

Broncos notes: Paradis candidate for new contract

By Mike Klis

9 News

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As it turned out, the first day of NFL free-agent negotiations became little more than a house-cleaning project for the Broncos.

The Broncos extended second-round, \$2.914 million tenders to restricted free agents Matt Paradis, the team's starting center, and part-time starting outside linebacker Shaq Barrett.

It would be a surprise if the Broncos didn't engage in long-term contract negotiations with Paradis before the start of the regular season, as the team did with three previous restricted free agents: C.J. Anderson, Brandon Marshall and Brandon McManus. Paradis has delivered every offensive snap the past three years.

Barrett may have to keep proving himself. He had 5.5 sacks in a part-time role in 2015, but slipped to 1.5 sacks in 2016 before rebounding with 4.0 sacks last season.

The Broncos also said goodbye to No. 3 receiver and core special teamer Bennie Fowler III by not extending a low tender to the restricted free agent. Fowler is now an unrestricted free agent.

It's unclear whether the Broncos will attempt to re-sign another receiver-special teamer, Cody Latimer, before he becomes an unrestricted free agent on Wednesday.

The Broncos also tendered one-year, minimum-salaried contracts to all their exclusive rights free agents: Receiver/returner Jordan Taylor, long snapper Casey Kreiter, linebackers Zaire Anderson, Jerrol Garcia-Williams and Joseph Jones and offensive tackle Elijah Wilkinson.

C.J. Update

The Broncos will listen to offers for running back C.J. Anderson but they're not going to give away a 1,000-yard running back. The Broncos are not planning on releasing Anderson, at least not now.

Anderson just finished his fifth season with the Broncos and was unquestionably the team's offensive MVP in 2017. He has two years left on his contract at \$4.5 million each.

Landow arrives

Loren Landow, a top performance coach in the Denver area for years, started his new job as the Broncos' strength and conditioning coach Monday.

Anthony Lomando and Cedric Smith return to become his top assistants.

However, the Broncos lost assistant trainer Billy Joe Voltaire to Houston, where he will join Luke Richesson's strength staff. Richesson had been the Broncos' head strength and conditioning coach for

six years before leaving for Houston last month. Voltaire will become the Texans' assistant strength coach and performance therapist.

How second-year center Matt Paradis has become model of consistency for Broncos' O-line

By Nicki Jhabvala
Denver Post
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Highlights for offensive linemen are rare, and, frankly, they prefer it that way. There are no individual awards or game balls. The line acts as one and thinks as one, and when one player messes up, they fall as one. The less attention, the better because attention is typically tethered to criticism.

The lineman lifestyle isn't for the faint of heart.

But this year more than ever in Denver, one man has stood out. Second-year center Matt Paradis has been the rock on a line that has been, well, rocky. He rose from practice player to full-time starter seemingly overnight last season.

"I'm not sure how many guys are in this league that played eight-man football in high school. That's probably the thing that's more unusual in this league than a guy in his second year kind of taking over," Broncos offensive line coach Clancy Barone said. "He goes from working with a Hall of Fame quarterback last year (Peyton Manning) that would kind of control everything to where, now, we have a guy in Trevor (Siemian) who kind of puts the onus back on Matt to be the guy that's kind of running things up front. I think he's embraced that and is doing a really fine job of it."

He's also been a model of consistency when the Broncos' offense has provided anything but.

Paradis is the only Bronco to have played every offensive snap — all 1,788 of them — to go with 120 special-teams snaps since the start of last season, when, as a first-year starter, he was tasked with being Manning's fifth center in four years.

Prior to Super Bowl 50, Manning likened Paradis' reliability up front to that of Jeff Saturday, Manning's long-time center in Indianapolis who was selected to six Pro Bowls in his 14-year career.

More significant than the comparison, however, was the source.

"Peyton had way more authority than most quarterbacks in the league do, and most quarterbacks rely on their center to make a bunch of calls before they can even make their call," said former Broncos tackle Tyler Polunbun. "But I can think of two or three games last year where there were specific blitz looks that Matt was responsible to find. It was his job to turn around and tell Peyton what that blitz was going to be, and Peyton multiple times said, 'Hey, Matt, I'm counting on you to see it for me because I'm not going to see it.' For a guy like Peyton Manning to rely on somebody, to put his trust in somebody — that says a lot."

