

Broncos' Max Garcia named NFLPA's Week 4 Community MVP

By Nicki Jhabvala
The Denver Post
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Broncos guard Max Garcia was named the NFL Players Association's Week 4 Community MVP for his ongoing relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

Garcia and his family in Atlanta coordinated a collection drive for canned goods and necessities for those affected by the hurricane, which hit the Puerto Rico on Sept. 20 and left dozens dead and the island without power.

Garcia had family living in Puerto Rico when the category 4 storm hit and he went days without being able to contact them. His grandfather, who had been residing in a nursing home, died a few days later.

To continue to provide relief to Puerto Rico, Garcia established his own website — maxgarciaphilanthropy.com — to accept donations and continue to raise awareness.

"I'm very humbled to receive this week's NFLPA Community MVP," Garcia said via the NFLPA's site. "After a catastrophic hurricane stormed through my mother's homeland, raising awareness on the disaster it left was crucial for me. Unfortunately, during the aftermath of the hurricane, my grandfather Don Felix Romero passed away — making my desire to help in the relief efforts all that more urgent."

In addition to his Hurricane Maria relief efforts, Garcia has helped to bring attention to sex trafficking. He and his mother joined other NFL players on a trip to the Dominican Republic to meet with victims of sexual exploitation.

Garcia recently told of his trip in a sit-down interview as part of CNN's Freedom Project.

The NFLPA will make a \$10,000 donation to Garcia's foundation or charity of choice, as well as an in-kind donation to him on behalf of Delta Private Jets. The honor also makes Garcia and the rest of the weekly community MVPs eligible for the Byron Whizzer White Award.

Broncos' Max Garcia, who has family in Puerto Rico, helping with Hurricane Maria relief efforts

By Nicki Jhabvala
The Denver Post
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As Broncos guard Max Garcia prepares to face the Oakland Raiders on Sunday, his family and friends in Atlanta will be gathering to accept donations of canned goods and supplies for those devastated by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

Garcia has family members living in Puerto Rico — an uncle and his wife, and a great-great-aunt. For days after the hurricane, as Puerto Rico lost power and cellphone service, Garcia and his family in the continental U.S. were unable to contact their family in Puerto Rico to determine if they were OK.

“It wasn’t really about us trying to locate them. It was them being able to get a phone line and being able to call,” Garcia said. “It took a few days to hear back from my uncle, and my uncle is taking care of my grandfather who is in a nursing home. So we didn’t know what was going on there. The nursing home wasn’t able to call us back.

“Thankfully, after a few days he was able to contact us.”

In a social media message posted Saturday afternoon, Garcia announced his grandfather died in his sleep.

The category 4 storm ravaged Puerto Rico on Sept. 20 and left more than a dozen dead, with the toll continuing to rise. Only a limited number of hospitals have power or are relying on generators, exacerbating the crisis. Fuel is scarce, power could be out for months in some areas, and residents have had a difficult time trying to fly off the island because of damage to the Federal Aviation Administration’s radar.

Garcia’s family and friends in Atlanta partnered with a local Puerto Rican restaurant to try to bring some relief to those in need.

“My mom has always been heavily involved in the community, so is my aunt, who owns a Puerto Rican dance company,” Garcia said. “We just felt like we should do something as a family and this is what we saw as a great opportunity. We’re just hoping to get a lot of support and help. A lot of people have been hitting me up already.”

The drive will be held at 3781 Presidential Parkway in Atlanta from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. Necessities including medicine, first-aid kits, water, cots and sleeping bags, diapers and baby formula, pet food, sheets and towels will be accepted. Trucks are on hand to deliver the goods to a Delta Cargo plane that is scheduled to fly to Puerto Rico on Monday.

The NFL has also joined the Hurricane Maria relief efforts. During its “Thursday Night Football” broadcast on CBS and NFL Network, the league will include messages to urge fans to donate to American Red Cross Hurricane Relief.

