

Free agency of Todd Davis highlights offseason questions for Broncos at inside linebacker

By Nick Kosmider

Denver Post

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Editor's note: First of a series providing a position-by-position review of the Broncos in 2017 and looking ahead as the team enters the offseason. Today: inside linebackers.

The last tackle of a trying season for Todd Davis saved a touchdown.

Davis, an undrafted player out of tiny Sacramento State who was cut four times by New Orleans before being picked up by the Broncos in 2014, was still in the game late in the third quarter against the Chiefs on Dec. 31. By that time many of Denver's starters had walked off the field for the final time in a forgettable 5-11 season.

But Davis had one last burst to give. He sprinted from his inside linebacker position in the middle of the field toward the sideline, where Chiefs wide receiver Demarcus Robinson had caught a pass at the 1-yard line. Denver safety Dymonte Thomas grabbed Robinson by the ankles. As the receiver tried to pull out of the safety's grasp and reach toward the goal line, Davis leveled Robinson with a tackle that helped force the Chiefs into settling for a field goal.

Davis had come out of nowhere, much as he has during a career that started at the bottom before he worked his way into a full-time starter in Denver. It's a journey that has led Davis to the doorstep of long-term stability as he enters unrestricted free agency this spring. And whether the Broncos make their own pitch to the team's winner of the 2017 Ed Block Courage Award will go a long way toward solving their puzzle at inside linebacker in the offseason.

"I love it here," Davis said as he cleared out his locker this past week. "Being a California 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. The fans are amazing. This is a first-class organization so I would love to get a contract here and stay here."

Davis battled through injuries this past season to play in 14 games. He finished second on the team with 82 tackles, behind only fellow inside linebacker Brandon Marshall (106). It was Davis' consistency in fighting through pain that earned him the Ed Block honor, an annual award given to the player who best exemplifies commitments to the principles of sportsmanship and courage.

So what might it cost the Broncos to keep the 25-year-old Davis? His numbers compare favorably to A.J. Klein, one of last season's top unrestricted free agents at the position. Klein was drafted by the Panthers in 2013 and was a key member of their 2015 team that reached the Super Bowl. Klein signed a three-year, \$15 million contract with the Saints last March.

Marshall, who signed a four-year, \$32 million extension with the Broncos in 2016, is owed a base salary of \$5 million in 2018. He battled his own injury issues this past season to play in all 16 games and finish with more than 100 defensive stops for the third time in the last four seasons. Corey Nelson, a seventh-

round pick of the Broncos in 2014, is also an unrestricted free agent. He missed most of the 2017 season after landing on injured reserve with an elbow injury in October. Zaire Anderson, a backup, saw increased playing time this season in the wake of injuries to Nelson and Davis and enters the offseason as an exclusive rights free agent. An exclusive rights free agent has no more than two accrued seasons in the NFL and can only sign with his prior team, provided that team extends a minimum qualifying offer.

The Broncos could seemingly reprise a unit that has helped the team to top-five finishes in total defense in each of the past three seasons. But the pursuit of a potential expensive free agent quarterback could affect decisions at nearly every other position in free agency.

If that means letting another team sign Davis, the Broncos could turn to the draft to find an inside linebacker. The list of prospects at that position begins with Georgia's Roquan Smith, the Butkus Award winner as the nation's top linebacker. He is considered an early first-round prospect and could be available when the Broncos select at No. 5 in April's draft.

Broncos split O-line coaching jobs, Von Miller selected second-team all-pro

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

Jan. 6, 2018

The Broncos are changing the way they coach. Or at least the way they coach the offensive line.

The team announced Friday that recent offensive-line coaching hire Sean Kugler will coach the team's interior linemen, while Chris Strausser, according to an NFL source, is expected to be the offensive line-tackles coach.

A 28-year coaching veteran, Kugler has 18 seasons of experience coaching the offensive line specifically and has 11 years of experience in the NFL. For the last five years, he was the head coach at his alma mater, the University of Texas-El Paso.

