

# If Courtland Sutton is good for Broncos, it's bad for Emmanuel Sanders. And he's OK with that.

By Mark Kiszla  
The Denver Post  
May 3, 2018

Once an apprentice in the No Fly Zone, cornerback Bradley Roby now walks through Broncos headquarters like he owns the joint. Roby, the star of John Elway's 2014 draft class, won't like me saying this. But he pushed Aqib Talib out the door to Los Angeles.

Talib gave the No Fly Zone an edge as nasty as a poke in the eye. Roby, however, made Talib expendable, which explains how a five-time Pro Bowler was traded to the Rams for a fifth-round draft choice.

In the NFL, every job is temporary work. Everybody's expendable.

"No more Talib questions," Roby said Wednesday, uncomfortable discussing a mentor who taught him so well that Talib is no longer a Denver teammate.

Well, not to harsh Roby's mellow, but Talib is scheduled for a return appearance to Colorado with the Rams in October, so maybe we haven't seen the last pick-six in this dusty old cowtown by our old friend.

What Roby really would rather not talk about, however, is the unavoidable bummers of a mean business. Money keeps intruding on the locker room camaraderie all championship teams cherish.

Is Roby a better shutdown corner than Talib? No way. No how. What favored Roby was the math. With the Broncos paying him \$8.5 million this season, the team figured it could let the Rams pick up the \$11 million tab on Talib, who celebrated his 32nd birthday in February.

With Denver selecting edge rusher Bradley Chubb with the fifth overall pick in the NFL draft, there's no room for charity regarding Shane Ray, whose 13 sacks since being the team's top draft choice in 2015 don't merit any financial guarantees beyond this season. So why should anyone be surprised Elway declined to pick up the fifth-year option on Ray's contract? It was a tough move, but also a prudent decision.

In the Expendables Football League, everyone is a replaceable part. The salary cap allows no room for sentimentality. When the Broncos used two of their top six selections in last week's draft on receivers Courtland Sutton and DaeSean Hamilton, the message was loud and clear.

In veteran receivers Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders, Denver has invested nearly \$17 million in base salary and allocated over \$22 million in cap space for 2018. After Elway minced no words in demanding more production from his core vets on both sides of the ball, notice has been served. It would make little sense to keep both Thomas and Sanders around beyond this season, especially if the Broncos fail to make the playoffs again.

With quarterbacks Trevor Siemian, Paxton Lynch and Brock Osweiler stumbling over musical chairs all season long, Sanders caught only 47 passes, by far the worst production of his four seasons in Denver. Yes, injury caused him to miss four games in 2017. But Sanders knows the score: "The moment you get over 30 in the NFL, they automatically say, 'He's getting up in age.' "

In a dog-eat-dog business, isn't Sanders worried if he teaches new teammates Sutton and Hamilton too well, they will take his job and he will be the next star over age 30 to be pushed out the door at Dove Valley?

"That is going to happen anyway," replied Sanders, figuring there's no reason getting angry about the harsh realities of pro football. "Once you get up (in age) in this league, you start making too much money, and they say ..."

Next!

In the NFL, younger is cheaper. Even a well-established star can be chewed up and spit out by the roster-churn machine. This time, it was Talib's turn. A year from now, the planned obsolescence could tap Sanders on the shoulder.

"Look, I understand the business of it," said Sanders, vowing to show Sutton and Hamilton all the tricks in his route tree, because he wants to help the rookies feed their families.

"All I can do is make plays every single day and show that if I become expendable here, just show some other team, 'Hey, look, I still got it. I still got the juice.' Maybe they want to pay me. That would be selfish of me to say, 'I'm not going to teach you everything that I know because you're going to beat me.' At the end of the day, if he's going to do it, he's going to do it. I can't avoid that."

In the Not For Long, Roby made Talib expendable.

And now the Broncos are hoping Sutton can do the same for Sanders or Thomas.

# WR Emmanuel Sanders confident in health, QB Case Keenum to start Broncos offseason

By Kyle Frederickson

The Denver Post

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There were times last fall when Emmanuel Sanders questioned whether or not it was all really worth it.

The Broncos' wide receiver struggled through a season when the Broncos won only five times. He played with a nagging ankle injury and three different starting quarterbacks. Following three consecutive seasons with at least 1,000 yards receiving, Sanders had only 555 yards receiving, his worst total in a Broncos' uniform.

"There were some games where I was like, 'What am I doing with myself? Do I even like football anymore?'" Sanders told reporters Wednesday.

However, when Sanders arrived back at Dove Valley recently for the start of the Broncos' offseason program, he discovered a welcomed sight. Hanging on clothes racks inside the glass doors of the team store were rows and rows of orange No. 4 jerseys with KEENUM imprinted on the back.

Following two seasons of uncertainty at quarterback following the retirement of Peyton Manning, there is no debate who will be starting under center for the Broncos in Week 1.

"Case is our guy," Sanders said, referring to free agent signing Case Keenum.

How about that injured ankle?

"I was out there today, I felt great," Sanders said. "I was running around, caught a slant and was able to take it like 60 yards. Just happy to be back running full speed and being myself."

The second phase of the Broncos' offseason program began this week as players practiced with coaches watching on-field drills for the first time since last fall. The introduction process for Keenum, the former Vikings quarterback signed in March, is just now taking place. Early returns on his first impression, per Sanders, have been overwhelmingly positive.

"He's one of those guys that when he steps into the huddle, he's that leader," Sanders said. "You don't have to second-guess what his thought process is. His thought process is, we're going to complete this ball and keep this ball moving. I'm liking what I'm seeing so far."

The Broncos inability to establish a consistent passing game last season with Trevor Siemian, Paxton Lynch or Brock Osweiler was well documented. Sanders eclipsed 100 yards receiving only once, that coming in a 41-16 throttling by New England when Osweiler was the quarterback.

"You can sit back and say, 'We're all professional football players and we've got to deal with that situation,'" Sanders said. "But at the same time, obviously, we can't gain the same chemistry. You don't have the same mindset. ... You're not maximizing the opportunity."

Minnesota certainly got the most out of Keenum a year ago. He averaged 10.9 yards per completion with 22 touchdowns. Plenty of those targets went to Vikings receiver Stefon Diggs — whose speed and quickness mirrors much of what has made Sanders so dynamic.

Developing the Keenum-Sanders connection has just begun.

“A majority of the passes, 95 or 98 percent, have been there,” Sanders said. “He’s confident in himself.”

With a quality starting quarterback, and his own health improved, Sanders is confident the Broncos can return to the playoffs in 2018.

“We’re working our butts off,” Sanders said. “My mentality is that I want to be the most conditioned team in the NFL next year ... then in the fourth quarter, it’s going to pay off to be able to take advantage of this altitude.”

# Broncos to decline fifth-year option for linebacker Shane Ray

By Kyle Frederickson  
The Denver Post  
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The Broncos are not expected to pick up the fifth-year option for linebacker Shane Ray, according to multiple media reports.

Ray, a 2015 first-round NFL draft pick with 15 career starts, missed the first half of the 2017 season with a wrist injury and never fully recovered the rest of the year. Last week the Broncos drafted North Carolina State edge rusher Bradley Chubb with the No. 5 overall pick.

Ray was effective in his second NFL season, totaling 48 tackles and eight sacks, but the Broncos would be on the hook for a salary of \$9.232 million in 2019 if they picked up this option. Ray was selected No. 23 overall in the 2015 draft.

Ray and linebacker Shaq Barrett will be unrestricted free agents following this season.

9NEWS first reported that the Broncos were not expected to pick up Ray's option.

# Rich Gannon shreds Broncos QB Paxton Lynch: “The game’s moving way too fast for him”

By Daniel Boniface

The Denver Post

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Will Paxton Lynch ever develop into a top NFL quarterback for the Denver Broncos?

Lynch got a vote of confidence from Broncos GM John Elway last week after the team passed on drafting a quarterback. But former NFL MVP Rich Gannon on Wednesday gave a scathing review of the 2016 first-round draft pick.

“I’m not going to lie to you,” Gannon told 104.3 FM. “I have real concerns about Paxton Lynch, whether or not he’s ever going to be a legitimate starter in this league. Honestly, he’s a taller guy, he’s not very accurate, I think the game’s moving way too fast for him right now.”

Gannon, a four-time Pro Bowl quarterback who now calls NFL games for CBS, said he was on the broadcast for Lynch’s first start against the Oakland Raiders last year.

Gannon said Lynch was having “kind of an ugly performance” before going down with an injury.

“He looks like he’s not the most comfortable guy under center,” Gannon said. “He’s got decent movement for a guy his size. Not very accurate. The anticipation, you just don’t see it.

“You’ve got to ask yourself, he’s been there now for a couple years, why isn’t this guy taking charge of the situation? Why is he not getting more reps? Why does the team not have confidence to hand him the reins of the football team?” Gannon continued. “It tells you, if you read between the lines, he’s a guy that’s struggling a little bit to kind of find his way, but also to handle the volume of information that’s required to play that position.”

The Broncos in 2016 traded up to select Lynch No. 26 overall. Last season, Lynch lost out in a quarterback competition against former seventh round pick Trevor Siemian, who this offseason was traded to Minnesota.

Lynch has started four games for the Broncos, going 1-3. He’s passed for 792 yards with a 61.7 percent pass completion percentage, four touchdowns and four interceptions.

“I don’t anticipate, based on what I’ve seen so far, this guy being a Pro Bowl caliber player, or even a mid-range starter for 6-8 years in our league,” Gannon. “I just don’t see that in him right now. And that could change. But, he’s got to do something.”

Lynch and 2017 seventh-round draft pick Chad Kelly are behind the newly signed starting quarterback Case Keenum, who Gannon called “a huge upgrade over what they had.”

“If they’re bringing in a guy like Case Keenum and they’re going to make him the starter, I think it tells you all you need to know right now about how they feel about Paxton Lynch,” Gannon said.

# Denver Broncos' Super Bowl 53 odds improve after NFL draft

By Joe Nguyen  
The Denver Post  
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The Broncos' 2018 NFL draft class was given high marks from national analysts and oddsmakers felt the same way.

The Broncos' 2018 NFL draft class was given high marks from national analysts and oddsmakers felt the same way.

There's a six-way tie at the bottom with the Buffalo Bills, Chicago Bears, Cincinnati Bengals, Cleveland Browns, Miami Dolphins and New York Jets all coming in at 100-to-1.

