

# Vance Joseph to return as Broncos' head coach in 2018

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

January 2, 2018

Despite a 5-11 season, eight defeats by double digits and a playoffless finish, the Broncos will retain coach Vance Joseph for next season, giving him a chance “to fix it,” just as he had hoped.

Joseph met with John Elway early Monday to learn of the general manager's decision and to mull changes to the coaching staff, which included the departure of six assistants.

“Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team,” Elway tweeted Monday morning. “We believe in Vance as our head coach. Together, we'll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018.

“To all our fans: THANK YOU for your tremendous support and sticking with us through a tough year. This wasn't the season anyone expected, but we'll learn from it and be better because of it. Our 2018 season starts today.”

In keeping Joseph for 2018, Elway spared the Broncos of a fourth head coaching change in five years and provided a significant cost savings. Had Joseph left, the Broncos could have had to pay the remaining salaries of most of two coaching staffs.

Joseph was hired last January after the resignation of Gary Kubiak and was immediately labeled “a leader of men” because of his ability to relate to players on both sides of the ball, and to work well with fellow coaches.

The Broncos had tried to bring in Joseph as defensive coordinator in 2015, but the Cincinnati Bengals refused to release him from his contract. So when Denver suddenly had to fill the void left by Kubiak, Joseph was atop Elway's list and on the radar of many other teams seeking a new coach. The four-year deal awarded to Joseph was deemed both brilliant and risky, as some lauded Joseph's football expertise but remained skeptical because of his limited experience. For much of Joseph's coaching career, he was a defensive backs coach, and when the Broncos nabbed him, he had only one year under his belt as a coordinator, at Miami in 2016.

“I'll say this: He's very smart — he's an ex-quarterback,” Elway said with laugh when he introduced Joseph as head coach. “You think all he knows is the defensive side, but he's aware of what we need to do on the offensive side, too. I think that's why the combination is tremendous.”

Joseph guided the Broncos through another offseason quarterback competition over the summer and helped the team to a promising pair of victories to start the season with Trevor Siemian under center. But Denver's 3-1 record unraveled after its bye week and included a loss to the previously winless New York Giants in Denver, the franchise's first shutout in nearly 25 years against the Los Angeles Chargers, a blowout defeat to the Philadelphia Eagles, a total of 11 losses by an average of nearly 15 points, and a whopping 34 turnovers that trailed only the Cleveland Browns (41).

As the Broncos' record cratered, so did everything else.

Elway called the team “soft” as the losses piled up, scuffles broke out during practices and the quarterbacks swapped roles multiple times, with all three rotating in as the starter, backup and inactive player twice. Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy was fired midway through the season, which led to another offensive scheme change, multiple players were demoted and promoted, and frustration mounted inside the locker room and out. At one point late in the season, the only draft pick contributing on game days was starting offensive tackle Garrett Bolles.

Throughout it all, players voiced support for Joseph and acknowledged the difficulty of trying to find a rhythm and consistency through multiple coaching and quarterback changes. In Elway’s time as a front-office executive, the Broncos have had three head coaches, four offensive coordinators (two stints by McCoy) and five starting quarterbacks.

“I think the track record for quarterbacks going in and out of offenses every single season and their success rate is pretty low,” quarterback and impending free agent Brock Osweiler said. “I think if you did a study on it, you’d be pretty surprised. As far as the quarterback goes, if you can find a coordinator that you can hang your hat with and spend back-to-back seasons with — hopefully more than back-to-back seasons — I think your play on the field will be much better. Because at the end of the day, when you’re out there on the field making decisions, it happens so fast. So that system has to be hard-wired into your brain, your feet, your mechanics, and that’s hard to do when you’re changing them every couple of months.”

The Broncos reached the cellar of nearly every major category on offense and special teams, ranking 31st and 32nd, respectively, by Football Outsiders in efficiency.

No team in the NFL this season allowed as many points after turnovers (142). And no Broncos team in the last 50 years endured an eight-game losing streak.

But no Broncos team under the watch of longtime owner Pat Bowlen had a one-and-done coach, even in the most trying of years.

“I want to be here. It’s a football team that’s close,” Joseph said after the Broncos’ season-ending loss to the Kansas City Chiefs on Sunday. “We have to make some adjustments in some places, but our football team all year has not stopped working. ... I want to be here to fix it.”

If there were bright spots in Joseph’s inaugural season as coach, it was the milestone reached by running back C.J. Anderson, who crossed the 1,000-yard rushing threshold for the first time in his career, and the defense that ranked among the top five in total yards, rushing yards and passing yards allowed.

“A lot of things didn’t go our way this year, but I wouldn’t put it on him,” linebacker Todd Davis said of Joseph, echoing the sentiments of other players. He added: “Definitely I stand behind him 100 percent.”

Added defensive end Zach Kerr, one of the first free-agent acquisitions in Joseph’s head coaching career: “I love Vance Joseph. I really do. He brought me in, and I have the utmost respect for him. It’s tough being a first-year head coach. ... He had a bad season his first time coaching in the NFL. I hope nobody judges me on my first performance in the NFL.”

The Broncos missed their second postseason in two years and, though the blame didn't rest solely on Joseph, the calls for change outside the team's headquarters were loud. Fans grew weary during the losing streak and were fed up watching the same mistakes repeated week after week.

The fan base that, not too long ago, praised Elway for guiding the Broncos to a pair of AFC Championships and a Super Bowl title suddenly became his greatest detractors for failed draft picks and back-to-back disappointing seasons. The franchise with long-held lofty expectations and an unofficial motto to "be No. 1 in everything" had become close to last in most things.

The Broncos lost their way and will soon try to rediscover their identity during an offseason of change.

And they'll do so with a familiar face. Vance Joseph is staying. For now.

# Broncos part with six assistant coaches after 5-11 season

By Nicki Jhabvala  
Denver Post  
January 2, 2018

A 5-11 season can rarely pass without significant changes, so although Broncos coach Vance Joseph was told he is safe for another season, many of his assistants were shown the door.

The Broncos began the process swiftly Monday and parted with six coaches: special-teams coordinator Brock Olivo, assistant head coach/running backs Eric Stutesville, longtime receivers coach Tyke Tolbert, outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac, offensive line coach Jeff Davidson and assistant defensive backs coach Johnnie Lynn.

Defensive coordinator Joe Woods was retained, and Bill Musgrave will stay on as offensive coordinator.

The Broncos' special teams under first-year coordinator Olivo had issues throughout the year, putting his job in jeopardy long before the season ended. Special teams reached peak disarray in a home game against the New England Patriots in which the unit committed four gaffes en route to another loss.

Denver shuffled through punt returners as rookie Isaiah McKenzie — an undersized receiver drafted for his speed and return ability — muffed six punts and lost two, and was demoted, promoted and demoted again before Jordan Taylor closed out the year. Kicker Brandon McManus struggled with accuracy to start the season and finished with eight missed field goals (24-of-32), and the Broncos' two blocked punts allowed were tied for most in the league.

Stutesville, the longest-tenured Broncos coach on the staff, joined the team in 2010 as the running backs coach and served as their interim head coach that year when Josh McDaniels was fired. Prior to the 2017 season, after interviewing to become to the New York Jets' offensive coordinator, Stutesville opted to stay in Denver and was promoted to assistant head coach.

His firing is perhaps the biggest surprise of the Broncos' moves thus far as he endured four head coaching changes and worked with four offensive coordinators while in Denver. In his eight seasons with the team, Stutesville coached two Pro Bowl running backs in Willis McGahee (2008) and C.J. Anderson (2014) and guided three Broncos players to 1,000-yard rushing seasons: McGahee (2011), Knowshon Moreno (2013) and Anderson (2017).

With Stutesville being one of the most respected coaches by Broncos players and others throughout the league, his departure was met with dismay on social media by Anderson, who added that he is "so thankful to be (coached) by an amazing man."

Tolbert had been with the Broncos since 2011, general manager John Elway's first year as an executive, and helped the offense through multiple coaching and scheme changes. In Tolbert's seven seasons with the Broncos, receiver Demaryius Thomas recorded at least 90 catches and 1,000 receiving yards for five consecutive seasons (2012-16). Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders combined for seven Pro Bowl selections and two all-pro designations under Tolbert's watch.

Davidson, a Broncos draft pick in 1990, joined Joseph's staff last January and reunited with former coordinator Mike McCoy. Davidson previously worked with McCoy on the staffs of the San Diego Chargers (offensive line) and Carolina Panthers (offensive coordinator). When McCoy was fired this season after 10 games, it seemed likely that Davidson could be gone, too, at season's end, even though the line saw marked improvement from 2016.

Pagac was hired as part of former defensive coordinator Wade Phillips' defensive staff in 2015 and quickly became a favorite of linebacker Von Miller's. Pagac worked with DeMarcus Ware in the final years of his sure-to-be Hall of Fame career, helped Miller rise from great to elite and oversaw the growth of Shane Ray and Shaquil Barrett.

"Personally, for me, Coach Pug has been one of the best coaches I've ever had," Miller said after the Broncos' loss to Kansas City on Sunday. "(Chargers linebackers) coach (Richard) Smith and Coach Pug are right there together. It will be unfortunate to let Coach Pug leave. I feel like he's a part of me. Coach Pug, I've been working with him, and he's really seen me develop as a player. He knows me."

Lynn arrived in Denver with 28 years of playing and coaching experience and previously worked with Joseph on the San Francisco 49ers' defensive staff (2006-10). Lynn worked under Broncos defensive backs coach Marcus Robertson, who was retained in the wave of coaching changes.

# Broncos quarterbacks voice support for interim offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave

By Nick Kosmider

Denver Post

January 2, 2018

It is unclear whether any combination of Paxton Lynch, Brock Osweiler and Trevor Siemian will have an opportunity to compete for the Broncos' starting quarterback job in 2018.

But as they left Dove Valley on Monday, the day after Denver completed a 5-11 season, the three players voiced support for the man who could be guiding the Broncos' offense next season: interim coordinator Bill Musgrave. A decision had not been reached by Monday morning as to whether Musgrave will be retained, but he has the backing, whatever it's worth, of the three quarterbacks who made starts after he took over for Mike McCoy, who was fired Nov. 20.

"I love working with Bill," said Osweiler, who started one game, at Washington, under Musgrave and played in three quarters of a victory at Indianapolis. "I just told him in our exit meeting, 'Thank you for you being you. You're an incredible coach and incredible person to be around. You make playing football fun.' Not only does he make football fun, he's also a great coordinator."

Siemian, whose shoulder injury in the first quarter of the Dec. 14 game at Indianapolis ended his season, said Musgrave "dialed down the volume" of the playbook after taking over for McCoy. The Broncos averaged 18.3 points during 10 games with McCoy, only 14.6 points following a 2-0 start. Denver averaged 17.7 points in Musgrave's six games, with three different starting quarterbacks running his offense.

"He helped me a lot," Lynch said of Musgrave. "I know it was kind of tough with the transition after McCoy left, but I think Coach Musgrave did a good job taking over and implementing his plan for us. Not completely changing the playbook, but kind of honing it down and making it simple so guys could go out there and play fast."

**Future contracts.** The Broncos on Monday signed 10 players to reserve/futures contracts, which will go on the team's books when the new league year begins in March: defensive tackle Paul Boyette; receivers River Cracraft, Jordan Leslie and Tim Patrick; defensive ends Stansly Maponga and Jhaustin Thomas; defensive back Jordan Moore; tight end Brian Parker; offensive tackle Jeremiah Poutasi; and linebacker Marcus Rush

**Davis talks future.** After playing the 2017 season on a one-year, \$2.75 million deal he signed last April as a restricted free agent, linebacker Todd Davis will enter this offseason with a chance to land a multiyear deal.

The question for the now unrestricted free agent is whether he'll sign that deal with Denver.

"I love this team," Davis said Monday. "I love this organization. We'll see what happens. I'm very excited for the future with this organization, but we'll see."

The 25-year-old Davis, starting at inside linebacker for the second straight season, finished with 82 tackles and one sack in 14 games this season. He played through numerous injuries and was the winner of the team's Ed Block Courage Award, which is given to players who exemplify commitments to the principles of sportsmanship and courage.

**Anderson reflects on 1,000 yards.** C.J. Anderson was one of nine NFL running backs this season to reach 1,000 yards. His 61 yards on 18 carries in Sunday's 27-24 loss to the Chiefs gave Anderson 1,007 for the season.

"It just feels good when you look back at it," he said. "There were nine of us who rushed for 1,000. The goal was to lead the league, but you take the performance that you had and build on it."

Anderson hit the milestone just before an offseason that will bring uncertainty for the former undrafted running back, who will turn 27 in February and will be entering his sixth season in 2018. He is under contract for the next two seasons at a base salary of \$4.5 million, but there are no guarantees left on that deal.

But Anderson made it clear he hopes to be in a Broncos uniform next season.

"Of course I'd like to stay here," he said. "I've only known here. Had my good here, had my bad here. I think I put enough on tape; we'll see. I just play hard every time. I go out there and give it my all."

# Broncos players get their wish after making pitches for Vance Joseph to return as coach

By Nick Kosmider

Denver Post

January 2, 2018

His pitch came with a promise.

When C.J. Anderson began cleaning out his locker early Monday morning, the Broncos running back was still awaiting word as to whether his coach, Vance Joseph, would be coming back for a second season. Anderson, hopeful Joseph wouldn't be fired, didn't have any inside information, but he did have a prediction.

"I can promise you sitting here — you can put it on record — if he does get a second chance we will not be 5-11," Anderson said. "We won't have a losing season."

Joseph will have the chance to prove Anderson correct. General manager John Elway later confirmed Joseph will be back in 2018 despite a 5-11 record in his first season that included an eight-game losing streak, the franchise's longest since 1967.

