

Kickin' It With Kiz: Love for Kyle Sloter most irrational form of Broncomania since Tim Tebow left town

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
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Kyle Sloter is an NFL back-up quarterback this year, but watch out next year. Sloter is John Elway. Trevor Siemian is Gary Kubiak. History repeats for the Broncos, with two great young quarterbacks.

– Mike, Genesee

Kiz: Broncomania means you can never love a player too much, even if the love is as irrational as Tebowmania. During the past 10 days, I've had young schoolboys and kindly grandmas tell me Sloter was the man. These are my peeps. God bless 'em. And God help 'em. Elway threw 300 touchdown passes in his NFL career. Kubiak started five NFL games. Sloter is a celebration of perseverance. But it's no better than a 50-50 proposition Sloter will ever complete five passes as a pro in games that count in the standings. Denver cut him Saturday. Blame Elway, not me.

You're absolutely correct in your assessment of the incompetence of the officiating at the Rocky Mountain Showdown. I am a 1974 CU alum and have been a season-ticket holder forever. But this 17-3 victory by the Buffaloes was one of the most difficult games to watch in memory. There was no fun. We just kept waiting for the next penalty flag to fly. We would love to have seen the real game between the Rams and Buffaloes. It could have been a classic.

– Pat, Golden

Kiz: The staff here at Kickin' It Headquarters, with substantial experience at hearing angry criticism lobbed from sports fans, feels a natural empathy for referees. Hey, we all make mistakes, and there are no mulligans in football. But there should be room for apology. If Pacific-12 Conference leadership has a shred of decency, it will offer condolences to the Rams for poor officiating that prevented us all from watching a great game.

Even we Wyoming fans know CSU got messed over by the Pac-12 officials. I think that might be what happens when teams like CSU embarrass Oregon State, a member of a power-five conference. Call me cynical.

– Oliver, Tulsa

Kiz: A Cowpoke, giving Rams Nation some love? I'd say that's sufficient to call you a sweetheart.

I honestly wonder if you consider yourself a journalist, Kiz. I know you can report. But I ask because most, if not all, of your work is commentaries. I don't know if I consider commentary to be journalism. But I'd really like your opinion.

– Alex, strongly opinionated

Kiz: Is it OK if I give you my journalistic opinion? News is stuff that really happens. I apply reporting skills to news, then offer my honest opinion. By the way: Just because somebody doesn't like my take on the news, doesn't mean it's fake.

And today's parting shot offers a contrarian theory why the addition Greg Holland and Ian Desmond has failed to keep the Rockies from playing like Fido during the dog days of summer.

My current projection for the Rockies is 81, maybe 83 victories. There weren't a lot of tears shed when Walt Weiss was let go as manager, but is Bud Black much better?

– Phil, cured of playoff fever

Kiszla: A sad day for Broncos Country: T.J. Ward gets the boot and Brock Osweiler is back

By Mark Kiszla
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John Elway kicks butt. He doesn't kiss and make up. So what the heck is Brock Osweiler doing back in Denver?

"It's just kind of funny how these things worked out," Elway said Saturday evening.

It's not funny. It's sad. Desperate times call for desperate measures. And the Broncos were desperate for help at quarterback. Elway called it a glaring hole.

But a week ago, if I had predicted Pro Bowl safety T.J. Ward would get cut from the team's 53-man roster and Osweiler would move back in with the Broncos fewer than 18 months after his acrimonious divorce from the Super Bowl 50 champs, you would have inserted your favorite marijuana joke here.

Don't ask me to explain the strangest cutdown day in franchise history, which left players shocked by Ward's departure and fans angry rookie favorite Kyle Slotter get dumped in favor of Osweiler, regarded as disloyal for signing a \$72 million contract with Houston.

But don't have a cow, Broncos Country. This is pro football. Personal feelings never get in the way of business.

Can fans forgive Osweiler? "He's going to need a little football rehab. We know that," Elway said. "We'll welcome with some open arms, and give him some love."

So where was the love – or the respect – for Ward?

By kicking Ward out the door, the Super Bowl window for the Broncos has not only been closed, it was slammed on the fingers of Von Miller, Aqib Talib and proud members of a defense that carried Denver to a championship.

Yes, the business of football can be cruel. NFL general managers don't trust anyone over 30. And Ward will celebrate his 31st birthday in December.

The Broncos have younger, cheaper and capable replacements for Ward in Justin Simmons and Will Parks. But the No Fly Zone is dead. Oh, it will still be tough to pass on Denver. What has been lost, however, is crucial and the most ephemeral thing in pro football: The sense that a locker room is a brotherhood.

When alerted last week that the Broncos were trying to squeeze a draft pick out of moving Ward rather than cutting the safety selected to the Pro Bowl three times, linebacker Brandon Marshall tweeted: "We better not trade the homie." Well, Elway has taken a wrecking ball to the team's sense of family. He has

done it with the same cold, calculating heart that allows New England's Bill Belichick to be a constant reminder loyalty is a one-way street in the NFL.

Among the Broncos, he was Boss Ward. His strong presence will be missed, especially on a team that has yet to fill the leadership void from the retirements of Peyton Manning and DeMarcus Ware.

"I was in that locker room. I didn't agree with every move that management made," Elway said. "You create those relationships in that locker room. That's important. And T.J. was a big part of that. I could tell you how many friends and people I had cut over the course of my career, and I didn't agree with all of them. But, you know, that's part of it. They understand, at least I hope they understand, that we've got to do what's best for the Denver Broncos."

The Denver defense is a big, messy toolbox of heavy hammers, sharp edges and loose screws. There's a lot of dangerous stuff that's hard to keep in the order. If you doubt it, I've got a video of Talib and linebacker Todd Davis bickering during the recent preseason game against San Francisco cued up for your viewing pleasure. The back-and-forth was as contentious as "Game of Thrones."

A year ago, coach Gary Kubiak no longer had the energy to keep all the big personalities in check. There was more than a crack between the offensive and defensive side of the locker room. It was a sinkhole, which swallowed Denver's playoff chances.

The opening four games for the Broncos are crucial for new coach Vance Joseph. He must beat the Chargers. The Cowboys won't go away quietly. There's never a good time for a trip to Buffalo. And the hated Raiders are intent on reasserting their dominance in the AFC West. If Denver goes 1-3 in that stretch, I'm afraid the authority of Joseph will disappear as quickly as Talib can rip a chain off your neck.

"Every move we're making is a football decision," Joseph said.

These moves ripped the heart out of the locker room and kicked Broncos Country in the gut.

Broncos form initial active roster; waive QB Kyle Sloter

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

September 3, 2017

The Broncos have their 53-man roster — at least for now.

The Broncos cut more than 20 players Saturday, including quarterback Kyle Sloter. The undrafted rookie from Northern Colorado had hoped to be in the running for the No. 3 quarterback spot in the wake of Paxton Lynch's shoulder injury.

Sloter started and played the entire fourth preseason game against Arizona on Thursday, earning high praise from coach Vance Joseph for his play: 15-of-23 passing, 220 yards, one touchdown and a 110.8 passer rating.

But with Lynch expected to miss at least the first few weeks of the season — maybe longer — the Broncos pursued veteran Brock Osweiler to fill the void at backup quarterback. They could try and keep Sloter on the practice squad but he would need to clear waivers.

"We'll see," general manager John Elway said. "He's definitely one of the ones that we are looking at. We're going to see how everything kind of pants out. There is no question that he is a candidate for us."

While trimming the roster, the Broncos placed rookie receiver Carlos Henderson (thumb) on injured reserve, and quarterback Chad Kelly (wrist) and tight end Jake Butt (knee) on the non-football injury list.

Shane Ray, the Broncos' starting outside linebacker who missed all of the preseason after undergoing wrist surgery, will be placed on injured reserve Sunday with a plan to bring him back at midseason when healthy. He would be eligible to return after eight weeks.

"It's kind of what we thought," Elway said. "With the surgery and where it falls is good for us, and here's why we decided to go with it: He has to be on IR for eight weeks. The bye week counts and then our eighth game is on a Monday night. With that being on a Monday night, the eighth Sunday counts as a game. So we'll get him back for the Kansas City game (on Oct. 30). So he's only going to miss six games. We didn't want to use that spot. He was not going to be back any earlier than that, and when he does come back he'll be really ready to go. Having that fall that way for us helped us with that extra slot."

Elway said the team will comb the waiver wires "to try to find the best player we can" to fill that slot.

Offensive lineman Michael Schofield and receiver Kalif Raymond, both of whom were on the bubble to make the final roster, were also waived on Saturday.

Schofield, according to a source, had asked to be traded when it became apparent there wouldn't be room for him among the final 53. The team tried to trade him, as they did Ty Sambrailo, but a deal couldn't be reached.

His exit finalized the Broncos' offensive line, with Garrett Bolles starting at left tackle, Max Garcia and Allen Barbre manning the left guard position, Matt Paradis starting at center, Ron Leary at right guard,

Menelik Watson at right tackle, and Donald Stephenson, Connor McGovern and Billy Turner serving as reserves.

Raymond played four games as a receiver and return specialist last season after spending time on the practice squad. After an impressive camp, he made a strong push for one of the final receiver spots on the roster. If he's not claimed on waivers, Raymond could be re-added to the practice squad Sunday.

Fellow receiver Marlon Brown was also cut, along with tight end Austin Traylor and veteran cornerback Chris Lewis-Harris.

Lewis-Harris played for Joseph in Cincinnati and signed with Denver to vie for the fourth cornerback spot behind Chris Harris, Aqib Talib and Bradley Roby. Though he was spoken of highly by his coaches who said they coveted a veteran in that position, the job went to rookie Brendan Langley. Lorenzo Doss was listed as the fifth cornerback.

After an impressive preseason, Shelby Harris was made the 53, but because the Broncos kept three quarterbacks, they are thin on the defense line. Kyle Peko was waived and Zach Kerr, who is nursing a knee injury, is listed as the backup for defensive end Derek Wolfe and nose tackle Domata Peko.

"We'll keep watching him and see what happens there," Elway said of Kerr. "We're going to look at the (waiver) wire and if there is a good football player that I think can help us, there is a possibility for us to do something like that."

The Broncos kept receiver Cody Latimer, whose name came up as a potential trade piece as he enters the final year of his contract. Jordan Taylor rounded out the Broncos group of six receivers.

After the team released safety T.J. Ward earlier Saturday, Justin Simmons was bumped to the top of the depth chart at strong safety. Jamal Carter was the lone undrafted rookie retained on the final 53, extending a streak the Broncos hold dear: For 13 of the past 14 seasons now, they have signed a college free agent to their active roster.

Joseph said he views Carter as a key piece of the secondary and special teams, who was everything he was billed to be on tape before the draft.

"Young, physical. He's going to be a great guy for Brock (Olivo) on special teams as a core guy," Joseph said. "He has the skills to play in the box and in the high zone and in the back end. It's impressive."

The Broncos can begin to form their 10-man practice squad after 10 a.m. MT Sunday, when the claiming period for those placed on waivers ends.

BRONCOS 2017 DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE

Quarterback

Trevor Siemian

Brock Osweiler — pending physical

Paxton Lynch (shoulder sprain)

Wide receiver
Demaryius Thomas
Bennie Fowler
Jordan Taylor

Left tackle
Garett Bolles
Donald Stephenson

Left guard
Max Garcia OR Allen Barbre

Center
Matt Paradis
Connor McGovern

Right guard
Ron Leary
Billy Turner

Right tackle
Menelik Watson
Donald Stephenson

Tight end
Virgil Green
Jeff Heurman
A.J. Derby

Wide receiver
Emmanuel Sanders
Cody Latimer
Isaiah McKenzie

Running back
C.J. Anderson
Jamaal Charles
(Devontae Booker) – wrist injury
De'Angelo Henderson

Fullback
Andy Janovich

DEFENSE

Left defensive end
Derek Wolfe

Zach Kerr
Shelby Harris

Nose tackle
Domata Peko
Zach Kerr

Right defensive end
Jared Crick
Adam Gotsis

Strongside linebacker
(Shane Ray) – IR
Shaquil Barrett
Kasim Edebali

Weakside outside linebacker
Von Miller
DeMarcus Walker

Inside linebacker
Todd Davis
Zaire Anderson

Inside linebacker
Brandon Marshall
Corey Nelson

Left cornerback
Aqib Talib
Bradley Roby

Right cornerback
Chris Harris
Brendan Langley
Lorenzo Doss

Strong safety
Justin Simmons
Jamal Carter

Free safety
Darian Stewart
Will Parks

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker

Brandon McManus

Kickoffs

Brandon McManus

Punter

Riley Dixon

Holder

Riley Dixon

Long snapper

Casey Kreiter

Kick returner

Cody Latimer

Brendan Langley

Punt returner

Isaiah McKenzie

Brendan Langley

RESERVE LISTS

Shane Ray, OLB – wrist (expected to go on short-term IR)

Carlos Henderson, WR – thumb (IR)

Billy Winn, DE – knee (IR)

Chad Kelly, QB – wrist (NFI)

Jake Butt, TE – knee (NFI)

Broncos form initial active roster; waive QB Kyle Sloter

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

September 3, 2017

Brock is back.