This year, Paradis' command at the line and experience in the system has been relied upon even more as the offense transitions to having Siemian run the show. Paradis' play count has remained steady — no easy feat considering the state of his body. He has been limited to one practice day a week in an effort to keep his sore hips functional for game day.

"I know one thing: I want him out there running the show on Sunday," Broncos coach Gary Kubiak said. "It is tough. When he is missing, he does all of the non-competitive stuff and all the walk-throughs that we add this time of year. We keep him up to date from that standpoint, but it's more important that Matt is there for us on Sunday than it is on Thursday."

The altered schedule poses challenges, especially as the Broncos prepare for their toughest stretch of the season. But it has its benefits, too.

"You have to do way more mentally," Paradis said. "Since I'm not out there on the field with them (for practice), we have to talk about how we're going to block. Like, 'This is how I'm going to step,' 'This is how I see this happening.' We have to be more upfront. Which is probably better for us in the long run."

The Broncos' offensive line ranks 25th in the league, according to Pro Football Focus, a reflection of its inconsistencies, especially at the tackle positions. Donald Stephenson and Ty Sambrailo, now jockeying for the starting job at right tackle, have allowed a combined six sacks and 46 quarterback pressures, according to PFF. On the left side, Russell Okung has surrendered 38 pressures.

Paradis, however, is rated by PFF as the top center in the league — higher than Travis Frederick, who anchors the Cowboys' line that is widely regarded as the best in the league.

In Denver, Paradis is the tone-setter. By necessity and performance, he stands out.

"For me, especially being a young quarterback, with everybody up front, he runs the show for us," Siemian said. "As guys are getting more comfortable in the system, they're coming along. But him getting a full year last year and being a pretty intelligent dude, he runs the show for us and he gets everybody lined up, myself included sometimes. He's big-time for us."

Broncos' offensive snapshot

Category	No.	Ranking
Sacks allowed	26	T25th
QB hurries	55	T10th
QB knockdowns	66	T25th
False starts	10	T9th
Holding penalties	13	T23rd
Rush yds/carry	3.69	26th
Pass yds/attempt	6.49	21st

Source: STATS, NFL; through Week 11

Broncos center Paradis quickly goes from kid to vet

By Mike Klis

9News

May 10, 2016

It was this time last year that Matt Paradis was a backup center shaking nervously at the thought of It was this time last year that Matt Paradis was a backup center shaking nervously at the thought of hiking the ball to Peyton Manning.

A year later, Manning is gone and so are many of Paradis' offensive line mates from the Denver Broncos' Super Bowl 50 team.

Faster than dogs age, Paradis has gone from kid center to senior member of the Broncos' offensive line.

"Just looking back from my rookie year," Paradis said, referring to the 2014 season he spent on the Broncos' practice squad, "it's just me and (Michael) Schofield, the only guys back from that year that have been here for that long. So over the last couple years there's been a lot of turnover so we've got to build that cohesion and unity."

For the first time in 2016, the Broncos gathered as a full unit Monday. The veterans have been around the past month, and the 30 rookies spent last weekend getting oriented while the vets weren't around, so this is the first week the entire team is participating as one.

Paradis, the only Bronco who played every offensive snap last season, has been practicing with the first-time line against air -- there is no defense vs. offense in Phase II of the offseason -- with Russell Okung at left tackle, Max Garcia at left guard, Ty Sambrailo at right guard and Donald Stephenson at right tackle.

Once there's contact during OTAs later this month, Okung and Sambrailo will stand down to continue recovering from their respective shoulder surgeries. At that point, Schofield, a right tackle last year, is expected to get reps at left tackle and the likes of Sam Brenner and Dillon Day could get reps at right guard.

Paxton Lynch will have to wait before he gets to take a snap from Paradis. The first-round rookie quarterback spent much of practice Monday observing Mark Sanchez and Trevor Siemian take most of the snaps.

There is plenty of time for Lynch to catch up but for now he is way behind. From tackle to tackle, everybody is behind Paradis' knowledge of the offense.

