

Safety Will Parks is eager for the Broncos' important offseason

By Mackenzie Brecker
Mile High Sports
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Heading into his third season, Broncos safety Will Parks is looking forward to eventually meeting his soon-to-be new teammates while also working hard to become a starter.

In an interview with Danny Williams and Benny Bash on Mile High Sports AM 1340 | FM 104.7, Parks shared his take on what decisions the Broncos could make in the upcoming draft, and how the current players are working hard to stay strong.

"I mean that's what the front office is for — we have one of the best in the league, one of the best quarterbacks to play here, like a legend here. John Elway, he makes all the right decisions. We know what they're going to do in the front office, you know we've got people to try and get the right people in our organization, and we're pretty excited," Parks said.

Adding a no-doubt starting quarterback is one of the Broncos' top priorities, and Parks wants someone who will always be on their game. "Let me tell you something, the biggest thing that I noticed in this league is that when things are going well, you still have to be prepared to make the right decision at all times, and that's as simple as it gets," Parks said.

However, Parks is also confident in the Broncos' current team members, and he believes that they are training hard to improve — and to flip the script from a season that saw them finish a disappointing 5-11.

"Paxton Lynch [is] out there training in Florida or wherever he's at he's getting it [done] right now. I've seen Trevor Siemian in the physical training room about two days ago; he's getting his shoulder right. There's a lot of good things going on with the quarterback that we have now, but like I said, the front office will definitely be the ones that decide," Parks said.

Parks is also looking to improve his play. He has also been training and working hard to improve his skills, and hopes to challenge for a starting position as soon as this fall. He knows that there is a lot of work to come, but overall, he is just thankful to be a Bronco.

"I'm here now though, so I'm blessed in this opportunity each and every day. I pray to be able to wake up and go be a Denver Bronco, be in the National Football League and being able to represent my family in that way. As long as I'm here, as long as I'm alive and doing what I love, I really can't complain," Parks said.

[Click here to listen to the full interview with Will Parks, including his tale of a recent experience with teammate Derek Wolfe and his opinion on the Nuggets, or listen to the podcast below.](#)

Broncos Q&A with Will Parks: Second-year safety eager to return to home city

By Nick Kosmider
The Denver Post
November 4, 2017

There's no mistaking the love Will Parks has for his home city. Philly Will, as the Broncos' second-year safety is known, bleeds Philadelphia. The city's blue-collar mentality, he attests, is what's helped carry him to the NFL and into a prominent spot on one of the league's top defenses. So has his family back home. Parks has collected 20 tickets for friends and relatives to come see him play against the Eagles on Sunday, and he knows he'll hear them on the field, no matter where they are sitting. Parks, in an interview edited for length, spoke to The Denver Post this week about returning home, his favorite local haunts and his journey from the City of Brotherly Love to the NFL.

Q: When you first saw the schedule come out for this season and saw a trip to Philadelphia on it, what was the feeling?

A: "It was a dream come true to play against the home team. When I'd seen that, man, words can't describe what I was feeling. I was just excited. That's what popped up. I was even more excited about playing against them. That's a team that passed up on me (in the 2016 NFL draft), and I actually talked with them (before the draft). It's going to be very emotional for me. We're going there to get a win, first and foremost."

Q: You say you weren't necessarily a fan of the Eagles, but did you go to games?

A: "I've never been to an Eagles game. I've only been to one Phillies game. My cousin Malcolm took me. Other than that, I've never been down to "The Linc." I've been to Wells Fargo Arena (home of the NBA's 76ers) about one time. Being from the city, none of us really went to Eagles games. We were always just trying to stay out of trouble, trying to make it, trying to go to school. We didn't really have time to get tickets. If we did, we won them for free. It's going to be special."

Q: What's going to be most special about playing at home?

A: "When I was coming out for college, I had an offer from Temple. Then there were issues as far as people saying I was too slow, too stiff. I ended up going to Arizona and then coming here. The Eagles ended up being on the schedule and I have my opportunity to show not just them, but a lot of people, they shouldn't have passed up on me."

