

Lunch Special: Do you think Vance Joseph has lost the Broncos locker room?

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
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Columnist Mark Kiszla on Monday chatted live with readers about the Broncos' loss at Philadelphia, and the Matt Duchene trade. Here are the highlights:

Do you think Vance Joseph has lost the locker room? Is there any way for a coach to win the locker room back once he's lost it?

Kiz: Broncos players are fond of Vance Joseph. There's no questioning the team likes him. But here's the deal. After getting embarrassed in the first half at Philadelphia, the Denver defense came out in the third quarter and let the Eagles march promptly down the field for another touchdown, while most on the defensive unit put up minimum resistance. It was a pathetic display of arm-tackling at its worst. And it was a sign that the Broncos had certainly lost interest, if not flat-out quit on Joseph. This was the turning point for me.

Can Joseph win the locker room back? First, he has to get the locker room's attention. I know this is old-fashioned, but a good place to start would be to cut a player that was guilty of poor effort. And make that cut today. If that doesn't get his players attention, then the Broncos have stopped listening to Joseph.

How can you say it's time to fire Vance Joseph when his QBs are garbage and the o-line couldn't block someone on Twitter?

Kiz: Hang with me here for a second. I think John Elway has 51 reasons to fire Vance Joseph now, but ... as I wrote in my column for Philadelphia, one very good reason why Elway will keep Joseph is extremely practical. I don't think there's an assistant on the current Broncos staff that is a suitable replacement for Joseph, and Jon Gruden ain't coming out of the TV booth to coach the Broncos at midseason. I do not make this criticism of Joseph lightly. I was delighted the Broncos gave him this opportunity. But we have seen it in the past. Coaching the Broncos is a tough gig, because our community spirit is inseparable from the team's success or failure. Either a man has what it takes to be the head coach in Denver, or he doesn't. Wade Phillips and Josh McDaniels are both superb NFL coordinators. But it was apparent from the jump they weren't going to make it as the man in charge of the Broncos sideline. I see Joseph headed for a similar fate. If I'm wrong, I will be happy to admit it.

Which QB do you want to see vs. the Pats on Sunday.... and does it even matter at this point?

Kiz: I'm not certain it matters which QB plays against the Patriots. Vance Joseph, however, must convey to his players that they still have a chance to make the playoffs. As such, he will roll out the QB that gives the team "its best chance to win." Whether Joseph decides that is Brock Osweiler or Trevor Siemian, I'm not certain. But I'm fairly certain players would not buy Paxton Lynch right now as the QB most qualified to beat Tom Brady and Bill Belichick. Lose to the Pats, however, and everybody at Dove Valley will have to admit a 3-6 Denver team is playing for 2018. Once the illusion (or should I say

delusion?) of a possible playoff berth is gone, then Denver has to let Lynch start and learn on the job for the remainder of the season, so John Elway has a better idea if his former first-round draft choice could be the answer for the team going into next season.

Coach Joseph had minimal qualifications when he was hired. He is a nice guy and may be a great coach someday but is that what Broncos country wants or will wait for? Sorry if this sounds insensitive but I feel he was hired because it was a politically correct choice rather than based on experience. Yes, the quarterbacks and O-line stink but an experienced coach knows how to handle that. Like any management position the employees need to respect and perform for him, if they like him that is great but not required. A new coach next year, what about Jimmy Garoppolo from the 49ers? Probably not a draft pick that will win immediately, something needs to be done before the defense decides to leave.

Kiz: It's my take that John Elway hired Vance Joseph because the coach made a good impression during the interview process when Gary Kubiak was hired. At the risk of mixing sports and politics, it's my belief Elway is laser focused on winning football games, rather than being preoccupied with the idea he can be an agent of social change. So it seems unfair to dismiss Joseph as a politically correct hire. But the hire seems to be a mistake, which Elway will admit if (and when) he reaches the conclusion Joseph isn't the answer. Here's the tougher part. Elway has told Broncos Country his goal is to "win now and win from now on." That creates high expectations every year in these parts. What this franchise might require is a total rebuild, which would make a playoff berth in 2018 — and maybe even 2019 — too much to reasonably expect.

I'm curious what was the mood like in the Broncos locker room after the game and how did that compare to the other games they lost in recent weeks, and other teams you've been around that have quit on their coach?

Kiz: The locker room emptied quickly. That's no surprise after a blowout loss. While Derek Wolfe was passionately angry, the vibe in the room was closer to quiet resignation. As Von Miller admitted, the Broncos know they are not a very good football team. Can that change? It's possible, but less than a 50-50 proposition at this point. Worth noting: Aqib Talib is a team captain. He did not want to talk after the loss. Make of that what you will.

Jumping ahead, is Elway going to go for a college or veteran QB next offseason? Any favorites in either college or veteran ranks?

Kiz: OK, let's start with what has been decided in the QB process for the Broncos. Trevor Siemian is a quality back-up, but it's hard to imagine how anyone at Dove Valley regards him as the starter of the future. Brock Osweiler is a place-holder. At some point this season, the team seems destined to give Paxton Lynch a full trial. If Lynch flops, then everything is on the table, from chasing the best available veteran in what promises to be a very active offseason for QB-shopping throughout the NFL, to analyzing if there's a future franchise QB coming out of college that Denver can select in the first round of the draft.

Is it fair to say the O-line is no better than last year's, despite the FA signings and spending a #1 draft choice on it? Seems to me that the problems begin there: No running game, no pass protection.

Kiz: On a day when it's easy to bash everything and anything Broncos related, let's start by saying John Elway's acquisition of guard Ron Leary as a free agent was an excellent move. But other than that ... I'd say the other four positions on the offensive line are iffy, at best. And that includes first-round pick Garrett Bolles. My hunch is the brute strength of Bolles might ultimately be better suited to right tackle. We shall see. If this is a major rebuild for the Broncos, then O-line could well become a much higher priority in the early rounds of the 2018 draft.

So do you think any big moves will be made soon? Seems like we need it!

Kiz: At the risk of giving you a paint-by-numbers response, somebody in the locker room needs to be cut. That's old-school sacrificial lamb stuff. Not analytics driven. But Vance Joseph and John Elway need to make a move that shouts to the locker room that these pathetic results and pathetic effort will no longer be tolerated.

Do you have a candidate for that cut you recommend?

Kiz: Yes, I do. Gonna keep it to myself for the moment. But will say this: Cutting the punter isn't a big enough move to send a message.

Is it time to look at John Elway's leadership? He has gone through three head coaches during his tenure. You need stability. His draft choices have not panned out. Would Peyton Manning be a good GM?

Kiz: Well, John Elway just agreed to a major contract extension. So unless you know something I don't, it's unlikely Elway is going anywhere unless it's his decision to walk away from the Broncos. Peyton Manning the QB made John Elway the GM look very good, which might explain why there was obvious tension between Manning and Elway when the GM cut the old QB's salary prior to the 2015 season. Elway does view coaches as disposable items. When I declared his 2017 draft made no sense, many fans and analysts alike said I was being too grumpy. I wouldn't count on Manning being GM of the Broncos anytime soon ... or ever. Elway, however, will be under increased scrutiny by a fan base that has previously believed he could do no wrong.

So. When is Elway going to admit he made a mistake in hiring V.J.? Broncos need to start over.

Kiz: In my role of Mr. Sunshine, let me dish a little optimism. After the Patriots visit Denver, the schedule for the final seven games of the season looks soft. Maybe, just maybe, the Broncos can get on a little roll. But at 8-8 or worse, I suspect John Elway will take a long, hard look at Vance Joseph's job performance at season's end.

I noticed our No. 2 pick DeMarcus Walker was inactive yesterday. You'd think halfway into a season, a guy picked that high would at least suit-up. Are we looking at a bust here?

Kiz: Never understood the DeMarcus Walker pick. He was a heckuva college player, and I love my college football. But he's a tweener. Not big enough for D-line at NFL level. Not quick enough for pass-rush OLB in Denver's 3-4 scheme. I'm not down on Walker. I'm down on the Denver front office that reached to pick him.

Are Broncos fans now willing to acknowledge that the bloom is off the rose where John Elway is concerned? Oh-fer picking quarterbacks, not so hot picking coaches, defensive prowess greatly exaggerated.

