

# Under the Headset: Q&A with Wide Receivers Coach Tyke Tolbert

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
October 28, 2016

How do you feel knowing that Emmanuel and DT are Broncos for the long haul?

It makes me feel really excited for our football team, and in particular for our wide receiver room because I've said all along, I feel like when guys label wide receivers one, two, three and four, I feel like we have two No. 1s with D.T. and Emmanuel, and very few teams have that. So for us to have those two guys in their quote-unquote co-number one positions [is huge].

Are they pretty levelheaded with regard to their game-by-game production?

They're all competitors in that receiver position, on any team. Any guy wants the ball, but the fact that they know each other so well — and I think they're genuinely happy for one another when one has more success than the other or vice versa — but the bottom line is whenever you win, everybody's happy. I think at the end of the day, as long as we keep winning, those things don't mean as much as when he wasn't winning.

You've coached through different offenses. What kind of transition was it from the previous one with Adam Gase and an uptempo strategy to this methodical, balanced attack with Head Coach Gary Kubiak and Offensive Coordinator Rick Dennison?

Coach Kubiak and I talked about that over the course of last year and this year, and I think he does a great job because he does what's best for our football team and how it is now. So, it might not be the throw-it-all-over-the-place type of offense that we've had before and all the wide receivers get tons of stats, but we have the best defense in football.

For us to have that and have young quarterbacks on the roster, we're going to do what's best for the football team. And if we have to run a little more, we'll run a little more. If we have to pass it a little more, we can pass it a little more. I think instead of saying, 'We're this, that or the other, as an offense,' I think Coach Kubiak does a good job in really just deciding on what's the best formula for our football team to be successful.

With Emmanuel and Demaryius here for the foreseeable future, how would you like to see them grow?

From a football — especially offensive — standpoint, I'd like for them to be able to continue to grow with our young quarterbacks. Some of the things that a veteran like Peyton [Manning] would do, he would see something and check something at the line and throw to them wide open. Those young quarterbacks don't see it right now, and I think they will in due time, and they have to be patient in that circumstance because it's not going to always be the best check or the best play or whatever, but whatever's called, they have to go out there and execute and make it happen, in the run game and the passing game.

What kind of potential do you see in the younger wide receivers like Cody Latimer, Bennie Fowler and Jordan Taylor?

Bennie has done some things that's shown he's able to make plays in this league. Cody has done some things to show he's able to make plays in this league, especially in preseason, and Cody has continued to come along. I'm very happy with where Cody is right now [and] where Bennie is, coming off the injury.

I'm really happy to see the maturation process of Jordan Taylor, because when he got here from Rice in the spread offense and just kind of running routes and letting them throw it up to him and make plays, he's really worked on his craft. As far as his route technique, having good footwork, because being 6'5", it's harder for a guy coming out of breaks as opposed to a guy who's 5'11". So he's had to work on that time and time again, and he's gotten so much better with that. He could always make plays on the ball, but in this league, you have to be able to have some separation against some elite DBs, and he's continued to work on that to the point of where we feel very comfortable putting him in the game, whenever it is. If DT or Emmanuel gets tired or whatever, we'll throw him in there and whatever play's called, go in there and execute it, be it run or pass. He had a play in the Indianapolis game, his first quote-unquote official NFL catch, for 20 yards. So he's averaging 20 yards a catch right now. Hope he keeps that average.

You mentioned how smaller receivers tend to come out of breaks quicker. The slot is generally where we see those guys — Jordan Norwood, Wes Welker, etc. But Bennie's a bigger receiver we see in that spot. How does he excel there?

Well, Bennie has really good feet for a big guy. Really good feet, and Bennie is super smart, too. Bennie is the guy who knows all of the positions; he knows the whole philosophy of the offense, where he needs to be. Bennie is like my Michael Jordan of the wide receivers. He is my go-to guy. When I need Bennie to go play X, go play F, go play Z, go play Y, I plug him in there and he knows what to do. And he has the feet like a smaller guy to be able to get in and out of his breaks, but he has the speed like a big guy and the size of a big guy to play outside. So he has that rare combination of size, speed and foot quickness to be able to play anywhere on the field.

