

Kiszla: I bought two Broncos tickets from a protest-weary fan I want to share with a veteran. Come sit with me.

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
November 10, 2017

There's a nasty spat between the NFL and America. Pro football has 99 problems. And one of those problems is as real, ugly and bright orange as the trashed, disfigured Von Miller jersey sent to me in the mail.

An angry Broncos fan took a Sharpie and slashed a thick black line through Miller's name, then scrawled graffiti on every available inch of the No. 58 with words of protest: "Stand for the flag!" and "Blue lives matter" and "Support veterans." The unwanted uniform was stuffed in a box, accompanied by a short note of farewell that declared, "Done with the NFL."

The rift from the national anthem protests inspired by Colin Kaepernick refuses to heal, with everybody from Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones to basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to pizza mogul Papa John jumping in the fray.

The debate has promoted far more shouting than listening.

Isn't it about time we sat down and talked? Maybe we could even do it during an NFL game.

Veterans Day is Saturday. When the Broncos dash out of the stadium tunnel Sunday night to play New England, members of the Colorado National Guard that will run alongside players onto the field will include the brother-in-law of defensive end Derek Wolfe.

From the beginning of the NFL season, and especially since more than 30 Broncos took a knee as the "Star-Spangled Banner" played prior to a game at Buffalo in September, I have heard from patriotic fans offended by the anthem protests, as well as veterans that say they served to protect freedom speech for us all. On both sides of the debate, the emotions are always heart-felt and often heated.

"Loving this country and respecting this flag isn't political, it is called patriotism, and if you don't know the difference, I can send you a dictionary," wrote Bev Haberman. "What do you expect from a bunch of men ... almost all have never worn a uniform that didn't come with a multimillion-dollar check? How many of those losers would leave an NFL team to serve this country?"

I'm listening.

Mike Allen, an infantry squad leader in Vietnam, made this point: "I do not agree with Kaepernick's choice of how to express his opinion. I think it is disrespectful of those who have fought, died and bled to guarantee his right to do so. I will, however, defend Kaepernick's right to do what he did. Americans must understand that if we deny the rights of someone to freely express their opinion, without fear of

reprisal, then we are empowering a culture of denial, the denial of freedom of speech that has the potential to damage all.”

I’m listening.

Earlier this season, when a Broncos fan informed me that he could not in good conscience attend games because of the anthem protests, I listened. And I purchased two tickets from him to the Nov. 19 home date against the Cincinnati Bengals.

The NFL has 99 problems; the rift over the anthem is only one. The league has turned its back on loyal football communities in St. Louis, San Diego and Oakland, while moving the Chargers to a city that clearly doesn’t want them. In their infinite greed, franchise owners welcomed prime-time games on Sunday, Monday and Thursday nights, yet are shocked when there aren’t enough compelling match-ups to go around. Fantasy football has created a new fan base far more interested in the showdown between the Flacco Earth Truthers and the Summer Brees than a match-up between the ho-hum New York Jets and disappointing Tampa Bay Bucs. And on the topic of the chronic brain damage from a violent sport, where do we even start to sort out the mess?

But, for all those NFL problems, here’s hoping there is at least one military veteran that would like to attend the Denver-Cincy game with me. The seats are in the lower bowl of the stadium. Near the end zone, which we can only hope the Broncos’ offense will actually be able to find. If you’re interested, send an email to mkiszla@denverpost.com that briefly summarizes your military background, your thoughts on the anthem protests and what makes you a die-hard football fan.

I’m all ears.

Let’s let football bring us together, not tear us apart.

As Demaryius Thomas nears significant milestone, he reflects on experiences past and present with Broncos

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
November 10, 2017

Demaryius Thomas eases onto a bench along the Broncos' practice fields at Dove Valley covered head to toe in orange and blue. A graphic "88" — his own logo — is stamped on his orange sweatshirt and paired with blue Broncos pants and a pair of socks bearing his likeness.

Thomas regularly advertises his team — and himself — but not even the full-body coverings can't shield his scars. There's still a line down his left pinkie, where he had surgery to repair a fracture. There are still nicks here and bruises there as postcards of games and practices of the past.

But as the longest-tenured Bronco on the roster — working on eight years — Thomas is nearing a milestone that belies the beatings he takes regularly and poses a defiant answer to his many critics who say he's always hurt.

Truth is, he has been.

But since Jan. 8, 2012, rain or shine, win or loss, Demaryius Thomas has started for the Broncos. His 88-game starting streak — a good number, he'd probably say — is the longest among active receivers in the regular season. Including the playoffs, Thomas is only two starts away from hitting No. 100 on his career.

"That speaks to his work ethic and that speaks to his toughness," coach Vance Joseph said. It's a tough game and to play that many games in a row, it's amazing. It's a physical sport. I mean, he's a receiver and he takes poundings all the time. Even being here with him for my first year year, watching the guy rehab, take care of his body and battle week-to-week injuries, he finds a way to play in the game and that's special."

But when Thomas looks back on his NFL tenure that has included five different head coaches, three different offensive coordinators and six different starting quarterbacks, he sees more than much more than history of toughness. He remembers the lessons learned in training, the lows of losing and the highs of winning it all.

He sees a career that, while still in the making, has afforded him a perspective no one on the Broncos' current roster has or can fall back on when navigating the emotions of a four-game slide.

"The past two years I haven't been healthy"

Thomas' entrance and first two years in the NFL were dominated by injuries that seemingly kept him in training and operating rooms than on the field. A broken foot, a forearm injury, a concussion, an ankle injury, a torn Achilles tendon and that broken finger — all before the start of his sophomore season.

There's there scroll of nicks and serious wounds, from his neck to his hips, to his feet, that have posed as speed bumps along his career but have also prompted Thomas to change his ways.

“My first two years, I learned from Brian Dawkins and Champ Bailey and I remember them telling me, ‘You ain’t no young player anymore.’ Because when you’re young you can go out and do whatever you want, you can eat whatever you want,’ Thomas said in a lengthy interview with The Denver Post on Thursday. “They were telling me to change my diet and continuously stay on top of my body. If I feel my Achilles and my ankle are tight, I make sure I get it worked on before I practice because I don’t want to put myself in the situation of possibly getting hurt.”

Before the start of this season, Thomas adopted a vegan diet in an effort to ease the pain his balky hips. And it’s worked, for the most part.

But when the Broncos host the New England Patriots on Sunday night, it’ll be an anniversary of sorts for Thomas.

“To be honest, completely, fully healthy, the best I ever felt playing was the year we played the Patriots for the AFC championship (in January 2014), that game I played was the best I’ve ever felt in my whole career,” he said, thinking back to his 134-yard, one-touchdown performance. “That game, I just felt I had all the juice, like I wasn’t missing anything. I wasn’t tight in my hip, I wasn’t tight in my Achilles, I didn’t have any hamstring problems. That game and probably the Cardinals game when I had 220-something yards (in October 2014). The past two years I haven’t been healthy. It’s either the hip, I had the neck problem.

“I’ve had to learn my body and I had to figure out things that will work for me — I had to change my diet and, having been injured, I’ve been in the treatment room and learning from those guys and people outside of the treatment room.”

His regular walk to and from the training room to locker room, he hopes, has provided an example, too.

The Broncos, embroiled in a losing streak, are feeling the pangs of an offense without a Hall of Famer at quarterback. Twenty months since Peyton Manning retired, the Broncos are still searching for their true offensive identity. Many on the outside believe the leadership void is one too great to fill by those on the current roster.

Thomas disagrees.

“That’s what I think a lot of people miss. Everybody is so used to the greats always leading. There were a lot of leaders that weren’t always the greats and never even get mentioned or talked about. I feel like I’m one of those,” he said. “I’m not a Peyton Manning or a Brock (Osweiler) or anybody else. I lead by example, but if I have to speak I will because it’s simple. We do this for a living. We get paid to do this, so you should do your best every chance you get because it’s not always promised.”

“Now they’re saying I’m sorry ...”

There’s a silver lining to being the most veteran Bronco in the locker room. When tempers flare, when frustration builds, when the bad times outweigh the good, the roller-coaster of years past can often temper the flames.

Thomas has experienced the lows of 2010 that no other player in Dove Valley has. He knows the patience and extra work required when a new coaching staff rolls in and when a new quarterback is

appointed. He knows how a loyal fan base can be both his biggest supporter and loudest critic in successive days.

In the Broncos' record books, Thomas sits most receiving categories alongside a Ring of Fame receiver and Hall of Fame tight end. Career receptions (589), career receiving yards (8,229), career receiving touchdowns (53) — Thomas ranks third in the Broncos' annals, behind Rod Smith and Shannon Sharpe, respectively, in each.

But Thomas sits at No. 1 with 35 100-yard games. And league-wide, only Thomas, Torry Holt and Marvin Harrison have recorded five consecutive seasons with at least 90 catches and 1,000 yards.

Yet, the critics so often call Thomas "average," at best.

"That's been there since I started," he said. "When I was playing with (Tim) Tebow they were saying stuff. When I was playing with Peyton they said it was all Peyton. Now they're saying I'm sorry. I hear it all the time. When I was playing my best ball I was still not what people expected me to be. I got to a point where it used to bother me. But now, they're going to say what they want to say."

Thomas began to tune them out when Emmanuel Sanders signed with Denver in 2014. Because he, too, is rarely considered a No. 1 receiver. He, too, rarely gets his due.

"All I care about is what the people here think — the guys I work with, the coaches that coach me," Thomas said. "If they start having a problem with me, that's when I need to do something about it. But all the other talk, I never get mentioned as being among the best receivers. I don't really care about that."

"I want to be the ultimate receiver"

Despite a week of chatter about Thomas' 13-game touchdown drought prior to the Broncos' loss at Philadelphia on Sunday, the cameras failed to capture the biggest moment.

The Broncos' window to climb back had already closed, but with about 10 minutes remaining in the fourth quarter, Osweiler connected with Thomas for a 1-yard touchdown, the team's first of the day.

The Broncos still trailed by nearly 30, so a true celebration (like the last time, when Thomas spiked the ball and gave out a primal scream in New Orleans) was uncalled for. So he simply handed the ball off to a fan and made his way to the sideline — where he bawled.

"It felt amazing. I'm not gonna lie to you," he said. "I got on the sidelines and I started crying. I was boo-hooing. I felt like a girl over there crying. I'm just so emotional about the game and with all the talent we have and the situation we're in, we're 3-5, and I know being a player on this squad for eight years, the longest-tenured Bronco, I've been around a lot of teams — this team we got right here is so special. The fact that we can't go out and (get a win) it can sometimes get emotional."

The emotions for Thomas are amplified because of the experience, he says. He remembers the feelings of 2010. He remembers the roster and the team's potential, too.

This time around, it's different.

"It makes it tough because we got players," he said. "We have to come out every week and can't back down to nobody and think anyone's going to give it to us. I feel I like we're one of the most hated teams in the NFL to tell you the truth. And that's how I feel every week."

Thomas rarely thinks too far ahead. He won't let himself. He doesn't think about the end or when it may come or when he wants it to come.

"I always say, 'If God called me today and I couldn't play anymore, I guess it's my time.' So whenever He calls me and says it isn't my time anymore or he gives me a reality check, I won't play," he said. "Now, I'm not going to be a receiver playing 20 years if I'm still able to play. But I'm blessed right now to be able to play eight. Because I've torn my Achilles, I've broken my hand, I've broke my foot, I've torn a labrum in my hip. It's a lot. So being able to come back from all that is just a blessing in itself."

But like Manning, Thomas is the type to remember every game, every play, every good moment and bad.

Like Manning, he can visualize the past seven years and can see vividly how he wants it to be remembered. But he thinks back to the times he felt the most satisfaction from a game, he remembers the 226-yard outing against Arizona, but he also remembers the block he had on a third-and-2 to spring a running back free for a touchdown.

"I want to be the ultimate receiver," he said. "A lot of guys go out and catch all the balls, make all the plays, score all the touchdowns. I just want to be the ultimate receiver and be able to block, so when they remember me, they can say D.T. knows how to block."

Broncos' Shane Ray: "We're all just as pissed as the fan base and everybody else"

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
November 10, 2017

Everything changes when the wins fade and the losses pile up. The narrative changes, frustration builds, the cheers turn to jeers and the vicious cycle spins with no clear end in sight.

The Broncos know this because they're living it. They've experienced the highest of highs in winning Super Bowl 50 with a historically elite defense. And they're experiencing a low that most on the roster have never faced as a Bronco or as a pro: a four-game losing streak.

And awaiting them is a meeting Sunday against the Super Bowl champion Patriots, who have the NFL's best offense.