Odds to win Super Bowl LIII  
Odds as of May 2 on Bovada.lv:

New England Patriots: 5/1  
Philadelphia Eagles: 8/1  
Los Angeles Rams: 9/1  
Pittsburgh Steelers: 10/1  
Minnesota Vikings: 12/1  
Green Bay Packers: 12/1  
San Francisco 49ers: 15/1  
New Orleans Saints: 22/1  
Houston Texans: 25/1  
Dallas Cowboys: 30/1  
Atlanta Falcons: 30/1  
Oakland Raiders: 30/1  
Denver Broncos: 30/1  
Seattle Seahawks: 30/1  
Carolina Panthers: 35/1  
Jacksonville Jaguars: 35/1  
Los Angeles Chargers: 35/1  
Kansas City Chiefs: 40/1  
Baltimore Ravens: 40/1  
Indianapolis Colts: 40/1  
Tennessee Titans: 45/1  
Detroit Lions: 60/1  
Tampa Bay Buccaneers: 65/1  
New York Giants: 75/1  
Washington Redskins: 80/1  
Arizona Cardinals: 80/1  
Buffalo Bills: 100/1  
Cleveland Browns: 100/1

Miami Dolphins: 100/1

Cincinnati Bengals: 100/1

Chicago Bears: 100/1

New York Jets: 100/1

# Roby on drop-off without Talib: "I'm getting tired of hearing about it"

By Mike Klis

9 News

May 3, 2018

It was still called, "Genesis" after Peter Gabriel left the band.

"The Who" carries on even after Keith Moon and John Entwistle passed away.

And so the Broncos secondary will continue with its moniker even though T.J. Ward and Aqib Talib have moved on in their careers. It may not be the same without them, but Denver's defensive backs are not going to stop performing.

"It's still the No Fly Zone," said cornerback Bradley Roby. "We started that Super Bowl year (2015) and we had a year that I don't think has been seen in the league in the past 30-plus years. That original Fly Zone is gone with T.J. departing and Talib departing but we've got three-fifths out there. Justin Simmons did great last year his first year starting. We're fine."

Ward and Talib no doubt were the biggest personalities in the Denver secondary. But cornerback Chris Harris Jr. is a three-time Pro Bowler. Safety Darian Stewart was re-signed to a nice contract extension in 2016. And Roby moves up from No. 3 corner to Talib's starter spot on the left side.

The promotion hasn't changed Roby's offseason mindset so much as it's sharpened it.

"Just working harder," he said. "Every year in the league you have to keep working hard. Not one year do you feel, 'OK, I've got it, I'm good now.' Kind of do the same thing every year because if you do the same things every year then somebody is going to come up and pass you.

"That's the nature of the league so every year I'm trying to work harder and try to find new ways I can better. Get my body better. Get my technique better."

One place where the No Fly Zone could be better now than during their Super Bowl 50 season is at the safety position thanks to the development Simmons and newly acquired Su'a Cravens.

The question will be whether the Broncos can fill Talib's void at cornerback.

"I'm getting tired of hearing about it, honestly," Roby said. "It is what it is, and I have to wait until the season to show that there's no drop-off."

# Broncos decline fifth-year, \$9.2 million option on Shane Ray

By Mike Klis

9 News

May 3, 2018

Shane Ray was informed by Broncos management Wednesday the team would not exercise his fifth-year, \$9.232 million option for the 2019 season, a league source told 9NEWS.

A first-round selection, No. 23 overall, in the 2015 draft, Ray has not met expectations, although he does have some legitimate reasons.

In his first two seasons, Ray was a back up to DeMarcus Ware, who figures to be elected into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in his first or second year of eligibility. Still, Ray flashed promise with 4.0 sacks in 2015 and 8.0 sacks in 2016.

In his third season of 2017, Ray seemed ready to break out as Ware had retired and Shaq Barrett suffered a hip injury that sidelined him through the offseason, training camp and preseason.

But Ray suffered torn left wrist ligaments on the first day of training camp, an injury that caused him to miss half the season and damaged his effectiveness when he did play. He had just 1.0 sack last season.

Regardless of circumstance, it's difficult for a team to pick up \$9.232 million on a pass rusher coming off a 1.0-sack season, even though that option is only guaranteed against injury.

And then with the No. 5 overall pick in the NFL Draft last week, the Broncos took pass-rushing defensive Bradley Chubb with plans to move him to Ray's outside linebacker position.

Ray is still a Bronco. He will play on a \$1,684,484 salary in 2018. And if he has a big year, he will be glad the Broncos didn't exercise his option. Through the leverage of unrestricted free agency, he could wind up with a multiyear contract worth more than \$9.232 million a year.

Still, it must be somewhat of an emotional blow to Ray, who when asked by 9News back in December about the Broncos picking up his fifth-year option: "I would hope so. If they want to keep me here, I'd love to be here. I love everything about this place. That's without question."

All first-round draft picks in 2015 were subject to a fifth-year team option that had to be exercised before those players' fourth season. Ray was one of 12 of the 32 first-round draft picks who did have their fifth-year option exercised.

To date, the Broncos have a mixed record in picking up the fifth-year options on their first-round draft selections. They exercised the option on Von Miller (first round pick in 2011) and Bradley Roby (2014) but declined it on Sylvester Williams (2013) and Ray (2015). The team did not have a first-round selection in 2012. At this time next year, the Broncos will be confronting a fifth-year option decision on quarterback Paxton Lynch.

# Emmanuel Sanders reveals he is devoted reader of 9News

By Mike Klis

9 News

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During this offseason, your 9News Broncos Insider has intermittently written about how the team's two, star receivers are starting to get up there in age.

Demaryius Thomas is 30. Emmanuel Sanders is 31.

It's kind of an issue, don't you think? I don't think I was the only one in the local media who wrote about it, or talked about it.

What we learned Wednesday is Sanders does read 9News.com.

"I mean speaking to you all, all these articles, I mean he (9News reporter) wrote an article, "Oh yeah, Emmanuel's 30 years old, he doesn't have it anymore," Sanders said with a smile during his press conference Wednesday. "I was getting ready to tweet about it."

"31!" the 9News reporter interjected as Sanders was heating up.

"Yeah, I'm 31, man," Sanders said before turning serious. "See the problem is what's going on right now is the moment you get over 30 in the NFL they automatically say, 'Oh he's getting up in age.' What they fail to realize is when I first came into the NFL, we had two-a-days. We had all these processes.

Big hits were going down. Guys were going to two-a-days, the whole nine yards. Now 30 is like the new 27. I still feel like I got juice for the next five years. So I don't know THIS GUY (9News reporter) is talking about."

He didn't smile while delivering the latter part of his response. He pointed at the defendant.

To Emmanuel Sanders and his fan club, this 9News reporter want to make two points. One, I never said Sanders "doesn't have it anymore." To the contrary, I wrote several times that Sanders seems to have plenty of juice left in his legs.

And point two, it goes to show that elite athletes – who are always seeking a motivational edge – hear what they want to hear, read what they want to read.

"I mean, you owe me an apology me, man," Sanders said smiling (kind of) to the 9News reporter. "You hurt my feelings."

Emmanuel, I never intended to hurt your feelings. One problem the media will always have with the people they cover is the truth sometimes hurts. It is true Emmanuel IS 31 years old. It is also true that if he stays healthy, Emmanuel can still play. At a high level. Especially now that Case Keenum is his quarterback.

Was I surprised Broncos general manager John Elway kept both Thomas at \$12.5 million this year and Sanders at \$10.25 million? I was. I never weighed in on who should be kept or who should be let go. I stated cases for each.

“Communicating with you (9News reporter), I thought I was going to be gone,” Sanders said. “But at the end of the day, I’m happy to be back. I’m ready to work and I’ve been working. I’m excited about this year, new quarterback. We have a system that now we can work the entire offseason on. Things are looking good.”

Can’t wait till Demaryius Thomas has his first press conference.

# City of Denver NFL Draft bid faces stiff competition from Canton, Nashville, others

By Mike Klis

9 News

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A contingent representing the City of Denver was in Dallas last week to make one more pitch for hosting the NFL Draft to league officials.

Denver is one of five finalists to host the NFL Draft in either 2019 or 2020. The league will announce the winners at its spring meetings May 21-23 in Atlanta.

The other four finalists: Cleveland-Canton, Las Vegas, Nashville and Kansas City. According to sources familiar with the process, Denver primarily focused its presentation on 2019 with the draft to be held at Red Rocks Amphitheatre and the Fan Party to be held at Civic Center Park.

The City of Denver has scheduling conflicts in 2020 that limits the downtown hotel availability.

However, the sources believe Cleveland-Canton appears to be the candidate to beat in 2019 as it would coincide with the 100th season of the NFL, which was founded in Canton in September, 1920.

The sense is Nashville and Las Vegas are the leading candidates to host the draft in 2020.

# Broncos will not pick up option for LB Shane Ray for '19 season

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

May 3, 2018

Facing a Thursday deadline, the Denver Broncos will not engage the fifth-year option in linebacker Shane Ray's contract, multiple sources told ESPN, confirming multiple reports.

Ray, who was the Broncos' first-round pick in 2015, had one sack as he finished the 2017 season on injured reserve after three wrist surgeries. The 2018 season will now be a prove-it campaign for Ray as he, without a significant change of heart by the team overnight, will now be an unrestricted free agent next March.

The Broncos selected Bradley Chubb with the No. 5 pick of the draft. Regarded as the best defensive player in the draft, Chubb will line up at outside linebacker and is expected to be in the Broncos' lineup quickly, perhaps even as the starter alongside Von Miller.

On Saturday night, Broncos president of football operations/general manager John Elway said he was "undecided" about whether the team would engage Ray's fifth year. By not doing so, it will mark the second time in the past three years that the Broncos have not added the fifth year for a former first-round pick.

The Broncos did not engage the fifth year for nose tackle Sylvester Williams, the team's first-round pick in 2013 who left in free agency after the 2016 season. Last year, the Broncos did engage the fifth year for cornerback Bradley Roby, who is expected to replace Aqib Talib in the starting lineup in 2018.

Ray has spent much of the offseason promising a rebound from last year's injury, saying he was essentially playing "one-armed" after suffering the wrist injury in training camp. He also took to social media this weekend after the Broncos selected Chubb, posting a variety of messages on Twitter.

After some exchanges with some of his Twitter followers after Chubb's selection, Ray posted "No more social media. I'm going dark" with a peace sign emoji.

Ray's best year statistically was 2016, when he revamped his offseason conditioning and said he also changed his diet. Playing alongside Miller and DeMarcus Ware, Ray finished that season with eight sacks and 48 tackles.

The Broncos traded up to select Ray, who was the SEC Defensive Player of the Year in his final season at Missouri, with the 23rd overall pick in the 2015 draft.

# With Bradley Chubb now on board, the Broncos will not exercise Shane Ray's fifth-year option

By Nicki Jhabvala

The Athletic

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Four months ago, picking up Shane Ray's fifth-year contract option appeared to be the only plausible scenario for the Broncos. Although he was injured for the duration of his third season, he was, after all, a starter on John Elway's prized defense.

