

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

By Andrew Mason
DenverBroncos.com
May 2, 2018

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Case Keenum makes immediate impression on Emmanuel Sanders

By Mike Florio
Pro Football Talk
May 2, 2018

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

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

Sanders already has given Keenum the seal of approval.

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

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

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

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

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

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

David Carr calls Case Keenum as the best offseason addition

By Colin Liotta
Touchdown Wire
May 2, 2018

A number of NFL teams found their future quarterbacks in last week's NFL Draft, with the Browns taking Baker Mayfield, the Jets taking Sam Darnold, the Bills taking Josh Allen and the Cards selecting Josh Rosen.

It was a mad dash at the top of the draft to secure a potential franchise quarterback. Even the Baltimore Ravens got in on the act by taking former Heisman Trophy winner and human speedster Lamar Jackson with the last pick in the first round.

But there's one team that may have come away the biggest winners this offseason when it comes to landing a winning quarterback: the Denver Broncos.

The addition of Case Keenum has been called the best offseason addition by NFL Network analyst David Carr, who said the following about the new Broncos quarterback:

"The Broncos have been looking for their quarterback since Peyton Manning's retirement following the 2015 season, and it sure looks like they're invested in Keenum, given that they didn't select a QB in the 2018 NFL Draft. Keenum, who can manage this offense well and can play above the Xs and Os, is surrounded by talented receivers in Demaryius Thomas, Emmanuel Sanders and rookie Courtland Sutton. And Denver's defense, which added pass rusher Bradley Chubb with the fifth overall pick, should keep the pressure off the offense and help keep the team in every game."

You may or may not agree with Carr's assessment, but you have to admit that Keenum is a tremendous upgrade from Trevor Siemian (who coincidentally signed with Keenum's old team, the Minnesota Vikings, this offseason) and enigma Paxton Lynch.

With a revamped offense and solid defense, the Broncos should be contenders next year, and a big part of that could be because of Keenum.

Keenum in charge of 11-man offense as Broncos begin Phase II

By Mike Klis

9 News

April 30, 2018

For the first time, Case Keenum lined up the Broncos' first-team offense Monday, called out the signals, and ran a play.

Phase II of the Broncos' offseason program has begun at the team's UHealth Training Center headquarters. After Phase I was limited to strength, conditioning and classroom work, Phase II puts Vance Joseph and his coaching staff on the field for 90 minutes of instruction. Practice allows for 11 players to a side to run their plays, although there can be no opposing side.

Keenum, Paxton Lynch and Chad Kelly – and nothing but -- are the Broncos' quarterbacks taking turns running their 11-man offensive units through plays.

Keenum is the Broncos' new starting quarterback after he signed a two-year, \$36 million contract in mid-March. Of that \$36 million, all \$18 million is fully guaranteed this season and \$7 million of his \$18 million is fully guaranteed for 2019.

Wish we could have seen his practice debut, even if there was no defense. NFL rules prohibit fans from watching practice until training camp in late-July. The media can't observe until organized team activities (OTAs) begin May 22.

Keenum is "the guy" after Broncos general manager John Elway decided against drafting a quarterback over the weekend. And how many readers out there thought the Broncos had given up on Lynch?

The first-round pick in the 2016 draft, Lynch will enter Phase II of his third season as the Broncos' backup quarterback.

"We are not kicking him to the curb," Elway said. "He can still develop. When we drafted him two years ago, as I said, we knew it was going to take some time.

"Paxton is going to compete with Chad for that backup spot. We are not going to bring another one in for OTAs. We will take a peek at that. It will be those two and Case. We are going to OTAs with those guys and go from there."

First-round draft pick Bradley Chubb wasn't around Monday to figure out where to line up with the Denver defense. Keenum, Lynch and Kelly could not share reps with rookie receiver Courtland Sutton, running back Royce Freeman or the rest of the Broncos' new draft class.

Rookies must stay away from their team's facility until the rookie minicamp, which for the Broncos will be held May 10-12.

