

Kayvon Webster embraces technique tweaks to prove he's starter-worthy in contract year

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

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Speed is natural. Hips are natural. Talent is natural. Technique is taught.

Early in his NFL career, Broncos cornerback Kayvon Webster learned that the hard way. He relied on his 4.3, 40-yard dash speed and athleticism.

Webster's rookie year, 2013, he played nearly half of the Broncos' defensive snaps — 479 to be exact, third among Denver cornerbacks. It validated his worth, but also provided a false sense of position security. Over the next two seasons combined, he didn't even reach half of those repetitions. He considers it being demoted.

Chris Harris, Aqib Talib, Darian Stewart, T.J. Ward and a newer addition to the no fly zone, Bradley Roby, were lathered with praise for being the best secondary in the NFL last season. Webster was mostly a special teams star, who played only 69 defensive snaps, the lowest of his career.

"Outside looking in, you probably wouldn't think I was a part of it," Webster said. "But I came out here with these guys everyday, when my number was called whether it was one play or five plays it was the same for me, I had to do my job. I don't really try to sit around and figure out why I'm not out there. All I can do is control what I can."

It was this past offseason that he realized what he could control. And heading into year four, Webster has fully embraced the importance of technique, and he's reaping the rewards of defensive backs coach Joe Woods' teaching.

"Everybody doesn't have the athletes that Alabama has," Woods said. "Sometimes you may be able to get away with playing poor technique. But once you get to the NFL, everybody's good, plus the timing from the quarterbacks to the receivers is always better. So you don't have any opportunities to be off. If you're off in the NFL, you're going to get balls thrown on you."

Webster is modeling his technique after Harris and Talib. It starts with having an efficient stance. Webster worked with Woods on getting his base a little narrower, taking shorter steps so he can move both ways and using his hands properly while he patiently makes his read on a receiver.

The result is a better cornerback.

Earlier this week, Webster lined up across from early training camp star Jordan Taylor, a man with a six-inch height advantage. With great technique and a knack for the finding the ball, he leaped to bat away a well-thrown deep ball down the left sideline.

Webster took a knee to the quad from Taylor while giving his body up to make the play. It was an injury of commitment that cost him a few days of practice, but he expects to return soon.

Two days before, Webster got the better of dangerously quick Emmanuel Sanders, knocking away back-to-back passes on crossing routes.

He probably wouldn't have made any of those plays two years ago.

"I gotta win the reps," Webster said. "That's the mindset I gotta have — not giving up any catches."

2016 is a big year for Webster. He's headed into the final year of his contract with goals of being a starter becoming more realistic next season.

"It's a great opportunity for him," Harris said. "Not only is he auditioning for us. He's auditioning for the whole league. You expect a guy to raise their game another level when it's time to get paid."

Webster spent the offseason training with a host of NFL players in Miami and Los Angeles including Steelers receiver Antonio Brown, Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater and cornerback Xavier Rhodes, and Jets quarterback Geno Smith and receiver Kenbrell Thompkins.

He's shined as a starter so far during training camp, getting plenty of first-team reps because Talib is sitting out with an injury. Webster attributes his progress to mental consistency, which is almost as important as technical consistency.

On a team full of talented cornerbacks, Webster might force the Broncos to find a way to put him on the field more.

"That's not a question of me being able to go out and play," Webster said. "It's just being able to get that opportunity."

Hard-earned reps

A look at cornerback Kayvon Webster's use on defense over his first three NFL seasons.

Year | Defensive snaps | % of defensive snaps | Games played (started) | Pass deflections/Interceptions

2015 | 69 | 6.3% | 15 (0) | 2/0

2014 | 130 | 12% | 12 (0) | 2/0

2013 | 479 | 42.5% | 14 (2) | 9/1

Source: Pro Football Reference

Miami native, former USF star Kayvon Webster took long path to Super Bowl

By Greg Auman
Tampa Bay Times
January 30, 2016

Patricia Webster went to her boss a month ago with a list of requested days off, including all of this coming week in full anticipation of her son Kayvon playing in the Super Bowl with the Denver Broncos.

The boss raised an eyebrow, not at the number of days she wanted off but reminding her that the Broncos were going to lose to the Patriots.

Sure enough, Webster is in his second Super Bowl in three NFL seasons, in part because of his mother's hard work and her confidence to bet on her son's future, to expect and embrace what many would say is unexpected success.

"I don't even have words for what I really feel," his mother said last week, excited to watch her son play for a championship in Santa Clara, Calif. "I can't even explain it without crying. For my kid, somebody I birthed, to get to go two times in three years. ... For him to get a ring, I might have to take a couple days off work, just from the joy."

She knows how fortunate he is to be playing in a second Super Bowl at 24. She has lived her whole life in Miami, where Dan Marino made the Super Bowl in his second season but lost, then never made it back again.

Webster's good fortune goes back to his childhood, as he grew up amid poverty in the Opa-Locka and Carol City neighborhoods of northwest Miami. There were times where the family had to stay with his maternal grandmother, Eula Lawson, with as many as 17 people in a four-bedroom house.

"I used it as motivation, because I didn't want to have my family grow up just like that," Webster said. "I wanted to do more. As I got older, I got a vision."

Lawson cleaned trains for Amtrak for 30 years to keep her family afloat, and her daughter followed suit. Patricia was 19 when Kayvon was born, putting college plans on hold. But after three sons, she went back to school, getting her undergraduate and master's degrees and a good job at Humana selling insurance.

The job offered nearly unlimited overtime, and during Kayvon's freshman year of high school, a football teammate took him to Monsignor Pace, a private Catholic school in Miami Gardens. The school offered him a better education and coaches and teachers who would mentor him, but the tuition was about \$900 a month. His mother took on the extra hours to pay the added bill, sometimes working from 7 a.m. to 10 or 11 at night, in addition to his father Paul's full-time job.