And you can never have too many pass rushers, according to Elway.

"It's good when you say, 'You have all those rushers,'" he said after the draft. "I like to hear that."

But as the deadline neared for the Broncos to pick up Ray's \$9.232 million option for the 2019 season, the likelihood of them doing so faded. Fast.

After selecting stud linebacker Bradley Chubb at No. 5 in the 2018 draft, the Broncos have declined to pick up Ray's fifth year, a source told The Athletic. Ray will be back for 2018, but then he'll head for the open market unless the Broncos offer him a contract extension.

The thinking from the Broncos' standpoint is likely this: You draft a player like Chubb at No. 5 and the expectation is for him to contribute immediately. And a \$9.2 million salary is hefty for a player in a reserve role.

Ray spent his rookie season learning behind DeMarcus Ware. Year 2 was a breakout season of sorts for Ray, who saw increased playing time as Ware nursed multiple injuries. He started eight games, and turned in eight sacks and 21 quarterback hits, both ranking second on the team behind Von Miller. According to Pro Football Focus, Ray's 45 pressures that year were nearly double the amount he produced as a rookie.

Year 3 was supposed to be Ray's first foray as a full-time starter, but a wrist injury suffered early in training camp last year required three surgeries and kept him sidelined for the first half of the season. When he returned, he was forced to play with a cast, limiting him in games and in the weight room. His strength deteriorated, along with his production.

Ray started seven games and had only one sack.

"He came back and played with that hand but it was tough," coach Vance Joseph said at NFL owners meetings in March. "It was sore, he couldn't bend it, he had no flex in it. We'll get Shane Ray back. I thought Shane was coming on. He's excited about being opposite of Von and helping rush the passer. Even Shaq (Barrett), as you watched the cut-ups from the season, I thought Shaq played well. He played very solid. But to have Shane back is going to help Von get more one-on-ones."

Though declining a fifth-year option can be perceived as a slight to the player, it has its benefits. Ray, a player in his prime at a prime position, will soon be able to pick where he wants to be and will get to negotiate a longer-term deal. If he plays well this season, the Broncos could try to keep him with a new deal.

Ray has spent much of his offseason regaining the weight he lost because of the injury and preparing for another season as a full-time starter. About a week before the draft, he told The Athletic that his health is the best it's been in his career and that he expected the Broncos to exercise his option.

"John's got a lot of things to deal with, and whether or not he picks up my option, it doesn't say anything about what I'm going to be for this team, my role for this team," Ray said. "I'm just excited. I wouldn't look into too much. I think that it's going to get picked up, I think that I'm going to be here and I'm just looking forward to this opportunity."

But the arrival of Chubb might have sealed the decision for Elway, even if it wasn't the primary reason for declining Ray's option. Acquiring Chubb was a no-brainer when he fell to No. 5. Retaining Ray was less so after his trying 2017 season.

The Broncos' recent history with fifth-year options has been split, but all have been for defensive players. Elway picked up Miller's option in 2014, then handed him the largest contract for a non-quarterback in 2016. Elway declined to pick up the option for nose tackle Sylvester Williams, his first-round pick in 2013, but exercised Roby's fifth year, viewing him as the successor to Aqib Talib.

Elway — who realized first-hand the value of having a deep pass-rushing corps in 2015 when Ware and Miller keyed the Broncos' Super Bowl 50 run — will have a stacked group for at least one more season, with Miller, Chubb, Ray and Shaquil Barrett. But after 2018, unless either is extended, Ray and Barrett will be unrestricted free agents.

Ray is the fourth fifth-year decision in Elway's tenure, but the general manager's biggest decision will come next year, with Paxton Lynch.

Elway has said repeatedly that he's "not kicking him to the curb" and that he still believes Lynch can be a successful NFL quarterback. But Lynch lost two offseason competitions for the starting job and will soon battle Chad Kelly for the backup position this year.

If history is a guide with Elway and fifth-year options, then anything is possible.

# Bradley Roby is ready. But he'd like you to please quit asking about Aqib Talib

By Nicki Jhabvala

The Athletic

May 3, 2018

Bradley Roby had one request as he walked out of the Broncos' press room for his first public comments as the Broncos' No. 2 cornerback.

"Please, no more Talib questions," he begged a room of reporters.

It's not that Roby lacks respect for his former teammate. Hardly.

It's not that Roby resents his time being No. 3 on a secondary with two all-pro corners. Hardly.

It's more that Roby is ready.

"I just want to be better than I was last year," he said. "I see myself as a guy that goes out there and balls hard, makes a lot of turnovers and that's what I've always been my whole life. So I'm not really competing with anyone. I want to be the best, but I also want to be the best me and I want to take the ball away as much possible and just do my job and completely take guys away."

For four years, the former first-round pick had both the luxury and curse of learning behind a core of veteran corners. He watched the way they worked, the way they studied film, the way they attacked offenses, the way they turned a defense in need into a defense that will be remembered for years.

He also watched the core four of the original No Fly Zone secondary — Chris Harris, Aqib Talib, T.J. Ward and Darian Stewart — receive the bulk of the credit for the defense's many successes in 2015. And perhaps rightfully so; they were the starters.

But in the span of six months, Denver's self-titled secondary has undergone inevitable change. Ward was released before the start of last season and replaced by Justin Simmons. Talib was traded this offseason and will be replaced by Roby.

"It's still the No Fly Zone," Roby insisted Wednesday, echoing Harris' earlier declaration that their self-titled unit is still intact. "We started that Super Bowl year and we had a year that I don't think has been seen in the league by a defense in the past 30-plus years. That original Fly Zone is gone, with T.J. departing and Talib departing. But we still got ? out there and Justin Simmons, he did great last year as a first-year starter. We'll be fine."

The Original No Fly, a relic of the Broncos' Super Bowl 50-winning season when the secondary and pass-rush keyed Denver's historic run, has begun a new era, and although many expect the loss of Talib to cause a drop-off, Roby believes the talk is meaningless, if not foolish.

"It is what it is. They didn't expect us to do what we did Super Bowl year," Roby said. "A lot of media people were saying this and that, they didn't think we were as good as we were, and we came out and we

proved. I don't really care what people say. I'm getting tired of hearing about it, honestly. But it is what it is and I have to wait until the season to show that there's no drop-off."

Last season, the Broncos emphasized that Roby had to prove himself in Talib's absence, specifically during Talib's suspension at the end of the year. He had to showcase that he was ready for the bigger role, and he had to do so consistently. Despite starting only four games and playing less than 70 percent of the team's defensive snaps, his 17 pass-breakups were tied for the most in a single season by a Bronco over the last 10 years.

What sealed the Broncos' decision, however, was his play in two games late in the season.

"In our hearts we feel like Roby is ready to go," coach Vance Joseph said at the NFL owners meetings in March. "It's funny, Roby really had two great weeks: Oakland, where Aqib got thrown out, and Miami, when Aqib didn't practice and play that whole week. Roby is capable. He needs to have a chance to play and get better and better at his trade. It's tough when you're the third corner and you're little brother. You don't take those steps to take over the job."

Roby and Harris took the extra steps this offseason to try to improve the lay and chemistry of the secondary. The two, along with second-year cornerback Brendan Langley and safety Will Parks, traveled to Texas to work with Harris' trusted trainer, Ronnie Braxton, a former defensive back.

Harris said that workouts were not just to hone their on-field play, but also their mentality. Now the veteran among a group of young defensive backs, he's has taken it upon himself to be the ringleader.

But there's also a message behind the off-campus workouts. There's a standard, Roby says, and the standard must be upheld.

For two years the Broncos led the league in pass defense. Last year, they ranked among the top five in total yards, passing yards and rushing yards allowed. But they were also gashed in the red zone and recorded only 17 takeaways, the seventh-fewest in the league.

"When I left Ohio State, I left a standard. Me and my coach were like, 'Every guy that comes in here, their goal is to be first round,'" Roby said. "We set that standard and now look at us. I have that same mindset behind here. No Fly Zone has been the standard and that's what it's going to continue to be."

# Denver Broncos will not pick up Shane Ray's fifth-year option for 2019

By Troy Renck

KMGH

May 3, 2018

The Denver Broncos will not exercise OLB Shane Ray's fifth-year option for 2019, multiple sources tell Denver7.

The team's decision had been trending in that direction after the team took Bradley Chubb with the fifth overall pick in this year's draft. Ray will remain under contract this season before heading to free agency.

One thing clearly worked against Ray: the presence of Shaq Barrett. The team could attempt to secure him on a long-term deal for less money than Ray, who has shown potential but not enough to warrant a \$9.3 million salary in his fifth season.

Not picking up the option on Ray does not preclude the Broncos from signing him again once he becomes a free agent, but makes it less likely.

This is a developing story and will be updated.

# Broncos' Emmanuel Sanders on new quarterback Case Keenum: 'Thank God'

By Troy Renck

KMGH

May 3, 2018

Emmanuel Sanders admitted Wednesday what became obvious over the final four months of last season. The quarterback carousel submarined the Broncos, leading to 22 interceptions and a pathetic 18 points per game.

"I remember when I got out here, I went out to the team store and I saw Case Keenum jerseys. I was like, 'Thank God, I don't have to deal with that again.' Case is our guy," Sanders said after the Broncos held another workout during Phase 2 of the offseason. "He's a leader. He's that leader."

No need to pretend the six quarterback switches -- Trevor Siemian to Brock Osweiler to Paxton Lynch and back again -- worked or made sense. The Broncos stunk, and the offense deserved a healthy dose of blame. In Keenum, the Broncos brought stability to the position, Sanders explained. For two straight years, Sanders talked in May about a competition, about uncertainty. It impacted performance not knowing who was in charge.

With Keenum, clarity is no longer a stranger. He's the guy.

"Every single pass that he's thrown so far—I wouldn't say ever single—but a majority of the passes, 95 percent or 98 percent, have been there. He's confident in himself," Sanders said. "You don't have to second guess what his thought process is."

The offensive overhaul under coordinator Bill Musgrave will feature uptempo and no-huddle concepts, and conform around Keenum's strengths. He showed he could manage a game last season in Minnesota, and has better mobility than many realize. Sanders conceded the offense already has a different vibe in the early workout sessions.

"When guys are messing up, they are going back and getting seconds," Sanders said. "It has that 2014 feel where guys are flying all over the field and we want to be good and we want to be successful."

The reboot almost came without Sanders. For roughly two months after the season, speculation swirled that the Broncos might move on from Sanders or veteran Demaryius Thomas.

"I thought I was going to be gone," Sanders said.