Rookies will join the veterans in time for OTAs in late-May.

New Broncos QB Case Keenum's Drive As Strong As Ever

By Arnie Stapleton

Associated Press

April 17, 2018

Case Keenum couldn't wait to get out of Minnesota. No, he's not bitter over the Vikings' decision to move on to Kirk Cousins.

And he isn't gloating over being "the man" for the first time in his NFL career after signing a two-year, \$36 million deal last month in Denver.

He's just glad to see some sunshine, that's all.

Before coming to Colorado for the Broncos' offseason program, Keenum made a stop in Minneapolis to accept the "Uncommon Award" from Tony Dungy at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska on Friday.

The only downer was the blizzard that struck the nation's midsection.

"It dumped like 25 inches on us," Keenum said. "So, I was ready to get out of there and get to Denver and the sunshine."

Keenum is entering the season as the starter for the first time in his six-year career after coach Vance Joseph declared him the Broncos' No. 1 QB at the free agent's introductory news conference a month ago.

Yet, Keenum's role beyond 2018 remains up in the mile-high air because general manager John Elway could still use the fifth overall pick in next week's NFL draft to select a quarterback.

Elway and his lieutenants have taken long, hard looks at this year's college crop of QBs, including the "Big Four" prospects. They hosted Baker Mayfield on Monday but Keenum said he hadn't run into him.

Keenum also insists he isn't concerned that he'll soon be tutoring his successor should Elway choose a quarterback.

"I'm excited for whoever's going to come in and make us better," Keenum said. "That's what competition breeds within your own team. I think it makes you better. So, whoever comes in I'll be looking for them to help us be a better football team. No matter what position it is.

I know they're going to draft a lot of positions. It doesn't change my mindset at all."

Yet, non-QB blue chippers such as Penn State running back Saquon Barkley, North Carolina State defensive end Bradley Chubb or Notre Dame guard Quenton Nelson would provide immediate help for Keenum this season and maybe even stability for his future.

Von Miller has said he'd love to have Chubb lining up next to him.

“He’s Khalil Mack and Von Miller put together,” Miller said with a laugh. “He is a great player and I would love to have him on my team. You don’t come across guys like that often.

We don’t (normally) have the No. 5 pick in the draft. I hope we don’t have a high pick like that for a while. So if we can steal a player like that, I’m all for it.”

When Keenum reported to work Monday, it marked the first time he’d been the unquestioned starting quarterback since his final days at the University of Houston, where he set NCAA passing records but still went undrafted before compiling a 20-18 record with the Vikings, Rams and Texans.

“It feels good, it does,” Keenum said. “It’s not something where I feel like I’ve made it. That’s not ever my mentality. I’m going to stay hungry.

“Nothing’s ever been handed to me. I’ve earned that right, and I’m going to continue to earn that right being in this building, in the weight room, meeting room, practice field and then on game day.”

The Broncos’ anemic offense was a big reason for their slide to 5-11 last season, just two years after they won the Super Bowl, and Elway’s makeover includes the arrival of right tackle Jared Veldheer and the departure of running back C.J. Anderson on Monday.

Anderson could have provided a valuable sounding board to Keenum much like he did with Peyton Manning, Brock Osweiler and Trevor Siemian.

“It doesn’t change me and my mindset and what I’m prepared to do here and what I want to do here, what I feel like I need to do,” Keenum said. “I know that NFL teams change constantly.

So, I’m here right now, just trying to get into the building and just become familiar with everything.”

For now, the Broncos’ quarterback room also includes holdovers Paxton Lynch, a first-rounder in 2016 who so far has flopped, and Chad Kelly, last year’s Mr. Irrelevant who spent his rookie season on IR.

Keenum said his interactions with Lynch and Kelly have been good so far.

“We’ve got a great quarterback room, and I appreciate that because I’ve been in some other quarterback rooms that haven’t been,” Keenum said.

