

Joseph hopes more zone, less man helps Denver D in long run

By Mike Klis

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Vance Joseph has dared to tweak what wasn't broken.

As the Broncos' first-year head coach, Joseph inherited a Denver secondary that was widely considered the NFL's best, both anecdotally and statistically.

The personality of the Denver defense the previous two years under coordinator Wade Phillips was man-to-man coverage.

Joseph and new defensive coordinator Joe Woods have employed far more zone coverage this season. Hey, it is called the No Fly Zone, not the No Fly Man.

One reason for the mix, Joseph said, is to make it a less physically taxing on cornerbacks Aqib Talib, Chris Harris Jr. and Bradley Roby.

"It's a physical reason it's also a scheme reason," Joseph said in a sit-down interview 9News last week. "If you're all man, you'll get all man beaters as far as a pass contest. If you're a mix of man and zone then they're guessing. So to help our players we thought we have to play more zone. And be good at it."

There's been some growing pains. It's not that the Broncos have been a sieve against the big pass play – 24 teams have surrendered more pass plays of at least 20 yards than Denver's 10. It's that they've given up at least one costly big play a game.

There was the 38-yard touchdown to the Chargers' Travis Benjamin in the opener. A 28-yard touchdown to Dallas tight end Jason Witten in week 2. Four completions of at least 25 yards surrendered in a week 3 loss at Buffalo. And the 64-yard touchdown pass from the Raiders' Derek Carr to Johnny Holton last week.

"To play more zone coverage you need more focus on details," Joseph said. "This team has been a man-to-man team primarily in the past. That's an easy job as far as assignments. It's hard job as far as physical ability. But we want to give our guys a break from time to time and play more zone.

"The issues we're having now is going to make us a better football team if we can play zone from time to time to give our guys a break. I think the issues we're having now is, we're transforming from being a total man team to being a split team, man and zone. That's been the issue and we'll get better at it."

The Broncos are allowing 25 more passing yards per game this year compared to 2016. But they're also the No. 1-ranked defense as they're allowing 80 less rushing yards a game.

The mix has been a 3-1 record.

“Most of the personnel hasn’t changed,” Joseph said. “Most of the staff hasn’t changed. Most of the calls haven’t changed. We expected to be a good defense. And we can do better. The first four weeks have been good, but we can do better as far as giving up the big plays.”

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

By Mike Klis

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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 have 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 buyers 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.

C.J. Anderson hopes his best start leads to best finish

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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There have been times when Denver Broncos running back C.J. Anderson has closed the deal and powered good things in the offense in a stretch run.

There was the 48-yard touchdown run to beat the New England Patriots as the snow fell in prime time in 2015 to help the Broncos gain home-field advantage in that postseason. He had 90 yards rushing in the Super Bowl 50 win just over two months later.

He had back-to-back 160-yard rushing games in the second half of the 2014 season.

And even last year, when Anderson played in seven games before he suffered a season-ending knee injury, his best day of that campaign came in his final contest, when he rushed for 107 yards against the Houston Texans.

"I've always felt like I've had strong outings late in the season," Anderson said. "That was something I've taken some pride in."

But this season has been about his strong outset, as well. Whether it has been lineup decisions by the coaches, a few nagging injuries or what he says were "things in my conditioning, maybe," Anderson has not started a season like he has started this one.

He credits a more consistent approach to his offseason -- "I finally picked something and stuck with it" -- that included plenty of cycling. Anderson said all of the work he put in before the start of training camp, as well as a more well-rounded recovery plan after workouts and games, has fueled what has happened to this point in the season.

After four games, Anderson was fourth in the league in rushing with 330 yards. That's more than Anderson has rushed for in the first four games of a season in any of his previous four seasons. He rushed for 252 yards in his first four games last season.

He had 437 rushing yards after seven games last season and was at his career best around the halfway point of any of his seasons. His 107-yard rushing day against the Texans is his only 100-yard rushing game before Halloween.

"I feel good," Anderson said. "There are some things I've been doing personally that I learned from other veterans that has been helping me out."

"My body feels good and fresh."

The Broncos have helped with a concerted effort to assemble a more physical offensive line, while offensive coordinator Mike McCoy also has been willing to pound the ball plenty on offense in the opening month of the season. After four games, the Broncos were tied for No. 3 in rushing, at 143 yards per outing, and No. 4 in carries per game with 32.5.