Kugler was on the Steelers staff and helped guide center Maurkice Pouncey to his first three Pro Bowls selections. He also coached Pro Bowl tackle Jason Peters and coached former Broncos tackle Ryan Clady at Boise State in 2006, when Clady earned first-team All-America honors.

Strausser, who was hired by the Broncos last season as assistant offensive line coach under Jeff Davidson, was a part of the staff that helped recruit Clady to Boise State, and has 28 years of coaching experience, the majority of which have been at the college level.

Another honor for Miller. Broncos linebacker Von Miller was selected second-team all-pro by The Associated Press. The selection is the sixth for Miller, who named to the second team in 2011 and '14, and the first team in 2012, '15 and '16.

Miller led the Broncos with 10 sacks last season to bring his career total to 83.5, the most in the NFL since he entered the league in 2011. He also became the first player in franchise history with six 10-sack seasons.

Miller also had a team-high 23 quarterback hits and 17 tackles for loss. According to Pro Football Focus, who named Miller the top edge defender in 2017, the Broncos' veteran linebacker led his position in total pressures, with 83 over 447 pass-rush snaps.

Footnote. Phil Rauscher, according to a league source, is close to being named Washington's assistant offensive line coach. Rauscher was an assistant to Broncos head coach Vance Joseph last season.

Broncos' Von Miller named NFLPA's Week 17 Community MVP

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

Jan. 6, 2018

Broncos linebacker Von Miller was selected by the NFL Players Association as its Community MVP for the final week of the regular season. Through his foundation Von's Vision, Miller donated 2,013 eyeglass frames to kids in need through the Anchor Center for Blind Children in Denver.

"Thank you to the NFLPA for this great honor of being named Week 17 Community MVP," Miller said via the union's website. "Von's Vision is a personal mission for me, so it is humbling to see the success that we have had in the lives of kids in Denver by giving them the gift of sight."

In working with the Anchor Center for Blind children, Miller helped provide education and intervention for children who are blind or visually impaired.

In honor of Miller's Week 17 recognition, the NFLPA will donate \$10,000 to his foundation or charity of choice and will make an in-kind donation to him from the union's partner, Delta Private Jets.

In early December, Miller was named the Broncos' Community Impact Award winner for raising more than \$3.4 million since his foundation's inception in 2012 for eye exams, frames and lenses to children of low-income families. In 2017 alone, Von's Vision said it provided more than \$2 million of free eye care to more than 5,000 Denver students.

"It's a wonderful award," Miller told The Denver Post. "I didn't need credit. I haven't been looking for credit. But to get that — I can't even downplay it. It's amazing. That's an award I hold close to my heart."

The Broncos are one of only two NFL teams this season (the other being the Philadelphia Eagles) to have three winners of the NFLPA's weekly awards. In addition to Miller, guard Max Garcia was recognized in Week 4 for his disaster relief efforts in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. Receiver Emmanuel Sanders was selected in Week 12 for his two-week winter clothing, book and toy drive for children in Denver.

The three Broncos players and the NFLPA's other weekly Community Award winners are eligible for the union's top honor, the Byron Whizzer White Award.

Von Miller selected second-team All-Pro for 2017

By Alex Kirk

9NEWS

Jan. 6, 2018

After leading the Denver Broncos in sacks, tackles for loss and quarterback hits in 2017, Von Miller was named a second team All-Pro by the Associated Press.

Miller was a first-team All-Pro in 2012, 2015 and 2016 and a second-team All-Pro in 2011 and 2014.

This is the first time since 2011 that the Broncos have not had multiple All-Pro selections.

The annual All-Pro team is selected by a national panel of 50 media members.