Did Von Miller and Case Keenum just become best friends?

By Troy Renck
KMGH
April 17, 2018

The Broncos began Phase 1 of their offseason conditioning program this week. They returned to Dove Valley as a humbled, hungry group. The Broncos have not posted back-to-back losing seasons since 1972. "Just be accountable. You let last season go, but you have to learn from it. There's things we have to fix," said All-Pro linebacker Von Miller, whose stellar 2017 season was wasted without any other player providing consistent pressure on the quarterback. "I need to play better. Just across the board we have to get back to that winning culture. We have to win, and it starts with being accountable."

Any Broncos rebound starts with a new starting quarterback. Case Keenum is the man for the first time in his career. He no longer has neck pain from looking over his shoulder in Minnesota for four months. This is his team. His time. The Broncos are counting on him providing steady play -- they would love him to repeat last season's 22-touchdown, seven-interception performance -- and being a rudder in the locker room.

It requires little leap of imagination to see this team contending if Miller and Keenum play well. He has no choice, perhaps, but Miller believes in Keenum. He talked about the new quarterback like they were going to star in "Step Brothers 2" together on Tuesday.

Did they just become best friends?

"He's a great leader. In 30 seconds of being around him, you can kind of tell what he's going to bring. He's going to be a great leader for us," said Miller before adding with a smirk. "I envision a whole bunch of magical moments between me and Case. Holding hands and dancing around the locker room. All we have to do now is get wins."

Keenum laughed when told of Miller's description. He said he was DFW -- down for whatever -- or implied it.

"I'm always down for some shenanigans," Keenum said. "I'm excited to get to know Von. Just the reputation that he has obviously. I'm excited. Locker rooms are always fun."

April brings off-beat questions and light-hearted answers. There are no games for four months, no public failure, no injuries. The spring is the NFL's version of Febreze for disappointing teams.

The Broncos overhauled their coaching staff, leaving Vance Joseph more comfortable with new faces, but working to keep his job on a weekly basis this fall. They addressed multiple needs, adding Keenum, safety Su'a Cravens, right tackle Jared Veldheer, cornerback Tramaine Brock (who will brazenly wear No. 21) and defensive tackle Clinton McDonald.

But holes exist.

Keenum joins a team without an established third receiving target -- will it arrive through the draft or with Jake Butt in year two? -- and inexperience at running back. C.J. Anderson, coming off a career-high 1,007 rushing yards, represented a potential safety net for Keenum in pass protection and knowledge of the offense. The Broncos cut him Monday, leaving them looking in the draft for a running back to vie for the starting job with Devontae Booker and De'Angelo Henderson.

Does this mean Keenum must microwave his leadership role?

"I just want to get to know guys. How are you off the field? I try to build a relationship from there. Getting to know the person is more important," Keenum said. "I am going to stay consistent. That's what's gotten me here, and who I am. I will stay hungry. Nothing has ever been handed to me."

Keenum is considering hosting an off-site passing camp, something that drew rave reviews when Peyton Manning held the job in Denver. First, he's learning names. One thing at a time. Miller admitted he will hold a second annual pass rushing summit with some of the game's most talented stars and legends.

"We're still finalizing where we're going to do it, sponsors and all that stuff," Miller said. "I don't plan on letting it go anytime soon. It's a great event. Wherever you can get rookies in there with vets, with guys like DeMarcus (Ware), Bruce Smith and Warren Sapp, to share knowledge, it's a magical thing."

Part of the offseason makeover sits on the horizon. Another nip and tuck will come from the draft. The Broncos continue to keep an open mind with the fifth pick, doing their due diligence on quarterbacks. Josh Allen, Sam Darnold, Baker Mayfield, who toured the facility on Tuesday, and Josh Rosen remain on the radar.