In a surprise move, the Broncos will re-sign their former second-round pick, quarterback Brock Osweiler, to a veteran's minimum deal of \$775,000 for one year pending a physical Monday, capping a whirlwind 18 months of bouncing from Denver to Houston to Cleveland and back again.

Osweiler returns to be a backup for Trevor Siemian as Paxton Lynch recovers from a right shoulder sprain that will likely keep him out for at least the first few weeks of the regular season — and possibly longer. Lynch has been wearing a sling on his throwing arm, another indication his recovery won't be as swift as some had hoped.

The Broncos waived undrafted rookie Kyle Sloter on Saturday to clear the way for the return of a veteran — one they know quite well.

"We're excited about that opportunity to have that experience there with Brock," general manager John Elway said. "And plus, with Paxton, you never know with the throwing shoulder. I will say this, Kyle Sloter did a heck of a job in preseason and had a heck of a camp, but as I told him today when I talked to him, I said, 'You don't know this, but I'm telling you from experience, going from the preseason to the regular season is a big jump' and we didn't put him in that situation.

"Trevor is our starter and he's always going to be that starter. We want him to be that starter, so we have confidence in that. But we feel like if something were to happen that Brock has the experience and we've got some good people around him that will be able to help him, too. He fits the system."

In Osweiler, the Broncos get a quarterback versed in offensive coordinator Mike McCoy's system for little money; the Browns are on the hook for his \$16 million salary for 2017, minus the amount the Broncos will pay him.

Osweiler left Denver as a free agent in March 2016 after spending four seasons grooming to be Peyton Manning's successor. He started seven games en route to Super Bowl 50 as Manning nursed a foot injury, but was benched in the season finale against San Diego when Manning was healthy enough to re-take the reins.

The move was believed to be the impetus for Osweiler wanting a new start in Houston, which came with a hefty four-year, \$72 million deal.

Osweiler's time in Texas, however, quickly spiraled and he was temporarily benched in favor of Tom Savage late last season. Osweiler finished his lone season in Houston 9-8, completing 59 percent of his passes for 2,957 yards, 15 touchdowns and 16 interceptions for a 72.2 passer rating. His play was worse in the postseason, when he took three sacks and threw three interceptions in a divisional loss to New England.

The Texans traded him to Cleveland two months later and, after a summer competing for the Browns' starting quarterback job, he was released.

Oswelier's return to the Broncos may have come as a surprise, given the perceived sour feelings after his exit in 2016.

"No, it's not true," Elway said. "When Brock made the decision, he made the best decision he thought was best for him. It's just kind of funny how these things worked out with our situation and Brock being available. It's a bit funny how everything aligned. We know Brock can win football games with us. He's got a lot of experience. That was one glaring hole we had at that point in time, in my mind, when Paxton hurt his shoulder. We were able to get it fixed.

"We were going to go with a veteran quarterback and Brock made the most sense for us."

During the offseason, Oswelier worked with former Broncos quarterback Jake Plummer in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where he also saw Elway. He now returns to Denver and looks to right a career that got off track when he left the first time.

Siemian is and will remain the starting quarterback. But the Broncos options at No. 2 suddenly became more interesting.

"We thought a lot of Brock," Elway said. "He went 5-2 as a starter for us. Without Brock that year, we don't win a Super Bowl. He had a lot to do with that year, but I'm sure it's probably been a long 18 months for him. ... I'm sure with everything he went through in Houston and then going to Cleveland, I'm sure he's going to need a little football rehab. We know that. We'll welcome him with open arms and give him some love."

Broncos release veteran safety T.J. Ward

By Nicki Jhabvala
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The No Fly Zone will look a little different in 2017.

The Broncos on Saturday released eighth-year safety T.J. Ward, saving the team \$4.5 million in salary cap space and shifting its focus to the future.

“This was a difficult decision to part ways with T.J. after everything he’s done for our football team,” general manager John Elway said. “He was a respected teammate whose physical mindset played a big part in our success, especially during our Super Bowl run.

“We thank T.J. for his contributions as a Bronco and wish him nothing but the best in the future.”

Ward arrived in Denver in 2014 as the first piece of Elway’s revamped defense. He signed a four-year deal, awaited the arrival of cornerback Aqib Talib and outside linebacker DeMarcus Ware, then quickly morphed into a force in the defensive backfield. A hard-hitting safety who split his time at weakside linebacker in subpackages, Ward was a tone-setter, on the field and off.

His release comes on the heels of what he described as his best season yet, with 87 tackles (second-most on the team), a sack, an interception, eight pass-breakups, three forced fumbles and two recoveries. During the offseason Ward said he hoped to stay in Denver.

“You know what, if I do the things that I have to do and do them the right way, everything will handle itself,” he said in April.

But Ward is soon to be 31, was in the final year of his contract and coming off a hamstring injury, which kept him from playing in any preseason games. Over the years he’s watched Peyton Manning take a pay cut, DeMarcus Ware restructure his deal and defensive starters Chris Harris and Derek Wolfe both accept significantly less money to stay in Denver. Elway has always drawn a hard line and has made it clear he will make roster decisions with the singular goal of trying to win another Super Bowl title.

Although there were discussions with Ward’s agent, a pay cut was never broached. The Broncos will eat about \$1.3 million in “dead money” from Ward’s prorated signing bonus, but the team had a long-held plan to move on. It was “a football decision,” coach Vance Joseph said, based not on money, but on the team’s depth and youth.

And the Broncos have plenty of both in their secondary.

In 2016, the Broncos drafted Boston College safety Justin Simmons in the third round and Arizona safety Will Parks in the sixth. Both were viewed as key pieces of the team’s future.

The “Baby” No Fly, they called themselves.

Simmons, the Broncos believe, is ready for the true No Fly.

The 6-foot-2, 202-pounder posted a 40-inch vertical at the 2016 NFL combine, besting all in his position that year. He put it to use with his extra-point block at New Orleans last year and he's continued to grow more comfortable in the Broncos' scheme that has since been tweaked by defensive coordinator Joe Woods and Joseph.

"That's the biggest thing, is that year one to year two, making that big leap and those big strides and going into that, so really looking forward to it," Simmons said. "You are what you put on tape, and so it doesn't really matter what I say. What matters is that I put on Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, you know, moving into the season. I'm excited for it. I'm excited for the challenge."

News that the Broncos were considering trading or releasing Ward left the locker room in disbelief last week, with many players still hoping it was untrue even as reality set in.

"It was shocking just to come out of nowhere toward the end of camp," Parks said. "But at the end of the day it's a business. He's been through it once already, so I'm pretty sure he knows how to handle it."

Von Miller argued for Ward to stay:

"I don't think he should be going," he said. "That's a cornerstone of the No Fly Zone."

Safety Darian Stewart did, too:

"I don't know if they are going to listen to us, but I think it is going to impact a lot," he said. "He is the key leader and a good teammate."

Elway understood how the players felt, and he knew the decision wouldn't be fully embraced, at least initially.

"It's always hard. I will tell you I was in that locker room and I didn't agree with every move that management made," Elway said. "You create those relationships in that locker room and it's important. T.J. was a big part of that, but I can tell you how many friends and people I had cut over my career and didn't agree with all of them but that's part of it. I think that they understand, at least I hope they understand, we had to do what we believe is best for the Denver Broncos. ... When you make tough ones like this, they're not always going to be popular. But I think the young guys will step up and play well and fill those shoes very well."

Ward posted a Thank You to fans on Twitter Saturday evening, saying he's "looking forward to my next chapter." As a vested veteran, he is free to sign with another team immediately.

Denver is moving on, but the team's — and especially Elway's — insatiable quest for another title has them feeling optimistic about their decision and their future.

"It's a combination of everything," Elway said. "Anytime you have a guy like T.J. that was such a big part of the championship year we had and the last three years that he's been here — he's led that defense and plays with an attitude and a chip on his shoulder. We give him a lot of credit for how we've played defensively the last few years. But it always comes down to football decisions. The young guys, they

were playing well. It really wasn't anything to do with T.J. It was just the fact that the young guys played well and we thought that was the best football move for us."

Elway, Joseph explain Broncos' 53-man roster

By Mike Klis

9 News

September 3, 2017

There is one hole on the Broncos' 53-man roster, although it's large enough to fit a 6-foot-7, 240-pound quarterback.

Once, the Broncos officially sign Brock Osweiler, they will have three quarterbacks and a full, 53-man roster. Osweiler will be a Bronco "pending a physical" exam on Monday, said Broncos' general manager John Elway.

A quick summary of the significant moves:

*The Broncos released Pro Bowl strong safety T.J. Ward and replaced him on the 53 with undrafted rookie Jamal Carter. Losing Ward did not sit well with many returning veterans on the team.

"I will tell you I was in that locker room, and I didn't agree with every move management made," said Elway, a Broncos' quarterback from 1983-98. "When you make tough ones like this they're not always going to be popular. But I think the young guys will step up and fill those shoes."

The Broncos now have had an undrafted rookie make their season-opening roster in 13 of their past 14 seasons.

"Young, physical, he's going to be a great Denver Bronco as a core (special teams) guy," said head coach Vance Joseph. "His skills to play in the box and high zone in the back end was impressive."

*Second-round offensive tackle Ty Sambrailo was traded away and third-round offensive tackle/guard Michael Schofield were cut.

*Undrafted rookie quarterback Kyle Sloter was waived despite his superb preseason. He will be replaced by Osweiler who has ample NFL experience.

"We're excited to have that experience there with Brock," Elway said. "Plus, with Paxton you never know with that throwing shoulder. I will say this: Kyle Sloter did a helluva job. He had a helluva camp. But as I told him today, "You don't know this but I'm telling you from experience, going from the preseason to the regular season is a big jump."

*The Broncos put three players on injured reserve lists: Third-rookie receiver Carlos Henderson, fifth-round rookie tight end Jake Butt and seventh-round quarterback Chad Kelly. Henderson (thumb surgery) is done for the season. Butt (knee) and Kelly (wrist, knee) can return about halfway through the season, which is pivotal because they could use the practice time. In addition, the Broncos will place outside linebacker Shane Ray on injured reserve Sunday, which means he's out until at least midseason. Elway said because there's a bye in week 5 and the Broncos play a Monday night game in week 8 at Kansas City, Ray will only miss six games, returning to play against the Chiefs.

*Running back Jamaal Charles, guards Ron Leary and Allen Barbre, right tackle Menelik Watson, defensive linemen Shelby Harris and Zach Kerr and outside linebacker Kasim Edebali are the offseason free-agent signings who made the team.

More on the roster moves at each position with projected starters in bold:

Quarterbacks (3): Trevor Siemian, Paxton Lynch, Brock Osweiler (once he signs).

Note: Lynch will be out at least until the week 4 bye with a shoulder injury, prompting Osweiler's arrival. Signing Osweiler prior to week 1, which means he will get a full year's salary, is an indication Lynch may be sidelined longer.

Running backs (5): C.J. Anderson, Jamaal Charles, Devontae Booker, De'Angelo Henderson, Andy Janovich (fullback).

Note: Booker will miss the first game or two with a fractured right wrist. Charles is now guaranteed to earn \$1 million and if he dresses game 1 against the Los Angeles Chargers on September 11, he will make at least \$1.328 million. He can earn up to \$2.5 million just by showing up and \$3.75 million if he accumulates 1,400 yards rushing and receiving combined yards – and the Broncos make the playoffs.

Receivers (6): Demaryius Thomas, Emmanuel Sanders, Bennie Fowler III, Cody Latimer, Isaiah McKenzie, Jordan Taylor.

Note: Taylor or Latimer beat out Kalif Raymond, who is built similar to that of the 5-foot-8, 173-pound McKenzie.

Tight end (3): Virgil Green, Jeff Heuerman, A.J. Derby.

Note: For a seventh-round draft pick in 2011, Green turned out to be a pretty good player. Derby will be the smaller, off-line tight end. Heuerman must come on.

Offensive linemen (9): LT Garrett Bolles, LG Allen Barbre, C Matt Paradis, RG Ron Leary, RT Menelik Watson, OT Donald Stephenson, G Max Garcia, G Billy Turner, C-G Connor McGovern.

Note: Very unusual to have three backup guards and just one reserve tackle – especially when one of the starting tackles is a rookie in Bolles. This assumes Barbre will be the starting left guard but he may rotate with Garcia. Barbe can also play tackle.

Specialists (3): Brandon McManus, K; Riley Dixon, P; Casey Kreiter, LS.

Note: All return from last year. Kreiter missed the final six games with a calf injury.

Defensive linemen (6): Derek Wolfe, Domata Peko, Jared Crick, Zach Kerr, Shelby Harris, Adam Gotsis.

Note: Wolfe (ankle) and Crick (back) suffered significant preseason injuries but are expected to play against the Chargers.

Outside linebackers (5): Von Miller, Shaquil Barrett, Kasim Edebali, DeMarcus Walker, Shane Ray.

Note: Ray would have been a starter but he will miss half the season. Barrett is returning from a hip injury that caused him miss training camp and the preseason. The Broncos may add a player here Sunday.

Inside linebacker (4): Brandon Marshall, Todd Davis, Corey Nelson, Zaire Anderson.