"It'll be good if the fans still believe," running back C.J. Anderson said of returning home following a three-game road stretch. "We get a lot of things on social media whether they believe or not. We need them out there, 76-77,000 strong, yelling, being loud, disrupting (Tom) Brady and his calls. It feels good to come home and have some home cooking."

Behind the scenes, the Broncos are desperately seeking answers to correct all that has gone wrong. They say they still believe and still see an opportunity to get their season back on track, though they know their time may soon expire.

They admit they were "embarrassed on national television" after allowing 51 points and nearly 420 yards to the Eagles last Sunday.

They admit there's been finger-pointing and frustration.

They admit that they, like the fans they hear from on social media, are upset.

"So don't think any of us are taking it lightly," outside linebacker Shane Ray said. "We're all just as pissed as the fan base and everybody else. We're mad, but we're trying to figure it out."

As the Broncos have watched their 2-0 start spiral into a 3-5 record, players have convened often on their own. Defensive players meet Thursdays and Fridays, Ray said, and the discussions are honest. Brutally honest.

"We're basically trying to have the communication on point," he said. "... We're all right here to talk about it and that's been the big emphasis these last couple of weeks because we need to communicate. We all need to be on the same page. Whatever the call is, we all need to run it, we all need to execute it. That's really where it's been at.

"It's a very blunt meeting. If I miss an assignment, I'm getting called out on my assignment in front of my whole team, my defense. If I was supposed to do this and I cost us a big play, that's seen. So it keeps the

truth, it keeps the realness because when you start losing and things start looking bad you get guys that point fingers at everybody.”

Last Sunday in Philadelphia, Ray was penalized for neutral-zone infractions twice, both on Eagles’ scoring drives. The Broncos collectively had 14 penalties for a loss of 105 yards.

The defense, typically consistent and suffocating no matter the struggles of the offense, had their worst outing since 2010 and they took ownership. They also let each other know what went wrong and where.

“If you’re in a room with everybody, you can’t disguise yourself. No,” Ray said. “You were supposed to do this. We were supposed to do this. Now everybody knows. This is the communication. It’s not a single thing anymore. That’s what makes the difference. We’re just being real, we’re being pros ... With the way the record is, we can’t sugarcoat stuff. Things have to change and be fixed now.”

Immediately after the Broncos’ loss 51-23 loss in Philadelphia, coach Vance Joseph seemed to question his players’ fight, and whether they quit when the Eagles’ lead ballooned. A day later, after reviewing the film, he said he didn’t question his players’ effort. But he did question his players pressing to make plays and “freelancing.”

“Yeah, that’s a problem,” Ray admitted. “When we look at film and you see a guy that’s not doing his job, that’s a problem. And it’s addressed.

“Like, we got in the meeting, I jumped offsides twice. ... It cost the team. That’s uncharacteristic of me to do that. but I’m so frustrated (that) I’m trying to do this, I’m trying to do that — I can’t do that. That’s me being out of character, that’s me freelancing. I need to do my job, watch the ball and make my play within the snap. ... It’s little stuff like that that clouds the big picture when you make little mistakes like that.”

Joseph said Wednesday that he believes the Patriots’ impending arrival is perfect timing. The Broncos need a win to restore hope and, despite New England’s 6-2 record, top-ranked offense and future Hall of Fame quarterback, a win against one of the best could be a season-changer.

Until that happens, Denver will continue to search for answers.

“When everything is fine and dandy, it’s not as much of an emphasis because obviously when you’re winning, things are happening right. Guys are doing their jobs right,” Ray said. “When it’s down and bad, you better not be coming in here with a good attitude and be happy, like we didn’t just get blown out by 30 points. We got to fix things.

“When everything’s going wrong, some guys may have the answer, some guys may do this. It’s a frustrating thing because we’re losing.”

Von Miller calls Tom Brady the G.O.A.T. It's why he can't wait to face the 40-year-old.

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
November 10, 2017

The answer was an acronym for Von Miller.

Does facing Patriots quarterback Tom Brady get the juices flowing for the Broncos' all-pro passer rusher?

You betcha.

"I mean, he's the G.O.A.T.," Miller said, providing the shorthand for "greatest of all time."

"I'm going against the G.O.A.T. There's two types of emotions you can have going against the best. You can have the emotion of, 'Oh, man. This guy is great. He's going to do this. He's going to do that.' Then you go into the game expecting that.

"Or you can have the emotion of, 'I'm going against the best. I'm going to go out there and play lights out so I can show everybody what we're about, show everybody that we are great, too.' That has been my mentality since 2011, when I came into the National Football League."

Miller has faced Brady eight times and has sacked him 7½ times. That includes one of Miller's signature career performances in the AFC championship game Jan. 24, 2016. He sacked Brady 2½ times in that game, a preview of his Super Bowl MVP performance against the Panthers two weeks later.

Miller has long been clear in his admiration for Brady, and the matchup between the two has often represented the game within the game when the two AFC powers collide.

"Miller can do it all," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said in a conference call with media. "He can play the run. He's a great edge-setter. He's a great speed rusher with a good counter move. He's seen double-teams and stuff like that and knows how to deal with them. He has a good inside spin and can get away from those types of techniques. He's as good of a player as there is in the league."

The same can be said for Brady if you ask Miller or just about any other player in the locker room. But don't count cornerback Chris Harris Jr. as one of those surprised that Brady is still leading the NFL in passing yards (2,541) at 40 years old.

"He sees everything and he knows everything is coming," Harris said. "He's always looking to pass instead of run, so you always have to be on your man and expect him to get the ball down the field. But it's crazy. It looks like he's getting more mobile."

Who has the edge? New England Patriots at Denver Broncos

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
November 10, 2017

Three things to watch

Restoring faith. Do the Broncos still believe they can win? A four-game losing streak — with all the losses coming by double-digit totals — has boiled frustrations in a locker room not accustomed to prolonged slumps. Players insist they can still make something out of a season that is falling fast. The clock is ticking on that mission.

This is 40. Can the Broncos make Tom Brady feel his age? The Patriots' all-world quarterback has been sacked 21 times this season, leaving him on pace for a dubious career high when it comes to hitting the turf. The Broncos have yet to truly wreck a game with their pass rush. Can that change this week against Brady, who is just 3-7 in Denver?

Run, run, run. Coach Vance Joseph said the Broncos simply aren't good when forced to pass and pass and pass. So, at any cost, Denver must find a way to run and run and run. That's been the formula in its three victories this season. The formula is more basic arithmetic than calculus. An early deficit can't be a reason to fold up shop on the ground, which has often happened.

Game Plan

When the Broncos run. The Broncos have shown an ability to succeed on the ground when they commit to the task. Against the Chiefs, Denver nearly overcame a hair-pulling five turnovers by pounding the ball on the ground while the defense piled up stops, finishing with 177 yards. The Patriots give up 121.5 rushing yards per game, 25th in the NFL. **Edge: Patriots.**

When the Patriots run. As usual, the Patriots are using a committee system in the backfield. They are led this season by Mike Gillislee (355 yards, four TDs) and Dion Lewis (271, two TDs) and rank 16th in the league overall in rushing (109 yards per game). The question for the normally stout rushing defense of the Broncos is how it will respond to giving up nearly 200 yards against the Eagles last week. **Edge: Broncos.**

When the Broncos pass. When Brock Osweiler beat the Patriots in 2015, he completed 23-of-42 passes for 270 yards with one touchdown and one interception. If Osweiler throws the ball 42 times Sunday night, the Broncos could be in trouble, especially with starting right tackle Menelik Watson now on the injured reserve list. Still, testing New England's bottom-of-the-league pass defense (295.5 yards per game) could be enticing. **Edge: Patriots.**

When the Patriots pass. Rob Gronkowski, arguably the NFL's top tight end, may be licking his chops as he prepares to face a Denver pass defense that has been routinely punctured by players at that position. Brady, who leads the NFL with 2,541 passing yards, has developed deep-ball chemistry with new wide receiver Brandin Cooks, who is averaging 17.1 yards per catch. **Edge: Patriots.**

Special teams. Broncos kicker Brandon McManus appears to have rebounded from a brief slump after connecting on all three of his field-goal attempts, including two of more than 50 yards, in last week's loss to the Eagles. Denver is still struggling to produce big plays in the kickoff return game. **Edge:**
Patriots.

Broncos set to face Patriots TE Rob Gronkowski for first time since monster AFC championship game performance

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
November 10, 2017

The Broncos' trouble defending tight ends has been well documented, and the revolving door of tough matchups at the position continues Sunday with New England's Rob Gronkowski.

Denver's defense has had mixed success against Gronkowski. In five regular-season games against the Broncos since entering the NFL in 2010, the tight end has 30 catches for 371 yards (74.2 yards per game) and three touchdowns.

But the last time Gronkowski suited up in Denver was a different story. The tight end caught eight passes for 144 yards and a touchdown, most coming in the second half, in a 20-18 loss by the Patriots in the AFC championship game Jan. 24, 2016.

Gronkowski was injured and did not play during New England's 16-3 win in Denver last season.

"There's really nothing you can do, really," Broncos cornerback Chris Harris said. "You try to slow him down, not let him get going full speed. Other than that, there's nothing you can do to stop that man when he's rolling."

The key for the Broncos against Gronkowski, Broncos coach Vance Joseph said, will be identifying the right times to help with coverage. It hasn't worked lately for Denver, which is 25th in the league defending tight ends at 75.8 yards per game, according to Football Outsiders.

"You can't double one guy every play," Joseph said. "So from time to time, you have to have your guys cover one-one-one. When it's first-and-10, nobody is going to be in a defense where you're doubling a tight end. That makes no sense because you have the run game to account for.

"From time to time, our linebackers and our safeties have to cover the backs and the tight ends one-on-one. Now, third downs and specialty downs where the ball should go to that guy, we have a plan to defend those guys with coverage, with leverage."

The Patriots added another familiar tight end to their roster Thursday, signing Martellus Bennett off waivers following his release from Green Bay. The Packers waived Bennett on Wednesday after claiming he failed to disclose a physical condition.

Bennett caught 55 passes for 701 yards as a key member of New England's Super Bowl team in 2016. He signed with the Packers as a free agent in the offseason.

Anderson, Wolfe absent. Broncos running back C.J. Anderson missed Thursday's practice due to illness, Joseph said.

Joseph said Anderson, whose long overtime touchdown run sealed victory for the Broncos over the Patriots when they visited Denver in 2015, should to be ready for Sunday's game.

Defensive end Derek Wolfe also missed Thursday's practice with a neck soreness, Joseph said. The coach added he's "not concerned" about Wolfe being ready for Sunday's game.

Offensive linemen Matt Paradis (back) and Ron Leary (elbow) and wide receivers Demaryius Thomas (hamstring) and Bennie Fowler (ankle) all returned to practice Thursday on a limited basis after missing Wednesday's session.

Linebacker Todd Davis (ankle) and offensive tackle Donald Stephenson (calf) were also limited participants.

Right tackle TBD. Joseph has not yet named a starting right tackle for Sunday's game. The position became open this week when Menelik Watson was moved to season-ending injured reserve after suffering a torn tendon in his foot.

Allen Barbre, a left guard who shifted outside against the Los Angeles Chargers, Donald Stephenson and rookie Elijah Wilkinson have all worked at the position in practice this week, Joseph said.

The Broncos also added former second-round draft pick Cyrus Kouandijo to the roster this week, but Joseph said Wednesday it would be "tough" to expect Kouandijo to be ready by Sunday.

Handing out hardware: Denver Post 2017 midseason NFL awards

By Nick Kosmider
Denver Post
November 10, 2017

With each team having now played at least eight games, the NFL has officially reached its midway point.

What does that mean here at the Denver Post? It's time to hand out some midseason awards, obviously. But we'll let others debate the MVP, rookie of the year and coach of the year awards.

Here are the players, teams and, yes, footwear that have us talking at the season's halfway pole:

Came Out Of Nowhere Award: Chris Thompson, RB, Redskins.

In his fifth season, Thompson already has set career highs in receiving yards (435) and receiving touchdowns (three), and he's well on his way to eclipsing his single-season high in rushing yards. Thompson, who has dealt with various injuries during his career that have hampered his production, has four games of at least 52 yards receiving — and that has come in a change-of-pace role. He's a safety valve for QB Kirk Cousins who can turn a leak out of the backfield into a busted pipe with his electric open-field ability.

The Vet Who Still Has It Award: Calais Campbell, DE, Jaguars.

The former Denver South standout leads the NFL with 11 sacks, which included a four-sack performance against Houston in the season opener. The 31-year-old appears to have found the fountain of youth in Jacksonville. Through eight games, he's already tallied two more sacks than in any other season during his 10-year career.

Player You Never Expected To Save Your Fantasy Team: Marvin Jones Jr., WR, Lions.