McCoy has not said whether he expects to keep up his current pace. But he has said he likes what Anderson and the team's other backs have done to this point and that if handing them the ball keeps the wins coming, that's what he plans to do.

"We're just trying to win games," said McCoy. "We're never going to say it's going to be 50-50 or 40-60. We're trying to win. We'll go from week to week. ... We're going to do whatever we can to win. We'll run it as many times and throw it as many times -- whatever it takes to win that game."

While Anderson's workload could vary in the weeks to come, what with Jamaal Charles and Devontae Booker also significantly in the mix, Broncos coach Vance Joseph has said Anderson is in the "best shape of his career" and that the fifth-year back should be ready for any carries the Broncos give him.

"We say it all the time, in our running backs room, anybody in there can make plays," Anderson said. "At this point, I just try to go game to game, make sure I'm ready to take advantage of the opportunities I get. We just want to keep this rolling and get into the games we all want to be in. I've said I just want to put together a season end to end, however many games that is, where I'm productive all the way through. I've had a good start."

Player Q&A: Safety Justin Simmons

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

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Second-year safety Justin Simmons took over the starting role for the Broncos as the season began, and he's wasted no time in finding rhythm with the rest of the "No-Fly Zone." During a rare off moment for Simmons, we caught up with him about stepping into that role, the "Baby No-Fly" and his hot basketball take.

Aric DiLalla: You had some success at Boston College, but the Broncos' organization was coming off a Super Bowl win. What sort of differences did you see in the culture that you had to get used to?

Justin Simmons: With B.C., I mean historically, they've always been a solid football team. When I was there, really all we had going for us besides my sophomore and junior year, all we had going for us was defensively and so everyone knew defensively we were going to come out and be one of the best, but overall as a team, offensively and special teams we sometimes struggled. The transition here was great because from special teams to offense to defense, the whole organization, all the way from the Bowlen family to [John Elway] to Joe Ellis all the way down to the equipment staff [and] the training staff. Everything here is top-notch and handled with so much class. You can tell just from walking in here and the way the players carry themselves and everybody else, it's just such a prestigious organization. It's the best. That's why it's been so successful for however many years. That's something I wasn't necessarily used to at Boston College, and now transitioning here, it's more than just football. ... It's just crazy how everything is so connected.

AD: When you took over for T.J. Ward, Aqib Talib said you could handle it in part because you're married. What sort of stability has marriage given you and what has it taught you that you've been able to take toward your professional career?

JS: It just limits distractions. I'm not saying that's the only reason I got married (laughs), but it helps tremendously. I get to come home and I have someone home waiting for me that I can talk about my day with if I need to. She obviously doesn't understand football as well as the guys in the locker room do, but I can go home to her and just get some stuff off my chest. The real reason why I've been able to handle this transition and why it's going so smoothly is because of the guys I'm playing with. There's not as much pressure as you'd think there is because I'm playing with All-Pros across the board. Our front seven is tremendous. You look at the Dallas game and what we were able to do in stopping the run and getting to the quarterback, it makes our job on the back end so easy. And then you've got guys like Chris and 'Lib able to lock up in the secondary — and that helps you play that center field so much more smoothly. This team is all about sacrifice and playing for and with each other. So it's great, man. I love it.

AD: In your first year as a full-time starter, what's it been like to run out of the tunnel?

JS: It was cool. I was really just focused on not doing anything crazy and just running straight through and getting to the guys and getting ready to play the game. It's something that you dream about as a kid, looking out at the NFL and wanting to be an NFL player and hopefully, at one point in your career, start and have your name announced. My dreams for that have been so far surpassed. I couldn't have

asked for a better place in Broncos Country and playing for the Broncos and having that crowd cheer for you when you're coming out and playing for something bigger than yourself.

AD: You and Will Parks have talked a lot about how you're the "Baby No-Fly." Now that you're starting and Will's a starter in dime packages, have you transitioned into the full-time "No-Fly Zone"? If not, what do you have to do to get there?

JS: I think we've transitioned. There's still obviously so much work to put in. There's still so much of the season left. ... There's still so much football to be played and so much more to be proven, but you have to make that transition. You can't sit around in that rookie bubble and that you're-still-new-to-the-NFL bubble. We're asked to step up and make plays and consistently — week-in and week-out — contribute and make more plays than you don't. So you have to step up to that role.

AD: You played high school basketball — what's the scouting report on Justin Simmons, the basketball player?

