

# It's been nearly 2 months since a Broncos WR caught a TD pass. For Demaryius Thomas, the wait has been much longer.

By Nicki Jhabvala  
Denver Post  
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It happened so long ago and so much has transpired in the weeks since that it's perfectly understandable if it's been forgotten. But the last time a Broncos wide receiver caught a touchdown pass was the afternoon of Sept. 17, when the Broncos toppled the Cowboys in Denver.

Midway through the second quarter, Emmanuel Sanders reeled in a 6-yard pass in the end zone from Trevor Siemian. The Broncos extended their lead to 14 points and eventually 25 points and, by most early assessments, had built the offense they had long envisioned.

My, how things have changed.

While the Broncos have occasionally found the end zone since that day, not one of their wide receivers has caught a touchdown pass since that Sanders score. In fact, only two wide receivers have caught a touchdown pass this season: Sanders with a pair in Week 2 and Bennie Fowler with two in the season opener against the Chargers. (Fowler should have had a third, but he dropped a pass in the end zone last Monday at Kansas City.) In their last five games, the Broncos have had only three passing touchdowns, caught by tight ends A.J. Derby (two) and Jeff Heurman.

More concerning: Demaryius Thomas, Denver's No. 1 wide receiver, hasn't caught a touchdown pass in 13 consecutive games. The last time he saw the end zone was Nov. 13, 2016, in New Orleans.

"He is a No. 1 in our offense and (opponent) game plans are made to stop him from scoring touchdowns," coach Vance Joseph said. "Our overall goal is to win games, whoever scores the touchdowns. He's one of our best players, so the more he scores, the more we can win. Our pass game goes through 88 (Thomas) and 10 (Sanders). However they play us, we have to take advantage of it."

The most-tenured Bronco on the roster, Thomas has played with six quarterbacks since he was drafted in 2010 and has dealt with the adjustments inherent in each. He played through a string of injuries to start 87 consecutive games, the most among active wide receivers in the NFL.

But he never had a scoring drought this long.

"I know, I know, it's been a while," Thomas said. "I don't know how to feel anymore. I heard a lot of people kept talking about it (laughing). It's been a while."

In seven games, Thomas has been targeted 59 times and caught 35 for 455 yards. His numbers are similar to those of his first seven games last season: 54 targets, 37 receptions, 456 yards. But he had four touchdowns in that span last year. He also caught seven of his 10 targets in the red zone, leading to three touchdowns.

This year, Thomas has been targeted only four times in the red zone and caught the ball once, for just a 3-yard gain.

The list of reasons he isn't scoring is long and varied, and go beyond the Broncos' offensive issues.

"There are certain plays we've missed," said offensive coordinator Mike McCoy. "I think there are certain plays he might say he might not have won on the release, whether it's a decision we made in a progression, was there a protection breakdown, there are a number of different reasons. It's not just one reason. But I think with Emmanuel and D.T., there are plenty of plays asterisked with those guys' names on it that we're trying to get them the ball. A lot of the passing game, with those two special players — not just Demaryius, but with Emmanuel — we're trying to get those guys the ball often."

According to Pro Football Focus, of the 10 interceptions thrown by the Broncos, four were targets to Thomas. Denver's collective struggles in the passing game have played a part, too. The double-coverages Thomas has faced certainly contributed, too, as Joseph alluded.

But the recent dearth of touchdowns by Broncos wide receivers and the Demaryius Drought hasn't gone unnoticed.

"Yes. We were putting in red zone (Thursday) and most of the time I'm in the back like, 'Give me that play! Give me that play!' I was like 'Hey, give it to 'D.T. Give it to D.T.' He's getting to go a full year without a touchdown, so we have to change that," Sanders said. "I'm praying that he goes on a run and has — look at the guy in Houston, I forgot his name. He has what? Fifteen catches and seven touchdowns — Will Fuller.

"Hopefully Demaryius can be that guy and I can come up next and do the same thing."

Ending Thomas' drought on Sunday is on the offensive to-do list.

"I'm determined to end it. I've been determined to end it every week," he said. "It just doesn't work that way. Half of the time, it's about winning, but as a receiver, you do want to score touchdowns. I do want to score."

## **Player spotlight, Numbers to Know for Broncos vs. Eagles**

### **Von Miller, Broncos OLB**

**The skinny:** The Broncos are desperate for a victory and they know getting one in Philadelphia against the 7-1 Eagles will be a tall task. Reliance on the defense may be greater than ever, especially as the offense deals with another quarterback shift. Enter Von Miller, rated by Pro Football Focus as the NFL's most productive edge rusher this season. Per PFF, Miller has recorded 42 total pressures (sacks, hits and hurries) on opposing QBs. Carson Wentz has been sacked 22 times this season, tied for the fifth-most among QBs, and pressuring him Sunday will be a high priority for Denver. In Miller's 23 career meetings against NFC teams (including Super Bowl 50), he's notched 24 sacks.

**The background:** Miller's latest sack streak ended at five games, but he continues to wreak havoc on opposing offenses in myriad ways — ways often overlooked by the casual fan. Miller leads the team

with 12 QB hits and, because opponents so often double-team and chip him, he's created opportunities for sacks and pressures by his teammates, including fellow outside linebackers Shaquil Barrett and Ray.

**His take:** "I have to start making plays," Miller said. "I haven't made that Miller Time, sackmaster sack all season. I'm just getting started as well. I feel it coming I'm just ready to get back into the lab and get on a really good Philadelphia Eagles team."

**Their take:** "I saw it in the offseason. Von Miller is the best guy I've ever seen on tape as far as quick twitch, getting off the ball," Eagles tackle Lane Johnson told local media. "There's nobody that can really compare to him. I got my work cut out for me."

### **Numbers to Know**

**-11:** Broncos' turnover differential, which ranks No. 31 in the league.

**47.8%:** Eagles' third-down percentage, second-best in the NFL.

**88th:** Consecutive career starts by receiver Demaryius Thomas on Sunday. Thomas, who hasn't missed a start/game since 2011, owns the longest active streak among NFL receivers.

**13:** consecutive games, dating back to last season, in which Thomas has failed to catch a touchdown pass. He last caught a TD in a Broncos win in New Orleans on Nov. 13, 2016.

**72.9:** Rushing yards allowed per game by the Broncos' defense. Denver ranks second against the run, behind Philadelphia (70.4)

**7-1:** Eagles' record this season. Philadelphia owns a league-high .875 win percentage.

# Onus on Isaiah McKenzie after muffed punt; Broncos list three players as questionable vs. Eagles

By Nicki Jhabvala  
Denver Post  
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After Broncos practices this week, rookie receiver/returner Isaiah McKenzie remained on the field with assistants and the team's JUGS machine to field punt after punt. With each catch, he would cradle the ball to make sure his head and body were in sync.

