

Kickin' it with Kiz: If Broncos are serious Super Bowl contenders, it's time to make deal for offensive tackle

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
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I'm on to you, Kiz. I know you secretly have your fingers all over the Broncos organization. So can you tell us why front-office honcho John Elway and coach Vance Joseph are so steadfastly sticking to Menelik Watson at right tackle? It seems like Elway should be banging down doors, looking for a new one. Would the Broncos consider a trade or signing a street free agent?

Shaun, smart shopper

Kiz: I am the unseen hand. I not only control the moon and stars, but what Elway decides to eat for lunch. So please accept my apologies. I should have pulled Elway away from acquiring Watson, whose pass-blocking is hazardous to Trevor Siemian's health. Duane Brown is a tackle, a holdout, so unhappy with his contract in Houston he refuses to suit up for the Texans. Brown might look good in a Denver uniform.

Is it time for Brocktober? I'm kidding (kind of).

Andrew, Denver

Kiz: Siemian is a less-than-average NFL starting quarterback, whether you use the traditional quarterback rating, which places him 19th in the league, or the Total QBR favored by ESPN, which ranks him 23rd, just ahead of Jacksonville's Blake Bortles. Siemian, however, is better than Brock Osweiler. And Siemian's job with the Broncos is simple: Don't mess it up.

I hope you are happy now, Kiz. Your column claiming the Rockies had nine innings in the playoffs to earn respect showed how little you know about baseball. Then your column linking broken hearts to Colorado's 11-8 loss to Arizona was pathetic. It is you who broke our hearts. It was you that posted a pregame column that Colorado players undoubtedly saw and planted subconscious doubt before the game even started.

Larry, Littleton

Kiz: We here at Kickin' It Headquarters will step up and take full responsibility for the fat meatball of a pitch that Jon Gray served up to Arizona slugger Paul Goldschmidt, who crushed it for a three-run homer. Provided, of course, that along with taking responsibility, we also get paid Gray's \$540,000 salary. A half million bucks can buy a bus-load of mea culpas, and still have enough money to buy a truck-load of beer.

I love the Rockies. But business should always come before pleasure, and the Rockies don't see it that way. The photos of champagne poured down the throats of players and their celebration needed to wait until they won the World Series. They celebrated too early and lost out.

B.J., stoic by nature

Kiz: Know what I say? Dance whenever the beat moves you. Pop the cork on champagne for victories, big or small. Life's short, and the party's way less fun after we're gone.

And today's parting shot represents one of the few offers I received from fans upset with NFL anthem protests to donate their unwanted Broncos gear to children in need.

Let me know where to drop off my blue Broncos sweatshirt. I will not mail it, and if dropped off, someone will have to meet me at my car.

Sandy, drive-by donor

Broncos' Von Miller hangs with fans, takes orders at Texas A&M bar

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Von Miller went to work during his bye week.

The Broncos' linebacker and Texas A&M Hall of Famer traveled to College Station, Texas, for the weekend to attend his alma mater's game against top-ranked Alabama on Saturday.

But first he stopped a local hotspot, The Dixie Chicken, to hang out with fans and even help out behind the counter.



Who will buy John Bowlen's no-control, high-dollar minority stake of Broncos?

By Mike Klis

9 News

October 8, 2017

Uncle John wants out.

John Bowlen, brother of Broncos' principal owner Pat Bowlen, wishes to sell his minority interest that could command anywhere from \$500 million to \$800 million.

This does not necessarily mean the Bowlen Family ownership is beginning to splinter. In terms of controlling interest, John Bowlen and the Pat Bowlen Trust do not intersect, but run parallel.

John Bowlen's minority interest – which has no voting or controlling rights – is not part of the Pat Bowlen Family Trust that contains 100 percent control of the Broncos.

There is strong evidence suggesting Broncos fans should be happy with their team's trust set up. It has led to team president and chief executive officer Joe Ellis overseeing the day-to-day operations of the franchise and general manager John Elway running the football department since the start of the 2011 season.

In the 6 ¼ seasons since the Ellis-Elway team took charge, the Broncos have gone 70-30 in the regular season, won five AFC West Division titles, earned two Super Bowl appearances and won one world championship.

"Fans are always comfortable with the status quo of a successful franchise," said Randy Vataha, a popular receiver of the New England Patriots in the 1970s who now runs Game Plan LLC, which represents buyers and sellers of sports franchises. "If there's a change, that's when they're going to pay attention. With a team like Denver, I'm sure the fans are completely comfortable with how it's been run to this point. It's a great franchise. They compete every year."

