

# The rise of Todd “Thunder” Davis as key piece in Broncos’ defense

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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Todd Davis doesn’t quite know how he got the name or why he’s sporting it now, but it stuck and he’s keeping it. Davis is known as “Thunder,” a nickname bestowed upon him by fellow Broncos linebacker Brandon Marshall, who labeled himself “Lightning.”

“I think I just like the heat and playing in the run game,” said Davis, wearing a wide grin. “I think that’s how I got it.”

This season, Davis has taken over Marshall’s spot as Denver’s middle linebacker, as Marshall moved over to the weakside position left vacant by the departure of Danny Trevathan. While Davis and Marshall had joined forces in stints over the past two seasons, with Davis filling in with injuries, this year is their first as true starters together.

It’s the beginning to what Davis hopes will be a long stay as an NFL starter. But the truest beginning was Dec. 22, 2014, on “Monday Night Football” against the Bengals in Cincinnati, where Davis made his first start at the position and had his coming-out party as a potential piece of the Broncos’ future.

Sunday, Davis will be back in the city where it all began, this time with a larger role and larger expectations, relying on his preparation and his past to validate his rise from undrafted free agent to starter.

“I have to show 31 other teams who didn’t see something in me that I have it,” Davis said. “I definitely feel like there’s a chip on my shoulder. Being undrafted really did help me. It pushed me to elevate my game to the next level. I feel like I have to prove everybody wrong.”

“You see the flashing lights and you can forget what brought you here. If you don’t play well on the field, those lights will dim real quick.” — Todd Davis

Marshall expected a rebuilding of sorts when Trevathan, his partner in crime inside, departed for Chicago in March. In two seasons starting together, the duo had a silent but strong connection, rarely needing communication on the field or the sideline to understand what the other was thinking.

“Sometimes (Todd and I) have a play in practice or a play in the game and we’ll go to the sideline and discuss it, whereas sometimes with me and Danny we wouldn’t have to because it would almost be automatic, like, ‘Bam, OK, we got it,’ ” Marshall said. “Me and Todd will get there. Sometimes we see things differently, whereas, if we’re comparing the two, me and Danny usually saw things a lot of the same.”

The foundation had been laid with Davis. But to ease his transition from primarily a special-teams player to starter, he took to film study. Hours and hours of it.

Davis said he watched more film than he ever had before to meticulously pick apart plays and technique, and to watch Trevathan and Marshall at work to hone his skill and decision-making. Davis also lost weight to improve his quickness and endurance, and he heeded the advice of Marshall.

“He just mostly tells me what he sees and things that he looks for,” Davis said. “Keys and tendencies that he’s learned over the years of playing and starting that you don’t learn unless you’re in the moment. So when the moment arrives, I’m like one step ahead. It helps me out a lot.”

The biggest changes in Davis were apparent during organized team activities this past offseason. Marshall said the “quiet and stiff” guy faded.

But Davis’ smarts never did.

“I saw a new Todd Davis,” Marshall said. “He knew it was his time, because Danny went to the Bears. He knew he had a shot, so I think he really came out of his shell.”

Davis was informed that the starting job was a competition between him and Corey Nelson.

“Todd just exploded on the scene in practice, and you couldn’t deny the guy,” Marshall said.

But for Davis, the drive started long before he arrived in Denver, and long before Trevathan bolted for Chicago.

Within five months of signing with the New Orleans Saints as a college free agent in 2014, Davis was waived four times before latching on with the Broncos. The opportunity to prove his potential might have first arrived in Cincinnati in 2014. But the opportunity to prove his staying power arrived last month, when he was appointed the Broncos’ new starter inside.

In the season opener against the Carolina Panthers, Davis emerged as Denver’s leading defender, making a team-high seven tackles (six solo), plus half a sack. The effort earned him the team’s defensive player of the game award and high praise from coach Gary Kubiak. Entering Sunday’s game against the Bengals, Davis ranks second on the Broncos in total tackles (12) behind safety T.J. Ward (13).

“I really think that when you’re a player and you’re a backup ... you’re a special-teams player, you’re a good role player and then all of a sudden you get a chance because somebody leaves. It’s amazing to watch guys say, ‘I’m not going to let this go,’ ” Kubiak said. “And that’s what you see from Todd, and through the whole offseason it was extremely important to him to prove to the defense, ‘Hey, I can pick up the slack, hey I can do this.’ He’s done it.”