Q: So settle the debate: what's the best cheesesteak place in Philly?

A: I'm getting a lot of questions about that. The best cheesesteak for me, where I live, it's called Max's. It's on Broad and Erie. Then you have Ishkabibble's on South Street. Then you have Dalessandro's, which is actually on the corner of where I played little league football for the Wissahickon Braves. So I might get a chance to go up and see them play for a little bit on Saturday when we've got some time off. I might go up there and visit my old stomping grounds.

(Parks went on to talk more about his love for Philadelphia's cuisine.)

A: "Lorenzo's has a pizza that is the size of, like, three footballs. Philadelphia has great food, great people, great places to shop. It's got a lot of landmarks. You have the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, City Hall, Penn's Landing, Delaware Avenue. There's so many things in Philly that is out there. It's going to be nice."

Will Parks, the Swiss Army Knife of the Broncos defense, growing comfortable with multiple roles

By Nick Kosmider
The Denver Post
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The Swiss Army Knife of the Broncos defense is drawing imaginary lines through the air inside the locker room. Will Parks is taking a visitor inside the mind of an all-purpose NFL safety, a position with diverse responsibilities that require, at least in his case, unusual study habits.

“I don’t use flash cards, but at home I have notes all over the place,” Parks said as he began pantomiming his note-taking process. “I’ve got this personnel here and this personnel here, but I attach it and I’ve got lines drawn all over. But this might refer to this, so now I have a line and an arrow I draw over here. As the week goes, I clear it all up. But for every page (of notes most players take), I’ve got four or five. It’s crazy, but I enjoy it.”

Catch all that?

As Parks sharply scribbled lines and arrows with his finger, it conjured the image of a mathematician blanketing a blackboard with equations that draw on multiple formulas to solve. In a way, this is the job description for the second-year safety out of Arizona, a player whose physical makeup and defensive talent have landed him perhaps the most complex job on the Broncos defense. In any given game, Parks will be used in nearly a half-dozen ways on defense. His position has been called a spur, a hybrid and many other names that essentially describe a player who must be ready to help just about anywhere.

“Willy Parks (has) had a bunch on his plate,” Broncos coach Vance Joseph said. “He’s playing base safety. He’s our big corner in packages. He’s also playing dime. He’s doing a lot more than (starting safety) Justin (Simmons) as far as assignments, and he’s done a good job. It hasn’t been perfect, but he’s fully engaged. He’s a tough guy, and every game he’s improved.”

Parks had five tackles and a pass defended in Denver’s recent victory over the Raiders, and a closer look at a few of the plays he made provide a window into how much is asked of him.

— First quarter, third-and-8. Parks is lined up in the slot in front of Oakland’s top wide receiver, Amari Cooper. Raiders quarterback Derek Carr sees what he views as a mismatch, but as Cooper breaks toward the sideline on a deep out route, Parks follows in stride and knocks the ball away, forcing a punt.

— Second quarter, third-and-6. Parks is in the slot again, this time covering tight end Jared Cook. He sags off in coverage, then breaks on Cook as he catches the ball 1-yard short of the first-down marker, bringing up fourth down.

— Next play, fourth-and-1. Parks is essentially a third inside linebacker, lined up just inside of edge rusher Shaq Barrett. At the snap, Parks detects that he’s unaccounted for. He bursts through a gap and takes down Marshawn Lynch just as he reaches the line of scrimmage, giving the Broncos a turnover on downs.

— Third quarter, third-and-14. Parks is playing dime 'backer and is tasked with zone responsibilities. At the snap, cornerback Aqib Talib is lined up on Cooper, who drags across the middle. Once Cooper crosses the middle of the formation, Parks takes over the coverage for Talib. Carr believes he has a window as Talib trails off the coverage, but by the time Cooper catches the ball, Parks is on top of him for a tackle that stops the play after a 1-yard gain.

