

Jhabvala vs. Kiz: How can the Broncos score 20 points a game?

By Mark Kiszla and Nicki Jhabvala

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How can this struggling Broncos' offense score 20 points in a game?

Kiz: As Brandon Marshall picked up a fumble and ran 19 yards for a touchdown with Denver trailing Philadelphia 44-16, it occurred to me that a linebacker might be the Broncos' best scoring threat. The offense has not scored 20 points in a game since Sept. 17. Yes, the O-line stinks. But what can offensive coordinator Mike McCoy do to get this broken-down piece of junk rolling?

Jhabvala: This is the million-dollar question right? "Broken-down piece of junk" is a strong description for a group that still features a pair of 1,000-yard receivers and two Pro Bowl running backs — one of which is the league's leader in career rushing yards average. But look at the Broncos' first two weeks of the season compared to the last four. In those first two, when they upended the Chargers and the Cowboys and averaged 33 points a game, they attempted about 38 rushes per game for an average of 159 yards. In their last four losses, in which they've averaged a meager 13 points, the Broncos attempted only 22 carries per game for an average of 82 yards. I'd like to see Denver commit to the run more. Peyton Manning has been retired for 20 months now. Why are they still running an offense built for him, with three-wide-receiver sets that they can't block?

Kiz: The Broncos either run the rock or they lose. In their three victories, Denver has averaged 134 yards rushing. In their five losses, they've averaged 88 yards rushing. The one outlier in defeat was in Kansas City, when Denver stayed committed to the run, despite falling behind early. During this four-game losing streak, it was the only time the Broncos had a real chance to win in the fourth quarter. Might be a lesson to be had there.

Jhabvala: Everyone likes to pick apart what is said and not said by the head coach, especially during a four-game slide. But Vance Joseph wasn't giving a party line when he said back in October that, "It doesn't matter who the quarterback is if he's not being protected or the run game is not effective." This team is built for balance and needs a run game to support its passing game and to help its defense. Until the Broncos consistently run the ball again, I think they're going to continue to sputter and the turnovers are going to continue pile up.

Kiz: The Broncos need to bludgeon the Patriots. Come out in two tight-end alignments, and run the ball until the defense starts to soften. It's also time to give Devontae Booker the majority of the touches at running back and see what he can do. Scrap the three-wideout look, which Denver can't block. For a change of pace, Denver should instead occasionally start a drive with no huddle. I can't guarantee these ideas will get the Broncos 20 points against New England, but the results can't be any worse than what McCoy has tried.

Jhabvala: Booker should get more reps, but the backs collectively should get more. C.J. Anderson ranks No. 3 among NFL backs in pass-blocking and in yards after contact per attempts (3.14), according to Pro Football Focus. Denver needs that with a line that struggles to create lanes. The Broncos were at their

best when he was carrying the ball 20-25 times per game. They've been at their worst when he's taken about 10 carries per game. Bottom line is the Broncos need to commit to the run. They have a loaded running backs room. Take advantage of it.

The Broncos' previously stout defense fell apart in Sunday's blowout loss. Anomaly or major cause for concern?

By Nick Kosmider
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The Eagles weren't content to simply attack the top-ranked defense of the Broncos. They wanted to send a message.

So, on Philadelphia's first offensive drive Sunday, with the ball on the right hash mark at the Denver 32-yard line, coach Doug Pederson and quarterback Carson Wentz put two all-pro players on a championship defense in their sights. Wentz, the second-year quarterback who tops the NFL's list of MVP candidates, took the snap in the shotgun formation. Running back Jay Ajayi ran toward Wentz from the quarterback's right and Wentz convincingly faked a handoff on the read option. The fake paused linebacker Von Miller for a split-second, long enough to prevent him from reaching Wentz as he rushed into the backfield.

Meanwhile, the fake caused cornerback Aqib Talib, lined up on receiver Alshon Jeffery, to peer into the backfield. When Talib froze, Jeffrey, who helped sell the run fake by briefly standing still on the line of scrimmage, bolted down the right sideline. The extra moment was all he needed to blow past Talib and catch the on-target, floating pass from Wentz for the game's first touchdown.

That snapshot of confusion and poor execution was the start of a miserable day for Denver's defense. The 51 points it allowed were the most since losing to the Raiders, 59-14, in 2010. Most troubling for Denver? There was no facet of its defense that wasn't exposed. Players missed tackles with alarming regularity. Stops they did make were often wiped out by penalties. And Pederson, who calls the offensive plays for the Eagles, had seemingly no trouble constructing one schematic mismatch after another.

"They knew everything we were going to do," cornerback Chris Harris said.

The meltdown by a unit that has so rarely slipped since leading Denver to a Super Bowl 50 championship in 2015 has begged the question. Was Sunday's showing on anomaly for a proud group? Or has a defense asked to carry a team for the third consecutive season finally reached its breaking point?

"I feel like we lost our mindset (Sunday) and our mentality of attacking and being the big dog," Broncos defensive end Shelby Harris said. "It didn't work out, but we don't have time to sit here and cry about it. We have to come back this week. I know it (stinks), but we have to come out and figure out what we're going to do against the Patriots (on Sunday). We have to get back to that mentality of just attacking and making plays."

An examination of the numbers reveals a defense that has often been on the defensive in 2017 — even as it had, before Sunday, kept overall yardage to a minimum. The Broncos rank 28th in the NFL through the midway point of the season with seven takeaways — five interceptions (21st) and two fumble

recoveries (30th). They are a middling 16th in sacks (19). And only two teams — the Giants (18) and Jets (19) — have given up more touchdown passes than Denver’s 16.

The Broncos had been able to hang their collective hat on not surrendering a rushing touchdown this season. Then they gave up three against the Eagles as part of a staggering 197 rushing yards allowed.

“I have never been a part of that type of game,” Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall said. “It was kind of a freak type game. The defense never plays that way.”

Broncos fans may find some comfort in the accuracy of Marshall’s statement. No member of the defense had been part of such a meltdown since playing for the Broncos. But cracks had shown before the Eagles split the defense open Sunday. The question now is whether the defense has the ability to repair them before welcoming New England on Sunday night, owner of the NFL’s top-ranked offense behind ageless star quarterback Tom Brady.

“We just have to do more,” Marshall said. “We just have to find something deep down inside us and fight.”

Cracks in the armor

A look at the drop in key numbers by the Broncos’ defense, comparing its 2016 stats to the first eight games of the 2017 season. (NFL rank in parentheses.)

Year	Takeaways	Int.	Fum. Rec.	Sacks	Opp. TD passes
2016	27 (7th)	14 (12th)	13 (4th)	42 (3rd)	13 (1st)
2017	7 (28th)	5(t-21st)	2 (30th)	19 (t-16th)	16 (t-25th)

Broncos add speed linebacker Jones, waive Snyder

By Mike Klis

9 News

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Coming to grips with the fact they struggle to cover tight ends, the Broncos made a roster adjustment Tuesday, waiving inside linebacker Kevin Snyder and signing rookie linebacker Joseph Jones off the Seattle Seahawks' practice squad.

Jones is a 6-foot, 231-pound, undrafted nickel linebacker from Northwestern who can run a 40 in 4.45 seconds.

Snyder is a run-stopping inside linebacker who was dressed as a backup to Brandon Marshall and Zaire Anderson the past two games while starter Todd Davis recovered from a high ankle sprain.

During the Broncos' ongoing, four-game losing streak, they have allowed a combined 21 catches, 368 yards and three touchdowns to tight ends Brent Celek, Trey Burton, Evan Engram, Hunter Henry, and Travis Kelce.

Bonfils Blood Center's Drive for Life

By Lynne Valencia

9 News

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Blood donors of all types are invited to team up with Bonfils Blood Center and the Denver Broncos at Drive for Life 20 on Tuesday, Nov. 7, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Sports Authority Field at Mile High. Donors may park on the west side of the stadium (in lots C or J) and enter through gate 2.