“Thunder” has come a long way.

The Davis file

A snapshot look at Broncos middle linebacker Todd Davis:

— Third-year linebacker who was claimed off waivers from New Orleans in November 2014.

- In three seasons has 43 tackles (29 solo), 0.5 sacks, two pass breakups, one fumble recovery and 12 special-teams stops.
- Made first start on “Monday Night Football” in Cincinnati on Dec. 22, 2014.
- Named Broncos’ defensive player of game in Week 1 victory vs. Carolina.
- Ranks second on Broncos with 12 tackles this season.

# Todd Davis is “hungry” for a shot as Broncos starting linebacker

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

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One of two projected new starters on the Broncos’ defense is middle linebacker Todd Davis, who is expected to line up next to Brandon Marshall.

He has to fend off competition from Corey Nelson, Zaire Anderson and Dekoda Watson to officially be named a starter, but he has already received endorsements from Marshall, defensive coordinator Wade Phillips and his defensive teammates.

Still, he’s not relaxing. Davis feels like he has to prove to his coaches every day that he can be the guy they trust to start and play effectively for 16 games.

“We’ve talked a lot in the past about my path and his path and what needs to be done,” Marshall said. “Todd is hungry. If I had to describe him in one word, it’s hunger. Todd’s going to be a great player, I promise you.”

Longshot is still a shot. It’s going to be tough for 5-foot-9, 160-pound undrafted receiver Kalif Raymond to make this roster, but he continues to impress. He has been one of the first players on the field in every practice so far, and Saturday he caught a 39-yard fade route from Paxton Lynch for a touchdown.

Coach Gary Kubiak has praised Raymond throughout camp for his performance and work ethic. He’s competing with Jordan Norwood and Bralon Addison for a returner’s role and more players in a crowded receivers room.

“You see a fearless returner,” Kubiak said of Raymond, who the Broncos signed as an undrafted free agent after the NFL draft. “That’s why we went and got him. ... He’s small, but he runs good routes. He is a speed kid and does everything hard. We’ll see.”

Heart of the offense. Kicker Brandon McManus had an unusually shaky performance Saturday. He missed three field goals in a row and even had one blocked.

McManus’ job is secure with no other kicker in camp, but he can’t put together too many days like Saturday. He did nail a 67-yarder Friday.

Footnotes. Denver’s all-time leading receiver, Rod Smith, was at practice Saturday. He has been a regular at Dove Valley, lending his advice to many of the Broncos’ receivers. ... Linebacker Brandon Marshall was thrilled to talk about his 90 rating on EA Sports’ Madden NFL 17, second among inside linebackers to the Panthers’ Luke Kuechly (99 rating).

# Linebacker Todd Davis ready to join NFL's top defense

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
June 3, 2016

Todd Davis has big cleats to fill — and they're just a few feet away from him, too.

Davis is the leading contender to earn a starting inside linebacker job that opened up when Danny Trevathan left via free agency after the Denver Broncos' Super Bowl run.

Brandon Marshall is sliding over to Trevathan's old "Mo" linebacker position, leaving Davis to try to fend off Corey Nelson and win the "Mike" linebacker job.

Marshall heaped praise on Davis earlier this week and after the Broncos wrapped up their second week of OTAs Thursday, it was defensive coordinator Wade Phillips' turn.

"He may not seem like it off the field, but he's really an intense guy. I don't know if I've been around — well, I was around (Chris) Spielman at Buffalo — but he reminds me of the same kind of temperament. He's intense every play on the field," Phillips said.

Davis was flattered by such a comparison.

He also considers himself lucky to have Marshall right next to him as he tries to carve out this bigger niche in his game.

Like outside linebackers Von Miller (financial) and DeMarcus Ware (back), Marshall has yet to line up in 11-on-11 drills since the Super Bowl. In addition to surgery to remove screws from his right foot, Marshall had to have his right forefinger surgically repaired and he said he doesn't anticipate regaining full motion until training camp next month.

So, for now, Davis has had to seek Marshall's guidance on the sideline or in the classroom but he looks forward to playing alongside him soon.

"It's been great being able to come off the field even now in practices and asking Brandon what do you see as far as my technique is, my intensity or how I cover man-to-man, like what do you see?" Davis said. "It definitely helps with him having played the position being there to help me and guide me through the whole process."

