

# Broncos linebacker Shane Ray getting second opinion on left wrist injury

By Ryan O'Halloran  
The Denver Post  
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Broncos linebacker Shane Ray is expected to receive a second opinion on his left wrist injury that has kept him out of organized team activities this week.

A team source confirmed a report by 9News and said Ray was shelved this week because of discomfort in the wrist. On Monday, coach Vance Joseph called the new injury an "irritation."

Ray provided an update via his Instagram account late Tuesday afternoon. He said he "didn't re-injure anything." and that there is a "complication from the initial surgery that needs correcting. We will evaluate my options going forward and I'm sure it will work out fine."

Ray had three left wrist surgeries last year that limited him to eight games and one sack. The Broncos drafted Bradley Chubb fifth overall to challenge Ray for the starting strong-side linebacker position.

Ray participated in the first two weeks of OTAs. Last weekend, he returned to his home state of Missouri to host a youth football camp and video footage revealed he was wearing a brace on the left wrist. He also wore a brace while watching Monday's OTA.

Originally injured last year in training camp when he damaged his wrist bone and ligaments, Ray had an initial surgery and then a follow-up procedure in October to remove pins. The screws remained in place and a hardware-type problem could be at the root of his current irritation.

The Broncos declined to pick up Ray's fifth-year (2019) contract option last month, which Ray said he understood because of the wrist issues. That salary would have been guaranteed had Ray not been able to pass a physical in March 2019. He is scheduled to be a free agent next year.

If Ray misses significant time between now and the regular season, it will benefit Chubb, who worked with the first team on Monday and would likely ease his transition from 4-3 defensive end to 3-4 strong-side linebacker.

# Broncos OTA notes: Bigger Bolles should be better Bolles in year two

By Mike Klis

9 News

June 6, 2018

The average weight of the six offensive tackles voted to the Pro Bowl last year was 319.3 pounds.

The group ranged from Donald Penn's 340 pounds to Taylor Lewan's 309.

Garett Bolles said by the end of his rookie year last season, he was playing at 290 to 295 pounds.

Big as he may seem, Bolles was one of the league's lighter offensive tackles last season. He said he's up to 300 to 305 pounds now and can handle getting up to 308.

"I just had to gain a bit more weight, just so I can anchor when I get those bull rushes and things like that," Bolles said following the Broncos' seventh OTA practice Monday. "I talked with my coaches and the front office and they want me to get a little bit bigger. So, I'll probably stay around 300-305. That's sort of my range. I feel more comfortable there — I feel more explosive and powerful."

Bolles was the Broncos' first-round draft pick last season, No. 20 overall, and he started all 16 games. He admitted he had "some rocky moments" in particular with his pass protection. His 10 holding penalties tied Cleveland's Shon Coleman for most in the NFL.

It probably didn't help that the Broncos changed quarterbacks six times in 16 games with Trevor Siemian (10), Brock Osweiler (4) and Paxton Lynch (2) all getting multiple starts.

"It was my job to do what I had to do—to protect them. I didn't do a good job of that. I'll be the first one to admit that," Bolles said. "It wasn't the best that I wanted to play. I was learning, I was new. Having all of that stuff on top of my head is no excuse."

This season, the Broncos' hope is new quarterback Case Keenum is the one and only.

"I'm grateful we have Case here," Bolles said. "I think he brings a demeanor here. That season he had in Minnesota [last year] was not a fluke thing. It was 100 percent who he is. A man that has been benched and moved around multiple times and still fought his way to the top and took his team as far as he did. That's a big picture in my eyes.

"When we brought him in I had to do my research and understand what kind of man he is. Knowing that he's been with his wife [Kimberly] for a long time goes to show what type of man he is.

"Knowing that everything he does—he's collected, he gets in that huddle and he demands. But he showed us in the offseason before we even started OTAs. He's bringing us along, we're doing outings together—hockey games and all those things. He's taking control.

“He does a great job bringing the other wives together, which I think is a big thing. We all get together and understand each other. Because that’s what a team is, understanding each other. If we understand each other then we get on the field, it’s easy.”

Von praises coach Ware

Von Miller was asked about the work former teammate DeMarcus Ware did last week as a Broncos’ pass-rush consultant.

“Whether he likes it or not, it’s his calling,” Miller said. “He’s a great teacher, a great mentor.”

Just call them "coach"

Broncos fullback Andy Janovich has laser focus. He’s dedicated his time to lifting weights, getting in shape, learning a tweaked offensive playbook, playing football.

The coaches’ names? He’ll get to that when he has time. At his post-OTA press conference Thursday, Janovich didn’t quite get the names of new special teams coordinator Tom McMahon [Mahomes] and new strength and conditioning coach Loren [Landry] Landow.

Like most players, Janovich probably just calls them "coach." Know this: His praise of those two coaches was well understood.

“Yeah, last year was rough, but I think we’re going to have a great year with [McMahon],” Janovich said. “Just looking at what he’s done with the Colts, he’s been top-five the last three or four years. I think he’s going to turn this thing around for us. I miss [former special teams coach] Brock [Olivo], but it’s on to the next.”

As for Landow: “He’s going to be awesome. I feel like I’m getting really strong again. He’s got us kind of like old Nebraska work-out sessions. We’re lifting heavy weights again and he’s got us doing a lot of running and all of this different type of stuff for speed. It’s just like being in Nebraska. I’m excited.”

# Shane Ray facing another wrist surgery but first getting second opinion

By Mike Klis

9 News

June 6, 2018

Shane Ray can't catch a break.

The Broncos' outside linebacker could be facing another surgery on his troublesome left wrist, sources told 9NEWS. Ray is getting a second opinion but as of now, it appears he's headed for surgery.

If he doesn't undergo the procedure, Ray would not be expected to miss the season, although it could jeopardize the start.

He first injured the wrist on the first day of training camp last season. He underwent multiple surgeries, then missed the first six games of last season.

A first-round talent who had 8.0 sacks in a part-time role in 2016, Ray had just 1.0 sack in eight games last season before the Broncos shut him down the final two games.

He is the second Broncos' linebacker to have suffered a serious injury during OTAs. The Broncos lost Deiontrez Mount to a season-ending, torn Achilles injury last week.

Ray, who just turned 25, seemed healthy during the Broncos' offseason program until this week, when he sat out the Organized Team Activity (OTA) practice while wearing a splint around his left wrist.

Broncos left tackle Garrett Bolles was lauding the edge pass rushers he goes up against in practice Tuesday. Bradley Chubb, the Broncos' No. 5 overall draft pick, is a hard worker. Six-time Pro Bowler Von Miller is a leader.

"It's a bummer about Shane Ray but he still teaches, he's still a leader on that sideline," Bolles said.

The Broncos last month declined to exercise Ray's \$9.23 million option for the 2019 season. Ray's injury would increase the chances of undrafted rookie Jeff Holland making the 53-man roster. Holland received a \$15,000 signing bonus that tied with running back Phillip Lindsay for the richest bonus among the Broncos' seven college free agents.

Stansly Mapanga, a native of Zimbabwe who has three seasons of NFL experience, is another outside linebacker who has been getting some second-team reps.

# Broncos' Color Rush uniforms coming home vs. Steelers

By Mike Klis

9 News

June 6, 2018

Buckle up the chin strap, Big Ben.

Here comes the Color Rush.

The NFL for the first time is not reserving their teams' Color Rush uniforms for Thursday night games.

Instead, the Broncos can wear their all-orange uniforms one time, at any time.

Per a team source, the Broncos have selected their Week 12 game November 25 against the Pittsburgh Steelers and quarterback Ben Roethlisberger for their Color Rush garb at certain-to-be-at-least-temporarily-renamed-Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

The Broncos wore their Color Rush uniforms for one game each of the past two years, both on the road. This will be the first time the garish-orange ensemble will be on display before the home fans. The Color Rush? Orange jersey, orange pants, orange socks, AND ... old-school, blue helmets.

One other league-wide uniform tweak this season: Teams can wear their alternative uniforms for two home games instead of one.

The Broncos will wear their alternative navy jerseys with either blue or white pants against the Kansas City Chiefs in a week 4, Monday night home game on October 1 and against the Cleveland Browns for a week 15, December 15 home game.

The Broncos' standard uniform is an orange jersey with white pants at home and white jersey with white pants on the road.

# Devontae Booker is hoping to make sure we don't miss CJ Anderson (too much)

By Rod Mackey

9 News

June 6, 2018

Things will certainly be a different this season now that running back CJ Anderson is no longer a Denver Bronco.

Fellow running back Devontae Booker's goal is to make sure that Anderson is not missed ... to much.

"You lose a good guy in C.J. (Anderson), that was that veteran guy in our group, now the roles change," Booker said. "Best of luck to him in Carolina, but at the end of the day it's a business. We just have to come out here and do work."

Booker is the leader in the clubhouse when it comes to competition in the Broncos backfield, but those two years under his NFL belt can only help so much, especially considering the changes in the offense.