Detroit expected big production out of Jones when they signed the former Bengals WR as a free agent ahead of the 2016 season. Coming off a three-game stretch in which he has caught 19 passes for 331 yards and three touchdowns, Jones is on pace for his first 1,000-yard season. He's given QB Matthew Stafford a target you could call Megatron Light. He's no Calvin Johnson, but the Lions appear to be getting their money's worth out of Jones.

Team We Didn't See Coming (Thumps Up Edition): Los Angeles Rams.

What a difference a new head coach makes. Jared Goff struggled mightily as a rookie quarterback under Jeff Fisher last season. But he's found a kindred spirit in 31-year-old Sean McVay, who has maximized the quarterback's strengths while creating an energetic culture at the base of the Hollywood hills for a 6-2 team leading the NFC West race.

Team We Didn't See Coming (Thumps Down Edition): Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

After flirting with the postseason a season ago, the Bucs seemed poised to make a big jump and compete for the NFC South title. Instead, they've cratered through the first half of 2017. QB Jameis Winston hasn't taken the jump most expected, and now he's injured. And that's only one problem on a long list.

Catch Of The Season's First Half: DeVante Parker, WR, Dolphins.

With Odell Beckham Jr. sidelined for the season due to an injury, Parker did his best to pay tribute to the "The Odell Catch."

@LeadingNFL

DeVante Parker comes up with an AMAZING one-handed grab!

9:33 PM - Nov 5, 2017

6 Replies 263 Retweets 556 likes

Best Cleats: Von Miller, LB, Broncos.

This was probably the award with the most competition. But how can you beat shoes that actually look like they could help a player fly? That, of course, refers to the rooster cleats from Adidas worn by Miller as he warmed up in Los Angeles last month.

If those weren't enough to take the cake, Miller followed up with a Halloween-inspired pair that were scary good ...

Bronco notes: Von's sacks and sacks, Durable Demaryius

By Mike Klis

9 News

November 10, 2017

There is money and taxes. Sacks and offsides.

These are parallel entities that intersect in abundance in the world of Von Miller.

Two seasons into his \$114.1 contract extension that set a record among NFL defensive players, Miller has grossed \$41.6 million in salary and bonuses. At an estimated 40 percent tax rate, he never saw roughly \$16.6 million that was taken by the government.

Follow along here. Miller picked up his eighth sack last Sunday against Philadelphia. He also was flagged twice for offsides, as he has taken to trying and time the snap count.

"I look at it like taxes," Miller said in his humorous way. "I'm going to get it. The sacks are going to come. The false starts and the offsides are like taxes for those. You have to pay taxes. I would like to keep my taxes minimal. I don't like to have two a game. Probably one every three games would be cool, but two a game is just not good."

Von vs. Brady

Miller has had some of his best games against the Patriots. Counting playoffs, he has 7.5 sacks, an interception and a touchdown off a fumble return in eight games against New England.

Yes, there is something about going up against Patriots' quarterback Tom Brady that gets Miller's juices flowing.

"He's the G.O.A.T.," Miller said, referring to the acronym for greatest of all time. "I mean I'm going against the G.O.A.T. There's two different types of emotions you can have going against the best. You can have the emotion of, 'Oh man, this guy's great. He's going to do this or he's going to do that. You go into the game expecting that or you can have that emotion like, 'I'm going against the best, I'm going to go out here and I'm going to play lights out so I can show everybody what we're about and show everybody that we are great, too. That has been my mentality since 2011 when I came into the National Football League and we played with Tim Tebow versus the Patriots here. We have a great team and I'm excited to go out here. That is the mentality I have had every single time I play the Patriots."

Wolfe, Anderson miss practice

Defensive end Derek Wolfe sat out practice Thursday with a sore neck and running back C.J. Anderson was sent home after he fell ill.

Broncos head coach Vance Joseph said he expected both to play Sunday night against New England.

Durable Demaryius

Broncos receiver will play in his 100th consecutive game Sunday and make his 89th consecutive start. The start streak is the most among active receivers.

Which is an especially impressive streak considering Thomas seems to come up limping at least twice a game with all the shots he takes to his legs.

“Everybody thinks I’m playing but it’s for real,” said Thomas, who has 535 catches during his 88-game starting streak that began with Game 1 of the 2012 season. “Every time I get hit it’s in my legs. It’s always bothered me. I’ve (previously) had a torn Achilles, I broke my foot, I’ve busted my hip. I’m bothered in my knees and everybody keeps hitting me in my knees.

“I just wish they would hit me in my chest and I wouldn’t have to worry about getting hit in my legs all the time.”

Look on bright side Broncos: Patriots not as good as Eagles

By Mike Klis

9 News

November 10, 2017

It's been dour around Broncos headquarters the past month or so. The natural balance of life says it's time to look at the bright side.

So here you go: The New England Patriots are not as good as the Philadelphia Eagles. They can't be. And the friendly confines of eventually to be renamed Sports Authority Field Mile High is a much nicer place to play than Philadelphia.

As non-competitive as the Broncos were last Sunday while getting drubbed, 51-23 at Philadelphia, they do not figure to get embarrassed before their home fans and primetime televised audience against the Pats.

"I'm sure we're not going to see anything close to what happened last week in Philadelphia," said Pats' coach Bill Belichick. "I know we'll get their best effort. They have a lot of great players that will compete hard and are tough. I feel like we're going to have to play our best game of the year this weekend."

Step one in the Broncos' comeback attempt was to get over last week. It wasn't easy for Broncos players.

"It's one of the biggest losses of my career," said Von Miller, the Broncos' top defensive player who has 8.0 sacks through eight games. "I don't think it's just something that you just totally forget. I'm sure as a team, and I'm sure as a defense, you forget stuff like that. But me and being the guy that I am, I always remember that because I never want to experience that again. Just use that to drive me in games going forward."

Fans can stew all week. Players tend to move on quicker. Still, Broncos' receiver Demaryius Thomas said it took a full 24 hours for the dark Philly cloud to dissipate.

"After the plane ride back home, a couple guys were talking about it, I overheard it, you have guys talking about what we did wrong, what we could have done better," Thomas said Thursday in a sit-down interview with 9News. "Because we're able to watch film on the plane. So, I would say really that Monday after we all came in together and watched everything, pointed out our mistakes and do whatever it is to get better as a group. Everybody had the option to tell you what we could have done better here. And after that meeting it was over with and onto the Pats."

"It is behind us, as a team and as a whole, it's behind us, and we're not too worried about that," Miller said. "We have another great opportunity to go against arguably the best football team in the NFL. We have a huge opportunity again, so you can't stay caught in the past. We have a huge game coming up this week and if we can get this one, it'll be wonderful. It truly will be."

The Eagles, not the Patriots, are the best team in football. The Pats are not as explosive as the Carson Wentz college offense that gave the Denver D fits, and nowhere as dominant on defense.

I'm not saying the Broncos, who are 7.5-point underdogs, will beat the Patriots. But they should at least make them sweat. They better or that home crowd won't be so friendly.

Broncos mailbag: Fans seek blame for team's fall

By Mike Klis

9 News

November 10, 2017

Know how sometimes, you open the mailbox and all you get are bills?

This Broncos' mailbag is the equivalent. Want cheery letters? Read the Eagles' mailbag. The Broncos are in a four-game losing streak in which they've been outscored by an average combined score of 31-13. They're committing more than three turnovers a game during their skid and their only ray of hope, the Denver defense, just got steamrolled for 197 rushing yards.

People want to assign blame. Luckily for Broncos fans, the New England Patriots are not as good as the Philadelphia Eagles. They can't be.

Perhaps, home field and a primetime start will inspire the Broncos to deliver a competitive performance Sunday night (6:30 kickoff, 9News) against Bill Belichick, Tom Brady, Rob Gronkowski and the Patriots.

Until then, this mailbag, like my bills, is not going away.

I read where it's time to for Vance Joseph to go. I realize they have problems other than QB, but do you really think he's on the hot seat just half-way into the season?

--Dennis DeJulio

Dennis—No. He's not. I like the way Joseph has been handling this woeful stretch. He remains authoritative but composed. It's his first test in crisis management as a head coach. I do believe at some point this season the Broncos will bring some encouragement to their fan base by winning a couple games.

Not sure when. He must get his team playing way better, and showing more gumption, than they did last Sunday at Philly. Starting with this Sunday night against the Patriots.

It doesn't matter if the Broncos are huge home underdogs against the defending Super Bowl champs. The Broncos have to at least give their fans a competitive game.

Not a win, necessarily. That may be asking too much of a team that has been the league's worst the past month.

That's right, the worst. The Browns have lost, 17-14 to the Jets and 12-9 to the Titans among their last four games. The 49ers lost 26-24 to Washington within the last month.

The Broncos have lost four in a row by at least 10 points. You have to go back to Jack Faulkner's Broncos -- from the last game of 1963 through the first four games of 1964 -- to find a more embarrassing stretch of bad Denver football.

The Broncos must make the Patriots sweat on Monday night so that they can have some confidence going into the following week's game against the Cincinnati Bengals. That home game against the 3-5 Bengals is becoming a must win not because of playoff implications, but to prevent an unthinkable collapse.

From my couch, it seems like blame for the Broncos failures are being pushed in many directions. In the past 5 or 6 years the only success I've seen was when Peyton was playing. I'm going to guess that he brought a great deal of confidence to the locker room. I also think the way he ran his offense by calling his own plays helped to bring about winning seasons.

I'm going to go out on a limb and say the problem seems to be with Elway. He may have been a good QB but once again from my couch he seems to be failing at putting together a competitive team. He seems to be the one responsible for hiring and firing of players and coaches.

--Bob Clode

Bob—Five weeks ago, Elway as a general manager constructed teams that won five AFC West Division titles through his first five years, made two Super Bowl appearances, won Super Bowl 50 and was off to a 12-8 start without Peyton Manning.

To me, Elway's most impressive work was how he built a fast-break, high-scoring offense that reached the Super Bowl in 2013, and then just two years later built a defensive-dominant team that won it all in 2015.

No one does that.

However, this awful, month-long stretch where the Broncos haven't been competitive during their skid has exposed some flaws in the roster.

It begins with the fact first-round quarterback Paxton Lynch hasn't come along as quickly as hoped.

Lynch still has a chance. Should the Broncos suffer their seventh or eighth loss before they get their sixth or seventh win, Lynch would figure to get his chance in the final month or so.

Until then, the line is long with NFL franchises who suffer when their first-round quarterback doesn't work out.

I'm calling B.S. on the Eagles running out of fireworks. Unless fireworks expire, they should have had plenty left over from all the times they lost in the NFC championship game.

--Art Mensing, San Antonio

Art—That’s the spirit. Bronco fans may be down but they can still throw a few haymakers while falling on their backsides. Too bad the Denver defense didn’t show the same fight against the Eagles.

Now that we know Trevor is not the reason, what is your recommendation for the next step.

Brock should have had 3 interceptions in the first half if the “Philly Boys” did not have slippery fingers.

The Broncos look flat. No spark for the last 4 games.

I am thinking the unthinkable, but you know the situation much better than this old sideline fan.

--Woody Miller

Woody—I can critically analyze what did happen with the best of them. But I’m not very good at predicting what will happen and, therefore, I have no recommendations on what should happen next.

For now, Brock Osweiler is the Broncos’ quarterback. If he plays well Sunday night against the New England Patriots, he’ll remain the Broncos’ quarterback.

If he doesn’t play well, Joseph will reassess. He could stick with Osweiler for the following week’s winnable game against the Bengals on Red Miller Ring of Fame Day, Nov. 19. Or he could go back to Trevor Siemian.

Again, I don’t think the Broncos consider starting Lynch unless they suffer their seventh or eighth loss. To date he has not been getting reps other than for the scout team in practice.

Mike - Literally as I write this Booker almost kneels kickoff inside the 1!

I scream at our special teams to just take a knee. I would love to know what the NFL average is and what the Broncos average is (including penalties). There’s no way we can be averaging better than 25 yards.

At a time where the Broncos need almost everything right to win a game and a struggling offense, why put yourself in the hole right away?!

--Dave Pennington

Dave—The Broncos are averaging 24.9 yards per kickoff return, which ranks 5th in the league. Many of those returns have a starting point of a few yards deep in their end zone, so you’re right, in most cases, accepting a touchback is the prudent play.

However, when you're down 10 points or so, the reward of a potential long return far outweighs the risk of starting field position behind your 20- or 15-yard line.

You've got to take it out if you're playing catch-up. But in the first quarter, it more often than not is best to take the touchback and the 25-yard line.

Broncos returners may not get a chance to settle for touchbacks this week, though, because Patriots' kicker Stephen Gostkowski is perhaps the league's best at the pop-up kicks that land between 1 and 10 yard lines. Maybe, he will struggle gauging the carry of the ball in altitude.