JS: Dangerous. Dangerous. Watch out for him. He has a mean crossover, an even meaner hesitation move, and he's looking for crowd-roaring dunks anytime he can. I love playing basketball. I still do. When we have a lot of time off in the offseason, I'll go back and play with my brothers and stuff like that. Basketball's always been fun for me.

AD: How could somebody exploit your weakness on the court?

JS: To exploit me as a player? It's probably to get somebody who has really good on-ball defense, because my dribbling could use some work. So if have to work around you a lot all game, you probably would get me every now and then. All in all, though, there's not too many weaknesses in my basketball game. I'm pretty sharp.

AD: Can anybody in the locker room match up with you?

JS: No. No, not at all. D.T. [Demaryius Thomas] and Bennie [Fowler III] talk about it all the time. Stew [Darian Stewart], too. They talk about how they could beat me. There's no chance. There's no way they could beat me. We're going to have to play here soon, sometime in the offseason, when we've got some time.

AD: If you took the five best players in this locker room, could you beat a low-level Division I basketball team?

JS: Yes. And I know there's a huge argument about that. And this is no disrespect to a low Division I basketball team, because I know the work that those guys put in, and I know the sacrifice that those guys put in, and I know that's their job in college. But we're at an elite level of playing our sport. Granted, it's not basketball, but you have to have elite athleticism to be able to play in the NFL. I really believe with some of the height and size that we've got, our five best players would definitely give them a run for their money and I bet we would win.

AD: Who would be on your team?

JS: I would put myself, obviously. I would put Stew, 'Lib, I would put D.T., Bennie and then we would only need one alternate, and I'm bringing Will, because Will hoops too.

Children's Hospital Colorado Jr. Reporter: Caleb Aldrich

By Caleb Aldrich – Junior Reporter

DenverBroncos.com

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Dear Mr. Fowler,

I enjoyed getting to meet you and learn more about you!

It was interesting to learn that your favorite things about football were playing in front of about 70,000 fans and winning the Super Bowl. I liked learning that if you couldn't play football you would be a coach.

It was fun to learn that you grew up in Michigan. I've been to Michigan near Michigan State University (MSU) to visit relatives. I can see why your favorite color is green.

I hope someday I can travel to Italy, your favorite place you've traveled to. We share the same favorite food – pizza – yum! When you're not playing football, it sounds like fun to relax with your dog (Franklin) and play video games. When I grow up I hope I can drive a truck like you!

Thank you for the interview,

Caleb

Thank you to everyone on the tour and everyone I got to meet during my time as a Jr. Reporter! I enjoyed watching practice and getting to ride in the golf cart. It was fun to meet some of the other Broncos and have Demaryius Thomas stop to talk to me after practice. It was great to have a snack in the Broncos' Cafeteria. I got to see the players' locker room and stand in a locker. There were lots of meeting rooms and comfy coach chairs.

Go Broncos!

Thank you,

Caleb

Woody Paige: Ownership uncertainty swirls for Broncos after Pat Bowlen

By Woody Paige
Colorado Springs Gazette
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The Denver Broncos are more synonymous with Colorado than Buffalo Bill, Molly Brown and Zebulon Pike.

Bill, Brown and Pike found riches and fame, but not quite on a proportional scale with the Broncos.

Since an initial investment of \$25,000 in late 1959, the Broncos' monetary worth has increased by approximately 2 billion, 599 million, and 975 thousand dollars (10,399,900 percent).

And except for three-year spans two decades apart, the football franchise has been family-owned and -operated for a half century.

It's all relative.

But fissures have shaken the Broncos' ownership.

One member of Pat Bowlen's family, John, acknowledged he is selling his minority ownership. The majority is owned by the Bowlen Family Trust, and run by three trustees from outside the family who function as the owners. And at least two family members have explored the option of selling the team.

One reliable source close to the Bowlen family says that one of the children would prefer to sell the team. A source within the Broncos denied the claim, saying that the franchise's majority share could not be sold without the approval of the three trustees, and they wouldn't allow a sale, based on Pat Bowlen's wishes. And that the trustees haven't been told of other members of the family, beyond John Bowlen, interested in selling out.

The Broncos' ownership, especially since the Bowlen family purchased it in 1984, always has been complex and even convoluted. CEO Joe Ellis simply said weeks ago that the ownership is "complicated."

Will the team remain as the Bowlen Broncos for another 33 years, or for the short term? Does John Elway figure into future ownership scheme?