Marshall's absence from team drills has given Davis and Nelson plenty of action with the starters to try to impress the coaching staff.

"On the first day Coach (Gary Kubiak) said, 'It's going to be one of you two next to Brandon and we'll see what happens,'" Marshall said. "I love both of those guys. Both of them are good. Both of them want to be good. I think either one will be a great asset to the team. Right now it's Todd. Todd is playing extremely well. He has high intensity and he's very instinctive. Corey is very athletic. They both have great assets they can bring to the team."

Davis has a slight edge in experience. He's made four spot starts since the Broncos claimed him off waivers from New Orleans on Nov. 13, 2014. Nelson, a seventh-round draft pick out of Oklahoma in 2014, hasn't started any games although he's played in all 16 games in both of his NFL seasons.

Davis had no idea when he first got to Denver whether the Broncos viewed him as a quick fix or not, but he was just eager for a fresh start after bouncing back and forth between the Saints' practice squad and 53-man roster.

"It was my dream to be in this position," Davis said. "... Now that I'm here, I definitely want to take full advantage of this opportunity and can't wait for the season to start."

The Broncos thought so highly of Davis and Nelson that GM John Elway didn't draft any inside linebackers this year.

"I definitely was tracking on my phone seeing what the Broncos were going to do because at the time I didn't know what direction they were going with," Davis said. "But when they didn't pick up anybody it definitely felt good. It let us know that they had faith in the inside linebacker corps that they have now, that they believed in us."

Nelson saw it as a challenge as much as a vote of confidence.

"I just looked at it as the pressure's on," Nelson said. "Now it's time for us to perform and show them that we can do it."

# Todd Davis hopes film studies leads to Broncos' starting linebacker spot

By Troy Renck  
DenverPost.com  
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Two weekends ago, the Broncos made a curious decision during the draft: They did not select an inside linebacker.

The lack of movement revealed the team's faith in Todd Davis and Corey Nelson. It's May, when conclusions should never be drawn, but Davis provides an interesting candidacy. He is playing the middle linebacker spot in practice, with stalwart Brandon Marshall shifting to Danny Trevathan's vacated weakside position. Davis poses a legitimate threat to start because of how he turns what he sees into what he does.

Davis likes to study. He watches film. With a chance to realize his dream, starting in the NFL, Davis has left nothing to chance. He chose to live in Denver this offseason to avoid an altitude adjustment in training camp. But his mental conditioning is where he hopes to gain an extra step through proverbial mouse clicks.

The former Sacramento State star installed a study hall in his home with wife Zina's blessings. With a computer screen on one side and a dry-erase board on the other, Davis dissects plays, drawing out the defensive linemen, the secondary and the formation to create memory retention designed to provide confidence and faster play, the desire of every NFL defender.

"Film is my biggest thing," said Davis, 23. "Film tells you everything you need to know: what you are good at, what you need to work on. It's an evidence-based decision. The film can give you the answers to the test. So when you face that situation in practice or the game, it should translate."

Davis represents part of the league's evolution at his position. In defensive coordinator's Wade Phillips 3-4 scheme, the inside linebackers must be smart and sound tacklers. To work in space, they don't weigh 250 pounds anymore. Davis is 230 and plans to play at 235. Playing lighter allows him to have more range, but it presents a challenge when shedding blockers and traffic near the line of scrimmage.

"You have to know what battles to fight," Davis said. "Sometimes you take on the O-linemen. And sometimes you get around them."

Davis made his mark last season on special teams. The Broncos saw enough of Davis and Nelson not to dip into free agency or draft a potential replacement for Trevathan, who led the team with 109 tackles last season and signed as a free agent with Chicago.

"It says we've got a lot of confidence in Todd and Corey," Broncos coach Gary Kubiak said. "Obviously B-Marsh is a great player for us. We have a lot of confidence in those guys. They're having a great offseason."

Davis enjoyed the spoils of the Super Bowl 50 victory. He didn't create a new kind of life but was honored for how he has lived the past decade. Lancaster, Calif., Mayor R. Rex Parris presented Davis the key to the city in March at a ceremony where his No. 59 Paraclete High School jersey was retired.

"I think the reason he came back home is to tell everyone here that you get to choose," Parris said. "I have always thought if you improve just a little bit every day, that's the ticket to success. He's the living embodiment of that."