In the end, Broncos general manager John Elway kept both, while challenging them to play better.

Sanders suffered through his worst season in Denver, compromised by an ankle injury when hit by Giants safety Landon Collins in the fifth game. He caught 47 passes for 555 and two touchdowns. He averaged 1,190 yards and six touchdowns in his first three seasons in Denver.

Sanders is not fully recovered from his ankle injury, calling it a "process" with options to explore if needed with training camp four months away. For now, he remains optimistic after doubt surfaced.

"The ankle is doing good. We're just testing it out every single day. I was running around today, caught a slant, and took it 60 yards," Sanders said. "(Last season) was bad, it was bad. I was questioning, 'Do I even want to play?' This year I have a different mentality. Get my confidence back. Get my ankle back up and ball out."

At 31, Sanders hears chatter typical of aging NFL players. Did the drafting of fellow SMU star Courtland Sutton and Penn State receiver DaeSean Hamilton accelerate his exit after this season when the cap hit is manageable \$2.6 million?

"It's a business. I understand that. I will help them in any way I can," Sanders said. "I want to see them do well."

Sanders believes he remains in his prime, citing the league changes that forbid two-a-day practices, while limiting contact in the name of safety.

"That's why 30 is the new 27," Sanders said. "I still feel like I got juice for the next five years."

# Broncos WR Emmanuel Sanders energized by offseason moves

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
May 3, 2018

When Emmanuel Sanders returned from vacation to start the Denver Broncos' offseason training program, he went straight to the team store and loved what he saw.

Hanging off the racks were No. 4 Case Keenum jerseys.

For the first time since Peyton Manning's retirement after Super Bowl 50, the Broncos entered their offseason training program certain of who will be under center after signing Keenum to a two-year, \$36 million deal and declaring him the starter.

"I appreciate it, for sure," Sanders said Wednesday. "This is the first time in two or three years that I'm not standing up here talking about a quarterback debate. I remember when I got out here, I went out to the team store and I saw Case Keenum jerseys. I was like, 'Thank God, I don't have to deal with that again.'

"Case is our guy. We can go from there. We can work our butts off, try to gain chemistry and try to put up points."

On the day he signed his contract, Keenum was named the starter by general manager John Elway, who also traded Trevor Siemian, who had beaten Paxton Lynch for the starting quarterback job each of the past two summers, to Minnesota.

After the draft last weekend, Elway reiterated two things about Lynch, whom he traded up to draft in the first round out of Memphis two years ago:

—He still believes he'll figure things out and become a starting NFL quarterback.

—He'll have to beat out Chad Kelly this offseason to win the backup job.

If he doesn't, it would mark the third straight summer that Lynch has failed to beat out a seventh-rounder for a job.

Sanders, who said he's healthy after being bothered by an ankle injury almost all of last season, is a big fan of Keenum and of the Broncos' decision to declare him the starter right away.

"He's a leader," Sanders said, adding that "98 percent" of his passes so far have been on target. "He's confident in himself. He's one of those guys that when he steps into the huddle, he's that leader.

"You don't have to second-guess what his thought process is. We're going to complete this ball. We're going to keep the ball moving. I'm liking what I'm seeing from him so far."

Sanders and Demaryius Thomas were loath last season to complain about it, but they were clearly affected by the turnstile at quarterback as the Broncos churned through Siemian, Lynch and Brock Osweiler during a 5-11 season.

"You can sit back and say we're all professional football players and you've got to deal with that situation, but at the same time, obviously you can't gain the same chemistry," Sanders said.

"You don't have the same mindset. You have to talk to two different quarterbacks. When you're going into individual routes, you have to go to one guy and then go with the next guy. You don't really gain that chemistry. You're not maximizing the opportunity.

"Now we're maximizing the opportunity, and hopefully it pays off."

The Broncos also added some talent into their wide receiving depth, replacing free agent departures Cody Latimer and Bennie Fowler III with draft picks Courtland Sutton of SMU and DaeSean Hamilton of Penn State.

Sanders, who also played at SMU, worked out with Sutton over the winter and was delighted when the Broncos picked him in the second round.

At 6-4 and 218 pounds, he's built like Broncos wide receiver Demaryius Thomas.

"D.T. is big," Sanders said, but Sutton "looks like he belongs in the NBA. Working out with him, he has amazing feet. He's very fluid for being so big. I'm looking forward to getting him in here and just working. Hopefully he can come up with some big plays for us this year."

At 6-1 and 205 pounds, Hamilton is closer to Sanders' size — 5-11, 180 — but still bigger.

"I'm going to teach those guys everything that I know," Sanders said. "That's my job."

Sanders, who is 31 years old and will make \$8.25 million this season, said he's not concerned that the rookies will eventually unseat him.

"That's going to happen sooner or later," Sanders said. "... All I can do is make plays every single day and show that if I become expendable here, just show some other team, hey, look, I still got it. I still got the juice."

# From Vance Joseph to Case Keenum to Shane Ray, the 2018 Broncos are on the 'Prove It' plan

By Paul Klee

Colorado Springs Gazette

May 3, 2018

If the Broncos are going to make their football team great again, there's an easy catchphrase to screenprint on their next batch of motivational T-shirts, right next to "Iron Sharpens Iron" and "Truth."

Prove it.

Start with Vance Joseph, who so far has done nothing to show John Elway made a smart decision to hire him as coach. Year 2 of the "VJ" era is ground zero for the Prove It era. It doesn't end there. You must look no further than the bottom line to see the new proving ground is Dove Valley.

Case No. 1: The Broncos reportedly won't select the fifth-year option on Shane Ray's rookie contract. Oof. That has to tickle. But look at it this way: now the former first-round pick can prove he's worth more than the \$9.2 million he would've received from the Broncos. Who in the American workforce wouldn't jump at the chance to name their price on the open market?

Case No. 2: The Broncos drafted two wide receivers — one huge (Courtland Sutton), one swift (DaeSean Hamilton) — just a year after they drafted two other wide receivers. Hey, Demaryius Thomas (huge) and Emmanuel Sanders (swift) didn't become gazillionaires by the ages of 30 and 31, respectively, without recognizing the profession they chose is a business.

"I thought I was going to be gone," Sanders said Wednesday with a laugh, and he wasn't joking.

Starting with head honcho John Elway, the Broncos have made it crystal clear what remains of the Super Bowl 50 champs must prove themselves all over again. Produce, and there's a juicy reward at the end of the rainbow: star cornerback Chris Harris Jr., possibly the most competitive dude I've covered in Denver sports, scored a sweet payday simply by kicking butt and taking names. Even though Harris was already under team control through the 2019 season, the Broncos dangled \$3 million in incentives in front of his nose. That's sending a message to the rest of the roster if I've ever seen one.

Once you get past the old guard, there's a whole lotta provin' goin' on.

One of the more endearing qualities of the Peyton Manning era was how the neck-fused quarterback trained, practiced and performed like a guy who had just been fired. Come to think of it, one of those snazzy Super Bowl rings should've gone to the Colts. Manning wrote the Prove It plan.

Which brings us to Case (No. 4): With a new orange jersey, Keenum has all the makings of a sweet story. You don't throw 3,500 passing yards, 22 touchdowns and only seven picks by chance, or score a 98.3 QB rating that exceeds Russell Wilson, Philip Rivers and, ahem, Kirk Cousins, just because. Toss in the added motivation of a two-year contract, and the new quarterback of the Broncos seems plenty equipped to prove it. Shoot, his old team chose a more expensive guy with zero playoff wins over Keenum, who led the Minnesota Vikings to the NFC title game in January.

"He's one of those guys that when he steps into the huddle, he's that leader," said Sanders, who is halfway through his first week of 11-on-11 workouts with Colorado's newest quarterback. "You don't have to second-guess what his thought process is: We're going to complete this ball. We're going to keep the ball moving. I'm liking what I'm seeing from him so far."

Any time I write something nice about the Broncos, my inbox is filled with haters and doubters who say they'll believe what the Broncos say when they see it with their own eyes. And you know what? The Broncos went 5-11. You guys are right on.

To his credit, Sanders is self-aware enough to know wide receivers on rookie contracts come cheap, and his next big payday is totally up to him. Still, the 31-year-old pledged to teach Sutton and Hamilton "everything I know," even as he explained that times have changed in the NFL and athletes play longer.

"Now, 30 is the new 27," Sanders said.

Wish I'd known that a few years ago. Could've helped on the dating scene. Oh, well. After seeing the Broncos last season, we can all agree 2017 wasn't the new 2015.

At the center of the Prove It revolution is the proud-and-loud "No Fly Zone." Or does the "No Fly Zone" even exist anymore?

"Quick question," ex-Bronco Aqib Talib wrote on Twitter. "If Quavo and Takeoff leave the Migos, are they still the Migos?"

Here's a handy translation, since millions of young Americans have been deprived of MTV music videos and "TRL" is no longer a thing: if Talib and T.J. Ward are no longer in Colorado, is it still the "No Fly Zone?"

"It's still a 'No Fly Zone,'" starting cornerback Bradley Roby said earlier.

Notice he said "a," not "the."

"No more Talib questions!" Roby hollered as he left the media room Wednesday.

There's only one way — two words — to make sure of it.

# Bradley's beginnings: Inside Chubb's first hours with the Broncos

By Aric DiLalla  
DenverBroncos.com  
May 3, 2018

FRIDAY, APRIL 27  
11:45 A.M. CT  
CORPORATE AVIATION FACILITY  
DALLAS, TEXAS

Bradley Chubb's mother, Stacey, has long imagined this day might arrive.

She may not have been able to provide the details of this morning — the morning after her son was selected by the Broncos with the fifth-overall pick of the 2018 NFL Draft — but that would've been too much to ask.

Who could've predicted the Chubb contingent — Bradley; Stacey; his father, Aaron; older brother, Brandon; and agent, Erik Burkhardt — would be stepping out of a 15-passenger van to board Broncos Owner Pat Bowlen's private plane at the Corporate Aviation facility at Dallas-Fort Worth International airport?

Who could've predicted the orange dress Stacey brought from Georgia to Dallas — "I was trying to be neutral!" she promises — would match the color of her son's new team?

Who could've predicted Brandon would be there in time to join them, having flown to Dallas after a practice in Detroit? Brandon would need to charter a helicopter from DFW to AT&T Stadium in order to arrive Thursday night on time for his younger brother's moment.

Even a week earlier, when Bradley sent Burkhardt a text that paired Von Miller's quote about him with the wide-eyes emoji, this setting would have been hard to perfectly predict.

But Stacey knew it was coming in some fashion.

Her elder son, Brandon, started playing football at age 8, and it didn't take long for Bradley to follow suit. Even then, Stacey could tell her sons were special.