And so it goes for Parks, who has, in 154 snaps, been in coverage 113 times, assigned to run defense 30 times and has been a pass rusher 11 times, according to Pro Football Focus. Parks plays with a physicality that belies his 6-foot-1, 194-pound frame. His upper-body strength gives him an edge playing the run against the tight ends assigned to block him, as evidenced by his takedown of Lynch, when he brushed off late attempts to block him.

"He's a huge reason why we're so good in the run game, being able to come down and fill those gaps where we need him," Broncos linebacker Shane Ray said. "To see him grow as a player is very exciting."

Parks honed his coverage skills at Arizona, where playing the "spur" linebacker-safety hybrid often meant sticking with some of the Pac-12's quickest receivers in the slot. But the growth that Parks has shown in his second NFL season has been founded on understanding the philosophy of what the Broncos are trying to accomplish defensively. Having so many roles means he's had to develop a fundamental understanding of nearly every position, and that's required an increased dedication to his craft.

"It's six or seven hours here, and when I go home, I always watch (film) for an extra hour or two," Parks said. "When I go home, I eat and rest for about an hour, take a little break just to get mind away from it and then go back to it. Basically, every day I'm in my iPad just going over it. For me, every position I play is nothing but details.

"When it comes to studying, I have a set amount of time and a set amount of notes that I write. It works out for me throughout the week. By the time game time comes, and I see something, I know I wrote it down and I know what's coming."

Will Parks Q&A: Broncos' rookie safety made quick mark, all the way from Philly

By Cameron Wolfe

Denver Post

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Q. You had your first pick a couple weeks ago. How are the first few weeks of the season going for you?

A: It's going good. Just getting a couple games under your belt, getting your feet wet. We ended the first quarter of the season and got ready for the second quarter. Just keeping focused and keeping your body healthy and keeping the main thing the main thing and that's getting W's.

Q. You played football most of your life, so this isn't new to you. But that first NFL game, tell me how nervous you were.

A: It wasn't so much me being nervous, as me being blessed. Like, 'Wow, I'm really out here. I was just watching the kickoff last season.' I just finished the college game and now I'm a part of something like this. It doesn't get better than that. They're paying us for this! It's what you dream of since you're little. It's what a lot of kids dream about. To be able to live the dream you've had all your life, nothing can beat that.

Q. Off the field, what's the favorite thing you've found in Denver?

A: Believe it or not, the people. I tell everybody. My family members who come into town for the games, they're like, 'What's the No. 1 thing you like?' I say the people. The people here are so free and so open. You don't see too many bad things going on in Denver, not that I know of. If you were outside looking in on it, you wouldn't understand how deep Denver is as far as the people, the culture, the community. So many people know who you are. So many people want the best for you. It don't get no better than that.

Q. How difficult is it getting used to the altitude?

A: Man, I ain't used to this yet. It will probably take me a year. But I'm definitely getting acclimated to it. Slowly, but surely.

Q. What's the most difficult part of playing in the cold?

A: I've been playing in the cold since I was little. Not the last four years in Arizona. But I got definitely got a couple cold games when we played Washington. My sophomore year, it was so cold up in Seattle, the rain was going up and down, instead of just coming straight down. You would have thought God was bringing the rain back up to him. That's the only time I got cold. Or in the New Mexico Bowl when I played against my little brother (wide receiver Delane Hart-Johnson). It was cold there too. But that's football. As long as I've got the Vaseline on, I'm straight.

Q. Thinking back, what's the favorite play you've made in your life?

A: In college, I had a hit against Oregon State, I had the 70-yard interception against Justin Simmons my sophomore year. But in high school I caught a bubble against, whew, Furness High School down in South Philly. The dude was on me, so he basically read the bubble. I juked him. I cut inside. There were two people coming from the outside. I juked back outside. It was similar to the play Sunshine (Jordan Taylor) made (against Tampa Bay), but with more people. I juked the whole team. I can show you. You can go on YouTube. Type in: "Will Parks senior film." At 6:38 seconds, that play is about to come up. You'll see it. That's when I was playing receiver, playing slot. That play was dirty. I watch that play a lot, just to make sure when I do get that interception, I do return it and that's what will happen.