Davis credits his parents, Karen and Todd, for shaping his character. He feels a desire to help others because it created an avenue for his success.

But Davis, at his core, knows he must help himself. The opportunity on his doorstep is significant, a chance to play significant snaps for a Super Bowl champion. There are players who look better in a uniform, but he believes he can look better in a game. The film, after all, does not lie.

"I am not the fastest, the biggest or the strongest," Davis said, "but if I know what I am supposed to do and use good technique, I feel like that gives me my edge. But I have to keep improving to hopefully win the job."

The Davis file

Broncos linebacker Todd Davis is vying for the inside linebacker job vacated by free-agent Danny Trevathan. NFL reporter Troy E. Renck analyzes Davis:

- Relishes film study. Created football film room with dry-erase board at home.
- Plans to play at 235-237 pounds and remained in Denver during offseason to train at altitude.
- Emerged as key special-teams contributor last season.
- Received key to city of Lancaster, Calif., and his high school jersey was retired in March.

# With Danny Trevathan out, Todd Davis prepares to step up

By Andrew Mason  
DenverBroncos.com  
December 11, 2015

A year ago, the Broncos needed Todd Davis to step in and start just 40 days and 18 practices after they claimed him off waivers from the New Orleans Saints.

This year, he had a bit more time to learn and prepare for the role he'll handle Sunday when he starts at one of the inside linebacker spots in place of Danny Trevathan, who will be sidelined because of the concussion he suffered last Sunday in the win over the San Diego Chargers.

"I feel real prepared now. It's definitely better being here the full time instead of [a few] weeks before," Davis said.

"Having the team chemistry that I have now, it's a lot different going into the game knowing everybody that you're playing with and having such a close bond with everybody."

Davis' work in practice and on special teams has helped prepare him for this opportunity for extended work.

"I'll say one thing: Todd is hungry," fellow linebacker Brandon Marshall said. "He's always been a hungry individual, since I've been around him. He's hungry; he wants it, man. The guy wants it."

"I told Todd, 'You're going to be a starter in this league. You've just got to bide your time. It took me two years to start. ... Everybody's time comes at a different time, but you're going to be a starter, man.' He's going to be good."

Added Head Coach Gary Kubiak: "I like [Davis] a lot. He's very detailed. I'll say this, no player has had a better week of practice than that guy from me watching practice. I'm excited to see him play."

Davis will start at the middle, or "mike" linebacker spot ordinarily manned by Marshall, who will move to the 'mo' inside linebacker position Trevathan usually handles.

The 'mo' is similar to what Marshall played in 2014 when he was the weakside linebacker in the 4-3 alignment.

"It's all relative. I've just got to recall it, because it's still a new defense," he said. "So it's not all the same, but I'll be behind that three-technique [defensive end]."

Even though Marshall will still be an inside linebacker, how he plays each snap will change.

"It's different responsibilities. I've just got to do different things than the 'mike' does," Marshall said. "You might just look at it and say that it's the same position, but it's different -- my responsibilities on different play-calls, my gaps, how I have to do things. It's just totally different."

"It's a challenge for me because I have to be on point with almost forgetting everything I've been doing the last 14, 15 weeks, and stepping into a new role, because it's really different, how you fit the run, your pass responsibilities, how you play a slot formation. It's really all different," Marshall added later. "So I just try to throw everything I know out, and then if Todd needs a break and Corey [Nelson] comes in, I'll just play the 'mike' and recall everything, which will be easier."

Marshall said that he studied both the "mike" and "mo" positions this summer.

"Now the time has come, so I'll be fine," Marshall said. "I knew that [the coaches] kept saying, 'All right, Brandon, you're playing [middle linebacker].' But at the same time, I know how this league works. I know how things work when guys get hurt, when different things happen. And I think they look at me as a versatile guy, anyway."

Marshall had more time to study because he was on the sideline focusing on rehabilitation work from foot surgery during OTAs and the early portion of training camp. With Marshall and Trevathan both sidelined following offseason surgery, the backup linebackers had plenty of chances to get up to speed on the first team.

"It helped me a lot. It was a lot of time for me to grow as a player, coming from my rookie year," Davis said. "It was a great time for me to grow as a player."

Young reserves received extra repetitions throughout the summer, which helped set up the Broncos to withstand the injuries that have accumulated and forced young players like Max Garcia and Shaquil Barrett into extensive work.