The New York Giants, New York Jets, Miami Dolphins and NFL Foundation are also donating a combined \$200,000 to American Red Cross. And the NFL will match donations of up to \$50,000 to the Miami and Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief Campaign of Dolphins linebacker Kiko Alonso. The league earlier donated \$1 million to Hurricane Irma relief efforts in Florida and the Caribbean.

Max Garcia learned his offensive leadership from Louis Vasquez

By Malika Rose Andrews
Denver Post
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Max Garcia isn't a big talker on the field. He is quiet when he takes his place and waits for the ball to be snapped. Then, he springs into action, grabbing his opponent by the chest and holding him there. After the play is over, while other players whoop and holler, he gives some subtle high fives and gets back in line for the next drill.

That's something he learned from former Broncos veteran guard Louis Vasquez. To Garcia, Vasquez was more than a teammate.

"Lou kind of just took me under his wing," Garcia said. "He was like a big brother to me."

In his rookie season with the Broncos, Garcia looked up to Vasquez and sought his guidance. He recalls days when Vasquez would drag him out of the locker room before practice to do hands work and practice pass protection.

He still calls Vasquez almost every day.

"I learned a lot from his game," Garcia said. "(I learned) how to be patient in a pass set and how to be aggressive in the run game. I really try to model my game after him, but have my own spin on it."

Vasquez, who joined the Broncos in 2013, was released in early March along with long snapper Aaron Brewer and tight end Owen Daniels. He had one year left on his contract at the time of his release.

Last season, Garcia often switched between playing left guard and right guard. In college, he played center. And now, with Vasquez gone, Garcia is expected to fill Vasquez's spot in the Broncos' starting lineup.

Offensive coordinator Rick Dennison said he thinks having Garcia in one spot will help him improve, and even with the moving around, he is a player who you don't notice because he's doing his job.

That's how Garcia wants to be seen: as a leader by example.

"I know that I do have guys watching me all the time," Garcia said. "I really just want to be that guy for the team...the guy the coaches are confident in."

"I just like to go out there and do my job and just set the tone for us as an offensive line unit and just be a guy that my teammates want to follow."

For Garcia, it's not extra pressure to be a leader, he said it's his duty to make sure that he is giving back to his team and trying to maximize his teammates' potential, not just his own.

Vasquez and Garcia are living the American (football) dream

By Carlos A. Nava

ESPN.com

February 4, 2016

Louis Vasquez knows the chances of a Latino playing in one Super Bowl are slim, for various reasons. But to be a Latino player in the Super Bowl twice in three years is so rare that the odds are virtually impossible. Yet on Sunday, the Denver Broncos offensive lineman will contest the NFL's championship game for the second time in three seasons, when his team faces the Carolina Panthers.

"I'm very proud to represent our people in a Super Bowl," said Vasquez. "We're not many Latinos here in the NFL, so to be one of them and to have the opportunity to play in the Super Bowl sometimes feels like a dream."

Like many Hispanics in the United States, Vasquez grew up in a football culture, but it was football where feet passed a round ball. Vasquez, who is in his seventh season in the NFL, grew up in a Mexican family in Texarkana, Texas, a town located about 180 miles northeast of Dallas. He began playing soccer from a young age, but soon realized that it was difficult for him to progress. It was at school that he became convinced that he might be better off playing American football.

"I was always very big," recalls the 28-year-old Vasquez, who stands 6'5" and weighs 335 pounds. "I started playing and did well... I went to Texas Tech. Now here I am a few days away from playing in another Super Bowl and hoping to win a ring."

Vasquez reasoned that his second experience in the big game should be slightly easier than the first.

"Now I know what to expect," he explained. "It'll be a little easier to focus on my job. I think I'm better prepared to win the game."

He said one of the things he learned in the week before the 2014 Super Bowl they lost against the Seattle Seahawks was to live in the moment and forget everything going on around the game.

