

Why John Elway's biggest fan in Denver is his new head coach

By Clark Judge

Talk of Fame Network

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Vance Joseph has never been a head coach before. But he's a head coach now, taking over the Denver Broncos after former coach Gary Kubiak resigned for health reasons.

It's what Joseph calls "a dream job for me," and not just because he's returning to Colorado where he played collegiate football (at the University of Colorado) or because he inherits a team only one year removed from a Super Bowl championship.

Nope, it's also because Vance Joseph is paired with one of the smartest and shrewdest GMs in the business, Hall-of-Fame quarterback John Elway..

"John is the most valuable resource for me," Joseph said on the latest Talk of Fame Network broadcast, "because John picks the players for me. In my opinion, that's the best setup for a first-time head coach. I don't want the responsibility of coaching the football team AND having the final say on picking the players.

"I think John does a great job. His track record speaks for itself, between his drafts and his free-agent pickups over the years. He's been successful at it. It allows me to focus on coaching the football team, and that's what I'm good at.

"So John's been great. He's great to work for; he's great to work with. I have opinions on personnel, and John listens. He wants to acquire players that I want to coach. Even though he has the final say of the players we pick, he allows me the voice of asking for what I want and giving it to me."

While Joseph takes over a quality team with one of the game's top defenses, he's charged with revitalizing a club that wilted down the stretch, losing seven of its last 12 starts. The Broncos not only failed to win the AFC West for the first time in six years, but, one year later, they still haven't settled on a starting quarterback — with Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch the options.

"Any chance you could start Elway?" we asked Joseph.

"I wish I could," he said, laughing. "Some of these young guys have no clue how good a player John was. John was ... I don't know ... John was a mix of Cam Newton and a mix of Peyton. He had a great arm. He had great legs. He was big. He was tough. He was smart. So I'm not sure how to describe John in the modern quarterback era."

How about: Really, really good?

"I mean, he was a great athlete," said Joseph. "He had great size. He was a great competitor. He's tough to describe as a quarterback. But watching him play and being in camp with these guys for a summer ... I watched it up close, and it was amazing watching John work every day."

How Vance Joseph's Worst Season Got Him the Job

By Robert Klemko

MMQB

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John Elway was eager to talk about lessons learned. The Broncos had just missed the playoffs for the first time since 2010, and now he was tasked with finding a new head coach.

So Vance Joseph reached back to the worst year of his football life. In 2013, his ninth season as an NFL assistant coach, his Houston Texans went from preseason AFC contenders to losers of 14 consecutive games.

That was Joseph's last of three seasons in Houston working under Gary Kubiak, Denver's last head coach, who retired due to health reasons. And in that interview, it became clear that Joseph shares Kubiak's calm delivery and attention to detail.

"We talked about the issue of expectations overwhelming a team, and not having the mental toughness and the leadership to overcome adversity when expectations are high," Joseph says. "Every year they pick and choose teams that should win the championship, and that can swallow your team if you let it, so you have to go to the mentality of winning every day. How do you go about your weeks? The same, every day."

It's coach-speak, for sure. But it was just what Elway wanted to hear.

On paper, Joseph, 44, was far from a conventional candidate for arguably the best opening of 2017. He'd been an NFL defensive coordinator for just one season; his Dolphins unit finished 18th in points allowed in 2016. Additionally, the tallest task for the new coach in Denver would be identifying and molding the next franchise quarterback, a task with which Joseph has zero experience. For Elway, Joseph's reputation as a leader of men outweighed that.

Back in 2013, it was an overtime loss to Seattle in Week 4 that sent the Texans tumbling. But people who worked with and played for Joseph say he maintained the loyalty and effort of the defensive backs room, with a rare devotion to his routine. Even after the season was a lost cause, he declined to cut corners when installing defensive game plans, cycling through every formation and every possible coverage and scenario. He pored over practice scripts in morning meetings, covering the formations the offense would show the team and the calls the defense would run, insisting defensive backs would be the group most prepared for practice.

"I learned a lot from Vance that year," says Perry Carter, a former NFL defensive back who assisted Joseph with defensive backs in 2013. "A lot of guys don't take the time to do all that. And he never changed. From Day 1, when people expected us to win the Super Bowl, to the final week. I liked that about him."

"They saw that he was all-in with them, no matter what, and they were all-in with us."

The Texans finished that year with the third-ranked pass defense in terms of yards. The success on one side of the ball gave members of the defensive staff hope that they might be spared from the staff overhaul sure to come after Kubiak's in-season firing, especially after defensive coordinator Wade Phillips was made the interim coach. Instead, with Bill O'Brien coming in, the entire staff was let go.

Joseph joined Marvin Lewis's staff in Cincinnati. Meanwhile, Kubiak and several of his staff, including Phillips, wound up in Denver, and finished their first season with a victory in Super Bowl 50. Though he wasn't in the organization, the Broncos' 24-10 win over the Carolina Panthers provided a measure of validation for Joseph. In his conversations with Kubiak then and since, he understood the coach had changed precisely nothing about his approach to the job.

"I was so excited when Kub came here and won a championship," Joseph says. "After the game I texted him, trust in the process."

"We knew we could do this somewhere else and could have done it in Houston. It's a hard league and sometimes things go off the rails. They didn't change anything they did and they end up being Super Bowl champions two years later."

After the 2015 season, new Dolphins head coach Adam Gase hired Joseph as his defensive coordinator. He took the reins of a defense that lost two pro bowlers (defensive end Olivier Vernon and cornerback Brent Grimes) in free agency, and would lose safety Reshad Jones and linebacker Koa Misi to injuries early in the season. Defensive headliner Ndamukong Suh knew little about the first-time coordinator prior to the season, so he reached out to Jared Crick, a former Nebraska teammate who had played for the Texans during Joseph's tenure. "Ndamukong wanted to know what Coach V was about, and I told him, Coach stays even keeled," Crick says. "In the best of times and the worst of times, he demands perfection of his guys. He's never riding the wave."

Crick found himself making the same call to Suh in reverse a year later, asking the all-pro defensive tackle what Joseph had been like as a coordinator once it became clear Joseph was a frontrunner for the Broncos job. "Talking to Suh, he was saying the same things that I experienced," Crick says. "A super prepared guy who does everything he can to make sure his guys are equally prepared." He had been as Perry describes him today: "Demanding but not demeaning."

When Joseph got the job, a sizeable portion of the Broncos fan base pushed back on Elway's decision, preferring Kyle Shanahan, one of the league's best offensive minds and the son of former Super Bowl-winning Broncos coach Mike Shanahan. The 37-year-old had been an offensive coordinator in the NFL since 2008 and interviewed with the Broncos before taking the 49ers job later in the offseason. Fans envisioned the coordinator who had just helped Matt Ryan to a career-defining season doing the same with either Paxton Lynch or Trevor Siemian. But Joseph got the job, in part for his projected ability to command a locker room that appeared to splinter as the team was knocked out of playoff contention in 2016. Reports of squabbles accompanied images of Aqib Talib shoving a teammate after a muffed punt in late November.

Crick and teammates have downplayed the notion of a locker room chasm in 2016. (“I’ve been on all kinds of teams and seen that kind of thing,” Crick says. “From my perspective there was no big group against another group pointing fingers.”) And Joseph says, from what he’s gathered, the issues were blown out of proportion by media reports at the time. Regardless, Joseph has emphasized in the few team meetings the team has held that everyone will have a clean slate.

“To me, what happened last year does not matter at all,” Joseph says.

Says Crick: “He brings that positivity. He’s not coming in as a coach after a 2-14 season saying we’ve got to change the culture. This isn’t a team that needs a complete overhaul. He came in and said, Guys, we just need to work, because we have everything we need to be successful.”

Almost everything. There’s still the small issue of picking the right QB for the job.

“I’ll let them figure that out,” Crick says.

Vance Joseph stresses teaching, competition as Broncos' rookies arrive

By Mike Klis

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There will be whispers. Eyes will glance. Uncertain status will reign.

When the real work starts, everybody wants to know how the new boss governs. And where they stand with him.

Vance Joseph is the new head coach for the Denver Broncos. The real work begins Tuesday with the start of organized team activities, otherwise referred to as OTAs, at the Broncos' UCHHealth Training Center.

The 2017 Denver Broncos are scheduled for 13 full-speed, non-tackling, offense vs. defense practices in the next 23 days – 10 will be labeled as OTAs and three as a mandatory minicamp that ends the offseason on June 13-15.

How efficient will Joseph's practices run? Will he be stern and all business? Or will he keep it loose and encourage laughter? Will he bring them in for pep talks or let his coordinators run the show while he evaluates from a distance?

So far, Joseph has been a balance of all of the above. There has been music during the team meeting sessions. The coach's message has been there's lots of work to get done and little time to do it.