At Kansas City last Monday, McKenzie muffed a punt that resulted in a turnover — a costly turnover — and was nearly pulled from the game and replaced by Jordan Taylor.

"His confidence is OK," Joseph said. "After the dropping the ball on Monday night, my instinct was to take him out, but that wouldn't have been right for Isaiah. So putting him back in and making him perform on Monday Night Football in a tight game was right for his future. So that's what I did and he caught the ball and it worked out for us. But he's got to possess the ball first. That's his job. It's a hard job, but it's his job. Possessing the ball first, it's a must."

Added special teams coordinator Brock Olivo: "We keep having egregious error after egregious error, and that's on me as a coach. It's attention to detail. We fix the leak on one end of the boat and another pops up on the other end. So I've got to dial in and get the guys focused."

**Game status.** Right tackle Donald Stephenson was ruled out for the second consecutive game as he recovers from a calf injury. Receiver Emmanuel Sanders (ankle), inside linebacker Todd Davis (ankle) and right guard Ron Leary (biceps) were all listed as questionable to play Sunday against the Eagles.

Joseph on Thursday said chances are good Sanders will play after missing two games with an ankle sprain. Davis, who was limited in practice all week and sat out the team's loss at Kansas City, said he's "optimistic" of being ready Sunday.

Davis suffered a high ankle sprain in the team's loss at Los Angeles and though such injuries typically take a longer recovery, Davis seems to be ahead of schedule.

"Todd wants to be out there and he's gotten better and better each day," Joseph said.

For the Eagles, tight end Zach Ertz was added to the injury list Thursday with a hamstring injury and is questionable to play Sunday.

**Status quo.** Joseph said the Broncos' playbook doesn't change with Brock Osweiler taking over as quarterback.

"We don't have to," he said. "And again, each week it's a different gameplan. We have a playbook, but we never go into a game with the entire playbook. It's always parts of the playbook that attacks that defense that we're playing that week. So our gameplan is a normal gameplan for Brock. He's a veteran player. he's a smart player. He studies hard. So there was no need to pare it down for him."

Fined. Safety Justin Simmons was fined by the league \$24,309 for his hit on Chiefs receiver Demarcus Robinson last Monday. Simmons was flagged for unnecessary roughness on the play.

# After being hurt by Travis Kelce, can Broncos limit the damage of a top-flight tight end?

By Nick Kosmider  
Denver Post  
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Zach Ertz caught the 1-yard touchdown pass in the second quarter at Lincoln Financial Field and spotted a celebrity fan in the back of the end zone.

So Ertz strolled up to baseball megastar Mike Trout and handed the popular Eagles fan the football. Ertz, one of the league's best tight ends, has souvenirs to spare. The scoring grab that came in a 33-10 victory over the 49ers last Sunday was his sixth touchdown of the season.

The Broncos once again face an elite tight end on Sunday, and that poses a challenge for a defense that gave up seven catches, 133 yards and a touchdown to the Chiefs' Travis Kelce on Monday night. They've also yielded big production to Jason Witten of the Cowboys, Evan Engram of the Giants and Hunter Henry of the Chargers. And they lost Buffalo tight end Charles Clay in the red zone in Week 3 for a damaging third-quarter touchdown in a 26-16 loss to the Bills.

"Now we move on to Ertz, another great tight end, one of the top tight ends in the league," Broncos safety Justin Simmons said. "It's going to be another challenge to be able to identify him, make sure we're able to limit his touches. He's the top receiving target (Eagles quarterback Carson) Wentz has. It's his security blanket. When all else fails, he can rely on Ertz to go get him a first down. It's going to be another challenge for us in the back end that we not only contain him, but that we take him out of the game."

The Broncos (3-4), for the third consecutive season, have a championship-level defense. They have allowed a league-low 261 yards per game. But they've surrendered four touchdown passes and 76.1 yards per game to tight ends, which ranks 27th in the league, according to Football Outsiders.

Against the Chiefs, the Broncos shut down the NFL's leading rusher, Kareem Hunt. They harassed quarterback Alex Smith, who entered the game as the league's most accurate passer but completed only 14-of-31 attempts.

Yet, Kelce made the three biggest plays of the game for the Kansas City offense. He caught a 29-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter after beating safety Darian Stewart in one-on-one coverage. With the Broncos trailing just 20-13 in the final minute of the third quarter, Kelce caught an 11-yard pass on third down to extend a Kansas City drive, then caught a 33-yard pass on the next play that led to a Chiefs field goal.

"We had two busted coverages and then really poor technique on the touchdown," first-year Broncos' defensive coordinator Joe Woods said. "We just have to improve in those areas, but that will be the plan."

There is a pick-your-poison element to playing defense in the NFL. The Broncos are second in the league against the run, surrendering just 72.9 yards per game. Denver is giving up 46.7 yards per game to

opponents' No. 1 wide receivers, according to Football Outsiders, which is the third-best mark in the league. And running backs average 29.4 receiving yards per game against the Broncos, the eighth-fewest against of any opponent.

That's left the tight end as the only reliable weapon teams have been able to use in attacking the Broncos defense. And Ertz, who was officially listed as questionable with a hamstring Friday but is expected to play Sunday, is as reliable a weapon as there has been for Wentz.

"We have three corners that can play man-to-man against anyone in the league," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said, referring to Aqib Talib, Chris Harris and Bradley Roby. "That helps your pass rush and it helps the run game to load the box. Teams know that to find a soft spot in our pass defense, it's not through those corners, it's through our linebackers and safeties. We all have watched this for three years, even when Wade (Phillips) was here. It's no secret. We have to do a better job of helping those guys versus the special tight end and special backs out of their backfield."

Scouting the Broncos defense isn't an exercise in joy for opponents. There aren't numerous gleeful discoveries of holes to exploit. So the Broncos know some catches by tight ends will be a part of the formula.

But if the Broncos don't make adjustments against them in critical situations, like they were unable to do Monday night, Ertz and others they face will keep passing out souvenirs.

# Broncos running back Devontae Booker appears ready for larger role in Denver backfield

By Nick Kosmider  
Denver Post  
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Tim Patrick leaped off the couch at his apartment in Denver on Monday night and hollered as Devontae Booker, his former teammate at Utah, sprinted through a massive hole and into the end zone from 6 yards out in the third quarter, pulling the Broncos to within one score of the Chiefs.

As a member of the Broncos' practice squad, Patrick didn't travel with the Broncos to Kansas City. But as he watched the telecast of the game, there was no mistaking the old Booker, the one who left bruises on Pac-12 defensive players who tried to stay in front of him.

"Devontae is the best running back I've ever seen, honestly, in person," said Patrick, a wide receiver who joined the Broncos last month. "He was just waiting for his opportunity, so it was cool to see, but there are going to be many more by the end of this season."