A new owner, in other words, has a greater chance of messing up the Broncos than improving the overall state of the team. Ask yourself this, Broncos fans: Would you rather have an audacious billionaire like Daniel Snyder running the team, or the Pat Bowlen Trust?

Still, there is controlling interest and there is cash. John Bowlen's stake has considerable cash value. As it stands now, John Bowlen believes he holds 31 to 35 percent of the Broncos' financial ownership -- all of which, to reiterate, is classified in a non-controlling minority interest. None of that financial value falls under the umbrella of the Pat Bowlen Family Trust.

With Pat Bowlen battling Alzheimer's Disease, his trust is run by three trustees: Joe Ellis, the Broncos' chief executive officer and president; Rich Slivka, the Broncos' executive general counsel, and Mary Kelly, a local attorney who has previously represented Pat Bowlen in legal affairs.

The trust lists his seven children as beneficiaries. His two oldest daughters Amie and Beth are from his first marriage to Sally Parker. Pat and his second wife Annabel had five children: sons Patrick III and John, and daughters Brittany, Annabel and Christianna.

One of these seven is to run the Broncos, according to the wishes of Pat Bowlen and the plan currently being carried out by the trustees.

Ellis recently received a contract extension. Considering Elway in late-July received a new five-year deal that runs through 2021, it figures that Ellis' new contract extends at least that long.

Broncos' football operations figure to be status quo for a while.

What's new is John Bowlen wants out as minority partner.

"I want to make this very, very clear: This has nothing to do with what Joe or Rich are doing," Kerry Bowlen, John's wife, told 9NEWS last week. "There's no animosity at all. It's just John and Pat were always partners. And now that Pat is no longer involved with running the team, it's just purely time to go. Let a new owner come in. And for us financially, spiritually, it's time as well."

Let's put John Bowlen's share at 31 percent. Forbes Magazine recently put the Broncos value at \$2.4 billion -- and the publication has been mostly low in its assessments compared to the ultimate sales of sports franchises. For instance, in August 2014, Forbes listed the Buffalo Bills' value at \$935 million. A month later, Terry and Kim Pegula bought the franchise for \$1.4 billion.

Still, using Forbes' \$2.4 billion as the starting point for the Broncos' total franchise value, John Bowlen could begin by asking for roughly \$740.4 million.

Will it sell? It won't be easy because that's a lot of loot for no say. Tennessee Titans minority owner Susie Adams Smith has been trying to sell her share of the team.

One attorney who has put together several sports ownership deals says John Bowlen would probably have to give a discount because his interest has no voting rights or controlling interest.

It's unclear whether John Bowlen's minority interest includes a right-of-first-refusal clause should the trustees decide to put the team's controlling interest for sale. Right of first refusal would be a huge component in the sale price.

Without it, instead of \$740.4 million, John Bowlen might have to settle for, say, \$500 million or \$600 million. That's still a lot of money for no control, and possibly no first-refusal rights. Will there be interest, anyway?

"I would think, a lot," Vataha said. "It's always hard when you get to that level of value that you're talking about -- several hundred million dollars no matter how you look at it to be a non-controlling owner. That's always a major factor in getting a deal done. But I think there will be great interest. You don't know what the sale number is but there will be real interest. I think a deal gets done. That's a great franchise."

What would multiple bidders do the sale price -- could it go past \$740 million to \$800 million?

Even if John Bowlen is only offering an economic interest, there's reason for a person worth a couple billion to consider it a good investment.

Consider that Forbes says the Broncos are the 24th most valued professional sports franchise with their \$2.4 billion figure, and that the franchises ranked ahead of them all play in considerably larger markets than Denver.

More significantly, the Broncos' value soared 24 percent from the previous year. Only the Los Angeles Rams and NBA's Golden State Warriors had a greater percentage increase among the top 24 sports franchises.

So the Broncos are not only highly valued, they're hot.

Consider also that sports franchises have also been fairly recession proof. Their value has increased at a far greater rate than, say, the S&P 500.

This helps explain why minority, non-controlling, sports partnerships have become popular in recent years. Will Farrell, Will and Jada Pinkett Smith, Justin Timberlake, Peyton Manning's wife Ashley, Gloria Estefan, Marc Anthony, Bill Maher, Serena and Venus Williams, Fergie, Nelly, Usher and Jay-Z are among the celebrities who own minority shares in sports franchises.