Kiz: Yes, from the tone of this chat, I'd say the bloom is coming off the John Elway rose, at least among the most loudly disgruntled residents of Broncos Country.

The No Fly Zone is giving up big plays with increasing frequency. Is the release of T.J. Ward the reason for the communication breakdowns in the secondary? Will Justin Simmons be able to fill Ward's shoes next year after more experience?

Kiz: When the Broncos cut T.J. Ward, I declared the No-Fly Zone was dead. Many folks, including the proud members of the No-Fly Zone, responded at the time it was crazy talk to suggest the secondary's demise. Ward was past his prime. But his release broke up the strong bond of brotherhood in the No-Fly Zone. Justin Simmons will be a very good NFL player. But the next member of the No-Fly Zone to go will be Aqib Talib, whose age and contract make him very vulnerable to a move early in 2018. And then everybody will agree the No-Fly Zone is no more.

Fire VJ, promote Mike McCoy to interim head coach and Bill Musgrave to offensive coordinator. If they believe Lynch is the future, sign Colin Kaepernick and design a simplified but souped-up college offense that he and Lynch can both operate. Tough decision will be who to cut loose, Brock or Trevor. If that fails to shake up the team, then maybe Elway is next to go.

Kiz: Your favorite knucklehead columnist (me) advocated long and hard that John Elway revisit the idea of acquiring Colin Kaepernick. I thought it made football sense, and chuckled when some fans were certain I had a hidden political agenda. As is often the case, Elway didn't listen to me. So I wouldn't get your hopes up for Kap. And ... as loyal readers know, my opinion on Mike McCoy as a head coach or an offensive coordinator is not very high. So he could handle the job on an interim basis, but I'd just as soon give Joseph a chance to prove me wrong as hand over the team to McCoy.

If Broncos draft top 10, do they like Josh Allen from Wyoming or go with Chad Kelly if he plays this year?

Kiz: Josh Allen is not ready to be an NFL starting quarterback.

Considering everyone knew the Avs wanted to trade Duchene, it seems like they got a decent haul for him. What do you think of the trade?

Kiz: The long Matt Duchene melodrama is over. It had to end with him leaving town. It should have ended far sooner. If the prospects and draft picks that Joe Sakic got in return pay off down the road, bravo. But Sakic fiddled for far too long before pulling the trigger on a move that should have been made 9 or 10 months ago.

Vance Joseph is sticking with Brock Osweiler. But he's mulling other changes, including play-calling.

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Vance Joseph will return to the drawing board and explore an array of possible changes to try to fix the Broncos' collective disarray. The coaching hasn't been good enough, the head coach admitted Monday. The execution hasn't been up to their standards either.

The Broncos are, in their words, "not a very good team right now."

And after four consecutive losses, they've yet to figure out why — why the work during the week hasn't translated to wins, why a coaching staff packed with play-callers isn't creating the plays that work, why a once-efficient team has seemingly come unglued.

"I've said this after every loss that we got to coach better," Joseph said Monday. "When you lose football games in this league, you have to coach better, you have to play better. It's a league that's really built and operated to have equal parts. So the difference sometimes is the coaching, the difference is the scheme and play-calling. So when you don't win, absolutely you have to coach better, and that starts with me. I understand that, because in this league coaching is very, very important, and the better-coached teams win. I'll leave it at that."

But one change Joseph will not consider this week is at quarterback.

Brock Osweiler will remain the team's starter against New England on Sunday in a potential make-or-break week. Osweiler took over for Trevor Siemian in Philadelphia and completed 19-of-38 passes for 208 yards, a touchdown and a pair of interceptions. But he nearly had three more passes intercepted and took three sacks.

"I thought Brock had an excellent week of preparation. It felt good to our team, it was a confident week, the energy was better, it was urgent, it was detailed ... so Brock's experience and Brock's personality really helped our team bounce back and gave us confidence going into this week," Joseph said. "So I think Brock's earned it from that standpoint. In the football game, it wasn't perfect. He had two interceptions, which we can't have. He understands that. He had a couple ill-advised throws.

"Brock did some good things as far as putting us in good plays. The red zone audible to (Demaryius Thomas) for the touchdown, that was one of Brock's audibles. I think Brock deserves one more week to kind of prove he's the guy for us because he had a great week of preparation."

Joseph said he's not looking beyond Sunday in terms of his quarterback, but the reality is if Osweiler plays well or at least average, he could likely retain his job. Because the problems with the Broncos go well beyond the quarterback or even one position.

Following the 51-23 loss to the Eagles, many players echoed Joseph's comment Sunday evening when he said they need to self-evaluate their play as well as their persistence. Joseph insinuated at the time that players quit late as a frustration mounted.

"It was tough to see during the game because you can't watch every player on each play. But after watching the tape, I don't question the effort. I really don't," Joseph said Monday. "I question guys pressing, I question guys trying to make plays, I question guys freelancing trying to make plays. That I do question. But the effort was there."

The Broncos' problems reached all three phases Sunday and nearly every detail of the game. Their defense that has been the more consistent and effective unit for two-plus years allowed 419 yards and 51 points. The offense was 3-of-13 on third downs, committed two turnovers and totaled a season-low 35 rushing yards. Special teams left plenty of room for improvement. Play calls were questioned and, to further dig themselves into a hole, the Broncos amassed 14 penalties for a loss of 105 yards.

Some of those penalties were a result of undisciplined play, Joseph said, such as jumping off-side. Others were close calls and the costs of "playing football," he said.

But all issues lead back to the same question the Broncos have been trying to answer for a month now: What is wrong and why hasn't it been fixed?

We've lost all five the same way. Again, it starts with me," Joseph said. "I say that because I'm not just 'coach-talking' to you guys. I say that because we have to figure out our brand of football to maximize our chances of winning. That comes from me. I have to figure out what's our best formula to win as a team."

After the Broncos' first shutout loss in nearly 25 years, against the Chargers in Week 7, Joseph said he would reconfigure practices, to move red-zone work up during the week, and to find new ways to teach players. Their previous methods weren't working, he said then.

Monday, Joseph said he'll consider all options to tweak the coaching, even the play-calling.

"You have to change something," he said. "... Whether it's personnel, how we game-plan, how we call plays, how we play as a football team together — offensively and defensively and teams together — that's also a thought. But I got to figure it out. That's obviously being explored.

"I have to coach better and get our coaches to coach better. Because things in the football game that are happening, it's not by accident. So we have to figure out a way to coach our players better and to have better gameplans and to manage the games better."

Why Broncos say QB Paxton Lynch isn't "mentally" or physically ready

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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When Broncos coach Vance Joseph turned to Brock Osweiler as his starting quarterback, he did so out of comfort and necessity. Osweiler knew the system, he knew the players and he was signed to a one-year deal for this role — to be the team's safety net should they need to make a change.

But Osweiler was re-signed in large part because of Paxton Lynch. The Broncos' first-round pick, dubbed the "future" at quarterback, suffered a shoulder sprain in Week 3 of the preseason and has yet to suit up in the regular season. Lynch returned to practice less than two weeks ago on a limited basis and has been slowly eased back into the fold. At Week 10 with the Broncos' season on the line, Lynch simply isn't ready, Joseph has said.

"What I meant by that is physically he's been hurt," Joseph clarified Monday. "He played his last football game in Week 3 of the preseason and he threw for four days prior to our last game. That's the physical part. The mental part, I was speaking more to that he hasn't played football. He hasn't been on the football field. ... Not his lack of football IQ. I wasn't talking about that. I was more talking about time on the job. He's missed so much time, so to put him in an NFL game Week 10 wouldn't be fair to our football team or fair to Paxton. That's what I meant."

In speaking to The Denver Post on Monday, Lynch said he feels "pretty good" and has placed his trust in the Broncos' training staff.

"You have to get geared back up because you've been away for so long — not really mentally, but more physically," Lynch said. "Especially with your conditioning and stuff, that's a little different."

Joseph said Osweiler will remain the team's starter Sunday against New England, giving him one more week "to kind of prove he's the guy." But the plan beyond Sunday has yet to be determined. If Osweiler plays well and limits turnovers, it's reasonable to think the job will remain his.