"He's real black and white," defensive end Derek Wolfe said last week. "He's just going to tell you how it is. Those are some of the things that I like about him. You don't have to yell at someone or raise your voice to get your point across. He'll just tell you how it is, but those words he says are piercing. It hits you. It makes you want to play hard. It makes you want to give your best for him."

Some keys for the Broncos as they embark on the most significant aspect of their offseason:

*Sharpen the quarterbacks. Here's the drawback to not knowing your starting quarterback: Neither Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch can fully step up as the team leaders.

How can they act like Joe Leader when they might not start on opening day?

Joseph is not expected to declare his starting quarterback on June 15, the final day of the offseason. What he most wants are for The Incumbent Siemian and The Future Lynch to become acclimated with the new plays, system and teachings of offensive coordinator Mike McCoy and quarterbacks coach Bill Musgrave.

Still, in these next three weeks, Siemian can either increase his lead on Lynch, or Lynch can rally.

*Build offensive line chemistry. Left guard Ron Leary and right tackle Menelik Watson are well-paid newcomers. Veteran left tackles Donald Stephenson and Ty Sambrailo will try to stave off first-round rookie Garrett Bolles. Max Garcia flips sides to get invaluable reps at right guard.

Matt Paradis awaits to take his center position. Connor McGovern and Dillon Day will snap until Paradis returns from surgeries on both hips.

*Produce a leader for the No. 3 receiver spot. Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders are as dependable as spring snow in the Rockies. Returning backups Bennie Fowler, Jordan Taylor and Cody Latimer will try to fend off third-round rookie Carlos Henderson, who is the team's only unsigned player.

*Stay healthy. OTAs are important in helping a team prepare for the 2017 season. But they're not that important. Two years ago, the Broncos lost left tackle Ryan Clady for the season when he suffered a torn ACL on the first day of OTAs.

Sure, veteran running back Jamaal Charles could use some reps with his new team. But given his bittersweet history of 1,000-yard rushing seasons and knee injuries, his reps can wait till training camp.

It's usually the defensive players that get worked up during the heat of competition but this year's OTAs are less important for the veteran defensive players than any other group. Offensive players are learning a new playbook and system. Rookies are learning everything. The defensive players are already well-versed in Joe Woods' system.

Von Miller and Aqib Talib do need terrific OTAs and minicamps to have All Pro seasons.

*There are exceptions of course. This is a huge OTA period for defensive lineman Adam Gotsis, a second-round draft pick last year despite coming off ACL surgery. He must fight off another second-round rookie in defensive end DeMarcus Walker for playing time this year.

*Bring along the rookies. Bolles, Walker, Henderson, third-round cornerback Brendan Langley and fifth-round returner Isaiah McKenzie will all be counted on to contribute this season.

The Broncos also invested more than usual in undrafted prospects such as safeties Jamal Carter and Orion Stewart and defensive tackle Tyrique Jarrett.

All players come along at their own pace. The quicker a rookie gets acclimated to how the Broncos do business, the sooner he gets to play.

The NFL's Biggest Position Battle Might Be in Denver

By Albert Breer

MMQB

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By the time his two quarterbacks reported for the offseason program on April 10, new Broncos coach Vance Joseph had watched every NFL game rep Paxton Lynch and Trevor Siemian had taken. Joseph had seen all their practice reps too. He'd even talked to their college coaches.

And that morning, he was there to tell them—and everyone else in the room—that all of it was about to be marginalized.

"I told the entire team, from this moment on, everyone gets a clean slate. And that includes the quarterbacks," Joseph said coming off the field this week. "So how they play from this moment on is what I'm concerned about, not last year, or college. I'm concerned about this moment, moving forward, who the best guy is for our football team."

It's time for organized team activities, the time of year when clubs begin to take shape. That means the start of 7-on-7, 9-on-7 and 11-on-11 work and, with the rules strangling what training camp used to be, OTAs and the mandatory minicamp tied to them have become vital in ramping up before summer. The Bills, Chargers and Cardinals are underway. Denver is among the teams starting next week.

So for everyone, it's time to start figuring out who's going to play in the fall. And when it comes to that, no one has a bigger decision to make than Joseph, still in his first few months back in Colorado, where he was once the University of Colorado's star quarterback.

In this week's Game Plan, we'll tell you how the identity makeover of the Jaguars could ride on a big man, as much as the guy he'll be blocking for; we'll give you more rookie minicamp stars; we'll explain why the Pats hanging on to Jimmy Garoppolo is a big deal; we'll examine a key complication in the Raiders' looming negotiation with Derek Carr; and we'll lay out the landscape for next week's league meeting.

But we'll start by examining those position battles, because they begin now and not in late July. Denver is a good place to begin because it's not every day that you see such a win-now roster fluid at arguably the two most important spots in any football operation—head coach and quarterback.

Joseph understands the position he's in. Last year he was part of Dolphins coach Adam Gase's teardown in Miami. This is different. Denver won the AFC West five straight years before missing the playoffs in 2016, and much of the club's 2015 championship core is intact.

But that doesn't mean Joseph can't apply things he learned during the Dolphins' facelift. And the No. 1 factor, as Joseph sees it, is making the facility the place to be. "The biggest thing we did as far as culture change," Joseph recalls, "was making it an environment where [Dolphins players] loved to come to work. We didn't have a bad day last year."

The idea is that new systems on each side of the ball—the change will be more drastic on offense than defense—should work to energize the vets. The hope is that dialing up competition will generate juice all the way around.

“There’s going to be a scoreboard on everything,” Joseph explained. “It’s going to be a grading system on everything, from how many loafs to how many missed tackles to how many turnovers we can force to how many touchdowns we throw for or run in. It’s going to be a grading system on every drill we do. ... We want our offense to develop a confidence and a swagger that says they can go out and play with anyone.

“And defensively, we want to continue our culture of playing dominant defense. I think competition, that’s going to be the first thing that’s different with OTAs, starting Tuesday, for the players.”

For a team with a lot in place—a revamped offensive line, good skill-position talent and a defense stocked with in-their-prime stars—that leads us to the question that will determine the ceiling for the early-era Joseph Broncos. What will they get out of the quarterback spot?

Joseph’s feel for the two is just what you’d think. He says Siemian plays “a game of patience, it’s a game of confidence. He is in control. ... He’s a smart guy, he throws the ball where it should go most of the time, he’s got a high football IQ.” And on Lynch, Joseph says, “The physical ability is there. He’s a first-round pick, great height, great arm talent, great mobility.”

But where those two stand going into OTAs isn’t nearly as important as where they’ll be coming out of camp in August. The coach repeated what he’s said before—there’s “no deadline” on making a decision. “If it goes down to the final week,” Joseph says, “I’m not opposed to that, because our goal is only to have the best guy win the job.”

The criteria is a little clearer.

“I’d say decision-making is going to be a major factor in who wins the job,” Joseph said. “That’s the position in the NFL—the guy who makes great decisions with the football, not turning the football over, and the guy who lets his teammates play for him, that’s the guy I want to lead our football team. Obviously, ball placement in the pass game, the ability to get us into the best play, those things are important.

“But it comes down to decision-making—that’s the biggest factor in this decision I’m going to make.”

Joseph knows how significant this is. He’s got a prideful defensive group that has seven players who are: A) making more than \$5 million per year; and B) between the ages of 27 and 31. He has cornerstone offensive weapons in Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders. He has a boss, John Elway, whose philosophy in team-building, he once told me, has been not “win now” but “win from now on.”

The upshot is that Joseph has a new/old coordinator in Mike McCoy who’s won with all different styles of quarterbacks—from Tim Tebow and Jake Delhomme to Peyton Manning and Philip Rivers—and

should be able to build the offense around the strengths of the cerebral Siemian or the talented Lynch all the same.

And yes, there's pressure to get that call right. But there's pressure in general, too, and everyone embraces it.

"Winning nine games and not going to the playoffs last year was not good enough," Joseph said. "And everyone's motivated, everyone's engaged in trying to make this thing better moving forward. So that's what I've noticed from day one from every guy in the building, every player, every person who works here, from the chef to the personnel people—last year was not good enough.

"Absolutely, they took it personally. And everyone's working to make it better."

So the Broncos just have to figure out who'll play the most important position in team sports. No big deal.

Of course, Joseph isn't the only coach with a big call to make.

Vance Joseph stresses teaching, competition as Broncos' rookies arrive

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

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When Broncos veterans returned to the team's facility last month to hear from their new coach for the first time, Vance Joseph offered a simple and concise message — there's no time to waste.

Work toward improving on their 9-7 season would started immediately.

When Broncos rookies arrived Thursday, Joseph offered a similar message. But his approach was tailored. Unlike in years past — and unlike the routine of most other NFL teams — the long-held rookie minicamp was scrapped for a three-day orientation.

