

Broncos sign former Raiders punter Marquette King to three-year contract

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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Marquette King will need to find an alternative to his bucking Bronco punt celebration. Because the former Raiders punter is switching sides.

Four days after he was surprisingly released by Oakland, King arrived in Denver for a visit with his once-AFC West rivals Thursday and quickly signed a three-year contract that, according to an NFL source, is worth up to \$7 million with incentives and includes a base salary of around \$2 million.

“The last few days were definitely different. It felt like — you know how you play those UFC games and you get punched and you’re in a daze until you get knocked out? That’s what it kind of felt like,” King said via conference call. “It all happened so fast. I just felt like Denver was the best team to go to. The people that I was familiar with that are here with the organization — you get a homey feeling when you get here. I’m just looking forward to competing and winning games. That’s all.”

A sixth-year player who signed with the Raiders as an undrafted free agent in 2012, King is the only player in NFL history to record at least a 40-yard or better net punting average in each of his first five seasons. He won Oakland’s punting job in 2013 and, the following season, led the NFL in punts (109) and punting yards (4,930), both of which are Raiders records. In 2016, King was named a second-team all-pro after recording the second-highest punting average (48.6) in the NFL and tying for the fifth-most punts (34) placed inside the 20-yard line. Last season he finished third in the league with a 42.7-yard average.

King signed a five-year, \$16.5 million contract extension with the Raiders in February 2016, but Jon Gruden’s arrival as head coach this year soon spelled the end of King’s tenure. It was reported that King’s personality and celebrations didn’t sit well with Gruden. But King said he never got an explanation for his release. In fact, he never even talked to Gruden.

“I just saw him on car commercials and stuff,” King said. “But I’ll definitely get to see him two times a year.”

His exit from Oakland allowed him to hand-pick his second NFL stop, and Denver — a place he calls “a punter’s paradise” — was atop the list for multiple reasons, including fit and familiarity, and certainly the altitude.

“I think there is somewhat of a revenge factor in there, too,” he said. “It’s a mixture of some of everything.”

“The cool thing about the Broncos is the people that work at the Broncos encourage you to be yourself. That is real cool. Players play a lot better when they can let their hair down and be themselves. It’s cool.”

The move saved the Raiders about \$2.9 million in cap space. The Broncos have been looking to upgrade their special teams across the board. Earlier in free agency, the team signed kicker Taylor Bertolet and long snapper Christian Kuntz for competition. It also let Cody Latimer and Corey Nelson, two of their top special-teamers a season ago, sign elsewhere.

King's arrival likely means Riley Dixon, a former seventh-round pick with two years remaining on his rookie deal, could be made available for trade or released outright. But, in the meantime, King has his work cut out for him.

"Now it's time to find a new celebration because that was one when I was trying to troll y'all," he said. "Now I've got to find something else. It's definitely going to be a nice little dance. We'll figure something out."

If the Broncos draft a QB at No. 5, how long is Case Keenum's leash?

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
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The Denver Post's Nick Kosmider on Thursday answered questions from readers about the Denver Broncos in a live Lunch Special chat. Here are the highlights:

If the Broncos draft a QB at No. 5, how long is Case Keenum's leash?

Nick: John Elway made it clear when he introduced Case Keenum at his press conference last month. The veteran, who signed a two-year, \$36 million contract with the Broncos, IS the team's starter. He'll go through the spring and fall camp with that distinction and, barring anything unforeseen will be the team's starter when they open the 2018 season. Still, selecting a QB at No. 5 would almost certainly create a scenario in which calls for that player will come at the first sign of struggle for Keenum. The Broncos believe Keenum could handle that. And he said as much during his introductory press conference. After all, Keenum opened as the starter for the Rams two seasons ago with Jared Goff, the No. 1 overall pick in the draft, learned behind him. It's a role he's not unfamiliar with. The challenge for the Broncos would be resisting the outside pressure to turn to a rookie QB before they are ready to do so.

Is our QB going to be good?

Nick: I am of the mind that Keenum will fit well into what the Broncos will try to do offensively next season. He showed a great propensity last season to take care of the football, lean on the running game, and make plays with his feet when he needed to. That will be the formula for the Broncos to bounce back from a 5-11 season that featured especially poor play at the quarterback spot. That being said, Keenum's success will depend greatly on how much the offense around him improves. He's not the kind of QB who is going to step in and automatically lift everyone around him by himself. There are only a handful of quarterbacks on the planet with that kind of talent. The Broncos have to improve on the offensive line. The addition of right tackle Jared Veldheer and the potential growth of left tackle Garrett Bolles could go a long way. But I think the Broncos need to find a starting offensive guard in the draft. They'll also be depending on some young players — like tight end Jake Butt and wide receiver Carlos Henderson — to make impacts after missing their respective rookie seasons with injuries. If improvements can be made in those areas, Keenum has a chance to be a solid fit for the Broncos. Whether he can fully replicate the incredible season he had in Minnesota? I'm skeptical for now.

Do you get any sense on whether the Broncos would consider drafting Shaquem Griffin? Do you think he could make an impact on the Broncos D?

Nick: Shaquem Griffin, the Central Florida linebacker who had his left hand amputated when he was 4 years old, is perhaps the best story in the draft. Doubted all his life, he became one of college football's most dynamic defensive players. But he is more than a great underdog story. His impressive performances at both the Senior Bowl and the NFL combine have put him in position to be drafted later this month. I'm not sure how high he'll be on the Broncos' draft board, but he would certainly be an

intriguing middle- to late-round selection, especially for a team that has some questions to answer at the pass-rushing spots.

Does anyone genuinely believe that a TE room with unproven Jake Butt, the proven deficiencies of Jeff Heurman, and practice squad guy Traylor is even close to adequate without a proven 3-5 year veteran in the competition?!

