be ready to play in Week 2, and if Ray winds up missing just one game this season, a breakout performance is well within reach.

In all likelihood, Ray will fall short of his goal. But the 24-year-old, entering his all-important third NFL year, will try his hardest to prove nobody can, in fact, block him.

That motivation alone vaults Ray among the league's breakout stars, soon to become a household name.

NFL to hire up to 24 full-time game officials for 2017

By Staff

NFL.com

August 10, 2017

Full-time game officials will be on the field this season.

The NFL will hire up to 24 full-time game officials for 2017 season from current crop of 124 officials, the league and the NFL Referees Association announced Wednesday.

The NFL and the NFLRA agreed to experiment with full-time officials as part of the last collective bargaining agreement and the NFLRA approved the move. The program will allow current officials to apply to become full-time.

"We believe this is a great development for NFL officiating overall and ultimately the quality of our game," said Troy Vincent, NFL executive vice president of football operations, in a statement. "We share a common goal, which is to make our game as great as it can possibly be, and look forward to working together on this new effort."

Full-time officials will be hired at each of the seven officiating positions.

The league believes the move to 21-24 full-time officials will enhance communication between officials working on and off the field during games. It also will give the league's officiating department a chance to work with the NFLRA in identifying effective ways to utilize off-field time for full-time game officials throughout the calendar year.

"NFL officials are always looking to improve, and we believe that additional time, particularly in the offseason, will be positive," said Scott Green, executive director of the NFLRA. "We're looking forward to working together with the league on this effort."

AJ McCarron report angers Denver Broncos' John Elway

By Mark Inabinett

AL.com

August 10, 2017

Denver Broncos general manager John Elway labeled a report that his team was "aggressively pursuing" a trade for Cincinnati Bengals backup quarterback AJ McCarron as "fake news" on Wednesday.

On Wednesday morning, Sandy Clough of Denver's KKFN-FM reported the Broncos were trying to swing a trade for the former Alabama star.

@1043TheFan

BREAKING: Sandy Clough is reporting that the #Broncos are aggressively pursuing a trade for #Bengals backup QB AJ McCarron. #Decision17

8:02 AM - Aug 9, 2017

34 Replies 121 Retweets 108 likes

McCarron was the subject of continuous trade speculation throughout this offseason. Rumors had him tagged for the Cleveland Browns, New York Jets and other quarterback-needy teams - including the Broncos -- even though Cincinnati coach Marvin Lewis consistently maintained the Bengals had no interest in trading McCarron.

Elway, a Hall of Fame quarterback for the Broncos as a player, said via Twitter that Denver isn't considering adding another quarterback with its first preseason game looming on Thursday night against the Chicago Bears.

@johnelway

Rumor of us being interested in anyone other than the QBs we have is another example of irresponsible, fake news!!

8:39 AM - Aug 9, 2017

1,678 Replies 3,501 Retweets 12,123 likes

The Broncos have four quarterbacks on their roster - Chad Kelly, Paxton Lynch, Trevor Siemian and Kyle Slotter.

Siemian started 14 games in his second NFL season in 2016, and Lynch started two after being selected by Denver in the first round of the 2016 NFL Draft. They are competing to be the Broncos' starting signal-caller in 2017.

Siemian's career passing-efficiency rating is 84.6, and Lynch's is 79.2. McCarron has a 97.1 rating in his NFL career.

Former Ole Miss standout Kelly was the final player picked in the 2017 NFL Draft, and Slotter is an undrafted rookie.

In a followup to Clough's story, Nicki Jhabvala, the Broncos writer for the Denver Post, reported there was no interest in obtaining McCarron at this time.

@NickiJhabvala

I'm told the Broncos are not trying to trade for AJ McCarron. "It's 150% false," source said.

8:11 AM - Aug 9, 2017

32 Replies 80 Retweets 155 likes

McCarron took only two regular-season snaps in 2016. But in 2015, he stepped in when Andy Dalton went out with a broken thumb, starting three regular-season games and a playoff contest.

McCarron was an All-State football and baseball player in Mobile at St. Paul's Episcopal, where he was the quarterback for the Saints' AHSAA Class 5A championship football team in 2007.

At Alabama, McCarron was the starting quarterback for the Crimson Tide's BCS national-championship teams for the 2011 and 2012 seasons. In 2013, McCarron won the Maxwell Award, presented annually to the nation's best all-around football player, and the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award, presented annually to the nation's outstanding senior or fourth-year quarterback. McCarron also was the runner-up in the balloting for the Heisman Trophy in 2013.

The Bengals kick off their four-game preseason schedule at 6:30 p.m. CDT Friday against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Fans in the Mobile area will be able to watch the game on WPMI-TV.

Broncos shoot down talk of A.J. McCarron trade

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
August 10, 2017

As the Broncos continue to watch Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch battle it out for the starting quarterback job, the team has shot down a third option not named Chad Kelly.

Nicki Jhabvala of the Denver Post reports, citing an unnamed source, that a report linking the Broncos to Bengals quarterback A.J. Carron is “150% false.”

Statistical impossibility notwithstanding, I think we get the point. And it makes sense, for various reasons.

First, the Bengals have asked for a lot for McCarron when contacted in the past about possibly trading him. Second, the Bengals at this point may be inclined to keep him around as a potential replacement in 2018 for Andy Dalton, if Dalton stinks it up this year. Third, trading for McCarron would put the Broncos in the awkward spot of having to justify whatever they give up to get him by either giving him a significant long-term deal or using the \$23-million-plus franchise tag in 2018. Fourth, trading for McCarron would represent a concession that they blew it when trading up in round one 16 months ago to get Paxton Lynch.

It's simply too late for an emergency option of that magnitude, and it would cost much more than the John Elway-led franchise ever would give up for a potential franchise quarterback. If Sieman isn't clearly better than Lynch, it makes much more sense to roll the dice with Lynch, figure out whether he's the guy, and then move on to other plans in 2018 if neither Siemian nor Lynch can get it done in 2017.

Elway dubs McCarron rumor “fake news”

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
August 10, 2017

The Broncos initially dealt with the rumor of a potential trade for Bengals quarterback A.J. McCarron by dabbling in statistical impossibilities. They’ve now gone on the record in a manner that pays homage to the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Broncos President of Football Operations and G.M. John Elway has taken to Twitter to respond to the McCarron rumor, without mentioning McCarron by name.

@johnelway

Rumor of us being interested in anyone other than the QBs we have is another example of irresponsible, fake news!!

8:39 AM - Aug 9, 2017

1,679 Replies 3,503 Retweets 12,128 likes

Why is Elway doing this? He knows that whoever wins the starting job will need to have the full support of the organization, from the top to the bottom. Allowing rumors of interest in other quarterbacks to linger will undermine the starter’s ability to lead, in the same way that drafting (to pull out a random name with no present relevance whatsoever) Tommy Maddox in the first round would.