The goal is to bring the Broncos' youngest players up to speed with Denver's system, its policies, league rules and the general life of being and acting like a pro before they attempt to do so on the field.

"In my opinion, the practices aren't worth it when you have guys on the field who haven't trained in a football place or hadn't met with our coaches at all," Joseph said Friday at the annual Salute the Stars luncheon hosted by John Lynch at Sports Authority Field. "In my opinion, having an orientation and having media training, having note taking and security training, NFL policy training — that's really important for those guys. Before being a great player, those things have to be in place. It's a good weekend. It's split in half: It's a day and a half of instruction as far as being an NFL player and a day and a half of practice."

Thursday afternoon, the Broncos' youngest party of eight arrived to be fitted for jerseys and helmets, to meet Von Miller, and — for most, anyway — to sign their first NFL contracts.

"It's a class of maturity," Joseph said. "Meeting those guys last night and then this morning, they're really in-tune. They're really engaged and they want to be great pros. That's where it starts. That's half the battle with rookies; knowing how to be a great pro and working towards that. It's a great group. It's an engaged group. Even (Chad) Kelly, he's got a glow about him, and that's impressive. It's a good group."

While their work on the field will be brief this weekend, the Broncos rookies will eventually join the veterans in competing for their jobs. The quarterback competition between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch will attract the most eyes, but the philosophy of sussing out the top talent and best man for the starting jobs will extend to many other positions.

"You want guys to come in and compete for the job every year," Joseph said. "Obviously, there are the guys that will win the job, and the guys who don't will be capable backups. Every spot on the football team is going to be a competition."

For a select few, however, the focus of the summer will be rehab. Kelly, coming off knee and wrist surgeries, is expected to be fully cleared by August, Joseph said. Fifth-round tight end Jake Butt, recovering from ACL surgery, is expected to be on a similar plan.

“Jake Butt is on the same plan as Jamaal Charles,” Joseph said. “We want to get him through OTAs (organized team activities) and continue to rehab him and get him healthy enough to be ready for training camp — and the same with Chad. Chad should be totally cleared with his wrist by August, so right in time for training camp.”

John Elway's biggest gamble with the Broncos? Hint: It's not at quarterback or left tackle.

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
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The biggest gamble general manager John Elway is taking with the Broncos has nothing to do with the uncertainty at quarterback or left tackle.

Please rate these four NFL coaches.

Adam Gase: Architect of the Broncos' record-setting offense in 2013. Deemed too young to be a head coach when Elway hired Gary Kubiak. Now a 39-year-old coaching star on the rise after going 10-6 in his first season in charge of the Miami Dolphins.

Jack Del Rio: Started 128 NFL games as a linebacker. Won Super Bowl ring as assistant with Baltimore. Served as the Broncos' defensive coordinator from 2012-14. At age 53 last season, led the resurgence of the Oakland Raiders and earned his third trip to playoffs in 11 seasons as a head coach.

Vance Joseph: Reserve quarterback on Colorado's national championship team in 1990. Made NFL as an undrafted free agent and played in 17 career games as a defensive back. Will make head coaching debut in September with the Broncos.

Kyle Shanahan: Son of the most successful coach in Broncos history. Became hot head coaching candidate at age 37, when his Atlanta offense led NFL in scoring and earned berth in the Super Bowl. Bypassed by Denver for Joseph, hired by San Francisco to oversee a massive rebuilding project.

If you rank Joseph higher than third on the list, either you view the NFL world through orange-tinted glasses or fancy yourself as football's version of the Amazing Kreskin.

Even in Denver, where it's Super Bowl or bust every year, it's unreasonable to expect Joseph to be great as a rookie NFL head coach. Every guy deserves a pardon for a few slips on the learning curve. But if Joseph doesn't make the playoffs, he will feel fingers of blame pointed at him from every corner of Broncos Country.

As a Hall of Fame quarterback, Elway clearly favors a head coach whose primary strength is building locker-room relationships rather than devising amazing game plans. Elway replaced mad scientist Josh McDaniels with the affable John Fox, picked the down-home wisdom of Kubiak over Gase's white-hot intensity and chose the people skills of Joseph when Denver could have hired Shanahan, the league's offensive genius of the moment.

To a man, Denver players have given thumbs-up on their first impression of Joseph's managerial style. But it's worth listening to the level-headed evaluation of Joseph by safety T.J. Ward, whose slobber-knocking hits get more notice than the fact he might be the most football-savvy member of the No Fly Zone.

“He’s a calm dude. It’s really hard right now to get that feel for a coach, because it’s really early. ... He hasn’t been around us that much. He came to the weight room today and watched for a little bit. But, really, we’ve had only two team meetings, and everything else has been if you go upstairs and meet with him, or just passing by,” Ward said Wednesday.

“I like to really get a feel for a coach when we get into preseason or a game, because as a player, you like to see their mannerisms under fire and in game-time situations. Then you can really get a grasp on how a coach is. I’ve had coaches that I thought would be great in the preseason. You get into a game, and they are on the sideline, losing their mind and just not being great game managers.”

The motto has remained the same in Broncos Country since 1983: In Elway we trust. As a front office executive who added a Super Bowl ring to the two trophies won as a quarterback, Elway has earned the benefit of the doubt that either Trevor Siemian or Paxton Lynch can lead the team to the playoffs at quarterback, and the Broncos will somehow find a capable 300-pound man to play left tackle.

But there have been 51 Super Bowl champions, and here is the list of all the coaches that hoisted the trophy as rookie head coach: Don McCafferty, who took over the Baltimore Colts in 1970, and George Seifert, elevated to head coach of the San Francisco 49ers in 1989.

History says the odds of Joseph leading his first Denver team to victory in the Super Bowl are 25-to-1.

Vance Joseph's goal: 'Juice' up Broncos offense

By Paul Klee

Colorado Springs Gazette

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Who is the QB to be?

"It is open, guys, 50-50. We've got these two young guys that's got bright futures. It's going to go down to the wire, I hope," Broncos head coach Vance Joseph said. "Right now it's a new system that's going into place here with Mike McCoy. It's a fair, open competition. The best guys will play."

Perhaps the Broncos should pass on Christian McCaffrey and draft a hybrid: Paxton Siemian, the 6-foot-7 Northwestern grad who pitches Skittles as expertly as he grows facial hair.

"There's no time to waste," Joseph said in a getting-to-know-you news conference Monday.

OK, then. Let's get down to the nitty gritty: The Broncos need some serious help on offense.

"Juice," as Joseph calls it.

The quarterback conundrum is just the start of it. Who on this offense scares the Raiders and Chiefs? Demaryius Thomas is a shaken Coke can. He can blow up at any time. Emmanuel Sanders, unless it's the final game with only his health on the line, can go big. After that... Denver's offensive fridge has only bottled water.

Somewhere along the way, the Broncos offense got boring. It was out of necessity as much as choice; the line cratered, allowing open season to smack the quarterback, and game-breakers here are as rare as Colorado natives. Who are other recent Broncos who busted the big one? Trindon Holliday against the Ravens? Omar Bolden against the Colts? C.J. Anderson when he's healthy?

"I think overall with our offense we want to add more juice there, whether it's a receiver or a running back," Joseph said. "Every good offense needs a guy who can take the ball from the LOS (line of scrimmage) and go the distance with it. That's important to have, that aspect on offense — running back, receiver, wherever it comes from."

That sound you hear is a new coach who's now watched the film from "Titans 13, Broncos 10," "Patriots 16, Broncos 3" and "Chargers 21, Broncos 13." Too many times, Denver's "O" was football Nyquil.

"Definitely having more juice on offense is a must, in my opinion," he said.

Believe Joseph when he says quarterback will be an open competition between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch. Believe me, or not, when I say Siemian will win the starting job.

Mike McCoy's job as offensive coordinator will be the toughest on the block. Unless the Broncos slide up in the draft for McCaffrey, stay put at No. 20 and get lucky with Washington speedster John Ross, or take a risky leap on Day 2 with Oklahoma tailback Joe Mixon, McCoy is assigned to build a Ferrari with Hyundai parts.

Sports aren't so complicated. You want dudes the other team doesn't want to deal with. The Broncos need more dudes the other team doesn't want to deal with.

On the first day of the offseason workout program, the first day he could meet with his new team, Joseph sounded and looked more like a man in his element. No surprise there; the locker room is where Joseph is most comfortable and his presence there is why he was pegged to succeed Gary Kubiak.

The defense is packed with enough robust personalities to fill several captain's chairs. Between Von Miller, Aqib Talib, Chris Harris Jr. and T.J. Ward, the question is when, not if, somebody steps up and speaks out. I asked Joseph: What do you seek in leaders on offense?