Note: Same four as last year.

Cornerbacks (5): Aqib Talib, Chris Harris Jr., Bradley Roby, Brendan Langley, Lorenzo Doss.

Note: Doss edged out veteran Chris Lewis-Harris. Talib, Harris Jr. and Roby have to be the best cornerback threesomes in the league.

Safeties (4): Darian Stewart, Justin Simmons, Will Parks, Jamal Carter.

Note: The No Fly Zone has either started to break up with the departure of Ward, or Simmons is simply the new piece.

Sources: Broncos expected to pursue Osweiler after cutting Sloter

By Mike Klis

9 News

September 3, 2017

There is a good chance Brock will be back.

Two player sources told 9News the Denver Broncos will zero in on making Brock Osweiler their backup quarterback once he officially becomes available.

The Broncos waived preseason darling Kyle Sloter on Saturday as the team was trimming its roster to 53 players by the 2 p.m. deadline.

Osweiler was a Broncos' second-round draft pick in 2012 and was a rookie in offensive coordinator Mike McCoy's system. McCoy then left to become head coach of the San Diego Chargers for four years, then returned to take his offensive coordinator's job back with the Broncos this year.

Osweiler sat three years behind Peyton Manning before finally getting his chance in 2015 when Manning missed six games and half of a seventh with a heel injury.

Osweiler went 5-2 as a starter for the Broncos down the stretch but was benched in favor of Manning in the second half of the regular-season finale against McCoy's Chargers.

The Broncos rallied behind Manning to beat the Chargers and earn a No. 1 AFC playoff seed. Manning then guided the Broncos through the postseason and to the Super Bowl 50 title.

When that season ended, Osweiler became a free agent and spurned the Broncos' attempt to re-sign him, opting instead to take a four-year, \$72 million contract with the Houston Texans.

After one difficult season, the Texans traded Osweiler and his contract to the Cleveland Browns in exchange for a second-round draft pick. The Browns just released Osweiler even though they had to pay him his \$16 million guaranteed salary this year.

Perhaps the Broncos can provide the Browns with a \$775,000 minimum salary offset. Osweiler has yet to hit the transaction wire but when he does, the Broncos are expected to pounce.

The Broncos need a veteran backup because second-year quarterback Paxton Lynch, the team's first-round draft pick last year, suffered an injury to his right throwing shoulder in a preseason game last week against the Green Bay Packers.

Lynch is expected to miss between two to four games – but maybe more should the Broncos reel in Osweiler. Despite Sloter's impressive preseason as an undrafted rookie from Northern Colorado, the Broncos decided they needed a quarterback with NFL experience to back up Trevor Siemian, who beat out Lynch for the starting job during training camp and the preseason.

The Broncos do hope Sloter clears waivers and returns to their practice squad, where he can continue to develop.

Siemian and Osweiler were in the same quarterback room with Manning in 2015. When Manning went down, Osweiler was backed up by the rookie Siemian.

It now appears the roles will reverse. Give credit to Broncos' general manager John Elway for upgrading his quarterback position. Osweiler's familiarity with McCoy's offense, and with Siemian, is a move that only makes sense.

Brandon Marshall "baffled" by T.J. Ward release but supportive of Simmons

By Mike Klis

9 News

September 3, 2017

Sure, players on the Denver defense are upset T.J. Ward is no longer among them after the strong safety was released Saturday.

But, in time, perhaps as soon as a couple days, it will hit Bronco veterans that once again the NFL is a difficult business that favors the young and is tough on the old.

Ward, who will turn 31 in December, is out. Justin Simmons, a second-year player who was a third-round draft pick last year, is in.

"Of course, we all support Justin," said Broncos starting inside linebacker Brandon Marshall. "Justin is a hard-working young guy with talent. I guess Justin has been inserted into the No Fly Zone even though you could also say they broke up the No Fly Zone."

During the week as it became known Ward's time with the Broncos was numbered either through trade or release, Marshall took to social media to urge his bosses to keep Boss Ward. Von Miller and Derek Wolfe also publicly supported their teammate that is now a former teammate.

"I'm baffled," Marshall said upon hearing the news of Ward's release Saturday. "T.J.'s a great leader. He's up there with the DeMarcus Wares. Different type of leaders. T.J.'s very vocal. It's hard to replace guys like that in the locker room and on the field. He plays with so much passion, so much fire. He inspires others to play that same way. He's part of the reason we won the Super Bowl that year."

Ward became vulnerable for a variety of reasons. One, safety is where the Broncos have the greatest depth of young talent. Besides Simmons, Will Parks and undrafted rookie Jamal Carter are box players and have the potential to become Ward-type hard hitters.

Two, Ward is 30, will turn 31 in December and while his Tasmanian devil style of play is what made him a three-time Pro Bowler, his 199-pound body is showing signs of breaking down from the punishment. He missed games each of his three years with the Broncos and he just sat out the preseason with a hamstring strain.

And three, he was to draw a decent \$4.5 million salary this season. That may be team-friendly for a Pro Bowler but it's significant for a player the Broncos believe is past his prime. The Broncos did not offer Ward a chance to stay with a pay cut.

Four, the Broncos couldn't block their young talent with two veterans and they chose to tie up the other safety, Darian Stewart, to a four-year, \$28 million contract extension last November.

“I’m going to miss T.J., he was a great player for us,” said Broncos running back C.J. Anderson, who like Ward is a Bay Area native. “I’m going to watch him play and I’m going to check up on his stats. But I also understand the NFL is a business.”

John Elway: Broncos will welcome Brock Osweiler 'with open arms'

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

September 3, 2017

With backup quarterback Paxton Lynch expected to miss at least the first month of the regular season, the Denver Broncos quickly, and happily, turned to a familiar face Saturday, signing Brock Osweiler to a one-year deal.

Osweiler, who spent his first four years in the league with the Broncos, was released by the Cleveland Browns earlier this week. The Broncos will pay Osweiler the veterans' minimum of \$775,000.

"I think with the opportunity we had to get Brock back, we're excited about that opportunity to have that experience there with Brock," said Broncos president of football operations/general manager John Elway. "Plus with Paxton, you never know with the throwing shoulder."

The Browns, who owed Osweiler \$16 million after his release, will now pay him \$15.225 million. Osweiler's deal with the Broncos is pending a physical on Monday.

The Broncos were searching for a backup with knowledge of offensive coordinator Mike McCoy's playbook. Osweiler, who played for McCoy in 2012 when McCoy was in the last year of his previous stint in Denver, is looked upon as a backup quarterback, with Trevor Siemian as the starter.

Elway said he believed the Broncos could have the player who helped the Broncos go 5-2 in the starts Peyton Manning missed with an injured foot in 2015 -- and not the player who often struggled in his time with the Houston Texans and the Browns.

"I'm sure it's been a tough one for him," Elway said. "I know we thought a lot of Brock. He went 5-2 as a starter for us, and without Brock that year, we don't win a Super Bowl.

"I'm sure it's been a long 18 months for him. He's been through a lot, I'm sure. ... He's going to need a little football rehab, we know that. We'll welcome him with open arms and give him some love."

Elway said the Broncos had an eye on Osweiler almost from the moment the Browns released him. The Broncos' issue is Lynch's recovery.

Lynch suffered a right shoulder injury in Denver's preseason win over the Green Bay Packers; Lynch played just eight plays in the game. The injury is expected to keep Lynch out at least four weeks of the regular season, and it could be longer because the injury is to his throwing shoulder.

"He'll be the backup until Paxton gets healthy. That's not going to change," Elway said.

Asked if the Broncos would keep Osweiler on the roster after Lynch is ready to return to practice and be Siemian's backup in games, Elway said: "We'll cross that bridge when we get there."

Oswelier was a second-round pick by the Broncos in 2012, the same year the team signed Manning in free agency. Oswelier spent four seasons as Manning's backup and didn't make a start until 2015.

Manning replaced Oswelier in the regular-season finale in 2015 and led the Broncos to a comeback win over the Chargers. Manning then started all three of the Broncos' postseason games, including the victory over the Carolina Panthers in the Super Bowl.

The move left some hard feelings among some in Oswelier's support group, though the Broncos were prepared to sign him to one of the bigger offers he received in free agency that offseason. However, the Broncos' offer wasn't nearly as big as that of the Texans, who signed Oswelier to a four-year, \$72 million deal.

Asked about the narrative of hard feelings between the Broncos and Oswelier being an issue that would need to be addressed in Oswelier's return, Elway said simply: "That's not true."

Vance Joseph expected T.J. Ward's release to ruffle Broncos' feathers

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

September 3, 2017

Vance Joseph has coached defensive backs in the NFL long enough to know the Denver Broncos' secondary is a rare group.

And he's coached long enough to expect he will have to address safety T.J. Ward's release by the Broncos on Saturday. Ward, a three-time Pro Bowl selection, was one of 34 players the Broncos either waived or released to get their roster down to 53 players.

Ward had been the topic of trade reports over the past week, and as the possibility he could be released also had been raised, several high-profile Broncos players had made their feelings known, either on social media or following the Broncos' preseason finale Thursday night. Joseph said Saturday he would not only address it with the team, but would be worried if those sentiments didn't exist.

"I would say so because he was obviously a valuable teammate to these guys," Joseph said. "They won a lot of games together. It's natural, it's expected.

"It's a close-knit locker room," Joseph added. "I wasn't surprised to see guys saying, 'Hey, we're going to miss T.J. We don't want him to go.' That's natural and it should be that way in the locker room, and if it's not that would be concerning."

Ward had said this past week he was concentrating solely on "getting ready for the Chargers," the Broncos' Week 1 opponent. He left the team's locker room quickly after Thursday night's game and was one of 29 starters or regulars who did not play in the game.

Ward signed with the Broncos in 2014 in an offseason when Aqib Talib, DeMarcus Ware and Emmanuel Sanders also were added to the roster. He has been named to the Pro Bowl in two of his previous three seasons in Denver.

"It's always hard," president of football operations/general manager John Elway said Saturday. "I would tell you, I was in that locker room, I didn't agree with every move management made. ... But I can tell you how many friends and people I had, cut over their careers, I didn't agree with all of them. That's hard.

"We had to do what we believe is best for the Denver Broncos. When you make tough ones like this, they're not always going to be popular."

Elway and Joseph both said the play of Justin Simmons and Will Parks -- both members of the 2016 draft class -- was the biggest reason the Broncos moved on from Ward. The 30-year-old Ward was set to enter the last year of his contract.

Ward missed all four of the Broncos' preseason games because of a hamstring injury. Simmons has played with the starters during that time, while Parks has been used in the role, at weakside linebacker, that Ward played when the Broncos went into their specialty packages.

"Justin had a hell of a spring," Joseph said. "Obviously, with T.J. not working the entire training camp, for the most part, Justin and Parks got a chance to play a lot. Obviously, opportunity leads to promotion. So both of those guys played very well."

Linebacker Brandon Marshall posted on Twitter Thursday afternoon that "Letting go of TJ would be a mistake. With all the plays he's made and leadership he's brought. He deserves to at least play out his contract." Cornerback Chris Harris Jr. and Talib also had made their feelings clear about the possibility of Ward's departure.

"I'm with him, I'm with him 100 percent," linebacker Von Miller said Thursday night. "I don't think he should be going. That's a cornerstone of the 'No Fly Zone.' The 'No Fly Zone' has made me great individually, us great as a defense and us great as an organization. We have championship leaders. We make championship decisions all the time. The front office puts us in championship positions all the time. You can only trust those guys like those guys trust us."

Elway said he had spoken to Ward's agent previously and said the Broncos were not going to talk about a contract extension for Ward before the season started. Elway added the Broncos did not ask Ward to take a pay cut before he was released.

Ward finished what he had said was his best all-around season in 2015 with 87 tackles, a sack, an interception and three forced fumbles.

"We give him a lot of credit with what we've played defensively the last few years, but it always comes down to football decisions," Elway said. "And young guys, they were playing well. It really wasn't anything to do with T.J., it was the young guys playing well."

Buccaneers to sign former Broncos safety T.J. Ward

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

September 3, 2017

Former Denver Broncos safety T.J. Ward will sign a one-year deal worth \$5 million with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, a source told ESPN's Josina Anderson.

The Broncos released Ward on Saturday after three seasons with the team.

The 30-year-old Ward signed with the Broncos in 2014 in an offseason when Aqib Talib, DeMarcus Ware and Emmanuel Sanders were also added to the roster. He has been named to the Pro Bowl in two of his previous three seasons in Denver.

Justin Simmons, whom the Broncos selected in the third round of the 2016 draft, has played in Ward's spot in the preseason and will be the starter into the regular season as well. Simmons' emergence has been part of the reason the Broncos were considering trying to trade Ward before releasing him.

Ward finished what he had said was his best all-around season in 2016 with 87 tackles, 1 sack, 1 interception and 3 forced fumbles.

Broncos cut safety T.J. Ward after three seasons

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

September 3, 2017

In a move that could create ripples up and down the depth chart, the Denver Broncos are releasing safety T.J. Ward after three seasons with the team.

"This was a difficult decision to part ways with T.J. after everything he's done for our football team," team president of football operations and general manager John Elway said in a statement. "He was a respected teammate whose attitude and physical mindset played a big part in our success, especially during our Super Bowl run.