FIRST TEAM

Quarterback: Tom Brady, New England

Running Back: Todd Gurley, Los Angeles Rams

Flex: Le'Veon Bell, Pittsburgh

Tight End: Rob Gronkowski, New England

Wide Receivers: Antonio Brown, Pittsburgh; DeAndre Hopkins, Houston

Left Tackle: Andrew Whitworth, Los Angeles Rams

Right Tackle: Lane Johnson, Philadelphia

Left Guard: Andrew Norwell, Carolina

Right Guard: David DeCastro, Pittsburgh

Center: Jason Kelce, Philadelphia

Edge Rushers: Calais Campbell, Jacksonville; Cameron Jordan, New Orleans

Interior Linemen: Aaron Donald, Los Angeles Rams; Cameron Heyward, Pittsburgh

Linebackers: Chandler Jones, Arizona; Luke Kuechly, Carolina; Bobby Wagner, Seattle

Cornerbacks: Jalen Ramsey, Jacksonville; Xavier Rhodes, Minnesota

Safeties: Kevin Byard, Tennessee; Harrison Smith, Minnesota

Defensive Back: Darius Slay, Detroit

Placekicker: Greg Zuerlein, Los Angeles Rams

Punter: Johnny Hekker, Los Angeles Rams

Kick Returner: Pharoh Cooper, Los Angeles Rams

Punt Returner: Jamal Agnew, Detroit

Special Teamer: Budda Baker, Arizona

SECOND TEAM

Quarterback: Carson Wentz, Philadelphia

Running Back: Le'Veon Bell, Pittsburgh

Flex: Alvin Kamara, New Orleans

Tight End: Travis Kelce, Kansas City

Wide Receivers: Julio Jones, Atlanta; Adam Thielen, Minnesota

Left Tackle: David Bakhtiari, Green Bay

Right Tackle: Mitchell Schwartz, Kansas City, and Daryl Williams, Carolina

Left Guard: Rodger Saffold, Los Angeles Rams

Right Guard: Zack Martin, Dallas

Center: Alex Mack, Atlanta

Edge Rushers: Everson Griffen, Minnesota; Demarcus Lawrence, Dallas

Interior Linemen: Fletcher Cox, Philadelphia; Calais Campbell, Jacksonville

Linebackers: Von Miller, Denver; C.J. Mosley, Baltimore; Telvin Smith, Jacksonville

Cornerbacks: Casey Hayward, Los Angeles Chargers; A.J. Bouye, Jacksonville

Safeties: Earl Thomas, Seattle; Micah Hyde, Buffalo

Defensive Back: Xavier Rhodes, Minnesota

Place kicker: Brett Kern, Tennessee

Kick Returner: Tyler Lockett, Seattle

Punt Returner: Pharoh Cooper, Los Angeles Rams

Special Teamer: Matthew Slater, New England

Broncos' performance after bye week shattered expectations

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

Jan. 6, 2018

The Denver Broncos ended their season on Sunday with a loss to the Kansas City Chiefs. Here's a look back at how I predicted their season would unfold.

My predicted record: 10-6

Broncos' actual record: 5-11

How I fared: Not well because there is wrong, and there is leisure-suit wrong. Yet months ago, when I dropped a 10-6 prediction, there was more than one Broncos player and coach who said they looked forward to tossing that back in my face since they believed they would be in the playoff conversation with fewer than six losses. In short, after a promising 3-1 start the Broncos' season took a dive after their Week 5 bye. They went 2-10 after the bye, lost four games by at least 20 points and have fired six assistant coaches. Consider expectations on all fronts unmet.

Denver Broncos get a gift in coaching Senior Bowl, where they might find a new QB

By Woody Paige

KMGH

Jan. 6, 2018

If the old adage “I’d rather be lucky than good” is true, the Broncos are blessed beneficiaries.

The team obviously wasn’t any good this season. But it certainly has gotten extremely lucky lately.

First, on Christmas Eve, the Broncos were leading Washington when Kirk Cousins, like the Frankenstein monster, finally came alive and decimated Denver’s defense while Brock Osweiler sputtered. Then, on New Year’s Eve, rookie quarterback Patrick Mahomes, in his first start (in a meaningless game for Kansas City), performed well against the Broncos. And despite two late touchdowns produced by Paxton Lynch, the Chiefs kicked a field goal on the final drive to win.

Those two losses, combined with victories by other lousy teams, propelled the Broncos from owning a draft pick barely in the top 10 to fifth overall, which gives them an opportunity, if they so choose, to select an upper-echelon quarterback.