Last (week) I watched a small part of "Next" and Kyle Clark read a statement from you regarding Trevor Siemian. I want to thank you for saying that about Trevor. I have liked him from the start but I feel that the press hasn't given him a fair shake. All you ever heard was Paxton Lynch, Paxton Lynch. Then, to my great dismay Elway brought Brock Osweiler back.

Brock thumbed his nose at the Broncos and went to Houston. I have no respect for him. So, sadly, even though I am a huge Bronco fan, I will not watch the games as long as Brock is quarterback. I understand that Trevor made some stupid mistakes in his last game -- he is, however, a young, learning quarterback and people seem to forget that.

I truly enjoy listening to your comments about the Broncos. Also, enjoy listening to Crockett and the Crib on 760 AM. Keep up the great work.

--Judy Meier

Judy—Consider yourself lucky for not watching the game against the Philadelphia Eagles. If you got a chance to meet Brock Osweiler you'd change your opinion. He's a good guy. Personable. Polite.

As for his decision 20 months ago to leave the Broncos for Houston, the Texans did offer close to \$2 million more a year than Denver did. And the Broncos could have made a stronger attempt to sign him back before he reached free agency.

But it worked well for both sides. Osweiler will collect \$37 million in 2016-17, he's playing quarterback for the Broncos, and Denver is only paying \$775,000 of his earnings.

What you missed, Judy, was Osweiler did do some good things against Philly. He does have to play better Sunday night against the Patriots.

It seems the Broncos' quarterback situation is quite fluid. We might not have seen the last of Siemian.

I do hope you watch the game Sunday night, Judy. Don't you want to watch Tom Brady play quarterback one more time in Denver? It's on NBC.

I have a different slant on Trevor Siemian - what do you think? Trevor is injured. Not physically, but his confidence is injured and as such, he should be treated the same as if he has a physical injury.

Had he suffered a torn muscle in his throwing arm, he would have been replaced by Brock.

Then he would take a few days off for rest and rehab.

Same for his psychological injury.

Right now, he has lost confidence in the offensive line's ability to protect him. He has taken more punishment than he should have been allowed to take (the psych injury should have been diagnosed earlier) and he is second guessing every move he makes, like holding onto the ball too long.

Time to step back and heal himself.

He should feel, and he should be repeatedly told, that he remains the starting QB and that Brock is backing him up until he is healed and able to come back onto the field again no matter how long it takes. No one should say "he's lost the starting job" or "he's blown it" or similar sayings as this will only restrict his healing.

He should not feel like a failure or that he has let the team down, but accept that he has been injured and needs to heal.

Remind him that when Peyton was injured the Broncos did the same thing - send in Osweiler until the starter healed. Get him back to basics. Have a few receivers on the practice squad to work with him on routes to restore Trevor's confidence and then in a couple of weeks when he practices with the starters we can consider a return to the field.

Your thoughts?

--Howard Davis

Howard—You're thinking, Howard. I like a man who thinks. I agreed with the first-half of your essay. Siemian has lost confidence and it is best, as Joseph said, that he take a step back.

However, there is no sugarcoating the fact he has lost his job. He was benched. Siemian is man enough to take it.

Is he hurt? Sure. Does he feel like he failed? Without using that word, I'm guessing so.

But let's not worry so much about Siemian's feelings. He is tough mentally and emotionally. He's not a woe-is-me person.

If he plays again this year, I would not be surprised if he plays some of his best football.

New England Patriots to practice at Air Force Academy

By Allison Sylte

9 News

November 10, 2017

If you, like most of Broncos Country (and the United States of America except for a pocket of people in the northeast) don't particularly like the New England Patriots, then this news will not please you.

The Patriots will be in Colorado Springs for three days next week to practice at the Air Force Academy ahead of their Nov. 19 game against the Oakland Raiders in Mexico City.

They'll be hanging around Colorado after they are (hopefully) upset by the Broncos (who let's be real, need a win) on Sunday Night Football.

The Patriots are practicing in Colorado Springs because it has a similar elevation to Mexico City.

It's not clear if the practices will be open to the public, if that's something that interests you to voluntarily go to for fun.

Too often in Broncos' losing streak one mistake leads to another

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

November 10, 2017

It is not unique for the Denver Broncos to make a mistake in a game.

It happens and it's unavoidable. But in the team's current 3-5 state, the Broncos too often have turned one mistake into two, two into three, three into an even longer list -- and the proof is in their current four-game losing streak.

"We have to get it right," cornerback Chris Harris Jr. said. "We can't keep giving people chances."

It was just a three-play sliver of the story in a 28-point loss, but a stretch in the first quarter this past Sunday offered a glimpse into what has become a frustrating trend in an increasingly frustrating season for the Broncos.

With just less than seven minutes remaining in the opening quarter, the Philadelphia Eagles' offense faced a third-and-1 at the Broncos' 37-yard line. Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz's attempt to get the ball to Torrey Smith fell incomplete, but Broncos cornerback Aqib Talib was called for defensive holding.

Talib vigorously argued the call following the play, but the Eagles got an automatic first down. On the next play, Wentz used play-action, then calmly tossed a 32-yard touchdown pass -- with an overaggressive Talib defending -- to Alshon Jeffery.

On the kickoff following the score, Broncos linebacker Kevin Snyder was flagged for an illegal block in the back, so Denver started its next possession on its own 8-yard line. Just a small part of the team's worst loss since 2010, but also part of a growing pile of mistakes that have shaped the Broncos' struggles, which include almost every player on the roster at one point or another.

And while all involved agree it has to stop if the Broncos are going to salvage the second half of the season, the "how" to do it has escaped them.

"I don't know. If I had the answer to that I could coach and play football at the same time, earn two checks," Broncos linebacker Von Miller said. "I'm a player, we have some of the best coaches, some of the best leadership in the world -- we still can't figure that out."

In short, over and over again, the Broncos have clustered their mistakes much of the time. They've averaged just over two turnovers a game -- only the Cleveland Browns have turned the ball over more than the Broncos' 17 -- and only four teams have had more penalties than the Broncos' 79.

They've been outscored 41-6 in the first quarter of their five losses combined as their sluggish starts have turned into a string of losses.

“Obviously there’s going to be some adversity, but it’s been four in a row,” Broncos coach Vance Joseph said earlier in the week. “It’s not so much if you lost to an NFL team -- it’s how you lose sometimes. The Giants game bothers me how we played after the bye and how we lost that game. The Chargers game, obviously being shut out, and [Sunday’s loss to the Eagles]. Those losses bother me because we work hard during the week, we expect to win games and we expect to compete.”

The Broncos will attempt to stem the tide Sunday night against the New England Patriots (6-2), a team Joseph and several of the Broncos players have said will force them to clean up their football act. The Patriots are, statistically, ranked last in the league in total defense and pass defense, yet they haven’t surrendered more than 17 points in any of their past four games.

And the Patriots have the same number of turnovers for the season -- five -- as the Broncos had in their loss to the Chiefs in Kansas City.

But the starting point may be how the Broncos manage their own frustration. Linebacker Shane Ray said this week: “We’re just as pissed off as the fan base.” But it’s a fairly new level of disappointment since wide receiver Demaryius Thomas is the only player on the team’s current roster who was with the Broncos the last time the team had a four-game losing streak in 2010.

“[We’re] definitely sick and tired of losing -- there’s a sense of urgency,” running back C.J. Anderson said. “We know what time it is. We have a chance to do something special. We have a chance to do something really special that only us in that locker room believe we can do. That’s where it starts. If everyone can change their minds ... to believe that we can do it, we can definitely make it happen. We have the players to do it. We have the roster to do it.”

Record says otherwise, but Broncos believe they can raise their game

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

November 10, 2017

The Denver Broncos' peers in the league these days are not the teams they expected.

Throughout the offseason, into training camp and during a 3-1 start, the Broncos talked of their ability to be in the playoff conversation, to mingle with the league's power brokers. But now, as November unfolds, they have one of the four longest losing streaks in the NFL.

The Broncos (3-5) have lost four in a row and five of their past six. Only three teams have longer losing streaks at the moment -- the winless Cleveland Browns (eight), the winless San Francisco 49ers (nine) and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (five).

That is not the company the Broncos believed they'd be keeping, but at midseason they still believe they can dig themselves out of their growing pile of trouble.

"The talent, what we have on the roster and the type of players we have on the roster, we have big-time players," said Broncos running back C.J. Anderson. "Us as big-time players, we have to make big-time plays. It's that time of the year to start making plays."

That theory, the Broncos' talent, and their ability to lift themselves up is certainly being questioned almost anywhere the team turns. Their last game, a 51-23 loss to the now 8-1 Philadelphia Eagles, is the most definitive piece of information many have to measure the distance between Denver and the playoff contenders.

Sunday night against the New England Patriots is another chance for the Broncos to alter the narrative, but their last prime-time appearance -- the 29-19 loss in Kansas City on Oct. 30 -- led them to bench their quarterback.

Still, the Broncos cling to this football life raft: Only one team they will face in the seven weeks following Sunday night's game has a winning record. Though Denver also has a losing record, coach Vance Joseph has repeatedly mentioned that the Broncos are still 2-2 in the AFC West.

Joseph has also called the Patriots, 6-2 and again in first place in their division, the kind of team that could snap the Broncos out of their funk simply because of New England's success.

"When you're playing the Patriots, you have to have a great week of detail," Joseph said. "You can't lose the snap, pre-snap. It's a smart team. It's a detailed team. They play with great focus and detail, I should say. We have to match that. If our football IQ is not high enough to match it, we cannot beat this team. It's about us and doing what we do, but also about matching the Patriots' football IQ because it's high."

"It is the perfect opponent," said Broncos quarterback Brock Osweiler, who will make his second consecutive start after replacing Trevor Siemian. "I think anytime you find yourself in a losing streak like this and not playing good football, you want to play a great opponent because if you can go out there

and play a good football game and find a way to get a win, it's going to create a ton of momentum for your football team."

Whether that's all just BBs off a battleship remains to be seen, but the Broncos are certainly searching for answers this week after the meltdown in Philadelphia, just two weeks after the franchise's first shutout loss in a quarter century. The Broncos haven't lost four games in a row since 2010, when they had losing streaks of four and five games on the way to a 4-12 finish.

"The [Patriots] are a good football team," Anderson said. "The best time to turn it around is against a team like this that are not going to beat themselves. They're going to be very disciplined and very detailed, and focused on their jobs. We can definitely take something from that."

Derek Wolfe, C.J. Anderson miss practice in tough injury week for Broncos

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

November 10, 2017

The Denver Broncos continue to feel the sting of injuries as they try to halt what is now a four-game losing streak.

On Thursday, that meant defensive end Derek Wolfe, who had practiced Wednesday, was held out of practice with what coach Vance Joseph called a sore neck, and running back C.J. Anderson was sent home with an illness.

That was after tackle Menelik Watson (foot, calf) had been moved to injured reserve Wednesday and two other starters in the offensive line -- center Matt Paradis and guard Ron Leary (elbow) -- as well as wide receivers Bennie Fowler and Demaryius Thomas were held out of Wednesday's practice. Paradis, Leary, Fowler and Thomas were all back in practice Thursday on a limited basis, but the absences of Wolfe and Anderson were the newest wrinkle.

The Broncos (3-5), who have lost five of their past six games, face the New England Patriots on Sunday night.

Joseph said after Thursday's practice he believed Wolfe and Anderson, who is the team's leading rusher with 482 yards, would be ready to play Sunday night as Anderson is expected to be back at the team's complex Friday morning. As things stand, Thomas, Leary and Fowler are expected to play against the Patriots as well.

Paradis, who has yet to miss a game during his three seasons as a starter despite having a hip issue throughout the 2016 campaign that required offseason surgery, was limited in Thursday's work. Paradis often was held out of practice last season, but then would play in games.

"He did most of our walk-through stuff, little bit of our [individual] work, he's getting better fast," Joseph said. "Obviously he wants to play."

Thomas, for all the punishment he has taken on the field over the past six seasons, is approaching his 100th consecutive start for the Broncos, playoff games included. If he starts Sunday against the Patriots as expected, Thomas will be at 99 in a row, a streak that dates back to the Broncos' wild-card victory over the Pittsburgh Steelers after the 2011 season.

"[It] speaks to his work ethic, speaks to his toughness ... it's amazing," Joseph said. "Even being with him my first year here, watching the guy rehab and take care of his body and week to week have injuries, but he finds a way to play in the football game."

Broncos and Patriots headed in different directions

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
November 10, 2017

The New England Patriots and Denver Broncos are usually teeter-tottering for supremacy in the AFC in what's become an annual showdown.