If their words before the news came down were any indication, the players in Denver's locker room are glad to have their coach back for a second season. In the days before the Broncos closed the season with Sunday's 27-24 loss to the Chiefs, players pointed fingers at themselves for not doing more in a forgettable season. It wasn't fair to lay all of the blame, many of them claimed, at the feet of their first-year head coach.

"I think he gives us his all," inside linebacker Todd Davis said. "He gives us his heart and soul. I can stand behind any man who does that. I trust him. A lot of things didn't go our way this year, but I wouldn't put it on him."

Davis insisted Monday that the Broncos didn't show quit while in the throes of a season-defining losing streak, and he gave credit for some of that to Joseph. Quarterback Trevor Siemian shared a similar opinion.

"I think he has the locker room," Siemian said. "He has all the respect of the guys. I think at times like this, it's easy to point fingers. The one thing I'll say is nobody in here has done that. That's a credit to Coach Joseph and how he steered this thing."

It's unclear how much the clear support of the players in Denver's locker room factored into the decision to keep Joseph. But those who wanted their coach to stay got their wish. Now they wait for the rest of the pieces of the 2018 offseason puzzle to come together.

"We're real close," safety Will Parks said. "There are probably just a few key pieces that we have to fix. I know (the front office is) going to do an outstanding job this offseason as far as collecting the right pieces and even letting a couple pieces go. That's just the business part of it. You just never know what you're going to get. You just have to be ready for it."

# Vance Joseph keeps Broncos head coach job

By Mike Klis

9 News

January 2, 2018

It took some long thought and discussion. Apparently, it was not an easy decision.

Ultimately, though, Broncos general manager John Elway informed Vance Joseph on Monday morning the head coach will be retained for a second season.

Joseph's future had been shaky after the Broncos finished with a 5-11 record that was the team's first losing season since 2010. On Sunday morning, ESPN reported Joseph was "facing increasingly long odds to return."

However, 9News countered the report Sunday evening by stating Elway had not made a decision, was going to sleep on it before making it and finally, "don't be surprised if Joseph returns for his second season."

Elway has decided to retain Joseph for a second season with plans to upgrade the quarterback position.

"Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team," Elway stated by Twitter. "We believe in Vance as our head coach. Together, we'll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018."

The reason Joseph was on the hot seat was simple: Elway doesn't put up with 5-11. Elway called his team soft after it had lost its fifth straight game by at least 10 points.

But there are probably two reasons why Joseph will get a second chance. One, it's only fair he gets the opportunity to coach with better quarterback play. The Broncos were 3-1, remember, before turnovers starting dooming their season.

There were improvements to the process, if not with the ultimate results. Last year, the Broncos couldn't run the ball or stop the run. This year, Denver improved from 27th in rushing (92.8 yards per game) to 12th (115.8), and from 28th in defending the run (130.3 yards per game) to No. 5 (89.4).

And two, this is not considered a strong year for head coaching candidates. Josh McDaniels is widely considered the hottest one. To which the politest portion of Broncoland would say: No thank you.

The next step Elway and Joseph will take is to fire several assistant coaches. There may be significant changes on the offensive side of the ball, although Bill Musgrave is expected to return as offensive coordinator. Gary Kubiak will be brought in to help Elway upstairs.

Everyone at Broncos headquarters, though, is on notice, even those who are staying.

# Coaching purge: Broncos say goodbye to Stuedesville, Tolbert, Olivo, Pagac, Davidson, Lynn

By Mike Klis

9 News

January 2, 2018

Vance Joseph was retained, but it was a sad day for some fine men on his coaching staff.

Five assistant coaches were fired Monday, including the long-termed Eric Stuedesville and Tyke Tolbert.

“Four head coaches is a pretty good run,” Stuedesville, remarkably gracious and humorous till the end, said in an interview with 9NEWS. “I knew I was on borrowed time at some point. But we’re in a fantastic game. It’s a hard business, but it’s a fantastic game.”

In his eight years as the Broncos’ running backs coach, he worked for Josh McDaniels, John Fox, Gary Kubiak and Joseph.

Stuedesville will be fine. In fact, the New York Giants notified the Broncos they would interview him for their vacant head coaching position. That interview will occur later this week. He deserves the opportunity. Stuedesville served as the Broncos’ interim head coach in place of the fired McDaniels with four games remaining in 2010.

Stuedesville even guided Tim Tebow to his first NFL win. Stuedesville also had two, 1,000-yard rushers in Knowshon Moreno in 2013 and C.J. Anderson to finish off his final year in 2017.

“The highlight, and really nothing else was close were the players and the people around here,” Stuedesville said. “I loved it. This was a great place for me and my family. The Super Bowl championship, obviously, fantastic. I’m glad we got the kid (Anderson) over 1,000 last night. That was important to me and to him. I’m glad I left knowing we did the right thing there.”

First-year special teams coordinator Brock Olivo, offensive line coach Jeff Davidson, outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac and assistant defensive backs coach Johnnie Lynn were also dismissed Monday.

Tolbert had an incredible run as the Broncos’ receivers coach, starting with the Tim Tebow season of 2011 and helping guide Demaryius Thomas to five Pro Bowl appearances and Emmanuel Sanders to two Pro Bowls.

“It’s been a great 7 years, including our Super Bowl 50 championship,” Tolbert said in an interview with 9NEWS. “I’m just very fortunate, very fortunate to have been here 7 years, my family to have been here seven years. This has been a first-class organization. My family loves it. My girls love it.

“I hate to leave now because I feel like we could fix it. But I understand it’s part of the business. It’s going to be another chapter in the Tolbert household. Obviously, I want to continue coaching. I want to thank all the Broncos fans and thank my players for laying it on the line for me. And thank the whole Broncos organization for allowing me to be here for seven great years.”

Davidson's departure was expected as he was brought in by offensive coordinator Mike McCoy, who was fired on November 20 and replaced by Bill Musgrave, who became the interim offensive coordinator.

Musgrave is expected to become the full-time offensive coordinator.

Olivo was one of the most intelligent, kindest and interesting men ever employed by the Broncos' organization. His special teams just didn't consistently play well.

Punt returner Isaiah McKenzie had too many muffs, kicker Brandon McManus missed too many field goals, and the coverage units allowed too many long returns.

Broncos' special teams ranked 32nd, or last, in the NFL, according to Football Outsiders grading system.

One possible candidate to replace Olivo is Carolina special teams coordinator Thomas McGaughey, who is a free agent after this season.

Lynn had been coaching football since 1987 and had been in the NFL as a coach and a player for 28 season. He was brought to the Broncos this year by defensive coordinator Joe Woods. Woods and Lynn had worked together in Oakland for two years.

More moves to the Broncos' coaching staff are possible. Broncos general manager John Elway and Joseph are scheduled to hold their end-of-season press conference at 11 a.m. Tuesday at team headquarters.

# Bronco notes: Kubiak to move back to Denver with new role

By Staff

9 News

January 2, 2018

In his new role in the Denver Broncos' personnel department, Gary Kubiak will relocate back to Denver.

The Broncos' head coach from 2015, when he led the team to Super Bowl 50 champs, and 2016, when he posted an 9-7 record, Kubiak resigned from that post because of health concerns a year ago.

Instead, he spent the past season serving as the Broncos' senior personnel advisor, where his primary role was scouting pro and college players while based at his offseason home near Houston.

Kubiak and his wife Rhonda kept their Denver home. He was in and out of Denver headquarters this year to attend player evaluation meetings with general manager John Elway and player personnel director Matt Russell. His kids are here. Two sons even work for the Broncos.

In his new role, Kubiak will be more involved in player evaluations on the pro side, in particular for the free agent period in March and then in helping the Broncos for the 2018 draft in which the team will have the No. 5 overall pick.

Kubiak will technically work under Russell but more importantly will bring a third set of eyes to the Broncos' personnel department.

The Broncos had a three-man leadership operation with Elway, Russell and Tom Heckert Jr. from 2013-16. But Heckert stepped aside from day-to-day duties last year in part because of health reasons.

Bringing in Kubiak shows Elway is holding himself accountable in what has been a difficult Broncos' season.

## Wasn't their fault

This hurts. After Kubiak resigned last season, the Broncos didn't retain his three coordinators: Rick Dennison (offense), Wade Phillips (defense) and Joe DeCamillis (special teams).

All three have similar roles with three different teams this year. All three made the playoffs: Dennison with the Buffalo Bills, Phillips with the Los Angeles Rams and DeCamillis with the Jacksonville Jaguars.

## C.J.'s milestone

There were nine NFL running backs this season who rushed for at least 1,000 yards. Only one – New Orleans' Mark Ingram with 230 -- had fewer carries than the Broncos' C.J. Anderson's 242. Anderson first made the Broncos' 53 roster as an undrafted rookie in 2013, made the Pro Bowl thanks to an incredibly productive second half in 2014, then rushed for 90 yards and scored the only offensive touchdown in Super Bowl 50.

So where does 1,000 yards rank among his accomplishments?

“It’s definitely up there,” he said. “Hundred yards all-purpose in the Super Bowl with a touchdown was big. But this is something personal where, hey, I was undrafted. I’m coming off knee surgery. I wasn’t supposed to be in this position. The average career for us as running backs is very, very short. To surpass the obstacles that I’ve overcome, I just want to build on that and go from there.”

### **Goodbye**

Bronco players will gather as early as 8 a.m. Monday to clean out their lockers at the UHealth Training Center and begin their offseason. Many will be Broncos for the last time.

# Many Broncos now have to wait to see if they're part of the team's plan

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

January 2, 2018

The Denver Broncos' top football decision-maker John Elway said Monday, one day after the Broncos had closed out a 5-11 season with a 27-24 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs, that the 2018 season had "officially" begun.

They opened that offseason work with a morning announcement the Broncos would retain coach Vance Joseph, then quickly followed it with an afternoon shake-up as several assistant coaches were shown the door, including two of the team's longest tenured -- assistant head coach/running backs Eric Studesville and wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert.

The Broncos players, who spent Monday morning taking exit physicals as part of their to-do list, were also set to deal with their own brand of uncertainty. Free agency doesn't open for another two months, but many who participated in the Broncos' troubled season were left to wonder what the future might hold.

"I've said it before, this whole business is uncertainty," said running back C.J. Anderson. "Everybody has to deal with that in some way. I hope I'm back, but those decisions aren't up to me."

Anderson just concluded a 1,007-yard season, but his contract is structured in such a way that, despite two years remaining on the deal, the Broncos could release him without any "dead money" penalty against the salary cap.

The Broncos have used a pick in each of the past two drafts on a running back -- Devontae Booker in 2016 and De'Angelo Henderson in 2017. The Broncos had been ready to give Booker a look as the main back when training camp opened, but a wrist fracture was discovered and Booker didn't play until Week 4 and didn't have more than eight carries in a game until Week 11.

Then there's the expected makeover behind center. Quarterback Brock Osweiler is set to be an unrestricted free agent while quarterback Trevor Siemian has a year remaining on his deal, but both know there are changes coming at the position.

On his chances to be back, Osweiler said: "Absolutely. I love the Denver Broncos. I love this organization. I love the coaches. I love the support staff. I love the city. I love the state ... I would love to be a Bronco for as long as I possibly can."

Siemian, who won back-to-back training camp battles to earn the starting job before he was benched this season and then suffered a season-ending shoulder injury after he had returned to the lineup, has a year left on his deal. Siemian, like Osweiler, knows the Broncos are already scouting the draft's best quarterback prospects and that Paxton Lynch was a first-round pick in 2016.

"I haven't thought that far ahead to be honest with you," Siemian said. "As far as I know, I'm under contract another year. Excited to be back here. I have a lot of great teammates and coaches here."

"I just want to get better," Lynch said. "Whatever I can do in the offseason to get better ... The goal is always to come back better than when you left."

Cornerback Aqib Talib, who will turn 32 next month, is another veteran player whose contract the Broncos may feel compelled to look at. Talib was just selected to his fourth Pro Bowl in four seasons with the Broncos and has two years remaining on his deal he signed in 2014.

But most of the guaranteed money in the deal is off the books and, if the Broncos chose, they could release him and have a dead money charge of \$1 million. He is scheduled to count \$12 million against the cap next season. Talib has said he doesn't know what the Broncos will do, but "if they want me back, I want to be back."

Linebacker Todd Davis, who has been a starter for the past two seasons, is one of the Broncos' front-line free agents. He finished second on the team in tackles, with 82.

"I love this team and I love the organization," Davis said. "We'll see what happens. I'm very excited for the future with this organization, but we'll see ... Being a Cali boy I never would have thought I'd love Denver this much, but I really love it here. I think it's a great, great city and great people ... so I would love to get a contract here and stay here."

But as they all loaded boxes and shoved clothes and other gear into plastic bags, they all knew the change that had been promised one floor above them would arrive soon enough.

"It's coming," said linebacker Brandon Marshall. "There are changes every year, that's the league, but when you finish like we finished, everybody knows they're not just going to let that go."

# Six Broncos assistant coaches out in wake of 5-11

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

January 2, 2018

Within hours of the Denver Broncos announcing Vance Joseph would be retained as the team's coach, the head began the difficult task of sorting through the decisions that follow a 5-11 season.

Assistant head coach/running backs Eric Stutesville, offensive line coach Jeff Davidson, wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert, assistant defensive backs coach Johnnie Lynn and special teams coordinator Brock Olivo were all fired Monday. Outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac, who was hired by Gary Kubiak in 2015, was also let go as his contract was set to be up in the coming weeks.

Given the Broncos just had their first 1,000-yard rusher since 2013 in C.J. Anderson, the Broncos' decision on Stutesville will be met with some surprise. Stutesville was the Broncos' longest-tenured assistant coach, having been hired in 2010 by Josh McDaniels, and he served as the Broncos' interim head coach for the final four games of the 2010 season when McDaniels was fired in the wake of a Spygate investigation by the NFL.