Nick: This is a great question. The current tight ends on the Broncos' roster caught a combined 17 passes last season. That's simply not a lot of production. The Broncos are putting a lot of faith in Jake Butt becoming a standout at that position. While there is certainly a lot to like about Butt's college film at Michigan, the reality is he hasn't played an NFL snap and already has a pretty significant injury history. Jeff Heurman, on the other hand, has caught 18 passes in two full seasons. He simply hasn't lived up to the billing he had coming out of Ohio State. John Elway really thought Heurman would make a big leap last season, his second full year removed from the ACL injury he suffered during his first rookie minicamp practice in 2015. But that never came to fruition. While Heurman has the strength and size you'd like to see from that spot — and his impressive TD catch at Indianapolis last year showed off his athleticism — he's got to put it all together for a significant stretch. There's no way around it: tight end continues to be a giant question mark for this team.

How much of an emphasis do you think the Broncos will put on adding offensive line help in this draft?

Nick: Getting veteran Jared Veldheer in a trade last month was a big coup for the Broncos. Adding tackle help was perhaps the biggest need outside of the cornerback position, and Veldheer should help stabilize a position that has been a revolving problem for the last several seasons. Acquiring Veldheer — remember, the Broncos still have Menelik Watson and Billy Turner on the roster behind him — keeps Denver from having to invest a high pick on another young tackle. Starting a second-year player (Bolles) at one outside spot and a potential rookie at the other would have been asking for trouble. That being said, I still the Broncos need to invest considerable resources — perhaps a second-round pick — on the guard position. Ron Leary was a great free-agent acquisition last year, and he was a big boon to the offensive line before getting hurt. But Denver needs more depth at the spot.

Why no proven veteran at tight end?

Nick: I addressed a little earlier, but I'll just add that, yes, I was surprised the Broncos didn't make a move for a veteran earlier in free agency. That's still a possibility, obviously, but there are no more marquee names on the board. They'll really be counting on their young players at the position to make big leaps.

I heard Eric Decker had interest in returning to the Broncos. Is the feeling mutual?

Nick: As you mentioned, Eric Decker made clear in a radio interview earlier this week his desire to return to Denver, where all of his children were born. He has a lot of ties to this area, and he obviously had the best years of his career in a Broncos uniform. As for the Broncos' potential interest in the 31-year-old wide receiver, whose production has dipped each of the last two seasons? The team has been pretty mum on it. Of note, Adam Schefter reported earlier today that Decker will be meeting with the Ravens, who are in the market for a veteran slot receiver.

So it looks like the Broncos signed a new punter. What do you think of the Marquette King addition?

Nick: The Broncos have made no secrets about their desire to bolster a special-teams unit that was, and this is probably putting it nicely, a disaster last season from start to finish. Jon Gruden appears to be molding his new locker room in Oakland in a very specific way, and that didn't include King, who is known almost as much for his spirited celebrations — and occasional personal fouls, like the one he committed in Denver last year — as for his punting, which is among the league's best. Bottom line, the Broncos would be getting a player who is among the league's best at his position. That was probably the biggest motivator here.

Which Bronco has the best shoe game?

Nick: The question of the day! He must know I'm a big sneakerhead myself. Truthfully, it's hard to pick. There are a lot of guys who put a lot of thought into their shoe selections — Zach Kerr, Domata Peko, Chris Harris come to mind — but because it's football, I'm going to lean toward the guy who also gets it done on the field, and Von Miller takes the cake there. His creative personality meshes well with his designers at Adidas, who always come up with pregame pairs of cleats that tend to draw eyeballs on social media.

Chances that the Broncos take Nelson at 5? I know that's a high spot for a guard...but Bolles, Leary, Paradis, Nelson and Veldheer could be amazing!

Nick: You're right when you say that, typically, the No. 5 spot would be viewed as a stretch for an offensive guard. But Nelson isn't your typical guard with a first-round grade. He's far and away the best offensive lineman in this draft, and he's probably one of the top two or three players overall, regardless of position. If the Broncos truly are committed to becoming a run-it-down-your-throat outfit, as they've claimed repeatedly this offseason, selecting Nelson, who didn't block people in college as much as he destroyed them in the run game, would be a big move in that direction.

Probably a way too early question here, but which off the radar guy do you think has the best shot of make the team or the practice squad this year?

Nick: It's a good question, Hank, but I think until we have a chance to see these guys during OTAs or even early in training camp, it's going to be hard to put a finger on what players among those who signed futures contracts in January have a shot at making the 53-man roster come September. That said, keep your eye on River Cracraft, the former Washington State standout. He was signed to the Broncos practice squad in the middle of last season and was quickly cut after suffering a hamstring injury because the Broncos simply needed the slot. But they liked him enough to bring him back onto the practice squad at the end of last season, so they are certainly interested in getting a look at him this spring.

To add on that, you only have to look at Shelby Harris, who signed a futures contract with the Broncos in January 2017, to see the impact those players can potentially make. Harris made the team out of camp, had a game-saving blocked field goal in Week 1 and finished with five sacks last season.

Do you think the Broncos No. 3 receiver is on the roster right now?

Nick: Great question. That spot is completely up in the air as we sit here now on April 5, and finding someone who can step into that spot and contribute is imperative. The Broncos simply haven't had a

reliable No. 3 target since 2014. There are some candidates on the roster right now. Again, the Broncos are depending on Carlos Henderson, a third-round pick in 2017 who missed all of his rookie season due to injury, to make a big impact. Jordan Taylor continues to improve as a versatile offensive threat, and he will have the chance to win that spot. Isaiah McKenzie didn't get many reps at wide receiver as a rookie, but he, too, could get more looks there this spring. My guess is that the Broncos will also add at least one wide receiver in the upcoming draft to compete for that spot.

Broncos sign former Raider punter Marquette King to three-year contract

By Mike Klis

9NEWS

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Punting philosophies change, apparently.

Two years ago, the Broncos cut longtime punter Britton Colquitt in part because he was about to make \$3.25 million (he offered to take a \$1 million cut) in favor of low-pay, seventh-round rookie Riley Dixon. Two years later, the Broncos went the other way signing veteran Marquette King for a three-year deal that appears to have a \$2 million annual base average, but with incentives could reach \$7 million.

Dixon, it is assumed, goes straight to the trading block with the \$630,000 salary he is scheduled to make in 2017. 9NEWS broke multiple facets of the story, first that King and the Broncos had held discussions Wednesday and then that the sides were expected to reach agreement on a three-year deal.

King had dinner with a couple Broncos coaches on Wednesday night, then continued his visit with a trip to the team's UHealth Training Center on Thursday.

