

Broncos' Brandon McManus seeks repeat captain title for bounce-back special teams play

By Kyle Frederickson

The Denver Post

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If the role of an NFL team captain is to lead by words and actions to inspire teammates, then the task ahead for Brandon McManus might look daunting. You can only do so much as a kicker.

"It's tough to be a completely vocal leader at a kicking position," McManus said.

Now, more than ever, though, it's time to speak up.

Among the more criticized shortcomings of Denver's 5-11 season last fall was abysmal special teams play. Riley Dixon had two punts blocked. Return man Isaiah McKenzie muffed six punts and lost two. The Broncos had three special teams penalties in a loss at Buffalo. They gave up a kick return touchdown against the Patriots and a punt return touchdown to the Chargers. And, in a pair of games, Denver featured two special teams penalties on the same play.

Even McManus, a 2017 special teams captain, wasn't immune. He missed five field goals in the first five games, including having a kick blocked against the Giants and another blocked by the Bengals in November. McManus blamed his early miscues on a kink in his form, when he too often hit the ground before connecting his foot with the ball. He refined his footwork and finished the season strong, making 16 of his last 19 field goals.

If Denver's special teams has any chance for a rebound season, the Broncos need McManus to be more consistent. He's one of just 17 players left on the roster from Denver's 2015 Super Bowl season.

"I've been here five years now, so even though it's still a young team, I'm one of the older guys here now," McManus said. "I know that they respect me. They see me working hard in the weight room, running and competing with these guys. I'll be able to speak up a little more this year than I have in the past."

The Broncos' special teams will be under the direction of first-year coordinator Tom McMahon, who replaces the fired Brock Olivo. McManus said he had contact with McMahon while exploring the free agent market in 2014 after being undrafted out of Temple. McManus called McMahon a "great motivator, leader and he's not afraid to let you hear it on the field. So you guys will hear it during training camp."

McManus will also transition to a third different holder in three seasons with the addition of punter Marquette King, formerly with the Raiders. "The biggest challenge we'll have this year is that Marquette is used to holding for a lefty," McManus said. "Now he has to transfer over to a righty."

McManus was proud to wear the white "C" emblem on his jersey last fall — and he aims to wear it again when team captains for offense, defense and special teams are announced in September. "I'll do everything I can to prove during training camp and OTAs that I do deserve to be that (captain)," McManus said.

C.J. Anderson on being released by Broncos: “I thought I did everything I could to keep my job”

By Daniel Boniface
The Denver Post
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Carolina Panthers running back C.J. Anderson this week opened up about being released by the Broncos, saying he felt he did enough to remain in Denver, but was excited for his new opportunity.

“I wouldn’t say I didn’t see it coming,” Anderson told SiriusXM NFL Radio. “I thought I did everything I could to keep my job over there. There was only two names in the offseason that was being looked to be shopped and that was myself and (Aqib) Talib. Denver, what they told me, is they did everything they could to try and trade me and things of that nature and it just didn’t work out.”

Anderson this week signed a one-year deal to join the Panthers, the team he helped defeat in Super Bowl 50. The 5-foot-8, 224-pound Anderson was coming off his most complete NFL season, one during which he rushed for 1,007 yards on 245 carries — both career highs. Anderson added 224 receiving yards on 28 catches. The Broncos cut him in mid-April, a month after NFL free agency opened.

“The timing of it sucks, but I’ve been in this position before,” Anderson said. “I’m a grinder and I’ve got an opportunity with the Panthers to do something special with this team and this organization for a year.”

In his five-year Broncos career, Anderson rushed for 3,051 yards on 693 carries (4.4 yards per attempt), and 20 touchdowns. He also had 859 yards receiving on 103 receptions and four touchdowns. And despite the fact that the Broncos saved \$4.5 million in cap space by releasing the running back, Anderson was still left scratching his head.

“There’s always a ‘why?’” Anderson said. “I felt like for five seasons, coming in undrafted, beating out a second round pick and things of that nature. I’ve done some things, given it a Pro Bowl, a Super Bowl, given that organization some light on myself and my game. We know what type of game it is and they’re always trying to replace you every day, in and out.”

Anderson said he did feel respected by the Broncos, since he said he was informed they were trying to trade him.

“It would’ve been great to be released during free agency, but it didn’t happen,” Anderson said. “But everything happens for a reason and I have a great opportunity in Carolina now.”

Anderson said he joined the Panthers because he felt it was a good fit for his running style and thinks offensive coordinator Norv Turner will make sure he gets plenty of opportunities to make an impact, alongside former Valor Christian star Christian McCaffrey.

“They just told me straight up, ‘You’re going to fit in well,’” Anderson said. “You can kind of tell your role when you pick the team. Don’t get me wrong, we know McCaffrey was just the eighth pick a year ago, there’s going to be some things they’re going to have him do.”

“There’s one thing that’s going to hold true, me and Christian are going to play at the same time. He’s going to get touches, just like I’m going to get touches. It’s not like I came into the situation and said, ‘Hey, I’m going to be the bell cow, I’m going to be here.’ You know what situation you’re getting into.”

Anderson said he looks forward to playing alongside quarterback Cam Newton and is happy to enter a season knowing who the starting quarterback is, so that he can focus on his primary objective.

“The goal at the end of the day is to win a championship and this is a team that’s close,” Anderson said. “Hopefully I’m the missing piece that can put them over.”

Projected signing bonuses, contract for Broncos 10 draft picks

By Mike Klis
9 News
May 11, 2018

With Broncos' rookies reporting to the team's headquarters Thursday for their weekend orientation to professional football, several of their 10 draft players are expected to sign their first contracts.

Here are the projected signing bonuses and four-year total value for each:

Rd (overall pick) ...	Player	Signing Bonus ...	Total value
1. (5)	Bradley Chubb	\$17,913,628 ...	\$27,271,239
2. (40)	Courtland Sutton..	\$3,055,948 ...	\$6,841,929
3A. (71)	Royce Freeman	\$997,020	\$4,010,903*
3B. (99)	Isaac Yiadom	\$761,516	\$3,687,084*
4A. (106)	Josey Jewell	\$713,984	\$3,173,984
4B. (113)	DaeSean Hamilton	\$682,640	\$3,142,640
5. (156)	Troy Fumagalli	\$281,804	\$2,741,804
6A. (183)	Sam Jones	\$168,556	\$2,628,556
6B. (217)	Keishawn Bierria	\$118,408	\$2,580,868
7. (226)	David Williams	\$93,980	\$2,553,980

*There is slight negotiating wiggle room for third-round picks regarding their salaries for year 2, 3 and 4.

Broncos sign Sutton, six other draft picks to 4-year contracts

By Mike Klis
9 News
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In one swoop of a pen, Courtland Sutton went from college star who was paid nothing to a \$3.055 million man.

Welcome to the NFL, kid.

For their first day of rookie minicamp Thursday, the Broncos greeted Sutton, a second-round receiver from SMU (no wisecracks about not getting paid), and their final six selections in the draft with new, four-year contracts.

The other draft picks who signed: Linebacker Josey Jewell, receiver DaeSean Hamilton, tight end Troy Fumagalli, guard Sam Jones, linebacker Keishawn Bierria and running back David Williams.

The only unsigned draftees: First-round selection Bradley Chubb and third-round picks Royce Freeman and Isaac Yiadom.