Stutesville remained on the Broncos' staff for John Fox, Gary Kubiak and Joseph. Earlier this season Joseph had called Stutesville a "vital" part of the coaching staff and an assistant coach he "leaned on."

Davidson and Olivo had been hired by Joseph last year. Tolbert was one of the Broncos' most-tenured assistant coaches, having been on Fox's first staff in Denver in 2011 as both Tolbert and Stutesville were on the Broncos' staff for Super Bowl XLVIII and Super Bowl 50.

The changes reflect at least some of the struggles the Broncos had on offense as well as special teams that were the major catalysts in an eight-game losing streak this season, the team's longest since 1967. Anderson, however, was one of nine running backs in the league to top 1,000 yards, something Anderson credited Stutesville with since it was Stutesville who helped Anderson retool his offseason workouts to include cycling.

On Twitter Monday Anderson called Stutesville's firing "bulls---."

After Sunday's loss to the Chiefs to close out the season, linebacker Von Miller said of Pagac: "Coach 'Pug' (Pagac) has been one of the best coaches I've ever had. (Chargers linebacker) coach (Richard) Smith and Coach Pug are right there together. It will be unfortunate to let Coach Pug leave. I feel like he's a part of me. Coach Pug, I've been working with him and he's really seen me develop as a player. He knows me."

The Broncos started three different quarterbacks this season, which didn't help how things went on that side of the ball. Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy was fired in November.

The Broncos finished tied for 26th in scoring (18.1 points per game), 20th in passing (208.3 yards per game), tied for third-most sacks allowed (52), tied for 25th in receiving touchdowns (19), were 31st in passer rating (73.0), threw the second-most interceptions (22) and suffered their first shutout in 25 years.

The Broncos' special teams were also a consistent problem all season, as opponents blocked two punts, kicker Brandon McManus missed eight field goals as five of those misses came in the first six weeks of the season, and wide receiver Isaiah McKenzie was demoted twice as the team's punt returner because of fumbling problems.

McKenzie muffed six punts this season. Olivo was in his first season as an NFL coordinator and before Joseph had hired him he had spent three seasons as an assistant to Kansas City Chiefs special teams coordinator Dave Toub.

Toub, who interviewed for the Broncos' head coaching job when Joseph was hired, is generally regarded as the top special teams coach in the league. The Broncos lost their season-finale to the Chiefs Sunday and just days before the loss Olivo had talked about facing his mentor after such a difficult season on special teams for the Broncos.

"(Toub) is awesome, he's one of the more important people in my life, really and honestly," Olivo said in recent days. "He's the archetype when it comes to special teams coaches throughout the NFL."

Asked if he had reflected on the Broncos season, Olivo said Friday: "That's definitely something that we will do next week for sure. There will be a lot to reflect on, no question."

# John Elway starts 2018 work by keeping Vance Joseph

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

January 2, 2018

Denver Broncos president of football operations John Elway took to Twitter on Monday morning as many of the team's faithful were still dealing with their own football hangover.

The Broncos had lost their 11th game Sunday, officially closing out the frustrating trek through the 2017 season that started with such high hopes and finished so far below expectations. But Elway thanked the team's fans on social media, offering, in part, "this wasn't the season anyone expected, but we'll learn from it and be better because of it."

He added, "Our 2018 season starts today."

The first major move of what figures to be a long list of offseason transactions was to announce Vance Joseph would be retained as the team's coach. Joseph was hired less than a calendar year ago, but the 5-11 finish meant Joseph and Elway had a lot to talk about at a Monday morning meeting.

It was a similar meeting after a disappointing home playoff loss to the Indianapolis Colts to close out the 2014 season that spelled the end of John Fox's time with the Broncos. Though many with the Broncos said Sunday night that they felt Joseph would be back if he could convey to Elway what his plan would be moving forward, Elway and Joseph still had to sit down face-to-face, shake hands and come out fixing.

That is done, Joseph is off the rumor mill, and now he and the Broncos can get down to the business of repairing their team. The latest edition of the Broncos didn't always play disciplined, didn't always look prepared and didn't always respond to adversity -- they had an eight-game losing streak and lost eight games by at least 10 points, four by at least 20.

Joseph and his coaches are in that stew of disappointment, but the players almost universally supported him after Sunday's 27-24 loss to the Chiefs and have also been particularly honest much of the time about what happened.

"Coming with a veteran locker room, with talent, I think it's on us as players, we didn't hold up our end of the bargain to help V.J. and all the coaches," running back C.J. Anderson said Monday. "I can promise you sitting right here, you can put it on record, [when] he gets a second chance our record won't be 5-11, we won't have a losing season."

Or as Chris Harris Jr. put it: "We just didn't play good ... simple as that. We all have to fix it, us and the coaches."

If you're looking for two big-ticket items on the to-do list, go with offense and edge.

Offense as in find a quarterback, of course, but the Broncos simply have to decide what they want to be on offense and stick with it, draft for it, build around it. This team's offensive line has been an offseason question for five years, including this one.

Again, just four of the nine offensive linemen on the roster for Sunday's finale were Denver draft picks, and they did not finish the season with a homegrown prospect at the position on their practice squad.

Until the Broncos can protect their quarterbacks and play an offense that suits their personnel wire-to-wire for a season, they won't develop any of those quarterbacks. They might like some of what Paxton Lynch did Sunday, but he's been sacked 18 times in five games over two seasons.

Trevor Siemian has been sacked 64 times in 25 games over the past two seasons, and Brock Osweiler was sacked 10 times in four starts this season.

Sure, some of that is the fault of the quarterbacks, but some of it isn't. It will go together for the Broncos moving forward.

Then the Broncos need to regain their edge. All season the team's older, more established players were suddenly in parental mode, lamenting the younger generation.

Whether it's leadership of those veteran players or the kind of young players the Broncos find, that, too, needs attention. There needs to be a little more tough love in the building -- the players say this privately -- and that can come from Joseph.

Players love Joseph's honesty and his willingness to tell it to them straight. But the Broncos need to address problems more quickly before small ones get to be big ones.

But that's all for the weeks to come. A team that has had way too much change for a playoff hopeful got a hint of stability Monday as Joseph got the second chance his players said he deserved.

# Vance Joseph to return as Broncos coach after going 5-11 in first year

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

January 2, 2018

Vance Joseph will return as the Denver Broncos' head coach for the 2018 season, team president John Elway announced Monday.

Elway tweeted that he and Joseph talked Monday morning and that the Broncos "believe in Vance as our head coach."



Joseph, 45, guided the Broncos to a 5-11 record and a last-place finish in the AFC West in his first season as an NFL head coach.

"I think it's great [that Joseph is returning]," quarterback Trevor Siemian said. "He's got the locker room. He's got the respect of the guys. Times like this, it's easy to point fingers. The thing is, nobody in here has done that, and that's a credit to Coach Joseph and how he steered this thing."

Joseph is the 16th head coach in Broncos franchise history and the first African-American to be hired for the job. Assistant head coach Eric Stutesville was Denver's interim head coach for four games in 2010 after Josh McDaniels was fired.

Stutesville was one of six assistants fired on Monday. Special teams coordinator Brock Olivo, offensive line coach Jeff Davidson, wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert and assistant defensive backs coach Johnnie Lynn also were let go. In addition, outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac will not have his contract renewed.

Joseph replaced Gary Kubiak a year ago when Kubiak stepped away from coaching because of health concerns. At the time of Joseph's hiring, Broncos president John Elway called him "a very good football coach and teacher who is ready for this opportunity." Elway also gave Joseph a show of support in mid-November when he publicly said that all involved with the Broncos had gotten "a little bit soft."

Elway later said he didn't believe the Broncos were going to make a coaching change during the season, just before Denver snapped an eight-game losing streak on Dec. 10 with a victory over the Jets.

Stability and consistency at quarterback were among the primary reasons for the Broncos' last-place finish this season, as Siemian, Paxton Lynch and Brock Osweiler all started games under center.

The Broncos' eight-game losing streak from Oct. 15 to Dec. 3 was their longest since 1967; six of those losses were by double digits and four by at least 20 points.

"I think it's on us as players," running back C.J. Anderson said. "We didn't hold up our end of the bargain to help [Joseph] and all the coaches. I can promise you, sitting right here -- you can put it on record -- [when] he gets a second chance, our record won't be 5-11. We won't have a losing season."

# Elway decides to keep Broncos coach Joseph after 5-11 season

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
January 2, 2018

John Elway is giving Vance Joseph another chance.

The Broncos general manager decided to retain his rookie head coach Monday following a 5-11 season that was in many ways the franchise's worst since Denver's dismal AFL days in the 1960s.

"Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team," Elway tweeted. "We believe in Vance as our head coach. Together, we'll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018."

Aiding that effort, they'll have the fifth overall pick in the NFL draft in April.

Plus, Elway is expected to embark on yet another veteran QB search after watching his offense regress under the turnstile trio of Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch, all of them his draft picks.

What Elway won't have to do now is go looking for his fourth head coach in five years.

Choosing continuity over change, though, still means Joseph has to do things differently.

He'll have to coach both his players and his staff better than he did in his first season, for one. And he went right to work shaking up that staff, firing special teams coordinator Brock Olivo. Also jettisoned were longtime receivers coach Tyke Tolbert, O-line coach Jeff Davidson and running backs coach Eric Stutesville, who had been in Denver since 2010 and was the interim head coach after Josh McDaniels' firing that year.

Elway labeled his team a bunch of softies at one point during their long losing streak, which didn't immediately snap them out of their funk but instead produced blowback and 72 hours later, Elway said he was including himself in that critique.

Top pick Garrett Bolles was one of the most penalized players in the league and was openly mocked in the locker room by some of his teammates after the tough-talking left tackle was bowled over by Redskins linebacker Ryan Kerrigan. Three Denver defenders said Bolles, who got flipped on his head, ignored their warnings about that exact result if he didn't fix his poor technique.

Aside from Bolles, who started all 16 games, the 2017 draft class couldn't get onto the field.

The other seven picks combined to miss more games — 75 — than they played — 37 — and they had zero starts. Meanwhile, seven undrafted players combined to play 58 games and start three.

A year after an offensive-defensive rift opened in the Broncos locker room, there was a generational gap in 2017. Several veterans said the rookie class just didn't grasp the NFL leap until the season was already a lost cause.

Of the six head coaching vacancies last season, Joseph was widely believed to have inherited the best situation, taking over a team coming off a 9-7 season and just one year removed from a Super Bowl parade. In his words, they didn't need a rebuild but a reboot after he replaced Gary Kubiak, who stepped away over health concerns.

But after winning all four of their exhibitions and starting off 3-1, things fell apart.

They lost eight straight, their longest skid in a half century, and eight times they lost by double digits.

"Brock said something yesterday that hit me: now we know what it feels like to have a bad NFL season," running back C.J. Anderson said. "I think it was hard for all of us to get a grasp of it and change it during the season because a lot of us had never seen it."

Joseph stuck with offensive coordinator Mike McCoy well into the season even as the former Chargers head coach stubbornly stuck to an offense heavy on the pass and spread formations that proved Denver's undoing.

His replacement, Bill Musgrave, called more plays designed around his players' strengths and the ground game.

With speculation about his future swirling, Joseph said Sunday, "It's been a hard year, but everyone kept fighting. I want to be here to fix it."

So, now he'll get the chance to do something no other head coach has done in the Super Bowl era: take a team that won four fewer games than the one he inherited and engineer a comeback to reach the playoffs.

"I think it's on us as players. We didn't hold up our end of the bargain to help (Joseph) and all the coaches," Anderson said. "I can promise you, sitting right here — you can put it on record — he gets a second chance, our record won't be 5-11. We won't have a losing season."

Throughout the last three months of losing, one thing Joseph never lost was the locker room.

"I think he's got the respect of the guys," Siemian said. "At times like this I think it's easy to point fingers. And nobody in here's done that and it's a credit to Coach Joseph and how he steered this thing."

Osweiler summed it up for a lot of his teammates:

"Winning five football games is not the standard here in Denver. The standard and the expectations are to compete for Super Bowls. When you don't do that, it's a failed season," he said.

"This year was very frustrating. It was aggravating. It just wasn't acceptable."

# The Latest: Broncos' Joseph stay, but some assistants go

By Staff

Associated Press

January 2, 2018

The latest on NFL coaching firings (All times EST):

5:30 p.m.

Vance Joseph is still the head coach in Denver. Plenty members of his staff, though, are looking for new jobs.

Among those who won't be back in 2018 with the Broncos are special teams coach Brock Olivo, running backs coach Eric Studesville, wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert and O-line coach Jeff Davidson.

Also, outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac's contract isn't being renewed.

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5:15 p.m.

Indianapolis Colts general manager Chris Ballard isn't seeking an offensive- or defensive-minded coach to replace Chuck Pagano. He wants a coach who can teach and develop players.

But the most attractive feature of the job may be working with a healthy Andrew Luck — and team owner Jim Irsay is making that a key selling point.

Just a few days after Luck said his surgically repaired right shoulder was feeling stronger and more stable, Irsay went further, predicting Luck would be even better when he returns.

"I have no doubt in my mind that Andrew is going to come back," Irsay said. "I'm telling you that kid is a special kid. Special. He was born to do great things in the National Football League and he will do great things in the National Football League.

"I believe he is going to be back and I believe he is going to be back for a long time and I believe he is going to write his name into the National Football League record books in a very strong way."

If Luck is healthy, the Colts opening becomes far more attractive. Indy has nearly \$90 million in salary cap room and the No. 3 pick in the draft to help surround their 28-year-old, three-time Pro Bowl quarterback with better players.

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1:30 p.m.

Bruce Arians of the Arizona Cardinals has announced his retirement, while Marvin Lewis of the Cincinnati Bengals says he's still discussing his future with team management.

Arians told players of his much-expected decision Monday. The 65-year-old has dealt with health problems in recent years, including treatment for diverticulitis and a successful fight against kidney cancer last offseason. He won a franchise-record 50 games in his five seasons with the Cardinals.