Does the proprietorship matter to the future of one of the NFL's most successful and valuable franchises?

Do the loyal season-ticket holders who have sold out the stadium for 389 consecutive games, the longest streak in the NFL, and the millions of fanatics in "Broncos Country" really care about the financial figures or the ownership?

"I think they only care about wins and losses, and Super Bowls," a Broncos' executive told me recently.

Pat Bowlen, 73, once told me he would "die with my boots on owning the Broncos."

He didn't plan to develop advanced Alzheimer's.

And he didn't have a family successor in place when he did.

Is Brittany Bowlen, the third oldest of his five daughters, the chosen one?

The Broncos typically have been a kinfolks kind of business.

In 1959, when the American Football League was created to compete against the established National Football League, the Howsams of Colorado decided to join. Bob Howsam, president of Denver's minor-league baseball team, the Bears, his father, Lee, and brother, Earl, invested a \$25,000 franchise fee be included in "The Foolish Club," the ignoble name given to the original eight AFL owners. They lured in a few other local financiers.

However, the franchise was pathetic, with its headquarters in a World War II Quonset hut, its team playing in uniforms purchased secondhand from a defunct bowl game, its players a bunch of misfits, oddities and NFL rejects, its "fans" only a few thousand paying \$10 a ticket. The Howsams brought in limited partners and borrowed money.

With a \$300,000 debt, because Bob Howsam had ordered building the "South Stands" at Bears Stadium and AFL revenues were minimum, the Howsam family sold to Cal Kunz, a former Marine Corps officer, and Gerald Phipps (the contractor owed money on the project), in 1961 for \$250,000.

For three years the team scuffled and lost additional money. Kunz tentatively agreed to sell the franchise to a Chicago man, and interests in both Atlanta and Philadelphia offered \$5 million-\$6 million.

Phipps, son of a former Colorado senator, stepped up to keep the franchise from moving. He offered Kunz and the other partners \$1.25 million, borrowed \$1.5 million from a Denver bank and called his brother Allan in New Zealand to announce: "You and I own the football team."

(One of the minority investors was Molly Brown's grandson.)

The Broncos still lost lots of money and most of their games, but a merger agreement between the NFL and the AFL made the Dusty Old Cowtown a "major-league city." Football caught on.

When the Broncos expanded their stadium, drew sellout crowds and, ultimately, reached their first Super Bowl in 1977, the franchise became respectable, respected and revenue-generated, the Phipps Bros. elected to get out of the business. At a lunch in a private downtown Denver club, Allan told me: "I'm a lawyer. Jerry is a builder. This thing got too big for us."

The NFL had a buyer-in-waiting - Edgar Kaiser Jr., a Canadian who was a reluctant industrialist and member of a famous family. Grandfather Henry J. Kaiser was a legendary ship and automobile builder, and aluminum and steel corporate owner. "My grandfather made the business; my father didn't care

about any of it, and almost ruined the business, and my job has been to remake the business and the family," Edgar told me on a trip we took to New York.

Kaiser had purchased the Broncos in 1981 from the Phipps brothers for \$33 million.

(As an aside, the wealthiest man in Colorado, oil magnate Marvin Davis, wanted to buy the Broncos. But Davis had purchased the land where Highlands Ranch is now from the Phipps family and immediately sold it for a massive profit. The Phipps brothers were furious. They put a clause in the contract with Kaiser that he couldn't sell the team to Davis.)

Oddly enough, Kaiser knew nothing about football and put his right-hand man, an accountant, in charge of the team.

But Kaiser made a trade with Baltimore Colts' owner Robert Irsay for a rookie quarterback who had been drafted No. 1 overall (Elway). Kaiser pulled off the biggest steal-of-the-century in sports.

Meanwhile, his multinational companies were going broke, and the Broncos were in danger of bankruptcy in 1983.

Kaiser borrowed \$10 million from Colorado businessman Robert Adams, then offered to sell him 39.2 percent to forgive the debt. Adams died soon after. His son, John Adams, had the option to complete the transaction and, with his attorney, purchased the minority ownership in early 1984.

At a March league meeting in 1984, the NFL announced that Kaiser was selling the team to Patrick Bowlen, a fellow Canadian who attended the same Catholic church in Alberta and once said to Kaiser after Mass: "If you consider getting out, call me. I want to get in."

Bowlen paid Kaiser \$26 million in cash, assumed debts of \$20-plus million and agreed to buy the minority partners out for another \$20 million - a total of approximately \$66 million, double what Kaiser had bought the franchise for three years earlier. (The number has since been reported erroneously as \$87 million.)