"I can do more to limit my distractions this time around," Vasquez explained. "I have to be ready to do my job, which is to keep Peyton [Manning, the Broncos quarterback] out of trouble."

Vasquez said it was a privilege to represent his community in the guard position, of which there are only a handful of Latinos in the NFL.

Coincidentally, the Broncos have another Latino guard, a backup who alternates with Vasquez on the offensive line. Max Garcia, of Puerto Rican and Mexican heritage, is a rookie who was drafted by Denver in the fourth round of the 2015 NFL draft.

Like Vasquez, Garcia also started his career in soccer, before realizing that he was destined for the "other" football -- the tackling kind.

"As a kid, I was a goalkeeper," said Garcia. "My dad wanted me to be a footballer, but in truth I was really bad. Because I was big and tall, I realized that things might go better for me if I played American football."

Playing opportunities were limited during the regular season for the 6'4", 309-pound Garcia. He was active in all 16 games, but only played in five.

"Sometimes I think it's a dream to be here," he said. "To play alongside Peyton, with DeMarcus Ware... sometimes I have to pinch myself to see if this is real... it seems like only yesterday I was still in college [at Florida] and now I'm close to being in a Super Bowl."

Garcia, Vasquez and the rest of the Broncos were given the day off Tuesday. Coach Gary Kubiak even allowed them to leave the team hotel to attend to personal matters or simply explore the area. On Wednesday, preparations continued in an attempt to win the third championship in franchise history.

"We have already done the bulk of the work during the year," said Garcia. "The guys who have already been here just recommended we stay focused and enjoy the moment."

Enjoyment is important when the opportunity for the moment is so rare.

Rookie Max Garcia rebounds, regains starting job he lost in training camp

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
December 4, 2015

When the Denver Broncos selected Max Garcia in the fourth round of the 2015 draft, coach Gary Kubiak thought Garcia was a smart player who would arrive to the NFL as a power blocker in the run game with the potential to develop into a starter at either guard or center.

What Kubiak and the Broncos have learned since (and is what they had hoped), is Garcia will put in the work and rebound from disappointment. The Broncos took a starting job away from Garcia as training camp drew to a close, and now as the Broncos begin their stretch run, Garcia has worked his way into position to get it back.

"He's worked hard," Kubiak said. "He had his turn, we took it away, it came back and he has taken advantage of it, so we just need to keep going."

Garcia was part of the youth movement the Broncos used in the offensive line through virtually all of training camp, a lineup that included Garcia, a rookie, at left guard, a rookie at left tackle (Ty Sambrailo) and Matt Paradis, who spent his rookie year with the Broncos in '14 on the team's practice squad, at center. The Broncos liked what Garcia showed in flashes, but there was some concern about him in pass protection as August drew to a close. The Broncos were working through the difficulties in constructing an offense that fit quarterback Peyton Manning and still included the things Kubiak wanted as well.

So, Evan Mathis was signed in late August and was the team's starter at left guard in the regular-season opener. But injuries to Mathis, (first hamstring and now an ankle), and right guard Louis Vasquez (some knee trouble a recent groin injury), have put Garcia squarely back in the mix.

He has played both guard spots in the same game, and figures to start his second consecutive game Sunday in San Diego.

Vasquez and Mathis practiced on Friday, but they were limited at times during the week as Vasquez did not practice Wednesday.

"I'm just impressed with Max in general," Kubiak said. "He's very young. That's a big, big stage for him. We have a lot of young players being called upon to play well for this football team to get it to where it wants to go. I think that we're all just excited for him, because he's worked so hard and put himself in position and we'll see. If Max continues to play at a high level, he's going to continue to get a lot of reps out there, so far so good."

Following Thursday's practice Vasquez, who was an All-Pro selection for the Broncos in 2013, spent time with Garcia after practice going over several pass-protection techniques. Kubiak said Vasquez and Mathis have helped Garcia along in recent weeks.

