

Denver Broncos team up with Special Olympics Colorado for Play 60 event

By Kyle Frederickson
The Denver Post
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Broncos place-kicker Brandon McManus has worked with Special Olympics dating to his time as a high school student in Pennsylvania. Tuesday at Dove Valley, he was reminded exactly why he continues to volunteer.

The Broncos welcomed about 125 Special Olympics Colorado athletes to its indoor practice facility through the NFL's Play 60 campaign for an hour-long event with select players, along with cheerleaders and mascot Miles, to run various football drills.

McManus, leading a running back agility workout, was caught by surprise when one attendee took charge, unannounced, while breaking down a huddle.

"Teamwork on three," the attendee said. McManus followed his lead.

"Seeing these kids out here encouraging one another and clapping for one another, it's just really moving and empowering for me," McManus said, "and makes me want to do what I do even more."

Special Olympics athletes rotated through four stations to practice several football techniques. Other notable Broncos in attendance included quarterback Chad Kelly, tight end Jeff Heurman and cornerback Brendan Langley.

"(The players) are so great," said Mindy Watrous, president and CEO of Special Olympics Colorado. "They'll kneel down and take the time to talk and understand. To show them how to put their fingers on the laces and to do all of that ... They were like miraculous in their kindness and their 100 percent commitment to what's happening here today."

When organized team activities (OTAs) begin next week, second-year Broncos linebacker Joseph Jones will work toward keeping his roster spot as a valued member on special teams. But those goals were on hold Tuesday as Jones found fulfillment working with Special Olympians.

"Everyone thinks that community service is about making the people that we're serving smile," Jones said. "For me, it always makes me smile more than I feel like it makes them smile."

The love is mutual.

"They will talk about it for months and years to come," Watrous said. "It is incredibly meaningful to them."

Elway gives deposition in Kaepernick collusion case

By Mike Klis

9 News

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Broncos general manager John Elway gave an hour-long deposition Tuesday to lawyers of Colin Kaepernick in the quarterback's collusion grievance against the NFL, sources told 9NEWS.

The deposition was held at Broncos headquarters. Kaepernick attended the deposition.

Kaepernick is claiming NFL teams are colluding to keep him from playing quarterback in part because of his controversial protests against what he perceives as social injustice in this country by first sitting, then kneeling during the playing of the National Anthem prior to NFL games. Kaepernick demonstrated his position during the 2016 season while playing for the San Francisco 49ers. He has not played since he opted out of his contract following that season.

Also deposed by Kaepernick's lawyers were Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, Baltimore general manager Ozzie Newsome and head coach John Harbaugh, Seattle general manager John Schneider and head coach Pete Carroll and NFL owners Stephen Ross and Bob McNair.

What makes Elway unique from the others was he was the last NFL executive who offered Kaepernick a job. Elway was trying to acquire Kaepernick from the San Francisco 49ers in the offseason leading up to the 2016 season – weeks after the Broncos won Super Bowl 50 – but it was Kaepernick who nixed the deal because he would not accept a pay cut.

Elway was in discussions with Kaepernick and the 49ers about a trade until a week before the 2016 NFL Draft. When Kaepernick continued to nix the deal because of money, Elway moved on and took Paxton Lynch in the first round of the 2016 draft.

Although Kaepernick began his National Anthem demonstrations after he nixed the trade to the Broncos, Elway already had his quarterback room set, first with Trevor Siemian, Mark Sanchez and Lynch; then with Siemian, Lynch and Chad Kelly and now with Case Keenum -- who led the Minnesota Vikings to the NFC Championship Game last season -- Lynch and Chad Kelly.

Heuerman ready in year 4 to become Broncos' No. 1 tight end

By Mike Klis

9 News

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There has been considerable chatter recently about the Broncos new rookie class - deservedly so. But there are times when Bronco fans need to get reintroduced to promising rookies of recent years.

Ladies and gentlemen, once again: Jeff Heuerman.

Much as Jake Butt gets most of the media attention around here, Heuerman is the Broncos' No. 1 tight end this offseason. And with Butt missing his rookie season in 2017, Heuerman is the likely starter for 2018.

"It's going to be fun. It's going to be exciting," Heuerman said after he was the Broncos headline player who participated in the team's Play 60 event Tuesday evening at the Pat Bowlen Fieldhouse. "I've been fortunate to learn from some older tight ends the last couple of years and I'm ready. I'm ready to take on that leadership role that No.1 role and go from there."

Besides Heuerman at tight end, Connor McGovern, a fifth-round draft pick in 2016, has been rotating at right guard with Menelik Watson. Watson was the Broncos' starting right tackle last season until he suffered a season-ending foot injury. The Broncos are taking a look at him at guard this offseason knowing he has the flexibility to play tackle.

Billy Turner is working at right tackle as Jared Veldheer continues to mend. Veldheer missed the final three games with Arizona last year because of an ankle injury. Veldheer is expected to return during the offseason. Max Garcia, who started the past two seasons at left guard, is now working behind Ron Leary at that position.

Fact is, rarely does a rookie start. Even Bradley Chubb, the No. 5 overall draft pick, may not start. A team's new starters each year are usually players who have been around long enough to receive a promotion.

The Broncos do believe Butt can eventually develop into a franchise-type tight end. But he is essentially in his first season after he spent last season mending from surgery on his right ACL, an injury suffered in his final college game for Michigan.

Heuerman understands. He was a third-round draft pick out of Ohio State in 2015. I interviewed him for 9NEWS on his first day at the Broncos' facility.

A week later, Heuerman suffered a torn ACL on a kickoff coverage drill during rookie minicamp. The next year was hampered by soft-tissue leg injuries common with those coming off torn ACLs. He started to come on last season, his third in the NFL.

It's been a longer-than-expected journey to the top of the depth chart for Heuerman but he's there now.

“It’s obviously not how you draw it up,” Heurman said. “But adversity is part of sports. Part of life. You’ve just got to keep going and here we are going into year four.

“I was taught at a young age to work hard, keep your mouth shut and in the end, good things can happen. Be a good person. That’s what I try to do and here we are four years later and you’re still interviewing me. I’m good.”

Athletic trainer group that 'Greek' built elects Courtney, Mathewson to Hall of Fame

By Mike Klis

9 News

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Back in 1977, an ambitious, young, Broncos' assistant trainer named Steve "Greek" Antonopoulos helped start the Colorado Athletic Trainers' Association.

The idea was for trainers around the state to share ideas and techniques so that all athletes from the youth level to high school to state colleges to the professional level received the best, up-to-date, medical care and rehab.

"We expound on each other's abilities and try to keep updated on state and national guidelines," Antonopoulos said.

There were only 14 members in CATA in its infancy. Today there are more than 800 members. And from that group, Shannon Courtney, a longtime faculty member at Greek's alma mater of the University of Northern Colorado, and Chris Mathewson of Ponderosa High School, are the newest members of the CATA Hall of Fame.

Courtney has spent close to 27 years at Northern Colorado. She has also worked at Colorado College, Overland High School and the Denver Bronco Sports Medicine Clinics.

At Northern Colorado, she was a faculty member in the school of Natural and Health Sciences and currently serves as Clinical Education Coordinator. She has taught approximately 300 student trainers.

"I've had an opportunity to be around Shannon for a number of years," Antonopoulos said in a statement. "She worked for the same mentor as I did at the University of Northern Colorado and does a great job as the head of clinical education for the athletic training curriculum. She has been a stalwart in CATA in addition to being a leader at the state and national level. She is a great person and a great athletic trainer."

Mathewson is in his 24th season with the Ponderosa Mustangs. During his six-year term as past president of CATA, Mathewson was instrumental in the passage of a state regulatory law for athletic trainers.

"Chris Mathewson has been a national and state level leader in the athletic training field for a number of years," said Antonopoulos, a CATA Hall of Famer himself and past president. "He's done a tremendous job for our local organization and helped increase our registration process at the state level as well.

He's a great man and runs a great program at Ponderosa and Douglas County."

The CATA board of directors also recently elected Jim Keller as president. Bronco fans might remember the name. He was Antonopoulos' assistant trainer with the Broncos from 1994-2003. Keller currently runs Next Level Sports Performance in Golden.

“I am honored and humbled to follow in my mentor Steve Antonopulos’ footsteps as the newest CATA President,” Keller said. “Colorado has such a strong history of Certified Athletic Trainers, and we are proud to represent the more than 800 members who are committed to being at the forefront of the athletic training profession.