"We thank T.J. for his contributions as a Bronco and wish him nothing but the best in the future."

The possibility that Ward would be either traded or released by Saturday has been the hottest topic of conversation both inside and outside the Broncos' complex in recent days. Ward, a three-time Pro Bowl selection who was set to enter the last year of his contract, has been an important voice in the Broncos' locker room and a key part of the Broncos' "No Fly Zone" secondary.

The Broncos informed Ward of their decision Saturday morning. Ward had taken to Twitter earlier in the day, as he often does, and had posted "#blessedmorning" before the news of his release became public. Ward did not play in any of the Broncos' four preseason games because of a hamstring injury and missed significant practice time as well.

Following Thursday night's preseason finale, Broncos coach Vance Joseph was asked if he could say if Ward would be traded or released. Joseph said: "Nothing on that. Again, it's going to be a long weekend of a lot of transactions. I can't speak to that. At the end of the day, we want the best guys for our football team, and if he's one of them, he'll be here."

Joseph was then asked if he thought Ward would be a part of the team after roster cuts. Joseph added: "I can't speak to that today. That's more for [Friday's] conversations and Saturday's conversations."

Team rosters league-wide must be cut to 53 players by 4 p.m. ET Saturday.

Ward said this past week that he was concentrating on "getting ready for the Chargers," given the Broncos open the regular season Sept. 11 against the Los Angeles Chargers. He left the team's locker room quickly after Thursday night's game and was one of 29 starters or regulars who did not play in the contest.

The 30-year-old Ward signed with the Broncos in 2014 in an offseason when Aqib Talib, DeMarcus Ware and Emmanuel Sanders were also added to the roster. He has been named to the Pro Bowl in two of his previous three seasons in Denver.

Ward's release could require at least some attention on Joseph's part to the team's locker room.

"I'm with him. I'm with him 100 percent," said linebacker Von Miller Thursday night. "I don't think he should be going. That's a cornerstone of the 'No Fly Zone.' The 'No Fly Zone' has made me great individually, us great as a defense and us great as an organization. We have championship leaders. We make championship decisions all the time. The front office puts us in championship positions all the time. You can only trust those guys like those guys trust us."

Justin Simmons, whom the Broncos selected in the third round of the 2016 draft, has played in Ward's spot in the preseason and will be the starter into the regular season as well. Simmons' emergence has been part of the reason the Broncos were considering trying to trade Ward before releasing him.

"You're talking about a leader, not only in our defense, but in our locker room," Simmons said this past week. "Everyone looks up to him and respects him, myself included. ... It's just crazy hearing all this talk and everything around it."

Linebacker Brandon Marshall posted on Twitter Thursday afternoon that "Letting go of TJ would be a mistake. With all the plays he's made and leadership he's brought. He deserves to at least play out his contract."

Ward finished what he had said was his best all-around season in 2016 with 87 tackles, 1 sack, 1 interception and 3 forced fumbles.

Source: Broncos to place Shane Ray on IR, eye midseason return

By Staff

ESPN

September 3, 2017

The Denver Broncos plan to place linebacker Shane Ray on injured reserve but hope to bring him back at midseason, a source told ESPN's Adam Schefter.

By NFL rule, players are permitted to return from injured reserve only if they are on the team's initial 53-man roster. The Broncos can officially move him to IR after 24 hours.

Each team is allowed to designate two players to return as a result of a rule change instituted for this season.

Ray, selected by the Broncos in the first round of the 2015 draft, tore a ligament in his left wrist two days into training camp. He underwent surgery in late July and was given a return time frame of six to eight weeks.

Ray, who finished with eight sacks last season, was elevated into the starting lineup almost from the moment DeMarcus Ware retired earlier this year. He started eight games for an injured Ware last season, which included a three-sack game against the Cincinnati Bengals in Week 3.

ESPN's Jeff Legwold contributed to this report.

Pro Bowl safety T.J. Ward is Denver Broncos' most notable cut

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

September 3, 2017

The Denver Broncos made 37 roster moves Friday and Saturday, trimming their roster to the NFL-mandated 53 players. Here's a closer look at the final cuts:

Most significant move: The Broncos released safety T.J. Ward, a three-time Pro Bowl selection in his career. Ward was set to enter the last year of the four-year contract he signed during the Broncos' free-agency binge in 2014. Ward has earned two of his Pro Bowl trips while with Denver and has been a respected leader in the locker room. But the Broncos believe second-year player Justin Simmons is ready to play, and Ward missed much of the preseason with a hamstring injury. This move will take some smoothing over by coach Vance Joseph with some of the team's veterans, but the Broncos simply believe Simmons is ready to play and that Will Parks, also a 2016 draft pick, can play a situational role.

Tie game: Joseph said the Broncos might not decide a "winner" at the left-guard spot, and the team's first depth chart after the roster moves has both Allen Barbre and Max Garcia listed there. The two split time in the final preseason game Thursday night and have split practice snaps with the first-team offense for much of the past two weeks. The Broncos might lean on one more than the other in specific games, but for the moment Joseph is expected to rotate the two in the regular season's opening weeks.

One more day: Outside linebacker Shane Ray suffered ligament damage on his left wrist during the first week of training camp and underwent surgery shortly after. Because the injury happened just after camp opened, the Broncos had to leave Ray on the 53-man roster when they made their decisions Saturday. But he will be moved to injured reserve by Monday and the Broncos will then add a player. The intention is Ray will be brought back when he is medically cleared, likely before the end of October.

Broncos moves

Trade (1): T Ty Sambrailo.

Waived (30): NT Nelson Adams, S Dante Barnett, C Dillon Day, LB Vontarrius Dora, LB Ken Ekanem, Jerrol Garcia-Williams, LB Quentin Gause, LB Deon Hollins, C/G Cameron Hunt, NT Tyrique Jarrett, T Cedrick Lang, LB Danny Mason, LB Deiontrez Mount, T Justin Murray, WR Anthony Nash, NT Kyle Peko, WR Kalif Raymond, CB Marcus Rios, TE Steven Scheu, T Michael Schofield, WR Hunter Sharp, QB Kyle Slotter, LB Kevin Snyder, DE Shakir Soto, S Orion Stewart, S Dymonte Thomas, RB Juwan Thompson, TE Austin Traylor, T Elijah Wilkinson, RB Stanley Williams.

Terminated vested veteran (4): WR Marlon Brown, CB Chris Lewis-Harris, RB Stevan Ridley, S T.J. Ward.

Non-football injury (2): TE Jake Butt, QB Chad Kelly.

Injured reserve (1): WR Carlos Henderson.

Brock Osweiler heads back to Denver Broncos as backup QB

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
September 3, 2017

Brock Osweiler is returning to Denver 18 months after jilting the Broncos in free agency.

The Broncos agreed to terms with Peyton Manning's former apprentice Saturday on a one-year deal after the quarterback was cut by the Cleveland Browns. Provided he passes his physical Monday, Osweiler will serve as Trevor Siemian's understudy in his second stint in Denver.

The Broncos needed another QB because Paxton Lynch, their 2016 first-round draft pick, will miss a month or more with a sprained throwing shoulder.

General manager John Elway said Osweiler will be the backup "until Lynch gets healthy," and the Broncos will re-evaluate their quarterback situation at that time.

Among the cuts as Denver trimmed its roster Saturday was three-time Pro Bowl strong safety T.J. Ward, a move made possible by Denver's depth in the secondary, which was known as the "No Fly Zone" ever since Ward's arrival in 2014.

Osweiler went 5-2 in relief of an injured Manning during the Broncos' Super Bowl-winning season two years ago before bolting to Houston in free agency for a four-year, \$72 million deal, about \$8 million more than the Broncos offered.

After just one season, the Texans traded Osweiler in March to the Browns, who will pay Osweiler his \$16 million guaranteed salary this season minus the offset from the Broncos. The minimum for a sixth-year pro is \$775,000.

No matter how long Osweiler's return to Denver lasts, his weekly salary of \$941,000 dwarfs the \$36,136 Siemian will make every week.

Osweiler started the final seven games of the 2015 season while Manning was sidelined with a foot injury. When the Broncos' offense sputtered in their final game, Manning replaced Osweiler and led Denver to a 27-20 comeback win against San Diego that secured the AFC's top seed. Manning then took every snap in the playoffs.

"Without Brock that year, we don't win the Super Bowl," Elway said Saturday. "He had a lot to do with that year. But I'm sure it's probably been a long 18 months for him. He's been through a lot. ... I'm sure with everything he went through in Houston and then going to Cleveland, I'm sure he's going to need a little football rehab. We know that. We'll welcome him with open arms and give him some love."

Elway said there are no hard feelings from their previous split.

"He made the decision that he thought was best for him," Elway said. "And so it's just kind of funny how these things worked out with our situation and Brock being available. We know that Brock can win

football games with us. He's got a lot of experience and so that was one glaring hole we had when Paxton hurt the shoulder. So, we were able to get it fixed."

Siemian emerged as the Broncos' starter last year following Osweiler's departure 48 hours after Manning's retirement. He had to win the job again this summer after Vance Joseph replaced Gary Kubiak as head coach.

Siemian went 8-6 in Denver last year but the Broncos' five-year playoff run came to an end. Osweiler had an identical record in Houston and led the Texans to a win over Oakland in the playoffs before losing to New England.

But Osweiler played poorly, got benched and didn't get along with coach Bill O'Brien, so the Texans traded him and a second-round draft pick to the Browns in March. Osweiler was subsequently beaten out by Browns rookie DeShone Kizer.

As for Ward, Elway said it was difficult cutting the veteran who set a nasty tone for Denver's defense as a founding member of the "No Fly Zone" secondary.

Ward was due \$4.5 million this year but his release was a product of Denver's depth at the position. He missed most of training camp with a pulled hamstring and second-year pros Justin Simmons and Will Parks played well. So did undrafted rookie Jamal Carter, who led the team with 19 tackles in the preseason.

"Obviously with T.J. not working the entire training camp, for the most part, Justin and Parks got a chance to play a lot," Joseph said. "Opportunity leads to promotion." Still, teammates expressed disbelief on social media Saturday that Elway would part with such a key leader and tone-setter.

Elway said he understands those sentiments .

"It's always hard. I was in that locker room and I didn't agree with every move that management made," Elway said. "I hope they understand we had to do what we believe is best for the Denver Broncos. When you make tough ones like this, they're not always going to be popular. But I trust the young guys will step up and fill those shoes."

Broncos release T.J. Ward; Confident young players can step up

By Troy Renck

KMGH

September 3, 2017

Encouraged by the progress of young players, the Broncos made the difficult decision Saturday to cut veteran T.J. Ward. Ward confirmed his release to Denver7 on Saturday morning.

It became increasingly likely earlier this week when the Broncos attempted to trade the former Pro Bowler. Ward, 30, was surprised by the development, but began wrapping his head around it as the days passed. He told Denver7 on Wednesday that "I am going to make it work out for me, you can believe that." As a vested veteran, Ward becomes a free agent. He's expected to talk with the Pittsburgh Steelers, and the interest could be mutual. So keep an eye on that. Other teams with a need include the Rams, Texans, Raiders and Buccaneers.

His agency said Saturday night that seven teams expressed interest with three finalists. He could sign as soon as Saturday night or Sunday morning.

The Broncos have released more than 20 players and traded Ty Sambrailo to Atlanta as they inch toward the 53-man roster limit.

Ward was due \$4.5 million this season, none of which was guaranteed. The Broncos will absorb a \$1.25 million cap hit. Ward wondered if something was possible as he missed the preseason games with a strained right hamstring, admitting "things got a little weird." He had hoped to land a contract extension in the offseason, but talks never developed. The Broncos never discussed or considered a paycut for Ward.

"This was a difficult decision to part ways with T.J. after everything he's done for our football team," general manager John Elway said. "He was a respected teammate whose attitude and physical mindset played a big part in our success, especially during our Super Bowl run. We thank T.J. for his contributions as a Bronco and wish him nothing but the best in the future."

The Broncos already have cornerbacks Chris Harris and Aqib Talib and safety Darian Stewart on longterm deals.

The Broncos' move signals their confidence in young players: second-year safeties Justin Simmons and Will Parks, and possibly undrafted rookie Jamal Carter. Simmons played well with Stewart in the preseason, providing the Broncos a different look given Simmons' coverage skills. It is likely Simmons will be used in a free safety role with Stewart serving as the thumper on the back line. Parks and Carter, called the "Baby Monster" by some teammates for his physical play, also are big hitters.

Still, this move, even as it slowly played out, is jarring and unpopular in the locker room.

"I'ma gonna miss my dawg," tweeted Chris Harris Jr.

"Mind blown," outside linebacker Shaquil Barrett tweeted.

Linebacker Brandon Marshall pushed for Ward to stay in conversations with me and on social media. Defensive end Derek Wolfe talked about how much he disliked even the possibility of Ward leaving, and Von Miller termed it "Fake news" because he couldn't believe it would happen.