A buyer of John Bowlen's minority interest could be in better position to purchase the team outright if eventually the Pat Bowlen Trust sells the Broncos on behalf of the children. First, a minority owner would have already passed NFL inspection.

Secondly, the trustees do have a fiduciary responsibility to operate in the best interest of the beneficiaries. If someone comes along and offers to buy the Broncos for \$3 billion, Ellis, Slivka and Kelly would be obligated to approach the children and ask, what do you think?

Who would have the financial wherewithal to purchase a minority stake in the Broncos for anywhere from \$500 million to \$800 million?

Vataha said the new partner wouldn't want to take out a loan for the purchase because the interest would slice too far into the potential investment gains. To come up with the kind of liquidity necessary to pull off such a purchase, someone would need the ability to cash in other assets.

"You would think it would be somebody with multi-billion net worth," Vataha said. "If you get down to a billion dollars you're talking quite a bit of liquidity of assets to buy this.

"I'm also not sure it does this all have to be sold as one piece. Can you sell it to a group? I'll put six guys together and they all buy 5 percent (of the team's total ownership). That does happen in the NFL. Quietly, but it does happen."

Because all minority owners require NFL approval, a group of multiple buys for John Bowlen's interest could get unwieldy. He's hoping to sell to one or two investors.

Forbes Magazine says there are 2,043 billionaires in the world. Start there. John Bowlen has Canadian ties so perhaps he can reach out to David Thomson, who runs Canada-based Thomson Reuters and is worth \$27.2 billion.

Billionaires with Colorado ties include Charlie Ergin, of the DISH Network; Philip Anschutz, a diversified investor who owns stakes in the NBA Los Angeles Lakers and NHL's L.A. Kings; John Malone, the cable magnate who already owns the Atlanta Braves of Major League Baseball; James Leprino, the mozzarella cheese king; Pat Stryker, a venture capital, real-estate developer; and Gary Magness, whose stepmother Sharon owns Thunder, the Broncos' mascot.

9NEWS reached out to local oil and gas magnate George Solich, who sent along a "no comment" to the inquiry of whether he would be interested in John Bowlen's stake.

"A buyer could be thinking if I buy it at a good price now, when the whole team goes up for sale, I've already got 30 percent at a better price than the ultimate price," Vataha said. "You'll need to understand all the financials, how the trust works because you buy that minority interest now and somebody else could be running the team in two years."

Again, the Pat Bowlen Trust plans on keeping the Broncos' controlling interest in the family. But it appears the trustees and beneficiaries are about to say goodbye to uncle John, and welcome in a new minority business partner.

Broncos wave bye to early bye, brace for long stretch with no rest

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

October 8, 2017

Whether the Denver Broncos want to admit it or not, the schedule the league handed them in April was worthy of a raised eyebrow or two.

And as they officially exit their Week 5 bye Monday morning when they arrive for their meetings, the 12 games that remain in their regular season still feature some potential bumps in the road. Start with the bye week they just enjoyed.

"We've known it for a long time; it's not a surprise," coach Vance Joseph said recently with a laugh. "It didn't sneak up on us; we've planned, and we'll stick to the plan and put the work in."

But the Broncos were among the four teams who got the first available bye week; there were no byes in the first four weeks of the season (except for an emergency one taken by Tampa Bay because of Hurricane Irma). The Atlanta Falcons, New Orleans Saints and Washington Redskins were the others.

As a result, just a month into the season, the Broncos are, for the most part, healthy across the roster. A later bye, like say Week 9, 10 or 11, could potentially bring more benefit to rest for the stretch run for a playoff contender.

Although the Broncos' players and coaches gladly took their four-day weekend, they will now play games for 12 consecutive weeks. The next opportunity for Joseph to give the players any additional days off won't come until Week 15 after the Broncos play on Thursday, Dec. 14, in Indianapolis.

Also, after the Broncos face the New York Giants next Sunday, they will have already played half of the team's home schedule by the sixth game. It's early, but it's a possible trend worth noting given the Broncos' three wins have all come at home, and their most disjointed effort has come in the only road game -- a Sept. 24 loss to the Buffalo Bills.

Quarterback Trevor Siemian did address the difficulty in gathering too many conclusions from four games' worth of work as the Broncos worked through limited on-field work this week.