Keenum said he didn't bump into Mayfield, and insisted he has no issue with the Broncos taking a quarterback with the fifth pick. Miller remained diplomatic as well. He trusts general manager John Elway. However, he named names, and no quarterback was among them, something I could not help but notice. "We have a Hall of Fame quarterback leading the ship (in Elway). I have all the faith in them," said Miller, who pays attention to mock drafts. "Whatever happens, I am cool with it. If we take Saquon (Barkley), I am cool with it. If we take (Bradley) Chubb, I am cool with it. If we trade away, I am cool with whatever he does with that pick."

Collected Wisdom: Case Keenum, Denver Broncos quarterback

By Ryan Aber

News OK

April 21, 2018

Case Keenum, Denver Broncos quarterback

Age: 30

Hometown: Abilene, Texas

Case Keenum has had a whirlwind few months.

On Jan. 14, the former University of Houston quarterback was part of one of the most memorable plays in NFL history against the New Orleans Saints in the NFC Divisional Round. With his Minnesota Vikings trailing and just 10 seconds remaining in regulation, Keenum lofted a pass over a pair of Saints defenders and into the arms of Stefon Diggs, who turned and ran in for the game-winning touchdown as time expired.

Exactly two months later, Keenum signed a two-year, \$36 million contract with the Denver Broncos.

Thursday, Keenum was in Oklahoma City to speak at the 44th annual Fellowship of Christian Athletes All-State Event at Crossings Christian Church.

Before the event, Keenum spoke with The Oklahoman about the play, his faith and his career.

I talk about that play a lot, especially meeting new people. It's an incredible play and it was an incredible moment. It was so crazy it's hard to even explain. I've told the story quite a bit, but my mind is still blown. I still almost don't believe that he turned and ran and scored. It was crazy — the loudest stadium that I'd ever been in at the loudest, unbelievable moment. It's been cool to be able to share that story and talk about the interview I gave right afterward and that it wasn't the best moment of my life, that it wasn't the most important thing in my life. I think that's the most important thing. I've been at the highest of highs that this world can give and I know that there's more important things than that because you can get the highest of highs or the lowers of lows and it's really more about what you put your faith in rather than things of this world. I think it relates to people in that — like tonight — I don't know where they are in their lives when they're coming in. I don't know where they've been. I don't know what the relationship is like with the Lord, where their faith journey is.

I'm trying not to wake up. I'm living a dream. Minnesota Miracle to starting quarterback of the Denver Broncos, getting introduced by John Elway, or times in my life that haven't been great.

Tearing my knee, I thought I was done playing football. I don't know what people are coming in here with, highs, lows, but no matter where they are, there's a God that loves us so much that is waiting with open arms to invite us into a relationship with Him that's full of love, joy, peace that nobody really understands and it's available for everybody.

My dad, old Pops over there, was a big influence on me. I was a coach's kid. He never coached me per se on a team but growing up in the yard teaching me how to throw, catch, and kick, and all that kind of stuff. Every coach I've ever had has been a big influence on me. I've had some great coaches. I think that's part of growing up a coach's kid.

The first lesson that pops into my mind, my old high school coach Hugh Sandifer used to say, "It's never as good as it seems, it's never as bad as it seems." He's talking about playing football, obviously, and in the course of a game how the flow of the game, that's it's never as bad as you think it is, but I've applied that to life in a lot of different things and it may be cliché but it's true.

I didn't start thinking that playing pro football was realistic until maybe later on in college, maybe junior or senior year. Then you start thinking about, "Well, maybe I'll give it a shot." It was definitely disappointing not to get drafted, to have the phone not ring, but it's kind of been my journey my entire life. Nothing has ever been handed to me. I've earned everything I've gotten so I've embraced it. It hasn't been the easy road but it's built a lot of character in me and I appreciate that. It may have sucked right in the middle of it, but looking back it was pretty special.