Next, the worst team in the league, Cleveland, declined the invitation to coach in the Senior Bowl. The Giants and the Colts couldn’t be considered because they are without a head coach.

Houston, at 4-12, was in, and the Broncos were up at 5-11 (over the 5-11 Jets because of a tiebreaker).

Of course, the Broncos, who haven’t coached in the game of talented seniors since 1989 because of their success, accepted the offer, making John Elway especially elated, excited, eager and energized.

Vance Joseph’s staff was given the North squad, the Texans the South.

The Broncos get to be up close for a week in Mobile, Ala., with players potentially draft worthy.

Then the official announcement was made that Baker Mayfield of Oklahoma would be placed on the North team. The Senior Bowl is somewhat geographically challenged and doesn’t stick to the Mason-Dixon Line as a guidance. Oddly enough, Mason Rudolph of Oklahoma State could be on the South team.

The Broncos definitely want to coach, and slobber over, Mayfield, one of their significant possibilities. There are four QBs on each side. One slot remains open. Reportedly, the eighth and final quarterback will be Wyoming’s Josh Allen, who would play on the North. Bingo for the Broncos.

Allen also is a quarterback the Broncos have followed for two years because of his close proximity to Colorado and are highly-interested in for the draft.

(Allen is a junior, but is eligible for the Senior Bowl because he was a fifth-year player. Josh Rosen and Sam Darnold, the two most heralded quarterbacks in the draft – who both announced on the same day

this week they are turning pro – are underclassmen who can't play in the game – which has archaic rules.)

The Broncos' staff, with new quarterback coach Mike Sullivan (whose addition was announced Thursday), will coach Mayfield, presumably Washington State's Luke Falk, maybe Rudolph or intriguing prospect Brandon Silvers of Troy, and Allen, if he decides to participate.

The South would have Kurt and Kyle – Kurt Benkert of Virginia (apparently destined to be drafted in the second or third round) and Kyle Lauletta of Richmond, Mike White of Western Kentucky and Rudolph or Silvers.

But the Texans already have a quarterback in Deshaun Watson, so Bill O'Brien won't be as needy (unless they like one of the other guys as a later-round choice).

The Broncos are lucky.

They'd rather be good, as they were with Elway, Peyton Manning and Jake Plummer (four most recent quarterbacks who guided them in playoffs to conference title games and Super Bowls).

Elway may find himself a quarterback in the Game-On-The-Gulf.

Since Elway took over for the 2011 season, the Broncos have drafted, or signed as free agents, 16 Senior Bowl players – including their first picks Von Miller, Sylvester Williams and Derek Wolfe (second round), offensive linemen Michael Schofield, Ty Sambrailo and Max Garcia, punter Riley Dixon and one-time defensive starters Quinton Carter and Nate Irving. Among others not so hot. The Senior Bowl has been a mixed bag for Broncos draft picks.

But, expect as many as five of their choices this year to come from players the Broncos' staff coaches in Mobile this year.

Quarterback?

Here are some quarterbacks who have played in the Senior Bowl during the Elway Era in Denver: Colin Kaepernick, Nick Foles, Carson Wentz, Jimmy Garoppolo, Mike Glennon, Jacoby Brissett, Andy Dalton and three others who could have been drafted by the Broncos – Kirk Cousins, Russell Wilson and Dak Prescott. The Broncos had Wilson (who earlier had been drafted by, and played in, the Rockies' organization) on their radar, and we'll never know why they didn't draft Prescott. There seemed to be no serious discussion then about Cousins, but there is now.

Could the Broncos' future quarterback be at the Senior Bowl?

Will the Broncos be lucky or good?

Denver Broncos agree to terms with 3 new assistant coaches

By Blair Miller

KMGH

Jan. 6, 2018

The Denver Broncos on Friday agreed to terms with three new assistant coaches who will be tasked with retooling the lagging offense in 2018.

Joining the team will be Sean Kugler, who will coach guards and centers on the offensive line; Curtis Modkins, who will coach running backs; and Mike Sullivan, who will be the new Broncos quarterbacks coach.