"This is my third offense in three years already," Booker said. "I guess you could say it's playing fast. For me during my rookie year, it was like I was running out there with my head chopped off and wandering around [not knowing] where I'm going. In a year or two since we had a new offense and everything, it just allows me to play fast and even now I see a lot more stuff than when I was a rookie."

Booker would prefer to be the No. 1 back, but if the Broncos share carries again, like they have in the past, he said he wouldn't mind.

"I like it, to be honest," he said. "Running back by committee, if it happens like that, I'm all for it. Just as long as I can get out there and help my team contribute to win."

And that's what matters most, winning. Booker like the rest of the Broncos are more than ready to put last years 5-11 season to forget behind them.

# The season Bronco Isaiah McKenzie hopes we all forget

By Rod Mackey

9 News

June 6, 2018

Isaiah McKenzie's special teams play last year was not that special. In his 11 games played for the Denver Broncos, he fumbled more than half of the time.

It was a season to forget for sure.

"Last year was a roller coaster," McKenzie said. "It was very unacceptable by me. But this year I came back with [a] clear mindset. I know how to do my job. I know how to catch the ball. I know I can run the ball. I just have to make great decisions."

The Broncos made the decision to stick with the rookie despite all of his mistakes. And McKenzie says these mistakes only made him work harder.

"I push myself even harder than I did last year," McKenzie said. "Each and every day I'm catching the ball, looking it in, making good decisions, running down the field and doing my job the best way I can."

It's early, but McKenzie looks like a completely different player, new number and all.

"Just a fresh start," McKenzie said. "I had 84 last year and I felt like it was a big guy's number. I went back to 16 which is the number I had in college and I just feel comfortable with that number. New number, new start."

A fresh start with a head start.

Despite his mishaps, McKenzie insists that he's way ahead of where he was 365 days ago.

# Will Demaryius Thomas stay healthy enough to be the Broncos' No. 1 receiver?

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

June 6, 2018

When Demaryius Thomas scans the practice field, he can see the power of change.

Now in his ninth season with the Denver Broncos -- and with the aches to prove it -- he knows how he has to approach being the longest-tenured player with the team.

"If I go out and bust my a\*\* I think the rest of the guys will see me and do the same thing," Thomas said.

In short, Thomas has been the Broncos' No. 1 receiver for as long as any of his teammates can remember. And he intends to show any and all interested parties he's still deserving of that title, especially if it leads to the kind of games he wants to play in.

"I'm always going to think of myself at that No. 1 guy," Thomas said.

"Playoffs, win another championship, that's always the goal, that's it ... I don't always talk about individual things because I feel like personal goals aren't the top thing. But I want to be the best at what I do and have a better year than the year before. That's how I think every year, if that's get back up over 1,200 yards or whatever, just as long as I'm helping us do what we need to do and I push as hard as I can to be better."

Now that he is a 30-year-old, however, he is in the gray-hair territory of his football career. Thomas is, after all, the only player left on the roster from the Broncos' 2010 draft class, just as Von Miller is the only one left from the 2011 draft class. And as the Broncos work through yet another remake on offense and Case Keenum becomes the seventh different starting quarterback who will throw to him, Thomas still believes there's plenty to his game despite what a struggle 2017 looked like at times.

His totals last season -- 83 catches for 949 yards -- were his lowest since 2011, when the Broncos gave Tim Tebow an option-based offense to run for much of that season. Thomas has battled hip troubles to go with a rather lengthy list of bruises, strains and twinges he has accumulated by not missing a game since that 2011 season.

Much like last spring, Thomas has looked refreshed in recent weeks as he has worked to find a rhythm in the offense with Keenum.

"Physically, I can say I've felt my best since I've been in the league," Thomas said. "I have been dealing with hip problems my whole career. Now it really doesn't bother me anymore. So physically I feel the best, mentally as well."

Thomas has felt much the same way in recent Junes on the way to the regular season. But in the 2016 regular-season opener he took a direct hit to his hip and the injury bothered him for the remainder of that season, even as he played in every game.

Last season, a few of the aches and pains cost him some practices, but it was Denver's struggles at quarterback -- the Broncos went through two cycles of Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch at quarterback -- that largely kept Thomas under the 1,000-yard mark.

This offseason, as the Broncos signed Keenum as the centerpiece of their free-agency efforts and offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave re-tooled the playbook, Thomas has been asked to do his part. John Elway mentioned him by name, as well as fellow wide receiver Emmanuel Sanders, earlier this offseason when Elway was listing players the team needed more from in 2018.

Thomas is ready to respond.

"You don't want to be that guy they look at and say 'that guy sucked,' I don't want to be that guy, because people are going to see it when you're that guy," Thomas said. "I don't want people to say 'd\*\*\*, Demaryius ain't got it no more,' I don't want to be that guy and I don't want the Broncos to be that team. We're better than that, we've got too much talent for that and we need to work like that."

# Why a bigger Garrett Bolles is convinced Year 2 as the Broncos' left tackle will be better

By Nicki Jhabvala

The Athletic

June 6, 2018

About a week before the 2017 NFL draft, the Broncos hosted Garrett Bolles on a top-30 visit to get to know him and to have that talk.

The then-25-year-old tackle had a high ceiling, the Broncos believed, and an athleticism and fire that was sorely needed in Denver after its failed bid to successfully defend its Super Bowl title.

But Bolles also arrived with a history of penalties, where he often crossed the line from aggression to foul in his lone year at Utah. So when he visited the Broncos ahead of the draft, he had that necessary chat with president of football operations/general manager John Elway and coach Vance Joseph.

"We talked about the fact that he has to understand that we love the passion that he plays with and how he plays with it, but he has to make sure that he stays within it," Elway said after the Broncos selected him at No. 20 in the 2017 draft. "We can't afford to have personal fouls."

Bolles started all 16 games at left tackle last season for the Broncos, and his rookie campaign included ups and downs typical of a first-year player. But his seven holding penalties were tied for the league high, his four false starts were tied for 11th-most and, according to STATS, LLC, he allowed 8.5 (third-most) of the Broncos' 52 total sacks on their quarterbacks.

Pro Football Focus ranked Bolles as the 53rd best tackle overall and tallied 51 total pressures allowed from him in pass blocking. Only four other tackles had more.

"We want Garrett to clean up his level of play," offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave said. "We had a number of penalties last year that we can get corrected. They've been addressed and we're looking forward to him playing a cleaner style this year. Also, just being better for us overall, both in the run and pass game."

Bolles is also eager for consistency in all facets, despite myriad changes around him.

By the end of last season, as the Broncos spiraled to a 5-11 finish, Bolles said his weight dropped to the 290s. He's now back up to 300-305, a range he says has provided added comfort and strength as he prepares for his sophomore season.

"It was my job to do what I had to do — to protect (the quarterbacks). I didn't do a good job of that," Bolles said. "I'll be the first one to admit that. It wasn't the best that I wanted to play.

"Last year, I just came in and I was raw. I only played offensive tackle for not too long. But now I have a season under my belt. I understand what it means to be in the NFL and hold down that left side and know where my quarterback is going to set up every single play, which is a big help. Just going out there and playing fast is the thing I'm going to focus on."

Simply knowing his starting quarterback from the outset helps too.

Bolles is onto his fourth starting quarterback in Case Keenum, and the changes in every phase seem to continue by the day at Dove Valley.

Last year the Broncos rotated starting quarterbacks five times, with Trevor Siemian, Brock Osweiler and Paxton Lynch each taking turns as the starter, backup and inactive quarterback twice throughout the year.

Offensive coordinator Mike McCoy was fired after Week 11 because of an unwieldy offense that resulted in the same mistakes repeatedly, and Musgrave was elevated to simplify the playbook. To streamline it. To make it functional and appropriate for the Broncos' personnel.

Musgrave has since tweaked the offense and installed new terminology and some new plays, and the offensive line was divided among two coaches. Chris Strausser, the primary offensive line coach, is working with tackles, and new hire Sean Kugler is coaching the interior linemen.

Bolles insists the adjustments — from himself and others — have already produced benefits.

"I feel different. I feel a lot different, I feel more smooth," he said. "I feel that like that weight (gain) is a big thing for me too. I know that I can anchor and shoot my hands. It was a big learning curve last year, but now I can take all that and apply it into my game."

The transition from college to the pros is arguably the most difficult for linemen in part because of the difference in size, speed of the game and — for many — learning an entirely new system.

Former Broncos tackle Ryan Harris has said that he didn't have to learn a playbook for years at Notre Dame. That changed immediately when he was drafted by the Broncos in the third round in 2007. For those coming from the spread offense, like Bolles did at Utah, the learning curve is even steeper.

"It's as if you're speaking Spanish and you're going some place that speaks Italian," Harris said in 2017. "There are some things that are similar, but on the whole, it's a completely different language."

Fellow former Broncos tackle Tyler Polunbush has said that the biggest challenge is often the mental part of the game. Polunbush went undrafted out of the University of Colorado and bookended his career with stints on the Broncos. His last go-round earned him a Super Bowl 50 ring.