"You want guys that are tough, engaged and love to win. Defensively, that secondary — all four guys are always fully engaged, very competitive, tough guys," he said. "That's what you want on offense: guys who hate to lose, who every day come to work to win. That's important. From that perspective, offensively, we've got some guys who could fit that role, but I want more."

A coach who lobbies in public for the front office to find his type of players? Hey, I dig it.

But the exchange that told the most about Joseph's M.O. — relative to quarterbacks, at least — arrived when he was asked about Dak Prescott, the quarterback who slipped to the fourth round before helping the Dallas Cowboys to a 13-3 record and No. 1 overall seed in the NFC.

"I wouldn't say everyone missed on him. He went to a good football team. He went to the perfect team for a young quarterback — big-time running back, with an experienced, dominant O-line," Joseph said. "It wasn't a miss on that. He went to the perfect football team. That plays a role for quarterbacks."

It would with the Broncos' quarterback candidates, too.

As Broncos' offseason workouts begin, Vance Joseph makes message to team clear

By Nicki Jhabvala

Denver Post

April 10, 2017

The seats started to fill a little before 8 a.m. There was Von Miller, back from his whirlwind European tour. There was Brandon Marshall, back from his trip to Africa. There was Shane Ray, sporting a fresh haircut for a new season.

Inside the Broncos' media room at their Englewood headquarters Monday morning, the team strolled in to finally hear from their new leader, Vance Joseph, more than three months after he was hired as head coach.

His message in his first address to the team: There is no time to waste.

"It was a friendly reminder of how much time we have to get ready," Joseph said. "Because it's not much time. For us it's 38 days to get ready for the fall season."

Thirty-eight days. Thirty-eight days of on-field preparation before training camp begins. Thirty-eight days to begin to install and revamp what has been a lackluster offense.

But the start to find the Broncos' starting quarterback begins now.

Trevor Siemian has been cleared to participate fully in the offseason program after having surgery on his left (non-throwing shoulder) in January. Siemian, who surprised last year to win the starting job, spent the majority of this offseason rehabilitating at the Broncos' facility with the hope of being ready when team workouts resumed.

Paxton Lynch, a second-year player who made two starts as a rookie, has not-so-subtly been told to show more — as a leader, as a decision-maker, as a pro quarterback. Lynch spent much of the offseason back in his home state of Florida working with quarterbacks coach Charlie Taaffe, a former offensive coordinator who helped Lynch ahead of the 2016 draft.

Despite the differences in experience and skill-level of his two quarterbacks, Joseph is adamant that the competition begins with a clean slate.

"It's open," Joseph said. "Fifty-fifty. It's an open competition. We got these two young guys who have bright futures. It's open and will go down to the wire, I hope. Right now, it's a new system that is going in with (offensive coordinator) Mike McCoy. It's a fair, open competition and the best guy will play."

The Broncos' offense has the pieces, or at least enough of them, to cause damage if used effectively, Joseph believes. In Demaryius Thomas and Emmanuel Sanders, Denver has a pair of Pro Bowl, 1,000-yard receivers. In running back C.J. Anderson, the Broncos will get their starter back after a knee injury cost him much of the 2016 season. In Ron Leary and Menelik Watson, offseason additions at guard and

tackle, respectively, the Broncos have more than 600 pounds of aggression protecting their quarterback and creating holes for their backs, if all goes according to plan.

“Running the football is the ultimate way of putting the defense at risk,” Joseph said. “If the running game is intact, with those two receivers, it’s almost impossible to stop the offense.”

Retooling the offense to accommodate quarterbacks that differ in size and strengths is a challenge, but one McCoy has done for years in tailoring his system to his players.

The structure of the offense will not change. But nuances will, often on a weekly basis.

“That will come into play more with the game-planning stuff that starts in the fall,” Joseph said. “But right now the overall structure won’t change. It’s Mike’s basic offense, basic route tree, basic run game.”

Done are the player evaluations. The current cast knows the expectations and the general plan. The focus in free agency was to add players to get bigger and meaner in the trenches, which Joseph hopes they’ve accomplished in adding Leary and Watson to the offensive line, and veterans Domata Peko and Zach Kerr to the defensive line.

Still to come is the NFL draft later this month and the rise of the Broncos’ next offensive leader. The search isn’t just for talent, but a certain mentality. Joseph’s refrain of adding “more juice” means finding a type of a player with a specific mindset.

“That’s not by accident that you find guys like that,” Joseph said. “It’s my purpose.”

Joseph could find that and more in the April 27-29 draft, while filling the team’s biggest holes. The most glaring one is on the offensive line, in finding another starting tackle. The others are scattered throughout for depth on both lines, for offensive playmakers “who can take the ball from the line of scrimmage and go the distance,” for depth in the secondary, and for key contributors on special teams.

“You want guys that are tough and fully engaged and love to win,” Joseph said. “Defensively, that secondary — all four guys are always fully engaged. Very competitive, tough guys. That’s what you want on offense. You want guys who hate to lose and every day come to work to win. From that perspective, offensively we’ve got some guys who fit that role, but I want more.”

Vance Joseph thinks Broncos' defense will overcome biggest offseason loss

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

April 4, 2017

The Denver Broncos have seen all of their high-profile free agents sign elsewhere so far, with players like Sylvester Williams, Kayvon Webster and Russell Okung having moved on.

But if you ask many among the team's faithful, those who see the world through the most orange-colored glasses would say the team's biggest loss this offseason was not any of those players, but rather a silver-haired, almost-70-something with a sharp wit and an unwavering devotion to preventing touchdowns and making life miserable for opposing quarterbacks.

Yes, when the Broncos and Wade Phillips went their separate ways this offseason, there were varied levels of panic among the folks who spend their hard-earned dollars on season tickets. And Broncos coach Vance Joseph has since made two things very clear:

The spirit of Phillips will remain in the defensive playbook as the team's base formation will remain a 3-4.

And Joe Woods is more than ready to call plays in the Broncos' defense.

"My system comes from Wade," Joseph said last week at the league meetings. "I was with Wade in Houston. I was with Mike Nolan, who learned from Wade, in San Fran. I was with Billy Davis in San Fran who learned from Wade. I was with Greg Manusky in San Fran who learned from Wade. So my belief system is Wade's. So I'm walking into a defense that I'm very familiar with. We're not going to change the structure of the defense."

Joseph was the Texans' defensive backs coach during Gary Kubiak's tenure as Houston's coach when Phillips was the team's defensive coordinator. Woods was the Broncos' defensive backs coach in each of the past two seasons, on Kubiak's Broncos staff when Phillips was the defensive coordinator.

Joseph has been adamant the players won't see much difference in the overall philosophy on defense when the team begins its offseason program next week and moves through the workouts toward training camp this summer.

"Players love playing for Wade, he's an easy-going guy," Joseph said. "He's the same every day whether you won or lost. Wade is always the same guy. But in my past, players have also loved playing for me also. I'm a different style than Wade but I've maximized players also. But again, Joe [Woods] is the coordinator. Joe has coached the secondary, which has a lot of personalities back there. Those guys believe in Joe. So I don't see any issues with those guys playing for Joe Woods."

The backdrop to all of this is when Kubiak elected to step away from coaching after the 2016 season and the Broncos were in the process of hiring Joseph, none other than the team's top football decision-maker, John Elway, said the top "priority" this offseason didn't have anything to do with how

quarterbacks throw the ball or how the Broncos block in the run game, but rather to "stay great" on defense.

Joseph and Woods say a secondary with four starters who have each gone to the Pro Bowl at least once during the past two seasons to go with a perennial Defensive Player of the Year candidate in Von Miller is the most enviable of starting points for any staff.

Overall, the Broncos retained Woods, defensive line coach Bill Kollar, linebackers coach Reggie Herring and outside linebackers coach Fred Pagac from Phillips' staff. As a result, the expectation, Joseph said, is the Broncos players likely won't see any major differences between how things went in the previous two seasons and how they conduct their business in the weeks and months to come.

"The system is not going to change," Joseph said.

The Broncos have finished among the league's top five in total defense and scoring defense in each of the past two seasons, and have been the league's top passing defense in each of those years. Joseph did say there will be some schematic tweaks made as he and Woods add things they'd like to see in the playbook and as they try to repair a run defense that finished 28th last season.

"We can add some things to make us better in my opinion," Joseph said. "... That won't be different from any season when you go from one year to the other. You're always going to look at what you did and what needs to be addressed. That's just part of it, too. But I feel good about where we'll be on defense."

Broncos' head coach Vance Joseph endorses Rooney Rule

By Mike Klis

9News

March 28, 2017

After the 2002 season, the head coach firings of Tony Dungy and Dennis Green led the NFL to adopt the Rooney Rule.

This requires teams to interview African Americans and minorities for top positions.