Following his rookie season, Paradis spent most of the 2015 offseason working behind veteran center Gino Gradkowski. It wasn't until the second week of August that Paradis became the Broncos' No. 1 center.

He stayed there through the Broncos' Super Bowl 50 victory against Carolina. Three of his fellow starting blockers in that final game -- Ryan Harris, Evan Mathis and Louis Vasquez -- are gone. And Schofield, the Broncos' starting right tackle for most of last season, will spend much of this offseason getting reps at left tackle in hopes he can become the game-day swing tackle behind Okung at left tackle and Stephenson or Sambrailo at right tackle.

That leaves Paradis as the anchor in the middle.

“I’m very excited about this group we’ve got,” Paradis said. “A lot of smart guys, athletic guys. And the guys are going to work hard. It’s hard to give you an exact (percentage) how (much) better we’re going to be but I think we will be better.”

Broncos center Matt Paradis now the mainstay on the O-line

By Pat Graham
Associated Press
May 10, 2016

To his left, Denver Broncos center Matt Paradis will see some new faces. To his right, more new faces. Even his quarterback will be different.

Those are a lot of changes for a player who's started only one season and now is the mainstay on the offensive line.

"It feels weird," Paradis said. "It's weird being the vet."

So let the bonding begin promptly. Paradis and the offensive line have already gone to a Colorado Rockies baseball game with quarterback Mark Sanchez, who's stepping in for a retired Peyton Manning and a departed Brock Osweiler. Those are just the sort of chemistry-building excursions necessary to fortify a reshuffled line.

"But we're ahead of where you'd think we would be," Paradis said.

Ever so quietly, Paradis had a productive year for the Super Bowl champion Broncos as he took every offensive snap. What's more, he allowed only one sack and drew just one penalty for a false start.

Given all the attrition and additions in the offseason, the line heading into training camp may look something like this: Russell Okung at left tackle, Ty Sambrailo at left guard, Paradis under center, Max Garcia at right guard — he started a handful of games at guard last season — and Donald Stephenson at right tackle.

That figures to be a lot of protection for Sanchez, Trevor Siemian or rookie Paxton Lynch.

Although, it's going to take some getting used to the cadence of someone other than Manning.

"I mean, obviously, Peyton was one of the best to ever play the game," said the 6-foot-3, 300-pound Paradis, who was a sixth-round pick in 2014 out of Boise State. "So there are differences. There are differences between every quarterback. There's nothing too special for us. We're snapping and blocking our assignments either way."

Paradis is a laid-back lineman. Case in point: While some of the Broncos celebrated the Super Bowl by making the rounds of talk shows — and others earned spots in dancing competitions (Von Miller) — Paradis said his most elaborate plan was returning to his hometown of Council, Idaho, to shake some hands.

That's simply his style.

"He's quiet, a quiet leader," offensive coordinator Rick Dennison said in January.

He's drawn some comparisons to longtime Broncos center and Ring of Famer Tom Nalen, who snapped it to Hall of Fame QB turned team executive John Elway.

"Tommy was an exceptional football player, having coached him," Dennison said. "(Paradis) has got a long way to go to step into those shoes, but he has some of those traits. We're hoping that he'll keep progressing."

Around this time a year ago, Denver's O-line suffered a blow when Ryan Clady tore his ACL in offseason training activities. During the season, Sambrailo hurt his shoulder. The Broncos searched all season for some consistency on the offensive line.

"I'm very excited about this group we've got. A lot of smart guys, athletic guys," said Paradis, who played for the league's rookie minimum salary of \$435,000 last year and also was the top earner (\$391,648) through the league's performance-based pay program. "Guys who are going to work hard. It's hard to give you an exact (example) how better we're going to be, but I think we will be better."

Sanchez certainly enjoys the vibe with his new team.

"These guys are fun to be around and they love football, that's for sure," said Sanchez, who took the linemen to a Rockies game in late April. "Everybody really knows what to do, so just fall in line and follow the guys around you. That's encouraging."

This is a team that was credited with 411 rushes in the regular season and that threw it another 606 times. Expect even more running plays this season, especially with the return of C.J. Anderson and Ronnie Hillman, along with the arrival of rookie Devontae Booker.