Kugler has 28 years of coaching experience, 12 of which have come in the NFL. He comes to the Broncos after five years as the head coach at the University of Texas-El Paso. Previously, he coached the offensive line for the Pittsburgh Steelers (2010-12); Buffalo Bills (2007-09) and Detroit Lions (2001-05).

The Steelers made the Super Bowl during Kugler's first year with the team, and four running backs have had 1,000-yard seasons running behind his lines.

Modkins is in his 23rd year coaching, with 10 years of NFL experience as a running backs coach or offensive coordinator. He coached the Chicago Bears running backs this past season, helping Jordan Howard to his second-straight 1,000-yard season. He previously coached with San Francisco, Detroit, Kansas City and Buffalo.

Sullivan is in his 23rd year of coaching as well, which include 15 NFL seasons. He was the offensive coordinator for the New York Giants for the past two seasons. He has also coached with Jacksonville and Tampa Bay, and won two Super Bowls during his first stint with the Giants.

Von Miller selected second-team All-Pro for 2017 season

By Ben Swanson
DenverBroncos.com
Jan. 6, 2018

On the heels of Von Miller's sixth Pro Bowl nod, Miller has received his sixth All-Pro selection.

The Associated Press named Von Miller a second-team All-Pro at linebacker. He was also a second-team All-Pro in 2011 and 2014. Miller received first-team selections in 2012, 2015 and 2016.

Miller led the Broncos in 2017 in sacks (10), tackles for loss (17) and quarterback hits (23). He also recorded three passes defended, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery.

This is the first year the Broncos have not had multiple All-Pro selections since 2011, Miller's first year as an All-Pro.

The Associated Press' All-Pro team was selected by a national panel of 50 media members.

Broncos agree to terms with three new position coaches

By Staff

DenverBroncos.com

Jan. 6, 2018

Head Coach Vance Joseph announced on Friday that the Broncos have agreed to terms with new quarterbacks, running backs and offensive line coaches. Mike Sullivan, a 15-year NFL coaching veteran, will coach quarterbacks; Curtis Modkins, a coaching veteran of 10 seasons, will be the new Running Backs Coach; and Sean Kugler, who has 11 years of NFL coaching experience, will hold the title of Offensive Line-Guards/Centers.

Sullivan, who worked with Eli Manning during the previous two seasons as the New York Giants' offensive coordinator, will assist a position group Joseph and President of Football Operations/General Manager John Elway hope to see more from in 2018.

Sullivan spent 11 years with the Giants in a variety of roles between 2004 and 2017 and left briefly for a two-year stint as the Buccaneers' offensive coordinator in 2012 and 2013.

He also worked with current offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave when the two were in Jacksonville in the early 2000s.

Sullivan, a California native, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy before he began his career as a graduate assistant in 1993 at Humboldt State.

Klint Kubiak, who served as the Broncos' interim quarterback coach after Musgrave was promoted to offensive coordinator, will remain on Denver's staff.

Modkins, who has 23 years of coaching experience, most recently coached for the Bears in 2017 in the same capacity. Previously Modkins was offensive coordinator for the 49ers in 2016, running backs coach/run-game coordinator for the Lions from 2013-15, offensive coordinator and running backs coach for the Bills from 2010-12 and running backs coach for the Cardinals and Chiefs in 2009 and 2008, respectively.

Under Modkins' coaching in Chicago, Jordan Howard ran for 1,122 yards and nine touchdowns for the Bears in 2017.

In Denver, Modkins will take over a running backs room that boasted another 1,000-yard rusher in C.J. Anderson. The team also has a tandem of young running backs in Devontae Booker and De'Angelo Booker.

Modkins also coached at the collegiate level from 1995 to 2007. He began at TCU, his alma mater, as a graduate assistant before coaching their secondary in 1996 and tight ends in 1997. He then coached defensive backs at New Mexico. Modkins then settled in for a six-year stint at Georgia Tech, coaching defensive backs in 2002 before moving to coach running backs from 2002-07.

Kugler, who most recently served as UTEP's head coach for the past five seasons, will be in the NFL for the first time since 2012, the final year of a three-season stint with the Steelers. In those years, he center guided Maurkice Pouncey to the first three of his six Pro Bowl selections.