Those who give blood at the event have the chance to interact with Broncos players in the donor-exclusive Fan Zone and will receive a goody bag including a commemorative T-shirt, lapel pin and a laser-signed Demaryius Thomas photo. They may also meet Broncos alumni, cheerleaders, Miles the Mascot, Stix the Outlaws mascot and enjoy complimentary food and entertainment.

“We are so grateful to the Denver Broncos for recognizing the importance of maintaining a safe and ready community blood supply and championing this lifesaving cause for a 20th year,” Bonfils Blood Center Senior Director of Donor Recruitment Charlie Propernick said. “Their support continues to make this a can’t-miss event for Broncos fans.”

In 2016, Drive for Life attracted 1,270 lifesaving blood donors. All tallied over the course of the first 19 annual blood drives, more than 37,000 blood donors have helped save or enhance up to 113,000 lives in Colorado and beyond.

It’s the blood already on the shelf that saves lives when patient needs arise. Blood donations can be used for up to 42 days. At Drive for Life 20 the goal is to have 1,250 donors give blood to help ensure patient needs can be met into the beginning of the busy holiday season, when donations tend to drop due to busy schedules and sometimes inclement weather.

There are no appointments for Drive for Life. While blood donors are usually asked to allow an hour to donate blood, donors at Drive for Life are encouraged to plan to spend two or three hours or make a day of it to enjoy all the donor-exclusive perks.

New this year, Bonfils donors who have a new tattoo are no longer automatically disqualified from giving blood. Learn more at bonfils.org/tattoo.

Blood donors are asked to eat a healthy, low-fat meal up to two hours before donating and should drink plenty of water up to 48 hours prior to their donation. Donors age 16 or 17 will need a signed parental acknowledgement form that will be available at Drive for Life.

Blood donations are needed every day of the year. Because those who give blood between Sept. 13 and Nov. 6 won’t be eligible to give blood at Drive for Life, when they give blood they can ask how they may get a ticket to gain access to all the donor-exclusive perks. Learn more in the FAQ at bonfils.org/dfi.

Bonfils’ Marrow Program will also add potential donors to the Be The Match Registry® providing hope to patients suffering from diseases such as leukemia and lymphoma. Would-be marrow donors between 18 and 44 will complete a brief health history and consent form and submit a sample of cells through a painless cheek swabbing technique.

Drive for Life is presented in partnership with the Denver Broncos Football Club and generously sponsored by 9NEWS, Sports Radio 104.3 The FAN, The Denver Post and Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

It's more difficult than ever for young quarterbacks to avoid the bench

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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OK, the Denver Broncos made the move they said they had to make. They benched their quarterback, Trevor Siemian, put Brock Osweiler in the lineup, then lost a game by 28 points with a season-low in total yards (226) and rushing yards (35).

So, now what?

Siemian will turn 26 years old the day after Christmas, he already has 21 career starts and his team went 11-10 in those games. In many ways he embodies the dilemma teams face as they try to develop quarterbacks over the long haul while playing in a win-now league.

Time was once an important part of the equation, but developing a quarterback has turned into a football Darwinian (survival of the fittest) vocation.

"Being a quarterback in today's league is an endurance contest," said ESPN's Monday Night Football analyst Jon Gruden, a longtime quarterbacks coach and playcaller. "And for some it can be beneficial, because it can harden you, but you have to go through it, go through the tough parts sometimes, and Trevor Siemian is doing that now. You have to go through it and do your part, because I'll tell you what, he's got talent, he's bright, he's obviously tough and he'll get the ball again if he does his part."

The backup quarterback is always popular if things aren't going well. Former Broncos coach Gary Kubiak, who spent nine seasons as Hall of Famer John Elway's backup, has joked there were times people would tell him in the grocery store he should be in the lineup "to really get the offense going."

A benched quarterback has to keep working for another chance, which is what Osweiler has done and what Siemian will need to do. Osweiler's current opportunity in Denver comes after the Houston Texans traded him after one season as a starter, and the Cleveland Browns essentially benched him in the preseason before his release. The Broncos will give him another start Sunday night against the New England Patriots, but coach Vance Joseph wouldn't commit past that game.

A young quarterback's ability to rebound from a benching is an important skillset in today's NFL. Philadelphia Eagles coach Doug Pederson has 2016 first-round pick Carson Wentz guiding his 8-1 team. In the days before Wentz threw four touchdown passes in a 51-23 victory over the Broncos, Pederson was asked what traits a young quarterback needs to have beyond his physical capabilities.

"How well can you move past a negative and make a positive play after that," Pederson said.

Pederson also added: "I can help them a little bit with the playcall, and playcalling, that type of thing, get back to the run game, get back to the fundamentals, settle him down a little bit. Maybe the ball comes out faster, some quick throws, get him back into rhythm ... as the game begins to flow from there, you

can open it back up again. The thing is too, quarterbacks in this league, you just have to have short-term memory and move on from anything negative that happens."

Elway was once asked what was more difficult for a young quarterback, actually doing the job, or dealing with everything that comes with the job. And he said, "having the job, no question, dealing with the expectations, the scrutiny, the criticism for the whole team while you're trying to get a handle on the football."

Gruden said it can be as simple as a benched quarterback being honest enough with himself to see what work needs to be done, the specific items that caused turnovers, poor decisions or flawed mechanics. But Gruden added "there just aren't as many reps" for young quarterbacks to work it out now with the collective bargaining agreement limiting when players can be with the coaches in the offseason.

"So, a guy like Siemian, he's just got to take a deep breath and understand he's a good quarterback in his second system, his second head coach in two years, there are growing pains," Gruden said. "A lot of young quarterbacks go through similar situations, very few guys are fortunate enough to play for the same head coach two, three, four years. But you're not the first quarterback to lose your job, won't be the last, now you get to work so you're ready the next time."

When Joseph benched Siemian and put Oswelier into the lineup last week, he quickly cited Siemian's 10 interceptions in seven games, the Broncos' struggles on offense, and the three consecutive losses at the time. But he also added that it was "quite frankly the best for Trevor's future."

Gruden likened it to a young coach in an increasingly wired world where it's often difficult to escape what's being said about you as you try to figure out how you're going to do your job.

"Now you turn on a website and there's 47 guys critiquing you and you get on Twitter and there's a million people on you, it's much different now, maybe harder in that regard," Gruden said. "If you're really not careful you can lose sight of what you really need to do to be a great player. When I was with the Eagles, I'd drive across the Walt Whitman Bridge every morning and the guys taking the coins were always ready to tell me what I could do better and I'd turn on the radio and they'd say 'If Gruden's IQ was one point lower he'd be a plant, he's an idiot.' And it's that times 100 now, this is the world, as a young quarterback you have to work, focus and be a professional and if you work to earn it back, you will, you were good enough once, so be better the second time."

Nothing is off limits as Broncos try to solve issues on offense

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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At the moment, the Denver Broncos offense isn't what the team hoped it would be.

It's not what most anyone would want an offense to be, really, given that the Broncos already have benched one quarterback, have been shut out for the first time in a quarter century, have a growing pile of turnovers ... and still have half a season left to play.

As a result, there is little about what the Broncos are doing and how they're doing it that isn't under the microscope. In their current four-game losing streak, they've scored 52 points -- or one more than the Eagles had against them Sunday -- and 14 of those points came when they were losing by four touchdowns in Philadelphia, with one of the Broncos' touchdowns coming from the defense.

In short, no potential changes can be off the table and no one can be off limits. The word "truth," which is emblazoned in several places inside the Broncos complex, has to apply to every part of the team's playbook, game plans and game-day structure.

"Am I satisfied with the playcalling? I've said this after every loss: that we've got to coach better," said Broncos coach Vance Joseph. "When you lose, when you lose football games in this league, you have to coach better, you have to play better."

That means the coaches on the offensive side of the ball, Joseph said this week, have to find the combination of personnel and scheme that creates what he calls the "best formula" for the Broncos. And while the execution of the playcalls falls on the players, what makes up that "formula" from week to week falls on the coaches.

"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 the playcalling," Joseph said. "So when you don't win, absolutely you have to coach better. And that starts with me. ... Understand that in this league coaching is very, very important. The better-coached teams win. Leave it at that."