When I tore my ACL in 2010 was probably the toughest part for me. That's a really big time in my life, just having to readjust priorities, really self-assess and look at yourself and figure out what's most important. Luckily, I had some great people in my life — my wife, who was my girlfriend at the time, basically took care of me. That really opened my eyes to how much she cared for me, which is probably the best thing that came out of the knee injury, and we got engaged. But a lot of other people too just really poured in my life, encouraged me, challenged me, slapped me in the face when I needed to stop feeling sorry for myself so it was a really, really, really tough time but it's built me into who I am.

Keeping the right people around me helps keep me grounded. My wife is one that is my best friend and somebody that will always tell me the truth. I want people that tell me the truth around me. I think that's important that we don't just have Yes Men around me, we have people that will tell you no or tell you what you need to hear, not just what you want to hear but what you need to hear.

Case Keenum aims to “make a good first impression and build on that” as Denver Broncos begin voluntary workouts

By Gina Mizell
The Denver Post
April 17, 2018

Case Keenum has started diving into his new playbook. He’s navigating how to move from the Broncos’ weight room at its Dove Valley training facility to the cafeteria. But Denver’s newest quarterback’s first priority in the next few days is learning everybody’s names.

The start of Denver’s voluntary workout program this week also marks Keenum’s first opportunity to get to know his new surroundings. Keenum acknowledges things feel a little bit different here. The NFL journeyman now arrives as the man expected to immediately fix Denver’s quarterback woes, as evidenced by the two-year, \$36 million contract he signed last month. So his goal is simple – “make a good first impression and build on that.”

“There’s a precedent set with certain things,” Keenum said during a Tuesday news conference. “It feels good. It does. I’m gonna accept it. I know there’s a responsibility with that, too, so it’s not something where I feel like I’ve made it. That’s not ever my mentality.

“I’m gonna stay hungry. I’m gonna stay consistent with the same mindset I’ve always had. That’s what’s gotten me here and that’s who I am. Nothing’s ever been handed to me. I’ve earned that right, and I’m gonna continue to earn that right.”

By Tuesday afternoon, Keenum had gone through just one workout, one team meeting and one lunch. He’s shared handshakes here and there with people around the facility. But he’s already gained approval from the most visible Bronco, all-pro linebacker Von Miller, who said he first reached out as soon as Keenum signed his deal.

“You can just tell by being around guys, by having a conversation with guys,” Miller said. “In 30 seconds, you can kind of tell what he’s going to bring. He’s gonna be a great quarterback for us and a great leader.”

Keenum put up stunning numbers in 2017, completing 67.6 percent of his passes for 3,547 yards, 22 touchdowns and seven interceptions while helping guide Minnesota to the NFC championship game. He took over once Sam Bradford went down with an injury. But perhaps the best example of that leadership is where he spent last weekend before returning to Denver. Keenum was back in Minneapolis to accept the “Uncommon Award” from Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy, an honor for a player who is not afraid to “take the tough road, to follow a higher calling or set a higher standard.”

In addition to the Broncos' OTA workouts in May and early June and a mandatory minicamp from June 12 through 14, Keenum is open to organizing more throwing sessions to help build chemistry with his receivers. But he's most looking forward to sitting down with teammates over the next several weeks and asking about their families and lives away from football.

"I try to build a relationship there and start there," Keenum said. "I think on-the-field stuff comes more from actions than words ... I think getting to know the person is more important.

It should not be hard for Keenum to get to know Miller, whose locker is right across from Keenum's. Miller said he "envisions a whole bunch of magical moments" with his new quarterback, such as "holding hands and dancing around" the space.

Is Keenum ready for such bonding with his new teammate?

"I'm always down for some shenanigans," Keenum said.

Peyton Manning: 'I'm a big Case Keenum fan'

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
April 18, 2018

Manning said Wednesday at his Colorado Sports Hall of Fame induction that the two had been communicating. He suggested the two may meet up on the course so that Keenum could ask some questions about playing in Denver.

"He said he wanted to pick my brain on a couple things," Manning said. "I just told him I'm here as a resource. I pull for quarterbacks. I really do. It's a unique fraternity and I'm excited for the opportunity for him.