Problem was, Bowlen didn't have the necessary capital. His younger brothers John and Bill, sister Marybeth and mother Arvella chose to take funds from Regent Resources Ltd., the oil corporation originated by Pat's father, former wildcatter Paul Bowlen, to purchase the football franchise.

Because of NFL rules, Pat got 30 percent to be majority owner, and the other 70 percent was split among family members.

In 1996-97, Bill and Marybeth asked to be bought out by Pat and John and their mother, listed at one time as the head of the various corporations formed by Pat Bowlen to actually own the Broncos.

The purchase price is unknown, but the franchise was valued in the late 1990s at \$400 million, about six times what the Bowlens paid for it. When Arvella Bowlen died in 2006 after suffering with Alzheimer's, her shares were split between her sons. Pat owned 51 percent, John 49.

Because of Pat's intent to run a first-class organization (with new practice facilities and expenditures on high-priced free agents), the franchise had to borrow money at least twice.

In the Broncos' history, owners had borrowed money and/or sold minority shares a half dozen times.

Then, the TV boom hit the NFL and the Broncos, in major part because of the role Pat Bowlen had as head of the television contract committee. He worked out the new deal with ESPN for "Monday Night Football" and brought in NBC for "Sunday Night Football." Fox also became a rights holder with CBS. And the NFL became a multibillion-dollar business.

Denver metropolitan area voters in the six-country metro area approved a .01 sales tax increase in 1998 that would pay for three-quarters of the new stadium (\$270 million), with Pat Bowlen agreeing to ante up the remaining \$90 million.

The Broncos became a money machine and an annual Super Bowl contender (eight games, three victories eventually), and the franchise never would have to borrow money again. And it seemed as if Pat Bowlen, entering his third decade of team ownership as he was approaching 70 (Bowlen had bought the team at the age of 40), would be around for a long time.

Forbes Magazine's 2017 valuation of the Broncos is \$2.6 billion, 11th highest in the league.

Pat Bowlen, a former walk-on football player at Oklahoma and an ex-lawyer, is a billionaire.

The NFL has become a family business over an extended period. More than half the franchises have been, or will be, passed from one generation to the next. The other three AFC West franchises in Oakland, Kansas City and Los Angeles are overseen by offspring. The Chargers, owned by Alex Spanos (who acknowledged publicly in 2008 he was suffering from dementia), have six Spanos family members in the front office. The Chiefs' ownership is shared by four of Lamar Hunt's kids. The Raiders are owned by the wife and son of Al Davis. The Rooney family ownership of the Steelers is in its third generation, as is the Halas/McCaskey family in Chicago. Twenty-four of the 32 NFL teams have sons, daughters, wives involved in day-to-day executive positions.

In 2009 I called Pat Bowlen for "a state of the franchise" conversation in the aftermath of the controversial trading of quarterback Jay Cutler after the hiring of kid coach Josh McDaniels.

"How are you doing, Pat?"

"Physically, I feel great," said the owner, who, for years, had a daily routine of rigorous workouts at Dove Valley and had competed in three Ironman competitions in Hawaii, where he had a second home.

"But I have short-term memory loss."

"Oh, we all do at our age." I'm two years younger than Bowlen.

"Except, I've forgotten our Super Bowl (victory) games," he said.

That was his first admission there was something wrong. Bowlen previously had indicated he worried about the disease, because his mother had suffered with Alzheimer's.

His condition slowly, then gradually, deteriorated over the following five years. Bowlen's decision to bring back Elway to control the operation, and to elevate Joe Ellis to club president, were gauges of how he was feeling mentally. The commitment to sign Peyton Manning to a \$100 million contract was Bowlen's last active action as the owner. He rarely talked after games, or at the headquarters. And when Bowlen was honored at a major charity event as citizen of the year in 2014, he didn't speak, and was held up by two former Broncos. His health issues were a well-protected secret but generally known in the community.

Bowlen already had established a family trust to eventually take over the Broncos ownership. And at training camp in 2014, it was announced Bowlen was ending his working role as CEO.

At his mansion in Cherry Hills Village, "Mr. B," as he is known by employees and friends, is enduring the full adverse effects of Alzheimer's.