"It's a lot of bruises, nicks and snacks," Marshall said. "This season has taken everybody to win and complete the season."

"I tell all the guys, 'Just step up. Get yourself some good film out there.' I told Juwan [Thompson], 'Get yourself some good film, so that everybody knows you can be the starter. I told Todd that, too. So they know.'"

# Todd Davis comfortable at camp after 2014 rise

By Allie Raymond  
DenverBroncos.com  
August 2, 2015

Last season was a whirlwind for inside linebacker Todd Davis. From starting the season in New Orleans to joining the Broncos in the middle of the season and earning his first NFL start on Monday Night Football, Davis has finally settled into life as a Bronco.

“It feels great,” Davis said. “I wouldn’t pick a better place to be. I love it here. [I’m] working this hard, but that’s what it takes to be a championship team and I love it here.”

After his chaotic season, Davis says he’s been able to step back and focus on training this offseason in preparation for camp. Three days in and Davis is excited to learn the new playbook and go through his first Broncos training camp.

“I feel like they’ve been pretty good,” Davis said. “Just learning more, staying in, playing hard, working in my playbook, understanding the whole concept of the defense and trying to get it more under my belt and just [making] progress as the days go on.”

Last season, Davis was signed by the Broncos mid-season and was immediately thrust into action. He was claimed off waivers from the Saints for a spot on the Broncos special teams unit. But after inside linebacker Brandon Marshall injured his knee, Davis suddenly went from being a minor role to key player in the middle.

During his time with the Saints, Davis saw action in only three games on special teams, but he was up to the challenge. Just over a month after arriving in Denver, Davis earned his first NFL start on Monday Night Football at Cincinnati (Dec. 22), where he notched a career-high seven tackles. On the year, he totaled 17 tackles, nine solo, while tallying two batted-down passes and five special-teams tackles in six games, including a pair of starts.

During this season’s training camp, Defensive Coordinator Wade Phillips and Head Coach Gary Kubiak are gradually reintroducing Marshall and fellow injured inside linebacker Danny Trevathan back into the fold. That leaves Davis fighting for a starting spot on the 2015 roster, a role he is eager and ready to take on in any way.

“[I’ll be] wherever the team needs me,” Davis said. “I’m going to work as hard as I can and do what I need to do on my end and whatever the team needs, that’s where I’ll fit.”

While Davis is fighting for a spot in the linebacker rotation, he knows he isn’t the only one.

“Everybody knows that we have 90 men here and we’re only going to keep 53,” Davis said. “So every day, everybody is trying to make an impression on whether it’s a drill or during team period. Everyone is showing, trying to put their best foot forward, [to] show what they can do.”

# Todd Davis pushes for playing time with Broncos at inside linebacker

By Troy Renck  
DenverPost.com  
June 10, 2015

With a sellout crowd at full throat in Cincinnati on Dec. 22, with an enormous Monday night national audience watching, Todd Davis began to feel nervous. Plucked from the New Orleans Saints on a waiver claim for special teams depth six weeks earlier, Davis stared across the line of scrimmage at unruly Bengals as the Broncos' starting weakside linebacker.

"I was that kid at home watching Monday Night Football from the couch saying, 'It would be so great if I did that someday. Now all of a sudden I was like, 'I am really out here!'" Davis recalled after practice this week. "I never had been in a situation like that."

His inexperience showed in mistakes. Then something unpredictable happened. Davis settled down, showing the same poise and ability that have him pushing for playing time at inside linebacker this offseason. Failure became a great teacher.

"I learned that you have to just relax. Definitely, just relax," Davis said. "My goal now is to show I can compete with anybody."

Davis, 23, represents the crack in the system. He wasn't drafted out of Sacramento State, hurt by slow speed times from overtraining. He showed enough in the New Orleans Saints' organized team activities a year ago to cling to a roster spot. Denver claimed him, needing better athletes for special teams coverage. When Brandon Marshall injured his right foot in San Diego, Davis impressed in 28 snaps, showing range in nickel packages.

"Well, he flashed with his time playing last year. Our guys inside right now have played really well, and it's because they kind of got forced into a tough situation with two injuries, with Danny (Trevathan) and (Brandon) Marshall. But those guys have responded, and it's just going to help them," coach Gary Kubiak said. "That may be as competitive a spot as we'll have probably going into camp."