“We are privileged to add Shannon and Chris to our elite group of Hall of Fame members.”

John Elway deposed in Colin Kaepernick collusion case

By Nicki Jhabvala

The Athletic

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John Elway was the latest NFL executive to testify in the Colin Kaepernick collusion case, an NFL source confirmed.

The Broncos' general manager was deposed at the team's headquarters Tuesday morning, with Kaepernick in attendance.

Kaepernick was spotted at Denver International Airport in the afternoon, raising speculation of some sort of Broncos connection to his visit.

It was only two years ago that the Broncos tried to acquire Kaepernick to vie with Mark Sanchez for the starting job in the wake of Peyton Manning's retirement.

Elway was in deep discussions with the 49ers on a possible trade, and he met with Kaepernick multiple times throughout the process. But the deal was contingent upon Kaepernick taking a significant pay cut to lower his salary-cap hit, and Kaepernick declined.

The Broncos' selection of Paxton Lynch in the first round put an end to the Kaepernick discussions.

Kaepernick filed a grievance case against the league last year, claiming NFL owners conspired to not sign him because of protests during the national anthem.

Kaepernick opted out of his contract with the 49ers in March 2017 and has not played in an NFL game since Jan. 1, 2017.

Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall, a former University of Nevada teammate of Kaepernick's, joined the protests in 2016 to bring attention to social injustice and police brutality. Marshall took a knee during the anthem for the first eight weeks of the season, then decided to stand again, in part, because the Denver Police Department revised its use-of-force policy.

When asked about the protests last summer during joint training camp practices with the 49ers in California, Elway said "everybody has the right to do what they wish to do and their beliefs are their beliefs" but "one thing that where we stand and I can stand with the Broncos is that you know what, that's OK, we'll respect that and whatever you want to do is fine with us. But the bottom line is, that can't get in the way of our main goal and that is to compete for World Championships."

In testifying, Elway joins a lengthy list of NFL executives, owners, coaches and league officials who have already been deposed in the case, including commissioner Roger Goodell, NFL executive vice president Troy Vincent, Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, Patriots owner Robert Kraft, Texans owner Bob McNair, Ravens coach John Harbaugh and former Ravens GM Ozzie Newsome, Dolphins owner Stephen Ross, Seahawks coach Pete Carroll and Seahawks GM John Schneider.

9News first reported Elway's deposition.

Seeking that extra percentage point: How the Broncos have grown to embrace football analytics

By Nicki Jhabvala

The Athletic

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On a video screen inside the Broncos' expansive training room, a clip from Super Bowl 50 flashed before a crowd of more than 120 high school coaches. It was third-and-1, with Denver, lined up at Carolina's 5-yard line, ahead 10-7 midway through the second quarter. Peyton Manning fielded the snap and handed it off to C.J. Anderson, who ran up the middle and was stopped inches short of a first down.

The clip paused.

"Show of hands. Who's keeping their offense out on the field?" Mitch Tanney, the Broncos' director of football analytics, asked the coaches in attendance. "This is your team. Think about it in terms of your team. Who's keeping the offense out on the field?"

A few hands begrudgingly raised.

"Who's kicking it?" Tanney asked.

More hands shot up.

The reasons for each varied. One coach didn't have a kicker. Another said he'd be annoyed he failed to get a first down on the previous try. Another said he wanted the points. Another said he felt confident in his defense, so if his team failed to get a first down, it could get regain possession quickly and try again.

Here's what really happened on that play: Gary Kubiak decided to go for it. The Broncos lined up, with two receivers out wide, and Manning handed the ball off to Anderson again, who eked out a first down. But a flag was thrown and Broncos guard Louis Vasquez was called for holding, backing them up 10 yards and forcing them to kick a 33-yard field goal. Brandon McManus nailed it.

Good decision, right?

Tanney stops the tape, turns to the crowd and shows a slide with three different calculations. Kubiak's decision to go for it that afternoon in Santa Clara, Calif., didn't come from a simple yay or nay. There was math involved, based on the probabilities Tanney and his staff studied exhaustively beforehand. And his calculations resulted in a large point-value difference between going for it and kicking it.

So on fourth-and-1, Kubiak kept his offense on the field and, well, it all worked out pretty well for the Broncos.

Since 2015, the Broncos have used Tanney and their growing analytics department to supplement the work of their personnel and coaching staffs. Football evaluation still drives the decision-making, but John Elway's embrace of analytics has added another layer to the process in helping to make in-game decisions,

to monitor the performance of players during practice, to evaluate league-wide trends, to analyze prospects ahead of the draft, to even parse through contract decisions.

The end game is simple, if minimal, as Tanney tried to explain to those at the high school coaching clinic Monday night. It's about process and decisions. It's about pragmatism, but also percentage points.

"In my opinion, there's a perception in the public that at the end of an NFL regular season, that there is a huge disparity between the top teams in the league and the bottom teams in the league. I could not disagree more," he said. "If you look at a 13-3 NFL team and a 6-10 NFL team or a 5-11 NFL team, a lot of times, the differences between those two teams is minimal. ... What we try to do from our group is to squeeze out 1 percent or 2 percent. Some areas it could be 5 percent, it could be 10 percent. But we're trying to move the needle toward a win, toward a better decision. We're constantly seeking that extra percentage point."

The gears started to turn as the coaches watched Tanney's 45-minute presentation intently. The numbers made sense, the approach did too, even if the tools used to get there were foreign.

Perhaps it was the matrix, the philosophy Tanney and his small team abide by in guiding Broncos' staff. "Good outcome" and "bad outcome" headed the two columns. The rows were divided between "good process" and "bad process."

"We want to live in this square," Tanney said, pointing to the "deserved success" that resulted from a good process and good outcome.

"If we're constantly here," he said, pointing to "poetic justice" from a bad process and bad outcome, "I'm out of a job."

The Broncos must believe Tanney and his staff are doing a good job, because the group of one from 2015 will soon expand to a group of three. The Broncos added football analyst Scott Flaska in 2016 to work under Tanney, and they are also discussing beginning a football analyst internship program. The football information systems department, led by Tony Lazzaro, works side-by-side with the analytical department and could grow to a three-person operation, too.

The new hires are, in large part, to pore over a recent data dump from the league.

Through Zebra Technology, the NFL has been tracking every movement of every player on every team for the last three seasons, and it just recently released all the data to the 32 teams. Embedded is a wealth of information. But interpretation is needed, and the growing staff in Denver signals a true buy-in from the top to find the value.

"I'm not here if there's no appetite for it," Tanney said.

A former quarterback out of Monmouth College, Tanney was the 2005 Midwest Conference offensive player of the year and a runner-up for Division III player of the year. He graduated Summa Cum Laude in 2006 as a double major in mathematics and Spanish, and was prepared to leave his playing days behind when a club team in Sweden called. Tanney was an assistant at Monmouth as he bounced from Sweden to various AFL teams and the IFL before going back to school to get his MBA, at the University of Iowa. It was there that he studied marketing and was introduced to the growing world of sports analytics.

Tanney went on to work for STATS, LLC, as a manager of football products and sports analytics, then was swooped by the Bears before the Broncos got to him in 2015.

Tanney is now one of the primary players in a budding area of pro football. Where Major League Baseball and the NBA have embraced the use of advanced stats and new technologies for years, the NFL is arguably still in the infant stages. There is still pushback, from the league and the coaches, who most recently opted against the use of live video on the sidelines during games.

For the second time in three years, the NFL's competition committee proposed a bylaw change to allow for video on their Microsoft Surface Tablets, which they use now to view still images.

The vote was a vehement "no."

But not all coaches have fought the advancement of technology in the game.

"I think going to Miami really helped me embrace the analytics part of it," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "We had four or five guys doing it. An advantage you have, in my opinion, with the draft is having certain portals of guys that have been successful in positions as far as being 6-foot-3, being 6-2, running a 4.5 — those guys were great rushers. I think analytics were a big deal in Miami for us. Obviously game-planning and prepping for games, those deals were huge for us as far as advance scouting. I think it's important. It's not going anywhere. It's going to be here for a while."

On Broncos game days, Joseph has a wire to Tanney in the booth, where he's limited to his week's worth of research and calculations to prepare for this opponent. There is no live stats feed, that reporters eye closely during games. There is no video stream.

"We do as much as we can during the week, not only from an analysis standpoint, but from a conversation standpoint," Tanney said. "We need to talk through things during the week because when the play clock is running and the game clock is running, you have a very limited amount of time to make a decision.