There are exceptions but for the most part, players drafted in rounds 4 through 7 get their signing bonuses, plus minimum salaries of \$480,000 in 2018; \$570,000 in 2019; \$660,000 in 2020 and \$750,000 in 2021.

The expected signing bonuses and four-year total values for the seven players who signed:

Rd ...	Player	Signing Bonus	Total value
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The Broncos hope to have Chubb signed before the rookie minicamp adjourns following a Mother's Day brunch Sunday morning. Freeman and Yiadom may take another week as third-round selections get to negotiate base salaries in years 2, 3 and 4 of their deals.

Broncos see benefits of having the Case closed at QB

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

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Only a few weeks into their offseason program, the Denver Broncos already feel the power of knowledge.

With games still months away, it's nice to know who will start at quarterback. After signing Case Keenum in free agency, the Broncos believe they are set at the position.

"That's good for everyone involved. That's good for the players and that's good for the coaches who are building a scheme around a player," coach Vance Joseph said. "Obviously, the last two years here it's been a competition in training camp, and that takes away from what you want to do. If you have to do it, you do it, but if you don't have to, you don't want to."

The past two offseasons were consumed by the quarterback question. Trevor Siemian wasn't officially named the starter over Mark Sanchez and Paxton Lynch for 2016 until Aug. 29, when then-coach Gary Kubiak said "he's earned the right to be our guy." Then last year, Siemian and Lynch competed for the job until Aug. 21, when Joseph finally declared Siemian the "clear-cut winner."

The 2017 season then dissolved into an almost constant offensive struggle as the Broncos cycled through Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Lynch (twice) at starting quarterback.

Keenum was the centerpiece of Denver's offseason work. He arrived with the stamp of approval from Joseph and president of football operations/general manager John Elway, who clarified "Case is our starter" when questions surfaced over whether the Broncos would use the No. 5 overall pick to draft a quarterback. Instead they drafted pass-rusher Bradley Chubb, and did not use any of their 10 picks on a quarterback.

"This is the first time in two or three years that I'm not ... talking about a quarterback debate," wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders said. "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."

Keenum's arrival, and the Broncos' commitment to him, allows coordinator Bill Musgrave to design the offensive scheme around Keenum. Not only did the competition between Siemian and Lynch last season limit the Broncos' ability to do that, but there was a general feeling that what Mike McCoy was trying to do with the offense -- including simply too much volume on game days -- wasn't in sync with their personnel in the post-Peyton Manning era.

As a result, and in the throes of what became an eight-game losing streak, McCoy was fired in November and Musgrave called plays for the final six games of the season. In the postseason review, Elway called the initial plan on offense "a bad fit."

"Last year, at the beginning of the season, we had Mike McCoy. I feel like it was a harder playbook [conceptually], and we had a lot of plays," Sanders said. "But I think that playbook could have been successful as well. ... I think the biggest thing of it all is not even the playbook, it's about us having a guy that is going to be consistent at quarterback play."

The Broncos are in the earliest stages of their offseason work -- the offense is working against air at this point -- but given that optimism in the NFL blooms quite nicely in April, the reports of Keenum's comfort level are already coming from his teammates.

"I like him," cornerback Chris Harris Jr. said. "Everybody I've talked to, receivers, they're excited about him. They say he throws an easy ball to catch. That's what you want to hear, they haven't said that too many times since Peyton was here. I think they're pretty excited."

Keenum said he's trying to take full advantage of workouts to get to know his new teammates and show them that he's ready to be the kind of quarterback the Broncos have waited for since Manning's final season in 2015.

"It feels good, it does," Keenum said. "I'm going to stay hungry; I'm going to stay consistent to the same mindset I've always had. That's what's gotten me here, and that's who I am. Nothing has ever been handed to me. I've earned that right and I'm going to continue to earn that right."

Nashville emerges as leading contender to host 2019 NFL draft

By STAFF

ESPN

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Nashville, Tennessee, has emerged as the leading contender to host the 2019 NFL draft, league sources told ESPN's Adam Schefter on Thursday. A decision is expected to be announced during the league's spring meeting May 22-23 in Atlanta.

In the unlikely event that Nashville were to lose out on the 2019 draft, the city would be in prime position to then host the 2020 event, sources told ESPN.

The other cities being considered as the potential host sites for the 2019 and 2020 NFL drafts are Las Vegas, Denver, Kansas City and a combination bid from Cleveland/Canton, Ohio.

Butch Spyridon, the president and CEO of the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corp., told ESPN's Cameron Wolfe on Wednesday that the city encouraged the NFL to use the Ascend Amphitheater for the draft theater, Nissan Stadium (home of the Tennessee Titans) and its parking lots for the fan experience, and the Schermerhorn Symphony Center for the Titans' war room.

Spyridon suggested that Broadway Street and First Avenue -- which is full of honky-tonks and includes nearby Bridgestone Arena -- be a big part of draft weekend as well. He also presented the Music City Center convention hall as a potential option.

Ultimately, the NFL will create its own event based on the potential locations provided.

Officials were told the NFL wants the draft to take on the personality of the host city, and that's when Nashville's representatives felt their chances improved dramatically because of the city's music-centric, party vibe.

Spyridon said Nashville's slight preference was to host the 2020 draft because of minor logistics, but the organizing group has the flexibility and desire to host the 2019 draft if that is the NFL's choice.

Spyridon said he was "cautiously optimistic" that Nashville would land the draft, putting odds at much better than 50-50.

"If we can embrace it Nashville style, we got a shot," Spyridon said. "It'd be a big party. You'd know you were in Nashville. I promise they wouldn't be disappointed."

The first televised draft was broadcast by ESPN in 1980, but it wasn't a fan event until 1995, when the league moved it to Madison Square Garden in New York.

After a nine-year run at Radio City Music Hall in New York ended in 2014, the draft has been held in Chicago (2015-16), Philadelphia (2017) and Arlington, Texas (2018). This year's event at AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys, was the first to be held inside an NFL stadium.

A behind the scenes look at how John Elway's roster rehaul came to fruition

By Nicki Jhabvala
The Athletic
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The Broncos' season shattered in Week 5, the pieces to their once-promising 2017 scattered farther and farther from reach as the season went on.

Denver's eager quest to return to the playoffs for the first time since their Super Bowl-winning season ended just as it was beginning and by the time they dropped to 3-6, the only plausible explanation John Elway could come up with was that his team had gotten soft.

"We went 4-0 in preseason. We started out 3-1, we get a bye week — if you exhale in this league, you're in trouble," Elway said after the Broncos' were thrashed by the Patriots at home in November last year. "To be dead honest with you, I think we exhaled."

The comment, both calculated and honest, was intended to light a fire under his players and his staff. Instead it backfired. Some bristled at the accusation. Others accepted the harsh label but collectively failed to fix the list of the problems that grew longer by the week.

"As a player, you can do a little bit more about it. As the GM, you sit back and watch," Elway went on. "That's why it's very frustrating for me. That's why the players have to understand that they're going to be the ones that bring us out. Not the coaches, but the players are going to have to bring this team out of this."

Though Elway held out hope his team would reverse course before it was too late, it was perhaps then, in mid-November with six weeks remaining in the season, that the foundation for 2018 was put in place. Not only would Elway retool the roster and the coaching staff in the succeeding months, but he would also alter the mindset of a franchise that veered wildly off course.