"Those young and smart guys, they watch these veterans," Kubiak said. "I mean, Evan is a great player and he's been very successful in this league. If you're a young player -- kind of like Brock (Osweiler) watching Peyton for all of this period of time. There's no doubt in my mind that some of the things that

he's done these last two weeks is because of his ability to sit there and watch a great one do it. I think that Max has learned from Lou, learned from Evan."

Even with the injury issues the Broncos have had along the offensive line, the team's run game continues to come around with at least 150 yards rushing in four of the past six games, and at least 170 in each of the past two.

For his part, Garcia has continued to say "I just want to take ownership of my assignments, get that done, that's my starting point and really concentrate on my techniques being right. No excuses, I have to do things right. I go in wherever they ask me to go in."

Through My Eyes: Max Garcia makes first NFL start

By Max Garcia

DenverBroncos.com

December 4, 2015

Before every game, I envision myself making the blocks; envision the plays that are going to be called.

We have what's called the first 15 plays, so I study those and just visualize it, the kind of defense that they're going to play. I visualize what's the worst thing that can happen on this play. How can I stop this from happening, or how can I react to that? How can I counter that move that defensive lineman's going to make, or the blitz that the defense is going to run? I kind of just envision those types of scenarios for every one of those 15 plays.

Heading into the Patriots game I knew for the first time this season, I was going to start. I knew I was going to play the whole game.

I was a little bit nervous. But I've been playing a lot this season, so I wasn't too rattled. There's always a nervous excitement. It doesn't matter whether I'm starting or not. I'm always nervous, excited for the game.

Our line has gone through some hardships and injuries this season, but it has made the older guys know they can count on me. After the game Ryan Harris said to me, "I was kind of nervous. I didn't know how you were going to be out there, but I'm totally comfortable playing next to you now." That was very encouraging to hear from him.

Then in the first quarter, Louis Vasquez went down.

When I went over to right guard after Lou went down, I thought, My team needs me. If there's ever a time that my team has ever needed me, it's right now.

There's no room to be a rookie. There's no time to make mistakes. The time is now. In the locker room we always say, "This is it." That's what I was saying in my head. This is it.

I just went out there and played free. Free from being worried about making mistakes. Free from expectations.

I feel like playing free and just going out there and having fun is the best way to play. That's really what was going through my head. Like, this is the time, and I just need to go out there and ball.

Heading into the half we were down by a touchdown. Sometimes during a game, you kind of have that feeling like, Aw man, we might not win this game. But that wasn't the case on Sunday. When we went back to the locker room, I felt like everyone believed that we were going to win the game. We were down, but losing was the last thing in our head.

In the second half, things started to click and we were able to fight back to get the lead, but then they scored and we were headed to overtime.

The defense had a big stop, we got the ball and I knew we had to do something there.

Then it was all a blur.

It was third-and-1 and Brock Osweiler got the ball to running back C.J. Anderson. I was trying to just gain on the backside, trying to shield my guy off and I was just running as fast as I could.

I was trying not to fall on the snow out there and C.J. bends the corner, I see Ryan and Matt -- they got two huge cut blocks that spring C.J. and then the last guy, he just shakes off the defender and then I'm just running behind him as fast as I can.

Everything just felt like it was happening in slow motion. The game moves fast, but everything is going in slow motion. Just running into the end zone with him was crazy.

That was probably the most excited I had ever seen the locker room this year. A lot of guys with huge smiles on their faces. I was so excited just yelling with the fans. It was a good time.

Most importantly, I think the game was a huge confidence booster for me, knowing that I can play at this level, I can succeed at this level.

I still have a lot strides to make and a lot of things to overcome in my game play. I've got a lot of work to do. That game was a huge confidence booster, but I can't settle on my success in the past, I've got to keep moving forward. That being said, I'm excited for this Sunday against the Chargers.