The Broncos on Monday provided a reminder — to themselves, most important — that perhaps the only way to emerge from the funk that has enveloped their season is to consistently run the football. Denver went run heavy in the second half, routinely pushing against the Chiefs' defense with two tight ends. The result was 177 yards rushing in a 29-19 loss, only 1 yard shy of the Broncos' season high this year.

Denver's players and coaches were left to wonder just how much damage they could have done in the running game were it not for an avalanche of five turnovers.

The Broncos averaged 5.7 yards per carry, with three running backs — Booker, C.J. Anderson and Jamaal Charles — all gaining at least 39 yards. Booker, who had a season-high 40 yards and, in addition to his touchdown, set up a field goal in the third quarter with a 26-yard run that provided a glimpse of what the Broncos were missing while the second-year pro was forced to sit out all of training camp and the first three games of the season while recovering from wrist surgery.

Booker returned against the Raiders in Week 4 and had three carries for 14 yards. His workload had increased only incrementally since, but his second half against the Chiefs could be a signal that he's ready to be a bigger part of a backfield rotation that was as equally distributed among the three running backs Monday as it had been all season.

"Devontae Booker has played well," coach Vance Joseph said. "He's had limited touches, but in those touches he's had explosive plays. He's a young guy with strong, fresh legs. He has great ball skills. As we go along here, he should get more opportunities."

Injuries have been the biggest road block for Booker since his senior year at Utah, which ended after 10 games because of an injury to the meniscus in his knee that required two surgeries. That setback precipitated a fall in the draft that allowed the Broncos to select him in the fourth round. When Anderson was lost for the 2016 season after only seven games, Booker stepped into a starting role and finished as Denver's leading rusher (612 yards) and its third-leading receiver (265).

In June, Booker suffered an injury to his wrist while working out on his own. It was initially believed to be a sprain, but another X-ray when he arrived for training camp at the end of July revealed a fracture. It was a blow for a player who was preparing to compete for a starting job.

"I feel good now being back in it for some weeks now, just getting to play football again," Booker said Thursday. "While I was sitting out, I was still here, still in tune, with the playbook and in the meetings. When I came back I was able to start fast, and there have been no setbacks for me out there on the field."

Booker's surge could put a wrinkle into how the Broncos use their three running backs. After fumbling on his third carry Monday, Charles was handed the ball only five more times, finishing with eight carries for 39 yards. Anderson led with 78 yards on 15 carries. Booker, meanwhile, gained 38 yards on his four second-half carries.

Being part of a three-man rotation has been a different experience for Booker, who was the featured back throughout his college career and then again at the midway point of his rookie season with the Broncos.

"As weeks go on and game plans come, we kind of get adjusted to it," he said. "All of us have certain plays for whatever type of situation in a game. It could be red zone, goal line or whatever. We all have different packages that we go in on. We just learn to adjust to it and we just try to spark one another when we're out on the field. If we see one go out there and get a 10-yard run, one of us is going to want to do the same or do better. It's been pretty good with all three of us in the backfield."

### **Backfield in motion**

*A look at what Broncos running backs C.J. Anderson, Jamaal Charles and Devontae Booker have produced on the ground this season:*

<b>Player ...</b>	<b>Games ...</b>	<b>Carries ...</b>	<b>Yards ...</b>	<b>Y/C ...</b>	<b>TDs</b>
C.J. Anderson ...	7 ...	107 ...	469 ...	4.4 ...	1
Jamaal Charles ...	7 ...	50 ...	235 ...	4.7 ...	1
Devontae Booker ...	4 ...	12 ...	62 ...	5.2 ...	1

# Joseph details adjustment to Broncos road woes; Sanders listed as questionable

By Mike Klis

9 News

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It's not so much the notoriously hostile Philadelphia Eagles fans the Broncos have to worry about.

It's that their game Sunday will not be played at eventually-to-be-renamed Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

The Broncos are 3-1 at home this year, 0-3 on the road. Perhaps, the fourth time will be the charm at Lincoln Financial Field.

Any adjustments made to playing on the road this week, coach?

"One adjustment: Don't give the ball away," Vance Joseph said. "How about that? Let's start with that adjustment. The rest will take care of itself."

What, you thought he'd say, we're going to try cheesesteaks for the pregame meal?

To verify Joseph's hypothesis, the Broncos had two interceptions in their road loss at Buffalo; a pick and two lost fumbles in their loss at the Los Angeles Chargers; and three interceptions and two lost fumbles in their 29-19 defeat Monday night at Kansas City.

That's nine road turnovers to help explain that 0-3 road record.

## Injury report

The Broncos again will be without backup offensive tackle Donald Stephenson, who will miss his third consecutive game with a calf injury.

Three Bronco players are listed as questionable: Right guard Ron Leary (left biceps strain), receiver Emmanuel Sanders (sprained ankle) and linebacker Todd Davis (sprained ankle).

Sanders is expected to play. Leary is on the probable side of questionable, although he said Friday it would be a game-time decision.

Davis will try to play, but may be held out one more week. If he is inactive, Philly's own Zaire Anderson will get his second start and Kevin Snyder will be the backup.

# Broncos star receiver Thomas hasn't scored in nearly a year

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
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Demaryius Thomas is on pace for his usual 1,000-yard season but the Denver Broncos' star receiver is closing in on another landmark that's both unwanted and unfathomable.

It's been nearly a year since Thomas' last touchdown catch.

"I know, I know, it's been a while," said Thomas, who scored 52 times in his first 95 career NFL games before failing to reach the end zone in his last 13. "I don't know how to feel anymore. I heard a lot of people talking about it. It's been a while."

Ever since his 2-yard TD grab from Trevor Siemian at New Orleans last Nov. 13.

Teammates say Thomas has never displayed any frustration over his drought and coaches say the eighth-year pro who's the longest tenured member of the team isn't one to beg them for more chances.

"No, Demaryius doesn't get frustrated. At least he doesn't show it," receiver Emmanuel Sanders said. "He might be mad, but he'll still smile at you and walk away."

Coach Vance Joseph said the Broncos just haven't been able to make opponents pay for scheming every week to keep Thomas from hurting them.

"He is a No. 1 receiver in our offense and game plans are made to stop him from scoring touchdowns," Joseph said. "Our overall goal is to win games, whoever scores the touchdowns. He's one of our best players. So, the more he sores the more we can win. Our pass game goes through 88 (Thomas) and 10 (Sanders). However the play us, we have to take advantage of it."

Thomas' lack of outward emotion doesn't mean he's not burning on the inside.

"I'm determined to end it," said Thomas, whose next chance comes Sunday when the Broncos (3-4) visit the Philadelphia Eagles (7-1). "I've been determined to end it every week. It just doesn't work out that way. Half the time, it's about winning. But as a receiver, you do want to score touchdowns. I do want to score."

It hasn't helped Thomas that Sanders has missed the last two games with a sprained right ankle. (He's questionable for Sunday), but even against constant double-teams, the Broncos have been trying to get their 6-foot-3, 230-pound receiver the ball in the red zone.