In his latest remake, Elway has followed a theme that has carried through a coaching shuffle, free agency and the draft, with the hope it will lead to a different outcome. Though he always says he's looking two or three years down the road, the Broncos' general manager is also looking to win now, and for the past six months, he and his personnel staff set out to find players who can not only contribute immediately but who also hate to lose as much as he does.

The Broncos, this year especially, sought more than just talent. Elway wanted players with the right mentality. He wanted the right fit. He wanted the leadership.

"Anytime you're 5-11, you're lacking something, right?" he said in March. "Obviously your leaders got to be able to pull you out of those streaks we got on last year. No. 1 we didn't play very well, but I think we just gotta get some guys in leadership positions that can take over a little bit more ..."

Shortly before the Broncos limped to a 5-11 finish and Elway's four-month nightmare finally came to an end, he and his right-hand man Matt Russell stood on the sideline of Albertsons Stadium in Boise, Idaho to begin shopping.

The position Denver tried to fill when Peyton Manning retired two years ago had become an embarrassment, and the draft class of 2018 was going to be stacked with quarterback talent, so there they were. In Boise, of all places, in search a potential successor. Josh Allen tossed three touchdowns in Wyoming's Potato Bowl victory over Central Michigan that evening.

Elway and Russell continued on the bowl game circuit but unlike in years past, the two often had a third party. Gary Kubiak, Elway's former backup and his sidekick for all three Super Bowl titles, took on a bigger role in the Broncos' front office this year. The former head coach was promoted unofficially — his title as senior personnel advisor hasn't changed — and was tasked with evaluating not only college offensive talent, but also free agents.

"He's a guy that has a lot of knowledge in football," Elway said at the season's end. "He's a very good evaluator, too. He'll help us in that area."

Translation: Kubiak, The Quarterback Whisperer, was charged with helping to find the next starting quarterback and his new role was the first major clue to Denver's impending roster changes.

"Obviously, Kube has a lot of experience as far as picking players, especially offensive players," coach Vance Joseph said. "Having Kube in as a sounding board for John and personnel and for myself and for (offensive coordinator) Billy (Musgrave) — just his experience in the game helps the entire building."

Of course, Elway's first steps toward remaking the Broncos didn't begin with the players or the personnel staff. It began with the coaching staff — hours after the 2017 season ended. Elway decided to retain Joseph but six assistants were fired. Joseph cited a needed "culture" change "so we could get back to pushing our players to be the best that they can be and getting our best players to play at their best all the time."

Six new ones were hired, as the structure of the positional staff was altered to focus on specialization. There are two offensive line coaches now, with Sean Kugler coaching the interior lineman and Chris Strausser handling the tackles. On the defensive side, defensive line coach Bill Kollar will work with linebacker Von Miller and the rest of the edge rushers will work with inside linebackers coach Reggie Herring.

But the biggest alterations were made inside the white lines.

Lions' Patricia says he was 'falsely accused' of assault

By Noah Trister
Associated Press
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Detroit Lions coach Matt Patricia said Thursday he was "falsely accused" in a 1996 sexual assault allegation that resurfaced this week, and he indicated that the matter has not been an issue as he has climbed from job to job in the years since.

Patricia held a brief news conference one day after a Detroit News report that he and a friend were indicted 22 years ago by a Texas grand jury on one count each of aggravated sexual assault. They were accused of assaulting a woman on South Padre Island. The accuser did not testify and the case was dismissed.

"I was innocent then, and I am innocent now," Patricia said.

The Lions said Wednesday night that a pre-employment background check did not turn up the incident. The team said Patricia was 21 at the time and on spring break in Texas. The Lions said they were standing by Patricia.

An NFL spokesman said Thursday the league "will review the matter with the club to understand the allegations and what the club has learned."

Lions owner Martha Firestone Ford, general manager Bob Quinn and president Rod Wood were at Thursday's news conference but did not speak.

"I'm here to defend my honor and clear my name. Twenty-two years ago, I was falsely accused of something very serious," Patricia said. "There were claims made about me that never happened. While I'm thankful on one level that the process worked, and the case was dismissed, at the same time, I was never given the opportunity to defend myself."

Patricia took a few questions but did not provide details about the day in question.

"I was falsely accused of something that I did not do," he said.

The Detroit News, citing a March 1996 story in the Brownsville (Texas) Herald, said Patricia and a friend were accused of entering the hotel room where the woman was sleeping and sexually assaulting her. The men were arrested later that night and released on bond, according to the story and court records.

The indictment came that August, but the case was eventually dismissed. The Detroit News posted a motion to dismiss from January 1997, which said the alleged victim did not feel she could "face the pressures or stress of a trial."

Patricia's first NFL coaching job was as an assistant with the New England Patriots in 2004, and he remained with them through last season, when he was the defensive coordinator. He was hired by the Lions in February to replace Jim Caldwell.

Before joining the Patriots, Patricia worked as a graduate assistant in 1996 at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, his alma mater. That was before he spent two years working as an aeronautical engineer. Patricia was an assistant coach at Amherst and a graduate assistant at Syracuse before moving on to the NFL.

"I've interviewed for a lot of jobs," Patricia said. "Interviewing for jobs in engineering right after the situation happened, it was never an issue, it never came up as anything, because it was dismissed, and I was innocent, so it just has never been part of any process that I've been involved with."

Patriots coach Bill Belichick said the team wasn't aware of the legal case and expressed support for Patricia.

"For 14 years in our organization, Matt conducted himself with great integrity and is known to be an outstanding coach, person and family man," Belichick said in a statement. "We have always been confident in Matt's character and recommended him highly to become the head coach of the Detroit Lions."

Broncos draft picks, CFAs receive jersey numbers for rookie minicamp

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
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The Broncos' 10 draft picks and eight college free agents will convene at UCHealth Training Center on Thursday afternoon to begin a three-day rookie minicamp.

As it did last season, the minicamp will serve as an orientation for the rookies, who will be introduced to the NFL and the Broncos. This year's class will meet to begin to digest their playbooks, and they will hit the field for the first time in their Broncos jerseys.

Nine eligible first-year players will also participate in the on-field portion of the minicamp: QB Chad Kelly, WR River Cracraft, DB Jordan Moore, LS Christian Kuntz, LB Marcus Rush, OT Andreas Knappe, TE Jake Butt, WR Tim Patrick and DT Paul Boyette.

While some jersey numbers could change before training camp or the regular season, the rookies will wear the following digits for this week's minicamp:

Draft picks

OLB Bradley Chubb – 55
WR Courtland Sutton – 14
RB Royce Freeman – 37
CB Isaac Yiadom – 41
LB Josey Jewell – 47
WR DaeSean Hamilton – 17
TE Troy Fumagalli – 84
OL Sam Jones – 70
LB Keishawn Bierria – 40
RB David Williams – 36

College free agents

RB Phillip Lindsay – 2
DB Trey Marshall – 3
WR John Diarse – 9
OLB Jeff Holland – 46
OT Leon Johnson – 63
OG Austin Schlottmann – 71
NT Lowell Lotulelei – 78
WR Jimmy Williams – 85

Seven of 10 Broncos draft picks sign rookie contracts

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

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Seven of the Broncos' 10 draft picks signed their rookie contracts Thursday afternoon.