Webster thrived at Pace, both academically and in football and track. But seeing the long hours his mother was working, he went to school officials before Christmas his sophomore year.

"He told them, 'Y'all are trying to kill my mother. She cannot do this,' " Patricia said, and Kayvon told administrators he would leave Pace rather than see his mother continue to work the long days. "He was

willing to do that. He doesn't know they told me that. They called me and made some arrangements where the tuition dropped a little bit."

Fast enough to win a state championship in the 4x100-meter relay in track, Webster was a coveted football recruit as a cornerback and chose USF over hometown Miami. He shined with the Bulls — when USF got a huge win at Notre Dame in 2011, Webster returned a fumble 96 yards for a touchdown. He graduated in four years with a degree in health science and had the luck to be drafted by the Broncos, letting him learn under a future Hall of Famer, cornerback Champ Bailey.

Two years ago as a rookie, Webster was practically a spectator in his first Super Bowl, playing only four snaps on special teams. When Denver changed coaches after last season, he wasn't sure if he'd still have a job with the team. But he carved out a role for himself — in last week's AFC Championship Game against the Patriots, he played 45 snaps, including 25 on special teams.

His mother broke out in tears before that game, not realizing he would walk to midfield for the coin toss as a team captain. The week before he had been given a game ball — which he gave to his mother — for his role in kick coverage, leaping into the end zone and flipping the ball over his head to down a punt at the 3-yard line, setting up an early field goal.

Webster has in turn inspired more to follow in his path, starting in his own family. His brother Paul, less than a year younger, played college football at Minnesota-Crookston, and his brother Khalil at Clarion University; his youngest brother, Antione, will sign scholarship papers next week, perhaps at Massachusetts.

"He's such a phenomenal kid," said his mother, who now lives a few miles north in Miramar. "All my children are such great kids, all work hard at their own level. For Kayvon to make it to the place he thought about as a kid is amazing. That's my kid right there! He's always going to be my kid."

The Webster children always had a high bar set from Patricia and Paul Sr. Once they graduated high school, they were going to college or the Army. "Pick a school or pick a service," she told them. "We're not raising kids to just sit in the house."

To keep them away from the violence and crime in the neighborhoods around them, they had no down time — if it wasn't football, it was baseball, basketball, track, even karate. "They hated karate," she remembers. "Oh, Lord, they didn't like it at all. I always had them in something, kept them busy all the time."

Valarie Lloyd, who taught Webster at Pace and is now a dean of students there, has photos of him on her office wall, both from Pace and in his Broncos uniform.

"He was a leader, everywhere," said Lloyd, who has flown to Colorado twice to see Webster play with the Broncos. "You knew he was special. ... To see that speed, that burst, you knew then he possessed something that put him over the top. But the way he handled himself, you knew he was doing everything he needed to do to achieve his dreams."

His mother points to Webster's work ethic, more than his football success, as what inspired his brothers to earn college scholarships.

"He works when everybody else is sleeping. His mind is always on 'How do I get better,' " she said. "So many doors were opened just by him doing the right thing. He paved the way for them. All they had to do was wake up in the morning and follow his path."

Webster has done that at Pace — he has come back to campus to talk to students during stops home, and just representing their school and hometown in the Super Bowl is inspiring in itself.

"Tremendously," said Anthony Walker, who coached Webster in football and track and is now a dean of students at Pace. "The kids just flock to him, listening to his every word. They've heard the Kayvon Webster stories ... the kids who have come through the program and now are able to give back. He was the model kid when he was here."

Webster said so many people have helped him along the way — "My mom always made sacrifices, and that's where I got some of my traits from" — but for him, success starts in staying focused and staying positive, no matter the circumstances.

"I think you have to have a strong mind," Webster said. "You have to have the things you want to accomplish, and once you make that a priority, you control the things you can control, stay prayerful, giving thanks, all those things you want to accomplish are right in front of you."

Kayvon Webster grew up in a full house beside other football legends

By Patrick Saunders

Denver Post

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Chaotic is not quite the right word to describe Kayvon Webster's boyhood home in Opa-Locka, Fla., a crime-plagued neighborhood northwest of Miami Beach.

Crowded, with occasional turbulence, mixed with plenty of love, is a more appropriate characterization. At times there would be 17 people sleeping in the four-bedroom house owned by Eula Lawson, Webster's beloved grandmother.

A frequent house guest was Minnesota Vikings quarterback Teddy Bridgewater, who remains best friends with Webster's younger brother, Paul.

"That house got kind of crazy. I'd have to wait in a long line to take a shower," Webster said, chuckling. "We had two bathrooms, but only one was a full bath with a shower."

So, at age 15, the future Broncos cornerback and special-teams standout began sleeping over at friends' houses, or with an aunt and uncle. He also spent countless hours pumping iron, studying and hanging out at Monsignor Edward Pace High School. He was something of a teenage vagabond, but he didn't see his lifestyle as unusual.

He said it helped mold him into the assertive, self-confident player he is now.

"It was kind of up to me to make my way," he said. "There are a lot of kids in Miami who are forced to grow up fast like that. Our parents are always at work, and as you get older, you adjust. You have to find yourself."

Armed with an innate inner strength, guided by lessons passed down from his parents and grandmother, and blessed with athleticism and speed, Webster thrived. Sunday, he earned a game ball for his special-teams performance in the Broncos' 23-16 victory over Pittsburgh in the AFC divisional playoff game.

