

Jhabvala vs. Kiz: Is the AFC West now a two-team race between the Broncos and Chiefs?

By Nicki Jhabvala and Mark Kiszla

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Is AFC West now a two-team race between Broncos and Chiefs?

Kiz: Denver has jumped out to a 3-1 start. Even better: With Sad Eli and the worst NFL team in New York coming to Colorado for the weekend, the Broncos have what amounts to a second consecutive bye week. They need the easy W, because Kansas City is the hottest team in the league. But what happened to the Raiders? Are they done? Is the AFC West now a two-team race?

Jhabvala: I'm hesitant to declare the Raiders out. It's too early and if/when Derek Carr miraculously comes back after suffering a back injury against the Broncos, they could easily storm back. What's more: The Broncos face a grueling 12-game stretch that includes consecutive road games at Los Angeles, Kansas City and Philadelphia following their meeting with the depleted Giants on Sunday.

Kiz: Our old friend Jack Del Rio is in full-scale desperation mode in Oakland. After winning a dozen games in 2016, the Raiders look as if they might need luck to finish 8-8 this year. The team is far too dependent on Carr, which is why Del Rio is pushing Carr to play against the Los Angeles Chargers on Sunday, only two weeks after the quarterback suffered a serious back injury against the Broncos.

Jhabvala: Perhaps you're right. I also think the expectations of Marshawn Lynch in his return after a year away from the game were maybe too high. Lynch is averaging a career-low 3.4 yards per carry. After ranking sixth in rushing yards per game last season, the Raiders now rank 23rd. Ask the Broncos how vital a rushing attack is to an offense.

Kiz: The calendar says there's a whole lot of meaningful football to be played. But not for the Raiders. Two weeks from today, Oakland could well find itself four games back in the loss column to Kansas City and three back of Denver. The AFC West figures to be a fight to finish between the Chiefs and Broncos. Hate to break it to Raiders Nation, but the best your team can do in 2017 is play a spoiler role.

Jhabvala: I'm more interested in the Chiefs than the Raiders, to be honest. Kansas City has the most exciting offense in the league with, among their many weapons, receiver/returner Tyreek Hill and running back Kareem Hunt. They're forcing defenses to change the way they play them, making Oct. 30 the most anticipated game on the Broncos' docket. Broncos linebacker and Kansas City native Shane Ray will return from injury for that game and has already made a bold proclamation: "I want to be a part of the reason why we take them down and really take over our division," he said Monday. It may be a two-team race now. But Kiz, you and I have seen how quickly things can change.

Lunch Special: Is there a short leash for Broncos quarterback Trevor Siemian?

By Nicki Jhabvala
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The Denver Post's Nicki Jhabvala answered reader questions about the Denver Broncos in a Lunch Special live chat. Here are some highlights:

Do you think there is a short leash on Trevor Siemian if he doesn't perform well? What happens when Paxton Lynch comes back? Is it a red shirt year for Chad Kelly and what kind of opportunity does he get next year in camp?

Nicki: A short leash? I don't think it's different from any other starting quarterback. Siemian won the job handedly for a second time this offseason and the Broncos fully back him. And he's performed well in his second season as a starter. Are there things he could improve? Of course. There should be for any quarterback after only 20 NFL starts. But he is the starter and Vance Joseph has said many times that Siemian is "in total control" of the offense.

"He's put us in great plays and his ball placement has been really, really good," Joseph said. His interceptions haven't been ball placement issues; it's been throw-aways, tipped balls and those things. He's played really well. He's a young quarterback still; he's going to play better and better each week in my opinion as he plays. I've been pleased with Trevor."

The Broncos will have to make a tough decision when Paxton Lynch is cleared to return from his shoulder sprain, but not in terms of taking over the starting role, unless Siemian is hurt or the bottom completely falls out.

The Broncos' brought back Brock Osweiler for very little (the majority of his \$16 million salary is being paid by the Browns), giving them an experienced quarterback who is well-versed in the system and who knows the staff. Lynch's competition, for now, is Osweiler, and the latter's signing might be a subtle nudge for Lynch.

Chad Kelly is on the non-football injury list and is likely to stay there as a redshirt season. Too early to tell how things will pan out next year — if they will have another open competition, if they try to keep Osweiler, etc.

I've been wondering what's your reaction to Cam Newton's sexist comments since you're a woman covering the NFL. Do you ever deal with sexism in your job?

Nicki: Cam Newton's comments were certainly disappointing to hear. I can't speak for other female sports writers, but I feel that I will always have to work twice as hard to be half as credible as my male counterparts. And I'm OK with that. I like that, in fact. And I believe there are benefits to being a woman covering a male sport; it gives me a different perspective, and I'll always stand out. But Cam issued a really well-done apology and hopefully everyone's learned from it and we can move on. I haven't faced

any such issues since joining the Broncos beat. The players have been extremely respectful and have treated me the same way they treat my male colleagues.

Is this a trap game for Denver? Do you see any possible way the Broncos lose to the Giants because I sure don't.

Nicki: I don't see this as a trap game. But it is one the Broncos certainly SHOULD win. The Giants rank 30th in rushing, just lost three receivers to season-ending injuries and sit near the bottom in the league in many defensive categories. Oh, and the Broncos are at home.

Maybe it's lip service, but the Broncos say they're not looking past this game.

"It's the NFL. It's a good football team. It's a playoff football team from last season. It's a Hall-of-Fame-type of quarterback," Vance Joseph said. "Defensively, they have three corners. They have two rushers. Trap game? I don't see it that way. Our team won't see it that way. Buffalo, they played a better football game than we did. That's what happened there. If you watched that Buffalo game, there was a lot of good that we did in that game. We just didn't win that game. So that wasn't a trap game at all. This won't be on Sunday."

What do you think the Broncos will do in regards to the national anthem in the light of Goodell's most recent comments and Jerry Jones saying his players that don't stand will sit?

Nicki: I asked the Vance Joseph yesterday if there had been any mandate from the team requiring its players to stand and he said no. The decision to stand in Week 4 and going forth was the players' decision — though not a unanimous one — made by the team's leadership council.

Broncos players released a statement that was later passed around to the rest of the league by commissioner Roger Goodell.

"We may have different values and beliefs, but there's one thing we all agree on: We're a team and we stand together — no matter how divisive some comments and issues can be, nothing should ever get in the way of that," the players said. "Starting Sunday (against Oakland), we'll be standing together."

NFL spokesman Joe Lockhart was asked about Jerry Jones' comments that Cowboys players will stand during the anthem or not play, as well the Dolphins' policy instituted by coach Adam Gase that requires players to stand for the anthem or remain in the locker room.

Lockhart said the NFL's game operations manual, which was brought up by President Donald Trump in conversations with Jones, states players "should" stand for the anthem but not that they must.

The 32 NFL owners are scheduled to convene in New York next week and the topic and current policy will be among the issues discussed.

Any reason to be concerned about the occasional inability of the D dating back to last year to close out teams in the second half of games.