Not this time.

This one looks like anything but a marquee matchup between the teams that have won the past three Super Bowls.

The Patriots (6-2) strut into Denver on Sunday night in customary hot pursuit of the conference's No. 1 playoff seeding. They're in the mix again behind the NFL's No. 1 offense and the seemingly ageless Tom Brady and despite a rash of injuries, an inconsistent O-line and a scuffling, 32nd-ranked defense.

The Broncos (3-5) are just trying to extricate themselves from a month-long funk that's resulting in four consecutive double-digit losses and exposed plenty of warts, including poor draft classes, free agent misses, turnstile tackles and stubborn play calling.

Denver has been outscored 41-3 in the first quarter during its dive, which led to Trevor Siemian's benching in favor of Brock Osweiler and neutralized a star-studded defense which lost its not-my-fault vibe last week in a 28-point loss at Philadelphia.

Even star defender Aqib Talib had a forgettable performance in that one.

"He didn't have a great game last week — none of us did — but you can tell how he's worked in practice this week," coach Vance Joseph said, stressing he's seen a renewed laser-like focus in the 2016 All-Pro cornerback.

"Yeah, kind of half-focused, half still (ticked) off," Talib said. "This is the week, though. This is a big opportunity for us. If we're going to spark that fire, this is going to be the week. So, I'm definitely focused."

Handing Brady his eighth loss in 11 trips to Denver could propel the Broncos on a second-half surge against a much softer schedule.

"If we come out on that stage Sunday night and if we're able to get a win, man, the swag, the energy in this locker room, it'll skyrocket," Talib said. "It's the perfect game. It's what we need. Powerhouse, put them in front of us, see what we're going to do."

Other subplots in the teams' 10th meeting since 2011:

TERRIFIC TALIB: Patriots coach Bill Belichick is expecting the Broncos to bounce right back from their 51-23 shellacking at Philadelphia .

"They're a very experienced team. I'm sure we're not going to see anything close to what happened last week in Philadelphia," Belichick said. "I know we'll get their best effort. They have a lot of great players that will compete hard and are tough. I feel like we're going to have to play our best game of the year this weekend."

Among those greats is Talib, who played for him in 2012 and '13.

"Aqib's a great player and a tremendous competitor. I have so much respect for him," Belichick said.

"He's just a great football player. Tackles well, tough and is really smart. Great ball skills, can handle the big receivers and can handle the quick receivers. Very crafty in his disguises and some of the techniques he uses out there, he's a very tough guy for the quarterback to read or to fool. He's as good as we play against."

MILLER TIME : Von Miller had a quiet game against Brady in Denver's 16-3 home loss to New England last season.

"They were throwing the ball quick," Miller said. "Tom Brady was flawless. Everybody was flawless on offense. It wasn't really a high-scoring game either, though. If we make them play where they've got to throw the ball and really score some points it'll be different."

Such as in the AFC championship game two years ago, maybe. Miller got to Brady seven times that day and collected 2½ sacks, a pass breakup and an interception in a precursor to his MVP performance against Cam Newton and the Panthers in Super Bowl 50.

BATTERED BRADY: The Broncos are the only team with a winning record against Brady (9-7) and they think they might be able to hound him as they did in that AFC championship game two years ago.

Brady has been sacked 21 times and taken 43 hits so far after being sacked just 15 times last season. O-line coach Dante Scarnecchia sees hope on the horizon — even if Miller's standing in his way.

"We're trying to do it right," Scarnecchia said. "We've just got to get it done better than what we're doing. Look, we're eight games into this deal, and no one's satisfied. They're not. I'm not. Certainly, the head coach isn't."

ROAD WARRIORS: The Patriots can tie their own AFC record with their 12th consecutive road win Sunday night, which begins a six-week stretch in which they play just once at home.

"This is about the time when everyone starts to see what you're made of," Brady said. "... We have very competitive games starting, obviously, with this one, a tough place to play against a very tough team. None of them are going to be easy, so we're going to have to play better than we've played. "

Broncos' defense looks to rebound after pride was hit

By Pat Graham
Associated Press
November 10, 2017

The typically talkative Aqib Talib has been noticeably quiet all week.

There wasn't much for the standout cornerback to say after an abysmal performance by a usually dependable Denver Broncos defense. No fingers to point.

For years, Denver's "D" propped up this team as the offense sputtered. But allowing 51 points and 419 yards in a 51-23 loss at Philadelphia stripped the Broncos of their usual bravado.

Hence, Talib's hushed demeanor.

"Kind of half-focused, half still (ticked) off," explained Talib, whose Broncos (3-5) host New England (6-2) on Sunday night.

"We're human. It's probably been a long time, but it definitely happened before. We're human. We're pros. We're professional and like I said, you put your head back down and you work, man. You come out and you have a great day."

As for the swagger of the NFL's second-ranked defense, well, that's still very much intact.

"The swag is always there," said defensive coordinator Joe Woods, whose team allowed a season-high 197 yards rushing along with the first three rushing TDs of the season. "The guys are just frustrated."

No one more so than outside linebacker Von Miller, who compared giving up that many points to getting "punched in the stomach."

"It's one of the biggest losses of my career," Miller said. "It's not something you totally forget. I'm sure as a team, as a defense, you forget and stuff like that. But me, being the guy I am, I'm always going to remember that, never want to experience that again, use that to drive me going forward."

"We have high-character guys in the locker room who have fought through adversity before. I wouldn't replace any of these guys going into the next game."

The path gets even tougher with Tom Brady on deck. The Patriots have long been a gauge for the Broncos, and this time they're out to halt a four-game losing streak and salvage their season.

"If we come out on that stage Sunday night and if we're able to get a win, man, the swag, the energy in this locker room, it'll sky-rocket," Talib said. "It's the perfect game. It's what we need. Powerhouse, put them in front of us, man, see what we're going to do."

Although his defense was shredded by Carson Wentz and the Eagles, coach Vance Joseph isn't worried about the Broncos' psyche.

"It's a confident group. It's been a dominant group for a long time," Joseph said. "It's a group that believes they can play well all the time. It happens. They had a great game plan. They made some plays on us. We had some unfortunate penalties that led to touchdowns. That's always an issue, but they're confident. They want a chance to show it on Sunday."

Bill Belichick and the Patriots are coming off a bye week and on Thursday they added tight end Martellus Bennett off waivers from Green Bay.

"I just noticed that, man. It's crazy," cornerback Chris Harris Jr. said. "That's what the Patriots do — the rich get richer."

"It's a playoff game. We know we have to win. We know there's a lot at stake."

NOTES: DE Derek Wolfe (sore neck) and RB C.J. Anderson (illness) didn't practice Thursday. C Matt Paradis (back), WR Bennie Fowler (ankle), OT Donald Stephenson (calf), LB Todd Davis (ankle), OG Ron Leary (elbow) and WR Demaryius Thomas (hamstring) practiced on a limited basis. ... Asked why the Broncos hadn't been able to end their slide by now, Miller responded: "If I had the answers to that, I could coach and play football at the same time. I'd need two checks." As it is, Miller is making \$16.5 million this season.

Shakeups under center have unexpected names at QB around NFL

By Dennis Waszak Jr.
Associated Press
November 10, 2017

Aaron Rodgers, Andrew Luck, Carson Palmer and Deshaun Watson are all big-name quarterbacks out for most of or the rest of the season because of injuries.

Now, Jameis Winston is banged up, too.

The shake-up under center around the league has left the position a mish-mosh of big names, no-names, youngsters and veterans who may or may not be part of their teams' futures.

That includes the likes of Brett Hundley in Green Bay, Jacoby Brissett in Indianapolis, Drew Stanton in Arizona, Tom Savage in Houston, Case Keenum in Minnesota, C.J. Beathard in San Francisco, Brock Osweiler in Denver and Ryan Fitzpatrick in Tampa Bay all starting this week.

"It's a quarterback-driven league," Packers wide receiver Randall Cobb said. "It's always going to be about the quarterback. We win or lose, it's going to be about the quarterback."

Especially in Green Bay, where the Packers' season hinges in large part on the development of Hundley, a third-year quarterback who's running the offense in place of the injured Rodgers, a two-time league MVP.

The Packers are 4-4, but have lost three in a row. Hundley, a fifth-round pick out of UCLA who has thrown one touchdown pass and four interceptions this season, has played in all three losses and started the last two since Rodgers went out with a broken collarbone .

"You all are putting it on Brett right now with the losses," Cobb said. "It's not him. It's us as a team. That's the way we always look at it. Obviously, when you have one of the greatest, if not the greatest, to ever play the game, it's definitely going to be a lot of chatter about him not being out there."

In a season marked by major injuries to significant stars, the quarterback position has been hit particularly hard. That has paved the way for some unexpected starters around the league, including Hundley.

With Luck sidelined in Indianapolis with a shoulder injury , Brissett is the man for the Colts — and he wasn't even on the roster until after training camp when New England traded him for wide receiver Phillip Dorsett. Brissett is 3-5 for the Colts after replacing Week 1 starter Scott Tolzien.

Brissett has thrown two touchdown passes in each of the last two games and has just one interception in his last four while providing the Colts with a spark in Luck's absence.

"He's a talented, talented guy," coach Chuck Pagano said. "He's got the 'it' factor."

The same was being said of Watson in Houston, where the rookie was quickly establishing himself as one of the league's most exciting playmakers with 1,699 yards passing and 19 touchdowns.

But a torn ligament in his right knee ended his season prematurely, and now Savage is back as the starter after opening the season under center for the Texans. After what he called a "cringe-worthy" performance last week against Indianapolis, Savage will need to bounce back in a big way or T.J. Yates — in his third stint with the team — could find himself at the top of the depth chart.

Things got so bad in San Francisco that Brian Hoyer was benched and then released while Beathard, a third-rounder this year, was being given a chance to show what he can do for the winless 49ers.

His audition might not be for long, though. San Francisco acquired Jimmy Garoppolo last week from New England, getting the supposed heir-apparent to Tom Brady as its likely quarterback of the future.

There are a handful of other quick-fix situations around the league with players who weren't expected to be playing at this point.

That's the case in Arizona, where Stanton has stepped in for an injured Palmer, who has a broken left arm. Same for Minnesota, which has Keenum starting with Sam Bradford out for the rest of the regular season with an ailing knee. Teddy Bridgewater has returned, as a backup for now, after missing all last season with a knee injury.

Fitzpatrick is in for the Buccaneers with Winston sidelined for at least a few weeks with a banged-up shoulder. And, fittingly, his first start will come against the Jets on Sunday — the team for which he played the last two years, capped by a miserable 2016 campaign.

"It's something I've had to do in my career plenty of times in going up against former teams," said Fitzpatrick, starting for his seventh team. "It seems like, especially in the last five or six years, that's been a standard theme."

The same can be said for the Jets' Josh McCown, who was signed in the offseason as a mere stopgap for youngsters Christian Hackenberg and Bryce Petty. But the 38-year-old quarterback is enjoying one of the best seasons of his career, ranking second in the NFL with a 70.4 completion percentage for the surprising 4-5 Jets.

"Yeah, we have the league covered between me and Fitz," said McCown, who's with his 10th franchise.

In Denver, Trevor Siemian is out and Osweiler is in again. Siemian wasn't up to the task of leading the Broncos' struggling offense, so Osweiler is back — after a whirlwind past few months.

He signed with Houston as a free agent last year, but the Texans traded him to Cleveland in March, and the Browns surprisingly cut him after training camp. That opened the door for a reunion in Denver.

And then, of course, there's the Browns' ongoing — and seemingly everlasting — search for a franchise quarterback. They're hoping they might have one in DeShone Kizer, who made Osweiler expendable.

But Kizer has also had his fair share of rookie struggles, having been benched twice. Cleveland also fumbled an attempt to acquire quarterback AJ McCarron from Cincinnati last week when it failed to get the necessary paperwork to the league in time before the NFL's trade deadline.

"When you're in a position where you're 0-8, when you are on a club that hasn't been winning in the recent past and hasn't had a solid quarterback in a long time, you've got to prove that every time you step out there," Kizer said. "It's going to take a lot for a guy to hold onto this position for a while, and that's why you have seen so many guys who haven't been able to hold on to it."

And, as we've seen all across the league this season, it's all about the quarterbacks. From Cleveland to Green Bay to San Francisco — and everywhere in between.

APNewsBreak: Most reported concussions occur on pass plays

By Barry Wilner
Associated Press
November 10, 2017

A video review of 459 reported concussions sustained during the past two NFL seasons has found far more occurred on passing plays than any other plays.

Yet quarterbacks ranked at the bottom of the list, ahead of only kickers, having suffered 5 percent of those concussions.