In the first quarter, the Broncos punted on their second possession of the game, and as the ball tumbled toward the end zone on its way to an apparent touchback, Webster turned on his jets and knocked the football backward, pinning the Steelers at their 3-yard line. His play helped set up one of Brandon McManus' five field goals.

"Kayvon has been exceptional for about the last eight weeks," coach Gary Kubiak said. "He's playing with confidence across the board."

If the Broncos beat New England at Sports Authority Field at Mile High on Sunday, Webster will play in the second Super Bowl of his three-year career.

"It would be fantastic," said Webster, who was drafted from South Florida in the third round in 2013 after becoming the first in his family to graduate from college. "I've wanted to play in the NFL since I was

6 years old. I'm blessed to be part of the Broncos organization. They have given me a chance, but I have always tried to maximize all of my opportunities."

Bring up Webster's name to teachers and staff at Pace High School and they gush with admiration.

"Kayvon was a tremendous kid here at Pace, a 'yes-sir, no-sir' type of kid," said Anthony Walker, the dean of students who also was Webster's assistant football coach and his head track coach. "He was great academically as well, with a 3.5 GPA. I always believed Kayvon had the athletic ability to get to the (NFL) level, but you just never know. But I do know that he was very focused."

Much like at his grandmother's home. Pace became Webster's refuge from Miami's mean streets. The school has been selected as one of the top 50 Catholic high schools in the nation by the Catholic Honor Roll.

"Pace gave me a little bit more discipline," Webster said. "You couldn't miss class, you had to make grades."

His parents, who helped foot the bill to put him through Pace, insisted he didn't waste his chance.

"I had great parents and they made sure I handled my life the right way," Webster said.

Still, to find his own way, he had to break free from his crowded environment.

His father, Paul, brought seven children into the house. His mother, Patricia, brought in four kids of her own. An aunt and uncle lived there too.

On weekends, it was not unusual for friends to crash at the house, where they would sleep, eat, horse around and play video games. One of those who found a safe haven was Bridgewater. His mother, Rose Murphy, worked long hours, often starting her day at 5 a.m. When she took a second job cleaning classrooms at a local community college, Bridgewater turned to his second family.

"I basically lived with Kayvon's family on weekends," Bridgewater said. "I was best friends with Kayvon's little brother, Paul. We'd stay over and get ready for our Pop Warner games on Saturdays. It was crowded, but the Websters were a very tight family. That's why I tell everyone that I consider Kayvon's mom my second mom. That's how much she means to me."

The area where Bridgewater and Webster, as well as Steelers all-pro receiver Antonio Brown grew up, is a cradle for great athletes. But it's easy to get lost on the streets of Opa-Locka, Liberty City and Overtown.

"Guys like me and Kayvon were lucky, we had sports and school," Bridgewater said. "There are gangs and a lot of drugs. Guys end up in jail, some guys just pass away before you even know it. It takes strength not to become a statistic. Kayvon was always smart, he always had that drive. He figured it out."

Broncos Q&A: Kayvon Webster learns from mentor Champ Bailey

By Troy Renck
The Denver Post
October 19, 2014

Kayvon Webster's rookie season could be summed up thusly: Wake up. Pinch self.

Webster began playing football at age 6. By middle school, his interest increased, and he adopted Champ Bailey as his favorite player. Last year, he broke into the NFL with Bailey as his mentor.

"When I really started taking football seriously as a kid, Champ Bailey was my guy. It was a dream come true having him as a teammate, me playing the position where he's going to the Hall of Fame. He helped me a lot," said Webster, a third-round selection (90th overall) from the University of South Florida. "I even got a chance to go to his wedding. That was big. I feel like I gained a brother."

After a slow start this season, Webster continues to gain momentum, playing more each week. He participated in a season-high 20 snaps against the New York Jets last weekend and excelled in nickel coverage. Webster talked with The Denver Post last week about his path to the Broncos, music and overcoming a preseason health scare.

Q: You started slowly this season after suffering from dehydration during the exhibition game vs. the Dallas Cowboys that left you hospitalized. How much did that set you back?

A: I didn't feel like it affected my preparation. It was more of a physical thing. My body was messed up. I am thankful every day and try to stay positive. It was hard not to be out there with the fellas. During the offseason, I put in so much work to be better than last year. I can't let one setback define my whole season. I pushed that aside. It was minor. I just had to put my head down and make plays.

Q: You were thrown into the fire last season because of injuries. How much did facing top receivers help accelerate your development?

A: I wouldn't say going against the twos or ones from other teams built my confidence. I had my confidence built from practice every day. It was a blessing to be out there going against our guys in practice. It helped make me more comfortable, and be more aware of what's going on.

Q: How does playing nickel coverage compare to your assignments in a regular base defense?

A: Nickel is more physical. I am more involved in the run game than at straight corner. At corner, you are reading primarily pass, then if the running back breaks you are involved in it. At nickel, you have certain fits as far as the run goes. My mind-set is pretty much the same: try to win every rep.

Q: You play a key role on special teams. Some players do it because they have to. What's your view?

A: I just love football. They throw me out there, and I am giving my full effort every chance I get. I don't take anything for granted. Would I rather have a big hit or a big block? Well, I am all for the one that helps us win the game.

Q: You mentioned that Bailey was your favorite player. What advice from him still sticks today?

A: I learned from him to stay focused, to always give full effort and when my number is called make a play. Cornerback is one of the toughest positions to play. You have to work hard to keep up with these receivers. He gave me guidance.

Q: What other sports did you play at Monsignor Pace High in Opa-Locka, Fla.?

A: I was highly recruited in football and track. I ran the 100, 200 and 4-by-100. Football was my first sport. I started excelling in track, which was pretty fun. I ran track at University of South Florida and had a chance to participate in the indoor championships and two outdoor championships. My fastest time was 10.5 in the 100 meters. But on my team, I wasn't known as the guy shot out of the rocket. I just had that strong speed.