The trust is administered by Ellis, Broncos CEO and president, the team's general counsel, Rich Slivka, and Denver attorney Mary Kelly. According to NFL rules, they function as the club's owners. Bowlen instructed Ellis to oversee the daily business of the franchise, while Elway runs the football operation.

And the trust is to eventually identify and choose which of the seven children is to become the next owner.

Ellis once said: "It's Mr. Bowlen's hope that one child will come along, earn the right to sit in his chair and run the team."

When I asked Bowlen years ago who would be his successor, his reply was: "I really don't know, but I would guess Brittany will at some point. She is the only one who has really expressed an interest in being the owner."

Bowlen has two daughters by his first marriage to Sally Parker - Amie Bowlen Klemmer, who lives in Hawaii and is married to a doctor, and Beth Bowlen Wallace, who last year earned her law degree at the University of Denver.

Klemmer never has shown any inclination to move to Denver and be involved with the Broncos. Wallace, married to a prominent Denver oil executive, served as director of special projects and events for the Broncos.

But she left the organization. One source said she no longer wanted to work with the franchise and preferred other projects in her life.

Pat and Annabel Bowlen have five children - Patrick Bowlen III, John Bowlen Jr., Brittany Bowlen, Annabel and Christianna.

Only one of the Bowlen children still is employed by the Broncos. Patrick is director of facilities and is seen regularly at games at the stadium.

"Johnny" Bowlen has been beset by multiple legal and personal issues and was suspended indefinitely by the team.

Neither is a prime candidate to ever become Broncos owner.

Brittany Bowlen was a national-class ice skater at Notre Dame and earned a degree, then entered the "junior management rotation" in the NFL home office. She returned a couple of years ago to work, and learn, with the Broncos, but resigned. She is at Duke in the prestigious MBA program. One Broncos source told me she intends to return to the Broncos.

Younger sister Annabel, named for her mother, attends the University of Colorado at Denver and is in the clothing and fashion business.

Teenager Christianna Bowlen recently graduated from a suburban Denver high school.

Speculation centers on Brittany, although Beth could be an outside possibility.

Some sources within the Broncos or close to the family will speak off the record or on deep background, but nobody wants a name linked to discussions about future ownership. Ellis did tell me weeks ago that the trustees protect and respect the privacy of the Bowlen family.

Two reliable sources told me that no decision on a successor likely is forthcoming for years, and the NFL is not pushing the Broncos on the matter, especially after league owners changed their bylaws to allow family trust ownership two years ago. A source close to the family said the family would not consider selling the Broncos given Pat Bowlen's wishes, and the trustees would not allow a sale to occur. Another source, however, said that the possibility of a sale has been investigated by at least two family members.

But, there has been a recent important announcement.

John Bowlen stated publicly that he is willing to sell his nonvoting, minority share of ownership. Bowlen, who lives in Canada, has owned as much as 49 percent and now "a bit less" than 40 percent (an estimated 35-38 percent) after selling stock to his brother. John Bowlen and his wife regularly attend home games, and John travels to some NFL owners meetings, including the latest one in March, "because there should be Bowlen representation." But he has no authority with the franchise.

"John hit the Powerball when he bought into the Broncos at the beginning," a source said.

However, for more than 30 years, John has been the CEO of Regent Resources, the company Bowlen's father founded. Yet, last November, Regent, as a result of declining oil prices worldwide, filed for bankruptcy. In December, an Alberta judge put the company in receivership, and most of its assets have been sold.

John, according to two sources, is experiencing health problems, too, and serious financial setbacks.

An NFL source says more than one person has expressed interest in buying the Broncos. And John Bowlen implied he has been approached about selling his minority stake. Based on the Forbes evaluation, Bowlen could receive more than \$900 million.

But would the potential investor be intrigued about trying to get a majority share one day?

And would Elway, on three occasions offered minority ownership opportunities by Pat Bowlen, be an interested party with friends and associates? John is rich, but not billion-dollar rich.

"John would never work for the Broncos for someone other than Pat or the Bowlen family, unless he was a big part of the action," a source told me.

Three-to-five prominent people who live in Colorado could afford to buy the Broncos, and many more might want to own a piece of the franchise.

The John Bowlen declaration could lead to further rumblings, reports and rumors in regard to the family's future as owners of the Broncos.

This is not quite what Pat Bowlen wanted.

Could the Bowlen royal-like reign of 33 years with the Broncos end? Or, like the House of Windsor, will there be, in due course, a worthy heir to the throne?

The answers are worth more than \$25,000 or \$2.6 billion.