"It's tough," Siemian said. "It's a small sample size, and we're in the middle of a season, so you're not rebuilding your game or anything. I think, as an offense, we're close to where we want to be. Again, it's a good spot to be in."

The Broncos will play seven of their next 11 on the road, including a stretch of three consecutive road games -- Oct. 22 against the Chargers, Oct. 30 in Kansas City and Nov. 5 in Philadelphia. Three consecutive road games is a schedule quirk that the team has not previously navigated better than 1-2 since the schedule went to 16 games in 1978. That includes the 2014 season, when Denver lost two in a stretch of three consecutive road games -- at New England and at St. Louis -- with Peyton Manning at quarterback on the way to a 12-4 finish.

This is why the Broncos, although happy with their 3-1 start, have been quick to point out that it's about the work from start to finish. They opened 4-0 last season and were 7-3 when they arrived at what they said was a well-positioned Week 11 bye and still missed the playoffs at 9-7.

"You want to be undefeated, but it's a tough league," said linebacker Von Miller. "I feel good. You want to go about 3-1 every quarter. That will put you right at the top of the AFC at the end of the season, right where you want to be. We're right on track to where we want to be."

"This staff has challenged this team to do more each week and not be satisfied with where we are," Joseph said. "Being 3-1 is a good thing, but we can do more and we can get better. It's a mature team, it's a motivated team and they want to win. They want to win it all, so my job is easy when it comes to that. We have to apply the pressure to our players to continue to do more and more each week as we have success."

Colts unveil Manning statue outside Lucas Oil Stadium

By Staff

Associated Press

October 8, 2017

The Indianapolis Colts have unveiled a statue of Peyton Manning on a plaza outside Lucas Oil Stadium in a ceremony attended by hundreds of fans and featuring remarks from Hall of Famers coach Tony Dungy and executive Bill Polian, and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

The five-time NFL MVP concluded the event Saturday by proclaiming "I will always be a Colt" and throwing autographed footballs into the crowd.

The bronze likeness features Manning in his Colts uniform preparing to throw a pass. It was a rare time he wasn't quite prepared.

"I keep checking my health to make sure everything checks out," Manning told The Associated Press on Friday. "I'm not sure you're supposed to be alive to see something like this."

But he was alive and kicking and ready to celebrate with more than a dozen former teammates back in town Saturday.

Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett and former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels also spoke, as did longtime Colts center Jeff Saturday. Even David Letterman made a surprise appearance in what Manning informally dubbed an all-Indiana event — with the exception of Goodell.

"We all salute Peyton for being a tremendous ambassador for his community, our league and our game," Goodell posted on Twitter after the ceremony.

Everyone wanted a part.

Vice President Mike Pence, another former Indiana governor, is scheduled to arrive in Indy on Saturday night and plans to attend Sunday's game against San Francisco. Manning will be honored again with his induction into the team's Ring of Honor. He also will become the first player from the franchise's Indianapolis era to have his jersey retired.

Goodell was not planning to attend Sunday's game.

Bud Light even launched a Youtube video that included three of Manning's former backups in Indy: Brock Huard, Jim Sorgi and Curtis Painter.

Manning finished his career as the NFL's career leader in yards passing and touchdown passes. He had two Super Bowl titles and a league-record five MVP awards.

He played 14 seasons with the Colts, leading Indy to two AFC titles and brought and its only Super Bowl victory, 29-17 over the Chicago Bears in early 2007. He was voted the Super Bowl MVP.

After missing the entire 2011 season with an injured neck, the Colts released him and he wound up signing with Denver.

With the Broncos, Manning set single-season records for yards passing and TD passes, played in two more Super Bowls and earned his second championship ring before retiring.

Mason's Mailbag: Keeping the ground game as a strength

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
October 8, 2017

It's too early to tell. During his press conference Wednesday afternoon before the Broncos scattered for the bye weekend, Trevor Siemian referred to the "small sample size" on multiple occasions, which is crucial in looking at things like red-zone offense and the fourth-quarter scoring deficit.

You can look to individual plays and circumstances that can be corrected -- penalties, turnovers, etc. These are all correctable mistakes. If they continue, they become a trend. Right now, it's too early to determine whether this will be an ongoing problem.

Now that Booker is healthy, and with the talent stockpile at RB, do you think that the Broncos might seek to trade one of their RBs to try and upgrade depth at another position? If not, how do they split up the carries among them all?

