

Jhabvala vs. Kiz: Did the Broncos' Jamaal Charles experiment end with his latest fumble?

By Nicki Jhabvala and Mark Kiszla

Denver Post

November 1, 2017

Did the Jamaal Charles experiment end with his crucial fumble in Kansas City?

Kiz: As homecoming's go, this one was a bust. Two years ago, Jamaal Charles scored a big touchdown for Denver with a turnover as a running back with the Chiefs. So I guess it was only fair Charles returned the favor when he returned to Kansas City as a running back for the Broncos. If this wasn't the breakout game for Charles, is his best chance to make a big impact in Denver gone?

Jhabvala: I was among the many surprised when Vance Joseph didn't put Charles back in immediately after the fumble, if only to rid the bad taste in his mouth after the turnover. (Andy Reid did it with rookie Kareem Hunt in his debut against New England and it certainly worked out for him.) But Charles did return and ended up playing 13 snaps Monday. Divvying up the touches among three talented backs is difficult, though. I wanted to see Charles do more. I know he wants to do more. But the committee approach might be slowing their production and limiting their potential.

Kiz: Looking for a spark, offensive coordinator Mike McCoy gave Charles three carries in the opening six minutes against the Chiefs. But after his fumble staked K.C. to a 7-0 lead, Denver made Charles split back-up duty to C.J. Anderson with Devontae Booker. In a running-back rotation at the NFL level, two might be good company, but three's an uncomfortable crowd. Is Booker better equipped than Charles to give Denver's struggling offense a boost?

Jhabvala: I agree. I think the Broncos, overall, could be using their backs more — both in the running game and as pass-catchers. Anderson was running well Monday and likely would have topped 100 yards (he had 78) had he played more than 35 snaps (48 percent of the offense). He was targeted only once as a receiver. And Booker deserves more work, especially if he's viewed as the team's future at the position.

Kiz: I get it. With nine games remaining on their schedule, the Broncos aren't mathematically eliminated from the playoffs. But the multitude of holes on this roster also dictate that John Elway and Joseph begin to attack the challenge of making the team better in 2018. Charles will be 31 years old in December. It's time to reduce his number of touches and give more opportunities to Booker.

Jhabvala: I firmly believe Charles is capable of producing more. But the setup in Denver may not give him that. If the Broncos' offense continues to struggle, it wouldn't surprise me if his reps are continually reduced and if he's released. He signed a one-year, incentive-laden contract — 46-man roster bonuses included — that is worth up to \$3.75 million. If the rotation isn't working, it financially wouldn't make sense for the Broncos to keep him. And I'd imagine Charles would want to find a place where he could contribute more.

Broncos stand pat at trade deadline; Vance Joseph updates on Ron Leary injury, more notes

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
November 1, 2017

Despite their three-game slide and myriad issues on offense and special teams, the Broncos stood pat at the NFL's trading deadline Tuesday. Teams had until 2 p.m. MT to submit their transactions to the league, and though many big names changed cities — notably running back Jay Ajayi, offensive tackle Duane Brown and quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo — Denver held on to its lineup.

This is the second year in a row the Broncos have stayed quiet at the deadline. A week before the 2016 trading period ended, Denver acquired tight end A.J. Derby from New England. In 2015, the Broncos acquired tight end Vernon Davis from San Francisco and had talks with the Browns about tackle Joe Thomas. Nothing transpired with Thomas before the deadline.

Leary OK. Broncos right guard Ron Leary was the only player to suffer an injury in the team's loss at Kansas City on Monday. Leary has a mild strain of his left biceps, coach Vance Joseph said, and is day-to-day with the injury.

"He's fine," Joseph said. "... He should be fine to play on Sunday."

Leary played 55 snaps, or 75 percent of the offense, against the Chiefs.

More changes? As Joseph, general manager John Elway, offensive coordinator Mike McCoy and quarterbacks coach Bill Musgrave convene over the next day or so to make a quarterback decision, they'll also consider changes to the rest of the roster.

"Absolutely. It depends on what we see on tape. You always consider that," Joseph said. "That's the NFL. If a guy's not getting his job done, you have to change it out for the sake of your football team. So I'm not opposed to that. If we have a guy that can play better at that position, we'll do that."

Though Joseph refused to lock in to a certain time to reveal his decision at quarterback or at other positions, if any are made, he said he first wanted to meet with his players and coaches before anything is announced publicly. Players had Tuesday off but will return Wednesday for regular meetings and practice.

Defending the defense. The Broncos defensive leaders had some honest but strong comments about what has gone wrong the last three games. Cornerback Chris Harris, for one, cited the lack of scoring and turnovers, telling reporters, "We're giving games away."

Asked about the comments on Monday, Joseph said he's appreciates that his players are upset about losing.

"That means guys want to win," Joseph said. "I don't blame guys for being upset because this football team has worked hard. Guys worked hard last night to win the football game and it didn't happen. ... I'm

upset. We're upset as a football team. That's why it's my job to find an option where we can go win football games. It doesn't bother me that guys are upset. They should be. This is a hard business, and it takes a lot of work to get ready to play games each week."

Game ratings. The Broncos' 29-19 loss to the Chiefs on Monday Night Football produced an overnight rating of 7.2 on ESPN, per Nielsen, the same as last year's Week 8 meeting between the Vikings and Bears. The telecast peaked from 7:30 p.m.-7:45 p.m. MT with an 8.5 metered-market rating. In Denver, the game produced a 12.7 rating on ESPN and a 16.7 rating on KTVD-IND for a combined rating of 29.4.

Lunch Special: Which QB gives the Broncos the best chance to win right now?

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
November 1, 2017

The Denver Post's Nicki Jhabvala answered questions from readers about the Denver Broncos in a live chat. Here are some highlights:

Based on what you've seen, which QB do you think gives the Broncos the best chance to win right now?

Nicki: First, a disclaimer: They don't pay me millions of dollars to coach for many, many reasons. But given the circumstances, the most logical option in my opinion is to start Brock Osweiler in Philly and even against New England if necessary, until Paxton Lynch is fully healthy and ready to come back. Remember, Vance Joseph said Lynch wasn't in good enough "football shape" to be active last night, let alone start. He only had three days of practice. So how could he suddenly be ready by Sunday? How could you make him the starter when nothing has changed between Saturday and now. He's played zero football in that time.

To me it seems clear they need a change at quarterback and they need to eliminate the turnovers. Denver could have and probably should have won that game at Kansas City had they not had five turnovers. So put in Osweiler — he's familiar with the system and has had enough practice now to get in there — and have him play conservatively. Just protect them while the backs carry the load.

Then, when Lynch is fully healthy, insert him to see what you have in the kid. I don't think it'd be fair to him or the offense to throw him in there if he's not really ready. It's only Week 9 and the Broncos, though 3-4, are still very much in this. Keep the offense afloat until Lynch is ready.

When will John Elway publicly apologize to his coaches, players and the fans for not having a viable QB on the roster? When will Coach Joseph stop being stubborn about Trevor and take responsibility for keep trotting Trevor out? Why doesn't Brock Olievo get fired for an inept special team play? Why can't I understand what Mike McCoy game plan is? Mike don't know if he want to run, pass, etc. When will Elway make a move for an experienced QB? because Elway have proven he can't evaluate college QBs.

Nicki: Impressed that you stuffed in five questions into one. I'm starting from the beginning:

1. What would a public apology do exactly? Apologies don't win games.
2. Stubborn is your description, not mine. Joseph said his reason for keeping Siemian in the game yesterday was because they were within one score in the third quarter and he's their starting quarterback. After the game, Joseph said he would review the tape and weigh their options for a change.
3. I don't make personnel decisions.

4. I can't answer why you don't understand Mike McCoy's game plan.

5. Elway has a history of surprising. Wouldn't rule out anything. But I think the Broncos do want to see what they have in Paxton Lynch before moving on entirely — if they move on. He's a first-round pick and he's started only two games in his career.

Any update on Ron Leary? I know he hurt his bicep, and those are notoriously difficult to heal up. Are we facing the loss of our best lineman, further deepening our sense of woe?

Nicki: We should get an update from Vance Joseph today on the severity of Leary's bicep injury. Leary was expected to undergo an MRI this morning and we will update you as soon as we hear at denverpost.com/broncos.

Losing him, even for a short time, would be a tremendous loss to the already struggling offense. He's been the most significant addition to that unit this season and has been especially key to their run game. For his sake and the Broncos, the hope is that the injury is minor and won't sideline him.

Like the rest of the Broncos fans, I'm ready to throw my hands up and consider this a lost season, but there's a part of me that senses there's still hope. Our defense continues to shut the run down, our offensive line showed some pride last night and rushed the ball well; isn't this the recipe for success? With competent quarterback play this team can still make it to the postseason, right? Or am I deluding myself?