Of course, only one quarterback is on the field at a time. Positions in which multiple players are in action at the same time, cornerback and wide receiver, led the list of frequency at 22 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

Nearly half of the 459 concussions (44 percent) were on passes, while 30 percent were on running plays, 21 percent on punt or kickoff returns, 4 percent on sacks and 1 percent on field goal attempts.

The side of the helmet was the most common impact location at more than 50 percent, while 41 percent of concussions were experienced by a player tackling an opponent rather than by the player being tackled or by someone who was blocking.

A higher percentage of helmet-to-body blows, 45 percent, caused concussions. Also on the rise were helmet-to-ground impacts at 19 percent. Helmet-to-helmet blows actually decreased to 36 percent.

The review was overseen by Dr. Jeff Crandall, chairman of the NFL's Engineering Committee and director of the Center for Applied Biomechanics at the University of Virginia.

"We've seen a shift," Crandall said regarding helmet-to-helmet hits. "Fifteen to 20 years ago we would have found a much higher relative percentage of helmet to helmet, as much 70 percent. Through a number of changes in rules it has altered how the game is played and reduced helmet-to-helmet hits.

"We see that helmet to shoulder and ground are larger percentages."

The data will help in testing and evaluating helmets and other equipment. The numbers are shared with all concerned parties, from the players to coaches, doctors, trainers, equipment designers, researchers and manufacturers. Crandall said the information will be available to other levels of football and to other sports.

The video review is one component in the NFL's \$60 million "Engineering Roadmap" designed to improve the understanding of the biomechanics of head injuries in the sport. Crandall emphasizes the need to create incentives for innovators to develop new and improved protective equipment.

One portion of data that Crandall found particularly enlightening was the frequency of impacts to the back of the helmet (35 percent). He noted that many of those were to quarterbacks, who are most vulnerable to falling backward when hit or sacked.

"After you look at the impact source, you break it down by different locations of the helmet ... where would you be impacted on helmet," he said. "Quarterbacks in particular, it was 50 percent and highest of any position, those hits coming from head-to-ground impacts. About 80 percent of those are to the upper rear of the helmet.

"This is such a large concentration of what we are seeing from quarterback hits, which leads us to: Is there a design opportunity here? Let's put this out to entrepreneurs and designers and manufacturers and see what they can come up with for counter measures."

Like many other physicians and scientists involved in concussion research, Crandall is eager to explore the worthiness of position-specific helmets. That has become a hot topic in the industry.

"We think it is an opportunity we can draft forward," he said. "we're going to study later with sensors and reconstructions to determine the severity, the locations, the impact sources. If you can think of tailoring or customizing a helmet for those particular impacts and injuries, that's is an opportunity."

Doctor: Hernandez's brain was severely damaged by disease

By Alanna Durkin Richer
Associated Press
November 10, 2017

Former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez suffered substantial damage to parts of the brain that affect memory, judgment and behavior from the most severe case of a degenerative disease linked to head blows ever found in someone so young, a researcher said Thursday.

Dr. Ann McKee, director of Boston University's CTE Center, stressed she could not "connect the dots" between the brain disease chronic traumatic encephalopathy and the behavior of the 27-year-old who hanged himself in April while serving life in prison for murder.

But McKee said CTE had significantly impacted key parts of Hernandez's brain, including the hippocampus — which is associated with memory — and the frontal lobe, which is involved in impulse control, judgment and behavior.

"We can say collectively, in our collective experience, that individuals with CTE — and CTE of this severity — have difficulty with impulse control, decision-making, inhibition of impulses or aggression, often emotional volatility and rage behaviors," said McKee, who has studied hundreds of brains from football players, college athletes and even younger players, donated after their deaths.

Hernandez hanged himself in prison days after he was acquitted in the 2012 drive-by shootings of two men in Boston and just hours before his former teammates visited the White House to celebrate their latest Super Bowl victory.

Prosecutors contended he gunned the two men down after one accidentally spilled a drink on him in a nightclub — and then got a tattoo of a handgun and the words "God Forgives" to commemorate the crime.

He had been serving a life sentence without parole in the 2013 killing of semi-professional football player Odin Lloyd when he killed himself.

Hernandez, who said he was innocent, did not raise CTE in his defense at either trial.

CTE, which can only be diagnosed in an autopsy, has been found in former members of the military, football players and boxers and others who suffered repeated head trauma.

BU researchers confirmed in September that Hernandez was diagnosed with Stage 3, out of 4, of the disease. But McKee had not publicly discussed her findings until a conference at the university on Thursday.

After Hernandez's CTE diagnosis, his attorneys filed a lawsuit against the NFL and football helmet maker Riddell, accusing them of failing to warn Hernandez about the dangers of football. The lawsuit, which

seeks damages for Hernandez's young daughter, said he experienced a "chaotic and horrendous existence" because of his disease.

While the outside of Hernandez's brain appeared normal, the inside was riddled with CTE, said McKee, who showed images of Hernandez's brain next to those of a typical 27-year-old.

In Hernandez's brain, there was evidence of previous small hemorrhages, which is associated with head impacts, she said. Other parts, like the hippocampus, had begun to shrink and large holes were found in his brain's membrane, McKee said.

Before Hernandez, the youngest brain they've examined that showed such severe CTE damage was 46 years old, McKee said.

"These are very unusual findings to see in an individual of this age," McKee said. "We've never seen this in our 468 brains, except in individuals some 20 years older," she said.

Hernandez inherited a genetic profile that may have made him more susceptible to the disease, McKee said.

NFL expects Goodell contract extension to be finalized soon

By Bill Wilner
Associated Press
November 10, 2017

The NFL expects a five-year contract extension with Commissioner Roger Goodell to be finalized soon, despite a threatened lawsuit by Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones.

NFL spokesman Joe Lockhart said Thursday that "our expectation is this will be wrapped up soon, but we can't project an actual date."

The extension would carry through 2024. Goodell became commissioner in 2006.

Lockhart added that the league is aware of Jones' potential lawsuit, which apparently has been sparked by star running back Ezekiel Elliott's six-game suspension over alleged domestic violence.

"Certainly neither the compensation committee or the league has been made aware of a lawsuit being filed," he said.

As for reports that Jones and other owners might be balking at the structure and compensation in the new contract, Lockhart noted: "I am saying the reporting about potential holdouts around particular issues has not been accurate. I don't know where it is coming from?"

All 32 owners voted in May to extend Goodell's contract and authorized the compensation committee to work out the details. Goodell suspended Elliott in August after a yearlong NFL investigation. Prosecutors in Ohio declined to pursue the domestic violence case.

A federal court on Thursday upheld the suspension, barring Elliott from playing Sunday against Atlanta.

Jones, who is not on the compensation committee but is one of the most powerful owners in the league, has expressed frustration over the NFL's pursuit of criminal matters with its own investigators.

Regardless, that committee has continued to structure and negotiate contract details with Goodell.

"We feel strongly that the 32-0 vote ... gives them the authority to enter into a contract extension," Lockhart said, "and the committee is moving forward under the assumption they do have that authority."

Prosecutors in Elliott's case cited conflicting evidence when deciding not to pursue the case. The NFL's probe continued for a year after that decision. Jones said his running back has been treated unfairly, and Elliott has denied the allegations of his ex-girlfriend under oath.

"I am very troubled by the swings that we've had," Jones said on his radio program on Oct. 31. "His swing of judgment has been unbelievable from the Ray Rice thing all the way up to one or two games, all

the way to the six-game suspension when you've truly got a debate. In our legal system it has to be stronger than that for somebody who has done it."

Goodell's decision to suspend Elliott prompted weeks of twists and turns in courtrooms from Texas to Louisiana to New York leading to a three-judge panel in New York making its decision Thursday. Elliott, on his third legal reprieve, has played all eight games for the Cowboys

Tom Brady is ageless, arguably the greatest, but has troubles in Denver

By Troy Renck
KMGH
November 10, 2017

Vintage wine, Rob Lowe and Cindy Crawford blush at how well Tom Brady ages.

He has turned 40 into the new 20. As Carolina's Cam Newton said this week, Brady is the "Benjamin Button" of quarterbacks. Remember when Peyton Manning reached 39? He nosedived statistically, undermined by a foot injury that left him hanging on by dental floss in his gutsy Super Bowl 50 playoff run.

Brady's last two years are breathtaking. He is 17-3 with 44 touchdowns and four interceptions over his past 20 regular seasons. And that doesn't take into consideration his engineering of the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history. So you get it. He's handsome, hard-working, revered in his locker room and insanely driven. Yet, he remains mortal in Denver.

Consider it the red dot on his career's cashmere sweater.

Brady owns a 3-7 record in Denver, including 0-3 in the playoffs. Overall, he is 6-6 in the regular season against the Broncos. In the AFC Championship Game following the 2015 season, former Broncos defensive coordinator Wade Phillips dialed up the best plan of his career, his defenders hitting Brady more than he had ever endured. It began with a Derek Wolfe pancake and ended with Von Miller and DeMarcus Ware chasing him into incompletions.

Brady, for reasons beyond the pass rush, has struggled with his accuracy in Denver (the ball carries more here, and makes all stats meaningless apparently based on the recent National League MVP voting for Nolan Arenado and Charlie Blackmon, but I digress).

Brady arrives on Sunday night with the possibility of his starting right tackle Marcus Cannon (ankle) sitting out and reliable receiver Chris Hogan saddled with a shoulder injury.

But no bravado exists from the slumping Broncos this week. Regarding Brady or otherwise. Only respect.

"He's playing at a high level. I don't see a drop off at all. He's obviously a smart football player, but his arm talent is excellent. His ball placement has been excellent," coach Vance Joseph said. "His poise in the pocket, obviously, he's one of the best of all time, so it's going to be a challenge."

The Broncos have attempted to frame this with a positive spin. Quarterback Brock Osweiler, who might be making his last start for Denver if the team loses a fifth-straight game, called the Patriots the "perfect opponent" to get back on track. I would suggest the Browns or 49ers would be better, but hey, to each his own. What Osweiler meant is that a victory against a team of New England's ilk could accelerate a U-turn for the Broncos. But it would have to come at the expense of Brady, who can be excused for saying, in true Benjamin Button fashion, "I am getting too young for this."

Broncos Injury Report: Matt Paradis, Ron Leary return to practice

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
November 10, 2017

Center Matt Paradis, guard Ron Leary and wide receivers Bennie Fowler III and Demaryius Thomas all returned to practice Thursday after sitting out Wednesday's work with various injuries.

Paradis took part in a majority of the walk-through repetitions and "a little bit" of individual work after sitting out Wednesday because of a back issue, Head Coach Vance Joseph said at his post-practice press conference.

"He's getting better fast," Joseph said. "Obviously he wants to play, and he's a guy that's fought through injuries before, so he gets it."

Leary, Fowler and Thomas all saw limited repetitions because of elbow, ankle and hamstring injuries, respectively. Inside linebacker Todd Davis also had limited work as he continues his recovery from a high ankle sprain that has sidelined him for the last two games.

Two Broncos did not practice Thursday: defensive end Derek Wolfe (neck) and running back C.J. Anderson (illness).

"C.J. just wasn't feeling well, so he went home to get rest and recover," Joseph said. "[Wolfe], it's a sore neck, so I'm not concerned about that at all. He should be OK."

Right tackle Donald Stephenson saw limited work for a second consecutive day as he works his way back from a calf injury. Joseph said that Stephenson and veteran Allen Barbre are both possible options to fill in for Menelik Watson at right tackle.

Von Miller: Offside penalties are like taxes on sacks

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
November 10, 2017

Von Miller knew the question was on its way.

After an offside penalty and neutral-zone infraction cost the Broncos against the Eagles, Miller knew the question was coming during his Thursday media availability.

And he was ready with an answer to explain the momentary lapses.

"I was so tuned into the game," Miller said. "Half of the time, I don't even hear the fans or the scoreboard or even guys on the sideline. I'm so in tune with my guy, the ball, the quarterback [and] the formation. When I'm in my stance, there are some plays when I'm more tense than others.

"If it's the beginning of the game, first-and-10, anything that moves, [I go]. I have to change that out of my game. Anything that moves, I'm going. On those plays, I'm vulnerable for offsides."

Miller was first whistled when he jumped on a hard count on a second-and-2 in the second quarter. The penalty gave the Eagles a first down, and Jay Ajayi then carried the ball two consecutive times for a combined 60 yards and a touchdown.

His second infraction came on the series after his strip sack of Nick Foles. On second-and-9, Miller fell victim to the cadence again and was tagged with a neutral-zone infraction.

That one, he said Thursday afternoon, caught him by surprise.