After arriving in Denver three weeks early for practices to acclimate to the altitude, Davis continues to receive first-team reps as Trevathan (left knee) and Marshall ease back into the fold. Both are hopeful they will be ready when training camp practice begins July 30.

Davis provides an intriguing option if they are not. He played last season at 228 pounds, but weighs 235 with plans to reach 240. The additional bulk should help him make the adjustment to Wade Phillips' 3-4 scheme responsibilities.

"It is definitely different because you have to take on big guys more on the offensive line. The biggest thing for me is getting in my playbook, knowing the defense so I can play fast and confident," Davis said. "I am grateful for the added reps. It just means I can get better."

Part of his progression is seeing the game through a wider lens. Davis believes knowing what the defensive line and safeties are doing every play will "just allow me to know exactly where I fit in."

Davis stuck out in his hometown of Palmdale, Calif. this spring. From his high school mentors to people on the street, Davis received recognition. It motivated Davis to provide more starry-eyed kids — just like he was — an opportunity. He will hold the Todd Davis Football Camp on July 11 at Highland High School in Palmdale.

"I remember (former Bronco) Marlon McCree had a camp that I went to, and I just know how much it meant to me to meet some players and learn some things I wasn't getting before," Davis said. "I want to give back."

The story figures to resonate because of Davis' resume. He was an afterthought, considered too slow, too small for the NFL. Now, he is candidate to start, to see meaningful snaps, better equipped after his first experience on that Monday night.

"That game, it was like 'aaahhh... man.' But after the first half, I realized I can do this," Davis said. "I realized I am made for this and that I just have to trust that and go out there and play."

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Inside look at inside linebacker

Todd Davis took a strange path up the Broncos' depth chart, claimed off waivers from the New Orleans Saints on Nov. 13 and thrust into a starting role after Brandon Marshall's foot injury. NFL reporter Troy E. Renck analyzes his highlights:

- Made career-high seven tackles vs. Cincinnati after difficult first half.
- Played 61 snaps in regular-season finale victory over Oakland.
- Graded out strong in run defense on 37 plays during Broncos' playoff loss to the Colts.
- Appeared in 45 games for Sacramento State, finishing second in school history with 351 tackles.

# Broncos Q&A: Sacramento State's Todd Davis in prime time

By Troy E. Renck  
The Denver Post  
December 20, 2014

Todd Davis didn't follow yellow bricks to Dove Valley. In a league with eye-opening stories, his path sticks out. The rookie prepared for the NFL by starring at Sacramento State. Then, after an anxious six weeks following OTAs last summer, the New Orleans Saints signed the linebacker for training camp.

The Hornets aren't a football factory. They don't play major-college football. Their most notable victory was upsetting the University of Colorado in Boulder in 2012. Davis starred in that game.

"I had a big third-down stop that helped (set up the Hornets' winning field goal). But it wasn't me. It was the entire team," he said. "Everyone contributed."

Davis has even better memories of Colorado. Claimed off waivers a month ago from the Saints to fill in on Denver's special teams, Davis could be a starter Monday night at Cincinnati, or at least receive significant snaps, at weakside linebacker after injuries to Brandon Marshall and Danny Trevathan. Davis talked last week about his winding journey to Denver.

**Q: You played 28 snaps last Sunday at San Diego, including 23 in pass coverage. Are you ready to be a starter in prime time against the Bengals?**

A: I couldn't ask for a better situation and scenario with family watching Monday night. I always dreamed of this. Coming from Sacramento State, it was always a dream, but a dream that's hard to realize. For me to be in this position, it's a blessing. I will be ready for any opportunity. The communication is the biggest adjustment with the different groups in the base package.

**Q: How do you compare being in the NFL with the Broncos to your college experience?**

A: It has definitely been different. You get a few people at Sacramento State who know your name. It's a smaller school. Here, you have thousands of fans waiting outside practice yelling "Todd!" I am like, "You know my name?" That's crazy. It's been a great experience.

**Q: Your arrival in Denver created headlines because the Broncos were upset that they couldn't reach you immediately in New Orleans, which**

**suggested the Saints were trying to keep you from other teams. What happened?**

A: It was an off day. I didn't know people were trying to contact me. I went to the Saints' facility and turned my phone off like I always had. I didn't think I was going anywhere. The plan was to go back to their practice squad. When I turned my phone back on later in the day, I had a Colorado number on there. I was like, "Why is someone from there calling me?" I found out I was going to be a Bronco. Sounds good to me.