Bradley was still years away from terrorizing quarterbacks. He played running back and often blazed by the other kids on his way to the end zone.

His parents didn't know then he would grow to be 6-foot-4, Stacey jokes, but they recognized his raw ability.

"That's where it started," Stacey says. "We could tell then he had it."

His energy was also unmatched. Stacey called Bradley “Tigger” because of the way he bounced around the house, and he was never far from the football field.

In middle school, as other kids his age hung out by the bleachers during high school football games, Bradley served as a ball boy.

Soon enough, Bradley reached his growth spurt and surpassed his 6-foot-1 brother during his junior season of high school.

Even then, he didn’t receive the attention from colleges he would later get from NFL teams. Bradley earned a handful of ACC and SEC offers, but traditional powers like Alabama and Tennessee never offered.

Neither did Georgia, where his father put his own NFL career in motion.

Had Bradley or Brandon — who played at Wake Forest — been recruited by Georgia, their stories may have turned out quite differently. Stacey thinks the pair would’ve committed to their father’s alma mater.

“They grew up watching Georgia football and knowing the players that played for Georgia,” Stacey says. “We would go back to some of the games. But when that didn’t seem like that was the direction that their careers were headed in, they definitely didn’t pine over Georgia. They just said, ‘That’s their loss.’

“I think it worked out well, because they got to make a name for themselves in their own places.”

At Wake Forest, Brandon did enough to get noticed by the Los Angeles Rams as an undrafted free agent.

Bradley would do far more.

After a 10-sack, 20-TFL season as a junior at NC State, he faced questions about whether he would leave school early. And that’s when Stacey finally knew how high her son would go in the NFL Draft.

“I’m not going to say I didn’t see him as a high pick before then,” Stacey says, “but going into his senior year, I’m like, ‘OK, this is real.’”

The magnitude of the moment, though, has only started to sink in as the plane begins to speed down the runway and lifts off toward Denver.

And still, as they jet toward his introductory press conference, it becomes abundantly clear that Bradley’s football talent doesn’t impress her as much as his maturity, work ethic and humble attitude.

“Just to know his dreams have come true is an overwhelming feeling, and it’s hard to describe,” she says. “To know your child has worked for something for a long time and it has been realized, it’s just the best feeling in the world.”

If this moment is a victory for Stacey, Bradley’s biggest fan, it’s a bigger victory for Stacey, Bradley’s mom.

The most wonderful thing about Tigger, she used to tell her son, is he’s the only one.

THURSDAY, APRIL 27

6:40 P.M. MT  
DENVER BRONCOS WAR ROOM  
ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO

The cheers rise from the Broncos' war room minutes before the card with Chubb's name on it has been turned in to the NFL.

They come instead when the Cleveland Browns pass on Chubb and select Ohio State cornerback Denzel Ward with the fourth-overall pick.

Cleveland general manager John Dorsey will later defend the pick, saying the Browns' need in the defensive backfield outweighed the potential of adding Chubb.

But at this moment the Broncos aren't worried about Cleveland's reasoning, which has changed the trajectory of Denver's draft.

The Broncos won't be trading back. They won't be selecting a second-choice player.

Instead, they land their highest-rated defensive prospect in the draft.

John Elway will later confirm he was close to sending the pick away. The appeal of Chubb playing opposite Von Miller ensures that doesn't happen — and the Broncos don't waste much time to make it official.

With more than seven minutes left on the clock, Chubb is already on the line with the Broncos.

As a staffer sprints down the hall to find Defensive Coordinator Joe Woods, Elway takes the phone and welcomes Chubb to Denver.

"You're a Bronco," Elway says.

The room seems to like the sound of that. Head Coach Vance Joseph smiles and shakes his head as Woods jogs to join the celebration.

"How about that, guys?" Joseph rhetorically asks the staff. "Awesome, awesome."

Woods' reaction is far less reserved. The second-year coordinator pumps his fist and starts clapping as he waits for his turn to talk to his newest weapon.

They chat for a moment, and then Woods is out of the room and jogging back down the hallway toward the coaches' offices.

It's time to celebrate.

Might Woods be the happiest of anyone in the building?

"You better believe it," he says later.

Chubb's highlights flash onto the projector screen, and the room falls temporarily silent. As Chubb brings down another quarterback, NFL Network Mike Mayock offers a comparison that thrills the room.

As a rookie, Mayock says, Chubb could make the same impact as the Chargers' Joey Bosa, who had 10 sacks during his first season.

"I hope so," Director of Player Personnel Matt Russell says with a grin.

FRIDAY, APRIL 28  
9:20 A.M. CT  
THE ADOLPHUS HOTEL  
DALLAS, TEXAS

Chubb loses his train of thought.

It's happened once before, and at first, it appears he's tired after the emotionally draining night that preceded this breakfast.

He's sitting in City Hall, a usually far-busier bistro in The Adolphus Hotel in downtown Dallas.

"You can't fight city hall," reads a sign near the entrance.

It doesn't appear wise to fight Bradley Chubb, either.

The 6-foot-4, 276-pound defensive star has squeezed himself into a back-corner booth in an otherwise empty restaurant, and he looks more like a pro-ready player than many of his peers who shook Roger Goodell's hand the previous night.

Thursday night's first round — and the celebrations that followed — has muted both the hotel and the restaurant.

Shaquem and Shaquil Griffin — who will end up teammates again in Seattle in just over 24 hours — enter a downstairs coffee shop around 8:45 a.m.

Chubb may be the only other player awake within the hotel. He's certainly the only one already in a suit, meeting with his new team.

He's traded his solar system-lined suit from the previous night for a far more reserved choice. Chubb complements a gray, pinstriped suit with a plain blue shirt and a darker blue tie.

The beaded bracelets on his right wrist provide the only other pops of color. One is red, white and black, presumably to honor his alma mater, NC State. Another is tinted gold.

And one has an orange and blue twist.

He's either a quick learner or quite lucky.

Chubb seems to think he needs another component to complete the look, though — and that’s where his attention has drifted:

To the Super Bowl 50 ring across the table.

Ray Jackson, the Broncos’ director of player development, holds up his fist to give Chubb a better look.

“It’s hard not to stare,” Chubb says.

One group of rookies will win their own ring this season, Jackson reminds him quickly. Then it’s on to a number of other topics.

How Chubb will be expected to help lead the rookie class. How his life will change as a first-round pick. How to help Von return the pass rush to an elite level.

Chubb is quiet at first, but as he works through his scrambled eggs, wheat toast and ham, he begins to pepper Jackson with questions.

These 40 minutes undoubtedly pass far faster than that same period of time did when Chubb waited in the green room.

Plate cleared, Chubb stands and heads back toward the front of the restaurant. He visits briefly with the NFL’s Executive President of Football Operations, Troy Vincent, and then he disappears into an elevator to grab his belongings.

This is when it becomes clear that Chubb is different.

The elevator doors open again, and a quarterback who was drafted in the top 10 the previous night steps out.

He struggles to carry both his bag and an Xbox, and his tie has come loose around his neck.

He looks, for better or worse, like a college student.

It only makes Chubb’s maturity all the more impressive.

FRIDAY, APRIL 28

1:20 P.M. MT

UCHEALTH TRAINING CENTER

ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO

In the lobby of UCHealth Training Center, Chubb stands in front of the Broncos’ three Lombardi Trophies and doesn’t speak.

He takes a few photos, but there aren’t many words exchanged.

When he and his family finally do speak, their voices are hushed. Reverent, even.

This is the goal. This is why Chubb was brought to Denver.

And with him, he brings renewed hope.

Hope for another playoff run, for another Lombardi Trophy.

As he leaves the lobby and tours the facility, the reminders of previous titles don't end.

There's a photo of Von Miller stripping the ball from Cam Newton. There's John Elway with his arms outstretched. Terrell Davis adorns one panel. On another, Steve Atwater smiles after a win.

And there's Owner Pat Bowlen hoisting the Lombardi.

Chubb stops when he sees a gold jacket dedicated to Bowlen by the team's Hall of Famers. His mother seems to be in disbelief when she's told the stat.

More Super Bowl appearances than losing seasons, Executive Vice President of Public and Community Relations Patrick Smyth tells them.

Chubb is one of the pieces that could help bring Denver back to that game.

"I need one of those from you," says Ray Jackson, pointing at the panel of Miller and Newton.

Around the facility, there's a belief he can do just that.

As he sat in the cafeteria earlier, Matt Russell stopped by Chubb's table to say hello and meet the first-round pick.

The lack of a pre-draft visit, Russell explains, was merely part of the plan.

"Don't think we weren't interested," Russell says. "That's why we did it. That means we were interested."

Before Chubb heads to his introductory press conference at the Pat Bowlen Fieldhouse, Elway confirms that sentiment.

The Broncos, Elway said, didn't think Chubb would still be on the board at No. 5.

That didn't mean they weren't thrilled.

"We won the AFC Championship and the Super Bowl because of our pass rush," Elway said, "and we have not had that pass rush."

Chubb, who's added a Broncos pin to his suit lapel, seems intent on fixing that problem.

When he and his family join Joseph in his office, it's not long before Chubb asks when he can get the playbook.

Soon, Joseph says. They'll load up his tablet for him, and he can begin to prepare for the Bosa-esque season Mayock predicted.

For these 15 minutes, though, they talk about the team Chubb is set to join.

Miller, of course, is among the players that come up.

Joseph believes Chubb can do more than just learn from the six-time Pro Bowler and Super Bowl 50 MVP. Chubb can inspire Miller, Joseph says, and push the All-Pro player to a higher level.

Then they arrive at the biggest question: how can they fix what went wrong a year ago?

Chubb should play a large part in finding that answer — but Joseph aims now to take some of the weight off the fifth-overall pick's shoulders.

"We expect big things from you," Joseph says. "But we've got patience.

"We've got time."

FRIDAY, APRIL 28

12:30 P.M. CT

BRONCOS' PRIVATE PLANE

SOMEWHERE OVER TEXAS

Still hours away from the photo ops and jersey presentation, Aaron and Stacey Chubb take stock of their new reality.

From where they sit at 40,000 feet, Marietta, Georgia seems quite far.

"We're not in Kansas anymore," Stacey jokes.

They'll never bat an eye at traveling commercially to one of their sons' games, but this is the family's first time on a private plane — and you can believe they're enjoying the small reward after years of hard work and sacrifice.

Aaron's brief NFL opportunity in 1989 has transformed into a reality in which both of their sons are NFL players.

"It wouldn't have been something I would've believed," Aaron says. "It's so surreal. You hope that. You wish that. You work for that.

"But for it to come true and actually happen ... it's just remarkable."