Wide receiver Courtland Sutton, linebacker Josey Jewell, wide receiver DaeSean Hamilton, tight end Troy Fumagalli, guard Sam Jones, linebacker Keishawn Bierria and running back David Williams all inked their deals.

Sutton, a second-round pick, is the lone member of that group who has visited UCHealth Training Center since he was drafted. Sutton spent Saturday, April 28 in Denver with Royce Freeman and Isaac Yiadom.

The remainder of the group — all Day 3 picks — arrived at UCHealth Training Center on Thursday as rookie minicamp kicked off.

Freeman, Yiadom and first-round pick Bradley Chubb have yet to sign their rookie contracts.

Matt Patricia's failure to disclose old allegation makes him either dumb or devious

By Dan Wolken

USA Today

May 11, 2018

For someone who has spent his career carefully cultivating the image of a genius in coach's clothing, Matt Patricia sure looked like a dope on Thursday.

Here he was, in front of the news media on a random day in mid-May, publicly discussing 22-year old allegations for the first time only because he seemed to foolishly expect that the kind of fame one acquires by becoming an NFL head coach would never result in a serious legal matter from his past being uncovered.

How is that possible in 2018? How dumb does this allegedly smart man think the rest of us are?

Over and over again during Patricia's seven-minute news conference after the Detroit News uncovered a 1996 grand jury indictment for aggravated sexual assault, he made two things abundantly clear.

The first was that he believes he was falsely accused. The second is that he did not believe that accusation, which wasn't just hearsay but an actual arrest and formal charge, was something he was duty bound to disclose with potential employers as he rose the ranks and became an inevitable head coaching candidate.

Barring new information or Patricia's accuser coming forward, it's impossible to discuss the merits of the case, which fell apart 10 months after the alleged incident when the accuser decided not to testify. Though a Texas grand jury deemed the evidence strong enough to move forward with the case, we don't know what that means. Other details, including from the police report, have been lost over two decades.

For Patricia, a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute football player on spring break when the alleged incident took place, the case being dismissed was obviously an important moment in his journey to becoming the Detroit Lions head coach. Even if he was falsely accused, as he claimed, a trial would have put the entire future of a 21-year old in the hands of a jury. When the case was dismissed on Jan. 28, 1997, he was free to resume the rest of his life.

The allegation didn't seem to impact Patricia's coaching career, if anyone knew about it at all. From a fledgling career as an engineer to football at Amherst, then Syracuse, then the New England Patriots, Patricia said it was "never an issue" when interviewing for jobs. Patriots coach Bill Belichick released a statement indicating the team was "not aware of the matter which recently came to light" and praised Patricia for having "great integrity."

But once Patricia got on the fast track to becoming a head coach within the past couple years, the idea he would lack the self-awareness to anticipate his past resurfacing is simply not believable.

"I've interviewed for a lot of jobs and, again, interviewing for jobs in engineering right after this happened it was never an issue, it never came up as anything because it was dismissed and I was innocent," Patricia said. "So it's never been part of any process I've been involved with before."

Of course, interviewing for a job as an engineer isn't quite like interviewing to become the face of one of 32 NFL teams. If Patricia doesn't understand the difference, he's not intelligent enough to be an NFL head coach in the first place. Since that probably isn't the case, it leaves us with the even greater sin of purposeful omission.

If the Lions never investigated Patricia's background to an extent that would have revealed the grand jury indictment, which the Detroit News had little problem procuring, it's bad. If they asked Patricia if there were any criminal or civil proceedings in his background and he did not disclose, that's worse.

The more likely scenario is that Patricia told the truth within a narrow set of questions but did not go further than he had to, thus avoiding disclosure of a murky episode in his life that he has long since left behind.

While Patricia may feel he's within his rights to do that, it's the dumbest thing he could have done – especially in 2018 when the odds of something like that remaining a secret were less than zero.

Patricia took the indignant road on Thursday, chastising the news media for pursuing a story that “for the sole purpose of hurting my family, my friends and this organization with the intention of trying to damage my character and credibility.”

But if anything damaged Patricia's character and credibility, it wasn't a fuzzy accusation from 22 years ago. It was his strident belief that he'd never have to answer for it again.

Here are potential landing spots for Dez Bryant and the best remaining NFL free agents

By John Breech

CBS Sports

May 11, 2018

After a seven-week lull, don't be surprised if NFL free agency starts to heat up again over the next few days and that's because May 9 is the unofficial start of the second wave of player signings.

If you've been following the NFL for any length of time, then you're probably well aware that the first day of free agency is almost always one of the craziest days on the NFL calendar every year. Although May 9 isn't as crazy, it's still a big deal in the NFL this year because it marks the first day that teams are allowed to sign free agents and NOT have it count toward the compensatory draft pick formula.

Basically, if Antonio Gates had signed a contract sometime before May 8, the Chargers would have had a chance to get a 2019 compensatory pick in return and the team that signed him would have had a lower chance of landing a compensatory pick. Instead, now that the deadline has passed, the Chargers won't get anything if Gates ends up signing with a new team.

Sure, the second wave of free agency isn't as exciting as the first wave -- or even half as exciting -- but there are still some big name players available who could end being major contributors in 2018. At this point last year, LeGarrette Blount was still available and things ended up working out pretty well for him. Instead of signing in March, Blount signed a one-year deal with the Eagles in May and ended up going on to win the Super Bowl.

So who's even left in free agency and where might those players end up?

Let's check out the list of players who are still available, starting with Dez Bryant.

Dez Bryant (WR)

Three teams that should target him: Texans, Seahawks, 49ers

Over the past three weeks, it seems like half the Texans roster has been trying to recruit Bryant to Houston and there's a good reason for that: He'd likely be a perfect fit. If the Texans were to add Bryant to the roster, he would join a receiving corps that already includes DeAndre Hopkins and Will Fuller, which means Deshaun Watson should probably start lobbying to make this happen as soon as possible.

If the Texans' front office is worried about a potential personality clash between Hopkins and Bryant -- remember, receivers want the ball on every play and don't generally enjoy sharing the spotlight -- it doesn't sound like that would happen. As a matter of fact, Hopkins is actually one of the players on the Texans' roster who wants to see Bryant in Houston.

"I love Dez, I looked up to Dez when I was in college," Hopkins said just before the draft, via the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. "When he was at Oklahoma State, I used to watch his highlights, because we're kind of measured similarly. He's a little bigger than me, but our body type is similar and our style of play. I've

always been a fan of his, so once I saw that the Cowboys dropped him, why not reach out to a guy that can still help a team win?"

The best part for Bryant is that he wouldn't even have to move away from Dallas, which is a big deal, because everyone hates moving. The other best part for Bryant is that he would get a shot at revenge on the Cowboys this season in primetime, because the Texans will be hosting Dallas on Sunday night in Week 5.

As for the Seahawks, after deciding that Russell Wilson doesn't need any offensive linemen, it appears that they've now decided he doesn't need any receivers. Since the beginning of the offseason, the Seahawks have lost both Paul Richardson and Jimmy Graham in free agency and they haven't exactly done a good job of replacing their production. Graham led team in touchdown catches last year (12) while Richardson ranked second on the team in receiving yards (701). The Seahawks seem well aware they need to add someone to their receiving corps, which is probably why they brought in Brandon Marshall for a visit this week. The advantage with Bryant is that he's younger and if nothing else, Wilson can use him solely as a red zone target.