This week the Broncos face the challenge of playing the team generally considered to be the best-coached group in the league, the Patriots. New England has Bill Belichick on the sideline and quarterback Tom Brady leading the seventh-highest-scoring offense in the league, at 27 points per game.

On the other side of the ball, however, the Broncos offense will face a Patriots defense that statistically has been at the bottom of the league's rankings for much of the season. New England is the only team in the league that has surrendered more than 400 yards per game (417). The Patriots are also last in the league in pass defense.

New England has limited opponents' ability to turn all of that yardage into points, however. The Patriots are tied for 16th in scoring defense -- nine spots better than the Broncos. So Denver will have to find a way to close out drives. And that has not been a strong point this season for the Broncos, who have outgained their opponents in four of their five losses.

In the 51-23 loss to the Eagles last Sunday, the Broncos' first three scoring drives ended with field goals while the Eagles' first three scoring drives ended with two touchdowns and a field goal. The Broncos finished with season lows in total yards (264) and rushing yards (35).

"When you get into their territory, you have to find ways to score touchdowns," is how quarterback Brock Osweiler put it earlier this week. "You're not going to beat a team like that on the road by kicking field goals and punting the football all day. Offensively, we know we need to get better, and we are going to work extremely hard to fix the issues that are taking place."

NFL HALFWAY: Rams, Bills, Jags succeeding with new coaches

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
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Of the half dozen first-year NFL head coaches, Vance Joseph inherited what was widely considered the best situation: a team just one year removed from a Super Bowl parade with a championship-caliber defense and a renovated offense.

Unlike the other five teams that averaged 4.4 wins last season, Denver was coming off a 9-7 season and the job only came open because of Gary Kubiak's health concerns.

Yet, it's the Broncos (3-5) who are spiraling with five losses in their past six games while Sean McVay's Rams (6-2), Doug Marrone's Jaguars (5-3) and Sean McDermott's Bills (5-3) are primed for playoff pushes.

Even Anthony Lynn's Chargers (3-5) are on the rise after a winless first month that included three losses by a field goal or less.

While the 49ers are an NFL-worst 0-9, Kyle Shanahan could end up being the biggest winner of them all with his team jockeying for the top pick in next year's draft.

"Of course it wears on you," Shanahan said of all the losing. "If you sit there and you think about those words and the record too much and, yeah, it will affect you big time.

"But sitting and dwelling on that and worrying about your ego and things like that, it's not going to make you play better."

The dive has started to fray nerves in Denver, where calls for offensive coordinator Mike McCoy's job fill the airwaves.

Suddenly, all that winning ugly over the past couple of years, highlighted by Denver's defense carrying a diminished Peyton Manning to victory in his Super Bowl 50 farewell, looks pretty good in retrospect.

When Kubiak quit, defensive coordinator Wade Phillips joined McVay in L.A. and offensive coordinator Rick Dennison joined McDermott in Buffalo.

Phillips is having his customary first-year effect with the Rams, who sport the largest point differential in the NFL, and Dennison is directing an offensive turnaround with the Bills, who could end the league's longest playoff drought — they haven't qualified since 1999.

The Rams have missed out every year since 2004 and the Jaguars every season since 2007. If they continue their resurgence, the Chargers might get in for the first time since 2009.

Even the Broncos haven't lost hope because they're only two games behind the Chiefs, losers of three of four (but with a favorable schedule the rest of the way).

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

The problems in Denver are mostly on offense, where Joseph spent his first eight months on the job pondering whether Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch would be his quarterback only to see Brock Osweiler emerge as his best bet.

Joseph has seen his team average an NFL-worst 14 points since Week 3, suffer its first shutout in a quarter century and get blown out at home coming off a bye week by the battered Giants.

After a 51-23 loss at Philadelphia on Sunday that shattered the defense's not-my-fault aura, defensive end Derek Wolfe said the "Broncos are beating the Broncos" with too many mistakes, turnovers, drops and flags before the snap and after the whistle.

Joseph acknowledged the coaching staff has to clean up its act, too.

Joe Woods' defense is having too many breakdowns in coverage, Brock Olivo's special teams are too sloppy and McCoy stubbornly sticks to a steady diet of three-receiver sets even though his quarterbacks have 18 sacks and 10 turnovers out of that formation over the past six games.

"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," Joseph said.

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

Right now that includes the Bills, Rams and Jaguars.

BILLS: McDermott is doing more with less than his predecessor Rex Ryan. Fewer than two dozen players remain from last year's roster and the losing culture is finally fading in Buffalo. McDermott has gotten the most out of QB Tyrod Taylor and the Bills lead the NFL with a plus-11 turnover margin.

The next four games are critical: road games against the Chargers and Chiefs sandwiched in between home games against the first-place Saints and Patriots.

RAMS: With help from McVay and a better supporting cast, former top overall draft pick Jared Goff has made a huge jump this season. After failing to win the starting QB job until halfway through his rookie season, Goff is undergoing a sophomore surge not unlike Carson Wentz's in Philadelphia.

The Rams hit the halfway point in first place in the NFC West. Down the stretch, they'll be tested by fellow NFC division leaders Minnesota, New Orleans and Philadelphia.

JAGUARS: Having spent the previous two years as Jacksonville's O-line coach, Marrone knew exactly what he had with turnover-prone QB Blake Bortles. So he built a run-first team that could control the clock, limit Bortles' passes and play to an already-stout defense.

Drafting RB Leonard Fournette and LT Cam Robinson beefed up the ground game, and DE Calais Campbell has proven to be the NFL's best free-agent signing. The Jaguars looked poised for a strong finish and their best season in a decade.

49ERS: Shanahan arrived with a lot of optimism as he brought his deep offensive knowledge and playbook from Atlanta to a team in need of a change. But San Francisco got off to the worst start in franchise history.

QB Brian Hoyer went from starter to the bench before getting cut when GM John Lynch acquired Tom Brady's longtime backup Jimmy Garoppolo. The only drama down the stretch will be if they can avoid 0-16 and get a good look at Garoppolo before determining whether to draft a quarterback with a premier pick in April.

CHARGERS: The relocated Chargers didn't leave their heartbreak in San Diego when they moved to L.A. They've already lost four games by eight points or fewer. McCoy's last two teams in San Diego lost 17 games by that same one-score margin.

They've once again had stretches of strong play and a string of solid victories with an undeniable collection of veteran talent. But narrow losses due to poor late-game execution and bad breaks have kept them from rising to the top of the AFC West.

Mason's Week 10 Power Rankings: After loss, Broncos fall a few spots

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
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1. PHILADELPHIA (8-1) Last week: 1

The only team that has guaranteed that it will not finish the 2017 season with a losing record, Philadelphia hits its bye with a plus-11.6-points-per-game differential that is the league's best.

2. NEW ENGLAND (6-2) Last week: 2

After allowing over 400 yards in each of their first six games, the Patriots have given up an average of 346 yards per game in their last two contests.

3. PITTSBURGH (6-2) Last week: 3

The Steelers face just two teams with a winning record in their final eight regular-season games, and both of those foes (Tennessee and New England) come to Heinz Field.

4. NEW ORLEANS (6-2) Last week: 7

The Saints' defense has accounted for just 12.7 points allowed per game during their six-game winning streak.

5. L.A. RAMS (6-2) Last week: 6

After a game with Houston this week, it gets rough for the Rams, who play the Vikings, Saints, Eagles, Seahawks and Titans during a brutal six-game stretch from Weeks 11-16. Los Angeles already has road wins against two teams with winning records (Dallas and Jacksonville), so it's not as if they've risen by beating lightweights, and three of their wins this year were by at least 33 points, so they're doing what good teams should do to outmatched opponents.

6. MINNESOTA (6-2) Last week: 5

Getting Teddy Bridgewater back on the 53-man roster is a wonderful sign for the fourth-year quarterback's recovery from his horrific knee injury, even though their short-term hopes are in Case Keenum's hands.

