

# Kiszla: Can DeMarcus Walker become more than a one-trick pony for Broncos?

By Mark Kiszla  
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There's a hole in the Denver defense. The Broncos are looking at rookie DeMarcus Walker to fill it. Can a down lineman from Florida State drafted in the second round to be a pass-rush specialist now stand up and help solve the team's crisis at outside linebacker?

"Whatever I can do to contribute to this team and win a Super Bowl and whatever a coach asks me to do, I do," Walker said.

So what did Walker do Sunday? He went to school, and showed maybe there's a little Elvis Dumervil in him.

Walker took a crash course in the nuances of playing outside linebacker at the NFL level. Von Miller, the best in the business, gave him private tutorials on the field throughout practice.

"It's a blessing, to be honest with you. He's the best for a reason," Walker said. DeMarcus Ware, still serving as the Yoda of Denver in retirement, also has reached out to Walker via text message.

Ball don't lie. And players recognize talent. If Walker couldn't play, would Miller and Ware be coaching him up? Maybe Walker is more than the situational pass rusher the Broncos drafted him to be.

While all eyes at training camp were fixed on the competition between Trevor Siemian and Paxton Lynch, so shaky in a padded practice that coach Vance Joseph expressed blunt dissatisfaction with both young quarterbacks, maybe the real news is how the role for Walker keeps expanding. Teams get inventive when looking for ways to get talent on the field.

If Walker is able to earn significant playing time at outside linebacker in addition to being a third-down contributor as a defensive lineman, he could be as essential to Denver's success in 2017 as first-round pick Garrett Bolles, counted on to win the job as the starting left tackle in a rebuilt offensive line.

Miller is the best player in the NFL this side of Tom Brady. But even the Vonster cannot play linebacker on both sides of the line at the same time. So he frequently got in the ear of Walker during practice, offering tricks of the trade at outside linebacker, where Denver has been bit hard by the injury bug.

"Instead of being a freshman who's trying to figure things out, I'm now more like a senior in high school. And I've got to act like it," said Miller, who has embraced his role as a team leader with the same passion he brings to sacking the quarterback or dancing with the stars.

Add the torn wrist ligament of Shane Ray on top of a hip injury expected to keep Shaquil Barrett on the shelf until sometime in September, and outside linebacker has morphed from one of the Broncos' strongest positions to one of those unexpected challenges encountered by every NFL team almost every year.

The Broncos drafted Walker as a 6-foot-4, 280-pound defensive end. His style of play, however, differs significantly from the skill set of Malik Jackson, the down lineman desperately missed by the Broncos after he departed as a free agent to Jacksonville. For Walker to make a major impact in Denver, can he be a Swiss Army knife more like Dumervil or Karl Mecklenburg?

As a pro prospect, Walker was condemned in scouting lingo as a tweener, too small against the run to be an every-down player on the inside and not athletic enough to bring consistent pressure from the edge. He wants to be on the field as more than an interior pass rusher.

Can Walker become more than a one-trick pony for the Broncos? Here's his chance.

# For Broncos rookie DeMarcus Walker, taking care of mom was Job One

By Adrian Dater

BSN Denver

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For Denver Broncos rookie DeMarcus Walker, the best moment of his summer, of his life actually, is a quick and easy recollection. It happened a few weeks ago, when he saw the tears of joy on the face of his mother, Cynthia, when presenting her with the keys to a new home.

Taking care of one or both parents is almost as much of a boyhood dream as it is to make the NFL, and the 22-year-old Walker has accomplished both in a surreal year that will never be forgotten.

“It was the best thing that I’ve ever done in my life,” said Walker, of buying a handsome new home in his home state of Florida, along with a new car. “That woman sacrificed so much for me. She took care of me for 22 years; It’s time to take care of her now.”

Walker, the Broncos’ second-round pick (No. 51 overall) from Florida State, signed a \$5.1 million contract with Denver that included a signing bonus of about \$1.8 million. It wasn’t always easy growing up in a tough neighborhood in his native Florida, but mom’s love and dedication saw his son through to a high-school diploma, then a degree from FSU.

“I’ve come from some struggles,” said Walker, a 6-foot-4, 280-pound defensive lineman. “But my mom always did what it took to keep a roof over our head and food on the table for our whole family.”

Walker, prior to coming to Denver, he’d never in his life spent more than a week outside of Florida. While home base will remain the Sunshine State, he said he is ready for what he believes will be a long career in Denver.

“I’m a winner,” Walker said. “I’m just here to win games, that’s all I’m here to do. To win a Super Bowl. But I still have a lot to learn, and a lot to adjust to. I’m just trying to learn, pick up the game and just play football.”

Walker said he has been made to feel welcome by a veteran defensive crew, which doesn’t always easy to a rookie in the NFL. Respect, friendship, camaraderie – it all has to be earned by rookies, but Walker said some of the veterans, particularly star linebacker Von Miller, have been gracious.

“With as much success as Von has had, the guy’s still humble,” Walker said. “Just two days ago, I Face-Timed him, just to joke around with him and I had a little conversation with him. That’s the kind of stuff that I like. People who are used to being around here, surrounding me with positive energy and love, that’s what I like and I really look up to those guys, especially Von.”