Nicki: The fourth quarters have been among the biggest issues so far for the Broncos. They nearly lost their lead against the Chargers in Week 1, and were gashed with some big passing plays by the Raiders

in Week 4. But blame is shared. The offense ranks last in the league in fourth-quarter scoring, with only seven points. The Broncos have been able to score early, correcting an issue from last season, but they haven't been able to sustain the momentum.

I asked Joseph about the team's play in the fourth quarters this season:

"It's been different. I thought we played really well early on against the Chargers. Obviously, the fourth quarter with the two turnovers and the two scores made it a game. I thought our first three quarters were pretty good. Week 2 against the Cowboys was pretty good. Buffalo, it was an up-and-down game for four quarters. (Against Oakland), I thought we — it was a grind on both sides of the ball. Offensively, we're running the football well. We had a bunch of long third downs where we couldn't convert. Defensively, it was a one- or two-score game the entire day. Obviously, you want to keep your focus for four quarters and finish games better. We haven't done that great. We can get better there."

Peyton Manning, Rashaan Salaam elected to Colorado Sports Hall of Fame

By Nicki Jhabvala
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Peyton Manning will add another accolade to his lengthy resume.

In April, the two-time Super Bowl champion will be inducted as the 33rd Bronco in Colorado Sports Hall of Fame. Joining Manning in the Class of 2018 is late Colorado running back Rashaan Salaam, former Northern Colorado football coach Joe Glenn, former Fairview High football coach Sam Pagano, former basketball player Tracy Hill and late Colorado State football and track star Alex Burl.

Manning signed with the Broncos in free agency of 2012 after playing his first 14 NFL seasons with the Indianapolis Colts. In 2013, he starred in one of the most prolific offenses in NFL history (606 points, 55 passing touchdowns, 5,444 passing yards), while guiding the Broncos to a berth in Super Bowl XLVIII. Two years later, he helped the Broncos back to the Super Bowl, where he earned his second ring before retiring in March 2016.

Manning is the NFL's only five-time MVP, and his 14 Pro Bowl selections are tied for most in the league.

In his four seasons in Denver, Manning helped the Broncos to the most wins (55) and highest winning percentage (.764) of any team in the league, while he earned three of his career Pro Bowl selections, one of his MVP awards, two of his career seven first-team all-pro honors and the 2012 Comeback Player of the Year award.

A 14-time team captain, Manning finished his career as the NFL's all-time leader in career touchdown passes (539) and passing yards (71,940).

Last weekend, the Colts retired Manning's No. 18 jersey, inducted him into their Ring of Honor and unveiled a statue of him outside Lucas Oil Stadium. In 2021, he will be eligible for the Pro Football Hall of Fame and the Broncos' Ring of Fame.

Salaam, the only Heisman Trophy winner from a Colorado school, joined an elite club with 2,005 rushing yards and 24 touchdowns in 11 games his junior year at CU. That season, he also tallied 10 100-yard rushing games.

Salaam was selected in the first round of the draft by the Chicago Bears in 1995 and played four seasons in the NFL. Salaam died in Boulder in December 2016 at 42 years old.

Glenn coached at Northern Colorado for 11 seasons starting in 1989 and helped the Bears to two Division II championships. In his career, he compiled a 98-35 record as a coach.

Pagano coached at Fairview High in Boulder for 26 years and led the Knights to three state titles, in 1978, '79 and '87. Fairview went 164-58-4 under his watch. Pagano, the father of Colts coach Chuck Pagano and Raiders assistant John Pagano, later coach football in Europe.

Hill remains the all-time scoring leader in Colorado girls high school basketball history with 2,934 career points at Ridgway High from 1980-83. Hill, who finished her high school career with 21 state records, went on to play at Missouri, Central Wyoming and Montana State. She was inducted into the National High School Hall of Fame in 2012.

Burl competed in football and track and field at Colorado A&M, now Colorado State, from 1951-54. He spent one season in the NFL, with the Chicago Cardinals, to become the first black player from a Colorado school to play in the league.

The Colorado Sports Hall of fame's induction banquet will be held April 18 at the Denver Hilton City Center. Tickets can be purchased through the Hall of Fame's website.

Will Parks, the Swiss Army Knife of the Broncos defense, growing comfortable with multiple roles

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
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The Swiss Army Knife of the Broncos defense is drawing imaginary lines through the air inside the locker room. Will Parks is taking a visitor inside the mind of an all-purpose NFL safety, a position with diverse responsibilities that require, at least in his case, unusual study habits.

"I don't use flash cards, but at home I have notes all over the place," Parks said as he began pantomiming his note-taking process. "I've got this personnel here and this personnel here, but I attach it and I've got lines drawn all over. But this might refer to this, so now I have a line and an arrow I draw over here. As the week goes, I clear it all up. But for every page (of notes most players take), I've got four or five. It's crazy, but I enjoy it."

Catch all that?

As Parks sharply scribbled lines and arrows with his finger, it conjured the image of a mathematician blanketing a blackboard with equations that draw on multiple formulas to solve. In a way, this is the job description for the second-year safety out of Arizona, a player whose physical makeup and defensive talent have landed him perhaps the most complex job on the Broncos defense. In any given game, Parks will be used in nearly a half-dozen ways on defense. His position has been called a spur, a hybrid and many other names that essentially describe a player who must be ready to help just about anywhere.

"Willy Parks (has) had a bunch on his plate," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "He's playing base safety. He's our big corner in packages. He's also playing dime. He's doing a lot more than (starting safety) Justin (Simmons) as far as assignments, and he's done a good job. It hasn't been perfect, but he's fully engaged. He's a tough guy, and every game he's improved."

Parks had five tackles and a pass defended in Denver's recent victory over the Raiders, and a closer look at a few of the plays he made provide a window into how much is asked of him.

— First quarter, third-and-8. Parks is lined up in the slot in front of Oakland's top wide receiver, Amari Cooper. Raiders quarterback Derek Carr sees what he views as a mismatch, but as Cooper breaks toward the sideline on a deep out route, Parks follows in stride and knocks the ball away, forcing a punt.

— Second quarter, third-and-6. Parks is in the slot again, this time covering tight end Jared Cook. He sags off in coverage, then breaks on Cook as he catches the ball 1-yard short of the first-down marker, bringing up fourth down.

— Next play, fourth-and-1. Parks is essentially a third inside linebacker, lined up just inside of edge rusher Shaq Barrett. At the snap, Parks detects that he's unaccounted for. He bursts through a gap and takes down Marshawn Lynch just as he reaches the line of scrimmage, giving the Broncos a turnover on downs.

— Third quarter, third-and-14. Parks is playing dime ‘backer and is tasked with zone responsibilities. At the snap, cornerback Aqib Talib is lined up on Cooper, who drags across the middle. Once Cooper crosses the middle of the formation, Parks takes over the coverage for Talib. Carr believes he has a window as Talib trails off the coverage, but by the time Cooper catches the ball, Parks is on top of him for a tackle that stops the play after a 1-yard gain.