-- Doug Holmes

I don't see a trade there happening, for these reasons:

1. The natural attrition of running back means you are likely to deal with an injury -- or injuries -- to players in the position group at some point the rest of the way. The depth that seems like a luxury now could become essential later on; just look at recent seasons such as 2014 and 2016 for evidence.
2. The offense's flow often stems from the ground game, which can help bring other areas of the attack along. It might not be the wisest move to deplete this area of strength, particularly when it can help continue to open things up for the passing game in the final 12 games of the regular season (and, the Broncos hope, for the postseason beyond that).

As for how they split the carries among the group, I would expect C.J. Anderson should continue to be the primary back; in the parlance of Head Coach Vance Joseph, he's the "bell cow" for a reason. The return of Devontae Booker should ensure that Anderson doesn't have to be overworked; perhaps Anderson settles in the range of 18-22 touches per game (he had 28 touches in Week 2 and 24 in Week 4). Charles has averaged nine touches per game; this workload seems perfect for him, and his production at his pace reflects that.

Why doesn't the NFL have a midseason break so that everyone has a week off at the same time rather than bye weeks? Or at least have half the league off one week and the other half the next so that everyone gets their bye week close to the same time?

-- Don Evans

If everyone had their bye at the same time, then you have a week without football. The television networks would have a week with no games. Given the money at stake with television contracts, this is not an acceptable solution.

Even having half the league off one week would dilute the product and the number of available games to an unacceptable level for CBS and FOX, who have the contracts for games sent around the country on a regional basis each Sunday afternoon during the regular season.

I've heard a few mentions of this being the NFL's 98th season. Of course, that means in two years, it's the 100th season. What do you hope the league does to promote this special occasion?

-- Tom Martin

I've mentioned in the past that I'd like to see a once-a-decade Hall of Fame class of 17 players to ease the perpetual backlog of qualified candidates (17 was the size of the original Hall of Fame class in 1963). The 2019 season would represent a perfect opportunity for this.

But throughout the season, I'd like to see a celebration of the sport's history. On a team-by-team basis, I would love to see each team bring back its old uniforms. To do this right, the NFL would have to dump the one-helmet rule that has been in place since 2012. (This has been a topic in previous mailbags, which you can read [here](#) and [here](#); I would prefer not to belabor the point on this subject.)

Obviously, the league has its standards and practices on uniforms that have been in place. But the 100th season needs to be special -- truly a once-in-a-lifetime celebration of the sport. Dusting off throwback uniforms to represent various eras of the sport would give the year a distinct flavor.

For example, the Broncos face the Detroit Lions at in Denver in 2019. How cool would it be to see both teams wear uniforms that look like the ones that they wore when they met in the 1967 preseason, when the Broncos became the first AFL team to defeat an NFL team?

There are other examples on the 2019 slate. For a Titans-Broncos game, both teams could wear the uniforms they wore in the 1960s, re-enacting an Oilers-Broncos game from that time period. A Broncos-at-Vikings game could see a recreation of a 1978 "Monday Night Football" game that went to overtime in which the Broncos wore orange pants with white jerseys and the classic "D" logo on the helmets. The possibilities are limitless. Almost every game on the schedule could be used to commemorate a specific era or time in the NFL's 100-season history. Even the in-game music could go along with it; a few years ago, the Bucs would play 1970s music when they were allowed to wear old-school throwbacks to accentuate the retro vibe.

The 2019 season has the potential to be a truly special celebration for the league and its fans, and I hope it is maximized.

Under the Headset: Offensive Coordinator Mike McCoy

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

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After a four-year stint in San Diego as the head coach of the Chargers, Mike McCoy returned to Denver this offseason to bring a jolt to the Broncos' offense. In the early weeks of the season, he's done just that. As he took a break from implementing another successful offensive game plan, we caught up with him about his return to Denver, his college quarterbacking career and his impressions of Head Coach Vance Joseph.

Aric DiLalla: What's something about Trevor that people outside the building may not appreciate that you've come to appreciate as you've spent a lot of time with him?