What is the fatherhood life as a coach in the season?

It is difficult. My wife and I kid all the time [that] my wife is a single mother for six months of the year because she's the one going to all the school activities and all the extra-curricular activities, whether it's volleyball, which my older girl plays, or gymnastics with my younger girl. So she's doing all that, so it's difficult. One thing that I'm grateful for is modern technology. You have FaceTime, so you get to see them in that regard because when I wake up in the morning and I go kiss them, they're asleep. When I come back at home and I kiss them, they're asleep. And I think on Thursdays is the first time they're able to see me, because I get home a little bit earlier, right before they go to bed, and I get to spend a little bit of time with them on Thursday. And Friday, I pick them up from school, so my wife calls me 'the fun uncle' because I pick them up from school, take them to get ice cream and [clear] the conscience of not seeing them all week. So that's awesome and Saturday home games, Coach Kubiak of letting the coaches and the players bring their kids to work with them and my girls so look forward to that, to come here and hang out with us, eat breakfast and see the other kids. We can go home after that.

Tyke Tolbert @CoachTykeT3

My daughters and I spent part of our Saturday afternoon horseback riding! 1st time for my youngest. They had fun!

1:39 PM - 10 Sep 2016

That part is difficult during the season because I don't get to see them basically through or until Thursday night, or that they see me, to put it that way. But FaceTime is good and talking on the phone, I talk to them about three times a day: when they wake up in the morning, make sure they have a good day; when they come home from school, I see how their day went; and when they go to bed at night, I tell them goodnight.

How much do you enjoy the other part of Saturdays with families, getting to interact with the players' children?

I love kids. My two daughters say, 'We need to have another! I want to have a brother!' Eric [Studesville's] son, E.J., that's my god-son, so I tell them, 'That's your little brother.' But I love kids and just being around them, seeing them laugh and smile and give you a high-five. That's the greatest thing.

Demaryius seems to be very similar to you in that regard, loving being around kids.

My kids and Eric's kids think DT is like their play buddy, because every time they see him, DT comes up and picks them all up and gives them a hug. After the game, even in the parking lot, he'll see them and he'll get out of his truck and give them a hug. He's been over to the house a couple times for different holidays and stuff we've had, dinners and stuff like that. He's awesome with kids, yeah.

I also hear you're a really big golfer. What are some of the most incredible courses you've played?

The most beautiful golf course that I've probably ever seen in Colorado is Sanctuary. Just the view on the No. 1 tee box, to have that view of the mountains straight downhill, par five, No. 1 handicap, that's a beautiful tight course. I lose a lot of balls there, but it's a beautiful course.

I was able to play Tiger Woods' new course in Texas this summer. He opened up a new course down there in Bluejack National. I played that one and I'm telling you, that course is the most beautiful course I've ever played on, from a grass and setup [standpoint]. It's a phenomenal course out there. I was able to get out there and play though it's a private course. I called in a favor. I called Peyton and Peyton called Tiger and they were able to get us on, me and a couple of my high school buddies. That was a cool course to play on. I love playing golf and I get to play it only probably about four and a half months out of the year. I start in the last part of March and then April, May, June, July. I don't play during the season. ... I'm totally focused on football during the season, then when it's not football, as I mentioned earlier, I spend time with my family because I don't want to cheat them out of any more time than I feel like I am, because I'm working so much.

Does your family play at all?

I'm trying to get my girls to play, and we go to Topgolf. They enjoy Topgolf. My youngest one, she has a really good swing, but she's not into golf like that. She could be really, really good because she's very competitive. I think she's the second-most competitive person in our house, behind me. But she's really competitive and she could be really good at it but I'm not going to push her in it, because she loves gymnastics and she loves basketball, so I let her do that.