Herm Edwards was the only African American head coach at the time, although by the time the Rooney Rule was enacted, Dungy, who had guided the Tampa Bay Bucs to three consecutive playoff seasons when he was fired, had already become head coach of the Indianapolis Colts.

Today there are eight minority head coaches: Marvin Lewis, Mike Tomlin, Jim Caldwell, Ron Rivera, Todd Bowles, Hue Jackson, Vance Joseph and Anthony Lynn.

Joseph is the first permanent African American head coach in Broncos history. He got the job while he had interviews set up for the head jobs in San Diego and San Francisco.

"It's a good rule to have in place because now you have a chance to keep the so-called playing field fair, I would think," Joseph said. "That being said, everyone wants to hire who they know. Black or white or whatever nationality you are, if I know you I want to interview you. That's what it's about in my opinion. It's never about their skin color. It's more about relationships and who you've worked with in the past."

Broncos general manager John Elway became familiar with Joseph in 2015 when he interviewed the former Cincinnati Bengals' secondary coach for Denver's defensive coordinator position.

The NFL owners' meetings this week is where it set in for Joseph that he is indeed a head man. No assistant coaches are invited to these meetings.

The AFC head coaches' breakfast was held Tuesday at the Arizona Biltmore Hotel. Joseph was both relaxed, and assured during his hour-long interview. His strong, leadership presence is why he got the head job.

Now all he has to do is get the Broncos back to the playoffs. Unlike the league's other new head coaches, Joseph doesn't have the luxury of breaking in with a 6-10 or 8-8 season.

"And that's OK," Joseph said. "Every player wants to win. Every player wants to win. Everyone is expected to win in this league. That's why you see so much turnover. Winning is the priority and that doesn't bother me. I'm embracing the expectations. I want the expectations. To have a chance to have a good football team, to have a dominant defense, why not?"

Why John Elway was smart to pick Vance Joseph over Kyle Shanahan as Broncos coach

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
Feb. 12, 2017

Although the Broncos missed the NFL playoffs, a big winner of the Super Bowl was John Elway.

Here's why: Denver did not hire Kyle Shanahan as its head coach.

Be glad, Broncos Country. Given a choice, Denver tabbed Vance Joseph to replace Gary Kubiak on the sideline, leaving one of the NFL's more dysfunctional franchises, the San Francisco 49ers, to fill its vacancy with Shanahan, the son of the mastermind. I know it's early, but that's the best news of the year for the Broncos in 2017 and beyond.

After Atlanta suffered the biggest collapse in Super Bowl history, botching a 25-point lead in no small part because Shanahan mismanaged the clock in ways that would shame a high school coach, he has spent the past week explaining how he blew it.

"I don't know if I used those exact words, but that sounds like how I talk," said Shanahan, whose play-calling in the fourth quarter was head-scratching, especially when the Falcons had a first down at New England's 22-yard line with four minutes, 40 seconds remaining in the game and somehow managed to punt rather than pad an eight-point lead with a field goal by Pro Bowl kicker Matt Bryant.

"I did believe we had a very good chance to win that game, especially at the end, and we didn't get it done. When you use the words 'I blew it,' I don't look at it that way. I believe we missed an opportunity and we didn't get it done. I'll go back through every play for the rest of my life."

Elway did not blow it. As has become increasingly apparent during the past week, hiring Shanahan could well have been a decision Elway would have regretted for the rest of his life.

Yes, there are legitimate questions whether Joseph was a great hire, from the dry-mouth discomfort he has shown in front of the media during his early days on the job in Denver to his awkward departure from the University of Colorado more than a dozen years ago amid allegations of sexual assault, an accusation Joseph steadfastly denies.

Without doubt, Joseph will be under intense scrutiny and immense pressure to produce no fewer than 10 victories in his first season as a head coach. Fail to make the playoffs, and Joseph will be on the hot seat faster than you can say Wade Phillips, who was unceremoniously dumped by Broncos owner Pat Bowlen after going 16-16 with a loss in the postseason from 1993-94.

Joseph, however, has put himself in position to succeed, by bringing back Mike McCoy as offensive coordinator and elevating Joe Woods, one of the brightest, rising stars in the league, to defensive coordinator. Elway likes his head coach to be a big-picture problem-solver, rather than a football technocrat.

So maybe we got a real good hint at one reason why Shanahan didn't land the Broncos gig. He's already acting like Josh McDaniels. At age 37, Shanahan wants to prove he's the smartest man in every room, from team meetings to the sideline, declaring he will call plays for San Francisco and will serve as his own offensive coordinator. Ut-oh. That smells like trouble.

The Niners staff assembled by Shanahan has such a strong scent of Colorado influence there must be a marijuana joke in there somewhere. His assistant head coach is Jon Embree, who bombed out when given a shot to rebuild the Buffaloes. The wise-old head is Bobby Turner, 67, who spent 15 seasons as the running backs coach for the Broncos, while 27-year-old T.C. McCartney, the grandson of CU's legendary football coach, brings the youthful enthusiasm.

What's more, the new general manager in San Francisco is former Broncos safety John Lynch, who made a crack last week about young Broncos quarterback Paxton Lynch looking lost when he was forced to call plays in an NFL huddle.

The same as Lynch is destined to be compared, for better or worse, to Dallas star Dak Prescott, every success or failure by Joseph will be measured against the work Shanahan does for the Niners.

Here's why I'm betting on Joseph: He's a first-time head coach who's smart enough to understand he doesn't know it all. That's a humbling lesson I'm afraid Shanahan will have to learn the hard way.

Big job for new Broncos coach Vance Joseph is to clean up sour locker room

By Mark Kiszla
Denver Post
Jan. 12, 2017

Job One for new Broncos coach Vance Joseph: Get a grip on the locker room.

On their way to missing the NFL playoffs, too often the defending Super Bowl champs acted like chumps. I don't know if Gary Kubiak lost energy for the tough stuff, but as the Broncos slipped to a 9-7 record, it felt as if nobody was in command of a Denver locker room, where all the shiny camaraderie was tarnished by the moldy residue of mistrust.

After Joseph was introduced as the 16th head coach in Broncos history, I grabbed him in the hallway of the team's Dove Valley headquarters and asked: Who rules the NFL locker room? The star players? Or the coach?

"The coach has to be in control of the locker room. There cannot be a time when the coach is not in charge. We all understand, it's a players game, and players get a lot of money to play this game, but ultimately the coach has to control that room," Joseph told me Thursday, without a second of hesitation.

"It's a matter of being demanding of players, without being a jerk. A coach has got to do both. That's my style. I'm not a yeller. I'm not going to curse players. I treat them with great respect at all times. But I am demanding."

General manager John Elway expects Joseph to win, and win big, in his first year as a first-time head coach. It's a tough task. Here's why: The championship culture the Broncos like to brag about? It's a mess.

After receivers Emmanuel Sanders and Demaryius Thomas were shown the big money from sweet new contracts, they should have been expected to lead 24/7/365. Instead, on any given Sunday, when young quarterback Trevor Siemian failed to get them the football, Thomas and Sanders pouted.

Paxton Lynch is a quarterback with a big arm and bigger potential. Once he lost the starting job to Siemian, however, it seemed as if Lynch was content to ride shotgun, noodling on his cellphone instead of grinding on the playbook. The rookie needs to grow up. Fast. He was irked about not playing in the season finale against Oakland? Good.

Aqib Talib is a crazy, brilliant cornerback. He's the crazy every NFL defense needs. In 2016, Talib was also the personification of a champion falling apart. Shoving and bickering with teammates should not be confused with the kicking and screaming that's demanded by Elway. It's losing your cool. Period.

"It's my job to find the small tweaks to make this team a winning team again. That's my call of duty, and hopefully we can do that quickly," said Joseph, singing music to Elway's ears. "It's not a rebuild. It's a reboot."

Well, the reboot might require a few swift kicks in the pants of Denver players who have forgotten all great football teams are a brotherhood.

Although the son of a coach, Elway is, first and foremost, a Hall of Fame quarterback. He believes players win. Elway is not dazzled by football nerds in headsets. The strength in Joseph echoes the best of John Fox and Kubiak, who were hired for their motivational skills rather than Mensa IQ scores.

While Broncos Country was attracted to the sweet nostalgia of Kyle Shanahan following in his father's footsteps on the sideline of Mile High, that honeymoon with Elway would have lasted until the first time the Son of Mike wrestled with Old No. 7 about why his draft choices weren't ready to contribute. Elway wants a sidekick, not a mastermind.

The truth is in the details, and franchise president Joe Ellis revealed a small but key point I believe pushed Joseph ahead of fellow candidates Dave Toub and Shanahan when the interviews were done. Ellis lauded Joseph for his ability to "manage up."