"I think it's a matter of when the time comes to make the plays, make the throws and win versus certain coverages," offensive coordinator Mike McCoy said. "It's not that we're not trying to get him the ball."

You look at targets in the red area, he's up there. I think there are certain plays he might say that he didn't win on a release whether it was a decision we made in progression whether there was a protection breakdown.

"I think with Emmanuel and D.T., there are plenty of plays that are asterisked with those guys' names on it that we're trying to get them the ball. A lot of the passing game, with those two special players, not just Demaryius, but with Emmanuel, we're trying to get those two guys the ball often."

When the Broncos practiced this week's red zone plays on Thursday, Sanders took a break from pestering the coaching staff to target him.

"Most of the time I'm in the back like, 'Give me that play! Give me that play!' Sanders said.

Not this week.

"I was like, 'Hey, give it to D.T. give it to D.T.'" Sanders said. "He's getting to go a full year without a touchdown, so we have to change that. I'm praying that he goes on a run and has - look at that guy in Houston. He has what? Thirteen catches and seven touchdowns - Will Fuller. Hopefully, Demaryius can be that guy and I came come up next and do the same thing."

Thomas isn't the only one aching to get back into the end zone.

The Broncos' offense has been so inefficient that no wide receiver has scored a touchdown since Week 2, when Sanders caught a pair of TD passes.

This week, the Broncos benched the turnover-prone Siemian after their fourth loss in five games and promoted backup Brock Osweiler, who went 5-2 during their Super Bowl-winning season two years ago in place of an injured Peyton Manning.

Having a history with Osweiler should make for a smooth transition, Thomas said.

"Yes, it helps big time," Thomas said. "We're excited about seeing what he can do come Sunday."

# Nick Buoniconti will donate brain to support research of CTE

By Staff

Associated Press

November 4, 2017

Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker Nick Buoniconti says he'll donate his brain to Boston University to support research of chronic traumatic encephalopathy.

In May, Buoniconti revealed he was diagnosed with dementia, and his doctors suspect CTE may contribute to his symptoms, which include impaired cognition, behavior and motor control.

"My life, as I know it, has been taken away from me," Buoniconti said in a statement Friday. "I hope that my story and contribution will help thousands of others who are in this journey, or who will follow me."

Buoniconti, 76, helped the Miami Dolphins achieve the NFL's only perfect season in 1972. He also played for the Boston Patriots and was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2001.

# Woody Paige: Where have you gone, Demaryius Thomas?

By Woody Paige  
KMGH  
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Where have you gone, Demaryius Thomas? Broncos Country turns its lonely eyes to you.

If Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were writing about Demaryius Thomas, he would title the story "The Curious Case of the Missing Wide Receiver."

D.T. has become a mystery.

The Broncos' eight-year veteran is not so entitled any more.

The six highest-paid wide receivers in the NFL are Antonio Brown, DeAndre Hopkins, Julio Jones, A.J. Green, Dez Bryant and D.T.

In 2015, on the same day, Thomas and Bryant signed virtually identically contracts of five years, \$70 million and approximately \$37 mil guaranteed.

Brown, Hopkins, Green and Jones are having Pro Bowl seasons. The first three rank in the top four in NFL reception yardage, and Jones is 9th overall.

Thomas is 19th.

Bryant is 42nd.

Hopkins has seven touchdown catches, Green and Bryant four, Brown three and Jones one.

Only D.T. has no TDs.

He hasn't caught a touchdown pass for almost a year (13 straight games), dating to Nov. 13, 2016, in New Orleans. Thomas had only one other touchdown in three of the previous four games.

Brown has been on the receiving end of 57 throws, Hopkins 38, Jones 37 and Thomas 35. Bryant has 32.

D.T.'s career is spiraling south, and Dez doesn't feel so good himself.

Demaryius certainly is missing passes and Peyton Manning. The Broncos' retired quarterback made Thomas a Pro Bowler and a \$70 millionaire.

Can Thomas revive his career with Brock Osweiler at quarterback again?

Oswelier and Thomas did connect in 2015 over a seven-game span (including a half in each two games) 35 times for five touchdowns. That's certain a better hookup than Trevor Siemian and Thomas, or even Kyle Orton and Thomas.

In 2010, Thomas' rookie season, he began with a 97-yard day, but never got over the century mark.

In 2011, when the switch was made to Tim Tebow, and there wasn't much of a passing attack, Thomas finished with four touchdowns and 551 yards in the regular season.

But his most famous touchdown was the 80-yard catch-and-run from Tebow on the first play of overtime in the Pittsburgh playoff game.

Then, along came Peyton, and Demaryius' numbers soared. He's since had five consecutive 1,000-yard-plus seasons in receiving yards. The high-water mark was 2014 with 1,619 yards on 111 receptions.

He scored 11 touchdowns that season after 14 the year before.

Last season the Thomas achievements slipped to 1,083 yards on 90 receptions, with five touchdowns.

And he's in danger, after seven games, of not reaching any of those numbers in 2018, unless the team, the quarterback, the system and the results change in the final nine games. At the current pace, Thomas would end up with 0 touchdowns, 1,017 yards and 80 catches.

D.T. certainly is not Pro Bowl material, with Hopkins, Green and Brown in the same conference – and several other receivers experiencing notable seasons.

Thomas generally is Missing From Action.

With Emmanuel Sanders just recovering from injury, the Broncos need Thomas to be even more influential. But he's being double-covered, and he can't escape.

His one sensational catch was for 80 yards against the Chargers, but the play was called back because Thomas was guilty of offensive pass interference. In another game, he dropped a potential touchdown. In others, he has been limited during games because of minor injuries, and in others he has been held down because Siemian couldn't get him the ball, or ignored him.

Neither Thomas nor Bryant has been worthy of a \$14 million salary this year.

Thomas hasn't earned the right to be called Captain America or even a captain on his own team. The man who once accumulated 226 yards on receptions in one game and had 10, 100-yard games in one season has produced one 133-yard game and one double-digit catch effort (10), both in the embarrassing loss to the Giants.

With a weak trio of tight ends and backup receivers who are average, the Broncos need Thomas to go big and long if they are to have any chance against the Eagles Sunday, or to manage a winning record in 2017. So far, though, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, and Vance Joseph and Mike McCoy, can't figure out the strange disappearance of Demaryius Thomas.

# Sacco Sez: Our quarterbacks and the Eagles

By Jim Saccomano  
DenverBroncos.com  
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When Brock Osweiler lines up to take that first snap under center this week in Philadelphia, he will become the ninth Denver quarterback to start against the Eagles.

Philadelphia is among the National Football League franchises that Denver has played the fewest times, this being just the 13th game between the two teams since 1971. The Broncos are 5-7 overall against the Eagles.

Despite the paucity of games between the two teams, there are always some interesting reference points, and as is often the case in the NFL, it all starts with the quarterback.