"I just wanted to find the best place that I thought I would fit," King said in a conference call with the Denver media 20 minutes after signing his new contract. "I think there is somewhat of a revenge factor in there, too."

Hey now!

King, 29, had been the Raiders' punter the previous five seasons until he was unceremoniously released last week by Jon Gruden, Oakland's new head coach.

And so conjure up this possibility: King nails a majestic punt in Denver's Mile High air that goes out of bounds inside the Raiders' 5-yard line. He then takes a wide swoop towards the opposing sideline and perform his Buckin' Bronco dance right in front of Gruden.

The 15-yard unsportsmanlike penalty for taunting spoils the moment a bit, but it's easier to imagine not he's a member of the AFC West-rival Broncos. Apparently while serving as a color commentator on Monday Night Football in recent years, Gruden didn't appreciate some of King's flamboyant antics.

"I never got a chance to talk to him," King said. "I just saw him on car commercials and stuff (laughing). I get to see him two times a year."

During his visit, King said the Broncos did not ask him to tame down his fun-loving shenanigans.

"Not at all," King said. "The cool thing about the Broncos is the people that work at the Broncos encourage you to be yourself. That is real cool. Players play a lot better when they can let their hair down and be themselves. It's cool."

King is coming off a contract that made him the NFL's fifth-highest punter at \$3.3 million a year. He has one of the league's strongest legs as finished third in the NFL with a 42.7-yard net and second in 2016 with a 48.6-yard gross average.

Dixon did have a bit of a sophomore slump in 2017 after an impressive rookie season. Dixon ranked 9th in net punting in 2016 but fell to 22nd in 2017.

Although it is a surprise the Broncos have apparently decided to move on from Dixon, management has been letting special teams know it was not happy with its 2017 performance.

First, special teams coordinator Brock Olivo was fired and replaced by NFL veteran special teams coordinator Tom McMahon. Then top core special teamers Bennie Fowler III, Cody Latimer and Corey Nelson were allowed to leave for free agency. After that, undrafted players were brought in as competition for current kicker Brandon McManus and longsnapper Casey Kreiter.

And now it appears the Broncos are considering replacing Dixon. He is expected to draw plenty of interest from other teams. The Broncos currently don't have a pick in the sixth or seventh rounds in the 2018 draft.

As a Raider, King has punted plenty in Denver's mile-high altitude and while it's one thing to punt here once here, he may have to make adjustments over an eight-game season.

"There is a lot more you can do with the altitude," King said. "I've always enjoyed punting out here in the altitude just because the ball travels further. It's something I'm going to have to get used to. I definitely have to get a feel for my leg when it comes to putting the ball inside the corners and everything. Denver is a punter's paradise. While I'm competing, I'm going to see if I can take advantage of it."

If the Broncos don't take a QB, they just might end up with best player in draft

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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The Denver Broncos are in unfamiliar territory in this year's NFL draft: They have a top-five pick in hand at a time when they want to rebound from last season's dismal 5-11 finish.

And while president of football operations/general manager John Elway has said "I don't want to be picking at [No. 5] again anytime soon," the Broncos do want to make the most of the kind of pick they've rarely had. The Broncos haven't had a pick in the draft's top five since 2011 -- they selected Von Miller at No. 2 -- and since the AFL-NFL merger in 1970, they have had picks in the top five just four times and a pick in the top 10 just five times.

"We have a lot of opportunities at five now," Elway has put it. "We're in good spots. We're high in a lot of rounds. As I said, it's going to be important for us to find guys that can help our football team."

The Broncos signed Case Keenum to a two-year deal, so if the top four quarterbacks in this draft are selected with the first four picks, or if the quarterbacks who remain on the board are not players Denver would be willing to take at No. 5, the Broncos will be left to choose from some staggering star power among the best players who aren't quarterbacks.

Players in that group -- those who have the potential to make a quick transition into the NFL -- include Penn State running back Saquon Barkley, NC State defensive end Bradley Chubb, Notre Dame guard Quenton Nelson, Ohio State cornerback Denzel Ward and Virginia Tech linebacker Tremaine Edmunds.

Some NFL talent evaluators would go as far as to say that most, or all, of the players on that list would grade out, regardless of position, higher than the quarterbacks would. So, if there is an early run on quarterbacks, the Broncos will have a chance to select one of the draft's best players, perhaps even the top player on their board, at No. 5.

"You always want to keep all your good players and you want to find more," said coach Vance Joseph. "... That's it. We want football players, guys who love the game and want to succeed."

Chubb, the draft's best pass-rusher, had 26 tackles for loss and 10 sacks this past season despite almost constant attention from the offenses across from him. He can play on either side of the formation, and elite pass-rushers often have the quickest transition to the NFL game.

Barkley is a player who many teams see as the best on the board. He's a levelheaded, intelligent, driven person, who also happens to be the rarest kind of athlete on the field. Many scouts believe he is the safest pick in the draft, a 233-pound back with 4.4-second speed in the 40 who finished with 1,856 rushing yards and 31 total touchdowns this past season.

Nelson is another player who some believe is the best player in the draft, so much so he shatters the don't-draft-a-guard-that-early narrative because teams have graded very few guards like him. He's an

athletic player who's a walk-in starter and plays with the kind of edge and finishing ability NFL offensive line coaches search their entire careers to find.

Ward, too, is considered a walk-in starter at a position where the draft's elite players often have a quick transition to an NFL lineup. No coach, scout or general manager believes he has enough players to put in coverage in these pass-happy times, and Ward is a ready-made starter.

Edmunds could play almost any linebacker spot in an NFL defense. He was a 100-tackle player for the Hokies this past season and has shown top-shelf pass-rush potential. In these times of specialty defenses, Edmunds projects to have the ability still to be a three-down player because of the variety of things he could do in a defense.

Broncos sign former Raiders punter Marquette King to three-year deal

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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Another signing, another fresh start offered by the Denver Broncos.

Much like safety Su'a Cravens said he hopes joining the Broncos will give him a chance to kick-start his career, punter Marquette King hopes his newly minted, three-year deal with Denver can mean he can be himself and play his best.