Kugler's career also included a one-year stint at Boise State (2006), where he served as assistant head coach and offensive-line coach for a team that finished a perfect 13-0 and defeated Oklahoma 43-42 in the Fiesta Bowl. While at Boise State, Kugler coached future Broncos offensive tackle Ryan Clady, who was a second-team All-American in his only season under Kugler.

After Boise State, Kugler returned to the NFL with Buffalo (2007-09), where he guided offensive tackle Jason Peters to two Pro Bowl appearances in three seasons.

During his five-year stint as UTEP's head coach, Kugler coached two-time second-team All-America guard Will Hernandez, a top prospect in the 2018 NFL Draft who has accepted an invitation to play in the Senior Bowl later this month.

Kugler, 51, has been in coaching since 1990, when he began coaching in the high-school ranks in Tampa, Florida.

Three years later, he began an eight-season stint as an assistant coach at UTEP, where he played from 1984-88. His final two seasons as a player came under the tutelage of Andy Reid. The future Eagles and Chiefs head coach was UTEP's offensive line coach at the time.

Kugler also played in the World League of American Football in the spring of 1991. He spent a season with the Sacramento Surge before returning to coaching.

Broncos have agreements with 3 new assistants

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

Jan. 6, 2018

The Denver Broncos have reached agreements with three new assistants, including former New York Giants offensive coordinator Mike Sullivan to serve as their new quarterbacks coach.

Broncos offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave held that role until he was promoted when Mike McCoy was fired midseason. Coach Vance Joseph took the "interim" tag off Musgrave following Denver's 5-11 season.

Klint Kubiak, who had served as the Broncos' interim QBs coach, is expected to remain on the staff in another capacity.

The Broncos also have an agreement with former Bears running backs coach Curtis Modkins to coach their running backs, a position that had been held by Eric Studesville since 2010.

Also this week, the Broncos replaced offensive line coach Jeff Davidson with former UTEP head coach Sean Kugler.

The three new coaches will be in place before the Broncos' staff coaches at the Senior Bowl later this month, where they'll get a close look at several draft prospects, including Oklahoma quarterback Baker Mayfield.

Joseph fired six assistants earlier this week and is still searching for a wide receivers coach to replace Tyke Tolbert and a special teams coordinator to replace Brock Olivo.

Notes: Von Miller was named the NFLPA's Week 17 Community MVP for donating more than 2,000 pairs of eyeglasses frames to kids in need through the Anchor Center for Blind Children in Denver as part of Von's Vision. In 2017, Miller provided free eye care to 3,279 Denver students, bringing the total to more than 5,000 kids he's helped since founding Von's Vision five years ago.

Brady in Broncos Orange? Teams that might fit if Tom Brady leaves New England

By Nate Davis

USA Today

Jan. 6, 2018

Could the New England Patriots be on the verge of imploding?

An ESPN story published early Friday detailed rifts between coach Bill Belichick and quarterback Tom Brady, Brady's alleged demand that backup Jimmy Garoppolo be traded (a wish owner Robert Kraft reportedly supported ... and maybe later regretted), apparent admissions from team insiders that the merits of the Deflategate case were legitimate and, perhaps most important, that the only NFL dynasty of the 21st century might be on the verge of splintering.

Should that be the case, what could be more fun than speculating on where the fallout — meaning the team's main characters — might land? Could Belichick leave in a huff (maybe he'd return to the New York Giants, who have an opening)? Might one of his coordinators, Josh McDaniels or Matt Patricia, be promoted if their longtime mentor departs? And/or whither Brady, the greatest quarterback in league history, but a man who will turn 41 before next season?

Let's explore that.

Perhaps the main thread of the ESPN report was the depth of Brady's desire to play into his mid-40s, which would allow him to cement his legacy and personally attempt to legitimize his "TB12 Method" lifestyle and brand. So let's just have fun with this and envision a world where Brady falls out of favor with Kraft, while Belichick remains behind to rebuild around Brian Hoyer. Where would be the best place for Brady to launch a second NFL act that would seem unimaginable ... just as it seemed unimaginable for Joe Montana, Brett Favre and Peyton Manning?