Nicki: I still think there's plenty of hope. It's only Week 9, the Broncos are 3-4 and in a pretty open AFC race. Their defense is tops in the league, their run game can produce (177 yards yesterday), their offensive line fared better in protection last night, and had they not turned the ball over FIVE times they would have won. The turnovers have been killer. If Trevor Siemian whoever plays quarterback can simply protect the ball, the Broncos are still in this. R-E-L-A-X.

Any update on Jake Butt? Any tight end who can catch the ball would be a very welcome addition right about now.

Nicki: He's getting closer. The Broncos have one more week to decide to activate him or leave him on the non-football injury list (teams get 21 days after players on NFI resume practice). If the team feels he's in "football shape," he could be a go for Sunday's game at Philadelphia.

Jake Butt could be tremendous addition to the Broncos offense, as red-zone threat and blocker. The Broncos haven't really had a true red-zone threat since Julius Thomas left in free agency. Butt could fill that void.

Vance Joseph was asked about the rookie this past Saturday: "I think Jake's getting closer. He hasn't played football since his bowl game — the Orange Bowl against Florida State. That's tough for a guy to go from rehabbing for almost six or seven months to playing in an NFL game. It's different. He's getting closer and closer. We have more time with him so we'll see where he's at next week."

I like how you said we need to relax. But how can you relax when you know you will in all probability have at least one or two turnovers a game with Siemian?

Nicki: A) I drink a lot of coffee and, B), there's a possibility they make a change at quarterback.

Why was Jamaal Charles the only player that was benched for making a mistake? What kind of message does that send?

Nicki: Charles wasn't benched. He didn't return to the game immediately, but the Broncos have an RB committee and are rotating among three players — Charles, C.J. Anderson and Devontae Booker. Charles played 13 snaps, which has been on par with his recent games.

Broncos coach Vance Joseph says “everything is being explored” at quarterback

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
November 1, 2017

For much of a chilly Monday night in Kansas City, backup quarterback Brock Osweiler sat on the bench in an oversized coat. The winter jacket kept warm a right arm that would never be used.

Next to Osweiler during breaks for the Broncos' offense was starter Trevor Siemian, who piled up one costly mistake after another in Denver's 29-19 loss to the Chiefs. Siemian had completed just 5-of-14 passes for 56 yards and two interceptions by halftime — “horrific,” his coach called the throws — while compiling an 8.9 quarterback rating.

Still, Osweiler sat.

It wasn't until minutes after Denver's third consecutive loss, the offense's turnovers once again the culprit, that Broncos coach Vance Joseph presented the possibility that someone other than Siemian could get a chance to jumpstart the team's stuck-in-the-mud offense.

Might the Broncos be ready to put that right arm of Osweiler to use?

A few bleary-eyed hours studying game film early Tuesday morning wasn't enough time for Joseph to make that decision. But a choice between starting Siemian or Osweiler, in a game that could determine whether the Broncos maintain a fighting chance in the AFC playoff picture, is looming.

“Everything is being explored after losing three in a row and having five turnovers (Monday night),” Joseph said Tuesday afternoon. “I think it's fair to evaluate everything there. With our team working so hard and our team putting in max effort yesterday and not having a chance to win the football game, I think it's fair to evaluate the quarterback and all positions.”

Siemian was arguably the Broncos' best offensive player during the team's 2-0 start. But in the 1-4 stretch to follow, the third-year quarterback has thrown three touchdowns and eight interceptions — including a career-high three against the Chiefs. He also lost a costly fumble against the Chargers in a 21-0 loss Oct. 22. Siemian has absorbed 19 sacks in those five games and has a quarterback rating of 67.1.

The results, Joseph said, simply haven't been good enough. He added that Siemian has been “pressing to be a special player for us,” a sentiment the quarterback himself admitted following Monday night's loss.

“When you watch Trevor, even (Monday) night, he made three horrible interceptions,” Joseph said. “I mean, horrific decisions with those three. But he had 20 other plays that were really, really good. So when you watch your starting quarterback make 20 or 25 amazing throws, amazing checks and three horrific interceptions, that's when it becomes an issue because, in your heart, you know he can play better.”

Should Osweiler, a second-round pick by Denver in 2012, start for the Broncos on Sunday, it would be his first significant action since throwing three interceptions during an AFC divisional playoff loss to the Patriots last January as the quarterback of the Texans. Osweiler, who signed a four-year, \$72 million deal with Houston in 2016, was traded to the Browns in the offseason. He was cut by Cleveland during training camp and signed to be Denver's backup ahead of its season opener in September.

Osweiler went 5-2 as the starter for the Broncos in 2015 while filling in for injured Peyton Manning. After leaving Denver in free agency following the Broncos' victory in Super Bowl 50, Osweiler helped lead the Texans to the playoffs last season, though he dealt with a temporary benching along the way.

"The thing is, he knows the system," Broncos general manager John Elway said of Osweiler on Tuesday during an interview with the team's radio partner, Orange and Blue 760. "That's why he was a good fit for us when he came back. He knows a lot of the players that are here and the personalities. If a decision would be made to go in that direction, we would be fine with it."

Paxton Lynch, who was a full participant in practice last week for the first time since injuring his throwing shoulder in a preseason game Aug. 26, "won't be in the mix" to start Sunday, Joseph said. Lynch, a first-round draft pick of the Broncos in 2016, lost the competition for the starting job to Siemian in August for the second straight year. Lynch started two games as a rookie last season and went 1-1.

Joseph said Lynch hasn't played enough football yet since returning from the injury to be ready to start.

"Obviously, Paxton is still healing up," Joseph said. "It would be unfair to put him out there right now."

The decision comes down to Siemian and Osweiler, at least for this week. Joseph said he would take his time to make the call and planned to meet Tuesday evening with Elway, offensive coordinator Mike McCoy and quarterbacks coach Bill Musgrave.

A short week for the Broncos, who arrived in Denver early Tuesday morning and will return to the team's facility for a "jog through" Wednesday, crunches the timeline on the decision. And Joseph is not taking the ramifications of that choice lightly.

"It's my job to do what's best for the football team," Joseph said. "When you've lost three games in a row and you've had the turnovers like we've had them ... that's not good. If you try to go the same way and it doesn't get better, that's on me. We have players and coaches putting a lot of time and effort in getting ready for these football games. Guys are playing hard. I think it's fair to examine that position and all positions."

Eye on the Eagles: Next up for struggling Broncos is arguably NFL's top team

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
November 1, 2017

Denver at Philadelphia, 11 a.m., Sunday, KCNC-4

For the record: The Eagles own the NFL's best record at 7-1 and are coming off a 33-10 demolition of San Francisco on Sunday. Philadelphia has an MVP candidate at quarterback and Carson Wentz, who is backed by the league's best rushing defense (70.4) yards per game.

Who's hot. Wentz. Scorching may be a better word. The second-year quarterback out of North Dakota State is first in the NFL in touchdown passes (19, tied with Deshaun Watson), third in yards (2,063) and seventh in overall rating (101.6). During Philadelphia's active six-game winning streak, Wentz has thrown 15 touchdown passes with only three interceptions.

Who's not. Health. About the only thing that hasn't gone right for the Eagles recently is the injury report. Philadelphia lost left tackle Jason Peters and linebacker Jordan Hicks to significant injuries during their victory over Washington two weeks ago. Wentz is tied for fifth in the NFL with 22 sacks taken, so the loss of Peters hurts.

Key stat: 43. The number of catches this season for Philadelphia's leading receiver, tight end Zach Ertz. Those catches, six of which have gone for touchdowns, have added up to a team-leading 528 yards. He presents another tall task for a Broncos team that has struggled to cover tight ends.

FYI: The Eagles made a splash ahead of the trade deadline Tuesday, acquiring Dolphins running back Jay Ajayi for a fourth-round pick. Ajayi, a Pro Bowl selection in 2016 after rushing for 1,272 yards, will join a backfield led by LaGarrette Blount.

Streaking: The Eagles have scored at least 26 points in each of their last six wins. In its past three victories — over the Panthers, Redskins and 49ers — Philadelphia has averaged 31.6 points. Wentz, meanwhile, has thrown for more than 210 yards in all but one game this season.

Playerspeak: "Being 7-1, we like that. It's a good place to be. We just have to keep building." — Wentz

All signs point to Osweiler replacing Siemian

By Mike Klis

9 News

November 1, 2017

Vance Joseph stopped short of formally announcing he's about to make a switch at quarterback.