But Denver could make another switch this season, and Lynch believes he'll soon be ready.

"Close. I feel like right now if I was needed to play, obviously I'm going to help the team however I can," he said. "But that's up to the training staff to decide. ... I think they've done a good job with me so far in the training room and my reps and what not. I know they wanted to ease me into it, so it's what they're doing."

Broncos rookies Jake Butt, Chad Kelly officially shelved for remainder of rookie seasons

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
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The Broncos will leave tight end Jake Butt and quarterback Chad Kelly on injured reserve, coach Vance Joseph said Monday, officially ending the season for both rookies.

The Broncos were hopeful Butt, who they selected in the fifth round out of Michigan back in April, would recover enough from an ACL tear he suffered in his final college game to be able to suit up at some point this season. Butt returned to practice three weeks ago, but he experienced some soreness in the knee following his first week back. Though Butt was back at practice last week, the Broncos decided to err on the side of caution with a player they believe will have a strong long-term impact on the offense.

The Broncos had until this week to either bring Butt and Kelly up to the active roster or leave them on the injured-reserve list for the rest of the season.

“As a competitor, it’s always in the back of your mind that you want to get out there and play,” Butt said. “But I trust these coaches and I trust these trainers, and I trust everyone throughout this organization that they’re going to do the best thing for my health and for the team. While I’m disappointed that I won’t be playing this year, I just trust them.”

Kelly and Butt won’t be allowed to practice with the team going forward this season, but they can attend meetings and be inside the team’s facility.

“With me being on IR, there’s still stuff I’ve got to handle every single day in here,” Butt said. “That doesn’t mean I’m going to be checked out of these meetings and waiting on next year. I’m still going to be locked in and learn as much as I can this year.”

Kelly practiced for the first time last week but was always a longshot to get called up to the active roster, especially with three other quarterbacks already on it. The former Ole Miss quarterback has been recovering from wrist and knee injuries since being drafted by the Broncos with the final pick of the draft in April.

“We were hoping Jake could come back and help us at this point,” Joseph said. “But he’s not ready yet. So we’re going to put both of those guys down.”

Lamenting penalties. The Broncos had a season-high 14 penalties for 105 yards in Sunday’s 51-23 loss to the Eagles, and Joseph said his team was “undisciplined” in committing a number of them.

“Some of the penalties are undisciplined and we can’t have them,” he said. “The ones before and after the whistle, we cannot have. In between the whistle, it’s a part of football.”

Joseph pointed specifically to four offsides penalties — two each by linebackers Von Miller and Shane Ray — and an unnecessary roughness call on rookie left tackle Garrett Bolles, who had three penalties overall.

“I’m not sure what he did to the guy, but he got penalized for it,” Joseph said of Bolles’ 15-yard penalty in the fourth quarter. “We can’t have it. It’s undisciplined. That’s been addressed with him on numerous occasions, so we have to fix it. We have to fix him because after the play is over, it’s over.”

Injury report. Joseph said the Broncos had no injuries to report following Sunday’s loss.

The Broncos had two players — linebacker Todd Davis (ankle) and offensive tackle Donald Stephenson (calf) — miss the game at Philadelphia, and their status for Sunday’s game against the Patriots is yet to be determined.

Eye on the Patriots: Brady is Brady, but New England defense has keyed latest surge

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
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New England at Denver, 6:30 p.m., Sunday, KUSA-9.

For the record: After an uneven start through four games, the Patriots are beginning to play like, well, the Patriots. New England has tallied four straight victories thanks to in-season improvements by a defense that was among the league's worst through the first quarter of the season. Its 6-2 record is tied for the best in the AFC.

Who's hot. The defense. The Patriots gave up an average of 32 points through their first four games. New England, which is coming off its bye week, has turned it around during the last four games, giving up just 12.8 points on average during that span. Of course, the Patriots also have the league's top offense behind QB Tom Brady.

Who's not. Red-zone offense. It's nitpicking, but the Patriots had to settle for four short Stephen Gostowski field goals in their 21-13 victory over the Chargers on Oct. 29. The issue also crept up in the prior week's 23-7 victory over the Falcons. The Patriots could be even more dominant if they make strides inside the 20-yard line.

Key stat: 2,541 passing yards, the league-leading total for Tom Brady through eight games. The 40-year-old appears to be playing as well as ever. He's thrown 16 touchdowns and only two interceptions, and his 106.5 quarterback rating trails only Kansas City's Alex Smith (113.9). Brady has five 300-yard games this season.

FYI: The Patriots were favored between 7½ and nine points over the Broncos when early betting lines opened for Sunday night's game, making them the largest visiting favorite in Denver in as many as 30 seasons. The Patriots won last season's meeting between the two teams in Denver, 16-3.

Streaking: The Patriots' victory at Sports Authority Field last season snapped a streak of three straight victories for the Broncos at home in the series, including the postseason. This is the seventh straight season the two AFC rivals have faced each other in the regular season.

Playerspeak: "I think he is a great coach, and there is obviously no coach I would rather play for. I love playing for this team and I've tried to do it for a long time, and I have done it for a long time. I enjoy doing it and hopefully I can do it for a long time." — Brady, denying a reported riff with coach Bill Belichick, via WEEI radio in Boston.

Vance Joseph accepts blame for Broncos' skid

By Mike Klis

9 News

November 7, 2017

Lose like the Broncos did against the Philadelphia Eagles, and blame is no longer directed at the quarterback, or offensive line.

It's bigger than that.

The guy catching some flak now is the head coach.

To Vance Joseph's credit, he is accepting blame to the point he admits changes to his coaching methods must be made.

"Well, you have to change something," Joseph said. "We can't continue to go down the same path and expect different results. That's insanity, right? So we have to change something whether it's personnel, whether it's how we game plan, how we call plays, how we play as a football team together, offensively and defensively and (special) teams together. That's also a thought. But, I've got to figure it out. That's obviously being explored."

I am surprised Joseph's players haven't been responding lately. Where have you gone, Broncos team that whipped the Dallas Cowboys, 42-17, in week 2 this season?

This is not Josh McDaniels, who seven and eight years ago was too volatile to lead a room full of men.

Joseph has a strong presence. He has a straightforward, calm, composed delivery.

He was asked specifically if he was satisfied with the offensive play-calling.

"I've said this after every loss, we have to coach better," he said. "When you lose football games in this league, you have to coach better and you have to play better. It's a league that's really built and operated to have equal parts, so the difference sometimes is the coaching and the difference is the scheme and play-calling. When you don't win, absolutely you have to coach better and that starts with me. I understand that because in this league coaching is very important and the better coached teams win. I'll leave it at that."

Keep this in mind: Bill Belichick will bring his New England Patriots to town here Sunday night with Tom Brady. Joseph's team is still trying to find its way without Peyton Manning.

Since Manning retired after the 2015 season, Broncos general manager John Elway has been trying to construct a roster strong enough in other areas so a Super Bowl can be won without "franchise" quarterback.

The Broncos are 12-12 since Manning retired – and trending the wrong way. Joseph said it's on him to reverse the sinking trend.

“I say that because I’m not just coach talking to you guys,” he said. “I say that because we have to figure out our brand of football to maximize our chances of winning. That comes from me. I have to figure out what’s our best formula to win as a team. We’ve played great defense, most of the time. Yesterday, we didn’t play great defense. Offensively, we had a chance to have a decent day if the defense would have played better yesterday. That’s where I’m at as a head coach here. I’m trying to figure out the best formula for us to win football games.

“Again, it’s not too late. We’re at the midway point. Our division has come back to us some. We can still fix this thing, but I have to figure out a way to get our football team to play their best football on Sundays.”

Broncos sticking with Brock Osweiler as starting QB vs. Patriots

By Mike Klis

9 News

November 7, 2017

Brock to the drawing board.

The Broncos are going with Brock Osweiler as their starting quarterback again this week. 9News first reported Osweiler would remain the quarterback and Broncos head coach Vance Joseph confirmed during his day-after-game press conference Monday.

"I thought Brock had an excellent week of preparation," Joseph said. "It felt good to our team. It was a confident week. The energy was better, it was urgent, it was detailed. Brock's experience and Brock's personality really helped our team bounce back and gave us confidence going into this week. So I think Brock's earned it, from that standpoint.