# Getting to know Tyke Tolbert

By Ben Swanson

DenverBroncos.com

September 22, 2015

With 13 years of NFL coaching under his belt, Wide Receivers Coach Tyke Tolbert has helped the Broncos build one of the league's top receiving corps. In 2014, his position group had its third-consecutive year with two receivers recording more than 1,000 receiving yards apiece. As Tolbert and his receivers prepare for a new season, we caught up with the coach entering his fifth year with the Broncos.

So practice just ended and you stayed afterward to throw with Demaryius Thomas. You and him have been around each other since 2011, his breakout season. What's it like working with him and how have you connected with him?

Well, it's been great, to answer your first question. Working with him, he comes to work every day, he doesn't say a whole lot; he just does what he's asked to do. He works hard in both the passing game and the running game. When I first got here he was coming off his Achilles injury and every day after practice, I used to work with him trying to perfect two routes every day. And we kept going over and over and over those two routes every day. It got to a point where he started perfecting them pretty well and he just evolved as a receiver because the offense he ran in college wasn't very receiver-friendly, the triple-option offense. So he had a lot of route technique to work on and a credit to him, he's worked on it a whole lot and he's become a really good receiver, obviously.

With him and Emmanuel Sanders, they're two different types of players and they're also quite different in personality. How does that combination add in regards to leadership in the locker room?

Everybody's different, first of all. DT, he is a silent type of leader by example and Emmanuel, he's a talker. But I think everybody does what they need to do in order to get the team ready or get their teammates ready. So whatever that is, whether it's by example or talking, whatever the case may be, it's different for everybody. It's just different for everybody and having them and the wide receiver group in general and all the teams I've been on, it's a unique group where you have a ton of different personalities, a ton of different egos, it's everything involved in that position, so we have to be able to manage all those personalities, all those egos and so far it's worked out for us.

Previously you had mentioned that the Broncos have a selfless group of receivers. When I've talked to Sanders in the past, that's something that he's really spoke highly about.

It shows on the field and in practice about them being selfless. Honestly, when you come to the NFL, all these guys were great receivers in college so everybody wants the ball, but they understand that if they don't get the ball, it's all about the team, whatever that is. One of the things that doesn't show up on the stat sheet that you will see in the game, if you watch it closely, is our wide receivers blocking downfield for running backs. That's something we demand and those guys know that I'll praise it more for a great block than I will a touchdown because if you run 65 plays in the game and you only catch five passes, what are you doing the other 60 plays? That's my philosophy. They've got to be doing something the other 60 plays to be able to help the team win, and a majority will be blocking, whether it's for a running back or somebody else caught the ball.

A few years ago, then-Broncos WR Eric Decker said you teach technique like few coaches do. Why do you think that is and what is your focus with it?

In my opinion, I put on my receivers' tip sheets every week that technique will get you open before speed. There are a lot of fast guys—really fast guys—that are at home on the couch because they can't run routes. They don't have good technique. But there are guys who are not as fast that have good technique that can cut and separate from a defender and go make plays on the ball. So that's what I've always believed, that technique will always get you open before speed. That's the way I was raised in coaching and that's what I continue to coach. Now if you have speed and technique, that's a plus! If I had to give up one or the other, it would be to give up speed to have good technique because there are a lot of really good receivers that play in this league that weren't the fastest guys but had good technique and were able to cut and separate and get open.

With Cody Latimer's development, do you think he's come into this year with a better understanding of how much is demanded of an NFL receiver?

I think he does, and because he's been here a year and he's watching DT work, he's watching Emmanuel work, he watched Wes Welker last year work — he's watched those guys and he sees that that's not the physical ability you have. You have to put in the work in the film room, put it in on the field with route technique. He's made tremendous strides from last year to this year and we're expecting a lot of good things from Cody this year.

When you think about your career, what themes do you come back to the most?