Mike McCoy: Well I think he did a great job during the offseason program, during all the training camp, going through a competition and never flinching. Him and Paxton both deserve credit for the way they handled the situation. We've had success up to this point in time because they worked together. Trevor didn't worry about any of the noise on the outside, and that's something we sat down [about]. So I think everyone really should appreciate the way he's handled the situation, especially after playing as much as he did last year. At the time, too, he showed a lot of toughness by playing hurt. He was a pro during the whole entire time, and when Paxton was in there, he was trying to help him and do everything he could and showed his leadership, and I think that's one of the big reasons why everyone voted him as a team captain. Trevor's also done a great job of picking up a new offense quickly. That's not easy to do.

AD: In 1994, in the last Freedom Bowl, you led a game-winning drive. I think Utah then finished with its highest-ever ranking, what are your memories from that season and that game?

MM: We had a great group of players and coaches. With the leadership of [former coach] Ron McBride at the University of Utah, it was a special year and day for everybody. We didn't have much success as an offense that day, but that's why you play four quarters of football. Fortunately, Cal Beck had a big return for us, and I saw Kevin Dyson on the back end line and got it to him. The 1994 season helped lay the foundation for the University of Utah football program.

AD: You've coached a lot of different quarterbacks. Which of the guys that you've coached reminds you most of the way you played?

MM: They were all a lot better than I was. Everybody's different. It's really hard to say just one of them. I was kind of chasing the dream, and all the guys I coached have had very successful careers, so it's hard to say just one. I'm very fortunate, though. I'll say this about all the guys that I've worked with: [They're] not only great players, but even better people. I'm a better coach today because of all of them.

AD: I know you spent some time with Terrell Davis when you were at Long Beach State, when did you realize he could be special?

MM: We were there for our redshirt year and then for our freshman year playing, so we were there for two seasons playing together. [During] our freshman game, Harvey Hyde, our running backs coach, he called all the plays for the little freshman game, and I think everything was designed to go to T.D. After about six or seven plays, I said, 'Can we throw the ball like a normal offense instead of just handing it to

T.D. or throwing him the ball?’ And he said, ‘He’s the best player on the field, he should get it.’ And I think once we came together in ’95 [in Denver] for training camp, you could see [his talent] when we went overseas and the way he played in the kicking game and what he did the few times when he carried the ball and the production he had. You saw that on the field every day. It’s great to see a Long Beach State 49er have the career he did and go to the Hall of Fame. I’m very happy for him.

AD: What went into your decision to come back to Denver?

It’s an unbelievable organization from top, down. From Mr. B [Owner Pat Bowlen], all the way down. I was very fortunate to be hired by the Spanos family to go to San Diego for four years and to have an opportunity to come back. My family and I absolutely love Denver. My family is still living in San Diego, but the friends that we’ve made here, working for a great organization, it’s a special place. And until you’re here, you don’t really understand that. Going away and then coming back, it was a very easy decision for my family and I to make to come back here and say let’s work for Mr. Bowlen and the Denver Broncos again. What John Elway’s done here, having the opportunity to work for V.J. [Vance Joseph] when I talked to him about coming here, getting back with D.T. [Demaryius Thomas]. Him and Virgil [il Green] are the only two still here on the offensive side of the ball. Just knowing what this organization’s all about and the expectations of the organization, it was easy to come back.

AD: How different of a challenge is it this time around?

MM: Well, it’s a new challenge every year. Every team changes from year to year. I was in Carolina for nine years, here for four years, then for four. You come back. Every team’s different, so it’s a great challenge every year. The turnover now-a-days, it changes all the time. So it’s a great challenge, and I think that’s one thing that I always like to do, is take advantage of what our players do best and put our players in a position to succeed. I’ve been very fortunate to be around some great players and some great organizations.

AD: What’s impressed you most about working with Coach Joseph and how he’s handled the early part of the season?

MM: He’s done a great job of running the team. And when I say that, there’s so many things that come up as a head coach, and he’s only been doing it for a couple months, but I just think his composure and the way he’s handled all the situations. There’s a lot of tough things that come across your desk, but he’s the same guy every day. I think the players love the way he’s set up the schedule. He’s always looking at the best interest of the players, but he’s also brutally honest with them, too, and lets them know, ‘Hey, this is the standard we have here. This is the way we want to get things done.’ And that’s what the players really want to do. He’s done a great job.

National anthem protests don't appear to be hurting NFL ticket sales

By Kevin Spain
USA Today
October 8, 2017

It's still early in the process to get a full grasp of how the NFL national anthem protests are going to affect the league, but it certainly has been something that sparked conversation.