Q: How do you unwind when you're away from football?

A: I like to get massages in my free time. Or I'll watch movies, listen to music, just relaxing things. Music is a big part of football for me. I have a playlist of guys I know from my neighborhood, like Rick Ross. I also listen to Gucci Mane, Drake.

Kayvon Webster file

--Played season-high 20 snaps vs. Jets, grading out well in nickel coverage.

--Started slowly first two games after suffering dehydration in preseason finale.

--Saw action in 49 of 50 games at the University of South Florida, earning all-Big East honors as senior.

--Clocked 4.34 40-yard dash before draft. Ran 10.5 100-meter dash as member of USF track team.

--Broncos drafted him in the third round in 2013, and Webster played in 14 games with two starts

--Graduated from South Florida with health science degree after starring at Opa-Locka (Fla.) High.

Del Rio: Webster 'has very bright future'

By Jeff Legwold
ESPN.com
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ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- There's perception and there's reality. Sometimes they go together, but sometimes they do not.

The perception, for many who rant about such things as a vocation, is that Denver Broncos cornerback Kayvon Webster's rookie season in 2013 was an abysmal affair with the apex of the struggles being the nationally televised loss to the San Diego Chargers last December.

In that game Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers hammered away at Webster as veteran quarterbacks will do against rookies.

"And they just made more plays than I did that night," Webster said.

The reality is Broncos defensive coordinator Jack Del Rio has big plans for Webster, both right now and down the road.

"He's a talent, he's a tough kid, he can run, he's bright," Del Rio. "Yeah, he was thrust into duty last year and in a moment, or two, that was televised or highly publicized, maybe he got beat. But tell me a corner who hasn't ever been beat. That happens. He was unfazed by it and went about his work. This guy is an ascending player who has a very bright future."

With Chris Harris Jr. still coming back from ACL surgery -- he just returned to practice this week -- Webster has worked plenty with the starters, both outside and in the slot. When the Broncos are at full strength in their re-vamped defense, they project to start Harris Jr. and Aqib Talib at cornerback in the base defense. They've practiced as if Bradley Roby would then come in an outside spot to move Harris Jr. into the slot.

That puts Webster in the dime with the prospect of using him in the nickel from time to time as well. And that, more than anything Del Rio said, shows the strength of the Broncos secondary in this training camp.

"The hard work I put in is paying off," Webster said. "I'm not a rookie any more, I'm just relaxed out there, taking advantage of the coaches putting me in."

In the end the math says Webster played 428 snaps on defense in the 2013 regular season, or 42 percent of the teams' plays. Some folks made up their mind about Webster with a handful of those plays against the Chargers, including a 10-yard catch by Keenan Allen when Webster had his hands between Allen's hands -- "in the pocket" as defensive coaches say -- but was not able to keep Allen from making the play.

Del Rio is quick to say "most guys would have already been out of that game, Kayvon just kept playing no matter what happened, including his hand." Webster suffered a fractured right thumb with just less than 13 minutes remaining in that game and stayed in the lineup.

"My thumb was probably OK about two weeks after I took the cast off (the week after the Super Bowl)," Webster said. "I still rehab the thumb to make sure."

Webster has turned some heads already this summer given he has intercepted Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning twice in training camp's early going, including one he returned for a touchdown.

The third-round pick from the 2013 draft, as he tries to make his way up the depth chart, said he has also remained in contact with former Broncos cornerback Champ Bailey, who is now with the New Orleans Saints. Webster consistently made it a point to sit next to Bailey in the defensive backs' meeting room, even as Bailey worked through an injury-marred season last year.

"That's my mentor right there," Webster said. "We've got a relationship, I just went to his wedding about three weeks ago ... but I use something he said or showed me every day. He always told me be ready to start, because he said I would be able to do that. So no matter what I want to be ready to start."

Broncos: Seats still available on the Kayvon Webster bandwagon

By Paul Klee
Colorado Springs Gazette
July 30, 2014

Within the first week of training camp last year, we had a pretty good idea Julius Thomas would be a big part of the Broncos. Peyton Manning threw at his tight end often, whether it was down the seam, tip-toeing the sideline, even when Julius Thomas was in the Port-A-Potty.

Orange Julius was the breakout player. Every training camp has one.

Here's my early hunch on the 2014 version: Kayvon Webster (above). Will the second-year cornerback have a Julius Thomas-like impact on the Broncos season? Probably not, considering established veterans Aqib Talib and Chris Harris are ahead of him on the depth chart. Thomas can be an All-Pro tight end this year. Different deal.

But is Webster better than anyone, mostly media, knows? I think so.

I loved the pick when the Broncos drafted Webster in the third round. I wrote before last season that he would become their best pick of the 2013 draft. (In the same column, I picked the Seahawks as the Super Bowl champs. Too bad I didn't make the same pick in New York. Oops.) After seeing Webster, who is 23, through one week in his second camp, that hasn't wavered.

Today at Sports Authority Field (above), on a slip-and-slide turf that gave the advantage to the wide receivers, Webster jumped the route on a Peyton Manning pass across the middle. He returned the interception for a Pick 6.

But if I were grading Webster on a singular play, I'd be making the same rookie mistake most media has made with Webster. It's too easy to pick one or two plays and define a player. That's precisely what most observers have done with Webster, cherry-picking the half-dozen plays where Webster got beat as a rookie.

Friends, every cornerback gets beat. Every rookie cornerback gets beat more often. Writing off a player after he goes through the normal rookie learning process is more convenient than professional.

You know John Elway's passer rating as a rookie? 54.9.