"It's also a challenge that we have to be creative in the ways that we work during the week so that we can prepare for game day and have the things that we need on game day."

In between Sundays, Tanney is tasked with not only dissecting the Broncos film, but that of every other game around the league. Every play is charted and cut up, with the notables sent over to the coaching staff for review and even presentation to the team.

The same approach is taken before the draft, as Tanney and his staff did extensive research and modeling to better equip Elway and his scouts as they added 10 new drafted rookies to the roster.

"I think probably the best way to describe is 'The Signal and the Noise,' a reference from Nate Silver," Tanney explained. "One of the great things about the game of football is there's no shortage of information about players and teams. You can slice and dice — this guy did this at this at x percent success rate, the next guy did this at y percent success rate. Our job is to find out whether or not that means anything. Is there actually a signal there, or is there just random noise."

And a similar approach is taken during OTAs and training camp, and during practices in season.

In a small workroom behind a row of power racks and weights inside the Broncos' training facility rest four cases charging Catapult tracking devices. The devices, each labeled with a player's last name, is worn on their shoulder pads during practices to measure performance and exertion and movement. The data is reviewed regularly, and the workouts — if needed — tweaked accordingly.

Among the most significant aspects of Tanney's role is simple communication and the translation of information for the coaching staff, which has changed over once since he signed on. Kubiak stepped down in 2017 and Joseph took over, with new coordinators and many new positional coaches.

"It's our job to find the way that best fits our audience," Tanney said. "Some guys are big on table formats, so we have to provide a lot of tables. Some coaches are big in graphics, so we'll tailor our message to our audience. That's one of the biggest pieces of our job — the communication of what we're doing, the sale of what we're going, why it could potentially impact this part of the game or another part of the game."

But the end game is always the same, no matter the coach or the situation. The process matters as much as the resulting decision.

"If it can make you 1 percent better, we have to use it," Joseph said. "Analytics have been a big part of the game for the last five or six years, so I think it's important to not ignore those things. Again, if it can make you better by 1 percent, why not? Why not use those things. It's 2018. Information is everything. Everyone is doing a study on everything. Why ignore those studies that are being done to help players, to help coaches, to help everyone in the business get better. I am a firm believer of all of the science and analytics that are coming into the game because I think it's important."

Broncos' five players who are critical to the team's success

By Troy Renck
KMGH
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It began with promise. Vance Joseph's first season centered on the slogan: reboot not rebuild.

Instead the Broncos regressed, spending the final 12 games getting kicked in the rears. Their eight straight losses matched the longest skid in five decades. The defeats came by average of 16 points per game.

The losses were painful. How they were achieved brought everything into question. Joseph kept his job, if only barely, because general manager John Elway decided he deserved a chance with a better quarterback.

If it were only that easy. As the Broncos begin to gain traction in their offseason workouts, my look at the five players -- Joseph is arguably first on the list, but not a player -- who must deliver for Denver to avoid back-to-back losing seasons for the first time since 1972:

1) Case Keenum, QB:

Let's not miss the obvious. The Broncos quarterback play -- for multiple reasons -- proved disastrous. Only the Browns threw more interceptions than Denver's 22. The Broncos ranked third in sacks allowed with 52, including an NFL-worst 12 in the red zone. Enter Keenum, who leaned on a strong running game to run Minnesota's offense with breathtaking precision. Can Keenum work with coordinator Bill Musgrave to play to his strengths? Keenum is accurate and mobile. And he's already accepted as a team leader. If he approaches last year's numbers -- say 23 touchdowns and 11 interceptions -- Denver will achieve a winning record.

2) Von Miller, OLB:

Miller finished with 10 sacks a year. The knee jerk reaction? He produced a disappointing season. Wrong. He applied more consistent pressure than any edge rusher. It did not result in sacks because he was chipped more than Doritos. It can be argued the Broncos will waste his prime if they don't develop a consistent second pass rusher. The return of a healthy Shane Ray (wrist), Shaq Barrett (hip) and Derek Wolfe (neck) coupled with the drafting of Bradley Chubb should benefit Miller. He will push for Defensive Player of the Year honors with 15-plus sacks.

3) Bradley Roby, CB:

Even with the torrential rain and winds recently, it's hard to forget the shade thrown at the No Fly Zone. Does it still suggest? Of course. As long as founder Chris Harris Jr. plays on the Broncos, the name stays, he told me. And he's right. But will the production remain? The Broncos traded Aqib Talib to the Rams to create a starting job for Bradley Roby. Roby battles inconsistency. However, he has played his best games as a starter. Can he continue this trend and prove he's a core player going forward? His ascension is critical to a defense that depends on its corners to spend more time on an island than Gilligan.

4) Royce Freeman, RB:

Rookies don't belong on these lists. But all bets are off when looking for upticks. With C.J. Anderson gone, Freeman should push Devontae Booker for the starting job. The Broncos want their identity to be simple: a bruising running game that sets up the pass. Booker has shown he can catch passes out of the backfield. In ideal world, these two players with a yet-to-determined third back inspire a more diverse offense.

5) Jared Veldheer, RT:

The Broncos right tackle spot remains a revolving door of ineffectiveness and frustration. Veldheer brings a reputation as a solid player, but as a left tackle. He has much to prove as a right tackle after struggling last season. Fixing this spot remains imperative for this line to move forward. Veldheer takes the fifth spot, edging out tight end Jake Butt. If the line blocks well, the red zone production will improve. As it gets better, red faces will diminish. It all traces back to quarterback and a more efficient offense. Take care of the ball, and take chances without compromising the defense. Do that, and the Broncos will contend for a postseason berth.

Who will referee billion-dollar sports betting industry?

By Wayne Perry
Associated Press
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Now that the U.S. Supreme Court has cleared the way for states to legalize sports betting, the race is on to see who will referee the multibillion-dollar business of gambling on pro and college games.

The NFL, NBA and others want Congress to set uniform, nationwide rules on sports gambling for all states, saying the integrity of athletics is at stake. And an influential Republican on Capitol Hill, Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, quickly announced plans to push for such legislation.

But states are already moving quickly to enact their own laws, with some legislators wanting fans to be able to place wagers by the time football season starts this fall. And there are serious doubts Congress wants to get involved.

"Sports are played on a national and sometimes international stage, crossing state borders and involving residents of numerous municipalities," said Rummy Pandit, a gambling analyst with New Jersey's Stockton University. "From that standpoint, federal regulation of sports betting makes sense. But the federal government has not historically been involved in the day-to-day regulation and oversight of gaming."

For years the major sports leagues argued that gambling on games would lead to match-fixing and point-shaving. Now that they lost the court battle with Monday's landmark ruling, many suspect that they are now pushing for federal legislation not for high-minded reasons, but because they see it as the easiest way to get a cut of the proceeds.

Negotiating a piece of the action with Congress would be more efficient than trying to work out deals one by one with dozens of states.

If it passed a nationwide bill, Congress could require casinos, tracks or state governments to share some of their revenue with the sports leagues — or pay them what the leagues like to call "integrity fees," designed to cover the costs of policing betting.

The leagues have been making headway in negotiations on integrity fees with individual states, including Kansas, Connecticut, Indiana and New York, said Daniel Wallach, a sports law expert from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The leagues also have come down on their fee demands in several states, lowering them from 1 percent to 0.25 percent, he said.

Wallach said the leagues, in seeking to be paid for sports betting, might also be able to make a compelling court case that they have intellectual property rights in the data that is used in wagering.

On the other side of the negotiating table, the gambling industry might want to work out a grand compromise on giving a cut to the sports leagues, rather than "battle it out, state to state to state, winning some, losing some," Wallach said.

But state opposition remains strong. Within hours after the ruling, New Jersey lawmakers introduced a new bill to regulate sports betting that would drop the integrity fee that was in an earlier version.

In West Virginia, Republican Gov. Jim Justice allowed a sports betting bill to become law without his signature and later announced he had reached a deal for casinos to pay a fee to pro sports leagues. But casino operators denied there was a deal.

On Monday, the high court struck down a federal law that limited sports betting to four states that met a 1991 deadline to legalize it: Nevada, Delaware, Montana and Oregon. It came on a court challenge from New Jersey. As a result of the ruling, states are now free to adopt laws regulating sports betting.

Hours after the ruling, the NFL called on Congress to "enact a core regulatory framework" for legalized betting, citing "the potential harms posed by sports betting to the integrity of sporting contests and the public confidence in these events."