Let's look at the possibilities (and before you draft up your angry tweets, I was kidding about rebuilding around Hoyer):

1. Jets: How 'bout these apples? If a divorce went down, what better place for Brady to stick it to the Pats than by switching allegiance to the J-E-T-S? As the ESPN story notes, Belichick hates the franchise he infamously "coached" for one day before resigning on the heels of Bill Parcells' departure after the 1999 season. Brady has long had real estate holdings in New York City, so moving a few hours down Interstate-95 would be no issue. And the Jets, flush with cap space and high draft picks this year, have already shown they're further along in their rebuild than anyone expected — notably minus, of course, an answer under center or a marquee superstar who could assist with recruiting blue chip free agents. The Jets didn't enjoy great off-Broadway runs from Boomer Esiason, Neil O'Donnell or Favre. But this kind of quick-fix, headline-grabbing move is definitely in their organizational DNA. And if Brady could bring Gang Green its long-awaited second Lombardi Trophy, at the expense of the Patriots no less, he would instantly be anointed the greatest athlete of all time and, likely, next mayor of New York.

2. Broncos: If you can't beat 'em, right? Brady is 8-9 all-time against Denver. Said another way, why not win a franchise that provided Peyton Manning with more hardware and has no fear of the Patriots? A

championship-minted defense is already in place, and a capable quarterback seems to be the only ingredient the Broncos need to reclaim their recent dominance.

3. Jaguars: If Brady can indeed play effectively until he's 45, then Jacksonville's supporting cast could probably give him a legitimate five-year window to win championships. And just imagine what might happen if Brady and Tom Coughlin were actually pulling in the same direction. (This might also give Belichick the chance to truly showcase his genius by rebuilding in New England with ... Blake Bortles? Ha.)

4. Ravens: Think of them as Broncos-lite. Outstanding defense. Typically play well against a Patriots team it lives to beat. But Baltimore clearly needs to consider it might be time to replace Joe Flacco.

5. Dolphins: Their roster has more appealing talent than, say, the Jets', though winning in Miami wouldn't have the same flair. And, frankly, that's another issue given Brady has historically been decidedly average in South Florida, going 7-9 there over the course of his career. The Dolphins would also have to decide they'd prefer a short-term arrangement, scrapping their apparent plans to continue building around suddenly brittle QB Ryan Tannehill. But a marriage between Brady and coach Adam Gase, who comes with the Manning stamp of approval, could certainly bear copious fruit.

6. Chargers: They've already got an ancient quarterback who's still playing effectively in the twilight of his career. The Bolts also have a largely loaded roster, kicker notwithstanding. And you can bet they'd sell a lot more seats (at escalated prices) at StubHub Center with Brady than Philip Rivers. And, yet again, let's not forget that California native Brady often resides in Los Angeles during the offseason.

7. Giants: They're probably not far from a turnaround. A Brady-to-Beckham passing combo whets the appetite. The stage has already been set for Eli Manning's exit. And joining the beloved Giants might irk Belichick even more than going to the despised Jets.

8. Bills: Let's at least consider the Patriots' other AFC East rivals, who do have some talent but clearly aren't satisfied with their quarterback situation. Brady would have to move to Western New York, but he could also save a few bucks by shacking up with Gronk's family before potentially convincing his favorite tight end to also come home.

Raiders preparing 10-year, \$100M deal for Gruden

By Kevin Patra

NFL.com

Jan. 6, 2018

NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport reported the Raiders are preparing to sign Gruden to a 10-year, \$100 million contract, per sources informed of the deal.

The pact, once finalized, is believed to be the richest coaching contract in NFL history, according to Rapoport. NFL teams do not disclose financial details on coaching deals.

Davis isn't opening the purse strings wide just for Gruden. Rapoport reported the coordinators are getting four-year deals. The deals would keep the staff under contract amid the team's move from Oakland to Las Vegas.

The Raiders are expected to announce Gruden as the new head coach on Tuesday.