Succeeding in the NFL takes time.

"I'm more into the playbook. I'm not a rookie anymore," Webster said. "I'm just relaxed out there. I'm taking advantage of the position the coaches are putting me in."

Here's one reason I like Webster as an impact player going into his second season and down the road. Last season in the first quarter of a game against the Chargers, Webster sustained a broken thumb. He returned to the game immediately, despite an injury that later required surgery.

If a broken finger doesn't slow his game, a couple perfectly thrown deep balls from Philip Rivers won't, either. I still expect Webster will prove to be one of the better draft picks of the John Elway era — either this season, or down the road, perhaps when the Broncos are forced to make a decision on Chris Harris' next contract.

Webster Working Through Injury

By Mike Morris
DenverBroncos.com
December 26, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- Returning to the practice field with his right hand in a cast less than two weeks after having surgery has been anything but a picnic for cornerback Kayvon Webster.

The rookie cornerback, however, is back on the field and hard at work to get back to contributing on defense.

"It's been very difficult for me but I'm getting through it -- coming out to practice and planning to play," Webster said after practice on Thursday.

Webster, who fractured his thumb during the Broncos' Week 15 game against the Chargers on Dec. 12, noted that only being able to use one of his hands is something he's conscious of on the field -- but something he is also growing more comfortable with.

"You know, during practice those are things that are going through my head," he said. "Once practice progresses, I'm pretty much cool with it. It's just getting me better, getting my feet together, giving me another to element."

Webster noted that he didn't initially realize his thumb was broken when the injury happened, as he instead stayed on the field and continued to play.

"It was something I realized later," he said. "I was just playing in the game and I came to the sideline, tried to take my glove off and I noticed my hand was pretty much swollen. They told me to look at it after the game and after the game they said it was broken."

Webster noted that he has gotten used to using only his left hand as a result of the surgery that the cornerback underwent the day after the Chargers game.

"I got six screws, five pins in it, nine stitches -- you know, the basics," Webster said with a chuckle.

"It's not really painful right now, it's just different," he added. "I've never had a cast before. I've never had surgery before for that matter. It's just different going through that whole process."

Defensive Coordinator Jack Del Rio noted that Webster's availability will be dependent upon how well the cornerback adjusts to playing with his unfamiliar appendage.

"He's going to have to get used to playing in that cast," Del Rio said. "That's what it will be. He's going to be in that thing for the duration of this season I believe. How he acclimates himself with that thing and being able to play with that will determine how much we can use."

Regardless of when it is that Webster is able to rejoin the defense, one thing was unmistakably clear to Del Rio about his cornerback's character after the San Diego game.

"Tough kid, I think he loves to play and wanted to be there for his teammates and fought through – clearly had to be painful," Del Rio said. "So you admire that when you see that. There are a lot of different aches and pains and things and you try to separate injury from just the pain you're feeling and I think he played right through that thing and didn't realize that he was actually injured and they had to fix it."

"Courageous, good to see, good young, tough player," he added. "He's got a bright future for us and he'll be a good player."

Broncos' Kayvon Webster a quality find

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

September 25, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- When the Denver Broncos snatched up cornerback Kayvon Webster with the 90th pick in this past April's draft, some of their brethren in the personnel game around the league thought, sure, it was a good pick, but perhaps a bit of a reach in the third round.

Yet, three games into Webster's rookie season, his play may have already authored a rather tidy response.

Whatever.

"That guy, I've been saying he's going to be a player. I just think Kayvon's going to have a long career in this league," Broncos linebacker Wesley Woodyard said. "He's going to be one of those guys who is a dominant corner in the future, take my word on that."

With all of the injuries the Broncos have had in the secondary already this season -- Champ Bailey has yet to play because of a left foot injury he suffered in mid-August and cornerback Tony Carter suffered an ankle injury in Monday night's win -- Webster's already quick progression up the depth chart has been expedited even a little more. And by the time Monday night's game was over, Webster had been in on 25 snaps on defense to go with 18 on special teams. He has shown himself to be both confident in coverage as well as physical when asked to square up and tackle.

Or, in short, he's been exactly who the Broncos thought he was.

"Kayvon has got a lot of swagger," said Broncos safety Rahim Moore. "He's so confident; he's not a rookie to me. I've seen that when he first came into training camp, he's an unbelievable player."

What the Broncos saw in Webster as he closed out his career at South Florida was a cover corner who also led his team in tackles as a senior with 82. And while scouts often lament how much game video they have to wade through to see any cornerbacks in press coverage in college football, where most coordinators prefer to back off in coverage, Webster liked to play it close.

"I think maybe it helped me, that people saw I could match up," Webster said. "I

want to be able to do whatever they ask me to do."

For his part, Bailey has seen plenty rookies come and go through the years in his decorated career and he has consistently said it takes two things for a rookie cornerback to advance very far past the rookie part. That it takes the confidence in yourself to bounce back from the inevitable tough plays -- "You're matched against some of the best athletes in the world, they're going to score a touchdown sometimes no matter what you do." -- and it takes the willingness to learn and listen.

"It's all about remembering they brought you here for a reason, so you have talent," Bailey said. "But talent is just the start. You have to keep fighting on every play, give up a touchdown, get back and play the next play like you didn't. And know what you're supposed to do, every time. Get in the book, study, because if they don't trust you, they won't play you, guys aren't going to want to play next to you because you decided to do something besides prepare yourself, and then somebody else gets your locker after you're gone."

Webster said his more veteran teammates in the defensive backs' meeting room are constantly dropping "pop quizzes" on him, asking him his assignments in specific situations, simply to see if he is indeed following along.

He also believes those ambush quizzes are at least part of the reason, when the Broncos had a need to fill on the field, Webster has heard his name called.