Speaking of red zone targets, the 49ers could probably use one after ranking second-to-last in the NFC last season in red zone scoring percentage. If anyone can figure out how to turn Bryant back into a deadly receiving weapon, it's 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan, who has proven that he can turn nearly anyone into an offensive weapon. With Jimmy Garoppolo throwing him the ball, there's no reason to think that Bryant couldn't approach or even beat the numbers he put up in Dallas last season (69 catches, 838 yards, six touchdowns).

The best part for any of these teams is that they don't even have to commit to Bryant, so there's almost no risk to signing him. Dez has already said he only wants a one-year deal this year so he can prove himself and then hit free agency again in 2019.

Other receivers still available in free agency: Brandon Marshall, Eric Decker, Jeremy Maclin

DeMarco Murray (RB)

Three teams that should target him: Saints, Seahawks, Broncos

At the beginning of the month, the Saints probably weren't even thinking about the possibility of adding a running back, but after Mark Ingram's four-game suspension was announced on May 8, it wouldn't be surprising at all to see New Orleans in the market for one. Although Alvin Kamara will almost certainly become the feature back, no one in New Orleans has any idea if he can handle the beating to his body that would come with being an every down back. Kamara got to split carries with Ingram last season, which was a big reason why he was able to stay healthy and not hit the proverbial rookie wall. Adding a veteran like Murray would make sense, just so Kamara doesn't have to carry the entire rushing load for the first four games of the season. Also, if Murray plays well, the Saints could look to trade Ingram, or even cut him after his suspension. Sorry, Mark, the NFL is a cutthroat world.

As for the Seahawks, well, if you watched them play at all last season, then you understand why they would be interested in signing a running back. In what might go down as the ugliest team rushing performance in NFL history, no Seahawks running back rushed for more than 250 yards on the season and Wilson ended the year as the team's rushing leader with 586 yards. Although the Seahawks did use their

first round pick on a running back this year (Rashaad Penny), it probably wouldn't hurt to bring in a veteran for reinforcements.

On the Broncos' end, they're arguably in a more precarious situation than the Seahawks. Although Denver rushed for 1,852 yards as a team last season, four of the team's five leading rushers from 2017 won't be returning this year -- and we use the term "rushers" very loosely with Denver because two of their top five "rushers" were Brock Osweiler and Trevor Siemian. Although the Broncos have several young running backs -- including two they selected in this year's draft -- it probably wouldn't hurt to bring in a veteran.

Antonio Gates (TE)

Three teams that should target him: Patriots, Falcons, Cowboys

If we've learned one thing about Bill Belichick over the past few years, it's that he loves to stock up on tight ends. Since 2015, the Patriots have either signed or traded for multiple tight ends, including Scott Chandler, Dwayne Allen and Martellus Bennett. This year has been no different as the Patriots have already signed a veteran tight end (Troy Niklas) and added one through the draft (Ian Thomas). Of course, Belichick can never have too many tight ends, which is why Gates landing in New England wouldn't be a total of surprise.

As for the Falcons, they're probably one of the few team that wouldn't be scared away by Gates' age (37). The last time the Falcons employed a 37-year-old All-Pro tight end came in 2012 when they had Tony Gonzalez and things seemed to work out pretty well for both parties that year. Not to mention, the Falcons could probably use a No. 2 tight end after letting Levine Toilolo walk in free agency.

On the Cowboys' end, let's just say it would probably be in their best interest to add a veteran tight end.

Gates could even serve as a mentor for Rico Gathers, who is also trying to make the rare jump from college basketball to successful NFL tight end. Although Jerry Jones has said the Cowboys aren't interested in signing a veteran tight end right now, he also said he might change his mind, so we're keeping them on this list, because Jones loves to change his mind.

Other tight ends still available in free agency: Coby Fleener, Julius Thomas, Mercedes Lewis, Brent Celek

Zane Beadles (OL)

Three teams that should target him: Seahawks, Bills, Vikings

At times last year, Russell Wilson was facing so much defensive pressure that it didn't even seem like the Seahawks had an offensive line on the field. Although the Seahawks signed D.J. Fluker and used a fifth-round pick on tackle Jamarco Jones, the offensive line still isn't a strength for this team. Beadles isn't going to turn the Seahawks offensive line to the top ranked unit in the league, but he's a versatile player who adds depth at multiple positions. During his two seasons with the 49ers, he played every position on the line from left tackle to right guard to center.

The Bills also could use some offensive line depth after being hit hard by retirement this offseason. Over the past three months, both Richie Incognito and Eric Wood have announced they're done with football, although Incognito is already trying to unretire, so there's a small chance he could be back. The Bills also lost starting left tackle Cordy Glenn, who was traded to the Bengals in March.

As for the Vikings, although they have one of the deepest rosters in the NFL, one of their biggest holes is on the interior part of their offensive line and they should be looking to sign anyone who might be able to help them, especially if that person can play guard.

Other offensive lineman still available in free agency: Luke Joeckel, Jahri Evans (Note: Austin Howard would've been on this list, but he signed with the Colts on Wednesday)

Adam Pacman Jones (CB)

Three teams that should target him: Colts, Raiders, Browns

The Colts had one of the worst secondaries in the NFL last season and things didn't definitely get better this year. Not only did they let one starter walk in free agency (Rashaan Melvin), but they didn't select a single defensive back in the draft. Now, signing Pacman Jones won't fix all of their problems in the secondary, or even some of their problems, but if there's one team that could use a veteran presence in the defensive backfield, it's Indy.

The problem with Jones is that he comes with baggage, which means he might actually be best suited to play for someone he's familiar with and that's where the Raiders and Browns both come in. The defensive coordinator in Oakland is Paul Guenther, who helped coach Jones for eight seasons in Cincinnati. As for the Browns, coach Hue Jackson is also familiar with Jones, which could make him a fit there. Let's also not rule out the possibility that the Bengals re-sign him, but at a much lower rate than the \$5.3 million in base salary he was due to make in 2018 before Cincy declined his option in March.

Other cornerbacks still available in free agency: Jeremy Lane, Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie,

Brian Cushing (LB)

Three teams that should target him: Patriots, Chargers, Seahawks

After Dont'a Hightower was lost for the season last October, the Patriots linebacking corps never really recovered. Although the 28-year-old Hightower is expected to be healthy for 2018, it probably wouldn't be a horrible idea for the Patriots to bring in some veteran insurance at the position. Hightower has had a tough time staying healthy over the past few years, missing a total of 22 games since 2014. Of course, you could also argue that adding an equally injury-prone linebacker might not be the answer and I don't think I would disagree with that.

If there's one team out there that could use some veteran linebacker depth at a relatively cheap price, it's the Chargers, which is why Cushing in Los Angeles could make some sense. If you look at the Chargers defense, their secondary and their defensive line are both stacked. As you may have noticed, the one unit that's not listed as being stacked is the team's linebackers. The Chargers should use the second-wave of free agency to beef up their depth at the position.

On the Seahawks' end, Cushing met with them in March and he's highly familiar with coach Pete Carroll, who coached him at USC. The one thing that could keep that Carroll-Cushing reunion from happening, though, is the fact that the Seahawks selected two linebackers in the draft. Although Seahawks roster seems to have a ton of holes -- I mean, we've listed them as a possibility for almost every free agent -- adding Cushing wouldn't be a pressing need.