"In the football game, it wasn't perfect. He had two interceptions, which he can't have. He understands that. He had a couple ill-advised throws. But Brock did some good things as far as putting us in good plays. The red-zone audible to DT (Demaryius Thomas) for the touchdown, that was one of Brock's audibles.

"So I think Brock deserves one more week to prove he's the guy for us because he had a great week of preparation."

He won't get the easiest of opponents to permanently win the job. The Broncos play the NFL's most dominant team of the past two decades in the New England Patriots this Sunday night with the game televised on 9NEWS.

Osweiler replaced Trevor Siemian as the Broncos' starting quarterback last week. Although, the Broncos were manhandled Sunday by the Philadelphia Eagles, 51-23, Osweiler's performance included some encouraging flashes.

He did engineer four scoring drives – a touchdown and three field goals. He also threw two interceptions, causing Joseph to wait until he evaluated the film before naming his quarterback this week.

Osweiler completed 19 of 38 passes for 208 yards. Osweiler also has experience in beating the Patriots at eventually-to-be-renamed Sports Authority Field at Mile High. In a Nov. 29, 2015 game that ended in snowstorm conditions, Osweiler completed 23 of 42 for 270 yards and a touchdown to help the Broncos defeat the Patriots, 30-24 in overtime.

That win gave the Broncos the playoff tiebreaker against New England, allowing them to host the AFC Championship Game against the Patriots. By then, Peyton Manning had returned as the Broncos' quarterback and he led Denver to a 20-18 win in the conference championship, before guiding them past Carolina for the Super Bowl 50 title.

Bronco Bits

Two drafted rookies, tight end Jake Butt and quarterback Chad Kelly, were transferred from the non-football-injury list to the season-ending injured list Monday. ...

Joseph was asked if he was satisfied with the offensive play-calling: "I've said this after every loss that we better coach better. When you lose football games in this league, you have to coach better. You have to play better. It's a league that's really built and operated to have equal parts. The difference sometimes is the coaching. The difference is the scheme and play-calling. So when you don't win, absolutely you have to coach better. And that starts with me, and I understand that. In this league, coaching is very, very important. Better-coached teams win. I'll leave it at that."

Offensive woes hinder Broncos' work in season's first half

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

November 7, 2017

Here's a look at the first half of the season for the Denver Broncos and a preview of what to expect in the second half:

First-half snapshot: The Broncos have lived at both ends of the spectrum in terms of their quality of play this season. Their best work came in a Week 2 rout of the Dallas Cowboys, and at the other extreme was their first shutout loss in a quarter century against the Los Angeles Chargers. The Broncos say they are the team that cruised to that Week 2 win, but their most recent work indicates otherwise. Grade: Below average

Midseason MVP: What linebacker Von Miller has done this season hasn't really been fully appreciated by folks both near and far. Miller has influenced the play of opposing offenses due to their almost constant attention to him on virtually every play. Offenses play him like a defense attacks a quarterback, which means he permeates opponents' game plans week to week. He still had seven sacks after seven games and his run defense is vastly underrated.

Best moment: Because it was the exclamation point on what has been their most complete win, cornerback Aqib Talib's 103-yard interception return for a touchdown against the Cowboys remains the high point. Talib's play finished off a 42-17 win against the Cowboys, which had the home crowd daydreaming of January games and a Super Bowl opportunity. That seems like a long time ago now.

Worst moment: A 51-23 thrashing in Philadelphia had more than its share of bad moments for the Broncos, but when the clock hit 0:00 in a soccer stadium in Southern California to end the league's longest-active scoring streak was the nadir. The Broncos lost 21-0, and it was the first time since November 1992 that they had not scored in a game. While Trevor Siemian has taken much of the heat for the Broncos' woes -- and his 10 interceptions by the time he was benched have contributed mightily to be sure -- the shutout loss provided proof that there was plenty of blame to go around for the team's struggles.

Second-half outlook: If the Broncos don't repair the disconnect between the team's planning on offense and special teams and what is actually happening on the field, the team will see their defense wobble more and more as the current group will not hold up if consistently put into bad field position and playing from behind over and over again. While who plays at quarterback will always dominate the public discourse, it has been a disappointing performance all around by this offense. And the Broncos' fortunes won't change until their work on offense improves.

Three consecutive road games once again trouble for Broncos

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN
November 7, 2017

Over and over again, the Denver Broncos said it didn't matter. The schedule was the schedule, they said, and they would just show up and play.

Well, over and over again, a stretch of three consecutive road games has indeed mattered to the Broncos.

The Broncos just completed this year's stretch of three consecutive road games at 0-3, with losses to the Los Angeles Chargers, the Kansas City Chiefs and the Philadelphia Eagles. The Broncos have now had stretches of three consecutive road games in nine seasons since the schedule went to 16 games in 1978.

They have also never -- as in, ever -- finished any of those stretches better than 1-2 and that includes when they've had a Hall of Famer at quarterback in John Elway and a future Hall of Famer at quarterback in Peyton Manning.

The rundown:

2017: 0-3 and were outscored 101-42 in the three games, including the team's first shutout loss since 1992.

2014: 1-2 as a team that finished 12-4; lost at New England and at St. Louis in the three-game stretch.

2010: 0-3 in what became a 4-12 season when Josh McDaniels was fired. Eric Studesville was the interim coach for three games and Elway was hired at season's end as the team's chief football decision-maker.

1997: 1-2 as not even the first of the Broncos' three Super Bowl winners was immune with road losses to San Francisco and Pittsburgh in the three-game run.

1995: 1-2 in Mike Shanahan's first season as coach. The Broncos went on to an 8-8 finish.

1994: 1-2 in Wade Phillips' last season as coach. The 1994-1995 seasons were the only time the Broncos had three consecutive road games in back-to-back campaigns.

1990: 1-2 as the Broncos went on to a 5-11 finish after going 3-10 over their last 13 games of the season.

1981: 1-2 in Dan Reeves' first season as coach and the Broncos went on to a 10-6 finish when they surrendered 61 sacks.

1979: 1-2 in a 10-6 finish when the three consecutive road games were also the final three games of the regular season. The Broncos were 10-4 and then lost the final two regular-season games -- at Seattle and at San Diego -- and the Chargers won the division at 12-4.

Brock Osweiler gets another chance with Broncos

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

November 7, 2017

After sifting through the wreckage of Sunday's 28-point loss to the Philadelphia Eagles, Denver Broncos coach Vance Joseph has decided to give Brock Osweiler another start at quarterback.

Osweiler will be behind center when the 3-5 Broncos face the New England Patriots this Sunday. And while Joseph didn't like much of what he saw in Denver's 51-23 loss to the Eagles, he said Osweiler's work in the days leading up to the game earned the sixth-year quarterback another start.

"I thought Brock had an excellent week of preparation," Joseph said Monday. "It felt good to our team, it was a confident week, the energy was there, it was detailed. ... Brock's experience Brock's personality really helped our team bounce back and gave us confidence going into this week. I think Brock's earned it from that standpoint."

The Broncos benched Trevor Siemian after seven games and put Osweiler in the lineup against the Eagles. Last week, Joseph said he would look at how things went in Philadelphia and then decide who the quarterback would be against the Patriots this Sunday night.

And once again Joseph would only commit to Osweiler starting against the Patriots and said that he would re-evaluate things a week from now. Osweiler finished 19-of-38 passing for 208 yards to go with a touchdown and two interceptions in the loss to the Eagles.

"In the football game ... he had two interceptions, which he can't have, he understands that," Joseph said. "He had a couple ill-advised throws. Brock had some good things, the red-zone audible for the (Demaryius Thomas) touchdown, that was one of Brock's audibles. I think Brock deserves one more week to prove he's the guy for us."

For his part, Osweiler expressed his hope, following the loss, that he would get another chance.

"Absolutely, I think every player in the National Football League plays this game to be the starter, to contribute to his team, to help their football team win games," Osweiler said. "So, I would love to be the starter of this football team. I can promise you that this game is not going to discourage me. I'm going to work harder than ever to clean up these problems and get us back in the win column."