And so it goes for Parks, who has, in 154 snaps, been in coverage 113 times, assigned to run defense 30 times and has been a pass rusher 11 times, according to Pro Football Focus. Parks plays with a physicality that belies his 6-foot-1, 194-pound frame. His upper-body strength gives him an edge playing the run against the tight ends assigned to block him, as evidenced by his takedown of Lynch, when he brushed off late attempts to block him.

“He’s a huge reason why we’re so good in the run game, being able to come down and fill those gaps where we need him,” Broncos linebacker Shane Ray said. “To see him grow as a player is very exciting.”

Parks honed his coverage skills at Arizona, where playing the “spur” linebacker-safety hybrid often meant sticking with some of the Pac-12’s quickest receivers in the slot. But the growth that Parks has shown in his second NFL season has been founded on understanding the philosophy of what the Broncos are trying to accomplish defensively. Having so many roles means he’s had to develop a fundamental understanding of nearly every position, and that’s required an increased dedication to his craft.

“It’s six or seven hours here, and when I go home, I always watch (film) for an extra hour or two,” Parks said. “When I go home, I eat and rest for about an hour, take a little break just to get mind away from it and then go back to it. Basically, every day I’m in my iPad just going over it. For me, every position I play is nothing but details.

“When it comes to studying, I have a set amount of time and a set amount of notes that I write. It works out for me throughout the week. By the time game time comes, and I see something, I know I wrote it down and I know what’s coming.”

In honor of 0-5 Giants, the 9 worst upsets in Broncos history

By Mike Klis

9 News

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There is reason for the Denver Broncos to not look past the 0-5 New York Giants this Sunday, or the 1-4 Los Angeles Chargers the following week and ahead to their AFC West showdown at Kansas City on Halloween Eve.

In fact, we at 9News found 9 reasons for the Broncos to not look past Eli Manning and the woeful Giants.

The Broncos may be 11.5-point favorites but a loss Sunday would not be the worst home upset in franchise history. Here are the nine worst home upsets in Denver history with opponent, final score and date. (Update: This list has changed from worst to worst at home, to avoid confusion, and, again in honor of the underdog Giants playing Sunday in Denver).

9. New York Titans, 46-45, Nov. 22, 1962

Contrary to what Bronco fans think about the team's early years, the franchise wasn't always terrible. The exception was 1962 when Jack Faulkner's Broncos started 7-2 in a 14-game season which at the time tied them with the Dallas Texans for the American Football League's best record.

The Broncos then lost their final five games, the most devastating of which was against Bulldog Turner's Titans, who finished the season 5-9.

The Broncos fell behind 17-0 but rallied for a 45-32 lead following a 49-yard Gene Mingo field goal with 5:57 remaining. But the Titans scored a touchdown on their next possession and then Al Frazier fumbled away the kickoff, setting up another quick score for New York.

8. Pittsburgh Steelers, 34-17, AFC Championship, Jan. 22, 2006

Not only were the No. 2-seeded Broncos 3.5-point favorites against the No. 6-seeded Steelers, who upset Peyton Manning's heavily favored Indianapolis Colts the week before, but Denver had the best Super Bowl odds, at 8-5, of the four remaining playoff teams (Carolina and Seattle in the NFC).

But second-year Steeler quarterback Ben Roethlisberger kept carving up the vaunted Denver defense on third-and-long conversions and the Broncos were never in it, as they were down, 24-3 at halftime.

The reason this upset wasn't ranked higher was the Steelers were a good team that got hot late in the season to go on to defeat Seattle in Super Bowl XL and they would win it all again three years later.

7. Cincinnati Bengals, 23-10, Oct. 25, 2004

This is similar to the Broncos' current situation. The present-day Broncos are 3-1 going up against the 0-5 New York Giants this Sunday at eventually-to-be-renamed Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

Twelve years earlier, the Bengals with second-year head coach Marvin Lewis came to Denver with a 1-4 record while the Broncos were 5-1.

Cincinnati's Carson Palmer threw a 50-yard touchdown pass to Chad Johnson in the first quarter and running back Rudi Johnson later rumbled for a 36-yard touchdown while the Broncos offense committed three turnovers.

The Broncos finished 5-5 to settle for an AFC wild card spot. They then got smoked by Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts in a first-round playoff game for a second consecutive season.

6. Buffalo Bills, 30-23, Dec. 21, 2008.

The Broncos were 8-5 with a three-game lead on 5-8 San Diego with three games to go. After losing to John Fox's Carolina Panthers in game 14, the Broncos still figured to clinch the AFC West title by beating the Bills, who entered this game 6-8 with three consecutive losses, largely because of poor quarterback play from Trent Edwards and J.P. Losman.

As they did two years earlier against the 49ers, the Broncos jumped ahead 13-0. And again, as they did against the 49ers, the Broncos folded from there. Edwards wound up gaining confidence as the game went on.

The Broncos had two chances to tie it late in the fourth quarter but Cutler from the Buffalo 15 was intercepted at the 1 to kill one drive. On the next possession, Cutler drove the Broncos to the Bills' 15 with 44 seconds remaining but he badly overthrew a wide-open Brandon Stokley in the end zone.

5. Oakland Raiders, 20-19, Dec. 20, 2009

The Broncos started 6-0 under first-year coach Josh McDaniels and were 8-5 entering this game against the decimated Raiders, who were not only 4-9, but playing without starting quarterback Bruce Gradkowski, who suffered an injury before the game, then Charlie Frye during it.

But the Denver defense allowed 241 yards rushing and JaMarcus Russell – JaMarcus Russell! – came through with a clutch, game-winning drive in the final minutes. With the Broncos up 19-13, Russell completed an 11-yard pass to convert a fourth-and-10 with 2:22 remaining and later hit Chaz Schilens for a 10-yard touchdown with 39 seconds left.

The Broncos then lost their final two games and joined 1978 Washington and the 2003 Vikings as the only teams to miss the playoffs despite a 6-0 start.

4. San Diego Chargers, 9-3, Nov. 9, 1986

San Diego entered the game 1-8 and the Broncos were 8-1. But before he came through two months later with his iconic "Drive," John Elway suffered perhaps the worst home game in his career. Not only

did he complete 13 of 31 with three interceptions, Elway lost a fumble at the Chargers 10, threw one pick to safety Jeffrey Dale at the San Diego 11 and another to Dale in the Chargers' end zone. San Diego would finish 4-12 while Elway regrouped to lead the Broncos to the Super Bowl.

3. San Francisco 49ers, 26-23, Dec. 31, 2006

The Broncos were 9-6 and needed a win against the 6-9 49ers to make the playoffs for a fourth consecutive season. A Champ Bailey 70-yard pick six off Alex Smith gave the Broncos a 13-0 lead with 2:09 left in the first half. But Smith threw a touchdown pass to finish off the first drive of the second half and on the Broncos' first possession of the third quarter, Cutler, who was knocked out in the first half with a concussion, threw a pick six to Walt Harris to put the 49ers ahead. That night, Broncos cornerback Darrent Williams was killed in a drive-by shooting.