The NFL reasoned, too, that it would be easier to comply with one nationwide set of regulations than with 20 or 30 individual ones.

The NBA likewise called for national regulation of sports betting.

Hatch, one of the authors of the federal law that was thrown out by the Supreme Court, sided with the leagues.

"The rapid rise of the internet means that sports betting across state lines is now just a click away," he said. "We cannot allow this practice to proliferate amid uneven enforcement and a patchwork race to the regulatory bottom. At stake here is the very integrity of sports."

It's unclear how eager Hatch's colleagues are to wade into this debate. Lawmakers are spending more time in their home states as election season heats up. The legislative calendar is winding down. And some lawmakers with libertarian views favor letting states deal with the issue.

Also, Congress has been unable in recent years to pass federal laws regulating online poker, fantasy sports or internet gambling. David Schwartz, director of the Center for Gambling Studies at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, predicted states will be reluctant to give up control over a potentially lucrative new source of tax revenue.

Sara Slane, a senior vice president at the American Gaming Association, said she believes Congress is going to have a hard time catching up with states that are moving quickly to legalize and regulate sports betting.

She said that many federal lawmakers already view sports betting as a states' rights issue and that it will be difficult for Congress to roll back those efforts once betting operations are up and running.

"I do see this as somewhat dead in the water," she said of federal legislation. "This is going to largely unfold on the state level."

Republican Rep. Bob Goodlatte of Virginia, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, was noncommittal Tuesday. "I am deeply concerned about the social ills that can arise from gambling. At the same time, I have deep respect for the federalism principles that underlie today's Supreme Court decision," he said. He said his committee "will continue to examine the issue with an eye to striking the appropriate balance."

Special Olympians and the Denver Broncos? Good time for a "choo-choo dance"

By Paul Klee

Colorado Springs Gazette

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Charlie is 16, one brash Special Olympian, and Tuesday night he out-swagged Swag.

I wish you all could've seen it: soon as he grabbed a handoff from Broncos tight end Jeff Heuerman, Charlie barreled toward the end zone. Score, Charlie! they shouted. Charlie scored, all right. Then he danced! Spinning toward Chad "Swag" Kelly, Charlie hit the quarterback with finger pistols. Oh, and he wasn't done yet. Charlie followed with his version of The Robot.

You got that in your bag of tricks, Swag?

"Might have to incorporate that move," Kelly said with a belly laugh.

Cheering, laughing, high-fiving. That was the perfectly executed gameplan when a dozen or so Broncos players joined a bunch of Denver-area law enforcement officers in hosting 125 Special Olympic athletes inside the Pat Bowlen Fieldhouse.

"It's one of my favorite days," said Mindy Watrous, CEO of Special Olympics Colorado, "because they get so excited."

The Broncos or the Special Olympians?

"I don't really have a favorite Broncos player," said Kaitlyn, another Special Olympian. "They're all just the best."

This is an NFL franchise at its best. Brandon McManus, showing a tiny Olympian how to kick. She stood there, speechless, until another tiny kid tried to tackle the kicker. Heuerman, lifting another Olympian over the goal line. The kid's smile felt like Christmas. Brendan Langley, the young cornerback, tossing a ball that bounced off the nose of Miles, the mascot.

Laughs. High-fives. More dancing.

"Do you know Case Keenum?" asked Travis, who's 27 and aspires to medal at the Special Olympics.

The new guy?

"Yeah, he's my favorite player. I want to learn some new skills. I'm a quarterback, too."

It doesn't get better than Special Olympians.

Sports don't get better than pro athletes playing with Special Olympians.

“What was that touchdown dance?” said long-snapper Casey Kreiter, holding his 10-month-old boy, Landen.

“That’s my choo-choo dance!” the Olympian said.

See what I mean?

I write often about the Broncos’ work in the community, because the Broncos’ work in the community is the greatest side of a great franchise. Last year Broncos players committed 980 hours to community service. The staff had 625 more. They adopted 75 families at Christmas. They collected school supplies for 62,000 students. They granted five Make-A-Wish wishes. They provided 266,000 meals for Food Bank of the Rockies. Chris Harris Jr. scored 350 coats in his “Coats for a Cause.” Von Miller raised over \$1 million for Von’s Vision. The Broncos’ volunteer work is endless, and it should be.

Oh, and this: Colorado law enforcement last year raised over \$1 million for Special Olympics, according to Aurora police Sgt. Cassidee Carlson. Awesome.

“Seeing (the kids) smile puts a huge smile on my face,” said Broncos linebacker Joe Jones, an early candidate for community MVP.

Chad Kelly spent his own birthday visiting a local children’s hospital.

“He’s been unbelievable with these kids,” said Liz Mannis, senior manager of community development.

Back to Charlie. This kid, man. Gold medalist.

“Do you want to see my ‘Robot’?” Charlie asked Chad Kelly.

“This is what it’s all about,” Chad said.

Now that’s swag.

Brandon McManus turns to self-reflection to improve after 2017 season

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
May 16, 2018

Brandon McManus would likely be the first to tell you his 2017 season left something to be desired.

Just over 18 months removed from a dominant postseason in which he made all 10 of his field goals, McManus struggled in the early stages of the 2017 campaign.

He missed field goals in four of his first five games, including a 1-for-3 performance in Week 5 in which he missed a 35-yard attempt and had a 53-yard try blocked.

And while he improved as the season continued, stringing together a five-game stretch in which he missed just one of 11 kicks, he finished with his lowest field goal percentage since his first season in Denver.

That led McManus, who served as a captain in 2017, to do some serious self-evaluation in order to improve his game.

“I think I do the self-reflection during the season,” McManus said Tuesday at the Broncos’ PLAY 60 All-Ability Clinic. “I started out terribly, [but] throughout the year I continued to make more and more kicks. So I was happy with that.

“This year I’m looking forward to a rebound year. I hold myself to be one of the best kickers in the NFL, so coming up short, as I was, motivates me more than ever, and I’m excited.”

McManus will have several new faces to help him as the Broncos inch closer to the 2018 season. Punter Marquette King will likely hold for McManus, who said Tuesday he was “excited to get him in early and work with him.”

McManus can also turn to new Special Teams Coordinator Tom McMahon, who joins the Broncos after a lengthy stint in Indianapolis.

“I knew Tom coming out of college,” McManus said. “I went to the Colts out of Temple [as a college free agent]. ... He’s more [more focused on the] whole special teams group — with kickoff, kick return, punt, punt return. Obviously he has tidbits, and he remembers my form coming out of college. I’ve changed a little bit since then, but he obviously [has] a good eye to see you. He’s been a coordinator in the league for a long time now.

“I’m excited to have him. He brings a different energy as well to the practice field, as well. He’s kind of been a yeller and will let people know if anything’s going wrong. I’m excited for him to be here.”

Ultimately, though, McManus’ success could likely be self-determined — and he’ll spend the next few months aiming to present the best possible version of himself.

Local law enforcement, Broncos join forces at PLAY 60 All-Ability clinic

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
May 16, 2018

As more than 100 Special Olympians participated in a PLAY 60 All-Ability clinic on Tuesday, it seemed right that Broncos players and local officers and deputies worked alongside each other.

The event gave the Broncos a chance during National Law Enforcement Appreciation Week to show their gratitude to the men and women who serve the community, and it gave deputies the chance to again serve a familiar charitable organization.

Law enforcement agencies have made a big impact on Special Olympics over the course of the past year. In Colorado, those agencies raised over \$900,000, according to sheriff's deputy Brian McKnight.

They continued that positive impact at the Pat Bowlen Fieldhouse.

"This is a great awareness event where we get to come out and just have fun with these kids," McKnight said. "We get to see them do things they normally don't get to do, work with the athletes and just have a great time. So it is a positive event that we normally don't get to do. And that's why it's so fun to be here."

The event, though, also provided something more than a chance to experience an hour of fun with the Special Olympics athletes.

Law enforcement officers and Broncos players received the opportunity to speak with each other and to get to know the individuals behind the titles.

"They see what we do on Sundays, we see them driving around doing their jobs," linebacker Joe Jones said. "But it's nice to actually come together and communicate and work with these guys here, just to get to know each other and have that relationship with the police around here in the area. Just to build that relationship and that camaraderie, it's pretty awesome."

With that basic understanding in place, players and officers can begin to have the deeper conversations that may be otherwise inaccessible.