7. JACKSONVILLE (5-3)

Last week: 12

Jacksonville ranks in the NFL's top 10 in net points per possession, net yards per possession and first downs per possession on both offense and defense, making the Jaguars the only team in the NFL with that distinction.

8. DALLAS (5-3)

Last week: 8

The Cowboys just keep stacking wins while they have Ezekiel Elliott. If they have to play without him, can they play .500 ball? If they can, a playoff spot would be within reach.

9. CAROLINA (6-3)

Last week: 10

The Panthers' defense has accounted for just 23 points allowed in their last three games -- five fewer than they gave up in their previous game against Philadelphia.

10. KANSAS CITY (6-3)

Last week: 4

Just one team left on the Chiefs' schedule currently has a winning record (Buffalo, Week 12).

11. SEATTLE (5-3)

Last week: 8

The Seahawks' first eight opponents have an average winning percentage of .401, giving them the league's weakest first-half schedule.

12. DETROIT (4-4)

Last week: 16

The most difficult part of the Lions' schedule is behind them; they face just one team that currently has a winning record for the rest of the season (Minnesota, Week 12).

13. WASHINGTON: (4-4)

Last week: 19

Legends are built on drives like the one Kirk Cousins led in the final minutes to beat the Seahawks.

14. BUFFALO (5-3)

Last week: 9

Without takeaways, the Bills' success equation does not compute; the Bills forced an average of 2.7 takeaways in their five wins and 1.0 in their three defeats.

15. ATLANTA (4-4)

Last week: 14

The Falcons can still move the football -- they rank second in the NFL in net yards and first downs per possession -- but they rank 11th in net points per series. Four of their next five games are at home, but four of their next five opponents have winning records, and they have the most difficult remaining schedule of any NFC team.

16. TENNESSEE (5-3)

Last week: 17

The Titans never trailed against Baltimore and won despite averaging just 3.4 yards per carry.

17. BALTIMORE (4-5)

Last week: 15

Their only two wins in their last six games have come against teams starting backup quarterbacks. Their next two games will come against the Packers and Texans, who are playing without Aaron Rodgers and Deshaun Watson, respectively.

18. L.A. CHARGERS (3-5)

Last week: 24

Moving up by standing still on their bye week.

19. OAKLAND (4-5)

Last week: 24

An impressive -- and necessary win at Miami gave them a split on their East Coast road trip, setting up a must-win game against the Patriots in Mexico City after their bye.

20. N.Y. JETS (4-5)

Last week: 26

The Jets are 1-3 with an average scoring margin of minus-9 points per game on the road and 3-2 with an average margin of plus-3.6 at home. Unfortunately for the Jets, a majority of their remaining games are away from MetLife Stadium.

21. DENVER (3-5)

Last week: 18

The Broncos still rank first or second in forcing three-and-outs and net yardage and first downs allowed per possession, but they dropped from seventh to 15th in net points allowed per possession because of Sunday's loss at Philadelphia. Denver allowed seven touchdowns, as many as its defense had permitted in the previous five games combined.

22. CHICAGO (3-5)

Last week: 23

Always competitive at home, the Bears face the Packers and Lions at Soldier Field in their next two games.

23. GREEN BAY (4-4)
Last week: 20

While the Packers obviously miss Aaron Rodgers, their defense is just as much of an issue, as they have allowed 27.5 points per game in their last four contests.

24. HOUSTON (3-5)
Last week: 13

Without Deshaun Watson, J.J. Watt and Whitney Mercilus, the Texans appear to be done.

25. CINCINNATI (3-5)
Last week: 21

At least the Bengals showed some fight, in a manner of speaking.

26. MIAMI (4-4)
Last week: 22

Their offense bounces back, and their defense struggles. Still, their offense ranks 31st in net points per possession and 32nd in net yards per possession, and their defense (18th and 10th in both categories, respectively) is not enough to make up for it.

27. ARIZONA (4-4)
Last week: 28

Their four wins came over teams that are a collective 5-27, including the 49ers twice (so their 0-9 mark counts double). They have just one game against a team that currently has a losing record before Christmas Eve.

28. TAMPA BAY (2-6)
Last week: 27

With Jameis Winston out this Sunday, the game against the Jets becomes the Ryan Fitzpatrick Bowl, as the backup quarterback faces his former team. That's about it.

29. INDIANAPOLIS (3-6)
Last week: 27

Jacoby Brissett's best game as a Colt -- 20-of-30 passing for 308 yards for two touchdowns and no interceptions -- showed progress. His play has become steadier in recent weeks, and he has a 5-to-1 touchdown-to-interception ratio in his last four starts as he learns how to limit his mistakes.

30. N.Y. GIANTS (1-7)

Last week: 29

Their offense has accounted for just 13.3 points per game since injuries decimated their receiving corps in Week 6.

31. CLEVELAND (0-8)

Last week: 31

The Browns' best chances at a win appear to be home games against the Packers on Dec. 10 if Rodgers remains injured and the Ravens on Dec. 17.

32. SAN FRANCISCO (0-9)

Last week: 32

The 49ers still have trips to Chicago and Houston remaining after their bye, but this week's home game against the New York Giants could be their best chance at a win; otherwise 0-16 becomes a legitimate possibility.

Drive for Life 20 brings out Denver community for a great cause

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
November 8, 2017

At Sports Authority Field at Mile High on Tuesday, Jordan Taylor was a sight as bright as his nickname.

He walked through the lanes that had been made by the arrangement of donation chairs, and as he did, he stopped to say hello to each person giving blood at Drive for Life 20.

For many people, the sight of a needle causes anxiety, but the purpose — giving blood to help save lives or receiving a vaccine — is greater than the fear. And if you then add in the factor of meeting Broncos players, well, that is one fear that becomes easily overcome.

That's why Drive for Life, a blood drive partnership between the Broncos and Bonfils Blood Center, has been so popular for 20 years.

"The Broncos have been a great community partner for 20 years now with Bonfils Blood Center," said Liz Lambert, a Bonfils spokesperson. "[They are] helping get the word out that the need for blood is constant and helping hold this event every year to remind donors of why it is that blood donations are so important and just celebrating those donors and making this a great event."

Some of the Broncos 22 players who supported the event wandered the donation area, like Taylor, and others played games with those who had already donated.

"It's always fun to just get out here and play games and hang out with the fans and the community," Virgil Green said. "Just for them to see us ... playing pop-a-shot here, I'm going to get real competitive. I think it's good for fans to see us in our competitive stage, kind of how we are on the field and just having fun.

"It helps save many lives, regardless of what the situation is. And anybody can give blood and help and [pay it] forward is doing a great thing in the community."

Beneath the jovial spirit of the event was a very serious cause.

"On a regular basis, Bonfils collects about 3,000 or more units of blood every week all around Colorado, just to help 100 hospitals in Colorado and hospitals in other states, as well, meet the needs of patients on a regular basis," Lambert said. "The blood collected today, we hope, will top 1,000 units, which will go towards helping ensure that as we approach the holiday months and weeks that when people are more busy, maybe aren't making time for those donations, we can help ensure that those donations can continue to be met."

The cause is important for the Broncos, and the reason why the community has picked up the support for 20 years is clear. "They are the heartbeat of our team," Green said.

Shane Ray's Rays Awareness foundation takes next step in growth

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
November 8, 2017

Unsurprisingly, Shane Ray's mother stole the show.

On Monday night, in front of about 100 supporters, Sebrina Johnson told the story many of his fans already know, about how they lived in one of the country's nastiest neighborhoods, about how she scrapped to keep them on the right path, about how he worked to get to the NFL.

But she also added anecdotes he didn't expect, like how it seemed like he gained a shoe size with each birthday or how the then-preteen Ray, dismayed at how he was slightly overweight, grew out of those concerns with a sudden growth spurt. She described a time when he so desperately wanted to become a better athlete.

As a single parent, Johnson scrapped together money however she could to provide solutions to these challenges. But she and her son know there are many families out there, whether in Denver or Kansas City or anywhere else, who struggle with those same problems.