"He's got a chance to play with some great players and what he did last year in Minnesota was really special. I know Broncos fans kind of hope to see some of that same magic here this year."

Manning has previously spent time with Keenum at the Manning Passing Academy, which Keenum participated in while playing at the University of Houston.

"I like Case Keenum," Manning said. "I'm a big Case Keenum fan. Case came to our football camp years ago as a college player. He's one of our alumni and my dad's kept in touch with him since. I've seen him through the years.

"...He's a hard worker. He's really been a winner all his life — high school or college. What a great opportunity for him, and I'm certainly pulling for him."

Manning said Wednesday his willingness to reach out to new players to offer his support extends to both Broncos players and the larger quarterback contingent across the league.

"Certainly, quarterbacks are a pretty unique fraternity, and I think quarterbacks need to look out for each other and kind of stick together," Manning said. "That's always been important, and I think certainly, [the mentality is] kind of 'Once a Bronco, always a Bronco.' I don't know what resource I can be, but [I] just try to be there for anything a player might need, especially a quarterback.

"I know what it's like to change teams. There's expectations. There's pressure. And there's a lot of adjusting.

QB Case Keenum set to accept 'Uncommon Award'

By Aric DiLalla

DenverBroncos.com

April 13, 2018

Before Case Keenum arrives in Denver for next week's offseason programming, he'll make a stop in Minnesota to accept the "Uncommon Award."

The award, which Keenum will accept at Hazeltine National Golf Club on Friday, is given to someone who is never afraid to "take the tough road, to follow a higher calling or set a higher standard."

Hall of Famer Tony Dungy will present Keenum with the award at "Arise With the Guys," an event where "professional and collegiate Christian athletes share their inspirational messages of faith, godly values and legacy-building."

Former Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning, Panthers linebacker Thomas Davis, Titans quarterback Marcus Mariota and CBS' James Brown are all previous Uncommon Award winners.

Emmanuel Sanders excited to play with collegiate-rival Case Keenum

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
April 13, 2018

Emmanuel Sanders' new quarterback is no stranger to him.

When Sanders played at Southern Methodist, he fell victim to Keenum and the Houston Cougars' attack on a couple of occasions.

In 2008, Keenum threw a 26-yard touchdown pass with 24 seconds left to guide Houston to a 44-38 win. He finished that contest 28-of-36 for 404 yards and a 184.8 quarterback rating.

A year later, Keenum completed 25-of-36 passes for 233 yards and a touchdown in a 38-15 win.

After that pair of performances in their head-to-head matchups, it's safe to say Sanders is glad to have Keenum on his side.

"I love it," Sanders said Monday. "I was just talking to him, and I told him, 'Man, we've had some great battles.' When I went to SMU and he was at U of H, he was slinging the ball around. I'm happy to have him here [and] to have a new quarterback — someone who can sling the football and throw it and loves to throw it and also [is] smart enough to handle the whole playbook."

But as the Broncos return for the start of their offseason workout program, Sanders said he doesn't yet have a feel for how successful the new pairing will be in 2018.

"Everybody's been asking me how I feel about him," Sanders said. "I don't really know yet, until we get here and see the chemistry and truthfully, it's on us. It's on Case and the other quarterbacks and the wide receivers to get on the same page and turn this thing around. It's all about ... putting the work in, and it starts tomorrow."

Just how long will that chemistry take to develop?

"Nobody knows," Sanders admitted Monday. "But at the same time, it's all about working at it and having a common goal. So we're going to set that, and we're going to work toward it every single day."

Jake Plummer: Case Keenum might be 'fearless competitor' Broncos need

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN

March 31, 2018

As the Denver Broncos make plans for their newly signed quarterback to flourish in the kind of offense that has brought the team some of its greatest successes, it is a good time to check in with a former player who once walked in those exact shoes.