"It's harder to have those conversations with people that you don't know," Jones said. "Once you start a relationship with those people — even if it's just something like this where it's a few minutes with each other — ... it really starts to make those conversations easier. People start to look at you more as people [as opposed to] officers or men and women of color. You start to say, 'Oh, that's Joe.' Or, 'That's Cliff.' You start to understand who they are as a person."

McKnight, who worked with Jones at a station for the better part of an hour on Tuesday, wholeheartedly agreed with the second-year player.

“That’s the big part,” McKnight said. “We’re always open to talk. And there are things we need to talk about. And instead of avoiding that, let’s show up and talk about it and work together to solve problems.

“That’s what we’re doing here today — working together to help out these Special Olympics athletes — and if we can talk about those other things, you betcha.”

Jones will continue that outreach this week when he visits law enforcement officers with several of his teammates on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, though, Jones just appreciated the opportunity to speak with McKnight and, more importantly, help the young athletes enjoy their hour in the spotlight.

“To actually get to do something active with kids that have these abilities to come out here and have fun is amazing,” Jones said.

Broncos hold close ties with Colorado Athletic Trainers' Association, new Hall of Fame inductees

By STAFF

DenverBroncos.com

May 16, 2018

The Colorado Athletic Trainers' Association's Hall of Fame will soon welcome two new members — and the Broncos hold close ties with both the organization and the members of its new class. CATA, which will soon induct the University of Northern Colorado's Shannon Courtney and Ponderosa High School's Chris Mathewson, has a long history with the Broncos.

Director of Sports Medicine Steve "Greek" Antonopoulos was one of the founding members of CATA, which is a state-wide organization that provides education and resources to athletic trainers.

Antonopoulos was inducted into the CATA Hall of Fame in 2011 as part of the inaugural class. He enters his 43rd season with the Broncos in 2018.

"We started the Colorado Athletic Trainer's Association in 1977," Antonopoulos said. "It has evolved from a few members—there were 14 members at one point—to 800-plus members today. It is an integral organization for athletic trainers. We expound on each other's abilities and try to keep updated on state and national guidelines."

Head Athletic Trainer Vince Garcia is also involved with the organization and currently serves as CATA's treasurer. Garcia was promoted to his current position with the Broncos ahead of the 2017 season.

Jim Keller, a former Broncos assistant athletic trainer, provides yet another tie to the organization. Keller spent 10 full-time seasons with the Broncos from 1994-2003 and recently succeeded Antonopoulos as CATA's president.

"I am honored and humbled to follow in my mentor Steve Antonopoulos' footsteps as the newest CATA President," Keller said. "Colorado has such a strong history of Certified Athletic Trainers, and we are proud to represent the more than 800 members who are committed to being at the forefront of the athletic training profession."

Antonopoulos expressed his support for the two latest electees to the CATA Hall of Fame.

"I've had an opportunity to be around Shannon for a number of years," said Antonopoulos of Courtney, who has spent nearly 27 years at UNC. "She worked for the same mentor as I did at the University of Northern Colorado and does a great job as the head of clinical education for the athletic training curriculum. She has been a stalwart in CATA in addition to being a leader at the state and national level. She is a great person and a great athletic trainer."

"Chris Mathewson has been a national and state level leader in the athletic training field for a number of years," said Antonopoulos of the Mathewson, a former CATA president. "He's done a tremendous job for our local organization and helped increased our registration process at the state level as well. He's a great man and runs a great program at Ponderosa and Douglas County."

David Tepper expected to buy Carolina Panthers for \$2.2 billion

By Tom Schad
CBS Sports
May 16, 2018

Hedge fund founder David Tepper is expected to sign a deal to purchase the Carolina Panthers for \$2.2 billion, a person familiar with the deal told USA TODAY Sports' Mike Jones. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal had not been finalized and would need to be approved by NFL owners, who are scheduled to meet in Atlanta next week.

The sale price of \$2.2 billion, which was first reported by The Charlotte Observer, matches the amount that restaurant and casino billionaire Tilman Fertitta recently paid to purchase the NBA's Houston Rockets. It also dwarfs the previous highest sales price for an NFL team — \$1.4 billion for the Buffalo Bills in a 2014 transaction.

Current Panthers owner Jerry Richardson put the team up for sale in the wake of allegations of sexual harassment and racial intolerance. The NFL has since taken over the investigation of Richardson.

Tepper, 60, is the founder of Appaloosa Management and a minority owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers. In a March ranking of billionaires, Forbes estimated his net worth at \$11 billion.

The Big Gamble: NFL Needs To Be Careful of ‘Unintended Consequences’ That Betting Could Bring

By Peter King

MMQB

May 16, 2018

There's something disquieting about this blood-lust excitement over the prospect of betting \$20 on your phone, even money, on whether Mitchell Trubisky is going to throw or hand off on the next snap, and if it's a pass, whether you'd wager 5-1 odds that Allen Robinson will catch it.

There's such a thing as having too much chocolate ice cream by being handed a half gallon of it every day. I fear America satisfying its gambling jones might be it. Of course I'm an older guy, 60, and I probably act out of caution more than a college senior would. And, truly, if alcohol and cigarettes and guns and other things that can harm you are legal, there's no reason why gambling on sports events in the other 49 states should be illegal. But that doesn't mean this is going to be great for our society.

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There's such a thing as having too much chocolate ice cream by being handed a half gallon of it every day. I fear America satisfying its gambling jones might be it. Of course I'm an older guy, 60, and I probably act out of caution more than a college senior would. And, truly, if alcohol and cigarettes and guns and other things that can harm you are legal, there's no reason why gambling on sports events in the other 49 states should be illegal. But that doesn't mean this is going to be great for our society.

There is no question there are some benefits for the NFL—some very big ones. I was with some other people close to the NFL at a dinner Monday night, while the Supreme Court ruling was still being digested. I'll sum up. They were excited about the money potential, to be sure. They were excited that fans who might not otherwise be engaged in an inconsequential Cleveland-Cincinnati game in Week 15 would be engaged if they could put some money on it. They were excited about potential TV-rating hikes for all games. They were excited that every play of 267 regular-season and postseason games would be meaningful to more people. But I'd say the operative word among these people was caution. There's just too much they didn't know yet.

At The MMQB, we once called leading sports-business consultant Marc Ganis “the 33rd owner.” I wanted to know what he thought of the past two days, when the NFL's 10-year effort to prevent gambling on games from seeping beyond the Nevada borders was knocked down by the Supreme Court.

“I just wonder: Are people aware of the unintended consequences?” Ganis said Tuesday night. “Is there a danger of killing the goose that laid the golden egg? Potentially, potentially, this could be opening a Pandora's box in many ways. For instance, are players and officials and team officials willing to potentially sacrifice some of their personal privacy? If a guy drops a pass, what's the first thing people will think of? I am concerned that, with some people, there's such a headlong rush for the money that they haven't thought of all these issues.”

Ganis is a pragmatist, as I am. The NFL is going to figure a way to put some insurance policies in place, but insurance policies are not going to stop every chance of a Pete Rose story happening. Gambling will be far more prevalent now than it was in the eighties, when Rose illegally bet on baseball with bookies. It's going to be so much easier to bet now, apparently.

I'm not saying America shouldn't have the ability to place legal bets on football games. I'm saying be careful what you wish for.

"The league knows it's going to have to be concerned with the perception and the reality of integrity," Ganis said.

Concerned is too mild a word. "Obsessed" might be better.

Now for your email:

ON MATT PATRICIA'S SITUATION

Matt Patricia deserves to coach with the presumption of innocence despite being indicted for [sexual assault]. I wish I could be surprised by you saying that, despite you leading the torch and pitchfork brigade about Zeke Elliott who was never charged much less indicted. His only accuser was found to not be credible by the NFL investigators, the prosecutors and the police.

—Alex, Albany, N.Y.

Alex, we're talking two different times, a generation apart. The Patricia story is 22 years old, with a case that was dropped eight years before he applied for his first NFL job. Barring additional damning facts against Patricia coming forward, he does not deserve to be suspended by the NFL over this. The Elliott story happened after he was drafted into the NFL. Much has been made of the facts of the Elliott case, and it's true he was not indicted nor brought to trial on the charges by Tiffany Thompson. But his case coincided with the NFL ramping up its discipline over domestic violence. Whatever side you're on here, the comparison does not hold water.