"We're going to run the ball," Paradis said. "That's our focus."

Matt Paradis not lost at center for Denver Broncos

By Troy Renck

Denver Post

February 5, 2016

Mike Paradis dropped off his oldest son John at Council Idaho High School for freshman football practice. Matt, a fourth-grader, stared out the window of his parents' truck.

"I can't wait until I am old enough to play," Matt said.

"Why?" Dad asked.

"I can't wait to hit somebody," Matt blurted.

Matt Paradis became a football player before he played football. Big when he was small, Paradis took to the game, loving the contact and the science of the sport. When Peyton Manning takes the first snap of Super Bowl 50, he will be the center of attention. But, the Broncos center deserves some attention.

On a line besieged by criticism, Paradis has served as a steady, trusted force. He is the only player on the Broncos' offense to play every snap this season, showing toughness through a knee injury and an alarmingly high football IQ while teaming with Manning, the sport's most demanding quarterback.

"It's my job," said Paradis, who faces a critical matchup with Carolina defensive tackle Star Lotulelei. "It's what I am supposed to do."

Paradis looks like a catcher who outgrew his equipment. At 6-foot-3, he is squatty with oak-tree thick legs. He is welcoming, but succinct. Work doesn't wait. There's always something to do, something more he can do. Such is life in the country.

The Paradis family — Mike, wife Janice, sons John, Ben and Matt and sister Liz — owns a ranch with 115 cows. The kids were active on the property, electing to take evening kindergarten classes to help out. At age 4, Matt would stand in the driver's seat of the GMC flat bed pickup and steer with it in four-wheel low as dad forked hay to the cows.

"It was only a couple of miles per hour," Matt said, smiling. "There's no days off on the ranch."

Matt embraced the lifestyle, the responsibility. But as he grew older, football became a bigger part of his life. He earned 1A high school player of the year honors in 2008.

"Yeah, but it was eight man-football," cracked Broncos left tackle Ryan Harris. "Eight men and three cows."

Paradis long wanted to attend powerhouse Boise State. He tore his left anterior cruciate ligament in his senior season. The injury left him mulling an offer from NAIA Rocky Mountain College. He walked on at Boise State as a defensive lineman.

His intensity and attention to detail — no wonder he and Manning have clicked — amazed coaches. He won scout team player of the year. Coach Chris Petersen would wander over to defensive drills, and

wonder how to get Paradis on the field. With some arm twisting, Paradis agreed to play center for the first time in his life.

He started his final two seasons. The Broncos drafted him in the sixth round in 2014. He didn't stick, landing instead on the practice squad. It seemed fitting. Offensive coordinator Rick Dennison said Paradis reminds him of Broncos Ring of Famer Tom Nalen, who began his career in identical fashion, as an underappreciated grinder.

Paradis quickly passed veteran center Gino Gradkowski on the depth chart in training camp. Of course, Paradis is a strong blocker. But at his position, leadership is required.

"I really enjoy playing with Matt," Manning said. "He really reminds me a lot of Jeff Saturday, the center that I played with in Indianapolis. He is smart. He is a student of the game. I think Matt is off to a great start in his career, Matt is a tough guy. He is a guy you like having in front of you. You know he is going to fight for you."

The Paradis family will be at Levi's Stadium for the Super Bowl on Sunday, making the long drive from Council. A friend can feed the cows.

"I remember watching the first Super Bowl in 1967, and I have watched every one since," Matt's dad said. "I never thought in my wildest dreams I would attend one and watch my son play. It doesn't seem real. We are so proud of him."

Paradis has been the one constant in Broncos' fluid O-line

By Arnie Stapleton
Associated Press
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The Broncos' offensive line has resembled both a carousel and a turnstile. The only constant has been center Matt Paradis, who has played every snap this season.

"He's the rock," left tackle Ryan Harris said of his line mate who was cut in camp as a rookie and spent all of last season toiling on Denver's practice squad for a coaching staff that was loathe to give young O-linemen an opportunity.

Before that, he was a walk-on at Boise State after playing eight-man football at Council High School in Idaho, where he only got a breather on kickoffs.