For while Case Keenum is the Broncos' quarterback of choice to lead the climb out of last year's 5-11 finish, while he is a player the Broncos believe has even more to give than the career-best 3,547 yards and 22 touchdowns he posted last season, it is Jake Plummer who knows both the weighty expectations and the potential for football glory that await Keenum.

Because Plummer has been that guy for the Broncos.

"You've got to have someone pulling the trigger that's a fearless competitor, who no matter what will fight hard for everyone on the team, everyone in the organization," Plummer said. "Find that kind of a player who has that kind of mentality. Case Keenum is that kind of guy. He's a fiery competitor, who even if he makes a mistake, goes back out there and pulls the trigger again."

In the cascade of historic numbers that came out of Peyton Manning's time with the Broncos, including the highest-scoring season in league history and two Super Bowl trips, it can be easy to forget where Plummer fits.

Until Manning's arrival, no quarterback in team history had helped lead the Broncos to a higher percentage of wins in his starts than Plummer's .722 mark. Plummer's 4,089 passing yards in 2004 were a franchise single-season record at the time and he still holds the franchise record for consecutive passes without an interception. Plummer was, as a player, fiery and irreverent, and at times he swam against the current convention.

But Plummer believes emphatically in the offense he thinks John Elway and coach Vance Joseph plan to run with Keenum at quarterback, because he ran a version of it. He calls the Broncos, even after his somewhat messy benching by Mike Shanahan in 2006, when Jay Cutler was a rookie and the Broncos were 7-4, "a team with people that will do anything and everything you need to win a Super Bowl." Plummer also believes the quarterback has to do his part and understand what he's getting into.

Elway has often said that simply handling all the intangibles that come with the job of quarterback can be more difficult than the football part. That maintaining confidence through the rough spots, handling criticism and leading a locker room impacts how a quarterback plays after the ball is snapped.

Trevor Siemian, Paxton Lynch and Brock Osweiler were all cycled through the starting job last season, and none of the three could rise above an often ill-fitting offense or stop the flood of turnovers. Both Elway and Joseph have routinely used the word “grit” to describe an important attribute Keenum brings to the table.

“Rebounding from mistakes, that’s all this league is sometimes for a quarterback,” Plummer said. “Everybody, of course, wants Tom Brady or Peyton Manning, but watch their film, they have days, they have times, when they suck. But when it matters most, those guys don’t remember that, all they do is ball out and make the plays now. You have to be a consistent badass. That’s what you’re looking for, a consistent badass.”

The Broncos, since Pat Bowlen bought the team more than three decades ago, have had more Super Bowl trips than losing seasons. Their current GM happens to be a Hall of Fame quarterback whose picture is scattered all over the team’s complex. Manning’s unprecedented four-year run, which included a 55-touchdown season as well as a Super Bowl win, is still fresh in the minds of most everyone in the seats on game day. In short, Broncos quarterback is a gig that comes with a cargo plane’s worth of baggage in tow.

And beyond game plans, arm strength and creativity on the playcalling, Plummer sees the ability to handle that legacy as one the most important items for Keenum or anyone else who tries to fill the job.

“Watching their games is the most important thing and I would like to sneak down on the sideline and watch him come off after an interception and see what they do,” Plummer said. “Does he sulk on the sideline? Oh, pity me, I’ve got to answer for a mistake. Or are they over yelling at their defense to gimme the damn ball back so I can go score.

“But so much is expected and if you can’t handle that, don’t come here ... Even Peyton took some flak when he didn’t win it all. But this is a place where you have everything you need to win, they’ll do every single thing in the world that needs to be done. It’s up to you to make the plays when it’s time to make the plays. But if you don’t want that, don’t come.”

Broncos quarterback Case Keenum draws strength from support of his wife

By Woody Paige
Colorado Springs Gazette
March 24, 2018

Case Keenum and Kimberly Caddell fell for each other while slurping snow cones in Abilene, “the prettiest town you’ve ever seen,” Waylon Jennings sang.

And, ultimately, the Broncos got a twofer.