Armour: The real mockery of national anthem was by Vice President Mike Pence

By Nancy Armour
USA Today
October 9, 2017

A mockery was made of the national anthem all right.

But it wasn't by the San Francisco 49ers.

Vice President Mike Pence turned the anthem into a prop Sunday, co-opting it for a stunt that served no other purpose than to sow division, further enrage the administration's conservative base and try to cow NFL owners. That it likely deflected attention from yet more neo-Nazi protests in Charlottesville was all the better.

Please, though, tell me again how it's the players who are so disrespectful.

Pence was so incensed by the sight of several 49ers kneeling during the anthem at Lucas Oil Stadium that he left immediately afterward. Not so incensed that he wasn't right there with a carefully crafted statement to let the world know of his outrage, however.

"President Trump and I will not dignify any event that disrespects our soldiers, our flag or our national anthem," Pence's statement said.

In case anyone missed how righteously indignant he was, he quickly updated the background photo on his Twitter profile to one of him standing for Sunday's anthem, hand over his heart, next to someone in a military uniform.

Spare me.

This isn't about patriotism or love of country or any other garbage excuse. This was a carefully orchestrated PR move — one staged at no small expense to taxpayers, given Pence flew to Indianapolis from Las Vegas on Saturday night and was heading back out West to Los Angeles later Sunday.

"After all the scandals involving unnecessarily expensive travel by cabinet secretaries, how much taxpayer money was wasted on this stunt?" Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., asked on Twitter.

@VP

We were proud to stand - with all our @Colts - for our soldiers, our flag, and our National Anthem us
11:42 AM - Oct 8, 2017
9,306 Replies 6,879 Retweets 29,634 likes

Before anyone starts squawking, this has nothing to do with whether Pence has a right to express his opinion about the player protests. Of course he does. You can question the impact on our democracy when the vice president and president make statements that could be seen as chilling to dissent, but that's an argument for a different time.

No, this is about the sincerity of Pence's "protest." This was not a heartfelt expression of political dissent, as the player protests have been.

This was pure political theater, as disingenuous as it was calculated.

Pence knew exactly what he was walking into in Indianapolis. The protests started with then-49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick more than a year ago. San Francisco safety Eric Reid, the first to join Kaepernick in taking a knee during the anthem, has made it clear his protest will continue this season.

The 49ers have also been the most staunch defenders of both their players' activism and reasons for it. They donated \$1 million last year to Bay Area organizations that promote social justice, and have left no doubt in the wake of President Donald Trump's rant two weeks ago that they consider the protests appropriate.

"For more than a year, members of our team have protested the oppression and social injustices still present in our society. While some may not have taken a knee or raised a fist, we have all shared the desire to influence positive change," the 49ers said in a statement issued last weekend on behalf of the players, coaches, ownership and staff.

"As the majority of us have done throughout our careers, we use our platform as members of a NFL team, and our right to freedom of expression, to speak up for those whose voice is not heard."

@VaughnHillyard

As media pool has been made aware, a staffer told pool that VPOTUS may depart the game early. Did not indicate how early. <https://twitter.com/vaughnhillyard/status/917082608130981888> ...

11:51 AM - Oct 8, 2017 · Indianapolis, IN

236 Replies 1,728 Retweets 2,598 likes

If there was any team Pence was guaranteed of seeing protest, it would be the 49ers. Yet he went to the game, anyway.

Perhaps that's why the media pool was left to wait in vans outside the stadium. NBC's Vaughn Hillyard said on Twitter that the pool was told Pence "may depart the game early. Did not indicate how early."

"This was like a PR stunt," Reid said after the game. "This is what systemic oppression looks like."

Pence knew what he would see and he knew what his response would be. Trump confirmed that, saying on Twitter that he "asked (Pence) to leave stadium if any players knelt, disrespected our country."

Some of the 49ers knelt, but the disrespect came from Pence. In a shameless bid for political points, he tried to play the country for a fool.

Vice President Mike Pence Upstages Peyton Manning With Orchestrated Anthem Walkout

By Peter King

MMQB

October 9, 2017

Editor's Note: This is The MMQB Extra, a sneak peek from Peter King's Monday Morning Quarterback column, which will be published in full early Monday morning.