"I spent the last three years with him. It can't be real. He's such an impactful player on and off the football field; in and out of the locker room for the Denver Broncos. It's just the nature of the National Football League. You can only control what you can control," Miller said Thursday night. "I'm with him. I'm with him 100 percent. I don't think he should be going. That's a cornerstone of the 'No Fly Zone.' The 'No Fly Zone' has made me great individually, us great as a defense and us great as an organization. We have championship leaders. We make championship decisions all the time. The front office puts us in championship positions all the time. You can only trust those guys like those guys trust us."

Broncos cut fan favorite Kyle Sloter. Osweiler on way back

By Troy Renck

KMGH

September 3, 2017

Brock to The Future.

It seems like yesterday Brock Osweiler exited to Houston for a fresh start. His departure, it turns out, had a Return To Sender stamp. Determined to add experience behind Trevor Siemian with Paxton Lynch sidelined indefinitely with a right shoulder injury, the Broncos are expected to sign Osweiler on Saturday. It can't become official until Osweiler's release from the Browns posts on the league transactions. Osweiler will sign Monday after a physical. He receives a one-year deal for \$775,000.

"He's going to need a football rehab. We will welcome him with open arms and show him some love," said general manager John Elway, who made it clear Osweiler was returning as a backup. "Obviously, we thought a lot of Brock. Without him we don't win a Super Bowl."

Osweiler has experience in offensive coordinator Mike McCoy's system, brief as it was in 2012. The Browns owe Osweiler \$16 million this season, less any salary he receives from a new suitor. Osweiler left the Broncos after the 2015 season, signing a four-year, \$72-million deal with the Texans. However, he failed miserably, never meshing with Bill O'Brien before the coach benched him in favor of Tom Savage. Cleveland absorbed Osweiler's salary this season in order to acquire a second-round draft pick.

"Having a veteran quarterback was critical for us," coach Vance Joseph said.

Osweiler's arrival is a result of Lynch's injury. Initially out for the first two-to-four games, Lynch will miss significant time to allow for healing of his throwing shoulder. Lynch has been wearing a sling since suffering the injury in the third preseason game.

Injuries change roster complexions. As I have hinted for weeks, outside linebacker Shane Ray is now expected to be sidelined for a longer period of the season. He is expected to be placed on the IR following surgery on his left wrist. The plan would be to bring him back at midseason, so with the bye week, he would only miss six games.

With Osweiler's boomerrang path as evidence, the NFL remains an odd, cold business. Sometimes, you call an Uber and a pumpkin shows up at your doorstep.

Dreams died on Saturday. Fan favorite Kyle Sloter's bid to make the Broncos ended as he was cut Saturday.

Sloter impressed the Broncos in the preseason, including Thursday's start. The Broncos would like to add Sloter to their 10-man practice squad if he clears waivers. Sloter impressed NFL scouts, but any team claiming the quarterback has to place him on the 53-man roster, complicating the decision.

"Thank you to Bronco country for all the support," Slotter tweeted. "Hopefully I'll be able to stick around in Denver. Next 24 hrs will be interesting."

The Broncos are willing to nearly \$800,000 for Osweiler because of Lynch's absence. And remember, Siemian has battled injuries since college, and missed two games last season with a sprained left shoulder and sore foot.

The Broncos began paring down to 52 players on Saturday, leaving room to add Osweiler. The most high profile cut arrived Saturday morning with safety T.J. Ward telling Denver7 he was cut. The Broncos' decision signals confidence in young players Justin Simmons and Will Parks and paves way for undrafted rookie Jamal Carter to make the team.

It is a painful time of year. Beginning with the exit of running backs Stevan Ridley and Juwan Thompson, the flurry of moves required to reach the limit of 53 by 2 p.m. arrived Friday.

"It's hard because guys do everything you ask, and they get their dreams crushed," Joseph said.

Receiver Kalif Raymond, a bubble player who performed well in the preseason, told Denver7 he was cut. I had him making the team, but knew it was going to be difficult because of similarities to draft pick Isaiah McKenzie.

"I feel good. I am just going to keep working and stay ready," said Raymond, who should be a candidate for the practice squad.

The Broncos attempted to trade utility offensive lineman Michael Schofield, but found no takers. He was released Saturday after falling to third on the depth chart. Friday, the team found a taker for slumping tackle Ty Sambrailo, a former second-round draft choice, shipping him to the Atlanta Falcons for a fifth-round draft pick in 2018.

Ridley rushed for 109 yards on 38 carries this preseason, hardly effective, but he finished strong Thursday with a touchdown run and a 27-yard gallop. Thompson collected 85 yards on 14 carries. He proved a valuable special teams member, but was never able to find a consistent role as a fullback or backup tailback over the past few seasons. Nash is considered a strong candidate for the Broncos' 10-man practice squad.

Linebacker Danny Mason, signed for training camp depth after Shane Ray's wrist injury, was cut. Ray could be out for the first month of the season as he rebuilds strength in his wrist. Linebacker Deon Hollins was also let go along with tight end Steven Scheu. Raymond and Tyrique Jarrett both told Denver7 they hope to return to the Broncos' practice squad.

Kyle Peko failed to make the final cut. The Broncos will look for D-Line depth, and possibly a free agent like Ahtyba Rubin. Joseph indicated that Derek Wolfe (ankle) and Jared Crick (back) will return to practice this week, and there remains a possibility Zach Kerr (knee) will be available for the opener.

Broncos Roster Cuts/Moves:

T Ty Sambrailo (traded to Atlanta for 2018 5th round pick)

S T.J. Ward

QB Kyle Slotter

T/G Michael Schofield

WR Kalif Raymond

WR Marlon Brown

T Justin Murray

T Cedric Lang

T Elijah Wilkinson

RB Stevan Ridley

RB Juwan Thompson

RB Stanley Williams

TE Steven Scheu

TE Austin Traylor

WR Anthony Nash

C Dillon Day

NT Kyle Peko

DT Tyrique Jarrett

LB Deiontrez Mount

LB Danny Mason

LB Deon Hollins

LB Quentin Gause

LB Ken Ekanem

LB Jerrol Garcia-Williams

LB Kevin Snyder

OL Cameron Hunt

S Orion Stewart

S Dante Barnett

S Dymonte Thomas

CB Marcus Rios

CB Chris Lewis-Harris

DE Shakir Soto

DE Vontarrius Dora

DL Nelson Adams

TE Jake Butt (Reserve/NFI; can return this season)

QB Chad Kelly (NFI, essentially serving as a redshirt season)

WR Carlos Henderson (IR following surgery on left thumb, out for the season)

OLB Shane Ray (Expected to be added to IR on Sunday so can return this season, also opens roster spot)

Broncos inform T.J. Ward of his release

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
September 3, 2017

In what President of Football Operations/General Manager John Elway termed a "difficult decision," the Broncos notified safety T.J. Ward that he would be released in advance of the roster deadline Saturday.

Ward, a three-time Pro Bowler who joined the team as an unrestricted free agent in 2014, is not subject to waivers as a vested veteran and is free to sign with any club.

"He's a respected teammate whose attitude and physical mindset played a big part in our success, especially during our Super Bowl run," Elway said. "We thank T.J. for his contributions as a Bronco and wish him nothing but the best in the future."

Ward, who missed the preseason with a hamstring injury, was entering the final year of a four-year contract he signed in 2014. Safety is also one of the deepest positions on Denver's roster with Justin Simmons and Will Parks entering their second seasons after seeing significant playing time as rookies in 2016.

Ward earned Pro Bowl selections in his first two seasons with the Broncos, helping cement the reputation of the "No-Fly Zone" with his tenacious play and his aggression against the run and in the pass rush. He racked up 222 tackles, five sacks, three interceptions, five forced fumbles and 19 passes defensed during his three seasons with the Broncos.

The Oregon product started all 41 regular-season games and four playoff games in which he played for the Broncos.

Ward's impact went beyond his on-field contributions, as he served as a mentor for teammates in the locker room, including Justin Simmons, who started two games in place of Ward late last season and stepped into the starting lineup this preseason after Ward injured his hamstring during practice Aug. 4.

"T.J. has been there for me since day one," Simmons said. "Coming into last year, he was the first person to text me on draft night. He's just been there for me since Day One."

Simmons and fellow Parks both counted Ward as a mentor. Now both will be counted on to step forward in the wake of Ward's departure.

Broncos trim roster at deadline

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
September 3, 2017

The Broncos waived 30 players and terminated the contracts of four others, including safety T.J. Ward, as they trimmed their roster at the deadline Saturday.

All of the Broncos' draft picks from the last two years made the team in some capacity. Each 2016 draft pick and five 2017 selections made the 53-man roster. Three rookies are injured and are on reserve lists: Wide receiver Carlos Henderson will start the season on injured reserve because of a torn ligament in his thumb, while tight end Jake Butt and quarterback Chad Kelly will remain on the non-football injury list because of injuries suffered before the Broncos drafted them.

Once again, the Broncos had an undrafted rookie make the first 53-man roster of the regular season, as Jamal Carter made the team as one of the team's four safeties. Carter is one of seven players on the 53-man roster who originally joined the Broncos as a college free agent.

Thirty-three of the players on the active roster were either drafted by the Broncos or originally signed by the team as college free agents, including 16 projected first-teamers.

Twenty-seven of the players on the 53-man roster are age 25 or younger. Twenty-six have three or fewer years of experience, with 15 players in their first or second seasons on an active roster.

"We're always trying to draft and develop ... and find young guys," President of Football Operations/General Manager John Elway said. "You're always looking for that youth, and developing it.

"We're fortunate to have the youth that we do have, with a good group of core veterans for leadership purposes, too."

RELEASED/VESTED VETERAN			
POSITION	PLAYER	EXP.	COLLEGE
WR	Marlon Brown	5	Georgia
CB	Chris Lewis-Harris	6	Tennessee-Chattanooga
RB	Stevan Ridley	7	LSU
S	T.J. Ward	8	Oregon
WAIVED			
POSITION	PLAYER	EXP.	COLLEGE
DE	Nelson Adams	R	Mississippi State
S	Dante Barnett	R	Kansas State
C	Dillon Day	1	Mississippi State
OLB	Vontarrius Dora	2	Louisiana Tech
OLB	Ken Ekanem	R	Virginia Tech
ILB	Jerrol Garcia-Williams	R	Hawaii
ILB	Quentin Gause	2	Rutgers
OLB	Deon Hollins	R	UCLA

G	Cameron Hunt	R	Oregon
NT	Tyrique Jarrett	R	Pittsburgh
OT	Cedrick Lang	1	Texas-El Paso
OLB	Danny Mason	2	Texas A&M-Commerce
LB	Deiontrez Mount	3	Louisville
OT	Justin Murray	1	Cincinnati
WR	Anthony Nash	R	Duke
NT	Kyle Peko	2	Oregon State
WR	Kalif Raymond	2	Holy Cross
CB	Marcus Rios	R	UCLA
TE	Steven Scheu	1	Vanderbilt
OL	Michael Schofield	4	Michigan
WR	Hunter Sharp	1	Utah State
QB	Kyle Slotter	R	Northern Colorado
DE	Shakir Soto	R	Pittsburgh
S	Orion Stewart	R	Baylor
S	Dymonte Thomas	R	Michigan
RB	Juwan Thompson	4	Duke
TE	Austin Traylor	1	Wisconsin
OT	Elijah Wilkinson	R	Massachusetts
RB	Stanley Williams	R	Kentucky

WAIVED/INJURED

POSITION	PLAYER	EXP.	COLLEGE
ILB	Kevin Snyder	2	Rutgers

INJURED RESERVE

POSITION	PLAYER	EXP.	COLLEGE
WR	Carlos Henderson	R	Louisiana Tech

RESERVE/NON-FOOTBALL INJURY

POSITION	PLAYER	EXP.	COLLEGE
TE	Jake Butt	R	Michigan
QB	Chad Kelly	R	Mississippi

With Paxton Lynch injured, Broncos bring back Brock Osweiler

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
September 3, 2017

Brock Osweiler is returning to the Broncos.

In need of an experienced backup quarterback in the wake of Paxton Lynch's right-shoulder injury, the Broncos agreed to terms with Osweiler shortly after he was released by the Cleveland Browns.

President of Football Operations/General Manager John Elway announced the move Saturday during his press conference, noting that the return is pending a physical on Monday.

"We're excited about that opportunity to have that experience there with Brock, and plus with Paxton, you never know with the throwing shoulder," Elway said.

Osweiler will be the backup "until Lynch gets healthy," Elway added.

Osweiler provides an experienced relief option behind Trevor Siemian, having broken into the NFL in 2012 as a second-round pick under Mike McCoy, who was then in his first stint as the Broncos' offensive coordinator. Osweiler should be able to quickly settle back into the scheme, having worked in it for three seasons -- first in 2012 under McCoy, and then for two seasons under then-coordinator Adam Gase after McCoy departed to become the San Diego Chargers' head coach.

A six-year veteran, Osweiler served three and a half seasons as Peyton Manning's backup before stepping into the starting role in November 2015 after Manning suffered a foot injury. The Broncos went 5-2 in the games Osweiler started, as he completed 61.8 percent of his passes for 1,967 yards, 10 touchdowns and six interceptions before Manning returned to the field in Week 17 of that season.