"It's amazing how little about football I really knew when I thought I knew a lot," Polunbush said last year. "The mental aspect of the game and learning what it's like to be in the building for 10, 12 hours a day every day and realizing how much more there is to know about football was huge. And then the confidence side of it was big for me. Realizing, yes, everybody here is the best I ever went against, but there's a reason why I'm on this field as well. So just getting to the point where I believed I belonged with those guys was huge, and I think that's the same for first-round guys to undrafted guys."

Drafted specifically to plug a hole on the front line, Bolles' time to get up to speed was almost nonexistent. He was appointed a starter immediately, and he was the only rookie to start every game.

"In college, you can just sort of show up and play and knowing that if their starter is out they can attack that area. But in the NFL, if one starter's out, the backup guy is just as good," Bolles said. "... And the

defense moves so fast, the players move so fast, that was a big thing for me. But I felt like I settled in when I needed to settle in.

“I did make mistakes, like I said. I’ll be the first one to admit that. At the same time, I feel like those mistakes just continue to light a fire in me to know I can play in this league, know that I can do the things that I need to do for this team and protect Case with everything that I have, so that he can open up pass lanes and let our running backs do what they need to do through the hole.”

# Broncos' Shane Ray tells Denver7 surgery is a possibility on left wrist

By Troy Renck

KMGH

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Broncos linebacker Shane Ray wore a brace on his left wrist at practice the past two days. He now braces for potential surgery on his wrist after undergoing three procedures last season. Reached on Tuesday, Ray told Denver7 he continues weighing his options as he seeks a second opinion.

"I don't know," Ray said regarding having another surgery, "I have to wait and see."

For Ray, the setback represents another wicked speed-bump on his road to recovery. Ray tore ligaments in his wrist during training camp. He had pins and screws inserted to accelerate the healing. Doctors removed the pins during the season, but the screws remained to secure the bone. The screws were eventually removed. The lingering pain and lack of strength sabotaged Ray. He dropped to 225 pounds because he could not lift and his lacking strength left him unable to shed blockers.

The result? A lost season with one sack and 16 tackles in eight games.

This offseason brought hope for a jumpstart. Ray recovered, bulked up to 257 pounds and looked strong in early workouts. However, questions about his health and escalating salary led the Broncos to decline his fifth-year rookie option. Ray understood the Broncos move, especially in light of the team's selection of first-rounder Bradley Chubb, "calling it a business decision."

Still, Ray found motivation. He needs a good year to cash in with the Broncos, or more likely, with another team as a free agent. It made this week's developments difficult for the former Missouri star. His wrist became sore, leaving the strong possibility of surgery. The glimmer of good news is that the calendar works in his favor. Training camp does not begin until the last week of July.

Ray has been a positive force at practice even with his injury. In the only workout open to the media this week, Ray spent Monday coaching young outside linebackers, helping them with their technique.

The drafting of Chubb protects the Broncos if Ray faces an extended absence. The Broncos remain determined to get the rookie on the field early. Denver boasts depth with Von Miller and Shaq Barrett. And while early in the evaluation process, undrafted free agent Jeff Holland appears to have a decent chance of making the team.

# DeMarcus Walker eager to pull his new weight in Year 2

By Pat Graham  
Associated Press  
June 6, 2018

The Denver Broncos mandated DeMarcus Walker bulk up this offseason. That was a big weight off his mind.

As a rookie last season, Walker slimmed down to about 238 pounds in order to be more of an outside pass rushing threat. This season, he's back at 280 and playing inside along the defensive line.

He feels this should tip the scales back in his favor. After all, it's a similar weight from when he flourished at Florida State and became a second-round pick.

"Knowing what weight to play at, what I'm playing — smooth sailing," Walker said. "Just do my job and get better every day."

Walker began slimming down as a contingency plan when linebacker Shane Ray suffered a left wrist injury in training camp last July. Denver's defense features a 3-4 scheme and it's predicated on a multitude of pass rushers to assist Von Miller.

The 23-year-old Walker struggled at times with his new assignment and played in just 10 games with one sack (Kansas City's Patrick Mahomes in the season finale). It was a difficult transition as his role sometimes required him to help out in coverage, which he hadn't done since his sophomore year in college.

"I had to refresh my brain and my body," Walker said. "I wasn't the best at it. But I can do it."

Now, he's on more solid ground. These days, he heads into the defensive line room with the likes of Derek Wolfe (285 pounds), Adam Gotsis (282), Shelby Harris (290), Domata Peko (325) and Zach Kerr (334).

"It's kind of funny, they still try to call me light," Walker said. "It's all fun and games."

He bulked up over the last few months by eating four to five meals a day. Going back to Florida and dining on his mom's cooking helped as well.

As it turns out, he's not a bad cook himself. His specialties?

"Love lobster and shrimp," he said. "Love seafood."

He's listed as a defensive end on the roster. But ask him what position he plays and he grins.

"Athlete," he said. "Just say athlete."

Among his roles during the workouts is helping rookie pass rusher Bradley Chubb get up to speed. He's learning plenty from Chubb as well when they play side by side.

"Just how to take advantage of the offensive line. I think we're undefeated right now," Walker cracked of the two of them getting the best of their counterparts in offseason practice.

While at Florida State, Walker had 164 tackles, 28 ½ sacks, eight forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries. That was playing mostly with his "hand in the ground," he said.

That wasn't always the case a season ago when he had seven tackles and spent six games as an inactive.

Feel like the forgotten rusher heading into this season? "Nah," he said. "I'll wake them up. Trust me."

His coaches certainly appreciate what he brings to the table.

"He's improving," defensive coordinator Joe Woods said. "Last year, he was a versatile player for us.

"Right now, we said, 'Hey, you're a defensive lineman.' So, he's put the weight on. ... I got on the scale with him — or watched him get on the scale — he was up to 278, and he's really making some tremendous improvements."

Definitely a step in the right direction.

"To me, if he's in the 270s or 280s, that's good enough for us, to play the defensive end position and to play as an inside rusher," Woods said.

Defensive line coach Bill Kollar will take it from there.

"He understands what Bill wants," Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. "Bill's obviously a demanding coach, so being with Bill has helped DeMarcus play harder, and obviously being bigger is going to help him play better for us."

NOTES: OL Garrett Bolles plans to play this upcoming season between 300 and 305 pounds. "Just so I can anchor when I get those bull rushes and things like that," Bolles said. "Feel more comfortable there. Feel more explosive and powerful there." Bolles was in the vicinity of 290-295 in his rookie season.

# Fox sorry for depicting praying NFL players in protest story

By David Bauder  
Associated Press  
June 6, 2018

Fox News apologized on Tuesday for showing photos of Philadelphia Eagles players kneeling in prayer — not in protest — during a story about President Trump canceling a White House ceremony honoring the team for its Super Bowl victory.

The 33-second report aired late Monday with four still pictures of the Eagles shown in the background of Shannon Bream's narration. She said that the cancellation was due to "the national anthem controversy," where some NFL players knelt during the "The Star-Spangled Banner" last season to protest police brutality.

"To clarify, no members of the team knelt in protest during the national anthem throughout the regular or postseason last year," said Christopher Wallace, executive producer of the 11 p.m. Eastern program where the report aired Monday. "We apologize for the error."

Fox tweeted a copy of Wallace's apology on its news account Tuesday and said the error would be addressed on the television show.

President Donald Trump abruptly canceled the ceremony planned to celebrate the Eagles' Super Bowl victory after it became clear that the majority of players would not attend, renewing controversy over players taking a knee.

Eagles player Zach Ertz, who was in two of the pictures used by Fox during the segment, tweeted "this can't be serious."

"Praying before games with my teammates well before the anthem is being used for your propaganda?" Ertz tweeted. "Just sad. I feel like you guys should have to be better than this."

The two pictures with Ertz, one that also included teammate Corey Clement, were taken by The Associated Press. Both knelt at the goal line, heads down. The AP's photo caption said nothing about prayer or protest. In one picture, there were players in the background scattered about, a clear indication that it was not taken as the national anthem played.

A third picture used in the segment, also taken by the AP, depicted Eagles players Malcolm Jenkins, Rodney McLeod and Chris Long standing during the anthem before an Oct. 8 game last year. Long held his right hand over his heart, while Jenkins and McLeod raised their right arms in a clenched-fist salute.

Long tweeted on Tuesday that "Fox News used the faith of Christian men dishonestly to push an agenda. That wasn't an 'error,' but intentional and strategic."

"You're complicit in PLAYING America," Long wrote. "This is just another day at the office for you, though."

Long also wrote that most players who decided not to visit the White House on Tuesday had decided long before the NFL issued a new edict last month that players in the future would be fined if they knelt during the playing of the national anthem.

Fox News would not discuss how the error was made or whether anyone would face disciplinary action. Fox, which deleted online video copies of the error, made the correction swiftly. They've been criticized in the past for being reluctant to correct misstatements promptly.

# Denver Broncos need Shane Ray to get healthy, and Bradley Chubb to be ready

By Woody Paige  
Colorado Springs Gazette  
June 6, 2018

"Shane! Come back!" - Little Joey

Shane's comeback has been disrupted.

