



DENVER BRONCOS QUOTES

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DENVER BRONCOS QUOTES – AFC COACHES BREAKFAST AT ANNUAL NFL MEETINGS (3/28/17)

HEAD COACH VANCE JOSEPH

On his thoughts when he heard Gary Kubiak was retiring

“I was real concerned for Gary’s health. Obviously being with Gary in Houston and watching the first episode, that was scary in the first half of a football game on national TV. I was a little concerned to be honest.”

On conversations he had with Kubiak

“We talked before my playoff game going into Pittsburgh. He was at his ranch and he was feeling better, but he thought it was time for a break. Having his family, having his wife, he wanted to be healthy for life. That was important.”

On when he first talked with the Broncos

“I didn’t talk to those guys until after the playoff game in Pittsburgh. We played on a Saturday. We flew back and my agent got a call from [Executive Vice President of Football Operations/GM] John [Elway] I think Sunday or even Monday morning. I flew out on Tuesday if I’m not mistaken.”

On his most eye-opening experience as a head coach

“It’s been the non-football issues. That’s the biggest difference. As a football coach, you spend your entire day doing football and doing players. As a head coach, that’s probably 10 percent of your day. That’s the biggest difference. I’m spending more time with scheduling, how we travel, what is the color of the walls, the carpet. Those things I had no idea that fall on my plate. I don’t care. I just want to coach football, but it does fall on your plate. That’s the difference in my opinion.”

On learning from the head coaches he has worked for

“You always draw back on your experiences. That helps. I think this job is based on your experiences. I’ve been with five teams now and every place you go it’s different how you do things. You take those experiences and you try and make them your own. It’s no different when you’re a coordinator on defense. I’ve been with a lot of coordinators and you take all of those packages and you make them one.”

On what about the Broncos appealed to him the most

“It was obvious in my opinion. The Broncos were a job that wasn’t broken. Most jobs that open, it’s a rebuild. The guy was fired for a reason; it wasn’t right. But with this job, they just won a championship the year prior and they won nine games with two rookie quarterbacks. It’s not a broken job. On top of that, you have a great fan base and great management. You’ve got John Elway in the building. To have a chance to acquire a job like that was luck. You’re lucky because most guys that get a first time job, your chance of keeping that job is almost slim to almost none in this day in age. They give you about two or three years to win, and if you don’t win, you’re gone. Having the Broncos job, I have a chance to be there for a while if I do it right.”

On having high expectations in the first season

“That’s OK. Every coach wants to win. Every player wants to win. Everyone expects to win in this league. That is why you see so much turnover. Winning is the priority. That doesn’t bother me. I want those expectations. Again, to have a chance to have a good football team, to have a dominant defense, why not?”

On whether the Broncos job is a dream job

“Every job in this league is a dream job, but for me, being a CU Buff and kind of going back home, that is different. It’s definitely a story you could say.”

On why some outsiders may be slow to embrace a player like QB Trevor Siemian

“Sometimes your draft status. Sometimes not playing every game—not having a full season of fair evaluation. You have to go back and really watch the tape and study Trevor to get a clear sense of how good he was in my opinion. He had seven wins maybe as a starter but you have to go back and really watch the tape and watch how he plays the position. If you ask football coaches about Trevor Siemian they recognize that it takes work to go recognize that.”

On whether Siemian can protect himself better from injuries

“Absolutely he can. That comes with being a young quarterback. You learn that part of when the down has expired get rid of the football and live for the next down. That comes with experience. A couple of those shots he took last year he could have probably prevented.”

On whether he had studied the Broncos’ quarterbacks before interviewing with Denver

“I had no time. I walked to the interview after the playoff game against Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh demolished us so I was in a bad place. I went in Tuesday and I had no time to really study the quarterbacks. I watched a little bit that Monday and flying in on Tuesday but I had no time to study those guys. I knew who Trevor and Paxton were just being around ‘Kub’ (former Head Coach Gary Kubiak) and being with ‘Kub’ in the offseason and [former Defensive Coordinator] Wade [Phillips] and those guys. So I knew about the kids but I didn’t study them at all.”