"We know that Brock can win football games with us. He's got a lot of experience, so that was one glaring hole we had at that point in time, when Paxton hurt the shoulder, so we were able to get [the hole] fixed," Elway said. "We were going to go with a veteran quarterback, and Brock made the most sense for us."

One month after the Broncos won Super Bowl 50, Osweiler departed the Broncos for the Houston Texans in unrestricted free agency. He started 14 regular-season games and two postseason contests in his only season with Houston, completing 301 of 510 passes (59.0 percent) for 2,957 yards, 15 touchdowns and 16 interceptions in the regular season.

"When Brock made the decision [to sign with the Texans], he made the decision that the thought was best for him," Elway said. "It's kind of funny how these things worked out, and with our situation, and Brock being available, it's funny how everything aligned."

Houston traded Osweiler to Cleveland in the 2017 offseason, and he spent the last four months battling for the starting job with a cluster of young quarterbacks. The Browns opted to release Osweiler at the roster deadline after second-round pick DeShone Kizer earned the Week 1 starting nod.

"[Osweiler] is going to need a little football rehab. We know that," Elway said. " We're going to welcome him with open arms and give him some love."

Jamal Carter becomes latest undrafted player to make Broncos' roster

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
September 3, 2017

Following the Broncos' preseason opener against the Chicago Bears, running back C.J. Anderson made a declaration.

From the Soldier Field visiting locker room, the former undrafted player out of Cal gave this year's undrafted crop a reason to believe in their prospects.

"I tell them that if any organization is going to give that undrafted rookie a chance, it's definitely this one," Anderson said in early August.

Safety Jamal Carter was listening to Anderson then, and perhaps a different young player will listen to Carter spout the same advice in 2018.

For now, Carter can just focus on playing football, as the Miami product became the latest undrafted player to make Denver's initial 53-man roster.

At least one undrafted player has made the Broncos' initial roster in 13 of the previous 14 seasons.

Carter certainly earned his spot on the roster. Across four preseason games, Carter totaled 19 tackles, a tackle for loss, a pass defensed and a fumble recovery.

None of that surprised the Broncos' front office or coaching staff, Head Coach Vance Joseph said Saturday night.

"No. Not at all," Joseph said. "What we saw in training camp is what we saw on tape. We had a draftable grade on Jamal, he wasn't drafted so we were happy to get him after the draft. But what we saw — being physical, being smart, great tackler — is what he showed us."

After the Broncos released T.J. Ward on Saturday, second-year players Justin Simmons and Will Parks moved up in the rotation. As a result, Carter should find himself contributing on key special teams snaps with the chance to make an occasional impact on defense.

"[He's] young, physical — he's going to be a great guy for [Special Teams Coordinator] Brock [Olivo] on [special] teams as a core guy," Joseph said. "Having the skills to play in the box and the high zones in the back end was impressive."

On game day, that means Carter will earn a jersey — and playing time.

"Absolutely, as a core guy and a backup-type safety," Joseph said.

Broncos plan to place OLB Shane Ray on IR, eye Week 8 return

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
September 3, 2017

The Broncos plan to place outside linebacker Shane Ray on injured reserve and activate him halfway through the season, President of Football Operations/GM John Elway said Saturday.

That timeframe falls in line with the Broncos' previous expectations for Ray's recovery after he suffered a torn ligament in his wrist during training camp.

Elway said the Broncos expect Ray to return for a "Monday Night Football" matchup with the Chiefs in Week 8.

The Broncos' bye comes in Week 5, and Denver plays four of its six games at home before that meeting.

When the Broncos move Ray to IR, Denver will gain an extra roster spot. For a player to return mid-season, that move must be made at least a day after initial rosters are set.

"We didn't want to use that [roster] spot," Elway said. "He's not going to be back any earlier than that. So when he does come back, he'll be really ready to go. Having [the schedule] fall that way for us helped us with that extra spot."

All-Pro Von Miller will join Shaquil Barrett, Kasim Edebali, DeMarcus Walker and any other late additions in the Broncos' attempt to maintain a dangerous pass rush in Ray's absence.

Elway did not commit to which position the vacant roster spot would go.

"We're going over that right now," Elway said. "Looking through and seeing what's available. As I said, we're going to try to find the best player I can."

Each NFL team can activate two players per season off the injured reserve list once that player has spent six weeks on IR. After two more weeks — eight weeks total — that player may return to game action. The 2017 season will be the first in which each team can activate two players off IR.

Klee blog: Broncos pass the "No Fly Zone" torch to Justin Simmons with release of popular veteran T.J. Ward

By Paul Klee
Colorado Springs Gazette
September 3, 2017

One striking exchange in the late Broncos preseason came after the fourth preseason game, on Thursday. In front of his locker and with his usual calm, cool disposition, second-year safety Justin Simmons reflected on what veteran safety T.J. Ward has done for him with the Broncos.

"The easier question would be, 'What hasn't he done?' That'd be a shorter response," Simmons said. "T.J. has been there for me since day one. He was the first person to text me on draft night."

That's what the Broncos are going to miss in Ward, who was released by the team Saturday and becomes a free agent. But they aren't going to miss Ward's play on the field as much as you'd think — or as much as the Broncos players seem think, as they continue their woe-is-me mutiny on Twitter. Yes, Vance Joseph's going to have his hands full in his first season.

But teams that last do this kind of thing too early instead of too late, when older bodies start to break down, especially those whose entire game is built around hits that punish themselves as much as they punish the opponent. Ward plays the game like a defensive fullback. Fullbacks are injured a lot. Ward just usually played through it.

At some point the Broncos were going to have to turn over some of these big-money contracts and roll with the next wave. This is that point at safety, where Simmons immediately becomes a critical part of the "No Fly Zone," and, like any smart rookie, knew the best way to make a bunch of money is to shadow the guy who's already made a bunch of money. So he picked Ward's brain at every opportunity, just like Steve Atwater with Mike Harden before him and young Chris Harris Jr. with Champ Bailey before him.

Simmons is different than Ward in almost every way imaginable. When Ward was leading the "No Fly Zone" in its song and dance after wins, Simmons, a team captain at Boston College, is the quiet one watching it go down with a smile. The Broncos lost some bark, but they gained some bite, considering Ward's advanced age (30) and lingering hamstring. The hurdle for Simmons will be the chorus "T.J. Ward would've made that play" each time Simmons doesn't make a play. It's a rule that players always get better when they're gone.

When he was healthy in Denver, Ward proved to be worth every penny of the stash of cash he received in a free agent haul alongside DeMarcus Ware and Aqib Talib. Ware was supposed to be the leadership on defense that Peyton Manning was on offense (he was exactly that); Talib was supposed to be the flashy, edgy complement to Chris Harris Jr. on the other side (he's been that and more, for better and worse); Ward was supposed to be the reckless thumper who continued the tradition of physical Broncos safeties. And no one hit harder or personified a cocky, world-class defense more than Ward, who was more ticked after a 16-3 loss to the Patriots (he truly loathes the Patriots) than he ever was happy after

a win (and no one in the building crowed louder). He'll be missed in the locker room, not as much on the field. Welcome to the No Fly, Justin Simmons. Stick around for a while, will ya?

Reports: Broncos release safety T.J. Ward, QB Kyle Sloter

By Paul Klee
Colorado Springs Gazette
September 3, 2017

Some familiar names are among the players being let go by the Denver Broncos as cutdown day approaches.

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UPDATE 12:56 p.m.

Quarterback Kyle Sloter has been cut by Denver, according to The Denver Channel's Troy Renck.

Sloter was the surprise star of the preseason, finishing with a 15-for-23 performance for 220 yards against the Arizona Cardinals. The Broncos are expected to sign Sloter to the practice squad if he clears waivers.

Mike Klis of 9News tweeted that two sources had told him they expect General Manager John Elway to try to sign Brock Osweiler, who was cut by the Cleveland Browns on Friday.

In the meantime, the Broncos have just one healthy quarterback on the roster in Trevor Siemian. Backup Paxton Lynch is expected to miss a few weeks with a shoulder injury.

Other recent cuts include OL Michael Schofield, WR Khalif Raymond and TE Austin Traylor.

UPDATE 10:30 a.m.

Multiple media sources are reporting that the Broncos have released safety T.J. Ward.

The team had been trying to trade Ward, who was set to make \$4.5 million this season. By cutting him, the Broncos will take a \$1.25 million cap hit.

Ward, 30, did not appear in a preseason game while dealing with an injured hamstring.

Justin Simmons is expected to take Ward's spot at strong safety.

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Saturday updates

UPDATE 4:03 p.m.

Brock Osweiler has been released by the Cleveland Browns.

Additional Broncos cuts include TE Steven Scheu, LB Deon Hollins, LB Quentin Gause and DT Shakir Soto.

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UPDATE 3:03 p.m.

Mike Klis reports that tackle Justin Murray has been waived.

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UPDATE 1:42

Various media outlets are reporting that linebacker Vontarrius Dora, center Cameron Hunt and linebacker Ken Ekanem have been waived.

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UPDATE 1:04 p.m.

Linebacker Danny Mason and safety Dante Barnett were both waived, according to Mike Klis of 9News.

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Mike Klis of 9News tweeted that the Broncos have waived WR Anthony Nash and RB Juwan Thompson. Klis also reported that tackle Ty Sambrailo has been traded to the Atlanta Falcons for a fifth-round draft pick.

@MikeKlis

Credit John Elway & personnel staff for getting 5th-rd pick for Sambrailo, a versatile player who may not have seen field here. #9sports

10:32 AM - Sep 1, 2017

9 Replies 20 Retweets 93 likes

The Broncos also cut running back Stevan Ridley, according to NFL.com's Ian Rapoport.

@RapSheet

Moves: #Ravens cut C Jeremy Zuttah, #Broncos cut Stevan Ridley, #Browns cut WR Josh Boyce & DL Brandon Thompson, put DB Howard Wilson on PUP

11:36 AM - Sep 1, 2017

15 Replies 238 Retweets 381 likes

Updates on Broncos cuts, as well as other notables around the NFL, will be added as information becomes available.

T.J. Ward released by Broncos in changing of guard

By Lindsay H. Jones
USA Today
September 3, 2017

The Denver Broncos released a key piece of their Super Bowl 50-winning defense Saturday by cutting veteran safety T.J. Ward.

Ward was scheduled to make \$4.5 million in the final year of the four-year contract he signed in 2014, but that hefty salary, combined with depth at the position behind him, made him expendable. The Broncos drafted two safeties, Justin Simmons and Will Parks, in 2016.

Ward did not play in any preseason games after suffering a hamstring injury in practice in early August, but he should be healed now and able to contribute to a new team immediately.

Simmons started in Ward's place throughout the preseason and the team believes he's ready to be a fulltime starter.

While the move makes sense from a business perspective, it will not be popular in the locker room, where Ward was a respected leader and beloved among defensive teammates. Earlier this week, outside linebacker Von Miller called it "fake news" when he heard a rumor that the Broncos were seeking to trade Ward, and on Saturday cornerback Chris Harris Jr. tweeted that he would "miss my dawg" along with two angry face emojis.

Ward, 30, had three interceptions and five forced fumbles in three seasons with the Broncos, and he also recovered a fumble and had an interception in the Broncos win over Carolina in Super Bowl 50. He spent four prior seasons in Cleveland and has been selected to the Pro Bowl three times.

Brock Osweiler, Broncos have awkward history to address in reunion

By Lindsay H. Jones
USA Today
September 3, 2017

There is no quarterback controversy in Denver. But there certainly is intrigue now that the Broncos will re-sign quarterback Brock Osweiler, pending a physical, to serve as Trevor Siemian's backup to start the season.

Such a move seemed unthinkable as recently as late-August, given the acrimonious end to Osweiler's four-year tenure with the Broncos in March 2016, and the recent competition between Siemian and 2016 first-round pick Paxton Lynch.

But now Lynch has a sprained throwing shoulder and is expected to miss at least a month, if not longer, and Osweiler was a free agent whose \$16 million salary for 2017 will mostly be paid for by the Cleveland Browns, who released Osweiler on Friday. The Broncos only will be on the hook for the veteran minimum.

The move means the Broncos receive a backup familiar with offensive coordinator Mike McCoy's scheme and language (Osweiler was a rookie during the coach's last year in Denver in 2012) for cheap.

Getting Osweiler back after his release by the Browns, who unloaded him nearly six months after taking his salary on in a trade so that they could receive a 2018 second-round pick, was the easy part.

A bigger challenge will be for general manager John Elway and new head coach Vance Joseph to sell the move to the players in their locker room and to a fan base who booed the same quarterback mercilessly last October, when Osweiler played in Denver against the Broncos with the Houston Texans.

Osweiler, who went 5-2 for the Broncos in 2015 when he replaced an injured Peyton Manning, distanced himself from Broncos teammates in the aftermath of Super Bowl 50 and ultimately picked a more lucrative contract offer from the Texans instead of staying in Denver. He skipped the Broncos' trip to the White House and the Super Bowl ring ceremony, a move that irked some of Osweiler's former teammates.

"Without Brock that year, we don't win the Super Bowl," Elway said at a news conference Saturday night. "But I'm sure it's been a long 18 months for him."