Q. I talked to you earlier this summer when you first got drafted about Philly and what this means back there, the love you've been getting back home watching you.

A: It's definitely been tremendous as far as how many people actually see you do your thing. It's mind-blowing knowing that the whole city is watching your every move. Not just on the football field, but what I post on social media, as far as my community aspects. Just show them that there are different ways to get where you want to be.

Broncos safety Will Parks is a source of motivation for all of North Philadelphia

By Cameron Wolfe

DenverPost.com

May 9, 2016

If you experience Will Parks' inspiring personality, toothy smile and love for his craft, it's hard to imagine that where the Broncos safety came from is an entirely different ballgame.

North Philadelphia isn't a fertile ground for breeding success. Instead, it's a natural home for drug dealing, gangs and violence. It's a lot easier for young black men to join the street life than it is to get to college.

Parks made sure he was an exception to the rule.

"When my dad put that football in my hand, it was just like, 'This is your tool. This is your way out. This is a way to make a better life for yourself,' " Parks said.

He remembers the freezing winters in an apartment with no heat. He was one of the rare kids in the area who grew up with a supportive mother and father, but that didn't make it easy. People don't grow up in North Philly without picking up the toughness that the city demands.

His parents did provide him with a set a role models who didn't allow him to succumb to being a statistic. People in his neighborhood quickly saw his potential, invested in him and pointed him toward school and the gym.

That's what made April 30 so special for Parks.

When he heard his name called as the 219th pick in the NFL draft by the Broncos, in the sixth round, his emotions took over. All his hard work seemed to pay off.

Success was never just an option for Parks. Defying the odds was the only way he could make it. He's not stopping now.

"I don't want it. I need it," Parks said. "This is the only thing I have in life for me. I'd probably be at home flipping McDonald's burgers if I didn't have this opportunity right now."

In 2012, Parks was a part of the second-to-last graduating class at Germantown High School, one of a growing list of Philadelphia public schools closing because of students choosing safer schools. Soon, he'll be the first male college graduate in his family.

The outpouring of texts and Twitter mentions from people in his hometown thanking him for the motivation has left him speechless. He told them they motivate him even more. He's a trailblazer and didn't even know it.

If Will Parks, from North Philly, can make it to the NFL, maybe one more high school kid will choose chasing his football dreams over selling drugs.

Parks' background and passion translate in his play. The football staff at Arizona knew him as a workout warrior with superb football intelligence.

The 6-foot-1, 194-pounder's strength on the field is his versatility. He was primarily a slot cornerback in 2014 but switched to a safety-linebacker hybrid in 2015, when he was the Wildcats' leading tackler.

He and new roommate Justin Simmons, a third-round pick and fellow safety, have an opportunity to provide depth behind Darian Stewart and T.J. Ward in a star-studded secondary. Both have a good chance of making the team after the departures of David Bruton and Omar Bolden in free agency.

"We don't go toward the box safety that much where you can only play inside," defensive coordinator Wade Phillips said. "The way we pick safeties, basically (the Broncos go with) guys that are versatile."

The buzz word all offseason for the Broncos has been versatility. Parks has the speed (4.52 seconds in the 40-yard dash at his pro day) and the strength (22 repetitions of 225 pounds in the bench press) to play anywhere in the secondary.

Parks played on all the special-teams units in college. He will have to impress there again to make an impact on a deep Broncos roster. He looked up to former NFL stars Sean Taylor and Ed Reed growing up but said Broncos safety Ward has caught his eyes recently.

Now, if Parks makes the team, Parks will play with Ward.

Parks file

A closer look at Broncos safety Will Parks:

Size: 6-foot-1, 194 pounds

College: Arizona

Hometown: Philadelphia

Honors: All-Pac-12 honorable mention in 2015; was on Jim Thorpe and Chuck Bednarik awards watch lists.