Lewis just completed his 15th season with the Bengals, none of which included a playoff victory. There was widespread speculation he would not be asked back, but he and owner Mike Brown did not reach a conclusion after meeting Monday.

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1:15 p.m.

Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks says the Giants, Lions and Colts have requested interviews with him for their head coaching positions.

If Wilks leaves, it would be the second straight season the Panthers lose a defensive coordinator.

Sean McDermott left Carolina to become the head coach of the Buffalo Bills last year.

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12:55 p.m.

There will be no new coach in Denver.

Broncos general manager John Elway tweeted that he'll be sticking with Vance Joseph despite a 5-11 record that included an eight-game losing streak.

The decision came after reports that Elway might be in search of his fourth head coach in five years. But in his tweet, Elway said he believed in Joseph and that together, they would put in the work to win in 2018.

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12:20 p.m.

The Chicago Bears have fired coach John Fox after a third consecutive year of double-digit losses and last-place finishes.

Fox, who came to Chicago from Denver, where he won four straight AFC West titles, finished 14-34 with the Bears and never won more than six games in any of his three seasons.

He is still 133-123 over a career that also included time with the Carolina Panthers. But Fox's .292 winning percentage will go down as the second worst in the history of the Bears.

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9:45 a.m.

The Detroit Lions have fired coach Jim Caldwell, who finished the season with a 9-7 record but missed the playoffs for the second time in three years.

Caldwell went 36-28 in four seasons with the Lions.

He joins Chuck Pagano of Indianapolis and Jack Del Rio of Oakland, each fired after their games Sunday.

Other teams that could be making changes today include Arizona, Cincinnati, Chicago and Denver.

# 2 fired, 1 retired and 1 near miss on NFL's 'Black Monday'

By Eddie Pellis  
Associated Press  
January 2, 2018

The Lions and Bears showed their coaches the door. Bruce Arians of the Cardinals found it himself. And Vance Joseph of the Broncos remained gainfully employed despite enduring the sort of season that doesn't go down well in Denver.

What is traditionally the NFL's biggest day for firings, "Black Monday," started with a flurry when Detroit canned Jim Caldwell and Chicago did the same to John Fox, both before noon.

"Today is the tough part of our results-oriented business," said Fox, whose team went 14-34 and finished last in all three of his seasons in Chicago.

He and Caldwell, who went 36-28 in four seasons but didn't win a playoff game, joined Jack Del Rio of the Raiders and Chuck Pagano of the Colts, whose owners didn't even wait until the calendar turned, choosing to sack them after their games Sunday.

But that was it.

Arians, who has been dealing with health problems, including a bout with kidney cancer, announced he was leaving Arizona, though that was widely expected.

In a teary news conference, the 65-year-old Arians called his stay in Arizona, which included 49 victories over five seasons "a great ride." Sporting his trademark cap and toying with his grey goatee, Arians said an eye opener came over the summer when his wife told him his son, Jake, was soon to turn 40.

"It hit me like a ton of bricks, that I missed all that time," Arians said. "That's the culture. I probably wouldn't change anything."

Joseph, a rookie head coach who oversaw a 5-11 season that included an eight-game losing streak, was on the hot seat. But his boss, John Elway, slept on it and decided to keep Joseph and not begin a search for the team's fourth coach in five years.

"We believe in Vance as our head coach," Elway tweeted. "Together, we'll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018."

The Marvin Lewis situation in Cincinnati — well, it's complicated. Lewis completed his 15th season with the Bengals, and conventional wisdom held that he might not be asked to return. He met with owner Mike Brown on Monday, but no conclusions were reached. Lewis said the decision was more complicated than management simply asking him back, and that the owner and the front office need to be on the same page.

The five vacancies (six counting the Giants, who fired Bob McAdoo earlier in December) naturally triggered a flurry of speculation about which assistant coaches might be moving on to take over the teams.

Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks confirmed that the Colts, Lions and Giants had asked him to interview. Patriots coordinators Josh McDaniels and Matt Patricia were, as usual, on a number of lists, and Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz was considered one of New York's top candidates.

Maybe most intriguing was the prospect of Jon Gruden leaving the broadcasting booth and returning to the Raiders. ESPN reported that Raiders owner Mark Davis was trying to lure Gruden back to the sideline with an offer that could include an ownership stake.

In Houston, Texans general manager Rick Smith said he would leave the team for at least a year while his wife, Tiffany, fights breast cancer. There had been speculation that coach Bill O'Brien might lose his job, though it appeared O'Brien would stay on. Smith dismissed the notion that he and O'Brien don't get along, saying they have a great working relationship.

"We continue to do that and that's another reason why this is a decision that I can make," Smith said.

# Broncos decide to keep Vance Joseph after 5-11 season

By Troy Renck

KMGH

January 2, 2018

After an awkward 24 hours of uncertainty, Vance Joseph received his wish. He has been retained for his second season. Joseph sat in limbo following the Broncos' forgettable 5-11 season, but made it clear he wanted to return. A Monday morning meeting with general manager John Elway provided clarity, the Broncos sticking with a coach they hired 11 months ago after Gary Kubiak stepped away due to health concerns.

"Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team," Elway tweeted. "We believe in Vance as our head coach. Together, we'll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018."

Joseph faced scrutiny because of several factors. The Broncos matched a 50-year-old eight-game losing streak, won a single road game, and showed a lack of discipline and growth from young players. While offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave and defensive coordinator Joe Woods will return, others were not as fortunate. As part of Joseph's return, he had to acquiesce to an overhaul of his coaching staff. The purge was dramatic and swift (and listed below).

In keeping Joseph, it showed an understanding of the abysmal quarterback play -- something mentioned repeatedly by players as the root cause of the spiral -- and a belief Joseph will improve from experience.

"Coming in with a veteran locker room and talent, as players we didn't hold up our end of the bargain," said running back C.J. Anderson, who finished with 1,007 yards rushing. "I definitely wanted him back. He deserves a second chance."

The players respected Joseph and offered support over the last several weeks as the seat began to simmer under the former Miami Dolphins defensive coordinator. However, their lobbying had little to nothing to do with Joseph returning. He was brought back because the franchise feels he will learn from his mistakes. He must coach his his coaches better -- he gave them too much freedom that bit him as game plans did not reflect the personnel. He also figures to be more assertive, creating more accountability in players.

There's no question the players like Joseph, but they need to perform better for him.

"I think Vance gives us his all," said linebacker Todd Davis, who is a free agent. "I can stand behind him. I trust him. A lot of things didn't go our way, but I would not put that all on him."

As linebacker Brandon Marshall put it, "We had a minus-16 turnover margin (going into the final game). "He's a first-year coach. Everything is not his fault. It was a tough season. The turnover (margin). ... Minus 16 (which ranks 31st in the NFL), there's no way you can have a winning season that way. There's been some different things out of his control. I definitely think he deserves another chance."

The Broncos missed the playoffs for the second straight season. They hold the No. 5 overall pick in the draft. Elway believes they can rebound after finishing in last place in the AFC West. Eight of the 12 teams in the postseason were not involved a year ago.

"To all our fans: THANK YOU for your tremendous support and sticking with us through a tough year. This wasn't the season anyone expected, but we'll learn from it and be better because of it," Elway tweeted. "Our 2018 season starts today."

Davidson, Tolbert lead coaches let go

The house cleaning began swiftly on Monday. The Broncos parted ways with special teams coordinator Brock Olivo, offensive line coach Jeff Davidson, receivers coach Tyke Tolbert, running backs coach Eric Stutesville, and outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac. Olivo, an entertaining outside-the-box thinker, failed dramatically in his stint as a boss. In attempting to be creative with special teams, it backfired horribly in losses to the Patriots, Redskins and Dolphins, among others. Isaiah McKenzie's six muffed punts highlighted the misfit unit. Davidson was expected to go. Former offensive coordinator Mike McCoy brought him aboard and was fired after a loss to Cincinnati.

The exits of Tolbert and Stutesville were mildly surprising based on their experience. However, the Broncos have failed to develop young receivers and running backs in recent seasons. Players reacted negatively to their dismissals, with veteran wideout Emmanuel Sanders telling Denver7, "Damn!" C.J. Anderson was more blunt about Stutesville, calling it, um, BS. Pagac was a favorite of All-Pro Von Miller. Miller made it clear Sunday night he wanted 'Pug' to return.

According to The Sporting News, Sean Kugler will interview for the offensive line post.

# Next-Day Notebook: C.J. Anderson savors his 1,000-yard milestone

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
January 2, 2018

C.J. Anderson knew exactly how many yards he needed to reach the one goal he had yet to accomplish in his five seasons as a Bronco.

When he took the field early in the fourth quarter with the Broncos down 24-10, he was still 10 yards away from hitting the 1,000-yard mark. The Chiefs had stacked the box to stop him, knowing the Broncos would push to get Anderson to the milestone, and every yard was difficult in a thicket of defenders on a frigid day.

But once the countdown was at 10, the end was in sight.

"When I looked up and saw 44 [yards], I said, 'I need one 10-yard run. I think I'm highly capable of that,'" Anderson said. "And we got it."

On back-to-back plays, Anderson got 7 and 10 yards. His season was done, his goal accomplished. The football is likely headed to his mother -- as opposed to his position coach, Eric Studesville, who has "had a bunch of 1,000-yard rushers" over the years and, as Anderson says, has no need for the ball.

It was the one item missing from Anderson's resume in five years with the Broncos. He's been a Pro Bowler. He's carried the team on his back through a run to a world championship, and his game-clinching touchdown in Super Bowl 50 gave him a permanent place in Broncos history, no matter what came after that.

But for Anderson, every accomplishment comes with the satisfaction of knowing that it all began with going unwanted by every team in the 2013 NFL Draft. He now sits alongside other Broncos standouts such as Chris Harris Jr., Rod Smith, Greg Kragen and Steve Watson, even all the way back to Ring of Famer Gene Mingo. They are the keepers of the undrafted flame in orange and blue.

"I think the average career for [running backs] is that we're supposed to retire by two and a half or three years, and I wasn't even supposed to be here," he said. =

"There were 32 teams and 22 running backs and 254 picks before me. It definitely feels good to be one of those undrafted guys that I've seen, from Marques Colston to Chris Harris [Jr.] to Wesley Woodyard. It feels good to be in that class."

It's not quite a class of his own. But it's a class of which Anderson is a worthy member.

## **DE'ANGELO HENDERSON CAPITALIZES ON HIS CHANCE**

It took a while, but De'Angelo Henderson finally had another chance to show the explosiveness and energy that made him one of the most eye-catching players on the roster in training camp and the

preseason when he turned a short pass from Paxton Lynch into a 29-yard touchdown that put the Broncos in front 10-7 in the second quarter.

Still, he downplayed his role on the score.

"Kudos to those guys [blocking], they made it look easy for me. They were blocking up front; Isaiah [McKenzie] got a block on a corner[back]. All I had to do was run straight."

It was a play that Henderson and the Broncos hope can be the harbinger of bigger things for the Coastal Carolina product who got lost in the shuffle as the other three backs ahead of him stayed healthy for the last 13 games of the regular season.

"I learned from some good guys this year, and hopefully it can translate," he said. "What I learned this year to next year, I'm pretty sure it will. What they laid down, the standard that they set for me going forward, it should be very exciting coming up."

Henderson finished the day with 44 yards from scrimmage, with all five of his carries coming in the fourth quarter after Anderson hit the 1,000-yard milestone.

"'Hop' [Henderson] worked hard. Myself, Jamaal [Charles] and [Devontae Booker] we just kept pushing him when he hit that rookie wall," Anderson said. "People forget that rookies have been grinding since January to get to this opportunity. So it's a long rookie season."

"He had three vets in the room who all went through it. We just stayed on him, and he finally got his opportunity and he made some plays."

# Mason's Prospect Guide: Players to watch on New Year's Day

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
January 2, 2018

## OUTBACK BOWL

### Michigan (8-4) vs. South Carolina (8-4)

Time: 10 a.m. MST  
Site: Raymond James Stadium, Tampa, Florida  
TV: ESPN2

Michigan DT Maurice Hurst: If you're a member of Tampa Bay-area sports media, the reason to go to the Outback Bowl is usually the top-notch pregame buffet. This year, it's not just the grub, but the dominant 6-foot-2, 280-pound Hurst, a likely first-round pick who will play in this game and the Senior Bowl later this month. He overcame frequent double-teams to post 13.5 tackles for loss and five sacks this season, both of which were career-high tallies.

Michigan ILB Mike McCray: A solid all-around linebacker, the 6-foot-4, 242-pound McCray uses his length well, posting 64 tackles, 13 tackles for loss and five sacks. McCray will also play in the Senior Bowl later this month.

## CHICK-FIL-A PEACH BOWL

### No. 12 Central Florida vs. No. 7 Auburn

Time: 10:30 a.m. MST  
Site: Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta  
TV: ESPN

UCF LB Shaquem Griffin: A two-time all-conference selection, the 6-foot-2, 229-pound Griffin racked up 163 tackles -- including 30 for loss -- 17 sacks, four forced fumbles and two interceptions in the past two seasons despite not having a left hand, the result of a rare condition that affected him before his birth. Griffin is quick, explosive and has honed outstanding instincts.

UCF DT Jamiyus Pittman: The 6-foot-1, 319-pound Pittman was an all-conference first-team selection after posting 42 tackles -- including six for loss -- and three sacks working at the core of the Knights' defense. Pittman will play in the East-West Shrine Game later this month.

Auburn G Braden Smith: This season's winner of the Jacobs Trophy, which is given to the best offensive lineman in the Southeastern Conference, Smith started 40 consecutive games for the Tigers and became a mainstay at right guard over the last three seasons. According to Pro Football Focus, Smith has allowed just four sacks over the last three years.