But Elway and the Broncos were hardly gracious about Osweiler's departure at the time.

Elway issued a statement after Osweiler signed in Houston saying he would build "a team with players who want to be Denver Broncos." Defensive standouts like cornerback Aqib Talib relished in beating Osweiler's Texans in October, with Talib telling USA TODAY Sports at the time that losing Osweiler was a "win-win" because the Broncos saved money and found a "better quarterback" in Siemian.

Elway still sees Siemian as his starter for the foreseeable future, but he's ready for a new chapter upon Osweiler's return.

"He's going to need a little football rehab. We know that," Elway said. "We'll show him that and give him a little love."

Brock Osweiler set to sign one-year deal with Broncos Monday, pending physical

By John Breech
USA Today
September 3, 2017

It looks like the Denver Broncos and Brock Osweiler are going to let bygones be bygones.

CBS Sports NFL Insider Jason La Canfora has reported that Osweiler is set to sign a one-year contract with the Broncos in a deal that will take him back to the city that he once spurned. The news of Osweiler's signing in Denver came just hours after Mike Klis of 9news.com reported that the Broncos were planning to "zero in" on Osweiler once he officially became a free agent.

The beleaguered quarterback was informed by the Browns on Friday that the team would be releasing him.

Just 18 months ago, the idea of Osweiler returning to Denver seemed nearly implausible considering the way things ended between the Broncos and their former quarterback.

It all started in March 2016 when Peyton Manning announced his retirement a few weeks after the Broncos' 24-10 win over the Panthers in Super Bowl 50. With Manning out of the picture, the belief in Denver was that Osweiler would take over for the Broncos and become the full-time starting quarterback.

However, Osweiler threw a wrench into those plans during free agency when he decided to spurn the Broncos and sign a four-year, \$72 million deal with the Texans. Osweiler's decision to leave Denver led Broncos general manager John Elway to rip on his former quarterback on several occasions.

Two months after signing the deal with Houston, Osweiler had some choice words of his own for the Broncos. The quarterback said he chose Houston over Denver because he felt he had a better chance at long-term success with the Texans.

"I have tremendous respect for both John Elway and Peyton Manning as people and as quarterbacks in the NFL, but I was not concerned one bit with playing in their shadow," Osweiler said in May 2016. "That didn't weigh into my decision whatsoever. Bottom line, I made my decision off where I felt like I could have the most success playing quarterback in the NFL and where I could go and win long-term."

Although Osweiler's decision to sign with the Texans made him rich, it completely backfired on the field after he ended up being one of the worst quarterbacks in the NFL in 2016.

After just one season, the Texans were so eager to get rid of him that they basically gave the Browns a 2018 second-round draft pick just to take Osweiler and his giant contract off their hands in March.

The Browns then held on to Osweiler for roughly five months before informing him that he would be released on Friday.

In the year and a half that Osweiler was away from Denver, Elway probably thought he would solve the Broncos' quarterback issues, but that's not what happened. The Broncos gambled on Paxton Lynch with a first-round pick in the 2016 draft, but that gamble didn't pay off. In both 2016 and 2017, Lynch was beaten out for the starting QB job by former seventh-round pick Trevor Siemian.

To Elway, it seems that Siemian is basically a stopgap solution at the quarterback spot in Denver, which is probably why the general manager went after Osweiler as soon as the Browns dumped him. Elway's original plan in 2016 was to make Osweiler the starter, and now, not only does he get to go back to that original plan, but he'll likely be able to do it at his own price.

One thing that's not clear is if Osweiler will have a chance to come in and compete for the starting job as soon as he arrives. The Broncos are actually in need of a backup quarterback right now because Lynch is expected to miss the next 3-4 weeks with a shoulder injury. That means it's possible that Osweiler could serve as the backup behind Siemian as he grows to learn the system being run by new Broncos offensive coordinator Mike McCoy.

Osweiler actually knows a thing or two about serving as a backup quarterback in Denver.

Osweiler spent the first four seasons of his career (2012-15) in Denver as a backup before going 5-2 as a starter in 2015 while Manning sat out with various injuries.

Prisco's 2017 All-Cut Team: Brock Osweiler, weak offensive line join strong secondary

By Pete Prisco

USA Today

September 3, 2017

There have been some on Twitter this week saying that you could put together a decent team from the final NFL cuts this year.

No chance.

There are two reasons why: quarterback and offensive line.

Good luck finding good players in either area that would help you compete. They just aren't there. Consider this: The starting quarterback on the All-Cut Team I put together from the final NFL cuts Saturday is none other than Brock Osweiler, who was cut by the Browns.

They paid him \$16 million -- the salary he would have made if still on the team -- to go away. That tells you all you need to know. He's returning to the Broncos, but only because Paxton Lynch is hurt.

As far players on the offensive line, I scrambled to find a unit that could even come close to competing. There are some veterans on my list, but how much do they have left? There just aren't enough good ones in the league anymore.

So forget the talk this team could win a few games. It's a team that would be a 14-point underdog to the New York Jets, who might not win a game this season.

With that, here's the 2017 All-Cut team:

Offense

QB Brock Osweiler (Browns): The Osweiler era in Cleveland didn't last long, despite the early talk that he had a chance to start. He's on his way back to Denver where he started games in 2016.

RB Chris Johnson (Cardinals): Age finally caught up to the speedy Johnson as he had a rough preseason and got caught in the numbers game. He turns 32 this month, so will he continue to play?

RB Matt Jones (Redskins): He was a starter to begin the 2016 season, and did some good things, but he fell out of favor with the Redskins. He will get picked up.

WR Jeremy Kerley (49ers): He was the 49ers' leading receiver a year ago, but was made expendable by the free-agent signings of Pierre Garcon and Marquise Goodwin.

WR Victor Cruz (Bears): The former Giants player was trying to keep his career alive with the Bears, but they opted to go in another direction. Is this the end for him?

TE Jace Amaro (Titans): This former second-round pick of the Jets has never lived up to the hype. He had three catches last season for the Titans and hasn't been the same player since suffering a torn labrum in 2015.

OT Khalif Barnes (Saints): He has started for Jacksonville and Oakland in his career, so there is some experience for a team looking for help.

G John Greco (Browns): He has been a good starter in his time with the Browns, which is why his release surprised some. He will be playing elsewhere this season.

C Jeremy Zuttah (Ravens): He started for the Ravens last season, went to San Francisco, was cut early in camp and then was brought back to the Ravens before being let go this week.

G Alex Boone (Vikings): He was signed as a major free agent in 2016, but he missed two games with injury last season and the Vikings obviously don't think he's worth the big deal they gave to him. They reportedly did ask him to take a pay cut, and he refused.

OT Eric Winston (Bengals): He has been a quality starter in his career, but is now more of a backup if he wants to continue playing.

Defense

DE Will Clarke (Bengals): They drafted him in 2015 with the idea he would someday be a starter, but it never happened. With the drafting of Carl Lawson and Jordan Willis, he was expendable.

DT Quinton Dial (49ers): He has been a starter for the 49ers, but the change in schemes hurt his chances this summer. But he is a solid player for a team looking for depth up front.

DT Ahtyba Rubin (Seahawks): When they traded for Sheldon Richardson from the Jets, Rubin was expendable. He's been a starter in Cleveland and in Seattle.

DE Devin Taylor (Giants): He started all 16 games for the Lions in 2016, so there is some ability there. He signed with the Giants as a free agent.

OLB Jelani Jenkins (Raiders): He started 34 games for the Dolphins from 2014-26 before signing a one-year deal with the Raiders this spring. Maybe he goes back to Miami.

ILB Sean Spence (Colts): He played a lot for the Titans last year and was signed as a potential starter by the Colts. But he missed time in camp, and the team decided to move on.

OLB Antwione Williams (Lions): He appeared to be a starter at one point this summer, but he lost his job and then was cut. He has some ability.

CB Senquez Golden (Steelers): He spent his two seasons with the Steelers injured, but this second-round pick has some ability. He will likely get a look from another team.

CB Joe Haden (Browns): He's already been signed by the Steelers, which shows they think the Browns made a mistake. But Cleveland cut him for financial reasons as much as anything. He has been slowed by injuries the past two seasons, but the Steelers signed him the same day he was released.

S T.J. Ward (Broncos): Some people had to be shocked to see him on this list, but when word came last week he was being shopped in trade talks, it was almost inevitable. He's a good player who can help a team in need.

S Dwight Lowery (Chargers): He has been a quality starter for a long time, but they opted to go younger at the spot.

Special Teams

P Andy Lee (Panthers): They opted to get rid of the veteran to keep Michael Palardy. Lee didn't have a great year in 2016 and ended the season on injured reserve.

K Cody Parkey (Browns): He lost his job to rookie Zane Gonzalez from Arizona State. Parkey made 20 of his 25 field goals last year.

Best Available: NFL Names to Watch As Teams Look to Sign Cut Players

By Jenny Vrentas

MMQB

September 3, 2017

An unprecedented number of players—1,184 in total—were cut by their teams in time for the 4 p.m. deadline Saturday to reduce rosters from 90 to 53 players. In previous years there was an intermediate cutdown from 90 to 75 players after the third preseason game, but a rule change this offseason eliminated that step. That also means that potentially a record number of players will be added to teams through waiver claims or signings in the next 24 hours.

Players with less than four years of experience are subject to the waiver wire, where teams submit claims for players they would like to add to the roster by noon on Sunday, and those players are awarded to teams based on draft order. Veteran players—like Broncos safety T.J. Ward, for example—do not go through the waiver wire. They are on the open market as of 4 p.m. Saturday. Thus, another round of cuts is coming once players from those two groups are signed; in the NFL, rosters are never final.

Here are eight names to keep an eye on as teams look to add cut players over the course of the next day:

1. T.J. Ward (free agent): The veteran Broncos safety was part of the team's 2014 free-agent spending spree and the venerable "No Fly Zone" on the back end of Denver's defense, which helped the team to Super Bowl 50 championship. Ward, though, was sidelined by a hamstring injury during the preseason, and second-year safety Justin Simmons stepped in for him, evidently making Ward and his \$4.5 million salary expendable in the eyes of the front office. Word that Denver was trying to trade Ward leaked earlier in the week, but with no deal in place the team moved to cut him Saturday.
2. Ahtyba Rubin (free agent): The 31-year-old defensive tackle started every game for the Seahawks each of the past two seasons, after seven years in Cleveland. Seattle's trade for Sheldon Richardson on Friday crowded out Rubin on the Seahawks' 53-man roster, but the veteran run-stuffer could be a valuable addition for a team looking to bolster its depth on the defensive line.
3. Matt Jones (waiver wire): The 2015 third-round draft pick entered last season as Washington's starting running back. But after a minor midseason injury he was surpassed by Rob Kelley and spent the second half of the season inactive. He even sat out Washington's offseason program as he slid to fifth on the depth chart. He's been prone to fumbles and is not a special-teams player, but his talent will certainly catch the eye of teams submitting waiver claims.
4. Brock Osweiler (free agent): When the Browns' starting QB job went to rookie DeShone Kizer, Cleveland made the decision to cut Osweiler and eat his \$16 million salary. That's not as bad as it seems; Cleveland's trade for Osweiler was always about acquiring Houston's 2018 second-round pick. Picking up Osweiler, and his albatross of a contract, was simply the cost of the deal. In a fascinating twist, multiple outlets have reported Osweiler is likely to end up back with the Broncos, the only team where he's had any success as a starter.

5. C.J. Spiller (free agent): The Chiefs release of the veteran running back came as something of a shutdown deadline surprise, particularly after Spencer Ware suffered a season-ending knee injury this preseason. Kansas City GM Brett Veach told reporters that Spiller could still end up on the roster, so it's possible the Chiefs bring him back after Week 1 when veteran salaries are no longer guaranteed, or that they needed his spot temporarily for some kind of roster manipulation, because they only kept two backs on the roster as of now. Or, it's possible he ends up elsewhere; the 30-year-old Spiller has bounced around the last few seasons but reports out of Kansas City were that the former first-round pick looked good in camp.

6. Joe Vellano (waiver wire): The 28-year-old defensive lineman has spent most of his NFL career battling for a roster spot; we told his story earlier this summer. Vellano had been vying for a position among a very deep Falcons defensive line, but for another team with less depth in that position group his ability to play multiple positions on the line and his experience playing in big games—including the Super Bowl and three conference championships—could be attractive. "You do as much you can in the preseason games to show that you belong somewhere in the league," Vellano said a few weeks ago.

7. Travis Rudolph (waiver wire): The rookie receiver captured the hearts of America last fall when, during a visit to a middle school with a group of Florida State football players, he separated from the pack and ate lunch with a student with autism who was eating alone. That has no bearing on his ability to make an NFL roster, but, Rudolph also turned plenty of heads this preseason with some nifty catches. He was a surprising cut by the Giants, but they had a crowded group at the position.

8. Andy Lee (free agent): The 35-year-old punter, for whom the Panthers gave up a 2018 fourth-round pick just one year ago, lost out on Carolina's punting job this year. Lee, a three-time first team All-Pro, missed the second half of last season with a hamstring injury, and the Panthers chose this year to stick with his younger, cheaper replacement, Michael Palardy. A team in need of a reliable veteran at the position could take a look at bringing in Lee.