Rapoport reported that Gruden has three key coordinators already in place: Rams quarterbacks coach Greg Olson as offensive coordinator, Bengals ex-defensive coordinator Paul Guenther as defensive coordinator, and Cowboys' Rich Bisaccia to run special teams.

The 10-year deal with a massive salary underscores the Raiders' commitment to bringing back Gruden after trading him to Tampa Bay in 2002. Gruden spent the past nine NFL seasons as a color commentator for the ESPN's Monday Night Football broadcasts.

With a move to Las Vegas on the horizon, Davis will pay a boatload to provide the Raiders with a glitzy coach who will marshal the franchise through the transition.

NFL TV ratings drop almost 10 percent, networks see revenue decline

By Jason Owens

Yahoo.com

Jan. 6, 2018

NFL ratings dropped almost 10 percent in 2017 from the previous year according to Nielsen data released on Thursday, a further decline in the decreased TV viewership from 2016 that saw an 8 percent drop.

The average number of games watched by viewers throughout the season dropped from 18.8 in 2015 to 16.5 in 2017.

Several factors appear to have influenced the decreased interest from fans in watching games, with an L.A. Times report pointing to evidence that suggests controversy over players kneeling for the national anthem played a role early in the season.

The L.A. Times spoke with Fox Sports executive Mike Mulvihill, who shared some numbers from the network. Fox's Sunday package saw an 8 percent decline in weeks two through 10 when the anthem controversy was at its peak, spurred on by commentary from President Donald Trump.

During weeks 11 through 17, the drop in viewership shrunk to 2 percent for the network.

Viewers upset with players kneeling and others not satisfied with the NFL's handling of the Colin Kaepernick situation that saw the quarterback miss the entire season appear to have tuned out.

A more compelling slate of national games and better quality of play as the season wore on and the playoff picture cleared up likely played a factor in the the late-season shift as well.

Mulvihill also pointed to a changing demographic that consumes its entertainment in non-traditional media, most notably YouTube, in this case.

"The audience for NFL highlights on YouTube have become pretty substantial," Mulvihill said. "Those highlights can be eight, nine or 10 minutes long, and I do worry they can be serving as a disincentive from watching the live game."

Mulvihill is clearly concerned about a younger audience less interested in sitting down for three-plus hours to watch a single game play out. He also theorized that more people are watching the news on Sundays with the volatile political climate being a big television draw, piggybacking on the wide-held belief that the election last year played a role in the declining 2016 numbers.

Despite the declining numbers, NFL viewership is still king on broadcast TV, by a wide margin. AdAge analysis shows that NFL broadcasts accounted for 37 of the 50 most watched broadcasts in 2017. NBC's "Sunday Night Football" remained No. 1 prime-time show on TV.

But that doesn't mean network heads aren't concerned. With CBS, Fox, NBC and ESPN each paying at least \$1 billion for broadcasts rights, the stakes are high. And, according to an anonymous network executive who spoke with the L.A. Times, each of those networks "made a lot less money than they expected" in 2017.

ESPN fires Donovan McNabb, Eric Davis amid sexual harassment allegations

By Ben Rohrbach

Yahoo.com

Jan. 6, 2018

A month after suspending Donovan McNabb and Eric Davis amid sexual harassment allegations, ESPN has parted ways with the former NFL players turned analysts following an internal investigation, according to Sports Business Daily's John Ourand.

A former NFL Network wardrobe stylist accused McNabb and Davis of sexual misconduct in a lawsuit filed last month. The suit also named several other current and former NFL Network employees, including Hall of Famer Marshall Faulk and ex-NFL players Warren Sapp, Heath Evans and Ike Taylor.

McNabb allegedly sent the woman multiple sexually inappropriate text messages.

Davis allegedly told her, "You look like a woman who knows what to do in bed."

"Mr. Davis also asked Plaintiff to have rough sex with him," the lawsuit said, "and said that he wanted to choke Plaintiff from behind until Plaintiff begged him to stop."

McNabb was a presence on ESPN's TV and radio shows, and Davis co-hosted an ESPN L.A. Radio show.