Doesn't matter how much I play, I'll play like it's my last time out.

Max Garcia poised to be next new face in lineup for Broncos' offense

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

November 27, 2015

What goes around does come around sometimes.

As the Denver Broncos prepared this week for their Sunday night matchup against the New England Patriots, they inched closer to the youthful look on the offensive line they sported for much of training camp. Rookie Max Garcia could make his first NFL start, at left guard, if Evan Mathis is not ready to play because of an ankle injury.

Garcia, the Broncos' fourth-round pick in this year's draft, has worked with the starters for much of the past week. Mathis was a limited participant in Friday's practice after being held out both Wednesday and Thursday. Unless Mathis shows significant progress, Garcia will be in the lineup against the Patriots.

The Broncos' current plan is to work Mathis out before the game to gauge his readiness, but coach Gary Kubiak believes Garcia is ready to step in.

"I have a lot of confidence in him, he's a lot like Brock (Osweiler) in a lot of ways, he's been working real hard," Kubiak said Friday. "I know he's a first-year player but if you go back, if you remember, there was a time when he was a starter for us near the end of camp."

Garcia was indeed part of the team's youth movement in camp at left guard, with fellow rookie Ty Sambrailo at left tackle and Matt Paradis -- who spent his rookie year in 2014 on the Broncos' practice squad -- at center. Sambrailo, who is on injured reserve following shoulder surgery, started the first three games of the regular season, while Paradis is the only Broncos player on offense or defense who has played every snap this season.

The Broncos felt Garcia would start at some point but needed a little more seasoning, so they signed Mathis as training camp drew to a close. But Garcia has played more and more, even getting snaps at both guard spots in the same game, with a season-high 43 snaps against the Chiefs earlier the month.

"I've just tried to keep working on my technique and stay on my assignments," Garcia said. "I just want to keep building off any reps I get and make sure I can do what they need me to do wherever I go into the game at."

The Patriots are third in the league in sacks with 32, behind only the Broncos (34) and Panthers (33). New England's Chandler Jones is third in the league individually with 10.5 sacks.

"Max has had a good week," Kubiak said. "This would be a tough assignment to draw for his first start."

Rookie Max Garcia talks Broncos, heritage

By Jonathan Gonzalez

9 News

October 1, 2015

As part of Hispanic Heritage Month, 9NEWS sat down with Broncos rookie offensive lineman Max Garcia.

The 23-year-old is of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent, so we asked him what it means for him to be one of the few Latino football players in the league, while becoming a role model for the Hispanic community in Colorado and across the country.

Jonathan Gonzalez: Obviously, we're talking Hispanic Heritage Month, but before we get to that, have you taken this in? The fact that you're a Denver Bronco?

Max Garcia: You know, I try to everyday because sometimes I just get so caught up in the moment. Just get caught up in going to practice and watching film and doing things like that. I don't really realize the opportunity that I have in front of me and you know, what I am, who I am, you know, what I represent now. I have to take it in every day and just realize I am a Denver Bronco and I'm just so privileged to be so.

JG: We're talking Hispanic Heritage Month and being a Hispanic in the league -- there aren't actually a lot of them -- but the fanbase is huge. What is it like representing Hispanics and Latinos across the country as a Denver Bronco?

MG: Like you said, there's a huge fanbase and I didn't really realize that until I came out here. So, it's just something so awesome to be a part of, especially going out last week and celebrating Hispanic Heritage here at the stadium, and just seeing so many Latinos come out and just getting to interact with them, speak Spanish with them and just let them know that I do represent for the Latino community.

You know, it's something that I'm honored and privileged to be a part of. Back home in Norcross, I did a lot of things out of the community with my church especially, so it's just something that I am aware of and that I do have to take on that responsibility and just be a good ambassador for our community and things like that. It's something, like I said, I'm just honored and privileged to be a part of.

JG: What was it like seeing the Latino community at the stadium, meeting them first hand?