2. Baltimore Ravens, 38-35, second overtime, Jan. 12, 2013, 2012 season second-round playoff

Peyton Manning's first regular season in Denver finished with 11 consecutive wins and the No. 1 AFC playoff seed. One of those wins was a month earlier in Baltimore, where the Broncos were up 31-3 on the Ravens in the fourth quarter.

On a frigid day in Denver, the Broncos were up, 35-28, and the Ravens were facing third-and-3 at their own 30-yard line with 41 seconds left when quarterback Joe Flacco stepped up in the pocket and delivered a moon ball deep down the right sidelines. Broncos' safety Rahim Moore misplayed the ball and it dropped in the arms of Ravens receiver Jacoby Jones for a 70-yard, game-tying touchdown.

Justin Tucker kicked a 47-yard field goal in the second overtime and the Ravens went on to win the Super Bowl.

1. Jacksonville Jaguars, 27-30, Jan. 4, 1997, 1996 season second-round playoff

Seems like in many of their crushing upsets, the Broncos had two-score leads, only to falter. The Broncos clinched the AFC's No. 1 seed on December 1 and five weeks later, they were up on the second-year expansion team, 12-0 after the first quarter. But the Broncos couldn't stop Jaguars' quarterback Mark Brunell or running back Natrone Means and this loss spoiled what may well have been the NFL's only Super Bowl title threepeat.

Peyton Manning to enter Colorado Sports Hall of Fame in 2018

By Jon Heath
9 News/USA Today
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Peyton Manning only played four seasons with the Denver Broncos, but the quarterback accomplished a lot during those four years.

Manning went 45-12 with the Denver Broncos, helping them reach two Super Bowls, winning one of them. Manning amassed 17,112 passing yards and 140 touchdown passes during his time in Denver and he broke the NFL's single-season record with 55 touchdown passes in 2013.

In recognition of his accomplishments with the Broncos, Manning will be inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame in April of 2018. Rashaan Salaam, Joe Glenn, Sam Pagano, Tracy Hill and Alex Burl will join Manning in next year's class.

Manning entered the Indianapolis Colts Ring of Honor last week and he is expected to one day join the Broncos' Ring of Fame. The five-time NFL MVP will be eligible for the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2021.

Manning will be the 33rd Bronco to enter the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame, joining former players including quarterback John Elway, tight end Shannon Sharpe and cornerback Champ Bailey.

Fans can purchase tickets to the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame Banquet for \$200 by visiting <http://www.coloradosports.org> or by calling 720-258-3535.

Broncos to face a stretch of QBs willing to test the secondary

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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Before the Denver Broncos adjourned for their bye last week, cornerback Chris Harris Jr. offered his own prediction of what was to come.

"If we keep stopping the run like we are," Harris offered, "then teams are going to want to throw against us, they're going to have to, they can't avoid it. And we want to make sure we're ready every week. We can't let what happened in Buffalo happen again. We could easily be undefeated right now."

The Broncos are indeed 3-1 at the moment, with that 26-16 loss to the Bills in Week 3. They return from their weekend off with a stretch of road games on the near horizon, but also a stretch of quarterbacks who will be more than willing to take some chances against the Broncos' accomplished secondary.

Starting with Sunday night's game against the winless and injury-riddled New York Giants, the Broncos' next five games will be against teams with quarterbacks who are currently among the league's top eight in passing yards. In order they will face the Giants' Eli Manning (No. 8 in passing yards), Philip Rivers (No. 5), Alex Smith (No. 3), Carson Wentz (No. 6) and Tom Brady (No. 1).

Even if the Broncos continue their run-stopping dominance -- they lead the league, allowing just 50.8 yards rushing per game -- that collection of quarterbacks would likely put the ball in the air anyway.

Sunday's meeting against Manning the Giants has the potential to be, by far, the most unpredictable given the Giants' injuries at wide receiver. Both Odell Beckham Jr. and Brandon Marshall were among the Giants' players who suffered season-ending injuries in New York's loss to the Los Angeles Chargers this past Sunday. Giants wide receivers Dwayne Harris and Sterling Shepard were also injured against the Chargers and Beckham, Marshall and Harris have already been placed on injured reserve.

Because of the limitations on their depth chart, the Giants could go to heavier formations, with multiple tight ends and running backs. They could try to run the ball more than the 20 carries per game average they've had to this point. It essentially puts the Broncos in be-ready-for-anything mode until the Giants show their hand early in the game.

Harris said it's important re-assert a pass defense that has finished as the league's best in each of the previous two seasons.

"With me and Aqib (Talib) and (Bradley) Roby, we can load the box, have more men in the box than what they can usually block against the run because we can play man outside," Harris said. "We want that responsibility to do that. And we've been good almost all the time, but we want to eliminate some of the big plays teams have had. We want to make it so offenses can't decide how to come at us."

The secondary has faced slightly more pass attempts this season because the Broncos have played with the lead in three of their games and the team's run defense has consistently put offenses in throw-first down-and-distance situations. They've faced 36 pass attempts per game through four games compared to 34.75 through four games last season and 35.75 through four games in 2015. The Broncos have already surrendered seven touchdown passes -- a pace that would have opponents finish the year with 28 -- as compared to 13 touchdown passes in all of the 2016 season and 19 in all of 2015

"We just have to keep working," Talib said. "It's about our preparation every week. We keep working so we don't second-guess ourselves in those kinds of situations and we keep cleaning up our assignments. We want to be great every week, that's putting in the work and making the plays on game days. No mistakes every week and don't worry about the next week until this week is done."

Peyton Manning to be inducted into Colorado Sports Hall of Fame

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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Just days after a statue in his likeness was unveiled outside Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Peyton Manning was honored in the other NFL city he called home in his career.

The Colorado Sports Hall of Fame announced Tuesday that Manning will be one of six people inducted into the state's Hall of Fame on April 18 -- a date that gives a coincidental nod to the No. 18 Manning wore in his four seasons with the Denver Broncos. Former Heisman Trophy winner Rashaan Salaam, Joe Glenn, Sam Pagano (Colts coach Chuck Pagano's father), Tracy Hill and Alex Burl are the others who will be inducted.

Manning was likely the biggest catch in the history of NFL free agency when Broncos president of football operations/general manager John Elway signed the future Pro Football Hall of Famer after the Colts released him following the 2011 season. Manning had missed all of the 2011 season after his fourth neck surgery and was not fully recovered when he worked out for the Broncos' decision-makers in March of 2012.

After Manning signed later that month, Elway famously proclaimed "there is no Plan B." The Broncos went on to win 13, 13, 12 and 12 games, with four AFC West titles and two Super Bowl trips in Manning's four seasons. The run included a win over the Carolina Panthers in Super Bowl 50 in what was Manning's last game.

Manning and the Broncos also constructed the highest-scoring season in league history during his tenure when the Broncos finished with a single-season record 606 points. Manning also set league records with 5,477 passing yards and 55 touchdowns on his way to his fifth MVP award. When Manning retired after the 2015 season, he was the NFL's all-time leader in passing yards (71,940) and passing touchdowns (539).