Instead, Shane Ray is anguishing through another setback.

And the Broncos' sturdiest and deepest position has gotten weaker and thinner by two the past week. It's not a splendid sign.

After Ray couldn't participate in the Broncos' OTA practice Monday with what coach Vance Joseph described as left wrist "irritation," the perceived starting outside linebacker could be out again for months.

There are more complications to the same injury - a torn ligament and separated bones in the wrist - he suffered in a routine linebackers-offensive linemen drill on the first day of 2017's training camp.

The last month has been dreadful for the fourth-year first-round draft choice, who turned 25 on May 18. On May 4 the Broncos declined to pick up Ray's fifth-season 2019 option, which would have guaranteed him \$9.232 million. John Elway was leery of Ray's injury and underachieving history, and the Broncos fortuitously had drafted heralded edge rusher Bradley Chubb fifth overall.

This year Ray will make \$2.9 million (including pro rata signing bonus). Tuesday, Ray was told by doctors he will have to undergo a fourth surgery on the left wrist. He is seeking a second opinion.

Ray's career is as scarred as his left arm.

Prior to the draft in 2015, the Missouri linebacker was arrested for possession of marijuana, and would drop to the Broncos at 23rd.

Two picks later, the Panthers chose Shaq Thompson, who has started 36 games at strongside linebacker, with three sacks, an interception and 106 tackles. Carolina recently extended Thompson for a fifth season.

On Oct. 18 of his rookie season, Ray suffered a grade 2 MCL knee sprain in Cleveland, and missed two games. He didn't start one game in the regular season or postseason opposite Von Miller, ending up with only four sacks and 15 tackles. He did force a fumble in the playoffs - and secured a Super Bowl ring.

In 2016, Ray started half the games, and played in all 16, and was named one of the 10 most-improved NFL players by Pro Football Focus. He doubled his sacks and his tackles.

Last season was supposed to be Ray's breakout as a full-mettle jacket complement to Miller.

It was a Lost Season, though.

Following an operation to repair the wrist and insert screws and pins, Ray was expected to be gone for six-eight weeks and return for the second or third game. But more difficulties required another surgery, and he was placed on injured reserve for six games. When Ray returned for the game in his hometown of Kansas City as a starter, he had lost weight (220s), didn't have the strength to dispense with linemen and played ineffectively - one tackle and no sacks. He tried for eight games, managing just 10 tackles and one sack.

Ray went back on IR for the final two games in the Broncos' putrid 5-11 season, and underwent a third surgery.

This season was supposed to be another attempt at a breakout - especially after Ray declared at the beginning of OTAs he was fully recovered. Rather, he has another tough break - or tear. Nobody seems to know when and if he can play.

The Broncos already had lost reserve outside linebacker Deiontrez Mount for the season with a torn Achilles.

Elway is sighing with relief over his decisions to select Chubb and not add another season to Ray's deal. The Broncos also signed, with a \$15,000 bonus, undrafted free agent outside linebacker Jeff Holland, who was all-SEC at Auburn. He'll certainly receive an opportunity, but Holland is not as athletic or powerful as Ray or Chubb. Veteran Shaq Barrett and Chubb will compete to start on the strong side, and journeyman Marcus Rush, who has bounced among five NFL teams (playing two games in four years) could contend.

Yet, the Broncos won't have their highest-drawer four-backer rotation at the start, or perhaps the middle. Chubb's progression on the pro level must be fast-tracked.

Meanwhile, Ray has to believe his fortunes and health will improve so he can earn a fortune next season.

The Broncos and every little Joey and Mary must hope that Shane will come back.

# President Trump canceling Eagles' White House visit shows NFL failed on anthem policy

By Jarrett Bell

USA Today

June 6, 2018

Look at the bright side, Philadelphia Eagles: Your team didn't wind up positioned in the Rose Garden as a political prop after all.

President Trump's decision to rescind the White House's invitation Monday evening wiped out what loomed to be the most awkward championship event ever. Multiple reports indicated fewer than 10 Eagles players were expected to be on hand for the ceremony, leaving a majority of those making the trip to Washington likely opting to spend Tuesday performing community service. The team wound up practicing in Philadelphia instead after its entire itinerary was wiped out.

Now the Eagles join the company of the defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors as title winners with better things to do than share the stage with Trump. And that list will undoubtedly grow with many future champions likely boasting a significant number of African-American players.

Sure, it's a shame, as former Eagles receiver Torrey Smith expressed on Twitter in summarizing the flip as a "cowardly act" by Trump. Players who embraced the idea of being honored at the White House suddenly lost that opportunity. They'll have to settle for having a place in history, at the intersection of sports, politics, polarization and activism.

Too bad there's no such silver lining for the NFL.

Trump's political punt underscored just why it was such a bad idea for NFL owners to pass that new, murky national anthem policy, as if it would squash the criticism coming from the President. Players now will be allowed to remain in the locker room for the anthem, but those who are on the sideline are required to stand and show respect, lest their teams be subjected to a fine.

Here's to hoping they know better now.

Trump — who has called for players to be fired for protests and suggested that those who continue to do so "maybe ... shouldn't live in the country" — apparently never had any intention of pulling his punches on the NFL over the anthem issue, whether they changed the policy or not.

According to The Wall Street Journal, Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said in a deposition that Trump admitted as much by telling him the issue "lifts him" and the league "can't win" on that front. Miami Dolphins owner Stephen Ross, per that same report, said he was "totally supportive" of players' protests until Trump "changed the dialogue."

NFL owners look silly about now — OK, sillier than two weeks ago — in weighing the criticism from Trump as one of the significant factors for changing the anthem policy. Kowtowing to him was hardly the ticket to reducing the attention on the matter ... or to solidifying its fan base.

No, that plan is backfiring, with more fuel now heaped on the issue.

Trump made that perfectly clear late Monday when he took another shot at the NFL and its new anthem policy on Twitter, scolding: “Staying in the Locker Room for the playing of our National Anthem is as disrespectful to our country as kneeling. Sorry!”

This came hours after the White House released a statement that yet again served up the narrative that player protests have been about the American flag or some imagined disrespect to the U.S. military. And, naturally, it doesn’t acknowledge the soul of the issue with the demonstrations.

No, the peaceful protests – including kneeling, as ex-49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick began at the suggestion of former Green Beret Nate Boyer – are First Amendment expressions targeting police brutality and social justice inequities that disproportionately affect African-Americans and other people of color.

But that’s where we are, still, with this range in worldviews. It brings to mind the remarks from Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie last October, when several team owners, Commissioner Roger Goodell and other NFL officials held a summit with players, including Eagles standouts Malcolm Jenkins and Chris Long, at league headquarters.

According to The New York Times, which obtained audio recordings of the meeting, Lurie referred to Trump’s reign as “one disastrous presidency” while emphasizing that the President’s support from NFL owners was far from unanimous.

“We’ve got to be careful not to be baited by Trump or whomever else,” Lurie said, according to The Times. “We have to find a way to not be divided and not get baited.”

Not a single Eagles player, by the way, has kneeled during the anthem. Jenkins, a co-founder of the Players Coalition, raised a fist until late last season, after owners struck a deal to support social campaigns led by players. Long, the most prominent white player to speak openly about social issues that concern African-Americans, stood alongside his teammate with his hand on Jenkins’ shoulder during the anthem.

Neither Jenkins nor Long has declared whether they will come on the field for the anthem this season. But at least one decision was made months ago. They weren’t going to visit with Trump at the White House, anyway.

# Bettors flock to Delaware casino to be among first to bet on sports after landmark ruling

By Jason La Canfora

CBS Sports

June 6, 2018

The announcement came, sort of out of nowhere, across the PA system inside the Delaware Park Casino at 1:20 pm.

Not that the masses assembled, probably a few hundred gambling diehards, didn't know precisely why they were there – for the opening of the full-blown sports book at all three casinos in this state Tuesday afternoon – but seeing the massive boards listing odds for everything from World Cup outcomes to Week 1 lines for the NFL season was a bit jarring. And hearing this countdown of sorts, not quite Michael Bufferesque but certainly high on the cheese-factor spectrum, made it clear that the Vegas stranglehold on legalized sports betting in this country was over.

"T-minus 10 minutes to get those bets down," came one of several announcements leading up the full-scale opening of wagering in Delaware, a state that previously allowed parlay betting in these casinos but was now suddenly taking action on Super Bowl odds, individual basketball and hockey games, MLS -- you name it, with more prop bets and more exotic wagering still to come.

The vast parking lots at this casino and race track were packed 15-20 rows deep by 1 p.m., and what would normally be a sleepy, empty Tuesday certainly had a unique buzz. Philadelphia sports talk radio station WIP had a radio-row style set-up broadcasting live from the casino. Several local television stations in the South Jersey/Philly market were represented, and there was a palpable buzz in the building as a representative for something called SportsGarten.com (a website that hasn't launched yet but promises to offer "your one stop shop for credible sports intelligence") placed the first ever wager of its kind at the book.