MG: Just made me realize there are a lot of kids out there, a lot of Latino kids out there that do enjoy watching football and just playing it. My two older brothers and my two older sisters -- we all grew up watching football. It's just what we did. No one forced us to. It's something we just started doing on our own and that just became a part of our family. I understand that happens to a lot of other Latino communities, a lot of Latino families just start watching football and just fall in love with it.

I can relate to them. I can see the thrill of it and just getting to know the game. My parents are still trying to learn the game as well, but like I said, it's just something that I'm privileged to be a part of.

JG: How would you say growing up Latino has influenced the kind of the man you have become today?

MG: My parents have always done manual labor. They've always just done a lot of hard work. My mom, she's been cleaning houses for 20-plus years. My father, he's done from construction to painting to car washing to mechanic -- all those things, and just kind of instilled that hard worker's mentality. Just bring a lunch pail, clock in, clock out and spend time with your family, so I understand all the hard work that was done before me to get to where I am now. I just feel like my parents really set a solid foundation for me, and I just kind of learned from them and that's what made me a hard worker as well.

JG: Hard work is what is needed to make that transition from the college game to pros. What have been some of the challenges for you so far, and what is your goal for your rookie season, what's your big goal?

MG: Some of the challenges I've seen so far -- just time management. I'm just so used to doing football and going straight to the books or doing football and going straight to community service or something like that, but now it's do football and you have your own free time. It's like what do you want to do outside of football? How do you want to manage that, you know? Whether it's watching film. Whether it's taking care of your body. Whether it's doing community service. That's on you, and I'm starting to get to pick up on that, like how do I want to spend my time? What's going to help me be better football player and also a better person, as well. So, I think that's probably the hardest thing right now -- learning to manage my time and just seeing how to allocate what I want to do and things like that.

JG: Rapid fire, you ready?

MG: Yeah.

JG: Favorite all-time Bronco.

MG: Terrell Davis.

JG: Why?

MG: I just think, what he did just running the ball was unbelievable, and that's probably one of the earliest football players I remember when I started watching football was T.D. I would just always hear his name on TV. So him and Elway are probably the first two players, in general, that I ever had known.

JG: Number one goal in the NFL?

MG: Definitely to be a Pro Bowler is something that I aspire to do. I just want to be the best of the best. Just to make my mark and it's one thing to get here, but it's another thing to get here and be even more elevated and just be in that elite group and that's something that I really strive to do.

JG: Something you'd love to say to Broncos fans in Spanish, because I hear you speak Spanish.

MG: Pues, gracias por todo el apoyo. Yo te amo. I love the community. Vamos a trabajar duro este temporada y ojala vamos a ir al Super Bowl, y ganar el Super Bowl.

JG: That's a good thing to say in Spanish or in any language. Max Garcia -- thank you so much.

MG: Thank you.

JG: Appreciate it.

Max Garcia: "Don't feel sorry for me"

By Mike Klis

9 News Sport

August 27, 2015

Whatever joy there may have been inside the Denver Broncos' locker room for the signing of Evan Mathis, it was tempered by the realization Max Garcia had lost his starting job.

"Don't feel sorry for me," said Garcia, whose days as the Broncos' No. 1 left guard are numbered until Mathis gets in shape. "I'm happy to be a part of this team. I'm content with the situation. I'm just going to keep striving to get better."

That type of maturity explains why Garcia almost pulled off the upset and became the starting left guard even though he is a rookie who wasn't drafted until the fourth round.

It wasn't Garcia so much as Broncos' general manager John Elway didn't want to stack three offensive linemen with zero NFL playing experience – rookie left tackle Ty Sambrailo, Garcia and center Matt Paradis – together in front of star quarterback Peyton Manning.

And the best blocker available to break up those baby Broncos was Mathis, an 11-year NFL veteran who is coming off back-to-back Pro Bowl appearances.