Pro Football Hall of Famer John Elway has the most Denver starts against Philadelphia with five, and he is the only Broncos signal caller with more than one start. When there is a gap of several years between games the players are bound to change.

From first to most recent, the starters have been as follows:

Don Horn, acquired from the Green Bay Packers by trade, and another in a long line of Denver passers hampered by a poor offensive line.

Steve Ramsey, who had the distinction of quarterbacking Hall of Famer Floyd Little's last home game, a win over the Eagles in 1975. Ramsey also was involved in one of the most significant trades in Bronco history when Denver sent him to the New York Giants in 1977 for future Ring of Famer Craig Morton.

During the regime of general manager Fred Gehrke and head coach Red Miller, the team engineered a trade with the New York Jets for Matt Robinson, who had a big arm but was largely ineffective. Robinson had one start against the Eagles during his brief Denver tenure. As one can see, the search for just the right quarterback often involves trades and free agency.

Of course, the one-of-a-kind John Elway came to the Broncos via trade and started the previously mentioned five games against Philadelphia.

When Denver was priming for its 1990's run of brilliance that would include consecutive Super Bowl wins, Bubby Brister was signed as a free agent. He started several games for Denver in 1998, including one game against Philadelphia.

We played the Eagles three times in Super Bowl years, with Elway going 1-1 in 1986 and 1989 and Brister victorious in 1998.

Another free agent, Jake Plummer, had one start against the Eagles.

Kyle Orton nearly led the Broncos to a road win in 2009.

And finally, the most recent start was by the greatest free agent signing in NFL history, Peyton Manning. His contract remains the only one in NFL history that bears the signature of a Hall of Fame general manager, Elway, and of a certain future Hall of Fame player in Manning.

Manning's 52-20 win over the Eagles on Sept. 29, 2013 was a first in 50 years for the Denver Broncos.

Amazingly, that was the first game in which the Broncos scored 50 points in five decades, with the only other occurrence being a 50-34 win over the San Diego Chargers back on Oct. 6, 1963.

I always found it fascinating that a team as consistently good as the Broncos had not managed to score 50 points, not an uncommon number over the years.

By odd coincidence, after going 50 years without scoring 50, Denver then did it two weeks in a row, following up that 2013 Eagles win with a 51-48 victory at Dallas in the next game.

Then, for good measure, Manning had one more 50-point game in 2013, a 51-28 win over the Tennessee Titans in December.

So even though we have not had a lot of games with the Eagles, there are always some interesting factoids, and as had ever been the case, it usually starts with the quarterback.

This week Brock Osweiler will start at Philadelphia as the only Denver quarterback among that grouping to have come to the Broncos twice, once as a draft choice, and most recently as a free agent.

As such, a new piece of history will be written this week in Philadelphia.

# Broncos Injury Report: Emmanuel Sanders, Todd Davis, Ron Leary questionable

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
November 4, 2017

Wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders, inside linebacker Todd Davis and right guard Ron Leary are all listed as questionable for Sunday's game against the Eagles, Head Coach Vance Joseph announced after practice Friday morning.

Offensive tackle Donald Stephenson was the only Bronco ruled out for this week. He did not practice all week because of a calf injury.

Emmanuel Sanders Sanders has missed two consecutive games because of a sprained ankle suffered Oct. 15 against the Giants but said he was at "full speed" Thursday.

"He looked fine," Joseph said. "It was a high ankle sprain, so those things take time to heal. But, he is a tough guy and he wants to be out there. That's half the battle with those injuries."

Davis practiced all week after missing last Monday's game with a high ankle sprain he suffered in Los Angeles on Oct. 22.

"He's gotten better and better each day," Joseph said.

In Philadelphia, cornerback Ronald Darby and tight end Zach Ertz were both listed as questionable because of ankle and hamstring injuries, respectively. Darby will be a "game-time decision," Eagles head coach Doug Pederson told Philadelphia-area media, while Ertz will play.

# Broncos prepare for challenge of Carson Wentz

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
November 4, 2017

It took just a season and a half for Philadelphia's Carson Wentz to emerge as one of the league's most productive quarterbacks.

He leads the league in touchdown passes halfway through the season. He is one of eight quarterbacks with with at least 100 attempts who boasts a passer rating of over 100.0. Only Ben Roethlisberger has completed more passes of 40 or more yards than Wentz, who has seven such connections so far this season.

"He's a great young quarterback. He has great vision. He's making deep throws down the field," outside linebacker Shane Ray said. "And not only does he lead the league in touchdowns, but in rushes of 10 yards or more by a quarterback. That's very impressive, and for a guy that gets out of the pocket, he can throw the ball."

Among quarterbacks, only Deshaun Watson and Cam Newton have rushed for more yards this season.

"He's out there trying to play football. He's not even playing quarterback," outside linebacker Von Miller said. "He's out there playing football. It's similar to Ben Roethlisberger and Andrew Luck, but ... I'm not making any comparisons. He's totally different. He's faster than those guys. He's quicker than those guys."

And what Wentz shares with them is a willingness to use his feet to set up deep strikes.

"I've seen a couple of passes where he scrambled to the right and threw it to his left, 60 yards for a touchdown pass," safety Will Parks said. "It's going to be a pretty good challenge for us, but a challenge we'll be ready for."

Of course, there is also the challenge that awaits Wentz: Denver's pressure defense, the same one that has toppled other quarterbacks such as Aaron Rodgers, Cam Newton, Tom Brady and Dak Prescott in the last two-plus seasons.

In 42 games over the last three seasons, the Broncos have held opposing starting quarterbacks to an average of 1.33 fewer yards per attempt and 1.52 fewer yards per pass play than their 2015-17 averages against all other teams.

Those quarterbacks complete passes at a rate 7.38 percentage points lower than they do against other teams and post a passer rating an average of 18.5 points lower than they do against other foes.

Thirty-two of those 42 quarterbacks have posted a rating lower than they notched against other teams the last three seasons, including Kansas City's Alex Smith last week, whose 77.6 rating on Monday night was 21.6 points lower than his 99.2 rating since 2015 against everyone else.

These are the numbers that reveal the task that Wentz will face Sunday.

"If we can put Carson in the position of a third-and-five-plus, that's when the Broncos play their best defense -- when we get guys in those positions. And I think we have the formula to do that," Ray said.

Of course, some of that relies on other phases, which has led to recent problems, particularly in turnover margin. But if the Broncos can solve those, they can play the game -- and Wentz -- on their terms.

"We've just got to control the turnover margin early, make sure we do what we need to do offensively," Ray said, "and on defense, we're going to handle it."

# Broncos Business Huddle connects local business leaders

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
November 4, 2017

Imagine you're sharing an elevator with three prominent business leaders. Your business is small but promising, and maybe, if they're interested, they could help you take it to new heights.

How can you pique their interest before they reach their floor?