"This is the first ticket ever outside of Nevada," he said, waving the tiny printout over his head like he had already cashed his ticket as camera bulbs flashed and the news crews drew closer. It was a \$1,000 bet on the Yankees to win the World Series at 5-to-1 odds. "I feel very good about it," he opined.

As for pomp and circumstance at this particular dawning of a new gambling era goes, that was about it, though an hour south of here, Delaware Governor John Carney made the first-ever straight bet at Dover Downs, taking the Phillies to upset the Cubs at Wrigley Field Tuesday night.

No one knows exactly where all of this is going just yet, and how the winners and losers will shake out among the various parties who stand to potentially profit – casinos, online sports books, state coffers, professional sports leagues -- following the Supreme Court decision to strike down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act of 1992 in May. But one thing all could agree on was that gambling was here to stay, and that whatever advantages the casinos in this tiny state gained by being first to the market will be mitigated by what is sure to be a sweeping tide from nearby states like New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland (from where I drove, less than an hour in all) and then on and on as this process becomes streamlined and sports gambling more mainstreamed. The demand for action will be sated across many

states and numerous platforms (online, in-state gambling is expected in Delaware by Week 1 of the NFL season), with execs at the Delaware casinos unsure how big their margins will be.

"It took a lot of hype and nine years (of court battles) to get here, but it's finally here and the crowd was pretty excited," said William Fasy, the president of Delaware Park. "This is a down time for wagering -- you call it the lounges in Las Vegas this time of year -- but there were some pumped-up reporters here, for sure ...

"We have the whole pie to ourselves right now in this state, then next week there is going to be half a pie (as New Jersey and other states come aboard), and it's just going to keep getting sliced up. I really don't see that this is going to be that huge for us; this might turn out to be the high volume that we had today, OK. Once the actual pie starts getting cut up, I bet we have -- for the whole state -- less than 10 percent."

Still, for a Tuesday in early June, this was a close to hopping as anyone could have expected. Once that ceremonial bet was out of the way, a line at least 50 deep quickly formed.

Many of the bettors had already been in the sports book for upwards of an hour, amazed at the plethora of options available. "Look at this man, can you believe this?" said a regular here who only wanted to go by Scott, turning to me to initiate the small talk as we both stared slack-jawed at the wall of odds. "I never thought I would see this day."

For Scott, this was something like Christmas, in, well, not quite July. He was upset that there was no golf to bet on, and he seemed intent on getting some action on MLS games even though "I don't know a damn thing about professional soccer," as he put it. He said he was here all the time before to make parlay bets but hadn't seen this many new faces before.

A young guy decked out in Eagles gear made what appeared to be the second-ever wager here, photographing his ticket repeatedly and staring at it like it bore some mystical powers. He bet on the hometown Eagles, but, after exchanging pleasantries decided he best not give his name or say much more.

"I'm supposed to be at work right now," he said.

Others were eager and happy to talk. Raji Thomas works nearby and would make a wager to two on the parlays during his work break.

"During the week whenever I come over for a break it's usually pretty empty," said Raji Thomas, who said he this Delaware Park three or four times a year. "Usually I would just bet a three-team teaser. To see this big board here now, wow, this is pretty cool. I'm glad I decided to come out here."

Vince Kordic drove almost 2 1/2 hours from Hagerstown, Maryland to be at the opening of the sports book. Donning an Argentina jersey, he was amped to make some early World Cup wagers, and couldn't help but get in on some Week 1 NFL action as well. There were some kinks to work out with the tellers, and a few patrons were upset that they could not make their wagers on over/under win totals for the 2018 NFL season yet (those should be live by the weekend, according to the casino), but the overall experience appeared quite enjoyable for most I encountered.

"I'm originally from Ohio, and this was a pipe dream in Ohio," Kordic told me. "And then I moved to Maryland for work, and there were rumblings it could happen there, and slowly but surely it ended up

being a thing. I Google-mapped it, and I lived 2 hours, 12 minutes from here, that's why I ended up at this casino. I would have drove over three hours to the other race track in Dover if I had to.

"I would have gone wherever I had to today. It was automatic. And I specifically had this off day scheduled for my work. Thursday I'm off, and there's day baseball, so yeah Thursday I'll be back. I'm running with the opportunity to say the least ... For me it's a matter of shopping here, versus what odds you can find online."

While the common perception would be that the NFL, as the dominant sport in this country, would be where the money is, Fasy rebuffed that notion. He expects the biggest crowds for college football and the NCAA basketball tournament, and was actually most excited about the prospects for the World Cup, even with the USA not qualifying, which he hopes will bring in a non-traditional crowd.

Fasy seemed skeptical about the likelihood of the NFL and other pro sports leagues getting "an integrity tax" of some sort implemented, or at least, believing his cut will already be pinched, is obviously against the notion (setting up an interesting showdown perhaps between the lobbyist for the gaming industry vs. those for the NCAA, NFL, NBA, NHL, et al).

"The day that Nevada gives them an integrity fee I'll go to the legislature and say, 'I think you ought to consider it,'" he offered. "But the odds of that are slim to none, and slim left town."

For the casinos, the money will be in selling additional hot dogs and beers and pizza, according to Fasy, to those they can attract here, though again he figures that percentage of the wagering public will dwindle as this spreads state-to-state. "We lost money on parlays; the taxes are too high and I don't think that will change now," he said. The expectation is half of all bets at least will ultimately be made online, and there remains competition, still, from the local bookie, who can offer action on credit (you pay up front here) and can be more forgiving with the odds as well.

While Fasy may have been less than enthusiastic about what this day may mean for the casino and the state of Delaware long-term, for the patrons it was a cause of celebration. Some stuck around into the afternoon waiting to watch some of the games they had wagered on to begin on the big screens adjacent to the odds boards. But you couldn't help but notice that less than an hour after that big "T-minus" announcement, the sprawling room was quiet, and relatively barren.

"What is it, 2:30, and the line is gone, OK," Fasy said. "It's not as big a you think. Now, football is going to be big and the parlays were huge on Sundays and we'd have a line all the way back here. But they made their wager and as soon as the games started, everybody left."

I shared my favorite Week 1 picks (obviously subject to change as the season draws near) earlier in the week, which you can check out [here](#).

# Roger Goodell made a federal case of deflategate but doesn't defend NFL being attacked by the president?

By Dan Wetzel  
Yahoo! Sports  
June 6, 2018

Donald Trump rightly noted Tuesday the NFL's new anthem policy really isn't any different than its old policy. The latter allowed players to protest on the sideline by taking a knee. The former requires them to stay in the locker room during the pregame anthem, lest they be fined.

"Staying in the Locker Room [sic] for the playing of our National Anthem is as disrespectful to our country as kneeling," Trump tweeted.

The disrespectful part is in the eye of each person. Some believe it is. Some believe protesting is the most American of acts.

Trump is correct, however, that if you think kneeling is disrespectful (or not) then you'll find staying in the locker room disrespectful (or not). It's essentially the same thing. It's why the NFL completely blew it by adopting such a policy last month.

It's part of a campaign of incompetence and cowardice that Trump keeps exploiting to perfection. This is a public relations disaster for the league that shows no signs of abating.

Consider this, on Tuesday the President of the United States, surrounded by a military band and choir, held a pro-America, anti-NFL ceremony at the White House because he, a man who overcame bone spurs to truly love the military (especially the "people who weren't captured" in combat), personally determined the Philadelphia Eagles to be insufficiently patriotic because they don't believe in standing for the national anthem even though they all stood for the national anthem before every single game last season.

This would've once been considered a scene out of a totalitarian regime. These days, it's a Tuesday afternoon in America.

And the NFL's response to this broadside attack on it and its employees was ... silence ... cowardice ... feeble pitifulness.

Just wait until the next Trumpian act. A military parade on Super Bowl Sunday? A presidential declaration that football is anti-American? Who knows.

You can expect Trump to continue beating this drum any and every time he wants. NFL owners are terrified of him. They have been bullied by him. They'll let him say and do anything he wants to them.

A group that opposed Trump ever gaining ownership of a team has granted him ownership of the space inside their collective heads.

Consider this bit of manufactured absurdity. Too few Eagles players were willing, interested or available to attend the traditional Super Bowl champion White House ceremony. Trump is an undeniably polarizing and unpopular president, even more than most presidents. It happens.

So Trump uninvited the team, which is also his right. Why allow yourself to be humiliated by sparse attendance? He instead held a brief patriotism event.

The problem is he blamed everything on player opposition to his stance against protests during the pregame anthem. That was a lie though, since every Eagles player stood before every game. Not that it matters. It was a deft political maneuver by a deft politician. Trump is well aware that facts are nebulous these days and is only trying to appeal to his base anyway.

So those same players that actually stood for the anthem are being attacked and blamed for not standing for the anthem.

Fox News even ran footage of Eagles players kneeling, except they weren't kneeling during the anthem but instead participating in a pregame prayer. It's since apologized in a statement, but there's a lot of viewers who saw it on near constant loop for a news cycle or two.