Since his retirement, Manning has been a regular with his family at Broncos' home games, including this season. Manning will be eligible for the Pro Football Hall of Fame in the Class of 2021.

Broncos rookie tight end Jake Butt on verge of practicing

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
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The Denver Broncos will soon find out whether their roll of the dice on tight end Jake Butt has a chance to pay off this season.

Coach Vance Joseph said Butt will practice next week for the first time, triggering a 21-day window for the team to decide whether to activate him or officially turn his rookie season into a redshirt year.

"I plan on putting my trust in this coaching staff and the trainers," Butt said Monday. "I feel good. Obviously for me, being a competitor, the sooner I can help this team the better."

Butt, who tore his right ACL in his final college game, will practice Monday alongside outside linebacker Shane Ray, who's been out since the first week of training camp with a torn ligament in his left wrist, Joseph said.

Ray is eligible to return to action Oct. 30 against Kansas City. Butt could make his debut a week earlier, against the Los Angeles Chargers.

Butt is a versatile tight end who was considered a first-round pick — maybe even the headliner of a great tight end class — but he slipped to the fifth round after tearing his right ACL against Florida State in the Orange Bowl.

He underwent surgery Jan. 10 to repair the same ACL he tore in 2014.

"It's been really tough," Butt said. "The first time I tore my ACL, I missed one game. I came back six months and one week later. I got banged up throughout college. I don't know. I always say I'm a quick healer. It's been really tough. It's been an adjustment having to sit back and watch."

"For me, I just want to feel like I'm contributing to the team and helping this team win. It's been hard doing that from a distance a little bit behind the scenes. I'm excited to try to earn my fellow teammates' trust in practice and earn the coaches' trust."

Butt, who collected on an insurance policy for slipping down the draft, was the cautionary tale of this year's draft after running backs Leonard Fournette and Christian McCaffrey skipped their bowl games a year after Notre Dame linebacker Jaylon Smith cost himself millions by blowing out his left knee in the Fiesta Bowl.

Fournette and McCaffrey were both top-10 picks and are already making an impact for the Jaguars and Panthers, respectively.

Butt has always insisted he has no regrets, however.

"I'll never regret playing in a football game in my life," Butt said on the day he was drafted.

Butt has had plenty of time to study the playbook.

"I feel really good about the playbook. I've been hitting it just as if I were playing. I still watch film with the guys. I quiz myself. I look at the scripts every day and make sure I know what everyone is doing," Butt said. "It's going to be an adjustment of course because it's one thing to do it off to the side or in your head when you're quizzing yourself, but it's another thing to hear it in the huddle, get out and then make your necessary adjustments depending on the defense.

"That's a challenge I'm excited about. I've been doing my best to make sure I'm prepared."

Mason's Week 6 Power Rankings: Raiders take a tumble

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
October 11, 2017

1. KANSAS CITY (5-0) Last week: 1

Kansas City leads the league with 2.85 net points per possession -- 1.08 points over the league average. Given that teams have averaged 11.0 non-kneeldown possessions per game, the Chiefs' offense can be expected to be 12 points better than the league average per game.

2. DENVER (3-1) Last week: 2

The Broncos lead the league in net yards allowed per possession, total yards allowed per game and first downs allowed on a per-possession and per-game basis.

3. PHILADELPHIA (4-1) Last week: 7

The Eagles are the best at avoiding three-and-outs; an NFL-low 17.0 percent of their offensive series have ended without a first down.

4. ATLANTA (3-1) Last week: 4

Atlanta leads the league in net yards per possession (41.2).

5. GREEN BAY (4-1) Last week: 5

The Packers have won seven consecutive games (including postseason) decided by one score.

6. CAROLINA (4-1) Last week: 10

Carolina beat the Lions despite rushing for just 28 yards, snapping a 19-game losing streak in games in which the Panthers rushed for 40 or fewer yards.

7. NEW ENGLAND (3-2) Last week: 11

Despite having the league's No. 1 offense in total yardage, the Patriots' No. 32-ranked defense has ensured that they've been outgained in four of five contests.

8. PITTSBURGH (3-2)

Last week: 3

The Steelers have never made a Super Bowl in a season that saw them lose a home game by 21 or more points.

9. SEATTLE (3-2)

Last week: 13

Although Seattle's defense ranks in the low-to-mid teens in most overall defensive metrics, it ranks second in a crucial stat: net points allowed per possession (1.22).

10. DETROIT (3-2)

Last week: 6

The Lions' offense ranks 29th in total yards per game and net yards per possession.

11. BUFFALO (3-2)

Last week: 11

Only the Jaguars have a better turnover margin than the Bills (plus-8), allowing Buffalo to overcome an offense that ranks 31st in total yardage.

12. HOUSTON (2-3)

Last week: 12

Houston's remaining opponents have an average winning percentage of .418, the second-lowest for an AFC team (Jacksonville, .345 is lower).

13. JACKSONVILLE (3-2)

Last week: 21

The Jaguars' plus-56 point differential and plus-10 turnover margin are the league's best through five weeks.

14. L.A. RAMS (3-2)

Last week: 9

It took 11 games last season for the Rams to score as many points as they have racked up in five weeks this year.

15. NEW ORLEANS (2-2)

Last week: 19

New Orleans is the only team without a giveaway.

16. WASHINGTON (2-2)

Last week: 14

The Redskins compiled their .500 mark against teams that are a combined 14-6, giving them the toughest start in the league.

17. MINNESOTA (2-2)

Last week: 17

Neither Sam Bradford nor Case Keenum has thrown an interception so far this season.

18. BALTIMORE (3-2)

Last week: 24

All of their games this season have been decided by at least 13 points.

19. CINCINNATI (2-3)

Last week: 22

Since dismissing offensive coordinator Ken Zampese after Week 2, the Bengals' offense has averaged 22.7 points per game -- a vast improvement over their 4.5-point average in Weeks 1 and 2.

20. TAMPA BAY (2-2)

Last week: 15

Since the start of the 2014 season, Bucs kickers have missed a league-worst 36 total placekicks -- seven extra points and 29 field-goal attempts.

21. N.Y. JETS (3-2)

Last week: 21

The Jets haven't amassed more first downs than their opponent in any game this season.

22. DALLAS (2-3)

Last week: 18

Dallas' defense ranks last in first downs and net points per possession allowed.

23. L.A. CHARGERS (1-4)

Last week: 27

The Chargers rank sixth in passing offense and fourth in passing defense.

24. OAKLAND (2-3)

Last week: 16

Oakland is one of three teams to rank in the league's bottom 10 in both total offense and total defense (the Jets and Colts are the others).

25. ARIZONA (2-3)

Last week: 20

The Cardinals have given up 28 or more points as many times in their last eight regular-season games (five) as they did in their previous 20.

26. MIAMI (2-2)

Last week: 26

The Dolphins' remaining opponents have an average winning percentage of .650, giving them the toughest remaining schedule in the league based on current records.