That was the challenge Thursday at Sports Authority Field at Mile High during the inaugural Winning at Business Broncos Business Huddle.

But the reward was more than just a ticket package to a future game. The true value in the experience was that whether the challengers won or lost, everyone got experience pitching to three experienced leaders: Mac Freeman, Chief Commercial Officer of the Denver Broncos; Pete Casillas, president and publisher of the Denver Business Journal; and Charles Kemp, account manager for Google.

Each competitor, brought into the elevator one at a time, was given 30 seconds to make their pitch.

Laura Thornton, a community relations specialist at a local plumbing company, prepared for the opportunity by giving her pitch to whomever she could at her home.

"[I practiced by] talking to myself a lot, talking to my husband and my children and kind of practicing with them on what an elevator pitch is and how that worked," Thornton said. "And really I just told our story. That's what it was about."

Michael Thompson, an employee at iQmetrix, was the first in line and found out how difficult the time limit was.

"It really goes quick," Thompson said. "You have to explain who you are, what company you work for and what do you do in a very limited time. So it's very hard to do. Again, by doing that, [by] perfect[ing] an elevator pitch, you [can] get that next conversation with whoever you're doing business with."

The business conference was much more than just the elevator pitch contest, though. It also featured booths from the event's sponsors — CenturyLink, Ceridian, Madwire and the Denver Business Journal — offering networking opportunities with other business leaders outside of the Broncos organization. There was also a photo set to provide professional headshots for visitors, and Ring of Fame safety Steve Atwater was available for a meet-and-greet and photos.

Fellow Ring of Famer Rod Smith provided the keynote speech, and his former teammate Ed McCaffrey hosted.

"For business people in different avenues, you can have a home-based business and come here and get some nuggets on how you can expand your business, grow your business, be able to scale your business

and even be able to cut back," Smith said. "To me, it's always great to get around successful, like-minded people because you're always going to learn something. And even though I'm a speaker, I'm here to learn. That's what I take from all these types of events."

Smith's speech revolved around customer service and focused on three goals: how to increase number of customers, how to increase the amount of sales per customer and how to retain customers, both in the digital sales realm and in physical stores.

"I think if it will be very valuable for at least one person, then I think I did my job," Smith said.

After Smith's speech, attendees split up for breakout sessions with executive staff members, directors and analysts from the Broncos.

"This was an opportunity for us to share the talent that we have on our staff," Freeman said. "That's one of the things we're most proud about is the quality of the individuals and the skill sets and the varied skill sets and experiences of all our staff. And I think what we've put together today really gives us a case to give people access to finance, to HR, to marketing, to sponsorship, to business pitches. We're able to share the quality people we have and hopefully provide some guidance, some mentorship, some advice for these people trying to grow their businesses."

# Through My Eyes: Chris Harris Jr. looking for one win that can spark a run

By Chris Harris Jr.  
DenverBroncos.com  
November 4, 2017

You can't let a loss linger too long.

After the game, of course you're going to be frustrated, but every week it's a new challenge and you've got to refocus and try to get a win — each and every week.

We've got to just keep pushing. You've got to get over some hurdles to be able to win games in this league. Every game is a learning experience, but we have to try to limit the mistakes and don't beat ourselves.

Coach Joseph has shared the truth with us every week, and a lot of times we've beaten ourselves. He brings the stats to us, he lets us know what we need to do. It's not an effort thing at all. Guys are playing extremely hard and that's a positive thing right there.

On defense, I'd say we're being very dominant in spurts. I think on third down, different situations, we've been great, and we can still pick up more sacks, more turnovers. We've had higher numbers in that in the past, but I think we're still playing at a high level and we're still a great defense.

This week, we can't give up explosive plays. I think everybody has to be on the same page in every coverage. You've got to know who their explosive guys are: Torrey Smith, Nelson Agholar, Zach Ertz. Those guys have probably had a lot of those explosive plays, so we've really got to stop those guys.

And even though Carson Wentz has been playing great, young quarterbacks take a lot more chances. He's a guy that doesn't even slide. He tries to run over everybody, and he forces the ball in there a couple times, but he feels like he can make every throw. When you have a young guy, they'll try it until they make mistakes. So with a guy like Carson, you've got to try to make him pay when he does.

In 2011, when we didn't get off to a great start, we just needed a spark. We just needed something to get everybody going, and it took one win. All it takes is that one win and we can get it back rolling.

Once you win that first game, it changes the whole mindset of a team.

And we still have a lot of games left. KC still has to come in, we've still got to go to Oakland. So we can still catch up in some of those division games.

But we've just got to win that first game.

# Cheerleader Spotlight: DBC Sarah Rose

By Staff

DenverBroncos.com

November 4, 2017

About:

**Hometown:** Columbus, Ohio

**College:** The Ohio State University ... GO BUCKEYES!

**Occupation:** Zumba fitness instructor

**Nickname:** Princess (Sarah means "Princess" in Hebrew)

**Zodiac sign:** Gemini

Favorites:

**Movie/TV Show:** "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air"

**Song to dance to:** "Despacito" by Luis Fonsi, Justin Beiber and Daddy Yankee

**Junk food:** French Fries!

**Dream car:** Mercedes-Benz

**Color:** Red

**Superhero:** Storm

**Holiday:** My birthday

**Animal:** Dog!

**Quote:** "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then is not an act but a habit."

Get to know Sarah Rose:

**What does being a DBC mean to you?** Being a DBC means being part of an everlasting legacy. Representing the best team in the NFL and cheering along side the best fans in the NFL is a dream come true for me. I hope to make the amazingly talented, football-savvy, beautiful women who wore the chaps before me proud!

**Who is your hero?** My mom is my hero ... for always working hard, standing up for what's right, and never settling for less than what she deserves. Love you, mommy!

**Tell us about the first concert you went to.** My first concert was Christina Aguilera. I went with my mom when I was about 8. I don't think she'd done much research prior to the concert, because I don't think it was quite 8-year-old appropriate ... but regardless I'm still a huge fan to this day!

**If there were a movie made about your life, which celebrity would you want to play you?** I'd want Gabrielle Union to play me.

**Who would play your parents?** Probably Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith.

**What is your dream vacation destination?** Bora Bora

**Any hidden talents or tricks you can do?** I can play four instruments!

**When did you first start dancing/cheerleading?** I started dancing when I was 5 years old.

**In 10 years I see myself...** Still kicking high in my chaps as a Denver Broncos Cheerleader! ... Or at least pretending from my living room while watching the Broncos play on my TV.

**As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?** A dancer.

**What advice would you give your younger self?** Never give up on your dreams, everything happens for a reason, and stay true to who you are.

**When did you get involved in organized cheer and dance?** I started dancing professionally after I graduated college at 21 years old.

**When did you realize you wanted to do it professionally?** I knew I wanted to be a professional dancer ever since I was a little girl.