At Dove Valley, if Elway ain't happy, ain't nobody happy. Forget the genius X's and O's scribbled on a white board. The motto Vince Lombardi made famous is ingrained in Elway's DNA: Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing. Joseph wasn't hired because his Miami defense ranked 29th in a 32-team league; he landed a gig in Denver because the Dolphins rallied from a 1-4 start to qualify for the playoffs.

"There's only one stat that counts," Elway said, "and that's how many games you win."

Joseph is not here to write the great American NFL game plan or overhaul a last-place team.

This job is far less glamorous, dirtier and simple. Elway issued Joseph a scrub brush and gave him a mission.

Now Joseph must wipe the walls of the Broncos' locker room clean from the selfish stench of me, me, me.

Vance Joseph is the new head coach of the Denver Broncos — here are 7 facts you should know about him

By Rhiannon Walker

The Undeclared

Jan. 11, 2017

The search is over and the choice is made. Vance Joseph was announced as the new head coach of the Denver Broncos on Wednesday, making him the 16th head coach in the franchise's history.

Joseph's hire puts him in a category with a very small, but very important, fraternity of black coaches in the NFL. He is the Broncos' first full-time African-American head coach (Eric Studesville took over for the final four games of the 2010 season after Josh McDaniels was fired) and the sixth black active head coach — Todd Bowles (New York Jets), Jim Caldwell (Detroit Lions), Hue Jackson (Cleveland Browns), Marvin Lewis (Cincinnati Bengals) and Mike Tomlin (Pittsburgh Steelers). Joseph's appointment means blacks now account for 20 percent of the league's head coaches.

Overall, the hire makes Joseph just the 18th black head coach in NFL history. Last July, Dennis Green, the second African-American head coach in the NFL, died of cardiac arrest. At the time of his death, The Undeclared's senior NFL writer Jason Reid wrote about the intense pressure Green felt to succeed so that the door would open just a little wider for future generations of black men hoping to ascend to an NFL head coaching position.

If Green failed, it would be harder for other African-Americans to ascend to the highest positions in coaching. No matter how you measure it, he got the job done.

In the 1990s, only five coaches had more wins than Green's 81 victories. Among Vikings head coaches, Green is second only to Hall of Famer Bud Grant with 159 games coached, 97 wins and a .610 winning percentage. During his 10 seasons with the Vikings, they had eight playoff appearances.

After two years of playing in the NFL for the New York Jets and Indianapolis Colts, Joseph made his bones coaching in the collegiate game for five years. He started his career at the University of Colorado, his alma mater, before making pit stops at the University of Wyoming, back to Boulder, Colorado, and finishing at Bowling Green State University. In that time, Joseph worked as a grad assistant, secondary and defensive backs coach, and then made the jump to the NFL in 2005.

He spent his first six years coaching with the San Francisco 49ers, the next three with the Houston Texans, two with the Cincinnati Bengals and last season with the Miami Dolphins.

In Cincinnati, his defensive backs intercepted an NFL-best 41 passes from 2014 to 2015. As the Texans' defensive backs coach for his first two years in Houston, Joseph and his unit held teams to a league-low 52.5 completion percentage and ranked third in passing yards allowed per game (207.7). Texans cornerback Johnathan Joseph also blossomed under the coach, earning his first two Pro Bowls selections of his career.

Denver's new head coach is inheriting a Broncos defensive unit with perennial Pro Bowlers Chris Harris Jr., Aqib Talib and T.J. Ward and outside linebacker and former Super Bowl MVP Von Miller.

All that being said, who is Vance Joseph and what are some things one should know about his past? Below are seven nuggets about Denver's new head coach:

1. This isn't the first time the Broncos and Joseph have flirted with a possible union.

In January 2015, Denver's front office and Joseph were in talks about him possibly filling the team's head coaching vacancy when John Fox was relieved of his duties. When Gary Kubiak, who was the offensive coordinator for the Baltimore Ravens in 2014, became the top pick for head coach, the talks turned to Joseph becoming the team's top choice for defensive coordinator.

The Cincinnati Bengals didn't allow Joseph, who was the Bengals' secondary coach at the time, to leave for the promotion.

"My path has been the right path," Joseph told MiamiDolphins.com. "I've made it through every step. I went back to college as a graduate assistant and I worked my way up in small-college football to make it to major college and then the NFL. I didn't miss any steps.

"You need to understand more than just what. You need to understand why. The path I have traveled here has helped me to accomplish that."

2. He is replacing his former employer.

Joseph replaces his former boss Kubiak, who resigned from the Broncos head coaching position over health concerns after the team's 9-7 finish this season. Kubiak brought Joseph to the Houston Texans for three years when Kubiak was the head coach of his hometown team.

3. Joseph could work with the man who had the greatest impact on him as a coach.

"I would say Wade Phillips," Joseph told MiamiDolphins.com. "Good, bad or indifferent, he was the same person every day. I never had a bad day with Wade. We won 13 games the first year in Houston, we won 12 games the second year and we won just two games the third year, and he was the same person. He never wavered. His philosophies never changed. His standards never changed. I have so much respect for that man."

The pair worked together on Houston's coaching staff from 2011 to 2013, when Phillips was the team's defensive coordinator. Houston had the second-ranked defense in the league in 2011 and the following year had the seventh-best unit. Phillips, who was the defensive coordinator for the Broncos the past three seasons, is no longer under contract with Denver.

4. He wasn't always a cornerback.

"I was a quarterback in college and a defensive back in the NFL, and most people think I was a defensive back my entire life," Joseph told MiamiDolphins.com. "I was a quarterback from 5 years old to my senior year at Colorado. In high school, I was a very, very good quarterback and in college I was pretty good. I was an option quarterback. I was Kordell Stewart's backup for two seasons and I played behind Darian Hagan for two seasons, so I was a backup to two All-Americans."

5. In his first NFL start, Joseph had to cover Hall of Famer Tim Brown, and it was not an undefeated experience.

In Joseph's first career NFL start, wide receiver Tim Brown amassed 156 yards and two touchdowns. The memory still stands out, even though Joseph is now more than two decades removed from the game.

"What do I remember most [from that year]?" Joseph told MiamiDolphins.com. "That I wasn't ready to play. I probably should have been on the practice squad for a whole year. But I was pushed into a starting role early on. And my first start was against Tim Brown. I got baptized pretty good. It was on TNT Sunday night football, so everyone saw it. That's my memory about being an NFL corner with the Jets. Not good. I'm a better coach than I was a player, I must admit that."

6. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Joseph leading his high school team to its lone state championship.

Joseph was a 14-year-old sophomore quarterback at Louisiana's Archbishop Shaw High School in November 1987. That season, Joseph quarterbacked the team to an 8-2 regular season and avenged a 21-14 loss to West Jefferson High School in the regular season by beating West Jefferson, 17-0, in the playoffs. Joseph, who was a three-year starter for Archbishop Shaw, guided his team to a 14-6 victory over Covington High School in the title game to give the school its only championship.

7. Joseph also won a national title with the Colorado Buffaloes as a third-string quarterback.

Joseph backed up Darian Hagan during Colorado's 1990 title run, when the Buffaloes defeated Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl for the school's only national championship. Joseph played the 1990 and 1991 seasons before redshirting during the 1992 season and playing his final two seasons from 1993 to 1994. During his tenure, Joseph accumulated 454 yards, four touchdowns and no interceptions on 34 of 61 passes. He also ran the ball for 237 yards and a touchdown on 50 carries.

Vance Joseph is Broncos head coach

By Mike Klis

9News

Jan. 11, 2017

Vance Joseph is the 16th head coach in Denver Broncos' history after the two sides finalized a four-year contract Wednesday.

Joseph is also the franchise's first African American to become its permanent head coach. The Broncos promoted running backs coach Eric Studesville as interim head coach for the final four games of the 2010 season.

Studesville is still coaching running backs for the Broncos and is expected to be retained.

As with any new head coaching hiring, however, the status of other Bronco assistants is uncertain, including that of defensive coordinator Wade Phillips, whose contract expires Feb. 1. Rather than re-up Phillips, the Broncos will have to consider promoting secondary coach Joe Woods, who has drawn interest from other teams as a possible defensive coordinator candidate.

Joseph, 44, is a former University of Colorado backup quarterback who played cornerback for the New York Jets in 1995-96. He started his coaching career as a CU grad assistant in 1999 before eventually working his way to the NFL in 2005 as an assistant defensive backs coach for San Francisco head coach Mike Singletary.

Joseph has spent his 12 NFL coaching seasons as a defensive coach -- 11 instructing defensive backs and this past year as the Miami Dolphins' defensive coordinator.

A five-man Broncos search committee also interviewed Kansas City Chiefs' special teams coordinator Dave Toub and Atlanta Falcons' offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan for the head coaching position that was vacated on Jan. 2 when Gary Kubiak retired for health reasons.