**Q: A teammate, linebacker Brandon Marshall, praised how quickly you have learned the Denver defense. How has your transition gone?**

A: I just saw it as an opportunity. I didn't know what to expect. The guys have been great. It felt like home, felt good from the start. The guys here took me in and took care of me.

**Q: Who was your favorite player growing up?**

A: I am a big Ray Lewis guy, everything about him. His intensity, the way he talks. I watch his highlights before I play even today. I think I have seen every (NFL Films) miked-up show, every inspirational video. I don't have a pregame dance. I don't bring that yet. His dance was sick, though. Being from SoCal, I was a Raiders fan. I loved the Ravens later. I just loved the way Ray played. He's the kind of person that makes you switch teams. Like LeBron James. You are a Heat fan one minute and next minute you are a Cavaliers fan again. It's like that.

**Q: Who is the biggest influence in your life?**

A: My dad, Todd. He taught me how to walk the right path. He's a pastor. He taught me the right morals. Not only to treat women with respect, but treat people the right way. Everything you do, do it as if you're doing it for God. I talk to my dad every day. I talk to my mom every day. If I don't, I am in trouble. That's the other thing that brought me to Ray (Lewis). His faith. How intense and passionate he is about it. It's something I gravitated to very strongly.

**Todd Davis file**

- 6-foot-1, 230 pounds. Plays fast. Before the draft, was hurt by pro-day workout times when his legs were fatigued from overtraining.
- Signed by the New Orleans Saints on June 23. Was waived four times over the next five months before landing in Denver.
- Played college football at Sacramento State because it was close to home. Helped the Hornets upset CU at Folsom Field in 2012.

- Finished his college career with 351 tackles (157 solo), 9½ sacks and three interceptions.
- Left the Hornets ranked second in school history in tackles.
- At the San Diego game last Sunday, had 15 friends and family members, including his grandmother, in attendance. "She will get mad if I tell you how old she is," Davis said.
- Has impressed his Denver coaches and teammates with how quickly he has grasped the defensive schemes.

# Todd Davis quickly earned Broncos' trust, playing time

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

December 17, 2014

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- One minute the New Orleans Saints are cutting you and the next minute ... well, actually there were a lot of minutes when the New Orleans Saints were releasing rookie linebacker Todd Davis.

The Saints waived Davis in August, then again in September, then again in October and then again in November as he bounced between the Saints' practice squad and the team's active roster.

"At that point you're just trying to make sure you're offering something that's needed," Davis said. "You want to find a way to stay, it's like standing on the edge of something, you know, keeping your balance."

Then on Nov. 13 Davis, fully expecting to find himself back on the Saints' practice squad after being waived by New Orleans the day before, was the Denver Broncos claimed him. The Broncos saw potential special-teams help in the short term and had a wait-and-see approach about what Davis could do on defense, perhaps down the road.

Then Davis started appearing in some of the team's passing-down personnel groupings in practice and this past Sunday in San Diego, with Brandon Marshall (left foot) and Danny Trevathan (dislocated left kneecap) having left what became a Broncos win with injuries, Davis was in the defense for 28 snaps (42 percent of the team's total) and as the game drew to a close there were times when Davis was the only linebacker in the formation as Von Miller was lined up at defensive end.

Broncos head coach John Fox, who often preaches the mantra of "guys make their own roles," has said Davis showed he was intent on doing just that in his first month in Denver.

"I think he's adapted quickly," Fox said. "He does have good football awareness and football character. I think he's done a very good job in this short time."

"I just wanted to bring something to the team, special teams, backup on defense, whatever it was, do something positive," Davis said. "Bring something to the team

every day ... And I like to stay in my playbook a lot, I got a lot of help from the coaches one-on-one, trying to get prepared. I kind of felt a little bit overwhelmed at times, but I kept telling myself everything gets better with time."

Davis went undrafted last May after he had concluded his career at Sacramento State, not because of production -- he was a first-team All-Big Sky performer with a 131-tackle season as a senior. There was, however, the little matter of his on-campus pro day.

"Aw man, yeah," Davis said this week. "Think it was just me putting too much on myself, trying to do too much, trying to be too fast. I mean I'm out there running sprints the day before trying to be the best I can be and by the time I got to pro day my body was not there ... I was gassed."