"Propaganda," said Philly tight end Zach Ertz, one of the praying (not kneeling) players in the videos.

It really shouldn't be Ertz or any of his teammates who need to defend themselves here. It should be the Eagles organization itself. It should be the NFL. It should be Roger Goodell going on camera to hammer Fox News for the video and blasting Trump for lying about the players and their motives.

Goodell made a federal case out of the inflation level of footballs but he doesn't care if his players are being attacked by the president and his favorite network for praying before a game? That gets ... crickets?

The President against some random players, who he has already effectively categorized as ungrateful and un-American – even though they, we'll keep repeating, never actually knelt for the anthem – isn't a fair fight.

The full weight and power of the NFL and its 30-plus owners, condemning attacks on the players and the league, repeating the facts and mocking Trump for lying, might be. At least it would be an effort.

The NFL's logo is a shield, yet where's Jerry Jones, where's Bob McNair, where's Robert Kraft to wield it in an effort to protect? Where's Jeffrey Lurie?

Trump is even blaming the players for the stay-in-the-locker-room-policy even though they weren't consulted on it, didn't write it and didn't vote on it. The owners concocted this ludicrous compromise and then implemented it. Since no games have yet been played under the policy, no player has violated it.

Doesn't matter. Trump is torching them anyway.

And their bosses are so scared of Trump calling them out by name in a tweet they allow it.

Trump is a politician and like all politicians they are going to beat a popular, hot button issue into the ground. He lives for this stuff. His presidency is an ongoing culture war. You can hardly even blame him for doing it. This is how he got elected. Trump is going to Trump.

The NFL, with its vast resources and highly paid commissioner, is supposed to be smart enough to know this and avoid it. If nothing else it should grow the spine necessary to fight for its employees, if not its own reputation.

Come on Roger, stand up and throw a punch.

The NFL needed to do one of two things on the anthem. It needed to require all players to stand for the anthem under the argument that while you are at work you follow the rules. That's the system with most employers, including the NBA (and, in full disclosure, I, personally, prefer).

Or it should have ignored Trump and stuck with what it had, brushing him off as unimportant. Any impact on the NFL's bottom line from boycotting fans was minimal to begin with and, in lieu of the legalization of sports wagering, destined to be nothing but a blip in a coming revenue boom. The league was well positioned to not react.

Instead it made mistake after mistake, striking the match that inflamed the situation again (and again and again) and then cravenly clamming up as everything burned and the players got blamed for things they didn't do, didn't believe and never said.

You can expect this to continue. Rinse. Repeat.

Having a president and his media wing demonize players who always stood for the anthem (but did kneel for prayer) to score cheap political points is dishonest and disappointing.

# White House explains decision to cancel Eagles visit

By Austin Knoblauch

NFL.com

June 6, 2018

A day after canceling the Philadelphia Eagles' scheduled Super Bowl LII celebration visit, the White House provided further explanation as to why it decided to scrap the visit.

In a statement released by Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House said it decided to cancel the event after learning that only a "tiny" number of players planned to attend the celebration. The Eagles tried last week to reschedule it, per Sanders, but the dates offered by the team conflicted with President Trump's schedule.

"The White House, despite sensing a lack of good faith, nonetheless attempted to work with the Eagles over the weekend to change the event format that could accommodate a smaller group of players," the statement said. "Unfortunately, the Eagles offered to send only a tiny handful of representatives, while making clear that the great majority of players would not attend the event, despite planning to be in D.C. today. In other words, the vast majority of the Eagles team decided to abandon their fans."

The White House said the Eagles initially told them that 81 individuals connected to the club -- players, coaches, executives and other team personnel -- would attend the celebration.

Philadelphia safety Malcolm Jenkins, a co-founder of the Players Coalition, reminded his followers on Twitter that no one on the Eagles kneeled or sat during the national anthem before games. He also explained, in part, some of the motivation for why he planned on not attending the celebration even before it was canceled.

"It's hard to meet with people who don't agree with you and to have tough conversations about uncomfortable race-related issues and how to make positive change," Jenkins wrote. "It takes courage to stand up for the TRUTH even if it's not a popular one."

[View image on Twitter](#)

# Trump Roars at the N.F.L. Again — the Eagles Roar Back

By Michael Powell

New York Times

June 6, 2018

I am no card shark but I might take my chances playing a round of poker with the men who own National Football League teams. Bluff these billionaires and they fold like cheap rugs in humid weather.

No need to take my word. Just keep an eye on our president, Donald Trump, a man practiced at the art of bluff and provocation, racial and otherwise. On Monday he turned on its head a looming embarrassment — only a small number of the Super Bowl-champion Philadelphia Eagles were going to visit him in his White House. He launched a pre-emptive disinvitation, saying he had no desire to see the owner, the mascot and whatever players could be rounded up.

He blamed cowardly N.F.L. owners and players who insist on kneeling for the national anthem. “They disagree with their President because he insists that they proudly stand for the national anthem, hand on heart.”

To which he added a tweet chaser: “Honoring America! NFL, no escaping to Locker Rooms.”

This was fib, misstatement, lie and baloney. Not a single Eagles player took a knee last year. And this spring the players have made clear with statement and tweet and words that they are simply embarrassed by “their” president and what a visit with him might come to represent.

Here’s Torrey Smith, a wide receiver for the Eagles last season, typing in plain English on Twitter: “So many lies, smh. Here are some facts: Not many people were going to go. No one refused to go simply because Trump ‘insists’ folks stand for the anthem. The President continues to spread the false narrative that players are anti-military.”

We might pity the owners, who have prostrated themselves before Trump with so much scraping and mewling. At least two-thirds are Republicans and about a half-dozen contributed \$100,000 to the President’s inaugural festivities. Robert Kraft, the owner of the Patriots, wrote a check for a cool million, and his coach, Bill Belichick, wrote an unctuous letter of endorsement during the campaign. Last month, the owners jettisoned all previous assertions of principle and dignity and agreed not only to allow themselves to punish players who show disrespect during the national anthem — they get to decide the definition of disrespect — but to fine any team that tolerates such outbursts of principle.

And of course no owner has offered a job to quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who started all this, or defensive back Eric Reid, who has been plenty outspoken.

And still Trump lashes them.

We might recall the roots of this lousy little morality play. Last September, Trump traveled to Alabama to campaign for a Republican United States Senate candidate who was not in great shape due to his alleged taste for dating underage women. Speaking before a vastly white and vastly conservative crowd, Trump decided to give them a jolt by calling out N.F.L. owners for failing to discipline the handful of players who had taken a knee during the national anthem to protest police brutality against the black community.

Squinting, his lips curled, Trump loosened a vaudevillian's fury.

"Wouldn't you love to see one of those N.F.L. owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out. He's fired!'"

He accused players, who are two-thirds black, of harboring "total disrespect of our heritage." Heritage is a favored Trump dog whistle. There was no racial subtext to divine here; this was pure text.

For a few minutes there, the owners offered a hint they possessed vertebrae. Their hired Man Friday, Roger Goodell, sort of stood by the players. "Divisive comments like these demonstrate an unfortunate lack of respect for the N.F.L., our great game and all of our players." And some owners stood alongside their players at the next game.

Afterward, most disconnected their phones and hid in their basements.

It was then left to players from all sports to engage in All-American free speech. Several members of the Golden State Warriors called out the president. Trump shot back at them. Then came the heavy artillery, LeBron James and Chris Paul and coaches Gregg Popovich and Steve Kerr.

Kerr renewed a strong lease on the First Amendment, calling out Trump for his usual assault on values of dissent. And James took time out from preparing for the Sisyphean task of trying to beat the Warriors to aim a jab at the president. Asked about it by the press, he near shrugged.

"It's typical of him. I'm not surprised. Typical of him," James said. "I know no matter who wins this series, no one wants an invite anyway."

Yet more impressive and more moving is to watch football players speak up. Of all the great American sports, football most closely resembles high-priced indentured servitude. The union has historically been weak. Most contracts are not guaranteed. Rank and file salaries trail a considerable distance between baseball and basketball. And the health conditions are horrendous.

So Eagles safety Malcolm Jenkins described the White House meeting as a photo op and he made clear he wanted no part of "being used as any kind of pawn." To which Connor Barwin, a former Eagles linebacker, added that there is value and dignity to be found in speaking out. "If our president doesn't understand this most important truth, it's even more important that we do."

As it happened, Trump's attack on the players came on the same day that Dwight Clark, the great receiver for the San Francisco 49ers, died of the terrible degenerative nerve disease A.L.S. on Monday. Clark had speculated, with some solid support from science, that his disease might have been caused by the battering he received as a player.

Our president adores going on about his love of toughness. (He had the misfortune to miss his shot at Vietnam. He ran up four years of exemptions while at Wharton, and then he discovered that he had a bone spur in his heel. His doctor, Trump told the Times, wrote "a very strong letter on the heels.")

So he indulges his inner Emperor Claudius and decries the desire among N.F.L. players to avoid brain-shattering hits. So he complained last September in Alabama that the boys on the field were insufficiently violent.