TEAMS NEED TO BETTER MANAGE THEIR HIRING PROCESS

By no means do I condone any of the actions described in the 22-year-old indictment. However, as you wrote, he was never convicted of any wrongdoing. On top of that, he was employed by another billion dollar football team who also states they never knew. This isn't about red flags within the Lions hiring process, it's about red flags throughout professional and collegiate sports when it comes to hiring/employing coaches and players.

—Brian K.

Agreed. And I think every team will get the message here: Probe your big hires much more thoroughly.

HOW COULD THE PATRIOTS NOT HAVE KNOWN?

A lot has been said by many media outlets about the Lions not knowing about Matt Patricia's situation but how did this go unnoticed by the Patriots? Did they know and not consider it a story? I agree that he should be presumed to be innocent but cannot fathom that this story never surfaced while he was a

member of the Patriots. Many are slamming the Lions for the process they use; why no questioning the Patriots?

—Michael G.

I do think the questions have been asked. And they are valid.

“REAL PARENTS”

When you mentioned the article on Jim Palmer, you referred to him finding his “real” parents. That is an unintended insult to those of us who are adoptive parents. Those young people in New York conceived Mr. Palmer but they never “parented” him for a minute. As we all know, parenting is loving, guiding and nurturing children throughout their lives. It comes with highs and lows. It comes with surprises and great joy. It comes from work and dedication. It is pure love.

—Jim G., Cockeysville, Md., Adoptive parent since 1987

You’re absolutely right, Jim. Poor choice of words. I should have used “birth parents.” Thanks for pointing it out, and giving me a lesson in the value of real parenting.

NOW THIS IS GOING BACK IN TIME

I’m a long-time reader and a longer-time Browns fan. Back in 2009 I bought your book “Sports Illustrated Monday Morning Quarterback: A fully caffeinated guide to everything you need to know about the NFL” and didn’t hesitate when you offered to sign any copy your readers sent to you since you didn’t have the time to do a proper book tour. You wrote, “Jeremy – Have faith! Browns will bounce back! Peter King.” My question is simple: Will my faith pay off this year?

—Jeremy G., Cleveland

Glad there wasn’t an expiration date on that prediction, Jeremy. Can’t believe you still have the book! Thanks for the memory. I am not sure your faith will pay off this year, but I do think the right front-office team is in place, and the players will play hard for this coach. My gut feeling is Baker Mayfield mostly sits this year (that would be best for him long-term) and prepares to start the 2019 season. But we’ll see. The one thing I like about what I saw in Cleveland last month is the front office is in harmony over the picks and the architecture. As for the wins, that’s going to be largely up to whether they made the right pick with Mayfield.

THANK YOU, MATT MILLEN

In 1959, at the age of 7, I had open-heart surgery at University of Michigan hospital for restricted pulmonary valve and a hole between the upper two chambers. I never had any problems but always wanted to do things the hard and physical way to overcompensate. The last few years I have been getting a little shortness of breath but I am 65 years old even though my mind says I am still 25. I have been getting extensive checkups at the Michigan hospital the last few years just because it is the smart thing to do. After reading about Matt Millen’s situation I called my cardiologist and asked about amyloidosis. We are pretty sure I don’t have it but we are monitoring the situation. Please let Matt Millen know he has educated at least one person.

—George S., Highland, Mich.

George, Matt will be thrilled to hear it. I’ll make sure he reads your mail.

ON MATT MILLEN'S FIGHT

Thanks for the good read on Matt Millen. Until a year ago, I'd never heard of amyloidosis. Then, in a span of 24 hours, my best friend growing up was diagnosed on a Sunday and gone by Monday afternoon. He was 58. Like Matt Millen, he'd seen specialists and been in and out of hospitals for several months. It's amazing that in this day and age, it takes so long to come up with a diagnosis.
—Bob S.

It's amazing, as you say, that this disease has remained so hard to diagnose. When I talked to Sean McDonough about it, he was stunned that in 2003 his father, famed sportswriter Will McDonough, was given a clean bill of health on the same day he later died ... and even more stunned that it took so long to diagnose Millen 15 years later. I hope the publicity around Millen gets more people, and doctors, to consider amyloidosis more seriously in patients.

PRAISING CHUCK KNOX

In your piece on Matt Millen and sidebar on Chuck Knox, you make two important points: 1) the importance of the quarterback; 2) the importance of a Super Bowl on a Hall of Famer's résumé. I agree both are significant, but isn't the Hall of Fame a measure of the contributions or impact that a player, coach or executive had on the game during their career—something that goes beyond big wins? Chuck Knox understood how to get the most out of his players and create a winning culture. That's an incredible and often underappreciated achievement! Most of us have been in lousy workplaces, and you can see how "the fish rots from the head" in those circumstances ... There is no question the quarterback is important, but what's more important is the culture that produces successful quarterbacks. Chuck Knox unquestionably created that culture, which extended to all players, and that is a testament to him and proof that his was a Hall of Fame-worthy career. Thank you for your great work at SI. I will miss reading your work in The MMQB.
—Glen W., Bayonne, N.J.

Superb points, and thanks for the kind words, too. One of the truly hard things to do as a member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame selection committee is to factor in things like the creation of a culture, and how much credit a coach should get for that. With Knox, you're absolutely right—though he didn't win a Super Bowl, he did turn around three struggling teams, markedly and quickly. Thanks for the smart email, Glen.

WE ARE BLUSHING

The Jenny Vrentas article on Chargers coach Anthony Lynn going back to college to get his degree, as well Peter King's article on Matt Millen, are just two of many reasons that make The MMQB an important must read for me! I love the football analysis every week, but it's the human interest reporting that makes this website so much better than others. I was worried with Peter's departure that you might lose his wonderful perspective, but Jenny Vrentas' article makes me feel so much better knowing that Peter has left an excellent impression on those who follow in his footsteps. We can watch our favorite athletes perform every week (heck – every day), and never realize there is so much more depth to these persons that we can relate to.
—Bill B.

I'll be sure to tell the staff, Bill. Really appreciate your words. I'm proud of the staff, and you'll love following the writers' development over the coming years.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE INTERVIEW?

I am sure by now you have been flooded with comments and emails since you announced you would be leaving for NBC Sports. I always enjoyed reading your MMQB articles. My question for you is since you have been working at Sports Illustrated, you have interviewed hundreds if not thousands of NFL players. Is there a specific player who was your favorite to interview and what attributes would make this player your top interview during your tenure at Sports Illustrated.

—Kevin F.

Thanks for the kind words, Kevin. I am going to reminisce a bit in next Monday's column about my favorite this-and-thats over 29 years. For now, I'll say it's very hard to beat Brett Favre. He was good at everything—letting his mind just spill out and saying anything that came to him, mostly. He put images and plays into words with color and fun stories consistently.

With David Tepper Buying the Panthers, Donald Trump Faces More NFL Resistance

By Jonathan Jones

MMQB

May 16, 2018

Donald Trump has been fighting against—and losing to—the National Football League for more than three decades. Now, one of his richest rivals is about to join the fray.

At the NFL owners meetings next week, hedge fund manager David Tepper will become the new owner of the Carolina Panthers after paying a record-breaking price—\$2.2 billion—for the franchise. In the past 18 months, Tepper hasn't been shy sharing his feelings about the 45th president, including comments as recent as last month at his alma mater.

"The economy's really good right now, despite different things," Tepper told a first-year business school student at Carnegie Mellon University (the business school is named after Tepper following his \$55 million donation in 2004). "...Whether I like the person or not I'm not going to get into that—although I did call him a demented, narcissistic scumbag. And if you look up demented, narcissistic scumbag, you'll see my name calling Trump that. Just Google those three words."

Tepper will soon join a small group of NFL owners who have spoken out against Trump. The president has battled against North America's most popular professional sports league dating back to 1984 when he owned the USFL's New Jersey Generals. Here is a brief history of Trump's dealings with the NFL since then:

- Trump was part of the USFL's anti-trust lawsuit against the NFL in 1986 that the upstart league won in name only, getting a judgment of \$1 and ultimately folding the USFL;
- He attempted to buy the Buffalo Bills in 2014 (he was ultimately outbid by the Pegulas), and reportedly started a seemingly grassroots campaign to foil Jon Bon Jovi's plans to purchase the team;
- And last fall, he inserted himself into the ongoing discussions surrounding player protests during the national anthem when he referred to players who knelt (while protesting police brutality against people of color and inequality in the criminal justice system) as "sons of bitches" and dared NFL owners to cut kneelers from their team rosters.