On the types of rule changes he favors

“With player safety, rule changes are always in my opinion a good thing for the league. We’ve got to coach the game differently and we’ve got to play the game differently so it can last. The defenseless receiver rule is always in my opinion a good one to put in. You can do your job without harming a player. Back when I played the game, that wasn’t the case. We were coached to take guys out. That’s got to change and it has changed in my opinion. Coaches are coaching the game differently. We have to coach the game differently so it can last. We have an understanding about concussions and head injuries. That’s serious, so we can’t discount coaching the game differently.”

On what he has seen on film from Siemian regarding his ceiling

“He hasn’t played enough. If you watch him, when he plays he plays with a calm demeanor. He plays with the ability to not turn the ball over. We’re going to play good defense in Denver. I think what’s going to help Trevor and Paxton is running the football better. That’s going to give us a fair box as far as if they play single-high we’ve got two receivers outside that are Pro Bowl-caliber guys. Now we’ve got 1-on-1s with those corners. Running the football better is going to help both quarterbacks. It’s going to force those guys to load the box—or not load the box and we run the football. That part I’m excited about. But again, the best teams win. I think Trevor and Paxton understand that. Just do your job. Do your job the best you can do and that’s going to be good enough to win football games.”

On what he wants to see form RBs C.J. Anderson and Devontae Booker

“[On] our offensive line, we’ve signed two big guys. We got [G Ron] Leary out of Dallas who in my opinion was the best guard in free agency. He’s going to bring an attitude and culture of being a good offensive line. That’s important for us. [T Menelik] Watson is a young player with huge upside. He’s played left and right tackle. He’s got a basketball background so he’s a heck of an athlete for a big guy. Again, Oakland’s O-Line last year, they ran the football on their terms. So those two guys are going to bring a different attitude to our offensive line. It starts there. We have to block better up front. C.J. is very capable. Even Booker in the last month of the season showed what he can do. So we have two backs that will run downhill but we’ve got to block better up front and we will.”

On T Menelik Watson's injury history

"That's a concern but that's year-to-year with guys. Some guys have bad luck and some guys come out of that. So hopefully he comes out of that. He's in Denver right now training. He's a big man and he's a fun guy to be around so hopefully he becomes healthy and plays for us."

On Cowboys QB Tony Romo

"Romo is a non-issue. He's under contract. For us it's a non-issue. We haven't had one meeting about Romo. We've got these two young guys that we're focused on right now. Absolutely, moving forward in the draft or free agency we have to acquire one more quarterback because of the reps that are going to be taken during the spring and the fall. But as far as Romo, that's a non-issue for us."

On whether he would like the third quarterback to be a veteran

"It depends. If it's a veteran and he's going to be our third, that makes no sense in my opinion. We've got two guys and it's going to be a competition. That's going to make both guys better. Whoever wins the job is going to ply for us but that guy behind him is going to get better through the competition. We've got those two young guys that we're happy with. One is going to start and one is going to be that second guy."

On whether a third quarterback could come in to compete for the starting job

"Right now, today, we've got two quarterbacks in our building that are going to be one and two. We have to add a third in some capacity. Now could that third outplay our one and two? if he's that good, absolutely. But right now, we have a one and two in our building."

On if the Broncos have interest in QB Colin Kaepernick

"We have not discussed him. Obviously he's been a good player in the past but we have not discussed him."

On the challenges of taking over a historically great defense

"My system comes from Wade. I was with Wade in Houston. I was with Mike Nolan—who learned from Wade—in San Fran. I was with Billy Davis in San Fran who learned from Wade. I was with Greg Manusky in San Fran who learned from Wade. So my belief system is Wade's. So I'm walking into a defense that I'm very familiar with. We're not going to change the structure of the defense. With that being said, we can add some things to make us better in my opinion. But the system is not going to change."

On Defensive Coordinator Joe Woods

"It's Joe's system. It's not broken. We've been No. 1 in pass defense for two years in a row. That's Joe. That's Joe's group and that's hard to do in this league. It's a passing league. It's Joe's system. he's going to call it and he's ready to call it."