But the Denver Broncos coach delivered hint after hint that Trevor Siemian is about to get pulled and Brock Osweiler is about to get his start of the season this Sunday against the 7-1 Eagles in Philadelphia.

In fact, Joseph probably would have been made the announcement at his day-after-game press conference except the players are off on Tuesdays. Joseph wants to talk to Siemian and Osweiler first, then his players before making the announcement.

"When you're football team is putting in max effort and the defense is playing good football, it's unfair to your team if you're not discussing that position," Joseph said.

Joseph also clarified Paxton Lynch won't be under consideration because the second-year quarterback is just now coming back from a two-month shoulder injury.

Ideally, Lynch plays only if the Broncos suffer their seventh loss, which is when teams with losing records are unofficially eliminated.

If there's nothing to lose, Lynch must play. He's not just a prospect, he's a first-round talent. The Broncos must get a full evaluation of Lynch as they go into their offseason planning.

But to put him in against Philadelphia and New England in back-to-back weeks with virtually no practice following a two-month injury to his right, throwing shoulder? That could do more harm to his long-term development than good.

Another hint on the change to Osweiler was the unusually harsh descriptions Joseph used of Siemian's play.

"When you watch Trevor, even last night, he made three horrible interceptions," Joseph said. "I mean, horrific decisions with those three he threw last night."

The Broncos' first-year head coach does present it straight, sometimes.

"He had 20 other plays that we're really, really good," Joseph said of Siemian. "When you watch your starting quarterback make 20 or 25 amazing throws, amazing checks and three horrific interceptions, that's when it becomes an issue.

"In your heart, you know he can play better because those three balls he threw, you just can't throw. The 20-plus plays he made in the third and fourth quarter, it keeps you excited about the guy. That's the issue.

“Again, it’s about results and we haven’t had them. We’ve lost three games in a row, and again, yesterday with (five) turnovers. At the end of the day it’s about results. It’s not about how he’s played, it’s the result that we’re not getting and it’s not good.”

Oswieiler makes sense. He’s had success. He’s also been beat up as an NFL quarterback. You must be steeled to play in Philly, the only place on earth that once booed Santa Claus.

Coming in to make your first start of the season against the 7-1 Eagles may be difficult, but Oswieiler has handled more difficult environments and greater pressure.

He replaced the injured Peyton Manning in 2015 and went 5-2 for the Broncos. And for all the struggles Oswieiler had last year as a hired gun for the Houston Texans, he posted an 8-6 record in the regular season, then played well in defeating the Oakland Raiders in a first-round playoff game.

“If a switch is made, it will be considered what’s best for the football team,” Joseph said.

It would be a shock if a switch from Siemian to Oswieiler is not made by Wednesday morning.

Elway pleased with effort, will evaluate quarterback "and see what happens"

By Mike Klis

9 News

November 1, 2017

It is part of John Elway's job as an NFL general manager to always consider worst-case scenarios.

Perhaps, because his team is already there after suffering its third consecutive discouraging defeat, Elway took a more philosophical approach Monday night.

"The effort's there," Elway said, as he walked out of Arrowhead Stadium following the Broncos' 29-19 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs. "And the defense had a great day. This isn't because of lack of effort. They're playing really hard. We've just got to stop shooting ourselves in the foot."

About those self-inflicted wounds. The Broncos committed five turnovers, three on interceptions by quarterback Trevor Siemian, against the Chiefs. Denver gave the ball away three times the previous week against the Los Angeles Chargers, twice by Siemian in a 21-0 loss.

And in the Broncos' stunning 23-10 loss to then winless New York Giants two weeks ago, there were another three turnovers, two on Siemian interceptions.

After a poor start against the Chiefs, Siemian rallied and even got in a rhythm for a while. But then Siemian made arguably the worst decision of his still young career by throwing long across the field and was intercepted for a third time.

Elway was asked his thoughts about Siemian.

"We'll have to evaluate that and see what happens," he said.

It was the type of abrupt response that suggested Siemian is in danger of losing his starting role. Brock Osweiler is the Broncos' backup quarterback.

"That's not my job," Siemian said when asked about a possible change. "My job is to play quarterback, play it as best I can. And I've got to play better. Can't turn it over."

Asked if he has been pressing, Siemian admitted, "At times, yeah."

Vance Joseph, the Broncos' head coach, will ultimately make the decision on whether to pull Siemian. He hasn't so far, explaining each of the past two weeks that because the Broncos were within two scores for the bulk of the game, their best chance to win was to stick with Siemian.

That doesn't mean a quarterback switch isn't coming before the Broncos play the 7-1 Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday.

“I’m not sure,” Joseph said. “But losing three games in a row and having five turnovers tonight, anything’s possible.”

Siemian did show signs of fighting through his slump. When Bennie Fowler III dropped a touchdown pass in the end zone with 8:15 left in the third quarter, Siemian to that point was 6 of 17 for 63 yards with two interceptions.

He went an encouraging 13 of 19 for 136 yards the rest of the way with a touchdown pass to A.J. Derby, but also the cross-field pick that doomed any chance of completing the comeback.

“We got Trev comfortable and when he’s comfortable he’s really good,” Derby said.

“Trevor’s our quarterback and we have 100 percent faith in him when he’s in there,” said Broncos right guard Ron Leary, who played most of the game with injured left biceps. “We can’t start pointing fingers or blaming this and that. It’s a team effort and offense as a whole, that’s how we roll. He’s the leader of this team so we’re going to roll with him till the wheels fall off.”

Thing is, after a 3-1 start, 3-4 is not exactly a ride of smooth stability.

People still buy Denver Broncos gear even in their losing streak

By Eddie Randle

9 News

November 1, 2017

The Denver Broncos' three painful losses are testing the loyalties of fans everywhere. One man has an upclose look at the fans' ups and downs throughout each season.

For three decades, Bill Vizas has been selling sports collectables.

"Definitely the Broncos dominate the landscape," Vizas said.

Shirts, hats, pictures, and helmets...Vizas' store has it all.

"It always helps when you're winning," he said. "Today is going to be a quiet day, always after a loss no matter what...is kind of a Denver hangover kinda thing."

But Vizas said die-hard fans always come back.

"Avs, Nuggets, Rockies...it's pretty much bandwagon. They got to win in order to support the team," Vizas said. "The Broncos had a 35-year head start on everybody, so they just kind of became part of the community."

Vizas said it's the team's history that's earned the love from so many loyal fans.

"When you aren't winning today, people like to live in their history and their past," he said. Vizas sells Broncos memorabilia that date back to the 60s and 70s. He said it's the new items that aren't so popular.

The Denver Broncos aren't the only team facing some trouble with their fan bases. NFL teams in general have new challenges when it comes to finding steady support from the city the team is located in, according to one marketing professor.

"People are loyal to their football teams, and when they move from city to city, they don't necessarily adopt the home team," Darren Duber-Smith, a sports marketing professor from Metro State University, said.

Duber-Smith said one of NFL's marketing strategy is to "take your team wherever you go."

Vizas said despite the losses, the love for the Broncos is still alive and strong.

'Billboard quarterback' sign gives John Elway some Broncos advice

By Kelly Jensen
9 News
November 1, 2017

Sure, we all figured just about everyone in Denver was talking about the Broncos today.

After the team lost their third straight game, falling to the Chiefs Monday night, many fans are calling for Siemian to be benched.

Especially when the team isn't winning, it's easy to sit back and be an armchair quarterback.

Well, how about a billboard quarterback?

The folks at Multiline Imports, who have an electronic sign just off I-25 at 58th Avenue, have some advice for John Elway.

Their electronic sign reads, "Elway, don't be SCARED to make a change."



Could they be alluding to 9NEWS Broncos Insider Mike Klis' article, published on Halloween, that Vance Joseph may be considering a change at the quarterback position?

After all, Klis writes, all SIGNS are pointing to Osweiler replacing Siemian as the starting quarterback.... (see what we did there?)

Eagles will be tough draw for either Trevor Siemian or Brock Osweiler

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

November 1, 2017

While most of the conversation around the Denver Broncos has centered around whether Trevor Siemian or Brock Osweiler will start Sunday in Philadelphia, the fact is the Eagles don't figure to be all that welcoming to either one.

Whether it's Siemian staying behind center or Osweiler moving in -- coach Vance Joseph is expected to name a starter Wednesday -- the Broncos quarterback will face an Eagles team that boasts the NFL's best record at 7-1. The Eagles have scored 27, 34, 34 and 33 points in their previous home games this season. Their defense stops the run better than anyone else in the league at the moment, and they are one of 10 teams with at least 22 sacks.