27. TENNESSEE (2-3)

Last week: 25

With Matt Cassel at the helm, a league-worst 53.3 percent of the Titans' drives last Sunday ended without a first down.

28. CHICAGO (1-4)

Last week: 29

The last two seasons, the Bears' average point differential at home is minus-1.4, but their average on the road is minus-15.1. Two of their next three games are away from Chicago.

29. N.Y. GIANTS (0-5)

Last week: 28

How badly do the Giants need Sterling Shepard to be healthy Sunday? Consider that the other four wide receivers on their 53-man roster have a combined career total of 262 yards and three touchdowns on 19 catches.

30. INDIANAPOLIS (2-3)

Last week: 30

The Colts are the only team to rank in the league's bottom two in net points, net yards and first downs per possession. Indianapolis also ranks last in net points (minus-62).

31. SAN FRANCISCO (0-5)

Last week: 31

According to pro-football-reference.com, the 49ers are the first team since at least 1940 to lose four games by three points or fewer in the season's first five games.

32. CLEVELAND (0-5)

Last week: 32

Since starting the 2015 season 2-3, the Browns have lost 30 of their last 32 games. Also, quarterbacks Kevin Hogan and DeShone Kizer have thrown 11 interceptions, more than an entire division (the NFC North's teams have thrown 10 interceptions).

How Brock Olivo connected with his Italian roots and found himself and his family

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
October 11, 2017

Brock Olivo's parents could have been HGTV stars had they been born to this era. Honestly, it's not hard to imagine.

"I'm David Olivo, and this is my wife, Vicki, and our two children, Brock and Daisy. After my NFL career ended, Vicki and I found a new passion together, moving into old homes and renovating them before moving on to the next one. Welcome to 'Bringing the House.'"

The couple paid the bills with other work — David was a high-school teacher and football coach, and Vicki dabbled in real estate and antiques — but home renovation was their passion.

But they didn't invest in just any kind of houses. They focused on old buildings. One of the Olivos' homes, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch wrote in 1987, was built around 1850, and since its construction circa 1850 by a German baker, it had been a winery and a hospital during the Civil War.

In their line of work, they were careful to retain the character of these homes while updating certain aspects like kitchen appliances or bathroom fixtures.

Mixing the modern with the vintage was a point of pride, a reflection of their life as Italian-Americans. And from the lessons of his youth, Brock knew he was destined to follow chase his Italian heritage wherever he could.

"That's kind of how I grew up," the young Olivo says. "My parents always bought these old homes and restored them and so it was this rustic setting, but they would throw these great, new kitchens in there or these bathrooms. So it was this rustic with the modernity of the new. I guess I've always had that in my background, and I just never knew how much I appreciated it until I matured and saw the contrast between America and Italy, and the beauty of combining the two.

"My gosh, what a beautiful phenomenon."

Brock Olivo had always been fascinated by his Italian roots.

At Christmastime, the Olivos usually visited his paternal grandparents' house in Arnold, Pennsylvania. The children of Italy-born immigrants, they spoke Italian or an Italian-English mix in their homes.

"To me, it was like warping to another era," Olivo says. "My parents would take us to Pennsylvania for Christmas, and it was this completely different world. Now I'm hearing Italian, eating grandma's homemade ravioli and cantucci, and all these things, and the coffee and Italian wine."

As a curious child, Olivo would ask his father or uncle what was being said in Italian, and eventually his grandfather began teaching him the language.

Decades later, after a prolific football career at the University of Missouri and a short NFL career, he decided to truly explore his family's background firsthand by moving to Italy in the spring of 2002 to play for the S.S. Lazio Marines in the Italian Football League.

The significance of the trip, if he hadn't been able to fully understand it before, became apparent as soon as the country became visible in a window on his airplane.

"I remember the descent into Rome and seeing the countryside and thinking, 'Wow, this is surreal,'" Olivo says. "It was emotional for me, because nobody from my family had been back on Italian ground since my great-grandfather left back in 1918. It was many years — almost a century later — that an Olivo went back."

That summer, he would return home to the U.S., but he knew he'd be back.

"I knew there was more to be discovered in Italy for me," Olivo says. "No question. I left a lot of doors open."

After living to the U.S. for six years, he went back to Italy to coach the same S.S. Lazio Marines and the Italian National Football Team from 2009-11.

This time, Olivo was able to fully immerse himself in Italian life. That, of course, begins with coffee.

Coffee is valuable to most NFL coaches, but it is more valuable to Brock Olivo.

Prior to living in Italy, Olivo had been just a "regular coffee drinker," as he puts it. Drip coffee, no cream, no sugar.

But by the time he left, Olivo understood that distinct part of Italian culinary culture, and it "Italianized" him.

"Regarding coffee, [it's] more artisanal," he says. "You have to have your coffee a certain way. The typical Italian puts a teaspoon of sugar into his or her espresso, but the hardcore, true connoisseurs of it don't. They want to taste it black. They want to taste all the essentials of the coffee. It's almost, nowadays, for lack of better terms, sommeliers of coffee, people who take it that seriously. I'm not — I'm far from that. I just appreciate it. And I appreciate the way their coffee culture is preserved. Even the young generations, they stick to the books. It's very cool. I love it."

To be indoctrinated as he was, Olivo simply observed the process and felt a connection with the culture.

"I really admire the way that they preserve traditions," Olivo says. "I love the fact that you can walk into an Italian café and there's a real barista making real espresso, not some automatic push-a-button-and-it-comes-out [process]. No, he or she is grinding the beans, they're tamping it, they're pulling the shot for the right amount of time and they're serving it to you, as if every individual one was the only one they're going to make that day."

Italian traditions imparted an intimate authenticity, which is a feeling Olivo cherishes.

"When you think about Italy, one of the things you think about is the Italian food culture, but that encompasses a lot of stuff," Olivo says. "It's food, wine, agriculture. Most of the stuff grown in Italy is organic by nature. They don't label it organic because it is organic; that's how they've always been and how they've maintained it. So I learned about that. I learned about winemaking. I learned how to harvest olives. I went and saw the olive-oil process. And my wife being from there, [being] Sicilian, I learned how to make bread, cannoli, various types of stuff. So cooking obviously has been something that I've learned. Now, I'm not really passionate about all that stuff — cooking and whatnot — but just being there and being part of that culture, in a sense, you learn it. It's infectious. It really is. I'm fascinated by the way that they do things, the way they do things as they did 100 years ago."

Two months before he left Italy in 2011, Brock Olivo met the woman he would one day marry.

But long before that could happen, he returned to America and put more than 5,000 miles between them.

Olivo had found a job coaching the United Football League's Omaha Nighthawks. Then he moved on to coaching running backs and special teams at Coastal Carolina.

"We did long distance, real long distance," Olivo says with a laugh. "We defined the term for a while."

A couple years later, Federica moved to America, and, with his daughter Sofia, their family became complete.

Olivo had gone to Italy in search of a connection to his ancestry and his family's history, and he ended up finding his family's future.