What I've learned, it's two things: Stay true, as far as in coaching, stay true to what you believe in. I have certain things I really believe in, like technique gets you open before speed, those types of things. Stay true to what you believe in and you've got to get it over to your players, however they learn because everybody doesn't learn the same. How I coach DT may not be the same way I coach Emmanuel; it may not be the same way I coach Cody. So whatever it is that you can get them to understand what it is you're trying to relate to them, then that's what you have to do. So I would say that being able to communicate with your players and being able to stay true to what you believe in. And, again, I'm always learning too, so I pick up things all the time that I learn from other people. But my true value, my true core, what I always come back to and stand to my guns for is technique will get you open before speed and you have to make an impact in the run game as a wide receiver. Those two things I tell my guys all the time: You are always the primary receiver on every route, and you are always the primary blocker on every run. So if you keep that mentality, you will be successful.

# Tyke Tolbert honored with father's induction to Texas high school hall of fame

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
July 22, 2015

Wide Receiver Coach Tyke Tolbert hates to lose in anything. When his oldest daughter was 4 years old, he bought an air hockey table. Though he was happy to concede a goal here and there, his competitive spirit wouldn't let him lose the game.

But that's just how he's wired. It's how his father Leon Tolbert was, how he is and now how his youngest daughter is.

"I got that from my dad and now my youngest daughter has that same competitive fire in her," Tyke said on Monday. "She's 9 and doesn't like to lose in anything. That's the biggest thing I got from my dad, being ultra-competitive."

That fire has been a driving factor in Tyke's career, first as a football player and now as a coach, and it was also what propelled Leon's athletic accomplishments that recently earned him a posthumous induction into the Prarie View Interscholastic League (PVIL) Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

The PVIL was a pre-desegregation league that existed from 1920 to 1970, governing academics, athletics and music for black high schools in Texas. Among the esteemed PVIL athletes are six Pro Football Hall of Fame members: Joe Greene, Gene Upshaw, Dick "Night Train" Lane, Charley Taylor, Emmitt Thomas and Ken Houston.

At a difficult time in American history with segregation, the schools existed with meager resources but produced distinguished students who would become some of the country's finest citizens, athletes, entertainers and more. Though the era marked a dark period before the Civil Rights Movement, PVIL is proud to remember the outstanding people who came out of the climate in spite of segregation. "Remembering the past with pride" is the slogan that adorns the top of their website.

Leon Tolbert was one of those stellar athletes for Booker T. Washington High School in Conroe, Texas, where he won two state championships in the 1960's, including a season in which the Bulldogs went 13-0.

Tyke's mother designated him to speak on his father's behalf, which was a great honor for him.

"We were very humbled by his induction and we had some family and friends there," Tolbert said. "There was over 1,000 people in attendance because there were several inductees but my dad got inducted for football so it meant a lot. I know he would have been proud to be there if he could have been there but for my mom to designate me to give the acceptance speech on his behalf was a very proud moment for me."

Leon's athletic legacy lives on for Tyke and his family in his mother's collection of newspaper clippings from the era. Tyke knows some of the stories his father told may have had a bit of exaggeration, but those clips are able to document Leon's some of his proudest moments in his football career.

"He used to tell us a lot of things about what he used to do. But the funny thing about it is my mom kept newspaper articles and all that stuff so I can actually read it and see his name in print the things he actually did, which is pretty impressive," Tolbert said. "So he had the evidence, I guess, to back it up about how good of a player he was and things he did of that nature. But I'm sure that would have been very good for him, very proud for him to be able to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. And he would have been really, really happy with that."

# WRs Coach Tyke Tolbert excited for Demaryius Thomas' return, potential in offense

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
July 21, 2015

Coaches are starting to get back to the Broncos' practice facility in preparation for training camp, and one was particularly thrilled to return to great news.

Wide receivers coach Tyke Tolbert was naturally happy from a professional standpoint to hear that Demaryius Thomas signed a new five-year contract with the Broncos through the 2019 season, but he was even more happy to hear about it on a personal level.

"I'm happy for us, the Broncos, and I'm really happy for him, based on where he's come from, the trials and tribulations he's had to go through coming up," Tolbert said on Monday. "And to see him get rewarded for all his hard work is very rewarding for me as his position coach because I know when I got here, he worked really hard to get where he is. He had an achilles injury when I first got here. He would stay after practice with me and work on route techniques and he would study more and he would do a lot of things to the point where he really worked hard to get where he is. People just don't realize that. He worked really hard to get where he is so I'm very happy for him in that regard."