Other linebackers still available in free agency: Tamba Hali, Lawrence Timmons, Junior Galette, Connor Barwin, NaVorro Bowman.

Johnathan Hankins (DL)

Three teams that should target him: Jets, Lions, Bengals

Hankins is one of the few free agents left on the market who could make an instant impact no matter where he signs. That fact that he's even a free agent at all is somewhat surprising considering he had a pretty impressive season with the Colts last year. Despite the fact that he was arguably the best player on Indy's defensive line last season, the team still released him even though he was under contract for two more years. With the Colts getting set to move from a 3-4 defense to a 4-3, the team decided they had no more use for the 26-year-old, who registered 44 tackles, two sacks and five quarterback hits in 2017.

Any team that's looking for a run-stuffing defensive lineman should give Hankins a call. In Detroit, Hankins could potentially fill the void left after Akeem Spence was traded to the Dolphins. With the Bengals, Hankins would have a chance to dominate because he would be paired up on the line with All-Pro defensive tackle Geno Atkins. As for the Jets, Hankins visited with them earlier this offseason, so there's definitely some mutual interest there.

Other defensive linemen still available in free agency: Alan Branch, Karl Klug, Terrell McClain

Tre Boston (S)

Three teams that should target him: Cowboys, Rams, Cardinals

The Cowboys haven't really been hiding the fact that they've been looking around for a safety this offseason. If you followed them at all over the past month, then you're probably well aware that they made a strong push to trade for Earl Thomas. With Byron Jones making the move from safety to corner, it would probably make sense for the Cowboys to add at least one more safety to their roster before training camp begins, wouldn't you agree, Stephen Jones?

The safety market is actually one of the most interesting offseason stories in the NFL right now, and that's mainly cause there's still several highly talented players available. Although you'll sometimes see one or two players slip through the cracks of the March free agency window, you'll almost never see more than that. With safeties, we're two months into a free agency and talented players like Boston, Kenny Vaccaro and Eric Reid are still available. Of course, all three of those guys have one thing in common and that thing is that they protested racial inequality during the national anthem at certain points last year, which may or may not be why they haven't really received any offers. Reid thinks that's exactly the reason why he hasn't gotten any offers, which is why he filed a collusion case against the NFL.

Other safeties still available in free agency: Eric Reid, Kenny Vaccaro, Mike Mitchell, Tyvon Branch, T.J. Ward, Mike Mitchell.

The Matt Patricia Fallout: How Could the Lions Not Know?

By Tim Rohan and Jenny Vrentas

MMQB

May 11, 2018

With additional reporting by Albert Breer, Conor Orr and Kalyn Kahler

Joe and Gail King heard about it Thursday morning, when a family friend called to ask if they had seen the news. The Detroit News published a story late Wednesday night detailing a sexual assault accusation made against Matt Patricia, the new head coach of the Detroit Lions and perhaps the most famous person to ever come through Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's football program, where Joe King was head coach for more than two decades.

"I was amazed," King said by phone Thursday. "I'm going to be honest with you, I never heard anything about it, which is kind of hard to believe. ... This is the first I've heard of it. Honest to God."

The incident in question occurred in the spring of 1996, toward the end of Patricia's senior year of college. Patricia and a friend, Greg Dietrich, were on a spring-break trip to South Padre Island in Texas. A 21-year-old woman alleged that the two of them broke into her room and sexually assaulted her. In August, 1996, a grand jury indicted Patricia and Dietrich each on one charge of aggravated sexual assault. But the charges were dropped in January 1997 when the accuser did not show up for court. A court document included the hand-written note: "Victim is unable to testify and can not give a date certain when she will be available. Victim does not feel she can face the pressures or stress of a trial. Victim may request that the case be refiled at a later date."

While this was all playing out, King hired Patricia to be a graduate assistant for the RPI football team in the fall of 1996. At the time, King said, he had no idea that Patricia had been accused of a crime.

"I'm sure we interviewed him, and I'm sure he filled out some paperwork, and I'm sure the school did some kind of a check on him," King said. "But I don't recall anything like that."

After leaving RPI, Patricia rose through the coaching ranks, making stops at Amherst College and Syracuse before landing with the New England Patriots, where he spent 14 years working his way up from offensive assistant to defensive coordinator, winning three Super Bowls along the way. When the Lions hired him as their head coach this offseason, NFL pundits generally lauded the move. Patricia was considered one of the brightest minds and best assistant coaches in the game.

It turns out, Joe King wasn't the only one kept in the dark. As Patricia interviewed for all those jobs over the years, he said in a press conference on Thursday, the 1996 sexual assault accusation never came up. "It never came up as anything, because it was dismissed, and I was innocent, so it just has never been part of any [job hiring] process that I've been involved with before," Patricia said at a press conference Thursday.

The Lions appear to have had no idea about the incident before the Detroit News published its report on Wednesday. When Robert Snell, the reporter who wrote the story, approached team president Rod

Wood, “I don’t know anything about this.” The Patriots also released a statement on Thursday saying that they, too, had not been previously aware of the accusation against Patricia.

- THE LEGAL FALLOUT OF MATT PATRICIA’S SEXUAL ASSAULT INDICTMENT: Could the Lions cut ties with Patricia? Could Patricia be sued or re-charged with a crime? SI’s legal analyst explains what legal action likely took place back in 1996 and what legal action Patricia could potentially face now.

The revelation of the 1996 incident has raised several questions about the Lions’ hiring practices.

1) How could the Lions not be aware of the indictment?

The Lions told the Detroit News that their background check searched only for criminal convictions.

In an e-mail to The MMQB, Snell wrote that he “ran across the indictment while conducting a routine check of public records that are widely and readily available—even after 22 years.”

Deadspin published a story on Thursday titled, “We Found Matt Patricia’s Sexual Assault Indictment In 30 Seconds. Why Didn’t The Detroit Lions?” MMQB staff writer Kalyn Kahler was able to find the indictment via Nexis in a similarly short amount of time.

Besides the Lions, five teams interviewed Patricia for head-coaching vacancies between 2016 and ’18. A source from one of those teams told The MMQB that he was unaware of the 1996 incident because Patricia was never a finalist for their vacancy, but believed his organization would have uncovered the indictment through a background check had they brought Patricia in for a second interview.

As of Thursday morning, Victoria Cisneros, the District Attorney’s Office Spokeswoman, said their office had not received direct communication from any NFL clubs or the league office inquiring about the case, though the New York Times reported that the NFL will conduct a formal investigation.

The Detroit News reported that APG Security, a New Jersey-based private investigations firm, requested copies of the indictment and dismissal from the county prosecutor’s office. (Presumably, APG was working on behalf of an NFL team.)

2) Had the Lions known about the accusation, would they have still hired Patricia?

For a story on the NFL hiring process, reported by The MMQB’s Conor Orr and Jonathan Jones last winter, Jed Hughes, the leader of NFL executive search firm Korn/Ferry, said this:

“I would say from my perspective, that would be my first recommendation to a client. If you have anything [involving domestic violence or sexual assault], you don’t want them.

“When we hire, we use an outside group called the Mintz Group [private investigators] and they go into the court records and all that kind of stuff. There’s another level of due diligence with them in the court and all the public records that we don’t have access to.”

Four years ago, the franchise received criticism for hiring University of Tennessee offensive coordinator Jim Bob Cooter as offensive coordinator. Cooter had been charged with aggravated burglary in 2009 after

allegedly climbing through a woman's bedroom window, stripping down to his underwear and getting in her bed. (A record of that arrest no longer exists.)