On his defensive style compared to Phillips

"I'm not Wade. Players love playing for Wade. He's an easy-going guy. He's the same every day whether you won or lost. Wade is always the same guy. But in my past, players have also loved playing for me also. I'm a different style than Wade but I've maximized players also. But again, Joe [Woods] is the coordinator. Joe has coached the secondary which has a lot of personalities back there. Those guys believe in Joe. So I don't see any issues with those guys playing for Joe Woods. It's going to be a good thing. He's been with that same group for two years and that back end kind of leads that defense. So we'll have great support from the secondary that he's coached the last two years."

On what makes the secondary so great

"It's an engaged group. You watch every game and those guys are ready to roll. It comes from the safeties. It comes from [S] T.J. [Ward] and [S Darian] Stewart. Those guys are on every day. To be a great secondary in this league you've got to be on every day."

On if the defense can make it easier on an offense

"It definitely helps but I don't want that. I want an offense that scores points. I don't want an offense that leans on our defense to win the games for us. I don't want that. I told [Offensive Coordinator] Mike [McCoy] when I hired him—I said, 'Mike, I want you to go score points. Whoever is our quarterbacks, let's score as many points as we can and our defense is going to play behind you.' We can't go into it thinking they are going to rescue our offense every game. That's a bad way to go into the season. I want those

guys to be aggressive. I want them to attack defenses and score as many points as they can. Now, if they can't—defense, help us. But their mindset just has to be, be aggressive and score points."

On if he is looking for a fourth cornerback and whether CB Lorenzo Doss can fill that role

"Having a fourth corner is important. Losing [CB] Kayvon [Webster], that was huge for us because Kayvon is a luxury that they had for three years. Kayvon is a big guy. He's a 4.3-40 guy. Your fourth corner is one step from being a starter because most of the downs are sub-downs and you're playing with three corners. So that fourth corner is a priority. Doss is a guy that can do the job but he's got to prove it. He's a young guy. He's a New Orleans guy so he's a favorite of mine (laughing). That's a big role as a fourth corner. He's got great instincts and he has great ball skills so hopefully he can grow into that role."

On how his experiences playing cornerback and quarterback have helped him in coaching

"Playing on offense my entire life, it's helped me. It was hard. I had some hard times in football from college to the pros. I think all of those experiences have helped me understand both sides of the ball. As an offensive guy coaching defense, it was a true advantage. As a defensive guy against offense, it was an advantage. I think having those experiences helped me understand both sides of the ball. As a head coach, you have to understand both sides of the football. It's a hard league. For players, they have to know it's a short-coming league, so put your work in and focus because in a year or two it can be gone. Don't have any regrets with your career. That's the part I think I didn't realize as a young player in the league. Do whatever you can to stay in the league as long as you can because one day it is going to be over."

On getting players to play harder

"The culture in Denver has already been set. It's a culture of winning as far as the overall building. Every year team cultures change. Last year, that culture of playing great defense wasn't the same in the building. I want a culture of transparency of everyone doing their job. We have to get back to just playing football. Reboot this thing and get everyone back to doing their job. If we do that, it's going to be a fun season."

On the two quarterbacks on the roster and what he is looking for in the competition

"They are both so different. Again, Trevor is a guy that plays the game with great awareness. He's good with the football. He can really throw the football. He throws the ball really well. Paxton is a young guy with great upside. He's tall, he's long and he can make plays with his legs. They're so different. Playing quarterback in this league is about decision making. That is important. They both are young guys. They both have to learn that part of playing the game. If they do that, we're going to win football games. It's going to be a great competition in the spring and the fall, and the best man wins."

On the quarterback draft class and potentially finding a third quarterback in the draft

"It's a fairly deep draft. I've watched I'd say 15 quarterbacks. As a third quarterback, it's kind of what you want. It is your preference. Again, that is a work in progress. It could be a young veteran. Why not? I would not perceive it being an older veteran. If it's going to be a veteran, it's going to be a young veteran for us. I wouldn't discount drafting a young quarterback in the draft next month. That's possible. Again, I would focus on those first two. The third is going to fall to us. Whether it is the draft or free agency, that won't be hard to do."