When Peyton Manning was drafted by the Colts in 1998, Mike Pence—born in Indiana, raised in Indiana, college-educated in Indiana—was a conservative talk-show host and avowed Colts fan. When Pence was elected to Congress in 2000, he moved away from Indiana for the first time, but continued to root hard for the Colts in the Manning glory years. When Manning left and after Pence was elected governor in 2012, Pence continued to root for Manning when he played the Patriots, presumably because of the rivalry between the Colts and Patriots; Pence even tweeted his best wishes to Manning before a Denver-New England game several years ago.

So it surprised no one when Vice President Pence announced last week he would be attending the ceremony in Indianapolis on Sunday when Manning's number would be retired at halftime of the Colts-49ers game. Pence would be in Las Vegas on Saturday to honor the victims of the murderous gun rampage there, and he would be moving on to California for a vice presidential appearance Monday, but he would fly on Air Force 2 with his traveling party for the 1,600-mile trip back to central Indiana to pay tribute to Manning at his halftime ceremony.

With Pence's trip, of course, there would be a traveling press pool of about 20 and a traveling Secret Service detail of approximately 10 with Pence and about 20 more doing advance work to sweep Lucas Oil Stadium and the Indianapolis hotel where the party would stay Saturday night and Sunday morning. There would be an ambulance in front of his motorcade and there would be a trauma team on alert at a local hospital. There certainly would be other manpower needs associated with a vice presidential trip at a significant cost to U.S. taxpayers.

Meanwhile, at some point during the weekend, President Donald Trump and Pence spoke, and Trump told Pence—he admitted as such on Twitter—that if there was a demonstration with players kneeling during the national anthem Sunday, Pence was to leave the stadium.

If there was one certain thing at the 49ers-Colts game, it was that some 49ers would protest during the anthem. This is the only team since the start of the 2016 season that had one or more players either sit or kneel for every game—preseason and regular season. There was absolutely no chance that this game would go off with 45 Colts standing on their side of the field and 45 members of the Niners standing on their side of the field. For at least the previous 26 games the 49ers played, first with Colin Kaepernick sitting and then kneeling, and this year with safety Eric Reid leading players in some form of demonstration, the team did something during the anthem. Last week in Arizona, about 30 players kneeled.

So why did Pence show up? This was a fait accompli—that some Niners would kneel, that Pence would walk out, and that it would turn into the story of the day in the NFL.

And in the process, it would cast a gigantic shadow over the ceremony Pence even tweeted about Sunday morning.

Unless he was tone-deaf and had zero press people on his staff telling him, “The 49ers are going to kneel, Mr. Vice President,” Pence knew he would be leaving and joining his boss in chiding NFL players for demonstrating during the national anthem.

Approximately 23 players for the 49ers kneeled. Pence walked out. By 8 p.m. Sunday, the top five stories on the Indianapolis Star website were:

- VP Pence leaves Colts game after 49ers players kneel
- Swarens: Throw the flag on Mike Pence’s walkout
- VP Mike Pence tweets same picture from Colts game
- Doyel: Pence uses Colts for political purposes
- Veterans, activists respond to Pence’s Colts walkout

No popular headline about Manning’s number 18 retired by the Colts or his induction into the team’s ring of honor. Judge for yourself about the motives of Pence, a native Hoosier, at the glorious celebration of one of the greatest athletes in the history of the state. He could have stayed away from Lucas Oil Stadium on Sunday. It’s a disgrace Pence copied his boss and hogged a spotlight he had no business even sharing, never mind owning.

But the vice president of the United States slapped Manning and Pence’s beloved Colts in the face. Whether he’s a puppet for the president or his own man, Pence trumped a day that belonged to the greatest football hero the state of Indiana has ever seen, and he did it for political purposes. He stole Manning’s last great day as a Colt. Mike Pence will have to live with himself for that.

Denver Bronco attends Chiefs game: 'We need the Chiefs to lose'

By Sean Hirshberg

KSHB

October 9, 2017

One of the Chiefs biggest rivals has the week off. But he's still on the sidelines of the team's game in Houston.

Denver Bronco linebacker Von Miller is back in his home state of Texas during his team's bye week. After attending his former college team's (Texas A&M) game against Alabama Saturday, Miller was on the sidelines on Sunday night.

@NFL

.@VonMiller in the house for #KCvsHOU!

6:14 PM - Oct 8, 2017

51 Replies 458 Retweets 1,455 likes

In a tweet posted on the NFL's twitter account, Miller said, "Von Miller here at Houston, KC. It's a big game for me, we need the Chiefs to lose."

The two teams meet for the first time this season on Monday Night Football on October 30.