**What is it about the Broncos that made you want to tryout for this team?** I did my research on all professional sports dance teams in the US, looked up videos, asked around and realized that Broncos was the best team to dance for. The cheerleaders and even just the brand itself is so iconic and well known. So I auditioned for the best and hoped for the best!

**Tell me about the audition process.** I was a walking ball of stress during audition week! It was definitely the most difficult audition process I've ever had to do. Lots of information and choreography to retain, lots of competition because all of the finalists were beautiful girls and beautiful dancers. But I just had to

go in every day with tunnel vision, focus on picking up the choreography and bringing my personality out when I danced!

**Tell me about your calendar shoot experience in Mexico.** The calendar shoot was amazing! Such a fun time with all of the girls supporting everyone else during their shoots. The veterans offered me lots of tips and advice, and our photography and cosmetology team was amazing and made us all look great. The whole experience was tons of fun and positive energy and an unforgettable experience.

**What did it feel like when you found out you made the team?** I didn't believe it at first. I was holding one of my best friend's hands, and when they called my number she squeezed my hand, and that's how I knew I'd heard correctly. It all happened so quickly and it was a lot to process, but the next morning I woke up elated!

**What has been your favorite part of being a DBC so far?** Getting to know my teammates. We're all so different and have such different personalities but we all get along so well; it's truly like gaining 25 other sisters.

**What do you do outside of being a DBC?** I teach Zumba Fitness, I'm an actress in "The Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Show" in downtown Denver, I practice Taekwondo, make jewelry, love to paint and have lots of family in the area that I love spending time with.

**Did you play any sports (other than dance) growing up?** I actually played basketball in high school instead of cheerleading. I was always much better at dancing though.

**Do you have any hidden talents?** I love playing the piano. I also paint often.

**Tell me something that people don't know about you.** I am an aspiring astronomer! I'd love to work for NASA at some point in the future!

# Jerry Jones, Robert Kraft, Bob McNair to be deposed in Kaepernick collusion grievance

By Mike Jones

USA Today

November 4, 2017

Proceeding with their collusion grievance against NFL owners under the collective bargaining agreement, quarterback Colin Kaepernick's legal team has demanded the deposition of a group of owners that includes the Dallas Cowboys' Jerry Jones, the New England Patriots' Robert Kraft and Houston Texans' Bob McNair, a person with knowledge of the situation confirmed.

The person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the ongoing dispute, said Kaepernick's team is also looking to depose Seattle's Paul Allen and San Francisco. And Baltimore Steve Bisciotti is among a group of other owners that Kaepernick has requested discovery items from in advance of deposition. Officials from other teams also have been targeted for questioning.

The owners will be asked to turn over e-mails and cell phone records. The investigation, which is moving at an expedited pace under provision of the CBA, requires an arbitration hearing.

Kaepernick, who last season began kneeling during the National Anthem as a protest against police brutality and racial and social injustice, has remained unsigned since opting out of his contract with the 49ers during the spring. San Francisco general manager John Lynch, who was hired this offseason, had said that even had Kaepernick not opted out, the 49ers would have released the quarterback.

Kaepernick, who led the 49ers to a Super Bowl appearance at the end of the 2011-12 season, generated some brief interest from the Baltimore Ravens during the preseason, but after receiving a backlash from the public, the team opted against signing him.

This season, the NFL has seen a higher number of starting quarterbacks suffer season-ending injuries. That group includes Green Bay's Aaron Rodgers, Arizona's Carson Palmer, Miami's Ryan Tannehill and Minnesota's Sam Bradford. However, Kaepernick didn't generate any interest from those teams. Teams like the Tennessee Titans and Oakland Raiders saw their quarterbacks suffer short-term injuries, and they signed less accomplished quarterbacks than Kaepernick, which only added to the suspicion that the quarterback is being blackballed because of his political stances.

Kaepernick filed the collusion grievance against the NFL's owners on Oct. 15. He chose to file his grievance without the help of the NFL Players Association, but instead hired attorney Mark Geragos to represent him.

In a statement issued on Oct. 15, Geragos said, "If the NFL (as well as all professional sports leagues) is to remain a meritocracy, then principled and peaceful political protest – which the owners themselves made great theater imitating weeks ago – should not be punished and athletes should not be denied employment based on partisan political provocation by the Executive Branch of our government. Such precedent threatens all patriotic Americans and harkens back to our darkest days as a nation. Protecting all athletes from such collusive conduct is what compelled Mr. Kaepernick to file his grievance.

“Colin Kaepernick’s goal has always been, and remains, to simply be treated fairly by the league he performed at the highest level for and to return to the football playing field.”

This past week’s quarterback-related drama only further strengthened Kaepernick’s argument.

The Indianapolis Colts placed quarterback Andrew Luck on injured reserve, and the Houston Texans had to place Deshaun Watson on IR as well. Meanwhile, the Cleveland Browns sought quarterback help but botched a trade.

However, Kaepernick’s phone remained silent.

# Four down territory: Broncos' keys to beating the Eagles

By Luke Snyder

Yahoo.com

November 4, 2017

On Sunday afternoon in the city of brotherly love, two teams on the opposite side of the NFL spectrum will face off. After winning five straight, the Philadelphia Eagles are quickly surging to Super Bowl favorites thanks to the development of Carson Wentz. A city that has been aching for a franchise quarterback capable of winning a Super Bowl has found their guy.

Meanwhile, the Denver Broncos have lost three straight and in an embarrassing fashion. A franchise with a history of Super Bowl quarterbacks hasn't been able to find a quarterback capable of mustering more than 12 points per game in the last month. Instead, the Broncos will now turn to whom they once believed would be their next franchise quarterback in an attempt to light a fire in a lifeless offense. Will the change to Brock Osweiler be the spark this team needs to get them back in the hunt? Here are this week's keys to beating the Eagles.

## 1st Down: Ball security is job security

The expectation for Brock Osweiler has been made crystal clear from his head coach; take care of the football. That's something that Denver's offense has been completely inept at doing of late. During the Broncos' losing streak, they have turned the football over 11 times. It doesn't matter how great the Denver defense is when you turn the football over at that rate. There will be instances when Osweiler will need to make a few key throws, but if Denver can just take care of the football, the defense will give them a chance in the fourth quarter.

Good news for Osweiler and the offense will be the return of wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders. Demaryius Thomas also looks to break out of his touchdown slump of 13 games without finding the end zone. When Osweiler was the starter in 2015, Thomas had five touchdowns in those seven games.

## 2nd down: Get to Wentz

Carson Wentz has been MVP caliber special. The second year quarterback is first in total passing touchdowns (19) and third in yards (2063). However, Wentz is tied for sixth in sacks taken (22). Add in the fact that the Eagles will be without their nine-time Pro Bowl left tackle Jason Peters, and the door is open for Von Miller and company to cause havoc for Wentz.