On Elway's role in the quarterback competition

"John is always involved, and I welcome John's experience and John's knowledge of quarterbacks. You've got [Offensive Coordinator] Mike McCoy, [Quarterbacks Coach] Bill Musgrave, [Tight Ends Coach] Geep Chryst, we've got a lot of guys that coached young quarterbacks in this league. We've got three guys on offense that have called plays in this league the last two seasons. We've got a lot of experience as far as identifying what that spot should look like. It's going to be a group effort on picking the quarterback. Again, that guys is going to play and win the job, but it won't be easy and it should not be easy. I'm hoping it's really tough and a really tight race that falls on a group decision."

On whether players that speak their mind like QB Colin Kaepernick bother him

"It does not bother me. You have to give players the right to voice their personal opinions. It does not bother me at all. Colin, you would hope he gets evaluated as a quarterback first and then his personal views can put to the side a little bit."

On whether he is surprised Kaepernick has not been signed

"I'm not surprised in this league. You have Kaepernick and you've got [RB] Adrian Peterson out there. There are lots of veteran players that have played well in the past still on the market. That can be financial issues or just waiting until your roster shakes up to see where those guys fit. I'm not surprised."

On RB Adrian Peterson and whether the Broncos have looked at him

"Maybe we have, you don't know (laughing). Everyone available is going to be explored and researched by our football team. Every guy out there has been talked about in some manner if he can help us. Everyone that we think can help us win, they've been talked about."

On the Raiders relocating to Las Vegas

"I was in San Francisco for six seasons, so I lived in the Bay Area. That's a great fan base for Oakland and for the [Golden State] Warriors. I feel bad for the fans of Oakland. They are losing a great franchise. With that being said, having a chance to move to Las Vegas and a new stadium, it helps the league. Whatever helps the league, I'm on board with. But I do feel bad for the Oakland Raiders fans."

On the Rooney Rule's effect on him getting a head coaching job

"It's a good rule to have in place because you have a chance to make the so-called playing field fair I would think. With that being said, everyone wants to hire who they know. Black or white or whatever nationality, if I know you, I want to interview you. That is what it is about in my opinion. It's never about your skin color. It's more about relationships and who you've worked with in the past. It's a good rule to have in place because you're just checking a box to make sure that everyone is getting a chance to interview for those jobs. I do agree with the rule. It's a fair rule in my opinion."

On whether he sees a benefit in expanding the Rooney Rule to position coaches seeking coordinator jobs

"It could be, but it's all contract issues because you can't leave unless you're going to be a head coach. I think about eight years ago the rules changed if you had an opportunity they couldn't hold you back from being a coordinator. There were so many titles being thrown out—passing game coordinator, assistant head coach—that the rule changed that you can only move to be a head coach. If that rule would change, then I would say yes."

On his philosophy on letting assistant coaches out of their contracts for better opportunities

"Here is my personal belief: If a guy has a chance to advance his career and help his family, I'm not going to stop him. It's as simple as that. It's about your family. It's a job. We feed our families with our job. If you're one of my coaches and someone wants to be a coordinator, I'm not going to stop you. It's as plain and simple as that. How about that? I'm not going to stop you."

"I've always felt that way. To me, it's easy. Most coaches work their entire lives to have a chance to be a coordinator. It's not my right to stop them from being that. If a guy has worked in the league for 20 years and it's his first chance to be a coordinator, that's not my right to stop him from being a coordinator. 'Hey, man. Go. Feed your family. Go chase your dreams.' That's not my right to stop his dream chase. So I think it's wrong."

On how his family is adjusting to Colorado

"I have not gotten out. It's taken a while to get settled. It's a beautiful city. It's grown an awful lot. I'm still using my Waze [app] to get around, which is weird for me, but it's grown so much. I get lost. The family is excited to be back West and it's going to be a good place to live and raise a family."

On if the Broncos would definitively rule out acquiring a player like Romo

"I would say this: It's our overall philosophy to not rule anything out. If a player is available who can help us get better in any area then we're going to research and explore it. That's everyone who becomes available. That's the issue. You can't say, 'Never, never, never.' Right now, today, we're fine with our quarterbacks. Moving forward, if anyone becomes available who can help us get better we're going to explore it."