"They get you ready, they keep you prepared," Webster said. "They ask you questions in front of the whole team, you have to answer them. I want to be able to answer them the best I can, I don't want them looking at me thinking I didn't stay on top of it. But I just listen all the time. And then if you have a question, ask it, ask Champ, ask Chris [Harris], we're a pretty tight group, you can go to them without any problem. So, yeah, listen, study, ask questions and get answers, that's how I'm doing it right now."

Unheralded Kayvon Webster makes his mark on Broncos special teams, filling in at nickel

By Mike Klis
The Denver Post
September 26, 2013

Maybe the ever-expanding subculture of draftnik geeks do have lives.

They all whiffed on Kayvon Webster. Small school. Losing football program. No picks.

If the stereotype were true, and all those bloggers, fast talkers and big-haired draft overanalyzers really did spend all day in dark rooms watching film, they would not have overlooked that Webster represents the new breed of bigger, stronger cornerback.

The Broncos didn't miss him.

"We talked to him at the combine," said Broncos secondary coach Cory Undlin. "We wound up working him out. Off the tape, you watch 45 guys, the athleticism he had, the fact he was physical — his physical play stood out."

One doesn't have to be a draftnik to see that now. In the Broncos' fourth and final preseason game against Arizona, Webster was lucky he didn't get fined for the three punishing hits he delivered.

And when nickel back Tony Carter went down with an ankle injury Monday night against the Oakland Raiders, Webster, a cornerback who has 4.34-second speed in the 40-yard dash, went in and delivered two more shoulder-popping blows.

"I played linebacker in high school," Webster said. "That's probably where I got it from. It stuck with me."

If Carter's ankle and Champ Bailey's foot need another week to recover, Webster will be the Broncos' nickel cornerback Sunday at home against the Philadelphia Eagles.

"If not, I'll do my thing on special teams," Webster said.

"Guys on the sideline are licking their chops to play," said linebacker Wesley Woodyard. "Kayvon, he's been doing that since the preseason. I've been watching

him knock people out. He's a good corner, and I think he's going to be one of the best corners eventually, in the future."

John Elway, the Broncos' boss of football operations, put out word to his scouts, coaches and administrative assistants that he wanted bigger corners.

"Elway said that?" Webster said.

Yep.

"Why's that?"

Elway has said he didn't like throwing against them during his quarterback days. And look at what the Seattle Seahawks are doing with Richard Sherman and Brandon Browner. Size is relative, and at 5-foot-11, 198 pounds, Webster is a good-sized corner. Bailey weighed 184 pounds when he was drafted out of Georgia. He's at 192 now.

When Webster was drafted in the third round — a good round or four higher than the draft blog sites projected — the Broncos had followed Elway's orders and completed Phase I of their big-corner transition.

"We have," Undlin said. "We got Dominique (Rodgers-Cromartie in free agency). It's obviously a bonus to have bigger guys because of the way offenses are now built. You see how big these receivers are now."

When Webster grew up in the Miami area, one of his best childhood friends was Stedman Bailey, who became a star receiver at West Virginia. Two picks after the Broncos took Webster at No. 90 overall in the third round, the St. Louis Rams took Bailey. Kenbrell Thompkins, a New England rookie who caught two touchdown passes from Tom Brady last week, also was part of the neighborhood.

"We played a lot of backyard football together growing up," Webster said.

Webster was recruited by Alabama, Florida, LSU and Miami, among others. He went to South Florida, where he played a ton, but didn't win a lot.

Since joining the Broncos, Webster didn't get many reps during the offseason practices, but by the end of the preseason, he had come a long way.

"Everything I tell him, he listens and applies everything," Champ Bailey said. "He's tough. He plays hard. Smart. Wants to be great. Everything you want. He never complains, either."

Bailey Loves Webster's Attitude

Rookie CB Kayvon Webster wants to do whatever it takes to get on the field and contribute. And Champ Bailey said that's what he loves about him.

Gray Caldwell
DenverBroncos.com
Jul 10, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- Champ Bailey has been to 12 Pro Bowls -- the most of any defensive back in NFL history. So it's no surprise when a young cornerback lists him as an idol.

Third-round pick Kayvon Webster is no different.

"When I used to go to practice in college, I used to always come tell everyone that, 'Champ Bailey is here,'" Webster said in May. "He's my favorite corner. It's just a blessing to be able to be on a team with him."

But Webster isn't just settling for excitement to be on Bailey's team. He's taking full advantage of the opportunity.

Bailey said he and the rookie have had some one-on-one sessions, and Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie said Webster has stayed after practice with him to go over that day's work.

"He made sure he sat right next to Champ in the meetings," Secondary Coach Cory Undlin said last month. "He understands the situation that he's in, especially now to be with a guy like Champ and Dominique and now you've got Quentin Jammer in there. You've got three guys who have been in the league a long time. What an opportunity for that kid to be in that room and learn from three very, very successful players."

Rodgers-Cromartie said Webster "has really been putting in the time," something he hasn't always seen in younger players entering the league.

Defensive Coordinator Jack Del Rio has noticed the same thing and has seen all of Webster's extra work, both with his teammates and coaches, paying off.

"You can tell he's very serious in his approach," Del Rio said in June. "He really wants to be a good player. He comes in with size and speed. Comes from a smaller school, so maybe a little raw in terms of understanding concepts, but he's coming

fast and he works very hard at it. So it will be fun to watch him as we get into camp as well."

During the initial rookie minicamp, Webster said he hoped his physicality -- which he believes comes from playing linebacker in high school -- could help him come in and make plays right away, whether that comes on defense or special teams.

That desire to get on the field no matter what is a trait that Bailey has appreciated.