The Broncos have scored 14 touchdowns on offense in eight games and are 22nd in the league in scoring (18.8 points per game), 17th in total offense (327.3 yards per game), 21st in yards per play (4.9) to go with 18th in third down conversions.

The biggest issue, however, and the one that was likely the biggest factor in Siemian's benching, has been turnovers. The Broncos are 31st in the league in turnovers, with 19 -- only the winless Cleveland Browns have more.

That total includes 12 interceptions, second-highest total in the league behind the Browns' 17. At the moment the Patriots are last in the league in total defense (417 yards allowed per game), last in the league in pass defense (295.5 yards allowed per game) and 24th in the run defense (121.5 yards allowed per game).

Broncos coach sticking with Osweiler at QB

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
November 7, 2017

Jake Butt won't be rescuing the Denver Broncos' faltering offense, at least not this season.

The rookie tight end is headed to injured reserve along with quarterback Chad Kelly, the seventh-round draft pick from Mississippi who is still working his way back from knee and wrist surgeries.

"Chad Kelly came back to practice last week and numbers-wise it doesn't make sense for our football team" to carry four quarterbacks, coach Vance Joseph said Monday. "We were hoping that Jake could come back and help us at this point, but he's not ready yet."

The former Michigan star was a projected first-round pick before tearing his right ACL in the Orange Bowl. He slipped to the fifth round and the Broncos were hoping he'd give them a much-needed boost at the midpoint of the season.

Going on IR "doesn't mean I'm going to be checked out of these meetings and waiting on next year," Butt said. "I'm still going to be locked in and trying to learn as much as I can this year. But in terms of the overall health of my knee, yeah, that probably is going to help me long-term just having extra time to rehab and strengthen it and get back to full health."

Joseph also announced Monday that he's sticking with Brock Osweiler as his starting quarterback despite his pair of costly interceptions in Denver's 51-23 flop in Philadelphia on Sunday.

Despite making many mistakes and completing just half of his 38 throws, Osweiler energized the team after taking over for a turnover-prone Trevor Siemian and made several good decisions, such as his audible on his touchdown pass to Demaryius Thomas, Joseph said.

"So, I think Brock deserves one more week to kind of prove that he's the guy for us," Joseph said. "Because he had a great week of preparation."

Joseph isn't committing to any quarterback beyond Sunday, when the Broncos (3-5) host the Patriots (6-2): "I'm only concerned about the Patriots this week and we'll see where we are next Monday."

If Osweiler has another middling performance, Joseph might go back to Siemian or give former first-round draft pick Paxton Lynch a look, although he was quoted by the CBS crew Sunday as saying the ex-Memphis star wasn't ready physically or mentally to play after getting hurt in the preseason.

Joseph explained Monday that he wasn't talking about "a lack of football IQ," but "I was talking more about time on the job. He's missed so much time. So, to put him in an NFL game in Week 10 wouldn't be fair to our football team or to Paxton."

No matter who's calling the plays, Joseph said the coaching staff has to do a better job preparing them.

Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy has stuck to a steady diet of three-wide receiver sets even though 18 of the 21 sacks and all 10 interceptions over the last six games have come out of that formation.

"Am I satisfied with the play calling" on offense? Joseph said. "I've said this after every loss, that we've got to coach better. When you lose football games in this league, you have to coach better; you have to play better. It's a league that's really built and operated to have equal parts. So, the difference sometimes is the coaching. The difference is the scheme and play calling.

"So, when you don't win, absolutely you have to coach better. And that starts with me. And I understand that. Because in this league coaching is very important and the better-coached teams win. I'll leave it at that."

With five losses in six games, the Broncos are mired in their worst slump since a stretch of nine losses in 10 games that cost coach Josh McDaniels his job in 2010.

After each of their last four defeats, Joseph, a first-time head coach, has mentioned he didn't see it coming because the team had great weeks of practice and had put together great game plans.

"Well, I'll tell you this. I told the players this five minutes ago, I said, 'Guys, we have worked hard and that's to your credit. We have put some good work in. But you're judged on Sundays. You're judged one day a week and that's the day you have to show up and perform,'" Joseph said.

"So, the practices, it's been good. But it should be good. We're NFL players and coaches. We get paid to do this job so we should have good work each week. It has not translated, obviously, in four weeks to wins."

The silver lining is that Kansas City (5-3) has lost three straight so the Broncos are only two games out of the AFC West lead.

"We have time, but time's running out," Joseph said. "So, we've got to fix it right now."

Broncos' Vance Joseph navigates crisis: 'It starts with me'

By Troy Renck

KMGH

November 7, 2017

Roughly 20 feet around the corner where the Broncos walked to their bus, the sign mocked them. Above the entrance to the Temple University football locker room, it read "Greatness Doesn't Quit."

Of all the Broncos' issues in the 51-23 loss to Philadelphia, the most serious accusation lobbed was that Denver checked out. Coach Vance Joseph challenged the players after the game to "self-check," joining him in looking in the mirror.

A day after the debacle, Joseph watched the film. While multiple commentators accused the Broncos of quitting Sunday, Joseph does not believe that was the case.

"I wouldn't question effort after watching the tape," Joseph said. "I question guys pressing, guys trying to make plays, guys freelancing."

How does this team move forward, developing accountability and salvage a season sabotaged by four-straight losses and zero road wins?

"It's not the losing, it's how we are losing," Joseph said. "I have to coach better, and I have to get our coaches to coach better. Understand this. We have time, but time is running out."

The Broncos will stick with quarterback Brock Osweiler for one more week, which comes as no surprise. He played at a level similar to Trevor Siemian, a smattering of good plays sandwiched by two awful interceptions.

Monday, Joseph said repeatedly the Broncos need to find their identity. It raises the question if the Broncos will change their offensive approach. Joseph admitted they are considering it. Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy leans on three-wide sets that have been underwhelming and left the quarterbacks facing constant pressure.

Even in Sunday's loss, the Broncos showed promise early when running the ball, then strayed from it. It is fair to wonder if the Broncos have the personnel to employ three wides given Demaryius Thomas' declining production, Emmanuel Sanders' right ankle injury and the lack of a reliable third receiver or tight end.

"It starts with me," Joseph said. "I say that because we have to figure out our brand of football."

A popular topic among fans now is when will Paxton Lynch receive a chance? Multiple sources say he needs additional practice to be ready. During the broadcast Sunday, the crew said Joseph indicated Lynch needed more time to be mentally and physically prepared.

"Physically (Lynch) has been hurt (with a throwing shoulder injured in the third preseason game)," Joseph said. "I wasn't talking about lack of football IQ."

Lynch told Denver7 on Monday that his shoulder feels fine throwing, but the training staff must feel comfortable that he's ready to take a hit in a game. If the Broncos lose to the New England Patriots -- and they are a heavy underdog -- Lynch playing makes more sense as Denver evaluates options as the position.

In the first seven games, the offense wore the blame. Now, no one is innocent after the Eagles riddled the Broncos for four scoring drives of more than 75 yards.

The Broncos have reached midseason as a crisis, not a contender.

It is a jarring juxtaposition for players with Super Bowl 50 rings. Joseph's ability to navigate this situation will reveal a lot about his leadership and the team's future.

Footnotes

The Broncos announced Monday that tight end Jake Butt (knee) and quarterback Chad Kelly (knee and wrist) will be placed on the IR. Kelly was never a strong candidate to play this season. Butt thought he would play, but the determination was made for a longer recovery as he heals from a second ACL tear. "Being on IR, I still have stuff that I have to handle in here everyday. I am still going to be locked in and learning as much as I can. In terms of the overall health of my knee, it probably is going to help me longterm."

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Woody Paige: Broncos should consider Eli Manning as QB woes continue

By Woody Paige
KMGH
November 7, 2017

Wait for it.

Denver, desperate dilemmas demand determined, definitive decisions.

Call me crazy, but call me with a more creative solution.

No, Peyton Manning is not returning, and John Elway would not sign him to be the quarterback of the Broncos the rest of the season. Elway was willing to let Peyton go before the 2016 season, and that judgment cost the franchise a sixth straight playoff berth.

The Broncos are precariously close to not reaching the postseason again in 2017.