"The cool thing about the Broncos is the people that work at the Broncos encourage you to be yourself," King said Thursday. "That is real cool. Players play a lot better when they can let their hair down and be themselves. It's cool. They encourage it."

King agreed a three-year, \$7 million deal with the Broncos, who continued to acquire players after the initial wave of free agency had already passed. Since the leaguewide spending frenzy in the opening week of free agency, the Broncos have since made trades to acquire tackle Jared Veldheer and Cravens, as well as signing King.

King, who was third in the NFL in net punting last season (42.7 yards), was released March 30 by the Oakland Raiders and there have been whispers that new coach Jon Gruden may not have meshed with King's outspoken personality.

King is active on social media and a popular interview. In 2016, he was penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct in consecutive games and last season he was penalized in a game against the Broncos.

"The last few days were definitely different," King said. "It felt like -- you know how you play those UFC games and you get punched and you're in a daze until you get knocked out? That's what it kind of felt like. It all happened so fast. I just felt like Denver was the best team to go to."

King said Thursday he had not spoken to Gruden before or since his release by the Raiders, adding, "I never got a chance to talk to him. I just saw him on car commercials and stuff. [Now] I get to see him two times a year."

King also said he didn't an "exact reason" from anyone with the Raiders about why he was released.

Asked if the Broncos had talked to him about tempering his personality, King said:

"No such thing as too much. Obviously the thing was not getting penalties, but like I said, all that happened two years ago. There was only one instance last year against the Broncos where I did get a flag. It is nothing that should happen again at all. Maybe if I was trying to save someone from scoring a touchdown and grabbing his horse collar. Other than that, it is what it is. It's in the past."

King, 29, originally signed with the Raiders as an undrafted free agent in 2012 and the team signed him to a five-year, \$16.5 million contract extension in 2016.

Since 2013, when he took over for Shane Lechler in Oakland, King is second in the league in total punts (426), eighth in gross average (46.8 yards) and net average (40.8), third in punts inside the 20-yard line (168) and first in punts inside the 10-yard line (65).

He will now presumably replace Riley Dixon, who has been the Broncos punter since he was a seventh-round pick in the 2016 draft.

Where top six in NFL draft stand: It's all about QBs, Barkley, Chubb

By Staff

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Josh Allen, Sam Darnold, Josh Rosen, Baker Mayfield. All quarterbacks. All could go in any of the top six spots in the NFL draft.

Here's a closer look at the scenarios for the teams that hold the Nos. 1-6 picks:

1. Cleveland Browns

Not much has changed for the Browns with this pick, nor will it change. The Browns will use this pick to take the quarterback they feel is the best fit, not for today but for two or three years down the road. Tyrod Taylor is the starter in 2018. The drafted quarterback will learn in '18 and start in the future. Chris Mortensen reported that the Browns are down to USC's Darnold or Wyoming's Allen. Both would work; either would be a good pick. What's important is the Browns have the ability to choose their quarterback, and that they do it. -- Pat McManamon

2. New York Giants

The Giants are doing their due diligence on all the top prospects. They're meeting individually with the quarterbacks, running back Saquon Barkley and edge rusher Bradley Chubb, among others. Still, the most likely scenarios appear to be selecting Darnold if he's not the No. 1 overall pick, trading back with a QB-needy team, or taking Barkley if they remain at No. 2 and Darnold is the top pick. So, many options for the Giants, and they remain in a position of power. -- Jordan Raanan

3. New York Jets

They're in the final stages of the evaluation process, as they're planning to host Mayfield and Rosen on pre-draft visits. The Jets assume Darnold will be off the board, so their pick will come down to Mayfield, Rosen or Allen. Mayfield has been gaining momentum in recent weeks and could be the pick at 3, but the Jets are intrigued by the arm talent of Allen and Rosen. It's a tough decision, one they can't afford to mess up. -- Rich Cimini

4. Cleveland Browns

The phrase "best player available" never meant more than this spot. With the fourth pick, the Browns should be able to choose among Chubb, Barkley and defensive backs Minkah Fitzpatrick and Denzel Ward. At least three will be available at the fourth pick, and if the Giants take a quarterback or trade the pick to a team that wants one, all four could be. For the Browns, it's starting to feel like the choice is coming down to Chubb or Barkley. Like the two options with the first pick, either is a good choice who would improve the team. -- Pat McManamon

5. Denver Broncos

John Elway has said the Broncos options are still "wide open" at No. 5, and they also continue to do the pre-draft homework on the top quarterbacks on the board, including a workout with Darnold in Los Angeles on Friday. But the Broncos will have met with or worked out all the top quarterbacks by the time the draft rolls around. If the Giants trade out of the top five, there is some belief the quarterbacks

could go 1-4. In that scenario, the Broncos would have an opportunity at one of the draft's best non-quarterbacks -- players such as Chubb, Barkley or Notre Dame guard Quenton Nelson. They are unlikely to surrender what it would take to move up and the chances of them taking a quarterback at No. 5 still hinge on whether they fall in love with at least one of the quarterbacks and he's still on the board. -- Jeff Legwold

6. Indianapolis Colts

The Colts, despite moving back three spots in their trade with the Jets last month, still believe they'll be able to get an "impact" player at No. 6. Who that player is --Barkley, Chubb or Nelson -- probably will be predicated by how many quarterbacks are taken by the teams selecting in front of Indianapolis. You can never rule out the possibility of GM Chris Ballard moving back again in the draft to stockpile more picks. But it probably would happen only if Barkley, Chubb and Nelson were all gone by the time the Colts select. -- Mike Wells

Broncos agree in principle on three-year deal with punter Marquette King

By Troy Renck

KMGH

April 6, 2018

It's good to be the King. Marquette King, that is.

The Broncos continued their methodical quest to address specific needs during the second wave of free agency.

Thursday, the Broncos upgraded their woeful special teams, agreeing to a three-year deal worth up to \$7 million with the charismatic King.

Oakland cut ties with King last week, the outgoing player a casualty of coach Jon Gruden's new regime. King is well known in the AFC West for his booming kicks and outrageous celebrations. He has been penalized for taunting, and drew the scorn of Denver fans with his "Riding Bronco" routine after a punt in 2016. He plans to avoid flags, but he will not stop dancing. His routine, however, will change.