Reflecting on his journey, Olivo couldn't help but think of how it all began when his great-grandfather left his homeland in 1918.

"The fact that he made that sacrifice at 18 years old to cross the Atlantic on his own and to allow us to be born and raised in the greatest country in the world, I mean, we feel forever indebted to him," Olivo says. "So that's why we kept his spirit alive, and that's why I will never let it die. And my children will know that and really anyone who comes in contact with me feels that, as well, because it's important to me."

Peyton Manning to headline Colorado Sports Hall of Fame's Class of 2018

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
October 11, 2017

The Colorado Sports Hall of Fame will gain another Broncos player in April when former quarterback Peyton Manning is inducted.

Rashaan Salaam, Joe Glenn, Sam Pagano, Tracy Hill and Alex Burl join Manning in the Class of 2018, which the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame announced Tuesday.

Manning compiled a 45-12 regular season record during his four years with the Broncos and threw for 17,112 yards and 140 touchdowns. He also earned a quarterback rating of at least 100 during three of his four seasons in Denver.

In 2013, Manning set the all-time single-season passing touchdown record after throwing for 55 scores. He earned First-Team All-Pro and MVP honors that year and led the Broncos to Super Bowl XLVIII.

Manning, who picked up another First-Team All-Pro honor and three Pro Bowl appearances during his Broncos career, also helped lead the Broncos to a Super Bowl 50 win.

He was named the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame Athlete of the Year in both 2012 and 2013.

Manning retired from his 18-year NFL career in March 2016.

The Broncos have a long, intertwined history with the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame. President of Football Operations/GM John Elway was inducted in 1999, former tight end Shannon Sharpe earned the honor in 2005 and Owner Pat Bowlen was added in 2007. In all, Manning will be the 33rd Bronco inducted, according to the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame.

Former cornerback Champ Bailey was the latest Broncos player inducted into the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame. He was enshrined April 27, which coincided with the first round of the 2017 NFL Draft.

Tickets for the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame Banquet are \$200 each and Sponsor tables start at \$2,500. For additional ticket and table information, please phone the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame (www.coloradosports.org, 720-258-3535). The Colorado Sports Hall of Fame & Museum is located at Gate 1 on the west side of Sports Authority Field at Mile High at 1701 Bryant Street in Denver.

NFL owners will decide whether a team can force its players to stand for the national anthem

By Mark Maske
Washington Post
October 11, 2017

NFL owners will have a comprehensive discussion next week at their regularly scheduled meeting in New York about the controversy over players' protests during the national anthem and will determine then whether it is permissible for a team to force its players to stand for the anthem, a top league official said Tuesday.

"I think there will be a discussion about the entire issue, including the policy . . . I'm not going to predict what might happen," Joe Lockhart, the NFL's executive vice president of communications and public affairs, said in a conference call with reporters.

Lockhart declined to give a direct answer when asked whether the league believes that a team, under current rules, is within its rights to compel its players to stand for the anthem.

Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said Sunday that any Cowboys player who protests during the anthem and, in Jones's view, thereby shows disrespect to the American flag will be benched and will not play.

Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross also has said he expects his team's players to stand for the anthem. The Dolphins enacted a policy this past weekend by their coach, Adam Gase, in which players must stand for the anthem if on the team's sideline, but have the option to remain in the locker room or in the tunnel leading to the field for the anthem.

"We're going to do this together as an ownership group and a league with the players," Lockhart said Tuesday.

Owners are scheduled to meet next Tuesday and Wednesday in Manhattan. It is their regular fall meeting and was scheduled before the anthem controversy was amplified by recent comments made by President Donald Trump.

"I think everyone at this point is frustrated by this situation," Lockhart said, and soon added: "The commissioner and the owners do want the players to stand."

Lockhart said "nothing has changed" regarding the league's view of enforcing anthem-related guidelines in its game operations manual. That manual, distributed to teams by the league, says that players must be on the sideline for the anthem and should be standing. Failure to be on the sideline could result in discipline being imposed, the manual says. The league has not issued any discipline this season for such violations. "It doesn't say the players must stand," Lockhart said. "It says the players should stand."

Lockhart said he does not know whether DeMaurice Smith, the executive director of the NFL Players Association, and other union representatives were told by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and New York Giants co-owner John Mara during a meeting last week that players would not face discipline for protests during the anthem, as Smith said Monday.

NFL protest: Commissioner says 'Everyone should stand for the National Anthem'

By Matthew VanTryon

USA Today

October 11, 2017

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell released a memo Tuesday afternoon to chief executives and club presidents regarding recent national anthem protests by NFL players. In the memo obtained by USA TODAY Sports, he said "We believe that everyone should stand for the National Anthem."

"The current dispute over the National Anthem is threatening to erode the unifying power of our game, and is now dividing us, and our players, from many fans across the country."

Goodell said the league has heard from several players and NFLPA leadership about the issue.

"We want to honor our flag and our country, and our fans expect that of us," the statement read in part. "We also care deeply about our players and respect their opinions and concerns about critical social issues. The controversy over the Anthem is a barrier to having honest conversations and making real progress on the underlying issues. We need to move past this controversy, and we want to do that together with our players."

Goodell said the issue will be discussed at a meeting next week.

"The NFL is at its best when we ourselves are unified. In that spirit, let's resolve that next week we will meet this challenge in a unified and positive way."

Currently, there is no rule in the publicly-available NFL rulebook regarding the national anthem. There is a guidebook which suggests players stand. NFL spokesperson Brian McCarthy said that the policy has been in place for several years, pre-dating protests that began during the 2016 season.

"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 told the IndyStar last month.

Donald Trump has consistently tweeted about NFL players kneeling for the national anthem. His most recent tweet regarding the topic praised Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, who said he will bench players who do not stand for the anthem.

@realDonaldTrump

A big salute to Jerry Jones, owner of the Dallas Cowboys, who will BENCH players who disrespect our Flag. "Stand for Anthem or sit for game!"

7:51 PM - Oct 9, 2017

34,793 Replies 32,482 Retweets 154,059 likes

During Sunday's Colts game, Vice President Mike Pence left the stadium after several San Francisco players knelt during the anthem.

Here's the full text of the letter:

We live in a country that can feel very divided. Sports, and especially the NFL, brings people together and lets them set aside those divisions, at least for a few hours. The current dispute over the National Anthem is threatening to erode the unifying power of our game, and is now dividing us, and our players, from many fans across the country.

I'm very proud of our players and owners who have done the hard work over the past year to listen, understand and attempt to address the underlying issues within their communities. At our September committee meetings, we heard directly from several players about why these issues are so important to them and how we can support their work. And last week, we met with the leadership of the NFLPA and more players to advance the dialogue.

Like many of our fans, we believe that everyone should stand for the National Anthem. It is an important moment in our game. We want to honor our flag and our country, and our fans expect that of us. We also care deeply about our players and respect their opinions and concerns about critical social issues. The controversy over the Anthem is a barrier to having honest conversations and making real progress on the underlying issues. We need to move past this controversy, and we want to do that together with our players.