That Bradley's opportunity will come in Denver only betters this moment.

Though his parents swear they had no preference as to where their son was drafted, the positive reviews arrived quickly and frequently.

Stacey received text after text praising the “Class-A organization” to which her son was headed. Videos of Broncos fans at the draft celebrating Denver’s selection only reaffirmed what Stacey was hearing about her new favorite team.

The city, too, is a familiar setting for the family. When Bradley and Brandon were younger, they toured the Mile High City with their father as Stacey attended a conference. They took in a Rockies game, spent time at Elitch Gardens and took a photo at the Mile-High Steps at the state capitol building.

Today, Chubb returns to Denver.

Less than an hour now remains until Chubb steps off the plane at Centennial Airport in Englewood and is whisked to UCHHealth Training Center, where the next chapter of his football career will begin.

At this moment, though, Bradley reclines in one of the plane’s leather captain’s chairs. He crosses his feet and points his polished, black dress shoes forward toward Denver.

He sets his phone — still pinging with congratulatory messages — to the side and tilts his Broncos Country hat down over his eyes.

Within minutes, he’s asleep.

One can only guess what he’s dreaming of now.

# Emmanuel Sanders all-in on Case Keenum: 'Case is our guy'

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
May 3, 2018

For the first time since 2015, the Broncos will go into OTAs knowing who their starting quarterback will be. For Emmanuel Sanders, that makes all the difference -- whether he's running routes against air in Phase 2 of offseason work or he's answering questions about where the team stands.

"I appreciate it, for sure," Sanders said Wednesday. "This is the first time in two or three years that I'm not standing up here talking about a quarterback debate."

In 2016, Mark Sanchez, Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch rotated through OTA snaps. A year later, Siemian and Lynch split the repetitions. Without an obvious starter each offseason, the opportunities to build cohesion were limited.

"You can sit back and say we're all professional football players and you've got to deal with that situation, but at the same time, obviously you can't gain the same chemistry. You don't have the same mindset. You have to talk to two different quarterbacks," Sanders said.

"When you're going into individual routes, you have to go to one guy and then go with the next guy. You don't really gain that chemistry. You're not maximizing the opportunity. Now we're maximizing the opportunity, and hopefully it pays off."

The work involved with that is ongoing, and Sanders admitted that this year's session have a "different feel" than last year's.

"I can see it in guys just trying to get in shape and trying to get their conditioning up," Sanders said. "When guys are messing up, guys are going back and getting seconds. It has that 2014 feel where guys are flying all over the field and want to be good and want to be successful."

The opportunities to work are still limited by league rules. During the current phase of offseason work, players can be at the facility four hours each day, and they can't face a defense or do one-on-one work until Phase 3 begins in just under three weeks.

For now, Keenum and his receivers can work on their timing. So far, so good.

"Every single pass that he's thrown so far -- I wouldn't say every single one, but a majority of the passes, 95 percent or 98 percent -- have been there," Sanders said.

"He's confident in himself. He's one of those guys that when he steps into the huddle, he's that leader. You don't have to second guess what his thought process is. We're going to complete this ball. We're going to keep the ball moving. I'm liking what I'm seeing from him so far."

And Sanders likes what he's seeing elsewhere as a result of Keenum's arrival.

"I remember when I got out here, I went out to the team store and I saw Case Keenum jerseys. I was like, 'Thank God I don't have to deal with that again,'" Sanders said.

"Case is our guy. We can go from there. We can work our butts off, try to gain chemistry and try to put up points."

# NFL coaches see both challenge and opportunity in implementation of new helmet rule

By Jarrett Bell

USA Today

May 3, 2018

Shortly after a group of football experts convened Tuesday morning in a large room in the basement at NFL headquarters, it was time for a quick poll.

Was that a foul or not?

This was all in the spirit of the new rule the NFL is implementing this year to ban the use of the helmet on hits. Troy Vincent, the league's executive vice president for football operations, wanted some clarity about the particular play that was reviewed as an example.

There were five head coaches – Todd Bowles, Dan Quinn, Anthony Lynn, Matt Patricia and Mike Vrabel – in the room. So Vincent let them weigh in.

It was a close call, 3-2, in favor of ruling it a foul. The result also illustrated the confusion and varying degrees of interpretation on the horizon for the league as it hopes the sweeping rule will, as Vincent put it, "take the head out of the game."

The debate set quite the tone for the two-day summit that Vincent organized to elicit feedback for a myriad of safety-related issues. USA TODAY Sports was among a small handful of media outlets invited to observe much of the gathering, which concluded on Wednesday with nine current and two former NFL special teams coaches offering several suggestions for rules changes on kickoffs, which produce the highest injury rate of any play.

"Very productive," Kansas City Chiefs special teams coach Dave Taub told USA TODAY Sports. "When you feel like you are part of something, it makes a difference."

The special teams coaches came up with a variety of suggestions, such as banning two-man wedges and altering alignment spacing, with the idea being to reduce the number of high-speed collisions. There's also interest in a modified touchback procedure, hinging on the ability of the returner to signal the play dead, much like a fair catch on a punt return.

Getting input from the assistant coaches to the degree that was demonstrated on Wednesday was striking, with the competition committee headed by Atlanta Falcons president Rich McKay instantly adding and reviewing language for a proposed rule for kickoffs that will be presented to NFL owners later this month. It's more often head coaches who are often tapped for their perspective, with some serving on the competition committee.

But we've also seen NFL owners pass a rule during a league meeting when coaches were off-site on a golfing outing. The inclusion of so many coaches (including two additional head coaches, Mike Tomlin and John Harbaugh) at the summit, alongside on-field game officials and former players, reflected a revised,

progressive approach. It was also part of a bigger plan for a league needing to improve safety...and reduce liability risk.

Coaches clearly came to the summit wanting to get a sense for how strictly the helmet rule will be enforced and what situations will prompt an ejection. They are more vital than any group to the process of developing the techniques and changing the habits of players to comply with the rules.

“At the end of the day, they are charged with the future of the game,” McKay told USA TODAY Sports. “Because they teach our players.”

As Vincent added, “We have to train the trainers.”

And vice versa. At one point on Tuesday, one of the head coaches acknowledged the validity of injury data (such as 46% of documented concussions suffered during games the past three seasons occurred during helmet-to-helmet hits) and the risks of faulty techniques, but added a layer of perspective by imploring the “need to get the shoulder back in the game.”

“What else is there to hit with?” the coach asked.

The coach also implored the NFL to obtain data that will reveal what percentage of concussions are linked to impact through the face mask. Another coach wants research that might establish patterns related to a player turning his head to avoid contact.

Los Angeles Chargers coach Anthony Lynn, meanwhile, related that upon returning from Orlando after owners passed the latest rule, he met with his equipment manager and was stunned to discover that 47% of his player wore poor-performing helmets. The league and NFL Players Association recently banned continual use of the 10 worst-performing helmets worn by players.

Now Lynn will implore his players to wear newer, form-fitting helmets designed to better absorb shock.

“There’s going to be a bigger learning curve than people think,” Lynn told USA TODAY Sports.

That cuts both ways. Lynn put together a package of clips for his assistants to use as a teaching aid and decided to send NFL vice president of officiating Al Riveron the first play, showing a fullback picking up a blitzing linebacker. Lynn was taken aback when Riveron told him it was an illegal block. Yet after a discussion, Riveron came to agree with Lynn that it was a legal play.

More examples will be needed – and fast.

“That’s the whole point of universal videotapes,” Falcons coach Dan Quinn told USA TODAY Sports. “As long as we know what the rule is, we can coach it and the players can comply.”

Open-field plays probably won’t cause the biggest debates. But taking the helmet out of the play when it is fourth-and-inches will be another matter.

“There’s always going to be that intimate contact,” LeCharles Bentley, the former all-pro center, told USA TODAY Sports. “That’s the nature of the game. But that doesn’t mean it can’t be minimized.”

Vincent said the officials routinely remind him that their calls come in real time and are dependent on their angle. Yet he insists that their marching orders for plays in the open field and in a scrum will be simple: "If you see it, call it."

Vincent estimated only five helmet-to-helmet hits from last season would have qualified for an ejection. Yet many more personal fouls would have been flagged.

What constitutes an ejection? Per the language that emerged at the summit, perhaps the rule would apply to an attacking player taking an unobstructed path to unload a hit. A suggestion was also made for developing the standard of protecting a victimized player in a stationary position.

Then again, one of the more practical safety solutions expressed during the summit came from Hall of Fame middle linebacker Willie Lanier. It underscored the responsibility of players themselves.

After his rookie season with the Kansas City Chiefs in 1967, Lanier was diagnosed with subdural hematoma (bleeding of the brain). Concerned about his long-term health, Lanier made a conscious effort take his head out of his style of play.

"My hope was to be standing here as I am today," Lanier, 72, told USA TODAY Sports, "with no issues."

He played 11 seasons and allows that he got a new nickname after being called "Contact" as a rookie. The final 10 seasons, he was known as "Honey Bear."

"The head is for thinking, not hitting," he said.

# Broncos fan has pettiest Eagles Super Bowl tattoo

By Andrew Joseph

USA Today

May 3, 2018

For all Tom Brady's postseason success with the Patriots, the Denver Broncos have typically had the Patriots' number. Brady is 1-3 against Denver in the postseason - with the lone win coming in a 2012 Divisional Round win.

Yet, for some reason, one Broncos fan really hates Tom Brady. He commemorated that deep bitterness with the unthinkable: A Philadelphia Eagles Super Bowl tattoo.

The tattoo had the Eagles logo over the letters, "FYTB," which isn't a kind message for the Patriots quarterback.

Brady has won five Super Bowls, sure, but not one of those titles have been at the expense of the Broncos. If anything, this fan should have gotten a tattoo to celebrate the Giants' Super Bowl win. At least then, the Broncos would have been a losing team in that New England playoff run.

Apparently, he just hates Tom Brady that much. The Eagles win was all the inspiration he needed.

# Broncos reportedly decline Shane Ray's fifth-year option after drafting Bradley Chubb

By Sean Wagner-McGough

CBS Sports

May 3, 2018

Shane Ray was once one of the most promising prospects on the Broncos' roster. Now, he's expendable.

On Wednesday, the Broncos declined to exercise Ray's fifth-year option, according to Nicki Jhabvala of The Athletic, which means 2018 is the final season that Ray is under contract with the team. While there's always a chance Ray earns a new contract, 2018 might be his final year in Denver.

Taken with the 23rd pick in the 2015 NFL Draft, Ray was supposed to form an unstoppable pass-rushing trio with Von Miller and DeMarcus Ware. But Ray never caught on. In a 14-game rookie season, Ray recorded only four sacks. In 2016, he doubled his sack output, but injury issues saw his production slip to one sack in eight games last season.