## 3rd Down: Denver's defense returns the turnover favor

While the Broncos' offense has been a turnover machine, the Denver defense ranks 28th in total takeaways. However, they still remain dominant against the run while boasting the number one ranked rushing defense. The Eagles traded for Dolphins running back Jay Ajayi but don't expect him to be a huge factor with only a few practices with his new team. The other Eagles' running backs are among the least talented that the Broncos have faced this season in Legarrette Blount and Wendell Smallwood.

Denver's secondary also has the advantage over the Philadelphia wide receivers. If the Broncos continue to shut down the run game and the offense can keep the game close, Wentz is going to have to test the No Fly Zone. It's time for them to cause their own turnovers.

#### **4th Down: Slow down Zach Ertz**

While the Broncos' corners can take just about any receiver out of the game, the Achilles heel of the Broncos' defense remains covering tight ends. The Broncos have given up 233 yards and two touchdowns in the last three games alone.

Wentz is going to look to his favorite target in tight end Zach Ertz often and with good reason. The Eagles' tight end Zach Ertz has emerged among the leagues best at the position. Ertz is currently tied for second in the league with six touchdown catches. The Denver defense won't be able to take him out of the game completely, but they must put together a better performance than weeks past.

#### **Final Say:**

For the Broncos to take back their season, they'll need to play a complete game in all three phases; something they haven't done since week two. The change at quarterback was needed, but just because the Broncos changed quarterbacks doesn't mean all their problems on offense are solved. The offense will have to prove they can take care of the football and give their defense a chance before anyone can pick an upset. Prediction: **20-16 Eagles.**

# Three NFL teams passed Brock Osweiler around; did any of them come out winners?

By David Steele  
SportingNews.com  
November 4, 2017

How a quarterback the caliber of Brock Osweiler tangled up the operations of three NFL franchises — one of them twice — is anyone's guess, but here we are.

Five years after being drafted by the Broncos in the second round to sit behind Peyton Manning, Osweiler is starting for Denver again Sunday in Philadelphia. In between, he has been on the Texans and Browns, with the Broncos being his third home in eight months. His performances have been consistently awful, yet if the Broncos get back on track with him this season, he could be in the playoffs for the third straight year.

Between all the signings, trades, releases and re-signings, who won their Osweiler-related transactions, who lost and who broke even? As Osweiler begins Act 2 of his Broncos career, here's the scoreboard, in reverse chronological order.

## **Broncos, Part 2 (September 2017-present)**

Denver signed Osweiler as a free agent in September 2017. So far, without having played yet, his popularity is at an all-time high because compared to ineffective starter Trevor Siemian and injured Paxton Lynch, he looks good. Plus, the Broncos are only paying him the league minimum of \$775,000.

**Win, Loss or Tie:** Tie. Financially it's a win, but John Elway, who has barely made a wrong move at any other position, has made a mess of the most important one since Manning's retirement after the 2015 Super Bowl run.

## **Browns (March 2017-September 2017)**

Cleveland acquired Osweiler along with a 2017 fourth-round pick from the Texans in March for a 2017 sixth-rounder and a 2018 second-rounder. The Browns released him in September. This was the Browns' vaunted "Moneyball" move: They used their bountiful cap space to absorb his \$16 million salary and get a prized future pick from the Texans to take him off their hands. The move looked brilliant until he actually started playing — to put it kindly, the Browns fell in love with rookie DeShone Kizer after two preseason games of Osweiler.

**Win, Lose or Tie:** Loss. They're still paying \$15.225 million of Osweiler's salary. They have that extra pick, but they have yet to prove they can make the most of the stockpiling they've done. Who knows if the current management will still be there by the next draft?

## **Texans (March 2016-March 2017)**

Houston signed Osweiler to a contract worth \$37 million guaranteed in March 2016. It traded him with a second-rounder to the Browns in March 2017. The Texans all but swept the postseason "worst free-

agent signings” selections. With the Texans, he stayed in the bottom of the league passer ratings (only Ryan Fitzpatrick finished lower than his 72.2) and near the top of the interception rankings (fourth-most, with 16). He was benched late in the '16 season, only to regain the job when Tom Savage got injured, and ended up starting two playoff games. It was a wasted year all around, except for his financial advisers.

**Win, Loss or Tie:** Tie. The Texans won a bidding war they shouldn't have gotten into, and they proved that quarterback-needy teams make irrational decisions. They found a way to cut their losses, albeit at a high price. They cleared a path for themselves to draft a legitimate franchise quarterback in Deshaun Watson, but with Watson now out with a torn ACL, the bad Osweiler karma might be more powerful than anticipated.

### **Broncos, Part 1 (April 2012-March 2016)**

Denver drafted Osweiler in the second round, 57th overall, in 2012. It lost him to the Texans in free agency in March 2016. He started those seven games in the fourth and final year of his rookie contract in 2015, and went 5-2, but the Broncos couldn't wait to get Manning back for the playoff push. Elway was heated when Osweiler signed elsewhere, and Osweiler was salty right back.

**Win, Loss or Tie:** Loss. Elway still has to carry the stain of once trying to throw a ton of money at him. Even though the Broncos lucked out and didn't have to pay him, their Plan B hasn't worked out yet. If it had, Osweiler wouldn't be starting again now. The deal-breaker: Russell Wilson went 18 picks after Osweiler.

**The final tally:** Two losses, two break-evens. No wins.

# **Broncos benched Trevor Siemian, but offensive issues “not just one position”**

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
November 4, 2017

After Trevor Siemian threw three interceptions in a Monday night loss to the Chiefs, the Broncos did what had started to feel like an inevitable move and made a change at quarterback.

Brock Osweiler is in for this weekend’s game against the Eagles, but the message from the team isn’t that the switch will fix everything that’s been ailing the offense in Denver.

“Absolutely, football isn’t an individual sport, it’s a team sport,” tight end Virgil Green said, via the Associated Press. “Yeah, we’re bringing Brock up to do things, but we all know that Trevor is totally capable. We just need a little more from everybody. Not just one position, every position.”

Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy threw the coaching staff into the mix as well and said “we’re all in this together” when it comes to getting the Broncos on better offensive footing. After outgaining their opponents in each game of their three-game losing streak and losing the turnover battle 11-2, it seems pretty obvious where the Broncos need to start cleaning things up offensively.

# Justin Simmons fined \$24,309

By Charean Williams  
Pro Football Talk  
November 4, 2017

The NFL fined Broncos safety Justin Simmons \$24,309 for unnecessary roughness.

Simmons hit Chiefs wide receiver Demarcus Robinson in the league and neck area, even though he tried to lead with his shoulder. Officials penalized him 15 yards, giving the Chiefs an automatic first down on a third-down incomplection.

The Chiefs scored their first offensive touchdown of the game three plays later, taking a 14-0 lead with 6:11 remaining in the first quarter.

Simmons finished with five tackles.