"I was just doing (The Ridin' Bronco) to troll you'all. I have to come up with something new. But I will still be me. Nothing will stop me from being me," said King, who acknowledged he will wear something besides No. 7 in Denver. "I know I can't get penalties. It's nothing that should happen again."

His antics aside, the fact remains he is a proven performer since 2012. He owns a career average of 46.8 yards per punt with 156 kicks inside the 20-yard line.

King represented a Raiders cornerstone player after signing a five-year, \$16.5 million contract. He was discarded two seasons into the deal, saving the Raiders \$2.9 million in cap space. His personality and struggles as the holder on field goals appeared to drive the Raiders' decision.

"I really didn't get a reason. I never met with Gruden. I saw him on car commercials," King said. "(I chose Denver) because there is somewhat of a revenge factor."

King, 29, averaged 47.4 yards per attempt last season. Riley Dixon, in his second season, averaged 45.6 despite playing his home games at altitude. His inconsistencies were one of many glaring issues with special teams so bad that it cost coordinator Brock Olivo his job after one season. Dixon becomes trade fodder.

The Broncos have been active this offseason, adding quarterback Case Keenum, right tackle Jared Veldheer, cornerback Tramaine Brock, defensive tackle Clinton McDonald, and King, while acquiring safety Su'a Cravens.

"I got a homey feeling when I was here," King said. "It was the right fit for me."

The case for Broncos not taking quarterback with fifth overall pick

By Troy Renck

KMGH

April 6, 2018

Talk of the Broncos landing their future quarterback can be intriguing, exhausting, and, perhaps, misleading.

While difficult for some to reconcile, believing every signal-caller in this draft is a winning Powerball ticket, the Broncos might go in a different direction with the fifth overall pick.

Multiple factors exist to suggest it remains possible. Let's start with the obvious. They signed Case Keenum to a two-year contract with \$25 million guaranteed. He is the starter -- no more looking over his shoulder -- for the first time in his career. The Broncos believe he is hitting his stride after an eye-opening performance last year in Minnesota. Keenum's ability to protect the football and lead with attitude and edge made him the Broncos' choice, especially when he willingly agreed to a contract that provided Denver roster flexibility.

In addition, the Broncos continue to carry Paxton Lynch, who enters the make-or-break stage of his Denver career, and Chad Kelly, who used his redshirt year to drop 20 pounds and mature. As such, the Broncos can provide a compelling argument to stick with the current stable, and address another need.

The second looming factor? Much is made about general manager John Elway's philosophy to "win now and from now on." Generally, that has been true. However, the team's posture stiffened this offseason. The Broncos were humbled and angry after a 5-11 mess that included eight straight losses, one road win, and no victories in visiting AFC West stadiums. Elway admitted at the combine that, "Life's too short to rebuild in the NFL." While it makes sense for Elway to find the quarterback of the future, leaving Denver in a good place long after he retires, how will that help them win this season?

Remember, the Broncos are not a good team that suffered poor luck. They are 7-15 over their last 22 games and 2-10 in their last 12. They need better players. If the focus is to avoid back-to-back losing seasons for the first time since 1972, it becomes increasingly difficult to select a quarterback who will be holding a clipboard.

The counterpoint, of course, is the Broncos will not draft this high again anytime soon, thus should take an elite arm. The fallout from such a move? The Broncos must hit on this draft on almost every pick in a way they haven't in recent seasons.

But for the sake of this story, the Broncos will move away from quarterback. A look at potential selections with the fifth overall pick:

Bradley Chubb, North Carolina State: All he did was produce at N.C. State. His 58.5 tackles for loss reveal his relentless motor. He shows polish in pass-rushing moves uncommon for a college player. The Broncos finished with 33 sacks last year, ranking 22nd overall. Elway's most successful first picks have been on defense: Von Miller, Derek Wolfe, Sylvester Williams, Bradley Roby, and Shane Ray. Could

Chubb join that group? Or will the New York Giants snatch him up with the second overall pick or trade that pick to Buffalo?

Denzel Ward, CB, Ohio State: He has been compared to Chris Harris Jr. That resonates in Denver where Harris has been among the team's most valuable players for years. Ward brings unique athleticism with quickness and a 39-inch vertical leap. He also profiles as someone who can play inside against slot receivers, which would free Harris to move outside (his preference to make more plays with Aqib Talib gone). Also, Roby can become a free agent after this season, meaning the Broncos could lose him.

Saquon Barkley, RB, Penn State: The Broncos want to run the football. They'd prefer it become their identity, allowing Keenum to operate in an environment similar to Minnesota. Barkley provides a home-run threat, and instantly gives Denver a much-needed playmaker. The idea he will be a four-down player is overstated. No team uses its starting running back regularly on special teams.

Derwin James, S, Florida State: He fought inconsistency and injury issues over his final two seasons. When healthy, he was a force. Some view him as the best defensive player in the draft. He can play in the box, and cover tight ends. This pick made a lot more sense before the Broncos acquired Su'a Cravens.

Quenton Nelson, G, Notre Dame: He is a mauler, a mover, a man determined to "break my opponent's will." Of the top 10 picks, I believe Nelson is the safest. And it is meant as a compliment. I have talked to multiple ex-NFL linemen about Nelson, and they see an All-Pro and multi-time Pro Bowler. The stigma of taking a guard fifth exists even though the game is being played more in the middle of the field and the players at this position are getting paid. My prediction is that Nelson lands in Chicago with his old college coach.

Minkah Fitzpatrick, CB/S, Alabama: Elway has no history of taking Alabama players. Could Fitzpatrick break that trend? He features versatility and intensity. He can cover in the slot and has the toughness to line up and bring the noise as a safety. You can never have enough good players in coverage in a pass-happy league.

Marquette King signs with Raiders' rival Denver

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

April 6, 2018

Marquette King has found a team will allow him to keep it real, seek his revenge and maybe pursue records.

"Denver is a punter's paradise," King said after signing a three-year, \$7 million deal with the Broncos on Thursday, less than a week after his surprising release from the Oakland Raiders.