Those families are the people Ray and his mother had in mind when they added a fundraising initiative to his foundation, Rays Awareness, with Monday night's inaugural Steak and Seafood Dinner at Ocean Prime in Larimer Square.

"I always told my mom, 'At some point in my life, I don't know when, but I want to help people out,'" Ray said. "Because I understood how it is to grow up and have people there to support you and have people that every time you get in trouble or you're failing, people give you the right direction. That's what Rays Awareness is all about: finding ways to help people who need help, whether it be kids that need shoes, whether it be kids that need backpacks, whether it be raising money for food. There's so many different things that we can touch and focus on in Denver. I'm just honored and blessed to be able to do it with the platform that I have."

Rays Awareness has focused on helping the Denver Rescue Mission in its first years of existence. Ray has a "Shane's Shoes" campaign where he gathers footwear for children in need, and he held a backpack giveaway for children at the shelter before the school year.

But he has his eyes on larger initiatives.

"I know that one of the goals Shane has is to build a new playground at the Denver Rescue Mission," said Lauren Renschler, Ray's publicist and a board member of Rays Awareness. "He was there with a backpack giveaway in the fall and noticed there wasn't really a place for kids to play outside there. And so that is something that we've earmarked and said, 'As soon as we're able to raise enough money, that is top of our list, to take care of our partners and those families.'"

Though Ray was nervous at first about taking this next step for the foundation, the dinner was a rousing success, with the main floor of Ocean Prime packed to the gills. In addition to the dinner, the event also featured live and silent auctions for sports memorabilia and other valuable prizes.

"When we really started the charity dinner and started planning it, we were kind of nervous because you just don't know how these things are going to go," Ray said. "But when I was able to start telling people about it and get the message out there of what I was trying to do, we sold out in almost two weeks, raising almost over \$40,000. That just says so much about people here in Denver and how much they really do care about the community, how they're supporting my cause in doing things for other people who are less fortunate and I think it's very powerful. To have the platform that I have as a football player and to be able to combine that same platform with the people in the community to help me out, I think it goes hand in hand."

Rays Awareness board members watched Monday night as what began as a small endeavor to help the Mission gained the support of many willing donors.

But they weren't the only ones who witnessed that expansion. Ray and Johnson invited representatives from the Mission to have a night to celebrate the growing assistance.

"Honestly, his support for Denver Rescue Mission over the last couple years has been tremendous, and you can just tell he and his mom, Sebrina, just the heart that they have for what we do at the Mission is so genuine," said Stacy Parker, PR coordinator for the Denver Rescue Mission. "Just the fact that he wanted us to be out here to be represented at this event is really, really incredible. We feel really blessed."

Power rankings roundup, Week 10

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
November 8, 2017

The Broncos' current average ranking among these publications is about 22nd overall.

ESPN.com

Current rank: No. 21
Last week: No. 17

The Broncos won a Super Bowl with a great defense and below-average quarterback play, but this season, their QB play has bottomed out. Denver ranks 29th in Total QBR this season and has seen a drastic fall in the standings and our rankings as a result.

Bleacher Report, Chris Simms

Current rank: No. 23
Last week: No. 16

Falling to 3-5 isn't the end of the world for Denver, but an inability to play through its championship-caliber defense is.

Sports Illustrated/The MMQB

Current rank: No. 22
Last week: No. 17

I'm not sure Brock Osweiler was any better (or more careful with the ball) than Trevor Siemian had been, but he'll draw a second straight start because . . . what else are you going to do? The good news is that the Patriots are coming to town and Tom Brady has never beaten Osweiler in Denver. It is his white whale.

USA Today

Current rank: No. 20
Last week: No. 19

Issues under center are legit. But previously top-ranked defense just embarrassed itself. Expect losing skid to reach five vs. rested Patriots.

Yahoo! Sports, Frank Schwab

Current rank: 22
Last week: 20

The Broncos are turning back to Brock Osweiler at quarterback this week, and that's not surprising. What is surprising is coach Vance Joseph's explanation: "It felt good to our team — it was a confident week and the energy was better. It was urgent, it was detailed and the meetings were better. Brock's experience and 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 lost 51-23 on Sunday and looked horrendous, the worst they've looked for a few seasons. I suppose Joseph is trying to keep everything positive during a bad streak, but talking about how Osweiler helped preparation and urgency before an embarrassing loss is not going to play well with an angry fan base.

Washington Post, Mark Maske

Current rank: No. 28

Last week: No. 25

Is anyone surprised that starting Brock Osweiler on Sunday against the Eagles didn't fix the Broncos' QB problems? The next move must be to Paxton Lynch as soon as he's deemed ready to play, as he works his way back from his preseason shoulder injury. In the meantime, Coach Vance Joseph is sticking with Osweiler. No matter what happens at QB, the defense must play far better than it did in Philadelphia.

NFL.com, Elliot Harrison

Current rank: No. 22

Last week: No. 21

Not sure anyone foresaw the Broncos getting absolutely throttled in Philadelphia on Sunday. Losing? Sure. But my Twitter feed suggested that my prediction of the Eagles winning 27-13 was off because there was no way Philly would score that many points on THAT defense. Right. The Eagles didn't -- they scored 51, almost doubling the way-off prediction.

DenverBroncos.com, Andrew Mason

Current rank: No. 21

Last week: No. 18

The Broncos still rank first or second in forcing three-and-outs, net yardage allowed per possession and first downs allowed per possession, but they dropped from seventh to 15th in net points allowed per series after Sunday's loss at Philadelphia. Denver allowed seven touchdowns -- as many as its defense had permitted in the previous five games combined.

U.S. Army soldiers treated to sideline experience at Broncos vs. Eagles

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
November 8, 2017

When Nancy Ardis-Wolfe was looking for a slogan for her non-profit, Supplies for Soldiers, she settled on “Serving those who serve.”

Since her six-month U.S. Army civilian deployment to Afghanistan, that’s what she’s done — via donations of snacks, hygiene items, needed appliances and other goods.

What started out of her own pocket became a full-fledged non-profit that sends provisions to troops in Afghanistan every month.

Sunday in Philadelphia, though, Ardis-Wolfe found a different way to serve those who serve.

Ardis-Wolfe, along with her husband Mark Wolfe, surprised U.S. Army soldiers and Broncos fans Mike Kasper and Eric Gallagher with tickets to Denver’s game against the Eagles.

The gift, which Ardis-Wolfe and Wolfe funded separately from their non-profit, was not only a way to reward the soldiers for their service — it was also a chance to meet Kasper for the first time.

For about 18 months, Kasper was one of Ardis-Wolfe’s points of contact in Afghanistan and later in the U.S., but the two had not met in person until Saturday after Kasper and Gallagher drove the seven-plus hours from Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

And that’s where the Broncos stepped in. Denver set the four up with pregame sideline passes to turn Sunday’s game from an incredible experience into an unbelievable one.

Kasper, who has been to games at Sports Authority Field at Mile High, had never been to a Broncos game at an opposing stadium. The pregame sideline passes only enhanced the experience.

“This is cool,” Kasper said. “This is the first time I’ve ever watched the Broncos anywhere but Mile High. It was really neat to get up close and personal and actually see all these guys. It’s just a really cool experience.

“It’s always great to see the support from the NFL. I feel like a lot of these players and all the people here definitely do support the military.”

For Ardis-Wolfe, the moment was a culmination of months and years of work. Though she’s been to Broncos games herself — she planned her deployment around the Broncos’ 2015 playoff run — this seemed to rank near the top of her experiences. The same could be said for Wolfe, who has been a Broncos season-ticket holder for 45 years.

“This was a dream come true,” Ardis-Wolfe said. “I haven’t been able to sleep for a couple weeks. Finally getting to meet Michael and his battle buddy who has been through everything with him. This is the first time meeting Eric, also. It’s just been an unbelievable experience. These guys put their life on the line, as do all of our military. I have the utmost respect and love for these guys.”

“This is who it was about for us. These two guys.”

To donate to Supplies for Soliders, please visit [this link](#).

Broncos sign LB Joseph Jones, waive Kevin Snyder

By Staff

DenverBroncos.com

November 8, 2017

The Broncos made a pair of linebacker transactions on Tuesday, signing Joseph Jones and waiving Kevin Snyder.