It was Broncos' general manager John Elway who led the search and chose Joseph, believing in his overall leadership quality, teaching ability and overall approach as the right man to lead the Broncos back to the playoffs and compete for the Super Bowl.

There will be Bronco fans who question the decision because of one, Joseph's spotty record as a defensive coordinator and, two, Denver's current makeup that has been strong on defense, weak on offense.

Joseph has held that top assistant post for just one year and it don't go well statistically, as the Dolphins' defense ranked 29th in the 32-team league during the regular season, then was a sieve in allowing the Pittsburgh Steelers three touchdowns on their first three possessions in a first-round AFC playoff loss on Sunday.

However, the Dolphins' defense suffered several significant injuries this season and head coach Adam Gase credited Joseph with keeping his unit functional enough to help Miami reach the playoffs for the first time in eight years.

It's also worth noting Elway was seeking not necessarily the best coordinator, but the person he felt would be the best head coach.

Joseph has the type of alpha leadership personality, calm demeanor and ability to relate to young players that Elway deems a fit.

The Broncos' locker room has a fair percentage of strong personalities that was managed to near perfection by Kubiak in 2015 when the Broncos won Super Bowl 50.

But after a 4-0 start in 2016, the Broncos swooned, losing seven of their next 11 games to miss the playoffs for

the first time in six years. Their problems began when Kubiak suffered a complex migraine condition that required emergency medical attention following the Broncos' first loss of the season in week 5 against Atlanta.

And then when the Broncos lost three in a row in December to miss the playoffs primarily because their offense failed to score more than 10 points, a few defensive players started to point blame at the other side of the ball.

Elway believes Joseph can get every player, not just most, to put team before self. Besides a possible underlying division between offense and defense, it was also a concern earlier in the season when receivers Emmanuel Sanders and Demaryius Thomas complained about not getting enough passes thrown their way.

The uncertain status of Phillips has drawn concern from the Broncos' fan base. The Broncos won Super Bowl 50 primarily because of their defense that ranked No. 1 in the league.

Phillips' defense featured both a tenacious pass rush led by DeMarcus Ware and Super Bowl 50 MVP Von Miller and a man-to-man, suffocating secondary led by Aqib Talib and Chris Harris Jr.

It wasn't just the players. Phillips' defensive system is considered simple for his own players to execute while

employing varied pass rush attacks to confuse opposing quarterbacks.

As an encore in 2016, Denver's defense wasn't nearly as effective, primarily because it allowed more than 130 rushing yards a game to rank 28th in the league. But it was still No. 1 in pass defense and ranked No. 4 in overall defense and No. 4 in points allowed.

Phillips and the Broncos reached a snag in contract negotiations following last year's Super Bowl. After sitting out the 2014 season, Phillips signed a two-year contract with the Broncos only after the team's preferred choice, Joseph, was unable to get out of his contract as the Cincinnati Bengals' secondary coach.

After the Broncos won Super Bowl 50, every coach whose contract expired after the 2016 season received a one-year extension – with the exception of Phillips.

With the league's top defensive coordinators making north of \$2 million per year, Phillips was asking to join the club. The Broncos balked saying they would revisit his deal after the 2016 season.

When Kubiak unexpectedly retired last week, the Broncos told Phillips his future with the club would be determined after the head coach is hired.

In the meantime, teams have expressed interest in Woods, a rising star who figures to become a strong head coaching candidate in the near future.

The Broncos' offense, meanwhile, struggled the past two years. Most of the blame was directed at the offensive line that could never generate a consistent running attack, and at quarterback where Peyton Manning was in his final year in 2015 and Trevor Siemian was in his first year in 2016.

The Broncos' offense ranked just 27th in yards this season and 22nd in points.

So why hire a defensive-minded head coach in Joseph that in turn shakes up the defensive staff instead of the offensive-minded Shanahan?

It did appear Elway was giving Shanahan strong consideration. Shanahan was impressive during his interview Saturday with the Broncos' five-man search committee – Elway, chief executive officer and president Joe Ellis, director of player personnel Matt Russell, vice president of public relations Patrick Smyth and team administrator Mark Thewes -- in the Atlanta area.

And the Dolphins' early defensive woes in their playoff loss at Pittsburgh didn't help Joseph's cause as it reinforced how bad his unit was throughout the season.

However, Joseph got his chance to sell himself Tuesday during a four-interview with the Broncos' search committee in the Pat Bowlen conference room at the UHealth Training Center.

Joseph then stayed over Tuesday night and dined with Elway and Russell and Elway's steakhouse in Cherry Creek.

Joseph had a flight scheduled Wednesday afternoon from Denver to San Diego for a head coach interview with the Chargers. He was also to meet Thursday with the San Francisco 49ers about their head coach opening and possibly Friday with the Los Angeles Rams.

A minority hire is unprecedented for the Broncos. Not only have they never had a minority as their permanent head coach, they've only had one serve as coordinator in their 57-year history. That was Ray Rhodes, who served as defensive coordinator in 2001-02.

Joseph will be only the 18th African American permanent head coach in NFL history.

Hiring Vance Joseph, a black coach, to lead Broncos big step forward for NFL, Colorado

By Mark Kiszla

Denver Post

Jan. 11, 2017

In a state that is overwhelming white, the new coach of the Denver Broncos is black. Vance Joseph was named Wednesday as the 18th African-American head coach in the NFL's 96-year history, not counting interim hires. Does that matter? Oh, heck yeah. Let me tell you how much.

I called the old football coach who brought Vance Joseph to Colorado more than 25 years ago and got to break the happy news to Bill McCartney.

"Wow!" said McCartney, the joy spilling out of him. "You're the first to tell me he's the next coach of the Broncos. And I'm glad you did. Because it's awesome. People are going to love this guy. Vance Joseph is a leader of men."

Race is an issue in America. Always has been. Always will be. It became a sticky issue, impossible to shake throughout the 2016 NFL season, as black players, including Denver linebacker Brandon Marshall, kneeled in protest during the playing of the national anthem before kickoff. It's a big deal a black man is now entrusted with rebooting the Broncos and returning a proud franchise to the Super Bowl.

"You hit a nerve with me right there. You hit on a topic that most people don't want to talk about or don't understand," said McCartney, who has long pushed for more minority coaches to ascend to key leadership positions. "It has always been frustrating to me that people have unwittingly ignored the lack of opportunity for black coaches. This is important stuff."

I firmly believe the locker room is more about W's and L's than black or white. But the fact the new face of the Broncos is African-American? Important stuff, indeed. The coach of the local NFL team might be the most high-profile leader in town. Here's betting the face of Joseph will appear more often on television during 2017 than the Denver mayor and Colorado governor ... combined.

"It's incredibly humbling to be part of an organization like the Broncos, with so much history and success," said Joseph, who served as the Miami Dolphins' defensive coordinator last season.

Who we see in a leadership role matters, because it shapes our worldview. Since the Broncos first took the field in 1960, they have played more than 900 games during the regular season and playoffs. Prior to hiring Joseph, who beat out Atlanta offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan and Kansas City special-teams guru Dave Toub for the job, the Broncos have only been led on the field by a black coach four times, when Eric Studesville served as interim head coach at the sad conclusion of the 2010 season.

It does McCartney proud to see a protégé, the teenage quarterback he recruited to Boulder from Louisiana in 1990, now represent CU on the sideline for the Broncos. But does it matter just as deeply in McCartney's heart that a black coach has been given a chance to shine in the pro football arena?

“Oh, yes. It matters,” replied McCartney, the enthusiasm in his voice booming like a big bass drum. “I will tell you why it matters: White folk generally don’t understand the plight of the brother in America. And that makes us insensitive. I’m not saying people are mean-spirited. They’re just clueless. You don’t know what you can’t know about.”

McCartney is now 76 years old. He has mellowed, but only a little. His memory sometimes fades, but his vision remains strong and lucid. A coach who led the Buffaloes to their lone football national championship has never been afraid to tackle controversial issues, whether it was taking a stance on abortion or lobbying on behalf of Bob Simmons, an African-American assistant on the CU staff, to take over the program when McCartney abruptly retired in 1994.

Long before Joseph began building his coaching resume, he arrived in Colorado as a standout prep quarterback with big dreams. But here’s what you should know. On a talent-stacked Buffs roster, Joseph threw only 61 passes in four seasons. What impressed McCartney about Joseph: Rather than get frustrated by lack of playing time, it drove him to discover new ways to lead.

And one more thing.

“Boulder is whiter than any place in Colorado,” McCartney said. “It’s no slam dunk an African-American young man was going to get through four years without being discouraged. But you could see the strength of his character, his drive, his ability to lead.”