"I think he played more football games against cows than humans when he first started out," cracked Harris. "But he's found a way to adapt and change his game."

Coach Gary Kubiak's philosophy of bridging the gap between the starters and backups by giving the second-stringers more snaps in the offseason paid off in a big way for Paradis. Once he got the chance, he never came out, supplanting free agent acquisition Gino Gradkowski in training camp.

Paradis snapped on every one of Denver's 1,108 offensive plays this season and all 73 possible special teams snaps.

That proved a godsend for a line that lost two left tackles to IR, rotated its right tackles at times and plugged in rookie Max Garcia for both Evan Mathis and Louis Vasquez with the Pro Bowl guards beset by nagging injuries all season.

"The most impressive thing is just his work ethic," Harris said. "He works just as hard as any guy on this team and the way he works, you'd think he'd been a pro for five, six years. But I just know being at tackle and being his line mate, his confidence and his communications are in another realm from the beginning of the year.

"And that's a big reason we've started to pick up the run game because he's been doing such a good job of directing the rest of us what to do."

The Broncos hit the playoffs on a roll offensively, having rushed for a season-best 210 yards against San Diego in Week 17. Peyton Manning's left foot is finally healthy enough for him to line up under center rather than in the shotgun all the time, which opens up the ground game and the play-action opportunities for Denver.

The soft-spoken center has snapped to all three of his quarterbacks in games this year and he'll be working with Manning again when the top-seeded Broncos (12-4) host the Pittsburgh Steelers (11-6) in the AFC divisional playoff round Sunday.

"I'm just trying to do my job," Paradis said. "I mean, just trying to stay healthy and do my job. It's been a lot more fun getting to play compared to last year."

Offensive coordinator Rick Dennison said Paradis' rise from bottom rung on the roster to anchor of the O-line hasn't been a surprise.

"His mannerisms and the way he goes about the game is not unlike some guys that have been successful in this building and in this scheme," Dennison said. "He's quiet, a quiet leader, has strong hands and then coordinates people up front. Not really that surprised and excited how much more he can get better."

Paradis has the look of a player who could anchor the position for years to come, much like retired star Tom Nalen did during the previous incarnation of the Broncos' zone-blocking scheme.

"Tommy was an exceptional football player, having coached him. He's got a long way to go to step into those shoes, but he has some of those traits," Dennis said.

Paradis might have languished on the scout team last year, but he knows all about stamina and staying on the field. In high school, he only sat out kickoffs. Otherwise, he played offensive guard and defensive tackle.

"So, it's a lot of plays. But I don't really think about it," Paradis said. "I just play football."

That's become his mantra.

"Just play football, man," Paradis concurred, finally cracking a hint of a smile. "That's what we're here to do."

Broncos center Paradis did not have typical NFL journey

By Mike Klis

9 News

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Players say all the time they got where they were through hard work.

They don't know hard work. Try growing up on a cattle ranch in rural Idaho like Broncos center Matt Paradis did.

Why in his day, he was feeding cows and driving the family farm truck from the age of kindergarten. No wonder the Broncos center was the only player on both sides of the ball to play every snap this year.

"We started chores when we were 5 years old, every one of us, me and my siblings, when we would start kindergarten you could pick the AM or PM session," Paradis said. "I don't know how it works in Colorado but in Idaho you do AM or PM.

"Every one of us would do the PM session and so in the mornings in the winter we'd go help our dad feed cows. We'd go drive the vehicle to feed the cows so he would have someone to help and then we'd go to kindergarten after the (livestock) pack."

Paradis played 8-man football for Council High School and was discovered through the three Boise State football camps he attended prior to his sophomore, junior and senior seasons. At the time he was a defensive end.

None of the Boise State Broncos coaches knew who Paradis was. They did start noticing how he was whipping on some of their recruits.

"And so ... the defensive line coach at the time, he pulled me aside and said, "Who are you?" Paradis said. "He said you need to go over there and talk to coach Harsin who's their head coach now and was the offensive coordinator at the time who recruited Idaho so that's how it all worked out."

It's a bad idea to give ax to Broncos center Matt Paradis

By Woody Paige

DenverPost.com

August 29, 2015

A year ago today, Matt Paradis was cut by Broncos Planet.