To make matters worse for Ray, the 2018 NFL Draft's top pass-rushing prospect, Bradley Chubb, surprisingly fell to the Broncos last week. Suddenly, the Broncos' pass-rushing crew looks mighty crowded with the likes of Miller, Chubb, Shaquil Barrett, Derek Wolfe, and Ray spearheading their defensive front. Barrett's the one to keep an eye on considering he plays the same position as Ray. Over the past three seasons, Barrett's accumulated 11 sacks -- only two fewer than Ray's total. Like Ray, Barrett's deal expires after the season, so the Broncos will have a couple important decisions to make next offseason.

The bottom line is that Ray just hasn't produced like a first-round pick, while the Broncos' roster already contains a whole host of capable pass rushers not named Shane Ray. That's why the Broncos didn't feel like paying him \$9.2 million for the 2019 season, which would've been guaranteed for injury.

Ray appears to have found motivation by the recent events, tweeting the following messages after the Broncos drafted Chubb:

It remains to be seen if that extra motivation will be enough for him to finally turn the corner. Regardless of what happens in 2018, someone is likely to give him another chance in 2019 given his potential and age (24). His quality of play in 2018 will now determine how much money he gets after his current contract runs its course this season.

# Did the Bears Just Have the Best Offseason in the NFL?

By Peter King

MMQB

May 3, 2018

This week, I sat down for conversations with veteran NFL reporter Dan Pompei and former NFL center LeCharles Barkley. Pompei discusses the latest Monster of the Midway middle linebacker in Chicago, whether the Bears may have had the best offseason of any team in the league, on why the Colts stuck at six and picked a guard. He also talks about his new book due in August, Doug Pederson's memoir Fearless.

LeCharles Bentley, an adviser to the NFL's committee on taking the helmet out of the game, on whether it's possible to create a reasonable game of football with the new rule, on Jets coach Todd Bowles' biggest concern (and the concern of several coaches) with the rule about preventing both defensive and offensive players from lowering their heads and using the helmet to strike the opponent, and on what is at stake with the parents of America with this new and revolutionary restriction to the game.

# Denver Broncos decline to pick up Shane Ray's option

By Marc Sessler

NFL.com

May 3, 2018

Loaded with pass rushers, the Broncos are preparing for life beyond Shane Ray.

The team is not expected to pick up the outside linebacker's fifth-year option, a source told NFL Network's James Palmer.

A 2015 first-round draft pick, Ray finds himself buried in a crowded position group after Denver used the fifth-overall pick in last week's draft to nab celebrated pass-rushing prospect Bradley Chubb.

With All-Pro Von Miller and the promising Shaq Barrett also in-house, the Broncos are willing to let Ray walk after this season. It's worth noting that Barrett is also set to become an unrestricted free agent, but all four of Denver's top sack-masters are on board for at least one more year.

Ray piled up eight sacks in 2016, but struggled through a wrist injury last season to notch just one takedown over eight appearances. Brought aboard as the heir to DeMarcus Ware, Ray is now learning how fast the scenery changes at the NFL level.

Turning 25 this month, Ray is guaranteed another shot elsewhere if and when he officially hits free agency next offseason. As for the Broncos, it's Miller and Chubb -- deep into the future.

# Kickoff changes could include eliminating running start

By Herbie Teope

NFL.com

May 3, 2018

NFL kickoffs and special teams appear on track to have a different look in 2018.

With safety in mind, potential changes include the likely elimination of the two-man wedge and running start for the kicking team, while allowing only three deep players on the receiving team, NFL Network's Judy Battista reported Wednesday from the league's player safety meeting in New York.

Rich McKay, who serves as the chair of the competition committee, "strongly believes" the changes when combined with the league's new rule focusing on helmet hits will reduce the risk of concussions during kickoffs, Battista reported.

Battista further points out that the committee hopes the proposed changes will remove the high-impact and dangerous hits out of the game.

The meeting drew input from special teams coaches, some head coaches and league officials.

The competition committee still has to finalize writing the changes to the kickoff rule, but it should be accomplished in time for the owners to vote on the proposal during the Spring League Meeting, which will be held in Atlanta on May 21-23.

# Redskins Cheerleaders Describe Topless Photo Shoots and an Uneasy Night Out

By Juliet Macur  
The New York Times  
May 3, 2018

When the Washington Redskins took their cheerleading squad to Costa Rica in 2013 for a calendar photo shoot, the first cause for concern among the cheerleaders came when Redskins officials collected their passports upon arrival at the resort, depriving them of their official identification.

For the photo shoot, at the adults-only Occidental Grand Papagayo resort on Culebra Bay, some of the cheerleaders said they were required to be topless, though the photographs used for the calendar would not show nudity. Others wore nothing but body paint. Given the resort's secluded setting, such revealing poses would not have been a concern for the women — except that the Redskins had invited spectators.

A contingent of sponsors and FedExField suite holders — all men — were granted up-close access to the photo shoots.

One evening, at the end of a 14-hour day that included posing and dance practices, the squad's director told nine of the 36 cheerleaders that their work was not done. They had a special assignment for the night. Some of the male sponsors had picked them to be personal escorts at a nightclub.

"So get back to your room and get ready," the director told them. Several of them began to cry.

"They weren't putting a gun to our heads, but it was mandatory for us to go," one of the cheerleaders said. "We weren't asked, we were told. Other girls were devastated because we knew exactly what she was doing."

Their participation did not involve sex, the cheerleaders said, but they felt as if the arrangement amounted to "pimping us out." What bothered them was their team director's demand that they go as sex symbols to please male sponsors, which they did not believe should be a part of their job.

The Redskins' weeklong trip to Costa Rica in 2013 — for which the cheerleaders were paid nothing beyond transportation costs, meals and lodging, the team said — provides a vivid illustration of how N.F.L. teams have used cheerleaders for far more than sideline dancers during games. Their treatment has come under intense scrutiny in recent weeks since two former N.F.L. cheerleaders filed discrimination complaints and described a hostile work environment in which they were often dangled as sex objects for the titillation of male fans away from the games.

Interviews with dozens of current and former N.F.L. cheerleaders revealed a common perspective: They enjoyed performing at games, developing friendships with other cheerleaders and participating in charity work, which included visiting hospitals and going overseas to entertain military troops. But they were disturbed by some of the extracurricular requirements that put them in what they considered unsafe situations.

This account of the Redskins' calendar shoot at the Occidental Grand Papagayo is based on interviews with five cheerleaders who were involved, and many details were corroborated with others who heard descriptions of the trip at the time. The cheerleaders spoke on condition of anonymity because they were required to sign confidentiality agreements when they joined the team.

"It's just not right to send cheerleaders out with strange men when some of the girls clearly don't want to go," one cheerleader who was there said. "But unfortunately, I feel like it won't change until something terrible happens, like a girl is assaulted in some way, or raped. I think teams will start paying attention to this only when it's too late."

Stephanie Jojokian, the longtime director and choreographer for the Redskins' cheerleaders, disputed much of the women's description of the Costa Rica trip. She vehemently denied that the night at the club was mandatory and said that the cheerleaders who went were not chosen by sponsors.

"I was not forcing anyone to go at all," Ms. Jojokian said. "I'm the mama bear, and I really look out for everybody, not just the cheerleaders. It's a big family. We respect each other and our craft. It's such a supportive environment for these ladies."

In a statement, the Redskins said: "The Redskins' cheerleader program is one of the NFL's premier teams in participation, professionalism, and community service. Each Redskin cheerleader is contractually protected to ensure a safe and constructive environment. The work our cheerleaders do in our community, visiting our troops abroad, and supporting our team on the field is something the Redskins organization and our fans take great pride in."

Many Redskins cheerleaders understand the team's approach — sex sells — and remain enthusiastic supporters of the team. They said they were troubled, however, when their safety was not taken seriously. There is no leaguwide policy for security, or a union to protect them.

A half-dozen Redskins cheerleaders said Ms. Jojokian seemed especially focused on preserving relationships with businessmen who supported the team and her nonprofit dance company, Capitol Movement.

"There was a lot of pressure by the director for us to be a part of that party atmosphere with sponsors because we knew she picked favorites that way," one cheerleader said of Ms. Jojokian, who in 2011 told women auditioning for the squad, according to WJLA-TV in Washington: "Don't cover your chest area too much. We'll assume you are trying to hide something."

In an interview on Tuesday, Ms. Jojokian choked up when she considered that some cheerleaders felt she did not fully support them.

"It breaks my heart because I'm a mom and I've done this for a long time," she said. "Where is this coming from? I would never put a woman in a situation like that. I actually mentor these women to be strong and to speak up, and it kills me to hear that."

The Redskins, who said that only six sponsors, including two couples, attended the calendar shoot trip, made available for interviews two cheerleaders who were captains of the squad in 2013. Both women, who spoke on condition of anonymity, praised Ms. Jojokian and said she never forced the cheerleaders to do anything they didn't want to do. They said they thoroughly enjoyed their experiences as Redskins

cheerleaders. Regarding the evening out with sponsors in Costa Rica, one of them said, “It was actually just a night of relaxation and to be away from it all.”

A recent contract for Redskins cheerleaders said off-the-field work would include “community and charitable events, youth camps, etc.” There was no mention of having to entertain men who financially support the team, and these appearances raised flags for some cheerleaders.

In 2012, Ms. Jojokian, a former squad director and choreographer for the N.B.A.’s Washington Wizards, announced a mandatory team-bonding boat trip. At a pier in Washington’s Georgetown neighborhood where the cheerleaders were to board, they discovered that it wasn’t the commercial party boat they had expected. It was a yacht with several men aboard — including a familiar face, William R. Teel Jr.

Mr. Teel, 52, was a longtime Redskins suite holder and a local businessman with close ties to the team. He lent cornerback Carlos Rogers \$125,000 in 2009, and later sued Mr. Rogers to get the money back.

He also maintained a close relationship with the cheerleading program. For about a decade, one or both of Mr. Teel’s companies, Energy Enterprise Solutions and 1 Source Consulting, sponsored the cheerleading program and, for a few years, Capitol Movement, Ms. Jojokian’s dance company. As an Army veteran, he said he was drawn to sponsor the cheerleading team because of the many trips it took to entertain United States military troops overseas.

As a sponsor, he helped judge cheerleader tryouts and occasionally was invited to buy package deals to attend calendar shoots. Mr. Teel also paid for Redskins cheerleaders to go to Super Bowls.

“It wasn’t just alcohol, it was a fully catered event at my cost, by the way, in appreciation for the work they do,” he said. “The people who wanted to get off, got off. The people that wanted to stay, stayed. I don’t believe that anyone was pressured by their management to attend events or to be nice to sponsors. The team bonding was just team bonding. Were people dancing? Yeah, but I don’t know about money for a contest.”