Jones, who was signed off of the Seahawks' practice squad, previously competed on the Chargers' practice squad. He entered the NFL in 2017 as a college free agent with the Cowboys and played for Dallas through the preseason before being cut.

The rookie linebacker appeared in 37 games, including five starts, at Northwestern University, totaling 70 tackles (44 solo), three sacks, two passes defensed and one fumble recovery.

A native of Plano, Illinois, Jones will wear No. 43.

Snyder recently rejoined the Broncos on Oct. 24 as a practice-squad member before being promoted to the active roster on Oct. 28. He had a stint with the Broncos previously, joining the team for the final month of the 2016 season and the entire offseason and preseason. He was waived by Denver on Sept. 2 during roster cuts.

Rapid Reaction: Denver Broncos, led by Brock Osweiler, hit bottom in humiliating surrender to Eagles

By David Ramsey
Colorado Springs Gazette
November 8, 2017

A group effort in futility.

Just when it seemed the Broncos had fallen as far as they could fall, they fell even deeper into the NFL abyss. For the past month, the Broncos offense has been asleep, but a violent, aggressive, stubborn defense allowed fans to retain hope.

Maybe the offense could start doing practical, important things like moving to first downs and scoring points. Maybe the season could be salvaged.

Goodbye, maybe.

The Broncos defense joined the offense in a frightening degree of awfulness during Sunday's 51-23 loss to the Eagles. It was bad, really bad, even worse than the loss to the Chargers two weeks ago.

Here are three reasons why the Broncos got trashed by the Eagles:

One – The defense

We can wave goodbye, at least for a week, to the angle of the defense being martyrs. On Sunday, the Broncos defense was shredded by Philadelphia quarterback Carson Wentz.

Wentz was seldom bothered by pressure. Wentz was able to torment Denver's proud and stingy secondary.

Remember the fun of watching the Broncos offense when it was led by an elite quarterback? That's where Eagles fans are now. Wentz is special. The Broncos collection of quarterbacks is, well, not so special.

Which brings us to another problem:

Two – Brock Osweiler

I wondered if the Brock of 2015, the one who led the Broncos to a 5-2 record, the one who played a vital role in Denver's march to a Super Bowl title, would suddenly return to revive the offense.

Instead, we saw the Brock of 2016, the one who inspired the Texans to dump him less than a year after handing him \$37 million guaranteed cash.

Brock was not an improvement over Trevor Siemian, benched last week. But he was not a drop from Siemian, either.

The Broncos have a serious quarterback problem that is unlikely to be solved this season, or maybe even this decade.

Three – Penalties

The Broncos had zero chance in the madness that is the Eagles home field.

They will have a chance later in the season. The Broncos could still finish, say, 8-8.

But sloppiness could send the Broncos to a truly atrocious season. On Sunday, the Broncos collected 14 penalties.

Vance Joseph faces a mountain of problems as his rookie season tumbles into chaos.

Discipline is near the top of those problems.

Worst Denver Broncos losses of the John Elway front-office era

By Vinny Benedetto
Colorado Springs Gazette
November 8, 2017

Sunday's 51-28 loss to Philadelphia was the worst suffered by a Denver Broncos team since the 43-8 blowout against the Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl XLVII. Here are the worst Broncos losses since John Elway took over the team's front office:

2011 season

Oct. 2: Packers 49, Broncos 23 (26 points)

Oct. 30: Lions 45, Broncos 10 (35 points)

Dec. 18: Patriots 41, Broncos 23 (18 points)

Dec. 24: Bills 40, Broncos 14 (26 points)

Jan. 14, 2012 (Divisional game): Patriots 45, Broncos 10 (35 points)

2012 season

N/A

2013 season

Feb. 2, 2014 (Super Bowl): Seahawks 43, Broncos 8 (35 points)

2014 season

Nov. 2: Patriots 43, Broncos 21 (22 points)

2015 season

Nov. 15: Chiefs 29, Broncos 13 (16 points)

2016 season

Dec. 25: Chiefs 33, Broncos 10 (23 points)

2017 season

Oct. 22: Chargers 21, Broncos 0 (21 points)

Nov. 5: Eagles 51, Broncos 23 (28 points)

NFL Week 10 picks: Bills upset Saints, Broncos stun Patriots in Denver

By John Breech
CBS Sports
November 8, 2017

I've seen "Fight Club" roughly 19 times in my life and I have to say, that movie is a kids' film compared to what went down in the NFL over the weekend.

We saw three fights, a head-butt, a cheap shot to the back and an old-fashioned chokehold, which ironically also kind of describes what usually goes down when my family gets together for Thanksgiving. We're having practice Thanksgiving this weekend just to make sure we're all on the same page this year.

Two players who weren't on the same page over the weekend were A.J. Green and Jalen Ramsey. In what will surely go down as the greatest fight in NFL history, Green used a chokehold on Ramsey that looks like it came straight out of a YMCA self defense class.

I have no idea why the NFL didn't suspend Green, but I'm guessing it's because of the perfect form on that chokehold. It takes WWE wrestlers years of practice to master something like that. Green perfected it in three seconds.

Of course, the one guy who did get suspended for his actions over the weekend was the one guy who went bonkers, Mike Evans. If you take someone out with a cheap shot to the back, you're going to get suspended 100 percent of the time, and that's exactly what Evans did to Saints rookie Marshon Lattimore.

The good news for Evans is that his one-game suspension means he won't have to catch passes from Ryan Fitzpatrick this week, which is arguably a win if you think about it.

One team that didn't get in a fight this week, or even put up a fight, was the New York Giants. I'm not really going to blame them for their loss though -- I'm going to blame Ben McAdoo's halftime speech, which might go down as the least inspirational words ever spoken.

That's a classic, "Ummm," and I'm not going to lie, I've used it before myself. I generally use it in any situation where I didn't do something I was supposed to do.

Sister: "John, did you pick up your brother from the airport?"

Me: "Ummm."

I can never remember to pick people up from the airport. I'm 90 percent sure Uber was invented by someone who got left at the airport.

Alright, enough jibber-jabber, let's get to the picks.

Actually, before we get to the picks, here's your weekly reminder that you can check out the picks from every CBSsports.com NFL Expert by clicking here. To be honest, you don't even need to click over this week because I actually had the best record of anyone here at CBSsports.com. Using my patented picking formula that mostly involves never taking the Browns, I was able to go 10-3 straight up in Week 9. That total includes two games -- Bills-Jets and Falcons-Panthers -- where I correctly picked the underdog to win, and i'm only mentioning that because I'm about to go underdog crazy this week.

As a matter of fact, I'm picking so many underdogs to win in Week 10 that I might actually get Underdog tattooed on me if all the picks pan out.

I'm thinking lower back.

Alright, let's get to the picks.

NFL Week 10 Picks: Underdog edition New Orleans (6-2) at Buffalo (5-3)

1 p.m. ET (Fox)

The Bills are the only team in the AFC that's still undefeated at home this year and I'm guessing it's because the bus ride from the visiting team's hotel to the stadium is the most intimidating 15-mile ride in the NFL. First, you have to go 14 miles through Buffalo, and then if that's not enough to make you want to forfeit the game, you have to drive by all the insane tailgaters at New Era Field.

I mean, how are you supposed to concentrate on football when you see fans setting themselves on fire and jumping through tables.

There's a good chance Bills fans won't actually be able to set themselves on fire this week and that's because it looks like there's going to be low temperatures and rain, according to the weather app on my phone, which is only right about 60 percent of the time.

The temperature is supposed to be in the low 40s, which I'm only mentioning because Drew Brees never has to play in temperatures that low. Since joining the Saints in 2006, Brees has only played a total of 11 regular season games when the temperature is 45 degrees or below and he's 4-7 in those games. Oh, and he hasn't played in a game this cold since 2014. The Saints are basically an indoor cat that's being let outside in cold weather this week and that never seems to work out well for the cat.