Today, he is the center of their universe.

"What a crazy ride I've had in football," Matt says.

Since Paradis showed up at Broncos camp last summer as a dicey sixth-round draft choice, he has been a red-haired, Paul Bunyan-sized mystery man. Who knew?

In the seventh grade, Paradis was the backup quarterback for Council (Idaho) Junior High.

"Mostly, I ran the quarterback sneak," he said.

He grew out of the position and into a lumberjack.

As a senior at Council High, Paradis, a defensive tackle and offensive guard, was selected the top eight-man football player in the state — despite tearing his ACL in practice before the championship game.

"The surgery was postponed," he said. "The doctor put a brace on my knee, and I played."

The Lumberjacks won.

Paradis received no football scholarship offers.

"Eight-man football, small town (population 839, counting crows), wrecked knee," he said. "I wasn't recruited. I decided not to attend college. I was going to work for my father."

Parents Michael and Janice Paradis own a cattle ranch (300 acres, 150 cows).

Football isn't that tough. When Matt was in kindergarten as the youngest of four children, his job every dawn was to drive the family's 1957 flatbed pickup while his father threw hay bales off the back. A 5-year-old kid can't reach the gas and break pedals.

"My dad put the car in second gear, made it roll, jumped out and got on the back," he said. "I stood on the seat and held the steering wheel."

Ultimately, Boise State coaches told Matt he could be a walk-on defensive lineman and a grayshirt while rehabilitating.

He earned an academic scholarship and selection as Boise State's best scout-team player. A season later he was asked (ordered?) to switch to center. Paradis started 26 straight games and was named all-Mountain West and selected for the national Hampshire Honor Society team.

The Broncos took a chance on Paradis. Previously the organization had drafted six Boise State players, including another offensive lineman No. 1 in 2008. Tackle Ryan Clady turned into a Pro Bowler.

Paradis was cut at the end of the 2014 camp, then signed a few days later to the practice squad, on which he spent the entire season — forgotten.

"The coaches thought enough to keep me around, and I just kept grinding and hoping," he told me Friday.

If he failed, Paradis would use his business economics degree to become a financial adviser.

The practice squad's other nine members picked Paradis to a mythical "Scout Team Pro Bowl."

"It was their idea of a joke," he said.

Paradis is funny, personable, intelligent, humble, strong as Babe the Blue Ox and a natural leader.

However, in the Broncos' 2015 media guide, Matt was listed in the back of the profile section with "other players." Just a guy (JAG). The Broncos had acquired veteran center Gino Gradkowski from Baltimore.

Matt might as well have been a 300-pound backup QB.

But Paradis wasn't disillusioned or delusional.

"I think I really developed as a player last year. It was like a redshirt year," he said. "This offseason I tried to soak up information and concentrate on technique, footwork, the new blocking schemes and calls, being more forceful. I think my consistency and work ethic must have gotten the coaches' attention. I appreciate their belief in me."

In camp Matt became the center of attention. He supplanted Gradkowski as No. 1 on the depth chart and started the first two exhibitions with rookies Max Garcia at left guard and Ty Sambrailo at left tackle.

"We bonded and helped each other out," he said.

Then, suddenly and shockingly on Tuesday, the Broncos signed free agent Evan Mathis, who was graded by Pro Football Focus in 2013 as the best in the league at left guard.

The center now is flanked by Mathis and another former Pro Bowler — Louis Vasquez. Those two have combined to play exactly 200 NFL games. Paradis has zero.

"Incredible," Matt says. "I'm very lucky. I couldn't even imagine starting and being surrounded by two great guards. I've got to work even harder to stay with them."

Could the interior offensive linemen — Mathis, Vasquez and Paradis — be the Broncos' MVPs? A year from today The Council Kid could be All-World, too.

Broncos notebook: From scout team to Paradis

By Mike Klis

9news Sports

August 18, 2015

Matt Paradis was discovered while playing on the Denver Broncos' practice squad.

That's where new Broncos head coach Gary Kubiak found him, anyway. Soon after he got the new gig, Kubiak was evaluating his own roster during the offseason and Paradis' effort and performances well away from game day kept jumping off the film.