‘Like a Human Barricade’

For the Costa Rica trip, the cheerleaders had a dress code: white tops, khaki bottoms and heels. Straw hats were permitted, while flats were definitely not.

Their suitcases were packed with bathing suits, which they had to purchase for the photo shoots, and food. Disordered eating was common on the team, several of the cheerleaders said. Laxative abuse was prevalent. Many N.F.L. teams, if not all of them, have weight restrictions in cheerleaders’ contracts, forbidding them to gain more than a few pounds. The Occidental Grand Papagayo is an all-inclusive resort, but the women did not feel they could indulge in the buffets. Besides, they said, they often were too busy to eat proper meals.

They said their hotel rooms turned into markets, with stacks of fiber and protein bars, rice cakes, peanut butter and cans of tuna.

During the photo shoots, they were anxiously aware when the sponsors and other guests were watching.

“At one of my friend’s shoots, we were basically standing around her like a human barricade because she was basically naked, so we could keep the guys from seeing her,” one of the cheerleaders said. “I was getting so angry that the guys on the trip were skeezing around in the background.”

The nine cheerleaders picked to escort the sponsors to a nightclub boarded a hotel van without any Redskins management. When they showed up at the club, it was dark and nearly empty, several of them said. But the men who had requested them were there.

The cheerleaders said they were further bothered by the fact that Redskins officials were there, too. Ms. Jojokian was not, but Lon Rosenberg, the senior vice president for operations, and Dennis Greene, the president for business operations, were. A former Redskins cheerleader who volunteered as a sideline assistant during games was encouraging the women to drink and flirt, the cheerleaders said.

“The issue was that management seemed to condone all of this,” one cheerleader who was there said.

At the end of the night, at about 2 or 3 a.m., the women returned to the waiting van, only to be stopped by several police officers who asked for their passports. They did not have them because the team had taken possession of them upon arrival. (The Redskins said it was team policy to collect passports for all international travel as a security precaution.)

“I guess they thought you were prostitutes,” a man affiliated with the cheerleading squad told them after they were allowed to leave.

They returned to the resort, but several women on the team decided not to return to the squad the next season. What happened in Costa Rica, they said, made them feel worthless and unprotected.

“You kept telling yourself that it was going to get better,” one of those women said. “But it never got better. Finally, I had to admit to myself, this is not what I thought it would be.”

Ms. Jojokian said she recalled the cheerleaders saying they enjoyed the night at the club in Costa Rica. When she asked the women how the party was the next morning, “They were like, that was fun,” she said. “I’m like, glad you had a good time — don’t get the other girls jealous that they couldn’t get to go.”

She added: “No sponsor is worth these children’s safety and well-being at all.

“I have to really reflect and think because I try to teach these women, these cheerleaders, to speak up, not just to me but to anybody. They shouldn’t deal with anyone who is hurtful or harmful.”

# Hulu Will Insert More Ads Into Live Sports Coverage

By Jen Booton  
Sports Techie  
May 3, 2018

This month, Hulu will begin offering dynamically-inserted advertising within its live television product, which includes sports.

The streaming company announced Wednesday that advertisers will be able to more easily reach younger demographics, many that count themselves as cord cutters, who rely on Hulu's \$39.99 monthly Live TV service to watch live TV shows, news, and sporting events.

The ads, which will be in addition to the typical commercials advertisers already run during breaks in live coverage, will begin showing up across select cable networks within a few weeks, then will expand across Hulu's Live TV service later this summer.

The news, unveiled at the Interactive Advertising Bureau's weeklong pitchfest in New York City, was announced during a presentation at Madison Square Garden in which Hulu brought New York Rangers goaltender Henrik Lundqvist on stage. The company touted its expanding portfolio of sports content and partnerships. Hulu is currently in the midst of streaming the NHL playoffs as an official sponsor of the Stanley Cup Playoffs and Final.

The company also revealed Wednesday that it now has 20 million subscribers across both its on-demand and live TV services. That is up from the 17 million the company reported in January. Hulu revealed plans for an ad-supported service that will allow users to download content for offline viewing.

## SportTechie Takeaway

Hulu says the new dynamic ads in its live TV product will enable advertisers to target specific households and insert ads on short notice. Hulu expects live TV to continue its shift from traditional cable broadcasts to over-the-top services, and believes ads are an inevitable part of that transition.

Streaming services, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, initially attracted users with lower prices and ad-free, on-demand experiences. The shift to live TV, however, seems to require a more familiar advertising structure to that of traditional TV.

Hulu isn't alone in this thinking. Earlier this week, YouTube also announced that it would begin selling ads in its TV service and similarly touted the ability to target specific households and cord cutters.

Hulu, which is jointly owned by The Walt Disney Company, 21st Century Fox, Comcast and Time Warner, began streaming sports live across a number of broadcast TV channels last year. Hulu says sports have fueled the growth of its live TV service, which has prompted it to expand its sports coverage.

Over the past year, through Live TV, Hulu subscribers have been able to access live games from major pro and college leagues, including NCAA football and basketball—Hulu streamed the March Madness tournament. They've also been able to catch Premier League soccer games, as well as NFL, MLB, NHL, and NBA games (including the NBA Playoffs) broadcast by ABC, TNT, CBS, FOX, NBC, ESPN and CBS Sports.

# Case Keenum makes immediate impression on Emmanuel Sanders

By Mike Florio  
Pro Football Talk  
May 3, 2018

For the first time in three years, the Broncos won't have a quarterback competition. Receiver Emmanuel Sanders likes it that way.

"This is the first time in two or three years that I'm not standing up here talking about a quarterback debate," Sanders told reporters on Wednesday. "I remember when I got out here, I went out to the team store and I saw Case Keenum jerseys. I was like, 'Thank God, I don't have to deal with that again.' Case is our guy. We can go from there. We can work our butts off, try to gain chemistry and try to put up points."

Sanders already has given Keenum the seal of approval.

"He's a leader," Sanders said. "Every single pass that he's thrown so far — I wouldn't say every single — but a majority of the passes, 95 percent or 98 percent, have been there. He's confident in himself. He's one of those guys that when he steps into the huddle, he's that leader. You don't have to second guess what his thought process is. We're going to complete this ball. We're going to keep the ball moving. I'm liking what I'm seeing from him so far."

The situation allows Keenum to establish the right type of chemistry with the starter now, without having to wait until late August to find out who it is.

"You can sit back and say we're all professional football players and you've got to deal with that situation, but at the same time, obviously you can't gain the same chemistry," Sanders said. "You don't have the same mindset. You have to talk to two different quarterbacks. When you're going into individual routes, you have to go to one guy and then go with the next guy. You don't really gain that chemistry. You're not maximizing the opportunity. Now we're maximizing the opportunity, and hopefully it pays off."

Sanders also hopes that extra attention to conditioning in the offseason pays off in September

"One thing my mentality is that I feel like I want to be the most conditioned team in the NFL next year, and I feel like if we're the most conditioned team that in the fourth quarter it's going to pay off," Sanders said. "Be able to take advantage of this altitude. I can see it in guys just trying to get in shape and trying to get their conditioning up. When guys are messing up, guys are going back and getting seconds. It has that 2014 feel where guys are flying all over the field and want to be good and want to be successful."

Going back to 2014 would be good for the Broncos. Going back to 2015 would be even better; that's when they won the Super Bowl.

# Bradley Roby ready to replace Aqib Talib

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

May 3, 2018

The Broncos have moved on from Aqib Talib. Now, Bradley Roby is ready for everyone else to move on.

“Please, no more Talib questions,” Roby politely asked reporters Wednesday, via Nicki Jhabvala of The Athletic.

The No Fly Zone secondary has changed the past year with the release of T.J. Ward and the trade of Talib. Justin Simmons replaced Ward, and Roby will replace Talib.

“It’s still the No Fly Zone,” Roby said. “We started that Super Bowl year, and we had a year that I don’t think has been seen in the league by a defense in the past 30-plus years. That original Fly Zone is gone, with T.J. departing and Talib departing. But we still got out there and Justin Simmons, he did great last year as a first-year starter. We’ll be fine.”

Roby started only four games and played 68.22 percent of the defensive snaps last season as the team’s third corner behind Talib and Chris Harris. Roby and the team believe he is ready to start.

“I just want to be better than I was last year,” Roby said. “I see myself as a guy that goes out there and balls hard, makes a lot of turnovers and that’s what I’ve always been my whole life. So I’m not really competing with anyone. I want to be the best, but I also want to be the best me and I want to take the ball away as much possible and just do my job and completely take guys away.”

# Adjustments will make kickoffs “much more of a punt play”

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

May 3, 2018

Owners will vote on several significant changes to the kickoff at their May meetings as the league seeks to make the play safer.

Competition committee chairman Rich McKay said the changes, which came largely at the recommendation of special teams coaches who participated in the league’s two-day safety summit, would make kickoffs “much more of a punt play,” Kevin Seifert of ESPN reports.

The NFL seeks to reduce the space and speed of the collisions on kickoffs, which produced 71 concussions between 2015-17, according to McKay.

According to Seifert, the changes include: Coverage teams would lose the 5-yard head start they previously had; five players required to align on each side of the kicker; elimination of all wedge blocks, including two-man double teams; eight of the 11 return team members would line up within 15 yards of the restraining line, with blocking prohibited within those 15 yards; and elimination of pre-kick motion.

Onside kick rules would remain mostly the same.

“I would be surprised if we don’t make some progress on this play,” McKay said. “The changes that you are going to look at will have a positive impact.”

So kickoffs received a reprieve for 2018, but it is clear the changes will have to make the play safer for kickoffs to remain a part of the game long term.

# Shane Ray won't have 2019 option picked up

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
May 3, 2018

Linebacker Shane Ray said in April that he expected the Broncos to exercise their option on his contract for the 2019 season, but that's not how things are going to play out.

A report this week indicated that the Broncos were likely to pass on the option, which would set up a salary of \$9.232 million guaranteed against injury only, and Nicki Jhabvala of The Athletic reports that they have indeed declined it.

While the Broncos had been noncommittal about their plans before Ray shared his opinion, the picture changed during the first round of the draft last Thursday night. That's when the Broncos landed Bradley Chubb with the fifth overall pick to give them a pass rusher to pair with Von Miller in hopes of realizing a bigger return than Ray has provided over the last three seasons.

Ray has 13 sacks in 38 games since joining the Broncos and would be able to position himself well for free agency if he can improve on that production this year. Doing so could require beating out Chubb for playing time and that looks like a tall order given the fanfare that accompanies the rookie into the NFL.