## **CITRUS BOWL**

### **No. 14 Notre Dame vs. No. 17 LSU**

Time: 11 a.m. MST

Site: Camping World Stadium, Orlando, Florida

TV: ABC

Notre Dame OT Mike McGlinchey: McGlinchey has all the tools to succeed in the NFL: size (he measures at 6-foot-8 and 315 pounds), quickness and balance (he does a good job getting set and guiding speedy edge rushers wide and behind the pocket) and power.

Notre Dame G Quenton Nelson: As good as McGlinchey was on the edge, Nelson was arguably more dominant on the interior. Because of the premium placed on left tackles in the NFL, McGlinchey seems likely to be the higher pick, but Nelson could grow become the more dominant player. Nelson was a unanimous first-team All-America selection this season and he was also the first offensive lineman selected as the Fighting Irish's team MVP in 42 years.

LSU WR D.J. Chark: Long and lean, the 6-foot-4, 198-pound Chark will play in the Senior Bowl after averaging 23.2 yards per reception this season. Chark amassed 811 yards on just 35 receptions, becoming one of the best vertical threats in college football.

## **ROSE BOWL**

### **No. 3 Georgia vs. No. 2 Oklahoma**

Time: 3 p.m. MST

Site: Rose Bowl, Pasadena, California

TV: ESPN

Georgia RB Nick Chubb: Consistently productive throughout his Bulldogs career, the 5-foot-10, 225-pound Chubb has averaged 102.2 rushing yards per game and posted three 1,000-yard seasons, capped by his 1,175, 13-touchdown campaign this year. He has never failed to average at least 5.0 yards per carry in a season. Chubb tore multiple ligaments -- but not his anterior cruciate ligament -- in a horrifying 2015 knee injury suffered against Tennessee, and he wasn't quite himself in 2016, but he was all the way back this year, improving his per-carry average from 5.0 yards to 6.2.

Georgia RB Sony Michel: In the wake of Chubb's knee injury in 2015, Michel stepped in and picked up the slack, posting the only 1,000-yard campaign in his four years with the Bulldogs. The explosive 5-foot-11, 215-pound back has a career 5.9-yards-per-carry average, including an eye-popping 7.2-yard pace this year, and he needs just 52 yards against the Sooners on Monday to hit 1,000 yards once again.

Georgia OL Isaiah Wynn: Although Wynn started at left tackle for the Bulldogs this year, he could project in the NFL as a left guard, the position at which he excelled earlier in his college career. The 6-foot-2, 302-pound Wynn was a first-team All-Southeastern Conference selection as chosen by the conference's coaches and will play in next month's Senior Bowl.

Oklahoma QB Baker Mayfield: No player has been more scrutinized this season for his on-field play and his off-field actions than the Heisman Trophy winner. Even his absence from a Friday media session because of flu-like symptoms was dissected endlessly. On the field, Mayfield's work has been defined by steady improvement in his production, accuracy, decision-making and his ability to do the little things that are demanded of pro quarterbacks, including looking off safeties, reading the defense's intent and getting his teammates set before the snap.

The next few weeks will be defining ones for Mayfield. Georgia's head coach, former Nick Saban assistant Kirby Smart, will throw some looks at Mayfield that he hasn't seen before, and if Oklahoma advances to the national-championship game, Alabama or Clemson will follow suit. Then comes the Senior Bowl, to which Mayfield has committed to play, which will give him the chance to work in a pro-style offense with an NFL coaching staff for a week.

It would be inaccurate to say that this is a make-or-break month for Mayfield; he will be someone's quarterback of the future next season, if not the present. But it would be accurate to say that he could not only solidify a place in the first round, but soar to its upper reaches, if he flourishes this month.

Oklahoma edge rusher Ogbornia Okoronkwo: A second-team All-American and Senior Bowl selection, the 6-foot-1, 240-pounder was the Big 12 Co-Defensive Player of the Year after posting eight sacks and 17.5 tackles for loss. He is as effective against the run as he is in the pass rush, and he will demand extra attention from Georgia's pass-protection scheme.

## **ALLSTATE SUGAR BOWL**

### **No. 4 Alabama vs. No. 1 Clemson**

Time: 6:45 p.m. MST

Site: Mercedes-Benz Superdome, New Orleans

TV: ESPN

Most of the top prospects for the Crimson Tide and Tigers are juniors who have yet to declare their draft intentions; they could change the complexion of the draft's first day. Beyond that slew of players, a pair of other prospects could be off the board by the end of Day 2.

Alabama ILB Rashaan Evans: A potential Day Two pick, Evans will sometimes be used in pass-rush situations as an additional inside rusher, enhancing his value. Evans is also a strong run defender and can play inside or outside if needed.

Alabama CB Levi Wallace: Steady development allowed Wallace to grow into one of the best cover cornerbacks in college football this year. According to Pro Football Focus, opposing quarterbacks had a 37.5 rating on throws targeted at Wallace, who intercepted three passes this season.

Clemson OLB Dorian O'Daniel: The 6-foot-1, 220-pounder is undersized, but he excels in coverage. If he can maintain his speed while adding 10 to 15 more pounds, he could stack up well against opposing tight ends in the NFL.

# Broncos 'believe in Vance' as Joseph heads into second season as head coach

By Aric DiLalla  
DenverBroncos.com  
January 2, 2018

President of Football Operations/General Manager John Elway voiced his support Monday for Head Coach Vance Joseph as the pair looks ahead to the 2018 season.

“Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team,” Elway tweeted. “We believe in Vance as our head coach. Together, we’ll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018.”

Several members of the Broncos echoed that sentiment as they cleaned out their lockers Monday morning and turned toward the future.

Veteran running back C.J. Anderson, who eclipsed 1,000 rushing yards during Sunday’s game, put the blame for a disappointing season on the players in the locker room and declared that Joseph deserved to return as head coach.

“Coming in with a veteran locker room and talent, I think it’s on us as players,” Anderson said. “We didn’t uphold our end of the bargain to help V.J. and all the coaches.”

Defensive lineman Shelby Harris echoed that sentiment Sunday afternoon after the Broncos’ season finale.

“It’s not on him, it’s on us,” Harris said. “We’re all grown men here. The season is completely on us, it’s not on the coaches, it’s on the execution. This is not Vance’s fault. Everybody needs to stop saying, ‘Oh it’s on him.’ It’s on us, and [if] Vance [were] to get fired over some crap like that, it’s the business, but it’s not fair. At the end of the day, we’re in Denver and they expect wins, but I stand with Vance, I stand with all my coaches. Without them I wouldn’t be here, and I stand with all of these coaches regardless.”

Anderson also made a guarantee Monday to Broncos fans about the future of the football team.

“I can promise you, sitting right here, you can put it on record: If he does get a second chance, we will not be 5-11. We won’t have a losing season,” Anderson said.

Defensive end Zach Kerr also said he believes in Joseph’s ability to help the Broncos turn things around and added that it would be unfair to judge Joseph after his first season.

“I love Vance Joseph, I really do,” Joseph said. “I really like the guy, he’s a really good guy. He brought me in and I have the utmost respect for him. It’s tough being a first-year head coach.”

“I hope nobody judges me off of my first performance in the NFL, you know what I’m saying?” Kerr said.

And as Joseph heads into his second season as head coach, he's given players reason to believe the encore performance will be much more successful. Anderson said he saw Joseph evolve and adapt over the course of the season and that he established himself as a player's coach.

Perhaps most importantly, though, Joseph prevented the locker room from splintering in the midst of a difficult season.

"He has all the respect of the guys," quarterback Trevor Siemian said. "I think at times like this it's easy to point fingers. The one thing I'll say is, nobody in here has done that. That's a credit to Coach Joseph and how he steered this thing."

# Broncos sign 10 players to future contracts

By Aric DiLalla  
DenverBroncos.com  
January 2, 2018

The Broncos signed all 10 of their practice-squad players to future contracts Monday.

The players, who were all on the Broncos' practice squad in Week 17, will officially be added to the roster when the league year begins on March 14.

The following players were signed: DT Paul Boyette, WR River Cracraft, OLB Stansly Maonga, S Jordan Moore, TE Brian Parker, WR Tim Patrick, T Jeremiah Poutasi, LB Marcus Rush, DE Jhaustin Thomas and WR Jordan Leslie.

One of last year's futures contracts paid big dividends in 2017. Shelby Harris, who signed a futures deal in January 2017, started six games for the Broncos this season and totaled five sacks.

# **Broncos part ways with six assistant coaches**

By Staff

DenverBroncos.com

January 2, 2018

The Denver Broncos have relieved six assistant coaches of their duties, it was announced on Monday.

The team has parted ways with the following assistant coaches: Jeff Davidson (Offensive Line), Johnnie Lynn (Assistant Defensive Backs), Brock Olivo (Special Teams Coordinator), Fred Pagac (Outside Linebackers), Eric Studesville (Assistant Head Coach/Running Backs) and Tyke Tolbert (Wide Receivers).

# Paul Klee: The Broncos lobbied for Vance Joseph's return. Will they actually play for him in 2018?

By Paul Klee  
Colorado Springs Gazette  
January 2, 2018

Within hours of dumping his locker-room possessions into a cardboard box, unsure if the orange-and-blue threads will be a part of his wardrobe in 2018, veteran running back C.J. Anderson blared his opinion on the Broncos firing longtime assistant running backs coach Eric Stutesville.

“THATS BULL\*\*\*\*,” Anderson tweeted.

Welp, that should settle the orange-and-blue debate. It was a good run, anyway. And welcome to the new NFL, where players put potential employers on blast and wonder later why they don't have a job. Special place, isn't it?

If the players put as much energy into winning games as they did lobbying for coaches, the Broncos would be hosting a playoff game next weekend. And the Broncos wouldn't have fired Stutesville (a great man, by the way, who should be a head coach at some point) and assistants in charge of the offensive line (Jeff Davidson), special teams (Brock Olivo), wide receivers (Tyke Tolbert) and outside linebackers (Fred Pagac). Head coach Vance Joseph kept his job.

Meantime, some Broncos players acted surprised when a 5-11 record resulted in staff changes. If it's not linebacker Brandon Marshall saying it was the players, not management, responsible for Super Bowl 50 — throwing shade directly at John Elway — it's Anderson calling out the boss via social media. The disconnect between some of these Broncos and the good people of Colorado — you know, the 67,000 folks who braved single-digit temps to witness another home loss to the Chiefs — has become astounding.

Since we're all friends here, and I appreciate more than words can express that you take the time to read this column, I should let you in on a little secret. This is not the column I wanted to write Monday. I wanted to write how the Broncos retaining Vance Joseph for the 2018 season was the fair thing to do for a first-year coach, even if I have doubts it will work in the end.

There's no chance the Broncos go into next season with the same shaky quarterback situation, so the wobbly nature of that position no longer will be a valid alibi. That's just an honest opinion. Hope I'm wrong. Hope “VJ” is the one to turn it around. Hope is all Broncos Country has right now, since the postseason is here and the Broncos aren't in it, again.

But then the Broncos tried to pull the wool over our eyes once more. One day after closing the second-worst season in a quarter century, players were cleaning out their lockers trying to convince somebody (you? me? themselves?) last season wasn't nearly as bad as a 5-11 record suggests.

“We still have a lot of talent,” wide receiver Bennie Fowler said. “We're not a lot of pieces away from the Super Bowl team that we had.”

“I think it’s minor tweaks here and there and I think we can be a dominant football team again,”  
linebacker Todd Davis said.

“It’s a football team that’s close,” Joseph said Sunday night.

Does this look close to you? 10, 13, 21, 10, 28(!), 25(!), 3, 7, 26(!), 16 and 3. Those were the margins of defeat in the Broncos’ 11 losses, a number they’ve matched only once since 1990. Grrrr. At a time when the Avalanche, Nuggets and Rockies seem to be making smart personnel moves, the Broncos are the early clubhouse leader for most frustrating team of 2018.

But it’s a new year that deserves a new approach. The players voiced support of Joseph and got their wish. Next time will they actually play for him?

# David Ramsey: Freshly rescued Vance Joseph must prove he's worthy to coach Denver Broncos

By David Ramsey  
Colorado Springs Gazette  
January 2, 2018

Vance Joseph has been given another year.

And that's all he's been given.

Joseph survived a 5-11 season. He survived despite being hugely unpopular among Bronco fans. He survived the last Sunday of 2017 when just about everyone believed he would be fired.

Now, Joseph must deliver. If the Broncos don't climb to at least nine wins in 2018, Joseph will not be given 2019.

Linebacker Brandon Marshall spoke Sunday for just about everyone associated with the Broncos. And I'm talking coaches, players, execs and fans.

"I think the season in general is a sad story," Marshall said. "We just couldn't get it done a lot of times this year in all phases. It was just kind of sad. It is not like us."

Marshall is correct, in a way. The Broncos have won more than five games 25 times since 1990. The norm for the franchise is high above this season's futility.

But in a crucial way, the Broncos of 2017 were similar to the Broncos of 2016: The offense was weak, especially when it mattered most.

In 2016, the Broncos finished 22nd in the NFL in points scored but that number is deceptive. In the final five games of the season, the Broncos averaged 13.4 points. (Even the 1-15 Browns averaged 16 points.) During three season-killing weeks in December, the Broncos scored only 23 points total against the Titans, Patriots and Chiefs.

It was a sonic boom warning for this season, but no one paid attention. A mighty defense could not rescue a weakling offense at the end of 2016, and we endured an even more extreme version of the horror show in 2017.

A year ago, I didn't understand why John Elway and the Broncos chose Vance Joseph over Kyle Shanahan. The Broncos offense was broken, and Shanahan was an offensive mastermind. Joseph specialized in defense, and the Broncos already had Wade Phillips, a defensive genius.

Since then, Joseph has done little – close to nothing – to cause me to understand his hiring. The Broncos weren't going to earn a playoff spot this season. The roster is filled with gaping holes, almost all on the offensive side.