Oh, and the Broncos are winless on the road this season and have averaged 11.7 points in those three games -- a span that includes the first time their offense was held scoreless in a quarter-century. The Broncos also have 10 turnovers during those three road games.

Those are not the best circumstances for Siemian, a quarterback who hasn't been able to stem the tide of turnovers. Nor is it good for Osweiler, who did not last a full season as the starter for the Houston Texans. And the losses are starting to wear thin all around.

"I'm tired of losing," is how cornerback Chris Harris Jr. put it after Monday night's loss in Kansas City. "I'm tired of losing the same way every game. We're not giving ourselves a chance to win."

While the Eagles have faced just two teams in the league's top 15 in scoring defense this season -- Carolina at No. 5 and the Los Angeles Chargers at No. 8 -- the Broncos will have to pick up the pace significantly to keep up with a team that has outscored its opponents 47-9 in the first quarter this season.

"We can't play like we have," Broncos wide receiver Demaryius Thomas said. "Everybody's frustrated ... we have to go out and put some points on the board. That's on us, you can't win games with turnovers."

The Eagles' defensive front has been a difficult dilemma for opposing offenses to solve at this point, especially Fletcher Cox at defensive tackle and Brandon Graham at defensive end. Philadelphia leads the league in run defense -- it has allowed 70.4 rushing yards per game -- so the Eagles have the potential to remove the one thing the Broncos have done consistently well on offense this season.

That same defense has also forced 14 turnovers, good for fifth-most in the league. Siemian has thrown six interceptions in the past three games combined as opponents have turned those six picks into 17 points. Only the 0-8 Cleveland Browns have turned the ball over more times than the Broncos' 17.

"To have five turnovers, that's unacceptable," tight end A.J. Derby said. "We've got to play better."

It's why Joseph, who called five turnovers "insane" Monday night, is considering a quarterback switch in the first place. But the Broncos have an abbreviated week either to make adjustments to Siemian's game or to get Osweiler ready to play.

They will likely have what Joseph calls "a jog-through" Wednesday to go with a half jog-through, half full-speed practice Thursday. The Broncos will leave for Philadelphia after their walk-through Friday and have a practice in the Philadelphia area Saturday.

It's all in the equation about who gets a crack at the Eagles.

"If a switch is made, it will be considered what's best for the football team," Joseph said. "Again, when you watch Trevor, even [Monday] night, he made three horrible interceptions, I mean, horrific decisions with those three he threw [Monday] night. He had 20 other plays that were really, really good. ... In your heart, you know he can play better because those three balls he threw, you just can't throw. The 20-plus plays he made in the third and fourth quarter, it keeps you excited about the guy. That's the issue. Again, it's about results, and we haven't had them."

Broncos look to stop losing streak with possible QB change

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

November 1, 2017

With a three-game losing streak caused mainly by a pile of turnovers, Denver Broncos coach Vance Joseph said Tuesday the team is considering a change at quarterback.

And the choice, at the moment, is between current starter Trevor Siemian and backup Brock Osweiler. Joseph said Paxton Lynch, the team's first-round pick in 2016, "won't be in the mix" to start Sunday against the Philadelphia Eagles.

"When you lose three in a row and how we've lost the football games, again [Monday] on offense with four turnovers, I think everything is for discussion," Joseph said. "It's fair to say, right now, everything is being discussed. ... It's unfair to your team if you're not discussing that position."

Because the Broncos are on a short week and leave for Philadelphia after Friday's practice, Joseph is expected to share his decision with Siemian and Osweiler Wednesday morning, then the rest of the players at the team meeting.

Siemian, who has won the job in back-to-back training camp battles, threw three interceptions in Monday night's 29-19 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs. Only the Panthers' Cam Newton and Cleveland Browns rookie DeShone Kizer -- each with 11 -- have thrown more interceptions than Siemian's 10 this season.

Siemian is 29th in the league in passer rating (76.8) and has been sacked 25 times -- tied for second highest among the league's starters. The Broncos, despite owning the league's No. 1 defense, have lost four of the past five to drop to 3-5.

Asked whether Broncos offensive coordinator Mike McCoy has protected Siemian well enough recently, Joseph said: "I think he has, but I've said all along we can coach and play better. ... [Siemian] has to play his way out of bad plays and not make them worse, that's his job as a quarterback."

"I just turned it over, couple of bad decisions, tough to win, tough to beat good teams when you turn it over," Siemian said after Monday's loss to the Chiefs.

Osweiler was signed by the Broncos just before the season after Lynch suffered a right (throwing) shoulder injury in a preseason win over the Green Bay Packers. Osweiler spent four seasons with the Broncos after being the team's second-round pick in the 2012 draft.

Osweiler started seven games for an injured Peyton Manning in 2015 and then left in free agency for Houston. But after he threw 15 touchdowns and 16 interceptions as the Texans' starter in 2016, he was traded to the Browns; the Browns then released him during the preseason.

Broncos president of football operations/general manager John Elway said Osweiler could undergo "football rehab" with the Broncos. Elway said during a Tuesday appearance on the Broncos' partner radio station that the team would "be fine" if Osweiler were named the starter.

Joseph said the decision comes down to whether the coaches could "do a better job of simplifying [Siemian's] life" and get improved play, or whether the change to Osweiler could shake the team out of its doldrums.

"I think Trevor has been pressing to be a special player for us," Joseph said. "Trevor is a young quarterback that hasn't played that much NFL football. It's a new system that he's inherited with Mike McCoy here, so his inconsistencies have come just by him pressing, trying to make big plays."

Joseph said he, Elway, McCoy and quarterbacks coach Bill Musgrave will make the call. Joseph also left open the possibility of putting Lynch in the lineup at some point this season as Lynch's shoulder improves and he practices more.

Broncos coach mulling a change at quarterback

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
November 1, 2017

Vance Joseph is either going to simplify his offense for Trevor Siemian or send him to the bench in favor of Brock Osweiler.

Joseph complained that Siemian made "three horrific decisions" on "three horrible interceptions" in the Broncos' 29-19 loss at Kansas City on Monday night, wasting another dominant defensive effort and negating any gains made by the offense.

So, Joseph huddled Tuesday with general manager John Elway, offensive coordinator Mike McCoy and QB coach Bill Musgrave to decide who will be under center when the Broncos (3-4) visit NFL-leading Philadelphia (7-1) this weekend.

"When your football team is putting in max effort and your defense is playing good football, it's unfair to your team if you're not discussing that position," Joseph said.

Former first-round pick Paxton Lynch isn't in the mix, Joseph said, because he's only practiced a handful of times in the two months since he sprained his throwing shoulder in the preseason shortly Siemian beat him out for the second straight summer.

"That wouldn't be fair to our football team or Paxton," Joseph said.

The Broncos re-signed Osweiler after Lynch got hurt. Peyton Manning's former longtime backup flopped last year in Houston and was released this summer by the Browns, who are still paying 95 percent of his \$16 million salary.

Joseph is trying to salvage a season that's slipping away. For all their troubles, the Broncos are only one game back in the AFC wild-card race and their schedule gets much easier after facing the Eagles and Patriots (6-2) the next two weeks.

Joseph insisted last summer that injury was the only way Siemian could lose his starting job, but circumstances have changed.

Siemian has thrown just two TDs and eight interceptions during a 1-4 slide in which Denver is averaging just 12 points a game and was shut out for the first time since 1992.

"No one goes into the season thinking your starter's not going to be your starter. So, in my mind that was appropriate at the time," Joseph said. "But again, when you lose three in a row and how we lost ... I think everything's up for discussion."

Joseph said he's evaluating "all positions."

The offensive ineptitude is starting to lead to grumbling among defensive players just as it did last season when a late slide ended Denver's five-year playoff run.

Denver's dominant defense is playing even better than the unit that led the Broncos to the Super Bowl 50 title two years ago. It's No. 1 in the NFL, second-best against the run and sixth-best against the pass.

Joseph, who was hired in part to restore locker room harmony, has been adamant that no one's pointing fingers, but cornerback Chris Harris Jr. said after the latest game there's definitely some friction.

"There's high tension. We're not winning," Harris said. "We're not taking care of the football. We're giving the games away."

Denver's defense played exceptionally well Monday night .

The Broncos held rookie sensation Kareem Hunt, the league's rushing leader, to 46 yards on 22 carries. They even managed to force a pair of turnovers against a team that hadn't turned it over since its first offensive play of the season.

They held the Chiefs (6-2) to two third down conversions and stifled Alex Smith, in the midst of a breakout season. He was 14 of 31 for 202 yards and a touchdown. They even held speedster Tyreek Hill, who burned them so often last season, to two catches for 38 yards.

Yet, Denver's klutzy offense and spotty special teams play cost them again.