President Trump's base of supporters and those who take offense to players who take a knee during the anthem — a protest started by then-San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick to call attention to racial inequality and police brutality — have made their feelings known about their displeasure, some even calling for a boycott.

Is that having an effect? Not really, according to ticket brokers.

TickPick, where customers can bid on tickets for events, had a significant drop in NFL ticket sales last week, until the weekend. They were down 17.9% compared to the same week last year. At the time, CEO Brett Goldberg and director of client relations Jack Slingland said that while they've seen a drop in sales after Week 3 in years past, what they experienced last week was more significant.

Looking at the data, they couldn't say for sure the protests were the reason — because you only get feedback from those who buy tickets and not from those who choose not to — but because there was so much press about the issue, it was something that had to be studied.

Then over the weekend, they got a 9.6% increase in sales from the week before.

This week, they've seen a 21.8% decrease in sales compared to before Week 4, but that was pretty much in line from the kind of decrease they've seen in recent seasons, which have been more than 30% lower in two of the past three years.

In a statement to USA TODAY Sports, the company said it expects the way the "NFL, the owners, the teams and the players handled last week's games will reduce the volatility that we have seen in ticket sales."

At SeatGeek, the numbers seem to indicate very little, if any, change in buying habits. The company said that ticket prices have been pretty normal for the past two weeks.

The company said according to their sales data, they're seeing a similar number of transactions each week. So the conclusion here is that there either has been no impact from a call for a boycott or there is a number of folks buying tickets because of the publicity the league has been getting.

Not only have fans not stopped going to games, but they're watching on TV more than they did last year. Despite Trump's claim that TV ratings are down, the overall figures for the past two weeks say the opposite. Week 3 ratings were up 3% across all games from 2016, including a spike of 63% in the rating

for Monday Night Football, the league announced last week. Overall, viewership for Monday Night Football is averaging 11.9 million through the first four weeks, a 5% increase from last year.

Fox's NFL coverage for Week 4 drew a 12.6 rating and 26 share, a 14% increase over its Week 4 coverage a year ago. The network broadcast one game nationally on Sunday and the ratings were about 20% better than in the same slot covered by CBS in Week 4 of 2016.

NBC's Sunday Night Football rating was unchanged from last year's Week 4 game. The Seattle Seahawks' blowout victory over the Indianapolis Colts resulted in a 11.0 rating and 19 share.

CBS was the one network to see a ratings dip for its national game (Oakland Raiders vs. Denver Broncos), which began at 4:25 pm ET. That telecast had a 10.8 rating and an 18 share, a 23% decline when compared to Week 4 in 2016.

TV rating for Bucs-Patriots is why 'Thursday Night Football' here to stay

By Frank Schwab
Yahoo! Sports
October 8, 2017

NFL boycotters are bringing the league to its knees, as shown by the 26 percent increase in ratings for “Thursday Night Football” from Week 5 last season. Hey, wait ...

The NFL is doing fine, of course. CBS announced it and NFL Network did an average 11.1 rating with a 19 share for the New England Patriots’ win over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Thursday night. Those ratings don’t even include digital viewing numbers on Amazon Prime, which weren’t available early Friday. The television ratings are a 26 percent increase from last season’s Week 5 Arizona-San Francisco game on CBS and NFL Network.

Boycotts, though.

Anyway, what this really shows us is that “Thursday Night Football” isn’t going away. The quality of the games are rarely good. Most of Thursday night’s game was the Patriots stalling in Buccaneers territory, and the Buccaneers never getting into Patriots territory or missing field goals when they did. It wasn’t a pretty game. But plenty of people watched.

As has been pointed out in this space over and over and over, the NFL “ratings crisis” is overblown. Consider that the Yankees-Twins wild-card playoff game on Tuesday night, which had an enormous 58 percent increase from 2016 because the Yankees were in it, had a 5.2 overnight rating. That game faced no real competition in the sports viewing marketplace on Tuesday night. The Buccaneers-Patriots 11.1 rating, despite going up against a Game 1 ALDS matchup between the Yankees and Indians, more than doubled that AL wild-card game rating.

Imagine if you’re the NFL. Sure, the games on Thursday night are generally sloppy, considering teams have half the usual time to prepare. But fans tuned in this week at twice the rate of an elimination game featuring the New York Yankees, the biggest draw in Major League Baseball. Networks are clearly going to pay for a program that produces a rating like the NFL can deliver over three hours. CBS said the Buccaneers-Patriots game ratings beat Fox by 325 percent, NBC by 176 percent and ABC by 132 percent. Now, if you were the NFL you’d really cut off “Thursday Night Football” and that revenue stream? Come on.