Though Trump has seemingly shifted his focus away from the NFL for now, he remains an important outside figure as Colin Kaepernick's collusion lawsuit against the league continues. And Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie called Trump's presidency "disastrous" in a meeting with owners and players last year that was secretly recorded and leaked to The New York Times last month.

By no means should Tepper be considered a bleeding-heart liberal for his anti-Trump stance. He called himself "an independent of sorts, I guess" the day before the election and revealed that he supported Barack Obama in 2008, Mitt Romney in '12 and Jeb Bush in '16 before voting for Clinton, who he said had questionable judgment, later that year.

But Tepper hit a tipping point the weekend before the November 2016 election when he says he heard future first lady Melania Trump introduce her husband as a “giving, generous and charitable person.” He called into CNBC’s Squawk Box show the day before the election to rip Trump and explain what the election of either candidate would mean to the economy.

“One thing I do with my wife, this is a thing called the Golden Rule. It has nothing to do with investments—nothing to do with investments,” Tepper emphasized. “It says do unto others as you would have others do unto you. And that’s not being done with Trump—not at least on the good side. It just was a turning point. That’s my upbringing. I can’t help it. I can’t take it anymore. And when you lie about that stuff and you lie about fundamental beliefs.

“Listen, Trump masquerades as an angel of light, but he is the father of lies, especially concerned with charity or good deeds.”

According to reports, Tepper hails from a middle-class Pittsburgh family. His father, Harry, was an accountant and his mother, Roberta, was a public school teacher. After earning his master’s at Carnegie Mellon University, Tepper ascended the ladder quickly at Goldman Sachs. He left the company after being passed over for a partnership and started Appaloosa Management, a name chosen out of horse book when he learned Pegasus Funds had already been taken.

He’s heavily involved in charities and food banks in the New York/New Jersey area. After Hurricane Sandy, Tepper donated \$200,000 in gift cards to families affected by the storm. He’s on the board of Robin Hood, New York City’s largest poverty-fighting organization, and Tepper donated \$3 million in hurricane relief to people in Houston and Puerto Rico last year.

In comparison, Trump received what he has referred to as “a small loan of \$1 million” from his father so he could begin his career. Since becoming a billionaire, Trump has dubiously asserted several charitable donations that have been doggedly pursued by a reporter who won the Pulitzer Prize for his work. And when visiting the hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico last year, Trump told officials during a briefing that aid to the American territory had “thrown our budget a little out of whack.”

“During the financial crisis, during Sandy, [Trump did] not [give] one dime, and I know this for fact—not conjecture—not one dime to one major food bank or one major pantry in Jersey during Sandy,” Tepper continued on CNBC. “You can’t tell me this is a charitable, giving person. When you live in these places and you are living with your people and you’re supposedly a multi-billionaire, and not one dime [donated] for the people in their greatest hour of need.”

It’s unclear what kind of NFL owner Tepper will be since his 5% stake in the Steelers gave him little say with Rooney’s team (he will sell his Pittsburgh stake upon purchasing the Panthers). Clues on how he deals with employees and foes are dropped throughout a 2010 New York Magazine feature about his firm, which earned \$7.5 billion by betting on the government to bail out the big banks in ’09.

A few other bits about Tepper gleaned from the New York Magazine feature: He bought a mansion in the Hamptons that had been owned by the ex-wife of the man who passed him over for a partnership at Goldman. He has a “cartoonishly huge” set of brass testicles on a plaque with the words “The Most Valuable Set of All Time” on display in his office. An unnamed former employee said he had stuff thrown at him by Tepper and described his personality “like Jekyll and Hyde.”

Those personality traits—and wall adornments—may follow him to Carolina. What seems certain is that his feud with Trump, one of the NFL's biggest agitators, will soon be set for another round.

“This is a guy, and you talk about calamity, this is a guy that has to remind himself on the podium to stay on message,” Tepper told CNBC. “‘Stay on message, Donald. Stay on message.’ The reason people are nervous about this guy is, is he going to get in the Oval Office and say, ‘Don’t press that button, Donald. Don’t press that red button.’ It could be dangerous. I don’t want a guy that talks like that to himself after he’s reminding himself to stay on message.

“It makes people nervous. And that’s economics. If the world’s destroyed, I don’t have anything. So that’s not good for me.

David Tepper to Buy Carolina Panthers for \$2.2 Billion

By Andrew Beaton
Wall Street Journal
May 16, 2018

Jerry Richardson, the founding owner of the Carolina Panthers, has agreed to sell the team to David A. Tepper, a billionaire hedge fund owner, for a record-setting amount of at least \$2.2 billion.

The sale price was confirmed by two people with knowledge of the deal.

The sale, which must be approved by at least three-quarters of the N.F.L.'s owners, comes five months after Richardson said that he would sell the team. The announcement came shortly after an article in Sports Illustrated linked him to allegations of sexual harassment. The N.F.L. continues to investigate those allegations.

The owners could vote on Tepper's application as early as next week, when they meet in Atlanta.

Advised by Steve Greenberg of Allen & Co., Richardson initially sought at least \$3 billion for his team, but trimmed his expectations when no potential buyers emerged at that price. At least one potential buyer, Michael Rubin, the founder of the online sports merchandise retailer Fanatics, dropped out of the process when he was told he would have to pay substantially more than \$2.5 billion for the team, according to two people with knowledge of the process.

Another bidder, Ben Navarro, who owns a financial investment group, was unable to raise the estimated \$2.6 billion he was said to have offered. Questions were also being raised about his holdings in companies that offer credit cards to low-income consumers.

Tepper offered several hundred million dollars less than Navarro, but was favored by more owners because of his substantial wealth, estimated at \$11 billion, and because he was vetted when he became a minority owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Tepper will have to sell his stake in the Steelers as part of his deal to purchase the Panthers.

"If he's good enough for Art Rooney, he's good enough for me," one owner said, referring to the owner of the Steelers.

Tepper, who has already submitted much of the required paperwork to the league, is unlikely to face much opposition when the N.F.L. owners on the finance committee review his application before sending it to the full ownership to vote on.

The sale of the Panthers is being widely watched in the league because the final price will become a benchmark for other team sales. Sports bankers said the Denver Broncos, the New Orleans Saints and the Tennessee Titans could change hands in the next few years. The patriarch of each of those teams has died in recent years or is in failing health. Rubin could re-emerge as a bidder for one of those teams.

The proposed sale price will set a record for the highest-priced sale for any North American team, and will be nearly a billion dollars more than the price for the Buffalo Bills, the last N.F.L. team that changed hands when it sold for a then-record \$1.4 billion in 2014. While two N.B.A. teams in recent years have

sold for far more than expected, the sale of the Panthers was in line with the \$2.3 billion valuation assigned to the team by Forbes.

In the near term, the team will stay in Charlotte, N.C., a fast-growing city and a healthy market for the N.F.L. But there are likely to be few restrictions to prevent a buyer from moving the team. The team owns the stadium, and the city has spent tens of millions of dollars on renovations. The team must play there through June 2019, or pay a penalty to break the agreement.

If the Panthers leave after that date, the city could buy the stadium for \$1, or the team could pay the remaining debt on the city's investment.

David Tepper to Buy Carolina Panthers for \$2.2 Billion

By Andrew Beaton
Wall Street Journal
May 16, 2018

David Tepper, the billionaire hedge fund founder, has agreed to buy the Carolina Panthers for an NFL-record of approximately \$2.2 billion, according to people familiar with the sale.

In December, Panthers owner Jerry Richardson announced he would sell the team he founded, shortly after allegations of workplace misconduct were reported by Sports Illustrated. An NFL investigation of Richardson's conduct remains ongoing.

The sale comes just before the league's owners meet next week in Atlanta. At that meeting, they can officially approve Tepper's purchase of the team, which people familiar with the matter said is not expected to be a problem.

One person familiar with the sale cautioned that the terms and agreement were not yet final.

The bidding process for the Panthers dragged on longer than many expected, with other bidders including Ben Navarro, the chief executive of Sherman Financial Group, and Alan Kestenbaum, the chief executive of a mining and metals companies.

Tepper, though, was long the preferred buyer from inside the NFL. While other candidates would have needed to go through a more rigorous vetting process of their financials and their backgrounds, Tepper is a known quantity as a current minority owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers. He will have to give up that stake to become the Panthers' majority owner.