The pick: Bills 20-17 over Saints

L.A. Chargers (3-5) at Jacksonville (5-3) 1 p.m. ET (CBS)

Although Philip Rivers will probably never win a Super Bowl, I'm starting to think he doesn't even care about that because playing the Jaguars is basically his Super Bowl. Since 2010, Rivers is 6-0 against the Jags.

The last time the Chargers lost to the Jaguars, David Garrard was Jacksonville's starting quarterback. Can anyone guess what year that was? I'll give you a hint, it was the same year the "Alvin and the Chipmunks" movie came out.

You know what, that's a horrible hint, so why don't I just tell you: It was 2007. Since then, Rivers has dominated the Jaguars almost as badly as "Alvin and the Chipmunks" got dominated at the box office in 2007. I'm not sure how much money it made, but the movie was about chipmunks, so it couldn't have been much.

In Rivers' six wins over the Jaguars, he's thrown a combined 18 touchdown passes and just two interceptions. Rivers is basically daring all of us to take the Jaguars here and I'm not going to do it. If the "Alvin and the Chipmunks" movie can spawn three sequels, then by God, Philip Rivers can waltz into Jacksonville and pick apart the NFL's best passing defense.

The pick: Chargers 19-17 over Jaguars

Minnesota (6-2) at Washington (4-4)

1 p.m. ET (Fox)

Every time the Redskins play a game, I always imagine what it would be like to watch them play while sitting on a couch with Kirk Cousins' agent. If I were that guy, I'd send Redskins owner Daniel Snyder a new contract demand EVERY time that Cousins throws a touchdown pass.

After Cousins led the Redskins to a wild comeback win over the Seahawkson Sunday, I would've sent Snyder an entire book of demands.

1. Hey Dan, did you see that comeback? Great. We're going to need to add three zeroes and one extra year to that proposed contract extension.
2. Also, let's up that signing bonus from \$41 million to \$81 million.
3. Oh, and Kirk's wife would like free ice cream for life, so let's throw that in.
4. Also, not sure if you heard, but the Cousins' just had a baby, and Kirk says you need to pay for the diapers. Not sure if that counts against the salary cap, though, so you'll need to hire someone to crunch the numbers there.
5. Kirk will also need you to get MTV to reboot the show "Pimp My Ride" and then once that's done, Kirk will need to be on the show because he kinds of wants his conversion van pimped out.

Besides those things, I would also make demands for restaurant gift certificates and free premium cable. As you can clearly tell, I would be a fantastic agent. I think what I'm trying to say here is that Cousins' value is going to continue to skyrocket because he's going to beat the Seahawks and Vikings in consecutive weeks.

The pick: Redskins 23-20 over Vikings

Dallas (5-3) at Atlanta (4-4)

4:25 p.m. ET (Fox)

Welcome to Week 9 of the Ezekiel Elliott watch. For the ninth straight week, I have no idea if Elliott's going to play and for the ninth straight week, I'm totally regretting the fact that I didn't take a constitutional law class in college. Of course, whether or not Elliott plays doesn't actually matter here

because there's no way I'm picking against Mr. November, Dak Prescott. Prescott has played a total of five games during the month of November in his career and not only has he gone 5-0, but he's thrown nine touchdown passes and zero interceptions combined in those games.

I'm so sold on this Mr. November thing that I'm going to the trademark office first thing Monday morning if Prescott leads the Cowboys to a win over the Falcons. Hopefully, Derek Jeter's Mr. November trademark from the 2001 World Series has expired by now.

I thought about picking the Falcons in this game, but lately, their season has turned into the NFL version of "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" -- except minus the good because they've only been bad and ugly over the past few weeks. I didn't actually think a Super Bowl hangover was a real thing until Sunday, when I watched Julio Jones drop a pass that I think someone with an actual hangover might have caught.

I didn't even know Julio Jones was capable of dropping passes. By the way, I'm fully expecting a shootout here, which is bad news for the Falcons because that's basically writing your own death sentence against Mr. November.

The pick: Cowboys 34-31 over Falcons

New England (6-2) at Denver (3-5)
8:30 p.m. ET (NBC)

After watching the Broncos for the past two years, I'm half-convinced that John Elway is drafting bad quarterbacks on purpose so that no one breaks any of his records in Denver. As a matter of fact, if it were up to Elway, the Broncos would probably be running an offense that doesn't even need a quarterback.

With no quarterback, the Broncos' season is on the verge of disaster, which is what the year will officially turn into if Denver loses this week. The bad news for the Broncos is that since the Patriots are coming off a bye, Bill Belichick has had an extra week to figure out how to stop a Broncos offense that he probably only needed four minutes to figure out. As a matter of fact, let's check in with Bill and see how his scouting has been going this week.

Wait, what?

I didn't want to pick the Broncos in this game, but I think Belichick might have just talked me into it. Actually, my pick in this game has nothing to do with the Broncos' explosive offense and everything to do with the fact that the Patriots haven't faced a good defense this year. In eight games, New England has faced just one top-10 defense (Carolina) and they lost that game.

After getting embarrassed by the Eagles on Sunday, the Broncos defense is going to be out for blood, I'm just not sure if they're going to be out for Tom Brady's blood or Osweiler's blood because they've seemed pretty frustrated with their own offense, lately.

Normally, I would say there's no way Osweiler could lead the Broncos to a primetime win over the Patriots, but he's actually done it before. Back in 2015, Osweiler won his second career start when he led the Broncos to an overtime win over New England in a Sunday night game. If Osweiler beats

Brady on Sunday, I think that makes him the new Eli Manning: The quarterback that Brady inexplicably can't beat.

The pick: Broncos 19-16 over Patriots

NFL Week 10 picks: All the rest

- Seahawks 24-16 over Cardinals
- Bears 16-13 over Packers
- Lions 30-20 over Browns
- Bengals 22-19 over Titans
- Steelers 27-17 over Colts
- Jets 30-24 over Buccaneers
- Rams 34-17 over Texans
- Giants 24-17 over 49ers

- Panthers 31-20 over Dolphins

BYES: Chiefs, Eagles, Raiders, Ravens

Last Week

Best pick: Last week, I said the Saints would score 30 points and beat the Buccaneers and then guess what happened? The Saints scored 30 points and beat the Buccaneers. I don't want to take too much credit for this pick because this game was over before it even started thanks to what might have been the worst pregame speech of all-time. I'm not kidding, either, I've spent the past 48 hours Googling pregame speeches and I couldn't find anything that was even half as bad as the one Jameis Winston gave on Sunday.

I mean, that's barely better than McAdoo's halftime speech. Unless you're eating a bowl of Alpha-Bits cereal, I'm not sure why anyone would ever want to eat a 'W,' or any letter, for that matter.

I'm not going to sit here and blame the loss on Winston's speech, but if DeSean Jackson's reaction was any indication, I think we can blame the loss on Winston's speech.

Winston won't be playing for at least the next two weeks due to a shoulder injury, which might actually be good news for the Bucs because that should give him ample time to work on his pregame speeches.

Worst pick: Last week, I spent three paragraphs babbling about how I shouldn't pick the Seahawks to win because of the curse of the Texans. If you don't pay much attention to curses, or the Texans, this is a situation where every team that plays the Texans loses the following week.

The Seahawks played the Texans in Week 8, so obviously I should've picked them to lose to the Redskins in Week 9, but I didn't, because I'm stubborn and because up until a week ago, I didn't believe in curses. However, I do now, which means I'm officially concerned for the following people: Tom Brady (Madden curse) and Jameis Winston (Ryan Fitzpatrick curse).

As a matter of fact, I'm not even going to blame Winston for his poor pregame speech anymore, I'm just going to assume that was a side effect of the Fitzpatrick curse. Poor Jameis.

Finally, if you guys have ever wondered which teams I'm actually good (and bad) at picking, here's a quick look.

Teams I'm 8-1 picking this year: 49ers, Eagles, Cardinals (7-1), Saints (7-1), Browns (7-1), Lions (7-1)

Teams I'm 2-6 picking this year: Dolphins, Jaguars

Every other team is somewhere in the middle.