Not all of us love the NFL games on Thursday night. But millions still tune in. That’s why they’re not going anywhere.

NFL running back Henderson checks in on his former Coastal Carolina teammates

By Alan Blondin
Myrtle Beach Online
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De'Angelo Henderson and the Denver Broncos have one bye week this season, giving the NFL rookie and former Coastal Carolina running back one weekend away from the team.

He chose to make Coastal Carolina's 27-21 loss to Georgia State on Saturday night at Brooks Stadium part of his lone free weekend.

"Why not?" Henderson said Saturday at halftime. "This is home. I was at my high school [Summerville] yesterday and gave a pregame speech to the guys. Why not come to Coastal? This is what got me to where I'm at and I'm forever grateful to this university and the people here, so I want to come back here and show my face and show my love and support."

Henderson earned praise from his Broncos coaches and teammates in preseason but has yet to play on offense. He has played specials teams in three of Denver's four games and has one rush for 1 yard this season, coming on a fake punt attempt in a 26-16 loss at Buffalo.

He was inactive in last Sunday's win over Oakland, as running back Devontae Booker returned from a wrist injury to take over the third-string running back spot behind C.J. Anderson and Jamaal Charles. But Henderson vows to be ready when his opportunity comes.

"The thing about the NFL is you never know what's going to happen," Henderson said. "It's a long season. Guys go down or changes happen throughout the season. You can't slip on anything. They make cuts every single day. You can't slack on your assignments or your studies, but if you do and it shows in practice they'll cut you. I don't want that to happen to me. I'm definitely on top of that stuff and trying to stay positive."

Henderson was a sixth-round pick of the Broncos in the NFL Draft in late April after gaining 4,635 career yards at CCU and scoring 64 touchdowns, including at least one in an NCAA-record 35 straight games. The Broncos are 3-1.

"I know many guys who wish they were in this position that fought and clawed their way to hopefully get a chance," Henderson said. "For me to be in this position is humbling. I'm thankful for it and one thing I won't do is take it for granted."

Henderson said being in the NFL is "everything you expect it to be times two."

As an NFL rookie, he said he has experienced the typical ribbing including having to carry the pads of veterans. "If you refuse to do something they'll throw your clothes in the cold tub, and that's not fun when all your stuff is wet and cold," he said. "So for the most part I try to comply."

Every time a former Chanticleer returns to the Conway campus, it provides motivation to the current group of players.

“It’s encouraging just seeing him and where he is now,” senior quarterback Tyler Keane said. “It’s something to look forward to for a lot of guys on the team.”

Henderson’s girlfriend, Natalie McKnight, accompanied him to the game and was displaying a baby bump. She is pregnant with the couple’s first child, which is a boy, and is due in about nine weeks.

“I’ve got a lot of things happening. I’m excited. I can’t wait,” Henderson said of becoming a father.

NFL Teams Policing Whether Players Sit For The Anthem?

By Vincent Frank
Forbes
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The first quarter of the NFL season has been drama filled. Following President Trump's disparaging remarks directed at National Anthem protesters around the game, we've seen protests themselves take on a wide-ranging theme.

It's led to a constant back and forth between players and the White House, culminating in Trump himself recommending the NFL make it a policy to force players to stand for the anthem.

Now comes this report from Shaun King of the The Intercept indicating that players on at least two teams have told him that their organizations have enacted policies requiring players to stand for the pre-game anthem.

The teams themselves are unknown, but the report was backed up by former NFL player and Huffington Post contributor Donte' Stallworth.

For his part, NFL spokesperson Brian McCarthy had previously clarified whether it is stated policy or rule that players stand for the National Anthem.

"It's policy, it's not a rule. I think where people are getting confused is, rules, that's like holding or defensive pass interference, that's a rule. This is policy," McCarthy said, via the Indy Star.

Essentially, this would be owners from at least two teams giving in to Trump's demands. It most definitely won't be welcomed by a vast majority of players, some of who support the right to protest while avoiding direct action themselves.

There's also two other important things to look at here.

First off, we focused on the differential between political donations from NFL owners to then candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The figures themselves are staggering (more on that here).

This gives us some idea of where owners themselves stand, a majority of whom have acted as coffers to the Republican Party.