3) Did the Lions do a thorough job following-up on the accusation?

In a statement released Wednesday night, the Lions said that they spoke with Patricia and his attorney "at length" about the incident.

What's unclear is whether the team made any effort to gather facts beyond his side of the story. Did they reach out to law enforcement? The prosecutors' office? Dietrich? The accuser?

The Lions did not respond to specific questions from The MMQB; a spokesperson said they stand by a statement attributed to owner Martha Firestone Ford, general manager Bob Quinn and Wood, which read in part: "Coach Patricia was the subject of a standard pre-employment background check which did not disclose this issue. We have spoken to Coach Patricia about this at length as well as the attorney who represented him at the time. Based upon everything we have learned, we believe and have accepted Coach Patricia's explanation and we will continue to support him."

The MMQB was unable to contact the accuser through phone calls.

4) What did Patricia reveal to the Lions that would cause them to support him so vigorously and so quickly?

In the Detroit News story, Rod Wood responded to Snell "hours" after first learning of the 1996 incident. "I am very comfortable with the process of interviewing and employing Matt," Wood told Snell. "I will tell you with 1,000-percent certainty that everything I've learned confirmed what I already knew about the man and would have no way changed our decision to make him our head coach."

Wood also told Snell that the victim in the 1996 incident had recanted her allegation multiple times—a claim that, Snell points out, is not substantiated.

In its official statement, the team also made a point to note that, at the time of the incident, "Matt was 21 at the time and on spring break in Texas."

It's unclear why the revelation of a sexual assault accusation and dismissal would make the Lions more confident in their decision to hire Patricia. Or why the team included his age and the fact that the alleged incident occurred during spring break, emphasizing what they seem to view as mitigating factors—unnecessary if they are confident in his innocence.

- THE HIRING PROCESS FOR AN NFL HEAD COACH: A look at how teams vet head-coaching hires, and how they present them to the public.

At Patricia's Thursday press conference, the Detroit media asked him some tough questions—questions the Lions should have asked before hiring him. But Patricia did little to shed light on the 1996 incident, other than to say he was "falsely accused" and proclaim his innocence:

What happened on the night in question?

Patricia: "Again, I think what's important here, what happened 22 years ago is what didn't happen. As I said, I was innocent then and I am innocent now. I was falsely accused of something that I did not do."

There was a grand jury indictment. Can you explain why you were indicted, even though the charges were dropped?

Patricia: "Again, I was accused of something that I did not do. I went through the process and the case was dismissed."

Were you in the room with the girl and was there consensual sex?

Patricia: "Again, I did nothing wrong. And that's all I'm going to say on that matter."

At the time of the press conference, Joe King, Patricia's college coach, was still trying to wrap his head around the accusation, how something as serious as a sexual assault indictment would not have come across his radar. He remembered Patricia as a grinder, an "exemplary student and citizen," a backup who worked his way into the starting lineup. Dietrich had been a team captain their senior year.

"I always used to tell the kids, 'I don't want to hear it from somebody calling me. If something goes on, tell me. Be a man about it.' Nothing was ever said," King said.

"I mean, I coached for 40 years. I never had anything—it's just never come up, you know? That's a lot of kids, and ... I don't know. At least back then, you never expected anything like that."

Lions Coach Matt Patricia Faces N.F.L. Review of 1996 Sex Assault Allegations

By Kevin Draper
New York Times
May 11, 2018

The N.F.L. has announced that it will look into a sexual assault allegation made in the 1990s against Matt Patricia, the newly hired coach of the Detroit Lions. “We will review the matter with the club to understand the allegations and what the club has learned,” Brian McCarthy, an N.F.L. spokesman, said.

The Detroit News reported Wednesday that in 1996, Patricia, who was 21 at the time, and a friend were arrested while on spring break in South Padre Island, Tex. A woman accused them of entering her hotel room and sexually assaulting her. Patricia and the friend were indicted by a grand jury on a charge of aggravated sexual assault, but the case collapsed after the alleged victim declined to testify. It never went to trial.

At a news conference on Thursday, Patricia proclaimed his innocence. “I’m here to defend my honor and clear my name,” he said in his opening statement. “Twenty-two years ago I was falsely accused of very serious allegations.”

Patricia wouldn’t say whether he had consensual sex with the alleged victim or otherwise explain what happened on the night in question, besides reiterating his innocence and that the charges were false. He said he had never been asked about the allegations during his lengthy football career, and that he did not lie during his interview with the Lions.

The Lions’ team president, Rod Wood, and their owner, Martha Ford, told The Detroit News that they were not aware of the allegation, and that the team’s background check of Patricia was “limited to employment matters only.” In a statement released after the publication of the Detroit News report, the Lions said that they “believe and have accepted Coach Patricia’s explanation and we will continue to support him.”

At the time of the alleged assault, Patricia was an aeronautical engineering major and offensive lineman at Division III Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y. He became a graduate assistant at R.P.I. after graduating in 1996, and took a series of college coaching jobs before joining the New England Patriots in 2004, as an assistant. He rose to defensive coordinator, a position he held for six years before being hired by the Lions this off-season.

In recent years, the N.F.L., as part of its personal conduct policy, has increasingly punished its players for incidents that occur off the field, such as domestic violence. In some cases, the N.F.L. has assessed penalties, such as suspensions, even if the conduct does not result in legal proceedings.

It was unclear whether Patricia would be subjected to that policy for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the accusation might have been fabricated. Also, whatever may or may not have occurred 22 years ago happened long before Patricia entered the N.F.L. and years before the current conduct policy was put into effect.

NFL Will Review Decades-Old Sexual Assault Allegation Against Lions Coach Matt Patricia

By Andrew Beaton
Wall Street Journal
May 11, 2018

The NFL will review a decades-old sexual assault allegation against new Detroit Lions head coach Matt Patricia that resurfaced late Wednesday.

The Detroit News reported that, 22 years ago, Patricia and a friend were indicted by a Texas grand jury for aggravated sexual assault of a woman. Patricia's accuser did not testify, and the charge was later dismissed.

Patricia, who was hired by the Lions after last season, said on Thursday that he is innocent and described the accusation from 1996 as false.

"I'm here to defend my honor and clear my name," Patricia said at a news conference. "I was innocent then, and I am innocent now."

Patricia said he has never lied about the incident and that it did not come up in his interview process with the Lions. He did not say whether he had consensual sex with the woman during the night in question, but said he did "nothing wrong."

According to the court documents, the victim said she was "unable to testify" and "does not feel she can face the pressures or stress of a trial."

In a statement, Lions owner Martha Firestone Ford and team executives said they support Patricia and that this did not come up during the standard pre-employment background check before he was hired as the team's head coach. Their statement said there was no settlement agreement in the case.

An NFL spokesman said the league will "review the matter with the club to understand the allegations and what the club has learned."

Patricia, 43 years old, is entering his first year as a head coach after years of becoming one of the sport's unlikeliest rising stars on the sidelines. He was 21 years old at the time of the allegation and was attending RPI, where he played on the school's Division III football team and graduated with a degree in aeronautical engineering. He began his career as a graduate assistant there, before later working at Amherst and Syracuse.