Thomas will bring that hard work back to the practice fields when training camp begins, and though he'll be making up for some lost ground in learning the offense, he was able to study with an assist from Tolbert.

"He actually saw a lot of film on it too because we sent him all the tape and all the cut-ups and all the practices we had," Tolbert said. "So he's been studying on his own and keeping up to speed as much as you could without being here."

Terminology from the previous offense may seem like a daunting task but Tolbert doesn't expect a steep learning curve for Thomas because of what they've retained from the previous offense, the communication he has with Peyton Manning and the route concepts he'll learn.

"Any new system will take a little time — from high school to college, college to NFL, NFL one team to NFL another team — it's going to take some time," Tolbert began. "But the good news about this particular offense is I think it's very wide-receiver friendly from a standpoint where the offense Coach Kubiak is bringing is very detailed from a standpoint where it kind of tells you, as a receiver, more times than not what you actually have on that particular route. A lot of routes we have are concepts as well, but more times than not it's very specific on X, you have this; Z, he has this; F has this.

"So from that standpoint, he'll pick it up a lot more and he's going to get to hear from the quarterback in the huddle when we do huddle, which we will most of the time, I would imagine. We still have a lot of our old offense involved so we'll have some of that mixture in so he obviously won't have to relearn any of that stuff; he still knows that. So combining the two offenses, his learning curve won't be as steep because he really only has to learn half the offense, if you will."

Thomas knows the potential the offense can bring him, especially with opportunities for big gains off play-action passes. The greater balance the Broncos hope to achieve brings with it the ability to catch defenses off guard.

"[The offense] gets me excited as a coach when we're all learning it in the spring and looking at cut-ups," Tolbert said. "I went back to Houston with Andre Johnson and those guys, and I went 'Wow, there are big plays to be had in this offense.' And I was reiterating that to him when I did communicate with him during the offseason. The fact is that there are some big plays in this offense to be had by the receivers so I think he's fired up about that and he actually saw a lot of film on it too because we sent him all the tape and all the cut-ups and all the practices we had."

# Q&A With Wide Receivers Coach Tyke Tolbert

Wide Receivers Coach Tyke Tolbert talked about how being in the second year with Peyton Manning at QB will help his group.

Stuart Zaas  
DenverBroncos.com  
Jun 25, 2013

Editor's note: DenverBroncos.com sat down with the assistant coaches to talk about their position groups before the coaches left Dove Valley for vacations in mid-June.

How has the addition of Wes Welker impacted your receiving corps?

"Oh, he's been great. He's been a welcome addition to the room. Obviously, he's one of the best slot receivers to ever play the game. He brings veteran leadership to the room and up to this point, everything's worked well with those guys."

You have three guys who all caught 1,000 yards worth of passes last year. Are you concerned at all about how they'll handle sharing touches?

"No, I'm never concerned about the sharing, I'm always more concerned about the winning. Those guys will tell you the same thing. Each one of them, individually or collectively, they'll tell you the same thing. They just want to win. We all just want to win. As far as who's getting the touches, those will come and go because some people will concentrate more on one receiver than another at different points in the game. It's a matter of how, as the game goes along, who gets the feel for what the best matchup that we have and we'll exploit that matchup."

How does having three different receivers who all can beat you affect an opposing defense?

"I think it's a harder situation to game plan for because we'll be able to throw the ball to anyone. We have good tight ends as well, the running backs have good hands out of the backfield, and if they play too conservatively on defense, we'll be able to run the ball. We feel pretty good about where we are offensively."

How much does the continuity of having a second year with a similar offensive system and with Peyton Manning at quarterback help the offense play faster?

"It helps a great deal. You alluded earlier to the fact that we had three receivers who had 1,000 yards. (Decker and Thomas) were here, obviously. Those guys (in their first year working with Manning) had 1,000 yards apiece and were the youngest tandem in the history of the NFL to do that. I think in year two, when they know Peyton a little bit more and Peyton knows them a little bit more – and

the welcome addition of Wes, as well as the tight ends we have – it's a recipe for even greater success."