And while most of the workout numbers were in line with others at the position, Davis' 40-yard dash time, depending on the stopwatch involved, was between 4.84 and 4.87 -- too slow for what most of the NFL's decision-makers are looking for in a linebacker.

Which is why Davis' entry into the league came as an undrafted rookie with the Saints, who signed Davis on June 23 -- roughly a month before training camp opened.

"I think [the pro day workout] affected me, I really did," Davis said. "... But everything worked out so that's kind of where I keep my focus now."

And with Trevathan having been placed on injured reserve Tuesday and with Marshall's foot injury, Davis could very well find himself in the defensive mix again in the coming weeks. Marshall, who is the team's leading tackler, left Qualcomm Stadium Sunday in a walking boot on his injured foot, but took to Twitter Tuesday night with a photo of himself wearing a shoe on his left foot, offering he had "graduated" from wearing the boot.

Marshall has been the every-down player at the position. Even if he returns quickly, Davis has still been one of the players who has worked in practice alongside Marshall at linebacker in some of the specialty packages, ahead of two other rookies in Lamin Barrow and Corey Nelson.

"It felt good [to come to the Broncos], it felt like home," said Davis, a Palmdale, Calif., native who said he had 15 family members in the seats at Qualcomm Sunday. "It didn't feel like I was coming in here as an outsider or anything like that

... as soon as I got here it felt good ... I just want to help find a way to make myself part of things. Whatever they want me to do, I'll try to do."

# Todd Davis quickly carves out niche in Denver

By Arnie Stapleton  
Associated Press  
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ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — In his six months in New Orleans, undrafted linebacker Todd Davis was waived four times, bouncing back and forth between the Saints' practice squad and their active roster.

Now he's part of Denver's deep linebacker corps that's being tested following injuries to Danny Trevathan (dislocated left kneecap) and top tackler Brandon Marshall (sprained right foot) last weekend.

Marshall is expected back for the playoffs. He's hoping the Broncos can wrap up a first-round bye in Cincinnati on Monday night without him. That would give him a month to get well before Denver would host a divisional round game the weekend of Jan. 10-11.

The Broncos claimed Davis off waivers Nov. 13 from New Orleans, where he played primarily on special teams, although he didn't arrive in time to play at St. Louis three days later.

"I just wanted to bring something to the team. Special teams, backup on defense, whatever it was, I just wanted to do something positive and just bring something to the team every day," Davis said.

Davis found an immediate comfort level in Denver. Not just on special teams, but on defense, where he fits the mold that defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio favors in his linebackers: smaller, quicker, instinctive.

"It felt like home. It didn't feel like I was coming here as much as an outsider or anything," Davis said. "It just felt like the right fit. As soon as I got here, it felt good."

And he proved a quick study.

He quickly began appearing in some of the team's specialty packages ahead of drafted rookies Lamin Barrow and Corey Nelson. When Marshall got hurt Sunday, Davis logged 28 snaps from scrimmage and with Von Miller lined up at defensive end, he was often the only linebacker on the field when Denver sealed its 22-10 win at San Diego.

"I think he's adapted quickly," coach John Fox said. "He does have good football awareness and football character. I think he's done a very good job in this short time."

Davis could find himself with an even bigger role over the next two weeks as the Broncos await Marshall's return.

It's quite a turn of events for Davis, who went undrafted after earning All-Big Sky Conference honors with 131 tackles his senior year at Sacramento State. His poor times in the 40-yard dash scared away NFL scouts.

"Aw man, yeah. I think it was just me putting too much on myself, trying to go out there and be fast and trying to do too much," Davis said. "I think it was just me putting too much on myself, trying to do too much, trying to be too fast. I mean, I'm out there running sprints the day before, trying to be the best I can be and then by the time I got to pro day my body, I think my body was just gassed."

The Saints signed him a month before training camp started, and he was waived every month starting in August, bouncing back and forth from the practice squad to their 53-man roster.

He'd been through this drill so many times, he thought nothing of it when he was demoted in November.

"Their plan was to bring me back," he said.

So, he turned off his phone when he went to work out on the Saints' off day.

When he turned it back on, his phone began buzzing with all the messages he'd missed.

"It was crazy that my phone was off at such a critical time," Davis said. "Because truthfully, I didn't really think I'd be going anywhere."

Now he's trying to help Denver go deep in the playoffs.