In addition to his three interceptions, Siemian was sacked three times, giving him 25 for the season. He's on pace for 57 sacks this season — should he manage to stay in the lineup.

"Our defense played winning football," Joseph lamented after his team's third consecutive loss. "Our offensive line blocked. We ran the ball for 177 and the pass protection was better, but it all falls back to turning the ball over five times. That's insane. You can't win when you turn the ball over five times."

Joseph's mantra all season has been that the Broncos can beat anybody if they just take care of the football, and he said Tuesday he thinks his defense could be even better if they didn't keep falling behind so much.

At the root of Siemian's poor play, Joseph said, are a combination of him learning a new system and pressing. So, simplifying things for him might be the way to go.

"As coaches, we can make his life a little easier by taking some of the variables away from him and not giving him so much," Joseph said.

Siemian has been hit so much that he's not setting his feet properly on throws, feeling pressure even when it's not there.

Although 17 of Siemian's 19 sacks during this slump have come with Denver in three-receiver sets where there's no help for his struggling tackles, Joseph defended McCoy, who last week left Allen Barbre to block Joey Bosa mostly by himself in his first game at right tackle since 2009.

"I've said all along we can coach and play better. So, Mike understands that. And Mike every day voices that he can help Trevor more," Joseph said.

"But the bottom line: players play and coaches coach. There are no perfect calls. You can try to make perfect calls for him but he has to play his way out of bad plays and not make them worse.

"That's his job as the quarterback."

One he might not have much longer.

Broncos continue mulling benching Trevor Siemian after third straight loss

By Troy Renck
KMGH
November 1, 2017

A confluence of factors -- four losses and nine turnovers in five games -- left Broncos coach Vance Joseph continuing to mull benching Trevor Siemian on Tuesday, with a change becoming increasingly likely.

"I have to do what's best for the football team. Trevor made three horrific decisions (on Monday). But he had 20 other plays that were really good," Joseph said. "It's about results. End of the day, it's about results. And the end result is not good."

That no decision was made public suggests Siemian is in trouble. Joseph said no decision would be made Tuesday as the coaches continue to meet. The players are off on Tuesday, making it likely an announcement will be made on Wednesday. Again, all signs continue to point toward a pocket change.

"It's under evaluation right now," General Manager John Elway said on the flagship station.

With the season at a tipping point in Kansas City, Siemian threw three interceptions and failed to complete a single pass under pressure as the Broncos dropped their third straight game. The loss, which featured a strong defensive performance and improved offensive line play, has made Joseph reconsider Siemian's status.

Ample evidence is available to sit Siemian.

Brock Osweiler has served as Siemian's backup while Paxton Lynch recovered from a throwing shoulder injury suffered during the preseason. Multiple players told Denver7 they believe Osweiler is ready to play, if needed. Joseph said this will not be a practice decision because of the short week, providing more fodder that Osweiler will take over.

Lynch, meanwhile, has practiced only three times -- all last week -- since he hurt his shoulder on Aug. 26. He's not under consideration at this point.

"It would be unfair to him," Joseph said.

Siemian, voted a team captain, exhibits leadership and toughness required for the position, but his performance has not matched. The former Northwestern standout won the job in training camp for a second straight season, only to see him nosedive after a 2-0 start.

He has committed nine turnovers over the last five games, directly contributing to the offensive averaging 12.2 points over this stretch. Denver has 13 touchdowns, fifth fewest in the NFL.

The turnovers have been alarming, and have undermined the team with regularity. The defensive players expressed blunt anger on Monday night. Chris Harris Jr. said there was "high tension. We are losing and giving games away."

"It doesn't bother me guys are upset. They should be. I am upset," Joseph said.

Monday's performance left Siemian vulnerable. In sticking with Siemian after the Broncos suffered their first shutout since 1992, Joseph preached all week about the importance of ball security and how a solid ground attack could be the embattled quarterback's best friend.

The running game returned with a bang against the Chiefs. The Broncos rushed 31 times for 177 yards on a season-best 5.71 yards per carry. Yet, Siemian made repeated mistakes. He missed open receivers, locked in on first reads with other targets running free and tied a career-high in picks. He badly underthrew Jeff Heurman on a ball snared by Marcus Peters, and his last turnover featured a mind-numbing across-the-body-toss to a Chiefs defensive back.

Siemian admittedly has pressed, trying to make big plays. By any measure, his statistics remain sobering. He owns a 3-7 road mark, including 0-3 this year, and has failed to win an AFC West road game in five attempts.

So it appears it could soon be Brock to the Future. Osweller signed as a free agent at the end of training camp after the Browns released him. He went 5-2 as a starter for the Broncos in their Super Bowl season. He took Houston's money on the open market, and experienced a nightmarish 2016 before the Texans shipped him to Cleveland. He never played for the Browns, requiring football rehab to correct bad habits. He might need more time, but has earned the right to start against 7-1 Philadelphia, it appears.

"The thing is he knows the system. That's why he was a good fit when he came back as a backup," Elway said. "He knows a lot of the players who are here and the personalities. If a decision is made to go that direction, I think we will be fine."

It might be temporary. If the Broncos continue to fade, Lynch could get an extended look as the team determines how to assess the position in the draft and free agency.

Woody Paige: Vance Joseph's decision to call Siemian the 'permanent' QB was a mistake

By Woody Paige

KMGH

November 1, 2017

Heraclitus advocated that “there is nothing permanent except change.”

Vance Joseph should have realized that the Greek philosopher’s hypothesis still is true 2,500 years later.

Permanency is temporary. Particularly with NFL quarterbacks.

Sometimes permanent means only “five-seven weeks” or until after a Broncos game with the Chiefs.

Three consecutive and four of five, Broncos coaches learned the awkward way.

In 2006, following a 19-10 loss in Kansas City, Mike Shanahan switched from quarterback Jake Plummer to rookie Jay Cutler.

In 2010, in the Broncos’ fifth game, John Fox benched starter Kyle Orton and inserted Tim Tebow. The next week Tebow was named the starter. The previous season, once Josh “Mistake” McDaniels was fired a day after the Broncos fell in K.C., Orton was replaced by Tebow for the final three games.

In 2015, when the Broncos were trailing at home to the Chiefs, Gary Kubiak sent in Brock Osweiler in the second half and, historically, removed the legendary Peyton Manning. The backup started the last seven regular-season games, then was pulled from the finale in favor of Manning.

And, on Monday, Trevor Siemian, after a third straight defeat, in Kansas City, was essentially demoted by Joseph.

In mid-August, the Broncos’ Cerberus (a multi-headed mythological Greek monster) – Joseph, John Elway, Matt Russell, Mike McCoy and Bill Musgrave – chose Siemian as the Broncos’ quarterback to start the season.

I was not amazed by Joseph’s announcement. I was stunned, though, when he declared: “It’s a permanent decision. Obviously, outside of injury, that’s different. But, as far as Trevor being our guy, he’s our guy . . . It was just getting it right so we’re not back-pedaling in two weeks.”

Permanent?

That assertion was a rookie mistake.

As a newspaper columnist, radio talk show and national TV commentator, and regularly contributor to The Denver Channel (KMGH-TV) during two different eras, I knew he was wrong. I’ve witnessed 14 different seasons in which the starting quarterback was not “permanent.” Change is constant, and usually inevitable, unless the quarterback is Elway or Manning – and even Manning was taken out.

At least, Joseph didn't back-pedal after two weeks. The Broncos did win their first three games of 2017.

But Joseph should have erased Siemian's "permanent" status in the second half of the Giants game. Osweiler suddenly was thrust into action late in the second quarter when Siemian re-injured his left (non-throwing) shoulder, which was hurt last season and required surgery in the off-season.

Instead of keeping Osweiler in the game for the second half, Joseph returned to Siemian, and the Broncos were upset by one of the three worse teams in the NFL.

Joseph should have swallowed hard in Los Angeles at halftime and yanked Siemian. But he left the mediocre QB in, and the Broncos were shut out by the Chargers.

Then, on Monday night, although Siemian was experiencing the worst game of his two-year stint as a starter, Joseph never made a switch.

The Broncos had scored three touchdowns in 18 quarters, and were averaging 18 points a game in six (including 42 points against the Cowboys).

In the 29-19 defeat, Siemian regressed. He threw for a rare touchdown, but gave up three ridiculous interceptions (and has 10 interceptions with nine touchdown throws) and had a 43.5 quarterback rating.

After the game, Joseph was critical of Siemian.

And the coach had transformed from August's "It's permanent" to October's "Anything's possible" about the quarterback situation.