"He is one of those guys that is here to play and learn as much as he can," he said. "He knows he is going to have to fight his way to get on the field, but when it comes down to it, he is going to do whatever it takes."

"I love that about him."

Broncos rookie Kayvon Webster modeled his game after Champ Bailey

Arnie Stapleton
The Associated Press
May 12, 2013

ENGLEWOOD Whenever cornerback Kayvon Webster arrived at practice at South Florida, he'd proclaim, 'Champ Bailey's here. '

Now he'll get to say that for real.

When the Denver Broncos selected him in the third round of the draft, Webster said he wanted a locker right next to his idol so he could pick the brain of the perennial Pro Bowler.

Instead, he got a locker right across from Bailey when he arrived at the team's Dove Valley complex for a three-day rookie camp.

'That's still a good spot, ' Webster said.

Besides, he added, 'we're going to be on the field together. '

And in meetings.

'It's just a blessing to be on the team with him, ' Webster said, 'and I'm looking forward to getting coached by him, as well as by my position coach. '

On Saturday, secondary coach Cory Undlin kept noting how pleased he was with Webster's clean technique during drills, and coordinator Jack Del Rio said after practice that he likes Webster's work ethic.

'You can see he's eager to get going and understands he's got a lot of work to do, ' Del Rio said.

The Broncos added Webster and free agent Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie this offseason to a stellar group of cornerbacks that includes incumbents Bailey, who's entering his 15th season, Chris Harris, Tony Carter and Omar Bolden.

A shade under 6 feet and 200 pounds, Webster represents a new breed of cornerback coveted by NFL teams who want bigger, stronger and sometimes faster players to cover taller tight ends and beefier wide receivers that are all the rage.

A linebacker in high school, Webster was converted to cornerback at South Florida and started emulating Bailey.

He did a pretty good impression of him, too.

Webster burst onto the national scene with a 96-yard fumble return for a touchdown in South Florida's season-opening win at Notre Dame his junior season, and he kept adding to his resume ever since.

'We saw a guy with great speed, ' said Matt Russell, the Broncos' director of player personnel, noting Webster ran the 40-yard dash in an impressive 4.3 seconds.

'Great cover skills. The thing that stood out to us about Kayvon was his physicality against the run game. Very tough. We feel like we've got a safety playing corner that can also cover. '

'And I would also add, not only that, but the size, ' said Broncos front office boss John Elway. 'I think if you look at the receivers and the tight ends in the game these days, it's that size is imperative at the corner position. It's very difficult to find size as well as speed in the same guy, and we were able to find that in Kayvon.'

Webster said he's never thought of himself as this new breed of cornerback, 'but I'm willing to step up to the challenge to be able to cover tight ends as well as stepping into the box to tackle running backs. '

He said he got his physical nature from playing linebacker in high school, where he also was a wide receiver. He realized during the recruiting season that college coaches viewed him as a defensive back, however.

'It wasn't a surprise. I was undersized as a linebacker in high school; I was 180. I had the speed of a corner, ' Webster said. 'My first offer came from South Carolina; Steve Spurrier, he asked me to play corner. And then that triggered into my mind that at the next level, I would be in the secondary, whether that was at safety or corner.

'I just had my mind focused on being the best at whatever position they put me at.'

When he got to South Florida, he was moved to cornerback and that's when he really began modeling his game after Bailey.

'He's very good in the man-to-man skills. I'm not up to his level yet. But with his coaching, I will be. I'm just building my confidence as the day goes on, ' Webster said.

When the veterans return for a three-day camp with the rookies later this month, Webster will once again get to proclaim, 'Champ Bailey's here. '

Only, this time, he'll mean it.

'I love Champ, ' Webster said. 'Favorite corner. '

Notes: Webster said he picked jersey No. 36 because 'I thought of 36 as me being a third-round pick, and I wore 6 in college. ' ... The Broncos have been practicing on their turf field but hope to return to the grass for their next camp May 20-22 now that the installation of new sod and heating system is complete. ... T Winston Painter was the first of Denver's seven draft picks to sign a contract - \$2,277,000 over four years - on the eve of the rookie camp. 'I wanted to get that out of the way so I could focus more on the playing part aside from the business part, ' he said.

LB Roots Fuel Webster's Physicality

Cornerback Kayvon Webster credited his physical mindset with his background as a high school linebacker.

Stuart Zaas
DenverBroncos.com
May 10, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. – If you combine the speed of a wide receiver with the physicality of a linebacker, you probably end up with a pretty good football player.

That's what the Broncos are counting on with third-round draft pick Kayvon Webster, who converted from a linebacker/wide receiver in high school to a physical cornerback at the University of South Florida.

"I started playing cornerback when I got to college," Webster said. "I had never played that until I stepped on USF's campus. Until then, I had played wide receiver and linebacker at the same time."

That position change didn't come as a shock to the 5-11, 198-pound player, who realized he didn't have the size to play linebacker at the Division-I level.

Many of the recruiting scouting services projected Webster as a safety. Rivals.com ranked him the 28th-best safety in the country while Scout.com had him pegged at No. 29 among safeties.

But it was a college coach that opened Webster's eyes to the possibility of playing cornerback.

"It wasn't a surprise," he said. "I was undersized as a linebacker. In high school I was 180 (pounds) and I had the speed of a corner. My first offer came from South Carolina, Steve Spurrier, he had asked me to play corner. That triggered it into my mind that at the next level, I'd be in the secondary, whether at safety or at corner. I just had my mind focused on being the best at it, whichever position they put me in."

At South Florida, Webster excelled as a versatile cornerback who could play in coverage as well as step up and help against the run.