Picks Record

Straight up in Week 9: 10-3

SU overall: 82-50

Against the spread in Week 9: 7-5-1

ATS overall: 66-62-4

Broncos' Vance Joseph says Brock Osweiler 'earned' another chance after 51-23 loss

By Sean Wagner-McGough

CBS Sports

November 8, 2017

In case you were wondering, Brock Osweiler has not magically improved since the last time we saw him play meaningful football for the Houston Texans last season. On Sunday, Osweiler made his first start for the Broncos this season after Trevor Siemian got benched. It went as expected. In a 51-23 loss to the Eagles, Osweiler completed 19 of 38 passes for 208 yards, one touchdowns, two picks, and a 53.4 passer rating.

If you missed Osweiler's start, don't fret, because you'll get another chance to watch him. On Monday, Broncos coach Vance Joseph revealed that Osweiler will start against the Patriots on Sunday night because he "earned" another shot.

"I think Brock's earned it," he said, per the Denver Post's Nicki Jhabvala. "I think Brock deserves one more week to prove he's the guy for us."

Translation: Paxton Lynch still isn't ready to start.

CBS Sports NFL Insider Jason La Canfora reported on Sunday that the 2016 first-round pick "continues to make strides in his recovery from a shoulder injury and could start as soon as Week 10." My best guess is that Lynch is still a week away from being ready, because there's no way that Joseph actually thinks Osweiler "earned" another chance, right? And unless Osweiler somehow lights up the Patriots, there's no way he can hang onto the starting job. The Broncos need to find out what they have in Lynch before entering the offseason and they already know Osweiler isn't the long-term solution.

Of course, Osweiler -- in his first stint with the Broncos -- did beat the Patriots, though in that win, he compiled a 72.5 passer rating. So, I doubt the Patriots are going to be overly concerned by him. But give the Patriots credit for trying to be complimentary of Osweiler and the Broncos' offense. Head coach Bill Belichick called them "very explosive" (not true) and defensive coordinator Matt Patricia called Osweiler a "big guy," which is at least factually true.

You know who else was a big guy?

Vance Joseph: Paxton Lynch still isn't physically ready

By Kevin Patra

NFL.com

November 8, 2017

The Denver Broncos sticking with Brock Osweiler under center leaves one big question floating in the thin Mile High air: What's the deal with Paxton Lynch?

The former first-round pick suffered a shoulder injury in the third game of the preseason and finally began practicing again last week. Lynch struggled in brief stints last season, but he would bring a needed mobility behind a porous offensive line. Frankly, he can't be much worse than what Broncos fans have watched from their quarterbacks the past few weeks, right?

Coach Vance Joseph suggested Monday that Lynch is behind both physically and mentally due to the preseason injury.

"What I meant by that is physically he's been hurt," Joseph clarified Monday, via the Denver Post. "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."

Presumably, Lynch was still in the playbook while rehabbing. Unless the young quarterback is struggling to grasp the nuances of the offense, the delay in bringing him in should be more due to getting him physically up to speed.

Lynch said as much to the Denver Post on Monday.

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

Trevor Siemian was benched in favor of Osweiler after tossing four interceptions in his last two starts. Brock did only slightly better, tossing two picks in Sunday's blowout loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

While Joseph cited Lynch needing to get physically and mentally ready to play, it's also possible the coach didn't want to put his young quarterback under the primetime lights against the Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots this week.

Given the play Osweiler has put on tape the past two years, we don't expect him to hold off Lynch much longer. The Broncos, at the very least, need to find out how much growth the first-round pick has undergone in the past 12 months.

The 23-year-old said he's getting close to being ready to go.

"Close. I feel like right now if I was needed to play, obviously I'm going to help the team however I can," Lynch told the Post. "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."

Chris Harris: Broncos hit 'rock bottom' in loss to Eagles

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

November 8, 2017

Denver's spiraling offense remains an easy and obvious target for fans and analysts alike, but Sunday's crash-and-burn against the Eagles had plenty to do with the team's typically stalwart defense.

Quarterback Carson Wentz and his Philly teammates lashed the Broncos by land and through the air in a 51-23 beat down, a game that left Denver reeling at 3-5 and veteran cornerback Chris Harris to wonder if the season could sink any lower.

"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."

Said Harris: "[We're] just not good right now. 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."

Denver figured nothing out on Sunday, as they allowed Wentz to splinter the secondary with aggressive downfield throws before unleashing his stable of backs -- Jay Ajayi, Corey Clement and LeGarrette Blount -- for 190 yards on the day.

Much of that rushing yardage came in the second half, when the Broncos knew what was coming from an Eagles attack looking to wind down the clock. Even more concerning, though, was seeing Wentz masterfully draw the defense offsides with next-level, pre-snap cadence that played a part in Denver amassing an outrageous 14 penalties.

Still, this defense has been brilliant for much of the campaign, doing its best to prop up a dead-on-arrival offense that sputtered horribly Sunday with Brock Osweiler under center.

Instead of a hopeful light in the distance, though, the flailing Broncos are now teed up to face the surging New England Patriots on Sunday Night Football. It's possible "rock bottom" has yet to be achieved.

Broncos' defensive play of the week: Strip six

By Dennis Best

BSN Denver

November 8, 2017

While the rest of the Denver Broncos defense looked like they were out of gas in the 51-23 blowout loss, Von Miller was out to prove that he is still the same old Von.

Midway through the fourth quarter, No. 58 was able to get pressure on backup quarterback Nick Foles and strip the ball from away from the six-year veteran.

The fumble was then recovered by Brandon Marshall and returned 19 yards for one of Denver's two touchdowns on the day.

Miller would end the game with a season-high eight tackles, six run stops, and a game-high 92.3 overall rating on Pro Football Focus.

Paxton Lynch feels close to being ready, but “it’s up to training staff to decide”

By Josh Alper
Pro Football Talk
November 8, 2017

The Broncos announced on Monday that Brock Osweiler will be making another start at quarterback when they take on the Patriots in Denver on Sunday night, which wasn’t much of a surprise given coach Vance Joseph’s take on where Paxton Lynch is after dealing with a right shoulder injury in the first half of the season.

Joseph said Lynch “hasn’t played football” as a result of the injury and that it “wouldn’t be fair to our football team or fair to Paxton” to throw him into a game this weekend. Lynch agreed with the coach that he needs “to get geared back up” after such a long layoff and said that he doesn’t feel that he’s far from hitting that point.

“Close. I feel like right now if I was needed to play, obviously I’m going to help the team however I can,” Lynch said, via the Denver Post. “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.”

A loss in New England would leave the Broncos with a five-game losing streak and a 3-6 record, both of which would likely increase the desire to see if Lynch can either pull them out of their current nosedive or provide some hope for better days in the future.

Chris Harris says T.J. Ward's departure has scarred Broncos

By Charean Williams
Pro Football Talk
November 8, 2017

Halfway through the season, Broncos cornerback Chris Harris finds it just as hard to play without veteran safety T.J. Ward as he did in the season opener. The Broncos have lost four in a row and five of their past six.

Harris was asked Tuesday if the release of Ward had affected the Broncos, who still rank second in total defense but are tied for 25th in points allowed.

"I think it has [affected us]," Harris said, via Denver's 104.3 The Fan. "You can see it in our play."

The Broncos moved on from Ward and his \$4.5 million salary after the preseason, and Ward's former teammates made it known they weren't happy about the move. Ward, who signed with the Buccaneers, wasn't either.

Broncos sign Joseph Jones off Seahawks' practice squad

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

November 8, 2017

The Broncos have signed rookie linebacker Joseph Jones off the Seahawks' practice squad, Mike Klis of 9News first reported. The team waived linebacker Kevin Snyder in a corresponding move.

Jones originally was signed as the Cowboys as an undrafted free agent out of Northwestern. He made a team-leading 15 total tackles in the preseason.

The Cowboys released him in their final cuts, and he briefly was on the Chargers' practice squad before Seattle signed him to its practice squad.

In four seasons at Northwestern, Jones made 69 tackles and three sacks.