But the Broncos shouldn't have tumbled to 11 losses.

Elway must rebuild his roster in the offseason. He must find a quarterback. Some are suggesting Oklahoma's Baker Mayfield. I'd suggest searching instead among underachieving or overlooked quarterbacks currently on NFL rosters. The chances of Mayfield being ready next season are remote.

Beyond remote, really. Even a quarterback destined for NFL greatness is seldom ready for dominance in his first season.

Elway in the past tense has been magnificent. For the past two years, Elway has not even approached mediocrity. Starting today and stretching into late August, Elway must prove himself again as a roster builder.

And Joseph must then prove he's a worthy head coach in the fall.

# **Broncos retaining Vance Joseph as coach for 2018**

By Staff

USA Today

January 2, 2018

The Denver Broncos won't be starting from scratch again this offseason.

The Broncos are retaining Vance Joseph for a second season, general manager John Elway confirmed on Monday.

Denver went 5-11 in 2017, its worst finish since 2010.

The Broncos were tripped up by shaky quarterback play throughout the season, as Trevor Siemian began the year as starter before Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch. Denver lost eight consecutive games in the middle of the season, the worst such streak for the franchise since 1967.

# Broncos inform Vance Joseph that he will coach team in 2018

By Ryan Wilson  
CBS Sports  
January 2, 2018

It was touch and go for the final few weeks of the regular season as speculation about his job security became a daily talking point, but first-year Broncos coach Vance Joseph will return to the sidelines for 2018, reports CBS Sports NFL Insider Jason La Canfora, who notes that general manager John Elway "went back and forth on the decision."

In a statement posted to Twitter, Elway said, "Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team. We believe in Vance as our head coach. Together, we'll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018."

The Broncos had an eight-game losing streak during the season, and finished on a 2-10 run, including a Week 17 loss to the Chiefs. And before Sunday's finale, Joseph admitted that he'd seen the reports that he could be dismissed after just one year on the job.

"My focus today, guys, was on our football team winning a football game," Joseph said at the time, via ESPN.com. "I saw the report, obviously, our coaches saw the report, but what are you going to do there? There was a game to play."

"I'm obviously going to visit with John [Elway] ... but I want to be here. It's a football team that's close. We've got to make some adjustments in some places, but our football team all year have not stopped working. That was fun to see tonight guys. It's been a hard year, but everyone kept fighting. I want to be here to fix it."

Asked if he expected to be back in 2018, Joseph said, "I do. Absolutely."

Joseph, one of the hottest coaching candidates 12 months ago, also had the support of his players.

"VJ's been great for us," linebacker Von Miller said. "It's not in my hands, you'd like to see those guys turn it around and we go to the playoffs, to the Super Bowl next season, but it's not in my hands."

Linebacker Brandon Marshall added: "I like Vance, I think he's a great coach, young coach, he works hard, he's passionate. And he cares about us, so absolutely."

Joseph's first order of business is finding a quarterback. The Broncos' season was effectively doomed when Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch all proved incapable of handling the job. Perhaps Lynch, the team's 2016 first-round pick, can grow into that role, but that's something the organization needs to know before September. Because there's no way Joseph -- and perhaps even Elway -- can survive another 5-11 campaign.

# Black Monday Blog: Broncos Stick With Vance Joseph, Arians Retires, John Fox, Jim Caldwell and Pagano Fired, Del Rio Out (and Gruden In?) in Oakland

By Staff

MMQB

January 2, 2018

## THE LATEST

Longtime Packers GM Ted Thompson will transition to a new role within the organization.

Broncos fire multiple assistant coaches.

Bears GM Ryan Pace has received a contract extension.

Bruce Arians has told his staff he is retiring.

John Elway announced Vance Joseph will get a second season in Denver.

Marvin Lewis, whose contract is up in Cincinnati, plans on taking his time before making a decision on his future. The Bengals are not expected to make an announcement on Monday.

The Bears have fired John Fox.

Jim Caldwell has been fired by the Lions; Detroit requests interview with Texans defensive coordinator Mike Vrabel.

Broncos GM John Elway is on the fence about Vance Joseph, but is now leaning toward keeping Joseph for a second season.

After a season-ending loss to the Chargers, Jack Del Rio said he has been fired by Oakland. All eyes now turn to Jon Gruden.

Chuck Pagano has been fired by the Colts.

Read on for team-by-team news and analysis...

## ARIZONA CARDINALS

**STATUS: Bruce Arians is retiring.**

## THE LATEST

Bruce Arians: "I probably didn't truly know until that kick went through that I was gonna retire. Everybody was speculating ... Been an unbelievable journey." —Albert Breer

Cardinals coach Bruce Arians told his coaches that he's retiring, per sources. It'll be made official shortly.  
—Albert Breer

## **CANDIDATES TO WATCH**

Arizona has put in a request to interview Vikings OC Pat Shurmur.—Albert Breer

I'd expect the Cardinals' search to be as wide open as any out there during this cycle. They'll be thorough with it, and go in without a front-runner. —Albert Breer

Whispers within league circles suggest GM Steve Keim wants an offensive-minded head coach—most likely one who values traditional dropback pocket passing (essentially, a younger Bruce Arians). Josh McDaniels is the biggest name out there, but there are multiple jobs that come with a long-term franchise quarterback; Arizona isn't one of them. Lions offensive coordinator Jim Bob Cooter is hot young candidate, but his passing game isn't as sophisticated as Arians'. Chiefs offensive coordinator Matt Nagy's stock has sky-rocketed in the past month since Andy Reid appointed him as the play-caller. But Nagy, given his inexperience, represents a serious gamble. Someone with previous head coaching experience and many more years of play-calling would be safer, perhaps an older branch of the Andy Reid coaching tree: Pat Shurmur. —Andy Benoit

## **CHICAGO BEARS**

**STATUS: John Fox has been fired. GM Ryan Pace has received a contract extension.**

## **THE LATEST**

Bears president Ted Phillips announces contract extension for GM Ryan Pace. New deal takes the sides through 2021. —Albert Breer

The writing has been on the wall here for a while. What's less certain is whether GM Ryan Pace gets to pick the next coach, and whether the coaches pursued by the Bears dictate Pace's fate. —Albert Breer

## **CANDIDATES TO WATCH**

Expect to hear offensive names like Minnesota's Pat Shurmur, New England's Josh McDaniels and Philly QBs coach John DeFilippo in the mix. —Albert Breer

If Vic Fangio follows Fox out the door (which is likely), you're left with a defense that's decent, but only decent, especially considering it may need to replenish at cornerback (starters Kyle Fuller and Prince Amukamara are both free agents). Stylistically, Texans defensive coordinator Mike Vrabel could be seen as a good fit. Vrabel has spent much of his playing and coaching career in Romeo Crennel's intricate system. But would GM Ryan Pace, whose own job security might be iffy, take a chance on a coach with just one year of coordinating experience? He may see a safer option in Dennis Allen, who has four years of coordinating experience, plus head coaching battle scars from his three years in Oakland. Allen, who is still only 45, just turned around the perennially unfixable Saints defense. —Andy Benoit

Chicago seems a good fit for offensive coordinators Pat Shurmur or Josh McDaniels, with Mitch Trubisky needing a hands-on mentor. —Peter King

## **CINCINNATI BENGALS**

**STATUS: Marvin Lewis, who was in the final year of his contract, is not expected to be retained, but a decision is not expected to come on Monday.**

### **THE LATEST**

The Marvin Lewis situation is complicated by the fact that his contract is up, so the Bengals and Lewis would have to make new commitment to one another. —Albert Breer

Lewis' impending departure has been on the table from the moment he and the team decided not to do another one-year Band-Aid extension, which sent him into a contract year. Word is, the Bengals will lean towards coaches they know, which is why Hue Jackson's name has been mentioned, as have internal candidates Paul Guenther and Darrin Simmons. —Albert Breer

### **CANDIDATES TO WATCH**

Owner Mike Brown has an affinity for continuity, and for promoting within. But after 15 years of Marvin Lewis, why not start totally anew? One coach who has taken a longtime traditional zone-based defense and redecorated it with disguises and blitzes is Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks. But Wilks, 48, has only been a coordinator for one year. With Matt Patricia linked to the Lions, there aren't a lot of experienced coordinators out there. And so here are names two of men who are about 10 years Wilks's junior, but with three times his coordinating experience: Kris Richard of the Seahawks and James Bettcher of the Cardinals. —Andy Benoit

## **CLEVELAND BROWNS**

**STATUS: Jimmy Haslam has reiterated that Hue Jackson will be retained for 2018.**

### **THE LATEST**

Haslam already said Jackson will be back in 2018, and GM John Dorsey affirmed it upon his hiring. What if the Bengals call? Will 0-16 change anything? My belief is Jackson sticks, but I also know Dorsey has done his research. —Albert Breer

## **DALLAS COWBOYS**

**STATUS: Jerry Jones has offered public support for Jason Garrett.**

## **DENVER BRONCOS**

**STATUS: John Elway announced that Vance Joseph will be the Broncos' head coach in 2018. Multiple assistant coaches have been let go.**

### **THE LATEST**

Broncos announce they've fired O-line coach Jeff Davidson, assistant DBs coach Johnnie Lynn, special teams coach Brock Olivo, outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac, assistant head coach/RBs coach Eric Stutesville and WRs coach Tyke Tolbert. —Albert Breer

Expectation is Broncos will now take a hard look at/address offensive staff and quarterback position this offseason. —Albert Breer

After a season-ending loss to the Chiefs, Broncos players spoke out in support Vance Joseph. CB Bradley Roby: "Rome wasn't built in one day . . . You can't expect a guy to come in and flip it around in one year." DE Shaquil Barrett: "We like Coach Joseph, and if he's back we're ready to work for him and turn it around . . . You need two to three years to leave your mark, but it's also out of my hands. I can't do anything about it." And veteran DT and first-year Bronco Domata Peko: "I would be disappointed if he was fired. I'm really pushing for him to get another chance. It's always going to be tough for a first-year head coach; you saw how Coach Zimmer struggled at first. Now [Joseph's] got his feet wet and knows how to do it. Everyone loves him, respects him, and he's a hell of a coach." —Robert Klemko

## **DETROIT LIONS**

**STATUS: On Monday, the Lions announced Jim Caldwell has been fired.**

### **THE LATEST**

Lions GM Bob Quinn said that he and president Rod Wood will run the head coaching interviews; ownership won't be in the room but will be consulted.—Albert Breer

The Lions have asked for permission to interview Texans defensive coordinator Mike Vrabel. —Albert Breer

Lions assistant head coach/O-line coach Ron Prince has been let go, per sources, reflecting the organization's frustration with the run game. Possibility still alive that OC Jim Bob Cooter is paired with a defensive head coach. —Albert Breer

Rumblings had held for a few weeks that Caldwell would be in trouble if he missed the playoffs. I'd expect Patriots defensive coordinator Matt Patricia to be a consideration if Caldwell gets whacked, with the possibility that Jim Bob Cooter and the offensive staff stay. —Albert Breer

### **CANDIDATES TO WATCH**

Detroit has a request in to interview Vikings OC Pat Shurmur.—Albert Breer

Patriots defensive coordinator Matt Patricia immediately becomes the name to watch for the Lions opening. —Albert Breer

Patriots defensive coordinator Matt Patricia is reportedly at the top of their list. The question is: Who would Patricia bring as his offensive coordinator? That was one concern teams had last season when Patricia was passed over for head coaching jobs. —Andy Benoit

## **GREEN BAY PACKERS**

**STATUS: Longtime GM Ted Thompson will transition to a new role within the organization.**

### **THE LATEST**

Eliot Wolf and Brian Gutekunst are obvious internal candidates, but some there have a belief that Russ Ball might be the guy. —Albert Breer

## **HOUSTON TEXANS**

**STATUS: Bill O'Brien's is expected to stay. There are reports that he and GM Rick Smith are at odds. In a statement released Sunday, Smith said he is taking an extended leave of absence from the team while his wife is treated for cancer.**

### **THE LATEST**

I hear owner Bob McNair is going to agree with at least some of Bill O'Brien's requests, and it's likely now that O'Brien will stay, particularly with Rick Smith's future understandably cloudy. McNair doesn't want to lose both men in the same year. —Peter King

Coach Bill O'Brien meets with ownership to discuss the future of the franchise tomorrow. If he is to stay, I'd expect a new personnel chief to come in. —Albert Breer

Simply, a reckoning is coming here. I'd be floored if O'Brien even considered signing an extension without changes to the way the football operation is aligned, and 2018 is a contract year for him. That would create a decision point for ownership—go forward for a year with a coach that would be the No. 1 guy on the market if free, or cut the cord now and move forward with GM Rick Smith. —Albert Breer

## **INDIANAPOLIS COLTS**

**STATUS: The Colts have fired Chuck Pagano.**

### **THE LATEST**

Chuck Pagano addressed the team, per those there, in a way that felt to everyone like farewell. Told the players that he loved them for fighting today, and that he'd never forget the group. —Albert Breer

### **CANDIDATES TO WATCH**

If Andrew Luck is healthy, this is the most attractive job opening. Given what Luck's body has recently gone through, Ballard might be inclined to find a coach who will install a passing game that's both complex and quick-timed. That's an unusual combination, but there's a certain quarterback in New England who has mastered it. The Colts could go hard after Josh McDaniels. —Andy Benoit

The rumor that will never go away is that owner Jim Irsay longs to hire old Colts QB Jim Harbaugh as his head coach. But the domineering Harbaugh, I believe, would be an ill fit with Luck and GM Chris Ballard. —Peter King

Two of GM Chris Ballard's ex-Chief co-workers, special teams coordinator Dave Toub and offensive coordinator Matt Nagy, have been connected to this one, and there are whispers that Indy could make a run at Pats offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels. —Albert Breer