During the press conference introducing the Broncos’ “new starting quarterback,” Case constantly made plural references. “This was our first choice,” “We’re very excited to represent the city of Denver and Colorado,” “We want to play the rest of my career here.”

Kimberly and Case have been together since their first quasi-date in 2004 — when the junior starting quarterback led Wylie High School to its only state championship and Caddell, a senior who attended that game, was a volleyball player and pole vaulter at a rival school.

Although they grew up apart in Abilene, Kimberly was in a Sunday School class taught by Case’s mom. The two had many of the same friends and crossed paths, but it wasn’t until a Fellowship of Christian Athletes conference that they actually talked.

Case asked the young lady to join him afterward for a free snow cone.

The couple continued to connect at the University of Houston — the only college to offer Keenum a scholarship.

As a redshirt senior in 2010, Keenum was a Heisman Trophy candidate after passing for 5,671 yards and 44 touchdowns the previous season. But in the third game, Case tore the ACL in his right knee — and believed his dream of becoming an NFL quarterback had faded. He was depressed, became addicted to pain-killers and lost 25 pounds.

After the surgery, Kimberly moved him into her garage apartment, dressed and fed Case and helped him wean off the drugs.

In mid-January the NCAA granted Keenum a rare sixth year waiver.

A few weeks later Case took Kimberly to Houston’s stadium, where she was surprised by their families and friends. At the 50-yard line, surrounded by candles and flowers, Keenum took a knee (the good left one) and proposed.

They married in June, 2011.

Given a new start, literally, Keenum threw for 5,631 yards (71 percent) and 48 touchdowns, with only five interceptions.

Except, no NFL team drafted the quarterback who set most of college football's passing records.

Texas coach Gary Kubiak, once an overachiever himself, gave Case a chance.

Kimberly, as always, was by his side. She memorized the Texans' offensive playbook and tested him every morning before workouts. Nevertheless, he was relegated to the practice squad.

In 2013 Case was promoted to the roster as third-string quarterback. However, after Matt Schaub was injured, Kubiak surprisingly named Case the starter.

The Texans lost eight straight games. Keenum was out as starter, and Kubiak would be out as coach. At the next camp Keenum was battling for a spot when the Texans came to Dove Valley for joint practices with the Broncos before their Aug. 23 exhibition. Case and Kimberly got their first look at Denver, and the Broncos got their first view of Keenum.

In the game, with Peyton Manning and Brock Osweiler sharing time for the Broncos, Keenum completed 11 of 18 passes for 74 yards. "I was at (Mile High Stadium) that night, and I thought Case played well" Kimberly told me after the media conference.

However, without his mentor Kubiak, Keenum was released a week later as the Texans added Ryan Mallett.

Keenum was picked up by the Rams for their practice squad. He was cut, then returned to the scout team and, in December, was grabbed away from St. Louis by, of all teams, the Texans.

He won two games as the starter, but was traded back to the Rams and had a 3-2 record as a starter in 2015. The Rams moved to Los Angeles — and drafted Jared Goff No. 1 overall.

Meanwhile, Kimberly continued to assist Case with his playbook and study of defenses, and served as the den mother to the players' wives, explaining the intricacies of the game.

The Broncos tried unsuccessfully in the 2016 offseason to trade for Keenum after Manning retired and Osweiler signed with, of all teams, the Texans. After starting 4-5, Keenum was back on the bench. Kimberly kept insisting that he would make it.

And, last season, Keenum, again a free agent, signed with the Vikings, and made it.

Which brings us, and them, to Denver.

"When I was young, my family would come snow skiing to Colorado, and Case and I stayed once at The Broadmoor," Kimberly said. "Anywhere you recommend we should go?"

I said: "You two obviously should visit the U.S. Mint."

Team Keenum has just made its own money — \$36 million.

Case wouldn't be where he is — with the Broncos — without Kimberly.

The indomitable, inspirational, inseparable, loving couple have taken Robert Frost's "road less traveled by" to reach Denver.