Then, in 2004, he landed his break as a coaching assistant with the New England Patriots, where he rose on coach Bill Belichick's staff and became famous as a brainiac with a bushy beard. In 2012, he became the team's defensive coordinator, the same role he served in until the Lions hired him to be head coach.

In a statement, Patriots coach Bill Belichick said the Patriots "were not aware of the matter which recently came to light" and that during Patricia's time with the organization he "conducted himself with great integrity."

Broncos get seven draft picks under contract, including Courtland Sutton

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

May 11, 2018

The Broncos have seven of their 10 draft picks under contract, according to Mike Klis of 9News. It leaves only first-rounder Bradley Chubb and third-rounders Royce Freeman and Isaac Yiadom unsigned.

Denver agreed to terms with second-round receiver Courtland Sutton, fourth-round linebacker Josey Jewell, fourth-round receiver DaeSean Hamilton, fifth-round tight end Troy Fumagalli, sixth-round guard Sam Jones, fifth-round linebacker Keishawn Bierria and seventh-round running back David Williams.

Sutton was the 40th overall choice.

He made 195 catches for 3,220 yards and 31 receiving touchdowns in his career at SMU.

Patricia case has plenty of unanswered questions

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
May 11, 2018

The sudden disclosure on Wednesday night that Lions coach Matt Patricia was indicted in 1996 for aggravated sexual assault created an assortment of P.R. options for Patricia. He could have said nothing at all, he could have issued a written statement but otherwise said nothing verbally, he could have issued a written statement, supplemented it with verbal comments, and otherwise taken no questions, or he could have issued a written statement, issued verbal comments, and answered all questions, fully and completely.

Patricia opted for a hybrid of the last two options, issuing a written statement, making verbal comments at a Thursday press conference, and then attempting to answer questions by reciting sound bites and buzz words without directly and fully answering the questions.

Which, of course, raises more questions. We know that Patricia was indicted for aggravated sexual assault. We know that the case was dismissed because the alleged victim decided not to testify at trial. We know that the dismissed indictment never came up during any of Patricia's job interviews, either with NFL teams or elsewhere. We know that the Lions (and presumably the league office) otherwise didn't know about the issue before the Lions hired Patricia to be the head coach.

We don't know whether Patricia was interviewed by police and, if so, what he said. We don't know whether Patricia testified before the grand jury and, if so, what he said.

We don't know his defense to the claim of aggravated sexual assault, beyond a general and blanket assertion that the accusations are false and that he did nothing wrong. We don't know whether he claims that consensual sex occurred, or that no sexual activity happened.

Do we have a right to know any of these things, or is it none of our business? That's a fair question, and reasonable minds may differ as to the answer. On one hand, Patricia has provided a broad denial to a broad claim. In the absence of specific allegations, there's arguably no reason for Patricia to provide specifics.

On the other hand, by attempting to secure an acquittal in the court of public opinion, Patricia arguably has opened the door to a wide variety of questions regarding what didn't happen — and what did — on the night in question.

If he'd said nothing at all, or if he'd simply issued a written statement, maybe he could get by without answering questions. By fielding questions without really answering them, Patricia has as a practical matter waved the green flag for the effort among reporters to secure the facts that Patricia has chosen not to provide during Thursday's effort to "defend my honor and clear my name."

Right, wrong, or otherwise, the incident that's now older than Patricia was when it happened (or didn't) has officially become a story, because Patricia chose to engage it. Which means that reporters will indeed be trying to resolve the unanswered questions — and that someone will surely try to get the alleged victim to tell her story.

Where it all goes from here remains to be seen. But with numerous outlets covering the story, chances are that updates will arrive during future news cycles, with the team and, more importantly, the league office monitoring the situation in order to ensure that the P.R. fallout doesn't force action that the Lions clearly don't want to take.

Matt Patricia reiterates his innocence during press conference

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
May 11, 2018

Lions coach Matt Patricia met with reporters on Thursday, as part of a previously-scheduled press conference. He opened by making a statement regarding the story that surfaced on Wednesday evening of an indictment from 1996 on a charge of aggravated sexual assault. After his statement ended, he took roughly 13 questions.

“I’m here to defend my honor and clear my name,” Patricia said, reading from a prepared text. “Twenty-two years ago I was falsely accused of something very serious, very serious allegations. There were claims made about me that never happened. While I’m thankful on one level that the process worked and the case was dismissed, at the same time I was never given the opportunity to defend myself or to allow to push back with the truth to clear my name. This was something that was very traumatic to me when I was 21 years old, and once it was finally addressed, I tried to put it behind me.

“For those of you that are just getting to know me and those that have known me for a long time, you should know that I was raised the right way by two amazing parents who taught me to know the difference between right and wrong. To stand up for what’s right, and to stand up for those who’ve been wronged. I have two older sisters that taught me respect and love. I’ve always tried to protect them, and keep them from harm. I am a husband and a father to a wonderful and amazing family. I try to share those values with them. I am so thankful to my wife and family for being supportive of me. I believe and have always acted with a respect for all people, knowing that everyone is someone’s dad, mom, sister, brother, son, or daughter.

“I do not condone any of the type of behavior that has been alleged, and I never have. I have always been someone who respects and protects the rights of anyone who has been harassed or has been the victim of violence, and we as an organization will continue to operate that way. In these times, we need to be even more sensitive and responsible in dealing with these issues and separate right from wrong. Thankfully, truth is on my side.

“I lived with the mental torture of a situation where facts can be completely ignored or misrepresented with disregard to the consequence and pain that it would create for another person. I find it unfair and upsetting that someone would bring up this claim over two decades later for the sole purpose of hurting my family, my friends, and this organization, with the intention of trying to damage my character and credibility. I was innocent then, and am innocent now.

“Let me be clear, my priorities remain the same. To move forward and strive to be the best teacher, coach, and man that I can possibly be.”

Patricia first was asked whether he thought the issue would never come up, especially in the wake of the #MeToo movement. He explained that he began interviewing for jobs not long after the incident was resolved, and that “it never was an issue.”

Next came the question of what happened on the night in question, which resulted in Patricia and a college football teammate/fraternity brother being accused of entering a woman's hotel room and sexually assaulting her while on spring break.

"Again, I think what's important here is what happened 22 years ago is what didn't happen," Patricia said. "As I said, I was innocent then, I am innocent now. I was falsely accused of something I did not do."

He then was asked how the situation could have resulted in a grand jury indictment, if it was a false accusation.

"Again, I was accused of something I did not do," Patricia said. "I went through the process, and the case was dismissed."

Patricia thereafter avoided a question regarding whether he was in the woman's hotel room, and whether consensual sex happened.

"Again, I did nothing wrong, and that's all I'm going to say on that matter," Patricia said.

He explained in response to the next question that he doesn't regret not disclosing the incident to the Lions, because it never came up in any of his various job interviews, and he said that he never failed to be truthful with the Lions.

"My mission is to move forward and be the best coach I can be," he said. "I am absolutely 100 percent the head coach of the Detroit Lions."

Patricia exited while reporters were still asking questions, and the effort to "clear his name" ultimately did not include many (any) specifics. That said, his denial seemed heartfelt and genuine. The only lingering question is whether the alleged victim will decide, more than two decades after not telling her story in open court, to tell her story to the court of public opinion. Unless and until she does, there's no reason to give Patricia anything other than the benefit of the doubt, and to respect his ongoing presumption of innocence.