As everyone awaited Joseph's media conference at mid-day on Tuesday, national football authorities disagreed about whether Paxton Lynch -- who was injured in the next-to-last exhibition and hadn't played since, and only practiced three days (last week) -- or Osweiler -- who had been signed after the Lynch injury as an emergency measure -- would be selected the fresh starting quarterback for the game in Philadelphia Sunday after a short week of preparation.

Presumably, Joseph met with the Broncos' brain-trust on Tuesday morning. He certainly talked with Elway, who makes all the major organization decisions.

And here's the BIG PROCLAMATION from Joseph:

"Nothing is done yet. Everything is being explored. It's my job to do what's best for the football team, and that I will do," the coach stated through denverbroncos.com before his press briefing.

Duh, coach.

BoncosCountry is peeved, and Heraclitus would be, too.

Next-Day Notebook: Broncos QB switch possible if 'best for the football team'

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
November 1, 2017

In the wake of a third consecutive loss with three or more offensive giveaways, "everything is being explored" to fix what ails the Broncos' struggling offense, including a change at the quarterback position, Head Coach Vance Joseph said Tuesday afternoon.

Monday night's 29-19 defeat in Kansas City saw the Broncos' mounting turnover issues hit their peak, with five turnovers -- including three Trevor Siemian interceptions -- dooming the Broncos. Denver now has the second-most giveaways in the NFL and the league's second-worst turnover margin.

"Obviously, after losing three in a row, and yesterday having five turnovers, I think it's fair to evaluate everything there, with our team working so hard and the guys putting in max effort yesterday and not having a chance to win the football game," Joseph said. "I think it's fair to evaluate the quarterback and all positions.

"With yesterday on offense, four turnovers -- I think everything is up for discussion at this point of the season."

The three interceptions thrown by Siemian were a career single-game high for the third-year quarterback, and pushed his season total to 10, the third-highest total in the NFL. Since starting the season with a 6-to-2 touchdown-to-interception ratio in Weeks 1 and 2, Siemian's ratio is 3-to-8.

"When you watch Trevor, even last night, he made three horrible interceptions, I mean horrific decisions, with those three he threw last night," Joseph said. "But he had 20 other plays that were really, really good.

"So when you watch your starting quarterback make 20 or 25 amazing throws and three horrific interceptions, that's when it becomes an issue, because in your heart, you know he can play better. He can play better because those three balls he threw, you just can't throw, but the 20-plus plays he made in the third and fourth quarter, man, it keeps you excited about the guy. So that's the issue.

"But again, it's about results, and we haven't had them. We've lost three games in a row, again, yesterday, with four [offensive] turnovers. At the end of the day, it's about results. It's not about how he's played. It's the end result that we're not getting. And it's not good."

If Siemian does not start in Philadelphia next Sunday, six-year veteran Brock Osweiler will. Joseph said that Paxton Lynch is not an option at this point because he has just four practices under his belt since returning from a sprained throwing shoulder suffered in the Broncos' third preseason game Aug. 26.

"If a switch is made, it would be considered [to be] what's best for the football team," Joseph said.

If a change is made, it will not be announced before Joseph can confer with his team. He did not expect that practice would impact the choice because of the short week that followed the Monday night defeat.

"If something is done, I want to meet with our guys first -- meaning the quarterbacks and the coaches and with our football team before we put anything out publicly," Joseph said. "So nothing is going to happen tonight, by [any] means.

"We're still discussing it. We're still figuring out what's best for our team going forward."

ANY DECISION WILL BE MADE with the entire locker room in mind.

"It's my job to do what's best for the football team," Joseph said. "When you've lost three games in a row and you've had the turnovers like we've had -- we're minus-11 [in turnover margin for the season] -- that's not good. If you try to go the same way, and it doesn't get better, that's on me.

"And, again, we have players and coaches putting a lot of time and effort in to get ready for these football games and guys are playing hard. I think it's fair to examine that position and all positions."

That effort can manifest itself in frustration in the hours and days after the game, some of which gets aired publicly. Tuesday, Aqib Talib tweeted about the afternoon trade deadline. Monday night, Chris Harris Jr. said there was "high tension" over the struggles.

"Frustration is very high, man," Harris said. "Tired of losing. Tired of losing the same way every game, man. We're not giving ourselves a chance to win.

"I mean, it's high tension, man," he continued. "We're not winning. We're not taking care of the football. We're giving games away."

Those comments didn't bother Joseph, whose defense has held its last four opponents to 17.3 points and 1.3 offensive touchdowns per game during the Broncos' losing streak.

"That means guys want to win, and I don't blame guys for being upset, because, again, this football team has worked hard, and guys worked hard to win the football game, and it didn't happen," Joseph said.

"I'm not moved by Chris or Talib's comments because they're upset. I'm upset. That's why it's my job to find an option where we can go win football games. So it doesn't bother me that guys are upset. They should be, because this is a hard business, and it takes a lot of work to get ready to play football games each week."

DON'T PANIC: That was the message defensive lineman Shelby Harris wanted to convey after the loss. Panic would do the Broncos no good whatsoever.

"No, because all you're going to do is put yourself in a fluster and just go crazy. So everyone just relax," he said. "We're going to get it figured out."

In his mind, it's easy for a team to stick together through a crisis.

"You guys weren't there for training camp. That's what it means. That's how you form the bond of brotherhood," he said. "We're fine. What did Aaron Rodgers say? 'Relax. R-E-L-A-X.' Chill; we'll be good. Yeah, it's a bump in the road, but we're going to go back this week and work our tails off and get it right."

Power rankings roundup, Week 9

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
November 1, 2017

After a third consecutive loss, the Broncos' average ranking fell slightly from about 17th overall to 19th.

ESPN.com

Current rank: No. 17

Last week: No. 17

The Broncos' defense is feared, but no one fears their offense right now. Trevor Siemian has thrown three touchdowns and eight interceptions over the past five weeks, with Denver going 1-4 in those games. The only thing scarier than his poor performance? His backup is currently Brock Osweiler.

Bleacher Report, Chris Simms

Current rank: No. 16

Last week: No. 12

If the Broncos don't figure out how to fix their problems quickly, their season is going to slip away.

Sports Illustrated/The MMQB

Current rank: No. 17

Last week: No. 18

USA Today

Current rank: No. 19

Last week: No. 18

With six interceptions in Denver's current three-game losing streak, how much more rope does QB Trevor Siemian have before he gets yanked?

Yahoo! Sports, Frank Schwab

Current rank: 20

Last week: 17

Take note of this quote from cornerback Chris Harris, via Nick Kosmider of the Denver Post: "It's hard to win when you don't score points." It has to be frustrating for this world-class defense to see a season slipping away. The Broncos' next step is probably benching quarterback Trevor Siemian, but I'm not sure that fixes everything.

Washington Post, Mark Maske

Current rank: No. 25

Last week: No. 20

Trevor Siemian is not the answer at QB and the season is slipping away from the Broncos.

NFL.com, Elliot Harrison

Current rank: No. 21

Last week: No. 21

No team looked as different from September to October. All the (negative) attention centers around Trevor Siemian, who looks nothing like the quarterback he was the first two games of the season. His three interceptions hurt on Monday night. But he didn't lose a fumble (like two of his teammates). Nor is he playing right tackle. Nor did he drop a sure touchdown pass. The defense is the only part of Vance Joseph's outfit that is playing above board. I'm all for do-it-yourselfers, but Von Miller and friends can't do it by themselves. That group looked outstanding most of the night, minus a few offside penalties. Not as outstanding: watching Jamaal Charles fumble early, giving the Chiefs the first points of the game on a scoop-and-score. Not after the fantastic career he built in Kansas City. Classy, great player.

Broncos considering QB change amid Trevor Siemian's struggles

By Lindsay Jones
USA Today
November 1, 2017

The Denver Broncos are mulling a quarterback switch this week after another turnover-laden performance by starter Trevor Siemian in Monday's 29-19 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs.

Head coach Vance Joseph said Tuesday he and his staff, along with John Elway, are evaluating whether to make the switch to Brock Osweiler for Sunday's game against the Philadelphia Eagles. Paxton Lynch is not an option this week, Joseph said, as the second-year passer is still easing back into practice following a late-August shoulder injury.

"Everything is being explored. After losing three in a row and yesterday having five turnovers, it's fair to evaluate everything there," Joseph said.

Siemian threw three interceptions against the Chiefs, and Joseph called them "horrific decisions" by the quarterback. Siemian has committed seven turnovers (six interceptions and one lost fumble) during the Broncos' three-game losing streak. The Broncos scored just three touchdowns in that span.