King said he doubts his oft-flagged on-field antics is what led new Raiders coach Jon Gruden to release him. He added, however, that "the cool thing about the Broncos is the people that work at the Broncos encourage you to be yourself. Players play a lot better when they can let their hair down and be themselves. It's cool. They encourage it."

King said he never had the chance to speak with Gruden before he was jettisoned.

"I just saw him on car commercials and stuff," King said with a laugh. "I get to see him two times a year."

And that was certainly a factor in King's decision to stay in the AFC West.

"I just wanted to find the best place that I thought I would fit," King said. "I think there is somewhat of a revenge factor in there, too."

The sixth-year pro who had appeared in all of the Raiders' games since 2013, was a Pro Bowl alternate last season and a second-team All Pro in 2016. He's the only punter in NFL history to post at least a 40-yard net average in each of his first five seasons.

Last year, he posted a career-high 42.7-yard net punting average, and he expects to do even better at altitude.

King has averaged a whopping 50 yards a punt in his five games in Denver, where he'll replace Riley Dixon, who slumped last year after a solid rookie season. In 2016, King averaged 56.5 yards on eight punts in Denver's mile-high air.

"I've always enjoyed punting out here in the altitude just because the ball travels further," King said. "It's something I'm going to have to get used to, too. I definitely have to get a feel for my leg when it comes to putting the ball inside the corners and everything."

He said he plans to continue his celebrations following big punts in Denver, but aims to avoid the 15-yard flags that dogged him in Oakland.

"I'm still going to have fun. I'm still going to dance and still celebrate. I'm going to be me. Nothing is going to stop me from being me," King said.

"The flags — I got three flags two years ago and one flag last year — it's in the past. I'm just looking forward to doing my thing and making sure I'm working on my composure and doing the right things to making sure the team is in the best situation possible."

He knows he has to come up with a new ritual to replace his "Bucking Bronco" dance.

"Now it's time to find a new celebration because that was one when I was trying to troll y'all," King said on a conference call with Denver media. "Now I've got to find something else. It's definitely going to be a nice little dance. We'll figure something out."

And he realizes he'll have to pick out a new number, too, because boss John Elway's No. 7 isn't going anywhere.

"I've got to take him out to a nice steak dinner, but I don't think that's going to work. I was thinking about getting him a helicopter or something, a big gift," King said. "But I don't think he's going to give that '7' up. I've got to figure out another number."

How he fits: Marquette King

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
April 6, 2018

When the Broncos turn new punter Marquette King loose at 5,280 feet above sea level, grab a fistful of popcorn, turn your eyes skyward and prepare to watch one blast after another.

In five career games in Denver, King has posted a net average of 44.0 yards and a gross average of 50.0 yards. That, combined with an upward career trajectory that saw him post his best net average last season -- 42.7 yards -- is why the Broncos pounced when the Raiders released him.

His Denver tally represents a small sample size -- just 39 punts in those games -- but when you consider that those averages are 2.3 yards and 4.4 yards better than the Broncos' home punting averages in that span, then you get a sense of what King can bring -- and why he's so excited about coming to the Broncos.

"I've always enjoyed punting out here in the altitude just because the ball travels further," King said. "It's something I'm going to have to get used to too. I definitely have to get a feel for my leg when it comes to putting the ball inside the corners and everything."

He should be able to succeed. King's placement numbers have been better in Denver than elsewhere; he's dropped 41.0 percent of his punts in Denver inside the 20-yard line, compared with 36.2 percent elsewhere. King also has a slightly better touchback percentage (7.69) in Denver than elsewhere (7.75).

"Denver is a punter's paradise," he said. "While I'm competing, I'm going to see if I can take advantage of it."

Naysayers have pointed to King's past proclivity for penalties. But last year, he only had one infraction -- a 15-yard unsportsmanlike-conduct foul in the Raiders' Week 4 loss to the Broncos.

King easily nullified that -- and more -- with his overall performance over the course of the season, in which he posted a career-best 42.7-yard net punting average. When taking his net average and factoring in an average number of punts in 2017 over a game (4.75) and season (76.0), that means that King would have given his team 143.5 yards of field position over the average punter. Even deducting 15 yards from that, that would still have left him with the fourth-best net yards-over-average in the league last year.

"The flags -- I got three flags two years ago and one flag last year -- [they are] in the past," King said. "I'm just looking forward to doing my thing and making sure I'm working on my composure and doing the right things to making sure the team is in the best situation possible."

The Broncos hope that their special teams in general is in the best situation, as well. Last year, the unit's performance declined. Punter Riley Dixon's numbers took a dip; his net average dropped by 1.1 yards, although his gross average was nearly steady, only falling by 0.1 yards per punt.

Still, the across-the-board issues on special teams have already led to changes, starting with the arrival of new coordinator Tom McMahon. The Broncos have already signed another kicker and long snapper to provide competition. Last week, Head Coach Vance Joseph said that Jordan Taylor, who replaced Isaiah McKenzie on punt returns late last year, is the current first-teamer, although he must work his way back from two hip surgeries first.

King was signed to help ensure that the 2017 special-teams nightmare doesn't recur in 2018.

"I know I'm going to put the work in like I always do. That's no question," King said. "Just compete and hopefully everything works out like it's supposed to."

Marquette King excited to join Broncos in 'a punter's paradise'

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
April 6, 2018

There are a number of statistics that back up Marquette King's skill as a punter.

His 54.1 yards per punt in Denver the last two seasons.

His 46.8-yard career average.

His Second-Team All-Pro selection in 2016.

But he may be even better at delivering analogies.

"The last few days were definitely different," said King of his release from the Raiders. "It felt like — you know how you play those UFC games and you get punched and you're in a daze until you get knocked out? That's what it kind of felt like. It all happened so fast."

On Thursday, though, King settled in Denver, where he signed a three-year contract.

"I just felt like Denver was the best team to go to," King said. "The people that I was familiar with that are here with the organization — you get a [homey] feeling when you get here. I'm just looking forward to competing and winning games."

As he does, he will continue to celebrate his punts, with two caveats.

First, he said he's aware he must protect his team.

"The flags — I got three flags two years ago and one flag last year — it's in the past," King said. "I'm just looking forward to doing my thing and making sure I'm working on my composure and doing the right things to making sure the team is in the best situation possible."