The Colts have been granted permission to interview Texans defensive coordinator Mike Vrabel, per source. —Albert Breer

## **NEW YORK GIANTS**

**STATUS: ESPN's Adam Schefter reports that Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz is the favorite for the vacant head-coaching position.**

## **THE LATEST**

Matt Patricia will have the chance to do a lot of interviews over the bye week, and deservedly so, but I have a hard time seeing John Mara hiring a head coach who wore a Goodell clown T-shirt. —Jenny Vrentas

I'd expect both Patriot coordinators to be considered. —Albert Breer

## **CANDIDATES TO WATCH**

New GM Dave Gettleman is 66 and might not be interested in a long-term rebuilding effort. Jim Schwartz represents a candidate with prior experience, and one who will likely update—but not rewrite—the offensive and defensive playbooks. All the better that he happens to currently work for a division rival. —Andy Benoit

## **NEW YORK JETS**

**STATUS: The Jets have signed head coach Todd Bowles and GM Mike Maccagnan to contract extensions through 2020.**

## **OAKLAND RAIDERS**

**STATUS: Jack Del Rio says he has been fired, and numerous reports have linked the Raiders to Jon Gruden.**

## **THE LATEST**

Three things on Jon Gruden: (1) He's been lining up staff for a few weeks. That's not always a sure sign a guy is coming back, but he's done what he'd need to do. (2) He's not as happy in the booth as he was coaching. And (3) His youngest graduates high school next year. —Albert Breer

Jack Del Rio was under contract through 2020, and a big question was whether Mark Davis would be willing to eat three years on a contract. Now, all eyes turn to Jon Gruden, with whom Davis has had a long-standing fascination. —Albert Breer

#### **SEATTLE SEAHAWKS**

**STATUS: Pete Carroll could consider retirement.**

#### **THE LATEST**

Crazy? Maybe. But with the future of several big defensive stars in question, and a possible overhaul of the roster coming, could Carroll, 66, retire to southern California? It's not the wildest idea out there. —Albert Breer

#### **TAMPA BAY BUCS**

**STATUS: The Bucs are expected to retain Dirk Koetter.**

#### **WASHINGTON**

**STATUS: Jay Gruden is expected to be retained.**

# Broncos coach Vance Joseph survives for another year, but his seat will be scalding

By Frank Schwab  
Yahoo! Sports  
January 2, 2018

The speculation about Vance Joseph's job security ended Monday morning. He's staying as Denver Broncos coach. It seems like it could have gone either way.

Joseph was under intense scrutiny by the end of the season. The Broncos began the season 3-1, and finished it 5-11. Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy was fired during the season. Other changes might be made, but general manager John Elway announced Joseph would return for a second season.

Joseph was in a very tough spot. He had never been a head coach, and had been a coordinator for only one year. He was hired to coach a team that was a season removed from winning a Super Bowl. And he had to do it with a quarterback situation that was among the worst in the NFL. The Broncos changed quarterbacks five times during the season, due to injuries or benchings among Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch. He was expected to win big right away, but that was a daunting challenge.

The pressure won't be any less next season. The Broncos still have the same expectations, the quarterback position is still a question, Elway is impatient and Joseph was on the hot seat and survived once already. By letting the Joseph question linger until Monday, Elway might have inadvertently increased the pressure on his coach. There seems to be little question Joseph will start the 2018 season on the hot seat.

There might not be a set number of wins the Broncos have to hit to get a third season, but it's probably fair to assume 5-11 won't do it. He'll have to show improvement even though he doesn't have final say over who his quarterback will be. Hopefully for Joseph, Elway lands Kirk Cousins or someone who can stabilize the position.

It's not an ideal situation. Every NFL coach faces annual pressure to varying degrees, but every time the Broncos lose a game there will be questions about Joseph. Many Broncos fans were calling for him to be fired after just one season. He needs to win next season and do it fast.

That's not to say Joseph can't succeed in 2018 and for many years after. His first year as a head coach didn't go well, but coaches have rookie mistakes too. Joseph might be much more comfortable in his second season and the results will follow. But Joseph will be near the top of every "coach on the hot seat" list this offseason. He has a lot to prove, and probably not much time to prove it.

# Vance Joseph will remain Denver Broncos coach for '18

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

January 2, 2018

The Broncos are staying put with Vance Joseph.

NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport and NFL Network's James Palmer reported Monday that Denver's first-year head coach will return for a second season in 2018.

Broncos football czar John Elway quickly confirmed the decision on Twitter:

"Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team. We believe in Vance as our head coach," Elway wrote. "Together, we'll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018."

While Joseph is safe, changes are coming to his staff. Special teams coordinator Brock Olivo, assistant head coach and running backs aide Eric Stutesville, offensive line coach Jeff Davidson and receivers assistant Tyke Tolbert have been let go, according to Rapoport.

Joseph's status was in doubt following a disastrous campaign that saw the Broncos flatline to a 5-11 mark in the AFC West following five straight winning seasons in Denver. Along the way, the Broncos lost a whopping eight games by 10-plus points, a feat topped only by the winless Cleveland Browns.

The root of the problem was Denver's grisly play under center, where Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch all failed to emerge as a viable starter. To be fair, Joseph inherited this tangled mess of signal-callers from Elway, who went out of his way to trade up two drafts ago for Lynch, who has been nothing short of a disappointment.

Denver still possesses talent on defense, a unit that finished third overall this season despite ranking 22nd in points allowed. Much of that scoring came off ghastly turnovers by the offense.

Joseph has survived an awful first year, but marches into 2018 with plenty of pressure on his shoulders. If he waltzes out to a slow start, the hook could come quick.

# Assessing the QB situation at each open NFL head-coaching job

By Judy Battista

NFL.com

January 2, 2018

When John Elway announced that Vance Joseph would return for the 2018 season, saying the Broncos believe in Joseph as a head coach, he added that together they would look to improve in all areas. Unspoken is the most obvious need for improvement. Since Elway wooed Peyton Manning for his career swan song abutting the Rocky Mountains, Elway has failed to deliver a viable successor at quarterback. The results have been predictable, as they are throughout the NFL when the player at that position is not a known asset. In the two seasons following Manning's retirement, Denver has gone 14-18, including a 5-11 mark in Joseph's first season on the job. Joseph was one of the fortunate ones -- Elway clearly recognized that he was hamstrung by a cast that includes Paxton Lynch, a first-round draft pick who has struggled to get on the field, and Trevor Siemian, a former seventh-rounder who has started 24 games.

The quarterback conundrum looms not only over the coaches who survived through the end of the season, but even more over the jobs that are now vacant:

**CHICAGO BEARS:** This is fascinating: On Monday, general manager Ryan Pace said the Bears were discussing allowing quarterback Mitchell Trubisky, who just finished his first pro season, to have a say in the head-coaching selection process. That would be unorthodox, to say the least. But whoever has a voice, finding someone who can develop Trubisky will be a priority for Pace, and having the ability to mold a franchise quarterback will be a powerful draw for an offensive coach, even if the power dynamic could be skewed by having Trubisky help pick his new boss. Could the Bears try to find the next young coordinator -- a Sean McVay of the Midway -- to team with Trubisky?

**NEW YORK GIANTS:** After the dramatic benching of Eli Manning and the subsequent reversal capped the unraveling of the season, new general manager Dave Gettleman has indicated he wants to go forward with Manning. But for how long? The Giants have the No. 2 overall pick in the 2018 NFL Draft, and the class is considered deep in quarterback talent. Big decisions await -- for Manning himself, who must decide if he wants to be a bridge quarterback, and for Gettleman, who must decide if he loves any of the draftable quarterbacks enough to pick one instead of filling other holes, and who must manage the end of Manning's career.

**INDIANAPOLIS COLTS:** The key question for every candidate to be the Colts' next head coach: What is the long-term prognosis for Andrew Luck's shoulder, and can I talk to the doctors? If the Colts are convinced it is sound, this is one of the most coveted jobs in the league, because a healthy Luck makes this team a contender, particularly because then the third overall draft pick could be used on another building-block piece. But the Colts were convinced Luck would play this season, too, and instead, he never saw a snap, so buyer beware. If there is any concern about Luck's viability, it will scare off candidates who would know they have to draft another quarterback and start over. Interesting to note: In the post-mortem press conference Monday, GM Chris Ballard insisted the team was not all about Luck, while owner Jim Irsay all but promised Luck would be back.

ARIZONA CARDINALS: Bruce Arians leaves behind a team at the start of a massive transition. Quarterback Carson Palmer (38 and coming off a season that ended in October due to a broken arm) is almost certainly finished or close to it, and receiver Larry Fitzgerald (34) could be done, too. Any candidate will want to know what the plan is to acquire a quarterback -- for instance, are the Cardinals willing to shell out the money required to potentially sign Kirk Cousins? Those coaching candidates will look around and see the young, dynamic quarterbacks in Los Angeles and San Francisco and know they have to get someone who can get the offense to stay with them.

DETROIT LIONS: Matthew Stafford is a powerful draw for candidates, and his comfort level with the offensive coaching staff -- he has lobbied for the Lions to keep coordinator Jim Bob Cooter -- could make for an easy transition for a defensive-minded head coach. Still, firing Jim Caldwell and his winning record (36-28 and two playoff appearances in four years) sets a high bar for success for whoever takes this job: It's win big or else.

OAKLAND RAIDERS: Derek Carr was hurt and regressed this season, and righting him will be the priority of the next coach (looking at you, Jon Gruden). There is a reason -- beyond copious amounts of money -- for this job to finally pull Gruden out of the broadcast booth and back to the sideline. Carr is an elite quarterback with enormous potential. Consider that if he hadn't gotten hurt late last season -- or this season -- Jack Del Rio might have a few playoff victories under his belt, along with, probably, his job.

# NFL coaching tracker: Latest moves, developments

By Staff

NFL.com

January 2, 2018

## FIRED COACHES

**John Fox, Chicago Bears:** The Bears parted ways with Fox after the team finished in the NFC North cellar for the third straight season under his guidance. Fox leaves Chicago with a 14-34 record over three seasons with the team. He's posted a 133-123 record over his career.

**Jim Caldwell, Detroit Lions:** The Lions fired Caldwell a day after the team missed the playoffs for the second time in three seasons. The Lions finished the season at 9-7 for the second straight year. Following a promising 6-4 start, the Lions quickly lost ground in the highly competitive NFC playoff race, hitting rock bottom in a Week 16 loss to a struggling Bengals team that annihilated Detroit's postseason aspirations.

**Chuck Pagano, Indianapolis Colts:** The Colts fired Pagano immediately after a 4-12 campaign -- his worst mark in his six years as Indy's head coach. The firing came shortly after the team's 22-13 win over the Houston Texans. Pagano posted a 53-43 record in Indianapolis. After posting three consecutive 11-5 marks that culminated in an appearance in the 2014 season's AFC Championship Game, the Colts failed to make the playoffs three straight seasons.

**Ben McAdoo, New York Giants:** The Giants fired McAdoo following a 2-10 start that saw the team briefly bench starting quarterback Eli Manning. McAdoo's firing comes less than two seasons into his tenure and just a year after helping guide Big Blue to a playoff berth in 2016. The 40-year-old finished with a 13-15 record as the Giants' coach.

**Jack Del Rio, Oakland Raiders:** Del Rio told reporters after the game that Raiders owner Mark Davis relieved him of his duties following Oakland's 30-10 loss to the Los Angeles Chargers. The firing completes a stark turnaround from a playoff season in 2016 that brought plenty of optimism into this campaign, in which Del Rio's Raiders failed to meet expectations.

## COACH RETIRING

**Bruce Arians, Arizona Cardinals:** Arians is set to retire from coaching in the wake of the Cardinals' 8-8 season, a source informed of the situation told NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport. Arians leaves the team with a 49-30-1 mark after a five-year run that included a pair of playoff appearances.

## HIRED GENERAL MANAGER

**Dave Gettleman, New York Giants:** The Giants hired the former Carolina Panthers general manager during the final week of the regular season to take over for the fired Jerry Reese. Gettleman, 66, shares deep roots with the Giants, having spent 15 years in New York as a personnel executive from 1998 to 2012. From there, the accomplished talent evaluator was hired as general manager of the Panthers, serving four seasons in Carolina and helping to guide the team to a Super Bowl in 2015.

## **FIRED GENERAL MANAGER**

**Jerry Reese, New York Giants:** The Giants fired Reese alongside coach McAdoo on the same day. With just one postseason appearance over the past half-decade, Reese's team-building prowess fell under increasing fire despite a playoff appearance in 2016. He exited with a 90-82 regular-season mark to go with an 8-2 playoff record and the two Lombardis.

## **GENERAL MANAGERS CHANGING ROLES**

**Ted Thompson, Green Bay Packers:** Thompson is expected to transition into a new role within the Packers organization, Rapoport reported. The executive has been with the Packers for a total of 21 years spread over two stints, from 1992-1999 and 2005-present.

## **COACHES WHO ARE SAFE**

**Vance Joseph, Denver Broncos:** Broncos general manager John Elway announced Monday that Joseph will remain the team's coach following a dismal season that left the team outside the postseason for the second straight year. Joseph went 5-11 for a Denver team that hasn't returned to the playoffs since its victory in Super Bowl 50. While Joseph is safe, changes are coming to his staff. Special teams coordinator Brock Olivo, assistant head coach/running backs Eric Studesville, OL coach Jeff Davidson and WR coach Tyke Tolbert have been let go.

**Hue Jackson, Cleveland Browns:** Despite falling to 1-31 in two seasons with the Browns, Jackson will be back with the team in 2018. Despite Hue becoming only the second coach to helm an 0-16 team, Browns owner Jimmy Haslam said he's confident in Jackson. "I don't think Hue has lost [his] magic," Haslam told NFL Network's Aditi Kinkhabwala.