On Chargers Head Coach Anthony Lynn

“Anthony and I were neighbors in Denver. We were neighbors for about two years so I’ve known Anthony for a long time—and his family. It’s going to be fun. He’s a first-timer, I’m a first-timer and we’re going to play twice a year. It’s going to be fun. We were teammates for training camp in Denver (1997) so I’ve known him for a long time. He’s a good man; he’s a great leader. Obviously I coached against him in Buffalo this year. The first time, I pretty much won the stats battle. The second time, we won the game but he won the stats battle. So it was a good battle. They (Chargers) will be a good football team this year.”

On what Kaepernick does well as a quarterback

“He’s an excellent athlete. When plays broke down, we couldn’t tackle him (with Miami in 2016). That’s the thing with Kaepernick. He’s a quarterback that runs a 4.5 [40]. Those big guys can’t get him to the ground. And he throws the ball fine. He’s a good passer but when you put the zone-read element into a gameplan with a guy like that, that makes it hard to defend.”

On why he thinks Kaepernick isn’t signed by a team

“I don’t really know but it could be numerous issues. He’s a veteran quarterback. His number could be really high. He doesn’t fit certain offensive philosophies. It could be numerous things.”

On wanting your backup quarterback to have a similar skill-set to the starter

“That’s a good question. In a perfect world, you want those guys to be different because from a defensive perspective, when that first guy goes down, your gameplan won’t fit. If they’re the same, your gameplan won’t change. To have a drop-back quarterback and then a zone-read guy as your two, that’s tough because gameday-wise you have no time to adjust your game plan. In a perfect world you want them to be totally different.”

On having talented offensive coaches on whether there could be a concern that there are too many cooks in the kitchen

“Mike McCoy wanted Musgrave and he wanted Geep Chryst. Those were Mike’s hires. Mike had no concern with that issue. Mike has been a head coach, so he gets the big picture. The more good ideas you have, the better you are going to be on Sunday. Our entire staff in my opinion is built that way. Even with Joe [Woods]. On that staff on defense, he is the young guy between [Linebackers Coach] Reggie [Herring] and [Defensive Line Coach] Bill [Kollar] and [Outside Linebackers Coach Fred] Pagac. He’s the young guy. He worked under Pagac in Minnesota as the secondary coach with Pagac as the coordinator. It’s no different on defense. Our two coordinators are embracing the help. They are embracing their veteran staffs. If they do that, we’ll be pretty good on both sides of the ball.”

On Running Backs/Assistant Head coach Eric Stutesville

“Eric’s been there the longest. He’s been there six years, so he knows the locker room. He knows the players in the locker room. That’s Eric’s role outside of coaching the running backs. The pulse of the locker room goes through Eric Stutesville. Eric and [WR Demaryius] Thomas are really, really close. That’s Eric’s role. He’s been in the building, he knows the players very well and he helps me. He’s a very detailed guy. From practice schedules to, ‘Hey, next month, this is coming up; in the past we’ve done this’—he’s kind of a bridge for me from the old to the new. His role is going to be vital for us.”

On what the offense will look like

“It depends on who is in the game. When you build a system offensively or defensively, you kind of build a big room and you put all of your tools inside of it. I think weekly—or by player—you pull things out that fits the player. When you’re building a system it’s not pinpoint what you’re going to do all fall. It’s a big room full of tools and weekly you pull them out. What fits that defense? What fits that player? What fits the scheme? So when I say system it’s an overview of what it’s going to look like. Inside of that, you can adjust very easily.”

On if the offense will be aggressive

“I want it to be aggressive. But, again, that changes weekly. How do you win each game? It’s going to look different sometimes. If we play an explosive offense on the other side of the ball, it may be a little slower. If we are playing at Miami in September it may be a little slower because of the weather. So it will change week-to-week. Mindset-wise, we want to score points—as many as you can. That wins games. If you score, you can win.”

On whether C.J. Anderson will be ready for the first reps of OTAs

“I’m not sure. He’s working in that direction. He’s there every day working, so hopefully. But, he’s a veteran player. If he’s working in OTAs in the middle part of it, we’ll be fine with him in the fall.”