Despite the presence of the Rooney Rule, established more than a decade ago to encourage greater opportunity for minority candidates, 21 of the 22 NFL head coaches hired during the five hiring cycles from 2012-16 were white. That’s the definition of absurd. The Rooney Rule, however, did nudge open the door at Dove Valley for Joseph to interview two years ago, and when general manager John Elway suddenly realized on Christmas Eve the Broncos were going to need a replacement for Gary Kubiak, the instant front-runner to fill the vacancy was Joseph.

When Marshall kneeled at Broncos games during the national anthem, hoping to raise awareness for social injustice, he attracted cameras, created waves and fostered discussion, often heated. When Joseph leads the Broncos out of the tunnel for the season opener in September, then stands at attention as “The Star-Spangled Banner” plays, it will remind us America can be the land of hope and possibility.

Vance Joseph has intelligence, alpha mentality to guide Broncos to championships

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

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Vance Joseph's name isn't etched in the grandeur of Colorado Buffaloes football history. He didn't throw any game-winning touchdowns, but his former teammates and coaches believe his value to the team was as significant as many who did.

Despite being CU's third-string quarterback for most of his career, which began in 1990, he ran the room. He played behind Darian Hagan, Charles Johnson, Kordell Stewart and Koy Detmer, but he demanded everybody's attention. And particularly in Joseph's later years at CU, when he played behind Stewart and Detmer, they followed his command.

It wasn't about position as much as presence.

"Clearly Kordell was the talent as far on the field, but Vance was the leader, without a doubt. It screamed coach," said Johnson, Joseph's teammate and fraternity brother. "The guy has uncompromising integrity."

Now Joseph, 44, makes the biggest leap of his coaching career, moving from the Miami Dolphins, where he was defensive coordinator, to becoming the Broncos' head coach and the first full-time African-American head coach in team history. (Eric Studesville was elevated to interim coach for four games to finish the 2010 season after Josh McDaniels was fired.)

Broncos general manager John Elway made it clear what he wanted in his next head coach — a strong leader and a bright, young mind.

What should Broncos players and fans expect from Joseph?

"Vance is the same guy with the fellas for a celebratory dinner or if he's in the board room with the owner of a team," Johnson said. "You know what you're getting from this guy. It doesn't change. If players see any fake or phony in you, they see that and don't respect it."

Lead, learn, laugh

Matt McChesney knows first-hand the impact Joseph can have on a player. The former CU and Broncos lineman started his college career when Joseph was beginning his coaching career. McChesney leaned on Joseph during a rocky freshman season.

"Coach Vance was always the guy to put his arm around you and say: 'Look, man, this is a process. You're going to have to grow, you're going to mature and we're going to need you,' " McChesney said. "It was the first time anybody at CU had ever done that for me. And it wasn't just me. He did it for so many players."

Former CU coach Gary Barnett, who as an assistant recruited and coached Joseph, and then as the Buffs' head coach hired Joseph as an assistant, said Joseph displayed that level of leadership early on. Barnett praised Joseph's unselfishness as being a key part of Stewart's recruitment from Louisiana to Boulder, even though it meant less playing time for Joseph.

"He always had that demeanor. He always understood the game," Barnett said. "Players loved him. He was a really good teacher. He was firm but yet fair."

Although Joseph was hired primarily for his leadership skills, his intelligence and football acumen have served him well. He thinks like a quarterback — and also as a defensive back, the position he played for two years in the NFL and has coached for most of his career.

Joseph's distinctive laugh is what most resonated with McChesney. It comes from the belly in a deep voice from a very happy man, McChesney said. It was a staple after big CU wins, echoing throughout the locker room.

"He's a very passionate football coach. He's high energy. Coach V.J. is one of the guys that you don't want to let down," McChesney said. "He has some of (previous Broncos coach Gary) Kubiak's strengths, like being able to talk to everybody and get everybody in the right direction. V.J. also has some of that (butt)-kicker in him. I've seen him chew out (Dolphins defensive tackle) Ndamukong Suh at least 10 times this year. If your coach can walk up to a guy making \$90 million and push him to be more disruptive and consistent, then you really got something."

"He's a step ahead"

There's no doubt Joseph was hired based on his pedigree, but he'll make history as the first African-American head coach in Broncos history to get a long-term contract.

Race won't have an impact on wins, but it will continue to open more doors for African-American coaches behind him if he has success.

"There is a culture of winning here," Joseph said Wednesday in a statement. "And the standards around here won't change: Those are to win championships."

The Broncos can only hope Joseph has the success of Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin, who spent most of his career as a defensive backs coach and one year as a defensive coordinator (like Joseph) before becoming a Super Bowl-winning head coach. Joseph's path is also similar to that of Tony Dungy, the only other black head coach to win a Super Bowl. As with Dungy, Joseph's skill set includes leadership and relating to players.

"He's a guy that knows how to adjust and adapt. He's going to be an excellent head coach," Suh said Wednesday in a statement. "He's great at dealing with a lot of different personalities."

Joseph has learned under some of the NFL's best defensive minds, including Cincinnati's Marvin Lewis, Wade Phillips, Minnesota Vikings head coach Mike Zimmer and former Broncos defensive coordinator Mike Nolan.

Joseph has learned from each of them at every stop. But his own mind-set about coaching is what has the Broncos so high on him. Johnson recalled a conversation he had with Joseph a couple of years ago about his coaching mentality. It perfectly sums up why players love him.

“You have to convince players of where you’re going in a way that works for them. ‘Far too often, I see where there’s a 1990 application of coaching to a 2015 reality, and it’s a dead end. It doesn’t work,’” Johnson recalled Joseph saying. “He’s a step ahead — what he gets is people.”

Five things to know about Broncos' Head Coach Vance Joseph

By Aric DiLalla
DenverBroncos.com
Jan. 11, 2017

As the Broncos welcome Vance Joseph to Denver, we've compiled a list of five things to know about the 16th coach in team history:

1. A state champion

Vance Joseph was a three-year starting quarterback at Archbishop Shaw High School (La.) and led the team to its only state football title. Running the veer, the 15-year-old sophomore quarterback guided his team to an 8-2 regular season and a playoff run that ended in a 14-6 win in the championship game. Joseph still keeps in touch with his high school coach, Hank Tierney.

"I have coached better players than Vance," Tierney told SportsNola.com. "His brother Mickey was more talented. But even though Vance was not big or fast, he just got the job done."

2. Talent in the family

Vance isn't the only talented football player in his family. His older brother, Mickey, was the nation's No. 1 recruit as an option quarterback and signed with Nebraska. The Cornhuskers' head coach, Tom Osborne, called Mickey Joseph perhaps "the greatest player I have ever signed at Nebraska." Mickey scored 21 touchdowns as a junior, but a leg injury derailed his career. He's served as a coach in several places since, most recently at Louisiana Tech.

An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated that Joseph had a brother named Terry. Though Vance has a relative named Terry, his other brother's name is Sammy.

3. Not far from his alma mater

Joseph enrolled at the University of Colorado in 1990, and while Kordell Stewart would later beat him out as a starter, Joseph showed his promise as a coach even then. Colorado's head coach, Gary Barnett, would later bring Joseph back as an assistant in 1999.

"He was a natural leader as a player and a coach," Barnett said. "He always had a knack for it. He could teach kids how to see things; he could teach them how to do things physically. He had a way of getting their respect. He was just hard enough on them where they knew they couldn't cross the line, but he also related to them really well."

He also backed up Darian Hagan, another All-American. Joseph credits his success as a defensive coach to his time as a quarterback. He told the Texans' website in 2011 that he can recognize "danger zones" from a defensive perspective.

Joseph was also a teammate of Broncos' Director of Player Personnel Matt Russell and former Bronco Alfred Williams while at CU.

4. A chance in the NFL

After his CU career, Joseph transitioned to the cornerback spot to play in the NFL. He signed with the Jets after he went undrafted in 1995 and played in 13 games as a rookie. Joseph finished the season with two interceptions — but his first start wasn't easy, as he gave up 156 yards and two touchdowns to Hall of Fame wide receiver Tim Brown.

"What do I remember most [from that year]?" Joseph told MiamiDolphins.com. "That I wasn't ready to play. I probably should have been on the practice squad for a whole year. But I was pushed into a starting role early on. And my first start was against Tim Brown. I got baptized pretty good. It was on TNT, Sunday night football, so everyone saw it. That's my memory about being an NFL corner with the Jets. Not good. I'm a better coach than I was a player, I must admit that."

Joseph later played in four games for the Colts before he moved on to his coaching career.

5. A family man

Joseph calls his family his "off-the-field passion." He and his wife, Holly, have a teenage daughter, Nataly, and a young son named Stone. Despite his coaching obligations, he told MiamiDolphins.com that he always tries to make his daughter's sporting events on Friday nights.