Today, Paradis is the Broncos' first-string center. Snapping to Peyton Manning.

Let that be a lesson to all you youngsters out there. You never know when somebody's going to be watching.

"The practice squad is a lot like redshirting in college," Paradis said. "You get to go against the best defensive players every play. And I'd spend more time with those players who were playing last year learning the ins and outs of offense.

"It's a chance to work on your craft for a year and not have to worry about the games. You'd rather be playing in the games, don't get me wrong. But it is an opportunity if you take it that way. It is hard to take it that way."

Paradis continues to catch Kubiak's attention. This time it was while the coach was watching film of the Broncos' preseason game last Friday at Seattle. Paradis was in the middle of an offensive line that helped quarterback Brock Osweiler and the Broncos amass 240 yards in total offense and 19 points in the first half.

"The first thing that impressed me with the first group was Matt Paradis running the group," Kubiak said. "He has to be a quarterback and I know that he has been here a year, but let's remember that he's really a rookie in a lot of ways, too. I liked the way he ran the group. We played extremely hard, we made mistakes, but then we came back to make the next play. I just like our effort and I think that if Matt can hold the group together, we can continue to grow, which is going to be the key."

Paradis will be snapping to first-string quarterback Peyton Manning on Saturday in the Broncos' second preseason game at Houston. Manning is an 18-year player who has five MVP awards and dozens of commercials.

Doesn't Paradis feel a tad intimidated in Manning's presence?

"There's a little bit right off the bat," Paradis said. "But you've got to put that behind me and say it's just football. It doesn't matter who's on the field, it's still just football and play my game."

Lanning factor

It took the Broncos two waiver claims but they finally got their man in punter/kickoff specialist Spencer Lanning.

After serving as the Cleveland Browns punter the previous two seasons, Lanning was waived in June after the team acquired Andy Lee in a trade from San Francisco.

"I was told they had the ability to bring in an All Pro punter and that's what they did," Lanning said. "It wasn't anything directly against me. I love the city, I loved playing for those guys I have a ton of respect for those coaches. It's always going to special to me because that's home. On to bigger and better things and I'm very excited about the opportunity here."

The Broncos put a claim in on Lanning when he was waived by Cleveland in June, but he was awarded instead to Tampa Bay, which had a worse record last season than Denver.

When Tampa Bay waived Lanning last week, the Broncos put in another claim. This time they got him.

Lanning is not here because the Broncos are disappointed with current punter Britton Colquitt. Lanning is here because he can kick off better than placekicker Connor Barth. The Broncos only want to carry two kickers – a punter and a placekicker with one of them handling the kickoff duties.

If Brandon McManus – the strongest of the kickoff specialists – can beat out Barth for the placekicker job, then Colquitt will probably be the Broncos' punter for a sixth season. If Barth is the placekicker, then Lanning has a shot to make the team as a punter and kickoff specialist.

"It's something I've always had in my back pocket," Lanning said of kicking off. "But every team I've ever been on has had had one. (Cleveland's former kicker) Billy Cundiff is probably one of the top 5 in the league so it was something I never needed to do."

Bronco Bits

Defensive end Kenny Anunike was held out of practice Tuesday because of a swollen knee. Kubiak said Anunike – who shined in the Broncos' preseason win last week in Seattle -- should return to practice Wednesday. ...

Jordan Norwood not only looks like the Broncos' top slot receiver, he took some handoffs from Peyton Manning and had a couple nice runs. "He's very smart," said Kubiak, who loves smart players. "Today, we actually did some things with him moving him in the backfield and stuff, but I think that Jordan can do a lot of things. We'll see. I'd like him to be able to return for us. He got a couple last week. They weren't very good opportunities, but hopefully we'll get him some more." ...

Among the special guests watching practice Tuesday were Hall of Fame tight end Shannon Sharpe, former receiver Rod Smith and former Colorado Rockies star Todd Helton, who was accompanied by current Rockies pitchers David Hale and Chris Rushin. Hale was watching football practice hours before he was come off the disabled list and start Tuesday night against the Washington Nationals at Coors Field.