On why the run defense struggled in 2016

“I think the run defense struggled because of the frequency of the run. Our front-seven mechanics—we’ve got to help those guys with different looks. When you play a certain front all the time and an offensive football team has a chance to practice all week—and you show up on Sundays and it looks the same—they are going to move the ball on you. So I think a combination of the frequency of runs and our front-seven mechanics, we’ve got to get better there and have more change-ups in the front. That being said, signing [NT] Domata Peko as a nose guard, that’s going to help. He’s a big man and he enjoys being a nose guard. He enjoys taking double-teams. That’s his job. His job is to sit in the A-gap and hold the center and guard off the backers. Keep those backers clean. He enjoys that job. With [DE] Zach Kerr, he’s also a big man but he’s played the 5[-technique], the shade[-technique] and the 3[-technique]. So he’s going to be a guy that can back up all three spots and he has the ability to rush the passer inside. So I think a combination of player, scheme and the frequency of the run—overall, big-picture, when you don’t score points on offense the opposing offenses feel no pressure to throw the football. So you get more runs. If you’re behind as an offense, you can’t run the ball 65 percent of the time. That’s what they saw last year because they were so good on defense and they weren’t scoring points on offense. So it affects the big picture. If a team is behind by 10 points, you’re not going to see that many runs. It’s a big-picture issue. It wasn’t just a defensive issue.”

On why the defense’s initial series were so problematic in 2016

“When I watched the film, I noticed that. Every first drive was almost a touchdown. Then they settled down and played well. That’s a system issue in my opinion as far as what they practice all week—when they show up on Sundays it’s the same picture. Mike Nolan was very, very good at this. He would always tell me, ‘In the first 15 plays, whatever you put in new that week, give it to them early because now his film study and his gameplan is out of whack.’ Then you come back to your bread and butter. But you can’t show him your hand because he’s also worked 90 hours. So he’s ready for those things. If you show up with those same looks, guess what? It’s NFL football. They are going to have some success no matter how good you are on defense. So you have to throw out your curveballs in the first 15 [plays]. Now, he has to go back to the drawing board and say, ‘OK, what was that?’ Then you come back with your bread and butter. The game slows down and now you’re back in your groove. I noticed that watching the games. I said, ‘Joe [Woods], what’s going on here?’ I knew the answer (laughing).”

On the left tackle position

“There was a possibility that we weren’t going to have it filled [during free agency]. You talk through every issue that’s possible with free agency and with your roster. So I’m not surprised that we’re sitting here without a known left tackle. [Donald] Stephenson has played some left; Watson has played some left tackle—so I’m not overly concerned with it. It’s like left and right corner. Who is your better corner? Left or right? [Reporter said ‘left’]. Why? [Reporter said ‘because you’re moving him to their top guy because the quarterback is looking at him’] That’s why. Because it’s vision, right? But for me, it’s the NFL. The hashes are so close that left or right corner doesn’t matter. They both have to be able to play. So left or right tackle, they both have to pass protect. So if it’s left or right, you have to switch your feet and play so I’m not overly concerned about having a left tackle. [OLB] Von Miller for the most part is on our defensive left side so he’s going against the right tackle all the time. Defensively, you can align your front anywhere you want. I can get Von Miller on your worst tackle anytime I want. So left or right, who cares? We need to acquire tackles who can block speed. In our division, every team has two [rushers] so it’s a concern for all of us in the division blocking edge rushers. Left or right? Not concerned. I want two guys who can block speed rushers.”

On how the tackle positions are viewed differently in this era

“That’s the old tradition. In football terms, the right tackle is more of a run blocker, a bigger guy. The left tackle is more of a dancer. It’s got to be equal. I want two good players. I don’t want one guy to be a heavy-footed run blocker and one guy to be a soft basketball player. I want guys who can do both.”

On what Elway is like to work for

“John has been great. In my opinion, for a young head coach, it is a perfect setup. I do football; John does contract and personnel. We come together on both, but my area is football. As a young coach, I couldn’t do both. I don’t want to do both. It’s too much. I want to coach the football team and allow John to do personnel and free agency, which he is really good at. So why should I jump

into John's suit? He won't jump into mine. I want John's input on football. From the quarterback to how we play offense and how we play defense, I want his input. He's a great football mind. He's a bright guy. I want it this way. I'm football; he's personnel. He's contracts. Even with coach's contracts, that falls on John. I can coach my coaches without having this animosity about contracts. John takes it off my plate. In my opinion, he's a perfect boss to work for because he kind of shields me from a lot of things that most guys don't shielded from. Even in Denver when John makes a call in Denver, he's been so good there that there is so much trust with the fan base it goes over because John has been so good. I need John. He's a welcoming shield for me."