"I'm looking at the scoreboard," Miller said, "we were down by like 30 points, they've got Nick Foles in. [I'm thinking], everything is on one, [they're] trying to get out of here. But obviously I was wrong."

That thorough answer would've sufficed, but Miller wasn't done. Instead of just explaining the penalties, Miller explained his whole philosophy around the issue.

"I look at it like taxes," Miller said.

"The sacks are going to come, so the false starts and the offsides are like taxes on those. You've got to pay taxes. I would like to [keep] my taxes minimal. I wouldn't like to have two a game. Probably one every three games would be cool. Two a game is just not good.

"[Outside linebackers] coach [Fred Pagac], he coaches us better than that. [Defensive line] coach [Bill] Kollar, all the guys coach us better than that. It's just, especially when you're down, you're just more inclined to take risks like that. Never on third-and-10, never in crucial situations for me, but there are some plays where I walk out there — and even as a fan I think you can feel it — like, 'OK, they've been moving the ball. They've been going on one for the last six snaps.' I'm a gambling man. Gambling got me here."

Miller was quick to limit the scope of the tax allusion, though.

Asked whether a recent string of losses was a Super Bowl 50 tax, of sorts, Miller quickly rebuked that idea.

“Losses? No, that’s too big of a tax. You never want to pay in losses. Never.”

Through My Eyes: Aqib Talib ready to honor military vs. Patriots

By Aqib Talib
DenverBroncos.com
November 10, 2017

We got the chance to explore Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station on Tuesday, and it's just a whole different world that people aren't aware of. They do a lot to protect the whole United States, not just Denver. You would think something like that would be fake, but it's actually real. I'd kind of heard about it. They always said Denver has the underground security. It was awesome to tour. That was my favorite part: learning about all the Secret Service-type stuff that's going on.

If I was down in the underground base, I think I would make it. I've been through it a little bit. I'm a pretty mentally tough guy. If I wasn't playing football, I'd probably have something to do with the military.

We got to have lunch with the Air Force troops later, and that was interesting. We were able to pick these guys' brains and learn about their daily lives. Of course, we know how our lives are, but it was cool to talk to them and see what they go through on a daily basis.

They're a lot like us as far as having to be away from their family. But they're there for longer periods of time. We get offseason breaks where we can go home and relax. They don't really get to relax. When they're here, they're here. They do so much for this country. It's great.

Last year I ran out of the tunnel with one of those guys, and it was fun. It was big-time for those guys. They barely get their faces on TV, so I had to bring a little joy to them and tell him we had to take a selfie and that I was going to post it on my page. It ended up being a pretty good picture.

We get to honor them again this weekend, and that's dope. I feel like the reason we're free is because of them. When I hear that national anthem, it's just a thank you to the military for letting us be a free country and letting us be able to play this game.

We're honoring them with helmet stickers, and I picked a U.S. Marines one. I feel like the Marines are the grimiest. They do all the real dirty work. When it's time to go to war, the Marines are the guys who are the front-line guys getting their hands dirty. I respect those guys the most.

Roger Goodell says fans don't come to NFL games 'to be protested to'

By Cindy Boren
Washington Post
November 10, 2017

NFL fans come to games "to have fun, to be entertained, not to be protested to." So says Roger Goodell in an attempt to make sense of how national anthem demonstrations have messed with the nation's most popular sport.

The commissioner, speaking at Bloomberg's The Year Ahead Summit in New York, sought to make sense of the latest crisis during his tenure, attempting to place players' national anthem demonstrations against the backdrop of these divisive times. Goodell, who may work for the owners but has at times regarded himself as the fans' commissioner as well, admitted that players who kneel, link arms or raise a fist are seeking to raise awareness of social injustice and police brutality.

Like the players themselves, however, he feels that the message they're sending has been misinterpreted, co-opted into being a dig at the military. Goodell reiterated that he still wants to "see our players stand" for the anthem even as players and owners continue to hold meetings to try to convert their activism into action.

"What we tried to do is listen and learn and understand what our players are actually focusing on. What they're focusing on is very American. They're talking about improving their communities. . . . They're focusing on social justice, criminal justice reform, how we bring hope to people and give them opportunities to live a better life," he said.

"And I'm proud of our players for that and proud of our owners for listening, supporting them and trying to give them a platform from which to make improvements in our society, which we're all about, . . . and get beyond what we call protests to progress, to get to the point where we can actually make that kind of positive change. Because people come to our stadiums to have fun, to be entertained, not to be protested to."

Unlike the NBA, the NFL does not require players to stand for the anthem and Goodell has sought to find middle ground between players and his bosses, owners such as Jerry Jones who threaten to bench players who do not stand. But the NFL has felt an impact on its once-impervious product this fall. Whether it's because of the demonstrations, the vocal criticism of President Trump or the mundane explanation that many of the league's biggest stars are injured, the game and its TV ratings have suffered.

"Our players say over and over again 'this isn't about disrespect for the flag or our military or our veterans' and I believe them," he said, "but they also have to understand that it is interpreted much differently on a national basis."

"You hear it from fans. You hear it from sponsors and licensees and partners," Goodell said of the volume at which the conversation over demonstrations is being conducted. "That's something that we keep in great communication about. But we also try to think long-term. I think we live in the short-term

world where we're reacting to everything and trying to not keep our focus on what our long-term values are, what our long-term goals are and stay with that and get that done in a way that we can all look in the mirror and all be proud of that.

“Our players are important to us . . . their perspective is important to us. It's important to our fans. What we have to do is find solutions to those things over the long term while respecting our values and respecting viewpoints that we may not necessarily agree with. That is a broader issue in our society.”

If the NFL wants to fix its ratings slump, flex these games into Sunday night

By Matt Bonesteel
Washington Post
November 10, 2017

Through nine weeks of the season, the NFL's TV ratings are down 5.5 percent compared with 2016, and with no post-Election Day bounce expected this year, that number could struggle to rise. And while some have overstated the importance of the league's ratings issues — compared with the rest of network TV programming, the NFL actually is looking pretty good — the league and the advertisers who spend millions on football-game commercials probably would like to reverse that trend.

The NFL does have one card to play with its flex-scheduling rules, in which the league can move a marquee matchup from Sunday afternoon to Sunday night on NBC to shine a spotlight on the weekend's best game. But there are parameters in place that give CBS, Fox and ESPN — the league's other broadcast partners — a certain amount of protection so that their best games aren't repeatedly snatched away.

The rules:

1. Only games originally scheduled for Sunday afternoon may be moved to Sunday night. Games played on Thursdays (including the Thanksgiving games), Mondays and Saturdays are untouchable.

2. The league must give the networks 12 days' notice of a flexed game except for Week 17, when the required notice is only six days.

3. Starting with Week 11, CBS and Fox can shield one game from flex scheduling in five of the following six weeks. No games can be protected in Week 17.

4. Three teams may appear in a prime-time game on ESPN, NBC or NFL Network a maximum of six times and no team may appear on NBC more than four times between Week 1 and Week 16. Those limits do not apply to Week 17. (H/t: Morgan Wick.) For our purposes today, this affects two teams: The Chiefs, who cannot be flexed into any upcoming Sunday night games because they will reach their six-game maximum between Weeks 1 and 16, and the Patriots, who will be making their third prime-time appearance on NBC this Sunday. New England can only be flexed into one more Sunday night game through Week 16.

Knowing all this, here are the best Sunday night matchups moving forward. Weeks 10 (Broncos-Patriots) and 11 (Eagles-Cowboys) are set in stone already, so we're starting with Week 12. Keep in mind that we don't know most of the games CBS and Fox are protecting.

Week 12 (decision due by Wednesday)

Known protected games: Vikings-Lions, Chargers-Cowboys and Giants-Redskins (all on Thanksgiving), plus Texans-Ravens (Monday night)

Scheduled SNF game: Packers-Steelers

Prediction: In most years Packers-Steelers would be a dream matchup for NBC, but Aaron Rodgers is out and Green Bay is floundering. It needs to be moved to the afternoon. Bills-Chiefs has become somewhat enticing, but Kansas City has maxed out its prime-time appearances. Thus, there is one choice: Saints-Rams. New Orleans has a future Hall of Famer in Drew Brees and a revamped defense. Los Angeles has revamped, well, everything and has a fun offense to watch. Both teams currently sit at 6-2. What's not to love?

Week 13

Known protected games: Redskins-Cowboys (Thursday), Steelers-Bengals (Monday)

Scheduled SNF game: Eagles-Seahawks

Prediction: Patriots-Bills probably would get some notice from the league and NBC, but one would have to think CBS would protect that one. Eagles-Seahawks stays on Sunday night. Caw!

Week 14

Known protected games: Saints-Falcons (Thursday), Patriots-Dolphins (Monday).

Scheduled SNF game: Ravens-Steelers.

Prediction: Ugh, the Ravens. Honestly, who wants to watch the Ravens charmlessly slog their way around the field? Get them out. But the NFL and NBC have a bit of an issue in that their two best choices — Seahawks-Jaguars and Eagles-Rams — involve teams that possibly could be featured on SNF the previous two weeks. Also, is the world ready for the Jaguars in prime time, even if their defense is something else? I'm not so sure about that. However, both of those games are scheduled for Fox, which can only protect one of them. Gimme Eagles-Rams, to decide which team got the best of the 2016 draft.

Week 15

Known protected games: Broncos-Colts (Thursday), Bears-Lions, Chargers-Chiefs (Saturday), Patriots-Steelers (Sunday), Falcons-Bucs (Monday).

Scheduled SNF game: Cowboys-Raiders.

Prediction: Steelers-Patriots likely would have been the only game to budge the Cowboys out of prime time, but CBS already has let it be known that it's protecting the game for a late-afternoon showing. Smart. Rams-Seahawks is another option, but seeing as how I've already filled the schedule with the Rams and Seahawks, let's just say Cowboys-Raiders stays in place, even though Oakland is kind of a mess and Dallas might not have Ezekiel Elliott.

Week 16

Flex scheduling gets a week off because that Sunday is Christmas Eve. No games at all that night.

Week 17

Protected games: None!

Scheduled SNF game: TBD!

Prediction: Panthers-Falcons, Jaguars-Titans, Packers-Lions, Bills-Dolphins, Cowboys-Eagles and Cardinals-Seahawks could all have some bearing on the playoffs. Let's just say Elliott is allowed to play the rest of the season, the Eagles stay hot and Dallas keeps pace in the NFC East. Cowboys-Eagles thus becomes a very enticing matchup for the final Sunday night game of the season.

Broncos' vaunted defense facing rare ridicule ahead of Patriots matchup

By Lindsay Jones
USA Today
November 10, 2017

This is an unfamiliar and uncomfortable situation for a Denver Broncos defense so accustomed to being dominant.

But for the first time in recent history, and certainly for the first time this year, the Broncos defense is equally to blame following a blowout loss. The Broncos (3-5) gave up 51 points to the Philadelphia Eagles last week – the most points allowed by the team since 2010, which was three head coaches ago.

“It definitely hurts. We got punched in the stomach,” outside linebacker Von Miller said.

Now Miller and his defensive teammates are facing serious questions heading into Sunday’s game against the New England Patriots. What happened to that dominant group that as recently as two months ago had the NFL’s best rush defense, and last month led the league in total yards allowed?

“It’s funny, when you have a couple bad games, the world forgets what you did to every NFL team for the last three years, and it’s a question now,” outside linebacker Shane Ray said. “There is no question. We still have the same guys that have been beating the hell out of these other guys for three years. We’re just making mistakes.”

More: Midseason NFL record projections for all 32 teams plus playoff forecast

More: NFL's contenders and pretenders: Which teams are Super Bowl threats at midseason?

Ray is partially right. Much of the Broncos’ defensive roster remains in place from 2016, including Miller and Pro Bowl cornerbacks Aqib Talib and Chris Harris.

But the changes that occurred were significant – from defensive coordinator Wade Phillips (replaced by defensive backs coach Joe Woods) to the unit’s two most respected leaders, pass rusher DeMarcus Ware (to retirement) and safety T.J. Ward (cut at the end of the preseason).

The result is a Broncos defense that after nine weeks is still experiencing communication breakdowns in the secondary, ranks in the middle of the NFL pack in sacks (19), and is among the worst defenses in the NFL at forcing turnovers (five interceptions, two fumbles).

Most troubling, however, has to be the amount of explosive plays allowed. Through eight games, Denver has given up 20 passing plays of at least 20 yards after giving up just 32 such plays all last year. Seven of those plays this year have gone for touchdowns. Denver didn’t give up a single deep touchdown pass last season.

“Some of it is just missed assignments. Some of it is just the teams are making plays. It can go both way,” head coach Vance Joseph said.