He totaled 136 tackles with 8.5 of those coming behind the line of scrimmage during his college career. As a senior, he led the team with 82 tackles to go with a pair of sacks, four tackles for loss and three forced fumbles.

"I think my physical nature came from when I was younger," Webster said. "I played linebacker in high school. I always was inside the box and I always had to tackle so I think that's where I get my tackling skills from. I pride myself in making the play."

While he is still getting used to the nuances of playing the cornerback position, Webster welcomes the challenge of competing at the NFL level. Whether it's covering a speedy wideout, playing inside against a tight end or stepping up in the run game, Webster plans to help in any way the coaches ask of him.

"I'm willing to step up to the challenge of being able to cover tight ends as well as stepping into the box to tackle running backs," Webster said. "I'm going to try to be the best corner I can be for them and contribute to the team as best as possible."

Ball, Webster Perfect Fits in Denver

RB Montee Ball and CB Kayvon Webster grew up Broncos fans. Now they're excited to bring their talents to Denver in 2013.

Gray Caldwell
DenverBroncos.com
Apr 27, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- For Montee Ball and Kayvon Webster, simply being drafted was a dream come true.

But to be drafted by the team they grew up rooting for?

"I'm going to do my best to try to find some words to describe this," Ball said. "Honestly, when the phone call came in I kind of went back to when I was 7 years old, watching the team that I always wanted to play for, and now finally the dream is now reality. It was an emotional time for me and my family, but we're blessed and very grateful, and now it's time to get to work."

Webster, like Ball, considered himself part of Broncos Country growing up. The player in particular he idolized was Champ Bailey. He would even announce himself during practices at South Florida by shouting, "Champ Bailey is here!"

Now he has a chance to play alongside the future Hall-of-Famer.

"It's going to be a blessing to be here with Champ Bailey (and) the history that I shared with Denver," Webster said. "I hope I can get my locker next to Champ so I can pick his brain; that would be kind of cool."

Familiarity with the Broncos went a step further for Ball, who met with the club for a formal interview at the NFL Scouting Combine.

He said he already knew who was going to be in the interview room, starting with Executive Vice President of Football Operations John Elway. Just shaking his hand before the interview was a memorable moment for the running back.

Learning under Denver's coaching staff is the next aspect that Ball is anticipating.

"I think the coaching staff here is amazing," he said. "A lot of players before me at Wisconsin are texting me now telling me how much they would love to have played

here, or once they were free agents they would love to play here, because of the chemistry between the coaches."

Both players said they already feel welcome at Dove Valley -- Webster said he already received a text from quarterback Peyton Manning.

"He texted me last night, told me it's time to work," he said. "So if Peyton texts me, 'It's time to work,' it's time to work."

As for what the Broncos got in their day-two picks, Webster described himself as a cornerback that will do whatever his coach asks of him.

He played inside for his first two years of college as he transitioned to the position - he played wide receiver and linebacker in high school. As he gained more experience, he moved outside.

"If he wants me to go on the line, I'll make that my full obligation and be aggressive on the line and do what he coached me to do," Webster said of Head Coach John Fox.

For Ball, he said he always has room for improvement, simply because he "strive(s) to be the best." But in particular he's proud of his ability to pass block, a talent he honed when Russell Wilson took over at quarterback for Wisconsin.

He'll have to do plenty more of it protecting Manning.

"I understand how important it is to protect the quarterback," he said. "I believe that it's one thing that a running back needs to focus on a lot. I think it's one of the easiest ways to keep your job as a running back is to be that guy to protect the quarterback, so that's what I'm going to make sure that I do.

As for his much-discussed college workload -- Ball racked up 663 carries the last two years -- the running back said it's not a concern because of how well he takes care of his body.

"For me, my saying is, 'My body is a temple,'" he said. "The NFL is about availability.

Whenever they need you now, they need you. So I make sure to take care of my body — cold tub, stretch, all that stuff, so I'm healthy for the game."

Saturday was the rookies' first day at team headquarters, and it only served to get them more excited to get things started.

"I'm just ready to get to working and excited to go out there and compete," Webster said.

Combine Performance Boosts Webster to Broncos

Cornerback Kayvon Webster improved his stock by flashing speed and strength in his pre-draft performances.

Sam Davis
DenverBroncos.com
Apr 26, 2013

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. -- Denver's second-round pick -- running back Montee Ball -- grew up a Terrell Davis fan.

The club's third round pick -- cornerback Kayvon Webster -- grew up a Champ Bailey fan. Both were avid Broncos enthusiasts.

"I love Champ," Webster said. "Favorite corner."

Webster went on to say that the Broncos' 1998 Super Bowl team was what first attracted him to the game of football. Now, the former South Florida Bull joins the team as the 90th overall selection in the 2013 NFL Draft, with a strong showing at the combine boosting his stock to within the top 100 picks.

"Kayvon is a fast and explosive player who had great production during his career at South Florida," Head Coach John Fox said. "He was one of the faster cornerbacks in the draft with sub-4.4 speed, and he will be a great addition to our team."

Webster credited his performances at the NFL Combine and the East-West Shrine Bowl for earning a third-round selection.

"I think it helped me out tremendously," Webster said. "I think the East-West Shrine helped me out as much as the combine because I showcased my talents."

NFL Network Analyst Mike Mayock agreed, saying that Webster "opened some eyes at the East-West game."

Knowing Webster was still available as the 90th pick approached, Fox said the staff was content at staying put and neglecting to trade up or down. Webster has the qualities that the Broncos were seeking.

"We were very pleased he was there," Fox said. "He's 5'10" and-a-half, 195 (pounds), he's got great short quickness. Probably one of the fastest corners in the draft. We felt good about his upside and what evidence he put on tape."