On what he expects Elway's input to be on the quarterback competition

"He's going to watch every practice—every tape from practice. I want John's input. That is going to be a group decision, and I'm hoping it's a hard decision. Now, if it is obvious, it's obvious and we'll move on. I'm hoping it's going to be a hard decision who is going to be our quarterback."

On whether he sees a starting tackle in the draft class

"Absolutely, but again, tackles, [pass] rushers and corners are the three positions that everyone wants. We're picking [at No.] 20. There may be three or four tackles that are first-round graded or quality. They may not fall to us. We have to go into the draft with an open mind as far as taking the best player for our needs. It's a combination of both. It's not only the best player, but it's your need. If there is a tackle there that has a first-round grade from us, that's awesome."

On his impressions of Oklahoma RB Joe Mixon after having him in for a visit

"I thought Joe was a nice young man. Obviously he had an issue three or four years ago, but he's owned it. We brought Joe in because he didn't go to the Combine. We brought him in and talked to him for a day. He's owned it, he's been remorseful for his mistake and he's a nice young man."

On head coaches that helped him along the way

"Gary Kubiak, Mike Nolan, Mike Singletary—[Bengals Head Coach] Marvin Lewis is a guy that I leaned on for a lot of different issues. Marvin has been a head coach now for 14 seasons. That's a model of longevity. Marvin is my guy for anything like schedule issues or any type of player issues. He's my sounding board, along with Gary Kubiak. Even [Rams Defensive Coordinator] Wade Phillips. I've worked with a lot of guys that have been head coaches that are good guys and willing to share information."

On not playing in Oakland in the future

"That's going to be different. And again, I feel bad for the Oakland Raider fan base. But moving to Vegas and having a chance to have an NFL team in a city of Vegas' magnitude, that's going to be fun in my opinion. The fans are what is important. Living the Bay Area for six years when I was with San Fran, that fan base was huge. It's a hard place to play in Oakland. I do feel bad for the fans. Again, it's exciting to move to Vegas."

On how big an advantage playing at Oakland is for the team

"For those guys, it was huge for them because the fan base was wild. How about that for a term? It's a wild fan base, but very supportive."

On what he learned from Dolphins Head Coach Adam Gase and Bengals Head Coach Marvin Lewis

"Marvin, he's going into I think his 15th season with the Bengals. Marvin is great with players. He's great with scheduling. He's great with the pulse of the roster. I've learned from Marvin, just how he handled coaches. He wasn't a micromanager. He let you coach your guys. Now, if it was a big issue, he would come at you and he was a clear communicator. He was transparent with what he wanted. Marvin is easy to work for. Adam Gase this year was a model of, 'Stay with the process.' We started off 1-4 maybe, I'm not sure, but it was bad. Then we won nine straight. He made changes that are hard to make. We cut three offensive linemen. We benched [Dolphins CB] Byron Maxwell who [was] traded from Philadelphia with big money. We benched [OLB] Mario Williams on defense who was a big-money free agent. That took courage because if those things don't work, now it's on you. We picked those players. That took courage, but it worked and we won nine straight game. We went to the playoffs for the first time in almost 15 years. With Adam, it was just stay with the process and have the courage to make hard decisions because he did. It worked and it helped us win."

On C Matt Paradis

“Matt Paradis will be fine for camp. He had two surgeries in the offseason, but he is walking now and off crutches. I’m excited about Matt. He’s there every day rehabbing and he’ll be fine for camp.”