During his news conference on Tuesday, Joseph repeatedly praised the "max effort" of his team, especially the defense, and said it would be "unfair" to everyone not to discuss changing quarterbacks after the Broncos' performance this month.

"It's about results, and we haven't had them," Joseph said.

Elway told team partner station Orange and Blue Radio on Tuesday that he would consult Joseph on the decision, but the call would be left up to the coach.

Osweiler re-signed with the Broncos in early September after being released by the Cleveland Browns, who are paying approximately \$15 million of his remaining guaranteed salary from the deal he signed in 2016 with the Houston Texans. Houston traded Osweiler to Cleveland in a salary dump move in March.

Osweiler spent four years as Peyton Manning's backup in Denver and started seven games in 2015 in relief of Manning. He led the Broncos to crucial wins against the New England Patriots and Cincinnati Bengals in that stretch, but was benched at halftime of the season finale after the offense struggled with turnovers in a game against the Chargers.

He started 14 games for the Texans last year, throwing 15 touchdowns with 16 interceptions. He was replaced by Tom Savage in late December, but regained his job after Savage suffered a concussion, and started two playoff games for Houston.

"He understands what we're doing and knows a lot of the players that are here. If a decision is made to go that direction, I think we would be fine," Elway said.

Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones takes on NFL, Roger Goodell in radio show

By Jarrett Bell
USA Today
November 1, 2017

If it's Tuesday (especially, but sometimes on Thursday, Sunday and maybe Friday), Jerry Jones is making headlines.

That's Jerry being Jerry.

This time, it was the Dallas Cowboys owner declaring that his star running back, Ezekiel Elliott, is the "victim of an overcorrection" by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell with the six-game suspension for violating the league's domestic violence policy.

In the days before that, it was Jones reportedly orchestrating a conference call among fellow owners that was used to pump the brakes on the seemingly imminent extension of Goodell's contract.

Go ahead, connect the dots.

On the surface, it seems Jones wants Goodell's head on a platter because of his handling of Elliott's case — which indeed includes some questionable elements pertaining to the investigative process and the discipline that has been imposed.

Then again, as Jones intimates that Goodell is in over-reaction mode because he originally went soft on since-unemployed running back Ray Rice, it's hardly the first time that Goodell has been under fire.

But it's news now because a day after a judge rejected Elliott's attempt for a preliminary injunction to block the suspension, Jones — or Jerry, as Stephen Jones, the team's executive vice president, calls his father — has fired off on Goodell.

Given that Goodell collects more than \$40 million a year in salary and bonuses from the NFL (according to the last publicly released figures) it's possible Jones would have objected to the terms of an extension if there were never an Elliott case in the wind. Arthur Blank, the Atlanta Falcons owner who chairs the compensation committee that handles Goodell's contract, told me recently that he enlisted Jerry as an ad-hoc committee member — contrary to suggestions that Jones inserted himself on the committee — because he knew the Cowboys owner would passionately bring perspective to the situation.

Still, at the moment, it looks like some major payback aimed at Goodell.

And Jones, whose heavily marketed franchise is the most valuable pro sports brand in the world, knows just how to get his message across.

I mean, what other team owner has his own weekly radio show?

Jones goes on Dallas-based 103.5 The Fan every Tuesday morning, win or lose, rain or shine.

There's always good stuff coming out of the show, and Jones rarely avoids sensitive topics. In Dallas, it's like must-hear radio.

Behind the scenes, Jones is arguably the most influential of all NFL owners — passionate about so many issues involving the NFL, especially when it comes to making money.

He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame earlier this year largely because he showed other owners how to make money.

Yet beyond that, Jones surely ticks a lot of people off with his boldness. Personally, like so many others — including players across the league — I think he went overboard on his hard line, Trump-ish stand on the national anthem, threatening to fire any player who didn't stand for The Star-Spangled Banner.

No, I don't agree with Jones on this. But I respect that he'll state his case publicly — even after months of thinking it — when so many others sit in the background and whisper about it.

As Richard Sherman might put it, at least you know where he stands.

So it was no surprise that Jones came to the defense of Houston Texans owner Robert McNair, who ignited another round to the protest saga with his “inmates run the prison” comment. Jones confirmed on his show that he was in the room when McNair spoke and contends the “inmates” McNair referred to were people at NFL headquarters, headed by Goodell, and not the players.

If that's to be believed, well, that's another type of problem in itself. As it stands now, Jones will use his platform to the fullest — love it or loathe it.

All of which takes me back to 1989, when I wrote for the team newspaper, The Dallas Cowboys Weekly, when Jones bought the team. One day, amid many intimate chats I've had with Jones over the years, he asked me how was it that former Cowboys president Tex Schramm had the media eating out of his hands.

Jones, who told me he had done just one major interview in his life before buying the Cowboys, just couldn't understand why Tex's word was considered so golden. So I told Jones this: Tex is accessible.

Whatever the topic, especially with league matters, Schramm was willing to weigh in. Surely, that helped Tex get his messages out, while media members had a source. And it helped Schramm wield more power in league circles.

Well, Jerry is part-Tex now. And, yes, Schramm had his own radio show. And TV show, too. Given the age we're in now, imagine Jones on Twitter, tweeting away like Trump, or even like Indianapolis Colts owner Jim Irsay.

Jerry's daughter, Charlotte Jones-Anderson, the Cowboys' executive vice president and brand chief, imagined her father tweeting away. And Charlotte concluded: No way.

See, Jerry has his limits, imposed by his daughter.

So radio it is. Call it “stay-tuned Tuesdays.”

Vance Joseph won't commit to Trevor Siemian after worst outing of the season

By Ryan Wilson
CBS Sports
November 1, 2017

Trevor Siemian's struggles continued on Monday night. The Broncos' second-year starter had his worse outing of the year, which is saying something for the guy who came into Week 8 as the 24th-ranked passer, according to Football Outsiders' metrics. When it was over, Siemian completed just 53 percent of his attempts while tossing three interceptions and just one touchdown. He also took three sacks and finished with a passer rating of 43.5.

The nadir in an altogether forgettable evening came midway through the fourth quarter when Siemian threw one of the worst interceptions you'll ever see.

In the days leading up to the Broncos' loss -- their third straight, by the way -- first year coach Vance Joseph said he was sticking with Siemian. That talking point changed late Monday night.

"Well I am going to watch the film tomorrow," Joseph told reporters, via Pro Football Talk. "Obviously like most coaches would do and see but tonight, our defense played winning football in my opinion. Our offensive line blocked. We ran the ball for 177 [yards] and the pass [protection] was better, but it all falls back to turning the ball over five times. That's insane. You can't win turning the ball over five times. Guys work too hard along with coaches and players to have a big game and give it away five times. It is mind boggling."

So is Siemian, who now has 10 interceptions on the season, still the starter?

"I am not sure," Joseph conceded, "but losing three games in a row and having five turnovers tonight, anything is possible."

Joseph's hesitation could be because Plan B entails benching Siemian for Brock Osweiler, who didn't remove his parka while standing on the sidelines Sunday night. But 2016 first-round pick Paxton Lynch could be an option; he came off the injury list last week though Joseph is in no hurry to rush him onto the field.

As it stands, the Broncos are 3-4 and 2.5 games behind the Chiefs in the AFC West. But things are about to get immeasurably tougher before they get easier. The Broncos face the 7-1 Eagles in Philadelphia next Sunday before hosting the Patriots a week later.

Broncos considering QB change amid three-game skid

By Kevin Patra

NFL.com

November 1, 2017

Following another poor outing from Trevor Siemian, the Denver Broncos could make a move under center.

NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport reported Tuesday the Broncos are mulling a QB change, per a source informed of the situation.

Rapoport added Brock Osweiler could get the first crack since Paxton Lynch has practiced just three times after sitting out the start of the season with a shoulder injury.

Broncos executive VP John Elway confirmed Rapoport's report during a Tuesday radio spot, saying they're currently evaluating the position and expect to have a decision in the next few days. Vance Joseph later told reporters that Lynch isn't in the mix for this Sunday as he's still coming back from injury.

Siemian has struggled to move the Broncos' offense during a three-game skid. The starter has thrown for fewer than 210 yards each of the last two weeks while tossing one touchdown to four interceptions in that span.

Coach Vance Joseph stuck with Siemian during Monday night's debacle, in which the former seventh-round pick completed 52.8 percent of his passes for 198 yards, one TD and three INTs. The Broncos offense has averaged 9.6 points over the past three games, including a Week 7 shutout.

One likely reason Joseph stuck with Siemian on Monday night instead of moving to Osweiler was his lack of mobility. Behind the Broncos' porous offensive line, a statue like Osweiler would get obliterated. Siemian, who is far more elusive than Brock, has been sacked 25 times through seven games this season. The offensive line woes aren't getting fixed this season.