Trump's latest rumble has prompted courtiers to run to his aid. I was stuck in John F. Kennedy Airport listening to one banal sort after another defend the president's right to savage whomever he likes. And Fox News, that most obedient Spaniel, ran a photograph of rebellious Eagles players kneeling.

It turned out those players were not protesting. They were praying to God before the game.

Defensive end Chris Long, one of the most outspoken players on the Eagles last season, took to Twitter to take on Fox. "Imagine wanting to please the boss so very badly that you run stills of guys kneeling down PRAYING during pregame."

"Keep carrying his water to sow division while misrepresenting Christian men."

No doubt writers and columnists will emerge as they did last September to argue that to engage Trump is to lose. He has, after all, a visceral feel for who to swing at and how that will play with his crowd.

Perhaps that is so. Perhaps it's also true that occasionally men and women are obliged to stand and speak, and rarely more so than when a leader of the United States is intent at picking at the nation's oldest and most painful scabs.

# President Trump Needs to Be ALL CAPS

By Jason Gay  
Wall Street Journal  
June 6, 2018

Another day, another episode in the life of President Donald Trump, Unofficial Commissioner of the NFL.

But before we dive into it, could I have a brief aside to address the president?

Mr. President: Hi. Jason here. Yes, the idiot at the Journal. Not sure you're getting this advice in the Oval Office, but: there is one and only one sports story that matters right now in Washington, D.C.—and that is the NHL Capitals, who are one win away from taking their first Stanley Cup in franchise history.

I know you love to jump on football, it seems like great fun to torment the league, but keep your eye on the puck. DO NOT MESS WITH THE CAPS MOMENTUM, MR. PRESIDENT!

OK, back to Trump vs. the NFL, Part 4,000...

This week's drama involves the Philadelphia Eagles, the Super Bowl champs who found themselves abruptly disinvented from a White House visit on Tuesday.

Apparently, President Trump—fresh from victory over the NFL last week in getting the league to adopt a stand-for-the-anthem policy—wasn't thrilled to hear a lot of Eagles weren't planning to show for Tuesday's ceremony.

The President must have imagined himself carrying a tray full of green-frosting Eagles cupcakes—and only a handful of takers—and pulled the plug.

Some Eagles players did want to go to the White House—but tough luck. Everyone was out. The President still went forward with a ceremony, and Eagles fans were invited—I hope they didn't climb up the light poles outside 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.—but official team personnel were banned.

We could go around and around on this topic ad nauseam, like we're on a terrible cable news show: whether the President was correct to ban the team; whether the Eagles should have just sucked it up and gone; whether the White House is mistakenly (or very purposefully) conflating the Eagles's tepid RSVP with player protests during the national anthem.

Because here's how many Philadelphia Eagles players knelt during the national anthem last season, or sat it out in the locker room: Zero.

That's right. Nobody.

I'm not sure the facts matter as much as the rancor, however. Knocking the NFL is a very popular wrestling move for the President—he admitted as much last year in private conversations with league ownership about the protests during the anthem, according to the Journal's Andrew Beaton.

“This is a very winning, strong issue for me,” Mr. Trump said in a phone call to Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, according to a sworn deposition reviewed by the Journal. “Tell everybody, you can’t win this one. This one lifts me.”

I agree. Taking on the NFL has been a winner for Trump. It’s noisy, reductivist, passionate and people on both sides are dug in. If NFL ownership thought the President would lay off them once they made their anthem rule, they were foolish.

For the White House, this is great fun. Why give it up now?

And this is why I’d recommend this move for the Philadelphia Eagles:

Ignore it.

Let it go. Do not make the same mistake that so many of the President’s targets make. Don’t engage. Don’t tweet. Go to the movies. Go get ice cream. Read John Carreyrou of the WSJ’s Theranos best seller, “Bad Blood.” Remove the oxygen, allow the fiasco to evaporate. Take a high road.

It’ll drive the unofficial NFL commish crazy.

I think by now we all know that President Trump lives for the fight. Conflict is his fuel. A battle allows him to dictate terms, stretch the drama, poke his opponents. He wants his enemies to jump into the Octagon.

I’m sure the Eagles who wanted to go to the White House are bummed. The players who planned to skip it are likely chagrined to see their choice painted as anti-American.

Or maybe they expected it.

Again, here’s how many Eagles knelt for the anthem during last year’s Super Bowl season, or sat it out in the locker room: zero.

Nobody.

“People on the team [have] plenty of different views,” tweeted the Eagles receiver Torrey Smith, whose father served more than two decades in the Army. “The men and women that wanted to go should’ve been able to go. It’s a cowardly act to cancel the celebration because the majority of the people don’t want to see you. To make it about the anthem is foolish.”

All fair points! But I still say: ignore it.

So far, the Eagles are flying low. On Monday night, the team released an anodyne statement thanking their fans and not mentioning a word about the White House disinvite or Mr. Trump.

This could make the President bonkers.

What are the Eagles saying about my No-Eagles-Allowed party?

They’re saying nothing, Mr. President.

What? Hand me my Twitter machine.

I've heard the argument against these White House ceremonies—that dust-ups like this one, and the President's missed connection with the Golden State Warriors, underline the absurdity and political hazards of the tradition.

But these things weren't such big chores before. Players attended, players did not. Michael Jordan skipped one. So did Larry Bird. ("[The President] knows where to find me," said Bird.) Tom Brady has missed ceremonies with President Trump and President Obama. Stanley Cup winning goalie Tim Thomas bailed on a Bruins visit with Obama because he felt the federal government was "out of control." Manny Ramirez missed a ceremony with the Red Sox, prompting George W. Bush to quip: "I guess his grandmother died again."

Which is a pretty funny line.

The point is, the show goes on. The President (whoever it is) is supposed make a few bad jokes and hold up a shirt with his name on it. It's harmless photo-op, basically.

Now it's become this heavy, humorless political...football. The White House is turning a sports ceremony into a showdown over patriotism.

It's silly, unproductive, and best to ignore. There are bigger issues.

Like the biggest sports story in Washington, D.C., right now:

**CAPS! CAPS! CAPS! ONE MORE TO GO!**

# I'm done helping the NFL Players Association's pay lip service to domestic violence prevention

By Deborah Epstein  
The Washington Post  
June 6, 2018

On May 23, I resigned from the NFL Players Association's commission on domestic violence. Susan Else, former president of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, resigned with me. I simply cannot continue to be part of a body that exists in name only.

My resignation brought to an end a nearly four-year association with the NFLPA that was, by turns, promising, inspiring and deeply frustrating. The commission was formed as part of the sport's belated effort to confront the plague of domestic violence in the National Football League. The precipitating event was, of course, the viral release of a security video from an Atlantic City casino showing then- Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice knocking his then-fiancee unconscious in an elevator and then dragging her through the doors.

When representatives of the players association approached me with the idea of organizing an official effort to study and rectify the NFL's domestic violence epidemic, I was thrilled. Several years ahead of the #MeToo awakening in American professional life, I believed the commission, as a project sponsored by an organization representing the players themselves, would be positioned to address head-on the serious problem of intimate-partner violence among NFL couples and families.

I spent the first year enthusiastically attending meetings and helping the commission make connections with the advocacy community. I worked with Lisa Goodman, a Boston College research psychologist with experience working with survivors of intimate-partner violence, to conduct a national study of players' wives and their suggestions for dealing with family violence in this particular, high-profile community. At the NFLPA's insistence, we signed a confidentiality agreement that prevents us from publicly discussing our research findings. But we made numerous systematic recommendations of concrete steps that would go a long way toward dramatically lowering the risk of domestic violence in professional football.

That study was completed two years ago, in June 2016. Since then, despite my numerous requests, the commission has met only three times. As of our last meeting, the NFLPA had not implemented any of the reforms proposed in our study.

I also have made several other suggestions for commission projects that could help reduce intimate-partner violence in the domain of professional football. In recent weeks, as I reviewed my correspondence with the players association, a deflating pattern emerged. My NFLPA contacts would initially greet these ideas with a burst of enthusiasm and an indication of likely implementation, but efforts to follow up would yield nothing in the way of specific plans, and eventually communication would fade into radio silence.

Meanwhile, we continue to see allegations of NFL players committing acts of domestic violence. Last spring, at least a half-dozen new players were invited to join NFL teams even as they were facing outstanding court cases based on alleged physical or sexual assaults, many committed against intimate partners. The Cincinnati Bengals drafted running back Joe Mixon, despite publicly available video footage of Mixon punching a woman so hard at a restaurant that four bones in her face were broken. This year,

the Cleveland Browns drafted Antonio Callaway, who faced sexual assault allegations at the University of Florida. (Callaway was found “not responsible” in a Title IX hearing in 2016 that was boycotted by his accuser because the hearing officer who presided over the case was also a booster of the school’s athletic program.)