"We needed a little bit of experience, especially on that left side," Elway said. "Evan's able to bring that plus a Pro Bowl-caliber type player. ... Max has a tremendous career ahead of him. This has nothing to do with how Max was playing."

Keep in mind, the Broncos only gave Mathis a one-year deal. Garcia can get his job back next year. He had moved ahead of Ben Garland as the Broncos' top left guard in the second week of training camp.

Garcia started the first two preseason games at left guard and he'll be with the No. 1 unit Saturday against the San Francisco 49ers as Mathis probably won't play until the regular-season opener Sept. 13 against the Baltimore Ravens.

"It's part of the business, part of the game," Garcia told 9NEWS Thursday. "I feel like it's a good move for the team. I'm not going to take it personal by any means. I know the coaches have been impressed with me, they have confidence in me, they have trust in me. I think this is for the overall betterment of the team. It's a good move. I'm still going to prepare like I'm the guy like I've been doing."

Broncos Bits

Receiver Emmanuel Sanders will run routes with Manning on Friday and be available to practice on a full-time basis next week. Sanders has been sidelined the past three weeks with a hamstring injury.

Cornerbacks Chris Harris Jr. and Tony Carter continue to be plagued by tight hamstrings but they are expected to play Saturday against the 49ers.

Inside linebacker Danny Trevathan will be in for about 20 defensive plays Saturday, his first game action since suffering a fracture near the left kneecap for a second time last Dec. 14 at San Diego. "The emotions are going to show on game day," he said.

Rookie Max Garcia a key player to watch in preseason opener

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

August 13, 2015

Of the newest Denver Broncos lugging around high hopes, Max Garcia may have the biggest adjustment to make as he plows along the NFL learning curve.

Sure, Garcia had 37 starts in his 39 games combined at the University of Florida and University of Maryland. And he showed some versatility, starting games at left tackle, guard and center, including all 13 games at center for the Gators in 2014.

But right now the Broncos are asking Garcia to be a starter, at left guard, as part of a rather extreme makeover in the offensive line. And Garcia is being asked to play that position in an offense that doesn't look anything like the one he was in for the Gators, in front of a future Hall of Famer at quarterback for a team that has Super Bowl aspirations.

Garcia will get his first opportunity Friday night in the Broncos' preseason opener in Seattle.

"Max is up and down," Broncos coach Gary Kubiak said. "Max is very strong, heavy-handed, so he has a lot of plays on film that are highlights. You go, 'Whoa, look at that,' but he has a lot of plays on the film that need to be better ... good kid, played in a lot of big games. This stage isn't too big for him, but he has to learn to play against great players down in and down out."

After trying several combinations in the offensive line during their offseason program as well as the early days of training camp, the Broncos settled in, at least for the past week or so, on a look with Garcia at left guard, rookie Ty Sambrailo at left tackle, Matt Paradis at center, Louis Vasquez at right guard and Ryan Harris at right tackle.

Since Sambrailo and Garcia are rookies while Paradis spent his rookie year in 2014 on the Broncos' practice squad, that side of the team's offensive line has zero career NFL starts. The Broncos have been committed to Sambrailo's presence in the starting lineup, almost since the moment Ryan Clady suffered a season-ending ACL tear in late May.

But Garcia and Paradis will have to hold their depth chart ground in the coming weeks, including Friday night against the Seahawks, to start in the regular-season opener Sept. 13 against the Baltimore Ravens.

Kubiak and offensive coordinator Rick Dennison have each said they would be willing to make adjustments days before the opener, but the team would prefer to have things solidified. And if the current alignment fares well enough for the Broncos coaches to keep it together moving into next week, it would be a quality step toward some much-needed cohesiveness.

Garcia, too, knows he has to do his part in that equation.

“Just prove that I can be a consistent player ... just execute on every play; not having a great play then having a not-so-great play on the next,” Garcia said. “ ... Just getting to know how we all work together and continue to build that chemistry.”