Blame Elway for the team he has assembled and the coaches he hired. Blame Vance Joseph for being a rather mediocre head coach. Blame the coordinators for not fulfilling their expectations. Blame the players for not living up their expectations. Blame specifically the quarterbacks for not being very good.

The blame game is easy. Salvaging the season isn't.

The Broncos are at the midway of a season spiraling south swiftly. The defeats in Los Angeles and Philadelphia were devastating to the Broncos' hopes of a Super Bowl, a division title, a wild card, a playoff spot and even a .500 season.

As Lionel Bienvenu so sagely stated on Denver7's SportsXtra Sunday night, this season resembles 1999 after Elway retired as the Broncos quarterback – following two Super Bowl victories. It is also smacks of 2016 following the retirement of Peyton Manning as he went out in glory as Elway did, winning a Super Bowl.

Replacing Hall of Fame quarterbacks with some as successful is improbable, if not impossible. The 49ers accomplished the feat with Steve Young taking over for Joe Montana. But other examples are few, and the course of action takes years. Dan Marino after Bob Griese, Ben Roethlisberger after Terry Bradshaw, Troy Aikman after Roger Staubach. Rarely does a great quarterback take over for a great quarterback.

In 1999, Elway's successor was young Brian Griese. The Broncos compiled a 6-10 record. Ever since, former Broncos coach Mike Shanahan has regretted his choice (the week before the regular season) of Griese over veteran backup Bubby Brister, who had substituted the year before in four games for an injured Elway, and the Broncos won all those games.

Over the next several seasons the Broncos scuffled to get back to the postseason. They were not serious factors until signing veteran free agent Jake Plummer, and reached the AFC Championship game. Then, Shanahan made another mistake by drafting Jay Cutler.

It wasn't until Manning was lured by Elway and John Fox to Denver in 2012 that the Broncos regained their prowess.

Will it take another half-dozen years or so for the Broncos to recover from their latest Super Bowl hangover?

The future quarterback of the Broncos probably isn't even on the roster now.

Elway missed on Tony Romo, who could have been the third coming of a quarterback to get the Broncos back in the Super Bowl.

Instead, the Broncos can't figure out what to do at quarterback for the second straight season.

I repeat: Bring Manning back.

Eli Manning.

Get This: The Younger Brother was the last quarterback to win a game at Mile High Stadium. The Giants beat the Broncos in Denver on Oct. 15, and the Broncos haven't won since. Four losses in a row. Visions of a fifth with the Patriots arriving in town this weekend.

As Troy Renck of Denver7 suggested Sunday night, there are only three clear-cut victory possibilities remaining for the Broncos in the second half of the season – the Bengals and the Jets at home and the Colts on the road. The Broncos will be underdogs against New England and Kansas City at home, and in Oakland, Miami and Washington.

This could be another 6-10 type season, just like 1999.

Giants' coach Ben McAdoo is threatening to bench Eli Manning after New York duplicated Denver's Sunday travesty – giving up 51 points to the opposition.

Eli is on the verge of breaking brother Peyton's record for consecutive starts at quarterback in the NFL.

Here's the answer:

The Giants waive Eli; the Broncos claim him, and another Manning starts for the franchise for the rest of the season and, potentially, for the first of his career.

Oh, he has won two Super Bowls – just as his elder brother did. And he could duplicate his brother's record of winning a Super Bowl with two different teams.

But Eli doesn't know the system. Mike McCoy once adjusted overnight from one system for Kyle Orton and a totally different one for Tim Tebow, and the Broncos went on a run to the playoffs.

Laugh and scoff and call me crazy.

Quarterback is the Broncos' question. Manning is the answer.

Manning 2.0.

Next-Day Notebook: 'You have to change something'

By Andrew Mason

DenverBroncos.com

November 7, 2017

One thing is clear above all else to Head Coach Vance Joseph in the wake of the Broncos' 51-23 loss at Philadelphia: The status quo isn't working.

"Well, you have to change something. We can't continue to go down the same path and expect different results. That's insanity, right?" Joseph said Monday. "We have to change something, whether it's personnel, whether it's how we game plan or how we call plays or how we play as a football team together -- offensively, defensively and teams together. That's also a thought. I have to figure it out.

"That's obviously being explored. How do we win as a team -- and win cleaner and play a cleaner, competitive game on Sunday?"

For Joseph, that starts with his own work.

"I have to coach better and get our coaches to coach better," he said. "Things in the football game that are happening are not by accident. We have to figure out a way to coach our players better and to have better game plans and to manage the games better from my perspective.

"Obviously, it's a hard league. I've been in the league a long time, so it's not my first go-around as far as having adversity during the season. I understand this. We have time, but time is running out. We have to fix it right now."

With four consecutive losses, the Broncos have plenty to fix in all three phases of the game.

"The truth about our team at this point of the season is that we are 3-5. That's who we are," Joseph said. "We've won three games and we've lost five. We've lost all five the same way. Again, it starts with me.

"I say that because I'm not just 'coach talking' to you guys. I say that because we have to figure out our brand of football to maximize our chances of winning. That comes from me. I have to figure out what's our best formula to win as a team."

PART OF THAT INVOLVES LIMITING PENALTIES

After being whistled for a season-high 14 penalties for 105 yards in Philadelphia, Denver now has averages of 7.9 penalties for 64.3 yards per game. Those figures place the Broncos in the bottom seven teams in the league in both categories.

Not all penalties are created equal, of course, and Joseph can live with some infractions, such as some offensive holding calls and the roughing-the-passer penalty against defensive end Zach Kerr in the second quarter Sunday.

"He was told all week to finish the play because this quarterback [Philadelphia's Carson Wentz] doesn't slide," Joseph said. "He finished the play and he was penalized for roughing the passer. That happens."

The bothersome and preventable penalties are ones that happen before the snap, such as offsides and false-start calls. The Broncos were flagged for seven pre-snap penalties in Philadelphia: four on defense (three neutral-zone infractions and one offsides call), two on offense (one false-start penalty and one delay-of-game call) and one on special teams, for delay of game.

"The one before the whistles, that's undisciplined, and we can't have that. We had Von [Miller] and Shane Ray jump offside four times, I think two times on third downs," Joseph said. "It's third-and-10, it goes to five. That changes the entire down to getting off the field to now half and half. That we can't have.

"That's undisciplined. We have to fix that. We have to simply watch the football and get off on the right count and rush the passer."

Penalties after the whistle, such as an unnecessary-roughness penalty against left tackle Garrett Bolles with 1:24 remaining in the game, are also frustrating, even though that particular infraction did not impact the outcome of the game.

"We can't have it. It's undisciplined. That's been addressed with him on numerous occasions, so we have to fix it," Joseph said. "We have to fix him because after the play is over, it's over. Go back to the huddle and play the next play. So that part, we have to fix."

Chad Kelly, Jake Butt headed to injured reserve

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

November 7, 2017

Tight end Jake Butt and quarterback Chad Kelly will be placed on injured reserve, Head Coach Vance Joseph announced Monday.

Both players were previously on the non-football injury list, which provides teams 21 days beginning in Week 6 to evaluate the status of those with that designation. After 21 days, organizations must decide whether to elevate those players to the active roster or place those individuals on IR.

"They're both going to go down," Joseph said. "Chad Kelly, obviously, he came back and practiced last week, and obviously numbers-wise, it doesn't make sense for our football team. We were hoping that Jake could come back and help us at this point, but he's not ready yet. So we're going to put both of those guys down."

Joseph hinted last week that Kelly would head to IR when he said Kelly's first practice session was "just OK," also adding that "it's pretty clear on Chad."

Butt practiced for the better part of the allotted three weeks and took just a few days off during the second week to recuperate from some soreness.

Joseph and the Broncos ultimately decided both players would be better served to finish the year on injured reserve.

Brock Osweiler to start vs. New England Patriots

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

November 7, 2017

Brock Osweiler will start Sunday night's game against the New England Patriots, Head Coach Vance Joseph announced Monday.

In his first start of the season, Osweiler finished 19-of-38 for 208 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions against Philadelphia.

"I thought Brock had an excellent week of preparation," Joseph said. "It felt good to our team. It was a confident week. The energy was better. It was urgent. It was detailed. The meetings were better. Brock's experience and Brock's personality really helped our team bounce back and gave us confident going into this week.