And second, he'll need a new go-to routine.

"It's time to find a new celebration because that was one when I was trying to troll y'all," King joked. "Now I've got to find something else. It's definitely going to be a nice little dance. We'll figure something out."

Whether King hopes to debut that dance against Oakland — a "revenge game" that he said factored into his decision to sign with Denver — or against any of the Broncos' other home opponents, King will be aided by the altitude.

"I think when it comes to punting out here, the ball definitely travels a lot farther," King said. "There is a lot more you can do with the altitude. I've always enjoyed punting out here in the altitude just because

the ball travels further. It's something I'm going to have to get used to, too. I definitely have to get a feel for my leg when it comes to putting the ball inside the corners and everything.

"Denver is a punter's paradise. While I'm competing, I'm going to see if I can take advantage of it."

That fine-tuning will come soon.

For now, though, King's first order of business as a Bronco may very well be to find a new number.

After all, in Denver, No. 7 is taken.

"I've got to take [John Elway] out to a nice steak dinner, but I don't think that's going to work," King joked. "I was thinking about getting him a helicopter or something — a big gift. But I don't think he's going to give that '7' up. I've got to figure out another number."

2018 NFL Draft: Browns take Sam Darnold at No. 1, Josh Allen to Jets and other predictions

By Jason La Canfora

CBSSports.com

April 6, 2018

As tempting as it may be, I'm not doing a mock draft less than a month from the first round getting underway. Too many moving parts, too many trades that could get completed, too many needs that could still be filled and far too much time to gather intel on what teams are truly thinking to wade into those waters yet.

But we are close enough to the big weekend that a few things are coming into focus. A few needs are so extreme they stand out. A few teams are falling in love with certain players. A few trends seem to be imminent. The trades that have already been completed portend other moves. So with that in mind here are a few things I could certainly see going down once the draft finally approaches. I guess you could call them fearless forecasts or something like that:

Browns kick it off with Sam Darnold

Sure, they could go in a different direction, but sometimes you just shouldn't try to over-think things. Darnold is pretty clean and super impressive and some of the other teams in line to select quarterbacks at the top of the draft just don't see John Dorsey passing on him. Yes, Josh Allen would fit a profile as well, but Darnold was more productive in a tougher conference and may be as close to the perfect package as you are going to get at this position in this particular draft.

Josh Allen doesn't get past the Jets

If the Giants select a quarterback second overall, then all the more reason that this will hold true. But even if it doesn't, the metrics – completion percentage aside – are very high and this kid has been impressing NFL teams the more time he spends around them and the Jets are among a handful of teams who were already super impressed by what Allen did in 2016. He won't have to wait long when Day 1 of the draft begins.

Bradley Chubb's floor is sixth overall

The more time you spend digesting this draft class, the more clear it becomes just how scant it is on proven pass rushers. And if NFL free agency teaches us anything, it's that you are more likely to land a former Pro Bowl QB on the open market than you are an elite pass rusher in his prime. So no way I see Chris Ballard – desperate to rebuild the Colts long-anemic defense – letting Chubb get past him. I still think he's gone by fourth overall if Dorsey keeps that pick, but six is the floor.

Somebody is trading for Baker Mayfield

He may be the best quarterback in this class and I don't believe he is going first overall. And I don't see him being a fit with the Giants even if they do go QB with the second pick and it might be too big of a gamble for the Jets, too, who as I noted I think may lean Allen. But there is too much here to like – off-field issues and crotch-grabbing aside – and with the Patriots and Bills and Cardinals among those focused on moving up for a QB, Mayfield could be the target. Perhaps the Broncos just keep their pick and take him, but I have a hunch he becomes the Patrick Mahomes of this draft, and ends up with his team via trade.

Mason Rudolph is going in the top half of the first round

Some teams are divided on just how well this kid projects to the NFL, but there are enough teams that like him enough that I see him being the fifth QB off the board ... And far sooner than some would have projected. I continue to hear the Ravens – deep into this QB market with them able to untangle themselves from Joe Flacco's contract after 2018 – are high on Rudolph and I'm guessing he doesn't get by them with that pick. The question becomes has Arizona (pick 15, for now) or someone else already selected him? Personally, I'm more of a Lamar Jackson guy, but I'm becoming convinced that Rudolph beats him off the board. I've been maintaining for quite some time that six passers will go in the first 30 picks, and I continue to expect that to be the case.

The Panthers are taking a defensive back

Yes, receiver remains a need as well, but this is a tough first round to try to address that need. But the defensive backs crop is quite deep and they could end up accounting for a fourth of all first-round picks and I can't see the Panthers not getting in on that group. I can't tell you which one just yet - a safety like Justin Reid or a corner like Josh Jackson, perhaps - but this is one team-to-position pairing that is as crystal clear as it seems. Hard to see a pass rusher dropping who would make any sense.

Rashaan Evans just seems like a Steeler

As much as Ryan Shazier has hinted about hoping to play again, he faces some significant medical odds. Pittsburgh has to operate as if he may have played his last snap for them and Evans, a tough-minded, speedy, long, impactful prototype 3-4 inside linebacker just looks like the perfect fit. Given where the Steelers are drafting, this could end up being a match.

Odell Beckham, Earl Thomas traded by first day of draft

The Giants are not inclined to pay Beckham what the market will yield him elsewhere, and, likewise, Thomas is not in line to get another payday from Seattle at this point. Both teams are transitioning – if not rebuilding – and holding on to these star players won't make much sense. Beckham's holdout would be a mess for the Giants, and while Thomas won't fetch the first-and-third the Seahawks hoped for, he'll land multiple other picks.

Rams and Broncos Exploiting the NFL's Newest Market Inefficiency

By Jacob Feldman

MMQB.com

April 6, 2018

One through-line connects nearly every notable piece of personnel news from the last week-plus: Su'a Cravens being traded to the Broncos, the Rams adding Brandin Cooks and Ndamukong Suh, Jim Mora suggesting former UCLA QB Josh Rosen might not be the best pick for the Browns, Odell Beckham Jr. rumors percolating, and most recently Marquette King losing his punting job with the Raiders only to find a new one in Denver. The link? Personality. Fit. No matter the terminology—bold guy, obstreperous personality, different cat—some teams seem wary of those players, while a handful of franchises respond, Bring 'em on.