The question is whether Joseph would have put in Lynch on Monday had he been healthy enough. The first-round pick boasts superior athleticism than either of the other two options. Given Siemian's play, it's clear that Lynch needs a shot to prove he's the long-term answer. The question when he'll be healthy enough.

Joseph said Tuesday that Lynch won't be considered to start Week 8 versus the Philadelphia Eagles.

Given the Tuesday comments, the team sounds poised to make a switch from Siemian to Osweiler to try and find a boost under center. However, the immobile Osweiler behind a faulty offensive line versus a bulldozing Eagles defensive front might not alleviate the struggles.

Elway: Broncos quarterback position is 'under evaluation'

By Joe Dahlke

FOX 31

November 1, 2017

The Broncos did not make a change at the quarterback position on Tuesday with Broncos general manager John Elway saying the position is "under evaluation."

Although no decision was announced on Tuesday, Broncos coach Vance Joseph did nothing to quiet the suspicion that the team is thinking about a quarterback change.

Many are speculating the team will name a new starting quarterback after Trevor Siemian threw three interceptions in a 29-19 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs on Monday night.

"I think it's fair to say that right now, everything is being discussed," Joseph said. "When you watch Trevor, he made three horrific decisions, but he had 20 other plays that were good."

"In the end, it's about results. It's not about how he's played. It's the end result that we're not getting," Joseph said.

Elway told Broncos radio that the position is "under evaluation right now" and that a "decision will be made in the upcoming days."

The Broncos appear to be considering only Siemian and Brock Osweiler with Joseph saying that Paxton Lynch will "not be in the mix" for Sunday's game against the Philadelphia Eagles.

Joseph also added that there is no possibility of bringing in a QB from the outside, via free agency or before the 2 p.m. MT deadline.

"When you make a move like that, it takes time, it takes thought because you want to be right," Joseph said.

Joseph added that he plans to meet with the team before it's announced. Broncos players return to team headquarters on Wednesday.

NFL-Funded Study Identifies Football Positions Most at Risk of Brain Injury

By Yasmin Tayang
Inverse Science
November 1, 2017

The suicide of former New England Patriots tight-end Aaron Hernandez in April brought the controversy surrounding brain injury in the National Football League back to the front pages. After his death, an examination of the 27-year-old brain showed that he had severe CTE — chronic traumatic encephalopathy — a serious disease, resulting from repeated blows to the head, that's known to have repercussions as severe as suicide.

The league has largely avoided the issue, but a study released on Tuesday — paid for by both NFLPA (the player's union) and the NFL Foundation (which is essentially run by the league) — links specific types of positions to increased brain damage. The findings were published in the journal *Radiology*.

The research, conducted by Kevin Guskiewicz, Ph.D., the research director of the Center for the Study of Retired Athletes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, didn't focus directly on the development of CTE through repeated head injuries, but it represents one of the NFL's first serious endeavors into research into CTE prevention.

The study used two MRI techniques — diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) and functional MRI (fMRI) — to examine the brains of ex-football players to determine whether there was a link between an individual's playing history and the amount of injury to white matter in their brains.

“Our study, by including both former collegiate and professional players, gives us the ability to examine career duration and playing position along with concussion history,” Guskiewicz said of the findings. “By doing so, we found that these factors are all important when considering the long-term effects of playing football.”

Certain Positions Linked to CTE

By analyzing the brain scans of 61 former players — half played only college ball, and the other half went on to play professionally — the researchers concluded that their hypothesis was correct: Certain positions were linked to greater white matter damage due to recurring head impacts. In particular, they looked at the effects of playing speed positions, like running backs and wide receivers, versus non-speed positions, such as offensive and defensive linemen. In general, linemen tend to bear the brunt of brain impacts, especially those to the front of the helmet.

Hernandez, a tight-end, played in a position that's a mix of position types. It requires speed but also is subject to frequent tackles.

Individuals that played non-speed positions that had a history of recurrent concussions (three or more), they found, had more damage to their frontal white matter, the part of the brain where CTE takes hold. That wasn't the case for those that played speed positions and had a history of concussions, suggesting that the way that non-speed players become concussed is different and more dangerous.

They also found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the duration of a player's career was linked to the number of concussions they had, which in turn affected how much damage their brains suffered. There was, however, one odd caveat: While ex-college players who had three or more concussions during their careers clearly showed more widespread damage to white matter, the same couldn't be said for the ex-professionals with the same concussion history, who had higher white matter integrity. It's possible this was simply an effect of the ex-pros that the researchers sampled — perhaps they were just atypically healthy — though co-author Michael Clark notes in a statement that it's also possible that the duration of a player's career is simply not that important when considering the factors leading to serious brain injury.

This study builds on recent research that underlines the long-term effects of playing football. In July, a groundbreaking study showed that 99 percent of the deceased ex-NFL players' brains that scientists examined had evidence of CTE and that the prevalence of CTE rose with higher levels of play.

Larger studies involving more players need to be conducted to reach more solid conclusions, but the discovery of the link between player position and brain damage, at least, points to a way to alleviate at least some of the problems in the NFL, says Guskiewicz: "The mechanisms of concussions in non-speed players are fundamentally different from those of speed position players, suggesting that perhaps position-specific helmets are warranted."

It's far from a perfect solution to solving the complicated problem of brain damage in American football, but it's a start.

The brain scan of Hernandez's brain after after he hung himself in prison (he was convicted of murder) showed his CTE was on par with someone in their 60s, the test showed. Boston University, which received Hernandez's brain via his family after he died, expressed its gratitude after its research was finished in September.

Hernandez's family filed a lawsuit against the NFL, but later dropped it, leaving open the possibility for it to be refiled if future research shows that brain injuries suffered by NFL players directly correlate to off-field problems. According to Boston University, symptoms of CTE include "memory loss, confusion, impaired judgment, impulse control problems, aggression, depression, suicidality, parkinsonism, and eventually progressive dementia."

Chris Harris: Broncos are giving games away

By Josh Alper

Pro Football Talk

November 1, 2017

Broncos coach Vance Joseph wouldn't commit to sticking with starting quarterback Trevor Siemian after Siemian threw three interceptions in Monday night's 29-19 loss to Chiefs and said he'd look at the film before making any decision.

He may also take a little time to listen to what's being said around the team because it sounds like frustration is rising inside the locker room. Cornerback Chris Harris correctly noted that the team "can't win if we can't score" and that it's difficult when the offense digs a hole for the team by turning the ball over.

The first score of Monday's game came when Chiefs cornerback Marcus Peters returned a Jamaal Charles fumble for a touchdown and it's clear the giveaways are a problem based on Harris' answer to a question about tension in the locker room.

"There's high tension," Harris said in comments distributed by the team. "We're not winning. We're not taking care of the football. We're giving the games away. We had some crucial chances to make a stop to give us a chance. We got back on the turnovers, which was a positive. Other than that, it was an ugly game."

If the Broncos do pull Siemian, their preferred replacement would likely be 2016 first-round pick Paxton Lynch. Lynch has not been active yet this season because of a right shoulder injury, but he's been practicing recently. Even if he's not ready, the Broncos may need to consider Brock Osweiler because three losses and 11 turnovers in three weeks is about as clear a sign as one could ever get that the current approach isn't working.

John Elway: Starting QB decision “under review”

By Darin Gantt
Pro Football Talk
November 1, 2017

Broncos coach Vance Joseph did nothing to quell suspicion that he was thinking about a quarterback change last night, when he refused to commit to Trevor Siemian hanging onto the job after a three-interception game.

Now, Joseph’s boss is also leaving the door open for someone else to start next week.

Joseph and executive John Elway appeared on KDSP AM this afternoon, and neither one of them was ready to reveal the particulars.

Via Lindsay Jones of USA Today, Elway said the decision was “under review,” and that he would not stand in the way of Joseph making a change.

Asked if he’d be comfortable with Brock Osweiler taking over, Elway replied: “If a decision is made to go that direction, I think we would be fine.”

“The last thing you want to do is make any quick decisions.” Elway said, noting that they’d be meeting later today about the call.

One guy who won’t be starting is former first-rounder Paxton Lynch. Joseph said that because he’s had such a short time practicing in his comeback from his shoulder injury, that he wasn’t a candidate, meaning it’s either stick with Siemian or go with Osweiler.

But he also didn’t make it sound too likely it would be Siemian, calling the interceptions last night “horrific decisions.”

“Those three balls he threw, he just can’t throw,” Joseph said.

With all that to work with, it’s not much of a reason to think that the Broncos are figuring out when, not if, to make the switch.