"I think Brock's earned it from that standpoint. In the football game, it wasn't perfect again. He had two interceptions, which he can't have. He understands that. He had a couple ill-advised throws. But Brock did some good things as far as putting us in good plays. The red-zone audible to [Demaryius Thomas] for the touchdown, that was one of Brock's audibles. I think Brock deserves one more week to kind of prove he's the guy for us, because he had a great week of preparation."

Osweiler's last start for the Broncos against the Patriots resulted in a 30-24 overtime win. He completed 23-of-42 passes for 270 yards, one touchdown and an interception in a come-from-behind victory.

Chris Harris says Broncos hit rock bottom in blowout loss to Eagles

By Jared Dubin
CBS Sports
November 7, 2017

The Denver Broncos got blasted off the field by the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday. They lost 51-23, the team's worst loss since a 45-10 drubbing at the hands of the Lions in 2011. The 51 points was the most the team has yielded since getting burned for 59 by the Raiders in 2010. They looked helpless against Philly's offense all afternoon.

The loss was Denver's fourth in the row, and dropped the Broncos to 3-5, putting them in the AFC West basement along with the Chargers. Things are not looking up right now. Just ask the Broncos.

"[We're] just not good right now," cornerback Chris Harris said, per NFL.com. "Just gotta look at yourself in the mirror to see what you can do to get better. Trying to figure out how to make plays. When you're not good and you are losing and a team puts 50 on you. You gotta figure something out."

They're going to have to figure things out very quickly, because the defending Super Bowl champs are next up on the schedule. A loss to the Patriots would just about sink the Broncos' fading playoff hopes. If that happens ...

"It is rock bottom. If we don't make the playoffs, that's the worst you can get," Harris said. "We can't afford to let anything else slide. Especially in our division. We gotta figure out something fast."

The tail end of the Broncos' schedule isn't all that difficult, as they have games against the Bengals, Raiders, Dolphins, Jets, Colts, and Washington sandwiched between next week's Pats game and the season finale against the division-leading Chiefs. If they're already at six losses before hitting that easier stretch of schedule, though, it might be too late for them to go on a run.

Broncos' Brock Osweiler to start at QB vs. Patriots

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

November 7, 2017

The Broncos are staying put with Brock Osweiler.

Coach Vance Joseph announced Monday that the veteran quarterback will start once again on Sunday night against the New England Patriots.

Joseph emphasized that Osweiler has "earned the opportunity" to prove he can lead Denver's sputtering offense down the stretch, per NFL Network's James Palmer.

He failed to make much of a case during Sunday's 51-23 loss to the Eagles, a swarming powerhouse that coaxed Osweiler into two bad interceptions and dangerously low production before garbage time kicked in.

Turnovers and bad decisions were enough to force Trevor Siemian to the bench, so it's no sure bet that Osweiler lasts beyond Week 10. The Broncos also have second-year arm Paxton Lynch rounding back into full health, but his timeline remains unclear.

Denver's offense has fallen off a cliff since their Week 2 route of the Cowboys, a show of strength that feels equally distant to John Elway helicoptering into the end zone during Super Bowl XXXII.

These Broncos lack punch on offense; they lack power and identity. It's not all about the quarterback play, but Osweiler isn't about to save the day. Not against the Patriots -- and not this season -- for a Denver operation spiraling toward the dim outer reaches of the AFC.

Broncos Team Grades: Broncos Remain Winless On The Road After Falling To Eagles

By Rick Brown

CBS Local

November 7, 2017

The Denver Broncos (3-5) were looking to put an end to their three-game losing streak when they traveled to Lincoln Financial Field on Sunday, but were unable to stop the high-flying Philadelphia Eagles (8-1). The team remains winless away from Denver, as the 51-23 loss to the Eagles marks the Broncos' fourth road loss this season.

Denver's new starting QB, Brock Osweiler, and the Broncos offense could not stop the Eagles defense from forcing two turnovers. To make matters worse, the Broncos defense finally ran out of steam in Week 9. Unable to continue the high level of play they've been exhibiting all season, Denver's defense gave up 51 points to Philadelphia, as the Eagles demonstrated to the rest of the NFL why they're the best team in the league.

On Offense: F

The Broncos offense did not receive a boost with Osweiler starting at quarterback, as the 26-year-old threw two picks during his first start of the season.

The Broncos offense continued to be ineffective and the team only put up 6 points in the first half. Throughout the rest of the game, Osweiler did not do enough to connect with his wide receivers. While the QB was able to complete some passes Emmanuel Sanders and Demaryius Thomas, he was unable to properly place the ball. There were also a couple of underthrown passes that had the opportunity to be turned into possible points. Thomas and Osweiler were able to connect for a touchdown in the fourth quarter, but far after the outcome of the game had been decided.

On Defense: F

After playing really well the past few weeks, the Broncos defense finally broke. A first quarter interception from Osweiler put the the Broncos defense in a bad spot; the Eagles got off to a fast start and scored a touchdown. It did not stop there, as the Eagles were able to score 17 points in the first quarter. Things only got worse as the the Broncos defense gave up a rushing touchdown to Jay Ajayi. A mid-season trade brought Ajayi to the Eagles and most people were expecting a light load, but Ajayi was able to go for 77 yards on Sunday. Overall, the team rushed for 198 yards and was in complete control throughout the game.

On Special Teams: B-

Even during a complete blowout, the Broncos special teams was able to perform well. Denver kicker Brandon McManus was able to convert on all three of his field goal attempts. Punter Riley Dixon had a busy afternoon, punting the ball six times throughout the game. Dixon did a good job of helping to flip the field for the Broncos, as he averaged 50.3 yards per punt with a long of 55 yards.

Coaching: F

The Broncos got off to a slow start as the defense allowed 17 points in the first quarter. Denver has not performed well in the first half of the last several games, but each week the coaching staff seems shell shocked. With the change at quarterback, it's a shame that the Broncos offense was unable to score any touchdowns through the first half. The coaching staff seems to be unable to adapt to football situations when the team is consistently experiencing the same scenario over and over. The Broncos were unable to get into the end zone through three quarters and the defense was unable to stop the Eagles. There are a lot more problems happening on this Broncos team than just a bad quarterback and a bad offensive line. Things are not going to be get better any time soon.

Up Next

The Broncos travel home to play the AFC East-leading New England Patriots (6-2) on Sunday, Nov. 12. This looks to be another blowout as the Broncos continue to struggle on offense. Denver's defense finally caved in against a good offense this week against the Eagles, so look for the Patriots to be able to put up a lot of points.

Midway through the season, the Broncos are lost in the worst possible way

By Zac Stevens

BSN Denver

November 7, 2017

The first day of the Denver Broncos' offseason following the 2016 season—Monday, Jan. 2, otherwise known as Gary Kubiak's retirement press conference—general manager John Elway reflected on his first season of missing the playoffs and the direction his team was going to take entering 2017.

At that moment, he didn't know who his starting quarterback would be to open the season some eight months down the road and he didn't even know who his head coach would be. But what he did know was he wanted to keep the same winning formula that brought the state of Colorado their third Super Bowl trophy just a year earlier.

"The priority is to continue to be great at defense," he said to the surprise of many as his team had just finished the season as a below average offense in nearly every category. "The one thing that I want to make sure is that we don't take a step back on defense. We're not going to not pay attention to that defense, either. It's just important, if not more important to get better on defense than it is to get better offensively."

Ten months later, following the team's biggest defeat since Super Bowl 48, Elway knows who his head coach is, but outside of that, the team is searching for answers—specifically looking for a winning formula.

"We've played great defense, most of the time," Broncos' head coach Vance Joseph said on Monday, the day after his team fell 51-23 at the hands of the Philadelphia Eagles. "Yesterday, we didn't play great defense and offensively we had a chance to have a decent day if the defense would have played better yesterday. That's where I'm at as a head coach—I'm trying to figure out what's the best formula for us to win football games."

After allowing 51 points to the Eagles on Sunday, Joseph realized the previous formula—play great defense and limit turnovers—wasn't reliable week in and week out. The plan his boss, Elway, had laid out at the start of the calendar year couldn't be trusted as the gospel any-longer.