The Broncos are already home to a superstar, Von Miller, who might also be the league's weirdest player. Now they've brought in Cravens, who walked off the Washington team just before the 2017 season, and King, who the old guard wishes would just walk off the field after each punt rather than, say, dabbing. Los Angeles, meanwhile, is confident its locker room can absorb a fickle Marcus Peters and an unreserved Aqib Talib plus the two new additions, Suh and Cooks (who once expressed his philosophy thusly: "Closed mouths don't get fed").

All those moves prove the point Mora might have been trying to make when he said Rosen's destination is critical because the quarterback "has a lot of interests in life." It's clearer now than ever: Independence is more welcome in certain towns. Beckham's rumored availability is yet another sign that on-field production isn't all GMs are looking for.

Of course, this isn't a new trend (nor am I the first to point it out). The Eagles just rode a loud locker room to a surprise title. Before them, it was the Seahawks who proved opinionated players could also be champions. New England has time and again leaned on The Patriot Way to get value out of players who caused headaches elsewhere. Yet, a large chunk of the league still seems uninterested in managing distinctive people. Why?

Marquette King agrees to deal with Denver Broncos

By Kevin Patra

NFL.com

April 6, 2018

Marquette King is joining forces with a former rival.

The ex-Oakland Raiders punter agreed to terms on a three-year deal with Denver Broncos on Thursday, the team announced. The contract is worth \$7 million and comes on the same day he made a free-agent visit to the team, a source informed of the situation told NFL Network Insider Ian Rapoport.

"It was somewhat of a revenge factor, too," King told reporters on his decision to join Denver, per 9News.

The Raiders surprisingly cut the 29-year-old King late last week after four seasons in Oakland. King was a Pro Bowl alternate last year and a second-team All-Pro in 2016.

King's personality reportedly didn't mesh with Jon Gruden's new philosophy in Oakland.

"The people that work at the Broncos encourage you to be yourself," King told reporters, per The Denver Post. "That's cool. Players play better when they can be themselves and let their hair down."

The Raiders' loss is their rivals gain.

In Denver, the already big-legged King will be aided by the thin Mile High air. Last season, King ranked sixth in the NFL in average yards per punt (47.4) and third in net yards per boot (42.7), to go along with 28 punts downed inside the 20-yard-line.

The Broncos rode Riley Dixon the past two seasons. The 24-year-old averaged 45.6 yards per punt and a 40.2 net average with 23 punts downed inside the 20 and two blocked kicks in 2017.

Denver headed into the offseason determined to upgrade its disastrous special teams play from a year ago. King's addition will aid that cause.

Marquette King on never meeting Jon Gruden: I just saw him on car commercials and stuff

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

April 6, 2018

Marquette King denies his celebrations or his personality are reasons Oakland cut him. The punter said he never even met Jon Gruden.

“I just saw him on car commercials and stuff,” King said in a conference call with Denver writers, via quotes distributed by the team. “I get to see him two times a year [now].”

King joined the Broncos on Thursday, agreeing to a three-year deal worth up to \$7 million. He chose Denver because it was the best fit, he said, but added, “There is somewhat of a revenge factor in there, too.”

King won’t wear No. 7 in Denver, obviously, and he will retire the bucking Bronco celebration.

“Now it’s time to find a new celebration, because that’s when I was trying to troll y’all,” he said.

King, 29, can’t wait to punt in Denver. He calls it a “punter’s paradise” because of the altitude, and then there’s the Broncos’ organization itself.

“The cool thing about the Broncos is the people that work at the Broncos encourage you to be yourself,” King said. “That is real cool. Players play a lot better when they can let their hair down and be themselves. It’s cool. They encourage it. But no, I don’t think that’s what the reason was [for his departure from Oakland]. Everybody has their own way of doing things. Maybe that is how they felt they wanted to do things. More power to them.”

He will continue celebrating, though he vows the unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are a thing of the past.

“I’m still going to have fun,” King said. “I’m still going to dance and still celebrate. I’m going to be me. Nothing is going to stop me from being me. The flags—I got three flags two years ago and one flag last year—it’s in the past. I’m just looking forward to doing my thing and making sure I’m working on my composure and doing the right things to making sure the team is in the best situation possible.”

Report: Broncos expected to shop Riley Dixon

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

April 6, 2018

Now that the Broncos have signed veteran punter Marquette King, they are expected to shop Riley Dixon, Mike Klis of Denver's 9News reports. However, since everyone knows Denver isn't keeping Dixon, the chances of a team actually trading even a seventh-round pick are slim.

Few punters are drafted, much less traded, though Dixon was a seventh-round pick in 2016.

Dixon, 24, averaged 45.6 yards per punt last season with a 40.2-yard net. He had 23 punts downed inside the 20, three touchbacks and allowed one touchdown return.

In his rookie season of 2016, Dixon averaged 45.7 yards per punt with a 41.3-yard net. He had 28 punts downed inside the 20 and six touchbacks.

Report: FOX plans Michael Strahan-hosted Thursday night pregame show

By Michael David Smith

Pro Football Talk

April 6, 2018

Michael Strahan is already one of the busiest people on television, and he's about to get busier.

Strahan, who appears in the New York studios of Good Morning America on ABC five mornings a week and then flies to Los Angeles for FOX NFL Sunday during the NFL season, is now slated to work on FOX's Thursday night package as well.

Jimmy Traina of SI.com reports that FOX plans to have Strahan host the pregame shows for its Thursday night games this season. FOX is paying a fortune for the NFL's Thursday night package and is trying to turn it into a marquee event, and will presumably make it worth Strahan's while to add yet another job, this one from a New York studio on Thursday nights.

Howie Long and Terry Bradshaw are expected to join Strahan on Thursday nights. Those three will continue to work with Curt Menefee and Jimmy Johnson on the Sunday pregame show.

FOX is also planning to put the lead team of Joe Buck, Troy Aikman and Erin Andrews on Thursdays, in addition to their Sunday afternoon work. After trying and failing to make Peyton Manning the centerpiece of a new Thursday night lineup, FOX is now going back to its Sunday staples.