Building on many discussions with clubs and players, we have worked to develop a plan that we will review with you at next week's League meeting. This would include such elements as an in-season platform to promote the work of our players on these core issues, and that will help to promote positive change in our country. We want to ensure that any work at the League level is consistent with the work that each club is doing in its own community, and that we dedicate a platform that can enable these initiatives to succeed. Additionally, we will continue the unprecedented dialogue with our players.

I expect and look forward to a full and open discussion of these issues when we meet next week in New York. Everyone involved in the game needs to come together on a path forward to continue to be a force for good within our communities, protect the game, and preserve our relationship with fans throughout the country. The NFL is at its best when we ourselves are unified. In that spirit, let's resolve that next week we will meet this challenge in a unified and positive way.

Goodell issues memo to teams on national anthem

By Staff

NFL.com

October 11, 2017

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell on Tuesday issued a memo to all 32 teams addressing the issue of the national anthem before games.

In the memo, obtained by NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport, Goodell stated that the league believes "that everyone should stand for the National Anthem," and that "the controversy over the Anthem is a barrier to having honest conversations and making real progress on the underlying issues."

Goodell also wrote that the NFL has developed a plan to review during next week's Fall League Meeting in New York based on discussions with teams and players. The plan "would include such elements as an in-season platform to promote the work of our players on these core issues, and that will help to promote positive change in our country," per Goodell.

Below is the memo in full:

"We live in a country that can feel very divided. Sports, and especially the NFL, brings people together and lets them set aside those divisions, at least for a few hours. The current dispute over the National Anthem is threatening to erode the unifying power of our game, and is now dividing us, and our players, from many fans across the country.

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throughout the country. The NFL is at its best when we ourselves are unified. In that spirit, let's resolve that next week we will meet this challenge in a unified and positive way."

Broncos Week 6 Opponent Profile: Giants Missing Key Offensive Players

By Ricky Brown
CBS Local
October 11, 2017

While the Denver Broncos (3-1) were resting during an early bye week, the New York Giants (0-5) may have witnessed the 2017 season slip away in a freak series of injuries. The under-performing Giants were early season favorites to perform well this season —some pundits had the Giants picked to represent the NFC in Super Bowl LII. How quickly things can change. Through five weeks of the 2017 season, the Giants are winless and the outlook does not bode well. The Giants were hoping for a turnaround to happen soon, but several key injuries are most likely going to derail the 2017 season for New York.

New York Giants (0-5)

During the Giants' Week 5 loss to the Los Angeles Chargers (1-4), New York's offense lost four wide receivers during the course of the game. The biggest injury is to Odell Beckham Jr., who fractured his ankle and is expected to miss the rest of the season. Dwayne Harris, another wide receiver, broke his foot during the game against the Chargers and will also miss the rest of the season. Free-agent wide receiver Brandon Marshall was also injured, and announced Monday night that he would have season-ending surgery. The last injury to the Giants' wide receiver group happened to Sterling Shepard, who went out during the game and did not return. This rash of injuries is certainly not going to help a Giants offense that is already under performing.

On Offense

Eli Manning has no weapons left at his disposal. The team is scoring just 16 points a game, good for 28th in the league. The running game is ranked 30th in the league, but that may be because the Giants are always playing catch up. The Giants do rank 11th in passing, but are unable to put points up on the board.

On the bright side, the team has been competitive and the last three losses have been by five points or less. Although, against the Broncos defense, it is difficult to think the Giants will be able to move the ball. The lack of production on offense is causing problems for the Giants defense.

On Defense

New York's defense ranks 28th overall. The team is giving up 24 points a game as well as letting teams rush for 139 yards a game. Since teams do not have to pass as much against the Giants defense, they rank right in the middle at 16th in pass defense. What was once a fearsome pass rush has been negated because the defensive line cannot stop the run. The Giants pass rush has not been as effective and has only racked up eight sacks for the season. This team has a lot of giant holes to fill against a talented Broncos team, but could get a jump start against the Broncos offensive line.

Players To Watch

For the Giants to have any chance against the Broncos, the team will need to stop the run and pressure Broncos starting quarterback, Trevor Siemian. This is a pretty standard ingredient to win games, but the Giants have not been able to earn a victory. Look for the Giants' pass rush tandem of Olivier Vernon and Jason Pierre-Paul to try to create chaos along the Broncos' offensive line. The weak link in the line, starting right tackle Menelik Watson, could prove to be a liability against these two talented pass rushers. On offense, look for Manning to take this team up on his back once again and hope for another fairy tale ending.

Outlook

The Giants face a monumental task in coming into Denver and trying to earn a victory. Denver's defense is one of, if not the best in the league. The Broncos secondary is top notch and will have a much easier task now that Beckham Jr. is lost for the season. Aside from all the injuries, the Giants are going to have to pull off a major upset against the talented Broncos. In the end, the Giants will not have enough fire power and will lose six straight games. Look for the Broncos to win 24-10.

Roger Goodell: We need to move past anthem controversy

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
October 11, 2017

During a conference call on Tuesday, NFL spokesman Joe Lockhart said that discussions about the national anthem would be “front and center on the agenda” for next week’s league meetings.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell sent a memo to top team executives and presidents on Tuesday expressing the same and also outlining some of what will be discussed. Goodell writes that he is proud of the way that players and owners have worked to understand and address the issues that led to players protesting social issues, but that the controversy over the anthem that reignited this fall with President Trump making it one of the top items on his agenda has become a “barrier” to further progress.

Goodell writes that the league believes that everyone should stand for the national anthem, which echoes the language in the league’s operations manual. Lockhart said that the issue will be “front and center” on the agenda for next week’s ownership meeting, suggesting that the wording could change so that players “must” stand without being collectively bargained with the NFLPA.

Goodell does not delve into that question, but writes that the league needs to “move past this controversy” and work with players to address the issues at the core of the protests that have taken place around the league over the last two years. His memo lays out some of the ways the league hopes to do that and the entire memo can be found [right here](#).

Shane Ray, Jake Butt to practice next week for Broncos

By Curtis Crabtree
Pro Football Talk
October 11, 2017

Linebacker Shane Ray and rookie tight end Jake Butt are both expected to return to practice for the Denver Broncos next week after missing the first six games of the regular season.

According to Arnie Stapleton of the Associated Press, Broncos head coach Vance Joseph said that both Ray and Butt will return to the practice field next week. Ray has been on injured reserve since the start of the regular season with a torn ligament in his wrist. Butt has been on the non-football injury list while recovering from the ACL injury he sustained in his final college game for Michigan.

Butt can practice for up a period of 21 days before the Broncos would have to put him on their active roster or end his season by moving him to injured reserve. Considering Butt doesn't have a single professional practice under his belt, it's likely the Broncos will use most, if not all, of their three-week allotment before making that call.

Ray is not eligible to return to the active roster until after Week 8 is in the books, though he can practice for the next two weeks in their interim without counting against the team's 53-man roster.