Report: Buccaneers Expected to Sign Pro Bowl Safety

T.J. Ward

By Max Meyer

MMQB

September 3, 2017

The Buccaneers added several tantalizing offensive weapons this offseason, and now they will reportedly acquire a veteran safety to shore up the other side of the ball a week before their regular season kicks off.

Tampa Bay is expected to sign T.J. Ward, NFL Network's James Palmer reported. Ward was released by the Broncos earlier Saturday following three seasons and one Super Bowl win with the team.

Ward having a brief stay on the market is hardly a surprise, as The MMQB's Jenny Vrentas ranked him as the best player available after teams reduced their rosters Saturday from 90 to 53. Drafted by the Browns in the second round of the 2010 NFL draft, the veteran's tackling prowess has led to three Pro Bowl appearances over his seven seasons in the league.

Despite turning 30 this past December, Ward showed no signs of slowing down in Denver. He finished with 87 tackles in 2016, which was the second-most on the team. He also tied a career-high with three forced fumbles to go along with a sack and an interception. Ward, however, was due a non-guaranteed \$4.5 million in the final year of his contract, which paved the way for his dismissal. He had also battled hamstring issues throughout camp.

Ward would be the third safety that Tampa has landed this offseason, joining free-agent acquisition J.J. Wilcox and second-round pick Justin Evans.

The Bucs allowed 7.7 yards per pass attempt last season, which was tied for the fourth-worst mark in the league. Ward's hard-hitting capability would help give them an imposing presence over the middle of the field.

Ward's debut with the Buccaneers would be in a road affair against the Dolphins on Sept. 10.

Brock Osweiler Signs With Broncos a Day After Being Cut By Browns

By Daniel Rapaport
MMQB
September 3, 2017

Brock Osweiler's last interaction with the Broncos involved him rejecting a multi-year contract offer to instead sign a four-year, \$72 million deal with the Texans. Osweiler is back with the Broncos after he was cut by the Browns on Friday, but the circumstances couldn't be much more different.

The details of Osweiler's return were reported by NFL Network's Ian Rapoport. The team announced the news later Saturday.

Osweiler, a second-round pick out of Arizona State in 2012, struggled mightily in his one season with the Texans—he finished dead last in yards per attempt, 27th in completion percentage and second-to-last in quarterback rating. The Texans miraculously found a way to rid themselves of his contract by shipping him and a second-round pick to the Browns, who had the requisite cap space to absorb that monstrosity of a contract in order to get that valuable pick.

Osweiler entered the Browns' preseason as the starter but completed just 12 of 24 passes for 64 yards and an interception in two preseason games. After rookie DeShone Kizer was named the starter, the Browns cut Osweiler.

The Broncos' quarterback situation is a bit precarious, which could present an opportunity for Osweiler, still just 26 years old. Trevor Siemian has been named the Week 1 starter, and Paxton Lynch is expected to back him up, but Lynch will miss multiple games with a shoulder injury. The Broncos picked Chad Kelly in the seventh round of this year's draft, but he is expected to miss the entire season as he recovers from a knee injury.

There will be some familiarity for Osweiler, but the coaching staff in Denver is completely different than the one in place when he played. His head coach was John Fox; Vance Joseph is now in charge. His offensive coordinator was Rick Dennison, while Mike McCoy has that position now. Osweiler is a long, long shot to start this season, but he could serve as a solid backup option.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers expected to sign T.J. Ward

By Staff

NFL.com

September 3, 2017

T.J. Ward wasn't on the open market for long.

Just hours after the Denver Broncos parted ways with the veteran defensive back, a source with direct knowledge of the situation told NFL Network's James Palmer the Tampa Bay Buccaneers are expected to sign Ward.

The former Broncos safety, who was released in part because of the non-guaranteed \$4.5 million due to him in the final year of his deal, started 41 games in Denver the last three seasons and was a key cog in the Broncos' Super Bowl 50 run. Ward logged 87 tackles and an interception last season, though he battled hamstring issues during camp and appeared to lose footing to second-year defender Justin Simmons.

"[Ward] was a respected teammate whose attitude and physical mindset played a big part in our Super Bowl run," Broncos general manager John Elway said in a statement after cutting the defensive back. "We thank T.J. for his contributions as a Bronco and wish him nothing but the best in the future."

Ward, 30, will compete for playing time in Tampa with Chris Conte and Keith Tandy, who the Buccaneers list as their starting safeties. Rookie Justin Evans and offseason addition J.J. Wilcox also round out the Bucs' two-deep at the safety positions.

Broncos, Brock Osweiler agree to terms on 1-year deal

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

September 3, 2017

Brock Osweiler's unusual odyssey through the world of pro football has taken its strangest turn yet.

Broncos general manager John Elway announced on Saturday that Denver has agreed to terms with the free-agent quarterback on a one-year deal, pending a physical on Monday. The move reunites the Broncos with the signal-caller they drafted back in 2012, but failed to re-sign in 2016.

"When Brock made that decision [to sign with Houston], he made the best decision that he thought was best for him," Elway told reporters Saturday night. "It's just kind of funny how these things worked out with our situation and Brock being available -- funny how everything aligned. We know that Brock can win football games with us, he's got a lot of experience and that was one glaring hole we had at that time in my mind when Paxton [Lynch] hurt the shoulder. We're able to get it fixed."

Osweiler was cut by the Browns on Friday after spending last season as a troubled starting passer for the Texans. With Cleveland already locked in to pay Osweiler's \$16 million salary, the Broncos will absorb a minor chunk of that king's ransom by signing the 26-year-old passer to the league minimum, NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport was told.

Denver was on the hunt for a veteran quarterback after losing Lynch for a few weeks to a shoulder sprain. He is expected to miss roughly five weeks, Rapoport reported, per a source

Osweiler will step in right away behind starter Trevor Siemian, mirroring the role he played under Peyton Manning for four seasons in Denver. When Lynch returns from injury, however, the Broncos will evaluate their need for Osweiler at the position.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get there," Elway said. "You never know. We're going to carry him right now. We'll carry him for now. As you know, it's always fluid, so we'll cross that bridge when Paxton gets healthy. We'll see what we have and go from there."

Osweiler was a messy, mistake-prone starter last year for the Texans, who inked him to a massive four-year, \$72 million contract with \$37 million guaranteed in March 2016. One year later, in an unusual NFL deal, Houston shipped its 2018 second-round pick to the Browns in exchange for Cleveland agreeing to absorb Osweiler and his unwieldy \$16 million payday.

The Broncos milked a handful of semi-solid starts out of Osweiler in 2015 -- their Super Bowl-winning campaign -- but his game has looked beyond repair ever since. Denver's front office is showing loyalty to their former draft pick, but Osweiler won't see the field barring a major disaster under center.

Broncos Waive QB Kyle Sloter

By Staff

CBS 4

September 3, 2017

The Denver Broncos waived rookie quarterback Kyle Sloter Saturday afternoon as NFL teams trimmed their rosters to 53 players.

Sloter, signed this summer as an undrafted free agent from the University of Northern Colorado, enjoyed a successful preseason as the third-string QB for the Broncos.

He acquired a following of orange-clad fans in the process.

Statistically, Sloter was Denver's top performing quarterback in the preseason. He completed 72 percent of his passes, including three for touchdown, against zero interceptions. His quarterback rating was a team-best 125.4.

Sloter played 35 games for UNC. He started his stint there as a wide receiver before moving to quarterback his senior year. He threw 29 touchdowns (a new single-season record for the school) and 10 interceptions that season.

Sloter may yet remain a member of the Broncos if he clears waivers — meaning no other teams claim him — and he is signed to the practice squad.

Broncos release T.J. Ward, Kyle Sloter

By Staff

FOX 31

September 3, 2017

The Denver Broncos have released high-profile safety T.J. Ward after three seasons.

Part of the team's Super Bowl 50-winning defense, Ward has made three Pro Bowl appearances (2013, 2014, 2015).

Ward was entering the fourth and final year of his contract with the Broncos, and would have made \$4.5 million.

Last season, Ward had 87 tackles, one interception, three forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries.

Teams are under the NFL's 2 p.m. (MT) Saturday deadline to reduce rosters to 53 players.

Additionally, Kyle Sloter was cut Saturday, tweeting his thanks for the opportunity and saying that "the next 24 hours will be interesting" as he is likely relegated to the practice squad.

Word around the Twitterverse and those close to the situation say that Brock Osweiler, who has been cut by Cleveland, is a strong contender to make the team as backup quarterback .

Osweiler was a Broncos' second-round draft pick in 2012.

Report: T.J. Ward gets one-year, \$5 million deal from Buccaneers

By Michael David Smith
Pro Football Talk
September 3, 2017

The Broncos cut safety T.J. Ward because they didn't want to pay his \$4.5 million base salary this season. But immediately after Ward was released, the Buccaneers called him with a better offer.

Josina Anderson of ESPN reports that Ward's deal with the Buccaneers is for one year and \$5 million. So the 30-year-old Ward will come out ahead.

Broncos front office boss John Elway said the team didn't ask Ward to take a pay cut. That may have been because they knew the market would pay Ward more than the Broncos wanted to.

Ward will have a week to get up to speed in Tampa before their Week One matchup against the Dolphins.

Report: Buccaneers are expected to sign T.J. Ward

By Mike Florio

Pro Football Talk

September 3, 2017

T.J. Ward won't be a free agent for long.

James Palmer of NFL Media reports that Ward is expected to sign with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The Broncos cut Ward, a three-time Pro Bowler, and his \$4.5 million base salary on Saturday. A strong safety, Ward will be an immediate contender to vie for a starting job.

Chris Conte and Keith Tandy were the starting safeties in 2016. The Buccaneers have been hoping that newcomers J.J. Wilcox and Justin Evans will supplant them. Now, Ward will get a chance to lay claim to one of the two jobs.

Ward has signed with the Broncos in 2014. He completed three seasons of a four-year deal before being released.

John Elway: Brock Osweiler is coming back

By Mike Florio

Pro Football Talk

September 3, 2017

He's baaa-aaack. Pending a physical.

Broncos G.M. John Elway told reporters on Saturday that quarterback Brock Osweiler will return to the team on Monday, if/when he passes a physical.

It will be a one-year deal for the sixth-year minimum, which means he'll get \$775,000 from the Broncos. The Browns will pay the other \$15.225 million.

"I think with the opportunity we had to get Brock back, we're excited about that opportunity to have that experience there with Brock," Elway said. "Plus, with Paxton you never know with the throwing shoulder."

There's no guarantee Osweiler won't be back on the market sooner than later. Once Paxton Lynch's shoulder heals, the Broncos may decide to keep only two quarterbacks.

"Yes, we'll cross that bridge when we get there," Elway said. "As you know, it's always fluid, if so we'll cross that bridge when Paxton gets healthy, we'll see what we have and go from there."

Rookie Chad Kelly has been placed on the non-football injury list, which means he'll miss at least the first weeks of the season.

Broncos announce their 53-man roster, and Jamaal Charles is on it

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
September 3, 2017

More than four hours after setting their roster at 53, the Broncos have announced the moves made to get there. Here they are.

Thirty-four players were waived or released. They are: defensive lineman Nelson Adams, safety Dante Barnett, receiver Marlon Brown, center Dillon Day, linebacker Vontarrius Dora, linebacker Ken Ekanem, linebacker Jerrol Garcia-Williams, linebacker Quenin Gause, linebacker Deon Hollins, guard Cameron Hunt, nose tackle Tyrique Jarrett, tackle Cedrick Lang, cornerback Chris Lewis-Harris, linebacker Danny Mason, linebacker Deiondre' Mount, tackle Justin Murray, receiver Anthony Nash, nose tackle Kyle Peko, receiver Kalif Raymond, running back Stevan Ridley, cornerback Marcus Rios, tight end Steven Scheu, offensive lineman Michael Schofield, receiver Hunter Sharp, linebacker Kevin Snyder, defensive end Shakir Soto, safety Orion Stewart, safety Dymonte Thomas, running back Juwan Thompson, tight end Austin Traylor, safety T.J. Ward, tackle Elijah Wilkinson, and running back Stanley Williams.

The Broncos also placed tight end Jake Butt and quarterback Chad Kelly on the non-football injury list. Receiver Carlos Henderson was placed on injured reserve.

These moves mean running back Jamaal Charles has made the team (at least for now). He reportedly was a 50-50 proposition to survive to the final cuts at the outset of camp.

Broncos plan to put Shane Ray on IR, bring him back later in season

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
September 3, 2017

The Broncos continue to keep secret their final roster moves. One move won't be final until tomorrow.

Linebacker Shane Ray will be placed on injured reserve after Sunday at 4:00 p.m. ET, according to Adam Schefter of ESPN.

Ray injured his wrist early in training camp. The Broncos plan to bring him back later in the season, a device that each team can use for two players per year.

To be eligible for IR-and-return, Ray must be on the initial 53-man roster. He can be moved to injured reserve after 4:00 p.m. ET on Sunday.

With DeMarcus Ware retired, the Broncos had been counting on Ray to step up in a major way this season. Ray had eight sacks last season.