When I was asked to join the commission, I told NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith that I was leery of associating with an organization that might just be paying lip service to the defining issue of my career — so that, in essence, the NFLPA could say it was confronting domestic violence abuses long enough for the Rice story to fall out of the news cycle. Smith assured me, repeatedly, that this commission would be a serious working group and that our efforts would help produce necessary reforms. But clearly that has not been the case. Authorizing a single study, and then burying it through a confidentiality agreement and shelving its recommendations does not constitute meaningful reform. Because I care deeply about violence against women in the NFL and beyond, I can no longer continue to be part of a commission that is essentially a fig leaf.

And the NFLPA’s response to my letter of resignation? A one-line email thanking me for my service but failing to acknowledge or respond to any of the substantive points set forth. The email was short, but its message couldn’t have been clearer: The NFL Players Association is no longer interested in even making a public show of concern about violence against women — a point driven home more forcefully during each new NFL draft season.

# Garrett Bolles hopes to play heavier in 2018

By Mike Florio  
Pro Football Talk  
June 6, 2018

Broncos 2017 first-round offensive lineman Garrett Bolles started all 16 games as a rookie. In an effort to have a bigger impact in his second season, Bolles hopes to get larger.

"I just had to gain a bit more weight," Bolles told reporters on Tuesday. "Just so I can anchor when I get those bull rushes and things like that. I talked with my coaches and the front office and they want me to get a little bit bigger. So, I'll probably stay around 300-305 [pounds]. That's sort of my range. I feel more comfortable there. I feel more explosive and powerful. Probably no more than about 308 is what I'm feeling. I feel confident there. My body feels good and I'm looking forward to the season."

Bolles explained that, at the end of last season, Bolles weighed in the range of 290-295 pounds.

"I put on a lot of muscle this offseason," Bolles said. "I feel good. My body feels healthy. That's all that matter's right now."

He admitted to having "rocky moments" in 2017, and he wants to put that behind him.

"I watched a lot of film trying to fix my mistakes," Bolles said. "I'm trying to do everything I can possible to get ready. Knowing that we've got a new quarterback in, I've got to be ready to protect him. I'm excited for that and I feel really good going into Year Two. I feel a lot calmer and collected. The offense is pretty similar. The thing is just new terminology. I'm just looking forward to it and I'm excited to see what happens this season."

So are Broncos fans. Last year's sub-.500 showing was an aberration, and the Broncos haven't had back-to-back losing seasons since the early 1970s. To avoid that fate, they'll need Bolles to improve — among plenty of other things.

# **Report: Shane Ray needs another wrist operation**

By Charean Williams

Pro Football Talk

June 6, 2018

Broncos outside linebacker Shane Ray is facing another surgery on his left wrist, Mike Klis of Denver's 9Sports reports.

Ray is getting a second opinion, but surgery would not be season ending, according to Klis.

He missed eight games last season with a wrist injury and made 16 tackles and a sack. Ray has had three previous surgeries on the wrist.

The Broncos did not pick up the \$9.23 million option on Ray's contract for 2019. He is scheduled to become a free agent in March without an extension.

# At White House ceremony, some visitors knelt during the national anthem

By Michael David Smith

Pro Football Talk

June 6, 2018

President Trump canceled the Philadelphia Eagles' White House visit today in his ongoing campaign against the NFL for players kneeling during the national anthem. But his effort to put on a display free of protest did not go according to plan.

At least two visitors on the White House South Lawn knelt during the playing of the national anthem at the event, which Trump said would include visitors standing for the anthem. A Swedish television crew showed one of the kneelers, who declined to discuss his protest.

Another person could be heard heckling Trump at the event.

"Stop hiding behind the armed services and the national anthem," the heckler yelled. "Let's hear it for the Eagles!"

In the immediate aftermath of today's event, Trump has drawn criticism for appearing not to know the words to "God Bless America."

Today's event at the White House had initially been the annual visit to the White House for the Super Bowl champions, but yesterday Trump abruptly canceled the event after many Eagles players declined to attend. Trump has criticized NFL players who kneel during the anthem, although no players on the Eagles knelt last season.

# LeBron James on White House: “No one wants the invite anyway”

By Darin Gantt  
Pro Football Talk  
June 6, 2018

President Donald Trump won't have a chance to rescind the invitation to the White House for the NBA champion, the way he did for the Eagles.

At least, that's the opinion of Cleveland Cavaliers star LeBron James, who told reporters today that neither his team nor the Golden State Warriors would be used as a prop the way the Eagles were this week.

“It's typical of him,” James said of Trump, via NBC Sports Bay Area. “I'm not surprised. It's typical of him. I know no matter who wins this series, no one wants the invite anyway. It won't be Golden State or Cleveland going.”

That seems particularly likely, for two reasons: 1) It's extremely unlikely it's going to be the Cavs because they have one good basketball player and the Warriors have many more, and 2) The Warriors have already decided to stay away once, only to have the invitation rescinded.

Warriors guard Steph Curry said he agreed with James about the likelihood of either team visiting.

“I'm pretty sure the way we handled things last year, we'll stay consistent with that,” Curry said. “But at the end of the day, every team has the opportunity to make a decision for themselves, speak for themselves, and that's powerful, being in this situation.”

Warriors coach Steve Kerr, who has taken a number of shots at both Trump and the NFL, also said the drama was predictable.

“The president has made it pretty clear he's going to try to divide us, all of us in this country, for political gain,” Kerr said, via ESPN's Rachel Nichols. “It's just the way it is. We all look forward to the day we can go back to just having a celebration of athletic achievement. . . .”

“The irony is that the Eagles have been nothing but fantastic citizens in their own community. I've been reading about Malcolm Jenkins, Chris Long; these guys are studs, they're amazing. It will be nice when we can just get back to normal — in three years.”

While that part remains to be seen, the Eagles at least have the support of their fellow athletes.

# Giants G.M. Dave Gettleman to begin treatment for lymphoma

By Darin Gantt  
Pro Football Talk  
June 6, 2018

The Giants are suddenly faced with a struggle far more important than Odell Beckham Jr.'s contract status.

The team put out a statement moments ago from General Manager Dave Gettleman announcing that he has been diagnosed with cancer.

"Recently, I underwent an annual physical, during which it was discovered I have lymphoma," he said in the statement. "Over the past week, I have undergone more testing to determine the course of treatment, which is scheduled to start in the very near future. The doctor's outlook for the treatment and the prognosis is positive, and so am I.

"I will continue to work as much as the treatment process will allow, and as they know, when I am not in the office, I will be in constant communication with Pat (Shurmur), Kevin (Abrams) and the rest of our staff.

"I am thankful to John Mara and Steve Tisch and our organization for their support and encouragement, and to Ronnie Barnes for his guidance and assistance. And, of course, to my wife Joanne and our children for their love and support. And I want to thank you in advance for respecting my privacy and that of my family as we work our way through this. I look forward to being back at full strength and devoting all my energy to helping make this 2018 New York Giants team the best it can be."

Our thoughts are with Gettleman's family and the Giants as he goes through this process.

# FOX News apologizes for misleading report about Eagles

By Josh Alper  
Pro Football Talk  
June 6, 2018

FOX News responded to President Trump's decision to cancel the Eagles' White House visit scheduled for Tuesday by running clips of Eagles players kneeling in prayer while a newscaster discussed the President's aversion to players kneeling during the playing of the national anthem.

No Eagles players knelt during the playing of the anthem during the 2017 regular season or postseason, however, and that led to angry reactions from Chris Long and Zach Ertz about the network's apparent attempt to suggest otherwise during their report.

In a statement from FOX News @ Night executive producer Christopher Wallace, the network acknowledged the video they showed was unrelated to the national anthem and apologized for that decision.

"During our report about President Trump canceling the Philadelphia Eagles trip to the White House to celebrate their Super Bowl win, we showed unrelated footage of players kneeling in prayer. To clarify, no members of the team knelt in protest during the national anthem throughout regular or postseason last year. We apologize for the error."

According to various reports, few Eagles players were planning to attend the White House event and the team is holding a workout at their facility instead.

# Report: President wanted to “punish” NFL via tax reform

By Mike Florio  
Pro Football Talk  
June 6, 2018

As if there was any doubt that the President has it in for the NFL, look no farther than last year’s effort to reform the tax code.

Via Joshua Dawsey and Wesley Lowery of the Washington Post, the President “told White House officials they should punish the NFL as part of a GOP-tax plan.”

Per the report, some of the President’s aides started to research how the league could be punished. One unnamed White House official said that “Trump’s ideas were never implemented and described his orders more as venting.”

If the President wants to continue to look for ways to hurt the NFL (whether because of the anthem issue or the failure of the USFL or the fact that the NFL never wanted him in the club), the easiest approach would be to attack the league’s broadcast antitrust exemption. This, of course, would require the President to rally enough support in Congress to overturn a law that gives the league the ability to market the 32 teams’ TV rights as one block, preventing (for example), NBC from buying all Cowboys home games and CBS buying all Patriots home games and no one offering all that much for the home games of certain teams that really don’t need to be named because we, and they, know who they are.

That’s a highly unlikely outcome, but if the President continues to be motivated to attack the NFL, he may decide at some point to attack the broadcast antitrust exemption. Which may be the main reason why the NFL refuses to engage him on this or any issue.