Combine those big plays with the lack of game-changing turnovers – the Broncos scored on a fumble last week, but were already losing by more than 30 points at the time – and Denver’s defense hasn’t been able to bail out a struggling offense as much as it did in the past two seasons.

“We got to get back on board with figuring out what we need to do, what is going to work for us, and we've got to execute,” Ray said. “It takes everybody. It's not like I can say, ‘Hey, we'll fix this and the problem's done.’ It's collective. Everybody has to figure out within themselves what they can do better and once everybody figures out within himself what he can do better, whether it be doing your job or going along with the call, whatever, that's how it works.”

Covering tight ends has been one of the Broncos’ biggest issues, and one that doesn’t get easier this week against New England. Denver allowed tight ends to score three touchdowns and record 23 catches for 378 yards over the past four weeks, including seven catches for 133 yards by Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce two weeks ago.

New England’s Rob Gronkowski is averaging 15 yards per catch and is tied for the team lead with five touchdowns.

“That’s a major matchup issue in this league. You have tight ends now that have receiver abilities with tight end size and ball skills. It’s a tough matchup,” Joseph said. “We have to do a better job of helping our safeties and helping our backers match those guys.”

But Broncos defenders know they can play well against the Patriots and Tom Brady (they held New England to 16 points in a loss last year, and at least half of the current defensive starters played significant roles in the Broncos’ two wins against New England in 2015). A strong performance on Sunday could change the outlook on the season.

“We have a huge opportunity. You can’t stay caught in the past. If we can get this one, it would be wonderful,” Miller said. “I want to go out there and prove that last week was a fluke.”

Jerry Jones says NFL misled by facts about Roger Goodell's contract

By Kevin Spain
USA Today
November 10, 2017

In a letter from Dallas Cowboys general counsel Jason Cohen to NFL owners on the compensation committee and NFL counsel Brad Karp, Jerry Jones said league owners have been misled about facts concerning Commissioner Roger Goodell's contract, according to an ESPN report.

All 32 owners voted in May to extend Goodell's contract and authorized the compensation committee to work out the details. The league and Goodell have been working on a five-year deal to kick in when his current deal expires in 2019.

According to the ESPN report, the letter says that Jones has discovered a discretionary bonus plan that was not disclosed. It also says that the compensation committee's consultants called Goodell's previous contract "the most one-sided deal they have ever seen."

The letter says that there is "a substantial commitment by the Owners, as more than \$200 million is at stake, on top of the \$200 million already paid to him," according to the report.

Jones' frustration with Goodell stems from his being upset with the six-game suspension levied against Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott over a domestic violence accusation. Elliott was never charged in the case.

According to the ESPN report, Jones said that the league is in a state of "upheaval" under an "avalanche of issues that have beleaguered the NFL unlike any other time in recent memory. These changing conditions must be weighed relative to the timing of the Commissioner's contract extension."

Jones has retained legal counsel and Wednesday threatened to sue the league in an effort to block Goodell's extension.

Goodell's contract reportedly at the center of Jerry Jones vs. Arthur Blank dispute

By Jared Dubin

CBS Sports

November 10, 2017

On Wednesday, it was reported that Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones threatened to sue the NFL and some owners over NFL commissioner Roger Goodell's contract negotiations, and hired attorney David Boies to represent him in the matter.

Jones has been attempting to stall negotiations for Goodell's next contract for a while now, and most reports have indicated that Jones' dissatisfaction with Goodell stems from the six-game suspension handed to Ezekiel Elliott for violating the league's personal conduct policy after Elliott was accused of domestic violence. CBS Sports NFL Insider Jason La Canfora reported in October that "Goodell's new contract is done as a practical matter and that Jerry Jones' effort to 'hijack' the process in a conference call among some owners on Thursday is not feasible."

On Thursday night, a new dynamic emerged in the dispute. According to a report from ESPN's Chris Mortensen, a disagreement between Jones and Falcons owner Arthur Blank over the inner workings and recommendations of the NFL's Compensation Committee (which Blank chairs and from which he recently expunged Jones as a de facto member) is at the center of a larger dispute over Goodell's next contract. Jones sent a letter to the league's other owners detailing the nature of the dispute.

From ESPN:

In a letter sent late Wednesday by Cowboys general counsel Jason Cohen to owners on the compensation committee and NFL counsel Brad Karp, Jones claimed he "has discovered a number of very concerning issues" while engaged as a committee member, including that "the Ownership (sp) and Jerry Jones now understand that they have been unquestionably misled" by Blank and that "critical facts" have been misrepresented regarding Goodell's contract.

The letter, which was copied to all NFL owners, alleges that Blank told owners, including Jones, on numerous occasions, that the six-man committee's recommendation would be unanimous. Two ownership sources, however, said the committee is not currently unanimous on Goodell's contract, which is in its final stages. Jones' letter alleges Blank backed off his word there would be "unanimity" on the committee before the extension would be finalized.

Jones also reportedly focused on the money the owners have already paid Goodell, would stand to pay Goodell under a contract extension, and an alleged bonus package included in the contract that was not previously disclosed. Per ESPN, quoting from Jones' letter:

"Commissioner Goodell's contract extension is a substantial commitment by the Owners, as more than \$200 million is at stake, on top of the \$200 million already paid to him," the letter states. "This is in addition to the unique and largely unfettered power exercised by the Commissioner. Ownership can't have the Chairman let us down again."

Jones alleges in the letter that he has discovered a discretionary bonus plan that was not disclosed, as well as a departure from a working contract proposal that included less guaranteed compensation for Goodell and was largely incentive-based. Jones says in the letter that the compensation committee's consultants called Goodell's previous contract "the most one-sided deal they have ever seen."

Sources said Jones repeatedly complained that Goodell, himself, appointed Blank as compensation committee chairman. Goodell was elected commissioner in 2006 and his contract was extended by Blank's three-man committee, which included Bob McNair of the Houston Texans and Jerry Richardson of the Carolina Panthers. In the letter, Jones said he discovered Goodell's original contract "lacks market-standard employment terms and conditions."

Jones wants to receive "full transparency" from Blank and avoid litigation, the letter also states, according to ESPN. He also reportedly wants to institute changes to the contract proposal, and the letter noted that if those changes are not instituted, he will indeed seek litigation.

Jones has not been shy about expressing his dissatisfaction with Goodell of late, both over his handling of the Elliott domestic violence suspension and subsequent appeal, and his (perceived lack of) response to NFL player protests of policy brutality and systemic racism during the national anthem.

Jones has long held tremendous sway inside the league's group of owners, and is clearly trying to flex his muscles in this latest case. It appears support for his maneuver is fractured, with some owners fully on his side, others on his side but wanting to see him cut down to size, and others against him. How this dispute plays out will have ramifications not only for Goodell, but also for Jones' standing in the league.

Broncos look to avoid free fall with win vs Patriots

By STATS

Fox Sports

November 10, 2017

As the Denver Broncos head into Sunday night's game against the New England Patriots, they're trying to pull out of a tailspin.

They switched quarterbacks, they are struggling with injuries all along their offensive line and they only averaged a little more than 10 points per game during a four-game losing streak that has dropped their record to 3-5 at the season's midway point.

"Definitely sick and tired of losing," Broncos running back C.J. Anderson said. "There's a sense of urgency. We know what time it is. We have a chance to do something special.

"We have a chance to do something really special that only us in that locker room believe we can do. That's where it starts. If everyone can change their minds ... to believe that we can do it, we can definitely make it happen.

"We have the players to do it. We have the roster to do it. It's not like it can't be done or it will never be done. It's been done before with a lot of other teams with a lot less talent. We have the talent."

But they face a daunting challenge in trying to pull off a turnaround of their season against New England (6-2), which has won 11 straight road games in addition to having extra preparation time because it is coming off its bye.

Coach Vance Joseph said the Broncos are going to have to be ready for the Patriots mentally as well as physically.

"When you're playing the Patriots, you have to have a great week of detail," Joseph said. "It's a smart team. It's a detailed team. They play with great focus and detail, I should say. We have to match that.

"If our football IQ is not high enough to match it, we cannot beat this team. It's about us and doing what we do, but also about matching the Patriots football IQ because it's high."

The Broncos and Patriots are meeting for the seventh straight year in the regular season. New England has a 5-1 edge, with the only Denver win in 2015, when the Broncos advanced to the Super Bowl and beat Carolina.

Brock Osweiler was under center for the lone Broncos' victory in that span, and after a meandering journey with stops at two teams, he'll be back as the quarterback on Sunday night, making his second consecutive start since replacing struggling Trevor Siemian.

A win against a formidable team like the Patriots could go a long way toward salvaging the Broncos' season, Osweiler added.

“It is the perfect opponent,” he said. “I think any time you find yourself in a losing streak like this and not playing good football, you want to play a great opponent because if you can go out there and play a good football game and find a way to get a win, it’s going to create a ton of momentum for your football team.”

A reshuffled offensive line could complicate matters, though.

The Broncos lost right tackle Menelik Watson to a season-ending calf injury earlier this week and Donald Stephenson, one of the candidates to replace him, just returned to practice this week in limited fashion after missing several games with a calf injury of his own. Allen Barbre and Elijah Wilkinson also are being considered as possible replacements for Watson.

Meanwhile, right guard Ron Leary (elbow) and center Matt Paradis (back) missed practice time this week and their availability remains in question.

All things considered, this still might be one of the best chances for the Denver offense to show some signs of life, considering New England is giving up an average of 417 yards per game, most in the league.

Coach Bill Belichick said the Patriots’ defensive issues are being addressed.

“We’re just trying to improve every week — fundamentals, overall execution and techniques,” he said. “We’re trying to coach better. Just a lot of little things, probably.”

Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said the Broncos’ defense can’t be overlooked. Denver has the league’s second-ranked defense, though it was overrun in last week’s loss to the Eagles, hurt by two offensive turnovers that set up short fields for Philadelphia.

“There’s little margin for error when you go out there,” Brady said. “They have a great defense. They have great players on both sides of the ball. You can’t go out there and make a bunch of mistakes and expect to win.”

Brady may be without one of his key wide receivers. Chris Hogan (shoulder) missed practice time this week. Also missing time on the practice field or taking part on a limited basis were defensive tackle Malcom Brown (ankle), tackle Marcus Cannon (ankle) and cornerback Stephen Gilmore (concussion).

Von Miller: Offside penalties are like 'taxes' on sacks

By Kevin Patra

NFL.com

November 10, 2017

Von Miller was caught offside twice in the Broncos' Week 9 shellacking at Philadelphia. Miller took ownership of his mistakes that aided the Eagles' blowout, but also explained his philosophy on trying to time the snap.

For Miller, getting a split-second head start to crush the quarterback is worth the risk of an occasional penalty.

"I look at it like taxes," the Denver Broncos' pass rusher said Thursday, via the team's official website.

"The sacks are going to come, so the false starts and the offsides are like taxes on those. You've got to pay taxes. I would like to [keep] my taxes minimal. I wouldn't like to have two a game. Probably one every three games would be cool. Two a game is just not good."

Miller also added that time and situation play on whether he tries to time the snap.

"[Outside linebackers] coach [Fred Pagac], he coaches us better than that. [Defensive line] coach [Bill] Kollar, all the guys coach us better than that. It's just, especially when you're down, you're just more inclined to take risks like that. Never on third-and-10, never in crucial situations for me, but there are some plays where I walk out there -- and even as a fan I think you can feel it -- like, 'OK, they've been moving the ball. They've been going on one for the last six snaps.' I'm a gambling man. Gambling got me here."

It is likely Miller will gamble some more Sunday night against Tom Brady and the New England Patriots. The all-world pass rusher has 7.5 career sacks on Brady in eight games (including playoff). No other player has more on the future Hall of Fame quarterback (Cameron Wake also has 7.5 in 14 games). With the Broncos' offense struggling, Miller knows his defense must smother Brady in order to pull off the home upset in a virtual must-win to save Denver's season.

Denver Broncos throw deep to MainStreaming for social media videos

By Michelle Clancy
RapidTVNews.com
November 10, 2017

“Engagement with our fans remains one of our many priorities and with the use of MainStreaming’s video delivery network we’re able to reach our fans and provide them high-quality video streams,” said Ben Hunt, director of digital media at the Denver Broncos. “We turned to MainStreaming to assist with transcoding video for our Broncos 365 app presented by Verizon, and broadcasting the streams to social-media channels.”

“We’re pleased to work with the Denver Broncos and to provide them a full-stack service of transcoding and delivery in order to provide the high-quality streams their fans deserve,” said Antonio Corrado, CEO of MainStreaming. “We understand that fan engagement for sports organisations is extremely important and thus, high-quality streams must be paramount for this to happen. MainStreaming’s high-performing Video Delivery Network (VDN) provides this for the Broncos allowing their fans to view video content regardless of device type.”