"Again, it starts with me. And I say that because I'm not just coach- talking you guys. I say that because we need to figure out our brand of football to maximize our chances of winning and that comes from me," Joseph said almost looking for the answers in a room full of media members. "I have to figure out what's our best formula to win as a team."

The encouraging piece, among all of the negatives over the past month, is Joseph is willing and actively looking, to make changes to get his team off their four-game losing streak. The discouraging part is the Broncos are all but lost in their search for a winning formula halfway through the season.

"You have to change something. We can't continue to go down the same path and expect different results—that's insanity, right?" Joseph said with certainty in his voice. "We have to change something,

whether it's personnel, whether it's how we game plan, whether it's how we call plays, whether it's how we play—as a football team together—offensively, defensively and [special]teams together... But I got to figure it out. That's obviously being explored—how do we win as a team and win cleaner and play a cleaner competitive game on Sunday.”

On the first-half of Denver's four-game slide, Joseph did make changes. First, he tried changing how the team learned by adjusting their practice schedule and moving the red zone period earlier in practice. After that didn't work, he turned to more time on the field and less time in meeting.

Finally, after the 29-19 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs in Week 8, Joseph made a change at quarterback, benching Trevor Siemian in favor for Brock Osweiler. Sunday's debacle against the Eagles proved the Broncos aren't just one position change away from winning.

“I have to coach better and get our coaches to coach better because things in the football game that are happening it's not by accident,” Joseph said holding nothing back. “So we have to figure out a way to coach our players better and have better game plans and to manage the games better from my perspective.”

Through the team's first eight games, they've had a winning formula in just three of them. Sitting three games back of the AFC West-leading Chiefs, Joseph remains optimistic about competing this season.

“We have time, but time is running out. So we got to fix it right now. Our division right now has all come back to us. So we do have time to rectify the season and have a chance to finish on a positive note.”

Depending on when, and potentially if, the Broncos and Joseph find the answers needed to win will determine what their “positive note” ends up looking like.

Elway's subpar drafts have Broncos suffering through their inevitable result

By Matthew Stefanski
Mile High Sports
November 7, 2017

It's been a five-year time bomb waiting to go off.

John Elway took the helm as Denver Broncos vice president of football operations in 2011, a year removed from the disastrous Josh McDaniels experiment, and was tasked with getting the Broncos back onto the winning track. With the assistance of then-general manager Brian Xanders for two years, Elway drafted Von Miller, Julius Thomas, Derek Wolfe, Malik Jackson and Danny Trevathan. Among the big names, Elway also dug up Orlando Franklin, Virgil Green and Brock Osweiler, all whom contributed to getting the team back on the championship path.

Elway signed big free agent players Peyton Manning, Wes Welker, DeMarcus Ware, Aqib Talib, Darian Stewart and T.J. Ward. Coaches John Fox and Gary Kubiak were brought in, both leading the team to the Super Bowl, with Kubiak winning one.

Through all the moves, Elway earned the team five straight division championships, two conference championships, and a Lombardi trophy. This earned Elway quite a few 'get out of jail free' cards with Broncos fans.

But the time bomb started ticking in 2012. Xanders and the Broncos parted ways, leaving that year's draft in Elway's hands alone.

Before Xanders' departure, he produced five Pro-Bowlers for the Broncos, as well as the third-highest draft classes in terms of games started during his tenure. Elway and the Broncos haven't drafted one since, making the Broncos one of three teams — along with the Cleveland Browns and the New Orleans Saints — that hasn't drafted a single Pro Bowler since in the last five years.

Elway did find some diamonds in the rough in 2012, pulling Malik Jackson in the fifth round and Danny Trevathan in the sixth. Derek Wolfe was also their first pick, albeit in the second round, and has started all five years with the Broncos.

2013, though, is when the wheels began to fall off. Sylvester Williams, the team's first pick, was the only perennial starter the Broncos managed to pull out of the draft. Williams left the team for the Tennessee Titans in the 2017 season after not being offered a contract by the Broncos. The entire 2013 class only managed to play in 167 games — pathetic when compared to the 2012 class' 354 games and five starters, and even worse when looking at Xanders' swan song in 2011; 500 games played by the players in that class, with seven perennial starters.

2014 and 2015 were just as ugly, with the acquisitions of starters Shane Ray, Bradley Roby and Matt Paradis as the highlights, but Michael Schofield, Cody Latimer, Ty Sambrailo, Jeff Heuerman and Lamin Barrow checked off as draft-day blunders and busts by Elway. Across the two drafts, the players have

seen 356 games of action, only two games more combined across the 13 players than the 2012 draft class alone. The two classes combined only produced five starters, as well.

The blunders of the drafts were offset by great free-agency moves, but with the retirement of Peyton Manning and DeMarcus Ware, the draw of the Denver Broncos no longer measures up when compared to other championship-caliber teams. The Band-Aid has been ripped off, and the scar left by Elway's draft record has been revealed.

2016's draft class is still up in the air, but only Riley Dixon and Justin Simmons have managed to become perennial team starters, while the success of Adam Gotsis, Devontae Booker and Will Parks are still up in the air. Quarterback Paxton Lynch has also produced next to nothing — despite being the supposed heir to the throne — overtaken by seventh-rounder Trevor Siemian for two straight seasons. 2017 brought in tackles Garrett Bolles, who started right away, but the class has produced nothing but question marks otherwise, even out of return specialist Isaiah McKenzie, who has fumbled four times and only produced two receptions as a wide receiver. Tight end Jake Butt has some of the highest potential out of the entire class, but is on injured reserve and will miss the entire season with a knee injury sustained during his final game at University of Michigan.

Now, after a 51-23 beatdown to the Philadelphia Eagles, the time bomb has exploded, the Broncos are foundering and there is no solution in sight. Elway's poor draft moves have put the Broncos in a deep hole, and one that free agency can't easily fill. Elway's drafts have to improve to bring the Broncos back onto the rails, and it has to start right away in 2018 with multiple starters — and finding those Pro Bowl-caliber players for the first time since 2011.

The 'get out of jail free' cards that were duly earned have all been spent. Now, it's time for Elway and the Broncos to win their off-seasons the old-fashioned way. It won't be easy.

Broncos shut Jake Butt, Chad Kelly down for season

By Josh Alper

Pro Football Talk

November 7, 2017

The Broncos will have to wait until at least 2018 before they have a chance to see how two of their 2017 draft picks look as part of their lineup.

Coach Vance Joseph announced that tight end Jake Butt and quarterback Chad Kelly will both be placed on injured reserve after opening the season on the non-football injury list.

"They're both going to go down," Joseph said. "Chad Kelly, obviously, he came back and practiced last week, and obviously numbers-wise, it doesn't make sense for our football team. We were hoping that Jake could come back and help us at this point, but he's not ready yet. So we're going to put both of those guys down."

Butt was a fifth-round pick in April and was projected to go a good bit earlier in the process before he tore his ACL in Michigan's Orange Bowl loss to Florida State. Kelly, who was the final pick of the draft, had wrist surgery before the draft and also tore his ACL while at Ole Miss last season.

Brock Osweiler will start again for Broncos

By Josh Alper

Pro Football Talk

November 7, 2017

The word after Sunday's loss was that the Broncos would give Brock Osweiler another start when they face the Patriots in Denver next weekend and nothing changed on Monday.

Broncos head coach Vance Joseph announced that Osweiler will start his second game of the year and second game in a row next Sunday night. Osweiler was 19-of-38 for 208 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions in a 51-23 loss to the Eagles.

"I think Brock's earned it. Deserves one more week to prove [he can do the job]," Joseph said, via Mike Klis of KUSA.

The Broncos aren't exactly overflowing with other options. Trevor Siemian got seven starts before Joseph opted to pull the plug last week on the heels of a three-interception outing against the Chiefs and Paxton Lynch has only been practicing for a short while after a long stretch on the shelf with a right shoulder injury.

If Lynch should start doing more at practice and Osweiler turn in another outing like he had against Philadelphia, the Broncos may decide to see what the 2016 first-round pick has to offer the offense. For now, though, it's another spin for Osweiler against a team he beat in his first stint as the Broncos starter in 2015.