**Dirk Koetter, Tampa Bay Buccaneers:** The Buccaneers are retaining Dirk Koetter for the 2018 season despite missing the playoffs for the 10th straight season. Koetter, who has a 14-18 career record with the team, will get another chance to prove whether or not he is capable of making winners out of the Bucs.

**Jay Gruden, Washington Redskins:** Rapoport reported Gruden isn't in danger of losing his job. A source informed of the situation told Rapoport that the Redskins aren't planning to make major changes this offseason after seeing how Gruden and his staff battled through the rash of injuries which damaged the team's playoff hopes.

## **POTENTIAL HEAD COACHING CANDIDATES**

### **Arizona Cardinals**

The Cardinals have requested to interview Eagles quarterbacks coach John DeFilippo, per NFL Network's Mike Garafolo. Per Rapoport, the Cardinals have put in requests to interview Eagles defensive coordinator Jim Schwartz, Patriots defensive coordinator Matt Patricia, Steelers offensive line coach Mike Munchak and Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks.

### **Chicago Bears**

The Bears are setting up an interview with Eagles' John DeFilippo for later this week, sources tell Garafolo and Rapoport. Bears defensive coordinator Vic Fangio also could get a look. The Bears have requested coaching interviews with Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks, Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels and Vikings offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur, per Rapoport.

### **Detroit Lions**

Patriots defensive coordinator Matt Patricia, Carolina Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks and Houston Texans defensive coordinator Mike Vrabel are considered the leading candidates for the team's coaching vacancy. The Lions have requested permission to interview Vikings offensive coordinator Pat Shurmur, Packers assistant head coach Winston Moss, Vrabel, Patricia and Wilks.

### **Indianapolis Colts**

The Colts have requested to interview Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks, Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels and Seahawks defensive coordinator Kris Richard.

### **New York Giants**

The Giants have requested to interview Panthers defensive coordinator Steve Wilks and Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels. Rapoport reported that New York will interview former Broncos assistant coach Eric Studesville this week.

### **Leading candidates**

Here's the short list of NFL assistants who figure to get a look in the coming weeks, based on recent conversations Rapoport and NFL Network's Tom Pelissero have had with team executives and others:

Patriots OC Josh McDaniels

Vikings OC Pat Shurmur

Eagles QB coach John DeFilippo

Chiefs OC Matt Nagy

Patriots DC Matt Patricia

Eagles DC Jim Schwartz

Panthers DC Steve Wilks

Chiefs STC Dave Toub

Eagles OC Frank Reich

Texans DC Mike Vrabel

Saints AHC/TE coach Dan Campbell

Seahawks AHC/OL coach Tom Cable

Steelers OC Todd Haley

Vikings DC George Edwards

Lions DC Teryl Austin

Steelers OL coach Mike Munchak

Seahawks DC Kris Richard

Saints DC Dennis Allen

Eagles STC Dave Fipp

Lions OC Jim Bob Cooter

Bears DC Vic Fangio

Cardinals DC James Bettcher

Buccaneers DC Mike Smith

# Broncos' opponents for 2018 season set after last-place finish in AFC West

By Chuck Hickey

FOX 31

January 2, 2018

The Broncos closed a disappointing season on Sunday with a 27-24 loss to the Kansas City Chiefs at Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

The Broncos finished 5-11 and last in the AFC West just two years after winning Super Bowl 50 for their third championship.

The season included an eight-game losing streak, the longest in the franchise in 50 years, and eight losses by 10 or more points.

After the regular season concluded Sunday, the Broncos' opponents for 2018 were set.

The Broncos will play home-and-away games against their AFC West rivals Kansas City Chiefs, Los Angeles Chargers and Oakland Raiders.

They also will play all of the teams in the AFC North and NFC West, and the last-place teams in the AFC South and AFC East.

The dates and times will be announced in April.

**Home:** Kansas City Chiefs, Oakland Raiders, Los Angeles Chargers, Cleveland Browns, Pittsburgh Steelers, Los Angeles Rams, Seattle Seahawks, Houston Texans.

**Away:** Kansas City Chiefs, Oakland Raiders, Los Angeles Chargers, Baltimore Ravens, Cincinnati Bengals, Arizona Cardinals, San Francisco 49ers, New York Jets.

# DESPITE ANOTHER RATINGS SLUMP, THE NFL REMAINS TV'S TOP DOG

By Anthony Crupi

AdAge

January 2, 2018

While seemingly everyone from the Papa John's guy to the President of the United States has seen fit to weigh in on the NFL's season-long TV ratings slide, pro football's Kung Fu Grip on American viewing habits remains indisputable. Despite losing 9 percent of its year-ago audience and coming under attack from both sides of the political spectrum, the NFL in 2017 continued to cast a long shadow over the media landscape.

According to Nielsen live-plus-same-day data, NFL games accounted for 37 of the year's top 50 broadcasts, or nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of the most-watched programs on TV. That marked a 32 percent increase compared to 2016, when the NFL laid claim to 28 of the top 50 most-watched programs, and was flat versus the 37 top airings the league chalked up in the previous year.

(That the NFL's dominance appeared to wilt somewhat in 2016 had much to do with the fact that 11 of that year's most-viewed broadcasts were notched by NBC's coverage of the Rio Summer Olympics.)

## Football, by the numbers

All told, the NFL put its stamp on 13 of this year's top 20 broadcasts, and while most of those slots were commandeered by postseason games, two of the biggest draws were regular-season matchups. With an average delivery of 26.9 million viewers and a 15.2 household rating, CBS's coverage of the Dec. 17 Patriots-Steelers nail-biter now stands as the 15th most-watched, highest-rated program of 2017, while Fox's presentation of the Sept. 17 Cowboys-Broncos blowout (Denver demolished Dallas by a 42-17 margin) ranks 19th with 26 million viewers and a 14.3 rating.

It is perhaps worth noting that neither of those big-reach broadcasts aired in prime-time. As has been the case for the better part of the last decade, the NFL's national Sunday afternoon window is by far the most valuable chunk of real estate for advertisers with deep pockets. Per Nielsen, CBS and Fox together averaged 22.2 million viewers and a 12.3 household rating in the 4:20 p.m. ET window, which marked a 9 percent decline when compared to last season's 24.5 million viewers and 13.5 rating.

Discounting playoff games and the Super Bowl, the late-national package scarfed up 16 of the year's top 50 broadcast slots. According to media buyers surveyed before the season kicked off, the going rate for a 30-second sliver of ad inventory in the blockbuster window was north of \$715,000 per unit.

NBC's "Sunday Night Football," which remained the No. 2 NFL window with an average delivery of 18.2 million viewers and a 10.3 household rating, accounted for six of 2017's top 50 broadcasts. And while that marked an 11 percent drop from the year-ago 20.4 million viewers and 11.4 rating, the margin separating "Sunday Night Football" from its general-entertainment competition is only widening. In eight head-to-head fall matchups, NBC's premiere NFL showcase averaged a 6.5 rating in the target demo, which works out to 8.38 million adults 18-49; by comparison, AMC's "The Walking Dead" drew a 3.8, or around 4.9 million members of the dollar demo.

## **Must-flee TV**

Speaking of scripted series fare, dramas and sitcoms once again failed to crack this year's top 50 list. As viewers continue to wean themselves from the networks' timetables in favor of time-shifted consumption, massive live TV deliveries effectively are limited to sports and special annual events like the Academy Awards. (Per Nielsen, 93 percent of all sports TV viewing last year was done live, whereas only about 70 percent of general-entertainment primetime consumption occurred in real-time.) As consumers who watch TV in real-time tend to stick around for a disproportionate amount of commercial messaging, advertisers would be wise to spend their marketing dollars accordingly.

This year's most-watched scripted program aired back on the very first day of the 2017-18 broadcast campaign. The Season 11 premiere of CBS's "The Big Bang Theory" on Sept. 25 scared up 17.7 million live-plus-same-day viewers and a 10.5 HH rating, good for 58th place. That opening episode edged out Fox's broadcast of "24: Legacy," which on Feb. 5 delivered 17.6 million viewers, making it the lowest-rated Super Bowl lead-out in 14 years.

Of the 20 new scripted series that have debuted since the start of the current broadcast season, only CBS' comedy "Young Sheldon" has come anywhere near to cracking the upper echelon. Bowing in the plum post-"Big Bang" slot, the Sept. 25 preview of "Young Sheldon" averaged 17.2 million viewers and a 10.0 household rating, making it the year's No. 63 program.

When the year's biggest broadcasts are broken down on a network by network basis, Fox had bragging rights to the most events in the top 50, with 15 NFL broadcasts (including Super Bowl LI and four NFC playoff games) and two World Series games giving it the edge over rivals CBS (13) and NBC (13). ABC, which does not enjoy the luxury of hosting a regular slate of NFL contests, popped up five times thanks to three NBA Finals broadcasts, its simulcast of the Dec. 7 AFC Wild Card showdown that originated on ESPN and the Academy Awards.

## **What ratings slump?**

Season-to-date, broadcast prime-time ratings are down 9 percent compared to the year-ago period, with the Big Four nets averaging 6.3 million viewers per night, down from 6.95 million in the first fourteen weeks of the 2016-17 schedule. The NFL's own 9 percent decline is of a piece with the slump in overall TV viewership, although football's scale dwarfs everything else on the tube. Through Week 16 of the NFL season, all regional and national broadcast windows are averaging 14.9 million viewers, which represents a loss of some 1.4 million viewers compared to 2016. NFL household ratings are down 8 percent to an 8.6 rating.

While NFL ratings took another hit this season, demand for ad time remains heavy. According to Standard Media Index estimates, overall in-game NFL ad sales revenues are up 2 percent year-over-year, while makegoods (aka audience deficiency units) are down slightly. In 2016, 22 percent of all in-game NFL spots were salted away for ADUs, while 21 percent have been thus allocated this season.

Also seeing a slight increase is the average unit cost of an in-game spot. Per SMI, a 30-second commercial in this season's NFL slate fetched some \$473,775 a pop, up 1 percent compared to \$468,434 in 2016.

# Eric Stutesville fired by Broncos, could interview for Giants head coaching job

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
January 2, 2018

The Broncos will have the same head coach next season, but Vance Joseph's staff is going to look considerably different.

Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy was fired during the season and several other coaches have been let go on Monday, including assistant head coach/running backs coach Eric Stutesville. Stutesville has been in Denver since 2010 and served as the interim head coach for the final four games of that season after Josh McDaniels was fired.

Stutesville's next move may be to interview for a permanent head coaching position. Mike Klis of KUSA reports the Giants requested permission to interview Stutesville before he was let go. Now that he's out of a job, no such request is needed.

According to Klis, the Broncos have also fired outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac and multiple reports add wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert to the list of former Denver assistants. Offensive line coach Jeff Davidson and special teams coach Brock Olivo are also on their way out after a 5-11 season.

# Broncos fire OL coach Jeff Davidson

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
January 2, 2018

The Broncos are keeping head coach Vance Joseph, but there will be changes to his staff.

According to multiple reports, the Broncos have fired offensive line coach Jeff Davidson.

Davidson joined the team in 2016 along with offensive coordinator Mike McCoy, who was fired in November amid an eight-game losing streak. Davidson also worked under McCoy in San Diego in 2016 and was McCoy's boss when Davidson was the Panthers offensive coordinator a decade ago.

Although the Broncos did better running the ball than they did in 2016, those ties make it unsurprising that the Broncos would move forward with Bill Musgrave as offensive coordinator.

Alex Marvez of Sporting News reports that Sean Kugler is expected to interview for a position with the Broncos this week. Kugler stepped down as UTEP's head coach during the 2017 season and was an offensive line coach for the Bills and Steelers before heading to El Paso.

# Brock Olivo gets pink slip in Denver

By Mike Florio  
Pro Football Talk  
January 2, 2018

When Broncos coach Vance Joseph learned that he wouldn't be one-and-done in Denver, his staff may have breathed a sigh of relief. Some of them shouldn't have.

Special-team coordinator Brock Olivo has been fired, according to Mike Klis of KUSA. Olivo joins offensive coordinator Mike McCoy (who was fired during the season) and offensive line coach Jeff Davidson as former Broncos employees.

It was clear in November that Denver's special teams weren't, but Joseph gave Olivo a vote of confidence.

"I watch [Olivo] work every day and the mistakes that we've had, Brock's responsible and I'm responsible, but he hasn't muffed a punt," Joseph said. "I'm not down on Brock. . . . Brock works hard, he's a young coach and he's a bright coach. He's going to be a great coach in my opinion."

Joseph either changed his mind or someone else changed it for him. Regardless, the Broncos will be making plenty of changes even though they aren't changing coaches.

Ultimately, the goal will be to change the outcome in 2018. If they don't, it will be the first time since 1971-72 that the Broncos posted back-to-back losing seasons.

# John Elway tells Vance Joseph his job is safe for 2018

By Michael David Smith

Pro Football Talk

January 2, 2018

Vance Joseph will not be one-and-done as the head coach of the Denver Broncos.

Broncos G.M. John Elway told Joseph that he is returning for the 2018 season.

“Vance and I had a great talk this morning about our plan to attack this offseason and get better as a team. We believe in Vance as our head coach. Together, we’ll put in the work to improve in all areas and win in 2018,” Elway wrote on Twitter.

Joseph appeared to be on the way out as the Broncos’ once-promising season went into a tailspin that ended with a 5-11 record. But as PFT reported early this morning, Elway began to have second thoughts about firing Joseph, and he ultimately decided to retain him for at least a second season.

Whether Joseph can win enough in his second season to stick around beyond 2018 will depend largely on whether the Broncos can finally find the right quarterback. So far, they haven’t. And that’s more on Elway than on Joseph. Elway is a Hall of Fame Broncos quarterback himself, but aside from luring Peyton Manning in free agency, his track record on acquiring quarterbacks for the Broncos has been poor. This year, both Joseph and Elway will come under heavy criticism if they can’t get the offense moving.