On the talent on the Raiders

“Your first thought goes to the quarterback (Derek Carr). He had a great year. Being a young guy, he’s going to have a hell of a career. He’s a Pro-Bowl type quarterback. That obviously is a concern for us. Offensive line, they’re big and they’re physical. They run the football on their terms. Outside of that, they have two receivers on the outside in [Michael] Crabtree and [Amari] Cooper that are Pro-Bowl type guys. It’s an offense that is going to be tough to contain. Defensively, they’re a fast playing group that takes the ball away. Our entire division has grown with the Chiefs having [WR] Tyreek Hill emerging there and San Diego with [QB] Philip Rivers. It’s a tough division.”

On the transition with the team’s leadership

“Losing D-Ware (OLB DeMarcus Ware) is a stinger in your locker room. We have a number of guys that can take over that role. Offensively, we have [WR Demaryius] Thomas, we have [WR Emmanuel] Sanders, both made Pro Bowls who were both veteran players who guys will follow. And then the quarterback. It’s the quarterback’s job to be a leader, whether you like it or not or you’re a rookie or not. That comes with your position. Defensively, we have a number of leaders. That entire secondary between [S Darian] Stewart, [S] T.J. [Ward] and [CB Aqib] Talib and [CB] Chris [Harris Jr.], they’re all leaders. That part does not concern me. With that being said, the locker room kind of controls how you lead, how you practice, how you play, your personality and your culture. You have to have leaders to win in football.”

On a favorite story with Elway and whether he has played cards with him yet

“I have not played cards with him. But as a competitor, this guy, if he’s playing cards or playing golf or anything he’s doing competitively, he wants to win. It’s apparent. I don’t have any good ones. I won’t play golf with him. I’m really bad at it. I’ve only played probably four rounds in two years. He’s a scratch golfer. His conversation with his buddies about golfing and traveling to play golf, it’s good conversation. He’s obviously a competitive player and that made him a great player in the past. He wants to win. Last season wasn’t good enough for him. That he has made known to me.”

On WR Demaryius Thomas

“I want ‘88,’ that’s what I call him, I want him to be a dominant player all the time. I don’t want him to ease into games. I want him to be a guy. I want him to step out and be a guy. It’s time. He’s a great player. He can take over a game, but I want his mindset every game to be every game we play to walk on the field and take over the game. Again, running the football will force them to load up the box and give him one-on-one opportunities. I want him to win every one-on-one. I want him to become a leader of our football team.”

On how running the ball and using the tight ends will help Thomas

“We have a guy like D.T., I think moving him around from outside to the inside, putting him in motion, it definitely helps him. He has the ability to do those things. He can play the slot and he can play outside. He’s a great runner with the football with wide receiver screens. That has been his trademark for years. Catch the screen and go 60 and 70 yards. I think you’re right, having more variety in the offense will help him play better.”

On the key to putting his personal touch on the defense

“The key is going to be, first of all, keeping the system in place. That has been so good the last two years. You can always add different coverage packages and different pressures that Wade didn’t have that I learned from [Minnesota Head Coach Mike] Zimmer in Cincinnati. I’m bringing in experience from the Bengals packages, which has been a really good package in the NFL for a long time. Adding some of those things to Wade’s package that Joe is going to run, it’s going to help us become better on defense.”

On what he thinks of Las Vegas as an NFL city

“It’s exciting. I was in Vegas about a month ago with my daughter for volleyball. It’s a fun city. Having a football team there is going to feel like a special event there playing at home. I think it’s going to be exciting for the Raiders fans and the players that will play in Vegas half the year.”

On concerns about players living in Las Vegas

“It won’t be any different than Miami or New Orleans or New York. They’re all big cities. Educating your players on the off-the-field behavior won’t stop because it’s Las Vegas. Players go to Vegas in the offseason, but it’s different living there obviously. It’s no different than Miami or any big city in the NFL. It’s the same education for the player. “

On whether he looks forward to matching up with Patriots Head Coach Bill Belichick

“I’ve done that before, but again, Bill doesn’t play. I don’t play. It’s a players’ game.”

On the Patriots’ offseason additions on offense

“It’s scary. It’s explosive, but again, players play and each week is different. When you play the Patriots, you can’t lose the game before the game. Does that make sense? They’re so good with their scheme. You have to go into the game and you have to match their football IQ before the game. If not, you have no chance to beat them. We have to spend a lot of time making sure our players are up to par with the football IQ of the game before any snaps are played.”