Garcia's character, mindset shine through

Dave DeChant

DenverBroncos.com

May 2, 2015

Max Garcia knows that passive play doesn't have a place between the lines.

"When you're playing in the trenches, there's no room for a nice guy on the field," the Broncos' fourth-round pick said Saturday on a conference call with Denver media. "You've got to be mean, you've got to be aggressive.

"...But you don't have to take that with you off the field."

The DT-mauling interior lineman is just the opposite outside of football, offering his time and giving back to the community. As a senior at Florida, he was given the Gene Elleson Community Service Award for his off-the-field work.

"I'm just extremely blessed and extremely just like, proud to be in this position," Garcia said, "...so I wanted to give back.

"I like to make people smile and make somebody's day better, and that's kind of like the person that I am."

The sort of character Garcia displays as a person is consistent with what he shows as a player, whether studying his playbook or grinding through another practice. The rookie, who says much of his game "has to do with mental preparation," already has high expectations for when he arrives at Dove Valley.

"I just really want to go in and get the playbook and learn that as quickly as possible, as thoroughly as possible, and just be able to be kind of like a coach to the other young guys out there who are learning the playbook as well," Garcia said. "I want to be able to make calls...Peyton [Manning]'s going to be out there and he's not one for errors when he's out there."

The young lineman plans to earn his way the same way he did when joining the Gators as a transfer in 2012: Keeping his head down and working hard.

"That's kind of just who I am," Garcia said. "I just like to get work done and not really talk about it. I just let my actions speak for themselves."

How He Fits: Fourth-round C/G Max Garcia

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DenverBroncos.com
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In a stormy two years for the Florida Gators, Max Garcia was a steadying influence -- first on the left side of the offensive line at guard and tackle, and finally in 2014 as the starting center for the entire season.

Considering that Garcia didn't arrive in Gainesville until 2012 after transferring from Maryland, the fact that he emerged as a full-time starter by 2013 and a team captain as a senior spoke volumes about the impression he was able to make on teammates and coaches.

"I feel like I had the right mentality," Garcia said. "I came in and had to sit out (2012, per NCAA transfer rules) ... I went out with the right mentality that I was going to practice hard, even though I wasn't going to play on Saturday. I think I earned the respect of my teammates that way."

Garcia's leadership potential is only one of multiple reasons why the Broncos used their compensatory fourth-round pick on him. His positional versatility enhances his value; he could find a home at left guard if he doesn't settle in at center.

"I think I'm a great fit for the Broncos for what they do as far as zone blocking," Garcia said. "I feel like I can get up to that second level in combinations with the center and guard."

Which part of that combination he is, he doesn't know.

"I'm listed as a center/guard, so I can be anywhere between the two," Garcia said. "That's where I'm going to play at: wherever they want me, it doesn't matter."

Head Coach Gary Kubiak said that Garcia would begin his on-field work at right guard, behind Louis Vasquez. But Garcia can expect to move around.

"It's a competitive situation, but Max will be involved in all of it," Kubiak said. "I think he's got to come in here and prove he can handle a bunch. That's one of the reasons we drafted him. We think he can handle a lot at those spots."

As a senior, and again at the Senior Bowl, he worked at center. During that week, he faced off with defensive tackles such as Iowa's Carl Davis and Washington's Danny Shelton.

Garcia held his own, doing a good job getting his position set after the snap and quickly gaining his balance. But he felt the experience was a bit humbling, and he left knowing he had to change how he worked.

"It made me realize that sometimes that you're not as good as you think you are, or that there are players out there that are extremely talented," Garcia said. "I kind of got that realization when I was out there."

"It increased my work ethic and gave me things I needed to work on after the Senior Bowl. I did do a good job out there; I left as the best center out there at the Senior Bowl. It was just a great opportunity to go against that type of competition."

And it gave him a taste of the challenge yet to come.