What are some of the challenges that come with running an up-tempo offense for the wideouts?

"The challenge for my group is the fact that two of my guys are bigger guys. We're going to play fast and go at a high tempo, so from a stamina standpoint, we have to be in great shape. Not only when we're on the road, but especially here at home at a mile high. We're here, we train in it, we're used to it, so it shouldn't affect us more than the other people. I think that those guys, when they leave here from minicamp and get ready for training camp, they have to continue to keep themselves in top shape. I think (Strength and Conditioning Coach) Luke Richesson and his group have done a great job of getting those guys in shape, and they have to maintain that throughout the summer in order to be ready to go when we come back for training camp."

Do you look forward to seeing what that up-tempo offense can do?

"Oh yeah. I'm always excited about our offense. Every year, I'm a total glass half-full guy, so I'm the ultimate optimist when it comes to what I'm doing and what we're doing offensively. But I'm looking forward to the up-tempo. I think it's going to be a real strain on defenses to be able to get the calls they want to get called, so they'll have to simplify more. I think, with the altitude, you'll see guys trying to sub and we can quick-snap the ball and catch them with 12, 13, even 14 men on the field at some point in time. I think we're definitely at the advantage in that regard."

What have you seen from some of other receivers in your group outside of Thomas, Decker and Welker?

"I think (Andre) 'Bubba' Caldwell has really turned the page this past spring. I think he's made a lot of good plays for us this spring. He's not only been able to sub in for Demaryius, but also for Eric Decker. I think Greg Orton has shown some promise. Gerell Robinson really impressed me because we had him in training camp last year and he was gone to another team on the practice squad throughout the year. He came back and the amount of recall he had with the offense was really impressive, so he's done a really good job as far as that's concerned. I think Trindon Holliday can get in the game in spots and we can exploit defenses with his speed and his running skills. Tavarres King, he's a fifth round draft pick and he was hampered earlier with an injury, but he's since come on and he's getting more reps to see what he can do. I think all the guys, from top to bottom, are doing a pretty good job in that next group."

What attributes did you see from Tavarres King in college?

"He has stretch-the-field, playmaking speed. He hasn't been able to show that as much in spring because of the injury he's had, but he can stretch the field. We obviously know that he played in – in my opinion – the best conference in college in

the SEC – so he’s played against top notch competition week-in and week-out, and that’s the same type of competition that he’s going to see in the NFL. I think he’s probably more NFL-ready from a rookie standpoint than the other guys because of the competition that he’s played against.”

How does competing against this team’s secondary in practice help your guys get better?

“It helps them a great deal. You’ve got a first-ballot Hall of Famer in Champ Bailey on the offensive right-hand side, and then you’ve got Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie – boy, he’s come in and he’s got the size at 6’2 and the speed. He’s got really good feet for a tall guy. So, in that regard, it helps us be able to get ready with those guys on the field. One of the most competitive guys on the team is Chris Harris in the slot – or wherever he is on the field – he’s one of the most competitive guys I’ve ever been around. That helps us a great deal because when game time comes around, it’ll be much easier for the receivers to go out and make plays because we play against some of the best in practice every day.”

What have the matchups in practice between Welker and Harris been like so far?

“There’s been give and take, definitely. Wes gets the best of Chris sometimes, Chris gets the best of Wes sometimes. Those are two really fireball, competitive-type guys, and it’s fun to watch. They get competitive and they’re only going to make each other better once the season starts.”

How do you think the extra year with Peyton throwing the ball is going to help your whole unit get better?

“I think it’s going to help a great deal because you have think about the fact that Reggie Wayne and Marvin Harrison and those guys spent probably 8-10 years with Peyton doing the same thing. Well we just were in year one and Decker and Demaryius both had 1,000 yards, so if we can take what we did last year and keep improving on it – I think the sky’s the limit for those guys.”