The \$2.2 billion price, first reported by the Charlotte Observer, breaks the previous high for an NFL team, \$1.4 billion by the Buffalo Bills in 2014.

Although at least one bid during the process reached higher than Tepper's, according to a person familiar with the matter, that was contingent on getting minority partners on board. Other factors, including Tepper's ability to pay more in cash and the fact that his approval appears to be a formality, were other potential factors, the person said.

Tepper, age 60, has risen to be one of the world's richest hedge-fund managers since he founded Appaloosa Management in 1993. The fund, based in Miami Beach, Fla., catapulted Tepper to wealth and prominence, which has included his minority stake in the Steelers and having the Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business named after him.

The Panthers and Tepper did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The sale will also bring an end to Richardson's ownership of the team he brought to North Carolina. The Panthers played their first season in 1995 and have reached two Super Bowls, though they lost both of them.

Richardson, 81 years old, quickly moved to sell the team shortly after the allegations against him came to light, though he had previously indicated that the team would be sold, and not passed on through his family, when he died.

See the Ultimate Broncos Fan Car: Latest Bid Is \$45K

By Michael Roberts

Westworld

May 16, 2018

Want to let the world know you're the most passionate Denver Broncos fan ever? Now's your chance.

A cherry version of a 1975 Ford Bronco marketed as the "Denver Broncos Edition" is currently available at the online auto site Bring a Trailer. The auction ends in fewer than four days, and at this writing, six bidders have pushed the price to \$44,999.

The text from the listing is below, along with a link to the original page. But here's a preview, as well as details about how this magnificent ride came to be.

According to a 2016 post on the Ford Trucks Enthusiasts website, the vehicle's origins can be traced to Bill Stroppe, described as an "off-road legend," who arranged with the automaker to create special-edition Broncos like the one he used in the Baja 1000 road race. The idea called for Ford to supply the cars to Stroppe, who would then modify them prior to delivery to dealerships across the country.

A couple hundred of the "Stroppe specials" had been built when the partnership ran out of gas. However, the article notes, 214 were already in the pipeline, and when the folks at Golden Ford found out about their availability, they purchased the whole batch.

After all, their predominantly orange color scheme already matched the uniforms of the gridiron Broncos, and Golden Ford personnel enhanced this connection by painting the roofs blue and slapping on a Broncos wheel cover.

The one currently on the bloc made its way to Ghent Ford in Fort Collins before being sent out into the world, and a couple of years ago, it was brought back to prime condition.

Not everything is original. Look no further than the affixed helmet, which has a logo that wasn't used until the late 1990s.

However, the mileage is pretty low....

...the interior retains its vintage design....

...the paint gleams inside and out....

...and a data plate affixed to the glove-box door attests to its authenticity.

The auction will conclude at the oddly precise time of 3:50 p.m. on May 18. Here's a link to the original listing and excerpts from its text.

1975 Ford Bronco Denver Broncos Edition

This 1975 Ford Bronco was sold new at Ghent Ford of Fort Collins, Colorado and was marketed as a Denver Broncos Special Edition. It is said to be one of just 76 Bronco Rangers equipped with the package and was treated to a cosmetic and mechanical refurbishment in 2016. Work included rebuilding the 302ci V8 and C4 automatic transmission with a mild cam, 4-barrel carburetor, and heavy duty shift kit. New upholstery was fitted and a repaint was performed in the original tri-tone shade following the installation of new fenders. Approximately 600 miles have been added by the current owner during his two years of ownership, and this Bronco is now being offered on dealer consignment with a clear Indiana title.

After the partnership between Ford and Bill Stroppe dissolved, the remaining stock of specially-painted Broncos were reportedly acquired by Golden Ford. Components added by the dealership included white fender flares, a Grabber Blue roof, and a Denver Broncos spare tire cover.

This example reportedly underwent a body-off repaint in its original paint scheme in 2016, and the finish is said to be of high quality per the seller. The driver's door was replaced at this time, and new old stock fenders were installed along with window and door rubber. 15" Cragar wheels wear chrome caps and Cooper Discoverer A/T tires, and the truck is equipped with power steering.

The seats were reupholstered in white vinyl, and the front buckets are equipped with lap belts. New blue carpeting was installed and a roll bar has been added. The white-painted dash houses a modern JVC head unit. 43,479 miles are shown on the five-digit odometer, approximately 600 of which were added under current ownership.

The 302ci V8 is paired with a C4 3-speed automatic transmission and a dual-range transfer case. The engine was rebuilt in 2016 with a mild cam and 4-barrel carburetor, and the transmission was rebuilt at the same time with a heavy duty shift kit.

John Elway the latest to be deposed in Colin Kaepernick collusion case

By Curtis Crabtree
Pro Football Talk
May 16, 2018

Denver Broncos General Manager and Vice President of Football Operations John Elway is the latest NFL executive to be questioned in regards to Colin Kaepernick's ongoing collusion case against the NFL.

According to Mike Klis of 9NEWS, Elway was deposed at Broncos team headquarters on Tuesday.

Elway joins Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, Houston Texans owner Bob McNair, Baltimore Ravens General Manager Ozzie Newsome and head coach John Harbaugh and Seattle Seahawks head coach Pete Carroll and G.M. John Schneider as people already questioned during the grievance process.

Kaepernick attended the deposition as he has other sessions throughout the case.

The Broncos had interest in acquiring Kaepernick in trade from the San Francisco 49ers over the 2016 offseason. However, the deal never came together as the two sides couldn't agree upon a restructured contract.

Kaepernick is trying to find evidence that proves the NFL jointly discussed and formulated a plan to keep him off an NFL roster after his decision to protest social issues by kneeling for the national anthem prior to games in 2016.

Lowell Lotulelei retiring from football

By Curtis Crabtree

Pro Football Talk

May 16, 2018

Utah nose tackle Lowell Lotulelei was one of eight players to sign with the Denver Broncos as an undrafted free agent immediately following the draft earlier this month.

However, Lotulelei's NFL career has turned out to be rather brief. According to Tony Pauline of DraftAnalyst.com, Lotulelei informed the Broncos of his intention to retire from playing football. Instead, Lotulelei intends to pursue a coaching career instead.

Denver waived Lotulelei on Monday.

According to Mike Klis of 9NEWS, Lotulelei returned the \$15,000 he received as a signing bonus to the Broncos upon informing them of his decision to walk away from the game.

Sports betting may force NFL to use full-time officials, enhanced replay

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
May 16, 2018

The NFL knows that it will never get every call right. With sports betting now available for any state that wants to adopt it, the NFL soon will have to try harder.

Both reality and perception will be important in this regard, with a compelling need to eradicate mistakes by officials and an even more compelling need to create the impression that the NFL is doing everything possible to eradicate mistakes by officials. For starters, the NFL will need full-time officials, across the board.

The process toward employing officials on a full-time basis already has begun. Eventually, all will need to be full-time employees, given the reality that for any mistake made by a part-time official, the argument will be, "A full-time official wouldn't have made that mistake." And while there's a practical limit to the number of calls that will be gotten right, it must seem to the neutral observer that the league is trying. Having a full complement of full-time officials cries out, "We're trying as hard as we can."

That may not be enough. To the extent that mistakes can be rectified via expanded replay review, the league will have to be willing to consider doing it. And the league also should seriously consider something I've suggested for several years now — the use of a video official who is part of the crew, who monitors the action away from the field via the various camera angles, and who communicates directly to the referee when the video reveals that a mistake is about to be made by the on-field crew, ensuring that the pre-replay call is as accurate as possible.

The league may argue that these enhancements justify the so-called "integrity fee" that all sports leagues hope to shake from the states that adopt sports wagering. The response should be that this isn't about "integrity," it's about competence.

The NFL has tolerated something less than absolute competence and performance by employing part-time officials, many of whom otherwise have full-time jobs. The NFL has done that because, quite frankly, it's far cheaper this way. The cheaper route won't be an option when millions of dollars will be legally changing hands every week based on the outcome of games.

In the past, a bad beat caused by officials would from time to time create a ruckus, like when former NFL referee Scott Green made a mistake at the end of a Chargers-Steelers game in 2008. With legalized gambling, that ruckus quickly could become a full-blown inquisition. And if enough of those happen, Congress could make the NFL's worst nightmare come to fruition by creating a federal agency that oversees all American professional sports.

So, no, this isn't about integrity. This is about the NFL finally having a clear, pressing reason to do what it should have been doing all along: Striving to get every call right in every game, with no tolerance for the concept of human error.